

SOCIETY AND SELFHOOD
IN GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN AND MICHAEL KOHLHAAS

AND

E. T. A. HOFFMANN'S MODERN MÄRCHEN:
THE POETIC USE OF THE DREAM EXPERIENCE IN DER GOLDNE TOPF

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SOCIETY AND SELFHOOD
IN GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN AND MICHAEL KOHLHAAS

Despite the fact that Goethe's Götz von Berlichingen (1771) and Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas (1804) are written in different genres,¹ one is immediately struck by similarities, both stylistic and thematic, between the two master works. Both are drawn from chronicles of the 16th century (Goethe's principal source is Götz's autobiography, Lebensbeschreibung des Herrn Gözens von Berlichingen, in the version printed in Nürnberg in 1731, Kleist's taken from Peter Haffitz' Märckische Chronik, contained in the Diplomatische und curieuse Nachlese der Historie von Ober-Sachsen und angrenzenden Ländern, also published in 1731). Both authors employed real names for persons and places taken from their sources, and neither hesitated to alter his historical sources for artistic purposes. Both authors used vivid, forceful language, notably in the minutiae included in the dialogues in Götz and the wealth of descriptive detail in Kohlhaas, although the intricacy of Kleist's syntax is in sharp contrast to Goethe's direct simplicity. Both works involve many changes of scene and expand the action from Jagsthausen and Kohlhaasenbruck, the homesteads of the protagonists, to include other centers of power in ever-expanding spheres of influence, until the

Empire itself is involved. This technique gives an epic sweep to these relatively short masterpieces, as well as contributing to a sense of historical context.

Against this panoramic backdrop the theme of the rights of the individual in relation to those of society is explored in both works, and it is the incompatibility of the vigorous, absolute modes of existence of the protagonists in a corrupted, effete world which holds our interest. Within their immediate social spheres, both Götz and Kohlhaas enjoy the support of devoted wives, exemplary dedication of servants and friends and the comfort of personal religious conviction. Both enjoy popular support, based on their reputations as "rechtschaffend," both win a certain measure of ecclesiastical support, both are given aid by gypsies--a motif suggesting a "natural" (as opposed to "cultural") sanction to their actions, as well as a "supernatural" (prophetic) one. Despite all of these positive relationships, both Götz and Kohlhaas also represent classes of 16th-century society, the lower nobility and the rural landowner engaged in trade, which were extremely affected by the social changes of the era. Both come in conflict with the changing status of the nobility, both are plagued by the intricacies of a newly developed legal system and its accompanying bureaucracy. Both are defeated by the machinations of court intrigues and the concomitant remoteness of the Emperor, who represents something more than the law, namely justice. Neither protagonist

is able to withstand the onslaught of the forces which are aligned against him, and both works end with the death of the title character.

Yet for all these similarities, the two works are vastly different in tone and implication, differences which reflect not so much variant perspectives on the dynamics of 16th-century society, but rather the two authors' divergent views on the possibility of social structures to serve as a locus of identity, to inform and therefore legitimize individuals' actions. A closer examination of the works will corroborate this thesis.

Goethe's choice of Götz as the prototype of a new heroic model was in part a result of his acquaintance with Herder in Straßbourg in 1770 and their discussions of the characters of Shakespeare and the informing influence of the historical aspect of culture. For Herder

. . . to understand men is to understand them genetically, in terms of their history, of the one complex of spiritual and physical "forces" in which they feel free and at home. This notion of being at home (and the corresponding notion of homelessness) which lies at the heart of his reflections on the emptiness of cosmopolitanism, on the damage done to men by social barriers, oppression by strangers, division, specialization--like the allied concepts of exploitation, and of the alienation of men from each other and in the end from their own true selves--derives from this one central conception. Those who have grasped the notion that men are made miserable not only by poverty, disease, stupidity, or the effects of ignorance, but also because they are misfits or outsiders or not spoken to, that liberty and equality are nothing without fraternity; that only those societies are truly human which may follow a leader but

obey no master, are in possession of one of Herder's idéés maîtresses. His writings radically transformed the notion of relations of men to each other.²

Goethe's representation of Götz as a tragic hero stems from this concept of the communal identity of the individual, for Götz's identity was bound up with the age of the Reichsritter, and he continues to subscribe to the feudal contract to the Emperor (Maximilian I, called "der letzte Ritter") with its accompanying freedoms, honor and responsibility. The new era, characterized by petty squabbles between ecclesiastic and secular princes, the rising class of the town burgher and a new economic system based on trade, and the introduction of a new legal code and system (the ewiger Landfriede and the Reichskammergericht were instituted in 1495 by Maximilian at the Diet of Worms), undermined the feudal system beyond repair. Götz's tragedy is not that of being at odds with his own knightly society, for he represents its last flowering, but of having outlived his time.

As opposed to the knightly virtues incorporated in Götz's mode of life, the new era is represented as corrupted and corrupting. Yet Götz, in fatherly solicitude for Georg, his squire, voices an optimistic attitude about the future:

Die künftigen Zeiten brauchen auch Männer.
Ich sage dir, Knabe, es wird eine teure Zeit
werden: Fürsten werden ihre Schätze bieten,
um einen Mann, den sie jetzt hassen.³

Götz himself is, of course, also a man whom the future will know how to value.

The opening scene of the drama divides the world into two camps: that of the Bamberg court and that of the free knights' vassals, the peasants Sievers and Metzler.⁴ Götz's character is attested to by the adjectives "getreuerzig" and "rechtschaffen"; the action of the Bishop's men in seizing Götz's page as "schändlich," deliberately provocative.

Although it is an ecclesiastical court against which Götz is opposed, it is clear from the next scene with Bruder Martin that it is the courtly, rather than the religious, nature of Bamberg with which Götz is in conflict. This simple cleric extols the knightly life, and upon learning Götz's identity, extols him: "Ich danke dir, Gott, daß du mich ihn hast sehen lassen, diesen Mann, den die Fürsten hassen [see above citation, p. 7] und zu dem die Bedrängten sich wenden!" Praising Götz's piety at the moment at which he lost his right hand (" . . . wie er im edelsten einfältigsten Vertrauen auf Gott sprach . . ."), Bruder Martin proclaims Götz's iron hand is "mehr wert als Reliquienhand."

The third scene takes place inside Götz's castle, that place which still is governed by the order which Götz exemplifies. His wife, Elisabeth, whom he has already described to Bruder Martin as "ein edles vortreffliches Weib!" participates in Götz's world view wholeheartedly, as she explains to their son the necessity for his father to ride out to avenge injustices (Götz's offences against merchants of cities are always described, except of course by the merchants them-

selves, as a means of righting wrongs perpetrated against individuals, such as the tailor of Stuttgart, who would have no recourse unless a knight championed their cause.

Even in the closed community at Jagsthausen, however, there are certain disharmonies to be observed in the characters of Götzt's sister, Maria, and his son, Karl. Karl is unlike his father or Georg: he has no desire to ride out like his father because he is afraid of the forest, he prefers the kitchen to the stable, and he "knows" his heritage in name only (Götzt remarks after his son's recitation concerning Jagsthausen: "Er kennt wohl vor lauter Gelehrsamkeit seinen Vater nicht"). This is in sharp contrast to Götzt's own "natural" education: "Ich kannte alle Pfade, Weg und Furten, eh ich wußte, wie Fluß, Dorf und Burg hieß" (I, 3). Maria's nature is different from Elisabeth's. She claims: "Wenn ich so einen Mann haben sollte, der sich immer Gefahren aussetzte, ich stürbe im ersten Jahr." Elisabeth gives thanks that God "mich härter zusammengesetzt hat." In response to Elisabeth's justification of Götzt's endeavors, Maria claims: "Die rechtschaffensten Ritter begehen mehr Ungerechtigkeit als Gerechtigkeit auf ihren Zügen," thereby testifying to a disintegration of the legitimacy of Faustrecht even within Götzt's household.

