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The Theme of Disappearance and Renewal in the Poetry of

Wilhelm Lehmann

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of

Arts in German at

Massey University

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1978

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time, Man has been preoccupied with the fleetingness of physical existence. Although concerned by the inevitability of the passing of materiality, he accepted it as a part of a permanent world order. However, as a result of the gradual disintegration of belief in a divinely based system, from the end of the Middle Ages until the present day, Man has become increasingly conscious of the transitoriness of material existence. Accompanying this disintegration, a growing feeling of isolation from the "Whole" has arisen. This sense of alienation is shared and articulated by the German poet Wilhelm Lehmann. Lehmann comments upon the position of Man in his critical essay Kunst als Jubel der Materie:

Wir wurden aus dem Paradies der alten Einheit vertrieben. Diese Vertreibung bedeutet den Beginn des Dichtens, des Schreibens. Wir verloren das Ganze, wir wurden selbst Teil, um uns als Teil des Ganzen zu erinnern und uns seiner in der Sehnsucht zu vergewissern. Hesiodisch gesprochen: das Halbe ist mehr als das Ganze. Welches ist das Geschäft der Welt? Da zu sein. Welches ist das Geschäft der Dichtung? Der Welt bei diesem Vorhaben zu helfen. Dichtung ist nicht Flucht, sondern Vorhandenheit, sie ist Kraft, also Gegenwart. Daher Schall, Metrum, Rythmus, Reim innerhalb der Zeile so gut wie an ihrem Ende, Formwille, also Sprache innerhalb der Sprache als Tag innerhalb des Tages. Der Welt als der Welt innezuwerden, erfand sich die Natur die Sprache, die Dichtung. 1)

As a precondition for Man's reintegration into the "Whole", physical existence must be re-endowed with the permanence it has lost through conceptualisation. This can be achieved, according to Lehmann, through poetry. He believes poetry to be "die Blutspenderin des verfallenden Lebens."²⁾ Within the poem, the things of Nature, although having ceased to exist as physical entities, can live once more. The Poet, through his art, can rescue them from oblivion. Hans Dieter Schäfer, in his book Wilhelm Lehmann - Studien zu seinem Leben und Werk, states:

Das dichterische Wort hebt durch seine verwandelnde Kraft das Gewesene aus der Vergessenheit ins Gegenwärtige. 3)

As a result of the attainment of permanence by the thing, Man can also become part of this newly realised permanence:

Dichtung hält das Flüchtige, sie hält auch
uns fest. 4)

In order to realise the thing's preservation within the framework of the poem, it must first of all be made to disappear. In Chapter I of my thesis, it is my intention to investigate the techniques employed by Lehmann to bring about this disappearance. The thing's subsequent inclusion into poetry is discussed in Chapter II. The idea of disappearance and renewal assumes a religious and supernatural significance in Lehmann's poetry. Chapter III deals with the reappearance of the thing after its passing as a circumstance brought about by external forces. This event is made possible through the priest-like mediation of the Poet.

Footnotes

- 1) Wilhelm Lehmann: Sämtliche Werke in drei Bänden. Bd. III, Gütersloh, 1962. p.159. Henceforth referred to as SW III.
- 2) Ibid. p.374
- 3) Hans Dieter Schäfer: Wilhelm Lehmann - Studien zu seinem Leben und Werk, Bonn, 1969. p.233
- 4) SW III, p.227

CHAPTER ONE: The Theme of Disappearance

The theme of disappearance is treated by Lehmann in several different ways. Disappearance can simply entail the physical vanishment of things. It can also refer to their physical disintegration, leading to a state of substancelessness and weightlessness. The Poet himself appears to be reduced to this state in several poems. The disengagement from external activity is a form of disappearance. This is usually characterised by sleep. The withdrawal from external activity is followed by the commencement of an "internal" activity, which is depicted in terms of natural procreation or in dreaming. The things are also represented as reducing into their genetic code, where they remain as the germ to a new existence.

1) The physical disappearance of the thing

In order that the existence of individual things can continue after their physical passing, acceptance by the Poet of transitoriness is necessary. In the poem Verzicht,¹⁾ the departure of the migratory birds and the death of the plants help bring about the fulfillment of this precondition on the part of the Poet. The poem is reproduced below in full:

Früh zog die Schwalbe dies Jahr,
Früh naht das Duster,
Hauch der Verwesung droht
Unwilliger Nüster.

Hölzerne Lüster, stehn
Engelwurzreste,
Geisternde Schatten sie
Mutloser Kräfte.

Starenschwarm spricht mir noch zu,
Eh er zerstoben;
Weisses Septemberlicht
Führt ihn nach oben.

Lange hält sich der Strauss
Abgeschnittener Stiele,
Nur noch Erinnerung
Der Lebensspiele.

Astern, Verbenen und Phlox,
Die langsam sich lichten,
Ich streue mich hin wie sie
Zu leisem Verzichten.

In the first stanza, the swallow is described as migrating early. Its departure heralds the approach of winter. The disappearing bird also symbolises the despair felt by the Poet. The next line alludes to the arrival of the new season through the image of the oncoming gloom. The depiction of departure in the first line, followed by that of arrival in the second line has a balancing effect, evoking the unity of Nature and at the same time, promoting a unity within the poem. The breath of decay represents the death of the old season. However, it is shown as threatening "unwilling nostrils", indicating the Poet's refusal to accept the passing of autumn, and hence the harmony of existence itself. In the second stanza, the remains of the angelica are described as a lifeless chandelier. Through the image of the chandelier, a contrast is suggested between its former existence and its present state as a dead shell. The contrast is strengthened through its representation as a shadow. This compares with the light-giving function of the chandelier. The "haunting" of the shadow denotes, in the Poet's mind, the inevitability of transitoriness.

