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The Role of the Fool and the Carnavalesque
in Post-1945 German Prose Fiction on the Third Reich

This thesis examines post-1945 German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*. My review of the secondary literature in Chapter 1 shows how few Germanists have examined the role of the carnivalesque in such fiction or used Bakhtin's work systematically. Having set out the shortcomings of Bakhtin's theory and shown Carnival's ambivalent position in the Third Reich, Chapter 2 builds on this theoretical and historical foundation by giving an overview of the different ways in which authors deploy the Fool and the carnivalesque in post-1945 prose fiction.

This overview provides a context for the rest of the thesis, in which I discuss in detail how four authors use the *topoi* of the Fool and the carnivalesque in different ways to confront the past and encourage social change. Thus, Chapter 3 analyses Hans Hellmut Kirst's *08/15* trilogy (1954-55) which describes Asch's carnivalesque subversion of the NCOs who abuse power within the Army, and his subsequent development into a positive figure of authority. Chapter 4 argues that, beneath its bleak surface, Günter Grass's *Hundejahre* (1963) deploys the carnivalesque to transmit a sense of mourning and rebirth after the Holocaust. Chapter 5 deals with Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur* (1977), whose Fool-protagonist provokes the reader to laugh at earlier attempts to make sense of the Holocaust in order to prioritize the act of anamnesis as an end in itself. Chapter 6 examines Gert Hofmann's *Veilchenfeld* (1987) and *Der Kinoerzähler* (1990). *Veilchenfeld* is a carnivalesque signifier of Nature whose persecution at the hands of the people of Limbach parallels the town's ecological destruction, so that the novel can be read as a critique of the exploitation of Nature. In *Der Kinoerzähler* Hofmann uses Karl, a Fool-figure who narrates silent films, to encourage the development of critical faculties which combat the fatalism and authoritarianism that hamper social change. It becomes clear that the authors of the above works have anticipated the shortcomings of Carnival as a model of resistance and have thus re-defined the Fool and the carnivalesque. So in my view, although the way the authors deploy these *topoi* maps only partially with Bakhtin's ideas about Carnival, these authors have understood the central concepts of the carnivalesque's ambivalence and its powers to subvert authority and use them productively to deal with the issues raised by the Third Reich.

The Role of the Fool and the Carnavalesque
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This thesis examines post-1945 German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of Carnival as set out in *Rabelais and his World* (*RW*). In Chapter 1 - which lays the theoretical basis of the thesis; reviews earlier criticism concerned with Bakhtin, the Fool and the carnivalesque; and describes Carnival's ambivalent position in the Third Reich - I explain why analysing the *topoi* of the Fool and the carnivalesque in post-War German prose fiction is a worthwhile exercise. Thus, I begin by summarizing what I consider the most important features of *RW*: inversion, the subversion of authority, laughter, and the ambivalence of carnivalesque phenomena such as the grotesque body, scatological imagery and verbal abuse. However, Bakhtin's model is most illuminating if one is aware of its many shortcomings. Accordingly, I identify six major problems of *RW*: Bakhtin's uncritical enthusiasm for Carnival, especially its attendant violence; his claim that Carnival has degenerated in the present; the arbitrary nature of the meanings which Bakhtin ascribes to Carnival; the rigid binarism of high and low culture involved in Bakhtin's model; the notion that Carnival works against its own subversive powers by functioning as a 'safety-valve' for its participants; and the alleged infrequency with which *RW* mentions the Fool-figure. On this latter point, I argue that Bakhtin makes it clear that the Fool is Carnival's representative and that although he may take many forms (e.g. clown, Harlequin, picaro etc.), he always embodies the central concepts of ambivalence, degradation and laughter. I then review the existing criticism that deals with the carnivalesque. To begin with, most of the secondary literature deals with the *Schelmenroman* and consists of attempts to define the picaresque by listing the characteristics that are allegedly typical of that genre, but without interpreting those characteristics. Moreover, apart from articles by the (English-speaking) scholars Holbeche, Hillman and Sheppard, no Germanist has used *RW* systematically to analyse German prose fiction - partly because there was no adequate German translation until 1987, and partly because *RW* arguably affirms values that German post-Enlightenment culture has tended to repress or diabolize. Then again, all critics who deal with either the *Schelm* or the carnivalesque fail to apply their insights to fiction dealing specifically with the Third Reich. The chapter ends with a description of how Carnival's position in the Third Reich was extremely ambivalent because on one hand, the Nazis successfully assimilated it and tailored its features to their own purposes, while on the other hand, evidence suggests that individual Fool-figures resisted the régime in carnivalesque style. So, although an analysis of the Fool and the carnivalesque involves focusing on just one aspect of the large amount of prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, such an analysis is worthwhile for three reasons. First, those *topoi* have never been examined in such prose fiction before; second, *RW* can help to interpret the disparate features of *Schelm*-figures described but not properly analysed by earlier critics; and finally because both the historical Nazis and their opponents implicitly recognized Carnival's powers and deployed them in different ways.

In Chapter 2, I give an overview of the use of the Fool and the carnivalesque in prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, and begin by identifying two major contextual factors. First, by using a variety of authors, I show how prose fiction largely reflects the historical fact that the Nazis assimilated the Carnival event for their own ends. Second, I establish the pivotal importance of Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* (*BT*) (1959) which initiated a minor tradition of Fool-novels set during the *Nazizeit* and which, through the ambivalence of the narrator

Oskar Matzerath, anticipates the many different ways in which the Fool is deployed more straightforwardly by other post-War authors. Thus, on one hand, Oskar is a Fool who can be read as the repellent embodiment of the Nazi values that Grass repudiates: after all, Oskar allows the Nazis to assimilate him and is brutal, malicious, mendacious, complicit in atrocities and unable to confront the past. But on the other hand, he functions positively (like Till Eulenspiegel) as a Fool who holds up a metaphorical mirror to the German people and compels them to recognize their own guilt and hypocrisy. Moreover, Oskar takes action to disrupt a Nazi rally and thus points to the individual Fool's ability to subvert authority. These two contextual factors mean that in most of the prose fiction that I discuss the carnivalesque is usually embodied in lone Fool-figures rather than in Carnival itself.

In the next section of Chapter 2, I examine two major ways in which the carnivalesque was used by artists and writers to distance themselves from Nazism. Whilst Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) and Robert Lucas's *Die Briefe des Gefreiten Hirnschal* (1940-45) used laughter to humiliate the Nazis during the War, some German authors confronted Nazism in the immediate post-War era by depicting Nazis and their influence in terms of brutal, violent clowns and Fools. By doing so, the latter group distance themselves from the Nazis by marginalizing them as irrational monsters - i.e. by associating them with the negative, violent by-products of Carnival. I also show how such a strategy dovetails with the verbal and pictorial methods used by some historians, cartoonists and commentators to repudiate the Nazis. I then discuss how, just as Oskar looks back to these Nazi embodiments of carnivalesque violence and irrationality, his disruption of the Nazi rally anticipates works that follow *BT*. Thus, from the 1960s onwards, there are several texts involving Fools who subvert Nazis directly and these texts reflect the desire of many at that time to confront lingering authoritarianism and Nazi-style attitudes in West Germany which culminated in the student protests of the late 1960s. Some writers instinctively understood that the carnivalesque's subversive powers could be deployed against authority: for example, early texts by Bobrowski and Bieler show Fools successfully subverting Nazis and may have been saying something about the era in which they were writing. But as the 1960s wore on, prose fiction shows Fool-figures either failing to subvert the Nazis, or being destroyed by them, or, where those Fool-figures try to humiliate unreconstructed Nazis in a post-War context, their efforts degenerate into violence - as in Bernward Vesper's autobiographical *Schelmenroman Die Reise*. In contrast, other authors such as Grass and Böll foresaw such problems involved in the use of the Fool and the carnivalesque and tried to re-define those concepts so that they made sense in a democratic context. In the final part of Chapter 2, I discuss the connection between the carnivalesque and the trivialization of the past. First, I show how some works depict German people laughing off Nazism after the War, even though - unlike Lucas and Chaplin - they knew about the Holocaust after the event and were arguably complicit in the Nazis' crimes. I then argue that the carnivalesque resistance to the Nazis in prose fiction of the 1960s, which had made a serious point about fomenting social change, turned into trivial entertainment from the 1970s onwards. Perhaps because the need for such 'resistance' was considered less urgent after the 1960s, the carnivalesque becomes harmless or marginalized in such fiction when it is not used to thrill or amuse the reader.

Having shown how prevalent the use of the Fool and carnivalesque imagery is in post-War prose fiction, Chapters 3 to 6 involve close readings of texts by four authors. Chapter 3 analyses Hans Hellmut Kirst's *08/15* trilogy (1954-55) which was published at the time when the *Bundeswehr* was being formed and many novels dealing with the War had already been published. Kirst's use of the carnivalesque prefigures by a decade the re-definition of the carnivalesque by authors like Grass and Böll. Thus, I show how Kirst intended readers to learn very specific lessons from his work and argue that the *08/15* trilogy aimed to change the

training methods of the Army and expose the abuse of power by NCOs in order to make the military more efficient and more humane. As with all the Fool-figures that I analyse in this thesis, I explain why I believe the protagonist of the trilogy, Asch, is a Fool. I then explain how Asch's humiliation of the authoritarian bully Hauptwachtmeister Schulz *before* the War in *08/15 In der Kaserne (Kaserne)* represents a straightforward example of carnivalesque subversion. But in *08/15 Im Krieg (Krieg)* - set *during* the War - Asch loses some of his (now inappropriate) carnivalesque qualities and begins to embody responsible leadership, in contrast to the incompetent authoritarianism of Hauptmann Witterer. Moreover, minor characters such as Kowalski and Soeft replace Asch as carnivalesque figures and, in a way that recalls the mini-utopias led by Fools in *Don Quixote* and *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus*, make up what Kirst may have seen as a blueprint for an ideal military unit. Finally, in *08/15 Bis zum Ende (Ende)* Kirst deals - simplistically and not very convincingly - with larger issues of the *Nazizeit* such as the Holocaust and the need for justice for Nazism's crimes. In the light of *Ende*, the strengths of the first two novels become clear. In *Kaserne*, Kirst used the Fool to attack the comparatively minor problem of the abuse of power in the Army, and this was an advantage precisely because Kirst only demanded change on a very modest scale. Moreover, Asch's metamorphosis into a responsible authority figure shows that Kirst understood that the carnivalesque powers were useful only up to a point and that authority of a positive kind was not only possible but necessary.

In Chapter 4 I argue that in *Hundejahre (HJ)* (1963) Günter Grass, perhaps unwittingly, shared Kirst's instinctive awareness that the carnivalesque can embody something positive - even though its redemptive powers are veiled beneath the novel's bleak surface. I use the psychoanalytical theories of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich and *RW* in a complementary manner because *HJ* involves *realistic* characters like Walter Matern - whose inability to mourn can be convincingly analysed using the Mitscherlichs' theories - and *surreal* characters who make little sense in terms of the 'real' world (such as Tulla and Amsel) but who can be illuminated by means of *RW*. I analyse Matern as the most authentic example of 'die Unfähigkeit zu trauern' among the many characters in *HJ* who are unable to mourn authentically, and I discuss Harry Liebenau's strategy of demonizing Tulla in order to evade feelings of guilt. Conversely, I argue that the Fool Amsel points to the ability to mourn through his carnivalesque scarecrows since these both deploy laughter against the figures of authority that have engendered Matern's inability to mourn and symbolize rebirth after death because they are new creations made from the discarded rubbish of the past. I further suggest that although Amsel's activities in the rest of *HJ* - like those of Tulla - seem superficially bizarre, revolting or negative, they can actually be interpreted through Bakhtinian spectacles as examples of carnivalesque acceptance of death preceding regeneration. Moreover, I show how the carnivalesque characters in *HJ* encourage just such reading against the grain in various ways. Thus, I conclude, *HJ*'s carnivalesque imagery hints that Grass may have tentatively felt that Germany could begin to move on from its traumatic past.

In Chapter 5, I interpret Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur (NF)* (1977). Hilsenrath wrote *NF* in 1968 and his approach to the Nazi past dovetails with the protesters of the 1960s who took issue with Germany's alleged failure to confront the past properly. But in accordance with the rejection of violence that characterizes the end of that decade, Hilsenrath does not advocate *physical* protest. Rather, he creates a Fool-protagonist, Max Schulz, who recalls the ambivalence of Oskar. On one hand, Schulz is a positive character because he provokes the reader to use the carnivalesque's debasing humour against attempts to theorize the Holocaust (psychoanalytical explanations of Nazism, the value of witness testimony, faith in justice, the notion that cultural enlightenment can prevent barbarism, and the view that the Shoah was a punishment from God) and against other ways of making sense of literary depictions of the

Holocaust (symbols, particularly of Jewish identity, numerological interpretations, and 'sprechende Namen'). He does this in order to prioritize the need - as an end in itself - to remember the dead who are often forgotten in such contexts, as they arguably were during the generational conflicts of the late 1960s, and are in *NF* by other Jews in the newly founded Israel. But on the other hand, Schulz is a negative figure since he has participated willingly in genocide, and Hilsenrath diverges from Bakhtin in that he does not see any regeneration after laughter except in the form of Schulz's rebirth as the forces of violence in history. By continually alluding to Walter Benjamin's Ninth Thesis from his *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* and by systematically negativizing Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, Goethe's poetry, *Märchen*, Grass's *HJ*, and Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*, Hilsenrath suggests that although mourning is a worthwhile end in itself, there is no hope for redemption from history's disasters.

Finally, Chapter 6 analyses Gert Hofmann's *Veilchenfeld (Vf)* (1987) and *Der Kinoerzähler (DK)* (1990). *Veilchenfeld* is a carnivalesque signifier of Nature whose persecution at the hands of the people of Limbach and ultimate death during the town Carnival parallels the town's destruction of its environment, so that the novel can be read as a critique of man's exploitation of Nature that is relevant to the present-day. *DK* adopts several features from *Vf*, and Hofmann responds to *Veilchenfeld*'s passive suffering by creating an active Fool-figure, Karl Hofmann. Karl is confronted with pessimism and passivity within *DK* itself via his female relatives who constantly talk of death, decay and the passing of time. He is aware of the futility of direct, violent confrontation with the Nazis and so undertakes subtle, indirect resistance through his job as a *Kinoerzähler*. Thus, I argue that he often narrates his film-summaries incorrectly in order to provoke a critical reaction from his listeners and so encourage the development of anti-authoritarian attitudes. Some of Karl's summaries involve the addition of happy endings to otherwise pessimistic films which combat his women's fatalism and optimistically suggest that history may turn out for the best. That said, Hofmann also makes it clear that Karl himself suffers from a residual authoritarian mentality, that his mis-readings are unwitting reflections of his own self-delusion and flawed personality, and that his optimism can simultaneously be interpreted as naïve given the novel's historical context of the Third Reich with all its brutality.

In other words, the texts discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 are worth analysing because they tap only partially into the Fool tradition by re-defining him and building in references to other genres, like myth and *Märchen*, that confuse the role of the carnivalesque. Moreover, they use the carnivalesque to deal with the Nazi past in very different ways. Because they have anticipated some of the problems involved in the Carnival model of resistance, and although their use of the carnivalesque does not always map directly with *RW*, these authors follow Bakhtin by using popular cultural forms, understanding Carnival's power to subvert authority, and grasping the central concept of ambivalence - especially in those texts where the carnivalesque generates hidden levels of interpretation that contradict the text's surface meaning.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Attempts to reconstruct the Third Reich in literary form and come to terms with the trauma of the National Socialist past have dominated German prose fiction of the last sixty years and generated a large body of secondary literature. In contrast, the *topoi* of the Fool and the carnivalesque have attracted considerably less critical attention and are only occasionally associated with the Third Reich specifically. Accordingly, almost no critic has considered these *topoi* as they occur in prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, and in this thesis I wish to plug this critical gap and identify trends in the way these *topoi* are deployed over time and by different authors.

Bakhtin's Model of Carnival: Summary

As Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*,¹ his seminal work on the carnivalesque and 'grotesque realism', will be my primary theoretical model for this thesis, it is worth briefly summarizing my understanding of *RW*. To begin with, *RW* seeks to bring a wide and disparate range of cultural phenomena under the overarching concept of Carnival.

Bakhtin describes how:

A boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture. In spite of their variety, folk festivities of the carnival type, the comic rites and cults, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody - all these forms have one style in common: they belong to one culture of folk carnival humor (p.4).

¹ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), hereafter referred to as *RW*. All references to this and any other texts cited in this thesis are included in the main text as page references in parentheses.

During Carnival, there was a 'suspension of all hierarchical precedence [...] all were considered equal during carnival' and as a result of this utopian equality, 'a special type of communication impossible in everyday life' was created, which was 'frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times' (p.10). This equality came about because Carnival involved 'a reversal of the hierarchical levels: the jester was proclaimed king' (p.81). This reversal illustrates Carnival's process of 'change and renewal' which involved 'a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings' (p.11). In the light of these ideas, *RW* makes sense of the phenomena connected with Carnival by analysing the novels of François Rabelais.

In my view, the most important idea underpinning *RW* is that of ambivalence. Whilst uncrownings, resistance to the power of the Church, and the reversal of hierarchy all indicate Carnival's power to debase its participants, Bakhtin also argued that Carnival involves rebirth after death, and regeneration after destruction. Bakhtin illustrates this ambivalence in his opening pages when he writes: 'Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time' (p.11). Thus, the point of free, often abusive speech, of the uncrownings, and of comic inversion is to degrade, change and prepare for rebirth. Bakhtin cites the concept of ambivalence again and again throughout *RW* when he analyses 'carnavalesque' phenomena, i.e the phenomena that are allegedly typical of Carnival.

According to Bakhtin, folk humour gave birth to 'grotesque realism', a literary aesthetic that is characterized by a concern with 'the material bodily principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life', and such images of the body are depicted 'in an extremely exaggerated form' (p.18). Moreover, the body is central to Bakhtin's conception of Carnival because it is emblematic of

carnavalesque ambivalence. Thus, he claims on one hand that the body is the site of much of the debasement that Carnival involves because the essential principle of grotesque realism is ‘degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body’ (p.19). But on the other hand, on Bakhtin’s reading, that degradation is always ambivalent:

Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. [...] To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one’ (p.21).

That is to say, although downward movement to the bodily level can debase, the lower bodily stratum, being the site of birth, is also regenerative. Moreover, Bakhtin refers to the grotesque body’s ‘ever unfinished nature’ (p.29): it is ‘unfinished’ because it is always participating in that process of death, change and rebirth. As a reflection of that process, the grotesque body ‘is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits’, and that transgression of limits explains why grotesque realism emphasises ‘the apertures or the convexities, or [the] various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose’ (p.26).² Consequently, the notions of incompleteness, transgression and the ambivalence of death and rebirth are regarded as liberating, anti-authoritarian concepts that subvert ‘the oppression of such gloomy categories as “eternal”, “immovable”, “absolute”, “unchangeable”’ (p.83).

Bakhtin analyses other important examples of the ambivalence of the carnivalesque, too. For instance, he clearly defines carnivalesque laughter, which is ‘not an individual

² According to Bakhtin, the nose and the phallus are closely connected in meaning: ‘the grotesque image of the nose [...] always symbolizes the phallus’ (p.316; cf. pp.86-7).

reaction to some isolated “comic” event’ but ‘the laughter of all the people’ (p.11) which, in Bakhtin’s view, performs a liberating function:

the victory of laughter over fear [...] over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden (“mana” and “taboo”). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself. Through this victory laughter clarified man’s consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life (p.91).

Bakhtin concludes from these ideas that the liberating force of laughter degrades ‘eternal’ concepts such as taboos, fear, oppression, boundaries and limitations for it is ‘directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity’ (p.11). Significantly, the fact that laughter is directed at those who laugh is said to distinguish carnivalesque laughter from the negative satire of modern times, in which he who laughs ‘places himself above the object of his mockery’ and does not include himself in his laughter (p.12). But again, and most importantly, carnivalesque laughter is ambivalent: ‘it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives’ (pp.11-12). Another example of the ambivalence of Carnival is the theme of madness which Bakhtin claims is used in the grotesque to challenge established, ‘unchangeable’ beliefs, or as *RW* puts it: ‘to escape the false “truth of this world” in order to look at the world with eyes free from this “truth”’ (p.49). Thus, the madman’s view is no longer marginalized but can contest (or degrade) ‘eternal’ truths in order to replace them with something new. The same ambivalence also explains the meaning of faeces and urine in ‘grotesque realism’: ‘the slinging of excrement and drenching in urine are traditional debasing gestures’; such inundation is ‘a literal debasement in terms of the topography of the body, that is, a reference to the bodily lower stratum’. But once again, this imagery is ambivalent because ‘the lower stratum is not only a bodily grave but also the area of the genital

organs, the fertilizing and generating stratum' (p.148). Bakhtin attaches a similar meaning to the eating of tripe, which was alleged to contain faeces; signifies life since tripe is food and derives from the bowels that swallowed food; alludes to death since tripe originates from the slaughter of animals; and implies birth since the lower stratum is the site of birth (see pp.162-3). Finally, in yet another important section, Bakhtin analyses carnivalesque violence - illustrated by the beatings of the Catchpoles described by Rabelais - in the same, positive terms, as destruction that prepares for rebirth (see pp.196-217).

So Bakhtin uses his theory of ambivalence in order to interpret and to connect otherwise disparate phenomena - such as madness, tripe, faeces and beatings - under the concept of the carnivalesque. As such, Carnival's potential to destroy and renew has a progressive, utopian purpose, since 'all that is new or renews [...] is emphasized as a positive element. And this element acquires a wider and deeper meaning: it expresses the people's hopes of a happier future, of a more just social and economic order, of a new truth' (p.81). Bakhtin emphasizes the positive notion that the people as a whole can never die but can only improve continually: 'Popular-festive forms look into the future. They present the victory of this future, of the golden age, over the past. [...] The victory of the future is ensured by the people's immortality. The birth of the new, of the greater and the better, is as indispensable and as inevitable as the death of the old' (p.256).

Bakhtin's Carnival: Some Problems

RW has aroused much critical controversy and before I can consider its value for an understanding of German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, I shall discuss some of the limitations of Bakhtin's theory. In my view, there are six major problems with Bakhtin's theory of Carnival. First, many critics attack Bakhtin's positive assessment of

Carnival as one-sided. In their early biography of Bakhtin, for instance, Clark and Holquist refer to the ‘strong element of idealization, even utopian visionariness’³ in *RW*; Stallybrass and White refer to ‘Bakhtin’s nostalgic and over-optimistic view of carnival’;⁴ and Gardiner, too, asserts that ‘[Bakhtin’s] valorisation of the folk-festive genres is overly effusive and hyperbolic’ with the result that Bakhtin ‘does tend to gloss over the negative aspects of carnival’.⁵ This idealization is problematic because, as Vice says, ‘Carnival is tough for those on the receiving end’:⁶ by this, she means that because Bakhtin describes beatings and killings so enthusiastically (see, for instance, his analysis of Pantagruel’s visit to the island of the Catchpoles on pp.196-207), he appears unconcerned by the pain suffered by victims of violence during Carnival and in Rabelais’s novels. Bernstein claims that in reality ‘many [carnivals], as recent studies have shown, ended in a violence that proved devastating both to the innocent victims and to the community as a whole’.⁷ Then again, Stallybrass and White describe how Carnival ‘often violently abuses and demonizes *weaker*, not stronger, social groups - women, ethnic and religious minorities, those who “don’t belong” - in a process of *displaced abjection*’ (p.19), and in a way that is relevant to my own argument they go on to relate how Jews in particular were chased and stoned during Carnival (p.53) because they allegedly represented the Lenten, anti-festive values of ‘cold rationality and profiteering individualism’ which opposed the ‘communal spirit of free expenditure and careless exuberance’ of Carnival (p.55). Moreover, Enid Welsford’s research extends the

³ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p.310.

⁴ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), p.18.

⁵ Michael Gardiner, ‘Bakhtin’s Carnival: Utopia as Critique’, in: David Shepherd (ed.), *Bakhtin: Carnival and Other Subjects* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: Rodopi, 1993), pp.20-47 (pp.34-5).

⁶ Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp.160; hereafter referred to as Vice (1997a).

⁷ Michael André Bernstein, ‘When the Carnival Turns Bitter: Preliminary Reflections Upon the Abject Hero’, *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983), pp.283-305 (p.302). Bernstein is referring to Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s *Carnival in Romans: A People’s Uprising at Romans 1579-1580*, translated by Mary Feeney (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).

problem of violence to the individual Fool who represents Carnival. Again and again, she returns to the question of the Fool's violent temperament and refers to 'the coarse and brutal type of humour'⁸ of the buffoon which was 'ethically indefensible' (p.26) and, with reference to the German figure of Till Eulenspiegel, to 'the sheer brutality and physical nastiness of many of the buffoon stories' (p.51; cf. pp.33-4 and 45). Welsford also claims that 'Buffoons can only flourish [...] in a society where the general level of sensitiveness and sympathy is not very high' (p.50) and that the buffoon's success relies on his 'inhumanity' (p.52).⁹ So modern historians of Carnival and the Fool have often been concerned by the brutal by-products of Carnival that are ignored by Bakhtin.

There is a further dimension to the problem of Bakhtin's enthusiasm for violence. For Bakhtin, the deaths of individuals in carnivalesque persecutions promote the continued life of the people as a whole. As Mihailovic explains: 'For it to remain deathless, the collective body needs to partake regularly of its eucharistic meal of perishable individual bodies'.¹⁰ Lock sees that 'biological life may be perpetuated but there is little to rejoice in if that life is devoid of persons [...] It is the absence of the personal in Bakhtin's carnivalesque affirmations that arouses scepticism, for such absence would indeed betray all that Bakhtin had hitherto celebrated'.¹¹ For Vice, 'To point to the likely survival of the people as a whole or as an abstraction is [...] a way of blinding oneself to individual deaths' (Vice 1997a, p.153). So not only is Bakhtin uninterested in individual pain, he also promotes the endless regeneration of the life of the people by embracing the deaths of individuals as a necessary aspect of this process.

⁸ Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (1935) (London: Faber and Faber, new ed. 1968), p.20.

⁹ Cf. Edith Kern's reference to comic episodes as 'violent and immoral by realistic standards' (Edith Kern, *The Absolute Comic* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1980], p.7).

¹⁰ Alexandar Mihailovic, *Corporeal Words: Mikhail Bakhtin's Theology of Discourse* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p.185.

¹¹ Charles Lock, 'Carnival and Incarnation: Bakhtin and Orthodox Theology', in: Caryl Emerson (ed.), *Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), pp.285-99 (p.296). First published in *Journal of Literature and Theology*, 5 (1991), pp.68-92.

The second major problem with *RW* concerns what Humphrey refers to as the 'nostalgic view of a radical but distant medieval past'.¹² Bakhtin's assertion that Carnival has 'degenerated so far as to have become indistinguishable' and that 'other forms [of the carnivalesque] have deteriorated and vanished' (p.218) implies that his idealization of Carnival extends to the belief that its powers no longer exist outside the historical confines of the Middle Ages. Such a conclusion would preclude using *RW* for analysing modern literary texts. However, medieval historians like Humphrey have cast doubt on the accuracy of Bakhtin's historical account of Carnival (see p.164); and similarly, the critics cited above provide evidence that the medieval Carnival was altogether more violent than Bakhtin suggests, all of which invites us to question Bakhtin's supposedly historical meta-narrative of Carnival's decline, that is, his idealization of the past and disparagement of the carnivalesque in the present. The solution to this problem is to acknowledge, like Hillman, that 'Bakhtin's Carnival [is] a construct, one which embraces the folk festival but subsumes it to a transcending vision',¹³ and to follow Stallybrass and White's lead in seeking to 'move beyond Bakhtin's troublesome *folkloric* approach' (p.26).

Bakhtin's slippery grasp of history has implications for the third and fourth major problems of his theory. While some critics maintain that the carnivalesque transcends history and ignore Bakhtin's claims that Carnival can only be situated at a specific historical juncture, others, like Dentith, oppose the use of Bakhtin's theory outside of the medieval framework: 'Carnival [...] despite [Bakhtin's] willingness to extend its range of meaning, is not a transhistorical phenomenon'. This statement leads Dentith to conclude that Carnival's regenerative powers might fade over time; or in other words, he

¹² Chris Humphrey, 'Bakhtin and the Study of Popular Culture: Re-thinking Carnival as a Historical and Analytical Concept', in: Craig Brandist and Galin Tihanov (eds.), *Materializing Bakhtin: The Bakhtin Circle and Social Theory* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), pp.164-72 (p.166).

¹³ Roger Hillman, 'From Carnival to Masquerade: Bakhtin, H. Mann, Böll', *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik*, 18 (1986), pp.110-24 (p.113).

implies that Carnival does not retain in the present the meanings which Bakhtin imputed to the medieval Carnival.¹⁴ On this account, the meaning of Carnival's tropes is more fluid and unstable than Bakhtin allows. Several critics have gone still further and asked whether Carnival's tropes meant exactly what Bakhtin said they meant in the Middle Ages. Humphrey makes the point that 'whilst a custom may make use of inversion at the level of its form, this does not necessarily mean that such a use is therefore socially oppositional or that it challenged the social order in some way' (p.169). Similarly, Renfrew challenges the historical validity of Bakhtin's analysis of Carnival's tropes before criticizing the whole concept of the carnivalesque for being too 'malleable': 'Carnival simply becomes a universal means, suitable to the imperatives of all, without exception, cultural and political tasks'.¹⁵ In other words, the carnivalesque is suspicious for being so widely applicable. In another essay in the same volume, Vice compares *RW* with Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1980) and demonstrates that although Bakhtin influenced Kristeva's ideas, Kristeva systematically attaches very different meanings to elements of the grotesque. For example, whereas Bakhtin sees 'the surprise of regeneration' in the maternal, pregnant body, Kristeva sees 'horrified desire'; and whereas Bakhtin connects food with community, transgression of the body's confines and defecation and birth, Kristeva's interest in food concerns its 'polluting properties'.¹⁶ Vice concludes that Bakhtin 'is not interested in *why* such substances [e.g. urine and faeces] should be associated with life' (p.163). Or in other words, the regenerative qualities that Bakhtin attaches to certain phenomena in Carnival may be limited to a specific time, are arguably not supportable by reference to history, and may be purely

¹⁴ Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p.71.

¹⁵ Alastair Renfrew, 'The Carnival Without Laughter', in: Carol Adlam, Rachel Falconer, Vitalii Makhlin and Alastair Renfrew (eds.), *Face to Face: Bakhtin in Russia and the West* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp.185-95 (pp.187 and 190).

¹⁶ Sue Vice, 'Bakhtin and Kristeva: Grotesque Body, Abject Self', in Carol Adlam et al. (eds.), pp.160-74 (pp.162 and 164); hereafter referred to as Vice (1997b).

subjective in nature. As Dentith concludes, Carnival does not have ‘one univocal social or political meaning’ (p.75).

The fourth deficiency of the carnivalesque lies in what Emerson calls ‘the stiff binary nature of Bakhtin’s social history’.¹⁷ By this she means the over-simplified opposition of high and low cultures, and of the people against powerful institutions such as the Church. Accordingly, other critics have attempted to redescribe this opposition: Sheppard, for example, accepts Bakhtin’s dichotomy but qualifies it by showing, with considerable historical detail, how the relationship between the two cultures was ‘extremely complex’ and how they ‘interpenetrated with one another’;¹⁸ Lock’s complex theological argument leads him to conclude that ‘for Bakhtin, degradation requires not the negation of the higher (as it were dialectically) but the full involvement of the higher in the lower’ (p.292); and Dentith claims that ‘[Carnival’s] forms were available to both sides’ (p.75). To compound the problem of this oversimplified binarism, Bakhtin’s model involves a process in which high and low cultures simply swap places, and this simple inversion reinforces the *status quo* by maintaining the hierarchical principle.¹⁹ So Bakhtin creates a problem by failing to acknowledge the complexities of the dichotomy.

The fifth major problem of Bakhtin’s theory is mentioned by almost all critics, namely that its alleged subversive powers are neutered if one accepts that Carnival functioned as ‘something of a safety valve for the libidinous impulses that afflict the body politic’ (Mihailovic, p.183).²⁰ Thus, the effect of such ‘licensed release’ would be to control the

¹⁷ Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.165.

¹⁸ Richard Sheppard, ‘Upstairs-Downstairs - Some Reflections on German Literature in the Light of Bakhtin’s Theory of Carnival’ in: Sheppard (ed.), *New Ways in Germanistik* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1990), pp.278-315 (p.283; cf. pp.280-3).

¹⁹ Gardiner buries this point in an endnote: see Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.231, n.27. Cf. Clark and Holquist, p.310.

²⁰ Cf. Emerson, p.165, Dentith, p.73, and Stallybrass and White, p.13.

people's resentful aggression and prevent genuine resistance or subversion of powerful state institutions; and according to Kern, who refers to 'the absolute comic' but means the carnivalesque, any change that did take place would only be temporary: 'the laughter of the absolute comic [...] but briefly turns the world upside down instead of aiming at any permanent improvement' (p.114). However, according to Stallybrass and White, Carnival 'may often act as a *catalyst and site of actual and symbolic struggle*' and they claim that violent social clashes are known to have coincided historically with Carnival (p.14).²¹ The debate on Carnival's potential for catalyzing political change is insoluble since Bakhtin himself is contradictory on the matter: Renfrew points out (pp.188-9) that Bakhtin implicitly acknowledges the 'licensed release' of Carnival (see *RW*, pp.89: 'a *temporary* suspension of the entire official system' [my italics]; cf. p.75). And yet elsewhere, the 'agelasts' that oppose the people in Rabelais's novels are *definitively* killed off and Bakhtin can speak of 'a *radical change* and renewal of all that exists' (p.274; my italics).

RW and the Fool-figure

The sixth and final criticism of Bakhtin's theory merits a section of its own. It is sometimes said that Bakhtin says very little about the Fool-figure in *RW*, which ought to be a serious omission given that I am dealing with *both* the carnivalesque *and* the Fool and using *RW* as the theoretical basis of my argument. But the individual Fool-figure appears again and again in post-1945 German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich - partly because the organized Carnival event is typically shown to have been co-opted by

²¹ Stallybrass and White have in mind Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's account of Carnival in Romans (see note 7). Cf. Dentith, p.75 and Gardiner (1992), p.182.

the Nazis themselves (see below) - so it is important to foreground Bakhtin's comments on the Fool.

To begin with, one must qualify the claim that Bakhtin says little about the Fool. Although it is true that the Fool-figure does not dominate Bakhtin's vision of Carnival, there are clear statements in *RW* that not only connect the Fool with Carnival but also attach the central concepts of ambivalence, degradation and laughter to the Fool himself. For instance, I have cited Bakhtin's assertion that 'clowns and fools' were one part of the culture of folk humour in general (*RW*, p.4), and that the 'jester' - a Fool-figure - supplants the king in Carnival's inverted hierarchy (p.81).²² Moreover, the 'free and frank' speech of Carnival recalls the licence of the court-jester (p.10). But Bakhtin's understanding of the Fool emerges from other statements in *RW*. For example, he explicitly associates Fools with the carnivalesque:

Clowns and fools [...] are characteristic of the medieval culture of humor. They were the constant, accredited representatives of the carnival spirit in everyday life out of carnival season. [...] [They] remained fools and clowns always and wherever they made their appearance. As such they represented a certain form of life, which was real and ideal at the same time. They stood on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar mid-zone (p.8).

Although Bakhtin reinforces this notion when he argues that 'the clown was the herald of another, nonfeudal, nonofficial truth' (p.93), he does more than merely *associate* the clown or Fool with Carnival by characterizing them centrally in terms of carnivalesque ambivalence. For a start, Bakhtin argues that 'Folly is, of course, deeply ambivalent. It has the negative element of debasement and destruction [...] and the positive element of renewal and truth. Folly is the opposite of wisdom - inverted wisdom, inverted truth'

²² Cf. Bakhtin's comments on the role of the clown in the ritual crowning and uncrowning as king that takes place during Carnival (p.197).

(p.260). Then again, when he is analysing the grotesque body's alleged energetic imitations of the sexual act, childbirth and death, Bakhtin writes of 'a peculiar mimicking of death-resurrection [...] (*the usual trick of the clown simulating death and revival*)' (p.354; my italics). Moreover, Bakhtin had mentioned the notion of the resurrected clown when he analysed the beating of the Catchpoles in Rabelais's work: 'the image is essentially related to the gay thrashings and abuse as well as to the red snout of the Catchpole, to *his apparent death, sudden return to life, and jumping up like a clown who has received a beating*' (p.197; my italics).²³

So the clown and the Fool not only represent the carnival spirit *at all times*: they also share the ambivalence of Carnival. Significantly, Bakhtin does not distinguish between the meaning of the Fool and the clown, and when he discusses another Fool-figure, Harlequin (as he does several times in *RW*), he does not distinguish between Harlequin and other, related Fool-figures either. Accordingly, Harlequin shares the carnivalesque connotations of related Fool-figures: Bakhtin mentions him alongside court-jesters as part of a larger review of earlier criticism dealing with the grotesque (see pp.35-6); and most prominently, he analyses - by reference to the lower bodily stratum and birth - a scene from the *commedia dell'arte* in which Harlequin head-butts a man who is stuttering so that he can 'give birth' to speech (see pp.308-9). Although the scene illustrates Bakhtin's understanding of the grotesque body in general, it also demonstrates how indiscriminately he attaches the same significance to Fools, clowns and Harlequin.

I intend to follow Bakhtin's approach not only by treating the Fool in his various manifestations as the embodiment of the grotesque and of the ambivalence of Carnival, but also by not drawing strict boundaries between the different kinds of Fool-figure. On one hand, some critics have argued that the alleged differences between different kinds of

²³ Bakhtin establishes another connection between the indestructible Catchpole and the clown by claiming: '[The Catchpole's] red snout is the clown's rouged mask' (p.200).

Fool - the clown, the jester, the trickster, the *Schelm*, the picaro, Harlequin etc. - are important when analysing their possible meaning: Van der Will, for example, argues that the 'Schelm' is a 'weltlicher Heiliger' and that such 'worldly saints' should be subdivided into intellectuals, clowns and picaros;²⁴ Seifert distinguishes between the picaresque novel and the *Schelmenroman* as a way of explaining Günter Grass's contradictory claims that *Die Blechtrommel* was influenced by Grimmelshausen but not by the *Schelmenroman* tradition;²⁵ and Neubert (wrongly) generalizes that a *Schelmenroman* is narrated in the third-person whereas a picaresque novel has a first-person narrator.²⁶ But in my opinion, such arbitrary definitions of and distinctions between such Fool-figures can result in the critic ignoring the *specific* role and significance of the Fools within the often very different texts under consideration. Or in other words, such definitions can have an inhibiting, not to say a levelling effect on the reading of texts.

But on the other hand, many critics concede the difficulty of defining figures such as the *Schelm* - not surprisingly, since *Schelme* etc. are all about the avoidance of definition. For instance, as Erhart-Wandschneider has observed in her comparative study of the *Schelmenroman*,²⁷ not only is definition of the picaresque novel extremely difficult (see pp.15-35), it can be both reductive and 'unergiebig' (pp.27-8).²⁸ In my view, there are at

²⁴ Wilfried van der Will, *Pikaro heute: Metamorphosen des Schelms bei Thomas Mann, Döblin, Brecht, Grass* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967), pp.9 and 11.

²⁵ Walter Seifert, 'Die pikareske Tradition im deutschen Roman der Gegenwart', in: Manfred Durzak (ed.), *Die deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart: Aspekte und Tendenzen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971), pp.192-210 (p.192).

²⁶ Brigitte Neubert, *Der Außenseiter im deutschen Roman nach 1945* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), pp.119-20.

²⁷ Claudia Erhart-Wandschneider, *Das Gelächter des Schelmen: Spielfunktion als Wirklichkeitskonzeption der literarischen Schelmenfigur; Untersuchungen zum modernen Schelmenroman* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1995).

²⁸ See, for example, Hans-Volker Gretschel, *Die Figur des Schelms im deutschen Roman nach 1945* (Frankfurt/ Main: Peter Lang, 1993), pp.5 and 7, and Neubert, p.118. Cf. Seifert's comment on the dangers involved in too wide a definition of the *Schelm*: 'Die Tatsache, daß das Pikareske im Detail liegt, bringt es mit sich, daß pikareske Szenen in allen möglichen Romanen auftreten können' (p.197).

least two reasons for these difficulties. First, literary manifestations of the Fool have developed organically over time because authors have often wanted to deploy such characters in different contexts, so that it is difficult to define clearly a figure that consistently changes its form according to circumstances. Thus, as an arbitrary example, Billington traces the red-haired clown's origins to the slightly different, earlier character of the country bumpkin or 'rustic booby';²⁹ similarly, the parti-coloured Fool's garb so often mentioned by Billington (see pp.6, 9, 13, 47 and 92) probably fed into Harlequin's own parti-coloured clothing. Second, the various kinds of Fool-figure overlap in meaning so that attempts to divide them rigidly are artificial and emphasize alleged differences to the detriment of the important *similarities* between Fool-figures identified by Bakhtin. Indeed, several major critics view the Fool as Bakhtin does, and so implicitly acknowledge the kinship of the Fool's various manifestations: for instance, the title of Willeford's book reflects his simultaneous treatment of the Fool, the jester and the clown;³⁰ and Welsford's book about 'the Fool' (1935) also deals with court-jesters, buffoons and Harlequin. Still other critics are explicit about the overlapping of concepts like the *Schelm* and Carnival: Bauer, for example, asserts that '[Es] bestehen zahlreiche Beziehungen zwischen dem "mundus inversus" des Schelmenromans und der verkehrten Welt des Karnevals';³¹ and Diederichs claims that Till Eulenspiegel and the confidence trickster are 'zwei weitere Haupttypen schelmischen Geblüts', that the clown and the Fool are also 'zwei weitere literarische Verwandte des Schelms', and that 'Kasperfiguren' are, in turn, 'd[ie] nächsten Verwandten des Clowns'.³² As such

²⁹ Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984), pp.43 and 92.

³⁰ William Willeford, *The Fool and his Sceptre: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969).

³¹ Matthias Bauer, *Der Schelmenroman* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1994), p.16.

³² Rainer Diederichs, *Strukturen des Schelmischen im modernen deutschen Roman* (Cologne: Eugen Diederichs, 1971), pp.32, 33 and 44.

comments accord with Bakhtin's largely undifferentiated discussion of Fool-figures, instead of hampering my argument with preconceived definitions I shall analyse all such Fool-figures - however different they may appear on the surface - as embodiments to a greater or lesser extent of such wide concepts as grotesque realism and the carnivalesque, and in each case I shall provide evidence to explain why I believe they are Fools. Thus, in conclusion, the little that Bakhtin says about Fool-figures suggests that his analysis of Carnival could illuminate a much wider range of Fool-figures than he himself discusses, and possibly that for Bakhtin such connections as I have discussed were so obvious that he took them for granted.

There are, of course, other possible criticisms of Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, such as Emerson's assertion that he 'attends almost not at all to the chemical side of carnival, that is, to intoxication, addiction, and drunkenness' (p.163), or Russo's criticism that Bakhtin's famous image of the 'pregnant hags' 'fails to acknowledge or incorporate the social relations of gender'.³³ So although the six points discussed above are, arguably, the most important problems thrown up by Bakhtin's theory, they do not constitute an exhaustive list. But given those six points, any critic analysing the carnivalesque must bear in mind both its brighter and darker sides. This becomes particularly important when one finds, as one does in prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, a great deal of violence and (anti-Semitic) persecution of minorities. Indeed, Carnival's insensitivity or blindness to individual death seems particularly appropriate to post-war Germany when one recalls the Germans' alleged 'inability to mourn'.³⁴ I shall follow Stallybrass and White's approach to the carnivalesque by not

³³ Mary Russo, 'Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory', in: Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.318-36 (p.325).

³⁴ See the seminal work on this phenomenon: Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (1967; Munich: Piper, 1998).

limiting myself to the historical or folkloric festival of Carnival itself. By doing this, I do not mean that I shall ignore instances of Carnival celebrations in the texts under discussion since there are, to my knowledge, several examples of such institutionalized Carnivals in German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich. Rather, it means that I shall assume both that there may be traces of the medieval Carnival in recent literature and that those traces may appear in a scattered, disparate or miniaturized form, the best example of which is the Fool-figure. Moreover, I shall not force Bakhtinian interpretations of Carnival's tropes onto the texts in question where such simple mapping would be inappropriate. Rather, I shall examine the texts for evidence that would support Bakhtin's theory in order to see how far that theory illuminates the text. Finally, when analysing recent texts one must tackle the question of the subversion of authority and the complex relationship between high and low cultures with even greater caution since, as Docker explains, postmodernity makes the situation even more complex by blurring several of the distinctions that are central to *RW* (which was, it must be remembered, written in Stalinist Russia):

Dominant discourses, if they exist in a contestatory world, are themselves not monolithic and single in character, but multifarious and contradictory. [...] In the postmodern world [...] it is never easy to distinguish between the mainstream and the oppositional, the conforming and the unconventional, the majority and minority view - between centres and margins that are ever shifting and uncertain.³⁵

The *topos* of resistance is important in prose fiction on the Third Reich, and the kind of violent subversion offered by Carnival in its Bakhtinian form seems appropriate in that context where the lines between the Nazis and their enemies, as in Stalin's Russia, were quite clearly defined. But the complexities described by Docker and the fact that protest in the democratic, post-war world can take many different, peaceful forms, such as the

³⁵ John Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.163 (cf. Hillman, p.114).

vote, interest movements, the media and trades union (Docker, p.274), raises questions about the relevance to the present of carnivalesque resistance in prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich.

The Carnavalesque, the Fool-figure and German Literary Criticism

While some have charged Bakhtin with ignoring the Fool in favour of Carnival itself, it could be argued, conversely, that German critics have focussed on the Fool-figure at the expense of Carnival. That German critics have done so reflects the frequent appearance in post-1945 prose fiction of the Fool-figure removed from his festive context. Most secondary literature focussing on the Fool deals in particular with what the critics term the *Schelmenroman*; moreover, the critics largely ignore Bakhtin's theory altogether. Furthermore, all these studies are primarily concerned with *definition* of the sub-genre of the *Schelmenroman* by listing what are allegedly typical characteristics of such novels. But I have argued that trying to differentiate strictly between the different Fool-figures is unhelpful; and while Jacobs, for instance, assures us that generic classification can be 'ein wertvolles Instrument zur Ausgliederung und Ordnung',³⁶ he never explains what the value of 'ordering' such texts is. Indeed, the great space devoted to generic definition in the work of these critics has left little room for analysis of the content of the texts under discussion. All too often, writers on the *Schelmenroman* claim that the meaning of a text amounts to the suspiciously undifferentiated notion of 'Gesellschaftskritik' or 'Sozialkritik',³⁷ and when, for instance, van der Will combined analysis with generic definition in his early study *Pikaro heute*, his book was disappointingly brief.

³⁶ Jürgen Jacobs, *Der deutsche Schelmenroman: Eine Einführung* (Munich and Zürich: Artemis, 1983), p.26.

³⁷ I am quoting here, as an arbitrary example, from Gretschel, p.128, but many other critics rely on terms like 'Sozialkritik' to compensate for a detailed analysis of the text.

Thus, critics identify those cultural phenomena which occur in picaresque novels but both separate them from each other and fail to analyse them. I believe that *RW* is the missing component in such criticism because Bakhtin makes sense of and provides meanings for those phenomena. I say this because some of the alleged characteristics of *Schelmenromane* have clear Bakhtinian echoes. For instance, van der Will claims that the picaro rejects notions of hierarchy (p.34); Gretschel argues that the *Schelm* never compromises with the state or any ideology (p.10); and one could argue that the lowly roots of the picaro place him among the oppressed people idealized by Bakhtin.³⁸ Moreover, while the picaro's trickery means that he sometimes achieves victories over those with greater power, he always risks losing any advantage that he gains. Or as Seifert says: 'die grundsätzliche Polarität der Pikarogestalt [beruht] auf dem Wechsel zwischen Sieger und Opfer' (p.196); in other words, the picaro's life involves a string of Bakhtinian crownings and uncrownings. Then again, Gretschel claims that 'den meisten Schelmenromanen [...] haftet etwas Unfertiges und Fragmentarisches an' (p.35), a feature that dovetails exactly with Bakhtin's enthusiasm for open-ended forms and rejection of closure. In my opinion, Bakhtin's theory can draw all these apparently disparate features together and analyse them in ways that have not yet been explored.

Given the relevance of Bakhtin to the above issues and the German interest in the *Schelmenroman*, one might expect *RW* to have impacted strongly on German literary criticism. But as Roger Hillman points out in one of the few articles that use Bakhtin's theories to interpret German literature: 'Bakhtin is largely absent from the German [literary-critical] debate' (p.110). Indeed, Hillman finds very few secondary works on German literature that use Bakhtin systematically and points out that most of these are by

³⁸ On the *Schelm*'s lowly roots, see, for instance, Diederichs, pp.19 and 40; or Jacobs, pp.9 and 29.

English-speaking critics.³⁹ In an article published ten years later, Anthony Wall expresses this even more strongly by speaking of ‘a glaring hole in the middle of what Bakhtin could have become in the German-speaking world’ and explains that ‘Very often he has simply not been taken seriously or been purposely ignored’.⁴⁰ Richard Sheppard’s long essay, published four years after Hillman’s article, uses Bakhtin’s model to survey German literature since the fifteenth century and therefore attempts to compensate for Germanists’ indifference to Bakhtin. However, Hillman limits his very brief analysis to a novel by Heinrich Mann and Böll’s *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*, neither of which deal with Nazism; and Sheppard, although his essay discusses the post-war period, is mainly concerned with the ecological implications of Bakhtin’s theory, offers only scant comment on Grass’s *Die Blechtrommel* (1959) and Böll’s two novels *Ansichten eines Clowns* (1963) and *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971) (see pp. 309 and 312), and ignores the Third Reich altogether.

There are two reasons why Bakhtin has influenced German-speaking critics so little, one of which may shed light on some of the problems of criticism dealing with the *Schelmenroman*. First, Bakhtin’s book was not fully translated into German until 1987.⁴¹ A translation of selected passages was published in 1969 but was of limited critical

³⁹ One of the articles Hillman cites is Yvonne Holbeche, ‘Carnival in Cologne: A Reading of Heinrich Böll’s *Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*’, *AUMLA*, 63 (1985), pp.33-42. It is probably unsurprising that of the very few critics who employ Bakhtin systematically, two (Hillman and Holbeche) are based at Australian universities (‘down under’, geographically-speaking) and are thus less strongly influenced by the prevailing values of European criticism.

⁴⁰ Anthony Wall, ‘On the Look-Out for Bachtin in German’, *Le Bulletin Bakhtine - The Bakhtin Newsletter*, 5 (1996), pp.117-41 (p.117). Bakhtin is called ‘Bachtin’ in German. Wall does not mention English-speaking critics like Hillman, Holbeche or Sheppard who have applied Bakhtin to German literature; nor does he include in his bibliography Matthias Freise, *Michail Bachtins Philosophische Ästhetik der Literatur* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1993). Freise devotes no specific section of his book to *RW*.

⁴¹ Michail Bachtin, *Rabelais und seine Welt: Volkskultur als Gegenkultur* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1987).

value,⁴² and Wall points out that to compound the problem, the older, faulty translation is still in circulation (p.131). Thus Erhart-Wandschneider, writing in 1995, uses this earlier, partial translation of Bakhtin - and then only piecemeal. And to make matters worse, Fischer issued a reprint of the hybrid translation in 1990 (Wall, p.132)! The second reason why Bakhtin has been largely ignored is because, as Sheppard says, '[RW] reaffirms values and attitudes which [...] the canon of German literature [...] has largely tabooed, repressed or diabolised' (p.278).⁴³ Indeed, it may be for similar reasons that critics of the picaresque novel have spent so much time *categorizing* novels, either as a *Schelmenroman* or something else, in order to compartmentalize the texts and distract readers from the *content* which, in the case of both the Third Reich and the carnivalesque, can be shocking, messy, subversive, violent, or out of control.

In 1986, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Neueren Germanistik* issued an edition entirely devoted to the modern German *Schelmenroman*.⁴⁴ A glance at the contents of this issue or, say, at the bibliography of a recent study like Erhart-Wandschneider's, reveals that more recent critics have been seeing works such as Jurek Becker's *Jakob der Lügner* (1969), Heinrich Böll's *Entfernung von der Truppe* (1964) and *Ende einer Dienstfahrt* (1966), and Bernward Vesper's *Die Reise* (1977) as part of the picaresque tradition. So critics have sensed that a wide range of post-War German fiction relates in some way to

⁴² The fragmentary translation was published as Michail Bachtin, *Literatur und Karneval - Zur Romantheorie und Lachkultur* (Munich: Hanser, 1969). It also included passages from Bakhtin's book on Dostoyevsky but did not indicate which passages were from which book (Wall, p.132). Furthermore, the quality of the translation was so poor that one reviewer, Hendrik Birus, commented: 'Für wissenschaftliche Zwecke ist sie nicht zu gebrauchen' (see Birus's review in *Germanistik*, 15 [1974], p.300).

⁴³ Without reference to Sheppard, Wall expresses this slightly differently:

In many ways, notions which inhabit the very heart of Bakhtin's thought - centrifugal forces, carnivalesque laughter, popular rebellious culture, long flurries of speculative and utopian thought etc. - seem to fly in the face of many of the rigorous intellectual traditions of German intellectual life, traditions so well-known for detailed verification against empirical evidence and exhaustive bibliographical commentaries (p.117).

⁴⁴ Gerd Hoffmeister (ed.), *Der moderne deutsche Schelmenroman: Interpretationen (= Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik, 20 [1985/86])* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986).

the literature of the carnivalesque. Moreover, it is clear from Wall's article that *RW* is the one text by Bakhtin that has struck any kind of chord in Germany, even if its impact has been minor and, according to Wall (*passim*), provoked several hysterical denunciations. *RW*, then, is the missing critical component here: first, because it can make sense of the many texts such as those mentioned above that appear to owe something to the carnivalesque tradition; and second, because German critics' strong reactions to *RW* suggest that the repressed carnivalesque nevertheless fascinates the Germans - a phenomenon that demands explanation. Finally, according to at least three critics, carnivalesque *topoi* generate the most suitable literary forms for dealing with the issues raised by the Third Reich. Uwe Naumann, for example, says:

Der deutsche Faschismus als Gegenstand von kritischer Literatur und Kunst ruft [...] die Darstellungsmethode der Satire (und Grotteske) geradezu herbei [...] Wo die Gewalttaten einer herrschenden Clique und ihrer Handlanger ins Monströse, Unerhörte, kaum Glaubliche wachsen, da liegt die Grotteske näher denn je.⁴⁵

Similarly, although Ezrahi claims that there is a dearth of appropriate metaphors or archetypes to describe Nazism in fiction, she praises Grass's *Hundejahre* (1963) by saying that his 'brilliant execution of the form suggests that it is through surrealistic satire or parable, rather than realistic fiction, that the madness of the Nazi years can be most effectively translated into art'.⁴⁶ And Strickhausen, discussing Jakov Lind's work, refers approvingly to his 'deal[ing] with the unspeakably gruesome events [of the *Nazizeit*] through the literary form of the grotesque, which highlights underlying patterns of human behaviour in a more poignant way than could be achieved by realistic description. Moreover, [...] these literary forms like the grotesque or comic novel also

⁴⁵ Uwe Naumann, *Zwischen Tränen und Gelächter: Satirische Faschismuskritik 1933 bis 1945* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1983), p.288; cf. p.17.

⁴⁶ Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.236, n.57.

allow the writer a certain emotional detachment'.⁴⁷ But although these three critics implicitly see the relevance of 'grotesque realism' to the prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, they focus only on a single text or a small selection of works, do not refer to Bakhtin, and do not explain in detail *why* the grotesque or surrealistic satire might be a useful means of reconstructing the Nazi past in literary form. Thus, in my opinion there is a connection between the carnivalesque and the Nazi past in post-1945 German prose fiction that has not been adequately explored to date and this critical gap justifies the use of Bakhtin's theory of Carnival to analyse that prose fiction.

Bakhtin's Carnival and its Ambiguous Relationship with Historical Totalitarian Régimes

A small amount of criticism on *RW* has understood that the relationship between the carnivalesque and authoritarianism is not as straightforward as it might immediately seem. I refer in particular to that criticism which has seen the applicability of the carnivalesque beyond the medieval world and has focused on the relevance of Bakhtin's theory to the Stalinist dictatorship under which he was writing. The significance of this criticism is that its conclusions are ultimately ambiguous. Early critics like Clark and Holquist ally Bakhtin with opponents of Stalinist ideology: 'In treating the specific ways in which Rabelais sought to find gaps in the walls between what was punishable and what was unpunishable in the 1530s, Bakhtin is looking for similar loopholes at those borders in the 1930s' (p.298). They then continue: 'When a work written in the Soviet Union in the late 1930s and early 1940s makes so much of freedom and the unofficial /

⁴⁷ Waltraud Strickhausen, 'Representations of the Holocaust in Jakov Lind's Fictional Writings', in: Andrea Hammel, Silke Hassler and Edward Timms (eds.), *Writing after Hitler: The Work of Jakov Lind* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp.57-72 (p.62).

official distinction, it cannot fail to be in part a comment on its times' (p.305). Finally, they confidently describe *RW* as 'Bakhtin's most comprehensive critique to date of Stalinist culture' (ibid.). Similarly, Gardiner (1992) points out that as Stalinist propaganda glorified the neo-classical view of the body, the Bakhtinian notion of the grotesque body clearly evolved as a counter to this (pp.180-1). And Vice (1997a) interprets Carnival as a point-by-point inversion of the Socialist Realist aesthetic itself (p.151; cf. Clark and Holquist, p.312). Significantly, Bakhtin himself encourages this kind of application of his model to real historical regimes and figures by discussing Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great in carnivalesque terms (pp.270-1).

Convincing as these arguments are, the same critics are often compelled, on closer inspection of *RW*, to concede *similarities* between the carnivalesque and Stalinism. Both Stalin and Bakhtin idealized the people (see Clark and Holquist, pp.310-1; Gardiner [1992], pp.180-1); Stalin used inversion to elevate humble workers to star status as 'Stakhanovites' (Clark and Holquist, p.309) and denounce political opponents (Gardiner [1992], pp.180-1); he also used huge parades and festivals to glorify his rule (ibid.). But most disturbingly, Mihailovic claims that Bakhtin recycles 'Soviet ideological clichés' (p.190) when he enthuses in *RW* about death as a preparation for the people's renewal and development and thus supports the idea that 'the self-sacrifice of the individual is indispensable to the continued existence of the masses' (p.189).⁴⁸ So while the relationship between Bakhtin's Carnival and totalitarian government is obvious, it is as deeply ambivalent as any other aspect of Carnival. Or as Mihailovic puts it: 'Bakhtin posits the possibility that carnival can easily degenerate into authoritarianism' (p.211).

The comments above relate to my own argument because, by illuminating the ambivalent relationship between Stalinism and Carnival, they indicate how in several

⁴⁸ Mihailovic even draws specific connections between Bakhtin's discussion of marketplace language of praise and blame with Stalinist show-trials (see pp.199-208).

respects Carnival occupied an equally ambivalent position within the similarly totalitarian Nazi culture.⁴⁹ I use the word 'ambivalent' because Nazism rejected many of the phenomena associated with Carnival while co-opting other aspects for their own purposes. This ambiguity might, for example, explain why critics cannot agree on whether the Nazis tolerated carnivalesque literature in the Third Reich. Thus, Gretschel confidently states that: 'Nach Hitlers Machtergreifung [...] hatte der Schelm im Deutschland des Dritten Reiches keine Heimstatt mehr. In der Zeitspanne der Gewaltherrschaft und während des Zweiten Weltkriegs erschienen keine Schelmenromane mehr' (pp.102-3); and the fact that the Germans banned and burnt the books of Jaroslav Hašek when they occupied Czechoslovakia seems to support this assertion.⁵⁰ But both Diederichs and Seifert contradict Gretschel by identifying four picaresque novels that were published during the *Nazizeit*.⁵¹ So Nazism's relationship to Carnival cannot be simply resolved with reference to carnivalesque literature published in the Third Reich.

The evidence of Nazism's engagement with the Carnival rituals themselves is somewhat clearer, even though the critics once again make contradictory claims. Thus, on the one hand John Ardagh, without offering any evidence for his assertion, claims that:

The entire razzle-dazzle of *Karneval / Fastnacht / Fasching* is a ritual today sedulously and lovingly kept up by this anxious nation seeking its identity and concerned to restore its broken links with past tradition [...] One advantage of it, surely, is that in its very mindlessness and silliness it has not been tainted by politics, nationalism or ideology. So it has survived intact the national nightmare.

⁴⁹ In this context, it is telling that, according to Wall, where German literary critics have discussed Bakhtin, they have refused to take him out of his Russian time, place and context (see pp.123 and 125). In my opinion, this betrays not only the sometimes hidebound attitude of German critics, but also a revealing inability to draw parallels with their own totalitarian past.

⁵⁰ See Cecil Parrott, *The Bad Bohemian: A Life of Jaroslav Hašek, Creator of the Good Soldier Švejk* (London: Bodley Head, 1978), p.17.

⁵¹ Kurt Kluge, *Der Herr Kortüm* (1933-37), Otto Rombach, *Adrian der Tulpendieb* (1936), Gerhard Pohl, *Der verrückte Ferdinand* (1937) and Georg Schwarz, *Pfeffer von Stetten* (1938).

After all, the Nazis never approved of it: first they banned it for a while, then censored it.⁵²

But on the other hand, Jeggle's short but excellent study of Carnival as a festival in the Third Reich contradicts Ardagh and, by reference to many historical sources, goes some way towards shedding light on Nazism's ambivalent relationship with and exploitation of Carnival. Jeggle describes how the optimism generated by Hitler's rise to power revived Carnival festivities that had faded during the Depression.⁵³ Carnival was then rapidly assimilated by Nazism between 1934 and 1939 when the *KdF* and the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* used it to prepare the masses for hard work⁵⁴ but ensured that criticism of the state or public disturbance were swiftly excised from the festivities (pp.230-2). Jeggle also hypothesises several ways in which Carnival resembled Nazism: its rejection of hierarchy helped promote the *Volksgemeinschaft*; it promoted a sense of regional identity; it involved a flight from the present into a mythologized history; and it engaged in a 'Reduktion auf einfache Formen' involving a 'Schwarz-Weiß-Bild von Normal/Fremd' (p.234). Indeed, Jeggle speculates that part of Nazism's popularity lay in precisely its Carnival-like simplification of the world (ibid.). But finally, and most importantly, its humour could be deployed against outsiders (see pp.232 and 234-6), and there is evidence that the Nazis tapped into Carnival's tradition of anti-Semitic persecution. For instance, Jeggle mentions a float during the 1939 Carnival in Villingen which his source describes as 'eine schöne Bescherung: Onkel Sam und Amerika bekommen von Mutter Germania einen Korb vollgestopft mit Juden. Das troianische

⁵² John Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans*, 3rd rev. edn. (London: Penguin, 1995), p.229.

⁵³ Utz Jeggle, 'Fasnacht im Dritten Reich', in: Hermann Bausinger, Utz Jeggle, Martin Scafe and Bernd Jürgen Warneken (eds.), *Narrenfreiheit: Beiträge zur Fastnachtsforschung* (Tübingen: Tübinger Verein für Volkskunde E.V. Schloss, 1980), pp.227-38 (p.229).

⁵⁴ According to Welch, the Nazis' need for control emerged in their attitude to fun, for the *KdF* 'prescribed in detail the correct methods, time, and content of leisure for the purpose of enhancing the worker's productivity' (David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], p.57).

Pferd: Vor dem Capitol in Washington steht ein riesiges Pferd aus dessen Bauch unablässig Juden entsteigen und das Capitol erobern' (p.232). Similarly, an exhibition in Cologne in 1997 scrutinized the city's Nazi past and revealed how 'in the 1937 carnival parade, one horse-drawn float was filled with Germans made up as bearded caricatures of Jews. A hand-painted banner proclaimed them to be "the last to leave" the city at a time when Jews faced increasing persecution'.⁵⁵ And Klersch likewise concedes that the Cologne Carnival of 1935 involved several floats 'die der politischen Propaganda und der Judenhetze dienten'.⁵⁶

The deployment of humour against 'Unerwünschte' and outsiders is particularly important, for as Jeggle says, the Nazis soon learnt not to use Carnival to celebrate important occasions in the Third Reich or to involve figures like Hitler in carnivalesque events for fear that he might become an object of laughter himself (pp.230-1 and esp. p.237). Or in other words, the Nazis assimilated Carnival only partially by using it to reinforce the Germans' sense of national identity and adopting its aggressive humour as a weapon against their enemies. They removed the ambivalence that is meant to degrade and renew *all* of Carnival's participants and they distilled out its violence for their own purposes. Indeed, there was even a historical incident which illustrates the latter point: German 'Werwolf' agents assassinated Franz Oppenhoff, the man appointed *Oberbürgermeister* of Aachen by the Americans, in a mission called, significantly, 'Operation Carnival'.⁵⁷ As Whiting puts it: 'The only kind of carnival going to be held in the last spring of the war was that involving violent death. Whoever had picked the

⁵⁵ Alan Cowell, 'Journal: Stripping Away Layers of Wistful Anti-Nazi Myth', *New York Times* (14 August 1997), n.p.

⁵⁶ Joseph Klersch, *Die Költnische Fastnacht von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Cologne: J.P. Bachem, 1961), p.184.

⁵⁷ See Charles Whiting, *Werewolf: The Story of the Nazi Resistance Movement 1944-1945*, revised edn. (1972; London: Pan Books, 2002), esp. pp.101-39. One of the agents, Hennemann, 'looked like the traditional village idiot' (p.109; see the physical description of the brutal, gormless Hennemann on pp.109-10). The 'Werwölfe' were specially-trained agents - including women and boys - who were to perpetrate assassinations and sabotage in areas under Allied occupation.

name had been a cynic' (p.111). Johan Huizinga, too, conveys the sense that Nazism tapped into the carnivalesque and in doing so emphasized Carnival's sinister, more violent side:

The habits [of play] I have in mind are, in themselves, as old as the world; the difference lies in the place they now occupy in our civilization and the brutality with which they manifest themselves. Of these habits, that of gregariousness is perhaps the strongest and most alarming. It results in puerilism of the lowest order: yells or other signs of greeting, the wearing of badges and sundry items of political haberdashery, walking in marching order or at a special pace, and the whole rigmarole of collective voodoo and mumbo-jumbo. Closely akin to this, if at a slightly deeper psychological level, is the insatiable thirst for trivial recreation and crude sensationalism, the delight in mass-meetings, mass-demonstrations, parades, etc. The club is a very ancient institution, but it is a disaster when whole nations turns into clubs, for these, besides promoting the precious qualities of friendship and loyalty, are also hotbeds of sectarianism, intolerance, suspicion, superciliousness, and quick to defend any illusion that flatters self-love or group-consciousness. We have seen great nations losing every shred of honour, all sense of humour, the very idea of decency and fair play.⁵⁸

Although Huizinga names no names, he is clearly thinking of the Nazis, for his seminal work on play, which forms a component of Carnival, was published in 1938, on the eve of World War II.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the Nazis' assimilation of Carnival was not total. Once the Nazis had assimilated the Carnival festival and its aggressive humour, its original, anti-authoritarian role fell to the Fools, the individual representatives of Carnival. Such Fool-figures are

⁵⁸ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Temple Smith, 1970), p.232.

⁵⁹ Huizinga's work on play is interesting since, although play is part of Carnival (cf. Bakhtin, e.g. p.84) and shares several features with it even in Huizinga's definition (e.g. play is a 'voluntary activity', has the 'quality of freedom' and is 'a stepping out of "real" life' [p.26]; 'while [play] is in progress, all is movement, change' [p.28]; play 'contributes to the well-being of the group' [p.28]; play involves a suspension of normal laws [p.31] and, often, dressing-up [p.32]), Huizinga distinguishes strictly between play and the carnivalesque. He associates play with creating order through its rule-system (pp.29-30) and dismisses any connection between laughter and folly and play (p.24). Huizinga's contradiction of Bakhtin's view may be due to the sense that play - which Huizinga views idealistically - has been contaminated or bastardised by Nazism, as my quotation indicates (cf. Huizinga's critique of the purely illusory play-element in modern politics and social life which he describes as 'puerilism': 'that blend of adolescence and barbarity which has been rampant all over the world for the last two or three decades' [p.232] or his disgust at 'the spectacle of a society rapidly goose-stepping into helotry' [p.233]). Huizinga sees play and the carnivalesque's negative, brutal sides manifest themselves in the Nazis and thus seeks to split play off from Carnival as a kind of ideal, pasteurised entity with none of the malignancy that is arguably inherent in the carnivalesque and certainly was in the Nazis' use of it.

associated with the grotesque, carnivalesque body with its emphasis on growths, swellings and openings such as noses, bellies, genitals and anuses (Bakhtin, pp.27 and 315-7), and this stands in diametric opposition to the smooth, clean, trim body of fascism. Moreover, Nazi ideology advocated the systematic annihilation of those retarded or mentally ill people who might have been protected as village idiots or ‘holy Fools’ in the Middle Ages.⁶⁰ So individual Fools would seem to be the natural opponents of Nazism. Accordingly, Klersch claims that after the Nazis had assimilated the Cologne Carnival, excised all criticism of the régime, and turned it into a highly commercialized event in 1935 (p.176), ‘Die Narren revoltierten und, was niemand sonst gelang, sie revoltierten mit Erfolg’ (p.177). They did this by forming a breakaway, independent committee and allegedly made almost no concessions to demands to align the event with Nazi aims (pp.178-85).⁶¹ Still other historical Fools stood up to Nazism: for instance, one of the post-war period’s most famous clowns, Marcel Marceau, worked for the French Resistance. As Webster explains:

He adopted an aryan [*sic*] name to disguise his Jewish origins as the son of a Strasbourg kosher butcher. While working as an escort for children being taken to Switzerland, he set up his own travelling theatrical troupe to complete his cover. The stagecraft he learned at the time earned him the accolade as the most popular French stage personality in the United States in an opinion poll taken forty years later.⁶²

⁶⁰ According to Ziolkowski:

the concept [of insanity] had entirely different associations for Renaissance man: madness was viewed as a spiritual affliction to be revered, not as a mental aberration to be understood and healed. It was only when the notion of madness was secularized, some two hundred years later, that the word entered into common usage as the designation for a state of mental illness (Theodor Ziolkowski, *Dimensions of the Modern Novel: German Texts and European Contexts* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969], p.344).

Cf. also Chapters 1 and 2 of Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967), pp.3-64. For a good, brief account of the Nazi euthanasia programme, see Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp.177-94.

⁶¹ The participants in the Cologne Carnival are supposed to have shown solidarity with the rebellious Fools on the committee when they saw the anti-Semitic floats of the 1935 Carnival: ‘Viel Freude hatte [die Partei] aber nicht [an der Propaganda]; denn - zur Ehre der Kölner sei es gesagt - die Zuschauer übergangen diese Wagen mit eisigem Schweigen’ (Klersch, p.184).

⁶² Paul Webster, *Pétain's Crime: The Full Story of French Collaboration in the Holocaust*, updated edn. (1990; London: Pan Books, 2001), pp.200-1.

Marceau was not the only historical Fool-figure to obstruct the Nazis: according to recently released documents, the Nazis intended to invade Northern Ireland, but the sheer stupidity of a village idiot ruined their plans by exposing the activities of a German secret agent.⁶³ So while the Nazis' assimilation of the Carnival event was largely successful, Carnival's individual participants and representatives, the Fools, were left to frustrate the Nazis' designs, even if they could not actively resist them.

In conclusion, I believe that the carnivalesque is a useful tool for making sense of literary depictions of the Third Reich, its oppressors and its opponents or victims, because of the ambivalent way in which it can be mobilized by oppressors and oppressed alike. This approach dovetails with those critics of Bakhtin who have seen how *RW* appears to allude to forces that both support and oppose Nazism's totalitarian cousin, Stalinism. In the next chapter, I shall use *RW* to give an overview of post-war prose fiction in order to examine whether fictional representations of Fools and Carnival during the Third Reich correspond to historical reality, explain why authors use Carnival to structure their texts and deploy Fools as characters, and draw conclusions about the significance of my findings for German attempts to confront the past.

⁶³ Anon., ' "Fool" Foiled IRA Invasion', *Metro* (14 November 2003), p.11. The article in full reads:
A village idiot wrecked the IRA's Nazi-backed plot to invade Northern Ireland, it emerged yesterday. He did not understand a confused German agent who was sent in 1940 to co-ordinate a planned landing of 50,000 troops. The agent, Hermann Goertz, did not even know if he had parachuted into Ulster or the republic. The first person he stumbled across was a fool, who, despite being bribed with a 100 dollar bill, was no help at all. Goertz's idiot was arrested in Dublin, along with the agent's radio and notes about landings in Sligo, Larne, Coleraine and Derry. Goertz was not captured for a further 18 months.

Chapter 2:
An Overview of the Role played by the Fool and the
Carnavalesque
in post-1945 German Prose Fiction on the Third Reich

In this chapter I shall show how authors deploy the carnivalesque again and again in post-1945 prose fiction in association with and in opposition to the Nazis, in accordance with Carnival's own inherent ambivalence and its ambivalent relationship with Nazism (see Chapter 1 above).

Bakhtin claims that the power of the carnivalesque declined from the end of the Middle Ages onwards, and critics who have analysed the Fool and Carnival in German prose fiction assert that this decline continued in the period after World War II. For instance, Sheppard describes how, prior to World War II, German literature shows Carnival's positive forces weakening considerably after the high modernist period,¹ and concludes that: 'After 1945, the picture becomes darker still inasmuch as post-war German writers have, on the whole, been concerned to show even more unequivocally how little room there is for either the genuine Fool or the oppositional license of Carnival'. He attributes this trend to the 'highly structured world of consumer capitalism' (p.309). Moreover, although Pinfold concedes that 'twentieth-century literature has more than its fair share of "outsider" figures, many of them with recognizable literary ancestors amongst the Wise Fools and hermits of the past',² her conclusions are as pessimistic as Sheppard's. She argues, for example, that these outsiders 'tend to suffer a hard fate; they are either forced to conform to or else destroyed

¹ Richard Sheppard, 'Upstairs-Downstairs', pp.307-9.

² Debbie Pinfold, *The Child's View of the Third Reich in German Literature: The Eye Among the Blind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.2-3.

by the societies of which they form a reluctant part', a tendency which is a 'consequence of our modern, pessimistic belief in the power of the mass over the individual' (p.3). Although the texts which I shall discuss in Chapter 2 largely accord with Sheppard's and Pinfold's pessimistic conclusions, I shall argue in the later chapters of this thesis that there are some significant exceptions in which some of the carnivalesque's subversive power can work successfully for change.

Introduction: Two Major Contextual Factors

There are two major factors that must be examined before I consider how the carnivalesque is deployed in post-1945 prose fiction. First, Jeggel shows that the historical Nazis assimilated Carnival for their own purposes: accordingly, I shall show that the prose fiction of the post-1945 period largely dovetails with Jeggel's research and that - with a few exceptions - the dominant forces, of which Nazism is the most extreme, assimilate the larger, organized Carnival event in order to reinforce their power over rather than liberate the oppressed. This trend explains the extent to which the carnivalesque's positive potential in prose fiction of this era usually centres around individual Fool-figures rather than the event itself. Second, I shall briefly analyse Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* (1959),³ which is of pivotal importance to post-war German literature in general and the *topos* of the Fool in the Third Reich in particular.

³ Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel*, in: Grass, *Werkausgabe in zehn Bänden*, edited by Volker Neuhaus (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), vol. II.

Nazi Assimilation of Carnival

To begin with, the two naïve narrators of Irmgard Keun's *Nach Mitternacht* (1937) and Heinz Küpper's *Simplicius 45* (1963) make sense of large-scale Nazi activities by means of the *topos* of Carnival. Sanna, the naïve narrator of Keun's subtly humorous novel (which satirizes Nazi society and explores the trauma of exile), is present at a Nazi parade in Frankfurt at which Hitler himself appears: 'Und langsam fuhr ein Auto vorbei, darin stand der Führer wie der Prinz Karneval im Karnevalszug. Aber er war nicht so lustig und fröhlich wie der Prinz Karneval und warf auch keine Bonbons und Sträußchen, sondern hob nur eine leere Hand'.⁴ In Küpper's novel the equally naïve, unnamed child-narrator describes a lorry full of badly beaten Jews on *Reichskristallnacht*: 'das sah beinahe aus wie ein Wagen aus dem Karnevalszug. Dazu paßte aber nicht, daß sie nicht lachten, und dazu paßte auch nicht der Deutsche Gruß'. And when a member of the SA dances joyfully with the narrator, the narrator's reaction is to ask himself: 'Also doch Karneval?'.⁵ In the eyes of these childish narrators, Nazism has occupied the place in German culture that Carnival once did; moreover, from the narrators' perspectives, the Nazis' carnivalesque behaviour is associated either with dominating the population or with targeting their Jewish victims.

⁴ Irmgard Keun, *Nach Mitternacht* (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1937), p.43.

⁵ Heinz Küpper, *Simplicius 45* (Cologne: Friedrich Middelhaue, 1963), p.10. The mystery town in *Simplicius 45* that the narrator never names is readily identifiable as Bendorf/Rhein, just north of Koblenz. Both towns have a Sankt-Medardus-Kirche (an unusual name for a German church since St. Medard is a French saint) and a Königsbergerstraße (see p.213), and both share a geographical proximity to Cologne, the Rhein and the Eifel. The striking number of Russian POW's that populate Küpper's text and the frequent mention of the Russians' 'Baracke' tie in with Bendorf's nickname during the War: 'das Russenlager' (see the Bendorf/Rhein historical website: <http://home.t-online.de/home/kutsche-bendorf/bdf-0036.htm>). Coincidentally, Bendorf is also the war-time setting for Heinrich Böll's short-story 'Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...' (1950) in Böll, *Werke: Romane und Erzählungen*, edited by Bernd Balzer, 4 vols. (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1987), I, pp.487-97 (see pp.491 and 492).

Then again, Grass's almost unknown short story 'Einer unserer Mitbürger: Prinz Karneval' (1966)⁶ suggests that even in the post-war period former Nazis were playing a leading role in Carnival. The story describes how a local radio-salesman, Boitz, is elected Prinz Karneval in the narrator's home-town. But the SPD mayor, Werth, refuses to receive Boitz at the end of the festivities, and the narrator comments:

Was überhaupt, haben wir uns damals gefragt, hat Politik mit dem Karneval zu tun? Zwar war der mittleren und älteren Generation in unserem Städtchen bekannt, daß Herr Boitz sich während der unglückseligen Zeit allgemeiner Verwirrung hatte überreden lassen, den hiesigen SA-Sturm zu führen (pp.326-7).

But Boitz had been *entnazifiziert*, and his predecessor, Raffrath, a former *Ortsgruppenleiter*, had never encountered difficulties with Werth. It then emerges that Werth snubbed Boitz because Boitz had embezzled money from the SA to fund an excursion to the 1936 Olympics and that the entire town *except* for Raffrath (who, being a Nazi, must have known) was prepared to deny that Boitz had murdered a communist in 1934. Or in other words, this story depicts two Nazis enjoying important roles in a post-war Carnival that might have been a timely opportunity for a confrontation between the political left and former Nazis and to expose a serious crime by a prosperous local businessman⁷ but is reduced to the occasion for a petty row over the more minor crime of embezzlement - a row, moreover, in which the problematic political issues are not even mentioned. Thus, not only does Carnival fail to bring down the former Nazi who plays a major role in the event, the participants collectively cover up a murder inspired by Nazi ideology. So twenty years on, Carnival is still tacitly serving Nazi purposes.

⁶ Günter Grass, 'Einer unserer Mitbürger: Prinz Karneval', in: Grass, *Werkausgabe*, I, pp.325-8. The story was first published along with several other stories under the pseudonym 'Artur Knoff' in *Akzente*, 13 (1966), H.5, pp.435-44.

⁷ According to Ardagh, local businessmen compete vigorously to be elected the leading personalities in Carnival since it is considered to be good for business (see Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans*, p.227).

But the two most straightforward examples of what I am talking about are Gerhard Ludwig's *Tausendjahrfeier* (1964)⁸ and Gerhard Fritsch's *Fasching* (1967).⁹ *Tausendjahrfeier* exemplifies the problems of organized Carnivals both during the *Nazizeit* and in the present, when it serves to reinforce lingering Nazi attitudes. First, the novel charts the sinister way in which Nazism assimilates Carnival. Shortly after the Nazis' seizure of power in 1933, the local gypsies entertain the people of Niflheim¹⁰ with a circus-style show which involves sticking needles into their bodies, sword-swallowing and, most significantly, 'eating' the watch of the policeman who tries to disrupt the performance (p.116). Similarly, the narrator describes an earlier New Year's Eve party at the church hall in 1932 which comprises comic plays, games, conversation and plenty to eat (pp.98-101) but from which the SA, who march on the same night and sing propagandistic songs, are firmly excluded (pp.101-2). The official and the Carnival cultures then enter into an uneasy symbiosis on the 'Tag der Erwachenden Nation' later in 1933 when the gypsy band is asked to lead an SA parade because the SA has failed to find a band of their own (p.125). But by 1939 the gypsies have disappeared (see pp.130 and 181) and the latest 'Umzug' is said to differ from the last in 'a) Auswahl und Qualität der Uniformen, b) modischem Pfiff' (pp.179-80) - it has become a militarized affair which involves only Nazis who wear smart uniforms (not carnivalesque attire) and carry a (military) *Schellenbaum*. The narrator then spells out the total assimilation of Carnival in Niflheim: 'die Folklore vermisse ich ganz entschieden [...] Die Weißen, Grünen und Blauen sind hier, sind dort im Zug mitunter geschlüpft, bei der NS-Volkswohlfahrt zum Beispiel, vielleicht bei der Arbeitsfront, beim Luftschutz' (p.181). But *Tausendjahrfeier* also shows how Carnival in the post-war period is still weak as an

⁸ Gerhard Ludwig, *Tausendjahrfeier* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968).

⁹ Gerhard Fritsch, *Fasching* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967).

