

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF GERMAN POETRY AND FICTION IN
TRANSLATION BY SPECIFIC AMERICAN NEWS MEDIA,

1945-1960

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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PREFACE

The aim of this study is twofold: (1) to determine the extent to which German works of fiction and poetry written during the period 1900-1960 have become available for the first time to the American reader in English translation during the years 1945-1960; (2) to evaluate their critical reception in the United States on the basis of book reviews which were located in certain nationally recognized newspapers and magazines.

The term "German fiction and poetry" signifies all works which, regardless of the specific author's citizenship, nationality, or place of residence, were originally written in German. However, with only two exceptions, only those works in translation are considered which were published in the United States for the first time during the period 1945-1960.

Basic research revealed the completely unsuspected fact that well over 500 German books in translation had been published during the indicated period of 15 years. This number, however, includes reissues of works which had appeared in the United States before 1945 or which were written prior to 1900, essays, school texts, children's literature, collections of folk tales, and retellings of earlier works by contemporary authors. In view of the selective approach and limited scope of a Master's thesis, the extent of the undertaking had to be drastically curtailed. Therefore,

all of the foregoing classes of literature were excluded from consideration.

Since, however, some 300 books still remained on the list, further eliminations, admittedly at some risk, had to be made. Consequently, this study was limited to those authors who either already have established for themselves a solid international reputation or, in the case of the more recent generation, of writers who were on the road to literary fame. The following works were consulted in making the final selection: Fritz Martini, Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, 10. Auflage, 1960; Jethro Bithell, Modern German Literature, 1880-1950, 1959; and Friedrich Herder, Lexikon der Weltliteratur, 1960.

The selection of the specific newspapers and magazines was made on the basis of the following considerations: (1) general scope and range of their book reviews; (2) high rate of circulation and wide distribution (socially and geographically); and (3) their availability at the University of Arizona library. Since the University library subscribes only to newspapers and magazines from the East, publications from the Midwestern states and the West could not be included in this study. The final selection was restricted to the following publications: the New York Times (NYT); New York Herald Tribune (NYHT); Saturday Review (SR); Christian Science Monitor (CSM); and Time, The Weekly Newsmagazine (TM). All of these are listed in the text and footnotes by their abbrevi-

ated titles.

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INTRODUCTION

During the years immediately preceding the turn of the century, German prose and poetry, after decades of absence from the international literary scene, again became a force to be reckoned with. One of the first authors to gain international recognition was Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946). Although he did not gain a mass audience abroad, his works, nevertheless, were probably the first ones since those of Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) that had a decisive impact on the future development of foreign literatures. From the days of the early Hauptmann up to the present, German literature has in one way or another continued to transcend those boundaries which are set by linguistic and ethnic lines. In the Scandinavian countries and in Eastern Europe this process was facilitated by the general knowledge of German by the educated classes; in France, England, and the United States recourse had to be taken more frequently to translations.

During the first half of this century there were two periods in which the national as well as the international reputation of the German literature of the time was seriously endangered. While the lights went dim in Germany in the grip of the National Socialists, a considerable number of German emigrants continued to pour forth literature of the highest artistic and esthetic quality. In fact, it was they who earned new laurels for German prose and poetry and who awakened anew the interest in German writing. To

-this group of authors who either were forced to leave Germany and Austria, or who voluntarily chose to do so, belonged Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Franz Werfel, Erich Maria Remarque, Stefan Zweig, Bert Brecht, Anna Seghers, Theodor Plievier, Alfred Döblin, Robert Musil, and others. Yet not all authors who remained in Germany put their talents into the service of their new political masters. In the ranks of the so-called "innere Emigration" were such important figures as Ernst Wiechert, Werner Bergengruen, Reinhold Schneider, Ricarda Huch, and even Ernst Jünger.

German literature held out few promises in the immediate years following World War II when spiritual and physical chaos reigned supreme in Germany. Gradually hopeful signs multiplied. First in Switzerland, then soon in Austria and Germany, works were written which indicated rather definitely that a new generation of writers was in the offing. Today, fifteen years after the war's end, German literature has again secured for itself an international audience. Time will tell to what extent this younger generation has produced literature of lasting quality. If one goes by external signs, the answer seems to be positive: Friedrich Dürrenmatt's plays have conquered Broadway, Gert Gaiser's novels are hailed as great literary successes in France, and Heinrich Böll's works, both in German and in various translations, have sold in excess of a million copies.

The extent to which certain authors' works have been translated is to a certain degree the result of purely economic considerations rather than literary merit. Publishers are realists; they work for a profit. Many important books are not offered in

translation simply because of their limited popular appeal and subsequent high cost of publication while works of lesser literary worth but with wide popular appeal run through several editions. Included in the latter category are the writings of Vicki Baum, Margot Benary-Isbert, Alice Maria Ekert-Rotholz, and, to some extent, even those of more sophisticated authors such as Lion Feuchtwanger and Erich Maria Remarque.

Certainly one of the major factors bearing on the issuance of translated works is the quality of the translation itself. The great difficulty is that of accurately reproducing the style, spirit, mood, and intent of the original. There is a failure of communication and style as soon as there is any disproportion between the translation and the original, any mistaking or dropping of the original tone and tempo or level of diction, or any failure to spot multiple levels of meaning or peculiar syntactical patterns of feeling. And to this problem is added the fact that certain words and phrases are simply untranslatable or completely lose their meaning in the translation. This is true, unfortunately, in both poetry and prose.

But even with these inherent difficulties a surprisingly large number of books in the realm of fiction have been translated during the last fifteen years, which indicates that the American reader has more than a casual interest in the cultural contributions offered through a specific foreign literature. The large number of re-translations and re-issues of works by literary great and near-great of previous centuries, such as Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Hölderlin, Kleist, Keller, and Hauptmann, just to name a

few, indicates a continuing interest in the ideas and writings of Germans of earlier generations.

One interesting facet revealed as a result of this study was the discovery of the large amount of children's literature translated during this period. German authors have long been noted for their talent in this special field, and the current generation seems to have retained this reputation. Although not all of the reviews of children's books were examined in detail during this study, those that were checked generally were very laudatory. Of particular merit are the books by Hans Baumann, whom the NYT and the SR described as one of the very best of the contemporary authors of children's books.

CHAPTER I

THE OLDER GENERATION: AUTHORS WITH AN ESTABLISHED REPUTATION

Werner Bergengruen (1892-)

Werner Bergengruen was born in Riga, Latvia, of old German Burgher stock. He lived for many years in Germany, fleeing to Austria during the Nazi period and finally settling in Switzerland at the end of World War II. Bergengruen, along with Langgässer, Le Fort, Böll, and Vollmöller, is one of the most important of the Catholic authors of the last four decades. He has written a considerable number of novels and Novellen, of which his most famous novel is A Matter of Conscience, 1952 (Der Grosstyrann und das Gericht, 1935). It is a combination detective story-murder mystery and historical novel. The setting is a small principality in medieval Italy. The central theme of the book is the erosion of virtue and morality in people faced with the problem of personal survival under tyranny. In this book, Bergengruen joins the ranks of Jünger, Werner, and Andersch in their plea against totalitarianism.

Frederic Morton, in a quite favorable report in the NYHT, describes it as "an inquiry into the question of why the human soul is such a hospitable habitat of evil . . . during the investigation

the Prince slices away layer after layer of their tailor-made virtue until there is revealed the naked corruptability of even the most upright man."¹ Morton states the book offers "an insight into the terrible ambiguity of the human spirit . . . and in Bergengruen's own words a true sense of God can only be derived from a profound faith in the imperfection of man, for in nothing other can our perfection consist than in the very faith."¹ Chad Walsh, in the NYT, summarizes the book as a "dark exploration of the mingled motives of men and women when fear paralyzes their sense of right and wrong."² Serge Hughes, in a very favorable resumé in the SR, characterizes the book as "the serene and noble utterance of a Christian humanist . . . the work of a master writer, one of the most impressive to have come from a modern novelist." Walsh continues with the statement that the book contains a series of "brilliant dialogues with deep and disturbing metaphysical implications dealing with the period of the discovery of the 'individual' and the danger of man's aspiration to be God."³

The second of Bergengruen's books to be published in the last few years was The Last Captain of Horse, 1954 (Der Letzte Rittmeister, 1952). The first third of the book is a detailed character portrait of a pre-World War I army officer of the Russian

¹NYHT, April 27, 1952, p. 10. Mr. Morton is an author and critic.

²NYT, April 20, 1952, p. 4. Mr. Walsh is Professor of English at Beloit College.

³SR, June 7, 1952, p. 22. Mr. Hughes is not further identified.

Army. The rest of the book is a series of anecdotes a là Canterbury Tales. Richard Plant, in the NYT, regards the anecdotes highly, commenting that "some . . . rise to dramatic heights . . . with a flavor of Gogol or Chekov. . . . The book is to be taken slowly like a glass of old brandy . . . The perfect antidote for 20th century blues."⁴ Chad Walsh, in the NYHT, mentions Bergengruen's "sharp insight into the moral and psychological depths of man . . . a view of life thru the unobtrusive spectacles of a Christian moralist."⁵

Bert Brecht (1898-1956)

Bert Brecht, like Anna Seghers, was one of the few German writers of the Socialist-communist viewpoint to reach major acclaim. He had to flee Hitler's Germany and, like Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Feuchtwanger, Werfel, and others, lived in Southern California during the years of World War II. An anthology, called simply Collected Poems, contains a selection of poems, songs, ballads, and dramatic excerpts written during the years when he lived in the United States. Reviews of Brecht's book varied widely, depending perhaps on the political position of the reviewer. The SR carried an extremely unfavorable review, the gist of which is apparent in these lines:

⁴NYT, April 25, 1954, p. 28. Mr. Plant is a Professor of German at City College of New York.

⁵NYHT, March 31, 1954, p. 4.

Brecht the voice of social protest, the apostle of reaction against individualism . . . the Marxist matchmaker who has joined literature and politics in a union which, despite all the blessings of the fellow travelers, has proved incompatible . . . custom-tailored to United Fronts and party lines . . . Brecht uses poetry as a means to an end, not an end . . . whatever he says is pre-conditioned by his social or political convictions. These are sincere and forceful enough, but honest passion does not always make good poems Brecht sees only economic oppression, social injustice and horror.

However, it is interesting to note the contrast between this view and those expressed in the NYHT, and the NYT. M: L: Rosenthal, in the NYHT, said simply that it was "a biting satire on the calm in the midst of an inferno."⁷ Stephen Spender, the English poet, in a long and favorable review in the NYT, pictured Brecht as a "complex ironist: an irony where the satirist satirizes the state of mind that creates the satire such a state is truest in Brecht."⁸

Max Brod (1884-)

Max Brod became famous as the literary executor of Kafka's works, but he is also a novelist of merit in his own right. His novel, The Master, 1951 (Der Meister, 1950), is a symbolical interpretation of the life of Christ. Brod endeavored to dramatize the birth of Christianity in terms of the philosophical and religious ideas dominating the Mediterranean world in the reign

⁶SR, March 20, 1958, p. 19. The critic was not identified by name.

⁷NYHT, February 29, 1948 p. 5. Mr. Rosenthal is not further identified.

⁸NYT, June 27, 1948, p. 5. Mr. Spender is a noted British poet.

of Emperor Tiberius. Thomas Sague, in the NYHT, reported that the book "has charm, beauty and penetration."⁹ Richard Sullivan, in the NYT, admitted that the "treatment of the figure of Christ is much different than others . . . likely to distress many readers The portrayal that ultimately emerges is that of a remarkable wonder-worker charged with a rather warm bubbling religiosity . . . but clearly this treatment is intended as praiseful."¹⁰

Hans Fallada (1893-1947)

Hans Fallada, the pseudonym of Rudolf Ditzen, had two books published during the period subsequent to World War II. That Rascal, Fridolin, 1959 (Fridolin, 1955) is a charming children's story about a badger, written by Fallada for his own daughter. Fallada's The Drinker, 1952 (Der Trinker, 1950) was published posthumously. It was written in code form as a "nonsense novel" and smuggled out of Strelitz Prison, where Fallada was serving a sentence for attempted murder. In this novel, as in others by Fallada, the problem of character weakness and fate plays a predominant role. It is the story of the gradual fall to total humiliation of one Erwin Sommer, an alcoholic wholesale grocer. Reflecting on the untimely death of Fallada, Richard Plant eulogised that "not only German literature but the entire world has lost a rather unique

⁹ NYHT, December 2, 1951, p. 26. Mr. Sague is an author.

¹⁰ NYT, November 23, 1952, p. 53.

talent . . . a mixture of Steinbeck, Faulkner, and Dostoevsky."¹¹

But TM was sharply critical of Fallada's talent:

Hans Fallada was one of those writers whose books bounce back from the Bank of Posterity stamped "Insufficient Funds". His talent was timely rather than timeless This novel adds little to his reputation, but its suspiciously autobiographical scent and its candid odor of damnation suggest the careful note-taking of a house-guest in Hell Fallada spells out Sommer's life there in the insane asylum in such emetic detail that it makes the Snake Pit sound like a country club as it is, the neurotic bundle of self-pity and self-hatred called Erwin Sommer is nearly as loathsome as his fate.¹²

Lion Feuchtwanger (1884-1958)

"The greatest living master of the historical romance"¹³ is but one of the accolades bestowed upon Lion Feuchtwanger, who left Germany in 1941 for Beverly Hills, California, where he remained until his death. His primary literary genre is historical novels of famous figures. He was never considered a particularly great author nor even particularly original in his plots, but he did receive credit for the imaginative handling of his subject matter, his unusually good characterization, and the great wealth of cultural tid-bits of learning with which he embroidered his settings. Feuchtwanger wrote for the mass appeal, and succeeded to the extent that most of his works were very well received by both the critics and the public in the United States.

¹¹ NYT, November 23, 1952, p. 53.

¹² TM, December 22, 1952, p. 70.

¹³ Herschel Bickell in the SR, May 19, 1951, p. 9.

Proud Destiny, 1947 (Reise nach Paris, 1945) is a massive novel about Franklin's mission to the court of Louis XVI in 1776-79 to gain support for the American Revolution. Most of the reviews were favorable, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

An outstandingly well done historical novel--balanced, effective. Characterization is excellent . . . some may complain that it is too historical . . . but they have no case to plead . . . a really distinguished historical¹⁴ novel that renders unto history the things that are history.

He achieves his aim through the . . . creation of true characters whose emotions, thoughts, experiences, actions and surroundings become real to the reader . . . many of the scenes . . . are told with passion and power¹⁵, with humor, and intimate knowledge of the human heart.

