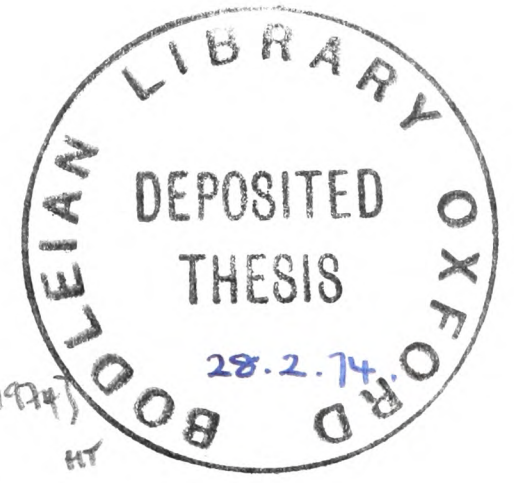
CARL STERNHEIM'S AESTHETICS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

Rhys W. Williams

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the
University of Oxford



Michaelmas Term 1973 [ie 1974] HT

Jesus College
Oxford

ABSTRACT

A brief introduction raises some of the methodological difficulties involved in a study of the relationship between a writer's literary theory and his practice. The use of the term "aesthetics" is justified, and some of the deficiencies in previous critical accounts of Sternheim's theory are noted. The ambiguity in Sternheim's theoretical statements, it is argued, corresponds closely to the conflict inherent in his creative work between criticism and affirmation.

The first chapter is devoted to a discussion of aspects of Sternheim's aesthetics up to 1906, his ideas being placed in a wider intellectual context. When Sternheim treats a conventional conflict between art and life in his early plays, his artist-hero does not come into serious conflict with society; it is the conflict between the artist's private life and the demands of his vocation which is central. Sternheim's treatment of the theme reflects the ambiguity inherent in the aesthetic itself. Secondly, neo-Romantic elements in his early work are isolated and it is shown that these continue to form one pole of his theory even after he has abandoned his early view of art as the expression of powerful feelings. Finally, his early efforts to evolve formal categories around 1904-1906 are recorded. These insights—derived from his acquaintance with the work of Heinrich Wölfflin and applied largely to the visual arts—fail to answer Sternheim's needs, but serve as a prelude to his encounter with Heinrich Rickert's philosophy.

In the second chapter the background and sources of Sternheim's aesthetic theory are examined. This entails a detailed account of the impact on Sternheim of Rickert's philosophy in 1906. The implications of his encounter with Rickert's work are assessed and it is found that he acquires additional impetus at this time from his reading of Nietzsche. Indeed, his interpretation of Rickert is coloured by his enthusiasm for some of Nietzsche's ideas. A central scene in Don Juan is interpreted in the light of Sternheim's new position, and the importance of his theoretical insights for his dramatic practice is underlined. Finally, three central concepts derived from Rickert--"Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit", "das Besondere" and the doctrine of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte"--are examined and their subsequent vicissitudes in Sternheim's theory traced. This account supplies the terms of reference for later chapters.

In Chapter III the central problem of Sternheim's work--the issue of whether it represents satire or affirmation of bourgeois values--is considered. Some widely divergent critical appraisals are noted, and it is argued that such conflicting interpretations reflect the characteristic ambiguity of his work. A section is devoted to Sternheim's theoretical statements on drama, and his idiosyncratic view of Molière's comedy is shown to reflect his own assumptions about the nature of comedy, assumptions which he embodies in his own plays. His insistence on the indirect social function of comedy (as distinct from overt didacticism) is shown to conflict with his view of the artist as the dispassionate chronicler of events and thus to reflect Sternheim's own ambivalent position. The major part of this chapter is devoted to Sternheim's renewal and adapta-

tion of Classical comedy, as illustrated by his four most successful comedies: Die Hose, Der Snob, Bürger Schippel and Die Kassette. The recent view that Sternheim's work portrays the realization of the hero's "eigene Nuance" is shown to have a very limited application, and the presence of satirical features is shown to conflict with the claim that Sternheim is in no sense a satirist. In conclusion it is argued that the peculiar tension between criticism and affirmation, satire and comedy, is the hall-mark of Sternheim's work.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the debate in Europa between a phenomenological approach and a didactic, committed approach, a debate in which Sternheim formulates the opposite poles of his own aesthetic. It is argued that justice can be done to his position only if both conflicting viewpoints are taken into account. A section is devoted to the four major debates on art in Europa, in the course of which Sternheim's indebtedness to Hugo Ball is demonstrated. In a second section Der Rheinländer is analysed as a characteristic example of a Sternheim short story; it is argued that Sternheim revised the earlier versions of the story for inclusion in Europa in order to reinforce the ambiguity and make it a more effective test-case for discussion by the main protagonists. A third section considers the French and German literary traditions, as seen by Sternheim; they are used to represent the opposite poles of aestheticism and political commitment between which the action of Europa fluctuates. In the next section some images, symbols and motifs in Europa are examined: they are seen to fall into the broad categories corresponding to the Rickertian scheme which Sternheim adopted in 1906. The co-presence

of the affirmative idyll and overtly satirical passages is illuminated by this same scheme. In a final section Sternheim's theory of aesthetic "Proportion" is expounded, its connection with his image of Flaubert is outlined and its relevance to his general theory is explained.

In an analysis of Gauguin und van Gogh a second major debate between a phenomenological approach and aestheticism is examined. Sternheim's image of Van Gogh, as reflected in his essay of 1910, the Legende of 1916 and Gauguin und van Gogh itself is traced, his indebtedness to Meier-Graefe's studies, to Van Gogh's letters and to Gauguin's autobiography being recorded. Gauguin und van Gogh is submitted to detailed analysis: Van Gogh is shown to embody a phenomenological approach, Gauguin aestheticism, and an attitude to society is shown to correspond to each aesthetic. The polemical intention behind the work, the attack on Meier-Graefe and F. M. Huebner, is illustrated and explained. Finally, Sternheim's use of Van Gogh as a mouthpiece for his own experimental theory is discussed in the light of the contemporary image of Van Gogh. It is argued that in Gauguin und van Gogh the form of the debate enables Sternheim to express adequately the problematic nature of his own aesthetic. If he sides with Van Gogh, he is fully aware of the coherence of Gauguin's rival position. If this debate is taken in conjunction with that found in Europa, then it is clear that Sternheim is concerned to establish his own aesthetic with respect to both political commitment and aestheticism.

In the last chapter Sternheim's language is considered. His various reflections are placed in the context of his general aesthetic theory. His insights into the problematic nature of language as a literary

medium, as attested by his correspondence with Blei, are discussed. A second section illustrates Sternheim's attack on the ideological bias of bourgeois language and his efforts to demythologize it, to produce a literature free from "Metaphern". This is shown to reflect a prevailing mistrust of language. Finally, aspects of Sternheim's literary style are examined: two versions of Meta, that of 1916 and that of 1926, are compared and the variants related to Sternheim's theoretical aims. Some general principles are extrapolated from the emendations to Meta: Sternheim attempts to record events baldly, with a minimum of psychological explanation; and by deleting articles, adverbs and adjectives, he strives towards universality. The tension between Sternheim's tendency towards the general and his efforts to chronicle events is related to the ambiguity of his theory. The view that the injunction "Kampf der Metapher" implies a rejection of all imagery is refuted. The language of the comedies is then briefly discussed and his treatment of the theme of language is seen to express a prevailing mistrust of language.

A brief conclusion reiterates the view that Sternheim's theory is best expounded in the unresolved debates on art, and that the creative work reflects the same ambivalence on the author's part. It is in the balance of criticism and affirmation in the comedies that his vision finds its most memorable expression. In style and structure, then, Sternheim's literary practice is sanctioned by theoretical statements which are at once more consistent and more complex than critics have hitherto realized.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am pleased to acknowledge the invaluable guidance and encouragement of Mr. Derrick Barlow, under whose supervision this thesis was completed. I am also grateful to Miss Margaret Jacobs for her advice during the early stages of my research. My thanks are also due to Professor Wilhelm Emrich, for additional material, to Dr. Manfred Linke, for permitting me to see some of the manuscript of the hitherto unpublished 10th volume of the Gesamtwerk, to Dr. Rudolf Billetta, and to the staff of the Literaturarchiv des Schiller-Nationalmuseums, Marbach am Neckar.

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INTRODUCTION

Any study which proposes as its subject the relationship between a writer's creative works and his theoretical statements about those works, or about literature or art in general, must be prefaced with the following warning: there is no necessary connection between theory and practice. There are no grounds for assuming that a finished work is ever the perfect realization of a prior intention, or that such an intention can ever be fully known.[1] No writer has ever established a reputation solely on the basis of his statements of intent. Despite this perhaps obvious caveat, however, it is possible to show that a writer's reflections on art in general, his literary predilections, his habits of thought and his intellectual interests shed light on his creative works and make them more accessible. While the consideration of material and facts extraneous to the work itself can never replace a close reading of the text, it can make such a reading more informed. It must be stressed from the outset, then, that I make no attempt to relate Sternheim's theoretical ideas and his creative work causally. Theory and practice evolve simultaneously, constantly stimulating and shaping each other. A given work may, indeed, embody certain principles

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1. The arguments against "the intentional fallacy" are set out by W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley in their essay of that name in The Verbal Icon, London, 1970, pp. 3-18.

already established in theory, yet it may equally contradict others, throwing up new problems, with which later theoretical essays will attempt to come to terms.

A brief comment is apposite here on the nature of Sternheim's theoretical statements. They are contained in a series of polemical essays and articles,[1] in his correspondence[2] and, not least, in his creative works themselves. To abstract a theory from a play or novel, using it as a scheme into which those works may then be fitted, appears to entail a circular argument. But in Sternheim's case the procedure is less problematic than it might at first seem. Many of his creative works contain an explicitly theoretical element. Either because he is concerned to justify himself and his approach, or because he wants to clarify his ideas, by projecting them into two characters who then debate the issues involved, Sternheim can seldom resist the temptation to introduce into his works a discussion of aesthetic problems. Even some of his comedies contain ironized and humorous expositions of his own theories. The nature and function of art, the rôle of the artist, the

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1. See vol. 6 of the Gesamtwerk, ed. W. Emrich, Neuwied, 1963 ff., 10 vols., the last four volumes (of which the final volume has yet to be published) being edited by W. Emrich and M. Linke. All subsequent references are to this edition, unless otherwise stated; the volume number and page reference will be given in round brackets in the text, e.g. 8,371 refers to volume 8, p. 371.

2. The complete correspondence between Sternheim and his second wife, Thea, was not available to me. On Frau Sternheim's death in 1971 it was deposited at the Schiller-Nationalmuseum in Marbach and will not become available until 1978, the centenary of Sternheim's birth. I have made use of the published excerpts, notably 6,466-84, 7,796-800, 7,802-6 and 7,812-19.

appropriate response of the spectator, these constitute a central theme of Sternheim's work. Two works in particular, Europa (1919-20) and Gauguin und van Gogh (1923), contain lengthy debates on literature and painting respectively. An examination of these works reveals that statements found in them may be adduced as evidence of Sternheim's own position only with extreme caution.

The term "aesthetics" has been used to denote Sternheim's more general observations on literature and painting, in addition to his comments on specific works of art, including his own. I deem the term appropriate because of the unique position which art occupies in his scheme. If he is himself rather reluctant to use the term, it is because he comes to associate it with German Classicism and with what he regards as the unwarranted transference of prescriptive rules for taste into an area which is free of such rules. Nevertheless, if one considers what is meant by Sternheim's claim that art combines the methods of history and the natural sciences, it becomes clear that there are close parallels between his ideas and more traditional aesthetic notions. Art, for Sternheim, succeeds in portraying the universal in the concrete, the species in the individual; it makes visible the collisions between freedom and necessity, between individual fulfilment and social determinism; and it performs an indirect social (not to say educative) function by restoring the harmony between these two spheres of human life which day to day existence jeopardizes. Furthermore, Sternheim's phenomenological theory—the notion that the spectator should approach the empirical world, or the work of art, without preconceptions, without

practical commitment—seems to be a more modern restatement of Kant's view that aesthetic appreciation is disinterested. I do not claim for a moment that Sternheim puts forward a radically new aesthetic, but that the language which he uses to describe the creative process and the work of art itself helps to place him in relation to prevailing currents of thought and points to some persistent problems, which leave their imprint on his creative work. Despite a genuine and abiding interest in philosophy, Sternheim is not a philosopher; nor are his ideas on aesthetics developed systematically. Nevertheless, some basic, coherent arguments may be extrapolated from his essays, articles, letters and comments and a clear picture built up of the shifts in his thinking.

The issue of a development in Sternheim's thinking points to one of the main deficiencies in recent criticism. The problem raised by the failure to take account of the changes in his position is well illustrated by W. Wendler's otherwise admirable study.[1] Wendler rightly draws attention to the importance of Sternheim's theoretical statements, noting the striking disparity between his self-confessed aims and the prevailing critical evaluation of his achievement. But what Wendler himself proclaims as Sternheim's position is largely derived from observations which Sternheim makes in the period 1918-1923. By insisting that all his creative works lack satirical elements, that they are concerned to demonstrate the fulfilment of the unique individual, and by citing the author's statements of intent as confirmation of his interpretation,

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1. Wolfgang Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966.

Wendler has, paradoxically, discredited rather than reinstated the theory. More recent critics, unable to accept that Wendler's interpretation holds good for the early comedies Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben, have responded by dismissing Sternheim's theory as erroneous or irrelevant.[1] It is no coincidence that Wendler's book deals almost exclusively with Sternheim's narrative prose, and that those critics who disagree with him most vehemently do so in the context of a discussion of the early comedies. Wendler fails to show that Sternheim revalues and reinterprets his pre-1914 work from the perspective of a phenomenological theory which he arrives at only after 1914-15. Given his later conviction that art should have no "Tendenz", Sternheim is forced to deny any satirical or critical intention in the early comedies written between 1909 and 1914. His reappraisal of the function of the "bürgerlicher Held" around 1920 tells us more about his thinking at this date than about his earlier treatment of his hero. For this reason, then, the attempt will be made here to trace the chronological development of Sternheim's views. If the chronological sequence is occasionally interrupted it is in order to show the continuity of certain central preoccupations.

Sternheim's theory is of interest on another count: it mirrors a dilemma which lies right at the heart of Expressionist aesthetics. His own fluctuation between aestheticism and political commitment is representative of a prevailing ambivalence. By 1906 Sternheim is convinced that

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1. This negative reaction is illustrated by R. Brinkmann, "Sternheims Komödie 'Bürger Schippel'", in Das deutsche Lustspiel, ed. H. Steffen, vol. 2, Göttingen, 1969, pp. 103-24.

art provides "Erkenntnis", knowledge of the essential structure of reality, of the interaction of a socializing rationality and an instinctive, intuitive individuality in man; art not only portrays the conflict between these two sides of man's nature, but redresses any imbalance between them. After 1914-15 Sternheim's political awareness increases and his views begin to coincide with those of the more politically orientated of the Expressionists. He shares their desire to transform bourgeois society through art, to shock the bourgeoisie out of its habitual modes of perceiving the world. Their aim is—Lukács views it from an ideological standpoint in his general indictment of Expressionism[1]—rather to alter the way in which reality is apprehended than to set about changing the unpleasant political realities themselves. The proclivity towards aestheticism, first apparent in Sternheim's youthful enthusiasm for George and the young Hofmannsthal, then begins to reassert itself in his insistence on the primacy of art, even over politics. Even his conviction that the artist should be totally subservient to his model, to the reality which he depicts, is tempered (Lukács would have said invalidated) by his creative method. By permitting the artist to select, shape, even dislocate social reality, in order to bring out its notional essence, Sternheim once more lays himself open to the charge of dilettante aestheticism. And his phenomenological approach to art, when it is carried over into the world of action, results, as Carl Wundt's behaviour in Europa illustrates, in passivity, in an aesthetic detachment from life.

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1. Georg Lukács, "'Grösse und Verfall' des Expressionismus", in Probleme des Realismus, Berlin, 1955, pp. 146-83.

To the writers who aligned themselves with Pfemfert's Die Aktion, Sternheim's political commitment is clearly suspect. In a critical assessment of Der Nebbich (1922), Max Herrmann-Neisse can lavishly extol his "radikale kritische Stellungnahme zu gegenwärtigem Weltzustand",[1] yet condemn three acts of the play ". . . weil der Verteidiger des Bestehenden sie als Bestätigung seiner Auffassung auszulegen vermag".[2] The ambivalence of Sternheim's attitude raises a general problem, as the reviewer himself observes:

> . . . wir Künstler, die wir zur AKTION gehören, hatten uns doch vorgenommen, nicht Kunst um der Kunst willen ausschliesslich zu treiben, sondern mit unsrer Kunst zur Revolutierung der Geister beizutragen, einen gesinnungshaften Standpunkt zu vertreten.[2]

This kind of response to Sternheim's work is neither untypical, nor without its justification. But if his standpoint is ambivalent, Sternheim is quite aware of the fact and gives expression to it in his theory. His theory illustrates his efforts to pick his way carefully between the extremes of aestheticism and doctrinaire polemic, between the two tendencies inherent in Expressionism. His list of Die zwölf wertvollsten Bücher (1921) reflects this polarity; he can admire at once Ludwig Rubiner and Gottfried Benn, Franz Blei and Heinrich Mann.[3] An artist first and foremost, Sternheim would nevertheless have subscribed to what a recent critic has called the adversary intention of modern art, the

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1. Max Herrmann-Neisse, "Die Uraufführung von Carl Sternheims 'Der Nebbich'", Die Aktion 14 (1924), Nos. 3-4, col. 88.

2. ibid., col. 89.

3. See 6,175-76.

belief "that a primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture . . . and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgement".[1]

The ambiguity in Sternheim's theory, then, is not born of intellectual confusion; it springs from the unceasing conflict in his mind between uncommitted aestheticism and social responsibility. And it is a corresponding fluctuation between affirmation and criticism, comedy and satire, which is the hall-mark of his creative work. Outwardly, at least, Sternheim adopts a traditional comic form, but in effect he reverses it unexpectedly, crucially shifting its perspective. The audience finds its expectations confounded, its assumptions questioned. With his basically affirmative comic vision he combines the penetrating insights of the social critic. His overtly political phase after 1914-15 heralds a decline in his work; it brings his ambivalence out into the open. Henceforward it becomes a theoretical problem. The conflicting tendencies in his position become increasingly polarized; his development of the doctrine of the "eigene Nuance", with its primitivism, its flight from an effete European civilization, is a symptom of this polarization. His creative works tend to become more schematic, to contain more theory, to be more obviously divisible into two distinct aspects: affirmation and criticism. It is in his early comedies written in the period 1909-1914—precisely when the balance between the two poles of his aesthetic is most delicately poised — that his most notable successes are achieved.

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1. Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture, London, 1966, p. xiii.

I. STERNHEIM'S AESTHETICS UP TO 1906

Looking back in 1919 on his literary achievements to date, Sternheim sought to account for the fact that success came to him comparatively late. Not until he was thirty-one, he explains, ". . . fingen . . . Mitmenschen an, mich zu packen".[1] When he began Die Hose in 1909 he had been committed to a literary career for well over a decade; but it was only after a period of introversion, of isolation and self-questioning—prompted, he insists in the same article, by his social background, and exacerbated by his initial lack of success—that he finally achieved his breakthrough to comedy. In a sense, then, Sternheim's adoption of the comic form coincides with Hofmannsthal's transition from neo-Romantic self-absorption to what he called "das erreichte Soziale"[2] of the comedies. The truth of Sternheim's self-appraisal (and the aptness of an analogy with Hofmannsthal) is borne out by his intense concern in his early work with the problem not simply of becoming a writer, but of becoming the kind of writer on which he modelled himself at that time. For a decade he tended to see himself as a lyric poet in the style of George, as a dramatist in the manner of the young Hofmannsthal. While his literary efforts before 1906 are of no great intrinsic merit, they are of interest for two reasons: issues raised in them are to crop up in different form in

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1. See Schöpferische Konfession, 6,93.

2. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Aufzeichnungen, ed. H. Steiner, Frankfurt am Main, 1959, p. 226.

his later theory; and they permit his work to be placed in a wider literary context. Sternheim never entirely abandons some of the assumptions about art which he acquires around the turn of the century.

The approach adopted in this chapter differs somewhat from that employed elsewhere in this study. Any attempt to place Sternheim's work within the general intellectual framework of "Lebensphilosophie" has the obvious drawback that it tends to deal in vague generalities. Even around the turn of the century the term "Leben" could mean different things to different people. Yet, in justification, it may be argued that this approach is conditioned by the nature of the subject. In his formative years, up to 1906, Sternheim was open to very general influences; his ideas were largely unoriginal and eclectic, his work often derivative. What is peculiar to his own position may be discerned more readily if his ideas are measured against prevailing assumptions, both intellectual and aesthetic. This venture into "Geistesgeschichte" has the second virtue of pinpointing elements of Sternheim's early work which are carried over, in modified form, into his later writings.

The period of German literature between 1890 and 1910 has aroused considerable critical interest in recent years. While there appears to be a measure of agreement on what is meant by the terms Naturalism and Expressionism, the period of transition between the two has attracted a variety of labels: literary impressionism, neo-Romanticism, symbolism, aestheticism, "Fin de siècle" and "Stilkunst" or "Jugendstil".[1] The

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1. See R. Hamann and J. Hermand, Deutsche Kunst und Kultur von der Gründerzeit bis zum Expressionismus, 5 vols., Berlin, 1959 ff.; D. Jost, Literarischer Jugendstil, Stuttgart, 1969; and J. Hermand, Der Schein des schönen Lebens, Frankfurt am Main, 1972.

obvious explanation for the plethora of terms is the sheer multiplicity of styles; indeed, the attempt to evolve a set of purely stylistic criteria—often by analogy with the visual arts, as is the case with the fashionable term "Jugendstil"—has not proved particularly successful. A cultural-historical approach is more rewarding, with an equal emphasis on thematic elements, on the shared intellectual assumptions of writers with quite distinct styles, and here the now less popular term neo-Romanticism and the broader historical description "Dichtung der Jahrhundertwende" come into their own.[1] While each of the terms listed above pinpoints a specific feature of some writing at this time, a broader term is necessary to convey the underlying unity of the period.

What, then, are the characteristics of turn-of-the-century literature? Broadly speaking, one may define it as a reaction against Naturalism. Some naturalistic techniques do, it is true, anticipate subsequent developments,[2] yet the rejection of a crudely mimetic style, of a materialist philosophy, is implicit in the work of writers as different as George and Wedekind. But the notion which perhaps best illustrates the fundamental unity of the literature of the period under discussion is that of "Leben". W. Rasch states categorically:

> Leben ist das Grundwort der Epoche, ihr Zentralbegriff. Vielleicht noch ausschliesslicher geltend als der Begriff Vernunft für die

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1. See W. Rasch, Zur deutschen Literatur seit der Jahrhundertwende, Stuttgart, 1967; and E. Ruprecht, ed., Literarische Manifeste der Jahrhundertwende, Stuttgart, 1970, pp. i-xlii.

2. W. Emrich, "Die Struktur der modernen Dichtung", in Protest und Verheissung, 3rd ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1968, p. 122, rightly points out that Holz's "Sekundenstil" invariably results in a kind of impressionism.

> Aufklärungszeit oder der Begriff Natur für das spätere 18. Jahrhundert.[1]

Life is felt to embody ethical, metaphysical and artistic values. It is conceived of as a dynamic flux, an older Romantic notion about the fundamental unity of all things being reinforced by more recent scientific discoveries, which point to reality as a physical or biological continuum. The problem lies in the way in which "Leben", this underlying reality, is apprehended. Scientific positivism, it is felt, distorts reality by translating it into a spatial, quantitative model, splitting it up into isolated phenomena and hence forfeiting any sense of underlying unity. Faced with this fragmentation of consciousness (of which commercial and industrial life are frequently seen as social symptoms), artists feel that it is incumbent on them to restore the lost connection between things, to evolve a mode of apprehension capable of grasping the qualitative richness and variety of life, as well as its unity. It is thus that, for Sternheim, artistic creativity can be explained by analogy with epistemology.

The "Lebensphilosophie" of Nietzsche, Dilthey and Bergson is generally accepted to have been the source of this notion of life, and it is Nietzsche, too, who gives expression to the ambiguous relationship between art and life which such a notion implies. P. Böckmann has summed up this ambiguity succinctly:

> So lässt sich Nietzsches Bedeutung für die literarische Situation nur genauer fassen, wenn wir uns klar machen, in welchem Verhältnis

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1. W. Rasch, op. cit., p. 17.

> er Dichten, Denken und Leben sieht; das Dichten sieht sich durch das Erkennen, die Wissenschaft in Frage gestellt und zugleich durch seine Bedeutung für das Leben auf eigentümliche Weise gerechtfertigt. Die Möglichkeiten wie die Gefährdungen der modernen Kunst kommen deshalb durch Nietzsche zu neuer Bewusstheit.[1]

Viewed negatively, art reflects the problem of consciousness, hampering, through its contemplative nature, the artist's complete immersion in the process of living. The conflict between art and life in Ibsen's plays, or the contrasting types of the "Künstler" and "Bürger" in Thomas Mann's work, may be seen to reflect this negative pole.[2] On the other hand, art itself is felt to be an expression of the creative powers inherent in the flux of life, and hence to provide a more direct and immediate awareness of life, by-passing the rational process. It is this positive pole to which Hofmannsthal refers:

> Gegenüber der eigentlichen Trennung, Feindseligkeit von Dichten und Leben, die Ibsen vielmals ausspricht, jene uns näherstehende Auffassung zu setzen, wie in einem Brief Immermann sie ausspricht: Ist Dichten etwas anderes als Leben in höchster Potenz?[3]

This art-life antinomy—in fact, a false antithesis, as its treatment in literature at the turn of the century invariably reveals—is the basis of an aesthetic problem which preoccupies Sternheim up to 1906.

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1. Paul Böckmann, "Die Bedeutung Nietzsches für die Situation der modernen Literatur", DVjs, 27 (1953), p. 80.

2. See T. J. Reed, "'Geist und Kunst': Thomas Mann's Abandoned Essay on Literature", Oxford German Studies, 1 (1966), pp. 53-101. Reed shows that Mann's more usual antithesis of "Geist" and "Leben" is matched, in an essay of 1909, by a contrast between "Geist" and "Kunst". Art thus occupies an ambiguous position, now allied to "Geist", now to "Leben".

3. Hofmannsthal, Aufzeichnungen, ed. cit., p. 145.

(i) The artist-hero and the theme of art and life.

The young Sternheim's desire to justify his artistic vocation and clarify its problematic nature finds expression in the creation of heroes, or central characters, who are artists of one kind or another. The chief protagonist of Die Sonne sinkt (1898) is, as the inclusion of one of his compositions is meant to establish, a lyric poet, as is Werner Belling in the fragment Das Entscheidende (1897), who similarly provides an example of his work. Carl Bernholm in the fragment Madonna (1895-96) is an aspiring painter, engaged on a "Madonna and Child" and seeking a model from life. Even the aristocratic Hans Joachim von Drewitz, in the play to which he gives his name, has dabbled in what appears to be photographic realism in his youth, and later in the action he resolves to dedicate the rest of his life to art.[1] Bender in Erlösung (1899) and Arnold in Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott (1903) are both sculptors; and both Wendstedt in Auf Krugdorf (1900-1) and Herster in Der Heiland (published in 1898) are dramatists. Nor is music neglected: Walter Hentig in Der Trottel (1901-2) is an aspiring composer. To this list may be added the numerous poets, painters and sculptors in the prose sketches. What is significant here is not merely the profusion of young artists, but the recurrence of the same problem of the relationship between art and life.

In both Erlösung and Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott the dependence of the artist on intense personal experience is explored; an experimental

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1. See 8,227.

divorce of art from life is intended to show that the creative urge suffers if it is deprived of active involvement in the process of living. In both plays the setting is conveniently isolated from social reality, and the artistic medium, sculpture, represents a pure aestheticism. If Erlösung is set in a Berlin suburb, the only indication of the metropolis outside is provided by the brief incursions of Bender's model and his housekeeper. For the rest, Bender's niece, Lise, explicitly refers to the rarified atmosphere of artistic seclusion, wondering "ob es nicht gerade verkehrt ist, dass er sich hier in der Einsamkeit verkriecht" (8,244). In Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott Arnold, too, draws attention to the fact that the action is hermetically sealed against the outside world:

> Es war die gesegnetste Idee unseres Lebens, aus den Städten hier in diese totale Einsamkeit hinaus zu fliehen. . . . Als ich das einsame Haus auf der einsamen Insel sah, wusste ich's im ersten Augenblick: Hier oder nirgends. (8,602)

Implicit in both these plays is a view of art as the expression of intensely felt personal experience. The very isolation of the artist is the source of the problem, for he needs renewed contact with life, new experience, if his creative urge is to be rekindled. In both cases it is a woman who effects the required renewal.

Bender, the artist-hero of Erlösung has achieved public acclaim for an early work based on personal experience. The statue, entitled "Kindesmörderin", was inspired by the suicide of a mistress whom he had abandoned. From this early success he derives an artistic credo:

> Alles, was man kann, kann man durch das Leben. Talent allein ist nichts. Bei einer Frau aber ist immer dieselbe Gefahr: weil sie nichts erlebt, leistet sie nichts. (8,248)

It quickly becomes clear that the connotations of "Leben" are here predominantly sexual, and hence Lise, herself an aspiring painter, can reply with some justification that men depend on women for this experience. Here the negative side of the artist's gift is given prominence: Bender realizes that to exploit personal relationships by transmuting them into art is to forfeit ordinary human happiness. Lise, who accepts the primacy of art, considers such an exploitation valid; she tries to persuade Bender to rescind his decision to abstain from further sexual adventures. Her argument is entirely consistent. Bender has already admitted that he still longs to create a masterpiece, yet creativity, he has himself admitted, presupposes intense personal experience. But Bender is not altogether to blame when he interprets Lise's counter-argument as a sign of her willingness to be the instrument of his salvation. She, stunned by his declaration of love, puts him to a test: he must choose between art, in the shape of a recent work of his, and life, epitomized by her love. Since he has already expressed misgivings about the statue in question, he understandably elects to destroy it and hence fails the test. He places life above art. Yet the last moments of the action, when the stage is flooded with light, suggest a reawakening of his vitality which might yet prove productive for his art. To the last the ambiguity is preserved.

Erlösung reflects an ambivalent attitude to the theory of artistic creativity which it expounds. Lise views art as a gift, betokening rich experience of life. Both she and Bender accept without question that personal experience is the pre-requisite of art. Yet Bender can also

claim that an artistic vocation precludes fulfilment in life. The dilemma is that art is both the crystallization of intense experience and a disqualification from further experience. The problem cannot be resolved in the play; it is inherent in the aesthetic itself. A brief comparison of Erlösung with Ibsen's The Master Builder (1892) reveals how Sternheim, while ostensibly seeking to examine the antithesis between art and life, is drawn towards an affirmation of art as a direct expression of life. Like Hilde Wangel in Ibsen's play, Lise represents physical beauty, youth and vitality; like Hilde she thirsts for experience. But, while Hilde consistently represents the claims of life, Sternheim's Lise is made a painter in her own right and as such embodies conflicting claims. The central symbol of Ibsen's play is that of climbing a tower; as Wilson Knight puts it,[1] Solness is faced with the problem of climbing as high as he can build, of living out his art. The dizziness which he experiences as he climbs symbolizes the fact that his art is seen as containing dangerous elements likely to trouble the conscience. The conflicting claims of art and life are thus sharply focussed in the central symbol. Bender's symbolic destruction of the statue in Erlösung seems intended to signify the victory of life over art. In fact, however, he chooses between a mediocre statue and the possible masterpiece which Lise's love may well inspire him to create. The "Erlösung", the reawakening to life, is simultaneously a rekindling of creative powers. Although the conflict between art and life is stated to be Bender's problem, there is, in the

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1. G. Wilson Knight, Ibsen, Edinburgh, 1962, p. 85.

last resort, no real conflict.

The same problem is explored in Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott. Arnold, having once achieved fame with a successful work, entitled "Mutter Erde", has retreated from the world, only to find that his creative powers have deserted him. He claims that Agathe's beauty inhibits him, that it represents a perfection already within his grasp, mocking his efforts to create comparable beauty in a statue. Agathe accepts this diagnosis and concludes: "Unerfüllbar muss ich dir wieder sein" (8,614). While Arnold is willing to forget about art and to settle for emotional fulfilment, Agathe is adamant (as was Lise in Erlösung) that art comes first. She insists that she does not love him as an ordinary human being, but as "den gottbegnadeten Künstler" (8,617). Forcing Arnold to agree to a period of separation, she destroys her beauty in an act of self-mutilation and claims, on his return, that she may now inspire him to works reflecting the darker side of life:

> Zu einem Werk, das die andere Seite des Lebens ebenso gross und überzeugend darstellt, bist du vielleicht auch darum bis heute nicht gekommen, weil du die Abgründe des Lebens nicht kanntest. (8,638-39)

Agathe obviously accepts the prime importance of personal experience in artistic creation, and, in order to fulfil her self-imposed function as the inspiration of Arnold's art, she is forced to live out the anguish which he apparently needs. But even physical suffering is not enough for Arnold; he claims that all along it was her spiritual perfection, rather than her beauty, which had inhibited him. Accepting this, Agathe is prepared to sacrifice even her moral dignity: she offers herself to the

gardener, the embodiment of soulless physical beauty. The sight of this further suffering combines with the destruction of his earlier masterpiece (which had likewise suggested a serene and soulless beauty) to give Arnold new creative impetus.

The negative side of the art-life antithesis emerges here in the physical suffering which Agathe undergoes. Yet, in an earlier version of the play Sternheim brings out this conflict more forcibly. In this draft Arnold envisages a statue representing misunderstood genius, at which Agathe explicitly draws attention to the dilemma of those who would inspire such art:

> Man könnte . . . ein Weib zu des Künstlers Füssen legen, das er, wahrend er nach dem Beifall der Welt schreit - achtlos zertritt. (8,855)
>
> Aber ich denke an diese armen Gefährtinnen der Künstler, die ohne Freude an den Werken der Kunst, jedes Schaffen glühend hassen und die grossen Gedanken erwürgen möchten, weil jeder neue den Gatten mehr und mehr ihrer Seele entfremdet. (8,856)

If Sternheim omits this passage from the final version, it is to concentrate on the positive side of the Neo-romantic aesthetic, on art as the crystallization of experience. Arnold suffers no pangs of guilt at exploiting his personal life for the sake of art. In neither version of the play does he appear to understand Agathe's feelings. Indeed, in the final lines of the play he can make the arrogant claim: ". . . bei der Arbeit, bei solcher Arbeit, bin ich ja tausendmal grösser als du" (8,668). Once he has been stimulated by the experience of Agathe's suffering, once his creative urge has been rekindled, the model itself has no further relevance to the work.

It is instructive to compare Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott with

Ibsen's When We Dead Awaken (1899), which has clearly influenced its conception. Not only does Sternheim's artist-figure bear the same name, Arnold, as Ibsen's Professor Rubek, but the theme is virtually the same.[1] In Ibsen's play the conflict between art and life is clearly reflected in the constellation of characters. There are two female figures: Rubek's wife, Maia, and his model, Irene, who years before has posed for Rubek's masterpiece. Maia represents sexual fulfilment, Irene artistic inspiration. Ibsen thus separates the two functions which Sternheim concentrates in Agathe, whose inner conflict thus becomes central to his play. Ibsen's Rubek is constantly aware of the conflicting claims of art and private fulfilment, whereas only once does Arnold voice a similar sentiment:

> Sollen andere Bilder aus Stein machen, wir halten uns an das Leben. (8,618)

This is more the expression of frustration, of momentary doubts about his vocation, prompted by his lack of inspiration, than of deep insight into the problematic nature of his art. Rubek, on the other hand, looks back on a life consecrated to art and on the conscious decision to renounce emotional fulfilment:

> Professor Rubek (again serious): It was this, that all the talk about the artist's vocation and the artist's mission, and so forth, began to strike me as being very empty, and hollow, and meaningless at bottom.
>
> Maia: Then what would you put in its place?
>
> Professor Rubek: Life, Maia.[2]

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1. This is noted by the editors of the Gesamtwerk; see 8,854.

2. Henrik Ibsen, The Collected Works, ed. William Archer, London, 1907, XI, 396.

In Ibsen's play Irene puts forward the views of a woman whose fate it was to serve as inspiration for the artist, rather than to be loved for her own sake, views echoed by Agathe in the earlier draft of Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott. Irene has never forgotten her hatred for Rubek the artist, whose dispassionate gaze transformed her beauty into art, but alienated her. Only when he ceases to be an artist is she prepared to love him. Sternheim's Agathe, by contrast, insists that she loves only the artist in Arnold. In Ibsen's case the conflicting claims of art and life pose a serious problem for the artist-figure; for Sternheim, art is justified at any price, and if there is a conflict, then it is found in the woman who would inspire the artist. This basic difference is reflected in the respective conclusions of the two plays. While Rubek is united with Irene in a final affirmation of life, transcending death itself, Arnold, in Sternheim's play, is inspired to new artistic achievements. In Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott, as in Erlösung, the destruction of an earlier masterpiece does not signal the unequivocal triumph of life over art, but, paradoxically, the rekindling of creative drives.[1]

In Auf Krugdorf Sternheim examines the problems which such an artist-figure encounters within society. Wendstedt is a social success: his published volume of short stories, "Aus einer jungen Ehe", betokens wide experience of life, gained, we are led to believe, largely at first hand.

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1. Sternheim's weakening of Ibsen's central symbol also indicates his different response to the theme. In When We Dead Awaken the mountain landscape signifies heightened experience of life; Sternheim reduces mountain-climbing to a mere euphemism for sexual love and hints darkly of the dangers of over-exertion for a consumptive (8,601-7). Agathe is shown to be reluctant to climb the mountain lest Arnold be distracted from his artistic mission by sexual passion.

Yet he is never slow to stress the prior claims of art, and when he recalls the breakdown in his marriage, the stage-direction runs as follows:

> Aus diesen Worten muss der ganze Jubel des Künstlers klingen, über dessen Schaffen lange ein unfreier Hauch gelegen hat. (7,142)

When his private life threatened to encroach on his art, it was sacrificed. Wendstedt admits to Anna, his friend's wife:

> Das ursprüngliche Wesen von ehemals, der harmlose einfache Mensch in mir hat dem Dichter weichen müssen, der nie harmlos ist, sondern in jedes Menschen Antlitz ein Drama liest oder hineindichtet. (7,160)

This is as explicit a statement of the art-life antithesis as can be found in Sternheim's early work. But again it is merely a conventional statement; its truth is not borne out by Wendstedt's actions, for nowhere is his heart-searching in evidence. It is simply that he prefers to observe the marital problems of others, rather than participate in an unsatisfactory marriage himself. He claims that events on the Krugdorf estate have provided him with material for a play on the theme of marital infidelity,[1] the implication being that the artist is a parasite, feeding off the experience of others. In fact, however, Wendstedt's account of his projected drama suggests that he has actually been inspired not by his friend's marital difficulties, but by his own unhappy experiences. The action flagrantly contradicts the stated theme. The real emphasis is on art as the crystallization of personal experience, and not on the conflict between the artist and the social milieu which he claims to exploit.

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1. This projected drama bears a distinct resemblance to Sternheim's own Hans Joachim.

Ernst Herster,[1] the artist-figure in Der Heiland, is not merely a passive observer of the marital problems of others, but is actively engaged in seducing the lady of the house, a situation which Sternheim is to use again in Die Hose. Herster, like Wendstedt, is a man of the world, a raconteur of dubious anecdotes. Any conflict between art and life is again sharply focussed on the female character. Julie is prepared to love the artist in Herster, but warns him against forgetting the prior claims of art. He, in turn, exploits her notions about art, intentionally misinterpreting a kiss intended to encourage the artist:

> Ernst eifrig: Ja wer sagt Ihnen denn aber, dass ich den Kuss als Mensch und nicht als Vorschuss für den Künstler verlangte?
>
> Julie: Gott, das konnte ich doch nicht unterscheiden! (7,49)

Despite her persistent rejection of Herster's advances, Julie's marriage is threatened by her desire to inspire a great work. Herster's Napoleon-drama seems calculated to overcome her doubts: in this projected play a woman, carried away by the genius of a great man, sacrifices her husband to that love.[2] Ironically events by no means correspond to Herster's wishful thinking and Julie's marriage is preserved by the timely discovery of his true intentions. In Der Heiland, then, the artist-figure exploits his art to facilitate his amorous adventures, a procedure which can succeed only if the woman in question shares the view that art must be inspired

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1. The name Herster was adopted by Sternheim as a pseudonym for Glaube (1895-96); it appears to be a contraction of Her(zog) and Ster(nheim), Hans Herzog being a childhood friend of Sternheim (see 8,703). This detail serves to underline the autobiographical element in Sternheim's early work.

2. There are some parallels between this project and Sternheim's own Napoleon-drama, entitled Fallende Blätter (1895).

by personal experience. But the treatment here is slightly ironic. Julie's husband is well aware of her tendency to indulge in theatrical posing and recalls the early days of their marriage:

> Sie fand das Glück an meiner Seite nicht, von dem sie geträumt hatte und zeigte mir den ganzen Tag das Gesicht, das sie ja aus Ibsen, Sudermann und wie die Brüder alle heissen, kennen. (7,62)

Later in life Sternheim is to criticize the way in which the theatre of this period distorted reality, encouraging the audience to derive their patterns of behaviour from literature; and looking back, in 1936, he claims:

> Jede Notarsfrau in einem Provinznest kam sich wie Ibsens "Nora" verkannt vor, jedes Fräulein wand sich in Strindbergkrämpfen.[1]

The introduction of Julie's husband, a practical, sensible man, with a down-to-earth assessment of his wife's fashionable affectation of domestic unhappiness, is much more in keeping with the conventional treatment of the art-life antithesis.

In Die Sonne sinkt the theory is advanced that only unfulfilled desire is suitable inspiration for the artist. The poet, discovering that he is not loved for his own sake, experiences the requisite amount of suffering to enable him to complete a poem, the final line of which has previously eluded him. Again the treatment of the theme underlines the ambiguity inherent in the aesthetic: the creative suffering is here occasioned not by the poet's neglect of his art in the interests of a deeper immersion in life (which is stated to be the problem), but by his realization that he is not loved for himself. The pain of unfulfilled

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1. Vorkriegseuropa im Gleichnis meines Lebens, Amsterdam, 1936, p. 59. Subsequent references are to this edition, the title being abbreviated to Vorkriegseuropa.

love is also shown to be a necessary component of art in Der Trottel, where, as the title suggests, the composer, Walter Hentig, is not taken too seriously.[1] Once again Sternheim contrasts the practical man of the world with the inhibited and gauche artist-figure. The final lines of the play are worthy of note:

> Ellen reisst sich schliesslich los, macht ein paar Schritt zur Thür. Kehrt um zu ihm, nimmt seinen Kopf, küsst ihn lange und ist dann wie der Blitz zur Thür hinaus.
>
> Walter steht stumm und ganz befangen noch einen Augenblick: "Oho!" sagt er dann und geht zur Thür, die er verriegelt findet. "So?" und sieht sich selig um im Raum. Sieht auf dem Boden ihre Handschuhe, die auf seinem Notenblatt liegen. Eilig hebt er beides auf. Sieht auf das eine, auf das andere, und es reisst ihn zum Instrument. Es entströmen ihm die letzten Reihen seines Liedes, und herausgejauchzt erklingt nun auch das Letzte, Gesuchte:
> "Es war, als lächelte der Heiland". (8,544)

This episode prefigures the wholly ironic scene in Die Hose, where Frank Scarron tears himself away from Luise in order to transmute his emotions into art. Indeed, Scarron shares all the intellectual assumptions of Sternheim's early artist-heroes: he champions Nietzsche, cites Heraclitus' description of life as a dynamic flux,and bases his art on "Erlebnis", which he invests with quasi-religious significance and expresses in improbable metaphors. It is only after 1906, after Sternheim has distanced himself from his own neo-Romantic view of art, that a wholly ironic portrait of such an artist becomes possible. But it is significant that the antithesis between the artist and the practical realist is retained in Scarron's relationship with Theobald Maske.

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1. Walter is, however, engaged on setting to music Sternheim's own poem "Über Feld" (see 9,39).

While they cannot, of course, be totally identified with Sternheim, the artist-figures in the early plays are used to explore problems which concern Sternheim at this time. There are elements of both self-irony and self-justification in the creation of such figures. The problem which they embody is, ostensibly, the conflicting claims of art and life, but in practice they do not appear to be beset by doubts. Since vast experience of life is always admitted in these works to be a crucial factor in artistic creativity, any unambiguous choice between art and life becomes impossible. The artists themselves seem to want (and in most cases to have) the best of both worlds; if they exploit personal relationships to enrich their art, they do so quite without guilt. Art is affirmed as the expression of intense experience. Only when the artist-figure is ironized slightly, only when he is contrasted with the practical, if philistine, realist, is the more problematic nature of art hinted at.

The art-life antithesis, which is raised in Sternheim's work around the turn of the century, continues to preoccupy him after 1914-15 in the slightly different form of an unresolved conflict between aestheticism and political commitment. In Europa he creates in Carl Wundt an artist-figure—again endowed with autobiographical features—who puts forward a doctrine of amoral, apolitical, aesthetic detachment, while his chief protagonist, Eura Fuld, counters with an attitude of political activism. Indeed, later in his life the charge of aestheticism is one which Sternheim is determined to rebut, for he patently feels that he tends to lay himself open to such a criticism. The notion of the artist as "voyeur", dispassionately observing the private experience of others, is another character-

istic view at the turn of the century; this Sternheim retains and builds into his later theory, where it is justified on different grounds in Gauguin und van Gogh.[1]

(ii) Neo-Romantic elements in Sternheim's early work.

Frank Scarron, in Die Hose, is the culmination of a whole series of artist-figures in Sternheim's work and, at the same time, an ironic portrait of the neo-Romantic writer; he is Sternheim's comic version of the type which Thomas Mann depicts in Tristan (1903) in the figure of Detlev Spinell. Scarron's assumptions about art, his characteristic confusion of the religious, the erotic and the aesthetic, underline a component not only of neo-Romantic writing in general, but of Sternheim's own early work. Scarron may indeed reflect Sternheim's desire to distance himself from his own literary beginnings,[2] and by 1909 Sternheim is certainly capable of employing heavy irony in portraying such an artist; yet, surprising as it may seem, Sternheim never entirely succeeds in discarding some of the neo-Romantic notions about art which inform his early work.

In much neo-Romantic writing, the artistic and the vaguely religious are brought together in opposition to what is held to be the prevailing

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1. See 5,86 and pp. 303-304 below.

2. Rudolf Billetta, in his unpublished thesis, "Carl Sternheim", Vienna, 1950, p. 100, was the first to make this point.

rationalism and materialism of Wilhelminian Germany. Both artistic and religious impulses are felt to have their roots in an intuitive awareness of the unity of life, of its mystery and magic. The titles of some of Sternheim's early plays and fragments—Glaube, Erlösung, Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott, Eva, Madonna, Der Heiland, Judas Ischarioth—bear witness to the importance of the religious component for him. For Sternheim, art and religion--together with love, the third major ingredient of his early work--belong to a single complex of associations, betokening heightened experience of life, in the sense in which the term "Leben" is understood around the turn of the century. What these three spheres have in common is that they express an intuitively grasped truth which defies rational explanation. The language appropriate to each sphere constantly spills over into the other two, epithets associated with all three spheres becoming virtually interchangeable.

The suffering of the artist, or of the woman who inspires him, is equated with Christian martyrdom, or the Passion in Sternheim's early work; the work of art is seen as the child conceived by the union of love between the creative genius and his self-sacrificing model. Artistic creativity is God-given ("gottbegnadet"), an epithet not merely applied to the artist-figures in the plays, but also found in Sternheim's own lyric poetry; in "Zu meinen liedern" the poet proudly announces:

> Mein dichtertum schien uns von gottes gnaden,
> wie ich in menschenseelen lesen konnte. . . . (9,68)[1]

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1. Sternheim imitated George's orthography between April and September 1901.

Yet Sternheim would not in any way diminish the artist's autonomy and, in the preface to Fanale (1901) he writes:

> Mag einem, dem Natur das Talent in die Wiege gab, auch die Möglichkeit nicht genommen sein, in starkem Erleben die angestammte Herrlichkeit zu genialer Grösse zu vervollkommnen. (7,8)

This is the sense in which Bender's statement: "Talent allein ist nichts" (8,248) is to be understood. Sternheim's artists have the self-imposed task—their "Mission" (7,48) or "heilige Mission" (8,604)—to expose themselves to intense emotional experience. If art is ordained by God, so too is natural beauty, particularly female beauty. Arnold can thus invest Agathe's beauty with quasi-religious significance:

> Du weisst, deine Schönheit fiel in mein Dasein wie der Stern zu Bethlehem in das der drei Weisen. Sie wurde mir Ungläubigem Religion und Glaube. . . . (8,614)

and later he reproaches her for having disfigured herself with the words: "An Gott hast du dich vergriffen" (8,628).

Just as art is invested with a vaguely religious aura, so too is love. The female characters of the early plays tend to fall into two groups: on the one hand, the Madonna, who inspires the artist; on the other, the sensual and seductive woman who fulfils the artist's more earthly needs and who thus provides him with raw material for his work. The two types are not radical alternatives: the Madonna-figure is a symbol of motherhood, not of unattainable purity, and is hence, like her more seductive counterpart, life-affirming. With her Sternheim associates the miracle of birth, with the Eve-figure the miracle of sexual fulfilment ("Wunder" is the recurrent term).[1] The female characters in the early

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1. In Ulrich und Brigitte (1904) Brigitte conveys her own feelings indirectly, through an interpretation of Dürer's "Adam und Eva" (see

plays are torn between fulfilling these two rôles, while the artist-figures find the two types equally productive for their art. Agathe's initial insistence on fulfilling both functions inhibited Arnold:

> Jede Mutter Gottes schien mir nicht Gottesmutter genug, weil ihr deine Hoheit fehlte, jede Eva nicht verführerisch, weil du schöner warst. . . . (8,640)

The dual nature of the female figures serves to underline the aesthetic problem facing the artist: the need to combine the spiritual purity of the Madonna with the dynamic, expressive content, suggestive of sexual passion.

The painting of religious subjects seems to Sternheim to provide a partial solution to this problem. His enthusiasm for Gothic art, particularly in 1904, when he is engaged on Ulrich und Brigitte, is illustrated by his retrospective account of his response to Veit Stoss's carving of the Crucifixion:

> Ich begann, das Kunstwerk inniger zu betrachten, und als ich es ganz in mich aufgenommen, die erschöpfende Anatomie des Lebens, Todes an dem Körper bewundert hatte, wo fand ich für den seelischen Ausdruck, das überlebendige Leben in dem Toten Worte?[1]

In keeping with his current views on art, Sternheim assumes that such expressiveness can only have been the result of the artist's personal experience:

> Wie kam er zu so süssem Schmerz, den nur der Heiland selbst gespürt hat?

(continued) 7,364), where she stresses not the guilt of the Fall, but the affirmation of sexuality. Die Sonne sinkt contains a similar interpretation of the Fall (see 8,184-85).

1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 106.

> Der nicht selbst am Kreuz hing, weiss nichts davon; nichts vom Schmerz, nichts von der Liebe![1]

While the expressiveness of early Gothic art conveys the sense of "das überlebendige Leben", which Sternheim sees as the essential content of art, he is also drawn increasingly to more Classical notions of beauty and proportion and finds in later Gothic painting the requisite compromise between formal beauty and expression:

> In leichterer, freierer, feinerer Weise erklärt nun der Verstand Vergangenes, legt Mass an die Unmässigkeit ekstatischer Ausbrüche; bringt Form, Reiz, Schönheit in die Wildheit nackten Gefühls. . . .[2]

Although these observations were not made until 1936—by which time Sternheim appears to have consolidated his views on Gothic art by a reading of Worringer's Formprobleme der Gotik (1912)—they reflect his own problem of combining formal control, which he admires in Classical painting, with the intensity of feeling which he seeks to convey in his own work. If the painting of religious subjects appeals to Sternheim, it is because he feels that even with formal control they retain an expressive power through their non-aesthetic religious connotations.

Religious themes and motifs are not introduced into Sternheim's early work for their own sake; they are intended to convey what W. Rasch calls the "Lebensmystik" and "Lebenspathos" of turn-of-the-century literature.[3] It is the intensity, not the otherworldliness, of religion which

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1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 107.

2. ibid., pp. 108-9.

3. W. Rasch, Zur deutschen Literatur seit der Jahrhundertwende, Stuttgart, 1967, pp. 1-48.

is invoked. Indeed, in Judas Ischarioth Sternheim paints a rather sympathetic portrait of a Judas who accepts Christ as a hero only to reject the otherworldliness of the Christian message. The affirmation of the here and now and the rejection of any transcendental realm will continue to play an important part in Sternheim's thinking long after 1906. The key term "Wirklichkeitsenthusiasmus" (5,85) will later convey the same affirmation of reality as it is. But, despite his explicit rejection of the notion that art transfigures or idealizes reality, or creates a "higher" reality, Sternheim will continue to use language charged with religious associations. In Gaugin und van Gogh (1923) the latter artist is to realize that "über Bekenntnis zur Bibel und den Evangelien sei der erlangte Wirklichkeitssinn die grösste Frömmigkeit" (5,85). Art, love and religion (or, at least, a quasi-religious reverence for reality as it is) will continue to form a single complex. In Busekow (1912-13) the intensity of the experience which Christoph and Gesine undergo and the momentous significance of their love-affair is suggested by a parallel between her pregnancy and the Visitation in the phrase: "es hüpfte das Kind in ihrem Leib" (4,25); and Christoph, in his "heroische Männlichkeit" (4,25) is compared with Moses, David and Jesus.

For Sternheim, sexual love will continue to be linked with art in an area of human activity where intuitive feelings prevail over rationality and materialism. In 1919 this whole complex will be subsumed into the concept of "Beziehungsinhalte", a realm of human freedom, which, together with the realm of the "Denkinhalte", of scientific causality and rationalism, makes up reality. While Sternheim sees literature, particularly

his own work, as reflecting the interaction of these two spheres, he will continue to use examples of religious art to illustrate experiences in the realm of the "Beziehungsinhalte". In Europa, it is a Baroque carving depicting a Madonna and Child—an object in which all three areas of art, love and religion are fused—which confounds Eura's attempt to reduce human relationships to a set of scientific laws.[1] Thus the single complex of associations, betokening "Leben" in Sternheim's early work, is retained to form one pole of his later theory of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte".[2]

The "Beziehungsinhalte" represent an affront to the prevailing materialism, the affirmation of intuitive feeling and emotional fulfilment. What is different is that in 1919 this complex is no longer the central component of Sternheim's work, as it was before 1906, but merely forms one pole of his thinking. Indeed, his development towards comedy in the period 1906-9 may be regarded as a process of accommodation with scientific determinism, of which society is seen as the outward manifestation. His early work is escapist in nature, a headlong flight from materialism. It illustrates what Sternheim himself, with reference to Ulrich

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1. See Europa (5,229) and pp. 271-272 below.

2. See W. Wendler, "Wirklichkeit und Wunder im Werk Carl Sternheims", in Grüsse, Hans Wolffheim zum sechzigsten Geburtstag, ed. K. Schröter, Frankfurt am Main, 1965, pp. 113-131. Wendler selects the two apparently contrasting terms "Wunder" and "Wirklichkeit", only to conclude, after some deliberation, that they are not mutually exclusive in Sternheim's work. Since "Wunder" is consistently applied by Sternheim to experiences in the areas of intuitive feeling, of "Beziehungsinhalte", which, together with the "Denkinhalte" make up reality, it should be obvious that for Sternheim "Wunder" is a vital ingredient of "Wirklichkeit". The real polarity in Sternheim's work is, as it were, between "Wissenschaft" and "Wunder".

und Brigitte, termed "den tiefen Abstand unserer [i.e. his own and Thea's] Beziehungen zu zeitlich bürgerlicher Wirklichkeit".[1] Not until his encounter with Heinrich Rickert's philosophy in 1906 can he develop a wider definition of art as encompassing both determinism and human freedom, both the materialism vested in social reality and the unique intuitions of the individual.

Early critics, notably Arnold Zweig and Bernhard Diebold, were not slow to point to the presence of neo-Romantic elements in Sternheim's work. Certainly the affirmation of intuitive feelings may be detected in some form in virtually all his works. Thus the later plays, Die Marquise von Arcis (1919), Manon Lescaut (1921) and Die Schule von Uznach (1926), with their unashamed affirmation of romantic love, need not be regarded as "romantische Rückfälle".[2] They contain, if in more pointed form, an ever-present aspect of Sternheim's vision. This affirmative aspect reasserts itself particularly strongly after 1914-15, in conjunction with and as a reaction to his growing concern with the artist's political and social responsibility. At this period it informs his views on individual self-fulfilment, his doctrine of the "eigene Nuance". Although Sternheim does not use this term before 1919, it is a formulation which harks back to the turn of the century. While Sternheim utterly repudiates the impressionistic aesthetic associated with the term "Nuance", he nevertheless

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1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 106.

2. See B. Diebold, Anarchie im Drama, 2nd ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1922, pp. 75-132. Diebold actually discusses Don Juan, 1913, and Die Marquise von Arcis under the rubric "romantische Rückfälle".

employs it to convey a social attitude of amoral aestheticism and aristocratic detachment. In Vorkriegseuropa he recalls how, as a child, he was imbued by his father with the "Weltauffassung der Nuance".[1] Its connotations of exclusiveness, of delicate and exquisite taste, are intended as a protest against the standardization and levelling of modern social life. This secondary sense of the term probably derives from Nietzsche, as this observation from the "Nachlass" may serve to illustrate:

> Der Sinn und Lust an der Nuance (- die eigentliche Modernität), an dem, was nicht generell ist, läuft dem Trieb entgegen, welcher seine Lust und Kraft in Erfassen des Typischen hat. . . .[2]

After 1914-15, when Sternheim becomes increasingly concerned to examine his own fluctuation between aestheticism and political commitment, features of turn-of-the-century literature are used to illustrate the former. In Europa, Eura's familiarity with the world of antiques and "objets d'art" stands for her own aestheticism,but the imagery of precious stones and metals, symbolic of the kind of permanent beauty cherished by "l'art pour l'art", is also employed to convey her unique individuality. The young Sternheim was also drawn to the mixture of beauty, uniqueness and sheer material value of the precious stone; in a discussion of details of Raphael's"Maddelena Doni" in 1906, he insists

> . . . dass vorausgesetzt, es verschwände der Rubin ein für allemal aus der Welt, wir uns seinen Begriff, d.h. die ihn kennzeichnenden besonders wertvollen Eigenschaften, aus diesem Bilde immer wieder deutlich machen könnten. (6,483)

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1. ed. cit., p. 10.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, Werke in drei Bänden, ed. Karl Schlechta, Munich, 1966, III, 892. Critics have also cited the phrase: "wehe mir! ich bin eine nuance" from Ecce Homo, ed. cit., II, 1150, as a possible source.

Indeed, there is more than a hint that he is thinking of luxury and material wealth when he responds so enthusiastically to Rickert's notion of "Werte" in 1906.[1] The atmosphere of opulence, eroticism and exclusiveness which pervades so many scenes in Europa points back to turn-of-the-century aestheticism. And Eura's journey through France with Carl, as they savour the delicate and fleeting impressions of the landscape, recalls the sort of evocation of a unique moment in which impressionists took delight. Their pilgrimage through France becomes an "Empfindsame Reise im Automobil", to quote the title of Julius Otto Bierbaum's work of 1903. Similarly, Carl's flight from Europe to a land of primitive simplicity recalls the powerful interest in the exotic, the fashionable globe-trotting of the turn of the century, epitomized by Gauguin, or Max Dauthendey. Sternheim consistently admired the work of the former, while the latter's death in Java in 1918—the year in which Sternheim began Europa—may well have prompted his choice of the Dutch East Indies as the venue for Carl's regression to primitivism.

The kind of aristocratic aestheticism current around the turn of the century forms one pole of Sternheim's later thinking and at the same time reinforces his claim to have provided, in Europa, a record of social and cultural developments in Wilhelminian Germany. But aestheticism is also carried over into the sphere of politics. Sternheim tends to regard the true social revolution as the extension to the working class of the kind of refined and exclusive tastes traditionally the preserve of the

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1. See Chapter II below.

aristocracy. His revolutionary slogan and exhortation to the proletariat is this: "Verzichtet nie auf das Auserlesene an sich" (6,228). The terms of his political and critical vocabulary often coincide; terms like "das Besondere", "das Spezifische", "das Auserlesene" and "die eigene Nuance" reflect the aestheticism of his approach, first apparent around the turn of the century and subsequently never entirely absent from his work.

(iii) Sternheim's reflections on the visual arts (1904-1906).

The central aesthetic problem facing Sternheim at this time is that of reconciling formal attributes, which he accepts to be the prerequisite of beauty, with dynamic content expressive of a sense of "Leben". He seeks to clarify his position in a series of observations on painting, observations which, while not entirely unproductive, fail to answer his particular needs. It is not until 1906—when he finally shelves the whole problem of beauty—that Sternheim can make any significant advances. Up to 1903 he appears to subscribe, rather uncritically, to the notion of art as the expression of powerful feelings; yet he gradually becomes aware that intense emotional experience is not in itself a guarantee of literary excellence and that technical skills and formal control have their part to play.

That formal aesthetic demands are beginning to concern Sternheim first finds indirect expression in his defensive attitude towards the portrayal of intense emotion in art, in his desire to justify its presence.

In Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott Arnold's earlier masterpiece embodied formal perfection, but, dissatisfied with its bland, unproblematic serenity, he now attempts to produce a more expressive work:

> Nicht das Äussere, der Inhalt soll vor allem schön sein, und da muss ich ja doch alles aus meiner Seele hinzuthun. (8,857)

The term "Seele", which in this play suggests an expressive quality, is elsewhere introduced to describe the way in which art not only reflects the external appearance of nature, but perceives an underlying essence. This development, which is to prove productive in Sternheim's theory after 1906, is well documented by the successive revisions of the "Künstlerszene" in Don Juan I. The earliest manuscript contains a discussion between a sculptor (here named Otavio) and Pietro (later to become Ripio) on the subject of Juan's contribution to the creation of a statue of a woman.[1] Otavio pays this tribute:

> Ich träumte und er schuf,
> belebte meine Augen, meine Seele
> und machte meine starren Finger fähig
> dem Schöpfer sein Geheimnis nachzubilden.

Apart from the almost casual juxtaposition of the terms "Augen" and "Seele", the main point here, and one repeated in the later printed editions, is that Juan contributed to the work by dint of his vast experience of the finer points of female beauty. The emphasis is still very much on personal experience. When the play was revised several

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1. This scene is dated 27 June 1905 in the first manuscript. Don Juan I was revised in November 1905 and published soon afterwards. Early in 1906 Sternheim began work on a second part, which was published in 1909, together with a considerably revised version of Part I. All the manuscripts are preserved in the archives of the Schiller-Nationalmuseum in Marbach am Neckar.

months later, this scene was radically altered in accordance with insights which Sternheim had gained in Florence in October of that year. On his own admission the scene was intended to become a "künstlerisches Glaubensbekenntnis" (7,814). The original statue is retained, but the sculptor, here called Ottavio, illustrates his aesthetic with reference to a painting of the Crucifixion:

> . . . das Auge
> fasst einen Gegenstand - sein Bild, die Linien,
> durch die er sich vom andern Raume trennt,
> das Mass der Glieder zueinander und zum Kreuz,
> fixiert es schnell, auch die besondere Farbe
> des Ganzen und der Teile, dann die Schatten
> des Lichts auf ihm, und die er selber wirft.
> Vielleicht noch manches andre sieht das Auge.
> Die Seele aber sieht, es ist der Heiland. (7,828)

Ottavio goes on to argue that only a bad artist would reproduce the body of Christ "so irdisch wie es wirklich ist" (7,828), for this would entail a diminution of the essential content. The implication is that a crudely mimetic style fails to convey the religious significance of the subject. The illustration, however, serves to blur, rather than clarify, the issue and is understandably dropped from the 1909 version. Sternheim's point here is not that the artist should choose a religious subject if he wants to evoke a metaphysical or spiritual dimension, but that all art inevitably acquires a quasi-religious significance when it points away from physical reality, not to a transcendental realm, but to a realm of underlying essences. Only thus can art satisfy the eye and the soul; only thus can it convey totality within the individual.

The distinction between the eye and the soul first occurs in Sternheim's

correspondence from Florence in 1905.[1] He develops the distinction into a typology of art, works falling into two general categories:

> Was einen Eindruck wiedergiebt, den das Auge gehabt von den Dingen. Was einen Eindruck wiedergiebt, den die Seele hat von den Dingen.
> Es ergiebt sich sofort, dass im ersten Fall ein vorübergehender Zustand, ein Augenblickbild von dem betreffenden Gegenstand geschaffen ist, der so überzeugend er auch das Augenblickliche, so fascinierend echt er es wiedergiebt, doch von dem unveränderlichen echten ewigen innersten Wesen des Dinges nichts - oder nur einen Teil giebt. (6,470)

The examples are instructive: whereas the eye perceives "einen Baum im Sturm, eine Kette im Licht glitzernd, eine Eifersüchtige", the soul grasps "eine Eiche, eine Goldkette, ein Weib (an sich)" (6,470). Sternheim arrives at a statement of art as showing the universal in the particular, the species in the individual. The reader, or the spectator, he insists, has every right to expect the artist to have undertaken such a process of distillation:

> Er will empfinden, dass der Künstler jeden Gegenstand der Welt auf seinen inneren Gehalt (substantiellen und ideellen) geprüft und in sich aufgenommen hat. (6,470)

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1. The dating of the correspondence in the Gesamtwerk, ed. W. Emrich, is in several instances manifestly in error. An identical letter is dated both "Anfang 1905" (6,471) and "Dez. 1905" (7,799); since this letter refers to Thomas Mann's Fiorenza, first published in Die Neue Rundschau in July and August 1905, the former is clearly wrong. Although Sternheim's own dating of his works in his autobiography is not always reliable, his dating of events is accurate and there seems no reason to doubt his claim that he visited Florence in October 1905 (Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 110) and Rome in January 1906 (ibid., p. 118). The letters from Florence should be dated as October 1905 and not "Ende 1904" (6,468), "1904/05" (6,469), or "Anfang 1905" (6,471); similarly, those from Rome must have been written in January 1906 and not "Anfang 1905" (6,472). This suggested revised dating may be verified: the correlation between the changes in the "Künstlerszene" and the correspondence from Florence indicates that the letter containing the insights into painting must have been written after 27 June 1905 and before November 1905.

The objects portrayed by the artist are, in a sense, symbolic; they point beyond themselves to an essential reality. Accidental or individual features are of secondary importance for Sternheim, serving merely to underline the universal "Wahrhaftigkeit" of the object, its permanent essence.

The emphasis on the artist's personal experience, so striking in Sternheim's early plays, is adapted to these new ideas. The artist's personal experience of many individual instances of, say, female beauty renders him better able to pronounce on what is essentially female. But the expressiveness which Sternheim also expected the artist to project into the model—a feature usually conveyed by the term "Leben"—appears to find no place in these reflections. Yet it continues to play an important part in his thinking and is reintroduced into the distinction between the eye and the soul in a different guise. This touches on a minor influence on Sternheim's development at this period: his encounter with the writings and teachings of Heinrich Wölfflin.

Wölfflin's Die Klassische Kunst appeared in 1899, and in the winter of 1903 Sternheim attended Wölfflin's lectures in Munich on the same subject. Years later, Sternheim was to claim that it was to him that he owed "den überzeitlichen Begriff der Kunst",[1] meaning that it was from Wölfflin that his own efforts to derive formal aesthetic criteria received new impetus. In September 1904 Sternheim's view of classical art is a conventional one:

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1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 94.

> Ich sehe immer das letzte Ziel der Kunst und ihre feierlichste Offenbarung in der Darstellung einer edlen, geschlossenen andächtigen Ruhe. (6,467).

This notion of classical repose obviously assorts ill with his own belief that art expresses intense experience, and, predictably, he is soon drawn to the more expressive elements in Renaissance painting. In October 1905 he writes from Florence:

> Michelangelo ist Höhepunkt und birgt in sich auch schon den tiefsten Tiefstand. . . . Ihm genügt nicht mehr die klassische Schönheit und er sucht in der enormen Gebärde auszudrücken was er nicht sagen kann. (6,467-68)

This assessment of Michelangelo's rôle in the degeneration of Renaissance painting and sculpture into Baroque is a direct echo of Wölfflin's conclusions.[1] Michelangelo appeals to Sternheim as a dramatic figure, embodying the struggle between powerful feelings and the constraints imposed on art by form. But, again taking his cue from Wölfflin, he reserves his greatest praise for Raphael, whose work Wölfflin saw as marking the point of transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque attitude. Raphael achieves a harmony of expressive content and form; in Sternheim's terms, he satisfies the eye and the soul, and his work seems a token that such a balance and harmony is possible.

Sternheim is clearly still very much concerned with "Leben" and redefines art and its aims as follows:

> Einen Eindruck des drängenden allmächtigen Lebens zu geben innerhalb der Masse, die die vom Auge abhängige Kunst erlaubt. (6,468)

While Raphael is the supreme exponent of this synthesis, Sternheim concedes

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1. H. Wölfflin, Die Klassische Kunst: Eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance, 6th ed., Munich, 1914, p. 187.

that Michelangelo occasionally reaches such heights, as in the "Aurora" statue in the Medici Chapel in Florence. Wölfflin claimed of this group that "der starke Drang zum Formlosen begegnet einem stärkeren Willen zur Form",[1] and drew attention to the resulting co-presence of movement and repose:

> Die Figuren besitzen eine ungeheuere Anregungskraft, weil sie voll sind von Flächendivergenzen und Richtungskontrasten im grossen. Und bei diesem Reichtum wirken sie noch immer ruhig.[2]

Sternheim, too, praises precisely this "schauerliche Ruhe der Kraft" in his letters to Thea (see, 4,468). Botticelli's work reflects the same combination of formal attributes with expressiveness:

> Er versteht es schon, einen mächtigen Inhalt in die Form zu <u>bannen</u>, eine riesige Spannung, verhaltene Kraft, ist in den ehernen Gliedern. <u>Echte</u> Bewegung in der Ruhe. (6,469-70)

Sternheim relates his own distinction between the eye and the soul to Wölfflin's notions of movement and repose; he interprets "movement" to imply everything which he himself understands by "Leben", an unwarranted extension of what was, for Wölfflin, a purely formal category. But it is significant that Sternheim, while insisting on the importance of "Leben" in art, should, nevertheless, follow Wölfflin in viewing the onset of Baroque massiveness and movement as a decline from the calm and serene beauty of the Renaissance. This fact reflects both his dependence on what, thanks to Wölfflin, had become a fashionable view, and at the same time his growing concern with formal criteria.

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1. H. Wölfflin, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 181.
2. <u>ibid.</u>, p.181.

Sternheim's adoption of Wölfflin's terms "movement" and "repose" permits him to reintroduce into his definition of art the expressive content not necessarily implied by the view of art as grasping the underlying essences of things. Art, for him, now becomes a "totales Abbild von etwas Lebendigem" (6,472). The epithet "total" points to the difference between nature and art, between the eye and the soul. A letter of the same period makes the distinction quite clear:

> Zweck des Kunstwerkes ist Darstellung einer Totalität, eines dauernden, nicht augenblicklichen Zustandes der Dinge; eben einer grösseren Wahrhaftigkeit, als sie das Auge im Augenblick von den Dingen abnimmt und abnehmen kann. (6,473)

While "Totalität" refers to an underlying essence, the phrase "totales Abbild von etwas Lebendigem" suggests that the essence is conceived of as a dynamic content, and that any attempt to convey this essence entails a distortion of what is merely pleasing to the eye. Here the theoretical groundwork is laid for Sternheim's later championing of Van Gogh's work.

