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KEIN ORT. NIRGENDS:

AN ANALYSIS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
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INTRODUCTION

1961 was an historic year for the German Democratic Republic. The erection of the Berlin Wall effectively sealed off East from West. In that same year Christa Wolf published her first work of fiction: *Moskauer Novelle*.¹ As part of an East German medical delegation visiting Moscow in 1959, Vera Brauer meets and falls in love with Pawel Koschkin, a Russian interpreter. Victims of fascism (Vera of Hitlerism, Pawel of Stalinism), the two characters discuss the future socialism will bring:

Bei allem aber wird er (der Mensch) - und das wird
seine grösste Leistung sein - kein Roboter werden, kein
perfektioniertes Ungetüm, sondern endlich: Mensch.²

Christa Wolf affirms that, in the future, socialism should become orientated towards humanism (in the general sense of the word) and serve the individual to realize himself. This is the central theme of all Christa Wolf's works.³ She, however, does not politicize literature, although political overtones may occur. Hers is a human message to fellow human beings:

1. Christa Wolf, *Moskauer Novelle* in: *Romanzeitung* 204 (Berlin, 1961), pp. 57-95.
2. Ibid p. 75.
3. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1980), p. 43: "Eine der wichtigsten Voraussetzungen für das Entstehen von Literatur ist aber Sehnsucht nach Selbstverwirklichung: daher der Zwang des Aufschreibens, als vielleicht einzige Möglichkeit des Autors, sich nicht zu verfehlen (...)."

Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?⁴

Es ist ein grosser Gedanke, dass der Mensch nicht zur Ruhe kommt, ehe er zu sich selber gefunden hat. Die tiefe Wurzel der Übereinstimmung zwischen echter Literatur und der sozialistischen Gesellschaft sehe ich eben darin: Beide haben das Ziel, dem Menschen zu seiner Selbstverwirklichung zu verhelfen.⁵

Already in *Der Geteilte Himmel*,⁶ Rita learns how under socialist work conditions men and women can work together to make society more fit for human beings, in contrast to her lover Manfred, who wants to "escape the miserable conditions by doing scientific work for more profit and power".⁷ Schwarzbach, Wendland and Meternagel, for example, are all men with courage. Although committed to socialism, they recognise that it is not a magic formula. They refuse to obey inhuman, arbitrary production orders at the expense of their fellow workers. Thus, they stand for the humanistic quality of socialism.

In *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, it is precisely the struggle for self-realization which leads to Christa T.'s death. The cause of her death was alleged to be leukaemia. Spiritually, she died because the social conditions did not allow her to make life livable (i.e. 'human') and to become herself: "Man selbst, ganz stark man selbst werden. Schwer zu machen."⁸ Her marriage to Justus is one way of resolving her human dilemma; to design a home on her own terms away from the socialist society is another. In rhapsodic fashion she states her devotion to a feeling for life:

Leben, erleben, freies grosses Leben! O herrliches
Lebensgefühl, dass du mich nie verlässt. Nichts weiter
als ein Mensch sein...⁹

4. Christa Wolf takes these words from Johannes Becher, a former cultural minister of the German Democratic Republic. They serve as a motto for Christa Wolf's later work *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Neuwied and Berlin, 1969).
5. Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, pp. 52-53.
6. Christa Wolf, *Der Geteilte Himmel* (Berlin-Schöneberg, 1967).
7. Jack Zipes, "Christa Wolf: Moralism as Marxist", an introduction to Christa Wolf's *Divided Heaven* trans. Joan Becker (USA, 1981), p. xxxvi.
8. Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, p. 188.
9. Ibid p. 46.

Born too soon, Christa T. offers hope because she knows that before long we will come to terms with our 'human' existence: "Es beginnt, was sie so schmerzhaft vermisst hatte: dass wir uns selber sehen (...)." ¹⁰

In *Selbstversuch*, ¹¹ a type of science-fiction story set in East Germany in 1992, the human problem is presented in its most extreme. A female scientist agrees to transform herself into a man for thirty days to test a special formula invented by bio-chemists. Scientifically the experiment is a resounding success. On the human level, however, the experiment fails. The female scientist discovers and sees through the strictly objective -- one could say 'inhuman' -- outlook on life of the male scientist:

Ihre kunstvoll aufgebauten Regelsysteme, Ihre heillose Arbeitswut, all Ihre Manöver, sich zu entziehen, waren nichts als der Versuch, sich vor der Entdeckung abzusichern: Dass Sie nicht lieben können und es wissen. ¹²

Apart from the scientific problem raised in *Selbstversuch*, the more relevant to my discussion is Christa Wolf's analysis of sexual rôles. Going beyond this analysis she tries to discover where love originates:

Jetzt steht uns mein Experiment bevor: der Versuch zu lieben. Der übrigens auch zu phantastischen Erfindungen führt: zur Erfindung dessen, den man lieben kann. ¹³

Love is uniquely human and, for Christa Wolf, an essential step towards self-realization. Beyond the sexual, there is a spiritual love which enables human beings to approach one another, as Vera and Pawel experience in *Moskauer Novelle*. ¹⁴

10. Ibid p. 231.

11. Christa Wolf, *Selbstversuch* in: *Unter den Linden* (Berlin and Weimar, 1974).

12. Ibid pp. 167-168.

13. Ibid p. 169.

14. Cf. Dagmar Ploetz, "Vom Vorteil, eine Frau zu sein" in: *Materialienbuch* ed. Klaus Sauer (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1979), pp. 103-104: "Die Liebe ist das zentrale Motiv im gesamten vorliegenden Werk Christa Wolfs. Gemeint ist nicht nur die Liebe zwischen Mann und Frau. Der Begriff ist bei Christa Wolf wesentlich weiter gefasst, bezeichnet eine Haltung der Welt und den Menschen gegenüber, die eine menschliche Existenzweise erst möglich machen kann."

There are risks in that love, as Rita and Christa T. find out.

All Christa Wolf's characters feel themselves confined to narrow spaces; they are confronted with the dilemma of what is possible and what is required to gain an "herrliches Lebensgefühl". Rita must choose between following her lover to the capitalist West or abiding with the socialist system. Christa T. seeks refuge from society with her husband in a small town in the north and eventually in the isolation of her home by the lake. In *Kindheitsmuster*,¹⁵ Nelly Jordan, who grows up in the Nazi State and now finds herself living in a socialist society, is asked, like all her generation, to suppress her childhood experiences. Alienated from the past she lives with irreconcilable contradictions. Life as "widersprüchliches Kontinuum"¹⁶ begs reconciliation.

The burdens of striving for self-realization may push Christa Wolf's characters to the point of death. Rita attempts suicide before reconciling the conflict of allegiance to her lover and to the German Democratic Republic. Because Christa T. is not prepared to compromise and fit into society, her death may be regarded as a thinly veiled suicide.¹⁷ Death, however, is not a means of escape from this world but the manifestation of a tragic existence this world imposes upon individuals. Society stifles self-realization. Thus, beyond a certain point, life becomes meaningless. Because society and the individual is in the process of becoming human, the individual may perhaps never reach his human potential. Only when society prevents him from striving towards his goal (i.e. reducing humans to *objects*), must he respond by withdrawing from society to assert a free choice (i.e. humans become *subjects*):

Unmoralisch dagegen ist alles, was uns, was die Massen
hindert, vom Objekt zum Subjekt der Geschichte zu werden.¹⁸

15. Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1977).

16. "Die Dimension des Autors", a conversation with Hans Kaufmann. In: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 86.

17. Cf. Fritz J. Raddatz, "Mein Name sei Tonio K." in: *Der Spiegel* (2/6/69). He understands *Nachdenken über Christa T.* as "Geschichte eines Selbstmords".

18. "Die Dimension des Autors" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 98.

Christa Wolf, the moralist, confronts the reader with exemplary situations involving a human conflict as Christa T. understands: "(...) denn nichts anderes ist schreiben als: Beispiele anbieten (...)." ¹⁹ For Christa Wolf, works of literature are stations along the path to an ideal human society. ²⁰ She is to articulate the difficulties the socialist society has in that quest ("Ich schreibe, suchend.") ²¹ and through writing offer solutions. ²²

One may wonder what sources Christa Wolf uses to authenticate her subject-matter. The policy of the "Bitterfelder Weg" required writers to familiarize themselves with production processes and the worker's living conditions. Accordingly Christa Wolf worked in a coach factory in 1961-1962. Her experiences inspired *Der Geteilte Himmel*. Many of Christa Wolf's characters are born around the time when she was born in 1929, ²³ which strongly suggests the intrusion of the author in her own works. ²⁴

19. Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* p. 57.

20. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 47: "(...) sie (die Prosa) ist ja ein Produkt des Reife-
prozesses der Menschheit, spät entwickelt, geradezu erfunden. Differ-
enzierung zu schaffen und auszudrücken. Prosa schafft Menschen, im
doppelten Sinn. Sie baut tödliche Vereinfachungen ab, indem sie die
Möglichkeit vorführt, auf menschliche Weise zu existieren."

21. Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*,
p. 51.

22. Cf. Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* p. 122. Christa T. claims:
"(...) dass ich nur schreibend über die Dinge komme! (...)."

23. Vera was born in 1929, Christa T. in 1927 and Nelly Jordan in 1929.

24. Cf. "Die Dimension des Autors" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*,
p. 75: "(...) es wird viel schwerer, 'ich' zu sagen, und doch zugleich
oft unerlässlich. Die Suche nach einer Methode, dieser Realität
schreibend gerecht zu werden, möchte ich vorläufig 'subjektive
Authentizität' nennen - und ich kann nur hoffen, deutlich gemacht zu
haben, dass sie die Existenz der objektiven Realität nicht nur nicht
bestreitet, sondern gerade eine Bemühung darstellt, sich mit ihr
produktiv auseinanderzusetzen."

If this was Christa Wolf's sense of authentication, my discussion will reveal that from 1979 she takes the authentication of the same subject-matter not from personal experience but from literary sources.

To define the present moment and to determine a direction for the future she looks to her own past and to historical models as in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979) and her latest publication *Kassandra* (1983). Her dialectical method incorporates the past in the present as she demonstrates when she negates the negation in the opening lines of *Kindheitsmuster*: "Das Vergangene ist *nicht tot*; es ist *nicht einmal vergangen*." (emphasis mine)²⁵

This brief profile of Christa Wolf's writings does not claim completeness; it was relevant only to my analysis of *Kein Ort. Nirgends*.²⁶

Kein Ort. Nirgends has appeal because it presents the writer delving into a literary past. In contrast to her previous works which contain outright autobiographical material, this narrative appears objective at first. It is set in the early Nineteenth Century and concerns itself with historical material. The sources for *Kein Ort. Nirgends* are Heinrich von Kleist's and Karoline von Günderrode's works and letters. Christa Wolf first came into contact with Kleist in the early 1950's when she was a student studying German Literature in Jena and Leipzig. Anna Seghers is responsible for introducing her to Günderrode.

25. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Der Sinn einer neuen Sache" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 164: "(...) Vergangenes möge nicht vergangen, nicht tot sein, es möge sich nicht ein für allemal verfestigen. Das Mittel dagegen ist die Neuerschaffung der Vergangenheit, die allerdings auch nicht zu jedem beliebigen Zeitpunkt möglich ist, sondern nur genau in jenem vergänglichen Moment, da die undurchsichtige Gegenwart so weit zurückgetreten ist, um durchsichtig, dem Erzähler verfügbar zu sein; aber noch nah genug, dass man nicht damit 'fertig' ist (...)."
26. Christa Wolf, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, Luchterhand, 1979). The first edition was published in 1979 by Aufbau Verlag in Weimar. I shall here quote from the Luchterhand edition only.

Christa Wolf's intense interest led her to publish a collection of Günderrode's poems, letters and literary fragments, as well as a literary profile of Günderrode in *Der Schatten eines Traumes*.²⁷

The initial reception of *Kein Ort. Nirgends* was tentative, to say the least. This was in direct contrast to Günter Grass' *Das Treffen in Telgte*,²⁸ which also appeared in 1979 and which narrates the meeting of writers in an historical setting. Significantly, this book was translated into English in 1981 -- *Kein Ort. Nirgends* remains untranslated. The indifference towards *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is more striking when one reads the laudatory remarks of newspaper reviews: "neben *Kindheitsmuster* das bedeutendste Werk der Autorin",²⁹ "eines der wichtigen Bücher der zeitgenössischen Literatur",³⁰ "meisterhafte Sprache",³¹ and "man weiss, dass es sich bei diesem Buch um ein Meisterwerk handelt".³² For a book deserving of such high praise, it is surprising that it has not been treated in the more critical literature.³³

The ambivalent reception among critics is rather a mark of their inability to come to terms with a piece of esoteric writing.³⁴

27. *Der Schatten eines Traumes* ed. Christa Wolf (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1979). This volume greatly helps the reader to understand the figure of Günderrode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*.
28. Günter Grass, *Das Treffen in Telgte* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1979).
29. Elsbeth Pulver, "Begreifen, dass wir ein Entwurf sind" in: *Aargauer Tagblatt* (25/8/79).
30. Ibid.
31. Charles Linsmayer, "Kein Ort. Nirgends" in: *Badener Tagblatt* (16/6/79).
32. Ibid.
33. For a list of the secondary literature on *Kein Ort. Nirgends* see pp. 82-84 below.
34. Cf. Manfred Jäger, "Verzweifelte Utopie, lockere Ironie" in: *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* (15/4/79): "Aber insgesamt erwartet Christa Wolf von ihren Lesern diesmal einiges germanistische Vorwissen, so dass man das kleine Werk wohl mit Recht eine 'Erzählung für die Freunde der Literaturgeschichte' nennen könnte."

Even Wilfried F. Schoeller who has a special interest in Christa Wolf -- a transcript of a conversation between him and Christa Wolf in October 1978 has been published under the title: "Ich bin schon für eine gewisse Masslosigkeit"³⁵ -- condemns her for moralising "auf eine letztlich ermüdende Weise",³⁶ and, to conclude his scathing attack, he claims: "Mit dieser Erzählung hat sich eine bedeutende Autorin in der Form vertan."³⁷

The reception of *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is, more than anything, due to the determination of critics to see Christa Wolf's narrative as just another piece of feminist literature.³⁸ They feel that in virtue of her "Sozialisationseigenschaften"³⁹ Günderrode is in a position "in verausgabender Liebe und in künstlerischer Produktivität innere Ganzheit und Identität mit sich selber zu erreichen";⁴⁰ in contrast, Kleist represents "die Verunmöglichung wirksamen politischen Handelns"⁴¹ and "die zum Scheitern verurteilte Tat und die Verlockung durch Macht".⁴²

35. A transcript of this conversation may be found in: *Christa Wolf Materialienbuch*, pp. 53-63.
36. Wilfried F. Schoeller, "Nicht gelungen, gewiss nicht" in: *Frankfurter Rundschau* (9/4/79).
37. Ibid.
38. This interpretation, for example, is held by: Sonja Hilzinger, "Der Wunsch nach 'Berührung'" in: *Kassandra. Über Christa Wolf* (Frankfurt, 1982); Günter Kunert, "Zweige vom selben Stamm" in: *Christa Wolf Materialienbuch*; Wilfried F. Schoeller, "Nicht gelungen, gewiss nicht"; Rolf Michaelis, "Eine andre Art von Tod" in: *Die Zeit* (Hamburg, 16/3/79); Sibylle Wirsing, "Das Malheur zu allem Unglück" in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (24/3/79); Charles Linsmayer, "Kein Ort. Nirgends" in: *Badener Tagblatt* (16/6/79).
39. Sonja Hilzinger, "Der Wunsch nach 'Berührung'", p.50.
40. Ibid p.50.
41. Ibid p.44.
42. Ibid p.44.

Günter Kunert believes Kleist's "Frauenbild"⁴³ and "unaufhebbarer Egozentrismus"⁴⁴ stifle any bond which could develop between the two protagonists. Critics who share this one-sided interpretation necessarily view *Kein Ort. Nirgends* in a negative light. It is possible that this attitude has originated from the fact that Christa Wolf's main literary figures tend to be women. Christa Wolf, however, does not favour Günderrode and the narrative may be interpreted in a more optimistic light. For the sake of the argument, both man and woman must become human first before they can live in harmony.⁴⁵ Christa Wolf prefaces her argument with two quotations which have their origin in Kleist's and Günderrode's letters respectively. Christa Wolf thereby accords her characters equal status from the outset. This distinguishes *Kein Ort. Nirgends* immediately from the rest of her works in that her interest is shared equally between a male and a female character.

Critics have also failed to treat Christa Wolf's narration of *Kein Ort. Nirgends* satisfactorily. The narrative, as we shall see, explores the technique of shifting the focus from one character to another. Some critics have held this method of narration against Christa Wolf.⁴⁶

43. Günter Kunert, "Zweige vom selben Stamm" p.18.

44. Ibid p.18.

45. Cf. Dagmar Ploetz, "Zügel, die ins Fleisch schneiden" in: *Deutsche Volkszeitung* (Düsseldorf, 8/3/79): "Die Geschlechterproblematik, die in Christa Wolfs Werk zunehmend an Bedeutung gewinnt, wird hier zu einem der zentralen Motive. Wie immer steht im Vordergrund nicht die Frage nach der Emanzipation der Frau, sondern nach der Vollendung des Menschen. Die Idee ist 'in die Welt gesetzt' und hat zum ersten Mal die Frauen erfasst."

46. For example: Wilfried F. Schoeller, "Nicht gelungen, gewiss nicht"; Rolf Michaelis, "Eine andre Art von Tod".

Rolf Michaelis⁴⁷ believes that the "Collage" of quotations and pronouncements now from Kleist, now from Günderrode only serves to bewilder the reader. Pointedly Michaelis asks: "Denn 'wer spricht?'" However, I shall demonstrate that the strength of the narration resides in this 'disturbing' ambiguity. To the embarrassment of the critics,⁴⁸ *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is not composed simply of 'interior monologue and dialogue' in the conventional meaning of the terms. Such a description fails to appreciate the subtle shifts of narrative focus that is placed now *within*, now *outside* the characters.

In my analysis of *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, I shall show what led to the encounter of Kleist and Günderrode (Chapter One). I shall then proceed to examine the two protagonists separately and draw some comparisons between them (Chapter Two). An examination of the narrative will demonstrate how, through language, Christa Wolf reconciles the gender differences between Kleist and Günderrode (Chapter Three). At the conclusion of my thesis I shall try to show what significance this narrative may have for our time (Chapter Four).

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47. Ibid

48. For example: Wolfgang Werth, "Für Unlösbares gibt es keine Form" in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich, 4/4/79); Charles Linsmayer, "Kein Ort. Nirgends"; Wilfried F. Schoeller, "Nicht gelungen, gewiss nicht"; Rolf Michaelis, "Eine andre Art von Tod"; Elsbeth Pulver, "Begreifen, dass wir ein Entwurf sind".

I.

A MEETING OF KLEIST AND GÜNDERRODE

Kein Ort. Nirgends narrates the imagined meeting of two historical figures: Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) and Karoline von Günderrode (1780-1806). The modern author explores the relationship which develops between the two protagonists.