This novel . . . is an achievement of the first literary rank . . . it has intellectual substance, imagination, and stature; it makes history come alive . . . in the deepest sense it is the spirit of man that is the hero of this book.¹⁶

The only unfavorable review was found in TM, which decried his "popularized history", "painstaking period sets", and "photogenic characters".¹⁷

Feuchtwanger's next book to reach the American audience was This is the Hour, 1951 (Goya, oder Der ärge Weg der Erkenntnis, 1950). It is a fictionalized biography of Francisco Goya, the great Spanish painter--"the story of the relationship between integrity and rottenness when they perforce walk hand in hand . . . the story of the relationship of the successful artist--not just the artist,

¹⁴NYHT, September 14, 1947, p. 5.

¹⁵SR, September 13, 1947, p. 9.

¹⁶NYT, September 14, 1947, p. 3.

¹⁷TM, September 22, 1947, p. 104.

but the successful artist--and the world."¹⁸ Again, most of the reviews are favorable, with only TM going against the majority.

Thomas Caldecot Chubb declared in the NYT that "you know that you have to read a penetrating book, and you not only know that it is, but why."¹⁹ Gouverneur Paulding, in a very favorable review in the NYHT, stated that "the richness Goya himself brings to this book compensates any clumsiness, transcends any superficiality, and provides the reader with excitement and pleasure."²⁰

TM complained that "the novel is about Goya, as a stud chart is about a bull Feuchtwanger spends most of his time jotting down statistics of Goya's sex life Feuchtwanger follows Goya like a patient Kinsey, occasionally dubs in statistics of other kinds. The most depressing statistic is the number of the final page, 516."²¹

With 'Tis Folly to be Wise, or The Death and Transfiguration of Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1953 (Narrenweisheit, 1953), Feuchtwanger received his least favorable reviews. Erwin O. Lessner, in the NYHT, admitted that it was "not one of his best" and although "labeled a novel, 'Tis Folly cannot well do without a plot the weakest, poorest of Feuchtwanger's works."²²

¹⁸ NYT, May 20, 1951, p. 5. Mr. Chubb is an author as well as a critic.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ NYT, May 20, 1951, p. 5. Mr. Paulding is the former managing editor of Commonweal.

²¹ TM, May 21, 1951, p. 125.

And Richard Plant, who reported favorably on other books by Feuchtwanger, commented in the NYT that "Feuchtwanger failed to reach his goal the subject matter should have made an excellent novel, but never got off the ground."²³

The next work to appear in English translation, Raquel, Jewess of Toledo, 1956 (Die Jüdin von Toledo, 1955), was a resounding success. The main theme of the book is the analysis of the effect of unbridled personal power, as portrayed in the character of King Alfonso of Spain during the time of the Third Crusade. Richard Plant in the SR remarked that "Feuchtwanger has created medieval Spain with such vigor and accuracy that we are tempted to approach the novel more as an intriguing history text than as the tragedy of real people."²⁴ Richard Winston, in the NYT, added that Feuchtwanger ". . . has again found a subject congenial to his gift of presenting sharp contrasts for laying bare the nature of antagonistic principles The book faces squarely the issue of peace and war . . . and exposes both the glory and the folly of unleashing the Four Horsemen."²⁵

The last of Feuchtwanger's works, Jepheta and his Daughter, 1958, (Jephta, 1958), published shortly before his death, is a

²²NYHT, May 10, 1953, p. 10. Mr. Lessner is a novelist and a former Viennese publisher.

²³NYT, May 10, 1953, p. 20.

²⁴SR, April 28, 1956, p. 14.

²⁵NYHT, April 22, 1954, p. 4. Mr. Winston is the author of a novel about Charlemagne.

story taken from the Old Testament. Jepheta, son of Gilead, the judge of Israel, is deprived of his heritage by his half-brothers. He vows to sacrifice whomever first runs to greet him on his return --if God will grant him power to regain his lost heritage--and thus must sacrifice his own daughter.

Richard Winston, in a favorable review in the NYHT, commended Feuchtwanger on his success in "the almost impossible task of entering into the psychology of the willing sacrifice" and continued saying, "he is no less successful in baring the complexity of Jepheta's mind: the superstitious fear which prompts his vow, the craftiness to avoid fulfilling it . . . and the subtle intelligence which teaches him the ultimate futility of his act."²⁶ But Siegfried Mandel, in the NYT, noted that Jepheta "is not his best effort,"²⁷ and TM reported that although the book is good, "it falls far short of the story's greatest possibilities."²⁸ The most severe objection came from Gladys Schmitt, in the SR, who suggested that "there is too little support . . . too thin a background . . . we do not believe or disbelieve . . . we simply do not, cannot, care."²⁹

²⁶ NYHT, March 30, 1958, p. 4.

²⁷ NYT, March 30, 1958, p. 34. Mr. Mandel is an Instructor in English at Brooklyn Polytech College.

²⁸ TM, April 7, 1958, p. 101.

²⁹ SR, March 29, 1958, p. 25. Miss Schmitt is the author of several historical novels.

Leonhard Frank (1882-)

Although characterized as a "vulgarisator of expressionism"³⁰ and "basically a latter day romanticist,"³¹ Frank is primarily a sympathizer with the ideals of socialism, and most of his works deal with the proletarian struggle. But in the only two works published in the United States since the war, there is no indication of his political leaning.

In Mathilda, 1958 (Mathilda, 1943), Frank tells the story of a Swiss girl who matures to womanhood preconceived by her through her adolescent reading. Robert Pick, in the SR, displayed mixed reactions to the book:

It would be too much to contend that Mr. Frank . . . has fully succeeded in discharging that difficult task (of eloquently picturing mature marital happiness without banality, yet truthfully). But for long stretches the sensitive Swiss girl will hold the reader's attention and win his sympathies for good The poorly done account of the hero's episodes in World War II should have been left out. The emotional, slightly poetizing and subliming effect of romantic German writing does not as a rule fit well with the genius of English."³²

Rose Feld, in the NYHT, admits that "while there is a certain charm in Frank's portrayal of Mathilda, something akin

³⁰Jethro Bithell, Modern German Literature (London: Methuen and Co., 1959), p. 365.

³¹Robert Pick, in the SR, April 24, 1948, p. 36. Mr. Pick is an editor and translator of many German books.

³²SR, April 24, 1948, p. 38.

to the quality of a fairy tale, it is not enough to give stature to the book stereotyped, . . . rambling . . . and sentimental."³³

Dream Mates, 1946 (Der Traum, 1945), the only other book by Frank which was reviewed, received only a few short, generally unfavorable, reviews. The remarks of Catherine Brody in the NYT serve as an example of their general tone: "a highly symbolic, intensely humorless fantasia, partly out of a woman's emotional life, but mostly out of Dali The events would strain the capacity of Walter Mitty."³⁴

Hermann Hesse (1887-1962)

Hermann Hesse stands alongside Thomas Mann as one of the greatest novelists of the present age, and their careers had a great deal in common: both produced a prodigious amount of literary works; both were Nobel prize winners; both emigrated from Germany to escape the totalitarian political environment of their time. But, Hesse, unlike Mann, was hardly recognized in the United States prior to the end of World War II. It was only then, as a consequence of his prize-winning novel, Magister Ludi, and the encouragement of his readership by the American

³³NYHT, March 7, 1948, p. 15.

³⁴NYT, October 13, 1945, p. 24.

authorities in Occupied Germany, that he began to enjoy general recognition in the United States as a major author. Why were the Americans in general so slow in accepting Hesse in his rightful place? Claude Hill, in the SR, postulated that "the main reason for his lack of acceptance is his appeal to spiritual values versus American pragmatic, bourgeois values."³⁵

The first of Hesse's novels published in English was Demian, 1923 (Demian, 1919), which was re-issued in 1948 as a result of the renewed interest in his work after he won the Nobel prize. Demian is an Erziehungsroman concerning a Swiss youth from a well-to-do family, a story in which Hesse analyses the psychological development the hero undergoes during adolescence. It is at least partially autobiographical. Alice Morris, in the NYT, expressed both satisfaction and dismay over the book. She acknowledged that the first half of the book was very well written, and

. . . it would be difficult to overestimate the magic of this section of the book, its freshness, its concreteness, its intelligence, and the grace and tension of its style . . . but the last half of the book suffers a sea change into something rich and strange--too rich and too strange for what has gone before. Symbolic dreams and paintings, cryptic messages and meetings, transcendental relationships, culminating in a cult of self and of "fate" replace the solution through rational experience that the earlier development seemed to promise. The luminosity of the story grows vaporish with only spasmodic flashes of the earlier intensity and light.³⁶

³⁵SR, June 1, 1957, p. 12. Mr. Hill is an Assistant Professor of German at Rutgers University. Professor Hill also pointed to the poor quality of the translations of Hesse's books as being one of the major reasons for his lack of earlier acceptance. But Anne Freemantle, in the NYHT (February 20, 1948, p. 27) commented that Demian had been "admirably translated".

Steppenwolf, 1929 (Steppenwolf, 1927), like Demian, was written in the decade following World War I and re-issued in 1947. Steppenwolf is the strange and introspective study of a man who regards himself as half man and half wolf of the steppes.

George N. Shuster, in the NYHT, in explaining the theme of the book, stated that "Steppenwolf is a commentary on the soul of an artist who detests the bourgeois, seemingly unable to do more than talk itself from one war into another, but unable to devise a regimen superior to that which he despises written in the expressionistic style, it is perhaps a kind of orthodox 'Hound of Heaven' in prose."³⁷

Claude Hill, in the NYT, questioned the acceptance of the book by the American reading public: ✓

Despite its analysis of the neurosis of our time, and despite the fact that Hesse is deserving of a wide audience, Steppenwolf is not likely to become very widely read. Although it is written in a noble, lofty, and lucid style (and ably translated), the book may strike the average reader as too "European", too mystical and possibly too shocking in its brutal honesty.³⁸

In a generally favorable article in the SR, Ben Ray Redman observed that "this philosophical fiction, written in the German expressionist manner that flourished after World War I, is sometimes brilliant, sometimes bewildering, but always interesting."³⁹ But TM in a short, highly critical opinion, described

³⁶ NYT, February 21, 1948, p. 6.

³⁷ NYHT, March 16, 1947, p. 1. Mr. Shuster is President of Hunter College and a former high official in the Military Government of Germany.

the book as "a repellent example of that beery old thing, German Romanticism, being sick in the last ditch before Nazism."⁴⁰

Hesse's major work, Magister Ludi, 1949. (Das Glasperlenspiel, 1943) is an essay in philosophic symbolism and a study of a futuristic utopia. It is an enormous novel about a community of men who live in celibacy and poverty, dedicating their lives to learning, in a mythical place called Castalia. Their main preoccupation is with the Bead Game, a universal intellectual language that can be used only by scholars of immense learning after lifelong practice. The master of the game is Magister Ludi, and this book deals with the life of Joseph Knecht, who rises from being an obscure student to become the Master, only to discover that the Castalian ideal does not satisfy him.

George Shuster, in the NYHT, felt that "it has a definite note of kinship to Goethe's Faust in the hero's return to the common life to achieve true unity and perfection."⁴¹ Shuster rated Ludi as "Hesse's greatest book," and concluded that "Hesse is a stern, superbly ironical preacher, with remarkable insight into the meaning of youth and age . . . but . . . Hesse is almost totally without 'plastic skill', i.e., his characterization is

³⁸NYT, March 29, 1947, p. 30.

³⁹SR, March 29, 1947, p. 30. Mr. Redman is an author and critic for several newspapers and periodicals.

⁴⁰TM, March 17, 1947, p. 104.

⁴¹NYHT, March 16, 1947, p. 1.

very poor. But he is interested only in the whole effect, not the various parts. Hesse is deceptively lucid on the surface but one could not conceive of a more elusive or peripatetic mind at work."⁴²

Robert Pick reviewed Ludi for the SR. He commented that

It is impossible to give, in a short space, an adequate idea of the fabulous scholarship, the eclectic learning, and the wealth of mystical speculation which permeate the discussions. If one applies the yardstick of the English-American novel to this book, it is an amorphous, a nearly boundless fantasy. Its best, as one of its early Swiss admirers once said, 'is proffered in a cipher language'. Hesse's great master, Jean Paul, would not have been ashamed of Magister Ludi. It commands high respect as the confession of one of the most sincere of contemporary authors and as the ultimate work of an old man who has never been content with retreating into the shell of an old man's wisdom.⁴³

Richard Plant, writing for the NYT, offered another generally favorable review, including the remark that "Ludi will take its place as one of those few rare achievements of modern German writing which belongs to world literature."⁴⁴ But Mr. Plant, despite his overall favorable evaluation of the book, was also critical, as is seen in this passage:

Improbable as it may seem, Hesse has succeeded in constructing a novel which is as original as it is profound, offering astonishing wealth to the reader who gives himself to it. But something of Castalia's sterility seems to have communicated itself to Knecht's biography. The book is reminiscent of a moon-scape--overclear, without shadows, colors and smells. Where there is no background the fore-

⁴² NYHT, March 16, 1947, p. 1.

⁴³ SR, October 15, 1949.

⁴⁴ NYT, October 30, 1949, p. 50.

ground loses its significance . . . only Hesse's lyrical power appears at its height, and his gift for projecting the essence of saintliness.⁴⁵

TM pointed up something that was perhaps overlooked by the other reviewers. "Magister Ludi has an underlying theme as savage as some of Jonathan Swift's, but it is written in an elegant, leisurely, almost wearily lyrical prose. The combination is arresting," and Hesse "is plainly smiling at all ivory tower intellectuals, all tight little groups that seek salvation by separateness."⁴⁶

One of Hesse's early short novels, Siddhartha, 1951 (Siddhartha, 1923), was hailed as a masterpiece in Europe when it was first published. It was not translated and published in the United States, however, until 1951. In this moral allegory Hesse concerns himself with the conflict between man's protean external reality and man's inevitable idealistic impulse toward spiritual self-realization.

Christopher Lazare, writing in the NYT, used Hesse's own words to describe the ultimate goal of Siddhartha: "'Grace . . . a state of harmony between the inner being and the external world.'"⁴⁷

Robert Halsband, in the SR, commented that "the clarity of this short tale allows one to look through to its profound

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ TM, October 17, 1949, p. 113.

⁴⁷ NYT, December 2, 1951, p. 52.

depth."⁴⁸

Hesse's Journey to the East, 1957 (Morganlandfahrt, 1932), received only two very short reviews. Richard Plant, in the NYT, called it "a teaser, but should have more notes to help the uninitiated understand what is going on,"⁴⁹ and Claude Hill, in the SR, devoted most of his comments to the generally poor quality of the translation.⁵⁰

Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929)

Hugo von Hofmannsthal was a writer who became world-famous as a dramatist and librettist, but he was also a talented novelist and one of the best lyric poets of the first half of the 20th Century. It is unfortunate, therefore, that only one small volume of his prose works has been made available to the American reader since 1945. This book, entitled simply Hofmannsthal's Collected Prose, 1952, is an anthology of several short pieces, fragments, poems, and aphorisms. The lead story, Andreas, is a fragment of a novel left unfinished at the author's death and first published in 1932.

