WOLFGANG KAYSER

The Grotesque

IN ART AND LITERATURE

Translated by Ulrich Weisstein

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Translator's Note

Wolfgang Kayser's untimely death deprived me of the possibility of consulting him while the translation was in progress. Although on the whole his German is clear and unexceptional, minor difficulties arose in connection with such pseudo-philosophical phrases as *Offenheit für ein Waltendes;* and occasionally I thought it best to add the original German word or phrase in parentheses. A special problem was posed by the inconsistency in the use of *komisch* on the part of the writers quoted by Kayser, whereas the rendering of the nouns *Humor* and *Komik* gave no trouble.

The translations of literary and critical passages incorporated in the text are my own unless otherwise indicated. I am grateful to Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., for their permission to use an

excerpt from Bernard Guilbert Guerney's translation of Gogol's *Dead Souls*. The English equivalents of German titles, where applicable, are those found in B. Q. Morgan's invaluable *Critical Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation, 1481–1935* (Stanford, 1938). I should also like to thank Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., for allowing me to quote from H. T. Lowe-Porter's English version of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*.

Mr. Mark Spilka has read an earlier version of several chapters of my translation. His comments have been greatly welcome. My wife has sacrificed part of a well-earned vacation to help me type the final draft of the manuscript.

The notes are slightly abridged from the original edition.

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Preface

The present book—if it is unified enough to deserve that name—came very slowly into being. Fifteen years ago, during my first visit to the Prado, my curiosity was aroused, although I did not as yet foresee where my future explorations would lead me. The same confusing and irritating features appeared over and over again in the pictures of Velasquez and Goya as well as in those of Bosch and Bruegel, which were collected as early as the sixteenth century. The same features seemed to be contained in certain works of literature. With that mixed feeling in which the pleasure of seeing one's own observations confirmed is mingled with regret caused by the realization that one's discovery has been anticipated, I subsequently came upon the passage in the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (Primer

of Esthetics) in which Jean Paul, without using the word, ascribes a special gift for the grotesque to the Spaniards and the English. Several examples from German and non-German literature and painting also recommended themselves; further material accrued in the attempt to trace systematically the etymology of the word "grotesque," just as the gradually sharpened awareness of the phenomenon suggested additional examples.

However, there was no chance of exhausting the subject. The present study, accordingly, does not aim at being a history of the grotesque. It is as impossible to write such a history as it is to compose one of the tragic or comic elements in the arts. For such an undertaking would presuppose a knowledge of all literatures, as well as the plastic arts, produced by all peoples and ages, not to mention an art with which my book is not at all concerned, namely, that of music. I somewhat regret this omission, since compositions like Ravel's "Grotesques," Alban Berg's "Wozzeck," certain characteristic passages in the works of Richard Strauss, and Orff's "Carmina Burana" repeatedly tempted me to study the nature of the grotesque in music. And how much material the movies could have furnished: *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Ladykillers* are two of many specimens in which the grotesque is used without adulteration.

What I have attempted to do is to give a more precise definition of the grotesque as such on the basis of the somewhat sketchy etymological history of the word. In this way, a definite limitation in time from the end of the fifteenth century to the present as well as a limitation in subject matter was made possible. This span of time, however, is not considered as a unit without regard to its historical sequence. I was also concerned with the individual expressions of the grotesque as well as its historical occurrences. If it turned out that these could be understood more positively and exactly with an insight into the timeless structure of the grotesque, then the present study would acquire a certain methodological significance. Its author, at any rate, was eager to apply the methods of modern structural analysis to a historical investigation. One begins to get tired of textual interpretations lined up like trees in a nursery and longs once more to enter the real woods.

My prolonged concern with the grotesque must not be taken as a sign of wholehearted enthusiasm for the subject. I gladly admit that

I, too, experienced the negative reaction likely to be provoked in the reader by certain chapters of my book or by a glance at its illustrations. What urged me to continue with my work was the novelty of the subject, the methodological challenge posed by the task of describing the variations on an ageless theme, the fruitfulness of the synoptic study of literature and painting, the exploration of unfamiliar territory, and, finally, the added knowledge to be brought to bear on familiar works, among them the dramas of the *Sturm und Drang,* certain Romantic novels and novellas, some of Keller's stories, Wilhelm Busch's pictorial narratives and certain widely discussed creations of the twentieth century.

But other than merely subjective stimuli were also involved. Serenus Zeitblom, the narrator of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus,* may turn away in disgust from the "grotesque" landscapes of an ambiguous nature and an inharmonious art in order to dwell solely in the noble realm of the humanities where one is "safe from such nightmares." The historian, however, would be at fault if he averted his eyes from the wealth of works from the past which pertains to that strange realm. And as a contemporary he is all the more obliged to eschew such an attitude. The art of our own day shows a greater affinity to the grotesque than that of any other epoch. I shall not now attempt to be specific. Our modern novels and novellas are replete with grotesque features, certain schools of painting openly subscribe to the grotesque in their programs, and as able a playwright as Friedrich Dürrenmatt regards the tragic comedy or tragicomedy, that is, the grotesque, as the only legitimate contemporary genre. "Tragedy presupposes guilt, distress, measure, insight, responsibility. The confusion of our age, the sellout of the white race, leaves no room for guilt and responsibility. Nobody is to blame or can be charged with complicity. Things just happen. Everybody is carried away and gets stuck somewhere. We are too collectively guilty, too collectively steeped in the sins of our fathers and forefathers. We are only descendents. That is our misfortune, not our guilt. Guilt exists only in the form of a personal achievement or religious deed. . . . Comedy alone is suited for us. Our world led as inevitably to the grotesque as it did to the atom bomb, just as Hieronymus Bosch's apocalyptic paintings are grotesque in nature. The grotesque, however, is only a sensuous expression, a sensuous para-

dox, the shape of a shapelessness, the face of a faceless world; and just as our thinking seems unable to do without the concept of paradox, so is art, our world, which survives only because there is an atom bomb: in fear of it" (*Blätter des Deutschen Schauspielhauses in Hamburg,* 1956/57, Heft 5: *Der Besuch der alten Dame* [The Visit]). The study of the grotesque in previous ages and the conceptual mastery of the phenomenon as such may help to open new paths to the understanding of modern art and perhaps even of the modern age.

In the book there are only a handful of examples from contemporary art, and that without seeking to explain or invoke the spirit of the times—as is equally true of its earlier chapters. The author is content to try to elucidate the phenomenon itself and the problems arising in connection with its presence in individual works of art. An observation to the effect that his book does not come to grips with its subject would not be regarded by him as a criticism. Considering this state of affairs, he hopes for clarification through further discussions. By creating a solid basis for such discussions, the book's scientific aim is achieved if it serves to stimulate thinking on the matter.

I am especially grateful to Professor Tintelnot and those of his students who participated in the two joint seminars on the grotesque. They were animated by the true spirit of inquisitiveness and greatly helped me in getting acquainted with hitherto unfamiliar fields of knowledge. To Professor Rosemann and his assistants in the department of art history of Göttingen University my thanks for advising and helping me in many ways. Dr. Guldan, finally, has consistently advised me on matters connected with the technical aspect of the illustrations. A further debt of gratitude has to be discharged to the anonymous audiences who attended my lecture on the grotesque, which contained a summary of the basic ideas underlying the present book and was delivered in many cities in Germany and abroad. I frequently found that new hints and suggestions were provided during the discussion periods. In concluding, I want to express my gratitude for the hospitable year at Harvard University that gave me the leisure needed for committing the larger part of the manuscript to paper.

Göttingen, *June, 1957.*

The Problem

In Seldwyla, Gottfried Keller reports in one of his novellas, a master combmaker employed a journeyman who was completely different from the gay, fun-loving, and easy-going tribe of native inhabitants. He joined none of their entertainments but worked from morn till midnight. He spent no money on himself but put all his savings into a stocking of already considerable size. For he had the "inhuman" plan, or rather the plan had him (the narrator here expresses himself in a somewhat peculiar way), to save sufficient money to buy the shop and settle down as a master in the town where he, with his anemic righteousness, remained a total stranger. He himself did not seem to feel the lack of anything, although he had to share the one large bed with his fellow journeymen. But in

the spring the latter went away, and he, in his privacy, felt as happy as a "fish in the water."

But one day it happens, strangely enough, that a second journeyman of exactly the same nature—a veritable "double," as the narrator calls him—makes his appearance, and shortly afterwards a third, identically disposed one. The three soon begin to engage in a fierce but quiet competition. They do not quarrel but observe each other suspiciously and seek to surpass one another in displaying their virtues. The atmosphere around them becomes strangely rigid and lifeless. The newcomer, too, lies in bed "as straight and rigid as a match"; and the narrator compares their coverlet with a piece of paper placed on top of three herrings. Our fish in the water has lost his gaiety and even his animation.

The last of the three to arrive is also the youngest and, accordingly, has been unable to save as much as his older fellows. But he makes up for this failure by invoking the aid of a "new magic power": Züs Bünzli, the rather well-to-do, elderly daughter of their washerwoman. Züs is a strange individual. The narrator needs a whole page to list her oddly assorted treasures and even more to describe her equally bizarre furniture, especially the Chinese temple pasted together by a poor bookbinder's journeyman—for Züs has already had a number of beaux. The "endless" speeches she delivers on all occasions, and the material for which is culled from her patched-up library consisting of books from the most diverse fields of knowledge, are just as bizarre and profuse as her possessions. But as soon as the others notice that their comrade is courting the maiden, they begin to compete with him. They know nothing about women, or how to pay compliments and woo, and actually they don't care. But in Züs' room they act like loquacious, temperamental lovers, while at night they dream the same dream and once more lie in their beds as quietly "as three pencils."

One night, however, they are visited by a nightmare. In his dream, one of them pushes the other who pushes the third. A violent struggle ensues, in the course of which they tumble out of their bed in a heap. Coming to, they think that the devil has come to fetch them and stand there trembling and crying, until the master arrives with a light and they blushingly realize that nothing at all has happened. Nothing at all? It turns out that they have lost their

confidence and their orientation and are now like puppets in the hands of an alien force that has taken hold of them. In the morning the master informs them that he is forced to dismiss them since thanks to their industriousness the supply has become so ample, that the inhabitants of Seldwyla are provided with combs for years to come. The three journeymen fall on their knees and tearfully beg to be allowed to stay. They are even willing to forego their wages. The smile with which the master meets their writhing despair constitutes a piercing contrast, and his reply is inherently cruel. They are to engage in a race from a point located at half an hour's distance from the town, and the first one to knock at his door will be permitted to stay and perhaps succeed him. They hurry to Züs, who secretly decides to make the master's decision her own by marrying the winner. While in the night it seemed to have been the devil who intruded, heaven now appears to interfere; for the biblical quotations she asks each of the three to find at random are all concerned with jumping and running. Thus the journeymen give in and, on a fine day, emerge from the town in the company of Züs Bünzli, the description of whose costume requires again more than a printed page. The strangest conversations and situations ensue, and with magic power Züs Bünzli, the object of the wooing, once more succeeds in restoring the peace by cleverly using her smile, her arms, and her feet. The narrator compares her skill with that possessed by one of those virtuosi "who, handling several instruments at once, play a glockenspiel on their head, blow the Pan's pipe with their mouth, pluck the guitar with their hands, beat the cymbal with their knees, the triangle with one foot, and with their elbows a drum that is fastened to their back"—an image the chaotic turbulence of which implies a total confusion of the natural order.

Züs Bünzli really does not care who wins the race and her hand, except that it must not be Dietrich, the youngest journeyman, who is penniless. Accordingly, she employs against the latter—and here her image changes—the feminine wiles of looking amorously, sighing, and enticing, and succeeds in making him, who relies on his younger feet, dawdle with her at the edge of the forest, while the two others are rushing away. But the deceiver is deceived; while playing she loses the "compass": "her heart fluttered as fearfully and helplessly as a bug lying on its back, and Dietrich defeated it in every

way." When, after a while, they begin to make their way back to Seldwyla, they are engaged. And when they reach the master's house, Dietrich is still the winner; and the heavily indebted master gladly accepts the proposal to sell his business to the couple. But things change once again; and Dietrich does not enjoy the fruits of his victory, for Züs Bünzli becomes the mistress of the house.

Here we have come upon well-known literary types and entered a comically, and partly satirically, drawn world that pleasantly entertains us. But what has happened to the others? They have hurried to town with increasing speed and despair "like two shying horses . . . with fear and anguish in their hearts." The inhabitants of Seldwyla have made this an occasion for a spectacle and are lining the streets. "Like a goblin," a boy jumps onto the knapsack of one journeyman, who falls behind and, in order to make up for this handicap, causes his rival to stumble over a walking stick he has thrown between his legs. In getting up, the rival takes hold of his competitor's coattail. They wrestle and savagely pound upon each other, while the ladies at the windows "throw their silvery laughter into the roaring surf at their feet" and the entire town is riotously gay. The two rivals, however, fail to notice this altogether. "They saw nothing at all, and thus the mad procession rolled through the town and out of it through the other gate." When they regain their composure, they realize that their future is ruined along with their reputation as decent and serious men. They have been thrown out of their tracks and can no longer "find their way." One of them hangs himself on the tree which served as their starting point, while the other ends as "nobody's friend" in depravity.

What has happened here? In the beginning, we still laughed about the herrings, the pencils, and the comets, but gradually our laughter changed into an embarrassed smile, as the atmosphere grew ever more stifling, and finally altogether vanished. We are now completely helpless, especially with regard to the death of the protagonists; there is nothing comic or satiric, nor is there anything tragic about it. The nature of these people and of the entire action forbids the use of such conceptual categories. Are we, then, in the presence of the grotesque? Has Keller written his novella with this criterion in mind?

For the time being, however, such an assertion in no way facilitates our understanding of the work. For no matter how often we

hear and use the word "grotesque"—and we hear it ever more frequently, since it seems to be one of those quickly cheapened terms which are used to express a considerable degree of emotional involvement without providing a qualitative distinction beyond the rather vague terms "strange," "incredible," "unbelievable"—it is certainly not a well-defined category of scientific thinking. In the commonly used auxiliary tools, the literary dictionaries, no entry is usually given under grotesque; and where such an entry exists it might well have been omitted. However, we use the word not only in connection with literary phenomena—to define the stylistic peculiarities of Rabelais, Fischart, or Morgenstern—but also with respect to the plastic arts, music (Ravel composed "Grotesques"), a special kind of dance, and a form of lettering. It thus appears to be an esthetic category. But if we look for it in esthetic treatises, we are once more disappointed. To be sure, the concept is not overlooked, and the phenomenon is usually defined in a rather uniform manner reminiscent of that which the first writers on the grotesque in the eighteenth century adopted. Justus Möser had spoken of the grotesquely comic (*das Grotesk-Komische*), as had Flögel in his first and still estimable *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen* (History of the Grotesquely Comic) of 1788. As a subspecies of the comic, namely as the coarsely, lowly, burlesquely, or even insipidly comic, the concept of the grotesque is dragged from one esthetic treatise to the other. Even in Nicolai Hartmann's posthumously published *Ästhetik* of 1953 we hear about "the two frequently noted genres of the comic, the coarsely comic, which easily degenerates into the grotesque, the burlesque, or the spectacular, and the subtly comic (*das Feinkomische*)." What we are thus handed is the ticket to a booth at the fair but not to the artistic worlds of a Keller or Ravel or the dance or —Spanish painting.

Flögel already emphasized that the Spaniards "surpass all European peoples" in the grotesque. He explained this proclivity by their "heated and excessive fantasy," an interpretation by means of which French seventeenth-century criticism sought to define the difference between French and Spanish art; except that Flögel noticed merely the low, coarse, and burlesque aspects of the grotesque. Indeed, the phenomenon of the grotesque can be experienced during a visit to the Prado far more strikingly than in Keller's novellas or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*—unless one wants to investigate E. T. A.

Hoffmann or Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque*—and far more urgently as a still unanswered question placed before the critical understanding. It makes its appearance in the very first galleries devoted to the work of Velasquez and filled with paintings of cripples, monsters, and court dwarfs who nevertheless addressed the king by the name of "cousin." Or we enter the hall that contains one of Velasquez' major works, *"Las Meninas."* A group of charming ladies-in-waiting surrounds the little princess, an image of youthful grace and loveliness and painted so realistically that one seems to hear the rustling of her silken dress. The youthful charm and grace are joined by the sanctity and dignity of the Majesty; for in a mirror—one of Velasquez' favorite motifs—the royal couple, who sit not in but in front of the room depicted on the canvas, are reflected. In the room itself, however, looming large and prominent in the right foreground and in clashing contrast with the charm, we discover a frightful thing: two additional ladies-in-waiting who are deformed and misshapen; the contrast is all the more striking since this ugly and unnatural aspect is not portrayed as something by itself but as an integral part of this court.

Later on, we reach the galleries devoted to Goya: Saturn devouring his children, the designs for the tapestries, and the graphic cycles entitled *Caprichos* and *Desastres de la Guerra* (Ill. 1). In one of the etchings from the *Desastres,* "Against the Public Welfare," we see a kind of jurist coldly and indifferently writing in a book. But is this still a human being? His fingers end in claws, his feet in paws, and bat's wings have taken the place of ears. Yet he is no creature belonging to a purely imaginative dream world: in the lower right corner the victims of the wars cry and writhe in despair—it is our world in which this horrible monster occupies a prominent position. Much in Goya's etchings is caricatural, satiric, or topical, but none of these categories provides a fully satisfactory explanation. These etchings contain distinctly ominous, nocturnal, and abysmal features that frighten and puzzle us and make us feel as if the ground beneath our feet were about to give way. If we continue our tour, we come to the pictures of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The former died in 1516, the latter in 1569. Both are Flemish painters, whose works were collected by the Spanish court as early as the sixteenth century. Their infernal and abysmal visions affect us in the same way as the paintings and etchings of Goya.

I

The Grotesque: The Word and its Meaning

1. ". . . che oggi chiamano grottesche"

Our visit to the Prado was no detour. For by leading us into the realm of the fine arts it has provided the basis for our attempt to give a closer definition of the grotesque by means of a brief history of the term and its gradually accumulated meaning.[1]

Grotesque (both noun and adjective) and the words which correspond to it in other languages are ultimately derived from the Italian. *La grottesca* and *grottesco* refer to *grotta* (cave) and were coined to designate a certain ornamental style which came to light during late fifteenth-century excavations, first in Rome and then in other parts of Italy as well, and which turned out to constitute a hitherto unknown ancient form of ornamental painting. It was soon discovered that this style was by no means native to the Romans but

had reached Italy as a new fashion relatively late, that is, at the beginning of the Christian era. In the course of his description of the discoveries made in the so-called Palace of Titus, Vasari quotes the following passage from Vitruvius' *De architectura,* in which the contemporary of Augustus characterizes and condemns the new barbarian manner: "All these motifs taken from reality are now rejected by an unreasonable fashion. For our contemporary artists decorate the walls with monstrous forms rather than reproducing clear images of the familiar world. Instead of columns they paint fluted stems with oddly shaped leaves and volutes, and instead of pediments arabesques, the same with candelabra and painted edicules, on the pediments of which grow dainty flowers unrolling out of roots and topped, without rhyme or reason, by figurines. The little stems, finally, support half-figures crowned by human or animal heads. Such things, however, never existed, do not now exist, and shall never come into being. For how can the stem of a flower support a roof, or a candelabrum pedimental sculpture? How can a tender shoot carry a human figure, and how can bastard forms composed of flowers and human bodies grow out of roots and tendrils?"

Vitruvius' critique, applying the yardstick of verisimilitude, condemned both the basic ingredients of the new ornamental style and their combination, but was unable to check its growth. His arguments were resumed by the art critics of the sixteenth century, who were no more successful in preventing the triumph of the new fashion than their predecessor in the age of Augustus or their successors in the classicistic eighteenth century. The Italian painters of the Renaissance and their patrons eagerly imbibed the new lesson; as early as 1502 Cardinal Todeschini Piccolomini commissioned Pinturicchio to decorate the vaulted ceiling of the library of Siena Cathedral "with such fantastic forms, colors, and arrangements as are now called grotesques (. . . *che oggi chiamano grottesche*)." The best-known and most influential ornamental grotesques are those which Raphael applied around 1515 to the pillars of the Papal loggias (Ill. 2).[2] Vitruvius' description can be almost literally applied to Raphael's creations: curled and involuted shoots, from whose foliage animals emerge and cause the difference between animal and vegetable forms to be eliminated; slender vertical lines on the lateral walls, which are made to support either masks or candelabra

or temples, thereby negating the law of statics. The novelty consists not in the fact that, in contrast with the abstract ornamental style, Raphael painted objects from the familiar world (for ornamental combinations of stylized flowers, leaves, and animals had long been used by artists like Ghiberti and his followers), but rather in the circumstance that in this world the natural order of things has been subverted. To be sure, compared with the ornamental grotesques created by his contemporaries, Raphael's may well be regarded as modest, innocuous, and even friendly. They constitute a playfully fantastic world of their own, and Goethe, who gave a first-hand description of them at the end of his essay, *"Von Arabesken"* (Concerning Arabesques), praised the gaiety, frivolity, and the wealth of the artist's imagination contained in them.

When describing Raphael's grotesques in this manner, Goethe overlooked the sinister quality inherent even in this playful world. That aspect comes strongly to the fore in the work of other Italians, such as the grotesques of the engraver Agostino Veneziano (Ill. 3): in the much more fantastic elements of his ornamental compositions (where human and nonhuman elements are fused), in the playful destruction of symmetry, and in the greater distortions of size. In Luca Signorelli's grotesques in the Cathedral at Orvieto (which were painted between 1499 and 1504[3]), Veneziano's relative clarity of design has given way to a turbulent entanglement of tools, tendrils, and bastard creatures (Ill. 4). The world constituted by these ornamental compositions is no longer self-contained, moreover, but imitates ancient grotesques by forming the dark and sinister background of a brighter and rationally organized world. The inlaid medallions represent scenes from the *Divine Comedy*, the "portrait" in the center being that of Vergil.

By the word *grottesco* the Renaissance, which used it to designate a specific ornamental style suggested by antiquity, understood not only something playfully gay and carelessly fantastic, but also something ominous and sinister in the face of a world totally different from the familiar one—a world in which the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and human beings, and where the laws of statics, symmetry, and proportion are no longer valid. This meaning ensues from a synonym for grotesque which came into usage during the sixteenth century: the

dreams of painters (*sogni dei pittori*). This term also names the sphere in which the dissolution of reality and the participation in a different kind of existence, as illustrated by the ornamental grotesques, form an experience about the nature and significance of which man has never ceased to ponder. Dreams of the painters—it can be assumed that Dürer was acquainted with the new Italian style when he stated: "If a person wants to create the stuff that dreams are made of, let him freely mix all sorts of creatures."

In the course of the sixteenth century, the grotesque spread from Italy to the countries north of the Alps and conquered all the artistic genres susceptible to the ornamental style: drawing and engraving as well as painting and sculptural decoration. We encounter it in book illustrations as well as on painted surfaces, as an architectural component as well as on tools and jewelry. As a special kind of decorative art, it has its own structure and subject matter, without being limited to one specific manner of execution. Originally appearing in the form of linear patterns, it soon began to come under the sway of the new style perfected by Italian artists in France during the sixteenth century and, on account of its most characteristic feature, is generally known by the name of scrollwork.[4] It even foisted itself upon those two other types of ornamentalism which, boasting of their own peculiar forms and motives, joined the grotesque in its triumphant progress: the arabesque and the moresque. Let us briefly consider these styles in view of the fact that both names were later applied to literature where, at least temporarily, they were used indiscriminately with that of the grotesque.

Art history justly distinguishes between the above three types of decorative art; for as far as their conceptual basis is concerned they are fundamentally different. The term "moresque" is used to designate a kind of two-dimensional ornament exclusively composed of rigidly stylized leaves and tendrils painted over a uniform background which is preferably kept in black and white. The arabesque, on the other hand, involves the use of perspective; unlike the moresque, it is tectonic (that is, distinguishes between above and below); it is more profuse, so that the background is often completely hidden; and it avails itself of patterns composed of more realistic shoots, leaves, and blossoms, to which animal forms are occasionally added. In discussing the sources of this latter type, modern scholar-

ship stresses the fact that its origin is by no means Arabic (as the name would seem to indicate), since the Greeks and Romans consistently used it for ornamental purposes. Yet it can hardly be denied that the Renaissance arabesques were stimulated and influenced by Islamic art.

Equipped with these definitions, art history cannot help but notice that the issue was perennially confused between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, and that the three terms were often used indiscriminately. The well-known *Book of Moresques* (1549) by Flettner, for instance, contains ornamental designs which are actually grotesques or arabesques. As early as 1587, the Milanese painter and writer Lomazzo declared that the grotesque had evolved not in contrast to but alongside of the arabesque.

The grotesque itself was further developed when, around 1600, the clear scrollwork style was replaced by the so-called *Knorpel-Ornamentik* (*Knorpel* = gristle or cartilage). (The static quality of the scrollwork style had been overcome in the *Schweifgroteske* [*Schweif* = tail or curve] developed by the Frenchman Delaune and cultivated in Germany by Kilian and the de Bry brothers as late as the seventeenth century.) While the *Knorpelgroteske* rather quickly disappeared in most European countries, it flourished in Germany not only in Jamnitzer's *Neuw Grottesken Buch* (New Book of Grotesques) of 1610 but even in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The literary historian knows it from the title plates of many a work by Grimmelshausen. Our illustrations (5 and 6) reproduce ornamental engravings by Simon Cammermeir and Johann Heinrich Keller, both of whom were active around 1680. Here the firm contours have completely vanished. The heads and limbs of fantastically distorted animals and monsters, often in masklike stylization, are intertwined and give rise, at numerous points, to new shoots, limbs, or excrescences. In the center of illustration 6, one can clearly discern how two already deformed heads merge with one another, the nasal area belonging to both of them at once. The *Knorpelgroteske* constitutes an extreme which precluded any further development in that direction. Accordingly, the subsequent history of the ornamental grotesque once again was based on the *Schweifgroteske* which had been alive in the sixteenth century. Around 1700 a new group of motifs was added, first in France and shortly after-

wards in Germany, to the then prevailing acanthus motif. In the eight books of *Grotesques* created by the highly talented and prematurely deceased Paul Decker (1677–1713), Chinese motifs are first introduced into the ornamental grotesque.

Having briefly surveyed the history of the style,[5] we must now turn to the history of the word "grotesque."[6]

2. "Ce discours est bien grotesque"

During the sixteenth century the other European countries adopted the term "grotesque" along with the type of art which it designates. As a noun, that is, as a term attached to a specific object, the word spread and rooted everywhere. It also appeared as an adjective, that is to say, in its original guise. The first instance of such usage in the German language refers to the monstrous fusion of human and nonhuman elements as the most typical feature of the grotesque style. In the introduction to his *Geschichtsklitterung* (1575), Fischart speaks of the "strange, peculiar, grottogrotesque, fantastic jars, chests, and boxes which can now be seen in our pharmacies." He illustrates this remark by devoting several pages to a list of monstrosities (in Dante, Giotto, Ovid, in Shrovetide customs, and in the pictorial representations of devils in the Temptations of St. Anthony and other "dreams of painters") and pretends to be angry about such "ridiculous, silly, and often frightful monstrosities." The same monstrous quality, constituted by the fusion of different realms as well as by a definite lack of proportion and organization, is also attested in an early French usage of the word. Speaking of his own essays, Montaigne calls them "grotesque and monstrous bodies, pieced together of the most diverse members, without distinct form, in which order and proportion are left to chance." Montaigne's use is striking insofar as it shows that he has begun to transfer the term "grotesque" from the realm of the fine arts to that of literature. This application, however, presupposes the formulation of a generalized stylistic concept.

Although one should not underestimate the mental and verbal skill required for such an operation, it is clear that Montaigne fol-

lowed an impulse inherent in the word itself. We have now reached a point where it becomes possible to understand certain aspects of the subsequent history of both the adjective and the noun "grotesque." In Germany, the word was obviously regarded as a foreign one. Accordingly, it was mainly used as a *terminus technicus,* commonly in the plural, for the new ornamental style. Lukas Kilian, for example, called his primer of 1607 *Grotesken für die Wand* (Grotesques for the Wall) and later added to it a *Neues Grodesko Büchlein* (New Book of Grotesques) and a *Grodisko-Buch* (Book of Grotesques) in 1632. A Frankfurt municipal record of 1612 informs us that the city hall (*Römer*) was decorated with grotesques (*Krodischkenwerk*). Numerous other examples could be cited; but I shall only mention two from the eighteenth century in which the new classicistic taste prompts a sharp rejection of the ornamental grotesques. Gottsched observes that "to imagine something without sufficient reason is to dream or to indulge in fantasies. . . . Still, clumsy painters, poets and composers frequently resort to this method, which results in the creation of sheer monstrosities, which might be called daydreams. The pictorial grotesques and the incoherent fables of the poets offer cogent examples of this procedure."[7] This observation shows that the old designation "dreams of painters," as Fischart used it, was still alive, except that the dreamlike nature of the grotesques did not recommend it to Gottsched. The other statement, taken from Winckelmann's early *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke* . . . (Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Art), runs as follows: "The good taste in the decorative art of our time, about whose deterioration Vitruvius so bitterly complained, and which has further declined in the last few centuries, partly on account of the grotesques popularized by Morto,[8] and partly through the shallowness of our interior decorations, could be purified through a more thorough study of allegory, whereby art would be rendered more truthful and meaningful."

In French, the noun "grotesque"—which commonly appears in the plural—was used as a technical term for the ornamental grotesques. However, along with it, the adjective acquired several new shades of meaning. A few reflections about the word may help to facilitate an understanding of this development. The word "grotesque" did not sound as strange to a sixteenth-century Frenchman as it did to his

German contemporary. As late as the seventeenth century the word was written *crotesque,* a spelling which suggests its relation to a group of words derived from the Old French *crot,* to which the adjectives *croté* and *crosté* had been added in the fifteenth century. The suffix *-esque* was common enough in sixteenth-century French and had a very distinct meaning. Like the Italian *-esco* (comparable to the German *-isch*) it expresses origin and is often used in connection with proper names and place names. However, it not only expresses geographical provenience but also participation in a spiritual essence. Apart from the realm of proper names, *-esque* and *-esco* (as well as *-isch*) attach themselves only to those nouns which can be regarded as spiritual essences. In German too, Goethean works (*Goethesche Werke*) are fuller of his spirit than the works by Goethe (*Goethes Werke*). The adjective provides spiritual orientation by stressing the evaluative and interpretative function inherent in its nature as an adjective. Adjectives are the perennial troublemakers in languages. By thus neglecting its material origin, the adjective cuts altogether loose from its tangible meaning. The chivalric is that which has not died out along with chivalry; the picturesque that which has not yet found expression in a specific painting; and Dantesque grandeur may be ascribed to a work that was not created by Dante. Thus, the word *grottesque* contained the latent possibility of designating more than the ancient grotto paintings and their modern equivalents, which had been originally intended by it. (Even in its original meaning, however, the term had suggested a certain emancipation from the physical context of the grotto.)

Seventeenth-century authors actually used the adjective *grottesque* in still another sense, and the dictionaries usually refer to this "figurative" meaning after having defined the word as applying to such and such a specific type of art. In the Dictionary of the French Academy (1694 and after), the following entry is found under grotesque: "Figuratively speaking, it signifies silly, bizarre, extravagant. A grotesque costume; this speech is rather grotesque; a grotesque facial expression. — Grotesquely (adverb): In a silly or extravagant manner. Dressed grotesquely; dancing grotesquely. — Bizarre, fantastic, extravagant, capricious."[9] More frequently than with this fairly heavy emphasis on its unusual aspect the term is defined in a shallower manner, namely as a synonym of *ridicule, comique* and—

preferably—*burlesque*. In Richelet's *Dictionnaire français* (Amsterdam, 1680) we read: "Grotesque, adj.: Pleasant; that which has something pleasantly ridiculous. A grotesque person. A grotesque girl. Grotesque manner. Grotesque face. Grotesque action." Here the grotesque has lost all its sinister overtones and merely elicits a carefree smile. This French usage of the seventeenth century continues to make its appearance even in the esthetic writings of our own century. To be sure, Larousse, in his *Grand Dictionnaire Universel* of 1872, refers, indirectly at least, to this loss of substance which had occurred in the *Grand siècle* (Rabelais had been succeeded by Corneille, Scarron, and Cyrano de Bergerac). Larousse also speaks of the deeper and more sinister meaning ascribed to the term in the age of Romanticism (with Shakespeare, Jean Paul, and E. T. A. Hoffmann constituting the most important centers of influence). This loss of substance suffered by the grotesque and the tendency to equate it with the burlesque and the coarsely humorous can also be gauged from the pictorial and poetic examples adduced during that period. If Teniers is mentioned alongside of Cervantes, it is obvious that only the less subtle aspects of *Don Quixote* are intended. However, just as the Dictionary of the French Academy continues to allude to a meaning less harmless and shallow than is implied by the word "ridicule," so do several illustrations found in the critical literature on the subject. Beginning with Trevoux (1704), Ariosto is repeatedly mentioned in this connection. In addition, another name appears with increasing frequency in connection with the grotesque after his creations were first sanctioned by Monet in the *Dictionnaire* of 1620 as models of the grotesque—the name of Jacques Callot (1592–1635).[10] There is no need here to dwell on the question of whether Callot's art—and its affinity with Goya's which is so strongly felt in the present century[11]—was occasionally interpreted in a more innocuous manner, which seems to be implied by certain sources, such as the following couplet from Sanlecque's (1652–1714) *Poème sur le geste:*

> *Enfin on peut compter plus de mines burlesques*
> *Que n'en grava jamais Callot dans ses grotesques.*

In mentioning Callot, however, we have touched upon another artistic genre, of which Callot was destined to become the principal

illustrator, the *commedia dell'arte*. The relationship was clearly expressed by Diderot, who, speaking of the *farce excellente,* stated: "It presupposes a special kind of gaiety. Its characters resemble Calot's [*sic*] grotesques, where the principal traits of the human figures are left intact."[12] Lessing translated Diderot's treatise, containing the above passage in which the grotesque is connected with the style of Callot and the *commedia dell'arte*. This juxtaposition was to result in a new definition of the grotesque, which had a considerable impact on the further development of the concept. Let us turn once more to the German language; for it is only with Victor Hugo that new substance is added to the word "grotesque" in French—and even then under German influence.

In eighteenth-century German, the adjective *grotesk* is not too frequently encountered; and where it occurs, it corresponds to the vague and shallow French usage of the word. As late as 1771, a German-French dictionary, the *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* by Schmidlin, gives the following definition: "Figuratively speaking, grotesque means odd, unnatural, bizarre, strange, funny, ridiculous, caricatural, etc." The word thus covers an exceedingly wide range of meaning and seems to have been shorn of its essential qualities.[13] It was precisely at this time, however, that the first efforts were made to give the word a more specific meaning. In discussing them, we shall not strictly observe chronology.

II

The Extension of the Meaning of Grotesque

1. "The so-called Hell Bruegel"

Let us once more recall that the noun "grotesque" was originally used to describe the ornamental grotesques. The meaning of the word was somewhat extended by its application to certain *chinoiseries* which the eighteenth century related to the grotesque because of the fusion of spheres, the monstrous nature of ingredients, and the subversion of order and proportion which characterizes them. Schmidlin states that: "the Chinese go so far as to represent houses and landscapes hovering in the air or growing out of trees," and in his *Harlekin* of 1761 Justus Möser, also influenced by a tradition, declares that "even the miniature grotesques of the Chinese add charm to a garden room. . . ." (We recall that Züs Bünzli's furniture

included a Chinese temple, the most secret drawers of which she had not as yet explored.)

Much more significant, however, was the attempt of certain critics to give a firmer contour to the grotesque as an esthetic category. This happened in connection with a problem that greatly concerned esthetic ians of the eighteenth century, namely, that of caricature. Hogarth's series of engravings, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews,* the rediscovered, because newly read, *Don Quixote,* Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* —these are only a few of the works which taught the age that caricature may serve as the basis of meaningful and substantial art which cannot be dismissed as a matter of trifling importance. If caricature, with its imitation of distorted and distinctly ugly reality and its exaggeration of actually existing disproportions, was a genuinely creative form of art, the very basis of the hitherto accepted esthetics—the principle of art as an imitation of beautiful nature or as its idealization[1]—was put in jeopardy; for caricature did the very opposite. It could be regarded as the utmost extreme of a practice based on the principle in which the new esthetics centered: the principle of characteristic art.

One of the writers on caricature in the third quarter of the eighteenth century was Christoph Martin Wieland.[2] In his *Unterredungen mit dem Pfarrer von* *** (Conversations with the Parson of ***) of 1775 he undertook to define caricature and classify its manifestations. He distinguished between three types of caricature: (1) true caricature, "where the painter reproduces natural distortions as he finds them," (2) "exaggerated caricature, where, for one reason or another, he enhances the monstrosity of the subject without destroying its similarity to the model," and (3) "purely fantastic caricatures, or grotesques in the proper sense, where the painter, disregarding verisimilitude, gives rein to an unchecked fancy (like the so-called Hell Bruegel) with the sole intention of provoking laughter, disgust, and surprise about the daring of his monstrous creations by the unnatural and absurd products of his imagination."

According to French usage, the word "grotesque" might have encompassed the first two of these types, which are still firmly rooted in reality. Diderot made a special point of declaring that Callot's grotesques still retained the most prominent traits of the human figure. But Wieland found the very essence of the grotesque to lie in

its complete detachment from reality. In his opinion, grotesques are not imitations but products of a "wild imagination." Like Gottsched, Wieland defined the grotesque in exactly the way in which the Renaissance Italians had defined it, namely, as *sogni dei pittori*. According to him, the grotesque is "supernatural" and "absurd," that is, it contradicts the very laws which rule our familiar world. Although Wieland's analysis of the grotesque as such is rather inconclusive, he makes up for this shortcoming by measuring its psychological effects upon the beholder.[3] This delineation strikes me as being excellent and quite in keeping with our previous observations concerning the effect produced by Gottfried Keller as well as by the ornamental grotesques. Wieland observed that several contradictory feelings are aroused by the grotesque; we smile at the deformations but are appalled by the horrible and monstrous elements as such. The basic feeling, however—if I understand Wieland correctly—is one of surprise and horror, an agonizing fear in the presence of a world which breaks apart and remains inaccessible.

I am fully aware of the fact that, by interpreting Wieland's argument in this manner, I read something into it which it does not literally state. But it seems safe to assume that this is what he really wanted to say. By viewing our surprise as an agonizing fear of the dissolution of our world, we secretly relate the grotesque to our reality and ascribe to it a modicum of "truth," even though Wieland considered it to have stripped itself of all truth (in the sense of verisimilitude). As long as the ornamental and pictorial grotesques were regarded merely as something alien to nature and arising from the artist's "subjective" imagination, they could justly be rejected by those who held that art is based on the principle of imitation. This is what Winckelmann, Shaftesbury, and Burke did in the eighteenth century,[4] and Wieland frequently offers remarks to the effect that one must not distort the original, successful design of nature by painting "burlesques in Ostade's and caricatures in Callot's manner since there is little merit in fashioning such caricatures and grotesques as are constantly to be seen."[5] In the above-mentioned passage Wieland also speaks of the grotesque as being unnatural and purely subjective. But instead of turning away from its manifestations he closely observed them and analyzed the feelings they engendered, while his reason felt obliged to spurn them. It is notable

that around 1775 he frequently returned to the subject, although the question had already been settled in theory. Our quotation also seems to indicate that Wieland was slightly disturbed by the possibility of the grotesque's having a hidden meaning. We cannot be sure whether Wieland actually felt that way. But there is no doubt that it was in his age that a measure of truth was first ascribed to the grotesque. The increasingly frequent references to the work of Bruegel indicate something more than mere surprise over an eccentric painter's pictorial phantasmagorias. But who was this Hell Bruegel whom Wieland called a master of the grotesque?

Whereas recent art history bestows the name of Hell Bruegel only on Pieter Bruegel the Younger (1564?–1638), eighteenth-century writers included in his work the infernal aspects in the paintings of his father, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525/30–1569), who is better known as the Peasant Bruegel. The infernal paintings of the grandson, Pieter Bruegel, finally, cannot even now be clearly distinguished from those created by his father and grandfather. If we want to trace the origin of the style, however, we must reach one generation beyond the eldest Bruegel, called the "second Bosch" by his contemporaries, and who actually started out by making engravings after sketches by Hieronymus Bosch (1450?–1516) and by adopting his predecessor's point of view and style.[6]

The similarities between the two artists are very striking. The sneaking, creeping, and flying infernal creatures which, often lacking a torso, are composed of human and animal limbs and indifferently inflict torments upon their victims, are found in the works of both. But in either case they are only part of the pictorial substance. Bosch's style is exemplified by the so-called "Millennium" in the Madrid Escorial (Ill. 7).[7] It is a triptych with the left wing representing the creation of woman in Paradise—which the painter regards as the birth of evil (*vide* the crescent, symbol of heresy, on top of the fountain)— while the central panel shows life on earth in the "Garden of Lusts," and the right wing depicts hell. Between the crowd in the foreground and the burning apocalyptic landscape at the top a number of details immediately attract our attention, among them two giant ears wandering lonely through the world with a knife between them (the little spots on and around them are human bod-

ies) and the isolated head with a hat in the form of a huge bagpipe, which is equally covered with swarming bodies.[8] A closer look reveals how the throng in the foreground is organized (Ill. 8). The groups of players and musicians are clearly marked by their attributes, deformed and disproportioned as these may be. Among the bodies the infernal henchmen squat, sit, or creep. Some of them resemble animals (like the pig in a nun's habit), while others are legendary creatures such as are born in nocturnal visions. One is struck by the silence with which these torments are inflicted. The victims themselves appear to be unaffected, an indifference that puzzles and frightens the observer. No emotions seem to have been expressed in the picture, neither fear of hell nor human compassion nor the urgent desire to warn and preach. The viewer is in no way instructed how to react to and how to interpret the picture.

We are equally puzzled by the landscape in which the mad activities of the "Garden of Lusts" take place (Ill. 9). Crystal needles shoot upward and pierce through enormous leaves. They form the roots of entire bushes or of sticks and glass globes which end in alembics or needles. The strangest creatures hover about them: unknown birds, flying fish, winged people who play with glass balls or try to catch fish. In brief, a frightful mixture of mechanical, vegetable, animal, and human elements is represented as the image of our world, which is breaking apart.

Even Bosch's contemporaries were puzzled by these pictures and tried to interpret them in the most different ways. Some regarded Bosch as a model saint, while others called him a sly heretic. Modern research has endeavored to solve the problem from several points of view. It is now generally assumed that Bosch's creations are not simply phantasmagorias but reproduce forms which have a definite historical context. The harp, for instance, is treated, in the Christian sense, as a symbol of suffering; and there can be no question that certain other elements are related to various Christian concepts of the waning Middle Ages as embodied in the immensely popular apocryphal Apocalypses (such as the second-century one ascribed to Petrus) or the *Visio S. Tundali*[9] or the biblical Apocalypse which, as far as its impact on the pictorial tradition of Occidental art is concerned, is second only to the Song of Songs. Certain figures, such

as the armored creatures in the lower right of the Hell wing (Ill. 8), are strongly reminiscent of the animals rising from the abyss which St. John describes in the Apocalypse (Revelation 9:7–10)

> And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
>
> And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
>
> And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
>
> And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails.

Other scholars have pointed to the typically Boschian and Bruegelian glass balls, alembics, bursting eggs, etc., and connected them with the pictorial language of the alchemists or certain heretic sects. Psychoanalysis, too, has taken hold of the subject, finding itself confronted with symbolic expressions of the complex-ridden subconscious or the collective unconscious, with both of which it is preoccupied. Each interpretation can boast of having adduced relevant material. Yet they seem wrong insofar as they claim to have reduced Bosch's art to one coherent system enabling one to regard each part of a composition as the key to an objectively verifiable coherent meaning. Bosch, however, was influenced by a number of divergent elements,[10] only to end up (as Wieland seems to have divined) by surrendering to his own imagination. Witness of a turbulent age, he painted the visions which came to him; he himself may have been hardly aware that, and to what extent, his paintings violated the functions normally assigned to altarpieces.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder no longer painted altarpieces. The rejection of the religious setting as the natural frame for paintings marks one of the decisive changes undergone by the painter's art during the sixteenth century. But neither did Bruegel paint purely visionary accounts of the nocturnal worlds. It is characteristic of his art that the nightmarish, infernal, and sinister elements he borrowed from Bosch are made to invade and subvert our familiar world. Pictures like the "Proverbs" (Ill. 10) and the *"Dulle Griet"* (Mad Meg) (Ill. 11) are composed as large segments of recognizable reality.

EXTENSION OF THE MEANING OF GROTESQUE

In one of his early essays, Hans Sedlmayr describes the transition from Bosch to Bruegel in the following words: "The estrangement in Bruegel's paintings can be regarded as a secularized form of Bosch's pandiabolism. It represents the infusion of Bosch's nocturnal visions into our everyday world. . . . That Bosch lives on in one aspect of Bruegel's art has always been recognized, for Bruegel started out by drawing Boschian subjects. What remains to be defined is the exact nature of the elements Bruegel borrowed from his model, namely, the experience of the estranged world. In Bosch's paintings, this experience is peripheral to the infernal pattern; it forms part of the hellish torments, like the phantasmagoric, the ghostly, the sadistic, the obscene, the mechanical, and other elements. In Bruegel's works, however, it occupies a central position and becomes a kind of 'heuristic hypothesis,' according to which the real world is seen with cold interest."[11]

"With cold interest," Bruegel paints the increasingly estranged world of our daily life not with the intention of teaching, warning, or arousing our compassion but solely in order to portray the inexplicable, incomprehensible, ridiculous, and horrible. In his book *Mimesis* Erich Auerbach has disclosed the only two perspectives from which humble reality could become the object of artistic representation in the Middle Ages. Either it was considered in a humorous vein or it was made meaningful in relation to the physical settings of the Christian legend (the stable, the shepherds, the craftsman's shop, the fountain, etc.). Bruegel seems to have added a third perspective: that of the terror inspired by the unfathomable, that is, the grotesque. Recent scholarship has verified one additional source of inspiration for Bruegel. Fischart's contemporary, he painted the sinister elements concealed in language. One of his most popular paintings illustrates a series of proverbs and constitutes a picture of the world turned upside down. As we begin to survey it, we find it humorous in many ways, but things begin to look different when we approach the center, the spot directly underneath the chapel (does the portico belong to it?) (Ill. 12). There is a Dutch proverb "to be shriven by the devil." A farmer has come to town and is kneeling before his confessor, who is neither a priest nor the familiar kind of devil, but a monstrous creature with a swollen face, hair resembling wisps of hay, and protuberances on his head, of which it is hard to

say whether they are antlers or tree branches. And Boschian monsters climb, glide, and creep through the windows.

"Money like dirt" is the proverb which provided Jedlicka with the basis for his interpretation of the previously unexplained figure in the *"Dulle Griet"* who procures gold coins from within herself by means of a long ladle and proceeds to distribute them among the greedy crowd surrounding her. On the back of her neck she carries the "ship of disaster" with the globe of glass (one of the many alchemistic symbols which are found in the works of both Bosch and Bruegel), while one of Bosch's apocalyptic landscapes unfolds in the background. The *Dulle Griet* herself constitutes the principal figure of the canvas. Originally a demonic creature, she was later used as a character in low comedies. Bruegel reinstates her demonic nature. Jedlicka calls her "perhaps the most important representation of the witch in Western art." He refers to the mixture of heterogeneous elements in the picture: the *Dulle Griet* in full flight and attacking, Amazon and old maid, ravaged and virgin (the veil symbol).[12] He also shows that she illustrates several figures of speech such as "to be up in arms," "to snatch something from the mouth of hell," "to rob one's way to hell with sword in hand," etc.

Griet attacks hell, whose mouth is open. The motive of hell's mouth is familiar from the *Visio S. Tundali* as well as the religious drama. Bruegel renders it in an unusual way; he paints a huge physiognomy composed of the most diverse ingredients. The forehead ends in a kind of spire construction; tree trunks emerge from the ears; the eyebrows are arches formed by earthenware pots, etc.

It is with good reason that the eighteenth century considered Bruegel to be more grotesque than Bosch,[13] and that its definition of the concept was based on Bruegel's paintings. Bruegel decisively breaks with the tradition, according to which the infernal world forms part of the Christian cosmos. He does not paint a Christian hell, whose monsters serve as God's tools in warning, tempting, or punishing, but an absurd nocturnal world of its own which permits of no rational or emotional explanation. The observer's bewilderment is in keeping with the quality which all the aspects of the grotesque we have mentioned thus far seemed to have in common, namely, that the artist himself did not intend a meaning but wanted to portray the absurd in all its absurdity. If we are to arrive at a

closer definition of the grotesque, however, Wieland's analysis stands in need of some correction. Raphael's grotesques appeared to constitute a special realm of gay phantasmagorias. Wieland regarded Bruegel's grotesques as a realm apart, a province of horrible phantasms. We, on the other hand, took it to be characteristic of the grotesque that it does not constitute a fantastic realm of its own (for there is none such). The grotesque world is—and is not—our own world. The ambiguous way in which we are affected by it results from our awareness that the familiar and apparently harmonious world is alienated under the impact of abysmal forces, which break it up and shatter its coherence.