Critics have drawn a comparison between these two literary figures, suggesting that Kleist was: "ein Grosser der deutschen Literatur"¹ and that Günderrode was: "eine vergessene Autorin",² "nichts anders mehr als ein Name".³ By comparison to Kleist's, Günderrode's literary production is very limited. Many of her dramas were dramatic outlines which she intended to amplify. The corpus of secondary literature on Günderrode's work is correspondingly limited.⁴

The time when the two protagonists meet in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is June 1804. As regards details of Günderrode's life immediately prior to the supposed meeting, we must rely on a few letters and one poem.⁵

1. Elsbeth Pulver, "Begreifen, dass wir ein Entwurf sind", *Aargauer Tagblatt* (25/8/79).
2. Manfred Jäger, "Verzweifelte Utopie, lockere Ironie", *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* (15/4/79).
3. Elsbeth Pulver, "Begreifen, dass wir ein Entwurf sind".
4. Christa Wolf lists the secondary literature pertaining to Karoline von Günderrode's works in: *Der Schatten eines Traumes* ed. Christa Wolf (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1979), p. 343.
5. From the period of January to early June 1804 only four letters of Günderrode are extant (cf. *ibid* pp. 199-210). The one poem "Der Kuss eines Traumes" was written in April 1804 (cf. *ibid* pp. 207-208). Günderrode's first collection of poems, entitled *Gedichte und Phantasien*, was published in 1804. It included her earliest poems written in 1799. In the letter of 26 February 1804 (cf. *ibid* p. 206), Günderrode informs Savigny that she has begun work on a drama. No title is mentioned however, and there is no evidence to date which identifies the work.

Details of Kleist's life between August 1803 and June 1804 are also sketchy. Only two letters⁶ survive from this period which has recently been described as a "two-fold conspiracy of silence",⁷ undertaken firstly by Kleist and secondly by Kleist's relatives and closest friends.

There is no historical evidence to show that Kleist and G nderrode did in fact meet. To date, the only evidence of such a meeting is no more than a supposition by the Kleistian biographer Edouard von B low: "Im Jahre 1803 soll Kleist die Bekanntschaft der G nderrode gemacht haben"⁸ and an unverified comment by Helmut Sembdner: "1803 (...) Winter (...) Bekanntschaft mit (...) Karoline v. G nderrode?"⁹ Neither date concurs with Christa Wolf's. Curt Hohoff comes closest to agreeing with Christa Wolf when he speculates;

Auf dieser Reise¹⁰ befiel ihn in der Rheingegend eine heftige - unbekannte - Krankheit, von der ihn jener Hofrat Wedekind (...) erst nach Monaten heilen konnte. Er blieb f r die Welt verschollen, soll aber die Bekanntschaft der G nderode¹¹ gemacht haben (...).¹²

Thus an historical accuracy for *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is, at best, tenuous.

6. I refer to the letters of 5 October and 26 October 1803, both written to his sister Ulrike.
7. R.H. Samuel and H.M. Brown, *Kleist's Lost Year and the Quest for "Robert Guiscard"* (Warwickshire, 1981), p. 85. This publication contributes much to elucidating this otherwise mysterious period of Kleist's life.
8. K. Edouard von B low, *Heinrich von Kleists Leben und Briefe* (Berlin, 1848), p. 153.
9. *Heinrich von Kleist S mtliche Werke und Briefe* ed. Helmut Sembdner (Munich, 1965), Volume II, p.1020.
10. i.e. the journey from Paris to Potsdam undertaken in late 1803 (see p. 17 below).
11. Cf. Karoline von G nderrode, *Der Schatten eines Traumes* p. 340. The different spelling of "G nderode" is explained: "Die Schreibung 'G nderrode' (statt 'G nderode') folgt den Feststellungen des G nderrode-Forschers Max Preitz, der auf K nigs 'Genealogische Adels-Historie', Frankfurt 1707, hinweist; danach sei die Schreibart 'G nderrode' von der 'gantzen' Familie 'erw hlt worden'."
12. Curt Hohoff, *Heinrich von Kleist* (Hamburg, 1958), pp. 60-61.

In Christa Wolf's version, the occasion for the imagined meeting is a 'salon' on an estate in Winkel am Rhein. The host is JOSEPH MERTEN,¹³ a spice and perfume merchant. Being a lover of arts and sciences, he has invited several local intellectuals and friends for the afternoon: the recently married SAVIGNY, who, historically speaking, later founded the school of Jurisprudence and became the High Chancellor of Prussia, and his wife, the former GUNDA BRENTANO; the poet CLEMENS BRENTANO and his wife, the gifted poetess SOPHIE MEREAU, who have been encouraged to attend the reception by CLEMENS' sister BETTINE (also present); the natural scientist NEES VON ESENBECK and his wife LISETTE, who has a penchant for languages, poetry and botany; the SERVIÈRE twins who are close friends of GÜNDERRODE, and DR. GEORG WEDEKIND, the renowned politician and physician. Together the guests, all of whom excepting the twins are noted figures in their respective fields, form a microcosm of society's intelligentsia.

They assemble in MERTEN'S drawing-room. Propriety and formal grace combine with a sense of ease and local charm to characterise the demeanour of the guests. Luxurious furnishings underline a feeling of unrestrained elegance, inspired by a balance between formality and informality: "Menschen zwanglos über den Raum verteilt, wie das Gestühl, in schöner Anordnung." (p. 6)

The southwest windows of the drawing-room offer a panoramic view of Rhenish landscape. The imagination could not envision a more beautiful setting:

Doch der schönste Landstrich von Deutschland, an welchem unser grosser Gärtner sichtbar con amore gearbeitet hat, sind die Ufer des Rheins von Mainz bis Koblenz, die wir auf dem Strome selbst bereiset haben. Das ist eine Gegend wie ein Dichtertraum, und die üppigste Phantasie kann nichts Schöneres erdenken, als dieses Tal, das sich bald öffnet, bald schliesst, bald blüht, bald öde ist, bald lacht, bald schreckt. (p. 53)

13. To differentiate between the historical figures and their counterparts in literature created by Christa Wolf, I shall use lower case letters and capital letters respectively.

The Divine Creator Himself has nourished the landscape with His love. The word "Tal" conjures up associations with the Garden of Eden. The soil is fertile (hence "blüht") and there is an all-pervading contentedness (hence "lacht"). This contrasts with the regions beyond the valley where the land is barren and non-productive ("öde") and where there is a feeling of dread (hence "schreckt"). Although landlocked, this valley of Paradise is isolated from the rest of the world ("bald öffnet, bald schliesst"). It resembles a garden island.

The uniqueness of the landscape is emphasised by the chiascuro effects of the ever-changing reflections of the sun and the subtle and intense colours of the vegetation:

Das Gelb des Löwenzahns im Grün, Farben, vor die man die Maler führen müsste, um sie zu lehren, was Wörter wie gelb und grün eigentlich meinen. Eine Wiese, zu beispielhaft, als dass man sie noch Wiese nennen dürfte. Rechterhand das Silberflimmern der Uferweiden, auf dem die Reflexe des Wassers spielen. (p. 96)

Expanses of rare greens and yellows lie before the eye. Indeed, an artist could find no finer teacher of colour than the fields of this valley. The harmonious interaction of greens and yellows so infuses the word 'field' with life, and so completely alters one's understanding of the term, that one feels compelled to renounce all use of the word in this context. The landscape is ineffable and inimitable ("zu beispielhaft").

Into this aesthetic setting enter the two protagonists: KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE. A brief historical description of the two protagonists must suffice to place them in context.

In the ten months before June 1804, Kleist suffered a spiritual and physical breakdown, resulting from his inability to conclude his tragedy *Robert Guiscard*. Kleist had been working on the drama since April 1802. This work promised to be the synthesis of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy.¹⁴

14. Cf. C.W. Wieland's eulogy of Kleist to Dr. Georg Wedekind 10 April 1804 (in: *Orpheus* ed. Carl Weichselbaumer Nürnberg, 1824, pp. 153-160): "Wenn die Geister des Aeschylus, Sophokles und Shakespeares sich vereinigten, eine Tragödie zu schaffen, sie würde das sein, was Kleists *Tod Guiscards des Normannen*, sofern das Ganze demjenigen entspräche, was er mich damals hören liess."

The synthesis of the two styles demanded that the death of the hero be brought about by fate (represented by the plague) and the individual will of the hero (Guiscard's ardent desire to establish a Norman kingdom on Greek soil). In October 1803, a quarrel between Kleist and his usually sympathetic Parisian room-mate Ernst von Pfuël over the validity of this union brought Kleist's crisis to a climax. Kleist burnt the manuscript of *Robert Guiscard*, broke off his deep friendship with Pfuël and travelled to Saint-Omer, where Napoleon was marshalling his forces to invade England. Kleist wanted to fulfill a death wish.¹⁵ An army doctor and acquaintance chanced upon Kleist and persuaded him to return to Paris, whereupon the Prussian Ambassador instructed Kleist to return to Potsdam. On the journey, Kleist was suddenly afflicted by a mysterious illness. He arrived in Mainz in a state of physical and spiritual exhaustion, and the local physician Dr. Wedekind, without hesitation or questioning, took him into his care. The ensuing six months were a period of deep humiliation for Kleist. Living became a matter of survival. Kleist remained under the careful supervision of Wedekind until his illness had almost been cured. In mid-June he returned to Potsdam.¹⁶

At the time of her putative meeting with Kleist, Günderrode had spent seven years in the Kronstetten Convent, a Protestant refuge in Frankfurt. It was not a strictly religious community, rather it was a place of solitude for unmarried daughters of impoverished noble families. Social life was restricted, but Günderrode could receive friends. Bettina was a regular visitor. Günderrode had gathered a number of close friends around her, including the Brentanos and the Servièrre sisters. Although travel in and around Frankfurt was unrestricted and permission for longer distances was usually granted without question, Günderrode preferred to remain in the convent, communing with herself.

(cont'd) "Von dem Augenblick an war es bei mir entschieden, Kleist sei dazu geboren, die grosse Lücke in unserer dramatischen Literatur auszufüllen, die, nach meiner Meinung wenigstens, selbst von Schiller und Goethe nicht ausgefüllt worden ist."

15. Cf. Kleist's letter to Ulrike 26 October 1803: "(...) ich werde den schönen Tod der Schlachten sterben."
16. This biographical information is drawn from: Curt Hohoff, *Heinrich von Kleist*, pp. 34-65.

In 1799, however, she met Savigny while visiting friends in Lengfeld. The relationship blossomed into a love affair, only to cease in May 1804 when Savigny married Gunda Brentano. Günderrode retreated into herself. She read extensively, in particular Müllers *History of Switzerland*, studied Schellings beliefs on natural philosophy, and engaged in writing a drama. Her love for Savigny, however, did not die.¹⁷

The meeting in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* occurs after KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE have both been through a period of crisis and withdrawn from society to heal the wounds of failure. The reception on MERTEN'S estate represents the opportunity of re-entering society. KLEIST comes to learn the art of mingling with people again, something he at first finds impossible: "Dass ich mich nicht unter sie mischen kann." (p.7) GÜNDERRODE comes to reconcile her differences with SAVIGNY:

Warum ist sie mitgekommen. (...) Der wirkliche Grund, jetzt sieht sie ihn klar (...): Sie musste Savigny wiedersehn. (p. 36)

After their arrival at MERTEN'S residence, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE feel they are pariah figures. KLEIST is understandably unsociable after six months without social contact. WEDEKIND asks: "Darf man erfahren, was Sie (KLEIST) uns entrückt?" (p. 13) KLEIST feels his situation is too tragic for the guests to appreciate: "Faxen. Wovon diese hier, in ihrer heitern Gegend, nichts wissen." (p. 7) Even MERTEN who is usually an impeccable host ignores KLEIST:

Jemand müsste sich seiner (KLEIST) annehmen. Warum nur Merten, sonst ein untadliger Gastgeber, seine Pflichten versäumt. (p. 21)

Although GÜNDERRODE is from the same region as the guests, in spirit she is not of them. She seems caught between belonging and not belonging to the 'salon': "Wie sie da steht, sich nicht aufdrängt, sich nicht ausdrücklich entzieht." (p. 21) She appears eccentric, a trait people have come to expect of her:

Man lässt mich jetzt, duldet meine Entfernung, als Grille, verlangt nichts weiter, als dass ich mich grillenhaft zeige, von Zeit zu Zeit. (p. 8)

17. The above biographical information is to be found in Richard Wilhelm's *Die Günderrode* (Bern, 1975), pp. 17-23.

In MERTEN'S drawing-room the protagonists encounter each other for the first time. KLEIST has never heard of GÜNDERRODE and, after a cursory introduction to GÜNDERRODE by WEDEKIND, forgets her name. She is merely another face. GÜNDERRODE has recently read KLEIST'S first drama *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and has heard rumours about the young author's ill-health. As GÜNDERRODE moves among the guests the curtain opens for a moment, a gratuitous invitation as it were, beckoning KLEIST to bridge the respectable distance of unfamiliarity and befriend GÜNDERRODE. With equal haste the overture is withdrawn: "Jenes Fräulein Günderrode hat sich ihm nur genähert, um sich wieder zu entfernen." (p. 16) The invisible wall ("unsichtbarer Kreis" p. 10) around GÜNDERRODE remains impenetrable. The privacy, and with that the profound loneliness, of each protagonist is preserved.

That moment has created an uneasy tension between KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE. KLEIST is disturbed by the inadequacy of language to describe GÜNDERRODE'S character. Even her name Karoline, he feels, is inappropriate, perhaps a further reason why he forgot it. It imposes on her conventional attitudes and a certain behaviour expected of her, thus giving a limited and false picture of her nature. Her sex does not define her actions; rather, from KLEIST'S observation at least, GÜNDERRODE embodies male and female characteristics:

Kleist unterdrückt das Wort, das ihm zu passen scheint.
Dem Widerwillen gegen Zwitterhaftes geht er nicht auf den
Grund. (p. 21)¹⁸

"Zwitterhaftes" too is ambivalent because it has a moral connotation. For that reason KLEIST suppresses the word. Moral understanding has become so rigid and so obsessed with categorizing individuals that it judges those who are of both sexes as miscreants. Yet, KLEIST cannot simply dismiss her as being a 'miscreant'.

18. See p. 61 below.

GÜNDERRODE possesses an ineffable, almost mythical presence and for KLEIST 'Zwitterhaftes' is the term which captures her nature best.¹⁹

Like GÜNDERRODE, KLEIST is misunderstood by the guests. Unlike her, he is shunned completely. Only in an extreme situation, to palliate an imminent attack of *melancholia* and to prevent social embarrassment, does he latch on to SAVIGNY:

Wedekind hat ihn eine Methode gelehrt (...): Alle Sinne und Seelenkräfte zusammennehmend, soll er sich in ein Mitglied des Kreises versenken, in dem er sich gerade befindet. Sein Interesse würde sich so von ihm weg auf einen andern richten, und jene Beklommenheit würde weichen, die gewöhnlich in Schwermut endete. (p. 33)

The guests, ignorant of their misconceptions about KLEIST, form a network of relationships with each other; yet each relationship carefully avoids passing through the centre and making contact with KLEIST. The pattern created resembles a diseased spot, a stigma on the flesh of society, so to speak:

(...) den Punkt, den alle Linien meiden, um den ein freier Flecken sich gebildet hat: Kleist. (p. 38)

Just as KLEIST alone perceives the uniqueness of GÜNDERRODE, so GÜNDERRODE observes the desolate figure of KLEIST. To do so, she must divorce herself from the group, shun the guests so as not to shun KLEIST. If she sought to remain an integrated member of the group, she would continue to ignore KLEIST. Propriety would demand this. Curiosity and a genuine desire to penetrate into the thinking of KLEIST replace a nonchalant, superficial attitude expected from her by the guests.

19. The problem of finding the 'right' language is a recurring theme with Christa Wolf's characters; for example Rita Seidel in *Der Geteilte Himmel* (Berlin-Schöneberg, 1967) has difficulties in the final chapter: "Sie können sich nicht vorstellen, was Ihr Mann leistet," sagt Rita, unfähig, die richtigen Worte zu finden, um die Frau zu trösten" (p. 287) and in *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Berlin, 1969) Christa T. finds language does not describe objects adequately: "(...) sie zweifelte ja an der Wirklichkeit von Namen, mit denen sie doch umging; sie ahnte ja, dass die Benennung kaum je gelingt und dass sie dann nur für kurze Zeit mit dem Ding zusammenfällt, auf das sie gelegt wurde." (p. 46)

Hence, she divorces herself from the group and from herself:

Auf einmal sieht sie, wie es ihr oft geschieht,
abgelöst von sich und allen, das Muster (...). (p. 38)

Thus, both KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are outsiders. Both are misunderstood, yet neither is prepared to sacrifice his belief in his own judgement. Each protagonist will judge without prejudice, regardless of the opinion of others. To probe the surface and not to be content until the essential nature of the fellow human has been ascertained, to be a sympathetic person -- these are the aspirations which inform the relationship between KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE.

The bond between them is at first tenuous, as is to be expected with individuals who are condemned to be misjudged and to be stigmatized as being quaint and unapproachable. Each in trying to enter the inner sanctum of the other is repulsed. GÜNDERRODE, uncertain of whether a reproach lurks behind KLEIST'S piercing glances, shrugs off his bold advance: "Die Günderrode spürt den Blick zwischen ihren Schulterblättern, schüttelt ihn ab" (p. 21)²⁰ and later: "Seinen Blick (...) weiss sie sich nicht zu deuten." (p. 38) KLEIST is surrounded by an impenetrable barrier of tranquillity. If GÜNDERRODE were to approach him directly, to converse with him out of politeness, she would profane the silence of his self-communion and in KLEIST'S eyes, at least, debase her own character:

Fordert die Höflichkeit, ihn ins Gespräch zu ziehen?
Gebietet sie eher, ihm seine Ruhe zu lassen, auf die er
wohl Wert legt? (p. 38)

Yet, to neglect KLEIST is to conform to the attitudes of the guests towards KLEIST.

It requires BETTINE, a third party whose actions are beyond GÜNDERRODE'S control, to break the deadlock, to break down the impenetrable defences of both protagonists and strengthen their relationship. Out of curiosity and perhaps even as a deliberate attempt to bring KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE closer together -- the timing could not be better -- BETTINE goes to GÜNDERRODE'S handbag to see whether she always carries a dagger with her.

20. See p. 62 below.

Clumsily and possibly shocked at what she sees inside, BETTINE drops the handbag, spilling the contents: "Sehr seltsam: ein Dolch." (p. 45) SAVIGNY is dismayed. In disbelief he asks the shortest of questions: "Immer?" (p. 45) His suspicion confirmed, he shakes his head disapprovingly. Meanwhile everyone has the opportunity to hold the dagger and feel the sharpness of the blade. WEDEKIND, too, is shocked. He tries to cover up the incident by confiscating the dagger from the SERVIÈRE twins who have engaged in a feigned duel. When finally he does return the weapon to GÜNDERRODE, the guests are struck dumb:

(...) unter allgemeinem Schweigen gibt der Hofrat
ihr den Dolch (...) zurück. (p. 45)

The sudden appearance of the dagger has given everyone a key to understand GÜNDERRODE: "Der Dolch der Günderrode ist für jedermann ein Begriff (...)." (p. 45) It confirms the belief that she is an eccentric and unmasks her grim determination to spurn conformity to any stereotype. GÜNDERRODE'S thoughts are not to be taken lightly; the sharpness of the blade confirms that. Society must learn to respect her, not she society. Fittingly, WEDEKIND is forced to show GÜNDERRODE respect -- which he does in the conventional manner -- when he returns the dagger to her with a bow.

The dagger is also a portentous sign, a weapon GÜNDERRODE can turn upon herself should society not rise to her challenge. It represents the one means, the final means, to shock society into a more sympathetic attitude towards its individuals.

Like the guests, KLEIST is amazed at the sudden appearance of the dagger: "(...) Kleist kann nur staunen." (p. 45) Unlike WEDEKIND who later tries to confiscate the dagger, KLEIST promptly picks it up and returns it to GÜNDERRODE. Symbolically a dagger represents the male qualities of courage and virility. These are the very qualities GÜNDERRODE no doubt calls upon to resist being cast into the mould of a socially acceptable woman. Thus by handing back the dagger, KLEIST acknowledges that GÜNDERRODE has the right to be her complete self. He is showing her respect and, as is manifest when KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE walk alone and finally turn to one another, will in turn earn respect. KLEIST'S dramatic irony in: "Ein kurioses Instrument, mein Fräulein, im Puderbeutel einer jungen Dame." (p. 45) emphasises the fact that GÜNDERRODE is no conventional young lady.