Stephen Spender, in a review for the NYT, commented on Andreas in particular and quoted Hofmannsthal's own opinion of what the goal of a writer should be:

⁴⁸SR, December 22, 1951, p. 38.

⁴⁹NYT, July 21, 1957, p. 18.

⁵⁰SR, July 1, 1957, p. 12.

The story is told with a wonderful clarity It is a symbolist allegory of a kind which foretells Kafka. And yet the interest of Hofmannsthal lies in his refusal to take the underground journey to the end of the night which is Kafka's or Joyce's. In the selections from the Book of Friends with which the volume terminates, there is an aphorism which reveals the aims distinguishing Hofmannsthal from his great contemporaries: "Modern psychological poets give depth to what would be lightly passed over, and take superficially what should be treated profoundly The writer's task is to cleanse, to organize, to articulate the substance of life Throughout the intellectual sphere of confusion, an almost unbelievable inconsistency prevails."⁵¹

Continuing his review, Spender remarked that "In the other pieces I am disconcerted by the over-insistence on luminosity. This has its own distracting effect It is as though Hofmannsthal were always accompanied by a midnight polar sun and his inventions could only be depicted in the colors of the aurora borealis."⁵¹

Francis Golffing, in the NYHT, noted that "Hofmannsthal is known in England and France as one of the great writers of German prose. Yet his scope is remarkably wide, his achievement is almost every genre of composition of the first order." In summing up the present volume, Golffing stated that

Hofmannsthal's concern with what is unsäglich, ungeheuer, is saved from vapidty by the firmness of his style, a style in which charm subserves rigor . . . if the style errs at all, it is not in the expected, German, direction; the reader will search in vain for traces of heavy-handedness, rumination over-indulged, mystique, or unwieldy syntax. What he might find here and there, and find lightly to his distaste, is an element of complaisance, of too large acceptance: the grand seigneur's bonhomie.⁵²

⁵¹NYT, August 24, 1952, p. 1.

⁵²NYHT, September 7, 1952, p. 4.

An interesting counterview to that expressed by Golfing was found in the SR. Robert Halsband, in a rather sharply critical article, commented that "the narratives, especially the fragment of the novel Andreas, are so beclouded with symbolism and mysticism and weighed down by stage costuming that they lose whatever tension that might have held the reader."⁵³

Ernst Jünger (1895-)

Ernst Jünger is one of the greatest and also one of the most unusual of contemporary German authors: a conservative and an aristocrat; a strong nationalist but an anti-totalitarian who opposed the tyranny of National Socialism; yet he served voluntarily as an officer in the German Wehrmacht throughout World War II. There is a definite parallel in the development of Jünger and Ernst Wiechert: both Wiechert and Jünger were linked to the Blut and Boden group of writers in their early works; both were at first strongly pro-war and ultra-nationalistic, all of which helped pave the way for Nazism. But they were disillusioned in the actual practice of National Socialism and became quiet, but sincere, anti-Nazis.

Jünger's On the Marble Cliffs, 1948, (Auf den Marmor-klippen, 1939), has been described by some as a veiled attack on Nazism, but whether that is true or not, it is at least an anti-totalitarian allegory about the loss of a civilization through the citizens' unwillingness to face up to the realities

⁵³SR, October 18, 1952, p. 36.

of their own defense. And in this regard, Jünger's book is in kinship with the novels of Bergengruen, Kesten, and von Unruh.

TM described this book as a "powerful, Gothic-like anti-totalitarian novel on how a peaceful, serene civilization could be subjected and overrun by an insidious and ruthless aggressor through the disinterest of its own victims."⁵⁴

Franz C. Weiskopf, in the SR, noted that

. . . in Marble Cliffs Jünger distinctly deviated from his former work As examples of the "art of polished darkness" which today, as under the Nazis, gives shelter to a lot of ambiguous opinions, and as material for the study of the camouflaged opposition to Nazi barbarism from an outraged esthete's point of view, the American editor of On the Marble Cliffs has certainments. The translation does justice to Jünger's style, which is lush and at the same time manages to be crisp.⁵⁵

According to Alfred Werner, in the NYT, "Jünger's prose . . . full of chthonic symbols and allegoric allusions, is flexible and rich . . . but despite its poetical merits and its unmistakable challenge to Hitlerism, it fails to uplift the reader because of its impotent hopelessness."⁵⁶

Franz Kafka (1883-1924)

Franz Kafka was one of the most significant writers of the early part of this century. He was one of the earliest writers to depict the agony, anxiety, and futility of man in the modern world. His short stories, unfinished novels, tales, and fragments all involve

⁵⁴TM, March 15, 1948, p. 113.

⁵⁵SR, April 10, 1948, p. 15. Mr. Weiskopf is the author of several novels.

⁵⁶NYT, April 4, 1948, p. 22.

various aspects of man's unfathomable and somehow mysterious anxiety and frustration. A considerable portion of his work was published prior to the period covered in this study, and only his diaries, a collection of short stories, and a re-issue of the novel, The Castle, have been published since World War II.

Kafka's Diaries, published in two volumes in 1948 and 1949, contain a great number of entries and notes about his work and short excerpts and fragments that were later incorporated into his larger stories. In general, they were favorably received, particularly by those reviewers who are known as Kafka fans, but on occasion they were rather sharply rapped. John Bartlow Martin, in the NYHT, called them "dull and disappointing . . . the bulk of the diaries is junk . . . the jottings of a 20-year old adolescent, hypersensitive and arrogant."⁵⁷ TM stated that "Kafka, by writing down whatever transient impression or narrative that entered his mind, hoped to achieve some sort of emotional catharsis."⁵⁸ Claude Hill, in the SR, stated that

I do not agree with those critics who consider Kafka one of the truly great writers of our time. There are technical shortcomings in his work as well as deep gaps in his spiritual world . . . yet there is no modern author more fascinating, more puzzling, more challenging, and more characteristic for the malignant frustration of modern man . . . his neurosis was nothing more than the mass neurosis of our time.⁵⁹

⁵⁷NYHT, May 1, 1949, p. 15. Mr. Martin is an author and free-lance writer.

⁵⁸TM, May 31, 1948, p. 14.

⁵⁹SR, February 26, 1949, p. 37

Description of a Struggle, 1959 (Beschreibung eines Kampfes, 1907) is a collection of three short stories and several fragments not previously published in the United States. Richard Plant, in the SR, rated these stories as minor items: "These unique and exasperating fragments will appeal only to those who are fascinated by Kafka . . . a frightening piece of schizoid, almost automatic writing with little coherence."⁶⁰

Dearest Father, a letter written by Kafka to his father, is an inquiry into Kafka's failure and despair in life. Kafka's letter to his father appeared for the first time in English translation in 1959, among a collection of Kafka notes and memorabilia. It amounts to some 59 pages of text and, as was typical of Kafka, was never delivered. F. W. Dupee, in the NYT, classed it as one of the great confessions of literature.⁶¹ Charles Neider, author of The Frozen Sea and a long-time student of Kafkania, reported in the SR that "the letter, as is not surprising, is brilliantly done, a tour de force, moving sometimes, always keen, and with an extraordinary ability to characterize the father and to portray him from the son's point of view." Neider's pithiest statement was that "one thing is certain: his kind of wound probing (in order to be certain that the wound is still there and thriving as a wound) is, in the end, tiresome."⁶²

⁶⁰ SR, October 25, 1958, p. 31.

⁶¹ NYT, September 12, 1954, p. 42. Mr. Dupee is a Professor of English at Columbia University.

⁶² SR, September 18, 1954, p. 21.

The definitive edition of The Castle, 1954 (Das Schloss, 1920), one of Kafka's more famous unfinished novels, received only a very few reviews, and only the SR contained one significant enough for inclusion here. In this review, by Ben Ray Redman, The Castle is described as "a symbolical, satirical picture of society caught fast in the grip of a senseless bureaucracy that functions habitually, traditionally, the victim of its own inertia. The hero K. represents the questioning stranger for whom society has no place." Redman further reflects that

. . . in The Castle as always, Kafka is a fascinating, tantalizing writer. His approach to his readers appears at first to be as direct as Checkov's; he seems to establish contact with us immediately, and quickly wins our confidence. Here is an author who knows exactly what he wishes to say, and how to get on with the business of saying it in a style of classic clarity. But then abruptly, we realize that we are not in close contact with him at all, that he has slipped away from us and is dancing on ahead of us, always just beyond our reach.⁶³

Kafka's Letters to Milena, 1954 (not previously published in German), received generally favorable reviews. Although, like his Diaries, not strictly fiction, they provide much insight into the character and personality of Kafka they have been included in this study. Richard Plant, in the NYT, gives a particularly fine report.⁶⁴ And Charles Neider, in the SR, concludes that "the letters constitute the most revealing factual document by or about Kafka yet published."⁶⁵

⁶³ SR, April 3, 1954, p. 26.

⁶⁴ NYT, March 28, 1954, p. 4.

⁶⁵ SR, April 3, 1954, p. 27.

Hermann Kesten (1900-)

Hermann Kesten, like many other German writers who fled Nazi Germany prior to World War II, settled in the United States. He is now a naturalized American citizen. According to Bithell, Kesten is "a moralist and a fighter for plain old unvarnished truth."⁶⁶ Kesten's first book in English translation was The Twins of Nuremberg, 1946 (Die Zwillinge von Nürnberg, 1946). The theme of this book is the struggle between good and evil in Germany during the period from 1918 to 1945, represented symbolically through the lives of two sets of twins.

Franz C. Weiskopf, in the SR, was prompted to write that "irony alternates with tenderness, and pathos with gloomy soberness. It is not always easy reading, but the discriminating and thoughtful reader will be richly rewarded. Kesten's literary skill shines most brightly in his witty aphorisms and his bold imagery."⁶⁷ The NYT, in a favorable review by Konrad Heiden, made the following comment:

Kesten is more than a story-teller. So artfully does he pit the Nazi against the anti-Nazi that he makes the reader feel that perhaps it is true that 'nature is mad'. It is here that the plot of the book becomes profound and reaches far beyond the mere problem of Germany. Good and Evil seem inextricably tied together, and we are on sadly familiar ground when Mr. Kesten shows one more how much blood had to be spilled in a new attempt to separate the eternal Siamese Twins. The tale often runs away with all

⁶⁶ Bethell, op. cit., p. 490.

⁶⁷ SR, May 11, 1946, p. 5.

probability . . . yet the author never lets the reader down . . . at first the story seems to fall short, but then surpasses its goal.⁶⁸

Keston's earlier book, The Happy Man, 1947 (Ein ausschweifender Mensch, 1929), is an ironic novel about Berlin in the 1920's, and its theme is that "Happiness is the reward of virtue". Stephen Stepanchev, in the NYHT, observes that it is "the sardonic study of the German 'average man' (kleiner Mensch) who is willing to put aside fame, fortune, power, and even love, to achieve a moderate, bourgeois happiness. Kesten is devastatingly rational, even cynical."⁶⁹

Elizabeth Langgässer (1899-1950)

Elizabeth Langgässer, one of the leading Catholic writers of the past three decades, has been described as the successor to Gertrude LeFort. As might be expected, her writings are all religiously oriented. The Quest, 1953 (Märkische Argonautenfahrt, 1950) is a novel of ghostly and devastated postwar Germany in which seven strangely assorted people set out from Berlin on a spiritual pilgrimage to the monastery of Anastasiendorf to seek absolution and find the meaning of their lives: it is a symbolical account of the diverse means through which one seeks grace. Ben Ray Redman, in a very favorable review in the SR, summed up her talents in these words:

⁶⁸NYT, May 12, 1946, p. 5.

⁶⁹NYHT, March 23, 1947, p. 10.

The Quest . . . reveals the mind and art of an extraordinary writer, a poet in prose as well as in verse, a writer steeped in the learning of books and the learning of life, whose searching reason and winged imagination were equally at home in the world of man's most ancient myths and the world of man's post-quantum indeterminacy physics . . . it is hard to speak of her writing skill, her virtuosity and range, in any words but superlatives . . . she is the mistress of many styles and moods, of rhapsody and plain prose, of naturalism and surrealism. She can snare the most elusive ideas in her verbal nets; paint pictures that arrest us in their beauty and horror. She can express the profoundest speculative insights with startling economy, . . . but she lacks a sense of form and often makes it more difficult for the reader than necessary.⁷⁰

Virgilia Petersen, writing in the NYHT, arrives at about the same evaluation. She commented that Langgässer "belongs in the main-stream of the German tradition in her lyricism and her insistent intellectualization . . . and in her pursuit of definition, she belongs to the contemporary elite of Catholic writers."⁷¹

Alexander Marie Lernet-Holenia (1897-)

Alexander Marie Lernet-Holenia is a Viennese-born author of many talents: playwright, novelist, poet, and author of numerous short stories. The only work from his pen translated during the period since World War II is Count Luna and Baron Bagge, Two Tales of the Real and the Unreal, 1956 (Baron Bagge, 1948). TM was not too impressed with his book: "His talent is special,

⁷⁰SR, September 26, 1953, p. 20.

⁷¹NYHT, September 20, 1953, p. 4.

minor, and eccentric, fit fare perhaps only for devotees of what might be called 'seance fiction'."⁷² Richard Plant, however, in the NYT, offered a more favorable opinion: "Lernet-Holenia has, since 1927, in turn bewitched, antagonized, and entertained those who like a good yarn. His picaresque tales are told with elegance and disdain, in a style at once purposefully old-fashioned and wearily decorative . . . a natural teller of tall tales . . . a ghost story teller a la Poe."⁷³

Thomas Mann (1875-1955)

Thomas Mann's creative life spanned over half a century. His first major novel published subsequent to World War II was Dr. Faustus, The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkuehn, as told by a Friend, 1948 (Doktor Faustus, das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde, 1947). The story concerns the life of a great German composer who made a pact with the devil in order to achieve world fame as the foremost modern composer.

The book received widely varying reviews. TM described the book as "Mann's most difficult to read novel,"⁷⁴ but Alfred Kazin, in the NYHT, was quite favorably impressed:

⁷²TM, October 22, 1956, p. 22.

⁷³NYT, December 9, 1956, p. 42.

⁷⁴TM, November 1, 1948, p. 96.

