

THE BILDNIS IN THE WORKS OF MAX FRISCH

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PREFACE

The theme "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" in the works of Max Frisch has by no means gone unnoticed. Both H. Bänziger¹ and E. Stäuble² in their monographs suggest that it is an important idea in Frisch's works, and numerous scholars and critics have mentioned it in scholarly works and reviews.³ Monika Wintsch-Spiess has devoted a chapter of her dissertation to the subject.⁴ Yet few of these works go much beyond general comments, and none offers a systematic analysis of Frisch's most important literary formulations of the theme, which are to be found in the diary excerpt "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," the plays, Als der Krieg zu Ende war and Andorra, and the novel, Stiller.

This thesis limits itself, except for occasional references, to these four works. Certainly the Bildnis-idea can be traced throughout Frisch's works, but the limited length of this study makes it necessary to concentrate on the works in which the idea appears as the theme. It should also be made clear from the outset that for the same reason no consistent attempt has been made to deal with the literary strengths and weaknesses of the works.

1. H. Bänziger, Frisch und Dürrenmatt, cf. p. 62. For complete bibliographical information, cf. list of secondary literature in the bibliography.

2. E. Stäuble, Max Frisch, cf. p. 21.

3. Cf. list of secondary literature in the bibliography.

4. M. Wintsch-Spiess, Zum Problem der Identität im Werk Max Frischs, cf. p. 52.

The most appropriate point of departure for such a study is clearly the diary excerpt, since it represents the first conception of the idea which appears as the theme of the other works. Andorra, Als der Krieg zu Ende war, and Stiller are treated in the order of their conception rather than in the order in which they were written. "Der andorranische Jude," on which Andorra is based, appeared in the diary of 1946 (Tagebuch,⁵ p. 35f.); the story of Als der Krieg zu Ende war was included in the diary of the following year (Tagebuch, p. 213f.); and Stiller stems from Frisch's year in America (1953/54).⁶

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5. Full bibliographical details for all references are to be found in the bibliography.

6. Cf. H. Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern, p. 27.

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CHAPTER I: "DU SOLLST DIR KEIN BILDNIS MACHEN"

In his diary of 1946, Max Frisch first expressed formally the idea to which he refers in quoting the Second Commandment. At the end of the story, "Der andorranische Jude," he adds the following thought:

Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen, heißt es, von Gott. Es dürfte auch in diesem Sinne gelten: Gott als das Lebendige in jedem Menschen, das was nicht erfaßbar ist. Es ist eine Versündigung, die wir, so wie sie an uns begangen wird, fast ohne Unterlaß wieder begehen - Ausgenommen wenn wir lieben.⁷

Since this formulation so tersely expresses the idea developed in numerous variations throughout Frisch's works, it can be considered the focal point of this study. Repeated references will be made to it in relation to specific works in which the idea is developed.

To anyone familiar with the Ten Commandments, the meaning of Frisch's words is immediately transparent. Hebrew Law forbids the making of plastic representations of God, because to do so is to belie his spiritual nature. Such sculptures can never represent the invisible Javeh, thus they can only be considered lifeless idols which betray him. Frisch reasons that the same thing must be true for the living spirit within man that is true for God, since the two are really the same. Just as it is a sin to try to limit the invisible, ever-transforming God to a fixed image, so it is with man. The only difference is that in Frisch's version, "fixed image"

7. M. Frisch, Tagebuch 1946 - 1949, p. 37. Hereafter: Tagebuch. Page references given hereafter in this chapter after citations.

(Bildnis) is a metaphor indicating a mental fixation and not literally a "graven" image, i.e. a sculptural representation. Frisch deliberately chooses the term Bildnis for his metaphor, because the kind of fixed image he means is figuratively as rigid and uncompromising as one of stone or metal.

It should be pointed out that in modern German, Bildnis usually means "portrait." It can, however, also be used in the figurative sense. An example is the title of the popular work by Franz Blei about well-known modern personages, Zeitgenössische Bildnisse. Frisch's Bildnis has little in common with this more standard metaphor. When he uses the term, it always carries the same negative moral implication as the "graven image" of the Second Commandment. This creates a problem of translation. "Graven image" is too literal and too archaic, thus some other term must be substituted in English. I have chosen "fixed image," although this expression is not as graphic as the German "Bildnis."

Max Frisch's version of the Second Commandment is more than just a clever metaphor. It is a statement of belief. God has been "existentialized" to das Lebendige, "the living spirit," which is that incomprehensible, transcendent something in man's being. If I ask: "Why should I not form a fixed image of a person?," then the answer must be: "Because it is a sin to treat the living spirit he embodies as though it were dead." And if the further question is asked: "But why should I respect the so-called living spirit, which I cannot even comprehend?," the answer can only be

"you must believe!"

While Frisch makes his statement of belief, he also turns to the real world about him and presents a rather pessimistic viewpoint: "It is a sin which we...almost incessantly commit." Nevertheless, the last phrase strikes a faint note of hope: "Except when we love." Thus, in trying to describe what it is like to be without fixed images, Frisch writes about lovers:

Es ist bemerkenswert, daß wir gerade von dem Menschen, den wir lieben, am mindesten aussagen können, wie er sei. Wir lieben ihn einfach. Eben darin besteht ja die Liebe, das Wunderbare an der Liebe, daß sie uns in der Schweben des Lebendigen hält, in der Bereitschaft, einem Menschen zu folgen in allen seinen möglichen Entfaltungen. Wir wissen, daß jeder Mensch, wenn man ihn liebt, sich wie verwandelt fühlt, wie entfaltet, und daß auch dem Liebenden sich alles entfaltet, das Nächste, das lange Bekannte. Vieles sieht er wie zum ersten Male. Die Liebe befreit es aus jeglichem Bildnis. Das ist das Erregende, das Abenteuerliche, das eigentlich Spannende, daß wir mit den Menschen, die wir lieben, nicht fertigwerden: weil wir sie lieben; solange wir sie lieben. Man höre bloß die Dichter, wenn sie lieben; sie tapen nach Vergleichen, als wären sie betrunken, sie greifen nach allen Dingen im All, nach Blumen und Tieren, nach Wolken, nach Sternen und Meeren, Warum? So wie das All, wie Gottes unerschöpfliche Geräumigkeit, schrankenlos, alles Möglichen voll, aller Geheimnisse voll, unfassbar ist der Mensch, den man liebt -

Nur die Liebe erträgt ihn so. (p. 31)

The lover will never say what the person he loves is like, i. e. form a fixed image of him, because the two attitudes, "to love" and "to form a fixed image," are mutually exclusive. He simply does not form a fixed image, nor could he love if he did.

The implication is that "to say what a person is like" is to form a fixed image of him. But there is some question as to how literally this is to be understood. Are we to conclude that we should never try to describe a person under any circumstances?

If so, then must not practically all art, including writing, be flatly condemned? An argument can be made that this is in fact what Frisch is saying. Artists and writers generally fare very badly in his works. One can make a list of the failures: Jürg Reinhart, Min Ko (in Die Chinesische Mauer), Marion (in Tagebuch), and Stiller. In Stiller, the Staatsanwalt suggests that there is always something inhuman about making a representation of a human being. Stiller, the sculptor and "author" of the first part of the novel, is in the opinion of the Staatsanwalt guilty of this sin.

This must also serve as a warning to Frisch. When his works are considered in this light, an important trend in his writing becomes evident: the constant effort to avoid the illusion that his characters are real people. In the plays the illusion is often broken by means of a Brechtian alienation effect. Characters step out of their roles to speak directly to the audience (Als der Krieg zu Ende war, Die Chinesische Mauer, Die große Wut des Philipp Hotz, Andorra), or they are absurd or grotesque to the point that it is obvious that they are not intended to be real people (Die Chinesische Mauer, Graf Öderland, Don Juan, Biedermann, Philipp Hotz). Even choruses are used (Nun singen sie wieder, Biedermann). In his epic works the illusion is destroyed by having characters experience such an extreme gamut of development (Jürg Reinhart and Yvonne in Die Schwierigen, Stiller, Walter Faber), or play such diverse roles (Stiller, Gantenbein) that one no longer knows what their "real" identity ought to be.

In this way the reader is never allowed to forget that a human being possesses unlimited possibilities of development and cannot be "summed up" in a Bildnis. In this respect Mein Name sei Gantenbein is Frisch's most perfect work. It is impossible to say which of the roles described by the narrator is his "real" one, because they are all presented as possibilities, not as realities.

The representation of people is not the only problem of the poet. The whole question of veracity in the representation of reality is of great concern to Frisch, as is noticeable in the following excerpt taken from Tagebuch:

Was wichtig ist: das Unsagbare, das Weiße zwischen den Worten, und immer reden diese Worte von den Nebensachen, die wir eigentlich nicht meinen. Unser Anliegen, das eigentliche, läßt sich bestenfalls umschreiben, und das heißt ganz wörtlich: man schreibt darum herum. Man umstellt es. Man gibt Aussagen, die nie unser eigentliches Erlebnis enthalten, das unsagbar bleibt; sie können es nur umgrenzen, möglichst nahe und genau, und das Eigentliche, das Unsagbare, erscheint bestenfalls als Spannung zwischen diesen Aussagen. (p. 42)

The only hope for the writer, according to this, is to maintain a tension between the imperfect, incomplete statements he is capable of making. Hence Frisch's preference for the fragment in his own works: witness the diaries, Stiller, and especially Mein Name sei Gantenbein. Marion, in Tagebuch, is addressing the form problem which the writer faces when he speaks of the "Andorran" poets:

"...wir schreiben Sonette, die aufgehen, wie unser Denken leider nicht aufgeht, Sonette, als wüßte der Schreiber auf die Zeile genau, wo der Mensch aufhört, wo der Himmel beginnt, wie Gott und der Teufel sich reimen; auf alles reimt sich sein Sonett, nur nicht auf sein Erlebnis, und vielleicht kommt es daher, daß es ihm so leicht fällt. Ich weiß nicht, Maestro, ob ich sagen kann, was ich leide? Wir haben eine Quantenlehre, die ich nicht

verstehe, und keiner ist aufzutreiben, der alles zusammen versteht, keiner, der unsere ganze Welt in seinem Kopf trüge; man kann sich fragen, ob es überhaupt eine Welt ist. Was ist eine Welt? Ein zusammenfassendes Bewußtsein. Wer aber hat es? Wo immer ich frage, es fallen die Wände ringsum, die vertrauten und sicheren, sie fallen einfach aus unserem Weltbild heraus, lautlos, nur die Andorraner schreiben noch immer auf diese Wände, als gäbe es sie, immer noch mit dem Anschein einer Vollendung, die in der Luft hängt. Wie aber, Maestro, wäre das statthaft und löblich? All unsere Kunst, je mehr sie in diesem Sinne gelingt, ist es nicht immer, als hätte sie ein archaisches Lächeln über sich selbst? Ich meine, Maestro, der Teufel hole die andorranische Mumie -" (p. 121)

Though it is difficult for the writer and the artist to remain truthful, Frisch does not necessarily find the task impossible. If he intended to condemn images as a whole, including the indispensable tool of creative thought, then one would have to make the absurd conclusion that he should never have bothered with the twenty odd works he has written, since they, like most literary works, are filled with images. It is obviously not writing per se which Frisch is attacking, but rather the "mummified" poetry which tries to capture reality in dead images.

In her dissertation on Max Frisch, Monika Wintsch-Spiess seeks to clarify Frisch's position by referring to the Bildnis as "erstarrtes Bild," and to the Bild (image) as "notwendige Vorstellungsbildung." She also distinguishes "das hohe Bild," i.e. the ideal, as a positive kind of image which Frisch would not consider a Bildnis. Her reasoning is as follows:

Alles Denken beruht auf Bildung und Verknüpfung von Vorstellungen. Um der Klarheit der Darstellung willen werden wir daher im folgenden, immer wenn wir diese notwendige Vorstellungsbildung meinen, den Begriff des Bildes verwenden. Den Begriff des hohen Bildes wählen wir für ein vollinhaltliches allgemeines

Menschenbild, das in den verschiedensten Ausprägungen eh und je als ideales Ziel menschlicher Vollendung vorschwebte. Demgegenüber werden wir den Begriff des Bildnisses für das erstarrte Bild gebrauchen.

Indem Frisch fordert: „Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen“, wendet er sich nicht gegen jene hohen Idealbilder, die sich verschiedene Richtungen der Philosophie, ja das Christentum selbst vom Menschen, so wie er als Ziel sein sollte, machen. Auch das humanistische Menschenbild, das in Goethes „Iphigenie“ Gestalt gewinnt, ...fällt⁸ nicht unter das Bildverbot, wie Max Frisch es interpretiert.

Dr. Wintsch-Spiess is theoretically correct in her contention that Frisch does not mean the normal images of language when he speaks of Bildnis. (And is this not quite obvious from his choice of the word Bildnis rather than Bild in the first place?) It must be remembered, however, that Frisch, as a writer who can in many respects be considered an existentialist, is interested not so much in theory as in practice. He does not write about how people might be, but rather about how they are, and in practice, people tend to think in clichés and stereotypes, instead of in creative images. Frisch says, "It is a sin which we almost incessantly commit" (p. 37). Such fixed images often dominate language so much that it becomes a barrier to understanding rather than the bridge it ought to be. This is the case, for example, in the play, Als der Krieg zu Ende war. In the paradoxical situation which this play presents, a German woman falls in love with an enemy officer with whom she shares no common language, but suffers a breakdown in communication with her own husband because of his cliché-ridden language. (Als der

8. M. Wintsch-Spiess, op. cit., p. 48.

Krieg zu Ende war is discussed at greater length in Chapter III.)