Despite these discordant elements, the "naturally" ordered freedom and nobility of life at Jagsthausen, where Götzt's gentle solicitude for Weislingen, his former comrade

now aligned with his enemies, stands as the epitome of virtue in contrast to "das unglückliche Hofleben und das Schlenzen und Scherwenzen mit den Weibern" (I, 3), the courtly life which has drawn the wavering character of Weislingen from his "proper" sphere. Weislingen himself is painfully aware of the contrast: he refers to his captor as "der alte treuherzige Götz" and further:

Wer kann ihm nahen und ihn hassen? Ach! ich bin so ganz nichts hier! Glückselige Zeiten, ihr seid vorbei, da noch der alte Berlichingen hier am Kamin saß, da wir um ihn durcheinander spielten und uns liebten wie die Engel. Wie wird sich der Bischof ängstigen, und meine Freunde. Ich weiß, das ganze Land nimmt teil an meinem Unfall. Was ist's! Können sie mir geben, wornach ich strebe? (I, 3)

Götz reminds Weislingen of the way of life he has abandoned, describing it in terms of a "natural" nobility in which there was a coherence of station and responsibility, feeling and action, so that the life of the community was protected by the actions of free individuals. He admonishes Weislingen:

Bist du nicht ebenso frei, so edel geboren als einer in Deutschland, unabhängig, nur dem Kaiser untertan, und du schmiegst dich unter Vasallen? Was hast du von dem Bischof? Weil er dein Nachbar ist? dich necken könnte? Hast du nicht Arme und Freunde, ihn wieder zu necken? Verkennst den Wert eines freien Rittersmanns, der nur abhängt von Gott, seinem Kaiser und sich selbst! Verkriechst dich zum ersten Hofschranzen eines eigensinnigen neidischen Pfaffen! (I, 3)

Weislingen has lost contact with this sense of immediacy, referring to the Emperor as "die entfernte Majestät"

and insists on the necessity and desirability of intermediaries:

ist's nicht ein guter Geist, der ihnen einräth, auf Mittel zu denken, Deutschland zu beruhigen, Recht und Gerechtigkeit zu handhaben, um einen jeden, Großen und Kleinen, die Vorteile des Friedens geneißen zu machen? (I, 3)

Götz, however, defuses this argument, perceiving the new concept of "state" as a dehumanization of natural relations, and its accompanying bureaucracy as a transformation of free men into functionaries:

Weislingen, wären die Fürsten, wie Ihr sie schildert, wir hätten alle, was wir begehren. Ruh und Frieden! Ich glaub's wohl! . . . Und mit unserm Kaiser spielen sie auf eine unanständige Art. Er meint's gut und möchte gern bessern. Da kommt denn alle Tage ein neuer Pfannenflicker und meint so und so. Und weil der Herr geschwind etwas begreift, und nur reden darf, um tausend Hände in Bewegung zu setzen, so denkt er, es wär auch alles so geschwind und leicht ausgeführt. Nun ergehn Verordnungen über Verordnungen, und wird eine über die andere vergessen; und was den Fürsten in ihren Kram dient, da sind sie hinterher, und gloriieren von Ruh und Sicherheit des Reichs, bis sie die Kleinen unterm FuB haben. (I, 3)

It is in fact this alienating bureaucratic machinery which enables Weislingen to claim that the Bishop of Bamberg knew nothing himself of the capture of Götz's page (compare to justifications of the Elector of Saxony by Luther to Michael Kohlhaas). It enables Weislingen, who later refers to the Emperor as a mere shadow, to misuse Imperial authority to condemn the man who pricks his conscience. It is the rejection of this machinery that enables Götz and Sickingen to base their actions on their personal knowledge of the Kaiser

(Sickingen: "Ich kenne den Kaiser auch und gelte was bei ihm" [IV, 3]) and to reject the orders of the Imperial commission as falsely construing the Kaiser's intention (Götz: "In Turn! Ihr mißbraucht die Kaiserliche Gewalt. In Turn! Das ist sein Befehl nicht" [IV, 2]).

The contrast with the meal to be shared between old friends in Götz's castle and the meal through which we obtain our first impressions of the Bishop's court is strong.⁵ Bishops, clerics, and courtiers discourse with Olearius, a pretentious scholar "beider Rechte." The fact that there are two kinds of law, the Germanic and the Roman codes, one native and one foreign (compare Götz's "natural" education as opposed to Olearius' "learnedness" demonstrated largely by the use of Latin terminology incomprehensible to his audience and the fact that Olearius has changed even his name from the Germanic Ölmann to suit the new mode) suggest that underlying the two systems of law might also exist two corresponding concepts of justice which may be mutually incomprehensible. The law becomes remote, documents to be interpreted by a jurist, whom the common people mistrust "als einen Verwirrer des Staats, einen Beutelschneider."⁶ The old justice was administered according to reliance upon a community of good faith:

Olearius: Aber das kommt daher: Der Schöpenstuhl, der in großem Ansehn weit umher steht, ist mit lauter Leuten besetzt, die der Römischen Rechte unkundig sind. Man glaubt, es sei genug, durch Alter und Erfahrung sich

eine genaue Kenntnis des innern und äußern Zustandes der Stadt zu erwerben. So werden, nach altem Herkommen und wenigen Statuten, die Bürger und die Nachbarschaft gerichtet. (I, 4)

It is true that Olearius makes a good case for the institutionalization of the Roman code:

Der Menschen Leben ist kurz, und in einer Generation kommen nicht alle Kasus vor. Eine Sammlung solcher Fälle von vielen Jahrhunderten ist unser Gesetzbuch. Und dann ist der Wille und die Meinung der Menschen schwankend; dem deucht heute das recht, was der andere morgen mißbilliget; und so ist Verwirrung und Unge- rechtigkeit unvermeidlich. Das alles bestimmen die Gesetze; und die Gesetze sind unver- änderlich. (I, 4)

But the problem remains that under the new system, the ques- tions of legality and justice may become confused, particu- larly since the "innere und äußere Zustände" which could be considered under the old system in each case are now rele- gated to unimportance, so that the communal sense of justice can be undermined by the legal system. Cases become much more an interpretation of law rather than an attempt to se- cure justice, and what the Bishop proclaims as "das Schönste" about the new system:

So könnte, wie Ihr sagt, ein Reich in sicher- ster Ruhe und Frieden leben, wo es völlig ein- geführt und recht gehandhabt würde . . . (I, 4)

already points to problems of interpretation, as we have seen in the previously noted conversation between Götz and Weis- lingen, concerning the nature of "Sicherheit," "Ruhe," "Frieden" and "recht."

It is, of course, this perversion of understanding, this newly introduced dichotomy between legality and justice, which causes Weislingen to betray his honor and Maria and ultimately to ensnare Götz. Weislingen has bound himself to Götz by his knightly word:

Hier faß ich Eure Hand. Laßt, von diesem Augenblick an, Freundschaft und Vertrauen, gleich einem ewigen Gesetz der Natur, unveränderlich unter uns sein! (I, 5)

and at the same time obtained Maria's hand. He has returned to his origins, to a society in which he can be rather than prove himself.

Ich fühle mich so frei wie in heiterer Luft. Bamberg will ich nicht mehr sehen, will all die schändlichen Verbindungen durchschneiden, die mich unter mir selbst hielten. Mein Herz erweitert sich, hier ist kein beschwerliches Streben nach versagter Größe. So gewiß ist der allein glücklich und groß, der weder zu herrschen noch zu gehorchen braucht, um etwas zu sein! (I, 5)⁷

The "Sinnesänderung" of which Weislingen speaks as he takes leave of Götz is immediately perverted by "Weiber-, Fürstengunst und Schmeichelei" upon his return to the court of Bamberg. Weislingen knows he is obligated to keep his oath to Götz--even the bishop does not deny this, only states he rather wished it had not been given. It is the clever "legalistic" argument presented by Adelheid which convinces him that his obligation does not exist:

Adelheid: Geht! Geht! Erzählt das Mädchen, die den 'Theuerdank' lesen und sich so einen Mann wünschen. Ritterpflicht! Kinderspiel!

Weislingen: Ihr denkt nicht so.

Adelheid: Bei meinem Eid, Ihr verstellt Euch! Was habt Ihr Pflicht versprochen? Und wem? Einem Mann, der seine Pflicht gegen den Kaiser und das Reich verkennt, in eben dem Augenblick Pflicht zu leisten, da er durch Eure Gefangennehmung in die Strafe der Acht verfällt. Pflicht zu leisten! die nicht gültiger sein kann als ungerechter gezwungener Eid. Entbinden nicht unsere Gesetze von solchen Schwüren? (II, 6)

It is clearly the morality rather than the legality of Weislingen's obligation which is at stake here, which morality he allows Adelheid to dismiss as sentimental nonsense. Her further undermining of the chivalric code, perverting the loyalty of his page, ultimately results in a horrible and ignoble death for the three of them.

The matter for which Götz is brought before the Reichskammergericht, the breaking of the Emperor's ewigen Landfrieden, is also a matter open to interpretation. When he was previously imprisoned at Heilbronn (which sets up the legal conditions which will be his final undoing), the Emperor's recognition of Götz's worth and value is demonstrated in that he will exact no punishment from Götz, but only require the Urfehde from him, that he remain in his castle and refrain from raids (III, 2). The conditions under which Götz was pressed into the service of the peasants during the revolt may also have excused him under the old system of law, where the "innere und äußere Zustände" would have been weighed. Götz's honor, having always rested on his own con-

science and sense of right and responsibility before any legal considerations, may enable him, he is convinced by Max Stumpf and others, to prevent unnecessary and excessive harm:

Stumpf: Das war eben das Unglück, daß sie keinen Führer hatten, den sie geehrt, und der ihrer Wut Einhalt tun können. Nimm die Hauptmannschaft an, ich bitte dich, Götz. Die Fürsten werden dir Dank wissen, ganz Deutschland. Es wird zum Besten und Frommen aller sein. Menschen und Länder werden geschont werden. (V, 2)

But the world is no longer a place where the righteous man may act according to honor and conscience. The cause of the peasants, to rid themselves of intermediary nobility, is one which Götz would not be out of sympathy with. But the methods of the peasants are completely foreign to him: he is threatened and cajoled into leading them, and for the first time Elisabeth, who has always supported his undertakings with complete understanding, has misgivings:

Elisabeth: Seine Feinde werden lägenhafte Klagartikel schmieden, und er wird nicht sagen können: Nein!