Although I do not fully subscribe to Wieland's distinction between grotesque and caricature, I grant that the latter—as well as satire (which is related to it)—has much in common with the grotesque and may even help to pave the way for it. We shall see by examining larger forms such as graphic cycles, plays, or novels how easily the grotesque can make its appearance in the midst of humorous, caricatural, or satiric contexts. Taken as a phenomenon, however, the grotesque is clearly distinguished from the humorous caricature and the topical satire, no matter how broad the transitions from one to the other and how difficult, at times, the distinction between them.[14]

2. *The "Chimeric" World of the Commedia dell'Arte*

Harlekin oder die Verteidigung des Grotesk-Komischen (Harlequin or The Defense of the Grotesquely Comic) was the title of a pamphlet published by Justus Möser in 1761. The essay constitutes a defense, against the attacks of the classicists, not only of the grotesques but also of the grotesque as an esthetic category. Harlequin himself is charged with pressing the argument. But who is Harlequin? He introduces himself by asking not to be confused with Hanswurst, that coarse and common fellow who entertains the crowd with dirty jokes and stories. Harlequin belongs to a nobler race, which produced such characters as Columbine, Pantalone, *Il Dottore* and *Il Capitano*—in other words: the dramatis personae of

the *commedia dell'arte.* Their world is called grotesque; and the speaker defines the nature of the grotesque with reference to it. Harlequin immediately explains that he considers it to be a world of its own. Harlequin is in his element only "where the entire dramatic creation is grotesque."[15] He feels that this world has "its own perfections." With this weighty argument, the little province was once and for all removed from the jurisdiction of the classicists and their definition of art as the imitation of beautiful nature, for the standards of beauty and sublimity were no longer applicable to it. Möser also succeeded in freeing the grotesque from the fetters of moral didacticism. In its negative portion the little pamphlet is symptomatic of the changing taste in Möser's age. In its positive part it does not penetrate very deeply and is soon caught in obvious contradictions. The title itself suggests that here the grotesque and the comic are confused, and in describing man's longing for joy and a by no means superficial gaiety[16] as the reason for the ridiculous aspect of the comic, Möser transcends the didactic esthetics without, however, ceasing to look at art with a view toward its desired effects. In his structural analysis he describes the ridiculous side of the *commedia dell'arte,* as of all comic art, in terms of exaggeration, as "size without strength," and compares it with pictorial caricature.[17] He even adduces Hogarth's satires without noticing that, by doing so, he reintroduces the didactic point of view. Only in a few passages does he betray an awareness of the essential qualities of the *commedia* and its grotesqueness; for twice he calls it a "chimeric world."

It brooks no doubt that Justus Möser was essentially right in calling the world of the *commedia dell'arte* grotesque, as Diderot had done before him in a passing reference. His instinct was sound, no matter how inadequate his own definition of the phenomenon, and it is worth our while to bear with him a little longer. It is by no means easy to gain insight into the true nature of the *commedia dell'arte,* especially since it did not establish its own tradition in Germany (whereas it is still cultivated in the Parisian theatre of the Rue Vieux Colombiers). Besides, its rather considerable influence on the German drama is usually overlooked by literary historians.[18] The matter is complicated by the fact that it is peculiar to this art not to operate with written texts, since its dialogues are improvised and only the bare outline of the plots is predetermined. As Diderot

points out, the word carries very little weight compared with the physical actions and gestures. The nature of the *commedia dell'arte* cannot be gauged by its language but only from the way in which it is acted or, better still, from the movements performed by the actors. It is important to know, for instance, that the actors had to be real acrobats capable of turning a somersault without spilling the water from a glass they held while performing the exercise. This bit of information indicates the manner in which the caricaturally distorted figures (Pantalone being the caricature of the lovesick and perenially deceived oldster, *Il Dottore* the braggart whose boasting is forever unmasked, etc.) were further exaggerated into an eccentric style of movement "that infected the entire stage." The "chimeric" element was further enhanced by the actors' masks, which covered even their noses. The purpose of these masks can be divined from the drawings created by the most talented illustrator of the *commedia,* Jacques Callot.[19] The etchings of his cycle *Balli di Sfessania* are faithful reproductions of the sketches Callot made during the performances, and the distortions which appear in them are by no means inventions of the artist (Ills. 14 and 15). It is easy to see that the masks were intended to add animal qualities to the human body. We encounter excessively long, beak-like noses, and appropriately sharpened chins. The heads seem to be elongated in the back, and bat-like protuberances as well as elaborate cock's feathers underscore their birdlike nature. Callot's drawings also furnish an idea of the gestic style. A completely frozen attitude in one part of the drawing may suddenly give way to the most eccentric movements in another.

I have added an example from one of Callot's sketchbooks to the illustrations from the *Balli* (Ill. 16). A number of drawings are populated by such figures. There is no need to describe at length the grotesque fusion of human and nonhuman elements which is to be found here. Figures like these plainly manifest the difference between caricature, satire, and the grotesque proper. It is to them that one of Callot's eulogists referred when stating: "Why is it that I am never tired of looking at your strange and fantastic prints, bold master? . . . His drawings are mere reflexes of the odd, fantastic visions produced by the magic of his overly active fantasy. . . . The irony which, by contrasting human with animal elements, mocks man

and all his trifling activities, dwells only in profound spirits; and Callot's composite grotesques reveal to the serious observer the mysterious allusions hidden under the veil of oddity. . . . A poet or writer who envisions figures of ordinary life in his inner, romantic realm of spirits—and who subsequently represents them in the aura which surrounds them there as a strange and bizarre costume—could easily justify his aims by stating that he wanted to work in Callot's manner."

These words were written nearly two centuries after the creation of Callot's drawings. They form part of E. T. A. Hoffmann's introduction to his *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier* (Fantastic Sketches in the Manner of Callot), to which Jean Paul added a special preface. What gave Gottsched and even Wieland cause for censure—the dreamlike quality of a work and the unruly fantasy which creates its own world—elicited praise from Hoffmann. For this specifically artistic fantasy, which makes the oddities of the actual world its point of departure, penetrates that world and furnishes the congenial soul with a glimpse of the real one behind it. But since, by jumping from Callot to E. T. A. Hoffmann, we have disrupted the chronology of our argument, we must now return to the sixties and seventies of the eighteenth century, when the term "grotesque" had begun to be more consistently used with reference to the Hell Bruegel and to the chimeric world of the *commedia dell'arte*.

3. *The "Spirit of the Grotesque" in the Drama of the Sturm und Drang*

The word "grotesque" was occasionally used in the theoretical writings of the 1770's. In his *Briefe über die Merkwürdigkeiten der Literatur* (Letters about Noteworthy Traits in Literature), Gerstenberg praises Shakespeare for "possessing every conceivable talent—the plastically endowed spirit of nature in movement and repose, the lyrical spirit of opera, the spirit of comic situations, and even that of the grotesque. Strangely enough," Gerstenberg continues, "nobody can say that he possesses one of these spirits more than another."[20] In this passage, the "spirit of the grotesque" is clearly dis-

tinguished from the comic one. By calling Jacques in *As You Like It* a grotesque character, Gerstenberg shows again that he knows the difference without, however, feeling the need for an explanation. One is also struck by the matter-of-factness with which the term is here applied to literature. It is hardly necessary to quote more extensively from contemporary sources. Suffice it to say that all of them show the grotesque to have been widely used as an esthetic category.[21]

A complete conceptual history of the grotesque, on the other hand, cannot be restricted to a history of the word itself. Wieland and Möser found a close relation existing between the grotesque on the one hand, and caricature, humor (*Komik*), and satire on the other. In many cases they implied one when referring to the others. The terminological difficulties Lenz faced in his theoretical writings as well as in the classification of his plays indicate his honest but unsuccessful attempt to define the terms *Komik* and comedy somewhat less stringently and, as far as I can see, in such a way as to include the grotesque: "What I call comedy is not only a performance that evokes laughter but one that concerns us all. . . . Comedy is an image of human society; and if serious problems arise, their image cannot be humorous. . . . It is for this reason that our German writers of comedies ought to write comically and tragically at the same time."[22]

Where Lenz failed as a theoretician, however, he succeeded eminently as a playwright. The grotesque, which disturbed the thinkers of the time, greatly attracted the artists as a vaguely defined goal. The drama of the *Sturm und Drang* (and especially Lenz' theatre) is more replete with grotesque elements than has hitherto been acknowledged. Historically speaking, it was especially Shakespeare, the master of the grotesque, and the eccentric gestic style of the *commedia dell'arte* which inspired the German writers.

Lenz admitted that he thought ten times more highly of the caricaturists than of the idealizing painters. Goethe, in turn, characterized Lenz as follows: "Lenz always aimed at the eccentric which, therefore, constantly entertained him."[23] The caricatural spirit of Lenz' play *Der Neue Menoza* (The New Menoza) is vividly expressed in the names of the principal characters—Mr. and Mrs. von Biederling (worthy), Count Chameleon, Mr. von Zopf (pedant), Mr.

Zierau (dandy), etc. The figures are composed of a minimum of traits which assert themselves with manic persistence. This may still result in purely comic effects. Mr. von Biederling's habit of directing every conversation toward the topic of tree nurseries and silkworm culture reminds one of certain traits in the character of Squire Western in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Or the outcome may be a topical satire or critique as in the case of Zierau's bookishness. An incurable reformer, Lenz puts a seriously meant, though grotesquely exaggerated, critique of eighteenth-century Europe into the mouth of his partly civilized hero, the Oriental prince who turns out to be the missing son of Mr. von Biederling. Both *Der Hofmeister* (The Tutor) and *Die Soldaten* (The Soldiers) conclude with honestly intended programs and reform plans. But the categories of the purely comic and satiric exaggeration do not suffice to explain the nature of Lenz' *Der Neue Menoza*. The Prince and Wilhelmine are genuine human beings who stand in contrast with the stereotyped characters of the play. But even they move in such a way (or rather, obey such impulses) that they are like puppets guided by an alien force. The Prince having asked for Wilhelmine's hand, the latter is questioned by her parents in his presence. After a long silence she replies "I do not want to marry," whereupon the dialogue continues in the following manner:

> Mr. von Biederling: Heavens, no (*stamps his foot*), I don't want you to. If all I am good for in this world is to keep you from being happy, I had rather cut down this old, barren tree. Don't you agree with me, prince?
>
> Prince: It is cruel of you to make me answer. Such pain can only be alleviated by silence (*in a faint voice*), silence, eternal silence (*turns to leave*).
>
> Wilhelmine (*restrains him*): I love you.
>
> Prince: You love me (*faints at her feet*).
>
> Wilhelmine (*falling over him*): I feel that I cannot live without him.
>
> Mr. von Biederling: You there! Box his ears to wake him up!

This is the same gestic style which dominates the figures in *Der Hofmeister*. In the child which the old nurse has brought before him, Läuffer recognizes his own self:

Läuffer: Now you are solved, terrible puzzle! (*Takes the child into his arms and steps before the mirror*) What? These are not my features? (*Faints; the child begins to cry*)

Marthe: Are you fainting? . . . I must call for help. I think he has fallen ill.

The contrast is heightened by the comments of the bystanders.[24] This technique, however, reveals the law of motion which governs the actions of Lenz' plays. Even where the characters seem to act, an unknown power acts from within them. Quite frequently Lenz introduces chance as the force which shapes an action. He always indulges in situations fraught with striking contrasts. The Prince has married Wilhelmine. Three days afterwards, an acquaintance, who does not know of their marriage and wants to please them, informs them that they are brother and sister. After the wedding the Prince has given a ball, to which the entire city was invited. But then he fled in despair. We re-encounter him at another ball. But this time it is a ball he has arranged for the beggars and cripples of Leipzig, a ball of lemures, a veritable *danse macabre*. The climax of the scene is reached when a cripple approaches the Prince with the words:

"(*Raising his glass*) Long Live—long live (*close to him*) your princely sweetheart (*drinks. The Prince rushes off*)."

The other guests respond by repeating the cripple's last words and throwing their glasses out of the window.

These are images of a world in the process of dissolution and estrangement. Even more clashing is the conclusion of the fourth act, when Count Chameleon is killed by Donna Diana, whom he has deserted, and whom he now embraces in the mistaken belief that she is Wilhelmine. Thus the ball which he has arranged suddenly takes on a macabre note. Far more is revealed than the cruel revenge of Donna Diana, the most eccentric figure of the play: When the door of the room that was to be the scene of the Count's amorous adventure is forced open, the light falls not only on the dying Count himself but also on the corpse of Gustav, the servant who was in love with the Countess and who, despairing of his hope, has hung himself in a corner.[25]

The fifth act offers a kind of epilogue in which the author introduces a new character, a healthy individual and common man who

speaks in dialect. He, too, is temporarily bewildered. For the learned son of this old mayor, who wants to relax from the day's work by looking at the marionettes, tries to show him that this kind of entertainment is no real art, since real art seeks to imitate beautiful nature and deceives by observing certain rules, especially those pertaining to the three unities. The father returns in the concluding scene. His pleasure in the marionettes has really been spoiled. He has followed the action with watch in hand, but now he is cured. He soundly thrashes his learned son: "I'll teach you to tell me how to amuse myself. . . . I'll give you a lecture about beautiful nature, I will."

In this manner something like a frame, a play around the play, is created; for a moment one is tempted to assume that it was a performance of *Der Neue Menoza* which the old man went to see in the interval between the two scenes. For there, also, the three unities are, obviously, not too well observed. Some kind of relation between the drama and the puppet play is certainly intended; if, in viewing the marionettes, we consider not only the disregard of the unities but also the rigid and highly stylized figures and movements, which closely relate to the chimeric world of the *commedia dell'arte,* we realize that by providing this frame Lenz has significantly helped us to understand his dramatic *oeuvre.*[26]

"I have assembled the craziest characters, and the most profoundly tragic feelings frequently alternate with laughing and roaring," Klinger wrote about the three principal characters of his *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress). His contemporaries were at a loss. "There they sat and did not comprehend." Thus Klinger himself describes the effect of the first performance. Literary historians subsequently found it easy to prove that no genuinely tragic, and only a few really comic, elements are present in the work. But one should not take Klinger's words or certain of Lenz' utterances too literally; for they merely hint at something which, terrible and ridiculous at once, is neither tragic nor comic. The critic who called Wild, Blasius, and La Feu caricatures was not too far off the mark. They, too, are composed of a few rigid qualities which are grossly exaggerated and summed up in their names. Nor should one overlook a shade of satire in the snobbish, hollow, and perennially bored Blasius or the constantly daydreaming La Feu. It is satire of the literary kind, as

is shown by the symbolic settings of certain scenes, for one of the two figures plans to retire to a wooded cave, while the other desires to withdraw to an Arcadian grange.

Even Wild, who harbors feelings that are shared by his young contemporaries, is portrayed with so much exaggeration that we cannot take him too seriously. The rejection of the play by the contemporary audience, as well as by the literary historians of subsequent ages, stems from the difficulty of deciding whether or not to take the characters and actions for what they are. The blame for this uncertainty is often placed on the poet's lack of artistry. But Klinger liked this play especially well and always considered it his masterpiece. It is the audience which should be blamed for failing to recognize the existence of a third genre. For in this play we have to do with a fusion rather than a confusion of grotesque elements. To be sure, Klinger's play (as distinguished from Lenz') represents a type which stays rather close to caricature. Take the following example:

(*The Moor pinches Blasius' nose and, standing behind La Feu, keeps the latter from writing*)

La Feu: Your eye radiates beauty! Ho, ho!
Blasius: Hm. Rascals all!
Captain: Gentlemen, I wanted to make your acquaintance. You are soldiers?
Blasius: I am nothing (*goes to sleep*).
Captain: That's a lot. And you?
La Feu: Everything, everything.
Captain: That's little. Come here, Mr. Everything. Let's have a bout. I should like to flex my muscles (*takes hold of him*).

The eccentric language and gestures prescribed for such scenes definitely tend to estrange the world, and we can't laugh at them with an easy conscience. We learn to make sense of the actions and characters of the play only when seeing them historically, that is, in relation to the grotesque style of the *commedia dell'arte*. As long as we apply to them the standards of comedy or tragedy, or both, they must seem unutterably silly. And only when historically oriented can we grasp Klinger's point of view, without necessarily sharing it.

Goethe—to present another example from the literature of the *Sturm und Drang,* which yields so much valuable material for our study—also indulged in the writing of dramatic grotesques. The principal character of his *Satyros* is a kind of monster, a sylvan creature half man and half goat. Although the satire was originally aimed at one of the vagrant prophets (and the gullibility of the crowd), the first intention was so obscured in the process of writing that we can only guess as to whether it was Herder, Kaufmann, or Goué whom Goethe had in mind.[27] In the midst of caricature and satire we come across three strange scenes which leave us puzzled and cause a feeling of horror, which is inspired by an alienation of the world, to contend with our smiling disposition. The first of these occurs when the abhorrent monster, overcome by genuine love of nature, composes a song in the truly Goethean manner; the second when the gentlest and most sensitive of girls falls under the spell of this furry creature, and when the latter reveals to her in the most gentle words the innermost secrets of a girl in love; the third when, shortly before his unmasking, he proclaims to the stunned people a myth of creation which echoes certain passages in *Faust* and expresses Goethe's own belief.

The lighter form of the grotesque, which more closely approximates the eccentric gestic style of the *commedia dell'arte,* had been attempted by Goethe in the play *Die Mitschuldigen* (Accomplices). The reader is somewhat disconcerted when the noble pair is finally separated and the genuinely loving (and beloved) Sophie remains tied to her unscrupulous husband. This ambiguity does not prevail in the original version of this work of Goethe's youth, however. For it was only in the later redaction of the play that its author eliminated the scene which most closely resembles the gestic style of the *commedia* (it contained such stage directions as "rushes into the alcove with the speed of lightning," "in an extreme caricature of embarrassment," etc.) as well as providing obvious emotional and critical perspectives so that the audience will know with whom to sympathize. In making these changes, however, Goethe rendered the play ambiguous.

Goethe's revision of *Die Mitschuldigen,* aimed at reducing its *commedia*-like features, reflects the progress of German literature in general, and Goethe's writing in particular. For Goethe, the clas-

sicist, spreads a veil over the unfathomable and pursues the grotesque, wherever he finds it, with his hatred. He often uses *fratzenhaft* (caricatural) as a synonym for grotesque.[28] Only in the works of his old age, in certain ballads, in the *West-Östlicher Divan,* and in the second part of his *Faust* could we find new material for our study. But, in the meantime, the concept of the grotesque had gone through still another phase of its development.

III

The Grotesque in the Age of Romanticism

1. The Theory

a) *Friedrich Schlegel*

In Friedrich Schlegel's *Gespräch über die Poesie* (Conversation About Poetry) of 1800, the most important document of the early Romantic esthetic, the concept of the grotesque occupies a central place throughout elaborate discussions. It is hard to say exactly how much A. W. Schlegel contributed conceptually and terminologically to the *Gespräch*. It can be shown, however, that, in the years prior to 1800, A. W. Schlegel actually shared the views expressed in the *Brief über den Roman* (Letter Concerning the Novel), which forms part of the *Gespräch* and where the term grotesque is used in its original, Raphaelian sense rather than with reference to the extended meaning attached to it in the eighteenth century. In a review dating from 1797, for example, he states: "With hasty and often grotesque

strokes he sketched humorous, tender, and wanton scenes in close proximity."[1] And one of the *Athenäum* fragments of 1798 contains the phrase: ". . . and for that charmingly grotesque color symphony of the most sublime and tender wantonness which tends to hover about the surface of greatness."[2] One senses that the speaker was thinking of the ornamental grotesques; and it can be shown how this connection was established.

In 1789, Goethe had published his essay *"Von Arabesken"* (Concerning Arabesques) in Wieland's magazine *Der Teutsche Merkur.* In this essay, far from acting as Winckelmann's docile pupil, he had somewhat hesitantly recognized the ancient grotesques as a perfectly legitimate and charming artistic genre. It was only in keeping with the usage then common in Germany and elsewhere that he used the terms "grotesque" and "arabesque" as synonyms. (The same, by the way, is true of Friedrich Schlegel's *Gespräch.*) At the end of his essay, Goethe especially praised the Raphaelian revival of the ancient ornamental style.

A few years afterwards, another defense of the ornamental grotesques against the distorting attacks by several adherents of the classicistic taste was published; its author was the Göttingen art historian Johann Dominicus Fiorillo,[3] the first academic representative of this discipline, who was soon to become the teacher of Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Wackenroder. It was Fiorillo who introduced them to the world of the great paintings of the Renaissance. To him Wackenroder owed the knowledge embodied in his *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Outpourings of an Art-loving Friar). It appears that in the figure of the alien monk at the end of the *Malerchronik* (Painter's Chronicle) he erected a monument to Fiorillo, who was born in Italy and never completely mastered the German language. Fiorillo also acquainted his disciples with the world and the spirit of the grotesques. This is echoed in Tieck's novel *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (Franz Sternbald's Peregrinations), where the painter Ludoviko designs a totally new kind of painting, which is no longer restricted to the ornamental sphere: "I would then portray the strangest figures related to each other in a confused and well-nigh incomprehensible manner; figures composed of the various types of animals and terminating in plantlike forms; insects and worms whom I would endow with a

striking resemblance to human characters, so that they would express attitudes and passions in a manner at once terrifying and hilarious."

August Wilhelm Schlegel was even closer to Fiorillo than either Tieck or Wackenroder. Their connection continued in subsequent years, when Schlegel helped his former teacher to write his *Geschichte der Malerei* (History of Painting).[4] If, as the quotations show, his definition of the grotesque was initially based on Raphael's art, this may well have been due to Fiorillo's personal influence.

In Friedrich Schlegel's *Gespräch über die Poesie,* the word "arabesque" is first used in Ludoviko's speech about mythology, which constitutes one of the focal points at which several motifs, each of them having been, or about to be, variously dealt with in the immediate context, are sounded together. Ludoviko calls mythology a "work of art produced by nature." He finds it to be structurally identical with "the great wit of Romantic poetry" that governs the construction of Shakespeare's and Cervantes' works, to which, as the epitomes of Romantic literature, homage is paid throughout the *Gespräch.* Ludoviko describes this structure as "that artfully regulated confusion, that charming symmetry of contradictions, that strange and constant alternation between irony and enthusiasm present even in the smallest parts of the whole" which, taken together, "constitute a kind of indirect mythology." He also has a name for this kind of structure and states that its "organization is identical with that of the arabesque, which represents the oldest and most primitive form of the imagination."

Schlegel, then, regards the arabesque as a form or structure. The sensory basis of this abstract definition is revealed in a subsequent passage of the *Brief über den Roman,* where Antonio refers to Raphael's "arabesques" as springing from the "great," that is, truly "fantastic," age of painting. Throughout the letter, the words "grotesque" and "arabesque" are used synonymously. But their estimation and place in the poetic theory is now a different one. Just as Goethe and Fiorillo regarded both arabesques and grotesques as legitimate but subordinate forms of art, so Schlegel assigns the arabesque to a lower stratum: Diderot's *Jacques et le Fataliste* is undoubtedly a work of art, but it is "an arabesque and not great literature. This does not lessen its value in my eyes, however, for I consider the ara-

besque to be a very distinct and essential type of poetic expression." Great literature issued from the pens of Ariosto, Shakespeare, and Cervantes, who were inspired by "the divine genius, the imagination." The arabesque, on the other hand, has the task of helping to pave the way for an understanding of these great writers or a new epoch. According to Schlegel, his own age was capable only of producing great musical works, whereas the field of literature was deserted. Diderot, Sterne, and Jean Paul were at least writers of the arabesque, which stimulates our imagination. The arabesque—to which Goethe assigned a marginal place in the universe of art—was the "primitive form" (*Naturform*) of poetry and the basis of all great art. Schlegel's age was unable to produce great poetry. But "grotesques and confessions like those of Jean Paul and Sterne are the only romantic products of our unromantic age."

Here the interpretation runs into difficulties. I, too, would speak of Sterne and Jean Paul as writers of the grotesque, as can be shown by a wealth of illustrations from the latter's works—and by no means only those already published at that time. In Jean Paul's writings we find the clashing contrasts which seem to remove the ground from under our feet, the sinister games with wax dolls and demonized mechanisms, the constantly renewed invocation of fear in the presence of a world about to be alienated, and, most strikingly, the abysmal visions in the speech of the dead Christ, delivered from on high and postulating the nonexistence of God. Likewise, I emphatically subscribe to the classification of Sterne as a writer of the grotesque, for the categories of humor, satire, and irony, of fantastic wantonness or wanton phantasmagoria fail to do full justice to the form and content of *Tristram Shandy*. The irregular progression of the narrative and the apparent arbitrariness of the narrator seem to indicate that the latter is possessed by a strange power which is secretly allied with the maliciousness of inanimate objects (*Tücke des Objekts*) and man's estrangement from his fellow men. But is this what Friedrich Schlegel found in Sterne's novel? Are the grotesque elements he discovered in the work of Jean Paul and Sterne those which we find there?

To be sure, many of the essential ingredients of the grotesque—the mixture of heterogeneous elements, the confusion, the fantastic quality, and even a kind of alienation of the world—may be found,

however vaguely defined, in Schlegel's *Gespräch*. But one aspect is definitely lacking: the abysmal quality, the insecurity, the terror inspired by the disintegration of the world. The speaker regards the "confusion of fantasy" in the grotesque as a "pleasant confusion." Now the imagination dips into that stream which carries it off and leads it home, now it senses an affinity with that fluidum in which everything—objective reality, as well as the "persons, events, and situations" of the work of art—are merely "intimations" of "the higher things, of infinity, hieroglyphs of the one eternal love and the holy vitality of shaping nature." To Friedrich Schlegel, the ominous aspect of the grotesque reveals the innermost secret of existence, and thus a new meaning is added to the concept. Schlegel's definition of the grotesque and the arabesque has taken on historical importance. During the months which they spent together Tieck must have transmitted this definition to Philipp Otto Runge, thus furnishing the latter with the name for and the theoretical insight into the nature of his own creative urge. In a letter of 1 December 1802 he wrote to Tieck: "I think that I know now approximately what you mean by landscape. Throughout ancient history the artists have always striven to see and express the workings of the elements inherent in the natural forces. . . . The essence of landscape would be expressed by the very opposite idea, namely, for man to see himself, his habits, and his passions embodied in flowers, plants, and other natural phenomena. When looking at flowers and trees, I become increasingly aware that each contains some human quality, thought, or feeling, and I am sure that this must reflect the state of Paradise. . . . I am, therefore, determined never to paint a flower piece without human figures. . . . There would be a growing tendency toward arabesques and hieroglyphs; but from them landscape would finally emerge. . . . It is thus inevitable that this art should be seen as an expression of the most profound religious mysticism."

So far we have only sought to define Schlegel's use of the term "grotesque" in his *Gespräch* or, more precisely, in the *Brief über den Roman*. There, the belief in the saving grace of the imagination had brightened the nocturnal aspects of the grotesque to the dawn of a day filled with sunshine. But Schlegel's fragments from the first volume of the *Athenäum* (1798) speak a different language. Here the

word "grotesque" appears eight times altogether and, in each case, is clearly distinguished from arabesque.[5] Tieck's writings, such as *Sternbald* and the fairy tale plays, are "poetic arabesques" (fragment 418), composed with a sense of irony and richly endowed with fantasy and gaiety. In fragment 125 the arabesque and the grotesque are treated as the opposite poles of Romantic art: ". . . I should like to see Jean Paul and Peter Leberecht (Tieck) combined. For the one lacks precisely what the other has. A combination of Jean Paul's grotesque talent and Peter Leberecht's fecund imagination would produce a splendid Romantic poet." In what sense is the word "grotesque" employed in this passage? According to fragments 75, 305, and 389, grotesqueness is constituted by a clashing contrast between form and content, the unstable mixture of heterogeneous elements, the explosive force of the paradoxical, which is both ridiculous and terrifying. As in the esthetic writings of the eighteenth century, the concept of caricature as well as those of the tragic and comic are subsequently brought into play. "Caricature is a passive connection of the naïve and the grotesque. The poet may use it either comically or tragically" (fragment 396).[6] By rearranging the equation we arrive at the formula: the grotesque is caricature without naïveté. Fragment 424, finally, indicates that Friedrich Schlegel used the terms "tragic" and "comic" to define still another category. In this fragment a new interpretation of the French Revolution is added to the customary ones which regard it as a national event, a global earthquake, or the prototype of revolution. "One can also regard it as the focal and climactic point of the French national character, in which all its paradoxical features are united; as the most awe-inspiring grotesque of the age, where its profoundest prejudices and its most violent anticipations result in a terrible chaos, a bizarre mixture, a colossal tragicomedy of all mankind." Instead of suggesting the fluidum of eternal love, the grotesque now opens the view into a chaos that is both horrible and ridiculous. A new word, tragicomedy, is thus made to adjoin the grotesque.

This confrontation throws new light on a subject previously dealt with. Friedrich Schlegel's definition of tragicomedy appears to be closely related to Lenz' and Klinger's attempted description of the genre represented by their plays. Their own definitions had been vague, just as that which was current since the Renaissance had suf-

fered from the lack of suitable material. In addition, the classicistic esthetic, exemplified by Lessing in the fifty-fifth piece of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie,* and again by Schiller and Goethe, had discredited the use of what they considered to be a confused idea. Schlegel no longer used the term "tragicomedy" to designate a mixture of genres, but regarded it as a consistent and independent form. Beginning with the dramaturgic practice of the *Sturm und Drang* and the dramatic theory of Romanticism, tragicomedy and the grotesque are conceptually related, and the history of the grotesque in the field of drama is largely one with that of tragicomedy. Shakespeare's plays form the background of the *Sturm und Drang* drama, and his purest tragicomedy, *Troilus and Cressida,* was later to serve Richard Dehmel as the basis for his definition of the genre. However, the *commedia dell'arte*—often with Molière as an intermediary —performed a similar office. The various modes of interpenetration determine the forms and variations of the grotesque in modern drama.

b) *The Annihilating Idea of Humor*

"Jean Paul's grotesques [are] the only romantic products of this unromantic age"—it may surprise us that Jean Paul himself neither elaborated on this statement nor used the word "grotesque" in his *Vorschule der Ästhetik.* This very omission, however, is significant. The praise of Jean Paul, the writer of grotesques, had been a little too ambiguous for him to feel tempted to give this term a central place in his esthetic, which was intended as a justification and exegesis of his own work.[7] But even though the word itself is never used, the phenomenon is sighted and circumscribed by entire programs. It is an ingredient of humor as Jean Paul sought to define it, namely, its "annihilating idea." Reality, the terrestrial, finite world as a whole, is destroyed by humor; it is the bird Merops which soars up to heaven with raised tail and draws us after it. The laughter which humor evokes is not detached but contains a certain measure of pain. According to Jean Paul, it is to "a melancholy people" (the English) that we owe the best humorists. The greatest humorist, however, would be the devil. "A significant thought: the devil, the world turned literally upside down . . . can easily be imagined as

the greatest humorist and whimsical man!" But now Jean Paul is frightened by the idea of the total destruction of the world. He turns away by stating that the devil "as the moresque of a moresque would be much too unesthetic; his laughter would be much too painful in resembling the gay and blooming costume of—those killed by the guillotine." Jean Paul stops, but not before quickly offering an example of satanic humor. Did he fully realize how often and how easily he adopted this attitude in his own writings? It is not surprising that in the same paragraph he refers to Flögel's *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen* and Möser's Harlequin essay, just as throughout these sections he takes his examples from his own works and those of Sterne, Rabelais (Sterne's "grandfather"), and Fischart. He closely approximates the phrase "the estranged world" when he states that "Skepticism, which . . . is born when the mind's eye surveys the terrible mass of martial opinions which surround it, is a kind of soul-dizziness that suddenly transforms our rapid movement into the entire strange world standing still." These observations belong to a series of examples by means of which Jean Paul intends to show that "something comparable to the audacity of the annihilating humor" exists outside of literature and even apart from art in general. He mentions, among other things, the medieval fools' carnivals and the *Eselsmessen,* where "religious and secular matters as well as social classes and customs are turned upside down" and where all order is destroyed.

But still, no matter how annihilating and satanic this humor may appear, Jean Paul does not find it to be solely destructive or abysmal. The bird Merops soars up to heaven, and the devil (we omitted these words when citing the quotation) is the "world's shadow which helps to make the body of light more prominent." The annihilation of finite reality can and may take place only because humor also leads upward toward the "idea of infinity." Jean Paul's language indicates that he thought of humor as aiming at an absolute. Jean Paul's grotesque and his annihilating humor resemble Schlegel's definitions of the grotesque and arabesque in his *Gespräch über die Poesie.* Jean Paul seemed to regard an intellectual content as so essential to the "ridiculous" as such that he refused to acknowledge the comic element in two examples cited by Flögel, which are of special interest in the present context: "the plastic Hell Bruegel, the Prince of Pallagonia at

Palermo."[8] The true essence of humor, however, is not only intellectual (as is the case with the comic) but also religious; the *Himmel* into which the bird Merops rises is not a sky but heaven.

Did Jean Paul's definition of the grotesque deflect us from the path of the grotesque as we have previously traced it? There is sufficient material in his theoretical writings to confirm this notion. But the section which deals with the annihilating idea of humor quite clearly indicates how familiar Jean Paul was with the satanic humor, which destroys and estranges without lending us wings for a flight into heaven. But is the idea of infinity, of heaven, of the divine world, of the body of light (characteristically enough, Jean Paul makes use of several diverse images) as much of a certainty in Jean Paul's poetic world as it may have been in his philosophy? I am inclined to believe that a final uncertainty is essential to Jean Paul's writings. The fervor with which he describes the spiritual flight of his exalted figures seems infused not only with grief over the transitoriness of the great moments and with pain caused by the awareness that all feelings are subjective and the heavenly gates will never open, but also with doubt whether they really are the heavenly gates and walls. The poet of seraphic and Dionysiac moods felt constantly urged to create abysmal visions, those nightmares of destruction and terror inspired by the knowledge that there is no God. These are perhaps the most poignant expressions of the grotesque in the German language.

c) *La Belle et la Bête*

After Schlegel's *Gespräch* and Jean Paul's *Vorschule,* the grotesque has an important place in still another exposition of the Romantic esthetic, namely, in Victor Hugo's preface to his drama *Cromwell* of 1827, which contains the program of French Romanticism. Victor Hugo treated the grotesque as the hallmark of all art created since antiquity, including that of the Middle Ages: "Here, then, is a principle unknown to antiquity, a new type of poetry. . . . This type is the grotesque." Hugo derived his knowledge of the concept from German Romanticism through translations and especially through the writings of the philosopher Victor Cousin. But Hugo en-

larged its scope and considerably increased its meaning and importance.[9]

To the new "principle" of the grotesque belongs a new artistic genre—that of comedy. At first glance, this connection between the grotesque and comedy appears to hark back to the traditional identification of the grotesque with *comique, ridicule,* and *bouffon.* Hugo acknowledged this antecedent but considered it merely as one aspect of the grotesque, the other being the deformed and the horrible: "The grotesque . . . is everywhere; on the one hand it creates what is deformed and horrible, on the other what is comic and farcical." Hugo thus enlarges the meaning of the French word *grotesque* by the dimensions which Möser, Wieland, Gerstenberg, and Schlegel had given to it. The preface to *Cromwell* leaves some doubt as to whether Hugo regarded both aspects as necessary for the grotesque, since some of the illustrations he furnishes are exclusively comic and burlesque. Yet he certainly considered the monstrous and horrible traits to be most essential, as is shown by the large number of examples he furnishes. He admits that antiquity, too, knew horrible and monstrous shapes, such as the Hydra, the Harpies, and the Cyclopes. But the ancients, Hugo asserts, merely tolerated them while seeking to beautify them: "The Greek Eumenides are much less horrible . . . than the witches in *Macbeth.*"

But, with the comically farcical and the monstrously horrible, the grotesque is by no means exhausted for Victor Hugo, who places it in the vicinity of the ugly which, unlike the one type of beauty, exists in a thousand different shapes. This reflection tends to make the concept diffuse; when Hugo proceeds to study the "origin and evolution of the grotesque" in literature, art, and customs since antiquity he seems, at times, to admit of no limits whatsoever.[10] But Hugo's illustrations raise still another basic problem. Can a single, isolated figure (such as a dwarf) or object (such as a gargoyle) be clearly regarded as grotesque? Are physical ugliness and deformity sufficient to render things grotesque? For if that were the case, the grotesque would belong among the esthetic categories determined by their external appearance, such as blank verse, Alexandrine, first-person narrative, and a five-act play. Occasionally, Hugo seems to use it in that sense. But the reader who often does not want to decide too quickly, who

should like to make the answer depend on the context, and on the place and function it assigns to the individual object, takes the grotesque more seriously. Only in context, as part of a larger structure or as a vehicle of meaning, does the individual form become expressive and does it belong to the grotesque. Even in the ornamental grotesque the single "absurd" figure was only a motif within a context that was strongly felt to be dynamic.

Victor Hugo is quite familiar with this point of view. As soon as he proceeds from specific illustrations to general considerations, he abandons the structural point of view. He even goes beyond the grotesque as an entity by assigning to it a function within a larger whole. He takes it to be one pole of a tension whose opposite pole is constituted by the sublime. He thus ceases to think of the grotesque as the only characteristic feature of modern art and comes to look at it as a contrasting device. He defines art as a means of creating a harmonious relation between them. According to him, naïve popular literature occasionally reveals "with admirable instinct this mystery of modern art; antiquity could not have produced *La Belle et la Bête.*" Among the artists, however, Hugo finds only one to have succeeded in combining "the sublime with the grotesque, the terrible with the burlesque, and tragedy with comedy" in drama, the highest form of art: Shakespeare, "the greatest poet of the modern age."[11]

The true depth of the grotesque is revealed only by its confrontation with its opposite, the sublime. For just as the sublime (in contrast with the beautiful) guides our view toward a loftier, supernatural world, the ridiculously distorted and monstrously horrible ingredients of the grotesque point to an inhuman, nocturnal, and abysmal realm. Hugo's language justifies this interpretation of the grotesque, even though he himself did not actually furnish it. As with Friedrich Schlegel and Jean Paul, "infernal" and "satanic" may be secondary meanings of grotesque: "You have a vision of the great infernal laughter."[12]

Victor Hugo is fond of using the contrast between the purely spiritual and the *bête humaine* in order to characterize the tension between the sublime and the grotesque. He probably does this essentially in order to indicate that inhuman forces have invaded the familiar world. The precision of this formulation is somewhat impaired, however, by the examples which Hugo cites. At the same

time a new element, which Hugo mistakenly sought to include in his formula, emerges. If Caesar is afraid of falling from his triumphal chariot, and Socrates, on the morning of his death, interrupts a conversation about the immortality of the soul with the request to sacrifice a cock to Aesculapius, Hugo would compel one to regard Caesar's fright and Socrates' distraction as grotesque, which apparently they are not. For here the *bête humaine* is nothing else than ordinary human nature. Hugo's examples are grotesque only insofar as they exemplify a certain form of contradiction or contrast. Nothing that is inherently sublime or grotesque is fused in a "beautiful" or "dramatic" structure; rather the grotesque consists in the very contrast that ominously permits of no reconciliation. To recognize and reveal such a construct of opposites is somewhat diabolic; the order is destroyed and an abyss opened where we thought to rest on firm ground. At this point the proximity to, and difference from, the comic are made obvious. The comic innocuously annihilates greatness and dignity, especially if they are wrongly assumed. It effects the annihilation by placing us on the secure level of reality. The grotesque totally destroys the order and deprives us of our foothold. The frightened Caesar on his triumphal chariot can be envisaged either comically (or even satirically) or grotesquely. Contrast as such furnishes a rather vague structural principle and can express many things.

It is evident that Hugo's examples point to the satanic humor or the humorous Satan of Jean Paul, who observes the most clashing contrasts with great detachment, and points them out even where he should not: the gay and blooming costume of the victims of the guillotine.

2. Narrative Prose

a) *The Satanic Humorist as Narrator*

In the same year in which Jean Paul, the theoretician, invoked the figure of the satanic humorist, this figure was also incorporated in a novel, where it was given the role of narrator.[13] The narrator of Bonaventura's extraordinary *Nachtwachen* (*Night Watches*) of 1804 sus-

pects that he is the son of the devil, which explains his knowledge of the vanity of human existence. He himself defines the point of view which he represents as being "satiric."

In the next to last Night Watch the narrator inquires in one of his many speeches: "Is there a better means of defying every mockery of the world and fate itself than laughter? The most heavily armed enemy shrinks away from this satiric mask; and even misfortune turns from me in fear when I make bold to mock it. What the devil is this whole earth with its sentimental companion, the moon, good for except to be mocked?" The speaker then proceeds to tell a myth explaining the origin of satire. In order to revenge himself upon the "overseer" (*Werkmeister*), the devil dispatched laughter into the world. Man gladly received it in this mask of joy, "until finally it removed its mask and mockingly looked at him in the form of satire." Satire is a gift of the devil, and its laughter, accordingly, is infernal.

In this context, then, the satiric perspective has a meaning different from that which is otherwise known to us from painting and literature. Previously, the ridiculous and distorted subject seemed to convey a warning, an admonition to reform, and behind the negative image of the satire one senses the positive one as an alternative that is open to man. In the *Nachtwachen,* the disillusionment is complete and irremediable, and the world is a madhouse. One is reminded of Goethe's words: "Looked at from the height of reason, life as a whole seems like a grave disease, and the world like a madhouse." This sounds more cynical and more heavily fraught with experience than young Werther's reference to the carnival of life and his comparison of the world with a magic box. Goethe still believed in the height of reason, which man as a thinking animal is able to reach; but behind Bonaventura's satire is the void. Satire, the next to last mask, as it is called in the eighth Night Watch, hides "the last, permanent one which neither cries nor laughs—the skull without hair or tresses, with which the tragicomedian exits." The satiric perspective, in turn, tears off all of life's masks. "Life is only the fool's garb worn by the void, which proudly displays it, but in the end angrily tears it up." "The void," which is the final word of the book, is used with growing intensity at the end of its last three sentences. This disillusioning satire is a "terrible" mask, to which still another function is assigned in

the eighth Night Watch, where it is called a "grotesque" mask. Seldom has the meaning of this word been so clearly defined as is here the case.

The grotesque perspective gives the novel its unity and, at the same time, determines the nature of its content. Structurally, the scenes follow each other in such quick succession that little room is left for summarizing reports or elaborate descriptions. And almost all the scenes are inherently grotesque. The apparently meaningful things are shown to have no meaning, and familiar objects begin to look strange. The author intends to shake the reader's confidence in his world view by depriving him of the safeguards provided by tradition and society. Stylistically, the narrative often indulges in caricatural exaggeration, which suits the intention of making us laugh derisively. At one point, for instance, the night watchman-narrator calls out eternity, that is, the dawn of the Last Judgment, instead of time. And now the great ones of this earth as well as the judges, priests, and virtuous people take off their masks and with frightful suddenness reveal the baseness of the *bête humaine*. At another point, the narrator joins three nocturnal devils' masks who threaten to excommunicate him if he interferes with their manipulations. (Three priests are hidden behind the masks, but those who are able to look through this disguise realize that the masks act "in character." Throughout the novel, the narrator employs the motif of the mask as the most important means of alienating the world.)

The world is a madhouse. But the reverse is equally true; the insane seem to be the most reasonable people. Following the model of *King Lear,* the writers of the *Sturm und Drang* had used this as a *topos*. (Werther, for instance, exclaims: "God in heaven! Have you saddled man with the fate of being happy only before acquiring and after losing his reason?") Bonaventura translates it once more into perceptual terms while creating one of the most powerful scenes of his novel. In the madhouse, where the world has confined him, the narrator re-encounters the actress who used to play Ophelia to his Hamlet. During one performance she was so deeply moved by Shakespeare's genius that she went mad instead of acting insanity. Both characters continue to play their roles in the madhouse. The way in which the author destroys reality by treating it as if it were a play

growing out of a play constitutes one of the most striking uses of the popular Romantic motif of the play *within* the play. Ophelia dies shortly after the birth of her child:

> The curtain fell and Ophelia left the stage. There was no applause, and it seemed as if no audience were present. She slept very deeply with the child at her breast. Both were exceedingly pale, and one could not hear them breathe, for death had already placed his white mask upon them. Greatly agitated, I stood beside their couch. I felt a wild and angry laughter rising up within me. . . . When I raised my eyes, the inmates, silently but strangely gesticulating, had formed a semicircle around the couch. Some smiled, while others meditated, shook their heads, or stared at the white sleeper and her child. The world's creator was among them, but he merely put his finger significantly on his lips.

At this point, even the narrator finds himself unable to continue. The Night Watch concludes with the words: "I was almost afraid of this company."

The narrator is by no means always so reticent. Usually he furnishes elaborate speeches and commentaries with the events he narrates. This may be one of the artistic flaws in the novel, although, from the very beginning, the role of the commentator obviously belongs to that of the narrator. As a night watchman he is a professional observer, and his literary past predestines him to comment on his observations. Twice more he has integrated his role as commentator in the book itself. A puppet player hears the speech about the infernal origin of satire and proposes to play and speak the role of Hanswurst in his little theater. This, however, is the role for which he was born. Just as the theater with its wire-pulled figures is a model of life, the role of the commenting Hanswurst provides the model for the entire novel's point of view. The above event also reintroduces a previously mentioned motif, which is now directly brought to bear on it. The symbolic figure of Hanswurst had been introduced in an earlier passage, where he acted as a prologue and commentator of the tragedy *Man,* for which the poet, the only friend of our night watchman-narrator, had been unable to find a publisher. In his prologue Hanswurst had stated that he wanted to make the people burst with laughter, "no matter how serious and tragic the poet had intended his action."

This constant use of commentaries obviously presents a danger; for

when the grotesque aspect of a scene is pointed out, some kind of meaning is assigned to it. The frequent insistence on the lack of meaning provides a solid basis for the abysmal world.[14] The commentaries and integral speeches of the narrator are of a very peculiar kind. They do not simply proclaim that meaninglessness is the meaning of life on earth. Instead, the meaning is hidden by a profuse imagery, which grows in accordance with its own laws of association. As in the case of Züs Bünzli, all logic of progression is abandoned, and the most heterogeneous things are brought together.[15] This produces a kind of speech which is in itself grotesque, the analysis of which we shall defer, however, until we have occasion to discuss the aims of its originators. For, historically, we have reached another juncture which points beyond Jean Paul and Sterne back to Fischart and Rabelais.

At the same time, however, the night watchman-narrator's commentaries about the madhouse of life[16] reveal a very human heart; and his satiric laughter is mixed with pain, revulsion, or even love. The narrator is aware of this human quality and, plainly hinting at the beginning of *Tristram Shandy*, interprets it as resulting from his ancestry. If his father is the devil, as he believes, his mother must be a canonized saint. This ancestry also helps to explain his own self-contradictory nature, which constantly puts him at odds with his environment. "I was several times expelled from churches, because I laughed there, and from brothels, because I was about to pray there."

The commentaries of the humane narrator add an emotional perspective to the terrible and grotesque perspective presented by the individual scenes. To be sure, these comments do not suggest a meaning in each individual case but serve as variously shaded expressions of human fear, helplessness, and a laughter whose derision can be drowned in tears. Instead of weakening the grotesque, the author integrates the reader. For, basically, the narrator may be regarded as the reader placed inside the book, or as man in general. The threefold use of the expression, "the void," at the conclusion of the novel inculcates the question which the narrator asked a moment before, when he saw his father's bones crumble to dust before his very eyes, a question intended to be asked by all mankind: "I can no longer see thee, father. Where art thou?"

Even when the narrator meets his real parents in the final Night

Watch, this constitutes no genuine conclusion. The Night Watches could be continued or the conclusion postponed; for the extended reference to this book was justified not only because it offers a number of motifs or traits in the treatment of constantly recurring grotesque elements which are characteristic of the age, but also because its author made the attempt to use the grotesque as the conceptual basis of an entire novel. We recall that the writers of the *Sturm und Drang* usually selected social satire as the basis and integral schemes of action as the structural support of their dramas. A novel feat was accomplished in the *Nachtwachen* insofar as here the grotesque point of view provides a unified perspective for the story. As it turned out, however, this did not result in the creation of a coherent story with a beginning, middle, and end. Instead, we are confronted with a series of independent and self-contained, though artificially confused, grotesque scenes. For a novel the work is exceptionally loosely structured. As in the picaresque novel, individual episodes are strung together, each of them being a slice of life, and their composite a mosaic. Almost every one of the sixteen Night Watches constitutes (to use the narrator's own expression) a Night piece of its own.

It is still not definitely known who is hidden under the mask of Bonaventura. As long as documentary evidence is lacking and no factual proof can be unearthed, as long as the work can still be analyzed according to the spirit which prevails in it, nobody seems to be more ideally suited to have been its author than Jean Paul, who had not only invoked the satanic humorist in his *Vorschule* but had also made the devil guide the pen of the honest Hansius in his youthful satire *Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren* (Excerpts from the Devil's Papers). To be sure, this thematic frame had not resulted in a satanic perspective but had merely provided a justification for the bizarre style of the youthful exercises. But in Jean Paul's subsequent works the abysmal humorists had appeared as characters breathing the air of the grotesque. Exactly such a figure appears in the last of Jean Paul's great novels, *Der Komet oder Nikolaus Markgraf* (The Comet or Nicholas Margrave), which I shall use to illustrate the way in which that author handled the grotesque. Jean Paul refused to admit that this novel, with the subtitle "A Comic Story," was even the great comic novel he wanted to bestow on German literature, although in the initial stages of the drawn-out process of its creation he seems to

have harbored and nourished such expectations. That the novel cannot claim this position is not due to its fragmentary nature as such, for a novel concerned with one eccentric character is almost bound to be so deficient; Gogol's *Dead Souls,* for example, has not suffered from this shortcoming. It is rather due to the fact that the author prematurely abandoned his work, and that the three published volumes are structurally unbalanced.

