

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKS
OF CHRISTOPH MECKEL, WRITER AND GRAPHIC ARTIST

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKS
OF CHRISTOPH MECKEL, WRITER AND GRAPHIC ARTIST

by

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

December, 1970

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank most of all two people whose cooperation and assistance were invaluable in the obtaining of materials and background information for this thesis: Christoph Meckel, visiting assistant professor in the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Texas in the spring semester of 1968; and Dr. Christopher Middleton, supervising professor for the thesis. Thanks for help in obtaining materials or in understanding some problems connected with Meckel's work are also due to Dr. A. Leslie Willson and Dr. Wolfgang F. Michael of the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Texas; to Dr. Wulf Segebrecht of the University of Regensburg, Germany; to the late Dr. Eberhard Meckel and to Frau Dr. Annemarie Meckel, parents of Christoph Meckel; and to Peter Rühmkorf, visiting assistant professor in the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Texas in the fall semester of 1969. I am grateful for the grant from the Germanistic Society of America which gave me the opportunity to continue research for this thesis in Germany, and for the Fulbright Commission travel grant which gave me the opportunity to travel to Germany and, within Germany, from Berlin to Freiburg i. B. and Regensburg to gather additional materials for the thesis.

November 6, 1970

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is designed as a descriptive introduction to the poems, prose and graphic art of Christoph Meckel. Although Meckel is only thirty-five years old, he has been publishing poems, prose and graphic art regularly for fifteen years, since 1955. He has published twenty-nine books as well as many etchings, woodcuts, lithographs and drawings, poems, stories and articles in books and periodicals, and his graphic art has been exhibited frequently in Europe and in Africa. Meckel's work is included in most anthologies which attempt to offer a representative selection from contemporary German literature.

This thesis is, as far as I can determine, the first academic study of Meckel's work. The convention of writing academic theses only about writers who have been accepted as part of a critic's or scholar's canon of literature is already outmoded. The problems involved in describing the work of a contemporary writer are at least as important as the problems involved in work on one of the classic authors. In either case it is necessary to study carefully the work itself and its historical context, and to make one's own judgments of literary quality, which are not entirely dependent

on the decisions of other critics and scholars.

In this thesis several interesting problems are brought forward. One problem is the choice, from a variety of available terms, of the proper term with which to describe any contemporary non-realistic short prose--the parable, Märchen, fable, short story, or Prosatext. Proper terminology must also be found to describe parallels in the artistic and literary work of a single artist. These questions could only be raised, not answered, for to deal with them systematically would have taken me beyond the limits of my purpose. This purpose is to provide a descriptive map of Meckel's work, which mentions the most striking aspects of each separate genre and points out some themes, moods, tones and techniques which appear in all the genres. After giving some biographical information, I will consider in turn his prose fiction, poems and graphic art, and the critical reaction to them.

As with any artist, the greatest challenge is to uncover and describe Meckel's private mythology, that set of symbols which results from the artist's personal vision of experience. Again, this is beyond the scope of this thesis and can only be touched upon here. Like his contemporary, the writer-artist Günter Grass, Meckel has developed a private language of frequently recurring, often obscure symbols which have different conceptual content in different literary contexts. These symbols are combined and recombined with other symbols and sets of symbols.

Meckel's work also challenges the reader to respond to his peculiar

sensibility: an apparently romantic sensibility, which varies in mood from gentle whimsy¹ to desperation (at times tinged with horror)² or to exuberance.³ Perception of the general tone or mood of a picture or story or poem must be qualified by an awareness of the use and effect of its elements. The grotesque, for example, can be an element of black comedy, political satire, pure disinterested play, or moral parable. One of my aims in this thesis is to describe some of these moods and examine their functions in Meckel's work.

¹Example, from the poem "Mitte Oktober" (Nebelhörner, p. 8):

Hat der Herbstmond eine Schlafmütze auf,
Vergisst er dem Holunder adieu zu sagen.
Der Wind zieht sich goldene Handschuhe an,
Um die letzten Blätter der Akazie
In sein Tagebuch zu legen.

NOTE: Complete bibliographical information on all works cited is given in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. The footnotes give only page numbers and enough information to enable the reader to find the entry in the bibliography.

²Example, from the poem "Hinter dem grossen Gewässer" (Wildnisse, p. 75):

Was hat er dort zu tun
im Dunkel hinter dem grossen Gewässer?
Dort kann man ihn nicht lassen
von dort muss man ihn holen
wo der Engel mit dem Pferdehaar umgeht und austrinkt
die Seen.

³Example, from the story "Ein roter Faden" (Der glückliche Magier, p. 149): Koppheister auf drei Beine gestellt, betrunken und fabelhaft nüchtern, verantwortungsvoll und leichtsinnig... und vom Seegang unablässig auf- und absteigender Zeit zu dieser Prosa verführt, lasse ich mich also nieder auf den weinfleckigen Flechtstuhl... und stecke... Fähnchen auf die Landkarte meiner Vagabondagen, Räubzüge und festen Burgen auf Abruf.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Christoph Meckel's father, the writer, critic, editor and scholar, Eberhard Lothar Wilhelm Meckel, was born in Freiburg im Breisgau on March 22, 1907, to Carl Meckel, architect and member of a family of well-known architects, and Louise Lucius Meckel, a descendant of Goethe's uncle on the maternal side (the Textors of Frankfurt). Both Eberhard Meckel and his wife, Annamarie Pietzker Meckel, born in 1908, studied literature and art history at various German universities and received their Ph. D. s at the University of Freiburg i. B. in the early 1930's.

Eberhard Meckel published his first book of poems in 1933; later volumes of poetry appeared between 1936 and 1956. During the war Meckel also published a biography of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, two volumes of short stories, and an edition of the works of the Alemannic writer Johann Peter Hebel. After the war Meckel published Umriss zu einem neuen Hebelbildnis and a new edition of the works of Hebel, as well as monographs on various cities and castles of South Germany. In 1956, he received the Award of Honor of the Bavarian Akademie der Schönen Künste, and in 1966 the Hebel Prize of Baden-Württemberg. Eberhard Meckel's poems are

described by a friend in an article as "im besten Sinne des Wortes, konventionell gebunden...und an Mörrike [erinnernd]."⁴

Eberhard and Annemarie Meckel were married in 1931 and had three children: Eberhard Christoph, born in Berlin on June 12, 1935; Andreas, born in 1939; and Wolfgang, born in 1942. Christoph Meckel seems to have had a rather quiet and happy early childhood, in contrast to his experiences of war and frequent moving from city to city in later childhood. His father used to recite poems and tell stories as they walked together in the forest. His mother describes him as an unusually sensitive child.⁵ He wrote poems and drew pictures as a young child.

During World War II Eberhard Meckel was an officer in the German Army. In 1940 Annemarie Meckel and the children moved to Freiburg i.B., but in 1944, when Christoph was eight years old, Freiburg was bombed and the family moved again, to relatives in Erfurt. Both in Freiburg and in Erfurt the Meckels experienced the loss of their home. In Freiburg they had been living in the suburban house of an old lady whose town house was destroyed by fire after a heavy bombing. In Erfurt their house was commandeered, and later many of its contents destroyed, by American and Russian soldiers. They had to push an ancient and ill grandmother through town in a wheelchair to a new home, then were allowed to return weeks later. They lived in Erfurt under the American occupation for six months, until November 1945, and

⁴Hanns Arens, "Traum und Wirklichkeit."

⁵In private conversation with the author.

under the subsequent Russian occupation until August 1947. In 1947 they returned illegally across the border to Freiburg. Eberhard Meckel was wounded in the war and spent several years in a Russian prisoner-of-war camp. Shortly after the war he rejoined his family in Freiburg, where he died on June 7, 1969.

Christoph Meckel was a member of a youth drama group which toured between Basel and Heidelberg in 1950 and 1951. During the same period he traveled alone to Paris during a school vacation. He left his Gymnasium after the end of Unterprima (i. e., without finishing the last year of school), but later studied graphic techniques for one semester at the Freiburg Art Academy and one semester at the Munich Art Academy. He has never studied at a university. Since he left school Meckel has spent his time traveling and as an independent writer and graphic artist. He has traveled, sometimes by hitchhiking, in Scandinavia, in Africa, England, France, Italy and Greece. He has lived in Paris and Rome, but also on Corsica--and in Austin, Texas. For years Meckel's winter home has been a fifth-floor studio apartment in Berlin/Friedenau. For seven years he spent the summer months in the village of Oetlingen (Württemberg), but he has spent the last four or five summers in a small mountain cottage near Suzette/Vaucluse, France.

Meckel has written several semi-autobiographical sketches: the story "Der Brand"; articles about Oetlingen, Freiburg, Greece and Rome; an interpretation of his own poem "Ode an mächtige Mannschaften," which is discussed later in the thesis; and a preface to Bilderbotschaften, which is

discussed later in the thesis and reproduced in excerpts in the appendix.

"Der Brand" is about a fire in Freiburg, where Meckel lived as a child during the wartime bombing. The story presents the idyllic world of childhood in contrast with the direct experience of war. The article "Ode an mächtige Mannschaften" refers to Meckel's memories of having his home searched by soldiers at various times during the war.

The four travel articles are written entirely from the perspective of an adult. The first two, on Oetlingen and on Greece, were published in supplements to the Badische Zeitung (Freiburg) in 1958. "Oetlingen im Markgräflerland: Das Dorf auf dem Rebberg" describes the village where Meckel lived in the summer for seven years.

Meckel's roots in South Germany are significant. His father was a specialist in Hebel and in Alemannic folklore, and his family had lived in Freiburg for generations. Meckel himself chose to live in Oetlingen for seven years, learned from the farmers of the area to speak the Alemannic dialect, and heard their folktales. Meckel has even written a few poems and short humorous monologues in the dialect. Meckel's nonsense-poem "Thema und Variationen" has a Berlin and a Baden variation, using two different sets of place names. Meckel contributed poems in Alemannisch to match poems in Berlinisch by his friend Günter Bruno Fuchs, for an anthology of German dialect poems. And in the Neue Rabenpresse's Berlin-Buch Meckel writes humorously (again in dialect) about Berlin from the standpoint of a town councilman from South Baden. However, Meckel's own poetic idiom contains

a little Berlin slang and almost no traces of Alemannic dialect. On the whole, Meckel's language is simple colloquial High German, with few noticeable regional influences.

While Meckel describes the village Oetlingen (in the article mentioned above) in a style not far from that of the usual authoritative guidebook, modified by occasional humor or lyrical description, the account of his travels through Greece, "Hellas oder: Die doppelte Dreifaltigkeit",⁷ published earlier in the same year, is more personal and lyrical, more an account of Meckel's travels through Greece than an instructive guide:

Diese Reise wurde, dank der geradezu peinigenden Gastfreundlichkeit der Griechen, zu einer einzigen Einladungs-tournee. Ich habe hunderte von "Freunden" gefunden.

The article "Warum ich nicht in Freiburg lebe" appeared in 1963. This is Meckel's slightly malicious, but clearly sympathetic description of the city. Characteristically, Meckel both challenges his family traditions and accepts them ironically. Meckel imagines Freiburg as the right city for an old man who is seeking peace:

man würde als alter, vergessener Poet, als musischer Veteran unter Obstbäumen am Stadtrand wohnen und ab und zu durch inzwischen veränderte Stadtviertel und Gegenden radeln, würde Verse und Sonntagsgeschichten für ein bigottes oder weniger bigottes Lokalblatt schreiben.⁶

The city is described as "langweilig,"⁷ "eine etwas ausgewachsene Kleinstadt."⁸

⁶P. 15.

⁷P. 16.

⁸P. 15.

The article about Rome, published in a book about Rome in 1968, is called "Vagabondage." It is much more lyrical than the earlier travel articles, and rather like the later prose pieces "Dunkler Sommer und Musikan-tenknochen" and "Ein roter Faden!." Throughout the article are scattered paren-
thetical phrases, variations on this formula: "(wer behält alle die Namen der
honigbraunen, schwarz gefleckten, wimmelnden, schallenden Ameisenstrassen!)"⁹
The article ends: "Rom, wie könnte es anders sein, im goldenen Frühlicht, in
feuriger Dämmerung, wie einst und immer: vernarrt verträdelte verkatert."¹⁰

Meckel's intoxication with travel and with the atmosphere of the big city has Romantic precedents, as do many other aspects of his work. In her book Romantiker entdecken die Stadt Marianne Thalmann writes of the early nine-
teenth century German Romantic writers who sought their spiritual home in
travel to the great cities of the world, especially their own Berlin, with its
cosmopolitan atmosphere, where the artist and eccentric could find a sympa-
thetic environment; with its labyrinthine quality, the possibility of being iso-
lated among people of whose lives one has hardly a notion; with a city which at
night has its own unique and exciting life.

Meckel is articulate, well-read and well-informed. He does not care
for conventional academic criticism and scholarship, and has written a parody
of literary and art criticism (the mock critical edition Die Notizen des Feuer-
werkers Christopher Magalan), but he has lectured on graphic arts at the
Munich Academy of Fine Arts and on twentieth century German literature at

⁹P. 194.

¹⁰P. 200.

the University of Texas (one semester at each school). He has also written an introduction to his own selection of the poems of Georg Heym. Meckel performs these activities with professional competence; indeed, he is even familiar with by-ways of German and other European literatures that many scholars tend to ignore. But he has repeatedly refused to join the influential Gruppe 47, partly because he prefers not to discuss his own poems, stories and graphic art or read what others have written about him.

Meckel has received an unusually large number of prizes for his poems, prose and graphic art. In 1958 he received the Kurt Tucholsky prize of the magazine Studentenkurier for "das beste zeitbezogene Chanson" ("Chanson von den Helden in kommender Zeit"); in 1959 the Karl Immermann Prize from the city of Düsseldorf; in 1961 the prize of the Hoffmann und Campe Verlag; in 1962 stipends from the city of West Berlin and from the Bundesinnenministerium of West Germany to live for a year in the Villa Massimo in Rome, and in the same year the Niedersächsischer Prize for Young Artists; and finally, in 1966, the "Junge Generation" prize, a part of the Berlin Kunstpreis für die Literatur (Fontanepreis).

CHAPTER III

PROSE FICTION

In this section I will discuss several aspects of Meckel's prose fiction. After a brief reference to his prose style, I will discuss a major theme of his fiction, the creative process itself. Then I will discuss Meckel's prose fiction in chronological order, concentrating on the three genres to which most of his fiction belongs: the anti-Utopian sketch or novel and, even more, the Märchen and the parable.

I. STYLE

Meckel's prose has the strengths and weaknesses which critics often find perplexing when they confront the prose of a lyric poet. As Horst Bienek points out in a review of Meckel's Im Land der Umbramauten:

[Meckel] besitzt die Stärke des Autors, der über die Lyrik zur Prosa kommt: seine Sprache ist geformt, durchdacht, facettenreich, präzise und bildhaft. Aber er hat auch dessen Schwächen. Es gelingt ihm nicht, überzeugende, vielschichtige Figuren zu zeichnen. So skizziert er Situationen, häuft Ereignis, auf, Ereignis und will sich selber ständig durch neue Einfälle übertrumpfen. Es zeigt sich, dass noch die grösste Phantasie ohne einen rechten Formwillen den Leser auf die Dauer ermüdet. Nicht Situationen, letztlich auch keine Sensationen treiben eine Handlung vorwärts, sondern

Menschen, Individuen, die in ihrer Differenziertheit dem Autor vorerst noch Schwierigkeiten aufgeben.¹¹

Like Dylan Thomas, another writer known primarily for his lyric poetry, Meckel writes lyrical short prose and lyrical radio plays. Meckel's prose thrives on the "latent power of the words and the magic of their substitution," as Vernon Watkins says of Dylan Thomas in his afterword to Thomas' Adventures in the Skin Trade.¹² Both writers tend to use long sentences, in which one word or phrase evolves from another, or is heaped together with others which have slightly different shades of meaning (see for example Meckel's sentence in footnote 3, p. 9). Yet Meckel's vocabulary is usually simple and even colloquial, though it sometimes includes esoteric words or exuberantly coined combination-words. The rhythm of his prose is pronounced, even in those stories which are most restrained and least playful or evocative.

II. THE CREATIVE PROCESS AS THEME

In much of Meckel's prose the creative process, the momentum of the story itself, is the subject. In some sketches from Meckel's first collection of short prose, Im Land der Umbramauten, he writes of projects such as causing confetti to rain down and diverting rivers from their courses. These seem to be partly free fantasies and partly analogies to

¹¹"Im Land der Phantasie." ¹²P. 184.

artistic creation. As in much of his later prose, he reports such fantastic projects in an unadorned, matter-of-fact tone. Sometimes the process of creation is seemingly subject to the will of the narrator, as in the story "Schiffsbau" (Im Land der Umbramauten); at other times it seems dependent on the whims of the animals and men which appear from the dreams or fantasies of the main character, as in "Herr Ucht" (Im Land der Umbramauten); and at still other times "die Geschichte" seems to create the story, as in "Der Zünd" (Der glückliche Magier), whereby "die Geschichte" corresponds roughly to Thomas Mann's "Geist der Erzählung."¹³

The act of writing--or making pictures--can be for Meckel the act of controlling one's own fantasy. At the climax of Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen Meckel writes of the city of his childhood fantasy, Ebenda, in which fragments of buildings in all the cities of the world were located. The name of the city was taken from pictures with the subtitle ebenda, or ibid., from books he had read as a child:

Das alles erhält seinen Platz in der Stadt Ebenda, die ich in meinem Kopf gegründet habe, Grosse, Unsichtbare, Herrliche, in die ich einziehe als ihr König, die ich aus vielerlei Wirklichkeiten zu einer einzigen zusammenbaue, die mich gewähren lässt und einmal zugrunde richtet, mich, Herrscher meiner Vergänglichkeit, Demiurg meiner Träume,

¹³ This is Mann's name for a truly omnipresent and omniscient narrator, the spirit of the Gregorius-legend, which Mann calls the real narrator of his novel Der Erwählte. The Irish monk Clemens was only its mouthpiece.

Berauschter von eigenen Gnaden und Jagdhund und Bettler--.¹⁴

Here the act of storytelling is a temporary means of winning power over life. In "Ein roter Faden" (Der glückliche Magier) the writer's work is symbolized by a "roter Faden" which is used to thread and tow along the flag-markers that the writer has planted along his life's path, but which can only be controlled by a master of the art of "spinning" tales:

Fähnchen, Gedichte, Bilder und viel mehr habe ich verschwendet und aufgesteckt längs meiner Haupt- und Nebenwege, über die der rote Faden läuft, den ich hinter mir herziehe, den ich festhalte, der mir folgt. Eine verknotete Schnur... leicht oder schwer zu ziehn, und ohne Anfang und Ende, und wer ein versierter Fadenzieher ist, weiss wie man ihn spinnt, zerreisst und zusammenflickt.¹⁵

In some other stories the artist or writer has only limited control over his creation. The vision seems to assert itself and assure the manner of its own realization in a poem or a picture. In one sketch from Im Land der Umbramauten, "Ein Mann kam zu mir," a man asks the narrator to paint him a picture of the land of his daydreams, and describes a few details of the landscape.

The narrator can find no picture of such a landscape in any book, so he simply begins with the colors green and gray: "Langsam und nachhaltig hoffte ich die Landschaft ding- und bildfest zu machen."¹⁶ He sketches a

¹⁴Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen, p. 14.

¹⁵Der glückliche Magier, p. 54.

¹⁶Im Land der Umbramauten, p. 29.

country house which would go along with the few objects the man had mentioned (sheds, doghouses, windmills)--expecting that the owner of the house will appear as soon as the building is unmistakably correct. The narrator continues adding colors and objects, but he relates:

[ich] legte...mich noch nicht fest...ich malte die Farben und Motive, wie sie kamen, und stellte die bunt flimmende, gescheckte und verworrene Tafel beiseite in der Hoffnung auf eine Selbstverwirklichung des unnachweislichen Bildes. Als ich voller Zweifel die Tafel wieder vornahm--einige Tage war sie sich selbst überlassen gewesen--, fand ich einen seltsamen Anblick vor. Die absichtlose Absicht hatte sich wider Vertrauen in Magie verwandelt, so schien mir, und alle meine Farben und Motive in ein Verhältni^s gebracht, anhand dessen sich weiterarbeiten liess.¹⁷

From this time on the narrator busies himself with sorting, grouping and removing objects and colors. His power is by no means unlimited: "Über eine Sonne, die [die Menschen] getrocknet hätte, verfügte ich leider nicht."¹⁸ The man comes later, accepts the picture of his daydreams, but refuses either to take the narrator with him on a journey into the land of his daydreams or to give the narrator the picture. He does, however, offer the narrator his own house. Through the many windows of the house the narrator can see all the pictures he would have needed to paint, if he had not come to live there.

In "Die Geschichte der Geschichten," again, a work of art takes

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

over the act of creation from its author. A boy asks an old man to start telling the story they have told so often before--the one about the raven.

It is:

ein Wüstenrabe, ein hungriger Steppenrabe mit verstaubten Flügeln und harten, kleinen, klugen Schlüsselloch-Augen. Ein weitgereister, moderner, vom Rabenherrgott gut und gross und dauerhaft erschaffener Rabe.¹⁹

The boy helps. Then the story begins to develop: "Aber, fuhr der alte Mann fort und sah den Jungen an, eigentlich war der Rabe kein Rabe, wie wir glauben, er war in Wirklichkeit... Der alte Mann dachte nach. Ein Berg, sagte der Junge schnell."²⁰ The mountain becomes a river, the river a book, the book a garden, the garden a man. But here the problems begin. Contained in the word Rabe is a colloquial meaning, "bad or bad-mannered person." The same enthusiastic developing of one concept from another which so vividly conjured up the raven and transformed it into a river, the river into a book, and the book into a garden, turns the man into a bad man, back into a Rabe, from "ein dicker, fatter Menschenkerl" to "ein Menschenfresser, ein Filou... ein ganz gewöhnlicher, schweinemässiger Menschenkerl."²¹ The formula tale (chain tale) is not satisfactory as a magic formula. The boy and the old man feel sad and helpless; they do not know what to do about

¹⁹Dichter erzählen Kindern, p. 8.

²⁰Ibid., p. 9.

²¹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

this turn in the story: "Ich hab keine Freude an Geschichten, wenn sie so ein Ende nehmen, sagte der Alte."²² The boy suggests other topics for stories, but the old man is afraid that they too would end badly. It is the boy's inspiration to turn the bad man, the man-eater, into a harmless old whale. The whale turns out to be a king and a cemetery as well, but most of all a general store, with an owner who is "ein zauberhafter Menschenkerl," "ein Liebling und ein Held."²³ At last the story has a happy end, the raven has been redeemed, and the boy and the old man go home happily.

"Da war ein Rabe, von dem die Geschichte weiss," is how the old man begins the story of the raven in "Geschichte der Geschichten."²⁴ The "Geschichte," the "Geist der Erzählung," is the only structure of the stories "Ein roter Faden" and "Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen." Both are mixtures of anecdotes, references to the process of writing, and nature descriptions, held together by the "Geist der Erzählung." Unlike Thomas Mann's "Geist der Erzählung," Meckel's "Geschichte" in these two stories remains a mood and never takes on the shape of a plot. In "Dunkler Sommer" the narrator meditates at various points in the story on his own activity:

Die Mittage sind fett von alter, betrunkenen Bläue, ich bin von Reisen und Vagabondagen zurückgekehrt zu einem Teil meines Besitzes und meiner Dinge, zu Spätburgunder, Radiernadeln und ollen Kamellen, ich habe eben zu schreiben begonnen, dies ist der Anfang von etwas, das noch keinen Namen hat.²⁵

 Und während er... farbenfrohen Teppichen Farbe und Qualität

²²Ibid., p. 15. ²³Ibid., pp. 17-18. ²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

²⁵Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen, p. 3.

erhält, sitze ich und schreibe diese Prosa, aber warum? O ein ganzer herrlicher Sommer ist mir verlorengegangen und ich weiss nicht, wo er geblieben ist.²⁶

.....
es geht mir vielmehr darum, die Krümel und Brocken meines goldenen, betrunkenen und verlorenen Sommers einzusammeln um zu sehen, ob sich daraus nicht etwa ein Backwerk ergibt, das Appetit machen könnte und Hunger auf dergleichen mehr und ewig und nie genug.²⁷

.....
Wie dem auch sei, ich habe dies hier geschrieben, wer weiss, warum und für wen? Der Altweibersommer zieht Fäden über den Hügel, hier werde ich eine Weile bleiben, und wenn eine Geschichte zu Ende ist, soll man keine Worte mehr machen.²⁸

The narrator of the radio play Eine Seite aus dem Paradiesbuch writes his story in the Paradiesbuch. The play begins:

---und ich schrieb, ---Ich verzeichne eure Namen auf der ersten Seite des Paradiesbuches.... Ich habe den Traum ins Recht gesetzt und ihn willkommen geheissen mit Klang und Tinte, damit eine Seite jenes sagenhaften Buches erzählen möge von eures Lebens Löwenanteil.²⁹

Moreover, the narrator (Sebastian of the story, grown old) describes his father writing in a diary. Part of the narration of the story is assigned to the father, who reads aloud to himself as he writes:

Hatte täglich fünf Stunden auf der Kirche gearbeitet, komma, und an trockenen Tagen Eimer voll Wasser auf das Dach gezogen und über Moos und rötlichen Blumen ausgeschüttet, Absatz....³⁰

The play ends as it began, with Paradiesbuch and Traum: "Ich schliesse das Paradiesbuch über euren Namen, und Klang und Tinte geb ich dem Traum zurück."³¹

²⁶Ibid., p. 4. ²⁷Ibid., p. 5. ²⁸Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹Eine Seite aus dem Paradiesbuch, p. 7. ³⁰Ibid., p. 23. ³¹Ibid., p. 65.