The theme is the surrender of Germany to the daemonic . . . but that is not why the book is so great . . . it is the confrontation of the problem, rather than the solution, and the new understanding of Germany as an interpretation of recent history It is a most German book, bounded on every side by thought of Germany, a great cry of love and despair over the country he fled, by a German artist Reading it in English one feels like an outsider and does not know whether to rejoice over the rich play of intelligence, of a kind German readers have not known for some time, or to be embarrassed at finding himself such an eavesdropper on Mr. Mann's long dialogue with himself over his own people. The book is saturated in German thought, German music, the indefinable German gift for equating the eloquence of language with the ambiguity of existence; intellectually, it is a feast.⁷⁵

Another favorable opinion was expressed by Claude Hill in the SR. In a long, careful analysis, with considerable comment on the many facets of the novel, Mr. Hill stated that "Dr. Faustus is a mirror of the German soul . . . Mr. Mann has created a valid symbol of Germany whose tragic fault has always been an unholy preponderance to the esthetic values over the moral world."⁷⁶ Hill further remarked that Dr. Faustus, like most really great works of world literature, can be interpreted on several different levels. Again, in his own own words, he observed that the book is

. . . loaded with a spiritual cargo that ever seems to out-weigh the penetrating mental struggles of The Magic Mountain, the book floats like a gigantic intellect-laden vessel in the shallow waters of the current world literature; its readers can be compared to watchmen on guard who, according to their position on the shore or the strength of their telescopes, may get varying glimpses of the slowly drifting

⁷⁵ NWHT, October 31, 1948, p. 3.

⁷⁶ SR, October 30, 1948, p. 31.

craft. A full view, however, will be afforded only those faithful who have forgone impatience and have learned to focus accurately.⁷⁷

TM, in a generally favorable review, reported that "the section describing Adrian's deal with the Devil is a tour de force that is a unique reading experience in or out of context. So is the subtle, near perfect sketch of the fast-talking music impresario Dr. Faustus will be considered a masterpiece by some, a bore by many."⁷⁸

But, as was frequently found to be the case, others did not share the same enthusiasm for the book. Harry Levin, writing in the NYT, was critical of the generally poor characterization, the long philosophical asides, and the digressions into musicology. His comment that "those who like to read program notes about imaginary compositions will find many passages to their liking here"⁷⁹ is indicative of the general tone of his review. Levin's most favorable comment was that "the dialogue, which is better than the characterization, permits Mann to develop a wide range of ideas with his usual essayistic skill but Leverkuehn remains a symbolic, shadowy figure, whose reserve is accentuated by long tirades in the manner of Luther's table-talk. The only vivid character is the narrator, Dr. Serinus Zeitblom."⁸⁰

Similarly, Mr. J. A. F. C. Auer, in the GSM, "wonders whether one should criticize a Nobel prizewinner, or whether one.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ TM, November 1, 1948, p. 96.

⁷⁹ NYT, October 31, 1948, p. 5. Mr. Levin is an Associate Professor of English at Harvard University.

should simply say ipse scripsit, and bow the head."⁸¹

Mann's next work, The Holy Sinner, 1951 (Der Erwählte, 1951), is an artful retelling of the medieval Oedipus legend of the monk Gregorius, who, despite great sin and suffering, became Pope. It was received with unanimous acclaim. Stephen Spender, the English poet and novelist, reported very favorably in the NYT:

In this book--which I believe to be a small masterpiece--Mann has pushed the connection of evil with magic and magic with evil to the point where he demonstrates that the magic can perform the final miracle of making evil good. It is a triumph of art indistinguishable from moral sensibility which makes the miraculous, most incredible part of the story--the 17 years on the rock--seem the least absurd (in a tale which audaciously risks absurdities) and the most convincing.⁸²

Siegfried Mandel, in SR, commented that "a new work of one of the greatest living novelists is always an event. The event is even more gratifying when it marks a distinct advance in the master's art as is the case with Thomas Mann's Holy Sinner."⁸³ In a long, careful review, Mandel reflected how this book was a personal accomplishment for Mann, for in this novel

. . . he has succeeded in achieving what has long been one of his chief goals, to write a sustained work compounded of irony and comic improvisation. He experiments with techniques which yield startling realism and deep seated comedy resulting in increased dramatic intensity. The character creations are among Mann's best, and the novel is at once complex enough with its latent meanings and symbolism to please the literati--more important, the general reader is treated to an exhibition of some of our best storytelling.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ CSM, October 30, 1948.

⁸² NYT, September 9, 1951, p. 1.

⁸³ SR, September 8, 1951, p. 19. Mr. Mandel is an instructor in English at Brooklyn Polytechnical College.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Gouverneur Paulding, in the NYHT, was almost rhapsodic: "In Mann's long list of remarkable books, this must be ranked as a tour de force, . . . it is filled with humanity, beauty, and strength . . . and told with skill, compassion, and wit. Never has Mann written with greater tenderness."⁸⁵

TM, in an unusually favorable review, commented that

Mann is at his most urbane. He writes with the literary craft of a master, and this time happily avoids the philosophical asides that cumbered his earlier books. He has glazed the legend with elegant mockery, and notions of Freud creep in to jostle the miracles of faith And Mann is too good a pessimist not to conceal his own derisive smile.⁸⁶

Mann's next book, The Black Swan, 1954 (Die Betrogene, 1953), did not fare nearly so well with the reviewers--the reviews ranged from mildly unfavorable to sharply critical. This short novel tells the morbid story of a middle-aged widow who meets a young American and becomes inextricably infatuated with him. She thinks that her love for him has caused a rejuvenation of her body and postponed her impending menopause, but she is only deceived by the symptoms of advanced cervical cancer.

TM, in what was perhaps the least unfavorable review, noted that "Mann has written with a cold and antiseptic detachment . . . and for this tired little side trip, Mann has clearly forgotten to pack his genius."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ NYHT, September 9, 1951, p. 1.

⁸⁶ TM, September 10, 1951, p. 102.

⁸⁷ TM, June 7, 1954, p. 122.

Richard Plant, who has made a long and serious study of Mann, wrote in the NYT that

There is no more painful task for a critic than to be confronted with a disappointing work by a writer of the first magnitude whose performance he has respected and admired for years. However, even the most belligerent Mann worshipper would have to admit that his latest effort is, to say the least, on a modest scale . . . The deceptions and feints of nature are the themes of the long, spun-out dialogues that form the novella's main body . . . They are intellectual exercises, presenting the author's favorite pairs of philosophical opposites: soul-body; health-sickness; life-death. Unfortunately the dialogues do not create human beings . . . The story doesn't reveal sympathy, insight or even interest: his irony puts up a plastic curtain of detachment between his theme and his protagonists.⁸⁸

Virgilia Peterson, in an unfavorable review in the NYHT, summed it up in these words: "The Black Swan cannot aspire to the class of Death in Venice because it has insufficient stature of its own."⁸⁹

Ben Ray Redman remarked in the SR, with apparent reference to the morbid character of the book, that Black Swan is a

. . . queer duck of a book . . . the strangest book I have read in 35 years of reviewing. That it is a work of art, I am sure. In retrospect one realizes that only an artist . . . could have written it. But I am also sure that it is one of the most repulsive, most devilish works of art that I have ever looked upon.⁹⁰

The last major work written by Mann before his death, Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man, 1955 (Bekenntnis des Hochstaplers Felix Krull, 1954),⁹¹ is a light-hearted study of

⁸⁸ NYT, June 6, 1954, p. 6.

⁸⁹ NYHT, June 6, 1954, p. 2.

⁹⁰ SR, June 5, 1954, p. 15.

an artistic and cosmopolitan rogue who makes a career out of chicanery and considers himself an eminent citizen of the modern world. According to Siegfried Mandel in SR, "it is such works as Felix Krull which holds a mirror up to the absurdities of our time. What we see is grotesque, but it is the truth as only pure comedy can show it."⁹²

Maxwell Geismar, in summing up the book for the NYT, said: "It is not a major novel; it is entertainment. Yet it has a deeper meaning in the development of Mann the artist . . . his final step, his emancipation. His art embodied a kind of universal 'becoming' and never-ending--which, he believed, was the real purpose of life."⁹³

Robert Musil (1880-1942)

Robert Musil is one of the least known, yet one of the most important writers of this century. During the past two decades he has gradually been accorded a higher position in the lists of great writers, and his genius has just in the last few years begun to be appreciated by American readers. His major work, Man Without Qualities, 1954 (Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften,

⁹¹Richard Winston, writing in the NYHT (September 18, 1955, p. 1), declared that "the translation of this novel calls for more than passing comment, because it is one of those rare triumphs of a difficult art. Denver Lindley has captured in his translation all the masculine farce and the multiple allusiveness of the German original. He knows when Mann is being simple and direct, when he is being circumlocutory and pompous for humorous effect. Some readers of Felix Krull will think that Mann has found a new style. On the contrary, they are for the first time reading Mann in his true style."

⁹²SR, September 17, 1955, p. 26.

Bd. I, 1930; Bd. II, 1933), took more than 20 years to write and rewrite. Although it amounts to over 2,000 pages and runs to two large volumes, it was still incomplete at Musil's death. Musil's great work is closely related in technique to that of Joyce and Proust, but he cannot be said to be the disciple of either. Musil was an exact scholar of philosophy, and one finds much psychological probing into the minds and motivations of his characters.⁹⁴ The setting of the story is in the waning years of the Austro-Hungarian empire before World War I.

Frederic Morton, writing in the SR, described it as

. . . exhibiting a disregard of novelistic tools that is at once reckless and calculated and, because of the size of the canvas across which it spreads, majestic . . . The novel presents a tournament of theories instead of a drama of emotions. It is composed of intricate dialectic, of a thousand finely-wrought intellectual crystals and not a single drop of blood. It depicts man's fate in the absence of a moral touchstone adrift where good and evil, truth and falsehood are reduced to bottomless relativity.⁹⁵

This same idea was expressed by Siegfried Mandel in the NYT: "Ulrich is Musil's 'Man Without Qualities' who can see both sides of every question so well . . . as to rationalize himself into complete inaction. In this atmosphere of intellectual indecisiveness and verbosity Musil's novel takes on a farcical yet nightmarish quality."⁹⁶

⁹³NYT, September 18, 1955, p. 1.

⁹⁴Bithell, op.cit., p. 503.

⁹⁵SR, December 11, 1954, p. 52.

⁹⁶NYT, November 14, 1954, p. 34.

Richard Winston, in an unusually favorable review in the NYHT, praised the novel for its "spriteliness, humor, and narrative power, with a highly dramatic and integral structure."⁹⁷

TM, in a capsule sketch of the book, wryly observed that "the ruling class has lost its faith in God, its fear of the Devil, and confidence in itself. It has opinions but no convictions, techniques but no principles, ideals but no beliefs. In short, its troubles may be more timely than at first appears."⁹⁸

Young Torless, 1955 (Die Verirrungen des Zöglings Torless, 1906), Musil's first novel, was not available to the American reading public until after Musil had received recognition with his Man Without Qualities. This short novel tells the story of the near psychopathic development of a young boy in a semi-military boarding school and the problems the boy faces during his early years of puberty.

Siegfried Mandel, in the NYT, suggested that the book is

. . . an artistically bold dissection of homosexuality in a military school . . . the novel is written in a sweat of terror, yet the author's poetic gift lifts the narrative above the theme. This book becomes the story of all young, trapped creatures, and Torless the prototype of bewildered adolescence . . . its penetration into the bewildered and lonely heart of youth has an uncanny accuracy.⁹⁹

Robert Pick, in the SR, remarked that the "book is as alive as though written yesterday . . . its poignancy and the

⁹⁷NYHT, November 7, 1954, p. 8.

⁹⁸TM, November 15, 1954, p. 116.

⁹⁹NYT, December 11, 1955, p. 31.

wisdom to be winnowed from it do not in the least depend on its faraway and strange time and place. Having read this novel, I am convinced of Musil's extraordinary stature."¹⁰⁰

Theodor Plievier (1892-1955)

Theodor Plievier, soldier-of-fortune, world adventurer and long-time advocate of leftist and communist causes, spent the years of World War II in Russia. He returned to Berlin in 1945 and moved to the Western Zone in 1947. His famous trilogy about World War II represents one of the most important accounts to come out of the war. These three books are not novels in the usual sense, in that there are no central characters or plot, but would be more properly called Reportagen. The first book, Stalingrad, 1956 (Stalingrad, 1945), was written while Plievier was in Moscow and represents the Russian viewpoint of the famous battle. This work is one of the very few in this study that received reviews in all five of the sources checked, and all the reviews were generally favorable.

William L. Shirer, author of the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, reviewing the book for the NYHT, described it as

. . . powerful, nauseatingly frank and brutal: an epic account of the sheer torture and hell of the loss of the German 6th Army at Stalingrad. The tragic story of a whole nation led astray to utter self-destruction . . . it comes close to Tolstoi's War and Peace, but goes far beyond anyone else in describing the grisly death in battle.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰SR, October 1, 1955, p. 21.

¹⁰¹NYHT, November 7, 1948, p. 7.

Melvin Maddocks, in the CSM, remarked that the "writing is memorable when it is primarily epic . . . when Plievier singles out sergeants and generals from the mass and gives them focus."¹⁰² The reviewer for the NYT, Robert G. Davis, called it "the most impressive novel of the Second World War yet to appear in Europe."¹⁰³ Edmund Fuller commented in the SR that "'Plievier's Inferno:' has a massive weight and power . . . nothing is spared . . . detail is heaped upon ghastly detail with a kind of stolid objectivity until the cumulative picture is one of madness and chaos" But he adds that "although comparable to Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front, it is not the equal of that famous novel."¹⁰⁴

The second part of the trilogy, Moscow, 1954 (Moscow, 1952) was not as well received as Stalingrad; nevertheless, it was considered an important contribution to the accounts of World War II. Frederic Morton, writing for the NYHT, considered it "an inferior effort . . . the story starts with conviction and quiet authority, but with the passing of H-Hour, the novel begins to fall apart." Morton further noted that " . . . its inhabitants follow the carefully charted routes that have been marked for them, yet they possess little life of their own . . . it speaks more of bullets than of wounds. In trying to show both the Russian and German side of the battle for Moscow, Plievier, like Napoleon and Hitler before him, gets bogged down in the Slavic vastness."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²CSM, October 16, 1948, p.16.

¹⁰³NYT, October 17, 1948, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴SR, October 30, 1948, p. 15.

John H. Lichtblau, writing in the NYT, with apparent reference to Plievier's former Communistic viewpoints, noted the author's increased objectivity: "This book is his first attempt to write about those things he chose to ignore before . . . to write with his political blinds off Here is a man who has something to say and says it well--with the bitter passion known only to those betrayed by their own illusions."¹⁰⁶ TM described Plievier as "the best novelist who has written on World War II" and observed that Moscow

. . . leaves a residue of flaming images in the mind. The description of war, from private's fatigue to general's annoyance, is one of Plievier's finest talents. Another is his easy way with mass confusion, civil and military, his ability to control vast areas without losing sight of the basic factors, from supply to morale.¹⁰⁷

His third war novel, Berlin, 1957 (Berlin, 1954), completed the series. This book received widely varying reviews, with the unusual twist of a very favorable review by TM, while the NYT was highly critical. TM noted that "Berlin, the story of the slow death of that city in 1945, is free of the Germans' all too-frequent self-pity; it is not only the death agonies of a city but the final ironic defeat of its philosophy of power." And in the description of Hitler's end in the bunker, Plievier "has brought a method somewhat reminiscent of Tolstoi--a combination of imagination and public record It is a terrible and very nearly brilliant

¹⁰⁵NYHT, March 7, 1954, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶NYT, March 17, 1954, p. 25.