Unlike Bonaventura, Jean Paul did not provide the narrator himself with the perspective of the satanic humorist. As in his earlier works, he entrusts a special figure within the novel with that function. The figure appears only in the third part of the novel, where he immediately assumes the leading role. And he delivers the grand speech by which Jean Paul sought to buttress the fragmentary conclusion of his work, and which is the author's final address to his readers.

The outward appearance of the "leatherman" who makes the speech is notably grotesque:

> Suddenly a lean, pale, overly tall, and colorless man, with hair arranged like horns, and with a long black beard, traversed the bright segment of the constantly thickening fog-shrouded Milky Way. He took long strides backwards into and out of the fog, disappearing and reappearing several times until, with flaming eyes and a deathly pale face, he stopped directly in front of Nikolaus. When a hired servant, who was just rushing by, exclaimed, "Long live the Prince!" the man slowly replied, "No Prince shall live. Not men but the Prince of Darkness shall govern." "Are you here, too, Wandering Jew?" retorted the servant. "My name is Cain, don't you see the snake," the man replied, his finger pointing to his forehead which was marked with a red snake about to raise itself for the attack. "You are the devil in person; and in all your life have never eaten or drunk," the servant cried after him from the whitish darkness.

This apparition, whom the inhabitants of the city regard as the Wandering Jew or the devil, and who calls himself Cain, Prince of Darkness and child of Beelzebub, instills fear and horror into the strangers. Or is he only a mad somnambulist possessed by an evil spirit? He himself lends credence to such belief, but the "only" in no way weakens the argument. For viewed in this manner, the "evil

spirit," the spirit of madness, becomes all the more sinister (here Jean Paul penetrates much more deeply than before into its abysses); and as we witness its irruption, the conclusion of the whole passage gains its full force of grotesqueness. From the satanic perspective, the speech which the man delivers before the alleged Prince, Nikolaus Markgraf, and his retinue is not a genuine grotesque but at most contains some grotesque elements. It is at this point that we realize why the genuine grotesque must result from action and cannot be inherent in a speech which utters thoughts and opinions. What strikes us as grotesque in this speech—as in those of the night watchman in Bonaventura's novel—is the manner of its delivery, the rapid talking which combines near and distant things, destroys all logical and syntactical connections, and thus manifests itself as a phenomenon which is beyond the control and the comprehension of human reason.

But Jean Paul makes an even greater effort to bring about a truly grotesque conclusion. In the process of speaking, the speaker is secretly subjected to a magnetic treatment, which causes him to fall asleep. In his magnetic sleep he climbs into the chimney; and suddenly the bystanders hear an unfamiliar voice, and its warmth as well as its charm appeals to them. It is a different person, a somnambulist who dearly loves the world and man, who regards his state as a punishment for the vicarious sins he has committed in his study (is he secretly a poet? Has Jean Paul, who appears in the novel as the doctoral candidate Richter, integrated himself a second time?), and who, sensing "the infinite God of love," addresses this prayer to him: "Father of men, I, too, am your son. . . . Father, do not desert me!" But at this moment the clock strikes and puts an end to the magic of transformation. ". . . the unfortunate creature awoke and fell down. His face and hands were black, the locks of his hair rose angrily, the red snake on his swollen forehead seemed ready to jump, and he joyously exclaimed: 'Father Beelzebub, I have returned to you. Why did you desert me?' " The novel concludes with the sentence: "Everybody stepped far away from him, not out of fear but overcome by terror." Is the truth to be found in the words of the sleeper or those of the waking man? Is it at all meaningful to postulate an Either/Or? Can one dismiss the madness and the split personality of this man, whose heart shows him to be God's child but whose

forehead betrays his infernal ancestry, as a disease? Or is it a reflection of our human nature, the ineluctable fate of those who do not want to divert and numb themselves by everyday life, but who want to endure the tension caused by their twofold origin, without being strong enough to do so? Is madness the fate meted out to us all? Is it our terrible and yet ridiculous fate when the everyday world revenges itself by forcing us to climb into the blackness of chimneys?

Just as skillfully as Jean Paul has constructed the grotesque final scene of his novel around the speeches of his "Cain," he also prepared that figure's first appearance. It is worth-while briefly to dwell upon this moment, for here Jean Paul, without fully exploiting it, makes use of a motif which frequently occurs in the subsequent history of the grotesque: the disintegration of order in a spatially unified social group, the estrangement inflicted upon an entire city. So far, we have encountered only traces of this motif, a fact that is best explained by the circumstance that the phenomenon "city" is poorly accounted for in pre-eighteenth-century fiction. We came upon it in Bonaventura's novel in the scene in which the night watchman announces the arrival of Judgment Day and chaos begins to reign in the city. (Wieland's *Abderiten* does not belong in this context, since in the city state of Abdera madness is the rule, so that the grotesque can be reached only through individual exploits.) Jean Paul is the first to make full use of this grotesque motif. In doing so, he employs not the coming of Judgment Day, war, fire, earthquake, or famine, as his successors were to do in order to motivate the estrangement, but another natural force: the fog, a dense fog, the most terrible fog of the entire eighteenth century. This fog, however, only increases the confusion that already inheres in the situation. The middle-class hero, Nikolaus Markgraf, labors under the illusion that he is a prince. His suddenly acquired wealth enables him to hire a large number of retainers, who accompany him and his collapsible capital on the search for his unknown father. He now wants to enter a city, the residence of a real prince. But since he has not yet discovered his real name, he assumes the grotesque pseudonym[17] Count Hasenkopff. His friend and chamberlain has managed to procure a safe-conduct for his master by hinting that the latter's nobility is the *idée fixe* of a madman. This news quickly spreads throughout the city. To complicate matters even further, an heir to the throne has been born to the real

prince at the very hour in which the alleged prince entered the city. This almost hopeless confusion is further enhanced by the dense fog which covers the crowded streets and causes people who meet immediately to lose sight of one another. Jean Paul indulges in details concerning a series of strange encounters and misunderstandings but, instead of introducing the grotesque, shows himself satisfied with demonstrating the comic turbulence of "fog joys and sufferings." He even provides a point of repose in the belatedly anticipated story of the woman-loving chamberlain (much as the language of this story enters into a kind of playful confusion), until he finally causes the grotesque figure of the leatherman to appear, spread fear and horror, and quickly leave the scene.

In addition to those of the madman and the disintegrating city, Jean Paul's *Komet* harbors still another motif, which leans toward the grotesque and is frequently treated in Romantic literature: the wax doll. In our novel it is the wax bust of his beloved (whom he has just once briefly seen) which the hero steals and carries with him in his search for the original. Instead of dwelling on the grotesque situations which arise in connection with his quest, we merely quote a remark of the narrator, which expresses the feeling of many Romantics, that "the verisimilitude of a wax doll has a terrifying impact even if the latter represents an indifferent object."

With regard to the structural problems encountered in grotesque literature, Jean Paul's *Komet* confirms our hypothesis that in the novel the grotesque appears preferably in the form of episodes and individual scenes, while being unable to furnish the structural basis for an entire work. Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen,* which breaks up into a number of individual Night pieces, led to the same conclusion. The matter is quite different, however, in the shorter form, the novella. That the grotesque can dominate here is shown in the work of another Romantic author. The relationship to the extraordinarily gifted predecessor is established in the name given to this particular genre, for E. T. A. Hoffmann called a collection of his stories *Nachtgeschichten* (Nocturnal Stories).[18]

b) *The Nocturnal Story*

Hoffmann's *Nachtgeschichten* appeared in 1817. It was preceded by the *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier,* the title of which, as well

as the author's preface, in paying homage to Callot suggests its appropriateness in the present context. Actually, even those of Hoffmann's stories which were composed before the *Nachtgeschichten* are full of grotesque elements. In many of them a connection with subjects previously dealt with is directly or indirectly established. Callot's and Bruegel's names are repeatedly mentioned, and occasionally they appear side by side. "Don't drink—look at her closely!" people are warned of beautiful Julia in *Abenteuer in der Sylvesternacht* (Adventures on New Year's Eve), "Haven't you seen her before on the warning signs put up by Bruegel and Callot?" This admonition is given in a dream which contains a perfect grotesque; in it trees and plants become disproportioned, the "little one" turns into a squirrel, and the other figures are transformed into candy creatures that come to life and creep about in an ominous manner—until the dreamer awakes with a cry. Whereas in this instance Hoffmann employs motifs from Callot and the ornamental grotesque, a dream from *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (Elixirs of the Devil) reads like the literary equivalent of certain of Bosch's or Bruegel's infernal visions:

> I wanted to pray, when I became aware of a bewildering whispering and rustling. Persons whom I knew to be gentle were distorted into the wildest caricatures. Heads moved along on crickets' legs attached to their ears and sneered at me. Strange fowl—ravens with human faces—whirled in the air. I recognized the concertmaster from B. with his sister, who danced madly to the tune of a waltz which her brother played on his chest, which served as a violin. Belcampo, with an ugly lizard's face and mounted on a ghastly winged worm, violently approached me and wanted to comb my beard with a red-hot iron comb. . . . Satan stridently laughs, "Now you are wholly mine."

While Aurelia is here transformed into Satan, the grotesquely drawn figure of Dr. Dapertutto in *Die Abenteuer* turns out to be the devil, and Giulia his creature. As soon as the reader is certain of this fact, the grotesque scenes in which the world was alienated lose part of their strangeness, and some of the grotesque has disappeared since it ceases to puzzle us. If the devil himself appears, we are prepared for all sorts of infernal tricks. What at first reading struck us with the full force of the grotesque seems milder or different in retrospect. When the stranger in the novella *Aus dem Leben eines bekannten Mannes* (From the Life of a Well-known Man) favorably impresses

the inhabitants of Berlin by his politeness, but jumps six feet high and twelve feet wide across the street when offered help by a compassionate pedestrian; when at night, dressed in a white shroud, he knocks at doors; when he acts most strangely but explains his actions (though never satisfactorily)—the world begins to be alienated. But when we are informed that it was the devil (for Hoffmann is retelling a Berlin chronicle of 1551), we are sobered and loath to reread the story. Expressions like "Callot's and Bruegel's warning signs" and Hoffmann's preface to his *Phantasiestücke* indicate that the German author wanted to see the works of these painters interpreted in a special manner, namely—in spite of his fascination with the grotesque—as a Christian mode of indoctrination. This confirms an observation derived from certain traits of the *Phantasiestücke* as well as some of Hoffmann's earlier stories: that a full interpretation and organization of the "secret realm of spirits" weakens the force of the grotesque, no matter how much Hoffmann likes and manages to portray the ominous alienation of the world in other places. There are sufficient genuinely grotesque elements still remaining in these stories; Hoffmann is much too preoccupied with this phenomenon not to use it even in passages totally unrelated to the infernal sphere and which are in no way illuminated by it when seen in retrospect.

In the opening section of *Sylvesternacht,* Victor Hugo could have found an excellent illustration for the clash between the grotesque and the sublime, a clash which becomes abysmal through grotesque exaggeration. The excited narrator has rediscovered his lost sweetheart, whom he finds to be more angelic than ever. Music from Mozart's "sublime E Flat Major Symphony" is heard. "I shall never let you go, your love . . . inspiring higher life in art and poetry . . . but didn't you return in order to be mine forever?—Precisely at that moment, a clumsy, spider-legged figure with protruding frog's eyes came stumbling in, laughed foolishly, and shrieked: 'Where the devil has my wife gone?' " With a few precise strokes Hoffmann has drawn a grotesque figure composed of human and animal traits, whose models could easily be found in Callot's engravings. But the grotesque is further heightened by the fact that this monster is the beautiful woman's husband, who appears at the very moment when the narrator thinks that he will never be separated from her. We would not be surprised if he were to go mad on the spot, but all he

does is to rush out of the house, leaving his hat and coat behind.

Ornamental grotesques, Bosch, Bruegel, and Callot—all these manifestations of the grotesque reappear in Hoffmann's writings, as do the two other closely related strains which we have isolated. Almost all of Hoffmann's stories yield examples of the eccentric gestic style of eccentric figures which we derived from the *commedia dell'arte.* Take the following passage: "The innkeeper covered the mirror, and immediately afterwards a little thin fellow dressed in a coat of a strange, brownish hue came rushing into the room. He moved with an awkward speed, clumsily, quickly, I am tempted to say. As he hopped about in the room, his coat with the oddest folds and wrinkles moved around his body in such a peculiar way that in the candlelight it almost looked as if many figures were moving toward, and away from, each other." This example is taken from *Sylvesternacht,* which also contains a caricature that is on the point of becoming grotesque. The reader had just witnessed a hellish grotesque, in which the infernal tempters appeared to the narrator and almost persuaded him to sell his wife and child to the devil—an act that would damn his soul forever. But his wife's good graces have saved him at the very last moment. He now steps up to her bed in order to listen to her farewell speech, which begins as a caricature of the pedantic housewife but ends grotesquely: " 'When you reach Nuremberg, however, add a brightly colored hussar, and a piece of gingerbread, as a loving father. Fare thee well, my dear Erasmus!' The woman turned over and went to sleep." This passage is obviously not only intended to satirize the mixture of common sense and insensitivity but also is designed to render the world strange and ridiculously ominous in the face of such inhuman, puppet-like behavior.

In E. T. A. Hoffmann's works we thus encounter the various types of the grotesque which emerged in the three centuries surveyed by us. Hoffmann is a master in the composition of grotesque scenes; still we get the impression that the grotesque effect is usually weakened by the conclusions of his works. The novellas so far discussed ultimately turned out to have a meaning, since the intruding hostile and alienating forces were mostly seen as infernal temptations. The figures rose out of hell, and not out of the void. Some of the ominous qualities of the grotesque are lost, no matter how vaguely defined the hellish mythology. This is also true of *Der goldene Topf* (The

Golden Pot), in which certain scenes are models of the grotesque (the name of the Hell Bruegel is significantly mentioned). Seen as a whole, however, the novella turns out to be a fairy tale illuminated by allegory. The good and evil powers which struggle for the artist's soul are carefully delineated, and once again the question concerning the relation of part to whole becomes appropriate. It is apparently quite easy to enter the realm of the grotesque, but outside help is needed if one wants to leave it. The grotesque pushes one into an abyss, and if the story is to be continued, another level is needed for its enactment. Hoffmann likes to present grotesque scenes in the form of dream experiences. The dreamer wakes with a piercing cry but, getting out of bed, moves on to a different level of existence. We recall that Gottfried Keller wove the web of the grotesque around his combmakers in the brighter and ironically satiric world of Seldwyla. It was a satire also which provided the frame for the grotesque scenes in Goethe's *Satyros* as well as in certain of Lenz's plays. Klinger used the recognition and reconciliation of two feuding families as a foil for the grotesque world of his eccentric characters and thereby reached a satisfactory conclusion. In these instances, the ties between the grotesque scenes and the whole of which they form part are obviously looser than in the case of an all-encompassing satire. Hoffmann was fond of countering the horizontal movement of a story of temptation—or, in *Der goldene Topf*, of a story of temptation and salvation—with the vertical movement of the grotesque scenes. But the meaning inherent in the story of temptation detrimentally affected the grotesque in retrospect.

The question as to whether the grotesque itself can furnish the structural basis for a more extended work of literature, or, to put it more cautiously, whether it can appear within a larger context having a greater affinity to it than the didactic story or even satire, has been answered by certain works written prior to the twentieth century, by the plays of Schnitzler, Pirandello, Beckett and others, as well as by Kafka's stories. Bonaventura had been the first to use the loosely patterned type of the sequential, spatial novel for the grotesque. If the author of the *Phantasiestücke* still put up warning signs, Bonaventura did in no way suggest an over-all meaning.

Der Sandmann concludes with Nathanael's fall into the abyss.[19] The hostile power which enters his life is not a devil but the dealer

in barometers Coppola, who appears to be identical with the lawyer Coppelius, who had acted so hostilely toward the boy. (It is typical of Hoffmann's art that the doubts concerning their identity are never fully resolved.) In Nathanael's description, Coppelius himself, however, again appears as a Callot grotesque composed of human and animal traits and merges with the sandman. His nurse had told him that this creature visits children "who don't want to go to bed and throws handfuls of sand into their eyes, causing them to fall bleeding out of their sockets. He then throws the eyes into his sack and takes them to the half-moon as food for his children, who sit in their nest with crooked owl-like beaks." A nursery tale, to be sure, but one that seems to have a hidden meaning. For Coppelius, whom Nathanael's parents called a sandman, aims at the boy's eyes during the fatal encounter when he catches him spying. He wants to throw "red-hot grains" into his eyes and afterwards tear them out. The eyes are a leitmotif of the novella, often in conjunction with the motif of the doll. The eyes of Clara, Nathanael's fiancée, are like a lake "in which the pure azure of the cloudless sky is mirrored." In a dream Nathanael sees himself standing with Clara before the altar, when Coppelius touches the latter's eyes and causes them to fall like bloody sparks into the dreamer's breast. The mechanical doll Olympia has everything—limbs, gait, and voice; only her glance lacks the "ray of life." The barometer dealer offers Nathanael a pair of sharply ground spectacles, that is, an artificial means of improving his vision; Nathanael finally buys a telescope, which he will always carry about him, and which symbolizes his dimmed and alienating glance. Or is it that he sees more sharply than other people? With the telescope he will finally identify the strange bush—which, as Clara puts it, "seems to move in our direction"—as the approaching Coppelius, whom he tries to meet by jumping from the tower. This remarkable emphasis on realistic details is typical of the style of the grotesque and reminds one of the cold and wiry strokes in the etchings of Callot or Goya. Taken by itself, the isolation of the eyes has an ominous and alienating effect. It forces us, moreover, to acknowledge the full meaning which they have here assumed: the eyes as an expression of the soul, as a link with the world; the eyes as the actual seat of life.

One of the most grotesque scenes in the novella is Nathanael's encounter with the doll Olympia. While everybody else regards this

mechanized image of life as both ridiculous and sinister (the solution of the puzzle is not furnished by the narrator but by the events themselves), Nathanael, who has fallen in love with her after seeing her through the telescope, is blind. He disregards the mechanical aspects and is ecstatic in the doll's presence. When he finally learns the deception, madness takes hold of him, since the excitement was too great and his contact with reality too tenuous. Once again he seems on the point of being cured when he opens his eyes, "as if from a heavy and terrifying dream," to recognize Clara, bending over him. But on the tower, in the presence of the approaching bush, his wits desert him forever.

Madness is the climactic phase of estrangement from the world. The whole novella is an account of the triumph of the inner life of a highly gifted, imaginative, artistic individual (Nathanael is a poet)—a process set in motion by the author and accelerated through repeated encounters with an ominous power. And this in spite of the fact that this power (Coppola, Coppelius) does not directly interfere with the action but merely functions as a catalyst—just as Züs Bünzli acted as a catalyst for the estrangement of the world around the combmakers. The stories are also similar insofar as in both a certain amount of guilt is involved. An ounce of justice too much and in the wrong place (the narrator speaks of the journeyman's "inhuman" plan), and an ominous force immediately answers the provocation. Little Nathanael, too, offends when he desires to see the sandman and hides behind the curtain in order to achieve his goal. In both instances the punishment is out of proportion to the guilt, and, basically, these ethical categories cannot encompass the events depicted in the story, for the "guilt" was in each case preformed in the nature of the protagonists. Nathanael's character, moreover, merely enhances certain traits of his father, whose alchemistic experiments—which drove him into Coppelius' arms and, finally, into death—resulted from the urge to gain access to the secret forces behind reality. The abysmal nature of Hoffmann's story consists in the very fact that the artist, whose existence rests on his rich imagination, is in danger of being exposed to other forces which estrange the world for him. Time and again in Hoffmann's stories it is the artist who provides the point of contact between the real world and the ominous forces, and

who loses hold of the world because he is able to penetrate the surface of reality.

In the story of such an estrangement of the world Hoffmann has found the horizontal action which enabled him, or rather forced him, to compose grotesque scenes. There was no need for him to produce devils or infernal monsters. It is a sign of Hoffmann's gradually acquired mastery that even those aspects of Coppelius' and Coppola's appearance and behavior which seem unnatural and improbable, permit a doubt or encourage the reader to seek an explanation within the limits of verisimilitude. At the very beginning of the novella, he makes Clara write a letter in which she describes Nathanael's youthful experiences and his harrowing encounter with the weathermaker in so reasonable a fashion that the reader is led to trust her. He feels she is justified in stating that the dark powers are victorious only if man's soul receives them willingly and grants them authority over the Self. Following this, the soul projects these phantoms into the outer world and is constantly attracted by the fatally deceptive images which it created or at least enhanced. A serene soul, on the other hand, does not give access to such dangers. By putting these words into Clara's mouth Hoffmann causes his readers to believe, like her, in the existence of the "dark powers" and thereby increases the horror stemming from Nathanael's experiences. Let Nathanael exaggerate the ominousness of Coppola's character; his doing so is in itself a symptom of the estrangement which leads him toward what goal? It is possible to give comic expression to the fact that he mistakes a doll for a human being, thinks that she loves him, and confesses his love to her,[20] but Hoffmann's presentation of the matter is so genuinely grotesque that its effect upon us is humorous and horrible at the same time. Hoffmann gains still another advantage by leaving the reader in doubt as to how things are in reality: who Coppelius is, whether he returns in Coppola, what is wrong with the telescope, etc.; a satisfactory explanation of these matters is not provided.[21] The narrator, whose task begins after the presentation of the opening letters, initially seems to adopt a familiar attitude. He claims to be poor Nathanael's friend and appears to know his entire story. But gradually he abandons this bird's-eye view, moves very close to the events themselves, occasionally fuses with the other char-

acters (and adopts their perspective) or turns into a deeply affected eyewitness of the events—an example of the new narrative point of view, the perfection of which is one of Hoffmann's great and lasting achievements.[22] But since this narrator, when he began to speak, introduced himself as one of those people whose excitable soul leads to conflicts and causes them to be at odds with the outside world (he is an "author"), and since, at the same time, he appeals to the highly imaginative reader, we tend to identify ourselves with Nathanael and regard his fate as a latent possibility of our own existence.

c) *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*

Edgar Allan Poe followed E. T. A. Hoffmann in developing a type of story that is suffused with grotesque elements and that just as strongly affected the fiction of subsequent ages. Poe called the first collection of twenty-five of his stories *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840). While formerly Poe was generally thought to have been strongly dependent on Hoffmann, some recent scholars tend to belittle or deny such a connection. All such assertions, however, are vague and meaningless so long as the two authors' stories are not stylistically, structurally, and conceptually analyzed in such a way as to dissolve the crude concepts of influence and dependence. Poe was, of course, familiar with the works of his German predecessor. In his preface to the *Tales* he betrays a familiarity even with second-rate German tellers of horror stories by declaring: "Let us admit, for the moment, that the 'phantasy-pieces' [he probably alludes to Hoffmann's *Phantasiestücke*] now given, are Germanic or what not. Thus Germanism is 'the vein' for the time being. Tomorrow I may be anything but German, as yesterday I was everything else." But he was perfectly right when he added, "If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul." Nor must one forget that neither of the two masters invented the tale of terror. They had forerunners, and found the magazines of their day replete with all sorts of horror stories.[23] The way for the genre was especially paved by the Gothic novel. Just as Hoffmann, in his tales, refers to Schiller's *Geisterseher* (Visionary) and Grosse's *Genius*, Edgar Allan Poe occasionally mentions Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, and both were, of course, familiar with the *Castle*

of Otranto by Horace Walpole, the eminently successful inventor of the "tales of terror."

It is probably in emulation of Walter Scott, who may have transmitted the word and the concept of the grotesque to him, that Poe uses grotesque and arabesque synonymously in the title of his collection. In his essay "The Novels of E. T. A. Hoffmann" (*Foreign Review,* July, 1827), Scott had called Hoffmann the first outstanding artist to represent the fantastic or supernatural grotesque in his compositions. In the same passage Scott attempts a definition of the grotesque: "In fact, the grotesque in his compositions partly resembles the arabesque in painting, in which are introduced the most strange and complicated monsters, resembling centaurs, griffins, sphinxes, chimeras, rocs, and all other creatures of romantic imagination, dazzling the beholder as it were by the unbounded fertility of the author's imagination, and sating it by the rich contrast of all the varieties of shape and colouring, while there is in reality nothing to satisfy the understanding or inform the judgment." Scott also regretted that Hoffmann confused the supernatural with the absurd and that, by his taste and temperament, he was pushed too far in the direction of the grotesque and the fantastic.

Scott's definition of the grotesque is noteworthy insofar as the term is used to denote a literary category, and one can see how he arrives at the definition by way of the arabesque in painting. This usage was as yet unknown in English. To be sure, apart from the ornamental grotesque it had long been possible to call a figure grotesque, which, according to French seventeenth-century usage, meant distorted and caricatural. When applied to landscapes, the word indicated a lack of order as well as a somber and ominous mood.[24] The famous critic William Hazlitt was the first to extend the meaning when in 1820 he spoke of English literature as being Gothic and grotesque.[25] By so doing, he detached the word from its tangible context (whether ornament, figure, or landscape) and made it a general category. As the conjunction with Gothic implies, emphasis is laid on the ominous and somber aspects of the phenomenon. The word serves as a rather vague designation of the atmosphere or mood of a work, or the impression which it makes upon the reader. Scott, however, did not only use it to characterize the nature of the impression but also to denote a well-defined structure of literary, or pictorial,

reality. Its emotional correlate was no longer a somber mood but rather a feeling of helplessness and disparagement before an increasingly absurd and fantastically estranged world.

What first strikes one in the title of Poe's collection is the fact that, contrary to the then current usage, the word "grotesque" is no longer meant derogatorily, as was still true of Walter Scott. One further notes that the arabesque is also drawn into the realm of literature as a category (in Germany Friedrich Schlegel had done the same around 1800).[26] Moreover, the word, as it appears in the title of Poe's book, seems to be more closely related to Hazlitt's impressionistic than to Scott's structural use of it. Poe's preface begins with the sentence, "The epithets 'Grotesque' and 'Arabesque' will be found to indicate with sufficient precision the prevalent tenor of the tales here published." And Poe further underscored his intentions by using the words "gloom" and "Germanism."

But Poe employed the word "grotesque" in still another sense, which was more closely related to that which Scott preferred. In 1841 the latter's essay on E. T. A. Hoffmann had been published (for the first time in America) in Philadelphia, which was then Poe's residence, in the second volume of his critical writings. One must assume that, now at least, Poe became acquainted with the piece. (The essay also enabled Poe to deepen his understanding of the German author; for Scott furnished detailed summaries and partial translations of the novellas *Das Majorat* [The Entail] and *Der Sandmann*. The influence of both works can be seen in the stories which Poe authored at this time.) The novella *The Masque of the Red Death* (1842), for instance, contains an interpretive description of the phenomenon that goes much beyond Scott and is perhaps the most complete and authoritative definition any author has given of the grotesque. In trying to escape the plague, the Italian Prince Prospero and his guests have withdrawn into an abbey. The Prince has ordered the seven halls, which had been built according to his own eccentric taste, to be decorated for a splendid ball and given instructions as to the kind of masks to be worn by the participants: "Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm—much of what has been since seen in *Hernani*. There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There was much

of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps."

The distortion of all ingredients, the fusion of different realms, the coexistence of beautiful, bizarre, ghastly, and repulsive elements, the merger of the parts into a turbulent whole, the withdrawal into a phantasmagoric and nocturnal world (Poe used to speak of his "daydreams")—all these features have here entered into the concept of the grotesque. This world is well prepared for the intrusion of the deadly nocturnal powers personified by Death in his red mask.

In another tale, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* Poe characterizes the appearance of the room in which the double murder has taken place by calling it "a *grotesquerie* in horror absolutely alien from humanity." Poe thus uses the word "grotesque" on two different levels of meaning: to describe a concrete situation in which chaos prevails, and to indicate the tenor of entire stories concerned with terrible, incomprehensible, inexplicable, bizarre, fantastic, and nocturnal happenings. In these stories Poe makes use of a considerable number of motifs made familiar by E. T. A. Hoffmann and the literature of horror in general: the double (which, in *The Black Cat,* is extended to a terrifying animal); artistry consummated in a work that causes the artist's death; the mysterious presence of past and distant things, which drives sensitive souls to their death, etc. Yet no one will confuse the author of the *Nachtgeschichten* with that of the *Tales of the Grotesque.* Poe's work, for one thing, shows a marked preference for repulsive, ghastly, and criminal phenomena. Written in 1841 or 1842 and published in 1843, *The Black Cat* somewhat resembles Hoffmann's *Sandmann,* which Poe must have known at least through Scott's summary of it. While in the latter story the world is estranged for the narrator by the mysterious figure of the sandman (Coppelius), the uncanny cat effects the estrangement in the former. Both characters offend against the apparition, and in both the estrangement is heightened by the baffling return of the hostile principle, which precipitates the catastrophe. But instead of the madness which causes Nathanael's death in Hoffmann's story, Poe uses

the protagonist's cruel murder of his wife. The detailed description of the deed, burial of the corpse, and its discovery are so compelling that the grotesque seems to be quenched by the horror. In the grotesqueries of the Rue Morgue, too, the horror of the crime prevails; here Dupin's intelligence triumphantly solves the crime, which was so inhuman as to seem altogether inexplicable. Still another difference between Poe and Hoffmann comes to light in this connection. Hoffmann confronts the sinister elements with an average intelligence unable to cope with them, while Poe, in a number of his stories, counters them with an amazing talent for combination. The ominous has thus been transformed into a puzzle capable of being solved by a sharp-witted individual. In *The Purloined Letter,* the criminal minister proves himself superior to all investigations by the police because he is both mathematician and poet, while the police work solely on the basis of their past experience. Dupin, however, is a match for the minister and thus able to outwit him. Both figures personify the higher gift of poetic combination. Poetic combination is also embodied in the speaker of "The Philosophy of Composition," who gives an account of the alleged genesis of "The Raven." By turning the crime into a puzzle that can be solved, and by letting an ingenious detective find the solution, Poe originated the genre of the detective story. Stories of this kind, however, no longer belong to the *Tales of the Grotesque.* Still, some of the characters in the latter book can trace their extraordinary power of deduction to this source; just as the proclivity to direct all elements to the denouement may be an outgrowth of the technique used in the detective story. Here we touch upon a third difference between Poe and Hoffmann. In Poe, the concentration on the denouement frequently impedes the creation of independent scenes of masterful construction at which Hoffmann excels.

"What is your conclusion?", Dupin asks after having called the condition of the room in which the murder took place a *grotesquerie.* In *The Black Cat,* the horror inspired by the fact that the imprint of the cat appears on the only remaining wall section of the burned-out house—the cat itself being dead—is soothed by the narrator's ingeniously contrived explanation. And the previously quoted excerpt from *The Masque of the Red Death* is a short summarizing description rather than an actual scene; for with the following sentence the

action continues and hastens to its end. As far as their size, their structure, and the narrative technique employed in them are concerned, Poe's *Tales* are strikingly different from Hoffmann's *Nachtgeschichten*. The younger writer, no doubt, was inspired by the older one. But in assimilating these influences, Poe turned them into something new and unique that was to acquire its own historical sphere of influence.[27]

3. The Drama

a) *Achim von Arnim*

It would not be difficult to cite further evidence of the use of the grotesque in the fiction of that period. By increasing the number of illustrations, one would gain the added advantage of being able to test and differentiate the previously acquired insights. For in many cases one senses an affinity with the grotesque without wishing to apply the term in its full meaning. In some of Tieck's novellas, for instance, in *Der blonde Eckbert* (The Fair Eckbert), the category of individuality is destroyed, figures are fused with one another, and the world is in other ways sufficiently estranged for Eckbert. Yet the novella can hardly be called grotesque since, as the narrator's point of view implies, the author is less concerned with the abysmal as such than with the atmospheric values attached to the ominous, among which even an alluring, lyrical, and melting mood occasionally predominates. The tone of the fairy tale is by no means excluded, and Friedrich Schlegel was essentially right in contrasting Jean Paul's gift for the grotesque with Tieck's penchant for the fantastic. Instead of estranging the world, Tieck enchants the reader. He uses even the ominous as a means of dissolving the soul in a stream of poesy. Marianne Thalmann has recently warned not to draw too sharp a line of distinction between the young "romantic" and the old "realistic" Tieck. Tieck's personal conviction seems to speak through the words about the grotesque—for this is the topic of the conversation —which he puts into the mouth of one of the characters in his late novella *Die Gemälde* (The Paintings):

> The mad, foolish, and trite things are infinite in number, since there is absolutely no way of limiting them. It is limit, however,

> which accounts for all reasonable things such as beauty, nobility, liberty, art, and enthusiasm. But because a supernatural and unfathomable element is added, the fools think that it is the absolute and with arrogant mysticism sin against both nature and the imagination. Look at the painting by the mad Hell Bruegel on this pillar here. Because he totally lost his sense of truth and meaning, because he altogether cut loose from nature, and because he mistook madness and nonsense for enthusiasm and insight, I prefer him to the whole host of caricaturists; for he resolutely closed the door and left reason outside. Look at the immense hall which Giulio Romano painted at Mantua, . . . the daring fusion of human and animal, beautiful and impudent elements. Study these things thoroughly, and you will discover what a true poet can and may do with these strange and mysterious dispositions of our soul.

In Arnim's novellas, too, one often feels close to the grotesque without ever admitting its presence. In *Isabella von Ägypten,* for instance, a gypsy woman, a witch, a sluggard (*Bärenhäuter*), a golem, and a mandrake disguised as a field marshal travel in one coach. Heine used this episode to explain to the French the nature of the true horror story: "Even if you empty the morgue, the cemeteries, the Cour de Miracle, and all the plague hospitals of the Middle Ages, you will not assemble a company as striking as that which drove in the coach from Bracke to Brussels. It is time for you Frenchmen to realize that horror is not your element, and that France offers a barren soil for any kind of ghost." However, the relaxed, almost leisurely way in which Arnim narrates his story indicates that here, too, the world is far from abysmal. Arnim has a special liking for folkloristic figures preformed in literature. These he embellishes and occasionally endows with new, fantastic traits, always regarding them as "symbols" of a spiritual essence hidden below the surface, as allusions to an "eternal union" and prefigurations of a higher world, which he considers his special task to keep alive. Arnim's *Kronenwächter* (Guardians of the Crown), too, contains a number of grotesque elements. When discussing the novel, H. A. Korff is reminded of Bruegel's paintings and repeatedly uses the word "grotesque" to define its style.[28] Korff maintains that for Arnim the past is a "storehouse for the things with which his imagination was preoccupied, namely curiosities, oddities, and especially strange things

of a baroque, grotesque, or comical nature." But the context of this passage indicates that Korff uses the word "grotesque" in a slightly different sense and almost synonymously with *kurios* (odd or curious);[29] and the paintings to which Korff refers are more likely those of the Peasant Bruegel than those of the Hell Bruegel.

One of Arnim's novellas, however, *Die Majoratsherren* (The Owners of the Entail) ranks as one of the greatest grotesques in German fiction. The narrative point of view in itself is rather striking; for the circumspection and equanimity which prevail in the opening portion of the story vanish as soon as we reach the action proper—which extends over a period of four days and nights—and its protagonist. At this point, the narrator turns into a mere reporter, who knows little more than the characters themselves and who, over long stretches, adopts the protagonist's point of view or directly quotes the other figures. To be sure, there is one passage, printed in italics, in which the narrator furnishes an extended commentary: ". . . and everywhere in the structure of this world that of a higher world, known to the senses only by way of the imagination that mediates between the two, became transcendent. . . ." But this prophecy applies only to that moment of the action in which the protagonist witnesses the death struggle of the ailing Esther and observes how the Angel of Death removes her winged soul to heaven; it does not carry the full weight of the action. For the protagonist does not see the higher world beyond reality by means of his imagination; the deeper meaning of men, objects, and events is constantly revealed to him as one who possesses the gift of second sight. This revelation, however, is forced upon him; it weighs him down and, rendering him entirely passive, makes him unfit for action of any kind. What he sees in his visions is by no means always lucid and exalted but usually possesses an evil, nocturnal and, occasionally, infernal aspect. What seems to be the coach of the physician on his way to one of his patients, with a lean driver on the box and surrounded by sparrows and a pack of barking dogs, appears to him in the following manner: "Death sits on the box, hunger and pain between the horses; one-armed and one-legged ghosts hover about the carriage and demand that the cruel man, who stares at them with cannibalistic gusto, return their severed limbs. His accusers run shouting after him; they are the souls he prematurely tore away from this

world. . . ." A strange feeling invades him in the room of the lady-in-waiting: "The squeaking tree frog on his little ladder seemed to exhale an evil spirit; the flowers in their pots looked all but innocent, since he thought he saw a dozen retired diplomats peering out of the bouquet. But he was especially bothered by the black poodle, although the latter seemed to be afraid of him; he took the dog to be an incarnation of the devil. . . ." These are truly Goyaesque pictures, and no contemporary artist seems to have been more congenial to the Spanish master than Arnim where he is really grotesque. The pictures which Arnim produces, however, do not stem from the age of the post-Revolutionary wars but refer to the rotten, corrupt, and depraved world of the pre-Revolutionary era.

The protagonist of Arnim's story is privileged, on three consecutive evenings, to hear the shot which originates in the brain of the allegedly Jewish Esther. (It is the shot with which her lover killed himself some time ago and which constantly reassumes reality for the two visionaries—for whom time has lost its meaning.) Arnim's hero also sees the airy figures with which Esther fills her room in her "sociable madness" and whom she causes to move and talk. On the second night he himself joins their company as his own double. In observing the scene, he feels "as if he had been turned inside out like a glove." The evenings grow ever more frantic, and the next one offers what is perhaps the most grotesque scene of the whole novella. Esther's "sociable madness" arranges a masked ball: "She quickly stepped into her short ball gown, threw a flame-colored coat over it, put on a mask and waited for the arrival of the other masks. Things happened just as they had on the previous night, only with greater frenzy. Grotesque disguises, devils, chimney sweeps, knights, and large cocks rattled and shouted in many languages. . . ." One is tempted to look for a model of this scene in the works of Bosch or Bruegel; but one is also reminded of the ball in Poe's, as yet unwritten, *Masque of the Red Death*. Both writers use the word grotesque at this point—a strange coincidence, which hardly results from the influence which one exerted upon the other. The estrangement of the world may be somewhat greater in the German novella; what was still reality in Poe appears here as the dream world of a madman which the "visionary" mistakes for true reality materialized. A religious interpretation is impossible. In those passages of the story

where the imagery seems to demand such an interpretation—the angelic traits connected with Esther, the demonic-diabolic ones connected with the old lady-in-waiting and Vasthi, Esther's criminal stepmother, whom the protagonist's vision repeatedly endows with birdlike features (raven, eagle, and vulture)—the religious aspect remains completely vague, if only because the images are supplied by the protagonist. In this account of the death of the two changelings, religious and mythical elements (Adam, Eve, Lilis [*sic!*], the Angel of Death, etc.) merge with demonic and ghostly ones, upon which a certain amount of historical symbolism is grafted. For one of the narrator's special concerns within the framework of the novella is to interpret the curious appearance of a hidden decadence and criminality as indicative of the rotten state of a world ready for the French Revolution. (Nor must it be forgotten that the "visionary," by regarding himself as illegitimate, removes the ground from under his own feet.) But even in this way no unequivocal meaning based on an ethical scheme of guilt and punishment emerges. The narrator wants neither to celebrate nor to defend the Revolution; he does not even want to explain it. The changes which it brings about are not improvements in his eyes; to him, such improvements are apparently impossible within the earthly sphere. The depraved old Vasthi survives everybody and everything. She will finally acquire the old *Majoratshaus* with the sanction of the new government and transform it into a sal-ammoniac factory. Bitter irony and somber cynicism speak through the apparently factual statements at the end of the novella: "In this way, the *Majoratshaus* was put to a use which, though offensive to the neighbors, was eminently practical, and the credit system supplanted the feudal society." This sounds as if uttered in satanic mockery of the vanity of human life.

Die Majoratsherren, Arnim's great "Nocturnal story," remains unique among his narratives. In his other stories, he rarely abandons the circumspection and conviction of the credulous narrator, in whose presence the grotesque is unable to unfold. Things are essentially different in the drama, which lacks the mediating narrator whose calm voice keeps the uncanny elements in check and robs the grotesque of its ominous overtones. The fact that subsequently the gold background erupts with an ever increasing luminescence allows Arnim to paint these worlds in the beginning in darker and

more desolate tones, a contrast which often prompts his fantastic imagination to create purely grotesque scenes. This is especially true of the first part of the double drama *Halle und Jerusalem,* namely, up to the moment in which the message from the higher sphere is understood and the world transformed into lucidity.

The very opening of the play sets the stage, for the mythical figure of Ahasver moves in the realistic, though slightly distorted, world of students and middle-class citizens. The distortion grows ever more violent and quickly results in a grotesque scene. Musicians have been hired for the ceremonies welcoming Wagner, who, following his disputation, is to be presented with the insignia of the doctorate. The wild, undisciplined Cardenio has taken the place of Wagner's originally appointed opponent, whom he has gravely wounded in a duel. A band of students emerges from the entrance of the building:

> *(Wagner's corpse is carried out by a group of mourning students. Playing a sad tune on his trombone, the musician precedes the procession, which has come to a halt because some students are still trying to revive him* [Wagner]. *Schmidt and Becker step forward from the crowd.)*
>
> Schmidt: What a sad day this is! I can hardly believe what I have seen with my own eyes.
>
> Suppius: Tell me, brother, why do they carry Wagner?
>
> Schmidt: Don't believe them if they tell you that the devil has wrung his neck. That's what the people will say; but it isn't true. I say it aloud: he died of his own greatness, crushed by the immense weight of his conclusions. He was killed by a syllogism intended to crown his argument. You are to blame for his death, Cardenio.

Afterwards, Cardenio delivers a passionate eulogy of his opponent (at the end of which he paces up and down "with clasped hands"), and is followed by an old woman who relates a striking example of the dead man's chastity. The woman then adds a myrtle wreath to the student's cap, which Cardenio has placed on the bier. The other musicians come running out of the inn and, since they do not know what has happened, begin to play a gay march, while their colleague continues with the tune *"Nun lasset uns den Leib begraben"* (Now let us bury the body). Here the world is obviously out of joint. The group of scenes dealing with the Jewish money-lender Nathan

(act two, scenes five to nine), who dies of shock when he discovers that Cardenio has borrowed 1,000 thalers against a false security, also ends in a grotesque. From the very start, Nathan, his wife Edelchen, and their children are treated in the caricatural manner of marionettes. They end up by turning into grotesque figures:

Nathan: I'll die in a moment.
Edelchen: If you had only died a few days earlier!
Nathan: I am really dead (*dies*).
Edelchen: Oh heavens! He pretends to be dead. (*Loud exclamations on the part of the children and servants*). Wake up, you rogue! I want my dowry back. (*Beats him, and so do the children*).
Child: Daddy knows how to make himself stiff.
Edelchen: You rogue, you wastrel, you blockhead, stop joking.—But he is really dead.—My dear husband, sweet Hirschel, sweet Nathan, wake up. I won't take another husband. He was the fifth and died so early—much too early. I'll tear up this cloth to prove my intentions.
Children: Don't tear, Mother.
Edelchen: Don't want a husband. I tear.
Children: Don't tear.
Edelchen: I tear.
Children: Don't tear.
Edelchen: I tear.—No, I don't.

The conclusion of this scene is more than mere burlesque; the bit of world around Nathan has been opened up and joined with the entire dramatic context through the appearance of Cardenio and even that of Ahasver who, immediately preceding the above quotation, delivers a long speech addressed to, and concerned with, the Jews. The world of the play is seen throughout as thoroughly rotten and confused, that is, an easy prey for the grotesque. But even after the principal characters have heard the message from above and thus found their bearings, the distorted counterworld continues to exist. Under the protection of the resurrected powers of salvation Arnim goes so far as to enhance the distortion phantasmagorically. Figures like Dienemann (Lackey), Kümmeltürke (Philistine), Waisenhäuser (orphanages), etc., whom we have met in the first part of the drama, now begin to talk and move in the highly eccentric style of the puppet play. When, in the desert, they come upon the

"chimera," a virgin "three houses tall" accompanied by a stork, who crushes two of them to death (although they are immediately resurrected), we have before us a grotesque which can well compare with the most experimental creations of Surrealism. With Arnim and, shortly afterwards, with Poe, the epitome of estrangement, such as had found its visual expression in the works of Bosch, Bruegel, Fuseli, and Goya, is achieved in the field of literature.

Unique as Arnim's plays may be in relation to their own time, they fit well into the context of literary history. They are peculiar only insofar as they depart from a common ground. *Halle und Jerusalem* belongs to that type of cultural-mythical (*kulturmythisch*) plays which Tieck (*Genoveva*), Zacharias Werner (*Kreuz an der Ostsee* [Cross on the Baltic], *Wanda*), Brentano (*Gründung Prags* [The Foundation of Prague]) and others sought to create under Calderón's influence, and to which Part II of Goethe's *Faust* and Immermann's *Merlin* are still indebted. Arnim's mistake in using the private characters Cardenio, Lysander, Olympia, and Celinde, rather than legendary figures, as the protagonists of the mythical action enabled him to create his fantastic grotesques. It is into this world that he felt entitled to insert the puppet-like figures of Wagner, Nathan, Dienemann, and the virginal chimera with her stork.[30] Though one can well understand his motives, it is impossible to suppress one's doubts as to the success of his undertaking. There is little coherence in what he did; and the change of style effected between the first, more realistic and the second, more fantastic part of the drama is suspicious, especially since the latter is written from an increasingly epic point of view. Arnim's play is an erratic block in the history of the German drama. Its author failed successfully to combine the fantastic myths with the style of the puppet theatre. The mythical aspect he owed to Calderón, and the caricatural one to Lenz.

Although Arnim's observations on the drama do not shed much light on the type of play which he envisaged (but this question is wrongly put in the case of Arnim) they contain specific references to types of plays he esteemed and wanted to keep alive. Among them we find the old German drama, from the Baroque plays of Gryphius to the Lenten and puppet plays (which latter designation Arnim applied to his own play *Die Appelmänner*), and the drama of the

Sturm und Drang, especially that of Lenz. As early as 1805 Arnim recommended to Brentano "a little comedy entitled *Der neue Menoza,* which Lenz wrote in the seventies." Brentano shared Arnim's enthusiasm for the play, which is perhaps the most grotesque of Lenz' theatrical products. Lenz' *Hofmeister,* of which so well-informed a critic as G. Körner was constantly reminded when reading *Halle und Jerusalem,* also comes to mind.[31] A younger author completed the task which Lenz and Arnim left unfinished, namely that of implanting the eccentric style of the puppet play into the serious drama or, to put it differently, of creating an authentic type of tragicomedy which is distinctly grotesque in style. Büchner did not hark back to Arnim's mythical drama but to the comedies written by that member of the *Sturm und Drang* whose fate and character he had sought to invoke in one of his own novellas.

b) *"Grotesk! Grotesk!"—Woyzeck*

"What I look for in everything is life, the possibility of existence, and then I am satisfied. Then we must not ask whether life is beautiful or ugly. What truly matters is the awareness that life inheres in all created things, and that should be our sole esthetic criterion." With good reason one has taken these sentences, which are put into the mouth of Lenz in Büchner's novella by that name, to express Büchner's personal opinion, for Büchner's letters contain many similar observations. Equally faulty is the current interpretation of the fact that Büchner was rediscovered by the Naturalists and celebrated as their predecessor. This fact, indisputable in itself, does not confirm the strict realism of Büchner's writings but rather arouses doubt concerning the strict realism of the Naturalists. When read in context, passages like the above reveal that Büchner-Lenz was by no means inclined to regard the work of art as a mosaic composed of closely observed and painstakingly recorded bits of reality. Lenz expressly demands a penetration of the subject and a deeper understanding of the individual. This, however, presupposes a definite and consistent attitude on the part of the writer: "One has to love mankind if one wants to understand the particular nature of each individual; nobody must be too lowly or ugly for those who want to know him." The work of art, on the other hand, possesses certain

qualities which are not found in reality: "I prefer the poet and artist who renders nature so real that I am moved by his creation." The task which is here assigned to the work of art—namely, that of affecting the audience in a special and analogous manner—appears to be connected with its being a structure (*Gebilde*). Büchner's esthetic admits the artificiality of art at least insofar as it recognizes the process of shaping, that is, unification, direction, selection, and limitation. The following sentence from a letter of 1 January 1836 shows a similar awareness of the limitations of a slavish copy: "I draw my figures as I find them appropriate to nature and history."