¹⁰ Ludwig clearly intends us to take a critical view of his fictional town and its inhabitants because it shares its name with the Niflheim of Norse mythology which was the lowest region of the Underworld, a land of endless cold, darkness and mist.

organized, collective event. Martin Volkwein, the hero and narrator whose surname connotes the popular and the Dionysiac, is charged with organizing a parade several years after the war's end to celebrate the thousandth anniversary of Niflheim's foundation which is to involve a celebration of different stages of the town's history. But as a barber, Martin is expected to prettify that history ('das muß poliert, muß frisiert werden' [p.9]), for apart from the millennial anniversary's uncomfortable associations with a more recent 'tausendjähriges Reich', the authorities insist on omitting all history between 1914 and the post-war partition of Germany (pp.10 and 300). Indeed, when Martin protests, the Mayor (literally) rubbishes recent history by describing it as: 'Ein Fäkaliengrube wahrscheinlich. Jawohl, Fäkalien des Weltgeistes. Verdaut und hinüber. Aus' (p.309). Although Martin tries to resist by driving his float into the parade in order to stop the flow of this bowdlerized history, the parade soon re-orders itself around him (p.311) before doubling back on itself when, as Martin tells us in the final line, it 'stürzte [...] über mich herein' (p.312). So in *Tausendjahrfeier* the ruling powers have assimilated Carnival to such an extent that a genuine oppositional figure like Volkwein ends up trying in vain to subvert Carnival itself.

Then again, the implications of Fritsch's *Fasching* are even more sinister. The novel recounts Fritz Golub's return to his home-town in Austria after a period of twelve years. During World War II, Fritz had deserted from the Wehrmacht but survived in the town by disguising himself as a girl called 'Charlotte Weber'. Having performed this carnivalesque travesty, Fritz attracts the amorous attentions of the local military commander, Hauptmann Lubits, who had shot other deserters and convinced the population to defend the town to the death against the Russians. Fritz manipulates Lubits into a sexually compromising position, forces him at gun-point to surrender to the Russians, shoots a SS soldier who tries to blow up the bridge, and rescues the town from destruction. However, in the post-War period, the town pretends to subscribe to

democratic ideals while simultaneously nurturing barely concealed, unreconstructed Nazi-style attitudes. As Lubits says in a speech in which he remembers his fallen (Nazi) comrades: 'Demokratie [...] ist richtig, wenn sie den unverrückbaren Werten die Treue hält' (p.99). Or in other words, the townspeople - still led by the same influential Nazis - subscribe even after the collapse of Nazism to the authoritarian 'unverrückbaren Werten' of the Third Reich, according to which Fritz is a traitor.

This situation has two consequences. First, as in *Tausendjahrfeier*, the townspeople in *Fasching* attempt to re-write their ugly history. Second, in contrast to *Tausendjahrfeier*, in which the fact that the Carnival procession could not be obstructed implied that the whitewashing of the past was inevitable, the townspeople in *Fasching* use Carnival *deliberately* to destroy the transgressive protagonist of the novel. Thus, in one bizarre episode, Fritz is tortured in the *Heimatmuseum* until he agrees to sign a document which states that the townspeople protected him when he deserted, and that he played no role in the surrender to the Russians that prevented the town's destruction. Or in other words, so that the townspeople can pretend to have upheld anti-Nazi, democratic principles even during the War, Fritz is forced to deny that his part in the surrender endangered his life and deserved recognition. Then, because Fritz's post-War return coincides with Fasching, he participates in the festivities in his professional role as a photographer. Despite wearing no costume, Felix laughs along with the townspeople when he wins the prize for 'schönst[] Maske' (p.227), is addressed as 'Charlotte Weber', and has to dress as a woman to be 'married' to the priapic Herr Fasching (pp.229-30). But when the participants accuse him of falling in love with a Polish *Fremdarbeiterin* during the War and capitulating to the Russians, they exploit Carnival's licence to attack him physically: Fritz escapes but is driven mad. So having forced Fritz to vouch for their own democratic credentials, the unreconstructed Nazis use Carnival to destroy him because he is an uncomfortable reminder of their own guilt and hypocrisy. Or, as

Zeyringer says: 'der Fasching, der einer Kommission untersteht, die im Heimatmuseum tagt, bietet keine kurze Möglichkeit der Unordnung, sondern ist die Gewißheit der dauernden Ordnung'.¹¹ Both Ludwig's and Fritsch's novels, then, involve a community which is compromised by Nazism to a greater or lesser extent and which exploits Carnival to create a new historical tradition that ignores the criminal events of the past and, in *Fasching's* case, destroys someone who reminds them of that past.

Finally, while Gentile German-speaking intellectuals nurtured justifiable doubts about the redemptive potential of the organized Carnival event, there are at least two examples which suggest that Nazism's *victims* - such as the Jews who were often the target of the Nazis' propagandized Carnival - found the organized Carnival event so dysfunctional that it reminded them of the Holocaust itself. For instance, Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Bruchstücke* (1995) catalogues a string of violent acts perpetrated by barbaric Nazis in a concentration camp. Having been released from captivity after the War, the Jewish child-narrator visits a *Volksfest* and breaks down when he sees the shooting-gallery where one of the targets depicts a woman.¹² In other words, what ought to be an opportunity for the child to participate in the kind of fun denied to him for so long actually reminds him of the execution of innocent women during the Holocaust. Similarly, Hans Hellmut Kirst described in his autobiography how one of his post-War colleagues, the Jewish journalist Fritz Benscher, reacted in a violent and very physical way to a 'Faschingsveranstaltung' held in the *Haus der deutschen Kunst* in Munich:

Dabei schob sich jedoch, wie darauf getrimmt, eine Art anführungsentschlossene Machergestalt in den Vordergrund - ein Wesen, das sich wohl gleichfalls für

¹¹ Klaus Zeyringer, *Österreichische Literatur seit 1945: Überblicke, Einschnitte, Wegmarken* (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 2001), p.141. Zeyringer's excellent, concise reading of *Fasching* as a whole is on pp.135-41.

¹² Benjamin Wilkomirski, *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939-1948*, translated by Carol Brown Janeway (London: Picador, 1996), p.136. I have cited the English translation because the publishers withdrew the original German version after it emerged that Wilkomirski was neither Jewish nor a Holocaust-survivor as he had originally claimed. Consequently, the German edition (*Bruchstücke: aus einer Kindheit 1939-1948* [Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1995]) is very difficult to obtain.

journalistisch eingefärbt, getönt hielt; welches allerdings, völlig ungetrübt, ausgestattet war mit unentwegt vorhandenen Offiziersallüren. Und dieser Mensch, wohl nichts wie ein unentwegter Kerl, rief aus: "Mir nach - ich gehe voran! Folgt mir!"

Worauf Fritz Benscher erbleichte. Denn das waren wohl Töne, mitten in einem Faschingsfest, die ihn an seine KZ-Zeit erinnern mußten. Worauf er sich dann in irgendeine Ecke hinein flüchtete, um sich dort zu übergeben - er kotzte vor sich hin, umrauscht von heraufplatternder Tanzmusik.¹³

So according to at least one fictional and one non-fictional account of the experiences of Nazism's victims, even a harmless Carnival with no connection to Nazism can, nevertheless, recall the worst excesses of Nazi persecution.¹⁴

But that said, traces of the carnivalesque's ability to remind man of what has been repressed *can* emerge in these organized events - albeit only on the few occasions when Carnival has escaped Nazi control and only ever by sheer chance. For example, when the circus arrives in town during the war in Helga Schütz's *Vorgeschichten oder Schöne Gegend Probstein* (1970), one character explicitly claims that Nazism has *not* assimilated the circus: 'Gut, daß so was noch ist und nicht immer bloß "die Fahne hoch"', a comment which prompts a prominent Nazi to leave the performance.¹⁵ Schütz's novel involves a boy called Christoph, who plans to develop a circus-trick in which he will prove that eggs can support enormous weights but is later killed on the Eastern Front (pp.48 and 118). And the circus, too, involves a clown with red lips and pink clothes called 'Christophorus aus Griechenland mit seiner schwarzen Kunst' (p.138) who conjures up several eggs on which he balances. As the war draws to a close, the narrator's words suggest that Christophorus is a timely reminder of the dead Christoph

¹³ Hans Hellmut Kirst, *Das Schaf im Wolfspelz: Ein deutsches Leben. Biographische Versuche 1945 bis 1957* (Herford: Busse + Seewald, 1985), p.226.

¹⁴ Even in recent prose fiction, certain characters see the similarity between Carnival and Nazi festivals. In W.G. Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten* (1992), the painter Max Aurach says of his childhood: 'kaum etwas anderes [ist mir aus der Münchner Zeit nach 1933] erinnerlich [...] als die Prozessionen, Umzüge und Paraden, zu denen es immer einen Anlaß gegeben hat. Entweder es war Maifeiertag oder Fronleichnam, Fasching oder der zehnte Jahrestag des Putschs' (W.G. Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten* [Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1994], p.272).

¹⁵ Helga Schütz, *Vorgeschichten oder Schöne Gegend Probstein* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), see pp.132-3.

and an implicit appeal to the people of Probststein to remember the dead: 'Nicht vergessen. Nicht vergessen' (pp.139-40). Then again, in Ruth Rehmann's *Der Mann auf der Kanzel* (1979), it is at a *Kirmes* during the *Nazizeit* that a drunken *Hitlerjunge* makes the scandalous revelation that an SS man shot during an attack on some trade-unionists - who were subsequently framed for murder - was actually killed accidentally by his comrades. The narrator's father, the local clergyman, had cravenly conspired in the cover-up and is thus shown to have colluded with the Nazis.¹⁶ So here, Carnival's alcoholic excess leads to revelations about Nazi injustice. Moreover, in Wolfgang Staudte's film *Kirmes* (1960), one of the few films made at that time which seriously confronts the Nazi past, it is a post-war Carnival that exposes the guilt of the characters. The film involves a man setting up his carousel for the town fair in 1960 who discovers the skeleton of Robert Mertens, a deserter who had been forced to commit suicide in the final days of the war because the townspeople refused to shelter him from Nazi retribution. Although the guilty townspeople do not have the same control over Carnival as the ex-Nazis do in Grass's story, they avoid the opportunity to confront the past in the same way and guiltily refuse to discuss the events of 1945.

So despite Nazism's largely successful attempts to assimilate it, the Carnival event, it is suggested, can still offer minor, chance opportunities to confront the past and expose ex-Nazis in dominant positions: but there is no evidence that the characters involved always make positive use of those opportunities. All the texts discussed above reveal their authors' mistrust of organized Carnival events which are supposed to be oppositional but turn out to serve Nazi interests. Moreover, those examples in which Carnival has led to accidental revelations about the Nazi past reveal their authors' lack of confidence about successfully confronting the past in two respects: first, the examples

¹⁶ Ruth Rehmann, *Der Mann auf der Kanzel: Fragen an einen Vater* (Munich: dtv, 1983), see pp.133-4.

imply that the authors felt that German society as a whole was unwilling to confront the past *collectively*; and second, although the instances cited reveal the authors' instinct that Carnival ought to be able to subvert authority and reveal the truth, the randomness of the revelations generated by Carnival suggest that the authors felt that a rational, conscious attempt to work through the past was still impossible.

The Importance of Die Blechtrommel

The second major element which shapes my argument is the importance of Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* (*BT*). Grass's novel is so complex that I cannot hope to do it justice here; nor can I take into account the vast amount of secondary literature surrounding it. Instead, I shall describe some of the reasons why the novel is, in my opinion, central to an understanding of the fictional Fool's relationship with the Third Reich.

First, part of *BT*'s importance consists in the way it initiated two post-war literary traditions. Grass's detailed, worm's-eye view of petit-bourgeois life in Danzig before and during the *Nazizeit* began a trend that continues to this day of depicting the *Alltag* of the Third Reich, a focus which can involve the attempt to understand *why* Nazism was able to find such wide support in a particular social class. *BT* is also central to my argument because it started a tradition of writing novels whose protagonists are Fools.¹⁷

Second, by using the ambivalent figure of Oskar,¹⁸ Grass points to some of the ways in which the carnivalesque has been deployed in prose fiction both before and after *BT*'s

¹⁷ Two writers on the *Schelmenroman* have pointed this out: van der Will notes the influence of *BT* on the post-war picaresque novels that he analyzes (van der Will, *Pikaro heute*, p.63) and Seifert states more explicitly, without reference to van der Will, that Grass '[schafft] dadurch den Neubeginn einer Traditionskette' (Walter, 'Die pikareske Tradition im deutschen Roman der Gegenwart', p.200).

¹⁸ It is symptomatic of Oskar's ambivalence that critics contradict each other when interpreting his character: to take a random example, Bance describes 'Oskar's weapons', such as his voice, *negatively*, as 'a reflection of the strident, destructive character of his age' (A.F. Bance, 'The Enigma of Oskar in Grass's *Blechtrommel*', *Seminar*, 3 [1967], pp.147-56 [p.148]), whereas Boa interprets his voice *positively* as 'the destructive power of intellectual critique' (Elizabeth Boa, 'Günter Grass and the German Gremlin', *German Life and Letters*, 23 [1969/70], pp.144-51 [p.148]).

publication. On one hand, Grass's depiction of Oskar can be understood as a condemnation of everything Oskar represents, with Grass using him as a way of rejecting what Nazism represented. *BT's* Fool-narrator is, for instance, insensitive (see his apparent indifference to the sight of the dead Jew Markus [pp.242-3]), brutal (see his attempted rape of Schwester Dorothea while posing as 'Satan' [pp.635-8]), a blasphemer in his continual role-playing as Jesus, evil by his own admission,¹⁹ irresponsible in his attempts to escape from society as a child and by remaining in the mental hospital, and guilty of participating in an atrocity.²⁰ Most importantly, Oskar refuses to confront that guilt and uses various tactics to that end: for instance, he admits to lying and contradicting himself throughout the novel; he also swamps the reader with detail with which he tries to distract attention from the most important events of the novel;²¹ and he blames his and Germany's problems on mythical figures such as the 'Schwarze Köchin' or Niobe²² while feeling a spurious sense of guilt for the deaths of Jan, Agnes, Alfred Matzerath and Schwester Dorothea as a way of concealing his genuine sense of guilt over the death of the nuns.

On the other hand, because Oskar is such an ambivalent character, it is possible to

¹⁹ In the chapter in which Oskar tempts passers-by to steal jewellery ('Das Schaufenster'), he admits: 'Wenn Sie mich fragen: War es das Böse, das Oskar befahl, die ohnehin starke Versuchung einer gutgeputzten Schaufensterscheibe durch einen handgroßen Einlaß zu steigern, muß ich antworten: Es war das Böse' (p.153). Even here, of course, Oskar does not abandon the ironic tone that partially undermines these words.

²⁰ The atrocity in question is the scene in which Lankes shoots the nuns on the beach in full view of Bebra's troupe (see pp.409-22). Significantly, the prose narration turns into theatrical dialogue in this scene so that Oskar can absent himself as narrator altogether.

²¹ The most obvious example of what I mean is the oft-quoted section in which Oskar compares 'Wehrmachtsberichte' on the radio to 'eine Art Geographieunterricht', reacts to the defeat at Stalingrad by saying '[ich] sorgte mich weniger um die sechste Armee, vielmehr um Maria, die zu jener Zeit eine leichte Grippe hatte', and describes how 'mit dem Afrikakorps [fand] auch Kurtchens Keuchhusten sein Ende' (p.390). Oskar, then, is apparently more interested in telling us about minor family illnesses than exploring in detail Germany's military catastrophes.

²² At the end of the war, long after he has worked for the Nazi propaganda troupe and given up hope of opposing Nazism, Oskar experiences a feverish, carnivalesque dream in which he rides on a 'Karussell' with some children who have drowned after their boat was sunk during the war: they spin round but despite their pleas, 'der himmlische Vater' refuses to let them get off. Oskar betrays a belief both in history's circularity (which itself implies individual impotence to break the pattern) and in the notion that historical forces are controlled by an irresistible but malevolent God: but significantly the dream also figures the carnivalesque as the province of authority and historical catastrophe (see pp.507-8).

interpret him in a more positive light. Indeed, some of the same negative qualities described above can be interpreted in a positive way: for instance, Oskar may be irresponsible and infantile, but Pinfold argues that there are positive qualities of the child, specifically the child's viewpoint, which remain positive even in *BT*: 'if the child's vision/self can be retained into adulthood, then the adult's integrity too can be preserved from influences like those of Nazism' (p.150). Then again, although Oskar's grotesque looks are in keeping with his ugly, Nazi-style characteristics and can thus be read as Grass's way of distancing himself from those characteristics, he risks becoming a *victim* of the Nazi euthanasia programme because his shape clashes with the fascist ideals of the body (Pinfold, p.148). Indeed, Boa interprets Oskar's ugliness positively as a reflection of 'the judgement of German society on the intellectual who, to the ordinary citizen, is indeed a grotesque figure who provokes both scorn and fear' (p.146). Similarly, although Oskar's glass-shattering abilities evoke the implications of broken glass suggested by the word *Kristallnacht*, he uses those same abilities to expose bourgeois morality when he tempts passers-by to steal jewellery in the 'Schaufenster' chapter. The plundering of shop-windows itself points forward to the plundering that would be perpetrated by the German people on *Kristallnacht*.

A second positive aspect of Oskar is his role as an *Eulenspiegel* figure, a Fool who holds up a mirror to those who deem themselves wise ('Eulen') in order to expose their follies.²³ Indeed, Oskar tells himself: 'du hast den Leuten vor den Schaufensterscheiben auch geholfen, sich selbst zu erkennen' (p.153). On this reading, Oskar's characteristics reflect the qualities of those around him and Kremer captures a sense of this when he refers to 'Die Doppelfunktion Oskars, der ja nicht nur Träger der Kritik ist, sondern wie

²³ Cf. Bance's description of Oskar as 'a reflection of the *Umbruch der Zeit*, the disruption of society, the breakdown of moral and intellectual values' (p.147).

so viele Hauptfiguren bei Grass gleichzeitig das Kritisierte mitverkörpert'.²⁴ Oskar's infantilism, amorality and naivety, then, could be said to reflect the childish lack of responsibility and political naivety of the German people who brought Hitler to power in the first place (Pinfold, p.148). Just as Oskar prefers to focus on trivia as a way of ignoring the larger, more serious events of the war, so Alfred Matzerath's involvement with Nazism is partly motivated by the banal need to absent himself from the scene of Jan and Agnes's adultery. Similarly, just as Oskar adopts various strategies to escape his guilt, Felix, one of Bebra's colleagues, turns on the gramophone to drown out the sound of the shooting of the nuns;²⁵ and Oskar's lying corresponds to the Germans' alleged denial of their guilty past. Precisely because his narration oscillates between the first- and third-person, the reader is persuaded to identify *up to a point* with Oskar's critical viewpoint while rejecting that viewpoint when he seems to represent Nazi-style behaviour.

Finally, Oskar is no mere victim or passive mirror of the German people but also *takes positive action* to expose those around him. His mobility, diminutive size and ostensible naivety allow him, for instance, to hide under the card-table, see Jan playing footsie with his mother, and thus betray their affair to the reader. Or again, more sinisterly, Oskar is able safely to witness the Nazis' destruction of Markus's toyshop on *Kristallnacht*. But the most important example of Oskar as a positively active figure is his disruption of the Nazi rally. This scene needs to be placed in context with some care since Oskar's action is motivated by the advice he has been given by the circus-clown Bebra. That advice sets up a framework within which not only Oskar's fate can be

²⁴ Manfred Kremer, 'Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel* und die pikarische Tradition', *German Quarterly* 46 (1973), pp.381-92 (p.388).

²⁵ 'FELIX: Wir sollten das Grammophon wieder anstellen. Das mildert manches!' (p.421).

understood, but also that of many fictional Fools in post-1945 prose fiction. During their first meeting Bebra tells Oskar: 'Unsereins darf nie zu den Zuschauern gehören. Unsereins muß auf die Bühne, in die Arena. Unsereins muß vorspielen und die Handlung bestimmen, sonst wird unsereins von jenen da behandelt. Und jene da spielen uns allzu gerne übel mit!' (p.132) and he then elaborates on this by saying: 'Kleine Leute wie wir finden selbst auf überfülltesten Tribünen noch ein Plätzchen. Und wenn nicht auf der Tribüne, dann unter der Tribüne, aber niemals vor der Tribüne' (p.133). By saying this, Bebra offers Fools like Oskar three alternatives: either he can take action to control events ('die Handlung bestimmen', 'auf der Tribüne'); or he can conceal himself and his carnivalesque side ('unter der Tribüne'); or he can be a passive spectator in the open ('vor der Tribüne'). But this third option is ruled out since, Bebra claims, the Nazis are fundamentally opposed to the Fool and what he represents, and threaten to destroy him ('von Tribünen herunter unseren Untergang predigen' [p.133]). However, it must be noted that Bebra fails to mention a fourth possibility that is contained *within* the choice to 'die Handlung bestimmen': the danger of being assimilated, a possibility which seems all the more likely given Nazism's assimilation of the Carnival event - both historically and in post-War prose fiction (see above).²⁶ The ambivalent Oskar exemplifies all four possibilities for the Fool during the novel: whilst he is always in danger of falling victim to the Nazi euthanasia programme (the third possibility), he takes action that disrupts Nazism, is assimilated by Nazism, and seeks to conceal himself altogether in various hideaways from society ('unter der Tribüne').

To my knowledge, no critic has pointed out the significant fact that the Nazis' apparent assimilation of the carnivalesque at first *confuses* Oskar when he attends a Nazi rally and sees *Gauschulungsleiter* Löbsack: '[ich] hielt längere Zeit den Tribünenredner Löbsack,

²⁶ Contrast Bance's reading of this scene (who counts just two possibilities): 'they must either join the Nazis or sit still and keep quiet' (p.150).

bucklig und begabt, wie er sich auf der Tribüne zeigte, für einen Abgesandten Bebras, der in brauner Verkleidung seine und im Grunde auch meine Sache auf der Tribüne verfocht' (p.136; my italics).²⁷ A grotesque hunchback 'auf der Tribüne' recalls Bebra's advice to his fellow-dwarf Oskar (who quotes Bebra explicitly on p.137). But when Oskar tries to hail Löbsack with the words 'Bebra ist unser Führer!', he is ignored and realizes: 'Ich täuschte mich schwer in dem Mann. Weder war er, wie ich gehofft hatte, ein Abgesandter Bebras, noch hatte er, trotz seines vielversprechenden Buckels, das geringste Verständnis für meine wahre Größe' (p.137). In his disappointment, Oskar implicitly recognizes that Nazism, despite superficial similarities with the likes of him and Bebra, is not, so to speak, authentically carnivalesque: 'Je länger ich mir die Tribüne, vor der Tribüne stehend, ansah, um so verdächtiger wurde mir jene Symmetrie, *die durch Löbsacks Buckel nur ungenügend gemildert wurde*' (p.138; my italics) so he disrupts the rally with his drumming. Minden describes this scene as:

[...] an archetypally carnivalesque performance, in that it converts an official congregation, shaped and informed by an ideology on the way to very comprehensive dominance, into a shared experience of music with no significance beyond the pleasure of the moment and the physical delight of the dance.²⁸

If I understand it correctly, Minden's statement suggests that Oskar's action converts the rally - which in my view is a kind of negative Carnival event complete with assimilated grotesques like the hunchback Löbsack - into a genuinely carnivalesque event. As Oskar claims after the rally that he was following Bebra's advice to take action (see p.145), his

²⁷ Bance comes close to seeing the affinity between Nazism and Carnival when he discusses *BT* but does not mention Löbsack: 'National Socialism appealed largely to a kind of play-instinct [...] The National Socialist philosophy was irrational; it could not be argued in logical terms; it was pure fantasy which could do battle with the reality and seriousness of everyday life' (pp.150-1).

²⁸ Michael Minden, 'A Post-Realist Aesthetic: Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel*', in: David Midgley (ed.), *The German Novel in the Twentieth Century: Beyond Realism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp.149-63 (p.158).

drumming at the rally exemplifies one possibility for the literary Fool, namely to take action and reclaim the 'Tribüne' for the Fools. According to Bakhtin, Carnival's degradation of authority always involves the rebirth of something in its place, but because Oskar denies that he is a resistance-fighter (see pp.145-6), his 'Protest' is not as 'archetypally carnivalesque' as Minden claims: 'Mein Werk war also ein zerstörerisches' (p.146). Or as Boa puts it: 'he chooses to add to the general chaos rather than commit himself to organized political opposition' (p.149). Just as Oskar cannot be adequately interpreted as a wholly positive or a wholly negative character, so his actions point to the positive potential of Carnival while simultaneously denying it.

It is entirely consistent with Oskar's ambivalence and his goal of performing 'auf der Tribüne' that he should subsequently accept Bebra's offer to join his Nazi propaganda troupe (see p.395)²⁹ - but this represents a tragic compromise since it leads Bebra and Oskar into complicity with the killing of the nuns and the death of Roswitha. Both Fools allow themselves to be assimilated by Nazism in return for their safety, but Bebra acknowledges the cost involved: 'Wir Zwerge und Narren sollten nicht auf einem Beton tanzen, der für Riesen gestampft und hart wurde! Wären wir nur unter den Tribünen geblieben, wo uns niemand vermutete' (p.424). Although in the post-war period Bebra remains in control of the 'Tribüne' in the sense that he employs Oskar to use his drum in order to make his audience regress to their childhood for profit (see pp.687-8), in contrast, Oskar himself refuses to make such an admission, takes refuge in several kinds of displacement activity and ultimately disappears by hiding from society in his 'Heil- und Pflegeanstalt' - which is homologous with the concealment implied by the words 'unter der Tribüne'.

²⁹ The fact that Oskar continued his disruptive drumming only until November 1938 (i.e. when *Kristallnacht* took place) (see p.145) implies that it was the escalation of Nazism's violence that led him to allow the Nazi machine to assimilate him.

Oskar, then, exemplifies many of the problems involved in taking carnivalesque action in order to subvert authority. While his disruption of the rally implies the tentative possibility of positive action, Grass ironizes that possibility by suggesting that Oskar, the self-confessed liar,³⁰ may have invented the event and by showing how easily the pseudo-carnavalesque Nazis could assimilate the genuinely carnivalesque powers of resistance. Moreover, *BT* shows by Roswitha's death how destructive compromise with Nazism can be for the individual Fool, and also how the Fool can end up denying his own powers by hiding away from society (as Oskar does in his mental asylum). Many of the novels which I will consider in this overview chapter involve the above four possibilities for the fictional Fool in literature dealing with the Third Reich.

'Spitting Out' Nazism

I shall begin by considering two major trends in the prose fiction that was published in the years immediately after the War. In my opinion, it is part of the ambivalence of the carnivalesque, especially when it occurs in prose fiction dealing with Nazism, that it can be interpreted at one moment *positively*, as a source of subversion that debases authority, and at another *negatively*, as repellent or revolting by virtue of its violent and disgusting by-products.

Comments by two pairs of theorists can further illuminate authors' use of this splitting of the carnivalesque into positive and negative components and deploying those features to distance themselves from the Nazis in different ways. Stallybrass and White describe in detail how the carnivalesque can be used as an instrument of rejection or marginalization. Although their theoretical model follows Bakhtin, they assume that the

³⁰ Cf. Oskar's description of his narration on *BT*'s first page: 'sobald ich [Bruno] etwas vorgelogen habe' (p.6).

grotesque is negative and argue that: ‘the classificatory body of a culture is always double, always structured in relation to its negation, its inverse’ (p.20) and that outsiders are constructed by the dominant in terms of the *grotesque body* as a way of defining themselves negatively against those outsiders (p.22). If I understand Stallybrass and White correctly, we might expect opponents of Nazism to describe the Nazis in terms of Bakhtin’s ‘grotesque realism’ in their prose fiction. Similarly, the Mitscherlichs also describe a process whereby the Nazis were spontaneously rejected after World War II and subjected to ridicule and demonization. If we can believe *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (1967), the psychological consequences for the German people as a result of their defeat in 1945, the discrediting of Nazism, and the revelation of their outrageous and irrational activities were extremely traumatic, and it was in this context that the prose fiction of the immediate post-War years was written. According to the Mitscherlichs, the collapse of Nazism and the exposure of Hitler and the Nazis led to ‘eine traumatische Entwertung des eigenen Ich-Ideals, mit dem man so weitgehend identisch geworden war’ (p.30). This, they argue, is because Hitler had set himself up as the Germans’ *Ich-Ideal* (Ego-ideal), a kind of role-model to which the people were to aspire (ibid. and p.34) but which, as part of their own ideal identity, actually represented part of the people’s own psyche. As the ‘Entwertung’ of their *Ich-Ideal* could have brought about *Melancholie* and with it ‘eine außerordentliche Herabsetzung [des] Ich-Gefühls’ (cited from Freud by the Mitscherlichs, p.37), one alleged tactic for avoiding this was the spontaneous rejection of Nazi ideals and inculcation of the Nazi leadership: ‘jedermann versuchte, dieses gescheiterte und gefährliche Ideal wieder “auszuspucken”, zu externalisieren. Jetzt hieß es: Die Nazis waren an allem schuld’ (p.77).³¹ To replace these lost ideals, the Germans allegedly identified with the Allied victors who replaced the authoritarian role of the

³¹ Given the nature of my argument, it is worth noting the Mitscherlichs’ suitably grotesque choice of metaphor: ‘to spit out’ Nazi ideals.

Nazis and thereby perpetuated old, authoritarian attitudes (pp.32 and 40) even though the Allies had been their war-time opponents ‘die bis zum äußersten *lächerlich* gemacht oder *verteufelt* worden waren’ (p.30; my italics). Or in other words, according to the Mitscherlichs, the dynamics of the German psyche were inverted as the aggression, contempt and ridicule once aimed at the Allies were turned on the Nazis and the idealization once reserved for Hitler was lavished on the Allies. So if the Mitscherlichs and Stallybrass and White are all correct, it would be entirely logical that at least some German post-war writers should invoke a particular, demonized version of the carnivalesque and its aesthetic of grotesque realism to deal with the now grossly discredited Nazis while they themselves tried to reconstruct their identity by distancing themselves radically from Nazism - ‘spitting out’ its ideals, as the Mitscherlichs put it. While the violence implicit in the verb ‘to spit out’ applies only to literature published in the immediate post-war years, all German texts dealing with the Third Reich represent a lengthy attempt to “digest” the Nazi past which so many Germans once supported but now saw for the outrage that it was.

In those works that deploy the carnivalesque, writers and artists approach the ‘spitting-out’ process described by the Mitscherlichs in one of two ways. Either they expose the Nazis, especially Hitler, to the humour that certain of their characteristics invited; or they depict Nazi characters in terms of the brutal, ‘verteufelt’ aspect of the carnivalesque which parallels the Nazis’ own sinister manipulation of Carnival.

Laughing at the Nazis: Pre-1945

One way, then, in which writers and artists ‘spat out’ Nazism was by tapping into what Bakhtin saw as a positive side of the carnivalesque - its debasing humour. The use of humour in this way fills the void left in Carnival proper when the régime excised humour

aimed at the Nazis themselves; moreover, it reinforces the natural opposition between carnivalesque laughter and the authority embodied by the Nazis. This natural opposition is obvious enough and explains why a historian like Stollmann emphasizes Nazism's opposition to Carnival and illustrates the hypothesis that 'Lachkultur' is a benchmark of societal freedom by referring to Nazism and the medieval Carnival as 'zwei einander fern, *sich scharf widersprechenden* Beispiele' (my italics).³² Accordingly, he declares that: 'Ich glaube nicht, daß ein Faschist lachen kann' (ibid.). Nevertheless, Nazism, and especially Hitler himself, 'the somewhat comical leader' of the Nazi Party,³³ offered targets for oppositional laughter. After all, it could be said that Hitler was a kind of evil trickster who deceived foreign governments again and again as he concealed his ultimate intentions for Europe,³⁴ a man who, in true Carnival style, rose from the bottom of society as an unemployed tramp to be the leader of a powerful empire, only to be dethroned at the end. Charlie Chaplin understood that Hitler could be humiliated by laughter and his film *The Great Dictator* (1940) is the most obvious example of an attempt to depict Hitler as a Fool. In the character of Hitler / Hynkel, Chaplin mocks Hitler's raving speeches and alleged proneness to tantrums. Moreover, Chaplin exposes the contradictions in Hitler's worship of the strong, blond Aryan since in many ways Hitler resembled his own stereotype of the Jews just as Hynkel looks like the *Doppelgänger* Jewish barber (also played by Chaplin).³⁵ But among German writers,

³² Rainer Stollmann, 'Lachen, Freiheit und Geschichte', *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik*, 20.2 (1988), pp.25-43 (p.26).

³³ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1959; London: Book Club Associates by arrangement with Secker and Warburg Ltd., 1973), p.4.

³⁴ See Low's famous cartoon 'Stepping Stones to Glory', p.35 (first published in the *Evening Standard* on 8 July 1936), in which Hitler goosesteps over and cheekily cocks a snook at the 'spineless "leaders" of democracy' because they failed to resist his reoccupation of the Rhineland.

³⁵ Cf. Louis de Bernières's depiction of that other great fascist leader, Mussolini, as a buffoon: see Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (London: Minerva Books, 1995), pp.8-16 and 221-9. It is also worth mentioning that although *The Great Dictator* was an anti-Nazi film, Naumann sees a deployment of carnivalesque tropes for the Nazis' own brutal ends in the film when the SA pelt Hannah with tomatoes because she protests at the looting of Jewish shops: 'Eine klassische Slapstick-Szene wird umfunktioniert zum Abbild faschistischen Terrors' (Uwe Naumann, *Zwischen Tränen und Gelächter*, pp.239-40). Thus, even a film that is deploying the carnivalesque against Nazism reveals how the carnivalesque can be redirected to serve the purposes of the very people it is meant to subvert.

Robert Lucas's *Die Briefe des Gefreiten Hirnschal*, originally broadcast from 1940 to 1945 as propaganda by the BBC³⁶ and in which Adolf Hirnschal describes his life at the front in letters home to his wife, is a central example of how carnivalesque humour was used to debase Hitler and Nazism in a similar way. On the one hand, Hirnschal resembles Hašek's Švejk in his naivety and propensity for telling lengthy anecdotes, and he also exposes the lies of Nazi propaganda by taking them enthusiastically at their face value. But on the other hand, the picture is more complex since Hirnschal actively criticizes the regime in some of his later letters. Most significantly, Hirnschal associates Nazism with Carnival itself by telling several anecdotes that allegorize Nazism as a circus, and it was the possibility of creating an embarrassing connection between certain aspects of Carnival and Nazism that, according to Jeggle (p.237), the Nazis tried to avoid. For example, Hirnschal describes how his Nazi friend Zwick once played Hitler's speeches to the animals he tended in a circus: when a parrot repeated Hitler's (by now obviously mendacious) assertion that the Sudetenland was his last territorial claim in Europe, Zwick was sent to a KZ for suggesting that Hitler was a liar (letter of 26 April 1941, pp.35-8). But where that letter exposes Hitler's mendacity accidentally, the circus-allegory in the letter of 13 March 1944 in which Hirnschal describes his view of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* (pp.150-2) is a clear example of his deliberate criticism of the regime: Strippe, the 'Obmann-Stellvertreter des Verbandes Nationalsozialistischer Jongleure, Schlangemenschen und Bauchredner' (pp.151-2), decides to act as a giant in a 'Wanderzirkus' by standing on the shoulders of Haidvogel. Despite the initial success of the giant-act, Strippe's weight is too much for Haidvogel, who eventually tips Strippe

³⁶ Robert Lucas, *Die Briefe des Gefreiten Hirnschal: BBC-Radio-Satiren 1940-1945*, ed. Uwe Naumann (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1994). Lucas was a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany whose real name was Robert Ehrenzweig. The *Briefe* were first published in prose form in 1946 in a print-run of 10,000 copies.

into a mound of lion-dung: clearly, Hirschal feels that Nazism (despite the initial success of its leonine virtues) will leave Germany in a similar mess.³⁷

Both these texts originate from before 1945, and it may be that laughter at a 'likeable Nazi' like Hirschal or the ridiculous Hynkel was possible only because both texts were conceived before the world discovered the truth about the *Endlösung* and its extermination camps: Naumann quotes Chaplin as saying that he would not have made *The Great Dictator* had he known of the camps in the East (p.8). Although these camps did not exist when Chaplin made his film, Hitler seemed much less funny when the full extent of his crimes became apparent.³⁸ So whereas Jeggel claims that the Nazis tried to assimilate Carnival for their own ends but did not involve themselves in it for fear of incurring its debasing laughter, Nazism's enemies created connections between Nazism and the ridiculous aspects of Carnival in order to expose the Nazis to that debasing laughter at a time when this was still permissible because the full extent of Nazism's crimes were unknown. Inevitably, Chaplin's film was banned by the Nazis before America entered the war, so very few of those who might have tapped into its carnivalesque potential could have seen it. Indeed, a German housewife who lived during the *Nazizeit* acknowledged to Walter Kempowski that, had the Germans had an opportunity to laugh at Nazism early on, they might well have avoided disaster altogether: 'Wenn die Chaplin-Filme eher in Deutschland gelaufen wären, meiner

³⁷ For other anecdotes in which Hirschal uses the circus or Carnival as an analogy for Nazism, see the letter of 17 October 1942 about the *Hungerkünstler* in a travelling circus (pp.98-100) and the letter of 21 July 1944 about Theodorich Zwanzig who builds a swastika-shaped hall of mirrors (pp.168-71). Even Hirschal was not immune to being assimilated: Naumann mentions that the Nazis tried to counter Hirschal in 1942 by creating their own anti-Hirschal, one 'Untergefreiter von Struwe' of the Afrika-Korps (see pp.148 and 345, n.160).

³⁸ The Belgian cartoonist Hergé was confronted with precisely this problem after the war: 'Tintin's junior companion strip "Quick and Flupke" treated its readers to a direct red-nosed assault on the German leader; he was the funny chap with a little moustache, a pathetic figure of fun. After the war, however, and the discovery of the concentration camps, Hergé removed all mention of Hitler from the reprints of Quick and Flupke. Adolf was no longer funny, just disgusting. Comedy had its bounds' (Harry Thompson, *Tintin: Hergé and his Creation* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991], p.86).

Meinung nach wär es unmöglich gewesen, daß Hitler an die Macht gekommen wär'.³⁹
Having missed this opportunity to laugh away the Nazis, the subsequent knowledge of the extermination camps in the East made such laughter extremely difficult.⁴⁰

Nazis as Grotesques, Fools and Clowns

The other, most common way in which writers in the immediate post-War period 'spat out' Nazism differs from the process described above. Some writers distanced themselves from Nazism by demonizing Nazis in grotesque terms as monstrous Fools or clowns.⁴¹ But the carnivalesque elements of these characters are limited to the violence with which the Fool-figure is sometimes associated; moreover, laughter is conspicuously absent since we are dealing here with *negative* versions of the carnivalesque that are meant to repel the reader and form a contrast with Bakhtin's *positive* view of Carnival.

³⁹ Walter Kempowski, *Haben Sie Hitler gesehen? Deutsche Antworten* (Munich: Goldmann, rev. ed. 1999), p.71. Hereafter referred to as Kempowski (1999a).

⁴⁰ Cf. Schlant who generalizes that in the context of the Holocaust, literary techniques such as irony, the macabre, 'the laughter of despair, and of gallows humor' was available only to authors who had been victims of Nazism. Authors from the perpetrator-culture avoided 'inappropriate' attitudes in favour of one of 'Betroffenheit' (Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust* [New York and London: Routledge, 1999], p.6).

⁴¹ This use of the Fool as an embodiment of primitive savagery and evil in order to demonize individual Nazis recalls the connection between Fools and the Devil. See, for instance, Erhart-Wandschneider who refers to 'die befürchtete Nähe des Narren zum Dämonismus und zur Teufelsbesessenheit' (p.103). Such a negative conception of the primitive, uncivilized nature of the Fool is less in keeping with Bakhtin's view of Carnival than it is with C.G. Jung's analysis of the Trickster-figure (see C.G. Jung, 'Zur Psychologie der Tricksterfigur', in: Jung, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Lilly Jung-Merkur and Elisabeth Rief, 20 vols. [Olten: Walter Verlag, 1976], IX, pp.271-90). In his essay, Jung describes the Trickster as 'die *kollektive Schattenfigur*, eine Summierung aller individuellen inferioren Charaktereigenschaften' (p.288) or a 'frühere[r] Bewußtseinszustand, nämlich die heidnische und barbarische Wildheit, Ausgelassenheit und Unverantwortlichkeit' (p.276). The Trickster archetype has an anamnestic function: '[Der Mythos] hält den früheren intellektuellen und moralischen Tiefstand dem höher entwickelten Individuum unter die Augen, damit man nicht vergesse, wie das Gestern aussah' (p.286). In accordance with my argument about authors' attitudes to Nazism in this section, one scorns the primitive past as embodied in this figure as a way of distancing oneself from that past: 'Erst als sein Bewußtsein ein höheres Niveau erreichte, konnte es den früheren Zustand als anderes von sich abtrennen und objektivieren, das heißt zum Gegenstand von Aussagen machen. [...] Dabei konnte es nicht ausbleiben, daß sich in den Rückblick ein gutes Stück Spott und Verachtung mischte und das auf alle Fälle nicht allzu erfreuliche Erinnerungsbild der Vergangenheit noch mehr trübte' (p.281).

The undifferentiated evil of such figures was meant to clarify the author's intellectual self-orientation, as were the Jewish characters in early post-war literature which, according to Schlant, were 'idealized, unrealistic stereotypes inspired by compensatory philo-semitism' (p.25). By that I mean that authors employed the imagery of 'grotesque realism' - a process explained in Stallybrass and White's book - to demonstrate both their rejection of Nazism and sympathy with its victims. Boa suggests that Grass employed the grotesque to reflect the fear and scorn felt by society towards the intellectual: but just as Oskar's ugliness was meant to be part of Grass's condemnation of much of what Oskar represented, so other authors use the grotesque to distance themselves from and reject Nazi ideals.

Before considering German prose fiction, it is striking that there is considerable background to this trend among critics, historians, early opponents of the Nazis, and commentators on the Third Reich who have themselves deployed the carnivalesque to describe the Nazis: in other words they, too, evoke the carnivalesque in order to define themselves against what they violently reject. Sometimes the carnivalesque emerges in these writers' choice of language. For example, Shirer's phraseology in his history of the Third Reich conveys again and again a sense of the folly of the Nazi leadership.⁴² Then again, research into Nazi documents published in 1993 uncovered such ludicrous examples of Nazi behaviour that the book advertised itself on its back cover as an opportunity to gain 'einen Einblick ins *Narrenhaus* der NS-Diktatur' (my italics).⁴³

When speaking of the Nazis, critics have not only evoked the notion of folly, but also

⁴² See, for example, Shirer's references to the 'folly' of backing Hitler (pp.144 and 145), 'the whole folly of the Third Reich' (p.369), Hitler's 'catastrophic follies' (p.411), 'the Fuehrer's folly' (p.909), and 'the ludicrous side of the rulers of the Third Reich' (p.785) who staged a 'comic-opera putsch' in 1923 (p.110) (cf. the reference to a 'comic-opera setting' [p.802, n.*]). Coincidentally, Webster describes the Vichy government in the same terms and refers to 'the comic-opera atmosphere of the little spa' and the 'air of ridicule [that] was to hang around the new French capital until the Vichy regime collapsed four year later' (Webster, *Pétain's Crime*, p.63).

⁴³ Beatrice and Helmut Heiber (eds.), *Die Rückseite des Hakenkreuzes: Absonderliches aus den Akten des Dritten Reichs* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993).

that of the grotesque: Shirer calls *Mein Kampf* (2 vols., 1925-7) 'a grotesque hodgepodge' (p.82) and describes the Nazi leadership as a 'grotesque assortment of misfits' (p.149). Furthermore, David Low's famous cartoons exploit the Nazi leadership's grotesque aspects again and again: on the occasion of Hess's flight to Scotland, for example, Low produced a cartoon called 'He must have been mad' in which a prison-cell labelled 'Nazi Lunatic Asylum' contains the entire Nazi entourage depicted as demented, slobbering grotesques.⁴⁴ Finally, Ian Schott's allegations about Hitler's private life sound distinctly Rabelaisian when he refers to:

[Hitler's] inability to have a normal sex life, and his reliance on a series of extreme perversions to obtain sexual gratification. It was a team of American psychologists, compiling a war-time, mental profile of the "Führer" [*sic*] who concluded that, as consequence of his early experiences, which may have included syphilis, he required young women to urinate and defecate upon him, a fact that was supported by several sadly unidentified partners and his niece Geli Raubal. Certainly, he had developed an obsession with disease, dirt and putrefaction, and the term "shithead" remained one of his favourite and most frequent epithets.⁴⁵

Hitler's grotesque sexual preference graphically recalls Bakhtinian imagery of degradation, which can involve inundation with urine and faeces.⁴⁶ However little evidence may exist to support Schott's claims, what is significant is that some scholars have thought it *plausible and defensible* to make such allegations about Hitler, and that such allegations recall the imagery of 'grotesque realism'. Finally, still other commentators have associated leading Nazis with clowns, Fools and other comic

⁴⁴ The bars of the cell are broken and a note attached: 'Had enough - slipped out. Hess.' See David Low, *Years of Wrath: A Cartoon History 1932-1945* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), p.162. The cartoon was first published in the *Evening Standard* on 15 May 1941. In this and several other cartoons, Goebbels is drawn as a ludicrous dwarf and one, 'Laugh! Damn you, laugh!', on p.306 (first published in the *Evening Standard* on 8 February 1945), shows Goebbels waving a scarecrow with the sign 'Silly old "Big 3" and their advice to the German people' at cowed German refugees. The sign refers to the Yalta conference and the Allies' demand that Germany surrender. The forced laughter expected by Goebbels in this cartoon betrays the sinister aspect of the unsmiling Nazi version of the carnivalesque.

⁴⁵ Ian Schott, *World Famous Dictators* (London: Magpie, 1992), p.85. Schott probably owes this information to Robert G.L. Waite's *The Psychopathic God Adolf Hitler* (1977; New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), pp.237-8.

⁴⁶ According to Bakhtin, bodily waste both degrades and revives since it originates in the lower bodily stratum which is also the area of birth and therefore creation (pp.147-52).

characters. For instance, Stollmann sees Nazism as a false liberation for the masses, and thus as a negative or superficial version of Carnival, and explicitly compares the leadership to Carnival-characters by referring to ‘der Anschein eines Karnevalsvereins (der Eintänzer Hitler, Hinkfuß Goebbels, der eitle, dicke Clown Göring, der “Reichstrunkenbold” Ley), dem das Lachen abhanden gekommen ist’ - but he buries this insight in a footnote (p.27, n.4).⁴⁷ One ‘outsider’ within the Third Reich connected the SA-chief Ernst Röhm with a famous comic actor by describing him as ‘an Oliver Hardy look-alike’.⁴⁸ Moreover, when the philosopher Hannah Arendt testified to the ‘banality’ of Adolf Eichmann’s evil, she went so far as to use a carnivalesque metaphor to describe his contradictory behaviour at his trial: ‘Despite all the efforts of the prosecution, everybody could see that his man was not a “monster”, but it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a clown’.⁴⁹ Finally, there are at least three early cartoons that associate Nazism with clowns. First, there was the anonymous and untitled cartoon published in 1927 in the satirical weekly *Simplicissimus* which involved two circus-scenes: the first depicted Hitler haranguing an applauding circus-crowd, while the second showed a clown performing various acrobatics and contortions to exactly the same audience.⁵⁰ Second, the cartoonist Paul Weber twice associated a sinister brand of the

⁴⁷ Cf. Waite, who shows an unmistakable fascination for the grotesque characteristics of influential Nazis. He refers to Hitler’s entourage as ‘either men of intelligence inferior to his own or men with physical or emotional deficiencies he could ridicule’ (p.44), describes the photographer Heinrich Hoffmann as ‘an alcoholic with a deformed back’, the one-armed publisher Max Amann as ‘dwarflike in stature’; Robert Ley as ‘a garrulous dullard and drunkard who had a speech defect’, and refers to the ‘bad limp’ of Hitler’s adjutant, Julius Schaub; the single eye of Victor Lutze (Röhm’s replacement as head of the SA); Julius Streicher’s perversion; Martin Bormann’s alcoholism, and Goebbels’ club-foot (p.45).

⁴⁸ Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany* (London: Fusion Press, 2001), p.121.

⁴⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York and London: Penguin, 1994), p.54. Cf. Shirer’s description of Italian Foreign Minister Ciano: ‘The Italian Foreign Minister had behaved like a clown during the Reichstag session, bobbing up and down like a jack-in-the-box to give the Fascist salute every time Hitler paused for breath’ (p.755, n.†).

⁵⁰ The cartoon is reproduced in Zbynek Zeman, *Heckling Hitler: Caricatures of the Third Reich* (London: Orbis, 1984), p.20. Zeman comments that: ‘*Simplicissimus* saw Hitler as the political equivalent of an accomplished circus acrobat’.

carnavalesque with Nazism. He drew 'Im Hofbräukeller' (1931/2), in which a skeletal figure dressed in a Fool's cap and bells stands on stage before an enthusiastic crowd and blows a bubble which contains an image of Hitler's face. As Zeitler observes, Weber did not caricature Hitler in this picture: rather, 'er hat ihn eher geschönt'.⁵¹ So, instead of humiliating Hitler with laughter, the cartoon uses a repellent version of the carnivalesque - a Death-figure dressed as a Fool - to marginalize and reject him. And finally, Weber also produced 'Die Glanznummer' (1934/5) which shows the same skeletal Fool standing on a ramp before a rapt audience, wearing a blindfold and threatening to light a bomb: the picture not only betrays Weber's fears at a time when Germany was re-arming, it also deploys the carnivalesque to reflect his horror at the sinister Nazis.⁵²

The above examples parallel one trend in German literature in the years shortly after the War, when German prose fiction reflected a similar attempt on the authors' part to draw a clear line between themselves and Nazism by tapping into the tradition of 'grotesque realism'. For instance, Jakov Lind's protagonist in *Landschaft in Beton* (1963),⁵³ the enormously tall and profoundly stupid Gauthier Bachmann, is variously

⁵¹ Rudolf Zeitler, 'A. Paul Webers Zeichnungen zu Ernst Niekischs Schrift *Hitler - ein deutsches Verhängnis* (1932)', in: Günther Nicolini, *A. Paul Weber - 50 Jahre danach: Politische Zeichnungen 1929-1936* (Hamburg: Christians, 1983), pp.29-44 (p.37). 'Im Hofbräukeller' is reproduced in Zeman, p.21.

⁵² 'Die Glanznummer' is reproduced in Zeman, p.33. It is worth mentioning that at least two writers have acknowledged and taken issue with the use of the carnivalesque to describe the Nazis. Thus, Arendt immediately qualifies her own description of Eichmann as a 'clown': 'And since this suspicion [that he was a clown] would have been fatal to the whole enterprise, and was also rather hard to sustain in view of the sufferings he and his like had caused to millions of people, his worst clowneries were hardly noticed and almost never reported'. Moreover, she also writes of 'the dilemma between the unspeakable horror of the deeds and the undeniable ludicrousness of the man who perpetrated them' (p.54). Arendt's reversal of her statement about Eichmann betrays the difficulty of understanding that imagery taken from 'grotesque realism' can be used legitimately to describe the Nazis in order to marginalize them, and significantly, she tries to split the two concepts apart by arguing that they are mutually exclusive. Similarly, Judith Ryan cannot accept the simultaneous appearance of Nazis and the carnivalesque and resolves the 'dilemma' by dismissing it altogether. Thus, as part of her discussion of Günter Grass's *Katz und Maus* (1961), she rejects any connection between Chaplin and Hitler: 'Evidently we have become so accustomed to Chaplin's version of Hitler [...] that it seems as if this depiction of Hitler were not so much parody as part and parcel of the real man. This is a dangerous perversion of thought' (Judith Ryan, *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983], p.100).

⁵³ Lind, Jakov, *Landschaft in Beton* (Neuwied/Rhein: Hermann Luchterhand, 1963).

described as ‘ein Depp’ (p.49) or ‘ein Narr’ (p.154; cf. pp.55, 140 and 234) and is a kind of anti-Švejk. Unlike Švejk, who tried to avoid rejoining his regiment in World War I, Bachmann wanders through the text searching for his regiment which is somewhere on the Eastern Front. Although there is some black humour in Lind’s novel, Bachmann is a psychotic brute: his enthusiasm for his cause and appetite for battle allow him to be manipulated into committing a variety of murders and he gains no insights into the folly and evil of his behaviour. Then again, Alfred Andersch, a founder-member of *Gruppe 47*, rarely employs carnivalesque motifs and is more interested in the ethical issue of personal responsibility in the face of evil. Consequently, it is all the more striking when he depicts the murderous *Gestapo* agent Kramer in *Die Rote* (1960) as a man with a white face (he is an albino) and fat, red lips (i.e. like a clown) who wears a metaphorical ‘Maske’ and has an excessive appetite.⁵⁴ And the unreconstructed Nazi war-criminal Judejahn of Wolfgang Koeppen’s *Der Tod in Rom* (1954) sees himself as ‘ein Clown seines Einst’ who is also afflicted with a nervous appetite.⁵⁵ Both men are war-criminals and entirely unreconstructed in their adherence to Nazi ideals: indeed, Judejahn is said to be not only a ‘Clown’ but the embodiment of Death himself.⁵⁶ Schlant’s analysis of Judejahn’s anti-Semitic and violent fantasies also applies to Kramer’s anti-Semitic attitudes: ‘in this isolation and outside a politically supportive environment his rantings show themselves for the madness and the evil they are’ (p.42). Or in the terms of my own argument, the Nazis’ ideals are shown to be as grotesque - in a negative sense - as the clownlike faces of Kramer and Judejahn.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Alfred Andersch, *Die Rote* (Olten and Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1960), see pp.191-2 and 199.

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Der Tod in Rom* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.41, and see pp.55 and 65.

⁵⁶ ‘Er kam aus dem Totenreich, Aasgeruch umwehte ihn, er selber war ein Tod, ein brutaler, ein gemeiner, ein plumper und einfallloser Tod’ (p.15).

⁵⁷ In Judejahn and Kramer’s case, these ideals are also *geographically* marginalized by Koeppen and Andersch since their novels are set in Rome and Venice respectively.

Whereas the above three authors' rejection of Nazism is implicit in the way they depict Nazi characters, there is one non-fictional text that supports the suggestion that some post-war authors used metaphors of 'grotesque realism' to distance themselves from Nazism. In his autobiographical *Doppelleben* (1950), for instance, Gottfried Benn attempts to defend his own activities during the *Nazizeit*,⁵⁸ and writing in 1944 he employs carnivalesque metaphors in a context in which he explicitly expresses disbelief that Germany could have supported such criminal madmen:

Wen beschäftigte sie nicht unaufhörlich, die eine Frage, wie es möglich gewesen sei und heute noch möglich war, daß Deutschland dieser sogenannten Regierung unentwegt folgte, diesem halben Dutzend Krakeeler, die seit nunmehr zehn Jahren dasselbe Geschwätz in denselben Sälen vor denselben gröhlenden Zuhörern periodisch abspulten. *Diesen sechs Hanswürsten*, die glaubten, daß sie allein es besser wüßten, als die Jahrhunderte vor ihnen und als die Vernunft der übrigen Welt [...] *Saalschlacht-Clowns*, Stuhlbeinheroen (my italics).⁵⁹

Benn uses similar terms to convey his contempt for those who continue to support Nazism despite the catastrophic failures of the latter stages of the war: 'Eine mystische Totalität von Narren, ein prälogisches Kollektiv von Erfahrungsschwachen - etwas sehr Germanisches zweifellos und nur in diesem Sinn zentral zu erklären' (p.127).

One example of those whom Benn would have described as 'Narren' is the protagonist and narrator of Küpper's *Simplicius 45* which was strongly influenced by Grass's *BT*. But Küpper's shorter and much less sophisticated text reflects only one possible reading of *BT* since its author has not grasped the positive aspects of Oskar's personality and so distills out only the negative image of the Fool from Grass's text. Nevertheless, *Simplicius 45* follows *BT* in that it simultaneously condemns Nazi attitudes by embodying them in the ostensibly naïve narrator / protagonist and has the narrator

⁵⁸ Benn had supported the Nazis when they came to power but distanced himself from them in 1934.

⁵⁹ Gottfried Benn, *Doppelleben*, in: Benn, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Gerhard Schuster, 7 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett, 1991), V, pp.83-176 (pp.126-7).

expose the evils of Nazi society; parallels *BT* in some of its details;⁶⁰ and is narrated in the first person which provokes the reader to see events through the eyes of a young Nazi in a manner that is almost entirely absent from texts published before *BT*.⁶¹ But unlike Oskar, with whom the reader has an ambivalent relationship not least because of *BT*'s narrative structure, we are clearly not supposed to identify at any point with Küpper's unequivocally pro-Nazi narrator. As in those cases where Oskar trivializes the horrors of the Third Reich and prevents the reader from identifying with his viewpoint, we are meant to be so repelled by Küpper's narrator's naïve enthusiasm for war and persecution that we reject him and his ideals completely. Moreover, whereas Oskar's paradoxical claims to have an adult mentality in a child's body and his self-consciously calculated naivety imply that his critical exposure of those around him is deliberate, Küpper's Fool is a child, his naivety is genuine, and his exposure of Nazi attitudes is entirely unintentional. This accidental exposure of Nazism may not detract from the text's ability to subvert Nazi beliefs, but it means that Küpper robs his Fool of the ability *actively* to choose to expose Nazism (as Oskar sometimes does). Thus, *Simplicius 45* amounts to a straightforward condemnation of Nazism (by rejecting everything the narrator stands for) whose author, like Benn, is clearly implying that only a Fool could believe in its ideals:

⁶⁰ For instance, the narrator's summary of the war's events in the form of a breathless list recalls Grass's style (p.165); there are two allusions to *BT* in the way the narrator watches 'eine komische Motte, die um die ungeschwärzte Glühlampe flatterte' (p.53) and succumbs to a feverish delirium at the end of the war before being cured by a girl called Maria (pp.155-6); and both Küpper's narrator and Oskar trivialize terrifying events (cf. Oskar's description of Markus's wrecked toyshop [*BT*, pp.242-3] with Küpper's description of a ransacked Jewish butcher's shop [pp.6-7], both of which events take place on *Kristallnacht*).

⁶¹ The occasional focalization of events by Judejahn in *Der Tod in Rom* is one prominent exception to this rule.

for Küpper, then, the Fool is a one-sidedly negative figure.⁶²

In other texts, such brutal, clownish Nazis take on more intangible and horrifying dimensions. In Franz Fühmann's East German text *Das Judenauto* (1962), Hitler's seizure of power is celebrated optimistically in Carnival style (as Jeggle claims it was in reality [Jeggle, p.229]): school and work are suspended, the pubs do not shut, and there is plenty of food, alcohol and sexual activity.⁶³ But later on, the protagonist, in line with his gradual conversion from Nazi to socialist ideals, has to face the *débâcle* at Stalingrad and suffers a nightmare in which he sees Carnival's nasty side: 'Dann kam ein Clown mit gepuderten Wangen; er lachte und schnitt Fratzen, und vor ihm lohte es rot' (p.125). Then again, in Wolfgang Borchert's dream-like short story 'Die lange lange Straße lang' (1947),⁶⁴ the protagonist, Fischer, sole survivor of a rocket-attack on the Eastern Front, wanders around a town and encounters the poverty caused by the war, suicides, and the indifference of the élite to the disasters that have taken place. The nightmarish quality of the story is most clear in Fischer's surreal encounter with the carnivalesque but sinister

⁶² It might be argued that Hirschal resembles the narrator of *Simplicius 45*, and certainly the notion that only a Fool would swallow Nazi propaganda is present in both texts. Nevertheless, there are important differences between Hirschal and Küpper's protagonist: first, unlike the narrator of *Simplicius 45*, Hirschal only ever mentions his belief in relatively harmless parts of Nazi propaganda, such as the erroneous notion that the war will be over within a year (see pp.50-1), so it is possible to laugh at his stupidity without feeling unease at the subject-matter. In *Simplicius 45*, the narrator's enthusiasm for war and violence exposes him, but is not funny. Second, Hirschal participates in combat and yet never kills anyone or even, unlike Küpper's child-narrator, fires a weapon in anger. Third, Hirschal is not an aggressive anti-Semite as many Nazis were: the anti-Semitic sentiment expressed in the letter of 13 March 1944, in which Hirschal accepts that the Jews are to blame for the war (pp.150-2), is arguably not on the same level as some of the worst statements of Nazi propaganda. In contrast, Küpper's narrator is viciously and unambiguously anti-Semitic. Fourth, Hirschal maintains his integrity because he ends up actively criticizing the regime in a way that Küpper's narrator, who even denies the Holocaust at the end of the novel, is incapable of emulating. All of which makes it possible at times either to identify with Hirschal's criticism or to laugh at his (implicitly harmless) stupidity. That said, Naumann relates how popular Hirschal was in Nazi Germany itself and sold widely after the war (pp.146-7 and 151-2) - which may suggest that Hirschal's harmlessness was counter-productive since it allowed Germans to laugh at the régime's less outrageous follies and ignore those crimes whose exposure might have had a greater power to undermine the Nazis.

⁶³ Franz Fühmann, *Das Judenauto: Vierzehn Tage aus zwei Jahrzehnten* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1968), pp.58-60.

⁶⁴ Wolfgang Borchert, 'Die lange lange Straße lang' (part of the collection *An diesem Dienstag* [1947]), in: Borchert, *Das Gesamtwerk* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1949), pp.297-320.

‘Leierkastenmann’ who controls various figures on his hurdy-gurdy, such as a boxer, a man with a sack of money, a general and a ‘Brillenmann’ who has a green powder that can kill 100 million people (pp.315-7). Although Fischer tears the ‘Brillenmann’ apart, the ‘Leierkastenmann’ simply replaces him; when Fischer tries to punch the ‘Leierkastenmann’, the hurdy-gurdy man ‘lacht so fürchterlich’ (p.318) and his neck grotesquely extends so far that his face is out of reach.⁶⁵

Although the Mitscherlichs describe the psychological processes by which, in their view, the Germans tried to reject Nazi ideals, they were less than sanguine that these processes could either heal the trauma of Nazism’s collapse or were psychologically healthy since they happened so quickly. Accordingly, although we cannot doubt that the above authors’ rejection of Nazism was genuine, the depiction of Nazis as grotesque Fools arguably constitutes a simplified, unsophisticated - and thus problematic - attempt to deal with the Nazi past. Because the grotesque behaviour and appearance of the Nazi figures described above prevent the reader from taking them seriously as characters whose actions have complex motivations, they are unlikely to persuade the reader to examine his or her own character in connection with the Nazi past. Küpper’s narrator in particular is a relatively harmless child whose responsibility for his beliefs can be excused by his genuine immaturity. Then again, Benn seems to imply that the contemptible Germans who supported Nazism are ‘Narren’ only because they continued to support the Party despite military catastrophe, which implies that support for a *successful* war might have been more acceptable. Moreover, by ascribing the alleged stupidity and authoritarian mentality of the Germans to some essential part of their

⁶⁵ Siegfried Lenz’s *Deutschstunde* (1968; Munich: dtv, 1992) is also relevant here. The artist Max Nansen, banned by the Nazis, produces a painting which expresses fear at the primeval violence of Nazism by mobilizing the same carnivalesque metaphors as the novels I have discussed: ‘Der Mann im roten Mantel zeigte einen Handstand, womöglich einen Tanz auf den Händen, mein Bruder Klaas sah ihm dabei zu, fürchtete sich und schien fliehen zu wollen’. As the policeman who is charged with preventing Nansen from working realizes, the painting has contemporary relevance and says: ‘Klaas, wie er dasteht und Angst hat - so kann er nur heute dastehen und Angst haben’ (p.166).

national identity, Benn tacitly excuses them for their actions which, he implies, were not motivated by free will. The implication that the Germans were at the mercy of mysterious forces that were inherent in their national make-up recalls the implications of Borchert's story in which Fischer, like Oskar Matzerath in his dream about the carousel, is powerless to prevent the disasters fomented by the 'Leierkastenmann'. In Oskar's and Fühmann's dreams and in Borchert's dream-like story, the Nazis (or the forces that control them) are elevated to supernatural, carnivalesque figures of evil against which there is no resistance. So although the carnivalesque is evoked in the texts discussed above to convey a visceral disgust at Nazism, the metaphors and imagery taken from Carnival turn out to be too simplistic or problematic to constitute a successful attempt to come to terms with the past. The reader has to wait for the mid-1960s for more practical attempts by authors to react to the Third Reich: and here, too, some authors deployed the carnivalesque.

Carnival as Resistance to Nazism

German prose fiction, especially after 1959, contains several examples of resistance to Nazism and Ryan suggests that this *topos* was a major literary theme during this period partly because some Germans were anxious about lingering Nazi attitudes in post-war society and the presence of former Nazis in positions of power (cf. Mitscherlich, p.21). Or in other words, some Germans wanted to 'resist' post-war Nazi *residua* in a way that did not happen during the *Nazizeit* and some of the prose fiction of this era reflects this trend. Thus, Ryan also points out the desire on the part of authors of this period to 'be true to the actual course of history while at the same time indicating paths that might have been taken and that could provide some kind of guidance *for the future*' (p.14; my italics). But because resistance to the historical Nazis was unsuccessful, the demands of

historical reality mean that this *fictional* resistance in German literature usually fails, especially in earlier texts - a failure which Ryan also interprets as a reflection of the Germans' alleged political apathy before the 1960s (p.15).

How does this relate to the carnivalesque? I have tried to show how Oskar Matzerath's actions, despite a lack of political commitment, point to the positive potential of the carnivalesque: the ability to resist and subvert authority, which Bakhtin called 'the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts' (*RW*, p.92). Given the influence of Grass's novel and the literary trend of resistance identified by Ryan, it was entirely logical that some of the resistance figures in post-war fiction should utilize the carnivalesque tradition. Although these figures tend to be much more committed than Oskar to opposing Nazism politically, because of the assimilation of the Carnival event (see above), they undertake their resistance as isolated *individuals* in contrast to the *collective* participation in the carnivalesque envisaged by Bakhtin. Consequently, they are much more vulnerable.

The sense in literature that German society needed to overcome political apathy and resist lingering Nazi attitudes became more pressing in the run-up to the upheavals of 1968 when the issues of protest and resistance became particularly pertinent as the younger generation demanded major changes in society. Spurred on by the relative success of protesters in Paris, German students had begun by demanding the reform of the archaic West German university system. But over time such demands grew to include protests against the Vietnam War, questioning of capitalist values, anger at an allegedly authoritarian state in all its forms and its police force's overreaction to student protests, and open questioning of the activities of the parental generation under National Socialism (which was given its initial impetus by the Auschwitz trials of 1964). Indeed, according to Schlant, the failure to confront the Nazi past was the dominant preoccupation of student protesters in Germany (p.81). As the violence and extremism

of the events of 1968 recall the by-products of the carnivalesque, it is unsurprising that in 1966 Willy Schumann could write of a 'Wiederkehr der Schelme' in German literature.⁶⁶ Moreover, Ernst Jünger remarked in his diary during a visit to Nice in 1966 on the relevance of the *Schelm* tradition to society's hippy 'drop-outs' of the 1960s and detected their resistance-potential, even if, in the less radical, pre-1968 years, he realized that that resistance manifested itself largely in inactivity:

Der Hitze können wir durch Indolenz begegnen; die Kälte zwingt uns zur Tätigkeit. Der Meinung sind auch die Langbeschopften, die in den Süden fahren, um dort zu gammeln [...] Sie stellen vielleicht, ohne es selbst zu ahnen, den Vortrupp des Widerstands gegen die technische Welt und ihre Wertungen, sind weder Revolutionäre noch Gegenrevolutionäre, sondern wirken durch Nichthandeln. Als Einwanderer sind sie wenig geschätzt oder sogar gefürchtet [...] Verbindet sich Mittellosigkeit mit konsequentem Nichtstun, dann stellen sich bald Motive für den Schelmenroman ein.⁶⁷

Finally, the socio-political atmosphere during the years leading up to and shortly after 1968 explains why several works about the positive potential of the carnivalesque were published around that time.⁶⁸

Many of the works that depict resistance to Nazism in the past also depict resistance to Nazi attitudes in the present and thus make the connection between past and present resistance explicit. There are two identifiable trends in the texts that involve carnivalesque resistance in this era. In the first trend, despite a few texts published in the mid-1960s in which Fools successfully resist Nazism, most of the Fools who resist

⁶⁶ Willy Schumann, 'Wiederkehr der Schelme', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 81 (1966), pp.469-74.

⁶⁷ Ernst Jünger, *Siebzig Verweht: Erster Teil* (1980), in: Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden*, no editor (Stuttgart: Klett, 1982), vol.IV (p.275). The quotation comes from a series of entries under 14/15 June 1966 which include a trip to Corsica, Nice and Munich.

⁶⁸ To my knowledge, these include the following nine works: Walter Kaiser, *Praisers of Folly* (first published in the USA in 1963; London: Victor Gollancz, 1964); Schumann's article (1966); van der Will's *Pikaro Heute* (1967); the English translation of Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* (1968); Enid Welsford's seminal book *The Fool* (first published in 1935 but eventually re-issued in 1968); Harvey Cox's *The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969); William Willeford's *The Fool and his Sceptre: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience* (1969); the English translation of Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1970); and Diederichs's *Strukturen des Schelmischen* (1971).

Nazism in its past or present forms fail to achieve change. And as part of the second trend, while individual acts of carnivalesque resistance remain a prominent *topos* throughout the 1960s, those same texts *question* that model of resistance in two ways. First, while authors begin to appreciate, post-*BT*, that the carnivalesque may be a valuable model for resisting or challenging authority, they simultaneously began to question the specifically *violent* subversion involved in Carnival. Second, even as they raise the possibility of resistance in the past and suggest its relevance to the present, some texts explore the possibility that *at least partial assimilation* may be the only effective method of offering resistance. Or in other words, the texts consider the possibility that change can be effected only by abandoning the extreme, polarized positions which marked the protests of the late 1960s and also characterize the binarism of high and low culture involved in Bakhtin's conception of the carnivalesque. This dual shift - the initial embracing of the carnivalesque and its subversive potential which gives way to increasingly clear ambivalence - may have stemmed from the tacit, dawning realization that while the extremities of the Nazis' behaviour in the past demanded equally extreme and violent resistance, such a reaction may not be relevant to a democratic, post-war Germany. Having described the forms that this resistance takes in post-1945 prose fiction, I shall illustrate this shift of emphasis with reference to two essays by Böll and Grass below.

The Early 1960s: the Failure of Fictional Resistance to Nazis in the Past

In earlier texts, one would expect any Fool-resisters to suffer the same fate as the man remembered by a hotelier in an interview with Walter Kempowski: 'Ein Karnevalist in

Düsseldorf wurde damals verhaftet. Es hieß: “Der kommt ins KZ””.⁶⁹ One example of the Nazis’ suppression of tentatively direct carnivalesque resistance is the case of the father, nicknamed ‘Beileibenicht’, of the eponymous protagonist of Paul Schallück’s *Engelbert Reineke* (published in the same year as *BT*). As Klapper explains:

[...] his studied eccentricity and ingenious defiance of Nazi bureaucracy *border on the comic* [my italics] - for example, he has obtained a spurious medical note certifying an inability to raise his arm to issue the Nazi salute, displays grotesquely enlarged photographs of pock-marked Nazi-figures on his wall and smuggles the works of forbidden authors onto the curriculum under the transparent pretext of holding them up as a model of the decadence Nazism rejects.⁷⁰

But Klapper then points out that Beileibenicht’s resistance is ‘problematic’ because ‘His numerous eccentricities are ultimately meaningless’ (p.105) with the result that he is arrested by the Gestapo and murdered in a KZ. Then again, Böll’s *Billard um halb zehn* (1959) raises the question of resistance independently of Grass (since his novel was published in the same year as *BT*) and direct and committed political resistance is also shown to be equally futile. During the war, for example, Ferdi Progulske, whom one of the characters, Johanna, remembers as a boy ‘der lachte, sooft ich ihn sah’,⁷¹ throws a bomb at the Nazi teacher Wackiera but only causes minor burns and is executed for his attempt. Johanna captures a sense of the naïve and futile motivation of the Fool-like Ferdi’s action by describing him as ‘ein Tor, der glaubte, er könne mit Knallbonbons gegen die an, die vom *Sakrament des Büffels* gegessen hatten’ (p.1008).

But whereas Schallück and Böll, whose novels were published in the same year as *BT*, may have sensed the same positive potential for resistance embodied by the carnivalesque that is indicated tentatively and in a heavily qualified form in *BT*, one text

⁶⁹ Walter Kempowski, *Haben Sie davon gewußt? Deutsche Antworten* (Munich: Goldmann, 1999), p.28. Hereafter referred to as Kempowski (1999b).

⁷⁰ John Klapper, ‘The Paradox of Simultaneity: “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” in Paul Schallück’s *Engelbert Reineke*’, in: Michael Butler and Robert Evans (eds.), *The Challenge of German Culture: Essays Presented to Wilfried van der Will* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp.99-109 (p.104).

⁷¹ Heinrich Böll, *Billard um halb zehn*, in: Böll, *Werke*, II, pp.886-1171 (p.1008).

which certainly picked up on Oskar's 'Protest' and turned it into something much more direct is Ludwig's *Tausendjahrfeier*. Oskar reappears in Ludwig's text in a highly simplified form as the cretin Lothar: he is described by the narrator as a 'Narr[]' (see the chapter-heading on p.21) who is secretly intelligent (p.22), a master of 'Mimik' (p.23), and as someone who loves hats, helmets and festivals of all kinds (pp.24-5). Like Oskar, who obtained his drums from a Jew, Lothar has a kind of drum, a 'Donnerblech' (p.104; my italics), that was given to him by a Jew called Katz (shades of *Katz und Maus*?). In one especially carnivalesque scene, Lothar twice takes a salute from a squad of *Hitlerjugend* and is twice 'uncrowned' (as Bakhtin might have put it) when his cap is knocked off (pp.139-40). At the end of the novel Ludwig provides a grimmer assessment than Grass of the likely fate of Fools who mock the Nazis when the ambitious Mayor, Achtert, has to explain Lothar's grave to some French tourists: 'Heiteres Gemüt, dieser Mann, aber nie nach anderer Leute Pfeife tanzend...Parteibonzen parodiert, sich mokiert...bei Aufmärschen zum Beispiel' (p.288). It then emerges that the Nazis took Lothar away for forced euthanasia, which Oskar himself only narrowly escaped in *BT*.⁷² But although Lothar's more direct attempts to oppose Nazism arguably reflect a sense that Ludwig approved of a more open opposition to Nazism than that offered by Oskar, Lothar's importance or political relevance is diminished because we lack evidence of any political intent and, in contrast to Oskar, any access to his thoughts, so we are less able to identify with him. Moreover, his mockery is as ineffectual and fatal as Ferdi's and Beileibenicht's. So these texts not only develop to a greater or lesser extent the direct resistance proposed in *BT*, they also suggest that while Bebra's advice to 'die Handlung

⁷² In another allusion to Grass's Oskar, Achtert says: 'Übel ist der Mann hier [Lothar] von den damaligen Machthabern mitgespielt worden' (p.288) which recalls Bebra's warning to Oskar: 'Und jene da [die Nazis] spielen uns all zu gerne übel mit!' (*BT*, p.132). In yet another reference to *BT*, Achtert reflects his concern to conceal Niflheim's guilty past when he says: 'Vergangenheit passé!' (p.261). This echoes the language of Lankes in *BT* when he tells Oberleutnant Herzog, who is revisiting his Atlantic bunker, 'Is doch längst passé, was damals noch aktuell war'. Oskar comments that: 'Passé ist ein Lieblingswort bei Lankes. Er pflegt die Welt in aktuell und passé einzuteilen' (p.672).

bestimmen' was admirable, it could sometimes involve standing 'vor der Tribüne' - i.e. clearly differentiating oneself from Nazism and thus exposing oneself to persecution or death.⁷³

Despite these pessimistic early texts, two texts from the mid-1960s involve a shift from muted to open optimism among intellectuals in the run-up to 1968 since both contain examples of *successful* carnivalesque resistance to Nazism during the Third Reich. First, there is Bonifaz, another *Schelm*-descendant of Oskar Matzerath whose outrageous adventures are described in Manfred Bieler's novel *Bonifaz oder Der Matrose in der Flasche* (1963).⁷⁴ Although Bonifaz claims neutrality (p.11) in a way that recalls Oskar's lack of political commitment or special prejudice against Nazism, he nevertheless hastens the Nazis' defeat by dismantling a tank-barricade in the winter of 1944 and selling the wood (pp.15-17), then tricking a group of *Hitlerjugend* by mislaying their *Panzerfäuste* and driving them in a tram straight to the Russian tanks (pp.39-40). Bonifaz's *Schelm*-like actions result in his entirely carnivalesque promotion to town-mayor. Then again, the East German author Johannes Bobrowski's story 'Der Tänzer Malige' (1965)⁷⁵ describes how the staunch Nazi Leutnant Anflug forces Polish Jews to undertake the Sisyphean task of rolling 'Kabeltrommel' up a hill: once the Jews have

⁷³ Even in a much later text, such as Ulla Berkéwicz's *Engel sind schwarz und weiß* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992) which repeats the idea that direct subversion is futile and that Fools are either destroyed or marginalized and powerless, there are at least three fools: the first is the anti-fascist Gabriel who is often described as laughing, wears a brightly-coloured 'karierte Fliege' (p.132) and who dances away 'als tanze er einen amerikanischen Tanz, einen verbotenen' (p.134) - but who is arrested for his resistance activities and kills himself in prison; the second is the barrel-organ man whose 'Lachen wollte nicht enden', who generously plies his visitors with food and drink, whose trade associates him with Carnival and the fairground, and who is implicitly connected with Gabriel by his long hair (see pp.112 and 134). But he is powerless because he lives in isolation in the Black Forest and although he warns the youthful protagonists of the text against supporting Hitler, his words are ignored because his quasi-mystical statements on destruction and renewal (p.113) are incomprehensible to his visitors. The third is a man described only as 'der Narr' (p.247) whom an SS-soldier, himself swinging a 'Narrenklatsche' (p.246), forces to dance by shooting at his feet before finally murdering him.

⁷⁴ Manfred Bieler, *Bonifaz oder Der Matrose in der Flasche* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1965).

⁷⁵ Johannes Bobrowski, 'Der Tänzer Malige', in: Bobrowski, *Gesammelte Werke in Sechs Bänden*, edited by Eberhard Haufe, 4 vols. to date (Berlin : Union Verlag, 1987), IV, pp.164-9. The story is supposed to be based on an incident involving Bobrowski himself when he punched a certain Sergeant Arnhut for maltreating Poles in 1939. See Leah Ireland-Kunze, 'Two Clowns: New Dimensions of the Picaresque', *Colloquia Germanica* 14 (1981), pp.342-51 (p.345).

done so, Anflug kicks the 'Kabeltrommel' back down the slope. But Malige, who had worked 'im Lunapark' and specialized in performing a 'Handstand einarmig auf einem grünen Flaschenhals', dances up the hill carrying the 'Kabeltrommel' for the Jewish Poles as if it were a performance, and Anflug is transferred for 'Unmögliches Verhalten' when he threatens to shoot him. Significantly, the narrator tells us at the end that Malige, and therefore the values he represents, may still be alive, which reinforces the notion of a rediscovery of the carnivalesque in the 1960s.⁷⁶

But while Ludwig may have reworked Oskar's uncommitted 'Protest' into Lothar's direct, explicit, but unsuccessful resistance, and while Bobrowski (writing in the GDR) and Bieler even maintained that the Fool could resist successfully, Grass himself remained sceptical about the carnivalesque as a form of resistance in a way that was significant for later developments in Germany. Mahlke, the protagonist of *Katz und Maus* (1961), Grass's next major work after *BT*, could have embodied some of the potential for resistance implied by the carnivalesque. He is endowed - just as a Fool might be - with a typically grotesque body with a protruding adam's apple, protruding ears and an enormous phallus;⁷⁷ his ambition is 'einmal Clown werden und die Leute zum Lachen bringen' (p.20); and the narrator compares his dress-sense to that of Charlie Chaplin (p.41). Furthermore, unlike those around him, Mahlke appears to maintain his moral values under Nazism, as the caricature made of him at school as 'der Erlöser Mahlke' (p.38) suggests. Given his grotesque, clownish appearance and his initial moral independence, one might expect Mahlke to be another Fool-resister: indeed, Mahlke's

⁷⁶ It might be argued that both Bieler and Bobrowski's fictional resistance was simply continuous with the GDR tradition of writing about anti-fascist resistance; Bobrowski lived and wrote in the GDR and Bieler published his novel in East and West Germany simultaneously. However, Bieler's Bonifaz claims neutrality and the GDR authorities would have hardly recognized his picaresque actions as part of the anti-fascist tradition; moreover, Bieler himself fell out with the GDR authorities for protesting against the suppression of the workers' uprising in Hungary in 1956 and moved to Prague in 1964, before moving again to West Germany in 1968 when Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, Bobrowski is well known for never allowing his work to be influenced by Socialist Realism.

⁷⁷ Günter Grass, *Katz und Maus*, in: Grass, *Werkausgabe*, III, pp.5-140 (pp.8 and 33-4). On the grotesque body, see *RW*, pp.27 and 315-7.

superficial traits may have led Ryan to argue, wrongly in my opinion, that he *was* a crypto-resister (see Ryan [1983], pp.95-111).⁷⁸ But Thomas's and Roberts's articles offer several more convincing explanations of Mahlke's behaviour in the text,⁷⁹ two of which are of importance to my argument: first, Mahlke gave in to Nazism because he wanted to compensate for his insecurity about his prominent Adam's apple; and second, he needed to out-do his father who had won a medal for sacrificing himself to save others' lives in a train-accident. But Mahlke is even less politically sophisticated or committed than Oskar, and his desire to emulate his father and gain recognition in order to compensate for his Adam's apple indicate a desire to *reject* his grotesque body and all its implications. Indeed, it gradually emerges that Mahlke wants to be a 'Clown' only in a superficial sense because of the possibilities for public performance and recognition such a role would bring him, and as in *BT* only the Nazis can offer the chance to perform before an audience. Thus Mahlke, like Oskar, tries to position himself 'auf der Tribüne' to escape persecution as a grotesque outsider, but in *Katz und Maus* the only way to do this is to earn the *Ritterkreuz* by killing on behalf of Nazism. By doing this, Mahlke betrays his moral values (signified by the loss of his 'Erlösermiene' [see p.116]) and perverts his father's saving of lives into its opposite. Ultimately, Mahlke's most subversive act is to slap the headmaster Klohse (p.122) for refusing to allow him to speak at the school - a faint echo of the carnivalesque beatings described in Rabelais - and even his earlier, trickster-like theft of a U-Boot captain's *Ritterkreuz* turns out to have been just another attempt to conceal his inadequacies.

⁷⁸ An earlier, slightly different version of Ryan's chapter on *Katz und Maus* was published as 'Resistance and Resignation: A Re-interpretation of Günter Grass' *Katz und Maus*', *Germanic Review*, 52 (1977), pp.148-165.