The flock of starlings is described, in the next stanza, as still speaking to the Poet. They have not yet rejected him. Then, however, it too, flies away, led into the heavens by the white light of September. It is as if the birds are commanded to depart by some all-powerful being. Here, the compelling aspect of the transitoriness of the individual things in Nature is suggested. Then, in the following stanza, there is the reference to the bunch of flower-stalks, which linger on, although separated from their flowers. The Poet is overcome, finally, at the sight of the plants, which he sees gradually becoming sparser. Whereupon, he too, is depicted, in metaphorical fashion, as strewing his petals upon the ground, as a gesture of acceptance.

The poem begins with the rejection by the Poet of the passing of things, and thus of the unity of Nature itself. Until the desired acceptance takes place, there can be no understanding of the permanence of the natural order, and Man must consequently experience complete exclusion from Nature's realm. The succession of images which emphasise the passing of the season, serve to impinge upon the Poet's consciousness an awareness of life's transitoriness. The climax is reached in the final stanza, where the dying plants appear in list fashion - "Aster, Verbenen und Phlox". The despairing Poet must now accept the

passing of everything within the context of the Nature cycle, and he does so with a gesture which expresses his desire for oneness with the transient things.

The message of acceptance of existence, as it is, appears in Lehmann's theoretical writings. He believed that the things existed for their own sake, and thus should be accepted as such. This in fact was referred to in the quotation given in the introduction, viz. "Welches ist das Geschäft der Welt? Da zu sein." In his essay Der Planet, he expands upon this theme:

Uns ist, als brauchten die Dinge bloss da zu sein, um sich und uns ihres Sinnes zu vergewissern. (...) Nur zu sein brauchen die Dinge, nur zu geschehen die Taten... 2)

The idea of non-acceptance is to be found in Grasmücke.³⁾ Here, it is the Poet's refusal to accept his own position which constitutes the central theme. As in Verzicht, images portraying things as disappearing are employed to bring about a new awareness. However, things are not depicted as vanishing completely in this poem. Instead, they are reduced to a state, whereby they appear to be barely perceptible:

Milchkanne glänzt und füllt den Krug.
Zu leben ist euch schon genug.
Blieb euch getreu der Sinn?
Der mir entging,
Mit Zwitschern fing
Grasmücke ihn sich ein,
Und vor mir flieht er hin.
Im heißen Blau der Mond ein Hauch,
Pustblume unten, monden auch.
Ich weiss nur, dass ich traurig bin.
Vogel, ich will dein Hörer sein. —
Mich schläfernte der Sommersang,
Der trällernd aus den Hecken sprang.
Ich wachte auf, zu Tode bang:
Der Mond, des Schwebens niemals satt,
War schon oranges Krokusblatt,
Grasmückenmann sang immer noch.
So hör ihn doch! So hör ihn doch!

The poem begins with a description of the simple objects, the milk-can and the jug. As if disembodied from any causal action of Man, they appear to fulfill their primary function on their own. This image is intended, by Lehmann, to emphasise the self-sufficiency of things. The Poet says in the third line, that the self-sufficiency of the milk-can

and the jug makes them part of the natural order. These things, unlike Man, are complete in themselves, possessing no desire to transcend their being. Consequently, the Poet feels excluded from the order of Nature. He will attempt to discover it in the phenomena of Nature, which, like the milk-can and the jug, appear complete in themselves.

First of all, the Poet looks to the song-bird, the hedge-sparrow, which is depicted as encapsulating the order. But the hedge-sparrow merely twitters, and the bird, and with it the meaning to existence, flee before him. He then looks to the moon above him to provide this order. But the moon in the hot day-sky appears simply as a breath. Even the plant at his feet is a "Pustblume". It assumes and mirrors the intangible and transitory aspect manifested by the moon.

In the centre of the poem, the Poet expresses despair at his isolation. This statement of the Poet's alienation, which usually occupies a central position in the poem, is frequently found in Lehmann's poetry. It is discussed at length by Jochen Jung in his book Mythos und Utopie.⁴⁾ The Poet implores the bird to teach him the meaning which he lacks. Its song causes him to fall asleep. Here, Lehmann has coined the word "Sommersang" to depict the unity of the bird with the season and hence with the rest of Nature. Then, in the early evening, he suddenly awakens. The significance of what he now perceives is underscored by his fearful reaction - "zu Tode bang". The Poet sees the moon in the early evening-sky "des Schwebens niemals satt", suggesting that it has hovered there above him all of the time, although he had been unable to perceive it.

Previously, the immaterial state of the moon, reflected by the almost substanceless "Pustblume", evoked the transitory and intangible aspect of existence as was seen through the Poet's eyes. Now it appears as a new moon, indicative of the birth of a new existence, and also a new understanding on the part of the Poet. Like the objects of the first line, it is now complete in itself. It is described as an orange crocus-leaf. The crocus is the first plant to push up through the snow in the new year. Therefore, the whole natural cycle is brought in with these combined images. At the same time, the Poet hears the singing of the cock hedge-sparrow. Its song permeates the whole scene with its message to the Poet of acceptance of existence as it is, telling him that meaning can be found merely in being.