While for the guests the appearance of the dagger confirms GÜNDERRODE'S eccentricity, for KLEIST it confirms his earlier suspicion that she embodies both male and female attributes. GÜNDERRODE herself says the dagger is native to her unsophisticated personality: "Mir kommt es ganz natürlich vor." (p. 45) Thus when WEDEKIND threatens to confiscate her dagger GÜNDERRODE is definitely unambiguous. In an unusually grave voice ("ungewöhnlich ernst" p. 45), as if she fears losing an integral part of herself, GÜNDERRODE demands that he give her back the dagger which she promptly puts in her handbag.

This episode has caught GÜNDERRODE off guard. It has shattered her social persona and exposed the private individual. GÜNDERRODE is ashamed, not because she feels guilt for offending against propriety, but because the ring of defences around her has been penetrated owing to circumstances beyond her control:

Die Günderrode hasst es, von so vielem abzuhängen, dem sie gar keinen Einfluss zugestehen will, und mehr als alles andre hasst sie es, darauf ertappt zu werden. Beschämung.
(p. 46)

On the other hand the situation allows KLEIST to gain an insight into the character of GÜNDERRODE and encourages him to come closer to her, at least in spirit, and to ingratiate himself as a person worthy of respect.

Despite the strengthening of the bond between the two outsiders the relationship cannot progress easily: firstly, because GÜNDERRODE'S wayward attitudes meet with disapproval (upon learning that the dagger always accompanies her SAVIGNY "schüttelt bekümmert den Kopf" p. 45), KLEIST in turn would suffer reproach for associating with her; secondly, because the dagger incident has upstaged GÜNDERRODE, the relationship can hardly be a private affair. It is no coincidence that both KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE long to escape the stifling atmosphere of the drawing-room and gain the out-of-doors, which, with its associations of freedom and salubrity, will favour a more vital relationship: (KLEIST) "Die Uhr schlägt fünf, man will ins Freie." (p. 77): (GÜNDERRODE) "Die Günderrode sehnt sich ins Freie (...)." (p. 71) Instead, buttonholed by MERTEN, KLEIST must give an account of his recent literary activities and LISETTE VON ESENBECK imposes herself on GÜNDERRODE and upbraids her for whispering secrets to BETTINE in front of others.

Indeed, the desire to go outside is but one of a number of parallel feelings evinced by the protagonists. Unbeknown to the guests KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE have a clear understanding of each other. When KLEIST is pondering the antonym of "Gebrechlichkeit", GÜNDERRODE gives the answer immediately: "Übereinkunft, sagt die Günderrode. Konvention." (p. 52); later, when everyone moves from the stifling atmosphere of MERTEN'S drawing room and is strolling towards the banks of the Rhine, KLEIST draws an absurd geometrical figure in the sand and asks GÜNDERRODE for her interpretation:

Die Günderrode, die Derartiges noch nie gesehn, auch nicht gedacht hat, versteht das Ding sofort. (...)

Sie wissen es selbst (...) Das ist das Verhängnis. (p. 85)

Repeatedly GÜNDERRODE'S timely comments seem to be directed more toward KLEIST, even though she is addressing one of the other guests: KLEIST, having been accused by MERTEN of writing books for pecuniary reward, 'overhears' a comment from GÜNDERRODE -- who is talking with BETTINE -- which formulates precisely the motivation behind his writing:

Gedichte sind Balsam auf Unstillbares im Leben. -
Merkwürdig, wie diese Frau, auch wenn sie zu andern
spricht, ihn zu meinen scheint (...). (p. 65)

While talking with CLEMENS, KLEIST overhears GÜNDERRODE and realizes that he is engaged at the same time in a veiled conversation with GÜNDERRODE, something at which KLEIST himself is proficient:

Die Günderrode, sieht Kleist, hat zu ihnen herübergehört, das ist ihm recht. Er ist nicht ohne Übung in der Fertigkeit, auf indirekte Weise mit einem andern zu sprechen. (p. 66)

Kleist feels no one has more intimate knowledge of the world than he, but for fear of being ostracised completely, he dares not say this in the present company. Yet, GÜNDERRODE gives voice to KLEIST'S thoughts:

Da sagt die Günderrode, als spräche sie für ihn:
Menschen, die sich nicht über sich selbst betrügen,
werden aus der Gärung einer jeden Zeit Neues
herausreissen, indem sie es aussprechen. Mir
ist, als ginge die Welt nicht weiter, wenn das nicht
getan wird. (p. 83)

This oneness of spirit, this singleness of mind, vindicate a thought which earlier passed through KLEIST'S mind: "Merkwürdig, (...) dass sie (GÜNDERRODE) ihm (KLEIST) als die einzig Wirkliche unter Larven vorkommt." (p. 65) GÜNDERRODE does not renounce the reality of life for the sake of fulfilling social expectations, of wearing the mask of social pretence. If KLEIST claims: "(...) von diesen allen hier ist womöglich keiner inniger mit der Welt verbunden als ich" (p. 83), then GÜNDERRODE is equally in touch with reality.

This KLEIST acknowledges when he takes GÜNDERRODE'S arm. The gesture is an outward manifestation of a desire for spiritual kinship. Immediately after this both KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE confirm their oneness of spirit by identifying with each other through the use of the personal pronoun "wir" for the first time:

(KLEIST) Ich aber, Günderrode, ich und Sie, denk ich, wir leiden unter den Übeln der neuen [Zeit].
(p. 86) ²¹

(GÜNDERRODE) Ja, sagt die Günderrode, das ist wohl verständlich, dass wir unter dem Zwang, dem wir unterstellt sind, in Gedanken wenigstens zu entfliehen trachten.

(...) Und was gab ihr das Recht, sie beide, sich und ihn, in dem Worte "wir" zusammenzufassen? (p. 87)

Where during the early afternoon each protagonist felt he was shunned by the guests and by the other protagonist, now late in the afternoon, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE face one another and shun the guests. The relationship has removed the feeling in both figures that they are outsiders. Rather, it is the guests with their social expectations and perverted conception of reality who are the outsiders, who intrude on KLEIST'S and GÜNDERRODE'S privacy.

21. Cf. pp. 77-78. By the 'new age' KLEIST refers to the contemporary world which is orderly but devoid of passion and beauty: "Sei es nicht grade die Grösse dieses Zeitalters, dass es die niedern Leidenschaften gebändigt, die Vernunft an die Macht gehoben habe? (...) Ordnung! Ja: Ordentlich ist heute die Welt. Aber sagen Sie mir: Ist sie noch schön?"

They judge only by superficial appearance. Hence the guests have no contact with the inner reality of life. Simply, they exist in a false reality. Although CLEMENS has just concluded singing a song dedicated to GÜNDERRODE, she is conscious that her relationship with KLEIST is inhibited by the presence of the guests. On impulse she seizes KLEIST'S arm and together the two protagonists go in the opposite direction of the guests. Symbolically, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE walk upstream, against the current of social morality as it were. In private, however, they will be able to share themselves freely and thereby attain a deeper self-understanding: "Man versteht nicht, was man nicht mit andern teilt." (p. 99) Each partner will become a confidant for the other.

At the same time both have second thoughts about their bold decision: "Gleich reut es sie. (...) Er würde auch lieber allein gehn." (p. 88) It is not so much concern at separating from the guests but scepticism that each will open himself to the other. Uncertain of their community of feeling, apprehensive that the newly-won freedom may be limited, that the relationship is therefore in some way restricted, GÜNDERRODE probes carefully to find the common ground. Considering KLEIST'S unstable emotional health, GÜNDERRODE must be even more careful when she talks with KLEIST:

Die Günderrode zweifelt, welche Gegenstände sie ihm
gegenüber gesprächsweise berühren darf, welche nicht.
(p. 92)

When KLEIST draws a parallel between his eternal feeling of lassitude and a coach accident which befell him and his sister Ulrike in Butzbach, GÜNDERRODE is given one such point of common interest. She knows the area well. Her grandmother lived there and GÜNDERRODE herself resided in Butzbach for six months after her grandmother's death. KLEIST'S incidental mention of Ulrike captures GÜNDERRODE'S attention. GÜNDERRODE would like to know more about her. Hearsay that on this journey Ulrike accompanied KLEIST to Paris and, indeed, walked the streets of the city clad in male attire intrigues GÜNDERRODE. Only a blind musician was not deceived by Ulrike's appearance.

Prior to the journey, KLEIST had struggled to gain a deeper understanding of Kantian philosophy.²² His failure to do so prompted him to undertake the journey, although Paris was not the intended destination. Having given up all hope of appreciating Kant's ideas, KLEIST quite unexpectedly came face to face with the essence of Kant's theory of cognition. Parisian onlookers, content in their superficial experience of the Ulrike 'phenomenon', failed to grasp the unknowable, 'thing-in-itself' -- Kant calls it the 'noumenal' -- half of Ulrike's person.²³ They, unlike the blind musician, were deceived by her appearance.

A parallel may be drawn between Ulrike and GÜNDERRODE for they are both judged by their appearance. Where Ulrike's male apparel belies the fact that she is a woman, GÜNDERRODE'S apparel -- a nun's habit -- belies the fact that her inner nature is a blend of male and female qualities. Ulrike is therefore an inverse mirror reflection of GÜNDERRODE. KLEIST plays the role of the blind musician who 'sees' beyond the external appearance. GÜNDERRODE notes all too clearly how personal, how relevant this incidental episode is to her:

Die Günderrode lacht nicht. Selten ist sie neidisch,
jetzt ist sie's.

Ihre Schwester möchte ich kennen. (p. 93)

KLEIST understands the reason for this desire. As women, it is their destiny to suffer: "(...) die Frauen sind das leidende Geschlecht." (p. 107)

22. Cf. p. 91. KLEIST explains one of the reasons for the Butzbach journey: "Teils wollte ich sie, um mich zu zerstreuen, da mir durch die nähere Bekanntschaft mit der Kantischen Philosophie mein einziges, höchstes Ziel, mir Bildung und Wahrheit zu erwerben, als unerfüllbar versunken war (...)."
23. Cf. Kleist's letter to Wilhelmine von Zenge 22 March 1801: "Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden sie urteilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken, *sind* grün - und nie würden sie entscheiden können, ob ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzutut, was nicht ihnen, sondern dem Auge gehört. So ist es mit dem Verstande. Wir können nicht unterscheiden, ob das, was wir Wahrheit nennen, wahrhaft Wahrheit ist, oder ob es uns nur so scheint. Ist das letzte, so *ist* die Wahrheit, die wir hier sammeln, nach dem Tode nicht mehr - und alles Bestreben, ein Eigentum sich zu erwerben, das uns auch in das Grab folgt, ist vergeblich -"

Yet Ulrike and GÜNDERRODE suffer more than most women, since, in addition to bearing the sufferings of womanliness, they are struggling to emancipate themselves from that suffering:

Sie wird sich drein schicken, wenn auch, das gesteht er ihr zu, schwerer als die meisten - darin der Schwester verwandt. (p. 107)

In the case of Ulrike, this is illustrated by her male clothing and in GÜNDERRODE'S case by the dagger.

KLEIST'S growing intimacy with GÜNDERRODE provides him with a clear understanding of the fallibility, or rather fragility, of appearance, for he becomes conscious of the hidden workings of reality:

Die ungesunde Lust auf die Hebel und Stangen hinter den Kulissen zu zeigen - bei einer Frau hat Kleist sie noch nicht angetroffen. (p. 97)

When KLEIST reflects on his incomplete self-understanding: "Um mich zu ergänzen, denk ich manchmal, braucht ich die ganze übrige Menschheit" (p. 107), GÜNDERRODE, as if lamenting about KLEIST'S and her own plight, replies: "Was ich sehe, Kleist, ist Mangel." (p. 107) She realises that to attain complete self-understanding they must both transcend hitherto uncrossed thresholds: "(...) wir müssen das Gebot übertreten." (p. 98) Their meeting therefore assumes a deeper meaning, for GÜNDERRODE'S honest statement to KLEIST is itself confirmation that the two protagonists are ready to remove the façade completely.

Indeed, both share a desire for an *alter ego* figure. KLEIST has earlier said to WEDEKIND:

Einmal in meinem Leben (...)möcht ich dem Menschen begegnen, der mir ohne versteckten Vorwurf erlaubt zu sein, der ich bin. (p. 56)

The use of the definite article in: "dem Menschen" underlines KLEIST'S wish. GÜNDERRODE reflects:

Einmal sollte einer ihr gegenübertreten, von dem sie nichts weiss. Von dem sie nichts erfahren kann, ausser sie erfährt sich selber bis auf den Grund, bis an ihre Grenzen und darüber hinaus. Und dann nichts weiter. - (p. 106)

We may say that KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are *alter ego* figures for each other.

GÜNDERRODE recognises her kinship with KLEIST:

Der Mensch, denkt die Günderrode, ist mir fremd und
in der Fremdheit nah. (pp. 100-101)

and later, when both turn towards each other, this is confirmed:

Sie bleiben stehn, drehn sich einander zu. Jeder
sieht den Himmel hinter dem Kopf des andern. (p. 108)

While the sky behind each protagonist's head has its mirror reflection behind the other protagonist's head, this also suggests that each protagonist is a mirror reflection of the other. In looking at the other, each is looking at himself.

KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE may openly surrender to each other spiritually, for here, in private, they will not offend against public feeling: "Sie mustern sich unverhohlen. Nackte Blicke. Preisgabe, versuchsweise." (p. 108) However, the surrender is at first tentative, as is to be expected, for this is an experiment ("versuchsweise") with reality, something the protagonists know exists but something they have rarely experienced. The mask of social pretence is discarded. The surrender is no theatrical act.²⁴ It is an honest confession of two individuals who offer themselves to come closer to the inner reality of each other.²⁵ The facial expression of both protagonists is also tentative. A smile mocks conformity with social convention: "Das Lächeln, zuerst bei ihr, dann bei ihm, spöttisch." (p. 108) Any reservations about offending against each other's feelings towards their social existence are removed as their intimacy grows.

24. See p. 66 below.

25. Cf. p. 98. The malaise endured by Kleist and Günderrode in conforming to social conditions is described: "Die Günderrode legt ihm ihre Hand auf den Arm. Sie wissen, dass sie nicht berührt werden wollen. Zugleich spüren sie ein Bedauern, ein Mitleid mit der unterdrückten Sprache ihrer Körper, eine Trauer über die allzu frühe Zähmung der Glieder durch Uniform und Ordenskleid, über die Gesittung im Namen des Reglements, über die heimlichen Exzesse im Namen seiner Übertretung. Muss man erst ausser sich sein, um das Verlangen zu kennen, die Kleider herunterzureissen und sich auf dieser Wiese zu wälzen."

Smiling yields to laughter:

Ohne Anlass beginnt sie auf einmal zu lachen, erst leise, dann laut und aus vollem Hals. Kleist wird angesteckt. Sie müssen aneinander halten, um vor Lachen nicht umzusinken. Näher sind sie sich nie als in dieser Minute. (p. 118)

That KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE roar with laughter ("laut und aus vollem Hals"), reveals the scorn with which each protagonist regards social pretence. In liberating themselves from social pretence, the protagonists find that the hollowness of that public existence is replaced by the full weight of reality which presses down upon them. Unaccustomed to reality, as if reality is endowed with too much substance and meaning, they struggle to withstand the pressure. The embrace lends each the support necessary to resist. The surrender, then, is a measure of KLEIST'S and GÜNDERRODE'S desire to be at ease with each other in reality.

That KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE embrace, also suggests that they complement one another. Indeed they are like brother and sister. Just as KLEIST'S relationship with Ulrike cannot be defined as a man-woman relationship,²⁶ so too does KLEIST'S relationship with GÜNDERRODE defy facile description:

Bis auf den Grund verschieden. Vom Grund her einander ähnlich. Frau. Mann. Unbrauchbare Wörter. (p. 109)

KLEIST'S relationship with GÜNDERRODE resembles his sibling relationship with Ulrike, excepting that it is founded not on blood ties but on kindred spirit.²⁷ However, the same description used to characterise KLEIST'S relationship with Ulrike is also appropriate for his relationship with GÜNDERRODE:

Geschwisterliebe, über die das Menschenwesen die Hände hält. (...) Verwandtschaft, welche die Fassungslosigkeit vor dem fremden Geschlecht mildert, dem man sich nicht ausliefern kann. (p. 95)

26. Cf. p. 95: "Er nicht ganz Mann, sie nicht ganz Frau..."

27. See p. 25 above.

Where a sexual relationship stupefies KLEIST because he must understand his partner as being an opposite being, as a symbol of her sex ("fremdes Geschlecht"), with Ulrike and GÜNDERRODE where the relationship is inspired by platonic love, KLEIST feels consoled. There are no sexual barriers between him and his partner.²⁸ KLEIST views GÜNDERRODE as a human being to whom he can deliver himself completely. Effectively, two people dissolve to become one human being. Such a union does not however mean that each protagonist has independently fulfilled his wish. The union is only the condition which is conducive to the wish-fulfilment. KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are simultaneously one complete person, and two distinct individuals who still strive for complete self-understanding: "Wir sind auf den ganzen Menschen aus und können ihn nicht finden" (p. 94) and later: "Unser unausrottbarer Glaube, der Mensch sei bestimmt, sich zu vervollkommen (...)." (p. 119)

As KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE return to Winkel am Rhein -- one could say to society -- the consummate experience of completeness and reality is corrupted, one feels, by discordant cries informing KLEIST that his coach is about to depart. To comply with social propriety, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE must again project an image which finds social acceptance. It is appropriate that they do not come together for a second time as KLEIST leaves. A gentle movement of the hand must suffice: "Sie verabschieden sich durch eine Handbewegung." (p. 119) In feigning unfamiliarity, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are assuming the veil of social pretence. They conform to social etiquette by keeping their distance from each other. The protagonists' regression into the 'imperfect' world (i.e. a world whose knowledge of reality is imperfect or deficient because it is based on appearances) is underscored by the changes in the light. Suddenly brilliant ("spitz, grell und scharf" p. 119), as if illuminating the inner person behind the superficial appearance and favouring an encounter with ultimate reality, the light is dimmed by descending darkness ("Jetzt wird es dunkel" p. 119), thus obscuring the reality of the individual.

28. Cf. p. 118. From his encounter with GÜNDERRODE, KLEIST draws a spiritual delight, almost an intoxication: "Der Austausch mit ihr, die ihn als Mann nicht reizt, kommt einem sinnlichen Rausch nahe."

If MERTEN'S reception represents an opportunity to be assimilated into society, then the protagonists' separation from the guests by the water's edge suggests that society is not ready for them. To appreciate what makes the protagonists unfit to survive in society invites an investigation of their respective outlook on life. In this light, I shall examine firstly KLEIST, then GÜNDERRODE, and finally I shall draw a comparison between the two figures.

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II.

BETWEEN IDEA AND REALITY

KLEIST

KLEIST has an idealist conception of the world; for him ideas determine reality: "Wozu Ideen in die Welt gesetzt würden, wenn nicht zum Zwecke ihrer Verwirklichung." (p. 48) Ideas are not mere notions. Their value is to be seen in their realization. When asked what he would like most if he were given three wishes KLEIST answers: "Freiheit. Ein Gedicht. Ein Haus." (p. 87) The choices reflect KLEIST'S concern to bring together two opposing elements, the 'ideal' and the 'real'. The poem represents the home of ideas; the house stands for the idea in its practical form, the home in reality.¹ To have freedom means to be able to unite the two elements, by realizing or 'living' the idea in practical terms.