Dr. Wintsch-Spiess' statement that Frisch does not consider ideals Bildnisse must also be treated with reserve. There may be nothing wrong with ideals as such, but in practice they become perverted into mere masks which people use to cover up the true motives for their actions. Biedermann in Biedermann und die Brandstifter is a grotesque example of one who disguises petit-bourgeoise values as Humanität. Biedermann caters to the demands of the obviously ruthless firebugs who gain entrance to his house because he thinks that if he treats them "humanely" they will do the same to him. His sin is that in considering the ideal of humanitas merely as a means to his own self-preservation, he makes Bild into Bildnis.

As it has been evident from these comments, individuals are not the only objects of fixed images. Here again I would take issue with Dr. Wintsch-Spiess, who asserts that Frisch is concerned only with fixed images of individuals. We also find in Frisch's works fixed images of whole groups of people belonging to certain nationalities or races, such as in Als der Krieg zu Ende war; fixed images of such values as humanity and morality, as in Biedermann und die Brandstifter, or even fixed images of oneself or of the world, as in Stiller and Homo Faber, for example.

It should be noted that "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" does not equal "Du sollst dir kein Urteil machen." Quite the contrary, Frisch could very well have written a corollary

to the Commandment: "Du mußt aber urteilen." Avoiding fixed images does not mean that one stops making judgments altogether. The message of Biedermann und die Brandstifter is that Biedermann makes Bildnisse instead of proper judgments. Instead of treating his desperate employees as crooks and the arsonists as reasonable men, he should judge the arsonists as the crooks they are and the employees as the humane people they are. And the audience is by no means supposed to refrain from passing judgment on him for his irresponsibility. On the contrary, Frisch considers it a sin to withhold one's judgment:

...der bloße Verzicht, sich in das Wagnis eines Urteils einzulassen, ist ja noch keine Gerechtigkeit, geschweige denn Güte oder sogar Liebe. Er ist einfach unverbindlich, weiter nichts. Nun ist aber gerade die Unverbindlichkeit, das Schweigen zu einer Untat, die man weiß, wahrscheinlich die allge-
meinste Art unsrer Mitschuld - (p. 148)

Having described in general terms Frisch's use of the word Bildnis, we should also consider the other key word in his thoughts on the subject: Liebe. In Frisch's usage, love means neither eros nor agapé exclusively, but is rather a power more like that of grace: it may exert itself in our lives, but it may also become exhausted. In the third segment of "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," he clearly delineates the relationship between the two alternative attitudes, "to love" and "to form a fixed image":

Unsere Meinung, daß wir das andere kennen, ist das Ende der Liebe, jedesmal, aber Ursache und Wirkung liegen vielleicht anders, als wir anzunehmen versucht sind - nicht weil wir das andere kennen, geht unsere Liebe zu Ende, sondern umgekehrt:

weil unsere Liebe zu Ende geht, weil ihre Kraft sich erschöpft hat, darum ist der Mensch fertig für uns. Er muß es sein. Wir können nicht mehr! Wir künden ihm die Bereitschaft, auf weitere Verwandlungen einzugehen. Wir verweigern ihm den Anspruch alles Lebendigen, das unfassbar bleibt, und zugleich sind wir verwundert und enttäuscht, daß unser Verhältnis nicht mehr lebendig sei.

"Du bist nicht", sagt der Enttäuschte oder die Enttäuschte: "wofür ich dich gehalten habe."

Und wofür hat man sich denn gehalten?

Für ein Geheimnis, das der Mensch ja immerhin ist, ein erregendes Rätsel, das auszuhalten wir müde geworden sind. Man macht sich ein Bildnis. Das ist das Lieblose, der Verrat. (p. 32)

The statement, "Wir können nicht mehr," indicates that without the sustaining power of love our relationships to others become impossible. In the journal version of "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," Frisch speaks of the tremendous "Lebenskraft" which "would be necessary in order that human relationships remain alive."⁹ Seen in light of the passage just quoted, Liebe and Lebenskraft seem to be the same thing: that supporting force in life which theology has traditionally referred to as grace. In a very interesting article, Kurt Marti "translates" Frisch's ideas into theological terminology:

Theologisch formuliert: Das Wort der Gnade setzt nicht das Wort von der Schuld, sondern das Wort von der Schuld setzt das Wort von der Gnade voraus.¹⁰

Guilt (=forming a fixed image) implies the exhaustion of one's love or life-force, not vice-versa.

If we take Frisch at his word when he says that it is not because we make a fixed image that our love ends, but rather because

9. In Schweizer Annalen, 3 (1946/47), p. 16.

10. K. Marti, "Das zweite Gebot im Stiller von Max Frisch," in Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz, 113 (57), p. 372.

our love ends that we make a fixed image, some confusion necessarily arises as to whether it is then meaningful to tell us "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," since we cannot really keep from making a fixed image when we have ceased to love, anyway. If the failure to love is the real illness, and image-making only its symptom, so to speak, would not, for example, Christ's addition to the Ten Commandments, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," have been a more appropriate choice of a Biblical quotation to express Frisch's idea? But the author is not so much saying that we should relate to our fellow men and to ourselves in the spirit of love--this is at least theoretically a commonly accepted principle of our predominantly Judeo-Christian western culture--as he is trying to tell us how we must go about doing this. The value of the admonition, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," would seem to lie in the fact that it makes us ask ourselves whether we are treating other individuals as the "unfaßbare Menschen" they really are, or merely treating them according to the fixed image we have made of them. This gives us a new insight into the human experience of love, which is otherwise so frozen in cliché. To use his own expression, Frisch frees us from our fixed image of that most human experience by describing it in an unusual and very concrete manner.

In the next section of "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," beginning with the remark, "Erinnerung an die vergangene Liebe,"¹¹

11. In Schweizer Annalen, loc. cit., p. 12. This section does not appear in the diary.

Frisch suggests that when one has lost the ability to love, i.e. the ability to follow the other person in his "continued metamorphoses," there arises an urge to explain why this has happened. To cover up one's own lack of the creative energy necessary to love, one invents a rationalization (cf. p. 55 below).

The last seven segments of "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" deal with the effect which fixed images have on the person they portray and on the person who makes them. Frisch observes that prophecy, a kind of fixed image, has a way of fulfilling itself through the power of suggestion:

Man hat darauf hingewiesen, das Wunder jeder Prophetie erkläre sich teilweise schon daraus, daß das Künftige, wie es in den Worten eines Propheten erahnt scheint und als Bildnis entworfen wird, am Ende durch eben dieses Bildnis verursacht, vorbereitet, ermöglicht oder mindestens befördert worden ist -

Unfug der Kartenleserei.

Urteile über unsere Handschrift.

Orakel bei den alten Griechen.

Wenn wir es so sehen, entkleiden wir die Prophetie wirklich ihres Wunders? Es bleibt noch immer das Wunder des Wortes, das Geschichte macht: -

„Im Anfang war das Wort.“

Kassandra, die Ahnungsvolle, die scheinbar Warnende und nutzlos Warnende, ist sie immer ganz unschuldig an dem Unheil, das sie vorausklagt? (p. 32/33)

Here one is reminded of Yvonne in Die Schwierigen, Frisch's novel of some years prior to Tagebuch. Her suggestion that Jürg Reinhart will become a painter proves true, as do all of her prophecies.

From the suggestive power of the prophetic word in particular, Frisch moves next to the suggestive power of words in general, i.e. those coming not from fortune tellers at a carnival but from the people we meet in our everyday lives:

Irgendeine fixe Meinung unsrer Freunde, unsrer Eltern, unsrer Erzieher, auch sie lastet auf manchem wie ein altes Orakel. Ein halbes Leben steht unter der heimlichen Frage: Erfüllt es sich oder erfüllt es sich nicht. Mindestens die Frage ist uns auf die Stirne gebrannt, und man wird ein Orakel nicht los, bis man es zur Erfüllung bringt. Dabei muß es sich durchaus nicht im geraden Sinn erfüllen; auch im Widerspruch zeigt sich der Einfluß, darin, daß man so nicht sein will, wie der andere uns einschätzt. Man wird das Gegenteil, aber man wird es durch den andern. (p. 33)

Es ist nicht unbescheiden, wenn man an den Einfluß seiner Worte glaubt, Worte, die sich mit der Person des Angesprochenen befassen; es ist nur leichtfertig, nicht daran zu glauben - denn wenn wir auch alles von einem Menschen vergessen, der uns einmal begegnet ist, so vergessen wir doch kaum, was er über uns selber gesagt hat.¹²

In gewissem Grad sind wir wirklich das Wesen, das die andern in uns hineinsehen, Freunde wie Feinde. Und umgekehrt! auch wir sind die Verfasser der andern; wir sind auf eine heimliche und unentrinnbare Weise verantwortlich für das Gesicht, das sie uns zeigen, verantwortlich nicht für ihre Anlage, aber für die Ausschöpfung dieser Anlage. Wir sind es, die dem Freunde, dessen Erstarrtsein uns bemüht, im Wege stehen, und zwar dadurch, daß unsere Meinung, er sei erstarrt, ein weiteres Glied in jener Kette ist, die ihn fesselt und langsam erwürgt. Wir wünschen ihm, daß er sich wandle, o ja, wir wünschen es ganzen Völkern! Aber darum sind wir noch lange nicht bereit, unsere Vorstellungen von ihnen aufzugeben. Wir selber sind die letzten, die sie verwandeln. Wir halten uns für den Spiegel und ahnen nur selten, wie sehr der andere seinerseits eben der Spiegel unsres erstarrten Menschenbildes ist, unser Erzeugnis, unser Opfer -. (p. 33/34)

With this, the fixed image is carried to its most negative and far-reaching consequences. To summarize the entire process: first, we cease to love the other person enough to accompany him through all the developments he may experience as a human being. We decide once and for all that we know what kind of a person he is or is not, and we do not intend to change our image: we are finished

12. In Schweizer Annalen, loc. cit., p. 14.

with him, as far as any creative human relationship is concerned. Our fixed image exerts, in turn, a powerful influence upon the other person. His life reflects our image in reality, whether in conformity to it or in reaction against it.

Frisch now seeks to give flesh and bones to what has remained theory up to this point, by means of a short, original story entitled "Der andorranische Jude" (pp. 35-37). The problem of fixed images had been dealt with before. Many of the works written prior to the diary contain the idea, e.g. especially Jürg Reinhart and Die Schwierigen, and it is certainly more than hinted at in many of the narrative segments of the 1946 part of the Tagebuch (cf. "Marion und das Gespenst"). Nevertheless, this story is the first narrative work in which the word Bildnis appears in the sense of Frisch's motto, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen."

The main figure of the story is a young man of the village Andorra who everyone considers a Jew. The people of Andorra have a very fixed image of what it means to be a Jew: a Jew is only interested in money; he is a man who has no one fatherland and can therefore be true to none; he is very intelligent but he has no feeling (Gemüt), and thus cannot be trusted. All of these images are applied to the young "Jewish" boy. After it becomes evident to the boy that people are determined to assign "Jewish" characteristics to him, he examines himself and finds that it is, in fact, all true: he really does like money; he is not really trustworthy; he cannot become very patriotic; etc. His reaction is to embrace all the more

vehemently the image which the people of Andorra have of him, as if out of spite. He becomes so alienated from the people of the village that he even enjoys fulfilling his role, since it enables him to set himself apart from them more and more. There are, to be sure, a few liberal village intellectuals who praise the young man for those very "Jewish" qualities which his fellow citizens have impressed upon him through their fixed image. They stand by him until his death, for which they strongly denounce the others who are responsible. Only in his death do they finally realize how terrible the "Jew's" whole life actually was. Some time afterwards, it is learned that he had not really been a Jew at all, but a foundling whose parents turn out to be Andorrans. At the end of the story, Frisch adds the remark that thereafter, every time the Andorrans look at themselves in a mirror, they find that they, too, have begun to look like Judas. The moral of the story, Frisch tells us, is "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen."

The version of "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" which appeared in Schweizer Annalen ends with the following statement, which does not appear in the diary version: "Ungeheure Lebenskraft wäre vonnöten, damit ein menschlicher Verkehr lebendig bliebe."¹³ With that, Frisch puts the motto which he has created from the Second Commandment into its proper perspective: it is almost as if he wishes to say "Beware! it is easier said than done!" This is the point where intellectual analysis ends and belief begins. As I

13. Loc. cit., p. 16.

have already mentioned, the term Lebenskraft, like the word Liebe as Frisch uses it, seems to point to that which has traditionally been called grace. Keeping this in mind, along with the fact that the author has, after all, chosen a Biblical quotation as the formulation of his idea, some consideration of the notion of the fixed image from the religious standpoint would seem in order here.

One must not be led to the conclusion that Max Frisch is a religious author in the sense that we would, for example, call Werner Bergengruen a religious author. This can be shown by contrasting the original Biblical commandment with "Frisch's" Commandment. The Second Commandment appears in the Bible for the first time as the fourth verse of Exodus 20:

Du sollst dir kein Bildnis noch irgendein Gleichnis machen,
weder des, das oben im Himmel noch des, das unten auf Erden,
oder des, das im Wasser unter der Erde ist.

The commandment is also found in Deuteronomy 5:8, an almost literal repetition, and in Leviticus 26:1, where the word Götzen, "idols," is expressly used in connection with Bild, "image."¹⁴ Even in the Exodus 20:4 version, Bildnis clearly refers to a concrete object fashioned after some object in nature. The meaning of the law, which was intended for the people of Israel, is transparent: it forbids the making of such graven images for purposes of idolatry, as it is commanded in the next verse, Exodus 20:5: "Bete sie nicht an und diene ihnen nicht...."