Thus the Poet finds the meaning to existence which he has been seeking. The poem ends with an exhortation to the reader to listen to the song of the hedge-sparrow and the message which it brings.

The acceptance of existence as it is, particularly with regard to its apparent transitoriness, is a necessary condition for its preservation. In both of the poems so far dealt with, this acceptance is finally exhibited on the part of an initially reluctant Poet. Verzicht deals with the disappearance of physical things in the context of the Nature cycle. In this poem, several images appear, one after the other, which depict things vanishing. A build-up of tension occurs, and at the end, when the Poet perceives the bare flower-stalks, he is overcome by emotion, and as a gesture of unity, he too, (figuratively that is), releases his petals. Things do not vanish entirely in Grasmücke, but are depicted as being reduced to a point whereby they are just perceptible. Once more, the theme of disappearance is used as a means of bringing about acceptance on the part of the Poet. The vanishing of the phenomena is also employed, in this case, to symbolise the Poet's exclusion from the natural order. Through the sudden reappearance, however, of the phenomena, i.e. moon, plant, and finally song-bird, the Poet is shocked into recognising that he must accept his own existence as it is.

Other poems by Lehmann in which the images of things disappearing appear as a means of bringing about acceptance are given in the final footnote below.⁵⁾

Footnotes

- 1) SW III, p.554
- 2) SW III, p.133
- 3) SW III, p.510
- 4) Jochen Jung, in his book Mythos und Utopie, Tübingen 1975, p.20, refers to "der notwendigen Vereinzelung des (...) Dichters". He continues: "Für den Dichter bedeutet das, dass er seine Einsamkeit nun weniger als Fluch denn auch als Segen empfindet, da erst sie ihn in die Lage versetzt, Korrespondenz mit seinem Gegenstand aufzunehmen".
- 5) Südliche Stunde, p.455; Schnelle Oktoberdämmerung, p.473; An einen Blumenstrauß, p.526; Der Bund, p.528.

2) The physical reduction of the Poet

The Poet must enjoy a close relationship with Nature in order that he can include the things of Nature into his poetry. The desired unity with the natural world is brought about, in Lehmann's poetry, through the depiction of the Poet attaining a state of substancelessness. No longer weighed down by his individuality, he merges with the phenomena of Nature, and thus he experiences once more the oneness with the "paradise" from whence Man was driven.

A poem whose theme is the physical reduction of the Poet is Signale,¹⁾ the first two stanzas of which appear below:

Seewärts hör ich Signale tuten:
Sie schiessen die Torpedos ein.
Auf fernen Meeren, nah dem Ohre,
Gesprengter Leiber letztes Schreien.

Der Märzwind greift den Wandernden,
Ich gleite wie auf Flügelschuhn;
Dann bin ich selbst ihm aufgestiegen
Und kann auf seinem Rücken ruhn.

The poem is set in war-time. The Poet hears a battle being fought far out at sea; the boats signal as they release their torpedoes. He can also hear the last cries of those who are meeting their deaths. A rather horrifying image is presented with these cries being depicted as emanating from exploding bodies. The scene is made more intense and penetrating through the fact that the screams are "nah dem Ohre", yet they are uttered "Auf fernen Meeren".

In the second stanza, a scene of peace and tranquillity is evoked. This picture contrasts sharply with the violence of the first stanza. In this stanza, the Poet assumes the disintegrated state of the "gesprengter Leiber" of the fourth line. In the fifth line, there is the use of the impersonal noun "den Wandernden". The Poet himself does not enter into the poem until the beginning of the following line. Within these three lines, a transition from "Gesprengter Leiber" to "den Wandernden" to "Ich" is depicted as having taken place. The Poet has now become without physical substance, and in this substanceless state, he is able to rest upon the back of the March-wind.

The reduction to a fragrance is the main theme of the poem An einen Freund, der sich das Leben nahm:²⁾

Willst du, der Erde satt, sie schon verlassen?
 Ich sehe deine Hand die Klinke fassen.
 Wähl diese Tür:
 Der Sommertag hat Duft gebraut,
 Wermut, Basilikum und Bohnenkraut.
 Bist du es noch, dem Böses widerfuhr?
 Nur heitre Stunde zeigt die Sonnenuhr.
 An warmer Planke hängt der Pfirsich, Venusbrust,
 Du bist begierdelose Lust.
 Die Aprikose lächelt, Puttenwange,
 Am Birnenfleisch fühlt die Ohrwurmzange.
 Die Pflaume spaltet sich, gerecht dem Munde,
 Die Sonnenuhr zeigt nur die heitre Stunde. —
 Du gingest doch. Der Tod hat dich nicht ganz genommen,
 Als Duft bist du der Welt zurückgenommen.

This poem is dedicated to a friend who has committed suicide. The Poet asks his dead friend if he has had enough of the physical earth to depart from it so soon. In the second line, he says that he sees his hand grasping the latch, indicating his imminent entrance into a new existence after his departure from the former one. In the following line, the Poet tells the friend: "Wähl diese Tür". This "door" is in fact the colon which follows the instruction. Discussion on this topic appears in the following chapter. Thus the Poet will provide the way to the new life. In the following lines of the poem, this new existence is depicted.