Sternheim's use of the term "Totalität" allows his ideas to be placed in a wider context and linked with prevailing notions about art around the turn of the century. Individual instances, objects portrayed by the artist, are felt to have symbolic value in that they point beyond themselves to an earthly totality.[1] This aesthetic is not unrelated to the idea of life as a dynamic flux; confronted with a limitless profusion of individual instances, the artist (and the artist alone) is felt to be capable of providing knowledge of essential reality by creating

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1. W. Rasch, Zur deutschen Literatur seit der Jahrhundertwende, Stuttgart, 1967, p. 12, puts this succinctly: "Die Einzelerscheinung transzendiert ins Diesseits. . . ."

permanent, clearly defined forms. The truism that art portrays the species in the individual acquires new force; scientific concepts, previously accepted to be ideally suited to clarifying and defining the species, now come to be regarded as lifeless abstractions, incapable of conveying the fundamental unity of things. Sternheim's reflections on painting prepare the ground for his fruitful encounter with Heinrich Rickert's critique of the method of the natural sciences in 1906. After this date art is equated with "Erkenntnis" in Sternheim's theory, and his interest in beauty rapidly recedes.

The general trend of Sternheim's thinking in the period 1904-1906 is towards a closer analysis of the relationship between the work of art and the reality which it depicts, and away from the earlier emphasis on artistic genius and personal experience as a vital component of creativity. Yet he continues to be concerned with beauty, even though the dynamic content which he envisages seems incompatible with formal beauty in the classical sense. By 1906, the work of art, for Sternheim, contains two distinct, if not unrelated, elements: a permanent underlying essence and a sense of "Leben", held precariously in check by the form. In neither case does "Schönheit" seem to be the appropriate term. Yet he continues to use the term. It continues to inhibit his thinking until late in 1906, when his reading of Nietzsche brings home to him forcibly that beauty does not necessarily imply calm and serenity. There is no mistaking the genuine tone of surprise in Sternheim's comment:

> Es leuchtet nebenbei aus seinem Werk als die Hauptsache heraus. Dass das Starke für ihn das Schönste ist. Es ist eine überraschende Entdeckung. (7,848)

Sternheim's theoretical reflections on painting up to 1906 coincide with developments in his creative writing. After his initial preoccupation with the art-life antithesis, he turns to the treatment of scarcely veiled autobiographical themes: his treatment of the theme of love and especially of the conception of a child—in Ulrich und Briggite (1904) and Vom König und der Königin (1904-5)—reflects not only his own love for Thea, but also his belief that the artist should project into his work his own intensely felt experiences. When in Don Juan he comes to attempt to project into a neo-Romantic Casanova-figure a total experience of life, the intensity of which, quite literally, transcends the distinction between life and death, he is faced with the formlessness, the massiveness and movement which he came to view with suspicion in classical painting. In the period up to 1906 he comes to realize that formal control must be achieved without sacrificing dynamic content. If he states the problem, he fails at this time to resolve it; nor does he explain how art arrives at the portrayal of the species within the individual, the universal within the particular. It is these difficulties which his reading of Rickert's philosophy will help him overcome.

II. THE BACKGROUND AND SOURCES OF STERNHEIM'S AESTHETIC THEORY

Recent criticism[1] has drawn attention to the impact on Sternheim's thinking of the Neo-Kantian philosophy of the Baden school, particularly the writings of Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936). Indeed, several specific influences have been cited, yet little or no attempt has been made to establish their relative importance, their precise significance for Sternheim's development, or the extent to which they inform his creative work. Great care must be taken to avoid what T. J. Reed aptly terms "the fallacy of misplaced completeness",[2] the assumption that "any detectable literary allusion implies the hidden presence and functional relevance of the larger whole to which it belongs".[2] Here the functional relevance of Rickert's ideas will be established by an account not only of their initial impact but of their subsequent development in Sternheim's theory.

Rickert's main work, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, published in 1902, is a landmark in the growing rejection of scientific positivism at the turn of the century, and, as Jost Hermand

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1. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, pp. 230-246, discusses "geistesgeschichtliche Einflüsse", citing Rickert, Nietzsche, Max Stirner, romanticism and "Lebensphilosophie"; Wendler's desire to interpret Sternheim's creative work as demonstrating the hero's quest for self-fulfilment causes him to place disproportionate emphasis on Stirner's Der Einzige und sein Eigentum.

2. T. J. Reed, "Thomas Mann and Tradition: Some Clarifications", in The Discontinuous Tradition: Studies in German Literature in honour of E. L. Stahl, ed. P. F. Ganz, Oxford, 1971, p. 162.

shows,[1] its impact is felt beyond the realm of philosophy in art history and literary criticism. The positivist attempt to explain works of art by a detailed account of their cultural, historical and biographical background is superseded by a renewed interest in formal interpretation, largely derived from philosophical idealism. The so-called "Geisteswissenschaften", "Kulturwissenschaften", or, as Rickert prefers to call them, "historische Wissenschaften", are aligned in opposition to the natural sciences and the attempt is made to evolve a method which can command equal status with the scientific method. Of this development Hermand writes:

> Man will wieder wie in idealistischer Zeit das Wesenhafte der Dinge erkennen, was zu einer allgemeinen Rückbesinnung auf philosophische Grundkategorien wie Epoche, Stil, Struktur, Ganzheit, Dynamik oder Dasein führt.[2]

Heinrich Wölfflin's concept of style similarly answers the need for an alternative method to that of the natural sciences; Sternheim's interest in Wölfflin's ideas in the period 1903-1906 reflects his sympathy with an approach which would remove art from the sphere of the natural sciences and grant it its own laws of development. Sternheim's aversion to scientific positivism, certainly apparent before 1906, would undoubtedly predispose him towards Rickert's ideas. Nevertheless, it will be maintained that his encounter with Rickert's philosophy in 1906 marks a significant stage in Sternheim's development and provides him with an

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1. Jost Hermand, Literaturwissenschaft und Kunstwissenschaft, Stuttgart, 1965, pp. 1-6.

2. ibid., p. 4.

intellectual scheme and a terminology which he is to retain, with minor modifications, for the rest of his life.

(i) Sternheim's encounter with Rickert's philosophy.

Sternheim first mentions his interest in the philosophy of the Baden school in a letter of February 1906, in which he records that his reading of Wilhelm Windelband's Geschichte der Philosophie has brought him to realize the importance of philosophy in providing value-judgements in the fields of ethics and aesthetics.[1] These reflections are developed in subsequent letters and in the autumn of 1906 he notes, in a letter from Bremen: "Sehr entzückend ist die Rickert'sche Definition der Naturwissenschaft . . ." (6,480). His reading appears to have been prompted by more direct contact with Rickert, in his autobiography he recalls having attended the latter's lectures in Freiburg in the summer term of 1906.[2] In his later theoretical writings Sternheim is fond of alluding to his philosophical antecedents and seems anxious to place his work in the philosophical tradition; in Vorkriegseuropa, harking back to the psychological relativism of the early years of the century, he maintains:

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1. See 6,473.

2. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 122. It has recently come to light that Sternheim shared accommodation in Freiburg with a student who was engaged in research into Rickert's philosophy. I am indebted to Dr. Manfred Linke for this information.

> Diese allgemeine, geistige, galoppierende Anarchie suchte die badisch-alemannische Philosophenschule, Windelband, Rickert an ihrer Spitze, mindestens für den Begabteren, durch eine "Theorie der Werte" zu bremsen; suchten später Scheeler [sic] und Husserl mit einem Katechismus der unbedingten Werte, ich selbst durch eine "Phänomenologie" unschädlich zu machen.[1]

Franz Blei's assertion that Sternheim's philosophical ideas merely reflect his intellectual pretensions and that Rickert's works lay uncut on the shelves of his library,[2] cannot be substantiated and should be viewed in the light of the strained relations which came to exist between him and Sternheim after 1916. In fact Sternheim appears to have read at least some of Rickert's works quite closely and continues to employ Rickertian terminology in his theoretical works; as late as 1931 he returns to the philosophy of the Baden school for renewed inspiration, Cäsar Kinkel, the chief protagonist of Aut Caesar aut nihil, being made to quote at length from Windelband's Geschichte der Philosophie.[3]

As the title of his highly influential work suggests, Rickert is concerned to limit the scope of the scientific concept, thereby freeing an area of knowledge for what he calls the "historische Wissenschaften" and Windelband the "Geisteswissenschaften". Rickert's thesis is as follows: the empirical world consists of an infinite variety of things, infinite both qualitatively and quantitatively; all knowledge of the world depends on man's ability to overcome this "Mannigfaltigkeit". The simplest

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1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 123.

2. Franz Blei, Erzählung eines Lebens, Leipzig, 1930, pp. 433-442.

3. See Valerij Poljudow, "Unveröffentlichte Komödien aus dem Sternheimschen Spätwerk", Weimarer Beiträge, 1971, pp. 183-193.

method of "Überwindung der extensiven und intensiven Mannigfaltigkeit der Dinge"[1] is, Rickert argues, by using words with general meanings, for such words constitute primitive forms of concept. Whereas a word with a general meaning is indistinct, since it is the simplification of a single perception, a reliable concept provides the element common to several perceptions. For everyday purposes concepts need only be sufficiently precise to be understood, but a further stage of conceptualization is reached when concepts meet the requirements of universality and become natural laws. Indeed, this is the ultimate aim of the natural sciences: to move away from the mere classification of reality and to gain insight into the "naturgesetzliche Nothwendigkeit der Dinge".[2] Summing up the scientific concept, Rickert shows that it is characterized by three features: "Allgemeinheit", "Bestimmtheit" and "Geltung". It is by its approximation to universality that the perfection of such a concept is measured, that is, by the extent to which it has moved away from empirical reality:

> So ist das naturwissenschaftliche Denken niemals auf ein Abbild der Wirklichkeit, sondern immer auf ein Erfassen allgemein gültiger Urtheile gerichtet.[3]

Significantly Rickert rejects the distinction between "Natur" and "Geist", preferring that between "Natur" and "Kultur", for the former has led to the inclusion of psychology in the so-called "Geisteswissenschaften",

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1. H. Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, Tübingen/Leipzig, 1902, p. 36. Subsequent references are to this edition.

2. ibid., p. 69.

3. ibid., p. 145.

whereas, according to Rickert's definition, psychology employs the same generalizing method as the other natural sciences. Such an exclusion of psychology from the "historische Wissenschaften" is likely to have commended Rickert's scheme to Sternheim.

When he comes to consider these so-called historical sciences, Rickert turns his attention to what the natural sciences inevitably neglect: namely, empirical reality; for even the most primitive scientific concept involves "die Beseitigung des individuellen Charakters der gegebenen Wirklichkeit".[1] Rickert argues that empirical reality is entirely individual and it is the historical sciences alone which can represent reality with respect to the particular. His general scheme is outlined thus:

> Sie [i.e. die Wirklichkeit] wird Natur, wenn wir sie betrachten mit Rücksicht auf das Allgemeine, sie wird Geschichte, wenn wir sie betrachten mit Rücksicht auf das Besondere.[2]

Every leaf on a tree is entirely individual, Rickert maintains, even if, for convenience, we choose to ignore its individuality by failing to distinguish "leaf" and "this leaf" by name.[3] It is history which alone can do justice to the unique and individual, and hence there is no such thing as a law of history.

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1. H. Rickert, op. cit., p. 236.

2. ibid., p. 255.

3. This example of the leaf appeals to Sternheim and is used in several instances in his theoretical work to illustrate primitive concepts. See Das Arbeiter-ABC (6,241) and, for related reflections on the limitations of "allgemeine Wortbedeutung", Der Snob (1,212).

The historian, like the scientist, is confronted with an infinitely various empirical world, which he must overcome through a process of selection. In Rickert's view, it is possible to speak of historical concepts, which, although not obtained by the same process as scientific concepts, nevertheless enjoy equal status with them. This process is one in which

> . . . aus der unübersehbaren Mannigfaltigkeit des anschaulichen Inhalts bestimmte Bestandteile so herausgehoben und zu Begriffen zusammengeschlossen werden können, dass sie nicht das einer Mehrheit Gemeinsame, sondern das nur an einem Individuum Vorhandene darstellen.[1]

Examining the historical concept more closely, Rickert observes that, although all empirical reality is individual in the broad sense, the historically individual is characterized by three features: the "Besondere", the "Einzigartige" and the "Untheilbare". The historian concentrates on those features which constitute the uniqueness of his subjects; the criterion by which he makes his selection is that of value, by which he means a generally accepted cultural value. At this point Rickert draws a striking analogy: he cites the Cohinoor diamond, which is distinguished from a piece of coal by having its value vested in its indivisibility. As W. Wendler has pointed out,[2] Sternheim is to adopt this analogy in his novel Europa (1919-20), where Eura Fuld's individuality, epitomized by her red hair, is compared to the Cohinoor diamond.[3]

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1. H. Rickert, op. cit., p. 337.

2. Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 234.

3. See 5,170.

Throughout his work Rickert provides examples from the realms of literature and the visual arts, yet he is at pains to distinguish the task of the artist from that of both the natural scientist and the historian. In illustrating the nature of the scientific concept, he distinguishes between the scientist and the painter: while the painter is fully aware that he cannot portray the empirical world in all its infinite variety and hence aims at "eine ausserordentlich grosse Vereinfachung der Anschauung"[1], the result of his efforts is, nevertheless, "eine anschauliche Vereinfachung".[1] Whereas the painter captures only the visual appearance of the inexhaustible riches of the empirical world, the scientist abandons the visual appearance once he has related it to the content of his concept. It is on this point that Sternheim is to take issue with Rickert, for he objects to this apparent limitation of the artist's scope.

Rickert also draws a line of demarcation between history and art. While he accepts that both seek to provide "Darstellungen . . . , die . . . etwas Besonderes und Individuelles enthalten",[2] what the historian says must be true and all imaginative effects subordinated to this truth. Yet Rickert tends to place the aesthetic within the realm of the historical sciences, claiming:

> Lediglich der historische Mensch fühlt die Objekte als schön, und zu den verschiedenen Zeiten wird verschiedenes als schön empfunden.[3]

In his Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft (1899) Rickert discusses

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1. H. Rickert, op. cit., p. 42.
2. ibid., p. 340.
3. ibid., p. 733.

more fully the place which art occupies in his system. Here he insists that the historian, even though he does make some appeal to the imagination, cannot give an entirely visual representation of reality. Art, however, can; it either creates a world of its own, or shapes reality according to aesthetic criteria. Whilst the artist may make use of the historically individual, he nevertheless seeks to raise it to a degree of universality; and in this respect, Rickert claims, art begins to approach the generality to which the scientific concept attains. Art can thus be seen to occupy a middle position in Rickert's scheme between history, which can work with visual images, and science, which seeks general laws. Art has some of the advantages and some of the limitations of each. Significantly, Sternheim is to reject the limitations which Rickert appears to place on art and to maintain the primacy of the aesthetic over history, science, or, for that matter, philosophy.

One further instance of a possible debt owed by Sternheim to Rickert must be mentioned here: it concerns the latter's general rejection of positivism. In Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung Comte is attacked for his efforts to produce a value-free, naturalistic philosophy of history; Hegel for his attempt to derive a philosophy from the course of world history; and Darwin for seeing in history natural evolution and not cultural values. Each of these systems represents a confusion of the historical and scientific methods. In much of his later polemical writing, as in the novel Europa, Sternheim is to echo this attack on Darwin, Comte and Hegel and himself draw a sharp distinction between an area akin to that of the natural sciences, where man is

subordinated to natural laws, and an area which Rickert defines as that of the historical sciences, where man is free of such laws. There is no evidence to suggest that Sternheim had coherently formulated his opposition to positivism before his encounter with Rickert's work in 1906; no mention of either Hegel or Comte is found in Sternheim's work before this date and references to Darwin can hardly be described as critical.[1] Yet, if Sternheim's response to aspects of nineteenth-century thought is strikingly similar to Rickert's, there is a shift of emphasis: whereas Rickert is referring simply to respective areas of intellectual activity, Sternheim characteristically introduces first a social and later an ideological dimension into the discussion. For Sternheim, two intellectual methods are swiftly re-interpreted in order to throw light on the pressing problem of the relationship between the individual and society.

Sternheim's initial response to Rickert's work is enthusiastic, as his letters to his second wife, Thea, amply illustrate. Writing from Bremen in the autumn of 1906, he reiterates Rickert's definition of the scientific concept, using the terms "extensive" and "intensive Mannigfaltigkeit" and concluding:

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1. In an early play, Verkauft (1893-94), Lili's reference to her English teacher, who neglected his subject to expound Darwinism, is merely an excuse for the joke: "Und auch du, kleine Lili, . . . bist ein kleiner Affe" (8,47). The recurrent use of the phrases "Kampf des Daseins" and "Kampf ums tägliche Brot"—favourite formulations of Sternheim's for society both before and after 1906—do not suggest a first-hand knowledge of Darwin's theories; and Sternheim's claim in Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 60, that the early tragedy Judas Ischarioth (1898-99) illustrates his "Einstellung zu der Passion jenseits von Darwin und Gottlosigkeit" should be viewed as a retrospective rationalization of his earlier position.

> Dann der einfache Schluss für die Naturwissenschaften: ist uns das Weltbild durch diese naturwissenschaftliche Bearbeitung in seiner Gesetzmässigkeit erst bekannt, gilt es die Ausnahme. (6,480)

Even at this stage a significant divergence may be observed: Sternheim appears reluctant to accept that Rickert is talking about two contrasting methods of overcoming the manifold variety of the empirical world. Sternheim divides reality into two areas: that which can be subsumed into scientific concepts and a residue of exceptions. This is clearly an unwarranted limitation of Rickert's thesis, according to which all reality becomes nature, when it is viewed with respect to the general, and history, when the particular and individual is taken into account. Sternheim's motive for limiting the scope of each of Rickert's methods becomes apparent when he puts forward a definition of art:

> Die Kunst, die uns über die Natur hinaus eben das Gesamtbild der Welt in der Menschenseele schaffen soll, muss also auf dem Untergrund des Naturgesetzmässigen das Besondere darstellen. (6,480)

Only art can be permitted to provide a "Gesamtbild der Welt", a new formulation for what Sternheim termed "Totalität" in his earlier reflections on the visual arts. In order that the primacy of art be preserved, the artist is shown to employ both the process of abstraction which characterizes the scientific method and the technique of distilling individual elements which the historian undertakes.

Initially, at least, Sternheim seems inclined to link the artist more closely with the historian. In a second letter, written again in Bremen in 1906, he suggests once more that the so-called historical sciences begin to operate only when empirical reality has been classified by the natural sciences:

> Nun aber - da alles übersichtlich wurde - darf man wohl eine Einzelgestalt - und jede - die auffällt, von ihrem Platze nehmen, sie auf das hin, was sie auszeichnet, ansehen und diesem Ausgezeichneten, Besonderem [sic], das uns reizt, freut, ärgert, einen Namen geben. (6,481).

Drawing an explicit parallel between the artist and the historian, Sternheim continues:

> Hier fällt sofort die innige Berührung des Künstlers mit dem historischen Wissenschaftler auf (unter historischer Wissenschaft natürlich nunmehr alles verstanden, was nicht Naturwissenschaft ist). In Wahrheit: auch er nimmt einen Menschen, einen Baum, eine Tonfolge irgendein Gebilde von seinem Platz, da er an ihm ein Besonderes erblickt und proklamiert dies Besondere. (6,481)

In these two statements the formulation "von seinem Platz" implies that the natural scientist has already classified reality before the artist and historian begin their tasks.

Having established a fundamental similarity between the historical method and that employed by the artist, Sternheim qualifies his position considerably:

> Während nun aber die historische Wissenschaft, diese gefundene Besonderheit einerseits anderen Besonderheiten zu vergleichen, in ein Wertverhältnis zu ihnen zu sezten, andererseits Folgen und Einwirkungen aus ihr wieder auf die nichtsichtbare Gesetzmässigkeit seiner Klasse nachzuweisen, mit einem Worte, tendenziöse Schlüsse aus ihr zu ziehen sucht, wohl gar eine Forderung aus ihr macht, begnügt sich die Kunst damit, sie einfach darzuthun. (6,481)

According to Rickert's definition, the historian selects his material from the whole available range of the individual and particular by applying a criterion of general value. Such a "Beziehung auf einen Werth",[1] Rickert insists, is not to be confused with a value-judgement, yet Sternheim appears to believe that it at least implies a value-judgement and is

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1. Rickert, op. cit., p. 363.

hence able to claim that art differs from history in being free of implicit moral imperatives. Although both history and art are concerned with the "Besondere", history is concerned with it only when it embodies a general value, whereas art finds pleasure in it for its own sake.[1] Thus Sternheim can go on to refer, in almost Kantian terms, to the "reines Wohlgefallen" (6,481) which art provides, an aspect of his aesthetic theory which is to be brought out even more strongly after 1914-15, when he develops a phenomenological approach. His ensuing remarks, in this context, on the didactic function of art are to have important repercussions in his theory. Although he denies a direct didactic purpose in art, he nevertheless believes that it fulfils an indirect educative function. Just as children see in natural laws what makes them into men and women, without the help of ethical preaching,[2] so the adult may learn from the "ausgewählten freien Bildern der Kunst" (6,482) what constitutes his humanity. Art fulfils its educative function through "einfache Spiegelung des irgendwie hervorragenden ohne die Spur bewusster sittlicher Predigt" (6,482).

Sternheim's initial reaction to Rickert's theory is to relate the functions of the artist and historian, so important is it to him that art should be capable of portraying the unique and individual ("das Besondere").

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1. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 235, is correct when he points out that Sternheim transfers to art the freedom from value-judgements which Rickert applies to the historical sciences, but he omits to mention that Sternheim disagrees with Rickert on this point and regards history as making at least implicit value-judgements.

2. This theme is treated in Sternheim's early prose work "Kindergeschichten für Grosse" (1901). See 9,349-406.

Yet in a letter dated 27 November 1906 and addressed to Rickert himself we find Sternheim laying claim, on behalf of the artist, to a technique which Rickert reserves for the natural scientist. In order to demonstrate that the generality attained by the scientist involves an abstraction, a movement away from a single perception of the empirical world, Rickert contrasts this process with the degree of generality which the artist achieves.[1] Sternheim, however, refuses to accept this apparent constraint placed upon the artist and applies Rickert's description of the scientist word for word to the great artist:

> Er verlässt die Anschauung, sobald er sich soweit ausdrücklich zum Bewusstsein gebracht hat, dass er sich über ihr Verhältnis zum Inhalt seiner Begriffe klar geworden ist. (6,482)

He objects that artists like Raphael and Velasquez similarly abandon their models once they have gained initial inspiration; their achievement consists in

> . . . hinter der Erscheinung, die ihnen der Augenblick und die Natur bot, etwas Wesentliches, begrifflich Einzigartiges gesehen zu haben und deutlich zu machen. (6,482)

In complete contrast to Rickert, Sternheim here insists that the artist creates a "Begriffswelt" (6,483); the Maddelena Doni, he argues, provides us not with the portrait of an individual, a unique personality, nor with a representative social type, but with the concept of womanhood ("Weib an sich"). He assimilates into Rickert's scheme his own previous insight that Raphael grasps a permanent essence, underlying the surface appearance of things. Only by laying claim to the scientific concept can he

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1. See H. Rickert, op. cit., p. 43.

uphold his claim that the artist is able to distil this timeless essence.

At the same time, however, Sternheim is unwilling to relinquish the advantages of the historical method and emphasizes that Raphael achieves his effects through the "Betonung des für uns dabei Wertvollen" (6,483), the criterion of value which characterized Rickert's historical sciences. But, once again, he concludes that, despite this common concern with value, the artist and the historian ultimately part company on the use to which the value is put. For Sternheim, the creative process now involves:

> Begriffe zu bilden, Werte auf ihren grössten für ihn möglichen Ausdruck zu bringen. So Velasquez. So übrigens jeder grosse Künstler, dessen Arbeit der des um historische Wissenschaft Bemühten viel weniger in ihren Zielen verwandt ist als gemeinhin angenommen wird. Nur, dass er die aufgewiesenen Werte nicht zu einer sittlichen Forderung an das Menschengeschlecht erhebt. Einfach darthut: Seht, das habe ich gefunden. (6,483)

Whether Rickert ever received this letter is not attested; nevertheless, it is a document of some importance, recording as it does the impact on Sternheim's aesthetic theory of Rickert's philosophy. For the latter the artist occupies a middle position between the scientist and the historian, clearly distinct in his function from either. Sternheim's artist provides generalized concepts, which are, at the same time, related to criteria of value; for him the artist succeeds in synthesizing and transcending the functions of both scientist and historian. Not for a moment, throughout the whole period of his encounter with Rickert's work, does Sternheim's confidence in art waver; he retains throughout an abundant assurance that art alone can provide a total picture of reality.

(ii) The implications of Rickert's ideas for Sternheim's literary theory and practice (1906-9).

To maintain that Rickert's epistemology appeals to Sternheim simply because it gives his own creative work a philosophical basis and justification is to understate the case, for the encounter is highly productive: it carries Sternheim's own independent inquiries into aesthetics several stages further forward, solves some of the problems besetting him at this time and lays the theoretical foundation for virtually all his subsequent reflections on art. Nor, at the other extreme, can the claim be justified that Sternheim's later creative works may be derived from Rickert's philosophy. In fact Sternheim places a slightly unusual interpretation on Rickert's ideas and assimilates them to some quite un-Rickertian notions, which he derives, at roughly the same period, from entirely different sources. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Sternheim's reading of Rickert not only prompts him to reappraise his earlier views about artistic form, but also has a direct bearing on his choice and treatment of themes. Indeed, it sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish clearly between formal and thematic implications, so closely are they related.

The fundamental change wrought by Rickert's ideas in Sternheim's aesthetics is this: Sternheim no longer regards art as a means of capturing or expressing beauty, but as a source of knowledge about the empirical world. This the artist achieves by first ordering, then selecting and concentrating the infinite variety of reality, so that the finished product becomes a microcosm of reality, a distillation of its two essential aspects, namely, that which is amenable to scientific laws on the one

hand, and the historically individual and unique on the other. That Sternheim takes epistemology as his point of departure suggests that the artist's technique of overcoming the manifold variety of the empirical world ("Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit") is not different in kind from that employed at any given moment by the ordinary man; it differs only in degree. The artist synthesizes the methods characterizing the two branches of academic learning, and hence his picture of reality is at once more complete than that provided by the scientist or historian alone and more concentrated and precise than that which the ordinary man achieves. This is the basis of Sternheim's assertion:

> Dass es dem Philosophen nie möglich sein wird, die von Rickert angestrebte Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit zu erreichen, indem er ein System von nicht misszuverstehenden Begriffen schafft, sondern, dass diese Begriffe nur vom Künstler im Kunstwerk gegeben werden können. Dass nur der Künstler die Mannigfaltigkeit überwinden kann, indem er Bilder giebt, die nicht misszuverstehen sind. (6,484)

The world which the artist creates is a "Begriffswelt", closely related to, and dependent on, the empirical world. Nowhere in Sternheim's theory, in 1906 or later, is the implication present that the artist creates a world out of his own imagination, his private vision. On the contrary, he is always dependent, in Sternheim's view, on his model, on reality, even if he goes beyond a mere photographic reproduction of it and succeeds in distilling its underlying essence. Art remains a "'Gleichnis' des Lebens, das einzige, das es giebt" (6,484), a concentrated supplement to reality, rather than an aesthetic alternative to it.[1]

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1. The problem of distinguishing between essential reality and a purely aesthetic construction is raised in Gauguin und van Gogh (1923; published in 1924). See below, pp. 327-28.

Sternheim's reading of Rickert is coloured by his own practical concerns as a dramatist. His reluctance to equate the functions of the artist and historian can be explained by the difficulties which he encountered in the composition of Don Juan. In the course of his revision of the first part of the play in November 1905, he admits to Thea that the figure of Juan is beginning to interest him historically; and in an endeavour to recapture the spirit of the age he undertakes intensive historical research:

> Lieber Gott, lass meine Seele sich langsam hineinfühlen in das Spanien des XVI Jahrhunderts, dass dessen Bild echt und bezwingend aus ihr wieder hervorstrahlt. (7,831)

Increasingly the historical Don Juan d'Austria begins to supplant his legendary counterpart, Don Juan Tenorio, who was the original inspiration for the work. Yet Sternheim is anxious to show that historical research almost invariably confirms what the artist's imagination has quite independently revealed. Indeed, he soon realizes the limits of the dramatist's concern with history:

> Die Historie . . . ist als etwas Zeitliches für den Dichter, der es mit Ewigkeitswerten zu tun hat, überhaupt nur sehr bedingt verwendbar.
>
> Sie bildet den Hintergrund, sie darf nicht gefälscht werden; ihre Thatsachen aber kommen überhaupt an sich nicht in Betracht.
>
> Historik handelt von Völkerschicksalen und der einzelne . . . kommt nur in Bezug auf sein Volk in Betracht, nicht auf sich selbst.
>
> Darum stellt die Geschichte nie einen Charakter dar. Das bleibt dem Dichter. (7,838)

This insight, gained in Rome in January 1906, can be related to Sternheim's earlier reflections on totality, where he noted that the portrayal of historical events was useful only in so far as it contributed to a total picture and enabled the artist "den dargestellten Menschen

(das dargestellte Ding) in seiner eigensten totalen Bedeutung zu erkennen" (6,473). And by February 1906 Sternheim is prepared to concede that in Don Juan he is primarily concerned to show "ein Wunder des Lebens . . . , der Lebenskraft" (7,839); the historical background is to be strictly subordinated to the expression of Juan's powerful personality. Given this fluctuation in Sternheim's views on the function of history in drama, it is small wonder that Rickert's definition of the historical sciences should appeal to him. The notion of "das Besondere"—one of the characteristics of "das historische Individuum", to which a general value attaches—offers him a means of combining an interest in the historical Juan with his more immediate concern to create an intensely vital character, a figure of Faustian appetites.

Rickert, it should be noted, cites the great names of literature and history to illustrate his concept of the historical individual.[1] It is but a short step for Sternheim to extend Rickert's terms of reference to literary creations and fictional characters. In the letter of 1906 in which he proclaims the primacy of art over philosophy, he argues that the artist alone can overcome the infinite variety of the empirical world by providing unambiguous "Bilder" and goes on to explain what he means by this term:

> Faust ist ein solcher Begriff. Aber auch schon der Künstler selbst, Botticelli, Goethe usw. (6,484)

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1. See H. Rickert, op. cit., p. 358: "Das Individuum Goethe ist also in demselben Sinne wie das Individuum Cohinoor ein In-dividuum".

Great individuals (and this includes literary creations) acquire a general value, for Sternheim, by virtue of their uniqueness. While Rickert's notion of "das Besondere" is of crucial importance to him at this time, his thinking gains additional impetus from another source. What he understands by "das Besondere" is undoubtedly conditioned by his reading of Nietzsche.

There is no evidence to suggest that Sternheim had any first-hand knowledge of Nietzsche's writings before 1906.[1] Yet a letter of 1906, written from Bremen, probably in the autumn of that year— and hence contemporary with his reading of Rickert—contains page and paragraph references to a volume of Nietzsche's work.[2] These references shed light not only on the conception of Juan's character but on the likely interpretation which Sternheim places on Rickert's term "das historische Individuum". The following quotations are especially instructive:

> Es sollen die herrschenden überschauenden Wesen geschaffen werden, die dem Spiel des Lebens zuschauen und es mitspielen, bald hier bald dort, ohne allzuheftig hineingerissen zu werden. Ihnen muss schliesslich die Macht zufallen . . . , weil sie keinen heftigen, ausschliesslich auf ein Ziel gerichteten Gebrauch davon machen.[3]

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1. The earliest references to Nietzsche are vague: Zarathustra is dismissed as a "Gaukler" by contrast with Christ (9,342); Nietzsche is cited as a "difficult" philosopher (9,390), or merely as a name with which to impress the uninitiated (9,472). In Vorkriegseuropa (ed. cit., p. 124) Sternheim claims that his image of man in 1906 was "gleich weit vom Affen wie vom Übermenschen entfernt", but this is a retrospective view, coloured by his subsequent development over three decades.

2. See 6,484. Sternheim refers to Friedrich Nietzsche, Gesamtwerk, XII, Leipzig, 1897, pp. 75 ff., paragraphs 144-47, 168, 172, 186-87. In fact paragraph 144 begins on p. 85.

3. Nietzsche, Gesamtwerk, XII, Leipzig, 1897, p. 108.

> Sind die Zwecke des Individuums nothwendig die Zwecke der Gattung? Nein. Die individuelle Moral: in Folge eines zufälligen Wurfs im Würfelspiel ist ein Wesen da, welches seine Existenzbedingungen sucht, - nehmen wir dies ernst und seien wir nicht Narren, uns zu opfern fur das Unbekannte![1]
>
> Tiefster Irrthum in der Beurtheilung der Menschen: wir schätzen sie ab nach ihren Wirkungen. . . . Aber der Mensch übt nur Reize auf andere Menschen aus, es kommt darauf an, was in anderen Menschen vorhanden ist. . . .[2]

Here Sternheim adds some comments of his own: Nietzsche rejects all ethical considerations in favour of aesthetic values; the individual should not obey a moral code, but simply fulfil his inner nature. Such an ethically uncommitted attitude to life is, Sternheim observes, aesthetic in a different sense; it is a playing with life, founded on detachment. In Nietzsche's "Nachlass", then, Sternheim finds confirmation for his own growing conviction that art must be capable of expressing "Kraft", of portraying the self-fulfilment of the powerful, ethically uncommitted individual.

Elements of "Lebensphilosophie" may be traced in Sternheim's subsequent reflections on individuality, contained in his correspondence with Thea in 1906. Here his observations are coloured by the need to create in Don Juan just such a unique individual. He emphasizes that the lives of Nietzschean "höhere Menschen" are not conditioned by outside events; they develop organically from within. Nor are such men the playthings of chance, but express in their lives an inner necessity. They respond to their fellow-men only inasmuch as these have personalities which are more or less compatible with the full and free expression of

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1. Nietzsche, op. cit., p. 102.
2. ibid., p. 147.

their own. They are what Sternheim calls "fertige Menschen", embodying "'Persönlichkeit' im Goetheschen Sinn" (6,479). He explains this reference elsewhere by alluding to Panthalis' words in Faust:

> Nein, nicht jeder ist Individuum, wie es seit einigen Jahren scheinen möchte, nicht jeder 'nur Lebende' ist schon . . . . All diese Millionen gehören den Elementen an, sind nicht - Denn 'Edles' wollen im Sinne Goethes, wie wenige dürfen das wohl von sich sagen. . . . (7,843)

Sternheim makes no distinction between a notion of radical individualism, which he derives from Nietzsche, and a theory of dramatic characterization; and it is Faust—a Faust viewed, it is true, from a Nietzschean perspective—who serves as his dramatic model.

While Sternheim is undoubtedly predisposed to adopt ideas which roughly correspond to his own previously held convictions, it is possible to speak, tentatively at least, of Nietzsche's influence on his thinking. But here, too, one must guard against the "fallacy of misplaced completeness".[1] There are no strong grounds for supposing that Sternheim's first-

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1. H. W. Reichert, "Nietzsche und Carl Sternheim", in Nietzsche-Studien: Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung, ed. M. Montinari, W. Müller-Lauter and H. Wenzel, vol. I, Berlin, 1972, pp. 334-352, succumbs to this temptation. While he rightly stresses the importance of Sternheim's reading of Nietzsche in 1906 and the lasting effects on Sternheim's imagery and terminology, he fails to make out a convincing case in support of his thesis that Sternheim "sich fast zwei Jahrzehnte immer wieder, und mehr als mit irgendeinem andern, mit Nietzsche auseinandergesetzt hat" (p. 352). This claim involves Reichert in a number of distortions. The content of Die Hose cannot be adequately summarized as an "Auseinandersetzung mit Nietzsche" (p. 352); the philosophical content is, in fact, entirely subordinated to the comic effect and is, besides, rigorously pruned in later editions. And if Nietzsche and Marx are viewed in a positive light in Europa, it is because they act as a regulative to the prevailing idealist tradition; in fact, Sternheim has serious reservations about both thinkers.

hand knowledge of Nietzsche's work in 1906 goes beyond a reading of the volume of the Gesamtwerk containing Die Wiederkunft des Gleichen. But more significant than the mere fact of Sternheim's enthusiastic reception of Nietzsche's aristocratic individualism is the way in which it is subsumed into his Rickertian scheme and informs his early dramatic theory, particularly his views on plot and character. Having defined the term "Persönlichkeit", he concludes that drama is "der Schauplatz für Persönlichkeiten" (6,479); the unique individual, who fulfils his own nature, unaffected by the world, or by lesser mortals, becomes the only fit subject for the dramatist. The implications are plain: "Schicksal" in any form must be excluded from drama, whether such outside interference takes the guise of an anonymous letter, a conventional intrigue, or the deliberate malice of a third party. This is the basis for Sternheim's assertion

> . . . dass alles was 'Handlung' ist in dem Sinne, dass sich aus dem absichtlichen Thun eines Menschen etwas "entwickelt", im Drama keinen Platz hat. (6,477-78)

Everything which does not immediately flow from the characters' inner natures is to be rigorously excised from the action. Both Schiller and Hebbel incur Sternheim's displeasure on this count: the former for manipulating character in the interests of moral atonement; the latter for subordinating character to the workings of the world-historical process.[1] Finally the separate insights are brought together into a

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1. Sternheim's rejection of a metaphysical dimension, and with it of the operation of what he calls "höhere Macht" in drama, is initially prompted by his reading of Nietzsche. A decade later similar views reappear in his phenomenological theory of art, according to which the artist approaches reality without prior metaphysical commitment.

definition:

> Es soll eine Reihe von Persönlichkeiten, - so bedeutend sie der Dichter dichten kann - einander gegenübergestellt werden und aus diesen Situationen sollen in Bewegungen und Worten und Geschehnissen Werte gezeigt werden. (6,479)

With this definition a strong link is forged between Rickert's scheme and Nietzsche's aristocratic individualism. For Rickert, relation to general value is the criterion of selection applied by the historian to the wealth of material which confronts him. Sternheim, for his part, draws the further distinction that, whereas the historian's efforts to relate individual objects to general value invariably implies an evaluation, the artist simply presents individuality in its purest and most concentrated form. His reading of Nietzsche's work encourages him to invest the notion of "Werte" with a quite specific content: Rickert's term "das historische Individuum"—which in itself simply denotes suitable material for the historian—becomes associated in his mind with Nietzsche's "höhere Menschen". And to such individuals Sternheim attaches the general value which he retains from Rickert's definition of the historical sciences. In other words, individuality is elevated from being merely a characteristic of the historical to form a doctrine of individualism. Rickert's scheme acquires a social meaning quite foreign to it.

Art, if it is to become a "Gleichnis" of reality, must, in Sternheim's view, first classify reality in a manner analogous to the method of the natural sciences and then portray, in all their uniqueness, the residue of exceptions to this classification. It is not only the exceptions which are interpreted from a social standpoint, but also the aspects

of reality which can be subsumed into scientific concepts. The scientific reduction of social life to a chain of cause and effect implies a doctrine of social Darwinism. The result is a blueprint for both Don Juan and Sternheim's later comedies. The unique individual, oblivious to all extraneous pressures and influences, is to be placed within a context of a prevailing determinist and conformist ideology.

One final point must be made about Sternheim's debt to Rickert. Thanks to his new definition of art Sternheim succeeds in solving, or at least shelving, a difficulty which long caused him concern. From 1905 onwards he is keen to establish a theoretical framework capable of supplying him with purely formal criteria; by February 1906 he freely admits to Thea:

> Ich . . . kann es nicht mehr ertragen, die Philosophie als die Wissenschaft, die uns Erkenntnisse, d. i. Werturteile über die Fragen der Ethik und Aesthetik vor allem giebt, zu entbehren. (6,473)

What he is seeking is a theoretical justification for some kind of formal control to counterbalance the intensely inspirational and autobiographical quality of his earliest plays. His brief interest in Wölfflin's formal categories is another symptom of this need. Sternheim's problem is this: he cannot reconcile the formal control which he perceives and admires in Renaissance painting with his own attempts to express a dynamic sense of life. His very choice of theme seems a recipe for formlessness. His dilemma is well attested towards the end of 1905. During his revision of Don Juan I that November he claims that, while the first version was the product of "frische Begeisterung, das Herz, das sich freischreiben musste"

(7,814), the second calls for stricter control:

> Hier gilt jedes Wort. Es wird erwogen, geprüft, auf seinen Geist, sein Volumen, und dann bewusst hingesetzt. Es ist ein Arbeiten nach Raffael. (7,814)

The allusion to Raphael is intended to convey the harmony of expressive content and formal beauty which Sternheim himself seeks.

The definition of art as "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit" permits Sternheim to retain, in the guise of "das historische Individuum", the dynamic hero, while at the same time introducing formal control. This control has nothing in common with traditional aesthetic notions of beauty, or "Zweckmässigkeit", but rather is inherent in the technique of selection which the artist is now seen as employing. By undertaking two separate processes of selection (analogous to those of the scientist and historian), the artist can reproduce the dual structure of empirical reality, but with greater economy and precision. The compression of the resultant "Bild" is a virtual guarantee against formlessness and obviates the need for formal aesthetic rules:

> Durch das Bild soll die begriffliche Unklarheit des Wortes überwunden werden, durch die Form die begriffliche Unsicherheit des Inhalts. (6,484)

"Bild" here is the artistic equivalent of the philosophical concept and practically synonymous with it. But a secondary, if related, meaning of the scenic "Bild" is found in Sternheim's theory at a slightly earlier date: the stage-set clarifies and enhances the dramatic content either by underlining it visually, or by contrasting with it. If this secondary meaning is incorporated into the later definition, then the revised definition runs as follows: the dramatist overcomes the manifold variety,

complexity and ambiguity of the empirical world through rigorous conceptual precision, reinforced by unambiguous scenic devices. Throughout his later development, economy and precision (both conceptual and verbal) remain Sternheim's guiding principles, as the compression and pruning of successive manuscript versions and published editions of his work amply demonstrate.

That Sternheim's theory has a direct bearing on his literary practice in Don Juan is the outcome of his fondness for building his latest insights into his creative work. The scene entitled "Verdeck eines Schiffs" (7,682 ff.), in which Juan and Cervantes debate the relative claims of public and private fulfilment, not only contains a programmatic statement of Sternheim's new position, but also a demonstration of the "Bild"; and hence it forms a convenient bridge between theory and practice. The idea of introducing Cervantes occurred to Sternheim early in 1906, when he was engaged in historical research for the second part of the play. Initially he sought to suggest that Juan's military success at Lepanto had inspired Don Quixote, but later—convinced now that Juan's character should take precedence over the attempt to recapture the whole spirit of the age—he replaces the battle-scene with a debate. In the final version Juan himself is made the mouth-piece of the author and explains the change of plan:

> . . . menschlich vollkommen habest Don Juan
> du einmal nur geschaut: Nicht in der Schlacht -
> auf seines Schiffes Deck vor Griechenland. (7,691)

Juan's character and attitudes are now to be conveyed through his vision of ancient Greece, an exemplary "Bild", in which the main themes of the

play are crystallized.

The debate between Juan and Cervantes is about two contrasting views of the relationship between the individual and society. The problem is that of action. Cervantes argues that the historical situation warrants, indeed demands, that Juan seize the throne, while Juan wonders whether the hero should be prepared to sacrifice himself in order to fulfil the aspirations of an effete, apathetic society. Cervantes' appeal is to Juan's vanity, his desire to tower over his contemporaries as "ein Einziger und Besonderer" (7,686), an echo of Rickert's term. Juan counters with a Nietzschean argument:

> Weil Welt so unbedingt für meinen Willen hingeschmissen liegt, gilt es vielmehr keusche Zurückhaltung als täppisches Zugreifen, das die Lüsternheit erwartet. (7,687)

In a society in which everyone is struggling for some kind of prominence he finds "Unabsichtliches verehrungswürdig und das Leise, Vergebliche ein holdes Ziel" (7,687), much as Nietzsche's aristocratic individual repudiates political power, refusing to make "heftigen, ausschliesslich auf ein Ziel gerichteten Gebrauch davon".[1] Into Juan's view of Europe in the sixteenth century Sternheim projects his own reservations about contemporary European society, while the image of Greece represents an idealized alternative. This contrast between a conformist, mechanistic society and an organic community of free individuals is to reappear in Sternheim's later work.

If Cervantes is moved by Juan's "schön und innig angeschautes Bild"

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1. Nietzsche, Gesamtwerk, XII, Leipzig, 1897, p. 108; this phrase is contained in one of the paragraphs cited by Sternheim.

(7,688), he emphasizes that this image of Greece is a fiction, a projection of Juan's own feelings; and Juan openly confesses his sympathy with the Greek ideal. Both statements are pointers to the close correspondence between the actual "Bild" and Juan's rôle in the play as a whole. He reminds Cervantes of three separate myths:

> Dort starb ein Volk, Cervantes,
> das um ein Weib die Greuel wüster Kriege
> mit heiliger Überzeugung auf sich nahm,
> die besten Männer hingab, weil sein Hirn
> nicht fassen wollte: Helena die Griechin
> bei Wesen, deren Sitte Barbarei,
> Leib, der an Göttervorbild aufgepflegt,
> Sinn, der durch innigste Erkenntnis blühte,
> schimpflich befleckten und verwüsten musste.
>
> Da flog ein Volk von Göttern, spannte Tugend
> bis in des Himmels Blau und holte sich
> die Frau zurück. Zu heldischem Gemeindrang
> wird Hoheit vieler einzelner geläutert. (7,688)
>
> Kastor lass
> und Pollux wieder leben, Ödipus,
> der seine Mutter eine Sternennacht
> wie eine süsse Frau in Armen hielt
> und sich in ihr vergass. (7,688-89)

With his seduction of Laurentia Juan re-enacts the Oedipus myth, for if his relationship with Maria's mother is not literally incestuous, it strikes Juan as such.[1] Indeed, each of the myths which he cites reflects some aspect of his own emotional experience: the quest for Helen corresponds to Juan's own pursuit of Maria; and the friendship of Castor and Pollux to his relationship with Ripio. While Cervantes is concerned with

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1. See 7,710. W. Wendler, "Carl Sternheim", in Expressionismus als Literatur, ed. W. Rothe, Berne, 1969, p. 459, draws attention to the omission of a father-son rivalry in Juan's account of the Oedipus myth and relates it to a more general avoidance of conflict in Sternheim's work.

wider political and historical perspectives, Juan's contrasting "Bild" refers exclusively to private experience; even the Trojan War is re-interpreted to fit into the pattern.

Cervantes rejects Juan's version of the Oedipus myth, arguing that it contains a message, a warning that one should act only after considering the social implications:

> . . . edler Menschengeist wirkt seine Tat
> nicht in verworrenem Knäuel für sich selbst,
> als glatten Faden spult er der Nation
> Gewinn, den ihm ein Gott gegeben, zu. (7,689)

It is anathema to Juan that private experience should be thus contaminated by social or national considerations; he accuses Cervantes of undervaluing his "schöne Einzelheit", his "Eigenwillen" (7,689). What follows is the speech most gratefully seized on by critics[1] in search of Sternheim's earliest recorded statement of the doctrine of the "eigene Nuance", of individual self-fulfilment at all costs:

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1. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, pp. 230-31, makes the point that Sternheim is preoccupied with the theme of individual self-fulfilment before his encounter with Rickert in 1906. Wendler's choice of examples is unfortunate. The first is from Vorkriegseuropa (1936), an unreliable document in that Sternheim emphasizes tendencies which are only later to become central. The second, cited here from Don Juan, is found in a scene in the Marbach MS. (no. 4 in W. Emrich's notation) which is dated 5 December 1908-10 January 1909. Corrections to this MS. indicate that the scene achieved its final form only at this late date. The third example is from Das eiserne Kreuz (begun in 1898), which has more in common with the now rejected Ibsen than with the Sternheim of Don Juan II. The whole point about Rickert's influence is that Sternheim now divides reality into two mutually exclusive areas, and thus the kind of conflict found in Das eiserne Kreuz—the direct collision of the individual with social conventions—is no longer possible. It is, of course, not from Rickert alone, but from a Nietzschean interpretation of Rickert's scheme that Sternheim develops his new position in 1906.

> Am Nächsten reizt mich nur das köstlich Eigene,
> Nichtzuerratende an Weg und Ziel. (7,690)

Juan projects into others his own refusal to be dragooned into pursuing political ends; for him, the goals of kingship, of military conquest, or of religious crusade automatically preclude private fulfilment. And, unwilling himself to enter the political arena, he casts doubt on Cervantes' motives, claiming that the latter would really prefer his study to the battlefield. For Juan (as, indeed, for the young Sternheim), artistic creativity belongs firmly in the realm of private emotional experience. In one final appeal Cervantes advances the religious argument: a crusade against the Infidel must surely appeal to a Christian. The response is a programmatic reiteration of Juan's position: the essential content of Christianity is not affected by military victory or defeat:

> Wem Wunder Lebens tiefste Notdurft ist,
> den wirft auch mangelnde Wahrscheinlichkeit
> nicht nieder, immer wieder Glaube sprengt
> die kahlen Wände dieser Erde fort
> und stellt die Seele ihrer Sehnsucht nach. (7,690-91)

If the hero remains true to his inner vision of events, the laws of material reality, of cause and effect, cease to have any meaning.

In the scene with Cervantes, then, Sternheim illustrates the contrasting views of the relationship of the individual to society by the two responses to the Greek myths, a technique which he favours, as it allows him to introduce theoretical statements into his creative works.[1] Here the "schön und innig angeschautes Bild", though not an independent

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1. In Europa the ideological differences between Carl Wundt and Eura Fuld are similarly evoked by their reactions to works of art. See below, pp. 213-33.

work of art, fulfils much the same function. Cervantes' interpretation is that of the historian; its moral preaching is akin to what Sternheim sees as the historian's attempt to relate personalities and events to general value. It is, after all, Cervantes who refers to "den Gesetzen historischer Ereignisse" (7,687), the existence of which Rickert flatly denies, but which Sternheim tends to read into the historian's concern with general value. By contrast, Juan's vision of Greece is not prescriptive; if he makes no apology for admiring in Greece qualities similar to his own, he draws no practical conclusions from them, either for himself, or for others. The distinction which Sternheim is at pains to draw between the artist and historian is thus built into the action at this point.

One further feature of the "Bild" corresponds closely to Juan's behaviour elsewhere in the play. The sheer power of the individual's vision enables him to transcend the constraints imposed by material reality:

> Es ging in Himmel und in Hölle Erde
> ganz unentschieden auf, ein jeder schritt
> in beiden furchtlos unbehindert fort
> und ungescholten, selig er allein. (7,689)

The point that is made here is reinforced visually in two notable scenes, which Sternheim later mentions as having prompted a theatrical scandal.[1]

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1. In Europa Carl Wundt's drama, which is clearly meant to stand for Don Juan, twice provokes a violent audience reaction: initially "als der historisch verkleidete Held . . . sich anschickte, neben dem für seinen Weg weitoffenen Tor ein spitzenstarrendes Eisengitter auf der Szene trotzdem zu überklettern" (5,229); and on a second occasion "als dieser Don Quichote zum Schluss, einen leeren, von sechs Pferden durch alle Länder spazierengeführten Wagen öffnend, vor der aussteigenden Geliebten, die nicht da war, . . . salutierte" (5,229).

The first instance is when Juan, ignoring the open door, climbs into the nunnery (7,662); the second, when he has an empty carriage accompany him, in the conviction, erroneous as far as the audience is concerned, that it contains Maria (7,715-19). The scenic device—here the "Bild" is found in its secondary sense—is intended to indicate how Juan's inner vision conflicts with and overcomes rationality, with its laws of cause and effect. The second example suggests that death cannot prevail against Juan's vision. As for the first, were Juan to climb into a nunnery alongside a closed door, the incident could readily be interpreted in terms of practical goals and their attainment. The open door removes this possibility and with it, ostensibly, any ambiguity. But, in fact, the action acquires a new kind of ambiguity: it is not clear whether Juan is simply rejecting a logical, practical way of thinking, or whether he is expressing a refusal to come into direct conflict with Philipp. Sternheim appears unwilling to recognize that the scenic "Bild", even if it springs from the protagonist's inner nature, is quite as capable of bearing several meanings as the words which he uses.

The thematic implications of Sternheim's Rickertian scheme are well illustrated in Don Juan. If art is defined as portraying "auf dem Untergrund des Naturgesetzmässigen das Besondere" (6,480), then it is Juan himself who represents "das Besondere", with all its Nietzschean associations. He consistently refuses to see his personal life in terms of anything "higher". That he succeeds in overcoming the limitations of material reality does not mean that he advocates any religious or metaphysical doctrine. Indeed, the religious solution is expressly rejected:

the abbess of the nunnery insists that Christian humility is incompatible with "Stolz auf eigene Person" (7,658). When Juan talks of transcending reality, he means the reality of scientific positivism, of cause and effect, in short, "das Naturgesetzmässige", particularly as represented by Philipp's "Realpolitik". Sternheim's own comments on the dramatic conflict are relevant here:

> Sehr klar wird mir inzwischen der Gegensatz zwischen Philipp, der die Welt erkannte und Juan, der von nichts weiss ausser sich und alles nach sich schätzt.
>
> Der König, der weiss, dass es eine Wirklichkeit giebt ausser ihm und dass es darauf ankommt, . . . dieses ausser sich zu beherrschen und nicht sich ihm hinzugeben. (7,847)

Whereas Juan refuses to allow his public rôle to encroach on his private vision, Philipp does not permit his personal life to interfere with his duties as king.

The problem posed by Sternheim's theoretical position is particularly well illustrated by the relationship between Juan and Philipp. Art is, according to the new definition, supposed to portray the interaction of the unique individual with a conformist, mechanistic world, obsessed with cause and effect, with motives and intentions. Yet, drawing the logical conclusion of his view that the hero should not be influenced by outside agencies, Sternheim finds the dramatic conflict impaired. Whereas in Das eiserne Kreuz Ellen's private code came into direct conflict with social convention, in Don Juan the hero is to be influenced by nothing which does not spring from his inner nature. Juan is the projection, on an ideal plane, of a complete rejection both of a universal moral code and of a realistic rationalist position; Philipp, by contrast,

is the political realist. The dramatic problem of juxtaposing the representatives of two mutually exclusive approaches is that they cannot be brought into serious dramatic conflict. They simply co-exist on separate levels. Juan does not come into conflict with morality or politics, for he refuses to acknowledge their existence. His tragedy is that others judge him by their own standards, attributing to him their own political motives. His military successes are, in fact, an accidental emanation of his extraordinary "Kraft", yet they are interpreted by Philipp as a political challenge. This is why he is sent to the Low Countries to his death. But, while the play is intended to portray the interaction of "das Besondere" and "das Naturgesetzmässige", direct dramatic conflict is negligible. Juan and Philipp meet only twice: on the first occasion, when Juan interrupts the "play within a play", they do not speak;[1] on the second, outside the nunnery, the exchange is minimal. The only words which Juan addresses to Philipp during the whole course of the play are these: "Mir war, mir war, ich hätte hier zu tun" (7,662).

In accordance with his interpretation of Rickert, Sternheim sees art as providing a heterocosm, a concentrated version of those same two essential areas of which reality is composed. The corollary of this definition is that reality itself is a broader, more diffuse work of art, a romantic notion which commended itself to Sternheim before 1906 and which now reappears in a new guise; reality—which is variously termed

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1. See 7,599-603.

"life" or "history" by Sternheim—is but a drama on a grander scale.[1] Sternheim's attempts to underscore the relationship between drama and the reality which it distils account for many of the differences between the 1905 version of Don Juan I and the first part of the 1909 edition. Not content with having gained the theoretical insight, Sternheim would, once again, incorporate it into his creative work.

The first of many devices calculated to remind the audience of the relationship in which art stands to reality is the "theatrum mundi" topos. In the 1905 version the "play within a play" was the second of the pieces collected under the title Der Abenteurer,[2] a work with the theme of seduction, but little else, in common with Juan's own experience. In the earlier version Juan actually took part in the play, offering his services in place of a sick actor, but no mention is made of "theatrum mundi". In 1909, however, the "play within a play" comes very close to mirroring Juan's escapade and the ensuing duel with Maria's father. At first it seems that the earlier version is to be repeated: the lovers are discovered by the jealous husband and, according to the author, the lover is, as before, to outwit the husband and effect a reconciliation. But, before events can take this happy turn, Juan interrupts the action from the auditorium and thus provides what Philipp approvingly calls a "Gegensatz

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1. In a letter of 1906 the relationship of art to life, or history, is described thus: "Was das Leben nicht vermag - (oder viel zu selten) bedeutende Menschen zusammenzubringen und aus ihrem Aufeinanderwirken die ganze Skala von hohen hochheiligen Werten zu entwickeln: im Verlaufe dreier Stunden uns an andächtigen Werten lebendig werden zu lassen, was uns die Historie kaum in Jahrtausenden bescheert hat . . ." (6,479).

2. See 7,209-20.

von Scherz und Ernst" (7,603). Juan insists that the play should not gloss over reality, that events should be true to life, that is, true to his earlier enactment of them. In this way, Sternheim hints at the conscious drama of the original incident. Ripio is not slow to learn his lesson and subsequently refers to the masked ball in theatrical terms:

> Das sind ja Pantomimen,
> das sieht ja wieder wie Theater aus.
> Ist das vielleicht theatrum mundi oder
> so Ähnliches? (7,611)

And Philipp employs the same image to suggest a determinist view of history:

> . . . da das Welttheater
> den Höhepunkt agiert, hat die Figur
> am Schnürchen ihre Rolle abzuhapseln,
> wer sich im Wort verstrickt, fliegt von der Szene. (7,678)

Each of the main protagonists interprets the relationship between the theatre and reality in a manner appropriate to his own attitude: Juan relates the "play within a play" to life, insisting that the characters should live out their inner natures, that art should not falsify the picture; Philipp uses the theatre-image of history, in support of his view that the individual is subordinated to historical ends.

Several other references to self-conscious rôle-playing are found in Don Juan. The love-scene with Laurentia is punctuated with comments likely to destroy, or at least impair, the dramatic illusion. Her declaration of love is Juan's cue:

> Juan: Mein Stichwort, nenne es mir,
> blitzschnell mein Stichwort. Dieses ist Komödie,
> ich werde ganz verwirrt . . .
>
> Laurentia: Ich liebe dich.

> Juan: Ich liebe dich, ich liebe, Immerfort
> das gleiche. Welche Rolle spielst du denn?
> Wie lächerlich! Und wer ist nur der Dichter,
> der das erdacht? (7,576)

It is a brave dramatist, or one bent on provocation, who would risk such a rhetorical question.[1] His references to self-conscious rôle-playing reflect Sternheim's growing self-irony. Ripio's reaction to Juan's masterly seduction of Inez similarly pre-empts the audience's response:

> . . . ich muss anfangen, diese Streiche aufzuschreiben. Sie
> sind ganz hervorragend geeignet, anderen Menschen Spass zu machen.
> Es wird erst hapern, aber Übung macht den Meister. (7,547)

The use of the "theatrum mundi" topos, then, is but one symptom of Sternheim's ironic detachment, which—to judge by the inclusion of scenes in the 1909 version which were not present in 1905—appears to increase markedly in 1906 and in the years immediately following. Faced with an overwhelming wealth of historical material, uncertainty about his dramatic aims, and, not least, an unbalanced mental state,[2] Sternheim seems to take refuge in self-irony. Even in later works he finds it difficult to resist the temptation to include ironic references to himself or his plays.[3]

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1. In Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 151, Sternheim describes the uproar at the première of Don Juan in September 1912, recalling the moment "als auf des Königs Philipps Frage im Text: 'Wer schrieb den Unsinn?' alles aus dem Zuschauerraum begeistert brüllend antwortete: 'Sternheim! Sternheim!!!'"

2. R. Billetta, ed., "Carl Sternheim: Briefe an Franz Blei", Neue deutsche Hefte 18 (1971), pp. 55-57, gives an account of Sternheim's mental condition in 1906.

3. See 1,102 and 3,219.

That Don Juan is "durchsetzt mit Reflexen weltliterarischer Werke"[1] has not escaped the critics. Sternheim's indebtedness to Faust, in particular, illustrates a second sense in which the "theatrum mundi" may be understood: not only is all the world a stage, but the world's stage is an inexhaustible fund of incidents, themes, motifs, scenes and memorable lines. Sternheim not only adopts formal elements from Faust, such as verse forms and the transition from the "kleine Welt" of the first part to the "grosse Welt" of the second, but also borrows directly, transferring speeches to different characters. Thus Gretchen's

> . . . tiefer will ich mich in dich verirren,
> herzlich geliebter Mann (7,653)

is given to Maria, but her "ich bin gerichtet" (7,578) to Laurentia; and the description of Helena is travestied in respect of Juan: ". . . der Mann ist viel gelästert, viel gescholten" (7,588).[2] Yet such allusions betoken ironic distancing rather than satirical intent; Sternheim maintains a positive attitude to Goethe until 1914-15. Here he is merely playing with a cultural tradition.

Sternheim's growing ironic detachment is a factor in his breakthrough to comedy in 1909. What must be regarded as a dramatic shortcoming in Don Juan: namely, the absence of direct conflict between the representatives of individualism and social conformism, is turned to good

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1. See 7,850. Noting that R. Billetta has cited twenty-one different sources for Don Juan, W. Emrich himself adds another two.

2. P. Stehlin, Zum Goethe-Bild des literarischen Expressionismus, Zurich, 1967, pp. 33-40, makes this point in his discussion of "Carl Sternheims Abkehr von Goethe".

effect in the later comedies. In one important respect Juan anticipates the "bürgerlicher Held"; like him, they remain essentially unperturbed by the machinations of others. They triumph over those who would cuckold, exploit, or manipulate them, simply by virtue of their extraordinary vitality, their strength of personality. Yet, while Juan's tragedy is his refusal to take political and social realities into account, their success is founded on their realism, their confident materialism. While they remain "Helden", like Juan, unaffected by outside influences, they become bürgerlich" and are, like Philipp, firmly rooted in social reality. The Rickertian scheme is retained, but the perspective shifts.

(iii) The subsequent development of Rickert's ideas in Sternheim's theory of art.

Now that the extent of Sternheim's debt to Rickert's philosophy in 1906 has been established, his subsequent use of Rickertian notions and terminology in his theory may conveniently be traced. Such a procedure has two main advantages: in the first place, it serves to provide a preliminary survey of ground which will be mapped out in greater detail in later chapters; secondly, if certain Rickertian ideas are taken as fixed points in Sternheim's theory, then the later shifts of emphasis in his approach to art may be the more readily isolated. As we have seen, Sternheim likes to link his name not only with that of Rickert, but also with those of Husserl and Scheler; and it is above all the impact of a

phenomenological approach which marks the next major advance in Sternheim's aesthetics. I propose here to examine the development of three central ideas, derived from Rickert, in Sternheim's work after 1906, showing how he further adapts them to his changing needs.

(a) "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit".

The idea that conceptualization enables man to overcome the infinite variety of the empirical world clearly exercises a fascination for Sternheim. Yet he is, above all, concerned to raise the status of the creative artist above that of the historian, scientist and even the philosopher. Art alone, he argues, is capable of providing the intellectually less gifted with philosophical insights in a form which allows such insights to be readily assimilated. Whereas Rickert's term "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit" defines conceptualization, Sternheim adapts it to describe the way in which the artist selects and orders his material. The finished work of art is equated with a philosophical concept, but in a ready-made form, as it were, for those less able to perform for themselves the process of subordinating the less essential to the essential. Art thus provides a short cut to a concept.[1] The term "Begriff", a commonplace in Sternheim's theoretical writings, refers to the end-product of

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1. Sternheim's conviction that art provides knowledge ("Erkenntnis"), a notion which he derives from his reading of Rickert, develops into the view that art supplies not merely a specific insight, but also the means to knowledge. This accounts for the inclusion of epistemological theory within both his creative work, such as Der Snob (see 1,211-12), and his essays. In Das Arbeiter-ABC (1922) he seeks to provide a simplified introduction to philosophy for the working class.

a process of selection and concentration.

It is in the essay Vincent van Gogh (1910) that Sternheim next expounds Rickert's theory and uses his terminology, without, however, feeling the need to cite his source. The artistic concept ("Begriff") has the following function:

> . . . zu orientieren in der Welt der umgebenden Mannigfaltigkeiten, das heisst: in einem jeden [Kunstwerk] sei die dargestellte Welt mit ihren Mannigfaltigkeiten zu einem Begriff gebändigt. (6,9)

This is the aim of all human knowledge: to reduce the chaos of the empirical world to ordered groups and disciplines, each providing "eine Anzahl endgültig gewonnener Begriffe" (6,9); art is merely one of these disciplines, for

> . . . auch im Gebiet der Kunst geht niemals anderes vor sich als Mannigfaltigkeitsüberwindung im Hinblick auf schliesslich zu gewinnende gültige Begriffe. (6,9)

Neither logic, nor ethics, can supply the kind of concept which art is capable of providing; these are peculiar to art and may be divided into two classes.

In the first place, the artist's concept may convey a "Komplex zeitlicher und örtlicher Menschheitsgeschichte" (6,9),preserving the essence of a past age, or specific locality, for posterity. Clearly, the criterion of selection here is the unique and individual, a feature which links this kind of painting to Rickert's historical concept. Sternheim clarifies his argument by citing two examples: Rubens is praised for distilling the essence of Dutch seventeenth-century life, Van Gogh for handing down to posterity "den erschöpfenden Begriff für das ganz südliche

Frankreich" (6,9).[1] The term used here to describe this process is "Extensität", obviously derived from Rickert's distinction between "intensive" and "extensive Mannigfaltigkeit". Whereas both Rubens and Van Gogh achieve, to use Rickert's terms, "Überwindung extensiver Mannigfaltigkeit", Van Gogh's particular achievement is the greater because of a second quality, which he shares with Manet and Renoir:

> . . . ihre aus jeder Gegend des Lebens, aus allen Zweigen der Materie nach Laune herausgenommenen Objekte vermögen sie dennoch mit Innigkeit zu durchdringen. Auch sie überwinden an diesen Mannigfaltigkeiten in der Weise, dass sie die weniger wichtigen Eigenschaften des Gegenstands der Besonderheit, die uns an ihm reizt, unterordnen und diese dadurch so verdichten, dass das Bild vom Spargel mehr ein Spargel ist als er selbst! (6,10)[2]

When one bears in mind Sternheim's indebtedness to Rickert, it comes as no surprise to find him describing the finished work as "ein so mit Intensität angeschautes Bild" (6,10).[3] This second technique, then, is

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1. In a letter to Franz Blei of 31 October 1916, Sternheim makes a similar theoretical point: "Überliefern Sie Späteren doch einmal die Mark Brandenburg begrifflich! Dann sind Sie ein Schöpfer. Sie brauchen bloss Sand, Kartoffeln und Luther ausdrücken können, und es bedarf keiner Idee weiter." He tries to realize this intention in the story Ulrike (1916). The above quotation is taken from the fourth of sixteen letters to Franz Blei, published in the Neue deutsche Hefte 18 (1971), pp. 36-69, edited, with notes and commentary, by R. Billetta. Subsequent references to this collection will be given in the form: Sternheim, "Briefe an Blei", followed by the number and date of the letter.

2. My italics. In Die Kassette (written 1910-11, published 1912) asparagus is the subject of Seidenschnur's first painting. To Krull, who expected a traditional religious subject, Seidenschnur explains: "Man malt keine Literatur mehr, hält sich streng an die Natur" (1,458), at which point the later 1926 edition inserts the topical cliché "Expressionismus". Here the theoretical point is incidental to the joke that, if he can paint such life-like food "aus dem Kopf", Seidenschnur is indeed justified in his assertion: "Gebe ich die Photographie auf, bin ich in kürzester Zeit imstand, meine Familie zu ernähren" (1,458).

3. This formulation recalls Cervantes' response to Juan's evocation of Greece: "ein schön und innig angeschautes Bild" (7,688).

related to Rickert's "Überwindung intensiver Mannigfaltigkeit". What constitutes Van Gogh's originality and greatness is the presence in his work of both forms of "Überwindung". The significance which Van Gogh attaches to menial objects never threatens to become idiosyncratic or whimsical, Sternheim implies, because such objects are always firmly rooted in the specific social, geographical and historical context.

Sternheim is anxious to stress that art in no way distorts reality: the structure of the world created by the artist is identical to that which underlies the empirical world. The artist's world is simplified, more concentrated, yet not essentially different. The artist's real achievement consists in his skill "Gottvaters Arbeit nachzumachen und das Einzeln Geschaffene zu einem neuen All zu vereinen" (6,10). The hetero-cosmic analogue, which Sternheim implies in his earlier neo-Romantic works, now reappears with a new emphasis. Previously, the artist's genius and inspiration made him a rival of God, a Promethean figure, creating his own unique world. Now the interest centres not on the inspirational quality of art, but on "nachmachen", on the artist's mimetic function.[1] The empirical world is given; the artist cannot take liberties with it, selecting at random, following his private whim. His task is one of "Verdichtung", of reducing the infinite variety of reality to manageable form, a process akin to that of conceptualization. In his final assessment

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1. Sternheim, in the "Briefe an Blei", No. 3, dated 23 November 1913, brings up the same argument: "Die künstlerische Form ist der Gegensatz zur Form des Schöpfers. Künstler und Gott, stehen sich gewissermassen ergänzend gegenüber; d. h. der Künstler ist der Ergänzer".

of Van Gogh's work, Sternheim pays him the ultimate compliment: he is more than simply a painter; he is "der Begriffsbildner" (6,12).

The two qualities in Van Gogh's work, "Extensität" and "Intensität", are produced by a dual process of selection. On the one hand, the artist selects from a landscape or period in history what is characteristic of the subject in question. This process is akin to the formation of the historical concept, the criterion of selection being "das Besondere", the individual. On the other hand, when he comes to consider the portrayal of specific objects within a landscape or historical setting, Sternheim is, once again, unwilling to eschew the advantages of the scientific method: by concentrating on a specific object and abstracting the essential, the artist arrives at the time-transcending generic type.[1] The capacity of art for grasping the species within the individual had long interested Sternheim, as his letters from Italy in 1905 and 1906 illustrated; and, during his encounter with Rickert's work, he continued to insist that the artist performed a process of abstraction analogous to that of the natural scientist. Now Sternheim introduces the quality of "Intensität" to fulfil much the same function. By arguing that the artist overcomes "intensive Mannigfaltigkeit" in this way, Sternheim preserves the traditional aesthetic notion of the universal. Indeed, when the dual

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1. See Benedetto Croce, Aesthetic, trans. D. Ainslie, 3rd rev. ed., London, 1967, pp. 33-34. Croce discusses the claim that art portrays the species in the individual: "Don Quixote is a type; but of what is he the type, save of all Don Quixotes? A type, so to speak, of himself. . . . We call that expression typical, which we might simply call aesthetic." Sternheim is clearly very reluctant to use the term "aesthetic".

process is complete, the result is tantamount to a "concrete universal".[1] In that Van Gogh's work exemplifies both processes, Sternheim believes that it constitutes a complete "Gleichnis" of reality.