KLEIST'S longing for these three things suggests that creative ideas no longer have a place in the practical world.²

1. One is reminded of the house which is to be built overlooking the lake in *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Neuwied and Berlin, 1969). The house was to be the objectification of Christa T.'s dreams.
2. Cf. pp. 50-51. SAVIGNY also shares this view, although his is a strictly pragmatic approach to survival in society and he does not believe that the division should or could ever be healed: "Oder wollt ihr es wirklich nicht sehn, welche Einschränkungen auf allem Denken läge, wenn wir fürchten müssten, unsre Phantasien könnten in die wirklichen Verhältnisse Eingang finden. Um Himmels willen, nein: Dass man die Philosophie nicht beim Wort nehmen, das Leben am Ideal nicht messen soll - das ist Gesetz. (...) Es ist das Gesetz der Gesetze, Kleist, auf dem unsre menschlichen Einrichtungen in ihrer notwendigen Gebrechlichkeit beruhen."

The division between the 'ideal' and the 'real' has become so entrenched in life that KLEIST questions whether one may be permitted to bring the two elements together:

Ja: Sei es nicht überhaupt unstatthaft, jene Wand zu durchbrechen, die zwischen die Phantasien der Literaten und die Realitäten der Welt gesetzt ist? (p. 14)

KLEIST believes a poet may inspire the 'real' world with his creative ideas.³ Denied that facility, the poet is threatened with living an isolated existence. The work of literature therefore assumes importance, for it enables him to convey the idea to the 'real' world and, at the same time, to heal the division inside him: "Sein Werk ist der einzige Punkt, mit sich eins zu werden (...)." (p. 117) Because KLEIST is completely reliant on the achievement of his literary endeavours for harmony both within himself and without, literature takes on existential significance:

Der Mann hält sich an Hilfskonstruktionen, darauf gefasst, dass sie zusammenbrechen. Dass er weder das eine noch das andre erreichen, also scheitern wird. Dass er folgenlos bleibt, eine Randfigur. (p. 114)

KLEIST'S "Hilfskonstruktionen" are his writings. His demands upon literature are so great that it may fail him. In the case of failure, KLEIST'S literary efforts would neither inspire reality ("das eine") nor heal the rift inside him ("das andre"). The poet thus suffers a double failure. The threat looms that he could become someone of no consequence.

This was the existential crisis KLEIST suffered with *Robert Guiscard*. He tried to realize in drama the idea of a hero's death brought about equally by self-betrayal and betrayal by the Gods.⁴

3. Cf. p. 81. MERTEN also understands that the task of the writer is to offer hope by presenting the possible: "Aber der Dichter, ruft Merten, ist doch nicht dazu da, seinen Mitmenschen die Hoffnung zu nehmen!
Bei Gott, Herr Merten, da haben Sie recht. Dem Dichter ist die Verwaltung unsrer Illusionen unterstellt."
4. Cf. p. 116: "Wozu er Jahre brauchte, begreift die Frau in Minuten: Dass er an Unmöglichem sich abgearbeitet. Ein Mann, gebunden an die Gesetze der Alten so stark wie an die der Neuzeit, der seinen Untergang zu gleichen Teilen dem Verrat der Götter wie sich selbst verdankt: Einem solchen Helden hat das Drama noch keine Form geschaffen."

The failure of the drama meant that KLEIST'S idea would remain a mere notion and have no practical significance in the 'real' world. Although the work promised much, failure inspired in him a feeling which still accompanies him, namely that he is a "Randfigur", a man without dignity:

Es zerreisst ihn, dass er denen nichts gilt. Das Werk ist nicht geschrieben, mit dem er auch diesen hier einst Schläge versetzen wird, dass sie in die Knie gehn sollen. (p. 34)

KLEIST was driven to the point of suicide:

Pfuehl, ich bin gescheitert! Es war die Wahrheit, weiss Gott, aber der Freund, der ihn am besten kannte (...) der seinen hoffnungslosen Kampf um den verfluchten "Guiscard" mit angesehen: dieser Freund bestritt ihm, die Folgerung aus dieser Wahrheit und verweigerte ihm die Wohltat, die Erde mit ihm gemeinsam für immer zu verlassen. (p. 13)

KLEIST'S anguish over the failure of the drama was intensified by his veneration for the historical figure Robert Guiscard. He was a man of action, determined to impose his will on the world: "Guiscard, ein Mann aus einem Guss, von seinem Willen regiert!" (p. 115) He dedicated his life to realizing one idea:

Wogegen Guiscard sich selbst beherrscht zu einem Zweck ausser ihm: das Reich der Normannen auf griechischem Boden zu errichten. (p. 115)

When KLEIST abandoned *Robert Guiscard*, he resolved to join Napoleon's army and meet his death fighting the British. KLEIST loathed the French tyrant for the fear he inspired and for his thirst for autocracy but, at the same time, was attracted to him:

Denn kein Mensch kann auf die Dauer mit dem Erlebnis leben, dass, so stark wie sein Widerstand gegen das Übel der Welt, der Trieb in ihm ist, sich diesem Übel unbedingt zu unterwerfen. (p. 55)

By his actions, Napoleon exuded supreme self-confidence. He could seemingly impose his will on the world as he desired. He was not a man of no consequence.⁵

5. Cf. p. 31. KLEIST explains the distinct difference between the self-assured man who realizes his ideal and the feeble individual who fails: "Sich Zeit und Ort nach eigener Notwendigkeit zu schaffen oder nach gewöhnlichem Zuschnitt zu vegetieren."

Although KLEIST has failed to put his stamp on the world, by serving under Napoleon he could at least observe someone imposing his will on the 'real' world.⁶ The tragedy of *Robert Guiscard* as well as KLEIST'S personal tragedy were being performed before his very eyes.⁷

Although he was fortunate that WEDEKIND took him into his care when he was in a state of physical and spiritual collapse, KLEIST has also found the past six months humiliating.⁸ The doctor prescribed a strict pattern of behaviour for his patient: "Vernunft. Mässigung, Ökonomie der Kräfte - ja und nochmals ja!" (p. 39) KLEIST felt WEDEKIND was merely imposing his idea of a healthy person on him.⁹ He asks pointedly: "Wie soll der Gesunde den Kranken verstehn?" (p. 39) Until he regained sufficient strength, KLEIST had to accept WEDEKIND'S regimen of moderation and a reasoned approach. At the time of MERTEN'S reception, KLEIST has all but fully recovered his health.

6. Cf. p. 41. WEDEKIND observes that this one conviction lies at the root of KLEIST'S troubles: "Sein Dogma der Willensfreiheit des Menschen (...). Etwas zerreibt Sie, Kleist, über das Sie nicht Herr sind. Wie wahr."
7. Cf. R. Samuel and H. Brown, *Kleist's Lost Year and the Quest for "Robert Guiscard"* (Warwickshire, 1981), p. 52: "The two situations, of Robert Guiscard in 1085 and of Bonaparte in 1803 were, indeed, analogous. At the outset Kleist had realised the affinities between the two usurpers, state builders, and conquerors, and their ambitious personalities. As to detail, Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt and Syria (1798-99), the affliction of his army by the plague, his intrepidity in walking among the infected soldiers in Jaffa hospital, helping and exhorting them, and his plan to conquer Constantinople, had been the contemporary background to the play."
8. Cf. p. 39: "Kleist wird es nie vergessen, wie wohltuend und zugleich entwürdigend es war, auf behutsame Anstösse schliesslich doch zu erwidern; wie er danach verlangte und es zugleich verabscheute."
9. Cf. pp. 14-15. KLEIST shows he does not share the doctor's idea of a healthy individual: "Andre wollen ein unblutiges Denken kennen. Harmonie, Mässigung, Milde." (pp. 14-15)

KLEIST'S defiant wish to leave WEDEKIND'S care is not a sign of ingratitude;¹⁰ it is a desire to put his stamp on the world. Indeed, KLEIST identifies with the Titan demi-god Prometheus:

In Gottes und in Teufels Namen, ich bin gesund.
Gesund wie jener Narr am Felsen, Prometheus. (...)
Keine plumpen Vertraulichkeiten mit der Götterwelt.
Sterblich sein, frommer Wunsch. (p. 7)

Prometheus left his mark on the world by giving mankind fire stolen from the Gods and by passing on knowledge and science.¹¹ KLEIST'S identification with Prometheus also symbolizes a longing to impose his own ideas on himself, to the point where he is master of his own destiny: "Ein Schicksal nach seinem Geschmack." (p. 31) That necessitates a rejection of social morality:

Herr von Kleist wolle (...) zum Ausdruck bringen, dass er sich unfähig fühle, sich in irgendein konventionelles Verhältnis dieser Welt einzupassen.

(...) Er finde viele Einrichtungen dieser Welt so wenig seinem Sinne gemäss, dass es ihm unmöglich sei, an ihrer Erhaltung und Ausbildung mitzuwirken. (p. 69)¹²

KLEIST spurns the suggestion that as a Prussian he must cultivate the stereotyped character traits of purity of mind, duty and self-discipline: "Strenge, Pflichterfüllung, Selbstzucht." (p. 32) If anything, KLEIST represents the antithesis. In literature, for example, he challenged the 'purity-of-mind' ethos by trying to fuse the old tradition with the new, a faith in the divine with a faith in oneself. Although his family is steeped in the traditions of Potsdam he has renounced his military career. He has thus failed in his duty to his family, to the aristocracy and to tradition.

10. Cf. p. 38: "Dass er ihn gerettet hat - wohl möglich; aber wo steht geschrieben, der Gerettete habe seinem Retter zu folgen, wohin der ihn zieht?"
11. Cf. Robert Graves, *Greek Myths* (London, 1958), pp. 143-145.
12. Cf. p. 68: "Ja, es ist wahr, sagt Kleist. Manches, was die Menschen ehrwürdig nennen, ist es mir nicht. Vieles, was ihnen verächtlich erscheint, ist es mir wiederum nicht."

To restore KLEIST to full health, WEDEKIND prescribes a reasoned approach, moderation and the conservation of physical energy. Essentially the doctor is restoring KLEIST'S lost self-discipline. In defence of his individualistic attitude, KLEIST argues: "Wir Preussen (...) sind schliesslich auch Menschen." (p. 33) It is a condition of his being human that, in trying to impose his ideas on himself and others, he run the risk of being a failure.

Although his literary attempts failed, being a literary artist, he must return to writing if he is to bridge the gap between the 'ideal' and the 'real':

Er muss sich Zwang antun, und für geheilt wird er gelten,
wenn er die Kunst beherrscht. (p. 13)

Just as conquerors and state builders like Guiscard and Napoleon strove to realize their ambition by mastering the world, so must KLEIST assert himself in literature. He senses that when he finally brings together in a work of art the two key ingredients of living, the 'real' and the 'ideal', he can justifiably claim a deep appreciation of life: "(...) wahres Leben nur fühlen, indem man schreibt..." (p. 20)

Although KLEIST is determined to unite the two worlds, it will not be easy for him to get past living in pure notions, for at MERTEN'S reception he realizes for the first time that he has never really lived in the 'real' world:

Er dagegen, der Gedanke kommt ihm zum erstenmal, hat nicht
in einem wirklichen Gemeinwesen gelebt, sondern in seiner
Idee von einem Staat. (p. 66)¹³

Furthermore, the dilemma immediately before KLEIST threatens to perpetuate his inner division:

Was tun? Würfeln. Frankreich oder Preussen. Ein Amt
oder die Literatur. Erniedrigung und ein bescheidenes
Auskommen, oder die blanke Armut und ein ungebrochenes
Selbstgefühl. (p. 71)

13. This statement is confirmed by KLEIST'S restlessness and his fruitless search for a home on earth: "Mehr als einmal, sagt er, sei er schon fest entschlossen gewesen, nie in sein Vaterland Preussen zurückzukehren." (p. 66) "So sei er entschlossen gewesen, sich eine neue Heimat zu suchen..." (p. 67) "Nirgends hab ich gefunden, wonach ich suchte." (p. 68)

Prussia offers employment, a modest remuneration and the humiliation of being subject to authority and a philistine system;¹⁴ France, a country which in addition to Rousseau's ideas has been inspired by the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity,¹⁵ represents literature, abject poverty and an unbridled self-appreciation which is gained by realizing one's own creative ideas in literature.¹⁶ It is essentially a conflict between the practical world and the 'ideal' world, between the world as it is and the world as it could be. A 'wall' in the form of a political boundary denies KLEIST the freedom he longs for to unite the two worlds. The basic need to have financial assistance to survive weighs heavily against KLEIST'S literary aspirations. The very conflict which induced his crisis threatens to reappear in a different form and stifle any hope of his recommitting himself to literature. The prospect of having to conform to the pragmatic attitude which Prussia symbolises is ultimately a challenge to KLEIST'S idealist conception of the world.

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14. Cf. p. 65. KLEIST for example, is horrified at MERTEN'S suggestion that he take up writing on a commercial basis: "Bücher schreiben für Geld? O nichts davon! ruft da der Kleist mit einer unerwarteten Heftigkeit."
15. Cf. p. 47: "Rousseau, ruft der Preusse aus, sei das vierte Wort der Franzosen."
16. Two parallels can be drawn between the choice KLEIST must make and the geographical situation and the political history of Winkel am Rhein. Firstly, Winkel am Rhein lies approximately half way between Paris and Potsdam. This symbolises the difficult decision KLEIST must make. Secondly, the sovereignty of the area around Winkel am Rhein alternated between France and Prussia: "(...) was nun wieder diese Herren hier kaum begreifen werden, da sie es gewohnt sind, in wechselnden Grenzen zu leben, von wechselnden Souveräns regiert zu werden (...)." (p. 66) This underlines KLEIST'S vacillation between the alternatives.

GÜNDERRODE

GÜNDERRODE is driven by a desire to attain absolutes. When BETTINE asks her what her choices would be if she were granted three wishes, GÜNDERRODE laughs: "Sie wüsste keinen, ihre Wünsche sind unbegrenzt." (p. 87) In particular, GÜNDERRODE longs to experience absolute love, i.e. a love which is mutual and complete. It is not something peculiar to women but something of which both men and women are equally capable. GÜNDERRODE refers to this when she answers KLEIST'S lament that nature divides us into man and woman:

Das meinen Sie nicht, Kleist. Sie meinen, dass in
Ihnen selbst Mann und Frau einander feindlich gegenüberstehn.
Wie auch in mir. (p. 105)

GÜNDERRODE believes elements from both sides are to be found within each individual. If the elements are hostile, then there is little chance of attaining love. However, anyone is capable of love if only he can harmonize the elements. GÜNDERRODE awakens the hope in KLEIST that there is a kind of love that can bring man and woman together in a harmonious way both within and without.¹⁷ GÜNDERRODE'S love is, above all, a human love which is wholly selfless: "Er begreift, dass ich treu bin, wenn ich liebe, und selbstlos (...)." (p. 16) She is absorbed totally by the object of her love, as she explains in her poem "Wandel und Treue":

(...) Erfüllt vom Gegenstande,
Dem ich gebe in der Liebe Bande,
Wird alles, wird mein ganzes Wesen sein. (p. 76)¹⁸

17. Cf. p. 106: "Wäre das die Frau, vor deren Liebe man keine Angst haben müsste?"
18. The complete poem, along with Günderrode's other poems and literary fragments, can be read in: Karoline von Günderrode, *Der Schatten eines Traumes* ed. Christa Wolf (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1979).

In love GÜNDERRODE has not attained the absolute. As KLEIST points out to her, it is significant that in the last line she uses the future tense.¹⁹ Absolute love remains an abstraction, a wish, which makes it no less valid for GÜNDERRODE, for it has the ability to unify her character:

Sie zerreisst sich in drei Personen, darunter einen Mann.
Liebe, wenn sie unbedingt ist, kann die drei getrennten
Personen zusammenschmelzen. (p. 117)

In my understanding, GÜNDERRODE is divided into a woman, a man and a poet.²⁰ If each 'person' devotes himself completely to the other, GÜNDERRODE can exist as a whole individual. Absolute love dissolves the divisions between the three. As man and woman combined GÜNDERRODE can dedicate herself to *human* love. As a poet she can articulate, among other absolutes, her ideal of human love. She can keep the ideal constantly before her eyes. This explains why GÜNDERRODE had struggled to become a poet.

Recently GÜNDERRODE tried to 'realize' her ideal of absolute love with SAVIGNY. Although her love for SAVIGNY was absolute, SAVIGNY was incapable of a response. He wanted a relationship based on suppressed passion. GÜNDERRODE for example speaks of "niedergehaltenen Leidenschaften" (p. 72). Devotion was to be held within reasonable bounds by independence:

Du willst wissen, wie man meine Liebe erwerben könne.
Aber du weisst es doch selbst, was ausser Vortrefflichkeit
nötig ist: das rechte Verhältnis von Selbständigkeit und
Hingabe. (p. 59)

For GÜNDERRODE the denial of intimacy was epitomized by SAVIGNY'S express wish that she refrain from using the familiar "Du" form when addressing him.

19. Cf. p. 76: "(...) er finde es bedeutsam, dass sie der letzten Zeile ihres Gedichts die Zukunftsform gegeben hat. Ja, sagt sie, es ist wahr. Mir ist es selbst eben erst aufgefallen."

20. Cf. p. 21. KLEIST also notices that she possesses characteristics of man and woman combined: "Kleist unterdrückt das Wort, das ihm zu passen scheint. Dem Widerwillen gegen Zwitterhaftes geht er nicht auf den Grund." See p. 19 above.

GÜNDERRODE'S desperate attempt to win SAVIGNY'S absolute love reached its climax a fortnight before his marriage to GUNDA BRENTANO. GÜNDERRODE was completely committed to SAVIGNY in selfless love: "(...) ich kannte mich selbst nicht mehr: Ist wahr." (p. 59) She wrote him a poem entitled "Der Kuss im Traum". It was a passionate plea for absolute love. Failure in 'real' life required her to exercise her only other option, to turn to poetry.

Her dream remained a shadow of reality. However, her ever-present hope of a change in SAVIGNY'S attitude meant she could not break completely from SAVIGNY. Although a very close three-fold relationship, almost a sister relationship, has developed between SAVIGNY, GUNDA and GÜNDERRODE,²¹ GÜNDERRODE is acutely conscious of the distinction between love and friendship: "Liebe bindet stärker als Freundschaft (...)." (p. 35) She is aware her love remains unrequited and therefore an ideal. The 'real' world is not yet ready for people who claim the absolute. GÜNDERRODE bemoans the fact that such claims are mere notions: "Die Ideen, die folgenlos bleiben." (p. 113) She deplores the ever-widening gulf between practice and ideas:

Merken wir nicht, wie die Taten derer, die das Handeln an sich reissen, immer unbedenklicher werden? Wie die Poesie der Tatenlosen den Zwecken der Handelnden immer mehr entspricht? (p. 113)

Unable to bridge that gulf herself, GÜNDERRODE returns to poetry and her ideas, as if to seek refuge:

(...) das ist wohl verständlich, dass wir dem Zwang (...) in Gedanken wenigstens zu entfliehen trachten. In der Wirklichkeit ist es uns nicht erlaubt. (p. 87)

At least through her ideas she can offer a model, a vision of the future. By keeping the ideal before us she can hope to inspire the actors of history so that they might bridge the schism between the two worlds.

21. Cf. p. 49. SAVIGNY speaks to GÜNDERRODE who in turn replies: "Vergessen Sie nur nicht, Günderrödchen, dass Sie jetzt nicht mehr bloss mein Freund, sondern auch unser Freund sind. (...) Ihr beide, Gunda und Sie, ihr gehört jetzt zu meinem Schicksal."