The story "Der Zünd" is also controlled by the "Geist der Erzählung," or "Geschichte." The first part of the story is a realistic account of Zünd's first steady job and his mysterious disappearance after a few months. This part of the story ends: "Und der Grossbäcker hat den ärgerlichen Gedanken, dass er an den falschen Brotträger geraten ist."³² The second part begins:

Wo treibt sich der Zünd herum? Unsichtbar ist ihm die Geschichte gefolgt, die als einziges dem Brotträger folgen kann, ein Irrlicht verschollener, abgestiegener Poesie, eine namenlose Geschichte mit Namen Zünd, die ihm anhängt auch abseits seines Verkaufsweges; was über Zünd zu erfahren ist, ist einzig durch sie zu erfahren, und stünde ihr ein Erzähler zur Verfügung, so würde sie lauten....³³

So far the transition resembles those in "Ein roter Faden" and "Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen." But the "Geschichte" in "Der Zünd," like Thomas Mann's "Geist der Erzählung," changes its style to correspond to the subject matter. As Zünd is gradually released from the pressures of responsibility for a steady job, as he gradually goes mad, the language begins to modulate from conventional syntax and diction to syntax and diction more appropriate for expressing Zünd's physical and mental sensations and his psychological disintegration. Zünd enters gradually into an orgy of fantasy, later also of sensation, in which his thinking seems to be done by parts of his body or of his environment. It begins: "Über den Wald weit hinaus und höher als die Bäume, weisse Wolken, denkt er und sieht er, Zünd!"³⁴ The thought spreads, as if there were too much thought and feeling to be contained in one

³² Der glückliche Magier, p. 115,

³³ Ibid., pp. 115-116.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 116.

person:

Das schmeckt mir, denkt ein Wohlbehagen in seinem Mund.
Das ist so eine braune Wolke in meinem Bauch, denkt der
Zünd. Weisse Wolke, denken die Augen von Zünd. Brot-
kasten Brotkasten Holz, denkt der Rücken von Zünd. Ich
fliege ein Weilchen Brot in dem Wald herum, denkt der
Brotkasten Brotkasten. Wir werden fremden Füßen bekannt,
denken die unbegangenen Wege im Wald. Wind, Wind,
himmlisches Kind, denken die begangenen, unbegangenen
Wege am Berg... Satansheiland, denkt kichernd der
fröhliche Zünd... Das zieht den Füßen die Schuhe ab, denken
die feuchten Hände von Zünd.³⁵

The phrase "denkt der Zünd" and similar phrases continue to be repeated, but now they are mixed with sentence fragments which reproduce Zünd's fragmentary thought directly, without quotation. Words are doubled more frequently now, not only Brotkasten, but also verbs such as weitergehn. New words are created (Spitzweckensprünge). This part of the story ends:

Da ist der Brotkasten-Zünd, denkt die weisse Wolke, denkt der Himmel, denkt Zünd, dass der Himmel denkt. Ich bin ein Brotkasten, denkt die Fröhlichkeit. Satansheiland, denkt Zünd und leckt die Hände. Ich führe einen Zünd durch grosse Wälder, denkt die Geschichte...³⁶

At this point the realistic narration is resumed. Zünd is handed over to the police. Only a poignant echo of the doubling of nouns, at the end of the story, reminds the reader of the joyous irrationality of Zünd's madness: "Vorläufig wird auch kein Brot in das Gebirge gebracht. Man hat dort den Zünd schon fast vergessen, und den Brotkasten Brotkasten auch."³⁷

In a similar way the poem "Die Krähe" displays an emotional transformation by means of distortion of language: by repetition, and increasing

³⁵Ibid., p. 117. ³⁶Ibid., p. 119. ³⁷Ibid., p. 123.

incoherence, and departure from normal syntax. The poem begins with conventional language and syntax, but it ends as follows:

Ich sah die Krähe
 Krähe Krähe Kräh
 krächzen Krah und krächzen Krah und Krähe
 sah die Krähe
 Krähe Krähe Krah
 krächzen krächzen Krah und Krah und Krähe
 sah die Krähe
 Krähe Krähe
 Krähe.³⁸

The poet has become a crow, after slaughtering and eating a crow and writing a poem called "The Heart of the Crow."

Meckel often relies on transformations inherent in the language itself to express transformations in the "Geschichte." This is particularly fortunate in the poem "Die Krähe," and in many of the shorter incantatory songs, such as "Lied aus der Uhr":

Was tun? Ich knacke meine L^äus
 und sitze tief im Uhrgehä^us
 und zäh^le zähl mit stummem Mund
 wie Stunde knüpft an schwarze Stund;³⁹.

Transformations operating through the language, the way in which one word suggests another and this in turn another, were not enough to make the story satisfactory in "Geschichte der Geschichten." Positive, powerful adjectives developed into images of evil, and the transformation of the cannibal into a harmless old whale was made possible only by deliberate, controlled imagination on the part of the boy. The boy and the old man accept

³⁸Bei Lebzeiten zu singen, pp. 24-25. ³⁹Wildnisse, p. 21.

responsibility for the consequences of a story (Wulf Segebrecht sees this as one of the most prominent themes--and characteristics--of Meckel's prose).⁴⁰ The theme of responsibility is sometimes made explicit, for example in "Erfindungen": "Auch einen Esel könnte ich zustande bringen. Aber wohin mit ihm!...ich müsste schon in den Süden reisen, um ihn verantworten zu können. --Schon deshalb unterdrücke ich ihn lieber."⁴¹

Herr Ucht, in the story by that name, must assume responsibility for his creations. "Ideen" visit Ucht at his home, and he puts them into an appropriate form. If the form is not adequate, the ideas torment him: "Alles, was ihm begegnet, scheint ihm Vorwürfe zu machen...Nur, um eine Heimstatt zu haben, die Ucht ihnen nicht verkörpern kann."⁴² The story ends as Ucht reluctantly but conscientiously goes out to speak to a dolphin, another of his creatures who has been calling for him.

In the poem "Gedicht über das Schreiben von Gedichten," as in "Geschichte der Geschichten," the fantasy cannot be completely controlled. The narrator is disappointed that he cannot find the magical words he needs for his poem. His dreams do not help him. The narrator uses what materials are available to him, but:

4
Ich setzte Wort an Wort an Wort
das Wort warf alle Fahnen fort
und hiess sich selber gradestehn
und nüchtern über Träume gehn
.....

⁴⁰Introduction, Der glückliche Magier, p. 8, pp. 14-15.

⁴¹Im Land der Umbramauten, p. 12. ⁴²Ibid., p. 8.

5

Das Wort sah mich von oben an;
 was schleppst du mir für Zeug heran
 das ich mit Klang versorgen soll
 ich mache dir dein Glück nicht voll
 ich wiege meine eigne Last
 und komme nur aus Trümmern her
 die du mir zu bereiten hast,
 aus Aschen, die nicht schimmern, her
 und werfe alle Zweifel um:
 du machst mich laut, ich mach dich stumm.⁴³

The "Word" demands to be brought to life, but in a poem which is free of magical and romantic trappings. The "Word" forces the narrator to be responsible--or silent.

In a poem written later, in 1968, words are still refusing to capture the vision, are still forcing the speaker to silence:

Wir dachten: uns gelingt
 die Verfolgung der Eule
 während wir abgeworfene Federn
 in Händen halten, wir sprachen das Denken
 der Eule nach in unserer Sprache,
 sie spricht: der Mond
 ist eine getrocknete Sonne!

Welt, verschöllen
 in Worten tausendundein
 KIRSCHBAUM! während der Kirschbaum in Blüte steht
 SINTFLUT! während das Meer sich entfernt
 auf den Bahnen des Mondes--

Es ist Zeit, ein Ende zu machen
 und heimzuführen die Welt in Worte
 bewohnbar:
 Traum, dem Atem anvertraut, im Schlaf noch
 Schweigen, gewonnen
 auf dem Grabweg der Sprache,

⁴³Wildnisse, pp. 33-34.

Zeit, dem Sommer
Kirschen zu schenken, Azur
und über uns kommen zu lassen das Meer,
ein starker Regen

Zeit, zu schweigen--
und unter den Dingen sein, wortlos
hören, wenn sich die Welt unserm Haus nähert, nachts
mit den Schritten des Gürteltiers
unübersetzbar.⁴⁴

The speech rhythm is more natural and relaxed in this later poem, and the world reflected in it is closer to nature than the world of phoenixes, horns of plenty and magic in the earlier songlike poem. The attitude to words, however, is similar in the two poems. This later poem, like so many of Meckel's stories and poems, has as its focal point and major theme the process of artistic creation and its effect on the artist.

III. FROM ANTI-UTOPIA

TO MÄRCHEN AND PARABLE

Anti-Utopia

Meckel published his first prose in 1959: "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten," a short sketch consisting of ten variations on the theme of time. In it Time is personified as an eccentric lady, with her minutes and seconds personified as rather unfree creatures which seek to be lived (experienced) by animals or people, and to avoid being left in empty space. Minutes prefer not to be taken up by "blossen Beschäftigungen... , von Büchern oder auch Vaterlandsliedern."⁴⁵ A miniature society, an anti-Utopia with limitations

⁴⁴"Talking about Poetry für Christopher Middleton," pp. 304-307.

⁴⁵P. 182.

on all sides, is described: "Stehenbleiben schliesst ihr Daseinsrecht nicht ein, Urteile bilden über Willkommenes oder Unwillkommenes steht ihnen nicht zu. Marsch! heisst es für alle Minuten."⁴⁶ The official jargon of the post office and of industry is applied to time in the section on the Time Factory:

Dazu kommt, dass die Aufträge und Auslieferungen sich meistens gleichsehen, Lieferungen an Jahrhundertfrachten, Monatspaketen und Stundenpäckchen. Eine ganze Abteilung für Sterbestunden ist neuerdings eingerichtet worden. Es gibt auch Einzelabnehmer, aber ihre Stunden- und Minutenforderungen bedeuten der Fabrik nichts Nennenswertes.⁴⁷

Conventional use of time is identified with lack of freedom:

Die Minuten haben keine Ferien. Sie haben sich verpflichtet, fortwährend in der unabsehbaren Schlange der Minuten, Sekunden und Augenblicke zu stehn. Oft bereuen sie es. Wäre das Durchkommen als einzelnes Zeitsprenkelchen nicht so mühsam, wären sie nicht in den Dienst der Zeit gegangen.⁴⁸

As in the society which is reflected in this negative Utopia, freedom is rarely attained:

Nur wenn es ihnen gelingt, in den Gehäusen zerborstener und stehengebliebener Uhren Einschlupf zu finden, sind ihre Ferien gesichert. In den toten Uhren ist Niemandsland, solange sie stillstehn. Und sollten sie dann eine Uhr gefunden haben, die nie mehr repariert wird, dann haben sie einen glücklichen Lebensabend, der unauffällig im zeitleeren Raum untertaucht.⁴⁹

In "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten" and in two other prose works, Manifest der Toten (also 1959) and "Im Land der Umbramauten" (1961) Meckel describes anti-Utopia fantasy lands. His prose treatment of these fantasy lands can be contrasted with his lyrical treatment, which is much more positive.

⁴⁶Ibid. ⁴⁷Ibid. ⁴⁸P. 184. ⁴⁹Ibid.

The rhythm and rhyme and the personal tone of the speaker in a poem such as "Lied aus der Uhr" establish their own state which is independent of totalitarian or mass control:

Was tun? Ich knacke meine L^äus
 und sitze tief im Uh^rgehä^us
 und z^ähle z^ähl mit stummem Mund
 wie Stunde knüpft an schwarze Stund;
 ich fände eine L^ücke gern
 durch die ich zeitquer schlupfen könn^t
 und krauchte durch die L^ücke fern
 wo Laus und Flaus nicht hüpfen könn^t
 und leichte Wolke zö^g mich fort
 ins graue Licht Imagin^är
 nur leere Uhrenkä^sten dort
 ich wohnte im Gehä^use leer
 und schnarchte bald zum besten dort
 und knackte keine L^äuse mehr.⁵⁰

In "Der Z^ünd" (probably Meckel's best story), a highly lyrical language asserts its rights in the middle of a conventionally narrated story, and in the middle of Z^ünd's life. Again, we can see this more clearly by comparing Meckel's prose treatment with the lyrical treatment in "Lied aus der Uhr." Above, on pages 25-26, is a discussion of the modulation of Z^ünd's language. In "Der Z^ünd" words are doubled (Brotkasten Brotkasten), as in "Lied aus der Uhr" (z^ähle z^ähl). The short sentences in the middle of "Der Z^ünd" not only express well Z^ünd's fragmentary thoughts; they also tend to increase the tempo of the story, and they lend themselves more easily than the narrative sentences of the first half of the story to lyrical expression. Correspondingly, the succession of clauses strung together by

⁵⁰ Wildnisse, p. 21.

the conjunction "und" in "Lied aus der Uhr" emphasizes the monotony of clock-like regularity that the singer is experiencing, and works together with rhythm and rhyme to make the song more like an incantation. Meckel creates special words and names to support and establish the central metaphors of his poems and stories: for example, Spitzweckensprünge in "Zünd," for the personified bread-box; or "das graue Licht Imaginär" in "Lied aus der Uhr," as a freer land, where there are only empty shells of clocks and no more "grosse Glocken."

Manifest der Toten is not so lyrical, but simply a more comprehensive version of the negative Utopia of "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten." The basic fiction, the law of this fantasy land, is not time but death. The mood is accordingly somewhat more sombre than the mood of "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten." Manifest is also considerably longer than the earlier story, with thirty sections to its ten.

In his revision of Manifest der Toten, which was published in 1970, Meckel makes very few basic changes. Occasionally he substitutes words which are less dramatic and closer to contemporary jargons from various areas of life. This tends to increase the lightly satiric effect of the story. "Unzählige Totengruppen" becomes "verschiedene Gruppen gestorbener"; "vernichtend" becomes "sehr unvorteilhaft" (section 3). "Zu fröstelndem Gähnen treibt" becomes "gähnen macht" (section 18). "Langsam stetig" is substituted for "schwindelerregend" (section 24). The understatement and the occasional addition of neutralizing phrases such as "wie üblich"

and "bestimmte" allows the emphasis of the story to rest on analogies to contemporary society rather than on the horrors of death in itself. Some changes are made for the sake of clarity. "Sie schwelgen in Namen und Stilverschwendungen" becomes "Sie schwelgen in Namen und Architekturen und proklamieren neue Stile" (section 10). Occasionally phrases are omitted, or added to emphasize a point. "Dafür [für die Flugblätter] wollen sie Texte verfassen" is followed by "Proteste, Vorschläge, Forderungen, die an jene gerichtet sind, die den Zustand der Toten zu verantworten haben" (section 14).

It is hard to read the first section of Manifest der Toten without thinking of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, where Meckel has lived during part of the year for most of his adult life:

Wer sich auf den Weg in den Bereich der Toten macht, dem stellt sich am Ende aller kontrollierbaren Wege ein grosser Triumpfbogen entgegen. Das ruft in der Regel angenehme Empfindungen hervor und man denkt schon an Empfänge, Ansprachen, Feierlichkeiten. Aber der Bogen hat die Aufgabe, das alles zu ersetzen, ein gefälschtes, aus unmotivierten Verpflichtungen errichtetes Aushängeschild der Totenzone. Wer sich noch die Zeit nimmt, ihn näher ins Auge zu fassen, findet ihn völlig verkommen, eine morsche Architektur mit dem Behang von welken Blumen und falschen Heldengestalten.⁵¹

But Manifest der Toten is no political allegory; rather, it is a sketch which at times seems to be a parable of contemporary society, at times a fantasy about death. There is no East and West in the sketch, but all human activity is set metaphorically in the Land of the Dead. It is a land of nothingness and silence. Boundaries are uncertain, and sudden winds may blow the in-

⁵¹ Revised version of Manifest der Toten, 1970, section 1.

habitants around. This society has many of the faults and problems of any modern mass society, socialist or capitalist. Meckel uses the language of bureaucracy: Kontaktmöglichkeiten, Geschenksendungen, Kontrollen.

The dead may not enter the section where the angels stay; the angels may not visit the archangels; the archangels may not enter the province of the highest ranking spirits. Much as modern men watch wars and assassinations on television, the dead watch violent and tragic events in the world:

Sich abwenden vor soviel Greueln? Im Gegenteil. Aufpassen, ob die Massengräber voll werden, wieviele Schiffe in Flammen aufgehen und versinken. Sie führen genaue Kontrollen. Es darf ihnen nichts entgehen von soviel abwechslungsreichen Beweisen des AUF DER WELT SEIN DÜRFENS [sic].⁵²

The dead are seized by one notion after another and attempt to carry the notions out with great enthusiasm and abandon: distribution of Flugblätter, census-taking, hunts, carousels. They are desperately eager for satisfaction of any kind, but their only real satisfaction comes from "Balance-Akte auf Perspektiven" (section 19). In the last two sketches the dead resolve to revolt and return to life, but they are blown back by the wind into their empty land.

Like Manifest der Toten, "Im Land der Umbramauten" has thirty sections, but the sections are longer and are organized into three main parts. The first part offers general information about the country of the Umbramauts; the second part describes typical and individual Umbramauts;

⁵²Ibid., section 12.

the third part describes aspects of the daily lives of the Umbramauts. The sketch is presented as a combination Reisebericht and guidebook to the land of the Umbramauts.

The land of the Umbramauts has many features in common with the land of the dead. Everything in the land shifts according to unknown laws; people are blown by sudden strong winds; and the land is empty except for a few stones, unless a mountain, forest or lake happens to wander by. Boredom is a problem here too; feelings of impotence alternate with frenzies of meaningless activity. However, boundaries can be determined, and there are mountains, stones and water. The land of the Umbramauts is not as barren as the land of the dead.

The land of the Umbramauts is also described in greater detail than were the earlier fantasy lands, partly because the sketch is longer. Many details seem to have been invented out of joy in fantastic detail and can be enjoyed freely, without reference to analogies in modern society. The shifting of the wandering mountains and lakes is compared with the shifting of objects in a loosely packed suitcase which is repeatedly turned on its side and upside down during a long trip. There are only two kinds of animals in the land of the Umbramauts: giant, menacing dogs, and sloths which sleep in the trees of the wandering woods.

The Umbramauts are more positive characters and more individualized, and their land is somewhat more livable, than the characters and lands in "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten" and Manifest der Toten. The land is

not altogether negative, but rather includes positive and negative elements. This is indicated by the first sentence of the sketch:

Das Land der Umbramauten ist zwischen dem Tagland und dem Nachtland gelegen als eine Weltmacht der Dämmerung, die sich gegen die Grenzen des Nachtlandes hin ein wenig verdunkelt und in Richtung des Taglandes um ein geringes erhellt. Diese zähe, durch nichts unterbrochene Dämmerung ist niemandes gewaltiger Schatten, in den alles Leben dortzulande gestellt ist.⁵³

The storyteller Sambai-Sambai and the quixotic Don Oleonder are positive characters, and Sambai-Sambai even enriches the lives of the other Umbramauts. The Umbramauts are neither altogether helpless and futile, nor really free. They are a reflection of real people, but in a muted grey, with distorted forms. The land of the Umbramauts is more of an out-of-focus gray image than a negative image of contemporary society, as we have encountered in "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten" and Manifest der Toten. Some details of the land are even improvements on contemporary society, but others are exaggerations of actual faults. The narrator may be warning against one-sided interpretation when he warns against attempts to make a map of the land:

ein Beobachter wäre zum dauernden Umzeichnen seiner eben gemachten Eintragungen gezwungen, denn alles im Land Befindliche bewegt sich nach privatem Gutdünken und die Gesetze dieser immerwährenden Beweglichkeit sind kaum mit Bestimmtheit auszumachen.⁵⁴

In this and in other passages, a landscape which otherwise seems to be a physical realization of the insecurity, emptiness and lack of freedom ex-

⁵³Im Land der Umbramauten, p. 54.

⁵⁴Ibid.

perienced by members of a modern mass society takes on an aspect of freedom, of defiance of rigid structure. True, the land is empty, except for a few mountains, lakes and forests which may wander by, or strong winds which may blow one in the wrong direction. But the wandering mountains are refuges for Umbramauts who fear the dogs and enjoy constant motion, and the long rains bring the Umbramauts peaceful sleep. Moreover, the boredom of the Umbramauts has made them appreciative of diversions and versatile in creating them.

Märchen and Parable

"Gwili und Punk" (Im Land der Umbramauten, 1961) is the first of the prose pieces which actually has a plot to which the usual Einfälle, or whims, can be subordinated. The next four stories, first published in magazines and anthologies in 1962, could be called Märchen or parables, like "Gwili und Punk": "Der Löwe," "Die Krähe," "Drusch, der glückliche Magier," and "Die Schatten." The first three of these five stories will be discussed in the following sections (on Märchen and parable).

Three years after these Märchen/parables, "Die Geschichte der Lädemli Lolle" appeared in an anthology called Ungewisser Tatbestand (1964). The sixteen stories in this anthology are variations by sixteen different authors on a simple plot which was suggested by the editor. Meckel characteristically uses his story to write about the importance

of telling and of remembering a story. The boy Jemel tells his story to the older Jemel, in long sentences interspersed frequently with the interjection "Ich, der Jemel heisst und Jemel war und ist so gut wie du." He pauses periodically to ask whether the older Jemel remembers, and the older Jemel at first says no, until the name of Lädemli Lolle makes him wonder if he has not heard the story before. Finally, after the boy describes the corpse of Lädemli Lolle, Jemel admits that he remembers, and he joins the boy in telling the story. At the end of the story Jemel seems to accept his own past:

Mit dem andern Auge sah er nah und klar die Jahre seiner Kindheit und das Dorf Wacholder in grün glänzenden Wiesen.. Neben ihm stand der kleine Junge, der er selbst gewesen war, und lachte ihm ins Gesicht... Jemel war ganz nüchtern. Da geschah etwas, das ihn in Erstaunen versetzte. Der Junge war plötzlich verschwunden, und Jemel verspürte an einem klumpigen Gefühl, dass der Junge in ihm hineingeschlupft war...und schliesslich eins mit ihm war...Er wusste, dass er nun vollständig war...Als er sich in Bewegung setzte und das Lokal verliess, merkte er mit heiterer Verwunderung, dass er jetzt doppelt so dick geworden war...Lädemli Lolle, seufzte er und lächelte vergnügt, als er sich fragte, ob seine Frau ihn wiedererkennen werde.⁵⁵

Two years later Meckel's "Die Geschichte der Geschichten" appeared in an anthology of children's stories by well-known writers. This story also involves a boy and an old man who tell a story together, but in "Geschichte der Geschichten" the old man has the leading role: the boy asks the old man to tell him a story.

One year after "Die Geschichte der Geschichten," Meckel published

⁵⁵ Pg. 95-96.

a radio play based on this same story. The boy and the old man become Rubim and Grossvater Fränzi, and the play is called "Der Wind, der dich weckt, der Wind im Garten." Other characters are added, as well as a narrator, who sets the scene with long lyrical descriptions of the countryside, like those in "Die Geschichte der Lädemli Lolle." The boy Rubim wakes up and hears his long-dead grandfather calling him. He thinks at first it is the wind, but finally discovers his grandfather inside a keg in the wine cellar. Grandfather explains that he came back in order to tell his stories to Rubim (another variation of the old man-boy relationship) and begins the story of the raven, the same one which was told in "Geschichte der Geschichten." When evening comes, Grandfather is satisfied to leave the story at the point where the friendly storekeeper has evolved from the raven, and to return to the kingdom of the dead. Despite his grandfather's warning Rubim follows, and is trapped in the kingdom of the dead.

This theme (of being seduced by spirits and lost forever in a mysterious land) appears in several poems, as well, and in the introduction to the graphic cycle Welttheater, where Meckel writes: "[Wer hier eintritt] wird auf Elefanten-und Vogelrücken lange Wege reisen und keinen Ausgang mehr finden."⁵⁶ The theme appears, for example, in the poem "Mischwälder":

⁵⁶ Welttheater, p. 1.

Hier trat mir die Wildnis entgegen, ich kämpfte um meine Augen, Haare und Hände, doch zwang sie mir ab das Meine und stiess mich zur Taufe ins Moor und ich hörte rufen--:

Jetzt ist er unser!⁵⁷

In "Der Magier rühmt die Finsternis," the magician speaks: "...voraus im Finstern ruft der Gepanzerte laut, ich soll ihm folgen--."⁵⁸

All three of the stories involving a boy and an old man rely on magical transformations. In "Lädemli Lolle," a man almost physically absorbs his own past, his own childhood. In "Der Wind" the transformations take place between the land of the living and the land of the dead. Grossvater Fränzi and Grossmutter Möhni become small and black (they die) after drinking from a bottle given them in the underworld, but they are allowed to return to life briefly. They re-enter the world through wine-kegs in their grandson's cellar, after waiting for the grandson to open the lid. In the story from "Die Geschichte der Geschichten," transformations keep the story moving, and indeed constitute the entire plot.

The other two stories published in 1964, "Der Zünd" and Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen, are referred to in the section of this chapter which deals with the creative process. The longer story Tullipan, (1965), like "Gwili und Punk," describes a love-hate relationship, but Tullipan's creator and friend, a writer, lives in a more concrete and contemporary environment than Punk: a village near the ocean. His house is described realistically and in some detail. In the world of this story people

⁵⁷ Nebelhörner, p. 23. ⁵⁸ Wildnisse, p. 65.

work to earn money. They have responsibilities, and correspond with friends. Tullipan stands out against this background, as a character who would have almost been more at home in the world of Gwili and Punk. The fantastic images of the story are the narrator's dreams, which begin after Tullipan has left: Tullipan flying, riding a whale, swallowing a singing bird, changing himself into a giant who will eat everything up.

Meckel's prose seems to have become more substantial in the period between the publication of his first prose piece, "Die Zeit und ihre Minuten" (1959), and the publication of the last few prose sketches (or Märchen/parables) between 1966 and 1969: "Gullivers Tod," "Mein König," "Eine unangenehme Geschichte," and "Eine Erzählung," which is included in Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan. Actually, the first substantial prose sketch by Meckel, "Gwili und Punk," followed only two years after Manifest der Toten and simultaneously with "Im Land der Umbramauten." The four stories of 1962 established Meckel as a master of the Märchen/parable, and he went on to produce the evocative mood piece Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen and his best prose sketch, "Der Zünd," by 1964.

The following sections will discuss the terms Märchen and parable and their applicability to Meckel's prose.