During the course of the next decade the term "Mannigfaltigkeit" undergoes a shift in meaning, acquiring a sense more commensurate with the phenomenological approach to art which Sternheim slowly evolves after 1914-15. By 1919 he can entitle one of his essays Die unbescholtene Mannigfaltigkeit and argue that the infinite variety of the empirical world must be preserved at all costs. The whole basis of his aesthetic of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit" seems to be called into question. But the context of his remarks indicates that no such major revision has taken place. The above-mentioned essay, written at a time when Sternheim is concerned to establish his own position with regard to politically committed art, contains an attack on the so-called revolutionary Expressionists

> . . . weil sie innerhalb des Aufbruchwillens der Massen sie an abgestandenen Ideen im Kreise gängeln statt endlich die Tür in die Welt unbescholtener und unübersehbarer Mannigfaltigkeiten aufzustossen. (6,100)

Such writers—he appears to have Hasenclever and Unruh in mind—simply reverse existing bourgeois[2] values, whereas Sternheim himself insists on

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1. See W. K. Wimsatt, "The Concrete Universal", in The Verbal Icon, London, 1970, pp. 69-83.

2. I use this term where Sternheim writes "bürgerlich", a notoriously difficult term to render into English. As R. Beckley rightly points out, in the entry under "Carl Sternheim" in German Men of Letters, II, ed. A. Natan, London, 1963, pp. 134-152: "Sternheim does not use the word "bürgerlich" in the rigid Marxist sense, or to define a social

the "Aufhebung jedes positiven oder negativen Wertzeichens" (6,99). That reality is now "unbescholten" implies that it should be viewed without moral or ideological bias. It is at this stage that Sternheim also develops a language-theory, claiming that bourgeois language falsifies reality by using words which imply a positive or negative evaluation; in this theory, too, "Mannigfaltigkeit" is reinstated.[1] In Morgenröte? (1919) this insidious process is described in the following terms:

> Mit allen Kräften sucht man weiter bei täglich erscheinender Mannigfaltigkeit, die uns gütig naives Auge vermittelt, schon in der Dinge Geburt die Wertzeichen zu fälschen. . . . (6,102)

"Mannigfaltigkeit" has come to mean reality in all its pristine freshness and variety, untainted by ideologies, by political or metaphysical pre-conceptions.[2]

Yet, while there is a crucial shift of emphasis in Sternheim's theory at this point, this does not involve a complete rejection of his earlier position. The artist still undertakes formal "Überwindung", but must not interpret reality according to a moral, metaphysical or political set of values. The emphasis is now not so much on the purely formal process of selection and concentration, as on the need to preclude any

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(continued) class distinct from the proletariat and the aristocracy. He seems rather to apply it to anyone whose attitude of mind is a product of the peculiar conditions of middle-class existence--the need to struggle for social recognition, conform to social standards, etc. It includes all but princes and beggars" (foot-note to p. 134).

1. Sternheim's theory of language is discussed in Chapter VI below.

2. W. Stauch-von-Quitzow, Carl Sternheim: Bewusstsein und Form seines Komödienwerks, Diss. Munich, 1968, p.15, is incorrect in his assertion "dass es in keinem Falle zutrifft, in Sternheims Grundgedanken zur Theorie der Mannigfaltigkeit im Laufe der Jahrzehnte einen Wandel zu erblicken".

other process of selection before the artist begins his task. "Mannigfaltigkeit" must still be overcome in art, but from every other point of view it is to be preserved. Significantly, it is around 1919--when Sternheim becomes increasingly aware of the dangers of promulgating political iedologies through art--that "Mannigfaltigkeit" is reinstated. This is the sense in which the term is employed in Europa, illustrated here by a passage in which Bura extols French culture, by contrast with its German counterpart:

> Hier überall war Leben, nicht Lesen, Denken, Systembildung zur Erziehung und einem Sichverhalten. Durchaus keine Prätension, . . . sondern aller Mannigfaltigkeit Hinnahme, Gefühl für das schlechthin Seiende und seine milliardenfache Zusammenstellung. (5,254)

The shift in the meaning of the term "Mannigfaltigkeit" affects Sternheim's views on the artist's choice of subject. In a tribute to Gottfried Benn in Die zwölf wertvollsten Bücher (1921), he again places all the stress on "die mit unüberwindlicher Mannigfaltigkeit von einem sich nie genugtuenden Schöpfer täglich neugeschmückte Welt" (6,176). Both he and Benn, Sternheim feels, reflect all aspects of reality in their works, with no special predilection for the beautiful, the true, or the good, an approach born of the conviction that reality is perfect in itself, that the artist should not attempt to correct, heighten, improve, or embellish it. One of the earliest statements of this phenomenological approach is found in the fragment Legende (1916), which is later adapted to become the first chapter of Gauguin und van Gogh (written in 1923); here Van Gogh realizes

> . . . dass vorerst er sich der Schöpfung wie dem irdischen Abbild des Schöpfers ohne andere Absicht nähern müsse, als sie unbefangen und durch eigenes Gesicht inne zu werden. (5,492)

Only if he eschews a fixed standpoint, preconceived attitudes, can the artist bring out the myriad possibilities inherent in reality.

Sternheim's insistence that the artist should not submit the raw material of his art to a preliminary process of selection on moral or aesthetic grounds is at the heart of his phenomenological theory. This development in his thinking dates from around 1914-15, roughly contemporary with (and not unrelated to) his repudiation of Goethe. As late as 1909 Goethe was his idol;[1] and, as such, Goethe, too, exhibited the technique of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit". But by 1915 Goethe is rejected as the chief representative of the German bourgeois ideology which Sternheim has come to hold responsible for the outbreak of war; and hence a new clause must be introduced into the theory to exclude such bourgeois writers. The phenomenological approach answers this need. It enables Sternheim to maintain that bourgeois writers distort reality by viewing it with moral or metaphysical preconceptions. If art overcomes the infinite variety of the empirical world only formally, then it follows that outside the realm of art there should be no "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit". Yet the representatives of bourgeois culture, he claims, submit reality to a process of selection <u>before</u> overcoming it formally; they select from reality only those elements which conform to

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1. In a letter to Thea, dated 10 March 1909, Sternheim can write: "Ich fühle mich oft so rein, so tief innerlich Kind durch den geliebten Meister Goethe" (6,510).

their own preconceived notions of the aesthetic or the moral and refuse to treat such subjects as the ugly, the grotesque and the ridiculous. In this connection it is not difficult to see why Sternheim should have responded so enthusiastically to Benn's early work.

Yet Sternheim's attack on Goethe goes even deeper. It is primarily directed against what he regards as Goethe's refusal to deal seriously with the major social and political events of his day:

> Dieser ganze Goethe . . . stand im Menschenerdreich nur auf einem Bein und entzog sich zur Hälfte der Verantwortung, die sein Schöpfer, fast unentrinnbar, auf ihn gesenkt: den Menschen im Krieg mitzufühlen, an ihm schrecklich zu leiden, ihn zu enträtseln, zu deuten und so weit zu höherer Meinung zu überwinden, dass schwächeren Nachfolgern fast nichts zu überwinden übrig blieb. (6,42)

Owing to his predilection for certain subjects, Goethe forfeits the opportunity, Sternheim argues, of handing down to posterity a concise "Begriff" (achieved, of course, through "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit") of the experience of social upheaval; and it is Tolstoy whom Sternheim adduces as a counter-example. What he misses in Goethe—and, indeed, in the German tradition generally—is the wider social perspective which he has come to admire in the Russian and French nineteenth-century realist tradition.[1] The criticism of Goethe coincides, it should

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1. W. G. Sebald, Carl Sternheim: Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära, Stuttgart, 1969, describes Sternheim's attack as "demagogisch und syllogistisch" (p. 71) and refers to "die blinde Vehemenz vulgärer und zynischer Ausfälle nach allen Seiten" (p. 71). He apparently fails to appreciate either the humour of Sternheim's remarks or the serious point which underlies them. In a recent study, entitled On Realism, London, 1973, pp. 95-99, J. P. Stern puts the same point more circumspectly: "Goethe's creative interest . . . is devoted to two spheres--the personal and the metaphysical--which are dovetailed around the social and leave it largely though not entirely uncharted" (p. 98).

be observed, with his enthusiastic championing of Tolstoy and Flaubert.[1]

Sternheim's use of the term "Mannigfaltigkeit" undergoes one further shift of emphasis. In Aufgaben einer verantwortungsbewussten Dichtung (1925) he returns to the definition which he first elaborated nearly two decades earlier. Once again he claims that art captures the unique and individual, "einmaliges unvergleichliches Sein" (6,335), by a process analogous to conceptualization. And once again he expresses the notion that art constitutes a direct road to knowledge, by-passing the more laborious mental processes:

> Nur sie [i.e. art] ist vor dem denkerischen Prozess und unbeeinflusst von Vorurteilen herrschender Klassen naiv und genial imstand, ein Ding aus mannigfaltigen, seine Eigentümlichkeit fesselnden und entstellenden Umständen und Beziehungen zur Umwelt wieder herauszuhauen. . . . (6,336)

The final verb suggests the clarity and precision which Sternheim so envies in the plastic arts. Although the ideological proviso is now incorporated in the definition, it is otherwise much as before. Yet the reference to "Beziehungen zur Umwelt" is included in order to counter a threat from an entirely new quarter. The problem is explained in Lutetia (1926), where Sternheim criticises Proust for his

> . . . Relativitätsprinzip, das ohne krüden Generalstandpunkt psychologische Mannigfaltigkeiten bis ins Endlose nicht sichtet, ordnet, zu gekrönter Architektur formt, aber noch in den letzten Beziehungsmöglichkeiten wahllos mit gleicher Inbrunst nachstellt, sie zerpflückt, bis in ungeahnte Tiefen aufreisst, ohne dass künstlerische Erkenntnis . . . bei alledem herauskommt. (6,404)

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1. See 6,42 and 6,21-22 respectively. The reference to Tolstoy is found in Goethe (1915), sections of which appear in the "Vorrede aus dem Jahr 1915" to Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu (1921); that to Flaubert is found in Zustand (1914).

Proust aims at reproducing a totality of psychological possibilities, all the infinite richness and complexity of recalled experience. Far from overcoming "Mannigfaltigkeit" formally, as Sternheim advocates, Proust seeks to extend and amplify it indefinitely. Their contrasting approaches are neatly illustrated by their respective methods: whereas Sternheim constantly condensed his work in manuscript, deleting all that he felt to be superfluous and aiming at a spare, economical style, Proust would return his proofs to the printer without having corrected the errors, all the available space having been taken up with new additions to the text.[1]

The fluctuation in the meaning of the term "Mannigfaltigkeit" is a useful guide to Sternheim's own theoretical development, for, in defending his theory from attacks on different fronts, he is led to emphasize different aspects of it. Having established his theory firmly by 1910, he defends it first against those who would overcome "Mannigfaltigkeit" by other means than artistic form, against those who would select aspects of the empirical world according to moral or aesthetic criteria before overcoming it formally. This leads to a reinstatement of "Mannigfaltigkeit". But when formal "Überwindung" is thrown into doubt by a technique such as Proust's, Sternheim rushes to its defence. And to the last he maintains his position, looking back on his own achievement in Die Kunst, ein heiteres Theaterwerk, das den Zeitaugenblick überdauert, zu schreiben (1929-30) in the following terms:

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1. Noted by W. Benjamin, "Zum Bilde Prousts", in Illuminationen, ed. S. Unseld, Frankfurt am Main, 1955, p. 356.

> . . . ich überwand aus Laune und höherem Aspekt nach Windelbands, Rickerts, Schelers und Husserls Rezepten soviel lausige Mannigfaltigkeit an ihnen, dass . . . Lust und Freude an deutschen Dingen als letzter Gegenstand der Erkenntnis übrigblieb. (6,429)

(b) "Das Besondere".

Sternheim derives his concept of the unique and individual ("das Besondere") from Rickert's notion of the historical individual. For Rickert, the historical sciences grasp not what is common to a number of phenomena, but what is unique in each. But to be worthy of the historian's attention an object must be "in-dividual" in a special, narrow sense. As well as being unique, it must be indivisible; and both these qualities have to be related to general cultural value. In 1906 Sternheim is quick to link such a concept with ideas which he borrows from Nietzsche and thence with dramatic characterization. One of the earlier references is to the "Besonderem, das uns reizt, freut, ärgert" (6,481) and the formulation in Don Juan II is similar:

> Am Nächsten reizt mich nur das köstlich Eigene. (7,690)

The essay Vincent van Gogh contains a reference to the subordination of the less characteristic features of an object to the "Besonderheit, die uns an ihm reizt" (6,10). In each case the verb recalls the passage in Nietzsche which commended itself to Sternheim in 1906:

> . . . der Mensch übt nur Reize auf andere Menschen aus, es kommt nur darauf an, was in anderen Menschen vorhanden ist.[1]

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1. F. Nietzsche, Gesamtwerk, XII, Leipzig, 1897, p. 147; see 6,484.

Nietzsche's "Lebensphilosophie" appears to be the source of the additional meanings with which Sternheim invests Rickert's historical individual; the emotional response evoked by the terms "reizt, freut, ärgert" clearly involves an unwarranted extension of Rickert's term.

Although Sternheim associates the historical individual, in Rickert's sense, with Nietzsche's brand of individualism, he continues to find Rickert's examples useful, as his use of the Cohinoor diamond to suggest Eura's unique individuality in Europa indicates. But, by 1918-19, when he is engaged on Europa, Sternheim has already adapted his aesthetic theory to a phenomenological approach, and this entails a shift of emphasis in his use of the term "das Besondere". Eura's own aesthetic response illustrates the new phenomenological position; of the young Eura, as yet untainted by socio-political preconceptions and prejudices, he writes:

> Das Exemplar, das Spezifisches am besten zeigte, bestach sie. Nicht Urteil oder Wille wirkte aus ihr—dem Ding selbst erlag sie wie einer Ohnmacht. (5,168).

"Das Besondere", or its equivalent here, "das Spezifische", still occupies a central position; and it is still arrived at by the same artistic process. But the emphasis now is less on the effect of this quality on the spectator, than on the ability of the spectator to approach art (or reality, for that matter) without preconceptions. The point is explained in Europa by an account of the different responses shown by Carl Wundt and Eura to a painting by Rogier van der Weyden.[1] Initially their response is instinctive and identical: the woman depicted appears

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1. This episode is examined in detail in the course of a discussion of Europa in Chapter IV below, see pp. 213-16.

"höchstpersönlich" (5,187). But Carl breaks the spell by asking:

> Warum sah dann der Künstler ihr Besonderes gerade—warum erschüttert uns beide nur das? (5,187)

Looking at the painting a second time, Eura is disturbed to think that it illustrates Carl's individualist position; her socialist leanings now prompt her to see in the work an expression of common humanity. She is now committing, in Carl's opinion, the cardinal error of viewing art with ideological preconceptions; she is no longer capable of approaching it phenomenologically, of "gläubig einem Phänomen zu erliegen" (5,188). The emotional impact on the spectator of "das Besondere" is played down after 1914-15, as Sternheim is increasingly keen to deny that art has a "Tendenz", that it is calculated to produce a particular response. After this date the only epithet used to describe the effect of a work of art is "erschütternd": when the spectator is made aware, through art, of the underlying dual structure of reality, he experiences a shock of recognition.

(c) The theory of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte".

The broad outlines of Sternheim's intellectual framework are established by 1906, and, despite later modifications, he continues to accept the division of intellectual activity into two distinct areas of interest, roughly corresponding to Rickert's definition of the natural and historical sciences. Given this distinction, Sternheim concludes in 1906 that art "muss also auf dem Untergrund des Naturgesetzmässigen das Besondere darstellen" (6,480). He sees in art the principle which combines and transcends Rickert's two methods; art alone, in his view, is

capable of doing justice to all aspects of the empirical world. In his desire to proclaim the pre-eminence of the creative artist, he sides now with the natural scientist, now with the historian, a vacillation apparent both in 1906 and in the Van Gogh essay of 1910. Throughout the basic framework is retained, and it is not difficult to explain its appeal: it offers Sternheim a means of accepting a materialistic and deterministic scheme, while at the same time preserving an area of human activity for the intuitive, the uniquely individual.

The theory of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte", first expounded in Europa in 1919, subsequently finds its way into Berlin oder Juste milieu (1920) and Das Arbeiter-ABC (1922). Although the terminology is new and the socio-political implications more obvious, the scheme is essentially the same as Rickert's distinction between the natural and historical sciences. The theory runs as follows:

> Es ist eine Welt von Denk- und Beziehungsinhalten innerhalb menschlichen Bewusstseins so zu unterscheiden, dass Denkinhalte und die aus ihnen gewonnenen Urteile, Ewiges, elementar Notwendiges von den Erscheinungen aussagend, ohne Relation zu irgendeinem anderen, stets unverändert, statisch und an sich gelten: Baum ist grün. Wasser = H_2O.
>
> Entgegengesetzt Begriffe, aus Beziehungsinhalten stammend, gerade nicht das Konstante, Ansich des Phänomens, sondern sein aus Bindung mit anderem und Reaktion auf anderes stets neu Entstehendes bezeichnen: dieses Kind gehorcht. (6,169)[1]

The two categories defined above together constitute the "Bewusstseinsinhalte", a term which Sternheim has not used before, but which is frequently

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1. In Europa (5,413), both Carl and Eura agree on this framework, although they differ markedly in their interpretation of its socio-political significance. See below, pp. 227-29.

employed by contemporary phenomenologists and psychologists alike. Rickert, too, mentions the term, if only to reject it in favour of "empirische Wirklichkeit".[1] Yet, if Rickert is the source, it seems odd that Sternheim should not have used the term earlier. Husserl, whom Sternheim explicitly cites as an influence, also discusses the term at some length,[2] yet his usage bears no obvious resemblance to Sternheim's. A more likely source—and one which criticism has not hitherto mentioned—is the work of the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). In his System der Philosophie (1889), Wundt not only uses the term "Bewusstseinsinhalte", but also, in a section entitled "Urteile und Begriffe",[3] the term "Denkinhalte"; part of his system also involves a distinction between "Beziehungsbegriffe" and "Gattungsbegriffe". Although Sternheim does not list Wundt among the philosophers who influenced him—it would obviously be problematic to include a psychologist among such bitter opponents of psychological relativism as Rickert, Husserl and Scheler—it is distinctly possible that he here borrows some terms from Wundt. It seems more than a coincidence that the character who expounds the theory in Europa should be called Carl Wundt. It must be stressed, however, that Sternheim, despite his predilection for technical terminology, does not stick very closely to his sources. Indeed, of all the sources which he himself cites, it

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1. H. Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, ed. cit., pp. 172-79.

2. E. Husserl, Logische Untersuchungen, 2nd ed., Halle, 1913, II, 345-359.

3. Wilhelm Wundt, System der Philosophie, Leipzig, 1889, pp. 46-49.

is only Rickert's philosophy in 1906 and the rudiments of a phenomenological approach after 1914-15 which have any lasting impact on his thinking.

For the sake of clarity, the contrasting pairs of terms in the theory of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte" may be tabulated thus:

Denkinhalte	-	Beziehungsinhalte
Vernunft	-	Sitte
Urteile	-	Begriffe
Ewiges	-	stets neu Entstehendes
Notwendigkeit	-	Freiheit

The realm of the "Denkinhalte", like the area of empirical reality with which Rickert's scientist is concerned, can be reduced to laws and is hence associated in Sternheim's mind with scientific determinism; the realm of the "Beziehungsinhalte", by contrast, refers to the area in which Rickert's historian is interested, an area of social life, of history, of the unique and individual. In the latter realm no prescriptive laws are possible, no patterns discernible.

As far as the social content of the theory is concerned, man's aim, in Sternheim's view, is a state of harmony between these two spheres:

> Aus beider Seiten Gleichgewicht allein, indem man abwechselnd von wirklicher Welt besessen und mögliche Welt besitzend ist, kann man lebendig funktionieren. (6,171)

The socio-political implications are worked out in some detail in Europa, where Eura is criticised by Carl for confusing the two realms, for attempting to transfer prescriptive laws into the realm of human relations.[1] But what is at issue here is the function of art in the scheme. Just as

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1. See Chapter IV below.

in 1906, when he saw art as portraying the interaction, or at least the co-presence of "das Besondere" and "das Naturgesetzmässige", Sternheim claims that art portrays the collisions between the two categories which he has distinguished. Art (here specifically "Dichtung" rather than "Kunst") is

> . . . die uns erschütternde untendenziöse und darum einzig wahrhaftige Aufzeichnung dieser immer wieder neue Kombinationen ergebenden Wechselwirkung beider schaffenden Gewalten. . . . (6,171)

Because it thus makes visible the underlying dual structure of reality, art is, for Sternheim, "der erschütternden Epoche reinstes Gleichnis" (6,171), an echo of the definition of 1906, when art was again a "Gleichnis", providing a "Gesamtbild der Welt" (6,480).

The analogies between Sternheim's theory and the Classical aesthetic which he professes to despise are striking. As in Schiller's theories, the aim here is "Gleichgewicht", a harmony between conflicting tendencies in man. And, as in Schiller's case, art not only demonstrates collisions between these conflicting tendencies, but also restores the lost harmony between them. If Sternheim appears to concentrate more on "das Besondere", on individual freedom, particularly after 1914-15, it is because he considers the prevailing social mood to be one of materialism and determinism. If the artist's social function is to redress the balance and restore harmony, then he must press the claims of "das Besondere". In his essay Schöpferische Konfession (1919), Sternheim claims that his own aim was to show

> . . . wie des Menschen Unabhängigkeitswille nicht Hochmut und dionysische Extravaganz, sondern notwendiges Regulativ zu den sonst über alle Schöpfung verhängtem, naturwissenschaftlichem Unabwendbarem. . . . (6,93-94)

It is the conflict between the realms of the "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte" which Sternheim has in mind, when he repeats his definition of art in Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu:

> Die nicht für Sittliches oder Vernünftiges voreingenommene, über tatsächlichen Ereignissen stehende Sichtbarmachung der zwischen beiden Kräften des wirklichen Seins, Vernunft und Sitte, ewig stattfindenden Zusammenstösse mittels eigener künstlerischer Massgesetze. (6,201)

The final phrase[1] betrays just how concerned Sternheim is with a special aesthetic category, even if, in his opposition to German Classical theory, he is naturally reluctant to use the term. Based, as they both are, on a Rickertian scheme, Sternheim's theory of art and his social theory are closely related; just how closely they are linked is well illustrated by the use Sternheim makes of the comic tradition.

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1. W. Emrich notes that the third manuscript version of Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu concludes: ". . . Zusammenstösse, die ihr Gesetz in nichts als eigenen Massverhältnissen hat" (6,560). In the margin the term "Massverhältnissen" is qualified by the adjective "ästhetischen".

III. STERNHEIM'S DRAMATIC THEORY AND PRACTICE

The central problem posed by Sternheim's work--the issue of whether it represents satire or affirmation of bourgeois values--has confounded criticism for the last sixty years and, despite notable attempts to solve the problem, largely continues to do so. In his sound account of the reception of Sternheim's work up to 1960, W. Wendler shows that the majority of early critics, notwithstanding their sometimes conflicting standpoints, agreed that Sternheim's work was characterized by "radikale Kritik an der bürgerlichen Denk- und Lebensweise".[1] Sternheim's plays tended to be viewed as social criticism, as satire on the bourgeoisie, at once cynical and at times grotesque. With Wendler's own study and Wilhelm Emrich's foreword to the Gesamtwerk in 1963, criticism entered a second phase; their work has given widespread currency to the view that Sternheim simply provides an "Abbild der Realität",[2] that the "bürgerlicher Held" is a positive figure, a hero in the literal sense, and that irony and satire are entirely absent from his work. Great stress is laid on Sternheim's theory of the "eigene Nuance", the notion that man must fulfil his unique individual nature in the teeth of social conformism.

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1. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 19.

2. ibid., p. 32.

Salutary as this new concern with Sternheim's theoretical writings is, Wendler's approach, in particular, has two drawbacks. In the first place, he tends to quote rather selectively from Sternheim's theoretical works, often disregarding their chronology, with the result that many critics who disagree with his conclusions have felt it necessary to contend that the theory is irrelevant, or that the creative work succeeds in spite of the theory.[1] Secondly, Wendler's chief concern has been with Sternheim's social theories; he attempts to shape the "Weltsicht" into a coherent, consistent whole and views the aesthetic largely as a means employed to put across the social arguments. He does not examine that part of Sternheim's theory which deals with comedy, nor, indeed, the comedies themselves; nor does he take into account some of the more glaring ambiguities in Sternheim's theory.[2] Nevertheless, his work is of immense value; he has cleared the ground, underlining the inconsistencies in the various views of Sternheim as a satirist and drawing attention to an affirmative element which previous critics overlooked.

There are indications that more recent critics have assimilated the conclusions reached by W. Emrich and W. Wendler, without altogether abandoning the view that Sternheim is a critic of society. H. Vormus concludes her appraisal of recent research with the sensible observation:

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1. H. Vormus and R. Brinkmann adopt this view. See below.

2. In a later essay, "Carl Sternheim", in Expressionismus als Literatur, ed. W. Rothe, Berne and Munich, 1969, pp. 454-473, Wendler rectifies this omission to some extent; but here he concentrates almost exclusively on Don Juan, a work which best illustrates the theory of the "eigene Nuance" by which he sets such store.

> Verknüpft man die beiden Pole des "zu sich selbst gewillten" Individuums und des "Viechskerls", so liegt vielleicht gerade im Schnittpunkt dieser Gegensätze die von Widersprüchen getragene Einheit des Sternheimschen Werkes. . . . Diese Ambivalenz aus Zustimmung und Kritik, aus Engagement und Distanz sollte nicht zugunsten einer vereinfachenden Eindeutigkeit aufgehoben werden.[1]

R. Brinkmann has noted the same ambivalence in Sternheim's treatment of the "bürgerlicher Held" from a different standpoint:

> Man gerät—widerwillig und irritiert—in eine verkrampfte Gefühlsspaltung, wenn man mit der gleichen Darstellung aufgefordert wird, sowohl Abscheu als auch bestätigende Annerkennung dem Tun und Gelingen der "Helden" entgegenzubringen. Aber es lässt sich nicht hinweginterpretieren.[2]

Brinkmann is at pains to deny that Sternheim's portrait of society is the product of unbiased realism; he rejects the claim that Sternheim's work lacks a satirical perspective, although he concedes that the comedies cannot be adequately termed satires.

Such wildly divergent critical assessments are calculated to dispel any lingering doubts about the presence of ambiguity in Sternheim's work. In an attempt to throw light on the nature of this ambiguity I propose to examine his rather idiosyncratic interpretation of French Classical comedy and to consider its implications for his own creative work. It will be argued that the social theory of the "eigene Nuance"—the notion that a true community can exist only if each individual is permitted to live out to the full his unique nature—is not elaborated until 1920 and

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1. Helga Vormus, "Sternheim in neuer Sicht?", Etudes Germaniques 22 (1967), p. 86.

2. Richard Brinkmann, "Sternheims Komödie 'Bürger Schippel'", in Das deutsche Lustspiel, ed. H. Steffen, Göttingen, 1969, vol. 2, p. 104.

cannot, applied retrospectively, do justice to the startling originality of Sternheim's most successful comedies. The triumph of Sternheim's central comic figures is not due to their desire to fulfil their individuality; it is a dramatic expedient, an allusion to and a reversal of the traditional comic ending. Indeed, so much of the comic tradition is preserved that it is possible to argue, with F. N. Mennemeier, that Sternheim's work has "etwas wie eine Tendenz zum eigentlich Komischen".[1]

It is not possible, within the scope of this study, to do justice to the rich variety of comic techniques which Sternheim has at his disposal.[2] His own interest centres on the dramatic hero, and it is in the relationship between the central character of a Classical comedy and the "bürgerlicher Held" that his reappraisal and adaptation of the comic form--under social conditions quite unlike those which saw the flowering of French Classical comedy, conditions, moreover, which hardly seem propitious for comedy--is most strikingly demonstrated. It will be seen that Sternheim's re-interpretation is undertaken from the perspective of a social critic; hence, the attempt to place his work in the comic tradition inevitably raises the problem of social satire. It is to this problem that I attempt to provide some answers.

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1. F. N. Mennemeier, "Carl Sternheims Komödie der Politik", DVjs 44 (1970), p. 704.

2. This is attempted in Theodor Barisch's unpublished dissertation, "Die Mittel der Komödie bei Carl Sternheim", Berlin, 1956; Die Hose is subjected to detailed analysis.

(i) Sternheim's dramatic theory

Sternheim's breakthrough to comedy in 1909 is usually viewed as the discovery of a personal style, of a medium adequate to his personal vision. It is not a completely fortuitous development. Broadly speaking, it can be argued that his comic style emerges from the fusion of two elements: his adoption of an intellectual scheme and a corresponding aesthetic derived from Rickert's philosophy and his encounter with Molière's comedies. The impact of the former is already apparent in Don Juan II, completed in 1909, in the conflict between Juan and Cervantes, a conflict between the vital, dynamic hero and the apostle of social conformism. But, whereas this scene and its conflict were very much an afterthought in Don Juan, this kind of confrontation was to play a central part in the comedies.

It was Franz Blei, Sternheim's friend and co-editor with him of the journal Hyperion who first drew attention to the similarity between his work and that of Molière.[1] And, as Sternheim himself wryly notes,[2] this comparison quickly became commonplace. Blei claims to have introduced Sternheim to Molière's work and appears to have regarded the rôle of Frank Scarron in Die Hose as an ironic tribute to himself, for he had translated Le roman comique by Molière's contemporary Paul Scarron. Yet

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1. Franz Blei, "Sternheim", Pan 1 (1911), No. 8, pp. 271-275 and in Über Wedekind, Sternheim und das Theater, Leipzig, 1915, pp. 84-95.

2. See 6,30.

Thea Sternheim maintains that it was she who encouraged her husband to abandon his plans for a dramatization of the life of Henry VIII of England and to turn his attention to the contemporary German scene. The context of Thea's claim is her account of a performance of Molière's George Dandin, where she pointedly remarks on the continuing relevance of Molière's work for a modern audience.[1] The importance of this particular play in the conception of Die Hose, as attested by the earliest manuscript of that work, seems to give support to Thea's claim.

It is George Dandin which Sternheim selects for special consideration in his short essay Molière der Bürger (1912), an essay which provides the key to his curious interpretation of Classical comedy:

> George Dandin, einem Helden höherer Molièrescher Ordnung (während in den Gestalten aus dem Beginn seines Schaffens nur erst das schlimme Beispiel aufgezeigt wird), fallen schon die Schuppen von den Augen. Er sieht auf welch schiefen Boden er kam, da er in die Hürden eines saturierten Standes brach, der über das Sakrament der Ehe hinaus zu innerem Widerstand gegen das niedere Blut und Dandins Art zusammenhält. Seine Erkenntnis greift uns in dem historischen Schrei: "Tu l'as voulu, George Dandin!" mit Krallen ans Herz. (6,17)

Above all, Sternheim is concerned with the social function of the dramatist, the more so as he believes that Molière wrote for a society which was not dissimilar to his own. In the mid-seventeenth century, Sternheim maintains, the French bourgeoisie, having acquired a measure of political power, responded by attempting to ape the manners of the aristocracy. Molière's genius was to grasp that slavish conformism to aristocratic values and ideals succeeded only in emasculating the bour-

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1. See 6,488. The entry is dated May/June 1909. Thea's diary was not available to me.

geoisie, in causing it to lose sight of its own qualities. Molière's aim, Sternheim declares, was to preserve the vitality of his own bourgeois class by drawing attention to its essential values, however unpalatable some of these might have appeared. Although the bourgeois public greeted the attempt with derision, Molière was, in Sternheim's view, motivated by love for his own class; he was the "Arzt seines Standes" (6,16).

From this perspective Dandin represents the bourgeois urge to seek assimilation into the ranks of the aristocracy; he becomes a hero through his recognition of the error which this entails. But, while Dandin is given this saving grace, Alceste is seen as going a step further:

> . . . erst Alceste, der Misanthrop, der von Anfang an von der Sucht besessen ist, fern von den Vielzuvielen, Allzugleichen ein anderes, eigenes Leben zu beginnen, ist der neue Bürger. (6,17)

With the unmistakably Nietzschean formulation Sternheim links Alceste to his own hero, Juan, the champion of individualism, the critic of the morality of the herd. Here, heavily disguised in a critical appraisal of Molière's comic characters, lies a prophetic insight: "der neue Bürger", or, in his more familiar form, "der neue Mensch", is essentially a misanthropic, anti-social, obsessed individual. Sternheim recognizes here, and amply demonstrates in his own "bürgerlicher Held", a fact which some of the politically committed Expressionists were reluctant to admit. That spiritual renewal which, for the next decade, Expressionist dramatists were to proclaim through the New Man frequently involves a negation of social or political activity.

It is striking that from among all Molière's comic characters Sternheim should have been drawn to George Dandin and Alceste. This

observation takes us to the heart of Sternheim's peculiarly original image of Molière. Both these comic figures refuse to accept the values of the society in which they find themselves, yet both are shown to be morally justified in their response.[1] Dandin is not mistaken when he accuses his wife of unfaithfulness, yet he is no less ridiculous for being in the right. According to Bergson's famous definition, the comic is derived from a view of human relations in which the specifically human, the vital and the flexible, stands in contrast to the fixed, the rigid, the automatic. Whether it be morally good or bad, the inflexible or the mechanical in human behaviour is punished by laughter. It is on social virtues which comedy concentrates, not moral ones. By any moral criteria both Alceste and Dandin appear justified, yet in the comedies they are found socially wanting. In almost all instances in French Classical comedy the social and the moral virtually coincide, the society emerging at the end of the play representing, in Northrop Frye's words, "a kind of moral norm, or pragmatically free society".[2] In Harpagon's case, for example, moral and social opprobrium are felt to be congruent. Yet in George Dandin, and more especially in Le Misanthrope, it is precisely the disparity between the moral and the social which is disturbing to later

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1. W. G. Moore, Molière: A New Criticism, Oxford, 1949, draws attention to the serious undertone in these two comedies: "Dandin is essentially in the right, but he is in all actual cases made to appear in the wrong. . . . But in this respect Dandin is but a hasty sketch beside the finished prototype of Alceste. He, too, is convinced that he is right; he has right on his side, but not the law" (pp. 118-19).

2. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, Princeton, 1957, p. 169.

critics.

To eighteenth-century French critics, with their own powerful orientation towards the didactic in literature, Classical comedy becomes a predominantly didactic genre. It is regarded as preaching the doctrine of the golden mean, as castigating some form of excess. Le Misanthrope can only be fitted into such a scheme if Alceste can be viewed as the embodiment of some quality which he carries to excess; to Rousseau's extreme displeasure that quality seems to be a moral virtue. His celebrated denunciation of this comedy in the Lettre à M. d'Alembert is based on the assumption that the Alceste who is ridiculed is an upright, honest and sincere man, and, as a recent study has shown, sincerity is not merely a virtue for Rousseau, it is the cardinal virtue.[1] Goethe's famous judgement of Le Misanthrope is likewise made with the assumption that natural (moral) values are no longer consistent with social ones:

> Hier stellt sich der reine Mensch dar, welcher bei gewonnener grosser Bildung doch natürlich geblieben ist, und gründlich sein möchte; wir sehen ihn aber im Konflikt mit der sozialen Welt, in der man ohne Verstellung und Flachheit nicht umhergehen kann.[2]

The congruity of social and moral values which a didactic view of comedy implicitly requires seems to be flouted by Le Misanthrope.

In a similar way, Sternheim's interpretation may be usefully related to his own intellectual presuppositions and may be seen to reflect a not dissimilar concern with the didactic function of comedy. Given his

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1. Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, Oxford, 1972, pp. 16-18.

2. Goethe, Werke, Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden, 6th ed., Hamburg, 1967, XII, 354.

violent rejection of universal moral standards and his bitter attacks on social conformism, it is hardly surprising to find Sternheim selecting George Dandin and Le Misanthrope from Molière's repertoire for special consideration. He goes a step further than even Rousseau; Rousseau is disturbed by the fact that Alceste's sincerity should bring him into conflict with society, for, despite his championing of sincerity, Rousseau's interest centres on a concept of society. For Sternheim it is the rights and needs of the individual which are paramount. He singles out the two comedies for special praise precisely because Alceste's moral code comes into sharp conflict with the social values embedded in the comedy. He extols the comedy for precisely the reasons which prompt Rousseau to reject it. Ridiculous Alceste may well be, yet he is infinitely preferable, in Sternheim's eyes, to the society in which he finds himself. A misanthropic rejection of society becomes a moral virtue when society itself is effete and conformist. What Sternheim does is to re-interpret the comedy from Alceste's point of view.[1]

It is significant that Sternheim shows considerably less interest in Molière's other comedies, where "nur erst das schlimme Beispiel aufgezeigt wird" (6,17). To become acceptable to him Molière's characters must come into conflict with society, but may not be ridiculed for any other vices; it is small wonder that the misanthropist-figure should

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1. Hofmannsthal's Der Schwierige may be seen as a parallel re-interpretation of the figure of the misanthropist in a world in which traditional social values, formerly invested with moral significance, are breaking down; see W. Wucherpfennig, "Der Schwierige und der Menschenfeind", Colloquia Germanica 3 (1969), pp. 270-301.

exert such a hold over Sternheim. He accepts the obsession, the fixation, of the comic character, for it is that which brings him into conflict with society; yet he would see that obsession morally justified, in order to indicate just how divergent are the needs of the individual and society. When he comes, in 1916, to translate Molière's L'Avare, Sternheim specifically draws attention to a major adaptation which he sees fit to make, in order to bring the play into line with his own theory. He insists that Harpagon's avarice should be shown to be morally justified:

> Dazu . . . zeige ich, Harpagons Geiz besser einsehen zu können, dem Zuschauer ein wenig Cléanthes Verschwendung, die Molière nur bespricht. (6,30)

And, indeed, in Sternheim's version Cléanthe is portrayed as a profligate bent on dissipating the fortune which his father has painstakingly amassed. Sternheim tries, thus, to recreate the scheme of George Dandin and Le Misanthrope: if Harpagon retains his obsession, he is now shown to be in the right. Sternheim's adaptation emphasizes the extent to which his notion of comedy corresponds to his social theories.

In his essay Gedanken über das Wesen des Dramas (1914) Sternheim makes a rare theoretical pronouncement on the theatre in general, and, although no specific reference is made to Molière, he does discuss the nature of comedy and later includes part of this essay in a tribute to Molière. From the outset he stresses the social function of the dramatist:

> Mit der Erkenntnis des Schaffenden, an irgendeiner Stelle irdischer Weteordnung ist ein Schaden sichtbar klaffend geworden, setzt [der Dichter] mit empörter und eifernder Liebe die Arbeit ein, hierhin die allgemeine Aufmerksamkeit zu rufen und aus den in

> der Dichtung gegebenen Aufschlüssen im Sinne neuer Erkenntnis Heilung zu schaffen. (6,19)

This is a prelude to the statement that the dramatist is an "Arzt am Leibe seiner Zeit" (6,19), itself an extension of the earlier "Arzt seines Standes" (6,16). The dramatist's attention is now directed not to the evils of his own class but to those of the age in general. His duty is to preserve "alle Eigenschaften des idealen Menschen blank und strahlend" (6,19), an ideal which is constantly in jeopardy. The medical analogy is developed at some length: allopathic treatment, countering the disease directly, is likened to tragedy; homoeopathic treatment, the giving of drugs to produce in the patient symptoms similar to those of the disease, to comedy. In tragedy the hero is himself aware of the danger, and fights against it in vain; in comedy "die moribunde Eigenschaft", the human quality threatened with extinction, is projected into the hero and he is made obsessed with it.[1] The effect on the audience is the same in either case: in tragedy the audience witnesses the death of the hero who embodies all the qualities of the ideal human-being; through comedy the audience is given a massive dose of that very quality which is needed

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1. H. Karasek, Carl Sternheim, Velber bei Hannover, 1965, pp. 22-27, clearly misinterprets Sternheim's essay at this point. He argues that Sternheim wants to project into the central figure of a comedy "die bedenkliche Stelle . . ., die der Arzt am Leibe der Zeit heilen will" (p. 24). This implies that the comic hero is the projection of a negative feature which must be eradicated and allows Karasek to claim that, through his hero, Sternheim is criticizing brutal realism. Now, in point of fact, Sternheim states that it is "die moribunde Eigenschaft" (in the 1917 version of this essay: "die aufzuweisende Eigenschaft") which is projected into the hero in exaggerated form. The hero embodies, not a negative feature which must be "cured", but a human quality which is threatened with extinction and must be preserved, for, as Sternheim maintains, again in the 1917 version, it is the dramatist's duty to preserve "des Menschen sämtliche . . . Eigenschaften blank und strahlend" (6,31).

to recreate the ideal of harmony.

Such a definition permits Sternheim to bring comedy within his general intellectual framework. He does not explain the exact nature of the ideal at this stage, but it appears to involve the harmonious interplay of freedom and necessity, the possibility of individual self-realization within a deterministic, materialistic scheme. This ideal is elaborated only much later, in Berlin oder Juste milieu (1920):

> Aus beider Seiten Gleichgewicht allein, indem man abwechselnd von wirklicher Welt besessen und mögliche Welt besitzend ist, kann man lebendig funktionieren. (6,171)

Comedy fulfils its social function by providing a hero who is "von wirklicher Welt besessen"; the hero embodies what Sternheim believes his age lacks: namely, a grasp of the material realities of life, of life stripped of its idealizing gloss, of its bourgeois ideologies.

In the Molière essay of 1917 a shift of emphasis becomes apparent. Once more the historical context is portrayed: France in 1660 was at the height of its power, all its citizens, not merely the ruling aristocracy and the clergy, basking in the reflected glory of the Sun King. Molière, Sternheim argues, simply reminded the French of their human frailty, pointing out that every single Frenchman "im Equilibre seiner sämtlichen Eigenschaften, jenseits von Gut und Böse, das Geschöpf Gottes bleibt" (6,30). Yet his fellow-countrymen rejected his dramatic offering, described as "das ironisierte bürgerliche Heldenleben" (6,30), a phrase which clearly indicated the extent to which Sternheim identifies his own work with Molière's. What is set out in the Gedanken über das Wesen des Dramas as the task of the dramatist is now applied wholesale to Molière,

and, as the reference to the "Heldenleben" suggests, by implication to himself. Here, however, Sternheim concludes the essay with a clearer statement of the effect: the audience is overcome by a "Sehnsucht nach einem schönen Mass, das der Bühnenheld nicht hatte . . ." (6,31). Once more there is an echo of the didactic eighteenth-century view of Classical comedy with which Sternheim's own definition has affinities.

The different emphasis in this later essay points to a slight reappraisal of the relationship between the dramatist and his society. Originally Molière was seen as ridiculing bourgeois conformism to aristocratic values, and hence as indirectly glorifying essentially bourgeois virtues. But by 1917 Sternheim suggests that Molière's criticism is directed not against the would-be aristocrats among the bourgeoisie, but against all Frenchmen, for the whole nation is now regarded as accepting the same values. This shift of emphasis corresponds closely to Sternheim's own fluctuating attitude to the bourgeoisie: in 1912 the dramatist's function is to preserve the bourgeoisie from ideologies; by 1917 it is to criticize all, even members of the bourgeoisie, who conform to current trends.

What has prompted this change? When Sternheim observes that Molière was alone in refusing to acknowledge the achievements of French militarism and nationalism, he is, in fact, making a point about his own attitude to German society in 1917. He alters his image of Molière to coincide with his new position. It is in the period 1914-15 that he broadens his attack to embrace virtually all aspects of the German cultural tradition, which he comes to hold responsible for the chauvinism

which accompanied the outbreak of war.[1] The function of comedy does not change; nor, indeed, does the rôle of the comic character through whom the audience is given the dose of realism necessary to restore its lost equilibrium. Yet the conflict between the hero and society is taken a stage further: the hero can no longer remain firmly entrenched within his bourgeois world. If he is to demonstrate his obsession to the full, he must break out of its confines, for its values have become more insidious and pose a more serious threat to him. In Sternheim's dramatic practice this development is reflected in the difference between Die Hose, begun in 1909, and Tabula rasa of 1915. Both Theobald Maske and Wilhelm Ständer indulge their materialist appetites behind a mask of social conformism, but, whereas Theobald retains his public image and remains within society, Ständer can fulfil himself only if he turns his back on Europe and its bourgeois culture. After 1914-15 the flight from an effete European civilization becomes a central motif of Sternheim's work.

In summing up Sternheim's notion of comedy, three points should be noted. In the first place, the dramatist performs an indirect social function, effectively a didactic function. He counters social evils, not by a direct assault, by moralizing, but by attempting to recreate in the audience an equilibrium which the "Kampf des Daseins" daily jeopardizes. The danger is a two-fold one: society is threatened, on the one hand, by

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1. Kasimir Edschmid claims that in 1915 he sought to persuade Sternheim to publish his reflections on Goethe as a representative of bourgeois culture, particularly with regard to the political and social realities of Goethe's day. See 6,505. The attack on Goethe was published in 1917 and elaborated on in Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu (1921).

its refusal to accept crude materialist drives for what they are, by its tendency to mask them with comforting clichés and palatable ideologies; on the other hand, by its failure to admit that there are, nevertheless, areas of human activity where an intuitively grasped ideal is both possible and necessary. This scheme is set out clearly in 1920 in terms of the areas of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte", but, as I have shown, it is a scheme which dominates Sternheim's thinking as early as 1906. The material realities of everyday life obey mechanical laws of cause and effect; they may be secured by rigorous planning, by foresight and calculation. But in the sphere of human relationships (and here Sternheim invariably means relations between the sexes), possibilities may only be grasped intuitively. In his essays on Molière Sternheim stresses only one side of his scheme: namely, that the dramatist provides, through the central comic character, a dose of realism, of unadulterated materialism, in order to counter the deficiency of this quality in the audience. The attempt to correct this weakness--the refusal to accept materialist drives for what they are--certainly predominates in Sternheim's own early comedies; but the other half of the scheme, involving the affirmation of human freedom and pointing out the limits of materialism, will be found in virtually all his works in some form and comes to predominate in some of his later comedies.[1]

It should be noted at this point that Sternheim's views on the indirect social function of the dramatist correspond very closely to those expounded by Schiller in his letters Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen,

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1. The affirmation of the intuitive is first found in Don Juan; in this respect only is Juan a prototype of the later comic heroes.

a fact which underlines the crucial importance of aesthetics for Sternheim. Although he is scathing in his denunciation of Schiller as a representative of German idealism, Sternheim is himself firmly rooted in that tradition. Like Schiller, he is the apostle of an ideal of human activity, expressed in terms of the harmonious interplay of opposing forces within the psyche. Schiller sees this interplay as the interaction of the sensuous and the intellectual in man; Sternheim as a dialectic between the intuitive and the rational materialist. Both see fit to restate the opposition in terms of freedom and necessity; Schiller characteristically places necessity on the side of the senses, and Sternheim, no less a child of his age, on the side of the rational. Harmony may be forfeited if either side extends its sway over the other: in Schiller's terms man becomes a "Wilder" if his sensuous nature extends its rule over his mind, a "Barbar" if the process is reversed.[1]

More significantly, both Schiller and Sternheim see art as the only means of restoring the harmony, once it has been lost; it is thus that the artist acquires his unique social function. The essential difference is that Schiller attributes to the aesthetic, the beautiful, the power of restoring the lost harmony, while Sternheim, after his encounter with Rickert's philosophy, loses interest in the aesthetic in the narrow sense and insists that art provides "Erkenntnis". Yet, if one examines more closely what Sternheim actually means by "Erkenntnis", it can be seen that his position is by no means so very different from Schiller's. Of

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1. Schiller, Werke, Nationalausgabe, ed. B. von Wiese, vol. 20, Weimar, 1962, p. 318.

what does art provide knowledge? For Sternheim it illuminates, it makes visible, the "zwischen beiden Kräften des wirklichen Seins, Vernunft und Sitte, ewig stattfindenden Zusammenstösse . . . (6,201). Art demonstrates, in concentrated form, the collisions between the two forces within the human psyche. Schiller could hardly have carped at such a definition, even if he might have interpreted it otherwise.

The second feature of Sternheim's comic theory, however, brings us to a decisive difference between his position and Schiller's. It concerns the way in which the "Erkenntnis" is effected. At the risk of grossly over-simplifying Schiller's argument, it can be said that, for him, the aesthetic state of harmony between the opposing sides of man's nature is to be worked out on the stage; the hero is brought to reconcile his moral and sensuous nature during the course of the drama. This Sternheim totally rejects. All his subsequent attacks[1] on Schiller make the same point:

> Alle Welt weiss, wie Schiller auf Massen des Juste milieu über ein Jahrhundert bis heute verblendende Wirkung übte, weil, zwischen Mendelssohn und Kant vermittelnd, er als einziger wesentlicher Geist sein Kunstwerk und den Helden aus erst von dem einfältig geschauter Vision, durch Kampf ins Licht mitbürgerlicher Schicklichkeit und nützlicher Vernünftigkeit hebt, welchen Aufschwung der Abgehandelte, dass dramatischer Schmiss sei, mit für ihn grässlichen Auftritten und Tod im fünften Akt büsst. (6,182-83)

For Sternheim, the required harmony is not to be recreated on the stage at the expense of the dramatic hero, but in the audience. To this end the dramatist projects into the hero an obsession, a large dose of the quality

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1. Particularly in Europa (5,193 and 266f.), Berlin oder Juste milieu (6,113), and, more systematically, in Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu (6,182f.).

which the audience is felt to lack. Endowed with this heavy concentration of rational materialism, or intuitive feeling, as the case may be, the hero proceeds to triumph over the obstacles which society places in his way. The audience "bleibt erschüttert und erleuchtet" (6,20); the triumph of the hero contradicts its own assumptions. As a recent English critic has pointed out, "the overall effect is one of shock—the shock of recognition".[1]

The third feature of Sternheim's comic theory which deserves mention concerns the hero. What Sternheim retains from Molière is the obsession of the central comic character. In Classical comedy, as Bergson's study illustrated, it is the obsessive rigidity of the central character which gives rise to the comic. Significantly, Sternheim manages to interpret Molière's work without explicit reference to the comic. He assumes that Molière created comic figures in such a way as to represent, in concentrated form, qualities which the society of his day lacked. Alceste's misanthropic candour is presented in such an exaggerated fashion, Sternheim assumes, not (or, at least, not merely) so that the audience will laugh at his expense, but so that it will recognize in him the heightened projection of an honesty and sincerity which is currently lacking in society. Small wonder that Sternheim shows little interest in those of Molière's plays in which "nur erst das schlimme Beispiel aufgezeigt wird" (6,17). He interprets Molière's work as if the latter shared his own views on the individual and society. The result is, in some respects,

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1. J. M. Ritchie, ed., Carl Sternheim, Scenes from the Heroic Life of the Middle Classes, London, 1970, p. 12.

the reversal of Classical comedy: the comic obsession is re-interpreted as the affirmation of an essential human quality. The most likely explanation for the fact that Sternheim makes no reference to the comic in his essays on Molière is that he simply takes it for granted.

When Sternheim's own comedies are examined, it will be found that the central character, while he is intended to perform the indirectly didactic function which Sternheim reads into Classical comedy, often retains elements of a purely comic obsession. Sternheim's inability, or unwillingness, to distinguish between a comic obsession and a quality which is to be affirmed not only characterizes his theoretical writings on comedy but also informs his own creative work.

It should be emphasized that the comic theory outlined above does not precede Sternheim's creative work, but evolves parallel to it. When Sternheim begins to elaborate a phenomenological theory of art, around 1916, the comic theory has to be fitted into the new scheme. It is the artist's indirect social function which causes him most difficulty. How can he reconcile the notion of the artist as "Arzt am Leibe seiner Zeit" (6,19) with a definition of the artist as simply grasping and portraying an essential reality, without preconceptions or prejudices? In fact, the difference between the two approaches largely disappears when one examines what Sternheim means by the term essential reality, variously called: "das Wesentliche", "das Wesen", "der Kern". For him, reality consists of two areas, the one amenable to scientific laws, the other a realm of human freedom. When he claims that art is unprejudiced, that it does not involve a positive or negative evaluation, he means that

it shows both areas of reality, giving each its due. That the audience in the theatre should be brought to recognize the claims of both material needs and intuitive feeling—part of the comic theory—is thus perfectly compatible with the phenomenological approach.

Initially Sternheim appears to believe that comedy can correct any imbalance on the part of the audience between the two areas which constitute essential reality; later he modifies this by arguing that the audience leaves the theatre simply "erschüttert und erleuchtet" (6,20), as a result of having been made aware of this underlying structure. But with the "Erschütterung", the shock of recognition, the indirect social function of the artist is preserved within an approach which is broadly a realist one. Sternheim's often cited statement of his theoretical position in the Nachwort zu "Ulrike" (1918) tends to be adduced as conclusive proof that his work is the product of unbiased realism:

> Ich entfachte zu keiner Erziehung; im Gegenteil warnte ich vor einer Verbesserung göttlicher Welt durch den Bürger und machte ihm Mut zu seinen sogenannten Lastern, mit denen er Erfolge errang, und riet ihm, meiner Verantwortung bewusst, Begriffe, die einseitig nach sittlichem Verdienst messen, als unerheblich und lebensschwächend endlich auch aus seiner Terminologie zu entfernen. (6,50)

The conviction of the opening statement is swiftly qualified by the indirect social function hidden behind the exhortations and admonitions which follow. Only direct moralizing appears to be rejected.[1]

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1. This same ambivalence on Sternheim's part to the social function of the artist is found as early as 1906, when, in the course of his reflections on Rickert, he can describe what he terms as "die unvergleichliche erzieherische Aufgabe der Kunst" as "einfache Spiegelung des irgendwie hervorragenden [sic] ohne die Spur bewusster sittlicher Predigt, in der ich vielmehr den schlimmsten Feind jeder aesthetischen Wirkung sehe" (6,482).

One further aspect of Sternheim's theory may usefully be considered at this point, an aspect which, though not directly related to his comic theory, has a bearing on his dramatic development. It concerns the notion of the artist as the chronicler of his age. Traces of this idea are first found in the essay on Van Gogh of 1910.[1] Here Sternheim argues that Van Gogh's talent enables him, through a process of selection and concentration, to present a picture of the South of France, much as Rubens' paintings evoke the Netherlands of the seventeenth century. Although Van Gogh has a second gift—the capacity to distil the essences of objects which he selects at random—Sternheim insists that it is the combination of the two gifts which is a mark of greatness. If the artist is to convey a true image ("Gleichnis") of life, then the selected objects must be placed within a recognizable historical setting, again captured in its salient features.

Only after 1914, when his political awareness has been heightened by the impact of the War, does Sternheim place greater emphasis on this definition. In the Vorwort zu Ottomar Starke "Schippeliana" (1917), subtitled "Politische Kunst", he maintains:

> Jedes Werk des wirklich grossen Künstlers ist uns nur deshalb lebendig, weil es als höchste politische Erkenntnis seiner Zeit vor jeder anderen Äusserung menschlichen Geistes zeitgenössisch, uns den schliesslichen Sinn der betreffenden Epoche in die Ewigkeit hinüberrettete. (6,26).

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1. Significantly, this first recorded instance of the definition of the artist as chronicler immediately post-dates Sternheim's decision to shift the setting of Die Hose from seventeenth-century Paris to Berlin at the turn of the century.

A similar consideration of the artist's function as the chronicler, the historian, of his age is found in a letter to Franz Blei of May 1918:

> Das Kunstwerk "wie es sein soll", d.h. die bessere, sinnvollere, vollkommenere Aufzeichnung des gerade sich abspielenden Lebens, ist immer historisch, nicht in dem Sinn, dass der Künstler historische Stoffe, oder Stoffe historisch behandelt, sondern dass er als der einzig Sehende seiner Zeit, diese durch sein blosses Geständnis und Zeugnis überliefert.[1]

Particularly after 1914 Sternheim's creative work includes reference to what he regards as the underlying social trends. The inclusion of Die Hose and Der Snob in a tetralogy, together with 1913 and Das Fossil, betrays his concern to implement this theory, as does his publication of the collected short stories under the title Chronik von des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts Beginn. Sternheim is explicit on the nature of the "Modell" which the tetralogy is intended to represent:

> An den Mitgliedern der Familie Maske und ihrer Abkommen ist alles Wesentliche des Zeitabschnitts, den wir miterlebten, gezeigt: Aufstieg und cynisches Verkommen einer bürgerlichen Dynastie bis zum Augenblick der Entscheidung über Europas Schicksal. (1,582).

And of his novel Europa Sternheim is to claim that he included "alle politischen Beziehungen der Zeit von 1870-1920 in das Schicksal der Heldin" (5,508).

The attempt to produce a documentary history of Imperial Germany is reflected in what Sternheim liked to call his "Ernüchterungsschriften": in Berlin oder Juste milieu trends in German culture and society are presented against the background of the expanding metropolis; in Libussa the same developments are viewed through the eyes of the Kaiser's horse;

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1. Sternheim: "Briefe an Blei", No. 14, dated 25 May 1918.

and in Lutetia the socio-political diagnosis is extended, with little variation, to France. Yet the portrayal of Germany's immediate political and social past is not Sternheim's sole, or even his main concern in his dramatic work. It is, rather, the inevitable result of the artist's unique function as a seer. When he elaborates his phenomenological theory, Sternheim again indicates that the historical insights are only part of the process, a logical conclusion of the fact that art, and art alone, is capable of grasping reality in its entirety:

> Einer Situation, einem Menschen gegenüber verhalte ich mich betrachtend, ohne eigenen Willen zu ihm; nur mit der Sehnsucht, seine Eigentümlichkeit zu schmecken, ihn bewundernd ohne Vorurteil des "Guten", "Bösen", "Schönen", "Hässlichen" zu geniessen. Und meine Kunst besteht darin, ihn in seine zeitliche, örtliche Umgebung hineinzuorganisieren, so, dass der künstlerische Mikrokosmos dem Makrokosmos der Schöpfung an ökonomischer Pracht nicht nachsteht. (6,315)

But to argue from this evidence that Sternheim actually provides a complete "Modell" of society is to misunderstand the principle of selection involved.

> Despite Wilhelm Emrich's somewhat grandiose claim—
>
> Carl Sternheim ist der einzige Dramatiker unserer Epoche, der den unlösbar gewordenen Widerspruch zwischen gesellschaftlichem Zwang und personaler Freiheit radikal, das heisst bis in seine Wurzel durchschaut, gestaltet und bewältigt hat (1,5)—

the reader who turns to Sternheim's plays for a penetrating analysis of the relation between the individual and society in Wilhelminian Germany, or, indeed, in our own day, is likely to be disappointed. Certainly the socio-political scene is an important ingredient: Tabula rasa takes a humorous look at the impotent and ideology-ridden German Left; Das Fossil, with its background of the Kapp putsch, an equally wry view of the alliance

of militarism and capitalism on the Right. Yet the underlying structure of reality invariably turns out to involve exactly the same dramatic conflict between the vital, dynamic individual and scientific determinism (translated, in the spirit of social Darwinism, into social conformism) which earlier informs Don Juan. The theme of the social climber, of conformism to the ethos and values of a higher social class, may be traditionally associated with Classical comedy; Molière's George Dandin and Le bourgeois gentilhomme exploit the comic potential of this social phenomenon to the full. Yet the choice of this theme does not necessarily imply that the dramatist sets out to create a "Modell" of society for its own sake; rather, a clearly defined social framework is the prerequisite of comedy, which is, after all, concerned with man as a social animal.

Sternheim's attempts to up-date this comic theme, to adapt it to a modern context, take him some way towards a Brechtian "epic" theatre; a recent critic goes so far as to claim that "almost all the modern theatrical developments right through to Brecht are there already potentially in Sternheim".[1] Undoubtedly there are parallels with Brecht: Sternheim clearly intends his plays to be a vehicle for "Erkenntnis", for enlightenment; and his curious reversal of the comic character, while retaining some of the latter's purely comic features, effectively precludes the kind of audience involvement and identification which Brecht seeks to counteract. Yet Sternheim arrives at this "Verfremdung" almost

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1. J. M. Ritchie, op. cit., p. 9.

by accident, and never develops a theoretical basis for it. Moreover, in his technique of unmasking ideologies through parody or literary allusion, Sternheim stands in direct line of descent from Wedekind to Brecht. Yet here, too, there is an essential difference of emphasis: while Brecht's classical allusions primarily serve the didactic purpose, the comedy being subordinate to that end, the comic effect is paramount for Sternheim and the unmasking often merely an incidental bonus.[1] Perhaps what Sternheim's plays illustrate most strikingly is the basic affinity of certain elements of the comic tradition with "epic" theatre. As H. Arntzen has pointed out, Brecht's repudiation of Aristotelian drama is, in fact, aimed at tragedy; Aristotle's remarks on comedy, however, adumbrate some important ingredients of "epic" theatre.[2]

Behind the quest for "epic" features in Sternheim's comedies lies a rather more serious, and slightly disturbing, intent: namely, the desire to save him for the modern theatre by transforming him into a precursor of Brecht, with its attendant implication that he would not, on his own merits, find a place in the modern repertoire. Such efforts, however laudable in intention, have caused disproportionate emphasis to be placed on the analysis of society in Sternheim's work, with the consequent neglect of his highly original comic skills. It is in an attempt to

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1. The re-enactment of the "Rütlischwur" from Wilhelm Tell in Bürger Schippel is predominantly a comic device, while the Schillerian language of the meat barons in Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe serves mainly to underline the masking of economic realities in a capitalist society.

2. H. Arntzen, "Komödie und episches Theater", Der Deutschunterricht 21 (1969), No. 3, pp. 67-77; see also R. Grimm, "Komik und Verfremdung", in Strukturen: Essays zur deutschen Literatur, Göttingen, 1963, pp. 226-247.

redress this deficiency that such importance is placed here on his renewal and adaptation of Classical comedy.

In 1912, in a review of Julius Bab's Neue Wege zum Drama, Ernst Stadler laments the lack of genuine talent in the contemporary theatre: no literary genre is "so chaotisch, so unsicher ihres Weges, so wenig repräsentativ für die Epoche"; no dramatist has succeeded in finding "den modernen Gegenwartsstil".[1] Two years later Stadler believes he has found the dramatist equal to the task.[2] On the basis of Sternheim's first four comedies alone, he confidently predicts for him a lasting reputation. It is a remarkable tribute to Stadler's perception that these four comedies have retained their appeal and currently figure in the repertoire of the modern German theatre. It is to these highly successful plays that special attention will be devoted here.

(ii) Comedy, criticism and affirmation: a study of Sternheim's comedies (1909-1914)

In addition to helping Sternheim clarify his own theoretical reflections on the artist's function, his encounter with Molière's comedies provides creative stimulus. When he begins work on the first version of

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1. Ernst Stadler, Dichtungen, ed. K. L. Schneider, Hamburg, 1954, II, 29-30.

2. ibid., II, 32-33.

Die Hose in 1909, his original intention seems to be to recreate the situation and constellation of characters of George Dandin. As his wife later notes, in a comment appended to the manuscript:

> Das Lustspiel war anfangs als ein sich um Molière drehendes Stück gedacht. Erst im Verlauf der Niederschriften ist daraus eine deutsch-bürgerliche Zeitkomödie geworden.[1]

This is borne out by references to Paris in the "grand siècle" and by the fact that in this version Maske is called Friedrich Scarron and the intruder into his household first Molière, and later Raillon, then Marron. Deuter appears as Madame Siloncot, then as Frau Sickemüller and Frau Deuter; Mandelstam as Benjamin; and the reference to the neighbour, "die Kiesewetter", is to Frau Lubin.[2] The comedy appears to have been originally conceived as the dramatization of an incident from Molière's private life, and hence forms a bridge between the historical drama, Don Juan, where the poet Cervantes makes a brief appearance, and Sternheim's early "Konversationsstücke", where the artist-hero is regularly portrayed as an intruder, as a threat to domestic bliss. Indeed, it is quite likely that Sternheim interprets George Dandin as a work inspired directly by an incident from Molière's life and sets out to re-tell the episode from a different view-point. He tends, after all, to explain works of art in terms of the author's personal experience all his life,

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1. This manuscript is preserved in the Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach am Neckar.

2. See 7,853-55. The earliest dating in this manuscript is 7 July 1909, not 7 April 1909, as the editors of the Gesamtwerk maintain. They also write "Siloncet" for what appears to be "Siloncot", "Farben" for "Salben" and "Frau Lupin" for "Frau Lubin" (Lubin is the name of a minor character in George Dandin).

and consequently shows great interest in the biographies of famous artists, as his own dramatization of the life of Oscar Wilde and his imaginative reconstruction of the encounter between Gaugin and Van Gogh amply illustrate.

Even after the setting of Die Hose has been shifted to contemporary Berlin, certain similarities with George Dandin remain. Initially Sternheim stresses the social difference between Theobald and his wife, Theobald being made to lament the error of having married a woman socially his superior. Although this point is not made in the final version, Dandin's response to his wife's flirtations, an impotence derived from his feelings of inferiority, may well have prompted Sternheim's opening scene. Dandin reflects on his mistake:

> Und hättest du ein Bauernmädchen geheiratet, so hättest du jetzt freie Ellenbogen und könntest dir mit einer ordentlichen Tracht Prügel zu deinem Rechte helfen.[1]
>
> Mir juckts in der Hand, ihr das Gesicht so zu verbleuen.[2]

Removing Dandin's social inferiority, and with it his impotence, Sternheim allows his version of the character, Theobald Maske, to carry out his threats. Moreover, the situation in the two plays is virtually identical:

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1. J.-B. Molière, George Dandin oder der beschämte Ehemann, trans. Karl Vollmoeller, Leipzig, 1912, p. 21. Vollmoeller's translation is useful, not only because it is roughly contemporary with Sternheim's adaptation, but also because his interpretation is very much in the spirit of Sternheim's own. In his "Nachwort" Vollmoeller refers to the "nackten Menschen George Dandin in einer Welt von Larven". Sternheim himself began, but never completed a translation of George Dandin and gave his blessing to Vollmoeller's undertaking, the essay Molière der Bürger appearing in the programme notes for the première in April 1912.

2. ibid., p. 80.

in the Molière play Clitandre, an aristocrat whom Dandin terms "der frisierte junge Affe",[1] has rented a near-by house to facilitate his affair with Dandin's wife, Angélique. The infidelity is actually encouraged by the servant-confidante Claudine, in Dandin's words a "kupplerisches, leichtfertiges Frauenzimmer".[2] In Die Hose Scarron and Mandelstam perform Clitandre's rôle and Fräulein Deuter Claudine's.

The comedy in George Dandin is focussed on Dandin's obsession with his wife's infidelity; he is exposed to laughter not because of the rightness of his allegations, but despite the fact. It is his obsessive preoccupation with marital infidelity—in Bergson's terms, his mechanical rigidity—which makes him ridiculous. Now Sternheim rejects the social norm implied by comedy and views the comic character as heroic in his rejection of society, particularly if the hero is morally justified in such a reaction, as Dandin is. In effect, Sternheim re-writes the comedy from Dandin's viewpoint: in this respect the Classical comedy is reversed. In Molière's comedies the central character represents an absurd or arbitrary law; he is "able to force much of the play's society into line with his obsession".[3] The comic action involves the overthrow of this order and the emergence of a "pragmatically free society". When Die Hose opens, the audience may be forgiven for assuming that Theobald is the stock comic character, forcing the play's society into line with

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1. Molière, George Dandin, trans. Vollmoeller, p. 19.
2. ibid., p. 43.
3. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton, 1957, p. 169.

his obsession. What perplexes the audience is that Theobald succeeds in imposing himself on all the other characters, not only at the beginning, but throughout the play; and, ironically, it is he who is "pragmatically free" at the end of the action.

Theobald Maske's behaviour is dominated by his concern with his position as a minor civil-servant. When his wife loses her drawers in public, he first uses the incident as a pretext to berate her for her domestic shortcomings, to reaffirm his authority. Yet soon enough the real reason for his rather exaggerated outburst of anger emerges: not only this incident, but his wife's provocative appearance in general, pose a threat to his secure position:

> Mein Amt, dein Aussehen gehen nicht zusammen. (1,30)

Three times he repeats the phrase "auf offener Strasse", a pregnant formula showing that his real concern is with the public nature of the incident, the repercussions which it might have for his job. Only later does he expound the principle behind this attitude:

> Mit dem, was mir Geburt beschieden, bin ich an meinem Platz in günstigster Lage und seiner bis zum Tode gewiss, unterscheide ich mich nicht allzusehr von meinen Kollegen im ganzen Vaterland. Nur besondere Tüchtigkeit oder ausserordentliche Schande könnten mich um die Sicherheiten bringen, die er verbürgt.
>
> Meine Unscheinbarkeit ist die Tarnkappe, unter der ich meinen Neigungen, meiner innersten Natur frönen darf. (1,96)

It is just such an "ausserordentliche Schande" which Luise's carelessness may have provoked.

Yet, while Theobald is obsessed with possible threats to his security, he does not appear to associate them with the arrival of Scarron and

Mandelstam, the prospective lodgers who have witnessed the incident. Once financial terms have been settled, Theobald appears to discount further problems:

> Danke Gott, blieb deine heutige Schlamperei anscheinend ohne üble Folgen. . . . Ich bin durch diese beiden minderwertigen Männlichkeiten, die Gott uns ins Haus sandte, wahrhaftig wieder guter Laune. (1,59)

It is unlikely that Theobald should turn a blind eye to his wife's infidelity in order to profit financially, for this is inconsistent with his scorn for one of his colleagues who tolerated such an affair and was subsequently dismissed;[1] his concern for his position would preclude such an explanation. The most convincing argument is that he simply fails to see the connection between the sudden arrival of the lodgers and the incident which precipitated it. Nor does he appear to realize, later, that each has made an attempt to seduce his wife. What he does realize—and this reflects his greatest asset, his realism—is that neither of the lodgers is, in fact, capable of posing a serious threat.

The key to Theobald's confidence is found in Act II, when Mandelstam, frustrated by Scarron's apparent success with Luise, hints that his rival's intentions are dishonourable, claiming that "schliesslich ist ringsum alles Lüge" (1,64). Theobald makes light of this suggestion and replies with his own realistic appraisal of events:

> So sicher Sie den Leuten den Bart abnehmen, nicht ganz sattelfest sind, so bestimmt ich an nichts denke, als dass meine Kolumnen stimmen, Herr Scarron Liebesgeschichten dichtet, meine Frau zu mir gehört, so sicher ist, was meine Augen sehen, und so bestimmt ist Lüge nur, was Sie träumen. (1,65).

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1. See 1,96.

Although, at this stage, the audience is prepared to concur with Mandelstam that this is "lächerlichste Gutgläubigkeit" (1,66) and to read dramatic irony into Theobald's view, his account of the situation is upheld by events: Mandelstam is, indeed, a hypochondriac, an impotent voyeur; Scarron, at the crucial moment, tears himself away from Luise to write a love-story; and Luise does, indeed, belong to her husband.

