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# *The Ethics of Narration*

*Uwe Johnson's Novels from  
'Ingrid Babendererde' to 'Jahrestage'*

COLIN RIORDAN

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FOR MY PARENTS



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## ABBREVIATIONS

### (a) *Works by Johnson*

Full bibliographical details appear in Section II of the Bibliography, pp. 236–39.

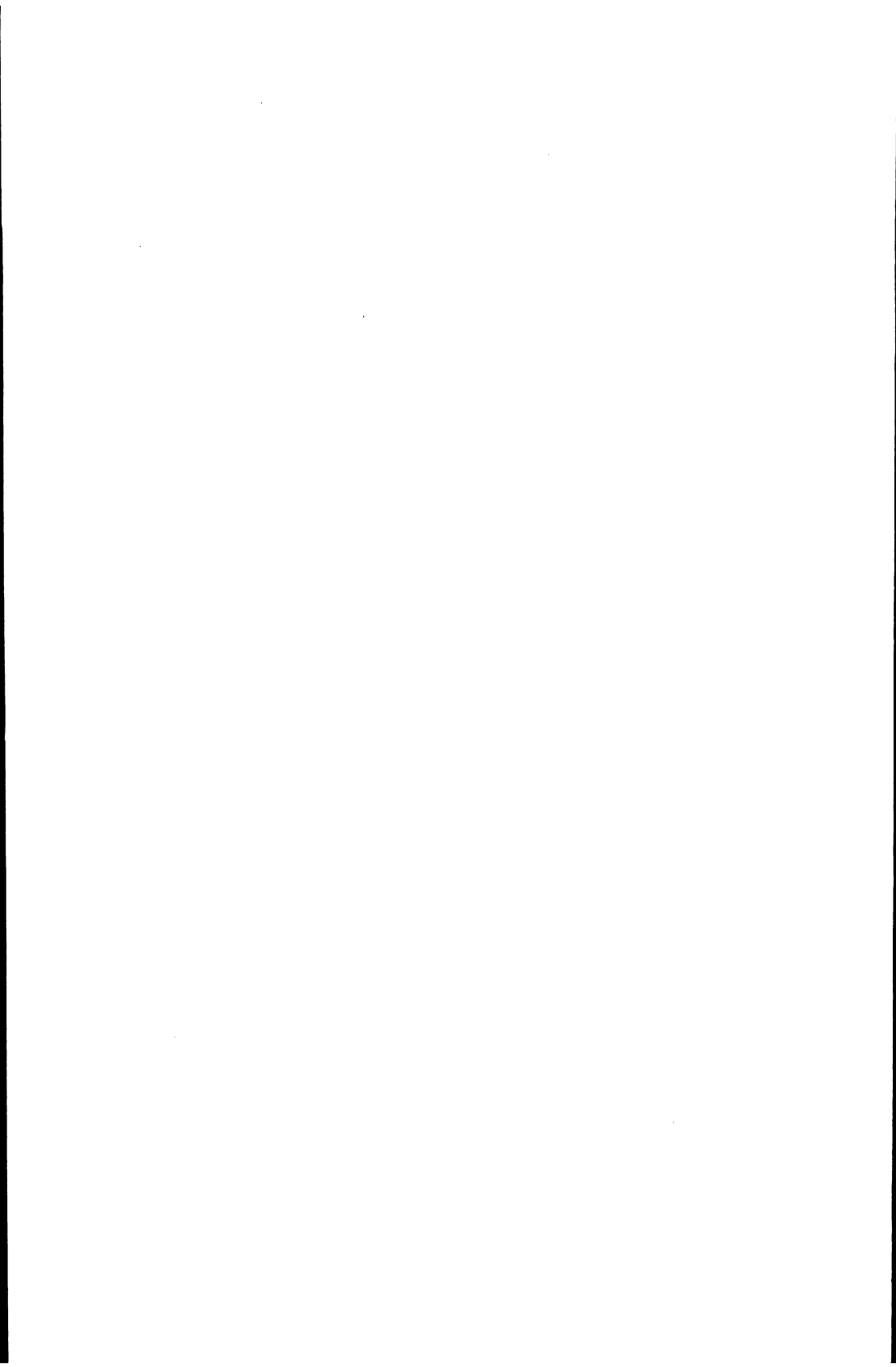
BS	'Berliner Stadtbahn'
BU	<i>Begleitumstände</i>
DBA	<i>Das dritte Buch über Achim</i>
IB	<i>Ingrid Babendererde</i>
JT	<i>Jahrestage</i>
KP	<i>Karsch und andere Prosa</i>
MJ	<i>Mutmaßungen über Jakob</i>
SV	<i>Skizze eines Verunglückten</i>
VPR	'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans'
ZA	<i>Zwei Ansichten</i>

### (b) *Other Abbreviations*

Bengel	Michael Bengel (ed.), <i>Johnsons Jahrestage</i> (Frankfurt am Main, 1985)
Gerlach/Richter	Rainer Gerlach and Matthias Richter (eds), <i>Uwe Johnson</i> (Frankfurt am Main, 1984)

Abbreviations for periodical titles are in accordance with those used in *The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies*.

PART ONE  
BEFORE *JAHRESTAGE*



## I THE ETHICS OF NARRATION

Uwe Johnson's novel *Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Greppahl*,<sup>1</sup> finally completed in 1983, shows every evidence of the peculiar, scrupulous, obsessive morality which was apparent in the author's public and private life. Yet no previous study of Johnson's work has appreciated how far this sense of morality determined the development of a narrative technique which ranged from the traditional, and therefore straightforward, form to be found in the originally unpublished manuscript of *Ingrid Babendererde* (written 1956), through the complicated maze of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* (1959), the paradoxes of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* (1961), renewed lucidity in *Zwei Ansichten* (1965), to the immense, perhaps partly unsuspected, dynamic complexity of *Jahrestage*. The term 'dynamic' is an accurate one, for Johnson's novels, particularly *Jahrestage*, are increasingly shaped by a flexible system of narrative forces, conditioned by an idiosyncratic decentralization of narrative authority which sets Johnson apart from others who have mistrusted traditional narrative form in the novel. *Jahrestage*'s complexity was no matter of caprice: the aim of this study will be not only to elucidate the narrative dynamics of Johnson's last novel, but also to explain both why such sophisticated techniques became necessary, and why the work took fifteen years (rather than the planned three) in the making, coming perilously close to remaining a fragment.

