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GOETHE AND CHARLOTTE VON STEIN IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN FICTION

by

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INTRODUCTION

Within recent decades writers have been attracted to Goethe as a subject for fiction with such enthusiasm and to such a degree of success that their efforts have produced nearly one hundred novels and short stories dealing with some phase or other of his life. By virtue of sheer numbers alone, it would seem justifiable to direct attention to this ever-expanding area of literary production. It should be possible to determine the merit--or lack of it--of individual works, while at the same time their contribution to "das Goethebild," the concept of Goethe as reflected in contemporary fiction, can be established. To attempt to do justice to all these Goethe novels here, to investigate every minute aspect of the poet's life as it has been presented in fiction, would be a task of unwieldy proportions. However, there is one period in his distinguished career which appears to have been attractive to a sufficient number of writers to warrant a comparative study of their achievements. It can hardly be mere coincidence that so many authors have chosen Goethe's love for Charlotte von Stein as the subject for their novels, for this is the period which has continued to be of interest, both fascinating and intriguing for scholar and layman alike, down to the present day. The appearance as recently as 1951 of Margarethe Susman's Deutung einer grossen Liebe: Goethe und Charlotte von Stein or of Walter Hof's Wo sich der Weg im

Kreise schliesst in 1957 would suggest that scholars themselves have not been thoroughly satisfied with previous interpretations, while the latest of the Goethe--Frau von Stein novels, Grete Fink-Töbich's Einer Einzigen gehören, published in 1955, would indicate that the interest among the reading public has not abated either.

Our aim therefore is to present a comparative analysis and evaluation of works of fiction in which the interaction of the figures of Goethe and Frau von Stein plays a significant role. The year 1900 has been set as a starting point; only works which appeared after that date are considered. This arbitrary restriction is not intended as a reflection on any individual novel published before the turn of the century but is meant simply to enable us to arrive at our goal: an analysis of "das Goethebild" in contemporary fiction. Ten works are therefore to be discussed, listed here as follows: one Novelle--E. G. Kolbenheyer, Karlsbader Novelle; and nine novels--Franz Servaes, Jahr der Wandlung; Gertrud Bäumer, Eine Woche im Mai; Albert von Trentini, Goethe: Der Roman von seiner Erweckung; Toni Schwabe, Wandlung des Herzens; Paul Burg, Alles um Liebe; Ottokar Janetschek, Frau von Stein; J. A. Lux, Goethe: Roman einer Dichterliebe; Juliane Kay, Meine Schwester oder meine Frau; and Grete Fink-Töbich, Einer Einzigen gehören.[1]

A study such as outlined below has not been previously attempted. Although some research has been done on the German

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[1]Bibliographical data on the above-cited works are given in the section devoted to each.

biographical novel in general, the Goethe novel remains to be explored. A dissertation by Elna Birch, Der biographische Roman in der neuen deutschen Dichtung, dealing chiefly with five novels which the author considers representative of the types being written, contains a brief comment on but one of the Goethe novels: "Trentinis Goethe ist noch ekstatischer und bewegter als Molos Roman und freier in der Umdichtung des Überlieferten."[2] In Arnold Scheidegger's dissertation, Gestalten der deutschen Geistesgeschichte im deutschen biographischen Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts, which by title promises more than the discussion offers, eleven Goethe novels are listed to which the author devotes two and one-half pages of text.[3] This rather scant treatment has obviously by no means exhausted the possibilities of the subject. Lack of space as well as the scope of his topic has prevented Heinz Kindermann from giving full consideration to the Goethe fiction in Das Goethebild des XX. Jahrhunderts, an essentially bibliographical study concerned with changes in the Goethe concept resulting from twentieth-century literary research.[4] However, in a few instances Kindermann does indicate which novels have either instigated or reflected a significant turn in the contemporary viewpoint. Further reference to his comments will be made later in the discussion of the individual works. In addition

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[2]Elna Birch, Der biographische Roman in der neuen deutschen Dichtung (dissertation, Heidelberg, 1936), p. 41.

[3]Arnold Scheidegger, Gestalten der deutschen Geistesgeschichte im deutschen biographischen Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts (dissertation, Zürich, 1947).

[4]Heinz Kindermann, Das Goethebild des XX. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart: Humboldt Verlag, 1952).

to these three studies, there have also been reviews of some of the novels which will be introduced where pertinent. To the best of the writer's knowledge, these items currently comprise the extent of research on Goethe fiction, and none of them approaches the subject in the comprehensive manner intended here.

An article by Julius Petersen, "Kleist im Roman," in which the author evaluates Kleist novels and, in so doing, suggests criteria by which the biographical novel can be judged, has proved invaluable as a model for the methods here employed.[5]

The plan of investigation is as follows: Chapter I is concerned with various aspects of the biographical novel in general, of the Goethe novel in particular. The paucity of pertinent research currently available makes it necessary for us to define our terminology, consider the nature and possible origins, and establish definite ways by which this sub-species of the novel can be approached.

Since the framework for the novel is to be found in the biography of the protagonist, Chapter II contains a brief review of the facts of the Charlotte period in anticipation of items which have been exploited by authors and which are introduced in subsequent chapters. Scholarly interpretations which have been incorporated may serve as a guide in judging the historical veracity of the fiction to be analyzed.

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[5]Julius Petersen, "Heinrich von Kleist im Roman: Eine Studie über das Verhältnis dichterischer und wissenschaftlicher Lebensdarstellung," Jahrbuch der Kleist-Gesellschaft, 1938, II (1941), 117-139.

Chapters III and IV are concerned with the novels themselves. Like any other novel, the Goethe-Charlotte novel could be classified according to style, such as naturalistic, realistic, impressionistic, romantic, etc., or from a structural approach, according to the point of view which the author employs. As to the former, these terms are somewhat unsatisfactory because the novels to come under discussion do not by and large manifest marked characteristics of, or decided affinities to, any particular literary movement or style. The latter classification, the structural approach, also needs to be eliminated since the divergence in structure and technique among the novels is not great enough to permit a grouping of them according to point of view.[6] By the very nature of the subject matter, the narrator is enticed into using some variation of the omniscient author technique. His interest in the problematic element of the Charlotte period requires him to be able to delve into the minds of either Goethe or Frau von Stein or both. For this reason, the story could be told by a third person--the observant bystander--only with considerable difficulty; it would perhaps be even more ineffective if related by the dramatic "I." The use of such an approach would not only seem presumptuous in the case of an historical figure of Goethe's stature, but because of the limitations imposed by its very fixed slant, little more could be revealed about the characters than history itself has handed down.

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[6]For a detailed discussion of this term, see particularly Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, LXX (1955), 1160-1184.

A perusal of the novels under consideration suggested an approach and classification, prompted by internal evidence, based on each author's selection of a central theme for his narrative. It is primarily in the development of these themes that individual divergences in interpretation become apparent. Since the bond between Goethe and Frau von Stein did not remain at a static level, an author's interpretation depends furthermore upon whether he treats a single phase of the historical period or whether he takes into account the full course of events over the years. Our narratives thus fall quite naturally into two groups which will be entitled "Partial Portraits" (Chapter III) and "Total Portraits" (Chapter IV). These terms are not meant to be considered as any form of advance evaluation; as will become evident later, a partial portrait can have just as much validity and contain just as faithful a reproduction of history and character as a total portrait, in some cases, even more.

Chapter V, containing the summary and conclusions, presents a comparative appraisal of "das Goethebild" in fiction and is intended to serve as a counterpart to Chapter II, "The Historical Picture."

No attempt has been made, because none could be made, to analyze these novels by separating fact from fiction systematically. The responsive reader doubtless will do that himself in obvious cases on the basis of his own knowledge.

It has not been considered necessary or even advisable to explore in great detail the background of the individual novelists, for it is felt that the knowledge so gained would

be of little benefit for this particular study. Our method of analysis is inductive, based on internal evidence in the novels themselves, and for that reason, only such information about the authors has been included as is deemed sufficient for purposes of identification.

Since Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein are a primary source, especially in Chapter II, it should be noted here that our orthography is based on Goethes Briefe an Charlotte von Stein, ed. Julius Petersen (2 vols., 2 pts. ea.; 2d ed.; Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1923). In order to avoid repetitive footnoting, all excerpts or further references to these letters are simply marked by the date given in the above-named edition. Reference to all other correspondence is footnoted in a normal fashion.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF BIOGRAPHICAL FICTION

It becomes increasingly evident that the German biographical novel has marked characteristics which entitle it to be considered as a definite sub-species of the novel. The four studies mentioned above (Birch, Scheidegger, Kindermann, Petersen) would indicate that scholars are not only aware of the existence of this sub-species but are willing to treat it as a distinct literary form. It is, however, equally evident that a great deal of research remains to be done in this area. Problems involving definition, origins, and various contributory factors leading to the twentieth-century form--in short, a comprehensive history of the biographical novel--await exploration by future scholars. For obvious reasons this great gap in our knowledge cannot be filled here; the many ramifications of the subject would entail a voluminous study by itself. An attempt will be made, however, to give in rough outlines certain specific features which may serve as an orientation for our subsequent analysis of the Goethe--Frau von Stein novels.

As far as terminology is concerned, there appears to be a difference in the methods of classification employed by English and by German critics. The tendency in England and America apparently is to include all writings dealing with the

life of an historical figure under the general heading "biography." Thus a work such as Dictionary of World Literature considers André Maurois, Philip Guedalla, Virginia Woolf, and David Cecil all as authors of a type called "Artistic Biography"--but nevertheless biography.[1] On the other hand, Jan Romein in his Die Biographie[2] calls attention to the position held by André Maurois, Lytton Strachey, Emil Ludwig, and others in the development of modern biography but mentions none of the authors whose novels are the basis for Elna Birch's dissertation (O. Gmelin, F. Timmermanns, E. G. Kolbenheyer, W. Schäfer, Ina Seidel). The distinction between "Roman" and "Biographie" is evidently taken for granted, a fact reflected in the studies of Birch, Scheidegger, and Petersen in which no attempt is made to define the biographical novel in terms of the author's position with regard to his source material, the historical life of his characters. In order to clarify the exact nature of the works included in our discussion, such a definition seems desirable. Although offered here as adequate for our purposes only, it may well have general application.

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[1]"Often, as in the works of André Maurois, the impulses of biographer and novelist are almost equally balanced. Or again, the art of fiction has influenced the biographical writings of Philip Guedalla almost as deeply as biography has influenced the novels of Virginia Woolf. David Cecil, who writes a life of Cowper under the title The Stricken Deer, furnishes one example among hundreds of recent biographers who construct their lives around a central theme, and give their heroes' careers imaginative significance."--Dictionary of World Literature, ed. Joseph T. Shipley (rev. ed.; New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 40.

[2]Jan Romein, Die Biographie: Einführung in ihre Geschichte und ihre Problematik, trans. from the Dutch and ed. by U. Huber Noodt (Bern: A. Francke, 1948).

The literature about Goethe and Charlotte von Stein or, for that matter, about any historical figure, falls into three main categories, each attempting to recapture the past on a different level. At opposite extremes, according to their function and approach, are biography and fiction; between the two lies the hybrid fictionalized biography. While distinctions are not always easy to make,[3] and are most successfully obtained on an individual basis, the difficulty is not so great as to preclude the possibility of any discussion whatsoever of the three types.[4]

The biography, in its ideal form the work of the literary historian who displays some talent for creative writing, is concerned primarily with a systematic and scholarly presentation of facts of the protagonist's life. Where the facts or documentation are contradictory or deficient, the scholar of course has the right and is expected to fill the hiatus with the help of his re-creative and deductive powers, drawing on his own imaginative experience as well as on all the information at his disposal in order to present a plausible account. The biographer, then, lays the scholarly groundwork for the authors whose works come under the other two categories.[5]

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[3]"Auch die wissenschaftliche Darstellung kann intuitiver Erhellung nicht entraten und steht damit oft in der Gefahr, ins Romanhafte abzugleiten."--Julius Petersen, "Kleist im Roman," Jahrb. d. Kleist-Gesellschaft, p. 123.

[4]It should be noted that in the terms used to characterize the three categories emphasis is placed on the particular noun involved.

[5]Cf. Emil Ludwig, "Historie und Dichtung," Neue Rundschau, XL (1929), 358-381.

The fictionalized biography bases its existence on the assumption that the aims of biography can best be fulfilled by employing techniques usually restricted to the novel. Presented in such a form, the facts of its hero's life are expected to be more palatable to popular taste, hence the term "populäre Biographie" frequently applied by German critics. Only in rare instances does the fictionalized biography show evidence of thorough scholarship; it is more likely to be the product of a creative writer who may deal somewhat extravagantly and at times even clumsily with material provided by the scholar. It is not possible to indulge here in the continuing dispute over the merits and disadvantages of this type of biography. Perhaps not all critics would be so caustic in their attack as Friedrich Sengle, who states "dass die populäre Biographie keineswegs original und 'modern', sondern eine abgeleitete Form ist, genauer, in fast allen Fällen, gesunkenes Kulturgut des 19. Jahrhunderts,"[6] yet the dangers which accompany a lack of scholarly integrity are not to be overlooked.[7]

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[6]Friedrich Sengle, "Bemerkungen zu Technik und Geist der populären Biographie: Am Beispiel von O. Heuscheles 'Herzogin Anna Amalia,'" Euphorion, XLVI (1952), 106.

[7]"No paths are forbidden that any means of analysis can cut through the dark forest of the human heart, but we should not be led to believe that these inspired guesses represent actual reveries known and recorded as having taken place. Where they are employed as symbols of a real tendency, not as facts, we are not deceived, and their use is innocent. Undesirable as they are in other ways, for example, no one would be in danger of mistaking those vast, windy, Victor-Hugo-like monologues that Emil Ludwig blows around a subject for anything that Goethe, or Michelangelo, or Napoleon had left on record. Such rhapsodic pythoness-wallowings obviously proceed from Ludwig alone."--Edgar Johnson, One Mighty Torrent (2d ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 480.

Whatever one's personal opinion might be, this composite form may have to be recognized as a necessary, if precarious, bridge between true biography and fiction. The writer of fiction needs a receptive audience if his book is to be a publishing success; the fictionalized biography helps to create this audience for him. Its function, after all, if not its intent is the same as that of biography, the promulgation of reconstructed fact, no matter how fictionalized the fact may be.

The writer of straight fiction, on the other hand, assumes at least a superficial knowledge of the pertinent facts and is therefore interested in them only to the extent that they provide the framework into which his story must necessarily be fitted. His work does not masquerade as biography nor does he openly wish to debate any particular phase of his protagonist's historical existence. As Wilson Follett says, "It is not the novelist's province . . . to instruct us how to take sides in partisan issues,"[8] although of course there are many techniques at his command which the good novelist will use to elicit sympathy for one side or the other. It is in this respect, in the author's relationship to history and the use he makes of it, that fiction differs from biography. By employing all the powers and tools of creative imagination, fiction seeks to delve beneath the bare facts, to fathom the minds and emotions of the characters, to re-create the drama out of which the biography arose, to relive with the reader

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[8]Wilson Follett, The Modern Novel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918), p. 114.

the adventure of the characters' lives[9]--as the author sees it. Although the facts may occasionally be juggled to suit the narrative, the dangers in this practice--undesirable as it may be for aesthetic enjoyment--would not appear to be nearly so great as in fictionalized biography, which conceivably might be mistaken for a true, documented record. It is significant that works belonging under this third classification in German have invariably been labeled by a term such as "Roman," "Novelle," "Erzählung," or the like, usually by the author himself; they are therefore immediately identifiable as fiction and are expected to be read as such.

It is with this latter category, specifically with the biographical novel, that we are here concerned. For this reason we do not include such works as Ida Boy-Ed's Das Martyrium von Charlotte von Stein, which Wilhelm Kosch mistakenly lists as a "Roman."[10] Though a highly imaginative and at times extremely subjective discourse, it is obviously intended as a vindication of the real Frau von Stein, an apologia for her actions, and consequently does not belong under fiction as the term has been defined above. Our definition also excludes Emil Ludwig's Goethe and similar works, which would seem to be more correctly characterized as a form of biography.

Once the nature of biographical fiction has been

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[9]"It is not enough to trace out the thread of event; we must recover the adventure of their lives . . . ."--Herbert Butterfield, The Historical Novel (Cambridge: University Press, 1924), p. 23.

[10]Wilhelm Kosch, ed., Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon, entered under "Charlotte von Stein," 1st ed., 1930ff. 2d ed., 1947ff.

established, its rise as a literary form can be considered. Far from attempting an exhaustive treatment of the subject, it is possible to suggest some of the factors which appear to be involved. Its origins are to be sought first of all in the realm of fiction. Strong traces of its ancestry can be seen in the historical novel with which it shares the similar intent of re-creating the past as an illusion of the present. That there is now a basic difference between the offspring and the parent form has been pointed out by Elna Birch:

> Für den biographischen Roman ist also das Interesse am Menschen das Wesentliche; Taten und Ereignisse dienen nur zum besseren Verständnis desselben. Hierin liegt der Unterschied zum historischen Roman, dessen Ziel die Verlebendigung einer Epoche oder eines für die Geschichte wichtigen Ereignisses ist, wobei dem grossen Einzelnen nur Bedeutung als Träger von Ideen, die für die Geschichte wirksam sind oder waren, zukommt.[11]

Miss Birch notes also that the rise of the biographical novel is closely connected with revitalized concepts of history which were evident around the middle of the nineteenth century, with nationalistic feelings resulting from the unification of Germany in 1870, and with the "Geniekult" instigated by Jakob Burckhardt.[12]

Other forces have also been at work. The biographical

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[11]Elna Birch, Der biographische Roman in der neuen deutschen Dichtung, pp. 5-6.

[12]"Mit dem Aufblühen der Geschichtswissenschaft etwa seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts und mit dem neuen Lebensgefühl, das seine Ursache in der Wiedergeburt Deutschlands von 1870 hat, und ferner mit dem Geniekult, der von Jakob Burckhardt ausgeht, hängt das Entstehen des biographischen Romans auf das engste zusammen. Zunächst sind es allerdings fast nur Gelehrte, die ihr geschichtliches Wissen in Romanform mitteilen--wie Dahn, Ebers, Freytag--, aber es entstehen jetzt auch immerhin schon die ersten biographischen Romane."--Elna Birch, op. cit., p. 7.

novel appears to have been affected by the same intellectual "revolution," occurring particularly in the fields of psychology and sociology, which also produced radical changes in the concept of biography.[13] The new ideas first found concrete expression in the writings of Lytton Strachey, who with his Eminent Victorians in 1918 threw a veritable literary bombshell, exploding the myth-like atmosphere which the nineteenth century had breathed around figures of history.[14] Although his works were acclaimed and disclaimed in his own lifetime, Strachey is generally credited today with being the father of modern biography. His imitators, many of whom misunderstood the principles which he set forth, were numerous, and it was not long before fictionalized biography became the fashionable vogue.[15] At approximately the same time as the appearance of Eminent Victorians similar developments were taking place on an international scale. In France it was André Maurois who

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[13]For detailed discussion see especially Edgar Johnson, op. cit., pp. 471-523 and Jan Romein, op. cit., pp. 63-102.

[14]"In the fourth year of the war this provocative book vied with the war itself as a topic of conversation. It delighted and it scandalized. By some it was admired for its subtle portraiture, its deft handling of the theme, its irony, its flexible prose. Others were thrilled by this cool attack, this scathing flanking movement against old idols of the market-place already slightly discredited by the Edwardians and now sufficiently demoded to invite hue and cry."--R. A. Scott-James, Lytton Strachey (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955), p. 5.

[15]"Almost overnight biography as a literary art became an exciting idea among readers. The brief preface which Mr. Strachey wrote to his four studies [Eminent Victorians] became a kind of critical credo, an oriflamme and a rallying-cry for a horde of biographers who, as it were, had just had their chains struck from their limbs."--Edgar Johnson, op. cit., p. 504.

with his Ariel: ou la vie de Shelley (1923) introduced romanticized biography; Emil Ludwig (Goethe, 1920) and Stefan Zweig (Drei Meister, 1922) broke with tradition in Germany and Austria. The innovations reflected in the works of these men also have a direct bearing on Goethe fiction. According to Heinz Kindermann, although literary historians were reluctant to succumb to the more radical of the new trends, the biographical novel flourished on the same fertilized soil from which fictionalized biography grew:

> Während die wissenschaftlich ernst zu nehmenden Literaturforschungen auf psychoanalytischer Grundlage, wie wir sie vor allem dem Schweizer Literarhistoriker Walter Muschg verdanken, sich verhältnismässig spät und vor allem im Anschluss an C. G. Jungs weniger radikale Umformung der Psychoanalyse zur Tiefenpsychologie entwickeln, konnte es nicht ausbleiben, dass sich sensationellere Formen der Biographik unmittelbar um eine Übernahme Freudianischer Gesichtspunkte und Massstäbe in ihre auf Entlarvungen und Entthronungen, in ihre bewusst auf Entidealisierung ausgehenden Lebensbilder bemühten . . . . Auch der biographische Roman der "Sachlichkeit" schlug solche Wege ein, besonders radikal etwa bei Lion Feuchtwanger, sehr viel gemässigter neben zahlreichen anderen bei Albert von Trentini, der einen Goethe-Roman wagte . . . .[16]

Kindermann's remarks, though oriented toward the history of literary research on Goethe, might well apply to the biographical novel in general.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, all of which have in some way or other contributed to the rise of Goethe fiction, specific features of the Charlotte period account for its popularity as a literary theme. Writers may have been attracted to the subject for a variety of reasons.

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[16]Heinz Kindermann, Das Goethebild des XX. Jahrhunderts, pp. 292-293.

First of all, the love of Goethe for Charlotte von Stein ranks in symbolic significance for German letters with that of Dante for Beatrice in Italian or Abélard for Héloïse in French literature. An author can therefore expect his readers to be sufficiently acquainted with the historical facts to be interested in his narrative.[17] But aside from the assurance of an informed reading public, there are perhaps more intriguing elements in the historical situation which would fire the imagination of a creative writer. The character of Charlotte herself is an enigmatic one. To what sort of woman does a man attach himself for ten years, in constant adoration, then abruptly break away? This question alone would be a sufficient challenge to the novelist. Moreover, the historical constellation of events provides the author with a ready-made plot, with a definite beginning and end. The absence of Charlotte's letters to Goethe and the lack of detailed documentation concerning the poet's early years in Weimar leave the author with a great deal of room in which to display his creative powers by means of the episodes upon which he builds his plot, while

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[17]As evidence that this latter statement is valid, as merely one example of the many which could be cited to indicate that Goethe's adoration for Charlotte is considered the common knowledge of every educated person in Germany, we quote from a story by Eduard von Keyserling: "Die Fürstin Elise Kornewitz . . . war ein kleines, gutes Wesen. Das feine Gesichtchen weiss von Puder. Die ganz hellgrauen Augen sahen ein wenig müde unter der Wolke blonden Haares hervor. Sie trug das Haar, wie Charlotte von Stein es zu tragen pflegte, denn sie glaubte ihr zu gleichen. 'Im Aeusseren und in manchem anderen,' liebte sie zu sagen. 'Bin ich dein Goethe?' fragte ihr Gemahl sie mit seinem ironischen, freudlosen Lächeln. '0 nein,' meinte die Fürstin, 'mein Goethe ist Mareiling.'"--Eduard von Keyserling, Beate und Mareile (1903), in Gesammelte Erzählungen (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922), I, 59. Similar quotations could easily be found, e.g., H. Bahr, Das Konzert, Act III, etc.

the skillful and subtle introduction of the known facts will tend to enhance the seeming veracity of his story. Continued efforts by scholars to achieve a completely satisfactory interpretation of the character of the real Frau von Stein make this aspect of Goethe's life perhaps more attractive than some others in which the documentary evidence is more conclusive.

Such is the nature of the Goethe--Frau von Stein novel. In appraising it, certain generally accepted principles will of necessity hold true. In the first place, it may be expected to meet the same standards required of any good fiction. The success of a work of fiction depends on the author's ability to create and maintain an illusion. In the case of the biographical novel, the nature of the illusion is the same as in any other novel: the past is to be rendered in such a way as to become the present;[18] within the reader there should be aroused the sensation of being on the scene when the events are taking place. This reaction will be possible only if the novel has verisimilitude, if it has the appearance of truth,

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[18]"There is no way of reporting an event to a reader except as past. It can be seen only in retrospect, the emotion can be felt only in retrospect. What he deals with is actually not a shadow on the wall but a memory that once was cast there, a reminiscence after the fact. And this is the greatest severity of the medium--for the event must not be after the fact, the reader must be there when it happens, he must seem to see the actual shadow on the wall. So that a constant tension of fiction is to convert a statement of past time into a perception of the immediate present. The illusion has other components as well but the validity of everything else depends on this one. To be sure fiction has established the current immediacy of its past as a convention which is accepted and thereafter disregarded. But its illusion depends on this disregard and will perish at the hands of anything that brings the paradox to the reader's attention. The foremost effort of the novelist is to make the past this present moment."--Bernard DeVoto, The World of Fiction (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), pp. 194-195.

if it creates the illusion of some type of reality. The author has various techniques at his disposal to convey the image of real life to the reader; at the same time he may also be subject to a number of pitfalls which could destroy the illusion he has created, and with it, the work of art. In the biographical novel, the principle of verisimilitude means that gross misrepresentation of known facts is out of place; by inviting criticism and correction on the part of the observant reader, unnecessary deviations will seriously mar the total effect of the work. There are other pitfalls, chiefly in the area of characterization, to which we shall return in the analysis of the individual novels.

A further consideration, which perhaps has not always been sufficiently emphasized in academic criticism, is that fiction, like any other work of art, should provide aesthetic pleasure. The attainment of this enjoyment, articulated from Schiller to Somerset Maugham, is strongly contingent upon the basic requirement, namely, that fiction create and maintain an illusion. In biographical novels, above all those dealing with events and characters as well known as those of the Charlotte von Stein period, the danger of destroying the illusion and thereby seriously curtailing the reader's enjoyment is particularly great. It will take all of an author's skill and craftsmanship to prevent the reader from anticipating the course of the narrative, thereby losing interest in the fictional account.[19] For an author to assume that the mere

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[19]"The danger . . . of divulging little by little a string of facts is that the reader may be more quick-witted

prominence of the names of Goethe and Charlotte von Stein will hold the reader's attention might well be a dangerous misconception.

Aesthetic enjoyment of the novel will further depend to a great extent on the author's ability to arouse his reader's empathy or imaginative identification with the characters and action unfolded in the narrative. If this is accomplished there can then quite naturally arise that essential vicarious experience on the part of the reader, who is thereby enabled to gain insights into the truths of life in an indirect manner; it is in pursuit of this vicarious experience, after all, that most of us reach for a novel.

If the story is well told, it will provide the reader with a psychologically real catharsis, a purgation of the emotions which the novel itself has aroused. The experience of catharsis is to no small degree a problem of literary form, a term which has been variously defined with respect to the novel. Essentially it may be understood as meaning that the novel has a beginning and an end, and that the intervening narrative proceeds organically from the one to the other. The novel is required to have more form than concrete life itself, and this indeed presents a real challenge to the writer of biographical fiction.[20] If the author succeeds in meeting

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than the character through whom the revelations are made and so guess the answers long before the author wished him to . . . . It is unsafe to take your reader for more of a fool than he is."--W. Somerset Maugham, Ten Novels and Their Authors (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1954), pp. 9-10.

[20]"We never think of complaining that Birmingham or Clapham has no form, or that Smith's life is without design;

this challenge, together with other generally accepted prerequisites of good fiction, some of which have been mentioned above, then, and only then, can the biographical novel make legitimate claim to being a true work of art.

Since the aesthetic enjoyment of the novel, hence its success as literary art, may be greatly dependent upon the author's treatment of his source material, i.e., the biography of his protagonist, a review, along with various critical interpretations, of facts pertinent to the majority of our novels is provided in the following chapter.

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but we would complain if even the most mediocre novel about Birmingham or Smith had not some approach to coherence. It is axiomatic that the pattern of no novel, however formless, can ever be so formless as life as we see it; for even Ulysses is less confusing than Dublin."--Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929), p. 11.

CHAPTER II

GOETHE AND CHARLOTTE VON STEIN: THE HISTORICAL PICTURE

In the years immediately following her death in 1827, the name and reputation of Charlotte von Stein enjoyed a respectable degree of anonymity. Not until the publication in 1848[1] of Goethe's letters to her did the literary world come to realize the profound influence which this woman had upon Germany's distinguished poet during those years in which the most radical changes were taking place in his development. These letters number over one and one-half thousand; the bulk of them lie within a twelve-year span (1776-1787). Many are mere notes, "Zettelgen" as Goethe calls them, bearing hasty messages in lieu of a telephone; others contain some of the

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[1]Before her death Goethe's letters were given by Charlotte to her son Fritz, who in turn passed them on to his nephew Karl von Stein in 1842. Upon Fritz's death in 1844 the remaining correspondence which he had been able to preserve was inherited by his daughter, Marie von Zobeltitz. Much of it was entrusted by her to her father's physician, a Dr. Ebers, for publication. In conjunction with Dr. August Kahler, Ebers subsequently (1846) brought out a little volume entitled Briefe von Goethe und dessen Mutter an Friedrich Freiherrn von Stein. From this collection, which also contained a few letters of Charlotte von Stein and Charlotte von Schiller, the intimate connection between the Stein and Goethe families first became apparent. Two years later, with the appearance of the first volume of Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein under the editorship of Adolph Schöll, Charlotte's claim to distinction was assured.--Cf. Wilhelm Bode, Charlotte von Stein (2d ed.; Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler & Sohn, 1912), pp. 637-638.

most beautiful prose he ever wrote. They are the tribute of a poet to his greatest love; at the same time they have paradoxically brought condemnation to their recipient. No feminine character in Goethe's own works, no other woman associated with a famous poet has been so variously judged or has aroused so much controversy as has Charlotte von Stein.

She was a woman apparently beloved and respected by all who knew her. Statements by her contemporaries, stemming from acquaintanceships spanning several decades as well as from those of but short duration, indicate Charlotte would have been a most unusual woman, had she never met Goethe--posterity would merely have been denied any knowledge of her, or, for that matter, of most of the other people at the Weimar court. Goethe was not the only man attracted to this personality. She maintained lifelong friendships as well with Zimmermann, Herder, Wieland, and particularly with Knebel. She was the only person in Weimar with whom young Duchess Luise felt a close kinship. The controversy concerning her as an individual and her influence on Goethe, hence her position in German letters, arose therefore not during her lifetime. As Wilhelm Bode states in the Introduction to his biography of Frau von Stein, "Feinde bekam sie erst zwanzig Jahre nach ihrem Tode."[2]

There are several factors which have given rise to the heated and partisan discussion concerning Goethe's relationship to this woman. During his Italian journey, Charlotte demanded and received her own letters back from him; disregarding his plea that they be preserved until the two friends

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[2]Bode, op. cit., p. vii.

might read them together once again, she subsequently destroyed them. His letters to her, however, she preserved for posterity, guarding them even through the sacking of Weimar and Jena in 1806. Thus the "correspondence" to which we have access is one-sided, except for a few letters written after 1789. As a result, the effect on the reader is at times rather uncanny. Frequently Goethe opens up his soul to Charlotte, pouring out emotions which he has not previously expressed elsewhere; then again, he may rebuke himself for having done so. One sometimes receives the impression of listening to a man praying, revealing his innermost being, yet one never discovers for certain whether his prayers were ever answered. Charlotte becomes for the reader, rather than a flesh-and-blood woman, an abstract idea of woman, an ideal. At no time does Goethe ever mention her external features. Thus it has not been so simple to reconstruct Frau von Stein's personality from Goethe's letters alone. We can only surmise what some of her answers and feelings might have been.

Considerable fuel has also been added to the debate by the fact that this friendship did not continue uninterrupted but was broken off abruptly and bitterly upon Goethe's return from Italy. The break itself has caused some critics to read a great deal into the letters, perhaps more than can legitimately be found there. Closely allied to the problem of interpretation here is the role of Christiane Vulpius in Goethe's life. Again it has not been the easiest task to explain the attraction of one man for two personalities so totally different in all phases of their being. As a consequence, those

critics who have been unable or unwilling to reach a reconciliation have aligned their forces on the side of one of the two women, using their utmost efforts to belittle the importance of the other; in doing so, they have brought more confusion than enlightenment. Other scholars, more correctly and wisely, it would seem to this writer, have attempted to approach the whole question of this delicate bond from Goethe's viewpoint and have at least achieved a plausible picture of those years of the poet's life.

The lack of any statement by Goethe himself on the subject has further made it difficult to determine the pertinent facts. Of other women who played a role in his life--Käthchen Schönkopf, Friederike Brion, Lotte Buff, Lili Schönemann--we have a description in Goethe's own words in Dichtung und Wahrheit, or in letters to his acquaintances. Poetic though these accounts may be, the impression received is definite. The chapters covering the Weimar years were never written; Goethe apparently had no intention of ever doing so. He is known to have been particularly silent on matters pertaining to Charlotte von Stein. When asked sometime later in his life why he had not recorded those early years in Weimar, Goethe replied: "Als wirkliche Tatsache würde die Welt es nimmermehr glauben."[3] Under these circumstances, with "Ehrfurcht vor der Tat" an attempt will be made here to reconstruct the salient features of Goethe's love for Charlotte, especially as it

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[3]Julius Petersen, ed., Goethes Briefe an Charlotte von Stein (2 vols., 2 pts. ea.; 2d ed.; Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1923), I, 1, vi. Hereafter cited as Petersen, Briefe. See also above, p. 7.

appears in the interpretations of scholars.

In the absence of any formal portraits we are forced to rely on comments by contemporaries for a description of Charlotte. There were some, such as the Counts Stolberg, who considered her "schön" without restriction and spoke of "die schönäugige, liebe, sanfte Stein."[4] Years later, Schiller, shortly after meeting Charlotte in the company of other members of the court in August 1787, expressed a more sober but hardly less enthusiastic view when he wrote to his friend Körner in Dresden:

> Die Beste unter allen war Frau v. Stein, eine wahrhaftig eigene, interessante Person, und von der ich begreife, dass Goethe sich so ganz an sie attachiert hat. Schön kann sie nie gewesen sein, aber ihr Gesicht hat einen sanften Ernst und eine ganz eigene Offenheit. Ein gesunder Verstand, Gefühl und Wahrheit liegen in ihrem Wesen.[5]

The only sketch of Charlotte's physical features has been preserved in a letter from Zimmermann to Lavater in 1774:

> Frau Kammerherrin, Stallmeisterin und Baronesse v. Stein aus Weimar. Sie hat überaus grosse schwarze Augen von der höchsten Schönheit. Ihre Stimme ist sanft und bedrückt. Ernst, Sanftmut, Gefälligkeit, leidende Tugend und feine, tiefgegründete Empfindsamkeit sieht jeder Mensch beim ersten Anblick auf ihrem Gesichte. Die Hofmanieren, die sie vollkommen an sich hat, sind bei ihr zu einer sehr seltenen hohen Simplizität veredelt.
>
> Sie ist sehr fromm und zwar mit einem rührend schwärmerischen Schwung der Seele. Aus ihrem leichten Zephirgang und aus ihrer theatralischen Fertigkeit in künstlichen Tänzen würdest Du nicht schliessen, was doch sehr wahr ist, dass stilles Mondenlicht und Mitternacht ihr Herz mit Gottesruhe füllt.
>
> Sie ist einige und dreissig Jahre alt, hat sehr viele Kinder und schwache Nerven. Ihre Wangen sind sehr rot,

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[4] Bode, op. cit., p. 73.

[5] Wilhelm Bode, Goethe in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen (3 vols.; 2d ed.; Berlin: E. G. Mittler & Sohn, 1921), I, 357-358. Hereafter cited as Bode, Briefe.

> ihre Haare ganz schwarz, ihre Haut italienisch wie ihre Augen. Der Körper mager; ihr ganzes Wesen elegant mit Simplizität.[6]

Repeatedly the words "Ernst," "sanft," "Sanftmut," and "Offenheit" are used to characterize Frau von Stein. They apparently refer to attributes which distinguished her from the average aristocratic woman of her time. Under "Ernst" we should understand perhaps a sobriety of countenance without harshness or bitterness--although there is no question that she had suffered a great deal--and most certainly there was no coldness in her features, for in "sanft" and "Sanftmut" are embodied all the qualities which men usually idealize as strict femininity. She was frank toward herself and others and elicited frankness and truth in return. Yet she was not always serious; one can imagine the impishness--not denying the presence of a kernel of truth--with which she teased Goethe in the skit Rino:

> Gleichgültig ist er mir eben nicht,
> Doch weiss ich nicht, ob er oder Werther mir spricht.[7]

The same trait was still with her in later life, as seen in her comment on the visit of Charlotte Kestner (Buff) to Weimar in 1816: "Sie ist von angenehmer Unterhaltung, aber freilich würde sich kein Werther mehr um sie erschiessen."[8] Judging from the previous report of Zimmermann, the personality of Frau von Stein was not nearly so complicated for her

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[6]As quoted in Bode, Charlotte von Stein, p. 57.

[7]Apparently written shortly after Goethe's arrival. Petersen, Briefe, I, 1, x.

[8]Bode, Charlotte von Stein, p. 607.

contemporaries as it appears to us today.

Born December 25, 1742 into the family of August and Concordia von Schardt, Charlotte was approximately thirty-three years old when Goethe arrived in Weimar. In 1764 she had married Josias Freiherr von Stein, Master of the Horse at court and owner of the estate Kochberg near Rudolstadt. According to the custom of the time, in which marriages were contracted seldom for love but more often as a means of maintaining or possibly furthering the family social and financial standing,[9] Charlotte's union with von Stein must have been considered favorable, particularly for her. At least one aspect of her new life, however, brought unpleasantness and misfortune. Within ten years she had given birth to seven children, four of whom, all girls, died either at birth or in early infancy. Only three sons, Karl, Ernst, and Friedrich (Fritz), remained to her, and even Ernst was not destined to reach manhood. Charlotte was apparently one of those unfortunate women for whom pregnancy and motherhood are both physical and mental torture.[10] She suffered considerably with the

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[9]For the general social climate of the eighteenth century see Hanna Fischer-Lamberg, "Charlotte von Stein, ein 'Bildungserlebnis' Goethes," Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, XXV (1937), 385-402.

[10]Years later she wrote to Schiller's wife: "Mir war dieses Geschäft auf eine schwere Art auferlegt. Von Tränen ermüdet schlief ich ein und schleppte mich wieder beim Erwachen einen Tag, und schwer lag der Gedanke auf mir, warum die Natur ihr halbes Geschlecht zu dieser Pein bestimmt habe. Man sollte den Weibern deswegen viele andere Vorzüge des Lebens lassen, aber auch darin hat man uns verkürzt, und man glaubt nicht, wie zu so viel tausend kleinen Geschäften des Lebens, die wir besorgen müssen, mehr Geisteskraft muss aufgewendet werden, die uns für nichts angerechnet wird, als die eines Genies, das Ehre und Reichtum einerntet."--Petersen, Briefe, I, 1, xii-xiii.

birth of each child and probably received little moral support from her husband, whose official duties frequently kept him away from home. In addition to the physical strain, the fear was constantly present that each new child might again be taken from her by death.

On a trip in 1773 and again in 1774 to take the cure at Bad Pyrmont she made the acquaintance of the fashionable Swiss doctor, Johann Georg Zimmermann. Through him her literary interests were reawakened, and they entered immediately upon an enthusiastic correspondence. In reply to her request to hear more about the young author of Werther, who was the talk of the whole country, Zimmermann wrote on January 19, 1775:

> Sie wollen, dass ich Ihnen von Goethe rede? Sie möchten ihn sehen? Ich werde Ihnen bald von ihm erzählen. Aber, arme Freundin, Sie bedenken es nicht! Sie wünschen ihn zu sehen und Sie wissen nicht, in welchem Masse dieser liebenswürdige und bezaubernde Mensch Ihnen gefährlich werden könnte.[11]

Zimmermann at that time did not know Goethe personally but subsequently had an opportunity to visit with him, first in Strassburg in July, then again in September at Goethe's home in Frankfurt. Shortly thereafter (October 22) he reported to his friend in Weimar:

> Ich bin am 5. Oktober mit meiner Tochter von Lausanne nach Hannover zurückgekehrt und„habe eine Reise von 450 Meilen glücklich überstanden. Überall, wo ich war, Madame, in Deutschland, in Frankreich, in Genf, habe ich Gelegenheit gehabt, von Ihnen zu reden. In Strassburg habe ich unter hundert anderen Schattenrissen den Ihrigen dem Herrn Goethe gezeigt. Hier sind die Worte, die er mit eigener Hand unter das Bild geschrieben hat:
> "Es wäre ein herrliches Schauspiel, zu sehen, wie die

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[11] Original in French. German by Bode, Charlotte von Stein, p. 63.

> Welt sich in dieser Seele spiegelt. Sie sieht die Welt, wie sie ist, und doch durch das Medium der Liebe. So ist auch Sanftheit der allgemeine Eindruck."
>
> Niemals hat man, nach meiner Meinung, von einem Schattenrisse mit mehr Genie geurteilt, niemals über Sie, Madame, mit mehr Wahrheit gesprochen.
>
> In Frankfurt habe ich bei Herrn Goethe gewohnt, einem der ausserordentlichsten und mächtigsten Genies, die jemals durch die Welt gegangen sind. Er wird Sie in Weimar sicherlich bald besuchen. Erinnern Sie sich dann, dass Alles, was ich ihm von Ihnen in Strassburg gesagt habe, ihm drei Tage lang den Schlaf benommen hat.[12]

The doctor was undoubtedly exaggerating, particularly concerning the "three sleepless nights." However, Charlotte was not one to be deceived by undue flattery, although she must have been pleased to learn that Goethe was also interested in meeting her. They probably heard of each other, too, through Knebel and von Stein, both of whom were accompanying young Duke Karl August and his brother Konstantin when the invitation to visit Weimar was extended to the poet.