The fact that, without spotting the connection between Luise's mishap and the lodgers' arrival, Theobald nevertheless grasps that he is not seriously threatened underlines the point that his success is attained not in spite of his blinkered perspective but because of it. He lives according to the "Schema F" (1,89):

> Scarron: Das heisst, essen, schlafen, schreiben Akten ab?
> Und wohin soll das führen?
> Theobald: In die Pension, so Gott will. (1,89)

His intellectual pretensions are non-existent; now that Bismarck has departed the scene, politics do not interest him. His nationalistic and anti-Semitic views are conventional; they are the opinions commensurate with his position. He accepts the Prussian "Obrigkeitsstaat", gives his allegiance to the Kaiser and justifies his inquiry into whether Scarron's work has any "staatsgefährlichen oder sonst die Ordnung der Dinge aufhebenden Charakter" with the statement of belief: "Ich bin Beamter" (1,58). He rejects moral relativism as dangerous. Of literature he is totally ignorant. On matters of general interest his views amount, in Scarron's opinion, to "Binsenweisheiten" (1,94). Yet Theobald's limitations are part of his attempt to merge completely with his background; they are the result of conscious choice, or so we are led

to believe. Cultural interests, he recognizes, would be dangerous, for they might interfere with his total mastery of a highly circumscribed area. Culture, for him, is an exotic realm which lies way beyond the horizons of his tiny world, like the giraffe in the Berlin zoo:

> Soll ich ehrlich sein, aus mir selbst wäre ich nicht auf die Idee gekommen, so ein Tier anzusehen. Ich bin solchen Knalleffekten und Seltsamkeiten der Natur abgeneigt. Da mir aber Herr Scarron so zusetzt, will ich etwas für meine Bildung tun. (1,95)

His attitude to culture corresponds to his feelings about his position: the unexpected, the unforeseen, the exotic, must be kept at bay. Theobald not only recognizes his intellectual limitations, he affirms them, for they are the guarantee of his success:

> Mein Leben währet siebenzig Jahre. Auf dem Boden des mir angelernten Bewusstseins kann ich manches in diesem Zeitraum auf meine Weise geniessen. Wollte ich mir höhere Meinung . . . zu eigen machen, hätte ich bei meiner schwierigen Veranlagung in hundert Jahren kaum die Regel inne. (1,90)

This is the credo of the "bürgerlicher Held". Theobald confines his interest almost exclusively to his material needs, for this area is amenable to laws, to rules; within it the future may be predicted with confidence.

If examples of Theobald's public conformism, banal views and conventional attitudes abound, so, too, do the instances where he demonstrates his supreme mastery over his material existence. Within his circumscribed domestic world everything runs like clockwork. Luise's romantic dreaming constitutes a threat to this routine. Her neglect of the household chores jeopardizes his material security:

> Warum noch nicht geheizt, warum die Tür auf, jene zu? Warum nicht umgekehrt? Warum läuft die Uhr nicht? (1,29)

The unwound clock symbolizes the break in the routine of the Maske household of which Luise's mishap is another symptom. It is Theobald who insists that the domestic routine follow its predestined course; it is he who winds up the clock in the first scene and who remarks, at the end of the play, when all the excitement has subsided:

> Die Uhr wie üblich trotz meines ewigen Appells nicht aufgezogen. (1,134)

Even when Theobald allows himself the extravagance of seducing Fräulein Deuter, he immediately insists that their future meetings take place regularly, on a weekly basis, lest the household routine be upset. When Deuter first remarks to Luise that "Ihr Mann ist Maschine" (1,46), she fondly imagines that his predictability will make him the more easily deceived by their plans. While her assessment is correct, it is she who will, ironically, become part of that mechanism.

Theobald's realism is suggested not only by the machine-images but also by his financial astuteness. The sphere of money is amenable to mathematical computation; chance is excluded. He manages to accept both the lodgers for what was originally intended as accommodation for one, to increase Mandelstam's rent, to hold Scarron to his contract for a year and then to re-let the room to a third lodger when Scarron leaves. In his calculation he is punctilious: when Scarron hands him 150 Talers in payment of the year's rent, at twelve Talers a month, he dutifully returns six. On his own admission he is obsessed with nothing "als dass meine Kolumnen stimmen" (1,65), and on Scarron's departure he surveys his success:

> Achzehn Taler zusammen, 18 mal 12 ist 180—ist 216 Taler auf ein Jahr. Die Wohnung kostet 115. Bleiben hundertundzehn. Siebenhundert verdiene ich, macht's achthundertundzehn, achthundertelf Taler und wir wohnen umsonst. Es geht, geht, wird sich machen lassen. (1,118)

Only now does it become clear that Theobald is planning an addition to the family. His calculation of material needs extends even to a rather crude form of family planning; children obviously belong in the area of man's material needs, an area where laws prevail and where the future may be planned.

Another area of the materialist "Schema F" involves food and drink: many are the illustrations of his capacity for enjoying large quantities of both, and Luise knows well enough that only the topic of food can distract Theobald from his anger. His notions about health are similarly materialist: sickness, which is, after all, costly, may be avoided by good food and healthy exercise. Theobald advises Mandelstam to take invigorating walks, scoffing at his fears of hereditary weakness. And to Scarron's bohemian life-style he responds with due caution, for "man muss schauen, dass man nicht zu früh kaputt wird" (1, 129-30). As far as his own physique is concerned, Theobald is, quite literally, "der Riese".[1] He demonstrates as much to Mandelstam:

> Theobald: In der Tat, Gesundheit, Kraft vor allem. Fassen Sie diesen Schenkel, den Bizeps.
> Mandelstam: Riesig. (1,51)

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1. This title, found in the first manuscript version of the play, was adopted for the première in February 1911 in order to comply with the censor's requirements.

When Scarron proclaims his Nietzschean doctrine, Theobald at once translates the term "Kraft" into purely physical terms, ignoring Scarron's intended reference to intellectual or spiritual power. The argument that "Kraft ist höchstes Glück" (1,87) is a truism for Theobald; it is he, not Scarron, who actually exemplifies "Herrenmoral".

The secret of Theobald's success, then, is that he confines his interest to his material needs. So convinced are Deuter and Luise that Theobald can be cuckolded that Deuter can proclaim:

> Ein Zyklop muss Theobald sein, will er seinem Schicksal entgehen. Ein richtiger Riese. (1,46)

This is exactly what Theobald is, he does escape his fate. And it is, therefore, wrong to regard the alternative title of Der Riese as unambiguously ironic. As regards his public rôle, Theobald is bent on preserving his anonymity, his insignificance. He plays the "Untertan". Yet, within his domestic sphere, he is literally a giant, a cyclops, a colossus. His intellectual limitations are part of his consciously adopted mask. When, in the discussion-scene in Act III, Scarron suggests as much, Sternheim originally permits Theobald to confirm this. In the 1910 version of the play Theobald explains that as a minor civil-servant with limited resources he does well to limit his pretensions:

> Es ist nicht viel, aber ich meine, es ist etwas, turnt meine Phantasie nicht über Zäune.[1]

These lines were omitted later because they make Theobald's position too

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1. Die Hose, Berlin, 1911, p. 129; this edition first appeared late in 1910. The Gesamtwerk, ed. Emrich, reprints the third edition of 1926.

explicit, perhaps. Realism means the exact correlation of one's assets and one's aspirations.

The effete Scarron and the hypochondriac Mandelstam both feel threatened by Theobald. Mandelstam calls him a "Viechskerl", a term which Sternheim is to adopt for his "bürgerlicher Held" in later theoretical statements, and complains of his "teuflische Brutalität" (1,99). Scarron responds to Theobald's doctrine of "Unscheinbarkeit" with the words:

> Ich bin verwirrter als ich es auszudrücken vermag. Zum erstenmal tritt mir solche Auffassung des Lebens als Überzeugung entgegen. (1,97)

It is only gradually that they, and with them the audience, realize Theobald's strength and vitality. Both men feel threatened sexually; the power of his personality seems a direct challenge to their masculinity. Both respond by confessing to him their sexual exploits. Mandelstam tells of his affair with one Frau Frühling, an affair tolerated by the lady's husband and standing in comic contrast to Mandelstam's abject failure in the Maske household. Scarron relates his quasi-religious experience with the prostitute. In neither case is Theobald taken aback. He is unimpressed:

> Dass sie Frühling heisst und in der Ahornstrasse wohnt, gibt der Sache kein Gewicht. (1,97)

And he punctuates Scarron's confession with deflating comments. By contrast with his lodgers' purely verbal successes, Theobald gives concrete demonstration of his own prowess by seducing Fräulein Deuter. Significantly, the stranger who takes over Scarron's room and who seems

to offer a serious challenge to Theobald goes out of his way to emphasize the lack of sexual rivalry between himself and his future landlord:

> Der Fremde: Haben Sie heiratsfähige Töchter?
> Theobald: Nein.
> Der Fremde: Sie selbst sind verheiratet. Ist Ihre Frau jung?
> Theobald: Doch.
> Der Fremde: Gefallsüchtig?
> Theobald: Das wäre der Teufel.
> Der Fremde: Sie sind ständig auf der Hut?
> Theobald: Unbedingt. (1,131)

A second feature of Theobald's character, then, and one not altogether unconnected with his realism, is his vitality.

The co-presence of these two features is reflected in Sternheim's brilliant use of the "Seeschlange" motif. Criticism has already drawn attention to the fact that Theobald's reference to the appearance of a gigantic sea-serpent in the south seas both opens and closes the action of Die Hose and thereby suggests that events in the Maske household have returned to normal.[1] In fact, however, there are three references to the "Seeschlange". In the first scene Theobald sits reading the newspaper, while Luise busies herself preparing a meal to pacify her husband after her unfortunate accident. The "Seeschlange" has a dual significance. Firstly, Theobald states explicitly that the serpent represents the unexpected dangers of life, a threat to the peaceful existence which he has carved out for himself:

> Es muss einen furchtbaren Anblick bieten. Da bin ich lieber in gesicherten Bezirken, meinem Städtchen. Man soll sich sehr auf das Seine beschränken, es festhalten und darüber wachen. Was habe ich mit dieser Schlange gemein? Regt sie nicht höchstens meine Phantasie auf? (1,32-33)

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1. See D. Barlow, ed., Bürger Schippel, Oxford, 1969, p. 52.

The first edition of the play contains, within the above quotation, the statement:

> Ich halte schon die Nachricht von solchen Knalleffekten und Seltsamkeiten für Sünde.[1]

This same phrase is used again in Act III of the giraffe in the Berlin zoo, which represents exotic and irrelevant "Bildung", similarly a threat to Theobald's sheltered world. Yet the rhetorical question—"Was habe ich mit dieser Schlange gemein?"—suggests a second sense in which the serpent may be understood. Luise's question about the eating habits of such a creature, raised as she is appeasing her husband with food, implies a comparison between him and the serpent. While the creature represents a threat to Theobald's world, there is a suggestion that he and the animal have a primitive vitality in common.

The serpent is mentioned again in the discussion-scene in Act III. Luise hands Mandelstam the newspaper account of the reappearance of the creature and, when he protests at the irrelevance of the subject, Theobald retorts that it might divert him from the reality of his physical condition. The context is important: Theobald has brought up the subject of Mandelstam's health in order, he claims, to arm the latter against a possible catastrophe if he continues to neglect it. Mandelstam prefers to ignore his condition, or, as he puts it, to worry about it inwardly. His escapist attitude is underlined by Theobald's remark about the serpent, which again represents the exotic, the sensational, an expedient to distract the reader from his actual situation. At the same time, however,

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1. Carl Sternheim, Die Hose, Berlin,1911, p. 15.

the Nietzschean Scarron has begun to expound the doctrine that "das Schwache, Lebensunfähige, muss dem Starken, Gesunden weichen" (1,86). The serpent is just such a survival in the process of natural selection, a primitive form of life preserved by its strength and vitality. Ironically, it is Scarron who upholds the doctrine, but Theobald who illustrates its truth that what is lacking in vitality must give way to what is strong and healthy. When the serpent is mentioned again in the final lines of the play and Theobald reiterates that even the mention of such eccentricities is repugnant to him, it once more represents both the exotic and the vital.

While criticism has drawn attention to the use of the reference to the serpent as a frame-work for the action, it has omitted to note that Sternheim was resurrecting a stock theatrical joke and investing it with wider significance. In Gustav Freytag's comedy Die Journalisten (1853) the joke appears in its original form. Bolz, a newspaper editor, is reading the proofs of the miscellaneous column:

> Wäsche vom Boden gestohlen - Drillinge geboren - Concert, Vereinssitzung, Theater - Alles in Ordnung - Neuerfundene Lokomotive; die grosse Seeschlange gesehen. (Aufspringend) Alle Wetter, kommt der wieder mit der alten Seeschlange! Ich wollte, sie würde ihm als Gelee gekocht und er müsste sie kalt aufessen.[1]

When the journalist responsible is called to account, he defends himself with the remark: "Es fehlte an sechs Zeilen".[2] In Hauptmann's Der rote Hahn (1901) the reference is extended; the reputedly much-travelled

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1. Gustav Freytag, Gesammelte Werke, Leipzig, 1887, III, 19.

2. ibid., p. 20. In this sense the "Seeschlange" is, of course, the German nineteenth-century equivalent of the Loch Ness monster.

Dr. Boxer is questioned:

> Langheinrich: Haben Se de Seeschlange nicht jesehen?
> Dr. Boxer: Jawohl, Langheinrich, in der Südsee unten.
> Langheinrich: Is wahr, det se saure Jurken frisst?
> Dr. Boxer: Mehrere hundert Schock jeden Tag![1]

Requested to convey Langheinrich's regards to the creature, Dr. Boxer expresses some doubt whether he will ever return to the South Seas, which prompts the retort:

> Denn hab'n Se de Nase nu volljekriegt? Sehn Se: nu sind Se so weit wie ick, Dokter, und ick habe mir jar nich vom Fleck jerührt![2]

The serpent, obviously a stop-gap in the press, now also suggests the antithesis of a simple, circumscribed, domestic existence, precisely the sense in which Theobald is to understand it.

Sternheim could probably have relied on his audience's knowledge of the joke, and hence the sensationalism of the press and the gullibility of the public, and, indeed, the associations with food, are all suggested. Yet Theobald is made to develop Langheinrich's blinkered standpoint, even to justify it. His repugnance at the mere mention of the serpent is symptomatic of his exaggerated fear of the exotic or unexpected, on a par with his attitude to the "merkwürdige Dinge . . . hinter den Tapeten des Lebens" (1,134). On the one hand, then, Theobald's desire to preserve his public image, his anxiety lest the predictable pattern of his life be disrupted, are evoked by the reference to the

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1. Gerhart Hauptmann, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Hans-Egon Hass, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin, 1965, II, 33.

2. ibid., pp. 33-34.

"Seeschlange". Yet, within the private sphere, Theobald is a giant, a man of animal vitality, of boundless physical appetites; this, too, is suggested by Luise's implicit comparison between him and the sea-serpent. In a curious way the serpent suggests at one and the same time Theobald's dual rôle.

If the comparison between Theobald and the serpent is only hinted at by Luise, it is reinforced elsewhere in the play. When Scarron leaves the Maske household, Theobald removes the painting of "Joseph vor Potiphar", replacing it with a "Boa Constriktor im Kampf mit einem Löwen" (1,132). In either case the painting symbolizes his relationship to the occupant of the room. The motif of seduction and marital infidelity evokes his relationship with Scarron, an excellent parallel since in Joseph's case the charge of adultery also proved unfounded. The new tenant, "Der Fremde", seems to be made of sterner stuff. Even his brief appearance suggests that he will offer a much more serious challenge to Theobald and the painting may be seen as the prefiguration of the kind of relationship which they will have. It requires no great feat of imagination to see Theobald as the serpent.

There is one area in which Theobald is prepared to allow his imagination some scope and in which he grants the importance of the emotions: the female sex. In the discussion-scene in Act III Luise is upset by Scarron's Nietzschean diatribe because it denies the possibility of pity. When she insists that such feelings are very real to her, Theobald, with characteristic masculine chauvinism, rudely interrupts; but when she leaves the room, Theobald makes the same point:

> Theobald: Und wo bleiben Sie mit dem Gemüt?
> Scarron: Wie?
> Theobald: Drückte ich mich nicht richtig aus? Wie brauchen Sie das Herz dazu?
> Scarron: Das Herz ist ein Muskel, Maske. (1,91)

Theobald insists that, for women at least, the emotions are significant; and, as if to illustrate the point, Luise returns from her errand of mercy with an extra blanket for the ailing Mandelstam. Scarron's catalogue of male achievements fails to persuade Theobald to revise his views:

> Theobald: . . . die Weiber haben ihr Herz.
> Scarron: Ein Muskel, Maske!
> Theobald: Aber sie leben davon, machen die Hälfte der Erdbewohner aus. (1,91-92)[1]

Another incongruous collection of male triumphs follows from the lodgers, to which Theobald responds, with a hint that his mind is turning to the foundation of a Maske dynasty:

> Dies beiseite, kommt soviel anderes dazu. Kinderkriegen und solche Dinge. (1,94)

These two incontrovertible facts: that women have emotions and that they produce children, constitute the sum total of Theobald's reflections on the psychology of sex. Banalities they may be, but they prove highly successful.

His seduction of Fräulein Deuter reveals Theobald's irrestible mixture of calculation and highly imaginative sexual innuendo, which he misleadingly claims to have appropriated from Scarron. He classifies his women not as beautiful or ugly, but as "spinös oder popottig" (1,120),

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1. The Gesamtwerk, ed. Emrich, has a misprint here ("Aber Sie leben davon . . ."), which I have corrected.

coinings which convey his taste in the erotic.[1] Theobald's materialism tells him at once that the new, lavishly adorned pair of drawers is an expression of Deuter's repressed sexuality:

> Theobald: Bejahrte Schaluppen ziehen nicht Segel von Seide auf.
> Deuter: Um noch begehrt zu sein.
> Theobald: Im Märchen. Im Leben sparen sie die unnütze Ausgabe. (1,120-21)

Correctly diagnosing Deuter's needs, Theobald makes his own contribution to the erotic "Märchen". Holding up the fateful pair of drawers, he alludes to phantasies of his own:

> Schmiss hat das Ding, und sitzt's der Besitzerin angegossen, gelingen die hübschesten Vorstellungen mit ihm. (1,121)

His suggestive remarks encounter only token resistance from Deuter, who, after a few last-ditch efforts to justify herself, gratefully succumbs. Theobald's technique is admirable: never for a moment does he permit the conversation to veer away from the erotic; nothing is allowed to dispel the atmosphere of the "Märchen".

Theobald's character and his ultimate success can be more easily understood if they are viewed in the light of Sternheim's curious interpretation of Classical comedy. Theobald performs two distinct, if not entirely unrelated, functions. Primarily he embodies an obsession, a concentration of one quality: crude materialism. Through him, it should be stressed, Sternheim is not advocating the degree of brutality, philistinism and materialism which Theobald actually exhibits; but he is saying

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1. The English translation by M. A. McHaffie, in Scenes from the Heroic Life of the Middle Classes, ed. J. M. Ritchie, London, 1970, makes a good, if perhaps too alliterative, attempt with "bony or buttocksome" (p. 135).

that realism is an essential human quality, a quality, moreover, which is threatened by the bourgeois tendency to seek refuge in ideologies. Through Theobald he is providing, to use his own medical analogy, a concentrated dose of materialism as an antidote to the audience's susceptibility to such ideologies. By projecting into him an antisocial obsession with material interests and by building into the play the hero's success—a triumph which is not fully warranted by his actions and which flagrantly contradicts the traditional comic outcome—Sternheim ensures a shock of recognition on the part of the audience. Theobald's success is guaranteed, not by the fact that he fulfils his individual nature, but as a result of Sternheim's dramatic technique. He triumphs over the machinations of Scarron, Mandelstam, Deuter and Luise because he is free of ideologies and because they are riddled with them, a triumph which seems ordained by the nature of things.

While, on the one hand, Theobald exemplifies Sternheim's comic intention to provide a massive dose of realism, there is more than a suggestion that Sternheim was unable to resist the temptation of allowing Theobald to exemplify a second quality: the affirmation of intuition in his relations with women. Not content with allowing his hero to survive the attempts to cuckold him, Sternheim permits him to succeed where the other characters fail. Sternheim's war against the imbalance which threatens man's harmony is fought on two fronts: he seeks to counter the tendency to gloss over material needs, to rationalize weakness or failure, with comforting ideologies; and simultaneously, to counter the failure to take the intuitive and irrational into account

in the sphere of human relations. These two functions of the hero may be observed in all Sternheim's work, though they are not always performed by a single character, nor are they both invariably present with equal emphasis in all the plays. Broadly speaking, the emphasis in the early comedies is on the materialist hero and the unmasking of ideologies, while in the later comedies, particularly after 1914, the affirmation of intuitive feelings comes to play a more prominent part.

At this stage some light may be shed on the problem of whether Theobald is a positive hero or the satirical caricature of the petit-bourgeois civil servant, interpretations representing the extremes within which criticism oscillates. As for the former view, there can be no doubt as to the fact or the manner of Theobald's success. His down-to-earth realism makes him a suitable foil for the ideologies of the other characters. For them he acts as a kind of sounding-board, much like the one which the "raisonneur" figure in Molière's comedies offers for the extravagant views of the central comic character. Just as it is dangerous to impute to Molière doctrines which the "raisonneur" advocates, so it is unwarranted to assume that Sternheim is himself seriously preaching a gospel of bourgeois heroism. Clearly he sympathizes with Theobald's vitality and energy, but the affirmation of realism—realism which here takes the extreme form of crass materialism—does not differ in essence from what Bergson sees as the implicit affirmation by the comic of the vital and flexible in life. Indeed, one of Bergson's formulations for the comic--"l'inexorable logique que la réalité applique à corriger le rêve"[1]--could well serve to describe aspects of Die Hose.

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1. H. Bergson, Le Rire, 273rd ed., Paris, 1969, p. 11.

Yet what of Theobald's similarities to the central comic character of a Classical comedy? Is not his preoccupation with security a fixed, inflexible obsession? Certainly his punctilious attention to duty, his conventional views, his treatment of his wife and his exaggerated fears for his security all lead the audience to view him as a comic type. But, if one accepts Bergson's thesis "qu'un personnage comique est généralement comique dans l'exacte mesure où il s'ignore lui-même",[1] then it would seem that, as Theobald's public image, or fixed mask, is consciously adopted, it is not in itself comic. What is significant, however, is that the audience only becomes fully aware of the mask in Act III; for the first two acts Theobald is exposed to the audience's laughter. And given the precision with which he is placed in a recognizable social setting and made to appear the incarnation of the values of the "Untertan", it was but a short step for contemporary audiences and critics to view him as the caricature of a social type. If Sternheim had actually set out with the intention of satirizing the petit bourgeois, the result, for two acts at least, would hardly have been vastly different. Only in retrospect may Theobald's utterances and reflexes be re-interpreted as conscious ploys, illustrating his total mastery of a public rôle. Admittedly, certain of his early remarks suggest that the maintenance of the mask requires a conscious effort of will:

> Frau, Dämonen sind aus unserer Seele wirkend. Knechten wir sie nicht mit unseres Willens ganzer Gewalt--man sieht nicht ab, wie weit sie es bringen. (1,32)

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1. H. Bergson, op. cit., p. 13.

But interpolated, as this comment is, between references to food, the audience is likely to find it comically exaggerated;only in retrospect will they realize how accurately it conveys Theobald's true position.

It is because Sternheim retains so much of Classical comedy, with its character-types and its taut "closed" structure, that the audience expects his own central character to be exposed to ridicule for his rigidity. An audience nurtured on Classical comedy would jump to the conclusion that Sternheim is ridiculing Theobald for his crass materialism, or even implying that such materialism is the property of one social class. In fact, the reverse is true: realism is affirmed as an essential human quality. That Theobald embodies an exaggerated amount of it is because Sternheim wants to make it into an obsession, a feature which attracts him from Classical comedy for quite the wrong reasons. He admires the comic obsession because it makes the central comic character anti-social, yet its inclusion in his own comedy has startling results. The audience, after laughing at Theobald's obsession, discovers with the same sense of shock as Scarron and Mandelstam, that in this obsession lies Theobald's real strength. Although, then, there is a fundamental affirmative element in Theobald, the moment of awareness is crucially delayed.

The very vehemence with which Sternheim denies his satirical intention indicates just how prevalent such an interpretation must have been. But Sternheim himself is not altogether free of responsibility for it: he clearly allows the audience to mislead itself. He creates the traditional comic type of the heavy-handed husband with a pretty young wife and for two acts sets in train a series of events which seems bound to

provide for the usual comic overthrow of the old and repressive order; in Deuter's words to Luise:

> Ein Zyklop muss Theobald sein, will er seinem Schicksal entgehen. Ein richtiger Riese. (1,46)

The audience, aware of the plans afoot to cuckold him, must view Theobald's confidence as dramatic irony. But in the end the audience's expectations are disappointed, the irony backfires; not only does Theobald triumph, but he does so without lifting a finger. It is Scarron, Mandelstam, Luise and Deuter who succumb to his arbitrary order. The audience is forced to shift its ground, to abandon the position into which habitual familiarity with a cultural tradition has made it so easily slip. It is this which constitutes the shock, the "Erschütterung" which signals the dramatist's indirect social function. The element of provocation, of assault on the audience's expectations, is a notable feature of Sternheim's literary theory and practice.

Sternheim's "bürgerlicher Held" is a composite figure. His ancestors are, on one side, the central comic character of Classical comedy and, on the other, the traditional notion of the hero as he tends to appear in his late-nineteenth-century guise: the representative of boundless individualism and vitality, the type of Wedekind's Marquis von Keith. The latter strain is found in unambiguous form in Sternheim's early work in the Casanova of Der Abenteurer or the Faustian Don Juan. Small wonder that such mixed parentage should produce an ambiguous "bürgerlicher Held". It is a constant temptation, when discussing Sternheim's work, to speak of a comic hero. Judged by Aristotle's canon such a description would be a contradiction in terms: the hero only exists in tragedy, which shows

men as better, or nobler, than they are, while comedy shows them as worse. Yet, for Theobald, the term seems right. He is at once both worse, more brutal, more materialistic, than his society, and better, more vital, more alive; he is seemingly more rigid and intractable than his society, and, in the final analysis, more adaptable, less ridiculous.

Although Sternheim, after he has adopted a phenomenological approach, is to re-interpret the function of his hero, his theory remains consistent on one point: namely, that the interaction of the hero and the minor characters, the relationship between the hero and his society, is calculated to show "alles Bürgertum der eigenen, bisher gehätschelten Ideologie inkommensurabel" (6,46). An examination of the minor characters in Die Hose indicates that Sternheim is primarily concerned with the comic disparity between reality and illusion. Nevertheless, it is possible to speak of satirical elements, that is, of elements of social and especially cultural criticism, in Sternheim's work.

Once again, it is his encounter with Molière's work which prompts Sternheim to reflect on the function of the minor characters and the topicality of comedy. It has recently come to light that early in 1911 Sternheim and Hugo von Hofmannsthal planned to collaborate on a translation of Molière's comedies.[1] Although the appearance of a rival version, coupled with their desire to follow their own independent interests,

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1. See Leonhard M. Fiedler, "Eine Molière-Ausgabe von Hofmannsthal und Sternheim," Hofmannsthal-Blätter 4 (Spring 1970), pp. 255-63 and "Carl Sternheim-Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Briefe", ed. L. M. Fiedler, Hofmannsthal-Blätter 4 (Spring 1970), pp. 243-54. Subsequent references to this correspondence are to this published collection.

prevented their collaboration from bearing fruit immediately, each enjoyed a rekindling of enthusiasm in 1916, when Sternheim completed his adaptation of L'Avare and Hofmannsthal his of Les Fâcheux. Sternheim elected to begin with George Dandin, a project which was never completed and of which there is no trace among his papers. But the attempt did prompt him to raise with Hofmannsthal the general policy for the new translation:

> Zu der Molièreübersetzung etwas Prinzipielles: Ich finde Ihre Verdeutschung von le mariage forcé zu treu. . . . Es kann doch nicht einen Augenblick zweifelhaft sein, dass wir jede Vocabel, wollten wir es, getreu verdeutschen könnten. Aber wir wollen doch in erster Linie was? Molière, den volkstümlichen, für unsere Zeit volkstümlich machen, das heisst, seine tausend Zusammenhänge mit dem Tage, seine Anspielungen auf die Mode, die gerade das Menschenherz von dem Urgewaltigen ablenkt, bringen und das bedeutet, ihn auf der Basis seiner Logik und seiner Ansichten . . . womöglich ins Zeitlose, sonst aber eher in unsere, als in seine Zeit zu rücken. Ich meine nicht etwa, dass man das Telefon oder so etwas einfügt, aber der Gedankeninhalt soll, wo er nicht ewig, sondern variabel ist, von einem Menschen unserer Zeit gedacht sein. Ich meine also beispielsweise: In dem Gespräch mit den Philosophen hätten, soweit ihre Dummheiten nicht auch heute noch unter Philosophen giltig sind, Gedankengänge heutiger Systeme lustigere Wirkung getan. An solchen Stellen hätte das Genie Molière's, heute erscheinend auch zu den aktuellsten Begriffen, die ihm zu Verfügung gestanden hätten gegriffen. Auf solche Weise begeht man keine Respektlosigkeit, sondern respektvollste Ergänzung.[1]

Uppermost in Sternheim's mind is the comic effect. These remarks serve as a timely reminder that the topical references in his own comedies are included principally for their comic potential; they should not be misconstrued as direct attacks by Sternheim on specific doctrines.

The minor characters in Die Hose are made the subject of quite conventional comic treatment. They pretend to views which stand in sharp

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1. Sternheim-Hofmannsthal: Briefe, No. 2, dated 10 March 1911.

contrast to their real situations. They may be regarded as illustrating Bergson's definition of the comic as "du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant".[1] It is not their views as such which are comic, so much as the involuntary rigidity with which they give expression to them, the tenacity with which they cling to theories which their behaviour contradicts. Frank Scarron is at once a Nietzschean exponent of social Darwinism and a neo-Romantic poet. As a poet his language is over-blown, rhetorical and larded with strikingly inappropriate metaphors:

> Ich bin eine Kirchenglocke. Mein Strang hängt gelähmt.
> Schlagen Sie mich an, läute ich Ihrer Kehle helle Schreie.
> (1,41)

This one example captures the unsubtle mixture of the erotic and the religious which characterizes Scarron's style. He opens a purely verbal attempt at seduction in the Maske living-room with the improbable declaration:

> Dir mehr als zwei Ozeane entfernt, bin ich an diese Bergwand gelagert. Vom Leben in zwei blauen Sonnen ausruhend. (1,77)

His exaggeration and fondness for religious allusion inspire his promise to Luise: "Heute noch sollst du mit mir im Paradiese sein!" (1,88), yet this, like all his other utterances, belongs to the artistic realm of his own imagination. Scarron's self-indulgent outpourings obviously impress the inarticulate Luise, yet in Theobald's presence his flow is reduced to the mere repetition of the phrase "in der Tat" (1,57), a fact which does not escape Theobald's notice. Words fail him on a second occasion,

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1. H. Bergson, Le Rire, 273rd ed., Paris, 1969, p. 29.

when he is confronted with Theobald's rock-solid convictions:

> Scarron: Das sind Binsenweisheiten, die feststehen wie - -
> Theobald: Bitte?
> Scarron: Mir fällt kein Vergleich ein. (1,94)

Scarron's artistic transformation of his night with the prostitute--perhaps the best, or the worst, example of his art--is exposed to Theobald's remorseless criticism. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in Scarron Sternheim is providing an ironic portrait of the Neo-Romantic poet. While the comic effect is primary, there is the suggestion that the curious amalgam of aesthetic, religious and erotic elements which characterizes much Neo-Romantic writing--one of the styles, incidentally, in which the young Sternheim dabbled--lends itself to the kind of idealizing function which Sternheim is later to attack quite overtly.

Scarron's social Darwinism, with its Nietzschean overtones, is similarly comic. With his superiority over Mandelstam in mind, he claims to be consoled by the Darwinist theory that "das Schwache, Lebensunfähige muss dem Starken, Gesunden weichen" (1,86); yet it is Theobald's superiority over both prospective suitors which the audience is shown. While Scarron extols "Kraft" (though he is careful to point out that he means man's spiritual energies), Theobald actually embodies "Kraft", physical strength and power of personality. From the first Theobald recognizes "wie sich hinter einer vorgetäuschten Zielsicherheit ein untergrabener Wille nur schlecht verbirgt" (1,59). Yet, despite his abject failure to live up to his promises to Luise, Scarron remains to the last convinced that he is a "Mann der Tat" (1,129), advocating the superiority of his own "Herrenmoral" (1,88) over Theobald's "Sklavenmoral" (1,96).

In Mandelstam's case the fixed ideology is a combination of several elements: his Wagner-worship, his sensitivity about his Jewish background, his hypochondria and his admiration for the achievements of technology. From the earlier manuscripts it is clear that Sternheim first intended Mandelstam to be an admirer of Schiller and to read into his infatuation with Luise a parallel to Thekla's relationship to Max Piccolomini; only later does Sternheim make Wagner's Der fliegende Holländer into Mandelstam's inspiration, allowing the latter to explain himself that "Wagner, nicht Schiller ist der Mann unserer Zeit" (1,50). That the literary model is interchangeable underlines the fact that it is not the model but the general tendency to confuse literature and reality which is ridiculed. Although the suggestion is not entirely absent that certain "classics" of the German cultural tradition are particularly suited to such misuse, Sternheim is, nevertheless, careful to relate the model in question very closely to Mandelstam's situation. The opera is appropriate; Senta and the Dutchman never consummate their love in this life. It is as if Mandelstam were employing the operatic model to rationalize his own impotence, an impotence which, despite his conventionally heroic threat to kill his rival, is underlined by his clumsy attempt at voyeurism. By allowing Mandelstam to recount with pride how he had traced out Wagner's name on the wall of his previous lodgings with dead fleas and bugs, Sternheim suggests the grotesque nature of such hero-worship.

The hints of cultural criticism are firmly subordinated to the comic. Above all, there is a comic discrepancy between Mandelstam's enthusiastic championing of modern ideas and modern technology on the one hand, and

his own behaviour on the other. He counters Theobald's philistinism with praise for the great inventors,[1] a sign of his propensity to hero-worship, and clearly finds compensation for his own insignificance, his puny physique, in Scarron's social Darwinism:

> Der Höchstgeborene stammt wie ich und Herr Scarron vom Affen, alle Menschheit ist gleich, und jede kann den höchsten Platz erringen. (1,96)

Carried away by Scarron's verbosity, Mandelstam reverts to his rôle as the operatic hero, denies the value of sympathy and extols "Anstand, Vornehmheit der Gesinnung" (1,99). Yet, as his name, Benjamin, suggests, he plays the spoilt child and tries to exploit both his youth and his physical weakness to arouse sympathy.[2] When it seems that Scarron is to be given the room in preference to himself he makes the appeal that "meine Jugend ertrüge eine Enttäuschung in dieser Hinsicht schwer" (1,49), and continues, with an allusion to his job as a hair-dresser: "Meine Eltern verlor ich früh, lebe von meiner Hände Arbeit" (1,50). Forced by Theobald to submit to an improvised medical examination, he forgets his appeal for sympathy and complains:

> Warum lacht er fortgesetzt so dämlich über mich, warum das spöttische Mitleid im Ton? (1,66)

Yet, a few moments later, he is still trying to play on Luise's sympathy with the plaintive cry that he has "niemand in der Welt" (1,67). Luise

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1. Theobald's admiration of technology, by contrast, is not directed to spectacular inventions, but, appropriately enough, to the press-stud, a tiny detail which underlines both his practical concerns and his obsession with security. See 1,134.

2. In the first manuscript version of the play Benjamin was his surname.

does, indeed, mother him, if only to allay his suspicions about her intended affair with Scarron; at once Mandelstam makes a startling recovery and throwing off the scarf which protects his throat becomes once more the dashing operatic tenor. When Scarron opens his exposition of Nietzsche's doctrines with the claim that they have brought a breath of fresh air "in die dumpfe stockige Mitleidsatmosphäre vergangener Jahrhunderte" (1,87), Mandelstam might be expected to fear such draughts intellectually as much as he fears physical ones. But, after demanding a blanket from Luise to counteract the effects of the latter, he enters the fray on Scarron's side, ignoring Theobald's point that for women, at least, emotions, like sympathy, are important. Finally, even when Luise has seen through his ploy and has noted the contradiction between his professed opinions and his appeal to her feelings, Mandelstam makes another desperate attempt to win her over with an obsessive and exaggerated outburst about his health.

It is not completely clear from the text whether Mandelstam actually suffers from a tubercular illness, or whether he is simply the comic hypochondriac. In a letter to Eugen Robert, the producer of Die Hose at the Munich Schaubühne in 1923, Sternheim himself tends towards the latter assumption:

> Mandelstam war ganz auf Fressgier gestellt, bei all seiner Todesangst räumte er stets das Essbare vom Tisch. . . .[1]

And the stage-direction confirms this interpretation, where Mandelstam "schickt sich gierig zu essen an" (1,113). Yet Theobald refers to the

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1. Quoted by W. Emrich, 1,570.

"Jammerfigur dieses hohlwangigen Friseurs" (1,59), who is "nicht ganz sattelfest" (1,65), and by broaching the subject of the sea-serpent, explicitly draws attention to Mandelstam's refusal to face up to the truth of his condition. The uncertainty on this point reflects Sternheim's own problem: he never really resolves the issue of whether he is creating in Mandelstam the purely comic hypochondriac (in which case he must be shown to be healthy), or whether he is attacking through Mandelstam what he regards as the bourgeois tendency to refuse to face up to facts, to gloss over them with comforting ideologies (in which case Mandelstam must be shown to be sick). This fundamental confusion in Sternheim's own creative work is not, I believe, fortuitous. It corresponds to the dilemma which informs his theoretical writings: his desire to champion the autonomy of art, its purity, its lack of intention, while at the same time laying claim to its indirect didactic function.

Luise Maske, too, is caught between her romantic dreams and the dreary reality of her everyday life. Yet, because she is fully aware of her propensity for dreaming, she is less unambiguously a comic character than either of the lodgers. Her obvious sexual frustration, the result of Theobald's conviction that they cannot afford a child, makes her at times an almost pathetic figure. Her husband leaves her in no doubt about the prior claims of the domestic routine:

> Luise: Du weisst, kanntest mich als junges Mädchen.
> Theobald: Nun?
> Luise: Und möchtest gern, ich träumte.
> Theobald: Für ein junges Mädchen gibt es nichts Besseres dem Unmass freier Zeit gegenüber. Es ist sein Los, weil es an Wirklichkeit nicht herandarf. Du aber hast sie, und damit ist der Traum vorbei. (1,29-30)

If Luise retains the dreams of her girlhood, she is not totally to blame, for, as she explains to Deuter, in one important respect she has not been allowed to become a woman:

> Hing's doch an einem seidenen Fädchen, ich stünde heute als Mädchen vor Ihnen. (1,44)

While she harbours romantic longings, these would never have impinged on reality without Deuter's agency. Luise's initial embarrassment gives way to complicity, only for her to discover that reality fails to live up to the dream. She is prepared, with Deuter's persuasion, to overlook the fact that Scarron places his art above her, but she is completely disillusioned to learn that he prefers Theobald's company to hers. Her "Nein!" (1,107) marks the point where she realizes that, for her, reality and dream are never to coincide. Sternheim is, of course, anxious to play down the potential pathos of Luise's experience: she is shown to have traditional views on marriage, insisting, despite her own behaviour, that any husband who tolerated his wife's affair would be bound to forfeit her respect. She remains sentimental, devout and slightly scatter-brained throughout the play, finally becoming one with the conventional ideal of the German housewife, her life revolving around the Church, her marriage and the kitchen:

> Luise: Unsere grosse heilige katholische Kirche, Theobald!
> Theobald: Gewiss kein leerer Wahn.
> Luise: Wir sind heute ein Jahr verheiratet.
> Theobald: Wie die Zeit vergeht.
> Luise: Was muss ich dir kochen? (1,133)

If Sternheim never completely succeeds in making Luise a comic character, part of the explanation lies in his attempt to allude, through her,

to another aspect of the German cultural tradition: the "bürgerliches Trauerspiel". This allusion seems to be part of the original conception of the play, the words "Theobald/Gretchen" being pencilled in at the top of the first page of the earliest manuscript. The name Luise, on which Sternheim decides early in the first manuscript, recalls the same tradition, alluding to Luise Miller in Kabale und Liebe. Luise Maske herself seems only too ready to view her relationship with Scarron as that of a simple bourgeois girl, honoured and flattered by the attentions of a gentleman. But here there is no tragedy of the simple girl seduced by the aristocrat; indeed, there is no seduction; nor is Scarron an aristocrat, even if Deuter, performing the function of Marthe in Faust, refers to him as an "Edelmann" (1,42), "ein Held, Barrikadenstürmer" (1,43). Alluding to this same tradition, Theobald ironically refers even to Mandelstam as "ein verkleideter Baron" (1,65).

Luise has some of the attributes of the tragic heroine: she is both devout and a dreamer, prepared to overlook the harsher aspects of her social world. The first scene of Die Hose bears more than a superficial resemblance to that of Kabale und Liebe, Theobald being cast in Miller's rôle. Like Miller he laments that the scandal, which has in each case taken place before the play begins, might attract the attention of the royal personage and hence entail the loss of his position. Just as Luise, like Gretchen, goes to church to salve her conscience, so Luise Maske is encouraged to pray that her accident will have no unpleasant repercussions and to give thanks that it has not. Luise Maske's plea:

> Lässt du mich heute zur Kirche? Ich habe Not. (1,112)

hints that she finds sexual sublimation in religion, an ironic re-interpretation of the devoutness of the tragic victim in a "bürgerliches Trauerspiel".

A highly successful instance of Sternheim's capacity for combining cultural criticism with appropriate literary allusion is found in Luise's singing of the Mörike poem "Das verlassene Mägdlein":

> Früh, wenn die Hähne krähen,
> Eh die Sternlein verschwinden,
> Muss ich am Herde stehn,
> Muss Feuer zünden. (1,45)

While this stanza evokes Luise's domestic drudgery, the audience is aware of the associations of unhappy love, the girl in the poem longing for the night so that she may dream of her departed lover. Even as the notion of an affair with Scarron is taking root in her mind, Luise has begun to romanticize and sentimentalize it, transforming the unpleasantness of her domestic slavery by projecting it onto a higher aesthetic plane. The parodistic element in Sternheim's references to the"bürgerliches Trauerspiel" and the Mörike poem is part of a critical intention which may be observed throughout Sternheim's development and which he is reluctant to admit. He seeks to unmask the use of literature as expressing the inability of the user to come to terms with reality.[1] Luise's day-dreaming constitutes an escape from her problematic social existence; her appeal to the literary

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1. In Das Arbeiter-ABC (1922) Sternheim is more prepared to make an explicit ideological point about the escapist function of the bourgeois theatre: ". . . die Schiller, Kleist und Hebbel, die Hauptmann häuften und haufen ein ethisches Depot, auf das man, just wie bei der deutschen Bank und bei Bleichröder, an einer Kasse abends Wechsel ziehen kann." (6,249)

tradition for confirmation, for sanction, of her escapism implies the criticism on Sternheim's part that certain aspects of that tradition particularly lend themselves to such a purpose.

While Scarron can safely enjoy the erotic only in art, Deuter may be seen as representing the kind of reading public to which such a writer might well appeal. Her obsession with sex is total: she promotes Luise's affair with Scarron for her own second-hand gratification. When Scarron first appears, she takes him for a nobleman, in keeping with the literary antecedents on which her eroticism feeds, and with amusing self-irony Sternheim has her attend a performance of one of his own plays, clearly Don Juan, and identify the hero with Scarron. Significantly, she and Scarron understand each other perfectly; they speak the same suggestive language:

> Scarron: Sie scheinen Patin eines Glücks sein zu wollen, das die schützende Hand nötiger als der Vogel hat, der nicht flügge ist.
> Deuter: Was aber fliegen will -
> Scarron: Und nicht zu fliegen weiss?
> Deuter: Ich bin sozusagen nur ein halber Vogel, der zur rechten Zeit den Mut nicht hatte, in der Dachrinne sitzenblieb. Von mir darfst du Unterweisungen nicht erwarten.
> Scarron: Deren bedarf es nicht.
> Deuter: Übrigens befleissigt sich das Nesthäkchen. Fand ich es gestern schon flatternd in inniger Berührung mit den höheren Regionen.
> Scarron: Wagen wir den Flug! (1,76)

So enthusiastically does Deuter develop Scarron's metaphor (her switch to the "du" form conveys her complicity), that finally even Scarron loses track. He has to interrupt to ask her whom she means by "ein Stösser . . . am Horizont" (1,76); even he fails to recognize this description of Mandelstam.

Much of the comedy, in Deuter's case, derives from the disparity between her view of events and the true state of affairs. When Scarron disappoints Luise, Deuter—as her name suggests—re-interprets his behaviour, filling in quite erroneous details from her fertile imagination and claiming:

> So machte ich mir sein Bild in der Ferne richtiger als du, da du ihn vor dir sahst. (1,106)

It is she who recognizes the erotic possibilities of the new underwear, but, ironically, it is Theobald, not Scarron, who correctly interprets the signs, and she herself who profits. Her sexual frustration is clearly conditioned by her upbringing, but, in order to preserve the comic atmosphere, Sternheim keeps this information back until the seduction-scene, when its introduction suggests that Deuter is more anxious to justify herself and draw attention to her needs, than to arouse sympathy.

The above examination of the minor characters in Die Hose throws light on a central ambiguity of Sternheim's comedies. Through these characters Sternheim employs conventional means to produce comic effect, for, as Bergson has pointed out, "toute raideur du caractère, de l'esprit et même du corps, sera . . . suspecte à la société".[1] They provoke laughter because of their comic rigidity; the audience laughs, Bergson argues, because such inflexibility contradicts the adaptable behaviour necessary for social life. Rigid aberrations from social normality are punished by laughter. Bergson's definition of the comic holds good for Sternheim's

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1. H. Bergson, Le Rire, ed. cit., p. 15.

minor characters, who form the society within which the hero operates. Indeed, it corresponds very closely to Sternheim's own theoretical framework, where social life, human relationships, are contrasted with a realm of scientific causality (and hence rigidity) and where attempts to apply scientific laws to human relationships give rise to the comic. It is, I believe, no coincidence that Sternheim's scheme and Bergson's own explanation of the comic have a common intellectual antecedent in "Lebensphilosophie". As for the minor characters, then, the audience's laughter indicates that the implicit social norm is upheld.

Sternheim's theoretical statements on comedy and his treatment of the central comic character, however, imply the rejection of any such social norm. Theobald's obsessive realism, far from being destroyed and defeated by the comic action, triumphs. In a Molière comedy the arbitrary, anti-social order represented by the central character is overcome; in Sternheim's comedy an anti-social, misanthropic individualism prevails. A co-existence of criticism and affirmation of the implicit social norm may thus be said to characterize Sternheim's comic vision. It explains the dilemma of both audience and critic: just enough of a traditional comic treatment is retained to allow the spectator to adopt a superior position, from which he may conveniently judge the minor characters as eccentrics; yet the same judgement, applied to the central character, proves unfounded and is invariably contradicted by the action.

Die Kassette, begun in the autumn of 1910 and published in 1912, poses a particular problem for those critics, like W. Emrich and W. Wendler, who view the hero's quest for personal fulfilment, for the

realization of his "eigene Nuance", as the unifying theme of all Sternheim's work. Certainly, the projection of an exaggerated quality into the hero, coupled with his inevitable success, suggests that the hero demonstrates the unfolding of that quality to its logical conclusion. So, indeed, he does; but to deduce from that that Sternheim is propounding the theory that every man should live out to the full his individual nature is to confuse a dramatic technique with a message. Sternheim is, let it be said, partly to blame for this confusion. When he later develops the theory of the "eigene Nuance", as a correlate of his phenomenological theory, he attempts to re-interpret his own earlier comedies in this light. In the essay Inhalt meiner sämtlichen Dramen (1923) Sternheim maintains:

> 1908 stiess ich in meinem Lustspiel Die Hose dem bürgerlich befangenen Menschen unserer Zeit diese Tür zum erstenmal ins Freie auf; während bis dahin der vom Dichter verantwortlich gemachte Dramenheld seinen Kampf zwischen der Pflicht für andere und Neigung zu sich selbst unbedingt mit Tod im letzten Akt büsste, machten meine Personen zum Schluss jedes Stücks geschwellter Brust den letzten Schritt auf sich selbst zu.
>
> In einem Dutzend Komödien von 1908-1920 stabilierte ich des Bürgers "Heldenleben", das Bekenntnis zu seiner Ursprünglichkeit. Held war er, weil er aus gesellschaftlichen und zufälligen Zwängen sich gegen Widerstände immer mehr in seines Charakters persönliche Freiheit, seine eigene unvergleichliche "Seinsweise" hineinspielt. . . . (6,277)[1]

This passage provides the justification for the interpretation of Sternheim's comedies as demonstrating the hero's fulfilment of his individuality. Yet it is significant that, in support of his claim, Sternheim

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1. The references to 1908 are erroneous. Sternheim's breakthrough to comedy took place in 1909.

can cite only Ständer's proclamation in Tabula rasa: "Ich bin so!". In the early comedies it is for the audience, not the hero, that the dramatist opens the "Tür ins Freie". Sternheim's re-interpretation is useful only for those plays written after Tabula rasa, which itself marks a turning-point in his dramatic theory and practice. By 1917 his theory of comedy has been re-defined; comedy is no longer viewed as preserving essentially bourgeois virtues, but as demonstrating the rejection of all social values (including bourgeois ones) in favour of a primitive, vitalistic, anti-intellectual and anti-European ideal, a development which reflects Sternheim's alignment with Gottfried Benn.[1] The later comedies do, indeed, demonstrate the hero's self-realization—usually outside society—and the affirmation of an intuitive vitalism, which is only hinted at in the earlier work.

The current critical obsession with the hero's self-realization has led, in the case of Die Kassette, to some wrangling about the identity of the hero: H. O. Fehr[2] finds himself obliged to regard Elsbeth Treu as the successor to Theobald Maske, while H. Karasek opts for Krull.[3] In the course of the brief analysis of the play which follows, it becomes apparent that the attempt to make either character into a representative of bourgeois heroism is problematic, and that a consideration of the comic technique is more useful. In the Molière essay of

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1. The analogies between Sternheim's work and that of Benn are discussed below, pp. 268-70.

2. H. O. Fehr, Der bürgerliche Held in den Komödien Carl Sternheims, Diss. Freiburg im Breisgau, 1968, pp. 61-75.

3. H. Karasek, Carl Sternheim, Velber bei Hannover, 1965, pp. 55-61.

1917 Sternheim echoes with approval the conclusion of a contemporary critic:

> Nichts törichter, als gegen die Kassette den Geizigen [i.e. Molière's L'Avare] auszuspielen. Wenn man ihn nach ihr zur Probe aufführte, so würde sich zeigen, dass er tot und in ihr wieder auferstanden ist. (6,30).

The same characteristic reversal of the comic structure may be observed. In L'Avare Harpagon, representing a rigid and arbitrary order, fails to impose his obsession on the other characters, while in Die Kassette it is materialism which ultimately prevails, all the characters being drawn into its orbit.

No single character can be said to represent materialism in Die Kassette; its power is impersonal, vested in the cash-box itself. When the play opens, with the return of the schoolmaster, Heinrich Krull, and his attractive second wife, Fanny, from their honeymoon, it is Tante Elsbeth who performs the realist function, deflating Krull's romantic clichés:

> Krull: Kinder, ist Gottes Welt schön an Frühlingsmorgen! Vor stolzen Burgen, die auf uns niedergrüssen, auf deutschem Strom gleitet man zu Tal. Germania grüsst und Lurley, bis auf ehernem Ross in Koblenz - (1,369)
>
> Krull: Ja Koblenz. Kinder, Koblenz! Wir waren in seligster Laune, süffiger Walporzheimer hatte die Sinne angeregt. Hundert Humore schwebten. Nichts, nichts geht in Gottes prangender Welt über einen Morgen am Rhein. (1,369)
>
> Elsbeth: Mit diesen Mätzchen, Lurley, Walporzheimer muss die Reise Geld verschlungen haben. (1,371)
>
> Elsbeth: Der Rhein hat ungünstig auf deine Neigung zur Phrase gewirkt. (1,373)

Here Elsbeth seems to fulfil the same function as Theobald, when he similarly deflates Scarron's overtly poetic diction. Yet, although

Elsbeth continues to represent a consistently realistic viewpoint, she can hardly be said to fulfil her inner nature. Even in the first act there is the suggestion that her cynicism is prompted by personal pique, her initial outburst being induced by Fanny's uncomplimentary remarks about the proofs of Seidenschnur's photographic portrait, where Elsbeth appears, in Fanny's words, like "Lady Macbeth von Schiller" (1,371).

Ironically Elsbeth demonstrates quite the same ruthlessness and single-mindedness of purpose as her literary forebear and exacts her revenge on Krull and Fanny by disinheriting them and leaving her fortune to the Church. She is motivated by wounded pride and by an unfulfilled sexual life. Viewing Krull's second marriage as an insult to her, she seeks to lure him away from Fanny with the promise of her wealth and is visibly gratified when Krull panders to her whims. Her money is her only asset in her campaign to dominate the household, and she exploits it to the full. A full two acts before the end of the play the audience is given an insight into the extent of her vengeance: after allowing Krull to gain the impression that her will has been made in his favour, and after appointing him custodian of the cash-box, Elsbeth disinherits her niece and Krull. Her justification for this step is expressed with a degree of callous indifference which belies her apparent sensitivity about Seidenschnur's portrait:

> Verwandte, lieber Herr Notar, sind zu Lebzeiten etwas so Widerwärtiges, dass der Verkehr mit ihnen durch den Tod ein für allemal geendet sein muss. (1,430-31)
>
> Aus meines Lebens Verlauf bin ich ohne Zusammenhang mit Menschen gewesen. Beim Tod meiner Eltern riss das letzte Band, das mich in menschlicher Gemeinschaft hielt. (1,431)

Elsbeth is triumphant in her attempt to wean Krull away from his wife. But this she has already achieved from the moment when she allows him to believe that he is, through Fanny, the beneficiary of her will. She can achieve this end by actually leaving Krull her fortune; she has little to gain by deceiving him. Why, then, does Sternheim have Elsbeth leave her wealth to the Church? And why is this revelation made so early in the action?

Sternheim's reason for emphasizing the futility of Krull's efforts may be explained by his desire to create in him the modern equivalent of Harpagon. The opening scenes of the play suggest that Krull is a tolerant, sociable, slightly pedantic schoolmaster with romantic tendencies and an unwillingness to concern himself overmuch with the ugly realities of getting and spending. Yet his outward desire for domestic peace is soon shown to be motivated by his obsession with money: he confesses to Seidenshnur that "Familienverhältnisse zwingen uns, auf oft barocke Wünsche Fräulein Treus Rücksicht zu nehmen" (1,410). Simultaneously he is forced to make token concession to his wife's image of the male as dominant and sexually aggressive, a concession which takes the form of the occasional repetition of the unlikely endearment "süsse Puppe". The arrival of the cash-box, suggesting an imminent decision on the inheritance, precipitates the crisis. In the erroneous belief that he and Fanny are named as beneficiaries Krull renounces further concessions to his wife and expounds a theory of outward conformism as a mask for a misanthropic, materialistic individualism:

> Unsereinem sind cäsarische Instinkte untersagt. Wir müssen uns strecken, anpassen; das ist Weltordnung. Den habe ich gern, der gegen sie murrt. Welches Kapital von Schmeicheleien und Erniedrigungen habe ich an die wracke Fregatte gewandt, und bin ich weniger als du, mein Stolz geringer?
>
> Nicht sie, nicht du--ich selbst bin Anfang und Ende, dich und sie, tretet ihr mir ein Tittel zu nah, zerschmettre ich. (1,417-18)

This is as close as Krull approaches to bourgeois heroism. Carried away by his own enthusiasm he is even provoked into a confrontation with Elsbeth. But his conformist tendency proves too powerful; he swiftly placates Elsbeth by sacrificing his wife to the artist-Casanova Seidenschnur and Elsbeth's triumph is complete.

For three acts of the play Krull is used by Sternheim to demonstrate the disparity between bourgeois ideologies and the underlying drives which they mask. The technique has already been noted in Die Hose: after convincing the audience that Krull himself stands for the anodyne clichés and cosy respectability of family life, Sternheim reveals that he merely pays lip-service to them in order to further his materialistic ends. Sternheim's comedies tend to open at a moment of crisis; an incident, like Luise's losing her drawers in public, or Krull's second marriage, or the death of one of the quartet in Bürger Schippel, occurs before the action and sets in motion a chain of events which prompts the hero to throw off his social mask. Underneath it an anti-social, materialistic individual is invariably revealed. The implications are not totally cynical: stripped of his social mask, his bourgeois accretions, man is, admittedly, brutal and selfish, but he is also alive. And it is to preserve this vitality that Sternheim sees the justification of comedy. In

his narrative work Sternheim can approach the subject of social conformism from another point of view: in Der Rheinländer,[1] for example, he will later trace the gradual acquisition of the mask. In the comedies he concentrates on an incident which prompts the removal of the finished mask.

This technique explains why the "bürgerlicher Held" is usually a hybrid figure, demonstrating both conformist ideologies and an underlying realism and vitality. Psychological verisimilitude has no place in Sternheim's dramatic work; his heroes are there to demonstrate a point. It is this feature which prompted contemporary critics to disparage his characters as marionettes,[2] and more recent critics to draw analogies with Brechtian techniques. Once again, it must be stressed that the characters' self-realization is incidental; it is a means to an end, necessary in order to illustrate the disparity between the social mask and the living man beneath. It is significant that up to and including the transitional comedy Tabula rasa all the "bürgerliche Helden" display virtually the same degree of vitality and realism. Far from demonstrating their uniqueness, they constantly illustrate and embody the same basic features.[3]

Krull maintains his realistic attitude for the remainder of the

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1. See 5,257-81.

2. Arthur Eloesser, reviewing Die Kassette in Das literarische Echo 14 (1911-12) records the impression "dass alle diese Figuren, an Drähten aufgehängt, nur zappeln können, dass sie niemals in der eigenen Schwere stehen werden" (cols. 501-502).

3. Not until Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse (1919) does Sternheim experiment with a heroine whose inner nature is "Güte".

comedy. Indeed, in the final scene it is he who deflates Seidenschnur's cliché-ridden account of the honeymoon with the materialist comment:

> Seidenschnur: Kurz für den Kulturmenschen heisst es: Florenz sehen und sterben. La fiorenza. Botticelli, Raffael und Michelangelo il divino. Ich habe, das darf ich sagen, künstlerische Anregungen empfangen. . . .
> Krull: Mit solchen Sachen, Chianti Kalomel muss die Reise gehöriges Geld verschlungen haben. (1,446)

The repetition of the scene, with verbal echoes of Elsbeth's deflating remarks, reinforces the impression that the lure of wealth is capable of transforming every character, of making each character throw off the mask of social forms. It comes as no surprise when Seidenschnur in turn is weaned away from both his new wife and his mistress and succumbs to the fatal attraction of the cash-box.

As in Die Hose, the materialism underlying the sickly sentimentality and cosy "Gemütlichkeit" of bourgeois family life is hardly attractive; yet it has the saving grace of vitality. As the mask of polite social forms is removed, the clichés which dominate the opening scenes give way to animal-imagery. The relationship between the two women in Krull's life is soon revealed as a sham. To Elsbeth, Fanny "hat ein Raubtierhaftes" (1,393), to which Fanny responds with the names "Drachen, Menschenfresserin" (1,404), which prompt Elsbeth to refer in turn to "dieser hysterischen Gans" (1,404). To Krull Fanny can claim that her "Krallen" have kept Elsbeth at bay, while he interprets the situation otherwise:

> Was heissen soll, ich stünde nicht selbst meinen Mann, sei zwischen euch als zuckender Fetzen Fleisch geworfen, um den ihr balgt? (1,418)

Fired by his unfounded belief that he will inherit the cash-box, Krull describes himself as "wie ein Waldtier ungebärdig" (1,420) and even ventures to attack his benefactress as a "Spinne", "Natter" and "Bestie" (all 1,424). Seidenschnur, when he comes to admit his own materialism, calls Elsbeth an "alte Ratte" (1,437) and refers to Krull as "viehisch" (1,451). Finally he recalls his mother's advice to him:

> Junge, sagte meine Mutter, Gold ist nichts. Papiere gelten. Da las ich: Reichsanleihe, Eisenbahnprioritätsobligation. Mir lief eine Welle im Rücken wie sonst nur vor Raubtierkäfigen. (1,463)

Here, as in Die Hose, animal-imagery is related to materialism; when man is stripped of his bourgeois ideologies, his social conventions, he is brutal and selfish; but he is also alive. Significantly, when Sternheim comes to reject the bourgeoisie as tainted with nationalistic and militaristic ideologies, after 1914, the development is indicated in his work by the fact that the vitalistic, primitive, exotic images and motifs come to be sharply contrasted with the images of finance and calculation. Materialism comes to be regarded as a European malaise from which a primitive exoticism offers the only escape.

For three acts of the play Krull is the instrument through which Sternheim first demonstrates, then exposes and implicitly criticizes, the conventional ideology-ridden rôle-playing which constitutes social life. Yet, for the remainder of the play, his financial obsession is itself shown to be based on a delusion. While he believes that he has rediscovered his aggression, Krull is easily intimidated by Seidenschnur; his financial dreams become increasingly remote from reality. Why should Sternheim appear to invalidate bourgeois heroism? The question itself

is significant, for it underlines the fact that the doctrine of bourgeois heroism, together with the mask which it involves, is not the whole basis of Sternheim's comedy, nor its "message"; it is simply a potent weapon in Sternheim's arsenal of unmasking techniques and a pointer to a socio-critical perspective in his work which can never be wholly discounted. Sternheim can invalidate Krull's heroism because it has served its purpose. It is dropped in the interests of Krull's second important function, which is to serve as the modern incarnation of avarice. Krull's monologues on money are a direct echo of Harpagon's. In bringing avarice up to date, Sternheim alludes to the conventional portrait of the comic miser. Opening his cash-box to exult in his wealth, the modern Harpagon exclaims:

> Erstaunlicher Vorgang, Rollen gemünzten Goldes in Papiertafeln verwandelt zu sehen, für deren Verzinsung der Staat ein Heer von Beamten hält. (1,440-41).

The nature of international capitalism is such that the investor's nationalistic feelings are tempered by his desire for personal profit, Krull observes. Far from being able to concentrate his attentions on a single cash-box, the modern miser has to broaden his interests to encompass all the possibilities of investment. As Seidenschnur recognizes, when he is initiated into the secrets of the cash-box, "unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten" (1,465) are opened up. Such possibilities are illustrated in the play: Elsbeth's investment in "Bayrische Anleihen" permits Krull to exult in the fact that, for years, the German forests have been quietly growing away, increasing his profits; his blatant greed is shot through with a kind of perverted "Waldromantik".

Finally, it is worth noting that Krull reiterates his refusal to

support Seidenschnur's artistic venture with the phrases: "keine Kopecke", "keinen Peseta", "nicht den Sous" (1,458-59). While underlining the international nature of capitalism, these phrases are a good guide to Krull's rôle in the last two acts of the play. Harpagon is the model. When he comes to translate L'Avare, Sternheim uses the phrase "ohne Kopeke" (2,276 and 2,363) to express Harpagon's intractability and the comic rigidity of his avarice. Whenever the subject of a dowry for his daughter is raised, Harpagon responds with this phrase; it comes to stand for his comic obsession.

Much of the ambiguity of Die Kassette, as, indeed, of all Sternheim's dramatic work, can be explained by examining the constant fluctuations between a critical unmasking, through the realist hero, of the ideologies to which bourgeois society seems prone, and the treatment of that same hero as a comic character. Initially Elsbeth performs the realist rôle of a sounding-board for the verbal ideologies of the family, including Krull. Then it seems that Krull was simply wearing a mask; his earlier clichés were the product—so we are led to believe—of his policy of conformism. Beneath the idyllic domestic scene lurk dark materialist drives of sex and money, the latter of which Krull comes to affirm. He takes over the realist rôle. But at the same time his realist obsession becomes transformed into the traditional comic obsession. He is exposed to the audience's laughter. The implicit affirmation of a vital materialism gives way to laughter at a comic obsession with an intangible and unrealizable paper fortune, which Krull does not even possess. The peculiar tension between criticism and affirmation which results is the hall-mark

of Sternheim's work; the flaw in Die Kassette is that the comedy falls into such distinct phases and that the tension is not preserved throughout.

Sternheim began work on Bürger Schippel on 29 November 1911 and the comedy was completed on 17 April 1912. The original title, "O Täler weit, o Höhen", the first line of an Eichendorff poem, was altered in the second manuscript to "Der Prolet--le prolétaire bourgeois", an allusion to Molière's Le bourgeois gentilhomme; and Sternheim himself later refers to his intention of writing "die deutsche Ständekomödie".[1] Both Bürger Schippel and Der Snob (begun in 1913 and published the following year) exploit the comic potential of the social climber, although of the two it is the latter which bears a closer superficial resemblance to Molière's play.[2] As in his other adaptations of the themes of Classical comedy, Sternheim's treatment effectively turns the tradition on its head. In Molière's comedy M. Jourdain's attempts to ape the manners and fashions of the aristocracy are shown to be both ridiculous and unsuccessful; Sternheim's social climbers, on the other hand, succeed completely. Yet the reversal of the tradition hides an underlying similarity: although Schippel and Christian Maske succeed in their aims, they become members of a class

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1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 163.

2. This theme also attracted Hofmannsthal; his first adaptation and translation of Der Bürger als Edelmann, in collaboration with Max Reinhardt, in 1911, was a failure. A second adaptation in 1918, this time involving a modernization of the characters and situation, was likewise unsuccessful. See Wolfram Mauser, Hofmannsthal und Molière, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft 20, Innsbruck, 1964, p. 8.

which has been shown to be rigid, artificial and lacking in vitality. The result is at once a reversal of Classical comedy and a modern version of it.

Initially, Sternheim seems to have intended both Schippel and Christian Maske to demonstrate their success by marrying into the class to which they would belong. In the earliest version of Bürger Schippel Thekla is portrayed as willing to marry Schippel, because she is convinced that he will always admire her as socially his superior. Such a marriage would clearly make Schippel's triumph incomplete by underlining his social inferiority. In the published version, therefore, Sternheim ensures his triumph, not by his marriage to Thekla, but by his refusal to marry her, his newly acquired bourgeois scruples about accepting a tainted bride provoking the duel which marks his acceptance into the bourgeoisie. Faced with a similar difficulty in Der Snob Sternheim has Christian stage an outrageous subterfuge in claiming royal descent in order to remove the stigma of his social inferiority. There is no doubt, then, that Sternheim's social climbers are meant to succeed.

As in Die Hose, events immediately prior to the action have precipitated a crisis in Tilmann Hicketier's plush world. Naumann's death not only exposes his sister, Thekla, to the attentions of numerous suitors, but also robs the quartet of its tenor and thus gives Schippel his opportunity. The dilemma of the "Bürger" is this: Schippel's asset is his magnificent tenor voice, yet he is not only working-class but illegitimate and a "Rotkopf" to boot. It is misleading to regard Schippel as being simply a representative of the proletariat; he represents, rather, the social outcast, the outsider in a bourgeois world. His own attitude

to the bourgeoisie is highly complex: throughout the play he professes implacable hatred:

> Ich hasse euch! Wie ihr Süssigkeiten zusammengeballt in eure Därme schlingt, faules Bürgerpack, euch entleert und weiter fresst, bis mit Säften gefüllt ihr euren Kindern die harte Glätte vererbt, die als Folge gut genährter Nerven die Welt verpestet. (1,523)

And, at one stage, he is moved to the revolutionary threat: "Aufrichten meine rote Standarte über euch" (1,526). He is a crude materialist in a society which prefers to gloss over unpleasant facts with palatable ideologies. His vitality and earthiness are always liable to burst through, despite his strenuous efforts to control them, out of deference to his social superiors. He initiates his bid for social acceptance with a bald statement of the "ekelhafte Einzelheiten" (1,480) of his existence:

> Wollen Sie noch wissen, wieviel ich verdiene? Rund zwanzig Mark die Woche. Je zweimal Fleisch, sonst meist Heu, würde man beim Pferd sagen. . . . Schlafe in einer Dachkammer, kämme mich mit ausgezähntem Kamm, meiner Zahnbürste fehlen die Borsten. (1,480)

Schippel later apologizes for these remarks, made, he claims, "halb im Fieber" (1,481). The way in which the outburst is carried along by an impetus all its own—"Dachkammer" prompting "Kamm" and "ausgezähnt" suggesting "Zahn"—indicates just how involuntarily the words tumble out.

Yet, while he fulfils the usual function of Sternheim's hero with his down-to-earth materialism and his scarcely veiled crudity, Schippel is fascinated by the bourgeoisie, by its physical well-being, its sleek, well-padded look. The bourgeois milieu even produces a modification in his language, prefiguring his ultimate assimilation. After his realistic appraisal of the sordid details of his existence, he begins to adopt a

more formal style, with polite circumlocutions:

> Wollen gütigst die Erschütterung verstehen, in der ich mich vor Ihnen befinde. Eine förmliche Umwandlung von Sekunde zu Sekunde, Wiedergeburt gewissermassen geht vor sich. (1,482)

Hicketier, rather than Thekla, holds the greater fascination for Schippel. It is the former who prompts his confession that he is "verliebt in dich, in deine ganze Art und Rasse" (1,524); and when he clambers up the ladder[1] to indulge to the full his passion for the physical realities of bourgeois life, it is Hicketier's room, not Thekla's, which attracts him. His demand for Thekla's hand is born of hatred, of resentment. It is an attempt to avenge the humiliation which he suffered at her hands as a child.

Schippel's love-hate relationship with bourgeois forms, his fascination, admiration, yet ill-concealed hatred, is conveyed in physical terms: he grasps the button of Hicketier's frock-coat, taps the latter's ample bourgeois stomach, pumps Krey's hand, wallows in the plush luxury of the bourgeois living-room and smashes his fist down on the table when his desire for social acceptance is thwarted. In his moment of triumph, when he has avenged Thekla's earlier humiliation of him, his vitality knows no bounds; he has "Schwung und Einbildungskraft" (1,536). Visualizing the culmination of his revenge, he cries:

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1. Sternheim is fond of this stage-direction. In addition to its associations with the balcony-scene in Romeo and Juliet, the motif recalls Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir, where Julien Sorel climbs into Mathilde de la Mole's room. Sternheim, like Stendhal, wants to stress both the love and the social climbing. He explicitly relates these two themes when he refers to Stendhal's novel in his essay Die Kunst, ein heiteres Theaterwerk, das den Zeitangenblick überdauert, zu schreiben (6,429).

> Ich abrechnend vor ihr aufwachse, balle die Worte im Mund. . . .
> Ich, irgendeiner, der aus Zufall wurde, in der Gosse aufwuchs,
> will jetzt die unbefleckte Bürgerin, will jetzt, packe sie an—
> (1,537)

Then, as if to underline the real object of his desire, the stage-direction runs: "packt Hicketier" (1,537).

Schippel's sometimes crude, but usually colourful language expresses his vitality. Once more, animal-images underscore this point: he is variously described as a "Vieh" (1,485), "Köter" (1,525) and "Habicht" (1,535); and he records his own feelings in such terms:

> Atavismus Grauchen. War gestern noch ein Hase, der furchtsam in
> den Kohl duckte. Ist aber nun so kolossaler Auftrieb lebendig,
> dass mir Messer an den Zehen, Säbel aus den Zähnen wachsen.
> (1,506)

At his moment of crisis, before the duel, he confesses to being "ein Hund", "ein Aas" (1,550). Schippel's vitality is related to his proletarian existence as an outsider;[1] but finally it is his fascination with the bourgeoisie which prevails. By conforming to the bourgeois code of honour in renouncing Thekla, Schippel is likely to appeal to Hicketier, who preaches a similar doctrine of renunciation to Thekla and who keeps a firm grip on his own proclivity towards romanticism.[2] Challenged to a duel by Krey, Schippel, despite his panic, and more by luck than judgement, wounds his antagonist, an outcome which Wolke comically ascribes to noble

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1. When Schippel reappears in Tabula rasa his assimilation into the bourgeoisie is complete. The implication is that the bourgeoisie tends inevitably to become complacent and devitalized and needs constant renewal from below.