The aspect which prevails in the unifying process of artistic creation has to be one that also prevails in reality—such is the essence of Büchner's theory of art. The shaping from an extrinsic point of view, preferred by the Idealists (by Raphael, according to Lenz; by Schiller, according to Büchner's letters), is "a heinous defamation of human nature." This passage from Büchner's story echoes Lenz' authentic statement: "I esteem the characteristic, and even the caricatural, painter ten times more highly than the idealistic one." Lenz here empowers the artist to intensify and exaggerate "reality" from his "realistic" point of view. Lenz himself made ample use of this device, and so did Büchner, whose theory of the emphatic nature of art had given him the right to proceed in this manner. Only those who narrowly focus on the language used in the eclectic plays of the period can mistake the language of the lower-class characters in *Woyzeck* as being realistic, genuine, natural, naïve, or what other terms have been applied to it. Actually, it is as artificial as all artistic language:

> "All earthly things are vain. Even gold rots. And my immortal soul reeks after brandy." "Heavens! Let's have a stud of drum majors. . . ." "Wish that our noses were two bottles of wine we could pour down each other's throats!"

If these expressions, selected at random from the speeches of the secondary characters in *Woyzeck*, remind one of anything, it is Shakespeare's language, the language of the poet whom Büchner enthusiastically admired, but hardly that of actual drum majors and journeymen such as one encounters in daily life.

What, however, is the point of view which Büchner adopted in his

Woyzeck and which permits such artificiality? Let us collect some additional quotes from Büchner's letters: "I feel crushed by the abhorrent fatalism inherent in history. In human nature I discover a terrible equality, and in the human condition an ineluctable power bestowed on all and none. The individual but foam on top of the wave; greatness mere chance; the rule of genius a puppet show, a ridiculous struggle against the brazen law which we endeavor to know but cannot hope to control." "What in ourselves is it that lies, kills, and steals?" "Oh, we poor crying musicians! Our moaning on the rack, is its sole purpose to ascend through the spaces between the clouds, to sound on and on, and to die, a melodious breath, in heavenly ears?"

Such sentences express the fear of "fatalism," that is, of man's lack of freedom, his being determined and pushed, and his being afraid of dark, ominous, and mysterious forces that work through us but defy all human explanation. In his letters, Büchner employs a *topos* which appears also in the speech of several of his characters: the world as a puppet play.[32] Some of the relevant sentences clearly betray Büchner's indebtedness to a wider historical context, although one cannot fail to see how much more bitter, harrassed, and tormented Büchner sounded when using the image. For an incomprehensible, meaningless, and anonymous force has replaced the God who wrote the parts and played the puppets. What, so far, had only been the literary expression of such despair (as in the case of Bonaventura's narrator) is now the despair of a live person in his early manhood. The fear engendered by this overbearing impersonal force is increased by the awareness of the vanity of life and the aimlessness not only of man's action but also of his suffering. This feeling culminates in the burning question that is raised by Büchner's Danton, "Are we children who are crushed in the red-hot Moloch's arms of this world and tickled by light rays in order to amuse the gods by our laughter?" The satanic humorist Jean Paul would certainly have approved this definition of laughter as an expression of pain that pleases the gods. Büchner himself mentions another writer who portrayed such abysmal disillusionment and disorientation. In the letter in which he asks his fiancée whether our moanings sound like a melodic breath to heavenly ears he confesses: "I am afraid of my voice and my image in the mirror. I could

have served as one of Callot-Hoffmann's models, couldn't I, my dear?"

Callot-Hoffmann—once again we have reached familiar territory. But now as before we should not be content with the sound of a name; for the history of the interpretation of Callot covers an enormous range, and Büchner considerably surpasses the mysterious oddity of Hoffmann's *Phantasiestücke,* and perhaps even the abysmal quality of the *Nachtgeschichten.* But we must not forget that our quotes are taken from letters which Büchner addressed to specific individuals. Being such they are intensified, stylized, and colored by the artificiality characteristic of epistolary language—although it would be wrong to doubt the sincerity of Büchner's feelings. But there is still another Büchner, who is a fanatic student and teacher of the natural sciences, and the one who is more strongly convinced than Lenz of "the infinite beauty that constantly changes its form" and who knows "the inexpressible harmony which, in the more developed forms, communicates and feels with a greater number of organs and is, therefore, all the more deeply affected."

The other point of view, however, which, using Büchner's own words, we might call that of the puppet-play or Callot-Hoffmann's, forms the central aspect under which the world of *Woyzeck* is created in a unified and deliberately exaggerated manner.

That the characters in this play are guided by an outside force like puppets is most easily shown in the figures of the Captain and the Doctor. Satiric intentions undoubtedly played a part in their creation, for they are caricatured representatives of the dominant society. But their caricatural aspect is not the exaggeration of traits proper to their class. The Captain, for instance, avows his idealism and his melancholic temper. He is "well-intentioned" toward Woyzeck because the latter is a *"guter Mensch"* (a decent fellow). The Captain talks a good deal about decent fellows.[33] It is the essence of the man, and the crux of the matter, that he is obsessed by the formula *qua* formula without acting in accordance with it. For he has not acquired the notion of a decent fellow, and concepts like conviction, development, or personality can in no way be applied to him since he is a wooden puppet. He is never himself because he has no substance. The *idée fixe* which governs his speech and attitude is the stubborn belief in experiment for its own sake. Even the secondary

characters are obsessed with preconceived ideas. Both in appearance and language the drum major is a sire of drum majors, while the journeyman is the incarnation of a soul reeking after brandy. The conception and execution of Woyzeck's plan to kill Marie, too, is imposed from the outside in the form of an *idée fixe*. It is the wire which sets him in motion and controls his limbs. Büchner's Lenz, too, is haunted by such notions, for this is what the narrator calls the manic urge which prompts him to attempt the resurrection of the dead child. When speaking of his intentions to give philosophical lectures, Büchner applied the formula even to himself. Once again one sees how a principle inherent in the puppet play and often instrumental in achieving purely comic effects is invested with deeper philosophical meaning and how, as a consequence, our smile is tinged by the fear of a world in which men are no longer themselves.

Büchner by far surpasses both Klinger and Lenz in the stylistic unity he has given the characters of his *Woyzeck*. It is not true that, as one critic has maintained, "the middle-class characters are treated differently from the common people." [34] The Captain and the Doctor are also ominous and terrifying and Woyzeck is ridiculous. Büchner makes no distinction between topically comic flights on one hand and high seriousness on the other, but the abysmal strangeness of tragicomedy is all-pervasive.[35] The language of the Captain, the Doctor, and Woyzeck himself, seen in conjunction with Büchner's stage directions, clearly suggests that all three characters move in the eccentric manner of the *commedia dell'arte*[36] figures: the Captain alarmingly phlegmatic, the Doctor with short-legged eagerness, Woyzeck with the haste of a fugitive. The conclusion of the scene "Street," which follows, offers one of the purest examples of the style of *Woyzeck*, in its language and action. At the end the Captain utters the summarizing, evaluative word at which our discussion aimed.

> Woyzeck: I am leaving. A lot can happen. The human being! A lot can happen.—Nice weather, Captain. Such a pretty, solid gray sky. Do you see? One is tempted to drive a log into it and hang oneself thereon, just because of the little hyphen between yes and yes again — and no. Captain, yes and no? Is the yes to blame for the no, or the no for the yes? Let me think it over. (*Exits with long strides, at first slowly but then quickly increasing his speed.*)

Doctor (*Rushes after him*): Phenomenal! Woyzeck, I'll raise your pay.

Captain: These fellows make me dizzy. How fast they run! The tall one runs like the shadow of a spider's leg, and the short one, how it swerves! The tall one is the lightning and the short one the thunder. Haha! . . . Grotesque! grotesque!

Every word which the Captain uses to describe the scene hits home, and with each he further estranges the world of man by introducing that of animals as well as the neutral ("it swerves"), atmospheric, and extrahuman sphere.

In an earlier version of the play, Büchner had used the word "grotesque" in still another passage. After the barker in the scene "Public Square, Booths" has praised his astrological ass, the romantic horse, and the military ape, whose sensible beastliness considerably surpasses man's beastly foolishness; and after he has thoroughly confounded the various realms of being, Büchner puts the following synoptic interpretation into the mouth of one of the onlookers: "I am a friend of the grotesque." (The additional remark, "I am an atheist," is topped by another bystander's verbal grotesque, "I am a Christian dogmatic atheist. I must see the ass.")

The barker's speech is as idiosyncratic as many other varieties of language found in *Woyzeck* (numerous songs, the parodistic sermon of the journeyman, the biblical story of the adulteress, the fairy tale told by the fool and that told by the grandmother). The stylistic unity of the play ensues from the way in which the most diverse ingredients fit together and are integrated into a whole. This whole comprises the total isolation and helplessness of all things human expressed in the grandmother's tale, as well as the grotesque manner in which the barker presents his limited little world. The two aspects complement each other; and Büchner's stylistic genius has never been more strikingly revealed than in the way in which he harmonizes the grandmother's story of the lonely child with the total estrangement of the world: ". . . and when it finally reached the moon, it turned out to be a piece of rotten wood . . . and when it reached the sun, it was merely a withered sunflower . . . and when it reached the stars, they were little golden gnats affixed to the sky as the killer bird impales them on blackthorns. And when it wanted to return to the earth, the latter was an earthenware pot turned upside

down. And then it was all by itself in the world and sat down and cried. And there it still sits all by itself."

c) *The Romantic Comedy*

While Büchner's *Woyzeck* grandly concluded a development begun by Lenz, his *Leonce und Lena* is the epitome of Romantic comedy. This history of that genre is somewhat less extended. It begins with Brentano's *Ponce de Leon,* but actually with Schiller. For it was Schiller who formulated the rules for the contest in comedy writing which Goethe announced in 1800, and in consequence of which Brentano's piece was written. "People justly complain," the invitation asserts, "that in Germany pure comedy, the gay comedy, has been replaced by the sentimental one. It is a fact that most of our comedies sin in that, in them, too much emphasis is placed on emotions and moral sentiments." This censure was aimed at the plays of Iffland and Kotzebue, which rely strongly upon sentimental effects. Pure comedy, however, according to Schiller's treatise on *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry,* should not affect us too profoundly but instead should produce and maintain in us a state of emotional detachment (*Freiheit des Gemüts*). In pursuing the idea that in comedy it is not the subject matter but the poetic treatment which matters, Schiller, who himself was never to write a work of that kind, came to the following strange conclusion: "Whereas tragedy departs from a more important point, one has to admit that comedy aims at a more important goal which, once attained, would render all tragedy superfluous and impossible." In another place he defined the aim of comedy as being "identical with man's highest aspirations, namely, to be free of passion, to be able to look into and about himself calmly and perspicaciously, to discover everywhere more chance than fate, and to laugh at the incongruity, rather than deplore or curse the infamy, of things."

If it was Schiller, the esthetician, who pleaded for emotional detachment, Schiller, the teacher of poetics, added further advice by setting up a distinction between two basic types of comedy: "In the comedy of intrigue the characters are subordinated to the events, whereas in the comedy of character the events are subordinated to the characters." The pure comedy which he envisaged was to be-

long to neither category. The invitation to the contest concluded with an expression of hope "that true genius will happily combine the advantages of both genres," a formulation which is conciliatory enough to have been inspired by Goethe.

But are there no other types except these two, plus a combination of them? When reviewing Goethe's *Egmont,* Schiller prefaced his analysis with a concise poetics of the serious drama, three different types of which he identified: the drama of action, the character drama, and the drama of passion. The first two types correspond exactly to the two varieties of comedy previously mentioned. But should there be no comic genre analogous to the third type of drama, that which is based on passion? Hardly in the literal sense of the word; for the chief aim of comedy was to gain emotional detachment. But perhaps in the sense that neither plot nor character but the totality of a world forms the substance—what Schiller called the *"Stoff"*—of the play, and that events and characters subserve the creation of a compact poetic universe, not one of the ingredients of which attracts attention by itself, but the over-all animation of which engenders an extreme feeling of gaiety, freedom, and ease.

Brentano's experiment was conducted precisely along these lines and thus served as a model for Romantic comedy, which is also characterized by the bouncing and whirling manner in which the atmosphere of *Ponce de Leon* resounds with a hundred different shades of love. Brentano submitted the play with the motto *"Lasst es euch gefallen,"* an allusion to that play which had charmed him as much as it was to charm his successors, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (*Wie es euch gefällt*), in which a fairy-tale-like atmosphere helps to resolve all conflicts, reunite the lovers, reform the scoundrels, and restore the exiles to their rightful place. The play sparkles with wit but its estival happiness is suffused with the somber mood of melancholy. Jacques is the melancholic whom Gerstenberg took to be a "grotesque" character. The other figures consider him a fool, not only because he isolates himself and does not seem to share their pains and pleasures, but also because he sees everything upside down and greatly distorted. He also penetrates the surface of things and admits that his melancholy is no special one, that is, not that of the scholar, the musician, the courtier, or the lover, but "composed of many ingredients and distilled from many substances." It is the

melancholy of a man who has seen much and knows that "all the world's a stage/and all the men and women merely players." Shakespeare makes Jacques the mouthpiece of his thoughts about the *theatrum mundi*. And while, at the end of the play, the universal order is restored and everybody returns home, Jacques is the only one to stay behind in his lonely cave.

Brentano's play is by no means that rich or unified. The melancholy has disappeared (Ponce's somber traits seem to be signs of his youthful confusion), and everything is treated more lightly and with much greater animation. Confusions and disguises abound, so that almost no character wears his own costume. If, in the opening scene, we are present at a masked ball attended by Pantaloon and Harlequin, this points to the heart of the *commedia dell'arte* or, at least, Gozzi, whose style has here been superimposed upon that of Shakespeare, the scope of whose plays is thereby somewhat reduced and unified. The movements executed by Brentano's figures are animated rather than eccentric, however. Here is an example from the third act of *Ponce de Leon*:

Scene fifteen

Porporino silently sneaks across the stage and pantomimically announces the arrival of the two knights.

Scene sixteen

Ponce rapidly crosses the stage from right to left. He wears neither coat nor hat. Enter Aquilar, weary, and carrying a heavy load on his shoulders. He wears Ponce's pilgrim's hat on top of his own large one and carries two pilgrim's staffs, two coats, and his lute. He stops and calls after Ponce.

Aquilar: The lover runs like a madman. Holla, Ponce, stop now! I won't go one step further.

Ponce (*Backstage*): We'll be there in a minute. It draws me like a magnetic mountain.

Aquilar: In a minute? All I feel is my weariness and your comfort.

This reminds one of the conclusion of the scene from *Woyzeck*, which the Captain called "grotesque." But the word does not seem to apply to the present context. The well-motivated haste of the lover in contrast with the slow weariness of his friend—important as

such gestic style may be here as well as throughout the rest of the play—does not have the ominous eccentricity of the figures in *Woyzeck*. Linguistically, too, Brentano has simplified the rich palette of Shakespeare's comedy by stressing the puns of the fool Touchstone rather than the dark imagery of Jacques' language. He uses quibbles, however, in such profusion and with so little restraint that, brushing away the opinions of eighteenth-century estheticians, he gained recognition for the pun as a truly poetic means of expression.[37] Subsequently, it became the very hallmark of Romantic comedy.

In Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*, the quibble is associated with one specific character, Valerio, although Leonce, too, is capable of chiming in. Just as in his life Valerio refuses to acknowledge any kind of obligation, his language, too, is unrestrained. The clownish commentator of all events, Harlequin (who was no more than a mask in Brentano's comedy) is here depicted as a real character.[38] Precisely because he is a figure apart from the others, however, and because his folly stands in radical opposition to the rest of the action, contrasts of a well-nigh explosive and no longer purely comic tension are created. The explosive nature of the contrast between "sublime" and "grotesque," for instance, which Victor Hugo sought to define, is embodied in the scene in which Leonce, abandoning himself in a Dionysiac manner, wants to drown himself, but is held back by Valerio:

> Leonce: Leave me alone.
> Valerio: I shall leave you alone as soon as your passion leaves you alone and you leave the water alone.

Büchner not only freed his characters from the limitations placed upon their language by Brentano but also managed, in his short play, to create a wealth of tensions of a scope almost equal to that found in *As You Like It*. Leonce himself has inherited certain traits from the melancholic Jacques; yet his melancholy is heightened by his *Weltschmerz* and his disgust with the ennui of life. Even in the first scene between Leonce and the tutor, for example, ominous tensions beneath a deceptive superficial humor are generated. In their speech, appearance, and behavior the figures of the courtly world are treated in the caricatural manner of the *commedia dell'arte*. They move, to a certain extent, within the orbit of political and social

satire, which can be very stringent on occasion. But, as in the case of the Captain and the Doctor in *Woyzeck,* an abyss begins to open under their feet, and the satiric caricature turns into a grotesque one. Valerio fits well into this world when, at the end, he ushers in the two lovers with a speech that constitutes rhetorical fireworks. It is in keeping with the spirit of the grotesque when he compares them with two automata:

> Valerio: Actually I wanted to announce to this high and honored company that the two world-famous automata have now arrived and that I may well be the third and strangest of them, although I do not know who I am; which is not surprising since I have absolutely no idea what I am talking about, no idea even that I have no idea of it, so that it is very probable that somebody controls my speech and that, actually, rollers and windpipes are talking to you. (*In a mechanical voice*) Look here. . . .[39]

The focal point of the little play, however, is reached when Leonce and Lena meet in the midst of the grotesquely painted world. To be precise: before they meet in person, it is the language which sounds concordantly between them and merges harmoniously above them like a nearly fatal dream to which they owe their lives. It is here that Büchner approaches true Shakespearean greatness and manifests a poetic power the like of which is not to be found elsewhere in nineteenth-century drama.

IV

The Grotesque in the Nineteenth Century

1. Interpretation of the Grotesque in Esthetic Writings

The post-Romantic nineteenth century is quickly covered in a history of the grotesque. We shall first glance at the definitions which the term received in the contemporary writings on esthetics. If, in making this survey, I discuss Hegel somewhat more extensively than the rest, I do not mean to imply that his esthetic is especially characteristic or that it exerted a particularly strong influence on subsequent ages. I tend to regard him as the last thinker whose analysis of the grotesque encompasses the metaphysical depth of the phenomenon, which was to be so totally lost sight of by his successors.

Hegel clearly distinguishes between the terms "arabesque" and "grotesque." By arabesque he means an ornamental style in which the arabesque and the grotesque are fused. He speaks of arabesques

as "distorted vegetal forms," as "human and animal forms that emerge from and are entwined with plants," and as "animal forms turning into plants."[1] This definition reminds one of Goethe's description of Raphael's grotesques as arabesques and his praise of their "grace, charm, variety, and wit." Hegel sees in the arabesques more than a mere product of the fancy: "If they are to retain a symbolic value, the transition from one realm of nature to the other must be so regarded." But the actual reason for the positive evaluation lies even deeper. Hegel lists the familiar objections to the ornamental grotesques raised by Vitruvius, Vasari, and Winckelmann, who called them unnatural. In defending this unnaturalness, Hegel characteristically shifts the ground of his argument. The classicists had pointed out that such fusions do not occur in nature, whereas Hegel defends the stylization of the various ingredients and actually restricts himself to speaking of plants: "This kind of unnaturalness is a privilege of art in general and a duty of architecture in particular, for only in this way are the otherwise architecturally unsuitable forms adapted to, and harmonized with, a truly architectonic style. . . . Used architectonically, their already regularly shaped leaves achieve an even greater linearity or circularity, so that everything that could be regarded as distortion, unnaturalness, and stiffness of the plant forms may be considered as a fitting transformation into truly architectonic elements." Since, for Hegel, all architecture has a twofold origin, insofar as it derives from natural forms (the column from the tree, etc.) as well as from rationally conceived utilitarian ones (the linear, the rectangular, and the planar), the unnatural and, in his opinion, geometrically stylized arabesque seems a fully acceptable synthesis. Yet he condones ornamental stylization only as long as it is restricted to the use of plant forms; for "the plants fall short of being sentient."

This explains why Hegel uses the word "grotesque" so consistently in a derogatory sense, as he does repeatedly in the sections concerned with "Fantastic Symbolism," and especially those devoted to Indian art, in the magnificent second part of his *Ästhetik* in which—much more elaborately than A. W. Schlegel had done in his lectures on dramatic art and literature—he endeavors to establish the general laws which operate in the history of art. According to him, the productions of fantastic symbolism may already be consid-

ered art insofar as here the division between the sensuous, individual phenomena and the general, spiritual ones is clearly felt and the attempt is made to bridge the gap by a kind of symbolic expression. But this expression is totally arbitrary, inappropriate, and fantastic. It is such forms which Hegel considers to be grotesque, a stylistic quality he characterizes in the following manner: 1) The unjustified fusion of different realms of being ("Indian art does not progress beyond the grotesque fusion of natural and human elements, so that neither part is given its due and both mutilate each other"); 2) Excess and distortion ("In order to be able to reach the level of universality as sensuous individuals, the individual figures [of Indian art] are made colossal or grotesquely distorted"); 3) The unnatural "multiplication of one and the same function, the presence of numerous arms, heads, etc." In every instance, however, the grotesque implies a transcendence of the individual form toward a realm inhabited by supernatural powers. Hegel does not consider this transcendence to be properly symbolic in grotesque Indian art, because the tangible and the intangible things are not closely related or substantially connected with each other and because, in this stage of the historical development, the supernatural plane still constitutes a dark chaos of interpenetrating forces. Hegel effectively demonstrates the truth of this contention by comparing the Indian theogonies with the theogony of Hesiod, with the result that he feels the latter is "much more transparent and definite, so that one always knows where one is and what is intended."[2]

Hegel's definition of the grotesque is striking insofar as it hints at a connection with the supernatural and extrahuman which had accrued to the meaning of the word since 1760, while at the same time slighting its humorous aspect. It is equally noteworthy that in Hegel's panhistoric thinking the phenomenon of the grotesque, the expression of a preclassical and prephilosophical attitude, is tied to a specific historical situation.[3]

Without directly attacking Hegel, F. Th. Vischer contradicts him on both counts. Formally, he takes the grotesque to result from a fusion of heterogeneous elements. (In paragraph 742 of his *Ästhetik*, he speaks of the grotesque intertwining of figures, and of the transformation of mechanisms, plants, and animals into men, and vice versa, while in paragraph 214 he notes that "animal forms

are mixed with human figures, and living matter with dead." See also paragraph 440.) But this fusion is brought about in the (ageless) mood of humor, which is the decisive factor in the grotesque, to which the ridiculous and the comic vitally contribute. Vischer goes so far as to define the grotesque as "the comic in the guise of the marvelous" (paragraph 440), and elsewhere he calls the grotesque the "mythically comic." These phrases are extremely characteristic, since, for Vischer, the grotesque is no longer the outgrowth of a belief in demonic or mythical attitudes. The mythical and the marvelous are merely the vehicles for the humor, which dissolves the natural order of things with the playful arbitrariness of an untrammeled imagination.[4] Vischer still senses a strange, ominous, and abysmal quality in this fantastic humor and repeatedly speaks of the "madness" which confuses the different realms and dissolves "the firm contours" into a "wild orgy" (paragraphs 244, 440). But he invariably uses "gay" in conjunction with "madness," thereby depriving the latter word of its inhuman and ominous quality.

We have reached a turning-point in the conceptual history of the term "grotesque": its reduction to the fantastically comic, which was ultimately to lead to its identification with broad humor (*Niedrig-Komisches*) and the burlesque (*Burlesk-Komisches*). It is this development which helps explain why the word "grotesque" has lost its status as a technical term and is currently used in a rather vague and noncommittal manner. The definitions given by the estheticians encompassed too little of the full meaning of the grotesque as manifested in the appropriate works of art; and the historians of art and literature invariably, though shamefacedly, incline to imitate the language of philosophical esthetics.

F. Th. Vischer's artistic sensibility still enabled him to sense the ominous, alienating, and inhuman quality of the grotesque. But he did not want to see it and therefore tried to explain or interpret it away. The example he used to define the nature of the grotesque (a scene from a Venetian *commedia* which Flögel had already mentioned) is in no way "mythical" and only slightly fantastic. The estheticians of the second half of the nineteenth century readily emulated the theories of Vischer and his school. The metaphysical content of the grotesque, which was still essential to Hegel, now ceased to be recognized and was simply ignored; instead of Vischer's

fairly comprehensive definition of humor, the measurable psychic effect of laughter became the legal basis of future definitions. There is no reason to describe in detail how in the esthetic writings of Eberhard, Krause, Köstlin, Carrière, Lemcke, Überhorst, and others, the grotesque is treated as a subspecies of the comic or the *Niedrig-Komische*. Occasionally, the distortion was taken to constitute a deliberate and functional exaggeration. Even E. von Hartmann equated it with fantastic caricature. Schneegans, whose introduction to the *Geschichte der grotesken Satire* (History of the Grotesque Satire) of 1894 discusses all the previous definitions, defined the grotesque as a special kind of caricature, namely, that which is "ludicrously exaggerated" (p. 39).[5] He even went so far as to state (on p. 307) that "the grotesque image must always be intelligible" and that "the satire must not only be clear and transparent but also striking." In its attempts to define the nature of the grotesque, modern esthetics has not yet reached the level attained between 1770 and 1830, for it still assigns it a place in the lowlands of the coarsely humorous.

2. The "Realistic" Grotesque

The leveling of the grotesque, as we encounter it in the definitions of the various esthetical treatises, seems to fit perfectly into the general picture presented by the post-Romantic decades of the nineteenth century. It stands to reason that no genuine grotesques will be found in the art of that period, and that the best we can hope for is a weak or impure manifestation of the genre. This expectation is fulfilled if one stays within the realm of German art and scrutinizes the dominant bourgeois style in painting and literature. But even there the individual familiar with, and interested in, the history of the grotesque will come upon certain relevant examples that are generally overlooked or dismissed as youthful imitations of Romantic models. This certainly applies to those passages in which the young Adalbert Stifter, imitating Jean Paul and E. T. A. Hoffmann, approximates the grotesque. To be sure, his *Narrenburg* (Castle of Fools), which was written after *Der Hochwald* (The

High Forest), is no longer a work of the youthful Stifter. In spite of its relation to Tieck's *Die Klausenburg* and Hoffmann's *Das Majorat,* one cannot speak of mere dependence, but rather of certain inherent traits allowing the recognition and understanding of the deliberate stylization in the calm narrative attitude of several of Stifter's other works. It is nevertheless true that all the material to be quarried in *Die Narrenburg* (the motif of folly sharpened by hereditary spleen; the unnatural mixture of heterogeneous styles in the small space occupied by the castle; the ominous, bizarre appearance and behavior of the lonely keeper) is rather eclectic and does little more than create an atmosphere appropriate to the grotesque, without paving the way for actually grotesque scenes. The connection with Romanticism is equally obvious in the case of Mörike's *Maler Nolten* (Painter Nolten), although here the treatment of the grotesque (around the Councilor [*Hofrat*] and the actor Larkens, who becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of suicide) is more incisive than in Stifter's works.[6]

Gottfried Keller's *Leute von Seldwyla* offers a more pertinent example. These stories also fail to reveal any novel aspects of the grotesque, especially since Keller reduces the wealth of possibilities that is furnished by Romanticism by focusing solely on the grotesque individuals. In doing so, however, he considerably, and appropriately, transforms his models.

Surveying once more E. T. A. Hoffmann's grotesque figures, we find them divided into three different categories, the first of which consists of those characters whose appearance and movements are grotesque. We recall the husband of the angelic beauty in *Die Abenteuer in der Sylvesternacht* who enters just as the narrator swears eternal love to his beloved: "Precisely at that moment, a clumsy, spider-legged figure with protruding frog's eyes came stumbling in, laughed foolishly, and shrieked: 'Where the devil has my wife gone?' " In analyzing this passage we observed that the models for such grotesque figures composed of human and animal traits can be found in the works of Callot. In E. T. A. Hoffmann's writings, they are usually seen in clashing contrast with angelic beauty.

The second type consists of the eccentric artists, most of whom are distinguished by their odd outward appearance, strange and uncontrolled facial expressions, and eccentric movements. They all

have seen the supernatural beauty and are just as much exposed to its fatal power as to that which is exerted by the ominous forces. They all (Kreisler, Ritter Gluck, and the rest) are threatened by insanity. Herman Meyer has justly remarked that Jean Paul's Schoppe, the Godseeker as he is called, anticipates Hoffmann's characters. (Schoppe, by the way, in one of his speeches admits his special interest in the *commedia dell'arte.*)

The third kind is constituted by the "demonic" characters whose appearance and behavior are grotesque.[7] As long as they are disguises of the devil, as in the case of the stranger in the novella *Aus dem Leben eines bekannten Mannes,* their grotesqueness is lessened. Coppelius in *Der Sandmann,* however, cannot be seen in this manner—and there are several figures of this kind to be found in Hoffmann's *oeuvre.* Even where they do not themselves interfere with the action or bring their supernatural powers into play, their mere presence usually spells death and destruction. They tend to possess uncanny mechanical skills of a kind that enables them "to establish contact with the most secret mysteries of nature and thus to produce effects which must remain inexplicable," as Hoffmann says through one of his characters. (That aspect, too, had been prefigured by Jean Paul's automata, wax figures, and peculiar mechanisms.)

All three types are represented among Keller's people from Seldwyla. Take the little man with the strange name Litumlei, with whom John Kabys suddenly finds himself confronted in a grotesquely furnished room when he seeks to discover the source of the child's crying in the lonely mansion: "He opened another door and suddenly found himself in a spacious ancestral hall, whose walls were filled with portraits from top to bottom. The floor was covered with hexagonal tiles of various colors, and the ceiling with life-size, and almost unsupported, stucco figures of men and animals, as well as with floral wreaths and coats of arms. In front of a ten-foot chimney mirror, however, there stood a tiny old man with hoary gray hair, not heavier than a kid, dressed in a scarlet sleeping gown and with lathered visage, who impatiently kicked his legs and whimpered: 'I can no longer shave myself; I can no longer shave myself. My knife doesn't cut. Nobody helps me. Oh!!' " But this suddenly emerging figure ceases to be strange the better we get to

know him and ends up by perfectly conforming to certain literary clichés (the cheater cheated and the triumphant cuckold). And even though he determines the fate of the protagonist by leading him to the peak of happiness, only to thrust him down again, this is in no way demonic or ominous but represents a just punishment for Kabys' presumption. This fall, moreover, is not one into destruction but one that, painful though it may be, puts the hero on the proper path on which "he belatedly came to know the happiness which results from simple and assiduous labor."

In the black fiddler from *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (A Village Romeo and Juliet) we easily recognize a descendant of E. T. A. Hoffmann's eccentric artists. Once again, Keller has carefully prepared his entry. In striking contrast to the happy and contented lovers who, on a quiet summer day, still unconscious of their love, "ascend the sunny curvature of the hill and descend on the other side" like a starry constellation, there appears all of a sudden the dark star by which they are so strangely affected that they have to follow it involuntarily. This character, too, combines human and mechanical features with those of animals, even though he is rather cautiously described by means of similes and the verb "seem":

> Actually he possessed a disproportionately large nose, which protruded from his lean, black face like a carpenter's square and which even more closely resembled a sizable club or stick stuck onto his face, underneath which a little round hole of a mouth—from which puffing, whistling, and hissing sounds incessantly issued—wriggled and contracted itself. To this was added a rather ominous little felt hat that was neither round nor square but so strangely fashioned that it constantly seemed to change its shape, although it never moved. All that could be seen of the fellow's eyes were their whites, since the pupils moved continuously and rapidly like two rabbits running along a zigzag course.

Keller, however, does not fashion his characters in line with the problematic nature of artistry. Instead, he avails himself of outlawed and uprooted individuals. And as in the case of Litumlei, he supplies a clear and almost continuous context by making his exile the leader of a clan of ragamuffins, the uprooted people, by whom the lovers are once more affected. But in contrast to *Der Schmied seines Glücks* (The Maker of his Fate) this connection forms only the

surface over the darker depths. It is this dialectic which invests the story of Vrenchen and Sali with a deeper meaning. While the motivations for certain actions are quite transparent, confusion arises from the fact that several motivations are given for the same event. Keller, morcover, presents the story in such a way that elemental forces, which are no longer susceptible to causal explanation, determine the course of the action: the passion of love, the liberating power of music, and the magic of injustice which, as a mysterious force, hovers over the field where the unjust deed has been perpetrated. The black fiddler does not symbolize the divided nature of the artist who is equally exposed to the forces of light and darkness, but is an embodiment of elemental forces which, through him, awaken in the couple and cause their destruction. Even in the "realistic" disguise of the disinherited musician, he is a demon: the demon of the alluring, blissful, and devouring abysmal world which lies underneath the human order. In his strange, mask-like appearance, which is the target of Vrenchen's laughter, the invasion of the ominous powers is anticipated.

The black fiddler combines the traits of the eccentric musician with those of Hoffmann's "demonic" figures. Züs Bünzli, too, is essentially demonic, and the answer to our initial question concerning the grotesqueness of her nature is now self-evident. She is introduced into the novel as a "magic power"; at the end of her bizarre sermon about the animals, an aspect of her demonism is starkly revealed. "Since cats and pigeons are devoted to me, it is proved that I am clever and simple-minded, sly and innocent at the same time." To be sure, the narrator has furnished her, the daughter of a washerwoman from Seldwyla, with a much more harmless disguise than the black fiddler, and her grotesque furniture with the grotesque *chinoiserie,* too, is rendered familiar, as the provenience of each piece is stated. Hand in hand with her Dietrich, Züs Bünzli herself finally merges into a literary cliché (the cheater cheated, the prepossessive woman), and the grotesque is reduced to the level of irony and satire. The novella, on the other hand, surpasses all others in the degree to which the world is alienated in the three combmakers and their environment. One does not know whether to admire the conscious artistry or the intuitive genius displayed in the narrator's choice of striking pictorial images, for once again Keller makes the

simile his chief narrative device (like a lucifer match, like a piece of paper placed on top of three herrings, like three pencils, like comets, like shying horses, etc.). He also brings into play the demonism of the mechanical by joining three perfectly identical combmakers and by comparing Züs with certain "virtuosi who play many instruments at once."

In using the grotesque, Keller humanizes the demonic and objectifies the abstract. He develops his own stylistic brand of the grotesque. Even if one calls him a realist, one has to keep in mind that the ominous, unfathomable, and somber powers form part of his world, and that the narrator, no matter how deeply his keen glance penetrates and how much he likes to smile and to make others smile, is by no means unfamiliar with the horrors of the abyss.

These horrors are totally unknown to the narrator in Raabe's fictional world, where we meet no overbearing and impersonal force that threatens to engulf reality. Perhaps it is due to the manner in which his characters are portrayed rather than to the author's world view that Raabe's fictional cosmos is limited to the personal sphere, namely, the good or evil nature of his figures. This entails a transformation of the grotesque into the bizarre and the odd, and the outwardly grotesque eccentric has exchanged his demonic nature for a rich and easily offended soul which he tries to protect by means of that mask. Throughout Raabe's works—as in the entire post-Romantic century—we meet the types created by Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Raabe's narrator frequently refers to the former. These types make their appearance in the *Chronik der Sperlingsgasse* (Chronicle from Sparrow Lane), especially in the figures of Dr. Wimmer with his "mad, baroque mask" and the eccentric artist and cartoonist Strobel, to describe whose room—which he finds to be even "madder" than one of Justinus Kerner's frozen fantasies—the narrator Wachholder requires an entire page. But such puzzling words cannot hide the fact that the room itself, while being disorderly, is essentially cheerful and almost cozy. A comparison with Züs Bünzli's furniture indicates how each object in it bespeaks its owner's personality, how nothing remains strange and isolated but contributes to a dense, warm, and highly personal atmosphere. The narrator uses the term "heterogeneous" in a greatly weakened sense: "A three-legged table, which showed signs of once having been a

quadruped, had been moved close to this couch. An empty beer stein, a half-filled cigar box, parts of a paint box, penciled notes, and other heterogeneous items covered it in most charming confusion. The room contained three differently shaped chairs. . . . One corner was occupied by the knotty stick of the hiking enthusiast, which was crowned by a broad-brimmed felt hat. The other corner displayed a bulky knapsack; and the walls were covered with a host of crazy drawings, fastened to them with pins. The whole constituted a veritable pandemonium of humor and droll nonsense."

Once again the narrator aims too high at the conclusion; for the room expresses an obvious meaning and, basically, the same "German soul" which the narrator subsequently ascribes to the "baroque" Dr. Wimmer. Raabe's charmingly droll eccentrics are usually of this kind, even though the painfully positive evaluation is gradually lessened. They all can boast of a richly endowed soul with which the reader becomes thoroughly acquainted. The result is the total loss of the grotesque features in the first type of Hoffmannesque characters, to the adaptation of which Raabe has practically limited himself. Only rarely does he attempt to deal with the second type. The mad musician Wallinger, a secondary character in *Die Kinder von Finkenrode* (The Children of Finkenrode), has justly been called a figure nourished by the Romantic spirit. However, if we compare him with (Hoffmann's) Johannes Kreisler, we quickly see that Raabe uses the personal sphere as a final limit. For him, there are no powers of light and darkness which take possession of the more delicately organized artist. Madness is a private disease that has no effect on the world's gaiety rather than being a human predicament that painfully reveals the abysmal aspect of our nature.

In using the grotesque, German literature of the nineteenth century has not restricted itself to the character types evolved by the Romantics, however. It has opened a new field for the grotesque, which F. Th. Vischer labeled the "malice of the inanimate object" (*Tücke des Objekts*).[8] No longer is it only the uniquely gifted artist and the Godseeker who serve as points of contact for the ominous forces; even in Keller the victims were sometimes quite ordinary people, although fate was "provoked" in a way that suggested a (basically inadequate) moral interpretation. In the *Kammacher,* it was an ounce of justice too much and in the wrong place,

in *Romeo und Julia,* the guilt of the fathers, and in *Der Schmied* John Kabys' fortune hunting. The new form of the grotesque reveals that, constantly and without any provocation, we all are the targets of malicious powers. Especially our everyday world, the small, apparently familiar things in constant use, turn out to be strange, evil, and possessed by hostile demons who constantly swoop down on us, especially in those moments when their interference is most harmful. Repeatedly in Vischer's novel *Auch Einer* the protagonist A. E. is seen to develop his philosophy, in which the commonly accepted laws of physics with their "trite" names, such as the law of gravity, statics, etc., are replaced by a metaphysics, a doctrine of the "realm of spirits," of "general tendentiousness" and of the "animosity of the object." He even evolves his own cosmology, in which nature appears as the "product of a female demiurge." For in A. E.'s opinion, only the existence of such a being can explain the fact that the ill-tempered, loathsome, cruel, and destructive elements in nature coexist with beauty, charm, loveliness, and mildness; that the noble dog is afflicted with rabies; and that, in addition to the "artistic forms" of the beautiful animals, we have "the warthog, the toad, the tapeworm, the louse, the flea, and the cockroach." "System of reciprocal murder" is much too mild a description of the guiding principle in nature's household: "Let us remember that animals do not simply kill their victims but sadistically torture them for hours and days on end." All these traits are intensified in man, "whose reason allows him to invent exquisite torments for animals as well as for his fellow beings." But with the creation of man the aims of nature were defeated; for "the same man, guided by a second, higher divinity—a male spirit of light—gradually invented things which the female demiurge and the spirits had not anticipated: law, the state, science, Platonic love, and the arts. . . . But the spirits, these creatures of slime and mud, raged and vowed to take terrible revenge by invading the inanimate objects. . . . You know the rest, know how man is plagued. . . . All that remains to be said is that it is wrong to blame the infested objects rather than the demons which inhabit them." This demonology presupposes an outlook on the world which somewhat reminds one of the perspective embraced by Victor Hugo or Jean Paul's satanic humorist. As soon as one focuses on specific settings, fre-

quent occasion for the grotesque arises. However, this attitude is not taken seriously. We are to regard A. E.'s system as a parody of Hegel on one hand and as the droll philosophy of an eccentric "infatuated with reason" on the other. The framing perspective of the novel is the "normal" one of the narrator, who knows himself one with the reader. If, initially, we are torn between a feeling of annoyance about the obsessive pedantry of the hero's thinking and one of compassion for the human being in him, the sympathy prevails as we learn more about the rich mentality of A. E., whose oddity becomes less and less obtrusive. Vischer's eccentric has actually much in common with those sketched by Raabe.

Yet his demonology remains somewhat disconcerting. In spite of the distorting frame and the parodistic content, we sense it to be serious and justifiable to a certain extent; especially since the action itself—not only in the illustrations furnished by A. E. but also in the events that are witnessed by the narrator—seems constantly to confirm such an impression. But even here the ominous quality is lessened. Since the inanimate objects are consistently and uniformly treacherous in trying to harm the individual wherever possible, they lose their ominous nature and, consequently, their demonism proper. The individual knows what he can expect from them and thus can be on his guard against their concerted actions. Moreover, these objects stem from the most common spheres of daily life. The first series of examples of such malicious objects that is furnished by Vischer's protagonist consists of "pencil, pen, inkstand, paper, cigar, glass, and lamp." Accordingly, the events have so little "significance" that the laughter they arouse remains innocuous. In *Auch Einer* the grotesque elements are almost obliterated by the comic ones, and thus Vischer's novel closely parallels his theory.

Occasionally, however, the novel reveals more than the demonology of its hero would seem to warrant. At the very beginning, A. E. relates a trick played upon him by the malice of a button:

> Against my principles I was persuaded to participate in a wedding feast. A large silver platter, containing several side dishes, was placed in front of me. I did not notice that it slightly protruded over the rim of the table. The lady next to me lost her fork. I wanted to pick it up, but one of my coat buttons which, with infernal trickery, had slid underneath the plate, lifted it up as I rose quickly. All the stuff

> on the plate—gravies, all sorts of preserves, some of them reddish liquids—rolled, rumbled, flowed, and rushed over the table. I wanted to save what there was to be saved and, in doing so, toppled a bottle of wine, which spilled over the white wedding gown of the bride to my left. I violently tripped on the toes of my neighbor to the right. Another guest, who wanted to come to the rescue, turned over a vegetable plate, a third one his glass. In short, it was an uproar, a catastrophe, a truly tragic event. The fragile world of all finite things seemed about to go to pieces. I, overcome by a feeling of the sublime, take a bottle of champagne, walk to the window, open it, and raise the bottle: The bridegroom grabs my arm, I become angry, we quarrel, the bride is about to faint. I won't go on, for now the matter became comic.

One sees that toward the end of this narrative a shift in the cause of laughter occurs when the deliberate clash between the events themselves and their interpretation ("tragic," "sublime," "comic," etc.) calls attention to itself as well as to the narrator. But even in the beginning the story is more than an anecdote about the malice of a button, for a principle unaccounted for by the demonology has come into play: the turbulent accumulation of incidents and the demonic nature of a mechanism which, once triggered, tumultuously unfolds itself and completely disintegrates a whole segment of reality. As a theoretician of the grotesque, Vischer both observed and named this principle. In his essay on Rodolphe Töpffer (*Jahrbuch der Gegenwart,* 1846) he speaks of the "crazy game of chance . . . that begins as soon as the principal subject moves from the exposition to the complications of his fate. The whirling wheel of a crazy world takes hold of his little finger and his coat tail, and forces him to share its movement." In the same essay, he calls that principle "the whirlpool . . . which, originating in a gentle motion, continually grows and draws half the world into its devouring funnel." One could imagine the above scene from *Auch Einer* illustrated in the manner of a pure grotesque, the artist exaggerating the tangible events themselves rather than the human interpretation given to them by Vischer's narrator. Such scenes, however, were actually created by Wilhelm Busch, to whose work we now turn our attention.

It would not be difficult to derive from Busch's utterances a world view similar to, though more binding than, the one adopted by the

protagonist of Vischer's novel. A. E. wanted to replace the traditional physics by a "metaphysics." The same idea occurs to Wilhelm Busch, whose letter to Franz von Lenbach of December, 1895, contains the following statements: "I feel that in science, in which I occasionally dabble, the dead foundation on which it has hitherto rested begins to take on life. Vitality, even on the smallest scale, would perfectly suit the kind of thinking to which I am accustomed."[9] This "vitality on the smallest scale" can be equated with the malice of the inanimate object, except that in Busch's view it becomes even more dynamic and cruel. For Busch, the "energetic bestiality" is by no means restricted to the level of everyday life: "He who has ever witnessed the fulmination of the eye of energetic bestiality will harbor the terrible suspicion that a single eccentric scoundrel on the planet Uranus may well be able to retard our salvation, and that a single devil may be stronger than a whole heaven full of saints" (letter of 13 December 1880).

In our inquiry into the nature of the grotesque, personal utterances and confessions can hardly be more than aids to a better understanding of certain subsurface phenomena. Valid answers, however, are found only in the works of art themselves. It has long been realized that the traditional interpretation of Busch's art as the family album type of humor is a superficial one. But it would be equally wrong to regard him as a true master of the grotesque. A survey of Busch's *oeuvre* reveals, as in the case of Vischer, a progressive "humorization" of the grotesque. Over and over again the observer is encouraged to avoid the puzzling aspect of the grotesque and concentrate on the more familiar stylistic traits. In Busch there is certainly no lack of comic and satiric elements, while the grotesque as such is rendered innocuous. Contrary to the opinion expressed in the previously quoted letter, Busch usually portrays carefully restricted segments of society, primarily that of village and petit-bourgeois life. In gaining distance from the events, the reader also wins freedom and self-assurance. To be sure, the impact of events in Busch's world is certainly greater than it is in Vischer's *Auch Einer,* and death fairly often takes its toll in the former's stories without, however, greatly baffling the reader. For these deaths not only occur in a very peculiar manner but in a world that is so strange from the outset that the alienation demanded by the grotesque is

never achieved. We are amused by the willful fantasy of the artist, imbibe it without becoming too involved, and indulgently smile when he ironically explodes our subconscious assumption that the peculiar nature of his world is capable of an explanation on didactic grounds. The inner form of many of Busch's stories is that of a parodistic parable. And just as the impact of the events is greater than it is in Vischer's works (although its effect is somewhat softened), so the malice of the inanimate objects increases while at the same time it is more realistic than in Vischer's individual stories. Busch's narratives form coherent segments of reality in which the aggressiveness of inanimate objects prevails as a law; here, too, the effect is once more softened but since we are at home in Busch's world, we take pleasure in our superiority over the unsuspecting victim. We are thus secretly allied with the equally superior narrator or draftsman, and know what it means when a pointed object appears in one corner of the picture, namely, that it will hit the nose or another sensitive part of the body. Or when the narrator begins to report in an ostensibly factual manner: "Now, Conrad, go. We wish you luck./Not far from here there is a bridge," we anticipate his fall into the water and rejoice to see it happen, doubly so because our pleasure is enhanced by childhood memories.

That the grotesque is blunted even by the way in which a story is presented can also be observed in connection with another set of motifs which Busch employs more frequently than Vischer, Keller, or even Raabe: that of animals. Vischer praises Busch's Huckebein for being an "infernal monster, a beast resembling an evil dream" and lauds Busch himself for having "ingeniously exaggerated nature in a dreamlike manner." But one gains the impression that here a person intimately acquainted with the grotesque and able to define it properly has succumbed to the temptation of overstating the case. "Infernal monster" and "evil dream" are phrases which add a slightly demonic touch to Hans Huckebein's malice. Huckebein, after all, does not hail from hell but from a raven's nest.

More impressively than in the malice of the inanimate object and that of animals, the grotesque element asserts itself under the rule of that principle which Vischer called the whirlpool, into the voracious funnel of which half the world is drawn. A minor incident suffices to trigger a series of turbulent events resulting in total chaos. When-

ever Busch desires to let the world be governed by this principle, he uses a motif dear to the Romantics (Arnim, Poe) as well as Vischer: the ball or party, which seems predisposed for such a role, since its very nature leaves it open to the unusual, to the magic of transformation, and, as far as the participating individuals are concerned, to the susceptibility to supernatural happenings. This relaxing of controls stimulates or provokes the ever-watchful demons to an intervention on their part. The "grotesque ball," with its total alienation and chaotic dissolution, offers a frequently recurring theme in the history of the grotesque and is closely related to that of the city in the process of alienation and dissolution. Stylistic differences can easily be gauged by means of comparisons between the ways in which these motifs are handled in different ages. In Busch we discern once again a tendency to render things harmless and humorous. Watching the county fair or carnival from a considerable distance, the spectator is so detached that he can enjoy the comic aspect of the situation which is never lacking. But this laughter—and, as far as Busch is concerned, laughter in general—is only an expression of "relative ease"; the following statement taken from the same context (*Von mir über mich*) contains an implicit critique of the usual attitude on the part of Busch's readers: "Such a silhouetted creature . . . can . . . endure a lot before we feel any pain. One watches the affair and remains comfortably aloof from the suffering in the world and the artist's exceeding naïveté."

But Busch's work does not altogether lack true alienation which can no longer be transcended or disguised by generalizations. The guiding principle in this instance may be vaguely described as the merger of mutually incompatible elements. We have repeatedly encountered this phenomenon: in Callot's grotesques as well as Jean Paul's satanic humorist, who derived esthetic pleasure from the "flowers" on the dress of those beheaded by the guillotine. These two examples also serve to illustrate the two subdivisions within this category. For the merger of incompatible elements may either be effected in the tangible objects themselves or it may result from a character's—or the narrator's—reaction to a given situation. The border of the grotesque is crossed when such a union is factually impossible, when it transcends the level of what seems humanly possible; in other words, when it is inhuman. Busch occasionally

employs both devices. One of the best examples is found in his *Eispeter* (Ice Peter), although here the somewhat gross translation into the woodcut medium entailed the loss of certain traits present in the pencil sketches.