Meckel's fantastic worlds present experiences of persecution or of friendship or of exercising power, as well as analogies to the creative process or to modern society. It is not the details of Meckel's plots, but

rather the atmosphere of feeling communicated (puzzlement or fear, for example), and the basic action of the plot (escaping or protecting, stealing or hoarding), which recreate the experiences and make it possible to draw the analogies.

Providing a new point of view through relocation and distortion of the details of a possible situation is a traditional means of effecting social criticism, as in novels of such various tones as Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Christoph Martin Wieland's Geschichte der Abderiten, or the artist Alfred Kubin's anti-Utopian novel, Die andere Seite. In some of Meckel's prose the fantastic and grotesque seem to have this critical function. In other prose sketches the fantastic and grotesque seem rather to be a mode of thought. Meckel's vision of the world sometimes seems to be distorted for the sake of expression, not for the sake of criticism.

It is difficult to know what to call Meckel's fantasy lands, whether fantasies or negative Utopias, and it is even more difficult to classify other prose by Meckel. Meckel's short prose sketches clearly do not resemble the conventional "short story." Richard Ellmann has identified similar problems in writing about the rather similar prose of the contemporary Belgian surrealist artist-writer Henri Michaux:

Reading Michaux makes one uncomfortable. The world of his poems bears some relation to that of everyday, but it is hard to determine what. If we try to reassure ourselves by calling it fantasy, we have to ignore the scalpel which is playing about our insides. On the other hand, the term satire at first seems equally inappropriate, for the point d'appui is hidden, and no obvious appeal to law, convention,

or common sense provides a focus for an attack on human ways. And to call Michaux's world obsessive or neurotic, as we may also be tempted momentarily to do, is to disregard the pervasive wit, a wit which is too keen, and implies too much control, to confirm a psychiatric explanation. What makes his writings so difficult to categorize is not his concern with the self's wobblings and grapplings, which Proust has made familiar enough; rather it is his habit of casting psychological insights into physical instead of mental terms, or into a system of images which at first appear arbitrary. The frame of reference is subtly displaced.⁵⁹

IV. MÄRCHEN

Meckel, like other German writers (at least since the enthusiasm for Märchen as a literary genre arose during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century), can refer quite naturally to the Märchen as a legitimate part of his own literary and cultural tradition. Occasionally he uses Märchen characters and motifs in his poems and stories and pictures, or refers to the concept Märchen, as in "Der Feind," "dem kann ich nicht mit alten Märchen kommen!";⁶⁰ or in "Die Weltwanderkrücke," "in der Tasche ein Abfall von Märchen."⁶¹ More interesting is the affinity of the form of some prose by Meckel to the Märchen, both to the Kunstmärchen of Brentano, Morike and Andersen and to the Volksmärchen collected by the Grimm brothers.

In a Märchen the moment of transformation can be the vehicle of justice, the deus ex machina. Enchanted princes are returned to their

⁵⁹Henri Michaux, Selected Writings: The Space Within, pp. vii-viii.

⁶⁰Wildnisse, p. 7. ⁶¹Nebelhörner, p. 50.

rightful shapes from the shapes of frogs or bears: justice is established through transformation. Transformation can also be a just punishment, as in the story of the "Sieben Raben" (Grimm No. 25).⁶² There the father who wishes that his seven sons would turn into ravens is punished by the fulfillment of his wish and the disappearance of his sons. Denis Donoghue sees transformation of character as the motive for the fairy tales of the nineteenth century British clergyman and writer George Macdonald:

So the motive for fairy tale is the motive for metaphor, the exhilaration of change. You like metaphor, Wallace Stevens says in an exemplary poem, when you want things to change, when you particularly want them to change to you, as if a cripple were to sing. The particular change that Macdonald wanted was a change of character, as he wanted people to be different by being better. This is the flow of feeling between his sermons, metaphors, novels, and fairy tales.⁶³

Peter Härtling writes of Meckel's graphic figure Möel, from the graphic cycle Möel:

Wir lieben ihn auch, weil Möel die Hoffnung verkörpert, sich fortwährend weiter zu wandeln und also auch das zu verwandeln, was wir Welt nennen und was wir mit der Kunst zu verändern meinen.⁶⁴

⁶² Following the usage of scholars such as Stith Thompson in his edition of Antti Aarne's Types of the Folktale, I will refer to Märchen collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm by the numbers they are given in the standard editions, such as Reinhold Steig's edition of the "Ausgabe letzter Hand" (1857) of the Kinder-und Hausmärchen.

⁶³ Denis Donoghue, "The Other Country," p. 35.

⁶⁴ Peter Hartling, Palmström grüsst Anna Blume, p. 105.

In his study of basic literary forms (einfache Formen) Andre Jolles suggests that the entire plot of a Märchen is a metaphor for justice. He states that Märchen have traditionally been referred to as moral tales--in contrast with a Novelle, for example--even though Märchen contain much violence and trickery, by heroes as well as by villains. He concludes that the reason is; "dass es in diesen Erzählungen so zugeht, wie es unserem Empfinden nach in der Welt zugehen müsste."⁶⁵ It is not the Handeln (action) in a fairy tale which is just, Jolles writes, but the Geschehen, the total act, or result. Injustice is understood in terms of the Märchen as being stupid or poor; justice is marrying the prince or receiving a treasure. Moreover, for Jolles the fantastic world of the Märchen makes morality possible:

Sobald wir in die Welt des Märchens eintreten, vernichten wir die als unmoralisch empfundene Welt der Wirklichkeit... das Wunderbare ist [im Märchen] nicht wunderbar, sondern selbstverständlich... das Wunderbare ist hier die einzig mögliche Sicherheit, dass die Unmoral der Wirklichkeit aufgehört hat.⁶⁶

It is Jolles' category of the tragic Märchen or anti-Märchen which can tentatively be applied to some of Meckel's prose. In Meckel's prose the happy end is completely missing, as is to be expected of a modern Märchen. But most prose works which are called Märchen or anti-Märchen

⁶⁵ Andre Jolles, Einfache Formen, p. 239. Jolles lists the "einfache Formen" as Legende, Sage, Mythe, Rätsel, Spruch, Kasus, Memorable, Märchen, Witz.

⁶⁶ Jolles, p. 243.

in the twentieth century are really parodies or satires of Märchen. Meckel's prose, instead, presents the potentially tragic situation of the traditional Märchen, in its traditionally innocent, poignant mythic quality, without resolving the situation into a happy end. By not righting the wrong and supplying a happy end, Meckel calls attention to injustice more effectively, in order to increase the reader's passion for justice.

The tone of such prose sketches by Meckel is contemporary in that it is realistic, cool, often colloquial or robust. It has none of the archness or simulated air of antiquity, the self-conscious cleverness or condescension, the deliberate moralizing which so often spoil attempts at writing Märchen, especially those for children. But the tone is also not parodistic, bitter, or cynical like that of many modern Märchen. There is no sentimental and unjustified adoption of the apparently heile Welt of a folk tradition, no attempt to rely on the Märchen as a substitute for reality. Rather, Meckel's own temperament has sometimes brought him to the spiritual world of the Volksmärchen, with its daemonic and magical and mysterious aspects, and to the innocence and unselfconsciousness which make it possible for the conventions of the "real" world to be suspended for the duration of the Volksmärchen.

Like most Märchen, Meckel's stories often have a simple plot. The stories share with the Märchen such themes as violence, loss, disguise, transformation and guilt. Behind the analogies in Meckel's parables and Märchen are often the deadly serious tragedies of real life; for example, the

absurd tyranny of "Mein König" can call to mind actual tyrannies and abuses of power. In "Von dem Machandelboom" (Grimm No. 47) and "Der singende Knochen" (Grimm No. 28) the dead sing with a strange, sad, daemonic power of their murderers. Meckel's parables and Märchen and his poems sometimes create a similar mood.

Gisela Brackert-Rausch writes of Meckel's stories as "Grotesken," "Negativform eines Ideals,"⁶⁷ and writes, "Vom Märchen [bleibt] nur der Zerrspiegel."⁶⁸ But she too sees a difference between Meckel's stories and the usual "Grotesken":

Christoph Meckel als Dichter des Grotesken--das würde unterschlagen, dass Meckel nicht nur Callot, Goya und Bosch anruft, sondern auch lebenswürdiger Schutzheilige: Mörike und Johann Peter Hebel, Christian Andersen und Marc Chagall.⁶⁹

It is the gentleness of Meckel's tone, like that of his above-named Schutzheiligen, which makes his prose sketches more like Märchen than Grotesken. Peter Härtling writes of the figure Möel from Meckel's graphic cycle Möel: "Dass wir ihn lieben, schreiben wir seiner Fähigkeit zu, zärtlich zu sein."⁷⁰

The conversations of Gwili and Punk in the story "Gwili und Punk"⁷¹

⁶⁷ Gisela Brackert-Rausch, "Christoph Meckel," p. 227.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 225. ⁶⁹ Brackert-Rausch, op. cit., p. 226.

⁷⁰ Peter Härtling, Palmström grüsst Anna Blume, p. 105.

⁷¹ Im Land der Umbramauten, pp. 123-161.

sound rather like dialogues from a play by Samuel Beckett, such as Waiting for Godot. But the story is equally reminiscent of the Grimm Märchen "Die beiden Wanderer" (No. 107), or of Hans Christian Andersen's Märchen "Big Klaus and Little Klaus." Punk finds a suitcase. A voice from inside identifies himself as Gwili and demands a dog to eat. Gwili never shows himself, and insists on being carried along on Punk's travels and on being fed. The two argue and tease and torture each other during most of the episodes of the story. At the end Punk drowns the querulant, demanding Gwili, only to feel completely desolate. The language of "Gwili und Punk" is modern and colloquial, but the situation has a timeless ring, like that in a Märchen.

Meckel's story which is most like a Märchen is "Die Krähe."⁷² The narrator of the story is approached for help by a man who is hunting a tiger. Both search for a tiger, but the tiger has transformed itself into a bear. In the course of the story the bear changes into an elephant, the elephant into a fox and the fox into a giant crow. Finally, alone, the narrator meets the crow, which is exhausted but taciturn and resigned. It later shows itself to be clumsy and awkward. The narrator decides to protect the crow from the hunter, and the two go on their way together. The narrator warns the crow that its size may seem strange to the people in the towns they will pass through, and he urges the crow to change itself into a more appropriate form. The crow reveals to the narrator that it only

⁷² Der glückliche Magier, pp. 124-133.

has one transformation left, and that it does not want to use it up. As was to be expected, a mob attacks the two, and the narrator manages to persuade the crow to transform itself. It becomes a giant, blind black cat which can only turn around helplessly, spitting, until the mob stones it to death. As in "Die Geschichte der Geschichten," the power of transformation is not always subject to control. The crow can sense, but not control, what it is to become. Transformation can take an undesirable turn. The psychological danger of forced transformation and the impossibility of reversing a step once taken are demonstrated in "Die Krähe."

Märchen motifs of the destructive fulfillment of wishes (the narrator's wish that the crow transform herself) and of the taboo connected with the disguise of a supernatural or enchanted relative appear in "Die Krähe."⁷³ The Märchen theme of the relative in disguise, or the supernatural or enchanted relative (brother or sister, bridegroom or bride, husband or wife) seems to be paradigmatic for "Die Krähe" and for other stories by Meckel as well.⁷⁴ The lion, Tullipan and Gwili each appear suddenly in the life of the main character of the stories "Der Löwe,"⁷⁵

⁷³Section C, "Tabu," in Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature. Numbers such as Thompson D670 refer to the classification numbers of motifs in the Motif-Index.

⁷⁴Types 400-459 in Stith Thompson, ed., Antti Aarne, The Types of the Folk Tale. Numbers such as Type 313 refer to the classification numbers of tales in this book.

⁷⁵Der glückliche Magier, pp. 105-109.

Tullipan and "Gwili und Punk," like the frog in "Der Froschkönig" (Grimm No. 1) or the bear in "Schneeweisschen und Rosenrot" (Grimm No. 161). Like the crow, they all disappear or are destroyed at the end of the story. The human, the more conventional partner of the relationship, is somehow not adequate to the task of perpetuating the relationship. Punk and the narrators of the other three stories are trustful, protective, tolerant and loving--but not enough so. Their sense of loss is a common denominator of the four stories. The guilt or inadequacy of the narrators (and Punk) vary in degree.

"Die Krähe" almost seems to be a variant of another widespread Märchen type (Thompson D670-672, Types 313-314), about which the folklorist Antti Aarne wrote his monograph, Die magische Flucht. The main characteristics of this traditional Märchen theme are that a good character flees from persecution by a bad character; that the good character is often accompanied by a guide, a sister or sweetheart; and that the main character or his companion is given the magic power of transforming the two, or transforming objects which the two carry, in order to prevent their capture.

In one classical version (Thompson D672), the fleeing characters throw objects behind them which turn into obstacles to hinder their pursuers. In one of the best known Magic Flight Märchen, "Fundevogel" (Grimm No. 51), appears another version, Thompson D671. Fundevogel and his foster sister Lenchen transform themselves first into a rose bush

with a rose on it, then into a church with a chandelier in it, and last of all into a pond with a duck on it. These disguises prevent the pursuers from recognizing them, and when at last the evil stepmother herself comes, the duck drowns her in the pond. "De beiden Künigeskinner" (Grimm No. 113) and "Der liebste Roland" (Grimm No. 56) have similar plots. "Die Nelke" (Grimm No. 76) involves a single transformation. In these Märchen, transformation has a positive or helpful function, as in the Greek myths of Daphne and of Proteus, who transform themselves in order to escape. In many other Märchen, however, transformation is punishment by an evil pursuer, e. g., "Brüderchen und Schwesterchen" (Grimm No. 11), or "Jorinde und Joringel" (Grimm No. 69).

Transformation aids in escape at the beginning of the story "Die Krähe," but by the end of the story transformation is more like a punishment or a fate. "Die Krähe" is not the only story in which persecution and pursuit, disguise and transformation play an important role. For example, Gwili does not want Punk to see him, and hides in a suitcase; Gwili sheds his skin periodically. "Eine unangenehme Geschichte" is a nightmare-like story of a writer who must display all his possessions before a huge audience in an auditorium before he is awarded the literary prize he came to receive. This is the reverse of disguise and transformation: a forced revelation, as slow and painful as the transformation of the crow and as Gwili's shedding of his skin.

V. PARABLE

In spite of all similarities--not to mention literary references--to the Märchen in Meckel's works, Märchen alone is not an adequate term with which to describe all of Meckel's prose, nor is it the only term which is appropriate for such stories as "Die Krähe." The parable is an equally useful term.

In Das kleine Lexikon der Weltliteratur Hermann Pongs defines the parable as a didactic genre which expresses a truth through a fictitious analogical action or event; the truth can be perceived through analogical thought.⁷⁶

Most so-called parables of contemporary writers must, of course, be distinguished from the traditional parables, such as are found in the Bible, and distinguished from modern variants of such parables by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. These older parables are closer to the aphorism than are the later ones. The older parables often lend themselves to the analogical extraction of a philosophical or didactic point, although this point is usually not as adequate to summarizing the parable as the moral of a fable is to summarizing the fable.

Just as some aphorisms seem almost to be fragmentary parables, and some parables expanded aphorisms, some poems seem to be expanded metaphors. There is also a modern parable tradition in which the parable

⁷⁶P. 1170.

is closer to an expanded metaphor or a poem in prose than an aphorism. Pongs, for example, calls Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa ("Die Verwandlung") "ausgeführtes Schreck-Traumbild (aus einer Metapher erwachsen)".⁷⁷ This parable tradition begins with some prose poems by Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and continues with some prose by Robert Walser, Franz Kafka, Henri Michaux, Reinhard Lettau, Ilse Aichinger and Günter Eich, among others. These parables are much less directly and less obviously philosophical or didactic. For such writers, the parable is a mode of vision. Its primary connection with the parables of Christ in the New Testament is its esoteric quality, which it shares with much modern poetry.

Parables like those in the New Testament often seem to have an esoteric meaning, for an elite, and an exoteric meaning which is easily understood and vividly memorable for the many. The phrase "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:9) seems to refer to an esoteric meaning. Whereas parables like those of Christ have become part of the great popular Christian tradition, the esoteric possibilities of the parable seem to have been developed more extensively by contemporary writers, after Kafka.

In his book The Forgotten Language, Erich Fromm has attempted to explain the metaphoric use of action and plot, as in a parable, by means of a distinction between latent story ("meaning") and manifest story ("plot"). In the chapter "The Nature of Symbolic Language," he mentions the Biblical

⁷⁷ loc. cit.

parable of Jonah and the whale as an expression of Jonah's inner processes, his relationship with God. Still referring to Jonah, he writes:

The story is told as if these events had actually happened. . . . However, it is written in symbolic language and all the realistic events described are symbols for the inner experiences of the hero. . . . In the manifest story events happen in space and time. . . . One thing happens after the other, and although some events are obviously unrealistic, the story has its own logical consistency in terms of time and space. . . . [But Jonah's] various actions following one after the other express the same mood in him; . . . sequence in time is expressive of growing intensity of the same feeling. . . . In the manifest story the logical connection is one of causality of external events. . . . But in the latent story. . . the various events are related to each other by their association with the same inner experience. What appears to be a causal sequence of external events stands for a connection of experiences linked with each other by their association in terms of inner events. This is as logical as the manifest story--but it is a logic of a different kind.⁷⁸

Fromm concludes the book with a discussion of the symbolic language of Kafka's Der Prozess:

An accused man is "arrested" by the police, and an organism is "arrested" in its normal development. The manifest story uses "arrested" in the former sense. Its symbolic meaning, however, is to be understood in the latter. K. has an awareness that he is arrested and blocked in his own development. . . . What is so confusing in the novel is the fact that it is never said that the moral law represented by the priest, and the law represented by the court are different. On the contrary, in the manifest story the priest, being the prison chaplain, is part of the court system. But this confusion in the story symbolizes the confusion in his own heart. . . just because he is not able to distinguish between them, he remains caught in the battle with the authoritarian conscience and cannot understand himself.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 250-262.

Fromm's distinction between latent and manifest story is even more useful when applied to such esoteric modern poetic parables than when applied to the parables of the Bible.

Wayne Shumaker argues that metaphor and plot in myths and songs and stories of primitive peoples are normally what he calls process images, which are projections of dynamic mental states. He writes:

Process images are, in fact, an aboriginal substitute for conceptualization. The primitive mentality, when confronted by a puzzling phenomenon, seeks relief not in the discovery of a physical or biological principle but in the fabrication of an adequate explanatory plot. . . the structure of a desired process is imitated by actions, as, in verbal metaphor, the sensory or conceptual image of one thing is linguistically substituted for that of another to which, when considered from a particular standpoint, it is sensed to be structurally similar.⁸⁰

...the sorting out of a group of sensory qualities has led to their alignment in a sequential order.⁸¹

Like Fromm's distinction between the latent and the manifest story, Shumaker's definition of the process image is useful when applied to Märchen or parables and to modern variants like those of Meckel. L. Börsig even sees analogies in Meckel's graphic art to the parable:

Wenn es auch richtig ist, dass Christoph Meckel es nicht auf die Parabel im ländlichen Sinne abgesehen hat, so gibt es in seinem graphischen Werk, dessen Stil so abseits von Vergleichbarem angesiedelt ist, doch Erhellungen durch die selbst erfundene Fabel, die manchmal nur aus dem Gesicht des Fabeltieres besteht.⁸²

⁸⁰ Wayne Shumaker, Literature and the Irrational, p. 90.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 116.

⁸² L. Börsig, "Märchen und Magie."

Karl Riha calls some of Meckel's poems "hinterhältige, manchmal absurde Parabeln."⁸³ Dietrich Segebrecht refers to Meckel's "parabolische Märchen-Realität."⁸⁴

One point of contact between the Märchen and the parable, which they have in common with much of Meckel's prose, is the translation of situations and states of mind and perceptions into metaphoric plots, into process images. Meckel's story "Der Löwe," for example, expresses a possible human relationship at the same time that it tells a simple story and presents a procession of poetic figures, animals which may represent human types, modes of existence, or projected moods and aspects of the mind:

Im Spätsommer sah ich, als der Mittag heiss über die Ebene zitterte, den ver mummten Reiter flussabwärts kommen nahe meinem Haus. An eine Schnur gebunden folgte ihm der Löwe, der einmal in meinem Haus gewesen war. Auf dem Rücken des Löwen sass die ungeheure rote Eule, die sehr viel grösser als der Löwe war. Sie hielt den schwarzen Fisch im Schnabel. Der Löwe schien schwer an der Eule zu tragen. Er setzte die Tatzen langsam und ging mit hängendem Kopf.⁸⁵

Such prose sketches can be called Märchen, or parable, or perhaps

Märchen/parable or parabolic Märchen.

⁸³Karl Riha, "Lyrik unter der Linie," pp. 337-341.

⁸⁴Dietrich Segebrecht, "Ein Fall von Einfällen."

⁸⁵Der glückliche Magier, pp. 108-109. Here, incidentally, are two motifs from other works by Meckel: the giant bird, much larger than its companions ("Die Krähe"), and the fish which is taken along on a land journey (Möel).

CHAPTER IV

POETRY

In this section I will discuss some early poems by Meckel, go on to trace four distinct themes throughout the body of Meckel's verse, point out the importance of playful allusion in Meckel's poems, and close by indicating the wide variety of Meckel's styles and verse forms. The purpose of this chapter is to present some of the themes and techniques which are most distinctive and characteristic of Meckel's poems as opposed to the poems of other contemporary writers.

I. FIRST POEMS

Meckel first published poems at the age of 21, in an anthology called Das lyrische Gedicht (1955), edited by its publisher Wilhelm Unverhau. In his introduction Unverhau offers "Faustregeln...für den Hausgebrauch" by young lyric poets, in which Zauber and magisch are important terms and Japanese haiku is mentioned as a possible model, along with poems by Trakl, Rilke, Hofmannsthal, and George. Some themes from these three earliest poems, "Novembertage," "Auf den

Boulevards," and "Variation über eine Landschaft," recur in many of Meckel's later poems: night, the big city, the lack of a passport to satisfy the authorities, and transformation. Landscapes are described, in images of emptiness and grayness, as being empty of meaning. These first poems are written in rhythmic but laconic free verse.

In 1956 Unverhau published Meckel's first collection of poems, Tarnkappe. The title poem introduces some of Meckel's favorite themes: disguise and transformation, tasks set for the speaker ("das lyrische Ich"), and persecution and pursuit of the speaker by the fantastic images of the speaker's unconscious mind:

Da ich mich in den Nächten verlor,
 Samt meinem kalten Tod, meiner unsteten Spur,
 Meutert mein riesiger Schatten, er kann mich nicht finden,
 Raunt mein lautloser Schatten, er möchte mich küssen,
 Murmelt mein schwarzer Schatten, er will mich verdunkeln,
 Ich soll zu ihm unter die Tarnkappe kommen.

Doch geborgen unter dem Schirm verfinsterter Monde,
 Gehe ich auf Abenteuer und habe viel zu tun,
 Ich muss mit meinem Namen leben lernen
 Und mit meinem Alter hausieren gehn,
 Ich muss für mein leeres Zimmer Blumen stehlen,
 Denn mein Schutzengel kommt zu mir zum Abendessen.⁸⁶

I will use "Tarnkappe" as a point of reference for some of my discussions of Meckel's themes and imagery because it is in many ways a typical poem by Meckel, and at the same time particularly significant as the title poem of Meckel's first book.

⁸⁶Tarnkappe, p. 5.

As in many later poems, some of the imagery of "Tarnkappe" constitutes a reverse or negative view of the ordinary world. Normal relationships of light and dark, black and white are reversed: "geborgen unter dem Schirm verfinsterter Monde." In Nebelhörner, three years later, several poems present darkness as ambiguously or paradoxically protective, as in "Tarnkappe." Three of these poems associate chameleons (and thereby disguise and transformation) with protection by darkness.⁸⁷ In Meckel's most recent poem cycle, Jasnandos Nachtlied, light and dark are still in a paradoxically close relationship:

...meine Wohnung
die tief und dunkel ruht auf Trümmern des Lichts.⁸⁸

Coldness is overcome with coldness (almost as in "Tarnkappe," where the dark shadow is foiled by dark moons, "verfinsterte Monde"):

denn da ist nichts, was Leben möglich macht; ich mach mir
auf diese Kälte einen Vers aus Frost...⁸⁹

In "Tarnkappe" a relationship is released from its static and predictable form. A shadow complains when it cannot find its owner. Like the wandering mountains and forests of "Im Land der Umbramauten," the personified shadow, loose at night, is part of a disjointed world, and the unexpected framework calls attention to the story.

Darkness and gloom is not the single dominant mood of the poem "Tarnkappe," however, as it was in Meckel's earliest poems. "Auf den Boulevards der Mitternacht," begins the poem by that name, in which

⁸⁷ Nebelhörner, p. 23, "Mischwälder"; pp. 38-39, "In diesen Tagen"; p. 46, "In kommender Zeit."

⁸⁸ Poem 4.

⁸⁹ Poem 8.

everything is silent and empty except for the presence of the speaker.

Here, as in "Tarnkappe," Meckel plays with the image of a shadow disconnected from its owner:

selbst der Schatten des Polizisten
blieb zwischen den Bogenlampen liegen.

Like "Tarnkappe," this poem thrives on paradox:

und der hallende Takt meiner Schritte
wird von den echolosen Asphalten nicht anerkannt.⁹⁰

In "Variation über eine Landschaft" the only connection between the speaker, the heavens and the earth is emptiness:

Die Leere nur, die den Himmel mit wesenlosem Licht,
die Erde mit grosser Verlassenheit
und mich mit schauernder Kälte erfüllt.⁹¹

The "Novembertage" in the poem of the same name are described as "Dem Sterben entsprechend verdunkelnd," and "grundlos verdunkelt und ohne Inhalt."⁹²

Most poems of the book Tarnkappe and of the next book, Hotel für Schlafwandler, take their images from Märchen-like or mythic concepts of the universe rather than from the desolate modern landscapes of the earlier poems, with their express trains and gas stations and subway stops. In Tarnkappe the poem "Schlaflos" mentions a legendary sandman, as well as Hell, and the mending of "des Bösen zertanzte Sandalen."⁹³ There is also a poem about a mythical "Dasein der Sterne":

⁹⁰P. 9. ⁹¹P. 8. ⁹²P. 7. ⁹³P. 10.