2. Despite his apparent fondness for symbols, Hicketier is adamant in his conviction: "am entscheidenden Ort keine Romantik" (1,533).

motives. Hicketier is also convinced of Schippel's "Heldenmut" and welcomes him into the ranks of the bourgeoisie.

Schippel's success is conditioned by the impotence and confusion of his antagonists, by his own vitality, and, not least, by circumstances. Sternheim takes the unlikeliest candidate for acceptance into the bourgeoisie and demonstrates his rapid assimilation. In this function Schippel is a true example of Sternheim's hero: dynamic and vital he serves to expose the weaknesses of an ideology-ridden society. Yet, like Krull, he is, at the same time, a comic figure: his avowed hatred of the bourgeoisie stems from envy. He can curse the "faules Bürgerpack" with one breath and willingly prostitute his talent and even endanger his life to become part of it with the next. The ambiguity again reflects Sternheim's own peculiar brand of comedy. Schippel's vitality and materialism unmasks bourgeois attitudes and ensures his success; but he is also the dupe of his own actions, a modern version of M. Jourdain. Jourdain's aspirations are not fulfilled in society; he is side-tracked into a world of make-believe, where his fantasies may be harmlessly indulged. Self-delusion in Classical comedy points away from society. But to Sternheim it is bourgeois society which deludes itself, and hence Schippel's self-delusion ironically leads to his own social integration. The modern social climber may indulge his fantasies within society.

If Schippel is quite a different sort of character from Krey, Wolke and even the more complex Hicketier, so, too, are Thekla and the Prince. They, too, represent affirmation of a human quality which Sternheim consistently uses in order to criticize deficiencies in society: sexual

fulfilment. The Thekla-Prince plot is closely interwoven with the main action surrounding Schippel. Thekla is liberated by Naumann's death from the stifling bourgeois rectitude which had so commended her late fiancé to Hicketier. Although she plays the conventionally inconsolable betrothed, she has long since been aware that she has very different needs:

> Ein Juniabend entschied. Wir beiden allein. Ich angefüllt von Glück, ihm als dem Weltall hingegeben. Das Wort musste er sprechen, Zeichen geben, ich hätte ihn überschüttet. Blödsinn schwieg er. (1,471)

Her longing for fulfilment is at fever pitch; the arrival of the impatiently awaited hero is imminent: "Tag- und Nachtgleiche. Sommeranfang" (1,473).

Yet Thekla, too, is torn between this passionate romanticism and her love and respect for her brother, who represents bourgeois self-control. If Hicketier shares this duality, to a degree, he succeeds in holding his romanticism in check, much as Theobald Maske kept at bay the unexpected and exotic, which threatened his circumscribed existence. Hicketier objectifies his romanticism both in symbols which he can control and to which he can attach special significance, and in his singing. The gold bangle in the form of a laurel crown, symbolizing both victory in the singing-contest and his sister's virginity, is presented to Thekla as a reminder of her bourgeois values; significantly, it is to be worn beneath her sleeve. Initially Thekla seems to attach little importance to it; only after she has given herself to the Prince does she accept Hicketier's assessment of the situation, and with it the doctrine of renunciation. Hicketier's "Traum hin" (1,533) marks her acceptance of her bourgeois

rôle; she repulses the Prince's renewed advances, affirms her "Zucht" (1,542) and comes, herself, to attach symbolic significance to the bangle, which she hands to the Prince as a memento. The use of symbols, Sternheim implies, is a potent weapon in the campaign of the bourgeoisie to control their world, to master it.

The consummation of Thekla's love for the Prince in Act III raises the problem of Sternheim's ambiguity in its most intriguing form. Does the scene represent a parody of romantic clichés or the genuine affirmation of romanticism? As Sternheim himself notes, two decades later, the whole atmosphere of Bürger Schippel is pervaded by the romantic tradition of the folk-song; his intention was, he claims, to show "den deutschen Bürger in seiner ererbten Romantik, die ihm im Weltall auszeichnet".[1] Yet the impartiality to which Sternheim lays claim is hardly reflected in the perplexing shifts of emphasis in the play itself. The exaggerated concern of the "Bürger" with victory in the competition is comic. The Prince's tongue-in-cheek remark:

> Der Männergesang, eine wichtige, dem Volk am Herzen liegende Sache, kann von uns allen nicht scharf genug ins Auge gefasst, muss dem Ansturm idealloser Zeit kräftig entgegengesetzt werden. Das deutsche Lied, meine Herren! (1,491)

is calculated to inflate the already overweening self-importance of the "Bürger" and induces them to re-enact the "Rütlischwur" from Wilhelm Tell. The folk-song seems a guarantee of a common bourgeois heritage, of a bourgeois identity; it is a symbolic form, into which otherwise dangerous

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1. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 163.

feelings can be safely channelled. That Schippel should be capable of appreciating the folk-song is tantamount to social anarchy.[1]

The references to the folk-song in the balcony-scene cannot, however, be equated with the involuntary comedy of the "Rütlischwur". Thekla is quite well aware of the disparity between the modern world and the vague romantic past; modern women

> kennen Naturwissenschaft und lesen im Kursbuch. Aber Prinzen, die nachts ans Fenster schleichen, gibt es nur noch im Märchen. . . . (1,512)

Here there is no comic confusion between reality and illusion, for, while Thekla and the Prince re-enact the folk-song motifs, they do so consciously, fully aware of the claims of the modern technological world. It is Thekla who insists that the Prince conform to the folk-song model, as if its very remoteness from her everyday world were a safeguard against unpleasant complications. She is disturbed by his monocle, a practical detail which accords ill with the image of the Prince "aus dem Volkslied" (1,513). If the setting reminds the Prince (and the audience) of Romeo and Juliet, Thekla is quick to point out that "Shakespeare ist hin" (1,514). The modern Prince, she teases, must proceed with the due consent of an elected assembly. The Prince answers this objection—Sternheim allows himself a cynical political comment even here—by accepting a parliament, but with only one social democrat, who can easily be outvoted by the loyal conservatives. When Schippel's voice is heard in the distance, the Prince,

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1. Christian Maske's appreciation of aristocratic forms poses an identical problem for Graf Palen in Der Snob. When Christian confesses to admiring the "innerliche Abgeschlossenheit" of the aristocracy, the Count responds with the puzzled statement: "Aber Sie können nicht Verehrer eines Prinzips und zugleich Angreifer desselben sein" (1,174).

learning that Schippel is a bastard, insists: "Doch also Shakespeare" (1,515). He removes the offending monocle, but, even now, Thekla is disturbed by the telegraph-poles, another reminder of the realities of modern life. To overcome her objections the Prince produces another essential prop: a dagger, or, at least, a hunting-knife which serves the purpose. Once more, Thekla raises objections: she will not allow the Prince to climb into her room and dismisses his hopeful suggestion that this is a modern variant in the tradition. For her

> Leiter und Stube—es ist nicht romantisch genug. (1,516)

Despite her confession—

> Aber ein Prinz! Ein junger melancholischer Held. Zu lange habe ich mit dem Bruder Volkslieder gesungen, in denen er unablässig auftritt, dass ich ihm hingegeben war, bevor er noch wirklich kam (1,516)—

it seems that the Prince has missed his opportunity. They arrange to meet the following morning, when more care may be taken to re-create the right atmosphere, to provide all the props of the folk-song models. Then, suddenly, a remarkable transformation takes place. The Prince, hearing Thekla softly sing the words of a folk-song, is enraptured and won over from his ironic scepticism:

> Mit dir bin ich diesem Ton wirklich nah, und die Geschichte mit deinem Bruder, dem Singen um den Kranz, bürgerlicher Ehrgeiz, geht mir zu Herzen. In unserem Wald, in den kleinen Städten stecken die Tonelemente solcher Lieder und zwingen uns mit Lebendigkeit. (1,518)[1]

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1. In the recent English translation, Scenes from the Heroic Life of the Middle Classes, ed. J. M. Ritchie, London, 1970, this speech unaccountably becomes: "When I am with you I feel alien to the sentiment of these songs . . ." (p. 54), a translation which makes the Prince into a more consistent figure, but robs the scene of its effect.

Here the folk-song is directly affirmed; and with the affirmation the last barrier between the Prince and Thekla is broken down. As the busily rehearsing quartet launch into the "Jägerchor" from Weber's Der Freischütz, the lovers become one with the sentiments and topoi of the folk-song tradition and with each other.

The perspective from which the folk-song is viewed shifts disconcertingly throughout Bürger Schippel. Initially it promises to be a rich source of comedy. The exaggerated seriousness with which the "Bürger" view the forthcoming competition, their inordinate consternation when Schippel proves a stumbling-block and their willingness to take the Prince's ironic comments on the folk-song at face value, all point to the kind of disparity between reality and illusion which is the prerequisite of the comic. This perspective corresponds to the rôle of the "Bürger" in the play. Yet through Thekla's relationship to Hicketier, itself a comic parody of Wallenstein's use of his daughter as a political tool, Sternheim can introduce a socio-critical comment on the folk-song. The bourgeoisie needs this kind of romanticism as a safe outlet for its fantasies: the rigours of the daily "Kampf des Daseins" entail the necessity of imposing severe curbs on the imagination. To preclude any damaging effects the "Bürger" uses art, and in particular this kind of art, as a receptacle for those emotions which might otherwise shatter the safe confines of his ordered existence. Hicketier's outward confidence, his air of decision and efficiency, is matched by a need for symbols and an unashamed emotionalism. Thekla, too, can only fulfil that part of her nature which is important to her by escaping from her everyday world of bourgeois

reality. Her social world is a realm of duty, a duty which links her first with Naumann, then with Schippel and finally with Krey. But fulfilment, for her, is only possible in the fictional realm which she re-creates in the imagination. Because Thekla performs one of the functions of a Sternheim hero, affirming her sexuality in conflict with society, that fiction which enables her to do so is also implicitly affirmed. The crowning irony is that she uses as the raw material for this fiction the very same folk-song tradition with which she has been imbued. So irresistible is the result that even the Prince is drawn under its spell.

Each of the three perspectives is mirrored in the characterization: the first corresponds to the conventionally comic figures, Krey and Wolke; the second to Hicketier, and his relationship with Thekla; the third to Thekla's with the Prince. The tendency in performance is for the producer to overlook the affirmative aspect, or ignore it in the interests of satire, a temptation which Max Reinhardt resisted, when he produced the play on 5 March 1913. Sternheim himself was, Thea notes,[1] delighted by this production, especially by the beautiful renderings of the songs and choruses by the quartet; "schön" is the term which she uses. The ambiguity, which is crucial to Sternheim's intention, is forfeited if the "Bürger" are caricatured and their singing ridiculed. It is only by winning over the audience, by appealing to their grounding in the same cultural tradition, that Sternheim can shock them by unmasking their romantic proclivities. In this way the audience is effectively prevented from taking up a

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1. See 1,596.

superior position, from which vantage-point it can smile down at the deluded "Bürger". The shock of recognition lies in the audience's discovery that, despite such critical insights into the social and cultural function of the folk song, such songs retain their power to captivate and enrapture.

Sternheim's own attitude to the cultural tradition of the bourgeoisie always seems to be that of an outsider. His early literary experiments demonstrate a mastery of various styles, yet he never appears to be able to write with complete conviction in any one of them. His parading of literary allusions, reminiscences and half-quotations betrays as much a desire to become part of the tradition as to unmask it; it is as much a tribute to the tradition as a criticism. An exchange between Schippel and Hicketier in the first manuscript version of the play provides an interesting insight into Sternheim's own ambivalent attitude:

> Hicketier: Können—Sie—deutsches Volkslied denn empfinden?
> Schippel: —alle meine Fiber beben.
> Hicketier: Bastard?
> Schippel: Teufel. Der Jude Heine sang die Loreley.
> Hicketier: Wahrhaftig. Aber—glaubte er sie? (1,591-92)

It is precisely Heine's mixture of involvement and ironic detachment--a feature which, in a tribute contained in the dedication of Brutalitäten und Wahrheiten (1903),[1] Sternheim calls Heine's "Gemeinheit" (9,409)--which he admires and with which he identifies. Sternheim's own sense of alienation may, indeed, have been conditioned by his social and cultural background,[2]

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1. This collection of short stories was not published in Sternheim's lifetime.

2. W. G. Sebald, Carl Sternheim: Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära, Stuttgart, 1969, discusses the sociological and psychological aspects, referring to Sternheim's "misslungene Assimilation" (pp. 48-50) and his

or by his recurrent mental illness.[1] Certainly, the figure of the outsider tends to re-appear in the comedies, as does the theme of "Anpassung", the self-conscious adoption of social forms. More significantly, perhaps, the perspective of the outsider informs Sternheim's whole comic vision; Hans Mayer, in a perceptive comment, has drawn attention to this feature:

> In Bergsons berühmter Abhandlung über das Lachen wird behauptet, in der Komödie lache ein Publikum, das sich im sicheren Besitz gesellschaftlicher Spielregeln weiss, über Aussenseiter und normwidriges Verhalten. Das war infam, aber wirksam: von Molière bis Sternheim. Allein bei dessen Szenen aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben wurde auch schon eine neue Art spürbar. Der Dramatiker verzichtete auf das Einverständnis mit der etablierten Gesellschaft, trat als Aussenseiter auf und zwang ein Publikum aus Bildung und Besitz über das Bühnentreiben von Bildung und Besitz zu lachen.[2]

While noting this change of perspective which characterizes Sternheim's comic vision, one should not overlook the traditional elements which he carries over virtually unchanged into his own work.

Christian Maske in Der Snob is, like Schippel, the modern equivalent of Molière's "bourgeois gentilhomme". Having amassed vast wealth and secure in the knowledge that he is about to be offered the directorship

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(continued) "Pseudokonservatismus" (pp. 50-53); W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt/Bonn, 1966, pp. 19-21, lists those critics who have based their interpretations on Sternheim's personality, his aristocratic attitudes and his opportunism.

1. A medical report on Sternheim--after a bizarre incident, which necessitated a course of treatment at the psychiatric clinic of Freiburg University in 1906--contains the statement: "Es handelte sich um psychopathische Konstitution mit Zwangsvorstellungen und perversen Gefühlsrichtungen" (quoted by R. Billetta, ed., "Carl Sternheim: Briefe," Neue deutsche Hefte 18 (1971) p. 56). Sternheim draws on the incident for his story Heidenstam (1917).

2. "Bildung, Besitz und Theater", in Das Geschehen und das Schweigen: Aspekte der Literatur, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, p. 98.

of a huge mining concern, he is in a position, when the play opens, to repudiate his humble background, to pack his embarrassingly petit-bourgeois parents off to Zurich and to discard the mistress who made his success possible. Like M. Jourdain, Christian is obsessed with the outward forms of aristocratic life: the fashions, the mannerisms, the linguistic formulae, all become ends in themselves, devoid of content, no longer the expression of genuine sentiments. A good illustration of this is the letter which Christian composes in reply to an invitation from Graf Palen, whose daughter's hand he is seeking. While his instinctive response was to accept the invitation, Christian's obsessive quest for the right stylistic and rhythmic form is such that he finds himself turning it down when the sought-after phrase lends itself more appropriately to a refusal. Similarly, when Theobald returns from exile in Zurich to announce Luise's death, Christian is concerned only with the forms of mourning: the dark suit, the statue in his mother's memory, the carefully modulated emotion.

Indeed, the role-playing which social life entails is underlined by the theatrical device of dressing up, of changing clothes, an echo of Moliere's treatment of the social climber.[1] In the first act Christian's mistress instructs him in the art of tying a bow-tie:

> Sybil bindet die Krawatte um den Hals einer grossen Vase. Zuerst einfaches Schlingen des Knotens. Zweitens Unterlegen des einen Endes als Masche. Durchziehen des anderen drittens.
> Christian: Steht rechts ein Stück vor.
> Sybil: Man schneidet's mit der Schere fort.

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1. Philipp Ernst in 1913 is to inherit Christian's passionate desire to display elegant taste in dress.

Christian: Kostet jedes Binden eine Krawatte.
Sybil: Und bringt ein: Die Anerkennung der Verstehenden.(1,145)

And, just to illustrate the point, Graf Palen, the representative of the feudal aristocracy, is completely taken in:

> Ihre Erziehung ist vollendet sogar in dem Sinn, dass Sie erkannten, auf der Basis gewisser selbstverständlicher Besonderheiten, die wir errangen, ist das unauffällig Uniforme das Korrekte. Man sieht's an Gesten, aber auch am Sitz einer Krawatte. (1,162)

From Molière's comedy, where Jourdain is likewise instructed in the courtier's fashions, social forms, culture and, not least, the skills of swordsmanship, Sternheim derives a number of features. Christian, too, "macht Fechtübungen" (1,182), a device indicating not merely his adoption of an aristocratic life-style, but also his aggressive posturing in the "Kampf des Daseins". While he retains the traditional comic features of the social climber, demonstrating to the audience the disparity between appearance and reality, he is, unlike Jourdain, completely successful in his plan to master aristocratic forms and is ultimately assimilated. As the apprenticeship under Sybil is meant to indicate, Sternheim is at pains to provide the traditional comic aping of social forms, and then to turn the tables by making it totally successful. Yet, as in Schippel's case, the reversal of the comic outcome produces a curious ambiguity and, ironically, opens up a wider comic perspective. The very fact of Christian's success throws it into question, for, if the traditional comic conformist to an alien ethos can succeed in hood-winking the class to which he would belong, then the implication is that such a class is itself no longer firmly rooted in reality. Christian's victory, like Schippel's, is a Pyrrhic one: it will inevitably entail the atrophy of the vital materialism

which made it possible. While it is society, rather than the central comic figure, which is principally exposed, the latter's aspirations to social assimilation implicitly make him the dupe of his own actions. If he is to retain his vitality and drive, he must continue to be aware that he is, like Theobald, merely playing a rôle.

As Graf Palen has recognized, Christian's reverence for aristocratic forms is matched by a crude materialism of the kind which we have come to expect from the "bürgerlicher Held":

> Wir glauben nun, in Ihnen den gefunden zu haben, der mit Tüchtigkeit die seltenere Gabe vereinigt, ein Empfinden für die durch Kult errungenen Werte des feineren Geschmacks zu besitzen, das insbesondere da am Platz ist, wo brutale Wahrheit der Zahlen ein bedeutendes Gegengewicht fordert. (1,162)

Christian's financial success, the pre-requisite of his social climbing, is based on ruthless calculation. With mathematical precision he translates human relationships into sums of money. His credo is "kein Fehler in der Addition und im Kalkul" (1,142), a materialist image of life which his mistress, herself a slightly less ruthless social climber, shares:

> Ich liebe dich, Christian. Du bist der Fehler in der Rechnung meines Lebens. (1,145)

Each step he takes is worked out in advance; when he is momentarily taken aback by the unexpected possibility that Marianne, the Count's daughter, might refuse him, he adapts quickly. His subterfuge in claiming royal blood, sacrificing his mother's good name to remove the final barrier of social inferiority between himself and Marianne, is his master-stroke. Yet Christian's success, like that of his father in Die Hose, is not completely commensurate with his efforts. Theobald's unexpected meeting with

the Count is not part of the plan and might easily ruin the chances of a marriage. His ensuing crisis of confidence recalls Schippel's panic before the duel. But Christian's fears, like Schippel's, are unfounded; his success seems guaranteed by the nature of things. While the audience is permitted to peep, for a moment, behind the mask of the suave, self-possessed industrialist and to see, behind it, an abject, insecure figure, the devitalized aristocracy is completely taken in. It is as much the feebleness of the aristocracy as his own vitality which ensures Christian's complete triumph.

Traditional features derived from Classical comedy may be discerned in Sternheim's treatment of both the central comic character and the minor characters. Yet the fundamental reversal of the comic structure is common to all the plays: it is society, for Sternheim, which is invariably rigid and inflexible, and the "bürgerlicher Held" who is adaptable, a kind of realist foil for the extravagances of an atrophied society. But, while he takes over this function from Molière's "raisonneur", Sternheim's hero also retains the obsession of Molière's central character. The obsession is preserved, not because it is comic—Sternheim appears unable, or unwilling, to view it as such—but because it is anti-social; it brings the hero into sharp conflict with a conformist society. This preservation of the comic obsession of Molière's central character, accompanied by the reversal of its social significance, gives rise to the central ambiguity of Sternheim's comedies.

The English reader is likely to be struck by the similarity between Sternheim's comedy and that of Shaw. Shaw's work first became popular in

Germany around 1903, and in the period up to the First World War twenty of his works were translated.[1] It is virtually certain that Sternheim would have encountered Shaw's work before 1909, and certainly in 1922, in Der Nebbich, he clearly identifies his work with Shaw's, allowing Fritz Tritz to voice the current tendency to label disturbing literary works as communist:

> Tritz: Wie ich's in meinem ersten Aufsatz für das Neue Wiener Journal schon gemacht habe, in dem ich Anatole France, Shaw und Sternheim glatt als Bolschewiken annagelte. (3,219)

More important than any possible direct influence by Shaw on Sternheim is the similar way in which each adapts the Classical model to his needs.[2] In both cases the general experience of men as rational and social beings, which forms the implicit basis for Molière's comedy, is replaced by a personal standard, a private vision. In both cases, the traditional method is inverted, the reasonable, or in Sternheim's case the realist, character being isolated, instead of the unreasonable one. In both cases bourgeois assumptions and ideologies are challenged and exposed. But there is an essential difference: Shaw's standard is entirely shaped by his own idiosyncratic ideas; his central characters invariably display Shavian intellect and wit. As, with the passage of time, these ideas lose their

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1. A. Schlösser, Die englische Literatur in Deutschland von 1895 bis 1934, Jena, 1937, pp. 92-100, notes that Candida, The Devil's Disciple and Arms and the Man appeared in German in 1903 and were all staged before the end of 1904. Caesar and Cleopatra and Man and Superman were first performed in 1906; in 1909 Major Barbara was translated and Widowers' Houses staged.

2. For a discussion of Shaw's adaptation of French Classical comedy see R. Peacock, The Poet in the Theatre, London, 1960, pp. 88-93.

startling originality and freshness, his heroes tend to become mere abstractions, stiff and lifeless. Since his heroes, on the other hand, are imbued with a philistine vitality, Sternheim's have fared rather better, for their vitality does not date. Sternheim succeeds in measuring the self-important, pompous, ideology-ridden bourgeoisie against a standard which is, at one and the same time, both a human quality which Sternheim would preserve, and another feature of that same bourgeois society (or at least of its less favourably placed and more ambitious members): its confident materialism, its vitality and drive. In the final analysis it is a bourgeois standard which he uses as a yard-stick against which to measure the bourgeoisie.

The parallel with Shaw's work can be extended further: like Shaw, Sternheim was a polemicist and pamphleteer, as well as a dramatist, although it is worth noting that Sternheim's polemic belongs in the period after the completion of his most successful comedies. Once more the vexed question of a polemical intention, of satire, is raised. Contemporary audiences readily interpreted Sternheim's work as satirical, a response which is not difficult to explain. Theobald Maske and Krull, Schippel and Christian Maske, were all felt to be the embodiment of bourgeois features, to be caricatures, and the minor figures were regarded as equally ridiculous. The audience's desire to find a positive figure, to discover a character whose version of events they could accept and with whose judgement they could indentify, was thwarted. Rationalizing their feelings of uncertainty, they regarded such a negative vision of life as overstepping the bounds of comedy, and the term satire was deemed

appropriate.

More recently the converse of this argument has gained wide currency. W. Emrich has succeeded in demonstrating beyond any doubt the affirmative element in the "bürgerlicher Held" and has concluded that satire is not present in Sternheim's work: "in Wahrheit ist sein Werk das genaue Gegenteil von Satire" (1,11). Rescuing the positive human values, he also saves Sternheim from those who would see him as a satirist. His argument deserves closer analysis. Citing Schiller's definition—"in der Satire wird die Wirklichkeit als Mangel dem Ideal als der höchsten Realität gegenübergestellt"—he points out that Sternheim's theories, in complete contrast, postulate the acceptance of reality as it is and involve a corresponding rejection of idealism.[1] This argument is open to several criticisms. First of all, it is important to recall that Schiller was not concerned to define a literary genre, but to distinguish three "Empfindungsweisen"; under the term "Satire" he can go on to consider both tragedy and comedy. Schiller's definition is clearly much broader than that which is normally understood by the term. Secondly, even if one were to accept this definition as providing a rough theoretical outline of the broadest possible area of satire, Professor Emrich over-simplifies the issue by his assumption that Sternheim consistently advocates the acceptance of reality as it is. This certainly describes his position after around 1915-16, when he has developed his phenomenological theory, but it is doubtful whether

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1. P. Pörtner, "Die Satire im expressionistischen Theater," Maske und Kothurn 9 (1963), pp. 169-181, also quotes Schiller's definition and concludes: "Für Sternheims Komödienzyklus 'Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben' trifft diese humanistische Auffassung noch zu" (p. 176).

it adequately conveys his position when he was actually engaged on the comedies. In fact Sternheim can write in 1914:

> Der dramatische Dichter ist der Arzt am Leibe seiner Zeit. Alle Eigenschaften des idealen Menschen blank und strahlend zu erhalten ist ihm unabweisbar Pflicht. (6,19)[1]

And in a tribute to Ernst Stadler in the same year Sternheim writes approvingly of Stadler's "unverbrüchliche Treue an das einmal geschaute Ideal" (6,24). Although Sternheim's theoretical position before 1914 is not well documented, it is clear that he was prepared at this time to postulate an ideal quite unequivocally. Thirdly, with his repudiation of the term satire, Emrich places heavy emphasis on the doctrine of the "eigene Nuance", the theory that each man should live out to the full his inner nature in direct conflict with society. In fact this theory is not attested, apart from the often quoted instance in Don Juan, until Tabula rasa, and its formulation in the theoretical writings is not found until 1920. It is a correlate of the phenomenological theory, whereby all reality, and with it human nature, is to be accepted as it is. It is a distortion—one for which Sternheim himself is, admittedly, partly responsible—to see all the comedies as demonstrating merely the progress of the hero towards self-realization. This interpretation does not do justice to the earlier comedies, even if it does throw light on Sternheim's position after 1915-16.

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1. My italics. It is significant that in the Molière essay of 1917 Sternheim alters this to "des Menschen sämtliche ihm von seinem Schöpfer gegebene Eigenschaften" (6,31), and that Emrich chooses to cite the statement in its later form. See 1,13.

Contrary to the arguments put forward by Emrich, then, the possibility of satire cannot be excluded *a priori* from Sternheim's work as a whole. The issue of satire does not stand and fall with that of the positive values. It is perfectly possible that Sternheim could create a positive hero and yet attack social follies. More fundamental to the argument is the issue of whether, or to what extent, his social criticism is present in the plays. In the classical sense satire refers to a literary genre in which vices, follies, or stupidity are held up to ridicule, or individuals lampooned. Sternheim does not write satires in this sense. Theobald Maske cannot be regarded solely, or even primarily, as the caricature of the petit-bourgeois civil servant. Although he may well be taken to represent a recognizable social type, it cannot be maintained that Sternheim expressly holds up his bourgeois attributes to ridicule throughout the play. On the contrary, they are ultimately shown to be his greatest assets. The most that can be said—and this is where it is possible to speak of a satirical element—is that it suits Sternheim's purpose to allow, or even encourage, the audience to expect such an exposé, so that their eventual shock of recognition may be the greater.

In practice, at least, the distinction between comedy and satire is not clear-cut. Comedy may not merely embody the comic in its purest form, but may also contain an admixture of social comment, or even satirical elements. The point about satire in comedy is that it is open-ended; it points out from the theatre to the social and political issues of the day. There are notable examples of comedy having wider social and political implications: Beaumarchais' *Le Mariage de Figaro* contains an

incidental attack on the representative of the reactionary nobility and the comedy acquires satirical overtones.[1] Traditionally satire implies the criticism, or condemnation, of an aspect of society by reference to an ideal, while comedy refers to no remoter standard than accepted social conventions. Satire treats of aberrations from the ideal, comedy of aberrations from current social normality. Yet the problem with Sternheim's comedies--a difficulty presented by all modern comedies--is that there is no generally accepted social norm. In Sternheim's case it is replaced by the notion of a society which inhibits the free expression of the individual, a society seen from the perspective of the outsider. Aberrations from current social normality are viewed by Sternheim as heroic, and only incidentally comic; they constitute a kind of perverse ideal. And it is against this ideal that a conformist society is shown to be feeble and debilitated. The shift of comic perspective brings with it an element of criticism.

Sternheim's vision is, above all, a comic vision, but the kind of comedy which takes as its accepted norm a misanthropic materialism is likely to challenge the audience's received ideas and assumptions. This element of provocation is part of an indirect didactic function, which

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1. Significantly enough, in Das Arbeiter-ABC (1922) Sternheim singles out Beaumarchais' comedy for special praise as a pre-revolutionary work and associates himself with its message. He consistently views the French eighteenth-century "philosophes" as having promoted the aims of the Revolution and adapts a story by Diderot for Die Marquise von Arcis (1918), setting it in the period immediately before the Revolution and frequently alluding to the coming upheaval, a device calculated to stress the revolutionary element in his own social message.

ill accords with the notion of pure comedy. In theory the comic and satirical visions may be differentiated; in a study of Heine's prose writings J. P. Stern draws a distinction which is useful in this context:

> The prerogative of the comic muse is to leave an argument uncompleted, a situation unexplored, to whip away the serious, possibly tragic conclusion from under our eyes, to create an integrated whole from a combination of omissions and exaggerations. The tricks which the humourist plays with our everyday world do not "fundamentally" challenge its reality, for he merely plays with parts of it, and cares nothing for what such play implies for the whole. The attitude that makes his playing possible is not doubt and deprivation, not criticism even, but abundant assurance that the world is what it is. This is why . . . the areas of humour and satire do not, alas, overlap.[1]

Satire and comedy do not, indeed, overlap; in Sternheim's work they co-exist rather uneasily. The persona of the unmasker, a naive-realist perspective commonly adopted by the satirist, is employed by Sternheim in order to expose ideologies. In Die Kassette, for instance, the idyll of the bourgeois marriage is swiftly shattered; it is revealed to be a sham, masking brutal obsessions with sex and money. Yet, having exposed the brutality of these crude drives, Sternheim does not attack them; what is shown to be ridiculous is the bourgeois refusal to acknowledge their reality. The reduction of human behaviour to an animal level, again a stock-in-trade of the satirist, is a technique which Sternheim employs. He reduces bourgeois society to a veritable menagerie, only to affirm animal vitality. The stripping-away of social and cultural accretions, which appears to have satirical intention, turns out to be merely a prerequisite for Sternheim's curious affirmation. The use of some of

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1. Idylls and Realities, London, 1971, p. 64.

the satirist's weapons, together with the reduction of characters to types, which his general theory of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit" demanded, seems almost deliberately calculated to mislead. Consequently, it is difficult to be dogmatic about whether Sternheim is a satirist or not. For part of the time, at least, it looks as if he is. If his vision ultimately affirms reality, it is only after it has relentlessly unmasked the ideologies which embellish it.

IV. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

In this chapter it is proposed to examine the conflicting definitions of art put forward by the two main protagonists in the novel Europa (1918-19). Their debates on art will be seen to reflect the underlying ambivalence of Sternheim's own position. Indeed, the ambiguity inherent not only in this novel but in Sternheim's creative work as a whole will be found to coincide with the ambivalent attitude which he attempts to explore, if not resolve, in Europa. While it is ostensibly Carl Wundt who is the author's mouthpiece, two factors must be taken into account: first, Europa is a creative work, even if it has a subsidiary polemical intention; secondly, Sternheim permits a theory of art which apparently contradicts that which has been claimed as his own to be argued cogently and with conviction. Eura Fuld's aesthetic must be given due consideration, if justice is to be done to Sternheim's own position.

It is more than coincidental that the critical debate which has surrounded Sternheim's work--the issue of whether he is ridiculing or extolling the "bürgerlicher Held"--is anticipated by the author himself in the discussions on art incorporated within this novel. His own constant preoccupation (and dissatisfaction) with the reception of his works by reader and theatre-audience alike indicates just how crucial the question of interpretation is to him and, in fact, just how open his work is to misinterpretation. It will be seen that the form of the debate permits Sternheim much greater scope than the straightforward polemic of his

essays and articles to express the ambiguity which is the hall-mark of his style.

Particularly in the period after 1914-15, Sternheim's ideas about art are seldom expressed in isolation from views on the individual and society. For Sternheim, a socio-political allegiance presupposes an aesthetic approach, and a theory of art implies a corresponding political viewpoint. It is, therefore, impossible to isolate his views on art from his socio-political theories, or indeed, as in the case of Europa, from another important theme: socio-psychological theories about relations between the sexes. These three strands—aesthetics, politics and sociology, and the psychology of sex—are closely interwoven in Europa, and any attempt to disentangle one inevitably entails some slight distortion of the other two. But for the purposes of a discussion of the theme of art in Europa, the social and psychological theories will be considered only in so far as they bear directly on the different aesthetic standpoints. Recent criticism has shown little interest in the theme of art in Europa. Although W. Wendler notes, in passing, that the differences between Eura and Carl "entstanden aus ihrer verschiedenen Auffassung vom Wesen der Kunst",[1] the significance of the aesthetic debate between the two protagonists has not been fully appreciated, a surprising omission given that much of the novel is taken up by reflections on the nature and function of art.

There are several indications, in addition to their common Christian

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1. Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 185.

name, that Carl Wundt can be regarded as a self-projection on Sternheim's part, and criticism has not been slow to note the resemblance. Book I of Europa closes with an account of Eura's anger and frustration that there is one sphere, that of beauty, which does not appear to obey the laws of scientific causality. This fact seems to be epitomized for her in the public response to Wundt's play:

> Aber Hass gegen Nichtauszurechnendes trug sie noch einmal über Klippen, als sie erfuhr, ein Drama Wundts habe in Berlin zu beispiellosem Theaterskandal geführt, als der historisch verkleidete Held . . . sich anschickte, neben dem für seinen Weg weitoffenen Tor ein spitzenstarrendes Eisengitter auf der Szene trotzdem zu überklettern. . . . (5,229)

This is an indirect reference to Sternheim's own Don Juan, the première of which, on 13 September 1912 at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, had precipitated just such a public outcry.[1] The account of the theory of "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte"—which takes the form of a debate between Carl and Eura (see 5,413-15)—is repeated in identical terms in Berlin oder Juste milieu (see 6,185), except that in the latter case Eura's words are attributed to the "Juste milieu", the European bourgeoisie, while Carl's are cited as Sternheim's own. In his final debate with Eura Carl proclaims that he has consistently, in both his narrative and dramatic work, upheld an individualistic attitude, of which "Ständers treuherzigen Abmarsch aus Europa" (5,471) had been the most striking example. This is a reference to Sternheim's own Tabula rasa (1916). But perhaps the clearest indication of Sternheim's identification with Carl Wundt is found in the

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1. An account of this incident is given in Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., pp. 150-51.

fact that a short story which Sternheim had himself previously published[1] is included in the novel and attributed to Wundt. If the contemporary reader in 1920 still had doubts about Sternheim's identification with Carl Wundt, criticism was quick to dispel them. Otto Flake wrote of "jene eingelegte Erzählung,. . . die darum nicht weniger echtester Sternheim ist, weil sie dem Gegenspieler Europas in den Mund gelegt wird".[2] But if Carl can be taken as at least a partial self-projection of the author, and Eura, as her name suggests, as the embodiment of those features of the European bourgeois ideology of which Sternheim was most suspicious, it does not follow that Eura is to be seen as entirely negative, or, indeed, as negative at all. Many of her insights into European society, into its attempts to transfer the causality of scientific laws to the sphere of human relations, are found in Sternheim's own polemical work Berlin oder Juste milieu. Her insights, particularly in Book I and in the account both of the prelude to the First World War and of the collapse of European socialism before the rising tide of chauvinism, are identical to Sternheim's own.

A third character, one Dr. Rank,[3] is made the mouth-piece of a theory

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1. Der Rheinländer was first published in Die Weissen Blätter, Jg. 6 (1919), Nos. 7 and 8, and not Nos. 4 and 5, as claimed in the Gesamtwerk, 5,506.

2. O. Flake, review of Europa, Der neue Merkur, Jg. 4 (1920-21), p. 189.

3. A character of this name also appears in Die Poularde (1918), where he fulfils the same function of counsellor and confidant of the central female character. Through these figures, both of whom meddle in the relationships of others, Sternheim alludes to Dr. Rank in Ibsen's A Doll's House and reinterprets the motives of Ibsen's Rank as impotent sexuality.

close to Sternheim's heart:

> In einer "Enzyklopädie zum Abbruch bürgerlicher Ideologie", wie er [i.e. Rank] den Titel vorschlug, müsse man mit Fanfaren blossstellen, wie der seit Jahrhunderten allmählich alles besitzende Bürger auch Sprache vergewaltigt habe. . . . (5,366)

Now Sternheim himself, in collaboration with Carl Einstein, planned just such an "Encyclopädie" and claimed to have completed the first part, of which the first page was published separately in Prosa (1918).[1] Clearly, then, Sternheim projects some of his theories into all three characters, and one must therefore guard against identifying him exclusively with Carl Wundt. Neither should Eura's opinions be related exclusively to those of the "Juste milieu". In fact, she is at times highly critical of those very same bourgeois traits, to which she at other times conforms so enthusiastically. She fluctuates between at least outward acceptance of the life-style and ideology of the bourgeoisie and outright condemnation of them in her socialist phases. While her socialism is itself placed in an idealist (and hence, for Sternheim, bourgeois) tradition, Eura's self-awareness does not permit her to be regarded as the unambiguous personification of the European bourgeoisie. There is a degree of ambiguity in Sternheim's treatment of all three main figures: Carl, Eura and Rank.

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1. See 6,55-57. Sternheim's intention may be related to his admiration for Flaubert, whose Bouvard et Pécuchet is followed by a "Dictionnaire des idées reçues", which likewise lists bourgeois clichés.

(i) Debates on art in Europa.

Eura and Carl are together for only four brief periods in the novel, and on each occasion their differences are expressed in the form of a debate. At each encounter the issue of aesthetics figures prominently in their discussions. They put forward different approaches to artistic appreciation, illustrated by their contrasting responses to specific works, which tend thus to assume the character of test-cases. Their first meeting brings such a confrontation with two works. The first may be identified as the "Portrait of a Young Woman with Coif" by Rogier van der Weyden[1] (ca. 1399-1464), a work acquired in 1908 by the Kaiser-Friedrichmuseum in Berlin, where Sternheim is likely to have viewed it. The fact that Eura and Carl are reported to have viewed the "Frauenkopf im weissen Tuch" (5,187) in Berlin, points unmistakably to this work, although the ensuing discussion contains what appears to be a curious misinterpretation on Sternheim's part. In Europa Carl's response is cited first:

> . . . die da, die Gemalte, schien höchstpersönlich mit eigenem Glück und Verzweiflung. Oder-?
> "Warum nicht?" sagte unsicher Eura.
> "Das widerspricht ihrem Evangelium, das, 'sich an Allgemeinheit hingiessen', heisst; Bedeutung in unpersönlicher Hingabe sucht, im Mimikry, in Selbstvernichtung."
> "Aber ihre Person war nicht Endzweck. Sie bediente sich ihrer zu eben meinem Ziel."
> "Warum sah dann der Künstler ihr Besonderes gerade - warum erschüttert uns beide nur das?"
> Feindlicher Regung sah Eura zum Porträt zurück. Jetzt aber strahlte das nicht mehr Unvergleichlichkeit, sondern nur ein

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1. In Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 198, Sternheim acclaims Rogier van der Weyden as "den überhaupt grössten Maler aller Zeiten in germanischen Landen".

> fabelhaft gemaltes Frauenbild hing da, und Carl spürte, der Augenblick, gläubig einem Phänomen zu erliegen, sei für lange dahin. (5,187-88)

Whereas both characters are initially moved by an intuitive response, Carl then points out that the woman's individuality seems to conflict with her apparent acceptance of a Christian creed of self-abnegation.

This is an unusual interpretation of a painting which has no religious connotations. It is conceivable, though unlikely, that Sternheim imagined, after an interval of some years, that the original painting represented a nun or a saint; more probably he retrospectively associated this painting with another work, also attributed to Rogier van der Weyden and on display in the Berlin gallery: a triptych, a workshop replica of the Miraflores altarpiece, known as "The Joys and Sorrows of Mary". Such a confusion would certainly account for Carl's insistence that the woman portrayed is "höchstpersönlich mit eigenem Glück und Verzweiflung". His subsequent remarks could then be taken to signify that the woman's deep emotion has no connection with the fact that she is intended to represent the Virgin, but derives from the personal experience of the model.[1] But, if Sternheim partially confuses "The Portrait of a Young Woman with Coif" and "The Joys and Sorrows of Mary", he appears to have the former in mind, for the Virgin in the latter work does not have a white coif. A second, remoter possibility is that the woman is associated in Sternheim's mind with the "Female Saint", a fragment now in the National Gallery in London

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1. The theme of the contrast between the private (sexual) life of the model and the high religious ideal which she is intended to represent is frequently found in Sternheim's early work before 1906. See Chapter I above.



ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN: Portrait of a Young Woman with Coif.

and attributed either to Rogier or to Robert Campin; this work bears a striking resemblance to the Berlin portrait and might have prompted Sternheim's assumption that both works portrayed saints. A third possibility is that the woman is simply seen as a devout and submissive Christian.

For Carl, then, the artist has succeeded in grasping and depicting the woman's unique individuality, her personal life shining through the religious significance which both Carl and Eura attribute to her. Only when Carl draws attention to the contradiction between the individuality portrayed and the religious submissiveness implied does Eura realize that the woman, like her, has subordinated her personal life to an ideology. But this insight dissipates the aesthetic effect. The implication is that only by submitting oneself to the visual impression, only by responding intuitively, without preconceptions, can art be fully appreciated. Once a work is seen to portray an abstract ideal, such as saintliness, the aesthetic effect is destroyed. In fact, Carl is quite as guilty as Eura of reading into the work his own views: if she sees the woman as a representative of moral decision, of religious commitment, Carl perceives her private emotional life. Both interpretations are feasible, for both Carl and Eura notice the religious connotations, yet it is implied that only the intuitive response to the woman's uniqueness permits a full aesthetic appreciation.

This incident is immediately followed by two contrasting responses to Châteaubriand's Mémoires d'outre tombe. Eura praises the style, the taut construction, the political insights of the book, overlooking a feature of which she does not approve: the romanticism. For Carl this

interpretation is a distortion:

> . . . sie [i.e. Eura] verstelle sich oder habe der Schrift Wesentliches, wodurch sie sich aus dem Plunder der Epoche, ja von Jahrhunderten hebe, nicht verstanden. (5,189)

Eura is guilty of reading into the work elements which conform to her own theory; she views it with preconceptions. For Carl, it is precisely the romanticism which is significant, which constitutes its uniqueness. The treatment of history reflects this romantic element most vividly:

> Napoleon und seine Syntax materiell mechanischer Kräfte scheine Null vor eines Herzens Hinschwung an einen Jüngling, den es sich allein in der Nation zu <u>seinem</u> König von Frankreich macht, zu dem es über Hindernisse pilgert . . . Henri V. (5,189)

Châteaubriand is praised for having depicted the subordination of external reality to a personal vision. To bring his assessment into line with his general rejection of a mechanistic, deterministic scheme, Carl attributes to Napoleon a "Syntax materiell mechanischer Kräfte". The subordination of social and political realities to a personal vision is a feature of Sternheim's own <u>Don Juan</u>, where it is formulated in the lines:

> Wem Wunder Lebens tiefste Notdurft ist,
> den wirft auch mangelnde Wahrscheinlichkeit
> nicht nieder. . . . (7,690-91)

And, significantly enough, these are the lines of Wundt's play which Dr. Rank is later to cite (see 5,369). Carl Wundt, then, is not a static character, but develops within the novel. At the point when he propounds this view of romanticism he has not yet written his <u>Don Juan</u>. His later views on art will differ from this advocacy of romanticism at any price. It is Eura who is to point to his development; when she has finished reading <u>Der Rheinländer</u>, she is nonplussed by the "Abgrund zwischen ihm . . . der sich noch im Drama des von sich besessenen einzelfälligen Don

Juans offenbart hatte, und dem ganz verwandelten Verfasser der Erzählung" (5,286-87). Here Sternheim is casting an ironic sidelight on his own artistic development.

If a disagreement about art characterizes the first meeting between Eura and Carl, that of their second is even more fundamental. Again two works of art are discussed, the similarity in the terminology used of the two works pointing to an implicit comparison between them. They are Wundt's own Der Rheinländer and Flaubert's L'Education sentimentale. Before the two protagonists debate their interpretations of Wundt's story, Eura's intuitive response to the work has already been recorded. This immediate impression deserves to be cited in full, not only because it conflicts with her stated views in the debate, but because it points to a crucially important source for many of the views contained in Europa. Eura's initial reaction is as follows:

> Das war, hatte sie Zusammenhänge begriffen, nicht deutsch. War alter Chronisten Einfachheit, guter Wille, was sich zutrug ohne Zurechtweisung anzuschauen. War schlichtes Ja ja - Nein nein, aus dem kein politisches, religiöses oder soziales Werkzeug gemacht werden sollte; Aufrichtigkeit, die nicht persönliche, sondern sachliche Autorität wollte. Keine Aufklärung, die wahre Freiheit vernichtete, doch mit grossen Mitteln der Ironie preussische Tradition zerschlug und der Natur heilige Physik aufrichten wollte. (5,285)

The language used here to express the impact made by Carl's story on Eura forcibly recalls Hugo Ball's proclamation in his Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz (1919):

> Wir sollten in unseren Reden und Schriften zurückkehren zur Simplizität unserer Vorfahren, jener himmlischen Chronisten des Wahren und Falschen. . . . Eure Rede sei Ja ja, Nein nein, alle Sophistik aber sei euch Ausflucht, Schwäche und Blendwerk. In einer Zeit, die, wie vielleicht keine vorher, aus der Ideologie demagogisches

> Werkzeug macht; in der jede politische, soziale und religiöse Äusserung der Eitelkeit und dem Interesse von Personen, Gesellschaften und Klassen zum Opfer fällt--kann die Autorität des geschriebenen und gesprochenen Wortes anders wiederhergestellt werden, als durch die äusserste Aufrichtigkeit?[1]

This verbal echo alone does scant justice to the influence exerted by Ball on Sternheim, a source which Sternheim-critics have hitherto overlooked. Sternheim himself drops a useful hint by placing Ball's above-mentioned critique high on his list of Die zwölf wertvollsten Bücher in 1921;[2] and he echoes many of Ball's findings both in Europa and Berlin oder Juste milieu. Ball's attack on the German tradition is, like Sternheim's, prompted by his revulsion at the chauvinism which accompanied the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. Their methods, too, are not dissimilar: Ball ranges the major figures of German social, political, religious, philosophical and cultural life into two opposing camps and comes down very firmly on one side. It is a method which is polemical rather than disinterestedly academic, and which throws up some unusual, not to say obscure, heroes. Ball's championing of Thomas Münzer as against Luther is echoed in Sternheim's disparaging reference to Luther as "dem sanft lebenden Fleisch in Wittenberg" (5,220), itself an allusion to Münzer's own pamphlet attacking Luther. And Ball's general indictment of German philosophical idealism is reiterated throughout Europa, particularly in Sternheim's denunciation of Kant and Hegel. Perhaps the most striking borrowing of all, however, concerns Sternheim's quotation from Wilhelm Weitling's Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit (see 5,382), for, if Ball's critique may be said to have one hero, then it is Weitling, who is extolled as the

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1. Hugo Ball, Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz, ed. G.-K. Kaltenbrunner, Munich, 1970, p. 150.

founding father of German communism, a positive counterpart, in Ball's scheme, to Marx, whom Sternheim also attacks. It is astonishing that in a work so permeated with polemic Ball should enthuse over the kind of writing which is free of ideologies; yet what he is actually attacking is the subtle and indirect propagation of an ideology. He praises the virtues of "Simplizität" and "Aufrichtigkeit" and considers the overt rejection or acceptance of a given historical figure to be a token of such integrity. It is not difficult, then, to appreciate why Sternheim should include an unattributed quotation from Ball to underline some of the features of Der Rheinländer to which he would draw the reader's attention. Sternheim cannot but be sympathetic to a view of art which combines a denial of implicit ideological bias with a denunciation of the German intellectual tradition. The phrase "Ja ja, Nein nein" conveys the balance between affirmation and criticism which Sternheim himself seeks.

When Eura and Carl meet, their irreconcilable differences are illustrated by their respective interpretations of the story:

> "Und Ihre Erzahlung?" fragte sie nach Augenblicken. Da sei, wenn nicht Verächtlichmachung von Schwarzbergs krassem Preussentrieb, mindestens dessen bodenlose Lächerlichkeit -
>
> "Bodenlos - Lächerlichkeit?" Er strahlte und sagte: "Liebe Freundin!" Aber sie brauste auf: es sei doch sein revolutionärer Standpunkt im Buch, gegen ein aufgezeigtes Prinzip mit Macht seiner Überzeugung zu anderem verführen zu wollen.
>
> Nichts, als durch ein Phänomen ein neues deutlich zu machen, habe er versucht.
>
> Ausser sich ergriff sie seine Hände und rief: "Sie wollen doch wirken!" Halb stand sie im Wagen: "Für Menschen Tat? Für Volk?"
>
> "Ich bin kein Regisseur", sagte er. "Überlasse weiter alles dem Schöpfer, ergötze und freue mich nur". (5,303-4)

Their impending arrival at Croisset, Flaubert's home, is not fortuitous; this visit, apart from its autobiographical significance,[1] is intended to point a parallel between Carl Wundt and Flaubert, a parallel which becomes explicit when the second test-case, L'Education sentimentale, is introduced.

What are the implications of the two interpretations of Der Rheinländer? Before the story is itself examined, in order that the correctness, or at least the feasibility, of the two views may be ascertained, the theoretical positions of the two protagonists must first be expounded. In accordance with her political activism, Eura is concerned to change society and she sees literature as a possible means of influencing the reader, of persuading him to adopt a certain course of action. Hence she views Carl's work as an attack on Schwarzberg's efforts to conform to a Prussian mentality, as a satire either on the Prussian mentality itself, or on those who would conform to it. Carl denies such an intention, arguing that he simply wanted to present a phenomenon with the utmost clarity. He denies the didactic function of art, repudiating the notion that art should manipulate reality for polemical purposes. As an artist himself he does not subscribe to the idea of the artist's Promethean rivalry with God. Carl's is an attack on two fronts: he rejects pure aestheticism, for it encourages the artist to indulge his sovereign will, selecting from reality according to a personal vision rather than subordinating himself to reality. This suggests that he has moved away from his earlier whole-hearted approval

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1. In Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 211, Sternheim gives an account of a pilgrimage which he and Thea made to Croisset.

of romanticism. But, more than this, he attacks any form of didacticism and rejects the label of satirist. He claims to enjoy all manifestations of life equally and refuses to commit himself, to judge reality. To Eura such an attitude is anathema; it represents an abnegation of social responsibility, a dilettante response. Carl's main attack, here, is directed against the notion that the artist should point a definite moral. As he is later to write in his diary, the attitude of an author towards his work, and, by implication, that of the reader, should be one of passive acceptance.

> Aber ich war kein Würger der Welt und blieb Mitlebendigem verpflichtet. Kein Regisseur und tollkühner Held auf der Lebensbühne, doch frommes Publikum im Zuschauerraum. (5,329)

Carl's theory does not entirely preclude a moral point; he merely insists that the author does not set out with such an aim in mind, though it might well be inherent in the subject-matter. It is particularly striking that Eura's initial, intuitive response to the story lies roughly half way between Carl's view and her own later position. In her earlier assessment she upholds Carl's argument that no political, social or religious weapon can be made of the story; but her simultaneous insight that Carl's destructive irony succeeds in demolishing the Prussian mentality, replacing it with "der Natur heilige Physik" (5,285), seems to give substance to her later interpretation. The respective responses to the painting by Rogier van der Weyden illustrated how Eura tended to rationalize an earlier intuitive (and thus "correct") response to art; the same process may be observed here. Carl's presence prompts her to overstate the critical element in Der Rheinländer and ignore its affirmative side. Their debate

is a polarization of two views inherent in Eura's initial, unbiased response; thus both Carl and Eura are, paradoxically, justified in their responses, both viewpoints being tenable.

The implicit comparison with Flaubert throws further light on the ambiguity. During their visit to Croisset, Eura and Carl visit Flaubert's house, and Eura, still upset about their disagreement over Der Rheinländer, reflects whether Carl's theoretical position is applicable to Flaubert's work:

> Während er in ausgestellte Manuskriptseiten vertieft stand, suchte sie stürmisch im Gedächtnis, ob, entgegen Carls persönlichem Bekenntnis, Flaubert nicht seiner dichterischen Welt und Geschöpfe "Regisseur" gewesen sei. Ob er sie Leben nur heftig habe empfinden und geniessen lassen, oder sie nicht vielmehr in geistiger Konkupiszenz, tief im Drang von ihnen gewollter Änderung der Welt erlebt und gezeigt habe. (5,304)

Despite herself she is brought round to Carl's view that Flaubert is not concerned to change reality, but simply to portray it as it is, a frustrating insight, which angers Eura, for she regards both Flaubert and Carl as "verführt" (5,305). Her own aesthetic is closely related to her personality: she can recognize her own individuality only by allowing her sovereign will to select and order the chaotic profusion of events and impressions before her, only by having a definite goal. She can realize her personality only by imposing it on events. This is why she sees in art the sovereign will of the artist at work, selecting and ordering reality with a specific end in view. Carl categorically denies this conclusion: if there is a selection, then it is not with a definite purpose in mind, but is simply the result of artistic technique. This Eura regards as a dilettante attitude.

In this context Sternheim's image of Flaubert is of some relevance. Just as he was fond of comparing his dramatic work with Molière's, Sternheim liked to view Flaubert's work as a model for his narrative prose.[1] In Europa Flaubert is described as "der von Vorurteilen fanatisch Unabhängige, über dessen Werk der Spruch: ne pas conclure, nicht Schlüsse ziehen! gestanden hatte" (5,298). This particular phrase is repeated on virtually every occasion on which Flaubert's name is mentioned and comes to be associated in Sternheim's aesthetics with a phenomenological approach to art.[2] As early as 1914, in the essay Zustand, Sternheim praised Flaubert's "höhere Demut . . . der der Welt den Spiegel seiner reinen Vernunft leiht und ihr Gleichnis zurückgibt, ohne mit 'ausgleichender Gerechtigkeit' daran gewischt zu haben . . ." (6,22). Sternheim is particularly drawn to one feature of Flaubert's work: namely, the way in which the great historical pageant is punctuated by the apparently trivial detail. Flaubert, he claims, has no special predilection for the grand or heroic,

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1. In an account of the conception of Ernst Kamnitzer's comedy Die Nadel, which was based on ideas which Sternheim chose to omit from the final version of Die Kassette, Sternheim compares the influence which he exerted on his young admirer to that which Flaubert exerted on Maupassant. See 6,422-23.

2. The phrase "ne pas conclure" is found in Gustave Flaubert, Correspondance, ed. Descharmes, Paris, 1922, I, 353-54, in a letter of 4 September 1850 to Louis Bouilhet. The context is an attack by Flaubert on the positivist philosophy of Comte for its utopian idealism. Concluding this attack--with which Sternheim would clearly have sympathized--Flaubert writes: "Une des premières études auxquelles je me livrerai à mon retour, sera certainement celle de toutes ces déplorables utopies qui agitent notre société et menacent de la couvrir de ruines. L'ineptie consiste à vouloir conclure. . . ." The notion that man should content himself with the reality which confronts him, without seeking to place it in a wider philosophical context, or to view it as part of a grand design, would have commended itself to Sternheim.

or rather discovers the heroic in the banal and everyday. Small wonder that Sternheim, with his own notions of the "bürgerlicher Held", should regard Flaubert's anti-hero as literally heroic. In L'éducation sentimentale, another piece published in the collection Prosa (1918), Sternheim pays special tribute to the novel, showing how criticism failed to do justice to it. When the work first appeared, it was regarded as a satire; only much later did the German public begin to appreciate the romantic features, the element of idyll. Sternheim enthuses over the way in which the significant and the trivial, the public and the private, are interwoven:

> Unaufhörlich geschieht dort das Gute und Böse, Bedeutende und Belanglose, Historische und Private. Aber als alles fertig steht, ist an kein Gewissen des Lesers appelliert, sondern alles ist Urteil in sich selbst und rührt nur an den bewundernden Geist.
>
> Durch künstlerisches Kombinationswunder wird der banalste Liebeshandel ein menschlicher Gipfel, und der riesige nationale Freiheitskampf, Revolution eines auf der Höhe seiner Entwicklung stehenden Volks, aus ehernen Gesetzen, die man wie die der Schöpfung nicht einsieht, eine alleralbernste und verächtlichste Farce. (6,53)

What Sternheim is saying is that good and bad, positive and negative, cancel each other out, and that the final work cannot thus be said to have a moral standpoint in the last resort. But this is not to say that Sternheim is incapable of seeing, or refuses to see, the obvious satirical features. Indeed, he does full justice to these. But he is anxious to show that the satirical element is matched by an idyllic, romantic element, and that, as far as the author's standpoint is concerned, these counterbalance each other. The final work, the finished product, is "des Dichters geläuterte Wahrhaftigkeit" (6,54), even though criticism prefers to call it irony and satire. Sternheim argues that criticism does justice only to half the work, when it points exclusively to the satirical perspective;

in so doing it distorts the author's vision, for the romantic features are as much part of the intention as the satire. If the romantic side of the work is given its due, it will be seen, he argues, that the author has no moral standpoint.

When Eura's response to L'Education sentimentale is examined, it is clear that, by selecting for special comment the final scene between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux, Eura is drawn intuitively to precisely this non-satirical, affirmative side of the work. Hence she must conclude, as indeed she does, that the author is not attempting to influence the reader, that the work as a whole is not a satire, even though it undeniably contains satirical elements. Carl Wundt, by refusing to view Der Rheinländer as a satire, echoes Sternheim's own response to Flaubert's novel, a parallel which is made quite specific by the introduction into Europa of references to Flaubert. Now if Eura's initial response were correct, this need not conflict with Carl's thesis, provided that the irony which struck her so forcibly were counterbalanced by a romantic idyll. Sternheim's point (as opposed to Carl Wundt's) is that to do justice to the work as a whole, both aspects must be appreciated. It is precisely the co-presence of criticism and affirmation which permits Carl to argue that he has no moral standpoint. Eura, with her characteristic tendency to overlook romantic features—as the respective responses to Châteaubriand's Mémoires d'outre tombe were intended to illustrate—makes the mistake of ascribing to the author a moral standpoint because she can appreciate only the criticism of the Prussian mentality. The final idyll in Der Rheinländer escapes her notice.[1]

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1. The validity of these various interpretations of Der Rheinländer is examined below; see pp. 233-48.

On their third meeting the debate between Carl and Eura, though it does not deal with a specific work of art, does raise the major theoretical differences between them. It is here that the doctrine of the "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte" is expounded. These spheres correspond roughly to Rickert's distinction between the natural and historical sciences.[1] The realm of the "Denkinhalte", like that of the natural sciences, is concerned with general and prescriptive laws; that of the "Beziehungsinhalte" with fortuitous relations between objects, where everything is individual, incomparable ("ohne Vergleich") and irreducible to general laws. While both Carl and Eura accept this framework, Eura claims that moral and aesthetic laws may nevertheless be formulated within the realm of the "Beziehungsinhalte", although admittedly only "aus dem Sinn des Augenblicks" (5,413). For Carl, on the other hand, any attempt to transfer laws of necessity from the sphere of "Denkinhalte" to that of "Beziehungsinhalte" entails an unwarranted application of prescriptive laws to human behaviour and, as such, an infringement of man's freedom. He dismisses any attempt to regiment man, to subordinate him to an ideological, moral, religious, or social scheme. He claims that among the "Denkinhalte" are all those features which men have in common; these constitute a "natürlicher Sozialismus", which may even involve what Carl prefers to call "die unentrinnbare Nächstenliebe" (5,414). This kind of "Nächstenliebe", Carl maintains, is a natural human response, a fact of human nature; and hence it is absurd to attempt to teach it. He rejects all Eura's efforts to propagate

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1. See Chapter II above.

the notion of the subordination of the individual to society, to preach "Nächstenliebe" as a doctrine, as part of a social dogma. Such attempts invariably involve the transference of laws of necessity from the realm of the "Denkinhalte" to an area of activity where they do not apply. The area of "Beziehungsinhalte" is characterized by its "unübersehbare Mannigfaltigkeit", a term which Sternheim derives from Rickert's epistemology. It suggests that the infinite variety of life cannot be subsumed into concepts by a generalizing process; nor can "Mannigfaltigkeit" be limited by selection from it according to moral or aesthetic laws, for this again presupposes the application of general criteria. Within this latter realm reality is always new, always entirely individual; within it man should exercise no selection, draw no comparisons.

Reflecting on their differences after Carl's sudden departure, Eura realizes that they both attach importance to the "augenblickliche Welt der Beziehungen" (5,431), but from different points of view. They are both concerned with freedom: Carl argues that, as man is not free within the sphere of the "Denkinhalte", he should passively accept the fact of his freedom within the other sphere; Eura argues that, since man is under compulsion within the sphere of the "Denkinhalte", he should actively exercise his free will by voluntarily imposing constraints on himself in the sphere of "Beziehungsinhalte". The notion of freedom as the voluntary acceptance of necessity is, as Sternheim has been at pains to point out throughout Europa, rooted in the German ideology. Here, however, Eura is permitted to argue the case cogently; her views are not ridiculed, but are held to present a serious alternative to Carl's. The divergence in

their theoretical views, expressed at their third encounter, does not appear to bear directly on aesthetics, but, in fact, it is of crucial importance for an understanding of their respective approaches to art.

Long before he introduces this theoretical debate, Sternheim provides many examples of its practical implications. In this context he is less concerned with art than with a response to reality in general, but the fact that Carl's views are specifically those of the creative artist lends particular importance to his statements and responses. If Carl is to be shown to do justice to the uniqueness and individuality of things, he must be shown to view them phenomenologically, without preconceptions and without attempting to order or select them according to general laws. His "naive" vision of reality is well illustrated when, after their second meeting, Carl and Eura drive through France. As an indication of their harmonious relationship at this time, Eura is shown to view reality through Carl's eyes and to reflect on the contrast between her previous conditioned and conventional responses and the "naive" approach which they now share:

> Während sie nach Frankreich, das er zum erstenmal sah, hineinrasten, merkten sie deutlich, draussen war nicht seit Zeiten für sie als Wald, Feld, Wiese, Dorf und Stadt Welt einfach schon da, zu der sie Urteile und vorgeschriebenes Entzücken als: wie herrlich, echt französisch! oder historisch: hier war zwischen Philipp II. und Heinrich II. die Schlacht von St. Quentin, fertig mitbrachten, sondern sie empfanden sich mit dem jeweiligen äusseren Gesichtsinhalt als niedagewesenes Kombinationswunder, zu dem gleichzeitig auch alle Gesetze aus der Erscheinung und ihnen selbst erst wurden. Die, in Begriffen festzulegen, aber darum belanglos schien, weil sie nur für den einen Fall, da aber durchaus, und sonst nicht wieder galten.
>
> Sie waren sich glücklich bewusst, des Kirchturms von Beauvais plötzliches Auftauchen vor der Fensterscheibe wirkte im Rahmen, den Euras über das Glas gebogene Hand spannte, anders, als wäre sonstwie diese Kirche erschienen. (5,295-96)

If the term "Gesetz" is used here, then it has little or no meaning, for this law cannot be formulated; it is applicable only in this single instance for these particular people at this given moment in time.

While it is Eura who here responds to reality without preconceptions, it is Carl who consistently embodies the phenomenological approach. Later, when Eura has reverted to her original tendency to subsume all experience into general laws, she is angered by what she now regards as the "Anmassung, mit der Wundt alle Phänomene als für ihn unbefleckt, mit nichts vorher in gültiger Verbindung annahm" (5,313). This way of looking at the world has its consequences for their relationship, for Carl sees in Eura a "Wurf Gottes ohne Vergleich" (5,333), and hence her ploy to exercise her supremacy over him by introducing Christine, her chamber-maid, into their relationship is doomed to failure, because Carl "gewöhnte sich, Eura nicht mehr nur aus ihr selbst, auch aus Vergleich mit Christine zu sehen" (5,334). It is his awareness of her efforts to turn him away from his phenomenological approach which prompts his ensuing departure.

The differences in the attitudes of Eura and Carl to reality are reflected in their reactions to both people and objects. When Eura picks a rose from Flaubert's garden for Carl, she hands it to him with the dedicatory sentiment: "Zum Andenken an ein Heldenleben" (5,306); whereas, when he returns the compliment, he chooses a red rose "weil sie an Ihrer Brust noch schöner ist" (5,306). Eura's gift is packed with associations: the rose-bush had been planted by Flaubert, whose life had been dedicated to art. She thus draws an implicit comparison between Flaubert and Carl. The "Heldenleben" is also, of course, Sternheim's own work, and this

reinforces the suggestion of a comparison on another level. The rose becomes, for Eura, the symbol of a poet's life and work. Carl, on the other hand, simply admires the momentary aesthetic effect of the rose against Eura's breast; this, too, is a "niedagewesenes Kombinationswunder". To underline their different approaches, Sternheim has Eura repeat the expression "Heldenleben" for what she takes to be the heroism of the "fille mère", the pregnant daughter of the gardener. Once more, Carl appreciates the momentary aesthetic effect: "Hübsch ist sie und weiss, dass ihr der Junge und mancherlei Kühnheit steht" (5,307). But on this occasion Carl goes on to point out that Eura has reverted to type, and that she is "des Lebens dramatische Dichterin" (5,307), unable to view reality phenomenologically, unable to resist reading into phenomena her own interpretations and associations. For her, the girl represents female pride in the face of male domination, an interpretation which reflects Eura's tendency to view her relationship with Carl in terms of a struggle for supremacy between the sexes. Apart from the brief period when she saw France with Carl's "naive" vision, Eura represents what Sternheim regards as the characteristic European tendency to view reality with preconceptions. Such a tendency stems from the confusion of the realms of "Denkinhalte" and "Beziehungsinhalte": Eura is not free when she approaches the empirical world; she tries to fit phenomena into patterns and see them as illustrative of an idea, as symbols. Her social and psychological doctrines reflect this same fundamental attitude.

The fourth and last confrontation between Carl and Eura contains another theoretical statement of the themes. Carl accepts Eura's tribute

to him as "gegen Herrschendes Rebell" (5,468), but again draws a distinction between their aims. Eura's goal is social revolution, but of his own aims Carl says: "Schwer zu sagen, was ich will, da heutige deutsche Sprache unbescholtene Inhalte entstellt" (5,469). This is a characteristic inability on Wundt's part to formulate his viewpoint, for once it is formulated it threatens to become a prescriptive law, an ideal, and this is precisely what he wishes to avoid. To blame the German language is something of a rationalization. What emerges from this final statement is Carl's passivity, his rejection of an active rôle:

> "Zehn Jahre vor der Zuspitzung begann ich, was ich dagegen für notwendig hielt, von der Szene und in Prosa zu wiederholen: nicht Tat; doch Haltung des Einzelnen und Ganzen!
> Aufbruch vom Willen zur Macht zum Trieb reinen Lebens hin, Wegbruch von Zwangsvorstellungen zur Beziehungsfreiheit!" (5,470)

This "Aufbruch" entails a flight from Europe and from Eura Fuld, whose activism he denigrates as a Nietzschean "Wille zur Macht". If the link between this statement of political and social aims and aesthetics seems tenuous, it is soon made explicit. Carl, having made what is tantamount to a statement of his credo, refuses to set himself up as a model, for that would imply didacticism.

> "Vorbild gilt es jetzt!" herrschte Eura ihn an.
> "Das wäre der Regisseur", antwortete er, "wieder Ausnahme, der neue Aristokrat. Ich bin Plebejer." (5,471)

Carl's social and aesthetic views are shown to be aspects of the same basic attitude: he refuses to mould reality according to his personal vision, either with respect to art or to politics. To view reality without preconceptions involves the negation of any political gesture, for the latter implies a form of idealism, a preconceived idea of what

society should be like. Even when Carl does suggest a positive programme, it is characterized by passivity: he advocates the establishing of an "Institut für geistige Zentralgewalt", which would contain two schools, the one studying "Denkinhalte", the other "Beziehungsinhalte". Each school would throw into doubt the findings of the other. This project is not intended to change society, but merely to reflect the interaction of the two spheres which condition human existence. It is obviously not a practical possibility, and Eura finds herself repeating the term which she had used to describe his aesthetic doctrine: "Dilettant" (5,472). This is the final encounter between Eura and Carl. Their subsequent actions carry to a logical conclusion the attitudes which they have put forward: Carl turns his back on Europe and returns to his primitive, private idyll in the Dutch East Indies, while Eura, in a final effort to translate her theories into practice is killed in what proves to be a futile political demonstration.[1]

(ii) Der Rheinländer as a model of a Sternheim short story.

In Der Rheinländer Sternheim reconstructs the Prussian mentality from first principles, as it were. Wolff Schwarzberg, through a chance meeting with a Prussian family on a train, realizes that he envies their values, their self-sufficiency and self-assuredness, and resolves to acquire

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1. The murder of Rosa Luxemburg in January 1919 may well have influenced Sternheim's account of Eura's death.

such qualities for himself. The course of events reflects his perfect assimilation of these values, his "Anpassung an das Strengpreussische" (5,261). His education follows a predictable course: like Diederich Hessling in Heinrich Mann's Der Untertan he progresses from the student fraternity to the army, from the army to civilian life; like Paul Schippel he gains acceptance into a higher social circle through panic-stricken, if successful, involvement in a duel. Finally in Bonn he can, like every true Prussian, indulge to the full his romantic enthusiasm for the Rhine, a process enhanced by his literary research into the stereotypes and clichés of the German lyric. Parallel to social uniformity, to conventional social responses, the German lyric conforms, he realizes, to a few simple rules: it has a predictable setting, situation and action. Only Novalis and Hölderlin he considers exceptions to the rule, in that they glorify their own "besondere Herzens- und Geisteshaltung" (5,266). When one bears in mind that Sternheim's own literary predilections coincide with Schwarzberg's here, it is clear that the latter cannot be viewed as an unambiguously ridiculous character.