¹⁰⁷TM, March 8, 1954, p. 102.

book . . . easily read, not easily forgotten."¹⁰⁸ But Frederic Morton, of the NYT, saw it in an entirely different light.

The transitions are too brusque The paragraphs leap ahead too quickly at the end I felt I hadn't read a novel but sat through a maniacal montage of lurid newsreels I closed the book feeling numbness instead of understanding in many disappointing ways just another verbal delirium about the fall of the Nazis.¹⁰⁹

His feeling was echoed somewhat by Richard Plant in the SR, who remarked that the book was "too long . . . too big . . . too many characters--too little 'life'." But Plant was impressed by it as a documentary, "a sort of fictionalized history . . . it should be required reading for our experts on Eastern European Affairs."¹¹⁰ Robert C. Healey, in the NYHT, rated the book as "an impassioned political tract, ending in a frantic plea for the West to watch out for the Colossus of the East . . . but Stalingrad, Moscow, and Berlin, taken together, represent the most powerful writing to come out of World War II."¹¹¹

Plievier's least known work in the United States is an unusual book indeed. Called The World's Last Corner, 1951, in English, it is the adaptation and abridgement of two novels, Im letzten Winkel der Erde, 1946, and its sequel, Haifisch, 1949, based on the author's personal experiences in the South American nitrate mines. Frederic Morton, in the NYHT, concluded that "I

¹⁰⁸ TM, April 29, 1957, p. 100.

¹⁰⁹ NYT, April 28, 1957, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ SR, May 11, 1957, p. 15.

¹¹¹ NYHT, April 28, 1957, p. 1.

can't help suspecting that the process of abridgement and synthesis of which the present edition must be a product is at least partly responsible for my disappointment. Luckily, many flashes of tragi-comedy and life-size drama have been preserved."¹¹²

James Ramsey Ullman, in the SR, followed the same thought expressed by Morton, adding that "it is a pity that it never gets down to telling a coherent story . . . a baffling book, it becomes well-nigh impenetrable when one goes . . . into the text."¹¹³

TM summed it up as "a picaresque novel with all the juice squeezed out."¹¹⁴

Erich Maria Remarque (1898-)

Despite the international acclaim which Erich Maria Remarque received with his novel about World War I, All Quiet on the Western Front, 1928 (Im Westen nichts Neues, 1928), his subsequent literary output, not unlike that of Lion Feuchtwanger, remains at the borderline between serious literature and sophisticated popular entertainment. Remarque left Germany in 1933, going first to Switzerland and, at the outbreak of World War II, coming to the United States. He is now a naturalized American Citizen. His first major book after the war, Arch of Triumph, 1946 (Arc de Triomphe, 1946), was an immediate best-seller. The scene of

¹¹² NYHT, April 15, 1951, p. 14.

¹¹³ SR, June 2, 1951, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ TM, April 16, 1951, p. 112.

the novel is Paris, alive with refugees and exiles, on the eve of World War II. The book was not only popular with the general public, but it was also well received by most of the critics.

TM described the mood of the novel as "one of quiet desperation . . . the story of the emigrés succeeds because it is tough, bold and unsentimental treatment of vast pathos."¹¹⁵ Robert Pick, in the SR, called it "a richly rewarding book . . . possessing many of the characteristics of a great novel . . . Ravic, the hero, is a masterpiece of original characterization . . . he is the 20th century man who survives."¹¹⁶ Charles Poore, in the NYT, had some reservations about the book: "Although what Remarque has to tell is often unbearably true; the way he chooses to tell it is often unnecessarily theatrical and inclined to be melodramatic at times . . . absorbing . . . but sometimes overcontrived."¹¹⁷ The review in CSM, apparently in reference to the detailed clinical descriptions of surgical operations, reflected an unfavorable note: "To read this book is an ordeal; one sets his teeth and goes through with it if one must. But in the end, one has little that is truly rewarding."¹¹⁸

Remarque's next work, Spark of Life, 1951 (Die Gefangenen, 1951), deals with the tragic story of life in a Nazi concentration

¹¹⁵TM, January 28, 1946, p. 90.

¹¹⁶SR, January 19, 1946, p. 7.

¹¹⁷NYT, January 20, 1946, p. 1.

¹¹⁸CSM, January 22, 1946, p. 16.

camp. Quentin Reynolds, in the NYT, describes the book as "a grim, agonizing, but terribly wonderful story of what happened to the political and religious nonconformists in Hitler's Germany . . . a book that is hard to read; once begun it is impossible to put down."¹¹⁹ Commenting on Remarque's recognized ability to create unforgettable characters, Reynolds described the characters in this book as "too determined to life to give up and die gracefully . . . those who had only physical strength did not last long; men like # 509 who were able to draw upon the inexhaustible resources of the spirit stayed alive the longest." TM, however, was not so favorably impressed and wrote that "his story of faceless victims and soulless destroyers occasionally enrages the mind; it seldom engages the heart . . . the trouble is that this book was written from second hand accounts and cannot capture the true spirit and imagination like a real account could."¹²⁰ An interesting contrast to this last idea was found in Reynold's review, in which he concluded that "no actual survivor of a camp has been able to draw up such a savage or eloquent indictment as Remarque in Spark of Life."

Black Obelisk, 1957 (Schwarzer Obelisk, 1956) is a satirical novel about inflation torn Germany of the 1920's. Fred T. Marsh, in the NYHT, stated that "Remarque has written a brilliant satirical novel; witty, often very funny, picaresque and serious

¹¹⁹NYT, January 27, 1952, p. 1.

¹²⁰TM, January 28, 1952, p. 102.

at the same time, filled with sadness, as it would have to be . . . but how to assess it as a fictional history of its time, I am not so sure."¹²¹ Maxwell Geismar, in the NYT, compared the Black Obelisk to a "cross between the Three Penny Opera and Tropic of Capricorn . . . whether it is great literature, is difficult to know; but it is such good reading I am suspicious of it."¹²² The idea of raciness came up again in Richard Plant's article in the SR when he remarked that "the Black Obelisk is definitely no gift for the Aunt Emilies of both sexes and all ages."¹²³ Plant further noted that "his characters have been worked out with such skill that one can overlook the possible lack of a basic plot . . ." and summed it all up as "one of Remarque's best."¹²³

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

One of the foremost literary figures of the last half-century was not a novelist but a lyric poet. Rainer Maria Rilke, one of the truly great poets in recent German literature, was a mystic and a Christian in search of the true meaning in life. Much of his poetry deals with religious motifs. It was in this vein that he wrote a group of thirteen poems entitled The Life of Virgin Mary, 1948 (Marienleben, 1913). Gustave Davidson, writing in the SR, described Rilke as "a sculptor of words . . . although obsessed with religious subjects . . . Rilke probes the enigma

¹²¹NYHT, April 7, 1957, p. 3.

¹²²NYT, April 7, 1957, p. 4.

of love, beauty, man, God, and eternity. His poetry embraces all the struggles, acceptances, compromises, and surrenders of mankind."¹²⁴ Harvey Breit, in the NYT, suggested that

. . . these little poems of The Life of the Virgin Mary partake of some of the quality of the best poems--a conversational tone that is at the same time curiously hymnlike and revelatory The translations seem to be of good quality; they avoid the literalness that Rilke has suffered from in English and transmit an explosive and lyric sense of discovery that has come to be one of several of Rilke's unique signatures Rilke is one of the most extraordinary poets of our century.¹²⁵

The only other collection of poems reviewed was entitled simply 31 Poems, an anthology of poems representing the entire creative span of Rilke's life. The majority of the comments in the reviews pertained not to the quality of the original poetry, but to the poor quality of the translation. Babette Deutsch, in the SR, devoted most of her entire review to the critique of the translation itself: "One or two of the Sonnets to Orpheus are happily turned and the outward shape of the original is faithfully adhered to, but the book is rather a testament to the pitfalls open to those who translate a great poet than an example of what such translation should be."¹²⁶

¹²³SR, April 20, 1957, p. 22.

¹²⁴SR, March 20, 1948, p. 18.

¹²⁵NYT, December 14, 1947, p. 26.

¹²⁶SR, August 3, 1946, p. 11.

Ernst von Salomon (1902-)

Ernst von Salomon, freebooting political adventurer, movie script-writer, propagandist, and novelist, wrote one of the most discussed books of the post-war years: The Questionnaire, 1954 (Fragebogen, 1951), a best seller which quickly ran into several editions. When it was published in the United States it caused a great stir of interest and was widely reviewed--and vehemently denounced. The book is von Salomon's political autobiography written in the form of indignant answers to the questionnaire served by the Allied Military Government on all Germans suspected of Nazi activities. Frederic Morton, in the SR, commented that

. . . what distinguishes these retorts is a candor not only unflinching but one surmises occasionally, not unembellished. Salomon brandishes his honesty-about-the-past with a braggadoccio piousness . . . he wears the Blackjack like a wedding ring. Salomon . . . an arch-Prussian intellectual and writer, while not a Nazi party member, by "enthusiastic passivity" encouraged the Nazi's march to power. Recommended as airplane literature to John Foster Dulles on one of his flights to Bonn.¹²⁷

In a sharply critical analysis of the Questionnaire, TM summed up the book as

. . . a viciously anti-American autobiography. There are in Salomon reflections of the things that made Hitler possible in Germany . . . moral colorblindness, a dangerous half-intelligence that can rationalize even the most monstrous side of any case, self-pity mixed with arrogant self-righteousness. Salomon is not content with trying to exonerate himself. According to him, no one was to blame for what happened in Germany. It just happened, and no one

¹²⁷SR, January 1, 1955, p. 54.

was responsible but the times. Yet it is clear that Salomon does not speak for all Germans, and it is hard to believe that he speaks for even an alarming or significant minority . . . there is a kind of totality, a rotten radiance¹²⁸ about his cynicism which is rare in the worst of times or man.

William L. Shirer takes recourse to cliché in a severely unfavorable review in the NYHT, classifying von Salomon as "a glib, cynical unregenerate German author . . . a fanatical nationalist . . . who gloats about his Prussianism."¹²⁹ E. S. Pisko, in the CSM, complained that "the book, unfortunately, is so well written that the reader has to muster all his alertness to see it for what it is--a luxuriously furnished inferno, in which von Salomon serves as a guide . . . smooth, sophisticated, and utterly unreliable."¹³⁰

Shepard Stone, in the NYT, also took a serious, highly critical tenor in his review. He characterized the novel as "a bitter, cynical, powerful book . . . written by a bitter, cynical man. This book is a peppery stew, part autobiography, part fiction, part essay, part political tract." In a further comment on the importance of the book, he wrote that

. . . today the real enemies of Germany are themselves, inside, not outside, the country. Among them is Ernst von Salomon. By subordinating the monstrous acts of the Nazis and concentrating on the actions of a small number of American soldiers in the first two years after the war, Salomon relieves the bad conscience of many Germans. He seeks to make the point that the Americans were as brutal as the Nazis. Such men as Salomon must bear some of the responsibility for the reservations which the non-German nations continue to have about Germany.¹³¹

¹²⁸ TM, January 10, 1955, p. 90.

¹²⁹ NYHT, January 2, 1955, p. 4.

Anna Seghers (1900-)

Anna Seghers (pseudonym for Netty Radvanyi, nee Reiling) is the chief exponent of the new social realism in the novel, as Brecht is in the drama.¹³² A disciplined Marxist-Leninist of long standing, she fled Germany in the 1930's, spending part of her time in exile in Spain, and later went to Mexico. She returned to East Berlin in 1947 where she has become a major literary contact between the East German socialist writers and Soviet authors. Her first book published after the war, The Dead Stay Young, 1950 (Die Toten bleiben jung, 1949), is listed as a novel but according to Ruth Chapin, in the CSM, "it is not a novel in the usual sense . . . it has no plot, no central characters, no unified action."¹³³

Continuing her review, Miss Chapin wrote that "The Dead Stay Young is a sincere contribution . . . no to the literature of condemnation, but to the literature of understanding. Her style is often heavy, but the results authentic."¹³⁴ One interesting sidelight noticed in this review was the absence of any comment about Segher's well-known political leanings, which were made a special subject for comment by nearly every other reviewer.

¹³⁰ CSM, January 25, 1955, p. 9.

¹³¹ NYT, January 2, 1955, p. 16.

¹³² Bithell, op. cit., p. 493.

¹³³ CSM, July 29, 1950, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Heinz Politzer, in the NYHT, had little good to say for the book; it was "fairly well done in part . . . [but Seghers] never concealed her leanings toward the extreme left . . . her intentions (political tract) are obvious."¹³⁵

Richard Plant, in the NYT, dismissed the book as an "over-carefully detailed chronicle . . . two-thirds of this book suffers from two defects: faulty technique and an unfortunate political bias."¹³⁶

Much the same type of comment was contained in the article in the SR written by Robert Pick:

The wealth of events between 1918-1945 forces the author to compress the historical material to the utmost. Many times important episodes are only hinted at . . . we are entitled to wonder whether Seghers, by reducing the conflict almost entirely to the Communist versus the Fascist issue, has done justice to the whole picture.¹³⁷

Fritz von Unruh (1885-)

Fritz von Unruh, scion of a famous Prussian family and son of a Governor General of East Prussia, turned against the tradition of his life to become an outstanding pasifist and mystic. Most of his works, like those of his great country-man Ernst Wiechert, have their settings in the lands of forests and heath of the East. Author of several dramas and numerous novels,

¹³⁵NYHT, July 30, 1950, p. 4. Mr. Politzer is a poet and critic, and Professor of German at Bryn Mawr.

¹³⁶NYT, July 30, 1950, p. 12.

¹³⁷SR, July 29, 1950, p. 14.

short stories, and poems, von Unruh was praised by Thomas Mann as "the most gifted dramatist Germany has produced in the last fifty years, whose lyric poems belong to the very best in modern German literature."¹³⁸ Von Unruh's major post-war novel, The End is Not Yet, 1947 (?) was written while he was in war-time exile.