In the exceedingly cold winter of 1812 (one is struck by the historical verification of the events) Peter, in spite of repeated warnings, has gone ice skating. As he gets up from the bench after putting on his skates, his trousers, which are frozen fast to the stone, are torn to pieces. Peter falls through a hole in the ice, crawls out and, though drenched to the skin, continues to skate. The water that clings to his body turns into icicles until, finally, he stands lifeless, looking like a "frozen porcupine." Hours later, his father and uncle find him, sorrowfully carry him home, and place him beside the stove. Both parents are overjoyed to see the outline of their Peter emerge from the melting ice. The melting, however, continues until the whole figure, still recognizable by its outline, has turned into a puddle on the floor, which the parents pour into a jar:

> Yes, yes, in this pot of stone
> Peter was preserved anon,
>
> Who, originally hard,
> Soon became as soft as lard.

(The clumsiness of the lines shows that *Eispeter* is one of Busch's early works.) The picture (Ill. 18) which accompanies the final couplets shows an empty basement. For the first time in the story no human beings are present. Instead, our attention is drawn to three jars on a shelf. Those to the left and right are labeled "cheese" and "pickles" respectively, while the central one, brightly lit and tightly closed, bears the inscription "Peter" with three crosses underneath. The perspective has suddenly changed, and the three jars give the impression of being inordinately large; for they are seen close up. One may be inclined to smile at the freezing and thawing as a typically Buschian exaggeration of reality for didactic purposes, although the vivid depiction of the parents' care and sorrow is scarcely humorous. But the tension engendered by our already torn feelings is abruptly released in the concluding picture. The remains of a human being are hallowed to all feeling creatures. There is something

macabre—though not without humorous overtones—in the fact that the remains of a child so dearly beloved by his parents are placed by these same parents on a shelf with cheese and pickles in a basement, where they are kept (but how long? For preserves are usually removed from storage to be consumed). The narrator's comments add still one more degree of absurdity to the story. Although he fulfills our expectations by furnishing a summarizing interpretation of the events, he does so in a completely detached manner by describing the transformation in terms of a mechanically induced chemical process.

Busch made frequent use of the discrepancy between the events shown in the picture and the words which are used to describe them. The effect may well be a humorous one, just as understatement is a special type of joke. The couplets in Busch's *Naturgeschichtliches Alphabet* (Zoological Alphabet) are of this kind. The general and apparently innocuous content of the lines, "The little June bug gives us pleasure/The Jaguar in slighter measure," gains surprising immediacy and concreteness for the reader who is confronted with a beast of prey which, in the picture, is about to attack the unsuspecting Negro. In this instance, the discrepancy is of the humorous kind, especially since we realize that the threat is "posed" and cannot be taken seriously. The exotic setting further increases the safeguarding distance. But as soon as the contrast between the verbal exegesis and that which is demanded by the picture exceeds the human measure and becomes inhuman, alienation ensues and we lose the ground from under our feet.

When exactly does this moment occur? When do we begin to sense the presence of something inhuman? A formal distinction between the comic and the grotesque can scarcely be made in this passage, since both use discrepancy as their means. The difference lies in their content but is also visible in the form. It is most easily gauged by the effect which it creates. In the genuine grotesque the spectator becomes directly involved at some point where a specific meaning is attached to the events. In the humorous context, on the other hand, a certain distance is maintained throughout and, with it, a feeling of security and indifference. The analysis of Busch's *Eispeter* defined the juncture at which one point of view is substituted for the other, that is, the pain suffered by Peter's parents, in

spite of the caricatural presentation. The parents' compassion breaks down the safeguarding distance and, with it, the reader's objectivity. The distance is further reduced in the concluding picture with the familiar basement (*vide* also the historical documentation at the beginning of the story). The close perspective causes the objects to be even more forcefully impressed upon us. In spite of the various connections between the comic and the grotesque which exist in the fusion of incompatible elements, and which help explain why the grotesque is often regarded as a subdivision of the comic, the two phenomena can easily be separated at this point.

Having discussed the various phases of the use of the grotesque in Wilhelm Busch's work, we now reach the final stage of its development. The most perfect grotesque ever created by that artist is *Eduards Traum* (Edward's Dream) of 1891, which is a purely literary work, and of which one could almost say that here Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen,* which appeared at the beginning of the century, has been graced with a companion piece at its conclusion.

While his body sleeps ("Eduard, don't snore" is a phrase that recurs throughout the story), Eduard himself traverses the world in the form of a dot. Now it is really the world in all its complexity: village and city, economy and science, art and politics. We even hurry through the realm of algebra and geometry, fly to other stars and a Utopia, and finally reach an allegorical landscape, where a broad highway leads toward a tunnel and a steep, narrow path that leads up to the mountains and the gates of the Temple City. These gates open for a very few pilgrims only. Eduard is not admitted, for, as one of the pilgrims informs him, he has no heart. Pursued by a devil, he flings himself into his body and awakens.

It is possible to assign a meaning to the entire sequence on the basis of its conclusion. Here the world is seen neither as a madhouse, as in the *Nachtwachen,* nor as a marionette show, where the strings are pulled by unknown hands. It is a world without a heart, without kindness or love, and the people inhabiting it seem, therefore, to be weightless and bodiless. Like ghosts they flit past us in quick succession. In this world, from which mind and soul are absent, no intimate ties or profound relations exist between human beings. Instead, they push, beat, betray, and destroy each other. Occasionally, these "filmstrips" seem to form a brief sequence as when the

cheater of a moment ago becomes the person cheated. But the moral perspective is by no means prominent enough to furnish an over-all meaning, especially since the comments of the observing dreamer also fail to provide one. Where he interprets he further confuses the issue; occasionally we come upon a nearly grotesque situation: "On the second floor, in the lamplight, an old couple is cozily sitting. Nearly fifty years have passed since they were joined in marriage. The woman sneezes, and her husband inquires: 'Was it a cat that sneezed?' 'Was it an ass that asked?' replies the woman. This is the way it should be. There is no harm in having once been in love, if only one learns to relax later on."

Passages like the above may still be regarded as a kind of ironical satire, and the accompanying picture as an ironically affirmed counterimage. Similarly satiric overtones prevail in the scenes derived from literary or political life. But such interpretations do not take one very far. The whole story is not meant to be an admonition to kindness but aims at showing the world as it really and ineluctably is. Human kindness as a possible attitude is satirized at the end when the members of Eduard's family surround his bed as he awakens: "Who could have been gladder than I was. I had my heart back and Elise's and Emil's as well." The phrase is glaringly ironical, especially since we have come to know the couple's married "bliss." But the narrator's concluding remarks are even more outspoken: "And, jokes apart, my friends, only those who have a heart can feel and express in a heartfelt manner that they are good for nothing. The rest will take care of itself."

But it is not only this indifference which deprives the world of its gravity and alienates the rapidly moving, concatenated, or fused dream images. The laws of nature are suspended; animals and inanimate objects participate in the ominous hustle and bustle which leads to the mutual destruction, strife, and torment experienced by all living creatures. Surrealistic images arise and make us shudder, because they reflect our own, though totally estranged, world. The following scene offers a pertinent example:

> At a leisurely pace I sailed toward an important city, the majestic towers and tall smokestacks of which I had noticed yesterday from afar.
>
> The local afternoon train was just racing across the bridge.

Seated in the first compartment was an experienced businessman who, having settled his affairs, now intended to travel abroad incognito.

The second compartment was occupied by a couple of blushing newlyweds; and so was the third.

In the fourth compartment, three wine salesmen exchanged their staple jokes; another three did the same in the fifth, still another three in the sixth.

All other compartments were filled with a brotherhood of pickpockets en route to the International Music Festival.

Several persons were standing on the track. An old man despairing of life, a hatless woman, a penniless gambler, two disappointed lovers, and two little girls who had received poor grades in school.

When the train had passed, the railroad official came to collect the heads, of which he had already a nice basketful at home.

Busch's *Eduards Traum* is an anticipation of what the Surrealists were subsequently to pass off as their own invention. With equal justice, however, Busch could be regarded as a reincarnation of Bosch and Bruegel, an analogy that is strengthened by his going beyond the Christian frame of reference. The literary value of Busch's work should not be exaggerated, the success of this particular story being due to the innate force of the perspective rather than the author's literary genius.

3. The Grotesque in the "Realistic" Art of Foreign Countries

Our survey of the grotesque in nineteenth-century German literature should be supplemented by a similar analysis of foreign literature and painting in the same period. Since pioneering studies in the field are lacking, however, I shall content myself with making a few scattered observations.

In his *Vorschule der Ästhetik,* Jean Paul names the English and the Spanish as the European peoples in whom there is an innate predisposition for the grotesque. A study of nineteenth-century Eng-

lish literature would confirm this observation, even though the Victorian age was hardly favorable to such tendencies. The Spanish and the English—it was more than chance that Edward Lear, the "laureate of nonsense," acknowledged some familiarity with the Spanish language in the final stanza of his *Self-Portrait:* "He reads but he cannot speak Spanish." The world of Lear's poems is a fantastically distorted one. German readers are often reminded of Busch, whose *curriculum vitae* offers a striking parallel to that of Lear, who was born in 1812 (twenty years before Busch) and died in 1888 (again twenty years before the German). Both artists originally intended to become landscape painters; both acquired fame as authors of picture stories accompanied by verses of their own making; and both possessed an unusually rich verbal imagination, and a genius for manipulating words which places them on a level with Rabelais, Fischart, Morgenstern, and James Joyce. In his *Nonsense Botany,* and his *Alphabets* (Busch used equally well-known forms from the natural realm as a point of departure for his fantasies), Lear invents the strangest plants, in which vegetal and animal, organic and inorganic elements are fused. Seen from a distance, the *Piggiawiggia Pyramidalis* looks like an ordinary lily-of-the-valley, but instead of little flowers pigs are seen to rise from its stem. Altogether Surrealistic is the world of the *Nonsense Pictures and Rhymes,* the kind of limerick beginning with "There was an old person . . ." which Lear popularized, and in which the most unexpected connections are established by means of the rhyme.[10] Hardly less fantastic but more coherent and kaleidoscopic, is the world of Lewis Carroll, the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, Phantasmagoria,* etc. This fairy-tale world is incomparably stranger than the one we encounter in the Grimms' collection; and it is described in a way that is incompatible with the naïve and devoted credulity which characterizes the latter. The cloying, yet frightening, manner of Marc Chagall is here foreshadowed. The Surrealists very emphatically claim Carroll as one of their ancestors.

The alienation of familiar forms (both Lear and Carroll indulge in playing with words and names) creates that mysterious and terrifying connection between the fantastic and the real world which is so essential for the grotesque. But whereas Lear and Carroll immedi-

ately remove us to their fantastic realms, Dickens appears to lead his readers through the familiar everyday world. Sketches of London stand at the beginning of his career, and London remains his favorite setting for the novels as well as the novellas. But it is a very special London and a very special England which are thus placed before our eyes. Dickens' world does not end at the point which marks the limit of that which Raabe, his more philosophical and sentimental German successor, created, and which is circumscribed by the human character. Dickens' characters are invariably shallower than those of Raabe. They are more mechanical and, therefore, more dynamic; always unwinding and on the move. The energy they expend in the course of their activities is not part of their personality but points to an impersonal force which drives them. The narrator has a keen eye for the dynamic and exaggerating aspect of these wholly uninhibited, elemental forces which move his world, and are by no means restricted to its human inhabitants. In Raabe's world it could never happen that within the context of a carefully drawn realistic environment an old, sober, and quite unimaginative miser finds the knocker of the door to his house transformed into the palely luminous face of his deceased partner. Dickens, by the way, does not always require the supernatural to alienate the world, as he did in *A Christmas Carol* and in his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*—where it comes to the fore only in the inserted stories, which thus constitute a coherent substratum of deeper meaning for the entire book. There is no time to investigate under what circumstances the grotesque appears in Dickens, what it is like and how it is realized, although it would be tempting to compare Dickens' technique with that adopted by the German masters of the "realistic" grotesque.

Our brief glance at English literature furnishes additional proof that the grotesque has also its place in realism,[11] even though its scope is considerably narrowed by the increasingly strong rejection of the supernatural and the greater emphasis which is placed on its humorous side. Surprisingly enough, a superficial glance at Russian literature seems to indicate that here the evolution from the Romantic to the "realistic" grotesque was closely patterned after the German development. This is less surprising if one considers how strongly dependent Russian literature was upon German Romanticism as late as the eighteen thirties. The gradual change is most easily demon-

strated in connection with the works of Gogol, who is generally regarded as the father of Russian realism.

Stender-Petersen has been especially successful in tracing the close ties which exist between Gogol's early narratives and German Romantic literature. The novella *Midsummer Night* from the collection *Evenings on the Farm near Dikanka,* for example, is a transposition of Tieck's *Liebeszauber* (Love Charm) into the Russian milieu. With its lyrically atmospheric values, this story hardly belongs in the present context. In the novella *Terrible Revenge,* on the other hand, we come upon a familiar-looking grotesque individual: the demonic magician whose presence spells death and destruction. He is still endowed with supernatural powers and, even in his strange costume, resembles Dr. Trabacchio from Hoffmann's novella *Ignaz Denner,* from which Gogol also borrowed several other figures and the general course of action. The ties with the German writer, who was one of Russia's favorite authors in the eighteen thirties and whose work circulated in numerous translations, are hardly loosened in the stories Gogol wrote under the impact of his experiences in St. Petersburg. In these stories he shows himself impressed by Hoffmann's way of introjecting fantastic occurrences into a carefully delineated urban environment. But in spite of all the resemblances—Gogol no longer copies individual stories but selects a variety of scattered motifs—the difference between the two authors becomes clearly apparent in the *Diary of a Madman.* Here Gogol describes the madness not of an artist but of a white-collar worker. Moreover, he does not represent this madness as the fate that is meted out to a person in search of beauty, but rather as a social phenomenon; for it is his cruel, oppressing environment which drives the poor fellow into a kind of madness that physically incapacitates and ultimately kills him. Nevertheless, it is impossible to derive all his hallucinations from his own impressions or repressions. One frequently senses that the author has willfully indulged in depicting fantastic traits and the horror of insanity. Grotesque elements are found intermittently but are neither supported nor demanded by the inner structure of the narrative. (It was Hoffmann who furnished Gogol with the idea of having the madman understand the language of dogs and search for dog correspondences.)

In *The Overcoat,* too, the element of social satire raises the aver-

age temperature of the narrative, and the fantastic element seems merely to have been superimposed. Only after the death of the poor scribe, whose new overcoat was stolen and cannot be recovered, the story (as the narrator himself observes) suddenly veers toward the supernatural. For now the dead man's ghost strips the living of their coats. The moral intention is only too obvious, however, for the grotesque element to be able to come into its own. It appears in a somewhat purer form in *The Nose.* One morning, a barber discovers a pale nose in his breakfast roll. Has he accidentally cut it off from a customer while in a state of intoxication? He tries to get rid of it on the street; but the package is invariably returned to him, so that he finally throws it into the river. On the same morning, Collegiate Assessor Kovaljov wakes up to find himself without a nose. He has a number of embarrassing encounters, but suddenly recognizes the nose disguised as a State Councilor, whom he asks to return it to him, but the Councilor rebuffs him and disappears in the crowd. All further attempts to locate the nose are futile. The newspaper does not accept an advertisement Kovaljov wishes to place in it, and the police refuse to interfere. In the meantime, the news of the accident has spread through the entire city and caused great excitement among its inhabitants. Several days later, a policeman returns the nose to its owner, who finds it impossible to restore it to its proper place, however. But on the seventh of April he discovers that it has grown back again. At the end of the story, the narrator seems puzzled by a number of things, especially by the fact that a narrator should choose such a futile subject. Yet "such things do happen, rarely to be sure, but they happen."

This is a genuine grotesque. The central motif of a part of the body that makes itself independent is familiar enough from Bosch and Morgenstern. Baffling overtones, such as the barber's vain efforts to get rid of the embarrassing object, and the protagonist's exclusion from society, are by no means lacking. However, the manner of presentation (the action does not result in a catastrophe but ends where it began) indicates that the grotesque elements are treated in a humorous and innocuous manner.[12]

After the publication of the stories Gogol turned his attention to the drama and the novel. But can this development be regarded as the symptom of an inner change or a break with the past? If one

takes Gogol's subsequent works to mark the beginning of his realism, one must do so in the awareness that the St. Petersburg stories, too, are realistic in style and critical in attitude. And what is the new realism? Is it actually devoid of all fantastic elements? Is it at all permissible to use a term, realism, which implies the existence of a world that is capable of scientific explanation, and which, as a technical term in literary history, presupposes a tendency toward the faithful imitation of reality? Although the present study is restricted to the grotesque, the answers to the foregoing questions have a direct bearing on the larger issues.

Dead Souls—the title is disturbing insofar as the question arises as to whether it refers only to the dead serfs whom the protagonist Chichikov seeks to acquire, or whether it applies with equal, or even greater, force to those apparently living creatures whose acquaintance he seeks to make. The unity of perspective is clearly marked; the world which is depicted in the novel is decadent and rotten. The parties given by society resemble macabre Dances of Death full of distorted movements, and when we accompany the hero to the lonely estates, we enter a kind of Hades—or so the narrator wants to make us believe. Here is the description of the living room in one of these houses:

> Chichikov stepped into a dark, wide entry, out of which cold blew upon him as from a cellar. From the entry he found his way into another room that was likewise dark, very, very meagerly lit by a light that came through a broad crack below a door. Opening this door he at last found himself in the light and was struck by the disorder that appeared before his eyes. It seemed as if a general house cleaning were going on and all the furniture had been piled up here for the time being. There was even a broken chair standing on one of the tables and, side by side with it, a clock whose pendulum had stopped and to which a spider had already cunningly attached its web. Here, too, with one of its sides leaning against the wall, stood a dresser with antiquated silver, small carafes, and Chinese porcelain. Upon a bureau, with a marquetry of mother-of-pearl mosaic, which had already fallen out in places and left behind it only yellowish little grooves and depressions filled with crusted glue, was lying a great and bewildering omnium-gatherum: a mound of scraps of paper, closely covered with writing, pressed down with a paperweight of marble turned green and having an egg-shaped little knob; some

> sort of ancient tome in a leather binding and with red edges; a lemon, so dried up that it was no bigger than a walnut; a broken-off chair arm; a wineglass with some kind of liquid and three dead flies, covered over with a letter; a bit of sealing wax; a bit of rag picked up somewhere; two quills, dirty with ink that had dried upon them consumptively; a quill toothpick, perfectly yellowed, which its owner had probably been picking his teeth with even before Moscow had been invaded by the French. . . .
>
> From the middle of the ceiling was suspended a luster in a canvas bag, which because of its accumulated dust had taken on the appearance of a silk cocoon, with the silkworm still inside. In one corner of the room had been piled up a heap of those things which were of a coarser nature and unworthy of knocking about on the tables. Precisely what the heap consisted of it would have been difficult to determine, since the dust upon it was so copious that the hands of whosoever touched it took on a gloved appearance. . . . One could by no means have told that a living creature inhabited this room had not an old, worn nightcap, lying on one of the tables, proclaimed this fact.[13]

The individual who lives here in spite of all this looks so strange that Chichikov cannot immediately determine whether he is a servant or the master, a man or a woman. One almost divines that in this environment the description will bring inanimate objects to life (a sleeping pendulum, a cupboard leaning against the wall, grinning holes, etc.) and mix human elements with those belonging to animals or mechanical objects (hair like currycombs made of steel wire, mouselike eyes, etc.). Here, too, we are reminded of Hoffmann's grotesque figures, and the room calls to mind Züs Bünzli's jumbled and oddly assorted furniture rather than Raabe's relatively cozy interiors. The appearance and the dwelling of the old, solitary woman farmer are described in similar fashion. When she goes to town, her carriage is persistently described as a four-wheeled pumpkin. These characters are, of course, no longer demonic creatures whose presence spells death; nor does the supernatural intercede as in the St. Petersburg stories. The individual characters of the book belong to the chorus of shades in whom the alienation, which persists even where the caricatural and satiric elements are in the ascendant, is crystalized. The satiric point of view is often so sharp that it enables one to penetrate to the abyss and, thus, to the immediate vicinity of the gro-

tesque. "These exciting dreams, suffused with the most convincing scenes from daily life, are diabolically attractive," Wilhelm Busch wrote after the perusal of a similar novel.[14]

So far we have only spoken of the world of the *Dead Souls* but not of its protagonist.[15] He, too, inclines to the grotesque, which remains latent, however, and does not come to the fore until the conclusion of the novel, when the narrator analyzes his hero in summarizing his career. Chichikov is neither a dead nor a noble soul. The writers have degraded the noble souls to circus horses, "and it is high time to bridle the scoundrels as well." But Chichikov is no ordinary scoundrel, either, nor even a mere "acquisitive genius." He is more complex than that, for "He is driven by a passion he did not choose and which was born with him. . . . A higher will implants such passions into the heart, and those who are ruled by them forever and ever hear a luring voice in the distance. . . . These individuals are destined for a great career." One feels how, at the end, a new dimension is added to the novel. Chichikov as a man under the sway of an inscrutable force, as a man destined to greatness—nothing of the sort is to be found in the body of the novel. This aspect is introduced only in the retrospective survey of its prehistory. In the novel itself we merely know him as a buyer of dead souls and are not even told whether he was able to carry out his scheme. Chichikov mainly serves the author as a means of adventurously conveying the image of a province and its capital. The novel of space is to be transformed into the novel of character. (In the second part of the novel, which Gogol destroyed, another change in Chichikov was intended: the wealthy scoundrel was to turn into a moralizing pensioner.) Gogol's conception, however, was realized in other novels written before or after *Dead Souls* which, taken together, constitute a species of their own. A suprapersonal, constant, and unswerving passion drives Don Quixote as well as Father Shandy, Uncle Toby, Mr. Pickwick, and Herr Kortüm—to name only a few examples. They all have grown out of the novels in which they appear by turning into mythical figures (Chichikov was on his way to becoming one). The stubborn, dynamic quality of this one passion may take the form of an *idée fixe,* since the portrayal of such incongruity between man and the world is invariably humorous. But the stronger we feel the effect of the superhuman element in man, the stranger he becomes to

1—Francisco Goya—against the public welfare

2—Raphael (Rafaello Sanzio)—grotesque, detail from a pillar

3—Agostino Veneziano—grotesque (*right*)

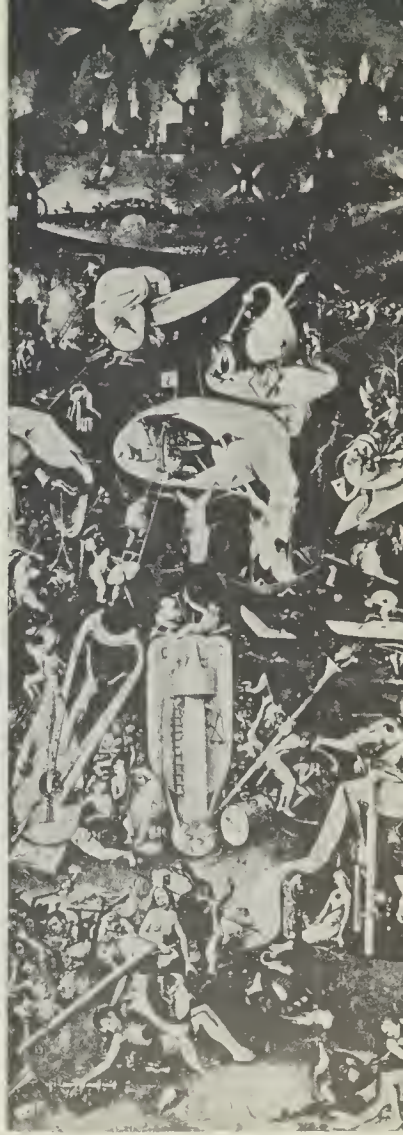
4—Luca Signorelli—grotesque, fresco in the cathedral of Orvieto

5—Simon Cammermeir—*Knorpelgroteske*

6—Johann Heinrich Keller—*Knorpelgroteske*

The Garden of Eden

The Garden of Lusts



Hell

7—Hieronymus Bosch—the millennium

8—Hieronymus Bosch—the millennium, detail from *"Hell"*

9—Hieronymus Bosch—the millennium, detail from *"The Garden of Lusts"*

10—Pieter Bruegel the Elder—FLEMISH PROVERBS

11—Pieter Bruegel the Elder—MAD MEG

12—Pieter Bruegel the Elder—Detail from FLEMISH PROVERBS

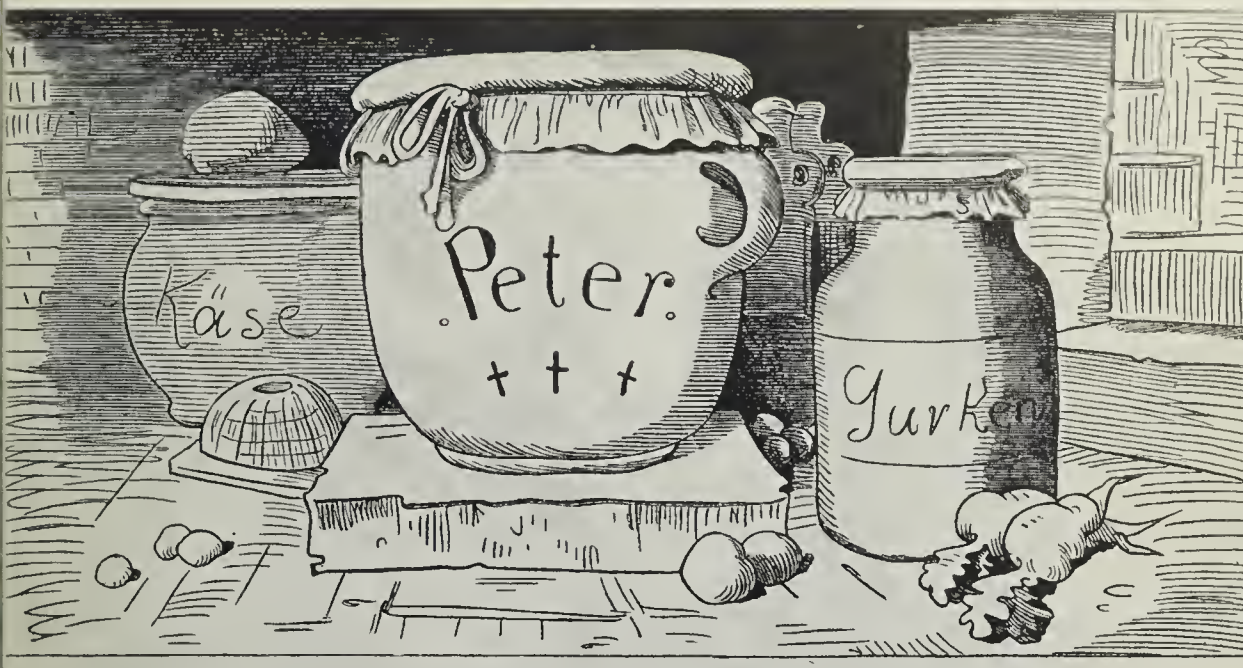
13—William Hogarth—gin lane

14—Jacques Callot—*Balli di Sfessania,* title page

15—Jacques Callot—From *Balli di Sfessania*

16—Jacques Callot—From the sketchbooks

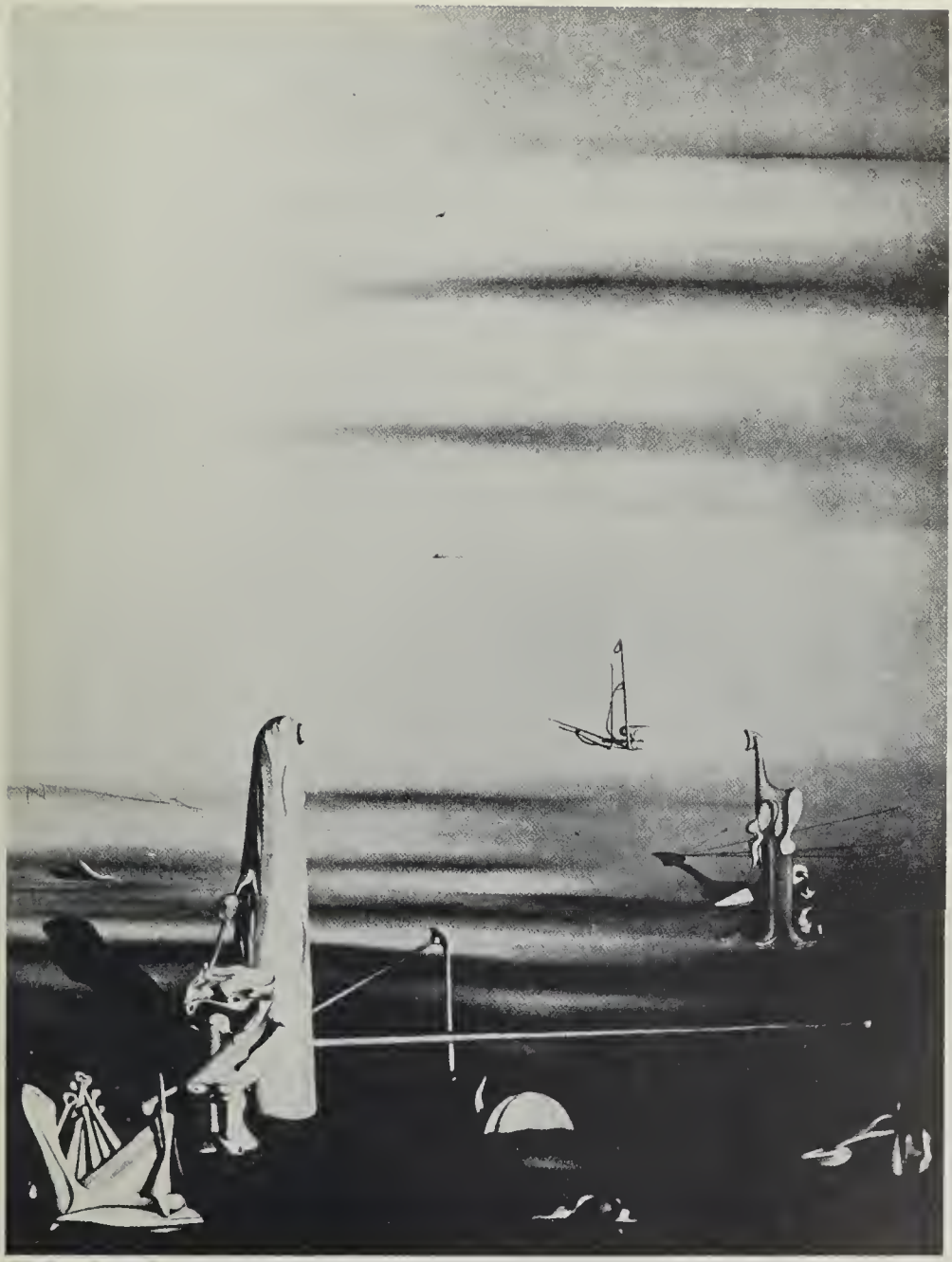
17—Johann Heinrich Füssli (Henry Fuseli)—NIGHTMARE, late version



Ja, ja! In diesem Topf aus Stein,
Da machte man den Peter ein,
Der, nachdem er anfangs hart,
Später weich wie Butter ward.

8—Wilhelm Busch—From *Der Eispeter*

19—Giorgio de Chirico—the great metaphysicist



20—Yves Tanguy—the sun in its shrine

21—Salvador Dali—the burning giraffe

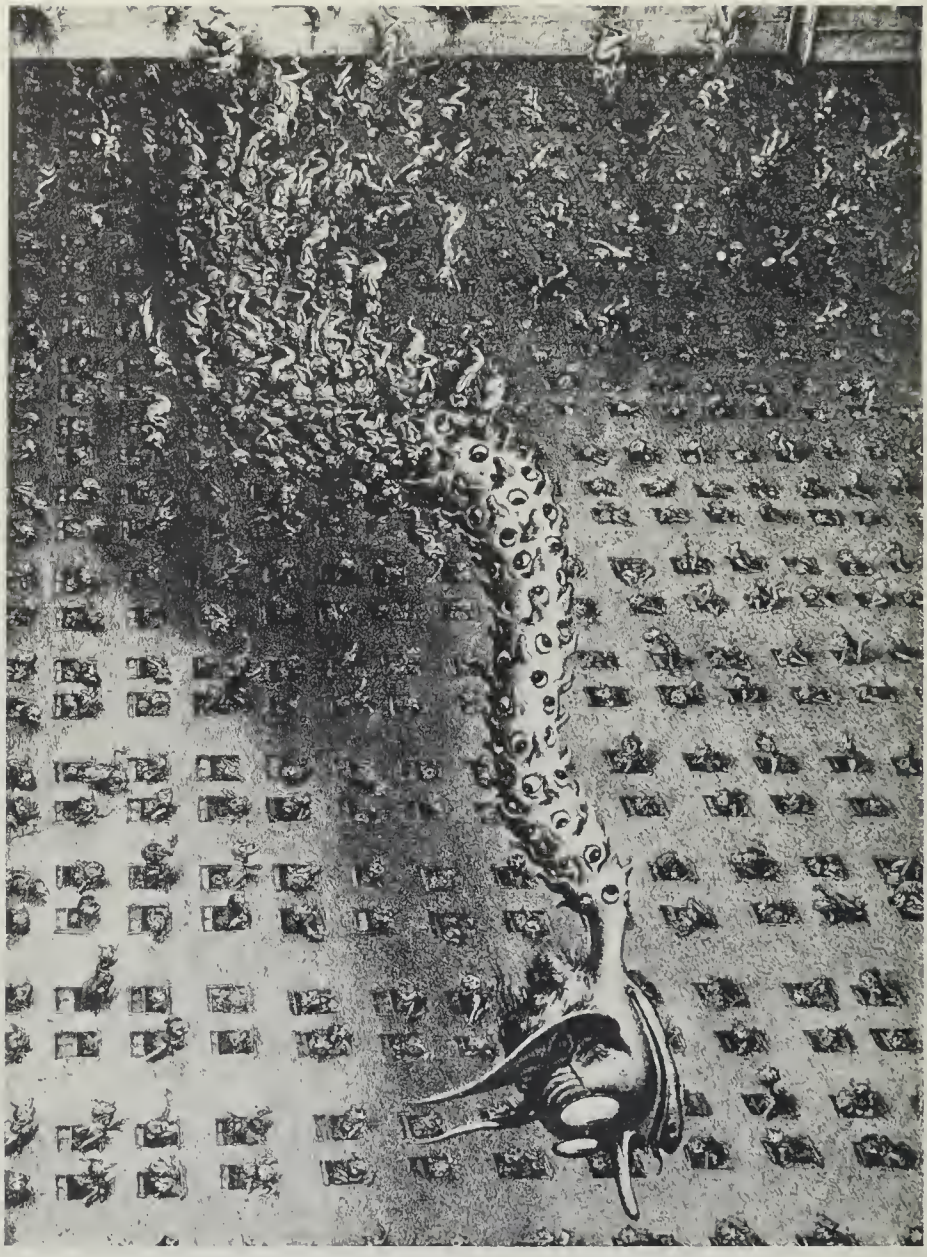
22—Max Ernst—evensong

23—James Ensor—the intrigue

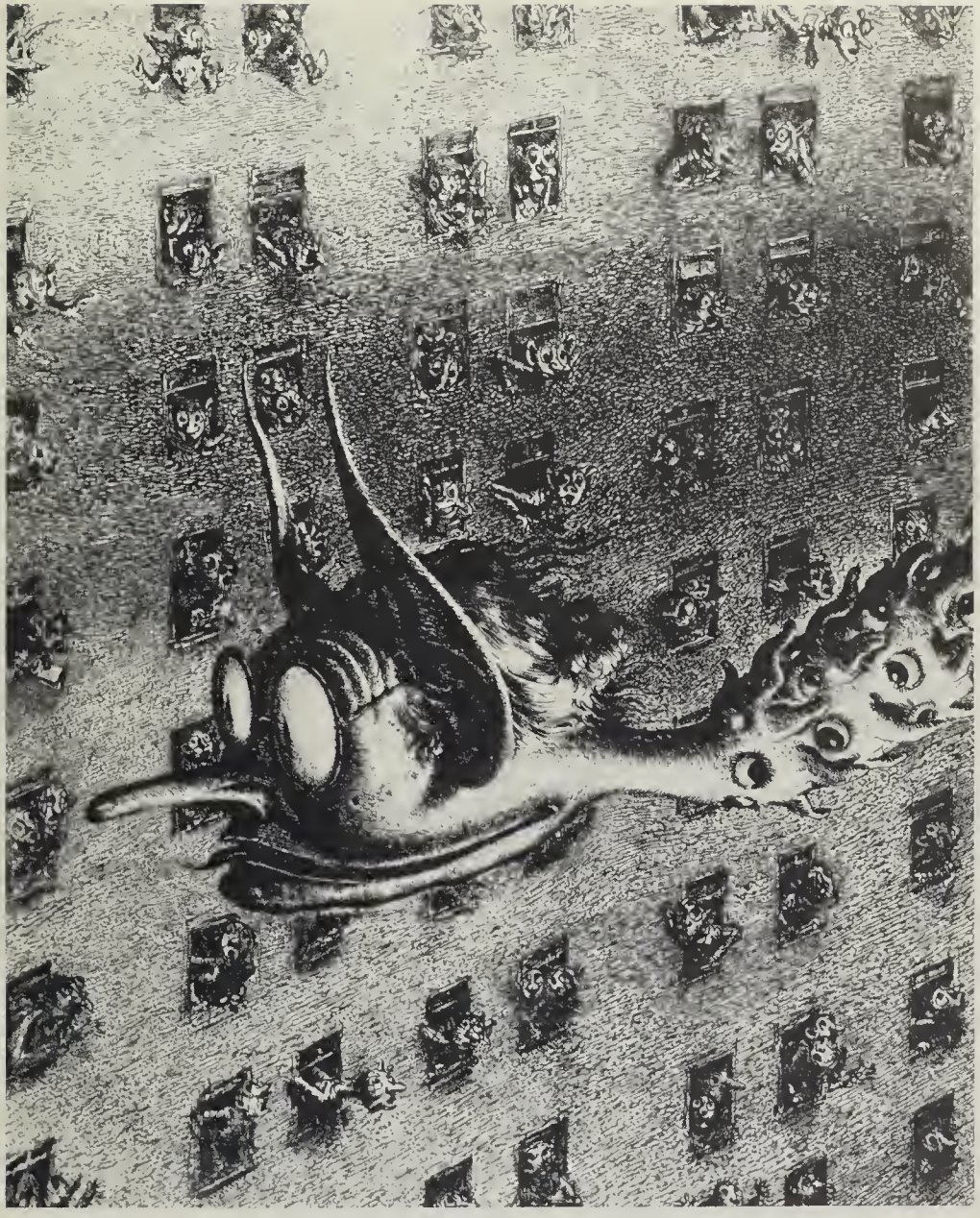
24—James Ensor—the cathedral

25—ALFRED KUBIN—BAD LUCK COMPOUNDED

26—Alfred Kubin—giant weasel



27—A. Paul Weber—the rumor



28—A. Paul Weber—Detail from the rumor

us and the more closely we approach the realm of the grotesque. From the opposite direction, the road to it is shortened if the narrator represents the world itself as being increasingly alienated. Illustrators tend to exaggerate this feature, and it would be a rewarding task to compare the various sets of illustrations to the above-mentioned novels (Chagall illustrated *Dead Souls*) with one another. In the case of *Don Quixote* it is especially striking to see how most of the illustrations are more grotesque than the literary texts on which they draw. The world of the novel is a familiar one, in which the readers feel at home, but in the pictures this context is destroyed, and small segments of reality are treated as self-contained units governed by the stylistic law of incongruity, which the hero imposes upon them. The Sancho of the novel hangs over a ditch, while his pictorial counterpart hovers over an abyss.

V

The Grotesque in the Twentieth Century

1. The Drama

The grotesque in nineteenth-century realism almost consistently constituted a watered-down version of Romantic modes of creation. Nor was it too frequently found, especially not in the German literature of the period. The picture changes when we enter the most recent phase of cultural history. If the (ornamental) grotesque of the sixteenth century could be regarded as "the source of all anticlassical tendencies in the decorative art of mannerism,"[1] the grotesque may well be called the source of certain widespread phenomena in twentieth-century painting and literature. The amount of relevant material is so large that we must consider only a few outstanding examples from widely separated areas.

In Germany the beginning of the modern period is very clearly

marked: the works which prefigure the main tendencies of twentieth-century art appeared in close succession in the years 1891, 1892, and 1893 (these tendencies fully assert themselves only in the years immediately before World War I). The differences among the various trends of modern art are so conspicuous that even today we speak of separate movements and arrange the numerous characteristics in chronological order. But actually all the new developments announce themselves at one and the same time. The naturalistic drama (Hauptmann's *Einsame Menschen* [Lonely Lives] and *Die Weber* [The Weavers], Holz and Schlaf's *Familie Selicke*) is created; Holz and Schlaf's *Neue Gleise* (New Tracks) and Gerhart Hauptmann's *Der Apostel* open new paths in fiction; Stefan George founds the *Blätter für die Kunst;* Hofmannsthal publishes his first poems and his lyric plays (*Tor und Tod* [Death and the Fool]); Dehmel and Dauthendey (*Ultraviolett*) prefigure Expressionism. All this remains outside the scope of our theme, however, for none of these attitudes shows any kinship with the grotesque. But in the very same year (1891) W. Busch's *Eduards Traum*—which we found to be partly surrealistic—and Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* (Spring's Awakening) are published. And with these works we have entered the realm of the grotesque.[2]

This aspect of Wedekind's play actually strikes us as being familiar, for the teachers who hold a conference in *Frühlings Erwachen* strongly remind us of the captain and the physician in Büchner's *Woyzeck.* Wedekind's scene, too, begins as a satire, which is even more biting and cynical and, in its violence, considerably more subjective than the corresponding scenes in Büchner's play. But here, too, the caricatural distortion soon rises above the level of satire, makes itself independent, and transforms human beings into rigid, mechanically operated puppets. This arbitrary distortion, no longer prompted by the satiric impulse, determines the outward appearance of the characters as well as their movements, thoughts, and language: "Suicide epidemic . . . , such as, until today, has defied every attempt to chain the high-school students to the conditions of life which are constituted by the effort to make them educated individuals." Once again we move in the sphere of the chimerical *commedia dell'arte;* and Wedekind, who in the last act of *Frühlings Erwachen* had still used the supernatural to achieve grotesque effects

(the dead Moritz Stiefel, "his head under his arm, stalks over the graves" and converses with his living friend and the "masked gentleman"), soon contents himself with the means furnished by that genre. His plays, however, are no longer performed by Harlequins, Columbines, Pantaloons, and the rest. He creates a small set of new parts which, often under identical names, appear in all of his plays. The prologue to his *Erdgeist* (Earth Spirit) tells us something about the basis of this stylization:

> The true beast, the wild and beautiful beast,
> That, my ladies, can be seen only in my show.

And then the lion tamer (it is the part the playwright has chosen for himself) enumerates his characters: the tiger, the bear, the monkey, the camel, insects from every zone, and especially the snake—

> It was created to cause harm,
> To allure, seduce, and poison—
> To kill one imperceptibly.

Thus a definite point of view, which is discussed in the prologue, is established. It is the glance which penetrates man's disguise and unnaturalness and focuses on his real Self, his primitive form (*Urgestalt*). Seemingly, the disclosure of the animal in man would intensify the effect of alienation and with it the ominous nature of the work. Actually the opposite is true; for the animals in the *Erdgeist* prologue are not infernal and demonic monsters but allegories, and their meaning is fixed by the age-old tradition of Christian ethics. Watching the play, the audience occasionally forgets these implications. Then the author, not at all the "cold" individual he had claimed to be in the prologue, allows his figures to argue and moralize. Thus the dead Moritz Stiefel, his head under his arm, heard the masked gentleman inform the audience that "the ghost is not altogether wrong. One must not forget one's dignity.—By morality I mean the real product of two imaginary entities, Shall and Will. Their product, morality, is real beyond a doubt." This occurs again and again, especially where the "true nature" of things is revealed to him; he not only allows the audience to see but makes them aware of what is to be seen. He constantly turns to the audience, for he really wants to admonish, arouse, and awaken. The play of grotesque distor-

tions does not exist merely for its own sake but serves as a perverted moral tract. The *horror naturae* may actually be an end instead of a means. Wedekind occasionally gets so involved in it that, guided by his tremendous theatrical instinct, he ends by creating genuine grotesques. But no matter how abstruse his opinions and attitudes may seem to be, a rationalizing and moralizing tendency is always in the offing. Accordingly, those plays in which he omits the pathos of the *Weltanschauung* and is satisfied with stunning his audience have more unity than the rest. This brand of comic distortion, already familiar to us, sets the tone for the "farce" about Fritz Schwigerling, *Der Liebestrank* (The Love Potion). But at this point the much wittier Bernard Shaw began to dislodge Wedekind's plays from the stage.

Lenz, Büchner, and Wedekind—in the works of these three we find a dramaturgy which, using the metaphor of the puppet as the basis for its treatment of stage characters, points toward the grotesque. A somewhat similar attitude seems to speak in the lines:

> All of the things we do on earth are play,
> Regardless of how great and deep they seemed.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Dream and waking flow into each other,
> And truth and falsehood. Certainty is nowhere.
> Of others we know nothing, or ourselves.
> We always play, and wise is he who knows.

These are the parting words of Paracelsus in Arthur Schnitzler's one-act play by that name, and being such they offer a clue to the play's meaning. In spite of the allusion to the concept of *theatrum mundi* the differences cannot be overlooked. "We always play"—it is we who play, but nobody plays us. There is no trace here of the unknown power that pulls our strings, the mysterious force that intrudes and governs at will, the wires which make our movements eccentric and distort man's outward appearance. If the grotesque element is to come to the fore in such a context, it has to be introduced in a way other than that of caricature and satire, which Lenz, Büchner, and Wedekind employed. But can it exist at all where there is no deeper meaning, where no abysmal forces pose a threat, where uncertainty fails to inspire fright and terror and leaves room for the calm

skepticism of wisdom (just as in one of Schnitzler's novellas the husband, who calmly accepts his wife's infidelity, is called "the sage")?

The one-act play *Paracelsus* appeared in 1899 together with *Der grüne Kakadu* (The Green Cockatoo), which Schnitzler subtitled "a grotesque." In the latter play reality and illusion merge and Schnitzler ingeniously, and with consummate skill, employs a motif by means of which the Elizabethan playwrights and the Romantics sought to confuse the spectators' sense of reality: the play within a play.[3] From the very beginning there is something unreal about the reality of the action; the owner of a Parisian tavern entertains his noble clientele by letting his actors represent life in a robbers' den and by treating his guests under the mask of the play in a way that is not open to him in real life. The players are joined (it is the eve of the storming of the Bastille) by a real criminal, and a real marquise begins to feel perfectly at home in the imaginary world of the play, so that her social self becomes illusory and the illusory world turns real. The principal actor appears and enacts the murder of a nobleman, his successful rival. But now even the host and his friends are deceived, for they all know that that nobleman is indeed the favored lover. The actor, who was the only person who did not know it, learns the truth from a few casual words uttered by the bystanders; and when the nobleman enters, he actually kills him. As the Revolution breaks out, the members of the nobility flee, and the whole illusory world collapses.

All this is almost irrelevant to our concept of the grotesque. By selecting the day of the storming of the Bastille and the location of an imaginary robbers' den, Schnitzler has chosen a segment of life in which reality and illusion are so closely intertwined that deceptions are constantly created. Nevertheless, they are deceptions. As spectators we enjoy the error, even if it is our own, because reality finally unmasks it. To the extent that the segment and what it contains are more than a clever contrivance on the part of the author, they symbolize a social situation characteristic of a specific historical moment, the reality of which is all the more complex and, hence, substantial, the oftener appearances deceive us. The reliability of our point of view, however, is not seriously questioned. It is strongly confirmed as far as the individual characters are concerned; and when the curtain falls, we know exactly what they are like.

In spite of its irrelevance to our theme, Schnitzler's *Grüner Kakadu* had to be mentioned, not only because its author called it a grotesque—a term the exact meaning of which had to be ascertained—but also because a few years later a genuinely grotesque dramatic style developed on the basis of the same dichotomy of illusion and reality. The output of a group of Italian playwrights active between 1916 and 1925 was known to their contemporaries (and also to modern literary history) as the *teatro del grottesco*.[4] A beginning was made by Luigi Chiarelli, whose play *La maschera e il volto* (Mask and Face), subtitled a grotesque, was first produced in Rome in 1916. Other members of the group included Antonelli, Cavacchioli, Fausto Maria Martini, Nicodemi, Rosso di San Secondo, and the most accomplished writer of them all—Luigi Pirandello. The spirit which animated the entire group has been described in the following terms: "The absolute conviction that everything is vain and hollow, and that man is only a puppet in the hand of fate. Man's pains and pleasures as well as his deeds are unsubstantial dreams in a world of ominous darkness that is ruled by blind fortune."[5] These are familiar thoughts and phrases, which are prefigured in the titles of the plays: *Mask and Face, Chimeras* (Chiarelli); *The Man Who Met Himself, The Dream Shop* (Antonelli); and *Marionettes, What Passions* (Rosso di San Secondo).[6] None of this fully explains the phenomenon which in the grotesque theatre of the Italians is responsible for the total uncertainty of existence and causes alienation: the split personality. "What within ourselves is it that lies, kills, and steals?" asked Büchner's Danton, and Woyzeck could have posed the same question if he had been able to look objectively at himself. In the grotesque theatre, the division of the Self has become the guiding principle of characterization, and the notion of the unity of personality is completely abandoned. Nietzsche and Freud have sometimes been suggested as possible sources for this attitude. But the figures in these plays are not simply impersonations of the Ego and the Id. The division is much more manifold.