The summer-day is described as having brewed a fragrance from the scents released by the aromatic herbs, wormwood, basil, and beanwood, as if in celebration of his entrance into the new spiritual existence. Here, the sundial does not indicate the passage of time, but instead, it merely points to serenity and happiness. Timelessness is suggested through this image. The happy serenity is reflected in the suspension of the peach against the warm plank. There is no movement at all, nor is there hot or cold, only the sensation of warmth. The atmosphere is one of fulfillment. The peach is depicted as the breast of Venus, and yet the pleasure experienced through its being perceived in such a fashion is not a lustful pleasure. Instead, the friend is described as "begierdelose Lust". This description serves to emphasise his complete abstraction from all physical substance. The feeling of unity and peacefulness is extended with the picture of the smiling apricot, which is described as the cheek of a cherub, and with the picture of the earwig, whose pincers are exploring the flesh of the pear. This

paradise further entices with the image of the splitting plum, which is to be savoured by the mouth. The description of the ideal scene ends with the repetition of the seventh line. In the seventh line, the cheerful and serene hour was made indefinite through the lack of article. Now, it appears as a definite time - "die heitre Stunde". This "hour" can be enjoyed by the friend - he has not been completely removed by death. As a fragrance, he has returned to the world.

The shedding by the Poet himself of his material substance is depicted in several of Lehmann's poems. This state of substancelessness is characterised by weightlessness. As a substanceless being, the Poet then experiences acceptance by Nature, of whose realm he longs to become a part. This situation compares with the process described in the previous section, whereby the vanishing of physical things brings about acceptance of Nature on the part of the Poet.

In the poem Leiser Herbstwind,³⁾ Lehmann brings about the physical reduction of the Poet, and simultaneously, he depicts him as entering into a death-like state:

Der Wegstaub pudert die Malven,
Es kraust sich die Wolle am Lamm.
Der Wind ist die Puderquaste,
Der Wind der zärtliche Kamm.

Es summt in den leeren Linden
Wie Bienengeisterschar,
Die Stirn streift Spinnenfaden,
Oder ist es mein eigenes Haar?

Ich bin schon halb vergangen,
Das Auge wird mir dumm,
Auf den wespengelben Stoppeln
Geht ein Gestorbener um.

Der Wind nimmt mich auf den Rücken,
Ich bin ihm nicht zu schwer;
Hase und Maus und Amsel
Fliehen vor mir nicht mehr.

Mit dem Winde staub ich die Malven
Und krause die Wolle dem Lamm,
Ich bin die Puderquaste,
Ich bin der flüchtige Kamm.

The wind is depicted as a powder-puff, which powders the mallows with dust from the path, and as a tender comb, which curls the wool on the lamb. The dusty path leads to the realm of the dead. The Poet's entry into death is accompanied by humming, which is likened to the sound of

hosts of "bee-spirits". As he loses consciousness, he is no longer able to differentiate between his hair and the cobwebs. A merging effect has taken place between his power of sight and hearing - "Das Auge wird mir dumm". He enters into a twilight zone, as a phantom, haunting the stubble-fields. He becomes substanceless, and is gathered up by the wind. In this state, the other creatures now accept him. The Poet becomes the wind itself.

The poem describes a progressive movement towards a state of death characterised by weightlessness, and at the same time, the Poet moves towards a unity with Nature. His complete integration into Nature is described through his assuming the function of the wind. The structure of the poem is cyclical, with the activity of the first stanza repeated in the last stanza. This technique promotes a unity and completeness within the poem, reflecting simultaneously the unity and completeness, and also the permanence of Nature.

Another of Lehmann's works which describes the entry of the Poet into a substanceless harmony with Nature is the major poem Geflügelte Frucht:⁴⁾

Kusshand des flüchtigen Jahrs,
Ulmenblatt, abgeweht,
Da schon zum zweiten Mal
Das Heu in den Diemen steht.

Gegen die Gnade der Luft
Abgewandt das Gedicht,
Fiel in den Staub mir der Traum,
Mit ihm fiel das Gedicht.

Fruchtlos floh Tag vor dem Tag:
In dem Ächzen der Zeit
Schlug mich die menschliche Tat
Mit Unverständlichkeit.

Vergebens hat schöne Geduld
Lange mir nachgestellt,
Als ein missglückter Plan
Entfiel ich der schnellen Welt.

In der Ruhe des Baums
Wird selbst die Windsbraut stumm,
Aber im Herzen geht
Immer Verzweiflung um.

Da! Auf den trockenen Mund
Haucht es als wohliger Kuss,
Blauer tieft sich das Blau,
Dass ich es sehen muss:

Goldene Fledermausschar,
 Zum Schlafe zusammengedrängt,
 Sind in die grüne Nacht
 Ahornfrüchte gehängt.

Spannte den Bogen ein Gott
 Der Flughaut, herrlich geschweift,
 Der wilden Hornisse gleich
 Von leisen Adern durchstreift?

Und entbrannt von der Lust
 Ihres Zusammenseins,
 Seh ich der Nüsse Rund
 In grünem Kragenbund –
 Alle Frucht eins.

Schwanger von jeder Saat,
 Wallt über den Wiesen Rauch,
 Ihm mischt der Wind mich zu,
 Ich fliege auch.

Leichter als Wimpernhaar,
 Wolle am Baldrian,
 Geglückt bin ich der Welt,
 Ihr zärtlichster Plan.

Ross ich und Reiter zugleich,
 Kentaurengestalt,
 Uns hebt vom Boden auf
 Eine Seelengewalt –

Eingelassen ins Spiel
 Und in den stillen Schwung,
 Fühle ich kein Zuviel,
 Keine Verminderung.