Thus it was that Goethe and Charlotte were not total strangers upon his arrival in Weimar on November 7, 1775. The exact date and circumstances of their first meeting remain uncertain. In a written account her oldest son Karl remembered years later that the Duke had brought Goethe to their home one evening.[13] On the basis of this statement, Heinrich Düntzer, whom Wilhelm Bode credits with having laid much of the groundwork for the modern biographer,[14] places the date at no later

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[12]Original in French. Ibid., p. 65.

[13]In 1775 Karl von Stein was approximately ten and one-half years old. Said to have been present at this meeting besides the principals were her husband, three sons, and two Frl. von Ilten, orphaned protégées of the von Stein family.

[14]But he adds: "Mehr als drei Seiten von Düntzer zu lesen ist Gefängnisarbeit."--Bode, Charlotte von Stein, p. ix.

than the 11th of November (Charlotte is said to have returned from the family estate Kochberg around the 10th).[15] Bode himself, also relying on Karl von Stein's statement, suggests the middle of the month,[16] while Paul Kühn, as might be expected, turns Bode's suggestion into established fact when he asserts: "Acht Tage nach Goethes Ankunft fand Frau v. Steins erstes Begegnen mit ihm statt."[17] There are others, such as Julius Petersen, who, apparently questioning the infallibility of a childhood memory, prefer to leave the date open and admit the possibility that Goethe and Charlotte may have been introduced at court.[18] It is definite, however, that they were sufficiently acquainted on December 6 for Goethe to inscribe his name and the date on her desk at Kochberg. Ten years later he recalled his visit in a letter to Charlotte (September 22, 1785): "Es regnet so sehr und ich dencke mir meine Liebe in dem alten Schlosse wo ich sie vor zehen Jahren zum erstenmal besuchte und wo sie mich durch ihre Liebe so fest hielt."[19]

Whether their first personal encounter lived up to

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[15]Heinrich Düntzer, Goethes Eintritt in Weimar (Leipzig: Ed. Wartig, 1883), p. 43.

[16]Bode, Charlotte von Stein, p. 72.

[17]Paul Kühn, Die Frauen um Goethe, ed. Georg Biermann (Graz: Verlag "Das Bergland Buch," 1932), p. 70.

[18]Petersen, Briefe, I, 1, xiv.

[19]Düntzer believes Goethe to have been in error here: "Gerade der Irrtum, welcher in der Behauptung liegt, er habe die Freundin zuerst in Kochberg gesehen, zeigt deutlich, welchen mächtigen Eindruck Charlotte dort auf ihn geübt, wo sie sich freier fühlte und in ihrer Häuslichkeit ihm viel näher trat."--Düntzer, op. cit., p. 58. Note his substitution of the verb "sehen" for "besuchen."

their mutual expectations is a matter for conjecture. Goethe has nowhere recorded his impressions, unless, as Petersen suggests, we compare the lines in which Tasso describes his appearance before Princess Leonore.[20] That neither could have been greatly disappointed seems to be indicated by the fact that their correspondence began within just a few months after Goethe's arrival, presumably in the early part of January while Charlotte was still at Kochberg. The first letter from Goethe bearing a date was written on January 27, 1776; there are also several others which may have preceded this one.

In the weeks and months which followed, it must be assumed that Goethe and Charlotte saw each other frequently at various court functions, parties, dances, teas, etc.; in fact, it would have been impossible to avoid almost daily contact

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[20]Petersen, Briefe, I, 1, xiv. In the passage to which reference is made, Tasso speaks to the Princess:

> Und ich, der ich betäubt von dem Gewimmel
> Des drängenden Gewühls, von so viel Glanz
> Geblendet, und von mancher Leidenschaft
> Bewegt, durch stille Gänge des Palasts,
> An deiner Schwester Seite schweigend ging,
> Dann in das Zimmer trat, wo du uns bald
> Auf deine Fraun gelehnt erschienest--Mir
> Welch ein Moment war dieser! O vergib!
> Wie den Bezauberten von Rausch und Wahn
> Der Gottheit Nähe leicht und willig heilt;
> So war auch ich von aller Phantasie,
> Von jeder Sucht, von jedem falschen Triebe
> Mit Einem Blick in deinen Blick geheilt.
> Wenn unerfahren die Begierde sich
> Nach tausend Gegenständen sonst verlor,
> Trat ich beschämt zuerst in mich zurück,
> Und lernte nun das Wünschenswerthe kennen.
> So sucht man in dem weiten Sand des Meers
> Vergebens eine Perle, die verborgen
> In stillen Schalen eingeschlossen ruht. (11. 868-887)

Text according to Goethes Werke, Sophien-Ausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1889), vol. X.

within the narrow confinement of the town of Weimar and the small court circle. Moreover, as a favor to her sovereign, Charlotte would have felt called upon to help entertain his guest, even had there been little mutual attraction. Yet they were not together so much as might be expected. Charlotte spent a large part of her time, particularly during the summer, with her sons at Kochberg. Goethe was occupied chiefly in the company of Karl August. The young duke was intent on winning his new-found friend over for Weimar and did everything in his power to convince the poet he should stay. He acquired a home for Goethe (the famed "Gartenhaus") and over the objections of his chief minister, von Fritsch, appointed him to the privy council. The two exuberant young men completely submerged themselves in the experience of Storm and Stress, following wherever their natural inclinations might lead. There were wild rides on horseback over the countryside, parties, dances, hunts, and excursions to the nearby hills, during which the entire party camped out overnight.

Charlotte obviously did not participate in these events and was not especially pleased with Goethe's conduct; he lacked the "polish" to which she was accustomed in the nobility. "Ich fühl's," she wrote to Zimmermann on March 8, "Goethe und ich werden niemals Freunde. Auch seine Art, mit unserm Geschlecht umzugehn, gefällt mir nicht. Er ist eigentlich, was man coquet nennt. Es ist nicht Achtung genug in seinem Umgang."[21]

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[21]Bode, Briefe, I, 175-177.

Yet she appears also to have recognized early the value which Goethe's friendship with the Duke was to have for Weimar, for in the same letter she wrote:

> Ich wünschte selbst, er möchte etwas von seinem wilden Wesen, darum ihn die Leute hier so schief beurteilen, ablegen, das im Grund zwar nichts ist als dass er jagt, scharf reit't, mit der grossen Peitsche klatscht, Alles in Gesellschaft des Herzogs. Gewiss sind Dies seine Neigungen nicht; aber eine Weile muss er's so treiben, um den Herzog zu gewinnen und dann Gutes zu stiften. So denk' ich davon . . . .

Several weeks later, on May 10, she again expressed concern but understanding, this time to Frau von Döring in Hanover, the benevolent friend of Zimmermann:

> Goethe verursacht hier einen grossen Umsturz; wenn er auch wieder Ordnung machen kann, um so besser für sein Genie! Sicherlich ist seine Meinung gut, aber zu grosse Jugend und zu geringe Erfahrung--doch warten wir das Ende ab! All unser Glück ist von uns gewichen; unser Hof ist nicht mehr, was er war. Ein Herr, der mit sich selber und mit aller Welt unzufrieden ist, der täglich sein Leben und sein bisschen Gesundheit auf's Spiel setzt, um diese letztere zu stärken--sein Bruder noch haltloser--eine bekümmerte Mutter--eine unzufriedene Gattin: alle zusammen gute Leute, aber Nichts, was in dieser unglücklichen Familie zusammenstimmt![22]

The uproar and general disapproval caused by the activities of the Duke and his friend (most of which was directed at Goethe, who was not only older but was considered a middle-class upstart) was not confined to Weimar alone. Rumors even reached Klopstock in Hamburg. His notorious letter of rebuke brought forth that well-known reply from Goethe which resulted in a break between the two poets never reconciled.

Although Karl August preempted most of Goethe's time, the poet was also a frequent visitor in the von Stein home.

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[22]Original in French. Bode, Briefe, I, 185. (Bode's italics.)

He quickly became attached to her three sons, particularly to Fritz, the youngest, whom he later took into his own home for private tutoring. Since Stein himself was away a great deal, tending either to matters of court or to the family estate--in addition, he received his dinner at the court "table" as part of his salary--the management of the Stein household and the rearing of the three boys fell almost entirely on Charlotte's shoulders. Goethe willingly assumed many of the duties of "Hausvater" and often was there at mealtimes.

The attentiveness of the young poet for the wife of the "Stallmeister" could hardly have escaped the watchful eye of others; a few eyebrows were undoubtedly raised and more than one tongue set wagging over his frequent visits to the Stein home, at odd hours, whenever the need for Charlotte's company seemed to strike him. Eighteenth-century Weimar, it must be remembered, was a small town (ca. 6000 pop.), and like most small towns, harbored and bred gossip, particularly as far as affairs of the court circle were concerned. As life itself centered around the court, so did also the major part of the "Stadtklatsch" for which Weimar was especially noted. Goethe, to be sure, made no attempt to conceal his admiration for Frau von Stein--he praised her whenever the opportunity arose, to Wieland, Karl August, Knebel, and even to her husband, which behavior in itself should have caused little comment since all concurred that she was indeed an outstanding woman. Charlotte, on the other hand, was very much concerned with maintaining a proper, respectable appearance. Her courtly up-bringing, over-refined sensitivity, plus her feminine instinct sounded

a warning note against becoming the main delicacy to be pecked over at the local hen parties. It may have been an overheard comment, or perhaps a direct statement to her, which Charlotte then passed on to Goethe, only to cause his indignant reply (May 24, 1776):

> Also auch das Verhältniss, das reinste, schönste, wahrste, das ich ausser meiner Schwester ie zu einem Weibe gehabt, auch das gestört! --Ich war drauf vorbereitet, ich litt nur unendlich für das Vergangne und das Zukünftige, und für das arme Kind das hinausging das ich zu solchen Leiden in dem Augenblick geweiht hatte. Ich will Sie nicht sehn, ihre Gegenwart würde mich traurig machen. Wenn ich mit Ihnen nicht leben soll, so hilft mir Ihre Liebe so wenig als die Liebe meiner Abwesenden, an der ich so reich bin. Die Gegenwart im Augenblicke des Bedürfnisses entscheidet alles, lindert alles, kräfftiget alles. Der Abwesende kommt mit seiner Sprüzze wenn das Feuer nieder ist--und das alles um der Welt willen! Die Welt die mir nichts seyn kann will auch nicht dass du mir was seyn sollst--Sie wissen nicht was sie thun. Die Hand des Einsam verschlossnen, der die Stimme der Liebe nicht hört, drückt hart wo sie aufliegt. Adieu beste.

Goethe's indignation bears the tone of a man unjustly accused; he had not tried to conceal his admiration and affection for Charlotte, or to curtail his visits to her home, for he saw nothing which needed to be concealed.

It soon became clear that the activities of the couple would not provide the instigation for idle minds to prattle, and what gossip there may have been eventually died down. Over the years, in the midst of dozens of "affairs"--Schiller's statement: "Die hiesigen Damen sind ganz erstaunlich empfindsam; da ist beinahe Keine, die nicht eine Geschichte hätte oder gehabt hätte; erobern möchten sie gern alle,"[23] was not so very exaggerated--the reputation of Charlotte von Stein

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[23]To Körner, August 29, 1787. Bode, Charlotte von Stein, pp. 213-214.

remained intact. Schiller, in spite of this statement, was also able to write to Körner (August 12, 1787): "Diese Frau [Charlotte von Stein] besitzt vielleicht über tausend Briefe von Goethe, und aus Italien hat er ihr noch jede Woche geschrieben. Man sagt, dass ihr Umgang ganz rein und untadelhaft sein soll."[24] And this after eleven years!

When Goethe's letters to Charlotte were made public, it was first assumed that von Stein must have been a clumsy dolt or an ignorant fool who let himself be deceived. Investigation soon proved he was neither. He apparently possessed all the fine traits of a well-bred courtier. Karl August was so impressed with Stein that he chose him among all the others to be his personal consort. By no means does he appear to have been blind to the attachment of Goethe to his wife or of hers to the poet. The circumstances may well have been as Lena Voss suggests: in 1773 Charlotte, physically exhausted after nine years of marriage and the birth of six children, became acquainted with Dr. Zimmermann, as mentioned above, on her first visit to Bad Pyrmont. She then returned to her duties as housewife and mother in Weimar, which to her meant endless days of misery and drudgery. In the following spring she gave birth to her seventh child, a girl, who after a few short weeks followed her sisters to the grave. In the summer of 1774 Charlotte and Zimmermann were once again in Bad Pyrmont. The cure this time was effective both physically and mentally. After this period, according to Lena Voss,

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[24]Bode, Briefe, I, 358.

Charlotte, presumably encouraged by Zimmermann, who as a physician entertained more modern views, found the strength to free herself from the sexual slavery of her marriage. This view, it is claimed, is supported by the fact that Charlotte bore no more children after her thirty-second year, stamping her, according to the opinion of the time in which continual pregnancies were the only proof of marital love, as not sensual, a characteristic which her picture has carried down to the present day.[25]

Stein can hardly have been overly pleased with this new development in his life but adjusted himself to it with a certain degree of good-naturedness, convenience, and resignation--perhaps even with love. Married life certainly had not offered him all he had hoped for either; when he came home from court in good spirits, he found only a sickly, tired wife, weeping copious tears, who endured his love with the patience of a martyr. If Lena Voss's assumption is correct, Stein may have bought himself a little peace at home by waiving claim to marital intercourse; the tears, the complaints, the sight of a suffering wife who saw in herself the personified lot of all womankind, soon vanished.

With the improvement of her health, Charlotte's weakened and weary pleasure in life was greatly alleviated, and once again she began to take an active part in the affairs of court and society. To all outward appearances, the von Steins

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[25]Lena Voss, Goethes unsterbliche Freundin: Charlotte von Stein (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1921), pp. 16ff.

were a harmoniously married couple. Stein himself may have looked upon Charlotte's renewed interest in literature, poetry, and the fine arts, and the friendships she thereby established (including the one with Goethe), first of all as something he did not care to understand, secondly as the harmless whim of a wife, thirsty for knowledge, of whose lack of erotic spirit he was firmly convinced.

From Charlotte's standpoint, her contact with Goethe gave substance and meaning to a life which was threatening to succumb under the exigencies of the everyday care of her household and family. With his active participation Goethe helped to relieve her of many of these worries. Adolph Schöll, the first editor of Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein, perceived with acumen that one of the real Charlotte's lost letters from this early period may have been preserved in a letter of the Charlotte of Die Geschwister:

> Die Welt wird mir wieder lieb, ich hatte mich so los von ihr gemacht, wieder lieb durch Sie. Mein Herz macht mir Vorwürfe; ich fühle, dass ich Ihnen und mir Qualen zubereite. Vor einem halben Jahre war ich so bereit zu sterben, und ich bin's nicht mehr.[26]

Schöll's opinion has generally been accepted as fact by later critics, and as such has been used as one of the bases for interpreting Frau von Stein's reaction to the stormy homage which Goethe paid her. Whether actually written by Charlotte or not, the passage quoted expresses a sentiment corroborated by other facts. On the back of a letter of October 7, 1776, in which Goethe compares her to the Madonna ascending into

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[26]See Petersen's comment, Briefe, I, 1, xiii-xiv.

heaven while he stretches his arms out in vain to reach her, Charlotte wrote:

> Obs unrecht ist was ich empfinde--
> und ob ich büssen muss die mir so liebe Sünde
> will mein Gewissen mir nicht sagen;
> vernicht' es Himmel du! wenn michs je könt anklagen.[27]

It is known also that Charlotte, who had previously withdrawn from court life, began to take an active interest again under Goethe's encouragement. It is equally significant that Charlotte became intimately acquainted with Wieland, who had been at the court since 1772, only through Goethe. Her frequent trips to Kochberg to avoid seeing Goethe, and her concern and admonishments to him to preserve the proper appearances (deduced from his letters) would seem to substantiate the validity of Schöll's claim as well.

There can be little question concerning Charlotte's importance for Goethe. In his diary he characterizes her with the astronomical sign of the sun, ⊙, a symbol undoubtedly chosen with care. In his letters he never wearies of telling her how much she means to him; from the early weeks on she is his "Besänftigerin," "Engel," "Gold," or "goldne Frau." Barker Fairley, among others, has pointed out that Weimar took the tension out of Goethe's life and that Charlotte played the chief part in doing so. Fairley supports his contention with evidence from Goethe's correspondence, noting the various images which are used to express a feeling of stability. For example, in a letter to Knebel on February 3, 1782, Charlotte is like a life-belt: "Die Stein hält mich wie ein Korckwamms

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[27]As quoted in Petersen, Briefe, Anm. No. 103, I, 2, 568.

über dem Wasser, dass ich mich auch mit Willen nicht ersäufen könnte"; or on December 24, 1782, she is his anchor: "du einziger Ancker meines Wesens"--a thought which he elaborates in a letter of June 3, 1784: "wie sehr fühle ich dass du der Ancker bist an dem mein Schifflein an dieser Rhede festhält." Another time she is a sleeping potion: "du Schlaftrunck meiner Leiden" (November 21, 1782), an image which Fairley considers a variant of the verse: "Tropftest Mässigung dem heissen Blute."[28]

The poem mentioned by Fairley expresses perhaps more clearly than any other document the features which attracted Goethe to Charlotte. Although it reads like two lovers carefully searching the sea of memories, it was actually written early in 1776 before they had any real background to share.[29]

Warum gabst du uns die Tiefen Blicke
Unsre Zukunft ahndungsvoll zu schaun.

. . . . . .

Sag was will das Schicksaal uns bereiten?
Sag wie band es uns so rein genau?
Ach du warst in abgelebten Zeiten
Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.

Kanntest ieden Zug in meinem Wesen,
Spähtest wie die reinste Nerve klingt,
Konntest mich mit Einem Blicke lesen
Den so schwer ein sterblich Aug durchdringt.
Tropftest Mässigung dem heissen Blute,
Richtetest den wilden irren Lauf,
Und in deinen Engelsarmen ruhte

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[28]Barker Fairley, A Study of Goethe (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 98.

[29]Not published during Goethe's or Charlotte's lifetime, a copy of the poem in Charlotte's handwriting, dated April 14, 1776, was found among the letters and included by Schöll in his edition. See above, p. 22, n. 1. Text here according to Petersen.

Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder auf,
Hieltest zauberleicht ihn angebunden
Und vergauckeltest ihm manchen Tag.
Welche Seeligkeit glich jenen Wonnestunden,
Da er danckbaar dir zu Füssen lag.
Fühlt sein Herz an deinem Herzen schwellen,
Fühlte sich in deinem Auge gut,
Alle seine Sinnen sich erhellen
Und beruhigen sein brausend Blut.

The idea apparently obsessed Goethe at the time, for he also wrote to Wieland, shortly after meeting Charlotte: "Ich kann mir die Bedeutsamkeit--die Macht, die diese Frau über mich hat, anders nicht erklären als durch die Seelenwanderung.--Ja, wir waren einst Mann und Weib!--Nun wissen wir von uns--verhüllt, in Geisterduft.--Ich habe keine Namen für uns--die Vergangenheit--die Zukunft--das All."[30]

It may have been Charlotte's frankness which above all appealed to Goethe. She could see through him--"Spähtest wie die reinste Nerve klingt"; hence, his feeling that she understood him, but even more, approved of him, that in her presence he was a morally responsible being--"Fühlte sich in deinem Auge gut." For the first time he had met someone, other than his mother or his sister Cornelia, who was capable of drawing from him the very best of his qualities. The clumsy "Bär" in Lili's company discovered through Charlotte the dignity of his human existence. He <u>had</u> to be frank with her, and it is not surprising that the whole affair seemed almost miraculous to him. That Charlotte meant so many things to Goethe has never been doubted, for he himself said so again and again, but <u>how</u> she was able to accomplish this, it is not within our province to know.

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[30]Petersen, <u>Briefe</u>, I, 1, xii.

It is generally assumed that their friendship began on a platonic basis and continued on that level for approximately five years. There are those who claim to discern a new tone in Goethe's letters from early in 1781 on; this change is said to be due to the fact that Charlotte finally confessed her love openly to Goethe. This view has received widespread support among the critics. Bielschowsky-Linden, for example, draws this conclusion from Goethe's letter of March 12, 1781:[31]

> Meine Seele ist fest an die deine angewachsen, ich mag keine Worte machen, du weist dass ich von dir unzertrennlich bin und dass weder hohes noch tiefes mich zu scheiden vermag. Ich wollte dass es irgend ein Gelübde oder Sakrament gäbe, das mich dir auch sichtlich und gesezlich zu eigen machte, wie werth sollte es mir seyn. Und mein Noviziat war doch lang genug um sich zu bedencken. Adieu. Ich kan nicht mehr Sie schreiben wie ich eine ganze Zeit nicht du sagen konnte.

In later years Charlotte underlined the sentence beginning, "Ich wollte dass es irgend ein Gelübde oder Sakrament gäbe," an indication that even then the passage held great significance for her. Since this was written from Neunheiligen, where Goethe had been visiting with Karl August since March 7, Bielschowsky-Linden implies Charlotte's confession was contained in a letter and was therefore made before March 12. Witkowski, preferring to remain a little vague, speaks only of Goethe's having arrived "zu einer schönen Klarheit über sein Verhältnis zu Charlotte" after his return from the Swiss journey but notes that the form "Du" appears

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[31] Albert Bielschowsky, Goethe: Sein Leben und seine Werke, revised by Walther Linden (2 vols.; München: C. H. Beck, 1928), I, 300f. Hereafter referred to as Bielschowsky-Linden, also in the text. Reference must be given in this manner, for Linden assumes authority for statements quoted. See his Introduction to the above-named edition.

regularly after March 11, 1781.[32] Julius Petersen concurs with Bielschowsky-Linden in assigning a great deal of importance to the letter of March 12. Petersen states that the difference in tone can only be due to a warmer response from Charlotte but adds that her lost correspondence probably would not betray this change--at least it would not express sentiment of the type to be found in Susette Gontard's letters to Hölderlin. Petersen also brings to attention the rather paradoxical coincidence that Goethe from this period on manifests a closer affinity for the husband, von Stein.[33]

Lena Voss, either ignoring or unaware of Charlotte's underlining, apparently assumes a woman in Charlotte's position and with her sensibilities would not entrust such sentiment to writing, particularly since the letters were being carried by the Duke's hussars and might pass through several untrustworthy hands before being delivered to Goethe.[34] She prefers to set the date of the confession several days later, after Goethe's return to Weimar. This took place, she claims, during an intimate meeting on the evening of March 21.[35] The change in Goethe's letters, she states, begins with the 22nd when he writes:

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[32]Georg Witkowski, Das Leben Goethes (Berlin: Th. Knaur Nachf., 1932), p. 261.

[33]Petersen, Briefe, I, 1, xxi-xxiii.

[34]Goethe to Charlotte, March 13, 1781: "Der Herzog hat mir Ihren Brief den der Husar brachte, bis ietzt vorenthalten, und schickt mir ihn in 10 übereinander gesiegelte Couverts eingeschlossen herauf. Ich hatte schon der Hoffnung entsagt etwas von Ihnen zu sehen."

[35]Lena Voss, op. cit., pp. 66ff.

> Deine Liebe ist mir wie der Morgen und Abendstern, er geht nach der Sonne unter und vor der Sonne wieder auf. Ja wie ein Gestirn des Pols das nie untergehend über unserm Haupt einen ewig lebendigen Kranz flicht.

Goethe's message from March 23 is used both by Bielschowsky-Linden and Lena Voss (among others) to support their contentions:

> Sagen kan ich nicht, und darfs nicht begreifen was deine Liebe für ein Umkehrens in meinem innersten würckt. Es ist ein Zustand den ich so alt ich bin noch nicht kenne. Wer lernt aus in der Liebe.

In a further note, of the same day, Goethe closes with: "Adieu meine neue" (Goethe's underlining).

The reason for the new spirit having thus been established on the basis of these and of following letters, some critics have taken another step back and have sought the instigation for this confession of love. If Charlotte had concealed her most intimate feelings from Goethe for over five years, what caused her to change her mind so suddenly? Kühn states that it was simply Goethe's visit to the Countess Werthern at Neunheiligen in the company of Karl August.[36] Lena Voss, Alphons Nobel,[37] and others have searched for "the other woman" and, naturally, have found the only possible contender for a position in Goethe's heart at this time to be the actress Corona Schröter, who had come to Weimar in November 1776 and with whom Goethe spent a great deal of his time (almost as much as with Charlotte). She was two years younger than Goethe, beautiful and charming. On April 6, 1779 she was

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[36]Kühn, op. cit., p. 110.

[37]Alphons Nobel, Frau von Stein: Goethes Freundin und Feindin (2d ed.; München: Münchner Verlag, 1949).

the first to play the title role of Iphigenie, opposite the author as Orestes. The critics who see in Corona the femme fatale assert that Charlotte confessed her love because of jealousy and fear that she might be displaced by the actress in Goethe's affections. This view is based mainly on a little verse sent to Charlotte from Gotha on October 9, 1781, apparently in response to her request that she be considered the only woman in his life:

> Den einzigen Lotte welchen du lieben kannst
> Foderst du ganz für dich und mit Recht.
> Auch ist er einzig dein . . . .

In a note of the same day he writes: "Ich bin ganz dein und habe ein neu Leben und ein neu betragen gegen die Menschen seit ich weis dass du davon überzeugt bist."

There are few, however, who would go so far as Ida Boy-Ed, who claims Charlotte not only confessed her love but gave herself physically to Goethe in an attempt to remove Corona from the picture.[38] This idea would seem to express a gross misunderstanding both of Charlotte's character and of the nature of her importance for Goethe.[39]

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[38]Ida Boy-Ed, Das Martyrium der Charlotte von Stein (Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhdlg. Nachf., 1920).

[39]But at least one French critic concurs in part with this view, without mentioning Corona Schröter: "Nous n'insisterions pas davantage sur un secret d'alcôve s'il n'expliquait pas le refroidissement des lettres de Goethe dans les années à venir et un nouveau désir de libération qui aboutit au voyage en Italie. Entre les deux solutions extrêmes du consentement ou du refus il y a place pour une hypothèse très plausible. Ne peut-on imaginer que, à la fin de 1780 ou plus probablement au début de 1781, Mme de Stein a cédé aux instances de Goethe, soit pour mieux l'enchaîner et prévenir une évasion possible, soit pour lui donner la preuve décisive de son amour total en scellant par l'union des corps le mariage des âmes? Cette union a-t-elle duré? Nous ne le

Heinrich Stümcke, who wrote a biography of Corona Schröter, states definitely that there is no basis for the theory that the actress played a role here: "Von irgend welchem Verdrängen Charlottens durch Corona kann keine Rede sein."[40]

Margarethe Susman, on the other hand, refutes what she terms the "legend" of the confession when she writes (in connection with the letter from Die Geschwister quoted above):

> Mit diesem einzigen kleinen Brieffragment Charlottens ist aber auch schon eine dreifache Legende zerstört: einmal die, dass diese Liebe als schwesterlich-mütterliche Freundschaft begonnen habe, zum andern die von der Leidenschaftslosigkeit Charlottes; denn was ist Leidenschaft, wenn nicht Qualen vorauszusehen und ihnen eine Liebe nicht aufopfern zu können? Und schliesslich fällt auch die dritte Legende dahin, dass Charlotte Goethe ihre Liebe anfangs verborgen gehalten und erst Jahre später eingestanden habe. Sie hat sich von Anfang an zu ihr bekannt; aber sie hat auch vom ersten Augenblick an ihre Liebe als Verantwortung gegenüber dem leidenschaftlichen, masslosen, jüngeren Mann begriffen.[41]

Barker Fairley also insists that the fundamental relation, as seen in the letters, remains unmodified from the first to the last:

> Let there be no mistake, there is nothing here for the dramatist, nothing that grows or develops; it is the static quality that impresses us in this relationship, the constant and not the variable. Whatever happens between

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croyons pas et nous serions tenté de penser qu'elle fut pour l'un et l'autre une déception. Cela nous permet de mieux comprendre pourquoi Goethe put avoir en Italie la révélation de l'amour purement sensuel et se lier ensuite à Christiane Vulpius."--Joseph François Angelloz, Goethe (Paris: Mercure de France, 1949), pp. 123-124.

[40]Heinrich Stümcke, Corona Schröter (2d ed.; Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1926), p. 65.

[41]Margarethe Susman, Deutung einer grossen Liebe: Goethe und Charlotte von Stein (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1951), pp. 42-43.

them, it makes no difference underneath and to this extent it is unimportant and can be dismissed.[42]

Charlotte has been condemned by some critics for the role which she played after 1781; by demanding and retaining complete control over his heart, it is claimed, she prevented Goethe from finding true happiness in marriage with someone else.[43] This thought, however, never seems to have occurred to Goethe himself. He apparently was completely content to harbor his emotions with Charlotte, at least for the time being. Not until the last months before his flight to Italy, from late 1784 on, can light undercurrents of restlessness, of insecurity be detected in his letters. On August 24, 1784, for example, he sends her the verse:

> Gewiss ich wäre schon so ferne ferne
> Soweit die Welt nur offen liegt gegangen
> Bezwängen mich nicht übermächt'ge Sterne
> Die mein Geschik an deines angehangen
> Dass ich in dir nun erst mich kennen lerne
> Mein Dichten, Trachten, Hoffen und Verlangen
> Allein nach dir und deinem Wesen drängt,
> Mein Leben nur an deinem Leben hängt.[44]

A few days later, on August 30, he states that his love is a sickness, but hastens to add that it is more dear to him than health: "Mon amour pour toi n'est plus une passion c'est une maladie, une maladie qui m'est plus chere que la santé la plus parfaite, et dont je ne veux pas guerir." Or again on

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[42]Barker Fairley, op. cit., p. 100.

[43]Lena Voss, to be sure, without giving her source of information, believes that Charlotte even had plans for arranging a union for Goethe with one Henriette von Egloffstein, but her plans were shattered when the young lady was forced into a "conventional" marriage.--Lena Voss, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

[44]Text according to Petersen.

November 22 of the same year: "Lebe wohl und wenn Eine Bitte bey dir statt findet so wecke den Amor nicht wenn der unruhige Knabe ein Küssen [Kissen] gefunden hat und schlummert."

Again Charlotte has been condemned for not realizing Goethe's dissatisfaction with the conditions of their love from 1784 on. A woman who really loved him and understood him, these critics point out, would have felt these light undercurrents. Typical of such comment is that of Alphons Nobel:

> Es ist schwer zu begreifen, wie blind Charlotte von Stein für die Wirklichkeit ihrer Liebe war. Mochten aus Goethes Briefen auch immer wieder die gleichen monotonen Beteuerungen der Leidenschaft, der Treue, der ewigen Anhänglichkeit strömen--vieles verriet doch seine Unzufriedenheit, seine furchtbare Unruhe; musste die Frau, die ihn liebte, nicht fühlen, dass er unglücklich war?"[45]

In defense of Charlotte against such charges, Lena Voss has aptly revealed what would seem to be the core of the situation:

> Dauernde Liebe ist bei Gefühlsbindungen aller Arten nur möglich bei vollem gegenseitigen Verständnis. Für den Hofbeamten, den zum Aristokraten gewordenen Minister, hatte Charlotte volles Verständnis, für den ins Weite strebenden freien Künstler nicht. Nach Erziehung und Lebensstellung konnte sie es nicht haben, es war nicht ihre Schuld, es war ihr Verhängnis.[46]

In the events that were to follow during the next few years, Charlotte is to be pitied rather than blamed. It was her unfortunate fate that she could not continue to grow in stature with the genius of the poet.

An unfelicitous combination of events, which threatened to stifle Goethe's literary activity completely, finally

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[45]Alphons Nobel, op. cit., p. 116.

[46]Lena Voss, op. cit., p. 109.

brought the poet to the decision to leave Weimar. The oppressing yoke of minor administrative duties contingent upon his position as "Geheimrat" as well as the many demands of the theater which he had been persuaded to direct left little time for him to devote to his writing. And when he could find the time, the Muses seemed to be elsewhere. Only the work on Wilhelm Meister appeared to be progressing with any degree of satisfaction.

It was during this period also that Charlotte's second son, Ernst, became seriously ill with a disease generally described as caries (Knochenfrass), ulceration and disintegration of the bone tissue in one of his legs. He therefore was returned home from school in December 1785 and the Stein household consequently was permeated with the air of the sickroom. Both Charlotte and Goethe gave their fullest devotion to the care of the young patient; in their concern for his recovery they would have found little opportunity to think of themselves. Charlotte's health threatened to break under the strain and on the advice of her physician, she went to Karlsbad in the summer of 1786.

As an economy measure to alleviate the strain on the meager ducal treasury, the "Hoftafel" was abandoned in August 1785, with the result that Stein and the others returned to their homes for their meals.[47] The intimacy of Goethe's and Charlotte's almost daily contact was thus further disturbed.

Charlotte, too, began to feel everything was not quite in order, for she wrote to Knebel on May 10, 1786:

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[47]Bode, Charlotte von Stein, p. 242.

> Goethe lebt in seinen Betrachtungen, aber er teilt sich nicht mit, Dies ist eine Tugend, die Sie nur besitzen! Aber ich bedauere den armen Goethe: Wem wohl ist, Der spricht! Mir versagt leider manchmal die Sprache aus doppelten Ursachen, weil ich Nichts weiss und weil ich leide.[48]

Goethe himself expressed the turmoil in his mind during this period in a letter of June 25, 1786:

> Thue meine Liebe was und wie dir's recht ist und es soll mir auch so seyn. Behalte mich nur lieb und lass uns ein Gut, das wir nie wiederfinden werden, wenigstens bewahren, wenn auch Augenblicke sind wo wir dessen nicht geniessen können.
>
> Ich korrigire am Werther und finde immer dass der Verfasser übel gethan hat sich nicht nach geendigter Schrifft zu erschiesen.

In the summer of 1786 Goethe, having put matters of state in order, received permission from Karl August to leave Weimar on an extended journey. The destination was not disclosed and the term was to be indefinite. The Duke was sworn to secrecy concerning this trip; only he and Goethe were to know about it.

Goethe's plans were to spend a few weeks at the spa in Karlsbad with the Duke, Charlotte, and other friends from Weimar, following which he would begin his journey. Frau von Stein preceded him to Karlsbad, while Goethe and Karl August remained in Weimar to await the arrival of a child to be born to Duchess Luise. Their departure was delayed by several weeks, so that Goethe's intended vacation with Charlotte was considerably shortened. He finally arrived in Karlsbad near the end of July and was able to enjoy a few weeks with her before she had to return to Weimar. Goethe accompanied her

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[48]Petersen, Briefe, I, 2, 542-543.

as far as Schneeberg, then returned to Karlsbad to finish work on the first four volumes of his collected works which he had promised to have ready for his publisher. From Charlotte, too, he had kept concealed the true nature and destination of his proposed trip. She knew only that he would be gone a little longer than usual but assumed he would scarcely stay away longer than six weeks.[49] From Karlsbad Goethe continued to write to her almost daily. On September 1 he reassured her once more of his love:

> Ich habe bisher im Stillen gar mancherley getragen, und nichts so sehnlich gewünscht als dass unser Verhältniss sich so herstellen möge, dass keine Gewalt ihm was anhaben könne. Sonst mag ich nicht in deiner Nähe wohnen und ich will lieber in der Einsamkeit der Welt bleiben, in die ich ietzt hinausgehe.

On Sunday, September 3, at three o'clock in the morning, Goethe slipped out of Karlsbad while the resort was still sleeping and thus entered upon the Italian journey--the phase in his life which was to mean a rebirth both for the artist and the man. From the beginning Goethe kept a detailed account of his trip for Charlotte in the hope that she, too, would derive some pleasure from the experience he was enjoying. The letters were not sent individually, however, but were kept as a journal, which was then packed in a box along with other materials and shipped to his servant Seidel in Weimar on October 13, when Goethe was ready to leave Venice. There may have been a delay in the mails, perhaps also it was an

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[49]Charlotte to Knebel, August 30, 1786: "Den 23. hab ich einen Brief vom Goethe, wo er mir schreibt, er werde noch acht Tage in Karlsbad bleiben, alsdann dunkel und unbekannt eine Weile in Wäldern und Bergen herumziehen, so dass er unter sechs Wochen nicht hier sein wird."--Petersen, Briefe, I, 2, 543.

oversight on the part of Seidel that the crate was not unpacked immediately; at any rate, the journal, which Goethe had expected her to receive by the end of October, did not reach Charlotte until Christmas. Bielschowsky-Linden places the blame on "merkwürdige Fehlgriffe, die sich nur aus seiner italienischen Traumbefangenheit erklären lassen."[50] Petersen, on the other hand, thinks this should not be excused as mere carelessness on Goethe's part, as so many critics are wont to do; he believes it was a deliberate attempt by Goethe to keep his final destination secret until he had arrived in Rome.[51] As the weeks went by and stretched into months, and still she received no word, Charlotte could assume only that his flight from Weimar was a flight from her personally. Bielschowsky-Linden has perceived that she probably was more disturbed by the fact that she lacked Goethe's address than by the absence of any letters from him; in effect, he did not want to hear from her![52] In addition, she was subject to the well-meaning inquiries of friends who wanted to know where Goethe was and what he was doing. She, his closest friend, could give no answer. Young Fritz von Stein in desperation finally wrote to Goethe's mother in Frankfurt to discover whether perhaps

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[50]Bielschowsky-Linden, op. cit., I, 394.

[51]Petersen, Briefe, I, 1, xxxi.

[52]Bielschowsky-Linden, op. cit., I, 392. This statement may be nearer the truth than is ordinarily assumed. Not discrediting the excuses which have been used to explain Goethe's conduct, there remains the possibility that he subconsciously was running away from Charlotte, although he was not willing to admit it, least of all to himself. She was to receive his pledge of continual love through the daily journal, but he needed to prove that he could stand on his own two feet emotionally and live without support from her.

she had some clue as to the whereabouts of her absent son.

Since Goethe's departure from Karlsbad, Charlotte had received perhaps two letters from him, one written September 18 from Verona, the other October 14 from Venice. She finally was in such a state of ill-humour that she wrote to him through Seidel expressing a desire to terminate their correspondence and demanded her letters back from him. When her message reached him on December 9, Goethe was completely unprepared for its contents:

> --Soweit war ich am 9. Dez. als ich einen Brief von Seideln erhalte und ein Zettelgen drinne von deiner Hand. Das war also alles was du einem Freunde, einem Geliebten zu sagen hattest, der sich so lange nach einem guten Worte von dir sehnt. Der keinen Tag, ja keine Stunde gelebt hat, seit er dich verliess ohne an dich zu dencken . . . .
> Die Kasten auf dem Archive gehören dein, liebst du mich noch ein wenig; so eröffne sie nicht eher als biss du Nachricht von meinem Todte hast, so lang ich lebe lass mir die Hoffnung sie in deiner Gegenwart zu eröffnen . . . .
> Ich sage dir nicht wie dein Blätgen mein Herz zerrissen hat. Lebe wohl. du einziges Wesen und verhärte dein Herz nicht gegen mich.

In a subsequent letter, of December 13, he admitted his share of guilt in the delay in communication but correctly warned Charlotte that a break between them at this point would do her more harm than good:

> Dein Zettelchen hat mich geschmerzt aber am meisten dadrum dass ich dir Schmerzen verursacht habe. Du willst mir schweigen? du willst die Zeugnisse deiner Liebe zurücknehmen? Das kannst du nicht ohne viel zu leiden, und ich bin schuld daran.

Goethe had hoped for a further letter from Charlotte indicating that she had received the journal and was convinced by this pledge of his continued devotion, but by December 20 such had not arrived:

> Noch ist kein Brief von dir angekommen, und es wird mir

> immer wahrscheinlicher dass du vorsätzlich schweigst, ich will auch das tragen und will dencken: Hab ich doch das Beyspiel gegeben, hab ich sie doch schweigen gelehrt, es ist das erste nicht, was ich zu meinem Schaden lehre.

On the 23rd there was still no word from Charlotte:

> Lass mich dir nur noch für deinen Brief dancken! Lass mich einen Augenblick vergessen was er schmerzliches enthält. Meine Liebe! Meine Liebe! Ich bitte dich nur fusfällig, flehentlich, erleichtere mir meine Rückkehr zu dir, dass ich nicht in der weiten Welt verbannt bleibe. Verzeih mir grosmütig was ich gegen dich gefehlt und richte mich auf . . . . Nur bitt ich dich: sieh mich nicht von dir Geschieden an, nichts in der Welt kann mir ersetzen was ich an dir, was ich an meinen Verhältnissen dort verlöhre. Möge ich doch Krafft alles widrige männlicher zu tragen mitbringen.