Lerse: Er wird und kann.

Elisabeth: Er hat seinen Bann gebrochen. sag Nein!

Lerse: Nein! Er ward gezwungen; wo ist der Grund, ihn zu verdammen?

Elisabeth: Die Bosheit sucht keine Gründe, nur Ursachen. Er hat sich zu Rebellen, Missetätern, Mördern gesellt, ist an ihrer Spitze gezogen. Sage Nein! (V, 4)

This is of course what transpires, and even though Götz renounces the peasant band before his capture, and even though

Maria is able to obtain a pardon from Weislingen in his last minutes before death, Götz cannot survive the complete breakdown of the knightly world which defined and sustained his identity: "Stirb, Götz--Du hast dich selbst überlebt, die Edeln überlebt" (V, 14), he says upon learning that Georg, his hope for the future, has died. (Weislingen too, even as he tears up Götz's death warrant, realizes he cannot undo what he has done: "Und so zerreiB ich's! Er lebt. Aber kann ich wieder schaffen, was ich zerstört habe?" (V, 10).

Despite Götz's tragic end, there is never any doubt as to the nobility and essential righteousness of his character. It is not Götz, but the times that are evil. The sentiment is underscored through the work and repeated by several motifs towards the close of the play. In the fourth act, Götz greets Lerse and Georg with "Glück zu, brave Jäger!" whereupon Georg reminds him: "WiBt Ihr, gnädiger Herr, wie Ihr uns prophezeitet: wenn sich die Welt umkehrte, würden wir Jäger werden" (IV, 5). And such is the condition of the world, "drunter und drüber" as the peasant Link declares at the opening of the fifth act. Signs in heaven, an ill-boding comet and fearful fiery crosses, point to the disruption of the social order as a reflection of the disruption of universal order.

Still, Götz as late as during his house arrest in the third act continues to speak of hope:

Sollten wir nicht hoffen, daß mehr solcher Fürsten auf einmal herrschen können? daß Verehrung des Kaisers, Fried und Freundschaft der Nachbarn und Lieb der Untertanen der kostbarste Familienschatz sein wird, der auf Enkel und Urenkel erbt? Jeder würde das Seinige erhalten und in sich selbst vermehren, statt daß sie jetzo nicht zuzunehmen glauben, wenn sie nicht andere verderben.

And even as Götz dies, there is a note to posterity:

Maria: Edler Mann! Edler Mann! Wehe dem Jahrhundert, das dich von sich stieß!

Lerse: Wehe der Nachkommenschaft, die dich
verkennt! (V, 14)

And there exist two means within the text of the play to ensure that posterity may judge rightly. The first is Götz's reputation, which cannot be taken from him. Elisabeth reports hearing two knights describing Götz: "Er ist das Muster eines Ritters, tapfer und edel in seiner Freiheit, und gelassen und treu im Unglück" (IV, 5). The second, and more lasting, is the autobiography which he writes during this time of inactivity, although he claims "Ach! Schreiben ist geschäftiger Müßiggang, es kommt mir sauer an" (IV, 5). Elisabeth realizes, however, that what he writes will serve future generations to judge what he has done:

So schreib doch deine Geschichte aus, die du angefangen hast. Gib deinen Freunden ein Zeugnis in die Hand, deine Feinde zu beschämen; verschaff einer edlen Nachkommenschaft die Freude, dich nicht zu verkennen. (IV, 5)

This autobiography, which served as Goethe's principal source for the drama now before us, illuminates the character of Götz and his times in such a way that it is indeed possible to conceive of the world being set right again. This

was Götze's hope, this was Goethe's motive, as well as the thrust of much nationalistic literature which appeared during the Sturm und Drang in the hopes of reviving a pride in Germanic national heritage and the possibility for the advancement of enlightened German society based on social responsibility.

In sharp contrast to the unambiguous presentation of Götze as the upright noble caught in the clash of emerging social structures of his era is the remarkable opening paragraph of Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas. To be sure, much of the action centers around petty court intrigues, and thematically the narration centers on questions of the discrepancies between the concept of justice and the legal code. But in this narration the world is not divided neatly into two camps representing the disintegration of an older nobler order in conflict with an emerging society which has yet to find its moral identity. Ominously, we are here dealing with three sets of laws: those of Saxony, those of Brandenburg, and the Imperial code. Nor is it the case that the turbulence of the times is seen as a stage in development (a sort of stepping-stone perception of historical development where the best from the older cultures can be recovered and implemented in a new, better order). In Kohlhaas, the "Gebrechlichkeit der Welt" is perceived as a condition rather than a temporary transitional period, a fact of which the protago-

nist is completely aware. Further, the problematic nature of justice and legality which Kohlhaas must confront in conflict with his society are interiorized in his own nature: in the words of the narrator, Kohlhaas is assessed as "einer der rechtschaffensten zugleich und entsetzlichsten Menschen seiner Zeit." It is on this "zugleich" that the entire drama of Kohlhaas' life unfolds. His might have been an exemplary life: indeed the further description of Kohlhaas in his community is that of a model citizen, nurturing and being nourished by his society.

Dieser auBerordentliche Mann würde, bis in sein dreiBigstes Jahr für das Muster eines guten Staatsbürgers haben gelten können. Er besaß in einem Dorfe, das noch von ihm den Namen führt, einen Meierhof, auf welchem er sich durch sein Gewerbe ruhig ernährte; die Kinder, die ihm sein Weib schenkte, erzog er, in der Furcht Gottes, zur Arbeitsamkeit und Treue; nicht einer war unter seinen Nachbarn, der sich nicht seiner Wohltätigkeit, oder seiner Gerechtigkeit erfreut hätte; kurz, die Welt würde sein Andenken haben segnen müssen, wenn er in einer Tugend nicht ausgeschweift hätte.⁸

The notion that an excess of virtue could precipitate the downfall of Kohlhaas indicates an irresolvable tension in the community, in the universe which he inhabits. Kohlhaas can no longer, like Götz, justify his actions (above or within the law) on the basis of his own conscience; the coherence of feeling and action is dissolved. The final sentence of the opening paragraph announces that the consequences, not the motivations will be judged: "Das Rechtgefühl aber machte ihn zum Räuber und Mörder."

The immediate incident precipitating the crisis which results in Kohlhaas' downfall is in itself as insignificant as that which led to Götz's or even less so, as it involves the seizure of property rather than of persons. Kohlhaas, citizen of Brandenburg, tradesman in Saxony, exhibits only mild surprise upon first confronting the barrier thrown across the path of his orderly existence ("Was gibt's hier Neues?"), but his immediate concern is to determine what the new master of the castle Tronkenburg requires.⁹ The duty paid, even the further request of the castellan for a pass does not provoke a disrespectful response, despite the fact that in seventeen border crossings, Kohlhaas' right to pass has never before been questioned. He assumes "daß dies wohl nur ein Irrtum sein würde, wegen dessen er sich zu bedenken bitte," (8)¹⁰ and only begins to become embittered when the castellan casts aspersions on his character (that he wouldn't slip through the eighteenth time). He resorts to the next higher level of authority, the Junker, whom we meet carousing in a society reminiscent of the Bamberg court, and obtains there no satisfaction but rather a demand to leave the two black horses as a pledge and a further insult: "wenn er die Pferde nicht loslassen will, so schmeißt ihn wieder über den Schlagbaum zurück." Even at this point Kohlhaas prefers to assume against his own judgment that Junker Wenzel has some authority to take the horses, and proceeds to Dresden (to the next higher authority) to confirm or allay his suspicions.

When Kohlhaas determines from the councillors in Dresden "was ihm allerdings sein erster Glaube schon gesagt hatte, daß die Geschichte von dem PaBschein ein Märchen sei," he persists in acting as if all was as it should be, or at least as well as could be expected, considering the condition of the world:

Kohlhaas, dem die mißvergnügten Räte, auf sein Ansuchen, einen schriftlichen Schein über den Ungrund derselben gaben, lächelte über den Witz des dürren Junkers, obschon er noch nicht recht einsah, was er damit bezwecken mochte; und . . . kehrte er, ohne irgend weiter ein bitteres Gefühl, als das der allgemeinen Not der Welt, zur Tronkenburg zurück. (11-12)

Such forbearance is indeed remarkable.

When Kohlhaas returns to Tronkenburg, the situation has degenerated even further: his horses and his servant have been abused.

Kohlhaas fluchte über diese schändliche und abgekartete Gewalttätigkeit, verbiß jedoch, im Gefühl seiner Ohnmacht, seinen Ingrim, und machte schon, da doch nichts anders übrigblieb, Anstalten, das Raubnest mit den Pferden nur wieder zu verlassen, . . . (12)

as he again confronts the castellan. Yet it is not only due to an awareness of the indefensibility of his position at the Tronkenburg that he suppresses the desire "den Fuß auf sein kupfernes Antlitz zu setzen."