The first grotesque drama, Chiarelli's *Mask and Face,* deals with the contrast between the social appearance of a man (his mask) and his real Self (his face). A husband, who has taken the position that a man must kill his adulterous wife, finds himself obliged to put his theory into practice. He now personally experiences the division of

the Self. His innermost being, which truly loves her, wants to spare her, but the social conventions to which he subscribes—the mask which he has always worn—compel him to act. He tries to combine the two urges by merely pretending to kill his wife. He is put on trial, but thanks to the forensic skill of his lawyer, a close friend, he is acquitted. The truth of the matter is revealed by the carelessness of his wife. The reconciled couple have to flee in order to escape being sent to prison.

This subject could be treated either humorously or seriously. Chiarelli combines the two approaches (since the whole *teatro del grottesco* is concerned with tragicomedy). In the first act, the caricatural exaggeration of the characters seems to betray the zeal of a social satirist. But the situations and events themselves become distorted. Chiarelli introduces the word "grotesque" at the moment when the world seems to disintegrate about the husband back home after his acquittal. Excessive homage is paid to the alleged murderer. The house is deluged with flowers; baskets full of letters are carried in; his friends congratulate him warmly; their wives rather shamelessly offer themselves to him; judges and jurors approach at the head of a procession. These details, however, do not constitute the grotesque but rather the mixture of the incompatible. "In real life, the most tragic scenes exist side by side with the wildest grotesques; and the leering of the most obscene masks is often accompanied by the most painful sufferings." Thus absurdities abound. The lawyer who secured the acquittal by putting all the blame on the adulterous wife turns out to be the true adulterer. The woman returns, out of love for her husband, at the hour in which arrangements for her funeral (a body identified as hers having been fished out of the lake) are made. The couple are lovingly reunited; but now the world threatens to separate them, since the friends want the innocent man, whom they had celebrated as a murderer, sent to prison because he had deceived the court. Farce and tragedy are fused in the absurd play of the masks. It is precisely by presenting the world only in such a manner that Chiarelli transcends the level of social criticism. The play exudes a cynical awareness of man's inability to separate farce from tragedy, and face from mask. For if the mask were to be taken off, the face would come off as well. Mandeville had disconcerted the optimistic eighteenth century by proving, through his fable of the bees, that injustice, vice, and

crime are necessary ingredients of this world. For him, the difference between good and evil, and between good and bad people, still existed. In the modern age, however, it is the Self which is divided; and the unknown, the mask, has become part of the person. Those who succeed—like the couple in Chiarelli's play—in separating the two by taking off their masks and healing the split, are no longer tolerated in the world. The flight of the lovers turns into flight from the world, "from society, friends, the law, and everything," as we are told at the conclusion of the drama.

The estrangement of Self, resulting from the split, is the central theme in Pirandello's *oeuvre*. The protagonist of his *Henry the Fourth* is a prisoner of his mask, the return to which, at the conclusion of the play, is his only means of salvation. In the preface to *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* Pirandello evolves a whole philosophy based on the dichotomy of life as shapeless movement and life as form, that is, as fixation through social status, actions, situations and, with them, the historicity of the Self. With ever-increasing despair, the father in the drama vainly tries to destroy the image impressed upon his stepdaughter when she saw him in a moment of weakness and humiliation. The dichotomy of form and movement, illusion and reality, is rendered more complex insofar as, outdoing Schnitzler, Pirandello places several layers of illusion one upon the other and then fuses them. The audience in the theatre witnesses a rehearsal on stage, which forms part of the action. Six persons, who claim to be more real than the figures on the first and second levels of the play on stage—and even more real than the audience, because they are poetic creations—make their appearance. They try to perform their timeless drama, which is still unwritten, and the actors mime them.[7] In this mirror, the flow of life hardens into forms, which are strange because they are specifically artistic. Hence a whole new set of problems—those relating to artistic creation—is introduced. And finally the audience is forced to play "an audience." In this way, the techniques which Tieck and Schnitzler used to elaborate the motif of the play within the play are surpassed, and not only dramaturgically. So much weight is attached to the motif that the audience is on the brink of losing its foothold on reality.

If this does not actually happen, however, and if the possibilities of the grotesque are not fully exploited in the play, the fault lies with

the author's constant withdrawal to the level of abstract thinking. Again and again the characters discuss their problematic nature and the dichotomy of illusion and reality; or the author compels the audience to perform this duty for those figures, who—like the director—cannot realize the precariousness of their situation. To be sure, Pirandello does not suggest a meaning at the end of his play; but by appealing to the rational mind, and feeding it with the categories relevant to the problems dealt with in the play, in almost every scene (although outwardly the play is not so divided) he keeps the world, which is on the point of estrangement, from becoming grotesque. The play actually contains a number of grotesque passages, especially, and characteristically so, in the pantomimes, where the language of the stage directions is rather illuminating. At the end of the play, the director feels "rid of an incubus," but immediately afterwards falls once more under its spell when, in the changing light, the shadows of the six persons, "huge and sharply defined," glide across the stage. In another pantomime, near the conclusion, the son finds himself unable to move "as if he were nailed to the spot by a mysterious power." In such moments we feel that the categories supplied by the characters themselves are insufficient to explain their world (into which the audience is also drawn), and that there are other, abysmal forces which suddenly interfere and further alienate the world. The most effective grotesque is probably found in the sudden appearance of Madame Pace, who enters as her name is mentioned. And it remains uncertain to what level of reality she belongs. Her strange name also fails to give us a clue, for an allegorical interpretation of it leads nowhere. She is said to have been "born with and formed by the action itself." Her outward appearance, too, is rather grotesque: "The entrance at the rear of the stage opens and Madame Pace takes several steps forward. She is an enormous, fat hag wearing a gaudy, orange, woolen wig (of a carrot color) with a bright, red rose to one side of it (Spanish style); she is all made up, dressed (with a clumsy, weird sort of elegance) in loud, red silk, holding in one hand a fan made of feathers while the other hand is in a position that allows her to hold a lit cigarette between two fingers. At the sudden appearance of this apparition, with a scream of fright, the actors and director dash down the stairs and off the stage, their flight pointing in the direction of the theater lobby. The stepdaughter, instead, runs toward

Madame Pace; she is submissive as one would be before a mistress."[8] The horror gives way to excessive laughter when Madame Pace begins to speak Spanish with an Italian accent.

If, with the exception of two or three of Pirandello's plays, no works of the *teatro del grottesco* are known in other European countries, this is partly due to the mediocrity of the other playwrights in the group and partly to the limited scope of the problems raised by them. The dissolution of the unity of personality as such, that is, in the manner in which the grotesque theatre dealt with it, formed too weak and unsubstantial a basis for the alienation of the world. Other contemporary writers and, especially, painters were much more successful in achieving this goal.[9]

2. The Authors of Tales of Terror

Calling themselves "narrators of the grotesque," a group of German authors active between 1910 and 1925 pursued a goal analogous to that envisaged by the Italian playwrights of the grotesque. In 1913 K. H. Strobl began the preface to his anthology *Das unheimliche Buch* (The Book of Horror) with the assertion that humor and terror are twin children of their mother imagination, since both are suspicious of mere facts and distrust any rationalistic explanation of the world. Both deal sovereignly with life by refashioning, exaggerating, and stylizing certain of its aspects. "Both require a highly sensitive soul, a keen mind, and a firm hand." Strobl rejects the theory that the authors of horror tales are pursued by hallucinations or overcome with deadly fear. "Precisely because the author of tales of terror is so strongly and horribly affected by his first experience, because he suddenly feels that terrible secrets have been partly revealed to him, only to be lost in even greater depths, and because he deals with the abysmal world of shadows, he himself must be all the stronger, just as he must possess an organizational talent disproportionately greater than that of other writers." Strobl quotes Baudelaire as saying that "the charms of horror intoxicate only the strong individuals." He also refers to painters like Bosch and Bruegel and, by merging the two major strands of the imagination, he finally reaches the goal he

had envisaged from the beginning: "Who can deny that especially in these artists the pleasure of immersing oneself in horror and of fighting with the devil results from a maximum of health, courage, and bravado? And that in their works horror is joined with its brother, humor? Occasionally the humor operates by itself, while at other times it is united with horror, a fusion that produces something exceedingly strange and precious—the grotesque."

Strobl continues: "Only literary midwives, washerwomen (these terms are followed by some even more drastic ones) . . . will maintain that humor and horror are incompatible, for the classics of horror by E. T. A. Hoffmann and E. A. Poe prove the opposite."

This programmatic statement is interesting in several ways: first, in the emphasis it places on the fact that the telling of horror stories requires great deliberateness and a firm control (an echo of Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition"); second, in its insistence on humor as an inalienable part of the grotesque; and third, in its assertion that humor and horror arise from a maximum of health or, as Strobl puts it in a Nietzschean manner, "the sovereign masculine desire to master life." Equally striking, finally, is his avowed intention to renew the art of Bosch, Bruegel, Hoffmann, and Poe. These are the years in which the former two were rediscovered and the reputations of the latter two re-established. The formation of a group was encouraged by a publisher, Georg Müller, who was devoted to the task of reissuing the older masters of terror and the grotesque and of bringing the work of their contemporary disciples before the public. H. H. Ewers coordinated the program. His career as a writer began in 1905 with a study on Poe, but he made a name for himself only with the publication of the collections *Das Grauen* (Horror) and *Die Besessenen* (The Possessed). Subsequently, Ewers wrote a number of novels, published by G. Müller, *Der Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer's Apprentice), *Alraune* (Mandrake), and *Der Vampir* (The Vampire), as well as numerous novellas, such as the collection *Der gekreuzigte Tannhäuser und andere Grotesken* (Tannhäuser Crucified and other Grotesques) of 1917. He also edited the works of Hoffmann and Poe as well as translating a number of French ones, especially those of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (the first volume entitled *Grausame Geschichten* [Gruesome Tales]), and the *Geschichten in*

der Nacht (Stories in the Night) by Frédéric Boutet, which he subtitled *Seltsamkeiten und Grotesken* (Oddities and Grotesques). In the *Galerie der Phantasten* (Gallery of Fantastic Authors) G. Müller published the work of Ewers's contemporaries, such as Panizza, Strobl, O. H. Schmitz, and Alfred Kubin (*Die andere Seite* [The Other Side]). As a graphic artist, Kubin illustrated several of these books, including the previously mentioned *Unheimliche Buch,* the great success of which—six editions in a single year—surpassed even that of its predecessor, the *Gespensterbuch* (Book of Ghosts), edited by G. Meyrink.[10]

As often as the word "grotesque" appears in the titles, prefaces, and works themselves, it would lose its meaning if it were used to designate this whole body of literature, which must be described in broader and consequently vaguer terms.[11] The term *Schauerliteratur* (literature of horror, Gothic literature) seems all the more apt since it stresses the parallel, consciously entertained by those authors, with that body of late eighteenth-century European literature which formed the basis of the "genuine" grotesques of Jean Paul, Bonaventura, Hoffmann, and Poe. The similarity is confirmed by a glance at the various motifs, subjects, and techniques embraced by the two schools. The entire set of motifs determining the structure of the *Schicksalsdrama,* for instance, is present in Meyrink's novella *Meister Leonhard* from the collection *Fledermäuse* (Bats): the family curse, incest, homecoming, omens, and fate. The *Schauerliteratur* also aims at making the reader's flesh crawl (a sensation he seeks for himself) and at revealing abysses to him (at the brink of which he gladly stands). These abysses are the same as the ones we have previously discussed: the problematic nature of the artist, the nocturnal aspects of the soul, the ominous magic of love and death, and the satanic nature of crime. Certain differences, however, are apparent. In the English Gothic novel, as well as in the German *Schicksalsdrama,* the abysmal forces are integrated with an order that is all the stronger for being able to contain such ominous elements. The English Gothic novel confirms the moral order of the world; its figures are judged by standards of good and evil, which apply even to the supernatural. No matter how destructive the curse that operates in the German *Schicksalsdrama,* it is crowned by grace and salvation,

and Zacharias Werner and Müllner were fully justified in speaking of the Christian content of their plays.

The literature of horror of the nineteen twenties no longer aims at integrating the nocturnal aspects. Insofar as it does not simply want to frighten the reader, a program to which a substantial portion of this literature conforms, it tries to demolish the categories prevalent in the middle-class world view. More strongly than the Gothic literature around 1800 it is opposed to the social conditions of the time, a trait for which the title of Meyrink's early collection *Des deutschen Spiessers Wunderhorn*[12] is characteristic. With its radically abysmal quality it seems to approximate the grotesque more closely. H. H. Ewers's works by no means lack the pathos of a metaphysics which seeks to generalize the individual, sensational event. Man is a "blind creature" surrounded by a "night of terror"; life (in a fictitious conversation with Oscar Wilde) is the "dream of an absurd being." These turns of speech sound quite familiar, for here the contemporary writers, Carducci and Przybyszewski, join their nineteenth-century predecessors as apostles of a satanic creed. (In his *Meister Leonhard*, Meyrink transforms the order of the Templars into a contemporary sect of worshipers of Satan.)

Such considerations, however, do not facilitate the task of interpretation, since other categories have a determining influence in Ewers's work. First of all, one is struck by its limitation of scope, since Ewers is preoccupied with perverting the commonly accepted notions about man's love life. The narrator's attention is constantly drawn toward sexual perversion. Ewers tries to reinforce and substantiate such practices by referring to corresponding biological phenomena. Repeatedly, he tells his readers how the female spider entangles her male partner and sucks his blood in the act of copulation. (He also reports the case of a snake who started to devour her partner during that act.) The novella *Die Spinne* (The Spider) from the volume *Die Besessenen* develops this motif into a story mysteriously located between the human and animal world.

The story begins with the words: "When the medical student Richard Bracquemont decided to move into room seven of the little Hotel Stevens, Rue Alfred Stevens 6, three persons had hanged themselves on the crossbars in that very room on three successive Fridays." These suicides are all the more mysterious since every spec-

ulation about the underlying motives has proved vain. The student wants to solve the puzzle. The rest of the story is told through the entries in his diary. Increasingly, he falls under the spell of a woman who lives on the other side of the narrow lane. She is described as possessing both human and animal characteristics. When in the act of spinning, her fingers (she wears long black gloves) rapidly intertwine, the observer is reminded of the motion of insect legs, especially since she wears a tight-fitting black dress with violet dots. In the material she is weaving one discerns "strange patterns" of "fabulous creatures and grotesqueries." Subsequently when the student presents the story of the spider as a personal experience, the reader begins to foresee the outcome but is entranced by the account of the gradual paralyzation of the hero's will. The diary ends at the point at which the student rises in order to hang himself. The narrator later informs us that a black spider with strange violet dots, which had crawled out of the mouths of his predecessors, was sticking squashed to his lips. We are also told that the apartment across the street had not been inhabited for several months prior to this event.

The grotesque elements in this story lack significance insofar as they subserve the sensational effect. But there is no trace of metaphysics or biology. Nothing is hidden behind the event; the logic of its construction is easily apprehended. The criterion of re-readability, recommended in English literary criticism, proves useful with regard to the stories of Ewers and his contemporaries; they do not bear a second reading, and their grotesqueness is hollow. Ewers, however, is familiar with the grotesque and constantly employs it. In his novel *Der Zauberlehrling,* a whole mountain village is drawn into the "witches' sabbath and dance of all delusions." (Ewers is always preoccupied with erotic perversion.) But the grotesque never comes into its own, for—as our analysis has shown—a third element is needed in addition to the enticements offered by crime and love: the observation of a soul in the process of being estranged from itself and thus ineluctably bound for destruction. At this point one notices the relationship between the literature of horror and the contemporary situation, as well as the relevance of Stevenson's famous story of a split personality, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1880), as an unsurpassable model.

Only two of the contemporary authors of horror tales make good

use of the grotesque, and one of them is Gustav Meyrink, some of whose stories and whose novel *Der Golem* are quite re-readable. In spite of a certain dryness of tone discernible in them, Meyrink's works are qualitatively superior to those of Ewers; and one is relieved to see that Meyrink aims neither directly nor indirectly at keeping the reader in suspense. At first glance, he seems to follow the *teatro del grottesco* in dealing with the problem of the division of the Self. "But who is the I?" the first-person narrator of *Der Golem* exclaims at the beginning of the novel, when he feels that his body is going to sleep and his senses are deserting him one by one. Even while only half-asleep, he is visited by strange voices. But at the end of the novel the problematic nature of the narrator, who had acquired a new identity, is erased with a playful gesture: it turns out that the mistaken identity was due to a mistaken hat and that the narrator's brief dream recapitulated several decades in the life of another man. But since this other character exists in the person of the gem cutter Athanasius Pernath, his life and mystery also exist. Meyrink avoids giving a dreamlike portrayal of that life which the dream repeats and the dreamer narrates. His very precise description evokes before our eyes the narrow, dark, and labyrinthine Jewish quarter of old Prague with its strange inhabitants: the old puppet player; the lurking second-hand dealer, who performs a strange ritual in his basement with a wax doll; his son, who is devoured by hatred for his father; Mirjam, who believes in miracles; and Rosina, who is infatuated with men. Theirs is a world in which greed and charity, love and hatred, crime and innocence are closely allied, where not only the Self but the entire world has become somber and mysterious. To this world (and not to the dream character of the portrayal) belong the trapdoors, the subterranean passages, and the chinks which permit a glimpse at the hidden world. Man and his environment are merged.

"Chinks" open for the narrator and enable him to view his own past (he was insane for several years), which was previously inaccessible to him. But even in the present he experiences moments of alienation. Something strange takes hold of him and he turns into the Golem, that artificial man, "whom once upon a time a rabbi, versed in the cabala, fashioned out of the elements and endowed with a mechanical life by placing a magic number behind his teeth." Is it the narrator's own soul that confronts him in the double, and which

is the Golem? The familiar motifs of the double, the automaton, and the wax doll are here used in a novel way and in new contexts. Nor is the narrator the only one who experiences an alienation of the Self. "On my twenty-first birthday it happened that in the morning, without any apparent cause, I woke up a different person. The things I had previously liked had suddenly ceased to affect me. Life seemed just as foolish and unreal as a Western. The only absolute certainty lay now in dreams; and reality turned into a dream."

In this way glimpses of the abyss are constantly revealed behind the mosaic of exact details. "As if there could be anything more splendid than to lose the ground from under one's feet. The world is there in order to be destroyed by us," says one of the principal characters, "for life begins only at that point." Meyrink does not show this "life"; and the word, which was uttered by Mirjam, is much too meaningful for that which the chinks allow one to divine. Meyrink is known to have studied Christian, Jewish, and Oriental mystery cults and to have become in 1927 an adherent of Mahajama Buddhism. In *Der Golem* and the novellas, however, the veil that hides the mysteries of the darkness is never lifted, and the grotesque is able to assert itself.[13]

With respect to *Der Golem,* the question concerning the affinity between the grotesque and the novel once more arises. For unlike Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen,* Meyrink's novel does not string up a number of episodes in a reversible sequence, but actually reaches a conclusion. Yet this conclusion, the union of Athanasius and Mirjam—like everything in the novel that appears to be part of an irreversible movement—provides merely a frame for the portrayal of this world. This frame, however, is loosely constructed. The factor which determines the inner structure of the novel is the totality of the Jewish quarter. To it several independent lines of action and numerous interspersed stories, which disrupt the contemporaneity—and thus the chronological sequence—of the plot, are related. A similar effect is produced by the recapitulation of the narrator's own past and by the frequent change of tense in his narrative. The nature of the world as it appears here allows the grotesque to be embodied in vivid scenes.

Of all the authors of horror stories active in the second decade of our century, Kafka is the only one to have attained fame in its fifth.

Thirty years have sufficed to blot out the memory of his contemporaries to such an extent that today he is often considered to have been unique and isolated in his own time. He has even been called a prophet without honor in his own country. When making such assertions, the older ones among us forget that a number of Kafka's most characteristic stories were published around 1920, and that Kafka himself was a well-known author who was supported by the publishers Kurt Wolff and Rowohlt. At that time his unusual voice still formed part of the chorus of contemporaries.[14] Modern scholarship sometimes deplores the lack of a historical perspective applicable to Kafka's works, but seems itself unwilling to provide it. This lacuna has not as yet been filled, although the biographical facts (K's association with Kubin and others in Prague) and the diaries (which show him to have read intensively the works of Dickens—some of which Meyrink had translated for Albert Langen—Lenz, Dostoevsky, and others) offer a clue, and although Kafka's self-confessed eclecticism urgently calls for an investigation of the problem.

In the present context we are merely concerned with the grotesque in Kafka. Whereas in the works of Meyrink and the *teatro del grottesco* the alienation originates in the division of the Self and its subjection to the nameless powers, in Kafka's writings this is not the case, even though his diaries contain occasional entries that seem to betray a similar attitude. Under the date of 16 January 1922 we read: "Collapse, inability to sleep or wake, inability to endure life or, more precisely, the sequence of events which constitutes life. The clocks are not synchronized. The internal one moves at an infernal or demonic—but, at any rate, inhuman—pace, whereas the external one proceeds sluggishly at the usual speed." The words "infernal," "demonic," and "inhuman" suggest an estrangement from the Self; but the accent lies on the discrepancy between internal and external life, the former appearing under the image of a clock, that is, an instrument felt and operating as a unity. Kafka's portrayal of human character further underscores his indifference toward the then fashionable theme of the split personality. Even where human and animal traits are merged—in the transition from one corporeal realm to another or in the superimposition of perspectives—no division occurs on the mental plane. In Kafka's universe the strangeness does not issue from the Self, but from the nature of the world and the discrepancy be-

tween world and Self. The vague term "world" requires a closer definition. In Kafka's writings the world appears in the form of incessant action that presses upon the individual. The incompatibility of world and Self could actually lead to a separation of the two, to the attempt to withdraw into an idyllic or anchoritic existence. But the external world precludes such a solution. In forcefully and ominously aiming at the individual, Kafka's world is even more restricted than Pirandello's, who had at least admitted the "truth" of the external world: "True is the sea, the mountain, the rock, and the blade of grass. But man? He is always masked, without knowing or desiring it." Here truth is seen as being in agreement with itself, as an enduring quality of mind that all can experience. This was no longer true of Meyrink, the plants of whose Dr. Cinderella were filled with ominous life. Kafka's world is nearly always an enclosed space, a man-made world devoid of landscapes, oceans, mountains, rocks, and blades of grass. It begins with the animal level, that is, at a level at which independent movement exists and which now is directed at man.

This world on the march is strange and inscrutable, and not only for a special kind of people whose nature (as in the artist) or guilt (as in Keller's combmakers) provokes secret powers which lie in wait. Kafka's characters are not specific individuals; they often lack a proper name. And "powers" would be much too meaningful and strong a term for that which asserts itself in the movement. There are no coherent sequences which directly and unambiguously point toward physical destruction, or which could be presented in that manner. Destruction may well be the result; but the action never leads up to it as a goal that is superimposed from the outside. What Kafka shows is the gradual displacement of the individual, a continuous process without climax, no single phase of which the narrator is able to explain; for he, too, like the reader is affected by the incomprehensibility of the phenomenal world which is strange and dreamlike. The dreamlike quality of Kafka's world does not consist in its "superreality"—the "supernatural" only intruded upon his early novellas—but in the structural principle based on the continuous onslaught of exactly rendered details, which is capable of no rational explanation, which forever eludes one's grasp, and to which one cannot get accustomed, since all attempts to solve the puzzle are thwarted.

Kafka's diaries show that he paid close attention to his own dreams. In some cases, a dream experience turns out to have formed the nucleus of a story. One is particularly struck by the stylistic resemblance between the diary entries and the narrative mode of certain of Kafka's works. The narrator's point of view is often derived from the dream transcriptions, a relationship that was consciously intended by the author. Some of Kafka's most widely known aphorisms gain their full meaning only when seen in the light of the special character of this dream reality: "True reality is always unrealistic." "The dream discloses a reality which puts our imagination to shame. This is the horror of life and the tragedy of art."[15]

In *Der Landarzt* (The Country Doctor), a story very highly esteemed by its author, the special nature of reality is manifested in the typographical arrangement: there is no subdivision into paragraphs, and the action continues without interruption. At certain moments the reader finds himself completely at a loss: when mysterious horses emerge from the pigsty, when the vehicle covers several miles in a single moment, when the unearthly horses show an interest in the events, and perhaps even when the doctor is undressed and placed beside the patient. In the later stories and in the novels the supernatural element is scarcely present, but even in the early works it is rarely stressed. If we consider how carefully Keller and Hoffmann prepared and portrayed the encounter with the abysmal forces and the moments of estrangement, the leveling in Kafka's works seems all the more remarkable. Here there are no "encounters" and no sudden irruptions or actual estrangements, simply because the world is strange from the beginning. We do not lose our foothold on the world, because we have never had it, although we did not realize this fact. By way of summary I venture to call Kafka's stories latent grotesques.

Kafka's grotesques are also cold grotesques. To be sure, we could also say that the works of Bosch, Bruegel, and Goya lacked a unified emotional perspective. There the emphasis, however, was placed on the lack of unity. The interpretation of Wieland, who stressed the strong emotional effects (laughter, horror, and disgust) engendered by these works, seemed fully adequate. When reading Kafka's works, on the other hand, we do not know whether we are supposed to smile when the horses neigh compassionately and the doctor is low-

ered into the patient's bed. Nor do we know whether and when we are supposed to shudder. The narrator is separated from his reader by an abyss such as was previously unknown, although our study of the grotesque has shown us similar phenomena. Kafka develops an entirely new narrative technique. He generally prefers the first-person narrator or, as in *Die Verwandlung* (Metamorphosis), tells his stories as seen through the eyes of the protagonist. But this is nothing new, for Meyrink uses the same technique. Nor is it novel for Kafka's characters to be neither omniscient nor capable of explaining the events they witness. But Kafka's narrators in one way or another become estranged from us by reacting most unexpectedly to the various situations. So we are appalled to find that the (narrating) country doctor laughs and jokes at the sight of the mysterious horses, that he "gaily" climbs into the carriage, and that he so resignedly allows himself to be undressed. It seems just as strange for Georg in *Die Verwandlung* to be so easily reconciled to his animal nature and for the narrator to report the transformation so coldly and objectively.[16] The people who narrate are no longer human. Following the model of the country doctor, they all glide through the dark on shifting ground. And like the country doctor some of them seem to step out of the temporal order.

Certain passages in *Der Landarzt* are striking insofar as, even though vaguely, the presence of supernatural powers is suggested. The word "fate" is uttered, or a "higher authority," which notifies and apparently dispatches the horses, is mentioned. Such remarks are found nowhere else except in the diaries, where the epithets "infernal" and "demonic" appear alongside of devils, spirits of retribution, and mysterious ravens circling around his head. In none of Kafka's other stories is the attempt made to invoke and name the ominous forces.

Although the familiar traits of the grotesque persistently recur in Kafka's early novellas, his narrative technique compelled us to speak of them as a very special kind of grotesques. The later stories offer no such choice, since they do not contain events that one can narrate. To be sure, events occur and the world exists—but no longer independently of the language, and the process of speaking completes the destruction of the world. "Destruction" (*Abbau*) is the inner form of these novellas, where speech is the linguistic expression of such a

process. The Emperor in Peking has dispatched a personal message to you, the person addressed in the story. But as soon as speech begins, the possibility of its arrival becomes increasingly remote, until the impulse altogether vanishes and the messenger disappears. The mice are visited by a great artist (Josefa, the singer), and her voice unites her people, who take it to be a mouthpiece of the gods. But as the story progresses, the singing turns into unintelligible squeaking, until the singer vanishes without a trace. The most typical story of the later Kafka is called *Der Bau* (The Burrow = The Construction), but actually its subject is destruction. With a mathematical imagination reminding us of Poe, the animal has constructed a subterranean refuge. But as its narrative unfolds, all means of protection are gradually cut off. The outside world appears only as a mysterious roaring which may or may not be real. The flywheel of an obsession has taken hold of thinking and continues to rotate until its end in the void.

3. Morgenstern and the Verbal Grotesque

Even before the Italian playwrights and the German authors of horror tales a poet had laid claim to the word "grotesque." In 1907 Christian Morgenstern stated in the section *"In me ipsum"* of his autobiographical book *Stufen* (Steps): "The older I grow the more one word comes to dominate my thinking—grotesque." Unfortunately, this label has been attached to Morgenstern's work in a way which neither corresponds to the author's intended meaning nor to the finished products of his imagination. Morgenstern is widely known only as a poet of grotesques, which reminds one of the fate of Wilhelm Busch's pictorial humoresques. Busch and Morgenstern are often mentioned in one breath. But in spite of certain techniques they have in common, the difference between their works is easily verified.[17] Busch consistently uses satire as his starting point. Satire is by no means absent from Morgenstern's *oeuvre,* which contains a number of parodies (of naturalistic drama, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Scheerbart, and others). But Morgenstern himself repeatedly emphasized the difference between his parodies and his grotesques. Ac-

tually, even those grotesque poems which relate to literature are neither caricatures nor parodies. The world of these poems unfolds willfully but does not present a distorted image of models selected for ridicule. An untrammeled imagination appears to be at work, which results in the kind of higher nonsense cultivated by Edward Lear rather than Busch. Lear and Morgenstern also agree in the use of poetic conventions in order to produce a tension between form and content; meter, rhythm, sound, rhyme, and refrain are fully exploited with the aim of enhancing the striking contrast between words and meaning.

But there is no such thing as an untrammeled imagination. If we study the sources of Morgenstern's poetry with the help of techniques developed by Spitzer and Klemperer, we do so only with a view to its grotesqueness. Morgenstern's imagination was frequently engaged by "verbal invention" (*sprachlicher Einfall*). A sound, a word, a phrase provide the stimulus. This is the way it happened biographically: when Morgenstern and a number of his friends were on their way home from an excursion to the Galgenberg (Gallows Hill) near Werder, they began to think of themselves as gallows brothers. Morgenstern wrote his gallows poems for them. The gallows gave rise to the gallows child, the hangman, the gallows bird, and the hangman's bride; around these a whole fantastic world was gradually constructed. Morgenstern's imagination continued to operate in this manner by creating new characters and their milieu through the medium of language. The characters and their milieu established cyclic connections between the poems. Korf and Palmström [recurrent characters in Morgenstern's poems] acquired a life of their own, and among the nonhuman realms the sphere of the moon was given special attention. Even in the early volume *In Phantas Schloss* (In Phanta's Castle) of 1895, the moon appeared now as a shiny soap bubble (which promptly gave rise to the soap-bubble blower Pan) and then as a Dutchman's face. The famous moon sheep was created along with the easily perplexed moon calf. Language suggested the creation of Tulemond (*tout le monde*) and Mondamin, and a whole host of mythical events were added. In Morgenstern's poems the mythmaking verbal fantasy can be seen at work. A word like *Schäfchenwolken* (fleecy or lambkin clouds) suffices to arouse Morgenstern's imagination. He has a passion for creating strange animals:

the moon sheep, the night mare, the raven, the toad, the fish, etc. The place in language or reality to which they owe their lives can always be identified. In this way the nonsense seems to become meaningful and legitimate; several layers of meaning are created, between which the narrative oscillates without coming to rest on any one of them. With ludicrous pedantry Morgenstern makes his deeply learned commentator Dr. Jeremias Mueller stress the realistic elements. The *Tonmassage* (Sound Massage), for instance, with which the expiring air is to be treated, denotes the familiar phenomenon of articulate speech; and it is easy to see why a cork in an upright position cannot see its own reflection. Here pedantry makes nonsense out of sense.

The confusion increases in cases where inanimate objects are treated like living things. When language furnishes the cause, the hidden aspects of such objects are suddenly brought to light, and nonsense is manifested as verbal nonsense.

Die Zirbelkiefer sieht sich an
Auf ihre Zirbeldrüse hin . . .

(The stone pine looks at itself
With regard to its pineal gland.)

Ein Stiefel wandern und sein Knecht
Von Knickebühl bis Entenbrecht . . .

(A boot and his valet wander
From Knickebühl to Entenbrecht.)

[In German, the word *Stiefelknecht* signifies bootjack.]

We enter a world in which parts of organic wholes have made themselves independent: "A knee walks lonely through the world." I do not want to spoil the fun engendered by this higher nonsense; but the attentive reader cannot help being puzzled or disconcerted. Klemperer is certainly right when he states that in Korf's and Palmström's bizarre watches the problem of time as *temps* and *durée* is touched upon, and that in the well-known poem about the picket fence our orientation in space is playfully questioned. There is something uncanny about these things. Morgenstern constantly questions language, which produces such oddities. De Villers, too, had observed that "more strange creatures dwell in the syntax than live at

the bottom of the sea."[18] Here is still another of Morgenstern's poems:

Die Nähe

Die Nähe ging verträumt umher . . .
Sie kam nie zu den Dingen selber.
Ihr Antlitz wurde gelb und gelber
und ihren Leib ergriff die Zehr.

Doch eines Nachts, derweil sie schlief,
da trat wer an ihr Bette hin
und sprach: "Steh auf, mein Kind, ich bin
der kategorische Komparativ!

Ich werde dich zum Näher steigern,
ja, wenn du willst, zur Näherin."—
Die Nähe, ohne sich zu weigern,
sie nahm auch dies als Schicksal hin.

Als Näherin jedoch vergass
sie leider völlig, was sie wollte,
sie nähte Putz und hiess Frau Nolte
und hielt all Obiges für Spass.

(Proximity

Proximity was lost in dreams . . .
It never reached the things themselves.
Its face grew increasingly yellow,
And its body wasted away.

But one night, while it was asleep,
Somebody approached its bed
And said: "Get up, my child, I am
The Categorical Comparative!

I shall transform you into a seamster
Or, if you wish, into a seamstress."
Proximity, without refusing,
Accepted this, too, as her fate.

But as a seamstress she forgot,
Unfortunately, what she wanted.
She sewed finery and called herself Mrs. Nolte
And thought all the above a joke.)

One immediately spots the humorous technique at work in this poem. Morgenstern is not interested in hiding it, since his procedure is not an arbitrary one but concerns the very principle of language. One of his favorite devices is that of personification. An abstract feminine noun becomes a woman, just as the Middle Ages had their Lady Honor, Lady World, Lady Love, etc. This is a process by means of which the obvious significance of the feminine article is heightened. The comparative appears as a new and, again, apparently legitimate force. Since we have reached the human level, the seamstress (*Näherin*) is the phonetically justified successor of proximity (*Nähe*), and her tendency to regard her well-attested origin as a joke seems very shortsighted. The reader's superior knowledge is skillfully and by no means unsuccessfully invoked; for who would be as simple-minded as Mrs. Nolte? One certainly cannot take the whole thing seriously, nor is one supposed to. The reader is slightly confused and may even seek to rediscover the humorous aspect of the seemingly correct grammatical situation. Morgenstern's intention would be fulfilled if he now began to suspect language. As early as 1896 Morgenstern noted in his diary: "Often a word suddenly strikes me. The total arbitrariness of language, which encompasses our world view—and, consequently, the arbitrariness of the world view—is revealed" (*Stufen,* p. 100). In the same year he noted that "man is imprisoned in a cage of mirrors" (which we are perhaps justified in equating with language).

Between 1906 and 1908 the number of entries concerned with the duplicity of language increases. One comes upon phrases like "destroy language!" or "by bourgeois I mean those things in which man has hitherto felt at home, especially his language. To rid the latter of its bourgeois traits is the noblest task of the future." In 1907 he had written: "The older I grow the more one word comes to dominate my thinking—grotesque." We now know what he meant by "grotesque." Over and above the ridiculousness suggested by absurdity and distortion, the grotesque inspires a fear which grows out of the sudden recognition that man's position is precarious.[19] In his grotesques, Morgenstern wants to shake our confidence in language and the image of the world which it supplies.[20] He does so by using the principles of language itself—such as word formation, metaphor, rhyme, simile, intensification—for the creation of absurdities. The "basic idea" of the *Galgenlieder* is "more or less grotesque."

Morgenstern seems to be an ally of Fritz Mauthner, whose *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (Contributions to a Critique of Language) of 1901/02 in three volumes surpassed every critique of language previously furnished by poets, mystics, and philosophers. Morgenstern knew Mauthner's work and repeatedly quoted it. But he was justified in drawing a line between his own aims and Mauthner's attempt to destroy language altogether. Morgenstern did not advocate a total agnosticism. He merely wanted to shake the naïve belief in language as a road to reality; but unlike the other contemporary writers of grotesques he firmly believed in its existence. "Destroy language," he quotes Master Ekkehart as saying, "and, with it, all things and concepts. The rest is silence," and adds: "This silence, however, is—God." (Morgenstern later thought he had found a path in Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy.) He aimed at the destruction not of language as such but of the false sense of security it gives: "I do not want man to be shipwrecked; but he should realize that he is sailing an ocean." Morgenstern's grotesques are not as harmless as many people take them to be. If they leave too much room for humor, however, this may be due to their author's failure to eliminate the category of transcendence.

Morgenstern's verbal grotesques form part of a literary tradition. If we traced their roots in our Western culture, we would come upon the "Asiatic" style, some features of which were cited by one late classical and medieval rhetorician after the other as examples of a manner to be studied only in order to be avoided. I wish to begin at the place at which Fischart introduced the word "grotesque" into the German language. In Fischart's works language gets out of hand. Careful analysis shows that he frequently uses elements inherent in the language which degenerate into the absurd as soon as they are liberated. Several centuries later, the Romantics pondered the secret of rhyme and the mysterious bonds which it creates between the words of a language. When Fischart allows the rhyme to determine the syntax, the most heterogeneous things are put together—as is also the case with Morgenstern. At other times, Fischart juxtaposes words with identical or closely related sound patterns; and, once again, the semantic incompatibility of phonetically related things is manifested. When Fischart amasses synonyms, language itself seems to be running away. The humanists of the sixteenth century had made the wealth of synonyms a criterion, which led to their

praising the German language. But Fischart exaggerates this preponderance. The German humanists also lauded the synthesizing quality of their mother tongue and, on account of it, placed German on a level with Greek and above Latin—a favorable comparison with the "sacred" tongues. After a serious beginning, Fischart often introduces the craziest word formations; and unexpectedly we find ourselves in a world that is filled with monstrosities in the manner of Hieronymus Bosch. Thus the opening passage of his *Geschichtsklitterung* (Jumbled History) runs as follows: *"Grossmächtige, hoch und wohlgevexierte, tief und ausgeleerte, eitele, ohrenfeste, ohrenfeiste, allerbefeistete, ährenhafte und haftähren, ohrenhafen und Hafenohren oder hasenasinohrige insondere liebe Herren, Gönner und Freund."* [Most powerful, high and well vexed, deep and emptied, vain, tough-eared, fat-eared, totally befatted, earable and stuck-eared, ears-port and port-eared or harenare-eared particularly dear sirs, sponsors, and friends.] The movement opens slowly and perfectly in keeping with the style of a prologue. But soon afterwards such linguistic forces as the massing of synonyms, alliteration, synthesizing [telescoping], etc., are set free, elude the speaker and, in their turbulent conglomeration, create a phantasmagoric world of their own. Another example of the frenzied and wild activity of linguistic principles that overpowers the speaker and precipitates a state of chaos is the description of a dance arranged by the giants: *"Da dantzten, schupfften, hupfften, lupfften, sprungen, sungen, huncken, reyeten, schreieten, schwangen, rangen, plöchelten, füssklöpffeten, gumpeten, plumpeten, rammelten, hammelten, voltirten, branlirten, gambadirten, cinqpassirten, capricollirten, gauckelten, redleten, bürtzleten, balleten, jauchzeten, gigaten, armglocketen, hendruderten, armlaufeten, warmschnaufeten (ich schnauf auch schier). . . ."* [So they danced, pushed, jumped, lifted, sprang, sang, limped, circled, shouted, swung, wrestled, —?—, stomped their feet, —?—, fell like potato sacks, shoved, —?—, volted, —?—, (dancing terms?), gamboled about, joked, gabbed, —?—, danced, shrieked with pleasure, jigged, (arm/bell/ed?), rowed with their hands, walked with their arms, puffed heatedly (I'm puffin' myself).]

In such passages Fischart surpasses his great model Rabelais, for the *Geschichtsklitterung* is actually a German version of the first book of *Gargantua*. Leo Spitzer, whose first monograph was devoted

to Rabelais' word formation [as a stylistic means] (*Die Wortbildung als stilistisches Mittel, exemplifiziert an Rabelais,* 1910), returns to the subject in a later work: "He creates word-families, representative of gruesome fantasy-beings, copulating and engendering before our eyes, which have reality only in the world of language, which are established in an intermediate world between reality and irreality, between the nowhere that frightens and the 'here' that reassures." Spitzer continues: "And Rabelais will shape grotesque word-families (or families of word-demons) not only by altering what exists: he may leave intact the forms of his word material and create by juxtaposition: savagely piling epithet upon epithet to an ultimate effect of terror, so that from the well known emerges the shape of the unknown. . . ."[21] These descriptions literally apply to Fischart. Spitzer calls this style, which succeeds in creating a world that hovers between reality and irreality and which both frightens and amuses the reader, "grotesque," and rightly so. I should like to add, however, that the abysmal and terrifying aspects of Rabelais' and Fischart's works are not restricted to the content of their language but also extend to the elusiveness of language itself. The familiar and indispensable tool suddenly proves to be arbitrary, strange, demonically alive, and capable of dragging man into the nocturnal and inhuman sphere. The history of the style which makes such a violent appearance in Rabelais and Fischart is not yet written.[22] It would turn up many things which have been or could be touched upon in the present study. The line of development leads from Shakespeare, Grimmelshausen, and the *commedia dell'arte* to Sterne and Jean Paul and on to James Joyce.[23] An echo of Fischart's style is heard in Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen,* in Valerio in Büchner's *Leonce und Lena,* and in the speeches of Züs Bünzli. To all of these Morgenstern's grotesques must now be added.[24]

4. Thomas Mann

If we trace the grotesque at still another place in modern German literature, we do so mainly to show how frequently and multifari-

ously it appears in our century. Also, by choosing a borderline case, we seek to test the validity of the results we have gradually acquired. Earlier, in the case of Pirandello we observed that, although all the major ingredients of the grotesque were present structurally, the mode of presentation clouded the purity of the grotesque and limited its scope. Though in a different sense, the same is true of the works of Thomas Mann.

In an important essay on Mann, Max Rychner uses the grotesque as a category for the interpretation of his works.[25] According to him, it is a shaping force in *Dr. Faustus,* and to a lesser extent it was present long before, even in the earliest works. Rychner quotes Thomas Mann as saying, "In the last analysis Nietzsche was a caricaturist and writer of grotesques." Rychner continues: "Compassionately, he [Mann] observed the 'horribly scurrilous accent' of Nietzsche's last writings. But he never lost his love for this writer, in whose footsteps he followed as an artist. In *Dr. Faustus* he drove caricature and grotesque to their utmost limit in his depiction of a German society degenerating into eccentricity. Even in the early novel, *Buddenbrooks,* the teachers and students had been designed as caricatures. The professors and students in *Dr. Faustus,* their deformations and their sophistries, however, are portrayed with a 'horribly scurrilous accent' not yet at the command of the young author of *Buddenbrooks. . . .*" Rychner calls *Dr. Faustus* a portrayal of the apocalyptic estrangement of the world, an account of the rise of the abysmal world, and an elaborate grotesque. He refers to Goethe's previously quoted statement that "looked at from the height of reason, all life seems like a grave disease, and the world like a madhouse." It is this point of view—Rychner expressly calls it that of the grotesque—which determines the character of the novel.

The word "grotesque" was frequently used by Thomas Mann, who circumscribes its meaning in the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Reflections of an Unpolitical Man) as follows: "The grotesque is that which is excessively true and excessively real, not that which is arbitrary, false, irreal, and absurd." Only the negative side of this definition is self-explanatory. "Tulemond und Mondamin/ liegen heulend auf den Knien" does not fall under Mann's definition of the grotesque, because it is too absurd and too arbitrary. What he calls grotesque, in being excessively real, is apparently

closer to common reality. But this view of Mann's position rests on the assumption that for him the grotesque entails a distortion and exaggeration of reality which reveals the true nature of a phenomenon. This is exemplified by the dancing master in *Tonio Kröger,* as well as by Christian Buddenbrook and Detlev Spinell. Rychner also mentions the lemur-like patients in the *Magic Mountain* and Felix Krull, who simulates and parodies disease. This is familiar territory, for here we are concerned with the kind of caricatural distortion which points toward the grotesque, the transitional realm which is called the grotesquely comic (*Grotesk-Komisches*) and which, as the lemur-like patients show, may extend relatively far into the province of the mysterious. Rychner regards these tendencies as preparatory to *Dr. Faustus,* in which the grotesque is fully unfolded and the world, seen from the perspective of alienation, is portrayed as a madhouse. I fully subscribe to Rychner's observations; nevertheless, the manner of presentation reveals that this is by no means the only valid perspective and that another impeding, detaching, and restraining factor is added: the self-assurance and perspicacity of the narrator. Let us give an example of the effect produced by such an attitude. In the twentieth chapter of the novel, Serenus Zeitblom (we notice Thomas Mann's increasingly daring use of names for his characters) describes some of the songs which Leverkühn has composed: "But I was even more profoundly impressed at first hearing a song set to words by Blake, a dream of a golden chapel before which stand people weeping, mourning, worshiping, not daring to enter. Now the figure of a serpent arises which with great effort forces an entrance into the sanctuary; it drags the slimy length of its body along the costly floor and gains the altar, where it vomits its poison upon the bread and wine. 'So,' ends the poet with desperate logic, 'therefore' and 'thereupon,' 'I went to a sty and laid down among the swine.' The dream anguish of the vision, the growing terror, the horror of pollution, and finally the violent renunciation of a humanity dishonored by the sight—all this was reproduced with astonishing power in Adrian's setting."

And here is Blake's poem, on which the description is based:

> I saw a chapel all of gold
> That none did dare to enter in,

And many weeping stood without,
Weeping, mourning, worshipping.

I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door,
And he forc'd and forc'd and forc'd,
Down the golden hinges tore.

And along the pavement sweet,
Set with pearls and rubies bright,
All his slimy length he drew,
Till upon the altar white

Vomiting his poison out
On the bread and on the wine.
So I turn'd into a sty
And laid me down among the swine.

One can see how familiar Zeitblom is with the English language, but one also realizes that certain shifts in emphasis have occurred. Zeitblom does not reproduce the poem but gives a critical account of it as a conscious mediator ("Now the figure of a serpent arises"). In summarizing the plot, he shows himself more concerned with the result than with the process, with the abstract than with the concrete (as in his summary of the second stanza, where the plasticity of the white columns and golden hinges—which is more than mere plasticity—and the violent obstinacy of the snake's intrusion are abstractly rendered by "sanctuary" and "with great effort"). Zeitblom also detaches himself from the entire scene by presenting the vision as a dream and by commenting on, interpreting, and explaining it. Even where he translates literally he adds an explanatory phrase ("with desperate logic") or smuggles additional words into the text ("therefore" and "thereupon"). In the opening passage he replaces the vague and ominous quality of the "none" and "many" by personalized agents. And as if still suspicious of the value of his mediation, he concentrates the most essential features into four significant nominal blocks. When fear, anguish, terror, and violence are brought into play no emotional involvement can be expected, and the narrator aloofly interposes his own superiority.

This is not to say, however, that Serenus Zeitblom, who speaks

with so much perspicacity and from such a "height of reason," determines the actual point of view of the narrative. When on the second page he reports that on May 27, 1943, two years after Leverkühn's death, he has sat down in his "familiar little study in Freising on the Isar," we think of the opening of *Der Erwählte* (The Holy Sinner), when the "spirit of the narrative" appears as a monk who sits down in his cell at St. Gallen in Switzerland to tell a strange story. The late first-person narratives of Thomas Mann are especially interesting because the "Spirit of the Narrative" is visible through the surface role of the narrator. With that Spirit the reader is to be put in touch, so that he may smile condescendingly at the pedantic Serenus Zeitblom, who constantly interprets, detaches, and restrains the grotesque. The actual narrator represents the world from the point of view of the grotesque, and the irony in *Dr. Faustus* owes its abysmal quality to the fact that the narrator no longer occupies the Goethean "height of reason" but speaks with an uncertainty that has nothing to hold onto or to look forward to.[26] But he, too, speaks in full awareness of his position and often with noticeable constraint. Thus still another separating wall is erected between the reader and the world, a wall which diminishes the effect of the grotesque.

5. "Modern" Poetry and Dream Narration

"Humor destroys reality by inventing the most unlikely things, by yoking together widely separated ages and objects, alienating the existing world, rending the sky, and revealing the immense ocean of the void. It is an expression of the discord between man and the world, and the king of the nonexistent." In these words Hugo Friedrich summarizes Gomez de la Serna's definition of "humorism" or "*humour noir.*"[27] The definition strongly reminds one of certain aspects of the grotesque: reality destroyed, unlikely things invented, incompatible elements juxtaposed, the existing world estranged. . . . Friedrich repeatedly uses the word "grotesque" in its full meaning in order to characterize this tendency. He states, for instance, that "these are radical applications of Victor Hugo's theory of the grotesque." Friedrich's discussion of the problem concludes with the re-

mark that here we have to do with a variant of modern poetics in general.