14. For additional Biblical references to images, see Monika Wintsch-Spiess, op. cit., pp. 47f.

The quotations given here are taken from the standard Lutheran version of the German Bible. The modern Zürcher Bibel, with which one might expect Frisch to be familiar, offers a version of the Commandment which differs considerably from that quoted by him. Neither of these versions of the Bible ever suggests, as Frisch does, an extension of the ban on the graven image to the realm of inter-personal relationships.

It should perhaps be mentioned that the Bildersturm of the Reformation was very strong in Switzerland. It was based on the Second Commandment and forbade the presence of Bildnisse, meaning paintings and sculptures, in the church. This was considered a literal execution of the Biblical law: the mere presence of these images in a church evidently implied that they were supposed to represent the divine, which makes them idols. Being Swiss, Frisch is especially aware of the Reformed Church's image stand. This awareness may even be what guided him to choose the Second Commandment as the "moral" of the story, "Der andorranische Jude." There remains, however, a significant difference between the Bildnis of traditional religion and Frisch's Bildnis: his is an abstract, mental image, while the Church has always understood Bildnis to mean an attempt at concrete representation of the divine. It is furthermore doubtful that a traditional Christian would agree with Frisch in the basic assumption of "his" commandment: "God as the living spirit in every person." On the contrary, the spirit of God and the spirit of man are traditionally viewed as being two distinct-

ly different realities.

No doubt, many a religious existentialist will be able to agree with Frisch's thoughts, because they represent a radical affirmation of life and an opposition to preconceptions and stereotypes which attempt to freeze life into a familiar, comprehensible pattern. In a deeper sense, Max Frisch is a religious writer after all, if we understand religious to mean recognizing a form of transcendence. But the transcendent power which he recognizes--"das Lebendige in jedem Menschen"--does not correspond to traditional Christian doctrine, and Frisch is anything but an apostle or even interpreter of religious doctrine.

Certainly one should not overemphasize the religious implications of the Bildnis-idea. In reality, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" is a pithy, forceful protest against a whole range of social and personal evils--prejudice, cliché, stereotype, intolerance, preconceptions, etc. Each of these finds its expression at some point in Frisch's works. The objective of the following chapters is to trace Frisch's treatment of the Bildnis-idea in its various aspects in the three most pertinent works---Andorra, Als der Krieg zu Ende war, and Stiller.

CHAPTER II: ANDORRA

In Andorra, a great deal of characterization and plot has been added to the material contained in "Der andorranische Jude." Andri, as the "Jew" is named, is considered by everyone in Andorra to be the adopted son of the town's schoolteacher. In reality, however, he is not a Jew but the schoolteacher's own illegitimate child by a foreign woman, who appears as the Senora later in the play. Unknown to everyone, he and the teacher's daughter, Barblin, (in reality Andri's half-sister) are in love and plan to be married.

Andri's personal situation is set against an unfavorable socio-political backdrop: Andorra stands under threat of attack by the "blacks," who persecute Jews. The fear of this eventuality makes the Andorrans more and more aware that Andri is a "Jew." Their image of him becomes increasingly fixed, to the extent that he is only allowed to do the things which, in their opinion, a Jew would do. Thus Prader the carpenter simply ignores the fact that Andri is actually a very good carpenter's apprentice, and insists that he become a salesman for his firm, since it is a well-known fact that Jews are only good at handling money. The selfish motivation behind Prader's Bildnis is his desire to increase his profit--he needs a "Jew" to sell his chairs.

For Peider the soldier, Andri must be a coward because he is a "Jew":

Soldat Ein Andorraner hat keine Angst!
 Andri Das sagtest du schon.
 Soldat Aber du hast Angst!
 Andri (schweigt.)
 Soldat Weil du feig bist.
 Andri Wieso bin ich feig?
 Soldat Weil du Jud bist.¹⁵

In fact, Andri is simply Peider's scapegoat: it is actually the soldier who is afraid, but by picking on the "Jew" as a coward, he is able to divert attention from his fear, and even to convince himself of his bravery. He stereotypes Andri as a "Jew" because he is a bully who needs someone to harass in order to boost his own ego.

The same is true for the doctor. He has also chosen the "Jew" as a scapegoat for his own failure as a professor:

Ich kenne den Jud. Wo man hinkommt, da hockt er schon, der alles besser weiß, und du, ein schlichter Andorraner, kannst einpacken. So ist es doch. Das Schlimme am Jud ist sein Ehrgeiz. In allen Ländern der Welt hocken sie auf allen Lehrstühlen, ich hab's erfahren, und unsereinem bleibt nichts andres übrig als die Heimat. (p. 231/32)

Andri's father sees through the doctor's prejudice against Jews:

Warum, wenn er draußen so ein großes Tier ist, bleibt er nicht draußen, dieser Professor, der's auf allen Universitäten der Welt nicht einmal zum Doktor gebracht hat? Dieser Patriot, der unser Amtsarzt geworden ist, weil er keinen Satz bilden kann ohne Heimat und Andorra. Wer denn soll schuld daran sein, daß aus seinem Ehrgeiz nichts geworden ist, wer denn, wenn nicht der Jud? - (p.234/35)

The doctor has found in the "Jew" a convincing excuse before the others for his own incompetence. As a result, his hatred of Jews has become more intense and overt than that of the other Andorrans.

15. M. Frisch, Andorra, in Stücke II, p. 214. Page references given hereafter in this chapter in parentheses after citations.

Thus it is mainly his words that express Andorra's final judgment of Andri in the Judenschau at the end of the play. His remarks betray the fact that Andri is a "Jew" before the Judenschauer has made up his mind:

Der hat den Blick. Was hab ich gesagt? der sieht's am Gang...
Er hat ihn...Er hört's am Lachen...Wenn das kein Judenlachen
ist...(p. 304)

Other Andorrans are eager to apply the "Jew"-image to Andri as a matter of personal expedience. The innkeeper, for example, has no axe to grind against the Jews or even against the enemy for that matter, as long as his business profits from his "tolerance." He is eager to "help" Andri's father raise the 50 pounds necessary to pay for Andri's apprenticeship--by paying him that sum for some land which is actually worth much more. The innkeeper's mercenariness becomes obvious again later, when the "Senora"--Andri's real mother-- arrives in town. When the innkeeper is asked why he has given lodging to an enemy (the Senora is one of the "Blacks"), he says it is because of "ein altes und heiliges Gastrecht....Ein Wirt kann nicht Nein sagen, und wenn die Lage noch so gespannt ist, und schon gar nicht, wenn es eine Dame ist" (p. 257/58). But Fedri, the other carpenter's apprentice, hits upon the innkeeper's real motive when he adds: "Und wenn sie Klotz hat!" (p. 258). Later the innkeeper is the first to throw a stone at the Senora, and, along with the other Andorrans, he betrays Andri in the Judenschau.

Fedri is also one of those whose prejudice against Andri

is a matter of expedience. He keeps silent when he could tell the carpenter the truth about Andri's work as an apprentice, because he knows that if he talks it will mean the end of his own career. He chooses rather to betray his friend, even to become one of Andri's most merciless persecutors, as we see in the eighth scene, where he takes part in the beating incident.

"Der Jemand" is another character who forms a fixed image of Andri, although he only plays the part of an "innocent bystander." In his cold objectivity, he neither condemns nor defends the victim, and he denies any responsibility for what happens. He is the average citizen who turns his head when the others fall upon the prey--with some pity, to be sure, for the victim, but afterwards quick to say "...Einmal muß man auch vergessen können, finde ich" (p. 276). For Jemand, Andri is just "der arme Jud" who was involved in an unfortunate incident. Like Biedermann, he uses clichés to escape from the responsibility of moral judgment.

All of the Andorrans form a fixed image of Andri, whether out of fear, because of their own incompetence, or for mercenary reasons. The stereotype Jew is for them the most evil kind of person--an imaginary person in whom all of their own bad traits are represented. They need such a "Jew" to "sacrifice," as though they were able to be rid of the evil in this way. Andri himself understands what is happening:

Das ist kein Aberglaube, o nein, das gibt's, Menschen, die verflucht sind, und man kann machen mit ihnen, was man will, ihr Blick genügt, plötzlich bist du so, wie sie sagen. Das ist das

Böse. Alle haben es in sich, keiner will es haben, und wo soll das hin? In die Luft? Es ist in der Luft, aber da bleibt's nicht lang, es muß in einen Menschen hinein, damit sie's eines Tages packen und töten können... (p. 219)

The one Andorran whose Bildnis seems to have a basically different motivation is the priest. His attitude, like that of the "intellectuals" in "Der andorranische Jude," is one of admiration for Andri's "Jewish" intellectual qualities. He tells Andri that he should accept being a Jew:

... 's ist ein Funke in dir. Warum spielst du Fußball wie diese Blödiane alle und brüllst auf der Wiese herum, bloß um ein Andorraner zu sein? Sie mögen dich alle nicht, ich weiß. Ich weiß auch warum. 's ist ein Funke in dir. Du denkst. Warum soll's nicht auch Geschöpfe geben, die mehr Verstand haben als Gefühl? Ich sage: Gerade dafür bewundere ich euch. Was siehst du mich so an? 's ist ein Funke in euch. Denk an Einstein! Und wie sie alle heißen. Spinoza! (p. 252)

Pater Benedikt is just as guilty of forming a fixed image of Andri as are the other Andorrans. In fact, since he is a priest, his Bildnis has a greater impact on Andri because it represents a moral sanction of the others' prejudice. He erases all doubt in Andri's mind about whether or not he is a Jew, by convincing him that it is not only the opinion of "the others" but also God's will that he is a Jew:

Kein Mensch, Andri, kann aus seiner Haut heraus, kein Jud und kein Christ. Niemand. Gott will, daß wir sind, wie er uns geschaffen hat....Du bist nun einmal anders als wir. (p. 252)

Even Andri now begins to consider himself an outsider in Andorra. Up to this point, the tension of the play has largely resided in Andri's resistance to society's Bildnis; from here on it consists in the open confrontation between Andri, the embittered

outsider, and Andorra; ultimately leading to his physical persecution.

When the priest finally learns the truth about Andri--that he is the illegitimate son of the teacher and the Senora, and not a Jew--it is already too late. He tries in vain to convince Andri that he is not different from the others after all. The Andorrans' Bildnis has materialized in Andri--he has become the mirror in which the Andorrans are forced to see the reflection of their own dead image, as Frisch puts it in "Der andorranische Jude." Andri expresses it rather more colloquially:

Seit ich höre, hat man mir gesagt, ich sei anders, und ich habe geachtet drauf, ob es so ist, wie sie sagen. Und es ist so, Hochwürden: Ich bin anders. Man hat mir gesagt, wie meinesgleichen sich bewege, nämlich so und so, und ich bin vor den Spiegel getreten fast jeden Abend. Sie haben recht: Ich bewege mich so und so. Ich kann nicht anders. Und ich habe geachtet auch darauf, ob's wahr ist, daß ich alleweil denke ans Geld, wenn die Andorraner mich beobachten und denken, jetzt denke ich ans Geld, und sie haben abermals recht: Ich denke alleweil ans Geld. Es ist so. Und ich habe kein Gemüt, sondern Angst. Und man hat mir gesagt, meinesgleichen ist feig. Auch darauf habe ich geachtet. Viele sind feig, aber ich weiß es, wenn ich feig bin. Ich wollte es nicht wahrhaben, was sie mir sagten, aber es ist so. Sie haben mich mit Stiefeln getreten, und es ist so, wie sie sagen: Ich fühle nicht wie sie. Und ich habe keine Heimat. Hochwürden haben gesagt, man muß das annehmen, und ich hab's angenommen. Jetzt ist es an Euch, Hochwürden, euren Jud anzunehmen. (p. 273)

As the respected representative of Christianity in Andorra, Pater Benedikt should be Andri's best advocate. In reality, he is his betrayer, because he does not try to make the Andorrans aware of the sin which they all have committed. He does not even appear at the Judenschau to defend Andri. But he does at least admit in retrospect his Bildnis of Andri, which is more than any of the other

Andorrans do. In the monologue following the seventh scene, he makes a confession and expresses at the same time the theme of the play:

Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von Gott, deinem Herrn, und nicht von den Menschen, die seine Geschöpfe sind. Auch ich bin schuldig geworden damals. Ich wollte ihm mit Liebe begegnen, als ich gesprochen habe mit ihm. Auch ich habe mir ein Bildnis gemacht von ihm, auch ich habe ihn gefesselt, auch ich habe ihn an den Pfahl gebracht. (p. 254)

The Pfahl referred to here is a stake symbolizing at once the "Jew"-image to which the Andorrans bind Andri, and his actual death. It first appears in the opening scene, when Andri's father imagines in his drunkenness that he sees a stake. His vision is obviously a fore-shadowing of Andri's fate. The innkeeper also refers to it in his monologue at the end of scene one: "...Hab ich ihn vielleicht an den Pfahl gebracht?" (p. 216). After that, the Pfahl is not mentioned again until the priest's monologue. At the end of the tenth scene, we hear the word from Andri's own mouth: "Tausende und Hunderttausende sind gestorben am Pfahl, ihr Schicksal ist mein Schicksal" (p. 281). Here again, the Pfahl is the figurative stake--the Bildnis--to which Andri, like all victims of prejudice, is bound.

Another symbol for the Andorrans' Bildnis is the empty pair of shoes at the end. Barblin says "...Wenn er wiederkommt, das hier sind seine Schuh" (p. 309). Not Andri himself will return--he is dead. What is meant is rather that another will come whom the Andorrans also will force to wear the "Jew's" shoes.