Her letter of December 18 finally reached him on January 6; apparently the contents were at least slightly conciliatory, for a note of relief can now be detected in his humble plea for forgiveness:

> Heute früh erhielt ich deinen bitter süssen Brief vom 18ten Dec. Unsre Correspondenz geht gut und regelmässig, dass sie nun nicht wieder unterbrochen werde solang wir leben.
>
> Ich kann zu den Schmerzen die ich dir verursacht nichts sagen als: vergib! Ich verstocke mein Herz nicht, und bin bereit alles dahin zu geben, um gesund zu werden für mich und die meinigen. Vor allen Dingen soll ein ganz reines Vertrauen, eine immer gleiche Offenheit mich aufs neue mit dir verbinden.

The arrival of the journal evidently had the intended effect; the beseeching tone, at any rate, disappears from Goethe's correspondence after this date. It is not known whether Charlotte carried out Goethe's wish to preserve her letters at the time, but they presumably were no longer present in 1808.[53] The letters sent to Italy were burned by Goethe in

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[53]Petersen, Briefe, Anm., Anhang, II, 2, 738.

accordance with her expressed desire.[54]

Goethe had originally planned to be back by August 1787,[55] but his return was voluntarily delayed and the sojourn in Italy extended for almost another year. On June 18, 1788 he was once again in Weimar. The reunion with Charlotte was not the pleasurable experience he had anticipated. The intervening two years since his departure had left their mark. Goethe returned transformed, matured--the value of the Italian journey for the artist cannot be overestimated. Charlotte had not only felt herself abandoned by her dearest friend but had also suffered through the long illness of her son Ernst, who had died as a result of his leg infection in the summer of 1787 on the way to Karlsbad where Charlotte had hoped to effect a cure for him. The old familiar avenues of communication seemed to be barricaded. Goethe, like many a traveler returning after an extended absence, soon found that Charlotte and his friends in Weimar had little sympathy, understanding, or enthusiasm for his Italian experience. Charlotte appeared to show more interest in her dog Lulu than in conversing with her former intimate acquaintance.[56] She had been expecting the return of the young novice who looked to her for leadership and guidance, and was prepared to continue in this role only.

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[54]Goethe to Charlotte, February 17, 1787: "Deine Briefe werden alle gleich verbrannt, wie wohl ungern. Doch dein Wille geschehe."

[55]Goethe to Charlotte, December 29, 1786.

[56]A scene in the narrative "Die guten Weiber," which Goethe wrote twelve years later, is said to refer to the situation in which he now found himself with Charlotte.--Bode, Charlotte von Stein, pp. 276ff.

Goethe, on the other hand, had gained control of his emotional self and no longer needed her help in this respect. As Bielschowsky-Linden and Barker Fairley have suggested, this is evident from his correspondence in later years; the intimacy which characterizes his previous letters, not only to Charlotte but to others, completely disappears. From this point on, he appears to have been able to deal with any crisis as it came, without involving others.[57]

It was not only in his letters but in his daily contacts that Goethe had also become less communicative. This change was beginning to take place in him before Italy and was all the more evident upon his return. He no longer looked to Charlotte: "Richtetest den wilden, irren Lauf" was a matter of the past. Goethe was now ready to meet her on the ideal level for which they both had been striving, but she had not risen with him during the past two years. Her chief complaint against Goethe she expressed to Karoline Herder: "Goethe ist sinnlich geworden."[58]

The break between Goethe and Charlotte had thus actually taken place before his alliance with Christiane Vulpius became known. The events which were to follow in the next few months merely served to aggravate an already painful situation. The discovery of Christiane apparently took place early in 1789 and is said to have been made by Fritz von Stein, who

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[57]Bielschowsky-Linden, op. cit., II, 3; Fairley, op. cit., p. 149.

[58]Recast here into direct discourse from a letter of Karoline Herder to her husband in Rome, August 15, 1788.—— Bode, Briefe, I, 377.

encountered her on a visit to the Gartenhaus.[59] Although the date and circumstances appear somewhat vague, by March 8 Karoline Herder was able to report to her husband:

> Ich habe nun das Geheimnis von der Stein selbst, warum sie mit Goethe nicht mehr recht gut sein will. Er hat die Vulpius zu seinem Klärchen und lässt sie oft zu sich kommen usw. Sie verdenkt ihm Dies sehr. Da er ein so vorzüglicher Mensch ist, auch schon vierzig Jahr alt ist, so sollte er nichts tun, wodurch er sich zu den Andern so herabwürdigt.[60]

With her characteristic frankness Charlotte informed all who cared to listen of the bitter insult and pain Goethe had caused her by taking this "Mamsell" into his home. To Charlotte von Lengefeld (later Schiller) she confessed on March 29:

> Ich war den Winter immer nicht wohl, und da wird man geneigter zum Nachdenken, das einen im Leben nicht glücklicher macht. Der andre mir mühsame Begriff von meinem ehemaligen, vierzehn Jahre lang gewesenen Freund liegt mir auch manchmal wie eine Krankheit auf und ist mir nun wie ein schöner Stern, der mir vom Himmel gefallen.[61]

Nor did she hesitate to communicate her disapproval to Goethe himself, but sought to regain him in the familiar way which had been so effective in former years. She rebuked him, demanded that he give up Christiane, and received a reply in which Goethe poured out all his own complaints concerning their relationship in the last few months (June 1, 1789):

> Ich dancke dir für den Brief, den du mir zurücklies-sest, wenn er mich gleich auf mehr als eine Weise betrübt hat. Ich zauderte darauf zu antworten, weil es in einem solchen Falle schwer ist aufrichtig zu seyn und nicht zu

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[59]Heinrich Düntzer, Goethes Leben (Leipzig: Fues, 1880), p. 428. Also Bode, Charlotte von Stein, pp. 288f.

[60]Bode, Briefe, I, 419.

[61]Bode, Briefe, I, 423-424.

verletzen.

Wie sehr ich dich liebe, wie sehr ich meine Pflicht gegen dich und Fritzen kenne, hab ich durch meine Rückkunft aus Italien bewiesen. Nach des Herzogs Willen wäre ich noch dort, Herder ging hin und da ich nicht voraussah dem Erbprinzen etwas seyn zu können, hatte ich kaum etwas anders im Sinne als dich und Fritzen.

Was ich in Italien verlassen habe, mag ich nicht wiederholen, du hast mein Vertrauen darüber unfreundlich genug aufgenommen.

Leider warst du, als ich ankam, in einer sonderbaren Stimmung und ich gestehe aufrichtig: dass die Art wie du mich empfingst, wie mich andre nahmen, für mich äusserst empfindlich war. Ich sah Herdern, die Herzoginn verreisen, einen mir dringend angebotnen Platz im Wagen leer, ich blieb um der Freunde willen, wie ich um ihrentwillen gekommen war und musste mir in demselben Augenblick hartnäckig wiederhohlen lassen, ich hätte nur wegbleiben können, ich nehme doch keinen Theil an den Menschen. u. s. w. Und das alles eh von einem Verhältniss die Rede seyn konnte das dich so sehr zu krämcken scheint.

Und welch ein Verhältniss ist es? Wer wird dadurch verkürzt? wer macht Anspruch an die Empfindungen die ich dem armen Geschöpf gönne? Wer an die Stunden die ich mit ihr zubringe?

Frage Fritzen, die Herdern, jeden der mir näher ist, ob ich untheilnehmender, weniger mittheilend, unthätiger für meine Freunde bin als vorher? Ob ich nicht vielmehr ihnen und der Gesellschafft erst recht angehöre.

Und es müsste durch ein Wunder geschehen, wenn ich allein zu dir, das beste, innigste Verhältniss verlohren haben sollte.

Wie lebhaft habe ich empfunden, dass es noch da ist, wenn ich dich einmal gestimmt fand mit mir über interessante Gegenstände zu sprechen.

Aber das gestehe ich gern, die Art wie du mich bisshher behandelt hast, kann ich nicht erdulden. Wenn ich gesprächig war hast du mir die Lippen verschlossen, wenn ich mittheilend war hast du mich der Gleichgültigkeit, wenn ich für Freunde thätig war, der Kälte und Nachlässigkeit beschuldigt. Jede meiner Minen hast du kontrollirt, meine Bewegungen, meine Art zu seyn getadelt und mich immer mal a mon aise gesetzt. Wo sollte da Vertrauen und Offenheit gedeihen, wenn du mich mit vorsätzlicher Laune von dir stiessest.

He continues by suggesting that her ill-humour is perhaps being aggravated by her coffee drinking, a habit which he himself despised and had often cautioned her about.

A few days later, on June 8, he added:

Zu meiner Entschuldigung will ich nichts sagen. Nur mag ich dich gern bitten: Hilf mir selbst, dass das

> Verhältniss das dir zuwider ist, nicht ausarte, sondern stehen bleibe wie es steht.
> Schencke mir dein Vertrauen wieder, sieh die Sache aus einem natürlichen Gesichtspunckte an, erlaube mir dir ein gelassnes wahres Wort darüber zu sagen und ich kann hoffen es soll sich alles zwischen uns rein und gut herstellen.

Charlotte's reaction to the letter of June 1 is poignantly expressed in the large, simple "O!" which she drew over it.

With this one exception Goethe did not return Charlotte's anger, if he did at all, but remained singularly silent in the face of her frequent vexed comments. A self-portrait of Charlotte's reaction to the change in Goethe has been preserved in her drama Dido in which Goethe is banalized as the poet Ogon; she herself appears as Elissa.[62] The bitterness of Frau von Stein at this time has been considered by some critics as proof that her previous relationship with Goethe had had a sexual union at its basis. A passage from the above-quoted letter of June 1 has been amply and ably used as a rebuttal against such thinking: "Und welch ein Verhältniss ist es: Wer wird dadurch verkürzt? wer macht Anspruch an die Empfindungen die ich dem armen Geschöpf gönne?" could hardly have been written to a former mistress, with whom one still hoped

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[62]Presumably written in 1794 or 1795. Schiller was unreserved in his praise (to Frau von Stein, Jena, January 2, 1797): "Ich habe weniges, ja vielleicht noch nie etwas in meinem Leben gelesen, was mir die Seele, aus der es floss, so rein und klar und so wahr und prunklos überliefert hätte, und darum rührte es mich mehr als ich sagen kann." He made arrangements with Cotta to have the drama printed, but these were not carried out. It was first published by Heinrich Düntzer in 1867, later by Julius Wahl in his edition of Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein; a more recent print appears in the Goethe-Kalender auf das Jahr 1923, ed. Karl Heinemann (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1922), pp. 101-146. See discussion there pp. 148-149; also Bode, Charlotte von Stein, pp. 418-419f.

to maintain contact. One cannot help concluding that Goethe apparently had no intention of breaking off his friendship with Charlotte, was furthermore deeply disappointed and hurt when she did so.

Charlotte was not willing to grant Christiane a place under Goethe's sun in spite of his plea. To do so would have been to declare bankruptcy on her whole philosophy of life.[63] The idealist in her preferred to give up her friend instead, no matter how grieved she might be. Aside from the personal insult which she experienced, Charlotte saw in Christiane the symbol of Goethe's willful descent from the heights of virtue into the realm of the sensual. To this extent she would not, could not follow him. For all the other grief Goethe may have caused her, Charlotte might have forgiven him; on this point there could be no reconciliation.

Only in later years, through their mutual interest in Schiller and particularly in the closer communion into which they were drawn upon his death, through Goethe's son August, who became a frequent visitor at Charlotte's home, did they begin to approach once more the intimacy of their earlier friendship. In a letter to her son Fritz (January 12, 1801) Charlotte expressed great concern over Goethe's severe illness:

> Ich wusste nicht, dass unser ehemaliger Freund Goethe mir noch so teuer wäre, dass eine schwere Krankheit, an der er seit neun Tagen liegt, mich so innig ergreifen würde.[64]

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[63] See Hanna Fischer-Lamberg, "Charlotte von Stein," loc. cit., p. 402 for a fuller discussion of this point.

[64] Bode, Briefe, I, 685.

In an able discourse Walter Hof has shown how, contrary to general opinion, the final years of their lives--especially after Goethe's marriage to Christiane, which made it possible for Charlotte to receive her--embraced a friendship which held some of the warmth and sincerity, if not the passion, of the earlier years.[65]

On one occasion Charlotte permitted Schiller's widow, Lotte, with whom she had always remained on intimate terms, to read some of Goethe's letters from the early Weimar period. Lotte has given an account of her reactions and feelings in a letter to Princess Karoline. Upon reading the letters she was reminded of Pope's "Eloïsa to Abelard"; Eloïsa, too, had made superhuman demands upon her friend: "And wished an angel when I loved a man."[66] A more fitting statement can hardly be made.

Charlotte lived to celebrate her eighty-fourth birthday; her death occurred on January 6, 1827. Her dying wish was that the funeral procession should not pass by Goethe's house, in order that he might be spared this further pain. Her wish, however, could not be carried out. Goethe himself did not attend the funeral but was represented by his son August. His great loss he concealed in silence; not even his diary contains an entry concerning Charlotte's death. He is not known to have mentioned her by name afterwards; when he had to refer to her, he used the terms "meine edle Freundin" or "meine

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[65]Walter Hof, "Um Mitternacht: Goethe und Charlotte von Stein im Alter," Euphorion, XLV (1950), 50-82. Also Hof, Wo sich der Weg im Kreise schliesst (Stuttgart: Curt E. Schwab, 1957).

[66]Bode, Charlotte von Stein, pp. 555-556.

selige Freundin."

Goethe has paid perhaps his greatest tribute to Charlotte in a poem written in 1820, in which he ranks her with Shakespeare as one of the two most powerful influences in his life:

> Einer Einzigen angehören,
> Einen Einzigen verehren,
> Wie vereint es Herz und Sinn!
> Lida, Glück der nächsten Nähe!
> Wilhelm, Stern der schönsten Höhe!
> Euch verdank ich, was ich bin.
> Tag und Jahre sind verschwunden,
> Und doch ruht auf jenen Stunden
> Meines Wertes Vollgewinn.

Such, in very broad outline, is the general historical picture, as derived from available authentic documents, and with some elaboration by scholars and critics, to the extent that it may have primary pertinence to our subject. It will now be our task to investigate what forms the raw materials of history have assumed when seen through the prisms of novelists.

CHAPTER III

GOETHE AND FRAU VON STEIN IN FICTION: PARTIAL PORTRAITS

The present chapter introduces narratives which in common manifest their authors' preference for one particular phase of Goethe's love for Frau von Stein. Each presents but a segment of the historical picture; they vary in scope from one portraying only the initial attraction of the two personalities to one depicting the dissolution of their friendship along with the dethronement of Charlotte by Christiane.

Several possibilities suggested themselves for the order in which these partial portraits were to appear. They might first of all be graded according to their literary merit, using either an ascending or descending progression. Such an arrangement, however, would provide little variety for the reader. Furthermore, it would imply a judgment before the work itself is introduced and thus eliminate any basis for further comparison. The problem of advance-judgment could be avoided by presenting the narratives in the chronology of their date of publication. Under ordinary circumstances, this method would suit the purpose quite well and is the one used in Chapter IV, where the scope of each novel is approximately the same. In this particular instance, however, in dealing with novels of limited and varied scope, the diversity obtained

by interspersing the good with the poor in chronological order would force the reader to retrace his steps frequently in order to place each succeeding narrative in the historical sequence of events.

An arrangement has thus been devised which retains the advantage of the logic in chronology, permits some degree of variety in presentation, yet leaves room for a later comparison, once each narrative has been introduced. To enable the reader to follow the events of history as outlined in Chapter II with greater ease, our arrangement is based on the chronology of the Charlotte period; the narratives appear according to the order in which the events treated by the author fall in the historical sequence.

Jahr der Wandlung: Goethes Schicksalswende 1775

The first of these partial portraits is a 424-page novel depicting the transition from Frankfurt to Weimar. The author, Franz Servaes (1862-1947), who was active chiefly as a drama and art critic, has a number of literary productions to his credit. He has written dramas--Stickluft (1897), Der neue Tag ("Ein Kleist-Drama," 1903), Jungfer Ambrosia (1905), Agnes und Albrecht (1918); novels--Gärungen (1898), Michael de Ruyters Witwerjahre (1909), Knospendrang (1912); as well as Novellen--Die Karroborrier (1903), and Wenn der Traum zerrinnt (1911). In the field of biography his publications include Heinrich von Kleist (1902), Giovanni Segantini (1902), Goethes Lili (1916), and Rembrandt: Im Rahmen seiner Zeit

(1926).[1] Jahr der Wandlung, one of his latest works, appeared in 1935.[2] It has been reviewed by Herbert Scheffler, who writes: "Franz Servaes hat vor allem den sicheren Takt, den Takt des Herzens und den Takt des Stils, der zu solchem Unterfangen [the writing of 'Künstlerromane'] nötig ist."[3]

The novel opens and closes with a New Year's Eve celebration, the first in Frankfurt in 1775, the second in Weimar one year later. Servaes has divided his narrative into four "books," each with a title designed to characterize the action during different phases of this transitional year. The "books" are then subdivided into a number of short chapters, each of which relates a single episode.

In constructing the story, the author has not concentrated on one particular phase of Goethe's life but has attempted to portray the variety of experiences and friendships which come to the protagonist during this eventful year. Among the people encountered are Goethe's parents, his sister Cornelia (now married to Schlosser), the painter Kraus, Fritz Jacobi, Johanna Fahlmer, Lenz, Merck, Lavater, Zimmermann, Klopstock, the Stolbergs, their sister Auguste--by correspondence only--and finally, Wieland and the court circle in Weimar. Through conversations with these figures Servaes is able to

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[1]Biographical information obtained from Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon, Wilhelm Kosch, ed. and from publisher's notices.

[2]Franz Servaes, Jahr der Wandlung: Goethes Schicksalswende 1775 (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1935). Hereafter cited in this section by page number in the text.

[3]Herbert Scheffler, in Die Literatur, XXXVIII (1935-36), 384.

show the diversified interests which comprise the total personality of his hero. Dominant, of course, is Goethe's love for Lili Schönemann; the plot revolves around this theme until the second-last chapter when she is supplanted in his affections by the stronger attraction of a new love.

The first book, "Spannungen," portrays Goethe's courtship of Lili, their engagement, his realization--apparent almost immediately--that the object of his love cannot be separated from her philistine family, that she may be a danger for his genius, and finally, his plan to slip away secretly in an effort of learning to live without her. "Wanderungen" covers his Swiss journey in the company of the brothers Stolberg. Their experience of Storm and Stress is for Goethe one means of finding release for emotions which have been centered on Lili. But when faced with the prospect of going on to Italy, the "Zauberfädchen" which bind him to his love are still tightly knotted, and he willingly returns to Frankfurt: "Lili hatte gesiegt." (p. 213.) In "Lösungen" it is no longer simply the family but his contact with Lili herself which raises doubt as to the wisdom of continuing their engagement. Various incidents serve to convince Goethe of his inability to adapt to her way of life; as conditions grow more and more unbearable, he concludes that he actually loves her more from a distance. A possible avenue of escape is presented in his acquaintance with young Duke Karl August and the timely invitation to visit Weimar. "Bindungen" depicts his arrival at the "ländliche Residenz," his initial impressions, and introduces the factors which bring about his decision to make his

home there.

Frau von Stein does not become a significant force in the life of Servaes' Goethe until she personally enters the narrative in the final book, "Bindungen." It is therefore with this section, which contains the author's interpretation of her initial impact on Goethe, that we are chiefly concerned here. However, Servaes does not suddenly transplant his hero to foreign soil without giving some previous indication that he will be able to take root there. First, a potential break with the past is established, thus determining the perspective from which subsequent events are to be viewed. Early in the narrative Goethe experiences a dissatisfaction with his present existence as a minor court lawyer in Frankfurt. His unrest finds expression in a desire to become one with the river; the soft, murmuring waves of the Main bring forth an urge to follow the waters out into the world beyond the city. (p. 12.) For the time being, however, he is bound to Frankfurt by his childhood and "ein Märchenschatz von tausend süssen Erinnerungen." But on one point he is certain: "Die Ferne lockte, das Draussen rief--und eines Tages, das fühlte er, würde die Unrast übermächtig werden--und dann: ade, Vaterstadt!" (p. 15.)

With the introduction of this mood, so strongly expressed, it is readily apparent that any event which takes place in Frankfurt will have only temporary effect. Because of this inner drive which constitutes an essential part of Servaes' protagonist, it is obvious from the beginning that Lili cannot be Goethe's "Schicksal," no matter how seriously

he may approach his love and courtship of her. His fate lies somewhere beyond Frankfurt, yet his desire to escape momentarily has no direction, and when urged by his friend Kraus to join him in Weimar, Goethe is adamant in his refusal. He still feels master of the situation and will not accept just any avenue of leaving: after all, Weimar has nothing to offer; it is but a "Fürstennest," where one would be forced to "versauern." (p. 23.) This conversation, by the way, neatly provides the author with the means (through Kraus) of introducing some of the personalities and aspects of court life which are to appear later in the narrative.

In addition to the general restlessness which will eventually force the removal of the hero from Frankfurt, there are several specific attitudes inherent in the protagonist which point directly to his attraction to Frau von Stein, at least as Servaes interprets it. One of these is a desire to be perfect, to experience the totality of his being: "Ich kenne keinen höheren Wunsch, als alle meine Fähigkeiten zu Vollkommenheiten zu entwickeln und das volle Glück der Persönlichkeit zu geniessen." (pp. 41-42.) Another time, in a conversation with Merck, Servaes' Goethe explains why his poetry contains so many contradictions and admits what he really seeks is harmony. He writes only according to what is within him; until he finds inward peace, the conflicts of his soul will be reflected in his art. (pp. 151-152.) A further indication of the role which Frau von Stein is to play occurs with Goethe's realization that Lili cannot offer him all that he needs. She is good, kind, and pretty, but not a "Seelenfreundin":

"Berauschen konnte er sich an ihr, aber nicht innerlich bei ihr ausruhen!" (p. 182.) Lili is not the substitute for the sister Cornelia whom he so sorely misses.

That Servaes considers Charlotte the perfect companion for his Goethe, a companion who will lead him to perfection and harmony and at the same time be a "Seelenfreundin," is evident from a scene in which Zimmermann invites Goethe to characterize the silhouette of "eine weimarische Hofdame and Gattin des dortigen Oberstallmeisters von Stein." With Zimmermann's assurance that no one has ever more accurately described the lady in question,[4] Goethe is suddenly struck by the portent of his own words:

> Goethe selbst aber war, kaum hatte er's geschrieben, in seltsamer Weise beklommen und betroffen. Was hatte er denn da über einen fremden Menschen für eine Charakteristik geäussert? Das klang ja fast wie ein Selbstbekenntnis! "Wahreit, geschaut durch das Medium der Liebe." Das war doch der Inhalt all der Gedanken, die ihn in diesen Tagen so mächtig und anfeuernd bewegten. Ohne dass die beiden anderen sich seine Erregung zu deuten wussten, war er auf einmal purpurrot übers ganze Gesicht geworden und wandte sich in Verlegenheit ab . . . . Wie seltsam, dass diese Frau von Stein, die er nicht kannte, solche Seelenbewegung in ihm beschwor! (p. 233.)

If the silhouette of an unknown woman can stir such depths of emotion, it is only to be expected that a personal encounter with its subject will have an equal, or even stronger effect. Yet in his love for Lili, this first impression of Frau von Stein is temporarily forgotten, to the extent that when he finally arrives in Weimar, there appears to be little trace of the fleeting, but soul-shaking experience. As one means of indicating Goethe's total unawareness of the influence

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[4]See Chapter II, p. 30, above.

which Charlotte and Weimar are to have on his life, Servaes introduces a conversation with Wieland. When the elder poet attempts to warn his young friend against the prejudices produced by small-town mentality, Goethe carefully explains that his visit will be only temporary, he has come mainly to satisfy his curiosity and the kind invitation of the Duke, and that any undue concern on the part of the local populace over his becoming a permanent inhabitant should be quickly dispelled. "Aber mich hier festsiedeln? Dazu ist mein Blut viel zu unruhig! Wie ich mich kenne, haue ich bald wieder ab!" (p. 336.) Servaes' Goethe knows himself only too well, but he underestimates the power of Frau von Stein. It remains for her, then, to counteract this "unruhiges Blut."

Servaes first presents his Frau von Stein in an extremely objective manner, yet in his objectivity he begins to bring out certain of her qualities. Goethe vaguely remembers having said something about a "Medium der Liebe" in connection with her silhouette. He now finds her face attractive, "soweit die etwas höfisch-reglose Maske ein Urteil erlaubte." (p. 351.) In the midst of a lively conversation with other members of the court, she is reserved and speaks only to act as moderator: "Seltener liess Frau von Stein sich vernehmen, vorzüglich wenn es galt, Meinungen zu überbrücken oder Gegensätze auszugleichen." (p. 352.)

The author later supplies more detail about her character along with his view of her family situation:

> Sie litt beinahe körperlich unter jedem rohen Auftreten, und dies war wohl auch der Grund, weshalb sie sich von ihrem Gatten, der soviel Stallduft und Stallmanieren mit

> sich herumtrug, innerlich entfernt hatte. So führte sie, nach elfjähriger Ehe, und nachdem sie vier Töchter im zartesten Kindesalter begraben hatte, beinahe ein Witwenleben, nur der Pflege und der Erziehung ihrer drei übriggebliebenen Söhne hingegeben. (p. 359.)

Goethe learns that Frau von Stein has been more than slightly disturbed by his exuberant conduct with the Duke, and assumes that his neglect in paying a dutiful call may be at least partly responsible for her ill-humour. He therefore sets out for the "'Höhle der Löwin'" (p. 360) in an attempt to get a better look at his enemy. As might be expected, this visit proves to be rather congenial; instead of the intended quarter-hour Goethe stays for over an hour and is somewhat perplexed by the reception she has given him: "War die 'Feindin' schon zur 'Freundin' geworden?" (p. 363.)

At a subsequent court gathering, when Goethe is persuaded to read from his "Faust," even Frau von Stein evinces emotion:

> Tiefes, ergriffenes Schweigen wechselte ab mit unwillkürlicher Bewegung und belustigtem Gelächter. Bei der Gretchen-Tragödie erstarrten beinahe die Gesichter, bis sie in Tränen sich lösten. Selbst der Herzogin-Mutter, gewohnt sich zu beherrschen, rollten dicke Zähren über die Wangen, und aus den Augen der Frau von Stein traf Goethe ein Blick, in dem Bewunderung und Ergriffenheit sich vieldeutig einten. (p. 364.)

His next visit with her is at her estate Kochberg, with Karl August and Duchess Luise. This encounter is even more enjoyable than the first; to indicate the change in Frau von Stein's personality, the freedom in her movement, Servaes for the first time mentions her by first name: Lotte. Goethe is so pleased that he returns alone a few days later, unannounced. After a lengthy conversation concerning the transmigration of

souls,[5] in which Charlotte appears receptive to his ideas, Servaes' Goethe decides the time has come to seal their love:

> Und ohne dass sie sich wehren konnte--oder wollte?--, drückte er auf ihre Lippen einen innigen Kuss.
>
> Zog ihr Mund sich zurück oder erwiderte er den sanften Druck? Jedenfalls lagen ihre Hände auf Goethes Schultern und strichen langsam, innig seine Arme hinab. Glitten dann wieder zu den Schultern hinauf und ruhten dort längere Frist.
>
> Schweigsam atmeten sie, dicht beinander. Fühlten die Ströme ihres Blutes einander begegnen. Minuten gingen darüber hin.
>
> Als Goethe sich zurückbeugte und in Charlottens Antlitz spähte, gewahrte er darin eine tiefe, ausgefüllte Ruhe und Befriedigung. Und als sie die Augen aufschlug und ihn anblickte, strahlte daraus unwillkürlich die Wärme der Liebe.
>
> Doch gleich darauf hatte sie sich wieder ganz in der Gewalt. Sie erhob sich und schritt in den anstossenden Salon. Goethe folgte ihr. (pp. 404-405.)

While his friends make every effort to convince Goethe that he should remain in Weimar, he resists, until finally the memory of Lili is banished by the vision of his future with Charlotte. Only then can he arrive at a decision. It is not a capricious move, however, but is viewed as a means of achieving his goal in life, and Frau von Stein is to help him toward this end:

> --Wo stehenzubleiben? Da, wo er jetzt sich befand, mit seinem sehnsüchtigen, unabänderlichen, gebieterischen Trachten nach einem Standort, "wo die gewöhnlichen Qualen der Menschheit ihn, in seinem innersten Dasein, gar nicht mehr anfechten mussten." Dies war sein Ziel. Ihm schwindelte beinahe, indem er es dachte.
>
> War solche Höhe erlangbar? Stärkste Zucht in seinem Innern war als Erstes erforderlich. Vieles musste er aus sich heraus gewinnen. Doch nicht wenig musste jene Frau ihm helfen, auf die jetzt alle strebenden und liebenden Kräfte seiner Seele und seines Geistes sich verheissungsvoll hinspannten. Sie allein durchleuchtete ihn, sie allein erspähte die feinsten und letzten Regungen seines schaffenden, aufwärtsringenden Strebens. (p. 419.)

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[5]The contents of the poem of April 14, 1776 (see Chapter II, pp. 41-42, above) are embodied here.

Although the assuming of official state duties will mean renunciation of his right to be exclusively a poet, it will also provide enrichment by forcing him to make use of unexplored powers, which in turn will benefit his poetry. Servaes' Goethe projects himself to become the model for all Germans:

> Den Deutschen wollte er vorleben, wie sie selbst einmal werden müssten: frei von Philisters Banden und dumpfer Beengtheit und hierdurch doppelt frei zu selbstbewusstem Dienst am grossen Ganzen! Dann erst--ja, dann erst durfte erhofft werden, was einstweilen noch wie ein feiner Traum vor der Seele der Besten schwebte: die Erringung einer wahren und echten, in sich selbst geschlossenen, bewussten Volkheit. (pp. 422-423.)

As the narrative ends, a shining future awaits the poet: "Goethe blickte empor. Rings umher, soweit er schauen konnte, lauter grüssende, funkelnde Sterne . . ." [ellipsis in the original]. (p. 424.)

As far as Goethe's love for Frau von Stein is concerned, Servaes sketches only incidents which conceivably could have taken place during the first two months of their acquaintanceship. However, for artistic purposes, in order to give his hero a sense of direction at the close, he incorporates Goethe's appointment to the privy council; for similar reasons he also considers it necessary to dispose of Lenz in the final book, who has been previously established as a serious problem for Goethe. Both of these events occurred historically several months later.

Servaes' experience with the drama is readily apparent in the construction of Jahr der Wandlung. He employs primarily a dramatic technique, attempting to supply as much information

as possible about his characters through their conversation. On the whole it might be said that his own comments appear almost on the order of stage directions. Only in the case of Frau von Stein, whom he evidently has some difficulty in portraying, since he seldom lets her appear or speak, does he find it expedient to provide rather lengthy descriptions. The character of Lili is more effectively drawn, although one might wish to question the author's capacity for insight into the feminine mind, especially when one encounters such profound observations as: "Lilis Feinsinn spürte, dass bei ihrem Freunde seelisch etwas nicht in Ordnung war." (p. 136.) It is to Servaes' credit that he usually is able to avoid such pitfalls. Occasionally, however, a false note rings from the conversations of his characters when they are forced to give details which might better be relegated to authorial comment. Goethe, for example, remarks to von Kalb concerning the condition of the roads: "Man kann's ja deutlich spüren, wie's über löcheriges Pflaster und durch Kotpfützen geht. Immer wieder wippen wir auf unseren Sitzen hin und her." (p. 322.) Such a statement, though it might be advantageous on the stage in order to explain the action to the audience, seems somewhat obtrusive in a novelistic conversation, since it is being made to a character who has no need for the information. An even more glaring instance of the false application of this dramatic technique occurs in a scene in which Klopstock tells Goethe where he, Goethe, put Klopstock's name in Werther:

> "Nie vergessen werde ich Ihnen auch die herrliche und tiefgefühlte Huldigung, die Sie mir in Ihrem Werther gespendet haben. Sie erinnern sich der Stelle: da wo

> Lotte und Werther nebeneinander am Fenster stehen und in das Zuschauen eines Gewitters versunken sind! Wie sich da das eine Wort aus ihrem Munde löst: 'Klopstock!' Niemals ist Stärkeres, Wuchtigeres in ähnlicher Knappheit gesagt worden!" (pp. 113-114.)

The effect is not only pedantic, but the probability of Klopstock's having uttered the last remark is extremely unlikely.

The author is considerably more convincing in the realistic detail which he injects into scenes, making them appear vividly before the eye and at the same time touching up his narrative picture with historical color. Usually a sentence or two is sufficient to establish the proper atmosphere, such as: "Hei, wie flogen da die beiden Soldknaben eiligst ans Tor, brachten es schlüsselrasselnd zum Öffnen und hoben den Schlagbaum hoch!" (p. 321) or: "Damit aber der Stadtdünkel von Weimar nicht gar zu hoch schwoll, bog soeben aus einer Seitengasse eine blökende Schafherde ein, die vor einem alten Hirten, unter Beihilfe eines umkreisenden Schäferhundes, über den Platz getrieben wurde." (p. 325.) These interpolations of historical detail form an integral part of the plot; that is, they exist not solely for the reader's benefit but for their impression on the protagonist:

> Als Goethe das Fürstenhaus verliess, empfing ihn beginnende Dämmerung. Ein alter Mann mit einer Leiter kroch schläfrig umher, stieg an Laternenpfählen empor, putzte die darin befindlichen Öllampen und setzte sie umständlich in Brand. Goethe blieb eine Weile stehen und schaute ihm zu, in Gedanken verloren. Dann setzte er sich langsam, den Parkanlagen zu, in Bewegung. (p. 345.)

Servaes also exhibits skill in his ability to point ahead, either to ensuing action within the narrative or to later events, without actually predicting. His early introduction of attitudes which will have additional meaning for

his protagonist in the final book has already been mentioned; occasionally, too, there is reference to an incident outside the scope of the novel. Fräulein von Göchhausen, for example, in an amusing scene, begs Goethe to let her make a copy of his "Faust," to which he finally agrees, although reluctantly; the author thoughtfully spares the reader here and in other similar instances from comment on its future significance.

In his technique, Servaes seems to combine elements which might be found, for example, in C. F. Meyer's and Jakob Wassermann's prose. Reminiscent of Meyer is the conscious organization into invisible acts within which the action is carried on, while the episodic, impressionistic style is somewhat similar to that of Wassermann. But he possesses neither the psychological subtlety of C. F. Meyer nor the sweeping panoramic verve of the great romancier Wassermann. There are no stylistic innovations, and Servaes seems to adhere rather stolidly to the time-honored formula for the German "Entwicklungsroman."

Jahr der Wandlung, then, provides a portrait of Goethe's love for Frau von Stein in its initial stage. It should be kept in mind, however, that this portrait is but a part of a larger one depicting Goethe as he strides through manifold experiences in a transitional year. Historically, the period covered is but two months; in the narrative, the Frau von Stein episode is contained in two short chapters. Very little actually happened in that time. Goethe and Charlotte met and became friends, but his love poems and letters did not begin until later. There may or may not have been a mutual

clarification of their feelings toward each other at this point. The best the author can do within the limited time span--and correctly, it would seem--is to give a vague hint of the direction and future significance which this new love will have. As Scheffler has pointed out, this ending is perhaps not as strong as it could be:

> Hier scheint mir auch eine der wenigsten Stellen, wo noch Reste von Romanhaftigkeit, von Stimmungsmache stehengeblieben sind . . . man möchte plötzlich keine Worte mehr um diese Sache geredet hören, man möchte entweder einen möglichst objektiven Tatsachenbericht oder ein Gedicht an Lida. . . .[6]

Of Goethe's two loves, Servaes is primarily interested in the first, with Lili, since Goethe's preoccupation with her covers a major portion of the year. The Frau von Stein portrait therefore does not receive as full a treatment in Jahr der Wandlung as it acquires in other novels in which the entire narrative is devoted to a portrayal of their love.

Eine Woche im Mai

It is not surprising to find that Gertrud Bäumer (1873-1954), sometime Goethe scholar, has tried her hand at a 405-page novel dealing with the Charlotte period. However, to discover that Gertrud Bäumer, leader of the "Frauenbewegung" and ardent champion for the role of woman in civil affairs, concentrates her narrative on the figure of Goethe rather than on Charlotte is noteworthy. The extent to which she has done this will become evident later. Among her services in the world of political affairs was the creation of the "Nationaler

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[6]Herbert Scheffler, loc. cit., p. 384.

Frauendienst" during the first World War. She later (1920) became a member of the German parliament, and with Helene Lange and Friedrich Naumann was publisher of "Die Hilfe" and "Die Frau," respectively. Miss Bäumer not only used her pen in establishing the groundwork for contemporary sociological theories with such works as: Die Frau in der Kulturbewegung der Gegenwart (1901), Die soziale Idee in den Weltanschauungen des 19. Jahrhunderts (1910), Die seelische Krisis (1924), Sinn und Form geistiger Führung (1929), Die Frau im neuen Lebensraum (1930), Heimatchronik während des Weltkrieges (1930), Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst der Frau (1933), and Neuer Weg der deutschen Frau (1946), but she also devoted considerable effort to studies of a historical-biographical nature: Fichte und sein Werk (1921), Die Frauengestalt der deutschen Frühe (1925), Männer und Frauen im geistigen Werden des deutschen Volkes (1934), Ich kreise um Gott (1935), Adelheid (1936), Krone und Kreuz (1938), Der Berg des Königs (1938), Gestalt und Wandel (1939), Die Macht der Liebe (1942), and Der Jüngling im Sternenmantel (1948), among others. Goethe has been a favorite theme and her interest in him has produced Goethes Freundinnen (1903), Goethes Satyros (Diss., 1905), Goethe--überzeitlich (1932), Drei göttliche Komödien des Abendlandes (1949), Frau Rath Goethe (1949), and Das geistige Bild Goethes im Licht seiner Werke (1950).[7] Eine Woche im Mai was first published in 1944 and in its eighth printing (1956) stands at

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[7]Biographical information from Dichter und Schriftsteller unserer Zeit, Franz Lennartz, ed. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1957).

73,000 copies.[8]

The period covered by the novel is from May 17 to 25, 1776--the first week which Goethe spent in his "Gartenhaus am Stern." In developing her narrative Miss Bäumer uses a "flash-back" technique somewhat reminiscent, for example, of Theodor Storm's Immensee. The story opens with Goethe's return to the Gartenhaus in May 1827 after an absence of years. It is just a few months after the death of Frau von Stein, and the house and its surroundings are pregnant with memories of her. Goethe makes a pilgrimage to the grotto where he had once carved in stone: "Hier gedachte still der Liebende seiner Geliebten." As he shuts his eyes, the past rushes in upon him:

> Und indem er die Augen schliesst, ist es ihm, als wenn alle Inhalte seines Innern, die Tausende von Gestalten, Bildern, Geistern, ihre Namen abwerfen und in dieses einzige Gefühl von der Unermesslichkeit und der stummen Gewalt des Lebens verschmelzen. Er wohnt an dem ewigen Born der Schöpfung, dem in unendlicher Fülle die Weisen und Formen des Lebens entquellen, von der Zeit aufgenommen, dennoch ewig und allgegenwärtig. Und so wird das Vergangene ihm als Gegenwart wiedergeschenkt. (p. 17.)

The Past becomes the Present--the scene now shifts to a week in May some fifty years previous, and the adventures, loves, joys, and sorrows of that period come to life in the present tense. From this point the narrative proceeds by "days" rather than by chapters, each day forming a separate division, except for the fifth and sixth which are combined into one. To promote the suggestion of dream-like reality in this part, Miss Bäumer employs a slightly unorthodox technique.

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[8]Gertrud Bäumer, Eine Woche im Mai (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag [Hermann Leins], 1944), 405 pp. Hereafter cited in this section by page number in the text.

Quotation marks as a means of distinguishing articulated speech have been omitted as well as paragraphing to indicate a change of speaker within a given conversation. The result is a blending of the spoken and unspoken word, of true dialogue and interior monologue. Although this method may at times produce a disconcerting effect, the justification for its use would appear to lie in the illusion established with the introduction. However, the author does not return to the Goethe of 1827, thus completing her "frame"--as one might expect--but concludes with an "Ausklang," an eighth day in the original week during which some of the previous events are reviewed as an aid in providing direction for the hero's future.

Basic in the structure of Eine Woche im Mai is the source material which has been utilized. The narrative is built on a framework obtained from entries in a journal which Goethe kept for Auguste Stolberg. These are incorporated as such and appear at appropriate intervals as Goethe briefly describes each day's activities for his friend. It is in connection with this journal that Miss Bäumer's creative imagination is displayed at its best. From a notation such as "machte eine Visite," for example, she builds an episode involving a meeting with Fritsch, who opposed Goethe's appointment to the privy council, with a resultant mutual understanding of the problems which lay ahead. Whether the historical Goethe was actually referring to such a meeting is immaterial; more important is that Miss Bäumer's interpretation is not only believable but convincing in line with the rest of her narrative.

The letters which Goethe wrote to Charlotte during this week also play a role, along with an occasional invented note to him from her. Again, these are incorporated as letters rather than as parts of conversation. This frank technique of presenting the sources for what they are lends a certain measure of authenticity to this novel which others unfortunately obtain to a lesser degree.