Doch sein Rechtgefühl, das einer Goldwaage gleich, wankte noch; er war, vor der Schranke seiner eigenen Brust, noch nicht gewiß, ob eine Schuld seinen Gegner drücke; (13)

and he manages to subdue his anger to inquire into the de-

tails of the dismissal of the groom. At the return of Junker Wenzel the castellan relates the matter "unter der gehässigsten Entstellung der Sache, an, was dieser RoBkamm, weil seine Rappen ein wenig gebraucht worden wären, für eine Rebellion verführe" (14). The Junker, whose paling face belies the rectitude of his situation, further insults Kohlhaas, and Kohlhaas quits the Tronkenburg without his horses, determined "daß er sich Recht zu verschaffen wissen würde" (14).

He turns "spornstreichs auf dem Wege nach Dresden" when again, even after such an interview, he pauses to consider the possible alternatives:

Denn ein richtiges, mit der gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt schon bekanntes Gefühl machte ihn, trotz der erlittenen Beleidigungen, geneigt, falls nur wirklich dem Knecht, wie der Schloßvogt behauptete, eine Art von Schuld beizumessen sei, den Verlust der Pferde, als eine gerechte Folge davon, zu verschmerzen. Dagegen sagte ihm ein ebenso vortreffliches Gefühl, und dies Gefühl faßte tiefere und tiefere Wurzeln, in dem Maße, als er weiterritt, und überall, wo er einkehrte, von den Ungerechtigkeiten hörte, die täglich auf der Tronkenburg gegen die Reisenden verübt wurden: daß wenn der ganze Vorfall, wie es allen Anschein habe, bloß abgekartet sein sollte, er mit seinen Kräften der Welt in der Pflicht verfallen sei, sich Genugtuung für die erlittene Kränkung, und Sicherheit für zukünftige seinen Mitbürgern zu verschaffen. (14-15)

Kohlhaas' deliberations recall the honorable intentions of Götz, and the "Gefühle" are admirably characterized as "richtig" and "vortrefflich," especially as Kohlhaas is fully conscious of the "frailty of the world." And yet, there is a subtle change in Kohlhaas' attitude at this point: not only does he feel that he (unlike others?) can obtain justice

in an admittedly fallen world, but that he is called to do so--it is this messianic excess which will later cause him to establish a "world government" at Lützen. And although undertaking this service for the benefit of society has a noble aspect, there is something obstinate and fearsome in the word Kohlhaas chooses to express his demand: "Genugtung."

Kohlhaas' efforts to obtain legal satisfaction through the courts, first at Dresden and then at Berlin¹¹ are repeatedly undermined by court machinations in which members of the Tronka family protect their interests. The legal processes are described in a deliberately alienating way by Kleist, through distances to court, the many hands through which petitions must pass, the existence of several codes of law in simultaneous operation, so that ultimately it becomes clear that the execution of the law depends too intimately on its servants, who can easily pervert it. And although the tear which Kohlhaas lets fall on the letter informing him of the denial of his petition in Dresden cannot be construed as ingenuine (22), there is the evidence which must count against him after he receives a similar report from Berlin:

Er sah, sooft sich ein Geräusch im Hofe hören ließ, mit der widerwärtigsten Erwartung, die seine Brust jemals bewegt hatte, nach dem Torwege, ob die Leute des Jungherren erscheinen, und ihm, vielleicht gar mit einer Entschuldigung, die Pferde, abgehungert und abgehärmt, wieder zustellen würden; der einzige Fall, in welchem seine von der Welt wohlerzogene Seele, auf nichts das ihrem Gefühl völlig entsprach gefaßt war. Er hörte aber in kurzer Zeit schon,

durch einen Bekannten, der die Straße gereiset war, daß die Gaule auf der Tronkenburg, nach wie vor, den übrigen Pferden des Landjunkers gleich, auf dem Felde gebraucht würden; und mitten durch den Schmerz, die Welt in einer so ungeheuren Unordnung zu erblicken, zuckte die innerliche Zufriedenheit empor, seine eigne Brust nunmehr in Ordnung zu sehen. (24)

Denys Dyer cites a letter written by Kleist to his fiancée Wilhelmine at the beginning of 1800 in which he discusses why he does not choose a career in law. The words might almost be placed in his protagonist's mouth:

Nein, nein, Wilhelmine, nicht die Rechte will ich studieren, nicht die schwankenden, ungewissen, zweideutigen Rechte der Vernunft will ich studieren, an die Rechte meines Herzens will ich mich halten . . . Ach, Wilhelmine, ich erkenne nur ein höchstes Gesetz an, die Rechtschaffenheit.¹²

In Götz's knightly world, the "Rechte der Vernunft" (Vernunft connoting reason and insight as opposed to the more objective quality of Verstand) would correspond to the "Rechte des Herzens." It is the optimistic hope of a future correspondence between these two means of judgment that informs Goethe's work. For Kleist and his protagonist Kohlhaas, such a resolution is impossible, and Kohlhaas, no longer striving for active, social cooperation, is all too pleased to exile himself from society to establish his own order.

This Kohlhaas sets to work to do by arranging the sale of his farm to his neighbor. It is interesting that Götz reacted to the ban of outlawry issued against him with disbelief and dismay, whereas Kohlhaas too readily exiles him-

self out of a sense of offended dignity:

Warum willst du dein Haus verkaufen? rief sie [Lisbeth], indem sie mit einer verstörten Gebärde, aufstand. Der Robkamm, indem er sie sanft an seine Brust drückte, erwiderte: weil ich in einem Lande, liebste Lisbeth, in welchem man mich, in meinen Rechten, nicht schützen will, nicht bleiben mag. Lieber ein Hund sein, wenn ich von Füßen getreten werden soll, als ein Mensch! Ich bin gewiß, daß meine Frau hierein so denkt, als ich. (27)¹³

Kohlhaas' wife does not agree with his perception of the situation, and through her intervention, he attempts one more effort to obtain his satisfaction through socially sanctioned means: his wife will use her influence on an old friend at court to obtain an opportunity to present her husband's petition in person. This attempt results in Lisbeth's death, due to her overzealousness to accomplish her mission: "Es schien, sie hatte sich zu dreist an die Person des Landesherrn vorgedrängt, und, ohne Verschulden desselben, von dem bloßen rohen Eifer einer Wache, die ihn umringte, einen Stoß, mit dem Schaft einer Lanze, vor die Brust erhalten" (30).

After her funeral, Kohlhaas proclaims power for himself:

Er setzte sich nieder und verfaßte einen Rechtsschluß, in welchem er den Junker Wenzel von Tronka, kraft der ihm angeborenen Macht, verdammt, die Rappen, die er ihm abgenommen, und auf den Feldern zugrund gerichtet, binnen drei Tagen nach Sicht, nach Kohlhaasenbrück zu führen, und in Person in seinen Ställen dick zu füttern. (32)

His demand not met by the appointed time (the narrator is silent as to whether Kohlhaas at this point feared his demands would be met by the Junker, thereby preventing further

action) Kohlhaas collects his band and begins his marauding vengeance. That his actions are excessive is masterfully related through understatement, as in the description of Hans von Tronka's brains bespattering the hall, and the bodies of women and children, as well as those of "guilty" parties being cast out of windows.

He calls himself in one of his manifestoes "einen Reichs- und Weltfreien, Gott allein unterworfenen Herrn" (37) and the signs from heaven which were so clear in Götz are far more difficult to interpret in Kohlhaas: a baby's cry prevents Herse from setting fire to the Tronkenburg after he had been chased away by the dogs; a thunderbolt and a sudden rain shower, together with a crucifix and an admonition from Antonia von Tronka ("fürchte Gott und tue kein Unrecht!") prevent Kohlhaas from burning the abbey at Erlabrunn. But though the lack of wind protects Wittenberg from too much destruction (although nineteen buildings, among them a church, are destroyed), a brisk north wind is blowing the third time Kohlhaas sets fire to the city and the destruction is vast. It would seem heaven is not particularly careful, in Kleist's universe, to be consistent about the favor it renders.