In addition to attacking the German lyric tradition in theory, Sternheim weaves into the story a characteristic, unattributed example of the genre, which serves as an amusing example of literary pastiche. The following scene is described:

> Als eines Sonntags in der Morgenstunde er ein leichtes Rănzel auf dem Rücken von Bonn linksrheinisch den Fluss hinan aufbrach, schienen ihm Flügel gewachsen, und jeder Schritt hatte klirrend Metallisches. Rings gingen Morgenglocken in weiter Runde, die ihm wahrlich heimatlich zuklangen. Das Schifflein, das zuerst auf weiter Flur anfuhr, grüsste er mit hallendem Schrei: du Schifflein gelt, das fährt sich gut in all die Lust hinein? (5,268)

This marshalling of stock images and motifs suggests a parody, whether or not the reader is actually acquainted with the source. In fact, Robert Reinick's "Sonntags am Rhein" contains the following two stanzas:

> Des Sonntags in der Morgenstund'
> Wie wandert's sich so schön
> Am Rhein, wann rings in weiter Rund'
> Die Morgenglocken gehn.
>
> Ein Schifflein zieht auf blauer Fluth,
> Da singt's und jubelt's drein;
> Du Schifflein, gelt, das fährt sich gut
> In all' die Lust hinein?[1]

Schwarzberg's complete identification with the topoi of "Rheinromantik" here is the signal for his first feelings of self-confidence. He has now reached the point where no situation can embarrass him; his study of lyric poetry has enabled him to rehearse in advance the appropriate response. He is now word-perfect in the rôle: "Wie vor Theater stand er vor aller Schöpfung. . ." (5,269). On his own admission he is now a dilettante. To indicate just how far Schwarzberg's behaviour is conditioned by his ideology, there follow two episodes illustrating his "Lebenslust", for this is deemed the correct response to the culmination of his literary studies. Significantly, both examples of "Lebenslust" are induced by artificial stimulants: it is alcohol which prompts Schwarzberg's seduction of the serving-wench, and an overdose of pep-pills which causes him to fling himself off the Rhine steamer opposite the Lorelei in a positive orgy of enthusiasm for the Rhine and to the wild acclaim of his fellow-passengers. But if the spirit is decidedly willing, the flesh is weak,

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1. Robert Reinick, Lieder eines Malers mit Randzeichnungen seiner Freunde, Düsseldorf, 1838.

and Schwarzberg's grand gesture forces him to take a rest-cure in a sanatorium, where his aesthetic theories are amplified still further.

The agent of this enlightenment is a munitions tycoon, whose favourite reading is the Gospels, the work of Swedenborg and Brentano's account of the life of the stigmatized nun, Katharina Emmerich. The literary tastes and the professional life of "dieser in Taten banale und brutale Mitmensch" (5,275) stand in ironic contrast. All the works in question postulate a distinction between earthly existence and a higher spiritual reality, hence enabling the tycoon to compensate for his materialistic drives by subscribing to an ideal realm, untainted by the vicious Darwinian "Kampf des Daseins". The tycoon is entirely self-aware; he has come to realize that the "Metapher"—the process of translating everyday objects to a higher plane, and hence of transfiguring them—is vital to a modern materialist society. This technique of sublimation is, the tycoon claims, characteristic of modern literature: the modern bourgeois poet is permitted to compare a lake with heaven, for this simply involves raising the status of the lake without lowering that of heaven; but he may not compare a blue door with heaven without lowering the status of the second term in the comparison. Thus bourgeois literature implies a constant movement away from the real towards the ideal, a glossing over of the harsh realities of modern life. This is the final intellectual weapon which Schwarzberg needs. He, too, comes to contrast poetic metaphor with mere experience. In an age of ruthless competition, such sophisticated theories perform the useful function of masking sordid economic realities. True to the German philosophical and literary tradition, Schwarzberg translates this

insight into a contrast between the empirical world of experience ("Sein") and the realm of knowledge ("Sollen"). These terms can be reconciled only by a Schillerian act of free-will. Having grasped the theoretical point, Schwarzberg is again faced with a practical dilemma: he is forced to reconcile the "a priori" advantages of marrying a professor's daughter ("Sollen") with the plainness of the lady in question ("Sein"). With the help of the theory he can rationalize his decision to marry Emilie, whereas, in fact, it is clear that such a marriage is to his material advantage. Thus the theory is given a practical demonstration and Sternheim an opportunity for demythologizing in fine comic style what he regards as the bourgeois use of literature:

> . . . an ein höheres Gleichnis der Kunst angeseilt, kann der Mensch im Leben noch so schlüpfrigen Weg, schlimmen Abgrund ohne Angst betreten. (5,276)

Were the story to break off at this point, Eura's interpretation of the work as a satire would be largely justified. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the final idyll really invalidates her viewpoint. Even if one concedes that this idyll is meant to be taken at face value, without a hint of irony, it is questionable whether the affirmation in this last episode counterbalances the rigorous dissection of the Prussian spirit which dominates the remainder of the story. It is characteristic of Sternheim's vision that the final idyll is a private sexual experience:

> Alles Uhrwerk in ihm liess nach; Flut wuchs in Glut. Er brach wie Morgenrot an und zärtliche Himmel fielen auf ihn. In rosenroter Wolke flog er da an ihren Mund und starb in grossem Loch goldenen Tod. Drei Tage lang warf Sturm sie stets von neuem zueinander. Fleisch war Sammet, und Herzen gingen auf Rubinen. (5,279-80)

Not merely the affirmation of sexuality but also the imagery of precious stones, of luxurious aestheticism, which accompanies it, points back to Sternheim's own literary beginnings, to his own youthful affirmation of romantic love. The episode is not ironic; the barrier which Schwarzberg has laboriously erected between the real and the ideal, between practice and theory, is broken down. All his previous efforts are invalidated by his final apotheosis:

> Aber auch in den Augenblicken, da er sein Bewusstsein fand, konnte er bei ihr zwischen a posteriori und a priori, vorher und nachher, gemachter Erfahrung und Sehnsucht, Sein und Sollen überhaupt nicht unterscheiden. Sondern hier war Vorstellung Urteil, Gleichnis Natur, Schicksal Freiheit, und es schien, um mit diesem Weib seliger, als es ihm bisher möglich war, zu leben, keiner Theorie, keinen Vorsatzes und der Dichtkunst nicht mehr zu bedürfen. Ja, es dünkte ihn, ihr gesellt, spielte sogar der Umstand, ob man am Rhein und als Preusse oder sonstwo simpel geboren war, nicht die ausschlaggebende Rolle. (5,280)

The whole meaning of Schwarzberg's life is altered, and even if his conscience drives him back to a bourgeois marriage to the pre-eminently practical Emilie, with her numbered underwear, even if "Pflicht" overcomes "Neigung" when the Schillerian opposites reassert themselves after three days of bliss, there is every reason to suppose that the idyllic episode itself should be taken at face value.

The ending of Der Rheinländer raises an important issue. All three manuscript versions[1] contain an alternative ending. In these instances it is the idyll which marks the logical culmination of events. Through his sexual fulfilment with the same woman whose Prussianness so captivated

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1. These are to be found in the Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach. See also 5,503-6.

him years before, Schwarzberg's "Anpassung an das Strengpreussische" is both completed and, paradoxically, made entirely redundant. In place of his abject retreat to bourgeois respectability, the third manuscript version concludes thus:

> Hier endet, logisch und psychologisch gestuft, ein Schicksal. Nichts Wesentliches bleibt, ein Phänomen zu runden, zu sagen übrig.
> Der Chronist setzt hinzu: Zwanzig Minuten nach seiner letzten Erkenntnis warf Schwarzberg von einer jener Landungsbrücken, an denen die Dampfer der Niederländischen Linie festmachen, sich in den Rhein. Zwischen Mehlem und Bonn wurde zwei Tage später seine Leiche geländet. (5,506)

This ending makes the story a more consistent and characteristic example of Sternheim's usual technique.

In Wolff Schwarzberg Sternheim selects a highly unpromising candidate for admission into the Prussian ranks, for he is, we are told, of mixed parentage and "unpreussischer als polnisches und jüdisches Gesindel seiner schlesischen Heimat" (5,257). Yet thanks to his single-minded pursuit of a spurious Prussian identity—a technique which enables Sternheim to enumerate, with considerable comic and satiric force, some of the constituents of the Prussian stereotype—Schwarzberg achieves his goal. At the very climax of this process of assimilation, when the Prussian woman becomes his, he is brought to realize, as a result of that very same fulfilment, the complete irrelevance of his earlier efforts. Ironically, his totally successful pursuit of a spurious identity brings genuine fulfilment. But when Schwarzberg emerges a fulfilled man at the other end of his process of conformism, his <u>raison d'être</u> has vanished. It simply remains for the story to be rounded off. And what more fitting way for him to meet his death than to drown in the waters of that same Rhine into

which he had earlier flung himself in a paroxysm of enthusiasm?

That this earlier ending is not only more appropriate but also makes the story more representative of Sternheim's work as a whole, may be demonstrated by a brief comparison with Busekow, which is generally considered to be Sternheim's most successful story. Busekow has none of the attributes associated with a successful career in public service to the crown: puny, pusillanimous and myopic, he entered the police service only because he was physically incapable of fulfilling his "Königstreue" in the army. His colleagues rather condescendingly refer to him as a "geborener Polizist" (4,7). Yet, through his love for the prostitute Gesine, Busekow acquires for the first time a feeling of his own human worth, a sensation which his childless, loveless marriage had stifled; his new-found self-confidence expresses itself, appropriately, in his public duties. His sudden promotion to sergeant coincides with the culmination of his sexual and spiritual experience, Gesine's pregnancy. His private idyll is a mixture of eroticism and religious ecstasy; but, ironically, it is also his "Königstreue" which is fulfilled, as he picks out the tune of "Heil dir im Siegerkranz" on the piano. His emotional, human fulfilment simultaneously involves the fulfilment of the "Königstreue" to which his life was dedicated. Yet the private experience which gives his life new meaning also renders his ideological aim superfluous. The manner of his death is entirely appropriate: he is knocked over by a car. His duties as a traffic policeman, through which first his ambition and then his true fulfilment is signalled, are instrumental in his death.

Criticism and affirmation are here subtly interwoven. Initially it appears that Sternheim is ridiculing Busekow's "Königstreue" and suggesting

that the typical "Untertan" sublimates his own insecurity in devotion to royalty. This satirical perspective appears to be reinforced by the episode in which Busekov picks out the tune of the national anthem on the piano. Here Sternheim is alluding to an overtly satirical episode in Heinrich Mann's Im Schlaraffenland (1900), where the social climber Andreas visits his mistress, who enhances the seductive atmosphere thus:

> Mit einem Satz war sie am Flügel, sie stemmte die Tafel in die Höhe und riss an den Saiten, dass sie schrillten. Dann schlug sie die Tasten an; sie entdeckte, eine nach der andern, sechs Noten von "Heil dir im Siegerkranz".[1]

Yet the emphasis in Sternheim's story is slightly different, for Busekow's life-long royalist feelings achieve their climax at the very moment when he gains personal identity and fulfilment. His private fulfilment, which Sternheim affirms, may well find expression in the anthem, but it is none the less genuine for that. At that moment Sternheim's satirical and romantic perspectives coincide. Busekow's subsequent death simply rounds the story off with an ironic twist; it does not invalidate the idyll, but merely provides a logical and appropriate conclusion,for the self-realization which he has achieved and the harsh realities of his life are shown to be incompatible.

The earlier ending of Der Rheinländer, then, corresponds to what one might expect of a Sternheim story. Why should it, therefore, have been altered? The answer to this question must of necessity be speculative. Yet one fact is beyond dispute: if Sternheim were deliberately seeking a work which might precipitate a bitter debate between Carl and Eura, then

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1. H. Mann, Gesammelte Werke, I, Berlin and Weimar, 1968, p. 275.

the final published version of Der Rheinländer answers the need to perfection. While the idyll intervenes to lend support to Carl's interpretation of the story, the addition of the ironic ending, with Schwarzberg's return to the domestic fold, gives renewed credence to Eura's emphasis on irony and satire. The final version patently demonstrates the co-presence of criticism and affirmation, of satire and romantic idyll; lest the idyll prove too seductive to the reader, Sternheim adds a final concession to satire and tips the balance slightly back towards criticism.

It is my contention that Sternheim's decision to include Der Rheinländer in Europa prompted him to change its original ending. The story was first published in its final form in July and August 1919, by which time Sternheim was engaged on the revision of the first two books of Europa, a task which he completed in September of that year. The change in title, too, suggests a slight shift of emphasis. The original title was Schwarzberg, implying that the story was to contain an account of an individual life and its ultimate fulfilment. This is, after all, Sternheim's normal procedure, as the titles of his other stories bear witness: Busekow, Napoleon, Schuhlin, Meta, Ulrike, Heidenstam, Posinsky, Vanderbilt, Yvette. The final title, Der Rheinländer, is first found in the third manuscript version, written some time after June 1919 (the last date in the second manuscript) and before July, when the story first appeared in print. The obvious irony of the final title again suggests a satirical perspective. The change of intention seems to have occurred in June or early July 1919, at a time when Sternheim was revising the first two books of Europa.

The discussion by Carl and Eura of Der Rheinländer is more than a contribution to their characterization. The story is also Sternheim's own, and the contrasting interpretations correspond strikingly to critical responses in general to Sternheim's work. Here Sternheim succeeds in adumbrating the critical attitudes which have accompanied his work right up to the present. Until 1963 it was generally accepted that Sternheim was a satirist; since then, largely thanks to the efforts of W. Wendler and W. Emrich, the concensus seems to be that the "bürgerlicher Held" should be taken seriously and that Sternheim is neither ironic nor satirical in his intention. This critical discussion, like that between Eura and Carl in Europa, is not a debate between two mutually exclusive viewpoints. Carl's argument that the work is not intended to persuade, that general conclusions cannot and should not be drawn from it, is closely linked, as we have seen, with the notion that the artist achieves a neutral balance between criticism and affirmation, if he interweaves within the work the ridiculous and the serious, the trivial and the insignificant. By overlooking the idyll, Eura gives a one-sided interpretation; yet she is not far wide of the mark, for the brief idyll does not invalidate the previous criticism. But Eura makes a second mistake: she implies that the satire is directed against Schwarzberg's character. It is this error which arouses Carl's indignation.

Sternheim's categorical denial that he was a satirist may be linked to his claim that the author has no moral standpoint. Yet to claim that a work lacks satire if that satire is counterbalanced by an affirmative idyll is clearly misleading. It is Eura's second mistake, however, which

helps to explain why Sternheim (or Carl Wundt) should deny any satirical intention. Schwarzberg as a person is not ridiculed; indeed, he can hardly be thought of as a person at all. He is devoid of character, precisely so that Sternheim may project into him every cliché of Prussianism. The process is a reductio ad absurdum of the Prussian mind, not an attack on one Wolff Schwarzberg. Sternheim wants to prevent his reader at all costs from limiting the scope of the satire by seeing Schwarzberg as ridiculous. In such a case the bourgeois reader would simply congratulate himself on being superior to the deluded hero, and the whole point would be missed. The positive idyll obviates, or at least counteracts, this risk. Schwarzberg may not be written off as completely ludicrous, for if he embodies all the clichés of Prussianism, he does so quite consciously. It is the ideology which is ridiculed. It is this confusion about the true butt of his satire which causes Sternheim to deny most emphatically that he is a satirist at all. And it is invariably in the context of a discussion of his hero-figures that such a denial is made. In Berlin oder Juste milieu he assesses his literary achievement in the following much-quoted words:

> In des "bürgerlichen Heldenlebens" sämtlichen Komödien ist wie in all meinen Erzählungen, die ihm folgten, mit des Helden Einschluss zwar alles Bürgertum der eigenen gehätschelten Ideologie inkommensurabel, vor der Vielzuvielen Hintergrund des jeweiligen Werkes Hauptfigur aber ein zu sich und ihm ursprünglichen Kräften gegen gesellschaftlichen Widerstand leidenschaftlich und heldisch Gewillter.
>
> Also nicht Ironie und Satire. . . . (6,139)

The ambivalence here is plain: the satirical intention behind Sternheim's self-confessed aim of showing the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and its ideologies is matched by an explicit denial that the hero is to

be regarded as ridiculous. If the bourgeoisie is satirized, the hero is not.

The distinction between an ideology and a figure who adopts it is crucial to Sternheim's brand of ambiguity. He seeks to create characters who, while they outdo the bourgeoisie in conformism, have the saving grace of self-awareness. The ambiguity arises because Sternheim's unmasking of the brutal drives which are glossed over by ideologies inevitably throws doubt on the underlying motives of the characters who so avidly accept bourgeois values, even consciously. Their ultimate achievement is to become indistinguishable from the bourgeoisie, so completely do they master the art of "Anpassung". At the moment of their greatest triumph they automatically expose themselves to the very criticism which was previously levelled at the bourgeoisie through them. Through Schwarzberg the Prussian ideology is dissected, exposed and reassembled by a process of montage; but so totally does he master its techniques that he becomes indistinguishable from the real thing and thus, at the very pinnacle of success, he threatens to become ridiculous. It is at this turning-point that the idyll is interposed and the possibility of genuine self-fulfilment introduced. The ambiguity is thus built into Sternheim's work and cannot be explained away.

In this context it is sufficient to show that the ambiguity of Sternheim's creative work is both sanctioned and illuminated by his theoretical work. But its roots, almost certainly, lie in his own ambivalent attitude to the bourgeoisie. While he claims to despise the materialism, the conformism, the ruthless competition of Wilhelminian society, in short,

all the features of the "Kampf des Daseins", he retains a curious regard for those whose energy and vitality enable them to succeed in such a struggle.[1] The same ambivalence is found in the work of so many writers and intellectuals around the turn of the century: the art-life antithesis in Thomas Mann's work, or Sternheim's own youthful productions is but another manifestation of this uncertainty. It is reflected beyond literature in contemporary sociology: Werner Sombart's influential work Der Bourgeois is set out in two sections, one devoted to the positive and vital "Unternehmungsgeist" of capitalism, the other to a negative and complacent "Bürgergeist".[2] But it is in Nietzsche's writings that the ambivalence is most clearly formulated: while he scorns so much of modern German materialism and nationalism, Nietzsche reluctantly recognizes that, if any traces of vitality can be found in Imperial Germany, then they will be detected in the dynamism of the rising bourgeoisie.

Although Sternheim's ambivalence may be placed in a wider cultural context, he preferred to regard it as the result of a deliberate refusal to take sides, of a conscious decision to treat reality phenomenologically. But Sternheim's ambivalence is even more deep-seated than he himself imagines; hence his rather desultory attempts to distinguish between the ideology and the figure embodying it. That this attempt is not entirely satisfactory is reflected in Eura's interpretation of the story. Her view, even when she overstresses the satirical element as a reaction to Carl's

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1. W. G. Sebald, Carl Sternheim: Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära, Stuttgart, 1969, does justice, as his title suggests, to Sternheim's ambivalent attitude to society, but, rather unfairly, sets it in the context of a general indictment of Sternheim.

2. See W. Sombart, Der Bourgeois: Zur Geistesgeschichte des modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen, Munich and Leipzig, 1913.

denial of it, is quite tenable, even if it is perhaps more sophisticated than she herself realizes. It is in the dialectic between Carl's position and Eura's that a balanced interpretation emerges. Sternheim projects into his main protagonists two conflicting, but equally tenable viewpoints. In ignoring the satire (or in regarding it as neutralized or invalidated by the idyll) Carl expresses a view no less extreme than Eura's, which ignores the idyll completely. It is Eura's first intuitive and unbiased response which comes closest to grasping the ambiguity. The ambiguity is not resolved; but the form of the debate, where the narrative gives way to a section of dialogue, does give it adequate expression.

The debate between Eura and Carl has a wider significance in that it reflects the dilemma facing critics, when they are confronted with Sternheim's work. Some recent comments by Fritz Martini on Busekow illustrate just how accurately Sternheim himself pin-points the problem central to his work:

> War diese Geschichte ernst gemeint? Es gibt offenbar keinen Anhalt, dass Sternheim sie anders verstanden wissen wollte. Gleichwohl liegt nahe, dass der Leser sie als Satire oder Groteske auffasst.[1]

Martini takes refuge in the observation that the reader and author may well be of different opinions; he draws no conclusions about which of them is correct, or whether the work itself allows of both interpretations. My contention is that, although both interpretations are possible, neither is acceptable to the exclusion of the other. Any interpretation which fails to do justice to the ambiguity inherent in the work is necessarily

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1. F. Martini, ed., Prosa des Expressionismus, Reclam, Stuttgart, 1970, p. 29.

one-sided. The attempt to explain away the difficulties, to provide a single unambiguous reading, is the reason for the polarization of Sternheim-criticism into apparently mutually exclusive positions. It is precisely this ambiguity which is conveyed by the inclusion in Europa of both the short story and the ensuing discussion. At first sight Carl Wundt's position might appear to be close to Sternheim's own; yet Sternheim distances himself from Wundt. In the debate Carl makes a very poor attempt at explaining his position. He fails to counter Eura's criticism; he fails to explain that the absence of a fixed standpoint on the author's part is the result of a balance of satire and idyll, of criticism and affirmation. In short, he lays himself open to the charge of being a dilettante. The work attributed to Wundt may not be the most successful of Sternheim's short stories as it stands, for if it contains satire and idyll, these remain disparate elements and are not closely intermeshed, as they are in Busekow. But this fact makes Der Rheinländer all the more suitable for demonstrating the theoretical point.

(iii) Aestheticism versus didacticism.

The aesthetic debate in the first two books of Europa reflects another important theme in Sternheim's thinking about art. The titles of these books, "Deutschland" and "Frankreich", and his attempts to characterize the ideology of each country, lead Sternheim into some contradictions. Generally speaking, the contrast is between German idealism and French

realism, the French mentality being described in terms close to those used to outline Wundt's own phenomenological approach:

> Hier überall war Leben nicht Lesen, Denken, Systembildung zur Erziehung und einem Sichverhalten. Durchaus keine Prätension, eitle Hingabe besserer Erkenntnis an Befangene, sondern aller Mannigfaltigkeit Hinnahme, Gefühl für das schlechthin Seiende und seine milliardenfache Zusammenstellung.
>
> Nicht Verengung und Zuspitzung von Horizonten, keine Erträglichmachung von Formen, keine Ideologie; aber abgöttische Idolatrie der Schöpfung, wie sie jeden Augenblick ist.
>
> Gesinnung, die Absichtslosigkeit hiess. (5,254)

This mentality can be related both to Wundt's own rejection of an explicitly didactic intention and to his refusal to countenance the transference of prescriptive laws to an area of human activity where they are unwarranted. The French attitude to the world of "Beziehungen" is passive acceptance of its ever-changing variousness; whereas the German attitude reflects the desire to change reality, to apply systematic laws to it. To make the contrast even clearer two parables are incorporated in the novel as illustrations of the contrasting German and French attitudes. During her stay in Germany Eura frames and hangs over her bed a cautionary tale, entitled "Der bekehrte Unzufriedene", which is unequivocally described as a "bourgeois lie". The educative function of the tale is clear from the fact that it is intended for school-children. A factory-worker persists in stirring up discontent, despite warnings that he should be content with his lot; when a war occurs, the factory is closed and he is made to see the error of his ways. The moral is "dass der Mensch sich geduldig in die göttliche Weltordnung fügen muss" (5,219).

This parable is meant to illustrate the worst evils of German idealism, which Sternheim traces back to its Kantian roots. It is Kant's

ethics which come under attack: the categorical imperative is applicable to all men and is not "jedes Menschen eigene und am Objekt täglich neu geprüfte Idee" (5,193). The link between ethics and aesthetics is explicit: just as the sphere of aesthetics has no prescriptive, universal laws, its conclusions being valid only for a particular situation and for particular participants (as the example of Eura's arm framing the spire of Beauvais church illustrates), so there are no universally valid moral laws. Any attempt to establish or propagate such moral norms constitutes an insidious extension of scientific thinking to spheres of activity where it does not obtain. The erosion of personal freedom, set in train by Kant, was, Eura discovers, continued by Hegel, Marx and Darwin, who subordinated man to historical necessity, economic laws and laws of evolution respectively.[1] In sharp contrast to the philosophical revolution unleashed by Kant in Germany, France enjoyed a political revolution,[2] which Eura characteristically sees as a direct result of the teachings of the eighteenth-century "philosophes", Voltaire in particular. Thus the problem of committed

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1. Sternheim's own objections to Hegel, Marx and Darwin are first prompted by his reading of Rickert's philosophy and reinforced by his more recent encounter with Hugo Ball's Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz. Rickert's attack is particularly directed against Hegel and Darwin for their confusion of the methods of the natural and historical sciences. See Chapter II, pp. 55-56.

2. A possible source of this particular distinction between the French and German traditions is Heine's Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland. See H. Heine, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Fritz Strich, Munich, 1925, V, 234-35, where Kant's impact is referred to in the following terms: "Wir [i.e. the Germans] hatten Emeuten in der geistigen Welt ebenso gut wie Ihr [i.e. the French] in der materiellen Welt, und bei dem Niederreissen des alten Dogmatismus echauffierten wir uns ebenso sehr wie Ihr beim Sturm der Bastille. . . ."

art is once more introduced. The implication is that art may, indeed, induce political revolution, provided that it does not set out to preach it. By contenting themselves with an indirect social function, French eighteenth-century writers could claim, like Carl Wundt, that they had no standpoint.

The French tradition is similarly illustrated by a parable: an aristocrat and a worker reveal the same capacity for enjoying food and appreciating female beauty. They are both connoisseurs; differences of wealth and status are irrelevant. The parable raises a problem, however, a difficulty with which Sternheim is always faced, when he seeks to provide positive counterparts to his criticism: how can an alternative solution be postulated without itself becoming prescriptive; how can the French aesthetic of "Absichtslosigkeit" be preserved? In fact, the second parable has a moral as pointed as that of "Der bekehrte Unzufriedene". The moral is that political revolution is irrelevant, that social differences are unimportant, and that the capacity for enjoying life's more basic pleasures transcends financial or social considerations. The saving grace of this moral, for Sternheim, is that it is private and individual, and that there is no universally accepted norm governing the fulfilment of these particular tastes. This is a characteristic confusion in Europa. In the last resort it is the content of the moral, rather than its presence, which is at issue. The German parable has a public moral, the French a private one, but this does not make the latter any less moralizing. This confusion recalls the discussion of the Rogier van der Weyden painting, where Carl's stress on the individual experience of the model caused him to imagine that he was being true to the artist's own vision and not reading any

interpretation into the work. In the French parable it is the pleasures of the flesh: food, drink and sex, which are affirmed, fulfilment in this world rather than in the next or even at some unspecified future date. In this respect, Eura concludes, the Germans are "ums Sein betrogen" (5,256).

A similar distinction informs Eura's assessment of the French realist tradition in literature:

> Hatte an Philosophien gelehnt, deutscher Parnass hartnäckig stets ein Ideal ausserhalb des Daseins gepriesen, . . . war mehr als je französischer Kunstwille im letzten Jahrhundert nur Spiegel von Wirklichkeiten gewesen, der blank und weit wie Himmel Abglanz sämtlicher Lebendigkeit ohne Kritik war. (5,253)

It is in this context that Sternheim cites Flaubert's dictum: "Nicht Schlüsse ziehen", which is to be repeated later in the novel and which is identical in meaning to the terms "ohne Absicht" and "ohne Kritik". It suggests that writers in the French realist tradition do not set out with the explicit intention of propagating an ideology; they are guilty neither of active moralizing ("Absicht"), nor of attacking an aspect of reality from an ideological standpoint ("Kritik"). Consequently it is incorrect, on the reader's part, to impute to them any such ideological intention, though it is permissible to read private references into their work. Maupassant's Yvette[1] is cited, not only because it is rooted in the French nineteenth-century tradition, but because it is related in theme to Europa: a psychological study of sexual relationships is common to both. It should be observed that virtually all the specific works of art mentioned

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1. Sternheim pays a tribute to this work by adopting its title for a short story of his own in 1917, See 4,297-312.

in Europa are seen by the main protagonists to reflect their own personal situation. They each project into such works their own needs; the difference between them lies in what they read into art. While Eura is attacked by Carl for regarding works of art as the expression of her own universally applicable ideals, he is allowed to read into Baudelaire's poem "Le Léthé" aspects of his own private relationship with her.

The fact that French nineteenth-century literature presents a positive alternative to German idealism causes Sternheim some difficulty, later in the novel, when he needs to motivate Carl Wundt's complete repudiation of Europe. This volte-face is made possible, if not altogether convincing, by the claim that the virtues of French culture are submerged in 1914 in a tide of European chauvinism. Yet Sternheim's own problem is more deep-seated than that, for he likes to place his own work in the French realist tradition, and, particularly after 1914-15, he seeks to align himself with Heinrich Mann, who was largely responsible for the revaluation of French realist writing as politically committed. In his essays entitled Macht und Mensch (1919) Mann contrasts with Goethe's Olympian distance from the common people Voltaire's involvement; with the German "Dichter" he contrasts the French "Literaten die von Rousseau bis Zola der bestehenden Macht entgegentraten. . . ."[1] In a letter to Mann, dated 16 August 1919—at a time, therefore, when he was working on Europa—Sternheim expresses not only his own political cynicism, but also his solidarity with Mann in their common struggle against prevailing prejudice.[2]

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1. Heinrich Mann, "Geist und Tat", Essays, Hamburg, 1960, p. 9.

2. This unpublished letter is in the possession of the Schiller-National-museum in Marbach am Neckar. It is not clear whether or not it was ever actually sent to Mann.

Although his alignment with Mann throws light on Sternheim's view of the French realist tradition, there is a crucial difference in their attitudes which reflects Sternheim's own dilemma. Sternheim accepts wholeheartedly the contrast between a German idealist tradition and the commitment of French realist writers to the world as it is. Yet his analysis of the aesthetic implications of these traditions leads him to an entirely different conclusion. German literature is regarded as propagating an ideal, French as having no explicit moral or political standpoint. The missionary zeal with which Eura pursues her socialist goals is placed in the context of an idealist tradition; political activism, the attempt to improve on reality, is hence a product of the German mentality. If, on the other hand, one were to translate into political terms the French acceptance of reality as it is, then one arrives at the acceptance of the status quo, at an apolitical aestheticism. The confusion is an expression of Sternheim's own ambivalence: he approves of the critical, anti-establishment posturing of French realist writers, as depicted by Mann, yet seeks simultaneously to affirm reality as it is. It is this ambivalence which informs the debate between the positions of Carl and Eura in the novel.

The French realist tradition is not shown in a wholly positive light; there are indications that it is exposed to a danger which invariably besets the phenomenological approach, namely, aestheticism. This aspect is illuminated in the novel by the treatment of the theme of art in Eura's development. Her father, we are informed in the very first sentence of the novel, is an art dealer, and she is herself to take over the running of a similar business in Paris. Her background is one of pure aestheticism.

She learns from an early age to judge reality on aesthetic grounds and constantly has before her an aesthetic ideal against which reality is weighed in the balance and found wanting:

> Da ihre Welt vom Künstler gewirkt war, hatte Gott schweren Stand. Beim Blick in Landschaft vermisste sie bildnerische Vollendung, die sie bei Ruisdael feststellte. War linkerhand Kulisse geglückt, lief des Bilds Eindruck nach rechts auseinander, und es fehlte die im Gemälde auftrumpfende Vernunft seines Schöpfers.
>
> Von vielen Situationen trug sie Vorstellung so tief im Bewusstsein, dass zufällige Erscheinung davon ihr widersprechen musste. Eine Frau im Wasser war wie von Hobbema, Corot - oder nicht. Äsendes Reh von Courbet oder falsch. (5,167)

The rivalry between God's Creation and the work of the artistic genius is a common sign in Sternheim's work for the dangers of "l'art pour l'art", with its implicit devaluation of reality. Eura's aestheticism develops at an early age into a social attitude: she begins to transfer the distinctions between styles and periods in art to human types:

> Sie bildete sich . . . auch Menschen als Paradigmen ein: den Schurken, den Heiligen, die Verworfene und die blonde Keusche. Auf einem Thron sass standartenbeweht über allen der Held. Theater bestätigte ihre Auffassung. Romeo war Gipfel. Und vor allem andern stand bewiesen: Menschenschicksal entrollt nach Stil und Gesetz. (5,168)

Carl is later to attack Eura's characteristic tendency to see in human beings a set of universal types, a response rooted in her aestheticism. From a wider perspective, the "Gesetzmässigkeit" of nineteenth-century society is related to Eura's absolute confidence that human behaviour can be reduced to a finite number of fixed clichés:

> Mutterliebe war so. Gattenliebe so. Keusch in Röcken Jungfrau. Kess der Knabe. Rembrandt Meister; Napoleon Er. Onkel und Tanten verehrenswert. (5,171)

Here Sternheim's characteristic stylistic precision, the succession of

short, clipped sentences, evokes the impression of absolutely fixed and preordained human responses.

Eura's aestheticism blossoms both during her early life in Holland and during her stay in Paris; it forms one pole of her experience. The other pole is that of political commitment, which is generally associated with Berlin, where she discards her earlier aesthetic insights and enjoys a brief, but intense flirtation with socialism. The contrast between France and Germany is reflected in her subsequent fluctuations between the extremes of aestheticism and political commitment. She vacillates between a notion of art as a pure aesthetic construction and overt didacticism. What these two aesthetic extremes have in common is their emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of the artist; in either case the artist selects what is amenable to his personal vision or to his ideological standpoint, shaping reality to suit his own ends. He imposes his will on reality, instead of subordinating himself to reality as it is. The fact that Carl attacks Eura's didactic view of art, but is less severe on her aestheticism, suggests that of the two approaches he is closer to the French than to the German. The debate in Europa is, for the most part, between a phenomenological approach and a German idealist viewpoint; four years later, in Gauguin und van Gogh, Sternheim is to examine the phenomenological artist's case against aestheticism in greater depth.

Europa Fuld, as her name suggests, fluctuates in her allegiances between the two poles of European culture, the French and the German.[1]

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1. The polarity of these two approaches is made explicit to Eura by her contact with nineteenth-century French art: "Aus ihr wurde plastischer klar, wie, als polare Seelentemperaturen, sich 'deutsch' und 'französisch' ausschlossen" (5,253).

In either case the aesthetic position closely corresponds to a social attitude and to a set of views on relations between the sexes. As far as politics and society are concerned, the German didactic view corresponds to political commitment and French aestheticism to an aristocratic detachment. With reference to the theme of sexuality, the German attitude implies the sublimation of sexual desires in political activism. This is exemplified by Eura's relationship with Fritz Führing, who claims "er habe auf sie keine männlichen Absichten . . ." (5,220). Just at this juncture Eura makes her first attempt at political oratory, and Sternheim is at pains to convey the element of sexual sublimation in her performance:

> Sie aber hatte zum erstenmal jene selige Entladung und war in ihr entrückt worden, die bei Zusammenkünften mit Carl in süssen Ohnmächten und Wanken der Knie sich angekündigt hatte. (5,222)

The corresponding French attitude is similarly illustrated; in Eura's relationship with the aristocratic Jules Chamaillard the male succumbs to the devious and seductively enchanting female. Eura's oscillation between France and Germany is thus related to all three main themes.

(iv) Some images, symbols and motifs in Europa.

Each of the theoretical positions put forward in Europa is exemplified by incidents, or descriptive details, which thus acquire a symbolic significance; the imagery, too, falls into a number of clearly defined categories, related to the themes. Eura's fluctuation between the French and German ideologies is illustrated, for instance, by her hair.

Criticism has already noted[1] that Eura's individuality, her "eigene Nuance", is vested in her red hair. Yet this observation alone does not do justice to the way in which her hair is used to illustrate the stages in her development and is thus related to the central themes.

Eura's initial response to the insight that her hair stands for her individuality is to hide it, and at this early stage she "verhängte Schlüssellöcher, ehe sie aus Zöpfen Nadeln zog . . . "(5,170). This detail underlines her attitude to society: outwardly she conforms completely and only in a private sphere can she indulge her individuality. Were she to flaunt her hair, it would be tantamount to a public declaration of independence. During her stay in Berlin, her conformism is paramount; she hides her hair from the public gaze, for its colour "machte sie innerhalb eines Volksideals, das blond hiess . . . , fast aussätzig" (5,181). Her fluctuation between the poles of socialism and apolitical aestheticism is symbolized by the length of her hair, or at least the way in which she chooses to wear it. Although it is not explicitly stated that she cuts it, the shortness of her hair seems to stand between herself and Carl at their first meeting. Immediately after his departure she stands before a mirror (an action which seems to signal self-awareness) and realizes that her "einmalige Ursprünglichkeit" (5,191) is somehow related to the length of her hair:

> Mit Satz ist sie zum Bett hinaus am Spiegel und begreift, mehr als ein Jahr müsse vergehen, bis der kupferne Mantel, aus dem der Kamm Entladungen weit ins Zimmer gesprengt hatte, zu den Knieen wieder gewachsen sei. (5,191)

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1. See W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, pp. 234-35.

The ensuing period, during which her hair grows to its original length, is that of Eura's political commitment. By the time she has abandoned her socialist friends for a life of aristocratic luxury and aestheticism in Paris, her hair has regained its former profusion, and Christine can admire the "rote Puschel des Kopfs" (5,252). The care and attention which Christine lavishes on Eura's hair reflects an equality born of mutual respect, despite Christine's lower social status:

> Christine schrie ein Ach der Überraschung, lief mit Bürsten und Kämmen herbei und fing, das Haar zu locken und mit einer Hingabe zu pflegen an, die ihrer Überzeugung entsprach, mit der Trophäe sei die Herrin auch unter Wundern in Paris noch Gipfel, und sie selbst, das Phänomen betreuend, müsse an Würde und Person gewinnen. (5,252)

Carl is closer to Eura when she has long hair, closer to her when her attitude is one of aestheticism. If Eura's hair always fascinates him—from the vision of the young girl "in Rock und Schopf" (5,336) to that of the mature woman, waiting for him on his return from the East Indies with "ihres unvergleichlichen roten Haares Masse" (5,465)—its length indicates whether political commitment or self-indulgent luxury has the upper hand. The fascination exerted on Carl by Eura's hair is reflected in his translation of Baudelaire's "Le Léthé". In a version which, apart from the addition of a line and a half at the end of the poem, closely follows the original, Carl makes one significant change. Baudelaire's lines:

> Je veux longtemps plonger mes doigts tremblants
> Dans l'épaisseur de ta crinière lourde . . .[1]

become in translation:

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1. Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal, Paris, 1857, p. 73.

> Ich flechte bange, gramdurchwirkte Finger
> in deines schwülen Schopfes Rot mit Gier. (5,330)

This example is further proof that Carl is by no means averse to reading into works of art personal associations, or even adapting them to his own purposes.

A second image which repays closer study is that of the theatre. The "theatrum mundi" topos is first found in Sternheim's early work: in Don Juan Philipp uses the term to suggest the manipulation of the individual by the forces of history.[1] Significantly this image was first introduced into the 1909 edition after Sternheim's encounter with Rickert's philosophy, and is clearly meant to suggest the antithesis of individual freedom. In Europa it is re-introduced with a similar meaning: Eura's acceptance of fixed human types and responses implies a view of life as a drama in which people act out pre-ordained rôles. Conventional social behaviour-patterns are confirmed and conditioned by the institution of the theatre. When Eura takes up sport in Berlin, her "performance" is described as follows:

> Auch hier war Welt Theater, und man trat in landschaftlicher Kulisse nur möglichst vorteilhaft und durchaus innerhalb der Rolle mit dem einzigen Ehrgeiz auf, im festgelegten Plan und notwendigem Szenarium oft zum Sprechen zu kommen und sein Stichwort nicht zu überhören. (5,175)

The theatre-image suggests conformism to accepted patterns; it illustrates a sociological point, in that Sternheim regards such pre-ordained rôle-playing as typical of modern urban life. The image thus tends to occur in passages which are critical in tone, though by no means always, as

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1. See 7,678.

there are areas where fixed rules and responses are legitimate. Yet the desire to reduce human behaviour to such a scheme entails, in Sternheim's view, the unwarranted extension of scientific determinism, of absolute and universally applicable laws, to a realm where everything is unique and individual. Thus the theatre-image may be placed in the wider context of a distinction between the realm of the "Denkinhalte" and "Beziehungsinhalte" and related to Sternheim's indictment of the prevailing tendency to confuse these realms. Nor is the image confined in its reference to the world of Carl and Eura and their theoretical arguments, for Schwarzberg's success in reducing bourgeois attitudes to a few basic reflexes is recorded in identical terms:

> Wie vor Theater stand er vor aller Schöpfung und konnte mit Namen nennen, was ihn früher . . . unaussprechlich gedünkt hatte. (5,269)

This is but one of the features which links Der Rheinländer with the action of Europa and makes the former a representative example of Sternheim's narrative work.

The theatre-image is further extended to convey the differences in the social attitudes of the main protagonists. Political activism, the effort to alter social reality, is compared with the function of a "Regisseur". If conformism to social norms involves the acceptance of a set rôle in the drama of life, commitment to a political doctrine is viewed as an attempt to direct this same drama. During her stay in Berlin, Eura is both a competent, if self-conscious, actress in the drama and tries, through her political activities, to direct the course of the action. Carl represents a third possibility, and thus provides the key

to his own behaviour: he claims to be "kein Regisseur und tollkühner Held auf der Lebensbühne, doch frommes Publikum im Zuschauerraum" (5,329). His determination to be a detached observer of life corresponds to his aesthetic practice, his refusal to judge reality; yet it also points to his escapism and anticipates his flight from Europe. In a letter to Eura, Carl implores her to at least allow her death to be an exception to the ordered pattern to which she strives to reduce her life:

> Arrangieren Sie weiter mit Kraft, führen Sie Lebens strenge Regie. Aber lassen Sie Natur ein Letztes: nur Ihres Todes schlichte Anordnung! (5,359)

The erotic overtones which accompany the narration of Eura's eventual death, towards the end of the novel, suggest that Carl's plea does not go unheeded. Like Busekow, or the Schwarzberg of the earlier versions of the story, Eura achieves, at the moment of death, some kind of self-fulfilment. Both Eura and Busekow are passive victims, destroyed by some outside agency, a fact which underlines the breakdown in their efforts to plan, organize and control their lives. For both of them, the forces of that same mechanistic society to which they had tried to conform reassert themselves and are instrumental in their deaths.

Throughout Europa the imagery serves to underline the theoretical argument. The realm of the "Denkinhalte" suggests fixed, immutable and prescriptive laws; that of the "Beziehungsinhalte" concerns the uniqueness and individuality vested in each person. Any intrusion into the area of human relations of scientific laws is viewed, in Sternheim's work, from a critical, even satirical, perspective, whereas the reassertion of the uniquely individual is affirmed. The resulting fluctuation between

criticism and affirmation is reinforced by the co-presence of two contrasting complexes of images and motifs. I shall call these complexes the "scientific" and the "historical", using the terminology which Sternheim derived from Rickert in 1906 and which thereafter conditioned his thinking. The "scientific" images concern what Sternheim sees as the pernicious attempt to transfer to human relations the causality and determinism of scientific laws; they are generally found where a satirical perspective is adopted, but this is not invariably the case, for within certain areas, such as man's material well-being, scientific materialism has its legitimate function to perform. Within this complex are found mechanistic, mathematical, chemical, theatrical and military images and motifs. Contrasted with these is a complex which implies affirmation of reality and which often signals idyllic scenes; in this group of "historical" images and motifs belong references to the vitalistic, the religious, the sexual, in addition to animal-images and nature-imagery. These are often combined in evocations of primitive, precivilized existence and generally develop out of the complex of religious, sexual and aesthetic images found in Sternheim's early work before 1906. An examination of these image-complexes serves as an indication of the shifting perspectives in Sternheim's writing.

The "scientific" imagery which occurs most frequently is that which is associated with the machine.[1] Just as the image of the theatre suggests that social rôles are pre-ordained, machine-images imply that society is

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1. In Berlin oder Juste milieu Sternheim explicitly relates scientific determinism to industrial mechanization; he refers to "Maschinen, in die als Symbole das Prinzip der unbedingten vernünftigen Gleichartigkeit verkörpert war . . . " (6,115).

mechanistic:

> Welt lief in Treibriemen als Maschine. Von überall her schon aus gedrillten Kindern und ihren klischierten Spielen troff Öl in repetierende Gelenke, und Wonne wars, der Räder gleichmässigen Schwung zu sehen. (5,171)

The reference to "gedrillten Kindern" hints at the militarism which Sternheim associates with a modern mechanistic society. Sternheim's own opposition to militarism, his almost Luddite rejection of industrial mechanization, indeed, his general indictment of modern urban society, are attitudes he shares with his Expressionist contemporaries. In a society of mass-production everything is "aus Maschinen gestanzt" (5,177), including the consumer himself; Eura even applies this phrase to herself.[1] Machine-images are frequently found in association with references to commerce and mathematics:

> Das Entwicklungstempo war rasend. Der Maschinen Zähne griffen nicht tief, kämmten überall nur Oberflächen ab. Nirgends war mehr Vorsatz; nur Umsatz. Abends krachten Kassen. . . . Anbetung des ziffernmässigen Rekords hub an. Viel wurde gross. Statistikentaumel. (5,174)

The strict economy of chemical reactions is used by Eura as a guide to the social usefulness of actions: of the young peasant she notes that "keine Kraft verlor sich in nichts" and hence concludes "er sei sozial und gut" (5,207). Eura transfers the scientific criteria which attach to the material world to the realm of human behaviour; the allusion to chemical formulae underlines her own acceptance of a political ideology founded on a materialist "Ökonomie des Denkens":

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1. See 5,446.

> Notwendigen Geschehens Bewusstsein hatte sie, in das sie als ruhender Pol richtig gestellt war. Dazu umwirbelte sie Glück von Stickstoff, Kohlenstoff und Sauerstoff, die sich in köstlichen Dosen mischten, wobei es göttlich ökonomisch zuging. (5,207)

There is no mistaking the irony here. The wastefulness of the old woman who allows herself to be wheeled up and down endlessly, for no apparent reason, and who eats in excess of her calorific needs, serves as a direct affront to Eura's views.

The "scientific" images and motifs often create their own opposites. Arithmetic, suggested by the "Statistikentaumel" and usually associated with commercialism, is used by Eura in a new sense. In a moment of happiness with Carl, she is aware of the need to come to terms anew with past experience, of the need for a "Mass . . . dessen Arithmetik sie nicht kannten, nach dem sie nur unwiderstehliches Verlangen hatten" (5,295). This moment of love belongs to "historical" experience and hence has an arithmetic of its own, not the commercial arithmetic of bourgeois getting and spending. But the advocacy of a new arithmetic of experience cannot be given to Carl Wundt, who must not be allowed to preach a positive moral; it is thus Dr. Rank who formulates a theory of an alternative mathematics:

> Gelänge es einmal, von der Zwangsvorstellung abzukommen, Eins hat zu Zwei kein anderes Verhältnis als dass Zwei zweimal Eins ist, und jedes Seiende und Erscheinende überhaupt könne in keiner anderen Beziehung zu Eins stehen als, sein Vielfaches seiend, begriffe man, es gibt wichtigere Korrespondenzen und Harmonien zwischen Zahlen als die, die die vier Spezies zeigen, dann erst ist entscheidender Schritt zu aller Erkenntnis getan, dann erst gibt es fröhliche, lebendige Wissenschaft! (5,377-78)

Sternheim is fond of using mathematical or chemical formulae within the

text of his works. Carl, for example, formulates legitimate scientific necessity as the knowledge "dass ich Luft atmen und Cu_2O unter allen Umständen Kupferoxyd sein muss" (5,469).[1] Human happiness, however, does not belong in this realm of necessity; in his Inhalt meiner sämtlichen Dramen (1923) Sternheim formulates this succinctly, claiming that "der Mensch, glücklich zu sein, muss nicht an der Leine gehen und nicht unbedingt glauben, 2 x 2 sei vier" (6,277).[2] Militarism is also held to involve the unwarranted extension of fixed laws to human behaviour: in addition to the image suggested by the epithet "gedrillt" above, Sternheim introduces an incident to make the point even more explicitly. Eura's response to the sight of soldiers drilling is recorded:

> In solchem Menschenmaterial,[3] das auf tausend Kasernenhöfen Europas zu Vieh gedrillt wurde,sah sie, war die Frage der Beziehungsinhalte auf einfachste Formel gebracht. Sie lautete, tauchte links hoher Vorgesetzter auf: Augen links! (5,448)

Sternheim himself reminds the reader of the connection between this incident and the general theory of "Beziehungsinhalte".

The "historical" image-complex is associated with the affirmative

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1. The chemical formula is actually found in the text as CU^2O.

2. As early as 1900, in the prose-sketch Oedipus II, Sternheim expresses "Neues, Umstürzendes, Pyramidales" (9,345) as a travesty of a mathematical formula. That the young Sternheim saw art and the natural sciences as diametric opposites is illustrated by the fact that in this story the connection between the arts and the sciences is presented in the absurd formula:
"Du bist wie eine Blume = $x^2 - bz^3 + bx$" (9,346).

3. Hugo Ball, in Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz, ed. Kaltenbrunner, Munich, 1970, p. 205, records that Marx was the first writer in German to use the term "Menschenmaterial"; it is thus appropriate that Eura, with her socialist leanings, should use it, even while she rejects the regimentation of life, represented by militarism.

perspective, with the idyll. If Europe is the setting of the scientific spirit, then the exotic and primitive cultures of the south seas or Africa provide the back-drop to scenes expressing the unique and individual. The motif of the south seas is found elsewhere in Sternheim's work: Ständer announces his departure for a realm of untrammelled personal freedom "und sollte ich sie in China und in der Südsee finden" (2,247); and Posinsky transforms his flat into an African kraal, in which he and Ulrike may regress to a state of pre-civilized bliss.[1] Carl Wundt's evocation of a primitive idyllic existence in Tunisia (with its associations with Flaubert's Salammbô) records the absence of pre-ordained patterns of human behaviour, of social conventions. There the response to reality is "naive": "Umgekehrt wie in Europa erlebte man Welt in erster göttlicher Auflage . . ." (5,403). The primitive idyll is not confined to distant lands; as a result of banishing all baleful European influences, Carl transforms his life with Eura and their baby into just such an African idyll:

> Während Wochen ihrer Genesung gelang ihm fernzuhalten, was nicht sie, er und das Kind war. Wirklich lebte sie in afrikanischer Hütte mit ihm im engsten Verein. In drei Stuben, zu ebener Erde, die er ihr bis ins Detail gemalt hatte, hatte sie das ganze einfache Frauenglück vergangener, schlichterer Jahrhunderte ohne zu fragen und zu fordern. Ewig blaute Himmel, Unterhalt wuchs zur Tür hinein, und heisses Klima verbot überflüssige innere und äussere Bewegung.
>
> Nachts aber, summte Wüste und schlug Meer an Küsten, wenn Stimmen der Natur tönten und irgendwo Mutter Erde schrie, mischten auch sie seliges Seufzen, Schluchzen und Stampfen dem Ursprünglichen. (5,403-4)

Here Sternheim rehearses the whole repertoire of images and associations

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1. See 4,158.

evoked by simple and private human experiences of birth, copulation and death, to borrow Eliot's formula. Only such a process of regression can strip away the accretions of civilization and restore man to his lost innocence.[1] In Ulrike (1916) the erotic overtones combine with animal-images and a characteristic setting of "heisser Wind im Halbdunkel" and "das Murmeln ferner Meerbusen" (4,158) to evoke a primitive idyll in which Ulrike may regress in the requisite fashion:

> Von Entwicklungen tropfte Ulrike sich frei, schabte Ursprüngliches, in Geschlechtern verschüttet, aus sich heraus, bis sie blank und ihr dichtestes Ich war. Jahrtausende hatte sie rückwärts eingeholt und wünschte das späte Paradies nicht herrlicher. (4,158)

Inherent in Sternheim's idyll is the rejection of cerebral consciousness, which can be profitably related to the same theme in Gottfried Benn's poetry. For both writers the theme of regression to a pre-civilized state, a process which Benn calls "thalassale Regression", is associated with a tropical landscape. It is Benn who supplies Sternheim with a motto for Posinsky (1917): "Es giebt ganze Völker, die liegen im Sand und pfeifen auf Bambusrohr" (4,436).[2] Benn's poem "Meer- und Wandersagen" invokes a characteristic "Südseetraum".[3] Many of the properties of the idyll are common to both writers, indeed, the term "Südsee" itself, with its associations of tropical sun and primitive marine life, suggests some

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1. The theme of cultural pessimism in Sternheim's work is examined by Johannes Mittenzwei in his unpublished dissertation "Karl Sternheims Kritik am Bürgertum im Rahmen einer Darstellung des Pessimismus", Diss. Jena, 1952.

2. See Gottfried Benn, Gesammelte Werke, ed. D. Wellershoff, Wiesbaden, 1959-61, II, 297.

3. G. Benn, Gesammelte Werke, ed. cit., III, 66-67.

of these properties. Despite the parallels, however, there are striking divergences in the treatment of this theme by the two writers. Benn, anxious to preclude romantic associations, uses an ostentatiously technical vocabulary; he also takes his objections to the cerebral consciousness to their logical conclusion and extols the most primitive forms of life, ultimately "ein Klümpchen Schleim in einem warmen Moor".[1] Sternheim's idyll, by contrast, is rich in sexual overtones; he unashamedly affirms romantic features: references to the moon and the stars on a warm summer night invariably signal his romantic idyll. Carl Wundt, writing to Eura from such a setting, concludes his letter: "So künden es mir einer unsagbar blauen Nacht Sterne, in deren Glanz ich still am Ufer warmen Meeres liege" (5,359). Even if it is treated more or less ironically, the magic of the "Sternennacht" is in no way diminished.[2]

For Benn, the rejection of a problematic cerebral consciousness finds expression in a "Südkomplex" of imagery and association, in which a single term can stand for a whole wealth of reference. Such abbreviated signs--Benn calls them "Chiffren"--may only be decoded when they are related to the whole complex for which they stand. In Epilog und lyrisches Ich (1927), Benn explains that "blau" is "das Südwort schlechthin", standing as it does for the whole complex. Sternheim's own complex of "historical" images stands for a rejection of scientific thinking and these images are

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1. G. Benn, Gesammelte Werke, ed. cit., III, 25.

2. The "Sternennacht" is the setting of Oedipus' incest in Don Juan (7,689) and provides the atmosphere in the many balcony-scenes. Treated seriously in Ulrich und Brigitte, it is ironized in Bürger Schippel, Die Schule von Uznach and Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse.

similarly interrelated. Nor is the technique different: when Sternheim introduces an animal-image, for example, it stands for vitalism, eroticism and a flight from European society, indeed, for all the terms in the complex. Unlike Benn, whose work affirms simple forms of animal life, such as marine organisms, the source of primitive biological life, Sternheim tends to introduce wild animals, suggesting vitalism and sexuality. As to other possible sources of the various components of the "historical" complex, Nietzsche may well have conditioned Sternheim's use of the image of the wild animal with his insistence that "Raubtiere sind viel individueller".[1] The choice of an African kraal as a setting for the primitive idyll may be derived from Gauguin's painting "Nevermore" (which Sternheim attributes to Posinsky in the story Ulrike); it may also have been associated in his mind with Carl Einstein's influential essay on Negerplastik (1915).[2]

The wild animal is a central component of the "historical" complex. The references to the "taubes Tier", the "geliebter Tiger" (5,330), in Baudelaire's poem are interpreted by Carl as correlates of his feelings for Eura. Immediately after the translation of the poem, Carl examines the objects which he associates with Eura; particularly striking is the "mit springenden Panthern durchwirkten scharlachenen Teppich" (5,331).

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1. F. Nietzsche, Werke in drei Bänden, ed. K. Schlechta, Munich, 1966, III, 892.

2. According to Thea Sternheim, Einstein read into Ulrike a barely disguised account of his own relationship with Gräfin Hagen, identifying the kraal-idyll as a direct reference to his work on African sculpture. The relevant passages from Thea's diary are quoted by Sibylle Penkert, Carl Einstein: Beiträge zu einer Monographie, Palaestra, Vol. 255, Göttingen, 1969, pp. 80-81.

The evocation of their passion illustrates how the animal-image is linked to individuality as well as sexual desire:

> Es war an ihr, die wie ein Raubtier schmauste, ihrer Hüften, zuckenden Brüste, verklärten Antlitzes Pracht nichts zu bessern. Wie sie an ihm fletschte - das war Wurf Gottes ohne Vergleich! (5,332-33)

Sensuality is very much part of the idyllic love-scenes and contrasts with the overt intellectuality of the theoretical discussions. Their meeting in Brussels is translated into an animal courtship:

> Nun geschah, als Dämmerung kam, zwischen ihnen, was von spielenden Katzen gilt: sie schnurrten, streichelten mit Pfötchen, kugelten vor Hindernissen und schmiegten sich an Weiches. Sie wedelten, bäumten und krümmten sich in sich selbst, machten samtene Musik und knisterten im Haar. (5,290)

Having established some of the characteristics of the two image-complexes, we may now examine examples in which they are juxtaposed or come into conflict. The episodes in the novel which reflect the breakdown of the scientific viewpoint tend to involve either sexual or aesthetic experiences, though these can never be completely separated. Just when Eura seems to have explained reality in terms of rational laws, an aesthetic experience will intervene to contradict the pattern she has worked out. The baroque carving, for example, has such an effect, perhaps because Eura reads into it the possibility of future fulfilment in motherhood:

> Ihr geschah wirklich das Gleiche,was kurz vorher sie theoretisch als unmöglich gewusst hatte: Sie wollte nicht nur anderes, als sein musste, sondern . . . wusste es: Schönheit fand sie, wo sie Unsinn suchte, und Eins widersprach auf Erden allem, was durch Biologie bewiesen stand. (5,229)

Her experience is accompanied by "Hass gegen Nichtauszurechnendes". Such moments, then, provide blatant contradictions of the scientific explanation, and thus belong on the side of the "historical". In Der Rheinländer

Schwarzberg's idyll is preceded by a literal breakdown in the mechanistic world-view: we learn that "alles Uhrwerk in ihm liess nach" (5,279). His first meeting with the Prussian girl was in a railway compartment, the railway symbolizing a world of fixed values: the new direction given to his life, the "Strich unter sein bisheriges Leben" (5,259), is prompted by an accident, in which the train shudders to a stop and he is thrown into the girl's arms. For Eura and Carl, too, the ride through France is interrupted by a breakdown, an "Unfall des Motors" (5,294). The sudden breakdown in the mechanism of society for the characters involved is thus clearly signalled.

The true idyll, although it is often heralded by a breakdown in the "scientific" imagery, cannot be said to belong entirely on the side of the "historical". Rather it transcends all distinctions between the two. Eura's motherhood is evoked in terms of "Mozartscher Andantes und das Gesetz des Vogelflugs" and "der Schöpfung mystische Zahlenreihen" (5,400). Here the "scientific" and the "historical" are both present, but are synthesized: if there are "Zahlenreihen", they are mystical; if there is a law, it is that of the world of nature:

> Hier ging, was überhaupt sich ereignen konnte, vor, hier war Sitte, Vernunft und Schönheit, die sie jauchzen machte in Einem: hier der Vollkommenheit Glück. (5,401)

Just as the Schillerian opposites of "Sein" and "Sollen", of "Schicksal" and "Freiheit" (5,280), ceased to have any meaning for Schwarzberg, so too does Eura achieve a state of harmony. The idyllic state is attained through the agency of the "historical", but once it is present it embraces both the "scientific" and "historical". If Sternheim tends to over-emphasize

the importance of the "historical", it is because he regards scientific rationalism as the prevailing ideology, because he takes it for granted. In the theoretical discussion both Eura and Carl accept the validity and absolute necessity of the "Denkinhalte"; where they disagree is on the area encompassed by the "Beziehungsinhalte". The implication throughout is that Eura is so imbued with the scientific spirit that only through the extreme primitivism envisaged by Carl can she achieve a state of harmony.

The usefulness of this analysis of Sternheim's imagery may be tested by applying it to an episode in which the two complexes are juxtaposed. The episode in which Eura is raped by the young peasant poses a number of problems. W. Sebald's interpretation indicates precisely why it is dangerous to ignore the imagery and its relation to the general argument. Sebald sees the incident as "eines der perfektesten Beispiele der Blut- und Bodenliteratur".[1] Obsessed with the desire to find in Sternheim's work "alle konstitutiven Elemente der Nazi-Kunst",[2] he wrongly infers that the figure of the "Rentnerin" who is uneconomic in her life-style is intended to express Sternheim's approval of euthanasia. He also takes Eura's assessment of the peasant as "sozial und gut" (5,207) at face value and assumes that Sternheim is writing approvingly of the rape. In fact, however, the episode is wholly ambiguous. The economy of the farmer's activity is only "sozial" for Eura because she has the tendency to transfer scientific laws to human behaviour. The wastefulness of the

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1. W. G. Sebald, Carl Sternheim: Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära, Stuttgart, 1969, p. 55.

2. ibid., p. 55.

"Rentnerin" is the equivalent of a statement of individual liberty, an open challenge to the economy of the scientific method and the chemical reaction. The chemical image underlines Eura's assumption that the peasant's daily round forms part of a scientific cycle; her desire to give herself to him is motivated, as W. Wendler correctly suggests, by her need to feel part of this process.[1] It represents "Anpassung" to a mechanistic process. Yet Eura's uncertainty points to the fact that she is motivated by another desire: she wants to see her action as symbolic of sexual emancipation. The rape itself does not fulfil her theoretical aims; what it provides is a purely sexual experience. The echoes of romantic, affirmative imagery, together with the vitality which tends to accompany the erotic in Sternheim's work, suggest that Eura gains physical satisfaction, without achieving the synthesis of the "scientific" and the "historical" which marks the true idyll:

> In die Sekunde schwillt Stille der Nacht; Sterne gehen in ihre Überschwemmten Pupillen auf, und in kochenden Katarakten ist sie ersoffen. (5,211)

When she first encounters the peasant, Eura makes a series of characteristic judgements. First of all, she transfers to him the scientific laws which she has observed in the chemistry of nature and thus seeks to gain access to this process through him. This reaction may be related to her socio-political notions, her tendency to apply laws to society, to regard individuals (the peasant and the "Rentnerin") as illustrative of

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1. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 175. Wendler's documentation of the nature-imagery in the short stories (op. cit., pp. 174-77) is useful, but he does not do justice to the ambiguity of this particular incident.

those laws. Secondly, she applies rigid aesthetic criteria to reality: the peasant is "wie eine Formel von van Gogh" (5,208). Thirdly, she views her own actions as an expression of female emancipation, as a blow for freedom in the sex war. Thus the three main themes of the novel are concentrated in the one incident. The rape itself, however, represents a failure for Eura in her desire to read into events a wider symbolic meaning; she is forced into a passive rôle and cannot claim to be the conscious instigator of what occurs. Yet the images of "Sterne" and "kochende Katarakte" indicate that the incident acquires a private, erotic significance, in spite of her theories. These images reflect the content of the experience when it is viewed phenomenologically, without moral, political, aesthetic or social preconceptions. The episode as a whole illustrates the same conflicting viewpoints as did the discussion of the painting by Rogier van der Weyden. There are two conflicting perspectives: W. Wendler, despite his accurate reading of the text, does not explain the element of affirmation, while W. G. Sebald completely ignores the critical perspective.[1] The imagery here helps to pin-point the ambiguity; nature stands for a chemical cycle of renewal and supplies the romantic images. In the problematic episode the "scientific" and the "historical" are juxtaposed.

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1. W. G. Sebald, op. cit., p. 55, complains that "der Bauer ist kein Individuum; er ist ein Stück Natur". He is thus drawn into making exactly the same erroneous judgement as Eura. He ignores the ironic distancing from his heroine on Sternheim's part.

(v) Aesthetic "Proportion" as a structural principle.

In Flaubert's work, it will be recalled, Sternheim sees a balance between "das Gute und Böse, Bedeutende und Belanglose, Historische und Private" (6,53); grandeur is possible even in the "banalste Liebeshandel", and even the "riesige nationale Freiheitskampf" (6,53) contains an element of farce. The writer's vision, then, entails a redressing of the balance between the sublime and the ridiculous, with the inevitable disappointment of the reader's expectations. There is more than a little provocation in this affront to the reader's habits of thought. If this reading of Flaubert is related to Sternheim's own vision, it quickly becomes apparent that the resulting balance may be restated in terms of a juxtaposition of the "scientific" and the "historical". The former tends to be related to the attempt to transfer general laws to human behaviour and is usually presented in the form of political activism, of the "riesige nationale Freiheitskampf", while the latter refers to the private erotic sphere, where individuality reasserts itself, even in the "banalste Liebeshandel".

Sternheim's image of Flaubert is a pointer to his own phenomenological approach, which is conceived as the refusal to take sides, to judge his characters or their actions. In practice, however, the approach is anything but unbiased: the grand gesture is deflated, unmasked as hollow, and ridiculed; while, conversely, an apparently ridiculous character may be raised to tragic or sublime stature. The dictum: "Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas", attributed to Napoleon and cited by

Heine,[1] could well serve as a motto for Sternheim's narrative work and indicates precisely what Sternheim admires both in Flaubert's work and, incidentally, in Heine's. Although Sternheim does not permit Carl Wundt to advance this theory, he does allow Eura to gain insight into it. During their pilgrimage to Croisset, Eura examines the manuscript of L'Education sentimentale; she is particularly drawn to an episode towards the end of the work:

> Nach Jahren an Schläfen grau, tritt Frau Arnoux in Fréderics Junggesellenzimmer. Und da, in ihres Lebens höchstem Moment, sehen zwei Menschen, die sich unendlich geliebt haben, aber vom Schicksal einander vorenthalten wurden, sich ohne zu mucksen an und - während Blut zum Hirn siedet, begreift Eura es in neuem Sinn zum erstenmal - lächeln nur. Lachen! (5,305)

Eura expects the characters' insight into the fact that fate has prevented the fulfilment of their love to find expression in a grand gesture, in a direct challenge to fate of tragic proportions. Her expectations are disappointed: the lovers simply smile. The implication is that Flaubert is not a "Regisseur", that he wants to depict the acceptance of things as they are, rather than a successful attempt to change them. But Eura is also forced to realize that L'Education sentimentale reflects aspects of her own relationship with Carl. She claims that both Carl and Flaubert "verkennten in so schwierigen Zeitläuften ihre seltene Mission des Helden" (5,305). Her implication is that, during such periods of political upheaval, the writer should take an active part in shaping events according to his sovereign will. Just as Flaubert portrayed the events of 1848 ironically, preserving his detachment by showing the element of farce in the grand

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1. See H. Heine, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Fritz Strich, Munich, 1925, II, 158. Heine's notion that the sublime and the ridiculous, the comic and the tragic, coexist in reality and complement each other in art is simultaneously put forward by Victor Hugo.

political gestures, so Carl Wundt is to insist that his own attitude is that of the "frommes Publikum" (5,329) in the drama of history. By heightening the "lächeln" into "lachen", Sternheim underlines his argument that the artist should accept life with all its tragedy and comedy, that high tragedy and comedy coexist.

As if to draw attention to the importance of this episode from L'Education sentimentale for his general interpretation of Flaubert's work, Sternheim includes direct reference to it in Europa. But he also alludes to it indirectly; certain features of Eura's meeting with Carl in Brussels echo the final encounter between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux. Flaubert describes the scene thus:

> Elle le saisit par les mains, l'attira doucement vers la fenêtre. . . . Dans la pénombre du crépuscule, il n'apercevait que ses yeux. . . . Tous deux restèrent sans pouvoir parler, se souriant l'un à l'autre.[1]

And after their conversation Flaubert records the detail:

> Elle avoua qu'elle désirait faire un tour à son bras dans les rues. Ils sortirent.[2]

Sternheim himself introduces similar gestures and details:

> Sie gab ihm Hände, die er nahm, und sie sassen und liessen Finger ineinander, als sie merkten, Ströme Geheimnisse stürzten wortlos durch Poren schneller als durch Bekenntnisse in sie. (5,290)

Contact between the lovers increases, similarly, "als Dämmerung kam . . ." (5,290), and, as if in tacit recognition of the technological advances since Flaubert's day, Sternheim adds:

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1. G. Flaubert, L'Education sentimentale, in Oeuvres complètes, Paris, 1923, pp. 600-601.

2. ibid., p. 602.

> Das erste, was sie zur Sache sagte, war der Vorschlag, im Automobil durchs schon dunkle 'Bois de la cambre' zu fahren. . . . (5,290)

It is not until she later glances at the manuscript pages of Flaubert's description of this encounter between the lovers, that Eura draws a parallel with her own experience. For once, she is forced to read into a work of art purely a private meaning for herself; it is this which angers and frustrates her. The key to her reminiscence is the word "lächeln". It is noteworthy that Sternheim stresses the importance of the juxtaposition of pathos and comedy by introducing, in place of Flaubert's smile, an explicitly comic incident in his own version of the lovers' meeting:

> Als er an ihren Stuhl mit dem Stock stiess, sagte er:
> "Pardon!"
>
> Das aber war aus Komik und Unsinnigkeit so krass, dass sie grinsten, dann in tolles Lachen ausbrachen, das sie von Vorbehalten freispülte. (5,289-90)

Flaubert's phrase "se souriant l'un à l'autre" is thus given new emphasis by Sternheim, in order to reinforce his own interpretation of Flaubert's work.[1]

If Eura dislikes this feature of Flaubert's art and draws a comparison between it and Carl Wundt's theory, it should be noted, nevertheless, that nowhere in the novel does Carl himself make the point. Indeed, he is generally rather reticent. Sternheim's difficulty is obvious: Carl can never be permitted to expound a prescriptive theory,for he would then be guilty of the very evil which he is so concerned to counter. Nor may he express any opinions, for there is always the danger that his views

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1. It is not unusual for Sternheim to borrow and reinterpret a scene from another novelist's work, as the allusion to Heinrich Mann's Im Schlaraffenland in Busekow illustrates.

may be interpreted as an attempt to criticize an aspect of reality, or to influence others. If he is to be entirely consistent, Carl has to argue that his statements are either ends in themselves, or have only private validity. His remarks about the increasing mechanization of American industry are interpreted by Eura as a condemnation of the dehumanizing methods of modern industry. But Carl, if he is to justify his claim that he does not judge reality, must insist that he has no ulterior motive, apart from the desire "es einfach zu bemerken und vielleicht für sich abzulehnen" (5,303). The weakness of his position is obvious: the tone of outright condemnation in which he refers to America as "diese aus Abfällen des alten Erdteils gemachte Nation" (5,302) implies a negative judgement, despite his protestations to the contrary. Eura is not convinced and questions his motives further; he replies that he intended only "es mitzuteilen, da es ins Gespräch passte" (5,303). When Eura persists, he evades the question by suggesting that their happiness in Rouen was similarly without motive or purpose. It is, of course, far easier to claim that happiness is without a specific purpose than to maintain that a series of bitter comments about America should not be construed as an attack. Eura remains unconvinced, and rightly so from her point of view, for, in her opinion, Carl is a "Dilettant" (5,304).[1]

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1. If pressed on the meaning of his phrase "aus Abfällen des alten Erdteils gemacht", Wundt might have been allowed to cite another of Sternheim's more extreme theories, namely, that the word "Abfall" has become polluted by the false negative implications in the prefix "Ab-". On the first page of his projected Encyclopädie (1918), Sternheim actually cites this word, seeing a distortion of its true meaning "in dem gewöhnlich tadelnden Beischmack, mit dem die Worte im heutigen Sprachgebrauch

Carl is always confined to a passive rôle. The limitations of his position, with his constant refusal to draw general conclusions, are underlined on a number of occasions. Eura is justified when she dismisses as cynical his response to the impending outbreak of war as "Neugier und darüber hinaus beruhigte Unterwerfung unter von Gott gewollte kernige Wirklichkeit" (5,409). Carl's views represent a theoretical extreme; pushed to its logical conclusion, his phenomenological approach involves total passivity. Eura's position is scarcely less extreme: the ultimate conclusion of her political activism is martyrdom, which, while it gives her personal satisfaction, is shown to be politically futile. What the different situations in the novel reflect is a dialectic between these two extremes. Through them Sternheim provides test-situations, in which contrasting views on art, politics and relations between the sexes may be explored. It is only when Eura's views are examined in conjunction with Carl's that a set of views emerges which can be closely related to Sternheim's own preoccupations.