In addition to the journal and letters, the author has also made use of the poem "Warum gabst du uns die tiefen Blicke."[9] Miss Bäumer's Goethe possesses a copy in Charlotte's handwriting, dated April 14,[10] which he always carries with him in his breastpocket, closest to his heart. During the course of the first day, he takes it out and rereads it. The poem itself and his reflections upon it thus set the tone for their personal encounters throughout the rest of the narrative:

> Sein Gedicht in ihrer Handschrift. Warum hatte er sie darum gebeten? Als Trost in seiner brennenden Enttäuschung über die Art, wie sie es aufgenommen hatte? Dass irgendein bedeutungsloses, missverstanden zu ihr getragenes Wort von ihm sich dazwischenzustellen und den reinen Widerklang zu stören vermochte? (p. 30.)

Goethe had hoped that something in her handwriting, a slight hesitation, a mistraced curve perhaps, perceptible only to the loving heart, would betray the fact that she, too, felt the portent of the words, but her hand never falters, and suddenly he realizes the significance:

> Das "Wir" der letzten Verse weckt ihn. Er weiss--und fast scheint es nun, als wolle ihre klare Handschrift bestätigen--, dass sie es <u>nicht</u> mitspricht; die Tage,

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[9]See Chapter II, pp. 41-42, above.

[10]See Chapter II, p. 41, n. 29, above.

> nachdem das Gedicht in ihren Händen war, stehen da, als zerrisse ein Schleier über ihnen. Sie entzog sich ihm und liess ihn im Ungewissen. Um ein einzig Wort hatte er gebeten. Um ihren Namen auf ein Zettelchen, um nur etwas von ihr zu haben. Es schien, als ob sie nicht verstanden hatte, dass er in Wahrheit ihre Macht über ihn auf einen geheimnisvollen Bezug in abgelebten Zeiten zurückführte. Sie verstand es als dichterische Einkleidung seiner leidenschaftlichsten Wünsche. (p. 34.)

With the poem thus establishing the presence of some emotional conflict, individual lines recur to the protagonist during the course of the week as the conflict is either lessened or intensified. So skillfully are these introduced that the effect is almost that of a leitmotif.

In building her narrative upon these sources the author has used an approach which is unique among the Goethe-Charlotte fiction. Because of the nature of the subject matter, which would not conveniently lend itself to being told by a third person within the story--the observant bystander--nor by the dramatic "I," Miss Bäumer, along with the other authors, has chosen authorial omniscience as the point of view from which the reader is to be permitted to witness events. This much all of the novels have in common, in that the author rather than one of the characters narrates and controls the course of action. This technique would seem to be best suited to the theme, for the author then has the liberty of revealing inner character or of supplying his own comment at will. According to a study by Norman Friedman, however, we may distinguish between two general types of omniscience: multiple and selective.[11] With multiple omniscience the reader is

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[11]See Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction," p. 1177.

provided with a composite of viewing angles, the effect of which may vary with the degree of insight permitted into any one of a number of characters. Since the problematic element in the Charlotte period is one of its most attractive features, authors have naturally preferred to present their narratives from the standpoint of multiple omniscience.

Miss Bäumer's omniscience, on the other hand, is selective. Instead of having access to the minds of several characters as an aid in judging the developing action, the reader is forced to follow the course of the narrative through the eyes of only one, the protagonist, Goethe. Although this technique is difficult to manipulate successfully, in the skilled hands of Miss Bäumer it becomes a highly effective narrative device. The author never falters in the development of her point of view; her choice, moreover, aids in maintaining the illusion established in the beginning. Since most of the narrative is told as a "flashback," it seems quite natural that only Goethe's memory of the past should be presented to the exclusion of all others. While the point of view is restrictive, it is not as limiting as might be imagined. The reader has at his disposal the same information which the protagonist has--no more nor less--and, in a sense, "lives" the adventure of the novel with him. The author cannot, of course, use this technique to avoid development of other characters within this story. If the protagonist is to appear "real," and have at least some of the qualities of a living being, he must react to persons he meets, and in his reactions, much is revealed about the other character. Just as one may draw

conclusions about the thoughts of an acquaintance in real life through his overt actions, Miss Bäumer permits her Goethe to pass judgment on his contemporaries. Although the motivation compelling a certain action may frequently be lacking, the action itself, whether it be of major proportions or only a minor gesture, takes on added significance. Like the protagonist, the reader is forced to rely on what he sees. A closer analysis of the author's technique for revealing character other than that of her hero is warranted, especially with regard to her treatment of Frau von Stein. In the novel, Charlotte lives only in the eyes of Goethe, yet through her influence on him, she has a personality of her own:

> Charlotte hatte nachdenklich zugehört. Wir werden verheiratet, ehe wir geliebt haben, seufzt sie. Es ist ein grosser Irrtum, dass die Liebe unter solchen Umständen in der Ehe noch aufblühen wird. Das Gegenteil ist viel häufiger, dass die Tore dafür durch die Ehe selbst verschlossen sind. Goethe sieht sie aufmerksam an, aber sie denkt jetzt nur an Karl August und Luise. Ihr klares und bewegliches Gesicht drückt nichts andres aus als die Teilnahme für das Herzogspaar. (pp. 193-194.)

Miss Bäumer makes it clear in this and other instances that it is Charlotte's <u>expression</u> which gives Goethe the key to what she is really thinking. In a similar manner, her fictional Goethe determines the position which he must take with respect to Charlotte's husband, von Stein:

> Der Oberstallmeister trinkt mit Behagen den gekühlten Wein . . . es wird seiner vornehmen und selbstsicheren Natur nicht schwer, weitherzig zu sein. Er strahlt eine freundliche Gelassenheit aus, die ihrer einzigartigen Verbundenheit einen beruhigten Raum zuzugestehen scheint, den Raum seines unbegrenzten Vertrauens zu seiner Frau. Dieser Doppelsinn seiner Haltung bedeutet Freiheit und Bindung zugleich. (p. 98.)

Throughout the novel Miss Bäumer employs this same

technique with other characters. Her method of characterization might be termed, in a sense, a modern variation of the type used by Fontane. In place of Fontane's typical and revealing dialogues, however, there is a much greater evidence here of "erlebte Rede," which, of course, is quite in keeping with the modern trend in narrative technique. In some respects, too, Miss Bäumer has much in common with Ricarda Huch, both in background and range of intellectual interests (historical studies). But her prose has a more masculine and sober undertone; it lacks above all the neo-romantic emotional spirit and poetic intensity of Ricarda Huch's imagery.

Although the author does not give the impression of being overly concerned with the presentation of historical flavor or local color, she has ably caught the spirit of the times as an array of colorful figures parade across the pages. All Weimar seems to have turned out in full splendor to greet the poet: Karl August, the Duchesses Luise and Anna Amalia, Charlotte's family, her parents, von Stein, Luise von Göchhausen, Emilie von Werthern, Wieland, among others; even Klopstock has his role when Goethe writes his scathing reply to the elder poet's rebuke for the alleged licentious activities in Weimar. Yet these figures do not clutter up the scene or detract from the main course of the narrative; they are each a legitimate part of Weimar and the society with which Goethe must come to terms. Each therefore has a specific function within the narrative, as the protagonist reacts to the conversation, dress, mannerisms, attitudes, or even position represented. The author devotes little attention to

description of external appearance, unless for some reason her Goethe is impressed by such. Mention of dress, for example, a technique frequently employed by writers of fiction as a means of revealing character or lending historical flavor, is kept to a minimum in Eine Woche im Mai; such reference is made at irregular intervals merely to remind the reader of the era in which the fictional characters are living.

Most significant of these secondary characters is, of course, Frau von Stein. Goethe's feelings for her are summed up in a conversation in which he compares her with other women of Weimar, particularly with Duchess Luise:

> Und dafür fehlt es Luise an Verständnis. Vielleicht können Frauen uns da überhaupt nicht verstehen--er sieht Charlotte zu, wie sie sicher und geschickt das gebratene Huhn zerlegt--doch, liebe Frau, verbessert er sich. Sie durchschauen uns, Ihnen bleibt nichts dunkel, Sie sehen, wie die Fäden laufen, die sich verknäulten, und können sie lösen! (p. 194.)

Yet Goethe's love for Charlotte as depicted in this novel is but a part of a broader theme which might be stated as youth seeking clarification: of his status in a new society, of his love, and of his goal in life. Miss Bäumer uses the episode with Fritsch and its felicitous outcome to establish Goethe's position in government circles. His recognition of his duty not to betray Karl August's confidence and trust firmly implants him in court society. Although there are still difficulties which will have to be resolved, indications are that this can be done without creating too much antagonism. A production of "Erwin und Elmire" which is being prepared for the court theater provides the means of illustrating Goethe's early self-appraisal as an artist. Finally, in his adoration

for Frau von Stein, Miss Bäumer's Goethe experiences in its beginning stages the influence which her mature love will have:

> . . . und so kehrt der unruhige Kreislauf seiner Gedanken zu der Geliebten zurück, die seit dem entscheidenden 7. November seiner Ankunft in Weimar seinem Herzen ein überschwengliches Leben geschenkt hat. Ein neues Leben--nicht nur den heissen, stürmischen Pulsschlag der Leidenschaft, sondern zugleich die nie erlebte läuternde Macht einer reifen Liebe. (p. 102.)

Miss Bäumer, moreover, prefers to use the narrative action rather than authorial comment to show the manner in which this love is expressed. At the dramatic highpoint, in a scene at a festival held in honor of Prince Konstantin, Charlotte feels her reputation offended when Goethe, after returning the flirting of several other women, asks her to dance with him. Her indignation, though it may seem exaggerated to the modern mind, is in keeping with the picture as Miss Bäumer presents it and could conceivably have come from the historical Frau von Stein, who along with Duchess Luise, formed a staunch pillar to uphold and preserve virtue among the court society. This incident, along with an ensuing difference of opinion brought out in a conversation between Goethe and Charlotte, is employed by Miss Bäumer as the instigation for Goethe's letter of May 24: "Also auch das Verhältniss . . . auch das gestört!"[12]

Goethe has presumably achieved the clarification he was seeking on all counts when the author leaves him at the end of the narrative with arms outstretched, ready to receive the future:

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[12]See Chapter II, p. 36, above.

> Und schon, so scheint es ihm, hat er seine Existenz mit all ihren Inhalten hier eingesenkt. Schon konnte er sich nicht mehr vorstellen, dass er einmal dieses Tal verlassen würde. Der letzte Blick zum Fenster hinaus umfasst die dämmernde Landschaft, so wie er ahnungsvoll die Hände zu den Göttern ausstreckt, um die unbegrenzte Fülle seines Lebens zu empfangen. (p. 405.)

Remembering the introduction, the reader has the assurance that Miss Bäumer believes Charlotte's love did indeed have a far-reaching effect and was everything which Goethe expected it to be.

Karlsbader Novelle

In 1929 Edwin Guido Kolbenheyer (1878--) brought out a little volume entitled Kämpfender Quell,[13] which was intended as a tribute to his mother's native Karlsbad. The three parts of the book, "Mythus," "Befreiung," and "Sinter," each independent yet united with the others by a common setting, may be interpreted as symbolic of corresponding stages in human life or civilization. The first consists of a series of poems, emphasizing the mythical birth of life, the second is the "Karlsbader Novelle," while "Weihnachten eines Sonderlings," a story of decadence, comprises the third section. Of the three, the "Karlsbader Novelle" has enjoyed sufficient popularity to be reprinted separately in 1935 and has since appeared in several other editions. It is, to be sure, one of Kolbenheyer's minor works, his reputation being based primarily on novels such as Amor Dei ("Ein Spinoza-Roman," 1903) and

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[13] Edwin Guido Kolbenheyer, Kämpfender Quell (München: 1929). Edition used here: Karlsbader Novelle, in the series Die kleine Bücherei, No. 32 (München: Langen & Müller, [n.d.]), 78 pp. Hereafter cited in this section by page number in the text.

the Paracelsus trilogy (Die Kindheit des Paracelsus [1912], Das Gestirn des Paracelsus [1922], and Das dritte Reich des Paracelsus [1925]), the drama, Giordano Bruno (1903), as well as a number of essays of a biological-naturalistic nature which were finally combined into one volume, Die Philosophie der Bauhütte (1952). Yet his skill as a writer of biographical fiction permits the Novelle to take its place among the more successful attempts at rendering a fictionalized picture of Goethe.

The Novelle has received rather detailed consideration from Günter Kabitzky in an article "Kolbenheyers Goethebild," in which it is viewed as one aspect of a threefold attempt by Kolbenheyer, a modern writer, at an "Auseinandersetzung" with the world and ideas of Germany's greatest poet and thinker from a previous century.[14] Although slightly tinged with implications from the political scene under which they were written, Kabitzky's comments have some merit; in the main he has caught the spirit of the narrative and has given it a lucid interpretation. In the light of our discussion, however, in comparison with the rest of the Goethe fiction, there are some points of interest in the Novelle, which need to be held up for inspection and clarification; there are also a few of Kabitzky's comments which unfortunately are subject to dispute.

For his narrative, Kolbenheyer has selected a period

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[14]Günter Kabitzky, "Kolbenheyers Goethebild," Goethe, Viermonatsschrift der Goethe-Gesellschaft, IV (1939), 288-305.

to which ordinarily little attention is devoted, either by writers or scholars: the few weeks which Goethe, in the company of Charlotte, Karl August, the Herders, and other friends, spent in Karlsbad in the summer of 1786 immediately preceding his flight to Italy. This period, brief as it was, is generally considered to be merely an interlude, an inconvenient one, if you will, during which Goethe, chafing under the delay in his proposed journey, attempted in vain to finish material for the first four volumes of his collected works which had been promised his publisher. While this perspective is to some extent justified, since the revision of his works was uppermost in the poet's mind, it leaves one major question unanswered: Why did Goethe take the trouble to go to Karlsbad at all? He could have continued his revisions in Weimar, or, this failing, have proceeded directly to Italy and finished there, which he subsequently did anyway. Kolbenheyer's answer, given in his interpretation of the Karlsbad episode, though by no means radical, is a refreshing and credible one: Karlsbad was necessary for Goethe, almost as necessary as Weimar and Italy, once his decision had been made, to provide a transition between the old and the new. He could not break away from Weimar as he had done from Wetzlar:

> Aber es war die Zeit vorbei, in der er von den Stätten seines Herzens und seiner Hand mit Werthergefühlen fortgebraust wäre. Schön sollte der Abschied sein, heiter und beruhigt. Er wollte keinem Schicksale durchbrennen. Er durfte bei all der inneren Unrast ein gerundetes, bereinigtes Leben hinter sich lassen und auch ein neues finden, unbedrängt von einer nie erlösten Liebe, ungehemmt von den engenden Ämtern eines Herzogtums: seinen Freunden aber ein wohlbewahrtes, sammelndes Erholen für die Zeit einer möglichen Wiederkehr. Wiederkehr--vielleicht. (p. 8.)

"Wiederkehr"--the possibility of returning--this distinguishes 1786 from 1772.

This, then, is the essence of the Karlsbader Novelle: Goethe is seeking a bridge to carry him from Weimar to Italy, and the plot revolves around his attempt to find it. In his restlessness he sometimes doubts his own subconscious motives for leaving:

> Vielleicht war, was er so ruhevoll als einen Weg der Klärung und Vollendung vor sich wähnte,--wie hatte er doch gelernt, seine Drangsale zu kühlen und zu schlichten!--doch nur die Flucht: Abstand zu finden von alle dem, was in diesem Jahrzehnt an der Seite Lottens bis auf den Grund der letzten bildnerischen Möglichkeit ausgeformt worden war . . . . (pp. 34-35.)

He also realizes that he and Charlotte during the past few oppressing weeks, even months, in Weimar have been drawing further and further apart. Their vacation in Karlsbad, which he hoped would alter this situation, serves if anything to heighten the distance between them. Yet Kolbenheyer's Goethe is cognizant of one factor of great personal importance to him: he still needs Charlotte, almost desperately; he needs her and all that she stands for as a protection against the excesses of the South:

> Da hätte er dann für eine umschleierte Zukunft, die wie ein Abenteuer seine Seele entspannen und erfüllen sollte, etwas von den heimischen Kräften des Nordens mit in den Süden getragen, dessen Sinnlichkeit nicht nur lösend, sondern auch auflösend wirken konnte! (pp. 33-34.)

Thus, instead of fleeing from Charlotte, the Goethe of the Karlsbader Novelle consciously and deliberately tries to isolate a cure, a hint, whether it be only a word, a gesture, the intuitive transmission of a mood, which will help him to re-establish and strengthen the former bond between them. His

bridge he hopes to find in Karlsbad, but the bridge is to be Charlotte herself.

The basic structure of the narrative is a simple one. It is divided into four parts with no apparent dramatic intent other than the effective indication of lapse in time. It opens with Goethe approaching Karlsbad and closes with his departure. Though a certain element of suspense concerning Goethe's search for peace of mind is deftly woven into the plot, the action never heightens to a dramatic climax; one has the impression at the end of the Novelle that conditions are very much the same as they were in the beginning. In regard to the climax, we must disagree with Kabitzky, who attaches such great importance to a sudden "decision" which Goethe makes near the end of the Novelle. This decision, Kabitzky feels, does not come as a result of the previous action and is not motivated by anything which has so far happened to Goethe.[15] This would seem to be a somewhat exaggerated interpretation of Kolbenheyer's use of the word "plötzlich." By chance Goethe

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[15]"[Der Dichter trennt] das Voraufgegangene von dem plötzlich befreienden Entschluss und erreicht dadurch, dass dieser Entschluss nicht als eine Folge vorhergegangener Gespräche erscheint, sondern aus sich selbst heraus verstanden werden muss . . . . Der Entschluss ist plötzlich da . . . . Alles Vorhergegangene war nur Spiegel des Lebens; das Geschehen selbst liegt tiefer, liegt nicht im Bereich menschlicher Willenswirkung. Die überraschende Veränderung [italics mine], die plötzlich mit Goethe vorgegangen ist, das ist das Eigenartige in dieser Novelle. Eine solche Gestaltung des Goethebildes steht der Auffassung einer freien, selbstherrlichen Persönlichkeit diametral gegenüber. In der Novelle hat Goethe selbst gar nichts zu diesem neuen 'Werde' seines Selbst beigetragen. Es ist an ihm getan worden. Es ist mit ihm etwas vorgegangen. Plötzlich ist er ein anderer geworden, jünger, entschlussfreudiger, die schweren Gedanken sind von ihm abgefallen."--Kabitzky, loc. cit., p. 294.

encounters a coach heading south and makes arrangements to travel along. In this sense, it is a sudden decision. But he has been determined to go to Italy from the very beginning; it is simply a question as to whether his last few days with Charlotte will be as pleasant as he has anticipated.

Furthermore, the course of the action moves directly forward to the time when he will leave. At a point much earlier, after Goethe has read from Iphigenie to Charlotte, Karl August, and a group of Weimar friends, he knows the path which he must take: ". . . und dann: frei durch die Kunst!" (p. 58.) He is no longer drifting: "Manche Antwort sank aus der erhellten Nacht dieses Tales, und er war voll Hoffnung, denn er hatte erlebt, dass er schenken konnte." (p. 58.) Paradoxically, it is not Karlsbad but Weimar which gives him his answer: "Weimar war in Karlsbad gewesen, und Karlsbad war für Stunden untergegangen. Was ihnen allen Weimar bedeutete, wie sehr hing es an ihm! Durch ihn bestimmt, trug er es." (p. 58.) Once his two closest friends from Weimar, Charlotte and Karl August, have departed, there is nothing in Karlsbad to hold him any longer: "Als des andern Tages darauf Karl August die Thermenstadt nach einem Abschiede verlassen hatte, . . . fühlte er [Goethe] seiner Ungeduld kaum eine Schranke mehr gesetzt" (p. 74); hence comes Goethe's seemingly abrupt decision to leave. In fact, he has been eager to be on his way throughout the narrative and now simply seizes the first opportunity which presents itself. Nowhere is there any indication that Goethe is vacillating in his original decision, which was crystallized before his arrival in Karlsbad.

In spite of the scene near the end in which Goethe pays tribute to Karlsbad for having provided a secure haven, not all of his expectations have been fulfilled. When Charlotte leaves to return to Weimar a few days after the reading of Iphigenie, they have been drawn no closer together. As Kabitzky points out,[16] the gulf is actually widened by Charlotte when she states that she cannot be a "home" for Goethe: "Ein Mensch kann des andern Heimat nicht sein, just eine Frau des Mannes Heimat nicht. Heimat ist Geborgensein . . . ." (p. 65.) And later: "Wir haben unsere Herzen an dich verloren, und du hast das deine behalten. Darum hast du keine Heimat." (p. 67.) But Kolbenheyer's Goethe does not agree:

> "Aber es gibt noch eine andere Heimat: das Menschentum, das man gewonnen hat . . . . Seid ihr's nicht alle, meine Heimat, und du vor allen? Muss ich nicht meiner Seele ganze Kraft anspannen wollen, diese Heimat stets neu zu erobern?" (p. 69.)

At her departure, a few threads are left dangling, perhaps deliberately, for Karlsbad was, after all, not the decisive period in their relationship. Considering Charlotte's viewpoint, it is doubtful whether Goethe has found his "bridge," but he is satisfied on at least one point: ". . . der bängste Abschied war genommen, und das Ziel der nächsten Wochen und Monate--er wusste jetzt, dass es Monate sein würden--war unverlautet geblieben." (p. 71.)

The over-all effect of the Novelle, however, is idyllic rather than dramatic, and one should not search too deeply for hidden meanings. In this respect it would seem that Kabitzky

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[16]Kabitzky, loc. cit., pp. 292-293.

has gone a little too far in his discussion. As the title indicates, the Novelle essentially concerns Karlsbad rather than Goethe. The love of Goethe and Charlotte is merely the means by which Kolbenheyer illustrates the story of Karlsbad. They are the figures he sets into the landscape he is painting. This statement is not meant to imply that the characters do not receive adequate treatment or attention from the author, but it is obvious that Kolbenheyer's first love is for Karlsbad. One might well suggest with Julius Petersen that Karlsbad itself is the real protagonist of the story.[17]

Kabitzky is correct in observing that the comparison of Goethe's life with the turbulent underground spring ("kämpfender Quell"), a parallel which runs throughout the Novelle, is not merely a symbol which reflects the course of action in the narrative; it is the midpoint of the action itself.[18] All life in the spa centers around this spring; it determines not only the economic condition but also the character of the inhabitants. Goethe, too, is drawn under its spell. Allusions to a thirst for its healing waters occur again and again: "Ihn brannte mehr als je der Durst nach neuen Menschen" (p. 21); "Er musste Menschen haben können, die er austrinken konnte, sein Selbst zu überweiten" (p. 21); "Und er hatte es bis auf

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[17]"Und in Kolbenheyers 'Karlsbader Novelle' führen Goethe und Charlotte v. Stein einen gedämpften Dialog, der fein abgestimmt ist nach der Sprache der Briefe, der aber keine dramatischen Wirkungen in menschlichen Leidenschaftsausbrüchen anstrebt, sondern dem bei aller Bewegung ruhenden Schauplatz Karlsbad die eigentliche Hauptrolle überlässt."--Julius Petersen, "Kleist im Roman," Jahrbuch der Kleist-Gesellschaft, p. 121.

[18]Kabitzky, loc. cit., p. 290.

die Hefe getrunken, dieses Weimar, und hatte alle nur durstiger gemacht." (p. 21.) Even Charlotte compares Goethe to the spring:

> Sie aber--Seligkeit, an die sich kaum ihre Sehnsucht gewagt hätte--vermochte den edlen Quell zu fassen und in ihre Hände zu schöpfen, die vordem leer geblieben waren, so oft sie sie verlangend zur Schale gerundet hatte. Nicht ohne Opfer war es ihr geworden, mehr wehren hatte sie müssen, als empfangen können, und so war Goethe, je weiter er an Form und Vollendung gewann, stiller geworden. Aus der heissen Quelle ein See, der die Ereignisse seines Ufers spiegelte und seltener, so selten, in seiner wilden Herrlichkeit zur Wallung kam. Sie ahnte, fühlte, wusste mehr und mehr: auch sie stand nur am Ufer. (p. 33.)

Kolbenheyer lovingly paints his picture of Karlsbad in great detail. Nothing is neglected; the buildings, the stores, the shops, the statue on the market-place, the hills, the houses, even the pavement of the streets, all receive due mention. In one instance he enumerates twenty-one articles which can be seen in the window of a modiste shop. Not satisfied with a mere physical description, Kolbenheyer, through Goethe, introduces a dissertation on home industry, on the character of the inhabitants, on the influence of the transient population of well-to-do guests upon the natives. Though these divergences, while interesting, may detract somewhat from the artistic merit of his work, Kolbenheyer can perhaps be forgiven for his excesses, for the story was written for Karlsbad, and it is indeed a fitting tribute to the town.[19]

One of the problems which confronts the writer of fiction is in the realm of characterization. In the case of

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[19]In one instance 10 pages are devoted entirely to description while the reader is left to wonder what has happened to Goethe and his friends.

historical and especially biographical fiction, the problem is particularly acute, for the author has to deal with the characterization of people who have actually lived, who have already drawn their own personalities in real life.[20] If the characters are well-known figures, the author has to contend not only with preconceived notions on the part of his reader but also with the possibility that the latter may know more about the characters than he does. Unfortunately, too few writers have been able to overcome this obstacle, although the solution is rather obvious; if the writer avails himself of the sources which exist and steeps himself thoroughly in background material, there is little danger he will be accused of distorting fact, provided he has some degree of intellectual honesty. Kolbenheyer does not fail his reader in this respect; he handles his narrative in an original fashion without committing serious injury to actual events. Within the short span of the Novelle, which span itself is greatly shortened when one considers the amount of space devoted to the description of Karlsbad, Kolbenheyer has included more fact and has more effectively told the story of the love of Goethe and Charlotte, with all its joy and tragedy, than some others have been able to accomplish in much lengthier accounts.

In the delineation of character Kolbenheyer proves himself to be a past master. First of all, he uses the framework of the Novelle, which by some might be considered a restriction,

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[20]"Es ist die Gefahr des historischen Romans . . . dass er ein bereits zur Dichtung gewordenes Leben nochmals zu einer Dichtung machen will."--Bernhard Knauss, "Über die historische Figur im Roman," Die Literatur, XLIII (November 1940), 53.

to his advantage; he limits his characterization primarily to Goethe and Charlotte. Minor figures are, of course, introduced, but he gives them only enough attention to establish them as individual personalities--a few words are usually sufficient for this purpose--then returns to his main characters, above all to Goethe. The protagonist himself enters the narrative in the first sentence, as an unidentified "er." The reader gets a view of him through the eyes of strangers, Herr Richter and Kandidat Henze, who see only the external bearing of the man. The focus of the narrative then shifts to Christian Vogel, who as his secretary, has more intimate knowledge but also is cognizant only of the outward Goethe. Through Vogel events preceding this trip are reviewed and the poet's ostensible reason for coming to Karlsbad is established. Only then does Kolbenheyer direct the reader toward insight into the protagonist himself. The focus is now centered directly on him and remains there throughout the narrative with but one brief lapse when the author permits the reader to spend a moment alone with Charlotte, after Goethe has left, in order to have the benefit of the views of the one person who knows perhaps as much about the poet as he does himself. Thus the author carefully outlines and then fills in his portraiture. As the narrative continues, no phase of the protagonist's personality is neglected. He appears as the stiff "Geheimrat," lover, naturalist, gallant courtier, poet, and is even shown in his considerate attitude toward the natives of Karlsbad. Charlotte, too, receives due treatment, but only as much as is necessary to clarify her position in the emotional conflict

her friend appears to be undergoing.

One of the difficulties in characterization is closely linked with the use of dialogue. In any type of fiction, the writing of dialogue demands the utmost in craftsmanship. A well-drawn character frequently can reveal more in his speech than the author can do with any amount of exposition. The problem is, what should the figures of biographical fiction say? If a figure such as Goethe is permitted to speak banalities, though he may have done so at times in real life, the reader will be unconvinced. On the other hand, if the protagonist is allowed to quote himself, that is, from his letters or his writings, the result will be just as ineffective, for there is a great difference between the spoken and the written word. In this area lies the greatest weakness of biographical fiction. Kolbenheyer, however, has deftly met the challenge of dialogue and of the handling of his source material, Goethe's letters. Working on the assumption that any two people when they meet after a separation of several weeks' duration will talk about what has happened in the meantime, Kolbenheyer introduces items from the letters, not as new information which is being told for the first time, but as a continuation of a previous statement. For example, when Charlotte asks what he has brought her, Goethe replies: "Mich, Lotte, für einige Tage nur mich, Herdern, Karolinen und Gustl ziehe ich nach. Das andre--du weisst es aus den Briefen." (p. 18.) This, then, provides the opening for a discussion of Charlotte's family, the illness of her son Ernst, and the general state of affairs in Weimar. The author is justified

in using this technique, for Goethe in his letters frequently mentions some occurrence of interest with the promise to fill in the detail later. In one instance Kolbenheyer finds it expedient to have Goethe quote directly from a letter, but again, it is not presented as an original statement; he lets the reader know that both Goethe and Charlotte realize it has been said before:

> "Dir bleibt ein Recht, so zu reden, Lotte, denn man will zu viel von dir. Ich wünsche deine ganze Seele, dein ganzes Herz, ich wünsche--und die andern können das fordern. Ich werde nicht ohne deine Liebe leben. Ich habe es dir hundertmal gesagt, und es scheint mir zu wenig oft."
> . . . Sie sagte: "Ja, du wiederholst dich, mein Freund." (pp. 19-20.)

In general the dialogue leaves one with the impression that all this has been said before, an effort for which Kolbenheyer appears to have striven deliberately, as though to show in this manner that the two central figures are reviewing recent events so each may be able to clarify his relationship to the other.

The Novelle, as indicated, is a labor of love, a monument to his mother's birthplace, and as such might not be expected to contain an elucidation of the metaphysical foundation of life as it is deposited in Die Philosophie der Bauhütte. Nevertheless, there is evident in this miniature epic an undertone of the author's philosophy: Kolbenheyer's Goethe flees to Italy out of what might be termed metaphysical necessity for self-preservation.

While one might question the application of the term "Novelle" to this little work--it lacks a true "Wendepunkt"

and contains expository material out of proportion to the dramatic element and might therefore more correctly be termed "Erzählung"--there can be no doubt that Kolbenheyer has produced a most accurate and effective fictionalized picture of the love of Goethe and Charlotte. A parallel employed by the author sums up their fate more vividly than others have been able to do with volumes. When Charlotte leaves Karlsbad for Weimar, the author offers as a closing remark: "Charlotte von Stein fuhr in den Abend" (p. 71)--into the evening of life; while the world lies open to Goethe at his departure: "Er lächelte leise, froh der gelungenen Flucht und des vereitelten Abschieds, sank leise, von dem wohlgefederten Wagen gewiegt, in Schlummer und--fuhr in den Morgen." (p. 78.)

Goethe: Der Roman von seiner Erweckung

A decided contrast to Kolbenheyer's interpretation is presented in a two-volume novel by Albert von Trentini (1878-1933), Goethe: Der Roman von seiner Erweckung.[21] It is but one of a number of novels by this South-Tyrolean lawyer, who began his writing career in 1908 with the publication of Der grosse Frühling, followed by Der Sieg der Jungfrau (1910), Comtesse Tralala (1911), Lobesamgasse (1913), Der letzte Sommer (1913), and a collection of Novellen, Stunden des Lebens (1913). Trentini also tried his hand at writing tragedy with

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[21]Albert von Trentini, Goethe: Der Roman von seiner Erweckung (München: Georg D. W. Callwey, 1923), 2 vols., 395 & 381 pp. Hereafter cited in this section by volume and page number in the text.

Das Paradies (1924).[22]

Chronologically, Trentini's Goethe is the first of the twentieth-century attempts to portray Goethe and Frau von Stein in fiction and as such set the pace for subsequent authors. Historically, it has achieved a distinction which few biographical novels enjoy. At the time of its appearance in 1923 the field of biography as a whole was in a state of violent upheaval. In the area of literature scholars were beginning to re-evaluate the previously held concept of Goethe, which had amounted to unquestioning adulation rather than understanding. Following the trend in biography established by men such as Lytton Strachey, and strongly under the influence of the new Freudian psychology, Trentini produced a work of fiction which is actually regarded as being a major factor in removing the poet from the untouchable Olympic pedestal on which the previous century had placed him.[23] The means by which he has done this are somewhat unorthodox, as they had to be to create the desired effect. His work is a brilliant display of a powerful if undisciplined imagination. He has no imitators among the novelists treated here; this fact alone is sufficient to warrant our close examination of his writing techniques; the historical significance of his work makes it

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[22]Biographical information according to W. Kosch, op. cit.

[23]". . . Albert von Trentini, der einen Goethe-Roman wagte; freilich keinen respektlosen, sondern einen ehrfürchtigen, der gleichwohl die Gipsbüste des 'Olympiers' zerstiess und den hüllenlosen Menschen in der Stunde einer grossen Entscheidung mit noch recht expressiven Kunstmitteln vor Augen führte."--Heinz Kindermann, Das Goethebild des XX. Jahrhunderts, p. 293.

doubly worth our attention.

The two volumes of the narrative have been divided into six and four "books" respectively. The use of the term "book" rather than "chapter" is at least partially justified, for the author has chosen to depict various stages in Goethe's "Erweckung" (each bearing a symbolic title), which, though related by what appears to be a form of internal logic, are not necessarily dependent on one another in terms of the external action. For the purposes of the present discussion it is significant that the bulk of the narration involving the mutual interaction of the figures of Goethe and Frau von Stein is concentrated in the first, second, and tenth books, while the remaining seven are devoted chiefly to Goethe's personal development away from her.

The reader who comes to Trentini's novel seeking the facts of Goethe's life will either be greatly disappointed or confused or both. Unless he is thoroughly acquainted with the details of the Italian journey beforehand, he will find little guidance from the narrative itself, although it is built on a sound framework of facts. Trentini uses a broad outline based on Goethe's diary, that is, he lays his scenes in Karlsbad, Venice, Rome, Naples, Palermo, etc., in the correct historical sequence, but the episodes which make up the narrative are derived primarily from minor incidents mentioned in Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein. Under Trentini's pen, these incidents, such as the historical Goethe's encounter with the

Frenchman,[24] his interest in the Doge,[25] the songs of Venetian women to the fishermen returning from the sea,[26] the Moritz episode,[27] or the murderous attacks on innocent men in the streets of Rome,[28] are all dramatized into a symbolic experience for the fictional hero. From the inconspicuous fact that Goethe was toying with the idea of writing a Nausikaa drama while in Palermo as a monument to his stay in Sicily, Trentini has drawn up a half-real, half-visionary episode comprising the entire seventh book "Zeichen."[29]

In basing his narrative on these minor events, the author shows his preference for the transformation which the protagonist undergoes rather than for the external action he performs. Among the stylistic means employed to illustrate this inner development is the generous utilization of dreams and visions. This, too, has a factual basis. In a letter of

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[24]Letter from Goethe to Frau von Stein, October 8, 1786; Trentini, I, 126f.

[25]Goethe to Charlotte, October 7, 1786; Trentini, I, 176f.

[26]Goethe to Charlotte, October 7, 1786; Trentini, I, 167f.

[27]Goethe to Charlotte, November 24, 1786; December 14-16, 1786; January 6, 1787; Trentini, I, 245f.

[28]Goethe to Charlotte, November 24, 1786; Trentini, I, 275f.

[29]"Sein schon früher entworfener Plan eines Nausikaadramas, in dem die phäakische Königstochter in unglücklicher Liebe zu Odysseus zugrunde gehen sollte, wurde neu hervorgeholt und sorgfältiger durchgearbeitet, ja einige Stellen wurden bereits ausgeführt. Er wünschte, dass die Dichtung in ihrer Naturstimmung ein Denkmal seines sizilischen Insellebens werde. Leider kam das zarte Werk auf dem Papier über die palermitanischen Anfänge nicht hinaus."--Albert Bielschowsky, Goethe: Sein Leben und seine Werke, revised by Walther Linden, I, 401.

December 20, 1787 to Charlotte, Goethe mentions that he has had a bad dream. Needless to say, Trentini makes the most of this item. It appears to be his favorite method of analysis and might be said to form the actual substance of the novel. A closer view of the intricate construction of the thematic action will give some indication of the extent to which Trentini applies this device.

The first book, "Mauer," is used to establish the basis for the subsequent narrative; in the span of one day's activities the forces which were surrounding Goethe during his last months in Weimar in 1786 are brought to the fore. A scene depicting a meeting of the privy council effectively dramatizes Goethe's difficulties in the area of governmental affairs involving the personal antagonism of other officials of state, the pettiness and smugness of which bureaucracy can be capable, and the preponderous amount of time required by routine matters--in short, his general dissatisfaction with the duties contingent upon his position as "Geheimrat." The introduction of two students who follow the poet supplies information that this is not the "real" Goethe. A scene with Karl August serves to intensify the impression given by the students and produces another side of the "wall": Goethe's inability to find the time or inspiration for his art. This scene also contributes certain other facts necessary for the continuation of the narrative, such as the projected trip to Karlsbad. At the home of Charlotte von Stein troubles temporarily fade away until she interrupts him in the relating of an anecdote, thereby convincing him that she no longer understands him. A

rejected passionate attempt to seal the bond of their affection evokes anger and resentment on the part of Goethe, while Frau von Stein displays first righteous indignation, then amusement and a degree of coquetry. The final brick in the wall is cemented into place by a vision which the poet has on his way home--Charlotte, symbolized by a rose, appears to surround him. The sight of young Fritz von Stein asleep temporarily distracts him, but a vision of the truths of life convinces him that he must make his escape. As a contributory factor in this decision Trentini has also introduced a weather element.[30]

In the second book, "Flucht," taking place in Karlsbad, Trentini covers the period from Goethe's last farewell to Charlotte at Schneeberg to his departure for Italy several weeks later. The emphasis here is on his literary activity, specifically on his own dissatisfaction, amounting almost to despair, with his previous accomplishments. Scenes with Herder and Karl August serve to establish further the basis for Goethe's flight and to show, by contrast, the necessity of this abrupt action for his intellectual and emotional survival while his friends can continue their existence in Weimar.

The author uses Book Three, "Freie," for which the setting is Venice, to illustrate initial manifestations of the change in Goethe's views. The rejection of his former ideas concerning architecture is reflected in the encounter with the Frenchman, Villet. Other incidents convince him that his

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[30]It rains throughout this first book.

personal problem in affairs of the heart is not unique, thereby enabling him to gain a beneficial degree of distance. The ramifications and direction of this new freedom being as yet undecided, Trentini's Goethe is beset by feelings of guilt for having run away. To record his scruples of conscience and feelings of guilt, the author elects to have his protagonist, as a gesture of consolation and with veiled erotic intentions, tell the story of Margarethe to a deserted fisher girl; this incident in turn as a subconscious echo becomes the basis for a dream in which Karl August symbolizing his official duties, Herder his literary ambitions, and Charlotte his emotional obligations appear to reprimand him:

> Des Herzogs Miene war wie Gewitterhimmel. "Also deshalb bist Du mir durchgegangen?" Wie ein Messer stach Herders spotttriefender Blick: "Um Romanzen zu erleben?" Charlotte aber,--die Empörung der welt-ausgespieenen Kreatur flammte in ihren Pupillen. "Wer ist mehr Margarethe," schrie sie ihn tobsüchtig an, "ich oder sie?" (I, 168.)

Continuing dream sequences of a nightmarish quality give further expression to his uncertainty. All of these dreams and nightmares occur in transit to Rome. The title of this book has some justification, for through dreams and compassion Trentini's fictional Goethe undergoes a partial catharsis: "Als er dort angekommen, sei er noch ein Stein gewesen; als er fortging, vor acht Tagen--ein Mensch." (I, 175.)

In Rome conversations with Tischbein and others foreshadow new directions in the classical period. Trentini devotes Book Four, "Ahnung," to Goethe's gaining an insight into Italian art and classical antiquity. These theoretical discourses are interrupted by the coincidence of his meeting

Faustina and the almost simultaneous arrival of Charlotte's curt note demanding the return of her letters. The latter occurrence gives rise to a vision of Michelangelo's Adam being driven out of Paradise.

In "Flügel" (Book Five) the parallelism of Moritz' situation with Goethe's own evokes new visions. The author has his protagonist seek forgetfulness of his own troubles by empathetically partaking in the experiences of those about him, in birth and in death. A letter to Charlotte containing a confession of his error and an apology provides catharsis; he then moves resolutely forward, having thus liberated himself from the furies of remorse and guilt. His love for Charlotte is viewed from a new perspective as expressed in a scene with Moritz, in which the relative importance of emotions is weighed against a man's objectives in life when Goethe says:

> "Sind Sie zu ihrem Vergnügen nach Italien gegangen? Der Mann hat ein Herz. Weiss Gott, das billige ich ihm zu! Aber er hat auch eine Aufgabe!" (I, 286.)

Trentini portrays Goethe's growing sense of independence and liberation from the influence of Charlotte in a vision in which the poet interprets the dethroning of Venus by Psyche in the light of his own experience.

Separate events at Naples as depicted by the author bring forth observations on the elemental forces of nature (Goethe is presented as witnessing a volcanic eruption from a nearby position)[31] and provide a contrast to previous

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[31]"Den Löwenanteil an seinem naturwissenschaftlichen Interesse hat der Vesuv, der in erregter Tätigkeit war. Dreimal besucht er ihn und er schrickt selbst vor deutlichen Gefahren nicht zurück, um die vulkanischen Erscheinungen recht genau kennen zu lernen."--Bielschowsky-Linden, op. cit., I, 399.

theoretical reflections on art with the concrete personification of the poet's ideal of classical beauty (presented as the unveiling of Venus in the form of Miss Emma Harte). A re-evaluation after the latter incident determines the fact that his emotional and intellectual status is still indefinite. During a nightmarish encounter with an insane woman Trentini's protagonist plunges into a state of disoriented nothingness. After this descent into "Nichts," portrayed in the conscious and subconscious parallelism with the fate of the old and completely isolated woman, Goethe emerges with a hint of direction: Nausikaa is to be the guide to home.