The direct result of the frustrated affair with SAVIGNY is a drama:

Ich schreibe ein Drama, und meine ganze Seele ist damit beschäftigt. Ich denke mich so lebhaft hinein, werde so einheimisch darin, dass mir mein eignes Leben fremd wird (...). Aber ich liebe diesen Fehler, wenn es einer ist. Er hält mich oft schadlos für die ganze Welt. (pp. 61-62)

Writing is not only a protection from the 'real' world; it is a second life.²² Where the practical world succeeds only in denying ideals, poetry enables her to come to a deeper understanding of herself:

(...) dass ich in der Poesie wie in einem Spiegel mich zu sammeln, mich selber zu sehen, durch mich hindurch und über mich hinaus zu gehn suche. (p. 36)

Poetry even enables her to rise above herself and see herself as part of a universal dimension; e.g. as part of absolute love. In striving for such lofty heights GÜNDERRODE'S poetry should not be understood as pure abstractions and flights of phantasy. She contends that if she is moved to express her feelings in poetry they must be true: "Aber alles, was wir aussprechen, muss wahr sein, weil wir es empfinden." (pp. 36-37) Thus poetry approaches reality. It objectifies ideas and gives form to the life of the writer:

Dass ich schreiben muss, steht mir fest. Es ist eine Sehnsucht in mir, mein Leben in einer bleibenden Form auszusprechen. (p. 25)

The 'ideal' experience of life is arrested and though 'realized' in the language of the poem becomes timeless.

Poetry must provoke thought and (re)action. To GÜNDERRODE that is a fulfilled poetic existence. Poetry perpetuates GÜNDERRODE'S absolute ideas. To that end, she published her first volume of poems.²³ To make herself immune to the certain rebuffs of the 'real' world she chose the pseudonym Tian.

22. Cf. p. 37: "Ich kann beides verfehlen, Leben und Schreiben, doch habe ich keine Wahl."

23. The volume was entitled *Gedichte und Phantasien*.

GÜNDERRODE'S struggle is essentially a conflict between the individual and social morality, between her passionate nature and the conditions society imposes upon her.²⁴ She simply refuses to conform to the social mould. SAVIGNY, as the practitioner of social morality *par excellence*, therefore fails to understand GÜNDERRODE:

Dass meine Natur Ihnen unheimlich war, weil sie Ihnen Rätsel aufgibt? Dass Sie sich nicht die Mühe machen wollten, herauszufinden, wem Sie glauben konnten: dem eignen Augenschein oder dem Gerücht, das mich mal als kokett, mal als prüd, mal als einen starken männlichen Geist, mal als den Inbegriff sanfter Weiblichkeit hingestellt? (p. 61)

Her prudish nature can be seen in her apparent exaggerated independence and lack of trust for which SAVIGNY has often upbraided her: "Ich habe dir oft über deinen Mangel an Vertrauen, über deine outrierte Selbständigkeit geklagt." (p. 59) In her desperate attempt to win SAVIGNY'S love her behaviour resembled a coquette's: "Ich lege Ihnen alle meine Vollkommenheit demutsvoll zu Füßen (...)." (p. 58) Subconsciously, it appears, SAVIGNY sees GÜNDERRODE as the embodiment of a masculine spirit as is shown when he addresses her as a "Freund": "Vergessen Sie nur nicht, Günderrödchen, dass Sie jetzt nicht mehr bloss mein Freund, sondern auch unser Freund sind." (p. 49) By the tenderness of her feeling and by her propensity to live in a world of dream and phantasy she shows herself to be the personification of womanliness. In short, her behaviour is undisciplined, incalculable, boundless and exaggerated: "Unbeherrscht, unberechenbar, masslos, outriert." (p. 59)

CLEMENS, on the other hand, describes GÜNDERRODE'S behaviour as being restrained, kept within bounds: "Immer zurückhaltend, immer beherrscht. Immer streng mit sich und andern. Immer misstrauisch." (p. 37) The discrepancy between the two descriptions suggests that the truth is a compromise of the two points of view. Indeed, the discrepancy reflects the division inside GÜNDERRODE between the 'ideal' world and the 'real' world.

24. Cf. p. 17. GÜNDERRODE is described as being torn between stifling social conditions and her own passionate nature: "(...) in den Gegensatz zwischen eine hochfliegende Natur und die beengtesten Verhältnisse gespannt."

With SAVIGNY the struggle to realize the absolute necessitated correspondingly extreme or, to SAVIGNY at least, 'undisciplined' behaviour; with CLEMENS it is a struggle to preserve the ideal in a pure form. To him, GÜNDERRODE'S behaviour is therefore disciplined and measured. She is suspicious of the 'real' world. She knows that to accept the conditions of social morality is to betray and deny herself: "Wahr ist aber auch, dass die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse eine Frau unglücklich machen müssen." (p. 72)

GÜNDERRODE'S uncompromising ("unbeugsam" p. 28) demand on her existence turns her into a social outcast. The walls of the convent symbolize her spiritual separation: "Die Frau, Günderröde, in den engen Zirkel gebannt (...)." (p. 6) She is destined to be misunderstood ("verkannt zu werden" p. 10) and to become a forgotten person: "Sie kennt sich, sie kennt die Menschen, ist darauf eingestellt, vergessen zu werden." (pp. 9-10) However, GÜNDERRODE does not dissociate herself willingly from others: "Sie brächte die Glut auf, die Wand zwischen sich und andern einzuschmelzen." (p. 107)

She has the continual urge to transform reality with her ideas. She therefore comes to MERTEN'S reception expressly to see SAVIGNY: "Immer ist es Leidenschaft, wenn wir tun, was wir nicht wollen." (p. 36) Predictably she is disappointed:

(...) da will ich doch oft mit Kraft und Mut mich von euch beiden (SAVIGNY and GUNDA) losreißen und mein eignes, abgesondertes, glückliches Leben führen. (p. 50)

She can only be happy living in her absolute, aesthetic cosmos.

GÜNDERRODE knows that during her lifetime the 'real' world will never espouse the absolute claims she makes on her existence: "Wo ich zu Hause bin, gibt es die Liebe nur um den Preis des Todes." (p. 37) She is prepared to die for absolute love. Consistent with her desire for absolutes, she will uphold in death her claims and in particular the idea of absolute love.

KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE share a similar approach to life: they take their inspiration from ideas and long to give practical form to their ideas in the 'real' world. The inability to 'realize' their ideas and impose them on society sets up a division inside each protagonist between the 'real' world and the 'ideal' world. So that their ideas do not remain mere abstractions and so that KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE themselves do not become individuals of no consequence, both protagonists withdraw from society to change society's attitudes by articulating their own ideas in literature.²⁵ Literature is their last hope of reconciling the division both within and without. For the two figures the dream of the absolute, be it absolute love or the 'divine' human, crumbles. They find they must accept the philistine attitudes of social behaviour or withdraw from society completely. For KLEIST, this dilemma is seen in the choice between Prussia and France; for GÜNDERRODE, it is symbolised by the choice between the conditional love offered by SAVIGNY and absolute love. In espousing absolutes, both are effectively alienating themselves from society. Their encounter on the banks of the Rhine, therefore, takes place away from the eyes of society; in that sense the encounter is absolute. Although each recognises in the other a kindred mind, their meeting does not cause them to shape their ideas in literature and nor do they inspire the 'real' world. Indeed, society, represented by the guests, remains oblivious to their encounter. It is Christa Wolf's task to keep alive the hopes of attaining what is absolute by 'realizing' in literature her idea of the encounter. Thus, she closes the gap between an 'ideal' world and the 'real' world.

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25. KLEIST withdrew to France; GÜNDERRODE retired to the convent.

III.

THE NARRATION OF KEIN ORT. NIRGENDS

To achieve her goal Christa Wolf cannot allow her creations to appear as 'ideal' figures who might only exist above the 'real' world. This is more especially the case since they derive from historical models. The meeting of KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE must appear to be probable, presenting the illusion of an historical event,¹ so that the characters' experience becomes an experience for the reader; i.e. the reader should become less conscious of the author's presence and gain the impression that the characters stand as historical figures in their own right. The relationship between reader and character should move from being indirect to direct, so that ultimately the reader can experience the experience.² Although in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* there is no simple, rigid, linear development in the narrowing of the focus upon the two main characters, the following outline of the narrative art illustrates the increasing degree of intimacy which is attained.

1. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*. Trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe. In: *Loeb Classical Library* (London, 1973), Volume XXIII, Chapter 9: "(...) what is possible carries conviction. (...) It is clear (...) the poet must be a 'maker' not of verses but of stories, since he is a poet in virtue of his 'representation' and what he represents is action. Even supposing he represents what has actually happened he is none the less a poet, for there is nothing to prevent some actual occurrences being the sort of thing that would probably or inevitably happen, and it is in virtue of *that* that he is their 'maker'." And Chapter 15: "In character-drawing just as much as in the arrangement of the incidents one should always seek what is inevitable or probable, so as to make it inevitable or probable that one thing should follow another."
2. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1980), p. 35: "Die epische Prosa sollte eine Gattung sein, die es unternimmt, auf noch ungebahnten Wegen in das Innere dieses Menschen da, des Prosalesers, einzudringen. In das innerste Innere, dorthin, wo der Kern der Persönlichkeit sich bildet und festigt."

The relationship between author -- or 'maker', as Aristotle calls him -- and character is most distant and contrived when the author appears to preside over the work. In modern literary criticism such an author may be called the *implied author*.³ Christa Wolf, the implied author, is a 'superior' being to the real Christa Wolf in that she, the implied author, claims complete knowledge of her historical material -- KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are her historical *subjects* -- and that she can place her historical figures in a universal context. The implied author stands above the narrative, as it were, and for that reason the reader's relationship with the characters may appear awkward. She uses the first person plural to establish her involvement with the reader.

The *implied narrator* differs from the implied author in that he stands not above but beside the characters. He may be called 'implied' because he is not a fully developed character; he is an anonymous voice. He describes and records the action and the pronouncements of the characters. Although he seemingly rubs shoulders with the characters, his *inquirits* ("sagt er") are a constant reminder that he is an indirect source of information for the reader.

The implied narrator may also be entrusted with recording the flow of thought in the character's mind. The reader thus comes closer to the character than he would in reality, for he is now placed in the privileged position where he can savour the character's most private thoughts. The reference to the character in the third person implies that the reader is not as close to the character as he might at first believe. Occasionally the sensitive narrator is so overcome by the intensity of feeling he shares with the character that reference to the character in the third person momentarily disappears. The character seems to be talking to the reader directly. This illusion is soon dispelled as the narrator remembers it is his task to describe and record, but not to participate in, the thoughts of the character.

3. Cf. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1967), p. 151: "The implied author (the author's 'second self') (...) is always distinct from the 'real man' - whatever we may take him to be - who creates a superior version of himself, a 'second self', as he creates his work."

The narrator and the character seem to come into conflict as they both narrate the character's unspoken thoughts. Here tension occurs because of the alternation between third and first person narration, between indirectness and directness. The alternation may become so fluid that the reader cannot differentiate between the implied narrator and the character narrating his own thoughts.

In reported or 'pure' dialogue, the implied narrator disappears altogether. Here the relationship between the reader and the character attains its highest degree of directness. The character does not narrate his thoughts; he speaks his thoughts quite naturally, as if he were 'living' them. At this point the narrative may be said to become dramatic. The character 'performs' before the reader's eyes. The reader, as it were, now rubs shoulders with the character. These five shifts in focus will now be applied to passages from the text.

In the opening lines of *Kein Ort Nirgends*, the implied author Christa Wolf establishes the links to the past:

Die arge Spur, in der die Zeit von uns wegläuft.
Vorgänger ihr, Blut im Schuh. Blicke aus keinem
Auge, Worte aus keinem Mund. Gestalten, körperlos.
Niedergefahren gen Himmel, getrennt in entfernten
Gräbern, wiederauferstanden von den Toten, immer noch
vergebend unsern Schuldigern, traurige Engelsgeduld.
Und wir, immer noch gierig auf den
Aschegeschmack der Worte.
Immer noch nicht, was uns anstünde, stumm.
Sag bitte, danke.
Bitte. Danke.
Jahrhundertealtes Gelächter. Das Echo,
ungeheuer, vielfach gebrochen. Und der Verdacht,
nichts kommt mehr als dieser Widerhall. Aber nur
Grösse rechtfertigt die Verfehlung gegen das
Gesetz und versöhnt den Schuldigen mit sich
selbst. (p. 5)

Throughout this quotation the first person plural is employed. The implied author addresses herself as well as the implied reader and those who have an abiding interest in Kleist and Günderrode.

As time moves on, so does the era of Kleist and Günderrode recede from us: "Die arge Spur, in der die Zeit von uns wegläuft." Our memories and knowledge of them grow fainter. Kleist and Günderrode measure time for us, for their shoe left an imprint ("Spur") on time. They were live figures of history ("Blut im Schuh").

Now their eyes are closed, their lips are sealed -- forever: "Blicke aus keinem Auge. Worte aus keinem Mund." All we have is their spirit: "Gestalten, körperlos."

By abruptly ending their lives, each descended into heaven ("niedergefahren gen Himmel"). They died to raise their spirit for themselves and for us. They were denied an encounter on earth and, as a symbol of their earthly existence, their graves will keep them apart forever. From their death, they rose to a new life ("wiederauferstanden von den Toten"), to unite as kindred spirits.⁴

To those among us who continue to condemn them for their eccentric act (suicide), they still offer forgiveness: "(...) immer noch vergebend unsern Schuldigern (...)." ⁵ Yet those of us who cherish Kleist and Günderrode must surely be eager to hear of their pronouncements, to enrich our consciousness by becoming familiar with their thoughts and to infuse our own being with a spiritual legacy. We persist in making pronouncements which reflect only a dying consciousness (hence "Aschegeschmack der Worte"). Compared with Kleist's and Günderrode's, our language, bereft of the spirit, must appear insipid. For all its emptiness, its lack of emotion, its anaemia, it is frozen into linguistic gestures or used only as a symbolic act: "Sag bitte, danke. Bitte. Danke." The apparent emptiness of these two words becomes significant in their isolation from context. Like children, we must begin to learn our own language again.

4. Cf. "Apostles' Creed" in: *Concordia Triglotta: Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis, 1921), p. 30. The allusions to the Apostles' Creed, the fundamental statement of faith for Christians, underline the spiritual tone of the opening lines of *Kein Ort. Nirgends*: "(...) gekreuzigt, gestorben und begraben, niedergefahren zur Hölle, am dritten Tage auferstanden von den Toten, aufgefahen gen Himmel, und sitzend zur Rechten Gottes, des allmächtigen Vaters (...)." (emphasis mine)
5. Cf. "Lord's Prayer" *ibid* p. 722. The fundamental prayer for Christians inspires these words: "Unser tägliches Brot gib uns heute, und vergib uns unsere Schuld, wie auch wir vergeben unsern Schuldigern (...)." (emphasis mine)

Attempts to capture life in language have met with ridicule through the ages ("Jahrhundertealtes Gelächter"). It is the words themselves that laugh. As the echo of that laughter which only served to ridicule the living becomes fainter in time, so the suspicion grows that any attempt at literature is futile: "Und der Verdacht, nichts kommt mehr als dieser Widerhall." The writer's situation is enigmatic and oracular. The offence against the law ("die Verfehlung gegen das Gesetz") which says words are empty and fit for silence only is writing nonetheless. This offence renders the dignity ("Grösse") of man or woman. Dignity alone enables the writer to vindicate his offence: "Aber nur Grösse (...) versöhnt den Schuldigen mit sich selbst." As a writer he *must* write. To deny expression of oneself is to deny one's human dignity and, indeed, a part of one's humanity.

The irony of this passage is that, to uphold her own dignity, the implied author must offend against the law and accomplish in her language what her two predecessors could not: she must capture their consciousness and their spirit. Through her intimate knowledge and her intuition Christa Wolf must restore their thinking. Though separated during their earthly existence, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE may now unite in Wolf's story. She must resurrect them from the grave, as it were, and before the echo of their voices is quelled by time make it audible for us. From the beginning she must defy the historical time to which she refers in the opening line of the narrative: "Die arge Spur, in der die Zeit von uns wegläuft." *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is her response to Kleist and Günderrode.

To enable her to articulate her response and to allow her to come close to her two predecessors, Christa Wolf enlists the assistance of an implied narrator. In the following passage KLEIST is asked how the tale he has recounted about WEDEKIND'S dog relates to him personally. The implied narrator records KLEIST'S reaction:

Wedekind, leider, muss eine unpassende Bemerkung machen. Herr von Kleist, sagt er lächelnd, scheine sich bis zu einem gewissen Grad in der Lage seines guten Bello zu fühlen.

In welchem Sinne, will man nun wissen.

Kleist wünscht dringlich, er hätte geschwiegen. Es rächt sich immer, aus sich herauszugehn. So knapp wie möglich sagt er: Nun, der Vergleich mit dem Tier sei ein Scherz, wenn auch die Ähnlichkeit seiner Lage mit gewissen unlösbaren Situationen des menschlichen Lebens unverkennbar sei.

Zum Beispiel? - Merten, der Gastgeber. Es schmeichelt ihm, dass in seinem Haus derart tief-sinnige Gespräche geführt werden.

Wer fragt, soll Antwort haben. Zum Beispiel, sagt Kleist, folgender Fall: Jemand fühle, ob nun zu Recht oder zu Unrecht, den Zwang in sich, einer Bestimmung zu folgen; seine Vermögensverhältnisse gestatten es ihm nicht, im Ausland zu leben und frei seinen Intentionen nachzugehen, noch auch in seinem Vaterland zu existieren, ohne ein Amt anzunehmen. Dieses Amt aber, zu dessen Erlangung er sich unerträglich erniedrigen müsste, würde in jedem Sinn seiner Bestimmung zuwiderlaufen. Voilà. Da hätten Sie Ihr Beispiel.

Man schweigt. (p. 64)

Before informing the reader of WEDEKIND'S suggestion that the predicament of the dog is analogous to KLEIST'S own situation, the implied narrator guides the reader to appreciate the statement from KLEIST'S perspective. The reader is forewarned that WEDEKIND'S statement is awkward ("leider", "unpassend") for KLEIST. The comment puts the reader on guard against KLEIST'S reaction to the as yet unheard statement.

The narrator reports WEDEKIND'S comment. The verb of speech ("sagt er") underlines the presence of the implied narrator. The use of the subjunctive emphasises the indirectness of the reader's relationship with the character: "Herr von Kleist (...) scheine sich (...) in der Lage seines guten Bello zu fühlen." The present tense of the main verb ("sagt er") preserves much of the immediacy of direct speech, while the adverbial description ("lächelnd") indicates that the statement was ironical. WEDEKIND'S irony lies in reducing KLEIST'S situation to that of the dog.

It is an allegation which strikes at the very core of KLEIST'S psychosis. The narrator records the feelings which run through KLEIST'S mind. He senses he is being called to account by all those around him, that he must refute or confirm the validity of WEDEKIND'S statement: "In welchem Sinne, will man nun wissen." He curses himself for having recounted the anecdote, for he cannot deny the truth in WEDEKIND'S allegation: "Kleist wünscht dringlich, er hätte geschwiegen." He feels his response will make him vulnerable and leave him open to misunderstanding and ridicule: "Es rächt sich immer, aus sich herauszugehen."

The narrator reports KLEIST'S answer to the allegation:

Nun, der Vergleich mit dem Tier *sei* ein Scherz, wenn auch die Ähnlichkeit seiner Lage mit gewissen unlösbaren Situationen des menschlichen Lebens unverkennbar *sei* (emphasis mine)

While we are told by the narrator that KLEIST, perhaps out of fear of prostituting his true feelings, replies as tersely as possible ("so knapp wie möglich"), the adverbial phrase should not be understood as the narrator's value judgement. He simply records KLEIST'S reaction. As KLEIST feels, so must KLEIST reply. He tried to avoid answering the allegation, firstly by claiming the anecdote was a joke intended to humour the guests ("der Vergleich mit dem Tier sei ein Scherz"), and secondly by generalising ("des menschlichen Lebens") rather than speaking of his own personal experiences.