The only characters in Andorra who are not guilty of forming a fixed image of Andri are the members of his family: his father, the two mothers, and Barblin. Of these, Barblin's love is the most striking for its innocence and fearlessness. Barblin is not in the least concerned about whether Andri is a Jew, or what others say about him. Her love is unconditional, like the love Frisch describes in the excerpt, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen." She stands in direct contrast to "the others" in that she follows him through all the transformations which he experiences--she still loves him when he becomes an outcast, even when he fails to return her love because he thinks she has become a "Soldatenbraut." And she still loves him--although she expresses it in a different way--when she learns that he is her real brother. Andri himself, on the other hand, is so much obsessed by the Andorrans' discrimination against him that he demonstrates a lack of understanding for Barblin and for his father. He is so convinced that everyone is against him that he readily accepts the outward appearance that they have also betrayed him, without giving them a chance to clear themselves. When his father refuses him the hand of Barblin, Andri thinks it is because he is a Jew, and when he sees Peider coming out of Barblin's room, he assumes that his beloved has also turned against him. With this, the breakdown in human understanding, which is the real subject matter of this play, has reached its most severe extent. If there is no understanding between father and son and lover and beloved, then there can be no

understanding at all. Andri expresses his plight thus: "-meine Barblin. Sie kann mich nicht lieben, niemand kann's, ich selbst kann mich nicht lieben..." (p. 251/52).

The few who do love Andri are eliminated just as surely as Andri himself. His mother, the Senora, is stoned to death-- ostensibly because she is an enemy, but more probably because she has embarrassed the Andorrans by helping Andri after they had cowardly attacked him. Andri's father hangs himself because of the guilt he feels in Andri's death--it was he, after all, who said that Andri was a Jew in the first place. Barblin becomes insane and appears at the end of the play only as an ironic reminder of Andorra's sin: she is the conscience of Andorra. The fact that witnessing Barblin's broken spirit at the end has an even greater impact on us than all of the actual physical violence shows that the real tragedy of the play is the loss of human understanding, and not merely Andri's death. Barblin is a living reflection of the de-humanization which society perpetrates by its fixed images.

The underlying tension of the drama is the conflict between the creative power of human understanding and love, represented in Barblin and Andri's parents, and the destructive power of the Bildnis, represented in the rest of the Andorrans. Accordingly, the scenes alternate between the family house and public places. The house is like a sanctuary of love and understanding in the midst of Andorra's prejudice. There are, however, two brutal intrusions by the outside world into this tiny bastion, and both times it is Pei-

der the soldier who forces his way in--once to force his will on Barblin, and once to take Barblin and Andri to the "Judenschau." The contrast, Bildnis vs. Liebe, is most strikingly represented in the two figures, Peider and Barblin: from the very beginning, Peider persecutes Andri as a Jew, while Barblin always loves him as a human being. With respect to the opposite sex, the soldier only knows the animal drive to physical conquest; Barblin's love is unconditional. On the one hand is the brutal executor of society's Bildnis, and on the other, humanity's hope. It is a tension which we might expect to find in Frisch's works, for as he points out in the diary excerpt, Bildnis is always the opposite of love.

In Andorra the individual is shaped and crushed by society's Bildnis. It should be noted, however, that it is not like a Naturalistic drama, which only attempts to show how everything is determined by heredity and environment. However important these factors may seem at times during the play, they are irrelevant to the basic moral issue. The Andorrans cannot be excused for what happens to Andri by these deterministic factors. Their fear, laziness, incompetence, and above all their prejudice--all faults which they could change--are responsible.

CHAPTER III: ALS DER KRIEG ZU ENDE WAR

The story on which Als der Krieg zu Ende war is based appears in the 1947 section of Tagebuch, i.e. a year later than "Der andorranische Jude." According to the data in Stücke I,¹⁶ the drama was written in 1947/48, which means that Frisch must have immediately begun work on it after writing down the story. On the other hand, the time lapse between "Der andorranische Jude" and the beginning of work on Andorra was twelve years. This is not difficult to understand if one contrasts the two diary-sketches: "Der andorranische Jude" is an "invented" story, designed to demonstrate in a model the thoughts of the preceding section, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen." In that sense, it was an end in itself, and it was only much later that Frisch realized that much more could be done with this material. The sketch from which Als der Krieg zu Ende war developed was not an invented story made up to demonstrate something, but a "true" story which the author heard while on a visit to Berlin, about an exceptional case of "fraternization" between former enemies.

The plot of the drama follows the original story in all but a few details. A German woman, Agnes, and her husband, Horst, a former Wehrmacht officer who has escaped from Russian captivity, are hiding in the basement of their home, because a Russian officer has set up his quarters in the upper floors. One day Jehuda, a Polish Jew working as a servant for the Russians, comes into the

16. Stücke I, p. 396.

cellar looking for wine, and discovers Agnes (Horst is hiding). He tells her that she must go up to his commander, who supposedly can understand German. She sees the prospect of reasoning with the Russian officer as the only chance to save her husband and herself, but she asks for half an hour's time in order to dress up a bit, in hopes of making a better impression. When she gets upstairs, she is at first molested by some of the younger officers, but finally does manage to talk to the commandant, a colonel, alone. After pleading with him for humane treatment and telling him her whole story, she finally realizes that he cannot understand a word of German and, finding herself trapped, she breaks down. She makes a desperate offer, which is translated by Jehuda, to come up and "entertain" the officer at a certain time each day, provided he will send all the others out of the house for good, and refrain from going into the cellar.

For a week she goes upstairs, always dressed in an evening gown, to keep the officer company. Back in the cellar she acts as if the Russian really speaks German, and she even invents conversations which she has supposedly carried on with him. Her husband is somewhat reassured by this, but he senses that she does not go upstairs unwillingly. It soon becomes obvious that an intimate relationship has developed between Agnes and Stepan, the Russian colonel, in spite of the lack of a common language. Heartened by Agnes' good reports about the Russian and by the fact that he has managed to get his hands on a suit of civilian clothes, and obviously suspicious, Horst makes his way one day to the room where

Agnes and Stepan are. Believing that Stepan understands German, he addresses the Russian and asks him very cautiously how long he plans to occupy his home. Stepan has to call Jehuda in to translate and to find out who this strange man is. Jehuda, an escapee from the Warsaw Ghetto, is furious when he finds out that it is Captain Horst Anders, who was stationed for a time in Warsaw. But when Jehuda starts to assault him, Horst pulls a gun and threatens the two men. Agnes throws herself in front of Stepan to protect him, and Horst drops the gun. Instead of taking any action against Horst, Stepan merely announces to Jehuda that they are going to leave. He walks out of the room without so much as to glance at Agnes or Horst again. The stunned husband and wife are left staring at each other, "...wie man über eine unüberbrückbare Kluft schaut,"¹⁷ and the audience is left to draw its own conclusion about the implications of what has happened.

The irony of Als der Krieg zu Ende war consists in the fact that Agnes falls in love with an enemy whose language she does not understand, but finds herself alienated from her own husband. Horst's language reflects the cliché thought patterns learned during the long years of fear and hatred of the war. Agnes is repulsed by his fixed image of the Russians:

Horst Ratten - das sind doch Ratten...
 (Agnes erbleicht.)
 Agnes Ratten?

17. M. Frisch, Als der Krieg zu Ende war, in Stücke I, p. 299. Page references hereafter in this chapter in parentheses after citations.

(Horst horcht an der Mauer.)

...

Horst Die kommen von drüben. Wo früher die Vorräte waren.
Das wimmelt nur so.

Agnes Ratten?

Horst Was hast du denn? Du bist ja ganz bleich -

Agnes Nichts.

Horst Wegen ein paar Ratten?

Agnes Schweig, ich bitte dich!

Horst Die Tierlein kennen wir. Sind immer dabei, wo's Vorräte
gibt oder Leichen -

Agnes Schweig! (p. 252/53)

Horst is characterized as a person who cannot adapt himself to the changing demands of life. So long as he was in Russia as a conqueror himself, he had nothing against the Russians. Agnes finds it necessary to remind him of this after his next outburst:

Horst Das sage ich ja die ganze Zeit: weg von hier, weg von diesen Russenschweinen! (Agnes blickt ihn betroffen an.)

Agnes Nun sagst du das auch?

Horst Ich weiß wirklich nicht, was du noch immer übrig hast für dieses Volk!

Agnes Ich?

Horst Ja.

Agnes Ich kenne sie ja nicht. Nur aus deinen Erzählungen. Damals im Urlaub. Aus deinen Briefen. Weihnachten bei russischen Bauern! Damals hast du immer so rührende Geschichten erlebt -

Horst Damals.

Agnes Wunderbare Menschen! Geschwärmt hast du ja -

Horst Kann sein. Im ersten Jahr.

Agnes Solang es vorwärts ging.

Horst Was willst du damit sagen?

...

Agnes Russenschweine, weißt du, das erinnert mich so an Judenschweine und all das andere, was unsere eigenen Schweine gesagt haben - und getan. (p. 254/55)

Horst's stereotyped language, like his maimed body (he has lost half of his right arm), reflects the crippling effect the war has had on his life. Although his prejudice toward the Russians and possible implication in Nazi war crimes put him in a bad

light, Horst is not depicted merely as a villain. The war has come between Agnes and her husband, and brought her and Stepan together, but she still loves Horst. In a "conversation" with Stepan, she even suggests that he and Horst often seem to her to be one in the same person:

Er ist so ein guter Mensch. Wenn du ihn sehen könntest: da unten - Und ich sitze hier auf deinem Knie... Es ist alles so verrückt! Wenn bloß die Sprache nicht wäre, Stepan, ich glaube, ihr könntet euch verstehen. Bestimmt. Ihr könntet Freunde sein. Manchmal kommt mir vor, als seid ihr ein und derselbe Mann...Kannst du das verstehen? (p. 291)

What Agnes evidently means is that her relationship to Stepan reminds her of the way it used to be with Horst, before his participation on the eastern front. Her description of the early days of her marriage is positive:

Eigentlich wollte ich nie einen andern Mann...Horst war Leutnant, er kam damals gerade aus Frankreich, und wir dachten eigentlich, der Krieg ist zu Ende. Oder wir dachten überhaupt nichts, mag sein, wir hockten auf den Dünen von Sylt...Später mußte er nach dem Osten, ich erwartete mein erstes Kind. (p. 294)

But after a few months in the East, Horst shows an alarmingly negative attitude:

Weihnachten kam er zum letzten Mal auf Urlaub, Weihnachten zwei- undvierzig. In unserer ganzen Ehe, was sind wir zusammen gewesen: drei Monate vielleicht, alles in allem. Am Lehrter Bahnhof nahmen wir Abschied, es war gerade Alarm, nicht wichtig, ein Störangriff, immerhin kam es herunter, und wir standen mitten auf dem offenen Platz. Bist du verrückt? sagte ich. Der kleine Martin war übrigens auch dabei, die Flak feuerte damals noch aus allen Rohren, in den Lagerschuppen krachte es von Volltreffern, eine ganze Kette, keine zweihundert Meter von uns. Schade! sagte er. Das werde ich nie vergessen. Dann eben nicht! sagte er, gab mir die Hand, ein Lächeln, weißt du, wie wenn einer zur Hinrichtung geht...Er war bereits durch die Schranke, als ich es begriff, ich konnte nicht mehr, ich heulte einfach heraus. Heil! sagte er...

Zwei Monate später kam sein letzter Brief aus Warschau -. (p. 294)

This, along with other hints in the play, gives us some reason to suspect that he at least witnessed the massacre in Warsaw, although this is never directly stated.

Horst undergoes, nevertheless, some positive development during the play. In contrast to his intolerance of the Russians at the beginning of the play, he displays an almost naive trust in Stepan at the end. If he did not believe in Stepan as an individual, he would never dare to show himself upstairs. The new attitude is, to be sure, based on Agnes' imaginary conversations with Stepan, but it nevertheless demonstrates some willingness on Horst's part to treat Stepan as an individual, rather than simply as "the Russian":

...plötzlich, wenn du mir von euren Gesprächen erzählst - plötzlich erscheint alles ganz anders; gewisse Dinge, die mir stets verhaßt waren, gewisse Namen und so - was ich nicht riechen konnte - plötzlich bekommt alles ein ganz anderes Licht, wenn man dich so reden hört, fast eine Art von Glanz - im Ernst. (p. 283)

Horst also accepts the fact that Stepan and Agnes are in love with each other, although he had made Agnes swear in the beginning that she was not buying their freedom with shame:

Er liebt dich...Das kann ich verstehen, Herrgott, das ist noch kein Verbrechen. Wenn nichts geschehen ist - ich weiß, es war gemein von mir, wie du das erste Mal herunter gekommen bist; Ich werde nie wieder verlangen, daß du schwörst! (p. 286)

The final scene leaves us with an ambiguous impression of Horst. On the one hand, he promptly drops the revolver when Agnes moves to shield Stepan. This requires some courage, consider-

ing that, under the circumstances, he is almost certain to be taken prisoner. On the other hand, his old mistrust seems to be expressed by his last statement: "Der hat doch was vor" (p. 299). Perhaps he still thinks that he "knows" the Russians.