Like Odysseus, Trentini's Goethe finds his Nausikaa at the shore of the sea. Composed of a series of events which are partly real, partly visionary, the Nausikaa episode is obviously intended to symbolize the Palermo experience referred to by some critics. In allegorical language and scenes Trentini depicts the liberating effect of Nausikaa on Goethe in the consummation of their love. She subsequently steps out of his life by suicide, thereby marking the end of another phase of Goethe's personal development. Emphasizing the symbolic or allegorical significance of the scenes embodied in this book, "Zeichen," the author ends it with a slightly superfluous exclamation: "Was ist Wahrheit? Was Dichtung?" (II, 90.)

In an attempt to find himself and to pierce the veils that becloud the nature of his future "Aufgabe," Trentini's Goethe sets out on a concentrated program of perfecting himself in the art of painting. The hopelessness of the undertaking is realized by his friends long before he himself

becomes aware of it. Another abortive attempt to find his proper sphere in "die Gestaltung des Menschen" leads to sculpturing.

Time, distance, and psychological growth make it possible for Goethe to hear the name Charlotte mentioned in his presence without emotional involvement on his part. During a temporary relapse when tormenting memories of her once again arise, he tries to sound his subconscious by means of Trentini's favorite technique, that of evoking a vision; however, the attempt fails. The vision does not materialize; it was only an illusionary echo of the past. In a later brothel scene with Moritz and in the ensuing reprimanding sermon on the subject of promiscuity, Trentini makes a strenuous effort to show that it was not primarily sexual frustration which drove Goethe to Italy but rather the clarification of his "Aufgabe." In a subsequent vision Charlotte beckons him to return; following as a free man both her call and that of duty to his country, he does return--however, not alone. Accompanying him are the fruits of his stay in Italy, which Trentini personifies as "die Geliebte." The symbol of "die Geliebte" is to assume in the last book a rather concrete form in Goethe's mind, for the author goes so far as to portray actual conversations between Goethe and this phantasma.

Thus reinforced, the protagonist arrives back in Weimar (Book Ten, "Gestalt"). Charlotte von Stein is beset by vague suspicions, in the Trentini garb of nightmares, that she might have lost Goethe completely and finds difficulty in preparing herself psychologically for his arrival. In her attempt to

visualize her former lover she is assisted by Herder's description of the returned poet. The amount of space which Trentini devotes to the reunion with Karl August, Goethe's conversations with Knebel and Herder, and other intervening events clearly illustrate the novelist's preoccupation with the portraiture of Goethe's reactions rather than those of Charlotte. There are indications, however, that Goethe's preference for masculine company is but a sign of trepidation concerning his first meeting with Charlotte, who is embarrassed and puzzled by the secondary role she is now forced to assume. In an interior monologue Trentini offers an insight into the emotional state of Frau von Stein which supplies rather strong indications that there has been no change in her inner involvement with Goethe, a fact which she, however, is subsequently unable to articulate; on the contrary, she takes recourse to nagging. Goethe's self-assured explanations of his flight from her fail to be convincing. His reluctant but finally frank admission of having enjoyed the favors of a "Schatz" while in Italy results in a curt "Adieu" on her part and a rather lengthy discourse from Goethe as to the basic necessities which constitute the totality of his being. This interview leaves in its wake an angered Charlotte in a state of complete and hopeless depression and an unhappy Goethe with the urge to return to Italy. This latter sentiment is embodied in visionary conversations with "die Geliebte." In an interior monologue the author shows Goethe's reaffirmation of his independence and his desire henceforth to avoid all ambiguities in his contact with Frau von Stein. Against the warning of

his liberated self (the previously mentioned "Geliebte") he returns to her home once more with the intention of making a full confession. However, Charlotte, fearing she might not understand his motivation, prefers illusion or uncertainty to stark reality and brands his attempt at self-realization as crass egotism. Sobered by this decisive encounter but without remorse, Goethe leaves and on his way home meets--Christiane. He is resigned and yet aggrieved by the utter lack of understanding on the part of the woman. To illustrate this reaction, Trentini resorts to the poignant quotation: "Eine Liebe hatt' ich, sie war mir lieber als alles! Aber ich hab sie nicht mehr!--Schweig, und ertrag den Verlust!" (II, 377.) As might be expected, Trentini concludes the development of his central theme with a vision in which Tasso and Faust appear; both figures have acquired enrichment and depth accruing from his experience.

In order to heighten the illusion of a blending between the dream-world and reality, the author extensively uses what might be called a modified interior monologue. For Trentini a thought is as "real" and as concrete as the spoken word. Therefore, in contrast to traditional usage, he includes within the same sequence both "erlebte Rede" and thoughts enclosed in quotation marks. This method, though supplying a note of freshness with its originality, may occasionally detract from the purely aesthetic enjoyment of the novel since it requires an additional degree of attention in ascertaining whether one is dealing with the spoken word or a non-articulated reflection. In one instance, the application of this modified

interior monologue combined with a visionary sequence produces a scene in which Goethe, sitting in a room with friends and without participating in the general discussion, carries on a lively conversation with himself. (I, 288f.) Such scenes are typical of the Trentini novel, which, with its emphasis on internal development, tends to diffuse the borderlines between concrete and psychological reality, between the spoken and unspoken word, between the conscious and the subconscious experience.

Another characteristic of Trentini's style can be observed in the dialogue which he permits his characters to use. His Goethe undergoes a remarkable transformation while in Italy. At the age of thirty-eight and with the supposedly maturing influence of the Weimar period behind him, he even reverts to expressing himself with the effervescence of a Stürmer und Dränger. Trentini himself aptly describes the tenor with which he imbues his protagonist's speech, when he states: "Wie Eiter aus geplatztem Geschwüre schossen die Worte aus Goethes ringender Brust." (I, 20.)

As far as the individualization of dialogue is concerned, it is sometimes difficult to perceive any great difference in shading or temperament in the speech of Goethe and secondary characters, such as Professor Moritz (described as a pedant), Bury (an emotionally unstable youth of twenty-three), or at times even in the case of Charlotte. This lack of individualization in the conversational style of the various characters is coupled with some difficulty on Trentini's part in imbuing the conversation itself with emotional color.

It is therefore frequently necessary for him to describe either previously or subsequently the missing element, which he intended to imply, with editorial comment such as, "spie er schneidend heraus" (I, 109), "wie Flamme, die wild aus der Glut bricht" (I, 37), or "erwiderte er blutrot, als wären ihm die Kleider vom Leibe gerissen worden" (I, 62). These and similar expressions may equally be the direct result of a sometimes forced but concentrated effort to avoid the conventional verbs of communication, such as "er sagte" or "antwortete sie." But as a consequence Trentini's characters have a slight tendency to move about more frequently than the action of the narrative itself appears to demand.[32] In substituting other phrases for "er sagte," Trentini has his figures waving their arms, throwing their hats to the ground, sighing, or even "pawing" the ground; "stampfte den Boden" occurs with such frequency as to be noticeable even to the most cursory and indiscriminate reader.

Although some attempt is made to give depth to the figure of Frau von Stein, by means of his customary techniques, as well as to the character of his protagonist, Trentini's preoccupation with Goethe forces Charlotte into a definitely subordinate role in the narrative. However, the importance which she assumes during the Italian experience and, particularly in the last book, upon Goethe's return to Weimar is

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[32]"Sometimes, alas, they [the characters of a novel] provide movement when we should prefer them quiet. An unskillful novelist's characters are apt to twitch a lot."--Bernard DeVoto, The World of Fiction (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), p. 239.

perhaps not sufficiently justified on the basis of the picture which the author presents in the initial sections of the novel. The whole work suffers from an even greater imbalance than is indicated by the title. Trentini has difficulty in convincing the reader that the personality of Frau von Stein, as he draws it, should have exerted such an overpowering influence. Historically correct though her characterization in the final book may be, Goethe's reactions to Charlotte while in Italy come somewhat as a surprise for the simple reason that Trentini has neglected to build her up sufficiently in the initial books.

The chief merit of Trentini's novel lies in the vantage point from which he has elected to view the total situation and in the originality with which he has avoided slavish adherence to documentary evidence. In regard to his style in general, the prevalence of "erlebte Rede," the use of dreams and visions as a means of revealing the inner man, and the near absence of external characterization would tend to give his literary technique the stamp of Expressionism.

Wandlung des Herzens

The final work devoted to a portrayal of one specific aspect of the Goethe-Charlotte theme is the product of Toni Schwabe (1877-1951), lyricist and novelist. Miss Schwabe's literary efforts exhibit a variety of interests. She has been editor of a monthly journal Das Landhaus, has published a volume of J. P. Jacobsen's Novellen in translation (1912), and has even committed herself as an enthusiast for ghost stories with Das Gespensterschiff, ein Jahrbuch für unheimliche

Geschichten (1920). Samples of her poetry may be found in two volumes, Verse (1907) and Komm kühle Nacht (1909). In the area of fiction her works include Hochzeit der Esther Franzenius (1902), Die Stadt mit lichten Türmen (1903), Bleib jung, meine Seele (1906), Tristan und Isolde (Novelle, 1908), and Antlitz im Zwielicht (1949).[33] In 1926 she published her first Goethe novel, Ulrike. Her preoccupation with the master continued as Der Ausbruch ins Grenzenlose appeared in the same year, followed by Christiane in 1932. The latter two works were republished in 1949 with little change under the single title Wandlung des Herzens.[34]

Although strictly speaking the two parts of the novel, for which the former titles have been retained, were originally conceived as separate and distinct entities, the first dealing with Charlotte von Stein, the second with Christiane Vulpius, the narrative thread which links the two is so closely interwoven that it is now difficult to imagine the one without the other. In introducing Christiane into Goethe's life, the author has been unable to avoid taking into account the problematical situation, resulting from his anticipated reunion with Frau von Stein, which confronted the poet in the weeks following his return to Weimar. Considering the lapse of time after the publication of each of the three volumes, it is doubtful that their appearance in this manner follows a

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[33]Biographical information according to W. Kosch, op. cit.

[34]Toni Schwabe, Wandlung des Herzens (Reutlingen: Oertel & Spörer, 1949). Hereafter cited by page number in the text.

preconceived plan. Yet it is obvious that the story of Christiane germinated from certain concepts planted in Der Ausbruch ins Grenzenlose, thus forming a natural sequel to the latter. It is perhaps to Miss Schwabe's credit that she was able to continue the second work over a number of years without noticeable deviation from the style which she displays in the first. Although the republication under the single title has the appearance of having been an after-thought, both narratives have without question been improved by this mere external juxtaposition. Since both also concern Frau von Stein, it is in the final form, as the novel Wandlung des Herzens, that Miss Schwabe's contribution to the Goethe-Charlotte fiction will be considered.

The construction of Miss Schwabe's narrative follows a definite pattern. Employing an effective technique for arousing interest, the author opens both parts with a dramatic scene in which a particular problem is presented in fictional garb. The ensuing narrative then consists of a number of briskly moving episodes gradually building up to the final one which, according to Miss Schwabe's recipe, necessarily culminates in a happy solution. The formula for the development of the internal plot of the total novel is just as fixed. The problem (the inadequacy of Goethe's bond with Frau von Stein) first arises in the subconscious but soon becomes apparent through some outward manifestation; in this case, it is a desire to plunge into the raging waters of a flood. The protagonist then becomes cognizant of the nature and scope of his inner conflict and immediately launches forth in search of a

solution. Several alternatives present themselves, among which is the final course to be followed, but temporarily all must be discarded, even that final one, for the protagonist's emotional involvement in the situation is still too great to permit him to accept the idea as the only possibility. It follows, then, that psychological distance would be a most valuable aid, the acquisition of which is made evident through a variety of incidents, all moving in a direct line toward the final goal, permitting, to be sure, an occasional setback. The accomplishment of this major feat proves to be so successful that the concept is carried over into the second half of the narrative, even beyond the point necessary for the solution of the original problem. Intensified there by the disappointing outcome of the anticipated reunion with his former love, the psychological distance from her increases throughout the rest of the novel until it reaches the utmost degree, when the protagonist can admit to himself, without any commitment of his emotions, "Es ist begreiflich, wie sehr ich diese Frau geliebt habe." His full attention can then be devoted to his new love, thus announcing the completion of the transformation. The formula outlined above, lying well within the realm of human credibility, would certainly not be considered objectionable in itself; unfortunately, an audible shuttling of the loom may be discerned as the thread of the narrative assumes its prescribed pattern.

In embarking her protagonist on his course through the novel, Toni Schwabe attempts to interpret the uniqueness of Goethe's Charlotte experience in terms of the commonplace,

thus giving an indication of the audience to which she addresses herself. In order to impart the mood chosen for her story, she employs what are obviously intended to be four major themes: a river at flood stage, locked doors, a search for Heimat, and the stars. The first of these serves symbolically to establish the problem at the opening of the narrative. In the surging waters of a spring flood, Goethe recognizes elemental forces of nature which bear a significance of greater permanence than the exuberant, but temporary pleasure derived from the sight by a group of young boys. The turbulent river which has broken its boundaries appears to the poet as a symbol of his own human fate:

> Dieses Aufschäumen und Überströmen erschien ihm des Flusses Erlösung, seine wahre Natur. Sonst aber, wenn er sanft geregelt im Zwang seiner Ufer hinfloss, war dies die Pflicht und Bürde täglichen Seins--ein Symbolum dem eigenen Menschengeschick.
> Denn auch ihm, dem Menschen, waren des Alltags Grenzen knapp gezogen. Leise und bedachtsam war sein Gang zwischen Pflicht und Verantwortung. Steuern musste er noch fremdem Ungestüm, wenn es in Unvernunft ausbrach. Gängeln und leiten musste er das Mittelmass. . . . (p. 8.)

The realization of the limitations of his present daily existence strikes him so powerfully that his subconscious demands the identification of his own latent powers with those of nature. This desire for oneness expresses itself in terms of a strange temptation:

> Eine seltsame und von der Wirklichkeit losgelöste Versuchung überkam den Menschen, sich dahinein zu stürzen, mitten hinein in das wildeste Getose! Beileibe nicht in den Tod! Nein, in die Urkraft des elementarsten der Elemente, in des Lebens lebendigstes Leben hinein! (p. 10.)

With the urge to escape thus stated in a somewhat unorthodox form, the author returns to the symbol of the river

as a means of signalling Goethe's break with the past at his departure for Italy:

> Ach, es war jetzt die Stunde gekommen, wo die abgedämmten Fluten das Hemmnis durchbrachen und in dem ausgedörrten Flussbett schäumend, brausend, aufgischtend zusammenstürzten, um endlich, endlich ihren eigenen Lauf zu finden. (p. 101.)

The themes of the "locked doors" and "Heimat" are so closely woven together that they may be considered a single unit. It is particularly in the development of these two concepts that Miss Schwabe's interpretation of the bond between Goethe and Charlotte, especially as it existed just before his flight from her, becomes evident. Upon the introduction of Frau von Stein into the narrative, it is apparent that their love has thus far presented itself in only one form to the protagonist. "Liebe Frau," he asks, "ist nicht alles Lieben nur ein Anstürmen gegen verschlossene Tore? Sehnsüchtig, sehnsüchtig nur, dass sie sich öffnen möchten?" (p. 10.) As the inextricability of his predicament is forced upon him, he searches for a possible solution. A bottle of wine suggests Frankfurt, but Frankfurt in turn suggests Weimar again, and in Weimar the doors are still closed:

> Und war er einmal wieder dort--dann gab es kein Vorwärts, aber auch kein Rückwärts mehr. Wo lag da der Ausweg? War dies eines Lebens Erfüllung: Eine Seele besitzen und doch allein sein? In der Liebe einer Frau leben und dennoch heimatlos bleiben? So lag die Zukunft mit verschlossenen Türen. (p. 19.)

Eventually the author reveals what her protagonist hopes to find beyond those doors:

> Ach, er wusste es wohl, er war das A und das O in Charlottens Leben, aber doch, das was er so brennend ersehnte, das allereinfachste Gut der Liebe, das jeder Steinklopfer auf der Strasse von seiner Frau empfing,

> wenn sie ihm im Henkeltopf die Suppe an den Arbeitsplatz brachte, wenn sie ihm einen Flicken aufs Hemd nähte und ab und zu aufsah, ob er jetzt nicht bald von der Arbeit heimkommend in die Tür träte. (p. 22.)

He has merely been seeking that which any man might expect to receive from the one he loves: "Ach! einfach nur das Zuhause, die Gemeinsamkeit mit dem zugehörigen Menschen--sie verweigert es ihm, trotz aller Liebe." (p. 22.) This desire for a home is not simply an idle longing, it has become vital for him: "Ihn hungerte nach Heimat und Gemeinsamkeit wie nach einem guten Stück Brot." (p. 22.) The spiritual home which Charlotte has provided no longer seems a sanctuary to him:

> Oft, demütigend oft hatte er sie nun schon angefleht: "komm zu mir, komm ganz zu mir." Und mit ihrem zarten, übersinnlichen Lächeln hatte sie ihn tief angesehen: "Ich bin bei dir, Liebster, fühlst du es nicht? Bin ganz bei dir."
>
> Ach, und ich meine doch Brot und Wein, meine Wirklichkeitsspeise! So schrie es in ihm. Der Hals wurde ihm trocken. Er vermochte nicht weiter zu reden. (p. 22.)

Although she has given him her son Fritz to rear as his own in an attempt to alleviate his suffering, to compensate for the physical presence which he so sorely lacks, this act of generosity serves only to reopen an old wound:

> . . . im letzten war und blieb der Fritz doch nur der Sohn des Herrn von Stein. Und ihn, Goethe, verlangte es gebieterisch danach, sein eigen Fleisch und Blut, sein angeboren Wesen in dem Kinde wiederzufinden, dem er die Prägung seines Geistes, seiner Seele, seines Wissens aufdrücken wollte. (p. 23.)

Miss Schwabe again employs her double theme as her hero, fortified with the armor supplied by a certain degree of psychological distance, surveys his enigmatic past and in so doing uncovers the key to his future strength:

> Seine Liebe zu ihr hatte sich befreit von der irdischen Bindung. Verlangte nicht mehr, wie einst, nach dem

> geheiligten Brot alltäglicher Gemeinsamkeit. Nie hatte sie ihm Heimat gegeben, ihm, der nichts als Heimat suchte. Sie hatte ihn geliebt--vielleicht über ihr Mass hinaus geliebt. Die letzte Tür aber war ihm verschlossen geblieben.
>
> Nun wohl, so ging er, ohne durch die letzte Tür eingedrungen zu sein. Lange, lange hatte er vergebens dort angepocht. Immer wieder mit der törichten Hoffnung, einmal, einmal würde sie sich dennoch öffnen, würde sein tiefstes Verlangen, das Verlangen nach Heimat mit dem geliebten Menschen, doch gestillt werden.
>
> Ach, alle Türen, an die er je gepocht, sie hatten sich ihm geöffnet. Nur diese eine--blieb verschlossen.
>
> In seinem Herzen aber strömte das Leben, riss und strömte das Leben und führte ihn fort von dem abgestandenen Platz des Wartens.
>
> Eins doch wusste er: er würde fortan nie mehr sein Leben an eine Tür postieren, wo man ihm das "Herein" bieten oder weigern konnte. Denn das ist das Geheimnis eines jeden starken Seins: niemals sich abhängig machen von einer Antwort, die vielleicht nicht gegeben wird. (p. 99.)

The possibilities of this particular symbol are exhausted when Goethe finally discovers in Christiane his long-sought goal: "Sie kam zu ihm. Kam immer wieder. Sie gehörte in den Sommer und in diesen Garten und in das kleine Haus, das ihm nun endlich die langentbehrte Heimat gab." (p. 162.)

The author's fourth symbol is a masterpiece of simplicity. At various points throughout the narrative Goethe makes the astounding discovery that the same stars shine upon all his loves, no matter what earthly course these loves may take. A starry night also appears to be conducive to the reaching of fateful decisions. (See pp. 81 and 82.)

Another characteristic of Miss Schwabe's approach is her episodic technique, and it is unquestionably in this area where her strength as a literary craftsman lies. These episodes may be divided into three main categories according to their function. The first and largest, of course, serves to

carry the central action of the plot in a direct line from beginning to end. The incidents in this group usually involve the three protagonists in several combinations, with some outside character not immediately connected with the direct line of action, such as Knebel, Duchess Luise, Karl August, Christiane's sister Ernestine, or any number of other historical figures. Occasionally the episodes may depict the interaction between the male protagonist and one of the two women; at times he also appears alone.

Into the second category fall incidents which, though involving secondary characters, nevertheless help to shed additional light by reflection on the protagonists. While this function is not necessarily alien to the first--the novel contains relatively little extraneous material--it needs to be considered for its own merit or lack of it. The fantastic story of Emilie von Werthern, the countess who, casting all convention to the winds, let relatives and friends mourn at the funeral of a doll while she fled with her lover to Africa, belongs in this second group.

Finally there are certain episodes which give the appearance of having been introduced primarily to supply an element of local color. These deal exclusively with characters not involved in the plot, most of whom speak in dialect while commenting on some event concerning the protagonist. A further example of an attempt to enrich the narrative with local atmosphere might be found in a short digression on the inhabitants of a rural community: "Es gab die ehelichen, es gab die ausserehelichen, es gab die vorehelichen, die unehelichen

und die nachehelichen Nachkommen der Kunzes und Hicketiers." (pp. 42-43.)

The author's concern with the establishment of historical flavor is less pronounced. Only an occasional reference to some outmoded custom, such as the practice of powdering the hair, or the means of transportation supplies the information that the fictional time is not of the present. The copious and rather free use of simple French words and phrases also provides the narrative with a slightly antiquated touch.

It is significant that the author closes her narrative before Frau von Stein and Christiane meet. The main current of the action thus flows from the male protagonist to one or the other of the two women with the dramatic conflict centered entirely on the protagonist himself. Of the two women, the author appears to have a greater affinity for the character of Christiane, if the relative amount of weight given to each in the narrative may be considered a valid criterion. An occasional statement, sometimes a short scene, is introduced to indicate Frau von Stein's (one hesitates to apply the more familiar "Charlotte" in reference to the character in this novel) position in this dilemma. For example, the duty which binds her to her husband precludes the possibility of her fleeing with Goethe:

> Meine Väter waren Soldaten, Wolf, du weisst, was für den Soldaten das Wort Pflicht besagen will. Die deinen waren--unter freieren Sternen geboren. Und so geschieht es, dass du mich wieder und wieder aus dem moralischen Erkennen hinauslocken willst auf Gefilde, die nur dem geistigen Herzen gemäss sind, auf die wir aber niemalen unser täglich Leben hinausführen dürfen. Und weil ich dies weiss und erkannt habe, und weil dies den innersten Gesetzen meines Seins entspricht, muss ich es dir sagen:

> nie würde ich die mir auferlegten Bande der Pflicht zerreissen und mit dir gehen--nie!" (p. 14.)

At other times Miss Schwabe permits her to display a questionable degree of insight into her lover's nature, such as her recognition that he possesses the quality of "eine vulkanische Urkraft, die unbekannten Explosionen entgegendrängte." (p. 73.)

Christiane, on the other hand, opens the second half of the novel with a dramatic scene in which she describes Goethe's return to her sister and aunt. Furthermore, entire episodes are employed to sketch her character, even before she becomes a significant factor in Goethe's life. Her ingenuity is illustrated in her plan to help her brother, which leads to the meeting with the "Geheimbderat"; her motherly instincts become apparent in her devotion to a sickly cat; while a third scene, with her young friend Franz, both attests to the simplicity of her joy in the things of nature (the song of the nightingale) and conveys the intended message that she does not freely grant the favors of her love. Additional episodes devoted to her occur throughout the latter part of the narrative. Both the amount of narrative space given to each of the two feminine characters as well as the nature and content of the authorial statements encompassed therein leave little doubt that Miss Schwabe finds it more difficult to project herself into the situation called for by Goethe's love for Charlotte than that resulting from his attachment to Christiane.

Finally, the author's relationship to her source material merits some attention. In certain instances one might wish to question the introduction of characters or

episodes with an interpretation which is foreign or deviant from that of historical tradition. In this respect two items immediately come to mind: the previously mentioned Emilie von Werthern incident, which Miss Schwabe's fictional Goethe later compares to his own plight,[35] and the figure of Tinele von Brühl, whom the author uses to provide the protagonist with a taste of the physical aspect of love in the form of a kiss, an act which presumably breaks Charlotte's spell over him.[36] Considering comments which Goethe himself made on both these women in his letters to Charlotte, the function which they are accorded in this narrative seems ill advised. The novel even

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[35]Goethe wrote to Charlotte on July 9, 1786 after Emilie von Werthern had returned to Weimar to be legally divorced from her husband and remarried to Einsiedel: "Nun aber unsre Flüchtlinge! Wie abscheulich! --Zu sterben! nach Afrika zu gehen, den sonderbarsten Roman zu beginnen, um sich am Ende auf die gemeinste Weise scheiden und kopuliren zu lassen! Ich hab es höchst lustig gefunden. Es lässt sich in dieser Werckeltags Welt nichts auserordentliches zu Stande bringen." The Goethe in Toni Schwabe's novel is permitted to complain: "So gab es doch Frauen, die ihre Pflicht und den Anstand gesetzter Grenzen vergassen, gab es doch solche, die das Wagnis fertig brachten, mit dem Geliebten zu ziehen, landflüchtig zu werden, Spott und Schmach zu tragen. Warum denn für andere, aber nicht für ihn?" (p. 40.)

[36]In a letter of July 6, 1786 to Charlotte there occurs the following comment on Countess von Brühl: "Tina wird nicht liebenswürdiger, sie fängt an sich gehn zu lassen und das will sie gar nicht kleiden, sie kennt weder Mass noch Ziel und wird gelegentlich höchst gemein und abgeschmackt." Since this letter was written from Weimar, it is doubtful that she could have been in Karlsbad at the time of Goethe's arrival, the point at which Miss Schwabe introduces her into the narrative. To be sure, the author attempts to circumvent the attitude indicated here with the statement: "Bei ihrem früheren Besuch am weimarischen Hofe war diese unbekümmerte, auch öfter ein bisschen dreiste Keckheit der sehr scharmanten Frau unliebsam aufgefallen. Hierher, in das leichte unzeremoniöse Badeleben passte sie wohl hinein." (p. 53.) In spite of this brave means of justifying the scene which follows, it is unfortunate, it might even be considered a glaring distortion of historical fact, to have chosen her as the object of the fictional Goethe's passion.

contains outright errors, the most noticeable one involving Duchess Luise, whom Miss Schwabe cannot resist including in the line-up of historical personages at Karlsbad, while the real Duchess was at home in Weimar, giving birth to Princess Karoline.

In general Miss Schwabe's interpretation of the love of Goethe for Charlotte leaves much to be desired. She does attempt to give a note of mystery to her commonplace events by the copious application of indefinite substantives, such as "das Grenzenlose," "eine Schwere," "ein Unnennbares," "ein Unerklärliches," or of noncommittal adjectives, especially "seltsam" and "irgendein." The total effect of these words is, however, not to convey the impression intended but to raise the suspicion that the author is perhaps either uncertain of her protagonist's emotions or unable to communicate precise concepts. A review of Der Ausbruch ins Grenzenlose by Georg Witkowski in 1927 is still applicable to the revised form of the work today and is quoted here in its entirety:

> Gleich am anderen Pol dieser Wissenschaft von heute, dem einer handfesten Massenkunst, stehen die biographischen Romane. Sie wollen das Geistige und Körperliche grosser Naturen dem Begreifen und Betasten der Menge darbieten, indem sie ihre Helden so reden und handeln lassen, wie es den Vorstellungen ihrer Verfasser und der ihnen verwandten Leser gemäss erscheint. Innere Vorgänge werden in Monologe mit zahllosen rhetorischen Fragen übersetzt, kurze Angaben der Quellen mit Hilfe konventioneller Romanmotive breit ausgewalzt. Das Schwebende wird zu handfester Materie und das Dunkle ins banale Alltagslicht gestellt. Nach diesem Rezept hat Toni Schwabe früher den alten Goethe mit Ulrike von Levetzow auf der Bühne ihrer Erzählungskunst erscheinen lassen, und was damals (L[iterarisches] E[cho] XXVII, 659) gesagt wurde, gilt auch von dem zweiten Goethe-Roman Toni Schwabes, "Der Ausbruch ins Grenzenlose" (München, Albert Langen). Das neue Thema heisst: Goethe und Frau von Stein vor der Flucht nach Italien. Sie will nicht mit, weil sie vor dem

> Bruch der Pflicht gegen Stein zurückscheut (oh, ahnungsloser Engel du!), und er muss gehen, um sich selbst zu suchen, nachdem er "bebend und fiebernd, oft überströmt von den Tränen einer mystischen Glückseligkeit die letzten Stunden durchlebt hat, weil er sich des Opfers bewusst war, das er seinem Geschick jetzt darbringen wollte." Wer hätte sich nicht Goethes Stimmung bei der Abreise nach Italien so, genau so wie Toni Schwabe vorgestellt! Wer hätte nicht, gleichsam lautlos, schon von Goethes Lippen die Worte zu Frau von Stein gehört: "Wir durchbrechen die Schranken steter Gebundenheit und stürzen uns in den seligen Ozean unserer Liebe--." Man begreift die Behauptung des Waschzettels: "Wer Goethe liebt, wird und muss dieses Buch lieben."[37]

In spite of the publisher's claim that Thomas Mann considered the reading of her prose "ein grosses Erlebnis," or that Stefan Zweig found her poetry "unvergesslich," Miss Schwabe's standing as a real contributor to the Goethe-Charlotte fiction should be seen in the proper perspective.

Each of the fictional portraits presented above has isolated one phase of Goethe's love for Frau von Stein and has attempted to ascribe to it some dramatic significance. It should be noted that all these narratives concentrate on the figure of Goethe rather than Charlotte. One aspect in particular, because of the conflict involved, has had appeal for three of the authors: the break which resulted when Goethe left Weimar for Italy. The interpretations thus far have been as varied as the authors themselves. It remains to be seen what changes the isolated incident may undergo when viewed as part of the total life of the protagonists.

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[37]Georg Witkowski, "Goethe-Schriften," Die Literatur, XXX (1927-28), 90.

CHAPTER IV

GOETHE AND FRAU VON STEIN IN FICTION: TOTAL PORTRAITS

The following five narratives are devoted to a portrayal of the full course of the love of Goethe and Charlotte, from the beginning stage with their first acquaintance and budding friendship to the dissolution of the bond between them, which, for most of the novelists, is simultaneous with the death of the protagonist. In this group, three of the novels center on the figure of Goethe, while two view the progression of events from Charlotte's standpoint. They are presented here according to the chronology of their publication, from 1922 to 1955.

Alles um Liebe

In terms of length the most gigantic of the narratives by far is the five-volume novel, Alles um Liebe.[1] The author, Paul Schaumburg (1884-195?[2]), who wrote under the pseudonym Paul Burg, pursued a career as a journalist and was even

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[1]Paul Burg, Alles um Liebe (5 vols.; Leipzig: Max Koch, 1922-24). Hereafter cited by volume and page number in the text.

[2]The death of Schaumburg is chronologically not firmly established. The "Nekrolog" of Kürschners Deutscher Literaturkalender (1958) lists him simply as deceased "laut Postvermerk," i.e., according to notification from the post office.

honored by the title of professor in Halle and Leipzig. He will be chiefly remembered, however, as a writer of fiction who apparently could fabricate a novel upon a moment's notice. He began rather modestly with Das ist Heimat in 1907 and Die vom roten Kreuz in 1909 and continued to produce at the rate of one novel per year until 1914, which saw the publication of no less than five works by this author. The first volume of Alles um Liebe appeared in 1922 and was reprinted in 1923 ("Das 1-5. Tausend . . . war binnen 4 Wochen vergriffen"[3]); the last was completed in 1924. Within the same two-year period, six narratives flowed from his pen: Der eiserne York (1922), Die heilige Scholle (1922), Glaubenskämpfer (Novelle, 1922), Graf Königsmark (1924), Barberina (1924), and Liebesbeichte (1924); his fame by now also warranted the writing of an autobiography, Meine Jugend (1922). Over fifty novels, along with numerous other publications, bear his name on the title page.[4]

Alles um Liebe was originally conceived as a three-volume work, but with the publication of the second volume, had grown to four. The first of these, Freudvoll und leidvoll, is concerned with Goethe's early years in Weimar before his flight to Italy; the second two, Meine Christel, treat his life with Christiane, closing with her death; and the fourth, Der schöne alte Herr, covers the final years of Goethe's life. After this last book it seemed necessary to write an additional

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[3]Statement by publisher on back of title page.

[4]Titles and dates of publication according to W. Kosch, Deutsches Literaturlexikon.

novel explaining how the protagonist of the first four came into being. Sie sind's, die Ahnherrn meines Hauses, subtitled Ahnen-Band des Goethe-Romans Alles um Liebe, which deals with a number of Goethe's ancestors and closes with his birth, brought the total number of volumes to five. It should not be thought, however, that Burg has neglected the years between Goethe's birth and his arrival in Weimar. Der junge Goethe (1930) takes care of them.

For the most part, we are concerned here with Volume I, Freudvoll und leidvoll, the only one in which the author devotes serious attention to the role of Frau von Stein. Burg introduces the narrative with a poem explaining why he felt compelled to write his fictional account. Although admitting the contribution of a few scholars toward an understanding of the poet, he complains that "Ballhorn, Bonzen und Sektierer, Fanatiker und Broschürenschmierer" have taken Goethe from the German people. Burg's self-imposed task is "Goethe im menschlichen Querschnitt,/sein Werden durch Weimar jeden Schritt,/ sein vielfältig Leben und heimlich Leiden,/inbrünstiges Suchen und bitteres Meiden/ aus Goethes Zeit heraus dem deutschen Volke zu beschreiben/ nahe der 'Wahrheit'--Dichtung zu bleiben." His goal is perhaps respectable enough in itself. However, the manner in which he uses "Dichtung" to interpret what only he considers to be "nahe der Wahrheit" leads to some rather unusual fictional situations.

As the author embarks his hero upon a series of adventures intended to justify the title Alles um Liebe, it soon becomes apparent that the statement selected as the motto for

the novel was a good choice: "Mein Leben ist einmal nicht einfach." The tone is set by the opening scene in which young Duke Karl August is enjoying a tête-à-tête in the Paris salon of a Greek princess. During the course of their conversation, which takes its general tenor from a commentary on Werther and includes in part a discussion of the merits of the lady's fiancé, the Duke is left speechless by the sight of a half-naked native servant girl. When the princess becomes aware of the source of the young man's consternation, she feels a moral duty to introduce him to the intricacies of love-play. He, naturally not wishing to embarrass his hostess, follows her lead. Upon his departure he is more than grateful for the consideration which she has bestowed upon him. Throughout Burg's novel, Karl August manages to practice the lady's instructions whenever the occasion permits and frequently even when it does not.

Burg's Goethe, on the other hand, is a paragon of virtue. Obsessed by the realization that all women want to love him, the "stets Ehescheuer," still smarting under the rebuff given him by Lili, avoids the clutches of them all, for his true love lies in Italy:

> Zum dritten, vierten, fünften Male im Leben begrub man seine heisse Liebe in sich selber. Nichtgeheiratet werden war ja schliesslich für einen Dichter auch das Allerbeste. Aber--
> Wohin vor dem eignen Herzen fliehen--woher winkte schon das neue Lieben?--
> Italien--ein Schemen rief dahin. (I, 41.)

For the time being, however, he must subdue his passion for the South; completely forsaking father and mother he heads north to join Karl August in Weimar:

> Die Mutter stand verängstet im frühen Morgen bei ihm unter der Haustür. "Vater hat gestern noch an das Wort Jesu gedacht: bittet, dass eure Flucht nicht geschehe im Winter, noch am Sabbath!"
> "Es ist Montag und regnet, Frau Aja, Adieu!" Was waren ihm noch Vater und Mutter! (I, 44.)

Once there, he thoroughly regrets having come and spends the rest of the first volume seeking his way out. For ten years his efforts are thwarted. First it is his attraction to Frau von Stein which holds him in Weimar; for her sake he promises to help "educate" young Karl August. Later the pleas of Duchess Anna Amalia (I, 106) and his financial dependence on the Duke (I, 100) present certain moral obstacles. Another time he feels he must stay to protect Corona Schröter from the unwanted advances of his friend, the Duke (I, 155). Finally, in desperation he throws all caution to the winds; renouncing any obligation to his friends in Weimar, he sets out to seek his fortune in Italy.

Along with this theme of escape, Burg has injected a strong erotic note. His Goethe passionately longs for love, but retains his virtue until he meets Christiane. He first hopes to find his happiness with Charlotte. They seem to be well matched, they read each other's thoughts at a glance (I, 69), and due to Goethe's reputation, there appears to be no opposition from the husband, von Stein, who says:

> "Der hat eine eingeborene Heiratsscheu. So was habe ich gleich heraus. Sonst hätt' ich ihn mir auch vom Hause gehalten." (I, 149.)

But Charlotte can offer him only the tenderness of a sister, for he is an artist, she of the nobility--and never the twain should meet:

> Anfangs hatte sie vor solchen Ausbrüchen seiner vulkanischen Natur gezittert, dass ihr die Knie bebten, jetzt fand sie nur ein Staunen noch für ihn, den immer wieder in tolle Liebesglut Rückfälligen, und ihr blieb das starre Fragen: An Mann und Kinder denkt er nicht, zu denen ich doch gehöre! Wir sind Adel--er ist Künstler, nie könnte das einen guten Bund ergeben. (I, 134.)

However, she does take from him the vow never to marry, which he regretfully keeps for ten years. (I, 123.) He turns to Corona Schröter only to be forced to endure her rebuff. Even Duchess Anna Amalia is a fleeting candidate for his heart (or so he imagines):

> Wie schön ist doch diese Frau--wenn ihr auch schon ein ganz klein wenig graue Locken um Stirn und Schläfen wehn! Goethe schlug vor dem Forschen ihrer grossen Augen die seinen nieder. Liebt sie dich gar? Lass dich nicht fangen, denn das Nest Weimar heisst nicht deine Welt. Weltmann, zeige dich dem verführerischen Weibe recht als ein Tolpatsch und ein Narr! In Wahrheit bist du mehr als sie alle. (I, 74.)

The most promising prospect appears to be the Marquise di Branconi, who symbolizes for Burg's hero his love for the South.[5] Although he is somewhat disturbed by the fact that she has already enjoyed the favors of another, he finally manages to overcome his misgivings. But she in turn refuses to live in Weimar, leaving him no course except to forget her. Throughout these various loves, the fictional Goethe maintains his attachment to Frau von Stein, though he finds himself

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[5]The Marquise Antonia di Branconi was born in 1746 in Genoa of German and Welsh parentage. At the age of 12 she was married; at 20 she was a widow with two children. She became for a time the mistress of Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, heir to the Duchy of Braunschweig, who purchased for her the estate Langenstein near Halberstadt. Even after the Duke's attention and favors turned elsewhere, as a former mistress of royalty she enjoyed a position of high standing in society. Goethe first met her in Lausanne in the fall of 1779 and later visited with her occasionally at Langenstein.--Cf. Wilhelm Bode, Goethes Liebesleben (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1921), p. 231.

ridiculed by the whole town: "Weimar lachte viel über diese 'Bindfadenliebschaft' mit der alternden Hofdame, Goethe hüllte sich in Unnahbarkeit, gekränkt und missverstanden." (I, 172.) As he explains to the Marquise, "das ist vielleicht mein besseres Ich." (I, 190.) Charlotte is not at all pleased with his desire to marry Frau von Branconi--"Lotte Stein hatte ihm die Hölle weidlich heiss gemacht" (I, 104)--but her influence is not so strong as to deflect his interest from the other woman.

Actually, Burg directs little attention to Frau von Stein in his narrative; his creative enthusiasm appears to be centered on the other loves which his fictional Goethe encounters. Occasionally he remembers that Frau von Stein was, after all, a major figure in the life of the historical Goethe and returns to her at intervals. For the most part, however, he ignores whatever influence she might have had. Upon Goethe's return from Italy, Burg describes her as "steinern wie ihr Name." (II, 9.) His Goethe is so repulsed by the sight of her--"Wozu habe ich die riesige Junobüste mitgebracht; hier ist Marmorkälte für ein Leben genug" (II, 11)--that he promptly dismisses her from his life. To show his anger and scorn, he unceremoniously takes back the key to his "Gartenhaus." (II, 2.) Only her death recalls fond memories:

> Es ist doch recht niederträchtig von mir altem, fast achtzigjährigem Kerl, dass ich heulen muss wie ein altes Weib. Aber eine solche Freundin zu verlieren, ist auch eine schwere Prüfung. (IV, 272.)