⁷⁹ See N.L. Thomas, 'An Analysis of Günter Grass' *Katz und Maus* with Particular Reference to the Religious Themes', *German Life and Letters*, 26 (1972/73), pp.227-38; and David Roberts, 'The Cult of the Hero: An Interpretation of *Katz und Maus*', *German Life and Letters*, 29 (1975/76), pp.307-22. Roberts does not mention Thomas's article despite both authors' similar concerns.

Mahlke's initial role as 'Erlöser' implies that he had the potential to redeem the criminality of his fellow citizens by adopting their guilt as his own, and, following Bakhtin, his carnivalesque appearance ought to have signified his powers of subversion and renewal. But although, like an indestructible clown, Christ redeemed mankind and was resurrected accordingly, Mahlke fails to realize the potential for rebirth and redemption that both Christ and the carnivalesque signify. Consequently, he never gets the chance to 'perform' his speech and disappears for ever by (possibly) committing suicide - an act of self-destruction that is analogous to Oskar's self-concealment and the logical conclusion of his desperate efforts to shed his grotesque role as an outsider. Through Mahlke, Grass not only indicates Nazism's power to attract and assimilate society's grotesque element (cf. the figure of Löbsack in *BT*), he also denies, even more explicitly than in *BT*, any inherent connection between the carnivalesque and successful political action. So at a time when other writers appear to have read a positive potential for resistance into the figure of Oskar as Bakhtin might have done, Grass had begun to consolidate his doubts about the carnivalesque.⁸⁰

The Mid-1960s Onwards: The Problems of Resistance to Post-War 'Nazis'

Many of the texts that dealt with resistance to Nazism made a connection with combating Nazi attitudes in *post-War* Germany by simultaneously investigating possibilities of

⁸⁰ Just as Mahlke looks like an avatar of Carnival but is not, Ireland-Kunze's reflects the ambivalences of the Carnival tradition *within* the texts under discussion by reading the story of Malige, which is superficially very positive, in a pessimistic way. Thus, according to Ireland-Kunze, given the wider historical context in which the story is situated, the fact that the Jews that Malige helps will inevitably end up in a ghetto by 1941 (p.349) is indicative of the sense that while the carnivalesque embodies positive forces of resistance, it is necessarily doomed to failure: so Malige's act is not, to Ireland-Kunze's mind, the success it appears to be. Instead, Malige becomes one of many positive post-war anti-heroes who 'rebels against a force so enormous that he cannot hope to change it' (p.343).

resistance in the *present*. Ireland-Kunze draws precisely this connection between past and present in her comparison of Bobrowski's 'Malige' and Böll's *Ansichten eines Clowns*: 'These isolated and apparently futile acts of individual heroism which have become increasingly prominent in recent literature reflect a need - *no less pressing now than in the Hitler era* - to assert the worth of the individual human being' (p.349; my italics). But as in the texts described above which are set in the *Nazizeit*, the lone, fictional Fool in the post-War period also fails to effect change. As we have seen, Martin Volkwein in *Tausendjahrfeier* tries to disrupt the Carnival that institutionalizes denial of the Nazi past in the post-war period but is overwhelmed by the parade itself and his actions parallel Lothar's during the Third Reich. But although both past and present resistance is unsuccessful, Lothar and Volkwein radicalize Oskar's uncommitted protest in *BT* and point to the possibility of direct action in the present.

Moreover, as with the examples described above of carnivalesque resistance to Nazism *in the past*, optimism about anti-Nazi, carnivalesque resistance *in the present* increases as the 1960s progressed - as does the violence employed to achieve that subversion. For example, Bieler's novel of 1963 ends when the *Schelm* Bonifaz⁸¹ attends a post-war gathering of unreconstructed Nazis who organize a 'Festzug' in which they demand the return of territories lost to the Russians and praise atomic and bacteriological weapons (pp.227-35). Bonifaz single-handedly confronts them by burning down the pavilion in which they are sitting, and the only man killed is Dierk (see pp.236-8), who had murdered children in the Balkans (see p.180). Then again, Günter Kunert's picaresque novel *Im Namen der Hüte* (1967) - yet another of *BT*'s offspring - describes a

⁸¹ Bonifaz's name recalls that of the English saint St. Boniface, and just as Boniface christianized the Germans, Bonifaz's actions are an attempt to civilize the lingering barbarism of the neo-Nazis he encounters.

series of adventures undertaken by the protagonist, Henry, who, whenever he puts on a hat, can read the thoughts of its previous wearer. Henry's father is Jewish, and despite surviving the war in hiding, he emerges from the rubble only to be murdered.⁸² A series of 'uncrownings', so to speak, then follows as Henry dons various hats in order to discover who had murdered his father. He traces the culprit, Belmer, to a sect of so-called 'Hoministen' - thinly-disguised and unreconstructed Nazis who foster a culture of moral amnesia: 'Vergessen, junger Mann, immer vergessen! Jeden Tag dreimal!' (p.247). Henry resolves to take action by infiltrating and disrupting the sect, and by the end of the novel has become a famous soothsayer whom the sect employs to predict prosperity at a public rally. Instead, however, he deliberately predicts economic disaster; the sect-leaders accuse each other of betrayal; and Henry triggers a large punch-up by hitting Belmer on the nose. As the Russian military police look on in bemusement ('Ein deutsches Volksfest? Kirchweih? [...] ein Jahrmarkt'), Henry escapes (see pp.253-63). So like Bieler's *Schelm*, Henry subverts lingering Nazi-style attitudes in the present by successfully disrupting a pro-Nazi rally and turning it into what looks like a Carnival.

But as events came to a head at the end of the 1960s, optimism about radical action disappears. Two of Böll's comparatively early texts anticipate some of the problems of this enthusiasm for the radical subversion embodied by Carnival. Hans Schnier, for instance, in Böll's *Ansichten eines Clowns* (1963), is a clown who mimics Oskar by exposing the hypocrisy of powerful Catholics and of his opportunistic, Nazi-turned-liberal mother. This he achieves not by means of *physical* action but by equally aggressive *verbal* criticism of his targets with the 'frank and free' (*RW*, p.10) speech of a jester. But as Sheppard points out, his resistance is toothless since he is 'reduced to making insulting phone-calls to marginal signifiers of the established order' (p.312),

⁸² Günter Kunert, *Im Namen der Hüte* (Munich: Hanser, 1967), pp.90-1.

something which recalls Borchert's protagonist Fischer and his futile lashing out at the 'Leierkastenmann'. Moreover, because Schnier is a cripple, he experiences none of the adventures of the typically dynamic *Schelm* (see Ireland-Kunze, p.342) and makes his phone-calls from the static safety of his own flat. Most importantly, as Ireland-Kunze points out, 'He is not free of the blemishes he notes in others', and notes his 'streak of selfishness' (p.343). But given Schnier's insensitivity, cruelty, chauvinism, authoritarianism and aggression, one could go further and compare him to the same former Nazis whom he attacks. Indeed, at the end of the novel, Schnier encourages this idea by painting his face in the mirror as a death's head, an action that symbolizes his self-destruction and the failure of his wise clowning because of his hypocrisy and narcissism, but also points to Schnier's Nazi-style behaviour, since the death's head was to be found on every SS cap. But in the earlier *Billard um halb zehn*, the character of Johanna shows even more starkly how those who protest against lingering Nazi attitudes in the *post-war* period tend to tip over into the same violence and behaviour that characterized the Nazis. Like Mahlke, Johanna superficially appears to be a genuine Fool since she is an insightful madwoman, a kind of wise Fool who ends up in a mental asylum like Oskar Matzerath even though, like him, she is not really mad (cf. Ruth's comment on p.1121).⁸³ The insight which qualified her as 'mad' is her belief that it is still war-time, i.e. that German attitudes have not changed at all but remain the same in the 1950s as they were during the Third Reich, an insight which motivates her decision to shoot a prominent politician. Again, an implicit connection is drawn between the laughing Ferdi who resisted the historical Nazis and to whom Johanna constantly refers in her flashbacks, and Johanna herself in the 1950s since they both take radical action.

⁸³ Cf. Bakhtin: 'the theme of madness is used in the grotesque [...] to escape the false truth of this world' (p.49). Johanna's Fool-role is suggested by her description of Kaiser Wilhelm II as 'ein kaiserlicher Narr' (p.970) at a function for army officers during World War I, although her husband simply plays down his wife's comment by ascribing it to pregnancy and her grief for her dead brothers and daughter.

But Johanna is imprisoned when the politician is barely injured so that her attack in the present was as futile as Ferdi's in the past. Moreover, there is a suggestion here that the overt behaviour of these carnivalesque figures in the post-war period has tipped over into unacceptable violence. After all, Johanna's choice to assassinate the politician with a gun may be to do with humbling authority, but that aside, the attack is not carnivalesque. To summarize then, while some fiction implies an enthusiastic response to the kind of resistance offered by Carnival, others, notably Böll and Grass, express a growing unease at the implications of Carnival. The radical subversion implied by Carnival involves a violence which was appropriate as a (usually futile) response to the violence of the historical Nazis but is inappropriate in post-war, democratic Germany. Furthermore, as Schnier's character implies, such ostensibly carnivalesque violence, even as a method of resistance, can have affinities with the object of protest, that is to say, with Nazism itself.

Grass's and Böll's Ambivalence Towards the Carnivalesque

Grass and Böll both delivered speeches during the 1960s which suggest that they had a complex understanding of the phenomena grouped under the umbrella-term 'the carnivalesque', and these speeches can help us identify more precisely why some aspects of the carnivalesque had become inappropriate. The speeches in question are Böll's *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (1964) and Grass's speech to the *Gruppe 47* 'Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen der schreibenden Hofnarren unter Berücksichtigung nicht vorhandener Höfe' (1966). Although Böll's four lectures cover a variety of topics, in his final speech he discusses issues with a carnivalesque resonance, and I want to dwell on two points in particular. First, within Böll's overall argument that Germans no longer feel at home in either their own language or country, Böll implicitly laments the lack of the (carnivalesque) motifs of communality and feasting: 'es wird so wenig gegessen in der

deutschen Literatur, wie wenig darin gewohnt wird', and in the same vein he claims that, despite the many restaurants in West Germany, 'Die Mahlzeiten in der Nachkriegsliteratur sind immer nur die Imbisse von Vorübergehenden, denen das seßhaft und langwierig zerimoniell eingenommene Mahl als etwas weit Entferntes, etwas Makabres, nur satirisch Darstellbares erscheint'.⁸⁴ To counter this trend, Böll advocates what he calls 'eine Ästhetik des Brotes [...] Zeichen der Brüderlichkeit nicht nur, auch des Friedens, sogar der Freiheit' (p.83). Böll here ascribes meanings to the act of eating that parallel some aspects of Bakhtin's theory, such as the notion of communality and freedom. But significantly, Böll feels that these values are missing in Germany; moreover, to judge from the communion-like meals eaten by Leni's circle of friends in *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971), Böll's enthusiasm for eating involves something much tamer than the excesses of Bakhtin's Carnival.

Second, Böll makes important comments about the German conception of humour and again parallels Bakhtin by defining humour's connection with the body: 'da das Wort *humores* Flüssigkeit, auch Säfte bedeutet und alle Körpersäfte, als Galle, Träne, Speichel, auch Urin meint, bindet es ans Stoffliche und gibt diesem gleichzeitig eine humane Qualität' (p.89).⁸⁵ But Böll also claims that the humour of the caricaturist, Wilhelm Busch, typified Germany and was unacceptable because it represented 'die Vernichtung des einzelnen, des Menschen, des Homo, des Humanen [...]. Es ist der Humor des Hämisschen, der Schadenfreude, der nicht das Erhabene lächerlich macht, sondern dem Menschen gar keine Erhabenheit zuspricht' (pp.88-9). For Böll, 'es gibt nur eine humane Möglichkeit des Humors: das von der Gesellschaft für Abfall Erklärte, für abfällig Gehaltene in seiner Erhabenheit zu bestimmen' (p.89). These words mean that Böll, like

⁸⁴ Heinrich Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, in: Böll, *Essayistische Schriften und Reden*, edited by Bernd Balzer, 3 vols. (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1979), pp.34-92 (pp.78 and 83).

⁸⁵ Contrast Sheppard's speculation on the connections between 'human', 'humus' (= 'soil') and 'humour' (pp.279-80).

Bakhtin, believes that the mechanism of laughter involves both the degradation of the individual and the simultaneous elevation of the weak or lowly. But significantly, while demanding the elevation of the lowly, Böll does not embrace (as Bakhtin might) the attendant violent degradation implied by laughter: rather, he expresses unease at the aggression that is often involved in humour. In short, Böll acknowledges the positive potential of some aspects of what Bakhtin would call 'the carnivalesque', in particular the communality of eating and humour's ability to elevate the humble. But he clearly envisages a tamer form of the feasting-excesses of Carnival; and his concern about the aggressive side of humour helps to account for his unease at the *verbal* violence of Hans Schnier and the *physical* violence of protest that emerged at the end of the decade.

In his speech, Grass also implicitly comments on the carnivalesque, but ironically, given that he fostered a tradition from the 1960s onwards that tapped into the radical literary tradition of Carnival, he redefines a much more subtle, compromised role for the Fool. He begins by describing how intellectuals lack any direct access to those in power: 'Denn fremd und selten genug stehen sie sich gegenüber: die übermüdeten Politiker und die unsicheren Schriftsteller mit ihren rasch formulierten Forderungen, die immer schon morgen erfüllt sein wollen'.⁸⁶ He wishes that there were such a thing as 'der schreibende Hofnarr' who could perform 'politischen Hofdienst' because historical Fools traditionally enjoyed the access to power (in a monarch's court) that contemporary writers lack. But these author-Fools allegedly no longer exist for four reasons. First, Grass claims that the appropriate social space does not exist: 'es gibt keine Höfe und also keine Berater und Narren' (p.153); second, despite their humble rejection of the title 'Dichter', writers also

⁸⁶ Günter Grass, 'Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen der schreibenden Hofnarren unter Berücksichtigung nicht vorhandener Höfe', in: Grass, *Werkausgabe*, IX, pp.153-8 (p.153). The speech was first delivered at Princeton University on 25 April 1966.

haughtily refuse to describe themselves as 'Narren' (p.154); this is related to the third reason, namely that writers are ashamed to entertain their readers - Grass speaks of 'Die Angst zu unterhalten, d.h. genossen zu werden: Eine in Deutschland erfundene und mittlerweile auch in anderen Ländern wuchernde Angst, Lukullisches von sich gegeben zu haben' (pp.154-5); fourth, and most importantly, Grass criticizes writers for demanding the immediate fulfilment of the utopias contained in their work and attacks those, like Peter Weiss, who describe themselves as 'engagierte Schriftsteller' (p.155)⁸⁷ and see their utopianism as evidence of this commitment. In Grass's view, such utopias are evidence of rigid ideological beliefs and as he points out, 'Diese kurzatmigen Utopien finden nicht statt, die Realität spricht anders' (p.157). So in order to compensate, Grass describes an alternative approach:

Und es gibt auch die Menge Schriftsteller, bekannte und unbekante, die weit entfernt von der Anmaßung "Gewissen der Nation" sein zu wollen, gelegentlich ihren Schreibtisch umwerfen - und demokratischen Kleinkram betreiben. Das aber heißt: Kompromisse anstreben. Seien wir uns dessen bewußt: Das Gedicht kennt keine Kompromisse; wir aber leben von Kompromissen. Wer diese Spannung tätig aushält, ist ein Narr und ändert die Welt (p.158).

What is the significance of this alternative? Grass begins his essay by saying that the kind of Fool who could effect immediate change is gone, but at the end he appears to contradict himself by saying that Fools can exist after all. But these Fools, who Grass views positively, effect change not by creating utopias that issue from sudden, revolutionary action, but by working *with* those in power, by trying to make small changes through *compromise*, and by participating in the slow democratic process. The modern, re-invented Fool *can* access power - but only through participation in

⁸⁷ In his *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, Böll anticipates some of Grass's comments, in particular that literature should not be élitist (see pp.40-1) and ought to be entertaining, although he understands the notion of 'engagement' differently to Grass in that he sees *all* literature as engaged: 'So wenig ich den Unterschied zwischen der wahren und der Unterhaltungsliteratur mir je habe zu Herzen oder gar ins Gewissen gehen lassen, habe ich den Unterschied zwischen engagierter und nicht engagierter Literatur je wahr-, schon gar nicht ernst genommen' (p.84).

democratic politics just like any other citizen. Or to express what Grass is saying in terms of my theoretical model: he rejects the kind of rapid revolutionary change that Bakhtin's model advocates; he detaches the Fool from the inability to compromise implied by such extreme revolutionary change; and most significantly, he implies that *partial assimilation* of the Fool by the ruling hegemony, far from diminishing his powers, is the only way in which the Fool can make a difference. This position clearly reveals Grass's awareness that the Nazi past and the democratic present require a different approach to political resistance. Whereas Oskar and Mahlke were implicitly criticized for collaborating with Nazism, Grass now sees that in a democratic Germany co-operation and compromise with opposing views is both acceptable and necessary. If this is the case, then it highlights why someone like the clown Schnier, to whom Ireland-Kunze attributes an 'inability to compromise' (p.342), should be viewed critically as a model of protest. In the context of the two trends in the literature discussed in this section (i.e. prose fiction which favoured Carnival's direct action, and that which redefined the carnivalesque for the modern, democratic context), Grass's insights of 1966 predictably did not go down well with certain other German writers who sympathized with advocates of revolutionary utopias like Weiss.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, those insights were confirmed by the student protests and the left-wing terrorism of the 1970s: carnivalesque-style, direct resistance not only brought violence and disorder, it effected little real

⁸⁸ For example, in a letter to Hans Werner Richter, Erich Fried describes the speech as 'scheußlich', 'selbstgefällig', and 'ermüdend'; criticizes Grass for attacking Weiss; refers to Grass's 'schlechten Eigenschaften'; and describes Grass himself as 'vielleicht der machthungrigste Mensch in der Gruppe', an arrogant man who believes he knows best how to promote social democracy. See Erich Fried, [Letter to Hans Werner Richter, 1 July 1966], in: Hans Werner Richter, *Briefe*, edited by Sabine Cofalla (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1997), pp.607-16 (pp.607-8). Grass's dismissal of Weiss obviously offended Fried's sensibilities, which is ironic since Grass, in spite of his enthusiasm for a less dynamic, compromised Fool-figure, might be said to have mocked Weiss in the aggressive manner of the traditional Carnival.

change and played directly into the hands of Germany's political right wing.⁸⁹

Student Protests and Terrorism: The Failure of Carnavalesque Resistance

The fictional neo-Nazi organizations in Bieler's and Kunert's novels had their counterpart in the student accusations of lingering Nazi attitudes in their parents' generation. Just as prose fiction mobilized the imagery of the carnivalesque in order to describe resistance against (neo-)Nazism, so the students imitated the Carnival in expressing their protest. But as Böll and Grass predicted, Carnival's worse sides emerged and proved inappropriate in democratic West Germany. According to Jillian Becker in her study of terrorism in Germany of the 1970s which grew out of the student movement, some of the student protests around that time were identifiably carnivalesque (although she does not use that term) and harmless enough. For instance, she cites (in English, unfortunately) the *Berliner Morgenpost's* description of the protesters as 'The Clowns of West Berlin' and relates how Fritz Teufel dressed as the Rector of Berlin University, had himself 'elected', then banned police from the campus and sacked all the professors. Moreover, she refers to protests against an official visit by American Vice-President Hubert Humphrey which involved 'pudding and smoke because such things were ridiculous, to provoke laughter, to tease, to humiliate, but not to harm'.⁹⁰

But as the conflicts between the younger generation and the authorities became more heated and the students' agenda more radical, their protest was no longer so harmless.

⁸⁹ Kunert's novel of 1967 also reflects a shift away from the violent subversion. The text describes Henry shooting Belmer, his father's assassin, before we learn that Belmer's murder was *just Henry's fantasy* (Kunert, p.204). In contrast to a character like Bieler's Bonifaz who murders Dierk and almost burns the other Nazis alive, Henry *rejects* murder and disrupts the gang of Nazis at their rally where there is certainly mild violence in the form of a slapstick punch-up, but no deaths. Thus, the resistance to the extreme right-wing undertaken by Kunert's Fool turns away from violence in accordance with Böll and Grass's reservations about the violent subversion involved in the carnivalesque.

⁹⁰ Jillian Becker, *Hitler's Children: The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Terrorist Gang*, 3rd edn. (1977; London: Pickwick Books, 1989), pp.15, 16 and 21.

Grass exemplified what he saw as the problems of the student protest movement in *örtlich betäubt* (1969),⁹¹ a novel which reflects the sobering attitude to radical resistance that Grass had anticipated in his Princeton speech of 1966 since, through his narrator Starusch, he clearly rejects violent, not to say sadistic, attempts to provoke social change. Scherbaum, one of Starusch's students, plans to burn his pet dog as a public protest against the Vietnam War⁹² and although Scherbaum is no Fool, he plans to make himself the scapegoat of this spectacle since he assumes that he will be beaten to death by the dog-loving Berliners. But it is symptomatic of Grass's sense that the carnivalesque has somehow turned against itself in a grotesque inversion of the 'Dialectics of Enlightenment' that the victim of this attack will be neither the authorities in Bonn (see p.140), nor the complacent middle-classes, but a dog, traditionally the Fool's best friend. In the end, Scherbaum gives up his futile plan and Starusch comes to the conclusion that progress can be made only through the sluggish but steady process of democratic politics. Not only is this substantially the conclusion of Grass's Princeton speech, it is also the message of his *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972).⁹³

Moreover, Chloe Paver points out that Starusch's dentist tells him that such a spectacle will *not* only not effect change, it will merely thrill those who witness it - and he cites Seneca: "Aber es ist doch Pause? - So soll man derweile den Leuten die Kehle durchschneiden, damit wenigstens etwas geschieht!" - Ein ähnlicher Pausenfüller ist das Feuer: Öffentliche Verbrennungen schrecken nicht ab, sondern befriedigen Lust'

⁹¹ Günter Grass, *örtlich betäubt*, in Grass, *Werkausgabe*, IV, pp.5-264.

⁹² One wonders if an analogous scene in Christian Geißler's much earlier novel, *Anfrage* (1960) (Berlin: Aufbau, 1961), influenced Grass's plot in *örtlich betäubt*. At one point in *Anfrage*, the angry young protagonist, Klaus Köhler, who obsessively confronts people with the Germans' guilty past, encourages the cynical communist Steinhoff to release a dog into the street wearing the Iron Cross. This action causes uproar among passers-by, but the effects are not lasting: 'Der Spaß war vorbei. Was erreicht werden sollte, war erreicht. Nichts' (p.156).

⁹³ Günter Grass, *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, in: Grass, *Werkausgabe*, IV, pp.265-567. See especially his speech 'Vom Stillstand im Fortschritt', pp.544-67.

(p.130).⁹⁴ Analogously, in Eva Demski's *Karneval* (1981), it is precisely the carnivalesque aspect of the student protests that lead older people to assume that the students are merely looking for more Carnival fun:

In einer Stadt [Mainz], die Umzüge exotischster Art gewöhnt war, hatten sie [the students] zunächst schwer, ernst genommen zu werden. Man hatte ihnen doch alles schon vorgemacht, dachten die Mittelalten. Das hatte seine Zeit in der Stadt. Wollten sie [the students] es jetzt am Ende das ganze Jahr haben? (p.122).

Additionally, the elderly narrator of *Karneval* wonders if she wanted Losie to participate in the student movement so that she could draw some kind of vicarious, heroic solace from her *protégée* in order to compensate for her own inaction under Nazism: 'Oder wollte ich eine Heldin, eine Weiße Rose für irgendeine Sache, egal welche?' (p.133),⁹⁵ and in this respect, she strongly resembles Irmgard Seifert in *örtlich betäubt* who betrayed a farmer when in the Nazi *Bund Deutscher Mädel* and now strongly supports Scherbaum's action. Demski and Grass are moving the debate on the carnivalesque a stage further: as so many critics of Bakhtin have pointed out, Carnival can turn into superficial fun designed to indulge the public's desires and fantasies and so work *against* political change.⁹⁶

Consequently, it is ironic and significant that Bernward Vesper's autobiographical picaresque novel *Die Reise* (1977)⁹⁷ - a text written by someone who *opposed* Grass's views - should encourage the reader to draw the same conclusions as Grass. While *Die Reise* advocates the complete opposite of *örtlich betäubt*, it also exemplifies what was

⁹⁴ See Chloe Paver, 'Lois Lane, Donald Duck and Joan Baez: Popular Culture and Protest Culture in Günter Grass's *örtlich betäubt*', *German Life and Letters*, 50 (1997), pp.53-64.

⁹⁵ Losie refuses to participate precisely because so many others do (p.123): her instinctive suspicion of such collective activity suggests that even the protests are like all those other assimilated Carnivals. Nevertheless, Losie's choice of action, three years later, is the equally futile attempt to shoot Elsbacher.

⁹⁶ Similarly, Schlant describes the confusion of motives in the students' protests against authority and their parents' generation: while the Nazi past was often cited as a justification for protest, the younger generation's actions were actually motivated by more abstract factors such as rage at perceived psychological injuries inflicted by their parents (see pp.80-7).

⁹⁷ Bernward Vesper, *Die Reise* (Jossa: MÄRZ, 1977). Vesper wrote *Die Reise* between 1969 and 1971 (i.e. at a very similar time to Grass), but the text was not published until 1977.

wrong with the extreme, violent, utopian approach to politics. Indeed, Vesper's text is closely connected with the logical extension of that revolutionary violence which most intellectuals had rejected after the disappointments of 1968, namely the extreme-left terrorism that marked the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. The *Schelm*-like Vesper,⁹⁸ described as a 'Simplizius' (p.31), still embraces the notion of destructive subversion of the ruling powers - here, of capitalism - and enthuses about 'die Schönheit der Zerstörung' (p.14; cf. pp.72, 122 and 295). As Vesper knew several members of the Baader-Meinhof group (see e.g. pp.158-9)⁹⁹ and openly acknowledges in the book that his frustration and aggression originated from the authoritarian upbringing he suffered under his father, the Nazi poet Will Vesper (see pp.55 and 222), he was typical of the so-called '68 generation, who saw the protests and terrorism as an opportunity to resist the 'Nazism' of the parental generation in the FRG: thus, in their estimation the 1960s became a 're-run' of the Nazi past.¹⁰⁰

But while Vesper wrote his book to free himself from his past and the constrictions of German society by means of his picaresque 'Reise' through Europe (pp.16-17), the book deconstructs itself by setting out all the reasons for the failure of the terrorist creed. For instance, Vesper often describes how drugs (hence the pun of the title ['Reise' = 'trip']) helped him to perceive the world differently as a vision of utopia: accordingly, he could return to reality with the desire to work towards that utopia (see pp.508-10; cf. pp.48 and 115); or, entirely carnivalesquely, drugs made him see the world as if it were 'auf dem

⁹⁸ For details of the picaresque aspects of *Die Reise*, see Frederick Alfred Lubich, 'Bernward Vespers *Die Reise* - Der Untergang des modernen Pikaro', in: Hoffmeister (ed.), *Der moderne deutsche Schelmenroman*, pp.219-37. See also Erhart-Wandschneider, who includes *Die Reise* in her bibliography. Coincidentally (but appropriately), one of the Baader-Meinhof gang was called Petra *Schelm*, who was shot by the police at a roadblock (Jillian Becker, pp.159 and 175), and Andreas Baader was a distant relation of the archetypal Dada clown Johannes Baader.

⁹⁹ Vesper was Gudrun Ensslin's lover and the father of her son (see Jillian Becker pp.28, 52-6 and 67).

¹⁰⁰ Elisabeth Domansky, 'Die gespaltene Erinnerung', in: Manuel Köppen (ed.), *Kunst und Literatur nach Auschwitz* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1993), pp.178-96 (pp.190-1). Cf. Jillian Becker, p.4.

Kopf stehend' (p.240); or again, Vesper argues that drugs make people reject authority in favour of creativity (p.260). But right at the start of the text Vesper admits that whatever he writes, he cannot shake off his past and its effects on him (pp.26 and 107), and it is clear that however much lip-service he pays to terrorist action, it is precisely the tortuous process of writing and his flights into narcotic stupor that prevent him from taking any concrete action.¹⁰¹ As, in Paver's view, Grass used *örtlich betäubt* to criticize, *inter alia*, the drug-culture of the 1960s as just another form of self-gratification that militates *against* political action and change (p.61), it is both ironic and yet fitting that, for a man who set such store by drugs, Vesper should find 'Grass' so poisonous! At two points Vesper explicitly criticizes Grass's anti-revolutionary stance (p.208) and he resents Grass's patronizing dismissal of Marxism in favour of slow progress via the SPD (p.500).¹⁰² But he fails to see that his own activities achieve much less than Grass's own 'trip' as described in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*. Moreover, Jillian Becker implies that the young German terrorists were as self-defeating as Grass's Scherbaum, since despite her politics Vesper's fellow-traveller Ulrike Meinhof was still closely involved with the wealthy, fashionable élite of Hamburg who saw her as their 'Revolutionskasperle' and thrilled at her daring actions (Becker, pp.118; cf. pp.3 and 153). So whereas Grass went on to help the SPD win the general election in 1969, Vesper's only act was to wreck a friend's flat and be confined to a lunatic asylum (Vesper, pp.570-1) where he committed suicide in a way that recalls the self-destructive impulses of Mahlke and Hans Schnier. *Die Reise* proves Grass right in seeing that radical subversion and revolution was inappropriate in the Germany of the 1960s and

¹⁰¹ Schlant specifically ascribes the demise of the student movement to, among other factors, 'the growth of the drug culture, which destroyed the sense of solidarity' (p.80).

¹⁰² Jillian Becker cites Grass's description of Ensslin - whom he knew - as an idealist who rejected all compromise (see pp.52-6).

1970s, while Vesper, with his contradictions and destructive tendencies, went - literally and metaphorically - to pot.

To sum up, the theme of resistance in prose fiction discussed in this section offers its own, threefold critique of Bakhtin's theory of Carnival. During the 1960s, intellectuals took up the promise of the positive forces, including that of resistance, embodied in the carnivalesque. But they encountered problems which, according to Ryan, derived in part from the need to refer to fictional models of resistance from the Nazi past. First, intellectuals realized that while the violence and extreme behaviour of the historical Nazis might demand violent resistance in return, such violence is both problematic and futile in a democratic, post-war society. Nevertheless, some of the younger generation embraced violence by making a direct connection between the historical Nazis and their parents' generation so that the tragedy of the events of the late 1960s and 1970s raises questions about 'learning' from the Nazi past and drawing problematic analogies between the *Nazizeit* and the present.

Second, Grass's view that the Fool should *deliberately* and self-consciously allow himself to be partially assimilated by compromising with his opponents calls into question the binarism that underpins Bakhtin's theory, which assumes that people can be categorized into the extreme positions of either high or low culture.¹⁰³ But Grass is not denying that 'the high/low opposition [...] is a fundamental basis to mechanisms of

¹⁰³ Cf. the same problematic binarism involved in Böll's simplistic and often criticised scheme of 'Büffel' (i.e. the Nazis) and 'Lämmer' (i.e. those who opposed them) in *Billard um halb zehn*, and the 'simplistic dualism' of the Baader-Meinhof gang who believed themselves to be absolutely morally good in their struggle against a vast conspiracy of evil (Jillian Becker, p.252).

ordering and sense-making in European cultures' (Stallybrass and White, p.3).¹⁰⁴ Rather, his Princeton speech states that it is a *compromise* between two opposing, possibly extreme or utopian views that can lead to positive change. This notion contradicts orthodox critical views of Bakhtin, for while the critics discussed in Chapter 1 questioned Bakhtin's binaristic model, they also attacked Carnival's proneness to assimilation, suggesting that they prefer Carnival and the Fool not to be assimilated and to remain part of a binarism that they believe is inadequate anyway! And when we reconsider some of the texts so far discussed, we see that the novels support Grass's belief in compromise and a non-violent approach to confronting the past: the distinctly un-carnavalesque Engelbert Reineke, for example, ultimately decides to continue working at the school at which his father, Beileibenicht, once taught; does not flee from the former Nazis on the staff who connived in his father's death; and along with other young teachers opposes those former Nazis, but not in the obvious, comical manner of his father. Or again, Johanna Fähmel's son and husband, Robert and Heinrich, in *Billard um halb zehn* confront the Nazi past not by violent action but by talking through their memories with other people. Thus, many of the texts discussed buy into the tradition of the carnivalesque through some of their characters, while putting a question-mark over that tradition by introducing other characters who take a compromised, more cautious, but no less committed approach to dealing with the past.

The third and final criticism of Bakhtin which emerges is that the same violence which most texts sensibly reject can itself become a source of entertainment. This idea

¹⁰⁴ Bieler illustrates the need for a dualist high/low opposition when the Russians carnivalesquely appoint Bonifaz mayor of Tesch: Bonifaz's first decree is: 'Das Oben und das Unten werden abgeschafft' (p.45), but when the town grinds to a halt, Bonifaz's assistant, Bogumil, explains: 'Der Mensch braucht eine Ordnung, und zur Ordnung gehört, solange die Leute es nicht besser verstehen, daß es Unten und Oben gibt' (p.52). Given his advice to Bonifaz, it is entirely appropriate that Bogumil's name should recall the tenth-century Bogomil faith, 'a dualist creed that had arisen in Eastern Europe', who are supposed to have influenced the Cathars, who were in turn dualist heretics based in the medieval Languedoc. See Stephen O'Shea, *The Perfect Heresy: The Revolutionary Life and Death of the Medieval Cathars* (2000; London: Profile Books, 2001), p.23.

resembles the 'letting-off-steam' effect that involves the reinforcement of authority's control over the people: the aggressive drives of the participants are indulged by events and no change takes place. For example, the fact that Ulrike Meinhof's wealthy friends could find the terrorists' violent anti-capitalism thrilling suggests that they were not concerned that it might actually undermine their own value-system, indicating that violence and its attendant thrills had become ends in themselves. The events of the late 1960s and early 1970s, then, illustrate that carnivalesque meanings are not as fixed as Bakhtin claims.

Verharmlosung: Laughing Off the Past - Entertainment - Hollow Forms

Probably because of the political disillusionment with the events of 1968, many German writers from the 1970s onwards turned 'inward' (i.e. away from wider social issues) or wrote fictional reconstructions of everyday life in the Third Reich which were often focalized or narrated by children or teenagers. Despite these general trends, the Fool and his subversive activities still remain in recent prose fiction from the 1970s onwards, but as these activities assume different forms from the manifestations of the carnivalesque discussed in the rest of this chapter, I would describe them in terms of a double *Verharmlosung* that was due to several factors. First, there was political disillusion over the failure to change society radically in the 1960s. Second, the specific violent form of political resistance offered by the carnivalesque tradition was inappropriate for political protest in democratic Germany. Accordingly, Grass, who set the tone so often for prose fiction on the Third Reich, had redefined the Fool in his Princeton speech in a way that is very unlike Bakhtin's more dynamic definition. Third, while the confrontations of the 1960s broke the taboos on the Nazi past, the very fact that the topic of the Third Reich had become less volatile might have exposed it to the danger of trivialization. And

finally, as Lipstadt points out, intellectual currents in the 1960s may have contributed to an increase in unorthodox reactions to Nazism: deconstructionist theories posited that texts had no fixed meaning so that the reader's interpretation, not authorial intention, determined meaning, such that 'It became more difficult to talk of the objective truth of a text, legal concept, or *even an event*' (my italics).¹⁰⁵ As a result, intellectuals might have felt able to react to Nazism in ways that did not involve the moral outrage or shock of earlier years. So within this context, what I call a double *Verharmlosung* takes place when the carnivalesque and the Third Reich coincide in German prose fiction, especially in recent decades. On the one hand, Carnival has been *verharmlost* by having its by-products and meanings redefined, rejected as inappropriate (*vide* Grass's 1966 speech), or dramatically weakened. On the other hand, the carnivalesque is employed for the *Verharmlosung* of the Nazi past. This phenomenon manifests itself in three major ways: first, some Germans - real and fictional - laugh at Nazism as a problematic strategy for 'overcoming' the past, despite their full awareness of Nazism's crimes which ought to make laughter difficult, not to say impossible; second, resistance is trivialized as mere entertainment; and finally, as the carnivalesque degenerates into harmless, hollow forms that lack the subversive or redemptive potential they allegedly once had, the Fool-protagonists become powerless children whose 'resistance' to Nazism becomes meaningless pranks and real Fools become marginal characters or, despite appearances, choose not to behave like Fools at all.

Although Grass himself played a small part in the *Verharmlosung* of the literary Fool, it is symptomatic of this *Verharmlosung* that another, pseudonymous author should have subverted Grass himself in Günter Ratté's *Der Grass* (1986).¹⁰⁶ *Der Grass* imitates

¹⁰⁵ Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (London: Penguin, 1994), p.18.

¹⁰⁶ Günter Ratté, *Der Grass* (Frankfurt/Main: Eichborn, 1986). The author's name and the book's title are, of course, a comic allusion to Günter Grass's *Die Rättin* (1986).

Grass but not in order to acknowledge a literary debt as some of the Fool-novels of the 1960s did; rather, the novel humorously sends him up by parodying his linguistic excesses and reliance on unreliable narrators¹⁰⁷ and exposing him in various ways as a vain, boring, megalomaniac, irredeemably pessimistic, intellectually arrogant show-off. Significantly, one of the characters, Rumpelstilzchen, alludes to Grass's Princeton speech as a way of criticizing Grass's pomposity: 'Aber jeder Hofnarr ist verloren, wenn er vergißt, wer er ist. Wenn er sich einbildet, er wäre plötzlich der König, weil der ihm aus einer Laune heraus die Krone aufsetzt und das Zepter in die Hand gibt' (p.45). However, I want to examine two points in particular that reinforce my argument about *Verharmlosung*. First, the characters in the book are far too interested in pop music, comics, videos and computers to read Grass's books which they say are dull and élitist (see e.g. pp. 36 and 93): indeed, one of the characters tells the fictional Grass explicitly that artists are expected to entertain the public (p.79). Second, whereas Grass (and his opponents, such as Vesper) ascribed a political meaning to the actions they took, the rat-narrator of *Der Grass* denies that anything he does is politically significant, accepts the impossibility of effecting political change ('Das Volk kann nichts ändern' [p.59]), and looks for ways of coping positively with this insight. Thus he and his friends spray-paint some traffic-lights, run over some parking meters and deflate a police-car's tyres: 'Brachte politisch überhaupt nichts. Bloß unheimlich viel Spaß, und der ist einer Ratte nunmal wichtiger' (p.35). The rat-narrator is not an ignorant victim of the system but pursues pleasure in full knowledge of his political impotence as a way of coping with and enjoying life: 'wir wissen, wie man mit Herrschaft umgeht. Sich so wenig wie möglich drum kümmern [...]. Den Spaß am Leben nicht verlieren. Mit Arbeit und Politik versaut

¹⁰⁷ For example, the novel debases Grass's linguistic style to a suitably lavatorial level by describing, in a series of alliterations, Tulla Pokriefke publicly urinating: 'Wärmliches Wasser wallte wogend über den Bürgersteig' (p.45); and the novel's narrator ironizes the events of the novel by constantly referring to 'der Dichter, den ich mir träumte' (see e.g. pp.63, 66, 67, 67, 70, 72 and 79).

man sich den ganzen Tag' (p.59). Whenever Grass annoys the rat-narrator, he is locked in a cage: so just as Grass tempered the dynamic, subversive spirit of the Fool in his Princeton speech, the author of *Der Grass*, by rejecting political change altogether in favour of entertainment and the pursuit of fun, has in turn 'tamed' - and implicitly *verharmlost* - the very man who made such a great contribution to the deployment of the carnivalesque in post-war German literature.

Laughing Off Nazism: Post-1945

Before the 1960s, laughter as depicted in German literature has lost its liberating force and serves those in power instead. Siegfried Lenz's story 'So war das mit dem Zirkus' (1955) implies the absence of a sense of humour among the Germans, for it involves the unsmiling inhabitants of Suleyken who take a travelling circus entirely seriously. For instance, the audience is angry at a knife-thrower for apparently attacking his assistant, and Uncle Stanislaw tries to claim a rabbit as his own property because a magician had pulled it from under his jacket.¹⁰⁸ One could dismiss this story as a joke at the expense of rustic yokels, but Heinrich Böll's short story 'Der Lacher' (1952) reinforces the sense that the Nazi era had affected the ability of post-war Germans to engage in liberating laughter. It describes a man whose profession is to laugh, but only to order and for payment: in private, he is 'ein todernster Mensch'.¹⁰⁹ This reduction of laughter to a commercial product recalls Horkheimer and Adorno's comments about the USA in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944) in which the authors pessimistically claimed that 'Gelacht wird darüber, daß es nichts zu lachen gibt'¹¹⁰ and alleged that laughter in the

¹⁰⁸ Siegfried Lenz, 'So war das mit dem Zirkus', in: Lenz, *So zärtlich war Suleyken: Masurische Geschichten* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1955), pp.79-86.

¹⁰⁹ Heinrich Böll, 'Der Lacher', in Böll, *Werke*, I, pp.848-50 (p.850).

¹¹⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 'Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug', in: *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2000), pp.128-76 (pp.148-9).

‘Kulturindustrie’ has become a means of cheating people of genuine pleasure and happiness by deceiving them into a false sense of liberation and solidarity: ‘Es klirrt nicht die Schellenkappe des Narren, sondern der Schlüsselbund der kapitalistischen Vernunft’ (p.151). So during the immediate post-war years, when the Germans had little to laugh about anyway, German literature depicts laughter as lacking the liberating power that Bakhtin attributes to it. Indeed, laughter is shown as serving the interests of the Nazis themselves even after the *Nazizeit*:¹¹¹ *vide* the cynical guffaws with which the defendants in Peter Weiss’s *Die Ermittlung* (1965) meet their lawyers’ attempts to defend them on technicalities.

Given the problematic nature of laughter in early post-war German literature, it is unsurprising to find laughter - once it regains some force as a motif in prose fiction of the 1960s and 1970s - deployed as part of the alleged culture of German moral amnesia. Post-war laughter at the past must be distinguished from the laughter of anti-Nazis like Lucas and Chaplin, who were not in any sense complicit in Nazism’s crimes. They had been able to use humour to humiliate the Nazis during the War: but once the world learnt of the extermination camps, attempts by members of the *perpetrator* culture to laugh at

¹¹¹ There are, to my knowledge, two examples of the assimilation of Carnival by the commercial power of post-war West Germany. Significantly, in both cases, the prosperity of the participants is built on a repression of the past. Gerd Gaiser’s novel *Schlußball: Aus den schönen Tagen der Stadt Neu-Spuhl* (Munich: Hanser, 1958) ends with a dance and party in which only the rich youngsters of prosperous Neu-Spuhl may participate, so the festivities do not challenge but instead reinforce their power, and are, in any case, miserable: ‘in Neu-Spuhl waren sie noch nicht einmal beim Tanzen lustig’ (p.172). Moreover, the novel ends with the suicide of Frau Förckh - for whom money could not compensate for emotional deprivation - and the attempted murder of one of the characters. *Schlußball* anticipates Eva Demski’s much later *Karneval* (1981) (Frankfurt/Main: Ullstein, 1984), which also involves both attempted murder and the yoking of Carnival to the consolidation of commercial power. (See Sheppard’s comments on this novel on p.309). But one connection between the two novels is that those wealthy people who control Carnival have, like paradigms from the Mitscherlichs’ *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, enriched themselves from the rapid rebuilding of their respective towns after the bombardment suffered during the war and connived in the collective amnesia about the past. The citizens of Neu-Spuhl (= ‘New-Clean’) have quickly rebuilt their shattered town and never discuss the crimes that took place there (see pp.50-2); and in *Karneval* Losie’s businessman-father, a former POW, claims: ‘Man habe keine Vergangenheit’ and is smug that Germany has largely escaped punishment for its crimes: ‘Es ist ja nichts passiert!’ (pp.23 and 24).

Nazism in a similar way turn into trivialization of Nazi crimes.¹¹² In *Tausendjahrfeier*, for instance, Ludwig had described how the characters laughed at Hitler immediately after Nazism's collapse and alluded to the Nazis' grotesque appearance and behaviour: 'Man könne [...] nur darüber lachen, wie es früher gewesen, wie die Leute sich aufgeführt: Wilhelm II. etwa, erst recht aber Hitler' (p.267), and we later read that 'Schulkinder, Schulrat und Schulvorstand [haben] das Lachen nicht verkneifen können über diesen Charly [*sic*] Chaplin, alias Hitler, mit der ulkigen Rotzbremse auf der Oberlippe' (p.268).¹¹³ But because *Tausendjahrfeier* is concerned with Niflheim's attempts to conceal its past, the reader sees through the superficiality of this sudden, humorous rejection of Nazism. However, as time passed and taboos were lifted on discussion of the Nazi past, Nazism became even more susceptible to this kind of trivialization.¹¹⁴ For instance, between 1961 and the early 1970s Walter Kempowski asked a number of German people whether they had seen Hitler in person and published some of the answers in *Haben Sie Hitler gesehen?* (1973). The memories of a significant minority were expressed in jocose metaphors involving the grotesque and clownishness - i.e. with none of the sinister quality that characterized some early descriptions of the

¹¹² Thus, in Britain we feel little guilt about our part in the war, which might explain why we have felt more able than the Germans to trivialize Nazism by laughing at it. For example, there are at least three TV comedies that have used Nazism as a source of humour and arguably trivialized the past: Monty Python made a joke of the Nazis' abuse of the democratic system and their desire for conquest in their 'North Minehead By-election' sketch (first broadcast as part of the first series on 4 January 1970); there was the comedy series *Private Schulz* (1981), starring the late Michael Elphick, which involves a petty criminal who ends up in a SS intelligence unit and parachutes into England as part of 'Operation Bernhard', the abortive Nazi plan to ruin the British economy by flooding the market with forged £5 notes; and then there was the extremely popular series '*Allo, 'Allo* (1984-92), starring Gordon Kaye, which made fun of Nazis, the French Resistance and even the Gestapo.

¹¹³ Cf. Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* in which one of the characters refers to the time 'als Hitler starb, als das Reich verging und fremde Soldaten auf deutschem Boden der Vorsehung und Zukunftsschau des Führers spotteten' (p.97).

¹¹⁴ Ardagh describes how few Germans in 1969-70 would speak to him about Nazism, but that in 1984-5, people 'talked openly and excitedly, even made jokes about it' (p.501). Admittedly, this account is the anecdotal evidence of one person, but it dovetails with the increase in trivialization of the Nazi past over time that I identify.

Nazis as discussed earlier in this chapter.¹¹⁵ These eye-witnesses' comments make Hitler appear ridiculous rather than dangerous. For instance, an architect described Hitler as 'Schauspielerisch, ich will nicht sagen clownhaft [...] Widerwärtig!' (p.48); another man described Hitler wearing rouge (p.83) and a historian confirmed this by describing 'ein elendes, ekelhaftes Bild' (p.53) of Hitler's make-up melting on a hot day; and a teacher mentioned Hitler staying in the 'Deutscher Hof': 'jetzt wohnt der Faschingsprinz da drin, im selben Appartement' (p.113). One respondent's lasting memory of Hitler was the time when he met the Führer 'und da war es mir, weil ich nun ganz dicht an ihm dranstand, daß er einen fahren gelassen hätte, man roch es, nicht wahr?' (p.65), while another still joked about the Führer by referring to 'den letzten Arbeitslosen, wie gesagt wurde, also seine Genitalien, nicht?' (p.109). In another work in which Kempowski published German views on the Holocaust, one woman relates how a friend told her: "Ich lese den größten Schelm- und Lügenroman dieses Jahrhunderts." Das war: *Mein Kampf* (Kempowski 1999b, p.120). Since Kempowski's fiction, like Ludwig's novel, has often focussed on the Germans' alleged inability to confront their past, we are probably meant to view these grotesque retrospective debasements of Hitler as just another imperfect attempt to 'overcome' the past by laughing at it. The carnivalesque is deployed to turn the Nazis, and by extension their crimes, into something less atrocious.

Resistance as Trivial Entertainment

Using resistance to Nazism as a structural device also remains a *topos* in prose fiction of recent decades, but it, too, is trivialized. Unlike in *BT* or some of the novels of the

¹¹⁵ Although motivated by serious scholarly concerns rather than by any need to trivialize the past, the wartime report that had speculated on Hitler's grotesque sexual perversion (see note 44) was not published until 1972 (see Waite, pp.237 and 457, n.297), one year before Kempowski's book. Thus, like Kempowski's findings, the content of the report had been kept in store until considerable time had passed since the *Nazizeit*.

1960s, identification with the protagonists is meant to be unambiguous. I want to explore this trivialization of resistance by considering two novels. First, Franz Josef Degenhardt, a notorious *Bürgerschreck* and supporter of the APO who was expelled from the SPD in 1971, exemplifies how the lifting of taboos after 1968 could cut both ways: it could *both* make the past open to discussion *and* expose it to *Verharmlosung* because it was no longer such a fraught issue. Thus, Degenhardt's *Zündschnüre* (1973),¹¹⁶ which describes the resistance to Nazism offered by a working-class community in the Ruhrgebiet, looks like something from Starusch's waiting-room. At first sight Degenhardt's novel might appear both carnivalesque in Bakhtin's terms and wholly admirable since it represents a timely reminder to West Germany of the anti-fascist resistance during the *Nazizeit*, which, according to Prümm, was virtually ignored in early post-war prose fiction in the FRG because the West Germans saw communists as totalitarian.¹¹⁷ In what sense, then, is the novel carnivalesque? The resistance, led by the teenage hero Fänä and his friends, plunder a railway goods depot only to find schnaps and condoms (p.57), enlist the help of the cunning, hunchbacked former Nazi called Fuchs,¹¹⁸ blow up a goods carriage after stealing six thousand litres of Burgundy (p.65), leave communist leaflets in the toilet at the flak emplacement (p.92), trick a *Hitlerjugend* leader into playing football with a metal ball and threaten to urinate in his mouth (pp.108 and 111), plunder the 'Marketenderei' (pp.203ff)¹¹⁹ for Christmas, and are often feasting and drinking (pp.71-3, 181-9 and 205). Moreover, the novel resounds again and again

¹¹⁶ Franz Josef Degenhardt, *Zündschnüre* (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1973).

¹¹⁷ Karl Prümm, "Die Zukunft ist vergeßlich." Der antifaschistische Widerstand in der deutschen Literatur nach 1945', in: Hans Wagener (ed.), *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich: Deutsche Autoren in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977), pp.33-68 (pp.33 and 35-9).

¹¹⁸ Fuchs's trickster-like qualities may be reflected in the implications of cunning in his vulpine surname.

¹¹⁹ The 'Marketenderei' is the German equivalent of the British NAAFI.

with laughter.¹²⁰ But *Zündschnüre* involves all the same problems that bedevil Bakhtin's model of Carnival. For instance, as Müller points out, there is a simple dualism of good anti-fascists against bad Nazis and the anti-fascists swiftly assimilate the ambivalent Fuchs. Moreover, in contrast to, say, Kunert's *Im Namen der Hüte*, the text presents violence uncritically: 'Nazis "umzulegen", gilt im Roman als kecker Schulbubenstreich'.¹²¹ But the novel's shortcomings are not limited to the way it so clearly illustrates the inappropriateness of Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque to modern sensibilities and notions of resistance. Degenhardt, possibly unintentionally, reduces the dangerous business of anti-fascist resistance, which justly deserved to be commemorated by West Germany, to the trivial plunder of wine and condoms, and Prümm rightly describes the novel as 'ein Abenteuerroman in der Pikaro-Tradition', 'eine nach rückwärts verlagerte proletarische Utopie' which 'trägt deutlich märchenhafte und idyllische Züge' and is marked by the 'Fülle der Episoden und Schnurren, der grotesken Pointen, der prallen Komik' (p.59). In other words, we are supposed to laugh at the book's events, be entertained by its fantasy material, and, because it departs from historical reality, not to draw any serious conclusions about lingering Nazi attitudes in the present in the way that Bieler and Kunert had done.¹²²

Second, Hans Hellmut Kirst's *08/15 In der Partei* (1978)¹²³ is also meant to be an entertaining depiction of the Third Reich, but here resistance is trivialized in a different

¹²⁰ See pp.17, 19, 20, 43, 49, 54, 65, 71, 86, 91, 92, 106, 110, 114, 117, 123, 129, 140, 159, 160, 164, 184, 186-7, 188, 193, 195, 197, 204, 205, 206, 212, 215, 217, 219, 224, 225, 230, 231, 242, 244, 245, 246 and 249.

¹²¹ Heidi M. Müller, *Die Judendarstellung in der deutschsprachigen Erzählprosa (1945-1981)* (Königstein/Ts.: Forum Academicum, 1984), pp.170-1.

¹²² A related example of trivialized working-class anti-fascism is August Kühn's *Jahrgang 22 oder Die Merkwürdigkeiten im Leben des Fritz Wachsmuth: Ein Schelmenroman* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1977). Its protagonist, Fritz Wachsmuth, is from the working-class but his background has no bearing on his behaviour as he engages in a series of adventures, for his motivations are purely selfish, as his motto suggests: 'Der Starke ist am mächtigsten für sich allein' (see e.g. p.342). Wachsmuth does not intend to subvert the Nazis' authoritarian system as a whole: instead he merely intends to save himself. Moreover, Nazi criminality here has become so harmless that we are even expected to identify with and laugh at his roguish behaviour when he steals and sells religious icons in Russia (pp.246-7).

¹²³ Hans Hellmut Kirst, *08/15 In der Partei* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1978).

way. This Fool-novel describes how Konrad Breitbach, a 'Kasperlfigur' (p.8), infiltrates the local Nazi Party and subverts it not by taking violent action against the Nazis but by quoting contradictory passages from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a way of confusing them; and he is aided by Emil Spahn, the 'Stadttrottel von Gilgenrode' (p.139) who embarrasses the Nazis precisely because he pretends to support them so fervently. Eventually, one Nazi commits suicide, another is arrested for murder, and Konrad is appointed local Party leader. Although Konrad's highly successful, verbal assault on the Nazis might be emblematic of the less radical attitudes of authors in the post-1960s era and even illustrate the notion of necessary compromise / assimilation to effect change,¹²⁴ his actions bear no relation to carnivalesque degradation or the 'frank and free' (*RW*, p.10) speech of Carnival: indeed, unlike the explicit criticisms made by Böll's Schnier, Konrad subverts the Party by speaking the words of Hitler himself! Accordingly, the success of his subversion is so implausible that it reduces the novel to the level of triviality. Moreover, given that all the Carnivals in post-1945 prose fiction are to a greater or lesser extent assimilated by the Nazis (see above), it is a striking indication of the comical, improbable atmosphere of the novel that the 'Parteikarnevalsveranstaltungen' (p.318) at the end are an unqualified success. Furthermore, that success is due to Konrad's ejection of all the Nazis who had originally organized the Carnival (pp.330-1). Or in other words, the fact that Kirst can imagine a successful Carnival event from which, uniquely, Nazi influence has been excised, suggests that his understanding of Carnival is out of step with his literary colleagues' more ambivalent, nuanced attitude towards it. Konrad's harmless resistance - like his harmless and improbably successful Carnival - says almost nothing to the reader about

¹²⁴ Thus, writing long after 1968, Mary Fulbrook makes this point when discussing resistance: 'in order to be in a place even to try to be effective, one had to conform, one had to wear a uniform' (Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999], p.76).

promoting resistance and social change in West Germany, and, by means of Konrad's manipulation of harmless and foolish small-town Nazis, reduces the events of the Third Reich to mere entertainment.

Meaningless, Hollow Carnavalesque Residua

If Degenhardt's anti-Nazis and Kirst's Konrad are teenagers, the Fool in other texts of the 1970s shrinks to the size of relatively harmless children. When the first half of *BT* was filmed in 1979, the director, Volker Schlöndorff, consciously chose a boy (not a dwarf) to play Oskar since a dwarf might have prevented the viewer from identifying with Oskar. Or in other words, the ugliness of the grotesque Fool Oskar was prettified by the use of a good-looking child, and the ambivalent literary Oskar became a more attractive cinematic Oskar.¹²⁵ Similarly, while Georg Lentz's *Muckefuck* (1976)¹²⁶ and Walter Kempowski's *Tadellöser & Wolff* (1970) and *Uns geht's ja noch gold* (1971) are typical examples of those works which depict *Alltag im Dritten Reich*, they, too, for different reasons to *Zündschnüre*, entertain the reader without provoking him. If Degenhardt's novel takes the trend of carnivalesque resistance initiated by *BT* to absurd lengths, then Kempowski and Lentz extract Oskar's naïve, childish viewpoint in order to copy Grass's exposure of the attitudes that helped Hitler's rise to power. These two authors make their debt to Grass clear: in *Muckefuck* for instance, Karl's mother, despite living on a working-class estate, takes Karl on shopping-trips (just as Oskar's mother took him

¹²⁵ In an interview on Bayrischer Rundfunk on 6 October 1978, Schlöndorff said: 'Die Idee war eben immer, nicht einen Film mit einem Zwerg zu machen, weil sich dann jeder sagt, das sind Zwergprobleme, das ist das Problem eines Zwergs, das interessiert mich nicht [...] mit dem Kind kann man sich identifizieren' (Volker Schlöndorff, *Die Blechtrommel: Tagebuch einer Verfilmung* [Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979], p.24).

¹²⁶ Georg Lentz, *Muckefuck* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1976).

shopping at Markus's toyshop) and gorges herself on cake at a fancy Berlin department store (which recalls Agnes's voracious appetite for sex and fish) (see Lentz, pp.51-3). Like Oskar, Karl crawls under the table, and just as Oskar witnessed Jan and his mother's antics during a game of *Skat*, he overhears conversations about obtaining a mortgage on a house in a more prosperous, middle-class area (p.76)¹²⁷ - which makes the point that whilst Karl's parents are not Nazis they are happy to tolerate the Nazis while their financial situation is favourable. In a similar way, Grass influences Kempowski, whose child-narrator, Walter, wanders the streets of Rostock and naively exposes or parodies the attitudes of complacent, insensitive and thoughtless Germans during and after the War.¹²⁸

Correspondingly, the subversive or 'uncrowning' aspects that Bakhtin associates with Carnival are reduced in these novels to the level of childish pranks which are not really subversive, have no sophisticated political intent, achieve no lasting effect whatsoever, and are merely amusing. Lentz's Karl and his friend Rabumm, for example, both described by one character as a pair of 'Dussels' (p.178), cause mayhem by stealing rabbits and painting chickens blue (p.165), drunkenly urinating on two lovers outside their window (p.184), and filling a pro-Nazi teacher's boots with slurry so that he splashes himself with filth when he puts them on (p.197). This latter reduction of order to ordure may recall Bakhtinian degradation, but it does not involve the destruction and regeneration of those in authority since we are dealing with harmless childish pranks that are not exclusively aimed at Nazis. Similarly, Kempowski's Walter may shirk his duties in the *Hitlerjugend* and cunningly trick his way his way through the tough, uncertain

¹²⁷ Helga Schütz also borrows the idea of a child eavesdropping on the adults from beneath a table in *Schöne Gegend Probstein* (see pp.126-7).

¹²⁸ For a detailed explanation of how Kempowski's *Schelm*-protagonist, Walter, exposes the evasions of his adult characters, see Richard Aston, 'Amnesia and Anamnesis in the Works of Walter Kempowski: Language, History and Evasion of Guilt', *Journal of European Studies*, 32 (2002), pp.27-50. For brief details of passages in *Tadellöser & Wolff* that allude to Grass, see p.50, n.37 in the same article; I also cite several works of secondary literature in the endnotes that read Walter as a *Schelm*.

world of post-war Germany, but like Fritz Wachsmuth he has neither a grand plan to subvert authority, nor, unlike those earlier Fools of the 1960s, any mission to redeem society. According to Mecklenburg, the only real resisters in Kempowski's novels are the mothers who complain when their children are forced to do excessive drill in the *Hitlerjugend*.¹²⁹ Moreover, Mecklenburg suggests that despite Kempowski's intentions, the lack of explicit reflection on the events depicted allows Kempowski's reader - and the same could be said of Lentz's novel - to identify with the very characters that are supposed to be criticized, with the result that, yet again, the horrors that were made possible, in part at least, by German complacency are trivialized.¹³⁰ Or in other words, the characters that are supposed to fill the Fool-role lack all the provocativeness of earlier Fools.

Given which, it is appropriate that when Rabumm and Karl in *Muckefuck* meet a real Fool called Fuchsruschen in a village outside Berlin, a woman who is willing to articulate the complacent attitudes of the Germans, she should live in an isolated shack opposite a graveyard and not be taken seriously. Her clownish appearance makes her unpopular 'weil sie einen Buckel hatte und rote Haare und rote Augen vom Trinken' (p.170) and she is blamed for several uncanny happenings.¹³¹ Moreover, when she

¹²⁹ Norbert Mecklenburg, 'Fachismus und Alltag in deutscher Gegenwartsprosa: Kempowski und andere', in: Wagener (ed.), *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich*, pp.11-32 (p.19).

¹³⁰ Mecklenburg refers to these dimensions of Kempowski's novels again and again: he describes how 'Der Erzähler verweigert jede wertende Stellungnahme nach dem Vorbild früherer, moralisch engagierter literarischer Faschismusdarstellungen' (p.19) and refers to the 'Absage ans autonome Subjekt als Gegeninstanz zur Gesellschaft' (p.21) which might have encouraged the reader to reflect on him- or herself and the events in the text (cf. p.22); he explains that 'die Idylle des Innern [...] ist abgedichtet gegen das Grauen des Ganzen' (p.19), that 'In der Anhäufung von Absurditäten des Alltags [...] verbirgt sich eine verstehende und letztlich rechtfertigende Sicht aufs Allzumenschliche' (p.21) and that the novels become 'einem Vexierspiegel, in welchem sich bürgerliches Bewußtsein selbst begrinsen kann, ohne sich zu begreifen' (p.22): Mecklenburg's choice of a mirror as a metaphor reflects how much weaker Walter is as an *Eulenspiegel* figure than, say, Oskar Matzerath.

¹³¹ In *BT*, Agnes attributes similar uncanny powers to Bebra: 'bei den Liliputanern war er. Und ein Gnom hat ihn auf die Stirn geküßt. Hoffentlich hat das nichts zu bedeuten!' (p.133; cf. how Agnes directly blames Bebra when she perceives a change in Oskar's character during the 'Schaufenster' incidents on p.152): while it might have made sense for a non-Fool like Agnes to suspect Bebra in *BT*, it is a sign of later developments that *Schelme* like Karl, who ought to recognize his affinity with the carnivalesque, should share that suspicion of Fools.

makes clear-sighted but gloomy predictions about the future after the Nazi conquest of France, those superficial *Schelme* Rabumm and Karl laugh in contempt: ‘Sie sah Schutt und Trümmer überall. Wer glaubte ihr?’ (p.182). So this (female) Fool is not only ineffective, she also completely fails to provoke the two boys. Then again, both Tante Ella in Peter Härtling’s *Nachgetragene Liebe* (1980; set during the *Nazizeit*) and Tante Harriett in Elisabeth Plessen’s *Mitteilung an den Adel* (1976; partly set during the *Nazizeit*) embody freedom for the young narrators from the authoritarian atmosphere of their families, but are equally marginalized and even less provocative or subversive than Fuchsruschen.¹³² For Härtling’s narrator, the denial of access to the carnivalesque becomes a sign of his father’s authoritarianism: after the boy watched a clown perform, he steals money to buy himself a harmonica and his father subsequently punishes him by refusing to take him to the circus when it visits town.¹³³ But he accesses the carnivalesque in another way by spending time with Tante Ella, a clownish woman with artificial red hair and a face white with make-up, who mixes up *Märchen* at random to produce ever-new versions (p.169). In Plessen’s novel, Tante Harriett, another great story-teller, takes the narrator as a girl to the circus (see pp.45-9). But both of these women are minor characters who offer the child-narrators fleeting escape from the suffocating *milieux* of their families in the form of entertainment and cannot help them surmount the profound problems of coping with their difficult relationships with their parents.

Even more striking is Skrobek in Horst Bienek’s *Septemberlicht* (1977), the second novel in Bienek’s *Gleiwitzer Tetralogie* which describes the *Alltag* of the Silesian town

¹³² One motif in much of the *Väterliteratur* is the lack of laughter in the dysfunctional families depicted and the freedom from authority that laughter embodies: in Christoph Meckel’s *Suchbild: Über meinen Vater* (Düsseldorf: Claasen, 1980), Meckel tells us that ‘das Lachen setzte aus’ (p.134) after his father’s return from the war; and in *Die Reise*, Vesper’s father says that jokes always have ‘etwas Negatives’ about them and dismisses them as the invention of Jews (p.379).

¹³³ Peter Härtling, *Nachgetragene Liebe*, in: Härtling, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Klaus Siblewski (9 vols.) (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1997), VII, pp.157-301 (see pp.172-5).

of Gleiwitz from the eve of World War II to the bombing of Dresden in February 1945. Skrobek looks like a Fool since he has a ‘Lächeln, das ihm schon bei der Geburt fest ins Gesicht gesetzt worden sein mußte’ and ‘dichtes rötliches Haar, das am Hinterkopf in einem kühnen Wirbel hochstand und ihm ein lustiges Aussehen verlieh’, and he ‘strahlte [...] geradezu ansteckend so etwas wie gute Laune aus’. Moreover, we are told of his ‘leicht grotesken Bewegungen’ and his ‘pausenlose Heiterkeit’ that ‘hatte auch etwas mit Naivität, ja Torheit zu tun’.¹³⁴ But Skrobek is just one of a vast number of characters in the tetralogy and he makes little difference to the plot: we hear only that he has sensibly compromised for the sake of survival and become a General’s chauffeur in the war.¹³⁵ Skrobek may be a Fool outwardly, but he entirely lacks the potent meanings that Bakhtin attributes to the carnivalesque.

Carnival’s apparel also litters more recent prose fiction but is inert and devoid of meaning. For example, Irma Piontek in *Septemberlicht*, constricted in the stuffy, self-deluding atmosphere of her *petit-bourgeois* family, leaves one of her wedding-presents lying on the floor, ‘eine auseinandergezogene Ziehharmonika, wie sie die Clowns im Zirkus benutzen’ (Bienek [1977], p.343). But when her mother Valeska trips over it, its carnivalesque potential is reduced to a squeak (p.346): it has become just part of a realistic backdrop. Likewise, in *Suchbild*, Christoph Meckel’s father, a morose, authoritarian man (‘er war kein Sweijk’ [p.71]) who returns from the war embittered and psychologically damaged by a brain injury, collects ‘Fastnachtmasken’ - but these are

¹³⁴ Horst Bienek, *Septemberlicht* (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1977), pp.268, 269 and 271.

¹³⁵ Horst Bienek, *Zeit ohne Glocken* (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1979), p.21.

static curios, totally removed from their carnivalesque context (p.173).¹³⁶ And by the time we reach Jurek Becker's 'Die beliebteste Familiengeschichte' (1980),¹³⁷ the carnivalesque has become an embarrassment. A businessman, Gideon, is tricked by a friend into attending a non-existent 'Kostümfest' and dressed as a clown he arrives at the house of the wealthy 'hosts' who politely invite him in. A comedy of manners then follows as Gideon slowly realizes the deception and his hosts pretend not to notice his attire: by the end, Gideon cannot wait to shed the appurtenances of Carnival. The narrator likes the story, but cannot explain *why* he does: 'Manchmal ist mir, als hätte ich sie vor langer Zeit schon irgendwo gehört, ohne daß mein Onkel Gideon darin vorgekommen wäre [...] Ich finde sie nicht schlecht, so bedeutend aber auch nicht [...] Ihr großer Erfolg muß [...] auf jeden Fall mit etwas mir Verborgenenem [zu tun gehabt haben]' (p.42). Although the carnivalesque resonates with the narrator in some residual way, its meaning has long since been lost.

So the evidence suggests that the true meaning of Carnival, in Bakhtin's understanding at least, is lost in various ways in prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, especially after the 1960s. This is not to say that serious fiction dealing with the Nazi past is not continuing to appear - but when the carnivalesque is involved, this

¹³⁶ Other examples include Demski's *Karneval* which is all about empty carnivalesque forms (Sheppard, p.309). Then again, in a text more directly connected with the Third Reich, Walter describes a 'Pfungstmarkt' immediately after the war in *Uns geht's ja noch gold*, which includes a model mine driven by a handle turned by former soldiers with missing limbs (dismembered not by Carnival [Bakhtin, p.319] but by war) which if anything celebrates the work ethic, and a carousel driven by men turning handles 'wie Sklaven' which becomes a symbol for the robotic behaviour of post-war Germans: 'Mensch, Maschine, Puppe oder Automat?' (Walter Kempowski, *Uns geht's ja noch gold* [Munich: Goldmann, 1999], p.58). The fair's carnivalesque powers are consigned to the past and have become a matter of historical detail: '1683 hatte es Streit wegen eines Puppenspiels gegeben. Weil betrübte Zeiten wären, der Trommelschlag die Leute störe, die Puppe Pollichinello dem Tod den Hintern gezeigt und die jungen Zuschauer im Dunkeln Ungebührliches betrieben' (p.57). Walter, a Fool himself, appears to lack any desire to participate in the fair, not least because he is needed for duties with the 'Arbeitseinsatz' (p.56), and the account of the fair looks like another example of Kempowski's concern to accumulate descriptive detail, but it reduces the carnivalesque to background scenery.

¹³⁷ Jurek Becker, 'Die beliebteste Familiengeschichte', in: Becker, *Nach der ersten Zukunft* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp.40-61.

element generally precludes a serious examination of the past by trivializing Nazism and its legacy.

At first glance, my above argument - especially the final section on *Verharmlosung* - largely confirms Pinfold's and Sheppard's pessimistic generalizations that Carnival and the Fool have lost their power in recent decades. But I have tried to show how some writers and artists have utilized the carnivalesque tradition in a *positive* way: for example, Lucas's and Chaplin's use of humour to attack Nazism, or in the way in which several works of the 1960s advocate resistance to lingering Nazi attitudes in the post-war period. These attempts to use the carnivalesque positively may not always have been successful, but they show that some writers and artists have remained optimistic about the carnivalesque's potential. Thus, in the remaining chapters of my thesis, I shall try to show how some writers have tentatively or cautiously pointed to ways of using the carnivalesque successfully, albeit in a different, less exuberant form from that of which Bakhtin wrote.

Chapter 3: The Changing Role of the Fool and the Carnavalesque in Hans Hellmut Kirst's 08/15 Trilogy

It may seem strange to choose Hans Hellmut Kirst's *08/15* trilogy¹ as the subject of the first close reading in this thesis when critics have described the *08/15* novels as 'second-rate works of West German fiction'² and claimed that *Kaserne* in particular 'mag manchen literarischen Mangel aufweisen'³ and 'gehört sicherlich nicht zu Kirsts stärksten Büchern'.⁴ But other commentators - especially those writing at least a decade after the trilogy's publication - have come to view Kirst's trilogy as a serious contribution to the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The late Andreas Mohler describes Kirst's work as 'der unmittelbarste Reflex auf die Katastrophe von 1945';⁵ Lütgenhorst refers to 'den für ihn immer noch unbewältigten Nationalsozialismus' as one of Kirst's central themes;⁶ and Schwab-Felisch also ascribes Kirst's popularity both to his candid statements about his involvement with Nazism and to the vast amount he has written in order to come to terms with the past.⁷ In my opinion, regardless of the novels' alleged lack of literary merit, the *08/15* trilogy confronts the events of the Third Reich - albeit obliquely - by deploying the carnivalesque in a complex and changing way and thus is

¹ Hans Hellmut Kirst, *08/15: In der Kaserne - Im Krieg - Bis zum Ende: Gesamtausgabe der Trilogie* (Klagenfurt: Kaiser, 2001). The trilogy comprises the following novels: *08/15: In der Kaserne* (first published in 1954) (pp.7-262; hereafter referred to as *Kaserne*), *08/15 Im Krieg* (1954) (pp.263-594; hereafter referred to as *Krieg*) and *08/15 Bis zum Ende* (1955) (pp.595-887; hereafter referred to as *Ende*). All further references to these and other works discussed are included in the main text.

² Judith Ryan, *The Uncompleted Past*, p.38.

³ Hans Henrich, 'Null-Acht-Fuffzehn -wie einst im Mai', *Frankfurter Rundschau* (27 March 1954), p.2.

⁴ Carl Nützel, 'Die Moritat vom Gefreiten Herbert Asch', *Münchener Merkur* (27/28 March 1954), n.p.

⁵ Armin Mohler, 'Der Fall Kirst', *Die Welt* (24 April 1965), n.p.

⁶ Manfred Lütgenhorst, 'Der Mann, den die Welt liest', *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* (1/2 February 1969), n.p.

⁷ Hans Schwab-Felisch, 'Ein Volksschriftsteller', in: Heinz Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst: Der Autor und Sein Werk. Information Zeugnis Kritik* (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 1979), pp.30-1. First published in *FAZ* (5 December 1974).

susceptible of serious literary analysis. Moreover, the immense popularity of Kirst's fiction suggests that Kirst made an impact on his readership that should not be ignored.⁸

Kirst's Understanding of his Fiction and the Historical Background

Kirst's attitude to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is straightforward: he believes that Germany should remember the past in order to learn from the experience of the Third Reich. In an interview published in 1969, he had lamented the fact 'Daß wir so bitter wenig aus den zwölf Hitlerjahren gelernt haben';⁹ but in an interview published in 1979, Kirst said of Nazism: 'Was dabei mit uns geschah, kann und darf nicht vergessen werden - nicht von mir'.¹⁰ As Kirst intended his prose fiction to contribute to this process of learning and remembering, he ascribed a didactic role to it in a newspaper article of 1954 on *Kaserne*, published when the novel first appeared: 'Und unverstündlich [ist] eigentlich jeder, der nur schreibt, um zu schreiben, der nicht ehrlich bemüht ist, einen Sinn zu suchen und eine Lehre zu ziehen'.¹¹ Or in other words, Kirst wishes to make it clear that he wrote the first part of the trilogy to draw a lesson from the bitter experiences of National Socialism. But what exactly did Kirst think that lesson was?

In the same article, Kirst, who was a professional soldier from 1933 to 1945, claimed that 'die Erziehungsmethoden des Soldaten beschäftigen mich immer wieder' and said that he realized that 'das ganze Erziehungswesen unserer Armee war überholt, und zwar

⁸ According to Mohler, 3.7 million copies of Kirst's novels had sold world-wide by 1964, of which 1.8 million were in translation; by 1976, the *08/15* trilogy alone had sold 1.8 million copies (see Walter Nutz, 'Der Krieg als Abenteuer und Idylle. Landser-Hefte und triviale Kriegsromane', in Wagener [ed.], *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich*, pp.265-83 [p.265]); and by 1979, Kirst's *oeuvre* as a whole had sold 9.5 million copies, including 377 foreign editions translated into 24 different languages (see Puknus [ed.], p.215). Many of Kirst's books are still in print.

⁹ Günter Rudorf, 'Ich bin ein typisch deutscher Schriftsteller' (Interview with Günter Rudorf), in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, pp.13-19 (p.13). First published in *Epocha*, 6 (June 1969).

¹⁰ Heinz Puknus, 'Fragen an Hans Hellmut Kirst' (Interview with Heinz Puknus), in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, pp.7-13 (p.8).

¹¹ Hans Hellmut Kirst, 'Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen', *Münchener Merkur* (27/28 March 1954), n.p.

seit nahezu einem halben Jahrhundert'. In particular, Kirst criticised 'den öden Drill und den bedingungslosen Gehorsam' of military training. These private concerns that were expressed in *Kaserne* became publicly relevant in the early 1950s: in August 1950, Adenauer had agreed in principle to contribute soldiers to a European Army, and West Germany joined NATO in October 1954 after considerable planning and discussion. In 'Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen', Kirst claimed that despite all the debates about the new armed forces, the planners had barely discussed 'die Behandlung der Wehrpflichtigen' - i.e. the issue of whether to scrap traditionally brutal drill-methods. Indeed, he claimed that it was this alleged oversight that had encouraged him to submit *Kaserne* for publication.

According to Abenheim, the planners of the new Bundeswehr were confronted with 'the need to select what might be called a usable past'. Moreover, given the need to reinvent an Army that had been tainted by Nazism, the reformers 'were forced to define what were valid and what were invalid traditions'.¹² To judge from Abenheim's research, Kirst underestimated the planners' sensitivity to the faults of the old army. For example, Abenheim refers again and again to 'the drillmaster mentality that, in the view of many critics, had always been the essence of German military tradition' (p.37). Similarly, in 1951, Wolf Graf von Baudissin was tasked with drafting reforms of the training of recruits. His reforms sought 'to banish practices that treated soldiers as mere objects'; dictated that soldiers would have to salute only their immediate superior; allowed soldiers a private life without interference from their superiors; prescribed realistic field training that was designed to foster the cohesion of their unit; and envisaged men who would fight for 'a sense of common purpose', not out of blind obedience (p.98). Moreover, other planners developed a new concept of leadership

¹² Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp.4 and 6.

called 'innere Führung' which Abenheim explains as follows: 'methods of leadership and relationships between superiors and subordinates - which were specifically understood to incorporate an element of mutual responsibility and participation - were to be made to conform to the image of the citizen codified in the Basic Law' (p.45).

The concerns of *Kaserne*, then, dovetailed with a major debate in West Germany of the time, and Kirst's criticisms of the army of the past clearly ran parallel to the question of how much of the old tradition was to be salvaged. But, as Abenheim's book indicates, the reformers understood both that it would be impossible to reject the traditions of the German Army altogether and that some positive aspects of the past would have to be identified and revived. So, despite the radical plans concerning leadership and the soldier's legal position, the planners understood that there would be limits to the changes they could bring about. Some literary critics made sweeping, reductive judgements of *Kaserne* which assumed that the novel lacked such an awareness of the limits to the possibility of change: for instance, an anonymous East German critic referred to *Kaserne* as 'einen antimilitaristischen Roman';¹³ and Schwab-Felisch claims that Kirst was making a sweeping attack against barracks-life as a whole: '[Kirst] wendet sich gegen den stupiden, schikanösen und geisttötenden Kasernenhofbetrieb'.¹⁴ But on the contrary, Kirst moderated his demands for dramatic change in 'Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen' by making several important *qualifications* to his criticisms of military training-methods. First, he explained that his criticism of drill-methods stemmed not only from his understanding of the dehumanizing effects of such practices on recruits, but also from the fact that mindless obedience is often useless in the field:

Aber im Kampf sind die tausend auf dem Exerzierplatz verbrachten Stunden plötzlich sinnlos, und jedes geistestötende Auswendiglernen von belanglosen Schraubchen und Merksprüchlein erscheint dann als lächerliche Farce. Das Feld

¹³ D.R., 'Bonner Kesseltreiben', *Neues Deutschland* (24 March 1954), p.4.

¹⁴ Hans Schwab-Felisch, 'gelesen-wiedergelesen', *Die Neue Zeitung* (11 April 1954), n.p.

beherrschte immer der Mann mit dem “Köpfchen”, der “Techniker”, der “Improvisator”.

Second, he did not challenge the military necessity for one man to command others. Rather, he objected to power in the wrong hands as ‘Das Grundübel’ and advocated using that power ‘mit Aufmerksamkeit und Einfühlungsvermögen’. Finally, he claimed that his criticisms were ‘gegen die Auswüchse der Kasernen gerichtet, niemals aber gegen das Soldatentum’. Or in other words, Kirst was not advocating the eradication of the military hierarchy, objecting to the formation of the Bundeswehr, or even protesting against militarism as a whole. Rather, he was arguing explicitly for specific changes to a single aspect of the military - just as the planners of the Bundeswehr sought to discard only certain aspects of the German military tradition. It is Kirst’s qualified demands for small-scale change that underpin my argument in this chapter since Kirst qualifies the activities of his central Fool-protagonist of the *08/15* trilogy, Asch, in a similar way. Thus, to my mind, Kirst’s references in his discussion of *Kaserne* to the need for a ‘Köpfchen’ in the field anticipate the concerns of the second novel, *Krieg*, in which Kirst depicts Asch as a model leader. To my knowledge, Kirst never publicly commented on *Krieg* in the way he did on *Kaserne*. But just as *Kaserne* mapped onto debates about the training-system, *Krieg* builds on the critique of *Kaserne* by making suggestions about the nature of leadership that dovetail with the debate about ‘innere Führung’.

The Subversive Role of the Fool in 08/15 In der Kaserne

Kaserne is set in a Wehrmacht barracks in the summer of 1938 and relates how Hauptwachtmeister Schulz, prompted by sexual jealousy, persecutes Johannes Vierbein, a young recruit who is undergoing military training. When Vierbein almost commits suicide under the pressure, his friend, Gefreiter Herbert Asch, the central Fool-character,

stops him and sets out to subvert and humiliate Schulz and his cronies in revenge. Or in other words, Kirst attacks the drill-methods of the Wehrmacht in *Kaserne* by deploying a Fool-figure.

The carnivalesque is an obvious literary trope to use for subversion of authority in general, but *Kaserne* is unusual for two reasons. First, Kirst's trilogy appeared right at the end of the golden era of German war-fiction. After West Germany entered NATO in 1954, far fewer novels dealing with the War were published,¹⁵ and those which had been published hitherto reflected how 'im offiziellen Gedächtnis der BRD [dominierte] das Bild des Deutschen als unschuldiges Opfer des Kriegs'.¹⁶ But Kirst's Fool-figure Asch contradicts this trend since he is not a passive victim and takes action in a variety of ways to resist those who cause him and others to suffer as victims. Second, *Kaserne* anticipates by several years the literary depictions of carnivalesque resistance to authority designed to effect social change that would become much more common after the publication of *Die Blechtrommel* (1959) in a society that had arguably failed to confront its Nazi past.

Critics have certainly detected that Asch and his world fit into the literary tradition of the carnivalesque. Seeberger, for instance, describes Asch as 'ein Eulenspiegel in Uniform' and an 'Erzschelm';¹⁷ Wagener refers to 'pikareske[] Szenen' in the trilogy as a whole (p.246); Mohler writes of 'das überraschende Auftreten eines "deutschen Soldaten Schwejk"'; and Kuczynski views the trilogy as 'ein Werk von unverkennbaren pikaresken Elementen'.¹⁸ But probably because three of the four statements appeared in

¹⁵ Hans Wagener, 'Soldaten zwischen Gehorsam und Gewissen. Kriegsromane und -tagebücher', in: Wagener (ed.), *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich*, pp.241-64 (p.241).