Stevenson Smith, writing in the NYT, postulated that Unruh sees the issue not in terms of a struggle for power, but against it. Smith's review contained much praise for the author, including this comment:

Aided by the imaginative shock technique that only a resolute artist can command, [Unruh] . . . has so interlaced his deeply felt principles with detailed particulars of character and action that he has no need to state his thesis overtly: the characters act it out for him on the world stage and will continue . . . for the struggle against the men of power is still going on and the end is not yet! This is the strength of the novel: in it's imaginative vision of evil, it still holds firmly to the dignity and essential greatness of human nature, in the face of the utmost indignities that men of power can devise.¹³⁹

A similarly favorable article was written by George Shuster, in the NYHT. Shuster was so impressed with this book that he regarded it as one of the great books of all time, comparing it to Dante's Inferno:

This book is less a novel than an impassioned, dramatic vision of a wholly distorted moral order. There is no all-resolving code in this book. It merely restates the ancient hope, fleetingly reborn after Verdun, that mankind will still find the way upward. But despite the fact that he stalks his prey with an implacable frankness which will scare off many readers, Unruh has not written a tragedy . . . it is

¹³⁸ SR, May 3, 1947, p. 10.

¹³⁹ NYT, May 4, 1947, p. 3.

a very moving, very stirring and extremely important work of art.¹⁴⁰

An entirely different opinion was voiced by Harrison Smith in the SR. In an apparent reference to a previous review, Smith exclaimed that "there is indeed nothing in accepted literature with which to compare this book. It is difficult to see how a recognized critic could have compared this book to Tolstoi's War and Peace."¹⁴¹

Only one other novel by Unruh has appeared in translation since the end of the war: The Saint, 1951 (Die Heilige, 1951), a romanticized biography of the life of St. Catherine of Sienna. Most of the reviews were unfavorable, with only the NYHT, in an article by Gouverneur Paulding, offering a few words in the author's favor: "The character of Catherine in The Saint rings true . . . [Unruh's] sustained lyricism helps him vastly, but his brain helps him more" ¹⁴²

Quite a different viewpoint was expressed by Martin Blumenson in the SR where he observes that "the serious intent of Unruh, whatever it may be, cannot be questioned. But his novel 'of sacred and profane love' is not plausible. Characters and story are infantile . . . and the spuriously romantic manner of the writing is so bloated that there is neither form nor grace nor taste. One wonders vaguely what impelled such a book to be written."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ NYHT, May 4, 1947, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ SR, May 3, 1947, p. 10.

¹⁴² NYHT, October 15, 1950, p. 8.

Closely following the disappointment of Blumenson was that of Richard Plant in the NYT; "There should be a law," said Plant, "against authors retelling medieval feast-orgies--they sound so dull . . . after a while the incessant fortissimo defeats itself."¹⁴⁴

Karl Gustav Vollmöller (1876-1947)

Karl Gustav Vollmöller was once one of the darlings of the neo-romantic movement. A playwright, poet, and novelist, Vollmöller wrote The Last Miracle, 1949 (Mirakel, 1911) as a symbolic retelling of the old legend of a runaway nun who became famous as an opera singer, then returned, a penitent, to the convent.

Gouverneur Paulding, in the NYHT, reflected that "there are traces of Mr. Cain and Dostoevsky, but unfortunately there are mystical sequences which must have had their origin in the worst of German romanticism."¹⁴⁵

Claude Hill, in the SR, described Vollmöller as "an aristocratic, romantic, mystic, . . . Roman Catholic His novel doesn't rank with Flaubert's or Mann's, but compared with the assembly line trash of most recent fiction in the genre, it is a superior performance."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³SR, November 25, 1950, p. 41.

~~144~~¹⁴⁴NYT, December 10, 1950, p. 25.

¹⁴⁵NYHT, June 12, 1949, p. 19.

¹⁴⁶SR, June 18, 1949, p. 10.

Jakob Wasserman (1873-1934)

Jakob Wasserman, once commanding a great reputation, is today all but forgotten. One of his lesser novels, Alexander in Babylon, 1949 (Alexander, 1905), translated decades after the heyday of the impressionist era, did not receive very favorable reviews, partly due to the dating of his style, partly due to the poor quality of the translation. Eugene O'Neill, Jr., writing in the NYT, said that "its merits are few and questionable and its faults many"¹⁴⁷ and Claude Hill, in the SR, comments on "the exceedingly pedestrian and awkward translation."¹⁴⁸ Only Capt. R. J. Searless, in the NYHT, had any words of appreciation for the book, with the note that it was "like a psychiatrist's case book As a study in madness it is fascinating, the author absorbing one's attention with flights of fancy and unrestrained language."¹⁴⁹

Franz Werfel (1890-1945)

Franz Werfel was one of the most outstanding poets of expressionism. Like many of his fellow Jewish authors, he had to go into exile in the 1930's. In 1940 he came to the United States where he became a citizen and a Catholic convert. His

¹⁴⁷ NYT, March 7, 1949, p. 31.

¹⁴⁸ SR, April 16, 1949, p. 46.

¹⁴⁹ NYHT, June 14, 1949, p. 14.

last major work, The Star of the Unborn, 1946 (Stern der Ungeborenen, 1946), was completed just two days before he died. It is a novel of the political utopia of the distant future, when all men's earthly frailties have been conquered, even death.

Isaac Rosenfeld, in a very unfavorable review in the NYT, describes it as

. . . a fantasy predicting the 'shape of things to come', and a novel in the venerable, ambiguous genre of utopian satire which criticizes the present in the light of utopia and at the same time ridicules utopia in the terms of the present. The book was written as a philosophical diatribe against scepticism, naturalism, and irreligion, a sort of reverse Candide . . . it is thus both ambitious and frivolous, a novel and a travelogue It is unfortunate that the strengthening of a novelist's religious and moral convictions should weaken his sense of the variety, seriousness and many-sidedness of the ineradicable conflicts of life totally lacking in . . . human character . . . rather boring and lacking in narrative tension I regret that I have not been able to write a more enthusiastic obituary.¹⁵⁰

Harrison Smith, writing in the SR, said that "it has magnificent imaginative and poetic passages, but it is as cold as outer space. Until the day comes when man has lost his heart and soul . . . no one in his right senses will place it beside Don Quixote or The Divine Comedy."¹⁵¹

An anthology of Poems of Franz Werfel, 1946, published shortly after the author's death, contains a number of his best poems from the previous 30 years. The NYT rated them as "one of

¹⁵⁰ NYT, February 24, 1946, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ SR, March 2, 1946, p. 7.

the very few good books of German verse published since 1933"¹⁵²
and Alfred Kreyborg, in the SR, praised the intelligence and
poetic spirit of the translator, Edith Abercrombie Snow.¹⁵³

Bruno Werner (1896-)

Bruno Werner, well-known as an art critic, newsman, and former editor, wrote only one novel, The Slave Ship, 1951 (Die Galeere, 1949). Robert Pick, in the SR, described the book as "an account of the years from 1933-1945 when Hitler piloted the slave ship of the Third Reich into the maelstrom . . . the story of Georg Forster, a liberal newspaperman who deplored the rise of the little corporal but, like so many others, did nothing about it."¹⁵⁴

In explaining why this book was so popular in Germany, Pick suggests that "it is . . . that fallacy--the German readers self-identification with the hapless, wavering hero, who never was able to bring himself to actively resist the Nazis--that accounts for this novel being a best seller in Germany."¹⁵⁵

In analyzing the book for the NYHT, William L. Shirer noted that "the majority of Germans approved of the Third Reich,

¹⁵² NYT, May 26, 1946, p. 14. The name of the reviewer was not disclosed.

¹⁵³ SR, March 23, 1946, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ SR, June 9, 1951, p. 9.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

at least tacitly. They disliked Hitler but hoped his aims would be successful [they were] against it all, but never did anything much to stop it. That was part of the German tragedy."¹⁵⁶

Frances Russell, in a favorable review in the CMS, concluded that

The Slave Ship is a somber book but it is not just another war novel. It is an achievement in understanding, a book that should be read widely, for it explains far better than all other self-conscious apologies that have been appearing right and left, just what it felt like under Hitler to be a German and a patriot and remain a decent human being.¹⁵⁷

René Fueloep-Miller, writing in the NYT, criticized the form of the book and the "flashback within a flashback" technique used by Werner, but felt that "these weaknesses are more than counteracted by Werner's keen psychological insight, his clear delineation of character and sense of dramatic tension."¹⁵⁸

Ernst Wiechert (1887-1950)

Ernst Wiechert is the novelist par excellence of East Prussia, the laureate of the vast forests and heathlands in which he grew up as the son of a forest ranger. He is at his best in the evocation of the magic and mystery of those enchanted woodlands and the people who lived there. His first novel in trans-

¹⁵⁶ NYHT, May 27, 1951, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ CMS, May 24, 1951, p. 11.

¹⁵⁸ NYT, May 27, 1951, p. 5. Mr. Fueloep-Miller is an author, editor and lecturer in European literature at Hunter College.

lation, The Girl and the Ferryman, 1947 (Die Magd des Jürgen Doskocil, 1932) concerns the struggle of good versus evil, as represented in the life of Jürgen, the ferryman. Jürgen lives a lonely life in the forests; Narte, a mysterious troubled sixteen year old girl, comes to live with him in his hut and brings first sorrow and then hope into his life.

The NYT, in an unsigned article, expressed certain reservations about this work:

This novel is soundly composed and sensitively written, its somber poetic tone never lapses; its characters and events are on the whole credible, even impressive; its intimate rendering of nature is unusual, and its meaning is reasonably important. Yet over the whole work there hovers a kind of inexplicable haze, through which the experience of Marte and Jürgen shows but dimly.¹⁵⁹

Virgilia Peterson, in the NYHT, was apparently more favorably impressed: ". . . when so much is written at fever pitch to shock our minds long deadened by the printed blast, the voice of Wiechert . . . falls on the ear like the rain of mercy It is a lovely piece of work translated into lyric English and speaking with the voice of an authentic poet straight to the bedeviled human heart."¹⁶⁰

The report in the SR by Robert Pick stressed the descriptive abilities of the author, who "with a few strokes . . . paints a winter scene, the miracle of a young field, or the nocturnal conversation of man and woman who love each other his

¹⁵⁹ NYT, April 27, 1947, p. 18.

¹⁶⁰ NYHT, April 27, 1947, p. 8.

voice is one of the best that remain."¹⁶¹

Wiechert spent almost a year in Buchenwald in 1938 and was under house arrest for the duration of the war. In his account of life in a Nazi concentration camp, Forest of the Dead, 1948 (Totenwald, 1945), he states that "this report is meant to be no more than a prelude to the great Symphony of Death . . . and I have but stood in the doorway and looked at the dark stage, and I have recorded not so much what my eyes have seen as what my soul has seen."

F. C. Weiskopf, in the SR, concluded favorably that "as a human document, Forest of the Dead will take its place at the side of the more enduring literary testimonies of a dark period."¹⁶²

George Shuster, in the NYHT, was more emphatic, with the opinion that "I think that no macabre masterpiece which the future may conceivably produce can strip Wiechert's simple but deep and moving account of its tragic beauty. He has not hitherto been one of Germany's greatest writers . . . but this book one does not hesitate to call great. Nobody who has ever read this book in the original German will ever forget it . . . The translation, while sincere, is exasperating."¹⁶³

Wiechert's last novel, Tidings, 1954 (Missa sine nomine, 1950), published posthumously, tells the story of Baron Amadeus

¹⁶¹SR, May 24, 1947, p. 18.

¹⁶²SR, June 21, 1947, p. 20.

¹⁶³NYHT, June 22, 1947, p. 5.

Liljecrona's return to his ancestral home after four years in prison camp, only to find the family castle occupied by American soldiers.

Gene Baro, in the NYHT, described it as "the re-awakening of individual moral life after suspension during the war . . . a story of strong Christian faith and ethics . . . [with] beautiful, novel descriptions of nature, especially the change of seasons."¹⁶⁴ Richard Plant, in the NYT, acknowledges that "Wiechert has succeeded in that rare achievement, a truly religious novel . . . he deserves a wide and grateful audience."¹⁶⁵

Arnold Zweig (1887-)

Arnold Zweig, forced into exile, fled to Palestine in 1933, and returned to East Berlin in 1947, where he now lives. In his first postwar novel, The Axe of Wandsbek, 1947 (Das Beil von Wandsbek, 1947), Zweig pictures daily life in Germany during the Hitler dictatorship. The hero, a master butcher, is forced by economic circumstances to supplement his income, and consents to act as an executioner for one day and thereby earn enough money to carry on his own business for a whole year.

Richard Plant, in the NYT, describes it as a "novel in the best European tradition . . . told on three levels: First, it is a powerful story of legalized murder; second, it is a parable

¹⁶⁴NYT, March 29, 1954, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵NYT, March 28, 1954, p. 22.

of crime, guilt, and punishment of the evil that by necessity perpetuates new evil; third, it paints a vivid canvas of Germany in the 1930's."¹⁶⁶

Robert Pick, in the SR, notes that "in the masterly drawn characters on a vast canvas . . . Zweig attempts to mirror his country's moral predicament and decay in the microcosm of one small man's life, and only partly succeeds. Yet, with all its faults, it is a great achievement and will probably remain an important book." But he adds further that "if you still wonder how many Nazis there were in the Third Reich . . . here is the answer: perhaps the Nazis were not more than 10% of the population, but at least 10% of the taint was in every German."¹⁶⁷

David Davidson, in an unfavorable review in the NYHT, comments that

. . . as conceived, it has all the poetic rightness of classic tragedy . . . but it falls down badly--in the ramifications of the plot, development of character, and the simple reporting of various attitudes under Hitler. Zweig evidently was determined to be fair . . . but in leaning over backward he has gone a little too far. The fair-seeming Nazis and nazi-followers that he depicts do not jibe either with the facts in general or themselves in particular.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ NYT, October 26, 1947, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ SR, November 29, 1947, p. 16.

¹⁶⁸ NYHT, October 26, 1947, p. 8.

CHAPTER II

THE YOUNGER GENERATION: AUTHORS WHOSE REPUTATIONS ARE NOT YET FIRMLY ESTABLISHED

Ilse Aichinger (1921-)

Ilse Aichinger, wife of Austrian poet ~~Günter~~ Eich, is in the words of Richard Plant in the SR, "an astonishing new talent, the 20th century successor to E. T. A. Hoffman and Kafka, with a touch of Tennessee Williams . . . her skill with words is most impressive."¹ It is unfortunate that only one small volume of her short stories, entitled The Bound Man, 1956 (Der Gefesselte, 1950), has been published in the United States thus far. Except for the preceding comment by Plant, no significant reviews were found.

Alfred Andersch (1914-)

The first novel by Andersch, Flight to Afar, 1958 (Sansibar, oder Der letzte Grund, 1957), tells of four people in an eastern Baltic port on the eve of the outbreak of World War II and their attempt to escape across the sea to Sweden.