The complex system of narrative dynamics evident in *Jahrestage* operates according to a set of moral imperatives which together amount to no less than a code of narrative ethics. And that code of ethics explains the technical developments from the early novels through to *Jahrestage* in a way which extra-literary explanations — sociological and historical — cannot match. This is not to say that Johnson's narrative ethics are a purely literary phenomenon: indeed, the present study will attempt to show that they have profound political, historical, and social implications. Johnson's fiction acts as a testing ground for issues which have affected the moral and political consciousness of both Germanies since 1945.

But Johnson's personal sense of morality also had tangible effects on his fictional output. Indeed, one important reason for the delay in *Jahrestage*'s completion was undoubtedly a personal crisis: the breakdown of his marriage in 1975, and the final separation from his wife in 1977. Johnson subsequently suffered a serious illness which interrupted his work on *Jahrestage*.<sup>2</sup> While some might regard Johnson's belief that he had been betrayed by Elisabeth Johnson as

pedantic and idiosyncratic to the point of unreasonableness, the rights and wrongs of the case are not a matter for comment here. Moreover, it will become clear later in this study that the writing of *Jahrestage* had begun to run into problems well before the crisis of 1975. Suffice it to say that the stringent, yet individual code of morality which Johnson considered his wife to have infringed has its parallel in literary terms, deriving from what was the most widely used catchword in early Johnson criticism: *Wahrheitsfindung*. The concept of *Wahrheitsfindung* has been unfashionable amongst students of Johnson for some years, but has caused so many fundamental misconceptions, while being essential to an understanding of his work, that we must return to first principles if the tribulations which accompanied the writing of *Jahrestage* are to be satisfactorily explained.

Those first principles are contained in a lecture which Johnson had first delivered in Detroit in 1961, entitled 'Berlin, die Grenze der geteilten Welt, als ein Platz zum Schreiben',<sup>3</sup> a lecture which soon afterwards appeared in essay form under the title 'Berliner Stadtbahn'.<sup>4</sup> This was the first of two pieces, written twelve years apart, which have been exploited as theoretical glosses to Johnson's work. While 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans' (1973)<sup>5</sup> initially went largely unnoticed, 'Berliner Stadtbahn' quickly became a ubiquitous feature in Johnsonian secondary literature, remaining so until the late seventies, but acquiring disproportionate importance as a theoretical statement with particular reference to narrative technique.<sup>6</sup> It was common practice to misuse the sentiments expressed in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' as a kind of hermeneutic template, a convenient explicator of narrative precepts equally suitable for application to all of Johnson's early works. Later critics, by contrast, have tended to play down the role of this essay, reacting both to its initial over-exposure and to its designation as '(veraltet)' in *Berliner Sachen*. Yet it can be dangerously misleading either to ignore or to accept unquestioningly any writer's pronouncements on his or her approach to literature. In Johnson's case, the evident disparity between theory and practice has consistently led to distorted readings of the novels, rather than efforts to enquire more critically into the premisses of 'Berliner Stadtbahn'. If undertaken, such enquiry offers a starting point from which to deduce the narrative strategy, pragmatic but teleological, which determined the development of the author's narrative technique between 1956 and 1983.

The deliberations set down in 'Berliner Stadtbahn', it must be borne in mind, refer in the main to the particular situation of Berlin in 1961, and the particular problems associated with that city. There is enough (though frequently ignored) qualification to remind the reader of the essay's restricted terms of reference: '(Es versteht sich, daß einige dieser Bemerkungen nur gerechtfertigt sind durch den Umstand, daß diese zwei Städte einmal die Hauptstadt eines nicht geteilten Landes bildeten, und durch den Blick auf eine mögliche oder

wünschbare Weidervereinigung)' (BS, 20). The final paragraph implies similar limitations: 'Hoffentlich habe ich die Schwierigkeiten mit einem Bahnhof der Berliner Stadtbahn dennoch so beschrieben, daß Sie ihn sich ungefähr vorstellen können' (BS, 21); the object of description has not been lost from sight. The legend '(veraltet)' appended to the title indicates the temporal constraints which Johnson later applied to the essay (BS, 7). Indeed, many of the problems discussed articulate a particular artistic dilemma which arose during the writing of the other work to appear during 1961, *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, as will become clear towards the end of the next chapter. This is not to say that no general conclusions may be drawn, but that in doing so it is prudent, first, to distil the underlying concerns from their specific context and to assess how far they may be more widely applied, to observe their spirit, as it were, rather than their letter, and secondly, to regard them as indicators rather than as rules, to be employed critically when examining other texts. With this in mind, some of the considerations may be surmised which might have influenced the composition of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*.

The most frequently quoted section of 'Berliner Stadtbahn' deals with the role of the narrator, and has repeatedly been generalized to refer to all of Johnson's early work. It is worth reproducing here in full, in order to facilitate future reference:

Aus diesen Bedingungen des Themas (das gewissermaßen für Deutschland nach dem Krieg, als ein Thema, steht) sind verschiedene literarische Konsequenzen hervorgegangen. In diesem Fall, den ich Ihnen vortragen darf, haben sie sich eigentlich ausgewirkt auf den Platz des Erzählers. Wo steht der Autor in seinem Text? Die Manieren der Allwissenheit sind verdächtig. Der göttergleiche Überblick eines Balzac ist bewundernswert. Balzac lebte von 1799 bis 1850. Wenn der Verfasser seinen Text erst erfinden und montieren muß: wie kann er dann auf hohem Stuhl über dem Spielfeld hocken wie ein Schiedsrichter beim Tennis, alle Regeln wissen, die Personen sowohl kennen als auch fehlerlos beobachten, zu beliebiger Zeit souverän eingreifen und sogar den Platz tauschen mit einer seiner Personen und noch in sie blicken, wie er sogar selbst sich doch selten bekannt wird. Der Verfasser sollte zugeben, daß er erfunden hat, was er vorbringt, er sollte nicht verschweigen, daß seine Informationen lückenhaft sind und ungenau. Denn er verlangt Geld für was er anbietet. Dies eingestehen kann er, indem er etwa die schwierige Suche nach der Wahrheit ausdrücklich vorführt, indem er seine Auffassung des Geschehens mit der seiner Person vergleicht und relativiert, indem er ausläßt, was er nicht wissen kann, indem er nicht für reine Kunst ausgibt, was noch eine Art der Wahrheitsfindung ist. (BS, 20–21)