...seltsamer noch als das erblindeter Zauberer,
Verlorener Kuckuckseier oder amputierter Puppen.⁹⁴

"Requiem" is about an old and thankless God:

Ochsgesicht mit den grossen Hagelkornaugen,
Einsam und träge.⁹⁵

In the earlier poems "Variation über eine Landschaft" and "Novembertage," on the other hand, it is precisely the lack of analogies and of myth which is proclaimed. In the poem "Auf den Boulevards" Meckel wrote:

ich entspreche nicht der Vorstellung,
die sich die Telefonzelle von mir machte.

and

Ich könnte mich als Zigarettenkuppe verwandelt denken,
um von den Gaslaternen geduldet zu werden.

In contrast with these everyday personifications and images, the images and metaphors of the poems in Tarnkappe tend to demonize the world.

"Tarnkappe" begins:

Da ich mich in den Nächten verlor,
Samt meinem kalten Tod, meiner unsteten Spur.

The poem "Tod" in Tarnkappe may give a clue to this experience. It describes a nightmare of being chased by powers of blackness which are at the same time almost a part of oneself:

Von wilder Liebe zu schwarzen Kastanien krank,
Am Rande der Dunkelkammern des Todes
Hab ich gelebt und weiss, wenn die Nachtpassate kommen,
Werde ich unter Kastanienbäumen sterben.

⁹⁴P. 11.

⁹⁵Pp. 8-9.

Schwarze Kastanien kollern in meine H¹ande,
 Schwarze Kastanien rumpeln in jagenden St¹össen
 Auf die heisse Schaale meiner Stirn.

Schwarze Kastanien poltern als donnernde Glocken
 Über meinen hohlen, stürzenden Sch¹ädel.⁹⁶

In "Tod" the speaker gives in to the blackness, in "Tarnkappe" he seems to be trying to fight being "verdunkelt" by his shadow by escaping "unter dem Schirm verfinsterter Monde." But the images and metaphors of darkness, invisibility, disguise and transformation in "Tarnkappe" are related to each other in rather complex ways. It is the darkness of the "night" which separates the speaker and his shadow, and yet both the "nights" and the shadow seem to be negative and threatening. It is verfinsterte Monde which protect the speaker from his shadow.

II. THEMES

In what follows I shall discuss four distinct recurrent themes in Meckel's poems: first, persecution and pursuit, disguise and transformation; second, tasks set for the speaker ("das lyrische Ich"); third, the raven; and fourth, the flood. These themes recur frequently from the earliest to the latest poem, in different poetic constellations. Together they constitute a representative sample of Meckel's themes and their variations.

⁹⁶The first verse of "Tarnkappe" has a tragic and daemonic mood, the second an airy mood, both of which are found in Meckel's poems, prose and graphic art from his first work to his latest. However, these two moods are usually separate, not combined in the same work.

Persecution and Pursuit, Disguise and Transformation

In "An wen auch immer ich mich wende" (Nebelhörner, 1959) the narrator is the pursuer, not the pursued as in "Tarnkappe." Series of phrases and words from various areas of life (from everyday life and from tales of adventure, especially), most of them clichés, are crowded together into a hurried, breathless monologue. Repetition of such phrases as "es spielt keine Rolle!" and repetition with variation of such phrases as "Wenn mich der Stiefel drückt, der goldene Stiefel, der schwarze Stiefel," contribute to a sense of urgency like that created by the repetition in "Tarnkappe":

Meutert mein riesiger Schatten, ...
Raunt mein lautloser Schatten, ...
Murmelt mein schwarzer Schatten, ...

And yet the narrator feels persecuted even as he is pursuing:

was wird dann aus dir, mein Kriegsherr, ohne
meinen Ruin, von dem du dich nährst,⁹⁷

Quite a few poems by Meckel have themes of persecution, especially in the book of poems Wildnisse (1962). The last verse of "Ihr sucht ihn" illustrates the speaker's escape from persecution:

Nahe euch
geht er und pfeift er
geht er
pfeift er
den ihr gesucht habt, geht er und pfeift er.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Nebelhörner, p. 66.

⁹⁸ Wildnisse, p. 9.

In "Chimärenjagd" the narrator is questioned about a chimera he claims to have seen, and is told:

...Du sollst es jagen
ward mir geheissen, über Nacht sollst du
das Tier gefesselt auf die Schwelle legen!

Wo soll ich jagen, schrie ich, sagt mir, wo
sitzt dem das Herz, und wo den Anfang machen--⁹⁹.

In several other poems as well, the narrator himself is the persecutor. The narrator of "Die Beute" orders his hunters to bring him all sorts of booty, dead or living, such as flying fish, angels, giants in king's clothes. Later, in despair, he orders their corpses taken back to the forest.¹⁰⁰ The narrator in "Die grosse Abdeckerèi" has the opposite experience. He has killed or injured the animals, but "Nachts heult meine Beute und lacht!"¹⁰¹ Like the shadow in "Tarnkappe," the cuckoo of another poem, "Abdeckerei," may be a part of the speaker's self projected onto a non-human object. The guilt and fear associated with the cuckoo and the shadow suggest that they are something more than such creatures of the speaker's fantasy as those strange beasts who plague Herr Ucht in the prose sketch by that name. They may be part of the speaker's creative instinct.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 27.

Abdeckerei

Ich hab meinen Kuckuck
 zur Abdeckerei gebracht. Er singt
 nicht mehr, sagte ich denen,
 stecht ihm das Herz. Mein
 alter Kuckuck singt nicht
 mehr, würgt ihm die Kehle.
 Auf der Strasse ins Jenseits
 der Pferde und Hunde, wo,
 laufend auf tonlosen
 Hufen, Karrengäule
 schreien um Hafer, wo
 Hunde heulen nach ihren
 Herren, hüpf auch mein
 Kuckuck und singt ohne
 Groll meinen Namen. --
 Stecht meinem Kuckuck
 das Herz und würgt
 ihm die Kehle, stecht
 ihm das Herz, mein
 Kuckuck singt nicht
 mehr, sagte ich denen
 und ging meiner Wege pfeifend. 102

The speaker in "Die Bären" bought woods for the sake of the bears who lived in them, but when he tried to get rid of the woods, the bears followed them, and when he hunted the bears for their fur, the woods withered.

Ich hatte Wälder
 ich hatte Bären
 ich hatte weder Bären noch Wälder. 103

In each of these poems the speaker feels a desperate, futile regret for his own unexpected inadequacy or destructiveness, as do narrators of the stories Tullipan, "Die Krähe" and "Der Löwe," as well as Punk of "Gwili und Punk,"

102 Gedichtbilderbuch.

103 Wildnisse, p. 16.

der dort im Dunkeln hat was mitbekommen
und sagt: "Den haltet strenger noch im Auge,
dem lasst nichts durchgehn, der ist unser Mann! "

Der Grosse hat seine Leute zur Rechten zur Linken
er kennt meine Kleider alle und Pfeifentöne
und findet meine Spuren im Wasser auch
dem kann ich nicht mit alten Märchen kommen,
Und um ihn einst den Blick zu trüben, braucht es
noch manche Kenntnis über Tuch und Schminke.¹⁰⁵

Here, as in the earlier poem "Tarnkappe," darkness offers protection from persecution, as do hiding and transformation.

Mobility does not effect any genuine transformation in Meckel's story "Im Land der Umbramauten." True, the landscape shifts continually, so that nothing remains in the same place. Even woods and mountains wander about. The buildings in the imaginary city Baan are lifted by cranes whenever a flood or avalanche seems likely, and the city is changed each time, for the buildings are never set down in exactly the same place. However, the shifting brings no beneficial change to the land of the Umbramauts. It contributes to the general insecurity and offers only little relief from the overwhelming boredom which the people must fight. The mobility in "Im Land der Umbramauten" seems rather to be part of a free fantasy.

Just as the curving and slanting lines of Meckel's drawings often seem to realize actions, or the blowing of the wind, the fantastic worlds of Meckel's poems and prose are often characterized by mobility and transformation. The critic L. Börsig says:

¹⁰⁵Wildnisse, p. 7.

Wie in Meckels Sprache gibt es auch in seiner Graphik keine unbelebten oder unbewegten Dinge. Alles ist unterwegs, alles ist denkbar in Verwandlungen,.... ¹⁰⁶

Christopher Middleton writes, referring to Meckel's graphic art:

boxers, drinkers and dancers [are] caught in such attitudes that the movement rushes out of them... There are poems by the early Expressionist poet Georg Heym which have a related vision of free objects and figures whirling in the grip of a controlling enchantment, sudden muscular events which galvanize the body of the vision. ¹⁰⁷

One of Meckel's poems about persecution is "Ode an mächtige Mannschaften." ¹⁰⁸ It is an invitation to troops to enter and search the speaker's house, and a warning that they will not find what they are looking for. In an interpretation of this poem for Hilde Domin's anthology Doppelinterpretationen, Meckel writes that the speaker "scheint guten Umgang mit [dem Verborgenen] zu haben, ... scheint es auch an seiner Stelle belassen zu wollen." He refers to "Umgang mit dem Verborgenen" as "vielleicht das eigentliche Motiv dieser Verse." And he writes:

Da das Gedicht, wie ich glaube, einfach ist und keineswegs besonders verschlüsselt noch eingepanzert in heraldische, dunkle, versteckspielende Formen (es sei denn, man erwarte an dieser Stelle, dass ich dem Verborgenen einen Namen gebe, was ich wohl tun würde, wenn ich ein Halunke von Verfasser und einer vom literarisch-akademischen Geheimdienst wäre). ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶L. Börsig, "Märchen und Magie."

¹⁰⁷Christopher Middleton, "A New Visual and Poetic Fantasy."

¹⁰⁸Nebelhörner, p. 45.

¹⁰⁹P. 262. Meckel's comments in print on his own work are generally either spoofs or sarcastic slaps at traditional literary criticism and scholarship. The introductions to Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan and to Bilderbotschaften are more serious, however.



Cover drawing from Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen

This sounds very much like a reference to Gustav René Hocke's interpretation of mannerism in literature. In Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers Christopher Magalan, Meckel seems to be parodying Hocke's book on mannerism in art. His Professor Kuchenfuchs writes:

Anders also als bei Rembrandt oder Cézanne zeigt seine selbstbildnerische Katharsis Züge tragiküberwindender Aufhellung. Er verzichtet freiwillig weitgehend auf Verschlüsselung und erreicht damit ein hohes Mass an authentischer Variabilität.¹¹⁰

It is as if Meckel's parody had the secondary purpose of taking the force away from some critical concepts which might be applied to his own work.

In his surveys of selected periods in European art and literature, Hocke points out stylistic and thematic similarities in various works of art which can be described as "mannerist." He also suggests psychological bases for the deformations, masks, transformations and word-games. According to Hocke, "Verbergung" or "Verborgeneheit" or "das Verborgene" is a basic concern of mannerism. He contrasts the classical approach to "das Verborgene" to the mannerist approach:

Die Klassik will das "Verborgene" des Mysteriums in der "verständlichen," nur "sublimierten" Natur zur Darstellung, der Manierismus will das "Verborgene" in einer "emblematischen," in der "Idee" meist "deformierten" Natur zur Wirkung bringen.¹¹¹

Meckel can be classified as a mannerist by Hocke's standards. Hocke

¹¹⁰Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers, p. 62.

¹¹¹Gustav René Hocke, Die Welt als Labyrinth, p. 226.

sees the following basic tendencies in literary mannerism:

affektvolle Übersteigerung oder kälteste Reduzierung des Ausdrucks, Verbergung und Überdeutlichkeit, Verrätselung und Evokation, Chiffrierung und ärgerniserregende "Offenbarung". . . . Die künstlichen, gesuchten, verblühten, übersteigerten oder untertriebenen Ausdrucksformen hängen mit einem problematischen Verhältnis zum eignen Ich, zur Gesellschaft und zu philosophischen und religiösen Überlieferungen der konventionell denkenden "Bien-Pensants" zusammen.¹¹²

In Die Welt als Labyrinth, about mannerism in art, Hocke writes:

In protestantischen Ländern, wo die befreiende Bedeutung der Ohrenbeichte unterschätzt wird, kann die "Hieroglyphe" allzu leicht zu einer ganz privaten Emblematik oder zu einer neuen magisch-emblematischen Naturlyrik werden.¹¹³

Man könnte von einer komplizierten manieristischen "Lüsterheit" für "Tiefe," für das "Unfassbare" sprechen, also von einer echten vitalen Parallelität von Triebstruktur und Ausdruckszwang. Man braucht Hemmungen, Verhüllungen, Verstecke, Masken, Komplikationen. Daher muss alles "schwer" werden, "dunkel," "verhüllt" sein, und "niemand darf es wissen." Solche "Komplikationen" müssen also zu Übersteigerungen veranlassen, zu Überspitzungen, auch in der Ruhmbegierde, in der Selbstüberschätzung, in der "versteckten" Masslosigkeit jeder Art. . . . Jedoch: die Tugend des manieristischen Menschentypus wäre nach Herbert Read gerade seine Labilität, seine Unbestimmbarkeit, seine Unfasslichkeit, sein ständiges Spiel mit dem "Verborgenen" in sich und in den Dingen.¹¹⁴

Meckel writes in his introduction to the poems of a fictitious

Sonderling rather like Tullipan, Thomas Balkan: "Thomas Balkan ist weder literarisches Pseudonym noch künstlerische oder private Mystifikation."¹¹⁵

¹¹²Gustav Rene Hocke, Manierismus in der Literatur, p. 301.

¹¹³Die Welt als Labyrinth, p. 200.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 208-209. ¹¹⁵Balladen des Thomas Balkan, p. 10.

Poems submitted to publishers by Meckel under the name Thomas Balkan, with a fictitious address, were actually rejected by about twenty prominent German publishers and literary magazines. Meckel wrote an introduction in response to this, for the edition of the ballads which was later accepted by a new, smaller publishing house.

In spite of his explicit denial of any attempt at Mystifikation, Meckel's treatment of the figure Balkan could be called typical mannerist treatment. Meckel may have been referring to Hocke's use of the word Mystifikation for an intellectual game involving transformations or disguises, specifically for a portrait by the mannerist artist Archimboldi of his patron as Vertumnus, god of disguises.¹¹⁶ In Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers Meckel had already mocked the possibility of tracing his own art back to Archimboldi. Professor Kuchenfuchs writes:

Magalans Beeinflussung stammt wahrscheinlichenteils von Arcimboldi und Leonardo. Mit Arcimboldi verbindet ihn die Löslichkeit des Natur- und Menschenbildes von allzu enger Treue, mit Leonardo die seismografische und vor allem seismodeskriptive Skizzierung erfindungsvoll den menschlichen Umkreis verlassender Halluzinationsaufschwünge und Kreationsschübe.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Die Welt als Labyrinth, pp. 146-147.

¹¹⁷ Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers, p. 61. Note: the word seismografisch is presumably a mocking reference to a cliché of German literary criticism of the 1950's. In the afterword to his anthology Aussichten, p. 327, Peter Hamm says that after Walter Höllerer popularized the term in his anthology Transit (1952), "Das Wörtchen seismographisch wurde zum fatalen Stichwort, zur Parole einer ganzen Generation, die darauf schwor, Dichten hiesse, das Grauen bloss zu registrieren..." Other phrases in Feuerwerker may also be parodies of specific clichés of criticism.

Thomas Balkan, writes Meckel, began as:

ein Versuch, aus der Haut und in einen neuen Namen zu
fahren, ¹¹⁸über den eigenen Schatten zu springen, Grenzen
aller Art ¹¹⁸über den Haufen zu rennen.

Moreover:

Er wird seine Unabhängigkeit ohne jede Einschränkung und
unter jeder Bedingung verteidigen, durchsetzen.
... Unverletzbarkeit ist eines der Wörter, mit denen er
umgeht. ¹¹⁹

The interwoven themes of persecution and pursuit (and flight),
disguise and mobility and transformation recur throughout Meckel's work,
as we have seen, and furnish the material for much of his most powerful
and moving writing.

Tasks

The last quatrain of the early poem "Tarnkappe" is the first of
many passages in which Meckel's persona lists a series of tasks which
he must perform or was once told to perform.

We find a passage similar to the last quatrain of "Tarnkappe" in
the collection of poems which follows Tarnkappe, Hotel für Schlafwandler
(1958). The poem is called "Erinnerung":

Einst war in Auftrag mir gegeben
Die Zählung der gestrandeten Wale und blinden
Passagiere und aller flüchtigen
Wandlungen des Chamäleons,

¹¹⁸ Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

Prospekte fremder Fata Morganen
 Und das Fischregister des Schwarzen Meers.

Und die Nacht verging im Singen des Schnees mir
 Und der Tag schlafwandelnd immer,
 Suchend nach jenen Eisenbahnen
 Die in Tunnels verlorengingen. 120

Here, two years later, the mood is more resigned. The narrator is no longer going on adventures, no longer stealing flowers, but he is more passive, he is sleepwalking and counting whales.

The next year, in Nebelhörner, the narrator of "Meine Arbeit" indicates a grim but still undaunted approach to impossible tasks:

Meine Arbeit besteht darin,
 Ratten und Flöhe in Schnee zu verwandeln,
 grosse Eisberge zu zerschmelzen
 und den Tau zu haltbaren Häusern zu schmieden. 121

This poem can be read as a retrospective comment on "Tarnkappe."

"Adventure" has been replaced by a set of impossible tasks. Instead of the guardian angel coming for dinner there is a raven:

der meine Arbeit mit den Schlägen
 seiner kalten Seufzerschwinge belohnt
 und meine Hoffnung blendet mit wildem Krächzen.

The speaker is now "der Mitmensch [seines] Schattens." Normal relationships of light and dark, black and white are not reversed; rather, a twilight state between light and dark is normal:

Weder in Licht noch Finsternis stehend,
 bleibt mir die Dämmerung für mein seltnes Geschäft,
 bleiben vier Wände auf Erden und ein Himmel
 karger Wochenendsterne im Dunkeln.

The "Ballade von eines Mannes Reichtum und Armut" begins by describing a land of bright misery and black joy, a world turned completely upside-down. As if this poem were a refutation of "Tarnkappe," in which the speaker must learn to live with his own name, the speaker in the ballad says:

mein Name ist zu Lumpen zerfallen
und kleidet sich langsam von mir aus,
der Mond ist eine verbrannte Papierlaterne,¹²²
selbst meine Puppen heissen Aschenbrödel.

The speaker is seeking many paradoxical things:

Sonnenuhren, die nach dem Monde laufen,
und... eine Mitternachtssonne
allen Wintern in Mondfinsternis. ¹²³
.....
eine Pfütze für meinen Ozeanriesen
und einen Ozean für mein Schiff aus grauem Papier. ¹²⁴

In Bei Lebzeiten zu singen (1967) another such poem appears;

"Verschiedene Tätigkeiten":

Verschiedene Tätigkeiten übte ich aus
in letzter Zeit.
So ritt ich Ochs und Nashorn durch die Städte
stand Kopf vor Königen
zerschlug Paläste
.....
So sang ich auch die Verse Shakespeares
in den Häfen
schief mit Undinen
sass im Bauch der Wale
verreisend von Ostende in die Tropen--
verschiedene Tätigkeiten übte ich aus
in letzter Zeit
und mancherlei zu tun
hab ich mir vorbehalten. ¹²⁵

¹²²P. 52. ¹²³Ibid. ¹²⁴P. 53. ¹²⁵P. 13.

The stilted bureaucratic language of the first line of the poem gives a particularly ironic cast to the list of impossible activities to which it refers.

These lists of tasks seem to be metaphors for the difficult tasks and the difficult position of the creative artist. The artist is ironically considered as Artist (German for vaudeville or circus performer), or jongleur, Kunst as Kunststück. The motif is prominent enough to contribute additional support to the definition of Meckel as a mannerist, for Hocke (above, pp. 71-72) describes mannerists as seeking complications and exaggeration of difficulties.

The Raven

In German tradition ravens are usually negative characters. Rabe is a colloquial term for a bad or bad-mannered person, Rabenstein for gallows, Rabenaas for gallows bird or carrion, Rabeneltern for unnatural, cruel parents (because ravens sometimes throw their babies out of the nest). There is the saying "Er stiehlt wie ein Rabe." In the Grimm Märchen ravens appear both as helpful and as harmful birds, and men are sometimes transformed into ravens. In the folk traditions of the world ravens are usually birds of ill omen, associated with death and with witches and devils. A raven was the divine culture hero and trickster god of the North Pacific Coast Indians, and a raven was associated with the Norse god Odin. The demonic raven in Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Raven" is

apparently one model for some of Meckel's crows (which of course belong to the same genus), as well as for some of Meckel's ravens.

In Meckel's story "Geschichte der Geschichten" a story is told about the transformations of a raven:

ein grosser, dicker, schwarzer Rabe, ... ein Wüstenrabe,
ein hungriger Steppenrabe mit verstaubten Flügeln
und harten, kleinen, klugen Schlüsselloch-Augen. Ein
weitgereister, moderner, vom Rabenherrgott gut und
gross und dauerhaft erschaffener Rabe. Aber auch
räuberisch... ein grosser Bruder von einem Raben, ein
Königsrabe... ein grosser Magier von einem Raben! ¹²⁶

The raven was also beautiful, according to the old man. In "Der Wind, der dich weckt," the radio play which developed from "Die Geschichte der Geschichten," the raven appears as a character and interjects rude comments occasionally throughout the play. In the poem "Meine Arbeit" (Nebelhörner), the raven is a cruel companion, the reverse of a guardian angel. But in "Gwili und Punk," a raven is a friendly and independent companion.

In this section I will refer to six raven poems which are reproduced in the appendix. The earliest two are both called "Der Rabe," from Hotel für Schlafwandler (1958). In the first, the raven is dependent on the speaker, who must set the raven free. In the two poems from Wildnisse (1962), "Der Vogel" and "Rabe Schnabelstumm," the bird himself insists on maintaining his freedom.

¹²⁶ Gertraud Middelhaue, ed., Dichter erzählen Kindern, pp. 8-9.

The basic metaphor of the first "Der Rabe" poem is a desert-ocean which mixes images of sand and waves rather like some poems in Paul Celan's Sprachgitter (1959); the basic metaphor of the second is a black-white, raven-snow contrast. The second poem expresses loss of beauty and freedom in terms of becoming black and being surrounded by darkness. Once the raven was shimmering white, surrounded by snowflakes, but he fell to the black, swampy waters of the earth and was dyed black by cuttlefish. It is important to keep in mind here the German phrase "ein weisser Rabe" (an exception, something most unusual). Meckel often enjoys such plays on words.

The black-white contrast is more elaborately worked out in "Vom schwarzen Schnee" (Wildnisse), where the paradoxes seem endless. Snow can be either black or white in this poem. The black raven and other "Getiere schwarzen Pelzes" must follow the Vogelvater to weisse Weide, weisser Schnee, and the raven's white brother will look for food in the black snow.

Moreover, all black things must now be clothed in white so they will be visible in the dark. If white snow turns black, then black ravens must look for whiteness somewhere else. The poem calls for reversal of this disturbed order, of the "verkehrte Welt": "einst war uns die weisse Wolke sicher." Meckel transfers conventional emotions to objects of fantasy by negativizing (reversing) the normal color value of the objects (or, in some of his prose, by presenting these objects out of focus).

In "Gott Grizzly" (Wildnisse) the raven is merely a follower of the great God, but the darkness-light contrasts are as complicated and significant here as in "Vom schwarzen Schnee." The desert-ocean imagery ("sein Sand fror zu stein") also appears here, as in the first "Der Rabe" poem. In this poem, as in "Vom schwarzen Schnee," it is hard to tell whether and why a state of blackness or of whiteness is being proclaimed. Black and white are not systematically reversed, and it is sometimes unclear which, if either, is positive. Especially in "Gott Grizzly," the colors gray, dun and silver are also significant. Thus the contrast is apparently not designed to create a neatly inverted world. Certainly it is a demonized world which appears in these poems, and a Flood or apocalypse often seems imminent.

Meckel's precursors Oskar Loerke and Georg Heym created mythic and Märchen-like situations much as Meckel does in these six raven poems. Like Loerke and Heym and like his contemporary Paul Celan, Meckel often allows a fragment of a story to evolve in his poem from an uprooted metaphor, like that of snow turning black, or of water being like sand, as in Celan's poem "Oben, Geräuschlos" (Sprachgitter, 1959). The relationships of images and figures in the story-fragment are analogous to relationships in situations or moods of real life, so the poem seems at once familiar and mysterious. It is the process, or the main story-line itself, not its individual elements, but their relationship, which acts as metaphor, as in Meckel's parables and Märchen. The individual elements are developed in a controlled fantasy.

The unnatural use of colors is a common technique of alienation in poetry, especially in modern poetry since Baudelaire. It is an easy way of making everyday objects mysterious and focusing on them by means of shock or surprise.¹²⁷ In his book on modern poetry Hugo Friedrich points out other such techniques: for example, pluralizing things which exist only in the singular, or summing up things with the word "alle" (Friedrich gives the example "alle Schneen"). Such techniques focus on the objects named, but in an unreal light.¹²⁸ Friedrich prefers not to call nonrealistic use of color in most modern poems synaesthesia, but rather to emphasize a possible motive, alienation:

Doch vergisst man über diesem Schulbegriff [synaesthesia]
dass es sich um Akte der Verfremdung handelt, um
Dissonanzen, denen ein Märchenschauer entsteigen soll.¹²⁹

Meckel's unnatural use of colors is primarily confined to the reversal of black and white (or dark and light) and to the introduction of black where it does not normally belong. Certainly this is conventional in modern poetry. It is tempting to see here as well an influence of Meckel's activity as a graphic artist, for the technique of etching is dependent on the appearance of etched lines as bright metal on a blackened ground; printing an etching involves inking (blackening), as well as reversal like that in the printing of a photographic negative; and the resulting print, of course, depends for its effect largely on the contrast of black and white.

¹²⁷Hugo Friedrich, Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik, p. 42.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 62. ¹²⁹Ibid., p. 151.