It is in the confrontation with Martin Luther that Kohlhaas is first forced to reexamine his own conscience. The style of the letter that Luther composes to Kohlhaas is striking, as the first sentence demonstrates:

„Kohlhaas, der du dich gesandt zu sein vorgibst, das Schwert der Gerechtigkeit zu handhaben, was unterfängst du dich, Vermessener, im Wahnsinn stockblinder Leidenschaft, du, den Ungerechtigkeit selbst, vom Wirbel bis zur Sohle erfüllt? (44)

Such a violent, almost hysterical tone, the subsequent distortion of facts in the case of Kohlhaas versus the state, the passing over of the responsibilities of divinely ordained rulers to obtain justice for their subjects--all this from a man who referred to the Pope as Antichrist and was himself "rechtschaffen" and "entsetzlich," prepared to undo the order of Christianity for the sake of principle. His missive accomplishes its purpose to return Kohlhaas "in den Damm der menschlichen Ordnung" (44):

Aber wer beschreibt, was in seiner Seele vorgeing, als er das Blatt, dessen Inhalt ihn der Ungerechtigkeit zieh, daran erblickte: unterzeichnet von dem teuersten und verehrungswürdigsten Namen, den er kannte, von dem Namen Martin Luthers! (46)

During his interview with Luther, Kohlhaas makes a statement concerning his perception of the relation of the individual to the state, and the contractual obligations placed on both sides. Thus, the state is not an organic outgrowth of community, but is defined legally: when either party breaks its part of the contract, the contract no longer exists:

Verstoßen, antwortete Kohlhaas, indem er die Hand zusammendrückte, nenne ich den, dem der Schutz der Gesetze versagt ist! Denn dieses Schutzes, zum Gedeihen meines friedlichen Gewerbes, bedarf ich; ja, er ist es, dessenhalb

ich mich, mit dem Kreis dessen, was ich erworben,
 in diese Gemeinschaft flüchte; und wer mir ihn
 versagt, der stößt mich zu den Wilden der Einöde
 hinaus; er gibt mir, wie wollt Ihr das leugnen,
 die Keule, die mich selbst schützt, in die Hand.
 (47-48)

Kohlhaas guarantees Luther that he will return to the protection and order of the state if Luther will personally obtain him safe-conduct, to which Luther agrees, thereby conceding a certain claim to justice on Kohlhaas' behalf.

From this point in the narrative, Kohlhaas becomes more and more passive in the proceedings of his case. The confusion, the irreducibility of Kohlhaas' case to a matter of clear-cut right and wrong, is evidenced in the discussion between the Elector, Count Wrede, Prince Christiern of Meissen, Count Kallheim, and the two lords Hinz and Kunz von Tronka, Cupbearer and Chamberlain to the Elector. For example, Prince Christiern declares:

Die Ordnung des Staats sei, in Beziehung auf diesen Mann, so verrückt, daß man sie schwerlich durch einen Grundsatz, aus der Wissenschaft des Rechts entlehnt, werde einrenken können. (53)

They do not know how to extricate themselves "aus dem Zauberkreise," (54) so that both justice is done and the fabric of the state remains intact.

At the one point in Dresden where it seems possible a resolution satisfactory to all might be obtained, the "Abdecker" scene, it is Meister Himboldt who prevents his cousin from being publicly tainted by dealing with the knacker's

horses until they are made "ehrlich" again. And the tragicomic circumstance "daß die Pferde schon, um derenthalben der Staat wanke, an den Schinder gekommen wären!" suggests a caricature of Kohlhaas' too-finely tuned sense of uprightness.

At this point we are forced to contemplate another caricature of Kohlhaas in the person of Nagelschmidt, not from "innere" but from "äußere" circumstances. Like Götz's entanglement with the peasant's rebellion, Kohlhaas' involvement with Nagelschmidt is rightly motivated. Previously having condemned the man to death for excessive crimes (Nagelschmidt was saved only by the intervening amnesty procured for Kohlhaas by Luther), Kohlhaas now aligns himself with the brigand only to escape the entire matter, to leave the country with his children, forgetting his claim to justice (which Luther had previously encouraged him to do). Falsely entrapped, it is the Brandenburg court, presented in a far more favorable light than the court of Saxony, which intervenes on Kohlhaas' behalf and which manages to see justice done. In return for the state fulfilling its obligations to him, Kohlhaas must accede to his own death under Imperial law. The episode with the gypsy woman provides Kohlhaas a means to avoid the punishment of the law, but he withstands the test by refusing to use the capsule she has given him to obtain his freedom. The restitution of Kohlhaas' horses sees justice done; the "entsetzlich" side of his character is also afforded satisfaction as he destroys the paper on which

the Saxon Elector's destiny is prophesied. It is interesting that the Elector of Saxony, unable to administer justice in the case of Kohlhaas, can now no longer stop the machinery of the law he ordered set in motion in order to spare his life. Kohlhaas dies "unter einer allgemeinen Klage des Volks" (112) and thus contributing to the restoration of order in the state, a further justice is meted out to him:

Der Kurfürst von Sachsen kam bald darauf,
zerrissen an Leib und Seele, nach Dresden
zurück, wo man das Weitere in der Geschichte
nachlesen muß. Vom Kohlhaas aber haben noch
in vergangenen Jahrhundert, im Mecklenburgischen,¹⁴
einige frohe und rüstige Nachkommen gelebt. (112)

With this conclusion, the principles of law and justice are vindicated, but there lingers the disquieting realization that the two principles do not necessarily correspond. There is no ultimate, idealized state or person in which they will be organically joined. In Kleist's novella, the "Gebrechlichkeit der Welt" is a fact of existence which relativizes moral absolutes; moral conviction may not be relied upon as an integrating force in the relations of the individual with his society. In no way is the complicated social structure a reflection of an intelligible universe.

FOOTNOTES

¹ It is possible to characterize Götz as an "episodic" drama, as it certainly broke with traditional concepts of "classical dramatic form," and to term Kleist's novella a "dramatic" narrative. In fact, the 19th century produced at least a dozen tragedies based on Kleist's prose work. See Rudolf Heukenkamp, "'Michael Kohlhaas auf der Bühne," Weimarer Beiträge 23, 9 (1977), 171-77.

² Isaiah Berlin, "Herder and the Enlightenment," in Aspects of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Earl R. Wasserman, Baltimore, 1965, p. 88.

³ Act I, Scene 2. Quotations from the play will be cited henceforth in the text according to act and scene (although scenes are not numbered in Goethe's text), where the source is not clear from context. All citations are from the Reclam edition, Universal-Bibliothek Nr. 71, Stuttgart, 1974.

⁴ The problematic association of the peasants with the free knights in this era of the breakdown of feudalism becomes apparent in the atrocities committed during the peasant rebellion, and in which Sievers and Metzler are condemned by Götz for their brigandry. But in this opening scene, they are still positive, though somewhat quarrelsome, characters who represent the common man Götz would defend against "die Fürsten, die uns die Haut über die Ohren ziehen." (I, 1)

⁵ The denaturalizing environment of the new court life is underscored in the first scene of Act II at the Bamberg court. Liebtraut sings a courtly song about Cupid to the accompaniment of a zither which suggests a passionless, easy morality:

Da fand er die Busen
Ach leider so bloß,
Sie nahmen so willig
Ihn all auf den Schoß . . .

The hearts at court are "bloß," not in the sense of innocent childlikeness, but because they are without any grandeur. Liebtraut enforces this opinion with his comments concerning the chess game underway between Adelheid and the bishop:

Ich wollte lieber das Geheul der Totenglocke
und ominöser Vögel, lieber das Gebell des
knurrischen Hofhunds Gewissen, lieber wollt
ich sie durch den tiefsten Schlaf hören, als
von Laufnern, Springern und andern Bestien das
ewige: "Schach dem König!" (II, 1)

and further:

Sie nenn's ein königlich Spiel und sagen, es
sei für einen König erfunden worden, der den
Erfinder mit einem Meer von Überfluß belohnt
habe. Wenn das wahr ist, so ist mir's, als
wenn ich ihn sähe. Er war minorenn an Ver-
stand oder an Jahren, unter der Vormundschaft
seiner Mutter oder seiner Frau, hatte Milch-
haare im Bart und Flachshaare um die Schläfe,
er war so gefällig wie ein Weidenschöbling und
spielte gern Dame und mit den Damen, nicht aus
Leidenschaft, behüte Gott! nur zum Zeitvertreib.

With its new diversions, the court has lost sight of the in-
forming traditions which shaped it, so that Liebetraut talks
of the discontinuity of the present court with the past:

Die Lücken unsrer Geschlechtsregister, das wäre
profitabler. Seitdem die Verdienste unserer
Vorfahren mit ihren Porträts zu einerlei Ge-
brauch dienen, die leeren Seiten nämlich unsrer
Zimmer und unsers Characters zu tapezieren; da
wäre was zu verdienen.

⁶ With some good reason: compare the manner in which
the dispute over land between neighbors is settled in a
simple, just and integrating fashion through marriage after
eight years of expensive legal wrangling in which the lawyer
fleeced all parties and settled nothing. (Act II, Scene 10).

⁷ Compare citation from Berlin, pp. 6-7.

⁸ Citations from Kleist are taken from Heinrich von
Kleist. Werke und Briefe in Vier Bänden, ed. Siegfried
Streller, et. al., Berlin, 1978, Vol. 3.

⁹ Kohlhaas' evaluation of the old Junker as "ein wür-
diger alter Herr, der seine Freude am Verkehr der Menschen
hatte, Handel und Wandel, wo er nur vermochte, forthalf, . . ." in
contrast to the new Junker's ways of dealing with com-

merce provides a glimpse of the equivalent of the "guten alten Zeiten" in Götzt, days of harmony and general good will among men.