Certainly Horst's somewhat doubtful attitude stands in contrast to Agnes' unequivocal love. When Agnes says "Ich kenne sie ja nicht," one is reminded of the statement in "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen": "Die Meinung, daß wir das andere kennen, ist das Ende der Liebe" (p. 12). For Horst, who thinks he "knows" the Russians, human understanding is impossible. Agnes does not claim to know the Russians, or any other people. She is above all against clichés and stereotypes. Just as she objects to "Russenschweine" and "Judenschweine," she condemns all "Redensarten, die keinen Schuß mehr wert sind, gar nichts, dieser ganze Unsinn mit den Völkern: als wären wir nicht alle aus Fleisch und Blut..." (p. 270). Her experience of the war, especially of the fall of Berlin, has been a very different one from Horst's. She reports in one of her Brechtian asides to the audience:

"Das war eine bittere Zeit....Auf der Straße lagen die toten Soldaten, die fremden und die eigenen, plötzlich ohne Unterschied. Andere hingen an den Bäumen. Weil sie nicht mehr hatten kämpfen wollen, sondern leben. Von einzelnen Dächern wurde noch immer geschossen, blindlings, aber in wenigen Stunden mußte der Krieg, der verfluchte, zu Ende sein." (p. 249)

The fall of Berlin is for her a blessing, because it signals the end of the war and a new beginning of life. Her attitude is more dignified and optimistic than Horst's. Thus, instead of following Horst's advice to smear ashes onto her face before going upstairs

in order to make herself unattractive for the enemy officers, she makes a conscious effort to look as decent as possible. She tersely explains: "Ich bin kein Schwein" (p. 260). She believes in the possibility of human life, but she knows that this possibility lies within herself--if she lives and acts like an animal then she will be treated as an animal, and everything that is human in her will die. If, on the other hand, she meets others--even the enemy--as a human being, then it is at least more likely that she will be treated as a human being. This attitude is not to be confused with Biedermann's cliché-humanitas: Agnes has no naive illusion about being nice to the Russians so that they will be nice to her. In contrast to Biedermann, she shows that she is willing to fight to the death, if necessary, rather than compromise her human dignity. She convincingly defends herself against Stepan's officers on her first visit upstairs:

Piotr Gnädige Frau!
 Agnes Lassen Sie das.
 Piotr Oho!
 Agnes Rühren Sie mich nicht an, ich bitte Sie.
 (Piotr greift ihren Rock.)
 Piotr .../Kommt herein, Genossen, kommt herein./
 (Piotr hebt ihr den Rock und bekommt eine Ohrfeige.)
 Agnes Sie sollen das lassen, habe ich gesagt.
 (Unterdessen nähert sich Ossip, der auf die Platten geschossen und die Saiten zerschnitten hat, sein Kopf ist rot vor Jähzorn, er will ihr zeigen, was sie sich erlauben kann und was nicht, er faßt sie am Pelz.)
 Ossip .../Was denkst du? Du denkst, du kannst uns schlagen auf die Fresse, du Schwein, deutsches, du Mistvieh, germanisches!/
 (Ossip hebt ihr ebenfalls den Rock und bekommt ebenfalls eine Ohrfeige. Sofort setzt er ihr den Revolver auf die Brust, Agnes schließt die Augen. Stepan schlägt ihm die Waffe aus der Hand, so daß sie auf dem Teppich liegt, und

die andern reißen Ossip zurück.) (p. 267/68)

She also makes it clear to Stepan what will happen if he tries to force his will on her:

Ich weiß nicht, wozu Sie mich gerufen haben. So wie es hier aussieht - das heißt, ich kann es mir denken. Sie sind Männer, und ich bin eine Frau, ich kann mich nicht wehren...Wenn das Ihr Wille ist: ich beiße mir die Adern auf, das ist alles, was Sie erreichen können. (p. 269)

Precisely because Agnes meets Stepan with openness, the unexpected happens: she falls in love with him. They are completely uninhibited toward one another, paradoxically, because they have no common language. Explaining his fascination for the story of Als der Krieg zu Ende war, Frisch describes their relationship as follows:

Überwindung des Vorurteils; die einzig mögliche Überwindung in der Liebe, die sich kein Bildnis macht. In diesem besonderen Fall: erleichtert durch das Fehlen einer Sprache. Es wäre kaum möglich gewesen, wenn sie sich sprachlich hätten begegnen können und müssen. Sprache als Gefäß des Vorurteils! Sie, die uns verbinden könnte, ist zum Gegenteil geworden, zur tödlichen Trennung durch Vorurteil. Sprache und Lüge! Das ungeheuerere Paradoxon, daß man sich ohne Sprache nähert. Und wichtig scheint mir auch, daß es eine Frau ist, die diese rettende Überwindung schafft; die Frau: konkreter erlebend, eher imstande, einen einzelnen Menschen als solchen anzunehmen und ihn nicht unter einer Schablone zu begraben. (Tagebuch, p. 220)

Agnes' inability to give Horst a satisfactory description of her Russian officer shows her unwillingness to bury Stepan under a mere Schablone. When Horst keeps pressing her to describe Stepan to him, she finally gives him the cliché he expects to hear, but she makes it clear that such clichés are meaningless:

Agnes Ich sage dir ja, er ist Russe...Und wie Russen aussehen, das weiß doch jedes Kind. Wozu gibt es Bilder. Jedes Volk

hat eine Fahne und ein Gesicht. Der Jude hat eine krumme Nase und dicke Lippen, vom Charakter zu schweigen. Der Engländer ist hager und sportlich, solange das Spiel zu seinen Gunsten steht. Der Spanier ist stolz, der Italiener hat eine beneidenswerte Stimme, aber er ist faul und oberflächlich, der Deutsche ist treu und tief. Und der Franzose hat Esprit, aber das ist auch alles...Der Russe, nun ja, denk an die Partisanen, die du getroffen hast -

Horst Ich habe keine getroffen.

Agnes Denk an die Illustrierte! Genauso sieht er aus, und am Hals hat er eine Narbe, glaube ich, oder ein Muttermal. Und jetzt, mein Lieber, was hast du davon? (p. 284)

Her refusal to make any serious attempt at describing Stepan echoes the words of the diary excerpt: "Es ist bemerkenswert, daß wir gerade von dem Menschen, den wir lieben, am mindesten aussagen können, wie er sei" (Tagebuch, p. 31). Agnes does not see Stepan as a Russian but as an individual, unlimited in possibilities, and thus indescribable. This is the great exception which stands out sharply in the foreground of the drama, as Frisch puts it:

Im Vordergrund...steht eine Liebe, die auch wenn man sie als Ehebruch bezeichnen mag, das Gegenteil jener Versündigung darstellt und insofern heilig ist, als sie das Bildnis überwindet. Und nur insofern rechtfertigt sich auch der Name, den ich dieser Frau gegeben habe: Agnes heißt Unschuld, Reinheit. Es ist freilich vorauszusehen, daß diese Liebe zwischen einer deutschen Frau und einem Russen, der ihr Haus als Feind betritt, nicht jedermann ergötzen wird;...¹⁸

The background against which Agnes' love is contrasted is the German persecution of the Jews in Warsaw which, as Frisch points out in the Nachwort to the play, is an example of the worst consequence of prejudice. Jehuda, who describes his macabre escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, serves throughout the play as a living reminder of

18. M. Frisch, "Daten und Nachwort zu 'Als der Krieg zu Ende war,'" in Stücke I, p. 398.

this grim reality. After having learned from Halske that Horst spent some time in Warsaw around the time of the massacre there, he accuses Horst at the end of the play ¹⁹ of being one of the murderers. Horst denies the charge, and the question of his personal implication in the incident is left open, but the important thing is that he and the audience are reminded of his association as German with the war crimes.

Halske, the only other German man in the play, denies any guilt in the persecution of the Jews. He has, as he says, nothing against the Jews. Halske is the typical German intellectual who claims to have had nothing to do with the Nazis, by virtue of the fact that he kept to his cultural world and did not concern himself with politics. This is precisely the kind of attitude Frisch attacks in his essay, "Kultur als Alibi":

Was hat, so sagen sie, Kunst zu tun mit Politik? Und unter Politik versteht man schlechterdings das Niedrige, womit der geistige Mensch, der berühmte Kulturträger, sich nicht besmutzen soll. ²⁰

Halske, like Jemand and Biedermann, is a reminder that "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" does not mean that we are not supposed to exercise our judgment. In so far as they remained silent in the face of Nazi crimes, all Germans--whether captains or musicians--are guilty of his sin.

19. I. e., at the end of Act II--Act III was dropped by the author in 1962.

20. M. Frisch, "Kultur als Alibi" in Der Monat, Munich, I 1948/49, p. 84.

One of the paradoxes of the play is that on the one hand it rejects stereotypes and clichés but provides on the other hand a constant reminder of the collective guilt of the Germans and the Russians as well. There are descriptions in the play of brutalities of both sides. Horst's and Stepan's uniforms identify them with these brutalities, although to judge from the positive characterization of Stepan, we are less inclined to associate him with any such crimes. The audience is placed in something of a dilemma: are we to accept the image of Horst as a mass murderer and condemn him, or sympathize with him as an individual? Is Stepan a Russian officer or an understanding human being? The basic question is this: how can one be aware of another person's national identity and past, and still recognize him as a unique individual? The drama gives no answer, nor can any general answer be given. Surely it must be found on an individual basis.

The whole art of Als der Krieg zu Ende war lies in the provocative questions it raises. We know from the diary that Frisch considers this kind of "provocation" his highest goal as a playwright:

Als Stückschreiber hielte ich meine Aufgabe für durchaus erfüllt, wenn es einem Stück jemals gelänge, eine Frage dermaßen zu stellen, daß die Zuschauer von dieser Stunde an ohne eine Antwort nicht mehr leben können - ohne ihre Antwort, ihre eigene, die sie nur mit dem Leben selber geben können. (Tagebuch, p. 141)

However we judge Horst and Stepan, one thing seems unambiguous: Agnes is the out-of-the-ordinary individual who does not form a fixed image of others. Her love, as Frisch states, represents

an exception:

...ein Besonderes, einen lebendigen Widerspruch gegen die Regel, gegen das Vorurteil. Alles Menschliche erscheint als ein Besonderes. Überwindung des Vorurteils; die einzig mögliche Überwindung in der Liebe, die sich kein Bildnis macht. (Tagebuch, p. 220)

CHAPTER IV: STILLER

The ostensible story of the novel concerns a man who is arrested on a train passing through Switzerland and held, in spite of his American passport bearing the name James White, under suspicion of being the missing Swiss sculptor, Anatol Stiller. This action and the events and conversations which take place during his imprisonment are narrated entirely by the man, in the form of a prison diary. In this narrative, Stiller's whole past is ingeniously unfolded before the reader's eyes in the montage of the prisoner's reports of conversations with his attorneys and with the people who knew Stiller before he vanished six years ago. We learn that he had been a sculptor of somewhat questionable talent, who had encountered serious difficulties in his marriage to Julika, a ballet-dancer suffering from tuberculosis. After a likewise unhappy affair with Sibylle, a married woman, he suddenly disappeared from Switzerland and managed to get to America, where he remained for six years before returning. Although the narrator consistently denies that he is Stiller, it becomes increasingly obvious that in fact he is, and that "James White" is merely a fictional identity which he assumed while in America. When this has been established to the satisfaction of the state, the prisoner is released to resume his former identity.

At this point the narrative is turned over to Rolf, who plays three roles in Stiller's life: he is the husband of Sibylle, Stiller's

mistress before his disappearance; he is the public prosecutor of the Stiller case; and, ironically, he is Stiller's only real friend. His "Nachwort des Staatsanwaltes" comprises the conclusion of the book. In it we are told that, after his release, Stiller and his wife Julika first live for a few weeks in a resort hotel, then move into a ramshackle old chalet in Glion above Montreux. Stiller takes up pottery-making and Julika manages to get a job teaching dance-gymnastics at a girls' school in Montreux. Rolf visits them in the Fall of their second year there, and learns from Julika that she is again suffering from tuberculosis and that it may be necessary to have one of her lungs removed. She is able to keep this secret from Stiller until the following Easter, when she does in fact have to go to the hospital for the operation. By chance, Rolf and Sibylle have planned a visit with the Stillers. In Glion they learn from Stiller that Julika has undergone surgery and that the doctors say her condition is good. Rolf and Sibylle stay with Stiller for two days, during which time he maintains an outward air of optimism, but betrays deep-seated doubts about his marriage in private conversations with Rolf. In his drunkenness he insists that the two years of life together with Julika after the trial have been a failure, and that he thinks Julika wants to die.

The soul-searching interchange between the two friends seems to make possible for Stiller the composed if shaken stance which he now assumes. When Rolf goes to the hospital at Stiller's request on the second morning, he finds that Julika has died. Rolf

indicates at the end of his narrative that as he prepared to leave Glion, he found Stiller working on some pottery in his basement shop. Since then, he has received a few scant letters from Stiller, and the two friends have seen each other a few times, but otherwise Stiller has simply "remained in Glion and lived alone."²¹

There has been a considerable amount of debate about what is being said in Stiller. Of special interest for this present study are the comments of Philip Manger,²² who radically differs with other critics on the interpretation of the novel. He argues that Stiller's development corresponds to the development of the knight of faith, as described in the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. Hans Mayer has contended that the basic theme of the book is actually the refutation of Kierkegaard, and that the two quotations at the beginning of the book from Either/Or are meant ironically, rather than as the motto of the novel.²³ Manger asserts very convincingly that this is an absurd idea, since there are so many correlations between developments in the novel and those described by Kierkegaard. He analyzes Stiller's development according to stages outlined by Kierkegaard for the development of the man of faith. Thus when Stiller left Switzerland, he was entering the stage of "despair and resignation." The period of his investigation, in which he is forced to become himself again, corresponds to Kierkegaard's

21. M. Frisch, Stiller, Fischer Bücherei, 1966, p. 328.

Page numbers hereafter in this chapter in parentheses after citations.