In two raven poems from Wildnisse, "Der Vogel" and "Rabe Schnabelstumm," the virtue of the raven is flying, and the freedom flying gives. The bird in "Der Vogel" feels: "Es muss geflogen werden." Rabe Schnabelstumm is a more grotesque figure. His name is repetitive and alliterative, like nicknames children give. He laughs, where the other bird shrieks. In this poem darkness is negative: the soul of the mountain and the souls of owls attacked by the vampire are gloomy, like the black core of the sun.

The figure of the raven in Meckel's poems and prose appears to be an undetermined or free symbol, perhaps simply a soul (a traditional function of birds in folk literature). It is often associated in Meckel's works with the concepts of beauty and of freedom through flight, and with black as opposed to white. The raven can be a scintillating or chameleon-like character, like the raven of "Geschichte der Geschichten." It can be daemonically beautiful, or it can be simply demonic (evil). It can be referred to casually, and interchangeably with the crow ("Ich zog mit Schnee und Krähen allerorten/des Wegs zu dem was niemals zu mir kam"),¹³⁰ or it can be the central character of a poem or story.

The Flood

The Biblical story of the destruction of mankind by a flood is retold in Meckel's graphic cycle Das Meer and alluded to in many of Meckel's

¹³⁰ "Reise durch eine Dämmerung," Hotel für Schlafwandler, p. 18.

poems. Like the theme of the Tower (of Babel), which is taken up in another of Meckel's graphic cycles, the Flood theme seems particularly relevant to the problems of twentieth century civilization, and to those of Germany in particular. The suggestion in much post-war poetry that crisis and doom are certain to come is easily explainable by twentieth century history.

The theme of the Flood appears in various poems from Nebelhörner (1959): "Miniaturen" ("Ehe du zu dir kommst, wird die Arche/aufgehen am Himmel"),¹³¹ "In diesen Tagen" ("Und mir ist Grund gegeben, gut zu denken/von der kommenden Sintflut"),¹³² and "Flaschenpost für eine Sintflut";¹³³ and it also appears in "Nachwelt," from the earlier Hotel für Schlafwandler: "Wir stiegen ab von den Graten, als die Flut/Aufs Meer sich besann und wieder einnahm die Flüsse."¹³⁴ The fool of "Der Hofnarr" predicts: "Nach mit die Flut."¹³⁵ Wildnisse (1962) contains a Flood poem, "Nach der Sintflut":

Von allen weltbeladnen Archen
unstörbar süßen Schlafes Schnarchen.

Die Taube fand das Zweiglein heiter
flog in den Kasten und schlief weiter.

Der Ararat taucht wieder abe,
dass süßer Schlaf kein Ende habe.¹³⁶

¹³¹P. 56. ¹³²P. 39. ¹³³P. 35. ¹³⁴P. 16.

¹³⁵alternative, IV (1960), Heft 16, p. 13.

¹³⁶Wildnisse, p. 20.

The Flood also figures in "Gott Grizzly!":

das D^uster sammelt Stille um seinen Schrei, die graue
Sintflut Schnee hat neu begonnen, die grosse Sintflut
Schnee will nimmer enden!

The Flood theme appears as well in Die Dummheit liefert uns ans Messer (1967), a series of sonnets which constitute a dialogue between Meckel and his friend, the writer Volker von Törne. The sonnets were published in the influential weekly newspaper Die Zeit. In the first of the series, "Rechts und Links," Meckel wrote:

Wir sind mit Wahrheit bitterbö^s in F^uhlung,
doch was wir tun, ist nur ein Wassertreten
im Wasserrad für Deutschlands Wassersp^ülung. 137

Von Törne answers:

Du klagst, als wä^ren es Naturgewalten,
was uns da br^üllend in die Messer treibt,
als gä^bs nicht Herrn, die Finsternis verwalten,
damit es dunkel in den Köpfen bleibt.

Wir sind mit Dummheit bitterbö^s in F^uhlung
(und kaufen schliesslich, wenn wir leisetreten,
die Sintflut ein als komfortable Wassersp^ülung). 138

Meckel replies:

Wenn wir nicht sagten: Es wird weitergehn,
und fluchten nur, und träten auf der Stelle,
dann packte uns die näch^ste Sintflutwelle. 139

The combination of explicitly political and social comment with the strict and traditional form of the sonnet is unusual, especially for Meckel. In the following year, 1968, "Das Lied von den Illusionen" and "Das Lied von

¹³⁷Die Dummheit liefert uns ans Messer, p. 1.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 2. ¹³⁹Ibid., p. 4.

den Parolen, " with lyrics by Meckel, appeared in an anthology of political chansons, Kurbiskern Songbuch. In these the language is even more colloquial than in Die Dummheit. In "Das Lied von den Parolen"

Meckel writes:

Der den Mob beruft, befiehlt
(und der frisst ihm aus der Hand),
den er auf Befehl beseligt,
mittels Gott und Vaterland,
gross bewimpelt und bewortet
Kalte Kriege, die er hortet,
ein Fanal, womit er winkt.¹⁴⁰

Meckel's only other political song, "Chanson von den Helden in kommender Zeit," won him one of his first literary prizes, the Kurt Tucholsky prize of the magazine Studentenkurier for the best chanson with contemporary relevance, in 1958.

In Meckel's two most recent collections of poems, death figures in almost every poem, but references to a Flood are rarer. "Der Geburtstag" in Bei Lebzeiten zu singen mentions it: "die Wildtaube gurrte das Echo der Sintflut im Kirschengarten."¹⁴¹ The Sintflut appears in the poem "Talking About Poetry" which is quoted in part on page 29 of the thesis. The Flood is also mentioned in the "Ballade von Ozeans Beerdigung":

Singend im Tod noch seine barbarische Unschuld
hallend noch immer.

¹⁴⁰P. 132.

¹⁴¹Bei Lebzeiten zu singen, p. 79.

vom Kommen und Gehn der Sintfluten alle
hing Ozeans Kopf in die enge Erde,¹⁴²

In "Die Wintertage," another of the ballads of Thomas Balkan, the speaker's shadow cries: "Jagt sie zurück in Nacht und Sintflut."¹⁴³ And finally, in the last ballad of the collection, "Weltlicht," we read "...doch verschaff ich/mir Auferstehung aus Flut und Fall noch immer."¹⁴⁴ Such optimism and affirmation usually accompany the Flood theme in Meckel's poems.

III. PLAYFUL ALLUSION

Meckel does not write academic poetry, nor does he create pastiches of the last 2,000 years of European culture in his verse, but his fantastic imagination draws on literary tradition as freely as on any other material. Many of Meckel's poems refer to literary figures or writers, or to painters or paintings. Meckel has written poems about or referring to Hans Christian Andersen, to the British and American writers Malcolm Lowry, Dylan Thomas and Herman Melville, and Meckel's friend, the contemporary writer Christopher Middleton, and to the German writers Andreas Gryphius, Friedrich Hölderlin, Johann Peter Hebel, Eduard Mörike, Georg Trakl, Klabund and Nelly Sachs, as well as a less sympathetic poem about Friedrich Schiller. Meckel has also written poems about Pieter Breughel, Hieronymus Bosch, Francisco de Goya, Rembrandt and Joan Miró (or about their paintings).

¹⁴² Balladen von Thomas Balkan, p. 52.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

Meckel sometimes uses quotations, in poems, in prose and in introductions to graphic cycles. Although many of these are invented and are set playfully in quotation marks, some are genuine and come from such writers as Ezra Pound and Malcolm Lowry. Meckel frequently alludes to literary figures such as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Sinbad, Prospero, Gulliver, Magelone and Melusine. He refers to traditional literary apparitions such as the sphinx, the phoenix, the chimera, the Fata Morgana and the will o' the wisp (Irrlicht), and to legendary objects such as the horn of plenty, the deadly nightshade (Tollkirsch), the seven league boots, and the cloak of invisibility. He refers to the Biblical figures Job, Jonas (and Leviathan), Moses and Azrael, and often to unnamed angels: "Der Engel," the aging angel, the armored angel. Finally, Meckel has alluded to the classical figures Pluto, Orpheus, Gorgo, Hekate and Charon, as well as to Tamerlane, Potemkin and Columbus, and even to the actor Buster Keaton.

Meckel's invention of names for characters is playful. There are names which differ in minor details from actual names and words: Zünd from the name of an actual man, Zund; Lädemli Lolle from the Alemannic word for Laden (wooden window shutters) and from the Basel Fastnacht character Lippi Lapeli; Rubim, instead of Rubin (ruby), for the boy in the radio play Der Wind, der dich weckt; Tullipan, from the Dutch and medieval German name for tulip or Tulpe, Tulipan; Moël from a Welsh word for a bare hilltop, moel; and the land Punt, from legendary geography. Umbramauten combines the German and English word for the dark

center of a sun spot or the shadow of a planet with a distortion of the Latin root for ships and sailors, naut (umbra is also the Latin word for shade). Some words seem to have been coined by Meckel, such as Gwili, Pog, Jasnando, Punk.

It is the frequency of literary (and artistic) allusions as much as the many almost archaic terms for obscure or obsolete objects (Kogge, Dschunke, for example), which gives some of Meckel's poems the atmosphere of antique shops, of collections of old, dusty and precious objects. One poem, for example, bears the title of the nickname of Gryphius, Meletomenus;¹⁴⁵ another, "Gesang des Magiers," uses without explanation the name which Holderlin gave himself in his madness, Scardanelli.¹⁴⁶ Meckel plays with the idea of his own role as a peddler of antiques in the introduction to Amüsierpapiere, his collection of crayon drawings:

Dieses Buch gehört nicht ins Museum. Es enthält...
Amüsierpapiere;... Buntpapier...; Wandschmuck...;
handgepunzte Cartoons und Dreigroschenbilder...;
Bilder aus dem Bauchladen des Phantasus, unver-
wüstlicher Antiquar und Hausierer, der alle Morgen
unter dem Fenster erscheint und ruft:
Schlechte Zeiten! Immer schlechter! Wer kauft!

¹⁴⁵ Bei Lebzeiten zu singen, p. 65.

¹⁴⁶ Wildnisse, p. 31.

IV. VARIETY OF FORMS

It is difficult to give an adequate impression of the range and versatility of Meckel's lyric work, not only because of the number of lyrics published (well over 300), but also because of the great variety of styles and subjects. Meckel has command of such relatively strict forms as the sonnet and the song, and of free verse as well. A few of his poems, particularly in Nebelhörner (1959), have a laconic simplicity which is reminiscent of the poems of Günther Eich and Bertolt Brecht.

Miniaturen

1.

Brich die Türen nicht auf:
andere hatten Grund, sie zu schliessen.
Höre die Nebelhörner weit:
Schiffe suchen nach dir an anderen Ufern.

Durch deine Fenster siehst du die leere Bai
Stunde um Stunde erblinden die Spiegel mehr.
Betrachte dich nochmal genau,
ehe sie schwarz sind!

2.

Sieh dich um in den Schatten:
der Sand deines Schneckenglases versteinte!
Schiefst du so ruhig,
dass du die Schnecken nicht rennen hörtest?

Mitternachts verstummte ihr Schlurfen.
Morgens trieben die letzten Hunde vorüber.

Ehe du zu dir kommst, wird die Arche
aufgehn am Himmel.¹⁴⁷

Some poems, particularly in Wildnisse (1962), have an incantatory rhythm and rhyme which call to mind the songs of the Grimm Märchen. The rhapsodic hymns and ballads describing travel, particularly ocean voyages, and exotic landscapes are reminiscent of Brecht's Balladen and Psalmen and of poems by Arthur Rimbaud ("Le Bateau Ivre") and Charles Baudelaire ("Le Voyage"). Such poems are found particularly in Wildnisse and in Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan (1969). Meckel has tried his hand at many established verse forms and types of poems. He has composed dialect poems, nonsense poems, political ballads, occasional poems, sonnets, and "Musiken," a form he developed himself.

The title poem of Meckel's book, Wildnisse is one of several "long-line" poems in which each line may run as long as five lines of type. The division into lines seems arbitrary, even so (lines are often joined to the next line by semicolons). Image follows similar image, phrase follows similar phrase throughout the poem. In "Wildnisse" this continuously flowing narrative describes the speaker's travels. The last two lines are:

Ebenen, hier ging ich vorüber, bevor die Wälder standen an ihrem
Ort, bevor die Steine lagen an ihrem Ort, bevor die Lüfte
stiegen und sanken, wo sie steigen und sinken.
Ebenen, hier geh ich, vorüber, der Wind strahlt die Katzenbart-
büsche, die Bläue braust; und der steigende Fluss wirft

¹⁴⁷Nebelhörner, pp. 5-6.

altes Gebrumm, einen milden Fischgesang vor mir auf
den Steinweg.¹⁴⁸

Most of the long-line poems describe travel, by sea or by land. The flowing motion of the lines seems appropriate to describe a sea journey, as in "In der Tonne!":

Ich schwamm durch die schnellen und trägen Gewässer,
unendliche Reise, und hörte das fischlaute,
geifernde, schnelle Meer und den endlos
flügelnden Himmel, Gewölk und Schaum, und gab
ihnen leisere Antwort mit meiner Stimme.¹⁴⁹

Only rarely are the long lines alternated with short lines. In "Der Nüchterne" this is especially effective. The brief refrain with variations (trank ich, sass ich), "Nüchtern ging ich, schenkte mir Wasser ein,"¹⁵⁰ contrasts with the drunken visions presented in the long lines. The long lines are also suited to interior monologues, as in the poem "Mörike." Here the conversational tone gives enough variety to the flow of images, and the free association seems natural:

Heitere Frühe, anhebend des Tages Lieblichkeit mit
unendlichem Licht, die schwäbische Sonne, weiss
Gott, und koschere Freude! Goldraute hab ich
vorm Fenster und Heckenrosen, aufschiesst das
Unkraut um den Lattenzaun. Das Brennesselweib
wird dieser Tage kommen. Dengeln und kleines
Geschrei in den Wiesen am Dorfrand, vorbei in
Eile ein rotes Kopftuch am Pfarrweg--wir wollen
uns nun den Versen zuwenden, Catull!¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸Wildnisse, p. 51.

¹⁴⁹Wildnisse, p. 38.

¹⁵⁰Wildnisse, p. 40.

¹⁵¹Wildnisse, p. 52.

The tightness and purity and excitement felt by some critics to be essential qualities in good modern poetry¹⁵² are most often found in those of Meckel's poems which depend most heavily on rhythm and rhyme and repetition, like the poem "Abdeckerei" above (page 66) or the poem "Rabe Schnabelstumm" (reproduced in the appendix). Such poems are often reminiscent of the songs in Märchen and are at least as close to the folk ballad as Meckel's prose is close to the Volksmärchen. Songs from such Grimm Märchen as "Rumpelstilzchen" (Grimm No. 55) or "Jorinde und Joringel" (Grimm No. 69), like some of Meckel's poems, tell a story with the concentration, brevity and repetition of a magic charm. Similarly, Hugo Friedrich attributes to the modern Spanish poet Federico García Lorca a laconic, alogical, haunting tone and an evocative symbolism which are seen to be close to the tone of Spanish folk poems (Romanzen) and are, Friedrich believes, appropriate in modern poetry.¹⁵³

In "Bei Lebzeiten zu singen" Meckel experiments with another verse form which he calls "Musiken": series of combinations of quatrains and couplets in iambic tetrameter:

ich sing 'zum Paradies,' ich sing:
 'Dass mir kein Unglück Trauer bring
 ich kehr nicht umme umme um
 ich zieh den Rücken keinem krumm
 durch Stein und Kraut und weissen Kies

¹⁵² C. M. Bowra, The Creative Experiment, chapter 1.

¹⁵³ Hugo Friedrich, Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik, pp. 110-111.

trägt mich mein Fuss zum Paradies.¹
 Und in der grossen Nacht, und kalt
 weist mir ein Riesenflügel halt

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Although elements of the "Musiken" have something in common with Meckel's magical Märchen-songs, the greater length of the Musiken (usually 32 lines) changes the effect of the song-like qualities. The "Musiken" tell a story, of sorts, with the repetition and parallelism and sing-song rhythm of a song, but are not divided into stanzas. After a long series of similar lines this becomes monotonous. As in many of Meckel's poems, including some of the long-line poems, there are in the "Musiken" so many similar images presented in such similar ways that they often cancel each other's effectiveness. On the whole, though, Meckel displays an excellent command of the language, and the quality of his verse is generally very high by any contemporary standards, especially with respect to rhythm and rhyme.

¹⁵⁴From the third of the "Musiken," Bei Lebzeiten zu singen, p. 35.

CHAPTER V

GRAPHIC ART

In this section I will mention the major artists, schools and traditions which form the context for Meckel's graphic art. Then I will describe the graphic cycles, and close by considering Meckel as a dually talented artist (writer-artist).

I. CONTEXT AND MODELS

Meckel is a graphic artist as well as a writer. He makes and prints his own etchings, and has published five graphic cycles and numerous illustrations. In addition to etchings he has made and published woodcuts, linocuts, lithographs and crayon drawings, some of which accompany his poems and stories or illustrate the works of others. Meckel's etchings and many of his lithographs, linocuts and woodcuts are technically more sophisticated than his deliberately childlike crayon drawings. Especially in the etchings, the lines are finer and more delicate; however, the themes and the basic shapes are often similar. The lithographs and linocuts and the crayon drawings are usually colored and often combine simple, bold abstract designs with figures resembling those of the etchings.

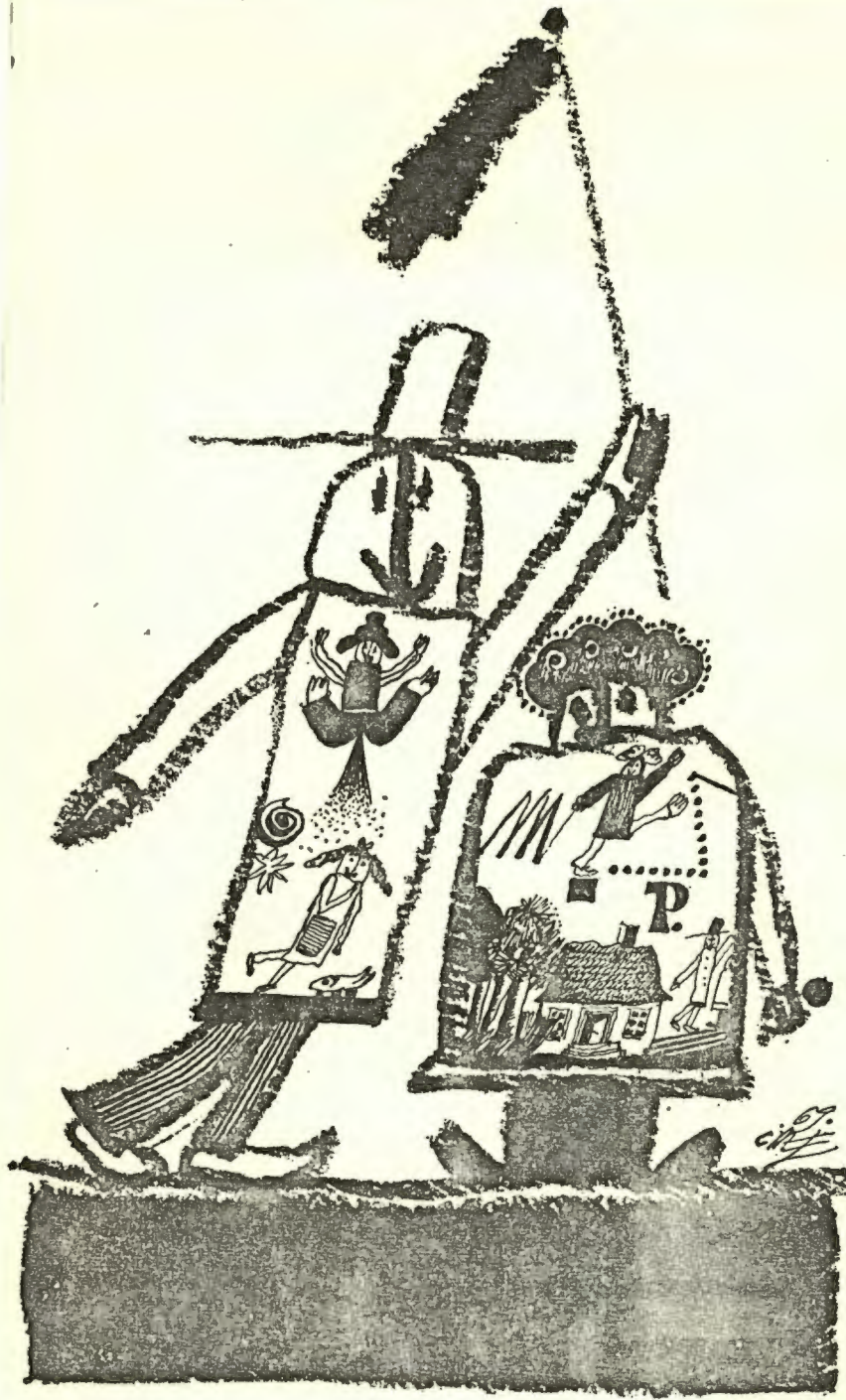
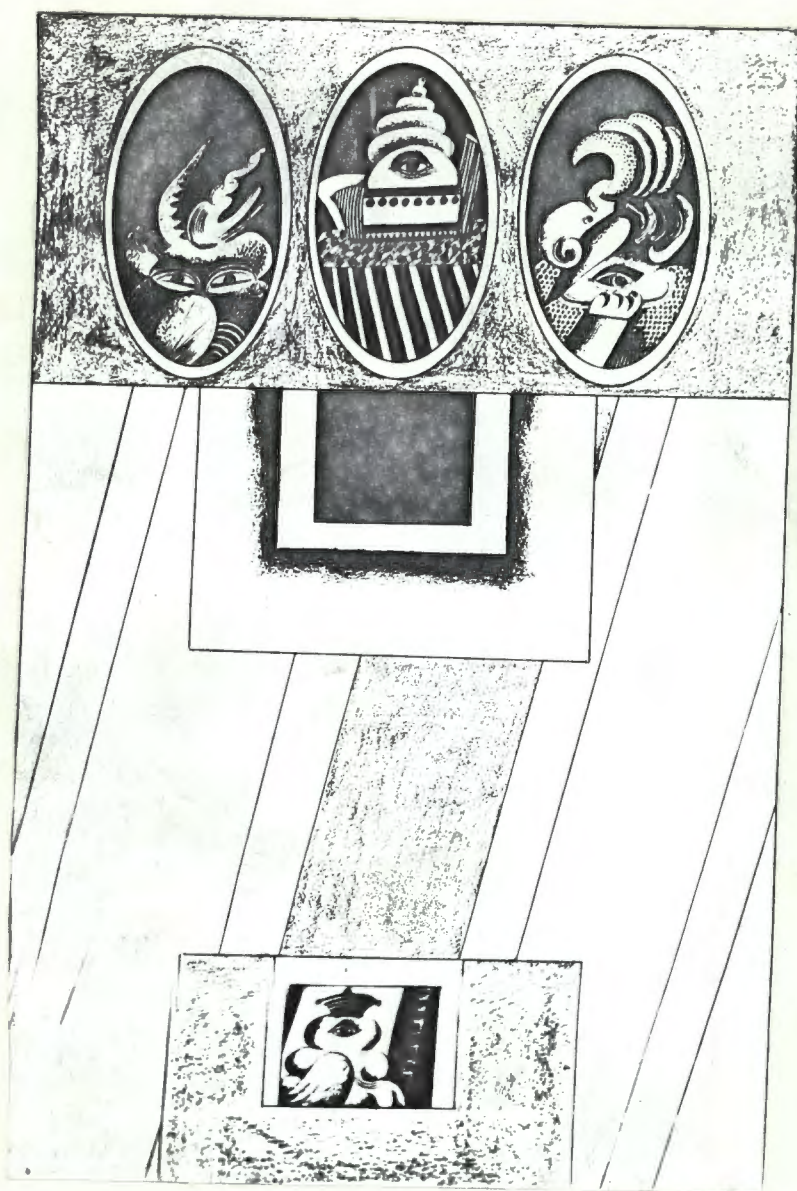


Illustration from Eine Seite aus dem Paradiesbuch, p. 15



Lithograph: from folder "You're Welcome"
(reduced to postcard size)

The people and objects in Meckel's pictures, and their relationships, are often grotesquely distorted or exaggerated. Parts of the body can be disproportionately large; people are often taller than houses; ships and trees lean in through windows of a house. Meckel's pictures are fantastic in other ways as well. Not only are the situations which he draws unrealistic (a clock strikes thirteen; fishermen sail in shoes; an elephant pulls a hay-wagon), but also miscellaneous objects appear in the middle of the picture without obvious function: crescent moons, snail shells, bells, keys, words, letters of the alphabet. Meckel sometimes tells a story by showing its several stages in different corners of a single etching.

It is clear that deformation and distortion of natural forms in art, such as is found in much Surrealist and Expressionist painting, is functional. It has frequently been argued that such deformation and distortion result from a creative process or mode of vision similar to that which produces distortion in primitive art, in children's art, and in the art of the insane. Wayne Shumaker quotes several critics who point to relationships of this sort in literature. For example:

In 1949, Richard Chase said: "To the student of myth the most important general conclusion of psychoanalysis is that the artist and the neurotic and the dreamer have much in common both with one another and with the primitive magico-mythical psychology."... Edward G. Ballard, in a notable work on aesthetics, asserted that the artist's imagination is "much more primitive and childlike" than the scientific imagination.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Wayne Shumaker, Literature and the Irrational, p. 246.

In an article about children's art in the Encyclopedia of the Arts, edited by Dagobert D. Runes, attention is called to the fact that young children favor brilliant clear colors (such as Meckel uses for his crayon drawings and lithographs). Several other characteristics of children's art as described in this article are found in Meckel's art as well:

Characteristic of child drawing... is the lack of proportion among parts of a given object and among several objects... It has been shown experimentally that the child's estimate of proportion of real objects is as correct as that of adults. Since drawing fulfills the purpose of expressing a thought or describing an experience, the importance of certain parts of the experience is underlined by an exaggeration of size... Conversely, uninteresting parts or details are shrunk or omitted.