Johnson makes no distinction in this passage between 'Erzähler', 'Autor', and 'Verfasser': the literary critic has no choice but to assume that the 'verschiedene literarische Konsequenzen' refer in the main to the manners of the narrator as a literary concept. 'Wo steht der Autor in seinem Text?' can only refer to the place of the narrator, and this mistrust of an omniscience which (in Johnson's view) belongs to the age of Balzac is indeed readily detectable in Johnson's early novels. The author's concept of omniscience is clearly enough stated here, and is

the sense in which 'omniscience' should be understood throughout this study: it constitutes a narrator's ability to know the thoughts of all characters and observe them impeccably, aware of the 'Regeln', the pattern of relationships in the novel. This clear, and conscious, rejection of narrative omniscience has coloured the critical view of Johnson ever since. But while the remarks of 'Berliner Stadtbahn' also undoubtedly do include elements of the real author ('denn er verlangt Geld für was er anbietet'), the manifestation of these elements is less a matter of literary technique than of moral concern. The writer has an obligation of honesty: 'der Verfasser sollte zugeben', 'er sollte nicht verschweigen'. He has a duty to expose the truth, while at the same time admitting his own inadequacies and limitations. Earlier in the essay truth is advanced as a necessary condition of production which dictates certain constraints; in this case the contradicting versions of truth put forward on each side of the border: 'Solange die Arbeit an einem literarischen Text dieser Art sich mit der Wahrheit befaßt, muß ihr Gegenstand also geprüft werden an zwei gegensätzlichen Tendenzen der Wahrheitsfindung' (BS, 11). Uwe Johnson's narrative approach is founded upon this obligation of honesty.

In 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans' the writer's responsibility is expressed in the most forceful of terms: 'Jeder sachliche Irrtum, ob er bei einem historischen Datum passiert oder bei der Unschuld eines Staatsmanns am Tode von Millionen Menschen, an dem er schuldig ist; jede Schlampigkeit in der Arbeit, jede lügenhafte Spekulation gilt als Grund zur Beschwerde, in schlimmeren Fällen als Anlaß zu öffentlichem Protest, in den schwersten Fällen die Verwandlung des Buches in Altpapier' (VPR, 401). This radical declaration as well as the comments in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' are symptomatic of the commitment to narrative integrity which lies at the root of Johnson's work. Just one practical demonstration of this kind of integrity is to be found in Johnson's refusal to alter *Ingrid Babendererde* as GDR publishers required. He describes his standpoint in *Begleitumstände. Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (1980): 'Das Typoskript wurde eingeschrieben zurückgegeben. Bestehen blieb die Einladung, "zu sehen, ob Sie eine Überarbeitung im Sinne unserer Debatte für möglich erachten". Eine solche, von der noch herrschenden Ideologie bestimmten Umschreibung wäre dem Verfasser an die Substanz dessen gegangen, was er als Wahrheit für vertretbar, für belegbar hielt. Sie wäre hinausgelaufen auf Streichungen in der Wirklichkeit' (BU, 89). The common ground between author and narrator, therefore, is moral, for precisely this kind of integrity defines the narrative scope within Johnson's literary works. *Wahrheitsfindung* may thus be regarded as a principle, not only in the sense of an axiom, but also in that of a moral category.

From the committed integrity which forms that principle springs in turn the rejection of narrative omniscience; on this basis the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century traditions of narration are disavowed, a repudiation

exemplified by the figure of Balzac, whose life coincided with the height of the nineteenth-century narrative tradition, of whose renunciation a reduction in narrative omniscience is part and parcel. Such replacement of what in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' are portrayed as outdated techniques with a striving for truth necessitating restricted narrative cognition constitutes the conscious aims which Johnson had in 1961, which is not to say that such ambitions existed when *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* was written. The textual evidence of that novel suggests that they did, albeit in a less articulate form.

Whether such aims were successfully realized is, of course, another matter. It is my contention that the writer did not and could not succeed in the endeavour, and that the major themes of his work can be derived from the resulting struggle. The search for the past, the problem of memory, the evident concern with the means of narration, even the problem of identity are all part of this nexus. It is the conflict between the limitations of the fictional medium and the moral obligations of *Wahrheitsfindung* that constitutes the most radical and substantial determinant of the evolution in Johnson's narrative technique until 1970. The crux of that conflict can be found in the matter of narrative cognition. Before that problem can be discussed, however, the term *Wahrheitsfindung* as used by Johnson, as well as its manifestation in his first two published novels, must be subjected to analysis.

Johnson's perceptions of this concept vary in value as far as critical purposes are concerned. 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans' contains a one-paragraph, categorical image which transcends theoretical discussion: 'Wahrheit ist Bimsstein' (VPR, 401). While this statement graphically illustrates the deceptive nature of what is commonly regarded as truth — solid rock to the eye, but light as a feather and full of holes — the present purpose is better served by analysis than illustration.

A rather more conventional approach to the question is to be found in the Neusüss interview of 1962, where Johnson offered a view characterized mainly by inconclusiveness:

Was ist denn die Wahrheit? Es gibt eine subjektive, die Erlebniswahrheit, die unter anderem an sich hat, daß ein Vorgang von fünf Minuten in der Erinnerung auf eine Sekunde zusammenschrumpfen kann, oder eine Sekunde weitet sich aus zur Unendlichkeit: da ist nichts genau zu fixieren. Es gibt bei dieser subjektiven Wahrheit der Erlebniszeit auch Teilwahrheiten, einzelne Aspekte der Wahrheit, die gar nicht formulierbar sind . . . Dann gibt es auch objektive Wahrheiten, etwa die Geschichtsschreibung oder die Statistik, und dann gibt es auch noch die parteiische Wahrheit. Die Wahrheit des Sachwalters oder die Wahrheit des Kanzlers: all diese Teilwahrheiten: sie mögen sich manchmal überdecken, mitunter bestätigen sie sich, aber sie alle greifen von ganz verschiedenen Aspekten her den Gegenstand oder den Vorfall oder das Gefühl an, und sehr oft widersprechen sie sich. Was ist denn da die Wahrheit? (Neusüss, p. 47)

These comments pose an epistemological question resting on the insecure assumption that truth might be a potentially recognizable object in itself which



is merely concealed within a multiplicity of perspective-conditioned variants. The division of truth into various categories is a necessary one, but only in order to distinguish the truth of which a novel is capable from the alternatives, which, it will transpire (in *Jahrestage* at the latest), have little in common with the essentially literary category of *Wahrheitsfindung*. Furthermore, the classification of 'Geschichtsschreibung' and 'Statistik' as 'objektive Wahrheiten' was surely a hurried judgement which Johnson would later have preferred to correct; statistics in particular is the mathematical discipline perhaps most misused in the name of truth.