22. Ph. Manger, "Kierkegaard in Max Frisch's novel Stiller," German Life and Letters XX, January 1967, no. 2.

23. H. Mayer, Dürrenmatt und Frisch, p. 40.

category of "repetition." The next step is the "choice of the self and the struggle to keep it," which begins at the end of Stiller's imprisonment. The final stage, the "leap of faith," now becomes necessary because the choice of the self implies the religious question of absolute law. "The imperfect self can only be accepted if the Archimedean point 'der feste Punkt' (Stiller, p. 183) or absolute law is accepted at the same time."²⁴ Manger, in contrast to the majority of the novel's critics,²⁵ does not find the conclusion of the novel to be pessimistic:

He [Stiller] goes on living by himself, incommunicative and in comparative isolation. Possibly his not getting Julika back means that he gets himself back, i.e. he achieves true repetition, in analogy with the young man in Kierkegaard's Repetition. Becoming free, Stiller had said earlier, is a very lonely affair, "eine sehr einsame Sache."²⁶

This is not the place to go into a study of Kierkegaardian elements in Frisch's writing, but it does seem appropriate and perhaps necessary to point out that in most cases, Frisch's use of these elements in his works does not represent so much a borrowing of ideas from Kierkegaard as it does a coincidence of the thoughts of the writer with those of the philosopher. It is also possible to make a parallel interpretation, essentially in accord with Manger's, on the basis of Frisch's own motto, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen."

To start with, i. e. up to the period immediately pre-

24. Ibid., p. 127.

25. Cf. H. Mayer, Dürrenmatt und Frisch, H. Bänziger, Frisch und Dürrenmatt, E. Stäubli, Max Frisch, among others.

26. Ph. Manger, op. cit., p. 130.

ceding his disappearance, Stiller was a flagrant narcissist whose image of his wife, his friends, himself, and the world as a whole was rigidly fixed by a single factor: his own egocentricity. He is a kind of modern counterpart to Narcissus of Greek and Roman mythology, who was so much in love with his own image that he could not return Echo's love. Stiller's narcissism is symbolized by his sculptures, to which Rolf refers as "Darstellungen seiner selbst" (p. 307). They are the same sculptures which he later smashes and throws out of the window of his studio. As we shall presently see, Stiller, unlike Narcissus, does eventually overcome his egoistic view of life.

Perhaps the most dominating feature of Stiller's ego is his fear of failure as a man. It goes back at least as far as his "Niederlage in Spanien" (p. 105), an experience from the days of his participation in the Spanish Civil War. He had been assigned to guard a ferry landing against Franco soldiers, but when actually faced by the enemy, he found that he did not have the courage to shoot. The enemy soldiers seized the opportunity to disarm him and tie him with his own belt. The importance of this humiliating experience for Stiller's ego is demonstrated by his inclination to relate the story again and again--at parties, to Sibylle, and, most telling of all, he insists of talking about it when he visits Julika in Davos, immediately prior to his disappearance. The reason Stiller cannot seem to get the little story off his mind is that for him it is symbolic of his failure as a man.

In his marriage to Julika, Stiller's fear of this failure is made even more critical by his wife's frigidity: he wrongly interprets it as a failure on his part to "awaken" her. Her reticence to submit herself to Stiller makes him think that she lacks the fulfillment she really deserves:

Es ist auffallend, wie schon gesagt, und bezeichnend, daß dieser Mann sich immerzu glaubte entschuldigen zu müssen; er nahm es offenbar als Niederlage seiner Männlichkeit, wenn die schöne Balletteuse, vielleicht nur etwas ehrlicher als andere Mädchen, nicht in Empfindungen zerschmolz unter seinem Kuß. (p. 77)

Hence Stiller's idea that she should have children: "Ein Kind, meinte Stiller, könnte Julika in einer Weise erfüllen, wie er es nie vermochte" (p. 71). This suggestion meets understandably with a negative response from Julika. "Was wollte er immerzu von ihr? Stiller war rührend, doch verbohrte in seiner Meinung, Julika käme nicht zu ihrem vollen Leben" (p. 71). Stiller's projection of his own fixed image of fulfillment onto Julika becomes the great curse of his life, right up to Julika's death. The mistake inherent in this Bildnis is that it ignores that which is vivid in Julika, e.g. her dancing and her charm, and attempts to alter an aspect of her character which is almost certainly static--her frigidity:

Man hat den Eindruck, daß der verschollene Stiller, wie sehr er von Julika fasziniert war, etwas im Wesen dieser Frau ganz einfach nicht angenommen, wahrscheinlich überhaupt nicht einmal erkannt hat, eben ihre Frigidität. (p. 76)

Stiller's image of "die arme Julika" as the unfulfilled one is so unshakable that even when her affair with an outspokenly masculine lover fizzles, the reason does not occur to him:

Der fliegende Reklameberater blieb für ihn der große Mann, der Julika glücklich zu machen vermochte; davon war Stiller nun einmal vom ersten Schrecken an überzeugt, blind für die Tatsache, daß seine Julika durchaus unverändert blieb. Er glaubte wohl, sie verstelle sich vor ihm, sie verberge ihre Glückseligkeit, um ihn zu schonen. (p. 79)

It should not be forgotten in this analysis that Stiller is not the only figure of the novel guilty of having fixed images. Stiller seems quite right, for example, when he complains that people think he is an idiot, and Julika does seem to have a strongly egocentric image of the world. She constantly demands admiration and sympathy from the people around her, as is frequently the case with theatrical people. As Julika's young Jesuit friend puts it:

"Wer sich selbst nur immerzu als Opfer sieht, meine ich, kommt sich selbst nie auf die Schliche, und das ist nicht gesund. Ursache und Wirkung sind nie in zwei Personen getrennt, schon gar nicht in Mann und Frau, selbst wenn es zuweilen so aussehen mag, Julika, weil die Frau scheinbar nicht handelt...." (pp. 101/102)

It is impossible to blame Stiller or Julika alone for their marital crisis. After all, the Bildnis is "eine Versündigung, die wir, so wie sie an uns begangen wird, fast ohne Unterlaß wieder begehen" (Tagebuch, p. 37). In reality there is a complex interplay of Bildnisse. What started with Stiller's idea that he is a failure as a man has confirmed Julika's idea that she is a failure as a woman and caused her to turn to other roles through which she seeks to escape the man-woman confrontation. When Stiller makes demands on her anyway, she develops a persecution complex, an image of herself which is readily affirmed by her "understanding" friends, who are consequently led to see Stiller as the undeserving, cruel husband.

"man sagte ihm, daß die arme Julika ihn nicht nur liebte, sondern mehr liebte, als er es verdiente,..." (p. 84). One of Julika's friends once tells Stiller "jokingly" that she frankly often asks herself what Julika could have done to deserve such a (bad) husband (p. 85). There can be little doubt that Stiller is also the victim of certain fixed images. Much of the first part of the novel deals with Stiller's struggle to overcome these images. Nevertheless, the basic issue, as it is unveiled especially in the "Nachwort des Staatsanwaltes," is the hero's own tendency to form fixed images.

The first stage in Stiller's development away from a life stance anchored in fixed images begins with the unhappy end to his affair with Sibylle, which forces him to make an honest self-evaluation, and climaxes in Stiller's tirade during his last visit to Davos:

Heute weiß ich es: im Grunde habe ich dich wahrscheinlich nie geliebt, ich war verliebt in deine Spröde, in deine Zerbrechlichkeit, in deine Stummheit, die es mir zur Aufgabe machte, dich zu deuten und auszusprechen. Was für eine Aufgabe! Ich bildete mir ein, du brauchst mich. Und deine Müdigkeit immer, deine Herbstzeitlosenblässe, dein Hang zum Kranksein, das war ja genau, was ich unbewußtermaßen brauchte, eine Schonungsbedürftige, um mir selbst um so kraftvoller vorzukommen. Eine gewöhnliche Geliebte zu haben, verstehst du, so ein gesundes und durchschnittliches Mädchen, das umarmt sein will und selber umarmen kann, nein, davor hatte ich Angst. Überhaupt war ich ja voll Angst! Ich machte dich zu meiner Bewährungsprobe. Und darum konnte ich dich auch nicht verlassen. Dich zum Blühen zu bringen, eine Aufgabe, die niemand sonst übernommen hatte, das war mein schlichter Wahnsinn. Dich zum Blühen zu bringen! Dafür machte ich mich verantwortlich - und dich machte ich krank, versteht sich, denn wozu solltest du gesund werden mit einem solchen Mann; die Angst, daß du an meiner Seite unglücklich würdest, fesselte mich ja stärker als irgend eine Art von Glück, die du zu geben hast. (p. 111)

Ich denke jetzt oft: Hätte ich dich nicht zu meiner Bewährungsprobe gemacht, wärest du auch nie auf diese Idee gekommen, mich durch dein Kranksein zu fesseln, und wir hätten einander auf natürliche Weise geliebt, ich weiß es nicht, oder uns auf natürliche Weise getrennt. (p. 113)

With this psychoanalysis of himself and Julika, Stiller demonstrates beyond doubt that he has correctly recognized the psychological factors involved in the failure of their marriage. And with the expression Bewährungsprobe, he has unknowingly hit upon a pithy formulation for the fixed image which he has formed of Julika: he has treated her merely as a test for his manhood rather than as a unique human being. Yet he is not aware of the fact that it is a Bildnis, i.e. a sin, for he in no way turns his rigorous psychological self-evaluation into a religious self-evaluation. He is very far from confessing that he has committed a sin, which according to Frisch is what having a fixed image amounts to. All of Stiller's psychoanalysis, useful as it may be for his understanding of Julika and himself, actually stems from the desire for rationalization which Frisch calls

...das Bedürfnis, den einstmals Geliebten loszuwerden, indem man ihn endlich und ein für allemal durchschaut. Es ist das Bedürfnis, Gründe zu haben, warum unsere Liebe zu ihm nachließ, Gründe, Vordergründe, damit man es nicht als Erschöpfung der eigenen Kraft erkennen muß, als eigenen Mangel an schöpferischer Bereitschaft, die es braucht, um einen Menschen zu lieben: um einen Menschen in einemfort kennenzulernen - ohne den Anspruch, daß er sich fesseln lasse durch unsere gewonnene Erkenntnis.

Durch unser Bildnis.²⁷

Julika is right when she counters Stiller's tirade with

27. M. Frisch, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," Schweizer Annalen, loc. cit., p. 12.

the exclamation "...du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von mir!" (p. 114). As strange and unconvincing as this advice sounds in the mouth of Julika, who is otherwise not given to such insights, her assessment of what her husband has done is far more profound than his own. She goes beyond the psychological and even ethical, into the religious. As we have already seen in Chapter I, Frisch's motto refers to the transcendent just as much as the original Second Commandment does, except that he defines God as "das Lebendige in jedem Menschen." It is significant that Julika becomes acquainted with the Frischian interpretation of the Second Commandment through a young Jesuit:

Von diesem täglichen Besucher, scheint es, hörte Julika nebenbei auch den nicht unbekannten Gedanken, daß es das Zeichen der Nicht-Liebe sei, also Sünde, sich von seinem Nächsten oder überhaupt von einem Menschen ein fertiges Bildnis zu machen, zu sagen: So und so bist du, und fertig! ein Gedanke, der die schöne Julika unmittelbar angesprochen haben mußte. War es nicht so, daß Stiller, ihr Mann, sich ein Bildnis von Julika machte?... (p. 89)

Thus when Stiller has vented all of his hostilities toward her, believing that he has fully overcome their relationship, Julika is able to offer a word which is so much more mature than his psychoanalysis that he does not even grasp it:

"Du hast dir nun einmal ein Bildnis von mir gemacht, das merke ich schon, ein fertiges und endgültiges Bildnis, und damit Schluß. Anders als so, ich spürte es ja, willst du mich jetzt einfach nicht mehr sehen. Nicht wahr?"..."Ich habe in letzter Zeit auch über vieles nachgedacht", sagte Julika und blies die Schneekristalle von ihrer Kamelhaardecke auch dann, wenn sie selbst das Wort führte, "- nicht umsonst heißt es in den Geboten: du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen! Jedes Bildnis ist eine Sünde. Es ist genau das Gegenteil von Liebe, siehst du, was du jetzt machst mit solchen Reden. Ich weiß nicht, ob du's verstehst. Wenn man einen Menschen liebt, so läßt man ihm doch jede Möglichkeit offen und

ist trotz allen Erinnerungen einfach bereit zu staunen, immer wieder zu staunen, wie anders er ist, wie verschiedenartig und nicht einfach so, nicht ein fertiges Bildnis, wie du es dir da machst von deiner Julika. Ich kann dir nur sagen: es ist nicht so. Immer redest du dich in etwas hinein - du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von mir! das ist alles, was ich dir darauf sagen kann." (p. 113/14)

Even if Stiller listened to what Julika says, he would not be able to follow her thoughts into the religious sphere from which she speaks--he is not that "far" yet, to use one of Rolf's expressions. It is interesting to note that White's (i.e. Stiller's) narrative, which is supposedly an objective report of what Julika has told him, makes the Bildnis-theme itself sound like a cliché. One has the impression that Julika is merely parroting what the young Jesuit has told her. If Julika's words were more convincing, Stiller--the narrator--would be put in a bad light.

In spite of Stiller's failure to appreciate what Julika says, the bitter recognition which he expresses in the conversation with Julika before his disappearance must be considered a positive step in his development. As he himself puts it:

...jetzt zum erstenmal, so scheint mir, stehe ich vor dir ohne dir böse zu sein. Nämlich ich weiß jetzt, daß nicht du es bist, was mich bis heute gehindert hat, wirklich zu leben. Gott sei Dank, daß ich es endlich weiß! (p. 114)

This is as far as he can go for now. For him, there can be no correction of the situation, barring permanent separation. He does not see Julika's "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von mir!" as a real possibility. He knows that their problem stems from the fact that he has made her his "Bewährungsprobe" or "Aufgabe," yet even in all the years before Julika's death, he is not able actually to

overcome this basic failure of his life. Rather than confess his sin and try to atone for it, he clings to the conviction that he now "knows" Julika and himself. The only solution he sees is to leave Switzerland and never to see Julika again.