.....
The pre-school child scatters the objects of his representation over the paper. He does not distinguish between up and down, right or left and turns his paper during the process of drawing so that some parts seem upside down in comparison to others.... The desire of expressing some definite experience through the content is satisfied by either breaking up the representation into a series or by a repeated representation of some individuals or objects within the same picture in order to indicate various activities or situations.¹⁵⁶

The resemblances are clear, in spite of the obviously more refined composition of most of Meckel's pictures.

Much of twentieth century fantastic and grotesque art is similar to Meckel's art in styles or themes. Among painters, Marc Chagall and Paul Klee are most frequently mentioned as models for Meckel's art. Many graphic artists, especially satirists and caricaturists, from Jacques Callot

¹⁵⁶Dagobert D. Runes, ed., Encyclopedia of the Arts, pp. 176-177.

through Francisco de Goya and William Blake, Honoré Daumier and Gustave Doré to James Ensor and Alfred Kubin, Frans Masereel and George Grosz, Max Beckmann and A. Paul Weber, are obviously related to Meckel by spiritual affinity. Their pictures sometimes seem to have served as models for Meckel's subjects, and style as well. However, it seems to be generally accepted that Meckel's graphic style is unmistakably his own, even though it is easy to find casual similarities to other artists' work.

Wolfgang Kayser writes that grotesque graphic art usually tends either toward the fantastic (as in Hieronymus Bosch's dream worlds of monsters and distorted men and animals), or toward satire or caricature of the evils of society or of war (as in the graphic cycles of Callot and Goya). Graphic art is particularly suited to the grotesque, according to Kayser, because its lines express a subject directly, whereas canvas and paint have their own laws. Kayser sees the pen of the graphic artist as being particularly suited to the expression of the momentary whim or mood or of a caprice, as Callot and Goya sometimes characterized their graphic art, or of an Abenteuer, as Alfred Kubin sometimes characterized his pictures.¹⁵⁷ Incidentally, Meckel calls his book of crayon drawings Amüsierpapiere, which underlines their whimsical or capricious nature.

In much of his graphic art, as in much of his poetry and prose,

¹⁵⁷ Wolfgang Kayser, Das Groteske, pp. 186-192.,

Meckel follows well-established literary and artistic traditions. As Ernst Penzoldt, another writer-artist, says in his book on the nineteenth century graphic artist and illustrator Gustave Doré:

Künstler waren zu nennen, die ihre Eindrücke und ihren schöpferischen Impuls nicht aus der Natur, sondern aus Bilder- und Märchenbüchern empfangen haben. Für das Kind ist diese Welt genau so wahr und wirklich wie die Natur und das Leben... Es gibt eine Fortzeugung aus der Kunst, die im Schöpfungsplan zur organischen Natur gehört.¹⁵⁸

Penzoldt mentions the graphic artist Alfred Kubin as one of these artists. Kubin, like Meckel (Im Land der Umbramauten), wrote a novel about a negative Utopia, Die andere Seite, which presents visions of horror and desolation rather like those which appear in his graphic art. Such fantastic worlds often recreate everyday experiences of pain and ugliness and fear and disaster, in out-of-focus or negative-like images of society.

Providing a new point of view through substitution of fantastic for realistic detail is one of the possibilities which literature offers for social criticism. Jonathan Swift's novel Gulliver's Travels is a better known example than Die andere Seite. A similar tradition exists in graphic art and painting, as for example in the fifteenth and sixteenth century paintings of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Breughel, and in the etchings of the seventeenth century graphic artist Jacques Callot. Meckel may consider his work to be in this tradition; at any rate, he has dedicated poems or pictures

¹⁵⁸ Ernst Penzoldt, ed., Gustave Doré: Potpourri, pp. 50-51.

to Breughel, Bosch and Callot, as well as to Goya, Rembrandt, Chagall and Miró. Bosch is the subject of the poem "Epistel an Hieronymus Bosch" (Wildnisse), and an etching in Welttheater is dedicated to him. The poem "Der verlorene Sohn" in Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan is subtitled "(nach Hieronymus Bosch)." Other than Bosch, only Hans Christian Andersen is the subject of both a poem and a picture by Meckel. The most obvious similarities in the work of Bosch and Meckel can be seen in the apocalyptic themes and grotesque figures which appear in much of Bosch's and of Meckel's work, especially in Meckel's graphic cycles Der Turm and Das Meer. Bosch and Meckel envision the world as crowded with monster animals and birds whose bodies are as distorted as their souls seem to be. Bosch's worlds are not purely fantastic; like Meckel's, they contain elements of social criticism as well.

Even among artists who tend to fantastic and literary themes, it may be possible to distinguish those primarily interested in form and composition from those who seem also concerned with a story they are telling. Meckel's pictures are usually either based on a literary theme, or are part of a story-cycle, or they are both at once. Meckel seems to enjoy inventing titles for his pictures. Sometimes the picture almost seems to take second place to the title (in Meckel's "Bilderbuch fur abc und andere honorige Leute,"¹⁵⁹ for example), as is often true of the paintings of Paul Klee. On the other hand,

¹⁵⁹In "A Christoph Meckel Sampler," Dimension (Austin, Texas) I, (1968), pp. 300-301.

Marc Chagall seems to have a less literary orientation. According to a biographer, Chagall does not himself invent titles for his paintings. They are suggested to him by others.¹⁶⁰ Meckel frequently refers playfully to personal or obscure or fantastic invented objects and ideas in his titles, pictures, poems and stories. The titles and objects of reference are to be appreciated for themselves, like objects in an antique shop.

II. GRAPHIC CYCLES

Meckel began drawing as a child, and his first books, Tarnkappe and Hotel für Schlafwandler, were accompanied by his own graphic art. Meckel's first cycle of etchings was published in 1959, after the first two books of poems, and in the same year as the third book of poems and the first book of prose. This was Moël, probably Meckel's best known graphic cycle. Like the later cycles, Moël tells a story ("in der Bildersprache geschrieben"¹⁶¹). Moël is the first in Meckel's long series of poetic figures, the last of which is Thomas Balkan. Meckel points out:

Thomas Balkan ist eine Gestalt, die ich erfunden habe.... Er ist--wie Moël, Tullipan, Ucht, Jul Miller, Magalan, Punk, Rubim und Jasnando, die in meinen Wörtern und Bildern existieren, sowie andere, die ich einstweilen nicht herausrücke-- unverwechselbares Geschöpf aus meinem Haus.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Jean Cassou, Chagall, p. 54.

¹⁶¹ According to the preface.

¹⁶² Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan, p. 10.

Moël, who figures in two poems by Meckel as well, is described in the preface in terms like those later used for Tullipan and Thomas Balkan:

er besitzt nichts ausser seinem Fisch; er ist weder arm noch reich und steht in niemandes Dienst... er wird reich sein in dem Bemühen, ohne Fesseln zu leben... Man wird ihn foltern, erniedrigen und um jegliche Würde bringen. Man wird ihm das Fürchten lehren... Aber man wird ihn nicht vernichten können.

There are several nearly parallel passages in the description of Thomas Balkan, such as:

Innere und äussere Unabhängigkeit ist die selbstverständliche Grundlage seines Lebens... Er besitzt nur wenige Dinge, wenige Bücher, lebt mit offenen Koffern und ist in der Lage, innerhalb einer Stunde einzupacken und zu verschwinden... Er wird seine Unabhängigkeit ohne jede Einschränkung und unter jeder Bedingung verteidigen, durchsetzen und neu erschaffen... Sein Leben wird schwieriger werden... Unverletzbarkeit ist eines der Wörter, mit denen er umgeht.¹⁶³

The story of Moël is told in a series of fifty-eight etchings with brief captions. Moël is a stocky peasant, his face always covered by his large, broad-brimmed hat. He wears shoes with long pointed toes and a dark, loosely belted smock over his dark trousers and white shirt. Until the end of the story Moël is inseparable from his fish.

Moël and his fish leave the village and travel through real and fantastic lands: Rome; the land of the long shadows; the land of the false shadows; and the lands of winds, of volcanoes, and of wars. After the land of wars Moël's troubles begin. In the next etchings trees and pieces of

¹⁶³Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan, pp. 12-13.



Etching "Moël und Mademoiselle" from Moël
(reduced to postcard size)

buildings hang from gallows, under which lie heaps of human bodies.

Moël is tried, tortured and put behind bars, then escapes. His fish is stolen. He searches for it in vain and finally must begin a new life, but he still dreams sadly of his fish.

In 1960, the year after the publication of Moël, three graphic cycles by Meckel were published: Die Stadt, Der Krieg, and Welttheater. These cycles are, like Moël and the later cycles Der Turm and Das Meer, long series of etchings with one central theme.

Die Stadt is prefaced by a quotation which Meckel attributes (without mentioning the source) to E. E. Cummings:

Eine Welt von Gemachten ist keine Welt von Gebornem--habt Mitleid mit armem Fleisch und Bäumen, armen Steinen und Sternen, doch niemals mit diesem Prachtexemplar von übermagischer Ultra-Allmächtigkeit.

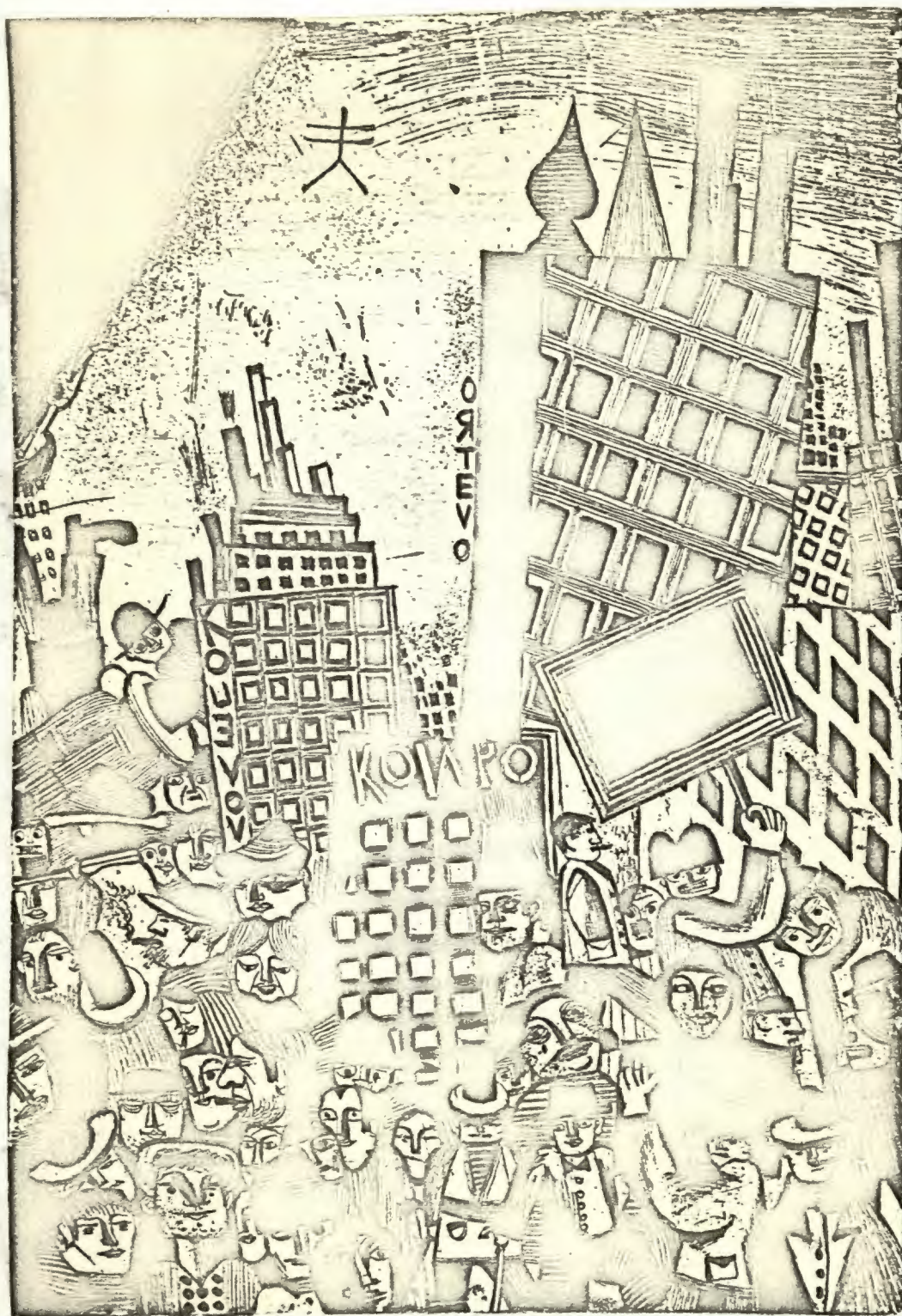
and one which Meckel attributes (without mentioning the source) to Bertolt Brecht:

Ich zeige, was ich gesehen habe.

What the narrator of this graphic cycle saw is a jumble of buildings, signs and people. One street, the most crowded, is called Broadway. There are cathedrals from the most various architectural periods, one topped by an avenging angel--but also prostitutes and gay bars, and a hotel lobby, a beer hall, a parade and a fair. A series of pictures called "Triumphbogen," "Bahnhof" and "Brücken" presents rows of arches, railroad tracks and bridges which are sinister in their very monotony. As in the other graphic cycles, Meckel's faces here resemble those in drawings by Georg Grosz;

they are sinister, crude, smug, self-satisfied, malicious. The chimneys in the city are tree trunks, and the smoke from the chimneys is so thick that it resembles leaves in a forest. The scenes in Die Stadt resemble typical scenes of a modern city, but they are just as much part of a stifling surreal fantasy land, one rather like Meckel's literary fantasy lands (das Land der Umbramauten, and the land in Manifest der Toten). Here, in Die Stadt, a man reads a newspaper in which all writing is reversed, illegible, nonsense, or in a foreign language, except for the word Totenfeier. In the last etching the trees and plants at the edge of the city are tall and menacing, as if a jungle were about to take over the city. This complements the first etching, an equally sinister and equally crowded jumble of people, buildings, signs and letters of the alphabet, called "Im Labyrinth der Städte." Like many of Meckel's titles, this one has literary reference, primarily to Bertolt Brecht's play Im Dickicht der Städte. Meckel's vision of the demonic quality of the modern city, with its similarity to a jungle, is also reminiscent of the poems of Georg Heym, and of the horrible decay of the city in Alfred Kubin's novel Die andere Seite. In the 1920's Georg Grosz produced portfolios of pictures, and Max Beckmann did series of lithographs, on the horrors of city life and the cruelty and violence of men. These too are rather close in spirit to Meckel's major graphic cycles.

The graphic cycle Der Krieg begins, like the other cycles, with a quotation, attributed to no one and perhaps simply by Meckel; "Mein



Etching "Broadway" from Die Stadt

Jahrhundert mäht Köpfe." It is followed by a poem by Meckel, "Lied zur Pauke," which has images reminiscent of Meckel's pictures in this cycle, "Vernichtungsmaschinen" and "Die Zählung der Toten." It begins:

Laut verlacht verlaust verloren
Blut verschluckt und Kopf geschoren.¹⁶⁴

The flag in the middle of the stadium where "Die Rede" is held is huge. It covers most of the crowd of spectators, like a giant black four-fingered hand. A figure in the lower right-hand corner of "Kasernen" may be wearing helmet and gas mask, but looks like nothing so much as one of Hieronymus Bosch's oversize birds, which silently stare at smaller men. Placed on top of a triumphal arch in the picture "Siegestor," instead of the usual classical sculpture, are the figures of hooded hangman and an avenging angel with axe.

The next cycle from the year 1960, Welttheater, promises the reader in the introduction:

Er wird...[im Welttheater] mancherlei Geheimnisse am Schlafittchen zu packen kriegen. Er wird die Märchen in Morgenröcken und Hauspantoffeln antreffen und ihre Gesichter ohne Legendenschleierchen sehn.

It is hard to see where the Legendenschleierchen might have been removed in the book. The pictures are all grotesque, but no more grotesque and no less stylized than the scenes of a Märchen. At the end of the cycle comes a series of pictures; "Flucht des Märchenkönigs," "Einzug der

¹⁶⁴Also in Wildnisse, p. 25.



Etching "Die Zählung der Toten" from Der Krieg

Rotte, " "Hinrichtung der Märchen, " "Wiederkehr der Märchen, " " "Aufbruch der Märchen. " The theme Märchen here seems, rather like the figure Moel in the graphic cycle, to represent a kind of eternal innocence, persecuted but indomitable. Andersen's mermaid and Moel's fish are hung from the gallows in Welttheater, and an angel (on vacation, according to the title) sits barefoot at the bottom of the ocean, smoking a pipe among small grotesque animals, but these are merely new Legendenschleierchen. The other pictures in Welttheater are miscellaneous fancies and fantasies: "Der Fisch auf der Leiter, " "Die Stadt fährt über Land, " and dedications to Callot, Bosch, Chagall and Hans Christian Andersen. Except for one picture, "Kulissen, " and the introductory picture, "Der Vorhang geht auf, " the theme of a theater announced in the title is not stressed graphically. The title is, of course, appropriate because of the literary tradition of the world as a stage.

The three graphic cycles discussed above, Die Stadt, Der Krieg, and Welttheater, were reissued by Ellermann Verlag in 1969, this time in one volume, called Bilderbotschaften. The preface, written especially for this edition, was called "Werkstattnotiz: Die ganze Welt und ein paar Zeichenfedern. " This preface describes first Meckel's process of making and printing his own etchings, then some of his reasons for making the drawings. The third section discusses briefly his conception of his graphic art as a whole. The preface, as one of only four comments that Meckel has ever made in writing on his work, deserves some attention. It is

interesting to see how closely the style and statements in these notes resemble the style and assertions in Meckel's stories and poems. Here, as in the introduction to his selection from the poems of Georg Heym, Meckel writes in a lyrical, buoyant manner, not in sober descriptive prose:

Die ganze Welt und ein paar Zeichenfedern!
Cognacgesichter an einem Wintertag in Coney Island,
rauchend von Kälte, getaucht in grüner Meerdunst.

The most important parts of the first and second sections of the "Werkstattnotiz" are reproduced in the appendix to this thesis. Even the description of graphic and printing materials and processes is romantically conceived. Meckel prefers simple, old, antique, or dilapidated objects: "Ich ziehe gebrauchte Dinge den ungebrauchten und neuen vor." He mentions "einen fürchterlich qualmenden Ofen, für den ich das Holz aus den Windbrüchen hinterm Haus hole," and "heruntergekommenen ländlichen Pharmazien, die nach Lavendelöl riechen." He is pleased to know the secrets of ancient craftsmen:

Den Lack . . . stelle ich selbst nach einem Rezept aus dem 18. Jahrhundert her. Das Rezept vermachte mir ein sehr guter Münchner Drucker unter der Bedingung, dass ich es für mich behalte.

Meckel's insistence on simplicity, even austerity ("Meine Radiernadeln sind einfache Schreibfedern"), and on his taste for the old-fashioned in the "Werkstattnotiz" resembles the taste Meckel attributes to Thomas Balkan:

Augenblicklich lebt Thomas Balkan in New York, 72. Strasse; zwei dunkle Zimmer im Parterre eines labyrinthischen Mietshauses. . . . Er besitzt nur wenige Dinge, wenige Bücher,

lebt mit offenen Koffern. . . . ¹⁶⁵

The rest of the first section of "Werkstattnotiz" discusses what is best to drink and what music is best to hear during the process of making and printing etchings, and the best time of day for it. The part of the second section not reproduced in the appendix simply refers to some of the subjects of Meckel's drawings. In the third section, Meckel explains his concept of his entire production of graphic art as a narrative-epic whole called "Weltkomödie." "Weltkomödie" begins with Moël and progresses through the three cycles from 1960 to Der Turm and Das Meer, to be continued in the future. Meckel describes "Weltkomödie" thus:

Ich versuche--so umfassend wie möglich--ein Bild der Epoche
hinzustellen; ich zeichne nicht mehr und nicht weniger als das
Leben der Menschen.

The graphic cycle Der Turm (1961) is prefaced by the first seven verses of the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes. Der Krieg had ended in destruction ("Triumph des Todes"), but this cycle is truly cyclical: it begins with "Die Ausrufer" and ends with "Die neuen Ausrufer." The human folly symbolized by the Tower of Babel repeats itself once again. A builder (Bauherr) plans and inspects the work, accompanied by his entourage of monsters and rascals like those in the pictures of Bosch and those in Meckel's other graphic cycles. People crowd into the almost completed tower through all possible entrances. Birds sit outside and laugh, as work

¹⁶⁵ Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan, pp. 12-13.

on the tower goes on. It is built up higher, until it dominates the cities around it. The angel of death flies by. The tower is built up higher than the clouds; then it falls down. The builder and his entourage escape, but the people are caught in the ruin. A phoenix arises from the heap of rubble, but it is clearly the peacock of Meckel's "Der Pfau":

Ich sah aus Deutschlands Asche keinen Phönix steigen;
 doch ich sah einen Pfau in der Leuchtzeit seines Gefieders,
 ich sah ihn strahlende Räder schlagen
 im Gegenlicht eisgrauer Himmel und Wetterleuchten
 und hörte den Jubel der Krähen und Spatzen und sah
 Elsternschwärme in seine Goldfedern stürzen
 Läuse finster aus seinem Gefieder wachsen
 grosse Ameisen seine Augen zerfressen.¹⁶⁶

And then come "Die neuen Ausrufer," in the last picture of the cycle.

Das Meer (1965), like Der Turm, has more of a cyclical character than the first three graphic "cycles." Exactly the same picture, called first "Das Wasser" and later "Stille," is used at the beginning and at the end of the cycle. The preface to the book is Meckel's version, in quasi-Biblical language, of a story of the Flood (but with no ark available): "Und was von [dem Menschen] übrig blieb, war einzig ein Widerhall von Wut und Weinen und das ungehörte Echo seines Protests." Many of the people in Das Meer are more conventionally and realistically drawn than most of the people in other graphic cycles by Meckel, but the usual monsters, mermaids and oversized birds are also present, along with fanciful games like those in Das Welttheater: "Das Schaukelpferd," "Die Papierschiffe,"

¹⁶⁶ Wildnisse, p. 26.

"Der Schneckenritt," "Das Maskenspiel," and "Die Puppe." Das Meer is the largest of the books of etchings, and the quality of reproduction of the plates is superior.

III. DUAL TALENT

Much has been made of Meckel's dual talent, and deservedly so, for he is one of the very few contemporary German writer-artists who can write and draw with what appears to be equal ease and felicity, and who is well known for his work in both fields. His mastery of the techniques of etching and printing also deserves comment. Two of Meckel's fellow Berlin writer-artists might be added to a list of contemporary dually talented artists: the nonsense-writer, satirist and graphic artist Günter Bruno Fuchs, and Günter Grass, who is, however, much more acclaimed as a writer than as a graphic artist or sculptor.

The July 1968 exhibit "Berliner Schriftsteller malen" (in the "Galerie Miniature" of the Berlin book store Camilla Speth) included work by Fuchs, Grass, Meckel, and Robert Wolfgang Schnell, Wolfdietrich Schnurre, and Hans-Joachim Zeidler. Of the six, only Zeidler is not well known as a writer. Fuchs is the center of a group of Berlin graphic artists which includes also Ali Schindehütte: the artists of the "zinke" art gallery and magazine, founded by Schnell and Fuchs in 1959, and now of the Werkstatt Rixdorfer Drucke, founded in 1962. Except for Schnell and Fuchs, however, these artists are not writers as well. The subjects and techniques

of Meckel's graphic art, especially his woodcuts, often show affinity to the work of this group. Meckel has contributed texts for the (now extinct) "zinke" magazine, and woodcuts for a folio of pictures printed by the Werkstatt Rixdorfer Drucke.

The Dada, Expressionist and Surrealist movements in the first part of the twentieth century produced many well known artist-writers and writer-artists: Oskar Kokoschka, Ernst Barlach, Hans Arp and Kurt Schwitters. Their predecessors in the twentieth century include Paul Scheerbart and Alfred Kubin. The dramatist Friedrich Dürrenmatt wrote Kafkaesque parables and was a graphic artist in the 1940's, before he began writing plays. Like many other writers, he has made drawings to accompany his later books. The Belgian surrealist artist-writer Henri Michaux is one of the most prominent living twentieth century artist-writers, and his prose parables are as close to Meckel's prose as are any of the other contemporary models (Lettau, Aichinger, Fuchs, etc.).

In Künstlerische Doppelbegabungen, Herbert Günther suggests that the artistic and literary activities of dually talented artists may influence each other--and also reinforce or cause limitations in one or the other medium. He writes, for example: "Zur Farbe als dem eigentlichen malerischen Material und zu grösserem Format als der Aufgabe der Malerei sind nur einzelne [Doppelbegabte] vorgedrungen."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Herbert Günther, Künstlerische Doppelbegabungen, p. 32.

The brilliant combination of colors is the most striking feature of Meckel's crayon drawings (many of which are in large format, like most paintings) and linocuts. Like a five or six year old child, Meckel often layers color, one color forming a rectangle around another. Color in a print is, of course, different from color in a painting. Günther's suggestion that most dually talented artists prefer smaller formats and genres such as the short story or poem, as opposed to the drama or novel, does seem to be generally true, in spite of the contrary evidence furnished by the work of such individual artists as Ernst Barlach and Günther Grass.

Dually talented writers seem often to tend to the fantastic, and their books are often full of powerful descriptions, which are easy to visualize. Arp, Schwitters and Kokoschka in the first, Meckel, Fuchs and Grass in the last half of the century are dually talented artists with a tendency to the fantastic and grotesque. Earlier examples from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are the Swiss painter-poet Johann Heinrich Füssli, William Blake, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and even Wilhelm Busch. In Herbert Günther's view Füssli's poems anticipate Hölderlin and Nietzsche, his paintings Alfred Kubin and modern surrealism.¹⁶⁸

The relationship of literature to art in these and other areas has not yet been well enough explored, and a terminology satisfying to critics and scholars of both fields has yet to be developed.¹⁶⁹ Theoreticians have

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁶⁹Christopher Middleton, "A new visual and poetic fantasy."

debated for centuries about the possibilities and dangers of carrying over the critical apparatus developed for one art into criticism of another art. The concepts of the grotesque, the mannered and the fantastic, as well as names for movements such as Surrealist, Expressionist and Impressionist, are commonly applied to both literature and art. The validity of this depends primarily on the nature of the individual case.