A more useful indicator may be found in a discussion which Johnson contributed to rather later in his career. The author attempts to define the verisimilitude of which a novel is capable, and cites not specific facts or historical events, but structures, that is, relationships between certain values in the form of invented characters, events, and circumstances. These representative values are distributed in such a way that their arrangement relative to each other will create a feasible version of reality:

[Das Erzählen ist] auch eine Vermittlung von Beziehungen. Ja, man könnte sagen, daß daraus der größte Teil des Erzählens im Roman besteht: daß über eine Person ihre Beziehungen zu anderen Personen dargestellt werden, die relevanten Beziehungen, nämlich die, die diese Person in den Zustand gebracht haben, in dem sie jetzt ist, und die Beziehungen, die sie jetzt unterhält, um am Leben zu bleiben, sich zu behaupten, sich zu verändern. Danach könnte man den Roman auch das Beziehungssystem der Personen nennen: Beziehungen allerdings nicht nur zwischen Personen, sondern auch zu gesellschaftlichen Instituten oder auch zum Wetter, wozu ja ein Individuum seine eigene, ihm unabsprechbare Beziehung hat . . . Eine kleine Stadt kann für viele kleine Städte stehen, selbst wenn sie erfunden ist; sie könnte möglich sein; so könnte es gewesen sein. Es ist das Gleiche, wie wenn es sich um eine große Stadt handelt, die es wirklich gibt, z. B. New York. Auch da handelt es sich um den Versuch, eine Wirklichkeit, die vergangen ist, wiederherzustellen. Und das heißt nicht etwa, eine Wirklichkeit in verkleinerter Form nachzubauen, sondern eine Wirklichkeit in allen ihren Beziehungen zusammengefaßt noch einmal möglich zu machen.<sup>7</sup>

Two further salient points arise from this account, which might justifiably be regarded as the most helpful statement of Johnson's view of fictional truth. Firstly, writing fiction concerns 'den Versuch, eine Wirklichkeit, die vergangen ist, wiederherzustellen'. *Wahrheitsfindung* thus ultimately refers to a past reality, attempting not to reconstruct such a reality mimetically, but rather to create an independent, organized set of values representing the social and societal relationships which underlay that reality. Secondly, the values which compose these 'Beziehungen' cannot be purely arbitrary; some criteria are needed to ensure their validity. Those criteria are probability and possibility: 'so könnte es gewesen sein'. Johnson's efforts are directed towards making 'eine Wirklichkeit . . . noch einmal möglich'.

The origins of these criteria are to be found in the distinctions drawn between historical and poetic truth in Aristotle's *Poetics*: '. . . it is not the function of the

poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen — what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity'.<sup>8</sup> In due course this law is elucidated: 'If [the poet] describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error; but the error may be justified if the end of the art be thereby attained . . . — if, that is, the effect of this or any other part of the poem is thus rendered more striking' (Aristotle, p. 35). The impossible and improbable may, therefore, be admissible under certain circumstances: 'In general, the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion. With respect to the requirements of art, a probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible' (Aristotle, pp. 37–38). Finally we are reminded that "'it is probable that a thing may happen contrary to probability'" (Aristotle, p. 38). The heritage of these deliberations echoes in the suggestions Johnson makes in 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans' concerning the role of chance in fictional relationships:

Es sollte etwas mehr sein, als daß Mrs. Brown in einem Eisenbahnwagen sitzt, und eine andere Person auch, durch nichts als Zufall. Das andere Extrem könnte sein, daß Mrs. Brown in ihrem Nachbarn, dem Straßenbahnschaffner, endlich ihren Urenkel erkennt, der seit achtzig Jahren als vermißt galt, und das noch nach einem Flugzeugabsturz. Ungültig. Nein, solche Beziehungen müssen fest sein, vielfältig verwirklicht, lebensfähig, etwa gleich denen im tatsächlichen Leben. (VPR, 398–99)

While Johnson's two examples cover the range from the highly probable to the absolutely impossible, the writer's task, he implies, is no easy one; namely to estimate which degree of coincidence is likely to be acceptable. This is the art of judging the limits of plausibility, and thus of narrative validity: a mistake will incur the verdict 'ungültig'. Precisely how the criteria for establishing and guaranteeing such limits may be identified and put to use is subjected to close scrutiny in *Jahrestage*.

So far, then, we have established that the initial objective of *Wahrheitsfindung* is to construct in the form of an organized set of values an independent fictional reality derived from an actual reality of the past. How the relevant values of reality are to be recognized is initially a matter for the writer, but one which in Johnson's prose is tested out both on the manners of the narrator and the narrative structure itself. This problem — that of selectivity — is of course nothing new; to return briefly to Aristotle, 'a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference is not an organic part of the whole' (Aristotle, p. 13). As far as the novel is concerned, Laurence Sterne's irrepressible narrator Tristram Shandy was well aware of the inextricable problems in which determining what constitutes an organic part of the whole can involve the writer. In *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* the foundations of a solution to this problem are laid, as an epistemological model is constructed which contrasts the perceptive processes available to fiction with those which obtain in life, so allowing the reader to distil independently the values of reality which can be ascertained.

The matter is taken a stage further in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, as the reader is granted an insight into the deployment of those values once recognized. This, indeed, is the very crux of *Wahrheitsfindung*, of 'finding truth'. For truth itself cannot be regarded as an object, like a treasure trove, which can be directly located and discovered. A particular fact 'X' may be correct or incorrect; determining whether it is true or not means applying a moral category to describe one who states that 'X' is the case as a teller of truth or a teller of lies. Conscious falsification of 'X' would constitute lying, or untruth, irrespective of whether 'X' is correct or incorrect. The search is for a way of showing that every effort is being made to tell the truth. *Wahrheitsfindung* represents a search not just for a fictional representation of observed structures in a past reality, but for a way of representing those structures honestly: the process of finding truth becomes itself the object of scrutiny. *Wahrheitsfindung*, therefore, may ultimately be defined as searching for a way of telling the truth, and for a method whereby the success of such an endeavour may be verified. Since, however, a fictional world cannot easily be compared with its source, except by the author, fictional truth will necessarily be unverifiable, which is not to render it valueless, merely to imply that its value depends upon the honesty of the teller; the honesty of the narrator. That honesty cannot simply be taken for granted; in essence, *Wahrheitsfindung* must seek a way of guaranteeing its own probity, providing a scale by which to measure the honesty of the narrative, and so of the narrator.<sup>9</sup>