An elliptical question: "Zum Beispiel?" demands a fuller and more personal answer from KLEIST. The unexpected question even catches the alert narrator unawares. He searches to find the speaker: "Merten, der Gastgeber." For a moment the narrator shifts his attention to record objectively MERTEN'S reaction: "Es schmeichelt ihm, dass in seinem Haus derart tiefsinnige Gespräche geführt werden." The pseudo-intellectual wishes to create the right impression: he cannot let pass the opportunity to continue such a 'profound' conversation. KLEIST must explain his answer; he steels himself for the ordeal: "Wer fragt, soll Antwort haben."

His spoken response is recorded in direct speech, for now the guests and indeed the reader recognize the analagous predicament which confronts KLEIST. The pronouncement: "Jemand fühle, ob nun zu Recht oder zu Unrecht, den Zwang in sich, einer Bestimmung zu folgen" reflects the thoughts which truly occupy KLEIST'S mind. He still hedges by substituting the indefinite pronoun ("jemand") for the personal pronoun "ich" and by expressing the pronouncement as a hypothetical statement, hence the use of the subjunctive. The dilemma instanced however is unmistakably KLEIST'S.⁶

6. Cf. p. 71. A short time after this conversation KLEIST again talks to WEDEKIND about his predicament: "Was tun? Würfeln. Frankreich oder Preussen. Ein Amt oder die Literatur. Erniedrigung und ein bescheidnes Auskommen, oder die blanke Armut und ein ungebrochnes Selbstgefühl." See pp. 38-39 above.

The narrator informs the reader that KLEIST feels it is his calling, his mission in life to devote himself to literature ("einer Bestimmung zu folgen"). On the other hand, KLEIST'S poverty ("Vermögensverhältnisse") demands that he abandon the pursuit of his calling and take up an office in his native Prussia. The predicament resides in the conflict between freedom ("frei seinen Intentionen nachzugehen") and conformity with authority, between the satisfaction, the exaltation experienced in the fulfilment of his calling and the humiliation ("unerträglich erniedrigen") of being reduced to a craven individual dependent on a sponsor for his livelihood. In short, it is a conflict between the spiritual and the material worlds. There can be no compromise. To do so would not only degrade KLEIST as an individual; it would outrage the exalted spirit of literature.

KLEIST, we are told, concludes his response with a sardonic remark: "Voilà. Da hätten Sie Ihr Beispiel." That explanation of the analogy should satisfy MERTEN'S predilection for 'profound' comments. The overtones of contempt indicate KLEIST'S disdain of having had to reveal his feelings. The narrator closes the passage: "Man schweigt." There is a lull in the conversation. The guests, it seems, are embarrassed by their own intrusion upon KLEIST'S privacy. They, like the reader, reflect on KLEIST'S words.

In the next passage, WEDEKIND causes KLEIST to contemplate his past. The implied narrator records the thoughts which pass through KLEIST'S mind:

Den Rhein, sagt Kleist vorsichtig, habe ich ja gekannt.

Gewiss: als Soldat. Das ist etwas anderes. Niemand kennt eine Gegend, die er nur in Montur durchstreift hat.

Da muss Kleist ihm recht geben. Er hat eine Scheu, dem Mainzer von der Zeit zu sprechen, da er als fünfzehnjähriger Fähnrich des Königs von Preussen seine Stadt belagert hat. Elf Jahre ist es her und war in einem andern Leben. Die Erinnerung daran wäre ihm ganz geschwunden, hätte er sie nicht durch Worte befestigt, mit deren Hilfe er sich nun, so oft er will, jenes Erlebnis heraufrufen kann: Wie er gegen den Abendwind und gegen den Rhein hinauf ging und die Wellen der Luft und des Wassers ihn zugleich umtönten, dass er ein schmelzendes Adagio hörte, mit allen melodischen Wendungen und der ganzen begleitenden Harmonie.

So hat er es - getreu, will er hoffen - der Wilhelmine von Zenge viel später in einem Brief beschrieben, und er war sich bewusst, dass die Verführung der Worte ihn fortriss, weit weniger das Bedürfnis, sich einem bestimmten Menschen mitzuteilen, denn bedenkenlos braucht er ja die gleichen Wendungen in Briefen an verschiedenste Personen, so dass er einer jeden, das fühlt er wohl, die letzte Vertraulichkeit schuldig bleibt. Selbst dann, wenn er der Braut ihren Mangel an Liebe vorwarf, richtete er alles: die Klagen, die Anklagen, jeden Federstrich an sich. Da er es nicht ändern konnte, hätte sie es dulden müssen, auch wenn das zuviel verlangt war. Was die Frankfurter Gesellschaft ihm nachredet, kann er sich denken, bis in die einzelne Wendung hinein. Die Braut hinhalten, dann sitzenlassen. Warum trifft es ihn. Warum dieser Horror, sich ihrem Urteil zu stellen? Warum, da die Entfernung sich nicht bewährt hat, immer noch die Versuchung: lieber sterben, als das.

Ach: weil ihrem Vorwurf sein Selbstvorwurf begegnet. Unmoral! Die wissen nicht, was das ist. Er weiss es. Dem Leben schuldig bleiben, was es fordert, den Lebenden, was sie fordern müssen, wahres Leben nur fühlen, indem man schreibt...Dieses schlimme halbe Jahr in Wedekinds Haus - in einem geheimen Sinn war es ihm eine unbeschreibliche Erholung: Sein Zustand verbot ihm, an Schreiben auch nur zu denken. In Todesnähe fällt dieser Zwang weg. Man lebt, um zu leben. Wie das ausdrücken.

Man sollte an anderes denken.

Hofrat Wedekind weiss: Wenn sein Patient so in sich selbst versinkt, ist es Zeit, ihn abzulenken.

(pp. 18-20)

This passage resembles an interior monologue because it presents the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in KLEIST'S mind, although it is written in the third person (an interior monologue is usually narrated in the first person). The choice of the third person implies the presence, seemingly, of an observer-cum-narrator. The relationship between KLEIST and the reader is ambiguous. The reader however feels unusually close to KLEIST. The only difference between an interior monologue narrated in the first person and the present musings related in the third person is the perspective employed. The content remains the same. The passage could be described as a 'reported interior monologue'.

This may seem contradictory because it denies the directness of the first person form usually reserved for 'interior monologue'.⁷ However the narrator seemingly takes no time to scrutinize and arrange the flow of KLEIST'S thoughts. The spontaneity of the narrator's language conveys the impression that the pronouncements are KLEIST'S. They appear authentic and urgent: i.e. the past presses upon the present moment. This is particularly apparent in intense moments when the narrator briefly ceases to use the third person and comes so close to the character that he fuses imperceptibly with him.

At the beginning of this passage we are told by the implied narrator ("sagt Kleist vorsichtig") that WEDEKIND reminds KLEIST of his experience as a soldier on the Rhine. Embarrassed ("Er hat eine Scheu"), KLEIST suspends the conversation. His reflection on the doctor's pronouncement ("Da muss Kleist ihm recht geben") marks the withdrawal into his consciousness. The narrator records KLEIST'S thoughts for the reader.

Although it is eleven years since KLEIST was on the Rhine, the memory of that time has been well preserved in his poetic language ("durch Worte befestigt"). However, the brutal side of the experience has been erased. Harmony replaces KLEIST'S earlier disquiet: "(...) ein schmelzendes Adagio (...) mit allen melodischen Wendungen und der ganzen begleitenden Harmonie." Although he would rather have seen the memory disappear completely, he can live with his own language. Once cast in language, the memory cannot be altered. The brutality of the experience is transformed permanently. Language masks the truth: it presents only the pleasant aspect.

7. Cf. Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 257-258: "Innerer Monolog: in Romanen und Erzählungen die Wiedergabe von in Wirklichkeit unausgesprochenen Gedanken, Assoziationen, Ahnungen der Personen in Sprache, *direkter Ich-Form* im Gegensatz zur erlebten Rede in dritter Person; erstrebt die Wiedergabe der Augenblicksregungen, wie sie im Bewusstseinsstrom erscheinen und versucht die Identifikation von Leser und Romanheld durch *unmittelbare* Gleichsetzung." (emphasis mine)

KLEIST'S pronouncement becomes a convenient formula which he can seize: "(...) mit deren Hilfe er sich nun, so oft er will, jenes Erlebnis heraufrufen kann." Expression through language is reduced to a linguistic gesture. Repetition merely ensures that the truth remains disguised. KLEIST'S vain hope ("getreu will er hoffen") indicates that language has become a pretence for the truth. Seduced by the ease of his formulations, he consciously allowed himself to be manipulated by language. He became the victim of his own deceit: "(...) er war sich bewusst, dass die Verführung der Worte ihn fortriss." In letters to friends he repeatedly used the same turn of phrase ("die gleichen Wendungen"). Hiding behind the formal elements of language, KLEIST feigned intimacy, yet all the while he was distancing himself from his friends. There was no feeling for life. Letter-writing was a dishonest act: he deluded himself and his friends. They, although ignorant of his gaming with language, could at best appreciate only the verbal elegance. In private, KLEIST admits he withheld thoughts from his friends "(...) so dass er einer jeden, das fühlt er wohl, die letzte Vertraulichkeit schuldig bleibt." That is his judgement. He has condemned himself with his own pronouncements.

If he truly feels -- the narrator is at pains to authenticate KLEIST'S feeling: "das fühlt er wohl" -- that he refused his friends intimacy, why does he persist in his actions and continue to hide behind the mask of language? It appears KLEIST cannot confront the truth and accept the judgement of others as being valid criticism. He used language to reproach Wilhelmine for her lack of love yet, in truth, he felt that he was wholly responsible:

Selbst dann, wenn er die Braut ihren Mangel an Liebe vorwarf, richtete er alles: die Klagen, die Anklagen, jeden Federstrich an sich.

The truth is ambiguous, masked by language. KLEIST is at once culpable and inculpable.

He reacts strongly to criticism levelled at him by the people of Frankfurt, i.e. Wilhelmine's family: "Warum trifft es ihn. Warum dieser Horror, sich ihrem Urteil zu stellen?" At this point the intensity of the narrator's feeling for KLEIST causes him to break away from the indirectness of his third person narration and speak directly, as if he were speaking *with* KLEIST:

Warum dieser Horror, sich ihrem Urteil zu stellen?
Warum, da die Entfernung sich nicht bewährt hat,
immer noch die Versuchung: lieber sterben, als das.

The implied narrator thus fuses imperceptibly with the character. For a moment the narrator slips back into the third person. KLEIST, we are told, can accept the judgement of his own conscience but not the judgement of others: "weil ihrem Vorwurf *sein* Selbstvorwurf begegnet." (emphasis mine) He wishes to be master of his own formulation and not the victim of the sentence of others. The narrator identifies so intensely with KLEIST'S thought that again he slips out of the third person narration: "Die wissen nicht, was das ist." While the condemnation of the 'people of Frankfurt' of his behaviour as being "Unmoral" is correct, KLEIST challenges their usage of the term claiming that they use the word without fully appreciating its meaning: "Die wissen nicht, was das ist." The narrator momentarily slips back into the third person. KLEIST, on the other hand, does appreciate the full meaning of the word ("Er weiss es") and therefore should have the exclusive right to its use as it applies to himself. The narration then becomes so direct that the reader could be forgiven for thinking that the historical Kleist is talking to him:

Dem Leben schuldig bleiben, was es fordert, den Lebenden,
was sie fordern müssen, wahres Leben nur fühlen, indem
man schreibt...

Although he acknowledges that he acted insincerely and immorally ("weil ihrem Vorwurf sein Selbstvorwurf begegnet"), in his defence he proclaims defiantly and proudly that he, better than anyone, understands the moral responsibility this world has bestowed upon him; namely to reveal the truth in life through language: "(...) wahres Leben nur fühlen, indem man schreibt..." KLEIST'S language is his *modus vivendi*.

As the intensity of feeling gives way to reflection part way through the next sentence the narrator shifts back to third person narration. This shift is underlined by the use of the dash: "Dieses schlimme halbe Jahr in Wedekinds Haus - in einem geheimen Sinn war es ihm eine unbeschreibliche Erholung." KLEIST is ambivalent towards his convalescence. He laments that it was a miserable six months because he could not write ("Dieses schlimme halbe Jahr in Wedekinds Haus"); yet, as he reflects, he claims that in a private sense it was balm to his soul ("eine unbeschreibliche Erholung") not to even think of writing. Writing was at once a moral responsibility and an anathema.

The narrator's intense feeling for KLEIST reasserts itself as KLEIST describes the experience of his life-and-death situation: "In Todesnähe fällt dieser Zwang weg. Man lebt, um zu leben. Wie das ausdrücken. Man sollte an anderes denken." A respite from his dilemma (i.e. writing) occurs only when he is in danger of being consumed by death: "In Todesnähe fällt dieser Zwang weg." On the brink of death KLEIST is on the brink of life. At that point one sets aside one's concern for 'truth and beauty'. Rather, one is driven by the instinct to live: "Man lebt, um zu leben." In that situation the truth does not demand articulation. The desire to live is the highest affirmation of life. There is no equivocation: KLEIST is either dead or alive. To rid himself permanently of his dilemma, he must constantly dice with death as he did on the battlefield eleven years ago and as he has done in the past six months. He must lead an uncertain existence which vacillates between life and death and challenges his will to live.⁸

The above 'monologue' forms an apologia. KLEIST defends himself in the face of his self-accusations; before his conscience, acting as his judge, he settles the accounts of the past. KLEIST has reserved the ultimate intimacy ("die letzte Vertraulichkeit") for himself. Although it has taken place in language, it has not been a mere play with words to mask his disturbance.

The narrator shifts his attention to KLEIST'S confidant WEDEKIND and at the same time moves back into the third person narration. He describes the thoughts running through WEDEKIND'S mind. Intuitively WEDEKIND feels it is opportune to divert KLEIST from his introspection.

Although a character's conscious response may be unspoken, it may nonetheless be expressed in language by the narrator. Having espied GÜNDERRODE, KLEIST struggles to find the term of address which befits her:

8. On the instinctual level, Freud conceived of suicide as a result of the triumph of the 'death urge' (thanatos) over the 'life urge' (eros). The ego is involved in a conflict between these two opposite urges; should the death urge win out, the *id* becomes directed toward death and suicide is the end result. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* trans. James Strachey (Toronto, 1964).

Die andern jungen Frauen nennen sie Karoline: Auch das stünde ihm nicht zu; weniger noch, das versteht sich, die Zärtlichkeit Savignys, welche die Günderrode über Gebühr zu freuen schien. Günderrödchen.

Wie sie da steht, sich nicht aufdrängt, sich nicht ausdrücklich entzieht. Dame. Mädchen. Weib. Frau. Alle Benennungen gleiten von ihr ab. Jungfrau: lächerlich, beleidigend sogar; später will ich darüber nachdenken, wieso. Jünglingin. Kurioser Einfall, weg damit.

Kleist unterdrückt das Wort, das ihm zu passen scheint. Dem Widerwillen gegen Zwitterhaftes geht er nicht auf den Grund. Sie dichtet? Fatal. Hat sie das nötig? Kennt sie nichts Besseres, sich die Langweile zu vertreiben?

Die Günderrode spürt den Blick zwischen ihren Schulterblättern, schüttelt ihn ab. Der Fremde, den Wedekind eingeführt hat, steht stocksteif auf dem gleichen Fleck, allein. Jemand müsste sich seiner annehmen. Warum nur Merten, sonst ein untadliger Gastgeber, seine Pflichten versäumt. (...) Was geht mich übrigens der fremde Gast eines fremden Hauses an. Vielleicht gibt sich nachher die Gelegenheit, diesen Kleist wissen zu lassen, dass ich sein Stück gelesen hab. Den Autor möchte ich sehen, dessen Laune sich nicht augenblicklich bessert, wenn in Gesellschaft sich einer als sein Leser bekennt.

Sie muss ihm ja nicht erzählen, dass es ausgerechnet Merten war, der ihr das Drama gegeben hat, enttäuscht übrigens, da er sich nach dem Titel, "Die Familie Schroffenstein", eins der üblichen Ritterstücke erhofft hatte, und dass sie es las, weil von Mainz herüber merkwürdige Gerüchte über den jungen Menschen kamen, der in desolater Verfassung den Winter über bei Hofrat Wedekind untergekrochen war. Diesem Kindergesicht allerdings traut man die Seelenstürme, auch die wilden Verbrechen nicht zu, von denen sein Drama strotzt. Er ist ja noch sehr jung.

Sie muss lächeln; sie selbst ist jünger als er.

(pp. 21-22)

This passage may be divided into two parts: the first half observes GÜNDERRODE from KLEIST'S point of view; the second half (beginning with the sentence: "Die Günderrode spürt den Blick...") observes KLEIST from GÜNDERRODE'S point of view. Thus each character observes the other from an external perspective. In each half, comment from the implied narrator alternates with comment from the character. KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are made to adopt the rôle of the implied narrator.

The first paragraph belongs to the implied narrator. He places the reader inside KLEIST, as it were. KLEIST, we are told, seeks to find a word which characterises GÜNDERRODE. He fathoms his awakening consciousness and tries to articulate his impression of GÜNDERRODE. The narrator informs the reader that the friendly peer group tone of "Karoline" and SAVIGNY'S paternal "Günderrödchen" do not seem to fit KLEIST'S impression.

KLEIST himself then takes over the rôle of narrator. He narrates his own thought. This is confirmed by the subsequent use of the first person: "(...) später will ich darüber nachdenken (...)." Nouns which could possibly pertain to GÜNDERRODE flash through his mind: from the aristocratic "Dame" to the neutral "Frau" to the derisive "Jungfrau". GÜNDERRODE does not fit into the mould of any of the above descriptions. To capture her uniqueness KLEIST is tempted to use a neologism: "Jünglingin". Sensing the facetiousness of the term, he dismisses it immediately: "Kurioser Einfall, weg damit." The reappearance of the third person indicates that the implied narrator takes over the narration: "Kleist unterdrückt das Wort, das ihm zu passen scheint." The word "Zwitterhaftes" comes closest to defining KLEIST'S perception of GÜNDERRODE, for this word combines elements from both the sexes.⁹ The thinking behind KLEIST'S newly created term "Jünglingin" is now clear: GÜNDERRODE, a young female adult, possesses the attributes of a young male adult.¹⁰ KLEIST'S concern over finding a suitable name marks a desire to reconcile what he sees with what he feels.

That different terms of address cross KLEIST'S mind, implies that each is appropriate, depending on the observer's perspective. SAVIGNY, playing the rôle of the paternal lover, obviously feels "Günderrochen" strikes the correct register just as the young ladies, as GÜNDERRODE'S peers, feel "Karoline" suits best. KLEIST'S quest for the *mot juste* represents not merely the search for a 'suitable' tag but the defining of his own awakening interest in GÜNDERRODE.

9. See pp. 19-20 above for a more detailed interpretation.

10. Cf. Dagmar Sobull, "Kleist und Günderrode: Gefangen im Geschlecht" *Deutsche Zeitung* (Bonn, 12/4/79): "Die 'Jünglingin' verkörpert das frühromantische Ideal des androgynen Menschheitstypus."

KLEIST'S perception of GÜNDERRODE as an androgynous figure reveals his purely human outlook. His reluctance to address her unless by the right name highlights his sensitivity to language. He is aware how he determines through language his own perspective on the guests present in the room, on GÜNDERRODE in particular. This is also a concern for the reader who must resolve the prejudice against KLEIST'S pronounced characterisation of GÜNDERRODE as "Zwitterhaftes".