Meckel's talent for creating symbolic figures expresses itself in all three genres, graphic art, poems and prose. His graphic art has a literary quality; imagery is important in some of his poems and stories. Specific parallels such as the poems which mention the main character of the graphic cycle Moël, or the graphic cycle about Rubim, the boy of "Der Wind, der dich weckt," are less interesting and significant than the fusion of the two arts in Meckel's creative power. This unity is expressed, for example, in his making picture books such as In der Tinte, in which both text and pictures are essential to the story, and in which there are really neither illustrations, nor accompanying text. It is expressed in his occasional drawing of colorful crayon designs as frames around poem manuscripts, or by his making pictures from actual drafts of poems, on top of the marked-out words and the corrections. The unity is indicated by Meckel's indiscriminate references to literary and artistic figures, which is based on his considering either to be equally a creature of the imagination. Whether a specific figure or symbol is drawn or written into life may be determined by accident: by a request from a publisher for a children's

story, or by the availability of writing and drawing materials, or by the suitability of a medium for the particular formulation.

Meckel never seems tempted to copy in one genre what he has created in another; he creates it anew. The poem about a crow realizes the crow in rhyme, pronounced rhythm, and play with language. The story about a crow relies on the plot. And Meckel's drawings of birds are not dependent on either of these already realized crows, but are quite simply sinister birds. Meckel claims that there is a unity inherent in all his work, but he sees it in himself as the creator.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰Anon., "Christoph Meckel," TAGS (Austin, Texas), April 1968, p. 1.

CHAPTER VI

CRITICAL RECEPTION

In this section I will discuss Meckel's parody of literary and art criticism (Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers) and report some of the various conclusions reached in discussion of Meckel's work by contemporary literary and art critics.

In his book Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers Christopher Magalan Meckel offers not only parody of literary and art criticism, but also an ironic treatment of his own work. The name Christopher Magalan is clearly an encoding of Meckel's own name. Giving the author of the introduction to the book the name C. E. McKell is another part of the joke. And the brochure announcing an exhibit of Meckel's crayon drawings stated that "Der Urenkel des Künstlers [Christopher Magalan] ist anwesend und eröffnet die Ausstellung."¹⁷¹ It was Meckel himself, of course. The fictional Magalan lived in the last half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. He produced exhibits of fireworks, and the book is a historical-critical edition of his Noticen and sketches for the fire-

¹⁷¹ Some of these crayon drawings were later published in Meckel's book Amüsierpapiere.

works.

Meckel is undoubtedly aware of the appropriateness of the term Feuerwerk as a figure for his own literary and artistic work. The word Feuerwerk is often used in German literary and art criticism to describe brilliance, ingenuity, a tour de force. For example, Marianne Thalmann writes quite seriously of the Märchen of Clemens Brentano, in a sentence which might almost have inspired Meckel's image of Magalan as

Feuerwerker:

Das ergibt ein Feuerwerk von Ironie, in dem die Rheinmärchen zwischen Schicksalstragik und Situationskomik lichterloh aufbrennen und ein Häufchen Asche hinterlassen.¹⁷²

Meckel has developed the metaphor extensively: Magalan's father is stoker on a ship, and later finds work as a lamp-lighter. Thus young Magalan grows up in an atmosphere which brings him into contact with light and fire at an early age. Magalan sees a great fire in Newcastle as a boy (like Meckel in Freiburg¹⁷³); he is so impressed that he tries to become a volunteer fireman. He eventually becomes a well-known producer of fireworks shows, and is invited to all the courts of Europe. Like one of Meckel's personae in his prose sketches about artistic creation:

der wohl oder übel inspirierte Magalan ist bemüht, sich der unfreiwilligen Visionen zu entledigen, indem er versucht, sie in grossartige Feuerwerke umzusetzen.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Marianne Thalmann, Das Märchen und die Moderne, p. 77.

¹⁷³ This is described in Meckel's story "Der Brand."

¹⁷⁴ Noticen, p. 13.



Illustration from Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers Christopher Magalan, p. 53

Magalan disappears from the world during one of his own fireworks displays in 1848, at the age of eighty-nine, under what C. E. McKell calls "tragischen, aber folgerichtigen und im Wesen seiner Kunst begründeten Umständen."¹⁷⁵

Magalan's drawings are unmistakably Meckel's: the fish, the letters and numbers scattered throughout pictures, the squat men in tall hats, the illusion of movement, the snail shells, the pig-fly (like Meckel's elephant-bird). And what Professor Kuchenfuchs writes here often reads like a parody of critics' articles on Meckel and on other fantastic and surrealist writers--for example: "Sachwelt wechselt schrankenlos, doch keineswegs sinnverwirrend, in Wesenswelt über."¹⁷⁶ Passages in Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers which mention Archimboldi and Leonardo, and passages in an article by Meckel on presentation and Verschlüsselung, apparently refer to G. R. Hocke's studies of mannerism in art and literature.¹⁷⁷ Meckel has used the firework-artist as a figure for himself.

Certainly Meckel's parodies of literary and art criticism are effective. However, in a review of the Noticen Richard Anders found that Meckel did not achieve satire in this book, because he was not able to remove himself from his own imaginary world. Meckel seemed rather to be

¹⁷⁵ Noticen, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ Noticen, p. 40.

¹⁷⁷ This is discussed above in chapter IV, pp. 69-73.

concerned with anticipating critical reaction to his own work. But only to the extent that Meckel himself is somehow exemplary, is he useful as an object of satire.¹⁷⁸ These observations are correct, but perhaps unnecessary, since there is no indication that Meckel was attempting to write a satire in Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers, but rather a parody.

Critics have argued that there are imitative and derivative elements in Meckel's work, but they often insist, in the same article, on Meckel's originality. This can be explained by the fact that as a rule Meckel assimilates, and then recreates, what he has absorbed from other writers and artists. What Marianne Thalmann says about Brentano's Märchen seems to apply also to Meckel:

Brentano bedeutet durch die Gabe eines eigenartigen Ausdrucks und durch die andererseits ungewöhnlich grosse Verpflichtung an Quellenmaterial ein besonderes Problem. . . . Alles, was ihm in den Weg gekommen ist, klingt nach und mischt sich mit der Verliebtheit in seine eigene Laune. In der Hand eines Dichters von seinem Schlag ist alles ungeformter Rohstoff, der wieder einen Autor sucht.¹⁷⁹

Karl Gunter Simon writes; "Trotz [der] Ahnen schafft Meckel etwas ganz Eigenständiges."¹⁸⁰ Another critic says: "Im höchsten Grade bemerkenswert[sind] auch das Ausmass seiner Phantasie, der Ideenreichtum

¹⁷⁸ Richard Anders, "Blinder Zerrspiegel."

¹⁷⁹ Marianne Thalmann, Das Märchen und die Moderne, p. 59.

¹⁸⁰ Karl Gunter Simon, "Das literarische Portrait," p. 5.

seiner Vorstellungswelt, " but in the next paragraph: "Da und dort arbeitet er--sicherlich unbewusst--unter dem Einfluss und Eindruck grosser Vorbilder."¹⁸¹ Horst Bienek¹⁸² and Rudolf Nicolaus Maier,¹⁸³ as well as Gisela Brackert-Rausch, who suggests that the similarity is deliberate,¹⁸⁴ have pointed out an unfortunate similarity between Meckel's poem "Als ich nach Hause kam"¹⁸⁵ and Günter Eich's poem "Wo ich wohne."¹⁸⁶ Other poems by Meckel show some influence by Eich, as Klaus U. Reinke points out.¹⁸⁷ A few other poems are reminiscent of Gottfried Benn, or Bertolt Brecht, or Hans Magnus Enzensberger, or even Dylan Thomas. But a year after he wrote the article which mentions "Als ich nach Hause kam," Horst Bienek praised Meckel's "unerschöpfliche Phantasie."¹⁸⁸

Eckart Klessmann accuses Meckel of self-imitation and of repetition, in his review of Meckel's radio play "Der Wind, der dich weckt":

¹⁸¹ Hanns Arens, "Traum und Wirklichkeit."

¹⁸² Horst Bienek, "Legendäre Wirklichkeit."

¹⁸³ Rudolf Nicolaus Maier, Das moderne Gedicht, p. 90.

¹⁸⁴ Gisela Brackert-Rausch, "Christoph Meckel," p. 223.

¹⁸⁵ Nebelhörner (1959), p. 9.

¹⁸⁶ Günter Eich, Botschaften des Regens (1955).

¹⁸⁷ Klaus U. Reinke, "Es geht um Leben und Tod."

¹⁸⁸ Horst Bienek, "Im Land der Phantasie."

Meckel hat diesen lyrischen Cocktail nach jenem Rezept gemischt, das für alle seine Bücher seit eh und je verbindlich ist. Das übliche Meckel-Bestiarium, womit der Autor schon seit zehn Jahren in schöner Beharrlichkeit unterhält (oder langweilt),¹⁸⁹ [Meckel ist] nur noch ein grosser Selbstimitator.

Peter Rühmkorf expresses a more mixed reaction to Meckel's poems, although he, like Klessmann, accuses Meckel of repeating himself. Where Meckel disciplines himself, says Rühmkorf, the results are most valuable.

Was alles versucht [Meckel] auf einen kühnen Zug zusammenzubringen, und es ist dann doch nur addiert und zueinander geworfen! Wie souverän scheint da einer aus dem unerschöpflichen Vorrat seiner Phantasie zu spenden, und hat sich bereits mehrfach wiederholt, ehe das Gedicht zu Ende ist.

Sicher, da gibt es unerhörte Einzelheiten, grossartige Bilder und frappierende originelle Wendungen, aber... was dann folgt oder was die Umgebung bildet solcher Genieblitze und Glücksfunde, ist meist nur die widerstandslose Assoziation... nur dass seine ersten Einfälle dann nicht immer gerade die besten sind und oft nur--literarische Reminiszenz.

Allerdings... dass sich in Meckels Gedichtband [Wildnisse] immerhin einige fünf sechs oder sieben Gedichte finden, die sich gerade dadurch auszeichnen, dass der Verfasser seine Talente zusammenhielt. Und hier nun... erreicht der Autor, was die Märchenmanufaktur seiner wuchernden Prosapoeme vergeblich anstrebt: Verzauberung.¹⁹⁰

The reviewer of an exhibit by Meckel, who signs himself "epb," writes:

Bei flüchtigem Hinblick denkt man, dieser Graphiker sei ein Kind, gezeugt von Chagall und der Graphikerin Hannah Nagel. Aber bald stellt man fest, hier sei ein Elementargeist am Werk, ein kräftiges, oft rücksichtsloses künstlerisches

¹⁸⁹ Eckart Klessmann, "Hörspiele--nachgelesen."

¹⁹⁰ Peter Rühmkorf, "Wildnisse," pp. 134-135.

Temperament, ganz von heute, wenngleich nicht "abstrakt," wohl aber abstrahierend.¹⁹¹

Here two paradoxes are mentioned: not only the contradictory impressions of derivativeness and originality which Meckel makes, but also the contradictory impressions of epigonality ("ein Kind, gezeugt von Chagall") and contemporaneity ("ganz von heute").

Meckel himself sometimes writes ironically of his own style. The reviewer of one of Meckel's frequent readings, "elha," apparently takes Meckel too seriously and perhaps even misinterprets a sentence when he writes:

"Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen" lautet der Titel einer... Erzählung, in der Christoph Meckel den Sprachklang der Romantiker restituiert. Eine Wendung, so gibt er zu, könnte vielleicht von Höltz stammen, lebten wir nur in seiner Zeit. [This may be quoted incorrectly; in the published version, Meckel writes, "Hätte ich zu Hölty's Zeiten gelebt, wäre das möglicherweise von mir; wie die Dinge aber stehn, ist es von niemand und nur an den Rand geschrieben."]
Diese Äusserung weist den Autor als unzeitgemässen Schreiber aus, als ein Talent mit der Sehnsucht nach versunkenen Zeiten und abgeschiedenen Stätten. Er besingt den "Meletomenus" (den in Sorge Befangenen) Andreas Gryphius [in Bei Lebzeiten zu singen] und beschwört den imaginären Ort seiner Kindheitsträume: die unauffindbare, grösste, schönste und reichste aller Städte mit dem seltsamen Namen Ebènda... Auch heute lebt Christoph Meckel noch in Ebènda... Aus der suggestiven Bildmetapher heraus (Die Mittage sind

¹⁹¹epb, "Kleine Ausstellungen."

fett von alter, betrunkenen Bläue") [Again in 'Dunkler Sommer']
kippt Meckel manchmal unvermittelt in den niedlichen
autobiographischen Plausch nach bewährter Romantikerart. ¹⁹²

Dieter E. Zimmer too points out the apparent romanticism of Meckel and some other poets in a quite favorable review:

Sie alle manipulieren nicht an der Sprache herum, die bleibt intakt, sondern schreiben Verse, wie sie den Laboranten von "movens" als Relikte aus Grossmutter's Zeiten erscheinen müssen: poetischer Sprache anvertraute Erfahrungen, jedem Gutwilligen verständlich. ¹⁹³

Even the most favorable critic cannot avoid recognizing a strong romantic element in Meckel's work, and describing Meckel in terms similar to Karl Günter Simon's:

ein Romantiker, der kräftig genug ist, der Welt seinen Traum entgegenzuhalten, -- ein Träumer, der nicht die Augen verschliesst und trotzdem nicht resigniert. ¹⁹⁴

Fascination with the city, especially in its darker aspects, and with travel (we have seen both of these in Meckel's work), are Romantic tendencies, according to Marianne Thalmann's book Romantiker entdecken die Stadt. Like his literary ancestors, the Romantic writers, Meckel's mode is sometimes an apparently pure, innocent, unreflecting poetry, such as that supposedly found in the Volksmärchen--and sometimes ironic self-reflection,

¹⁹² elha, "Aus Ebenda."

¹⁹³ Dieter E. Zimmer, "Lyrik in unserer Zeit."

¹⁹⁴ Karl Günter Simon, "Das literarische Portrait," p. 4.

highly refined and civilized. Meckel manages to induce or fall into the first of these states, but not often enough to ensure the objective, restrained style of the Volksmärchen in all his works. Often the ego is intrusively prominent. (According to some Romantic philosophers, the ego alone creates the world and art.)

At his best Meckel is either in the first of these modes, or in a fusion of the two, in which case he resembles Brentano most of all the Romantic writers. This resemblance lies in Meckel's gentle irony and his joy in words and sounds, as well as in the lyrical-narrative technique of association by which one word gives rise to another; Brentano sometimes, but rarely, has the apparently naive closeness to the folk tone attributed to Meckel above. Brentano's Widmung to Goethe's mother, which precedes his best known Märchen, "Gockel, Hinkel und Gackeleia," is an obvious model for the Ebenda section of Meckel's "Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen." Both describe a small boy's fantasy kingdom, in similar ways. Meckel made a series of etchings illustrating a well known poem from Brentano's and Arnim's Des Knaben Wunderhorn, "Das bucklige Männlein." And Marianne Thalmann's description of Brentano's Märchen is almost applicable to some of Meckel's works, though not so much Meckel's Märchen as his poems and graphic art and other prose:

Sein Märchen ist aus Einfühlungsgabe und Sprachphantasie gemacht, so wie er selbst eine Märchenfigur, von liebenswürdig Heterogenem war.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Marianne Thalmann, Das Märchen und die Moderne, p. 61.

Die Mäusestadt aus holländischem Käse mit den schönsten Gärten von Schimmel... sind nur witzige Abziehbilder unserer eigenen Umwelt, in die Architektur einer anderen Bevölkerung übersetzt.¹⁹⁶

Brentano kennt nicht nur die Magie eines Namens, er kennt auch schon die Freude am sprachlichen Einfall, der zweckfrei wird.¹⁹⁷

Brentanos Wendung zum Klang entspricht wohl einem in seinen Briefen oft wiederkehrenden Bekenntnis: So schwer mein Herz, so leicht mein Sinn. Er liebt den Tanz der Substantiva, der ein Ding in seine Teile aufsplittert und Schattierungen häuft. Er stellt gleich oder 'ähnlich klingende Wörter zusammen und zerlegt die Wirklichkeit in ein Nebeneinander der Dinge. Der Satz wird ein witziges Chaos aus verschiedenartigsten Gegenständen, in dem die Ganzheiten aufgehoben werden, die dingliche Schwere abgestreift wird, und in das Lautgeplätscher und in den Sprühregen von Wortspielen 'übergeht. Es ist ein Stilmittel, das er nicht entbehren kann, und das er auch bedenkenlos häuft.¹⁹⁸

But Meckel's style is too buoyant and energetic, and his thought too modern, to allow an analogy with Brentano to be fully satisfactory.

Baroque, the term used to describe another period as much characterized by mannerism in literature and art and as congenial to Meckel's style as the Romantic period, is another descriptive category which has been applied to Meckel's work by Wolfgang Maier ("barocke Vitalität")¹⁹⁹ and by Klaus U. Reinke:

Der Grundton französisch beeinflusster, surrealer Romantik ist geblieben. Aber eine barocke, sprudelnde, drängende,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 62. Cf. Land der Umbramauten.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁹⁹ Wolfgang Maier, "Christoph Meckel," p. 12.

hochschlagende Bildhäufung hat sich hinzugesellt.²⁰⁰

It is even tempting to seek in Meckel's defiant assertion of his ego, and of a style about which even he is ironic, the hallmark of a very modern sensibility: a kind of "Camp," an attempt to establish a personal and unconventional style as valid and attractive. To the extent that this personal style includes the innocence and passion for justice of the Märchen, such defiant assertion could be a moral act. Heinrich von Nussbaum considers that possible, but unlikely:

Will er also mit dem Vorwurf, dass nicht einmal der Dichter in seinen Träumen verschont bleibe, vor dem Zugriff des Fremden, Dunklen, Bösen, die Grundformel für das total verplante, totalitär beanspruchte, allseits 'öffentliche Dasein geben? Ein faszinierendes Unternehmen, scheint mir, aber für derart dialektische Aussage, für eine solche kritische Unterwanderung der eigenen Machtherrlichkeit findet sich keinen weiteren Anhaltspunkt.²⁰¹

Christopher Middleton points out that Meckel's art has validity of a different and perhaps a better kind:

his style is a distinctly original one... whatever the antecedents, they have been wholly assimilated. Herr Meckel is not a kind of starry Kafka, sugar-plum Beckett or zombie Dada. The Land of the Umbramauten is not a parable beyond paraphrase; nor is it a whimsy fringe-effect of a culture without orientation or roots. It is a pure fiction, born out of the desperate impulse underlying any coherence in art; the impulse to create without purpose beyond the creating act itself... only as a creator does the artist or poet enrich with some new thing the content of experience.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Klaus U. Reinke, "Es geht um Leben und Tod."

²⁰¹ Heinrich von Nussbaum, "Das literarische Porträt," p. 10.

²⁰² Christopher Middleton, "A new visual and poetic fantasy."

But that quality in some of Meckel's work which Middleton describes in another article as "a free-wheeling blackness with a minimum of sensuous or psychological relevance"²⁰³ is seen by some to be a simple inability, or lack of desire on Meckel's part, to root his work effectively in the everyday world. In a review of the same book of poems to which Middleton referred above, Bei Lebzeiten zu singen, Reinhold Grimm writes:

Der lyrische Eskapismus...kennt indes noch mehr Wege...
die Resignation des Nachahmers...der Rückzug ins Private
und ins Exotische, das Ausweichen in die Bohème-Attitüde und
eine antiquierte Kneipenidylle.²⁰⁴

Peter Hamm also writes harshly of escapism in the Nachwort to his anthology of contemporary poems (without applying these terms to Meckel):

Dabei zeigte es sich doch gerade hier, wie kräftig diejenigen
mit der Zeit marschierten, die glaubten, ohne ihre Zeit
auskommen zu können und sich im Museum der modernen
Poesie einrichteten oder aber ihr Heil in Grotten, Labyrinthen,
Zisternen, Amphoren, Aschen- und Tränenkrügen suchten, bei
Tang und Algen, Fabelfisch und Vogel Rock, Magier Merlin
und den Chimären, denn: waren Regression und Restauration
nicht Merkmale der politischen Entwicklung, wurde nicht eine
ganze Industrie, die des Schlagers, damit beschäftigt,
Fluchtromantik zu produzieren?²⁰⁵

Less harsh, and probably more relevant to a discussion of Meckel's work, is Hans Bender's statement in his article on political poems in general:

Alle diese Konfrontationen lassen sich, weil sie so vage
bleiben, leicht zur allgemeinen, wirkungslosen und
sentimentalen Anwendung missbrauchen. Die Konfrontation

²⁰³ Christopher Middleton, "Phantoms, Furniture and Futility."

²⁰⁴ Reinhold Grimm, "Deutsche Lyrik 1967," p. 49.

²⁰⁵ Peter Hamm, Aussichten, p. 328.

wird nützlicher und gefährlicher, wenn dem Monstrum Öffentlichkeit reale Züge gegeben werden; wenn die Mächtigen, die Feinde, die Politiker kenntlich gemacht werden.²⁰⁶

Meckel's political and social criticism, to the extent that one can call any of his work by this name, is usually general and symbolic (or vague, as Bender says). Yet Meckel did sign a call for a new regime, which was published in the influential weekly newspaper Die Zeit and signed by many other West German writers as well. And according to Heinrich von Nussbaum in his "literarisches Porträt" of Meckel, Meckel was called by the East German newspaper Neues Deutschland, along with the decidedly radical West German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "engagierter und aggressiver Kritiker bundesrepublikanischer Wirklichkeit."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶Hans Bender, "Über politische Gedichte," p. 238.

²⁰⁷Heinrich von Nussbaum, "Das literarische Porträt," p. 4.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In this concluding section I will attempt to describe Meckel's conception of the role of the poet or artist and to describe Meckel's own place in contemporary German literature. It should be clear from the sections on Meckel's prose fiction, poems and graphic art that the most striking aspects of Meckel's work are his talent and versatility and the fact that he has managed to make his poems, stories and pictures, and the personal style which informs them, noticed (and worthy of notice) in a period in which rather different subjects and styles are commonly demanded of the artist and writer. One key to this is Meckel's own conception of the role of the artist.

Various traditional conceptions of the role of the poet are often adopted by Meckel: the poet as creator or inventor, in the tradition of German Romanticism, Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Baudelaire; as magician or alchemist; as vagabond, jongleur or troubadour in the tradition of Francois Villon; as high priest (poeta vates). "Der Dichter als Erfinder: ein alter Topos," writes Gisela Brackert-Rausch. "Wer ihn zu verwirklichen heute noch Phantasie besitzt, mag getrost auf eine forcierte Stellungnahme verzichten. Er hat das Altertum aller Schulen

hinter sich." ²⁰⁸ Meckel seems to see the invention of a literary or artistic figure as one of the highest forms of creation. He seems to envisage these literary and artistic figures as taking on an independent life in the imaginations of men, independent of their creators.

The following passage indicates clearly that Meckel likes to think of himself as a magician and of his relationship with a poem as magical, or at least as non-causal. This comes out in the passage even though Meckel has just finished giving two pages of concrete details of incidents from his own life which, he assumes, gave rise to the poem:

An dieser Stelle ¹¹spätestens entzieht mir das Gedicht jedes weitere Wort und weist mich an, den Mund zu halten. Ich gebe ihm gerne nach; mag sein, ich unterwerfe mich noch der geringsten Strophe. Ich lasse das Gedicht seiner Wege ziehn, wohin auch immer, und es ¹¹lässt mich, was sein Recht ist und worum ich es bitte, weit hinter sich ¹¹zurück und sieht sich nicht mehr nach mir um. ²⁰⁹

In many of his writings--as, for example, in the story "Die Schatten" (Der glückliche Magier) and in the Umbramauten stories "Herr Ucht" and "Meine Freunde,"--Meckel seems to assume the persona, or to project a possible persona, of the Märchen-king, the benevolent power, the "vorangehender grosser Bruder" with charismatic healing power. Ortrud Stumpfe writes:

Das Ziel des Märchens ist es, König werden zu können.
...Als echten König bezeichnete man immer den souveränen

²⁰⁸ Gisela Brackert-Rausch, "Christoph Meckel," p. 227.

²⁰⁹ "Ode an mächtige Mannschaften," Doppelinterpretationen, p. 265.

Menschen, der fähig ist, sein Verhalten und Tun und seine Umwelt zu verantworten innerhalb seines Bereichs.... Von ihm und durch ihn fühlte man das "Heil" oder das "Charisma" wirken.... Hier gründet das eigentliche Geheimnis echten Königtums, das ausstrahlende "Heil," das Charisma des vorangehenden grossen Bruders.²¹⁰

This role of the Märchen-king is explicit in some of Meckel's stories, such as "Drusch der glückliche Magier" and "Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen" (both from Der glückliche Magier), but generally it is implicit.

Sometimes, however, the narrative or lyrical persona is powerless even to control its own demonic will to power, as in several poems from Wildnisse, or it is burdened with guilt at its failure to love. Positive characters, often objects of love, may be mad (Zünd, Gulliver), or awkward and child-like (Tullipan), or they may have the taciturnity, independence and innocence of animal creatures (Gwili, the crow, the lion).

In Meckel's world evil men, who seek and perpetuate destructive political or social power, can dominate the innocent. Such evil characters are found in the stories "Mein König" (Der glückliche Magier) and "Im Land der Umbramauten," in the poem "Chimärenjagd" (Wildnisse), and in the graphic cycles. To maintain his very existence, not to speak of his role as "vorangehender grosser Bruder," the persona of the author relies on the airy lightness of the fool of the Tarot cards, on the sovereign fantasy of the French Symbolists and on the irony of the German Romanticists. Sometimes the persona has a function which is closer to that of Simplicissimus.

²¹⁰Ortrud Stumpfe, Die Symbolsprache des Märchens, pp. 24-26.

mus, Candide, even Parzival or Don Quixote, and especially of Meckel's own Moël: the holy innocent.