Eura has the tendency to overlook the affirmative, more romantic elements in a work of art and to concentrate on the elements of social criticism, of satire. Carl denies that he has any satirical intention as a writer and tends himself to be drawn to the affirmative elements in art. If the two viewpoints are correlated, then each may be seen to be correct,

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(continued) erscheinen . . ." (6,55). But the provocative use of the word in a new value-free sense involves an indirect purpose, namely, the propagation of a new theory of language. But, while Carl uses the word, he cannot be allowed to expound a theory, a fact which makes it expedient for Sternheim to introduce Dr. Rank.

provided that the work in question contains a balance between criticism and affirmation. Carl does not make out a case for such a balance of perspectives; nor does he maintain that Flaubert's work contains such a balance. His own aesthetic credo is obscure and somewhat misleading; it should not be confused with Sternheim's. He claims that he simply wants to show reality as it is, a process which, on his own admission, "am präzisesten durch das Kunstmittel der Proportion geschieht" (5,303). What exactly this entails, Carl does not say, but if Eura's views are taken into account, it becomes clear that "Proportion" involves the distillation of reality into two essential areas.

If we turn to Sternheim's own theoretical writings, we may throw some light on what the term "Kunstmittel der Proportion" means. In Berlin oder Juste milieu Sternheim reiterates the distinction between the "Denkinhalte" and the "Beziehungsinhalte" which he had drawn in Europa. But, having established the distinction, he goes on to postulate that art provides the "untendenziöse . . . Aufzeichnung dieser immer wieder neue Kombinationen ergebenden Wechselwirkung beider schaffenden Gewalten . . ." (6,171). Two years later, in Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu, art is defined, in much the same terms, as the "Sichtbarmachung der zwischen beiden Kräften des wirklichen Seins, Vernunft und Sitte, ewig stattfindenden Zusammenstösse mittels eigener künstlerischer Massgesetze" (6,201).[1] The examination of the influence of Rickert's philosophy on Sternheim above[2]

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1. My italics.
2. See Chapter II.

shows that "Vernunft" and "Sitte" here correspond to the "scientific" and the "historical" respectively. The co-presence of the two perspectives of satire and affirmation is a reflection of Sternheim's desire to attack the unwarranted extension of the "scientific" and extol the reassertion of the "historical" and the harmony which it brings. When Sternheim claims that art is a true "Gleichnis" of reality, he means that art alone contains both essential elements; when he argues that the artist has no standpoint, it is because affirmation and criticism cancel each other out. What art does, in Sternheim's view, is to concentrate and distil reality, to juxtapose starkly its two essential elements. It is this general principle which informs Sternheim's own work and which is so striking in Europa, as the examination of the imagery has indicated. In a letter to Edschmid of 5 January 1920, Sternheim draws attention to the balance in the structure of the work:

> Gegenüber dem Versagen des Mannes war mir das Schicksal des Weibs interessant, gegenüber dem europäischen Minus konnte nur das Hereinspielen aussereuropäischer Luft interessieren. (5,507 and 6,103)

In the debates on art in Europa, then, Sternheim is above all concerned to clarify the problematic nature of his own aesthetic theory. Carl Wundt is made to put forward a phenomenological approach, affirming reality as it is, while Eura adopts a politically committed position, criticizing reality from a fixed standpoint. Yet the conflict between them is never resolved. Although Carl's position appears to correspond more closely with Sternheim's own, Carl is not a convincing advocate. That Eura can mount a serious challenge to his views indicates Sternheim's own conviction that the phenomenological position is open to attack from

a committed standpoint; from the first moment when Carl denies being a "Regisseur" he runs the risk of becoming merely a "Dilettant". Given Sternheim's political cynicism in 1918-19, it is not surprising to find him identifying Carl Wundt's position with the "Absichtslosigkeit" of French aestheticism. By 1923, as the following study of Gauguin und van Gogh will indicate, he is more concerned to align the phenomenological approach with political commitment in opposition to aestheticism. What he is striving towards in Europa is a compromise between the phenomenological approach and political commitment; he is seeking a committed position which avoids the dangers of moralizing, an aesthetic detachment which does not degenerate into a dilettante aestheticism. The contradictions in the debates between Eura and Carl are never resolved, yet they remain an ideal vehicle for conveying the ambiguity of Sternheim's own work, an ambiguity of criticism and affirmation which has so perplexed and exasperated critics.

V. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH AND AESTHETICISM

In Europa Sternheim is primarily concerned to clarify Carl Wundt's phenomenological approach by contrast with Eura's politically committed position. Eura, as we have seen, represents two possibilities; her adherence to the German idealist tradition points to a didactic, committed approach, while her admiration for aspects of French realism implies an aestheticism closer to Carl Wundt's own notion of "Absichtslosigkeit". Yet the two extremes between which she fluctuates are not unrelated, for in either case the artist manipulates reality, selecting and ordering it, either to point a political moral, or according to its suitability for expressing an inner vision. In either case reality is subordinated to the sovereign will of the artist. The phenomenological approach, on the other hand, involves the subordination of the artist to reality as it is, the complete absence of any desire to change reality in any way. If, in Europa, Sternheim tests out the phenomenological approach against a politically committed one, in Gauguin und van Gogh (1923) he is concerned to distance the phenomenological approach from aestheticism. But in neither instance does he argue a conclusive and unassailable case for the phenomenological approach. Just as the debate between Carl and Eura remains unresolved, despite Sternheim's obvious sympathy with Carl's arguments, so too can it be said that the disagreement between Gauguin and Van Gogh exhibits a certain ambivalence, despite Sternheim's patent approval of Van Gogh's work. In this chapter, then, it is proposed to

examine the ambiguity in Gauguin und van Gogh, a work which is of major importance as a theoretical statement of Sternheim's views and to which criticism has devoted insufficient attention.

(i) Sternheim's image of Van Gogh: the background and sources.

At each stage of Sternheim's development it is Van Gogh who consistently embodies, for him, the highest artistic qualities. In the essay Vincent van Gogh (1910) Van Gogh is presented as the practitioner of a theory which Sternheim derived from Rickert in 1906. According to this theory, the concepts ("Begriffe") which art provides fall into two categories. First, it can render a "Komplex zeitlicher und örtlicher Menschheitsgeschichte" (6,9), preserving for posterity what is representative of a landscape or a past age. Features which are typical, in the sense that they are peculiar to a time or place, are selected and concentrated; the resulting work demonstrates the quality of "Extensität". Van Gogh is seen as having fixed, in such a concept, the characteristic features of the South of France. The second kind of concept which the artist can achieve is illustrated by a quality which, in Sternheim's view, Van Gogh shares with Manet and Renoir: they select objects at random, emphasizing what is essential to all objects of that class or species. The resulting work is characterized by "Intensität" and gives the essence of an object. Van Gogh's unique genius is that he combines both these qualities in his work; the selected objects are always placed in a specific geographical

or historical setting. Van Gogh's work thus embodies both "Überwindung extensiver Mannigfaltigkeit" and "Überwindung intensiver Mannigfaltigkeit" and realizes to perfection the theory which Sternheim evolved from his reading of Rickert's philosophy.

The Legende von Vincent und Paul (1916) reveals that Sternheim's image of Van Gogh, and consequently his own aesthetic theories, undergo significant changes after 1910.[1] After 1914-15 Sternheim comes to regard the whole German cultural tradition, with only a few exceptions, as having shaped the bourgeois ideology which he holds responsible for the outbreak of War. Constrained thus to narrow the scope of his original theory to exclude writers whom he now rejects as bourgeois, Sternheim develops a phenomenological theory. Looking back on this development in his autobiography, Sternheim underlines the shift from Rickert's ideas to a phenomenology associated with Husserl and Scheler:

> Diese allgemeine, geistige, galoppierende Anarchie suchte die badisch-alemannische Philosophenschule, Windelband, Rickert an ihrer Spitze, mindestens für den Begabteren, durch eine "Theorie der Werte" zu bremsen; suchten später Scheeler [sic] und Husserl mit einem Katechismus der unbedingten Werte, ich selbst durch eine "Phänomenologie" unschädlich zu machen.[2]

It is difficult to establish beyond doubt the precise extent of Sternheim's knowledge of Husserl's writings. He is certainly pleased to regard himself and his own work as part of this philosophical tradition, but what he actually adopts amounts to little more than a terminology and a rudimentary

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1. The Legende was first published in Die Aktion 6 (1916), Nos. 27/28, pp. 381-386. With some slight alterations this fragment became the first chapter of Gauguin und van Gogh.

2. Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 123.

version of a method. By a phenomenological approach Sternheim means that the artist should concentrate single-mindedly on the object before him, excluding all theoretical knowledge, all moral, political, social and philosophical preconceptions, and admit only the given; he should disregard all tradition, all that had previously been taught about the object. In the wake of this new theory terms like "das Gegebene","das Vorhandene" and "das schlechthin Seiende" begin to occur with increasing frequency in his work. And, as one might expect, it is with reference to Van Gogh in the Legende of 1916 that Sternheim first mentions the new approach. Van Gogh is made to realize that there is a new prerequisite for artistic creation of which he had not previously been aware:

> . . . dass vorerst er sich der Schöpfung wie dem irdischen Abbild des Schöpfers ohne andere Absicht nähern müsse, als sie unbefangen und durch eigenes Gesicht inne zu werden. (5,492)

From this point onwards, Sternheim is to stress the total absence of standpoint on the artist's part, a notion which informs the "Absichtslosigkeit" of the French realist tradition.

How does this new approach answer Sternheim's need for a theory which would exclude what he regards as bourgeois writers? Previously Sternheim argued that art always involved the process of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit". Now he is emphatic that this is a purely formal process, the artist selecting from the profusion of subjects offered by the empirical world only according to formal criteria. Bourgeois writers of the German idealist tradition since Kant can now be rejected wholesale for having selected subject-matter according to moral, metaphysical, or ideological preconceptions. For Sternheim, the artist should have no

special predilection for the morally good or the aesthetically pleasing; all aspects of reality are of equal value, and any selection can only be made on a formal basis. The corollary of this argument is that outside art no selection should take place at all, a view upheld by Carl Wundt in Europa. Sternheim's coupling of the term "Mannigfaltigkeit" with the epithets "unbescholten" and "unüberwindlich" after 1916 suggests that, when he is not actually discussing the artistic overcoming of "Mannigfaltigkeit", then it is to be preserved at all costs and not diminished by any prior selection. The phenomenological approach which Sternheim imputes to Van Gogh in 1916 is retained and amplified in Gauguin und van Gogh.

If Gauguin und van Gogh is compared with Sternheim's earlier discussions of Van Gogh's life and work, it is not merely the transition to a phenomenological approach which is a striking innovation. A study of the background and development of his image of Van Gogh throws light on many aspects of Sternheim's aesthetics and underlines the importance of Gauguin und van Gogh as a theoretical statement. Sternheim's interest in Van Gogh dates from around 1907, when he first began to build up a personal collection of paintings. In Vorkriegseuropa he recounts his purchase of a Van Gogh painting "den kaum ein Mensch kannte",[1] and then his subsequent visit to Amsterdam, where he claims to have bought half a dozen Van Goghs from the painter's sister-in-law.[2] In spite of Franz Blei's

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1. See Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 132.

2. See Vorkriegseuropa, ed. cit., p. 156 and Lutetia, 6,366-367. Here, too, with reference to the death of Hugo von Tschudi, Sternheim relates how the latter, involved in the acquisition by the Prussian National

attempts to belittle Sternheim's real interest in Van Gogh,[1] it is significant that an early German study of Van Gogh's work, published in 1910, could contain an illustration of the "Arlésienne" with the acknowledgement: "Sammlung Sternheim, Höllriegelskreut".[2]

Sternheim's first tribute to Van Gogh in the essay of 1910 contains, in addition to the theory derived from Rickert, three features which illustrate Sternheim's own preoccupations at that time and which he associates particularly with Van Gogh. The first reflects his desire to read into works of art the personal experience of the artist. He recalls how he had turned from Van Gogh's work to his biography, and, after a brief account of the main events of the painter's life, he concludes:

> . . . da erst wurde aus der Bekräftigung und Beteuerung mit dem Leben dieser holländische Maler des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts ein holder Begriff für mein Dasein Glück. . . . (6,7)

The notion that the artist's work necessarily reflects his personal experience is found at every stage of Sternheim's development. It informs the art-life antithesis in his earliest work and is well illustrated by

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(continued) Gallery of six Van Goghs, found himself the reluctant possessor of all six when Wilhelm II, on viewing the paintings, refused to authorize the transaction. Tschudi later became intendant of the Bavarian State Collection in Munich, and it was there that Sternheim first viewed the paintings in question.

1. See Franz Blei, Erzählung eines Lebens, Leipzig, 1930, pp. 433-42. Blei maintains that Sternheim showed no interest in Van Gogh in 1907 and had ridiculed Blei's own suggestion that some of Van Gogh's drawings be published in the periodical Hyperion, which they edited jointly. Sternheim's later enthusiasm was the product, Blei claims, of his admiration, not for the painter, but for Hugo von Tschudi.

2. See Julius Meier-Graefe, Vincent van Gogh, 3rd ed., Munich, 1910, opposite p. 52.

the fact that even the representatives of the phenomenological approach are permitted to read into works of art private significance, with respect either to the author or to themselves.[1] If Sternheim returns from Van Gogh's biography to his work with increased understanding and enrichment, it is because he tends to regard art as the expression of personal experience. And even if the excursus on Rickert's ideas points to his concern with formal elements in Van Gogh's work, he seems anxious to point out that formal analysis is merely the rationalization of an intuitive response:

> Da erlebte ich Wonnen eines geistigen Vorganges, der pries, was Intuition gewagt hatte, der mit Gründen das Kunstwerk bejahte, und den ich Kritik heisse. (6,8)

Both the Legende and Gauguin und van Gogh are concerned to relate Van Gogh's art to his experience. Indeed, it is as much the painter's life, his unconventional behaviour, his social and political sympathies, as his work which appeals to Sternheim.

A second feature of the essay of 1910 is the use of the "heterocosmic analogue",[2] the romantic notion of the artist's creativity as analogous to the Creation. Thus Sternheim can write of Van Gogh:

> Er beginnt wie der Herrgott selbst mit der Scheidung von Licht und Finsternis. . . . Er vermochte wie jeder Schöpfer in sich

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1. Sternheim is himself always prone to read into works the artist's private experience, as a delightful example from a letter to Thea of 1906 illustrates. After citing Panthalis' speech from Faust, the lines which conclude: "nicht nur Verdienst, auch Treue wahrt uns die Person" (7,843), Sternheim confidently notes: "Eckermann ist gemeint. Müller und einige. Die mögen wohl eine Thräne beim Lesen im Auge gehabt haben. Es war Goethes Dank für sie" (7,843).

2. See M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, New York, 1958, pp. 272-85. Abrams traces the sources and development of this notion of poetic creativity; I have adopted his term.

> das Chaos, die totale Verworrenheit und Finsternis als Voraussetzung zu empfinden und lehnte die Vorarbeit jedes Anderen zur Erhellung ab. Auch Gottes selbst. (6,10-11)

In his early plays and poems before 1906, the young Sternheim set great store by inspiration and genius, terms which implied a notion of the artist as a Promethean rival of God. If he still uses the image in 1910, it is in a slightly different sense. "Gottvaters Arbeit nachzumachen" (6,10) simply entails the concentration and distillation of the world as it is, in order "das Einzeln Geschaffene zu einem neuen All zu vereinen" (6,10). If there are echoes of a rivalry between God and the artistic genius, there are also pointers to the later theory that the artist's work supplements that of God, that the artist does not create a new world, but reproduces the existing one in more concentrated form.[1] The "heterocosmic analogue" is not found in the Legende in 1916; by 1923 any suggestion of the artist's autonomous will is completely rejected by Van Gogh. Sternheim's evolving image of Van Gogh illustrates his growing suspicion that this image for poetic creativity implies an aestheticism no longer commensurate with his phenomenological approach.

A third feature of the essay of 1910 recalls the neo-Romanticism in Sternheim's early work. The "heterocosmic analogue" was, in fact, only one example of a general tendency to confuse the spheres of the religious, the erotic and the aesthetic. In the Van Gogh essay the artist's relationship to reality is similarly expressed in terms of a

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1. The transition is already complete by 1913. In Sternheim, "Briefe an Blei", No. 3, 23 November 1913, Sternheim states quite categorically that "die künstlerische Form ist der Gegensatz zur Form des Schöpfers. Künstler und Gott stehen sich gewissermassen ergänzend gegenüber. . . ."

sexual relationship:

> Bei sengender Glut finden . . . Mysterien eines Liebestaumels statt zwischen aufgespreizter Natur und einem Mann, der ihr Inneres durchwühlend die Trophäen ihrer Eingeweide als Überwinder aufzeigend zum Himmel hebt. . . .
>
> Man fühlt, die schüchternen Küsse sind getauscht, der Liebende hat der Geliebten Launen und Mannigfaltigkeiten besiegt, und beide sind bei jeder Vereinigung einfach zum Letzten Gewaltigsten entschlossen gewillt. (6,11-12)

Significantly enough, even the purely formal process of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit" acquires erotic connotations in the above quotation. In Sternheim's later work the confusion of the artistic and the erotic is never expressed quite so vividly, although it remains a feature of Sternheim's theory. In Europa, as we have seen, the erotic is a component of the idyll and is subsumed into the general category of "Beziehungsinhalte".

Sternheim's image of Van Gogh in 1910 owes a great deal to the work of the art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, who had been a contributor to Hyperion, the periodical jointly edited by Blei and Sternheim. Meier-Graefe's chapter on Van Gogh in his Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Malerei (1904), prefaced with a Nietzsche-quotation, seems to cater for an interest on the part of the public for an individual "life" as the content of art. In a study of 1907, Meier-Graefe not only proclaims an aesthetic in which art is viewed as the product of the artist's victory over nature, but expresses it in language which Sternheim clearly echoes in his essay on Van Gogh of 1910:

> Alle grossen Kunstwerke sind Trophäen siegreicher Kämpfe. . . . Aus van Goghs Arleser Bildern brennt der Kampf deutlicher, zuweilen mit betäubendem Getöse. Unter dem sengenden Himmel werden seine Bilder zu Flammen.[1]

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1. J. Meier-Graefe, Impressionisten, 2nd ed., Munich, 1907, pp. 31-32. The chapter on Van Gogh was later published separately as Vincent van Gogh, Munich, 1910.

Meier-Graefe's pioneering study of Van Gogh was instrumental in the creation of what amounted to a Van Gogh mythology in Germany. His is the first of a spate of publications over the next two decades in which Van Gogh is portrayed as a Gothic artist, an archetypal "northern" man, whose gloomy religious broodings could be transmuted into art only if he left the mist-shrouded North for the bright sunlight of a Mediterranean landscape. It can be claimed, without exaggeration, that Van Gogh is depicted as a latter-day Faust, whose journey to Arles is invested with associations of Faust's quest for Helena. For Meier-Graefe, Van Gogh is a tragic hero; and the quasi-religious intensity of his experience prompts the use of another epithet:

> Er hat den Ernst Millets noch ernster, beinahe könnte man sagen, lutherisch gemacht.[1]

Another epithet, "barbarisch", acquires a positive sense in conjunction with the reference to Van Gogh as a Germanic artist; Meier-Graefe can announce with approval that "das Wunderbare daran ist, dass das Barbarische nicht hemmt, sondern bereichert".[2] Thus, when Sternheim describes Van Gogh's artistic development as a progression from northern darkness to the light of the south, he is reiterating a view to which Meier-Graefe's portrait gave widespread currency. The strong religious element in Sternheim's image of Van Gogh, together with the emphasis on the painter's individualism and heroism, is undoubtedly conditioned by Meier-Graefe's writings. But, if these are the features which attract Sternheim to Van

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1. J. Meier-Graefe, Impressionisten, Munich, 1907, p. 48.

2. ibid.

Gogh, it is his own reading of Rickert which supplies the aesthetic theory to which the painter is seen as subscribing.

The Legende of 1916 contains the first statement of the phenomenological approach and hints at some of its underlying causes. The Van Gogh of the Legende is vehemently anti-bourgeois; his whole life implies the rejection of the materialism and conformism which Sternheim held to be characteristically bourgeois traits. Van Gogh's aesthetic theory, his claim to view reality without metaphysical or moral preconceptions, is related to his view of society; his family background and education are shown to be beset with moral imperatives, so that an art free from moral strictures is, at the same time, a protest against a bourgeois tradition. Van Gogh's "naive", unbiased vision is both the prerequisite for "Erkenntnis" and a contradiction of accepted values. It is in this sense that the phenomenological approach can be said to imply a revolutionary stance. In perceiving an object, Van Gogh puts out of his mind any associations which that object may have for him; when such associations nevertheless impinge on his consciousness, "da musste er den Willen zu ursprünglicher Wahrnehmung spornen. . . " (5,493). The artist's own personality is entirely absent from the pictures which are thus created:

> Die Bilder sind stark und still und atmen das in sie verschwendete Leben. Man wird durch sie bewegt und nimmt das Dargestellte ernst, als sei man durch diese Blumen höchstselbst betroffen; aus ihnen hat man plötzlich das Mass zu Dingen. (5,494)

The use of the term "Leben" here does not suggest that the pictures recall the personal experience of the artist, but simply underlines the intensity of his vision. Here the phenomenological approach appears in its purest form.

The aesthetic propounded here can be usefully compared to that aspect of Van Gogh's art which Sternheim described in 1910 as "Überwindung intensiver Mannigfaltigkeit", a process by which the artist selects certain objects, subordinates their less characteristic elements to those features essential to all objects of that name, and thus arrives at a concept ("Begriff") of the object in question. The procedure is retained in 1916, but is now more rigorous, requiring the exclusion of all traditional associations and accepted values. The result remains a short cut to "Erkenntnis", the spectator being enabled to grasp instantaneously and comparatively effortlessly the essence of an object, the species or class within the individual. What is new is the socio-political dimension; the essence is now not merely what is characteristic of a class of objects, but what remains after the bourgeois accretions have been stripped away. The approach requires not merely the isolation of the object, but its dissection:

> . . . die Blicke rissen die Schöpfung aus den Rahmen, in die sie oberflächliches Leben überall spannte, und zerlegten sie in ihre endlichen Teile. . . . Die Felsen sprengte er und teilte die Wasser, schob den Männern den Anzug, Weibern begegnend das Kleid zur Seite und erkannte mit dringendem Zusehen Haut, Muskel und Skelett. (5,493)

Such a process of dissection is a necessary prerequisite for the concentration of reality which Sternheim now sees as the artist's main task. That he ascribes this technique both to the painter and the creative writer is illustrated by some remarks made in a letter to Franz Blei in 1916:

> Raffael . . . sah vom Kern aufwärts. Die andern schildern Oberfläche, Schall, Geruch. Psychologisches. Auch Boticelli [sic] sah Skelett. Unsere heutige Sprache ist Fett. Kaum: Muskel. Nie Knochen. Und nie, was noch dahinter ist.[1]

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1. Sternheim, "Briefe an Blei", No. 4, 31 October 1916.

As early as 1905-6 Sternheim had praised Raphael for his skill in penetrating beneath the surface of things, of distilling their essence, their underlying structure. If he repeats the tribute in 1916, it is with the additional implication that Raphael viewed reality phenomenologically.

The account of the phenomenological method in the Legende is retained when this fragment is adapted to become the first chapter of Gauguin und van Gogh, which was written in 1923 and published the following year. But one feature of the account in the Legende is conspicuously absent from the later work. In 1916 Sternheim emphasized the religious element in Van Gogh's attitude to reality; in 1923 this is entirely missing. In 1916 Van Gogh's increasing desire to leave Paris was expressed in the form that his will had "auf Sonne und Gott gepocht" (5,490); in 1923 this becomes simply "ins Freie gepocht" (5,67). In 1916 Vincent had grasped the purpose of his life as "Wesen des Allmächtigen . . . aufzufangen" (5,491), which is later adapted to "des Wesentlichen Kern" (5,67). Of this new purpose in the artist's life Sternheim had written in 1916:

> Das sollte, zum Ausgleich bisher sündhaften Wandels, musste für den Rest des diesseitigen und alles jenseitige Leben der geziemende Geleitbrief sein. (5,491)

In 1923 the epithet "sündhaft" becomes "finster", and "alles jenseitige" is omitted. The following section of the Legende is dropped completely:

> Aus vehementer Helligkeit ward für zwei Augen Natur des Gewachsenen nicht nur, sondern über Natur noch Gottes Sinn und Laune mit Blumen offenbar und gab ihnen Gewissheit. Da dankte Vincent mit gebogenem Knie. . . . (5,491)

Finally, in the 1916 version, what had driven Vincent away from the city was "das immer deutlicher gespürte Fehlen Gottes in ihm" (5,492); this, too, is secularized to become the "Fehlen des runden Mittelpunkts in ihm" (5,68).

There are several possible explanations for these alterations. It is conceivable that Sternheim had not grasped the wider implications of his phenomenological aesthetic in 1916 and still wanted to preserve the admixture of religious associations which characterized his image of Van Gogh in 1910, as well as his earlier views on art up to 1906. Religious elements still survive in Europa in the examples of the baroque carving of the Madonna and Rogier van der Weyden's painting. A second possibility is that Sternheim came to identify the religious connotations of creativity with the "heterocosmic analogue" and thence with the pure aestheticism which he rejected in 1923. Yet the most likely explanation is that Sternheim was seeking to distance himself from the image of Van Gogh put forward, this time at much greater length, by Julius Meier-Graefe in his Vincent van Gogh: Der Roman eines Gottsuchers (1921). As his title suggests, Meier-Graefe placed increasing emphasis on religion in Van Gogh's life and work. Sternheim came to regard this development, along with other of Meier-Graefe's propositions, with some suspicion.

Sternheim's use of source-material in Gauguin und van Gogh is particularly revealing. Large sections consist of translation, strong verbal echoes and sometimes unattributed word-for-word quotation from several sources. Biographical details are liberally culled from two editions of Van Gogh's letters[1] and from Paul Gaugin's account of the

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1. Vincent van Gogh, Briefe an seinen Bruder, ed. J. van Gogh-Bonger, trans. Leo Klein-Diepold and Carl Einstein, 2 vols., Berlin, 1914; and Briefe, ed. Margarete Mauthner, 4th ed., Berlin, 1911.

meeting of the two painters in Arles.[1] If the first three chapters are relatively free from borrowings, from the fourth chapter onwards Sternheim's text is often simply a rephrasing of sentences found in the sources. The opening of the fourth chapter provides a good illustration of the process; Sternheim's text is quoted first:

> Manchmal meinte er, sein Blut finge mit der neuen Lebensart wieder zu kreisen an, was in Paris nicht mehr der Fall gewesen war. Einmal hatte er auch öffentliches Glück, als vor der Tür des Bordells zwei Italiener aus Eifersucht auf eine Insassin zwei Zuaven erschlagen hatten. Da sah er auf kein Kommando, doch beim rasenden Versuch, die Mörder zu lynchen, eine Menge so ausser sich, wie sie es sich sonst nicht erlaubt hatte.
>
> Von überallher holte er Beweise, theoretisch hatte in seinen markantesten Köpfen das Jahrhundert sich schon zu gleicher Lebensauffassung wie er bekannt; praktisch sie aber nicht gelebt. Er notierte Flauberts Bekenntnis: Talent ist Riesengeduld, Originalität hingesunkene Betrachtung. Maupassants Ruf: Zivilisation zur Natur übertreiben! Und befolgte ihn. Suchte wie Courbet ohne bürgerliches Ideal und Religion zu sein. Liess sich von seinem Posten bei gebärender Schöpfung durch Frühlingsstürme nicht vertreiben, band seine Staffelei an Stützen fest, die er in den Boden gerammt hatte. Trotzte in Arbeitswut allen Wettergewalten. Da Bäume in Buntheit lohten, wollte er einen richtigen Obstgarten der Provence, seine hinreissende Heiterkeit machen, die Sache mit des Sansculotten Frechheit hinlegen, das Eisen schmieden, so lange es warm war; denn nicht lange würde das Obst so blühen. (5,91)

The letters from which these lines are taken may be found in the second volume of Van Gogh's Briefe an seinen Bruder (1914); in each case the number of the letter and the page-reference in this edition are noted in parenthesis:

> Zeitweise glaube ich, dass mein Blut wieder anfangen will, richtig zu zirkulieren, was in der letzten Zeit in Paris nicht mehr der Fall war. (448, p. 312)

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1. P. Gaugin, Vorher und Nachher, trans. Erik-Ernst Schwabach, Munich, 1920. Dr. Manfred Linke informs me that the Sternheims had the original manuscript of this work in their possession for a time and regretted not having purchased it.

Neulich habe ich der Untersuchung eines Verbrechens beigewohnt, das hier vor der Tür eines Bordells begangen worden ist. Zwei Italiener haben zwei Zuaven getötet. . . . Die Menge hat nahezu . . . die beiden Mörder, die im Gefängnis des Stadthauses sitzen, gelyncht. (453, p. 322)

Ich lese eben 'Pierre et Jean' von Guy de Maupassant. Es ist schön. Hast du die Vorrede gelesen, wo von der Freiheit des Künstlers die Rede ist, zu übertreiben, in seinem Buch eine Natur zu schaffen, die schöner, einfacher, tröstender ist. Auch das Wort von Flaubert wird darin erklärt: Talent ist grosse Geduld, und Originalität ist nichts als eine Anstrengung des Willens und intensive Beobachtung. (454, p. 323)

Ich habe beim Malen viel unter dem Wind zu leiden, aber ich binde meine Staffelei an Stäbe, die ich in die Erde stecke, und so arbeite ich trotz allem. (456, p. 327)

Ich bin in Arbeitswut. Die Bäume stehen hier in Blüte, und ich möchte einen richtigen Obstgarten der Provence mit seiner hinreissenden Heiterkeit fertig machen. . . . Man muss die Sprache anpacken mit der Frechheit von Sansculottes. . . . (457, p. 327)

> Du weisst, dass ich in meiner Arbeit schwanke, und dass diese Leidenschaft, Obstbäume zu malen, nicht immer anhalten wird. . . . Ich kann nicht anderes tun, als das Eisen schmieden, solange es heiss ist. (458, p. 330)

This exercise serves to indicate not only the debt which Sternheim owes to his sources, but also the striking similarity between his own preoccupations and those of Van Gogh. Van Gogh's appeal to the authority of Flaubert and Maupassant is clearly calculated to appeal to Sternheim, as is the statement that "man muss die Sprache anpacken".

Tracing the sources of Gauguin und van Gogh also has the effect of bringing into sharper focus the passages which are Sternheim's own. The aesthetic theory and the socio-political comments are Sternheim's; what he borrows is the biographical detail of Van Gogh's stay in Arles, together with Gauguin's short account of the quarrel itself. The inner motivation, both of the quarrel and of Van Gogh's suicide, is invented by Sternheim. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that as many as fourteen of the

remaining thirty-eight pages after the third chapter are very closely modelled on the sources; and, in view of the extent of the borrowing, great care must be exercised before views ascribed to Van Gogh are accepted as Sternheim's own.

(ii) Theory and polemic in Gauguin und van Gogh.

The first point made about Van Gogh's work is that it is phenomenological, in the sense that it is not based on preconceptions, nor is it derived from traditional models; it is stated explicitly that "der Weg lief nicht schriftlicher Überlieferung, keiner Erfahrung anderer nach" (5,68). The artist approaches reality "ohne Absicht" (5,69), subordinating himself completely to the object and transferring to it no private associations. This enables him to grasp "das Ursprüngliche" (5,69), a term synonymous in Sternheim's aesthetics after 1916 with "das Wesen", "das Wesentliche" and "der Kern". So completely has Sternheim identified his earlier notion of Rickert's historically individual ("das Besondere") with his phenomenological approach, that Van Gogh is made to perceive "das Ursprüngliche, den besonderen Stoff und Farbe und Bau" (5,69). In order to achieve the complete isolation of objects within his consciousness, the artist must bring to bear a powerful will. The outcome is a grasp of essential reality:

> Strahlt augenblickliche Wirklichkeit ihm zu, setzt Vincent für die zufällige Erscheinung die gültigere Form seiner Erfahrung aus ihr. (5,70)

The process is virtually identical to that which Sternheim had called "Überwindung intensiver Mannigfaltigkeit". In the essay of 1910 he had noted that "das Bild vom Spargel mehr ein Spargel ist als er selbst!" (6,10). In 1923 the formulation is very similar:

> Bunt steht wollüstiger Frühling da und ist durch des Meisters Wurf im Bild wollüstiger und bunter. (5,70-71)

Essential reality does not exist empirically; it comes into existence only when the artist penetrates beneath the surface of the empirical world to reveal its inner structure. The important point is the shift of emphasis in Sternheim's theory; what had in 1910 constituted only part of Van Gogh's achievement, becomes, under the influence of the phenomenological method, the central feature of his art.

Throughout the work Sternheim is at pains to stress his phenomenological theory. Van Gogh rigorously excludes "aus Vergangenheit, Schrift, Bildern und Erzähltem mitgebrachte Vorstellung" (5,69). The implication is that traditional approaches are both conformist and sterile:

> Von Vorwänden, Vorurteilen, gesitteter, gesippter Menschen, historischen und zeitgenössischen frei, sah er nicht Denkmäler, Symbole, Andenken, Katafalke mehr, doch war Bauch an Bauch am All jeder Beichte der Natur gewachsen, zu seiner bis ans Ende gewillt, wirklichkeitslüstern. (5,75-76)

In accordance with the theory, Sternheim is forced to argue that Van Gogh models his work on no other artist; it is Gauguin who is later made to advise Vincent to paint "erzählende Kompositionen nach Millet und Delacroix" (5,121). Here Sternheim falsifies the fact that Van Gogh willingly chose to work from such models, which he greatly admired, and that he appears to have derived benefit from the formal constraints thus placed upon him. For Sternheim, such models would be "Denkmäler",

already rich in association, and hence it is Gauguin, the bourgeois artist, who misleadingly advises Van Gogh to paint traditional motifs.

Sternheim raises the problem of "das ursprünglich Menschliche" (5,86) as the subject-matter of a work, a prelude to, and a pretext for, an attack on conventional morality as a distortion of human nature. As the scheme in Europa illustrates, morality is, for Sternheim, confined to the realm of the "Beziehungsinhalte" and cannot be reduced to universally applicable, prescriptive laws. By morality Sternheim usually means sexual morality; he implies that polite, "unnatural" manners are adopted in public, but are ignored in private, and that if, therefore, the artist wishes to reveal human nature stripped of its bourgeois conventions, he must eavesdrop on the private moments of others. Criticism has already drawn attention to Sternheim's voyeurism, but has omitted to point out that he introduces it overtly into his general theory.[1] Of Van Gogh he writes:

> Da hiess es . . . sich an den Einzelnen pürschen, ihn, wo er sich allein glaubte, und das Unvorbildliche aus ihm geschah, entlarven. (5,86)

Sternheim attempts to underline the significance of voyeurism in art and further justify it by quoting Huysmans' praise of the Degas exhibition of

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1. W. G. Sebald, Carl Sternheim: Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära, Stuttgart, 1969, pp. 64-66, lists nine examples of voyeurism. Although Sebald disclaims any intention of showing "die Verklemmtheit der Psyche Sternheims", he concludes that the recurrence of such scenes points to Sternheim's projection of an "egozentrisches Bewusstsein, einem Zwangsmechanismus gehorchend, in seine Umwelt", which amounts to virtually the same thing.

1886.[1] Degas is extolled not only for having revealed the intimate details of a woman's life, but for having thereby countered the prevailing tendency to idealize woman. Once more, the unbiased phenomenological approach is, paradoxically, aggressive. The frequent instances of voyeurism in Sternheim's work may well throw light on his own psyche, but they also have a function within the works of shocking the reader by unmasking what moral convention holds dear. It is as if Sternheim were seeking to provoke the reader into making a moral judgement about the work in order to underline the reader's failure to approach the work phenomenologically. That this is a conscious technique on Sternheim's part has been illustrated by the debate in Europa in which Carl uses language with negative associations to describe America.[2] When Eura, not unnaturally, assumes that Carl is being critical, he can reproach her for her failure to view language phenomenologically. Sternheim thus underlines the significance of the new approach by introducing situations in which the reader wrongly imputes to the author a definite standpoint, or passages in which the reader's own moral standpoint is challenged.

A subject raised at the very beginning of Gauguin und van Gogh is the relationship between the individual and society, a theme which can never be completely divorced from the aesthetic theory. Van Gogh's

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1. This passage is a literal translation of J.-K. Huysmans, Certains, Paris, 1908, pp. 23-26. What appeals to Sternheim in Huysmans' description is the emphasis on provocation. Sternheim also ascribes to Van Gogh Huysmans' sentiment that the architectural monuments of Paris should be torn down (see 5,87); this reference is found in Certains, ed. cit., p. 165.

2. See 5,302.

arrival in Arles is much more than the mere biographical detail which it appears to be. His letter to his brother, Theo, contained the comment: "ich war gestern mehr oder weniger tot".[1] Sternheim expands this into a sociological theory; in Paris Van Gogh had been "dicht am Tode seines Ichs" (5,77). Throughout the work Paris represents urban bourgeois culture, with its industrialization, its aggressive materialism and its depersonalization. Sternheim's negative response to the mushrooming metropolis of Berlin, elaborated at length in Berlin oder Juste milieu, is here repeated. The bourgeois evils--the worship of mediocrity, the acceptance of an absolute morality, and, most insidious of all, the prevailing conformism--are now transferred wholesale from Berlin to Paris. Only through flight from the capital is Van Gogh able to preserve the integrity of his personality. The journey to Arles--which comes to symbolize freshness and fecundity--represents a rejection of the bourgeois city, a spiritual rebirth. Significantly it is Van Gogh's return to Paris which Sternheim holds responsible for his final collapse, concluding that "Paris und alles was mit der Stadt zusammenhing, erschlug ihn schnell" (5,142). The conformism of Paris drives Van Gogh to "barbarischem Ausfall gegen die Gesellschaft" (5,82). The vice of prostitution is causally related to an urban society: only when his emotions are confused by Gauguin does Van Gogh visit the prostitute in Arles, whereas in Paris such visits had been a constant feature of his life.[2] Ideally Van Gogh

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1. Vincent van Gogh, Briefe an seinen Bruder, Berlin, 1914, II, 312.

2. See 5,82 and 5,92.

advocates celibacy for the artist, who may then channel his creative energies into his art. But, if prostitution is linked to the city, with its destructive effect on individuality, the prostitute herself is praised; her self-forgetfulness at least enables those on whom she bestows her favours to boost their deflated egos. The implication is that such a recourse is unnecessary in the natural state; only when individuality has already been eroded by bourgeois conformism does the prostitute offer a momentary respite. She herself is not condemned; she is at once the product and the victim of modern society.

In accordance with Sternheim's theories, Van Gogh does not advocate political or religious solutions to social evils, for both Marxism and Christianity presuppose a collective consciousness, a single set of laws applicable to all human situations. This Sternheim repudiates, and Van Gogh is consequently made to proclaim a more individual solution, namely "gegen blöde Vorurteile herrschender Klassen den geistigen Befreiungskrieg aller" (5,100). Sternheim conforms to a long-standing tradition when he regards the French Revolution as marking the triumph of the bourgeoisie over the aristocracy and thus as illustrating the theory that political revolutions simply reverse the existing order of society, but do not abolish that structure. To illustrate this point he projects into Roulin—the postman who sat for a number of Van Gogh's studies—social attitudes strikingly similar to those of his own bourgeois hero; an indirect parallel is drawn between Roulin and Wilhelm Ständer, the central figure of Tabula rasa (1916), by the verbal reminiscence:

> Die Republik, die er [i.e. Roulin] sabotierte, wo er konnte, war ihm der wüsteste Ausbeuter, mit dem er "tabla rabla" machen würde. (5,101)

In the first act of Tabula rasa Ständer is characterized by his mastery of socialist jargon, his secretly indulged passion for good food, his disapproval of the revolutionary views of Werner Sturm and his willingness to sabotage work at the glass-factory for his personal ends. All these traits are shared by Roulin. The summing-up of Roulin's character could equally well stand as a motto for Ständer, or indeed, for Sternheim's "bürgerlicher Held" in general: Roulin was "eine schlichte, brave Haut: ideologische und religiöse Bedürfnisse hatte er nicht" (5,102). With this indirect allusion to his own work, Sternheim is drawing a comparison between himself and Van Gogh; both sympathize with such characters as Roulin and both make them the subject of creative works.

In Gauguin und van Gogh Sternheim does not argue that radical individualism is an end in itself; it is merely the prerequisite for a free community. In the story itself he provides two alternatives to bourgeois society. The first is the notion of an artist-community, an idea which, incidentally, preoccupied Van Gogh himself and which he sought to realize in Arles. Such a community, Sternheim argues, is possible only "auf dem Boden so gutbegriffener Unvergleichlichkeit" (5,78). The counterpart of a mechanistic bourgeois society ("Gesellschaft") is an organic community ("charaktervolle Gemeinschaft"), founded on the self-realization of each member. If Gaugin's bourgeois attitude prevents the fulfilment of this hope, a second alternative community is found later in the story in the asylum at St. Rémy, where the inmates have "nicht nur vollen Mut zu ihrer eigenen Geisteshaltung, doch auch zu der der anderen" (5,136). The motif of a true community outside society is frequently

found in Sternheim's own work: it occurs in Heidenstam, Der Anschluss and Meta, in addition to informing the primitive idyll found elsewhere. As to life in the asylum, Sternheim needs only to repeat Van Gogh's own impressions, although he does, it is true, fit them into a social theory of his own. Van Gogh wrote of St. Rémy:

> Obwohl man beständig Schreie und furchtbares Heulen hört, so kennen sich trotzdem die Leute hier gut untereinander und einer hilft dem anderen, wenn er in eine Krise fällt.[1]

Seizing on this comment, and repeating it, Sternheim idealizes the community spirit found in the asylum and contrasts it with the artificial society outside its walls.

The ultimate source of Sternheim's antithesis between society and the community is almost certainly Ferdinand Tönnies' influential work Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (1887).[2] "Gesellschaft" suggests, for Tönnies, arbitrary relations between men, founded on a mere social contract of mutual self-interest; "Gemeinschaft", on the other hand, is based on sympathy; its cohesion is the result of natural, organic growth. It is the older form, now jeopardized by the mechanistic forces of modern society. The weaknesses and dangers of Tönnies' theories are not at issue here;[3] what is significant is not that Sternheim's views may have

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1. Vincent van Gogh, Briefe an seinen Bruder, Berlin, 1914, II, 575.

2. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, pp. 230-246, purports to consider "geistesgeschichtliche Einflüsse", yet, surprisingly, makes no mention of Tönnies' work, nor of that of Sombart.

3. For a critical discussion of Tönnies' ideas in relation to German sociology, see Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, London, 1968. Dahrendorf sums up Tönnies' antithesis as "historically misleading, sociologically uninformed, and politically illiberal" (op. cit., p. 128).

been conditioned by Tönnies, but that the latter's antithesis is subsumed into Sternheim's general theoretical scheme. "Gemeinschaft" is represented in Sternheim's work as an idyll of mutual respect for personal freedom, of mutual acceptance of individual differences; it belongs within the realm of the "Beziehungsinhalte". "Gesellschaft", by contrast, is linked to the "scientific", the realm of mechanistic determinism. By 1920, as we have seen, Sternheim views art as demonstrating the collisions between the "historical" and the "scientific"; in terms of Tönnies' sociological antithesis, art may be said to portray collisions between society and the community of free individuals. The social theme is an important component in the conflict between Carl and Eura in Europa, and between Gauguin and Van Gogh.

The relationship between the individual and society has a direct bearing on the problem of artistic integrity. At the height of their quarrel Van Gogh is to cast doubt on Gaugin's personal integrity with his question: "Wer endlich bist du, Paul Gauguin?" (5,116). That this question should arise from a discussion about painting serves to underline Sternheim's conviction that social attitudes imply approaches to art and vice versa. The aesthetic debate here is between Van Gogh's phenomenological approach and Gauguin's aestheticism, which is presented as the highest achievement of bourgeois art. The crucial factor at issue is the relationship between art and reality. Initially Van Gogh marvels that Gauguin can paint "als habe er die Welt kaum noch anzusehen" (5,111). But his admiration gives way to incredulity when Gauguin advises him to paint from memory and chides him for abandoning himself so completely to his

model. Van Gogh insists that, both socially and artistically, only "demütige Hingabe an das Vorhandene" (5,103) is permissible. In his view reality is perfect in itself and must be approached without preconceptions; it should not be submitted to any process of selection, which is what working from memory would inevitably entail. Gauguin's counter-argument is that the richness of the empirical world can never be fully conveyed; it must be hinted at:

> Unfassbare Fülle, unerschöpflicher Quell, davonjagende Mannigfaltigkeit in Raum und Zeit ist höchstens begrifflich von uns und gruppenweis anzudeuten. (5,112)

It is worth noting that Gauguin, the exponent of bourgeois art, is permitted to express his aesthetic in terms very similar to Sternheim's own theory of art as "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit". But, in fact, Gauguin does not overcome "Mannigfaltigkeit"; he merely suggests its richness. For him, art cannot provide knowledge of single objects, but at best conveys "Traum", "Sehnsucht" and "Glaube". This theoretical divergence accounts for the differences in the techniques adopted by the two painters: Van Gogh juxtaposes strongly contrasting colours, so as to isolate the object from its background; Gauguin advocates gradual changes in tone, chiaroscuro, and rejects Van Gogh's colours as "taktlos brutal" (5,112). A key-word in the renewal of the argument is the term "Deutungsmöglichkeiten". For Gaugin the evocative, suggestive quality of art means that a given work is open to a variety of interpretations; Van Gogh insists that art provides absolutely unambiguous "concepts" of objects, penetrating to their underlying essence, defining them once and for all. Gauguin pleads for restraint on the artist's part, so that the teeming possibilities inherent

in reality may be suggested; the artist should, he claims, remain detached from reality, in order that he may better select and manipulate it to obtain a maximum of expressive content.

The social conflict reasserts itself at this point in the story. Van Gogh's view is that reality is already perfect in itself and that the artist need only approach it humbly and surrender himself to it. Gauguin, he argues, cannot countenance such self-effacement because a depersonalized bourgeois culture has shaken his belief in his own uniqueness; this insecurity explains Gauguin's need to project his personality into all that he paints. He uses reality merely as a shell into which he may pour his personal experience. Such an approach, Van Gogh argues, is prejudiced, it involves selecting aspects of reality according to their suitability for expressing the artist's personality. This approach implies a denigration of reality, a subordination of it to the artist's ego. To Van Gogh this kind of art is essentially escapist, the artist compensating for his lack of true individuality by claiming absolute sovereignty in his art. He rejects in advance Gauguin's flight to an idyllic life in the south seas; Gauguin, he argues, would not accept the natives for what they were, but would read into and savour in their behaviour merely an implied contrast with an effete bourgeois civilization.

Gauguin represents pure aestheticism; he can create art out of nothing. Van Gogh puts the difference between their attitudes succinctly;

> Du willst das Nichts--ich muss das Etwas beleben. (5,115)

But it should not be thought that Gauguin's art is totally repudiated; indeed, Sternheim is at pains to avoid giving such an impression. After

their first major quarrel Van Gogh returns to the house to find that Gauguin has completed a still life to complement one of his own. In fact, both of these works, Van Gogh's "Still Life with Coffee Pot" and Gauguin's "Still Life with Three Puppies drinking", were in Thea Sternheim's possession, as was a portrait of Roulin and a work by Van Gogh entitled "The Lovers", which may well have inspired Sternheim's remarks on voyeurism.[1] An analogy is drawn between Gauguin's still life and "tollbunte Fayencen, Email, Goldgeschmeide" (5,120), suggesting the finely-worked but sterile quality of Gauguin's aestheticism:

> Hier war grosses Kunstwerk - darüber kein Streit, doch auch - Blitz fuhr die Erkenntnis in Vincent, masslose Verführung. Ein Meister zeigte hier Fähigkeiten, nur mit Verantwortung einzusehende Wirklichkeit . . . umundumzugestalten, nach seinem Willen, was in ihr den Beschauer packen sollte, festzusetzen.
>
> Hier hatte an Gott vorbei und ihm ein masslos ehrgeiziger Nebenbuhler der geniale Mensch komponiert. . . . (5,120-21)

Once more, the allusion to a Promethean rivalry between the artist and God is a signal of the dangers of aestheticism; the phenomenological approach, by contrast, precludes rivalry, for here the artist merely supplements God's creation by revealing its underlying structure. Confronted with Gauguin's still life, Van Gogh finds that the cultured man in him appreciates the associations and allusions; the effect is both intoxicating and escapist, like the "Haschisch von Pauls Überredungskunst" (5,122). After a final, bitter attack on the "ausgespuckten zähen Schleim von der Belebung des Nichts durch des Menschen Genie" (5,143)--

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1. The Schiller-Nationalmuseum in Marbach is in possession of a catalogue of the sale of some of Thea Sternheim's paintings. The works cited are listed there.



VINCENT VAN GOGH: Still Life with Coffee Pot.



PAUL GAUGUIN: Still Life with Three Puppies drinking.

the notion of artistic genius is central to bourgeois art--Van Gogh commits suicide as a direct result of reading an article purporting to have been written by an art critic who shares Gauguin's artistic assumptions.

An examination of the sources of the article which drives Van Gogh to his death throws light not only on the polemical intention behind Gauguin und van Gogh but also on some of the arguments placed in the mouths of the protagonists. The first point which must be made is that the manuscript versions of the work contain an entirely different quotation, in place of the extract from the article.[1] The original quotation runs as follows:

> Vincent van Goghs Anschauung wird von Anfang an von seinem tiefgehenden Sozialismus bestimmt. Er bleibt was er von Anfang an war, der Mensch der sich mitteilen will. . . .

The source of these remarks is one of the earlier works on Van Gogh by Julius Meier-Graefe.[2] The introductory remarks which refer to the rediscovery of El Greco by the writer of the article in question, also point to Meier-Graefe, who had published a study of El Greco. The phrases which follow the quotation in the manuscript: "Pathos, Impressionismus, Berieseln der Leinwand, leuchtender Akkord, Vibrieren, Symphonie, Krater, feurige Lava"—a list which is shortened in the final printed version of Gauguin und van Gogh—are all to be found in Meier-Graefe's later biography

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1. Only MSS. 2 and 3 of those listed by Emrich (see 5,484) contain the longer quotation, as MS. 1 breaks off before the last two chapters; only MS. 3 contains the subsequent list of epithets. No reference is made in the notes to the Gesamtwerk of any variation in the MS. versions.

2. J. Meier-Graefe, Vincent van Gogh, Munich, 1907, pp. 46-48.

of Van Gogh, published in 1921.[1] The final manuscript version, then, contains a bitter attack directed explicitly against Meier-Graefe, to whose work Van Gogh's suicide is anachronistically attributed.

One of the reasons for Sternheim's diatribe against Meier-Graefe may well have been his annoyance at finding his own projected work on Van Gogh pre-empted by the biography. But Sternheim undoubtedly objected to Meier-Graefe's interpretation of Van Gogh,particularly to the emphasis on the religious side of Van Gogh's nature. As we have seen, Sternheim deleted the phrases with religious overtones from the Legende, which was carefully secularized, in accordance with the phenomenological approach, before it became the first chapter of the later Gauguin und van Gogh. But Sternheim's objections to Meier-Graefe's image of Van Gogh go even deeper and are closely connected with his own attempts to distance the phenomenological approach from aestheticism. The imagery and the epithets of which Sternheim is especially scornful all stress the expressive nature of Van Gogh's work. In a study of Romantic theory, the critic M. H. Abrams has listed the metaphors of expression used in Romantic aesthetics; he quotes Byron's phrase "the lava of the imagination" and notes how, in Romantic theory, music began to replace the visual arts as the analogy illustrating the character of poetry.[2] Sternheim's disapproval of the

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1. J. Meier-Graefe, Vincent van Gogh: Der Roman eines Gottsuchers, Munich, 1921, p. 146. The actual quotations indicate that Sternheim is less than fair to Meier-Graefe. The latter actually writes, for instance: "Van Gogh lichtete das pastose Imbroglio Monticellis, ersetzte das summarische Vibrieren durch klaren Bau und das Gesumme durch Symphonie".

2. M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition, New York, 1958, pp. 47-53.

terms "Lava" and "Krater", with their suggestion of the overflowing of powerful feelings, appears to be not unrelated to his dislike of the musical analogy. What he is rejecting is the emphasis which Romantic aesthetics place on artistic genius, on the relationship between the work of art and the artist, rather than on that between the work of art and the world which it depicts.

If the attack on Meier-Graefe is explicit in the manuscript versions of Gauguin und van Gogh, the quotation which is finally used to motivate Van Gogh's suicide is derived from quite a different source. In 1922 Friedrich Markus Huebner had published in Kasimir Edschmid's series "Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit" a defence of modern art entitled Die Belebung des Nichts. It was in this same series that Sternheim's own Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu appeared in 1921. Although there can have been little doubt in the minds of Sternheim's contemporaries as to his targets, the effect of his decision to alter the final quotation, while preserving the introductory remarks which point to Meier-Graefe, must have been confusing and would probably have thrown the reader off the scent. Yet the polemic against Huebner was part of Sternheim's original intention, for the slighting references, earlier in the story, to "die Belebung des Nichts" (5,115) were present in the earliest manuscript. If any doubts lingered on in the minds of contemporaries, Huebner was quick to dispel them; in an open letter to Die Weltbühne, dated 16 November 1924, Huebner announces:

> Carl Sternheim teilte mir vor zwei Jahren mit, dass er mich wegen meiner Schrift: "Die Belebung des Nichts" gründlich zerrupfen

> wolle. Die Zerrupfung ist erschienen in der Form seines Romans: "Gauguin und van Gogh".[1]

Huebner proceeds to defend himself against Sternheim's attack, suggesting, not without some justification, that Sternheim's work is itself a prime example of "die Belebung des Nichts".

Why should Sternheim have reacted so violently to Huebner's pamphlet? In it Huebner was concerned to defend what he called "modern" art against a crudely mimetic Naturalism, which, in his view, threatened to deprive reality of its mystery and magic. In Gauguin und van Gogh Sternheim places a number of Huebner's arguments in Gauguin's mouth and permits Van Gogh to counter them. Huebner writes:

> Wenn die Wirklichkeit von heute unfruchtbar und zerrüttet ist, so trägt nicht sie die Schuld daran, sondern der Mensch, der ihr gegenüber versäumte, Zurückhaltung zu üben.[2]

This sentiment is echoed in Gauguin's admonition to Van Gogh of "Zurückhaltung vor Wirklichkeit" (5,114). The phrases in the following exchange between Gauguin and Van Gogh are direct allusions to Huebner's thesis:

> "Es lebe das Allmögliche!" Paul.
> "Das Eindeutige, Einnötige vergöttere ich", brüllte van Gogh. . . .
>
> "Mit einem Wort: Du willst das Nichts - ich muss das Etwas beleben."
> "Das gekannte Etwas pestet Leichengestank. Damit, dass es begriffen wurde, starb es." (5,115)

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1. Friedrich Markus Huebner, "Brief an Carl Sternheim", Die Weltbühne 20 (1924), No. 2, p. 875.

2. F. M. Huebner, Die Belebung des Nichts, Berlin, 1922, p. 10.

Huebner actually writes:

> Die Wirklichkeit gänzlich nackt, gänzlich eindeutig werden lassen, heisst, sie in die Todesstarre treiben.[1]
>
> Der neue Kunstwille . . . stösst den Glauben an das Einmögliche von sich und lobpreist das Allmögliche.[2]

The term "Deutungsmöglichkeiten", which prompts the dispute between the two painters to flare up anew, is also derived from Huebner's pamphlet.

Surveying recent developments in modern painting, Huebner concludes:

> Die Malerei rückt in den Bereich des Wunders. Der Beschauer wird vor ihr zum Zeugen, wie unter der Berührung des Geistes sich die Dinge und der Geist selber zu immer neuen, niemals erschöpflichen Deutungsmöglichkeiten befreien.[3]

Sternheim's final long quotation from what purports to be a criticism of Van Gogh's work is also adapted from a passage in Huebner's pamphlet.[4] Although true to the spirit of Huebner's theory, this passage is a falsification in that Huebner does not even mention Van Gogh and is engaged in discussing modern art in general. The interpolated references to Van Gogh as "ein heilig Blinder" and "der neue Prophet der Malerei" (5,144) are choice epithets culled from Meier-Graefe's biography.

Huebner's thesis flagrantly contradicts Sternheim's own view that art can provide knowledge of essential reality. Huebner's belief in artistic "Traumkraft"—another term which is echoed by Gauguin in Sternheim's story—suggests that the artist orders and selects aspects of reality according to their suitability for expressing his inner vision.

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1. F. M. Huebner, Die Belebung des Nichts, Berlin, 1922, p. 10.
2. ibid., p. 16.
3. ibid., p. 14.
4. ibid., p. 11.

A particular bone of contention, for Sternheim, is Huebner's claim that the artist should not observe the object closely and reproduce it accurately, but that he should invest it with symbolic qualities. In Huebner's theory the object itself is immaterial; it is merely a pretext for the artist to exercise his virtuosity. This is, of course, precisely the argument between Gauguin and Van Gogh. If the polemical element of Gauguin und van Gogh is taken into account, then it becomes clear that Sternheim's own position approximates, but only very roughly, to Van Gogh's.

A consideration of the polemical intention underlines the fundamentally contrasting approaches to art which are under discussion. Van Gogh is interested in the relationship of art to reality, in its capacity for revealing the underlying structure of things. Gauguin is concerned with the relationship of art to the artist, with its capacity for expressing the artist's personal vision. It is basically a debate between a mimetic and an expressive theory. Van Gogh's approach is mimetic to the extent that he seeks to imitate not the surface appearance of things, but their essence, arrived at through a phenomenological examination of the object in question. Gauguin, by contrast, is not interested in the given object:

> "Ich nehme nicht mit Gegebenem vorlieb, es reizt mich nicht, es zu kennen, ihm zu folgen, mich hinzugeben. Alles muss mein Werk, persönliches Erlebnis, Sinn, den ich den Dingen gebe, sein." (5,114)

The phenomenological approach contrasts sharply with both aestheticism and an expressive theory. The latter select and manipulate reality either for purely aesthetic effect, or to express the artist's personal vision. The selection undertaken by the phenomenological approach is dictated by

the nature of the object itself; it is a concentration of what is essential to the object. As far as Sternheim's polemical intention is concerned, he distances himself equally from the expressive theory implicit in Meier-Graefe's language and from the aestheticism proclaimed in Huebner's pamphlet.

(iii) Van Gogh as a practitioner of Sternheim's aesthetic theory.

Sternheim's image of Van Gogh is not one which would necessarily be shared by modern critics. The emphasis which he places on certain features of Van Gogh's work illustrates his attempt to transform Van Gogh into an exponent of a phenomenological approach. Comparison of Sternheim's image with a recent account of Van Gogh's achievement serves to underline the idiosyncrasies of Sternheim's portrait. Werner Haftmann, in an excellent survey, stresses three main points about Van Gogh's work.[1] The first is his new feeling for things, his ability to penetrate beneath their superficial radiance to a deeper reality released by his complete absorption in the model. In this respect Sternheim's view is a conventional one. Secondly, Haftmann notes the importance of Van Gogh's life:

> In his own flesh he lived the new conception of the artist's life, the new image of the artist, that radically changed our ideas concerning the psychology of the artist. This 'exemplary tragedy' became a hidden force behind the whole outlook of modern artists.[2]

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1. Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century, trans. R. Manheim, London, 1968, I, 23-27.

2. ibid., I, 25.

Although Sternheim is at pains to distance himself from the notion of artistic genius, it is clear that for him Van Gogh's life is as significant as his art, that the painter's art is inextricably bound up with his life. Thirdly, Haftmann notes a quality which Van Gogh shares with Gauguin: an awareness of the expressive value of colour and line. He goes so far as to refer to Van Gogh's symbolism, the pictures being held to symbolize the painter's love of simple things. This Sternheim would deny: his Van Gogh specifically rejects the notion of art as "Anspielung, Apotheose und Symbol" (5,115), since to make reality stand for something else implies a denigration of it. He refuses to see Van Gogh's work as symbolic of emotions; if the colour and line are expressive, Sternheim would see them as expressive only of the essence of the object, which is in turn symbolic only of the totality of objects for which it stands.

Sternheim's imaginative reconstruction of Van Gogh's stay in Arles is only one of a spate of works treating Van Gogh's life, particularly in the second and third decades of the twentieth century.[1] Even before the publication of Sternheim's first essay in 1910, Hugo von Hofmannsthal had written a short tribute to Van Gogh, in which the painter's work is shown in a strikingly similar light.[2] This work takes the form of a

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1. For a striking example of the way in which the Expressionists, in particular, tended to view Van Gogh's work as the realization of their own aims, see Georg Heym, Dichtungen und Schriften, ed. K. L. Schneider, vol. 3, Hamburg and Munich, 1960, p. 205. Heym writes of Van Gogh: ". . . er sieht alle Farben so, wie ich sie sehe. Ich habe beim Lesen mir so und so oft gesagt: Donnerwetter, genau so würdest Du ein Gedicht machen."

2. Hofmannsthal, "Ein Erlebnis des Sehens", Kunst und Künstler 6 (1908). This was re-published as the fourth of the "Briefe des Zurückgekehrten", Gesammelte Werke: Prosa II, ed. H. Steiner, Frankfurt am Main, 1951, pp. 297-305.

fictitious letter in which a businessman relates his experiences at an art exhibition. The businessman, though hard-working and pre-eminently practical, nevertheless enjoys brief moments of heightened awareness. Such experiences, though once a regular feature of his life, have ceased since his recent return to Germany from travels overseas. Germany is clearly meant to represent modern urban civilization, much as Paris is to do in Gauguin und van Gogh. Hofmannsthal's businessman-narrator indicates just how little at home he feels:

> Zuweilen kam es des Morgens, in diesen deutschen Hotelzimmern, dass mir der Krug und das Waschbecken . . . so nicht-wirklich vorkamen, trotz ihrer unbeschreiblichen Gewöhnlichkeit so ganz und gar nicht wirklich, gewissermassen gespenstisch, und zugleich provisorisch, wartend, sozusagen vorläufig die Stelle des wirklichen Kruges, des wirklichen mit Wasser gefüllten Waschbeckens einnehmend.[1]

This sense of the unreality of everyday objects has never before affected him, and he resolves to leave Europe after an impending business-conference. With a few hours at his disposal he chances upon an exhibition of paintings. Their effect on him is devastating: he becomes aware of "was hinter dem Gemalten war, das Eigentliche".[2] If he admires the colours, he is careful not to attribute to them any autonomous expressive power:

> Aber was sind Farben, wofern nicht das innerste Leben der Gegenstände in ihnen hervorbricht! Und dieses innerste Leben war da, Baum und Stein und Mauer und Hohlweg gaben ihr Innerstes von sich. . . .[3]

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1. Hofmannsthal, "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten", in Prosa II, Frankfurt am Main, 1951, pp. 298-99.

2. ibid., p. 302.

3. ibid., p. 303.

The effect of the paintings is to restore the businessman's equilibrium, his missing contact with reality. His conference, we are told, is a success. Only in a footnote, as an afterthought, is it reported that the painter was one Vincenz van Gogh.[1]

Hofmannsthal projects into Van Gogh the experience of the unreality of familiar, everyday objects, the sense of having lost touch with the objects themselves. Van Gogh's particular achievement is to have penetrated the facade of unreality to grasp the essential reality of things. Those who are exposed to Van Gogh's paintings perceive anew what objects are really like and hence overcome their feeling of alienation. Van Gogh thus solves what is held to be a modern European malaise, a crisis of knowledge, the pervasive and paralysing doubt as to whether things in themselves can ever be fully known. Unless knowledge is safeguarded through art, man is exposed to what Hofmannsthal calls "dem furchtbaren Chaos des Nichtlebens".[2] Sternheim's Van Gogh is to regard Gauguin's art as similarly threatening, for "mit seinem ekstatischen Wegsehen von Wirklichkeiten mache er erst das Chaos . . . möglich" (5,127). Like Hofmannsthal, Sternheim is to argue that art has an indirect social function. The point which they both make is that art, in overcoming the rift between man and the world of things, thereby overcomes the social

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1. For a discussion of Hofmannsthal's image of Van Gogh and of some of the possible reasons why he projects his views into a businessman-narrator and feigns ignorance of the spelling of Van Gogh's name, see O. K. Werckmeister, "Hofmannsthal über van Gogh", Neue Deutsche Hefte 8 (1961), No. 6, pp. 40-60.

2. Hofmannsthal, "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten", in Prosa II, Frankfurt am Main, 1951, p. 303-4.

alienation which is ultimately responsible for that rift. In Gauguin und van Gogh the solution is presented in the form of an ideal community outside society, whereas Hofmannsthal's businessman is shown as being better able to cope with society as it is.

For Sternheim, as for Hofmannsthal, Van Gogh is portrayed as the practitioner of a modern aesthetic. Nor is their response uncharacteristic. Gottfried Benn, too, reads into his image of the painter his own preoccupations and likewise stresses the fact that Van Gogh's work marks a break with tradition. When Benn traces the breakdown of the cerebral consciousness after its ascendancy in the nineteenth century, it is Van Gogh, the man and the artist, who signals the new development:

> Durchbruch aus der Zone des Gedankens in die des Seins, letzte Dränge des Zeitlich-Gültigen in das Unendlich-Zeitlose, fiebernde Jaktationen des Individuums in das Unbedingte - jawohl, zwei Sonnen waren auf dem Bild, gewirbelt zwischen die Zypressen, und ein Kornfeld, auf das der Himmel schrie -: eine flache Stirn, eine fliehende Stirn, eine Verbrecherstirn: der Idiot von Arles.[1]

Van Gogh here represents the breakdown in the rationalist explanation of the world, which gives way, in and through his vision, to an intuitive grasp of essential reality. For Benn, such a development involves the rejection of an individual consciousness; correspondingly, for Sternheim, it is Gauguin's bourgeois art which is a reflection of the artist's need to preserve his individuality, while Van Gogh's art approaches the kind of absolute validity of a once-and-for-all definition.

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1. Gottfried Benn, Gesammelte Werke, ed. D. Wellershoff, 4 vols., Wiesbaden, 1959-61, II, 88. "Der Garten von Arles" first appeared in Die Dichtung 2 (1920), No. 1, pp. 154-162.

These parallels between the image of Van Gogh in the writings of Sternheim, Hofmannsthal and Benn illustrate the extent to which Van Gogh is seen as representing a break with traditional aesthetics. Such parallels help, at the same time, to place Sternheim's ideas in the framework of modern aesthetics. His phenomenological approach may be closely related to other contemporary attempts to see in art the possibility of gaining the kind of certain knowledge of reality which philosophy or the natural sciences no longer seemed capable of supplying. Gauguin und van Gogh is an attempt to explore the modern aesthetic; it is not coincidental that Sternheim could substitute for Huebner's references to modern art, the name of Van Gogh, for Van Gogh is intended to represent the modern artist.

In a recent article W. Emrich has attempted to characterize modernism in art and distinguish it from traditional aesthetic notions.[1] His argument is revealing and throws light, indirectly, on Sternheim's theory. He argues that in both Classical and Romantic aesthetics the particular, the individual case, is both intelligible in its own right and also contains the general. The individual case may be enjoyed for its own sake, or it may be enjoyed as an illustration of the universal, so great is the congruence between the two levels. In modern literature—Kafka's work is taken to be the supreme example of this—the particular, the individual instance, does not appear to make sense and cannot be fully enjoyed as such. Kafka's work is seen as marking a radical break with the tradition; it contains what Emrich calls "eine dichterische Zeichenschrift menschlichen

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1. W. Emrich, "Zur Ästhetik der modernen Dichtung", in Protest und Verheissung, 3rd ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1968, pp. 123-34.

Seins selbst".[1] Kafka's work does not treat a problem; the form of the work is the problem. No single action or image is gratuitous; they all point beyond themselves and have strict functional significance. The originality of the modern aesthetic lies in its capacity, again in Emrich's words, "die wahre Struktur menschlichen Seins selbst sichtbar zu machen, nicht nur seine Erscheinungen oder Ideologien".[2] Emrich finds this aesthetic realized in the work of such disparate figures as Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Benn and Brecht, yet one could well add Sternheim's name to the list, at least as far as his phenomenological theory is concerned.

The modern aesthetic is not quite the radical break with traditional aesthetics which it appears to be, Emrich concedes, for if the individual instance is puzzling or incomprehensible it nevertheless contributes to the universal picture. The fact, however, that the empirical world, as it is portrayed by Kafka, is distorted, points to a fundamental feature of the new aesthetic and touches on its central problem. The empirical world is distorted precisely in order that it should point to the underlying structure of reality. In one of his conversations with Janouch, Kafka raises the subject of Edschmid's interpretation of his work and, in so doing, goes to the root of the problem:

> Edschmid spricht von mir so, als ob ich ein Konstrukteur wäre. Dabei bin ich nur ein mittelmässiger, stümperhafter Abzeichner. Edschmid behauptet, dass ich Wunder in gewöhnliche Vorgänge hineinpraktiziere. Das ist natürlich ein schwerer Irrtum von

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1. W. Emrich, Protest und Verheissung, ed. cit., p. 125.

2. ibid., p. 129.

> seiner Seite. Das Gewöhnliche selbst ist ja schon ein Wunder! Ich zeichne es nur auf.[1]

Kafka's debate with Edschmid is a close parallel to the debate between Sternheim and Huebner, or, on another level, to that between Gauguin and Van Gogh. The greatest danger besetting an aesthetic which claims to point to the underlying essence of reality is that the artist simply imposes on reality a pattern which he constructs, a vision of his own. Just as Kafka insists that he is not a "Konstrukteur", so Sternheim is adamant in Europa that he is not a "Regisseur". To point to the underlying essence of things, the artist, if he subscribes to the modern aesthetic, finds himself dislocating reality, distorting it. There is no guarantee that the work which results is not simply an arbitrary distortion, a willful manipulation of the material offered by the empirical world. Sternheim is well aware that he lays himself open to the charge of seeing in reality what he wants to see, of projecting into it his private vision, in short, of "die Belebung des Nichts". The very vehemence with which he seeks to counter the charge seems to indicate how serious a challenge he feels it to be. The polemic of Gauguin und van Gogh is directed solely to the end of answering this accusation.

The debate between Gauguin and Van Gogh is not, then, an argument between mutually exclusive opposites, but an exploration of two tendencies inherent in Sternheim's own art. This explains why Gauguin's art is extolled, and why he is permitted to expound a theory close to "Überwindung

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1. Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen, Frankfurt am Main, 1951, p. 38.

der Mannigfaltigkeit". The most consistent exponents of a phenomenological approach are Van Gogh and Carl Wundt; neither can be equated with Carl Sternheim, who is well aware that he shares Eura's concerns with committed art and Gauguin's with aestheticism. His phenomenological approach is realized, not by Sternheim himself, but by two fictional characters. Pushed to its logical conclusion, the phenomenological approach is unrealizable in practice. Perhaps that is why Sternheim makes its most consistent exponent a painter rather than a writer.