One final indication of the interpretation which Burg places on the early Weimar years occurs in the introduction

of a motif, which, as used here, seems in rather poor taste. In his attempt to give the "real" Goethe back to the people and--more likely than not--in an effort to cover up his own shortcomings as an author, Burg surrounds his hero with an adoration even greater than that usually accorded to a saint. He seems to be able to find no other means of expressing the inner man than to compare Goethe with Christ. Three illustrations immediately come to mind. One occurs in a meeting with Frau von Stein: "Du! Wärst du uns doch ein neuer Christophorus in Weimar; wir sind alles so wegmüde--las er in ihrem Blick." (I, 69.) It is significant that she does not utter this statement, but Burg's Goethe thinks she feels this about him. A comparison with Christ is also made by Goethe's mother: "Hatte nicht Jesus selber seiner zudringlichen Mutter entgegengerufen: Weib, was habe ich mit Dir zu schaffen?" (I, 221.) The third reference comes as editorial comment at the end of the first volume: "Goethe hatte den Kranz der Rosen und Dornen zerrissen, den ihm Weimar um die Stirn wand. Der Wirkliche Geheime Rat von Goethe war geflohen." (I, 277.) Burg has evidently taken his cue from a letter by the historical Goethe to Charlotte in which he states: "Du hast recht mich zum heiligen zu machen, das heisst mich von deinem Herzen zu entfernen."[6] Although some emphasis on this aspect of their love may be justified on the basis of this letter, the wisdom of elevating it to the level of a motif might be questioned.

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[6]May 1, 1776. Orthography according to Petersen, Briefe.

In general, this novel is a potpourri of letters and historical incidents; seen through a vivid Burg imagination, these have lost all factual status and have been turned into an incredible account. The true merit of the novel, if such there be, was undoubtedly not the result of an intentional act on the author's part. In contrast to Trentini, whose work appeared in the same year as the first volume of Alles um Liebe, Burg's service is to have written a narrative which established no standard or precedent, leaving the field wide open for the serious and conscientious writer of fiction.

Frau von Stein

The second attempt at interpreting the total Goethe--Frau von Stein complex within the realm of fiction is a 340-page novel by an Austrian lawyer and railway official, Ottokar Janetschek (1884--), whose creative talents have been directed primarily toward the writing of historical-biographical fiction. Among his works are Mozart: Ein Künstlerleben (1924), Der Rexkönig (1925), Christiane Vulpius (1927), Der Titan: Beethovens Lebensroman (1927), Schuberts Lebensroman (1928), Kaiser Franz Joseph (1950), Die Thronfolger (1951), and Der König und sein Meister (1952).[7] Frau von Stein, his second Goethe novel, appeared in 1932.[8]

Janetschek's novel is the only one of the total

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[7]Biographical information obtained from Wer ist wer, 1955.

[8]Ottokar Janetschek, Frau von Stein (Berlin-Schöneberg: Peter J. Oestergaard, 1932), 340 pp. Hereafter cited in this section by page number in the text.

portraits which does not extend to the death of the protagonist. The narrative opens in Heidelberg where Goethe in the company of his secretary Seidel is awaiting the arrival of the Duke's coach from Weimar; it closes with a scene depicting Goethe's meeting with Charlotte upon his return from Italy. This encounter, in Janetschek's terms, symbolizes the dissolution of their love; both characters seem to feel intuitively that the rest will be merely aftermath.

In constructing his novel, the author has chosen not to use a formal division into chapters with headings. Instead, the narrative flows continuously with an occasional break to indicate a lapse of time. Contrary to the indications of the title, the plot centers on the figure of the male protagonist rather than on Charlotte. Furthermore, the subtitle Roman um Goethe, with its choice of preposition, supplies a key to the author's manner of treatment. It is a novel about Goethe. Consequently, secondary characters, especially Seidel, play a larger role in this fictionalized account than they do in most others. A significant portion of the action here is not viewed directly by the reader but occurs as a reflection in the conversations of these secondary figures. Seidel, who calls himself a true "Volksstimme," undertakes to act as Goethe's conscience. Through him, particularly in conversation with Goethe, the author brings out various incidents which are essential to the outcome of the plot yet cannot be considered a part of the direct action. In comparison with Burg's novel, for example, there is relatively little external action. Goethe is received at court, he pays several visits

to Frau von Stein's home, takes an occasional ride with the Duke, and talks with Seidel and with Herder as well, who also is a self-appointed conscience, but with somewhat higher authority than the "Volksstimme." Like Toni Schwabe, Janetschek has a flair for the dramatic situation and shows a decided preference for scenes with quickly moving dialogue. His emphasis on Seidel as the voice of the people indicates that he may also be addressing the same audience as Miss Schwabe.

Janetschek's interpretation of Goethe's love for Charlotte, though it is not understood by the majority of the characters within the novel, can be expressed in rather simple terms: he loves her because she is sick and needs his help. The initial attraction, however, is one of passion, not compassion. A pair of enchanting eyes--"zwei tiefdunkle, glutende Tollkirschenaugen, die aus einem wunderlichen Frauengesichtchen guckten" (p. 17)--first lure him. He and the owner are brought together under the auspices of the Duke, who seeks Frau von Stein's aid in retaining the poet in Weimar. Upon closer acquaintance the enchantment grows into rapture; her heart in turn softens, becomes "butterweich" (p. 51), until she finally realizes she has been doing more than following the wishes of the Duke. (p. 87.) Although Charlotte is not yet ready to recognize her love, Goethe, fully aware of his own feelings, asks himself: "Wie lange würde die Festung dem Belagerer noch standhalten?" (p. 91.)

Eventually nature takes its course and the besieged fortress momentarily crumbles as their love reaches the point of no return:

> Die Leidenschaft lauerte zwischen ihnen wie ein sprungbereiter Löwe. Eine gewitterschwüle Atmosphäre hing im Raum, hochgespannt in den Gegenpolen Mann und Weib, atembeklemmend, nervenaufwühlend. Der Versuch, mit leeren Worten die Stimmung zu klären, scheiterte. Die Natur war stärker als die Vernunft. (p. 118.)
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Da schnellte er empor. Heiss loderten seine Augen. "Lotte!" schrie er heraus, umfing sie stürmisch und zog sie dicht an sich. Sie stand wie eine Bildsäule. Ihre Blicke verschwammen ineinander. So standen sie, aneinander gepresst, regungslos einige Sekunden. Höchste Liebeslust fieberte in ihnen, sie zitterten beide an allen Gliedern. Was war es, das sie in dem gewaltigen Sturm der aufgepeitschten Sinne plötzlich innehalten liess? Vernunft? Pflicht? Was denn?
>
> Aber es gab kein Zurück mehr. Die bis zum Zerreissen gespannten Nerven verlangten unerbittlich nach Entspannung. Ein Druck seiner Arme genügte, um die letzten Widerstände zu brechen. Wie im Kälteschauer schmiegte sie sich an ihn. Mit letzter Kraft sammelte sie einige wirre Gedanken, ihre Lippen stammelten:
>
> "Du! Wie nenne ich dich, du?"
>
> "Hans! Sag Hans zu mir!"
>
> "Hans!" Das war ein letzter Aufschrei und . . .
>
> "Lotte!"
>
> Die Lippen fanden sich, verbanden sich, Atem strömte in Atem, die Welt ringsum versank . . ." [ellipsis in the original]. (pp. 121-122.)

Although Goethe tries to console her that they kissed "wie Bruder und Schwester" (p. 122), Charlotte later suffers feelings of remorse, which eventually develop into migraine headaches. She consequently vacillates in her affection toward him with the result that their love becomes "eine Liebe, die einer schweren Nervenkrankheit sehr ähnlich war." (p. 151.)

Sometime later, after a discussion with von Stein, who complains about his misfortune to be married to a constantly ailing wife, Goethe assumes the burden of guilt for the harm which he has caused her and resolves to raise their love from the level of the sensual:

> Er prüfte sich genau und fand, dass hier eine reine, von Leidenschaften geläuterte Liebe aufzublühen begann,

> die sich aus den Niederungen der gewöhnlichen Erotik erhob zu einer seltsamen Form der Liebe, die vielleicht deshalb so seltsam war, weil sie aus einer Krankheit keimte. (p. 193.)

And Charlotte at this point finally confesses: "Wir haben doch längst erkannt, dass wir nicht Bruder und Schwester sind." (p. 194.)

Just at the time when the affected parties have come to terms with their love and are determined to nourish it in its purity, wishing "uns nicht gegenseitig durch die Sünde wertlos zu machen" (p. 197), Seidel and Herder begin independent but concentrated attacks on what each considers an unhealthy situation. Both Goethe and Charlotte offer a stout defense; the attacks appear to fail, but in the long run have their effect. Goethe finally finds her sickness repulsive when it begins to express itself in forms of coquetry. The man and the artist within him seek release:

> Dazu durchschüttelte ihn das Bedürfnis nach einem jungen, unverbrauchten Liebesleben wie ein rasendes Fieber. Der Mann verlangte gebieterisch und rücksichtslos ebenso seine Rechte wie der Dichter in ihm, der aus der gesunden Sinnlichkeit erschaffen wollte. (p. 320.)

Upon Goethe's return to Weimar, he is reluctant to face his former love and finally does so only upon the insistence of his secretary Seidel. His fears appear to be justified, for their meeting results in the extinction of all feeling between them: "Was Freundschaft war, das kleine Fünkchen aus der Riesenfackel der Liebe verlosch." (p. 339.)

Aside from the naïveté with which this highly complex theme has been handled, the novel contains several gross errors in the reproduction of historical fact. The incident

of Christel von Lassberg, who took her life in the Ilm near the Gartenhaus, and in whose possession a copy of Werther was found, is said to have occurred before Goethe's arrival in Weimar. (pp. 10-11.)[9] Janetschek also places a great deal of emphasis on Charlotte's presence in Karlsbad in 1785 but makes a point of excluding her from the same trip in 1786. (p. 322.) He also ignores the historical course of events following Goethe's departure for Italy; the mailman stops frequently at the home of his fictional Frau von Stein.(p. 324.)[10] Less important but still in error is the implication that young Ernst von Stein died from a broken heart. (p. 337.)[11] Occasionally there may be justification for changing fact for artistic purposes, but if such is the case here, the author has failed to divulge the information through the structure of the narrative itself. Scenes in which Seidel plays a dominant role prove to be more convincing. By letting the reader view Goethe through the eyes of the secretary, Janetschek is generally able to keep the narrative moving in an area which approximates or reflects documented fact without actually being that fact.

With respect to literary history, Janetschek's effort at prose artistry somehow seems to defy classification, a distinction which his novel has in common with those of Burg

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[9]Actually, her death occurred January 16, 1778. Janetschek's vivid imagination even has her clutching Werther as her body is taken from the river.

[10]See Chapter II, p. 54, above.

[11]See Chapter II, p. 56, above.

and Toni Schwabe. All three novels might be appropriately designated as "Unterhaltungsliteratur," a term indicating a quality of writing which, according to Gero von Wilpert, is "ohne tiefschürfende Problemstellung und echte dichterische, seinsergründende Werte und ästhetischen Ansprüchen nicht genügend."[12]

In spite of its shortcomings Frau von Stein shows a marked advancement over Burg's attempt to fictionalize the totality of the Charlotte period. In terms of scope and depth of portrayal, however, Janetschek's version does not approach the sensitive treatment given to the theme in J. A. Lux's Goethe.

Goethe: Roman einer Dichterliebe

Joseph August Lux (1871-1947), a Viennese writer, although perhaps best known as a novelist, has also exercised his creative powers in the field of the drama, lyric, and essay. Around 1900 he was active in the propagation of a certain Geschmackskultur originating in England, and subsequently founded a school of culture at Hellerau. His name is associated as well with efforts in preparing the ground for the Kralik-Gesellschaft in Vienna. The greater part of his literary production has been in the area of fiction, from which only a few illustrative titles can be mentioned here: Amsel Gabesam (1909), Chevalier Blaubarts Liebesgarten (1910), Die Vision der lieben Frau (1911), Auf deutscher Strasse

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[12]Gero von Wilpert, Sachwörterbuch der Literatur (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1955).

(1918, sequel to Amsel Gabesam), and Der himmlische Harfner (1925). With the publication of Grillparzers Liebesroman in 1912, Lux began a series of biographical novels which were devoted to outstanding German personalities. Franz Schuberts Lebenslied appeared in 1914, followed by Beethovens unsterbliche Geliebte in 1926 and Franz Liszt: Irdische und himmlische Liebe in 1929.[13] The final work in this series was Goethe: Roman einer Dichterliebe (1937).[14]

Of all the possibilities which lay before him, of all the Goethe novels which he might have written, Lux has chosen the Charlotte period as his subject. The closing paragraphs of his narrative give a strong hint as to the reason behind this choice. In discussing Goethe's refusal to provide a poetic account of his early years in Weimar, Lux notes: "Aber er fügte noch hinzu: um diese Zeit zu schildern, bedürfte es einer Dichtung, eines Märchens, eines Romans . . . ." (p. 524.) Lux's modest aim was to fill a gap in the poet's biography by producing the work which Goethe himself deliberately shied away from writing. In pursuing this goal, Lux has, however, assumed an obligation, which, though it may be subconscious, has had a marked effect on his approach to the narrative. The Lux novel is justifiably more favorable, and in some respects, more glowing in the presentation of its subject than many of the other works under consideration here, for this, after all,

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[13]Biographical information according to W. Kosch, op. cit.

[14]Joseph August Lux, Goethe: Roman einer Dichterliebe (Wien: F. Speidel, 1937), 524 pp. Hereafter cited by page number in the text.

is intended to be Goethe's own story and is therefore colored by what the author considers to be Goethe's point of view. Aside from the question of maintaining historical veracity, most of the other authors have not bound themselves to this particular self-imposed restriction in the manner of treatment.

The motivation behind Lux's Goethe has a definite bearing on the selection of his theme. The novel is exactly what the subtitle indicates: Roman einer Dichterliebe. The plot is concerned with the "Bildung"--a term of added significance in this work, to which reference will be made later--the "education" and development of the Sturm und Drang youth into the mature humanistic leader of German classicism. In this process of maturation of the artistic genius, there is one element which outshines any other contributory factor: Goethe's love for Charlotte von Stein. She is the star which he follows: the ideals for which she stands are, as it were, the "blaue Blume" which he seeks. Trentini, it will be recalled, also focuses at times on the growth of the artist, but the role assigned to Frau von Stein in each of the two works is diametrically opposed. For Trentini, who deals almost exclusively with the Italian experience, Charlotte's influence on the poet is to be considered in the same category with the encumbering duties of the "Geheimrat"--as merely another inhibiting, restricting, almost stultifying force working against the poet's natural creative inclinations; for Lux, she is the very spark which bursts the genius into creative flame.

In carrying out his theme, Lux has chosen to extend his

narrative from the point of Goethe's first meeting with Charlotte to the end of his life, encompassing thereby all the years during which, according to Lux, she continued to be a determining, if not dominating force for the poet. The story opens with the budding friendship as they are introduced by the Duke in the von Stein home, concentrates then on the ten years spent together before Goethe leaves for Italy, briefly covers the Italian interlude and the so-called break, but concludes with the renewal, the "resurrection" of their close bond after torturous years of separation culminated by an illness which is almost fatal for Goethe.[15] An epilogue reaffirms the poet's devotion to Charlotte and contains his recognition of the unique role she has played, even after death.

It is a role which begins to take shape immediately as the novel opens. In narrative garb Lux tries to point out the indications, present during the initial meeting, of the direction in which Frau von Stein's influence is to reign. For the author, love does not begin "at first sight" but requires some degree of persuasion. The two friends are not overly impressed with each other; if anything, there is a note of disappointment as each reflects on the appearance and behavior of the other. Goethe, for one, is reminded of another Charlotte, of a similar experience he has had, and is happy to note that there is no danger of falling into a second Werther situation: "Er hinwiederum dachte: Zum Glück brauche ich

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[15]Reference presumably is to Goethe's illness in January, 1801. See Chapter II, p. 61, above.

nicht zu fürchten, dass ich Werthers Leiden zum zweitenmal erleben müsste." (p. 9.) Yet at the same time he feels somewhat of a disappointment, paradoxically mingled with a slight sense of relief, when he realizes that this woman, with all her sympathetic qualities, cannot help his troubled heart, cannot be a substitute for the Lili he has left behind in Frankfurt:

> Er sah zwar die schwermutvollen Augen, die ihn zu Teilnahme hinrissen, und die leise Melancholie, die diese Frau mit einer Sphäre innerer Einsamkeit umhüllte und schier eine Zärtlichkeit aufrief, aber er fühlte gleichwohl, dass vor ihr das Bild, das er im Herzen trug, nicht verblassen würde. Lilis Bild. (p. 9.)

Charlotte lacks the warmth and exuberance of personality which he had been led to expect; he feels that it would take more than what she apparently has to offer in order to banish the picture of Lili: "Nur Leidenschaft konnte Leidenschaft schlagen, Gift wider Gift?! . . . Wo sollte Linderung herkommen? Etwa gar von dieser Marmorkühlen, die er sich doch eigentlich ganz anders gedacht hatte?!" (p. 9.) Although the initial impact is mellowed by past experience and muted by memories of Charlotte Buff and Lili Schönemann, it very rapidly assumes the proportions and intensity of uniqueness:

> Unwillkürlich geriet er immer mehr in Staunen darüber, wie diese Frau . . . so viel Jungfräulichkeit bewahren konnte, so viel Keuschheit des Wesens, dass es ihn wie ein Hauch aus fernen reinen Gefilden überströmte. Er, der den Fluch Kains über sich fühlte, der sich zu Tantalus' Geschlecht rechnete und schon mit den Pistolen Werthers gespielt hatte, von Selbstmordgedanken heimgesucht, fühlte sich jetzt wie ein erhitzter Wanderer, der endlich im kühlen Schatten ausruht. Und da ging ihn für die Spanne eines Augenblicks die Ahnung von etwas ganz Neuem, gänzlich Unerhörtem, bisher nie Erfahrenem auf. Es war wie eine Vision. Der Nebel hatte sich gleichsam vor seinem Auge zerteilt, aus azurnem Grund stieg ein Seelenbild ätherhaft in strahlender Reinheit hervor--Lilis Bild war verdrängt. (p. 10.)

It would seem that Lux's Goethe in this instance falls prey to a minor error in judgment; not passion, but a vision of radiant purity devoid of all passion is to be the antidote for the sick heart. The startling effect of this vision has in addition a marked outward manifestation: "Gesitteter, als er gekommen war, höfischer als je gegen alle Hofdamen, erhob er sich gegen Charlotte, küsste leicht ihre Fingerspitzen . . . ." (p. 10.) More mannered, more polite than when he came--although he appears to be unaware of what is happening, this new personality has had a decided impact on the stormy youth. Charlotte's charm appeals first to the man; her steadying and sobering influence directs him along the path which leads to the polished product fit for court society. At the moment she guides only the man; later it will be the artist.

Although the two see each other almost daily in the course of the next few weeks, they seldom have the opportunity to exchange more than a few words of greeting. It seems to Lux's Goethe as though Charlotte had intentionally arranged to meet him only in the company of others. The author therefore has him take advantage of an occasion to surprise the lady with an unannounced appearance at the von Stein estate Kochberg, where she is staying with her sons. This visit leads to intimate conversations, "confessions" by both of them, which result in an awareness on Charlotte's part of her own share in the responsibility of preventing a recurrence of the tragedy of Werther. It is a realization, "das sie festhielt wie einen Talisman oder wie einen schönen, friedlichen Stern zu ihren Häupten" (p. 22), which also arouses in her a desire

for clarification of the bond between them:

> Ich kann Ihnen nichts sein oder nur sehr wenig. Das wenig ist allerdings sehr viel, und es ist alles, was ich darf. Sie haben es selbst ausgesprochen, und ich gebe es Ihnen für heute zum Abschied, nicht mehr und nicht weniger, aber das will ich Ihnen sein: Schwester, und nichts anderes! (pp. 22-23.)

With these words, the tone is set for all future contacts; only if their love can be maintained on a platonic level may they continue to meet. Lux's Goethe apparently accepts Charlotte's decision as final, for no subsequent indication is given that he doubts the validity of her judgment. From this point on, a certain stability of the relationship is assumed, which is manifested not only in the outward action of the plot but is also evidenced by the style and language which the author employs. Further reference to the latter aspect will be made later.

It is not long before the Charlotte "experience" expands its sphere of influence. Initially shaping the moral man, it now overflows into the realm of the artist and finds expression in Goethe's writings. His latest work Stella, a tribute to Lili, was a typical product of the Sturm und Drang of his youth. Now, however, a revised concept of the heroic, brought about by this newly found ideal of love, personified in the character of Frau von Stein, seizes his imagination. This vision of ideal, pure love which knows no sorrow or wounds of passion is henceforth the underlying motive of the dramas he will write. With time, Charlotte becomes for the poet "die Verkörperung seiner Muse." (p. 103.) When he wonders why it had to be she and not someone else, Lux's Goethe attributes

the phenomenon primarily to her ability to listen--not as others do, but with her whole soul. Her responsiveness is a source of inspiration, of enthusiasm, capable of leading him to a new, heretofore unexperienced plateau of creative endeavor.

As the narrative progresses, incorporating most of the events, major and minor, which colored the historical lives of the two protagonists, as established by research, Lux skillfully inserts certain episodes which are intended to show the instigation for later literary works. Thus there is a scene in which Goethe meets a wagon with a family of refugees from a fire at Ilmenau. They are strangers in the area; the daughter's name is Dorothea. While Goethe is wondering how he can be of assistance to them, the local apothecary offers lodgings in his home: "'Mein Sohn Hermann wird die Leute dort hinbringen.'" (p. 66.) In another scene discourses on the theater lead the poet to the conclusion that perhaps he should write a book incorporating his views on the subject:

> "Ja, wenn ich an die Notwendigkeit einer vaterländischen Bühne denke, die wir brauchen, . . . dann möchte ich geradezu von einer theatralischen Sendung reden. Oft denke ich daran, dass ich eine solche Entwicklung in einem Buch niederlegen sollte, in einer Art von Roman; doch damit hat es noch Zeit." (p. 160.)

Other allusions may not be quite so apparent on the surface; the mysterious, unnamed monk who suddenly appears at opportune moments for discussions of a philosophical nature bears at least a superficial resemblance to the Abbé of Wilhelm Meister and may be intended as the prototype for this character. The three incidents cited are merely a sampling of the many which

are woven into the course of Lux's version of Goethe's love for Charlotte.

Although the novel concentrates on Goethe, the author does not neglect the effect which the poet's personality has on Charlotte. In order to maintain some sort of balance, Lux frequently lets Charlotte tell the story as she records occurrences and her reactions to them in a fictional diary. He moreover feels called upon to explain to the reader why he uses this invention. A diary, he believes, could become the passive recipient of more intimate sentiments than Charlotte herself would have revealed to another individual, even to Goethe. He therefore uses it as a means of observing her inner character. To indicate that a new world has been opened to her through Goethe, Lux has her pen the familiar quotation from Die Geschwister. (p. 34.)[16] Yet Charlotte does not have the support of an inner conviction such as the poet has. While Lux's Goethe seldom expresses any doubt concerning either the relationship itself or its value for him, his Charlotte is constantly tormented by pangs of conscience and seeks to reassure herself as to the correctness of her actions and feelings. Yet her conflict is not the result of her original decision to be a "sister" and nothing more; it is not the degree of her love but the form in which it is to be expressed which causes her anxiety. Her problem appears to lie mainly in the discrepancy between her ideal picture of the man and reality; this problem, never completely resolved, is the basis

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[16]See Chapter II, p. 39, above.

for her inability to accept Goethe after his sojourn in Italy.

Moreover, Lux does not present Charlotte as the sole inspiration for the artist. She is forced to share the stage with Corona Schröter who serves a function in the novel which Charlotte cannot perform. Conversations with the actress supply the opportunity for Goethe to express views on various aspects of the theater and drama, views which Charlotte, with all her responsiveness, would not be able to elicit or understand. But Corona is not merely a sounding-board; through her acting, she, too, provides inspiration. For the poet, the two women represent one ideal:

> "Ja, Marianne," erwiderte er auf ihre [Corona's] tastende Frage, indem er ihr den Namen der Rolle gab, darin sie das Ebenbild Charlottens dargestellt hatte. "Ist es doch, als könnte ich keine Frau mehr wahrhaft lieben als in ihrem Bild. Wenn ich dich ansehe, Marianne, ist es mir wie im Traum, es sei Charlotte." (p. 162.)

Lux's Goethe later attempts to explain more clearly to Corona the role which the two women share. It is particularly in creating the figure of Iphigenie that the realization of the dual nature of her origin comes to him. In discussing the drama with Corona, Lux has his Goethe define his own task as an artist, namely to create a poetry, "die einen Tempel der edlen Sitte baut." (p. 286.) The attainment of this self-realization has been possible only through Charlotte and Corona, representing two different aspects of the art of creating which are fused in the mind of the artist into the one poetic ideal. In effect, it is the impact of Charlotte's personality which has supplied the idea, both for the character of Iphigenie and for the theme of the drama, while the vision of Corona's stage interpretation of the role led to the

creation of the figure itself.

The presence of two women whom the poet loves gives rise quite naturally to some conflict, which does not, however, attain proportions of a triangular nature. Although there are indications of some degree of jealousy between the two women, Lux's Goethe appears to be unaware of any possible difficulty here. Since the poet remains totally unaffected by these incidents of feminine machination, one has an inkling that they perhaps are not essential to the plot and may consequently have been inserted solely for the reader's benefit, to provide an extra bit of spice for the narrative. Goethe does experience moments of indecision as to the nature of his relationship with Corona (the author likens him to Hamlet), but his attention at such times is centered on Corona alone, not on a comparison of her with Charlotte. Lux's Goethe even wonders whether he should perhaps marry the actress--though he is fully conscious of her "Unantastbarkeit"--chiefly in order to "save" her from the persistent advances of Karl August. But when the Duke finally turns his attention and affection to the Gräfin Werthern-Neunheiligen, her problem is resolved without Goethe's intervention. Corona's virtue no longer needs his protection, and since she is now comfortably established as an actress in the Weimar society, Goethe dismisses the thought of marriage to her.

While the protagonist's preoccupation with the poetic inspiration afforded by Charlotte and temporarily by Corona forms the core of the narrative, and although "das ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan" is inscribed as the motto of his

novel, the author does not mean to imply that Goethe's works are the product solely of contact with the opposite sex. Lux introduces as minor characters figures such as Wieland, Herder, and above all Merck, whose aesthetic judgment is valued highly by Goethe and is a major factor in determining the final form in which his works appear.

When the narrative arrives at the point of the Italian journey, the author circumvents the possible question of Goethe's fleeing from the forces of a passion which can find no means of release. Passion, to him, was not a significant force in their previous relationship, nor does it begin to play a role here. Lux does not attribute any responsibility for Goethe's decision to escape to Charlotte, but sees the primary cause in the artist's lack of time or freedom for his poetic endeavor. For Lux, the crisis which Goethe faces at this stage is comparable to the problem in Tasso: Goethe is both Antonio and Tasso, statesman and poet, and experiences the conflict in the ideologies of the two; Charlotte's role, similar to that of Prinzessin Leonore in the drama, is to bind the poet to the Weimar court society. In Lux's novel, Goethe does not flee from Charlotte, for there is no reason for him to do so. The release which he seeks results from other, oppressive aspects of his existence. Charlotte prevents his leaving sooner, and it is she who brings him back. However, her inability to come to terms with the new Goethe who returns after a two-year absence results in a break in the former close bond. Lux presents Goethe as the injured party; his love for Charlotte continues through the years, awaiting only a sign of

reconciliation on her part. When it finally comes, with her expression of sympathy upon the occasion of Goethe's illness, their life begins anew: "Die einstigen Liebenden, so lange Entfremdeten, beginnen ein zweites Leben als Genesende oder als vom Tode Auferstandene . . . ." Here the main narrative comes to a close. Yet even during the years when circumstances prevent the intimate give-and-take of the past, Charlotte's influence continues to be felt. As one of several examples, the author notes the friendship with Schiller which is fostered under her tutelage. The two poets frequently use her home for theoretical discussions of their work; thus Charlotte, in an indirect manner, provides a further inspiration for Goethe's poetry. With his Goethe standing near the end of life, Lux once more seeks to evaluate the poet's position in German letters, and in so doing re-emphasizes the part played by Charlotte in shaping both the poet and the man through her ideal love.

The author thus leaves no doubt in the concluding scenes concerning the interpretation which he places on the bond between Goethe and Charlotte; it was an ideal, platonic love, a fact which he asserts both in the beginning of the narrative and again at the end. And this concept of a supra-physical love, borne and nourished only in a spiritual realm, which he finds personified in Frau von Stein, is the star to which Lux's Goethe hitches his wagon of creative ambition. Through her he realizes his dreams as an artist; through her and the ideals for which she stands the "Bildung," the maturation of the creative genius is completed.

The tone which Charlotte sets during their first intimate meeting at Kochberg is maintained by Lux throughout the novel and is reflected in the style and techniques he uses to tell his story. He conceives their love as so ideal that it finds its complete nourishment on an intellectual, spiritual plane. Thus satiated, it need not seek to taste of lower fares. Therefore, there are no undercurrents of passion, such as one finds, for example, in the Karlsbader Novelle and certainly none of the outbursts characteristic of Trentini's Goethe. A stability in the relationship is taken for granted here which affects both the internal and external movement of the narrative. This is not the story of a love which constantly has to be regained; it is attained by both parties almost immediately and, at least for Goethe, is never lost. One might almost say the Lux novel lacks a real plot, or rather it lacks the external plot usually found in the Goethe-Charlotte fiction, for there is no evidence of conflict between the two protagonists. The action of the narrative, rather than furthering the course of their love, is primarily the result of that love; it reflects rather than depicts the inner development of the characters.

In keeping with the general tone of his theme, Lux's approach to the narrative is epic rather than dramatic. Although there are skillfully drawn scenes in which the reader is permitted to witness directly the action as it takes place, these are outweighed by others in which the reader is told (either by the author or through some character) about what has happened. The use of a give-and-take type of dialogue

occurs with relative infrequency; instead, the author prefers either "erlebte Rede" or long and sustained speeches in which he often combines the spoken word with the subjunctive of indirect discourse. This technique helps to further the desired emotional climate of the narrative; the stability of Goethe's and Charlotte's love apparently arouses no need for occasional verbal explosions by means of dramatic dialogue.

In order to maintain his story at the proper emotional pitch, Lux makes deliberate use of aesthetic distance. His employment of the subjunctive not only softens the dramatic effect, but serves to move the reader one step further away from the action. Moreover, he does not shy away from authorial intrusion, with discourses on such topics as letter writing, which he concludes with "Das hat Charlotte empfunden" (p. 41), the keeping of a diary (pp. 34-35), or even on what he calls the "Schein-Ich" (p. 228)--the latter in preparation for scenes in which Goethe is to appear incognito. It is particularly in the introduction of Frau von Stein's fictional diary that deliberate aesthetic distance is most evident. This diary serves a threefold purpose: it lends an authoritative touch to the narrative by providing a note of authenticity, it serves to aid in gaining insight into Charlotte's character, and it is the place where much of the action of the story is unfolded. Thus the reader is often twice removed from the actual happening itself; he neither witnesses the event as it occurs, nor sees it with the author's help, but is forced to view it through Charlotte's eyes. And of course, by the time Charlotte records any particular occurrence in her

diary, most of the dramatic effect has worn off. In spite of its advantage for conveying the mood intended, this technique bears in its wake an obvious, though minor pitfall which Lux is not always able to avoid. There are times when the author wishes to impart to the reader certain information, the presence of which might be questioned, above all in the diary of a person so intimately involved in the action. Consequently Charlotte's entries occasionally appear to be cluttered with details which seem trite either because they are unnecessary or out of place. These errors, however, are usually not so gross as to destroy the fictional illusion irreparably. Another incident will perhaps supply the final commentary on the length to which the author goes to maintain his aesthetic distance: in one scene Goethe and Corona, pleasantly chatting, describe in minute detail the various aspects of their performance of "Minerva," while mentioning that two years have passed since the actual event! (pp. 383f.)[17]

There is every indication that Lux has thoroughly digested the source material in preparation for writing his Goethe. The amount of detail concerning characters and events injected into the narrative leaves no doubt as to the thoroughness of his study. There is even evidence that he has consulted the opinion of authority in order to arrive at his interpretation of the Charlotte experience. At least one scholar

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[17]Referred to in the narrative as "die Minerva-Aufführung," the full title was "Minervas Geburt, Leben und Taten," a shadow-play performed on the occasion of Goethe's 32nd birthday in the park at Tiefurt. See Ernst Beutler, Essays um Goethe (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Dieterich, 1947), II, 189.

enjoys Lux's esteem so highly that sections of his commentary have been embodied in the novel. Certain parallels with Julius Petersen's Introduction to Goethe's letters should not be overlooked. Petersen writes concerning the drama Stella:

> Die Helden der vorausgehenden Dramen sind übermütige Eroberer, die schwache Mädchenherzen an sich reissen.[18]

Lux notes in the same context:

> Als stürmische, übermütige Eroberer erscheinen bisher die Helden seiner Dramen, als verwegene Liebhaber, die schwache Mädchenherzen an sich reissen, unbekümmert um alle Gebote und Schranken. (p. 38.)

Goethe's ruthless editing of his letters before the publication of Italienische Reise draws the following comment from Petersen:

> Die unbarmherzige Objektivierung liess ihn um so höher das Bleibende werten, das aus jenen Zeiten hervorgegangen war. Als die glücklichste Periode seines Schaffens mussten jetzt wieder vor seiner Erinnerung die Jahre stehen, in denen die Liebe zu Frau von Stein ihren Höhepunkt erreicht hatte.[19]

Lux depicts his Goethe at the end of his life (with no mention of the letters):

> Und wenn er nun bei der unbarmherzigen Objektivierung das Bleibende wertet, dann stehen wieder vor seiner Erinnerung jene Jahre, in denen seine platonische Liebe zu Charlotte ihren Höhepunkt erreicht hatte. (p. 523.)

In surveying the various aspects of Lux's Goethe, one is struck by its marked resemblance to the "Bildungsroman," although certain deviations from the traditional concept are of course necessitated by the order and nature of events in the life of the historical characters. The influence of

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[18]Petersen, Briefe, I, xix.

[19]Petersen, Briefe, I, xli.

Goethe's own Wilhelm Meister can be strongly felt. Lux's theme, for example, is that usually found in the traditional "Bildungsroman." Although it does not begin with the hero as an adolescent, it is essentially the story of the formation of a character as he ceases to be self-centered and becomes society-centered, thus realizing his true self. The major factor in this formation is, of course, his love for Frau von Stein. Certain parts of Roy Pascal's discussion of Wilhelm Meister as a "Bildungsroman" are directly applicable to the Lux apprentice novel:

> The hero . . . is interesting above all for his disposition, his moral views and sentiments, his moral personality. In the midst of apparently fortuitous occurrences, he gives the latter a unity within his disposition, he "moulds" them though he does not cause or control them. The occurrences are of little importance in themselves, but acquire a meaning when reflected in his character. Thus Goethe lays all the stress on the disposition of the hero, on his "Bildsamkeit" as Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel called it, his educability. There is no fatal clash between circumstances and character; the outcome is inherently there in the character from the beginning.[20]

With its emphasis on "Bildung," on the inner organism, the relation between novelistic time and chronological time in Lux's work is rather shaky and varies its proportions at the author's discretion. But a few short pages are used to cover the Italian journey while just as much space is devoted to a discourse by Corona Schröter on her family, childhood, past and present career, and ambitions for making the stage a respected profession. Furthermore, the author's love for sustained, reflective speeches, the didactic note, the near

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[20]Roy Pascal, The German Novel (Manchester University Press, 1956), p. 23.

absence of characters or events who are "evil" (one notable exception: Lenz, in whom Lux's Goethe views a caricature of himself), combined with numerous other elements, some of which have been mentioned above--all leave little doubt that Lux firmly believes Goethe would have produced a second "Bildungsroman," had he elected to fill that hiatus in his biography.[21]

Although the work obviously does not come up to Lux's high aspirations of being a continuation of Dichtung und Wahrheit, it may nevertheless be regarded as a worthy though somewhat removed descendant of Wilhelm Meister and Gottfried Keller's Der grüne Heinrich. Within the ranks of the more recent "Bildungs- und Künstlerromane," it can stand comparison with such respectable representatives of the genre as Walter von Molo's Schillerroman (1912-16) and Herbert Eulenberg's Schubert und die Frauen (1929).

Meine Schwester oder meine Frau

Juliane Kay (pseudonym for Erna Baumann, née Smreker, 1904--) has achieved some distinction not only as a novelist but also as a dramatist and scenarist.[22] She turned to creative writing after training for a stage career. Among her published novels are Abenteuer im Sommer (1925), Frauen um Fedja (1929), Der Erzbischof von Salzburg (1933), and Kein Tag kommt zurück (1951); she has also written a series of

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[21] See above, pp. 145-146.

[22] Biographical information obtained from Wer ist wer, 1955, and from a sketch appended to Meine Schwester oder meine Frau (see note 25, below).

Novellen, which appeared under the title Die Frau vom Orlog (1943).[23] Her stage plays include Dorf und Menschheit, Der Schneider treibt den Teufel aus, Der Zauberer, Der Birnbaum Charlotte Ackermann, Das hohe Haus, Vagabunden,[24] and Klara, the latter having had its premiere at the Theater in der Josefstadt, Vienna, 1953. Miss Kay has produced scenarios for a number of films as well, whose very titles, perhaps, tell a story: Ihr erstes Erlebnis, Vagabunden, Wenn abends die Heide träumt (1952), Vergiss die Liebe nicht (1953), Der erste Kuss (1954), Eine Frau von heute (1954), Du bist die Richtige (1955), Der fröhliche Wanderer (1955), and Die Toteninsel (1955). There may have been more of the same since. In 1926 she was distinguished with the Jugendpreis deutscher Erzähler, in 1950 with the Sascha-Kolowrat-Preis (Austria), and in 1953 with the Deutscher Bundesfilmpreis. As will become evident later in our discussion, Miss Kay's experience as a dramatist and scenarist has had a strong influence on her Goethe-Charlotte novel, Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.[25]

The theme of the novel, according to the publisher's notice, is "das Schicksal einer Leidenschaft, die Neigung einer schönen und hochstehenden, aber spät zur Liebe bereiten

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[23] Wer ist wer also includes the entry Weder Schwester noch Frau, R., 1950, which is not confirmed by our other source. The item may conceivably be an error, both in title and date, in reference to the novel under discussion here, which is not included by Wer ist wer.

[24] The above works are listed in Wer ist wer with no indication of the date when written or performed.

[25] Juliane Kay, Meine Schwester oder meine Frau (Wien: Ilse Luckmann, 1953), 476 pp. Hereafter cited by page number in the text.

und von den Ahnungen des Alters umschatteten Frau, zu dem jüngeren und kraft seines überragenden Genies doppelt wandelbaren Manne."[26] Accordingly, it is an interpretation of the love of an older woman for a younger man with the psychological implications resulting from such a union. In contrast to previous Goethe--Frau von Stein novels, which focus on the male protagonist, the emphasis in this narrative is placed primarily on the character of Charlotte.

The author has conceived her narrative to include the various stages in Charlotte's love for the poet; beginning therefore with Goethe's arrival in Weimar, it encompasses also a final scene in which Charlotte is depicted in old age. In order to cover the time span of the novel, which may be assumed to be approximately fifty years, and at the same time to introduce and develop the personalities of a number of minor characters, a certain amount of selectivity in the presentation of incidents has been judiciously employed. Structurally, the narrative consists of two parts, called simply by that name, and an epilogue. The two parts are subdivided into "scenes" or "episodes" rather than chapters, and as the two parts themselves, these scenic sequences are not distinguished with any significant title; mere spacing is used to indicate the close of one episode and the beginning of another. The bulk of the narration, both in external form and in content, lies in the first part; covering approximately 340 pages of text, it deals with the initial stages of the attraction.

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[26]Statement on the inside front book jacket. Author unknown.

Although historical timing is minimized throughout the novel, there are indications that the action in this first part is supposed to take place within a period of two or three years. It is in this section that Charlotte's love for Goethe takes on a definite form; here also is the conflict with Corona Schröter, who considers herself and is looked upon by Charlotte as a rival for Goethe's attention and affection, with its resolution in favor of the older woman.

Miss Kay has exercised her prerogative as an artist in minimizing or even eliminating from her narrative historical events which might be considered to have rather weak novelistic potentialities. Thus between the first and second parts there is a lapse of a number of years, for which there would appear to be little documentary evidence indicating a significant change in the historical relationship. At the opening of part two, time has taken its toll on the members of the Weimar society, and Goethe's flight to Italy is imminent. The "Zweiter Teil," with 116 pages, covers the last few months in Weimar before the Italian journey, the vacation in Karlsbad, Charlotte's reactions while Goethe is in Italy, his return, and his alliance with Christiane which terminates abruptly any connection with Frau von Stein. In the brief Epilogue (9 pp.) Charlotte as an old woman pays a call on Corona Schröter during which both reflect on earlier years in the court society.[27] The novel thus presents the love of Charlotte for Goethe in its dramatic highlights: the initial attraction,

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[27]Actually, Corona died in August, 1802; she was 51, Charlotte 60 years old at the time.

the forces leading to the break, with a final mature reflection on the whole situation mellowed by the course of time.