If one surveys the self-interpretations of "modern" poetry which Friedrich mentions in his study to see what they have to say about structural matters, one comes upon many echoes of the sentences previously quoted. Even if one grants that not all of twentieth-century poetry is, or wants to be, "modern" in this sense, it remains nevertheless true that the concept of the grotesque can be applied to large sectors of contemporary lyrical art. The dams burst and, surprisingly enough, even those dams which protected an area of literature previously immune to the grotesque.

There is still further evidence of the grotesqueness of modern poetry, the structure of which may well be regarded as a direct expression of creative impulses to which the poets entrust the deeper meaning of their art. Again and again they designate "absolute" fantasy or vision and dream as the poetic forces which penetrate the surface of reality and which the poet is bound to follow. Even in cases where poetic theory stresses the share of conscious activity in the creative process, consciousness is commonly intended to safeguard and enhance the irrational tendencies. From many of the contemporary poems, however, which claim to be representative of the age one gets the impression that in the creative act the deeper impulses were prematurely checked by a consciously entertained ideal of form. The pressure exerted by a dominant poetics has always shaped the art of the lesser minds. This pressure has increased during the last eighty years, since it gained momentum with the rise of antibourgeois feelings and was able to take upon itself the stigma of misunderstood modernity and the nimbus of prophetic powers, while it seems to the historian that much of what passes for mid-century *avant-garde* lyric poetry merely exploits the innovations introduced by Rimbaud and Apollinaire two or three generations ago.

But we do not have to rely solely upon the vague and unviable feeling engendered by the artificially constructed works.[28] Even the lyric poetry of the real masters seldom justifies our saying that the concept of the grotesque is an adequate definition of their art. In the case of Baudelaire this is due to the difference between a poetics which expressly includes the grotesque and the absurd among its central ideas and a lyrical *oeuvre* that essentially derives from other

sources. It may be difficult to demonstrate such a discrepancy in the works of other poets, and even in Baudelaire the real reason lies perhaps still deeper. I think that it has to do with the nature of the lyric poem itself; the world of which, beginning with the first word, is so peculiar that no alienation can take place. I use the word "alienation" (*Verfremdung*) with emphasis on its prefix: something that was familiar is made strange. Familiarity and strangeness are categories of one's physico-spiritual existence in three-dimensional space. But the sphere of lyric poetry does not essentially constitute such a space. We become fused with it as with a stream or breath or sound; we become one with it. The grotesque, on the other hand, impresses itself upon the observer as a scene or a latently dynamic image. No matter how many grotesque traits the poetics of modern poetry may boast, that poetics deals with the technique rather than the true substance of the lyric poem.

> On the edge of the fairy tale the night knits roses.
> The knot of storks fruits Pharaohs harps dissolves.
> Death carries his rattling bouquet under the root of the void.
> The storks rattle on top of the chimneys.
> Night is a stuffed fairy tale.

These lines well exemplify the structure of Surrealistic poetry; but that does not mean that they themselves are grotesque. If there are readers who regard them as poetry, they do so because of a lyric substance that oozes through the chinks in the structure of the work. In the above instance, this substance is not particularly strong, much weaker at any rate than in the following poem by the Spaniard Alberti, whose works Friedrich calls poetic grotesques (*Groteskgedichte*).

Si ma voz . . .

Si ma voz muriera en tierra,
llevadla al nivel del mar
y dejadla en la ribera.

Llevadla al nivel del mar
y nombradla capitana
de un blanco bajel de guerra.

¡O mi voz condecorada
con la insignia marinera:

sobre el corazón un ancla
y sobre el ancla una estrella
y sobre la estrella el viento
y sobre el viento la vela!

(If my voice . . .

If my voice were to die on land,
Carry it up to the sea
And desert it on the beach.

Carry it up to the sea
And make it captain
Of a white man-of-war.

O my voice, adorned
With the marine insignia:
Above my heart an anchor,
And above the anchor a star,
And above the star the wind,
And above the wind the sail!)

Here the lyric substance, far from merely oozing through the chinks in the structure of the poem, expresses itself through repetition, analogy, and intensification—while using words the meaning of which is obvious—and overshadows the structural traits of "modern" poetry. Each of the last two lines could well be regarded as indicating an inversion of the spatial dimensions advocated by modern poetics. But this interpretation would be wrong; for the spatial significance of the word "above" is reduced to a point where the inversion is meaningless. Everything in the poem serves the expression of a dynamic intensification climaxed in the word "sail," and its correspondence to the white man-of-war suddenly reveals the symbolic meaning of the otherwise unspecified color. (One might mention in passing that the lyric substance of the poem seems very familiar and almost reminds one of certain aspects of mid-nineteenth-century poetry.) There are poets more truly modern than Alberti, but they are so not because of the "truly modern" structure of their works but rather because of the purer, more genuine substance permeating it. H. Friedrich observes (p. 141) that "poets of a higher rank, like Eluard or Aragon, who are usually included among

the Surrealists, scarcely derive their poetry from the program of that movement."

Friedrich also solves the problem which arises in connection with García Lorca's ballads. After all, epic time and space seem to belong to the ballad form. Since these categories are confused in Lorca's ballads, may one assume that this would lead to an alienation of the world that could be regarded as grotesque? It is true that Lorca confuses time and space. Both fade away, as is shown in one of the poet's most beautiful ballads, the *Romance sonámbulo,* which opens with the words *"Verde que te quiero verde."* But here no grotesque world comes into being, for time and space—this is the final solution of the problem—are seen from a "lyric perspective." Friedrich adds, "This is great and daring poetry. It requires no justification by the theories of dream psychology."

A discussion of the grotesque in twentieth-century poetry must be concerned not so much with the poetry itself as with its poetics. In each individual case one would have to determine what makes a poem lean toward the grotesque. For example, there is Hans Arp's poem *Dem Ausgang zu* (Toward the Exit):

> The birds of night carry burning lanterns in the rafters of their eyes.
> They guide gentle ghosts and ride in cars with gentle wheels.
> The black rocking horse is hitched before the mountain.
> The dead carry saws and tree trunks to the pier.
> From the birds' craws the harvests drop on the iron threshing floors.
> The angels land in baskets of air.
> The fishes take their walking sticks and roll in stars toward the exit.

Here space does not dissolve, but the reader integrates the individual data, so that they become statements about the condition of a larger whole. Space is essentially pictorial; we read the poem as the description of a picture. Perhaps a painting by Hieronymus Bosch comes to mind and substantiates the facts expressly stated in the poem.

Still another of Arp's creations is:

> The tables are as soft as freshly baked bread
> And the loaves of bread on the table as hard as wood.
> This explains the large number of broken [*ausgebissen*] teeth
> That have been spat out and lie around the tables.

Why this is so
Has caused much racking of brains [*Kopfzerbrechen*].
But such racking of brains explains the large number of broken heads
Which lie around the tables among the teeth.

Once more a grotesque has come into being, and we are faced with a scene or an image filled with movement. It is language itself which, closely scrutinized, alienates the world. *"Sich die Zähne an etwas ausbeissen"* and *"sich den Kopf zerbrechen"*—these figures of speech are taken literally, with the result that the poem abounds with broken teeth and heads. Here Morgenstern has found a successor. [Playing with the German pronouns and the elements,] Arp adds a *Kakasie* to the *Kakadu* (cockatoo) and a *Hagelwittchen* (hail white) to the *Schneewittchen* (snow white); he combines *Kruzifix* with *fixundfertig* (all set) and separates *handgemein* (hand and common = physical combat) in order to set it against *fussvornehm* (foot and noble). These are rather shallow jokes, since Arp plays with words and phrases rather than with language itself. His poems accordingly lack that deeper dimension of ominousness which characterizes the grotesques of Rabelais, Fischart, and Morgenstern.

In spite of the many grotesque ingredients of modern poetics, grotesque poems are created only under very special conditions. It is worth noting that Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror* are not presented as lyric poems but as prose visions experienced by an individualized speaker. The Surrealists of the twentieth century regarded Rimbaud and Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse) as their predecessors. Lautréamont also furnished them with the frequently quoted model of the automatism of inanimate objects: "The beauty of a chance encounter between a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table." The *Chants de Maldoror* certainly contain a number of grotesque elements precisely because they exist in a perceptible, three-dimensional space. In his *Poésies* Lautréamont refers to Dante and Milton as poets of the *landes infernales*. Edmond Jaloux was later to add the *roman noir* and the Gothic novel of Monk Lewis and other writers, to the models of the *Chants*.[29] Among the poems of Apollinaire, who coined the term "surrealism," there is only one genuine grotesque, and it is not a lyric poem but a dream vision in prose entitled *Oneirocritique*. In the five stanzas interspersed within

that work the dark river of Apollinaire's poetry is again flowing. The animals—Lautréamont's hyena and Apollinaire's monkey—are grotesque, infernal, ominous, and changeable. The hyena in a Surrealistic poem has a meaning but no perceptible form. Accordingly, the true Surrealistic grotesques are to be found in the prose transcripts which were favored by the members of the group. Here is a poem by Wassily Kandinsky entitled *Wasser* (Water):

On the yellow sand a tiny, thin red man was walking. He constantly slipped, as if he were walking on ice. But it was the yellow sand of an endless plain.

From time to time he said: "Water . . . blue water." And he himself did not know why he was saying it.

A horseman dressed in a green pleated coat rode quickly past on a yellow horse.

The green horseman strung his thick white bow, turned around in the saddle and aimed his arrow at the red man. The arrow whistled like a man's crying and was about to force its way into the red man's heart. At the last moment, the red man caught it with his hand and threw it away.

The green horseman smiled, bent over the neck of his yellow horse, and disappeared in the distance.

The red man has grown larger; his step became firmer. "Blue water," he said.

He walked on, and the sand formed dunes and solid hills of a gray color. The farther he walked the harder, grayer, and higher grew the hills, until finally rocks came into view.

And he had to force his way through the rocks, where he could neither stop nor turn back. One cannot turn back.

As he was passing a very steep, pointed rock, he noticed that the white man who crouched on top of it was about to throw a huge gray stone at him. He could not turn back and had to enter the narrow aisle. And he stepped forward. He was directly under the rock, when the man on top of it managed to detach the stone.

And the block fell down on the red man. He caught it with his left shoulder and threw it over his back.—The white man up there smiled and nodded his head in a friendly manner.—The red man grew even larger, that is, taller—"Water, water," said he.—The path between the rocks broadened continuously, until shallower dunes appeared, which grew flatter and flatter until they ceased to exist.—Only a plain remained.[30]

This text, which originally appeared in 1913 in the volume *Klänge* (Sounds, Harmonies), was reprinted recently in the anthology *Dichtung moderner Maler* (Poetry by Modern Painters).[31] This leads to the field of painting in which actually we had already arrived, for that which we called the poetics of Surrealism was originally not intended as a theory of literature but as one of modern art in general. The Surrealistic program extended even further to the personal, political, and social spheres.

6. Surrealism and Painting

The concept of the grotesque seems especially applicable to that movement of modern art which called itself Surrealism.[32] No explanation is required for the fact that in this context we do not deal with Futurism, Cubism, and the various types of nonobjective art (Russian Constructivism, the Dutch De Stijl movement, etc.). We shall also exclude German Expressionism—although it would be profitable to study its influence on the grotesque—and concentrate on Surrealism. In its programs—Breton's two "manifestoes" of 1924 and 1928, his book *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (1928), Breton's and Eluard's prefaces to a number of exhibition catalogs, and the contributions of various members of the group to the periodical *La Révolution Surréaliste* (since 1924)—the Romanticists are occasionally referred to as forerunners. Of the German Romanticists, Novalis and Arnim are specifically mentioned. But the concept of the grotesque, which plays so important a part in Romanticist theory, is slighted, although certain considerations and demands bring us relatively close to it.

Breton's first manifesto opens with an attack upon logic and rationalism, in the cage of which modern culture is said to be imprisoned. The new art wants to destroy the rationalistic concatenation of our world view, as well as the treacherous connections perceived by our senses. Novalis anticipated the first demand, and Rimbaud the second when he stated, "The poet makes himself a seer through a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses." Such demands presuppose the cessation of the belief in the personal (sen-

suous-mental-spiritual) unity of man. The Surrealists strongly emphasized these negations because they hoped to present an entirely new outlook on life, which Breton saw anticipated in Sigmund Freud's theory. Several painters were to find their way to Freud, as Breton had done as early as 1922. Freud is responsible not only for the anthropology but also for the esthetic of the movement. His name and his ideas are constantly echoed in the writings of the Surrealists, but subsequently the influence of Jung and his concept of the "collective unconscious" also made itself felt. For Surrealism saw in the unconscious the wellspring of its new art and the new culture in general. Even though the destruction of logic and the temporal-spatial order, the blending of heterogeneous elements, the quest for the absurd, and the regression to the unconscious (especially to the dream as a creative source) approximate the grotesque, the Surrealistic program leads away from it. To the extent to which the adherents of the movement did not create in protest against the past but employed the various techniques of psychic automatism, the "dictation of thought in the absence of any control exerted by the rational mind" (Breton), they sought new insights. They wanted to explore a new world which they found to be mysterious rather than terrifying or ominous. Paul Reverdy, another spokesman for the group, said that, "The marvelous is always beautiful, no matter how unreal it is. It is beautiful; for only the marvelous is beautiful. Gradually the mind becomes convinced of the higher reality inherent in these pictures." Breton, too, constantly referred to the "higher reality of certain hitherto neglected types of association." He believed "in the future resolution of the apparent contradiction between dream and reality in a kind of absolute reality or surreality." The official theory of Surrealism thus ultimately rejected the quest for the grotesque.

But the works of the Surrealists, notably those of a certain group consisting of Chirico, Max Ernst, Tanguy, Salvador Dali, Pierre Roy, Zimmermann, and others, constantly pose the question of the grotesque. For here we have to do with a kind of painting that is not based primarily on a distinct view of man but rather on a new view of the world or, more precisely, of the world of inanimate objects. At the time when the Italian writers of the *teatro del grottesco* were alienating the world through the agency of man, the painters of *pittura metafisica* were alienating it through inanimate objects.

The familiar relationships between tangible things were to be abolished in order to reveal their hidden ominousness. The alienation (*Verfremdung: render strano*) is achieved through the blending of heterogeneous elements, through sharp focus (a super-clarity that makes the world doubly strange), and through the distribution of objects on endless plains. At the same time the chronological order is disturbed by the juxtaposition of ancient and modern objects. This immensely visible world may totally lack the threatening, frightful, and abysmal qualities essential to the grotesque, so long as attention is focused on the magic of the phenomenal world. With regard to Carrà, critics have even spoken of a pathos of mysteriousness and in the case of Morandi of reassurance. In the paintings of Chirico, on the other hand, the strangeness of the world takes on an ominous overtone, and life has congealed into mechanical exanimation (Ill. 19). The air which envelops these objects is so thin that one finds it difficult to breathe. Sharp lines and smooth geometrical surfaces have been superimposed upon organic life. It is characteristic of Chirico that in his works statues and mannikins have taken the place of human beings. The old Romantic motif of automata and wax dolls is thus revived by the Italian painter.

In Chirico's works one also notices that fusion of realms, the mixture of organic and mechanical elements, which destroys the familiar order of our world view. More striking, however, is the blending of historically incompatible things. When ancient sculptures are placed alongside the most banal tools of modern life, and Renaissance buildings are topped by factory smokestacks, modern man's claim to his cultural heritage is challenged. This destruction of the historical is more incisive than Lautréamont's juxtaposition of sewing machine, umbrella, and dissection table, all of which can well be thought of as coexisting simultaneously. Chirico, who was probably deeply affected by Nietzsche's critique of the modern view of history, was certainly not the only artist active before World War I who drew his inspiration from a crisis of the historical consciousness. But it was his style in particular which determined the opening phase of French Surrealism. While the other Italian painters of *pittura metafisica* rejected the "Nordic" aspect of his art (an aspect that we have good reason to equate with its grotesqueness), in France his works had the impact of a revelation.[88]

Apollinaire called Chirico the "most amazing" painter of his age.

It was one of Chirico's canvases which caused Tanguy to become a painter, and the latter's relatively uniform works clearly betray this influence (Ill. 20). In Tanguy's paintings space, being illimitable, is filled with rigid bone- and cartilage-like objects. These are no longer the familiar but alienated objects found in the works of Chirico and the "metaphysical" painters. But the sharp contours and the merciless light which is directed at the objects from an oblique angle (so that their shadows are abnormally long) invest them with a certain degree of reality. The tensions inherent in these grotesques are lessened; anachronisms are lacking, and heterogeneity has been replaced by the striking monotony of the objects displayed on canvas. The distinctly static quality of the paintings—the slowly progressing stratus clouds in the sky are the only signs of movement —occasionally engenders an atmospheric unity.

Tanguy, in turn, has influenced Salvador Dali, as is shown by the incidence of illimitable spaces, cartilage-like formations, and the oblique light with the elongated shadows one encounters in certain of the latter's paintings (Ill. 21). But Dali does away with the homogeneity and self-sufficiency of the objects. The distortions, dislocations, fragmentations, and the disgusting and offensive ingredients of Dali's paintings, rendered with photographic exactness, make it hard for one to look at them for any length of time.[34] The objects in these paintings, moreover, do not only coexist but are actually intertwined. Chests of drawers burst forth from human bodies; mechanical and fragmented organic parts are fused; individual parts belong to several objects at once (a feature reminiscent of the seventeenth-century *Knorpelgrotesken*); and occasionally an object has a double identity. Such puzzle pictures—which Dali seems to regard as a pictorial way of reproducing the logic of dreams—can also be found in the Manneristic grotesques. One of the Mannerists, the Viennese court painter Arcimboldo was specifically mentioned by Dali, who imitated his grotesque caryatids in his own "Herodiad." But in Dali's paintings the effects of alienation are enhanced by the daring use of color.

Dali naturally refers to dreams as well as to Freud's theory. Passing beyond Freud, he has developed a theory of his own, the critical-paranoic method, which claims to be able "to materialize the images

of concrete irrationality with the fury of utmost precision." Dali the theoretician has succeeded in furnishing serious critics of his works with an excuse for closely studying his pictures because of their alleged irrational truth content. It is easy enough, however, to isolate symbols and allegorical signs with a literary origin in Dali's paintings.[35] This knowledge forces one to admit the share of deliberately introduced rationalistic elements in the creation of the works in question. This admission in turn immediately destroys the theoretical basis of the assumption that the world of these paintings is in any way authentic, as well as the reason for regarding them as grotesque. Poorly simulated madness does not deserve to be taken seriously.

Werner Haftmann calls Max Ernst "the first and foremost master of Surrealistic painting," especially of its "veristic" strain. Ernst helped to redact the first Surrealist manifestoes, and his writings repeatedly call for the exploration of the new surrealities in which our irrational faculties participate. The technique of rubbing (*frottage*) which Ernst developed during that period is striking for the use it makes of elements from objective reality. The patterns of the grain in wooden objects surprise him as "intensifications of his visionary powers" and affect him as a hallucinatory sequence. The mental universe is stimulated by the observation of the natural one. At one stage of his career Ernst created genuine nature grotesques in which the organic world is rendered demonic "through a series of spontaneously induced suggestions and transmutations" (Ill. 22). At times it seems that the elements of the ornamental grotesques of the Renaissance have reawakened to ominous life. Growing profusely and enormously, plants shoot up and produce blossoms which end in animal faces. For their part, the animals which are creeping about are of a plant-like nature. Even the human and demonic creatures mingle with this profuse vegetation of a malignant jungle. Other paintings by Ernst, such as the "Antipope," remind one of Hieronymus Bosch's creations.

Those familiar with the motifs of the grotesque throughout the centuries will be somewhat painfully aware of the historical ties of Surrealism, insofar as they prove the falseness of the contention, put forward in its programs, that Surrealistic art relates only the most intimate personal experiences. The magnetic attraction of the manifestoes is gone, and the pathos of self-interpretation no longer

affects us. It remains to be seen how many of the Surrealistic pictures, in which the technique of alienation was perfected and the attempt made to expand the scope of the grotesque, will prove of sufficient intrinsic merit to deserve a place in the history of the grotesque.

7. The Graphic Arts

The violent language of Surrealism—which emerged in the second decade of our century and consolidated itself as a movement in the twenties—tends to make one forget that throughout the nineteenth century there existed a kind of surrealism that carried on the tradition developed in previous centuries. The ties were strengthened by the uniformity of the medium, for the artists in question were, often exclusively, graphic artists who used pencil, pen, and burin. Focusing on the grotesque, one may distinguish between two principal currents, although these, too, are frequently merged. The "fantastic" grotesque originates with Bosch and Bruegel. It was cultivated by Blake in the eighteenth and Grandville, Bresdin, Redon, and other French artists in the nineteenth century. Their macabre dream worlds abound with rattling skeletons, creeping, root-like creatures, frightful monsters, and fantastic animals. (Snakes and bats, though slightly distorted, are often copied directly from nature.) Every section of these pictures is charged demonically, and often the horror emanates from the sucking, tumbling, and devouring spaces themselves. The other trend, which is illustrated by the work of Hogarth (whereas Callot and Goya participate in both), reaches the grotesque by way of satiric, caricatural, and cynical distortions, that is, by way of the comically grotesque. With Daumier, as well as with Hogarth, it is not always clear where the borderline of the comically grotesque has been overstepped.

While the subsequently secularized "Temptation of St. Anthony" is a central motif of the fantastic grotesque, the second type seems to choose social satire and the "horrors of war" (as in Callot's and Goya's cycles) as its favorite topics.[36] It is easy to see why the need for a cyclic treatment of these themes arises. With its illustrated

newspapers and magazines, the nineteenth century constantly provided new stimuli for social and political satire. Further possibilities were offered by the illustrations of literary works. In the latter case, the grotesque element often seems to be added by the graphic artist. We have already pointed this out in connection with the illustrations of *Don Quixote*. But this can be observed in regard to Tony Johannot's illustrations for Musset's *Voyage où il vous plaira* of 1843 and the different sets of illustrations of Dickens' works. Besides the English, only the French cultivated both the fantastic grotesque and the satire-turning-grotesque in the nineteenth century. The first type was stimulated by the triumph of French Romanticism, and the second by the July Revolution (1830). Both developments originated at the moment when Heine tried to persuade the French that they had no talent for the nocturnal-fantastic.

The two greatest masters of the grotesque in the graphic medium (whose creations are artistically superior to the works of the Surrealistic painters), however, were not Frenchmen. Werner Haftmann opens the section concerned with the Flemish artist James Ensor (1860–1949) with the words, "It was the Germanic spirit which brought the drama of these decades to its highest pitch." If we add Alfred Kubin (1877–1959), this time span increases by a number of years. Ensor perfected his style in 1886, Kubin his around 1900. This means that although the new trends (in our context: the vogue of horror stories, the *teatro del grottesco,* Morgenstern's grotesques, *pittura metafisica,* and the beginnings of Surrealism) gained prominence only in the years immediately preceding World War I, they were clearly foreshadowed in the works of certain individuals active at the end of the nineteenth century.

Kubin and Ensor resemble each other insofar as, apart from brief, rather insignificant trips abroad, they never left the narrow circle of their real or elective fatherland. Ensor was rooted in his Ostende and Kubin (after 1906) in his Zwickledt. They lived and worked as individuals and did not join any of the groups then being formed by their contemporaries. (Kubin quickly cut his ties with the "Blue Rider" school.) Both exerted a powerful influence on their younger contemporaries, however. Ensor's name appears in the Surrealists' programs, and Chirico and Klee (whose early graphic work betrays his infatuation with the grotesque) both came under Kubin's spell

during their residence in Munich. But in at least one respect Klee is closer to Ensor than to Kubin; while Kubin's works are largely devoid of social criticism, Ensor and the young Klee reach the fantastic grotesque through exaggeration of the satiric element.

From his knowledge of French Impressionism Ensor developed a new technique of breaking up and splicing lines which enabled him to express the malevolence of the world of objects and the ominously fantastic nature of space in a striking manner. Even more characteristic of his style is the way in which he alienates the human face by rendering it as a mask or grimace (Ill. 23). To be sure, these are familiar themes and motifs of the grotesque. But Ensor discovered the mass as a new power that overwhelms the individual and deprives him of his Self. This turbulent massing and intertwining of human elements is also found in the ornamental grotesques of Luca Signorelli and in the works of Bosch, Bruegel, and Callot. Viewing Ensor's composition a little more closely, however, one finds that the tangles consist of individual groups, so that the eye is able to traverse the pictures by wandering from place to place and from group to group. Ensor succeeds in representing the mass as mass. With the eruptive and unswerving force of its movement this mass is considerably more than the sum of its parts (Ill. 24).

We called the "Temptation of St. Anthony" one of the basic motifs of the fantastic grotesque. In E. T. A. Hoffmann's works, the saint had turned into an artist, for whom there was no escape and no reward for being. Ensor approaches the familiar theme from a new point of view, especially in the work entitled "Demons Which Torment Me." He frequently chooses the moment at which the intrusion of the ominous forces is pending, whereas Kubin's art is more static. Kubin portrays a world that is already strange and the ominousness of which is clearly sensed, without as yet having fully asserted itself. In contrast to the dramatic quality of Ensor's works, Kubin's do not capture the moment immediately preceding the irruption. The horror, which is always actual in Ensor, is latent though all-pervasive in the creations of the German artist. In the works of the Flemish painter the demons can still withdraw from their theatre of operations, whereas Kubin shows the ominous forces in their omnipresence.

In his autobiographical writings Kubin defines the point of view

he adopted as follows: "At times I was totally dominated by the urge to yield, even when conscious, to the nocturnal visions, and the impressions of the real world reached the core of my being as if deflected by strangely ground lenses." But Kubin does not merely want to record his dream experiences. When in 1902 Ferdinand Avenarius spoke of his art as a kind of "dream drawing," he mildly protested; dreams would lead to the remote world of pure subjectivity. Kubin, however, operates in that transitional realm between dreaming and waking, "the progression from one state of consciousness to another," where the soul dips into the suprapersonal stream, a fluidum or a universal being, and where the senses and feelings are able to pierce the surface of external reality.[37]

In contrast to the Surrealists Kubin does not strive for insight (*Erkenntnis*) but for artistic form: "I was fully satisfied only when I decided to fuse the gently emerging fragments in such a way that they formed a whole. . . . We shall beware, however, of dismembering each individual phenomenon . . . according to some interesting system, in order to discover its secret. Let us rather preserve the full symbolic meaning. I consider the visible manifestation of the creative vision as stronger and more enduring than any elaborate analysis."[38]

The products of this mode of creation bear such titles as "Nocturnal Visions," "Twilight World," "Adventures," and "Dark Fairy Tales." Occasionally these are rather quaint and humorous, or even gay and totally relaxed "fairy tales," and it would be decidedly wrong to call all of Kubin's works grotesque. But something uncanny appears to be present in most of them and, all things considered, the grotesque seems to furnish the most inclusive category applicable to an *oeuvre* which, in addition to individual pieces and graphic cycles, comprises a large number of book illustrations.[39]

While in Ensor's works the human world predominates, Kubin is fully preoccupied with nature. For all his study of the masters—Kubin himself spoke of Bosch, Bruegel, Goya, and others, as his models—he developed a highly personal technique, characterized by a quick, gliding, and elusive kind of stroke which is nervous even in its tiniest particles. In this way, plants, trees, thickets, tools, and buildings gain an ominous vitality. Kubin's favorite subjects, however, are animals, which populate his drawings by creeping, sliding,

crouching, emerging from the water, or lurching through the air. And only when considering the sum total of Kubin's output does the observer realize the enormous variety in the mixture of horrible, frightful, terrifying, odd, and humorous ingredients.

While Kubin is basically a Romantic who seeks to portray the twilight worlds of nature, his younger contemporary A. Paul Weber (born in 1893) is mostly concerned with the present age. As in the case of Ensor, his fantastic grotesques are largely satiric in nature. His is a kind of satire, however, which, like the narrator in Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen,* sees merely the abysmal forces and no longer expects the chaos to be defeated. Even where a specific image is placed in focus, the perspective aims at the totality of the decadent age and its culture. This is even expressed in the spatial organization of Weber's works, where we recognize the wide open spaces we know from Chirico, Tanguy, and Dali. Occasionally, our glance is drawn over a long distance toward enormous buildings capable of housing millions of people. But "housing" is the wrong word, for actually they seem ready to collapse at any moment and crush the crowd which is milling around them. Equally characteristic of Weber's style are the monstrous creatures that come creeping over the gigantic buildings: the spiders, octopuses, snakes, and dragonlike beings. As with Ensor, individuals are seen as particles of a mass, and human faces are reduced to masks or caricatures (Ills. 27 and 28). Weber's stroke is not as consistent as Kubin's, however, and one is variously reminded of Daumier, Munch, Ensor, and Barlach.

Our survey of almost five centuries of cultural history raises the simple question of why it is that the graphic arts boast a technique that is particularly well suited to the grotesque. Beginning with Agostino Veneziano and the ornamental grotesques of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the one hand and with Bosch's drawings on the other, these arts were practiced by Callot and Goya and throughout the nineteenth century down to our own age. One could well write a full-fledged history of the grotesque without leaving the realm of the graphic arts. Pencil and burin seem to be tools ideally suited to a direct and immediate transcription of visionary experiences. By insisting on the fleeting nature of the twilight visions ("The moments of transition from one state of consciousness to another are artistically the most fruitful ones for me.

Vague, colorless phantoms glide and flow past me in the room, into which a strange light from invisible sources pours as through a cave"), Kubin characterized more than his personal approach to art. At the same time, the linear stroke is better suited to express the grotesque intention than the brush stroke. It is not a question of the importance of the medium as such; in that respect an art that uses color is certainly far superior to an art that is restricted to black and white. Color, however, implies detachment, since it leads into another realm that has its own tensions, laws, and subjects. Line, on the other hand, gives more immediate expression. The creator of the grotesque desires to be in direct touch with his subject and to be as closely as possible identified with it. Nor is color the only cause of detachment in a painting. A similar effect is created by the larger surface of the canvas and the special problems which it poses. Both older and younger painters of the grotesque characteristically prefer the smaller sizes. Dali's "Burning Giraffe" (Ill. 21) measures 27 x 35 cm., and a number of pictures by Tanguy and Chirico have equally diminutive dimensions. Perhaps there is still another factor which makes the affinity of the graphic arts for the grotesque comprehensible. This factor moderates the somewhat disturbing pathos which lies in phrases like "the artist should record his nocturnal visions in a state of complete abandon." Kubin called one of his collections "Adventures of a Drawing Pen." Did the drawing pen create these adventures? One must not take this title to express a literal truth, although it certainly contains a grain thereof. The pen pursues the fantastic idea of the moment. Even here we do not have a completely free imagination but rather one that is predisposed in a certain way and conditioned by the artist's previous output. In the act of drawing, strange shapes (which we know from doodling during boring lectures or telephone conversations) suggest themselves and are willingly executed by the artist's hand which obeys the momentary impulse precisely because it is fascinated by the oddities. The German *Laune* (whim) corresponds to the Italian *capriccio* and the French *caprice,* the name attached by Goya and Callot to certain of their creations. In their day, the word "grotesque" was used in this sense almost synonymously with *capriccio,* and we who attach more significance to the idea of the grotesque than previous ages should keep the connotation well in mind. We now have reached the point where we ought to ascertain the results of our survey.

An Attempt to Define the Nature of the Grotesque

Do the paintings, the graphic arts, and the richly diversified literary works which we have considered have anything in common? Is it significant that the language, the usage of which we have so far followed, suggests the word "grotesque" over and over again, despite the numerous variations in its meaning? I think it is, although all the phenomena which down through the ages have been so designated certainly do not belong to this timeless conception of the grotesque. The decisive changes in the connotation of the word occurred in the first few centuries of its history, when the technical term became a "significant" word, an esthetic category referring to certain creative attitudes (dreamlike, for example), contents, and structures, as well as to effects upon the beholder (Wieland's "laughter, disgust, and astonishment"). But these changes were not arbitrary. When the

sixteenth-century Italians spoke of the ornamental grotesques as *sogni dei pittori,* they meant a certain creative attitude which has been regarded as typical of the grotesque until the present—without hesitation one may insert a skeptical "as if" in parentheses. It can just as easily be shown that the effect which Wieland (whose definition we accepted with slight modifications) regarded as typical of the grotesque in the latter part of the eighteenth century also applies to the ornamental grotesques and proves just as useful for more recent times. Finally, we saw that certain motifs of the ornamental grotesques reappeared again and again, even in Surrealism.

That the word "grotesque" applies to three different realms—the creative process, the work of art itself, and its reception—is significant and appropriate as an indication that it has the makings of a basic esthetic category. This threefold aspect is characteristic of the work of art in general which, in direct contrast to all other forms of production, is literally "created." Its unique structure enables the work of art to preserve its identity however much of its "cause" it may have absorbed. It has the strength to rise above this "occasion." And finally, in contradistinction to other and different kinds of use, the work of art is "received." It can only be experienced in the act of reception, regardless of any modifications arising from it.

The modification and expansion of esthetic concepts in the eighteenth century was largely connected with the changes in the reception of the works of art. What was previously taken to be the designation of objectively verifiable tangible forms was now primarily regarded as an indication of mental responses, or at least as the cause of such responses. The history of the word "grotesque," which clearly illustrates this change, is in this respect characteristic of the far-reaching developments which took place in that period. The counterblow against this procedure favored by the *Sturm und Drang* was struck by Goethe during his Italian journey and by Karl Philipp Moritz. Both wanted to evolve clear-cut esthetic categories unrelated to reception and dealing primarily with the work of art itself, which was no longer to be gauged by its tangible and measurable forms but by its structure. Our contemporary esthetics and poetics follow in their footsteps, and I myself find it necessary to speak of the grotesque—if it is to gain currency as an esthetic category—as a comprehensive structural principle of works of art.

Nevertheless, it remains true that the grotesque is experienced only in the act of reception. Yet it is entirely possible that things are regarded as grotesque even though structurally there is no reason for calling them so. Those who are unfamiliar with the culture of the Incas will consider many of their sculptures to be grotesque, but perhaps that which we regard as nightmarish and ominously demonic, that is, the medium through which some horror, anguish, or fear of the incomprehensible is expressed, is a familiar form that belongs to a perfectly intelligible frame of reference. Only our ignorance justifies our use of the word "grotesque" in such a case, and analogous examples can easily be found in far less remote regions or periods. Art history is currently seeking to decipher Hieronymus Bosch's pictorial language. If it succeeds, we may have proof that Bosch did not mean his pictures to be grotesque in the proper sense of the word, and that the effect engendered by his *oeuvre,* probably unequaled in the Occidental history of the grotesque, is essentially based on a misunderstanding. On the other hand, it could also be shown, as we did in the case of Wilhelm Busch, that the grotesque elements to be found in certain works are not properly judged when interpreted in the comic or humorous sense. All these experiences teach us not to define the grotesque exclusively on the basis of its effect, although it is really impossible to avoid the vicious circle. Even in defining the structural properties of the grotesque we have to refer to its reception, with which we cannot dispense under any circumstances. It is certainly true, however, that a prolonged interest in the works of art themselves helps us to develop a greater ability to judge them. (Ultimately, it is this ability which lies at the root of personality and provides a refuge for all art. The way through scientific observation—which is the straight one when theoretical insights are concerned—is only a detour, albeit a useful one.)

An inadequate understanding of the grotesque is possible; the individual forms and detachable contents are ambiguous and suffused with the most diverse meanings. Modern stylistic research is accustomed to such conditions. Nevertheless, there are certain specific forms and motifs which are predisposed toward certain contents. We have had ample occasion to observe repetitions of subject matter, and there is good reason for listing some of the most important themes. Among them belong all "monsters." Even the ornamental

grotesque employed the fabulous creatures enumerated by Walter Scott in his definition of the grotesque. If Benvenuto Cellini wanted to substitute "monstrosities" for "grotesques," this shows that he considered this trait as the dominant one. This trait traditionally prevailed from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries in the "Temptation of St. Anthony," by which the artists of subsequent ages were inspired.[1] Another pictorial source was provided by the biblical Apocalypse since, like the demons around St. Anthony, the animals rising from the abyss obviously bear their own meaning. But real animals also frequently recur in the grotesques. Even in animals that are familiar to him, modern man may experience the strangeness of something totally different from himself and suggestive of abysmal ominousness.[2] Certain animals are especially suitable to the grotesque—snakes, owls, toads, spiders—the nocturnal and creeping animals which inhabit realms apart from and inaccessible to man. Partly for the same reason (to which their uncertain origin is added) the same observation applies to vermin. It seems as if the original meaning of that word were still alive, although we are no longer aware of it. In Old High German, *zebar* means sacrificial animal. Vermin (*Ungeziefer*), accordingly, is everything that is unclean and unworthy of being sacrificed. It belongs not to God but to the evil powers:

> Welcome, and hail to thee,
> Patron, to-day!
> We're flying and humming,
> We hear and obey.
> Singly and silently
> Us thou hast sown;
> Hither, by thousands,
> Father, we've flown.
> The imp in the bosom
> Is snugly concealed,
> But lice in the fur-coat
> Are sooner revealed.
>
> (translated by Bayard Taylor)

The chorus of the insects greets its master Mephisto when he takes off the old fur coat in which he formerly revealed the secrets of

science to the student and from which "grasshoppers, bugs, and moths" emerge. And their lord is pleased by the new creation.

The grotesque animal incarnate, however, is the bat (*Fledermaus*), the very name of which points to an unnatural fusion of organic realms concretized in this ghostly creature. And strange habits complement its strange appearance. An animal of the dusk, the bat flies noiselessly, has exceedingly subtle senses, and moves so rapidly that one could easily suspect it of sucking the blood of sleeping animals. It is strange even in the state of repose when its wings cover it like a coat and it hangs, head down, from a rafter, more like a piece of dead matter than a living thing.[3]

The plant world, too, furnishes numerous motifs, and not only for the ornamental grotesques. The inextricable tangle of the jungle with its ominous vitality, in which nature itself seems to have erased the difference between plants and animals, is so grotesque that no exaggeration is needed. The enlarging microscope or a glance into otherwise hidden organic realms reveals grotesque sceneries as well. What Serenus Zeitblom and Adrian Leverkühn witness in the aquarium of Adrian's father, Alfred Kubin has experienced in reality. Paul Klee also once admitted that he was always haunted by the impressions he gained in the Naples aquarium.

The characteristic motifs of the grotesque also include all the tools which unfold a dangerous life of their own. The pointed objects of Wilhelm Busch have more recently been supplanted by modern instruments of technology, especially the noisy motor vehicles. The fusion of organic and mechanical elements offers as easy a target as disproportion did in the past. In modern pictures, airplanes appear in the form of giant dragonflies—or dragonflies in that of airplanes—and tanks move as if they were monstrous animals. This technical outlook is so familiar to modern man that he has no difficulties in devising a "technical" grotesque in which the instruments are demonically destructive and overpower their makers.

The mechanical object is alienated by being brought to life, the human being by being deprived of it. Among the most persistent motifs of the grotesque we find human bodies reduced to puppets, marionettes, and automata, and their faces frozen into masks. From the interspersed masks of the ornamental grotesque to the present age the theme has been a popular one, although in the course of time

it underwent characteristic changes. Even in Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen* the mask, instead of covering a living and breathing face, had taken over the role of the face itself. If one were to tear the mask off, the grinning image of the bare skull would come to light. Ensor's and Paul Weber's figures are born with masks. Even the grinning skull and the moving skeleton are motifs the macabre content of which structurally aligns them with the grotesque. Again and again, I have mentioned the influence exerted by the Dance of Death, which had only to slough off its didactic skin to enrich the vocabulary of grotesque forms.

In the insane person, human nature itself seems to have taken on ominous overtones.[4] Once more it is as if an impersonal force, an alien and inhuman spirit, had entered the soul. The encounter with madness is one of the basic experiences of the grotesque which life forces upon us. In their shaping of the grotesque, the Romanticists and the moderns have taken over this theme with notable frequency. But the phenomenon also leads us to the *Schaffenspoetik* [poetics concerned with the creative process]. From an early date, insanity, quasi-insanity, and dreams were used to define the source of creativity. Originally this was done by critics who made the work of art a criterion of the artist's state of mind and who regarded the world of the grotesque as a correlative of insanity. This has been a massive statement about the structure of the grotesque, and we have now reached the point where the actual definition has to be made.

The grotesque is a structure. Its nature could be summed up in a phrase that has repeatedly suggested itself to us: THE GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WORLD. But some additional explanation is required. For viewed from the outside, the world of the fairy tale could also be regarded as strange and alien. Yet its world is not estranged, that is to say, the elements in it which are familiar and natural to us do not suddenly turn out to be strange and ominous. It is our world which has to be transformed. Suddenness and surprise are essential elements of the grotesque. In literature the grotesque appears in a scene or an animated tableau. Its representations in the plastic arts, too, do not refer to a state of repose but to an action, a "pregnant moment" (Ensor), or at least—in the case of Kafka—a situation that is filled with ominous tension. In this way the kind of strangeness we have in mind is somewhat more closely defined. We are so strongly

affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world. The grotesque instills fear of life rather than fear of death. Structurally, it presupposes that the categories which apply to our world view become inapplicable. We have observed the progressive dissolution which has occurred since the ornamental art of the Renaissance: the fusion of realms which we know to be separated, the abolition of the law of statics, the loss of identity, the distortion of "natural" size and shape, the suspension of the category of objects, the destruction of personality, and the fragmentation of the historical order.

But who effects the estrangement of the world, who announces his presence in this overwhelming ominousness? Only now do we plumb the final depth of the horror that is inspired by the transformed world. These questions remain unanswered. Apocalyptic beasts emerge from the abyss; demons intrude upon us. If we were able to name these powers and relate them to the cosmic order, the grotesque would lose its essential quality. We have discussed such instances in connection with Bosch and E. T. A. Hoffmann. What intrudes remains incomprehensible, inexplicable, and impersonal. One could use another descriptive phrase and characterize the grotesque as the objectivation of the "It," the ghostly "It"—in contrast to the psychological "It" (*es freut mich:* it pleases me = I am glad) and the cosmic "It" (*es regnet:* it rains)—the "It" which Ammann defined as the third meaning of the impersonal pronoun.[5]

We are unable to orient ourselves in the alienated world, because it is absurd. Here the difference between the grotesque and the tragic becomes apparent. Initially the tragic also harbored the absurd. We can see this in the tragic nuclei of Greek tragedy. It is absurd for a mother to kill her children, for a son to murder his father or a father his son, and for a man to eat the flesh of his sons. The Atrides myth is full of absurdities. But, first of all, these are individual deeds. Furthermore, they are deeds which endanger the principles of the moral order of the world. The grotesque is not concerned with individual actions or the destruction of the moral order (although both factors may be partly involved). It is primarily the expression of our failure to orient ourselves in the physical universe. Finally, the tragic does not remain within the sphere of incompre-

hensibility. As an artistic genre, tragedy opens precisely within the sphere of the meaningless and the absurd the possibility of a deeper meaning—in fate, which is ordained by the gods, and in the greatness of the tragic hero, which is only revealed through suffering. The creator of grotesques, however, must not and cannot suggest a meaning. Nor must he distract our attention from the absurd. If Keller in his *Kammacher* had described with compassion his protagonists' progress and their race toward destruction, the ensuing emotional perspective would have weakened the effect of the grotesque.

But of what nature is this perspective? And from what point of view is the alienated world represented? Both questions lead us back to the creative process. One answer was given again and again through the ages by artists as well as by critics: the estranged world appears in the vision of the dreamer or daydreamer or in the twilight of the transitional moments. What is so clearly attested in the autobiographical writings of the Romantics and Surrealists—namely, that this vision takes hold of "real" things and seeks to create enduring forms—could also be shown to be true of the artists of earlier ages. But quite as often we came upon confessions of a different order. According to these, the unity of perspective in the grotesque consists in an unimpassioned view of life on earth as an empty, meaningless puppet play or a caricatural marionette theatre. The divinity of poets and the shaping force of nature have altogether ceased to exist. If Kubin harks back to the ancient *topos* of the *threatrum mundi*: "We, the creatures most mysterious to ourselves, are poets as well as directors of, and characters in, the play," the apparent answer only increases the mystification. For here, too, a real answer cannot be given. The two above-mentioned points of view may well correspond to the two basic types of the grotesque which our survey of the graphic arts has helped us to isolate: the "fantastic" grotesque with its oneiric worlds and the radically "satiric" grotesque with its play of masks.

And does the ridiculous still form part of the grotesque? With slight modifications we subscribed to Wieland's analysis of its reception. But in what structural element of the grotesque does its justification lie? The possibility of such a view is most easily grasped in connection with the grotesque that emerges from a satiric world

view. Laughter originates on the comic and caricatural fringe of the grotesque. Filled with bitterness, it takes on characteristics of the mocking, cynical, and ultimately satanic laughter while turning into the grotesque. Wieland felt the urge to laugh even in the presence of the Hell Bruegel's "fantastic" grotesques. Did he mean the kind of laughter that is an involuntary response to situations which cannot be handled in any other way? The laughter which, in Minna von Barnhelm's opinion, sounds more horrible than the most terrible curses? Wieland's laughter is unlikely to have echoed Tellheim's despair, although it undoubtedly constituted a somewhat involuntary and forced attempt to shake off fear. The role of laughter within the complex of the grotesque poses the most difficult question that arises in conjunction with that phenomenon. A clear-cut answer is impossible, especially since the involuntary and abysmal laughter formed part of the action of certain works we have studied: the narrator of Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen* felt urgently compelled to laugh in churches, and E. T. A. Hoffmann's figures are often shaken with laughter when they do not feel at all in the mood for laughing. Perhaps still another aspect of laughter in the grotesque should now be added. I refer to Fischart's description of the dance of the giants, which began as a simple play with words but progressed to a point where language itself seemed to come to life and draw the author into its whirlpool: *"ich schnauf' auch schier."* Fischart had begun a dangerous game, the same game which the graphic artists played in their *capriccios*. The works we have studied clearly testify that THE GROTESQUE IS A PLAY WITH THE ABSURD. It may begin in a gay and carefree manner—as Raphael wanted to play in his grotesques. But it may also carry the player away, deprive him of his freedom, and make him afraid of the ghosts which he so frivolously invoked. And now no helper comes to his rescue. The creators of grotesques have no advice that they can follow. They transgress the limits which the aged Goethe set to their art in a paralipomenon of his *West-Östlicher Divan:*

Solcher Bande darf sich niemand rühmen,
Als wer selbst von Banden frei sich fühlt,
Und wer heiter im Absurden spielt,
Den wird auch wohl das Absurde ziemen.

(Nobody may boast of such bonds
Except those who feel free of bonds.
And to him who plays gaily with the absurd
The absurd is likely to be suited.)

In many grotesques, little is to be felt of such freedom and gaiety. But where the artistic creation has succeeded, a faint smile seems to pass rapidly across the scene or picture, and slight traces of the playful frivolity of the *capriccio* appear to be present. And there, but only there, another kind of feeling arises within us. In spite of all the helplessness and horror inspired by the dark forces which lurk in and behind our world and have power to estrange it, the truly artistic portrayal effects a secret liberation. The darkness has been sighted, the ominous powers discovered, the incomprehensible forces challenged. And thus we arrive at a final interpretation of the grotesque: AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD.

Such attempts have been made throughout the ages. But our survey revealed a marked difference in their density and intensity. In concluding, we may state once again that there are three historical periods in particular in which the power of the "It" was strongly felt: the sixteenth century, the age which extends from the *Sturm und Drang* to Romanticism, and the twentieth century. In these periods the belief of the preceding ages in a perfect and protective natural order ceased to exist. Without being forced to construct a unified world view for the Middle Ages, one must admit that the sixteenth century had experiences unexplained by the *Weltanschauung* of the preceding centuries. *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism were consciously opposed to the rationalistic world view developed during the Enlightenment; they even questioned the legitimacy of the rationale for such a world view. The modern age questions the validity of the anthropological and the relevance of the scientific concepts underlying the syntheses of the nineteenth century. The various forms of the grotesque are the most obvious and pronounced contradictions of any kind of rationalism and any systematic use of thought. It was absurd in itself when the Surrealists sought to make absurdity the basis of their system.

Our survey has also established the fact that the artists of subsequent ages consciously harked back to the earlier masters of the gro-

tesque. In spite of the structural similarity of all grotesques, the styles of individual artists and ages were easily discernible. At the same time, two basic types of the grotesque emerged: the "fantastic" and the "satiric." Only by means of structural analyses can one define individual and historical idiosyncrasies. The number of such analyses could be continued and would always find new material. In this book I have sought to view the phenomenon for what it really is and to explore a few paths which seemed rich in promise.

Notes

I The Grotesque: The Word and Its Meaning

1. It is self-evident that the phenomenon is older than the name we assign to it, and that a complete history of the grotesque would have to deal with Chinese, Etruscan, Aztec, and Old Germanic art as well as with Greek (Aristophanes!) and other literatures.

2. L. Curtius, *Die Wandmalerei Pompejis* (1929), p. 138, refers to Asia Minor as the region in which the new fashion originated.

3. See L. Dussler, *Signorelli* (1927). Among earlier discussions of the ornamental grotesque, Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and several publications by Schmarsow are of special interest.