Although 'Berliner Stadtbahn' provides some useful indicators (as well as red herrings), the code of narrative ethics which springs from the dictates of *Wahrheitsfindung* can only be fully elucidated by reference to the texts themselves. In *Das dritte Buch über Achim* a first step towards guaranteeing the storyteller's honesty is taken by means of depicting the process of fictional creation. In part, that depiction takes the form of an analogy with the workings of memory. Since a fictional world only consists of words on a page it only exists as an image in the reader's mind. The closest analogy to this mental image in the thought processes of everyday life is a memory; both are incomplete conceptual structures based on a set of abstract stimuli which have no immediate concrete counterpart. It follows that the process of creating the pattern which provokes such a memory-image is analogous to the process of memory. This analogy is well documented in Johnson's work as well as in his own testimony: 'Mir fällt eine Geschichte ein und zwar stückweise, mit immer zugehörigen Einzelheiten. Es ist eine Art Erinnerungsvorgang, und gewiß, da wirken Erlebnisse ein, Wahrnehmungen, Erfahrungen, Tagesläufe aller Art'.<sup>10</sup> Other authors report similar experiences. In isolation, as an object presented for the reader's edification, a version of reality which readers can compare with their own, the mental image represented by the text is as limited in usefulness as the result of a mathematical proof without the method by which it was obtained. Portraying the means by which the result is arrived at implies that, by analogy,

an analysis of the workings of memory will help reveal the creative process, exposing in turn the search for the truth, a search which in effect represents the truth which is being sought, since the means of *Wahrheitsfindung* are ultimately their own objective. In parallel with this analysis the origins of fiction are directly exposed; herein lies the need for frankness which 'Berliner Stadtbahn' affirmed, for the dictates of honesty are paramount in Johnson's code of narrative ethics. But before investigating the problems involved in attempting to guarantee that honesty by means of restricting narrative omniscience, the 'ausdrückliche Vorführung der schwierigen Suche nach der Wahrheit' (to paraphrase 'Berliner Stadtbahn') must first be examined in practice.

## II EXPOSING THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Although *Ingrid Babendererde*, we now know, was the first novel Johnson wrote, it will suit the present purpose initially to consider Johnson's early works in the context of their critical reception, in order to explain the origins of certain misconceptions which have dogged readings of Johnson's work ever since.<sup>1</sup> *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* enjoyed a critical — if not commercial — success comparable to that accorded to Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*, as Bernd Neumann points out.<sup>2</sup> Yet it would be neither inaccurate nor ungracious to assign *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* to that category of twentieth-century novel which cannot be read, only re-read. While there were, naturally, a number of dissenters regarding the book's literary worth,<sup>3</sup> a typical reservation appended to a highly positive reaction runs: 'Gewiß, ein guter, ein bedeutender und lesenswerter Roman. Lesenswert, ob aber auch lesenswert für einen größeren Kreis?'.<sup>4</sup>

This kind of reservation refers to the complexity which arises from the interweaving of three narrative media. Interior monologues from the minds of Gesine Cresspahl, Herr Rohlf's of the security service, and Jonas Blach, are indicated typographically by italics. The identities of the respective minds whose thoughts are revealed emerge solely from the substance of the thoughts. Snatches of dialogue provide a second narrative medium, and again the identity of the participants only becomes apparent from the context. There are three such dialogues: between Jonas and Jöche (Jakob's colleague); Jonas and Gesine; and Gesine and Rohlf's. A narrator who uses both scenic description and *erlebte Rede* provides the third medium of conveying the story. Conversations observed by the narrator are indicated by inverted commas, in contrast to the dialogues, which are indicated by dashes. Opening at a point where Jakob is already dead, the book is divided into five chapters, the last of which governs the structure of the work. In chapter 5, Jonas visits Jöche in Jerichow on the day of Jakob's death, and the conversation which ensues between them provides most of the thread of dialogue through chapters 1 and 2. Jöche starts the conversation by saying in bewilderment: 'Aber er ist doch immer über die Gleise gegangen' (*MJ*, 304), which echoes the first line of the book: 'Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen' (*MJ*, 7). Having finished his visit to Jöche (in chapter 5) Jonas telephones Gesine; their phone conversation provides the thread of dialogue through chapter 3. The first words of their conversation appear in chapter 5 and open chapter 3: 'Hier ist Cresspahl; wer spricht.

Teilnehmer bitte melden Sie sich. Weisst du es schon' (*MJ*, 305; compare *MJ*, 142). The final paragraph of the book indicates a meeting between Rohlf's and Gesine, which they had arranged for 10 November in Berlin (see *MJ*, 225), and their discussion on this occasion accounts for the dialogue which runs through chapter 4.

This bewildering structural arrangement tends to result in a kind of foggy indistinctness hardly commensurate with any notion of *Wahrheitsfindung*. But in fact the component parts of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* can be re-arranged into an easily comprehensible, clearly recognizable form, as Hansjürgen Popp was the first to prove in 1967.<sup>5</sup> Popp painstakingly dissects both time-scheme and plot of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, devoting around twenty-five thousand words to an extremely detailed account of the novel's external events, whereby each narrative element is placed in order of occurrence according to the fictional world's chronology. Furthermore, a timetable is provided which dates where possible the sequence of events.

From 7 to 17 October 1956 Rohlf's makes preliminary investigations into the possibility of using Jakob Abs to recruit Gesine Cresspahl, an ex-GDR citizen now working for NATO, into the East German *Staatssicherheitsdienst*. The SSD Captain approaches Jakob's mother and institutes a surveillance of her son. On 17 October Frau Abs flees to the West. The next day Rohlf's interviews Jakob for the first time, and we learn of the dissident conference in which Jonas takes part. Jakob and Jonas travel to Jerichow whilst Rohlf's and his assistant, Hänschen, continue their investigations; Rohlf's keeps track of the movements of Jakob, who returns to his place of work on Sunday, 21 October. Jonas remains in Jerichow to continue work on his conference paper. On Tuesday, 23 October, Gesine arrives in the town on the Elbe. She observes the meeting between Jakob and Rohlf's, which they had arranged for 7.15 p.m. Subsequently she meets Jakob and they travel all night by a devious route to Jerichow, unaware that Rohlf's is tracing their movements. The next day Jakob meets Rohlf's again, the latter promising safe conduct for Gesine. Gesine decides that she must tell Jonas (who is in love with Gesine) of her love for Jakob. In the evening the conversation between Jonas, Rohlf's, Gesine, Jakob, and Cresspahl takes place in the latter's house. Shortly after midnight Gesine is returned to the West by Rohlf's. On the morning of 25 October Jonas returns to Berlin. On 30 October Jonas visits Jakob in his tower and they observe the Russian troop movements. The following day Jakob travels to Düsseldorf, where he spends a week with Gesine. On 8 November, he returns from the West and is killed on the railway line. On the same day Jonas arrives in the town on the Elbe; later he goes to see Jöche in Jerichow, and their conversation takes place in the Krug tavern. The next morning he returns to the town on the Elbe with the intention of meeting Cresspahl. He telephones Gesine and is arrested by Rohlf's. On Saturday, 10 November 1956, Gesine meets Rohlf's in Berlin.