Clyde S. Kilby, in the NYHT, is of the opinion that

¹SR, June 16, 1956, p. 25.

Andersch "pours more meaning into this thin novel than one usually finds in a large work. He writes like a man who is sure of himself and a permanent set of values . . . a man who recognizes the pure delight of liberty, of peace, and of private decisions and conduct."²

Richard Plant, in the NYT, observed that "the characterization is very good--each character is illuminated through an inner monologue, and the author does not overload his characters to push them into symbols."³

Heinrich Böll (1917-)

Mr. Böll is one of the few young post-war authors who has established for himself a firm literary reputation. He is the author of nearly a dozen novels and Novellen, several of which have been translated into various languages, including English. All of his books deal in one way or another with the impact of World War II and its aftermath on the German people. It is interesting to note that Böll's works have been published in the United States in inverse order to their original publication in Germany. This presents the unusual situation that Böll's latest book was translated almost immediately after it was written while his first novel did not appear in translation until almost eleven years after its first publication. The first of his books

²NYHT, October 19, 1958, p. 8.

³NYT, September 28, 1958, p. 44.

to be translated was Adam, Where Art Thou?, 1955 (Wo Warst du, Adam?, 1951).

According to Robert Pick, in the SR, Böll's theme in this novel is the "senselessness of war, 'a disease like typhoid' . . . [but Böll] fails to give substance to the novel . . . all the characters' sufferings remain isolated episodes." But on other grounds Pick rated Böll quite highly, concluding that "his style has a persuasiveness all of its own and a kind of sturdy beauty. By a succession of rather ordinary observations, he brings his characters to life . . . with economical use of details, suggesting a Japanese water color, he builds a scene out of an apparent chaos and leads the action to a climax without ever raising his voice."⁴

In an article in the NYT, Richard Plant voices a similar view: "Böll . . . is a great prose writer . . . his characters are etched with insight, their tragic destinies presented with incisive skill . . . He touches us with a pungent melancholy, a kind of dark brilliance."⁵

In sharp contrast to the foregoing opinions, Denver Lindley, in the NYHT, observed that "his characters are pointless, and the reader's vision ends with the margin of the page."⁶ Even stronger words were used by TM, which reported that "Böll is the German Norman Mailer . . . he wallows in the same mud and tears and reaches the same conclusion--war is a dirty, futile

⁴SR, November 26, 1955, p. 14.

⁵NYT, November 13, 1955, p. 4.

business . . . He seems not only bent on living the war again, but also on losing it again . . . silt by association."⁷

Böll's next work to be translated is the novel Acquainted with the Night, 1954 (Und sagte kein einziges Wort, 1953), the story of the flight from the reality of mediocrity of a lower class German worker in the post-war industrial jungle of the Ruhr valley.

Richard Plant, in the NYT, again has the highest praise for Böll: "A born writer, . . . it may well be that his advent marks the beginning of a literary renaissance in Western Germany." Continuing his review, Plant reports favorably on the author's narrative skill: "Böll's interior monologues have a brilliance and insight worthy of Schnitzler . . . a Dostoevesky-like intensity, the quiet sadness which permeates every sentence of the story . . . yet he avoids the fashionable despair of so many moderns, the mocking sadism of the Hemingway imitators, and the neo-baroque style that spoils some of Germany's profounder writers."⁸

Voicing a somewhat different opinion, Jerome Stone, in the SR, wrote: "In an otherwise undistinguished novel, except for its occasional telling symbols of the spiritual ugliness of urban Germany, Böll achieves something--he conveys the quality of sad mutual tenderness, in which love, though besieged by the forces of abominable ill fate, has not dwindled to a mere out-

⁶NYHT, November 13, 1955, p. 5. ⁷TM, November 21, 1955, p.101

⁸NYT, October 17, 1954, p. 42.

ward habitual expression."⁹

Böll's first novel, The Train was on Time, 1956 (Der Zug war pünktlich, 1949), relates the story of a German soldier-poet's long train ride across Germany to keep his rendezvous with death on the eastern front. Mr. Plant once again extolls the abilities of the author, this time for the SR: "It is proof of Böll's craftsmanship that the novel rarely loses its tension, although the theme, like a dominating tragic motif in a Beethoven sonata, is never abandoned."¹⁰

An interesting contrast between the opinions of Plant and Denver Lindley, in the NYHT, was noted in their reaction to the scene in the brothel, where the hero falls in love with a prostitute. Plant sees the scene as one that could have been tawdry, but is instead a deeply stirring scene, which reveals the author's special talents.¹¹ Lindley, however, ridicules the scene as one of the weakest points of the entire book, full of clichés and nonsense.¹²

The most critical review was written by Frederic Morton in the NYT, who was irked by Böll's poor character development of the hero, whose "premonition of death was on time, but had he died earlier the book would have been better."¹³

⁹SR, September 16, 1954, p. 17. ¹⁰SR, June 2, 1956, p. 12.

¹¹SR, June 2, 1956, p. 26.

¹²NYHT, June 10, 1956, p. 4.

¹³NYT, May 20, 1956, p. 4.

The last of Böll's books to appear in English translation, Tomorrow and Yesterday, 1957 (Haus ohne Hüter, 1954), tells the story of two fatherless boys who are growing into maturity in the war-ravaged Ruhr valley.

Gene Baro, in a very favorable review in the NYHT, rates Böll as "certainly one of the foremost novelists of contemporary Germany."¹⁴ Frances Keene, commenting in the NYT, felt that Böll had done an outstanding job of characterization in the person of young Heinrich: "One of the most believable boys in contemporary fiction, moving the reader by his cynicism, his desperate matter-of-factness Böll never weakens the character by allowing a shade of sentimentality or pity to intrude."¹⁵

Richard Plant, in the SR, again sings Böll's praises, calling him "the best author to come out of Germany since World War II." But Mr. Plant had certain reservations about this novel and was particularly critical of "Böll's use of LARGE PRINT and CAPITALIZED WORDS as a recurring leit-motif, which eventually becomes wearying."¹⁶

Wolfgang Borchert (1921-1947)

Wolfgang Borchert, a talented young writer with a tendency toward nihilism, wrote a number of radio plays and short stories

¹⁴ NYHT, November 3, 1957, p. 10.

¹⁵ NYT, October 19, 1957, p. 17.

¹⁶ SR, October 19, 1957, p. 17.

before his untimely death. The Man Outside, 1952 (Draussen vor der Tür, 1946) is a collection of short stories, prose poems, sketches and essays. This is the only work by Borchert published in the United States. Richard Plant reviewed this book for the NYT and described it as "a haunting experience for any reader . . . written in the nihilistic-expressionist style of the 1920's . . . vignettes of despair . . . and apocalyptic vision of the world gone to ruin."¹⁷

Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-)

Friedrich Dürrenmatt is, next to Max Frisch, the most prominent writer of contemporary German-Swiss literature. His dramas and mystery novels have won considerable acclaim throughout Europe. The first of his short novels to reach the American audience was The Judge and his Hangman, 1955 (Der Richter und sein Henker, 1950). Reviewers in this country paid little attention to this book. The NYHT called it " . . . a muddle rather than anything more memorable."¹⁸

However, Dürrenmatt's The Pledge, 1960 (Das Versprechen, 1958), received a number of favorable reviews. Saul Bellow, in the SR, sums up The Pledge as "simply a criticism of the nineteenth century idea that man's mind could master reality . . . the book's

¹⁷ NYT, August 3, 1952, p. 12.

¹⁸ NYHT, July 17, 1955, p. 9.

form is classic. It is a récit."¹⁹ TM wrote that "it leaves the reader with a wry, ironic aftertaste . . . it creates an atmosphere of intense depression."²⁰ Robert Glauber, in the NYHT, considered it a "bitter novel . . . an outstanding mystery a la philosophical teaser."²¹

Dürrenmatt's latest book to reach the American scene is Traps, 1960 (Die Panne, 1956), which was adapted for the American stage as The Deadly Game in 1960. In this book Dürrenmatt tells the story of a Swiss traveling salesman who imagines he committed a murder. Vernon Hall, Jr., in the NYHT, analyzed the book as "an agonizing protest against a world that has been reduced to the level of advertising slogans."²² George R. Clay, in the NYT, commented that "Dürrenmatt has done much more than diagnose the corrosive effect of capitalism on morality, . . . he has effectively dramatized man's amoral, apolitical craving to see his life in heroic terms."²³

Max Frisch (1911-)

Max Frisch is one of Switzerland's best post-war writers and recognized throughout Europe as a dramatist and novelist with

¹⁹SR, March 28, 1959, p. 20.

²⁰TM, March 30, 1959, p. 90.

²¹NYHT, March 29, 1959, p. 8.

²²NYHT, March 13, 1960, p. 5.

²³NYT, March 6, 1960, p. 4.

a talent for gripping psychological analysis. However, the only book of his to reach the American public is I'm not Stiller, 1955 (Stiller, 1954), in which Frisch presents a classic case of mistaken identity: a "Kafka in reverse" situation in which the hero is forced to believe he is someone he really isn't. The author explores a very timely psychological problem: the question of an individual's identity. The novel is an elaborate and powerful illustration of Kierkegaard's thesis that man's road to freedom lies in self-acceptance, and that this is his only road to happiness.

Denver Lindley, in the NYHT, declares this book to be "a substantial and compelling novel,"²⁴ and TM notes that Frisch argues the case subtly and with drama.²⁵ But Richard Plant, in the SR, penned a highly critical review as the tenor of this excerpt indicates:

To be candid, Frisch presents a brilliant and timely idea . . . but he is not yet capable of controlling his rich materials . . . we must admit . . . to a basic defect in author Frisch . . . rarely has a provocative idea been spoiled more efficiently or effectively by excessive detail and over-decoration . . . too long and too windy. Translator Bullock did an outstanding job and was even courageous enough to cut out several long passages as unnecessary and windy.²⁶

Gerd Gaiser (1908-)

Gerd Gaiser, author of many novels about the psychological

²⁴NYHT, April 12, 1958, p. 24.

²⁵TM, May 12, 1958, p. 104.

²⁶SR, April 12, 1958, p. 24.

recovery of post-war Germany, in The Last Squadron, 1951 (Die sterbende Jagd, 1953) presents a lyrical account of the last critical days of the aerial war over the north German coast, as seen through the eyes of the pilots involved. Although it is fiction, "only by literary license can Squadron be called a novel."²⁷ Indicative of its style are the comments of the reviewers: "word pictures of a lonely pilot's communion with sun, sky, and sea";²⁸ "a series of brief, sharp snapshots";²⁹ "the element of fiction is secondary";³⁰ "his evocative descriptions are created more with the hand of the artist than with that of the novelist."³¹

Albrecht Goes (1908-)

Albrecht Goes was a Protestant chaplain with the German army during World War II and a Lutheran clergyman in Württemberg until his retirement in 1953. Writing in the quiet, lyrical tradition of Mörike, whom he greatly admires, Goes has achieved considerable popularity in his homeland and has been widely translated. His book, Unquiet Night, 1951 (Unruhige Nacht, 1950), recounts the experiences of an army chaplain serving on the Russian front, who has the duty of comforting the last hours

²⁷ TM, July 9, 1956, p. 83.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ NYHT, July 8, 1956, p. 8.

³⁰ TM, July 9, 1956, p. 83.

³¹ NYT, July 8, 1956, p. 20.

of a young soldier condemned to be shot for desertion.

Frederic Morton, in the NYHT, wrote "In simple accents, with unadorned fidelity, Night records not only the corruption of evil men but also the corruption of the good."³²

Richard Plant, in the NYT, is somewhat more specific: ". . . [it is] a fleeting glance at the tragedy of war . . . of destiny throwing together a few lives for a few hours, revealing their minds and hearts and testing the best and worst within them the story is remarkable for its warmth, its simplicity and for the classical restraint with which the somber, swift-moving events are related."³³

Robert Pick, in the SR, reflected that this "is the story of Christian love in a world that is hardly Christian any longer. It is very moving. It is a religious writing of a kind that probably comes to life only when religion in its hope for survival has to go back to the sources of man."³⁴ According to Pick, Goes' style is outstanding in its directness of approach and economy, it is reminiscent of Heinrich von Kleist.

The only other book written by Goes and translated during the last fifteen years, The Burnt Offering, 1956 (Das Brandopfer, 1954), is described by Frederic Morton as a "short bitter novel about the tyranny of the Third Reich; the story pattern is as

³²NYHT, August 26, 1951, p. 4.

³³NYT, August 26, 1951, p. 5.

³⁴SR, September 16, 1951, p. 17.

terse as a parable, plain as a wayside Christ . . . but the importance and insight of the theme needs a sturdier framework than this little novel can provide."³⁵

Hans Habe (1908-)

Hans Habe (pseudonym for Jean Bekessy) is a former Austro-Jewish newspaper man who emigrated to France after the Anschluss. During the war he joined the U. S. Army and rose to the rank of major. In the years immediately after the war, he was a civilian official in the Military Occupation Government of Germany. Most of his writings center around the problems of social and economic recovery of defeated Germany. Habe strove untiringly for a reconciliation with the former enemy, and this laid him open to attacks from certain quarters in the U. S. A. Although primarily considered a novelist in the lighter vein, this prolific writer frequently offers penetrating insights into psychological and social problems.

Aftermath (?) tells the story of two American Army officers in the Occupation Government who, although married, live with the European women they love. The principal theme is the problem of the re-education of the Germans in democracy, which Habe seemed to feel was a task that Germans must do for themselves.

Richard Plant, in the NYT, sums up the book in these words:

It becomes clear early in the novel that Habe has deserted what might have been his main theme to write just another love

³⁵NYHT, August 19, 1956, p. 21.

story. This is a pity, for his fluency and craftsmanship show up best in the scenes dealing with political realities in the description of a Germany that would neither accept nor understand defeat, and the problems of an occupation government.³⁶

Merle Miller, in the SR, seems to agree that Habe has missed a fine opportunity to develop an important subject: "Habe tries to say a good deal in Aftermath, but it just doesn't come off."³⁷

Walk in Darkness, 1948 (?) is the story of a negro GI who marries a German girl, contrary to army regulations, gradually gets involved in the sprawling morass of the black market underworld, and finally deserts the Army to become the ringleader of a band of hijackers. H. B. Kranz, in the SR, characterizes the book as a "sincere but sometimes depressing narrative with an important theme, however, overemphasized . . . a gloomy and dramatic story, the author spares no punches and does not miss the drama of telling it."³⁸

Richard Plant, in the NYT, remarks that Habe's characterization of the hero is excellent, but that of his wife Eva is not nearly as well done. But all in all, Plant writes, "this book seems to be the best of Habe's books . . . the final chapters are . . . written with a sincerity and compassion that

³⁶NYT, October 19, 1947, p. 16.

³⁷SR, November 1, 1947, p. 16.