Schmelzen fühl ich das Selbst,
 Weilen fühlt sich das All,
 Mutter und Sohn vereint –
 Welcher Zusammenhall!

Kehrt der Vereinzelung
 Schweres Geschick?
 In meinem Gebein verharret
 Der selige Augenblick.

In the first stanza, the Poet is the recipient of a kiss, blown to him by the fleeting year. The kiss takes the form of an elm-leaf, blown to the ground by the wind. Through this image, and that of the stacked hay, is the transitoriness of physical existence evoked. The dream of kinship with Nature is offered in the shape of the leaf. However, the Poet turns his face away, indicating his alienation, and the dream is subsequently lost. The close link between dream and poem is alluded to here. This relationship is dealt with in the next chapter. The image of the fleetingness and fruitlessness of human endeavour is taken up

in the third stanza. The dream of union with Nature has proved infertile so far. Human activity makes him unable to grasp this unity, and thus he ignores the patience of Nature. Then the Poet "falls away" from the fast-moving world and enters into the stillness of the tree. It is here that the characteristic statement concerning the Poet's isolation appears. He refers to his despair, and at this point, the vacuum which he experiences as a result, is ready to be filled. With "Da!" at the beginning of stanza six, the marriage between wind and Poet is on the verge of being consummated, commencing with a breath of air, which is felt as a contented kiss upon the Poet's dry mouth. The intensity of this act is illustrated by the deepening blue, which the Poet perceives as he enters into the timeless infinity of Nature.

As he enters into union with Nature, the fruit of the maple, ancient symbols of fertility, are seen in the "green night" as a flock of bats, squeezed together in a sleeping position on a branch of the tree. This branch becomes a bow being stretched by a god. The fruit become like living beings; the membrane which constitutes their wings is interlaced with delicate veins, as are the wings of wild hornets. Their closeness causes the Poet to become inflamed with passion. The fruit have now become a single entity. Their natural function is symbolically realised, after their release, as the haze above the meadow becomes "pregnant" with the seeds. Through the action of the wind, a merging takes place between haze and Poet. As they both become one, he too, is impregnated with the winged seeds, and at the same time, he achieves a lightness which enables him to be carried off by the wind.

The marriage between Nature and Poet is represented by the union of rider and horse in the shape of a mythological centaur. In that form, Nature and Poet are still discernible as separate physical entities, although united in one body. However, the new power, brought about between the marriage of the Poet's "soul" and Nature, raises "them" off the ground. Suspended motionless, the Poet experiences total equanimity. The self is felt to melt into the Whole. He is now one with Nature.

At the end of the poem, the Poet asks if the heaviness of individuation is once more to be his fate. The blissful moment of union is, however, encapsulated in his body, in the form of the poem.

In order that the things of Nature can be reproduced in his poetry, the Poet must experience unity with them. This unity is accomplished through the Poet's reduction within the poem, to a state of substancelessness. In An einen Freund, der sich das Leben nahm, the Poet's dead friend is described as having been reduced to a scent. In Signale, the disintegration of the bodies at sea is translated into the person of the Poet on the shore, who then becomes weightless and is collected up by the wind. This state of substancelessness is also attained by him in Leiser Herbstwind and Geflügelte Frucht. Just as the vanishing of things in the previous section led to the Poet's acceptance of Nature, his own reduction here brings about his acceptance on the part of Nature.

Other examples in which the Poet is depicted as attaining a state of substancelessness appear in the final footnote.⁵⁾

Footnotes

- 1) SW III, p.522
- 2) SW III, p.593
- 3) SW III, p.458
- 4) SW III, p.474
- 5) Über die Stoppeln, p. 450; Untergehender Dichter, p. 446;
Tag in Jütland, p.478; Starenschwarm im Baum, p.447;
Der Schlafapfel, p.460; Noch nicht genug, p.604;
Augustwolken, p.485.

3) Withdrawal into inactivity

Disappearance is sometimes depicted as a withdrawal into a state of inactivity. The disengagement from physical or external activity is characterised by the entrance into sleep. As external activity diminishes, a subsequent increase in internal activity occurs. This "inner" activity can refer to the process of procreation, on the part of Nature, or to dreaming, which can apply to either Nature or Poet.

A poem which portrays the withdrawal of Nature into sleep or "Ohnmacht" followed by procreative activity is Novemberohnmacht,¹⁾ which appears below:

Novemberfrost verdarb
 Die kühne Gladiole;
 Die Winteraster starb.
 Im nassen Dunst glimmt weiss
 Das Wassergrabenband.
 Mein Fuss zerknirscht den Rand,
 Als splittre er Phiole.
 Greif ich mein Fleisch, ich greife Eis.

 Der Tag versinkt. Auf Wiedersehn?
 Nichts tönt mehr, nur ein Tropfenfall.
 Gekrümmte Blätter wischen
 Um mein Gesicht und mischen
 Als Dufte sich zurück ins All,
 Sie schwinden, sie entstehn.

 Ohnmacht befällt das Kalte,
 Mächtig wird sie im Schwachen:
 Damit die Welt nicht alte,
 Begegnen sich im Dämmergrau
 Frostspannermann, Frostspannerfrau,
 Die zeugesüchtig wachen,
 Damit die Welt nicht alte,
 Damit die Welt sich halte.