Two time strands are intertwined in this way. The dialogues run from 8 to 10 November 1956, while the time-span they discuss, which is supplemented by the interior monologues and the contributions of the narrator, runs from 7 October to 8 November 1956. The *erzählte Zeit* and the *Erzählzeit* thus meet and coalesce in the final chapter, much as they do in both *Das dritte Buch über Achim* and in *Jahrestage*.

Although *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* can thus be resolved with surprising precision, no reader should feel ashamed at being unable to comprehend the novel's external events without at least two careful perusals. For, in the words of S. E. Jackiw, 'rather startlingly unconventional demands are made on the reader's memory and on his ability to hold a mass of information and impressions in suspension until he is given the clues that enable him to apply it to the proper characters and situations.'<sup>6</sup> The novel's structural arrangement precipitates the recipient into a state of disorientation which can only be reversed when certain perceptive processes are tested, then discarded or retained accordingly. In order to elucidate these perceptive processes, it is worthwhile isolating the specific literary effects which result in the initial reader disorientation.

The first stumbling block is Uwe Johnson's idiosyncratic use of language, nowhere in his work more eccentric than in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. A number of critics, particularly Karlheinz Deschner and Richard Alewyn,<sup>7</sup> have launched clever, sometimes bitter, almost personal attacks on the author for his deviations from standard linguistic usage. Others, especially Herbert Kolb and Hugo Steger,<sup>8</sup> sprang to his defence, showing the rhyme and reason behind such modifications. Language, however, is less imponderable an obstacle to comprehension than the structural peculiarities and withholding of explanatory information in the novel.

The employment of three major narrative modes in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* has led certain critics to view polyperspectivism as a source of confusion. But the mere fact that several perspectives are used is not enough to explain the difficulty for the reader, as Ingrid Riedel would have it when she claims that 'die perspektivisch auffächernde Erzähltechnik Johnsons ist so beschaffen, daß der Leser an den Schwierigkeiten der Wahrheitsfindung und ihrer epischen Darstellung partizipiert'.<sup>9</sup> Countless detective stories afford the reader a similar opportunity of viewing the same event from different standpoints, yet hardly provide the same insights as Johnson's novel.<sup>10</sup> The use of multiple perspectives *per se* has a long and distinguished history throughout literature, and does not set *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* apart from the tradition. S. E. Jackiw points to the neglect of introductory character sketches as a partial explanation for reader bewilderment (see Jackiw, p. 131). But this, too, is a traditional convention frequently ignored by 1959; moreover, at least one of the characters, Heinrich Cresspahl, is introduced at some length and in considerable detail by the

narrator and Rohlf's first monologue on the third page of the book (see *MJ*, 9–10).

The novel's time-scheme which, though chronological, operates on two interwoven levels, undoubtedly demands a certain flexibility from the reader. Yet even this complexity, on its own, should not prove overly confusing. Most readers by 1959 would be very used to techniques of flashback and *Rahmenerzählung*, not least from the film genre, and, once more, from detective stories, which likewise tend to open with the death of a character followed by reconstruction, conveyed through narrative and discussion, of the victim's last weeks. This renunciation of conventional maxims of plot amounts to a rejection of the narrative tradition which Bernd Neumann terms 'Aristotelian',<sup>11</sup> the linear narrative form so vigorously defended by one of its typical exponents, E. M. Forster, in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). His definition of 'story' is 'a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence', whose only merit is to make the audience want to know what happens next. By this reckoning, *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* commits the only fault ascribable to the story by destroying suspense through disruption of the narrative sequence. Forster accords 'plot' a superior status to that of 'story', defining the former as 'a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality'.<sup>12</sup> Johnson's rejection of this notion of plot is quite emphatic: 'Ich sage: Geschichte. Damit meine ich nicht: Fabeln. Das halte ich für ein gewaltsames Arrangement, das vor zwei Jahrhunderten vielleicht nötig war, das ich jetzt aber nicht mehr für durchaus angebracht halte'.<sup>13</sup> *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* is characterized by a systematic denial of information which might expose causal links between the narrative elements, as well as techniques designed to break down any semblance of causality. Techniques of this kind are reflected linguistically in the widespread use of parataxis, as Herbert Kolb's 'Rückfall in die Parataxe' (see *Über Uwe Johnson*, pp. 74–94) has shown. This denial of information, furthermore, extends to a refusal explicitly to identify which character, when and where, is speaking or thinking. Were that information appended to each narrative section, most reasonably astute readers would have little difficulty in comprehending the whole at the first attempt. It is this instance of deliberate obscurity to which most of the confusion can be traced. In view of the high price paid by the reader for this policy of non-identification and concealment of motive, it is reasonable to suppose that these features must have a crucial narrative function.

The Aristotelian plot, which provides for a clearly explained, chronologically ordered sequence of events, with a common theme, joined by distinct causal links, is designed to facilitate an understanding of that sequence, enabling the reader to understand what happened and why, rather than to comprehend how either reader or writer acquire that understanding. In *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, on the other hand, the reader is encouraged to participate in the generation of the story by identifying and assembling the various elements of which it is



composed. That the reader should experience in this way something of the epistemological processes through which fiction comes into being is represented not only in structural, but in thematic terms. Three of the characters, in their occupations, set examples for the reader to follow.

In purely practical terms, Jakob, in his job, demonstrates the kind of mental agility which the reader of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* must command. As a *Dispatcher* he is charged with organizing the trains so that they correspond as far as possible with the regular time-table. Such organization demands the ability to grasp an abstract structure as well as to recognize and rearrange the relevant disparate, sometimes mutually exclusive, elements in such a way that they form a functioning system. Precisely this ability was cited by Johnson in interview with Bienek when asked to recount some of the qualities he considered it necessary for a novelist to possess; such qualities included: 'die Fähigkeit, grössere Wirklichkeitszusammenhänge oder gedankliche Zusammenhänge in vielen Schichten gleichzeitig im Kopf auseinanderhalten und ordnen zu können' (Bienek, p. 97). Part of this responsibility devolves on to the reader of the novel under discussion. Autumn 1956 offers a pessimistic model: the railway system, already burdened by bad repair and a shortage of coal, is reduced to hopeless confusion by troop movements resulting from the Hungarian uprising. Each timetable disruption precipitates further disruptions, resulting in a sequence of cause-and-effect which can be neither predicted nor traced: 'Jedes Ereignis zog einen borstigen Schwanz wechselseitig bedingter Abhängigkeiten hinter sich' (MJ, 23). A certain scepticism regarding the possibility of recognizing, not to mention elucidating, consequential relationships is already evident.