Miss Kay takes great pains in drawing the character of her fictional Frau von Stein. As the novel opens, Goethe catches his first glimpse of Charlotte as she passes him on the steps of the palace. He is impressed; there follows then a rather detailed description of her dress, her manner, and general appearance as seen through his eyes. The letter of Dr. Zimmermann to Lavater is recalled,[28] with Goethe making a few corrections according to his own personal impressions:

> Dann erwähnte er [Zimmermann] noch ihren "Zephirgang," ein Wort, das Goethe im stillen verbesserte; Zephirgang schien ihm, für die augenfällige Grazie des Ganges, durchaus nicht der richtige Ausdruck. Sie geht mit Tanzschritten, dachte er, geht wie ein überaus junger Mensch, der die Schönheit der Haltung noch völlig unbewusst mit sich herumträgt. (p. 10.)

With Goethe's conclusion, "Sie besteht einzig nur aus Kontrasten!" the reader has a definite concept of the appearance of Frau von Stein, which is periodically reinforced throughout the narrative by further descriptions, partly in her effect upon others, frequently also in her own opinion of herself, when, for example, in a very feminine way, she reflects while dressing and rearranging her hair in the mirror.

After a brief scene depicting the "second" formal meeting of Goethe and Charlotte at the latter's home, in which there is evidence of some mutual attraction, Miss Kay proceeds

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[28]Miss Kay does not disclose the information that the letter was written in 1774 to Lavater but gives the impression that Goethe himself was the recipient. Whether Goethe ever read it or was even aware of its existence is not an established fact.

with a methodical explanation, in narrative guise, of the multiple facets of Charlotte's composite and complicated personality, as the author understands it. The conflicts in her character, if we interpret Miss Kay correctly, exist because she has trained her overt actions to respond to her will rather than to instinct. To some extent this control has been so great as to stifle the emotions themselves or to produce an effect which is in decided contrast to that which is really felt. Until the time of Goethe's arrival, Charlotte has been a woman who has been disinterested in, if not completely repulsed by sex. During her first meeting with Goethe, at which other ladies of the court are present, the conversation idly turns to kissing, and the question is raised as to which language has the most appropriate word for this "phenomenon." Charlotte's answer is quite blunt:

> Die Stein, mit ihrem spöttisch-gleichgültigen Lächeln, erklärte das Phänomen auf ihre Art: für ein so lächerliches Tun wie die Berührung zweier Lippenpaare könne, in welcher Sprache auch immer, nur ein lächerliches, um nicht zu sagen läppisches Wort geprägt und gefunden werden. (p. 12.)

Yet, equipped with this knowledge, the reader discovers Charlotte a few moments later with her thoughts turning to Goethe, who is sitting quietly in a corner not partaking in this feminine pratter. Even the most naive will recognize immediately that Charlotte's disappointment in the poet, amounting almost to disgust, is but an initial stage of the order in which affairs of the heart are at times known to develop. Her concern for Goethe is too great to be attributed to a mere cursory or intellectual interest. Thus even at this early point in the narrative, the sources of Charlotte's conflicts

become apparent. The impression which she has deliberately cultivated and which is accepted by the "world" is that of an emotionally cold personality, yet at the same time there are strong indications that she is about to become attracted to the poet in a manner which is not entirely of an intellectual nature.

One of the conflicts which beset Frau von Stein is that between reality and the ideal. This motif, also introduced by Lux, is developed to a point of high intensity by Miss Kay. In this respect, her fictional Charlotte is vaguely reminiscent of the "weisse Frau" type of character recurring in the Novellen of Eduard von Keyserling.[29] Like many of Keyserling's heroines, she has been standing behind a fence, staring longingly at the outside world, waiting for "das grosse Erlebnis":

> "Nichts bin ich als das Kind, das ich einmal war, und das hinter dem Gartenzaun steht, auf die Strasse starrt und wartet. Ich wusste bis heut nicht worauf--jetzt weiss ich's." (p. 44.)

Frau von Stein's great experience is to come in the person of Goethe. The figure of Anna Amalia in the novel also appears, incidentally, to have some traits in common with the aristocratic women familiar to the readers of Keyserling. Miss Kay's Goethe perceives in the Duchess a certain element of loneliness:

> Ein Mensch stand vor ihm, ein trauriger kleiner Mensch hinter Gittern. Ihre Hand, die er in der seinen hielt und küsste, war vorzeitig alt und welk--als hätte die Einsamkeit, die in ihr wohnte, sich ein Nest von Fältchen und Äderchen gebaut. (p. 102.)

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29 For a complete discussion of this personality type see Hedwig David-Schwarz, "Der Typus der 'weissen' Frau im Werk Eduard von Keyserlings," Psychologische Rundschau, 1929, I, 285-292, 336-340, 367-370.

The Charlotte of Meine Schwester oder meine Frau has had since her youth an inner desire to be complete in all phases of her being. Under the influence of Goethe (subconscious at the moment), she sets out anew to attain this goal:

> Leider war es ihr nie gelungen, diese Vollkommenheit auch nur einen Tag lang durchzuführen--höchstens nach aussen hin, nach innen nicht. Denn ihre kritische Vernunft, ihr Hang klar zu sehen und vor ideellen Übertreibungen zurückzuschrecken, hatten sie gehindert, die Wärme und Nachsicht, die sie ausstrahlen wollte, auch nur im engsten Familienkreis zu verbreiten. Wie sollte man den vollkommenen Engel spielen, wenn fast alles, was man sah und hörte, zum Widerspruch reizte? . . . Heute--seit vielen Jahren zum ersten Mal--überkam sie der jugendliche Ehrgeiz, sich neuerlich den kleinen Anforderungen und Augenblicken des Tages mit ausgesuchter Vollkommenheit hingeben zu wollen. Und es amüsierte sie, auf sich aufzupassen, sich keinerlei innere Nachlässigkeit zu erlauben. (p. 18.)

On this particular day she launches forth on a deliberate plan of self-improvement in an effort to approach the ideal she has of herself. Although not entirely successful, it is an earnest attempt at removal of another "Konstrast."

Above all, Charlotte's inner self, her "Ich" demands recognition:

> . . . weil Lotte den Kopf senkte und die gefalteten Hände löste, als hätte es keinen Sinn mehr, das Schicksal anzubetteln um etwas, was man doch nicht bekam. Das "etwas" war die Erlaubnis, sich zum eigenen Ich bekennen zu dürfen. Dieses Ich war kindlich, zärtlich, sehnsüchtig, verspielt, unmütterlich, launenhaft--leidenschaftslos, wenn Leidenschaft von Männern gefordert wurde, und über die Massen zärtlich bis zur hingebendsten Leidenschaft, wenn sie hinter dem männlichen Wesen den Spielgefährten erkannte, den träumenden, lachlustigen und klugen Gefährten, der ihre Abneigung gegen das allzu Männliche zu überwinden verstand. (p. 46.)

With the painting of this inner portrait Miss Kay quite clearly establishes the necessary conditions under which Charlotte will grant her love.

Before plunging her heroine too deeply into contact with the young poet, in which the emphasis is to be strongly on the erotic side, Miss Kay deems it expedient to clarify Charlotte's relationship to von Stein. Her explanation is far from subtle, as she depicts the situation in the von Stein household as far from one of marital bliss. Perhaps the mildest comment occurs when Charlotte interrupts von Stein at breakfast and realizes: "Ich störe ihn." (p. 22.) Her husband's table manners leave much to be desired, while those in the bedroom are even worse:

> In diesen Nächten verwandelte er sich aus dem gesitteten (wenn auch realistischen und unschwärmerischen) Hofmann in die lächerlichste und albernste Kopie eines Liebhabers, wie er sich Liebhaber dachte--in eine Mischung also von unreifer Politesse, verbunden mit der Reife eines behaglichen Geniessers, der um diesen Genuss herum einen falschen Aufbau von Feinheit und Rücksicht gruppierte, den er zuletzt doch wieder vergass. Am unerträglichsten schien ihr die eitle Zufriedenheit, mit der er sich, nach solchen Nächten, von ihr verabschiedete. Etwas Gönnerhaftes schwang durch, als hätte er--unübertrefflicher Mann, der er war--ein Meisterstück in der Umarmung der Frau, die ihn nicht im geringsten reizte, mit höchster Akkuratesse vollbracht. (pp. 22-23.)

Charlotte's repulsion of the crude masculinity in her husband finds an indirect reflection in her reaction to the eldest of her sons, twelve-year-old Karl: "Gerade das männlich Kräftige an ihm hatte ihr immer eine Mischung von Beklommenheit und Abneigung verursacht." (p. 20.) Even von Stein's manner of laughing grates on her nerves. (pp. 33, 34.) In short, the situation is so intolerable that Charlotte "murders" her husband: "In diesem Augenblick ermordete sie ihn--in Gedanken." (p. 23.)

On the other side of the picture von Stein himself has

not been entirely pleased with his wife's attitude. He has sought an outlet for his frustration in affairs with other women; these affairs, to be sure, have been above board and so far harmless, for von Stein never does anything which might draw the attention of the curious: ". . . denn er tat nie etwas, was Aufsehen erregen oder bekannt werden könnte." (p. 23.) However, his frustration at times becomes so acute as to result in pathetically awkward situations, one involving an encounter with their old servant woman. (pp. 42-43.) The picture of marital animosity is complete as Miss Kay's von Stein realizes he actually hates his wife:

> Und mit verzerrtem Gesicht, vom Krampf der Erbitterung, der Ohnmacht und der Feindschaft geschüttelt, hasste er diese beiden [Karl August and Goethe]--und sich selbst--und am meisten die Frau, die an Kopfschmerzen litt, und müde und kalt in den Kissen lag, ohne Glanz und Süsse, und die es nie fertig gebracht hatte, Haar, Augen, Fleisch, Kissen, Decken und Lächeln zu <u>einem</u> Begriff zu vereinen. (p. 43.)

The author presumably is using this means to vindicate Frau von Stein in her subsequent love for another man. When both partners have dissolved the emotional ties of a marriage--so Miss Kay appears to reason--it is no longer a binding force.

As the narrative progresses, it holds true to the promise of the subtitle: <u>Roman einer Leidenschaft</u>. Charlotte wavers constantly in her love for Goethe; should she be "Schwester" or "Frau"? At times she rather enjoys the latter idea:

> Aber sie hatte das Aufblitzen der Augen, das Erstarren der Mienen ringsum gesehen, und äusserlich scheinbar aufgebracht, genoss sie von ganzem Herzen den Triumph der Zweideutigkeit. Morgen würde sie alles aufklären. Heute durfte sie sicher sein: jedermann hielt sie für seine Geliebte und malte sich aus, dass und wie sie in seinen

> Armen lag. Der wunderlich strahlende, unvergleichliche Sieg der Gefallenen wurde ihr zuteil. (p. 126.)

But then again she seems unable either to make up her mind or to carry through on her desires. The crux of this problem is brought on by the imminent arrival of Corona Schröter from Leipzig. Goethe has elected to make the journey to entice her to come to Weimar. Charlotte, fearing the actress will usurp her own place in his affections, finally manages to persuade herself to go to him (he has already presented her with the keys to his Gartenhaus). Along the way her "Ich" rebels:

> Die Furcht vor den Peinlichkeiten und Lächerlichkeiten, die aus der Fremdheit der Körper entstehen mochten, sie würde vielleicht zu ertragen, möglicherweise zu überwinden sein. Jetzt aber, wie ein zweiter Berg hinter dem ersten, stand die stärkere Furcht in ihr, die unüberwindliche: ein einziger Zug der Enttäuschung in seinem Gesicht, ein einziges Ersterben der Freude in seinen Augen--dies würde nie zu ertragen, nie zu vergessen sein. (p. 147.)

Miss Kay's Charlotte, to be sure, is not ready to admit that she suffers from a biological inferiority complex and succeeds in convincing herself that her sore foot is to be blamed for her interrupted journey to Goethe's Gartenhaus. With a note of relief she postpones going to him until some other time, perhaps next summer, when the foot is better. (p. 147.)

With the subsequent arrival of Corona, forces of a triangular nature come to the fore. The two women openly hate each other, their attitudes giving rise to considerable comment from the court. The poet himself seems to be unaware of any difficulty; Miss Kay, at any rate, does not share with the reader Goethe's reactions to this competitive situation. The action of the narrative now centers for a time on the two

women. Corona unscrupulously tries to win Goethe's affections entirely for herself by circulating the fiction that she possesses one of Goethe's letters which Charlotte has "purposely" lost. Her intrigue eventually fails, Goethe "gives" Corona to Karl August, and Charlotte remains the victor. Miss Kay leaves the question of Goethe's previous position with regard to Corona open:

> Und da Goethe bejahend den Kopf senkte--oder war die Kopfbewegung nicht bejahend gewesen?--nickte ihm Karl August zu, drückte den Arm, den er noch immer hielt, und trat in den Saal zurück. (p. 276.)

Although for all purposes she is no longer an effective element of the triangle, Corona makes one last valiant but hysterical appeal to Goethe to restore her to the position she thinks she formerly held in his heart. Under the impact of his rebuff her psyche is completely crushed.

With Corona eliminated, the action of the narrative is again focused on Goethe and Charlotte. In a setting that might be bodily taken over into a movie scenario--complete with the delicate and suggestive fade-out--Miss Kay presents the final intimate scene of the first part. Goethe relates to Charlotte the story of Francesca da Rimini from Dante's Divine Comedy as a parallel to their own love:

> ". . . Und allabendlich, vor der Dämmerung, sassen sie vor den Fenstern und lasen zusammen in einem Buch, das sie schön fanden und lehrreich. So wie wir beide."
> "Wir beide?"
> "Dann kam ein Tag, an dem sie einander ansahen und plötzlich aussprachen, was sie lange verschwiegen hatten--"
> "Dass sie sich liebten?"
> "Dass sie sich liebten. Es ist wörtlich nicht angegeben. Francesca drückte sich anders aus. Sie sah in die Flammen und in die Augen des Mannes, den sie geliebt hatte, und in die Augen des Dichters, der sie gefragt

> hatte, und sagte: 'An diesem Abend lasen wir nicht mehr.'"
> "An diesem Abend--"
> Lotte sah in den flammenden Nebel vor den Fenstern, der hin und her trieb und langsam verblasste. Die Dämmerung fiel ein. (p. 347.)

In the second part of the narrative, Miss Kay seems to have less difficulty in making her characters conform to the lines of the established biography. Except for one scene at Schneeberg, when Charlotte is on her way home from Karlsbad, the action deviates little from historical tradition, and only well-known events are utilized. This one invented scene finds Charlotte making preparations to spend the night alone with Goethe in a vacated house, since there is no room at the inn and the last mail coach of the day has been missed. Her friend, however, finds accommodations for her in a private coach and her plans come to naught. The implications of this scene are strong, particularly in view of the fade-out used to end the first part. It would seem that Charlotte is no longer plagued by the question as to whether she should be "Schwester" or "Frau," for she has no qualms or pangs of conscience, either in the form of a sore foot or otherwise, concerning the advisability of her actions. On the other hand, the attitude of Goethe, who appears to be either unconcerned about or unaware of her plans--a very disturbing factor for Charlotte, to say the least--could just as well lead to the conclusion that he has long since received his answer and is no longer interested in posing the question again. However, these are merely implications; for obvious reasons, the author apparently prefers to couch the final decision of "meine Schwester oder meine Frau" in ambiguity. As a closing episode,

after he has returned from Italy, to illustrate Charlotte's state of complete despair and disorientation over the loss of her lover to Christiane, Miss Kay employs the well-known "library" incident. Frau von Stein, seeing Goethe approaching her home, makes hasty and excited preparations to receive him, only to discover he has used the path below her home as a short-cut to the library. It is then that she comes to the realization that he is lost to her forever:

> Sie schloss die Augen und sagte mit einer ganz weichen, schwerfälligen Stimme, als redete sie im Schlaf oder Traum: "... und ist mir nun wie ein schöner Stern, der mir vom Himmel gefallen." (p. 465.)[30]

Although the emphasis in the novel, as the theme suggests, is on the attraction of the older woman to the younger man, the reverse of that situation is also taken into consideration. The figure of Goethe, though by no means treated in such detail as that of Frau von Stein, is portrayed with some degree of success within the scope of the novel. His function in the narrative, as might be expected with its Charlotte orientation, is primarily either to instigate or reflect certain reactions on the part of the feminine protagonist. Yet Miss Kay devotes enough attention to his character to have him appear not merely as an instrument, as an object of Charlotte's adoration, but as a personality in his own right. In respect to the total view presented by the narrative Goethe's role is definitely relegated to that of a secondary figure. In spite of this fact, his character is sufficiently drawn to enable the reader to visualize him as a personality worthy of

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[30]See letter of Frau von Stein to Lotte Schiller, Chapter II, p. 58, above.

Frau von Stein's personal conflict. His also happens to be the only figure in the novel whose actions appear to be in harmony with his inclinations. Although he looks to Charlotte for guidance, for understanding and moderation (p. 326), Miss Kay assigns not to her but to him the task of being the stabilizing force in this love affair. The delineation of his character is complete when he proves himself to be capable of overcoming Frau von Stein's "Abneigung gegen das allzu Männliche." Her faith in him is justified, for he explains to her:

> Denn sieh, du bist wie du bist, und kannst nicht aus deiner eingeborenen Haut, die dich verurteilt, abzuwägen, und furchtsam zu sein und kalt und lieblos--zu dir selber. Mich hältst du im Tempel wohlverwahrt, aber du betrittst ihn nicht, siehst mich nur an, willst keinen Schritt auf mich zugehen. Darüber grämte ich mich. Aber ich wusste ja, dass du dein Leben leben musst, eingeengt in Gesetze und Vorschriften, die dir heilig sind. Oft vermied ich, dir zu begegnen, um es dir--und mir nicht schwerer zu machen. Und versuchte auch, von dir loszukommen, zuweilen glaubte ich, dass es mir gelingen könnte. Ich verstand dich und verschwieg dir vieles. Aber natürlich wusste ich, dass du mich liebtest. (p. 342.)

Of the other secondary characters, Corona Schröter and Duchess Anna Amalia are the most outstanding with respect to the consideration which the author devotes to them. While there might be some serious question as to the degree of historical accuracy involved in their characterization--a question which could obviously be raised concerning every other character drawn with Miss Kay's imaginative pen--there is little doubt that they, too, exist as distinct personalities. Corona's role in the triangle is more than catalytic; she herself becomes so involved in the course of the action as to suffer considerably under its outcome. The final sketch of her in a state of total disillusion offers a strong and

effective parallel to that of Charlotte when she finds herself in a similar position. While Corona decisively affects the course of Charlotte's love for Goethe, Anna Amalia appears chiefly as the central figure around which activities in the court society revolve. As such, she is accorded a significant role by the author; along with Charlotte, Goethe, and Corona, the Duchess has a major responsibility in bearing the weight of the plot.

Miss Kay exhibits a great amount of skill in the construction of her novel. She has wisely refrained from attempting to include in her narrative all the material available from scholarly sources. Goethe's letters are used sparingly; where introduced, they are not merely decorative, as so frequently happens in a biographical novel, but form an integral part of the narrative with the definite function of furthering the action. The author also cleverly provides comic relief to prevent the narrative from obtaining an over-balance of high-pitched, tense emotional scenes. Only in rare instances does the comic element appear out of place or exaggerated, as it does, for example, in Miss Kay's indecorous selection of the time and place in which Duchess Anna Amalia is said to do her most serious thinking. (pp. 103-104.)

The techniques of the dramatist and scenarist are employed in the novel to the author's, if not always the reader's advantage. Miss Kay manipulates her characters with dexterity, moving them about as if on a stage; hardly a scene lacks a precise pictorial image. To aid in the creation of these images, the author makes ample use of similes and metaphors,

many of which are drawn from the animal kingdom. Thus we are told that Duchess Anna Amalia "gliche äusserlich diesen englischen kleinen Hunden, die Ratten fingen--wie hiessen sie doch--, und wie diese Tiere habe sie einen unglaubhaften Spürsinn dafür, wo 'Ratten' zu finden seien" (p. 36), while Duchess Luise sits in her rooms "störrisch und langweilig, wie ein überzüchtetes Pferd" (p. 50). The von Kalb family arrange themselves on their chairs "wie Papageien . . . bunt, aufgeplustert und geschwätzig" (p. 66). Anna Amalia, convinced that Caroline von Ilten will bring disaster to the ducal household, calls her "dieses dicke Fohlen, das meinen Sohn Konstantin umspringt" (p. 68), and she sometimes catches herself "bei dem sinnig-verlorenen Lammsgesicht, das sie gemacht hatte" (p. 97). Einsiedel's face takes on the expression of a dog, "der sich zu den Füssen seiner Herrin hinlegt" (p. 100); Fräulein von Waldner has "Kuhaugen" (p. 13) or a "Katzengesicht" (p. 124), and is sometimes referred to by others as "die fette Katze" (p. 124). Herder, with his coattails stuffed in his pockets to avoid stepping on them as he climbs into the carriage with his arms full, resembles a "Fledermaus . . . der er übrigens ohnedies glich mit seinem graublassen Gesicht und den schläfrigen Augen" (p. 221), while his wife Karoline crawls into bed "mit der Behendigkeit eines Mäuschens" (p. 225). Young Fritz von Stein when first aroused feels his way around "wie eine blinde Katze" (p. 229), but when fully awake ". . . fing er an, sich wie ein Fisch von ihrem Schoss abzuschnellen und quer durch das Zimmer zu laufen" (p. 229). Although the work abounds in stereotyped expressions, and

although the choice of figures of speech may at times be distracting, the effect of the narrative as a whole is enhanced by the ease with which individual scenes can be visualized. The dramatist's appeal to the eye has obviously been a strong guiding factor in the production of this novel.

From her experience as scenario writer, Miss Kay has transferred another technique: a "fade-out," as indicated before, not unlike that found in films where a "suggestive" note is desired, is frequently employed as a transition between sequences. Where legitimately applied, it is a convenient device for bringing an episode to a close and allows the author to refrain from a detailed description of intimate scenes. The reader is simply invited to supply the continuation in terms of his own imagination or experience. In Meine Schwester oder meine Frau the "fade-out" is most effectively employed at the end of the first part, in the love scene quoted above. This type of close conveys the intelligence that only the characters themselves really know whether Charlotte was "Schwester" or "Frau"--or neither! The use of the technique is less convincing in instances in which the author, apparently not trusting the reader's imagination, later feels impelled to clarify incidents which previously were left in a deliberate state of ambiguity.

Although the lines "Ach, du warst in abgelebten Zeiten/ Meine Schwester oder meine Frau" stand as the motto of this book, the poem itself has not been utilized as such in the narrative, as it has, for example, in Gertrud Bäumer's novel. Both the poem and the spirit of the words would, of course,

find themselves in rather uncomfortable surroundings here, for it is difficult to think of Goethe as ever having expressed such sentiment to a woman with the character traits described by Miss Kay. There is even a strong suspicion that the title "Weder Schwester noch Frau" listed by Wer ist wer was the one originally intended for this novel of passion.[31] The work gives all appearances of having been written with an unexpressed "--sondern Geliebte" in mind.

Aside from the style, language, and certain narrative devices, an additionalfactor affecting the general tenor of this novel is its point of view. While the story is presented from the standpoint of authorial omniscience, Miss Kay's adaptation of this technique produces a markedly different effect than one receives from any of the other works. With omniscience the presence of the author, who guides his characters along a prescribed course of action, is usually taken for granted. Occasionally this presence may even be seen rather than felt, as for example, in the Lux novel, when the author steps in to instruct his reader on some matter of importance to his characters. In Meine Schwester oder meine Frau the author is constantly on the scene as a very real part of the narrative, almost peering--as it were--over the reader's shoulder. Miss Kay is primarily interested in depicting what she considers the motivation behind the historical event, which in her interpretation does not necessarily proceed in a logical manner. Her characters are complex personalities who

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[31]See above, p. 163, n. 23.

suffer from frequent and severe inhibitions; the resultant action in the narrative is therefore not always in accordance with the characters' expressed wishes. The external plot proves to be essentially that which historical tradition demands; the internal plot, however, is entirely Miss Kay's own. With such a concept involving an intricate maneuvering of the characters, the author must be there to avoid an entanglement of the strings of the puppets. This is not to imply that the characters are by any means wooden--they are far from that--but Miss Kay, with a touch of vanity, has painted her strings in bright color to make sure the skill and power of the puppeteer will not be ignored. A closer approximation might be to state that the impression gained is that of watching the rehearsal of a drama with the director on stage coaching his players.

Whatever strength the novel possesses lies in its structure. The selection of incidents, i.e., the inclusion of only those which illustrate a particular mood or phase in the love affair, has been carefully and felicitously accomplished. Scenes which do not fit into the general scheme, as designed by the author, seldom occur. Deviations from the main theme are rare. It is especially in the development of the "triangle" aspect that Miss Kay's skill is displayed at its best. As mentioned, the action in the first part centers on Charlotte, Corona, and Goethe. When Corona is eliminated, the emphasis for a time is on Goethe and Charlotte, until another triangle develops involving Christiane, which forms a parallel to the first. It is irony of fate that Charlotte,

who at first was permitted to revel in her victory over the younger woman, must now give way to another. While the development of these two triangles forms the core of the narrative, the epilogue ties the two sections together. Goethe's rejected "mistresses," who once fought with bitter hatred over him, now experience a kinship in their unhappiness.

Although the author seemingly has paid some attention to the era in which her characters are supposed to be living, occasionally noting articles of clothing, hair styles, the lack of modern conveniences, etc., one wonders if these features--as used here--really succeed in conveying the impression that the setting is long ago. In contrast to the Kolbenheyer or Gertrud Bäumer narratives, which retain the proper perspective, what little historical color there is here appears to be simply a disguise for twentieth-century people and occurrences.

By concentrating her narrative on the figure of Charlotte, whose life and personality have been less documented than Goethe's, Miss Kay has a vantage point from which to display her re-creative talent. In the final analysis, however, her work must be compared with that of Grete Fink-Töbich, who from the same vantage point also presents a portrait of Frau von Stein.

Einer Einzigen gehören

The final comprehensive fictional treatment of the Goethe--Frau von Stein complex is also the work of an Austrian writer, Grete Fink-Töbich (1898--). Frau Fink-Töbich has

published a collection of Novellen and Jugendschriften along with two contemporary novels, Das ungeteilte Herz and Unvergängliche Melodie, the latter currently in preparation for publication. Einer Einzigen gehören[32] is her only attempt so far at writing historical fiction, but the work stands as proof of her real talent for this genre. Her works have received acclaim, both in the German-speaking world and abroad. Her success in understanding and portraying with an unusual degree of sensitivity the essence of Charlotte's love for Goethe is perhaps due to a personal experience:

> In meinem Manne hatte ich den helfenden, verstehenden Gefährten meines Lebens gefunden. Ich brauchte dieses Verstehen, denn nach der jahrelangen Tätigkeit in einem männlichen Beruf war es für mich nicht einfach, nun Hausfrau und Mutter und ausserdem auch noch Schriftstellerin zu sein.[33]

In scope and depth of character portrayal the novel makes every attempt to live up to its impressive subtitle, Roman einer unvergänglichen Liebe. As in the other total portraits, this timeless love is presented not at an isolated stage in the development, but is depicted in all the vicissitudes brought about with the passing of the years. From Frau von Stein's first acquaintance with Goethe as the author of Werther to his final homage to her with the last of the Lida poems, "Einer Einzigen angehören," the narrative follows the course of her love for the poet throughout her life. As in

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[32]Grete Fink-Többich, Einer Einzigen gehören (Graz: Leopold Stocker, 1955), 648 pp. Hereafter cited by page number in the text.

[33]Biographical and incidental information obtained from personal correspondence with the author. Letter dated February 5, 1959.

Lux's novel, the approach is epic, a reflection both of the author's interpretation of Frau von Stein's personality and of the nature of the bond between them. As an additional symbol of the timelessness of their love, verses taken from the poetry of the Weimar years have been used to head individual chapters.

If, in a certain sense, this work can be considered a counterpart of Lux's Goethe, which presents the masculine viewpoint with a similar interpretation, it can be even more directly compared with Juliane Kay's Meine Schwester oder meine Frau. The results of such a comparison are enlightening, for in working within an identical external structure and with their focus on the same character, the two authors have created narratives with totally different pictures of the characters and period concerned. The scope of both novels is approximately the same; both are also divided into two parts, with the division intended to signify the arrival of a change in the course of the protagonists' love. In addition, both novels treat the same basic theme: the love of an older, married woman for a younger man, for a poet of no mean stature. The joys and frustrations which such a love brings, the reaction of the woman when she finds that love threatened, and in a final reflection, the re-evaluation of her former and present existence constitute the basic "plot" of these narratives.

Using this framework, however, each author has proceeded in a separate direction. In contrast to Miss Kay, who selects certain incidents which she interprets as representative

of a general trend in Charlotte's love (episodic technique), Frau Fink-Töbich incorporates both major and minor events of the period, at least in so far as these have a direct bearing on Frau von Stein. Noticeably absent from the Fink-Töbich novel are incidents or reactions by other characters which could not have been a part of Frau von Stein's personal knowledge. Often, for example, there is no indication of what Goethe may be doing at any specific time, whereas Juliane Kay usually keeps the reader posted on Goethe's exact whereabouts and frequently also on his reactions. The Charlotte of Einer Einzigen gehören (as well as the reader) knows only as much as Goethe personally communicates to her. Consequently the effect in the Kay novel is highly dramatic, while emotional scenes in the Fink-Töbich novel, which seldom reach the intensity of Miss Kay's, are softened by the inclusion of others with little or no emotional content.

The point of division between the two parts of each narrative also reflects a divergence in interpretation. Miss Kay, it will be remembered, has chosen to end her first part with the mutual declaration of love. A time lapse of several years is indicated as the second part then opens prior to Goethe's flight to Italy. Frau Fink-Töbich, on the other hand, carries her narrative through the years omitted by Miss Kay. The two parts are almost equal in length; Part I closes with the arrival in Weimar of word from Goethe that he is leaving Karlsbad on an extended journey, while the introductory scene of Part II depicts Charlotte as she waits for further communication from him. The time element between the

two can therefore be a matter only of several weeks at the most.

It is particularly in the development of the internal plot, in the delineation of the character of Frau von Stein, that the two novels show the greatest divergence. For Frau Fink-Töbich, Charlotte's acquaintance with Goethe begins not with their first personal encounter but with a copy of Werther which has been given her by a friend. She thus knows him as an author long before they meet, and it is as an author that she is first attracted to him. The artist, not the man, provides the initial impulse. As Charlotte stands holding the little gilt-edged volume, neither the author, the title, nor the cover with two lovers embracing have any emotional content for her; books with such covers are the current mode. But when she idly begins to read, the first sentence fairly leaps from the page to mark the turning-point of her life:

> Und dann gleich der erste Satz: "Bester Freund, was ist das Herz des Menschen?" Man erschrak und wusste keine Antwort. Man legte das Buch zögernd aus der Hand und nahm es wieder. Was aber geschah mit dem wissend gewordenen Herzen? Erlag es nicht dem Ansturm der fremden Macht, die es heraushob aus der Ausgeglichenheit der gewohnten kleinen Umwelt und hineinstellte in Geschehnisse, die ewig sind seit Anbeginn? (p. 7.)

The abrupt substitution of the impersonal "man" for the pronoun "sie" conveys a sense of the sudden and overwhelming impact of the words, even before Charlotte's reflections on the novel become known. "Sie erschrak" would have limited this reaction to a single instance, as an impression which she alone had had. "Man" implies an unseen presence which forces this reaction from her; she is startled because

she must be. So strong is her attraction to the author that she feels she has to meet him personally. A visit with Zimmermann in her home provides the opportunity to obtain more information about Goethe. This visit serves a twofold purpose in the narrative: it supplies an opening for Charlotte's views on Werther and consequently on love in general, and also gives some indication of certain qualities in her personality which make her attractive to the opposite sex. In Werther it is not merely the particular manner in which Werther voluntarily takes his own life, nor the freedom he has thereby gained, which she finds so appealing, but the fact that forces of nature exist which can drive two people to the point where no other solution is possible:

> Charlotte schwieg und wagte nicht weiter zu begründen, wie er das Eigentlichste so ganz übersah; denn nicht im Ausgang und in der Ausführung der geschilderten Tat schien ihr der unwiderstehliche Zauber des Buches zu liegen, sondern in den Kämpfen gegen eine Naturmacht, die zwei Menschen mit solcher Gewalt überfiel, dass kein anderer Ausweg als dieser letzte übrigblieb. (p. 12.)

Zimmermann himself is struck less by the direction of their conversation than by the charm of her face, so extraordinarily noble and yet so femininely lovely. When he leaves he asks for a picture. "Die Welt war bunt und voll der Schönsten, aber man begegnete selten einer Blume und fast niemals Frauen, die leuchteten wie ein Licht." (p. 13.)

When the silhouette is returned to her sometime later with Goethe's character sketch,[34] the instigation is on hand for a reflection and review of Frau von Stein's past. For

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[34]See Chapter II, pp. 29-30, above.

this purpose, she takes a walk to the nearby woods at Ilmenau. One point in particular is emphasized by the author: Charlotte throughout her life has been seeking love. At the insistence of her parents and on the advice of her friend, Duchess Anna Amalia, she had married against her better judgment with a slight ray of hope that the union would bring the warmth and intimacy of love with time. But her marriage has left her emotionally destitute; although she realizes that von Stein loves her in his own way, she has not found true happiness with him: "er war ihr kein Freund und Helfer geworden in all dem Unerwarteten der ersten Zeit." (p. 24.) Charlotte's awareness that the emotions aroused by such memories brought on by Goethe's words may be a foreboding of possible disaster is expressed in a sudden fear of her surroundings, a mood not unlike that of "Erlkönig."

Later a conversation with Luise von Göchhausen indicates the esteem in which Charlotte is held by the court and establishes the fact that she has not appeared in society of late. Other scenes with her sons, particularly with Fritz and Ernst, depict her as a loving, concerned mother. As young Duchess Luise makes her arrival in Weimar, she immediately recognizes in Charlotte the one understanding friend:

> Noch befangener geworden, sah sie sich im Kreise um und begegnete mit einemmal einem Blick voll zarten und tiefen Verstehens. Eine Weile standen sie voreinander stumm, Luise, die kindliche Frau, und Charlotte, beide den Anruf verwandten Wesens fühlend, Freundinnen von Anbeginn. (p. 29.)

Frau von Stein has thus become a definite personality with strong characteristics before Goethe enters the narrative

in chapter five. Their first meeting is at court, where Charlotte is initially impressed, then disappointed in Goethe when the conversation takes on a sporting note with regard to the problem of Stella:

> Charlotte stand, den Kopf gesenkt, den Mund verzogen, wie Menschen tun, die Bitteres schmecken. Eine schreckliche Ernüchterung, die fast an Verzweiflung grenzte, senkte sich in ihr Gemüt, Verzweiflung darüber, dass nichts ganz, nichts rein sein konnte in dieser Welt. Den einzigen Menschen, der ihre Sprache verstand, hatte sie zu finden gehofft und sah nun einen Fastnachtsgoethe in entliehener Werthertracht vor sich, der in einem Kreis junger Mädchen als dem ihm zugehörigen Rahmen stand und die Schönen durch frivole Andeutungen und Redensarten verwirrte. (pp. 39-40.)

In the wake of the effects of this encounter, Charlotte reacts with a counterattack: Rino.

A surprise visit by Goethe to Charlotte's home brings about a reconciliation. The poet first enchants the children with a fairy tale. When he and the mother are finally alone, he uses the opportunity to become better acquainted. In contrast to the first intimate scene in some other novels, the conversation here is quiet, with no outbursts of passion. Goethe talks of his past, his sister Cornelia, his other loves and Charlotte tries to understand, often questioning his motives in order to draw out the essence of the man. Their declaration of love comes somewhat later, after several such meetings at her home and at Kochberg during the Christmas season have led to a mutual understanding. In a scene fraught with tension as each attempts to keep his emotions and passion under control, Charlotte asks Goethe to help her to remain true to her own character. Her strength, her value for Goethe, and the future happiness of both of them, she realizes, lie

ir continuing as the Charlotte she now is, even though it means the renouncement of what momentarily seems to be a higher pleasure. "Nimm mich als Schwester," she pleads, "auch ein solches Handinhand vermag unendliches Glück zu geben." (p. 98.)

She steadfastly holds to this decision throughout the coming years; in Frau Fink-Töbich's version, "Entsagung" is the key with which otherwise inaccessible doors are opened to the lovers. Often it takes the utmost in Charlotte's power to keep their love on a platonic level, to prevent the smoldering fires from breaking into the flames of passion. Numerous scenes are introduced which depict Charlotte in the difficult task of furthering their love because Goethe wishes it, and at the same time maintaining a stability in their contact with each other. Frequently, too, it is simply her trust and confidence, both in herself and in Goethe which protect her:

> Seine Arme, die sich erhoben hatten, die allzu geliebte Frau zu umschliessen, sanken ihm wieder herab. "Du bist in guter Hut, Charlotte," versicherte er endlich leise, mühsam fast, "dein Vertrauen, das fühlst du wohl selbst, schützt dich besser als alles Wehren." Sie nickte nur und lehnte dann den dunklen Kopf an seine Schulter. So standen sie lange schweigend. . ." (p. 236.)

But Frau Fink-Töbich does not devote her entire narrative simply to this aspect of Goethe's and Charlotte's love. Such a one-sided picture would be unrealistic and misleading. The love of renunciation with voluntarily suppressed passion could not have been constantly endured in real life without longer moments of interruption, of distraction, nor could it be tolerated by the most enthusiastic reader throughout the length of the novel. The author appears to be fully aware of this fact, for she includes scenes and episodes involving

Charlotte's family (often humorous, where the children take part), members of the court, Wieland and his wife Dorothea, the Herders, and a host of other historical figures who visited Weimar during this period. As in other novels in which Charlotte, as a secondary figure, is but one of a number of interests of the protagonist Goethe, so here, too, their love does not occupy all of Charlotte's time and energy. Occasionally the author prefers to indicate Charlotte's influence and meaning for Goethe by showing a similar effect which she has on other men. The poet Lenz serves as a particular example here. Although there can be no question of a direct comparison between his reactions and those of Goethe, inferences can be drawn as Charlotte attempts to guide Lenz along the right path. For the first time, the author notes, she is unsuccessful. A later meeting with young Hölty at Bad Pyrmont emphasizes another side of Frau von Stein's character: her ability to listen.

As the time of Goethe's flight to Italy draws near, Charlotte has occasional premonitions that one day the poet in Goethe will force him to leave. Since the narrative is presented almost entirely from Charlotte's viewpoint, little indication is given as to the personal motives for his desire to escape, but the implications in their final scenes together in Karlsbad and at Schneeberg before Charlotte returns to Weimar are definitely that his flight is not from her. On the contrary, he begs for her continued guidance: "Charlotte, du...bleib mein Leitstern...auch im Wirbel selbstgesuchter Verschlingungen" [ellipsis in the original]. (p. 341.) On

this parting note, Charlotte returns to her home, unaware of Goethe's destination or of the length of time his absence will consume.

In the action which now follows in the second part of the narrative, the author makes no attempt to justify or defend the position which Charlotte takes. Events are simply depicted as they occurred; the author sketches, fills in the outline, explains where such an explanation is necessary or helpful, but does not defend. Charlotte's request for the return of her letters, for example, is "eine rätselhafte Sucht nach Vermehrung ihrer Qual." (p. 358.) She feels wronged because she does not understand what is happening. In such a mood she wants Goethe to suffer, too. Yet in her anger, as she burns her letters, a vague intuition tells her that his own will be immortal. She later comes to the realization that love must be unselfish, a feat of which she has heretofore not been capable.

Upon Goethe's return, her anticipated reunion with him proves disappointing; the personal note which she seeks is missing from his conversation about Italy. The advent of Christiane in Goethe's life breaks all further communication between them. The birth of August dispels all hope of reconciliation, for now Fritz, too, has been robbed. In her despair, she turns to Dido.

At this point, the narrative begins to move in a different direction. Part I, it will be noticed, was devoted primarily to a simple yet skillful delineation of the many-sided character of a woman who for the first time in her life

was faced with a problem which threatened her existence as she saw it. Her self-assured attempts to turn that threat into fortune composes the bulk of this first half of the novel. Hints of her ultimate failure to make their love a lasting bond become apparent near the end. From the beginning of Part II her character is on the decline, descending gradually downward until it reaches its lowest point, when her full anger, bitterness, and hatred are poured out in the lines of Dido. With this purging of emotions a slow but steady rise begins, but it takes years for her character to attain once more the height it previously held, when even her silhouette was capable of stirring the passions of love.

In a sense, throughout the rest of the narrative, Charlotte does penance for the harm she has caused. She suffers upon the death of her husband, whom she realizes only too late that she really loved, she is forced to watch from the sidelines the friendship of Goethe and Schiller without being able to participate fully in their work, she sees Goethe in his happiness with Christiane, and finally manages to survive the ravages of war, financially destitute. All this she willingly accepts without complaint as her just dues.