The first half of this passage deals as much with KLEIST as it does with GÜNDERRODE. This is borne out in: "Sie dichtet? Fatal. Hat sie das nötig? Kennt sie nichts Besseres, sich die Langweile zu vertreiben?" These questions could be recorded by the implied narrator or by KLEIST himself. The alternation has become so fluid that the reader cannot differentiate between the first and third person narrators. Whoever narrates, KLEIST is judging from experience. The questions are therefore rhetorical. To take up writing is to deliver oneself into the hands of fate (hence "Fatal"). KLEIST tries to probe beneath the surface, to empathize with GÜNDERRODE. He is trying to intuit her thoughts, at the risk of projecting his own upon hers. GÜNDERRODE, it seems, is not conscious that by obeying her calling she has delivered herself into the hands of fate. Because the reader perceives of GÜNDERRODE through the eyes of the fated writer KLEIST, a new facet of GÜNDERRODE'S character is revealed and at the same time a 'subjective' light is cast upon her. Thus the reader is informed of both the observing and the observed characters.

KLEIST abruptly turns his eyes away. His musings are broken off. GÜNDERRODE has become conscious of KLEIST. The sentence: "Die Günderrode spürt den Blick zwischen ihren Schulterblättern, schüttelt ihn ab" serves as a short transitional statement to shift the reader's point of view.¹¹ The narrator has shifted to GÜNDERRODE. The reader now observes KLEIST from GÜNDERRODE'S side and experiences her reaction to KLEIST. Thus the reader observes both KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE from an external and an internal perspective. His privileged position between the two becomes ironical at this point. The reader can establish a relativity between the two characters.

11. See p.21 above.

For example, as GÜNDERRODE now narrates her own thought, the reader notes the similarity of the initial feeling each protagonist has for the other. Just as KLEIST felt that an aura of mystery surrounded GÜNDERRODE, so does the reader now learn that GÜNDERRODE views KLEIST as unapproachable. KLEIST is a stranger, too strange and mysterious for others to dare to approach; hence he is "allein". KLEIST is so removed from GÜNDERRODE that she refers to him by way of an apposition, preferring to associate him with WEDEKIND rather than to call him by his name ("Der Fremde, den Wedekind eingeführt hat..."). Not even MERTEN who is usually an impeccable host attends to KLEIST. KLEIST is an estranged guest in a stranger's house: "der fremde Gast eines fremden Hauses".

GÜNDERRODE asks herself why KLEIST engages her attention: "Was geht mich übrigens der fremde Gast (...) an." The question reflects her awakening consciousness, the private nature of the experience and the intensity of interest being underlined by the use of the first person pronouns. KLEIST'S inscrutable behaviour, she realizes, attracts her to him. She wishes to look behind his frozen façade (KLEIST stands "stocksteif") and his gloom ("dessen Laune sich nicht augenblicklich bessert"). In short, she considers "Fremder" to be a poor description which, at best, conveys only the impression KLEIST gives. The word reveals to the reader her ignorance of KLEIST and her remoteness.

Although KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE find each other unapproachable, each believes that with the adoption of the appropriate language, he can acquaint himself with the private world of the other. For KLEIST this has meant selecting a name worthy of the subject; for GÜNDERRODE, as the implied author informs the reader, it will mean that she must choose the opportune moment to mention *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and her knowledge of his crisis which prompted her to read the drama. She treats KLEIST as an object of play. The words she uses to approach KLEIST will determine how intimately she becomes acquainted with him. In language she consciously manipulates KLEIST to resolve why she is at once attracted to, and repulsed by, him. If she plays her game cleverly, she will reconcile KLEIST'S innocent, childlike face with the numerous outrageous injustices and dramatic outpourings of his writings and reach a closer understanding of KLEIST himself.

Again there is ambiguity in who speaks the lines: "Diesem Kindergesicht allerdings traut man die Seelenstürme, auch die wilden Verbrechen nicht zu, von denen sein Drama strotzt. Er ist ja noch sehr jung." The indirect, impersonal comment by the implied narrator may also be interpreted as direct, personal comment by GÜNDERRODE.

The appearance of the third person "sie" in the last sentence indicates the words are narrated by the implied narrator. Their encounter causes GÜNDERRODE to reflect upon herself and see herself in relation to KLEIST. Bewildered, she looks upon his youthful face: "Diesem Kindergesicht allerdings traut man die Seelenstürme (...) nicht zu (...). Er ist ja noch sehr jung." She immediately recognises the irony of her statement: "Sie muss lächeln; sie selbst ist jünger als er." Aware that she is little more than a child herself, she must be careful not to become the object of her own game.

In the next passage two individuals alone on the riverbank come face to face for the first time. They meet in language and their meeting is sustained by that language only. The stations of a growing intimacy are being traced, as if the validity of the intimacy is being tested. The reader's intimacy with the characters is also being tested. He must not only identify with them, he must firstly identify them:

Preisgabe, versuchsweise. Das Lächeln, zuerst bei ihr, dann bei ihm, spöttisch. Nehmen wir es als Spiel, auch wenn es Ernst ist. Du weißt es, ich weiss es auch. Komm nicht zu nah. Bleib nicht zu fern. Verbirg dich. Enthülle dich. Vergiss, was du weißt. Behalt es. Maskierungen fallen ab, Verkrustungen, Schorf, Polituren. Die blanke Haut. Unverstellte Züge. Mein Gesicht, das wäre es. Dies das deine. Bis auf den Grund verschieden. Vom Grund her einander ähnlich. Frau. Mann. Unbrauchbare Wörter. Wir, jeder gefangen in seinem Geschlecht. Die Berührung, nach der es uns so unendlich verlangt, es gibt sie nicht. Sie wurde mit uns entleibt. Wir müssten sie erfinden. In Träumen bietet sie sich uns an, entstellt, schrecklich, fratzenhaft. Die Angst im Morgengrauen, nach dem frühen Erwachen. Unkenntlich bleiben wir uns, unnahbar, nach Verkleidungen süchtig. Fremde Namen, die wir uns zulegen. Die Klage in den Hals zurückgestossen. Trauer verbietet sich, denn wo sind die Verluste?

Ich bin nicht ich. Du bist nicht du. Wer ist wir?
Wir sind sehr einsam. (pp. 108-109)

Although there are no quotation marks, the passage appears to take the form of a dialogue. This is suggested by the use of the first person and the familiar second person: "Nehmen wir es als Spiel (...). Du weisst es, ich weiss es auch." The exchanges between GÜNDERRODE and KLEIST are presaged by the protagonists' smiling at each other ("Das Lächeln, zuerst bei ihr, dann bei ihm"). The contrast between the pleas: "Komm nicht zu nah. Bleib nicht zu fern. Verbirg dich. Enthülle dich." would suggest that there is an alternation of speakers. There is, however, no indication which words are GÜNDERRODE'S and which are spoken by KLEIST. The reader himself must make the connection. If the passage is to be read as a dialogue, the pronouncements become lines which may be assigned to their respective speakers. Such a division is necessarily arbitrary. Rearranged in dialogue form, the above passage translates into a small scene in a drama:¹²

Preisgabe, versuchsweise. Das Lächeln, zuerst bei ihr,
dann bei ihm, spöttisch.

GÜNDERRODE: Nehmen wir es als Spiel, auch wenn es Ernst ist.

KLEIST: Du weisst es, ich weiss es auch.

GÜNDERRODE: Komm nicht zu nah.

KLEIST: Bleib nicht zu fern.

GÜNDERRODE: Verbirg dich.

KLEIST: Enthülle dich.

GÜNDERRODE: Vergiss, was du weisst.

KLEIST: Behalt es.

Maskierungen fallen ab, Verkrustungen, Schorf, Polituren.

GÜNDERRODE: Die blanke Haut.

KLEIST: Unverstellte Züge.

GÜNDERRODE: Mein Gesicht, das wäre es.

KLEIST: Dies das deine.

GÜNDERRODE: Bis auf den Grund verschieden.

KLEIST: Vom Grund her einander ähnlich.

GÜNDERRODE: Frau. Mann.

KLEIST: Unbrauchbare Wörter.

GÜNDERRODE: Wir, jeder gefangen in seinem Geschlecht.

KLEIST: Die Berührung, nach der es uns so unendlich verlangt,
es gibt sie nicht.

12. Cf. Manfred Jäger, "Verzweifelte Utopie, lockere Ironie", *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* (15/4/79): "Die Dialoge sind ungefähr notiert, auch innere Monologe braucht es - der Regisseur und die Schauspieler hätten es nicht leicht. Als Leser meint man jedenfalls ein Szenarium zu studieren, einen Entwurf, der noch einer weiteren Umsetzung harrt. Man fühlt sich schon beim Lesen als ein Zuschauer, dem vorgespielt wird (...)."

GÜNDERRODE: Sie wurde mit uns entleibt.
KLEIST: Wir müssten sie erfinden.
GÜNDERRODE: In Träumen bietet sie sich uns an, entstellt,
schrecklich, fratzenhaft.
KLEIST: Die Angst im Morgengrauen, nach dem frühen Erwachen.
GÜNDERRODE: Unkenntlich bleiben wir uns, unnahbar, nach
Verkleidungen süchtig.
KLEIST: Fremde Namen, die wir uns zulegen.
GÜNDERRODE: Die Klage in den Hals zurückgestossen.
KLEIST: Trauer verbietet sich, denn wo sind die Verluste?
GÜNDERRODE: Ich bin nicht ich. Du bist nicht du.
KLEIST: Wer ist wir?
GÜNDERRODE: Wir sind sehr einsam.

The order in which the protagonists speak may appear as a *tour de force*. The first two sentences may be understood as stage directions given by an implied dramatist. The characters exchange smiles, firstly GÜNDERRODE, then KLEIST ("zuerst bei ihr, dann bei ihm"). The characters 'perform' before the reader's eyes, as it were.

With a mocking smile GÜNDERRODE scorns the idea of a surrender ("Preisgabe"). KLEIST responds by doing likewise. His mocking smile draws a conscious response from GÜNDERRODE. She conceives of their encounter as a game, even though it may be sincere: "Nehmen wir es als Spiel, auch wenn es Ernst ist." The object of the game, it seems, is to transcend convention.¹³ KLEIST'S response: "Du weisst es, ich weiss es auch" confirms that each protagonist understands the game. The contest may now begin.

The juxtaposition of GÜNDERRODE'S plea with KLEIST'S 'counter-plea' elevates the sacred act to the level of language. It thus becomes a symbolic embrace. At the same time it highlights the antithesis between upholding convention and the sincere desire for intimacy of feeling: "Komm nicht zu nah. Bleib nicht zu fern. Verbirg dich. Enthülle dich. Vergiss, was du weisst. Behalt es." GÜNDERRODE adopts the rôle of a lover who feels inhibited by social attitude: "Komm nicht zu nah. (...) Verbirg dich. (...) Vergiss, was du weisst"; KLEIST, in contrast, presents the truly sincere thoughts of a solicitous lover: "Bleib nicht zu fern. (...) Enthülle dich. (...) Behalt es."

13. See pp. 29-30 above.

GÜNDERRODE, it appears, tries to entice KLEIST into becoming self-conscious. Although GÜNDERRODE mocks social attitude through language, her sincere message may be seen in the irony of her statements. KLEIST'S words explain the irony and are confirmation that he understands the sincere message contained in her words.

The next sentence, shown again in a quasi stage direction, indicates that GÜNDERRODE has failed to induce self-consciousness in KLEIST. Having reached a stalemate, both break off the game: "Maskierungen fallen ab, Verkrustungen, Schorf, Polituren." Both protagonists are now free of any mannerisms: (GÜNDERRODE) "Mein Gesicht, das wäre es." (KLEIST) "Dies das deine."

The playful tone ("Spiel") of earlier exchanges thus becomes more demure ("Ernst"). GÜNDERRODE laments how the social attitude encourages lovers to observe the sexual differences between each other: "Bis auf den Grund verschieden. (...) Frau. Mann. (...) Wir, jeder gefangen in seinem Geschlecht." Paradoxically, she is expressing her conviction that a love relationship is founded not on gender difference but on common humanity which is generally ignored. She is confirming KLEIST'S belief: "Vom Grund her einander ähnlich." By inference, KLEIST confirms GÜNDERRODE'S statement; i.e. if they act as is expected, they will necessarily regard each other as sexual beings. To avoid this they must remove the time-honoured division of man from woman to establish their common humanity. Thus KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE each present the same dilemma differently, either by inference or by simple statement. Their views are not disparate. As KLEIST says, the terms "Frau" and "Mann" are invalid ("unbrauchbar") for them. However, the language they use urges them to look upon each other as male or female and to adopt masculine or feminine attitudes. Language ensnares each in his own sex ("Wir, jeder gefangen in seinem Geschlecht"). KLEIST paraphrases GÜNDERRODE'S statement: "Die Berührung, nach der es uns so unendlich verlangt, es gibt sie nicht." Language places them beyond each other's reach. The tragedy, they realize, lies in the paradox of their divided togetherness. Furthermore, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE feel that in forming a union in language, their love is removed from the senses ("Sie wurde mit uns entleibt") and placed on a spiritual plane. They must discover a lost spirituality, their common humanity: "Wir müssten sie erfinden."

Even in GÜNDERRODE'S dreams the ideal appears 'perverted', terrible' and 'grotesque': "In Träumen bietet sie sich uns an, entstellt, schrecklich, fratzenhaft." As she describes her dreams in the language available she finds that language conditions her subconscious response. Upon waking, KLEIST is also possessed by the fear ("Die Angst im Morgengrauen, nach dem frühen Erwachen") -- increased no doubt by the recollection of a dream of a life uncorrupted by language -- that any human relationship is fraught with the words we use to define it. Language sets limits. Severed from one another by language, people cannot come close and cannot be known: "Unkenntlich bleiben wir uns, unnahbar (...)." In vain the individual searches for a disguise ("nach Verkleidungen süchtig"), and tries to invest himself with a unique personality by using inappropriate labels: "Fremde Namen, die wir uns zulegen." Words like "Frau" and "Mann" are without substance.

GÜNDERRODE feels any lamentation is futile ("Die Klage in den Hals zurückgestossen"), for, as KLEIST says, there are no tangible losses: "(...) denn wo sind die Verluste?" There is, however, the complete loss of identity: "Ich bin nicht ich. Du bist nicht du." KLEIST likewise questions the validity of the term "wir": "Wer ist wir?"¹⁴ Because language prevents people from coming close to one another, there is no "wir" in reality. This word is also without substance. Each of the characters is alone and alienated: "Wir sind sehr einsam."

Since both characters are aware of the dilemma posed by language, the last lines: "Ich bin nicht ich. Du bist nicht du. Wer ist wir? Wir sind sehr einsam." may be interpreted differently. Language may achieve intimacy and a mutual understanding of uniquely personal feelings. Indeed, the singular verb in KLEIST'S question: "Wer ist wir?" suggests that KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE may become one. Closer examination of the above passage reveals that while they have been engaged in a series of exchanges, they have in fact been involved in a colloquy of parallel statements; i.e. GÜNDERRODE'S utterances parallel KLEIST'S.

14. Cf. p. 87. After identifying that KLEIST'S desires and needs were identical to hers, GÜNDERRODE without consent from KLEIST used the term "wir", thus placing herself on an equal footing with KLEIST. His reaction was no doubt ironical: "Und was gab ihr das Recht, sie beide, sich und ihn, in dem Worte 'wir' zusammenzufassen?" See p. 25 above. By asking "Wer ist wir?", KLEIST is suggesting that everything she has said in connection with the word "wir" is meaningless.

GÜNDERRODE'S pleas: "Komm nicht zu nah. (...) Verbirg dich. (...) Vergiss, was du weisst" are ironically mirrored in KLEIST'S pleas: "Bleib nicht zu fern. (...) Enthülle dich. (...) Behalt es."; likewise, GÜNDERRODE'S veiled comments: "Wir, jeder gefangen in seinem Geschlecht. (...) Unkenntlich bleiben wir uns, unnahbar, nach Verkleidungen süchtig" are recast in KLEIST'S responses: "Die Berührung, nach der es uns so unendlich verlangt, es gibt sie nicht. (...) Fremde Namen, die wir uns zulegen." The tentative approach in language to a human truth proceeded from two sides. Ultimately, there are no words to pronounce that truth.

The deliberate distinction between "ich" and "du" in the first half of the passage yields to "wir" in the second half, even if this "wir" is finally put in the form of a question. Each confidently speaks not to, but for the other. No longer is the distinction between them valid: "Ich bin nicht ich. Du bist nicht du." They have both resisted the separateness and the isolation imposed on the individual by language. Although they briefly share in their common humanity and are united, they remain lonely: "Wir sind sehr einsam." They are lonely because language militated against them.

Paradoxically, the plural verb: "wir *sind*" may seem to contradict their oneness, particularly as it answers the question: "Wer ist wir?" In its original meaning however "ein-sam" means 'one and the same', the suffix "sam" meaning "von gleicher Beschaffenheit."¹⁵ Thus GÜNDERRODE'S response at once asserts the loneliness of the protagonists and affirms their togetherness.¹⁶

KLEIST'S question: "Wer ist wir?" remains unanswered. There can be no answer, for no label describes completely their harmony, their oneness of thought, their common humanity. However, alone on the banks of the Rhine, removed from society as it were ("Wir sind sehr einsam"), KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE have assembled the words to approach the union of opposites they both long to discover: "Die Berührung, nach der es uns so unendlich verlangt (...). Wir müssten sie erfinden."

15. Cf. *Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Gütersloh, 1978) p. 3118.

16. Christa Wolf's concern to understand the meaning of a word is illustrated in her ambiguous use of "nachdenken" in the title of an earlier narrative *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, as has been pointed out by Alexander Stephan in: *Christa Wolf* (Munich, 1976), p. 80: "(...) das dreifache 'Nachdenken' der Erzählerin, das 'denken über' oder 'erinnern', aber auch 'nachfolgen im Denken' meinen kann."

In Christa Wolf's narration, there is a meeting of a different kind: the 'ideal' is translated into the 'real'. Christa Wolf's vision of a meeting and all that it implies has been realized. As KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE 'perform' their drama before the reader, they appear not as abstract forms who exist wholly in Christa Wolf's mind, but as figures who could well have existed in reality. Liberated from the implied author and the implied narrator, the two protagonists come alive and through Christa Wolf's language 'live' as resurrected figures. They are themselves.

One may wonder what inspires Christa Wolf to move from the epic to the dramatic form of narration. She was surely familiar with Kleist's essay: "Über das Marionettentheater".¹⁷ A puppeteer manipulates his puppets in such a way that they give a convincing (i.e. uncontrived or 'innocent') performance. We may draw an analogy between *Kein Ort. Nirgends* and Kleist's essay. Christa Wolf, as it were, plays the part of the puppeteer. She is the centre of gravity around which her puppets revolve. As re-creations and as *her* subjects, her two figures possess 'anti-gravity'.¹⁸ In this sense she, the writer, exercises 'divine' control over KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE.

To make her puppets give a convincing performance, the puppeteer must transpose herself into the centre of gravity of the puppets (i.e. into the puppet's soul). In Kleist's Puppet Theatre the wire connecting the puppet and the puppeteer was the mysterious way to the dancer's soul. For Christa Wolf that wire is represented by language. She may invest KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE with speech, thoughts and actions. She may in turn transpose herself into their soul. If the sympathy and understanding demonstrated through language is wholly devoid of affectation, if the puppeteer is without self-consciousness, then puppet and puppeteer become one.

17. Heinrich von Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater" in: *Heinrich von Kleist Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* ed. Helmut Sembdner (Munich, 1961), Volume II, pp. 338-345.