³⁸SR, October 9, 1948, p. 16.

should stir every heart."³⁹

Probably Habe's weakest effort was The Black Earth, 1952 (?), the story of an aristocratic Hungarian landowner and his daughter living with their peasants in a quasi-feudal society before the outbreak of World War II, and of the loss of the land itself by both classes with the coming of communism. Virgilia Peterson, in a favorable review for the NYHT, seemed to be particularly struck by the characterization and description which "achieve an unforgettable impression."⁴⁰ Pearl Kazin, in an article for the NYT that was as critical as Peterson's was favorable, deplored Habe's technique: "Habe seems to believe that if facts and issues of current history are put down fast enough, the other requirements of fiction will take care of themselves . . . his characters are . . . flat, two-dimensional as the pages of the book itself . . . the writing, which is uniformly listless and stale, doesn't help."⁴¹

Off Limits, 1957 (Off Limits, 1954) sees Habe returning once more to the familiar ground of the American Occupation of Germany after World War II. One of the characters in the book states the theme: "the injustices of the victors obscure the guilt of the defeated, that is what I am complaining of."

While Fred T. Marsh, in the NYHT, rates Off Limits as a "very good account of the troubles and mistakes in fundamental principles of the American occupation and de-Nazification and

³⁹NYT, October 10, 1948, p. 5.

⁴⁰NYHT, November 23, 1952, p. 20.

⁴¹NYT, January 4, 1953, p. 23.

the Nurnberg trials,"⁴² TM, in an emotion-filled review, charges that

Habe . . . peddles the familiar made-in-Germany apologia that most Germans were as innocent as the children of Hamelin, and that only the wicked Pied Piper of Berchtesgaden seduced them into evil ways. Habe argues that the Americans have acted as louts and barbarians preying on a helpless suffering people all Americans are bad, all Germans good a crass coating of sex and corn on this propaganda pill may make it a best seller, although it is rubbish. Habe's strange verdict is that the U. S., acting in good faith, has done more harm to Europe than the nation which has twice in a quarter century launched a total war. In this false equation, miscarriages of justice such as the imprisonment of non-Nazis or the requisitioning of homes are treated as the vicious equivalent of murdering six million Jews⁴³

Frederic Morton, in the NYT, described the novel as "an aquarium in which to exhibit every species animating the sub-aqueous jungle of post-collapse Germany . . . the villain is an idea: the illusion that morality takes place as a kind of public baseball game in which you can tell the good guys from the bad by reading the newspapers."⁴⁴

Hans Habe's last book, The Devil's Agent, 1958 (Im Namen des Teufels, 1958), is described in the NYT as "an intensely funny book . . . the ultimate and wondrous picaresque novel of the secret agent."⁴⁵ However, no further reviews of this book were found.

⁴²NYHT, January 6, 1957, p. 6.

⁴³TM, January 14, 1957, p. 110.

⁴⁴NYT, January 6, 1957, p. 5.

⁴⁵NYT, September 7, 1958, p. 5.

Walter Jens (1923-)

Jens was just old enough to be drafted into the German Army in the early days of World War II, and his experiences during the war influenced him to become a pacifist. His only novel, The Blind Man, 1956 (Der Blinde, 1951), is the story of a teacher who has fallen ill and is stricken with blindness: a symbol of the individual overwhelmed by the horror of darkness. The only review concerning this book was located in the SR; it was written by Nicholas Monjo, who took a sharply critical tack in his assessment of the book:

Cloudy as his intentions often are, it is certain that Jens suggests that the suffering of the Jews will mitigate the blindness and brutalities of the Third Reich, and that only a generous concern for mankind will overcome that terrible German self-absorption the world knows so well. But apart from the story's fugitive thesis, it is wise to modify the above assertion that Mr. Jens has written a "moving lesson" until there is substantial proof that a new Germany has learned that lesson well.⁴⁶

Hans Helmut Kirst (1917-)

Hans Helmut Kirst is the author of numerous light-hearted and entertaining stories of the tragi-comical situations of the war. Kirst's most famous work, a runaway best seller that was quickly translated into several languages and made into a movie, is a trilogy entitled Null-acht-Fünfzehn (08/15). The title takes its name from the German slang version of "G. I.", the mocking nickname for everything military. This book was published in the

⁴⁶SR, May 8, 1954, p. 15.

United States as a serial, in three volumes: The Revolt of Gunner Asch, 1956, Forward, Gunner Asch, 1956, and The Return of Gunner Asch, 1957.

Kirst's books received numerous short, favorable reviews. Here are but a few of the more pertinent and representative comments from various sources: "humorous handbook to a blandly functioning nightmare universe";⁴⁷ "The author joins a casual virtuosity with a highly amusing knowledgeableness of the outer fringes of human nature";⁴⁸ "a calculating as well as talented farceur."⁴⁹

In The Return of Gunner Asch, Kirst changes from the comic vein to one of deeper meaning and seriousness but never loses his satirical style. In the words of Herbert Mitgang of the NYT staff, the "author conveys the bitterness of the soldier's life . . . war is no damn good and Germans, especially, should stay out of uniform."⁵⁰

The Lieutenant must be Mad, 1951 (Wir nannten ihn Galgenstrick, 1951), was written in the same comic vein as Null-acht-fünfzehn. Richard Plant, in the NYT, maintained that it was "in the best tradition of the picaresque novel" and added that it Kirst reveals in the final chapters "a fine, strong sense of the:

⁴⁷ NYT, March 4, 1956, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ NYT, October 28, 1956, p. 41.

⁵⁰ NYT, July 7, 1957, p. 4.

hilarious that will anger the cliché addicts."⁵¹

Gert Ledig (1921-)

Gert Ledig has written only one novel that has appeared in English since 1945. The Tortured Earth, 1956 (Die Stalinorgel, 1955) is a novel about a German army battalion before Leningrad during the height of the battle for that city.

The CSM rated it as "the most eloquent anti-war monument of the new Germany. It makes the victory columns and Tannenberg memorials of earlier generations appear pompous and hollow."⁵²

Robert Pick, writing for the SR, has the following words for the author: "eloquent . . . careful in the choice of imagery . . . astonishingly skillful at delineating some of the traits of the Soviet soldier." This evaluation receives perhaps additional illumination by Pick's summary of war novels in general:

German war novels keep coming from the presses, and the quality of the writing keeps improving, but what do they all say? They say the same things: war is senseless. Still, they say, there is a manliness in the business. I for one wish some German novelist would come out with a story about one of the early campaigns . . . and tell about the times his army made war on people even more 'bewildered' by 'Fate' to other nations.⁵³

Frederic Morton, writing in the NYT, remarked that Ledig, like Plievier, has an eye for hard details about the horror of war: "Ledig disdains the luxury of metaphor. His style runs a

⁵¹NYT, April 8, 1951, p. 4.

⁵²CSM, June 28, 1956, p. 11.

⁵³SR, June 9, 1956, p. 15.

short hard gamut from sardonic comment to appalling detail to tight-lipped compassion. He will not spare his readers a single severed limb . . . the last half of the book is too much repetition of the same horror."⁵⁴ In commenting favorably on his style, TM called it "calculated casualty-report style."⁵⁵

Klaus Mann (1906-1947)

Thomas Mann's son, Klaus, has made several attempts at creative writing. One of his earlier novels, Pathetic Symphony, 1948 (Symphony Pathetique, 1933), is a fictionalized biography of Tschaikowsky. The general tenor of the reviews is indicated by the following excerpts taken from various sources: ". . . no outstanding contribution to the literature about Tschaikowsky";⁵⁶ ". . . emphasis is placed on Tschaikowsky's homosexuality";⁵⁷ ". . . were his book truly fiction this would be legitimate as the analysis of a character which Mann has created, . . . but when he superimposes his own thoughts and conversations as belonging to Tschaikowsky, he achieves a book which has neither the reality of a creation of character nor the reality of an honest biography."⁵⁸

⁵⁴NYT, June 3, 1956, p. 22.

⁵⁵TM, May 28, 1956, p. 112.

⁵⁶NYHT, June 27, 1948, p. 8.

⁵⁷NYT, July 4, 1948, p. 5.

⁵⁸SR, April 17, 1948, p. 38.

Hans Wilhelm Pump (?)

Pump's Before the Great Snow, 1956 (Vor dem grossem Schnee, 1956) is a story about partisan warfare in German-occupied areas of Eastern Europe during the early part of World War II.

Only one review was found. Rating the book as rather mediocre, Richard Plant reported in the NYT, that "the book's events appear to have overpowered the author . . . the troublesome predominance of material over organization . . . and a lack of psychological substance The characters are unfinished Mainly, the narrator is kept at a distance. Pump has left us with a tantalizing and haunting fragment."⁵⁹

Hans Werner Richter (1908-)

Hans Werner Richter had a hard struggle with privation as a youth. This may partially explain why he is basically a social critic. Richter was vehemently outspoken in his anti-Nazi speeches in the early thirties. Forced into the German army in 1940, he was taken prisoner in Italy in 1943 and sent to a POW camp in the United States. On his return to Germany he founded Gruppe 47, a confraternity of writers, to which a large number of leftist writers belonged. His first novel, Beyond Defeat, 1950 (Die Geschlagenen, 1949), was an immediate best seller in Germany and was soon translated into six languages.

According to Richard Plant in the NYT, this book is

⁵⁹NYT, December 14, 1958, p. 16.

"a hard slap at the stupid actions of American POW camp commanders in World War II who failed to seize and exploit the opportunity to re-orient and re-educate their German soldier POW's."⁶⁰ Not much different in context is the statement by E. L. Acken in the NYHT: "It is in fact a tract, a stern and honest lecture aimed directly at the United States."⁶¹ H. D. Kranz, reporting on the book for the SR, rated it very favorably:

Among the many war novels published in the last years this is one of the most significant if only because it is the first book to deal with the German who was not a Nazi and opposed the war, but nevertheless stood alongside his comrades. As a psychological study it conveys in terse dialogue the rather nebulous, blurred state of mind of this young talented writer, who knows far better what he is against than what he is for.⁶²

Although critical of the author's technique, TM also reacted favorably:

Beyond Defeat is not a great novel, its characterization is rudimentary; its style raw; its construction disorderly. But no other book has yet shown so closely how German troops felt and thought in the last, lost stages of the war.⁶³

Richter's second novel, They Fell From God's Hands, 1956 (Sie fielen aus Gottes Hand, 1950), depicts the lives of ten assorted refugees in a German refugee camp after the war. Robert Pick, writing for the SR, criticized the book as "too wide in scope . . . too many characters . . . too little central plot or or cohesion. Although not a successful novel, this is the

⁶⁰ NYT, July 23, 1950, p. 4.

⁶¹ NYHT, July 23, 1950, p. 5.

⁶² SR, September 2, 1950, p. 19.

⁶³ TM, July 31, 1950, p. 66.

poignant testimony of an obviously sincere writer, another moving protest against twentieth-century man's inhumanity toward man."⁶⁴

In the view of Frederic Morton, in the NYT, the book "demonstrates that Mr. Richter reproduces types rather than creates individuals . . . the focus rests on conditions, rather than personality. The hectic, jerky pace of the narrative suits the subject matter: a slower pace would have sacrificed the mist of bewilderment, the sudden, casual terror . . . of a nightmare . . ."⁶⁵

Luise Rinser (1911-)

Much of the material for a good novel could be taken from the personal life of this well-known Bavarian authoress. During World War II she was arrested by the Gestapo and spent several years in a concentration camp where she was condemned to death and saved only through liberation by the advancing American Army. She presently lives in Munich and was married for a number of years to the noted German composer, Carl Orff.

Her most heralded work, Nina, 1956 (Mitte des Lebens, 1950), tells the story of a young, successful authoress in Munich who prefers not to marry but sleeps with many men-- "aus Mitleid", of course,-- for the unfortunate male must follow the urges of his nature and is to be comforted rather than condemned.

⁶⁴SR, March 17, 1956, p. 15.

⁶⁵NYT, March 11, 1956, p. 28.

Although the reactions to her book were quite varied, the general concensus seemed to be that she succeeded rather well in a difficult attempt to break away from the stereotyped format of the usual novel.

Richard Plant, in the NYT, appeared to be very much impressed, to judge from the tenor of this excerpt:

We are tempted to call the form experimental . . . the author has plunged us simultaneously into the present and the past, a technique so dangerous it can blast the foundation of a book sky high. How she manages to stay in control, to keep us tied to every last detail, remains her secret But we are drawn so deeply into the heroine's life that, against all logic, the book appears to be charged with the tension of a suspense novel.⁶⁶

Mary Barrett, in the SR, reported her impressions in much the same vein: "Miss Rinser is admirable, not only for the perception and originality of her theme, but for the way she has turned her back on many of the over-used conventions of the novel. She never descends to cheap effects. Yet it cannot be denied that nobility and high-mindedness are dangerous subjects for a woman."⁶⁷

⁶⁶NYT, October 14, 1956, p. 34.

⁶⁷SR, December 1, 1956, p. 36.

CONCLUSIONS

In summing up the results of this investigation, there are several aspects which merit special mention.

The first thing that stands out in this author's mind is the fact that the bitterness and hostility, on the part of both authors and critics, which might have been expected as a result of the emotions engendered by World War II, are generally absent. In this regard, it was noted that in the books themselves, with only very rare exceptions, almost no anti-American feelings or obvious animosity are expressed. In view of the enforced military occupation of several years duration following the war, this is quite surprising. The critics also showed a great deal of restraint in criticizing authors of books for political or reasons other than literary merit. There appears to be a gradually growing feeling of respect for the ability of the younger generation of German writers.

A second observation is the generally high caliber of the more frequent and prominent reviewers. A large proportion of these, including Pick, Shuster, Plant, Lindley, Morton and Shirer, are accomplished German linguists, and frequently have read the various books both in translation and in the German original. The reviews of Morton appear to be especially good, often incisive and quite illuminating. Shirer, on the other

hand, exhibits little sense for literary criticism, and his latent anti-German sentiments at times stultify the merit of his reviews.

A third significant point is the generally consistent tone of the reviews appearing in the different papers. There was, generally speaking, a unanimous agreement by the critics concerning the book under review. The one notable and frequent exception to this was TM which chanced to find some point of argument. TM seemed exceedingly sensitive to any criticism of things "American" and reacted then with a near diatribe. An important point is that there appears to have been no noticeable bias or editorial policy to prejudice the opinions of the reviewers.

Finally, the results of this undertaking indicate that a great amount of German fiction has been offered to American readers in translation and that the latter have obviously been enthusiastic in their acceptance of the product of the current group of German authors. This is undoubtedly in no small measure due to the American reviewers who have been receiving the majority of these works with favor and understanding. All in all, it may be confidently said that the reputation of German writing is again on the rise.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

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APPENDIX III

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