Her reconciliation with Goethe finally begins, according to the historical tradition, through his son August who comes to visit at her home. It becomes complete when Charlotte defends Goethe, and in so doing, Christiane against the attack of Bettina Brentano:

> "Oh, Bettina, nicht so, nicht so!" unterbrach Charlotte das tieferregte kleine Wesen, "du wirst ungerecht und unedel in deinem Zorn! Goethe liebt dich doch, dich und

> deinen Achim! Wie hat ihn das holde Buch 'Des Knaben Wunderhorn' entzückt. Von Rechts wegen, sagte er, sollte das Buch in jedem Haus, wo frische Menschen wohnen, zu finden sein!"
>
> "Ja, wir sind Geist von seinem Geiste und doch hat er uns Christianens wegen fortgewiesen."
>
> "Sie ist seine Frau," erwiderte Charlotte ruhig und leise, "sollte er sie etwa nicht schützen, wo er bei allen und gerade bei seinen Nächsten diesen unbesiegbaren Widerstand fühlt? Er weiss allein, was er an ihr hat, wir anderen begreifen nur, dass es wohl nicht einfach und leicht ist, Goethes Frau zu sein." (p. 615.)

Goethe's tribute to her in the lines which furnish the title of the novel, "Einer Einzigen angehören," brings the final proof that the original goal which she set was the correct and only one for her to seek. In spite of the dubious course which fate decreed their love should take, at the end of her life she experiences its complete fulfillment:

> Sie selbst aber hatte wohl alles erfüllt, was ihr aufgetragen gewesen, im tätigen Leben und in der Liebe. Ihr Verzicht, damals fast mit dem Leben bezahlt, hatte diese Liebe von allen selbstischen Wünschen gereinigt und zur stärkenden Seelenkraft geadelt, so dass der grösste Geist unter den Deutschen eines Wertes Vollgewinn aus ihr zu schöpfen vermochte. Musste sie darum nicht unvergänglich sein und fortbestehen, auch wenn das eigene Leben sich neigte?
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> Durch Entsagung erfüllt! dachte Charlotte laut, ja, nun darf ich wohl mit gutem Gewissen sagen: Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh. . . (p. 647.)

Because this is primarily a novel of character rather than action, and because of the epic treatment of the theme, chronological and narrative timing do not always correspond. As in Lux's Goethe, a sentence or two may cover a period of several weeks or even months, while several pages are sometimes necessary to depict a scene or conversation of short duration. In introducing events from Charlotte's life the author has adhered strictly to the historical sequence. In only rare instances has she made use of poetic license in

altering the details of any particular incident. The circumstances of the death of Charlotte's husband furnish the only example of a major deviation from the traditional account. Historically, von Stein died after a lengthy illness, said to have started with a brain concussion after a fall from a horse. During the period of his illness, in which he showed definite traces of insanity and senility, his demands upon Charlotte were extreme.[35] Unfortunately, the picture which has been handed down of both husband and wife undergoing the strain of these months is in many respects more detailed and clearer than that of former years when von Stein enjoyed the full bloom of health. In this novel, however, von Stein's death occurs as an immediate consequence of his fall. The author's motive for making this change was, as we learn,[36] to correct the impression of von Stein which has been retained from the final days of his life. She has therefore completed her portrait of him as a man in full control of his senses. "Es lag mir daran," she explains, "das Bild des Mannes, dem von gedankenlosen Chronisten, mehr aber noch von modernen Autoren viel Unrecht geschehen ist, so abzuschliessen, wie es sich aus den Aufzeichnungen seiner Söhne, aus seinen Briefen und gelegentlichen Äusserungen Goethes zu Charlotte, ergab."

In terms of language and style this novel is written in the best epic tradition of the German "Frauenroman." Frau Fink-Töbich has unquestionably drawn upon the experience of

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[35]Kenneth Keeton, "Charlotte, Goethe, and Freiherr von Stein," Monatshefte, LI (1959), 25-30.

[36]See above, p. 183, n. 33.

her forerunners in this genre. There are passages, for example, which are somewhat reminiscent of the poetic insight and epic restraint of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. Frau Fink-Töbich also appears to have the mature feminine touch and the profound humanity characteristic of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. To be sure, as a writer she has not attained the stature of a Gertrud von LeFort, yet her work displays some of the latter's architectonic deftness in handling a plot, without Gertrud von LeFort's metaphysical undertones, however.

Although occasionally a reference, in the form of editorial comment, to events occurring after the time of Goethe and Charlotte may be distracting, Frau Fink-Töbich conveys for the most part an awareness of the period she is depicting. In this respect her work stands far above that of Juliane Kay. Whether one wishes to accept the Fink-Töbich interpretation of this historic love or not, there can be little doubt that the author has made a sincere effort to project herself and the reader into the temperament and emotional climate of an age long past.

In the total portraits presented above, each author, in his own way, has made an attempt to interpret the changing stages in the love of Goethe and Charlotte. As dramatic highlights both the initial impact and the break occur; however, in spite of the fact that all except Janetschek carry the action through to the end of the protagonists' lives, only two authors attach any lasting significance to their love in the final years. For the others, the break itself indicates

a complete dissolution of the bond. The interpretations in these novels appear to be no less divergent than in those depicting an isolated phase of the historical period. By comparing features which seem to be characteristic of all ten narratives, it may be possible to arrive at some interesting conclusions concerning the fictional portrait of Goethe and Frau von Stein.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS: THE FICTIONAL PICTURE

The results of this study--"das Goethebild" in fiction--were originally envisaged as following a pattern similar to that used in presenting an historical portrait with its various scholarly interpretations. Each significant feature of the Charlotte period might be traced undergoing change in a number of novelistic environments. Such a line of discussion would perhaps be feasible and rewarding if our only concern were to examine the narratives for the purpose of separating fact from fiction, or if all the narratives were dealing with the same theme and range. However, instead of one general theme with slight variations in interpretation, we find ten, some far removed from the others. Instead of one Goethe and Charlotte, who would appear with minor divergences in characterization as they encounter different situations, there are again ten, often more varied than the themes. The narratives would therefore lose in continuity if individual events were isolated for consideration; some would also be excluded at times on the basis of their scope. It would be extremely difficult and perhaps even unfair, for example, to compare the treatment of historical events in Gertrud Bäumer's Eine Woche im Mai with those of Kolbenheyer's Karlsbader Novelle.

Another possible basis of comparison might have been to consider the degree to which the individual writers were influenced by trends in the work of Goethe biographers. The search for a link between novelistic and scholarly interpretations proved, however, to be fruitless. One area remained which seemed to offer a common ground for an approach to the narratives. It has become increasingly apparent that the term "biographical fiction" does not convey the same meaning to all. Many of the divergences in the novels would appear to derive not so much from a difference in interpretation or in style and technique among the authors but rather from an understanding of certain concepts inherent in the genre itself. It therefore seems advisable to re-examine some of these concepts in terms of what fiction devoted to Goethe is and what it can be expected to do.

In discussing biographical fiction from a technical point of view, one of the fundamental questions concerns the relationship between its component parts. Is it, essentially, biography or fiction? "Dichtung" or possibly "Deutung"? Certain specific features can be pointed out which distinguish it at least from the traditional type of biography written by the literary historian. Among these are notably the avoidance of specific dates, the use of dialogue and interior monologue, the toning down or omission of pertinent incidents or information, the dramatization of one event in preference to another which might have had equal or more historical significance--in short, the application of techniques which are generally considered to be the prerogative of the novelist. On the

other hand, some of these same techniques are encountered in biographies. Emil Ludwig's Goethe, for example, also has no dates and contains sections of dialogue. On the surface there would appear to be little difference between his work and the novels above, but with all the liberties he took, he certainly did not write, nor intend to write, a novel.[1]

Closer analysis, then, reveals a basic point of departure, stemming from the author's intent, from the function the work is to serve. It is from this difference in function that our definition of biographical fiction as a genre is derived. If it were essentially biography, presented in fictional garb, the problem of how to treat it would be much less complicated. There would simply be the matter of sifting fact from fiction, labeling the various elements for what they are. However, we are not dealing with pure biography, but with works which are essentially fiction. In principle they stand in the same relationship to biography as the novels of Scott or Freytag or Feuchtwanger do to history. For the novelist treating a figure of history, literature, music, or whatever, who has actually lived, the biographical facts form merely a framework for the tale he has to tell, for the meaning he wants to convey, and he is interested in them only to that extent.

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[1]The following comment by Theodor Reik may serve as some indication of how successful Ludwig was in attaining his goal: "Ludwig gibt als das Ideal seiner Darstellung des Goetheschen Lebens an: 'historische Wahrheit eines Kalenders, psychologische Wahrheit einer Dichtung.' Man wird loyal anerkennen müssen, dass seine Biographie die historische und psychologische Wahrheit einer Kalendergeschichte erreicht hat."--Theodor Reik, "Warum verliess Goethe Friedericke?" Reprint from Imago, XV (1929), (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), p. 24, n. 1.

As Guido Brand has pointed out, the approach of the novelist and the biographer, proceeding from separate bases, affects the general tenor and impression of their work, regardless of the techniques employed:

> Hier nützen aber dem Dichter die historischen Unterlagen weniger als dem reinen Biographen. . . . Denn wo der Biograph erklärt, aufdeckt, wird der Dichter gestalten müssen; wo jener den Ablauf der Reihe nach darstellen kann, muss dieser "erfinden," um das Leben "vollständig" zu machen.[2]

But it is this framework which gives biographical fiction its peculiar nature, which differentiates it from any other type of fiction and causes it to have its own special problems and standards. Consequently, the framework cannot be simply defined away and thereafter ignored. Some sort of biography is after all there, as a very real part of the fiction, and for all practical purposes it is impossible and superfluous to separate the two.

It would be a mistake, obviously, to suppose one could acquire biographical knowledge by means of fiction. It would likewise be in error, and perhaps unreasonable, to insist that an author provide the same degree of accuracy in every minute detail. Any novelist has his own intentions, artistic and possibly otherwise, and the writer of biographical fiction is even exposed to outright bias, by virtue of the very fact that he has chosen this particular protagonist. The information thus imparted is of necessity unreliable to the extent of that

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[2]Guido K. Brand, "Der biographische Roman," Die Literatur, XXXII (1929), 78.

bias in all its aspects, artistic and non-artistic.[3] In some novels, such as Trentini's, for example, historical fact may be so obscured as to appear almost non-existent. But since the informed reader will not expect to find unadulterated history in a work of art anyway, this does not disqualify him. In the blunt words of Raleigh, "Books are written to be read by those who can understand them; their possible effect on those who cannot is a matter of medical rather than of literary interest."[4] To be sure, this statement might be paraphrased to read with equal validity, "Books should be written by those who understand them," for the author as well as the reader should be aware of the nature and limitations of his genre.

All of this being fully understood, we can consider the area in which the author's responsibility to his reader and to his subject lies. First of all, there need be no conflict between biographical and novelistic material; indeed, there should be none. What matters is, rather, that both types of material are properly fused, each in its own way serving the ultimate purpose of the novelist. For, although we may place one function above the other, insisting that these narratives be considered primarily as examples of a genre of fiction, if the underlying biographical structure should be false, no amount of craftsmanship of the author's can produce a satisfactory work of art. In our specific case the name "Goethe" carries an obligation, however difficult it may be to define

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[3]See discussion by W. Somerset Maugham, Ten Novels and Their Authors, p. 7.

[4]Sir Walter Alexander Raleigh, The English Novel (5th ed.; London: J. Murray, 1904), p. 171.

this obligation accurately in all its aspects. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that soundness in matters of biography is not enough. As Wagenknecht has suggested, no novel can stand or fall on the accuracy of its background alone.[5] The writer of biographical fiction must at least have the same insight into human psychology that would be needed if he were writing about his own generation. In addition he must by empathy be able to think and feel his way back to a forgotten age, an alien mode of life. And above all, being an artist, he must be able to create a symbol, adding--or at least suggesting--the aspect of timelessness. It is perhaps in this latter spirit that our narratives should be read: as an attempt, however precarious, by a modern author to present Goethe in a vital phase of his life, not merely for the sake of understanding what happened and why, but in order to plumb human existence as such in a representative and outstanding example, ennobling it, perchance, with the patina of a wistfulness and glamor which otherwise only time itself can produce.

Taking this much for granted, assuming the author has made an honest effort to fulfill his obligation to the subject matter, we are confronted by problems of a more practical nature. Although historical fiction has come into its own and gained acceptance as a legitimate member of the literary family, biographical fiction is still in search of champions to serve its cause. The difficulties of the medium have been

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[5]Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1954), pp. 163-164.

pointed out, both by experienced writers and by critics. It has no well-defined boundaries, only those prescribed by the subject itself. If, as Sheppard claims, the historical novel is harder to master than any other form of fiction, considering that he has written novels not strictly historical in one-fifth of the time required by an historical novel, then the obstacles which confront the writer of biographical fiction must be even greater.[6] The historical novelist, if he so chooses, can weave his plot around minor or even imaginary figures who view the great historical events from the periphery. He therefore is in little danger of being caught in flagrant error. The figures of biographical fiction, however, even the secondary figures are normally not merely observers of history but active participants. By definition, biography is history. The more prominent the protagonist, and by and large the closer his life to the time of the author, the greater the possibility of possessing a wealth of accurate information about him. It is a condition both advantageous and disadvantageous. The author has more assistance in forming a vivid image of his fictional characters; at the same time his work must stand the close scrutiny of readers who may happen to know more about the subject than he does.

The problems are compounded for the writer of Goethe fiction. It is generally conceded that a man of action, who is known primarily for his deeds--a Napoleon or a Wellington--makes an easier subject for fiction than does a thinker or a

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[6]Alfred Tresidder Sheppard, The Art and Practice of Historical Fiction (London: Humphrey Toulmin, 1930), p. 19.

poet. Franz Werfel in writing his Verdi novel was fully aware of the difficulties and responsibilities which his subject imposed in this respect:

> Am schwersten aber ist dieser Missklang zu überwinden, wenn es sich um einen sogenannten Künstlerroman handelt. Die Darstellung in sich gekehrter Menschen, berühmter Geister, schöpferischer Vorgänge verführt leicht zu Fälschung, Übertreibung, Phrase. Viel ist hierin gesündigt worden.
>
> Niemals aber können rein ästhetische Gefahren schrecken. Es gilt nur durch die Tat zu beweisen, dass sie keine sind.[7]

The reader's concept of Goethe especially may well have been determined in a great many ways by his own works as well as by the broad outlines of his historical existence. Consequently, when he appears--let us say--in a fictional conversation, there may be an annoying feeling that the poet himself not only would have said it all much more aptly, characteristically, but may actually have said or written something similar somewhere which is utilized here haphazardly.[8]

However, to say a medium is difficult is not to excuse mediocrity, nor does it imply that it is impossible to succeed in this genre. At any rate, writers will hardly cease to be lured by its enchantment because of these difficulties, for the number of Goethe novels alone which have appeared to this day would belie such a suggestion. Naturally, every author has to meet the challenge in his own way, conditioned by his own specific intentions, and it is out of the question to set up any standard of biographical obligation but the one spelled

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[7]Franz Werfel, Verdi: Roman der Oper (Wien: Paul Zsolnay, 1924), "Vorbericht."

[8]Bernhard Knauss, "Über die historische Figur im Roman," Die Literatur, XLIII (1940), 52.

"Goethe." Beyond that, only aesthetic standards may prevail. In other words, we must examine the nature of these narratives and ask that each stand on its own merit as fiction, in comparison with others treating the same or a similar subject.

As works of fiction, they all adumbrate a central theme. The majority of these themes result from various combinations of the four fundamental themes outlined, for example, by Clayton Hamilton: Hunger, Sacrifice, Identity, and Love.[9] Hunger may include spiritual as well as physical craving, Sacrifice is an essential ingredient of friendship, while Identity implies the persistence of personality. Love, obviously, which with all its variables needs no elucidation, is *per se* dominant among the four, and so also among our narratives. It is intriguing to observe how these fundamental themes pervade the several renderings of the Goethe--Frau von Stein complex in various and ever-changing combinations, making for an abundance of creative possibilities. More specifically, these themes have been expressed in the partial portraits as the impact of new love (Servaes), youth seeking clarification (Bäumer), the search for a bridge between the past and future, between Weimar and Italy (Kolbenheyer), the liberation of the artist and the man (Trentini), and the break, resulting from a change of heart (Schwabe). To some extent all involve identity. In addition Bäumer and Kolbenheyer seem to concern hunger, while the theme of spiritual hunger finds its highest development with Trentini. The total portraits depict a love

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[9]Clayton Hamilton, *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Doubleday Doran & Co., 1939), pp. 104-105.

derived from illness (Janetschek), the concrete personification of the philosophy of "All for Love" (Burg), the maturation of the artistic genius, involving hunger, identity, and love (Lux), and the love of the woman for the poet, a love which in one instance is characterized by passion (Kay) and in another by renunciation which requires sacrifice (Fink-Tōbich).

The creative approach is normally that of authorial omniscience. For most of the narratives this takes the form of multiple omniscience, in which the author explores the mind of more than one character. Only Gertrud Bäumer, as we may recall, uses selective omniscience, limiting the direct insight to the character of Goethe. It may be that the omniscient technique is the only one suited to this particular subject; at any rate no attempt has been made so far to explore any other approach. In two of the novels, variations on the multiple form have notably affected the tenor of the work. Lux uses his omniscience not merely as a narrative device for depicting character but rather as a deliberate means of providing aesthetic distance. His authorial intrusions, with their detailed instructions on the action, lend a slightly pedantic note to his story. In the Kay novel, the author not only directs the course of the action, but, as we have seen, to all intents and purposes becomes almost a character in the novel herself, the puppeteer among her puppets. Although this effect was doubtless unintentional, the story which the reader gets is not solely the one which Miss Kay wrote. It is that story plus the author in the act of creating it. With these

two exceptions, the author as a guiding force will always be tacitly taken for granted.

In the choice and development of his specific theme, each author has manifested a definite predilection for either Frau von Stein or Goethe, probably contingent upon his capacity for insight into the character of either, which has resulted in the shifting of the artistic emphasis from one to the other. By various means, such as the early introduction of the figure, a relatively larger number of pages devoted to the depiction of his or her character and actions, and the degree to which the reader is allowed to participate in the inner and inmost thoughts of the various characters, the author, consciously or subconsciously, seeks to enlist sympathy for one side or the other in a controversial historical situation. Accordingly, the narratives fall into two groups which might be called "Goethe-oriented" and "Charlotte-oriented."

From the author's standpoint, the Charlotte-oriented novel evidently allows greater opportunity for a display of creative talent than the Goethe-oriented. Less is known about the historical Charlotte; she can therefore be presented in any number of invented scenes with various figures from the Weimar period without danger of obviously running counter to established fact. Most of the anecdotes, tales, and similarly documented incidents which form a part of history have been handed down as told from Goethe's viewpoint. As a result, if these are incorporated in the fictional account, a note of freshness may be supplied with a shift in emphasis which now comes with a Charlotte orientation. One incident may serve

as an example here. Because of its humorous element many of the authors have retold the story of the prank which Karl August and Goethe allegedly played on Luise von Göchhausen. In her absence one evening they had someone wall up the door to her room, then waited to enjoy her consternation as she sought her way to her quarters in the dark. All too frequently the account in fiction is little more than a dressed-up repetition of the version conveniently to be found in Zellweker's recent collection of Goethe anecdotes.[10] By way of contrast, in the Fink-Többich novel Fräulein von Göchhausen gives her side of the story as she relates the incident to Charlotte, supplying a far more imaginative element.

To give a hint of another illustration: Whenever any of Goethe's letters are introduced, instead of re-creating the mood in which they were written--an extremely difficult feat in which more likely than not anyone will fail but a second Goethe--the author of Charlotte-oriented fiction can well re-create the mood in which the letters were received, in this way exploiting all the rich opportunities of character delineation, of creating atmosphere, etc., which such a method allows.

In spite of all these and other advantages only two authors have attempted a Charlotte-oriented novel: Juliane Kay and Grete Fink-Többich. Both have made a serious attempt to portray depth of character, Miss Kay by ascribing to her Frau von Stein certain traits which, however conjectural in

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[10]Edwin Zellweker, Goethe in der Anekdote (Wien: Gerlach & Wiedling, 1947), p. 23.

the given case, might be considered typically feminine, Frau Fink-Tŏbich by attempting to show the unique effect which a personality like her Charlotte's might have on others.

In the Goethe-oriented novel, Frau von Stein appears more or less distinctly as a secondary character, and in order to do full justice to the figure of Goethe, she usually expresses only one of a variety of interests which the poet has. Relatively speaking, and perhaps naturally, she does not enter the narrative so frequently as Goethe does in the Charlotte-oriented novel. As a result, these authors are more apt to have difficulty in portraying her convincingly than the opposite authors have with Goethe. Three of the narratives may be said to have been successful with her character within the limits imposed by a Goethe orientation: Gertrud Bäumer, Kolbenheyer, and Lux. All too often no effort is made to develop her as a distinct personality; where this is the case, the portrait of Goethe suffers, for there appears to be no compelling reason for his love for her. One may simply want to know more about her, as in the Trentini novel, for example, in order to understand Goethe's reactions. Or if carried to the extreme, if her characterization is practically ignored (Burg) or downright false (Janetschek), the resultant impression may be that the protagonist is weak for having loved such a woman. On the other side, the best of the narratives (Bäumer, Kolbenheyer, and Lux) strive to portray Goethe in the totality of his personality, not merely as a lover and friend, a poet and an artist, but even as a statesman and an earnest scientist. To show these multiple aspects a number of

secondary characters are introduced in a variety of combinations. Most frequently conversations with Herder or Wieland and, later, Schiller indicate Goethe's literary interests, while Karl August and the Duchesses Anna Amalia and Luise represent his connections with the court circle both as friend and advisor. A favorite character also is Luise von Göchhausen, who usually provides a comic element.

The historical constellation of events in the Charlotte period makes it possible to consider as another group those narratives in which a third person actively enters the picture along with Goethe and Charlotte, thereby giving rise to a triangular situation with varying weight being distributed among all three parties. Juliane Kay, Servaes, and Toni Schwabe have made this triangular feature an essential part of the plot. It is perhaps most highly developed in the Kay novel in which, in a purely fictional manner, Corona Schröter attempts to intervene and alter the course of Goethe's love for Charlotte; her involvement as here depicted causes her to suffer physically and mentally under the outcome. The triangle is complete, with the action flowing visibly between the two women as well as from Goethe to one or the other of the two. In the Servaes novel, Goethe makes a conscious comparison between Lili and Frau von Stein; only through the prospect of a new love which offers him the "Seelenfreundin" he has for so long been seeking in vain, is he able to free himself completely from Lili's hold. For Toni Schwabe's Goethe, the process is reversed; freedom from Frau von Stein is the necessary prerequisite for his love for Christiane. In neither novel do

the two women meet; the main current of the action thus is directed from the male protagonist to one or the other of the two. Accordingly, the lack of conflict between the women makes the figure of the proverbial triangle inadequate here. Since both are Goethe-oriented novels, most of the action emanates from or centers around the figure of the poet, although the impact of his personality on the feminine characters is not entirely neglected. But once Goethe resolves to be done with one of them and his love for the other begins, we are not permitted to witness the first woman's reactions to his decision. By contrast, the Kay novel has several scenes devoted to a portrayal of Corona after Goethe has rejected her, a theme which must have had a special significance for the author. There are two others, Lux and Grete Fink-Tõbich, who also touch upon Corona as a possible rival for Frau von Stein, but in neither novel does this part of the action develop into a dramatic conflict which noticeably affects the further course of the plot. Lux even minimizes the potential conflict, once it is introduced, by having Goethe explain to Corona the nature of his attraction to either of them, which, as far as he is concerned, produces a state of harmony.

Biographical fiction is by definition primarily a narrative of character rather than action. The success of a work will therefore depend to a large extent upon the degree of fidelity in characterization which can be developed and maintained. We have previously established as one of our basic criteria for evaluation the dictum that fiction have verisimilitude, that it give the illusion of some type of

reality.[11] We should therefore consider the special implications of this statement for the Goethe-Charlotte narratives.

First of all, there is a basic difference between the people we meet in real life and those encountered in fiction, between homo sapiens and homo fictus, as E. M. Forster has aptly termed them.[12] In our daily life, as he stresses, we never fully know or understand each other. Our only source of information about another person is what appears on the surface in the way of an action or gesture, what he tells us, or what we learn about him through others. By way of illustration, Forster uses an example from history. If Queen Victoria on a certain occasion had not said, "We are not amused," her friends would not have known that she was not amused. She might possibly have frowned and thus have given some means of deducing her state of mind. But had she remained silent and impassive, there would have been no evidence of her boredom, we would never have known how she felt.[13] The deepest recesses of the mind remain hidden, even among friends. This mutual secrecy, being the basis of our life, serves quite well for our daily contacts and for the people we meet in history. In fiction, on the other hand, it is exactly those very recesses that are forbidden in real life which we have come to expect the author to explore and to reveal. We want to know the motivation behind the external action, to be

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[11] See Chapter I, pp. 18-19, above.

[12] E[dward] M[organ] Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927), p. 55.

[13] Forster, op. cit., p. 45.

a confidant of thoughts which ordinarily might be too intimate to be expressed. A fictional character may be imperfect or imaginary, but he is definite. In other words, we expect him to be "real," in a sense even more profound than we feel ourselves to be real. Unless the veil is lifted, at least for the protagonist, we are not dealing with fiction, though the account as such may be an acceptable reproduction of real occurrences.

A fictional Goethe, therefore, can never be the Goethe who walked through the streets of Weimar or rode the Ilm valley with Karl August. He will not be the Goethe known to his contemporaries nor will we ever be able to experience the love of Goethe and Frau von Stein as it actually happened to either of them. A fictional Goethe is neither the Goethe whose works, letters, conversations, etc., we read, nor the Goethe of scholarship. To a certain degree he is both of these modified by the artistic intent and imagination of the author of the narrative. This, then, is the area in which verisimilitude takes on paramount significance for the biographical novel. As mentioned in another context, the figure of Goethe especially is both a challenge for the author and the cause of many problems. In a way, there is something sacrosanct about his character; we think we know him so intimately through his own works, his lyrics, his letters, that he has become a friend to many of us who may now look with horror or at least disgust upon the irreverent probings performed with the questionable X-ray eyes of a modern author. It takes deft handling to overcome this prejudice, which must be overcome if the work

is to succeed as fiction: Goethe must remain recognizable as Goethe, and yet serve the major purposes of the story-teller.

Not only the possible effect on the reader is of importance. The ten Goethe-Charlotte narratives, with their ten variations on a theme, and their ten different Goethes and Charlottes, provide a lucid illustration of the problems which beset the writer of any biographical fiction. It must be difficult indeed for an author who is accustomed to creating his own figures at will, to be forced to draw characters which conform to established historical lines, and still give the illusion of freshness and originality. To be sure, some writers, apparently unaware that any such difficulty exists, plunge into the narrative blithely attributing such traits to their fictional personages as are deemed necessary for the story at hand with little respect for at least a semblance of reality (Burg, for example); while others, possessing a greater degree of intellectual honesty, may be so overcome by the source material that their characters, though accurately drawn, lack the spontaneity demanded of good fiction (the Lux novel at times falls prey to the charm of pure biography). Creative imagination needs room in which to develop; each author as he approaches the task of writing a biographical novel seeks some area in which his talents can legitimately demand and receive free rein.

This search for "Spielraum," for freedom from the restrictions of the genre itself, has been manifested in a variety of forms. Some authors have sought it in the area of characterization. Juliane Kay retains a framework taken from

history but builds an internal plot involving neurotic characters who are incapable of responding to their innermost desires. She also introduces a fictitious character, Klara Poschen, ostensibly modelled after the historical Wilhelmine Probst, who was a constant companion of Corona Schröter. As a final stroke of inventiveness, Klara is revealed to have been the actress's mother! Janetschek takes his liberty in the interpretation of the nature of Goethe's love for Charlotte, ascribing his affection and the course which it took solely to Frau von Stein's illness. More shrewdly and successfully, he directs a considerable portion of his narrative away from Goethe and Charlotte by centering it on the figure of none other than Philipp Seidel, Goethe's secretary and confidant.

Other areas have been selected which appear more legitimate for a display of the author's individuality. Among these is the choice of scope for the narrative. Gertrud Bäumer, Trentini, and Kolbenheyer have each selected a period in which the documentation is comparatively slight, or to which little attention is normally directed by the scholar in considering Goethe's love for Charlotte. Grete Fink-Töbich finds similar leeway by writing a Charlotte-oriented novel, while Lux cleverly employs the invention of Frau von Stein's diary.

Along with variations in characterization and interpretation it is interesting to note also the manner in which source material is utilized. The major source of information, of course, is Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein. These are supplemented by his poetry from the earlier Weimar years and

by letters of contemporaries. In addition, any number and variety of scholarly interpretations are available to the writer if he cares to take advantage of them. Lux has quite obviously done so; there is no question but that he has accepted Julius Petersen's language as well as his interpretation. The letters especially are most likely to show up in fiction since they constitute our only knowledge of the subjects Goethe and Charlotte may have pursued in conversation. If they appear as letters in the narrative, they can be effective, as Gertrud Bäumer and Grete Fink-Többich have shown. However, when incorporated as parts of conversation torn out of context, a disturbing element may arise. A piece of dialogue from the Trentini novel may serve as an illustration, based on a passage about Goethe's progress on the revision of Werther from the letter of June 25, 1786:

> "Wie steht's mit Werther?" fragte sie neugierig noch auf der Schwelle. "Geht's?"
> "Ich finde, dass der Verfasser übel getan hat, sich nach geendigter Schrift nicht zu erschiessen."
> "Morgen scheint die Sonne wieder!" Unbesorgt--er ist doch ein Dichter!--lachte sie ihm nach in das Dunkel. "Adieu? Schlaf gut!"[14]

So in Trentini's novel it is a Goethe angry with Charlotte who utters the remark, and a flippant Charlotte who gaily tosses it aside as an idiosyncrasy of the poet. This can hardly be an adequate reproduction of the mood in which the original remark was written, and the Goethe portrait, instead of gaining by the borrowing, loses in authenticity.[15]

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[14]Trentini, I, 43.

[15]See Chapter II, p. 51, above.

Without question the Karlsbader Novelle has given us a standard for the skillful handling of historical fact in fictional conversation. Kolbenheyer occasionally informs, but never instructs; more often he expects the reader to have the same knowledge of current affairs and people of the period as his characters seem to possess. At least part of his success with this technique stems from the brevity of the Novelle, which by definition does not tolerate excess matter. It is therefore legitimate for him to base his dialogue, rather, on the general tone of the letters, for Goethe and Charlotte are reviewing what has happened since they last met. Whether a similar technique could be effectively maintained throughout a longer narrative remains to be seen in some future novel.

A dramatic, episodic approach in constructing their narratives has had an appeal for the majority of our authors. Certain incidents from the biography seem to have intriguing dramatic possibilities. Most notable is a declaration-of-love scene which takes on all kinds of implications depending on the fertility of the author's imagination. Three of our authors have even used the keys to Goethe's Gartenhaus as a symbol of varying degrees of intimacy between Goethe and Charlotte. Juliane Kay's Goethe nonchalantly tosses the keys on the table in front of Frau von Stein as a suggestion that he is available whenever she cares to make use of them. She subsequently does--but is stopped by her conscience, evinced as we recall, in the form of a sore foot. Seidel, in the Janetschek novel, draws his own conclusions on the state of amorous affairs when he discovers Charlotte in possession of the

keys. Burg's Goethe shows his complete disdain for Frau von Stein upon his return from Italy by taking the keys away from her, which somehow seem to be kept within convenient reach.

Favorite themes also are the Emilie von Werthern episode and the tragic love of Karoline von Ilten and Prince Konstantin. The Lenz affair has likewise been included by a number of writers. With the exceptions previously mentioned (Chapters III and IV, above), these incidents are usually introduced into the narratives at the correct point in chronological time. Errors, where they occur, are more apt to result from deviations in interpretation of the significance of such episodes. There seems to be a slight area of confusion, however, concerning Charlotte's family. Gertrud Bäumer, though her characterizations of the children are accurate, reverses for no apparent reason the names of the two older boys, Karl and Ernst, while Kolbenneyer's Frau von Stein, in her worry over the illness of Ernst, appears to have forgotten one of her four babies who died when she reminds Goethe: "Ich habe schon drei Kinder verloren."[16] Toni Schwabe's Frau von Stein, on the other hand, is so unnerved while in Karlsbad that she thinks, not Ernst, but her husband is ill at home: "Ach, das wusste sie ja selber: Steins Krankheit. Und dass er nicht wie sonst im Schloss, sondern viel zu Hause war, fast immer dabei war, wenn Goethe kam."[17]

So great is the variety of themes, incidents, and characters, both real and imaginary, which have found their way by

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[16]Kolbenheyer, p. 19. [17]Toni Schwabe, p. 89.

diverse means into the fictional world of Goethe and Frau von Stein, that it almost seems as though the historical account had been drained of its novelistic potentialities. Hardly a single detail, however minute, has escaped exploitation in some fashion in at least one of the narratives. On a plane located anywhere between physical and spiritual hunger, between sensual craving and poetic inspiration, authors have attempted to retrace Goethe's acts and attitudes: some gently, reverently exploring or cautiously probing, others gleefully prying, peering and peeping through keyholes, forcing locked doors--to borrow from Toni Schwabe--and each presumably in terms of his or her own personal orientation and experiences, which are willy-nilly somehow also read into the record.

And yet one wonders whether the most intriguing question of all, the question of inevitability, has received sufficient attention. To portray the role played by chance or destiny in bringing these two extraordinary individuals together, in an unbelievable union lasting ten unheard-of years, might well be a challenge to a great writer of fiction, if fiction, as an art, encompasses a criticism of life, an attempt at interpretation of what this existence of ours is ultimately all about.

Most of the authors, to be sure, seem to have been aware of the technical problem, have perhaps even solved it in their own minds and to their own satisfaction, but then expect the reader to take their solution for granted without benefit of the inner analysis possibly followed and certainly needed in reaching it. Particularly in the narratives dealing

with the early stages of the friendship and love, a feeling is apt to creep in that some essential element is missing. All too often the authors proceed under the tacit assumption that their fictional Goethes and Charlottes simply belong together. They met in history and this meeting led to some kind of union which seemed to be mutually gratifying for a while, until the poet became depressed about something or other and decided to leave; the woman in turn got bitterly upset about whatever happened and told him so, and naturally after that they could no longer be friends.

This characterization is rather crude perhaps, yet it is exactly the impression gained from the majority of the fictional accounts. The symbolic quality is lacking. Since all this happened in history--such is the apparent line of reasoning--it must happen in fiction, and who cares about inner necessity. It might be argued that searching for such deeper motivation is a concern for the Goethe scholar rather than the Goethe novelist, and some scholars and critics surely have shouldered the task--in the search for historical truth. But this cannot possibly mean that the novelist may safely eschew the same responsibility--in the search for the symbol, using the term "symbol" as neatly defined in the superb words of Goethe's own "Chorus mysticus."

All too frequently the characters come into the story ready-made, and they usually go out in the same fashion. As a result, one may at times entertain grave doubts as to whether Goethe and Charlotte as here fictionally delineated actually do belong together, and whether there would be a mutual

attraction if they were to meet in real life. In some manner the author is called upon to convey the feeling that the two unique individuals he has created are destined to react to each other in the prescribed manner, not merely because in the light of history we assume they were so destined, but because in a given case this is part and parcel of his very trade. It is a feature usually found in good fiction and--as previously noted, the name "Goethe" entails a certain responsibility.

Indeed, the historical situation fairly pleads for such a treatment. One might consider, for example, certain traits of Goethe's character and mentality, his state of mind, his spiritual needs, when he arrived in Weimar to have this fateful encounter. Did he meet Charlotte because his essence was ready for this experience, or did he have the experience because he met Charlotte? Or--does the truth lie somewhere in between? Is Charlotte Iphigenie or Iphigenie Charlotte? In other words, is Iphigenie, as we find her in the drama, merely the result of Charlotte's inspiration or did Goethe find in Charlotte the concrete personification of an ideal, a healing agency, an Erlösung he had long been seeking, perhaps "das Ewig Weibliche" imbedded in his own nature? Again, how much was chance, how much was destiny? And similar questions, though in a different direction, could be asked about that other Charlotte drama, Torquato Tasso.

From the standpoint of Charlotte, there are complementary and equally interesting, if perplexing considerations. She has said she was ready to die before this friendship began;

under Goethe's influence her life was visibly changed, and yet, after the break between them she lived another forty useful years. What are the implications to be drawn? Was Goethe nothing but an accident in her life, without significance for anyone but herself? Or is it possible to raise her, historically, to the meaningfulness of Tasso's Princess?

These are only some of the basic problems involved, problems not only for the psychologist-scholar, but, in a creative perspective, aesthetic problems of the artist as well. They are practically ignored in our narratives--though this might be one area in which real creative talent could be shown in a twentieth-century novel. It would mean, however, a reversal of the procedure which appears to be the accepted one. Instead of depicting second-hand characters in terms of second-hand biography, it would be imperative to forget about the biographical facts and features temporarily and first of all create characters, who would then produce the known biography, with all its profound implications, as a matter of inevitable necessity. Goethe himself, under inner compulsion, was the first to "fictionalize" his relation to Charlotte von Stein, but his example--as an objective example, detached from his authorship--has not been followed, if grasped.

A final evaluation of the narratives may now perhaps be attempted. As we must maintain, the name "Goethe" cannot be evaporated, it does carry an obligation, no matter in what direction the novelist may wish to develop his theme. Some quality of authenticity is the rightful expectation of the reader. At the very least, one might claim, the novel should

doubtless use established biography as an over-all framework--but then Paul Burg's Alles um Liebe and Ottokar Janetschek's Frau von Stein hardly deserve to be considered here at all. The only connection with historical personages in these two works is the misguided use of well-known names and places. In fact, the Janetschek novel might have improved as pure fiction, had other, non-fictional characters been presented; it is questionable, however, whether such a change would benefit the Burg novel at all.

Toni Schwabe in Wandlung des Herzens seeks to portray the character of Goethe degraded to the commonplace; consequently her Goethe is not "Goethean," but, as the author herself admits, might be any "Steinklopfer auf der Strasse."[18] Several obvious distortions of fact likewise detract from the value of the novel as fiction dedicated to the name of Goethe.

Both Franz Servaes' Jahr der Wandlung and Trentini's Goethe provide fairly accurate, or at least conceivable portraits of Goethe as a man and artist undergoing a unique transformation; however, they are both weak in the shadowy characterization of Frau von Stein, chiefly because she does not appear often enough to become a definite personality. Even with Goethe absolutely in the center of the author's concern, a vital aspect--the most vital perhaps--remains obscured. Trentini's machinery with its emphasis on dreams and visions does not improve matters.

Of the remaining narratives, all have made a serious

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[18]Toni Schwabe, p. 22. See Chapter III, pp. 121-122, above.

attempt to give depth to the characters of both Goethe and Frau von Stein, attaining thereby a degree of balance between the two, regardless of Goethe or Charlotte orientation. However, except for the introduction of Charlotte's fictional diary, Lux's Goethe displays little artistic imagination. His learning is more obvious. More often than not, the work serves as a medium for the author's own pedagogically flavored instruction of the reader, or lapses into a simple anthology of letters, both real and imaginary.

Juliane Kay's Meine Schwester oder meine Frau has the flair which the Lux novel lacks but seems to show little of the sensitivity required by the subject matter. By virtue of the implications which the reader is invited to draw, the author has failed to do justice either to her characters or to her theme. Especially secondary characters frequently have little resemblance to their historical counterparts. As previously mentioned, certain features of the novel strongly suggest that the author may have written it with one eye on its cinema potentialities. This double purpose may well be the real source of its weakness as a book.

Only three of our ten narratives, Gertrud Bäumer's Eine Woche im Mai, Kolbenheyer's Karlsbader Novelle, and Grete Fink-Töbich's Einer Einzigen gehören, display a sensitive treatment of the theme, both in their characterization of all figures involved and in their intrinsic interpretation of this celebrated love, each within the limitations imposed by scope and orientation. Aside from the question of being historically reliable, they have succeeded in creating believable characters

who seem to "live" in their prescribed environments. In the fusion of novelistic and biographical elements, in the deft handling of internal and external plot, in the skillful interjection of source material, and in ability to retain interest, they stand considerably above the "Unterhaltungsliteratur," which characterizes the quality of their competitors. But while they are an indication that biographical fiction can be written without committing serious injury to its components, it is hard for the critic to say whether any one of them would deserve the distinction of being considered a work of "art." None seems to have been able to escape completely a reliance upon the charm of the historical names, to rise distinctly above its biographical ingredients, to transform the uniqueness of the individual experience into a symbol for the universality of human existence as such. Whether these three narratives represent the highest plateau of fictional treatment which can be achieved with the theme of Goethe and Charlotte von Stein must be decided by some future novelist. Perhaps we are demanding too much. Occasionally one has to make concessions and may still get something worth having after all. But if, as Julius Petersen suggests, it would take a super-Kleist to write a good Kleist drama,[19] it is conceivable that the ultimate in Goethe-Charlotte fiction could be produced

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[19]"Der Dichter eines deutschen Kleist-Dramas müsste sich dem Helden mit Hingabe unterwerfen und in ihm aufgehen, aber er müsste sich ihm zugleich gewachsen zeigen, um den Kampf mit ihm zu bestehen. Eigentlich könnte nur ein wiederkehrender Kleist, aber kein Kleistulus, sondern eher ein Über-Kleist seinem Ebenbild Worte in den Mund legen, die ihn nicht verkleinern."--Julius Petersen, "Kleist im Roman," Jahrbuch der Kleist-Gesellschaft, 1938, II (1941), 119.

only by a second Goethe capable both of understanding the inner conflicts involved and of finding the right symbols for expressing them in great language.

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