¹⁶ Helmut Peitsch, 'Zur Geschichte von "Vergangenheitsbewältigung": BRD- und DDR-Kriegsromane in den fünfziger Jahren', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*, 38/39 (1995), pp.89-117 (p.92). Cf. Wagener, p.242.

¹⁷ Kurt Seeberger, 'Eulenspiegelien in Uniform', *Münchener Merkur* (13-15 August 1955), n.p.

¹⁸ Krzysztof A. Kuczynski, 'Zwischen Kaserne und Wolfsschanze: Hans Hellmut Kirst - Annäherung an eine Soldatenautor', *Krieg und Literatur / War and Literature*, 3 (1991), pp.162-8 (p.164).

newspaper articles that are necessarily restricted in scope, none of their authors explains why they think that Asch fits so well into the traditions of the picaro or the *Schelm*.

In my opinion, Asch's affinity with the Fool and other, related traditions is clear even before he resolves to subvert the military system. For example, when we first encounter him, he is engaging in the carnivalesque practice of verbal abuse by calling a fellow Gefreiter named Richard Wagner an 'Armleuchter' (*Kaserne*, p.10);¹⁹ like a rogue, Asch cheats at cards 'schamlos' (p.15); as a trickster-figure, he has developed, among other 'tricks', a way of standing to attention without tiring: 'Das gehörte zu seinen Tricks, die er sich nach und nach ausgedacht hatte' (p.26). Indeed, his slippery ways partly account for his popularity with his girl-friend Elisabeth: 'ihr war aufgefallen, daß er kaum jemals das sagte, was er wirklich meinte' (p.29). He also shows his transgressive nature when he escapes the barracks by illegally climbing over the fence (p.31), and mocks the 'Deutscher Gruß' by saluting a tree with the words 'Heil Hitler!' before signalling his lack of respect for authority-figures by criticising his opportunist father (p.32). When a Sergeant wants Asch's name in order to report him for saluting incorrectly, Asch falsely claims that he is called 'Kasprowitz' - a clear fusion of the words 'Kasperl' (= the German Mr. Punch) and 'Witz' (= 'joke') (p.35). Like Švejk before him, he participates in a pub-fight between his artillery battery and some infantry which involves abuse, alcoholic excess and beatings (pp.48-9); his identity-card photograph depicts 'einen reichlich dumm dreinblickenden Menschen in Uniform, der scheinbar nicht bis drei zählen konnte' (p.88); and his future father-in-law, Freitag, identifies Asch as 'einer von

¹⁹ It is, of course, striking that Asch should insult someone on the opening page who shares his name with Hitler's favourite composer; it is also possible that Asch is alluding to and mocking one of Hitler's most famous quotations when he enters the barracks in the middle of the night, naked except for a shirt, and explains his behaviour to the drunken Wachtmeister Platzek by saying: 'Bitte, Herrn Wachtmeister melden zu dürfen, daß ich Schlafwandler bin' (p.68). Perhaps Kirst flirted with widening Asch's subversive activities to include satirizing the larger phenomenon of Nazism itself; if so, that satire is only very tentative and not even limited to Asch, for it is Schulz who thinks: 'Was soll aus Österreich schon Gutes kommen!' (p.119).

der Sorte [...], die, sobald sie den richtigen Anstoß bekommen, es glatt fertigbringen, gegen Windmühlenflügel anzurennen' (p.109) - i.e. Freitag sees Asch as a kind of Don Quixote.²⁰ So if we put all these components of Asch's character together - his trickery and selective dishonesty, his superficial stupidity, his transgressive behaviour, his disrespect for authority and his indulgence in the abuse and violence that is allegedly typical of Carnival - Asch's connection with the carnivalesque is obvious.

Moreover, Asch's name arguably connects Asch with the grotesque because it connotes the word 'Arsch', part of Bakhtin's 'lower bodily stratum' whose functions are central to Carnival. An early article in *Der Spiegel* refers to the protagonist as 'ein Gefreiter mit dem beziehungsreichen Namen Herbert Asch ohne r' - which strengthens my point by implying that a German reader, at first glance, would make the same connection.²¹ Precisely for this reason, Thilo Koch misquotes *Kaserne* in a highly revealing way. According to him, Asch rages against the drill-system when he says: 'Wir lassen uns beschimpfen und schikanieren, wir stehen stumm dabei, wenn man uns "Sauhund", "Schweinekerl" oder "*Aschloch*" nennt' (my italics).²² *Kaserne* actually inserts the missing 'r' (p.245). Moreover, in *Krieg*, Asch himself makes play with the same connotations when he says: 'Aber wenn wir nicht nach spätestens drei Kilometern steckenbleiben, will ich Arsch heißen' (p.528).²³ But most significantly, Kirst admits in his autobiography that the choice of Asch's name was only partly accidental: 'Daß dieser

²⁰ Freitag's insight is unsurprising since he is himself a self-confessed Fool. In the scene when Freitag invites Asch to dinner, Freitag and his wife discover that they have been eating ham and pea soup for ten years when neither of them particularly likes it. Freitag reacts by saying: 'Wir sind herrliche Narren [...] Aber ich bin dafür, daß das so bleibt. Wir essen weiter jeden Dienstag Erbsen mit Speck und nennen sie Narrensuppe' (p.106).

²¹ Anon., 'KOMMISS: Waren Sie Soldat?', *Der Spiegel* (14 April 1954), n.p.

²² 'Des Teufels Hauptwachtmeister: Eine Debatte rund um *Null-acht Fünfzehn*', *Der Monat* (1954), pp.245-63 (p.249). This article comprises a series of seven contributions written by ex-soldiers who comment on the controversy surrounding *08/15*. Thilo Koch's piece is on pp.245 and 248-50.

²³ It may also be relevant to the issue of Asch's name when, in the same novel, Oberst Luschke uses the German idiom for a man who is militarily the 'lowest of the low': 'Schütze Arsch' (see Luschke's comments to Wedelmann: *Krieg*, p.578).

Name möglicherweise “Arsch” zu bedeuten hatte, war eine Suggestion, die kaum beabsichtigt war, dann aber augenzwinkernd hingenommen wurde’.²⁴

Given which, it is entirely logical that when Asch decides to take action against the military hierarchy, he should continue in carnivalesque vein. Asch’s ‘abenteuerliche Revolte’ (p.145) begins when Vierbein, having suffered days of persecution from his NCOs, tries to shoot himself during a rifle-shooting competition, and, as if to echo the regenerative beatings of Rabelais, Asch responds - despite ‘Wellen von Mitleid’ - by beating Vierbein into bloody submission (p.144). I say ‘regenerative’ because Asch’s goal is to save Vierbein’s life and toughen him up so that he can survive his military training.²⁵ Subsequently, Asch resolves to show Vierbein how to disregard authority and degrade the likes of Schulz and Platzek who have abused their power to victimize him. Or in other words, Asch treats the Wehrmacht just as the Carnival Fools of old had treated the gloomy, eternal institution of the Church when he tells Vierbein: ‘Es ist wohl die höchste Zeit, den Beweis dafür anzutreten, daß ein Kasernenhof alles andere als eine göttliche Institution ist’ (p.147). Asch is equally sceptical about grand words and ideas by which people set so much store, like those ‘eternal’ concepts described by Bakhtin: ‘ich finde alle großen Worte albern’ (p.198). So, because of his scepticism about the power and durability of great institutions and ideas, he shows his optimistic hopes of subverting the senior NCOs when he discusses his plans with his friend Kowalski (see p.157). During the ‘Siegesfeier’ to celebrate Schulz’s triumph in the shooting competition, for example, Asch adds schnaps to the beer to make the NCOs as drunk as possible (p.161) before telling Schulz to his face: ‘Ich scheiße auf so ein

²⁴ Hans Hellmut Kirst, *Das Schaf im Wolfspelz: Ein deutsches Leben*, p.318.

²⁵ Asch’s ally Kowalski implicitly understands the regenerative element of the beating when he says later: ‘Wenn ihm [Vierbein] die Prügel nicht helfen, die er heute mittag von dir bezogen hat, ist er ein hoffnungsloser Fall’ (p.158).

Unteroffizierskorps' (p.163). In this episode, then, Asch not only encourages gross alcoholic excess that leads to a range of grotesque behaviour on the part of the NCOs (see pp.157-63), he also displays a kind of *Narrenfreiheit* that allows him to abuse Schulz in terms that recall Rabelaisian faecal inundation. Asch next abuses his superior Werktru by accusing him of cheating at cards and being a scrounger (pp.186-7) to show Vierbein how to treat those in authority. He then systematically humiliates the rest of his superiors. First, he tricks Schulz's favourite martinet, Platzek, into falsifying a document which accounts for the six rounds of ammunition lost when Asch stopped Vierbein from killing himself. When Platzek is at his mercy, Asch confronts him with his cowardice for failing to take responsibility for the missing ammunition and tells him: 'Zunächst einmal [...] will ich, daß Sie sich wie ein halbwegs zivilisierter Mensch benehmen' (p.190). Second, Asch shoots a stolen round through the window of Schulz's private lavatory - a wellspring of carnivalesque imagery - when Schulz is enthroned there (p.193), an action which triggers panic and uproar. Third, Asch tricks the authoritarian pedant Lindenberg into breaking the regulations that he worships and insults the NCO by calling him an 'Aufseher' and a 'Sklavenhalter' (p.210). Fourth, Asch admits to Schulz that he insulted Lindenberg, confesses unprompted that he shot at Schulz and plans to aim better next time, and insults him, too: 'Wenn ich Sie wäre, würde mir oft schlecht werden. Ich würde mich zum Kotzen finden' (p.223). Finally, when the battery commander Derna tries to have Asch declared mad, Asch tells the doctor, Sämig, that the soldiers call him 'Knochenraspler' and 'Gehirnsäge' (p.237) because of his brutal lack of concern for patients and his amateurish grasp of medicine. When Sämig declares Asch mad and thus not responsible for his actions, Asch, also like Švejk before him, exploits this diagnosis to justify beating up the doctor. The novel ends with Asch's court-martial before the CO, Major Luschke, who himself has a somewhat grotesque appearance. He is nicknamed 'Knollengesicht' (p.79) because of his large, grotesque nose (a physical trait he shares

with so many of the officers drawn by Lada in *The Good Soldier Švejk*), and it is implied that Luschke is more consciously subversive since he ‘verbreitete mit Erfolg und nicht ohne Genuß Unruhe’ (p.252) by telephoning his subordinates at unexpected times. In keeping with this, he dispenses typical comic justice (like Azdak in Brecht’s *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* [written 1943-4])²⁶ by promoting Asch, threatening Schulz with demotion for being afraid of rifle-fire, and reprimanding the NCOs for their inability to control their men (pp.254-9). Thus, Asch’s attack on authority, embodied in his trickery, fearless verbal abuse and violence, allow him to be raised from his lowly status while his superiors are brought low.

Furthermore, the wider world in which Asch operates also fits Bakhtin’s model of Carnival. Indeed, some reviewers of the trilogy felt that the characters are polarized into two groups, thus reinforcing the sense that *08/15* parallels Bakhtin’s binaristic world-view. So, according to Seeberger, ‘Die Welt [von *08/15*] teilt sich ein in Sympathische und Unsympathische’; Mohler cited a reader of *08/15* who says: ‘Man weiß sofort, wer die Guten und wer die Bösen sind!’; and Kuczynski claimed, as late as 1991, that Kirst ‘teilt seine Soldatenwelt [in] zwei Gruppen’ (p.164). And as if to establish the idea of two opposing parties as an emblem for the novels, the opening scene of the trilogy involves Schulz dividing a platoon of soldiers into two groups (see p.9). The readers’ reactions to the book seems to have depended on the group - the ordinary soldiers or the bullying NCOs - with which they identified since initial reactions to *Kaserne* were sharply polarized. In his discussion of the debate surrounding *08/15*, Henrich referred both to the majority who strongly approved of *Kaserne* and to ‘die schneidend knappen und verächtlichen Urteile’ (p.2) of those who took offence, and he cited some of their

²⁶ It may be significant that Brecht’s play was first published and performed in Germany in 1954, when *Kaserne* was published. For Azdak’s and Luschke’s style of dispensing justice, see Kern’s reference to the ‘special notions of justice’ that obtain in comedy and related genres such as texts in the carnivalesque tradition (Kern, *The Absolute Comic*, p.34; cf. p.75).

comments, many of which stem from precisely that kind of unreconstructed, authoritarian personality criticized by Kirst. The fact that *Kaserne* arguably lends itself to such binaristic readings explains why Asch fits so easily into that world in his role as a Fool.

The Changing Role of the Carnavalesque

Nevertheless, for a large number of reasons, Kirst's trilogy is much more complex and problematic than the above polarization of critical reactions suggest, and a closer reading reveals that Kirst - especially in the two later novels - tempers the subversive forces embodied in Asch. Because of that, one might conclude that *08/15's* use of the carnivalesque resembles that of other, more 'serious' authors in the 1950s and 1960s who embraced carnivalesque subversiveness before distancing themselves from that mode of resistance or confronting its often dramatically negative consequences. In fact, *08/15's* tempering of the carnivalesque does not stem from *disappointment* at the carnivalesque's shortcomings: rather, the trilogy implies first, that a limited, qualified use of the carnivalesque may be the most effective way of deploying it; and second, that the carnivalesque functions can only *pave the way* for a new authority to replace what had come before. And in accordance with Bakhtin's model of Carnival, in which that new authority will be an *improved* version of what came before, Kirst implies that Asch's activities improve the running of his battery.

There are two ways in which Kirst tempers the carnivalesque. First, after *Kaserne*, Asch almost stops playing the Fool altogether: as Seeberger points out, Asch in *Krieg* and *Ende* is no longer the 'Erzschelm' he was in *Kaserne*. But the picaresque still lingers in *Krieg* and *Ende*: 'der Schelm bleibt trotzdem im Buch. Nur hat er dann die Gestalt des Obergefreiten Kowalski angenommen. Auch findet er sich in der Figur des

Unteroffiziers Soeft'. Or in other words, the role of the Fool passes from Asch to two other major characters and also, in a minor way, to Schulz.

Second, Deicke is only half-right when he describes Asch's activities in *Krieg* as follows: 'Die "abenteuerliche Revolte des Gefreiten Asch" wiederholt sich nicht, kann sich nicht wiederholen, denn Asch hat sich nicht entwickelt [...] Asch, obwohl Titelgestalt, ist gar nicht mehr Mittelpunktfigur'.²⁷ Although, as Deicke argues, *Krieg* no longer deals with revolt and subversion in the way that *Kaserne* had done, it is incorrect to say that Asch has not developed. Indeed, his alleged relegation to the role of just one of many important characters reflects his development from leading, subversive Fool-figure to responsible military leader who co-operates with his colleagues. As such, he is not a selfish individualist - as *Schelm*-figures conventionally are - and so casts a critical light on the glory-hunting, authoritarian bungler Hauptmann Witterer, the officer who takes command of Asch's artillery battery in *Krieg* (pp.265-6). Although Asch retains little of the Fool in *Krieg* and *Ende*, his role nevertheless connects with his subversiveness in *Kaserne*: having humbled the corruptly powerful in the first novel, Asch, now promoted to Wachtmeister, exemplifies effective military leadership within a successful unit that embodies the ideals of a *post-war* German Army by becoming a responsible authority-figure whom we are meant to admire. That such a transformation can occur is entirely in the spirit of the progressive qualities which Bakhtin attributes to Carnival.

²⁷ Günther Deicke, 'Der Rubikon des Hans Hellmut Kirst', *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 2 (1954), H.12, pp.171-5 (p.172).

Ironization of the Carnavalesque: Asch's Civilizing Role and Schulz's Folly

If we examine *Kaserne* more closely, we can already detect indications of Asch's future, responsible role. We can also detect Kirst beginning to distance himself from a positive attitude to the carnivalesque by having Schulz embody some of its negative sides, a shift which challenges the straightforward binarism between the 'good' and 'bad' characters registered by nearly all critics (see above). To begin with, Asch's subversion sometimes consists of entirely legal activities, by means of which he has a civilizing effect and restores order rather than spreading disorder, or as he himself says to Platzek: 'Zunächst einmal [...] will ich, daß Sie sich wie ein halbwegs zivilisierter Mensch benehmen' (p.190). In other words, his carnivalesque humiliation of Platzek also involves him positively confronting Platzek with his corrupt attempts to conceal the loss of the six rifle-rounds. Asch also tricks Lindenberg by claiming that, if Lindenberg overlooked him and Kowalski lying naked in bed when they should have got up, then he must have implicitly approved of their slovenliness (p.209), thereby using the Army regulations *against* Lindenberg, who lives by rules and regulations. Similarly, when Asch insults Schulz and confesses to shooting at him, his insults are part of an honest confession (see p.223); when Asch beats up Sämig, the assault cannot be punished legally because, according to Sämig's own diagnosis, Asch was not responsible for his actions; and Asch's foolery also brings to light the corruption of Küchenunteroffizier Rumpler by revealing that Rumpler has been serving reduced portions of meat and selling off the excess (see pp.171-2). Thus, *some* of Asch's actions that degrade and humble his superiors do not involve outrageous or immoral behaviour at all, but behaviour which is entirely within the letter of the regulations and exposes others' wrongdoing and criminal activities.

A moment of disillusionment comes at the end of *Kaserne*, when Asch is imprisoned and tells Kowalski that he believes his plans have failed: 'Im Grunde ist das alles genauso öde [...] Das ganze System ist total versaut. Ein völlig hoffnungsloser Fall' (p.240). But when Wedelmann visits him in prison, he indicates how Asch's civilizing influence can convert what he has achieved by his carnivalesque subversiveness into something new and positive whose effect is to improve the system that had existed before. Wedelmann begins by telling Asch: 'Sie erreichten nicht, was Sie wollten' and then adds that Asch, despite his pessimism, knows that his revolt has not yet achieved its aims: 'die Demonstration, die Sie bezwecken, wäre nichts weiter als eine brutale Gewalttat. Aber das ist nicht Ihr Ziel'. Wedelmann then explains that he understands that the drill-system destroys soldiers' individuality: 'Die Knochenmühlen arbeiten vorzüglich, sie pulverisieren den Charakter und zermahlen jedes Eigenleben' (p.242). But finally, and most importantly, Wedelmann argues that Asch's revolt makes no sense on its own and that something must replace what he has subverted: 'Auch ich bin dafür, daß diese Mühlen abgerissen werden - aber etwas anderes muß an deren Stelle entstehen. Etwas grundlegend anderes - eine Reformation!' (p.243).²⁸ Two factors emerge here that prepare for *Krieg* and *Ende*. First, Asch's carnivalesque revolt cannot go on indefinitely and must issue in a sensible, alternative system about which we shall hear more in *Krieg* where Asch himself, as a model leader, exemplifies the new system which functions efficiently but tolerates rather than crushes individuals' characters. Second, although Wedelmann is in no sense a carnivalesque character, he sympathizes with and wants to build on Asch's revolt (cf. Kowalski, below), something which partly explains the tolerant, efficient functioning of the battery in *Krieg*.

²⁸ Wedelmann echoes Kirst's own balanced sentiments in his 'Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen', where Kirst makes the Bakhtinian-sounding comment 'daß niedergerissen werden muß, wenn neu aufgebaut werden soll'.

Conversely, Schulz himself, Asch's principal opponent in *Kaserne*, already has something of the trickster and the carnivalesque about him. But if a negative character like Schulz can sometimes behave in a carnivalesque manner, then *Kaserne* must implicitly be putting a question mark over the assumption that the carnivalesque is inherently positive. For example, the 'Siegesfeier' (pp.157ff) to celebrate Schulz's success in the shooting competition is typically carnivalesque: it involves not only the consumption of huge quantities of alcohol that is typical of Carnival, but also a 'Staatsbegräbnis' in which Platzek, who is dead drunk, is laid on his bed (his 'Sarg') and then, 'unter dem Absingen schmutziger Lieder', put under a cold shower which revives him (p.162). This ceremony parallels the degradation, death and rebirth imagery involved in Bakhtinian Carnival. But Schulz also uses the 'Siegesfeier' and a drinking-session at a birthday party to encourage his fellow NCOs to *destroy* the outsider Vierbein, whose name's quadripedal implications suggest that his role is that of a Carnival scapegoat (pp.74 and 160). Then again, acting as a trickster, Schulz slyly engineers favourable treatment for himself and his fellow NCOs at the barracks canteen by threatening to bankrupt the owner, Bandurski, through underhand methods (p.27); he sees through Asch when he hears how Asch had deceived Lindenberg in order to be allowed out for the evening (p.30); and he castigates Lindenberg again when Asch and Kowalski report sick: 'Sie [kennen] die Schliche dieser Burschen nicht [...] Denn beide kennen die Spielregeln besser als Sie, Lindenberg' (p.110) - by implication, Schulz himself is very familiar with the tricks perpetrated by Fool-figures like Kowalski and Asch. Finally, despite his authoritarian side, he, like Asch, resents the authority of officers (to whom he refers in scatological terms: 'diese Scheißoffiziere!' [p.59]). So while Schulz is on one hand the target of the Fool Asch's subversion, on the other he engages in carnivalesque activities (that do not always have a regenerative outcome) and understands others' trickery while employing trickery himself and channelling Carnival's

aggression onto Vierbein. Implicitly then, Schulz's character suggests that Kirst already senses that the carnivalesque is not *ipso facto* a benign force.

In *Krieg*, Kirst's distancing of himself from the forms of the carnivalesque represented by Schulz becomes complete, for in this novel Schulz remains in the barracks during the War and plays the Fool by indulging in lavatorial pranks and jokes. For example, he orders his sidekicks, Bartsch and Ruhnau, to trap a dog belonging to the wife of the Stabszahlmeister - whom Schulz dislikes - by jamming its tail under a closed toilet seat (p.410): but the duo mistakenly trap the dog belonging to the commanding officer's fiancée (shades of Brecht's Schweyk). Similarly, Schulz arranges for a sign to be put up in the air-raid bunker: 'Es wird gebeten, sich nicht in die Hosen zu machen' (p.477): fortunately, the Reservemajor only narrowly fails to notice that it has been placed over his head. But such jokes reflect Schulz's trivial priorities in his sinecure away from the front, and the disorder caused by such sub-carnivalesque indulgence is merely an index of irresponsibility and stupidity. It no longer acts as a tool, as it did in Asch's hands in *Kaserne*, for subverting and improving a corrupt system.

Soeft, Kowalski and the Issue of Trivialization

If, in Kirst's work, the carnivalesque sometimes appear malign (in the form of Schulz) and benign (in the form of Asch), it also manifests itself in Soeft and Kowalski, the major carnivalesque figures in *Krieg* and *Ende*. But their behaviour differs significantly from that of Asch in *Kaserne*. As with Asch, several critics have interpreted Kowalski as a Fool: Deicke, for example, refers to 'der zu einer robusten Schwejktype ausgebildete ewige Obergefreite Kowalski' (p.171); Frühling sees Kowalski as 'der reichsdeutsche

Schwejk’;²⁹ and Mohler describes him as ‘Sancho Pansa-Kowalski’. Although Mohler’s reference to Kowalski as a sidekick to Asch’s Don Quixote reflects Kowalski’s less overtly carnivalesque role in *Krieg* and *Ende*, no critic has registered or explained the differences between Asch’s and Kowalski’s respective roles as Fools. In *Kaserne*, Kowalski is not especially carnivalesque, except perhaps in his enjoyment of violence and alcoholic excess (*Kaserne*, pp.45, 48, 136 and 138). Indeed, at two points, Kowalski appears to be uneasy about Asch’s revolt: when he feels obliged to explain to Rumpler why Asch had to ‘ausschlafen’ and was late for duty (p.171), and when he blushes at Asch’s insulting behaviour towards Lindenberg (p.208). Nevertheless, two dialogues with Asch anticipate Kowalski’s partial adoption of Asch’s Fool-role from *Krieg* onwards. To begin with, before Asch’s ‘Revolte’, Kowalski clearly expresses his pessimism about the prospect of effecting change:

“Ich liebe diesen Verein auch nicht”, sagte Kowalski. “Aber ich rechne von vornherein damit, daß ich ihn nicht ändern kann.”

“Wenn jeder so denkt”, sagte Asch, “werden wir nicht weit kommen.”

“Und wenn Tausende so denken wie du, kommt ihr trotzdem nicht weiter. Bleib aus dem Schußfeld und nähre dich redlich, das ist die Parole aller Soldaten, die ihren Verstand nicht auf der Bekleidungskammer abgeliefert haben” (p.157).

- an attitude that is unsurprising given his uncarnavalesque behaviour up to that point.

But by the time that Asch is jailed in *Kaserne*, Kowalski has been converted to Asch’s project, and in contrast to Asch’s temporary pessimism about the success of his revolt, Kowalski is now keen to continue Asch’s humiliation of the corrupt NCOs (p.240): like Wedelmann, Kowalski has understood Asch’s desire for change and supports him accordingly.

In line with this development, Kowalski becomes a Fool-figure in *Krieg* as Asch loses almost all of his Fool-like qualities. But however eager Kowalski may have seemed at

²⁹ Jacek Frühling, ‘Die Waffe des Witzes’, in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, pp.134-5 (p.134).

the end of *Kaserne*, his activities in *Krieg* mainly consist of pranks rather than the systematic subversion perpetrated by Asch in the earlier text. For example, Kowalski, who actually describes himself as a ‘Hanswurst’ (*Krieg*, p.499), has little respect for the military hierarchy and treats both his peers and his superiors equally casually (pp.294-5 and 307-8). Accordingly, he ‘promotes’ himself on two occasions: first, when he claims front-row seats for the ‘Wehrbetreuungstruppe’ performance by claiming that he is saving them for a General and that Asch is the General’s son (pp.405-6); and second, when he claims to ‘outrank’ senior officers in terms of sexual prowess: ‘ich [rangiere] noch vor den Stabsoffizieren [...]. In gewissen Betten sogar noch vor der Generalität’ (p.507). Perhaps, too, Kowalski’s role as Hauptmann Witterer’s chauffeur is meant to suggest that he is ‘in the driving seat’ both literally and metaphorically. Moreover, just as Kowalski promotes himself, he also degrades Witterer’s sycophantic Adjutant, Krause, in Bakhtinian fashion by verbally abusing him (p.390) before driving in such a way as to soak him in slush and dirt (p.419). Then again, when Witterer decides to charge Kowalski for his insolence, Kowalski enjoys the prospect of imprisonment (see pp.470-3), knowing that he, like the classic trickster figure, cannot be confined for long because his driving skills are irreplaceable (p.486).³⁰ Finally, Kowalski degrades the Generals yet again near the end of *Krieg*, when Asch informs Witterer that he does not need a map because he knows the local terrain so well. Witterer orders him to obtain one anyway: ‘Woher Sie die nehmen, ist mir gleichgültig. Und wenn Sie die einem General unter dem Hintern wegziehen’. In Bakhtinian fashion, Kowalski swaps the head with the backside and trumps Witterer’s joke by quipping: ‘Das ist nicht der Hintern, den der General über der Karte hat, das sieht nur wie ein Hintern aus’ (p.560). In other words, Kowalski is a Fool who can violate the military hierarchy easily, but in contrast to Asch in *Kaserne*

³⁰ Cf. the potted biography of Kowalski provided at the end of *Kaserne*: ‘Er stand dreimal vor dem Kriegsgericht, und niemals konnte man ihm irgend etwas beweisen’ (p.261).

none of his actions amount to a deliberate, sustained attempt to change the Army permanently or subvert its leadership.

In the topsy-turvy context of the front, that other Fool, Soeft, a mere Unteroffizier in charge of food-supplies who does not appear in *Kaserne*, can be the most powerful man in the battery - like his American counterpart Milo Minderbinder in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. He is variously described as 'Kalif von Bagdad' (p.394), 'der Verpflegungskönig' (ibid.), 'ein begnadetes Feldküchengeenie' (pp.395-6) and 'der "Generalfeldküchenmarschall"' (p.396). Moreover, as befits a carnivalesque figure who is both lowly and yet enjoys great power, Soeft has a grotesque appearance: he has 'eine[] erstaunlich große[] Zunge' (p.282) and 'einen gewaltigen Riechkolben' (p.368; cf. pp.441 and 500). Like Milo Minderbinder, Soeft spends *Krieg* making money for himself and keeping his battery unusually well-supplied. As his power and wealth derive from his ability to obtain large amounts of luxury food supplies, he is implicitly associated with the excessive feasting of Carnival. When we first encounter him, for example, he is eating 'ein leichtes Frühstück' of tuna with herbs on buttered toast with real coffee (pp.280-1) and he later takes orders from the gun-teams at the front who request liver and onions, mutton and even caviar (pp.396-7)!

To any reader familiar with historical accounts of the Eastern Front, Soeft's activities are entirely improbable. Bartov refers to 'living conditions of the utmost primitiveness' on the historical Eastern Front³¹ because half of all infantry divisions were supplied by horse and cart via long supply-lines on poor roads (pp.17-18).³² What motorized transport was available lacked fuel and spare parts (Westwood, p.76). Troops suffered from lack of sleep, apathy, cold, starvation, inappropriate clothing and illness (Bartov,

³¹ Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.17.

³² Cf. J.N. Westwood's claim that 'Guns were still horse-drawn' (J.N. Westwood, *Eastern Front: The Soviet-German War 1941-45* [London: Hamlyn, 1984], p.33).

pp.18ff and 23-4; Westwood, p.76). Moreover, conditions were made even worse by the terrible Russian winter of 1941-42 (Bartov, p.12). Still other historians mention the equipment shortages that led to the use of obsolete weaponry, the 'petty miseries such as lice', the 'extremely common' danger of frostbite, the frozen guns and equipment, the suicides, the dysentery and the self-inflicted wounds.³³ Bartov also claims that artillery was limited to ineffective, small-calibre anti-tank guns (p.19; cf. Hart et al., p.31) or guns whose barrels might explode (Bartov, p.23). The soldiers were allegedly brutalized by strict discipline (p.61) and warned not to fraternize with Russian women (p.94), strictures that derived directly from the 'highly ideological context' (p.68) within which the War was fought. Indeed, according to Bartov, because most troops were indoctrinated with Nazi ideology having grown up in the Third Reich (see pp.108-9), they were willing to commit atrocities against their 'sub-human', Bolshevik enemies. Bance was presumably thinking of such historical privations when he spoke of the 'trivial tone' of *Krieg*.³⁴ While it is true that German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich or the Holocaust often fails to correspond precisely to historical reality, causing critics sometimes to explain such discrepancies by reference to the author's unreconstructed attitudes to the past, in *Krieg* the discrepancy is so patent and systematic that it merits more detailed discussion.

In *Krieg* - set at the end of the harsh winter of 1941-42 - the soldiers encounter very few of the problems described above. For example, Kowalski's role as chauffeur shows that a car was available for the battery, and *Krieg* begins with Asch demanding that Witterer move his lorry so that his own can get past: or in other words, there are *too many* motorized vehicles! According to Pfeifer, 'Läuse sind ein Standardthema im

³³ Dr. S. Hart, Dr. R. Hart and Dr. M. Hughes, *The German Soldier in World War II* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2000), pp.25, 29 and 124-5.

³⁴ Alan Bance, 'Germany', in: Holger Klein (ed.), *The Second World War in Fiction* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1984), pp.88-130 (p.122).

Kriegsroman',³⁵ but *Krieg* mentions neither lice nor, indeed, horses, bad roads, the cold, suicide, illness or poor living conditions. Then again, Vierbein's success in destroying Russian tanks suggests that German guns were far from ineffective. Both Wedelmann and Soeft fraternize in different ways with Natascha, a Russian woman, which implies that neither character identifies with the Nazis' anti-Bolshevik ideology. Indeed, Nazi ideology and discipline are associated only with the new, unpopular commander, Hauptmann Witterer, who threatens Asch with a charge of 'Verächtlichmachung des Staates' (p.561) when he recalls an art exhibition in which he had seen a painting, numbered 175, called: 'Das ist unsere SA'.³⁶ Or in other words, both Soeft's ability to feed luxuries to the soldiers and his power within his unit, and Kowalski's cheek and disregard of the military hierarchy are of the same order as the improbably comfortable conditions in which Asch's battery lives.

How can such glaring improbability be explained? For one thing, it is worth noting that such mini-utopias are not unprecedented in Fool-novels, and that Kirst's carnivalesque military unit has a considerable high-literary pedigree. For instance, one recalls both the polyglot, liberated world of spirits beneath the Mummelsee, free from pain, punishment and religious or nationalist intolerance, in the fifth book of *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus*; the promise of a peaceful world free of sin, evil and religious discord under the reign of the madman Jupiter in the third book of the same novel; and the wise, just and modest governorship of the Island of Baratavia by an illiterate rustic, Sancho Panza, near the end of the second part of *Don Quixote*.

But Kirst's utopia also serves the expressed didactic purpose of his fiction. Pfeifer assumes that Kirst, like many writers before him, aimed to condemn the War and

³⁵ Jochen Pfeifer, *Der deutsche Kriegsroman 1945-60: Ein Versuch zur Vermittlung von Literatur und Sozialgeschichte* (Königstein/Ts. : Scriptor, 1981), p.87.

³⁶ Asch is thinking of paragraph 175 in the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, adopted in 1896, which prohibited homosexuality. The joke, of course, is that many of the SA leaders - most prominently Ernst Röhm - were indeed homosexuals.

criticizes Kirst's style by writing: 'der Irrsinn des Krieges [ist] nicht aus spannenden Abenteuern zu erschließen' (p.65). In my view, one should discard the assumption that *08/15* is like earlier war-fiction in that it offers an accurate depiction of the historical realities of war and thus condemns it. Kirst's primary concern was not, as we have seen, to contemplate 'der Irrsinn des Kriegs' or passively lament its horrors but, as he said in 1954, to persuade his readers to draw a lesson from his work. So there must be another reason for the allegedly 'trivial tone' of *Krieg*. Moreover, Kirst himself was well aware of the dangers of trivializing war and exemplified the problems via negatively portrayed characters who are guilty of precisely this. For example, when Witterer visits his soldiers in hospital, he is characteristically insensitive. When he examines a man with a large, bleeding, stomach-wound, he trivializes the situation with the comment: 'Könnte schlimmer sein' (p.468). Similarly, the comic duo Bartsch and Ruhnau, who work as Schulz's henchmen away from the front, are also guilty of trivializing war: despite their knowledge of conditions at the front and attempts not to be sent there, they give themselves military nicknames like 'Bomben', 'Kanonen', 'Panzerkreuzer' and 'Minensucher' (p.340). Finally, for Schulz, who is still working behind the lines, war is solely about the relatively trivial issue of promotion (see p.607).

In my view, it can be argued that Kirst discards historical authenticity in order to offer the reader an approximate vision of the ideal, *post-War* military unit in the form of Asch's battery which reflects the positive, civilizing effects of Asch's carnivalesque activities in *Kaserne*. First, *Krieg* is continuous with *Kaserne*, which, on my reading, reverses the trend in German war-fiction of presenting German soldiers as victims. While *Krieg* involves none of the subversiveness of *Kaserne*, Kirst moves the argument from the self-pitying discourse of other war novels and depicts soldiers who are efficient, able to survive, and show initiative. This reversal means that the reader is not distracted by well-worn descriptions of the horrors of war and can concentrate on what are, in my

view, Kirst's central concerns: to indicate ways of changing and improving the efficiency and humanity of the German Army and to illustrate Hauptmann Witterer's abuse of power. Second, Asch's battery shows the civilizing influence of his earlier activities in *Kaserne* by allowing carnivalesque characters like Kowalski and Soeft to be tolerated when one would expect their behaviour to cause problems. On the one hand, Kowalski's slovenly appearance and cheek, and Soeft's pursuit of profits could undermine the good order of a military unit. But on the other hand, Soeft's schemes - however selfish his motives - improve conditions for his comrades, and Kowalski is, according to Hauptwachtmeister Bock, 'Der anerkannt beste Kraftfahrer der Batterie' (p.326).³⁷ Soeft and Kowalski's attitude to conventional, parade-ground discipline and the military hierarchy proves to be irrelevant when compared to the much more important issue of military efficiency. As Wedelmann explains to Witterer: 'Kampfkraft ist wichtiger als Disziplin' (p.303). In *Krieg*, there is no need to present Kowalski and Soeft as Fools who are out to subvert the military system because their part of that system has already benefitted from the carnivalesque destruction of its more negative, authoritarian sides.³⁸ Because the carnivalesque has already left its mark on the unit, its presence is less overt, leading Pfeifer to note that *Krieg* is 'untypisch für den Schelmenroman [...], weil es mehrere Hauptpersonen gibt' (p.65). This very clearly suggests that *Krieg* has progressed from the victimized viewpoint of earlier war novels and has moved on from the typically selfish individualism of the *Schelm*: there is no single, central protagonist because the positive characters generally co-operate within the unit. Perhaps most significantly, the ethos of Asch's battery in *Krieg* anticipates post-war notions of 'innere Führung' that involved unit cohesion and respect for the individual soldier's rights as a

³⁷ In this context, Soeft's name is significant because it recalls the 'Jäger von Soest', the nickname acquired by Grimmelshausen's Simplicissimus precisely because he is such an effective soldier.

³⁸ Significantly, although Kowalski looks like a Fool-figure, his post-war career reflects his understanding of the need sometimes for moderation, order and control: 'Nach dem Krieg schloß er sich einer sozialen Partei an [...]. Er ist von seiner Fraktion als Polizeipräsident vorgesehen' (*Kaserne*, p.261).

citizen. Kirst's lesson, then, is not that we should linger self-indulgently on the past, but that we should learn from it in a humane and positive way. However unrealistic Asch's unit may be historically, its existence and nature are entirely consonant with Kirst's stated aim of using his writing to teach his readers a constructive lesson.

Military (In)competence: Witterer versus Asch

Just as the battery in *Krieg* is an approximation of what could be possible in a military unit of the future, so Kirst offers, in the form of Asch, a similarly approximate indication of what the ideal, modern military leader could be. In *Krieg*, Asch once again confronts an authoritarian fool (in the colloquial sense), Hauptmann Witterer, but does not set out to humiliate him: rather, his own behaviour as an NCO exposes Witterer's militarily incompetent posturing and shows how far Asch has changed from Fool to ideal military leader. Correspondingly, we can see Kirst sensibly refraining from celebrating the carnivalesque unchecked and offering something moderate and practical to replace his earlier subversiveness. Thus, Witterer turns out to be a malign disruptive influence on the unit, in contrast to Asch's beneficially disruptive activities in *Kaserne*. In 'Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen', Kirst said that his opposition to harsh drill-methods partly consisted in the fact that such rituals were useless for coping with the practicalities of the battlefield - and I would argue that this is the lesson Kirst wants his readers to draw from *Krieg*. Witterer may be as authoritarian as Schulz, but whereas Schulz in *Kaserne* demonstrated the pernicious effects of his style of leadership only in the barracks, Witterer does so at the front.

In *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (1976), Norman Dixon posits a connection between authoritarian personalities and military incompetence. Following the

research of Adorno and others in the 1940s,³⁹ Dixon lists typical characteristics of the authoritarian personality. These include: rigid adherence to conventional values; a submissive, uncritical attitude to authority; a tendency to seek out and show aggression towards those who violate those values or criticize those authorities; opposition to the subjective, the imaginative or the tender-minded; the habit of thinking in rigid categories; a preoccupation with dominance and submission, strength and weakness; the assertion of 'toughness'; and an inability to empathize with other human beings. Moreover, such authoritarians are allegedly the products of parents who are so anxious about status that their offspring are pressurized to seek the status which their parents desired.⁴⁰ Dixon then shows how an excessively authoritarian personality can create military incompetence. For example, authoritarians favour harsh, traditional drill-methods - partly because of their unthinking adherence to empty tradition and partly because of the opportunities offered by such methods for releasing frustrated aggression and exploiting the power of rank. Moreover, authoritarians insist on blind loyalty among the lower ranks at the expense of initiative or imagination: accordingly, any criticism of themselves or those who are even more senior is censured, however valid it may be. Then again, because authoritarians think in rigid categories, adhere to convention, and rarely reflect on or question the prejudices by which they live, Dixon argues that they ignore information which conflicts with their preconceptions about, say, the enemy's intentions and are incapable of sacrificing military traditions in favour of technical or tactical innovation. Then again, because of the frustrated aggression that accumulates due to their submission to authority, authoritarians are quick to take out that aggression on

³⁹ Their research was first published five years after the War, in English, as: T.W. Adorno, E. Frankel-Brunswik, D.T. Levinson and R.N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950).

⁴⁰ Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp.258-9.

despised outsiders, including foreigners. As a result, military authoritarians can underestimate an enemy whom they despise and view in stereotyped ways. Finally, when their lack of empathy leads to the squandering of lives in combat, such personalities cannot reflect on their own shortcomings and allegedly blame other, junior ranks for their military failures (pp.263-79). As Dixon's model might be termed an 'ideal' authoritarian military leader, an individual commander need not exhibit all the above traits to be considered authoritarian. Nevertheless, his definition of the incompetent military authoritarian provides a useful way of evaluating the characters of Witterer and Asch.

Witterer's character suggests that Kirst instinctively understood the typical features of the authoritarian and the dangers they can cause, and constructed Asch's character in *Krieg* and *Ende* as an alternative. In that sense, the *08/15* trilogy as a whole deals not only with subversion of authority but also with imagining a workable alternative. *Krieg* recounts how a new commander, Witterer, leaves his desk-job at HQ and is attached to Asch's highly successful artillery battery on the Eastern Front late in the winter of 1941-42. Although, as in each novel of the trilogy, the plot involves several strands, it mainly focuses on the front, where Witterer's incompetent leadership causes catastrophe and results in Vierbein's death. Much of Witterer's activities stem from the kind of authoritarian personality described in Dixon's book. For instance, *Krieg* opens with a confrontation between Asch and Witterer in which Asch asks Witterer to move his lorry which is blocking the road. Witterer immediately shows how he is controlled by notions of power and rank rather than by common sense: he deflects the perceived slight to his authority by dismissing Asch's request, reminds Asch of his superior rank, and calls him 'undiszipliniert' despite the fact that Asch needs to get past in order to deliver a new gun to his battery (*Krieg*, pp.267-8). Witterer's anxiety that he be shown proper respect manifests itself again when he first meets Leutnant Wedelmann: instead of praising the battery for its success, Witterer suggests that their combat-performance might have been

achieved at the cost of discipline. When Wedelmann contradicts him, Witterer pulls rank to silence his colleague: 'er leistete sich einen nachsichtigen Oberlehrerton. Schließlich war er Hauptmann. Es war manchmal ratsam, auch Offizierskameraden darauf aufmerksam zu machen' (p.303). Finally, he brooks no contradiction for a third time when, later in the text, Wedelmann tries to discourage him from unnecessary attacks (see p.348). So like all authoritarians, Witterer expects his rank alone to bring him respect and elevate him above criticism or contradiction. But he also treats war as a means of gaining even greater status. When a journalist comes to photograph the front line, Witterer betrays his inability to criticize himself and fantasizes about the admiration he will receive from his peers: 'Er kannte seinen Wert und hatte noch niemals an sich gezweifelt. Und er fragte sich, was wohl seine Freunde in der Heimat sagen könnten, wenn sie ihn möglicherweise auf der Titelseite des *Völkischen Beobachters* entdecken würden' (p.487).

Given the above, it is entirely logical that Witterer likes those who conform to his idea of discipline by respecting rank and status and looking tidy. So when Witterer reaches the front and is greeted formally by Hauptwachtmeister Bock, he betrays his outdated and irrelevant preconceptions about proper soldiering: 'Altgedienter Soldat - das sah man auf den ersten Blick. Rückgrat der Armee! Auf solche Männer konnte er sich verlassen, die brauchte er hier - genau die!' (p.302). He is similarly impressed by Unteroffizier Krause because of his text-book salute, clean uniform, close shave, family and educational background (pp.329-30). But Krause's pomposity about his lowly rank partly explains his failure as a soldier: 'Gleich zu Beginn hatte zum Beispiel seine Geschützbedienung den Versuch gemacht, ihn, den Unteroffizier Krause, zu duzen. Nun, er hat ihnen gezeigt, woher der Wind weht' (p.368). Thus, in the name of self-importance, Krause perpetuates the binarism of NCOs and ordinary soldiers which militates against cooperation and efficiency. Vierbein, in contrast, runs a successful gun-team who

‘duzen’ each other (ibid.). Ultimately, Oberst Luschke, Asch’s ally, tries vainly to explain the primacy of co-operation over arrogance to Witterer:

Haben Sie schon mal was von Vertrauen gehört? Von Zusammenarbeit? [...] Aber was das ist, wissen Sie vermutlich nicht ganz genau? [...] Lassen Sie sich ruhig von Ihren Soldaten beraten [...] Sie haben dort eine Menge ausgezeichnete Soldaten - *mit* ihnen sollen Sie Krieg führen, aber nicht *gegen* sie (p.513).

In other words, as Krause discovers and as Luschke already knows, the binarism by which Asch defined himself in *Kaserne* against the likes of Schulz and Platzek becomes counter-productive in war-time - but Witterer insists on propagating such hierarchical ideas.

Witterer is also guilty of a chronic underestimation of the enemy and sees his inflexible reliance on written rules as evidence of his superiority over the Russians: ‘Die Vorschrift ist die Bibel des Soldaten - nur durch sie wird eine Konzentration der Kräfte erreicht, die jeden Gegner, der ohne planvolle Zielstrebigkeit auf die Dauer verloren ist, todsicher auf die Knie zwingen wird’ (p.401), a cliché-ridden claim which combines rigid preconceptions about combat with the erroneous assumption that the enemy is not as well organized as the Wehrmacht. Witterer shows another, similar kind of preconception about combat when he likens it to boys’ adventure stories and underestimates his enemy yet again when he imagines ‘die dummen, die saudummen Gesichter der Gegner [...]. Das war beinahe wie Karl May!’ (p.464).⁴¹

Finally, Witterer shows all the frustrated aggression of an authoritarian commander in his eagerness to launch needless and tactically unsubtle attacks on the enemy he so despises. For example, having inspected the battery and the front, Witterer makes clear his intention to launch some kind of offensive and suggests that an enemy attack could

⁴¹ In his enthusiasm for Karl May, Witterer resembles Hitler, who allegedly (if implausibly) trawled May’s work for military tactics to employ against the Russians: see Robert G.L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God Adolf Hitler*, pp.11-12.

happen at any minute. But he ignores the fact that there has been no fighting in that sector for some time and Asch's intelligence that there have been no enemy movements or reinforcements (pp.306-7). He also persists in disregarding information that contradicts his preconceptions when he criticizes Bock for having no plans to deal with sudden Russian offensives (p.328) - but Asch has already told him that there is no evidence of an impending Russian attack. Later, Witterer ignores the implications of the failure of his first, abortive attack: when he visits the military hospital, he shows his inability to empathize with his fellow human beings by denying the seriousness of his troops' wounds, lamenting the lack of optimism among the patients, and being revolted by the stench in the wards (pp.467-8). Furthermore, such sights and smells do not mollify his aggression and he gleefully anticipates his next assault: 'Seitdem er Uniform trug, und eigentlich schon Jahre vorher, hatte er dem Fronterlebnis mit Verlangen entgegengesehen - jetzt also war er kurz davor, einzusteigen!' (p.511). The two phenomena go hand-in-hand: Witterer's blindness to the possible consequences of combat make possible his enthusiasm for futile battles.

But however obnoxious Witterer's authoritarian personality may be, the catastrophic effects of his military incompetence are most obvious after the two attacks he initiates. First, while inspecting the lines, he notices a Russian 'Essenträger' walking in the distance and shatters the long-lasting peace by ordering the artillery to bombard the lone enemy soldier (pp.421-4). But the troops deliberately aim inaccurately, and when the infantry commander calls to complain, Witterer insults him. As a result, the Russians not only injure three infantrymen by firing grenade-launchers in retaliation (p.426), they also bring hitherto concealed artillery up to the front line (p.452). Thus, Witterer's first act of incompetence reflects his uncontrolled aggression against a harmless enemy, his lack of tactical sense, his dismissal of criticism from a fellow officer, and his misjudgement of the Russians' reaction. In his second attack Witterer repeats all his errors: when he

bombards the enemy, the Russians immediately return fire, kill and wound several men, and expose his misjudgement of their intentions and strengths. To make matters worse, he shows no empathy whatsoever when one of his men is wounded by shrapnel: 'Der Kerl soll sich zusammenehmen' (p.519). Despite all that, he continues to dismiss Russian fire-power, first to Krause and Kowalski: 'Was heißt das schon! Die Kerle werden uns für dumm verkaufen wollen. Die machen Lärm. Die haben irgendwas gemerkt und schießen jetzt aus allen Knopflöchern. In spätestens zehn Minuten geht ihnen die Puste aus' (p.530), and then to Luschke, who has informed him that the Russians have heavily reinforced the line: 'Ein Bluff vermutlich, Herr Oberst. Der Iwan...'. Significantly, Luschke corrects Witterer's sloppy language: 'Sagen Sie bitte, der Gegner' (p.542). At the end of *Krieg*, Witterer flees the battlefield in cowardly fashion and leaves Vierbein to his death (pp.586-7) - but the loss of these men is insignificant to Witterer, and this enrages Luschke who parrots Witterer's words: 'Nur ein Unteroffizier und sieben Mann, nur!' (p.590). Thus, Witterer's final failure shows his insensitivity to the lives he has wasted; Luschke's objection to the word 'Iwan' indicates how Witterer's underestimation of the enemy was rooted in xenophobic stereotypes that are typical of the authoritarian personality; and the results of Witterer's incompetence are loss of life and a disorderly retreat from the front.

Asch's role in *Krieg* is to offer an alternative to Witterer's leadership and his personality defines itself starkly against Dixon's picture of the incompetent authoritarian. To begin with, Asch's anti-authoritarianism manifests itself in the wish that his soldiers should develop independent opinions: 'Soldaten werden nicht nach ihrer Meinung gefragt. Einigen gefällt das sogar. Sie lassen sich lieber Blut abzapfen, ehe sie ihr Hirn in Tätigkeit setzen' (p.270). And he himself exemplifies the ability to reflect upon counter-productive orders: 'Ihm waren nicht alle Befehle heilig. Er leistete sich den Luxus, eigene Gedanken zu haben' (p.333). Similarly, he is thoughtful enough to be able to

criticize his own behaviour: when, for example, he offends Lisa Ebner of the 'Wehrbetreuungstruppe', he apologizes for his rudeness (p.378).

But Asch's skills as a military leader are most visible in his confrontations with Witterer. He attempts to dissuade Witterer from launching his first bombardment by explaining that provoking combat gratuitously will only cause casualties on both sides: Witterer, however, justifies his aggression by appealing to the authoritarian values of 'toughness' and 'fighting spirit' ('Wachtmeister Asch, [...] Ihnen fehlt die notwendige Härte. Und darüber hinaus scheint es Ihnen an Kampfgeist zu fehlen' [p.352]) - to which Asch replies: 'Wir vermeiden unnötiges Blutvergießen - das ist alles' (ibid.). But Asch also points out that an attack will encourage the Russians to bring up more artillery to that sector and is proved right (p.452). Then again, when the battery is retreating, Asch contradicts Witterer's plans by suggesting that it should wait for three hours before departing, since the roads will be blocked with other retreating vehicles from their division - another prediction which is proved correct (p.529). During this episode, Witterer's attempt to restore his authority and force through his unpragmatic plans ('Kein Krieg ist ohne Organisation möglich') is countered by Asch's 'Ohne Improvisation auch nicht'. Analogously, in the same scene Asch asks: 'Ist denn nachdenken verboten?' (p.527). Finally, Asch's practical sense exposes Witterer's incompetence when a lorry becomes stuck in the snow and Asch immediately orders brushwood to be placed under the tyres. The driver's reply to Asch's order is: 'Das habe ich doch schon vor einer halben Stunde gesagt' (p.558) - but Witterer had neither listened to the driver nor thought of an alternative way of dealing with the problem. In all three instances Witterer ignores Asch's sensible advice or, in the third example, that of an even more junior soldier, and so betrays his inability to accept information that contradicts his own prejudices. In contrast, Asch's words and actions evince a belief in improvisation, careful thought,

reliance on experience, and concern for the welfare of his men and the efficient running of the battery in general.

But Asch's changed role has a further dimension. Asch's new rank and responsibilities bring out the 'policing' role he had had in *Kaserne*: indeed, in *Krieg* this change means that there is a tension between him and the grotesque Soeft - who, on my reading, embodies the carnivalesque excesses of feasting - and even Kowalski. For example, Asch uses a 'spöttische[r] Blick' (p.503) to prevent Kowalski from boasting about his sexual prowess and clashes with Soeft when Soeft steals Asch's ammunition-lorry in order to transport his own luxuries. Soeft offers a girl to Wedelmann and a crate of luxuries to Asch, but Asch refuses these offers of food and sex because he needs the ammunition for the security of his battery: 'Wenn ich die Wahl habe zwischen einem leeren Magen und einem Loch im Kopf, dann wähle ich den leeren Magen' (p.286). So Asch's pragmatism defeats the irresponsible temptations and excesses offered by Soeft. Finally, Soeft carps about Asch for sabotaging his brothel when they first reached Russia. Witterer assumes that Asch's rejection of the brothel is because he is now married to Elisabeth, his girl-friend from *Kaserne* (p.372) - a significant assumption because, in generic terms, critics often interpret a *Schelm's* marriage as a sign of his assimilation by society. Or in other words, Asch's abandonment of the Fool role leads to occasional tensions with those characters who now embody carnivalesque values (such as excessive feasting and sexuality) to the point where he even clashes with Kowalski. When Asch tells Kowalski that he has drunk too much, Kowalski highlights Asch's bossy attempt to moderate excess: 'du bist ein Wachtmeister [...] Und das merkt man manchmal sogar' (p.297).⁴²

⁴² What I have called Asch's 'policing' role is reflected in his promotion in *Krieg* since 'Wachtmeister' is not only a NCO-rank in the German artillery, but also the old-fashioned, polite form of address to a policeman (cf. the English word 'Officer'). Kirst would have known this because his father was a policeman (see the biographical details in Puknus [ed.], *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, p.212).

In *Krieg* then, the positions of *Kaserne* have been reversed: the tolerant and efficient battery forms an ordered majority, whereas the authoritarian Witterer becomes a selfish individualist who represents a disruptive external influence. Kirst reflects his distaste for the values embodied in Witterer when he depicts him committing the one atrocity of the novel during which two partisans are made to dig their own grave before being executed (p.392). Significantly, Bartov felt that this kind of real atrocity recalled the medieval Carnival:⁴³ so with savage irony - in Bartov's terms at least - Witterer's disruptive, criminal behaviour turns him into a (negative) carnivalesque figure.

08/15 Bis zum Ende: *Kirst's Over-Ambition*

In *Ende*, Asch pits himself against two more villains, Oberst Hauk and Leutnant Greifer. At the start of the novel, Hauk orders the infantry unit to which Asch is attached to launch a suicidal attack against the Americans. But he fails to provide the reinforcements he had promised, and it emerges that the attack was intended to cover his and Greifer's own retreat from the front. So Asch and an infantry officer, Hinrichsen, pursue Hauk and Greifer to exact revenge.⁴⁴ While doing so, Asch discovers that Hauk and Greifer have beaten a woman to death and shot another man while searching for three supply-crates, the nature of whose valuable contents is never revealed to the reader. In the end, Asch captures Greifer and after a hasty court-martial, hangs him, but Hauk

⁴³ Bartov claims that atrocities encouraged comradeship rather than disrupted the army, as I am arguing: 'The decision to allow, for a determined spell of time, such localized and controlled chaos, and to direct it toward defenseless members of the enemy's side, instead of leading to the army's disintegration, actually enhanced its cohesion' (p.72). In a footnote to this comment, Bartov says: 'A different example of the function of structured chaos in ordering society is the Medieval Carnival' and mentions Le Roy Ladurie's, *Carnival in Romans* (p.200, n.36).

⁴⁴ Hinrichsen's name signifies his role as the 'executioner' ('hinrichten' = 'to execute') of a Nazi criminal whose own name recalls 'Hauke' Haien of Theodor Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter* (1888), a man whose pride leads him to violate established codes and who dies as a result in cataclysmic circumstances.

has long since surrendered to the Americans, so in order to punish him, Asch, Wedelmann and Kowalski arrange a brief uprising against the Americans and extract him from his POW camp. To bring Hauk to justice, Hinrichsen duels him with sub-machine guns and both men kill each other.

Ende is much less concerned with the carnivalesque than the two previous novels because Kirst is now interested in such wider issues as explaining how Nazism could achieve power, loss of faith in God, the Holocaust, the apportionment of guilt, and - in particular - the search for justice for crimes perpetrated under Nazism. The novel tackles the Third Reich as a whole more explicitly and ambitiously than the first two novels. For example, at the end of the novel, Hinrichsen admits to Asch that he (Hinrichsen) had denied to himself that the stories of Nazi atrocities were true (see pp.868-9) and explains that he had supported Nazism because Hitler seemed to be an ordinary man like him who had fought in World War One, promised 'Sauberkeit, Anständigkeit, einfaches, gesundes Leben' (p.868), and improved the economy of his small home-town. So at the very end of the trilogy, Kirst offers at least a partial explanation of why ordinary Germans had supported Hitler. Similarly, it is not until *Ende* that Oberst Luschke attempts to accept some responsibility for the criminality of the War. Moreover, the rest of the novel contains several references to even more complex issues. For example, in the final scene of the trilogy the priest Westerhaus appeals to God to bring some meaning to the War - but receives no reply (see pp.886-7). Many of the characters wrestle with issues such as the necessity for justice after the War and the difficulties involved in identifying those responsible (see, for example, the argument conducted by CIC officers, 'James I' and 'James II', about German collective guilt [see pp.835-7]). Then again, Kirst even has his characters discuss the Holocaust and concentration camps: for example, in his discussion with the priest Westerhaus about the need for humane, liberal people to rebuild Germany, Freitag mentions concentration camps and raises the controversial issue that many

criminals in the camps would pass themselves off as anti-fascists after the war (see p.709). James I refers to the destruction of six million 'Menschen' (p.839) - but without mentioning Jews or camps - and Asch mentions that: 'In einer Stunde sollen in Auschwitz siebenhundertunddreißig Mann verheizt worden sein' (p.808). Kirst even briefly depicts a Jewish character in Asch's father's housekeeper, 'eine Halbjüdin' (p.690), but we only see her in a curt verbal exchange with Wedelmann (see p.640). But such passing references, daring though they are so soon after the War, do not amount to a detailed engagement with the Holocaust. Nor are the discussions of 'betrayal' and guilt especially productive in offering solutions to the big issues of Germany's past - which, as is so often the case with prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, seem to be insoluble. Wagener, for instance, describes Luschke's confessions of guilt for the war in *Ende* as 'zu spät kommende[s] Moralisieren' and continues: 'In 08/15 kommt es höchstens zu einer vereinfachenden, angehängt wirkenden Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus' (p.246). So like so many novels published *after* Kirst's trilogy, Kirst's own attempts to tackle the larger, difficult topics that the Third Reich involved - a more ambitious subject than his concern with the reformation of the armed forces - are either inconclusive or treat the issues too briefly, as in the allusions to the Holocaust.⁴⁵

Despite these limitations, *Ende*'s central concern is with the issue of achieving justice for Nazism's crimes. But by tapping into another generic tradition, that of the detective-story, in order to solve the problem of justice for all the crimes to which he alludes in *Ende*, Kirst thematizes his simplistic, superficial treatment of the denser and more complex issues raised by the Third Reich. Although Asch's new role in *Ende* as a detective follows on from his 'policing' role in *Kaserne* and *Krieg*, it is all too easy for

⁴⁵ Ernestine Schlant's *The Language of Silence* is just one example of several secondary works which interpret prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich and find fault again and again with the texts they discuss precisely because bringing closure to the larger issues surrounding the Third Reich can seem impossible.

the detective-story genre to oversimplify issues of justice and guilt. As Bance says: '[Kirst] finds a popular-novel, detective-story way of bringing order into chaos' (p.103) - but one cannot convincingly bring order to the mental and material chaos of Germany in the immediate post-war period using the simple structures of the detective novel. Moreover, once Asch has caught his quarry, Kirst uses the carnivalesque model alongside what might be called a conventional model of justice to bring the war criminals Hauk and Greifer to justice. On the one hand, Greifer, who has a 'Nußknackerkinn' (p.661) (which presumably gives him a brutish appearance and thus validates the problematic notion that the criminals of the Third Reich were somehow not quite human), is hanged after a court-martial by Asch and his colleagues - i.e. according to conventional justice. But on the other hand, Hauk is dispatched in carnivalesque circumstances as part of an uprising against the Americans by the prisoners-of-war, including Asch and Hinrichsen. Like a Carnival, the uprising is explicitly planned to be of limited duration (p.852); it involves the destruction of a scapegoat, Hauk; it involves travesty in that Hinrichsen, who had been working for the CIC, changes back into his Wehrmacht uniform, an action which prompts James I to call the affair a 'Mummenschanz', a 'Theater' and a 'Maskenball' (p.856); and it involves a limited inversion of the relationship between the powerful Americans and the powerless German prisoners.

But there are problems. First, in a book that deals - however superficially - with some of the major issues thrown up by the Third Reich, Hauk and Greifer are obviously meant to stand for the evils of Nazism: but the murders they perpetrate are motivated by greed for the three supply-crates, not politics or racism. Furthermore, they are unambiguously guilty in a way that ignores the complex shades of guilt among individual Germans after the War. Thus, the Carnival model here involves an over-simple binarism - not of high and low culture but of guilty and innocent people. Accordingly, the mini-Carnival at the POW camp is subsumed into the detective-story model in which, conventionally, the

guilty criminals are known to be guilty and successfully caught, as they are in *Ende*.⁴⁶ A brutal if conventional form of justice punishes Greifer, and carnivalesque justice executes Hauk in the same way. Thus, whereas Asch's carnivalesque subversion in *Kaserne* was suitable for achieving the modest goal of identifying and changing the shortcomings of the military system, in *Ende* the carnivalesque is not appropriate to the larger, more complex *topoi* that form the novel's core.

Conclusion

Despite *Ende*'s attempts to grapple with more ambitious problems, the *08/15* novels are not particularly political books. Pfeifer claims that 'Die meisten Kriegsromane sparen den Zusammenhang von Krieg und Politik aus', and Kirst's novels are allegedly typical of such novels: 'das Dritte Reich [wird] wirksam ausgeklammert' (p.147). Similarly, Kuczynski asserts that: 'Kirst setzt sich nicht mit dem deutschen Faschismus auseinander' (p.164). But I would argue that for at least four reasons, *08/15* has been more productive in its confrontation with the *Nazizeit* than other, better-written, better-known and more ambitious novels.

First, as we have seen, Kirst intended his readers to learn both a lesson from his work and a lesson from the Third Reich: he showed how militarily incompetent, authoritarian leaders attained power in the armed forces and abused the drill-system to destroy their subordinates. But with typical Bakhtinian ambivalence, Kirst put something in place of

⁴⁶ In the plot-strand of *08/15 In der Partei* which involves the murder of the SS-man Keller, Kirst deploys the detective-story genre once again: yet again, the possibility that several characters might be guilty is resolved very neatly in the end in a way that is unhelpful for the much more complex, ambiguous issues of guilt involved in Germany's confrontation with its Nazi past. Like *Ende*, *08/15 In der Partei* focusses, albeit more humorously, on the political issues which are ignored in *Kaserne* and *Krieg* and which have caused so many problems for other authors.

what he had so carnivalesquely degraded: thus, in *Krieg*, Kirst showed how a military unit run by tolerant, competent leaders could function as a guideline for the future, while simultaneously demonstrating how the same authoritarian personality that promotes dehumanizing drill is entirely dysfunctional in the field. But Abenheim's claim that 'The senselessness of the *Kommiss* [...] had caused public resentment and satire long before the Nazis came to power' (p.82) suggests that Kirst would have understood that although the drill-system had been a problem for decades, the Army had been tainted by Nazism and would now - as the reformed Bundeswehr - be willing to modify its authoritarian culture in the name of rejecting certain aspects of its tainted tradition. Or in other words, because Kirst knew that the Army was very sensitive about its Nazi past, he associated the drill-system with the Nazi era *in particular* in order to encourage contemporary military planners to reject that drill-system as an integral part of the discredited past.

Second, having bound the problematic drill-system to the fraught and explosive issue of the Nazi past in order to promote change in the present, the strength of Kirst's novels lies - ironically - in the modest nature of his proposed changes. That is to say: because Kirst wanted to change only a few aspects of a limited sphere of German society (the armed forces), his hopes were much more likely to be realized. Kirst, anticipating Grass in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972), already understood instinctively that one effective way of coming to terms with the past was to limit oneself to small changes rather than indulge in grand gestures. At the conclusion of *Ende* Kirst appended a speech by Schulz at a veterans' meeting in 1954 under the title 'An Stelle eines Nachworts' (pp.891-3) in which Schulz praises the efforts of the soldiers in the Wehrmacht, sidesteps the issue of the War's criminality, and betrays his own unreconstructed Nazi-style attitudes by referring to 'antideutsche und daher probolschewistische Literatur' (p.893). Although Schulz speaks of the Army, his words point to the wider issue of a failure among the German population as a whole to confront the past and their own prejudices.

Consequently, the speech can be read as an ironic admission by Kirst that he knew that the more ambitious concerns of *Ende* would have little impact either on the attitudes of his readers or on the attempts to bring closure to Germany's confrontation with the Nazi past.⁴⁷ As a result, we are left with the much more modest, but more practical and realistic lessons of *Kaserne* and *Krieg*.

Third, Kirst pre-emptively understood the limitations of tapping into the carnivalesque tradition, and that understanding followed directly from his instinctive preference for limited change over grand designs. I have argued that several authors of the 1960s and the student protesters of 1968 tapped into the carnivalesque tradition in the name of such grand, radical designs, but that these gestures led to disillusionment as the consequences of unrealistic radicalism became apparent. But Kirst, having deployed the carnivalesque in *Kaserne* to demolish what he sees as the shortcomings of the Army, tempered that subversion and put something sensible in its place. Consequently, his suggested changes remained plausible and did not issue in disillusion. Kuczynski unkindly suggests that *Krieg* and *Ende* were written to exploit the financial success of *Kaserne* and to compromise with right-wing criticism of the first novel:

Es gibt eine bemerkenswerte Version, wonach Kirst die zwei weiteren Bände nicht nur wegen des sensationellen Erfolgs des ersten geschrieben hat, sondern auch angesichts (oder: unter dem Druck) der rechts-orientierten Kräfte, die verlangten, daß in den weiteren Teilen der *Null-acht-fünfzehn*-Trilogie die angebliche Verleumdung der deutschen Armee relativiert werde (p.164).

Kuczynski's insight that *Krieg* and *Ende* 'relativize' *Kaserne* reflects the way in which those novels temper the subversiveness of *Kaserne*. But I would argue that *Krieg* grows organically from the end of *Kaserne* and deliberately balances the disorder left at that novel's end. Or in other words, Kirst wrote *Krieg* not because of right-wing pressure and

⁴⁷ Significantly, in his autobiography Kirst referred to 'jener wohl niemals zu überwindenden Vergangenheit' (Kirst [1985], p.87; my italics).

greed, but in order to transform Asch's carnivalesque behaviour into moderation and practical sense. After all, *Krieg* and *Ende* continue to criticize the worst aspects of the German Army through the characters of Witterer and Schulz, and in my view it was *because* of Kirst's efforts to balance *Kaserne* that he was eventually reconciled with the German right wing - in particular, with Franz Josef Strauß who had tried to smear Kirst publicly for his involvement with Nazism.⁴⁸

Finally, in my view Kirst showed a considerable sense of timing when he published his trilogy. Critics have pointed out the connection between the timing of the trilogy and its success and typically, such comments are made in a more or less grudging tone. For instance, Wiegenstein argues reductively that the uproar caused by *08/15* had nothing to do with the quality of Kirst's work - which he describes as poor - but with the time at which the books were published: 'Wäre Kirsts Buch zwei Jahre, oder besser noch zweienhalb Jahre früher erschienen, wer weiß, welchen Einfluß es auf die damals nicht sehr wehrbeflissene Phantasie der Deutschen gehabt hätte'.⁴⁹ Likewise, Koch argues that 'Das richtige Thema im richtigen Zeitpunkt auf die richtige Weise anbringen, darin liegt das Geheimnis solcher Bucherfolge' (p.248). But Kirst conceded the same point himself: 'zu einem Sensationserfolg wurde es, nachdem es in die Strömungen des Zeitgeistes hineingeraten war'⁵⁰ - though he was being falsely modest when he described *08/15* as

⁴⁸ See Kirst (1985), pp.326 and 332-3 for his account of the criticism he received from businessmen, ex-generals and Strauß in particular. For Strauß's allegations about Kirst, see 'Des Teufels Hauptwachtmeister', p.247. The contrast between these attacks and the warm words quoted on the first page of my chapter from Armin Mohler - a notorious figure on the far right, a disciple of Ernst Jünger, and a former secretary to Strauß - illustrate the way in which the right wing eventually understood that Kirst was not attempting a one-sided assault on militarism. In time, Kirst was reconciled with Strauß at, appropriately, a 'Faschingveranstaltung' held at the *Münchener Merkur* some years after the controversy had died down. Strauß confronted Kirst with the words: 'Du - Militarist!', to which Kirst replied: 'Du - Pazifist!', with the result that 'Erlösendes Gelächter kam auf. [...] Dieses Fest war gerettet, durfte sich in Harmonie auflösen' (Kirst [1985], p.345). Indeed, the title of Kirst's autobiography - *Das Schaf im Wolfspelz* - reflects Kirst's sense that he was always misunderstood as being more of a subversive than he intended.

⁴⁹ Roland H. Wiegenstein, 'Empörung im Imperfekt', *Frankfurter Hefte*, 9 (1954), pp.553-4 (p.553).

⁵⁰ Heinz Puknus, 'Fragen an Hans Hellmut Kirst', in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, p.8.

‘vermutlich eine Art Zufallstreffer [...] Es erschien eben genau zur richtigen Zeit’.⁵¹ I say ‘falsely modest’ because his 1954 article ‘Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen’ makes it clear that he submitted the novel in full knowledge of its relevance to contemporary debates about the reformation of the Army. Thus, it could be argued that *08/15*’s timing is actually one of its strengths since it reflects Kirst’s sensitivity to German society’s anxieties about what it could safely inherit from the past when Adenauer decided to form the Bundeswehr.

So did *08/15* and the ‘sensible’ carnivalesque subversion involved in it change anything? On one hand, it sounds implausible to argue that three novels alone could change the course of government policy, and there is no evidence of a direct connection between the novels, the debate surrounding them, and the plans for the Bundeswehr. Moreover, even within the fictional world of the trilogy, Schulz’s personality does not improve after Asch humbles him in *Kaserne*. But on the other hand, *08/15* was influential enough for at least two non-literary writers to refer to the trilogy and the issues it raised when discussing the historical German soldier during and after the war.⁵² Then again, we know that Theodor Blank - whose ‘Dienststelle Blank’ was charged with creating the Bundeswehr and became the *Verteidigungsministerium* in 1955 - saw the film version of *Kaserne* (1954) and promised that there would be none of its bullying in the modern Army. Indeed, the film was powerful enough to offend Blank’s sensibilities: ‘Im übrigen meinte Theodor Blank, daß der Film zum Teil stark überzeichne und die Feier in der Unteroffizierskantine etwas geschmacklos sei’.⁵³ Finally, Kirst himself thought that his novels might have changed the nature of the Bundeswehr for in an (undated) piece he wrote: ‘Was mich persönlich betrifft, so habe ich möglicherweise die

⁵¹ Hans Hellmut Kirst, ‘Rückblick auf *08/15* - 25 Jahre danach’, in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, pp.100-2 (p.100).

⁵² See Abenheim, p.82, and Stephen G. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p.231.

⁵³ Dpa, ‘Amt Blank sah *08/15*’, in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, p.99.

Umgangsformen in unserer neuen Armee der Bundeswehr *ein wenig vermenschlicht*' (my italics).⁵⁴

What is certain is that the military planners were aware of the problem of the drill-system and tried to design the Bundeswehr to prevent abuse of power. At first, there were problems in introducing the promised procedures for military justice and complaints, and Abenheim speaks of 'the growing movement in favor of restoration of the drillmaster mentality' (p.172). He then cites two incidents which illustrate the recrudescence of the kinds of problems described by Kirst: first, when fifteen paratroopers drowned in the Iller in 1957 after obeying an unnecessary order, and second, when brutal training abuses left a paratrooper dead at Nagold, near Stuttgart, in 1963 (pp.173 and 202). Abenheim glosses these incidents as 'the army's return to blind obedience, putting the lie to five years of promises by the ministry' (p.173). But to attach such generalizations to isolated incidents is to over-state the problem. Whether it was thanks to Kirst or not, the Bundeswehr did try to deal with the institutionalized abuse of power in the Army. And to a passing observer like John Ardagh, the Bundeswehr, with its casual saluting and freer relations between the ranks, is an admirably democratic institution, 'based on persuasion and discussion rather than unthinking obedience'.⁵⁵

In short, Kirst was unusually explicit about his intentions in writing *08/15*; timed the submission of his books for publication at precisely the time when the new army was open to radical change because of its associations with Nazism; cleverly deployed the carnivalesque to subvert - within his fiction - what he saw as those phenomena which reduced the efficient and humane running of the Army; and then balanced that with sensible and moderate suggestions for an alternative form of military leadership. Kirst

⁵⁴ Hans Hellmut Kirst, 'Brief an Jungbuchhändler' (n.d.), in: Puknus (ed.), *Hans Hellmut Kirst*, p.80. Cf. Kirst's similar claim in 'Rückblick auf *08/15*', p.102.

⁵⁵ John Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans*, p.564.

was also prematurely aware of the limitations of carnivalesque radicalism, for his trilogy charts neither the inevitable dangers of tapping into the carnivalesque, nor disillusion over its failure (except very briefly when Asch is in prison), nor the assimilation of the Fool. Rather, it describes how one can deliberately balance the carnivalesque's subversiveness with constructive, moderate ideas.⁵⁶ And once that balance was achieved, Kirst - as if in the spirit of Carnival - was happy that his novels would not be 'eternal': 'wenn alle Väter und Mütter beruhigt und vertrauensvoll ihre Söhne einer neuen, reformierten und reorganisierten Armee anvertrauen können, dann wird niemand mit größerer Erleichterung behaupten können als ich: dieses Buch ist überholt!'.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Kirst, writing in the 1950s, did not fall into the trap of other authors, writing a decade after him, who tapped into the carnivalesque and experienced disillusionment (see Chapter 2), and that might explain why - despite his alleged inept authorship - he has had a minor *literary* influence both on the well-known war-novelist Willi Heinrich and on major writers like Grass and Böll. Thus, *Krieg* parallels Heinrich's *Das geduldige Fleisch* (published a year later than *Krieg*, in 1955) in several respects: Heinrich's hero, Steiner, is an outstanding soldier like Asch who is devoted to his comrades, and the novel involves an officer, Stransky, who like Witterer arrives at the front with no military experience, lusts after medals and military glory, despises the Russian enemy, favours costly frontal assaults, and sacrifices his men to save himself. Moreover, Ryan (1983) sees parallels between Schulz's speech at the end of *Ende* and Grass's *Katz und Maus* (p.105), although she overlooks the affinity between the personalities and military accomplishments of Mahlke and Vierbein. Then again, in my view, the brief uprising in *Ende* arguably has some parallels with the Dustmen's Uprising in Böll's *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971), just as Asch's revolt and evasion of punishment in *Kaserne* anticipate Heinrich Böll's *Ende einer Dienstfahrt* (1966), which involves carnivalesque justice in the way the Gruhls receive a very light sentence for burning an army jeep and singing and drinking merrily as they watch it burn: the point of the fire was to make a statement about the tedium, the purposelessness and the wastefulness of life in the Bundeswehr. And finally, Lore Schulz's experience of working in a graveyard and losing her virginity on a pile of wreaths (*Kaserne*, pp.165-7) corresponds *exactly* with Leni Gruyten's sexual history in *Gruppenbild mit Dame*.

⁵⁷ These are the final lines of Kirst's article, 'Das Grundübel ist die Macht in unrechten Händen'.

Chapter 4: Bakhtin and the Mitscherlichs: The Carnavalesque and Mourning in Günter Grass's *Hundejahre*

In Chapter 2, I argued that in *BT* and *Katz und Maus*, Grass questioned the power of the carnivalesque to subvert authority and distanced himself from the revolutionary change and violence implicit in the activities of the traditional Fool. But when Grass continued his ambivalent engagement with the carnivalesque in *Hundejahre* (1963),¹ he ignored the issue of political subversion altogether. Instead, he used the carnivalesque more subtly and even expressed guarded optimism about the Germans' attempts to confront their past productively. And whilst any critic might have to be as mad as Oskar Matzerath to attempt to add to the mountain of secondary literature on Grass's works, I nevertheless believe that the relationship in *HJ* between the carnivalesque and mourning the past has not yet received critical attention.

So in this chapter I shall argue that a Bakhtinian reading of Grass's deployment of the *topoi* of the Fool and the carnivalesque in *HJ* sheds light on the problem of mourning the past as that is outlined in Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (1967).² I shall do this because, in my view, the freedom and fearlessness of Bakhtin's notion of Carnival provides guidelines on how to work through the past, confront the inevitability of death, and achieve progress in a way similar to that described by the Mitscherlichs. Consequently, using Bakhtin and the Mitscherlichs in tandem generates a reading of *HJ* that contrasts strikingly with previous, overwhelmingly pessimistic interpretations.

How can Bakhtin's 'grotesque realism' and the Freudian theories of the Mitscherlichs

¹ Günter Grass, *Hundejahre*, in: Grass, *Werkausgabe in zehn Bänden*, III, pp.141-835 (hereafter referred to as *HJ*). All further references to this and other works discussed are included in the main text.

² Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: Piper, 1998).

be used together? Bakhtin would seem to have little in common with Freud: after all, Bakhtin was probably thinking of Freud when he complained that ‘In the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level where their connotation becomes narrow and specific, torn away from the direct relation to the life of society’.³ But several critics have pointed to ways in which Freudian psychoanalysis and Bakhtin’s thought might be reciprocally relevant. First, Clark and Holquist point out that in his later works, Freud ‘demonstrated a concern for precisely those issues of history and culture that Bakhtin charged him [...] with ignoring’⁴ - and it is this concern with making psychoanalysis socially relevant that motivates the second half of the Mitscherlich’s book.⁵ Second, Sheppard draws parallels between Bakhtin and the theories of another psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, although he rightly points out some of their many differences.⁶ Third, Byrd suggests several ways in which Bakhtin’s theories map directly onto Freud’s by pointing out, for instance, the similarity of ‘unofficial folk culture’ and the Freudian unconscious, and by demonstrating that both Freud and Bakhtin shared a belief in the therapeutic function of laughter.⁷ Finally, recent British research into psychotherapy has detected ‘the similarity [between] the Easter message of wilderness, death and resurrection to the changes [...] observed in [...] patients as they undergo therapy and abandon their restricting psychological symptoms’ and linked this

³ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.321.

⁴ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), p.171.

⁵ See Schneider’s reply to Moser’s criticism of the moral element in the Mitscherlich’s work (Tilman Moser, ‘Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Hält die Diagnose einer Überprüfung stand? Zur psychischen Verarbeitung des Holocaust in der Bundesrepublik’, *Psyche*, 46 [1992], pp.389-405) in which Schneider points out that the Mitscherlich were attempting to rehabilitate psychoanalysis after it had been tainted by Nazism and, following Freud’s example, demonstrate its relevance to history, society and politics (Christian Schneider, ‘Jenseits der Schuld? Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern in der zweiten Generation’, *Psyche*, 47 [1993], pp.754-75 [pp.761-3]).

⁶ Richard Sheppard, ‘Tricksters, Carnival and the Magical Figures of Dada Poetry’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 19 (1983), 116-25 (pp.116-7).

⁷ Charles L. Byrd, ‘Freud’s Influence on Bakhtin: Traces of Psychoanalytic Theory in *Rabelais and his World*’, *Germano-Slavica: A Canadian Journal of Germanic and Slavic Comparative Studies*, 5 (1987), pp.223-30 (pp. 223 and 224).

specifically to ‘the difficulty of coming to terms with *grief and change*’ (my italics).⁸ Thus, Bakhtin’s festive world view overlaps with the issue of authentic mourning in the Freudian sense, even if his theory of grotesque realism deals with a different *order* of reality from the major issues addressed by the Mitscherlichs.

In my opinion, psychoanalytical theories and Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque can be applied simultaneously to *HJ* because of the novel’s hybrid nature, which O’Neill rightly characterizes as its ‘intermingling of closely observed realism and extravagantly fantastic elements’.⁹ I say ‘rightly’, because at one level the novel deals with *realistic* characters like Walter Matern - whose inability to mourn can be analysed using the Mitscherlichs’ psychoanalytical theories - and with very real historical issues such as Nazism and the Holocaust. But at another level, other elements of the text clearly derive from a different, *surreal* order of reality which make little sense in terms of the ‘real’ world. Thus, although the apparently indestructible Eddi Amsel, his scarecrows, and the superficially revolting figure of Tulla Pokriefke are elements which are not obviously redemptive or positive, they can be strikingly illuminated by means of Bakhtin’s text. Because the two above orders of reality leak into one another, the ideas of both Bakhtin and the Mitscherlichs need to be used in a complementary manner to make sense of this novel. So I shall demonstrate *both* how the Mitscherlichs’ theories explain the behaviour of those more realistic characters in *HJ* who cannot mourn, *and* how Bakhtin’s theory can be used to analyse the grotesque characters to show how they counter the inability to mourn, offer a chance for proper mourning in their fearless acceptance of the past and death, and thus suggest the possibility of redemption.

⁸ Thomas Stuttaford, ‘Why Habits Die Hard’, *The Times* (12 April 2001), [Times 2] p.9. Stuttaford is referring to an unpublished paper by Jenny Beddington, a member of the British Association of Psychotherapists, which she subsequently made available to me.

⁹ Patrick O’Neill, *Günter Grass Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999), p.61.

Finally, it is entirely legitimate to use *RW* to shed light on the Rabelaisian imagery that Grass deploys because Grass himself conceded the importance of Rabelais for his fiction on two separate occasions. First, Kurt Ziesel, who accused Grass in 1967 of blasphemy and pornography in the *Danziger Trilogie*, is a good example of a reader who misreads Grass's 'disgusting' imagery. In his self-defence as part of legal proceedings against Ziesel, Grass submitted a short essay to the court on 23 October 1968 in which he criticized those who measure world-literature 'mit literaturfremden Kategorien' and likened his own work to Rabelais's novels by saying that if his works were banned for blasphemy, then Rabelais would have to be banned as well.¹⁰ For Grass, sexuality and religious blasphemy were aspects of the reality that any good writer tries to capture (p.318) so that 'wenn ich mich gegen Verleumdungen wehre, dann tu ich es nicht nur in eigener Sache, sondern im Sinne großer Erzählertraditionen, *denen ich viel verdanke*' (p.319; my italics). And second, in a later essay about *BT*, Grass named Rabelais as one of the 'Tote und Lebende' who 'hockten um meine Schreibmaschine'¹¹ - a clear admission that Rabelais greatly influenced his fiction.