18. Cf. *ibid* p.342: "Zudem (...) haben diese Puppen den Vorteil, dass sie *antigrav* sind. Von der Trägheit der Materie, dieser dem Tanze entgegenstrebensten aller Eigenschaften, wissen sie nichts: weil die Kraft, die sie in die Lüfte erhebt, grösser ist, als jene, die sie an der Erde fesselt."

The five shifts of focus show Christa Wolf gradually losing her self-consciousness as the writer of *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. She moves from controlling her puppets above the stage, as if the narrative were her idea, to performing on stage 'inside' her puppets, as if she were the characters. While the reader may gain the impression that KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE attain independence from their puppeteer, Christa Wolf has paradoxically grown so close to her puppets that she 'melts' into them. Thus, when KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE 'dance', so too, in effect, does Christa Wolf.¹⁹ She is the centre of their performance.

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19. Cf. *ibid* p. 340: "Dagegen wäre diese Linie wider, von einer andern Seite, etwas sehr Geheimnisvolles. Denn sie wäre nichts anders, als der *Weg der Seele des Tänzers*; und er zweifelte, dass anders gefunden werden könne, als dadurch, dass sich der Maschinist in den Schwerpunkt der Marionette versetzt, d.h. mit andern Worten, *tanzt*."

IV.

TOWARD UTOPIA

In Chapter One, I described firstly KLEIST'S and GÜNDERRODE'S rejection of social morality, and secondly their spiritual encounter once they withdrew from the guests. Chapter Two revealed that the two protagonists' feeling ill-at-ease among the guests was due to their inability to translate ideals into reality. The previous chapter illustrated how Christa Wolf dramatised KLEIST'S and GÜNDERRODE'S predicament through the very narration of her story. The characters became 'life-size' figures. That Christa Wolf obviously relates to Heinrich von Kleist and Karoline von Günderrode through her narrative, invites several questions which I would like to consider in this concluding chapter. How do Christa Wolf's creatures differ from their historical counterparts? What is the spiritual association between Christa Wolf, Heinrich von Kleist and Karoline von Günderrode? How does this narrative help us to understand the rôle and perhaps the plight of the writer? What significance does *Kein Ort. Nirgends* hold for the present generation?

The 'life' KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE lead during the afternoon described in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is composed of two elements: fact and fiction. Fact and creative thought merge imperceptibly and inseparably. Christa Wolf tempers the one element with the other. She addresses this question as she concludes the brief prelude to the story proper:

Dass sie sich getroffen hätten: erwünschte Legende
Winkel am Rhein, wir sahn es. Ein passender Ort.
Juni 1804. (p. 6)

Christa Wolf anchors her myth in history. We are led to believe that two figures¹ will meet in their own contemporary setting.²

1. In the opening words of the narrative the author refers to Kleist and Günderrode as being her precursors: "Die arge Spur, in der die Zeit von uns wegläuft. Vorgänger ihr, Blut im Schuh." (p. 5)
2. Historically Günderrode did visit Winkel am Rhein. Indeed, MERTEN'S drawing-room windows overlook the place where Günderrode committed suicide:
.../

The subjunctive "sich getroffen hätten" reveals that the meeting which is about to take place between KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE never occurred in fact. It is imagined; Christa Wolf wished it to be.³

In describing her narrative as "erwünschte Legende", she highlights an ambiguity.⁴ A legend is an unauthenticated narrative, embroidered from historical material.⁵ Winkel am Rhein in 1804 is judged a suitable place ("Ein passender Ort") in which to situate the narrative; it accommodates both authentic history and phantasy, creating the illusion of an event. The illusion succeeds: the historical Kleist merges with the imagined KLEIST, as does the historical Günderrode with the imagined GÜNDERRODE. The following biographical detail authenticates KLEIST as an historical figure:

(cont'd) "An jedem Ort kann sie, ohne zu zucken, ihren Leichnam liegen sehn, auch da unten am Fluss, auf der Landzunge unter den Weiden, auf denen ihr Blick ruht." (p. 9) Kleist also passed by Winkel am Rhein, albeit on his journeys on the Rhine: "Sie sollen schon hier gewesen sein? (...) Zweimal. Das letzte Mal mit meiner Schwester. Die Ufer hier kenn ich, vom Schiff aus." (p. 53) In fact, Kleist and Günderrode were both in the vicinity of Winkel am Rhein in 1804: Kleist in Mainz under the care of Dr. Wedekind and Günderrode in Frankfurt in the Kronstetten Convent. See pp. 17-18 above.

3. It will be revealed later in the text that at this time (June 1804) Kleist himself had never heard of Günderrode: "Da hat er ihren Namen nie gehört." (p. 16) Günderrode, however, had read Kleist's *Die Familie Schroffenstein*: "Sie muss ihm ja nicht erzählen, dass es ausgerechnet Merten war, der ihr das Drama gegeben hat, enttäuscht übrigens, da er sich nach dem Titel 'Die Familie Schroffenstein', eins der üblichen Ritterstücke erhofft hatte, und dass sie es las, weil von Mainz herüber merkwürdige Gerüchte über den jungen Menschen kamen (...)." (p. 22)
4. The close connection between writing and legend is suggested in the derivation of the word 'legend'. It derives from the Latin verb "legere" meaning 'to read'.
5. Cf. *Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Gütersloh, 1968), column 2323: "Legende: (...) verzerrt dargestellter historischer Vorgang; lange vergangenes, nicht mehr nachweisbares und oft phantasievoll ausgeschmücktes historisches Ereignis; unglaubwürdige Geschichte."

Keinem Menschen hat er je sagen können, und er weiss es selber nicht und will es nicht wissen, wie er von der novemberöden französischen Küsteweg - da der verfluchte Korse dem Todessüchtigen den einzigen Gefallen nicht getan, seine eignen Pläne aufgegeben seine Flotte nicht nach England geschickt, dem Verzweifelten das ersehnte Schlachtfeld nicht bereitet hat -, wie er also nach Paris zurück und mit strikter Marschorder des preussischen Gesandten, auf den Weg nach Potsdam und bis Mainz gekommen ist. (p. 56)⁶

In contrast to the above quotation this next passage presents the unauthenticated KLEIST:

Kleist, stark erregt durch das Gespräch - wie schnell sein Gleichmut zusammenbricht! -, sagt dem Hofrat, indem er sich mit den beiden Fäusten gegen den Schädel hämmert: Ja, ja, ja! Mag sein, dass der Fehler hier drinnen steckt. Dass die Natur grausam genug war, mein Gehirn falsch anzulegen, so dass auf jedem Weg, den mein Geist einschlägt, der Aberwitz ihm entgegengrinst. Wedekind, wenn Sie ein Arzt wären: Öffnen Sie diesen Schädel! Sehn Sie nach, wo der Fehler sitzt. Nehmen Sie Ihr Skalpell und schneiden Sie, ohne zu zittern, die verkehrte Stelle heraus. (p. 82)

Unlike the first, this passage bears no biographical evidence to support KLEIST'S actions. The conversation which agitates KLEIST never took place in reality. The agitation is the modern author's. With an understanding of, and a familiarity with, Kleist's works, Christa Wolf attributes to the historical Kleist certain actions and motivations. The tenses of the verbs distinguish between the two Kleists. In the historical passage past tenses are used and in the second passage the present tense is used (eg. "sagt", "hämmert"). The modern author records what flashes through her imagination.

Both KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE exist in, and create, their own time and space, their own world. That world may be an amalgam of history and Christa Wolf's imagination, but KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE stand as independent beings; they possess a life of their own.

6. Confirmation of this biographical detail may be found in Curt Hohoff's biography of Kleist: *Heinrich von Kleist* (Hamburg, 1958), pp. 61-62.

Their world is literature. KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are solely literary creations, inhabitants of literature. They are inspired with life, just as they give life to literature. If literature is their reality, then where they meet is not in Winkel am Rhein but in the narrative, ironically entitled *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Outside the narrative they cease to exist. Caught between history and imagination, they exist in 'no place, nowhere'.

This narrative is an acknowledgement of the modern writer's veneration for, and indebtedness to, her precursors ("Vorgänger ihr" p. 5). That she focusses her narrative upon Kleist and Günderrode suggests that they embody part of her *Weltanschauung* and, moreover, that she needs Kleist and Günderrode to reveal her own thinking.

In creating a legend around Kleist and Günderrode, Christa Wolf, as it were, confers literary sainthood upon them.⁷ For her, the meeting of these two minds is miraculous, not in the narrow religious sense of the word, but in a very private sense: it enables her to fathom and shape her own aspirations. This suggests that the narrative is a personal statement in which the unsung protagonist is the modern author herself.

What are the aspirations which cause Christa Wolf to identify with Kleist and Günderrode? The answer is suggested in the title of the narrative; "Kein Ort. Nirgends" is the German paraphrase of the word 'utopia'.⁸ Christa Wolf sees Kleist and Günderrode as writers who cling desperately to their utopian vision of the future.⁹

7. Cf. *A Glossary of German Literary Terms* eds. E.W. Herd and A. Obermeyer (Dunedin, 1983), p. 129: "When referring to a literary genre (...) "Legende" (...) means a narrative of the life of a saint, a prophet, a holy person, a martyr etc. or an event in such a person's life, usually a miracle."
8. The word 'utopia' derives from the Greek "ou-topos" meaning 'no place' or 'nowhere'. Thomas More coined the term for an imaginary island with an ideal or 'utopian' political, social and legal system.
9. Cf. "Ich bin schon für eine gewisse Masslosigkeit", a conversation with Wilfred F. Schoeller in: *Christa Wolf Materialienbuch*, ed. Klaus Sauer (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1979), p. 55. In the year before *Kein Ort. Nirgends* was published, Christa Wolf commented: "Jedenfalls sehe ich mich einer verfestigten Wirklichkeit gegenübergestellt, und ich sehe gerade im Schreiben eine Möglichkeit, Utopie überhaupt noch einzuführen, Elemente von Hoffnung, um dieses altmodische Wort ruhig zu gebrauchen. Daran halte ich sehr fest."

.../

In *Kein Ort Nirgends* they come together not because they have in common the vision of a utopian political state but because they share the utopian desire to remove the separateness which divides man from woman. They wish to come to terms with each other peaceably and restore the lost harmony which together man and woman once enjoyed.¹⁰ They recognize that society - be it capitalist or socialist -- thrives on divisions at the expense of human values. They also have the conviction that these differences can be reconciled. This, above all, attracts Christa Wolf to Kleist and Günderröde.

As figures with a utopian vision, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE necessarily come into conflict with 'society' (represented by the other guests),¹¹ for their ideal of harmony sets up a standard by which 'society' measures its insufficiencies.¹² On the afternoon of *Kein Ort. Nirgends* the two protagonists feel they are outsiders because they maintain an ideal of harmony. They may either compromise and conform to social morality, or withdraw from 'society' and hold fast to their ideal. KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE choose the latter; their direction, we have seen,¹³ is upstream, against the current. Amidst the paradisaical setting of the Rhine valley, they come together not to contemplate but to experience the harmony they both long for.

(cont'd) Ganz im Gegensatz zum Pragmatismus, auch zu pragmatischen Anforderungen an die Literatur, bin ich sehr daran interessiert, auch in späteren Arbeiten dieses Element von Utopie weiter einzuführen."

10. Cf. p. 117. KLEIST believes it is our task to regain the lost state of utopian harmony: "Oft denk ich: Wenn der erste Idealzustand, den die Natur hervorrief und den wir zerstören mussten, nie zu jenem zweiten Idealzustand führte, durch die Organisation, die wir uns selber geben?"
11. Cf. pp. 50-51. SAVIGNY speaks for society when he declares: "Dass man die Philosophie nicht beim Wort nehmen, das Leben am Ideal nicht messen soll - das ist Gesetz."
12. Cf. Joyce Hertzler, *The History of Utopian Thought* (New York, 1950), p. 277: "Principles and ideals are always with us, and serve as criteria by which we may judge actual conditions. This is the great function of ideals, that even if they cannot be realized, they yet enable us to understand the real, they give us a comprehension of the character of the immanent truth; they give us a norm whereby we can ascertain the defectiveness, the abnormality, the perversion in existing institutions and conditions, the perfect standards to which conduct ought to approximate. That which is always begs comparison with that which should be, and the discrepancy is obvious."
13. See p. 26 above.

In this union of opposites they glimpse utopia. As they are symbolically called back to 'society' at the end of the narrative, they part knowing that the division between man and woman, which they reconciled for an 'eternal moment', will endure for some time to come.

Although their ideal of harmony cannot survive, KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE now know it can be achieved. For that reason their return to 'society' is tragic. Caught between their unwillingness to accept a relationship based on differences and their inability to sustain a 'utopian' relationship in their 'society', KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE exist in a no man's land. For them there is 'no place, nowhere'. The death they ultimately endure is the price they pay for preserving their ideal. It is the risk of the tragic hero to sacrifice himself for his ideal. What is more, it is the risk of literature:

Der Zerstörung, die nicht immer offensichtlich ist,
sind sie alle ausgesetzt. Die Literatur der Deutschen
als ein Schlachtfeld - auch das wäre eine Weise, sie
zu betrachten. Dichter sind, das ist keine Klage, zu
Opfern und Selbstopfern prädestiniert.¹⁴

Indeed, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is a statement of faith in literature. Just as KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE uphold their ideal in the face of social morality, so too does Christa Wolf; for their union is her union. She believes that the writer has the task of bringing the latent and the possible into life,¹⁵ of inspiring the individual to realize his potential as a human being¹⁶ and, in short, of imbuing the individual with the utopian spirit.

14. Christa Wolf, "Der Schatten eines Traumes" in: *Der Schatten eines Traumes* (Darmstadt und Neuwied, 1979), p. 65. Christa Wolf closes her outline of Günderrode with these words.
15. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1980), p. 23: "Anscheinend brauchen wir für unser Leben die Zustimmung und Unterstützung der Phantasie. Das heisst: das Spiel mit offenen Möglichkeiten."
16. Cf. *Proben junger Erzähler* ed. Christa Wolf (Leipzig, 1959), p. 4. In the introduction for this collection Christa Wolf writes: "Der grosser Stoff unserer Zeit (...) ist das Werden des neuen Menschen."

Encouraged by literature, the individual and, indeed, society may rise above themselves.¹⁷ As we move towards utopia, the writer must keep the ideal, the vision of the future before society. If the history of society is the struggle to attain utopia, then the writer is all-important, as Christa Wolf's protagonists are made to say:

Wenn wir zu hoffen aufhören, kommt, was wir befürchten bestimmt. (p. 117)

If the writer abandons hope of attaining utopia, or if indeed society is without its writers, society will lose. There will be no guiding spirit, no inspiration for a less-than-ideal society. It is incumbent firstly upon the writer not to give up hope and secondly upon society not to abandon the writer.¹⁸

Although Christa Wolf sets her narrative in the early Nineteenth Century, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* has significance for generations to come.¹⁹ We too must solve the burning issue of our time; the separateness of man from woman continues to confront us. Through her narrative Christa Wolf urges us to rise above ourselves and restore to ourselves, our relationships and our society what befits us: human dignity.²⁰

17. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 55. Having completed *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, Christa Wolf describes the rôle future works would play for her: "Aber ich habe herausgefunden, dass man um jeden Preis versuchen muss, den Kreis dessen, was wir über uns selbst wissen oder zu wissen glauben, zu durchbrechen und zu überschreiten."
18. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Kurzer Entwurf zu einem Autor" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 44: "Er (der Autor) ist nichts anderes und will nichts anderes sein als ein normales, engagiertes Mitglied dieser Gesellschaft."
19. Cf. p. 110. GÜNDERRODE muses that in time she and KLEIST may be understood: "Zu denken, dass wir von Wesen verstanden würden, die noch nicht geboren sind."
20. Cf. "Die Dimension des Autors", a conversation with Hans Kaufmann in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 98: "'Wie muss die Welt für ein moralisches Wesen beschaffen sein?' Bobrowskis Frage ist und bleibt stimulierend, weil sie hilft, die Welt einer menschenwürdigen Moral, die nicht die Moral der Menschen einer noch wenig menschenwürdigen Welt anzupassen: Das wäre auch der physische Tod der Menschheit..."

Taking her models from the past, Christa Wolf keeps the ideal before us and gives us hope. Thus the past has significance for the future.²¹ Kleist and Günderrode are Christa Wolf's "Vorgänger" (p. 5) in two senses of the word.²² They are literary forbears as well as harbingers who, far ahead of their time and, indeed, our own age, appear as being born too early.²³ While Christa Wolf's laconic closing remark: "Wir wissen, was kommt" may imply that KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE will commit suicide, in a broader context it reminds us of the ancient struggle to reconcile the differences between man and woman.²⁴ The remark merely increases our awareness that the struggle has by no means ended in our day. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, therefore, is "(...) ein Werk (...), das offen bleibt, offen wie eine Wunde." (p. 119) Thus Christa Wolf may not entitle her narrative 'utopia'. The ideal remains as elusive as ever, existing in 'no place, nowhere'.

21. Cf. *ibid* p. 86: "Die historisch konkrete Behandlung der Vergangenheit soll mir einen Zugang zur Gegenwart eröffnen. 1953 schreibt Brecht: 'Wir haben allzu früh der unmittelbaren Vergangenheit den Rücken zugekehrt, begierig, uns der Zukunft zuzuwenden. Die Zukunft wird aber abhängen von der Erledigung der Vergangenheit.' Vielleicht wirst du mit mir darin übereinstimmen, dass Brechts Überlegung über die dialektische Beziehung zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft heute noch genauso zutrifft."
22. Cf. Wolfgang Werth, "Für Unlösbares gibt es keine Form", *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich, 4.4.79). KLEIST and GÜNDERRODE are described as: "Vorgänger derer, die hinter ihnen zurückblieben und zugleich Vorgänger derer, die sich heute in einer nicht gleichen aber vergleichbaren Situation als ihre Nachfolger - und damit ihrerseits als Vorgänger (...)."
23. Cf. Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Neuwied and Berlin, 1969), p. 231. Christa T. also feels she is ahead of her time: "Ich bin zu früh geboren."
24. Cf. Joyce Hertzler, *The History of Utopian Thought*, p. 289: "The Utopians from Plato onward, almost without exception, *advocated the equality of the sexes*. (...) They made women not only the companions of men, but also the religious, political and civil equals of men, permitting them to enjoy the same opportunities of achievement, and to make their contributions to social advance."

However, standing outside time and space for the duration of the narrative, Christa Wolf also glimpses utopia for an 'eternal moment' and thus keeps alive not only Kleist's and Günderrode's hope, but her own hope too, that we may one day attain a state of utopia. In *Kein Ort. Nirgends* there is little action. Utopia is a "state of mind";²⁵ it is not a political programme which calls to immediate action. For those who have given up the search for the utopian state (the realists so called), the spirit which fills Christa Wolf's narrative must appear intangible and indefinable.²⁶ By its very nature, the utopian vision is without immediate political consequences, more like a dream unfulfilled. *Kein Ort. Nirgends* focusses on the tragedy of separateness which alienates man from woman. Christa Wolf does not resolve that conflict; nor does she resort to political solutions, as for example are offered by the socialists or feminists. The tragedy is placed in a literary context -- i.e. in a human context --, thus revealing Christa Wolf as a humanist.

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25. Cf. *ibid* p. 314: "After all Utopia is not a social state, it is a state of mind."

26. Cf. Christa Wolf, "Der Sinn einer neuen Sache" in: *Lesen und Schreiben Neue Sammlung*, p. 165: "Ich liebe Bücher, deren Inhalt man nicht erzählen kann, die sich nicht auf die simple Mitteilung von Vorgängen und Ereignissen reduzieren lassen, die sich überhaupt auf nichts reduzieren lassen als auf sich selbst."

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