It is significant that the "Überwindung extensiver Mannigfaltigkeit" --the selection of what is typical of a particular landscape or historical period--should play virtually no part in Sternheim's discussion of Van Gogh's art in 1923. In 1910, after all, it had been a central consideration. The selection of the typical conforms to traditional aesthetics and does not necessarily depend on the formal distortion or concentration of aspects of a given object or scene. The only remnant of his earlier concern with the representative is, in fact, a direct borrowing from Van Gogh himself.[1] One of the latter's own decisions about the way in which his own work would henceforward be distinguished from that of Gauguin is cited. He concludes

> . . . dass er nie den Christ im Olivenhain, nur immer die Oliven selbst, die südlicher Länder Charakteristisches gerade so wie

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1. See Vincent van Gogh, Briefe an seinen Bruder, 2 vols., Berlin, 1914, II, 631, letter no. 599. This letter reveals an intriguing variant which possibly suggests a misprint in Sternheim's text. Van Gogh actually writes: "Die Olive ist wechselnd wie unsere Weide (not "Weizen") im Norden. Der Baum enthält vollkommen den Charakter des Landes. Diesselbe Wichtigkeit, die bei uns die Weide hat, besitzen hier die Zypressen und Oliven."

> Weizen das der nördlichen Himmelsstriche sind, malen würde. (5,142)

The point is that, while Gauguin may paint Christ in an olive grove (as indeed he did), Van Gogh determines to paint the object itself, without investing it with any religious associations. That the olive is typical of a southern landscape makes it, in one sense, symbolic, and hence incompatible with a purely phenomenological approach. But the observation is, in any case, relegated to a subordinate clause and is the only hint of the "Überwindung extensiver Mannigfaltigkeit" which was so important in 1910.

It is problematic, then, to identify Sternheim completely with Van Gogh. Van Gogh's claim that his vision is determined by the object alone, irrespective of any subjective interpretation placed upon it, hardly holds good for Sternheim's own procedure in the story. He selects from Van Gogh's life incidents and features which coincide with his own theories and ignores what does not. By contrast with Paris, Arles, for instance, is portrayed as an ideal community; its inhabitants are described as "ganz zu sich Entschlossene" (5,77). Yet, when they later insist that Van Gogh be removed from the town to an asylum, they are miraculously transformed into "Spiessbürger" (5,133), and the ideal community is transferred to the asylum. Here Sternheim lays himself open to the charge that he manipulates events to suit his preconceived ideas of what essential reality should be. As far as society is concerned, Sternheim tends to accept the findings of contemporary sociologists and creates artist-figures who, while subscribing to a phenomenological approach, also take such social theories for granted. Yet, as we have seen, he is aware of

the tentative nature of his own theory and it is no coincidence that he should place the most coherent and unambiguous statement of the phenomenological approach in the mouth of a fictional character.

In 1923 Sternheim's main concern is to distance his own work from a self-indulgent aestheticism; his Van Gogh is a socially committed artist who accepts a phenomenological theory. In his story Sternheim raises the perennial problem posed by his own work from another perspective. If the writer perceives incisively and intensely what is before him, and if he reproduces it in such a way as to point to the underlying structure of reality, must he not inevitably expose himself to the charge that he distorts and dislocates reality for his own ends? In two fictional works Sternheim explores two conventional responses to his work in general. In Europa he confronts the satirical interpretation, the claim that he has an explicit socio-critical aim; in Gauguin und van Gogh he squarely faces the objection that his kind of compression and distortion is purely self-indulgent and mannerist. Significantly, these are the two charges which are most frequently laid against him. The unresolved debates reveal that these accusations are partly justified, that there is no cast-iron guarantee that he actually avoids the extremes of satire or mannerism.

VI. STERNHEIM'S LANGUAGE

Sternheim's theoretical statements about language are not merely intended as a justification or a rationalization of his own literary practice. They form an integral part of his general aesthetic theory and develop in conjunction with it. While one would expect a writer to be preoccupied with his linguistic medium, Sternheim's interest in language goes beyond a concern with the tools of his trade and ultimately extends to a consideration of the ideological content of language and hence of its revolutionary potential. His various observations on this subject may be conveniently grouped under two headings. Principally Sternheim is concerned with the problematic nature of language as a medium of literary expression. Having reached the conclusion in 1906 that art provides knowledge ("Erkenntnis") of reality, his secondary aim is to ensure that such knowledge should be as precise and accurate as possible. Later in his development, after 1916, he makes strenuous, if not altogether convincing, efforts to assimilate his language theory to his phenomenological argument. It is then that the not entirely unrelated problem of language and ideology is raised. In the essay Das Arbeiter-ABC (1922) these two aspects of the language theory are brought together. In this chapter the development of Sternheim's language theory will be traced, its relevance to his general aesthetic theory examined and its implications for his literary practice assessed.

(i) Language and epistemology.

After his fruitful encounter with Rickert's philosophy in 1906, Sternheim is convinced that art alone can provide knowledge of reality and that the artist's image can encompass a totality. The problem presented by this definition of art is that the language employed by the writer must be capable of fixing this image precisely and unambiguously. As early as 1906, in the context of a discussion of Thomas Mann's Fiorenza, Sternheim shows an awareness of the limitations, in this respect, of conventional poetic diction. In a letter to Thea he observes:

> Die Sprache des Dramas muss dramatisch sein, d. i. prägnant vor allem, scharf und nicht misszuverstehen.
> Shakespeares Sprache ist vorbildlich. Sie ist nicht an sich schön, nicht das Wort, sondern das dramatische Bild das das Wort weckt, ist schön. (6,471)

Then, fresh from his encounter with Rickert's philosophy, he restates this insight in terms of his newly acquired philosophical terminology, claiming, in a letter of 1906, that

> . . . nur der Künstler die Mannigfaltigkeit überwinden kann, indem er Bilder giebt, die nicht misszuverstehen sind.
> Durch das Bild soll die begriffliche Unklarheit des Wortes überwunden werden, durch die Form die begriffliche Unsicherheit des Inhalts. (6,484)

The distinction here between "Wort" and "Bild" points to Sternheim's growing scepticism about the conceptual precision of language; yet overriding his doubts is the confident assurance that art can, through "Bilder", achieve the necessary precision and provide absolutely unambiguous forms, which define the essential nature of objects once and for all. In this way art can bridge the gap between the word and the empirical

object to which it refers.

It is his reading of Rickert's work, then, which prompts Sternheim's initial quest for conceptual precision through art. While it is not always clear what he understands by the term "Bild"—sometimes it is synonymous with "Begriff", which is applied to the unique individual, either the great artist or the dramatic character, such as Faust[1]—Sternheim consistently maintains that only art can achieve such clarity of definition. The reason for the pre-eminence of art among the various branches of intellectual activity is that art can attain to the generality of the scientific concept without losing contact with the empirical world, and to the individuality of the historical concept without thereby forfeiting its claims on the universal. Sternheim's fondness for illustrating his theories from painting, in which visual representations are untainted by verbal ambiguities and associations, is the more readily understood when his suspicion of language is taken into account. If it is Rickert who supplies the definition of art as "Erkenntnis", it is also Rickert who shakes Sternheim's faith in language. When he adopts Rickert's terminology, describing the artist's distillation of a "Bild" as a process of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit", he insists that only the artist should be permitted to select and concentrate the data of the empirical world in this way. Rickert, however, points out that "allgemeine Wortbedeutung" presupposes a degree of selection, generalization and abstraction.[2]

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1. See 6,484.

2. See H. Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, ed. cit., pp. 32-47. That this particular section of the work appealed to Sternheim is attested by his quotation from it in his letter to Rickert. See 6,482-83.

The implication for Sternheim's theory is that the writer (unlike the painter or sculptor) inevitably works with material which has already relinquished some of its "Mannigfaltigkeit". Sternheim's problem here is to evolve a means by which the arbitrary and imprecise "Wort" may be transformed into a permanent and universally valid "Bild".

The same scepticism about language informs Sternheim's reflections on ethics in 1906. His enthusiasm for Nietzsche's rejection of a universally applicable moral law stems, in part, from his insight that moral norms cannot adequately be defined in language:

> Mir kommt da plötzlich eine Idee, dass alles an der Sprache liegt. Wir können eine Ethik nicht haben - einfach weil etwas, durch ein Wort ausgedrückt, immer vieldeutig bleibt und ein ethisches System doch immer in Worten bestehen wird. Für jedes Individuum andersdeutig.
>
> Aber male ich eine aesthetische Offenbarung so schreit alles oder empfindet 'ah'. Freude. Da hast Du sie!! Zu allen Zeiten bei allen Menschen. (7,848)

Only the artist may legitimately define absolutes or universals, lest they become prescriptive. It is instructive that Sternheim again elects to use the non-verbal "malen" to convey the non-prescriptive properties of art.

In Der Snob Sternheim introduces his theory of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit", relating it to a distinction between "Wort" and "Begriff" (which is virtually identical to "Bild"). Marianne's expression of admiration for Christian's "Gabe, Menschen plastisch zu machen" (1,211) is the cue for an exposition of Rickertian epistemology. Significantly, Christian describes his quasi-artistic gift as a process of conceptualization:

> Christian: Besser gesprochen nennt man's die Fähigkeit der

> Begriffsbildung. Was aus der Menschen Mund gewöhnlich kommt, sind Worte, nur Worte. (1,211)

He goes on to explain exactly what he means by a concept:

> Die reine Vernunft reisst Gruppen gleichartiger Gebilde der Erscheinungs- oder Willenswelt in einen Ausdruck hinein, der den Komplex in seinem Wesentlichen festlegt, und der Begriff heisst.
>
> Alle Tat . . . orientiert über das ungeheure Gebiet umgebender Welt, in dem sie Mannigfaltigkeit überwindet. So: Buche, Eiche, in deren Namen schon vorher die eigene Mannigfaltigkeit bezwungen ist, sind schliesslich Wald. (1,211-12)

Here Sternheim reiterates the problem raised by Rickert's "allgemeine Wortbedeutung" and even cites examples which Rickert himself used. A specific oak-tree, is for example, not distinguished by name from the whole class of oak-trees. In taking this process a step further, Sternheim suggests, language loses touch with the empirical world completely. A word like "Wald" gives no idea of the constituent elements of which the wood is composed. In this sense language glosses over the infinite variety of the empirical world and hence becomes problematic.

The theoretical significance of Christian's statement should not, of course, be allowed to obscure its dramatic significance. Christian has acquired the useful technique of reducing things to their essentials in order to gain mastery over them, a skill which confers a social advantage on him in the ruthless competition of the "Kampf des Daseins". Nor should the comic overtones of Christian's remarks be overlooked. His exposition accompanies his efforts to help Marianne out of her dress. The theoretical peroration is prefaced by the stage-direction: "Er fängt an, die Ösen zu suchen" (1,211); and by the time his speech is over he is, we are told, "mit Knöpfen fertig" (1,212). Sternheim presents here

a comic analogy to "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit". Christian's dexterity enables him to overcome the manifold obstacles which stand between him and the consummation both of his relationship with Marianne and of his social ambitions. The suggestion that there is more to the "Wald" than the word itself can convey not only serves as a cue for the joke of "not seeing the trees for the wood", but also anticipates the fictitious account which Christian is about to give of his mother's seduction in the Bois de Boulogne by a nobleman. There was more to that particular "Wald" than met the eye, or that, at least, is what Christian would have Marianne believe.

The attempt to trace the features which distinguish the "Bild" from the "Wort" involves a brief reiteration of nearly all the main arguments of Sternheim's aesthetic theory, so central is the "Bild" to this theory. The term "plastisch", used by Marianne to deseribe Christian's "Begriffsbildung", is regularly applied to Van Gogh's paintings. What attracts Sternheim to Van Gogh, "der Begriffsbildner", is the way in which he isolates objects from their background by stark colour-contrasts and hard outlines. It is the clarity of contour, achieved not least by the juxtaposition of disparate elements, which permits Sternheim to claim that the resulting work is unambiguous. The technique which he so admires in Van Gogh finds parallel expression in his own theoretical distinction between the unique individual, placed as it were in the foreground of the work, and the social milieu which forms the back-drop. By heightening and intensifying both the object and its setting, the artist achieves a maximum of clarity and plasticity. Eura Fuld's description of Carl's

story as "schlichtes Ja ja - Nein nein" (5,285) is calculated to pinpoint just this dual distillation, a structural principle which is elsewhere referred to as "Proportion". F. M. Huebner's advocacy of the kind of painting which suggests infinite "Deutungsmöglichkeiten" flagrantly contradicts Sternheim's own insistence on unambiguous clarity and prompts the polemic of Gauguin und van Gogh.

After 1914-15--when Sternheim excludes bourgeois writers from his theory of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit" on the grounds that they allow moral or ideological criteria to influence their choice of subject--the aesthetic theory is taken a step further. By 1916 Sternheim is convinced that the notion of "Überwindung" must be applied to language. Two separate stages are involved: the writer must first exhibit an unbiased, phenomenological approach to reality, thereby flouting the traditional predilection for the beautiful in art;then he must develop a linguistic form adequate to this approach. Even Flaubert did not advance beyond the initial stage, as Sternheim explains in a letter to Franz Blei of February 1918:

> Er [i.e. Flaubert] hat sprachlich nichts geleistet, sondern er hat nur gedanklich den Weltstoff vorpräpariert. Aus Klischee ihn erlöst. Als er die richtigen Gedankenreihen endlich hatte, war er nicht mehr imstande, das zweite Problem: wie nun die neuen Gedankenreihen klassisch zu übermitteln seien, zu erschöpfen.[1]

Sternheim's own efforts to evolve a new linguistic form are first apparent in 1916 and are recorded in the correspondence with Blei:

> Mein Sprachwille ist das einzige, was in mir noch wächst. Heute spricht noch kein Mensch unsere Zeit aus. Ich bemühe mich sehr

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1. Sternheim, "Briefe an Blei", No. 13, dated 1 February 1918.

> und träume Sprache. Mir scheint die Idee immer weniger. Vielleicht haben wir alle zu viel Idee und zu wenig Willen: eben Ausdruck in die Sprache.
>
> Auch Flaubert ist nur Anfang. Überliefern Sie Späteren doch einmal die Mark Brandenburg begrifflich! Dann sind Sie ein Schöpfer.
>
> Unsere heutige Sprache ist Fett. Kaum: Muskel. Nie Knochen. Und nie, was noch dahinter ist.[1]

Faced with the problem of capturing in language the sharp contrasts, hard outlines and clear definition which he admires in painting, Sternheim is clear about one thing: that the kind of linguistic structure which he envisages has nothing in common with the spoken idiom:

> Ich halte auch Gramatik [sic] für nichts Primäres und verwechsle nicht Glauben und Dogma. Ich bin nur gegen einen Impressionismus der Sprache, der "das Leben nachahmen soll", und bin für Form. Wie ich für Komposition in der Kunst bin. Und zwar für die Form, die nach dem jedesmaligen Inhalt des Kunstwerkes die Sprache haben muss. Nicht für die Syntax aber für eine Syntax.[2]

A month later, in reply to Blei's criticism of the stylized language of Posinsky, Sternheim explains some of the prerequisites of the syntax commensurate with his vision:

> Jedes Wort steht dort an der Stelle, an der es, den Satz auf seinen prägnantesten Sinn gebracht, nur stehen kann.
>
> Jeder Satz will dem Leser im Grund ein Fazit mitteilen und es kommt darauf an, dieses Fazit so unmittelbar als möglich dem Leser zu übermitteln. Es ist aber das Subjekt, das den Sinn dieses Fazits enthält und daher muss seine Stellung im Satz so sensationell wie möglich sein, damit im ersten Blick der Leser weis [sic] um was es sich handelt. . . . Das ist alle Syntax. Die übrigen Worte rangieren sich gemäss Ihres Werts für das Subjekt.[3]

Sternheim is at pains to stress that his aim is not stylistic virtuosity but concentrated expression; his language is "nur der stärkere Ausdruck

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1. Sternheim, "Briefe an Blei", No. 4, dated 31 October 1916.
2. ibid., No. 12, dated 15 January 1918.
3. ibid., No. 13, dated 1 February 1918.

einer sehr simplen und ohne mich und meine Absichten vollkommenen Sache: der Welt".[1]

Certain of his stylistic devices, then, are conditioned by Sternheim's theoretical aims. He seeks compression, the dislocation of accepted syntax in the interests of greater expressive force. In his essay Guter Prosastil (1921) Sternheim reiterates publicly what he had discussed privately with Blei:

> Stil ist nichts als ins Wort umgesetzte, wirklich zu Ende erkannte Erkenntnis oder zu Ende geschaute Anschauung. . . . Es ist Niederschrift, nicht ein primärer, sondern sekundärer Vorgang, und ihr Rang hängt von der Qualität des ersten ab. (6,214)

The process of literary composition falls into two stages: the first is akin to the procedure adopted by all artists, in that the particular insight is reduced in the mind to its most concise and plastic form. The point of the pregnant formulation is to obviate possible misinterpretations. The ideal form is the non-verbal painting or statue, or even the scientific formula. Having reduced the particular insight to its essentials, the writer must transcribe it in such a way that

> . . . des Mitzuteilenden Kern, seine Substanz, das Subjekt im Satz, den prominentesten . . . Platz hat. (6,214)

Various techniques for giving the subject the required prominence are suggested: its position in the sentence, the use of rhythm, additions to the subject, or its reduction to a bare minimum. But Sternheim insists that the "knappste begriffliche Fassung" (6,215) is always the most effective, that monosyllabic words are invariably preferable to polysyllabic.

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1. Sternheim, "Briefe an Blei", No. 14, dated 22 May 1918.

The stark juxtaposition of noun and verb, deprived where possible of the softening, qualifying effect of articles, adjectives or adverbs, thus becomes the linguistic equivalent of Van Gogh's use of contrasting colours to achieve firm contours.

Sternheim's concern with conceptual precision extends to reflections on the advantages of other languages over German. His enthusiasm for the French language is largely induced by his admiration for French nineteenth-century novelists, yet he tends to justify it on different grounds. In Europa Eura is granted insight into the advantages of French with its "durchdachten lateinischen Stämmen" (5,286) over German, which did not undergo a corresponding "Raffinement der Römer" (5,286). This explains why Sternheim should have prefaced his translation of an exchange of letters between Voltaire and Rousseau with a reminder of the difficulty "die unübertreffliche Schlagkraft lateinischer Wortstämme in deutscher Sprache ebenbürtig begrifflich zu machen" (6,433). The heroine of the story Adrienne (1927) is more specific about the positive features of the French language:

> Die erste Freude . . . war, das französische Zeitwort, in zwei Formen seiner Vergangenheit, bestätigte, was sie erfunden hatte, unterschied, ob etwas für alle Welt schon immer da war, oder neu in der Zeit und für den einzelnen geschah. Dass "il était" ganz etwas anderes sagte als "il fut". (5,153)[1]

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1. From the MS. of Adrienne—which is in the personal possession of Professor Wilhelm Emrich—Sternheim deletes the additional comment here: ". . . 'il devenait' sie nicht entfernt so wie 'il devint' packte" (p. 7). The past historic is deemed more vivid because it stands for the unique and individual. On revising the work, Sternheim realizes that he can express no preferences between the two tenses; each has its rightful place.

It is as if the French language were ideally constituted to express in its past continuous (imperfect) and past historic (preterite) tenses the two areas of the "Denkinhalte" and the "Beziehungsinhalte" respectively. Adrienne's insight into language is, in effect, an insight into the fluctuation of her life between the poles of absolute necessity and individual freedom, much as Napoleon's job as a cook fluctuates between a concern with the fixed and immutable laws of nutrition and a private delight in creating startlingly original culinary masterpieces. The poles between which Sternheim's characters tend to oscillate seem, to him, to be more adequately conveyed in French than in German.

(ii) Language and ideology.

Implicit in all Sternheim's comments about language is the conviction that literary form is a secondary process, subordinate to and preceded by the artist's vision of things. His attack, after 1914-15, on what he terms "Metapher" is primarily a rejection of ideological bias in the artist's selection of material, though it includes a criticism of the language in which such a distorted vision is inevitably clothed. The battle-cry of "Kampf der Metapher"--the title of Sternheim's pamphlet of 1917--is a plea both for a new phenomenological principle in the selection of material and for a linguistic medium adequate to a phenomenological vision. The impetus for his proclamation of a new approach derives from Sternheim's awareness of what he regards as deficiencies in the

German literary tradition:

> . . . ungleich seltener als in anderen Literaturen sei bei uns der Mann, der mit eigenem Bild, das eigene Sprache verkörpert, die in Begriffen festgelegte und allgemein akzeptierte Welt verändert. Jener wirkliche Befreier, der die alten Schlagworte sprengt und neues, gültiges Element setzt, das wahren Furor hat und alsbald Geschichte macht. (6,33-34)

Once again it is striking that the unbiased and non-didactic phenomenological approach is here portrayed as revolutionary in its effect, if not in its intention.

With the publication in Prosa (1918) of what he claimed to be the first page of an "Encyclopädie zum Abbruch bürgerlicher Ideologie" Sternheim's criticism of language as perpetuating the bourgeois ideology becomes quite specific in its targets. Together with Carl Einstein[1] Sternheim planned a broad attack on all manifestations of the ideology of what he called the "Juste milieu". Although this project never reached fruition, Sternheim was to pursue this end independently in his two pamphlets attacking the European "Juste milieu". These made up two of a planned series of five works, one of which was to be concerned with language.[2] The original plan, involving collaboration with Einstein, may be linked to Sternheim's approval of the French eighteenth-century Encyclopédie and his conviction that the intellectual activity of the "philosophes" laid the groundwork for the Revolution, much as nineteenth-century

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1. Sibylle Penkert, Carl Einstein, Göttingen, 1969, pp. 75 ff., cites from the Berlin "Nachlass" Einstein's own independent plans for a "Phänomenologie der Moderne". She also claims (op. cit., p. 81) that the decision to produce the "Encyclopädie" was prompted by the appeal of Lenin and Trotsky to the nations at war on 28 November 1917.

2. See 6,535.

Russian novelists helped to precipitate the events of 1917:

> Da und dort hatte eine Phalanx Begriffszertrümmerer Jahrzehnte vorher verkrachte Vorwände herrschender Gesellschaft aus Fugen gesprengt. . . . (6,159)

Sternheim's theory of language is the logical outcome of his phenomenological position. He is scornful of conventional usage, which, in his view, implies a value-judgement:

> Nicht die Sache selbst wird in ihrem Nennwert fundamental und erschöpfend fixiert, sondern eine Eigenschaft, die sie menschlicher Gemeinschaft angenehmer macht. (6,55)

For Sternheim, the single most insidious and pervasive feature of modern society is its conformism, and it is this trait which is reflected in the way in which positive and negative judgements are made. In the prefix "Ab-", for example, Sternheim claims to recognize "den Hintersinn . . . in dem gewöhnlich tadelnden Beischmack, mit dem die Worte im heutigen Sprachgebrauch erscheinen" (6,55). "Ab-" suggests a deviation from the norm and hence, in a conformist society, an implicitly negative evaluation. The prefix "An-", by contrast, has an implicit affirmative sense. Although the first page of the "Encyclopädie" considers only the various instances of the use of "Ab-", Sternheim makes it abundantly clear in Die unbescholtene Mannigfaltigkeit (1919) that he is making an assault on a broad front against all implicit value-judgements from his phenomenological (and hence value-free) position. He insists "vor allem auf Aufhebung jedes positiven oder negativen Wertzeichens" (6,99). If he is himself constrained to use these same prefixes, he would claim that he does so without prejudice or moral bias, as the incident in Europa is intended to illustrate.[1]

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1. See above, p. 208.

Sternheim's criticism of the bourgeois norms implicit in language is connected with his reinstatement of the term "Mannigfaltigkeit". As he explains in Morgenröte?:

> . . . mit allen Kräften sucht man weiter bei täglich erscheinender Mannigfaltigkeit, die uns gütig naives Auge vermittelt, schon in der Dinge Geburt die Wertzeichen zu fälschen, dass neun Zehntel des sich wirklich Offenbarenden an Hand uns eingebläuter Tabellen als minderwertig, sogar verbrecherisch gebrandmarkt und vom "Gewissen" aus Welt wieder ausgeschieden wird. (6,102)

Sternheim's objections to the term "Gewissen" are outlined in Das Arbeiter-ABC, where he explains that it is a loan-translation for the Latin "conscientia", the prefix "con-" acquiring a positive sense because it suggests that the quality in question is generally accepted by society. Such words reflect the indirect extension of norms to areas of human life, such as morality, to which they are not, in Sternheim's view, strictly applicable.

In Europa Dr. Rank is made the mouth-piece of this particular language-theory. He advises Eura to confine her revolutionary activities to unmasking the value-judgements implicit in bourgeois usage. He advocates the compilation of an "Enzyklopädie"—Sternheim's spelling of this term fluctuates—and proceeds to list what are to become standard examples in Sternheim's own essays. He is particularly interested in the prefix "Ab-", which suggests "vom bürgerlich vorausgesetzten Durchschnitt Abweichung und somit Tadelnswertes" (5,366). Here, however, the criticism is extended to cover a wider range of positive and negative examples:

> So in allen Sprachen: "conseil" sei Rat, den man "mit" "con" "cum" allen anderen gäbe; durch bürgerliche Autorität und Herkunft Gestütztes und somit Plausibles. Conviction sogar, die heilige eigene Überzeugung äussere sich in Übereinstimmung mit regierender

> Macht. Hingegen sei déception englisch und französisch Enttauschung, weil in ihr ein Sinn "de" "ohne" Beifall der Majorität sich offenbare. (5,366)

Shortly afterwards Rank reads Eura the entries under "Anmut", "Anpassung" and "Anstand" (5,370), noting the implicit positive connotations attaching to the roots to which the prefix is added. Sternheim's criticism of language is a close correlative of his socio-political views. The prevailing pressure to conform, which he regards as precluding individual fulfilment, is surreptitiously expressed and propagated in the positive and negative bias of the prefixes "An-" and "Ab-", "con-" and "de-". That Sternheim's ambitious plans for an "Encyclopädie" were never realised—any more than Rank's were in Europa—stems not least from the fact that he has only main point to make about the ideological bias of language and that the same two contrasting examples would have to be cited ad nauseam. It is indicative of the limited application of this part of Sternheim's criticism of language that neither his own, nor Rank's, "Encyclopädie" progressed beyond the letter "A", under which both contrasting examples could be listed.[1]

In Europa the revolutionary impetus behind this critique of language is explicit, which is why these sentiments cannot be placed in Carl Wundt's mouth, for he denies any didactic or doctrinaire intention. But in Gauguin und van Gogh Sternheim has no such problem: his Van Gogh is at once an exponent of the phenomenological approach and a socially com-

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1. Carl Einstein published his contribution to the planned "Encyclopädie" in the form of an article entitled "Abhängigkeit" in the periodical Der blutige Ernst, No. 6, 1919, p. 7. S. Penkert, Carl Einstein, Göttingen, 1969, p. 152, describes this, slightly misleadingly, as "ein Fragment aus dem Buch 'Abbruch' geschrieben von Einstein und Sternheim".

mitted artist. Inevitably Van Gogh is granted precisely the same insights into language as those which Rank bestowed on Eura in Europa:

> Dabei ging ihm [i.e. Van Gogh] auf: in seinen Farbsätzen gab es die zufälligen und gewollten Irrtümer nicht, die in neueren Sprachen sich darum häuften, weil ein in alten Stämmen mitübernommener Vorsinn heutige Ursprünglichkeit der mit ihnen gebildeten Worte hindert. (5,93-94)

And there follows the usual list of examples of the use of the prefix "con-". This insight, Van Gogh believes, serves to promote "Entlarvungen der verlogenen Gesellschaft" (5,94). Sternheim claims, in Morgenröte?, that an awareness of the ideological bias of language is a vital prerequisite for the "Umsturz der Bewusstseinsinhalte" (6,101).

Just how Sternheim supposes that his theory may fulfil its revolutionary function is explained in Das Arbeiter-ABC. Here the earlier observations on conceptualization, as expounded by Rickert, and Sternheim's own notions about the ideological bias of language are fused in a somewhat far-fetched theory. After giving a succinct account of the process of "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit", Sternheim advances the view that the acquisition of this skill confers a useful social advantage in the "Kampf des Daseins", a claim illustrated in the comedies. He then develops the theory of the "Denk- und Beziehungsinhalte" in a new form, distinguishing two attitudes between which man fluctuates. The "logical" attitude is concerned with the unchanging essence of things and is usually formulated in propositions containing the verb "sein". By contrast, the "psychological" attitude is concerned with the ever-changing relationship between man and reality, an attitude reflected in the use of such verbs as "wirken" and "beeinflussen". Although Sternheim does not use the terms

"Denkinhalte" and "Beziehungsinhalte", it is apparent that the "logical" attitude is akin to the realm of the natural sciences in that it refers to absolutes, while the "psychological" is akin to that of the historical sciences with their interest in the unique, the individual and the particular.[1] A further link with the earlier theory is that the aim of human activity is stated to be the establishement of harmony between these two attitudes, "Harmonie zwischen beiden, von der Schöpfung ursprünglich gesetzten, Arten des geistigen Seins" (6,243). This essentially Classical notion of harmony pervades Sternheim's aesthetic theory.

Into this theoretical statement Sternheim introduces a historical perspective. The "logical" attitude is regarded as aristocratic and conservative, as having dominated Europe up to the French Revolution. With the subsequent triumph of the bourgeoisie the "psychological" attitude took over in the nineteenth century, placing increasing emphasis on the world of "Beziehungen", yet attempting to reduce it to fixed laws. The only way in which relationships could be established between individual and unique objects was, in Sternheim's view, by overlooking their uniqueness: thus criteria of quantity tended to supersede those of quality. This conclusion is partly a rationalization of Sternheim's dislike of bourgeois commercialism, for criteria of quantity are said to find their

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1. Sternheim's distinction here bears a close resemblance to that drawn by William Wundt in his Völkerpsychologie, I, Die Sprache, Part 2, Leipzig, 1900, p. 480, between "Gattungsbegriffe" and "Beziehungsbegriffe". In the same section of the work Wundt considers the use of prefixes and notes: "Dass . . . das ge- in Gewissen ein Mitwissen (ge- urverwandt mit lat. con-) bezeichnen solle, ist völlig unserem Bewusstsein entschwunden" (op. cit., pp. 485-86).

most perfect embodiment in finance. The advent of the "psychological" attitude—so runs Sternheim's argument—has meant the eclipse of the permanent underlying essence of things. It is at this stage that the critique of bourgeois language is reintroduced.

Sternheim's anger is directed against the way in which the "psychological" attitude concentrates on those features of an object which it has in common with others and ignores qualitative differences:

> Zielbewusst verwischt der Bürger in jedem Wort, das er sagt, des Dings ursprünglichen, von der Schöpfung gewollten Sinn, sein unvergleichlich Einmaliges. . . . (6,244)

The example cited is that of the word "Gras", which is said to fail to do justice to the variety of different species of grass which might be present in a given case. Such a"bürgerlicher Sammelname" overlooks the uniqueness of each variety in the interests of convenience; it glosses over what is actually presented to the eye, which results in a disparity between the word and the object which it is intended to denote. Developing this point, Sternheim argues that many adjectives add little or nothing to the nouns which they qualify: that grass is conventionally described as green exemplifies the tendency to overlook the subtler shades of colour which are actually present.

This same point is introduced into Der Nebbich, where Rita enlightens Fritz Tritz on the ideological distortion of the world through language:

> Rita: Ich wies dich auf die fabelhafte Neigung unserer Muttersprache, in keinem Wort sein Spezielles, das, was ein Ding deutlich und ein für allemal ausdrückt, sondern das Allgemeine, das es mit vielem teilt, zu betonen, wodurch bei uns seit Jahrhunderten glücklich vermieden ist, dass irgendwas im Wort wirklich verständlich und aufgeklärt wird.

> Von einem, den du für gefährlich hältst, sagst du "Kommunist"!
> Nicht als ob er das wirklich sein müsste, sondern es soll ihn nur
> aus seiner präzisen Besonderheit in allgemein Unbeliebtes hinabstossen.
> (3,218-19)

Here the "bürgerlicher Sammelname" has the direct ideological function of subsuming unique individuals into an arbitrary class in order to forewarn the reader or listener against them.

Sternheim's argument is closely related to his phenomenological theory. His concern is that all language-users—he does not specify creative writers—should subordinate themselves wholly to the object before them and not seek to impose on it any conventional associations. The object, he implies, must be closely observed and accurately recorded; nor, in the interests of exact description, should one eschew a technical vocabulary. To illustrate the advantages of this he lists the technical terms for the various shades of colour on a painter's palette. The quest for terminological precision, particularly where this involves the deletion of purely conventional adjectives or adverbs, is a principle which informs Sternheim's own literary practice. A flagrant illustration of the way in which reality is ignored in favour of a higher poetic realm is the statement: "Grosse Seelen verzeihen Beleidigungen" (6,247), which, in Sternheim's view, is tautological and begs the vital question of whether "grosse Seelen" actually exist. It seems that it is particularly the "Metapher" of literary diction which Sternheim is concerned to unmask.

The historical dimension is introduced into Sternheim's language theory in order that he might claim that the state of harmony between the "logical" and "psychological" attitudes is neither aristocratic nor

bourgeois, but proletarian. This enables him to bring together his cultural criticism and his political sympathies. His conclusion is categorical:

> Alle deutsche Revolution hat mit der Revolutionierung der deutschen Sprache zu beginnen! (6,247)

If this statement appears to be something of a rationalization, it should be remembered that Sternheim's attitude at this time was one of political cynicism and bitter disillusion, as the essay Die deutsche Revolution hints. His plea for a revolution in language is a symptom of his feelings of frustration and political impotence after the abortive events of 1918.

On the credit side it should be said that Sternheim is acutely aware of the way in which language may be used to manipulate reality in the creation of myths, or what he prefers to call "psychologisch gefälschte Vorurteile" (6,252). One of his avowed aims is to demythologize the language of the "Juste milieu", exposing its distortion of reality, its weakness for the "Metapher". He is sensitive to the use of misleading names in commercial life, citing the examples "Germania" and "Thuringia" (as used, no doubt, by insurance firms); it is, he wryly notes, as if "Länder und Provinzen schützend hinter ihnen ständen" (6,252). He had already brilliantly exploited the comic potential of this kind of myth in Die Kassette. In Europa, too, Rank is made the mouth-piece of an attempt to demythologize the exploitation inherent in sexual relations:

> In allen mann-weiblichen Determinationen hatte Rank ohne weiteres die banale Tatsache entdeckt, dass eo ipso in ihnen Frau Mannes Objekt, er Herr erschiene wie in: "ehelichen", "heiraten", "beischlafen" usw. "Heirat", mittelhochdeutsch "Hîrât" bedeute geradezu "Haussorgung". Schon lateinisch: in matrimonium ducere = in die Ehe führen; nur vom Mann gesagt. (5,378)

Even though the political moral which he draws does not follow, Sternheim's argument is consistent. He claims that the proletariat is deprived, through the existence of such myths, of direct contact with reality itself and is forced to make do with a second-hand imitation. This is his justification for the call to the worker of "Verzichtet nie . . . auf des Auserlesene an sich" (6,228). The political lesson which he draws from his cultural criticism is largely a rationalization on Sternheim's part: the impoverishment of language by bourgeois myths comes to symbolize on a cultural level the economic deprivation actually suffered by the proletariat.[1] Now that political activism has proved fruitless, Sternheim takes refuge in the idea of a language revolution.

The political overtones of Sternheim's language theory appear to be an expression of political impotence rather than a radical alternative to, or even a prerequisite for, political activism. Yet their presence does not invalidate the theory as a whole. His scepticism about language, his realization that the word and what it denotes are somehow no longer congruent, reflect a prevailing crisis of confidence in language after the turn of the century. Fritz Mauthner's monumental Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache (1901-2) is generally accepted as having contained the most comprehensive statement of this scepticism, and a shorter version of this three-volume work, entitled Die Sprache (1906), undoubtedly helped to popularize Mauthner's ideas. If Mauthner's theory contributed to the general climate of ideas, Sternheim himself may well have derived a

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1. There are some striking parallels here to Roland Barthes' recent efforts to unmask some of the prevailing myths in France. In Mythologies, Paris, 1957, p. 239, Barthes draws a conclusion very similar to Sternheim's, namely that "le mythe est toujours un vol de langage".

specific impetus for the ideological interpretation which he places on the problem of language from Max Stirner's Der Einzige und sein Eigentum, which was first published in 1845, but which enjoyed a considerable vogue after 1906, the centenary of Stirner's birth. Sternheim's acquaintance with Stirner's brand of anarchistic individualism is attested in Europa.[1] For Stirner, as for Sternheim, language is laden with associations which inhibit individual expression:

> Die Sprache oder "das Wort" tyrannisiert Uns am ärgsten, weil sie ein ganzes Heer von fixen Ideen gegen uns aufführt.[2]

It is only after Sternheim has developed his phenomenological theory that the "idée fixe" becomes wholly suspect to him.

The classic formulation of the experience that language is unable to provide knowledge of the world is contained in Hofmannsthal's Ein Brief, published in 1902. It is here that it first achieves striking literary expression. The abortive attempts of Naturalism to reproduce every detail of physical reality, or of literary Impressionism to fix every nuance, to grasp every shadow on the surface of things, seem, to writers after the turn of the century, to epitomize the inability of language to convey things themselves. The very structure of language seems to inhibit the writer, to stand between him and the world of things.

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1. See 5,174 and 5,229 for indirect references to the title of Stirner's book. W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, pp. 240-43, examines parallels between Stirner's work and Sternheim's, without, however, mentioning Stirner's attack on language.

2. Max Stirner [Caspar Schmidt], Der Einzige und sein Eigentum und andere Schriften, ed. H. G. Helms, Munich, 1968, p. 209.

This scepticism provides the starting-point for the linguistic experimentation of the early years of this century. A variety of new forms—from the dislocated syntax and the "Telegrammstil" of Expressionism to the word-games of Dada—are born of a deep-seated mistrust of language; yet they paradoxically betoken a continuing belief in the efficacy of a kind of language, a kind of syntax. It is here that the revolutionary and the epistemological aspects of Sternheim's theory merge. He is at once concerned to expose the "Metaphern" which characterize conventional usage and to replace them with a style calculated to reproduce not the outward appearance of things but their inner essence. Just how Sternheim himself sought to implement this theory will be examined below.

(iii) Aspects of Sternheim's literary style.

Sternheim's idiosyncratic style has given rise to as much and as vehement critical disagreement as has his treatment of the "bürgerlicher Held". Reactions tend to be extreme. On the one hand are heard the shrill voices of Sternheim's detractors; a contemporary reviewer of Ulrike expressed a widely held opinion when he claimed:

> Wenn man die ganze Handlung aus dem geschwollenen Phrasendeutsch in normale Sätze übersetzt, so hat man reine Gartenlaub-Novellistik vor sich. Man mache die Probe aufs Exempel - und man wird staunen, wie diese auf Bedeutung hin frisierten Sätze vor dem nüchternen Verstande verlieren und sich als das erweisen, was sie sind: Papierdeutsch eines Ästheten.[1]

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1. W. Mahrholz, in Das literarische Echo 20 (1917-18), cols. 424-25.

Yet precisely those features which tended to arouse the indignation of the critics were singled out for special praise by the apologists. Kurt Pinthus wrote with obvious approval:

> Diese nüchternen Sätze, in denen kein Wort entbehrlich ist, diese Gerippe von Perioden, in denen knappe Partizipien und Genitive an Stelle erläuternder Nebensätze treten, diese trockene Schärfe der sprachlichen Formung festgestellter Zustände verblüffen und erregen den Leser. . . . Die fast wissenschaftliche Formulierung der Tatsachen und Geschehnisse . . . lässt uns nicht erkalten, sondern des Menschen trauriges Heldentum und heroisches Missgeschick tiefer erfühlen als breitströmende Erziehungsromane und sentimentalische Seelenschilderung.[1]

On the one hand Sternheim's language is decried as arbitrary or mannered, on the other extolled as a vehicle ideally suited to his particular vision. The discussion has continued in much this vein up to the present. W. G. Sebald has recently criticized the much vaunted precision of Sternheim's language as illusory and has insisted that its tendency towards generalization conflicts with the author's avowed intention of portraying the "eigene Nuance".[2] In marked contrast, W. Wendler has demonstrated to good effect that Sternheim's language is a legitimate and consistent expression of his theoretical position.[3] The very features which Sebald adduces as evidence of "der schizoide Charakter der Sternheimschen Sprache" are held

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1. K. Pinthus, review of Die drei Erzählungen, in Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde 7 (1916), cols. 615-16.

2. See W. G. Sebald, Carl Sternheim, Stuttgart, 1969, pp. 74-97. It should be noted here that Sternheim was never exclusively concerned to portray the individual in the sense of the accidental or particular, though the disproportionate emphasis placed in recent studies of Sternheim's work on the "eigene Nuance" may have given this erroneous impression.

3. See W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, pp. 192-229.

by Wendler to contribute to its characteristic "innere Spannung". Other critical responses range themselves somewhere between these extremes. Not infrequently a chronological dimension is introduced: the language of Sternheim's early comedies is praised for the way in which it both characterizes and unmasks the bourgeoisie, while his later style is dismissed as artificial.[1]

In order to illustrate Sternheim's efforts to implement his language-theory, it is proposed to examine aspects of his literary style, including successive revisions of his published work. While the manuscript versions illustrate effectively, and often instructively, the stages of composition, it must be assumed that, as Sternheim was clearly dissatisfied with preliminary versions, they do not coincide with his views of what represents optimum expression. For this reason it is proposed here to examine in some detail the differences between the first printed edition of Meta, published by Kurt Wolff in 1916, and the version which appeared in the first of the three volumes of the collected short stories Chronik von des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts Beginn. It is this latter version which is reprinted in the Gesamtwerk. The variants in the printed editions reflect Sternheim's changing views on style more faithfully than the experimental versions in the manuscripts. Meta is a particularly suitable example as the first printed edition appeared in 1916, at a time when Sternheim first sought to evolve a new linguistic medium adequate to a vision which he liked to

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1. For an example of this approach see A. Soergel and C. Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit: Vom Naturalismus bis zur Gegenwart, II, Düsseldorf, 1963, pp. 234-35.

compare with Flaubert's, as the correspondence with Blei attests. If the Meta of 1916 bears some of the hallmarks of Sternheim's mature style, that of 1926 develops these tendencies further.

The parallel with Flaubert is not fortuitous. Meta bears a distinct thematic resemblance to Flaubert's Un coeur simple, the first of the Trois contes. Both works depict a mundane life consecrated to domestic service and the sublimation in that life of a woman's emotional and sexual drives. Just as Flaubert's Félicité derives a measure of fulfilment from the birth of Mme Aubain's child and from the consolation of religion, so too does Meta, though Sternheim characteristically grants her a voracious sexual appetite which she satisfies without passion, true fulfilment having been precluded by her own weakness for the "Metapher" of romantic literature and Franz's quasi-religious idealization of female purity. Sternheim alludes directly to Flaubert's work by introducing into Meta's private world the consolation of a pet parrot.[1] Félicité's parrot is the central symbol of Flaubert's story, the focus of all her emotional and religious needs, once she has been deprived of human contact.

That Sternheim should have used Flaubert as the point of departure for his own theoretical statements about language, as well as for direct inspiration, is more readily understood if the image of Flaubert among Sternheim's contemporaries is appreciated. Heinrich Mann, in a seminal essay first published in 1905, set the tone for subsequent assessments of Flaubert's work; here Mann cites Flaubert's own account of an experience

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1. See 4,104.

in Greece and of the theoretical reflections which it prompted:

> In Wahrheit aber glaube ich nicht einmal, dass es in der Kunst ein Äusseres gibt. Ich erinnere mich, wie ich Herzklopfen bekam und eine heftige Lust empfand, als ich eine Mauer der Akropolis betrachtete, eine ganz nackte Mauer. . . . Und ich frage mich, ob ein Buch, unabhängig von dem, was es sagt, nicht dieselbe Wirkung hervorbringen kann. Liegt nicht in der Genauigkeit der Wortgefüge, der Seltenheit der Bestandteile, der Glätte der Oberfläche, der Übereinstimmung des Ganzen, liegt darin nicht eine innere Tugend, eine Art göttlicher Kraft, etwas Ewiges wie ein Prinzip?
>
> Warum besteht, zum Beispiel, eine notwendige Beziehung zwischen dem richtigen und dem musikalischen Wort? Warum kommt man immer auf einen Vers hinaus, wenn man seine Gedanken zu sehr zusammendrängt?[1]

This elevation of architectonic structure and precision to a creative principle, the notion that the progressive compression of an idea invariably results in poetic expression, may serve as a useful starting-point for a discussion of Sternheim's style. It is worthy of note that Benn should have cited this same passage from Flaubert under the rubric "absolute Kunst".[2] It is as a tendency towards the absolute and universal that Sternheim's self-confessed efforts to outdo Flaubert may profitably be examined.

The tendency towards formalism is a feature of Sternheim's prose from Busekow onwards. W. Wendler has listed its most striking characteristics: a fondness for visual images, monosyllabic words (especially those which begin or end with plosives), alliteration and assonance. The following examples, both of which are taken from the 1916 edition of Meta, are typical. The first passage simultaneously illustrates Sternheim's

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1. H. Mann, "Gustave Flaubert und George Sand", in Essays, Hamburg, 1960, p. 93.

2. Gottfried Benn, Gesammelte Werke, ed. cit., I, 412-13.

somewhat provocative predilection for what is traditionally considered unaesthetic, in practical demonstration of his view that all subjects are equally valid:

> Erst ist es Fressgier, die sie befällt und unzähmbar quält. Mit tierischem Hunger schlingt sie alles Erreichbare wahllos in den offenen Schlund, bis Ekel vor sich selbst sie packt der aufgetriebene Magen sich brüsk erleichtert. Dann quillt Speichel in Wellen aus den Häuten des Mundes und der Nase, schäumt auf den Lippen und wechselt dort in vielen Farben.[1]
>
> Sie schwatzte Blasen ins Blaue und spürte gleichviel, wie Basalt fiel ihre Rede auf sein lauschendes Herz.[2]

It is sound as much as sense which conditions Sternheim's choice of words. At the same time it is apparent that he likes to chronicle events or actions without interrupting the narration with explanations or qualifications. The preponderance of main clauses linked with "und" indicates the paratactic nature of the syntax.

Subsequent developments in Sternheim's style after 1916 point to even greater compression and more conscious structuring. Compression is largely achieved by the deletion of what are felt to be redundant clauses or phrases and, more especially, of adjectives and adverbs: well over fifty adjectives and over two hundred adverbs or adverbial phrases are excised from the 1916 edition when it is revised in 1926. While some of the alterations are arbitrary, a number of general underlying principles may be extrapolated from the variants between the two editions. The aim of "Verdichtung", of progressive "Überwindung der Mannigfaltigkeit", produces a variety of effects. The adjectives omitted fall into several categories.

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1. Carl Sternheim, Meta, Leipzig, 1916, pp. 24-25.

2. ibid., p. 8.

First, there are those which are deemed conventional, or thought to add little to the nouns which they qualify: thus "einen runden Blick" becomes "einen Blick", "der rote Fleck" becomes "der Fleck" and "ihre braunen Flechten" becomes "ihre Flechten". Although this kind of emendation appears to contradict Sternheim's stated concern with precision, he clearly feels that such adjectives convey the wrong kind of precision, for they dwell on accidental features rather than concentrating the reader's attention on the essential. Conventional, abstract epithets are also removed; thus "unaussprechlich" is dropped before "Ahnungen", "inbrünstig" before "Gebet", "unverhüllt" before "Jammer" and "grenzenlos" before "Anbetung". A second group is composed of adjectives which were originally included in order to convey a degree of generality, of universality, or of repetition: thus "alle" (six times), "ganz" (four times), "häufig" and "gewohnt" are all deleted in 1926. Sternheim appears to consider that the same degree of generality can be achieved without having to signal it so obviously: thus, for example, "an Strassenecken" is preferred to "an allen Strassenecken". A third group of adjectives, comprising "vollkommen" (twice), "schrecklich", "schlimm", "grässlich" and "närrisch", would seem to have been deleted because they imply a moral judgement on the author's part and hence contradict the aim of phenomenological detachment.

The deleted adverbs fall into roughly similar classes. Sternheim follows the general policy of omitting as many references to time as possible, whether these refer to a specific point in time, a sequence of events or a repeated action. The following are deleted:

immer (ten times), schliesslich (seven times), nun (six times), erst (five times), alsbald, fortan, jetzt, endlich (each three times), einmal, stets, längst (each twice), ewig, noch einmal, jedesmal, tagsüber, tagtäglich, oft, gleich, hinfort, hinterher, am Ende, gerade, bisher, dann, sofort, bald, zugleich, bislang, von jeher (each once).

The following are also dropped:

plötzlich (six times), allmählich (five times), regelmässig, unverzüglich, zeitlich, unmittelbar (each once).

In effect actions and events are removed from their setting in time; they are lifted out of chronological sequence. Frequently the individual instance becomes indistinguishable from the repeated action and thus attains to a certain generality. This stylistic development conforms closely to Sternheim's stated intention of showing a timeless element underlying actuality. By the same token the specific adverbs of place, "auf Märschen" and "auf Gängen" are removed, both from clauses describing repeated actions; "überall" (twice), "allenthalben" (twice), "oben" (twice) and "unten" (once) are also omitted.

A large number of redundant adverbs are dropped in 1926. In this category belong those which are used for emphasis:

ganz, unbedingt, von Grund auf, reichlich, entschieden, wirklich, sehr (twice), vor allem (twice), vollkommen, völlig (twice), vollends (twice), vollauf, gänzlich.

Similarly "nicht im geringsten", "nicht im mindesten", "nicht mehr" and "durchaus nicht" are reduced to "nicht". This change serves to tone down the author's involvement in the narrative, which is thus reduced to a series of bald statements in which each statement has equal emphasis and equal significance. The indefinite "irgendwann", "irgendwie" (six times), "irgend", which Sternheim introduced in 1916 as a direct affront to the

detailed psychological explanation or the precise setting in time, are also removed. Finally a number of adverbs are deleted in accordance with the principle that the artist should approach reality phenomenologically, without reading into it any extraneous significance. In the following example--

Oft fiel sie verloren in den Sitz und staunte[1]

--the adverb is later removed. This kind of emendation, of which there are many instances, reinforces Sternheim's desire to record actions without dwelling on possible psychological explanations. The gesture of sinking into a chair is deemed sufficiently expressive of Meta's sexual awakening; the presence of an explanatory or qualifying adverb implies an omniscient narrator and is hence suspect to a writer who would simply chronicle events dispassionately. To sum up the findings, it would appear that the general principle behind Sternheim's deletion of adjectives and adverbs is the attempt to distil an underlying essence, for if nouns and verbs are not qualified they tend to acquire an absolute quality.[2] Yet the compression which Sternheim undertakes invites a second conclusion, namely, that he is increasingly concerned to suggest that he is simply chronicling events, merely recording that they take place, without describing in detail how or explaining why. To use Sternheim's

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1. Meta, Leipzig, 1916, p. 4.

2. In a letter to Thea Sternheim, published in Ausgewählte Briefe, ed. Max Rychner, Wiesbaden, 1957, p. 173, Gottfried Benn writes: "Sofern mich mal ein französischer oder amerikanischer Schriftsteller besucht . . . . , gebe ich die Sternheimsche Maxime weiter: streichen Sie die Adjektiva! Ein grosses Wort von ihm!"

own terms, the "psychological" is strictly subordinated to the "logical", the accidental to the permanent and universal.

In his prose style Sternheim develops a technique calculated to convey in language the kind of heightened colour-contrasts and resulting sharp outlines which he admired in Van Gogh's painting. The deletion of offending adjectives and adverbs is accompanied by the omission of definite and indefinite articles, of commas in enumerations and of co-ordinating conjunctions between clauses. In Meta alone the 1926 revision entails the removal of the definite article in some hundred and fifty cases, roughly a third of which result from the introduction of the "Saxon genitive". In 1926 enumerations appear thus:

Er sah ihr Antlitz Hände Haare Atem leuchtend werden. (4,88)

The omission of the article results in the following concatenation of substantives:

> Zwar gab sie ihrem Unriss herbere Kontur, der Erscheinung Strenge, Worten Kommandoton, doch vor dem Prall und Knall der Armeeerlasse, Alarm der Katastrophen und Verlustlisten konnte sie nicht bestehen. (4,89)

The two "Saxon genitives" were first introduced into the following sentence in 1926:

> War in ihrem gemeinsamen Leben ein Fehler, Unreines in der Seelen Zusammenhang, und stimmt Gott der Harmonie nicht bis in der Schöpfung verborgenen Winkel zu? (4,93)[1]

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1. W. G. Sebald, op. cit., p. 84-85, suggests that Sternheim's use of the "Saxon genitive" reflects a subconscious desire to show familiarity with an elevated literary style. Sebald ignores the conscious irony in the choice of a highly stylized form to convey what the reader might be tempted to dismiss as the banal facts of a mundane existence.

Finally, the transposition of word-order necessitated by the dropping of "wenn" in the subordinate clause produces the kind of juxtaposition which gives Sternheim's prose its characteristic density:

> Schicken Frühlinge Begierden, blühende Natur Versuchung. . . . (4,95)

Even when Sternheim elects to remove the co-ordinating "und" and replaces "aber" with "doch", which involves an inversion of subject and verb (there are some twenty instances of this emendation in Meta), his syntax remains paratactic. To use an analogy from the visual arts, the narrative picture is built up—this applies equally to the nouns within a given clause and to the clauses within the sentence—by a series of short adjacent brush-strokes rather than by long flowing lines.

Another stylistic feature which has aroused critical comment is Sternheim's fondness for set phrases, a feature which W. Wendler regards as tending away from plasticity and towards abstraction, and which he considers to reflect Sternheim's conscious repudiation of an elevated, overtly literary style.[1] The inclusion of such phrases seems intended as a direct affront to the view that such expressions are unsuitable for literature. Yet an additional factor in their favour is that many of them play on assonance. The following phrases are found in Meta: "ohne Sang und Klang" (4,92), "in Schritt und Tritt" (4,88), "mit Stumpf

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1. See W. Wendler, Carl Sternheim, Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 208. It is characteristic of the uncertainty of Sternheim-criticism that Wendle should note Sternheim's conscious rejection of an elevated style and W. G. Sebald his desire to allude to it. It is the provocative juxtaposition of the banal and the elevated which is sanctioned by Sternheim's theory.

und Stil" (4,107), "an Tor und Tür" (4,93). Sternheim imitates this device frequently; we find: "lachten und dachten" (4,80), "mit Brosche und Blume" (4,79), "richtend und regelnd" (4,95), "krass und klar" (4,93), "vor dem Prall und Knall" (4,89), "in Prost und Toast" (4,109).

Sternheim's own claim that the subject of the sentence should be placed in the most prominent position and the remaining parts of speech grouped in order of their relative importance for the subject is reflected in some of the changes in the syntax: "es blitzten die Augen" becomes, for example, "Augen blitzten". Some hundred and fifty instances of transposed word-order may be found by comparing the two editions of Meta. One of the most frequent, as well as one of the more instructive changes involves the encapsulation of the subordinate clause within the main clause:

1916: Sie lächelte jeden an, dem sie Rede stand. . . .
1926: Sie lächelte jeden, dem sie Rede stand, an. . . . (4,80)

1916: . . . und als er's gab, sah er in die Luft.
1926: . . . und sah, als er's gab, in die Luft. (4,82)

1916: Meta aber putzte die Scheiben zur Strasse, nach ihm zu spähen.
1926: Meta aber putzte, nach ihm zu spähen, Scheiben zur Strasse. (4,83)

Subordinate clauses are enclosed within main clauses, which thus dominate the sentence-structure. The sentence becomes a self-contained unit; its content does not spill over into succeeding sentences. Subordinate clauses are not tacked on to the main clause in what might be termed an "open-ended" structure, but are interpolated within the main clause, bestowing on each sentence a "closed" and static form. What hypotaxis there is, is thus disguised as parataxis. Once again it is what Walter

Benjamin has called Proust's "Syntax uferloser Sätze"[1] which offers the sharpest contrast to Sternheim's procedure. The self-sufficiency of each of Sternheim's sentences helps to explain his difficulty in linking what are, after all, unrelated and disparate elements. This accounts for his tendency to begin sentences with an arbitrary "doch", "also", "noch" or "dann", much to the annoyance of a recent critic.[2]

In revising Meta in 1926, Sternheim tends to drop separable and inseparable prefixes alike, replacing them with the simple form of the verb. The following are shorn of their prefixes:

> übersehen, niedersteigen, vorbeigehen, zerschmettern, anbefehlen, herschweben, dahingehen, anfüllen, aufbäumen, zusammenpacken, aufschiessen, auflösen, eingiessen, herausfrieren.

Das Arbeiter-ABC provides the key to these changes. It is not that the prefixes display an ideological bias, but that they characterize "psychological" relationships, rather than "logical" essences. Given that Sternheim's aim is to distil permanent and clearly defined forms, the problem with the prefixes "hin-", "her-", "vorbei-", "auf-" is that they presuppose a relationship between the participant and the activity which is being described. Such a relationship is "psychological"; it fails to capture the timeless essence of things and grasps the significance of an action or event only with respect to a particular participant or observer. Ideally Sternheim would describe absolute actions, actions

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1. See W. Benjamin, "Zum Bilde Prousts", in Illuminationen, Frankfurt am Main, 1955, p. 355.

2. W. G. Sebald, op. cit., p. 84, dismisses this expedient as childish, as an attempt to give the narrative a logical development which it does not in fact have; he does not pause to consider its underlying causes.

without an implicit standpoint from which they are observed. This explanation is upheld by other alterations: in place of the active "tritt" and "erschien", Sternheim writes, in 1926, "stand", the static "Bild" being deemed more appropriate than the description of a continuing action.

Changes in vocabulary are relatively few. In some cases monosyllabic words are preferred to polysyllabic ones: thus "Kehle und Schulter" becomes "Hals und Brust", "wetterleuchtete" becomes "blies", "vollendet" becomes "prall". Furthermore, in 1926 several gallicisms (though by no means all) are replaced by their German equivalents or near-equivalents: thus "Kraft" for "Energie", "Geschäfte" for "Spekulationen", "Ganze" for "Ensemble", "Luft" for Atmosphäre", "Leere" for "Vakuum", "bekräftige" for "legitimiere", "Frische" for "Sensation", "lärmen" for "rumoren", "entzündet" for "illuminiert", "Worte" for "Vokabeln", "Spaziergang" for "Promenade" and "Land" for "Nation". Only some of these alterations can be explained by the preference for monosyllabic words. For the rest it appears that Sternheim may have been sensitive to the charge that he deliberately larded his prose with foreign words. Certainly this development runs counter to the widely accepted view that Sternheim's later work contains an ever-increasing number of foreign words and expressions. Where they are rife, as in John Pierpont Morgan (1930), they are conditioned by the subject-matter. Elsewhere they characterize the affectation and pretensions of the social climber. In Der Nebbich, for example, Fritz Tritz displays his mastery of journalism, films, big business and diplomacy by ringing the changes on his smattering of foreign expressions and technical jargon.

Sternheim's injunction of "Kampf der Metapher" is not, as W. G. Sebald has supposed,[1] an argument for the rejection of all metaphorical devices. What Sternheim repudiates is the attempt to transfigure the banal and mundane by relating it, often through imagery, to a "higher" level. Examples of "Metapher" in Meta are Meta's own efforts to judge her flesh-and-blood lover by the standard of a literary hero, and Franz's sublimation of his sexual desires in an ideal of religious purity. The "Metapher" is principally thematic. As far as Sternheim's aesthetic theory is concerned, all art is a "Gleichnis", if and when it manages to convey the dual aspect of reality by a process of distillation. Yet in this process of concentration the artist must ensure that he derives the essence from the object itself, and does not impose on it an alien and arbitrary form. The phenomenological approach, as exemplified by Carl Wundt, does not deny a symbolic or metaphorical dimension. On the contrary, it aims "durch ein Phänomen ein neues deutlich zu machen" (5,303). The finished work will always be a "Gleichnis" in this sense. As the title of Sternheim's autobiography—Vorkriegseuropa im Gleichnis meines Lebens—suggests, the writer's personal experience becomes a microcosm, a symbolic representation, of the essential features of pre-war European society.

Sternheim, then, has no quarrel with the term "Gleichnis"; nor does he question the use of imagery to underline his findings about society. His images, as we have ascertained, may be grouped into two main spheres

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1. See W. G. Sebald, op. cit., p. 75. After listing some of Sternheim's images, Sebald concludes that Sternheim's theory contradicts his literary practice.

of interest. Even where the imagery is derived from a single source, it is invariably used to refer to one of the two aspects of human experience. Nature, for example, may provide the setting for a romantic idyll and thus signal individual fulfilment, yet it may also represent absolute necessity, a deterministic law, and hence conflict with human freedom. Meta, for one, has to learn that "Regelmässigkeit sei das Prinzip, aus dem Natur sich regte" (4,108). The same ambiguity applies to the machine-image. Generally it stands for a set of fixed human responses, a mechanistic world-view. In Meta Jakob, the war veteran who becomes Meta's husband, relives his war-time exploits with predictable regularity:

> Sie [i.e. Meta] stützte seine einfache seelische Mechanik, ölte die Maschine, drehte Kurbeln, stellte sie auf Jahrestage beliebter Schlachten, auf Kaisersgeburtstag oder sonst ein Jubiläum, ihn, rasender Brisanz mit Lampions und Feuerwerk auf Zeitgenossen loszulassen. (4,108)

If the mechanical repetitiveness of his behaviour is evoked by the machine-image—which here, as elsewhere, Sternheim couples with militarism—the machine may also be used to convey pent-up sexual passion:

> [Franz] schlürft ihre Wärme, bis sich Blut entzündet, im Kessel des geschwollenen Leibes Überschwang an den Ventilen siedet. . . . (4,90)

Where the machine represents "Kraft", it is found on the side of private fulfilment.

One of the emendations to the 1916 edition of Meta has a direct bearing on the imagery. In some seventeen instances the comparative "wie" is omitted and the simile thus transformed into a metaphor. For example, the phrase "Schweisstropfen . . . wie aus dem Knochen herausgefroren" becomes, in the light of Sternheim's later notions about style,

"Schweisstropfen aus Knochen gefroren" (4,92). It is as if the author were insisting on the literal truth of the identification. By the same token, "wie" is twice replaced by "als", and on one occasion "schien" becomes "war". The dropping of "wie" facilitates the juxtaposition of nouns. If it sometimes gives the reader pause, forcing him to puzzle over the meaning, Sternheim would not have considered this a stylistic fault.[1] On the contrary, he consistently stresses the disparity between a naturalistic imitation of the spoken idiom and the formal compression and dislocation of his own style. His language is consciously constructed; if his isolation of the noun is also found among his Expressionist contemporaries, his own usage contrasts sharply with Expressionist "Pathos". For the Expressionist dramatist the isolated noun has an emotive force; it lends itself to the declamatory style. In Sternheim's work, however, it forces the reader to an act of reflection. In this context it is interesting to record that Kurt Pinthus, whose eulogy of Sternheim's style was quoted at the beginning of this section, should have expressed vehement opposition to it, when he discovered that its peculiar stamp was "durch mechanische Umstellung mittels Korrekturen erst in den fertigen Druckbogen künstlich erzeugt. . . ."[2] What is surprising is that anyone

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1. In a recent article entitled "Sternheims Bühnensprache", Neue Züricher Zeitung, 12 July 1970, p. 49, Peter von Matt notes some of the problems occasioned by Sternheim's tendency to substitute the imperfect subjunctive for the present subjunctive, the resulting form often being indistinguishable from the imperfect indicative. There are six such cases in the revised edition of Meta.

2. Quoted by R. Billetta in his typewritten biography "Unabhängig von Gemeinschaftsidealen: Carl Sternheims bürgerliches Heldenleben", Vienna, 1958, pp. 96-97. The truth about Sternheim's method was reportedly

should have believed for a moment that Sternheim's syntax was organic, or that it sprang from his pen in final form at the first attempt.

The stylistic devices listed above all tend towards the general. The deletion of the definite article bestows on events an air of universality; the preponderance of main clauses and the closed sentence-structure suggest that events are being reported baldly, without qualification. The impression that a specific series of events is being chronicled contrasts with the tendency towards the universally valid and representative and gives Sternheim's style a peculiar tension, to which W. Wendler has rightly drawn attention.[1] The chronicler who would record events with a bare minimum of explanation stands at variance with the artist who would perceive in the individual instance a representative situation or fate. The single-name titles of the stories suggest that an individual life is to be depicted; yet in each case a representative experience is portrayed. Meta is characterized from the outset as a "dienender Geist", much as Busekow is a "geborener Polizist". Within the mundane lives of these characters a curious heroism begins to emerge, a heroism which finds expression in their occupations. The tension in the style is matched by a thematic tension between the individual and private fulfilment of these characters and their social rôles, which seem to preclude fulfilment. This is where Sternheim's own aesthetic theorizing is of relevance.

(continued) leaked by a secretary and published by Norbert Jacques in Der Bücherwurm. Jacques triumphantly claims "dass dieser Artist nicht einmal von vorneherein sicher über seine Hand ist und . . . das stützende Gerüst der alten Sprache braucht. . . ." (also quoted by Billetta, op. cit., p. 96).

1. Carl Sternheim. Frankfurt am Main/Bonn, 1966, p. 223-29.

In the debate between phenomenology and social commitment, the former views the individual instance without drawing general conclusions, while the committed artist sees in the individual a symbol. In the debate between phenomenology and aestheticism, the latter advocates the manipulation of the individual instance and attaches an arbitrary significance to it. In his theoretical works Sternheim thus takes sides and makes a choice between elements which are in balance within his complex creative personality. He claims to approach reality without prejudice, yet his creative method is constructivist and his creations threaten to become either illustrations of an idea, or purely mannerist.

A charge commonly laid against Sternheim by those who would view him as a social realist is that his language is unsuitable for drama because it allows of no differentiation between characters; all the characters, it is claimed, talk in Sternheim's own prose. As far as the early comedies are concerned, this accusation cannot be wholly substantiated. In Die Hose and Bürger Schippel, for example, each character has his distinctive manner, even if they share stylistic devices which would be adjudged artificial by the strict canon of "konsequenter Naturalismus". If the dislocation of normal syntax later becomes more extreme and less differentiated, it should be remembered that in Das Fossil, say, Sternheim is characterizing a society which is no longer rooted in reality. Language serves both to characterize the society which Sternheim depicts and to unmask it. The clipped tones of the officer and the jargon of the world of finance are punctuated by romantic clichés from Baedeker as well as from the literary tradition.

Many of the most successful effects of Sternheim's comedies derive from the fact that they play with the literary and cultural tradition, and of that tradition language is an integral part. Sternheim's comedies are about language; conversation in them is so often a substitute for action. In Die Hose, for example, the threat to Theobald's marriage is purely verbal. In a society in which language no longer seems to be rooted in actuality—in this sense Sternheim's work is conditioned by a more general crisis of belief in language—real power seems to be vested in words alone. Language becomes a vital ingredient for success in the "Kampf des Daseins". The acquisition of a few clichés suffices to grant the social climber access to the higher social circle to which he would belong. Christian Maske has at his finger-tips all the outward forms of the aristocracy, of which language is but one; Ständer skilfully manipulates the jargon of social revolution and Fritz Tritz swiftly makes his mark in a handful of careers with the help of a few convincing platitudes. Written forms, too, contribute to the comic unmasking: the composition of Christian's letter of acceptance to Graf Palen[1] epitomizes the subordination of reality to verbal forms, much as the "Bürger" conspire to counter the real social threat from Schippel by erecting a barrier of officialese in their letter of invitation to him.[2]

There is a noticeable progression in Sternheim's awareness of the comic potential of the theme of language. In Die Hose Theobald has a

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1. See 1,161.

2. See 1,474-75.

firm grip on reality, a solid vantage-point from which he may unmask Scarron's neo-Romantic bluster as the rationalization of real weakness. In Der Snob and the plays which treat the social climber, the mastery of empty clichés—while the audience is under no illusion that they are clichés—is crowned with real social success, a fact which raises doubts as to whether society itself is still in contact with reality. There seems to be a subtle connection between the currency of language, what a recent critic has called the "agreed value of linguistic coin",[1] and the value of the literal currency of hard cash, a relationship which Lessing exploits in Minna von Barnhelm. This same analogy is found in Sternheim's work. In Die Kassette wealth is no longer vested, as it was in Molière's L'Avare, in tangible rolls of coin; it has assumed the guise of an unrealizable paper fortune. Similarly, words seem to have become detached from the objects in the real world for which they stand. They no longer have any solid grounding in reality. Yet they have remained in currency and have usurped all the functions of real things. It is hence in a realm of words that Sternheim's "Kampf des Daseins" is fought out.

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1. George Steiner, Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution, London, 1972, p. 158.

CONCLUSION

The disproportionate emphasis which recent critics[1] have placed on Sternheim's denial of a satirical or critical intention has brought his theoretical statements about art into disrepute. But, as W. Hinck has sensibly argued, "es muss kein unlöslicher Widerspruch darin liegen, dass Sternheim nicht Satiriker sein will und doch immer wieder als solcher verstanden wird".[2] Indeed, Sternheim is himself fully aware that the finished work sometimes escapes the constraints which the author might wish to impose on it. In Diät (1922) he concedes

> . . . es habe sich auch in meinen Komodien aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben, die ich Jahre vorher ohne den eigentlichen Zweck der Aufklärung schrieb, ohne mein Zutun in der Zwischenzeit so starke Ernuchterungssäure gebildet, dass der bürgerliche und feudale Magen sie nicht mehr unmittelbar verträgt. . . . (6,230)

While he frequently denies the explicitly didactic function of art, he continues to insist on its indirect social function. As far as his theoretical statements are concerned, then, it is of crucial importance that they be considered as a whole. Highly selective quotation from them has given a false impression of Sternheim's position and exposed him to unwarranted criticism. The theoretical ambiguity cannot be explained away. It is fundamental to his vision. It has been shown to sanction and illuminate the peculiar tension in his creative work.

As to the ambivalence implicit in Sternheim's conflicting statements about art, this is not, as has been claimed, simply the result of

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1. This comment applies to W. Wendler's study and to W. Emrich's introduction to the Gesamtwerk.

2. Das moderne Drama in Deutschland, Göttingen, 1973, p. 93.

a perverse desire to mislead the reader; nor is it entirely fortuitous. The resulting ambiguity falls into a clearly discernible pattern. While he was initially unaware of the tension in his creative work between criticism and affirmation, he gradually realized--particularly after his political insights of 1914-15--that the artist must pick his way carefully between the extremes of outright political commitment and pure aestheticism. These, he came to see, were the attitudes inherent in his work. After 1916 the theoretical dilemma becomes paramount and the dual perspective is elevated to a conscious structural principle.

Sternheim's fondness for working with conflicting pairs of concepts and for seeking some kind of synthesis between them first becomes apparent in 1906, during his encounter with Heinrich Rickert's philosophy. It characterizes the Vincent van Gogh essay of 1910 and reappears in the later theory in 1918 and afterwards. In the meantime this ambiguity finds its most successful creative expression in the early comedies Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben. Here the shifting perspectives effectively preclude, as we have seen, any attempt on the part of the audience to shelter behind its feelings of superiority over the characters in the play. The aesthetic debates of the later works spring, in part, from the need to explain the success of the early comedies, with their mixture of criticism and affirmation. In attempting to clarify, expound and justify his own position, Sternheim develops his phenomenological approach. Yet, at the same time, he is fully aware of the dangers which beset such a solution and gives these their due in Europa and Gauguin und van Gogh. The tension between the conflicting theoretical arguments put forward in

these two instances has been shown to be similar to that which informs Sternheim's own dramatic and narrative works, as reflected both in their structure and style.

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