Stiller's stay in America is accounted for only by the desultory, dream-like stories he tells to Knobel, the prison guard. They are essentially archetypal re-formulations of Stiller's basic experiences. In the story about "Little Grey," for example, the cat represents Julika. Stiller is staying in a house in Oakland and must feed the cat as a condition for staying there. He finds the cat food's smell too unpleasant to continue feeding "Little Grey" in the house where she is used to eating and decides to keep her outside. But she refuses to stay outside--she jumps up onto the window sill and into the house. When Stiller closes all the windows, she perches herself on the window sill and hisses at her tormenter. Finally Stiller loses his patience and locks her up in the refrigerator, but has a guilty conscience and lets her out again before she freezes. Suddenly she disappears and stays away for several days. When she returns, she has a gaping wound in her face, which again makes Stiller feel guilty. He starts feeding her in the kitchen again, but he is still haunted by the little animal--even in his dreams. The importance of this seemingly insignificant story is suggested by Stiller's prefatory remark: "...diese Katze [war], wie ich heute glaube, der erste Vorbote" (p. 48). This can only mean that Stiller's relationship to "Little Grey" is a foreshadowing as well as a re-

flection of his relationship to Julika. Stiller makes an absurd test of his virility out of "Little Grey" just as he does with Julika.

There are several other stories inserted as a kind of digression into Stiller's prison narrative. Many of them are simply invented or have been picked up by the hero sometime during his stay abroad. They all shed light in some way on Stiller's life. There is Isidor, whose wife can only ask "where have you been?" when he appears after having served for years in the French Foreign Legion. He calmly pulls out his revolver, shoots up the beautiful cake she has baked, and walks out, never to return. With his rejection of married life, he rejects his identity as Isidor, thus making his experience analogous to that of Stiller. Another narrative obviously is based on the story of the discovery of Carlsbad Cavern, which Stiller mistakenly locates in Texas. The labyrinthine cave might represent the subconscious, or perhaps the whole embroilment of Stiller's encounter with Julika. White's fight with the "other Jim" is like Stiller's struggle with himself: he finally wins and leaves the old self "down there." When Knobel asks Stiller if he is the Jim White of the story, he answers, "'Nein, das gerade nicht! Aber was ich selber erlebt habe, sehen Sie, war genau das gleiche - genau'" (p. 130). "Rip van Winkle" is the story of another man who loses contact with reality, this time by literally oversleeping it. Perhaps this again reflects the banning of Stiller's old self into the subconscious. Certainly all of Stiller's stories have a dream-like, even nightmarish air about them. At the end of

his narrative, Stiller betrays in an account of his attempted suicide the despair which the years of "exile" must have held for him.

Despair at the old guilt-ridden self is not Stiller's only experience during his "exile"--he also meets Florence, who is "his kind of woman." She represents the image to which he thinks Julika should conform in order to be "fulfilled," i.e. she is the passion that he hopes to "awaken" in Julika. It is at least in part this hope which eventually makes Stiller want to return to Switzerland and give it another try with Julika. The only problem is that when he gets back to Switzerland, people expect him to accept completely the old self which he has suppressed into the subconscious but not eliminated. This inevitable fact seems never to have entered his mind. As James White, he has in an illusory sort of way overcome his old fixed image of Julika. During the time of the investigation it is possible for him to "have an affair," as he puts it (p. 278), with his own wife. But this turns out to be self-delusion, because Stiller does not make love to Julika as Stiller but as "White," and he does not love Julika as herself but as "Florence." He demands the impossible from Julika in expecting her to love him as he presents himself now and to forget the past. It is an "affair" which can exist only within the exceptional circumstances of Stiller's investigation. In real life they must be Stiller and Julika, and not James White and Florence.

At the pivotal point of the investigation, the studio scene, Stiller symbolically demonstrates that he is willing to be Stiller, but this time a Stiller with a basically new image of life.

He destroys the sculptures which represent the self-projections of his earlier identity. A mere symbolic act, however, is still not enough to free him of the actual Bildnis which has always given a false sense of meaning to his life: he still maintains the notion that it is his task to "fulfill" Julika. In his final two years together with her, his fixed image is carried to its final consequences. His attempt to "create" her according to his fixed image of the fulfilled woman has precisely the effect which Frisch described in Tagebuch:

Wir sind es, die dem Freunde, dessen Erstarrtsein uns bemüht, im Wege stehen, und zwar dadurch, daß unsere Meinung, er sei erstarrt, ein weiteres Glied in jener Kette ist, die ihn fesselt und langsam erwürgt. (Tagebuch, p. 34)

Rolf begins to sense what is happening to Julika on his first visit to Glion. He cannot help but notice her lifeless, indifferent attitude toward the news which she confides to him of her impending operation:

Was ist mit diesem Menschen geschehen? Denn daß ein Mensch so sein kann von Anfang an, so ausdruckslos noch im Zustand der schreienden Not, wollte ich nicht glauben. Wer hat sie so gemacht? (p. 304)

Even her body reflects the gradual, inner death which she is experiencing. Rolf consistently describes her appearance in metaphors referring to statues or other plastic figures:

Ihre Kühle, wahrscheinlich nur eine Maske der Scheuen, durfte man nicht auf sich selbst beziehen. (p. 300)

...ihr kupfernes Haar...(p. 300)

...ihre Miene erschien mir wie ein stumm gewordenes Erschrecktsein in Permanenz. (p. 301)

Ihr Lachen blieb reine Mimik,... (p. 302)

Ihr Mund war offen wie bei antiken Masken. (p. 304)

And finally, Rolf's impression of the body at the hospital:

"Leider hat sie die Augenbrauen zu einem dünnen Strich zusammenrasiert, was ihrem Gesicht eine graziöse Härte gibt, aber auch etwas Maskenartiges, eine fixierte Mimik von Erstauntheit." (p. 327)

There are also various references to stone in connection with Julika in the first part of the novel. In the cavern story, which seems to reflect Stiller's relationship to Julika, the narrator notes, "...es fehlte nicht an versteinerten Damen, die, so scheint es, langsam von ihren fältelnden Schleiern verschluckt werden, von Schleiern aus Bernstein..." (p. 125). At another point Julika notices that a fellow traveller is reading Ernst Jünger's Marmorklippen, and we learn that "Marmorklippen" is "...ein Wort, das Julika neuerdings irritierte..." (p. 103). One is reminded of the mythical figure, Echo, who was turned into a cliff. It is also interesting to note that Stiller has made a sculpture of Julika. When Sibylle visits Stiller's studio for the first time, she sees this sculpture and exclaims, "Ist das nicht furchtbar für deine Frau?...ich fände es furchtbar, wenn du mich so in Kunst verwandeln würdest!" (p. 195). Now the significance of the fact that Stiller is a sculptor becomes evident: he is also in a figurative sense Julika's sculptor.

Stiller is also a writer--his diary, after all, comprises the greater part of the novel. In that capacity he is also a maker of images. Rolf has some rather harsh words of critique for Stiller's representation of his wife in the prison diary:

Das Bildnis, das diese Aufzeichnungen von Frau Julika geben, bestürzte mich; es verrät mehr über den Bildner, dünkt mich, als über die Person, die von diesem Bildnis vergewaltigt worden ist. Ob nicht schon in dem Unterfangen, einen lebendigen Menschen abzubilden, etwas Unmenschliches liegt, ist eine große Frage. Sie trifft Stiller wesentlich. (p. 305)

Rolf's criticism of Stiller's narrative is very important because it provides a cue for the reader to correct his distorted perspective of Julika and Stiller himself. In retrospect it becomes obvious that "White's" pledge to be objective has in large measure gone unfulfilled. If one only read the first part of the novel, it is very likely that he would tend only to see Stiller as the "victim" in his relationship to Julika. In fact, it is quite conceivable that for many readers, the impression of Julika formed in the first part may be so firmly implanted in the mind that even after reading the second part, they remain convinced that it is Julika who has ruined Stiller's life, rather than vice-versa. In Stiller's Aufzeichnungen there are constant references to Julika's unwillingness to let Stiller be something different from what he used to be. It is undoubtedly true that she has a fixed image of him in this respect, but what Stiller, the narrator, fails to make clear is the fact that he is just as guilty of this sin as she is. Perhaps this is why critics have tended to think that the end of Stiller is pessimistic; that the point of the novel is simply that Stiller's life is ruined by his unhappy marriage.

Granted, the outward appearance of Stiller's life seems bleak at the end, nevertheless, looking at the novel from the point

of view of the Bildnis-problem, it becomes evident that Stiller's internal development, which is certainly more important than external appearances, is a consistently positive one, even including its final stage.

The switch of narrators is a very important key to the understanding of what takes place inside Stiller. This switch is deliberately positioned immediately following Stiller's sculpture-smashing tantrum and trial, i.e. after his acceptance of his old self and rejection of many of the fixed images which that self had formed. Stiller reports, "...ich war ohne Angst, das Falsche zu tun, und wieder einmal ich selbst" (p. 283). When Stiller has become his old self again, he does not need to keep his diary any longer, because he no longer has the desire to describe everything and everyone in his environment.

Yet even after this great step forward, it is implicit in Stiller's remarks about Julika that the old fixed image of her has not yet vanished. He still expects her to respond to him in the same way that Florence might have responded:

Einige Atemzüge lang, wie ich, das Feuerzeug noch in der Hand, meine Julika betrachte, glaube ich in heiße Tränen auszubrechen und im nächsten Augenblick auf meine Knie zu fallen, beide Hände vor dem Gesicht, bis Julika mein schluchzendes, häßliches, lächerliches Gesicht befreien wird. Ich möchte es, aber es geschieht nicht, es ist, als gingen die Tränen nach innen, und ich stehe unverwandelt wie sie. (p. 284)

Another telling evidence of Stiller's Bildnis is his repeated question "Do you love me?" Julika's reluctance to answer is liable to be interpreted as a negative answer, although in reality it is

simply no answer at all. It is impossible for her to make the kind of emotional show of her love which Stiller's question anticipates. Later, when Rolf asks her whether she loves Stiller, she can only answer: "Ich begreife ihn immer weniger" (p. 304). But it is Stiller who is on trial here and not Julika. He wants to love her--Julika says, "...er ist überzeugt davon, daß er mich liebt" (p. 304)--but as long as he has a preconception of how she should respond, this is impossible. Stiller himself admits that he did not come back to Julika because he loved her, but because she represented for him a "defeat" which he could not get off his mind (p. 319). All along, the important thing for him has been that he should be the one who gives her "life and joy" (p. 317).

Rolf knows why this is:

Bei aller Selbstannahme, bei allem Willen dazu, sich endlich unter die eigene Wirklichkeit zu stellen, hatte unser Freund nur eins noch gar nicht geleistet, nämlich den Verzicht auf die Anerkennung durch die Umwelt. (p. 306)

"Du liebst, ohne das Geschöpf glücklich machen zu können, das du liebst. Das ist dein Leiden." (p. 320)

"Ein Mensch begreift, daß er sich an einem anderen versündigt hat und übrigens auch an sich selbst, und eines späten Tages ist man bereit, alles wiedergutzumachen - unter der Voraussetzung, daß der Mensch sich verwandelt...eine solche Erwartung, mein Lieber, ist die nicht etwas billig?" (p. 316)

"Auferwecken! dein alter Unsinn, Stiller, du gestattest, daß ich es dir sage: dein mörderischer Hochmut - du als Erlöser eurer selbst!" (p. 316)

"...diese Frau hat dich nie zu ihrer Lebensaufgabe gemacht. Nur du hast so etwas aus ihr gemacht, glaube ich, von allem Anfang an. Du als ihr Erlöser, ich sagte es schon, du wolltest es sein, der ihr das Leben gibt und die Freude. Du! In diesem Sinn hast du sie geliebt, gewiß, bis zum eigenen Verbluten. Sie als dein Geschöpf. Und jetzt diese Angst, sie könnte dir sterben! Sie ist nicht geworden, was du dir erwartet hast. Ein unvollendetes Lebenswerk!" (p. 317)

What Rolf says is essentially the same thing that Julika told Stiller before his disappearance: "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von mir." So long as Julika lives, Stiller clings desperately to the notion that he must somehow gain her recognition. But the kind of recognition he expects is impossible for Julika. She will never be able to change in the way he wants her to. In this sense, his Bildnis is an unrealistic image of himself as much as it is one of Julika. Rolf calls it Selbstüberforderung.

It is also a fixed image of love. When Rolf asks Stiller what "love" means to him, he only answers, "...Ich kann nicht allein lieben, Rolf, ich bin kein Heiliger..." (p. 315). Stiller cannot love as Barblin does, regardless of whether the other person loves. Rolf tells him, "...du erwartest von deiner Liebe wirklich so etwas wie ein Wunder, mein Lieber, und das ist es vermutlich, was nicht geht..." (p. 320).