4. In his book *Säule und Ornament: Studien zum Problem des Manierismus in den nordischen Säulenbüchern und Vorlageblättern des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stockholm, 1956), p. 113, Erik Forssman has recently taken exception to the traditional view that the scrollwork tech-

nique was developed in connection with the decoration of Fontainebleau (after 1530). Forssman believes the style to have evolved simultaneously at different places.

5. See P. Jessen, *Der Ornamentstich* (1920); *idem, Meister des Ornamentstichs* (4 vols., 1922–1924); R. Berliner, *Ornamentale Vorlageblätter des 15. bis. 18. Jahrhunderts* (1925/26); Emmy Rosenbacher, *"Die Entwicklung des deutschen Ornamentstichs von 1660 bis 1735"* (Dissertation, Hamburg, 1930); Felicitas Rothe, *Das deutsche Akanthusornament des 17. Jahrhunderts* (1938); P. Meyer, *Das Ornament in der Kunstgeschichte* (Zürich, 1944).

While leafing through the ornamental engravings of the seventeenth century, the historian of the grotesque is struck by certain designs which seem to foreshadow the enlarged meaning the word was to gain in the following century. In the seventeenth century, the ornamental flower piece, which includes a detailed and often structurally important foreground, existed as an independent genre. We often encounter the motif of the dragon, from whose mouth the flower arabesque or grotesque issues. In a design of 1635 the Frenchman François Lefebure makes use of greatly reduced figures from the etchings of Callot. The two framing figures in the lower right and left are derived from Callot's illustrations of the *commedia dell'arte* (see ill. 18 b in F. Rothe's book). In an engraving by J. Hagenbach and Daniel Buchenwald (illustrated on p. 111 of P. Jessen's book) certain of Bosch's fantastic creations have been used for the grotesque figures.

6. We anticipate an observation from the subsequent history of the meaning of grotesque, namely, the one that relates to its application to the dance, the terminology of which includes also the words "arabesque" and "moresque." Whereas arabesque means only a figure of the solo dance—the horizontal position while standing on one leg, which is particularly popular as a final figure, moresque refers to a special genre of the dance. The Morris Dancers were known in Europe since the fifteenth century and have often been illustrated by contemporary sculptors and draftsmen (see the reliefs on the *Goldenes Dach* at Innsbruck and the carved Morris Dancers of Erasmus Grasser in Munich's old City Hall). Here we have to do with an extremely eccentric stylized dance by several characters (whose costumes were all adorned with bells) competing for the prize of a "Queen." Modern descriptions of this dance frequently resort to the word "grotesque"; and the modern grotesque dance with its only slightly curved line presumably harks back to the Morris Dancers. If the terms grotesque and arabesque, however, can be transferred to the dance, and if the term moresque is ambiguous, language itself suggests the conclusion that the dance is essentially a dynamic use of ornaments within a given space. Or, to put it more cautiously, this is the essence of one kind of dance. For, from the very beginning, the ornamental group dance goes hand in hand with a mimetic dance executed by individuals or couples. In the social dance of the twentieth century,

the ornamental group dance came to an end with the decease of the quadrille. Today, no prearranged order governs the couples and their movements. The only relation between the couples in the modern social dance consists in the fact that they are in each other's way. Space is at a premium, and one looks for room in the corners, aisles, and between the tables.

7. *"Stücke aus den ersten Gründen der gesamten Weltweisheit"* in *Deutsche Literatur in Entwicklungsreihen,* series *Aufklärung,* vol. 2, p. 217.

8. In making the painter Morto de Feltro responsible for the triumph of the ornamental style, Winckelmann follows Vasari.

9. Compare also W. von Wartburg's entry in his etymological dictionary of the French language; P. Knaak's *"Über den Gebrauch des Wortes* 'grotesque' " (Dissertation, Greifswald, 1913); and G. Matoré's article *"En marge de Th. Gautier: 'grotesque' "* in the *Festschrift* for Mario Roques (Paris, 1946), pp. 217–225.

10. See also the entry "grotesque" in Furetière's edition of the *Dictionnaire Universel* (new edition, 1725).

11. Callot, like Goya, treated the themes *"Caprices"* and *"Misères de la Guerre"* in cyclical form. It has been shown that his two versions of the "Temptation of St. Anthony" are indebted to Pieter Bruegel.

12. This quotation has not been collected by P. Knaak, who cites Diderot as having equated the grotesques with *êtres chimériques.* As far as I know, this phrase had only once before been related to grotesques, namely, in Desmarest de Saint-Sorlin's *Visionnaires* (1637).

13. How vague the meaning of grotesque had become even within the realm of the fine arts is shown in later editions of van Mander's *Maler-Buch.* In the Haarlem edition of 1604 it is only used in the strict sense of the word, whereas J. de Jongh, who was in charge of the edition of 1764, adds a comment (p. 63 A) which betrays the influence of the recently adopted French usage of the word.

II The Extension of the Meaning of Grotesque

1. Klopstock and Winckelmann had undermined this principle from other angles.

2. The problem appears in almost all theoretical writings on art. In his *Anmerkungen über das Theater* Lenz observes that he thinks ten times more highly of the painter of caricatures than of the idealistic painter. Gerstenberg increased the problematic nature of the phenomenon by referring to the meeting of extremes "where often the slightest shift in thought makes the difference between beauty and caricature." As early as 1742 Fielding sought to justify his use of the caricatural style in the preface to his novel *Joseph Andrews.*

3. In making the psychological effect—in correlation with the psychological cause—a part of the definition of esthetic phenomena, Wieland

follows a trend of the time, since in his day the entire esthetic vocabulary was transformed or renewed in this sense (especially by Gerstenberg and Herder).

4. Shaftesbury, *Characters* (1737), III, 6: "'Tis the perfection of certain grotesque-painters to keep as far from nature as possible." E. Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1756): "All the designs . . . of St. Anthony were rather a sort of odd, wild grotesques than anything capable of producing a serious passion."

5. *"Geschichte des weisen Danischmend"* in *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1854), IX, 15 f.

6. Max J. Friedländer, *Pieter Bruegel* (1921), quotes Bruegel's contemporary Guicciardini as calling the artist "grande imitatore della scienza et fantasia di Girolamo Bosch, onde n'ha anche acquistato il sopranome di secondo Girolamo Bosch" (p. 25). On fol. 133 b of his *Schilder-Buch* (Antwerp, 1617) van Mander observes that Bruegel "imitated the example of Jerome Bosch and produced similar horrors and drolleries, which caused many people to call him Pieter the Droll." Sandrart, in his *Teutsche Akademie* (1665), gives a literal translation of van Mander's statement. None of them uses the word "grotesque" in connection with Bosch or Bruegel. Concerning the drollery see M. Th. Bergenthal, *"Elemente der Drolerie und ihre Beziehungen zur Literatur"* (Dissertation, Bonn, 1936).

7. See W. Fraenger, *Das 1000jährige Reich* (1948); L. von Baldass, *Hieronymus Bosch* (1943); D. Bax, *Ontcijvering van Jeroen Bosch* (Den Haag, 1949); Clément Wertheim Aymès, *Hieronymus Bosch: Eine Einführung in seine geheime Symbolik* (1957).

8. The relationship between Mannerism and Surrealism was pointed out by Dagobert Frey in a lecture entitled *"Stil und Geist des Manierismus"* (see the report in the magazine *Kunstchronik* [V, No. 9]).

9. It was printed in 1484 in Bosch's residence in Hertogenbosch. The infernal vision of Tundalus, which belongs to the Irish visions, was published in Germany in Latin prose, and subsequently in two German metrical versions, in the middle of the twelfth century. The printed book was again written in prose.

10. The previously cited passage from the Apocalypse was meant to suggest a source of inspiration, and not a direct model for Bosch.

11. *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* (N.F. VIII, 1934), p. 148 f. The passage is approvingly quoted in G. Jedlicka's *Pieter Bruegel* (second edition, 1946). Bruegel's work is treated in the monographs of Ch. Bernard (Brussels, 1908), K. Pfister (1921), and M. J. Friedländer (1921).

12. I am struck by an association that suggests itself to Jedlicka in his *Pieter Bruegel*. Speaking of the conglomeration of things which Mad Meg carries away, he remarks (p. 93): "This wild array of objects is a heightened expression of her state of mind (it reminds one of the frightfully exaggerated description of Züs Bünzli's sewing box)." This is a

surprising confirmation of our interpretation of Züs' character as that of an essentially demonic creature who changes into a "person" of the Seldwyla world only toward the end of the novella.

13. One of the first instances of the use of grotesque in connection with Bruegel's art occurs in Florente Le Comte's *Cabinet des singularitez d'architecture, peinture* . . . (3 vols., Paris, 1699/1700). The passage (II, 217) is all the more important since it associates Bruegel with Callot as a painter of grotesques: "Bruegel particularly distinguished himself in the painting of grotesques, and one can say that he bequeathed to Callot all these comical and pleasing conceptions which pervade the genius of that great man. It seems quite appropriate to say that if Bruegel was the Callot of his time, Callot was the Pieter Bruegel of his" (quoted from H.-W. von Löhneysen, *Die ältere niederländische Malerei: Künstler und Kritiker,* 1956, p. 148). One must not overlook, however, that grotesque is here used in the sense of burlesque, bizarre, ridiculous, and with reference to the genre paintings and figures of the two masters. The eighteenth century transfers grotesque from Bruegel's genre paintings to his representations of hell.

14. Goya's cycle, *Desastres de la guerra,* for instance, is largely polemical in nature. Its true depth, however, is plumbed only (as far as I can see) by the grotesque perspective, which operates in quite a different way. In Hogarth's graphic cycles, on the other hand, the topical element predominates to a point where the grotesque can only occasionally unfold. In the famous "Gin Lane" (Ill. 13) the human figures and even the suicide in the window can be interpreted didactically. But the houses in the background, which are about to collapse, indicate that Hogarth uses a perspective that envisions the world as going to pieces.

15. This also provides the reason for reproaching Molière for having introduced Harlequinades into his generically different plays.

16. The gaiety of the soul, i.e., its freedom and positive outlook on the world, formed the center of the Anacreontic writers' esthetic and later found expression in the writings of Wieland as well as Goethe, when the latter concerns himself with the effect of art. See my essay *"Goethes Auffassung von der Bedeutung der Kunst"* in *Zeitschrift Goethe* (1954).

17. "That which is called caricature in painting, and which consists of the exaggeration of the figures, is actually the way in which I describe the habits of men."

18. See E. Petraccone, *La commedia dell'arte: storia, tecnica, scenari* (Naples, 1927); M. Apollonio, *Storia della commedia dell'arte* (Rome, 1930); H. Kindermann, *Die Commedia dell'arte und das deutsche Volkstheater* (1938); *La commedia dell'arte,* special issue of the *Rivista di studi teatrali* (Nos. 9/10, Milan, 1954); O. Rommel, *Harlekin, Hans Wurst und Truffaldino* (1950).

19. J. Möser also mentions him in his *Harlekin* together with Teniers and Dou.

20. The grotesque as a Shakespearean category has been developed

by Wilson Knight (*The Wheel of Fire,* Cambridge, 1931) in connection with *King Lear.* Concerning the use of the word "grotesque" and its meanings in Gerstenberg's writings, see Klaus Gerth, *"Studien zur Gerstenbergschen Poetik"* (Dissertation, Göttingen, 1956), pp. 96–99.

21. It is characteristic that Sulzer, in treating the grotesque as an ornament, immediately moves toward a definition, which emphasizes its oneiric nature: "It surprises like a fantastic dream by the excessive fusion of such things as are not naturally connected with each other" (*Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste,* I [1771], p. 499). As the bibliography shows, the elaborate article in the second edition of 1792 is based on a thorough knowledge of the historical material.

22. From Lenz' own review of *Der neue Menoza* in the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen* (1775), p. 459.

23. From the beginning of the fourteenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit.*

24. *Der Hofmeister* contains another characteristic example. A student wants to attend a performance of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm.* He is so poor that he has to pawn his coat and is forced to wear his wolf's fur in midsummer. When he steps out into the street, the dogs attack him and chase him through the streets, and he becomes completely disoriented in every sense of the word. The Lady Knicks, who tells the story, almost bursts with laughter.

25. Donna Diana and Gustav are marionette-like exaggerations of figures from Goethe's *Götz.* Lenz later wanted to rewrite the play and composed a new scene for the conclusion of the fourth act. K. Weinhold, the editor of Lenz' posthumous work (*Dramatischer Nachlass* [1884], p. 308) describes it as follows: "The poet was preoccupied with the horrible and grotesque. The Count is even more abhorrent, and the rapacious nature of the Countess asserts itself even more strongly than in the printed version."

26. A limitation is placed on the grotesque by the fact that the puppet plays are performed by carved and mechanically operated figures, whereas the *commedia dell'arte* and the plays of the *Sturm und Drang* which are influenced by it, are represented by real actors. The puppet theatre constitutes a world of its own and is therefore (contrary to Möser's opinion) not grotesque. (It is grotesque perhaps only in the two extremes: in a completely naïve illusion which succeeds in totally merging with the real world, and in the expert and puppet player himself, for whom the puppets and their world have come to life upside down.) It is grotesque, however, when the figures of the *commedia dell'arte* and the plays which it influenced turn into mechanically operated dolls, and when the lifeless, mechanical sphere enters the animated and organic one and thereby alienates our world. The puppets of the marionette theatre would be grotesque only if they gained a life of their own and exchanged their world for ours. This is a motif which the Romantics (Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Arnim) subsequently exploited in their gro-

tesques. See E. Rapp, *"Die Marionette in der deutschen Dichtung vom Sturm und Drang bis zur Romantik"* (Dissertation, Munich, 1917).

27. See F. J. Schneider, *Goethes Satyros und der Urfaust* (1949), and the notes to volume IV of the Hamburg Goethe edition.

28. Goethe calls Savonarola "a grimacing, fantastic monster who juts into the bright world of the Renaissance like a Gothic gargoyle." In the *Schriften zur Kunst* (*Weimar edition,* XLIX, 224), Goethe associates "animals, chimeras, grotesques, and other follies."

III The Grotesque in the Age of Romanticism

1. See A. W. Schlegel's *Werke,* ed. Boecking, XI, 92.

2. *Ibid.,* VIII, 31. Minor (*Friedrich Schlegels Jugendschriften,* fragment 379) assigns it to Friedrich Schlegel. However, the choice of words points to the speaker quoted above.

3. *Über die Grotesken* (Göttingen, 1791). Fiorillo's treatise constitutes a reply to the highly subjective treatment of the problem in A. Riehm's "Über die Grotesken," *Monatsschrift der Akademie der Künste* (1788). Compare also Stieglitz' *Über den Gebrauch der Grotesken und Arabesken* (1790). See also the article on Fiorillo in the second edition of A. Zastrau's *Goethe-Handbuch* (1955 and after).

4. A. W. Schlegel helped to maintain the contact between Fiorillo and Goethe, which had been established during the latter's visit to Göttingen.

5. In the ideas from the third volume of the *Athenäum* it occurs twice in the sense in which it is used in the *Gespräch,* i.e., within the ambience of "wit" (*Witz*) and "mythology." See also W. Meinhardt, *"Die Romantheorie der älteren Romantik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Friedrich Schlegels"* (Dissertation, Göttingen, 1955).

6. The same concept of the grotesque, without the use of the word, dominates Schlegel's interpretation of Goethe's *Braut von Korinth*: "The moving aspect of it is heart-rending and yet seductive. Certain passages could almost be called burlesque, and precisely in them the terrible looms oppressively large" (No. 429).

7. "The grotesque porcelain figures of his pictorial wit that has been conscripted like an Imperial army" (No. 421). "I admit the gay confusion of sickly wit; but I defend it and boldly maintain that such grotesques and confessions are perhaps the only Romantic products of our unromantic age" (*Gespräch . . .*).

8. Paragraph 26: "Definitions of the Ridiculous." Concerning the buildings of the Prince, which Goethe describes in his *Italian Journey,* see K. Lohmeyer's article in the *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* (1942).

9. Hugo mainly uses the noun. His usage and the role of the grotesque in his work were studied by Knaack, *"Über den Gebrauch des Wortes 'grotesque.'"* Matoré's remarks, in *"En marge de Th. Gautier,"* on the other hand, are quite inadequate.

10. He uses Callot, *"le Michel-Ange burlesque,"* and the figures of the *commedia dell'arte* as examples.

11. In his essay on Shakespeare Hugo also arrives at a formula that echoes Gerstenberg: "Shakespeare a la tragédie, la comédie, l'hymne, la farce, le vaste rire divin, la terreur et l'horreur, et pour dire en un mot: le drame."

12. This brings us to a motif which is so expressive and comprehensive that it became the leitmotif or the exclusive theme in numerous realizations of the grotesque: the infernal laughter, the abysmal, eccentric, terrifying laughter of Brunhilde and Tellheim. The more it is heard and understood not as a personal characteristic (for instance, of despair) but as the result of the onslaught of an alien, inhuman power, the more clearly it is grotesque. If someone laughs where laughter is out of place, a feeling of strangeness is apparent. But if somebody laughs against his will (or independent of it), this laughter can no longer be interpreted as an outgrowth of personality, but directly expresses the intrusion of an alien force. The example which Victor Hugo adduces (the ridiculed lover has a mangled face that seems to laugh constantly) is of that nature, and similar situations occur in many of E. T. A. Hoffmann's stories. Here is an example from his *Elementargeist:* "Strangely enough, the Major's face seemed to cry when he laughed, which happened rarely. On the other hand, he seemed to laugh when he was overcome by a violent rage. But this laughter was so horrible that the oldest and most courageous fellows were terrified." Every word in this description hits the mark, as far as the grotesqueness of the situation is concerned, since it depersonalizes the individual and makes him the agent of something strange and inhuman. At the beginning stands the description of the body, its limbs not matching and each of its parts given an inhuman attribute.

13. Compare W. Kohlschmidt, "Nihilismus der Romantik," *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* (N. F. XXI, 1953/54). This essay is included in the volume *Form und Innerlichkeit* (Bern, 1955). Concerning the "transformations of Satan" and other themes and motifs of the "nocturnal" side of Romanticism see Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (New York, 1956), where German literature is only occasionally mentioned, however.

14. One could carry the argument further in the same direction. If the devil dispatched the satire, futility has found expression in a mythological figure, whose role as "opponent" implies the existence of an "overseer." But Bosch's altarpieces teach us that the world can be portrayed grotesquely in spite of the Christian frame.

15. The manner of speaking corresponds to the narrative mode in general. The narrator himself describes it as "motley and bizarre" (*kraus und bunt*) and admits at the beginning of the sixth Night Watch: "How much would I give to be able to narrate consistently and to the point like other honest Protestant poets and journalists. . . ." The confusion,

irregular progression, abruptness, digression, etc., are skillfully arranged and betray the author's indebtedness to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. The structure of the *Nachtwachen* is discussed in a dissertation by D. Nipperdey (Göttingen, 1954).

16. The expression "madhouse of life" is supplemented by the phrases *Possentreiben* (farcical actions), *Fastnachtsspiel* (carnival play), tragicomedy, and—most frequently—puppet theatre. The identification with reality reaches the point where real events are described by the protagonist as scenes from a puppet play. Over and over, the narrator uses the alienating device of portraying people as puppets mechanically operated by an unknown force (such as the judge in the third Night Watch).

17. The word occurs only in this passage. Its use gains significance by the fact that the narrator puts it in the mouth of the author, whom he introduces as a character: "The simple-minded doctoral candidate Richter . . . found nothing wrong with the grotesque pseudonym but considered it beautiful." And it is characteristic of the meaning of the term, and of Jean Paul's predilection for the grotesque, when the narrator continues, "Striking and unusual things were ordinary stuff for the young man."

18. The name points toward a common source. In addition to *Nachtgeschichte* and *Nachtstück* we frequently encounter the expression *"Nachtgemälde"* (nocturnal painting). When the history of the *Nachtgeschichte* is written, it will have to comprise the pictorial genre of the Night piece, which begins with Caravaggio. Night, in this compound, indicates the contrast to day and, as far as painting is concerned, the use of artificial sources of light. But night also signifies the ominous and terrifying element, the susceptibility to alien powers. In painting, the genre is well represented by Johann Heinrich Füssli's [Henry Fuseli] "Nightmare" (first version 1781, later version *ca.* 1815/20), and engravings of it were widely disseminated (Ill. 17). See E. Beutler, "J. H. Füssli," *Vorträge und Schriften des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts,* vol. II (1939).

19. The last paragraph does not imply an inclusion of the absurd but merely indicates Clara's exclusion from that world. With her "gay and joyous spirit," she finds the "quiet domestic happiness" that suits her nature—an objective statement which seems to imply more than joy and admiration.

20. Hoffmann and Wilhelm Hauff have treated a similar motif (the ape disguised as a human being) almost purely comically or satirically. All of the motifs (automaton, doll, disguised animal) show a predilection for the grotesque. It would no longer be a joke if a host placed a life-sized doll on an easy chair in such a manner that the entering guests are deceived even for a single moment. The loss of confidence in the reliability of their orientation would be too great.

21. However, Hoffmann cannot altogether refrain from ever so briefly suggesting the possibility that Coppelius is the devil. After the

quarrel with Olympia, Spalanzani tells Nathanael: "Your eyes!—he stole them, the cursed, damned fellow!" Since we were expressly told that Coppelius did not deprive the boy of his eyes, one must assume that the deal with the telescope signifies an exchange of eyes and, as is implied by the religious overtones of the words "cursed" and "damned," a kind of pact with the devil. Here we come upon a popular motif: the devil acquires something from an individual in order to implant it into a creature he wishes to mingle with society. But Hoffmann is content with the brief allusion.

22. It is not strictly enough observed in *Der Sandmann.* After the discovery of the mechanism in Ophelia, the narrator reports how the deceived society reacted to this experience: how people became terribly suspicious of other people, what absurd proofs they demanded from their lovers, and how excessively they yawned at the tea table in order not to arouse suspicion. As in the case of the pedantic housewife from *Die Sylvesternacht,* here, too, the social satire turns into a grotesque. But within the framework of a story of insanity the difference in style and mood constituted by this variety of the grotesque disturbs us, and the cold detachment and superiority of the altogether differently disposed narrator otherwise disrupts the stylistic unity.

23. The stories included in the *Gespensterbuch,* which A. Apel and F. Laun (Fr. A. Schulze) began editing in 1814, are often of a fairly high quality. Fouqué was one of the subsequent editors of the publication, which was later called *Wunderbuch.* Here Poe's stories, which had originally been published in American magazines, appeared side by side with other tales of horror, and in Hawthorne and Washington Irving Poe had prominent predecessors.

24. The same usage is found in German; for instance, in the opening passage of Lenz' *Waldbruder*: "Grotesquely piled up mountains."

25. The *New English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1901) lists the earlier instances of grotesque but fails to quote Scott and Poe and the change of meaning they brought about.

26. Arthur H. Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* (New York, 1941), comes to the conclusion that Poe uses the word "arabesque" to denote a "powerful imagination," whereas "grotesque" signifies a "burlesque or satiric trait." But Poe's language does not seem to confirm this.

27. See H. H. Kühnelt, *Die Bedeutung E. A. Poes für die englische Literatur* (Innsbruck, 1949); Pierre Cambiaire, *The Influence of E. A. Poe in France* (New York, 1927); Léon Lemonnier, *E. Poe et les Conteurs Français* (Paris, 1947).

28. It appears seven times on p. 365 of the fourth volume of his *Geist der Goethezeit.*

29. Nineteenth and twentieth century German usage frequently places *grotesk* alongside of *kurios* (odd, curious), especially by calling a mass of curiosities grotesque. One can easily see why this should be so.

The disorderly array of things that are odd in themselves gives the whole the appearance of an unfamiliar world. As long, however, as the curious aspect (which is seen as contrast) predominates, the strangeness is somewhat abated, and the word "grotesque" lacks its proper dimension.— The equation with *kurios* is also made in the almanac *Grotesken, Satyren und Naivitäten,* which Falk edited 1806/07 at Gotha.

30. For Arnim himself the principal characters may have had a deeper meaning, since they were adaptations of figures created by the much-admired Gryphius, i.e., as far as he was concerned, expressions of the poetic roots of the *Volksgeist.* This does not place them, however, on a level with such legendary figures as Genoveva, Wanda, Libussa, etc. On the whole, the cultural-mythical play offers a fertile soil for the grotesque, as soon as it turns to the portrayal of the dark counterworld. In Zacharias Werner's plays, to be sure, the pathos usually stands in the way of the grotesque; but the conjuration scene around the God Tschart in the fourth act of Brentano's *Gründung Prags* (the picture of the God, which Brentano supplies in a footnote, affects us grotesquely) and the three strong men and the lemur scene in Goethe's *Faust, Part II,* offer pertinent examples.

31. F. Schönemann (*Ludwig Achim von Arnims geistige Entwicklung,* 1912) feels that the expectation aroused by Körner's observation is hardly fulfilled. But Schönemann merely hunts for parallels. Even so a number of connections between *Halle und Jerusalem* and Lenz' dramatic *oeuvre* are established. However, they mean little compared with the obvious stylistic relationship, which Schönemann is unable to see or to handle methodologically.

32. For the history of the *topos* see E. Rapp, *Die Marionette in der deutschen Dichtung vom Sturm und Drang bis zur Romantik* (1924); as well as R. Majut, *Lebensbühne und Marionette* (1931); J. Obenauer, *Die Problematik des ästhetischen Menschen* (1933); and E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1953).

33. Alban Berg further enhances this effect in his opera *Wozzeck,* which offers a good example of the use of the grotesque in music.

34. K. Viëtor, *Georg Büchner* (1949), p. 192.

35. Woyzeck and Marie are raised above the level of the other characters by the fact that they have a soul. They sense the vanity of human endeavor and suffer in themselves and the world. The portrayal of the suffering individual (*leidende Kreatur*) is structurally important for the drama, and its meaning enhances that of the tragicomic aspect, the structural significance of which we are seeking to ascertain.

36. The relationship to the *commedia dell'arte* is discussed in W. Kupsch's *Woyzeck* (1920). After the rejection of this claim by Hans Winkler (*Georg Büchners Woyzeck* [1925]) and R. Majut (*Lebensbühne und Marionette* and *Studien um Georg Büchner,* 1932) scholars have paid very little attention to the thesis.

37. The first beginnings of a rehabilitation of the pun are to be

found in the sixteenth of Gerstenberg's *Briefe über die Merkwürdigkeiten in der Literatur* (on the occasion of Shakespeare). The classicists' point of view, on the other hand, is characterized by the fact that the pun is regarded as pertaining to the lower style (as in Karl Philipp Moritz' *Vorlesungen über den Stil* [1793]). Concerning the pun in the age of Romanticism prior to Brentano, especially in the writings of the brothers Schlegel, see G. Roethe, *Brentanos Ponce de Leon, eine Säkularstudie* (*Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* [1904]), pp. 14 ff. Brentano himself writes in the dedication of his comedy to the Duke of Aremberg: "I also remember your observation to the effect that the Germans are lacking both puns and the elegance of language. I did not then share your opinion, nor do I today. . . ."

38. Concerning the relationship between *Leonce und Lena* and the *commedia dell'arte,* see Renker, *Georg Büchner und das Lustspiel der Romantik* (1924) and the books by Kupsch and Majut. The latter's *Studien um Büchner* also deals with the direct and indirect—by way of Tieck—relationships to Gozzi.

39. This scene and its relationship to Brentano and Hoffmann is fully treated in Majut's *Lebensbühne und Marionette,* pp. 125 ff. ["Leonce and Lena," in an English version by Eric Bentley, is included in *From the Modern Repertoire, Series Three,* edited by Eric Bentley (Bloomington, Indiana, 1956), pp. 1–37.]

IV The Grotesque in the Nineteenth Century

1. *"Vorlesungen über Ästhetik"* in *Jubiläums-Ausgabe,* XIII, 301 f., ed. H. Glockner.

2. The preclassical *Phantastik* has an equivalent in the postclassical one, when at the end of the Romanticist phase harmony and appropriateness, which had been unbalanced by the Romantic principle of inner subjectivity, are totally dissolved. The Crusades are for Hegel the "total adventure" of the Christian Middle Ages, and he describes it with categories that strongly suggest the use of the word "grotesque" (which does not appear, however): "an adventure that was in itself disjointed and fantastic," "contrasting elements linked without reconciliation," "a decay of the spirit. . . ."

3. This explains why Hegel severs the concept of the grotesque from the etymological root of the word by designating the ornamental grotesques as arabesques, as was customary around 1800. Language did not follow his example. The designation of that kind of ornamental style as grotesque, which was never abandoned in art history, once again comes to the fore in the middle of the nineteenth century. Between the years 1851–1853 Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* appeared, in which ornamental grotesques are thoroughly described and analyzed. Soon afterwards, Schmarsow did the same in Germany.

4. To be sure, Vischer, too, realized the close connection between gro-

tesque and caricature. But in his view the realistic side of the grotesque caricature is insignificant compared with the fantastic play of humor. The satiric intention disappears as the comic spirit is revealed.

5. See also Beate Krudewig, *"Das Groteske in der Ästhetik seit Kant"* (Dissertation, Bonn, 1934). This study hardly progresses beyond the collection of the material. The inadequacy of the definitions given by the esthetieians is stressed by R. Petsch in his article *"Das Groteske"* (*Deutsche Literaturwissenschaft* [1940]). Petsch's own definition is equally vague, however: "The grotesque (is) the symbolic use of exaggeration with a view toward higher and profounder values, and especially toward a world with greater tensions and depths than we find in daily life."

6. In Theodor Storm's works, on the other hand, the grotesque appears in a harmless guise. In a letter to Erich Schmidt (*Werke*, ed. A. Köster, vol. VIII, p. 273), Storm states: "The morally or esthetically ugly, where it does not reach the level of terrible greatness, is artistically and poetically relevant only when reflected in a humorous mirror. This is the origin of what we call the grotesque."

7. This type is well analyzed by Herman Meyer, *Der Typus des Sonderlings in der deutschen Literatur* (Amsterdam, 1943). My remarks on Keller and Raabe owe much to this book. The whole era is treated in Lee B. Jennings' dissertation "The Grotesque Element in Post-romantic German Prose, 1832–1882" (Illinois, 1955).

8. Herman Meyer rightly refers to the beginnings of this trend in Jean Paul and E. T. A. Hoffmann (*Der Typus des Sonderlings*, p. 172). Schopenhauer asserts that "everything we touch resists because it has a will of its own."

9. Quoted in Christel Lumpe, *"Das Groteske im Werk Wilhelm Buschs"* (Dissertation, Göttingen, 1953), to which I am indebted in several other respects. Compare also H. Cremer, *"Die Bildergeschichten Wilhelm Buschs"* (Dissertation, Munich, 1937), and M. Untermann, *"Das Groteske bei Wedekind, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Morgenstern und Wilhelm Busch"* (Dissertation, Königsberg, 1929).

10. In the preface to his edition of *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear* (New York, 1951), Holbrook Jackson writes (p. xxiii), "It may be that this fantastic world gratifies for him a desire which we all share to some extent, probably more than we are willing to admit, and which he seems to share, by anticipation, with the surrealists of our own time."

11. See also L. B. Campbell, "The Grotesque in the Poetry of Robert Browning" (Dissertation, Texas, 1907).

12. Our interpretation disagrees with that of Stender-Petersen (*"Gogol und die deutsche Romantik," Euphorion*, XXIV, 1922), who regards the story as the parody of a Romantic motif (the man without a shadow, the man without a mirror image). But this identity of motifs does not exist. Among other things, Gogol is concerned with the independent life

of the nose and the confusion of the city. Stender-Petersen needs his interpretation for the more comprehensive one to the effect that, with his parody, Gogol freed himself of the mental and literary dependence and the mistakes of his youth, for "between Tieck and Hoffmann on the one hand and Gogol on the other no tie of intimate understanding was possible." The mature Gogol, who is the father of Russian Realism, Stender-Petersen claims, was "not in the least fantastically inclined," "in a certain sense very un-German; but very Russian." Once again, the national bias obscures the comparative point of view. For the St. Petersburg novellas, too, contain realistic elements, which, as Stender-Petersen himself admits, are ultimately derived from Hoffmann. And what if the later Realism was not altogether lacking in fantastic overtones? In that case, the idea of national characters would prove unsuitable and the category of Realism would break up. The topicalness of this very problem has considerably increased since 1922.—Modern scholarship, by the way, takes Gogol's work to constitute the Russian variant of the picaresque novel. Historically, Narezhny's novel *The Russian Gil Blas or the Adventures of Prince Tschistjakow* (1814) forms a bridge to *Dead Souls*. See Müller-Kamp's essay *"Wirkungen und Gegenwirkungen des westlichen Geistes in der russischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts," Beiträge zur geistigen Überlieferung* (1947), pp. 350 ff.

13. From the translation of Bernard Guilbert Guerney (New York, 1948).

14. Letter of October 17, 1884.

15. I do not comment upon the narrative point of view, which is important for the stylistic analysis of the grotesque. Note the confession of the narrator, ". . . this is decreed by the dark power that rules me."

V The Grotesque in the Twentieth Century

1. Erik Forssman, *Säule und Ornament*, p. 97.

2. For Wedekind see M. Untermann's dissertation, *"Das Groteske bei Wedekind . . . ,"* as well as E. Schweizer, *"Das Groteske und das Drama Wedekinds"* (Dissertation, Tübingen, 1932).

3. Joachim Voigt, *"Das Spiel im Spiel: Versuch einer Formbestimmung an Beispielen aus dem deutschen, englischen und spanischen Drama"* (Dissertation, Göttingen, 1954). See also Dagobert Frey's essay *"Zuschauer und Bühne: Eine Untersuchung über das Realitätsproblem des Schauspiels"* in *Kunstwissenschaftliche Grundfragen* (Wien, 1946).

4. Playwrights like the Irishman Synge (*The Playboy of the Western World*) and the Russian Andreev (*Black Masks*) have been suggested as models of the *teatro del grottesco*. Schnitzler's influence would seem to be much greater.

5. Adriano Tilgher, *Studi sul teatro contemporaneo* (third edition, Rome, 1928), p. 119 f.

6. Luigi Pirandello, who graduated from Bonn University with a

philological thesis and worked temporarily as a literary historian, was undoubtedly familiar with German Romanticism. But this has little bearing on his work and even less on the grotesque theatre as such.

7. The dissolution of the conventional dramatic action—for even the "ageless drama" of the six persons consists of isolated situations—is analogous to the dissolution of the concept of personality.

8. Excerpt from Mark Musa's manuscript translation of *Six Characters in Search of an Author.*

9. Pirandello's plays are still occasionally performed in the postwar years. But Silvio d'Amico (*"Fortuna di Pirandello," Rivista di Studi Teatrali,* Milan, 1952) surely goes too far in claiming that modern European and American playwrights have been strongly influenced by his compatriot. Lander MacClintock went so far as to call his book *The Age of Pirandello* (Bloomington, Ind., 1951). Recent literature on Pirandello includes articles by Mario Wandruszka (*Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift,* 1954) and Ulrich Leo (*Romanische Forschungen,* 1952).

10. O. Langen also published such literature (e.g., Meyrink). His firm subsequently merged with Georg Müller's. Ernst Rowohlt and Kurt Wolff deserve also to be mentioned in this connection. Kurt Desch continued the tradition after World War II by anthologizing *Phantastische Erzählungen* and acquiring the rights to the works of H. H. Ewers.

11. In the texts, the word "grotesque" is often used in the shallower sense of bizarre or unusual, so in O. H. Schmitz' novella *Die Geliebte des Teufels* from the *Unheimliche Buch.*

12. The title parodies Brentano's and Arnim's famous collection of folksongs, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806–8).

13. In the story *Die Pflanzen des Doktor Cinderella* (The Plants of . . .) from *Des deutschen Spiessers Wunderhorn,* Meyrink uses expressions like "infernal hand" and "demon." But these are not interpretations, and the first-person narrator limits them by adding an "as if" or "perhaps." It is striking how, in this novella, the ornamental grotesque assumes an ominous life. The narrator wanders through a subterranean trellised garden:

"To its very top the wall was covered with a net of deep red veins from which hundreds of staring eyes protruded like berries. . . .

"In between glistened numerous eyeballs, which shot up in alternation with ghastly blackberry-like bulbs and slowly followed me with their glance as I passed. Eyes of all sizes and colors. From a crystal-clear iris to dead, sky-blue horse-eyes that are immobile. . . .

"They all seemed to be parts detached from living bodies, put together with unbelievable skill, deprived of their human soul and reduced to the level of vegetal growth.

"That they were alive I clearly recognized by throwing more light at their eyes, which immediately contracted. Who could be the infernal gardener who had planted this horrible culture?"

The beginning of the alienation of the world and the Self is made

with the acquisition of a strange bronze, which plays the same part as Coppelius in Hoffmann's *Sandmann* and the cat in Poe's novella. Meyrink obviously continues the tradition of the nocturnal story.

14. Kasimir Edschmid, for instance, states in *Die doppelköpfige Nymphe: Aufsätze über die Literatur und die Gegenwart* (1920), p. 122, that "this form [that of Kafka's narratives] is basically more natural and more significant than Meyrink's. . . . Kafka is, of course, a minor talent insofar as the strength of his utterance is concerned. His slender stories and reflections draw a very narrow circle around Prague. But the unequivocalness is certainly effective."

15. The first quotation is taken from G. Janouch, *"Erinnerungen an Kafka,"* in *Die Neue Rundschau* 62 (1951), 62; the second from an article by Erich Kahler in *ibid.*, (1953), p. 37.

16. At the conclusion of this story the satiric tone fails to hide the narrator's concern and his attempt to assign a meaning to the events. But the diaries demonstrate that—apparently for this very reason—Kafka remained dissatisfied even after having revised the story. In Dickens, by the way, Kafka discovered a similar attitude, "indifference underneath a highly emotional manner." (October 8, 1917).

17. See Leo Spitzer's congenial study *"Die groteske Gestaltungs- und Sprachkunst Christian Morgensterns"* in the volume *Motiv und Wort* (1918). Schuchardt's critique (*"Christian Morgensterns groteske Gedichte und ihre Würdigung durch Leo Spitzer," Euphorion,* 22, 1915) is of little value. See also K. Chr. Bry, *"Morgenstern und seine Leser"* (*Hochland,* 1925), V. Klemperer, *"Christian Morgenstern und der Symbolismus"* (*Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde,* 42, 1928), H. Schönfeld, *"Morgensterns Grotesken"* (*Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung,* VIII), and M. Untermann's dissertation, "Das Groteske bei Wedekind. . . ."

18. Quoted by Schuchardt, *"Christian Morgensterns groteske Gedichte,"* p. 640.

19. The following entry is equally characteristic of Morgenstern's usage: "The planetary cultures of spiritual beings are the large grotesques of God. God's material form is necessarily grotesque."

20. In addition to languages he also "hates" numbers (as his grotesques imply): "At times I profoundly hate all numbers. The number is the most absurd falsification of reality man has ever brought about, and yet our modern world entirely relies on it." This aphorism echoes Mauthner's theses.

21. *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics,* I (Princeton, 1948), p. 17.

22. A wealth of material was compiled by Schneegans in his *Geschichte der grotesken Satire* (1894), which contains detailed analyses of the language of Rabelais and Fischart. Schneegans includes the time preceding Rabelais and pursues certain lines of development to the eighteenth century.

23. The playful linguistic nonsense of Mörike's *Wispeliaden* (*Werke,*

ed. H. Mayne, II, p. 435 ff.) in some ways seems to anticipate Morgenstern. But the realm of the innocuously comical is rarely abandoned, since the language itself is not productive. Mörike lets the poems be written by Liebmund Maria Wispel, whose pseudo-scientific pretension of wit is thus exposed to ridicule.

24. Morgenstern has found very few real successors. The reception of his work seems to have stimulated the growth of a literature of grotesque which lacks proper depth. The grotesques of Ringelnatz (*Der arme Pilmartine, Die Walfische und die Fremde,* etc.), for instance, fail to exhibit the wild growth of principles peculiar to language. Their grotesqueness consists in a few extrinsic formal elements, whose use is much more arbitrary than in Morgenstern. The prevailing fantastic quality partly subserves a stringent social satire and partly aims at producing a stunning and bizarrely comical effect. Judged by the impression they make on the reader, these grotesques do not engender a painful smile but, on the slender basis of an obvious critique, seek to provoke a roaring laughter. This laughter, however, tends to make its appearance only after the consumption of alcohol.

25. *Jahresring 1955/56* (Stuttgart, 1955).

26. Not only the "German society degenerating into eccentricity" but nature itself is grotesque. At the very beginning of the novel we enter such realms when the narrator takes us into the home of Adrian Leverkühn's parents. Adrian's father is fond of exactly those ominous, ambiguous, and extrahuman aspects of nature which cannot be rationally explained. Here, in the composer's native environment, we encounter some of the leitmotifs that reappear throughout the book and repeatedly disrupt society. Through the use of words applicable to humans, the first reference to the strange butterfly prepares the reader for its reappearance in human form (a parallel to H. H. Ewers' "spider" suggests itself): "One such butterfly, in transparent nudity, loving the duskiness of heavy leafage, was called *Hetaera Esmeralda. Hetaera* had on her wings only a dark spot of violet and rose; one could see nothing else of her, and when she flew, she was like a petal blown by the wind."

Another leitmotif which makes its first appearance at this point is a true *Gespensterei* (ghostly set of circumstances), a perfect grotesque, which the narrator himself designates as such: "I shall never forget the sight. The vessel of crystalization was three-quarters full of slightly muddy water—that is, a diluted water glass—and from the sandy bottom there strove upwards a grotesque little landscape of variously colored growths: a confused vegetation of blue, green, and brown shoots which reminded one of algae, mushrooms, attached polyps, also moss, then mussels, fruit pods, little trees or twigs from trees, here and there of limbs. It was the most remarkable sight I ever saw. . . . He showed us that these pathetic imitations of life were light-seeking, heliotropic, as science calls it. He exposed the aquarium to the sunlight, shading three sides against it, and behold, toward that one pane through which the

light fell, thither straightway slanted the whole equivocal kith and kin: mushrooms, phallic polyp-stalks, little trees, algae, half-formed limbs. Indeed, they so yearned after warmth and joy that they actually clung to the pane and stuck fast there.

" 'And even so they are dead,' said Jonathan, and tears came in his eyes, while Adrian, as of course I saw, was shaken with suppressed laughter.

"For my part, I must leave it to the reader's judgment whether that sort of thing is matter for laughter or tears. But one thing I will say: such weirdnesses are exclusively Nature's own affair, and particularly of nature arrogantly tempted by man. In the high-minded realms of the *humaniora* one is safe from such impish phenomena" (H. T. Lowe-Porter's translation).

One clearly sees how, once again, the reader is made a secret ally of the actual narrator and how he is raised above the limited point of view of the narrator Zeitblom, who simply closes his eyes in the face of such freaks of nature. We are even in a position to smile about the sentimental reaction of the old Leverkühn. The perspectives embraced by both men turn out to be inadequate. But the most far-reaching and valid perspective, that of Adrian Leverkühn, leaves us completely at a loss. His suppressed laughter does not liberate but ominously confirms the eccentricity—in the depths of nature as well as man.

27. *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* (1956). Ramón Gomez de la Serna, *Ismos* (Buenos Aires, 1943). In the chapter on *"Humorismo"* Gomez de la Serna himself designates the grotesque as the main ingredient (p. 199).

28. Even in literature there existed a trend to raise the artificiality and the accidental aspect of creation to an esthetic principle. In an anthology of his poems (*Wortträume und schwarze Sterne,* 1953), Hans Arp describes his Dada period and the creation of his "automatic" poems, which fit well into H. Friedrich's poetics of modern poetry without, therefore, being in the least grotesque.

29. *Oeuvres Complètes,* ed. Edm. Jaloux (Paris, 1938). Introduction, pp. 15, 24. Lautréamont's reference to Dante and Milton on p. 306.

30. If E. Jaloux proved that Lautréamont was stimulated by the *roman noir,* Kandinsky's dream landscapes can be compared with those which are found in German Gothic novels, which Kandinsky may not have known. With its emphasis on the alienation of man from nature (and on the estrangement of the Self), the German equivalent of the Gothic novel foreshadows the realization of the grotesque in the works of Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Poe. A good example is found on p. 174 ff. of the first volume of Grosse's *Genius* (1791).

31. Edited by H. Platschek (1956). The title of the collection would seem to be a little too pretentious, for the specimens contained in it only rarely betray a genuine literary talent.

32. Of the critical studies relevant to this section I mention Dieter

Wyss, *Der Surrealismus* (1950); Doris Wild, *Moderne Malerei* (1950); Alain Bosquet, *Surrealismus 1924–1949* (1950); Will Grohmann, *Bildende Kunst und Architektur* (1953); W. Haftmann, *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* (1954); H. Sedlmayr, *Die Revolution der modernen Kunst* (1955); Walter Hess, *Dokumente zum Verständnis der modernen Malerei* (1956).

33. Chirico studied at the Munich Academy. In his writings he refers to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. In Munich, by the way, he was greatly impressed by his encounter with Kubin and his grotesque pictorial world.

34. Dali regards blood, decay, and excrement as the three central symbols of life.

35. With obvious reference to Dali, O.F. Beer (*"Surrealismus und Psychoanalyse," Plan 1947,* V, 329 ff.) says of the Surrealists who did not get beyond the first fifty pages of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams:* "A type of painting which limits itself to projecting half-understood dream symbols onto the canvas, without spiritually digesting them, cannot fulfill its artistic function. It represents a retrogression to an infantile level of thinking. It not only fails to aid the process of cultivation but actually impedes it, a phenomenon that constitutes a spiritual obscenity of a rare kind." On p. 245 of her book, *Moderne Malerei,* Doris Wild reports the interpretation of Dali's "Burning Giraffe" by the graphologist O. R. Schlag: "He referred to Indian symbolism, with which everybody interested in psychoanalysis must be familiar. In accordance with it, the woman or whore of the dead (*Totenfrau* or *Totenhure*) in the painting appears as the tragic impersonation of modern man, the drawer of whose heart and those of whose vitality are empty and open to all impressions. She feels her way in a blindfold manner, since her instincts are dead; strides gigantically through the disconsolately barren plain as through the world of cold intellect; supports herself on the five crutches (symbols of the five senses) by outer perceptions—prone to rationalism. The profile figure of the woman to the right symbolizes, as Daphne, the vitality of nature and plant growth. It roots in the ground and radiates her vitality into the cosmos. She has torn the pernicious snake out of her flesh and holds it up, liberated and enlightened. In her other hand she holds a jewel, which is her reward, like the jewel in the fairy tale, which has to be won with great effort." The interpretation of the painted absurdities turns into a game; and, what is most absurd, one is supposed to acknowledge the "genuineness" of the painting in advance.

36. It was previously treated by Schongauer, Grünewald, Cranach, Bruegel, Callot, Jan Mandijn, Joos v. Craesbeeck, and many others.

37. "By forcing myself with unconditional surrender to portray what I felt most deeply, I merely yielded to a pitilessly dictating force against which my conscious Self often stubbornly defended itself. Only in the last few years I have come to see a little more clearly that it is a transitional realm, a twilight region, that wants to be adequately expressed by

me. . . . In special moments of greater clarity I sometimes sensed the subterranean existence of some mysterious fluid that connects all living matter. . . . I do not see the world in this manner, but notice these transformations in strange moments, when I seem to be only half awake." (Kubin, *"Dämmerungswelten," Die Kunst* [1933], pp. 340 ff.).

38. *"Über mein Träumerleben,"* in *Künstlerbekenntnisse,* ed. P. Westheim (1924).

39. A complete list of all the books which Kubin illustrated is found in the authoritative book by Paul Raabe: *Alfred Kubin: Leben, Werk, Wirkung* (Hamburg, 1957). Ensor, too, illustrated works by Poe.

Summary: Attempt to Define the Nature of the Grotesque

1. See J. Dausrich, *"Antonius der Einsiedel: Eine legendarisch-ikonographische Studie," Archiv für christliche Kunst* (1901 and 1902).

2. Schopenhauer (*Werke,* ed. Hübscher, second edition, 1948, VI, 2581) wrote about the animals: "It is that volition, which is also essential to our being, which, at this point, makes its appearance . . . more strongly developed and so clearly profiled that it borders on the monstrous and grotesque."

3. A passage from the third act of Brentano's *Gründung Prags* (*Gesammelte Schriften,* ed. Christian Brentano, VI, 236) reads as follows:

PRIMISLAUS: . . . the swallows of the traitors.

. . . .

It's therefore that I called the bat by name.
With uncertain flight, like the conscience
Of the new thief, nature in it
Is torn between good and evil.
It follows the night, follows the trace of light.
It is not mouse alone or bird
But mousebird, too, and steals (*maust*) in the dark.
It blindly plunges into its death, where treasures sparkle.
Thus treason, tormented like a ghost,
Hovers between evil advice and deed,
As the fat mouse (*Speckmaus*) hovers between day and night.
And he whose hair she tears with her claws
Should think himself warned of the evil path.

4. See A. Schöne, *"Interpretationen zur dichterischen Gestaltung des Wahnsinns in der deutschen Literatur"* (Dissertation, Münster, 1952).

5. Concerning the German impersonal pronoun see the *Husserl-Festschrift* (1929). K. Ph. Moritz (*Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* [1783], I, 1, 105) notes "that by means of the impersonal 'it' we seek to express that which exceeds the sphere of our concepts and which language cannot name."

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