No-one seems to have been aware of the redemptive sides to Grass's third novel, and there are at least two reasons for this trend. For one thing, the dominance of two-thirds of the narration by Harry and Matern - i.e. realistic characters who persecute the carnivalesque Amsel and Tulla in various ways - means that the redemptive force of the carnivalesque imagery in *HJ* is obscured. For another, Grass's natural melancholy might have meant that he himself was not consciously aware of *HJ*'s redemptive sides and did not acknowledge them. Kniesche points out that, at the end of *Aus dem Tagebuch einer*

¹⁰ Günter Grass, 'Nicht nur in eigener Sache', *Werkausgabe*, IX, pp.318-9 (p.319).

¹¹ Günter Grass, 'Rückblick auf die Blechtrommel - oder Der Autor als fragwürdiger Zeuge - Ein Versuch in eigener Sache', *Werkausgabe*, IX, pp.624-33 (p.629); first broadcast on WDR on 16 November 1973.

Schnecke (1972), Grass viewed melancholy as an opportunity for reflection before taking action and calls this ‘eine Neuinterpretation der Melancholie [...], die die Bedeutung des von Freud und den Mitscherlichs verwendeten Begriffs auf den Kopf stellt’ since, in contrast to Freud, Grass views melancholy *positively*, as a prerequisite for progress.¹² Similarly, in an article written one day after *HJ*, Grass referred to the Mitscherlichs as follows: ‘Alexander Mitscherlichs Buch *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* hat nachzuweisen versucht, mit welchem beängstigendem Geschick wir, die Deutschen, Schuld verdrängt, Erkenntnis der Schuld vermieden und die Fähigkeit, Trauer zu zeigen, verlernt haben’.¹³ This partial account of what the Mitscherlichs were saying, encapsulated in the omission of Margarete’s name, suggests that when Grass read *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* he appreciated only their *criticism* of German society and ignored the text’s tentatively redemptive message. My interpretation of *HJ*, then, will set the issue of mourning - *pace* Kniesche - back on its conventional feet since on my reading *HJ* suggests that authentic mourning along the lines laid out by the Mitscherlichs may be possible after all and that the text achieves this by evading the conscious intentions of an author who, in his early work at least, is well-known for his pessimistic view of human nature. Thus, although Grass’s natural melancholy and the dominance of the narration by Harry and Matern means that Bakhtinian theory will inevitably fail to map neatly onto *HJ*, *RW* nevertheless allows us to see the tentative, almost occluded, redemptive elements of the novel.

¹² Thomas Kniesche, “‘Das wird nicht aufhören, gegenwärtig zu bleiben’: Günter Grass und das Problem der deutschen Schuld’ in: Hans Adler and Jost Hermand (eds.), *Günter Grass: Ästhetik des Engagements*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pp.169-97 (p.181).

¹³ Günter Grass, ‘Politisches Tagebuch: Betroffen sein’, *Werkausgabe*, IX, pp.487-9 (p.488); first published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (12 / 13 December 1970).

Critical Reactions to Hundejahre

Little has been said in criticism to date on the *topoi* of the carnivalesque and mourning in *HJ*. Indeed, one common way in which critics have sought to cope with the complexity of that novel is by simple *Nacherzählung*. As Silberman points out, before 1985 ‘viele [Kritiker gingen] nicht über eine bloße Paraphrasierung des Inhalts ohne nennenswerte Einsichten hinaus’.¹⁴ Even more recent studies of Grass frequently resort to reproducing plot-summaries,¹⁵ and because few of those studies demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of previous research on Grass, they frequently rehash ideas that earlier works have already considered. Because of these trends, critics have occasionally ignored altogether some of the most interesting work on *HJ*. For instance, Mitchell’s early, insightful article on the use of Dante in *HJ*¹⁶ is, to my knowledge, known only to one other critic, Bosmajian, whose excellent chapter on *HJ*¹⁷ is never cited by anyone else or even included in any bibliographies of Grass! Thus, given the size and complexity of *HJ* and the reluctance of critics to plough through earlier criticism before putting pen to paper, the secondary literature tends to be reductive and repetitive, focussing again and again on the same topics, such as the ‘friendship’ between Matern and Amsel, Amsel’s ‘art’,¹⁸ the meaning of the dog-imagery, and the significance for the novel of Otto Weininger’s *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903).¹⁹

¹⁴ Marc Silberman, ‘Schreiben als öffentliche Angelegenheit: Lesestrategien des Romans *Hundejahre*’ in: Manfred Durzak (ed.), *Zu Günter Grass: Geschichte auf dem poetischen Prüfstand* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1985), pp.80-95 (p.81).

¹⁵ Two recent examples of this are Ute Brandes, *Günter Grass* (Berlin: Wissenschaftsverlag Volker Spiess, 1998) and Dieter Stolz, *Günter Grass zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 1999).

¹⁶ Breon Mitchell, ‘The Demonic Comedy: Dante and Grass’s *Hundejahre*’, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 9 (1973), pp.65-77.

¹⁷ Hamida Bosmajian, *Metaphors of Evil: Contemporary German Literature and the Shadow of Nazism* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979), pp. 82-114 (see p.234, n.27).

¹⁸ See, for instance, Ann L. Mason, *The Skeptical Muse: A Study of Günter Grass’ Conception of the Artist* (Bern and Frankfurt/Main: Herbert Lang, 1974) and Klaus Stallbaum, *Kunst und Künstlerexistenz im Frühwerk von Günter Grass* (Cologne: Lingen, 1989).

¹⁹ This is most clear in Wesley V. Blomster, ‘The Documentation of a Novel: Otto Weininger and *Hundejahre* by Günter Grass’, *Monatshefte*, 61 (1969), pp.122-38.

Not only has no critic ever undertaken an extensive study of the *topoi* of the Fool and the carnivalesque in *HJ*, some critics even reject the significance of folly there completely, perhaps in an attempt to cope with the novel's combination of realistic and surrealistic elements. Thus, at the start of his study of *HJ*, Goetze describes Oskar (from *Die Blechtrommel*) as a 'Kunstfigur' and this, he claims, prevents him from having any authentic psychological motivation, from which he concludes: 'hier versagen alle Hinweise auf die pikareske Tradition und den Schelmenroman' - which implies that *HJ*, too, is not connected to the picaresque / Fool tradition.²⁰ Similarly, Brode dismisses the influence of the *Schelm* tradition as a 'literarhistorische[r], von der Grass-Forschung gewiß überwertete[r] Aspekt'.²¹ However, some other critics do betray a certain sensitivity to the relevance of the Fool and the carnivalesque for *HJ*. Goheen, for example, sees that the world is turned upside-down in this novel, referring to 'die labyrinthische Oberfläche eines Werkes [...], dessen Vision eines bedeutenden Teils deutscher Geschichte zwischen 1890 und 1960 als bottom-up Entwurf interessiert';²² Gerstenberg claims that 'Das Barockmotiv von der "verkehrten Welt" klingt, hier ins Grotteske und Paradoxe verschoben, an';²³ Harscheidt's massive, 750-page *Habilitationsschrift* describes the dating of events in the novel as a sign of 'eine Welt, die eigentlich auf dem Kopf steht';²⁴ and Mitchell speaks of 'Grass's penchant for standing things on their head' (p.75) and argues that 'from the opening words of the final "Materniad" the suspicion grows that Grass is about to perform a literary handstand'

²⁰ Albrecht Goetze, *Pression und Deformation: Zehn Thesen zum Roman Hundejahre von Günter Grass* [sic] (Göppingen: Alfred Kümmerle, 1972), p.xi.

²¹ Hanspeter Brode, *Günter Grass* (Munich: Beck, 1979), p.55.

²² Jutta Goheen, 'Intertext - Stil - Kanon: Zur Geschichtlichkeit des Epischen in Günter Grass' *Hundejahre*, *Carleton Germanic Papers*, 24 (1996), pp.155-66 (p.156).

²³ Renate Gerstenberg, *Zur Erzähltechnik von Günter Grass* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), p.67.

²⁴ Michael Harscheidt, *Günter Grass: Wort - Zahl - Gott: Der 'phantastische Realismus' in den Hundejahren* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p.575.

(p.69). Other critics find traces of the Fool and Trickster in *HJ*'s characters: Schwarz suggests that 'Amsel [ist] eine Hochstaplernatur wie Felix Krull [...] die Welt ist für ihn so etwas wie ein amüsanter Narrenhaus';²⁵ both Blomster and Hollington see Amsel as Toulouse-Lautrec when he paints prostitutes in a Danzig brothel and thus implicitly liken him to a midget (who, like hunchbacks, were often employed as court-jesters);²⁶ Miles asserts that Amsel, like Oskar and Mahlke, is a 'natural entertainer';²⁷ and Bosmajian confidently reads both Amsel and Matern as Tricksters (pp.90-2 and 100). But most of the above comments remain undeveloped and *none* are made with reference to Bakhtin's concept of 'grotesque realism'. Furthermore, if Bakhtin's text is mentioned at all, it is never used in a methodologically systematic way. Hollington claims that he is 'indebted to classical accounts of the grotesque in literature, notably to Mikhail Bakhtin', yet cites Bakhtin only twice (see pp.28-9 and 84), and although Harscheidt includes Bakhtin in his bibliography (p.732), he never actually cites him. Thus, although some critics have tentatively registered some of the carnivalesque elements of *HJ*, none have explored their possible redemptive potential - no doubt because *HJ*'s bleak tone would seem to preclude such an interpretation.

Much more surprisingly, the Mitscherlichs' book is used in an equally peripheral way. Despite Brode's entirely defensible statement that the Mitscherlichs' book is 'eine sehr nützliche Hilfestellung zur Verdeutlichung der erzählerischen Konstellation in den Grasschen Danzig-Büchern' (p.63), he cites their work only three times (pp.207, n.20 and 208, nn.21 and 26); Harscheidt includes *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* in his bibliography (p.750) but again fails to cite it in his book; and Cepl-Kaufmann quotes the Mitscherlichs

²⁵ Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, *Der Erzähler Günter Grass* (Bern: Francke, 1969), p.50.

²⁶ Blomster, p.132; Michael Hollington, *Günter Grass: The Writer in a Pluralist Society* (London and Boston: Marion Boyars, 1980), p.74.

²⁷ Keith Miles, *Günter Grass* (London: Vision, 1975), p.123.

only once, and then in connection with another text.²⁸ Thus, much work remains to be done on the interrelated *topoi* of the carnivalesque and mourning in Grass's work in general and *HJ* in particular, and although I shall focus on several aspects of the text that have preoccupied other critics, my analysis, based on the ideas of Bakhtin and the Mitscherlichs, will involve a completely fresh perspective on them.

Failed and Successful Mourning

Before turning to the individual cases of Walter Matern and Harry Liebenau, we must consider the treatment of *Trauer* in the novel as a whole - which involves many cases of death and mourning. Although Kniesche's article deals with this precise topic, he does not differentiate between, or even notice, the various kinds of *Trauer* to be found in Grass's work and his treatment of *HJ* is disappointingly brief. I say 'disappointingly' since in my view, *HJ* explores different modes of mourning and thus, anticipating the Mitscherlichs by four years, suggests models of authentic *and* inauthentic mourning.

In *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, the Mitscherlichs follow Freud in suggesting that a psychologically healthy reaction to the past, death and guilt is to 'bewältigen' (overcome or come to terms with) the past: 'Mit "bewältigen" ist [...] eine Folge von Erkenntnisschritten gemeint. Freud benannte sie als "erinnern, wiederholen, durcharbeiten"' (p.24). The alternatives to this authentic *Trauer* are identified as denying of the past altogether (by denying guilt [ibid.], projecting guilt [p.77], or 'de-realizing' the past [p.40]) - which is what the Mitscherlichs accuse German society of doing - or falling into *Melancholie* which, according to Freud, is 'eine außerordentliche Herabsetzung seines Ich-Gefühls, eine großartige Ich-Verarmung' (cited on p.37). In the

²⁸ Gertrude Cepl-Kaufmann, *Günter Grass: Eine Analyse des Gesamtwerkes unter dem Aspekt von Literatur und Politik* (Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor, 1975), p.249, n.41.

Mitscherlich's view, melancholy occurs when a love-object is lost with which the subject had identified so strongly that it had become part of his or her psyche ('narzißtische Objektwahl' [p.39]), and the Mitscherlichs claim that Hitler himself represented precisely this kind of love-object for the Germans. Thus, to avoid the above sense of 'Ich-Verarmung' (impoverishment of the Ego), the Germans allegedly repressed the past.

This complex theory is illustrated by those characters in *HJ* who are compelled to confront the past, death and change. The first case is that of Lorchen Matern who, after World War One mourns her dead boyfriend 'Paulchen' inauthentically and thus anticipates the inability to mourn shown by the likes of Matern after the *Nazizeit*. Lorchen's inability to mourn manifests itself first in the way she lingers on her sense of loss, and second as a complete denial of reality. Thus, she speaks to 'Paulchen' as if he were still alive, betrays her sense of loss by demanding that he return some unspecified object, and loses touch with the world around her which goes on as normal: "Nu jibb mech daas wedder zurick [...]" Niemand erstattete etwas [...] Unter den Kühen nahm die Milch zu. Die Windmühle [...] mahlte' (p.163). For the Mitscherlichs, denying the Nazi past was tantamount to tabooing the subject, defined as follows: 'Wo immer man nicht mehr weiter zu fragen wagt oder nicht einmal auf den Gedanken kommt, es zu tun, hat man es mit einem Tabu zu tun' (Mitscherlich, p.111). Whilst Lorchen does not deny the past - much less the Third Reich (for it lay in the future) - she broods on it excessively, and this means, according to the Mitscherlich's scheme, that she has tabooed the need to face life and her own responsibilities (such as cooking the goose for Matern's christening, which she allows to burn [p.164]), and so has failed to move on. Or in other words, her psyche's development has been halted, which in turn leads to 'Rückständigkeit' since so much psychic effort is wasted in tabooing the reality of Paul's death: 'Soweit das Symptom - hier zum Beispiel die Denkhemmung - herrscht, kann keine Realitätsveränderung wahrgenommen und kein Anpassungsschritt

vorgenommen werden, der ein neues Selbstverständnis ausdrückt' (Mitscherlichs, p.132). In Lorchen's case then, authentic or healthy mourning does not take place - not, at least, until Walter Matern's catatonic grandmother wakes up and beats her for burning Walter's christening goose.

During the *Nazizeit*, most characters in *HJ* are incapable of mourning but in a manner that differs from Lorchen. It is not that these characters have lost touch with reality, are trapped in the past, and cannot progress: rather, most of the characters in *HJ* can only look forward and so ignore the past altogether. For example, Harry Liebenau describes the memorial to those former pupils of his school who had died in the Second World War by 1941. But this memorial turns out to be just an empty symbol of collective mourning that has no relevance to people's psyches or consciousness, and Harry's description indicates that he is more interested in the glory of battle than in thinking about the dead, for he says: 'Unter den Gefallenen gab es einen Ritterkreuzträger. Zwei Ritterkreuzträger lebten noch und besuchten [...] regelmäßig ihre alte Schule' (p.476) before swiftly moving on to the soldiers' speeches. In other words, Harry's thoughts of the dead are immediately superseded by the thought of two successful soldiers who are still alive. When - before his arrest - the teacher Brunies asks one of the *Ritterkreuzträger* how he felt when he first saw a dead man, Harry tells us: 'Die Antwort des Jagdfliegers ist mir entfallen' (ibid.); Brunies also asks Matern the same question but reacts similarly: 'Auch die Antwort des Feldwebels [...] habe ich vergessen' (ibid.). Similarly, when Harry wears a 'Trauerflor' (ostensibly to mourn his dead cousin Alexander), he betrays the superficiality of his own mourning when he says: 'Dabei kannte ich Alexander Pokriefke kaum' (p.468), and it is implied that the Pokriefkes' grief is almost equally superficial since they stop wearing black exactly a year after Alexander's death as if following convention rather than their own feelings (p.483). Indeed, Jenny is actually discouraged from mourning Brunies because she does not have official permission to do so (p.484).

This kind of inability to mourn while Hitler was still in power is briefly explained by the Mitscherlichs: because of the Germans' total identification with Hitler, who set himself up as the people's 'Ich-Ideal' (Ego-Ideal) and glorified fighting wars and dying for Germany (Mitscherlichs, pp.30 and 34), Hitler's Ego replaces the people's own and distorts their perception of reality to such an extent that it leads to pride rather than regret in the face of increasingly futile death (Mitscherlichs, pp.74-5 and 76).

After the War, the characters' inability to mourn becomes still more pronounced. One recalls, for instance, the players of Matern's former *Faustball* club ('Schwamm darüber. Neue Platte auflegen [...] Also, warste nich mal, und haste nich mal, und irgend jemand hat mir erzählt' [p.676]) or all those people whose criminal pasts are exposed by Brauxel's 'Erkenntnisbrillen'. According to the Mitscherlichs, the German people wanted to distance itself from the Nazis and their ideals and so made them solely responsible for crimes perpetrated during the *Nazizeit*: 'jedermann versuchte, dieses gescheiterte und gefährliche Ideal wieder "auszuspucken", zu externalisieren' (p.77). As a result, the Mitscherlichs conclude, the repressed shame over the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes led to a loss of self-worth among the people in whose name those crimes had been perpetrated (p.30). In precisely this spirit, Harry states at the end of his narrative that the Germans needed to forget that past altogether: 'Neu beginnen wollen alle mit dem Leben [...]. Vergessen wollen alle die Knochenberge und Massengräber, die Fahnenhalter und Parteibücher, die Schulden und die Schuld' (pp.574-5).

In contrast to Lorchen's pre-War inability to mourn and that of many of those around Harry, *HJ* contains several instances of authentic mourning both during and after the *Nazizeit*, but these are problematized in different ways. To begin with, it tends to be marginal members of society who are capable of mourning because they are prepared to confront the past and death. For example, just as Brunies is the *only* teacher willing to face the truth of death during the *Nazizeit* by asking his provocative question about the

sight of a dead man (p.476), Jenny, a social outsider like Amsel and Brunies, bravely wears *Trauerschwarz* at some risk to herself when Brunies is arrested (pp.483-4). For her own safety, Felsner-Imbs attempts to discourage her from doing this: 'Wenn sie Trauer im Herzen trage, genüge es vollauf. Seine Trauer sei kaum geringer, denn ihm habe man einen Freund genommen, den einzigen' (p.484). But Jenny is undaunted: she and Felsner-Imbs sort through Brunies's stone-collection (p.485), an act which could be seen as the objective correlative of the process of working through her memories of her adoptive father. And yet she is positive enough to be able accept an invitation to the cinema (albeit with the hateful Harry) and move on in her life while her mourning is taking place (p.485) - which is why, perhaps, Jenny is unshaken when she receives written confirmation of Brunies's death (p.534): her mourning has already been completed.

Amsel, too, mourns the death of his mother authentically during the *Nazizeit*. After her death he preserves some memory of her by drawing her face, an act that requires him quite literally to look the dead in the face (pp.344-5), and at the funeral he reacts with the appropriate emotions ('Während des Begräbnisses in Bohnsack soll er geweint haben' [p.345]) before moving on by selling his mother's house and the contents of the shop (p.355). Tulla, likewise, weeps with grief when her brother Konrad drowns in 1933 (pp.304 and 310); she is then literally paralysed until his burial (p.310) after which she lives in Harras's kennel for a week before emerging as she was before (pp.310-22). By such means Tulla comes to terms with her brother's death successfully - but not, significantly, without Harry trying to silence her weeping (p.304) and her family trying to force her to leave the kennel (p.310), *inter alia* by threatening to send her to a lunatic asylum (p.311). As I shall argue below that Tulla and Amsel are carnivalesque figures, it is significant that they are both able to mourn authentically.

As a final example of mourning by marginal figures, we must consider Prinz, Hitler's dog, who is the only creature in post-War Germany who openly and honestly mourns Hitler when shown a picture of the *Führer* during the radio discussion - the dog licks it and whimpers (p.749). Amsel, of course, can still mourn in the post-War period: he remembers how Matern threw his penknife into the Vistula and Matern's assault on him. But as a half-Jew whose greatest crime was to train ballerinas for Nazi propaganda, it is unsurprising that he is capable of remembering the past after the War and mourning without difficulty: because his past is a relatively innocent one, there is no need for him to 'de-realize' it (i.e. completely re-invent it in an unreal form) in order to avoid a sense of guilt.

So Grass offers a spectrum of different kinds of mourning: some as a guideline for an authentic reaction to the past and loss, others as a warning against dishonest and psychologically unhealthy reactions. But his paradigmatic case of 'die Unfähigkeit zu trauern' is Walter Matern.

Walter Matern's Inability to Mourn

Matern is central to my argument since his is the most detailed case-study of an inability to mourn, and in his essay 'Unser Grundübel ist der Idealismus' Grass described Matern as:

ein deutsch-idealistischer Ideenträger [...], der innerhalb kürzester Zeit (ohne Opportunist zu sein) im Kommunismus, im Nationalsozialismus, im Katholizismus, schließlich im ideologischen Antifaschismus jeweils die Heilslehre sieht. Am Ende betreibt er mit faschistischen Methoden seine Art Antifaschismus.²⁹

²⁹ Günter Grass, 'Unser Grundübel ist der Idealismus', *Werkausgabe*, IX, pp.392-4 (p.394); first published in *Der Spiegel* (11 August 1969).

This uncompromising, serial devotion to a variety of ideologies anticipates precisely the kind of *psychological* identification that would be described by the Mitscherlichs. As Matern abandons each discredited ideology, he feels a sense of 'Ich-Verarmung' (Mitscherlichs, pp.30 and 37) - a psychological wound which causes him then to see himself as a victim. Accordingly, in the post-War period, Matern pursues only those 'Nazis' who have done wrong to *him*, and his memory of the attack on Amsel is de-realized and verbalized in such a way that he becomes as much a victim as Amsel: 'ich habe ihn geliebt. Und sie haben ihn mir genommen [...] die anderen waren stärker, und ich konnte nur ohnmächtig zusehen' (p.613).

Then again, Matern's need for totalizing ideologies with which he can identify indicates that he has undergone a highly authoritarian socialization process since it is precisely such ideologies that appeal to the over-developed Super-Ego, i.e. that part of the psyche which socializes us according to what the Mitscherlichs called the prevailing 'Moral'. Thus, Matern's adoption of one ideology after another prefigures the Mitscherlichs' analysis of why the Germans identified with Hitler. In the normal formation of the Ego (i.e. one's identity), a person should only ever partially identify with their 'Ego-ideal' since this allows them to adopt *some* characteristics of that Ego-ideal but also to form *other* identifications with *other* people (p.244). According to the Mitscherlichs, Hitler did not so much *build on* the ideals which the Germans had learnt from their parents as *replace* them wholesale with his own ideals (p.250). As a result and notwithstanding the inherently ambivalent nature of any power relationship (p.33), resistance to or questioning of Hitler's authority became extremely difficult and the individual's Ego was suffocated by the Super-Ego (cf. p.150). Matern's need to identify with a series of authoritarian ideologies, then, betrays an Ego that had been severely damaged by the suffocating Super-Ego of Nazism.

The Mitscherlichs also contend that authoritarian ideologies, like excessively strict parenting, control people by creating taboos which cannot be questioned (p.111) and thus inhibit their two main drives, the aggressive and libidinal (p.103). In such an authoritarian atmosphere, they continue, the Ego is weakened still further since it learns only to suppress those drives rather than reflect on or question the taboos which control them (*ibid.*). The humiliating position of the person who is subject to this process leads him or her to feel a loss of 'Selbstwert' and so strong a sense of 'Ressentiment' (p.115) that both drives build up in a potentially dangerous way. This is why, the Mitscherlichs argue, power relationships are inherently ambivalent: despite the apparent total devotion of the subordinate partner, he or she is unconsciously allowing explosive emotions to build up that are aimed at whoever has imposed the taboo (cf. p.33). Or in other words, a person who is subject to an authoritarian leadership or upbringing will tend to become dangerously frustrated and refuse to see why the taboos to which he or she is subject are in place. If those taboos were 'mit "warum" und "weil" verknüpft' (p.104), the individual would understand that his or her self-restraint was necessary for the sake of *other people* and so learn 'Einfühlung' (i.e. empathy) (pp.104 and 119). This, the Mitscherlichs believe, is vital both for humane, restrained behaviour and for authentic mourning since it involves putting oneself imaginatively into the victims' place instead of denying one's own guilt in a defensive and selfish manner.

Matern's behaviour illustrates several aspects of the above theories. He is a highly repressed individual whose life is dominated by several taboos.³⁰ After sleeping with a prostitute, he betrays his guilt at having violated a sexual taboo by grumbling gloomily to Amsel about 'das käufliche Weib' (p.335). Just as he persecutes 'Nazis' after the War and attempts to reject Nazi ideals because of the shame attached to them, so Matern

³⁰ It may be significant that Matern is raised by his father - a classic authority figure - whereas the unrepressed, laughing Amsel is raised by his mother and never even knew his father.

attacks the philosopher Martin Heidegger (pp.621 ff). Heidegger's major work *Sein und Zeit* (1927) had dominated Matern's thought during the War, just as Hitler's ideals had dominated the minds of many Germans, but now Matern rejects his philosophical inspiration.³¹ Most strikingly, Matern's aggression and rampant sexuality show all the signs of a repressive upbringing. Although he has abandoned Nazism, he still behaves aggressively in the post-War period since his aggressive and libidinal drives are never socialized by whatever ideology he happens to follow. Consequently, he attacks a variety of people who harmed him during the War, and expresses that aggression vicariously by seducing their wives, girlfriends and daughters (for a list, see p.626), thereby satisfying his unsocialized aggressive and sexual drives without any 'Einfühlung' with his victims. Matern's lack of empathy is also betrayed by his alcoholism (p.426) which can be seen as a sign of regressive orality: like an unsatisfied child, he is caught between a state of frustrated deprivation and a violent need to have his repressed desires satisfied.

Harry Liebenau and Tulla

Harry Liebenau's account of himself and his relationship to Tulla in the novel's second book explores the inability to mourn in yet another way. We saw how some of Harry's actions within the novel exemplify an inability to mourn which is similar to Matern's. But Harry's inability to mourn also manifests itself in his attempt, as narrator, to de-realize his past (Mitscherlich, p.40) and misrepresent his cousin Tulla, whom he blames for his own wrongdoings.

³¹ Given that Heidegger saw through Nazism fairly quickly and spent the rest of his life trying to make amends for his flirtation with the Nazis, Matern's attack on the philosopher turns out to be the displacement of his own feelings of guilt and Nazi characteristics onto a rather marginal signifier of the Third Reich.

Although critics seem vaguely aware of Harry's unreliability as a narrator, no-one has provided extensive concrete evidence for this suspicion. Cicora asserts that 'Grass' narrators are notoriously unreliable';³² Hollington sees that the 'stories overlap and contradict each other' (p.67), thus implying unreliability on at least one narrator's part; and Thomas refers to 'the basic unreliability of the narrators themselves as a result of their sense of guilt':³³ but none of these three critics elaborates these assertions. Moreover, despite this general awareness of Harry's unreliability, no critic has ever challenged his view of Tulla: indeed, they have queued up to help stick the knife in. Richter, for instance, interprets Tulla as 'ein abstraktes Prinzip der Destruktion';³⁴ O'Neill refers to Tulla as 'The purest incarnation of violence and malevolence for their own sake' (p.53); and Rothenberg even sees Tulla in the scene when she places leeches on Jenny as, among other things, a vampire.³⁵

So before reconsidering Harry's view of Tulla, I would like to offer some detailed evidence for Harry's unreliability as a narrator. First, when Amsel / Brauxel interviews him at the end of the first book of *HJ* for the job of narrating the second book, Harry shows an absurdly and improbably detailed knowledge of Danzig during the interview - he even knows when the rubber truncheon was first used by the police there (p.274). Like his incredible athleticism when he runs up and down the Erbsberg to watch Amsel and Jenny's snowmen melting simultaneously (pp.402-8), this detailed knowledge seems, at first sight, to figure Harry as an omniscient narrator. But by drawing attention to Harry's omniscience in such a patently unbelievable way, Grass actually undermines it:

³² Mary A. Cicora, 'Music, Myth, and Metaphysics: Wagner Reception in Günter Grass' *Hundejahre*', *German Studies Review*, 16 (1993), pp.49-60 (p.56).

³³ Noel Thomas, *The Narrative Works of Günter Grass: A Critical Interpretation* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1982), p.162.

³⁴ Frank Richter, *Die zerschlagene Wirklichkeit: Überlegungen zur Form der Danzig-Trilogie von Günter Grass* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), p.88.

³⁵ Jürgen Rothenberg, *Günter Grass: Das Chaos in verbesserter Ausführung: Zeitgeschichte als Thema und Aufgabe des Prosawerks* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1976), p.73. Cf. also Brode, who sees Tulla's promiscuity amongst the soldiers as prostitution (p.95), and Hollington, who refers to 'the purposeless spitefulness and violence of Tulla's behaviour' (p.75).

Harry's supposed omniscience cannot be trusted. Second, Harry's own biography has one large gap: like Pilez, the narrator of *Katz und Maus*, we know that Harry fought in the War (see, for example, p.568), but we hear little about his experiences. Did he kill anyone? Did he participate in atrocities? If Harry does have something to hide, it could suggest that his lengthy narration of largely trivial events is a strategy for distracting the reader from much more serious issues. Third, and most significantly, because Harry's account of Tulla de-realizes her, it displays several signs of an inability to mourn in the Mitscherlich's sense. It is striking, for instance, that Harry should write so-called 'Liebesbriefe' to Tulla when his consistently negative presentation of her implies a *hatred* for her. Harry seems determined to blame Tulla for everything in a way which prefigures the Mitscherlich's description of the Germans' post-War rejection of Hitler's ideals ('Jetzt hieß es, die Nazis waren an allem schuld' [Mitscherlich, p.77]) and also parallels Matern's unfairly exaggerated, anti-Heideggerian rants. Similarly, Harry de-realizes Tulla by associating her with a mythological 'Wassergeist' (p.282)³⁶ and so attributes to her the kind of magical and malevolent powers that Oskar attributes to the 'Schwarze Köchin' in *BT* and, more widely, allowed many Germans to explain away Hitler's own irresistibility in the aftermath of the *Nazizeit*. But Tulla's avoidance of the sea after Konrad's death (pp.305 and 385) belies this attribution since it clearly shows that her affinity with water is no greater than that of any other person.³⁷

Given that Harry lays all the guilt for various misdemeanours on Tulla, and given that he cannot be trusted as a narrator, many of Tulla's alleged crimes can actually be ascribed to Harry himself. To begin with, there is a tension in Harry's narration between

³⁶ Neuhaus accepts Tulla's supposed mythological and literary antecedents and makes them the basis of an entire article. See Volker Neuhaus, 'Belle Tulla sans merci', in: Volker Neuhaus and Daniela Hermes (eds.), *Die Danziger Trilogie von Günter Grass: Texte, Daten, Bilder* (Frankfurt/Main: Luchterhand, 1991), pp.181-200.

³⁷ Amsel uses his scarecrows to perform the opposite trick to Harry's: whereas Harry depicts an ordinary girl, Tulla, as a dangerous mythological creature, Amsel produces a mythological Medusa-scarecrow that *looks* dangerous but turns out to be beneficent.

what *actually happened* and the spin he puts on events *when he narrates* them, constituting an attempt to deceive the reader that is suggested by at least five pieces of evidence. First, Harry is present at *every single one* of Tulla's misdeeds and so may have rewritten the episodes to exonerate himself and portray Tulla as the guilty party. Second, Harras attacks Felsner-Imbs on three occasions, and Harry consistently lays the blame on Tulla. But the *facts* that Harry gives us are as follows: on the first occasion it is Harry who receives a beating for provoking Harras to attack (p.357); on the second occasion, and despite his *claim* that Felsner-Imbs had cleared him of guilt for the first attack, Harry is beaten yet again by his father for the same reason (p.372); and the third attack is said to have taken place 'ohne daß Tulla ein Wort gesagt hatte' (p.385). In other words, Harry's proffered evidence could equally well point to his own guilt: Tulla seems not to have directly provoked the third attack and Harry could have been beaten on the first two occasions because he could easily have provoked the dog's attack himself. Moreover, the 'Fleischermeister' - whose reliability the narrative gives us no reason to doubt - offers an account of the second attack on Felsner-Imbs that contradicts Harry's version: 'Er erzählte den Vorgang in für mich unvoreilhafter Weise, nannte Tulla ein ängstliches kleines Mädchen, das entsetzt davongelaufen sei, als ich den Hund an der Leine nicht mehr habe halten können' (p.372). Similarly, it is Harry, not Tulla, whom the police blame for letting Harras turn wild. But as in all the above cases, Harry transfers the blame to Tulla: 'Nicht Dich, mich hatte des Leutnants Finger gemeint. Dabei warst du es, die Harras falsch abrichtete' (p.309). Third, like the voices of the 'Fleischermeister' and the police, the more reliable Matern's reference in the radio discussion both to the (attempted) destruction of Amsel's painting of Harras and to the anti-Semitic abuse hurled at Amsel on that occasion contradicts Harry's narration yet again. Thus, Matern's testimony also identifies at least one instance where Harry definitely played a leading role in a (minor) crime: 'als Sie, Herr Liebenau, unterstützt von Ihrer rotznäsigen

Cousine, [...] meinen Freund grob beschimpften' (p.758). In contrast, Harry's account says that Tulla acted alone. Fourth, Harry expects us to believe the highly unlikely story that the six-year-old Tulla caused the brawl in the 'Kleinhammerpark' pub: 'Aber kein Mensch ahnte, daß meine Cousine [...] die Saalschlacht ausgelöst hatte' (p.378). The reason why nobody suspects this is because a little girl could hardly be involved with a political party in such a way - but by now, the reader is entirely predisposed to believe Harry's lies and to see evil in everything Tulla does. Finally, there is the bizarre episode of Tulla's alleged temptation of Brunies with vitamins that supposedly led to his imprisonment and death in Stutthof. But Harry's own efforts to denounce Brunies are much more likely to have been decisive than Tulla's alleged actions. To begin with, Harry's comment 'Ich glaube nicht, daß ich es war, der am Ende sagte: "Gewiß hat Studienrat Brunies [...] von den Cebiontabletten gekostet"' (p.481) sounds more like a confession than a denial, and Harry even admits to denouncing Brunies's reluctance to *mitmachen*: 'Vielleicht hätte ich nichts sagen sollen von dem immer leeren Fahnenhalter des Studienrates' (p.483). But in any case, it is more probable that Brunies was arrested for being a freemason (*ibid.*) than for stealing vitamins.

So Harry's inability to mourn manifests itself both in his actions and in his displacement of guilt onto Tulla for the various misdemeanours that he himself may have perpetrated.³⁸ Moreover, Harry's unreliable narrative about those relatively petty

³⁸ What Harry does to Tulla recalls the even more blatant example of his victimization of Matern in the radio discussion that *Harry himself* has written (see p.721): after all, the fact that Matern shares Hitler's birthday (p.739) and owns Hitler's dog (p.741) does not make him Hitler's equal in evil. It should also be noted that there is a similar misrepresentation of the dogs Harras and Prinz in both the 'Liebesbriefe' and the 'Materniaden'. Matern is almost as untrustworthy as Harry and yet the critics have been willing to accept the opening words of his book: 'Der Hund steht zentral'. The dog is seen variously as a symbol of the unavoidable past (Brandes, p.34); 'Nazi brutality' (Ronald Hayman, *Günter Grass* [London and New York: Methuen, 1985], p.48); and guilt (Kniesche, p.177). But in fact the dog is, as we saw, another model of authentic mourning. Moreover, Prinz is reborn like Amsel in the way he grows younger as he follows Matern's train east (pp.772-5) and, as a dog, is traditionally related to the Fool. Accordingly, Tulla and Amsel are the best at controlling the dogs in the novel. Nevertheless, as in Tulla's case, Matern and Harry's narratives encourage the critics to accept those narrators' displacement of guilt onto the animal.

misdemeanours may be designed to distract the reader from wondering about any major crimes on Harry's part while he was a soldier: but on that subject, Harry is silent.

The Fool Eddi Amsel

In *HJ*, Grass uses several major and minor characters as embodiments of the Germans' alleged inability to mourn. But he also does the opposite, and one character who is deployed as an antidote to Harry and Matern is Amsel. Because of this, the Mitscherlichs' primary concern is less useful with him than it was with Matern and Harry. Instead, Bakhtin's theory of 'grotesque realism' helps to explain why Amsel - a Fool and a grotesque figure whose activities sometimes make no sense in realistic terms - *can* mourn and why he behaves as he does throughout the novel.

Some critics sense that Amsel belongs to the related traditions of the Trickster and the *Schelm* but rarely provide textual evidence to support their claims. That said, O'Neill at least evinces a sense of Amsel's affinity with Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque when he says that Amsel is 'characterized by an ambivalence that is far more fundamental [than Matern's]' (p.60). But it is possible to go further than this since the novel contains specific evidence connecting Amsel with the carnivalesque. When Amsel first appears, he is described as 'was komisch Rundes' (p.150) and later as 'dicklich' with 'rotblonde Haar' (p.177) and 'lächerlich rund' (p.180). The associations of humour, the fat, grotesque body (*RW*, p.26), and red hair all point to the classic Fool or clown. As if participating in Carnival, Amsel performs two travesties: once when he takes Hedwig Lau's shoes as payment for a scarecrow (*HJ*, p.187) and thus changes clothes and gender simultaneously (cf. *RW*, p.411), and again when he swaps clothes with Matern on the train to school and finds himself wearing clownishly large shoes (*HJ*, p.227). Moreover, Amsel had breast-like 'Zitterzitzen' (p.348) when he was younger, and his gender

permanently hovers around an indefinable mid-zone (cf. *RW*, p.8) since he is seen as ‘eine Art Neutrum’ (*HJ*, p.334). Furthermore, Amsel’s invention of a new language which reverses normal spelling in a carnivalesque manner (p.247) accords with the inversions and reversals of Bakhtinian Carnival. Amsel is associated with laughter because of his ‘Fäustchen, gut zum Hineinlachen’ (p.343); and in the post-war radio discussion, Matern describes Amsel as ‘immer gute[r] Laune’ (p.756). Indeed, he even instinctively realizes that Amsel participates in the universal laughter of Carnival: ‘Nichts war ihm heilig [...] Alles fand er lächerlich’ (p.732). Together, the tall, ‘starkknochig’ Matern (p.286) and the short, fat Amsel form a typical comic pair whose archetype is Don Quixote and Sancho Panza (see *RW*, p.201). Later, as a ballet-impresario in Berlin, Amsel practises ambivalent abuse by encouraging his protégé(e)s to greater efforts by calling them ‘Ihr Stöpsel und Löchlein’ (*HJ*, p.492; cf. *RW*, p.165). Although Amsel’s reduction (or dismembering) of the dancers to their reproductive organs is at one level destructive and abusive, at another level those organs are creative and positive in Bakhtin’s eyes precisely *because* they reproduce and thus ‘renew’ the dancers. Finally, Amsel is associated with food, drink and free, frank speech (see *RW*, pp.281 and 284): he gives sweets to orphans (*HJ*, p.389), buys dinner for Harry and Jenny (pp.500-1), and takes Matern on a pub-crawl in Berlin, confronting him all the time with the truth of his guilty past in the best tradition of the licensed court jester (pp.776-800).

These are just some of the superficial features of Amsel’s behaviour that connect him with the Fool tradition and Bakhtin’s grotesque realism. But this imagery has a deeper significance which can be seen in Amsel’s mysterious activities during the novel.

Amsel and his Creations

Amsel's scarecrows have been variously interpreted as art by several critics, and those critics often attribute a satirical or parodic function to them. But O'Neill - rightly in my view - describes Amsel's work in terms that recall Bakhtin's vision of carnivalesque dismemberment and rebirth: '[his] art consists centrally of taking things apart and putting them back together again in entirely new and unexpected ways' (pp.61-2). Similarly, my reading of Amsel's 'Produkte' (*HJ*, p.178) interprets them as the objective correlative of Amsel's Bakhtinian world-view. If we take Amsel / Brauxel at his word when he narrates the first book, we learn that he never intended to build scarecrows at all (p.177) and that they were 'gegen nichts gebaut' (p.178). Likewise, Harry, the narrator of the second book, supports Brauxel's statements by claiming that 'gegen niemanden baute er' (p.361) and quotes Amsel as saying: 'keinerlei Kritik wollte er äußern' (p.381) - so it seems that Amsel's scarecrows were not meant to be satirical.

Nevertheless, to understand the deeper significance of Amsel's 'artistic' activities, one should consider exactly what his scarecrows depict. He constructs several scarecrows of the locals (p.179); the school bullies who beat him up (p.180); Waltern Matern (pp.180-1); a Medusa consisting of eels and a pig's bladder (a typical emblem carried by a Fool) (p.193); Prussian soldiers (pp.196-7); Matern's grandmother combined with a willow tree (pp.198-9); the locals *as* Prussian soldiers (p.199); Matern's father (p.200); three ancient Prussian gods - the fire-god Perkunos, the god of death Pikollos and the god of fertility Potrimpos (pp.208-9); the 'Großer Vogel Piepmatz' (p.238); a variety of unidentified figures - much later - who were apparently inspired by Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (pp.366-7); a fight between Matern and some members of the Hitlerjugend (p.368); a variety of SA-men with the faces of historical characters, including Weininger and Amsel himself (pp.379-80); some orphans (p.389);

and nine figures consisting of characters from the *Nibelungenlied* dressed as SA-men (pp.395-6). Finally of course, as Brauxel, Amsel builds an underground factory producing hundreds of robotic scarecrows.

Amsel's claim that criticism was not his intention is entirely plausible - after all, the orphans, the gods, the Prussian soldiers, 'Piepmatz' and the Medusa are not obviously satirical, nor do his scarecrows convey any clearly critical message. So I would argue that the scarecrows perform two related functions involving the carnivalesque. First, they degrade conventionally frightening beings, violent authority figures, or notions that arouse fear. Bakhtin explains how Carnival wards off fear and authority by writing of:

the victory of laughter over fear [...] over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"). It was the defeat of divine and human power, *of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death*, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself. Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life (*RW*, p.91, my italics).

Second, they point to a wider carnivalesque framework because they reproduce the world around him according to the tradition of 'grotesque realism' described by Bakhtin. I shall argue that Amsel's grotesque creations reflect his anti-authoritarian, Bakhtinian world-view which allows him to accept death and makes him capable of mourning. As Bakhtin's above comments suggest, the carnivalesque allows man to laugh off fear of authority and death. And conversely, as I have shown, it is authoritarianism that prevents Matern from mourning properly.

So to begin with, Amsel creates in grotesque form a variety of images of authority and / or violence or figures that arouse fear and grief. For instance, his scarecrows make Matern's father and grandmother, the SA, the Prussian soldiers and Walter Matern look silly: all are authoritarian figures and the latter four commit or have committed violent acts. Similarly, the deformed images of the bullies and the tableau of Matern fighting the

Hitlerjugend are grotesque images of violence itself. Then again, Amsel neutralizes the supernatural forces attributed to a range of mythological figures by re-incarnating them as grotesque scarecrows: for example, the Medusa which *looks* dangerous but turns out to be harmless (unlike the monster of Greek legend), the three Prussian gods, and Amsel's own pagan-sounding effigy, the 'Großer Vogel Piepmatz' (to which the locals attribute supernatural powers). Finally, and most interestingly, Amsel's creations involve a willow-tree, orphans and characters from the *Nibelungenlied*. Willow-trees are often associated with mourning; orphans by definition are bereaved; and the *Nibelungenlied* is characterized by the violent, tragic death of almost all the characters and the motif of happiness repeatedly giving way to grief: so here, too, Amsel is recreating in grotesque form images involving death and mourning.

But Amsel's scarecrows do not simply ward off fear, they also embody their creator's world-view which is rooted in the tradition of 'grotesque realism' as that is described by Bakhtin and celebrate the cycle of life and death that the carnivalesque involves. This cycle of life and death is implicit in Amsel's use of detritus - dead matter - when making his scarecrows: he recycles rubbish from the Vistula - clothes, pieces of wood, rope, bottles and pots (*HJ*, pp.182-3) - and later, even old SA-uniforms (pp.368-70). For Bakhtin, there is a 'logic in the choice of carnival objects. They are, so to speak, utilized in the wrong way, contrary to their common use. Household objects are turned into arms [...] Useless and worn-out items are produced' (*RW*, p.411).³⁹ These old items are 'debasement junk' which 'symbolize the obsolete character of that old world, its futility, absurdity' (p.394), but they are also part of the 'logic of the "wrong side out"' (p.411)

³⁹ Cf. Amsel's comment in his penknife story near the end of the novel: 'Sodann wird jedes Taschenmesser benutzt, entweder als das, was es ist und sein sollte, oder es wird dem eigentlichen Zweck entfremdet und findet als Briefbeschwerer, Gegengewicht oder [...] Wurfgegenstand Verwendung' (p.785).

and reflect the cycle of life and death since, according to Bakhtin, ‘Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world [...]. *The old world that has been destroyed is offered together with the new world and is represented with it as the dying part of the dual body*’ (p.410; my italics). In other words, Amsel’s figures are constructed from and openly display those remnants of the old world but also embody the *rebirth* of that rubbish in a new form as comic scarecrows.

Moreover, Amsel degrades his targets in such a way as to reverse the destruction and death for which they conventionally stand. For example, both the Medusa and the SA-men built by Amsel have pigs’ bladders for heads (*HJ*, p.395), a feature that recalls the grotesque ‘substitution of the face by the buttocks, the top by the bottom’ (*RW*, p.373; cf. p.353) and expresses ‘the ambivalence of the material bodily lower stratum, which destroys and generates’ (p.163). Or in other words, the carnivalesque nature of Amsel’s scarecrows point to rebirth and regeneration rather than death. The Prussian gods of death, fertility and fire fit neatly into this scheme, since Pikollos is the god of death and thus aligned with the discarded rubbish, whereas Potrimpos, as god of fertility, represents the renewal the rubbish undergoes. But Perkunos, the fire-god, simultaneously performs both functions of his two fellow deities since he represents destruction *and* renewal (*HJ*, pp.208-9). On fire as a carnivalesque symbol, Bakhtin refers to the ‘carnival bonfire that renews the world’ (*RW*, p.17) and to ‘the festival of fire, that is, of burning and rebirth’ (p.248).⁴⁰ In similar vein, the soldiers and the Weininger-scarecrow constructed by Amsel are also incarnations of the dead brought back to life or reborn. Finally, Amsel’s scarecrows ‘reverse’ destruction inasmuch as they are not ‘eternal’ and are constantly

⁴⁰ The use of fire imagery is paralleled by other incidents in the novel. For instance, when Piepmatz burns, Amsel’s intellect simply gives birth to new ideas (p.243). When the goose catches fire, it does so during Matern’s christening (and so is connected with birth) and leads to the resurrection (‘Auferstehungsfest’ [p.166]) of his catatonic grandmother and her beating of Lorchen who is hammered out of her retrogressive mental state - i.e. producing three images of (re)birth in one episode. Finally, there is a trace of this fire imagery in Jenny’s claim that it was ‘Schrecklich heiß’ (p.410) in the snowman: in other words, her metamorphosis is accompanied by extreme heat.

destroyed and then rebuilt. Thus, when Amsel began building scarecrows, he destroyed and rebuilt them again and again: 'Was er gestern [...] gebaut hatte, riß er am folgenden Morgen nieder und baute aus den gleichen Requisiten ein Unikum anderen Geschlechts, anderen Glaubens' (*HJ*, p.178). And when Amsel's 'Piepmatz' is publicly burnt - an event described as 'ein Fest' (p.242) and a 'lustige[] Verbrennung' (p.243) - the sight merely sparks the new idea of rebuilding the enormous bird in the future (p.243). Thus, Amsel's constant dismantling and reconstruction of his creations points to the same world-view of destruction and, most importantly, rebirth that motivated his building of the scarecrows.

Moreover, the *effects* of the scarecrows are not destructive but largely productive: crops flourish since birds are scared away (pp.178 and 359); the Matern-scarecrow reverses the direction of Matern's punches onto Amsel's aggressors (pp.180-1) which benefits Amsel and makes the beatings more general and less individually directed (cf. 'The blows [...] at once kill and regenerate, put an end to the old life and start the new' [*RW*, p.205]); and the farmer's wife who buys Potrimpos not only finds the scarecrow humorous ('zum Kichern') but also quickly gives birth to twins (*HJ*, p.208). Admittedly, Amsel makes mistakes: his scarecrow of Matern's grandmother merely provokes fear just as the original once did. But she, who once accused Matern's mother of barrenness (p.162), represents the old, dying world and when Amsel's Piepmatz kills off the grandmother (p.239), her death issues in renewal: Kriwe touches her corpse and in a 'heilig lächerliche[n] Moment wunderbarer Heilung' (p.240; my italics) is cured of a dental abscess.

Mason suggests that 'if [Amsel's "art"] inspires any laughter at all, [it] is likely to evoke a fascinated laughter in revulsion' (pp.37-8). While she is correct that Amsel's figures might well provoke laughter and even captures some of the Bakhtinian ambivalence of laughter in the contradiction between the words 'fascination' and

'revulsion', no character in the text is revolted or personally offended by Amsel's creations: on the contrary, he sells them without difficulty. Significantly, only Matern sees satirical criticism in the scarecrows - which Bakhtin carefully distinguishes from carnivalesque laughter (*RW*, p.12) - and misunderstands Amsel's all-embracing laughter when he complains about Amsel's SA-effigies. Amsel, who 'fand [alles] lächerlich' (*HJ*, p.732), must have found his creations funny, too, and even Matern describes the scarecrows after the War as '*komische Figuren*' (p.756; my italics). For Bakhtin, laughter functions in exactly the same way as the 'debasement junk' of which the scarecrows consist: 'laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives [...] it is also directed at those who laugh [...] they, too, are incomplete, they also die and are revived and renewed' (*RW*, pp.11-12). Amsel echoes this idea when he claims that his intention is to produce 'Pfundskerle wie Schweinehunde, gemischt und gewürfelt, wie nun mal das Leben spiele, mit künstlerischen Mitteln' (*HJ*, p.381). Or in other words, the effect of Amsel's scarecrows is universal in the Bakhtinian sense, in that they are aimed at the *whole* world as well as specific targets.

On my reading, then, Amsel laughs in the carnivalesque sense at himself, his tribulations, fear, authority, and everyone else. Boyers, in a little-known work which discusses *HJ*, argues, rightly in my view: 'To come to terms with the past is not to immobilize it in exemplars or formulas but to live with it as a key to one's present identity. [...] *Past and present and future live together in the scarecrow figures that violate all sense of quotidian and temporal limitation*' (my italics).⁴¹ That is to say, Amsel's grotesque vision of the world is reflected in his creations, which are composed of and openly display awareness of the past and of their origins in what is old and dead

⁴¹ Robert Boyers, *Atrocity and Amnesia: The Political Novel since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.205-6.

(represented by the rubbish from the river) - which Amsel is able to confront - and simultaneously overcome the old world while celebrating rebirth, progress and change and rebuild creatively on that past.⁴² The implications of Amsel's Janus-faced vision are particularly relevant when considering the central issue of mourning as part of a regenerative process since that vision represents a way of both confronting and living with the Nazi past.

Amsel's Acceptance of Death

Bakhtin tells us that: 'death is not a negation of life seen as the great body of all the people but part of life as a whole - its indispensable component, the condition of its constant renewal and regeneration [...] Death is included in life, and together with birth determines its eternal movement' (*RW*, p.50). This idea explains why Amsel is able to mourn properly: because he stands in the grotesque tradition, he neither fears nor ignores death and accepts that it is part of a greater cycle and is always accompanied by rebirth. But Amsel's vision is also directed to the future and rebirth, and that is why *new* figures are created out of all the detritus he collects. Although Amsel's products are humorous, his ability to laugh at death is not to be confused with callous mockery of the dead since his is the laughter of those who do not suffer from fear and can accept the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Amsel's carnivalesque attitude is not embodied exclusively in his scarecrows: it is implicit in many of his other activities. To begin with, several minor incidents in *HJ* illustrate his embracing of the death of the old world and the rebirth of the new - even if,

⁴² Cf. Mason who underlines how the narrator Brauxel draws an explicit comparison between the floating rubbish of the Vistula and his own memories in the opening pages of *HJ* (Mason, p.74). Thus, Brauxel explicitly repeats the meaning of the actions of his youth: now he reworks the past (as memories) in creative form (his book), just as he collected and rebuilt rubbish from the Vistula as scarecrows when he was called Amsel.

because of the occluding tendencies caused by Harry and Matern's domination of most of the narrative, the redemptive implications of these incidents is by no means immediately obvious. Thus Mason, speaking of Tulla's alleged attempts to ruin Amsel's painting of Harras (*HJ*, pp.338-42), registers Amsel's ability to turn persecution into artistic triumph (Mason, p.55, n.21). But if we read that episode through Bakhtinian spectacles, then Amsel could be said to be *embracing* destruction by reworking the destroyed item into a *new* object: Tulla throws sand at Amsel's painting and he, 'verärgert und gutmütig zugleich' (i.e. with ambivalent feelings) (*HJ*, p.338), then uses the sand to discover a new artistic technique (p.339). Then again, in a manner which recalls Hans Castorp, Amsel / Brauxel even makes a narrative aside to the effect that his hair and nails will continue to grow after his death (p.177) - in other words, he says that life continues after death. And when Felsner-Imbs's jacket is torn by Harras - to the short-sighted narrator Harry a 'heillose[s] Kleidungsstück' (p.358), a 'hoffnungslos zerfetzte[s] Kleidungsstück' (p.360) - Amsel re-uses it to amuse Jenny and Felsner-Imbs by mimicking birds and humans alike. Indeed, Amsel's 'Maskerade' with the torn jacket is precisely what encourages him to start his scarecrow-building anew: 'denn [Harras'] Scherengebiss hatte [...] im Inneren des Eddi Amsel [...] eine Saat Ideen aufgehen lassen, die, während Amsels Kindheit gesät, scheunensprengende Ernte versprach' (p.359). So while Amsel's painting and Felsner-Imbs's jacket might appear metaphorically 'dead' because they have been ruined, Amsel can see ways in which to create something new out of them.

However, I want to analyse three further, major episodes in which Amsel embraces *literal* death and which illustrate just how important Amsel's carnivalesque world-view is to an understanding of the novel. To begin with, a close reading of the episode in which Amsel and Matern discover a skeleton demonstrates some of the ways in which Amsel's fundamental attitude manifests itself. Brauxel describes how he (as Amsel) and Matern explore the tunnels under their school, an episode that is connected in several

places with death, folly and the imagery of grotesque realism: the exploration takes place 'nach Ostern' beneath a former 'Franziskanerkloster[]' (p.228). That is to say, the boys' adventure takes place at a time when death and resurrection are celebrated, beneath a monastery once populated by those who were known as 'God's jugglers' for the Franciscan order was a 'carnivalized Catholicism' (*RW*, p.57). The boys enter the tunnels through a hole in the 'Umkleideraum der Turnhalle' (*HJ*, p.229), a room designed for travesty ('changing clothes'). Their downward movement into the sewers (p.229) - a kind of urban digestive system - promises to be both destructive and creative, since Bakhtin equates the 'mighty thrust downward into the bowels of the earth' with that 'into the depths of the human body' (*RW*, p.370) and adds: 'The material bodily lower stratum is productive. It gives birth, thus assuring mankind's immortality. All obsolete and vain illusions die in it' (p.378). Indeed, the sewer's course is associated with images of death and decay (it runs through the 'Altstadt', is shaded by 'Trauerweiden', and then joins the 'Toten Weichsel' [*HJ*, p.229]), before issuing in salvation: 'Gegenüber dem Sankt-Salvator-Friedhof' (p.230, my italics). Finally, the skeleton which they find during this episode is, in several respects, a typically grotesque body. It is 'unvollständig' - a virtual translation of Bakhtin's description of the grotesque body as 'never finished, never completed' (*RW*, p.317) - and it is dismembered since several bones are broken and 'Links fehlt das Schlüsselbein' (*HJ*, p.232). Dismemberment, according to Bakhtin, prepares for rebirth (see *RW*, p.317).

Amsel and Matern's very different reactions to their find are central for an understanding of their characters. While Matern neurotically 'steht starr' (*HJ*, p.232), Amsel is all too keen to examine the skeleton closely ('Amsel beginnt das Skelett auszuleuchten' [p.232]), and even sketches the skeleton in an act of remembrance ('im Gedächtnis zu bewahren' [p.232]) before reaching for the skull: 'An die Weichsel will er den Schädel tragen und einer seiner noch gerüthhaften Scheuchen [...] draufsetzen'

(pp.232-3). On my reading, Amsel's behaviour points to a healthy attitude in the face of death so that when Matern beats him for taking the skull, 'Amsel kommt wieder hoch' (p.233) and thus performs what Bakhtin refers to as 'the usual trick of the clown simulating death and revival' (*RW*, p.354). Like Rabelais's Catchpoles (see *RW*, pp.196ff), Amsel cannot be beaten down for long and revives himself after the beating just as he intends to revive the skeleton as a scarecrow. At this juncture, Amsel recalls a clown with his smiley-teary make-up because he can both weep ('Wer kann so dicke, stoßweis rollende Tränen weinen?' [*HJ*, p.233]) and 'gutmütig bis spöttisch grinsen'; moreover, he mimics the boys' English teacher, the kind of authority-figure who would have created the kind of taboos in Matern that cause him to fear death: 'denn immer, auch während Tränen fließen, muß er jeden, notfalls sich selber imitieren' (p.233). At the end of the same episode, Amsel produces the grotesque symbol *par excellence*, namely some excrement, in that he defecates on the floor of the sewer: Bakhtin frequently describes the ambivalence of this image and refers not only to its 'debasing meaning' but also, through its connection with the bodily lower stratum, to its 'essential link with birth, fertility, renewal' (*RW*, p.148). Because the narrator, Brauxel / Amsel, explicitly connects faeces with the past (see *HJ*, p.228), Amsel is able to face the past (in the form of his own faeces) 'neugierig' (p.233) - i.e. with interest and without revulsion. Moreover, the implications of the word 'neugierig' (= literally, 'greedy for the new') reinforce the idea that Amsel can look forward to and move on towards the future while leaving the (defecated) past behind him because he has confronted it. This would explain why Amsel can confront death without fear and symbolically grasps death in the form of the skull (p.233). And because Amsel wants to preserve the memory of the skeleton but re-use its skull creatively in his scarecrow as a sign that something new can emerge from death, he mocks gloomy 'agelasts' like Matern who refuse to participate in the cycle of life and death.

Then again, when Harry narrates Matern and the SA's attack on Amsel, the reader can easily view the incident as a typical example of Nazi brutality. But even here, I would argue that the episode contains redemptive elements and is ambivalent in the Bakhtinian sense. So, to begin with, Amsel proves to be as indestructible as he was in the skeleton-episode: just as he had turned the beatings he received at school into artistic creativity (p.180), so he is reborn after the attack in the snow and cannot be killed. Furthermore, his reaction to the assault is a deliberately foolish misunderstanding of the situation:⁴³ he offers his assailants coffee and cakes - a typically festive image of food and drink - and laughs (p.398). He even tries to speak his reversed language ('Tsib Ud se?') as he is knocked down and bounces back up again ('er fällt [...] kommt schnell wieder hoch' [p.399]). Then again, as in the carnivalesque beatings described by Bakhtin, Amsel is dismembered during the assault since he loses all thirty-two of his teeth (p.407) - and, coincidentally, having all one's teeth knocked out is cited *verbatim* from Rabelais by Bakhtin as a sign of carnivalesque dismemberment which prepares for rebirth (*RW*, p.194). After Amsel thaws, he finds his teeth in the snow and Harry, the narrator, wonders: 'Suchte er [...] der Hölle Sieg, des Todes Stachel?' (*HJ*, p.406). Here, Harry is quoting I Corinthians 15: 55, where St. Paul *laughs in the face of Death*, an act which parallels Amsel's indestructibility in the face of death. St. Paul also says, in verse 52, that 'the dead will rise immortal', and it is surely no accident that I Corinthians is the book in which Paul's famous words 'We are fools for Christ's sake' occur (4: 10). If we take all this imagery together, then we can see that Amsel's ability to be reborn after a beating is closely connected with his role as a Fool and his concomitant ability to deal with death through laughter. Moreover, if Amsel stands for all the victims of Nazi

⁴³ Cf. Amsel's supposed ignorance of Adolf Hitler in his conversation with August Pokriefke (p.340).

persecution, then the ambivalence of the episode implies that Grass, despite his instinctive pessimism at this stage of his career, may, with another part of his imagination, have sensed that regeneration, rebirth and progress were possible after the destruction caused by the Nazis.

Finally, a similar process is at work in the scene at 'Chez Jenny' narrated by Matern. Amidst much carnivalesque eating and drinking in a variety of Berlin bars, Amsel chain-smokes, but whenever he discards his cigarette, someone extinguishes it (p.778), whereupon he immediately lights another: one cigarette 'dies' and another is reborn. On reaching Jenny's bar, Amsel delivers a monologue in which he draws an explicit analogy between faeces and his cigarettes by describing them as 'meinen existentiellen Stuhlgang' (p.789): like his faeces in the sewer, the burning cigarettes are an image of his past and so left behind while something new is ignited. Ironically (from today's perspective), the cigarettes are also a sign of life for just as Amsel cannot die, so the cigarettes never go out and during the same monologue he states: 'ich rauche, damit alle Welt begreift: Seht, er lebt noch, denn er raucht noch' (p.789). Moreover, at the same juncture Amsel again reveals his awareness of the grotesque nature of reality: 'Abfälle Abfälle! Sind wir nicht? Oder werden wir nicht? Leben wir etwa nicht von?' (p.789). Amsel sees that, like his scarecrows, we all carry the signs of the dead or dying past in us: but it takes a Fool like Amsel to confront this fact and turn it into something positive. Subsequently he drinks a 'Lebenselixier' (p.792) which consists partially of urine - but Bakhtin's theory allows us to understand this superficially unpleasant act in a positive way: 'The images of faeces and urine are ambivalent [...]; they debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously' (*RW*, p.151). Amsel, Jenny and even Matern then follow up this act by telling stories that recapitulate the events of the novel: i.e. they work through and reconstruct their discarded past memories by turning them into creative narration. A fire is then caused by one of Amsel's cigarettes, but the carnivalesque

framework of the characters' story-telling makes the characters impervious to the flames. Indeed, the fire itself is said to enjoy a carnivalesque feast: 'Das Feuer tischt sich den zweiten Gang auf' (*HJ*, p.793). The three even laugh at their own stories ('nicht enden wollendes Gelächter' [p.795]) which scares away the authoritarian fire-brigade who seek to extinguish and limit this creative fire. As we have seen, fire is a vital image of rebirth for Bakhtin (*RW*, pp.17 and 248). Once again then, although this episode is narrated by Matern, who cannot understand Amsel and subsequently appears unmoved by his experiences at 'Chez Jenny', a Bakhtinian reading of this incident highlights Amsel's indestructibility and explicitly alludes to redemptive ideas of death and regeneration.

So Amsel's ability to mourn is an aspect of a much larger, carnivalesque world-view which enables him to confront death and laugh at it in the knowledge that rebirth comes from death: he acknowledges death, but also knows how to recast the past for the sake of the future.

Tulla - a Positive, Carnivalesque Character

Tulla is the other major character in *HJ* who can mourn authentically. But Harry's systematically negative presentation of Tulla veils her positive role as someone who can confront the past and death, and shows how easily a blinkered, realistic reading of such a character can lead to a misunderstanding of the carnivalesque. Tulla can mourn because she, like Amsel, is a being who is rooted in the tradition of grotesque realism. For example, she has an outsized, grotesque nose (p.309), lacks any conventional sense of logic ('Warum? Darum!' [p.480; cf. Bakhtin, p.426]), and when she appears in *Katz und Maus*, Pilenz says that she 'hätte genausogut ein Junge sein können'⁴⁴ - so, like Amsel,

⁴⁴ Günter Grass, *Katz und Maus*, p.31. Cf. Harry's description of Tulla: 'Tulla, mehr ein Etwas als ein Mädchen' (*HJ*, p.287).

she is ambiguously gendered. Moreover, several features make her resemble one of Amsel's constantly destroyed and rebuilt scarecrows: her knee is an 'aufgeschlagene[s], verschorfende[s], heilende[s], neu aufgeschlagene[s] Knie' (ibid.); Neuhaus compares her wig of wood-shavings (*HJ*, pp.309 and 355) to a Medusa's head (Neuhaus [1991], p.190) which implies that she resembles Amsel's grotesque (but *harmless*) Medusa-scarecrow; and like Amsel's scarecrows, Tulla's 'Knochenleimgeruch' (*HJ*, p.285) means that she carries all the signs of death and the past around with her. Finally, as Harry tells us, her name recalls the word 'Tolle' (p.282) (= 'mad woman'). For Bakhtin, 'the theme of madness is used in the grotesque [...] to escape the false "truth of this world"' (*RW*, p.49), and Tulla, as a 'mad woman', has a perspective on reality that is shared by Fools like Amsel but is very different from that of Harry or Matern.

Given that Harry controls the narration of the parts of *HJ* in which Tulla features, it is understandable that critics have conventionally accepted that Tulla is a wholly negative character. So much so that Harris is the only critic to remark - using accidentally Bakhtinian vocabulary - that there is more to Tulla than people like Harry can see: 'to Harry's rather simplistic mind Tulla always remains something of an enigma. Her generally *ambivalent* and unpredictable nature may be a reflection of the times in which she was raised and is certainly suited to their ambiguity' (my italics).⁴⁵ Indeed, if we read Tulla and the imagery associated with her through Bakhtin's eyes, her activities become more comprehensible *and* redemptive. For instance, her apparent persecution of Jenny at the Gutenberg monument takes on a different meaning when it is interpreted using *RW*. This episode appears sinister only because Harry takes so much trouble to associate the 'attack' in the reader's mind with Matern's beating of Amsel by constantly switching from scene to scene: the reader is forced to connect Tulla's actions with

⁴⁵ Frederick J. Harris, *Encounters with Darkness: French and German Writers on World War II* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.121.

beatings by the Nazi SA. In fact, Tulla encourages Jenny to dance (p.397); Jenny makes a fool of herself by falling down and getting up again the magical three times (p.398); and it is Tulla who helps to knock her down again and again: 'wenn Jenny hoch wollte, stieß Tulla sie zurück [...] Tulla lachte' (p.399) - just as Amsel falls and rises again and again in the snow-scene. Tulla makes a snowman out of Jenny with a prominent nose (p.400) and when it melts, Jenny is reborn as a skilled ballerina (p.406) and is entirely unconcerned by an experience that, in realistic terms, should be traumatic (pp.409-10). However negatively Harry may want us to see the event, Tulla has laughingly destroyed the old, frumpish Jenny and brought her back to life in a new, improved guise. Indeed, Pinfold goes so far as to say that 'Her emergence from the snowman and transformed appearance accompanied by church bells evokes the Resurrection'.⁴⁶ Moreover, in another episode when Tulla allegedly behaves badly, she anticipates the part she will play in the destruction and renewal of Jenny when she spits into Jenny's pram (p.300): one could draw an analogy between spit and the urine in Amsel's elixir which, according to Bakhtin, debases and renews.

Like Amsel, Tulla can mourn and has no fear of death. As we have seen, she mourns Konrad despite her family's bullying (p.311), but the event which receives the lengthiest narrative treatment is when she eats Harras's food - 'einen Napf voller Herz-Nieren-Milz- und Lebersud' (p.314) - at the very time when she is mourning her brother. Although a reader could interpret this superficially disgusting incident as a sign that Tulla is a bestial emblem of the savagery of the Third Reich, it is much less straightforward when read in the light of *RW*. In accordance with Tulla's ability to confront death, mourn and move on, she eats tripe which, for Bakhtin, symbolised death (being connected with the slaughter of animals), birth (since the lower body from which tripe comes is the site

⁴⁶ Pinfold, *The Child's View of the Third Reich*, pp.139-40. Pinfold also cites a work on ballet 'which refers to ballet training as a crucifixion and performance as a resurrection' (p.140).

of birth) and renewal (since tripe nourishes Tulla and keeps her alive [*RW*, p.163]). Finally, Tulla fearlessly accepts the deadly truth of the 'Knochenberg' at Stutthof and, as a positive character, forces the likes of Matern to confront something of the horror of the Holocaust. Thus, she commits a transgression by crossing the barbed-wire (*HJ*, p.517) and brings back a skull (p.518) - an action which recalls the sewer-scene with Amsel.⁴⁷ And the result is precisely the same: Matern, interrupted in his pointless shooting of crows, beats her just as he had punched Amsel for violating the same taboo.

So where, on a *realistic* reading, Tulla will appear vicious and revolting, on a Bakhtinian reading, she appears as a positive, *surreal* character who can confront death and effect rebirth in various carnivalesque ways. Harry's depiction of Tulla is one site in *HJ* at which the two ways of reading the novel clash and intertwine so that Harry's negative depiction of Tulla is not only a sign of his inability to mourn, it also shows how a one-sidedly realistic reading of the novel's grotesque characters leads to a misunderstanding both of them and the redemptive potential which they embody.

Matern's Failed Potential

Although Matern embodies the inability to mourn, he is by no means the simple antithesis of Amsel and Tulla since he possesses many characteristics of the grotesque Fool which could have led to psychological health had he been able to recognize them. And again, Bakhtin's theory demonstrates Matern's latent potential for redemption where the Mitscherlichs' theory can account only for his psychological deficiencies.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Cf. Pinfold's analysis of this scene, in which she evaluates Tulla's actions positively yet again by referring to 'the innate potential of childhood: [...] its fearless articulation of the truth' (p.142).

⁴⁸ Moser's comment that the Mitscherlichs' text is 'eher ein Katalog von Beschimpfungen denn als ein Dokument des Verstehenwollens' (p.391) suggests that the pessimistic tone of *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* might prevent a reader gaining any message of hope from the text. Bakhtin's model, when read with the Mitscherlichs', allows the positive characters' example to emerge.

Moreover, Bakhtin can be used in order to interpret the biggest taboo which haunts Matern, the taboo surrounding death itself. For Matern, death is viewed from the point of view of the *individual*, but for Bakhtin, death is always followed by rebirth because the life of the people goes on. Accordingly, Matern's individualistic view of death explains why he loses touch with his carnivalesque side.

If we return to the sewer episode, Matern's fear of death is obvious. To begin with, his reaction to Amsel's violation of the taboo surrounding death is to grind his teeth (p.233). This is an obvious index of the frustrated aggression that characterises Matern, who is referred to as 'der Knirscher' throughout the novel and whose teeth-grinding is explicitly associated with taboos: '[Das Knirschen] besagt: Amsel darf keine Fingerchen spreizen. Amsel darf nicht mitnehmen. Der Schädel ist nicht zum Mitnehmen. Stör ihn nicht. Rühr nicht dran' (p.233). That we are dealing with a taboo during the sewer episode is clear since no justification is given for Matern's prohibitive unease at Amsel's tampering with death even in the free indirect speech that appears to reflect Matern's own thoughts: similar considerations explain why he subsequently beats Amsel without speaking or reflecting first.

Just as the Mitscherlichs demand that the socialization process should enable the individual to become more aware of others, so Bakhtin understands Carnival as a means of promoting an awareness of people as a whole. Because Matern is so unaware of people around him, he can, in Bakhtinian terms, think of himself only as an isolated *individual*. So all he says in the sewer is 'Vlaicht isses dä Jan Bobrowski odä Materna, wo unsre Famielche härkämmt' (p.234): i.e. when Matern sees the skeleton, all he can do is identify with the dead and so remind himself in a negative way of his own mortality.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Brauxel / Amsel, the narrator, makes it clear that Matern's hypothesis that the skeleton is one of his family is very unlikely to be accurate (p.234) and thus undermines Matern's attempts to identify with the dead.

Analogously, in the episode in Jenny's bar, Matern misunderstands the death / rebirth significance of Amsel's cigarettes (which he refers to as 'Sargnägel' [p.780]) and makes trivial comments about Amsel's health (pp.777, 778, 780, 783 and 788). In both episodes, Matern can only see the threat of mortality where Amsel sees the possibility of rebirth, and because he does not comprehend that life as such continues after the death of the individual, he fears death in a particularly acute way.

Matern's tragedy is that he had the traits needed to share Amsel's attitudes all along but chose a path which prevented him confronting death without fear.⁵⁰ Thus, his alcoholism looks like carnivalesque excess but actually causes him loneliness and misery and even makes him poison Harras. His habit of grinding his teeth is a kind of chewing without the eating and swallowing of carnivalesque feasting. His surname suggests carnivalesque gender-bending and the earthy, material sphere since 'Matern' recalls the Latin words 'mater' (= 'mother') and 'materies' (= 'material'), but his first name, deriving from the verb 'walten' (meaning 'to reign or rule'), betrays his authoritarian character.⁵¹ Indeed, Matern loses his ability to play *Faustball* to such an extent that after the War he is fit only to be a referee (p.684), i.e. an authority figure. Matern's transgressive potential is also indicated by his habit of crossing thresholds, but except for his fence-leaping antics to pursue the gypsies who abandon Jenny (p.257), he crosses barriers only for destructive purposes - as when he jumps fences to attack Amsel himself (p.396) and Ralf Zander's trees (p.708) - or for flight to the totalitarian GDR across the border (pp.764ff). Then again, in the radio discussion, Matern claims to have no fear of death because he is a Catchpole-like 'Stehaufmännchen' (p.734) - only to withdraw this

⁵⁰ Interestingly, Matern's inability to accept his own mortality is also reflected in his irrational hostility towards Heidegger, whose philosophy deals with living life authentically in full acceptance of one's own future demise. See Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.69-78.

⁵¹ Grass might well have intended Matern's name to be significant since, according to Reddick, Grass changed it from 'Damaschke'. See John Reddick, *The 'Danzig Trilogy' of Günter Grass* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), p.175.

claim two pages later (p.736). His clown-like baldness and multi-coloured clothing ('glatzköpfig auch innen [...] Stehaufmännchen läuft auf Bleisohlen, oben kahl, innen hohl, außen mit Stoffresten behängt, roten braunen schwarzen - anspucken!' [p.662]) are merely the symptoms of a body weakened by dissolution, venereal disease, alcoholism and self-imposed electric-shock therapy (with no chance for regeneration) and a mind that constantly switches ideologies. His Priapic sexuality might have been productive in a carnivalesque context, but after the War he employs it for aggressive, vengeful and therefore destructive purposes. Matern destroys and, unlike Amsel, never (re)creates. In Bakhtinian terms, then, Matern has no sense that death can issue in rebirth; in Mitscherlichian terms, Matern is destructive because he can neither sublimate his aggressive and libidinal drives, nor feel empathy for others, nor express his (already weak) identity through *creative* activity (Mitscherlichs, pp.176-7) in the way that Amsel can.

So where a Mitscherlichian analysis of Matern shows how his psychological flaws prevent proper mourning, a Bakhtinian analysis shows that he had the potential to be a Fool like Amsel and hints at the faint chance that he will achieve an authentic reaction to the past at some point in the future. But unfortunately for Matern, 'das Tragische sei ihm ohnehin mitgegeben, und nur im Komischen hapere es noch bei ihm' (p.363). Accordingly, his book finishes with the words 'Jeder badet für sich' (p.835), a statement which betrays his inability to empathize with Amsel's world-view, an inability that stems from Matern's sense of himself as an isolated individual and makes the prospect of his achieving authentic mourning unlikely.

Resistant Reading

As *HJ* prompts the reader to read from the realistic and *surrealistic* perspectives simultaneously, there is a constant tension between the ‘realistic’ characters like Matern and Harry (who are determined to trust language and the printed word to reinforce what Bakhtin called the ‘official philosophy’), and the grotesque, carnivalesque characters (who resist the conventional meaning of language and point to alternative ways of communicating and understanding reality). Thus, just as the ‘official philosophy’ of moral amnesia about the events of the Third Reich causes Harry to abuse his narration in order to scapegoat Tulla, the novel involves several examples of the illegitimate manipulation of language and the printed word. Harry’s (and others’) abuse of Heidegger’s language to deny the reality of the ‘Knochenberg’ is well-documented in the secondary literature, and Harry even uses that language to avoid mourning Tulla’s miscarried foetus (p.532). But Grass’s exploration of the dangers of an uncritical attitude towards language and even the abuse of literature itself extends beyond his narrators’ deployment of Heideggerese. Harry, for instance, knows the power of words to control, attack and disseminate destructive ideologies: quite apart from the ‘Liebesbriefe’, he writes a radio discussion in order to persecute Matern (p.721) which is cast in theatrical dialogue (thus concealing his presence as the narrator of that section *within* Matern’s book) and an essay (‘Mein schönster Tag’) about his trip to see Hitler’s dog, Prinz, which presumably sang the praises of Nazism (p.450). Harry also sees the advantage in trusting words’ everyday meaning. While Jenny instinctively knows that Brunies is dead ‘auch wenn sie nicht geschrieben haben, daß er tot ist’ (p.485), Harry can refuse to face Nazi criminality and claim that Brunies may eventually return. He even admits that he wants to categorize Tulla by finding a word that rhymes with her name (p.280), and he resorts to the (written) mythological tradition in order to trace the origins of her name and thus

make sense of her (p.282).⁵² He also employs the literary *Märchen*-form to mask the horror of Stutthof and the end of the War (pp.502-75). Matern, too, is guilty of trusting the written word too much when he tries to interpret Brauxel's mine as Dante's Inferno (cf. Mason, p.25): like Oskar (who poses as Dante when he emerges from the Paris Metro) and Raskolnikoff (who is named after the protagonist of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*) in *BT*, Matern seeks to tap into a *literary* analogy that will, by its very form, guarantee his redemption from sin at the end of his ordeal.

But at the same time, the carnivalesque characters in *HJ* know how to resist the ideological power of the written word. Bakhtin speaks of 'the carnivalization of speech, which freed it from the gloomy seriousness of official philosophy as well as from truisms and commonplace ideas' (*RW*, p.426) and claims that, as a result of carnivalization, 'events are conceived outside their traditional official interpretation and so offer new opportunities for interpretation and appreciation' (p.424). Jenny resists the 'official philosophy' when she insists on mourning despite having no *written* confirmation of Brunies' death; Amsel speaks in his invented back-to-front language (*HJ*, p.233); and Tulla escapes categorization when Harry admits that he gave up his search for a word to rhyme with her name (p.560). Some characters do not even communicate by means of words at all: Tulla swaps humorous stories with Konrad in sign-language (p.288) and Brunies wordlessly mimes the act of sucking a sweet in his mouth to illustrate an essay-title given to his pupils ('Einen imaginären Malzbonbon ließ er von einer Backe in die andere ziehen [...] ließ den Bonbon sprechen, erzählen' [p.477]).⁵³ Brunies also offers a resistant reading of Harry's sycophantic, pro-Hitler essay by ignoring the bulk of its

⁵² Neuhaus (1991) offers a series of literary analogues to support Tulla's mythological / literary background and yet does not see that this interpretation of Tulla is *Harry's* alone.

⁵³ Brunies is somewhat clownish in that he has 'Ein Gesicht, durchspinnen von Lach-Kicher-Schmuntzefalten' and is 'nie ernstgenommen' (p.251); indulges himself excessively with sweets; wears a large hat ('einen breitrandigen Schlapphut' [p.286]); and, as he pushes his adoptive daughter Jenny in her pram, is followed by a group of children to whom he dispenses sweets as if in a Carnival procession (p.287).

content and delivering a lecture on the fine artwork to be seen in the hotel which Harry had visited (p.450). Jenny's dance and Tulla's destruction / reconstruction of Jenny at the feet of the satanic Gutenberg monument show a significant lack of respect for the man who invented the printing-press (and thus gave the likes of Harry the chance to disseminate their views as the 'official philosophy'). Another irony is that the insult 'Itzig', so often hurled at Amsel, turns out to be as ambivalent as any of Rabelais's abuse: Goheen points out that 'Itzig' is derived from 'Isaac' (p.165, n.17) but she does not see that for Amsel, the insult would have both a destructive *and* a regenerative effect since 'Isaac' is the Hebrew word for 'laugh'!⁵⁴

Finally, the point of Otto Weininger's influence on Amsel is to show how perniciously *and* inaccurately the written word can be used to represent reality, for Weininger's theories and categorizations do not accurately describe the dogs, women or Jews who appear in *HJ*. And yet, ironically, Weininger's theories - those *not* cited in *HJ* itself - justify the half-Jewish Amsel's pedigree as a Fool. Moreover, by criticizing the alleged qualities of Jews - qualities which are recognizably carnivalesque - Weininger's published theories provide another example of how the written word in the novel puts the carnivalesque under a negative sign and consequently marginalizes the authentic mourning represented by a woman (Tulla), a dog (Prinz) and a Jew (Amsel). In *Geschlecht und Charakter*, Weininger denies Jews, women and dogs a soul. But more significantly for *HJ*, Weininger's particular criticisms of the Jews include, for example, his condemnation of the 'Veränderungsfähigkeit des Juden' who is 'dem niederen Leben ganz zugewandt'⁵⁵ and the Jew's affinity with 'Weiblichkeit' (p.409). He also asserts

⁵⁴ Isaac's birth in the Bible even involves *communal* laughter: 'Sarah said, "God has given me good reason to laugh, and everybody who hears will laugh with me"' (Genesis 21: 6).