10 The narrator informs us at this point that it is a matter of "ungesetzlichen Erpressungen" not a misunderstanding, and the demand for the horses is described as an "unverschämte Forderung."

11 Which efforts, "die öffentliche Gerechtigkeit für sich aufzufordern" (20) are supported "aus voller Seele" by his wife Lisbeth, who further characterizes his efforts as exemplary for a higher form of justice than those the courts can provide: "daß es ein Werk Gottes wäre, Unordnungen, gleich diesen, Einhalt zu tun" (20).

12 Denys Dyer, The Stories of Kleist. A Critical Study, London, 1977, p. 139. It is interesting here that the contrast between the wavering, uncertain and ambiguous "laws" of reason and the certainty of the subjective emotion of "Rechtschaffenheit" stands in direct opposition to Olearius' case for the codification of law in Götzt.

13 Such a response to being at home (and correspondingly, to homelessness), to recall the citation from Herder above, may be compared to the piety with which Götzt accepts his mutilation in battle, while this action of Kohlhaas corresponds to a type of self-mutilation in service to the ideal of the social contract.

14 The Elector of Saxony was the last of his line.

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E. T. A. HOFFMANN'S MODERN MÄRCHEN:
THE POETIC USE OF THE DREAM EXPERIENCE IN DER GOLDNE TOPF

The propensity of authors of the Romantic period to employ the form and content of fancy has been criticized as an attempt to flee reality.¹ Seen from this perspective, the use of dream motifs, the incorporation of das Wunderbare, could be interpreted in these works as merely subconscious wish-fulfillment. Indeed, a great many stories of this period follow, at least superficially, a standard fairy-tale formula:² the hero meets a fair princess who inspires him to great achievements, in the course of these endeavors evil is confronted and if not vanquished, at least suppressed, allowing the hero and the princess to dwell happily ever after in a magical kingdom. Such is the structure, on one level, of E. T. A. Hoffmann's Der goldne Topf, subtitled Ein Märchen aus der neuen Zeit. This paper will discuss Hoffmann's use of the fairy tale as a structuring principle: far from an attempt to flee reality, it was a device to articulate a new (higher?) level of reality which integrated the mundane and the poetic worlds, the rational and the supernatural, the conscious and subconscious modes of perception. I will seek to demonstrate that Hoffmann incorporated a number of philosophic, scientific and psychological attitudes of his era which

directly challenged the predominantly rationalist monistic traditions of 18th century thought and art.

Romanticism is marked by a decided break with traditional mimetic art of the eighteenth century,³ in which art was a representation of an orderly rational universe. This change in artistic perception was a manifestation of the philosophic position developed by Immanuel Kant in his three Critiques that man cannot know reality, das Ding-an-sich, but perceives only a reflection mediated by his senses and by phenomenological categories such as space, time and causality. The Enlightenment confidence (traceable to Renaissance theories on the commensurability of the micro- and macrocosm) that nature, the world, was rationally understandable and that art should reflect this order was shattered. The phenomenal world, according to Kant, is a joint creation of the ultimately unknowable thing-in-itself and the mind of the perceiver. Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre (published in three versions between 1794 and 1802) carried this position to its logical extreme, to claim that we could not posit an external reality at all, that reality was constituted solely in the mind. The result of Fichte's position in the aesthetic sphere was that artists turned more and more to the workings of the mind, the subjective realm of fantasy, for their material, which for the first time had been accorded the status of "reality."

In his Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (1787) Herder traced an order of ascendancy in nature from stone to crystals to metals to plants, animals and

men, not unlike the Neoplatonic "Great Chain of Being."⁴ The source of dynamism in nature, according to this concept of the universal order of things, is the yearning of each being at each point of the chain for the station above it. Schelling's Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur (1804) emphasized this dynamic aspect of creation: he postulated an interplay between two spheres of reality, an ultimate one he termed die Weltseele, and the perceptible world of our senses. Die Weltseele was process as well as entity, das Absolute returning to itself through time. This process accounted for the historical world, and a dialectic progression of stages of development. The first world stage was a period of intuitive harmony, when all nature was in accord (and nature included here the supernatural). Self-consciousness (the rationality of the Enlightenment?), an isolating rather than a unifying agent, introduced disharmony in the form of otherness in the second stage. The final stage will be a restoration of harmony, the reestablishment of heaven on earth. The new Eden is not identical to the primal one, for having eaten of the apple of consciousness, man cannot return to innocence.⁵ The new harmony will be the result of a synthesis of human consciousness with the necessary progression of the Absolute. For the author of Der goldne Topf, this synthesis is possible only in the moment of poetic apotheosis, as my explication will demonstrate.

Schelling's concept of interaction between two spheres of reality and his view of the origin of the material world

as effected by a synthesis resulting from the struggle between opposites (this view serves as an informing mythos in the structure of Hoffmann's tale) was reflected also by the science and psychology of the era. The tendency to think of the world in terms of polarities generated interest in exploring the means to unite the two extremes. Ritter's Beweis, dass ein beständiger Galvanismus den Lebensprozess in dem Tierreich begleite (1798), attempted to extend Galvani's experiments with what he called animal magnetism (as distinguished from mineral magnetism) and to trace galvanism through metals and crystals ultimately to animals and humans, thereby bridging the gap between organic and inorganic creation. Mesmer's dissertation De influxu planetarum in corpus humanum (1766) attempted to demonstrate the influence of the planets on organic life.

In the field of psychology, there was a similar interest in unifying the conscious with the unconscious mind. Both Herder and Schelling derived consciousness from a prior state of unconsciousness. The unconscious was thereby elevated to the position of a source of knowledge. The dream was a means to tap that source, being in the mediate position between the two realms of knowledge. This joining of the conscious mind with the unconscious by means of the dream parallels the progression of the Weltseele through history. The dream as the instance of synthesis was the means of conjuring up the new age of harmony in the present, and the representation of the

dream as a structuring device in literary works a means to posit new possibilities for viewing the nature of reality.

The ancients had, of course, granted a special significance to dreams--at least to some dreams (visions, prophecies, oracles).⁶ Those dreams which were considered revelations were incorporated without question into the primitives' construct of reality as manifestations of a higher realm impinging upon this world. By the time of the Enlightenment, the idea that the dreamer transcends "ordinary" reality and sees and acts in a sphere of heightened awareness had been rationally explained away.⁷ But even such a founding father of rationalism as Descartes discusses in his Meditations the fine line between waking and dreaming, suggesting that dream images are vivid enough to be confused with waking reality. Recognition of the dream as the cross-point between two systems of perception, the unconscious and the conscious realms, acknowledged an entire dimension of reality which the writers of the Romantic period took up thematically and stylistically. The artistic counterpoint of the dream, translating knowledge into symbolic image, was the power of imagination.⁸

The importance of the works of G. H. von Schubert as a popularizer of Schelling's philosophy and as a direct influence on E. T. A. Hoffmann is not to be underestimated. Hoffmann's correspondence records his favorable reaction upon reading Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft as well as an urgent plea that a copy of Symbolik des Traumes be

sent him upon its publication.⁹ In the Symbolik des Traumes (written in 1814, the year in which Der goldne Topf appeared) Schubert presents a discussion of the pictorial language of the dream as it relates to the "language of nature" and of poetry, contrasting it to "Die Sprache des Wachens," conceptual language, which is described as a falling away from a primal language rich in universal imagery and significance.¹⁰ Schubert argues that the language of dream, of prophecy, of myth, and of poetry are all related to the language of nature, and even posits a special organ in the body called "der versteckte Poet," which he locates in the ganglionic nervous system (in charge of unconscious activity as opposed to the cerebral system governing conscious activity and thought). It was through this organ, when the unconscious center was in control such as during sleep or reverie, that man could understand the primal language of nature.

The topos of reading from the book of nature, "die Hieroglyphen der Natur,"¹¹ implies the artistic possibility of decoding a language which is symbolic and universal, that is, mythic. Thus myth--through the medium of dream--became the substance of Hoffmann's Kunstmärchen,¹² and the characters, the author/narrator and the reader are invited to participate in several levels of reality simultaneously.