For Rolf, what is necessary is obvious: Stiller must stop considering Julika's happiness his life's task, and live with her and love her for what she is. He must stop "idolizing" her--i. e. treating her either as super-human or sub-human--and expecting her to give him a "sign" (p. 319). All of this is, however, too abstract for Stiller--he wants to know "ganz praktisch" what his life together with Julika should be like, assuming that she does survive. Rolf's answer is very simple:

"Es gibt keine Änderung...ihr lebt miteinander, du mit deiner Arbeit da unten im Souterrain, sie mit ihrer halben Lunge, so Gott will, und der einzige Unterschied: Ihr foltert euch nicht

mehr Tag für Tag mit dieser irren Erwartung, daß wir einen Menschen verwandeln können, einen anderen oder uns selbst, mit dieser hochmütigen Hoffnungslosigkeit... Ganz praktisch: Ihr lernt beten für einander." (p. 322)

"You learn to pray for each other" suggests what Rolf means by the "one last step" which Stiller is lacking: he must make the "leap into faith." But the religious view of life which he advocates is something quite different from the religious clichés of which Stiller is so skeptical (p. 320). It is a life stance which must be based on one's own experience--the essential experience: death. Stiller is horrified at the thought of Julika's impending death. Also, he once made an attempt to take his own life, from which he learned that "nichts erledigt ist, wenn einer sich beispielsweise eine Kugel in die Schläfe schießt" (p. 324). Stiller calls the "Schrecken" which he experienced after his suicide attempt his "angel," because instead of death, the experience meant a rebirth for him. The important thing is that for once he was utterly free to choose life. "Näher bin ich dem Wesen der Gnade nicht gekommen..." (p. 287), as he puts it. He cannot make a sensible explanation of what happened to him, but the experience nevertheless "made sense": "...Ich habe den Sinn lediglich empfangen" (p. 286). Out of the experience of the void of death, life takes on an unconditional meaning for Stiller, i. e. life becomes worth living for its own sake, apart from any of the illusory purposes or preconceptions or idols which people invent in order to give their lives meaning.

After the suicide attempt, it became possible for Stiller to accept his old guilt-laden self because the values from which the guilt had sprung were now relegated to the one absolute value, life itself. This explains why Stiller is so uninhibited during the investigation--in every respect, that is, except in the point of his identity. As long as he clings to the White-identity, he can face the old environment with the new, fresh, Bildnis-free outlook which he has acquired since his "rebirth." But the problem is to "fuse," as Rolf says, the sterile but inescapable past into the vivid present (p. 307). The new life-stance which he has won as James White must be carried over into the old self. During the course of the investigation, he is able to carry out this process in large measure:

Er war im Begriff, den zweiten und noch viel schwereren Schritt zu tun, herauszutreten aus der Resignation darüber, daß man nicht ist, was man so gerne gewesen wäre, und zu werden, was man ist. Nichts ist schwerer als sich selbst anzunehmen!...Meines Erachtens hatte Stiller, als wir ihn in der Untersuchungshaft trafen, diese so schmerzvolle Selbstannahme bereits in einem beträchtlichen Maße geleistet. (p. 306)

With respect to his environment in general, Stiller becomes his old self, except that now the old fixed images are shattered. He gets along with his family alright, he has made some new friends, and he even accepts his native country, although it had been the target of his most bitter satire in the diary. This new attitude of acceptance is reflected in Stiller's choice of the bourgeois surroundings in which he lives in Glion. He writes to Rolf, "...wir sind einfach drüber,...auch innerlich drüber!" (p. 295).

Only vis à vis Julika has Stiller been unable to perform the fusion of the old self into the new. He is terrified at the thought of her death, because in this one respect, his life is still conditioned. Since the task of making Julika happy has become the meaning of his life, her death must make life meaningless for him. The only answer is to find some higher meaning: to overcome the fixed image which has been the curse of his life requires an act of faith. Rolf explains it very succinctly:

"Du bist nicht die Wahrheit. Du bist ein Mensch und oft bereit gewesen, eine Unwahrheit aufzugeben, unsicher zu sein. Was heißt das anderes, Stiller, als daß du an eine Wahrheit glaubst? Und an eine Wahrheit, die wir nicht ändern und nicht einmal töten können - die das Leben ist."..."immer wieder hast du versucht, dich selbst anzunehmen, ohne so etwas wie Gott anzunehmen. Und nun erweist sich das als Unmöglichkeit. Er ist die Kraft, die dir helfen kann, dich wirklich anzunehmen. Das alles hast du erfahren! Und trotzdem sagst du, daß du nicht beten kannst; du schreibst es auch." (p. 324/25)

With Unwahrheit, Rolf can only be referring to the fixed images which Stiller has already overcome, i.e. with respect to his family, friends, native country, etc. If Stiller has rejected the untruths which these fixed images represented, then he has implied by this act his belief that there is some higher principle against which the untruths are sins. The higher principle is life itself--to form a fixed image is to belie "das Lebendige" in a person. Life itself is the only transcendent value we can know, and we can only know it by experience. Rolf realizes that Stiller has experienced life--in his case, as with many of Frisch's characters, in a confrontation with death. Thus his words are in no way meant to convert Stiller to a belief in God, but rather merely convince him of the faith

which he already has but is afraid to affirm. It is a question of recognizing that what he has done to Julika and to himself is a sin against life, for as soon as he does, he begins to show the proper respect for life--das Lebendige--within her and within himself, never again to deny it by forming a fixed image.

To become the "knight of faith" is nevertheless no small task for Stiller, in view of the immensity of his sin. Even Rolf is deeply moved when he sees Julika's body at the hospital:

...ich hatte plötzlich das ungeheure Gefühl, Stiller hätte sie von allem Anfang an nur als Tote gesehen, zum erstenmal auch das tiefe, unbedingte, von keinem menschlichen Wort zu tilgende Bewußtsein seiner Versündigung. (p. 327)

Frisch leaves the conclusion of the novel open--we do not know for sure whether Stiller attains faith. There are, however, several reasons to believe that he does. When Stiller and Rolf finally say good-night after they have talked into the early morning hours, Stiller asks Rolf to pray for him. This gesture reflects, perhaps, a change in his somewhat skeptical attitude toward religion. The next morning we learn: "...Stiller hatte nicht geschlafen, den Rest der Nacht vermutlich im Garten, den frühen Morgen in seiner Töpferei verbracht (p. 326). The symbolic connotation of a sleepless night in a garden cannot be ignored: the implication is that Stiller himself has been praying. It is also no coincidence that Julika dies at Easter. Her life is sacrificed for the sake of Stiller's in the sense that he is now able, in the face of her death, to overcome the Bildnis which has inhibited his life. The fact that Stiller

is able to work in his shop after such a spiritually tumultuous night and again at the end after Julika's funeral, suggests engagement in life, even if only on a very modest level.

More convincing than all of these indications is the simple fact that Stiller is able to go on living. After all, he once tried to commit suicide in order to eradicate his guilt, and now his guilt is even greater. But this time he not only chooses life--he keeps on choosing it. The fact that he simply "remains in Glion and lives alone" does not necessarily mean that he is a broken man. He accepts himself for what he is: not a hero, but a simple man who needs nothing more than himself for life to be meaningful.

The interpretation of the novel based on the philosophy of Kierkegaard and the interpretation based on Frisch's own Bildnis-idea both lead us to the same point: the final consequence of Stiller's development is that he is able to accept his life, i.e. his self, unconditionally. And in both interpretations there is the inevitable implication that he has found a belief in a form of transcendence, whether we call it "God" or "das Lebendige in jedem Menschen." When one is filled with its sustaining power, life becomes worth living in and for itself, without any qualifying Bildnisse.

For Stiller the way to the elimination of all fixed images proves to be a painful and even tragic one. His "disillusionment" would be cause for great joy, except that it is accompanied by Julika's death. Nevertheless, Stiller does not break down under the strain of his guilt. One has the feeling that if Julika had

lived, Stiller would now be able to love her unconditionally, in the sense Frisch means in "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen." After reading Stiller, one begins to understand the full significance of Frisch's words: "Ungeheure Lebenskraft wäre vonnöten, damit ein menschlicher Verkehr lebendig bliebe."²⁸

28. M. Frisch, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen," Schweizer Annalen III, 1946/47, p. 16.

CONCLUSION

From his first, almost lyrical formulation of the Bildnis-idea in Tagebuch to the refined dramatic model, Andorra, Frisch has given widely variegated literary expression to his theme. Each of the works involved represents a different approach; each possesses a unique form.

"Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" is at once the conceptual stage and the first attempt to put the idea into literary flesh and bones. The first of the fragments still have a poetic character--poetic, not in the sense of the mummified Andorran poetry, but in the sense of being composed in an extremely pithy, imaginative language. Gradually Frisch begins to look for examples in order to put his thoughts into more concrete terms: first he turns to the phenomenon of prophecy, then to the power of suggestion in general, and finally, to a socio-psychological observation. At this point, the development of the idea has progressed far enough that it can be crystallized into the story, "Der andorranische Jude." First conceived in the simplest of narrative forms, the full dramatic potential of this material was to remain untouched until much later.

With the Bildnis-idea clearly worked out in his mind, however, Frisch was quick to recognize the pertinence of other stories, notably the one about the Russian colonel and the German woman. This fascinating narrative not only illustrated what he had

already expressed in a more poetic form about love and the fixed image; it also made good drama material. Tension, the necessary ingredient for any play in the traditional sense, is already inherent in the situation it depicts. In his stage rendition, Frisch brings out the contrast between the exceptional instance of love between two enemies and the especially dark background of distrust and prejudice cast by the war. As Agnes' and Stepan's relationship develops, the tension grows, finally reaching the climax in the incisive moment of truth when Horst and Stepan meet. This scene represents a confusing confrontation for each of the characters. Horst is confronted by Jehuda's accusation on the one hand, and by Agnes' willingness to sacrifice herself for Stepan on the other. Stepan meets Horst, who is a Nazi officer but also the husband of the woman he loves. For Agnes the confrontation is also a two-fold one: she learns for the first time that Horst may have had something to do with the Nazis' Warsaw Ghetto action, and she is placed in the unexpected position of having to defend her lover against her husband.

Frisch masterfully realizes the dramatic potential of the situation. The visual impression of the action alone is enough to convey the impact of the scene. It is almost as though the mutual Bildnis which Horst's appearance precipitates becomes visible in Agnes' and Horst's stare. Whether it will be possible for them to bridge the gap between them--to overcome the Bildnis--is left up to the audience.

Andorra is a very different kind of drama from Als der Krieg zu Ende war. Its basis, "Der andorranische Jude," is not the dramatic material which the story of the earlier drama had been. Rather than depicting actions or events, it describes a socio-psychological process. Nevertheless, Frisch was finally able to give dramatic form to the unique material which he had been saving for so long. In an interview with Horst Bienek he explains the long delay:

Erst nach Jahren, nachdem ich die erwähnte Tagebuchskizze mehrere Male vorgelesen hatte, entdeckte ich, daß das ein großer Stoff ist, so groß, daß er mir Angst machte, Lust und Angst zugleich - vor allem aber, nachdem ich mich inzwischen aus meinen bisherigen Versuchen kennengelernt hatte, sah ich, daß dieser Stoff m e i n Stoff ist. Gerade darum zögerte ich lang, wissend, daß man nicht jedes Jahr seinen Stoff findet. Ich habe das Stück fünfmal geschrieben, bevor ich es aus der Hand gab.²⁹

Andorra is a dramatic expansion of "Der andorranische Jude." The objective--to illustrate step-by-step the cause and effects of prejudice--remains the same. But the play is not merely a "dramatized story." The stage provides what a purely epic form can never provide: a means of constructing the "model" before the eyes of the audience.

In the note at the beginning of the play, Frisch states that the name "Andorra" does not refer to a real state but rather to a "model" (Andorra, p. 200). In fact, the drama is a kind of psychological model, a hypothetical situation designed to demonstrate for experimental or didactic purposes a particular psycho-

29. H. Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern, p. 28.

logical process.³⁰ In this case the process is the slow but sure alienation and elimination of the "outsider" by society. In scene after scene we witness a development from dutiful bourgeois toleration to rabid hate. In the drama-model the only roughly-sketched figures of the story become convincing characters who can lull the audience into sympathy. We are tricked, in a sense, into distancing ourselves from them too late, "...wie in Wirklichkeit," as Frisch suggests.³¹ The play requires us to judge the Andorrans for ourselves, while the story makes it clear all along who the antagonists are. In "Der andorranische Jude" we are told outright that the Andorrans ruin Andri's life with their Bildnis; in Andorra the audience is guided to this conclusion by a gradual unfolding of the individual characters as links in the chain which eventually strangles Andri. The whole development of the model points toward the inevitable final impression of repulsion produced by the Judenschau and the ensuing confrontation between the deranged Barblin and the Andorrans. In this dramatic rounding-off of the play Barblin is a living reminder of Andri's persecution. She whitewashes the pavement of the town square, symbolizing the Andorrans' attempt to forget the whole Andri-affair. Each of the Andorrans' statements represents a blatant attempt to deny the guilt for what has happened, and each of Barblin's statements is an ironic reflection on their guilt, from identifying herself as "die Judenhure Barblin" to her reference to Andri's shoes.

30. Cf. K. Aurin, "Andorra - ein psychologisches Modell," in Politische Psychologie III (1964), pp. 95-112.

31. "Notizen von den Proben 'Andorra'." In Stücke II, p. 347.

There can be no ambiguity about the Bildnis which Andorra depicts.

While Andorra is a model which demonstrates the "mechanics" of prejudice--how and why it develops in society, and what its effects are, and while Als der Krieg zu Ende war is the depiction of an exceptional instance in which the Bildnis is overcome, Stiller is a long developmental novel which presents rather a broad treatment of the theme's deeper philosophical and religious implications. Not one but many situations are explored in connection with one man's struggle to free himself of the fixed images which hamper his life. Multiple perspectives are made possible by the montage-form of the novel. The narration ranges from the varying degrees of subjectivity of Stiller's diary to the relative objectivity of Rolf's Nachwort. The second part of the novel places the first in its proper perspective and draws the moral consequences of Stiller's experience: we learn from Rolf that Stiller has formed a fixed image of Julika and of himself. Here "fixed image" does not imply merely a stereotype in the socio-psychological sense developed in Andorra and Als der Krieg zu Ende war, but rather the preconception of life's meaning. If the two dramas show us the negative effect of the Bildnis and the beauty of living free of it, Stiller takes us into the subjective realm of existential religious philosophy to unveil the Bildnis as an enemy to man's spirit.

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