⁵⁵ Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1980), p.429.

that Jews are ‘alles bewitzelnd’ - ‘er nimmt sich nie ernst, und darum nimmt er auch keinen anderen Menschen, keine andere Sache wahrhaft ernst [...] Der Jude hält nie etwas [...] für heilig und unverletzbar’ (p.431). That is to say, Weininger claims that Jews indulge in universal laughter; that (like Bakhtin’s grotesque body) ‘der Jude ist nie einheitlich und ganz’ (p.437); that the Jew is transgressive, a ‘Grenzverwischer’ (p.416); that Jews are stereotypically ambivalent since their ‘psychische Inhalte’ are ‘sämtlich mit einer gewissen Zweiheit oder Mehrheit behaftet’ (adding that ‘über diese Ambiguität, diese Duplizität, ja Multiplizität kommt er nie hinaus’ [p.434]); and that Jewish doctors are supposed to attempt to produce ‘aus Totem Lebendes’ with their (al)chemical treatments (p.423). Thus Weininger, like Harry, puts a *negative* sign over all the *positive* qualities that are involved in the carnivalesque and possessed by Amsel himself: travesty, the ability to change, incompleteness, ambivalence, transgression, laughter at the whole world and rebirth of life from death.⁵⁶ But the most significant ironies involve Weininger’s claims that only the Aryan is truly interested in his own past and that for the Jew, his past is ‘nur der Quell, aus dem er neue Hoffnungsträume saugt: die Vergangenheit des Juden ist nicht wirklich seine Vergangenheit, sie ist immer nur seine Zukunft’ (p.412). On my reading, *HJ* shows that it is the Aryans who were keen to *ignore* their past whereas a half-Jew like Amsel *mourns authentically* by building that future while retaining an acute awareness of the past.

So on the one hand, the realistic characters are unable to mourn and manipulate language and literary forms to promote their world-view. But on the other, the voices of *surreal* figures like Amsel, Tulla and Brunies suggest that there are alternative forms of communication and that reality and texts can be understood in ways other than the conventional one. In their mistrust of and resistance to ‘official’ language and the printed

⁵⁶ One of the ‘Jewish’ traits that Amsel *does* try to overcome in himself is the claim that ‘der Jude treibt keinen Sport’ (*HJ*, p.175): but this charge against the Jews does not appear in Weininger’s text.

word, these surreal characters show the reader how to read like a Fool, embrace the ambivalence of the text, and recognise the 'gay truth' that lies under the gloomy lies of powerful oppressors like Harry and Matern.

Conclusion

HJ is a highly ambivalent text. On its realistic surface, it is a bleak novel full of revolting episodes and violent persecution, and Harry's and Matern's control of over three-quarters of the narration contributes a great deal to the sense that *HJ* is irredeemably negative - precisely because these two characters are paradigms of 'die Unfähigkeit zu trauern'. Moreover, Grass's natural melancholy and his ability to see only the critical side of the Mitscherlich's book when it appeared seem to have caused him to foreground such characters. Thus, on a realistic reading, the third novel in the *Danziger Trilogie* appears to share the bleakness of its two predecessors.

But *HJ* can also be viewed as a transitional novel that stands between Grass's first two, dark novels and texts like *örtlich betäubt* (1969) (in which there is an unmistakable note of optimism despite the narration of the failure Starusch)⁵⁷ and *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (1972) (in which Grass is guardedly positive about the ability of the individual to make a difference and the possibility of progress in the political sphere). I make this claim because, as I have shown, redemptive, optimistic voices can be heard in *HJ* - perhaps despite the author's intention - in characters like Amsel and in the world-view embodied by his scarecrows, which create something new while recalling - and thus forcing those around Amsel to confront - the often unpalatable detritus of the past from which they are constructed. Indeed, Harris's self-conscious choice of words betrays a

⁵⁷ For a close reading of Starusch's narration, see Chloe E. M. Paver, *Narrative and Fantasy in the Post-War German Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp.164-95.

sense that Grass's art (i.e. *HJ* itself) functions in the same way as Amsel's creations: 'The deaths that occurred in the Stutthof concentration camp are part of the European experience [...], a fact that must be remembered along with so many others in the long and turbulent history of [Grass's] native Danzig which Grass has *resurrected*, as it were, in his books' (p.138; my italics). But the fact that Grass's most positive characters in *HJ* can all too easily look like nothing more than unpalatable grotesques suggests that Grass may have *sensed* the redemptive nature of Rabelaisian / proto-Bakhtinian imagery, but could not quite commit himself unequivocally to its positive potential when he wrote *HJ*. Grass's understanding of melancholy in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* would involve a similar ambivalence. On the one hand, his *negative* outlook is betrayed by his borrowing of the term 'Melancholie' (which, for Freud, meant unhealthy brooding on the past and on grief). But on the other hand, Grass's view that melancholy allows us to gather strength before taking action for progress looks more like a reworking of Freud's idea of *authentic mourning*.

Grass's own attitudes in *HJ* are, as so often in the *Danziger Trilogie*, difficult to pinpoint: a naturally pessimistic attitude to the prospect of mourning vies both with an emergent sense that perhaps mourning and progress are possible after all and with an instinctive understanding that Rabelais's apparently revolting imagery has a vital place in serious modern literature. *HJ* plays out Grass's unresolved conflicts as Matern and Harry take pains to avoid mourning and seek to vilify authentic mourners like Amsel and Tulla. But once Bakhtin has helped us to understand Fools like Amsel and Tulla and the significance of Amsel's scarecrows, then we can see how such beings subvert and resist

the dominant narration of Matern and Harry and emerge - albeit obscurely and in a heavily ironized way⁵⁸ - as potential figures of hope.

⁵⁸ Mason refers to the 'grim comic aptness to Grass's depiction of Amsel's and Jenny's maltreatment and beatings at the hands of the Nazis as a series of artistic triumphs' (pp.54-5) and argues that the episodes to which she refers are 'described with heavy irony' (p.55, n.21). While I accept that the triumphant rebirths experienced or effected by Amsel and Tulla are ironized in the sense that both characters can be read as surreal, cruel or disgusting, I would neither agree that Grass's irony functions to dismiss those 'triumphs' and rebirths altogether, nor that all the 'triumphs' - such as Amsel's survival of the assault by the SA - are artistic in nature. It is just as reductive to ignore the ambivalence of *HJ* as to argue that Grass's concerns are limited to questions of art.

Chapter 5:
The Holocaust, Carnavalesque Laughter and the Violence of
History
in Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur*

The Jewish-German author Edgar Hilsenrath was born in 1926 in Leipzig, moved with his family to Romania, and spent the War in the ghetto of Moghilev-Podolsk. Having survived the Holocaust, Hilsenrath spent several years in Israel, moved to New York in 1951, and then settled permanently in Berlin in 1975.

In this chapter, I shall show how Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur* (written in 1968; first published in German in 1977)¹ departed dramatically from the norms that surrounded the literary representation of the Holocaust prior to 1968. Although Hilsenrath employs the carnivalesque and its attendant laughter to break several taboos and undermine many earlier approaches to the Holocaust, *NF* is essentially conservative and shows Hilsenrath's sympathy with and mourning for the Holocaust's victims, a process which had been all but forgotten despite all the debates about the Shoah in Germany at that time. Moreover, despite *NF*'s humour and Hilsenrath's belief in the necessity of mourning the victims, the novel's intertextual allusions imply that Hilsenrath lacks any faith that the Holocaust signifies the end of the violence which causes History's disasters. Or in other words, although Hilsenrath tapped into the literary carnivalesque tradition, he did not appear to see those redemptive qualities in the carnivalesque which Bakhtin had identified.

Hilsenrath is still a *Geheimtip* in Germany: only two books and a handful of articles have been published on his work, and most of these are quite recent. Of the books, the first was a collection of essays and newspaper reviews edited by Thomas Kraft² and the

¹ Edgar Hilsenrath, *Der Nazi & der Friseur* (Cologne: Braun, 1977), hereafter referred to as *NF*. All further references to this and other works discussed are included in the main text.

² Thomas Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath: Das Unerzählbare erzählen* (Munich: Piper, 1996).

second was Dopheide's analysis of the grotesque and black humour in Hilsenrath's *oeuvre*.³ Since Dopheide's book overlaps with the topics that I am examining, it is worth considering his argument - which in my view has several shortcomings. The first of these is his insistence on summarizing a wide range of texts which theorize in often very abstract terms the nature of black humour and the grotesque.⁴ Dopheide does not explain why such theorizing is relevant for an understanding of Hilsenrath's work and actually abandons the theories when he analyses Hilsenrath's texts. Second, his analysis consists of lists of *examples* of black humour and the grotesque in Hilsenrath's work, and he fails to explain how these elements are significant to debates on the representation of the Holocaust. Third, he is sometimes reductive in his insistence that all Hilsenrath's novels are humorous. For instance, it is revealing that when he tries to prove that Hilsenrath's first novel - the profoundly grim *Nacht* (1964) - employs black humour, he has to concede that no reviewer detected any humour there whatsoever (see p.265). Fourth, his bibliography omits some articles that had been published on Hilsenrath's *oeuvre* prior to the appearance of *Das Grotteske und der Schwarze Humor*,⁵ but most importantly, he is unaware of several which are of particular significance for *NF*, including Stenberg's comparison of Jakov Lind and Edgar Hilsenrath, Taubeneck's analysis of circumcision,

³ Dietrich Dopheide, *Das Grotteske und der Schwarze Humor in den Romanen Edgar Hilsenraths* (Berlin: Weißensee Verlag, 2000).

⁴ Dopheide even cites the obsolete translation from 1969 of Bakhtin's theory of Carnival, *Literatur und Karneval - Zur Romantheorie und Lachkultur* (see Chapter 1).

⁵ For example, Dopheide does not mention two articles by Dagmar Lorenz: 'Social Darwinism in Edgar Hilsenrath's Ghetto Novel *Nacht*', in: Dagmar C.G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (eds.), *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), pp.214-23; and 'History, Identity, and the Body in Edgar Hilsenrath's *The Story of the Last Thought*', in: Dagmar C.G. Lorenz and Renate S. Posthofen (eds.), *Transforming the Center, Eroding the Margins: Essays on Ethnic and Cultural Boundaries in German-Speaking Countries* (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1998), pp.146-54.

and Anne Fuchs's feminist reading of *NF*.⁶ That said, Dopheide's monograph is an important contribution to research on Hilsenrath - but he is at his most insightful in those parts of the book where he abandons the themes of humour and the grotesque altogether.

Literary Representation and the Holocaust - Problematic Trends in Public Mourning - Trends in German Literature

Edgar Hilsenrath wrote *NF* while visiting Munich in 1968 but, because of its controversial content, could not get it published until 1977. This is probably because Hilsenrath had written his novel at a time when several patterns were emerging in public attitudes to mourning the Nazi past, both in such German literature as had sought to confront Nazi atrocities and in the surrounding theoretical discussions. In 1968, German literature and society had allegedly become stuck in 'de[m] zum Ritual erstarrten, ohnmächtigen Betroffenheitdiskurs' (Dopheide, pp.32-3), a pattern of philosemitic posturing and inauthentic rituals of mourning that were mobilized to show German society and its intellectuals in a superficially positive, anti-Nazi light: *NF* openly challenged the assumptions and taboos involved in these trends.

In the literary sphere, the possibility of representing the Holocaust was hotly debated soon after the end of the War. Adorno's assertion that 'nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben ist barbarisch' placed a taboo on depicting the Holocaust in literature at all, for it was feared that a literary representation of genocide might either diminish its horrors or

⁶ Peter Stenberg, 'Edgar Hilsenrath and Jakov Lind meet at the employment office in Netanya, Palestine, discuss literature, and contemplate their recent past', in: Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (eds.), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096-1996* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.642-7; Steven Taubeneck, 'Binding Together by Cutting Apart: Circumcision, Kafka, and Minority Discourse', in: Linda E. Feldman and Diana Orendi (eds.), *Evolving Jewish Identities in German Culture: Borders and Crossings* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000), pp.63-76; Anne Fuchs, 'Bad Boys and Evil Witches: Gender and Abjection in Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur*', in: Fuchs, *A Space of Anxiety: Dislocation and Abjection in Modern German-Jewish Literature* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: Rodopi, 1999), pp.163-76.

even provide voyeuristic *enjoyment* of the violence.⁷ Moreover, because literary representation tends to impose order and meaning on its material through traditional literary tropes - such as metaphor - or even language itself, more than a few critics argue that the Holocaust cannot be represented because its alleged uniqueness defies such attempts.⁸ But critics also feel that such terrible events cannot be condemned to silence and demand literary representation and investigation.⁹ This is partly because people need to make sense of and come to terms with traumatic events - which is what German literature has tentatively tried to do - and partly because it is right that the dead should be mourned, something at which German literature has not always succeeded.

In an excellent overview article, Elisabeth Domansky has described how, until 1968, Germany had developed what she calls a 'gespaltene Erinnerung' of Nazi atrocities in the public sphere: while private, authentic 'Erinnerungsarbeit' is neglected in the present (that is, in 1993, when Domansky was writing), she charged Germany with performing an empty 'kollektives und öffentliches Erinnerungstheater' to demonstrate its peaceful and responsible attitude to the rest of the world.¹⁰ She then analyses the historical processes that led to this situation: after World War II, West Germany, in complicity with the Allies, was integrated into the West as a bulwark against the Communist East (p.183).¹¹ Consequently, Domansky argues, the Germans were able to rationalize the division of Germany as the fault of the Russians and not the result of their own, criminal

⁷ Dopheide, pp.28-9. Cf. Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence*, p.8.

⁸ Schlant, pp.7-11; Dopheide, pp.23 and 28-9. Cf. Irving Howe's assertion that the novelist must make sense of his material 'either through explicit theory or [...] absorbed assumptions' (Irving Howe, 'Writing and the Holocaust', in: Berel Lang [ed.], *Writing and the Holocaust* [New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988], pp.175-99 [p.188]); and Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's claim that 'although Holocaust literature is a reflection of recent history, it cannot draw upon the timeless archetypes of human experience and human behavior which render unlive events familiar through the medium of imagination' (Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature*, pp.2-3.)

⁹ Schlant, p.10; Dopheide, p.24.

¹⁰ Elisabeth Domansky, 'Die gespaltene Erinnerung', p.179.

¹¹ Cf. Dopheide, pp.37-8.

past; the totalitarian USSR was identified with Nazism - which allowed the Germans to figure themselves as victims of totalitarianism, both present and past; and Nazism's real victims were largely forgotten (p.184).¹² She then relates how the younger generation's questioning of their parents in 1968 - the year when *NF* was written - allowed the rediscovery of the real victims of the Nazi period, including the Jews (pp.186-7).¹³ But it then transpired that while both generations united to mourn Nazism's victims, the younger generation's probing into the past was, arguably, a selfish tactic: they wished to keep the memory of the past alive as a stick with which to beat their parents (p.190).¹⁴ Domansky even claims, in a way that parallels my argument in Chapter 2, that the students of 1968 were re-enacting the past by posing as both resisters and victims and demonstrating how Nazism ought to have been combatted decades previously (pp.190-1). So, she concludes, although Germany appeared to have confronted its crimes in the 1960s and mourned its victims publicly, it had in reality used the victims for its own purposes, ignored their demands for authentic mourning, and even identified with them in order to avoid confronting its own guilt.¹⁵

So, given the difficulties of the literary representation and the alleged inability of the Germans to mourn their victims publicly, literary depictions of the Holocaust were rare until the late 1960s (Dopheide, p.23). But the few extant examples of such depictions of the Holocaust appear to have been as unsuccessful as attempts to represent Jewish characters adequately. Public mourning after the War allegedly involved postures of

¹² Cf. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), pp.85-7. Novick's book was first published in the USA as *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999). Cf. also the Mitscherlichs, who argued that for complex, psychological reasons, people in post-War Germany chose to see themselves as victims of various kinds (Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, p.59).

¹³ Cf. Heidi Müller's reference to '1968 - zu der Zeit, als im Westen die öffentlichen Sympathien für das Judentum ihren Höhepunkt erreicht hatten' (Heidi M. Müller, *Die Judendarstellung in der deutschsprachigen Erzählprosa (1945-1981)* [Königstein/Ts.: Forum Academicum, 1984], p.199).

¹⁴ Cf. Müller, pp.193-4; Schlant, p.16.

¹⁵ Schlant comes to a similar conclusion about public rituals of mourning in Germany which she claims 'assuage the individual's conscience without self-questioning' (p.13).

philosemitism (Schlant, p.39)¹⁶ which then *fed* into literary representation of Jews that idealized the Jewish victims ‘mit Hilfe stereotyper Denkschemata’ and ‘Klischeevorstellungen’ (Müller, p.13)¹⁷ so that these appeared as ‘pure, noble, defenceless martyrs’.¹⁸ Such early idealization may have been intended ‘to redeem the dignity of the victim’ (Dopheide, p.33), but its function was, more probably, to assuage the conscience of the author (Dopheide, p.41) and make it easier for the reader to identify with the victim. Jewish characters might have become more rounded by the 1960s,¹⁹ but even then the (predominantly Gentile) German authors were still reproducing many of the same problematic clichés. Müller, for instance, interprets Amsel in Grass’s *Hundejahre* (1963) as an unsuccessful parody of the anti-Semitic stereotype of the all-powerful Jewish magnate who is able to turn any situation to financial advantage (pp.19 and 157). She also criticizes Bienek’s *Gleiwitzer Tetralogie* (1975-82) for using Jewish characters who are Catholic converts - in a manner which recalls Heinrich Böll - on the grounds that it is easier to identify with them and that they are, accordingly, even less ‘deserving’ of persecution than a practising Jew would have been (pp.118 and 166).

The inability of Gentile writers to escape such clichés even in the 1960s points to an even more intractable problem: literary depiction of Jews in the post-war period involved a vicious circle since there were no agreed criteria for that depiction (Müller, pp.207 and 20). Primo Levi summarized this paradox as follows:

It is certain that practice (in this case, frequent re-evocation) keeps memories fresh and alive in the same manner in which a muscle that is often used remains efficient; but it is also true that a memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by

¹⁶ Cf. Dopheide, pp.40-41.

¹⁷ Cf. Schlant, p.25.

¹⁸ Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz, *German Holocaust Literature*, rev. edn. (New York, Berne and Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1989), p.11.

¹⁹ See Cernyak-Spatz, p.11; Müller, p.205.

experience, crystallised, perfected, adorned, which installs itself in the place of the raw memory and grows at its expense.²⁰

He then continues: 'it must be observed, mournfully, that the injury [of the Shoah] cannot be healed' (p.12). Thus, if we believe Levi, although writers feel compelled to write about the Holocaust and Jewish characters, they are doomed to failure and inadequacy. Indeed, one wonders whether any text can be considered an adequate work of Holocaust literature: after all, when one reads Schlant's, Cernyak-Spatz's or Müller's books, one finds that they mainly catalogue the failure of literature to meet some ill-defined benchmark. It is to this intractable background problem that Hilsenrath was responding when he wrote *NF*.

The Response of Der Nazi & der Friseur

NF tells the story of the Aryan German Max Schulz, who is a Fool-figure. Although his very name exemplifies what Hannah Arendt termed 'the banality of evil', Schulz resembles the grotesque Jewish stereotypes of Nazi propaganda and becomes the best friend of Itzig Finkelstein, a Jewish barber's son, who looks like an Aryan. Max grows up to join the SS, commits mass-murder in a concentration camp in Poland, and having stolen Itzig's identity to evade punishment, emigrates to Palestine. Here he helps in the founding of Israel by becoming a terrorist-hero and sets up a barber's shop. At the end of the novel he attempts to confess his crimes - apparently out of a sense of guilt ('Schulz' recalls 'Schuld') - but his role-playing has been so successful that his confessor, Wolfgang Richter (= 'judge'), does not believe him.

²⁰ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal (1986; London: Sphere Books, 1989), pp.11-12.

Quite apart from the many critics who have seen that Schulz belongs in the *Schelm*-tradition,²¹ he has several traits that associate him with the Fool-tradition in general. For instance, he claims to have a ‘Dachschaden’ (*NF*, p.26) and is described as ‘ein Halbidiot’ (p.32) - in other words, he is mentally defective. As a child he behaved like an acrobatic clown and ‘schlug [...] seltsame Purzelbäume. Ich konnte auch Radschlagen, verstand es, meine Glieder zu verrenken, machte Handstand, Kopfstand, Spagat’ (p.26; cf. p.30); he also wrote poetry that was ‘formlos [...] disharmonisch [...] absurd und pervers’ (p.33); and he loved the circus (p.342).²² Schulz’s mendacious behaviour and shape-changing recalls the Trickster-figure, and he shares such traits as naivety with Fool-characters like Švejk. But his most carnivalesque characteristics emerge in his activities during *NF*, which I shall analyse below.

As a Fool-figure in German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich, it is unsurprising to discover that Schulz is yet another literary descendant of Grass’s Oskar Matzerath. Various critics have noticed that *NF* has been strongly influenced by *BT*: Steinlein, for example, parallels my argument in Chapter 2 that *BT* represented a ‘so signifikante[r] wie riskante[r] Wandel’ in its grotesque depiction of the Third Reich that it directly prompted similar texts - like *NF* - by Hilsenrath and Jakov Lind.²³ Graf notes that both Schulz and Oskar Matzerath are of dubious parentage, are *petit-bourgeois*, describe their own birth, and are mad, and that Grass’s and Hilsenrath’s work share several stylistic features.²⁴ Also like Oskar, Schulz invites the reader both to share his

²¹ See, for example, Dopheide’s comment that Schulz is ‘die groteske Parodie des Schelmentypus in der Figur eines Holocausttäters’ (p.172; cf. his justification for this assertion on pp.236-42).

²² It is worth pointing out that *NF* provides another good illustration of the Nazis’ appropriation of the carnivalesque in the ‘Bergpredigt’ given by Hitler on pp.49-51: Jesus’s sermon posited a distinctly carnivalesque, utopian world turned upside-down, but Hitler adopts the form of that speech and turns it firmly back onto its feet again by using slogans such as: ‘Selig sind die Starken, denn sie werden das Erdreich besitzen’ (p.50).

²³ Rüdiger Steinlein, ‘Das Furchtbarste lächerlich? Komik und Lachen in Texten der deutschen Holocaust-Literatur’, in: Köppen (ed.), *Kunst und Literatur nach Auschwitz*, pp.97-106 (p.101). Cf. Dopheide, p.46.

²⁴ Cf. Andreas Graf, ‘Mörderisches Ich: Zur Pathologie der Erzählperspektive in Edgar Hilsenraths Roman *Der Nazi & der Friseur*’, in: Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath*, pp.135-49 (p.140-2).

point of view and reject his perspective. For instance, he constantly poses questions directly to the reader²⁵ or makes assumptions of shared knowledge.²⁶ Moreover, Hilsenrath follows Grass by making his narrator both the ‘Täter’ and the victim (Graf, p.137). One might add that Schulz’s post-War employer, ‘Schmuel’, is a further allusion to *BT* because Oskar’s post-War employer in the *Zwiebelkeller* is ‘Schmuh’: both names derive from the Jewish name ‘Samuel’. Moreover, Oskar Matzerath claims to have two possible fathers, Jan Bronski and Alfred Matzerath, and as if to compete with and outdo his predecessor, Hilsenrath gives Schulz *five* putative fathers (see *NF*, p.7).

But there are significant differences between *BT* and *NF*. For one thing, Schulz is an even more provocative narrator than Oskar when, for instance, he assumes that the reader shares his anti-Semitic attitudes.²⁷ Furthermore, Hilsenrath makes Schulz’s victim / perpetrator role much more extreme even than Oskar’s: by this I mean that whereas Oskar was only ever threatened with euthanasia and was merely complicit in the shooting of the nuns on the beach in the chapter ‘Beton besichtigen - oder mystisch barbarisch gelangweilt’, Schulz poses as a Jew who supposedly survived Auschwitz - i.e. as the ultimate victim of Nazism - after personally murdering hundreds of people in a concentration camp. To my knowledge, no other German novel has attempted to describe the Holocaust from the perspective of someone who personally perpetrated genocide,²⁸ and by doing so, *NF* forces the reader to view events through a murderer’s

²⁵ E.g. ‘Habe ich recht?’ (p.10), ‘Sie glauben wahrscheinlich, daß ich mich über Sie lustig mache?’ (p.13), ‘Wollen Sie das wissen?’ (p.179).

²⁶ E.g. ‘ich nehme an, daß Sie wissen, was eine Beschneidung ist’ (p.10).

²⁷ E.g. ‘Daß wir beide [*sic*] [Itzig und ich] oft verwechselt wurden, werden Sie sich ja leicht vorstellen können’ (p.29); ‘Sie werden sich vorstellen können, daß manche von uns, die nicht jüdisch aussahen, mehr, andere dagegen weniger auf Herz und Nieren geprüft oder auf den Zahn gefühlt wurden. Ich hatte es besonders leicht’ (pp.177-8). Cf. Dopheide, p.123. On the issue of the reader’s assumed anti-semitic attitudes, see also Ursula Hien, ‘Schreiben gegen den Philosemitismus: Edgar Hilsenrath und die Rezeption von *Nacht* in Westdeutschland’, in: Stephan Braese, Holger Gehle, Doron Kiesel and Hanno Loewy (eds.), *Deutsche Nachkriegsliteratur und der Holocaust* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1998), pp.229-44 (pp.233-40 deal with *NF*; see especially p.235).

²⁸ The case of Wolfgang Koeppen’s *Der Tod in Rom* (1954) is slightly different in that only part is focalized by the maniacal Nazi Judejahn and the text as a whole is set entirely in the post-war period.

eyes. But at the same time, when Schulz poses as a Jewish victim in the second half of the novel and thus returns the text superficially to familiar post-war patterns of identification with Jewish victims, we do not acquire that 'warm of glow of virtue that such a vicarious identification brings' (Novick, p.13) since, by this point, identification with the 'victim' is entirely repugnant, not to say impossible. If we can believe that Germans appealed to the memory of Nazism's victims to support their own political agenda (see above), and because a Nazi who steals a Jewish victim's identity is the ultimate example of the instrumentalization of those victims, then Hilsenrath is showing in an extreme form why such an abuse of the past is unacceptable.

But one feature that Hilsenrath borrows directly from *BT* is very important: of all the writers of prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich who were inspired by *BT* to deploy the carnivalesque, he is the only one to my knowledge to have understood something of Oskar's ambivalence. For all his sinister characteristics, Schulz serves a *positive* function because his role is not limited to attacking the way in which some Germans adopted the victim's role after the War. In his guise as a Fool, Schulz's activities provoke the reader to laugh at the many other ways in which people have tried to rationalize or instrumentalize the Holocaust and thereby bring meaning to the victims' deaths in a way that cheapens them. However, just as the Fool is traditionally a violent figure who can die and be reborn, Schulz is also a *negative* figure who embodies the destructive forces of History that can never die out. As a result of Schulz's ambivalence, *NF*'s response to the problems surrounding the depiction of the Holocaust in German prose fiction has three components: first, the use of carnivalesque humour to undermine and frustrate attempts to make sense of the Holocaust; second, the foregrounding of the importance of sympathizing with and mourning the victims of the Shoah as an end in itself; and third, the pessimistic belief that the violence of History will endure.

To begin with, how does *NF* provoke laughter in order to undermine attempts to rationalize the Holocaust, and why is this important? *RW* helps us to make sense of one aspect of the novel's humour, which has a similar function to Amsel's scarecrows in *HJ*.

Bakhtin speaks of:

[...] the victory of laughter over fear [...] over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions [...]. Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life.²⁹

A writer who tackles the Holocaust will be anxious not to fall foul of the traps and taboos that are involved in such a project and that will draw critical opprobrium - such as the danger of either idealization of the victims or the expression of latently anti-Semitic attitudes. But on my reading, *NF* uses laughter to achieve two goals. First, it uses humour to ignore fearlessly such oppressive taboos (as Bakhtin might have put it): by that, I mean that the novel raises difficult topics such as the possibility that adequate justice cannot be achieved for the victims or the possibility that the behaviour of the Jews themselves - at least in the post-War period - might merit criticism. Second, *NF* metaphorically 'destroys' any theoretical attempts *to make sense of or instrumentalize* the Holocaust by ridiculing such attempts. Indeed, Hilsenrath's own statements support my argument that he was deeply suspicious of attempts to make sense of the Holocaust. For instance, he has openly expressed his opinion that finding a satisfactory meaning in life is not always possible, and in one interview he said: 'Damals war alles sinnlos für mich

²⁹ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, pp.90-1.

[...] Heute versuche ich einen Sinn zu finden, aber ich kann ihn nicht immer finden'.³⁰

Similarly, Hilsenrath has shown an equally profound mistrust of any totalizing theories generated by authority: 'Alle große Heilslehren machen mir angst, besonders dann, wenn sie vom Staat und der Bürokratie gepachtet werden'.³¹ Finally, in his later novel on the Armenian genocide of 1915, the story ends with a Turkish minister asking Thovma Khatisian why he wants to remember that catastrophe - 'Was für einen Sinn hätte es?' - to which Thovma replies: 'Es muß ja nicht alles einen Sinn haben'.³²

This latter quotation connects the idea that events or actions may be devoid of meaning with the belief that remembering the past is nevertheless important. Or in other words, Hilsenrath seems to believe that such anamnesis is necessary even if it has no obvious, immediate purpose or meaning, and this sentiment parallels one particular argument in the debates about the Holocaust. Interpreting the inscription at the entrance to Yad Vashem in Israel - 'The secret of redemption is memory' - Micha Brumlik takes it to mean not that memory and mourning is therapeutic but that we should, as a matter of principle, keep the dead 'alive' in our memories. He describes this notion as 'Die Konzeption eines [...] zweckfreien Gedenkens'³³ and argues that it has been unpopular with the Germans partly because the interests of Holocaust victims have been ignored in Germany (pp.200-1) and partly because the Holocaust has been 'instrumentalized'. Consequently, Brumlik continues, we must not remember the Holocaust for any specific

³⁰ Edgar Hilsenrath, "Ich habe über den jüdischen Holocaust geschrieben, weil ich dabei war": Gespräch mit Thomas Kraft und Peter Stenberg [April 1995], in: Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath*, pp.218-24 (p.224). Hereafter cited as Hilsenrath (1995).

³¹ Edgar Hilsenrath, 'Ich bin von Natur aus ein Einzelgänger und singe nicht gern im Chor', in: Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath*, pp.50-3 (see pp.52-3) (first published in Karlheinz Deschner [ed.], *Woran ich glaube* [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1990], pp.111-14). Hereafter cited as Hilsenrath (1990).

³² Edgar Hilsenrath, *Das Märchen vom letzten Gedanken* (Munich: Piper, 1989), p.506. Cf. also the episode in Hilsenrath's *Jossel Wassermanns Heimkehr* (Munich: Piper, 1993) - hereafter referred to as *JWH* - in which Jossel's underpants are stolen by two thieves, an act considered to be one of the many senseless acts perpetrated by the *Goyim* (*JWH*, p.287). Given that novel's frame-story involves Holocaust deportation, Hilsenrath implies a homology between the senseless crime of the underpants and the even greater senselessness of the Nazi genocide.

³³ Micha Brumlik, 'Trauerarbeit und kollektive Erinnerung', in: Köppen (ed.), *Kunst und Literatur nach Auschwitz*, pp.197-203 (see p.200).

purpose since this would imply that we know how to give meaning to the victims' senseless and purposeless deaths. If, for instance, we invoke the Holocaust to justify fighting racism, then we imply that 'they died so that racism might die' and so, to some extent at least, make the Holocaust meaningful and therefore slightly acceptable. Although Brumlik says nothing explicit about the applicability of 'zweckfreies Gedenken' to literature, his concept helps us make sense of *NF*. To begin with, *NF* circumvents the problems of the *mimetic* representation of the Holocaust and therefore Levi's paradox by setting the story in a deliberately unrealistic, grotesque, carnivalesque context. Furthermore, by touching on earlier debates and others' attempts to make sense of the Holocaust, Hilsenrath renders them meaningless or absurd by provoking the reader to laugh at them - in accordance with his own professed belief. But elsewhere in *NF*, Hilsenrath does not laugh at the Holocaust's victims and leaves the reader with the simple fact that the Holocaust took place. In this way, the text unobtrusively foregrounds the importance of remembering the victims' deaths as an end in itself. Doing so is tantamount to Brumlik's 'zweckfreies Gedenken' and achieves the 'clarification of man's consciousness' and the creation of a 'new outlook' - i.e. some of the by-products, according to Bakhtin, of carnivalesque laughter.

Hilsenrath exploits his carnivalesque narrator to provoke the reader to laughter and uses the destructive, irrational, anti-authoritarian powers of that laughter to subvert at least five different ways of making sense of the Holocaust: psychoanalytical explanations of the motivation of Nazism's supporters; the value of witness-testimony for coming to terms with the past; the belief that justice will punish the perpetrators adequately; the idea that cultural ignorance might cause uncivilized behaviour and anti-semitism; and the belief that the Holocaust was God's punishment of the Jews. As a typically Protean *Schelm*, Schulz cannot be pinned down by reductive theories or categorization, and his role as a Fool becomes even clearer as his activities in *NF* subvert each of these theories.

To begin with, Hilsenrath pre-empts any attempt to make easy sense of the Holocaust by laughing at psychoanalytical explanations of the Nazis' murderous behaviour. For example, Schulz himself often refers to his 'Dachschaden' - that is, some kind of mental trauma - as an explanation for his violent behaviour and this is supposed to have resulted from Slavitski's rape of him when he was a newborn baby. But Hilsenrath makes this seem absurd by having Schulz's mother say to the Priapic Slavitski: 'Dein Schwanz war einfach zu groß [...] und zu lang. Der stieß an seinen Hirnkasten an. Oder an sein Dach. Und was entstand: ein Dachschaden' (*NF*, p.26). Or in other words, Hilsenrath makes this instance of putative child-abuse absurdly carnivalesque by associating it with an improbably enormous phallus and totally unrealistic sexual violence. Sautermeister, too, has noted that the beatings Schulz received from Slavitski allegedly generated a similarly sadistic desire in Schulz to harm other, weaker people (see *NF*, pp.53-4) - a phenomenon that the Mitscherlichs call the 'Radfahrer-Reaktion' (Mitscherlichs, p.153) - and he also sees that *NF* points to the quasi-religious aspect of Hitler's power over the Germans (see the parodied Sermon on the Mount - *NF*, pp.48-51). But he also concludes that these theories are reduced to 'Trivialität' and finds the suddenness of Schulz's quasi-religious conversion to Nazism implausible.³⁴ Dopheide, too, albeit unwittingly, exposes the text's resistance to such rationalizations of Nazism when he attempts to psychoanalyse Schulz's character: having spent several pages discussing Schulz's psychology, he concludes that the novel rejects psychoanalytical theories since these ignore notions of free will and personal responsibility (Dopheide, pp.189-93). Schulz is not alone in having implausible reasons for joining the Nazis: for example, the schoolmaster, Siegfried von Salzstange, claims that he joined 'Wegen des Pfeffers [...] Den mir meine

³⁴ Gert Sautermeister, 'Aufgeklärte Modernität - Postmodernes Entertainment: Edgar Hilsenraths *Der Nazi & der Friseur*', in: Jens Stüben and Winfried Woesler (eds.), "*Wir tragen den Zettelkasten mit den Steckbriefen unserer Freunde*": Acta-Band zum Symposium "Beiträge jüdischer Autoren zur deutschen Literatur seit 1945" (Universität Osnabrück, 2-5.6.1991) (Darmstadt: Häusser, 1994), pp.227-42 (p.235).

Frau jeden Morgen in den Kaffee schüttet' (*NF*, p.46). Finally, the English translation of *NF*, which was published earlier than the German version, includes three pages at the end that were omitted from the German version in which Schulz stands trial before God. God asks him 'What about the bats you have in your belfry?', to which Schulz replies: 'No bats in the belfry'.³⁵ The English translation thus makes explicit what is only implicit in the edited German version, namely that Schulz's madness or otherwise is irrelevant to making sense of his crimes. So through the persona of his narrator, Hilsenrath exaggerates several theories about psychological motivations for joining the Nazis in order to discredit them as reductive interpretations of senseless Nazi criminality. Furthermore, *NF* forms a contrast with *HJ* and *08/15*, both of which set up carnivalesque characters (e.g. Asch and Amsel) in opposition to characters (e.g. Witterer and Matern) who supported Nazism and are psychologically more realistic. *NF* makes the Nazi and the Fool one and the same character, so that rational explanations of the Nazi's behaviour become problematic.

On the second count, *NF* questions the value and positive effects of remembering and accurately recording a witness's account of the Holocaust. Here again, the text deliberately fails to provide the reader with what he or she might expect from such a work. For instance, the reader might expect a perpetrator to repress his memories of his crimes whereas Schulz, recalling Oskar in his insensitively naïve narration, frequently discusses his criminal actions in Poland and shows little sign of being disturbed by them. Or in other words, Hilsenrath again challenges assumptions by having Schulz neither furtively conceal his experiences (like many Nazis in post-War prose fiction) nor thrill sadistically over them (like Judejahn in *Der Tod in Rom*). Consequently, his indifference

³⁵ See Edgar Hilsenrath, *The Nazi & the Barber: A Tale of Vengeance* (London: W.H. Allen, 1975), p.301. The trial with God is described on pp.300-02. The English translation was published in the USA even earlier, in 1971.

completely subverts the import, the drama and even the superficial reliability of his testimony - even though he has little difficulty in recalling his past. Thus, he discusses his posting to Poland with Frau Holle in the following, shocking way: 'Das war ein ruhiger Abschnitt [...] Und nichts war dort los. Wir schossen vor Langeweile die Eiszapfen von den Bäumen, legten zuweilen auch ein paar Juden um, weil wir nichts besseres [*sic*] zu tun hatten [...] Alles bloß Fingerübungen' (NF, p.68). In the same dialogue, Schulz also blandly recalls his favoured methods of mass-shooting (p.109), and when relating how he had to evacuate the camp to flee the Red Army, he says, completely carelessly: 'Ich erhielt dann Befehl, die Gefangenen zu erschießen [...] Die letzten Überlebenden. 89? Was ist das schon! Die kann ein einziger Mann erledigen' (p.123). Later, when volunteering to help give children vitamin injections *en route* to Palestine, he whimsically recalls injecting children with phenol (p.255). While posing as Itzig in Palestine, he lectures an American journalist about genocidal techniques that are clearly based on his own experiences in Poland (p.310). Finally, he coolly narrates to Richter in his barber-shop the murder by Max Schulz of 'his' parents the Finkelsteins (pp.398-400). These are the six occasions on which Schulz relates his activities during the War, and the narrative is not only brief and unexciting, registering nothing of the horror of the situation or the remorse one would expect from a confession, but the testimony is also made to people who disbelieve some or all of it or who are unlikely to remember or record it. Thus, Frau Holle is a Nazi who disbelieves part of Schulz's account (see p.109) and dies shortly after meeting him; despite Schulz's paratactic narration, apparently designed to increase suspense, Richter refuses to believe the truth of his account: 'Ihr Bericht hat mich *fast* überzeugt' (p.400; my italics); and we later discover that the American journalist's article will contain nothing on Schulz's crimes (p.311). Schulz feels no particular need to verbalize what he saw; the memories and their preservation are entirely unimportant to him; and his audience do not believe him, so that

the very act of bearing witness to the past becomes so trivial that it recalls Švejk's pointless story-telling or, like Oskar's narration, is considered unreliable.

Hilsenrath's novel even denies that there is any value in learning about other cultures as a means of overcoming differences and promoting humanity, and once again, Schulz fulfills his Fool-role as a figure who subverts such a superficially rational attitude. Thus, *NF* implicitly attacks the assumptions of theorists like Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) who, following Humboldt, argue that moral benefit derives from exposing oneself to the 'sweetness and light' of cultural study. As Dopheide points out, Schulz resembles Adolf Eichmann in his profound knowledge of Judaism and Zionist history (p.188). Furthermore, Schulz tells the reader how he researched the symbolic meaning of circumcision (*NF*, p.10); learnt Hebrew and Jewish prayers (p.28); immersed himself in the intensive study of Jewish history immediately after the War (pp.192-7); relearnt the forgotten prayers on his way to Palestine (p.251); refused to travel or smoke on the Sabbath (p.318); and acquired some Hebrew (pp.281 and 327). He also recalls Itzig's habit of reading the works of Scholem Aleichem to him during their youth (p.317). But none of this cultural knowledge makes Schulz a morally good person or particularly well-disposed towards the Jews: he is still responsible for murdering hundreds of them and, as far as we can see, suffers no remorse for having done so. Consequently, the mere fact of acquiring cultural knowledge or understanding other cultures is implicitly exposed as something that is powerless to prevent genocide. Indeed, too much knowledge can actually be abused - as it is by Schulz - for his knowledge of Judaism helps him to adopt his new, fraudulent identity to such an extent that he even convinces some children that he is a rabbi by dressing up in a rabbi's robes (pp.253-4). Hilsenrath also denies that anti-Semitism alone is the ultimate cause of Schulz's complicity in the Holocaust for, although he offers several other banal justifications of his behaviour, he, like Eichmann, denies hating the Jews (p.222).

Similarly, although Schulz's poorly-educated mother initially mocks Slavitski's paranoid fantasies about the alleged domination of business by the Jews (p.25), she later chooses to support the anti-Semitic Nazis - a fact which suggests that Hilsenrath does not accept the reductive assumption that all supporters of the Nazis suffered from an *inveterate* hatred of Jews.³⁶ Finally, as Stenberg points out, Frau Schmulevitch's seven barber's chairs for what she perceives as the seven different classes of Jew suggest that even Jews themselves can be mildly anti-Semitic.³⁷ So, although Schulz researches Jewish culture and ritual practice both before the rise of Nazism and after its fall, this has no significance for an understanding of *why* he commits his crimes against the Jews, let alone prevent those crimes: at most, such researches aid Schulz's post-War, Trickster-like play-acting. Schulz the Fool not only challenges rational assumptions that knowledge and culture might prevent people from perpetrating genocide, his story shows that such values can be counter-productive inasmuch as they help the perpetrators of genocide.

In carnivalesque style, Schulz's activities also undermine an 'eternal', authoritarian concept, namely that of justice. *NF* does not resolve the issue of the appropriate punishment for Nazi criminals: indeed, Schulz implicitly ridicules - in grotesque terms - the possibility of being punished by wondering how long his tongue will look when he hangs from the gallows (*NF*, p.162). Because, at the end of the novel, Schulz's disguise as Itzig Finkelstein has been so successful that Richter thinks his confession is 'verrückt'

³⁶ Hilsenrath's point becomes all the more relevant given the debates that surrounded Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996). Norman Finkelstein sums up Goldhagen's argument as follows: 'driven by pathological hatred, the German people leapt at the opportunity Hitler availed them to murder the Jews' - but as if to prove Hilsenrath's point, Finkelstein also asserts that Goldhagen's book was 'little more than a compendium of sadistic violence [...] [r]eplete with gross misrepresentations of source material and internal contradictions' (Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, rev. edn. [London and New York: Verso, 2001], p.64). In other words, Hilsenrath attacks an assumption about the causes of the Holocaust that is still widely-held today, even by respected historians.

³⁷ See Peter Stenberg, 'Memories of the Holocaust: Edgar Hilsenrath and the Fiction of Genocide', *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 56 (1982), pp.277-89 (pp.287-8).

(p.410), Schulz has to force him to take part in his 'Prozeß' (p.411), and in accordance with the special notions of justice in other carnivalesque texts involving trials (e.g. Punch and Judy, Kirst's *Kaserne* or Brecht's *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*), Schulz is acquitted (p.416) and cheats the hangman. But even if Schulz were to be hanged 10,000 times (p.414) or to experience the fear that all his victims felt (p.423), he would not have been appropriately punished - and Schulz, for all his earlier imperviousness, recognizes that the dead have demands that are not satisfied by mere justice: 'Was hätten [meine Opfer] davon, Wolfgang? Sie sind tot! [...] Es gibt keine Strafe für mich, die meine Opfer versöhnen könnte' (pp.414 and 415).³⁸ Thus, although Hilsenrath addresses the issue of just retribution, he cannot resolve it and has Schulz himself admit that people like him laugh at grand words like 'justice': 'Es geht ihnen gut, den Massenmördern! [...] Sie leben auf freiem Fuß und machen sich über Gott und die Welt lustig. Ja. Und auch über das Wort "Gerechtigkeit"!' (p.418). So, by employing the carnivalesque *topos* of cheating the hangman and subverting 'eternal' concepts through laughter, the novel's open ending resists the satisfying closure that appropriate justice for Schulz's crimes would bring.

Finally, *NF* uses the Fool-protagonist to subvert another 'eternal' concept, namely faith in God, by addressing what Novick calls 'viewing the Holocaust as divine punishment - or as marking the expiration of the special covenant between Jews and God' (p.108; cf. p.150). Like Novick, one can subsume these two superficially different concepts under the notion that the Holocaust represented a radical deterioration of man's relationship with God. Once again Hilsenrath rejects such an easy explanation for this would give meaning to the Jews' suffering and lay the blame on the victims themselves. Thus, at the start of Hilsenrath's novel, God, in a manner that recalls the Book of Job, is

³⁸ In this respect, Schulz recalls the debate over an appropriate punishment for Eichmann in which several people criticized the death-penalty; see Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp.250-1.

cruelly unconcerned by mankind's suffering and His motivations are opaque: there is no relationship between Him and man in the way that a meta-narrative of transgression and punishment would imply. Thus, when Schulz is raped by Slavitski, he 'hörte den lieben Gott lachen' (*NF*, p.22); Siegfried von Salzstange blames the random injustice of God for encouraging people to join the Nazis: 'Hier sind alle versammelt, die irgendwann mal eins aufs Dach gekriegt haben - vom lieben Gott oder von den Menschen' (pp.45 and 52); and Schulz himself equates his abuse by Slavitski with God's perceived sadistic attitude towards him: 'Und war nicht auch der liebe Gott ein Slavitski?' (p.53). Consequently, Schulz rejects God and to prove it, shoots a statue of Christ to pieces in a graveyard during a mass-execution (p.69). Indeed, in Hitler's Messianic 'Bergpredigt' and Schulz's blasphemous cries of 'Es werde Licht!' (e.g. p.127), *NF* implies that the Nazis hubristically arrogated God's position to themselves and that God did nothing about it.

Having adopted his persona as a Jewish victim, Schulz's perspective on God is very similar to his attitude when he was a Nazi perpetrator. Once again, God appears supremely unconcerned by mankind's sufferings. For example, Schulz blames God for allowing the purposeless Shoah to take place: 'Gott ist ein großer Versager. Was hat er getan, als seine Kinder in die tiefen Massengräben purzelten? Welche Armee hat er zu Hilfe geschickt? [...] Und was hat Gott für die anderen getan, die durch den Schornstein gejagt wurden?' (pp.251-2). So when asked if he believes in God, Schulz replies: 'Manchmal ja, manchmal nicht [...] Ich nehme ihn nicht ernst' (p.291). Just as Schulz the perpetrator violently rejected God by destroying a statue of Jesus, so Schulz the victim does not take Him seriously, doubts in Him and rejects Him.

The two perspectives merge at the novel's end when Schulz's real identity is exposed. Here again, Schulz, both as victim and as perpetrator, rejects God: 'die Beschneidung [ist] ein Bund mit dem Herrn [...], dem einzigen und ewigen Gott. Und Gott hat mit dir,

Max Schulz, nie einen Bund geschlossen! [...] Ich scheiß auf Gott!' (p.393). And when Schulz demands justice for his victims and punishment for his crimes, he dreams that Richter tells him: 'Ich hab dich dem lieben Gott überantwortet', to which Schulz replies: 'Den gibt's vielleicht nicht' (p.422). It is possible to read these statements on two levels. First, because Schulz the perpetrator had concluded that God was unconcerned with mankind's suffering and rejected Him, he was capable of committing atrocities: Schulz has made no covenant with God, he smears His name ('ich scheiß auf Gott!'), and he is unconvinced that he will be subject to God's punishment ('Den gibt's vielleicht nicht'). But the second way of understanding these words relates to Schulz's new persona as victim: because God failed to help the Jews, they cannot have a covenant with Him; nor is He likely to punish the perpetrators since He may not exist.³⁹ So Hilsenrath's text mobilizes carnivalesque subversion of divine power and authority in the context of the Holocaust to express profound doubts that God even exists, let alone that He can provide an answer to such major issues as justice or an adequate framework in which to make sense of such major issues as the Holocaust. Unsurprisingly, Hilsenrath himself has stated that he stopped believing in God because of the Holocaust and all the other injustice in the world (Hilsenrath [1990], pp.51-2).

Hilsenrath's Subversion of Symbolism

Just as Hilsenrath addresses several convenient theoretical ways in which to make sense of the Holocaust before having the Fool Schulz demonstrate their inadequacy or

³⁹ Stenberg points out that in the English translation, God is accused by Schulz of 'just watching' (in fact, Stenberg misquotes the translation in which God says: 'Yes, I just watched') and thus loses the right to judge Schulz at all. In other words, the English translation deconstructs the hope for divine justice or protection even more forcefully than the German version. See Peter Stenberg, "'Ich habe dich einen kleinen Augenblick verlassen': Edgar Hilsenrath und der abwesende Gott", in: Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath*, pp.178-90 (pp.185-7).

absurdity, so he also systematically uses humour to subvert the signs and symbols that might be used to make meaningful sense of Holocaust material.

One example of this is the way in which signs and motifs that ought to mean something do not do so in *NF*, particularly those that mark Jewish identity. According to Taubeneck, the difference between Jew and Gentile has been transferred in our secular world from religious to physical differences, the most obvious of which is - despite its widespread use among Gentiles - circumcision (Taubeneck, p.68). But Schulz's ability to 'become' Jewish so convincingly suggests that even this physical difference is meaningless: accordingly, Schulz buys circumcision from a shady, ex-Nazi doctor immediately after the War (*NF*, p.173).⁴⁰ Furthermore, although Schulz's mother and five putative fathers - none of them Jewish - had already tried to circumcize him as a baby (pp.12-13), they participated in this ritual when it had no religious meaning for them. But most importantly, the sign of a camp-survivor, the 'KZ-Nummer' tattooed on the arm, is equally easy to purchase - in Schulz's case from his grotesque, legless SS chum Horst Kumpel in the back streets of ruined Berlin (p.172). Schulz, of course, fully intends these signs to be meaningful ('Der Buchstabe A, Horst! [...] Auschwitz, Horst! Das wirkt mehr. Das ist bekannter' [ibid.]), but the reader knows how meaningless they are in reality. Other instances of what Taubeneck calls 'floating transferable signifiers' can be seen in the way in which the boys in Schulz's youth think he is Itzig (i.e. a Jew) (p.29); the picture Schulz sees in a German newspaper immediately after the War that reverses the images of Nazi propaganda: 'das Bild eines blonden jüdischen Hünen' (p.213); and the figure of Wolfgang Richter, who is primarily German but resembles a British Prime Minister: 'Ein Deutscher durch und durch, obwohl er Jude ist und wie

⁴⁰ Taubeneck - rightly, in my view - describes the circumcision in this scene as 'a floating transferable signifier' (Taubeneck, p.72) and Dopheide, writing in the same year, comes to the same conclusion: 'Die angeblichen Kennzeichen jüdischer Identität [...] werden dadurch zu austauschbaren und nichtssagenden äußerlichen Attributen' (Dopheide, p.184).

Churchill aussieht' (p.246). As Torberg points out, even the name 'Itzig' is not a proper Jewish name but 'eine Rufform von Isaak, mit unüberhörbarem Beiklang von Spott, und zwar von deutschem Spott'.⁴¹ So if religious belief can no longer identify the Jews (and the rejection of God implied by the text compounds this), then Hilsenrath shows, by playing with Jewish stereotypes, that physical signs cannot do so either. Alarming, *NF* further suggests that the definition of Jewish identity by means of such superficial markers means that those very physical signs - like the status of Holocaust-victim itself - can be appropriated by the Jews' enemies. Schulz explicitly raises his doubts about the existence of defining Jewish characteristics when he asks: 'Was ist es, was wir Juden ausstrahlen? Und wenn wir einander begegnen, was erschnuppern und erkennen wir mit unseren Seelennasen? Was ist dieses geheimnisvolle Etwas? Und woraus setzt es sich zusammen?' (p.204). Like so many other issues in the text, *NF* refuses to give any firm answer by means of which we can anchor its meaning.

Additionally, the motif of numerology in *NF* is related to the way in which Schulz 'dismembers' and destroys the meaning of the supposedly definitive, but in reality superficial markers of Jewish identity. By 'numerology' I mean the interpretation of apparently significant numbers to make sense of a text, a hermeneutic method that can be read in *NF* as yet another reference to Jewish practices because of the way sacred numbers are used in Jewish scholarship to interpret the Torah. In this context, Gershom Scholem, for example, discusses the *Gematria*, which is related to numerology, as a fifth method of interpretation used as a last resort: 'Hier wird außer den vier Sinnesschichten noch eine fünfte aufgeführt, nämlich die Deutung mit Hilfe des Zahlenwertes der hebräischen Buchstaben, *Gematria*, die sonst keine eigene Sinnesschicht bildet'.⁴²

⁴¹ Friedrich Torberg, 'Ein Freispruch, der keiner ist', in: Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath*, pp.72-6 (p.73) (review of *NF*, first published in *Die Welt*, 12 October 1977, p.XI).

⁴² Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1960), pp.79-80.

However, like so much else in *NF*, Hilsenrath exposes the inability of such systems to make any sense of the awful events of the novel: whatever Schulz may think, the numbers which occur there are utterly insignificant.

For instance, the number seven appears again and again: Frau Holle has sex seven times with an American major (*NF*, p.97); Laubwalde is seven kilometres from Veronja's hut (p.134); Schulz claims that his medical officer warned him against having sex seven times in one night before Veronja forces him to do precisely that (p.142 and 144); Schulz has a heart attack on the seventh night of sexual torture from Veronja (p.144); the trees are felled for seven kilometres around KZ Laubwalde to rid the forest of evil spirits (p.145); Itzig is murdered on 7 September 1942 (p.164); Schulz learns seven sexual positions (p.190); he is left with only seven dollars after he loses his black market fortune (p.202); the ship to Palestine weighs 700 tons (p.234); the rabbi pronounces seven blessings at Schulz's wedding (p.350); Schulz tries to consummate his marriage seven times (p.352); he works for Jewish terrorists seven times (p.358); and Frau Schmulevitch has seven separate seats in her barber-shop (pp.373-4). Because nothing connects these events, their connection by the sacred number serves to reinforce its meaninglessness: Hilsenrath thus satirizes the attempts of Nazis like Holle and Schulz - not to mention latter-day readers - to rationalize events using the traditional power of these sacred numbers. Holle, for example, draws attention to her use of numbers to make sense of things when she rationalizes the American major's death after he has had sex with her: 'sieben Nummern! Und sieben ist 'ne böse Zahl. Und der ist tot!' (p.97). Schulz also draws attention to the supposed significance of certain numbers: at one point, he comments: '[Dreizehn] ist eine böse Zahl. So wie die Sieben!' (p.250); he explains away his failure to consummate his marriage by saying: '7 mal hab ich's versucht. Aber 7 ist eine böse Zahl' (p.352); and he explains the arrest of his fellow terrorists in the same way: 'die 7 ist eine böse Zahl! Beim siebenten Angriff [...] wurden unsere Leute

aufgerieben' (p.358). Thus, the attempt to rationalize catastrophic events using numerology is taken to such absurd extremes that it becomes meaningless - and in any case, seven is traditionally a sacred, not an unlucky or evil number.⁴³

As if to confirm that he is satirizing attempts to interpret numbers which are inherently meaningless, Hilsenrath even has Schulz himself - a character *within* the text - indulge in numerical interpretation. Thus, when Schulz hears of Frau Schmulevitch's anti-Semitic plan for seven chairs for seven kinds of Jew, Schulz 'Dachte an die Hausnummer 33-45! Dachte: Aha. Also so ist das!' (p.374). Although the Third Reich existed from 1933 to 1945 and despite Schulz's implication that there is a connection between Frau Schmulevitch's attitudes and Nazism, the supposedly significant house-number of her shop is merely coincidental. It is as if Hilsenrath has caught the reader out in his or her attempt to find significance in purely random numbers. But on a more serious level, the meaninglessness of these numbers also refers to the people murdered by Schulz, whose number is so large that debate on its exactitude is idle: 'Ungefähr 10 000. Es könnten aber auch mehr gewesen sein. Oder auch weniger. Nur, um eine runde Ziffer zu nennen: 10 000' (p.413). The result of Schulz's musings on the total of his victims is, of course, that the particularity of the victims to which the total refers disappears. Ultimately, one has to conclude, with Schulz, that 'Zahlen sind Zahlen!' (p.310) and nothing more. So once again Hilsenrath exemplifies the absurdity of trying to bring order and thus meaning to Holocaust material - in this case, by parodic numerology.

⁴³ One could go on pursuing number-patterns for a long time, but the ultimate point is the same. The number fifty-nine is another example (Holle is fifty-nine years old [pp.80 and 132] as is her American suitor [p.92], she was raped by the Russians fifty-nine times and lives at Nietzschestraße 59 [p.84]) and again Holle tries to rationalize her misfortunes as she did with the number seven: 'Das war allerdings eine Unglückszahl' (p.84). Yet another 'magic number' is three which appears on pp.151, 170, 181, 261, 273, 277, 298, 321, 322, 345, 361, 371 and 420, and not only is attention drawn to its symbolic import, but that symbolism is undermined again, in this case by scatological imagery: 'Und Max Schulz [...] ging nach Jerusalem...um dreimal *symbolisch* zu pinkeln' (p.295, my italics. Cf. 'Das ist die Dritte Entscheidungsschlacht. Und aller guten Dinge sind drei' [p.392] - a statement undermined in this case by the banality of the cliché which echoes Minna's use of the same phrase - 'Aller guten Dinge sind drei' [p.14]).

Another way in which *NF* inverts assumptions about symbolic meanings involves the ironic use of ‘sprechende Namen’. Names of things and people do not really mean what the reader assumes they might. For instance, the fictional camp in which Schulz works is called ‘Laubwalde’ (= ‘leafy wood’) and Sem Dresden points out that ‘Laubwalde’ ‘sounds so poetic, poetic like ... Birkenau and Buchenwald [...] places of horror and annihilation that form a sharp contrast with their lovely names’.⁴⁴ Max Schulz’s mother is called Minna, but she is no aristocratic lady courted by valiant knights familiar from the *Minnesang*, nor is she the embodiment of feminine virtues like Lessing’s *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767), nor is she like the slender, religious wisp of a woman, the personification of spiritual love, with whom she shares her name in Hauptmann’s *Bahnwärter Thiel* (1888): in fact, she is a ‘wandelndes Bierfaß auf Stelzen’ (*NF*, p.15), a prostitute, and ultimately a supporter of Nazism. It makes sense that Siegfried von Salzstange - in itself a highly unaristocratic and improbable name - has the initials ‘S.S.’ (since he is involved in Nazi activities), but it makes little sense that Schulz’s affable boss in Palestine, Schmucl Schmuclvitch (p.299), and the Jewish terrorist, Schloime Suppengrün (p.320), share those initials. Wolfgang Richter is even made to analyse some of the text’s signs himself from *within* the novel - just as Schulz ‘interpreted’ Frau Schmuclvitch’s house-number - but concludes that they have no significant hidden meaning. Thus, after Schulz has confessed that he is a Nazi war-criminal, Richter, who has refused to believe him, jokes knowingly at the implications of one of Schulz’s hair-growth products: ‘Grinst, wenn er ins Geschäft kommt [...] “Warum heißt Ihr berühmtes Haarwuchsmittel “Samson V2”? Und was haben Samsons Haare mit der deutschen Rakete zu tun?”’ (p.417). So again, what appear to be obviously allusive names point to the opposite of what the reader assumes they mean. Or, as in this final example, when

⁴⁴ Sem Dresden, *Persecution, Extermination, Literature* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p.42.

the names may really mean what they appear to mean, nobody takes the implications seriously.

Hilsenrath's Inversion of Intertextual References

So far I have argued that *NF* obstructs the reader from dealing with the Holocaust in any systematic or reductionist way by using theoretical techniques or by relying on a 'common-sense' interpretation of the novel's symbolism. Indeed, by setting these debates in a carnivalesque world full of wooden-legged, fat, sexually-voracious witches like Frau Holle and Veronja and grotesquely priapic sex-maniacs like Slavitski; by making Schulz undermine these theories; and by using the destructive, subversive powers of humour, Hilsenrath implicitly seeks to close down such theoretical or literary debates. This is not to say that *NF* is simply a shallow, even insensitive, book which simply laughs at and dismisses earlier, well-meaning debates and writing on the Holocaust. Dopheide unwittingly reinforces such a judgement on *NF* inasmuch as large parts of his book merely register or list its humorous sections but draw no specific conclusions about *NF* as a whole. Moreover, when Stenberg says that 'As a surviving victim [Hilsenrath] cannot be accused of being disrespectful to the six million who did not survive' (Stenberg [1982], p.283), he raises the issue that one might criticize Hilsenrath for his purposeless mockery of the Shoah. In fact, although Stenberg excuses Hilsenrath for laughing at the Holocaust, he fails to see the crucial point that genuine victims like Schulz's friend Itzig are never mocked or made grotesque at all - unlike most of the other characters in *NF*.

The reader is not left with any explanation or meaningful framework in which to view the Holocaust; rather, he or she is left only with the certainty that the Holocaust happened and that its victims have been forgotten. But Bakhtin's definition of carnivalesque

laughter claims that laughter ought to produce something new in place of what has been destroyed: '[laughter] asserts and denies, it buries and revives' (*RW*, p.12) and it is at this point that *NF* diverges from Bakhtin. Although Hilsenrath's use of the Fool-figure and humour is sustained throughout *NF*, his novel does not reflect the redemptive, regenerative qualities attached to carnivalesque laughter by Bakhtin. In contrast to Bakhtin, Hilsenrath is entirely pessimistic in that he does not believe that redemption can be achieved or that there is a positive future after the Holocaust, and he betrays this belief in his use of intertextuality. Accordingly, the rest of my argument will show how Hilsenrath not only wants to return the focus to the victims themselves - who are implicitly despised in Israeli society as that is depicted in *NF* - but also that History's disasters and violence will continue - even among the former victims of that violence, and regardless of our hopes to the contrary and any mourning we might undertake.

Hilsenrath's implicit denial of the optimistic assumption that any sense can be made of the Holocaust or that such issues as the need for justice can ever be resolved is reinforced by examining his use of intertextuality. Horch is typical of the many critics who sense literary influences in Hilsenrath's work and he lists such influences as Rabelais and Hašek, and himself suggests Raabe's *Der Hungerpastor* (1864) and Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855) as possible sources for *NF*'s 'dual autobiography' form.⁴⁵ One might arguably add to the list authors such as Lessing and Hauptmann (if, for instance, Hilsenrath is thinking of those writers when he invented Minna's character) or texts such as the Bible. But I would argue that *NF* makes sustained allusions to at least seven other texts. Moreover, while I agree with Arnds that 'Hilsenrath's principle [*sic*] technique is one of inversion', I do not believe that 'he inverts high culture into low culture'⁴⁶ in

⁴⁵ Hans Otto Horch, 'Grauen und Grotteske: Zu Edgar Hilsenraths Romanen', in: Stüben and Woesler (eds.), *Wir tragen den Zettelkasten mit den Steckbriefen unserer Freunde*, pp.213-26 (pp.215 and 222).

⁴⁶ Peter Arnds, 'On the Awful German Fairy Tale: Breaking Taboos in Representations of Nazi Euthanasia and the Holocaust in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*, Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur*, and Anselm Kiefer's Visual Art', *German Quarterly*, 75 (2002), pp.422-39 (p.431).

every case. This is because only very few of the intertextual references are subverted by carnivalesque laughter. Rather, Hilsenrath simply inverts the meaning of the texts in order to deny any positive message that can be read into those works, with two significant exceptions - Grass's *BT* (discussed above) and Benjamin's 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte'.⁴⁷ I have already shown in various minor ways how Hilsenrath does this: for instance, in the way Hilsenrath's Minna is a negative inversion of Hauptmann's and Lessing's characters, but the examples analysed below involve those allusions that are most obvious and direct.

Both Anne Fuchs and Peter Arnds discuss Hilsenrath's intertextual use of two Grimm *Märchen* in *NF*. Both see how such intertextuality raises rather than answers questions. Fuchs, for example, sees the connection between the episode involving the witch Veronja (who abuses Schulz in her hut in the Polish forest) and the tale of Hänsel and Gretel and claims that 'Hilsenrath's narrative does not simply reverse the roles of Grimms' story but [...] deconstructs the dichotomy of good and evil that structure the fairy-tale [and] thus illustrates an uncomfortable truth [...]: namely, the inability to interpret history (after Auschwitz) in moral categories' (p.164). Or in other words, Hilsenrath has Schulz take the role of the two victimized children who successfully kill the witch - however, Schulz is not a victim but a mass-murderer, so reassuring categories such as 'good' and 'evil' become unserviceable when used of anyone implicated in the events of the *Nazizeit*. Then again, Arnds, who describes the Hänsel-and-Gretel episode with Veronja as a 'carnavalesque encounter' (p.433), also observes that Hilsenrath's Frau Holle, an old woman with a wooden leg who is an unreconstructed Nazi, is a grotesque parody of the Frau Holle from the Grimm tale of the same name who was 'considered a role model for

⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in: Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 7 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-89), I/2, pp.691-704. Since Benjamin's complete works post-date the year Hilsenrath wrote *NF* (1968), it is probable that Hilsenrath read Benjamin's 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte' in *Illuminationen* (first published in 1955).

all women in the Third Reich' (p.432). But, more importantly, Fuchs sees the discrepancy between Hilsenrath's Frau Holle and the Grimms', and suggests that the allusion 'questions a model of story-telling which fulfils the reader's expectation that the bad will ultimately be punished' (p.165). By this, Fuchs means that the ironic reference to the Grimms' Frau Holle - a magical figure who awards the pretty, industrious but down-trodden daughter of the tale with a shower of gold and punishes the lazy, ugly but favoured daughter with a shower of pitch - prefigures the impossibility of adequately punishing Schulz since the suffering ultimately experienced by Hilsenrath's Holle is equally meaningless in terms of justice because it is entirely random: 'Although Frau Holle dies in Hilsenrath's novel when she steps on a land mine, her death is not an act of punishment but an accident typical of its times' (ibid.). So while Hilsenrath alludes to two stories which gratify the reader with their happy endings, he replays those stories in a grotesque form and denies their optimistic message by his lack of faith in the possibility of justice and his challenging of simplistic moral categories.

Then again, *NF* makes two literary allusions to two of Goethe's most famous poems: 'Das Göttliche' (written c.1783; first publ. 1785) and 'Prometheus' (written 1774; first publ. 1785). Schulz describes his love of hairdressing as follows: 'Gibt es denn etwas Edleres als den menschlichen Schädel? Und macht es nicht Spaß, das Edle zu formen, zu gestalten, zu verschönen...weil man gerade bei dieser und ähnlicher Arbeit das Gefühl hat, es könnte auch Spaß machen, das Edle zu zertrümmern?' (*NF*, p.35). Here, Schulz is alluding to 'Das Göttliche' but inverting its idealistic claims about human nature. The poem famously begins: 'Edel sei der Mensch / Hilfreich und gut!' and is appropriate to a barber's discussion of heads since it, too, contains a reference to hair in the fifth stanza: 'Auch so das Glück / Tappt unter die Menge, / Faßt bald des Knaben / Lockige Unschuld, / Bald auch den kahlen / Schuldigen Scheitel'. But such sentiments are mocked in the mouth of a homicidal barber who really does handle people's heads.

Moreover, the poem's final stanza says: 'Der edle Mensch / Sei hilfreich und gut! / Unermüdet schafft er / Das Nützliche, Rechte'. Schulz also alludes to 'Prometheus', a poem which defiantly denounces the gods (as Schulz himself does in *NF*) and, like 'Das Göttliche', affirms creativity in the final stanza: 'Hier sitze ich, forme Menschen / Nach meinem Bilde'.⁴⁸ But Schulz is anything but 'edel', 'hilfreich' or 'gut' himself, and by its very nature the Holocaust puts a question-mark over such claims about the essential goodness of mankind. Moreover, Schulz does not create but destroys other people. Arnds states that 'the fairy-tale tradition was at best considered beneficial for the process of healing the great German wound' (p.432). But just as Hilsenrath inverts and makes grotesque his fairy-tale allusions, so these Goethean allusions are inverted in Schulz's mouth and would have had uncomfortable resonances for educated Germans at a time when they were looking back to the 'Klassisches Erbe' as the embodiment of all that was good in German culture. Or in other words, because of the Holocaust perpetrated by Germans like Schulz, Hilsenrath's negative inversion of major components of German culture - fairy-tales and Goethe's poetry - show his lack of faith in the idealism or optimism embodied by those texts. Once again, the carnivalesque *NF* subverts another 'eternal' institution.

Hilsenrath's literary inversions are not limited to the optimistic texts of the distant past, since he negativizes more recent texts (two of which are in English) that deal with the Holocaust but arguably promise some kind of resolution to the trauma of the past. To date, no critic has noticed the allusions to Jerzy Kosinski's notoriously violent Holocaust novel *The Painted Bird* (1965).⁴⁹ Just as Schulz - who is stereotypically 'Jewish-

⁴⁸ 'Prometheus' and 'Das Göttliche' are reproduced in J.W. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Hendrik Birus et al. (40 vols.) (Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987), I, pp.203-4 and 333-5. Coincidentally, the words 'Hier sitze ich' echo the name 'Itzig'.

⁴⁹ Jerzy Kosinski, *The Painted Bird*, 2nd edn. (1965; New York: Grove Press, 1995). Hilsenrath must have known Kosinski's novel as it was first published in the US (where Hilsenrath was living) in 1965 (three years before Hilsenrath wrote *NF*) and was a best-seller.

looking' - spends part of *NF* wandering through the Polish forests in mortal danger and is sexually abused by a witch who lives in a hut, so Kosinski's novel involves a boy who wanders through rural Poland during World War II, lodges in a number of huts, encounters various witch-like women, and suffers serial sexual and physical abuse at the hands of the peasants who treat the boy as an outcast because of his swarthy looks.⁵⁰ Norman Finkelstein sums up the tone of *The Painted Bird* by arguing that: 'The book's motif is the sadistic sexual tortures perpetrated by the Polish peasantry' and cites two pre-publication readers' comments that the novel was a 'pornography of violence' and 'the product of a mind obsessed with sadomasochistic violence' (p.55). Given which, it might seem difficult to see how Hilsenrath 'inverts' Kosinski's novel into something even more bleak, but he does so in two ways. First, in a way that expresses his profound vulnerability, the boy-narrator of *The Painted Bird* fantasizes about becoming a SS-officer (Kosinski, p.147) - i.e. about reversing his position from powerless victim to powerful oppressor. In contrast, Schulz, a cynical member of the SS, *successfully* becomes a Holocaust-victim. Similarly, whereas Kosinski's novel ends happily when the boy narrator survives the War, lives in an orphanage, and regains his voice, *NF* involves the much less palatable survival of a Nazi war criminal in Israel. In these two ways, *NF* is even bleaker than *The Painted Bird*.

Hilsenrath also very obviously inverts the positive tenor of Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator* (1940). Only Dopheide has noted any parallels between the film and *NF*, and he focusses on the way in which *The Great Dictator* involves a confusion between the Jewish barber and Hynkel / Hitler, just as *NF* involves a Nazi stealing the identity of a Jewish barber (pp.114-5). But he does not see that *NF* only alludes to Chaplin by

⁵⁰ It is worth adding that there is a further parallel between Schulz and the author Kosinski himself: Schulz - as Finkelstein - marries a Bavarian aristocrat, 'Kriemhild, Gräfin von Hohenhausen' (p.183), and Kosinski, too, married a Bavarian aristocrat, Katharina von Fraunhofer.

systematically negativizing each allusion. First, just as the narrator of *The Painted Bird* dreamed of achieving the power of a SS-officer, Chaplin's Jewish barber is accidentally confused with Hynkel himself and actually achieves the position of leader of Tomainia at the film's conclusion. And second, Hilsenrath takes at least two names from Chaplin: Chaplin's Hannah and Schultz become Hilsenrath's Hanna Lewisohn and Max Schulz. But *NF* puts these allusions under a negative sign, so that Schulz may be confused with a Jew, just as Hynkel is, but this confusion leads to the *survival* of a Nazi in *NF* rather than a Nazi's demise, as happens in *The Great Dictator*. Similarly, Hannah, the Jewish barber's gutsy girlfriend in Chaplin's film, becomes a mad ballerina in *NF* who is mentally ruined by her experiences during the Holocaust and ends up in an asylum. Likewise, Chaplin's Schultz, who is saved by the Jewish barber during World War I, protects the barber from persecution, tells Hynkel to his face how evil he is, and ends up in a concentration camp - but in *NF* he becomes the murderous Nazi Schulz. Given the way Hilsenrath negativizes all these allusions to Chaplin's film, it is entirely appropriate that *NF* has an inconclusive, not to say highly depressing, ending which contrasts strongly with the climax of *The Great Dictator*, in which Chaplin delivers an appeal to the values of democracy, love, brotherhood and peace.

Then again, although *NF* makes several intertextual references to Grass's *Hundejahre* (1963), only two critics have registered the allusions more specifically: Horch merely mentions it as a possible literary influence but does not discuss the earlier novel's significance (p.222), and Gilman confidently states that 'Die Handlung [of *NF*] ist eine eindeutige Antwort auf Günter Grass' *Hundejahre*' but offers as evidence only the fact that *NF* involves two boys, one Jewish and one Aryan.⁵¹ If my earlier reading of *HJ* is plausible, then Hilsenrath is referring to a text which, beneath a surface of bleakness and

⁵¹ Sander Gilman, 'Hilsenrath und Grass Redivivus', in: Kraft (ed.), *Edgar Hilsenrath*, pp.119-27 (p.122).

despair, conceals the potential for positive redemption and rebirth which is most obviously embodied in the grotesque artistic creations of the Fool Eddi Amsel. But Hilsenrath's allusions involve none of the redemptive potential that is implicit, albeit in an occluded way, in Grass's novel: like so many other critics Hilsenrath has read *HJ* as an entirely bleak novel. Indeed, as with his reworking of *The Painted Bird*, Hilsenrath makes the meaning of those parts of *HJ* to which he alludes even more bleak than they already were. Schulz and Itzig are friends like Amsel and Matern and similarly mocked as a pair by their peers at school (*NF*, p.35). But Itzig, unlike Amsel, is not an ever-present figure who watches over Schulz and points his Aryan friend towards the redemptive powers he embodies. Rather, he plays very little part in the plot and, again unlike Amsel, does not have the chance to narrate part of the novel (which is entirely narrated by Schulz). Moreover, whereas Matern seriously injures Amsel (in the snow-scene witnessed by Harry), Schulz actually murders Itzig and his parents. Similarly, although Itzig's name recalls the anti-Semitic insults hurled at Amsel in *HJ*, the implications in his name of the power of laughter ('Itzig' = 'Isaac' = Hebrew for 'laugh') are ineffectual and comprehensively blown away by Schulz in Laubwalde (*NF*, pp.221 and 237). Then again, like Störtebeker and Matern, who stood around Stutthof catching rats in *HJ*, Schulz enjoys rat-catching (*NF*, pp.26-7), a trait which prefigures his later genocidal actions - not least because of the parallel set up between Jews and rats in the notorious Nazi propaganda film *Der ewige Jude* (1940). Similarly, in contrast to my ambivalent reading of Tulla, the women in *NF* are unequivocally destructive 'eating monsters and waste factories that threaten male identity' (Fuchs, p.173), and Hilsenrath's Frau Holle is an even grosser version of several of Grass's triangular-faced women (including Tulla) with her 'Gesicht...breitknochig...wie ein Dreieck [...] große[], gelbe[], abstehende[] Zähne' (*NF*, p.77; my italics). Although Schulz absconds from Laubwalde with a bag of gold teeth from victims' mouths and uses some of them to

replace his own ('Es soll glänzen, wenn ich lache' [p.181]), unlike Amsel/Goldmälchen, these teeth are not a sign of Schulz's own victimhood but represent the profit he gains from his victims. Finally, Schulz meets a ballerina on the ship to Palestine called Hanna Lewisohn who 'behauptet, daß sie Berlin überlebt hat, als Berlin eingeäschert wurde, und daß sie tanzend aus glimmender Asche herausgeschwebt war' (p.257). Although, at first sight, Hanna recalls the gypsy ballerina Jenny Brunies who, with Amsel and Matern, survives the conflagration of her burning bar in Berlin at the end of *HJ*, Hanna's own rebirth is problematized on her arrival in Palestine because she goes mad there and is confined to an asylum.⁵²

So while educated Germans looked back to an idealistic, pre-twentieth century literary tradition to rehabilitate German culture after the Third Reich, and while even the bleakest post-War literary texts about the Holocaust seemed to indicate some hope for redemption and healing, Hilsenrath systematically alludes to some of these texts but denies any of their optimism. But the text to which *NF* most frequently alludes - an allusion, incidentally, which no critic has noticed⁵³ - confirms Hilsenrath's scepticism about redemption and recovery after the Holocaust: namely, Walter Benjamin's famous Ninth Thesis in his 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', with its idea of powerless contemplation of the endless repetition of History's catastrophes:

Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt. Ein Engel is darauf dargestellt, der aussieht, als wäre er im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen,

⁵² It is possible that the numerological references in *NF* not only refer to Jewish practices but also to *HJ*, since the supposed numerological motifs in *HJ* have generated at least one critical work, namely Michael Harscheidt's gargantuan *Günter Grass: Wort - Zahl - Gott: Der 'phantastische Realismus' in den Hundejahren* (1976) which interprets in immense detail the number-patterns that are supposedly present in that text and in my view unwittingly points up the futility of such efforts. A case in point can be found on pp.244ff where Harscheidt attempts to establish a connection between the number of times the word 'Schnee' is used in a particular section of the second book and the age at which Christ is assumed to have died. To make his argument even more problematic, the tradition states that Christ died at the age of thirty-three, but Harscheidt claims Christ was thirty-four.

⁵³ Karin Bauer's useful article discusses *JWH* within the theoretical framework of Benjamin's historical theses but ignores the ninth thesis altogether: see Karin Bauer, 'Erzählen im Augenblick höchster Gefahr: Zu Benjamins Begriff der Geschichte in Edgar Hilsenraths *Jossel Wassermanns Heimkehr*', *German Quarterly*, 71 (1998), pp.343-52.

worauf er starrt. Seine Augen sind aufgerissen, sein Mund steht offen und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt. Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor *uns* erscheint, da sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist *dieser* Sturm (pp.697-8).

NF is saturated with echoes of or references to this passage. To begin with, trust in progress and the future is comprehensively ironized when Itzig's father, Chaim, explains to Schulz that he emigrated from Galicia to Germany because 'Deutschland aber [sei] ein *fortschrittliches* Land [...], ein Land der Menschenwürde, wo auch ein Jude [...] beruhigt und mit Vertrauen der Zukunft entgegensehen könne' (*NF*, p.28; my italics). Chaim may be looking into the future and trusting in progress, but he can no more see the disaster hurtling towards him than can the backwards-looking Angel of History. Moreover, *NF* shows the War leaving behind huge 'Trümmerhaufen' in Germany: we first see Frau Holle - whom Arnds describes as a '*Trümmerfrau*' (p.432) - as she walks 'durch das Trümmerfeld' (p.83); one of the roads in Frau Holle's home-town of Warthenau is 'zertrümmert und voller Schutt und Geröll' (p.93); Schulz contemplates 'das [*sic*] Ruinenfeld gegenüber' when he visits Frau Holle (p.117) before moving to Berlin, 'der zertrümmerten Hauptstadt des Tausendjährigen Reiches', and burying his sack of gold teeth 'in einem Trümmerfeld' (p.169); Schulz remains 'in der Trümmerstadt' (p.173) and complains, in his new role as victim, that 'Unsere Welt ist in Asche und Trümmer aufgegangen' (p.177) and that 'Berlin war immer noch ein Trümmerhaufen' (p.181); finally, Schulz apostrophizes the dead Itzig and describes Germany as 'Ein Trümmerhaufen, lieber Itzig. Ein Trümmerhaufen!' (p.226).

Then again, the novel is well-populated with 'angels' who are typically shown to be powerless to intervene in catastrophic events: Schulz himself is 'wie ein Engel' before

Slavitski rapes him as a helpless baby (p.20); during the rape, Schulz thinks that he heard ‘die Englein singen, hörte ihr “Halleluja”, sah schwebende Harfen und Panflöten’ (p.21) - but they do nothing to help him and promptly disappear (p.22) just as they did when, in abject fear of castration by his five putative fathers, Schulz fled to the window but saw ‘keine Englein, gar keine Englein’ (p.13) to offer help. Schulz has a second vision of angels during his rape by the witch Veronja when he sees ‘die Englein sitzen...in den Blumenkelchen...singen und spielen und warten’ (p.144) - but yet again they fail to rescue him. While illegally emigrating to Palestine, Schulz’s ship is not protected by angels but reconnoitred by British aeroplanes - whereupon Schulz makes the appropriate pun: ‘Und dort oben am Himmel, das sind keine *Engel*, das sind *englische* Flugzeuge, R A F ... Royal Air Force!’ (p.245; my italics). Finally, Schulz remembers how he, who was once a defenceless ‘Engel’ as a baby, became the one who victimized other helpless children when he injected them with phenol: ‘Die waren gleich tot. Kleine tote Engel’ (p.255).

The closest thing to Paradise seen in *NF* is the description of the Eden-like *kibbutz* Pardess Gideon: ‘Felder! Mitten in der Wüste! Plantagen! Bananen- und Orangenhaine! [...] Kreisender Wasserstrahl unter der gelben Sonne! [...] Ein Wunder!’ (pp.278-9), and Schulz specifically describes it as ‘ein kleines *Paradies*, eine Oase in der Wüste’ (p.281; my italics).⁵⁴ But Schulz cannot stand the *kibbutz* for long, and like Benjamin’s Angel of

⁵⁴ Coincidentally, Scholem refers to a mystical work written by Moses de Leon in the thirteenth century ‘mit dem Titel *Pardes* [...] was wörtlich Paradies heißt’ (p.80). He explains that the title is a ‘Wortspiel’ that indicates the four methods of Biblical interpretation (or ‘vier Sinnesschichten’ referred to in note 42): ‘Moses de Leon [las] diesen in vielen Nuancen schillernden Begriff als Abkürzung für die vier Sinnesschichten der Tora [...], wo aber jeder Konsonant in dem Wort *PaRDeS* auf eine dieser Schichten verweist: *P* steht für *Peschat*, den Wortsinn, *R* für *Remes*, den allegorischen Sinn, *D* für *Derascha*, talmudische und agadische Deutung, *S* für *Sod*, den mystischen Sinn. Der *Pardes* [...] bekam damit die Bedeutung von Spekulationen über den wahren Sinn der Tora auf allen diesen vier Schichten’ (pp.80-1). So not only does Schulz, like the Angel of History, leave Paradise behind as a sign of mankind’s fall from grace; he also abandons a place whose name has a powerful mystical resonance connected with *interpretation* - on my reading, *NF* resists traditional attempts to make meaning of its text. It should also be noted that ‘Pardes’ (= usually ‘orchard’) is not the normal word for Paradise, which is ‘Gan Eden’ (the Garden of Eden).