Rohlf's methods of investigation, described early in chapter 1 of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, provide a paradigm for the heuristic method which the reader must employ on approaching the novel for the first time:

So aus Begegnungen und Nachbarschaften und telefonischen Gesprächen und gleichgültigem Blickwechsel in den Fahrzeugen des städtischen Verkehrs ergaben sich Berichte und Vermutungen, die nahmen Gestalt an in laufenden Tonbändern und schreibenden Maschinen und in der innigen Atmosphäre des Flüsterns und wurden sortiert und gebündelt und geheftet und in einem fensterlosen Zimmer in einem unauffällig erblindeten Miethaus der nördlichen Vorstadt aufbewahrt für einen Mann, der seinen Namen austauschte vor jedem Gegenüber und also schon dem Namen nach keine andere Teilnahme an Jakobs Ergehen verwalten konnte als eine allgemeine und öffentliche. Die Grossen des Landes warfen ihr Auge auf Jakob. (MJ, 28)

A collection of reports, facts, rumours, opinions, and ideas is made available from various sources, material which needs to be collated and interpreted, fact sifted from opinion, rumour from correct information. In order to construct a coherent picture of events, the reader, like Rohlf's, must not only deal with the epistemological problem of how to distinguish between possibility, probability, and certainty, but also must decide whether it is always possible to make

such distinctions. Such decisions are part of the creative process itself: since that process has been arrested before it can reach the pre-digested form of Aristotelian narration, the reader is to some degree placed in the position of the author, taking up the threads of the novel as though it were in an incomplete state of composition, and, as it were, finishing the job. Its 'incompleteness', as I have put it, is of course deliberately structural and highly stylized, only comprehensible in the context of traditional narrative techniques and of the thematic corroboration mentioned above. It is not comparable to the efforts of some sixties' authors to engage the reader in the literary process by supplying a collection of collage material (bus tickets, theatre programmes, maps, etc.) as the basis of a novel.<sup>14</sup> But in taking the kind of — albeit programmed — decisions which would normally remain the writer's preserve, the recipient may experience some of the epistemological pitfalls which can lie along the road to Aristotelian narration.

The dangers of misinterpretation and misunderstanding which stalk the unwary are revealed thematically when Jöche tells Jakob that Cresspahl has fled to the West (see *MJ*, 62). Jöche has heard from the coast via the railway grapevine that Cresspahl was seen to enter a train with two suitcases, and not to re-emerge. On the basis of this hearsay, rumours arose to the effect that Cresspahl had fled, rather than Frau Abs, as was in fact the case. Jakob's mentally-expressed reaction serves as a caution: 'Dann haben sie Cresspahl bloss einsteigen nicht aussteigen sehen, nun machen sie eine Geschichte für Cresspahl als ob die Dinge wären wie einer sie ansieht' (*MJ*, 62–63). In a similar way it is open to the reader to place an interpretation on the events of the story and decide why, for instance, Frau Abs so precipitously departs from the GDR. It seems plausible that she left because of fear: but that is no more than inference, based on the fact that her departure came immediately after her interview with Rohlfs, and that Rohlfs himself believes that he frightened her. That Jakob died is a matter of fact in the novel; why he died cannot be established with any certainty.

The figure of Jonas Blach, in his capacity as lecturer in English at Berlin University, allows the problems involved in reconstruction of cause-and-effect sequences to be exemplified. Part of Blach's discipline — linguistic reconstruction — concerns itself with problems similar to those which confront the reader of this novel: postulating a possible version of events on the basis of incomplete, unreliable, and occasionally contradictory data. The study of language change and the problems it presents are discussed by Blach when Jakob asks him what his job involves:

Die eigens auf den Lautstand gerichtete Linguistik untersucht die reine Sprache und deren erstaunliche Veränderungen von den frühesten Dokumenten bis zur Gegenwart; sie ist immer etwas in Verlegenheit, denn die Schreiber etwa des elften Jahrhunderts mögen wie die des zwanzigsten nicht die genaue sondern eine sehr ungefähre Aussprache schriftlich aufbewahrt haben, die Tradition als fahrlässige Gewohnheit, und

es gibt keine Erklärungen für den Übergang von o zu a aus offenbar heiterem Himmel, solche Dinge beweisen nur dass es nicht bleibt wie es ist in menschlichen Angelegenheiten. (MJ, 101)

While the changes and developments in language may be systematically documented, accounting for those changes is fraught with difficulty. Gesine unexpectedly finds herself precipitated into such a condition of helplessness during the night-journey to Jerichow with Jakob. She perceives their taxi analytically, stripped down to its disparate functions: '*Ich . . . verhielt . . . vor einem greisenhaft dicken Kasten auf Rädern zum Fahren, und die ungeschickt vorstehenden Lampenköpfe waren zum Leuchten, die breite dellige Lederbank hinten war zum Sitzen der Fahrgäste, ein fünfspeichiges Rad zum Steuern, und all diese verschiedenen Zwecke sassen ungelenkt und treuherzig nebeneinander in einem einzigen Auto*' (MJ, 163). While each figuratively dismantled component's purpose is clear in isolation, Gesine's mental re-assembly of the complete object fails to restore the functional links which justify its wholeness. The resulting collection of parts appears 'ungelenkt', their conjoinment deriving from the moral category of trust ('treuherzig') rather than the functional category of causality.

Establishing causal links between the last few weeks of Jakob's life and death is an equally unreliable venture, for the range of possibilities is infinitely large, cladistically expanding in a manner whose investigation could only lead to absurd hypothesis. This very point is discussed by Gesine and Jonas during their telephone call after Jakob's death:

— Ich glaube nicht dass man auf einen und jemand zutreten kann mit den Worten: du bist schuld, durch dich ist es so gekommen. Dann mag einer auch sagen: er hätte diesen Beruf nicht haben sollen.