The destroying effect of winter is shown in the first stanza. The gladiolus and the winter-aster have died as a result of the frost of November. Referring to the frost as "Novemberfrost" serves to particularise it and make it concrete, thus emphasising its destructive role. However, the white glimmer at the edge of the ditch represents a glimmer of hope. The Poet breaks the ice at the edge of the water, and the locked in cold is suddenly released, as if it were some penetrating vapour which had been enclosed in glass phials. It enters his flesh, and he is described as becoming one with the ice - "Greif ich mein Fleisch, ich greife Eis".

The sinking of the day, which is referred to at the beginning of the second stanza, corresponds with the dying of the plants in the first stanza. The disappearance of the day becomes symbolic of the passing of the old season. With the question "Auf Wiedersehn?", the Poet asks for an assurance that he will see the day, and thus life as it was, once more. There is, however, no reply. Only the sound of dripping water can be heard. The image of the death of the past season is extended with the description of the crumbling leaves, rubbing against the face of the Poet. As they disintegrate, they exude their fragrances. The leaves are described as disappearing and then reappearing. Their disappearance parallels the passing of the previous existence. However, their reappearance is suggestive of the future rebirth of that existence, within the context of the natural renewal, and also as part of the poem. Its rebirth is dealt with in the following stanza.

In these two stanzas, a certain movement towards a state of physical reduction becomes apparent. A static situation is implied by the first three lines, in which the past tense is used. The change to the present tense in the fourth line has the effect of creating the impression of movement. The process of reduction begins, however, with the image of the Poet's foot breaking up the ice. After that, there is the picture of the crumbling leaves, which are reduced, finally, to the substancelessness of a fragrance. This reduction is reflected in the switch from the use of such harsh sounding words in the first stanza as "zerknirscht" and "splittre" to soft sounding words such as "wischen" and "mischen" in the second stanza. In fact, it is stated at the beginning of the second stanza - "Nichts tnt mehr, nur ein Tropfenfall". There is also a movement from light in the first stanza - "Im nassen Dunst glimmt weiss ..." to darkness in the next stanza - "Der Tag versinkt".

Out of the lifeless state of Nature, and catalysed by the reduction of the leaves to fragrances which vanish and then appear, arises the "Ohnmacht" in the final stanza. The first line begins with the word "Ohnmacht" in order to stress its significance. It appears without an article, suggesting something both definite and yet indefinite, something all-powerful and all-pervading. Its power is demonstrated through the image of it attacking the coldness. The paradox-

ical nature of the "Ohnmacht" is summed up by the second line - "Mächtig wird sie im Schwachen". It is as if the withdrawal of life has the effect of causing a vacuum within the realm of Nature, which can remain void for so long. The "Ohnmacht" appears as a regenerative force which stimulates the germ of the new season, having lain dormant within the impotence of the winter season. With the appearance of the "Ohnmacht", the vacuum can become filled. It infuses the winter-moths with the strength to copulate. In the poem, the whole renewal of Nature is encapsulated in their copulation. Within the word "Frostspanner" itself, the unity between the non-living and the living worlds is expressed - both worlds come together in this word. The permanence of Nature is expressed by the last two lines, in which the cyclical aspect of Nature is emphasised through the repetition - "Damit die Welt nicht alte, / Damit die Welt sich halte".

A similar effect to that which appears in Novemberohnmacht is brought about through the recurring image of the wind dropping off to sleep. In Klage ohne Trauer,²⁾ the wind "falls asleep", and this act is followed by the poplar's releasing of its seed. In Die Hornisse,³⁾ the wind is overcome by the narcotic effect of August - "In die Augustnarkose ist die Luft versunken". Several images suggesting fertility follow, e.g. "Aus dem Euter, stockt die Milch geronnen", and "Tomate glänzt wie Brust der Kybele". It is the sleeping of the world in Merlin⁴⁾ which appears to bring about growth in the plants and the flourishing of the egg within the womb of the female cuckoo:

Die Welt schläft ein. Wie grüne Hand
Streckt aus dem Graben sich
Der Fieberklee, der Knöterich
Aus Schotter und aus Sand.

Dem Kuckucksweibchen ist das Ei
Im federleichten Schoss gediehn.

The dream is often portrayed as a consequence of the withdrawal into sleep in Lehmann's poetry. In Die Schläferin,⁵⁾ the dream of the sleeping earth is depicted:

Weiden Schafe dort im Winde?
Raucht des Schnees ergraute Rinde?
Eis hält Weidenbusch umklammert,
Wind stösst sich am Pfahl und jammert.

Als der Held die Schöne suchte,
 Sah er durch das dunkle Mieder
 Ihre Glieder strahlen, durch die Glieder
 In den Knochen helles Mark.

Legt der Wind sich, abzukühlen
 Seine Wunde, unterdessen
 Höre ich die Erde wühlen,
 Tief im Schläfe, traumbesessen:

Regt die Schläferin den Fuss,
 Zuckt erstarrter Carabus,
 Goldne Schnalle ihres Schuhs.
 Regt die Schläferin die Hand,
 Dass der Steinwall beben muss:
 Moschusblatt hüpft aus dem Sand,
 In die Zweige fliegt der Traum,
 Zager Weidenblütenflaum.

Wird die Überraschte zürnen?
 Reisst Dianas Meute schon?
 Flieh die Grausame, die Zarte!
 Bleibe! Ihr Geschöpf, ihr Sohn.