History, leaves the Paradise of Pardess Gideon far behind after just a few days (see p.285), presumably blown away by the wind that again and again gusts in sinister contexts throughout the text. During *Kristallnacht*, for instance, Chaim Finkelstein's shop is deliberately burnt down but other buildings catch fire, too: 'Daran war allerdings der Novemberwind schuld. Ja, der verdammte Wind' (p.67); Schulz ties up the American Major's corpse after wrapping it in paper 'Nur im Falle von starkem Wind [...] damit das Packpapier nicht wegflattert' (p.118); when Schulz is fleeing the partisans after the War, he claims that 'Der Wind heulte in den Bäumen und peitschte uns frischen Schnee ins Gesicht' (p.127); when Veronja rapes him, Schulz listens as 'Der Wind sang in den Bäumen' (p.142); the Arab aeroplanes that attack the embryonic Israeli state 'flogen schneller als der "Hamsin"...Hamsin, der heimtückische Wüstenwind, den selbst die alten Propheten gefürchtet hatten' (p.366); at the prospect of the Israelis cultivating desert land, the desert itself 'ließ heiße Winde fahren' (p.383); and finally, when Schulz dreams of suffering a heart-attack at the very end of the book, the weather is 'drückend heiß. Hamsinwetter. Ostwind. Kommt aus der arabischen Wüste, um Menschen und Tiere und Pflanzen zu quälen. So ist das. Die Araber wagen es nicht, ihre Flugzeuge zu schicken. Aber sie schicken uns den Wind' (p.420).

Finally, in his role as omniscient narrator in the 'Zweites Buch', Schulz is even more pessimistic than Benjamin's Angel when he suggests that there is no point in 'die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen' (to cite the ninth thesis once again) for he says: 'Als ob das noch einen Sinn hätte, den Schutt wegzuräumen, wo doch sowieso alles im Eimer war' (p.84) - Benjamin's Angel at least *wishes*, albeit vainly, to reconstruct the rubble ('möchte'). By the end, Schulz, like Benjamin's Angel, also wants to restore his victims to life but knows that he cannot: 'Was ich getötet habe, das kann ich nicht zurückgeben. *Auch wenn ich wollte*. Ich kann's aber nicht [...] Ich kann nicht. Das steht nicht in meiner Macht' (p.414; my italics). Thus, as if to confirm the

impossibility of resurrection, Hilsenrath has Schulz's NCO order him to shoot Jesus Christ and thus deny the myth of resurrection *par excellence*. The NCO rationalizes the shooting as follows: 'Man kann nie wissen [...] so ein Kerl wie dieser Jesus Christus, der ist ein Zauberer. Der kann plötzlich wieder auferstehen' (p.69).

The spirit of Benjamin's Ninth Thesis permeates the novel: Paradise has been abandoned, a progressive country has reduced itself to rubble, the angels can do nothing but stand by and watch impotently, the wind blows at disastrous moments, and, according to Schulz at least, resurrection and reconstruction are impossible. Or in other words, Hilsenrath cannot accept the attitude of a Bakhtin or even an Amsel, who resembles the *Shtetl*-Jews in Hilsenrath's *Jossel Wassermanns Heimkehr* (who 'aus dem Nichts oder aus dem fast nichts, aus Lumpen und Abfällen und Lederstücken kleine Kunstwerke schufen, die man tragen konnte, ohne sich zu schämen' [*JWH*, p.100]), and who see the creative potential of rubbish and rubble. And although Brumlik makes no reference either to *NF* or to the Ninth Thesis in particular, I would agree with his claim that Benjamin's theses on history support the notion of 'zweckfreies Erinnern' (p.201). Because, for the Benjamin who wrote the Ninth Thesis six months before his own death and for Hilsenrath, the rubble of history cannot be reshaped constructively, we are left like the Angel with only the possibility of contemplating History's disasters in horror and mourning of the Holocaust as an end in itself.

Jews who will not Mourn - Schulz's Resurrection as History's Destructive Powers

I have argued that the main concerns of *NF* involve profound doubt in the possibility of redemption - because of History's inevitable violence - and a desire to discredit theories that made sense of the Holocaust in favour of the act of remembrance as an end in itself. In my view, Hilsenrath's controversial depiction of post-War Palestinian Jews brings

together the author's pessimism about History and his sympathy for the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, and does so by highlighting two ironies. First, Hilsenrath shows how the Jews of post-War Palestine rejected their victim-status, disregarded Holocaust victims, and aspired to heroic deeds. Second, it is those same Jews who propagate History's violence in the form of anti-British terrorism - and the re-occurrence of such violence is the only kind of 'rebirth' or 'resurrection' to be found in *NF*. In other words, the pessimism of *NF* involves a double irony inasmuch as the Jewish characters not only fail to recognize themselves as victims, they also perpetrate the same kind of violence they once suffered. But crucially, Hilsenrath's lack of faith in redemption means that the novel contains no suggestion that if the Palestinian Jews were to mourn the Holocaust, then violence would necessarily stop altogether. Once again, mourning the past is not meant to serve any purpose.

Hilsenrath's depiction of the Palestinian Jews' view of themselves and of Holocaust-survivors is historically authentic. Oz Almog has discussed at length the attitudes of the 'new Jews' towards Holocaust survivors and described the 'elitist identity of the Zionist settlers' in the *kibbutzim* who regarded their 'pioneer'-status as a mark of this élitism.⁵⁵ Indeed, the 'new Jews' were allegedly guilty of 'a certain insensitivity [...] about the Holocaust' (p.82) and invented terms of abuse to emphasize the survivors' 'moral and social "inferiority" to the Sabras', including 'human dust' which connoted 'people without spine, without personality, who were blown hither and thither by the wind' (p.86) and *sabonim* or 'soap-bars' because of the Nazis' mythical use of Jewish bodies for making soap (p.87). According to Almog, 'the immigrant was expected to change not only his habits but also the very structure of his personality' (p.91) and was despised for preferring the urban, capitalist life to which he was accustomed in Europe to the

⁵⁵ Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, and London: University of California Press, 2000), p.74.

outdoors, agricultural life of the *kibbutz* (p.87). The 'new Jews' preferred 'the myth of the Jewish partisans' and honourable death (p.84) to tales of victimhood in Europe, and these myths were reinforced after the brave fighting by the *Sabras* in the War of Independence and the Sinai campaign (pp.119-21 and 134), during which the military commanders were seen as the embodiments of resurrected Biblical heroes (p.127).

NF contains several allusions to these phenomena. Mira, Schulz's future wife, shows how insensitive post-War Palestine was towards the victims: she is a Holocaust survivor, a fat 'Freßmaschine' (*NF*, p.344) who - like Kosinski's boy-narrator - cannot speak but is ridiculed by her fellow workers who leave scraps on the floor for her to eat (pp.347-8). Once Schulz has arrived in Palestine, he begins to re-invent himself as a 'New Jew' while retaining traces of his status as a Holocaust-victim. Sometimes Schulz acts like a Holocaust-survivor: for instance, at the end of *NF* he describes himself as '[der] Staub, der wandert' (p.417) and leaves the *kibbutz* in order to find a job as a barber in the nearest big town because he cannot stand the wholesome task of mucking out the cowsheds (pp.283-5). But at other times, and in accordance with his split perpetrator / victim personality, Schulz behaves like a 'New Jew': he boasts of being 'ein Pionier' (p.278), insensitively wonders what kind of soap Max Rosenfeld's family were turned into (p.210), and becomes a member of a terrorist group and the Israeli Army in order to re-invent himself completely in an environment that was uninterested in his new-found victim-status.⁵⁶ Similarly, Schulz - as Itzig Finkelstein - invents an autobiography that excises the real Itzig's victim-status and involves participation in resistance work with the partisans in Poland (pp.174-5) and this goes down very well with the terrorists (p.340). Later, in the War of Independence (which greatly helped in the assimilation of the refugees [Almog, p.90]), Schulz's Švejk-like failure to carry out his orders and

⁵⁶ Even the refugees on the *Exitus* are already uninterested in Schulz's talk of the Holocaust (*NF*, p.238).

aimless driving of his jeep ('of special symbolic importance [...] a (motorized) war horse' [Almog, p.113]) earns him hero-status in the press: "Judas Makkabäus ist auferstanden!" Oder: "Der Gettojude ist endgültig überwunden!" (NF, p.371). The new state is full of images of heroism: Schulz breakfasts in the Café Trumpeldor (p.313 - named after a Zionist hero), stays briefly at Kibbutz Pardess Gideon and invents a hair-growth lotion called the 'Samson V2' (Gideon and Samson were Biblical heroes). Two of Schulz's closest friends are Schmuël Schmulevitch and Wolfgang Richter. Significantly, 'Schmuël' derives from 'Samuel', and 'Richter' is the German title of '(the Book of) Judges' and both the Biblical books of Samuel and Judges concern Jewish heroism - indeed, the Book of Judges actually contains the stories of Gideon and Samson.

But Hilsenrath undermines Schulz's attempts to overcome the victim in himself just as he subverts other consoling fictions - and by implication, he questions the new Israelis' heroic posturing and insensitivity. He has Schulz leave Pardess Gideon; his 'Samson V2' formula is all about losing battles since the V2 rocket was deployed by the Nazis only when they were already certain to lose the War and so was ultimately as futile as trying to reverse the loss of one's hair - which is precisely what led to Samson's blinding; and his newly-born son, who is to be named after 'Judas Makkabäus, der große jüdische Freiheitskämpfer' (p.390), dies immediately after being born and so implicitly denies any 'rebirth' of Jewish heroism. Moreover, unlike Samson, Schulz is no *Nazarite* - a sect devoted to God that were supposed never to cut their hair or touch dead bodies: rather, he is a barber, has committed mass-murder, and explicitly denies his bond with God. It is also significant that during the two orthodox Jewish periods of mourning, the *Shivah* and the *Sheloshim*, people may not shave or cut their hair: Schulz is successful as a barber in newly-founded Israel precisely because the new Israelis are apparently not interested in observing orthodox mourning rituals for the Holocaust victims either.

So although Israel is founded and, to borrow from Levi, some of the drowned are saved, Hilsenrath describes the Jews achieving power and engaging in heroic role-playing but laments their disregard for the predicament of Holocaust victims or survivors. In fact, as I shall argue below, Hilsenrath uses Schulz - who is a characteristically protean *Schelm* - as the embodiment of those destructive forces which, according to *NF*, will never die and may re-appear again and again - even, ironically, among those Jews who were once victims. In other words, with his split personality as a perpetrator and victim, Schulz holds a mirror up to the Jews - who were victims but are now perpetrators - by reverting to the violence he had committed as a Nazi.

Thus, the one major way in which the rebirth and resurrection which Bakhtin associates with Carnival takes place in *NF* is *via* Schulz's new life as Itzig Finkelstein. Although this is a pseudo-resurrection, it still makes sense in the light of Benjamin's Ninth Thesis since Schulz cannot be included in the motionless rubble of History because he embodies the forces which *produce* that rubble. Consequently, he is the one character who cannot be said to suffer passively in the way that Benjamin's thesis implies is the lot of mankind. Indeed, Schulz's metamorphosis suggests that the kind of random violence that was involved in Nazism and was a major, not to say defining feature of life in the KZ's (see Levi, pp.24-6) might appear even among the former victims themselves. And if Nazism is the paradigm of violence and evil (cf. Novick, pp.24 and 255), then it is no surprise that in *NF* Jews are made to resemble Nazis in order to illustrate the potential rebirth of those forces in what might be assumed to be the least likely of contexts. This is not to say that Hilsenrath is invoking the Holocaust to prevent another one taking place since, on Brumlik's argument, the memory of the victims cannot be used even for that. And in any case, the evidence in *NF* - such as the use of intertextual references - suggests that Hilsenrath had little faith that the Holocaust might mark the end of such violence. Nor is he seeking to make lapidary and highly questionable criticisms to the effect that

‘Jews now behave like Nazis’: he is merely illustrating the repetitive and inevitable nature of the violence that is postulated by Benjamin’s thesis.⁵⁷

For a start, Schulz’s new life is referred to several times, and Arnds sees much imagery of rebirth in the fairy-tales he analyses. Thus, he argues that Frau Holle derives from the Norse goddess Hel, ‘a figure associated with death and rebirth’ (p.432); moreover, referring to the Veronja-episode, he analyses the imagery of spring as a sign of Schulz’s resurrection and claims that ‘the Hansel-and-Gretel oven is a symbol of rebirth simultaneously pointing to the destruction in the camps [...]. The oven that destroys human life becomes the perpetrator’s site for his recreation as a victim’ (p.434). But one could add other evidence of Schulz’s rebirth. For example, he tells Frau Holle that he plans to begin ‘Ein neues Leben’ (*NF*, p.112) and buries the gold teeth thinking precisely the same words (p.130). Moreover, the boat that takes Schulz to Palestine is a ship that has been requisitioned from the scrapheap, ‘Ein Schiff aus dem Totenreich’ (p.232). But it is difficult to feel anything other than ambivalent about a ship that helps the ‘rebirth’ both of Jewish refugees and of an escaped war criminal: like the rebirth of the Jewish state, everything associated with Schulz appears sinister and possibly evil because, due to Schulz’s contribution to the Jewish efforts to obtain their own state (which is seen as an ‘Auferstehung’ [p.268]), this new state has the power to repeat the violence of earlier history.

In this historical context, Schulz the Nazi contributes to the Jewish terrorist effort and the Jews are tainted by Nazi attitudes and behaviour to the extent that they have the

⁵⁷ It is worth noting that *Das Märchen vom letzten Gedanken* is equally saturated with imagery adapted from Benjamin’s ninth thesis. Once again, violent forces emerge in the course of history and, as in the case of the Zionists in *NF*, are expressed by anachronistic Nazi-style language in the mouths of the Turks. Hilsenrath thus denies the alleged uniqueness of the Holocaust (Dopheide, p.178), an attitude that is implicit in his rejection of the debates that surround Holocaust representation. Moreover, no critic has noticed that Hilsenrath published *Das Märchen vom letzten Gedanken* in the year in which, according to Novick, ‘Israeli diplomats and important American Jewish activists joined in a coalition that helped defeat a congressional resolution memorializing the Armenian genocide [in the USA]’ (Novick, p.193): it thus served, like *NF*, as a timely attempt to memorialize the victims who, like Holocaust victims in Germany, were forgotten in the face of stronger political forces.

power to produce more rubble of their own. And a second look at some features of *NF* tends to support this idea. For instance, the name of Chaim Finkelstein's barbershop - 'Der Herr von Welt' (p.17) - may have been some kind of English-language joke because it sounds like 'Hair of the World'. And while in German it means 'The Man of the World', a word like 'Herr' arguably recalls Nazi ideas about world-domination. The violent potential of the Jews also explains why the terrorist Schloime Suppengrün and the barber Schmucl Schmulevitch can share their sinister initials with Siegfried von Salzstange. And whilst the German newspaper that depicts 'das Bild eines blonden jüdischen Hünen' (p.213) may at one level be a joke that reverses anti-Semitic stereotypes, at another it may also imply that the Jews now have the power to *behave* as well as *look* like Nazis.⁵⁸ Then again, Max Rosenfeld helps to complete another headline in the newspaper: 'Gott strafe England!' (p.214). This was once a German slogan dating back to World War I, but now the Jews share an enemy with the Nazis because, from Hilsenrath's perspective, Britain opposed the founding of Israel;⁵⁹ when the Zionists send people to (DP-)camps in order to concentrate them in one place, Schulz comments: 'wir haben das ja auch so gemacht, obwohl unsere Ziele [...] entgegengesetzter Natur sind' (p.229); Schulz thinks that Frau Schmulevitch might have voted for Hitler (p.304); when Hanna Lewisohn goes mad and is confined to an asylum, Schulz comments: 'Hanna war während des Krieges drei Jahre lang an eine Bank gefesselt. [...] Und jetzt ist sie in

⁵⁸ It is worth noting that in reality, according to Yaacov Shavit, the 'new Jews' in Palestine did indeed model themselves on the 'idealized portrait of the Greek in European culture [...] which described the ideal man as tall, blond and blue-eyed'; Shavit further describes the ideal as 'erect [...], tanned by the sun, has beautiful eyes [...] close to nature, self-confident, dynamic, courageous, laughing, singing, and dancing; he loves hard work' (Yaacov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew* [London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997], pp.389-90). Cf. Almog, pp.76 and 78-80; and Novick, p.148.

⁵⁹ In his interview with Kraft and Stenberg, Hilsenrath says: 'Eigentlich habe ich [die Engländer] negativ beschrieben. Denn die Engländer wollten den jüdischen Staat verhindern' (Hilsenrath [1995], p.224). In fact, the situation was more complex than he allows since the British were mandated by the UN, against their will, to govern Israel and keep order after the War, and this involved keeping out refugees from Europe. From a strict historical point of view, it is difficult to ascribe opposition or otherwise to the founding of the Jewish state to the British when they had not chosen to become involved in the situation in Palestine and were also subject to pressure from Arab nationalists to prevent the founding of the Jewish state.

einem jüdischen Land ... und wird wieder gefesselt' (pp.322-3); when Sigi Weinrauch mocks Zionism, Schulz accuses him of 'Zersetzung', 'Führerbeleidigung' and 'Verbreitung von Feindpropaganda und Defätismus' (p.331) and he rouses the barber-shop to the Zionist cause by making a rabble-rousing speech in Hitlerian style ('guckte in den Spiegel [...] sah Stirnlocke und Schnurrbart, redete lauter, berauschte mich an meiner eigenen Stimme' [p.334]); when the terrorists summon Schulz from his bed to work for them, they shout: 'Befehl ist Befehl!', to which Schulz replies: 'Das haben die damals auch gesagt!' (p.353); the 'Stoßtruppe' of the terrorists are labelled A, B and C (p.356) in a manner that recalls the murderous Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* A, B, C and D (cf. p.109); and finally, when Frau Schmulevitch tells Schulz: 'Ich bete jede Nacht für den Endsieg!' and Schulz points out that these were 'die Worte des Führers', she corrects herself: 'Ich bete für die Freiheit des jüdischen Volkes! Und für die Auferstehung!' (p.357). So by means of these hints and parallels, Hilsenrath implies that the 'resurrection' of his Jewish characters in a Jewish state also involves the re-emergence of destructive violence.

Dopheide claims that the anti-Americanism of the political Left in the late 1960s later led to anti-Zionism and to the branding of Israel as 'faschistisch' (p.47); Müller points out that the German media began to sympathize with the Palestinians and criticize Israel's military prowess in the 1970s (p.205); and Novick cites evidence to suggest that the Israelis were tentatively described in some quarters in the late 1980s as the 'new Nazis' (pp.162-3). But it would be wrong to think that the potential for violence and the Nazi *residua* to be found among Hilsenrath's Jewish characters imply a simple equation of Nazi crimes with Jewish terrorism. Through Schulz, Hilsenrath anticipates his readers' inclination to do precisely this and once again problematizes matters. For example, having compared the terrorists to Nazis (p.353), Schulz comments: 'Ich weiß: Es ist nicht dasselbe. Die Terroristen sind Kämpfer. Echte Freiheitskämpfer! - Und

damals, da habt ihr doch nur die Wehrlosen ermordet!' - but even this concession turns out to be problematic for although the terrorists shoot and hang armed British soldiers, they are still committing murder whether the (reluctantly mandated) British are armed or not. Similarly, when Schulz meets the terrorists for the first time he says: 'Dort ist nämlich keiner Nichtraucher. Oder gar Vegetarier. Die sind alle normal. Schien mir so. Oder: hatte diesen Eindruck' (p.341). Schulz knows that the reader by now expects the terrorists to look like Nazis (or to look like the non-smoking, vegetarian Adolf Hitler), but preemptively denies this before undermining his own words ('*Schien* mir so'). Of course the Jews are not the same as the Nazis: Schmucl Schmulevitch, for instance, is a harmless old barber and has nothing to do with the SS. But Hilsenrath suggests that even he might sometimes support those rubble-producing forces of violence embodied in Schulz.⁶⁰

Schulz demonstrates three times how he is the embodiment of the destructive forces of History by alluding directly to Benjamin's vision of 'Trümmer'. First, when he describes his killing of Veronja he says: 'Ich [...] warf Veronja zu Boden, ergriff selber die Hacke [...] und *zertrümmerte* den Schädel der Hexe mit drei Schlägen' (p.151). Then, in the episode when he alludes to the two poems by Goethe, he describes his love of hairdressing as follows: 'Gibt es denn etwas Edleres als den menschlichen Schädel? Und macht es nicht Spaß, das Edle zu formen, zu gestalten, zu verschönen...weil man gerade bei dieser und ähnlicher Arbeit das Gefühl hat, es könnte auch Spaß machen, das Edle zu *zertrümmern*?' (p.35; my italics). Finally, when describing his feelings for Mira, the survivor of a mass-shooting during the Holocaust, he says:

Mira verkörpert irgend etwas für mich, was ich zu kennen glaube und doch nicht recht begreife. Wenn ich an sie denke, dann kriege ich Lust, zuzustoßen, zu *zertrümmern*, aufzufressen, mir einzuverleiben [...] da möchte ich alles wieder

⁶⁰ Cf. Stenberg's references to 'the evil inherent in almost every character we meet' and to how 'everyone, given the right conditions, can become the perpetrators of crimes' (Stenberg [1982], p.287).

ausspucken, zusammenflicken, streicheln, versöhnen...aber nicht loslassen, als müßte ich es festhalten, um es wieder zu fressen (p.345; my italics).

Like Bakhtin's immortal Fool or clown who performs 'the usual trick of the clown simulating death and revival' (*RW*, p.354), Schulz embodies the repetitive, inevitable forces of violence in History - given which, we can explain the novel's fantastic ending. Schulz tells us that he is not one to let History keep him down: 'Und ich, Max Schulz, war immer ein Idealist [...] Einer, der sich das Mäntelchen nach dem Wind hängt' (*NF*, p.163) - so it is entirely appropriate that he cheerfully *embraces* the dark winds of History in the novel's final paragraph:

Und ich kann auch den Wind sehen. Den kann ich sehen!
Und es kommt mir vor, als käme der Wind aus dem Wald der 6 Millionen. Der Wind! Und der Wind packt die weißen Gardinen vor meinem Fenster. Und schüttelt sie.
Und allmählich werden sie dunkler. Die Gardinen am Fenster. Werden dunkler und dunkler, haken sich los, werden zu Flügeln, schwarzen Flügeln, fangen zu flattern an, lassen sich tragen vom Wind, vom Wind, der aus dem Walde kam, dem Wald der 6 Millionen. Und die Flügel packen mich, krallen sich fest an meinen ausgestreckten Armen. Und der Wind erhebt sich, trägt meine Flügel, und auch mich. Irgendwohin. Dorthin! (p.423)

The Nazi Max Schulz had been officially declared dead (on p.403), although we know he is not; and in this final section of *NF*, Schulz is only *dreaming* of a lethal heart-attack (see p.420): he 'dies' in order to continue his work elsewhere ('Irgendwohin. Dorthin!'). So Hilsenrath implies that Schulz the violent Fool cannot really die because the violence he represents - of which Nazism has become the extreme, paradigmatic example - will always disappear and return, die and be reborn. Crucially, in the lines before the final paragraph, we read that Schulz feels the fear of his victims before their death (see p.423) - i.e. he makes the all-important act of empathy with his victims which is the basis of authentic mourning. But that moment of empathy is significant, or rather, insignificant, because it makes no difference to the fact that Schulz apparently continues to embody

violence and fly with the Angel of History. Thus, Hilsenrath shows his belief in the importance of mourning the victims but does not pretend that this will solve History's problems. So Schulz floats through time, changing the form in which he appears and hitching a ride on the wind alongside the Angel of History.

In *NF*, then, Hilsenrath makes it clear that he laments the lack of respect shown to Holocaust victims, particularly in the new Israel for reasons discussed above. Accordingly, Hilsenrath wants to restore some kind of dignity to the victims of the Shoah and to confront the disaster that befell them. Consequently, on the one hand, he uses the Fool Schulz as a positive force to frustrate and laugh at those who instrumentalize the victims' deaths by using the Holocaust to support a variety of reductive, theoretical explanations. This approach to the Holocaust represents an end in itself and exemplifies Brumlik's 'zweckfreies Gedenken': after all, Hilsenrath implicitly denies - especially at *NF*'s conclusion - that such mourning of the past will make any difference in real terms to the future. But on the other hand, Schulz's dual role as victim and 'hero' in Israel allows Hilsenrath to point up the predicament of Holocaust survivors among the Palestinian Jews while simultaneously figuring Schulz as the embodiment of ineradicable, Nazi-style violence. But just because mourning makes no positive difference to History and its violence, Hilsenrath does not take the view that mourning should not be undertaken. Rather, mourning is an end in itself. Such a pessimistic view of History means that *NF* tends to contradict a novel like *Hundejahre*. While both novels deploy a Fool-figure and the carnivalesque and believe in the importance of confronting and remaining aware of the dreadful events of the Third Reich, the imagery of *HJ*, in a quiet and subterranean manner, implies a hope for ultimate redemption. In contrast, *NF* understands the power of laughter to subvert authority but *denies* altogether the redemptive, regenerative power which Bakhtin attributed to laughter and the

carnavalesque. Ironically, the carnivalesque trope of rebirth is actually deployed to reinforce the *pessimism* of *NF* because such 'rebirth' and 'regeneration' is only seen in the consistent recrudescence of violence throughout History.

Chapter 6:
The Lessons of the Third Reich: Ecology and Pluralism in
Gert Hofmann's *Veilchenfeld* and *Der Kinoerzähler*

Confrontation with the Nazi past is a central theme in several works by Gert Hofmann.¹ Although critics have extensively analysed his favoured child-focalizer² and his characters' evasion of guilt, I shall consider two of his works, *Veilchenfeld* (1986)³ and *Der Kinoerzähler* (1990),⁴ in the light of Bakhtin's theory of Carnival since this arguably unlocks these texts in ways which the secondary literature has hitherto ignored.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the author of any text dealing with the Third Reich had to consider why he or she was taking the reader once again over such familiar ground. In my view, Hofmann, unlike Hilsenrath, had no scruples about 'instrumentalizing' the Holocaust or Nazism to draw lessons from the past. First, I shall show how *Vf* can be read as a text that uses Holocaust material to draw a subtle analogy between man's destruction of his fellow man during the Holocaust and post-War concerns about man's destruction of the environment. This analogy is particularly evident in the Jew *Veilchenfeld* who arguably signifies Nature - from which mankind has become increasingly alienated - and whose persecution also stands for the suffering of the Jews during the Third Reich. As at least two critics have established extensive connections between the concerns expressed in Bakhtin's *RW* and more modern ideas about ecology,⁵

¹ Apart from *Veilchenfeld* and *Der Kinoerzähler*, see *Die Denunziation* (1979; Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), *Unsere Eroberung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1984), *Unsere Vergeßlichkeit* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987) and *Vor der Regenzeit* (1988; Munich: dtv, 1995).

² See especially Hans-Georg Schede, *Gert Hofmann: Werkmonographie* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999), pp.231-52.

³ Gert Hofmann, *Veilchenfeld* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), hereafter referred to as *Vf*.

⁴ Gert Hofmann, *Der Kinoerzähler* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), hereafter referred to as *DK*.

⁵ See in particular Michael Gardiner's 'Ecology and Carnival: Traces of a "Green" Social Theory in the Writings of M.M. Bakhtin', *Theory and Society*, 22 (1993), pp.765-812, in which he speaks of 'a common sensibility' between Bakhtin and modern views of human-Nature relations (p.785). For a description of how Carnival was meant to remind mankind of its earthy origins and relationship to Nature, see Richard Sheppard, 'Upstairs-Downstairs - Some Reflections on German Literature in Light of Bakhtin's Theory of Carnival', pp.278-315 (pp.278-89).

it is unsurprising that *Vf* has something to say about the diminished powers of the carnivalesque in connection with the destruction of Nature and of Veilchenfeld himself. But although I argue that *Vf* laments environmental destruction, it fails to suggest how the individual might take action to effect change or prevent such destruction. Accordingly, *DK* involved a shift in Hofmann's writing about the Third Reich because *DK* - which has many similarities to *Vf* - foregrounds the carnivalesque elements that were present only as *residua* in the earlier text. The *Kinoerzähler* himself, Karl Hofmann, is a Fool who exploits the films that he narrates to work against the uncritical and fatalistic attitudes that helped to usher in Nazism, encourages pluralism, and thus acts as an anti-authoritarian figure. I shall also show that Gert Hofmann does not naively believe that Karl's activities provide an easy answer to authoritarian attitudes since Hofmann ironizes Karl by exposing his inability to shake off his own latently authoritarian mentality. Nevertheless, Karl does offer the kind of small-scale subversion which might be appropriate in the present, and although the change which his resistance effects is slow, he shows how the carnivalesque might still have some useful purpose today.

Vf and *DK* invite the reader to interpret them side by side since their plots are similar in several respects. Both are set during the *Nazizeit* and both are concerned with eccentric old men, namely the persecuted Jew Veilchenfeld and the narrator's grandfather Karl Hofmann. These characters are increasingly marginalized over time by the townspeople of Limbach;⁶ deteriorate physically; go through a period of silence; and die at the end of the text as a direct result of Nazism. Apart from their connections with Nature and Carnival, both men are philosophers, since Veilchenfeld had worked as a

⁶ 'Limbach' is a real town in Sachsen, but its name recalls 'Limbo', the region of oblivion on the borders of Hell, and thus may point to the townspeople's ability to 'forget' the crimes taking place around them, just as the elephant in the Carnival in *Vf* does (see below). Cf. 'Niflheim', the setting for Gerhard Ludwig's *Tausendjahrfeier* (see Chapter 2).

philosophy professor at Leipzig while Karl plans to compile his thoughts and 'eine Philosophie daraus machen' (*DK*, p.26). Indeed, Karl is described as looking like a 'Gelehrte[r]' with "was Semitisches" about him (*DK*, p.223) - which could equally well be a description of Veilchenfeld. Additionally, both men are connected with the media, Karl through his films and Veilchenfeld through his books and paintings. Finally, both texts involve Carnival-style events towards the end of the story. When read alongside each other, the straightforward plot of the short story *Vf*, which describes Veilchenfeld's persecution and death, anticipates some of the concerns of the longer novel *DK*.

Veilchenfeld as a Signifier of Nature

To begin with, Veilchenfeld is a character who signifies Nature. And since the growing popularity of Bakhtin's conception of Carnival can be linked with post-1960s concerns about ecology, Veilchenfeld also possesses some qualities of the Fool, even if these are veiled. Thus, Veilchenfeld's increasing isolation and persecution can be understood as an indictment of the way in which Western civilization in particular has grown increasingly hostile towards Nature.⁷ Or in other words, *Vf* plays out a speeded-up version of the process described by Carolyn Merchant whereby capitalism and the expansion of industry have led to the 'Death of Nature', the destruction of our environment which mankind in the West has treated as a passive and inert source of riches.⁸ Accordingly, at least two critics have sensed that *Vf* is more than an indictment of the persecution of the Jews. Like many other critics, Gehrke sees that the word 'Jude' never occurs in the text, but he also points out that *none* of the words relevant to the

⁷ As if to reflect the way some people might conceptualize the Holocaust in ecological terms, Bauman explains how bureaucracy helped to carry out the Holocaust by evoking three times the metaphor of society as 'a garden to be designed and kept in shape by force' while undesirables are weeded out (Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989], p.18; cf. pp.91-2 and 113).

⁸ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990).

Nazizeit, such as ‘Nazi’, ‘SS’ or ‘SA’ occur⁹ and so concludes: ‘Tatsächlich geht es Hofmann um mehr als gleichnishaft die Geschichte der Judenvernichtung zu erzählen. Er legt seine Erzählung in einer Art und Weise an, die ihr eine zeitlose Gültigkeit verleiht’ (Gehrke, p.99). But he then claims that *Vf* is not so much about anti-Semitism as ‘Fremdenhaß’ (p.100) and so overlooks the ecological concerns that I shall identify. Schlant comes closer to the truth, but still fails to link Veilchenfeld with Nature: ‘By not using the word “Jew”, Hofmann [...] forces the reader to pay attention to the victim’s humanity rather than his ethnicity’.¹⁰ So the text deals with the Holocaust and simultaneously points to wider concerns - environmental destruction, for example - that are not necessarily restricted to the Third Reich.

There is considerable evidence to justify calling Veilchenfeld a signifier of Nature. He walks obsessively round his own ‘Gartenstück’ (*Vf*, p.8), tends to the vegetables (p.45), and walks in circles (p.50) that may point to the round of life, death and rebirth signified by Carnival. On a visit to the narrator’s house, he gazes out of the window and, despite his own precarious situation, appears to lament the absence of beans and tomatoes in the garden (pp.25-6). Moreover, given that the word ‘Buch’ derives, via the word ‘Buchstabe’, from the German for a beech tree, ‘Buche’,¹¹ it may be significant that Veilchenfeld claims that he feels safer ‘unter [s]einen Büchern’ (p.8) than amongst his compatriots. He is also associated with the animal kingdom on at least three occasions: his hands are compared to ‘zwei abgekämpfte Tiere’ (p.124); he himself is compared to ‘ein altes Kaninchen’ (p.179); and he implicitly compares *himself* to ‘Ungeziefer’ (p.155) when he has the narrator buy the pesticide with which he will kill himself. Moreover, the

⁹ Ralph Gehrke, “‘Es ist nicht wahr, daß die Geschichte nichts lehren könnte, ihr fehlen bloß die Schüler...’”. *Veilchenfeld: Gert Hofmanns Lehrstück über Auschwitz und sein Bezug zur Gegenwart*, *Der Deutschunterricht*, 44 (1992), pp.92-103 (p.100).

¹⁰ Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence*, p.184.

¹¹ ‘Buchstaben’ were originally beech-wood sticks on which runes were carved. See M.O’C. Walshe, *A Concise German Etymological Dictionary* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p.31.

intertextual references to the *Märchen* 'Hänsel und Gretel' which so many critics register may also be relevant here.¹² The narrator's name is 'Hans' and because his sister's is 'Margarete', she is sometimes called 'Gretel' for short. Veilchenfeld corresponds to the witch in the *Märchen* because, like her, he lives in a house that inspires curiosity in the children and which they visit. Just as Jews are supposed to have big noses (see Lansky's anti-Semitic comments on p.131), witches are also conventionally depicted with large noses. But, most importantly, one reason why witches were persecuted in the past was their allegedly magical ability to use the disorderly powers of Nature for their own purposes,¹³ and the negative depiction of the witch in the *Märchen* reflects this tendency to demonize them. Because Veilchenfeld, as a Jew in Nazi Germany, suffers the same kind of unfair demonization and marginalization, he is yet again associated with Nature by being forced to take on the witch's role.

Thus, because Veilchenfeld is most comfortable in the garden, is compared several times with an animal, and figured as a fairy-tale witch, a *prima facie* connection between him and Nature is clear. But the depth of Veilchenfeld's closeness to Nature is most obvious in his art and philosophical pronouncements. On the first count, he shows the young narrator his paintings of 'Landschaften, Bäume, Hügel' (p.48) that are the objective correlatives of his own feelings. Consequently, one of his last paintings mirrors the danger posed to him by the Nazis and shows a mutilated man 'in einer wüsten Landschaft' (p.49): the image implies that Nazism destroys both people and their habitats. Veilchenfeld's affinity with Nature also permeates in his use of the word 'natürlich' (pp.29 [twice], 46, 49 [twice], 74 and 108). But most important of all is his philosophy (dismissed by Hinck who claims that it 'erschöpft sich in den Floskeln einer

¹² No critic makes the obvious point that the central relevance of this reference is to draw a parallel between the witch's fate (that of being pushed into an oven) and the fate Veilchenfeld *would have suffered* as a Jew had he not killed himself (i.e. cremation in the furnaces of a concentration camp).

¹³ See the chapter 'Nature as Disorder: Women and Witches' in Merchant, pp.127-48.

allgemeinen Nichtigkeitslehre').¹⁴ Veilchenfeld believes that 'die Menschheitsgeschichte [...] mit Landschaften ja immer eng verbunden ist' (p.29), and his philosophy has a close affinity with Bakhtin's ideas on Carnival. For instance, he tells the narrator's family that:

Und der Mut, sich selbst, sein Volk, seine Kultur und die verschiedenen Landschaften, in die das alles hineingewickelt ist, als rasch vergehend, zufällig und belanglos anzusehen, ist den wenigsten gegeben. Besonders an solchen weitigen und weitläufigen Tagen, wo sich alles verewigen will und sich vor einem auftut, als ob es wirklich wäre (p.30).

[...] Jedenfalls hatte ich den Eindruck, daß es sich in dieser Weltgegend nicht nur sterben, sondern auch leben ließe, sagt er (p.31).

Veilchenfeld is under no illusions about his own transitoriness and mortality: 'und wenn ich hundert Jahre alt werden sollte, was ich aber für unwahrscheinlich halte' (p.22). Similarly, Bakhtin interpreted Carnival rituals as 'freed from the oppression of such gloomy categories as "eternal", "immovable", "absolute", "unchangeable" and instead exposed to the gay and freely laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal'.¹⁵ Veilchenfeld is profoundly aware of his place in Creation: he accepts that nothing is eternal, least of all himself, even when 'sich alles verewigen will', and that Nature always renews itself: 'es [ließe] sich in dieser Weltgegend nicht nur sterben, sondern auch leben'. Or, in other words, he is one of those who 'know themselves to be part of the endless process of copulation, birth and death which connects human life with Creation as a whole' (Sheppard [1990], p.279). Indeed, this circle of Creation is reflected in the text's structure: as in Heinrich Böll's account of his own flowery heroine, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (1976), we learn of a death at the start and then what led to that death. In *Vf*, Veilchenfeld is dead at the start,¹⁶ lives, then dies 'again' at the end.

¹⁴ Walter Hinck, 'Der Tod des "Großen Ohrs"', in: Hans Christian Kosler (ed.), *Schauplatz Menschenkopf: Der Erzähler Gert Hofmann* (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1997), pp.169-73 (p.172); first published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (25 March 1986), n.p.

¹⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.83.

¹⁶ The first words of *Vf* are: 'Unser Philosoph ist plötzlich gestorben' (p.7).

Ecological Destruction and the Dysfunctional Carnival: Veilchenfeld's Death

Given that Veilchenfeld signifies Nature, the escalating persecution which he suffers goes hand in hand with an economic and industrial upsurge in Limbach. That is to say, *Vf* implicitly establishes a link between the destruction of the environment and the anti-Semitic destruction of Veilchenfeld himself. Similarly, the people of Limbach put a clear distance between themselves and Nature, while simultaneously marginalizing Veilchenfeld. Very early in the text, for instance, a brickworks and workers' tenements are built right in front of the narrator's house which causes the loss of the children's sand-pit, two trees and the rabbit-hutch. The narrator's father complains that they cannot now see storms approaching (a hint at the political trouble to come) and that the washing is now dirtied by the polluted air (*Vf*, pp.10-11). When the narrator's father drives Veilchenfeld to the family's house we read: 'Wir fahren ihn [...] zum Steinbruch, also zu uns nach Haus' (p.18). But quarries and other kinds of mining were considered a violation of Mother Earth until a mechanistic view of inert Nature was developed in the modern era which justified such exploitation (Merchant, pp.29-41). When describing the pleasant natural location of Limbach, Veilchenfeld qualifies his praise of the landscape by referring to evidence of industrial exploitation: 'Natürlich muß man ihren Horizont erst einmal von den verschiedenen Schornsteinen, die sich bei so einem Überblick immer vordrängen, reinigen' (p.29) and is then briefly unable to speak. When he can speak again, he points to the tightening control exerted on him by the town by describing his vision of a 'Gefängnis' (p.31) at the very heart of Nature: correspondingly, Veilchenfeld himself ultimately cannot escape from the prison of Limbach since his passport is destroyed. The narrator's mother distances herself from polluted Nature by preventing her children from playing in the 'entsetzlichen Schlamm' and the 'stinkende Unkraut'

(p.63), while Laube justifies an assault on Veilchenfeld by drawing a sharp distinction between mankind and the animal kingdom and ascribing thuggish violence to ‘das Tier, das in uns allen schläft’ (p.58). The narrator’s parents complain for a second time about the ‘Lärm, Schmutz und Schatten’ (p.88) of the brickworks as well as the polluted air (p.89), and it is no surprise that Lansky, an anti-Semite, chops down trees for a living (p.133). Most strikingly of all, the narrator’s geography lesson consists of lingering with pride on the ecological disaster that appears to have befallen Limbach: there has been extensive and pointless mining (see the reference to ‘unsere[] Heimat, in der seit Jahrhunderten nach Kohle und Erzen gegraben wurde [...] nur nie etwas gefunden’ [pp.143-4]); people breathe ‘von der nahen Braunkohlenindustrie vernebelte[] Luft’ (p.144); the town’s stream goes into the town’s factories and comes out ‘auf der anderen Seite als Abwasser’ which ‘die ganze Gegend verstäktert’ (p.145); and the narrator’s father points to the deforestation of Limbach, saying: ‘dort, wo der Wald beginnt oder beginnen würde, wenn man ihn nicht geschlagen hätte’ (p.145). Indeed, the narrator’s father, who is also Veilchenfeld’s doctor, appears to gain some insight into the direct connection between environmental pollution and Veilchenfeld’s well-being:

Von Nichtsein ist keine Rede [...] Weiß aber, warum Herr Veilchenfeld so denkt [...] In einer sonst geliebten, von Hügeln sanft durchzogenen und von Wäldern (Mischwald) bestandenen, nach und nach von innen heraus, aber ekelhaft und verhaßt und unbewohnbar gewordenen Landschaft leben und denken zu müssen, macht erst krank, bringt dann um, sagt der Vater (p.114).

Furthermore, the people of Limbach emphasize their difference from Nature through their names. The policeman who tears up Veilchenfeld’s passport is called ‘Obermüller’ (p.69) and Veilchenfeld’s neighbour, who does little to help him, is called ‘Urmüller’ (p.123). Like the grandson of the ‘Altfleischer’ (p.59), who beats up Veilchenfeld, and the ‘Schlachthof’ (p.144) (which the narrator mentions as one of the three most important buildings in Limbach), these names point to processes in which Nature, in the form of

crops or animals, is crushed or butchered for human consumption. Veilchenfeld's landlady is called 'Frau Belling' (p.166) and lives in verdant 'Grüna', and her name, by way of an English-language pun, recalls the 'bells' worn by Fools - but she is safely locked away in a mental asylum 'die sie auch nicht mehr verlassen wird' (p.166).¹⁷ The ice-cream seller, who ought to be a figure linked with carnivalesque fun, is called 'Mausifalli' (p.72), a name which recalls the German for 'mouse-trap' ('Mausefalle'). Moreover, the man who forbids Veilchenfeld to enter what might be seen as his natural habitat, the local park, is called 'Herr Geier' (p.93) (= 'Mr. Vulture'), whose name points to the bird that circles animals on the point of death before feeding off their carcasses. Indeed, the park in Limbach is a place where traditionally serene swans 'beißen gerne zu' (ibid.). The two women who push thoughts of Nazi atrocities out of their mind in a scene which exposes German moral amnesia are called 'Frau Übeleis', a name which implies that something natural like ice has become threatening or 'evil' (= 'übel'), and 'Frau Schellenbaum' (pp.53-4), whose name can be read two ways. First, it recalls the word 'Handschellen' (handcuffs) and thus points to the authoritarian control of Nature in the form of a tree ('Baum'). Second, a 'Schellenbaum' is a kind of portable xylophone on a pole which is always carried at the front of a German *military* band and simultaneously functions as a regimental standard. In other words 'Schellenbaum' signifies a man-made construction for aggressive, military purposes that is not a *natural* 'Baum' at all.¹⁸ And the 'Schellen', which one would normally find as 'bells' on a Fool, have been assimilated by the powers of authority. Finally, there are 'Herr[] und Frau Optiker Laube' (pp.55ff),

¹⁷ Readers should arguably be sensitive to the English connotations of Hofmann's language since Hofmann must have spoken English fluently, having worked in the 1970s at the universities of Bristol and Edinburgh as a *Lektor*.

¹⁸ Interestingly, the women's names are different to the men's in that the men have names that represent the forces that *act* on Nature ('Müller'), whereas the women have names that use natural nouns which then have an element *added* to them (so 'Eis' becomes 'Übeleis', 'Baum' becomes 'Schellenbaum') that is either negative or reifies it. This might reflect the damage *done to* Nature, which is usually figured as *female* (Merchant, pp.1-41).

who are distinguished by their short-sighted prejudice against Veilchenfeld. Despite the verdant nature of their surname ('Laub' = 'leaves'), it contains the element 'lau-' that recalls the verb 'lauern' (= 'to lurk') and so points to Nature's supposed threat to man.¹⁹ 'Laube' means 'bower': i.e. when '-e' is added to the word for 'leaves', flourishing Nature is tamed for cosy, domestic purposes. All these names, then, point to the various ways in which mankind destroys, contains, reifies or demonizes Nature and thus suggest the wider implications of the persecution of the Nature-signifier Veilchenfeld. Naturally, Veilchenfeld's own name roots him in Nature (= 'field of violets').²⁰ But the colour purple implied by violets is the canonical colour of Lent and Passiontide, a time of sobriety and fasting that follows on from and is diametrically opposed to Carnival, the festival that puts mankind in touch with Nature. So the conflict between the Lenten and natural values that is contained within Veilchenfeld's name parallels the struggle between the people of Limbach and Nature that, it is implied, lead to Veilchenfeld's death.

But Hofmann makes his point about the destruction of Nature in another way. Given that Veilchenfeld represents Nature and Bakhtin's theory of Carnival is connected with modern, ecological concerns, then it is a clear sign of Limbach's disturbed relationship with Nature that *Vf* should involve a dysfunctional Carnival and carnivalesque by-products which are deployed *against* Veilchenfeld, the very man who ought to derive his powers from those phenomena because they are associated with Nature.

For example, *Vf* displays what might be seen as an inordinate number of people who have lost body parts in some way. Or in other words, there is a significant preponderance

¹⁹ For a poem that exploits the same ambivalence of the element 'lau-', see Ernst Stadler's 'Mittag' (1904) in: Stadler, *Dichtungen, Schriften, Briefe*, edited by Klaus Hurlbusch and Karl Ludwig Schneider (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983), p.77.

²⁰ That the persecution of the Jews is to be seen in the wider context of the death of Nature is supported by the mention of another Jew, 'Herr Lilienthal' (p.146) who flees Limbach and whose name (= 'valley of lilies'), like Veilchenfeld's, signifies Nature.

of what could be seen as the typical Carnival phenomenon of dismemberment (*RW*, p.319). The narrator's father has a false leg (*Vf*, p.12) and Herr Lohmann's wife has a glass eye (p.88). Herr Magirius, one of Veilchenfeld's associates, has his legs chopped off by a train (p.12). Lansky, the anti-Semitic lumberjack, risks losing his leg after hitting himself accidentally with an axe (p.133). A young thug threatens to cut off Veilchenfeld's ear (p.129), the narrator dreams that someone has hacked off Veilchenfeld's arm (p.115), and Veilchenfeld himself paints a picture of 'einem verstümmelten Mann' (p.49). But none of this dismemberment is part of the cyclical process leading to regeneration envisaged by Bakhtin. After all, the narrator's father has lost his leg as a result of World War I, for many early twentieth-century writers the paradigm example of modernity's destructive effect on the human person.²¹ Magirius appears to kill himself (or was he killed?) in grief at Veilchenfeld's death. The reason for the narrator's dream is his preoccupation with the persecution of Veilchenfeld, and Veilchenfeld paints a mutilated man out of fear for his own safety.

Then again, one episode when local Nazis harass Veilchenfeld can be read as a kind of violent circus-performance. The scene in question occurs when Veilchenfeld is dragged into a pub²² and attacked, an episode which encapsulates how the Nazis perverted and travestied Carnival for their own negative ends. The pub ought to be a place of carnivalesque partying and festive merriment, but here it is the site of anti-Semitic persecution. Several thugs attack Veilchenfeld in the street and '[haben ihm] die ganze Turnvater-Jahn-Gasse hinunter *in den Hintern getreten*' (p.59).²³ Here, the

²¹ See, for example, Brigid Doherty, "'See? We are *all* neuraesthenics" or The Trauma of Dada Montage', *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (1997/98), pp.82-132, in which she discusses the Dadaists' use of images of dismemberment to criticize the effects of modernity as exemplified by World War I.

²² The pub is called the 'Deutscher Peter' (p.59): the name recalls 'Deutscher Michel', the German equivalent of Uncle Sam or John Bull (but with a strong element of the bigoted peasant). The name suits the small-town aggressive nationalism of the Nazi thugs who attack Veilchenfeld.

²³ Friedrich Ludwig 'Turnvater' Jahn was the founder of modern mass gymnastics as a way of promoting health and his ideas were seized on by the Nazis for their own ends. Moreover, he himself was a well-known exponent of nationalism in the nineteenth century.

overlap with Carnival lies in the way clowns in slapstick circus-acts often kick each other in the backside to amuse the audience. Appropriately, there *is* an audience: the people of Limbach hear the fracas but '[haben] nur zugeschaut' (p.59) and do not intervene. Moreover, the episode - despite the persecution which it describes - involves at least three examples of vocabulary connected with fun and mirth: on reaching the pub, Veilchenfeld is 'mit Heiterkeit empfangen' (p.60); the thugs ask Veilchenfeld 'ob es ihm nicht paßt, wenn sie ein bißchen fröhlich sind' (p.63); and finally Veilchenfeld tries to restrain the Nazis by saying: 'Sie hatten Ihren Spaß mit mir' (p.62). In a manner which recalls lion-taming in a circus, he is 'wie ein gefangenes Tier traktiert' (p.60) on his arrival in a room with 'Sägemehl' (p.61) on the floor. He is splashed with beer, another instance of quasi-slapstick, before one of the thugs dances with him, kisses him like a woman - which recalls the gender-swapping of Carnival - and forces him to drink beer and sing a song (p.61). When Veilchenfeld appeals in vain to the sense of common humanity that Carnival, in Bakhtin's view, is meant to promote by asking: 'bin ich denn nicht auch ein Mensch?' (p.63),²⁴ the thugs respond by shaving his head, leaving him looking like a bald clown (p.65). Finally, as he walks home, Frau Pietsch sees him crying and tells him to 'einfach [...] weglächeln' (p.65): the combination of simultaneously crying and smiling recalls the smiley-teary make-up of the clown. Veilchenfeld is made into a clown for the entertainment of his persecutors, but the result is not regeneration but pain and humiliation.

Similarly, *Vf* includes a *Fest* in Limbach which involves a Carnival parade, and this - like most of the historical German Carnivals during the Third Reich and many of the Carnivals in the prose fiction that I analysed in Chapter 2 - has been assimilated by the Nazis. Once again, the dysfunctionality of the Carnival and its destructive effects

²⁴ Here, Veilchenfeld is echoing Shylock, another victim of anti-Semitism, in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (III/1).

arguably reflect Limbach's warped relationship with Nature. To begin with, the event has a clear nationalist thrust: 'Es ist ein Heimatfest, mit dem wir die Gründung unserer Stadt feiern, die schon weit zurückliegt, wie weit, weiß keiner' (pp.150-1). But it turns out that the date of the town's foundation has been arbitrarily chosen so that the event is presumably an attempt by the ruling Nazis to foster local and national pride. At first, it seems to enter into the spirit of Carnival since there are free balloons and pancakes, fireworks, flowers, drinking, dancing and a parade in which the people are divided up into different trade-groups called 'Familien' (p.151), a word which seems to discourage alienation from one's fellow citizen. But the *Fest* is 'miserabel organisiert' (p.152) and demonstrates the dysfunctionality of the small-town nationalist version of Carnival. As the pancakes are thrown to the crowd, the greedy masses almost trample a girl to death (p.150); three of the *Familien* are 'die Krieger [...] die Holzfäller und die Köhler' (p.151), trades which once again point to man's violence towards Nature; the narrator has to dress up in a costume which he hates but is not permitted to discard his silly hat (or 'uncrown' himself, as Bakhtin might have put it) because 'das ist verboten' (p.152) - so even here, authoritarian powers hold sway. Moreover, despite the fact that during Carnival proper, established hierarchies are overturned (*RW*, p.14), in Limbach, the sweets are always thrown to the higher-ranking 'Fürstenfamilie' (*Vf*, p.153). Then again, the elephant lent to the parade by the local circus is 'schon ganz tatterig und verschimmelt [...] und [paßte] gar nicht in den Zug' (p.157).²⁵ The narrator's sister has a wretched time and starts to cry (pp.157-8). As Schlant sees, the fireworks are described 'in a language that anticipates the disaster of war' (p.187) and finally, Veilchenfeld's house stands out for its *lack* of festive decoration (*Vf*, p.153) - not surprisingly since the Carnival takes place on the very day when he commits suicide. Thus, the *Fest*, which

²⁵ The mouldering elephant, a symbol of memory in both Britain and Germany, may point to the Germans' patchy memories of their crimes after the War.

contrasts with Bakhtin's anti-authoritarian, regenerative view of Carnival, ends up by recalling the Carnivals of the Middle Ages which, according to Stallybrass and White (see Chapter 1), involved anti-Semitic persecution.

By establishing Veilchenfeld as a signifier of Nature, connecting his persecution with the simultaneous destruction of the environment of Limbach and the Nazi assimilation of the carnivalesque, Hofmann implies that there is a connection between the kind of attitudes that led to the Holocaust and Western assumptions about the rational exploitation of Nature. By doing this, Hofmann implicitly justifies re-working Holocaust material: he is drawing a lesson from the past that is relevant to the present. But at the same time, his use of the carnivalesque and his attitude to environmental destruction in *Vf* are pessimistic: Carnival here offers no chance of rebirth after death and the text does not indicate ways in which environmental disaster can be halted.

From Passive Nature to Active Fool: The Shift from Veilchenfeld to Der Kinoerzähler

Although *DK* has many features in common with *Vf*, in my view its plot involves two important shifts. On the one hand, *Vf* anticipates the Fool-role of *DK* in that Veilchenfeld possesses some traits of the carnivalesque Fool which Hofmann fully develops in the character of Karl. On the other hand, traces of Veilchenfeld's affinity with Nature can be found in Karl's activities, but these are muted to the extent that Karl explicitly distances himself from Nature. One reason why Karl takes this stance is because his actions do not involve him passively suffering persecution in the way that Nature and Veilchenfeld do in *Vf*. Rather, Karl's role as a film-narrator involves making it clear to his audience that one's understanding of a film is subjective and that no film-plot can be pinned down to a single interpretation or summary: accordingly, his activities indicate a way of actively developing anti-authoritarian, pluralist attitudes. But the

second shift concerns *DK*'s ambivalence. Because the narrator of *DK* understands his grandfather's implicit view that no narrative can be limited to a single meaning, he constructs the narrative of Karl's life by including all his faults and contradictions. On this reading, Karl's contradictory personality explains why, for all his anti-authoritarian activities, he possesses some of the very authoritarian tendencies that he is trying to eradicate. Such tendencies and contradictions explain his problematic attitude to Nature, ironize him as an ambivalent resistance-figure, and make *DK* a much more complex text than *Vf*.

Vf anticipates the more overt carnivalesque mood of *DK* in that Veilchenfeld is endowed with some aspects of the Fool. For instance, he walks along the street, 'wie auf einem Seil' (*Vf*, p.9), i.e. like a circus tightrope-walker, and advocates the fun ethic in learning ('Lernen [...] muß Spaß machen' [p.48]). Like Karl (see below), he carries a bamboo stick (p.30) and wears a striking hat (pp.9 and 18) and a 'Flauschmantel' (p.18) that is not only too big - i.e. baggy, like a clown's clothes - but is utterly inappropriate for the time of year. His speech defect leads him to reverse letters in his words (e.g. 'er verhaspelt (er sagt: *verhapselt*) sich' [p.23]), and reversal and inversion are typical of the topsy-turvy world of Carnival. He lives in 'Heidenstraße' (p.7), a name which simultaneously points to Veilchenfeld's roots in Nature ('die Heide' = 'heath') and his roots in the heathen origins of Carnival ('der Heide' = 'heathen'). Finally, Veilchenfeld occupies a similar position psychologically to that of the Fool: Jung argued that the Trickster or *Schelm* is the embodiment of the collective shadow (the disorganized and uncivilized forces that emerge from the unconscious),²⁶ and Jungian theorists have seen the Jews as the Germans' collective shadow during the *Nazizeit*.²⁷ So Jews like

²⁶ See C.G. Jung, 'Zur Psychologie der Trickster-Figur', p.281.

²⁷ Hyde and McGuinness argue that 'The mass psychosis of Hitler's Nazi Germany and its genocidal atrocities occurred because the German Ego became inflated through its identification with the "pure Aryan race" and projected its Collective Shadow onto the Jews' (Maggie Hyde and Michael McGuinness, *Introducing Jung* [Duxford: Icon Books, 1999], p.88).

Veilchenfeld had negative, repressed values projected onto them just as, according to Jung's argument, the Trickster-archetype does.

Conversely, although Karl's affinities with Nature are not as prominent as Veilchenfeld's, they do exist and they reinforce the idea that there is a connection between the Fool and Nature.²⁸ Karl enjoys taking walks to the 'Hoher Hain', a local natural beauty spot whose religious implications recall a time when religion in the West had more to do with Nature. One of his philosophical pronouncements recalls Veilchenfeld's opinions: 'Wir sind mit der Erde verbunden' (*DK*, p.73), and as if to recall the primitive origins of the Trickster, he claims that the *Kinoerzähler* came from the 'äffischen Urgründen der Kunst' (p.7). Karl has an uncanny ability to find the best wild mushrooms (p.84) and writes 'drei Gedichte über die Bodenerhebung bei Mittweida' (p.116). The apple-trees are 'verblüht' at the same time as Karl loses weight (p.107) and thus form the objective correlative of his physical state, just as Veilchenfeld's barren landscapes reflected *his* increasing weakness. Karl likes the sound of the word 'Erdgeschoß' (p.209) - perhaps because of its connotations of wombs and the earth - and the word 'natürlich' crops up in his speech even more frequently than it did in Veilchenfeld's.²⁹ Finally, like Veilchenfeld, Karl accepts his own mortality (pp.123 and 126) and claims that life goes on after death.³⁰ Thus, while *Vf* anticipates the prominent

²⁸ Gert Hofmann's real grandfather was certainly associated in his mind with Nature since he once described him as 'ein unermüdlicher Waldgänger und Pilzesucher' (Gert Hofmann, [untitled speech], *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Darmstadt. Jahrbuch 1987* [Frankfurt/Main: Luchterhand, 1988], pp.155-6 (p.155)).

²⁹ See pp.26, 30, 34, 67, 99, 105, 124, 125, 149, 155, 191, 207, 210, 225, 232, 247, 248, 254, 270 and 276.

³⁰ Cf. Karl's assertion that 'das Leben [ist] unendlich. Und jetzt ist es noch unendlicher' (p.108) and his comment that 'Was meine Person betrifft, glaube ich an kein Ende. Es geht immer weiter' (p.184). See also Gert Hofmann's use of *DK*'s structure to reverse Karl's death: Chapter 13 begins immediately after we learn of Karl's death and consists of a single page on which the narrator describes Karl's entry in the baptism records of the local church (p.300). In other words, the narrator 'undoes' Karl's death by immediately referring in a very obvious way to his birth.

Fool-role played by Karl in *DK*, *DK* looks back to the importance of Nature in *Vf* - but the emphases have changed chiastically between the writing of the two texts.³¹

Yet another link between the two texts concerns *DK*'s depiction of man's hostility towards Nature and Nature's decline. For instance, Theilhaber, the Jewish cinema-owner, is a man who blocks Karl's attempts to use the cinema to resist uncritical attitudes: by encouraging the attitudes that allowed the rise of Nazism, he effectively 'commits suicide' like Veilchenfeld. As a rational, Lenten capitalist who opposes the carnivalesque Karl, Theilhaber protects himself from Nature's powers both when she rains on him ('Er hielt sich [...] eine Zeitung über den Geschäftshut. Da war er dann doppelt geschützt' [p.61]) and when she shines on him (using fat from a dead animal: 'Wegen der gefährlichen Sonnenstrahlen hatte er sein Gesicht mit Rinderfett eingeschmiert' [p.87]). The Nazi Götze, who once worked in a 'Kunstdarmfabrik' (p.228) (i.e. where imitations of natural products are made), sees Nature as dangerous: 'Er macht sich aus Pilzen nichts, er hielt alle für giftig' (p.247), and this despite Karl's obvious enthusiasm for mushrooms. Even the young narrator appears hostile to his environment and wants to throw stones at sparrows but is stopped by Karl (p.87). Karl discusses some films in which Nature is depicted as forbidding and dangerous, such as *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* (1929/1935; pp.264-5) in which Dr. Krafft and his beloved die on a mountainside, or *Das blaue Licht* (1932; pp.50-1), in which he claims (wrongly) that all the characters die in an earthquake. Given these examples of aggression towards and fear of Nature, it is unsurprising that when Karl looks from a window we read: 'Da ging der Blick über die Bäume. Von hier, sagt er, schaut man der Natur direkt in ihr kränkelndes Herz' (p.170). And by the end, the 'Hoher Hain' is

³¹ *DK* also recalls *Vf*'s allusions to the persecution of witches when the narrator reads a book while Karl seduces Fräulein Fritsche and sees a picture of a witch being 'geschlachtet' and dismembered (p.152). This is no echo of ancient Bacchic ritual dismemberment, but the latter-day marginalization and destruction of witches.

suffering from deforestation and has, in any case, become a threatening place full of runaway POWs (p.290). So as in *Vf*, *DK* presents Nature as threatening and dying.

But despite all the above evidence, it is stated early on in *DK* that Karl 'hatte mit der Natur nichts im Sinn' (p.24). How can this be true of a Fool-figure, when there is such a clear connection between the carnivalesque and Nature? There are arguably at least two reasons for this strange feature. First, as I explain below, Karl is a Fool-figure who seeks to develop critical attitudes and opinions - in other words, change the way people think - and thus promotes *active* resistance. But in Karl's view, Nature *lacks* critical faculties: 'Wir gehen so gerne in die Natur, weil sie uns ihre Meinung über uns nicht sagen kann!' (p.26).³² Nature's silence and passivity accords with the view that has developed since the Reformation and Renaissance that Nature is passive and inert and exists to be used and abused by mankind (Merchant, *passim*). Conversely, Karl's activities are much more active because they offer subtle means of resisting domination and persecution. So, although the textual evidence provides lingering *residua* which connect the Fool Karl with the Nature from which he is meant to derive his power, he distances himself from Nature because he does not wish to be a similarly passive victim of exploitation.

But a second possible reason for Karl's lack of affinity with Nature has to do with Gert Hofmann's careful ironization of Karl's character. Although at one level Karl embodies positive, active resistance, at another he suffers from many of the authoritarian flaws that he is trying to correct. At the very end of *DK*, the narrator implies not only that he ought to record his memories of his grandfather (because, presumably, Karl's life embodied something valuable) but also that he has learnt the lesson that no narrative can

³² The germ of this notion of the importance of opinion and critical attitudes can be found in *Veilchenfeld*. Veilchenfeld tries to teach the young narrator to be critical and reflective: 'Ich sagte ihm, welche [Bilder] mir gefielen und welche nicht, konnte aber nicht sagen warum. Ja, sagte er, das Begründen müssen wir noch lernen' (*Vf*, pp.48-9). But Veilchenfeld gives him only two lessons with the result that his influence is limited, so once again, *DK* involves a shift in emphasis as Karl tries to take further what is only hinted at in *Vf*.

be pinned down to one meaning, an insight which sheds light on the structure of *DK* itself. Thus, the narrator produces a biography of his grandfather which includes all of Karl's flaws and contradictions:

Man müßte das ganze Material über den Großvater und die Großmutter und die Mutter und die vielen anderen toten Leute einmal zusammentragen und auf einem Tisch ausbreiten und, das sagt mir mein Ordnungssinn, in eine bestimmte Form bringen, damit es ein bißchen Bestand hat. Man kann es den Leuten ja nicht ungeformt vor die Füße schütten! (p.302)

But he then describes how he is constantly distracted from completing his self-imposed task so that the reader has to conclude that the novel is indeed, despite the narrator's best efforts, 'ungeformt'. Such inability to put the facts in order suggests that the narrator has learnt Karl's lesson that one should leave any narrative open to ambiguity and analysis and not impose a fixed interpretation on it. Furthermore, such an approach to narrating *DK* means including Karl's flaws, no matter how contradictory Karl's character will then appear. In such a context, Karl's occasional, contradictory *lack* of respect for Nature makes perfect sense inasmuch as lack of respect for Nature is typical of the rationalist, authoritarian mind-set which *Vf* had implicitly criticized. But it is also a sign of how Karl, for all his attempts to subvert authority, cannot escape the authoritarian mentality that is typical of the inhabitants of Limbach. So another aspect of the shift between *Vf* and *DK* is the later text's greater ambivalence: while the carnivalesque regains its active, redemptive powers, Nature's destruction becomes less important because the Fool who embodies the renewed force of the carnivalesque suffers to some extent from the very authoritarianism that he is trying to undermine.

Karl Hofmann as a Fool

The claim that Karl Hofmann is a Fool-figure requires evidence since although Karl fits easily into the literary Fool-tradition, critics have been only dimly aware of this fact and made no attempt to analyse it. Walther³³ and Schwartz³⁴ both see Karl as a 'Don Quichotte' figure, and although Schumacher calls him a 'Clown',³⁵ his subsequent comments show that he means this figuratively because, in his view, Karl is not taken seriously by people - an attitude shared by many critics. But in her excellent article on narrative in *DK*, Paver acknowledges the *possibility* of seeing Karl 'as a fool-figure, throwing a little grit into the smooth working of the ideological machine through his obdurate naivety'.³⁶ In my view, *DK* alludes strongly to the Fool-tradition and explains ways in which the Fool's subversive potential can be made relevant to resistance in the modern day. That said, Karl does not represent the violent subversion traditionally associated with Carnival but a more low-key, less radical version of 'resistance' which could effect only slow, small-scale change.

On the very first page the reader is told that Karl wears a large 'Künstlerhut' (*DK*, p.7) and carries a stick, and that other, similar *Kinoerzähler* came from the 'Rummelplätzen'. Classic depictions of the Fool show him wearing a hat and carrying a stick, and clowns are often found at fairgrounds. We also read: 'Manchmal zog er sein Taschentuch hervor und rollte es straff zusammen. Er sagte zu mir: Eine Wurst! Und wischte sich damit die Stirn' (p.17). The application of a phallic 'Wurst' to the forehead is another visual

³³ Klaus Walther, 'Die Luftgeschichten des Kinoerzählers', *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 39 (1991), H.4, pp.149-52 (p.150).

³⁴ Leonore Schwartz, 'Der kleine König mit dem großen Zeigestock', *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* (23 November 1990), p.34.

³⁵ Heinz Schumacher, "'Jeder Mensch trägt ein Kino in seinem Kopf'" - Zu Gert Hofmanns Roman *Der Kinoerzähler*, *Literatur für Leser*, 14 (1991), H.4, pp.250-61 (p.253).

³⁶ Chloe E.M. Paver, "'Als Hitler und der Tonfilm kamen": Cinematic, Technological, and Historical Narratives in Gert Hofmann's *Der Kinoerzähler*", *Modern Language Review*, 97 (2002), pp.1-21 (pp.9).

reminder of the typical Fool figure with the displaced phallic nose.³⁷ Karl has an irresistible appetite for food (e.g. pp.16 and 73); he once worked in the circus (p.23); and he wears make-up and a polka-dot tie, just as a clown might (pp.31, 42 and 93). Among his ambitions are: ‘Er wollte ein neuartiges Buch verfassen und “von hinten nach vorne drucken lassen”’ and ‘Schmetterlinge sammeln’ (p.30). The first is a typically carnivalesque reversal which echoes a line in of Kurt Schwitters’s most famous poem, ‘An Anna Blume’ (1919),³⁸ while the latter ambition recalls some versions of the ‘Fool’ card in the Tarot deck of whom Alfred Douglas says: ‘Sometimes he is shown following a brightly coloured butterfly or insect that flutters before his face’.³⁹ At one point, the narrator’s grandmother says, ‘Der Mann bekommt noch einen Buckel, wenn das so weitergeht’ (p.53): hunchbacks were favourites as court-jesters and Kasperl, the German Mr. Punch, is traditionally a hunchback.⁴⁰ In another reversal, the narrator quotes his grandfather when they were taking a train journey together ““in die falsche Richtung”” (p.55).⁴¹ When sacked from the cinema, Hofmann is told that he is superfluous ‘wie ein drittes Nasenloch’ (p.68) - a ridiculous and grotesque image.⁴² Given that Švejk is a dog-dealer, that the Tarot Fool is often depicted with a dog (representing the low culture with which the Fool is associated), and that Kasperl / Mr. Punch has a dog (Toby), Karl entirely accords with his literary forebears when he declares: ‘Wenn du mal einen Freund

³⁷ Cf. Willeford’s reference to ‘the exaggerated phallus’ which ‘recur[s] throughout the world of clowns and fools’ (William Willeford, *The Fool and his Sceptre*, p.15).

³⁸ It is said of Anna, the carnivalesque figure of the poem, that: ‘Man kann dich auch von hinten lesen’ (reproduced in: Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, edited by Friedhelm Lach [5 vols.] [Cologne: DuMont, 1973-1981], I, pp.58-9). Coincidentally, Schwitters also wrote a collection of poetry called *Veilchen* (1931).

³⁹ Alfred Douglas, *The Tarot* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p.43.

⁴⁰ Cf. Willeford’s reference to the ‘*physical deformity, even freakishness*’ of the dwarfs and hunchbacks who were Fools (p.14).

⁴¹ In the same section, we learn that the pair are travelling to ‘Wittgenstein’ (p.56). As Walther saw, ‘Nur einmal verändert der Autor einen realen geographischen Namen: Aus dem Örtchen Wittgensdorf wird in seinem Buch Wittgenstein’ (p.150) - but he cannot suggest a good reason for this. Given Karl’s role as a Fool, this may be an intertextual reference to Thomas Bernhard’s novel *Wittgensteins Nefte* (1982), where the central figure is also a Fool (see Sheppard [1990], p.310). This is entirely plausible given the well-documented influence of Thomas Bernhard on Hofmann’s writing (see Schede, pp.207-12).

⁴² For another reference to the noses that are so important to Fools, cf. the child-narrator’s reference to travelling ‘immer der Nase nach’ (p.55).

brauchst, kauf dir einen Hund!' (p.79). At the first showing of a *Tonfilm*, he makes a point of sleeping and not watching, as well as laughing '[a]n den ergreifendsten Stellen, wo viele weinen wollten' (p.104), another reversal of normal behaviour. At another point, he buys a 'Zelluloidbrille. Da sah man seine Augen nicht mehr so, während er noch alles sah' (p.107): this would presumably make him look like the masked Harlequin, a close relation of the Fool.⁴³ His single weeping eye ('Die Augen - besonders das linke - tränkten ihm beim Rauchen' [p.223]) recalls the tears painted below one eye that sometimes characterize a clown's make-up. At several points he is associated with lavatories (pp.231-3, 252 and 286) which Sheppard, referring to Bakhtin, describes as 'that very throne from which [...] so much carnivalesque imagery flows' (Sheppard [1990], p.311). Karl's clothes suffer from typical clownish 'lumpishness' (Willeford, p.16): 'die Hemden und Jacken und Hosen wurden ihm zu weit' (*DK*, p.167). This 'lumpishness' is not the only characteristic that Karl shares with that other literary Fool, Christian Buddenbrook (cf. Sheppard [1990], p.304), for he also grows increasingly bald (*DK*, p.268) and makes the grotesque claim that his legs are of different lengths (p.266). Finally, Karl's 'Philosophie' involves a profound understanding of what Bakhtin calls 'ambivalence': 'Glück und Unglück haben beide etwas Positives und etwas Negatives, ein Hinten und ein Vorne (p.26).⁴⁴ In short, *DK* takes up so many of the allusions to the Fool-tradition that are already in *Vf* that it is entirely legitimate to regard the character of Karl as a full-blown Fool-figure.

⁴³ For Harlequin's black mask that makes him invisible, see Welsford, *The Fool*, pp.298-9.

⁴⁴ Hofmann even appears to make Karl allude to Bakhtin's ideas in what appears to be a satirical summary of Bakhtin's well known theory that *chuzhaia rech'* (quoted speech) permeates all our language activities in both practical and artistic communication: someone else's speech makes it possible for us to generate our own. After claiming that 'wir sind mit der Erde verbunden', Karl tells his grandson: 'Alle Worte, die wir sagen, sind vor uns schon gesagt worden. Wir sagen sie bloß nach' (p.74).

Although I have argued that Karl's character is the opposite of Veilchenfeld's passivity, *DK*, too, explicitly thematizes passivity - but of a different kind. This passivity is embodied in the fatalistic attitudes of the three women in Karl's life: his daughter (the narrator's mother), his wife, and his mistress, Fräulein Fritsche. Their fatalism manifests itself in their continual comments that the future is entirely predictable and cannot be changed, and that all life ends in decay and death. Furthermore, this kind of fatalism has a great deal to do with Karl's narration of his film-summaries. Appropriately enough, this unholy trinity recalls mythological antecedents, namely both the three Norse Norns and the three Greek Fates, and does so in two different ways. First, Karl's wife and his mistress are grey-haired. As Karl's wife is likely to be grey-haired since she is an old woman, it is significant that the text explicitly draws attention to her hair (p.44). But it is much more significant that the text should mention Fräulein Fritsche's greying hair (see pp.135 and 291) because she is slightly less than forty years old (p.128) and twenty-five years younger than Karl (p.18). Second, all three women spend their time either knitting or sewing, which recalls the spinning of the Norns / Fates: sewing is the narrator's mother's job throughout the text;⁴⁵ Fräulein Fritsche also sews professionally (pp.128 and 251); and Karl's wife knits in her spare time (pp.162-3, 167 and 288).

Paver notes that 'almost every sentence the grandfather utters in the text is relativized in one way or another [...] by his sarcastic wife and daughter' (p.10). But because she does not give examples of the way in which the women undermine Karl, she does not see that almost all their comments involve gloomy predictions about the inevitable passing of time which inexorably leads to physical decay and death. Thus, while I do not want to

⁴⁵ See pp.74, 87, 118, 162-3, 169, 174, 177, 182, 191, 281, 283 and 288.

overstate the women's connection with mythological antecedents, such fatalistic comments are entirely appropriate to such figures. For instance, Karl's wife laments the passing of the "wilde[] Zeit", wo sie noch "gelebt und geliebt" hatten' which has now given way to the 'Sorgen [...] die erst das Alter bringt' (p.44);⁴⁶ Karl's daughter tells the narrator: 'so viel Zeit hat er [Karl] ja nun nicht mehr' (p.45); when Karl finds that the capillaries on his face have become visible and interprets the problem as a disease, his wife claims that: '[die Krankheit] fängt erst an' (p.48); then again, she claims that Karl wears a white carnation 'als wär wieder einer aus seinem Jahrgang dahingegangen' (p.63); both women claim that 'der Mann [Karl] geht ein' (p.74); Karl's daughter both views the present pessimistically ('Die Zeiten stehen nicht auf Liebe' [p.89])⁴⁷ and doubts that there will be a brighter future: 'Geht das ewig so fort? Kommt keine schöne Zeit?' (p.87); Karl's wife heralds the demise of the *Apollo* cinema, which 'so vor sich hinkrümelt und in die Knie geht und sicher bald zusammenfällt' (p.88); Karl's daughter imagines Karl thinking of his lost past ('Er denkt an die schöne Zeit, als er noch eine [Arbeit] hatte' [p.114]) and sneers at Fräulein Fritsche: 'Das Weib sollte doch endlich kapieren, daß er sie nicht heiratet, jedenfalls nicht in diesem Leben' (p.130); Karl's wife becomes so annoyed at Karl that she exclaims: 'Es wird Zeit, das sich bei uns was ändert!' (p.142); both Karl's daughter and the narrator predict that Karl will die soon (pp.163 and 143); the child-narrator associates Karl's wife with expressions of time: 'Es war die Zeit zwischen dem Chinesisch-japanischen Krieg und dem Spanischen Bürgerkrieg, wie die Großmutter sagte' (p.148); Karl's wife suggests playing cards and justifies it with: 'Da vergeht die Zeit' (p.191) and later says: 'Zukunft hat er nun keine mehr, die liegt hinter ihm' (p.208); she also comments on suicide by saying: 'Es gibt [...]

⁴⁶ Cf. her similar complaints on p.181.

⁴⁷ Cf. Karl's wife's reference to 'diesen schweren Zeiten' (p.138) and her gloomy augury that 'In den Leuten sitzt eine Zerstörungswut, das ist kein gutes Zeichen' (p.204).

im Leben einen Punkt, wenn man den erreicht...' (p.234), and later muses on the arbitrary nature of man's fate: 'so ist's auf der Welt! Die einen haben Pech, die basteln's zusammen, die anderen haben Glück, denen gehört's [...] So vergeht die Zeit, die dem Menschen auf Erden gegeben ward' (p.262); she also claims that Karl smokes 'weil er so bald wie möglich eines qualvollen Todes sterben will', re-emphasizes his increasing age: 'Und jünger [...] wird er auch nicht' (p.266),⁴⁸ and refuses to shelter from the deadly threat of bomb-raids: 'ob's früher oder später kommt, was ist da für ein Unterschied!' (p.288); Karl's daughter sings songs that include lyrics such as 'Das gibt's nur einmal, / Das kommt nicht wieder / Das ist zu schön um wahr zu sein / Das kann das Leben nur einmal geben' (pp.292-3); and finally, towards the novel's end, Karl's wife, a *petite-bourgeoise* Greek Fate, even makes a highly appropriate reference to the Underworld of Greek mythology: 'Dorthin, wo wir all landen, wenn wir für die Welt nicht mehr schmuck genug sind. In den Orkus' (p.269).

All the above evidence shows very clearly that the women in *DK* adopt a passive, pessimistic attitude to the irresistible, inexorable powers of fate, and this attitude - which has deep roots in German literary and philosophical culture - was allegedly typical among Germans in the immediate post-war period since it allowed them to exonerate themselves for the events of the *Nazizeit*.⁴⁹ The three women's resemblance to the Norse Norns and their references to the passing of time and Karl's inevitable decay and death prefigure this fatalistic pessimism: for them, the meta-narrative of life has only one possible plot and conclusion. So even if the reader does not read *DK* in the light of the related *Vf*, *DK* nevertheless makes it clear that Karl's character is in a state of revolt against the passivity that is embodied in the utterances of the women in his life, with whom he is often in

⁴⁸ Cf. Karl's complaint that 'Meine Weibsbilder machen mich gerne älter, als ich bin und als ich mich fühle!' (p.283).

⁴⁹ See Judith Ryan, *The Uncompleted Past*, pp.13, 24-5 and 35.

conflict.

Karl Hofmann's Film-Narration

How does the Fool Karl respond to the passivity of those around him and what form does his carnivalesque activity take? How does he encourage people to be reflective and more critically-minded and learn that change may be possible? Karl's resistance differs from most other resistance to Nazism to be seen in earlier prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich. In contrast to the events in resistance-novels (such as Bruno Apitz's *Nackt unter Wölfen* [1958]) which involve violent, organized, physical resistance to the Nazis, Karl's efforts in *DK* are very understated. While it is true that Karl never explicitly spells out exactly what he is thinking or trying to achieve, he does drop plenty of clues, especially in his occasional 'philosophical' observations - which are dismissed by Paver as 'phoney' (p.9). To begin with, Karl is clearly aware of the dangers of speaking out openly against authority because he tells us that 'Wer die Wahrheit geigt, dem schlägt man die Fiedel auf den Kopf' (*DK*, p.73) - and presumably he has the Nazis in mind, given that he is speaking during the *Nazizeit*. Moreover, he is equally sceptical of violent political subversion, as becomes clear when he comments on the 'Blutzeuge', a man who has been badly beaten and left in the gutter. The 'Blutzeuge' turns out to be 'ein weggelaufener Politischer', and Karl suggests that the man will be put on display: 'Zur Abschreckung! Damit ihn alle sehen mit dem Hemd und dem Schädel und der Nase! Und gewarnt sind!' (p.240). So in the 'Blutzeuge' episode at least, it is clear that Karl realizes the danger of confronting the Nazis directly: accordingly, Karl's 'resistance' involves activities that are altogether more subtle and low-key.

To begin with, by questioning whether the most mundane features of everyday life are real, Karl implicitly challenges people to reflect on familiar phenomena or ideas that they

take for granted. For example, Karl accepts his own mortality and yet - in the spirit of the Bakhtinian Carnival in which death is never final - he also questions the reality of his own death by saying: 'Natürlich erwähne ich meinen Tod manchmal, es rutscht mir so raus, aber nur, um den Leuten zu zeigen, wie unnatürlich das klingt' (p.185). Moreover, the narrator says that Karl was 'wie jeder Künstler überzeugt, das Leben ist nicht wirklich' (p.73) and Karl says as much to Götze: 'Ich denke ans Leben [...] Gelogen!' (p.289). Then again, Karl recalls how he discussed philosophical questions: 'Wir haben von allem gesprochen, als ob es wirklich wär: die Welt, Gott, unsere Zukunft!' (p.290) - a comment which makes no sense to the unimaginative Nazi Götze. And finally, just as Karl tells his wife: 'Das, wie viele andere Dinge, bildest du dir ein' (p.18), so he says (of his friend Cosimo - a name related to the Greek word for 'order') 'aber das ist, wie das meiste, was er uns erzählt, erfunden' (p.17). The word 'erfunden' is meant to convert Cosimo's words from objective fact to explicit fiction and thus encourage Karl's grandson - to whom he is speaking - to think for himself.

In my view, Karl's job as *Kinoerzähler* - his 'art' which dominates the plot of *DK* - encapsulates his world-view that everyday life is a fiction or construct, and the fact that Karl means to achieve something positive *via* his art is implicit in his claim that 'die Kunst kann uns aus mancher Verstrickung heraushelfen' (p.227).⁵⁰ But Karl's art as a narrator of films is a mundane one which takes two main forms. First, he stands by the screen in the *Apollo* and narrates his interpretation of events in *Stummfilme* to the audience, despite the fact that these had 'Zwischentitel' (as the owner of the cinema, Theilhaber, points out on p.64) which were supposed to explain the events on screen. Second, Karl's obsession with films means that he often narrates films in normal

⁵⁰ Cf. Karl's attribution of very similar powers of salvation to the cinema itself: 'Das Kino ist für uns gerade noch rechtzeitig gekommen. Wenn es nicht gekommen wäre, hätten wir uns Hand in Hand in den Großen Teich stürzen müssen!' (p.26).

conversation, outside the cinema, when talking to other people like his grandson or Cosimo, both of whom appear to have seen many of the films described by Karl. But just as Karl challenges the subjective nature of what we take to be reality, so, in his role as a Fool, he also implicitly asserts that the text of a film is open to interpretation and that our understanding of a film is subjective. This he achieves by distracting the cinema-audience, narrating factually incorrect readings of some films both to the cinema-audience and to his interlocutors in conversations outside the cinema, and violating taboos surrounding other films. In this way, Karl attempts to encourage the citizens of Limbach to develop both critical faculties and intellectual independence by learning to set off the films' *Zwischentitel* against their visual content and his own words. Implicitly, Karl's agenda seems to be that if his listeners can see through his subjective interpretations, they may also learn not to accept the authoritarian pronouncements of the Nazis.