Hoffmann quite deliberately locates his story in "real" time and space in his opening phrase of Der goldne Topf:¹³

Am Himmelfahrtstage, nachmittags um drei Uhr,
rannte ein junger Mensch in Dresden durchs
schwarze Tor . . . (1)14

The day, the time of day, and the locality are so matter-of-factly stated that there can be no question that the story takes place in "everyday" reality, except for the fact that it is Ascension Day, a day celebrating a miraculous occurrence, which already suggests, within the Christian mythos, another plane of reality beyond the streets of Dresden. What Anselmus, the young man, quite literally does while running down the street is run into this mythic plane of reality, for his collision with the old woman signifies the beginning of the interaction between two planes of existence right from the very first sentence of the tale. Anselmus' "upsetting the applecart" not only may be interpreted both literally and symbolically, but, given the structure of the narrative, must be interpreted simultaneously on both levels. Anselmus is encircled by a ring of scolding vendors, and upon paying for the damage done, "der festgeschlossene Kreis" releases him. Releases him, that is, in a literal sense. For before he can make his escape, the old woman utters a cryptic curse. The curse, too, must be read on two levels: as a "normal" expletive under the circumstances in the mundane world (which actually produces sympathy for Anselmus' plight among the on-lookers) and at the same time, as an oracular, magical phrase with the power to affect Anselmus' destiny. The incomprehensibility of the old woman's words. as well as her voice it-

self, produce a mysterious effect:

Die gellende, krächzende Stimme des Weibes hatte etwas Entsetzliches, sodaß die Spaziergänger verwundert stillstanden, und das Lachen, das sich erst verbreitet, mit einemmal verstummte. -- Der Student Anselmus (niemand anders war der junge Mensch) fühlte sich, unerachtet er des Weibes sonderbare Worte durchaus nicht verstand, von einem unwillkürlichen Grausen ergriffen Auf ganz sonderbare Weise hatten die geheimnisvolle Worte der Alten dem lächerlichen Abenteuer eine gewisse tragische Wendung gegeben, sodaß man dem vorhin ganz Unbemerkten jetzt teilnehmend nachsah. (1)¹⁵

Anselmus, having given his money away so that he can no longer participate in the communal festivities at the Linke Baths, wanders alone until he finds himself under an elder-tree, where his next encounter with a mythic plane of reality occurs.¹⁶ Anselmus' soliloquy on the inappropriateness of his nature for success in the world¹⁷ is interrupted by the three green-gold snakes who speak to him in crystal tones from the elder-tree. The fact that the voices of Serpentina and her sisters are described three times in the passage as crystalline recall the curse of the old woman: "ins Kristall bald dein Fall--ins Kristall!" (1), thereby suggesting an inner cohesiveness to this as yet incomprehensible world. As he watches the snakes' movement through the branches of the tree, Anselmus attempts to give a rational explanation to the occurrence: "Das ist die Abendsonne, die so in dem Holunderbusch spielt" (5).¹⁸ Indeed, there is other evidence given which might explain the "sinnverwirrende Rede" as hallucination: Anselmus' distress over his encounter with the apple

woman ("denn noch immer sah er die Äpfel um sich tanzen," p. 2), his preoccupation with the enjoyments he is forced to pass up at the Linke Baths ("an der Glückseligkeit des Linkischen Paradieses teilnehmen," p. 2), and the pipe of "medicinal tobacco"¹⁹ which his friend Konrektor Paulmann gives him. (Indeed, the passers-by in the beginning of the third vigil attribute Anselmus' behavior to either drunkenness or madness; his friends Paulmann and Heerbrand describe his actions as "Anfälle").

The possibility for rationalization exists each time the mythical realm intrudes upon the mundane. But even as he rationalizes:

Durch alle Glieder fuhr es ihm wie ein elektrischer Schlag, er erbebte im Innersten--er starrte hinauf, und ein Paar herrliche dunkelblaue Augen blickten ihn an mit unaussprechlicher Sehnsucht, so daß ein nie gekanntes Gefühl der höchsten Seligkeit und des tiefsten Schmerzes seine Brust zersprengen wollte. Und wie er voll heißen Verlangens immer in die holdseligen Augen schaute, da ertönten stärker in lieblichen Akkorden die Kristallglocken, und die funkelnden Smaragde fielen auf ihn herab und umspannen ihn, in tausend Flämmchen um ihn herflackernd und spielend mit schimmernden Goldfaden. (5)²⁰

In this instance of epiphany Anselmus is initiated into the primal realm where the language of nature is comprehensible and he understands the speech of the tree, the wind, the sun and the snakes. Serpentina, like Undine in Hoffmann's opera of that name, represents the feminine principle sent to represent the primal plane and to guide the initiate on his path.²¹ The animating power of love endows the student with

poetic vision and he is able to perceive the mythic contours of the world.

Being chosen to mediate between the two planes of existence is difficult to assimilate.

Dem Studenten Anselmus vergingen beinahe die Sinne, denn in seinem Innern erhob sich ein toller Zwiespalt, den er vergebens beschwichtigen wollte. Er sah nun wohl deutlich, daß das, was er für das Leuchten der goldenen Schläglein gehalten, nur der Widerschein des Feuerwerks bei Antons Garten war; aber ein nie gekanntes Gefühl, er wußte selbst nicht, ob Wonne, ob Schmerz, zog krampfhaft seine Brust zusammen. (9-10)

His friends will attempt to help him escape this dilemma:²² it is in fact such an effort that causes Heerbrand to introduce Anselmus to "unsern geheimen Archivarius Lindhorst." The suggestion that Anselmus is the perfect candidate to copy Lindhorst's manuscripts, written in exotic letters in no known language, seems a perfect solution to cure him of his delusions, as he is diligent and talented in copying. That Anselmus will not be so easily allowed to reintegrate his life is evident from his first attempt to contact Lindhorst. He has managed for once to be at the appointed place at the appointed time when, as he is about to knock on the door, the bronze knocker transforms itself into the face of the old apple woman who reiterates her threat: "Bald dein Fall ins Kristall!" (14).

The third vigil begins with Lindhorst's narration of the myth of creation and the fall, which to Paulmann and Heerbrand represents an old man's fantasy, "orientalischer Schwulst,"

but which Lindhorst insists is the true story of his forebears: "Aber es ist dessenunachtet nichts als ungereimt oder auch nur allegorisch gemeint, sondern buchstäblich wahr" (18). Anselmus attempts to go along with his friends' opinion of Lindhorst as "ein ganz wunderlicher alter Mann" (20), but his sensitivities have been awakened by Lindhorst's narration ("führend. wie ein Eisstrom ihm durch alle Adern fröstelte. daß er beinahe zur starren Bildsäule worden". p. 20).

From the point of meeting Lindhorst, Anselmus can no longer deny "the other reality." Each of his encounters with the fantastic represents a waking of his spiritual, creative potential:

Also, wie gesagt, der Student Anselmus geriet seit jenem Abende, als er den Archivarius Lindhorst gesehen, in ein träumerisches Hinbrüten, das ihn für jede äußere Berührung des gewöhnlichen Lebens unempfindlich machte. Er fühlte, wie ein unbekanntes Etwas in seinem Innersten sich regte und ihm jenen wonnevollen Schmerz verursachte, der eben die Sehnsucht ist, welche dem Menschen ein höheres Sein verheißt. (23)

Lindhorst's myth has an organic structure, which offers him an alternative of form to the confusion of his experience in the bourgeois world (the recitation of the myth is completed by Serpentina in the eighth vigil). The dualism of the forces of good and evil, personified in Lindhorst and Liese, represent both in the realm of the myth and in the city of Dresden the fall of the higher creative principle into divisive, chaotic impulses. The battle for reunification of das Absolute must be fought within Anselmus, for he has a "kind-

liches, poetisches Gemüt." The solipsistic world of Lindhorst's library becomes the only means of establishing his mental equilibrium: he would be persisting in error to return to Veronika (even here, there is a connection with the other realm: Veronika's blue eyes remind Anselmus of Serpentina's) and the bourgeois life of a Hofrat.²³ "Die unaussprechliche Sehnsucht, das glühende Verlangen" he feels for another existence represents the power of creativity (as opposed to "copywork") to fuse the lower world--bourgeois "reality"--with the higher realm of Atlantis through poetry. This essential unity is represented by the flowering of the fire-lily in the golden pot.

Hoffmann's artistic manipulation of the boundaries between waking and dreaming, his presentation of reality as the interpenetration of the strange and the commonplace, addresses the epistemological and psychological issues of his era concerning the nature of reality and the relation of the subconscious to consciousness. No less important, however, are the aesthetic issues raised by Der goldne Topf, principally, the question of how dream material is incorporated into narrative prose such that it represents an intensification of reality rather than posing an alternative to reality. One way in which Hoffmann does this is structural: his narration consists not of chapters, but of vigils, the term implying a watchful state over those who sleep (or in those readers in whom imagination sleeps). His most striking solu-

tion to this question is the remarkable structure of the twelfth vigil. At the beginning of the fourth vigil, Hoffmann implores his "gentle readers" to appreciate Anselmus' inner turmoil. At the beginning of the twelfth vigil, he claims this sympathy for himself:

Wie fühlte ich recht in der Tiefe des Gemüts die hohe Seligkeit des Studenten Anselmus, der mit der holden Serpentina innigst verbunden, nun nach dem geheimnisvollen wunderbaren Reiche gezogen war, das er für die Heimat erkannte, nach der sich seine von seltsamen Ahnungen erfüllte Brust schon so lange geseht. Aber vergebens blieb alles Streben, dir, günstiger Leser, all die Herrlichkeiten, von denen der Anselmus umgeben, auch nur einigermaßen in Worten anzudeuten. Mit Widerwillen gewährte ich die Mattigkeit jedes Ausdrucks. Ich fühlte mich befangen in den Armseligkeiten des kleinlichen Alltagslebens, ich erkrankte in quälendem Mißbehagen, ich schlich umher wie ein Träumender, kurz, ich geriet in jenen Zustand des Studenten Anselmus, den ich dir, günstiger Leser! in der vierten Vigilie beschrieben. (83)

Plagued with not being able to write, he reports that after several days he receives a letter from Lindhorst:

Er bot ja selbst hilfreiche Hand, mein Werk zu vollenden, und daraus konnte ich mit Recht schließen, wie er im Grunde genommen damit einverstanden sei, daß seine wunderliche Existenz in der Geisterwelt durch den Druck bekannt werde. (84-85)

Lindhorst "inspires" Hoffmann by hopping into a fiery drink he has prepared for the author. "Es war köstlich!" reports Hoffmann. With this stroke, Hoffmann has "realized" poetic inspiration as a means of mediation not only for Anselmus and the world of Dresden in 1813, but for himself and his audience which includes, of course, present-day readers.