A scene depicting activity is presented at the beginning of the poem. This activity centres around the wind, whose movement becomes increasingly violent by the end of the first stanza. In the second stanza, there is a sudden switch to Greek legend. Here, the story about the observation by Actæon of the goddess Diana at her toilet is evoked. There is a return to the theme of Nature in the third stanza. Now the wind is described as abating in order to "cool its wounds". With the dropping of the wind, the Poet can hear the tossing about of a "dream-possessed" earth.

The dream manifests itself in the third stanza as "die Schläferin". The movement of the stiffened carabus-beetle indicates the stirring of her foot. The movement of her hand causes the stone rampart to quake. Then, as the wind begins to blow once more, the musk-leaf "hops" from the ground, and the dream can no longer sustain itself. It is described as flying into the branches, nothing but a faint-hearted ball of willow-fluff.

In the third stanza, the figure of Diana and Nature have become one during the break in the activity of the wind. The Poet becomes part of this dream as the mortal Actæon, and for a brief moment, he can view Nature in all of its radiant beauty. The Poet is able, thus, to become one with Nature on the level of the Greek legend within the dream. With the disappearance of the dream, this unity too vanishes.

The cessation of unity is represented by the ripping to pieces of the mortal by Diana's pack of hounds. However, from this union springs the poem to record the event. Its relationship to the union is alluded to in the final line - "Bleibe! Ihr Geschöpf, ihr Sohn."

Another poem which deals with the idea of the dream in a similar fashion is Leben vor der Sonnenwende,⁶⁾ the third stanza of which is reproduced below:

Saft des Schöllkrauts quillt orangen,
Heilsam kranken Fingers Schwäre.
Aus dem Schlafe steigt der Traumgeist,
Und Gewissheit füllt die Leere.

A striking similarity with the poem Novemberohnmacht presents itself here. In that poem, the "Ohnmacht" emerges from the impotence of the winter landscape, filling the vacuum caused by winter through its triggering the process of renewal. Here, out of the sleep state, arises the "dream-spirit", causing the vacuum of uncertainty to be filled with certainty.

The withdrawal of the Poet into a state of sleep and his subsequent entrance into the dream appear in several of Lehmann's poems. Through the dream, he is then able to attain the sought after unity with Nature. Jochen Jung refers to the dream as "der zentrale Ort der Begegnung"⁷⁾ between Man and Nature in Lehmann's works. It was discussed in the previous section how the Poet, at the point of attaining union, becomes weightless and flies through the air. This sensation of weightlessness is also experienced by the Poet during the period in which he is dreaming. A poem in which the Poet's entry into the dream and his subsequent sensation of weightlessness is described is Über die Stoppeln:⁸⁾

Die Eiche spielt wie ein Dudelsack,
Vom Sturm der jungen Stare geschwellt.
Huflattich schlängelt den weissen Hals,
Wenn Wind über seinen Rücken wellt.

Die Iris plattet die längliche Frucht
Wie die Eidechse sparsamer Glut,
Als grüne Hode schwankt sie und schwillt
Von schlafendem Zeugungsmut.

Zwölf Rebhühner flogen, als Flüge der Lehm -
Ich bin auf ihrem Nacken geritten.
Die Stoppeln pfeifen, es pudert der Staub,
Kamille duftet zerschnitten.

Ich wanderte in die Wesen aus,
 Sie litten mich traumeslang.
 Dann riegelten sie das Ängstliche Haus.
 Wie Zikadenschaum
 Vertrocknet der Traum -
 Er dauert nur im Gesang.

The unity of Nature is suggested in the first stanza with the image of the "storm" of singing starlings in the oak-tree, and of the colts-foot, writhing in the wind. In the second stanza, the iris with its oblong fruit is portrayed. It is described as being in a state of "schlafendem Zeugungsmut". The suggestion is made that within the fruit lies latent the germ of a new existence, that is the seed of the plant and the dream, which is to be experienced by the Poet. In fact, the sleeping state of the fruit extends to the Poet, who, in the following stanza, enters into the dream.

In the state of dream, he becomes light, and is carried up by twelve partridges. As if to celebrate his new unity with Nature, the stubbles "whistle", the dust turns to powder, and the cut up carnations exude their fragrances. All of these images - stubble, dust, cut up flowers, suggest transitoriness, in this case, the transitoriness of the dream which the Poet experiences. The Poet attains substancelessness, and at the same time, experiences complete oneness with the birds, entering into their being. The merging with the birds in this poem is to be compared with the uniting of the Poet with the seeds in Geflügelte Frucht. However, this unity will last only for the duration of the dream itself. Like the foam covering the cikada larvae, the dream, too, must evaporate. The dream of unity will endure only in the poem - "Er dauert nur im Gesang".

To sum up, another means of effecting the disappearance of the things in the world of Nature is through the withdrawal into a state of inactivity. This state is characterised by sleeping. A consequence of the disengagement from external activity is the commencement of an inner activity. It is as if the physical withdrawal effects the creation of a vacuum, which in turn demands further activity. In the case of Novemberohnmacht, this activity refers to the descending upon the winter landscape of the "Ohnmacht", which catalyses the renewal. Further examples are given with Klage ohne Trauer, Die Hornisse, Merlin.

In the case of Die Schläferin, Leben vor der Sonnenwende, Über die Stoppeln, the inner activity refers to the arising of the dream. Through the dream, the Poet himself can achieve a state of momentary oneness with Nature, and at the same time, he experiences the characteristic sensation of weightlessness which accompanies the attainment of unity.