Meckel's characters alternate between attitudes of princely arrogance and flight from persecution, sometimes in the same sentence, as in "Ein roter Faden": "gefoltert (ich werde mich mit Gedichten revanchieren)."²¹¹ The narrator is threatened not only by power-mad rulers, not only by his own failure to love and by his own will to power, but also by the creatures of his fantasy, his own stories, which threaten to assume power over their creator. Sometimes they do assume this power, as in the stories "Die Schatten" (Der glückliche Magier) and "Herr Ucht" (Im Land der Umbramauten), and in such poems as In der Tinte and "Gedicht über das Schreiben von Gedichten" (Wildnisse). The narrator of In der Tinte exclaims:

Was gehn mich Tintenfass
und Tinte an!
Was schert es mich
dass ich aus Tinte bin
und in der Tinte sitze
schwarz und lang!
Ja, in der Tinte--
der mich reingesetzt hat
soll wissen: Ich bin gern in dieser Tinte!
Verflucht, mich freut
die dicke dunkle Tinte--
ja, mir gehts gut!
Ein Glück ist diese Tinte!

²¹¹Der glückliche Magier, p. 149.

The poet defies the creatures of his imagination by accepting them, and wins power over them by acknowledging their power.

The individual's conscious or subconscious desire for power and the threat of the destructive power of political rulers and mobs are presented as problems in Meckel's works. But to Meckel a serious and more subtle threat to freedom is the social and cultural pressure which he sees in contemporary Germany, a general tendency calling for writers to be ostentatiously engagiert, sophisticated, obscure or experimental in syntax, logic and diction. He protests such pressures implicitly in many works, and explicitly and most passionately in his introduction to Die Balladen des Thomas Balkan. In a review of the Balladen, Helmut Mader corroborates what Meckel says:

Geeinigt hat sich der bundesdeutsche Feuilletonismus im Augenblick auf den von Reimar Lenz mit Recht als dürr und das Bewusstsein verengend charakterisierten "Neuen Glauben" der Linken und auf einen zweitrangigen und langweiligen Sprachformalismus, auf die Schlagworte "Engagement" und "Experiment"--beide eher gläubig und opportunistisch verehrt als theoretisch fundamenti²¹²ert.

Meckel's characteristic language and tone, which are more traditional than experimental, seem to be maintained partly as a protest against such pressure. This is the lyrical, evocative, incantatory tone of the writer of parables, Märchen and poems. Meckel has never written a drama or a novel, or for that matter, anything in which dialectics or the presentation

²¹² Helmut Mader, "Der sozusagen pathetische Ton."

of problems would be appropriate. He prefers the paradox.

Meckel participated in one of the discussions of the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin on the subject "Erklärbarkeit oder Nicht-Erklärbarkeit der Welt als Axiom der Literatur." His comment on the question whether the world can be explained is characteristic: he rejects an insurmountable polarity.

Das Dilemma besteht doch in dem Gegensatz zwischen Erklärbarkeit und Nicht-Erklärbarkeit, zwischen Beschreibung und Interpretation. Eventuell könnte dieser Gegensatz im Spiel aufgehoben werden, in der Figur des Clowns, in der Kasparfigur bei Arp, auch im "Monsieur Teste" von Valéry; wenn Chaplin auftritt, interpretiert er gleichzeitig sich selbst.

When Walter Höllerer describes this as "auf ein drittes Feld zurückziehen," Meckel answers;

Es handelt sich keineswegs um ein Zurückziehen, sondern um ein Koinzidenz.²¹³

Meckel's grotesque art is not exaggerated into the realm of the absurd or the nonsensical. It is occasionally, as in the Noticen des Feuerwerkers, parodistic or satirical. But usually it reflects a sensitivity to the possibilities of play inherent in language and art. His approach is far enough from being realistic to give him freedom for play, and, at the same time, for a kind of criticism which is necessarily playful and light.

There is no doubt that Meckel lives mentally and spiritually in the twentieth century. He often approaches Romanticism in his styles and themes,

²¹³Walter Höllerer, ed. "Erklärbarkeit oder Nicht-Erklärbarkeit der Welt als Axiom der Literatur," p. 196.

but not in a sentimental or even in a purely romantic spirit. That innocence which is reminiscent of such truly kindred spirits as Hans Christian Andersen, Eduard Mörike or Clemens Brentano, and which distinguishes Meckel's style so pronouncedly from that of his contemporaries, must be considered to be at least partially a deliberate manner. Meckel's defiant and tenacious maintenance of a manner of innocence, part Bohemian and part fairy-tale, is not simply regression to Romantic traditions, but rather a manner born of, and designed to cope with, the problematic modern mind. There is no conservative tone.

Meckel rejects the possibility of resignation or submission to the dictates of society, and insists on his right to express his own buoyant fantasy. There is a kind of egotism in Meckel's work which, when it is idiosyncratic rather than creative, produces texts of less intrinsic interest than stories like "Der Zünd." In "Der Zünd" the personal element has been transformed into an objective vision. However, the insistence on the ego in so much of Meckel's work does have a function: it challenges the reader to realize that idiosyncrasy may be more valid, as a form of existence, than impersonal neutrality. Idiosyncrasy is a way of avoiding that resignation which to Meckel is so fatal. The arbitrary ego is, nevertheless, a feature of Meckel's world which at times seems to impede creation of his visionary realm.

In celebrating the innocent, mad, awkward, animal-like and child-like, Meckel implicitly rejects the sophisticated, the fashionable, the

cerebral, and especially the power-oriented: those who desire power over others through knowledge, physical possession, or destruction. Meckel creates distorted but recognizable, fantastic but conventional forms, and maintains a tone which disdains sophistication--or surpasses it.

Meckel could be called an enfant terrible among contemporary German writers, although he does not seek to make himself noticed, nor does he provoke scandals. His talent and the freshness and power of his fantasy are generally unquestioned. Recognition has come to him in the form of numerous literary prizes, and his work has usually been well-received by reviewers. Yet he persists in rejecting the idea of critics or prizes, in rejecting the "Literaturbetrieb" as a whole.

The tenacity with which Meckel insists, in print, on his right to his own style and on its value, puzzles some who see it as a derivative mixture of Surrealism and Romanticism, nonexperimental and noncommitted. But Meckel's style is unmistakably his own, in spite of many casual similarities to the styles of other writers and artists. He is, moreover, not only prolific and talented, but also committed in a good sense, if not in the only sense. Meckel has about the same political bias as many other contemporary German writers, and sometimes even signs petitions or participates in demonstrations. This is not the fear of overt political commitment, which partly explains apathy among older generations of Germans. Rather, Meckel is skeptical of panaceas, and insistent on as much authenticity as possible in political activism. He seems to see the freedom involved in, for example,

his own literary independence--and in his defense of the individual's need for pleasure and for creative work--as a prerequisite of a healthy and free society. The tension (often resulting in fusion) in many modern poets, such as Gottfried Benn and T. S. Eliot, between intellectuality and severe form on one hand, and mystic irrationality and free, alogical form on the other, or between politics and poetry, as for Bertolt Brecht, is not relevant for Meckel. It is likely that he perceives such polarities as unhealthy exaggerations. Meckel seems to reject, at least for his own work, most political categories and most abstraction and experimentation in art and literature. He is a sensitive and psychologically very complicated writer, but not an intellectually problematic one. His most difficult and most favored role is that of poet-as-magician. He is at home with the concept of Leichtigkeit in art, of art as Spiel, which has been traditional at least since Schiller. The narrator of Meckel's radio play "Eine Seite aus dem Paradiesbuch" closes;

Ich schliesse das Paradiesbuch über euren Namen, und Klang und Tinte geb ich dem Traum zurück. Sebastian. Fanny. Vater. Mutter. Grauer Heinrich und Tante Rosalie. Ihr habt mich belustigt und in Erstaunen versetzt, und es machte mir Spass, eine Weile mit euch zu spielen.²¹⁴

²¹⁴P. 65.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

A List of Meckel's Books, published between 1956 and 1970

- 1956 Tarnkappe (poems)
- 1958 Hotel für Schlafwandler (poems; reissued 1970)
- 1959 Moël (etchings)
- Nebelhörner (poems)
- Manifest der Toten (long prose sketch, or Proroman; reissued 1970)
- 1960 Der Krieg (etchings; reissued 1969)
- Die Stadt (etchings; reissued 1969)
- Welttheater (etchings; reissued 1969)
- 1961 Der Turm (etchings)
- Im Land der Umbramauten (short prose; paperback 1967)
- 1962 Wildnisse (poems)
- 1964 Gedichtbilderbuch (poems and colored pictures)
- Dunkler Sommer und Musikantenknochen (story)
- 1965 Lyrik, Prosa, Graphik aus zehn Jahren
- Tullipan (short novel)
- Das Meer (etchings)
- 1966 Die Noticen des Feuerwerkers Christopher Magalan (parody)
- Die Savannen (poem with etchings)

Appendix B.

Excerpts from
 "Werkstattnotiz: Die ganze Welt und ein paar Zeichenfedern"
 (Bilderbotschaften)

1. Ich habe ein paar hundert Radierungen gezeichnet und abgezogen auf einer alten Acht-Zentner-Presse (Herkunft unbekannt; Tischgrösse 100 x 50 cm; Walzendurchmesser 30 cm) und einer kleinen neuen Kupferdruckpresse, die sich auf Autorücksitzen transportieren lässt und die ich vorübergehend auf einer mit Gerümpel gefüllten Kiste festgeschraubt habe. Die schwere Presse stand zuerst in einer Freiburger Waschküche, wo ich meine ersten Radierungen machte, und steht jetzt in Ötlingen/Südbaden im Haus... [eines] Freundes... Die leichte Presse steht in einem Landhaus in Suzette, Vaucluse.

Ich besitze kein eigenes Atelier und keine komplette Werkstatt; also arbeite ich, wo ich Platz finde, am liebsten in Rumpelkammern und Kellern voll ausrangierter Kommoden, Giesskannen und Obstkisten. Ich ziehe gebrauchte Dinge den ungebrauchten und neuen vor, aus diesem Grund benutze ich die alte Presse lieber als die neue. Mein bester Arbeitsraum war eine Abstellkammer zu ebener Erde mit Obstbäumen vorm Fenster, mein bester Arbeitstisch eine alte Türe auf Holzböcken.

Da ich keine eigene Werkstatt habe, bin ich auf Gebrauchsgegenstände angewiesen, die ich in der jeweiligen Umgebung auftreiben kann. In Ötlingen benutze ich einen kleinen, sehr unpraktischen elektrischen Kocher zum Erhitzen der Druckplatten, in Berlin einen Gasherd, in Suzette einen fürchterlich qualmenden Ofen, für den ich das Holz aus den Windbrüchen hinterm Haus hole (tote Bäume und ausrangierte Telefonmasten).

Einen grossen Teil meiner Druckplatten habe ich verloren oder in feuchten Kellern oxydieren lassen, aus Achtlosigkeit. Meine Auflagen sind klein: höchste Auflage zehn Exemplare. Ich drucke meine Abzüge selbst, weil ich meine Platten kenne und überzeugt bin, dass auch der beste Drucker meine eigenen Platten nicht besser drucken kann als ich selbst.

Mein Kupferdruckpapier beziehe ich von der Firma Radecke, Hamburg; mein Zinkblech (Kupfer wäre zu kostspielig) kaufe ich in verschiedenen Eisenhandlungen in Berlin-Kreuzberg und schneide es, da ich eine Blechschere besitze, selbst zurecht; Asphaltlack, Kupferdruckfarben und Kupferdruckfirnis beziehe ich von der Firma Wicke, Berlin-Tempelhof. Terpentin und Salpetersäuren kaufe ich in der nächsten Drogerie, am liebsten in heruntergekommenen ländlichen Pharmazien, die nach Lavendelöl riechen. Den Lack zum Grundieren der Zinkplatten stelle ich selbst nach einem Rezept aus dem 18. Jahrhundert her. Das Rezept vermachte mir ein sehr guter Münchner Drucker unter der Bedingung, dass ich es für mich behalte; der Lack, den ich herstellen kann, ist besser als jeder andere, den ich probiert habe; Schusterpech und venezianisches Öl spielen bei der Herstellung eine Rolle.

Meine Radiernadeln sind einfache Schreibfedern; als Filz benutze ich die Unterlage meiner Schreibmaschine.

Note: This section of the "Werkstattnotiz" was exhibited in the Galerie Gräber in Freiburg i. B. in the winter of 1968/1969, in a series of large pages of text illustrated with crayons and stencils. It was called "Werkstatt-Buch des Radierers und Druckers Christoph Meckel gezeichnet am 14. 7. 1968 in Suzette/Vauchuse."

2. In bekannten und unbekannten, gesehenen und vorgestellten Landschaften bin ich, täglich und nächtlich, unterwegs. Ich habe Lebewesen in ihnen getroffen, die ich nicht kenne und die ich sogleich einzufangen, d. h. zu zeichnen gezwungen bin: Damit sie mir gehören, damit ich mit ihnen umgehen kann. Fremde Geschöpfe, Erscheinungen mit kupfernem Reisszahn und gepanzerten Armen, die wiederum (sie erstaunen, überwältigen mich zuweilen) andere Geschöpfe, Tiere und Menschen nach sich ziehen, nicht ganz geheure Gestalten, die näher der Schöpfung zu wohnen scheinen als ich. . . . Neue Menschen, Orte und Geräte werden deutlich, zeichnen sich langsam ab, ich weiss noch nicht, aus welchen Gegenden und Zeiten sie stammen, ich kenne sie nicht und es ist erforderlich, dass ich mich ihrer sofort vergewissere mit Bleistift, Tusche und spitzer, verlässlicher Radiernadel.

Und ich steige hinunter in die fremden, unerschöpflich sich ausbreitenden Landschaften; zeichnend markiere ich meinen vorerst einspurigen Weg durch sie und setze mich, zeichnend immer, in ihnen fest. Hier behaupte ich mich, ich muss mich behaupten in meinem winzigen, unbefestigten Einmann-Camp, durchaus, es gelingt mir, brauchbare Notizen zu machen. Mit offenen Augen bewege ich mich weiter, langsam, mühevoll oder leichtsinnig; Zeit vergeht; und einmal stosse ich vielleicht an eine Grenze, da ist eine Nebelbank, ein unüberschreitbarer Rand der magischen Welt, deren erster und einziger Waldläufer ich bin; da kehre ich um, begeben mich an meinen Ausgangspunkt zurück, rüste eine Expedition aus, arbeite meine Notizen durch, besorge mir Zentnerpakete von Kupferdruckpapier, Bütteln und Makulaturbogen, Stichel, Federn, Asphaltlack und Terpentin; ich sehe zu, dass ich so schnell wie möglich an meinen Arbeitstisch und an die Radierpresse komme, säge Holz für den teuflisch knallenden, rauchspuckenden Ofen, auf dem die Radierplatten eingefärbt werden, und arbeite solange, bis ich einwandfreie Drucke in Händen halte: erstes Ergebnis, erste Beute meiner Expedition.

Appendix C

Six Poems

1. From Hotel für Schlafwandler, 1958, revised 1970

Der Rabe

Nächtlich trägt mein Rabe Schrei für Schrei
 Das Schweigen des Himmels ab und räumt
 Die Windstillen wehender Laute und Seufzer leer,
 (1970: die Windstillen leer von Laut und Seufzern)
 Die seine Stimme einmal füllten,
 Als er an Bord der Wanderdünen reiste.

Die Brandung masslosen Sandes verschlug ihn in mein Land,
 (1970: salzigen Sandes)
 Er schüttelte den Staub von den Flügeln,
 Er hatte in meinen Augen die Seen seiner Träume
 (1970: seiner Ruhe)
 In meinen Haaren das Schilf seiner Herbste gefunden.

Er rückte meinen Schatten ins Licht der Wüste,
 In meinen Träumen stiess er auf Grund,
 Er lebte nicht vom Wind allein,
 (1970: vom Staub allein)
 Sondern von jedem Wort aus meinem Munde.

Aber wir riefen ihm, Hunde, Wale, Menschen--:
 (1970: Und ich rief ihm zu, in meinen Nächten)
 "Unser Reich ist von dieser Welt, " und unserer
 (1970: MEIN REICH IST VON DIESER WELT, und meine)
 Nebelhorner Befehl und Reisesegen tönte--:
 (1970: tönten den Reisesegen:)
 "Flieg, Vogel, flieg, Vogel, flieg uns aus den Augen! "
 (1970: Flieg, Vogel, flieg, Vogel, flieg mir aus den Augen!).

Der Rabe

Dass mein Ende finster wäre--!
 Als ich schimmernd fiel aus allen Wolken
 In die grasigen Tröge schwarzen Wassers
 (1970: in die Tröge aus Gras und schwarzem Wasser)

Und die Tintenfische ihresgleichen
Machten aus mir.

Ich kann nicht beweisen, dass ich weiss war.
Aber grosse Kontinente Schnee
Sahen gern mich, Schattenflocke,
Wenig dunkler als Novemberflocken,
Wenig schwerer auf die lichten Schwellen wehn.

Seitdem treibe ich im Feuchten, Finstern,
Wappentier der Winde, und belebend
(1970: Wappentier der Sumpfe)
Schüttelt mich die Kälte, doch der Sommer
Scheucht mein Krächzen
Tief hinab die Kehle immer.

2. From Wildnisse, 1962.

Der Vogel

Ich rief; friss Vogel oder stirb, ich rief:
es gilt zu fressen
oder gilt zu sterben
was willst du tun da oben, rief ich, rede!

Es bleibt das Fliegen, rief der Vogel oben,
es bleibt das Fressen,
es bleibt das um die Wette pfeifen
schrie der Vogel.

Es muss geflogen werden, schrie er oben,
Wolke um Wolke, schrie er, Wind um Wind,
Himmel um Himmel muss beflogen werden
bis selbst der lahme Drache Flügel spreitet--

bis selbst der Stein um Schwingen bettelt
schrie der Vogel.

Rabe Schnabelstumm

Der Rabe Rabe Schnabelstumm
 er lebt und lebt und lacht darum
 wo der Vampir am Felsen hängt
 und Berges finstre Seele saugt
 und sich zum Frasse Eulen fängt
 und ihre finstre Seele saugt--
 und schrumpfte Fels und Berg zur Stund
 mit Stumpf und Stein verscholl verschütt
 und risse den Vampir zu Grund
 und schlitze halben Himmel mit
 bräch aus der Sonne mit Gewalt
 der Kern der Sonne schwarz und kalt
 der Rabe flöge schnabelstumm
 und lebte fort und lachte drum.

Der die Vampire trinken lässt
 und Berg um Berge krachen sieht
 und ohne Gram versinken lässt
 und alle Eulen lachen sieht
 der Himmel aufgerissen wüsst
 in Fetzen hängend, lachen müsst
 der immer flattern kann wenns kracht
 und überm Abgrund Kreise macht
 mit dunkler Schwinge schnabelstumm
 der lebt und lebt und lacht darum.

Den selbst vom Berg kein Brocken trifft
 kein Stein den Federrocken trifft
 wenn schwarz der Kern der Sonne kreist
 das Goldfell von der Sonne reisst
 wenn Berg und Fels verschütt verrollt
 und stumm der Rabe fliegen sollt
 sitzt auf der Wolke schnabelauf
 der Rabe Rabe Schnabelstumm
 und nichts hält sein Gelächter auf
 er lebt und lebt und lacht darum.

Vom schwarzen Schnee

Rabe, mein Schwärzling, gekommen ist
 die Zeit zu fliegen. Der Vogelvater
 fern in den Wäldern pfeift schon, tappen hörst du
 seine Dreispitztatzen im krachenden Schwarzsnee;

dein weisser Bruder kommt, dich abzulösen,
er soll im schwarzen Schnee um Futter fliegen
die Hungerblume winkt mit welken Stengeln
dir Nimmerwiederkehr, mein Rabe.

Vogel, dein Vater sucht nach dir, er pfeift
Getiere schwarzen Pelzes fort, sie gehn
auf weisser Weide grasen, im weissen Schnee
auf Nachbarlandes Kar im blühenden Schneekraut;
mein Schwärzling, Rabe, einst
war uns die weisse Wolke sicher, aber nun flutweis
fällt das stumme Fuder Finsternis
und selbst der Winterengel färbt die Mähne.

Aufglänzt des meerentstiegenen Raubfisches
Jägerauge in Grimm und Schwarzglut.
Glanzlosen Himmel befliegen Tintenfische,
zärtlich tarnt sie die kriechende Finsterflut
fahlflockiger Dämmer und Nacht.
Im Pfeifen aus starker Lunge, im flatternden Hauch
dröhnt das Schnaufen der landein fliegenden Haie.

Horch, Sesam öffnet sich! Die Felsenflügel
knirschen im Frost, die Unterwelt steigt auf
mit Wurm und Kriechbär und Gelächter
ins finstre Element, in Rauch und Nacht;
wir, schwarz im schwarzen Gegenlicht
eingeboren im Schnee aus lichter Wolke
tauschen Rock und Galoschen und kleiden uns weiss,
damit uns, wer uns sucht, im Duster finde.

Schwarz rundet schon die Schneebeere sich, Geäst
zieht Finsterwasser hoch ins letzte Blatt--
wann kommt die grosse Tauwetterzeit und schwemmt
das Meervieh fort in die grünen Kerker der Tiefsee,
wer bringt die schwarze Flut in Gang,
wann kehrt der Rabe heim von weisser Weide?

Gott Grizzly

Am weissen Tag ging Gott Grizzly durch grosse Wälder, da blauer
Schnee in Fahnen hing von Azur, und Dämmer Gebell Rauch
Eis mit dem Schnee stäubten hoch in die Weiten,
ihm auf dem Fusse folgte blind sein Ahn, mit Flinte Pfeife Horn
der Rabenfürst, Häuptling der Elche und Wolfskönig auf dem
Fuss. Herrscher einst in Grizzlys schneerauchenden Wäldern,

die Heiligen fliegend löscht^{en} seine Spur, die Meute der Auerhähⁿe
 auch folgte ihm fern, die Totenvögelⁿ schreiend, die Schwäneⁿ
 schwarz, steil flog ihr Atem in Flocken über den Wald, fern
 den Städten der Küste, den taghellen Steppen,
 aus tiefer Flüsse Salzⁿacht Eisstaub Flut stieg Schlange und
 Weiberspinne tr^{ug} an Land, den wandernden Gott zu grüssen
 neunköpfig und stumm,
 und die Himmel, ineinandergefahren im Glanz, Paläste des grauen
 Sturms, die Rauchberge fahl, die Schneemüh^len und Regen^kammern
 in den siebenmal silbernen Lüften machten auf ihre Tore weit
 dem grossen Gott Grizzly,
 und sein Weg f^uhrte quer ohne Spur durch des D^üsters Gebrumm, durch
 Steinkohlenwälder, die seufzten von alter Jagd, und
 Schlittenglocken und Ächzen von Sintflut und Schiffsholz,
 und Gott Grizzly sah, dass sein Wald in den Tiefen gut war, das Licht
 und das Dunkel gut, und gut der Haufe leis wildernden Schnees
 in den Weiten,
 und er sah, dass das Dunkel gesättigt war und reich, er hörte die
 Eulen schrein, die Dohlen uralt, und König Wolf sang ihm sein
 Lob wie vor Zeiten,
 und er rief: der Gott ist gekommen in seinen Wald, sein grosses
 Dunkel hat sich nicht gelichtet, sein Wasser fliesst schwarz,
 sein Schnee fällt voll Glanz aus den hunderttorigen Fernen,
 sein Sand fror zu Stein, sein Holz trinkt zur Neige das Licht, sein
 Eis kerkert König Fisch in Tausendⁿtiefen, sein Auerhahn fliegt
 durch die Nacht mit schneeⁿbeladenem Flügel und singt,
 das D^üster sammelt Stille um seinen Schrei, die graue Sintflut Schnee
 hat neu begonnen, die grosse Sintflut Schnee will nimmer enden!
 Jubel ward ihm gesungen aus allen Wäldern, am weissen Tag in weissen
 Winters Glanz, und er erhob sich und flog davon mit den Winden.
 O Nacht in weissen Tiefen, Schnee auf Schnee! Nicht mehr gesehn
 ward der grosse Gott Grizzly in ihnen. Bärenⁿaugen rollten
 durch das Dunkel. Und die Föhrenⁿ brausten im Wind, am weissen
 Tage.

Appendix D

Poems for Christoph Meckel

Ulenspiegel

Volker von Törne

Für Christoph Meckel

Der Trinker wird ertränkt.
 Der Henker wird gehenkt.
 Der Richter wird gerichtet.
 Ihr seid zu nichts verpflichtet.

Der Krieger wird bekriegt.
 Der Sieger wird besiegt.
 Der Schläger wird erschlagen.
 Ihr sollt die Nacht vertagen.

Der Taube wird betäubt.
 Der Lahme wird gestäupt.
 Der Blinde wird geblendet.
 Der Tag ist schon verpfändet.

Der Lacher wird verlacht.
 Der Schlachter wird geschlacht.
 Der Fresser wird gefressen.
 Der Wind wird euch vergessen.

-- Wolfspelz; Gedichte, Lieder, Montagen.

"Quartheft." Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach:
 1968. P. 47.

Zu Christoph Meckels Graphiken

Johannes Bobrowski

Ging auf Händen oder
 stand auf der Richtstatt,
 Holz, Gerät, die Werkzeuge,
 Gegenstände, Flöte und Uhr,
 flogen, hingen
 an Wolke und Regen, hatten
 Händegekehrt und Stimmen
 nach der Erde. Fauchen
 zog umher unter ihnen,

Gedächtnis ging nach Verlass 'nem
um, das Verlassene irdisch
stand in Dächerfarben
der Häuser schwarz und grün.

Hör,
Stimmen. Was ists?
Erschallt meine eigne Stimme
unter euch? Ihr Flug
aus meiner Schulter, wie Wimper
hinunter und Wasser
auf deiner Wange
unbenannt.

--Wetterzeichen; Gedichte. Berlin: Union Verlag.
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Items in section B of the bibliography are listed in alphabetical order within each section. This bibliography of books and reviews and articles and radio programs which mention the work of Christoph Meckel is as complete as possible up to July 1970, but undoubtedly some sources have been inadvertently omitted, especially radio programs and reviews in newspapers.

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