Despairing once again after the moment of inspiration has passed, desiring to flee mundane reality and to join Anselmus in Atlantis, the narrator is consoled by Lindhorst:

„Still, still, Verehrter! klagen Sie nicht so! -- Waren Sie nicht soeben selbst in Atlantis, und haben Sie denn nicht auch dort wenigstens einen artigen Meierhof als poetisches Besitztum Ihres innern Sinns? -- Ist denn überhaupt des Anselmus Seligkeit etwas anderes als das Leben in der Poesie, der sich der heilige Einklang aller Wesen als tiefstes Geheimnis der Natur offenbaret?" (88)

In the poetic work itself resides the ultimate means of establishing correspondences between all levels of reality, and the inclusion of dream content and structure in artistic form is the means through which poetry can attain this status.

FOOTNOTES

¹ See for example Ilse Weidekamp, Traum und Wirklichkeit in der Romantik und bei Heine, Leipzig, 1932, or Philipp Lersch, Der Traum in der deutschen Romantik, Munich, 1923.

² Subsequent work on the structure and meaning of the fairy tale as it reveals psychological tensions (such as that done by Bruno Bettelheim in his The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales, New York, 1977) is beyond the scope of this paper.

³ See M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition, New York, 1953.

⁴ See Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being. A Study in the History of an Idea, Cambridge, 1936.

⁵ See William Blake's "Songs of Innocence and Experience," or Schiller's treatise "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung." There are also nostalgic artistic attempts to recover the lost golden age, such as Novalis' Christenheit oder Europa.

⁶ See Artemidorus, the Bible and the Norse sagas as sources for such dreams.

⁷ Graydon Ekdahl clearly establishes this development in his examination of the terms in which dreams and dreaming were described from the Universal-Lexikon of Zedler (1745) to Schubert's Die Symbolik des Traumes (1862) in The Romantic Art of Dreaming, Diss. Princeton University, 1974.

⁸ See, for example, the aesthetic essays of Coleridge and Schlegel.

⁹ See Maria Magdalene Tatar, Romantic "Naturphilosophie" and Psychology: A Study of G. H. Schubert and the Impact of his Works on Heinrich von Kleist and E. T. A. Hoffmann, Diss. Princeton University, 1971, p. 24.

¹⁰ G. H. Schubert, Die Symbolik des Traumes, p. 24:

Was zuerst die Sprache der Poesie betrifft: so ist ihre Verwandtschaft mit der Sprache des Traumes schon aus dem Vorhergehenden deutlich. Wie die letztere der Seele natürlich und gleichsam angeboren ist, nicht erst erlernt zu werden braucht, so ist nach der alten bekannten Sage auch Poesie die ursprüngliche Sprache der Völker gewesen, die Prosa überhaupt eine spätere Erfindung, und ältere Völker und Völkerbücher sprechen noch immer für uns Sprache der Poesie. Jene wie diese redet ausdrucksvoller, gewaltiger, magischer zum Gemüthe, als die Prosa des Wachens, und die Poesie zeigt auch noch in anderer Hinsicht, daß ihr der Schlüssel zu unserm innern Räthsel nicht fern liege. Wie nämlich der Seele, wenn sie die Sprache des Traumes spricht, prophetische Combinationen, Blicke in das Zukünftige gelingen, so erhält sie diese Eigenschaft auch in der Region der höhern Poesie; die wahrhaft poetische Begeisterung und die prophetische sind sich auf ihren, freilich sehr verschiedenen Stufen verwandt; Propheten waren wenigstens immer Dichter.

C. J. Jung developed from such ideas the theory of the "collective unconscious, and Jung's student Aniela Jaffé applied Jung's mythic categories in her analysis of Der goldne Topf in Gestaltungen des UnbewuBten, Zurich, 1950.

¹¹ The watchman in Die Nachtwachen des Bonaventura speaks of the language of the flowers that we no longer understand.

¹² Both dreaming and thinking are governed by laws of association. The difference is that thinking proceeds according to logic while the dream dramatizes. The dream work is the transformation of abstract thoughts or instinctual desires into a series of images which are related in a story. The dream work is therefore not at all far removed from the origins and principles of artistic creation. Dream language and poetic language make use of what is symbolic in man's unconscious, allowing him to express himself outside of logical constructs. Such pictorialization has in fact penetrated our conscious language: terms such as "genealogical tree," and phrases such as "time flies" strike respondent chords in widely divergent cultures. For a further discussion of these linguistic and mythic archetypes (as opposed to the Jungian

archetype, see Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History. The Myth of the Eternal Return, New York, 1954.

13 Hoffmann's descriptions of Dresden, such as "das schwarze Tor," "das Linkische Bad," and "Antons Garten" correspond to historical localities (see W. F. Mainland's introduction and notes to the Blackwell edition of Der goldne Topf).

14 Citations from Der goldne Topf from E. T. A. Hoffmann, Der goldene Topf. Ein Märchen aus der neuen Zeit, ed. W. F. Mainland, Oxford, 1956.

15 That the dread is produced involuntarily might be interpreted to signify that "der versteckte Poet" of Schubert's ganglionic system at some level understands the significance of her words, though Anselmus' consciousness cannot.

16 Mainland's notes to the text associate this occurrence at the elder-tree and its significance to that in Kleist's Käthchen von Heilbronn, which Hoffmann had read and admired.

17 In part:

„Wahr ist es doch, ich bin zu allem möglichen Kreuz und Elend geboren!-- DaB ich niemals Bohnenkönig geworden, daB ich im Paar oder Unpaar immer falsch geraten, daB mein Butterbrot immer auf die fette Seite gefallen, von allem diesen Jammer will ich gar nicht reden; aber, ist es nicht ein schreckliches Verhängnis, daB ich, als ich denn doch nun dem Satan zum Trotz Student geworden war, ein Kümmeltürke sein und bleiben muBte? (3)

18 One recalls the "explanations" of the father in Goethe's Erlkönig as he attempts to rationalize his son's perception of the spirit world.

19 Opiates produce a dream-like consciousness which the Romantics took account of. See, for example, Novalis' Hymnen an die Nacht or Thomas de Quincy's Confessions of an English Opium Eater.

20 See comments on galvanism above, as well as Maria M. Tatar, Spellbound: Studies on Mesmerism and Literature, Princeton, 1978.

21 Compare also Dante's Beatrice and Goethe's "ewig' Weibliche."

22 They also offer various explanations for his state of distress: Veronika suggests that he perhaps fell asleep unawares, and only believes he was awake! Heerbrand relates that he, too, has experienced "einen gewissen träumerischen Zustand," under the influence of which he remembered where he had mislaid a manuscript; he has also experienced visions of "herrliche große lateinische Frakturschrift" under the influence of coffee. Dean Paulmann's suggestion is most remarkable:

"Ja!" fügte er hinzu, „man hat wohl Beispiele, daß oft gewissen Phantasmata dem Menschen vorkommen und ihn ordentlich ängstigen und quälen können, das ist aber körperliche Krankheit, und es helfen Blutegel, die man, salva venia, dem Hintern appliziert, wie ein berühmter, bereits verstorbener Gelehrter bewiesen." (11)

23 Compare Graydon Ekdahl's discussion of Eichendorff's Ahnung und Gegenwart:

. . . the dream prefigures the outcome of the novel. While Friedrich's waking deliberations persist in error almost until the end of the novel, his dream has long since provided a symbolic solution to his search for a role which corresponds to his spiritual development. (18)

Likewise, Anselmus' attempt to reject his spiritual development results in his mental imprisonment, represented symbolically by the crystal bottles on Lindhorst's bookshelves. He cannot pretend, unlike the other crystal-encapsulated captives, that he does not see. Likewise, the difference between Anselmus' consciousness and that of Veronika is clearly demonstrated at the close of the eleventh vigil, where she dismisses all that transpired in the seventh vigil, where she obtains through black magic the knowledge of the mythic identities of Liese, Lindhorst and Serpentina, as a silly dream: "Halten Sie das, wofür Sie wollen, . . . vielleicht für einen recht albernen Traum" (81).

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