Other examples of poems in which the dream assumes a central role are included in the final footnote.⁹⁾

Footnotes

- 1) SW III, p.530
- 2) SW III, p.603
- 3) SW III, p.585
- 4) SW III, p.472
- 5) SW III, p.531
- 6) SW III, p.471
- 7) Mythos und Utopie, p.55
- 8) SW III, p.450
- 9) Traumleib der Wärme, p.433; Starenschwarm im Baum, p.447; Der Schlafapfel, p.460.

of existence becomes translated into the permanence of the perpetual principle or genetic code encapsulated in the seed.

The permanence suggested by the image of the seed is reflected in the form of the poem. It is evoked through the lack of movement which becomes apparent from the centre of the poem until its conclusion. In the final stanza, the linear movement, which was suggested at the beginning of the poem with the use of the verb "entlanggehen" is transformed into space with the use of the prepositions "über" and "unter". The central position of the seed image serves to endow the poem with a balance. Thus can it be said to mirror the completeness and unity of Nature.

Another poem which depicts a reduction into the principle of regeneration is Sommerrausch.²⁾ In this case, the genetic code is housed within the grains of pollen which hover in the summer-air:

Ein goldner Staub der Pollenrauch:
Wie leise schwebt die Zeugungsgier!
Verschwenderischer Übermut,
Brüllt sie als Donner aus dem Stier.

Ein Hauch begegnet einem Hauch:
Es ist genug! Es ist geschehen.
Die Narbe schwankt, die Narbe fällt,
Vor Zeus muss Semele vergehen.

Der Gott entsinnt sich seiner Frucht:
Da sie kein Ungestüm mehr drängt,
Ein grünes Feuer, abgekühlt,
Schwillt runde Beere, blattverhängt.

Der Sommer stürzt, die Sense blitzt;
Duftschwaden, sinken Gras und Klee.
Durch ihre Träume fährt der Gott,
Verbrennt noch einmal Semele.

The image of pollen appears right at the beginning of the poem. There is, however, no mention of the plants which have released it. The pollen grains have become abstracted from their source, and are represented as existing on their own. They form "smoke" and are described as a golden dust. These images serve to emphasise the near substancelessness of the pollen. In the second line, the substance of the grains disappears altogether. They become abstracted completely from their physical being, depicted as "die Zeugungsgier" or reproductive force. The power which they possess is emphasised, and also endowed with a sense of urgency, through the image of the bull, expelling them through

its nostrils as thunderous roaring.

In the second stanza, the fertilisation of the plants is described as the coming together of breath with breath. The creation and perpetuation of life is suggested through the use of the word "breath". After the fertilisation is complete, the stigma sways and falls. With this, the Poet evokes the legend of Zeus and Semele. The passing of the stigma becomes synonymous with the destruction of Semele by Zeus through the deception of the jealous Hera. Yet, just as Zeus saved the unborn son, Dionysus, so he bestows his protection upon the seed of the plant. Here, a link with the title of the poem can be established. Robert Graves, in his book The Greek Myths³⁾ says: "One of his titles (Dionysus) was Dendrites, "tree-youth", and the Spring Festival, when the trees suddenly burst into leaf and the whole world is intoxicated with desire, celebrated his emancipation". The fertilising pollen ("die Zeugungsgier! / Verschwenderischer Übermut") in the first stanza symbolise this intoxication of the natural world. The protecting and vitalising force of the god is described as a green fire, which, when cooled down, actualises in the swelling, round berry, hanging from a leaf.

Just as the stigma must fall, so must the summer pass on. With the end of the season, grass and clover fall to the scythe, releasing swaths of fragrances. Just as the poem begins with substanceless "pollen-smoke", so it ends with the similar image of substanceless swaths of scents. Like the pollen, imbued with the life-principle, they too are infused with the vitalising force of the god Zeus - "Durch ihre Träume fährt der Gott". Here, the perpetuating inner activity of the dream, discussed in the previous section is evoked. Also, in this poem, as in Über die Stoppeln, a connection is established between the process of dreaming and that of procreation. Once more will Semele be consumed by lightening, yet once more will the seed regenerate and the natural cycle perpetuate itself.

Things are often reduced by Lehmann to the genetic code or regenerative concept. This reduction can be brought about through the use of the image of the seed or that of pollen grains. Within the seed and the pollen lies the germ to the new existence. Through these images, the transitoriness of physical existence becomes translated into the

permanence of the Nature-cycle. This translation takes place in Schnelle Oktoberdämmerung as the transitoriness of existence, characterised by the disappearance of the day, gives way to permanence represented by the seed of the mignonette. In the poem Sommerrausch, permanence is achieved through the image depicting the fertilising of the plants by the pollen grains. The reproductive process is extended to the whole of existence as a consequence of the evocation of the legend of Zeus and Semele.

Other poems which depict the reduction into the genetic code in a similar fashion to the two poems just dealt with appear as the final footnote.⁴⁾

Footnotes

- 1) SW III, p.473
- 2) SW III, p.566
- 3) Robert Graves: The Greek Myths, Volumes 1 & 2, Penguin Books, p.107.
- 4) Abschied, p.465; An eine Eichel, p.506; Der Baldgreis, p.503; Sehnsucht zu bleiben, p.670; Gentige, p.675; Abgeblühter Löwenzahn, p.551; Zu Zweien, p.637; Südliche Stunde, p.455; Ruhm des Daseins, p.624; Die Elster, p.452; Windiger Februar, p.453.