In justification of this it should be noted that, at the very start of the novel, Karl explicitly encourages the reader to look for discrepancies between what he says and what the film depicts since he criticizes other *Kinoerzähler* as follows:

Die Reden der anderen Kinoerzähler, selbst in größeren Städten, waren geschwollen, ihre Aussprache verwaschen, die Zusammenhänge zwischen den Leinwandbildern - sie flackerten so - und den Worten für die Zuschauer oft unverständlich. Längere Wörter [...] betonen sie auch falsch. Ihre Erklärungen kommen entweder zu früh - vor dem Bild - oder zu spät - danach -, so daß zwischen dem, was man sieht, und dem, was man hört ... Man sieht den Zusammenhang nicht (p.9).

Thus, before the reader has even read one of Karl's own summaries, in paratactic, almost fractured language which echoes the broken, incoherent narration of the *Kinoerzähler* that he is describing and resembles the very nature of early films, Karl alerts the reader to the very nature of the new medium and the film-narrator's slippery grasp of a film's narrative. But it is evident that Karl does not believe that the *Kinoerzähler's* influence is

limited to the confusing effects of his mistakes since he implies that such narration / interpretation involves the viewer's powers of imagination. Indeed, Karl equates the medium of cinema with the imagination because, in his view, the former offers an opportunity to exercise the latter: 'Jeder Mensch trägt [...] ein Kino in seinem Kopf. [...] Und dieses Kino nennt man [...] Phantasie!' (p.191). This statement is directly relevant to Karl's activities because it points to the frequent lack of a 'Zusammenhang' between the original film and his own narration, and to the possibility that such a discrepancy might be the product of his own imagination. By doing so, he shows how there could be several ways of understanding a film because any interpretation is, to some extent, the subjective product of the individual's imagination. In this way, Karl personifies a pluralistic mentality that is open to several possibilities rather than an authoritarian one which seeks to reduce a film to a single meaning. Accordingly, when the child-narrator has the following highly significant insight: 'Dann schauten wir uns den Film an [...] Im Zug - oder Bus - erzählte mir der Großvater den Film noch einmal, so wie *er* ihn verstanden hatte. Oft verstand er [den Film] ganz anders als ich. Ich dachte: Warum versteht jeder jeden Film anders auf der Welt?' (p.61), he is confirming that he has understood Karl's pluralist attitude to films.

How can silent films become a medium for transmitting a pluralist attitude of openness? Primo Levi describes one of the weapons of the totalitarian state as: 'propaganda camouflaged as [...] popular culture'.⁵¹ And Fiske, in a work on popular culture that clearly owes much to Bakhtin, shares the view that popular culture can be a means for the powerful to control the way the masses think:

Theories of ideology or hegemony stress the power of the dominant to construct the subjectivities of the subordinate and the common sense of society in their own interests. Their power is the power to have their meanings of self and of social

⁵¹ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p.16.

relations accepted or consented to by the people. At the most basic level, evading this power or inverting it is an act of defiance.⁵²

Within a context in which the authorities exercise hegemonic control over the 'subjectivities' of an audience - and of which the totalitarian regime of the Nazis is one extreme example - Karl encourages people to resist any ideology which the ruling powers transmit through popular culture. Thus, through his work as the *Kinoerzähler* at the *Apollo* cinema, a clear site of popular culture, he participates in precisely the sort of struggle described by Fiske.

There are at least three ways in which Karl encourages his viewers to become more critically aware. First and most obviously, Karl shatters the illusion on screen by intervening with his voice, his piano-playing (*DK*, p.35) and his slapstick behaviour (p.12), just as he had once drawn blatant attention to the fictionality of a stage-play in which he had been involved.⁵³ Second, Karl exploits the formal elements of silent films to transmit his pluralism. Fiske suggests how popular culture, despite its ability to transmit the hegemonic ideology, might also offer opportunities to resist the dominant powers:

Much of this struggle [between popular culture and the dominant powers] is a struggle for meanings, and popular texts can ensure their popularity only by making themselves inviting terrains for this struggle. [...] So popular culture is [...] shot through with contradictions, for contradictions require the productivity of the reader to make his or her sense out of them (pp.5-6).⁵⁴

⁵² John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.9.

⁵³ This is the point of chapter 7, which consists solely of a list of the many jobs Karl has had in his life. The only one commented on at all by the narrator is Karl's job as 'Souffleur im Stadttheater Chemnitz, bis er bei einer Hauptprobe des "Fiesco" von F. Schiller plötzlich aus seinem Kisten sprang, den Regisseur beiseite schob und den Schauspielern selbst Anweisungen geben und ihnen alles vormachen wollte' (*DK*, pp.200-1). It is as if, even then, Karl was trying to shatter the fiction of the play for the actors themselves. Moreover, the plot of *Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua* (1783) is entirely appropriate to Karl's anti-authoritarian role since the play involves Fiesco deposing the despot Doria. But Fiesco then begins to act like a despot himself and is drowned in turn by the democrat Verrina. Perhaps, by analogy, Karl would like to see the kind of serial deposition of authority seen both in *Die Verschwörung* and in Carnival enacted in reality.

⁵⁴ In his companion text to *Reading the Popular*, Fiske returns again and again to the concept of contradictoriness as a defining feature of popular culture: see Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.105, 120 and 126.

Moreover, as Elsaesser's historical account suggests, the very nature of *Stummfilme* and the subversive potential of the historical *Erklärer* perfectly exemplify Fiske's conception of pop culture:

The episodic and fragmented nature of the spectacle was further mitigated by the presence of the lecturer ('der Erklärer') who would provide a running commentary, sometimes explaining the action, but more often making irreverent jokes and improvising little routines. Between the disparate segments he was not only the link, but also the filter, the frame and the perspective, shifting and varied, through which the audience experienced the spectacle. The power of the word, as opposed to music, was of crucial importance here, for the lecturer's ironic distance to the action allowed an audience to respond with [...] hostility or hilarity. [...] the authorities tried to get rid of the 'Erklärer', because they suspected him of stoking up 'class hatred'.⁵⁵

So, by 'formal elements' I mean that the lack of sound, the scanty plot details offered by the *Zwischentitel*, and the interruptions in *Stummfilme* caused by the *Zwischentitel* themselves - not to mention the interruptions of the *Erklärer* himself - all produce what Fiske calls 'syntagmatic gaps'. Consequently: 'The relative openness of the finish of each narrative leaves the viewer in a position of power vis-à-vis the text. She is invited to participate actively in the construction of the narrative and [...] to write her own script from the narrative fragments provided' (Fiske [2000], p.121).⁵⁶ Indeed, three of Karl's films are well known for the paucity of their 'Zwischentitel', which makes them even more amenable to free interpretation: *Die Straße* (1923, p.56) had only twelve 'Zwischentitel' and *Scherben* (1921, p.70) and *Der letzte Mann* (1924, p.155) had only one each. *Stummfilme*, then, are ideal terrains for popular resistance as defined by Fiske.

⁵⁵ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Early German Cinema: A Second Life?' in: Elsaesser (ed.), *A Second Life: German Cinema's First Decades* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp.9-37 (p.20). Cf. Paver pp.11-12.

⁵⁶ For Fiske, a defining feature of popular culture *in general* is the fact that it is a 'text full of gaps' where much less is said than in the 'closed, disciplinary text' of, say, a novel where more is explained (Fiske [2001], p.122).

Third, and most importantly, because of the openness of silent films, Karl can offer alternative, eccentric readings of them. These summaries, set against the sub-titles and images on the screen, ought to provoke critical reactions from viewers who, having recognized the extent to which Karl's interpretation differs both from their own and that offered by the *Zwischentitel*, are prompted to create their own interpretations of the films *in opposition* to Karl. Alternatively, the likes of Cosimo and the narrator, to whom Karl often narrates film-summaries during conversation, should be just as likely to challenge him because they often know the films which he narrates and have presumably seen the *Zwischentitel* and formed their own ideas of the plot. Or in other words, Karl's eccentric plot-summaries create the 'contradictions' which Fiske describes, subvert the film's authority, and remind the viewer that films are texts open to interpretation, thus breaking down 'the barrier erected against pluralism of information' (Levi, p.16) that allegedly typifies totalitarianism.⁵⁷

There are many examples of Karl's eccentric summarizing of the films. To begin with, when Karl narrates his films, he often gets factual details wrong. Although this is never made explicit in the text, such errors would be obvious both to the viewers in the *Apollo* and to any of his interlocutors (e.g. the narrator) or even those readers of *DK* itself who knows the films that he summarizes. Paver made the important discovery that the major source for *DK*'s film synopses was *Reclams Filmführer* (Paver, p.3).⁵⁸ But she failed to compare Karl's interpretations systematically with Krusche's synopses and so overlooked just how many mistakes Karl makes in his summaries. The fact that Karl should get his summaries wrong ought, on its own, to arouse a critical reaction among his audience. For instance, Karl's summary of *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (1926) omits two

⁵⁷ For the Nazi destruction of pluralism, see Bauman, pp.164-5.

⁵⁸ The references in this chapter are to Dieter Krusche, *Reclams Filmführer*, 11th revised edn. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000).

important facts: first, that the protagonist's murderous fantasies are triggered by a local murder, and second, that the protagonist sees his cousin as a sexual rival (DK, p.12; cf. Krusche, p.265). Moreover, Paver points out that when Karl narrates *Orlacs Hände* (1924),⁵⁹ he refers to an 'Autounfall' (DK, p.36) when the film involves a railway accident (Paver, p.13), and he accepts as fact the main character's purely psychological obsession that the hands of a murderer have been surgically attached to him. Then again, Karl claims that the protagonist of *Die Straße* (1923) is able to exonerate himself of murder by naming the real culprit (DK, p.56) - but it is actually the woman whom the protagonist has been pursuing who exposes the murderer (Krusche, p.644). Similarly, Karl's account of *Die Hintertreppe* (1921) contains two errors: first, he claims that the letters sent by the protagonist's lover were burnt when they were actually sent back, and second, that the lover kills the postman who had returned his letters when in fact the postman kills his rival (DK, p.78; cf. Krusche, p.309). In *Alraune* (1927), Alraune kills her creator, Professor ten Brinken, then herself (Krusche, p.37): but Karl confuses perpetrator with victim yet again by claiming that it is ten Brinken who kills Alraune and then commits suicide (DK, p.155). Later, Karl tells the story of the sound-film *Im Westen nichts Neues* (= *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1929/30 - Karl dates it to 1930) during a conversation with Cosimo and his grandson while they are going for a walk (i.e. outside the cinema), but he wrongly promotes 'Unteroffizier' Himmelstoß to 'Feldwebel' (DK, p.121; cf. Krusche, pp.35). He then claims that 'Boß' in *Varieté* (1925) kills his rival Artinelli by deliberately failing to catch him during a trapeze-act (DK, pp.124-5) - when in the film, 'Boß' stabs Artinelli (Krusche, p.712). In *Der letzte Mann* (1924), the protagonist's phoney life is exposed at his niece's wedding (Krusche, p.395), and not, as Karl thinks, his daughter's (DK, p.155). Finally, Karl's narration of certain films is often

⁵⁹ *Orlacs Hände* is not included in the most recent edition of *Reclams Filmführer*.

incomplete in that he never mentions propagandistic elements in films like the anti-British *Anna Boleyn* (1920; *DK*, p.52), *Der alte und der junge König* (1934; p.159)⁶⁰ and *Ohm Krüger* (1941; p.293).⁶¹

Karl's errors involve at least one major and very obvious pattern: he often attaches a happy ending to an otherwise pessimistic film. For instance, Karl claims that the 'Pfarrerstochter' in *Der starke Mann* (= *The Strong Man*, 1926) regains her sight (*DK*, p.42) - but there is no evidence for this assertion in Krusche's summary (Krusche, pp.645-6). Similarly, Karl's version of *Sturm über Asien* (= *Potomok Tschingis-Chana*, 1928) ends happily when he claims that the hero, Bair, inherits a vast fortune as Ghengis Khan's descendant (*DK*, p.70): Krusche mentions no such an inheritance (Krusche, pp.536-7). Karl excises the darker aspects of *Scherben* (1921) by claiming that the *Bahnwärter's* wife dies 'ohne Schmerzen' (*DK*, p.70) and by omitting the ending altogether, in which the *Bahnwärter* strangles the seducer of his daughter (Krusche, p.596). He also wrongly states that all the characters in *Das blaue Licht* (1932) die in an earthquake (*DK*, p.51). This would amount to poetic justice since they had all persecuted the innocent heroine of the film, Junta, but in fact only Junta dies, and not in an earthquake (Krusche, pp.111-2). Finally, he omits the fact that the peasant in *Das Glück* (= *Stschastje / Stjaschateli*, 1934) who finds a bag of money, later loses it (*DK*, p.213; cf. Krusche, p.646).⁶²

⁶⁰ According to Krusche, the film's theme is: 'wie die Staatsidee der Nationalsozialisten aus der Geschichte abgeleitet und gerechtfertigt werden soll' (p.37).

⁶¹ Krusche describes *Ohm Krüger* as 'Der aufwendigste und wohl auch bekannteste antibritische Propagandafilm des "Dritten Reichs"' (p.494).

⁶² It is worth noting that, even outside the world of *DK*, there is a certain amount of uncertainty about the details of silent films of the early twentieth century. For example, if we compare Krusche's book with Günther Dahlke and Günter Karl (eds.), *Deutsche Spielfilme von den Anfängen bis 1933* (Berlin: Henschel, 1993), we find several discrepancies. Dahlke and Karl specifically refer to the film *Hintertreppe* (pp.62-3), not 'Die Hintertreppe'; claim that the protagonist of *Die Straße* is saved by a child (p.93), not by the woman he was pursuing; *Der Golem* is dated to 1915, not 1914, and stars Carl Ebert as the antique-dealer, not Albert Steinrück (p.26); *Hamlet* is dated to 1921, not 1920, and has an eventful second half that is omitted by Krusche (pp.50-1); *Alraune* is dated to 1928, not 1927 (p.163); and finally, the couple in *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* are rescued by a team of local rescuers, not by an airman (p.203).

So far I have argued that such examples ought to arouse a critical reaction in the people to or with whom Karl is talking simply because he gets basic details wrong. But Karl's 'mistakes' have further implications. Although his activities described so far have involved a low-key, *generalized* anti-authoritarianism, a closer look at some of Karl's manipulations of film-plots suggests that a case can be made that Karl is attempting to subvert the Nazis directly. For example, the three propagandistic films mentioned above represent a clear case of the dominant powers trying to force a one-sided interpretation on the people. For instance, in the case of *Ohm Krüger*, it is suggested that the British invented the concentration camp - which is true - and are therefore the murderers of innocent people. But these accusations are made during the year of the film's release when the Germans' own genocidal actions were escalating and eight years after the Germans had set up their own camps. But by refusing to acknowledge their one-sided, propagandistic message, Karl's interpretations make the films open to alternative interpretations that might make the hearer aware of even greater crimes that were increasingly being perpetrated in Germany and elsewhere. Moreover, Karl has the habit of violating taboos on films. For example, he indirectly criticizes Nazism by alluding to the desperate social and economic circumstances that helped the Nazis to seize power. When telling the story of *Die freudlose Gasse* (1925; p.97), he violates a taboo by mentioning the fact that the women in the film offer the butcher sex in return for meat. But he is speaking long after 1928, the year in which the censor cut the scene that reveals this fact to the viewers.⁶³ The authorities would rather have had the people see *Die freudlose Gasse* as an unproblematic film that ignores the depths to which people were forced to descend in order to cope with poverty and inflation - the same depths from which Nazism offered an escape. But Karl narrates the film complete with the banned

⁶³ See Ludwig Greve, Margot Pehle and Heidi Westhoff (eds.), *Hätte ich das Kino!* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976), p.347.

content in such a way as to historicize the phenomenon of Nazism: far from being a great, historic destiny, it had its roots in very basic needs. Then again, he violates another taboo directly connected with Nazi ideology when he argues violently with Cosimo about the name of the hero of *Schuhpalast Pinkus* (1916): they debate whether the hero is called either 'Schmul' or 'Sally' (p.259) - both abbreviated forms of the Jewish names 'Samuel' and 'Salomo'.⁶⁴ This is particularly provocative since it draws attention to individual members of a group that had been forced into invisibility at a time when the Nuremberg Laws had long since been in place (post-1935). Then again, Karl enthuses about *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (1922) by describing it as 'was Feines' (p.206) - but this was an Expressionist film (and thus anathema to the Nazi régime) by Fritz Lang, whose sequel to *Mabuse - Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1932) - explicitly attacked the Nazis (Krusche, p.208). Similarly, Karl ignores the taboo that the régime has attached to the banned American film *Im Westen nichts Neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*) by trying to make it a topic of conversation with two Nazis, Friedrich and Götze. But he is met with: 'Von diesem Machwerk [...] wollen wir lieber nicht reden!' (*DK*, p.241), suggesting that he is reminding his interlocutors of an inglorious account of the war that clashes with its glorification by the Nazis (cf. Paver, p.9).⁶⁵

But quite apart from the possible subversive significance of Karl's activities, some of his imaginative tampering with the plots of films arguably imply an alternative, optimistic way of viewing the world which contradicts the fatalism of the women in his life and could be more generally applicable to contexts other than the Third Reich:

⁶⁴ This is yet another of Karl's mistakes since Cosimo's 'Sally' is the correct name. It is significant that Cosimo should draw attention to the possibility of Karl's inaccurate narration here since there are few clues anywhere else in *DK* that Karl's narration might be flawed.

⁶⁵ Karl appears to feel no need to show respect for his Nazi colleagues: quite apart from his violation of film-taboos, he expresses impatience at Götze and Friedrich (p.227), appears annoyed at Friedrich's successful recruitment of new Nazis (p.245), and rejects Götze's 'Duzvorschlag' (p.249). Moreover, earlier in *DK* the increasing amount of political discussion amongst Karl's family ('Wörter wie *Führergeburtstag* oder *Röhmputsch*') appears to give Karl hypertension and causes the capillaries in his face to burst (p.47).

history need not, it is implied, follow the negative meta-narratives so popular with his women, who 'sahen nur das Schlechte' (*DK*, p.220). Or in other words, it could be argued - despite what I say below - that Karl's behaviour suggests - even to the reader in the present day - that things can turn out for the best, that there are always alternatives, and that the path to these alternatives involves intellectual independence, the refusal of fixed, formulaic narratives (such as those which typify the films [Paver, pp.7-8]) and the use of imagination.

Are Karl's activities successful? There is certainly some evidence that Karl succeeds in getting his listeners to react critically to him and his narration: Karl's women are always arguing with and contradicting him; Cosimo corrects Karl's facts on *Schuhpalast Pinkus* (*DK*, p.259) and challenges him on his misuse of the word 'künstlich' (p.24); when Karl mis-narrates a real event - a fire at a cinema in Halle (Saale) - and claims that three people had died, Herr Salzmann contradicts him and says there were seven (p.43); and the narrator has clearly understood what Karl is getting at when he asks himself the important question cited on p.277 above. Indeed, the narrator's insight that no narrative can be pinned down to one meaning motivates the very structure of *DK*: like many early films, the work lacks a coherent narrative to the extent that its episodes are only loosely connected to each other and the dating of events is vague.⁶⁶ Moreover, this incoherence partly explains, for example, why Karl's baptism is mentioned - illogically - at the end of the novel, right after his death. The narrator has clearly learnt Karl's lesson that one should not impose too fixed an interpretation, order or shape to a particular narrative, but leave it open to analysis and ambiguity.

⁶⁶ Cf. Paver's comment in a different context: 'Hofmann employs a narrative style that deliberately attenuates our sense of linearity, sequence, and cause and effect' (p.2).

Karl's Flaws and Contradictions

So far, I have argued that Karl's film-narration is straightforwardly anti-authoritarian; can be read as a plea for optimism against fatalism; can sometimes be understood as a subtle attempt to subvert the ideas, attitudes and authority of the Nazis; and successfully encourages those closest to him to develop their critical faculties. But such a one-sided argument would run counter to *DK*'s narrative ethos described above. In fact, Gert Hofmann takes care to make *DK* much more problematic than I have suggested so far by depicting Karl as a flawed and contradictory character and thus ironizing the minor successes of Karl's brand of resistance in at least three ways. To begin with, Karl is sometimes shown to suffer from the same authoritarian mind-set that he is apparently trying to subvert. Then again, there is evidence that Karl's audience share his latent authoritarianism and are resistant to exercising their imagination and critical faculties. And finally, it is possible to read Karl's errors in film-narration not only as deliberate mistakes designed to provoke a critical reaction, but as unwitting and highly revealing comments on his own self-delusion, lack of self-knowledge, and the hold which the authoritarian mentality exercises over him as well despite his better judgement.

Karl has an ambivalent relationship with those authoritarian forces that part of him is trying to subvert. For example, he occasionally adopts a Hitler-like pose and actually looks like Hitler ('sein italienisches Aussehen mit der untersetzten Gestalt [...] der Schnurrbart' [*DK*, p.15]).⁶⁷ Or again, Hitler stands on a box to speak at the rally in Berlin, and this reminds Karl that his own manner of speaking is similar to that of the *Führer* ('ER stand aber auch auf einer Kiste' [p.280]). Notwithstanding the mockery Karl receives for his claims to artistry, he shares his self-styled position as a failed artist

⁶⁷ The 'italienisches Aussehen' and 'Schnurrbart' also recall the Hitler-like fascist Fool Cipolla of Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer* (1930) when he first appears on stage.

with Hitler. And the following comment on Karl's speech-making powers could equally apply to Hitler: 'Im Grunde war er ja ein kleiner Mann, "doch das vergißt man, wenn er redet"' (p.34).⁶⁸ It could of course be argued that Karl's Hitleresque pose is part of his project of subversion: just as Karl means the people of Limbach to question his inaccurate commentary on the films and set up rival interpretations, so they should also question the pernicious misrepresentations of reality offered to them by Hitler and the Nazis. But Karl's resemblance to Hitler is ambivalent since it might also be understood as an index of his own deep-rooted authoritarianism. After all, although Karl may show little respect for the Nazis Friedrich and Götze, he does attend Party meetings and considers a Jew, Theilhaber, as his enemy. Indeed, at one Party meeting Karl silences his grandson for wanting to go home: 'Gib Frieden! [...] Red nicht, wenn die Großen reden und du nicht gefragt bist! Hör lieber zu, da lernst du was!' (p.217). Furthermore, much of *DK*'s dialogue is driven by the child-narrator's persistent questioning of his grandfather, but even when no Nazis are present, Karl can be intolerant of that questioning: for example, he impatiently tells the narrator that he is thinking of 'einen wunderbaren Film, wo ein Enkel mit seinem Großvater immer spazierengeht, ohne ihm unablässig Fragen zu stellen, auf die es keine Antworten gibt' (p.79). Here we are seeing Karl - contradictorily - betraying an authoritarian attitude by silencing a competing and questioning voice that, as a would-be pluralist, he ought to be encouraging.⁶⁹

Then again, Karl's audience are just as prone to authoritarian tendencies as Karl himself - not least because they prefer the less challenging *Tonfilm* to the more open form of the *Stummfilm*. That is to say, because the *Tonfilm* 'erklärte sich selbst' (*DK*, p.102) by spelling out its plot very clearly and taking responsibility for understanding it away

⁶⁸ Cf. the slightly different evidence which Paver uses to underline the similarity of the cinema, the cinema-explainer and Hitler on pp.14-15.

⁶⁹ Similarly, the fact that Karl, a Dionysian figure, works in the '*Apollo*' cinema reflects how he cannot escape from the very thing to which he is naturally opposed.

from the viewer it appeals more to an authoritarian mentality than the *Stummfilm*, which requires more intellectual independence of the viewer. The introduction of sound, then, renders Karl superfluous, closes Fiske's 'syntagmatic gaps' considerably, and limits the possibilities for the audience to construct meaning themselves. Significantly, Horkheimer and Adorno, writing in 1944, criticized the American *Tonfilm* for precisely this reason and described 'Die Verkümmerng der Vorstellungskraft und Spontaneität des Kulturkonsumenten' which allegedly takes place because '[der Tonfilm läßt] der Phantasie und dem Gedanken der Zuschauer keine Dimension mehr [...] in der sie im Rahmen des Filmwerks und doch unkontrolliert von dessen exakten Gegebenheiten sich ergehen und abschweifen könnten ohne den Faden zu verlieren'. In their view, the *Tonfilm*, which '[geradezu verbietet] die denkende Aktivität des Betrachters', heralds the dumbing-down of cinema and its viewers: 'Jede logische Verbindung, die geistigen Atem voraussetzt, wird peinlich vermieden'.⁷⁰ Even if Horkheimer and Adorno's argument is over-stated, they identify what benefits were lost when the *Stummfilm* yielded to the *Tonfilm*, and *DK* dovetails exactly with their argument. These factors lead Karl to conclude that '[Der Tonfilm] ist nicht künstlerisch genug' (*DK*, p.104): or in other words, if Karl's art was to encourage the development of a critical intellect, then the 'talkies' encourage intellectual passivity because Karl has become severely restricted in his ability to use films - from *within* the cinema, at least - for purposes of resistance. In line with this contention, Karl's performances become very sparsely attended towards the end of his time as a *Kinoerzähler* at the cinema: at one showing, there are only eleven viewers (p.64), and when Karl fights Theilhaber in the *Apollo*, there are fourteen (p.243). But when the first *Tonfilm*, *The Jazz-singer* (1927), is shown in Limbach, it is a sell-out

⁷⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, 'Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug', pp.134 and 145.

(see pp.95-6) - even though Karl does his best to disrupt the performance (p.103).⁷¹ But Karl, too, shows how he, like his audience, can be tempted to indulge in the less demanding, escapist *Tonfilm* when he is drawn away from a Nazi rally in which he was due to participate and goes to watch *Gone with the Wind* (1939; p.276), and Karl's yielding to this temptation finally kills him since he dies during a bombing raid (p.299) while watching another 'talkie', *Operette* (1940). In other words, Gert Hofmann acknowledges the limitations of Karl's particular form of resistance by conceding that his subversive challenging of the audience demands a great deal intellectually from people who may not want to be challenged but prefer to live within the dominant, authoritarian ideology to which they have become accustomed.⁷²

Finally, many of Karl's mis-readings can be interpreted as highly significant - albeit unwitting - comments on Karl's flawed personality.⁷³ Such implicit self-criticism by Karl might encourage people to become still more critical of what he says - but they also undermine the credibility of Karl's resistance by reducing what could be seen as provocatively inaccurate narration to a mere series of psychological slips. For example, some of Karl's mis-readings blur the issue of motivation and responsibility for crime in a way that is appropriate to someone who at one level opposes authoritarianism while possessing authoritarian traits that briefly induce him to become a *Mitläufer*. Thus, it could be said that to confuse perpetrator with victim in both *Alraune* and *Die*

⁷¹ Although the cinema is empty again only a few weeks after the *Tonfilm* reaches Limbach (p.107), *DK* offers no explanation for the loss of popularity. The lack of customers may be because the cinema-owner, Theilhaber, is Jewish, but there is no textual evidence to prove it.

⁷² If the *Tonfilm* actually militated - and presumably still does militate - against challenging the audience to think for themselves and exercise their imaginations, then *DK* parallels Günter Grass's earlier novel *örtlich betäubt* (1969) in which, as Paver pointed out in an earlier article, popular culture provides surrogate experience to the protagonist, Starusch, that prevents real political action. (see Chloe E.M. Paver, 'Lois Lane, Donald Duck and Joan Baez', pp.59-60). On my reading, *DK*, like *örtlich betäubt*, rules out direct political action and suggests that certain modern forms of popular culture can militate *against* political action. But *DK* differs from *örtlich betäubt* because it does not condemn all forms of popular culture. Rather, it laments the loss of a cultural medium - the *Stummfilm* - that might have encouraged its consumers to think and which has given way to a modern form - the *Tonfilm* - which apparently militates against independent thought. Or in other words, more modern forms of popular culture might be less useful for encouraging the kind of resistance which Karl represents.

⁷³ Cf. Paver's related point in her brief analysis of Karl's summary of *Blinde Wut* (p.3).

Hintertreppe reflects Karl's own confusion about whether he sides with the victims of authority or with authority itself. To accept that the main character of *Orlacs Hände* really did have a transplanted pair of murderer's hands raises issues about (not) taking responsibility for criminal actions. And to omit the real reason for the protagonist's murderous fantasies in *Geheimnisse einer Seele* is tantamount to a refusal to examine the motivation for crime. Moreover, by promoting Himmelstoß in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Karl arguably betrays an instinctive, not to say excessive respect for authority, and his claim that all the characters in *Das blaue Licht* are killed in an earthquake reflects a distinctly un-carnavalesque fear of Nature's power. Then again, it may well be significant that Karl thinks, wrongly, that the protagonist in *Der letzte Mann* is humiliatingly exposed by his daughter, not his niece. After all, throughout *DK* Karl is often in conflict with his own daughter, so this latter mistake may betray a resentment at his family's attempts to resist his authority and practise pluralism when that happens at his own expense. If that reading is plausible, then it means that Karl's own insecurity and lack of autonomy militate against his attempts to encourage contradiction and criticism. Finally, despite what I said above, the happy endings which Karl attaches to some films could be taken as evidence of *false* optimism and his own self-delusion. For example, one could interpret his invention of Bair's inheritance in *Sturm über Asien* and his omission of the fact that the peasant in *Das Glück* loses his money as the self-consolatory fantasies of an unemployed man in straitened financial circumstances. But two further examples of Karl's happy endings are particularly significant given that *DK* is set during the Third Reich. First, his omission of the strangulation scene from his account of *Scherben* and his assertion that the wife dies painlessly suggests that he is wilfully blinding himself to violence and pain. Second, the supposed annihilation of the people who persecute Junta in *Das blaue Licht* could be taken to suggest that Karl believes that crime will be justly punished. But because of the historical juncture at

which Karl creates these endings, his faith in justice looks naïve and forlorn, just as his attempts to overlook violence and pain in his films could, notwithstanding the *Blutzeuge* episode, be interpreted as a more general blindness to the realities of the Nazi period. In short, Karl's readings have a double-edged quality about them which, appropriately enough in such a novel, resist a single reading. Gert Hofmann allows us to read Karl's actions as an attempt to foster small-scale change by low-key subversion, but he also includes elements in the text which simultaneously ironize Karl, his successes, and his credibility as a model of resistance given the deep-rootedness of authoritarian attitudes in the socio-historical and cultural history of Germany.

Conclusion: The Unspectacular Nature of Karl's Fool-Activities

Where does this discussion leave the Fool Karl? I do not mean the above comments to invalidate Karl's resistance: rather, they reflect Gert Hofmann's awareness of the difficulty of subverting authority and effecting change when it is so difficult for the resister and the people whom he is trying to influence to escape the hegemonic authority. But for all Karl's shortcomings, the reader should still take his resistance seriously as a positive model for bringing about change. Moreover, if I am right to interpret Karl's actions at one level as carnivalesque resistance to authority, I would also argue that one of Karl's *strengths* is the tameness of his activities when judged by the standards of Bakhtin's Carnival. So *DK* could be said to be offering its readers a subtle version of carnivalesque resistance that is plausible and appropriate in the post-War era, and in this conclusion, I want to discuss the significance of this 'tame' version of carnivalesque resistance.

Towards the end of *DK* there is a Nazi rally in Berlin which, like the *Fest in Vf*, can be interpreted as yet another Carnival that has been assimilated by the Nazis. Although

Karl's participation in such a grand Carnival is due to his association with the Nazis and might be construed as another sign of his ambivalent relationship with authority, his involvement actually proves to be emblematic of his subtle brand of resistance - because he fails to take part altogether. The rally is to take place on 1st May (the date of a classic pagan fertility ritual) in the 'Zirkus Krone' (p.272). Karl is to wear a Nazi 'brownshirt', described here as 'eine "durchfallgelbe Versammlungsjacke"' which was 'ihm [...] zu weit' (ibid.). According to the narrator's grandmother, Karl travels there 'mit vierzehn anderen Deppen' (p.274). Karl describes the spectators as 'Kleinmenschen' (p.277) as if they were all jester-like midgets. There are images of dismemberment: 'die Helden von früher - die Saalschlachthelden [...]. Leute mit verstümmelten Gliedern, einer Binde überm Auge, ohne Fuß' (p.278), and Karl even dresses up as Hindenburg (p.279). Thus, the Carnival setting, with its dwarves, scatological imagery, Fools in 'lumpish' clothes and circuses, is clear. Although Karl is to carry a flag on behalf of Limbach, he misses the parade by watching the film *Gone with the Wind* and, in carnivalesque style, 'Der Marsch ist in die Hose gegangen' (p.279). Despite the fact that Karl absents himself from this perverted version of Carnival, the rally still takes place and, like the Carnival in *Vf*, reinforces rather than weakens Nazi power. Nevertheless, Karl's absence is emblematic of the way in which the Fool in *DK* distances himself from the kind of grand gesture of subversion that a Carnival event is meant to involve in favour of individual, small-scale resistance. Fiske's theories on popular culture correspond exactly to this conclusion since he asserts that popular culture 'is most effective in the progressive and the micropolitical' (Fiske [2001], p.159). He also contrasts '[p]opular change' with '[r]adical social change', and according to his definition, radical social change 'results in a major redistribution of power in society, is often described as revolution (armed or otherwise), and occurs at relatively infrequent crisis points in history' (p.188). Finally,

Fiske questions whether 'any form of radical art has produced a discernible political or social effectivity' (p.191).

Although Fiske's argument is supported, say, by the 'Blutzeuge' episode in which Karl acknowledges the futility of open opposition to Nazism, at least two critics, Paver and Pinfold, expect Karl to enact 'radical social change' directly. Although Paver accepts Karl's role as a Fool up to a point, she makes assumptions that he will be 'subversive or anarchic' (Paver, p.9) - or in other words, her conception of the inherent nature of the Fool differs completely from my understanding of Karl as a much subtler, low-key, subversive figure. As Paver's assumptions about blatantly anarchic subversion means that Karl inevitably fails to accord with her concept of the Fool, she ends up doubting Karl's Fool-pedigree because 'to construct this reading [of Karl as a Fool] one needs to find evidence for the cinema explainer's subversive potential, and I have found none' (p.19). Then again, because Pinfold interprets Karl as an artist, she expects similarly explicit gestures of resistance on his part when she criticizes his parody of the Messianic myth of the artist. Although he cites Jesus twice ('Oh Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen?' [p.161] and 'Ich habe kein Zuhause' [p.162]),⁷⁴ Karl, unlike Oskar Matzerath, refuses to pose as Christ for a painting (see p.186) and thus, to Pinfold's mind, fails to accept the responsibility of serious artistry.⁷⁵ Or in other words, Paver and Pinfold lament the absence of grand gestures of resistance and they do so because they make assumptions about the role of the Fool and the artist that are, in my view, inappropriate to *DK*.

⁷⁴ Cf. the reference to Karl's 'Auferstehung' (p.189); Karl's claim that martyrdom was always his ambition: 'Märtyrer, sagte er, wollte ich immer werden. Schon als Kind, wenn mich einer fragte: Was willst du denn mal werden?, habe ich: Märtyrer! gesagt. Das bin ich dann ja auch geworden' (p.75); his prevention of his grandson's stoning of some sparrows (p.87) which subtly recalls John 8:7 (where Jesus invites 'one of you who is faultless' to cast the first stone at an adulteress) and Luke 12: 6 (where Jesus says: 'Are not sparrows five for twopence? And yet not one of them is overlooked by God'); and finally his 'Kriegsverletzung' which recalls Christ's spear-wound because it is located 'in Rippenhöhe links' (ibid.), is said to have been received centuries before (p.77), and, like stigmata, still hurts (p.76) and is 'rot wie frisch geschnitten' (p.77).

⁷⁵ Debbie Pinfold, *The Child's View of the Third Reich in German Literature*, p.168.

There are at least two reasons why the above expectations of Karl are misplaced and they are connected with the changing role of the Fool in post-1945 prose fiction (see Chapter 2) and the changed status of art in the postmodern era. To begin with, in a work that is centrally concerned with the depiction of resistance in literature on the Third Reich, Ryan claims that from the 1970s onwards, German authors invoked the Nazi past 'primarily to provide a kind of contrastive model for reflections on issues of current relevance' (p.16). *DK* must be read in the light of these considerations because, although Karl is a Fool, he provides a model for non-violent, non-anarchic resistance and a desire for change which both parallels the change in the Fool's role in post-War German prose fiction and is more appropriate to a modern, democratic society. So if Ryan is correct to argue that prose fiction like *DK* which deals with the Third Reich is meant to be relevant to the present - *pace* Paver's claim that 'Hofmann is not writing about his own contemporary society' (p.9) - then any violent acts of subversion in such a text would look dubious.

Similarly, if, as Sheppard claims, 'art itself becomes problematic' in the postmodern era when it is so difficult to define what constitutes art and what the value of art is,⁷⁶ then Karl's posturing as an artist and any lofty expectations of him become questionable. Indeed, *DK* itself thematizes the problematic status of art when Karl's wife launches a tirade against him in the middle of the novel. She refers - 'wegwerfend' (p.141) - to Karl's 'Kunst' which she sees as 'Lug und Trug' (p.140) and 'erstunken und erlogen' (p.141), and she attacks Karl by alleging that he thinks he is above the demands of real life, refuses to find 'eine[] ordentliche[] Tätigkeit' (p.140), and earns no money with his so-called art (pp.138 and 140): in *DK*, even those closest to Karl question the value and relevance of his art and realize, as Paver does, that Karl 'is patently not a representative

⁷⁶ Richard Sheppard, *Modernism - Dada - Postmodernism* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000), pp.354-5.

of the German intellectual classes, but rather an absurd working-class dilettante' (p.9). So, given Karl's amateurish artistry, self-delusion, and confused attitude to authority, and given the fact that *DK* explicitly thematizes the problematic status of art, it is unjustified to expect a flawed 'artist' like Karl to make grand, obvious gestures of resistance.⁷⁷ From a modern viewpoint, perhaps the most that we can expect is the imperfect, slow, low-key version of carnivalesque resistance embodied by Karl.

In *Vf* and *DK*, then, Gert Hofmann takes a wider perspective on the Nazi past which does not limit itself simply to the narrower issues raised by Nazism. Although I have made a case for seeing the anti-authoritarian pluralism of Karl's narration as oppositional, Karl's resistance to Nazism is actually so indirect that it is arguably more valuable to extract more general lessons from his activities. Or in other words, this generally pluralist attitude makes Karl's activities equally applicable to the present, just as *Vf* could be read as making a point about modern ecological concerns. Where *Vf* shows how Nature's destruction is linked to the destruction of ourselves and others, *DK* briefly reiterates this idea but goes further and demonstrates how one might begin to resist those destructive and often authoritarian forces. Karl does not naively believe that problems can be swiftly resolved by the individual acts of cinematic *Übermenschen*: rather, his subtle and indirect version of carnivalesque resistance arguably encourages the reader, like the cinema-goers, to develop critical, independent, anti-authoritarian attitudes. At the same time, Gert Hofmann is cautious enough not to suggest that even such low-key resistance is straightforward and, by pointing to Karl's self-delusion and

⁷⁷ Indeed, one wonders whether the same kind of glossy films that so enthuse Karl have also influenced critics like Pinfold and Paver in their assumption that resistance to Nazism ought to involve the spectacular efforts of one outstanding individual. After all, according to Sheppard (who cites Bruce Willis in his film *Armageddon* [1998] as just such an individual), the media in the postmodern era transmit 'the metanarrative of late capitalism according to which everything is constantly improving and there is no (mini-)disaster that cannot be put right or prevented from occurring again by initiative, hard work, money, and technology' (Sheppard [2000], p.358).

contradictions, shows us how the difficulty of escaping from one's own latent authoritarianism can militate against taking effective action for change.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

I shall begin this final chapter with a brief summary of the issues that I have discussed in this thesis. The purpose of this thesis has been to examine post-1945 German prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*. I have shown how few Germanists have adequately examined the role of the carnivalesque in such fiction or used Bakhtin's work systematically - which is one reason why my discussion of these issues can claim a certain originality. Carnival was as ambivalent a concept in the historical Third Reich as it is in *RW*, and the Germans clearly understood that Carnival embodied something important because both the Nazis and their opponents struggled for control of it. Accordingly, I have shown that although German post-War writers viewed Carnival ambivalently, they often used it and the phenomena associated with 'grotesque realism' as a means of dealing with the Third Reich. So, for example, in Chapter 2 I described how some authors immediately after the War deployed the carnivalesque in order to express what they saw as the brutality and irrationalism of the Nazis; conversely, other writers in the 1960s deployed the carnivalesque positively to subvert the compromised, dominant powers in West Germany at that time.

In Chapters 3 to 6 I focused on four authors who deploy the carnivalesque in a complex way that reflects the ambivalent meanings attached to Carnival by the authors discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, Hans Hellmut Kirst's *08/15* trilogy (1954-55) describes not only Asch's carnivalesque subversion of the NCOs who abuse power within the Army but also his subsequent development into a positive figure of democratically responsible authority. Günter Grass's *Hundejahre* (1963) deploys the carnivalesque to transmit a sense of mourning and rebirth after the Holocaust - even if that redemptive potential is veiled beneath the novel's bleak surface. Although the Fool-protagonist of

Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi & der Friseur* (1977) provokes the reader to laugh at earlier attempts to make sense of the Holocaust in order to prioritize the act of anamnesis as an end in itself, *NF*'s depiction of enduring violence in history suggests that Hilsenrath lacked Grass's tentative faith in the carnivalesque's powers of redemption. Chapter 6 examines Gert Hofmann's *Veilchenfeld* (1986) and *Der Kinoerzähler* (1990). Although *Veilchenfeld* is a carnivalesque signifier of Nature whose persecution at the hands of the people of Limbach parallels the town's ecological destruction, that carnivalesque imagery - as in *NF* - tells us nothing about how the problems identified in the text might be solved. Nevertheless, in *DK* Karl Hofmann does embody Carnival's redemptive potential because he is a Fool-figure who narrates silent films in order to encourage the development of critical faculties that oppose the fatalism and authoritarianism which hamper social change. Or in other words, I have shown how the authors of the above works deploy the *topoi* of the Fool and the carnivalesque productively and in very different ways to deal with a range of issues in the context of the Third Reich: the dangers of authoritarianism, the importance of mourning the past, the need for social and mental change, the threat of ecological disaster, and the abuse of power.

The New, Post-War Fool

In the light of the above summary, I want to draw two major conclusions, the first of which deals with the new form taken by the Fool in post-1945 German literature, and the second with the significance of *RW* for understanding such fiction. To begin with, when Paver argues that: 'it seems to me that [*DK*] alludes to the tradition of the fool without buying into it wholesale',¹ she is making a statement that is true not only of *DK* but also

¹ Chloe E.M. Paver, "Als Hitler und der Tonfilm kamen": Cinematic, Technological, and Historical Narratives in Gert Hofmann's *Der Kinoerzähler*', p.19.

of most of the texts I have discussed in this thesis, and certainly of the texts dealt with in Chapters 3 to 6. Paver's insight can be explained by at least two trends in prose fiction that deals with the Third Reich and the carnivalesque.

For a start, although critics like Paver have to a greater or lesser extent identified the protagonists of the texts in Chapters 3 to 6 as Fools, they have tended - except in the case of *NF* - to refrain from systematically exploring the Fool's function in those texts. Rather, they have limited their analysis to drawing superficial analogies between the Fool in question and various other carnivalesque figures (e.g. by viewing Asch as Til Eulenspiegel, or Karl Hofmann as Don Quixote, or Karl and Amsel as clowns) and have thus betrayed their uncertainty about the kind of Fool they are dealing with. This trend can be explained by the fact that although - as my detailed evidence has shown - these figures' superficial characteristics recall traditional Fools, they do not act according to the critics' assumptions about how Fool-figures ought to behave. That is to say, critics have overlooked the possibility that the authors of texts under discussion have redefined the Fool's role so that their activities are much less radical or obvious and thus make more sense in the context of post-War Germany. For example, Asch changes from a highly disruptive, classic Fool in *08/15 In der Kaserne* to an un-carnivalesque, responsible authority-figure in *08/15 Im Krieg*, and his only goal is to prevent the abuse of power in the Army, rather than to destroy that institution altogether. Although I have argued that Amsel's carnivalesque scarecrows in *HJ* laugh at authority indirectly, it is very difficult to establish their meaning with any certainty. Moreover, in my view the scarecrows also point to the much more important issue of confronting and overcoming the past productively and fearlessly and working towards psychological regeneration and rebirth. Then again, the Fool-figure in *NF* provokes the reader to laugh at ideas rather than specific people or institutions. Finally, Karl Hofmann's resistance to authority is subtle, non-violent and indirect, and involves narrating films inaccurately, so that he does

not obviously engage in activities which characterize the traditional Fool. Thus, the most interesting exponents of the carnivalesque have, like Grass in his Princeton speech of 1966, redefined the Fool to make the carnivalesque a more practical and democratic option in post-War society.

Then again, the idea that authors do not completely buy into the Fool-tradition is also reinforced by their use of other generic forms and traditions. In Chapter 2, for instance, although I discussed Degenhardt's *Zündschnüre* as a carnivalesque novel about anti-fascist resistance, it clearly owes a literary debt to the thriller-genre and adventure-stories. Then again, the *Märchen* plays a significant role in *Die Blechtrommel*, *HJ*, *NF* and *Vf*. Similarly, the Norn-like women in *DK* and Amsel's *Nibelungen* and Medusa scarecrows allude to mythology, whereas the militarily incompetent Hauptmann Witterer in *Krieg* and especially Matern in *HJ* are psychologically realistic characters. In short, the carnivalesque in the texts that I have analyzed is often just one of several competing generic elements. Accordingly, if, say, Max Schulz in *NF* can be interpreted both as a carnivalesque figure and as a character who alludes ironically to Hänsel's role in the *Märchen* 'Hänsel und Gretel', it is unsurprising that other such Fools do not behave as they have traditionally done, or that their activities appear veiled or distorted. In other words, none of the texts discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 are carnivalesque in every respect and are too complex to be reduced to a single, carnivalesque reading.

So if authors have redefined the Fool and made use of other genres and traditions along with the carnivalesque, and if they have used the carnivalesque in a variety of complex ways in the texts under discussion, it is not surprising that the carnivalesque in these texts does not map directly onto Bakhtin's *RW*. In such a context, it makes sense when Sheppard laments that 'After 1945, the picture becomes darker still inasmuch as post-war German writers have, on the whole, been concerned to show even more unequivocally how little room there is for either the genuine Fool or the oppositional

license of Carnival'.² By subsequently citing Grass's Princeton speech as evidence that there is no room for the Fool, Sheppard demonstrates that he is measuring post-War authors' deployment of the Fool and the carnivalesque strictly according to Bakhtin's definition. By such standards, Sheppard's generalization about the carnivalesque in post-War literature is accurate. But in Chapter 2, I argued that Grass does not dismiss the Fool altogether in his Princeton speech: rather, he redefines his understanding of the Fool so that the Fool makes sense in post-War, democratic Germany. Similarly, if Bakhtin's critics, as I made clear in Chapter 1, have identified several problems with *RW*, then they are implying that his ideas, too, need to be redefined to make sense in a modern context. All the above means that Sheppard's argument that the Fool and Carnival *as Bakhtin understood them* are virtually absent from post-War German literature is actually a *positive* development because, on my reading, it is a sign that authors have anticipated the problems of tapping into the Fool-tradition and have reacted sensibly to those obstacles by redefining the Fool-figure.

The Post-War Fool and Bakhtin

So which problems concerning Bakhtin's Carnival have these authors anticipated? To begin with, authors have instinctively understood that Carnival involved several problematic by-products that Bakhtin overlooked and have implicitly acknowledged those aspects in their texts. For instance, prose fiction on the Third Reich largely accords with the historical evidence which suggests that the Nazis successfully assimilated Carnival and used it for their own ends - in particular, for persecuting or humiliating their enemies. And critics of Bakhtin have argued that for all Bakhtin's attempts to attach an

² Richard Sheppard, 'Upstairs-Downstairs - Some Reflections on German Literature in the Light of Bakhtin's Theory of Carnival', p.309.

oppositional function to Carnival, it has often been co-opted by hegemonic cultures in order to control the people. Thus, Carnival (as an event) in the texts I have discussed can either serve to support the Nazi cause (as in *BT*, *Vf* and *DK*), or validate post-War moral amnesia (as in Ludwig's *Tausendjahrfeier* or Grass's 'Einer unserer Mitbürger, Prinz Karneval'), or allow unreconstructed Nazis to take revenge on their enemies after the War (as in Fritsch's *Fasching*). Accordingly, German authors have nurtured justifiable doubts about the Carnival event and have shifted its subversive role to the individual Fool-figure. Then again, critics have acknowledged that violence is a by-product of Carnival, and in the texts discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 violence for the sake of subversion is either quickly tamed (see Kirst's *Kaserne* and *Krieg*) or associated with the vengeful post-War aggression of Matern in *HJ*. Although Matern looks like an underdog who subverts a variety of guilty former 'Nazis' who enjoy power in post-War West Germany, *HJ* exposes such violence as hypocritical, unproductive and the product, ironically, of an authoritarian mentality which cannot confront feelings of guilt. Furthermore, the subversive elements of *NF* and *DK* have nothing to do with violence: *NF* involves encouraging the reader to laugh at and thus undermine a variety of theoretical assumptions about the Holocaust, whereas Karl Hofmann's subversion is also purely intellectual and involves the development of critical, anti-authoritarian independence. And although *NF* also deals with violence of a non-subversive kind - i.e. the endless violence that allegedly repeats itself throughout History - Hilsenrath laments the existence of such violence by associating it with the odious Max Schulz. Then again, like Bakhtin's critics, the authors discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 instinctively question the strict binarism which Carnival allegedly involves. Kirst shows Asch developing from a Fool to a positive figure of authority between *Kaserne* and *Krieg* and thus challenges both the strict division between high and low culture and the assumption that those in power necessarily deserve to be subverted. Then again, on my reading, *HJ* can be taken

to challenge Bakhtin's binarism because Matern had the *potential* to adopt a more carnivalesque attitude that might have saved him - a fact which confuses the issue of which half of the binarism he belongs to - but reverted to his self-destructive authoritarianism. Conversely, *DK* shows that while Karl tried to act independently, challenge authoritarian attitudes, and promote pluralism, he himself behaves in an authoritarian way on several occasions. Finally, *NF* casts doubt on the positive meaning that Bakhtin attaches to the carnivalesque: for although I have identified ways in which *NF* deploys carnivalesque laughter positively, the novel promises rebirth or regeneration only of the kind of violence embodied by Max Schulz. In other words, *NF* deploys the carnivalesque but contradicts Bakhtin entirely with its pessimistic conclusions about the future course of History.

The above authors, then, anticipate the critics' questioning of aspects of *RW* by implicitly identifying several shortcomings of Bakhtin's model of Carnival. But having said that, does those authors' use of the carnivalesque parallel Bakhtin's understanding of Carnival in any respect? To what extent is Bakhtin still useful as a theoretical model? In my view, the authors discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 match Bakhtin by associating the carnivalesque with popular cultural forms, the subversion of authority, and ambivalence.

To begin with, several of the texts discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 share an affinity with Bakhtin's Carnival in that they involve popular cultural forms. For a start, as Bance pointed out, Kirst's *Kaserne* involved the 'international' theme of the little man struggling against the military hierarchy and argues that the novel's success in translation was partly due to its 'picaresque form'.³ Moreover, while *DK* is an ordinary work of prose fiction, one of the strengths of Karl Hofmann's use of film as a medium for his resistance *within* the novel derives from popular cinema's non-élitism. It was a long time

³ Alan F. Bance, 'The Brutalization of Warfare on the Eastern Front: History and Fiction', in: Ian Higgins (ed.), *The Second World War in Literature* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986), p.107.

before the cinema was regarded in Germany as 'art' in any shape or form: it never took on the intellectual stigma that the art of high culture did and, as Elsaesser points out, the early cinema had a broad demographic appeal to women and men and the middle and working-classes alike.⁴ Then again, Hilsenrath is no cultural élitist and clearly felt that accessible, popular forms were appropriate for contemporary Holocaust literature. In a discussion in 1993, he dismissed survivor literature⁵ and stated his belief in the need for entertainment to keep readers interested in the Holocaust because his goal consisted in keeping the victims' memory alive:

Nach dem Krieg sind Tausende und Tausende von Büchern erschienen, meistens sehr schlecht geschrieben, von Überlebenden, die etwas aufgezeichnet hatten. Es war eine [...] Überschwemmung [...] Alles muß konsumierbar sein und unterhaltend. Wenn ich ein Buch in die Hand nehme, das mich langweilt, dann lege ich es nach drei Seiten wieder weg. Ich erfülle den Zweck nicht, wenn ich langweile [...] es [war] auch wichtig, daß das Thema nicht vergessen wurde.⁶

Accordingly, Hilsenrath wrote *NF* to be as popular, entertaining and accessible as possible. Quite apart from *NF*'s humour which no doubt 'unwittingly entertained'⁷ its readers, it involves those 'Ingredienzen der Massenmedien' against which Sautermeister fulminates - such as *NF*'s short, sharp sentences and its love of numbers, superlatives and stark contrasts. Sautermeister also claims that its language resembles mass-media headlines⁸ - presumably a reference to the text's liberal use of exclamation marks. But Hilsenrath knows that literature needs to keep pace with modern, popular forms of the mass media if it is to maintain the public's interest: after all, it was a popular American

⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Early German Cinema: A Second Life?', p.22.

⁵ Significantly, Hilsenrath himself expressed profound misgivings about writing his survivor autobiography in the acknowledgements section of his 'autobiographischer Roman' *Die Abenteuer des Ruben Jablonski* (Munich and Zürich: Piper, 1997) where he said: 'Ich hatte Hemmungen, diesen autobiographischen Roman zu schreiben, und nur der Überzeugungskunst meines Lektors Uwe Heldt und seinem sanften Zureden habe ich es zu verdanken, daß das Buch schließlich geschrieben wurde' (n.p. [p.4]).

⁶ Manuel Köppen (summarizer), 'Holocaust und Unterhaltung. Eine Diskussion mit: Edgar Hilsenrath, Michael Komar, Ursula Link-Heer, Egon Monk und Marcel Ophüls', in: Köppen (ed.), *Kunst und Literatur nach Auschwitz*, pp.107-12 (p.108).

⁷ Peter Stenberg, 'Edgar Hilsenrath and Jakov Lind meet at the employment office', p.646.

⁸ Gert Sautermeister, 'Aufgeklärte Modernität - Postmodernes Entertainment', pp.241-2.

television series, *Holocaust*, broadcast two years after *NF*'s publication in Germany, that marked 'the turning point in Germany's long-delayed confrontation with the Holocaust'.⁹ So Hilsenrath's deployment of mass-media techniques is just one more way of making his novel accessible, and *NF*'s commercial success suggests that it worked.¹⁰ Finally, although Grass's *Danziger Trilogie* is extremely challenging intellectually, the novels have undoubtedly struck a chord with readers since they have sold well globally.

Then again, in accordance with *RW*, the authors discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 have instinctively understood that the Fool and the carnivalesque involve the potential to subvert authority. Moreover, each of those authors has identified different ways in which an authoritarian mentality has caused problems for Germany and was still causing problems in the post-War period. For example, Kirst held up Hauptwachtmeister Schulz (in *Kaserne*) as an authoritarian bully who was responsible for the abuse of power in the Army that led to the persecution of junior soldiers; and Hauptmann Witterer (in *Krieg*) corresponds in many significant ways with the stereotypically authoritarian military leader described in Norman Dixon's *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*. Kirst deployed a Fool, Asch, against both of these figures because they embodied the residual authoritarian mentality that was still to be found in West Germany, and whose persistence after the War might have made the new Bundeswehr dysfunctional. Similarly, by using the Mitscherlichs' *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, I have shown how, in *HJ*, Matern's authoritarian personality might explain his attraction to the Nazis and his post-War inability to mourn. Grass deploys his Fool figure, Amsel, more subtly than Kirst inasmuch as Amsel does not subvert or humiliate Matern: rather, he arguably personifies the way in which Bakhtin's understanding of the carnivalesque involves embracing the death of the past which is followed by rebirth and laughing at the

⁹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p.213.

¹⁰ Ursula Hien, 'Schreiben gegen den Philosemitismus', p.241, n.28.

authoritarian figures who engender psychological taboos and anxiety among the likes of Matern. Accordingly, Amsel's character implies that Grass - perhaps unconsciously - was tentatively optimistic that Germany could successfully mourn its past and move on. Then again, *NF* and *DK* criticized a more subtle manifestation of authoritarianism. In *NF*, Hilsenrath used the degrading power of carnivalesque laughter to subvert a variety of totalizing theories which attempted reductively to make sense of the Holocaust. Similarly, in *DK*, Karl Hofmann's mis-readings of films provoke his audience to challenge his summaries with their own ideas about what is happening in order to make them realize that there is no single, 'correct' reading of a particular film. The authoritarianism of those who simplistically theorize the Holocaust or pin down a film to a single interpretation lies in their reduction of complex phenomena to a single, possibly convenient interpretation that brooks no contradiction.¹¹

Finally, I would argue that the authors discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 also understood that the carnivalesque generates ambivalence - even if that ambivalence manifests itself differently in each text. In my opinion, the ambivalence of Kirst's trilogy parallels *RW* most closely because destruction goes with rebirth: first, Kirst understood that the Fool's destructiveness and the subversion of the NCOs' authority can precede the re-creation of an improved and successful military unit, and second, Asch changes from a humble soldier to a responsible NCO - i.e. a Fool is elevated to a position of power and authority. Then again, *NF* is thoroughly ambivalent in a slightly different way. Although I argued that *NF* involves the destruction through laughter of a variety of reductionist ideas about the Holocaust for the constructive goal of returning the reader's focus to the victims, the novel also generates ambivalence in the reader's understanding of Max Schulz: he looks

¹¹ The notion of critical reading is not new to prose fiction dealing with the Third Reich. Alfred Andersch's *Sansibar oder der letzte Grund* (1957) involves the salvation of a wooden sculpture of a monk (Ernst Barlach's *Der lesende Klosterschüler*) who is reading a book with sceptical 'Witz' in his eyes which demonstrates the possibility of criticizing and questioning authority (Alfred Andersch, *Sansibar oder der letzte Grund* [Olten and Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1957], pp.54-5).

stereotypically Jewish but is a Gentile; he becomes a Nazi and then an Israeli; and he is a repellent figure whose actions we sometimes applaud because they expose the folly of attempts to make sense of the Holocaust at the expense of genuine anamnesis. Ironically, although *NF* is the most humorous of the novels I have analysed, its conclusions are the most pessimistic.

However, ambivalence is perhaps most interesting in the works of Grass and Hofmann because the full force of the carnivalesque can often only be identified by looking beneath the texts' realistic surface or the conventional readings of those texts. As a result, reading their work through Bakhtinian spectacles involves reading against the grain. For example, I have argued that the reader of *HJ* ought to challenge the reliability of the narrators of that novel. Although Harry Liebenau and Matern dominate two-thirds of the narration, they are demonstrably unreliable narrators who cannot confront the Nazi past and who misrepresent the heavily veiled, positive meaning of grotesque characters such as Amsel and Tulla. This means that in order to understand the role played by the Fool and the carnivalesque in *HJ* the reader has to acknowledge that several superficially realistic and negative episodes also involve highly significant, surreal elements that suggest an alternative, positive meaning. For example, most critics would agree that Tulla's persecution of Jenny in the snow can be read as a realistic example of the aggression of those with Nazi sympathies towards minorities like the Gypsies. Although I would argue that such a reading is entirely plausible, I have shown how, when the episode is read through Bakhtinian spectacles, it can be seen as an example of the ambivalent destruction and rebirth typical of Carnival, because Jenny emerges from her ordeal unharmed and blessed with excellent balletic skills. On my reading, then, an episode of brutality that is appalling when read in realistic terms becomes a symbolic episode involving rebirth and progress when read in Bakhtinian terms. Hofmann's texts are comparably ambivalent. Schlant, for example, reads *Vf* as a straightforward, realistic

account of Nazi persecution of a Jew and argues that it 'shows in concrete scenes what it meant to be a Jew in Germany at that time' and deals with 'the humiliation and crushing of an individual'.¹² But I have argued that Veilchenfeld is also a carnivalesque figure whose experiences say something about the destruction of Nature and allow Gert Hofmann to draw a contemporary lesson from the Holocaust. Likewise, *DK* could easily be read as a straightforward story about an ordinary *petit-bourgeois* who succumbs to the attractions of Nazism: accordingly, Pinfold reads Karl as a 'vain' failure with 'artistic airs' who uses his art for 'self-aggrandizement' and becomes a 'Mitläufer'.¹³ In contrast, although my reading allows for Karl's flaws and latent authoritarianism and therefore can embrace Pinfold's reading, I have found evidence which suggests that Karl also personifies a subtle way of resisting authority and that, for all his deficiencies, his attitudes transmit an optimistic world-view to the reader so that, once again, a superficially pessimistic novel suggests a tentative solution to the problems that it identifies. Or in other words, I do not mean my own readings to cancel out those of previous critics: rather, I have tried to show that a carnivalesque reading can make a text more complex and challenging either by identifying a second level of understanding of a text (as in *Vf*), or by foregrounding the veiled imagery of rebirth that follows destruction as a contrast with the text's more gloomy, surface meaning (as in *HJ*), or by showing how the Fool figure very subtly undermines a certain kind of authority and offers a way of escaping from authoritarian attitudes (as in *DK*). In short, these authors 'agree' with Bakhtin that the carnivalesque has something to do both with combating authority and with ambivalence: but Grass, Hilsenrath and Hofmann have a much more sophisticated understanding of the variegated, often indirect forms that authority can take; Kirst sees that authority in certain forms can be a good thing; and Kirst, Grass and Hofmann all

¹² Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence*, p.186.

¹³ Debbie Pinfold, *The Child's View of the Third Reich in German Literature*, p.168.

accept that rebirth may follow destruction and that the carnivalesque may offer a chance to overcome the problems of the past. But unlike Bakhtin, those three authors veil that possibility of rebirth and see regeneration as a slow, tentative process.

Beyond German Literature: Commercialization and Marginalization

I want to finish this chapter by mentioning briefly some of the ways in which the carnivalesque and the Nazi past have coincided since the 1960s *outside* German prose fiction. Moreover, I shall show how Carnival is still a powerful force today beyond the concerns of the Third Reich. In my view, both Carnival and Nazism are exploited simultaneously in two major ways: first, like Carnival, the Nazi past has become commercialized, and second, again like the imagery of ‘grotesque realism’ associated with Carnival, Nazism has been used to marginalize groups or ideas.

To begin with, the trivialization of the Third Reich identified at the end of Chapter 2 implied that some writers had gradually lost sight of the complexities of the Third Reich. Lipstadt contends that ‘the irrational [i.e. the irrationalism associated with Nazism] has a fatal attraction even to people of goodwill. It can overwhelm masses of evidence and persuade people to regard the most outrageous and untenable notions as fact’.¹⁴ Arguably, Lipstadt’s description in her book of the appeal of the irrational, the fashionable liberalism towards *any* intellectual opinion, and the trivializing habits that have arisen in recent decades might account for the wider commercialization of Nazism, a phenomenon to which Schmitz refers when he says: ‘the acceleration of contemporary life endangers memory while the media maelstrom with its demand for continuous

¹⁴ Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p.181.

feeding threatens to turn [the Third Reich] into yet another consumable product'.¹⁵ The historian Michael Burleigh made a similar point when he wrote of a 'fetish' for Nazism in Britain with which publishers collude, 'content in the commercial certainty that they can sell a ton of books decorated with a swastika'.¹⁶ In my view, such commercialization has nurtured an entirely new kind of carnivalesque figure, namely the liars - or trickster-figures - who seek to exploit the Nazi past for commercial ends. I say this because several such people - even several decades ago - have tried to deceive public opinion for profit. Lipstadt claims that the 'relativistic approach to the truth has permeated the arena of popular culture, where there is an increasing fascination with, and acceptance of, the irrational' (pp.18-19) and cites the conspiracy theories about the murder of John F. Kennedy as an example. But her remark applies just as easily to conspiracy theories about Nazism. For instance, Whiting describes some of the rumours, stories and theories about the ultimate fate of Martin Bormann: the testimony by one 'Herr Graf' who allegedly saw Bormann at Otto Skorzeny's Command HQ at the end of the war; claims made by Erich Karl Wiedwald that he had lived on Bormann's farm in Brazil; and Reinhard Gehlen's allegation that Bormann became a Soviet spy after the war.¹⁷ Then again, there is Ladislav Farago's book in which he claims to have met Martin Bormann in South America: but he seems to have been tricked because Bormann's skeleton was eventually found in Berlin in 1972 (see Whiting [1996], pp.217-9).¹⁸ In another book,

¹⁵ Helmut Schmitz, 'Introduction: National Socialism and German Culture in the 1990s', in: Helmut Schmitz (ed.), *German Culture and the Uncomfortable Past: Representations of National Socialism in Contemporary Germanic Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp.1-10 (p.5).

¹⁶ Michael Burleigh, 'Don't let the Nazis occupy your mind', *The Sunday Times* (15 December 2002), [News Review], p.2.

¹⁷ Charles Whiting, *The Hunt for Martin Bormann: The Truth*, revised edn. (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 1996), pp.113, 148-58 and 161-91. Whiting discusses the sightings of Bormann and theories about his whereabouts from p.97 onwards.

¹⁸ Ladislav Farago, *Aftermath: Martin Bormann and the Fourth Reich* (London: Hodder, 1975).

where Whiting discusses similar allegations about the *Gestapo*-chief Heinrich Müller,¹⁹ he also attacks the ‘laughable case’ of Christopher Creighton’s ‘ludicrous book’ according to which Bormann was smuggled into Britain by Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond, and lived in Reigate (p.135)!²⁰ But most sinister of all is the story of a genuine Nazi war-criminal, Klaus Barbie, who, as ‘Klaus Altmann’, extracted money from the *Stern*-journalist Herbert John to introduce him to Martin Bormann in Bolivia before trying to frame John as a cocaine dealer.²¹ As a final example of this indulgence in trickery and folly, the commercialization and fetishism of the Third Reich produced yet another Fool: Konrad Kujau, the forger of the so-called ‘Hitler Diaries’ in 1983, whom Gitta Sereny described as a ‘crooked clown’.²² Kujau had made his fortune selling Nazi memorabilia to West Germans, and when he forged the diaries, he was simply exploiting the market for collectable, atomized fetishes that are no longer perceived to embody the evil of Nazism.²³ Ironically, the serious historian Hugh Trevor-Roper identified the diaries as genuine, whereas it took the derided historian David Irving to

¹⁹ Charles Whiting, *The Search for ‘Gestapo’ Müller: The Man without a Shadow* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2001). Whiting mentions, for example, two separate stories about Müller living in Albania and, according to *Stern*, working for the KGB (see pp.218-9), and laments the ‘gullible people [...] who still believed in conspiracy theories and governmental cover-ups’ (p.136) and how “‘Chequebook journalism’ was already flourishing and it helped those who might profit from such largesse to believe in the most impossible of plots’ (p.170).

²⁰ For a satirical dismissal of both Creighton and Farago, both of whom were paid large advances for their stories, see Whiting (2001), p.4. The text in question is Christopher Creighton, *Op.JB* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

²¹ See Magnus Linklater, Isabel Hilton and Neal Ascherson, *The Fourth Reich: Klaus Barbie and the Neo-Fascist Connection* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), pp.309-10.

²² Gitta Sereny, *The German Trauma: Experiences and Reflections 1938-2001*, revised edn. (London: Penguin, 2001), p.168. Cf. Sereny’s references to Kujau as ‘the prison clown’ and ‘a good confidence trickster’ (pp.169 and 171) and to ‘the clown’s poise’ (p.170). Sereny’s account of the Hitler diaries scandal is on pp.162-193. See also Charles Hamilton’s *The Hitler Diaries: Fakes that Fooled the World* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), in which he refers to Kujau as ‘the courtroom jester’ (p.164) during a fraud trial that was ‘a real slapstick affair’, ‘a comedy of crooks’ (p.153). Hamilton quotes the famous historian Norman Stone’s appraisal of the diaries: ‘This reads like a “Charlie Chaplin” Hitler’ (p.70).

²³ According to Hamilton, this fetishism for fascism has existed for decades: in an analogous incident, two Italian women had tried to sell forged diaries by Mussolini in 1957 but were convicted of fraud (p.114).

identify them as forgeries! So with some justification, the story became a comic film in Germany and a TV satire in Britain.²⁴ But Sereny concludes:

The real danger the “Hitler diary” phenomenon has uncovered is that the only acceptable Nazi past may now be a prettified one, like the film *Holocaust* or the belief that the forging of “Hitler diaries” or of anything else connected with that period, is a petty crime, or indeed no crime at all but a joke, and the characters connected with it comical figures. The real Hitler and his legacy is something the world cannot bear to face (pp.192-3).

In my view, Sereny is overstating the problem: it is not that the world cannot bear to confront Hitler and his legacy. Rather, as the issue of the Nazi past became less volatile and thus open to trivialization, it could be used to appeal to the public’s shallow fascination with the irrational²⁵ and thus become increasingly exploitable from a commercial point of view, a trend which bred a new group of tricksters. So just as some people have exploited Carnival for commercial purposes (Sheppard [1990], p.311), others have been able to exploit the Nazi past for financial gain. Indeed, the commercial exploitation of the carnivalesque and Nazism coincided in sinister circumstances when a McDonald’s restaurant opened in 1997 within a mile of Dachau concentration camp on land once used for forced labour. McDonald’s, of course, have used the clown Ronald McDonald for decades for marketing purposes. In response to protests in 1997, the

²⁴ Sereny names neither the film nor the TV satire. The film is Helmut Dietl’s *Schtonk!* (1991), the title of which refers to one of the words Charlie Chaplin often uses in *The Great Dictator* when mimicking Hitler’s speech-making; the TV satire is *Selling Hitler* (1991), starring the alternative comedian Alexei Sayle.

²⁵ It is worth speculating on the reasons for the fascination in which both Carnival and Nazism are held by the public. According to the Mitscherlichs, Nazism offered the Germans the opportunity to satisfy fantasies of omnipotence and aggressive drives by erecting appropriate targets in the form of enemies of the state such as Jews (see e.g. *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, pp.34 and 62). Similarly, Carnival promises the fulfilment of fantasies involving the humiliation of authority, violence and sensual excess. Carnival’s excesses are, like Nazism’s, inappropriate to modern society - which arguably makes the promise of indulging in those excesses all the more appealing. Thus, people’s instinctual enthusiasm for both phenomena may stem from a tacit acknowledgement of the promise of drive-satisfaction that Carnival and, much more sinisterly, Nazism offer.

McDonald's Corporation denied that it was trying to profit from the Holocaust, despite distributing leaflets reading: 'Welcome to Dachau and welcome to McDonald's'.²⁶

Moreover, Nazism has been trivialized to such an extent that the Nazi past is now exploited in yet another way, namely for purposes of marginalization. Following Stallybrass and White's use of *RW*, I argued in Chapter 2 that some authors of prose fiction distanced themselves from Nazism by depicting Nazis as the clowns and Fools who are typical of 'grotesque realism'. Accordingly, when I say that Nazism is used for 'marginalization', I mean that in my view people sometimes marginalize groups or ideas by associating them with Nazism. The germ of this trend lies in the student protests of the 1960s when some students took an undifferentiated view of their political opponents by attacking 'the "fascist" behaviour of the authorities of the present' (Schlant, p.82). But such reductive labelling appears to be even more prevalent today - especially outside Germany. For example, in a book review in which he describes fascism as 'a carnival of unreason', Eagleton points out that 'In some leftist circles, the word [fascism] is lobbed loosely around to vilify anyone in the cramped space to the right of Conrad Black [the right-wing former owner of *The Daily Telegraph*]'.²⁷ Moreover, John Laughland has argued against closer ties with Europe by claiming - reductively, in my view - that 'there is a certain overlap between two currents of thought - Nazi and modern pro-Europeanism - whose antecedents [the title of Laughland's book] reach back in European intellectual

²⁶ For details of the controversy, see Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001), p.233. McDonald's franchisee Oscar Goldstein first conceived Ronald McDonald as a marketing tool in 1963 and by 1965 McDonald's were introducing him to the USA in a major advertising campaign. Thus, in the same period when student protesters and hippies were appropriating Carnival for their attempts to effect change, the capitalist forces some of them wanted to overthrow were exploiting young people's affinities with the carnivalesque to reinforce their own financial power. Thus, Schlosser implicitly ascribes the success of the clown as a marketing ploy to the drug-culture of the 1960s: 'there was something trippy about Ronald McDonald, his clothes and his friends' (p.41).

²⁷ Terry Eagleton, 'A carnival of unreason' [Review of Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*], *New Statesman* (3 May 2004), pp.36-7 (p.36).

and geopolitical history to well before the outbreak of the Second World War'.²⁸ More generally, Finkelstein complains of the 'sheer vulgarization' of the Holocaust and comments that 'one is hard-pressed to name a single political cause, whether it be pro-life or pro-choice, animal rights or states' rights, that hasn't conscripted the Holocaust'.²⁹ Or in other words, Finkelstein means that advocates of political causes, by comparing their plight to that of Holocaust victims, have implicitly compared their opponents to the Nazis as a way of demonizing them.

Just as the commercialization of both Nazism and Carnival can happen simultaneously, there are instances in which the marginalizing and demonizing power of laughter - a component of Bakhtin's 'grotesque realism' - coincides with the marginalizing force of being associated with Nazism. But here at least that coincidence of laughter and Nazism usually involves a benign version of the marginalization described above. For example, Monty Python's 'North Minehead By-election' sketch is not only an attempt to laugh at the Nazis, but also a humorous demonization of the British Conservative Party: according to the sketch, because North Minehead is a safe Conservative seat, the Nazis would be extremely popular with the electorate there. Then again, there is Norman Spinrad's hilarious novel *The Iron Dream* (1972)³⁰ which satirizes the science fiction genre by making explicit the connections between the concerns of that genre and fascist wish-fulfilment. Finally, Mel Brooks's film *The Producers* (1967) laughs at the decadent tastes of New York musical-goers when a musical about Hitler - which is intended to be a flop - proves to be extremely popular with Broadway audiences because of its absurd trivialization of the Third Reich. So in

²⁸ John Laughland, *The Tainted Source: The Undemocratic Origins of the European Idea* (London: Warner Books, 1998), p.80. Laughland devotes an entire chapter (pp.11-80) to establishing the connection between Nazi ideology and advocacy of European unity. Cf. Anon., 'The history of an idea', *The Economist* (3 January 2004), pp.24-6.

²⁹ Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, p.144.

³⁰ Norman Spinrad, *The Iron Dream* (Birmingham: Toxic, 1999).

all three cases, the authors have associated the concerns of one particular group - the Conservatives, science fiction enthusiasts, and Broadway audiences - with those of the Nazis themselves as a way of laughing at and gently marginalizing them. Or in other words, there is evidence that Nazism as a concept has begun to perform some of the same functions as Carnival and the carnivalesque: namely, making money and marginalizing people or ideas.

The Carnivalesque Today: Beyond German Literature

But for all the above descriptions of the parallels between the uses to which Carnival and the Third Reich have been put, it would be reductive to dismiss altogether the power of the genuinely carnivalesque in the present day. Just as interest in the Third Reich today is not limited to demonizing people and making money, so Carnival still performs a positive function outside the context of the Third Reich. Although the carnivalesque is exploited by the commercial world, there are signs of a revival of Carnival's former powers not only as part of other countries' attempts to confront and deal with their own traumatic recent pasts, but also in the areas of popular culture and grass-roots activism.

To start with, there is evidence that the carnivalesque is used in the present to ease the psychological pain of war in a way that follows on from earlier, non-German attempts to cope with the pain of the Holocaust. It seems that it is only outside Germany that one finds examples of Jewish characters explicitly deploying the carnivalesque as a way of anaesthetizing the pain of their suffering during the Holocaust - perhaps because German authors realized that that avenue was closed to them. Or in other words, these non-German authors feel confident in promoting what might be called a benign *Verharmlosung* of the Holocaust. To my knowledge, there is only one author of German

fiction - who is well-known for his ambivalent sense of national and religious identity³¹ - who could be included in this group, namely Jurek Becker in his *Jakob der Lügner* (1969).³² At least one critic has identified Jakob as a *Schelm*,³³ and I would further argue that he functions as a trickster-figure whose lies are designed to trivialize the danger which threatens his fellow ghetto-inmates - but to the positive purpose of maintaining optimism. But there are more, non-German examples of authors who describe such a 'benign' *Verharmlosung*. For instance, Des Pres, discussing the Holocaust, refers to the 'medicinal power' and 'survival value' of one aspect of the carnivalesque, namely laughter.³⁴ Moreover, the American Jerry Lewis's (unfinished) film *The Day the Clown Cried* (1972), Czech-born Israeli author Avigdor Dagan's novel *The Court Jesters* (1989), Italian Roberto Benigni's film *La Vita è bella* (1998), and Justin Butcher's play *Scaramouche Jones or The Seven White Masks* (2001) all involve scenes in which a clown or clownish figure uses his skills to amuse those who are about to be executed in the Holocaust in order to ease their fear and pain.³⁵ I mention these cultural and fictional examples to do with the Holocaust because they feed into the activities of other, real clowns in the present day who have used the carnivalesque in other countries to help people overcome their own traumatic historical past. For instance, Danny Kaye, probably the best-known and most successful cinematic clown of the 1950s, devoted the

³¹ See Jurek Becker, 'Mein Judentum', in: Becker, *Ende des Größenwahns* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), pp.9-21 (first published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [13 May 1978]); and Becker, 'Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich' in: *Ende des Größenwahns*, pp.177-202 (first published in *Die Zeit* [20 May 1994]).

³² Jurek Becker, *Jakob der Lügner* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1969).

³³ Nancy Lukens, 'Schelm im Ghetto - Jurek Beckers Roman *Jakob der Lügner*', in: Hoffmeister (ed.), *Der moderne deutsche Schelmenroman*, pp.199-218.

³⁴ Terence Des Pres, 'Holocaust Laughter?', in: Lang (ed.), Berel Lang (ed.), *Writing and the Holocaust* pp.216-33 (pp.218 and 219).

³⁵ See Avigdor Dagan, *The Court Jesters*, translated by Barbara Harshav (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), p.42, and Justin Butcher, *Scaramouche Jones or The Seven White Masks* (London: Methuen, 2002), pp.28-9. Dagan's novel involves a variety of carnivalesque figures and is much more complex in its engagement with the carnivalesque and the Holocaust than I have been able to show here. In Benigni's film, I am referring to the second half in which Guido tries to distract his son, Giosué, from the fact that they are imprisoned by pretending that the camp itself is part of an ongoing game. Finally, for details of Lewis's film, see: <http://www.subcin.com/clownspy.html>.

last three decades of his life working for UNICEF entertaining orphaned and impoverished refugee children in the Third World.³⁶ Moreover, the UN have reportedly used a clown to help to preserve the peace that has broken out in Liberia after fourteen years of sporadic civil war:

With his comic wooden glasses, baggy britches [*sic*], oversized shoes and white-painted face, Boutini the clown seems an unlikely front man for a disarmament campaign. But in Liberia, many of the soldiers who need to be disarmed are children. At a “sensitisation” meeting last weekend in Bo Waterside, a sleepy town on the border with Sierra Leone, Boutini reduced a gaggle of ex-fighters to giggles with his slapstick routine. Then he urged them to “Hand in your guns”.³⁷

Similarly, in April 2004 the political activist Jo Wilding toured Iraq with her travelling circus to bring both laughter and medical supplies to people there in order to help them deal with the hardship of life after the Allied invasion of 2003.³⁸

Then again, the carnivalesque is not limited to healing the psychological wounds of the past. Rather, it is also being deployed actively to achieve social progress and to promote democracy. For instance, Roger Boyes wrote of ‘a comic revolution in Germany’ in his report on the International Humour Congress in Stuttgart in 2003, ‘a concerted attempt to discover whether humour can be socially useful’.³⁹ Elsewhere in the world, Jesse Dean Bogdanoff, an American who was appointed Jester to the King of Tonga in May 1999, allegedly defrauded the King of \$27 million and disappeared. The Tongan people have criticized the King for allowing himself to be robbed and are now questioning the feudal political system that allows him to rule undemocratically, to the extent that Bogdanoff may have become ‘an unwitting catalyst for democratic change’.⁴⁰

³⁶ See UNICEF’s own account of Kaye’s work: http://www.unicef.org/people/people_danny_kaye.html.

³⁷ Anon., ‘Of killers and clowns’, *The Economist* (31 January 2004), pp.53-4.

³⁸ See the account of Wilding’s work in Iraq at: http://www.awakenedwoman.com/garland_wilding.htm. See also Wilding’s website: <http://www.circus2iraq.org>.

³⁹ Roger Boyes, ‘Germans encouraged to laugh by the Ministry of Silly Walks’, *The Times* (3 May 2003), p.19.

⁴⁰ Christopher Goodwin, ‘Pacific Heist’, *The Sunday Times Magazine* (27 April 2003), pp.48-54 (p.50). Coincidentally, Bogdanoff’s name points to his role as a kind of saviour for the Tongan people since it means ‘gift of God’ in Russian.

And finally, since 2002 the Anti-Nazi League has restored Carnival to its natural opposition to authoritarian Nazism as part of the League's 'Love Music Hate Racism' campaigns: their stated aim is to 'build a counter-culture to the Nazis, with gigs, festivals and street parties', 'a vibrant alternative to the Nazis'.⁴¹ So there is evidence that people understand that Carnival's potential can still be harnessed to achieve important, contemporary political goals and is relevant to contemporary issues by healing the pain of the past and indicating ways of progressing in the future.

⁴¹ 'Love Music Hate Racism: Carnival Against the Nazis' (Anti-Nazi League leaflet [2002]); for more details of the campaign, see the ANL's website: <http://www.anl.org.uk>.

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