— Noch besser natürlich hätte der zweite Weltkrieg nicht stattgefunden, die Spaltung Deutschlands könnte unterblieben sein; und wie gut es für ihn geworden wäre, wenn er das Licht der Welt nie erblickt hätte, das ist ja nun gar nicht auszudenken. (MJ, 142)

The reception history of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* illustrates the dangers of attempting to attribute causes to and calculate a logical consequential system for the events of the book. Certain critics hoped to show that Jakob's death is inevitable because of the dilemma in which he is placed by the division of Germany.<sup>15</sup> These attempts tended to be based on the premise that he is killed by a West or East bound locomotive whilst trying to avoid one coming from the opposite direction. In the light of Christa Wolf's novel *Der geteilte Himmel* (1964), in which the heroine is the victim of a very similar accident but survives, it is undoubtedly tempting to see the circumstances of Jakob's death as symbolic in this way. But it is clearly stated that the tracks on Jakob's stretch run parallel to the border (see MJ, 21), and there is no indication in the text that one of the trains was bound for the West. Whether Jakob died by accident, suicide, or murder can also only be a matter for conjecture in the absence of any evidence in the novel's fictional world. Efforts to locate the 'Stadt an der Elbe' on the map

have likewise proved fruitless; the fictional city has elements of several real towns and seems to be a composite of Magdeburg and Wittenberg.<sup>16</sup> Like Jakob, Gesine serves a warning on those who may attempt to draw hard and fast conclusions: 'Ich möchte nur wahrhaben dass keiner sich hinstellen kann und sagen: So war es und nicht anders. Die Schuld hat der und der' (*MJ*, 167). As far as the events themselves are concerned, the reader is called upon not to speculate, but to observe with the utmost precision in order to reconstruct the circumstances of narration and thus the last weeks of Jakob's life. But that reconstruction can only be confident of having exhibited the events in their chronological sequence; their significance remains a matter for conjecture and should be recognized as such. Literary criticism, naturally enough, consists largely of such conjecture (however well-founded); *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, therefore, indirectly serves as a reminder to the critic of the limitations inherent in the fictional medium, limitations which derive from the cognitive processes whereby works of literature come into being. That is, since the novel as a finite object can have no hope of recapturing the potential infinite values of the past reality from which it is derived, or of fully explaining the consequential chains which link those values, it must admit that the only heuristic approach open to both narrator and recipient is one of acknowledged subjectivity. Presumption of objectivity or absolute explication invalidates any claim to truth.

Doubts of this kind point to a certain lack of faith in the validity of historical investigation, whose aim is precisely to explain how and why a particular historical event or set of circumstances came about; to identify causes and consequences. Ernst Barlach's *Der gestohlene Mond*, on which Uwe Johnson wrote his *Magisterarbeit*, evinces a similar scepticism; one is reminded of Wau's helplessness in the face of certain anomalies ('Ungehörigkeiten') which he perceives in his life, but whose persistent presence, indeed very existence, he is at a loss to explain except with a kind of resigned stoicism: 'Wodurch [die Ungehörigkeiten] aber in Waus Gemüt zu solchen wurden, von ihm wahrgenommen, und, einmal erkannt, nicht wieder von ihm wichen, . . . daran trug die reine bloße und unabdingliche Ursachlosigkeit des Geschehens überhaupt die Schuld, das kam vom Sollen aus der ausgemachten Unergründlichkeit . . .'.<sup>17</sup> Taken to its logical extreme, this 'Ursachlosigkeit des Geschehens' would leave literature with the task of showing without presuming to explain. But since literature's ability to show is in any case limited, and since thought depends on logical deduction (incorporating the assumption that causes may be identified), the ultimate consequence of the breakdown in causality would be to destroy language itself. The process can never, therefore, be thoroughgoing. Yet the distinction in German between *Anlaß* and *Ursache* — immediate and original cause — is a useful one; while *Anlaß* may be deduced with some, though not usually absolute, certainty, *Ursache* tends to remain concealed. Later in this study it will become clear that the narrator of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* does in

fact have access to any detail of the fictional world which might suit his purposes, despite the accepted wisdom that his knowledge is restricted. Yet the availability of facts does not necessarily reveal *Ursache*, even in fiction; in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* the ability of fictional means to succeed where history is limited by lack of information is cast into doubt, for which reason attention is diverted from (unreliable) result to the means by which that result is achieved. By *Jahrestage*, however, an increasing confidence in fiction as a means of replacing what history cannot do culminates in Gesine's reconstruction of the Jerichow past: for concluding that fiction offers no valid opportunity to reconstruct motives would mean abandoning literature altogether as a means of telling the truth. Nevertheless, the awareness of logic's fallibility, established in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, remains as a powerful influence in the system of narrative dynamics which governs *Jahrestage*, in which novel a means of overcoming that fallibility is sought.

*Mutmaßungen über Jakob* stops short of divulging explicitly how 'die schwierige Suche nach der Wahrheit' is carried out, but formally tackles the epistemological problems which that search must deal with. These problems are concerned less with recognizing the truth when it appears — since truth, as such, cannot be a recognizable object — than with recognizing how and when the demands which a search for truth makes can be satisfied. The evident distrust of fictional *Wahrheitsfindung's* ability to elucidate consequential chains means, in effect, that the relationships between the fictional values represented in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* must, like the dissected taxi which Gesine observes, be accepted on trust rather than by reference to a causal framework. But reliance on 'Treuerzigkeit' in this way would represent at best a dead end, and at worst a descent into pious sentimentality. Both those results may be avoided by tackling the means available to fiction itself, the way in which the sense-impressions produced in the reader come into being. *Das dritte Buch über Achim* takes that step by addressing directly the operation of memory, coupled with that of the creative process, so displaying the way in which the writer arrives at his version of reality.

In *Begleitumstände* Johnson explains that he was not fully responsible for the title under which his second novel was published; pressure from Suhrkamp obliged the author to accept their suggestion: *Das dritte Buch über Achim*.<sup>18</sup> Johnson's original choice had been *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, a title which indicates more clearly one of the book's major themes, namely 'den Leser beim Lesen sehen zu lassen, wie er an das Erzählte geraten ist und wie er es anstellt beim Erzählen' (*BU*, 193). The note of explanation placed at the end of the book provides another indication of the extent to which the study of the writing process dominates *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. That note explicitly divorces the novel's fictional world from the real world: the characters are invented, we are assured, while the events refer not to historical counterparts, but to 'die Grenze:

den Unterschied: die Entfernung'; and then, in a separate line, 'und den Versuch, sie zu beschreiben' (DBA, 301). Those objects of description are unspecific; not particular people or places, but relative values; the stuff of *Wahrheitsfindung*. Clearly 'die Grenze' refers partly to the political and physical division of Germany. But its terms of reference also include the dividing lines between truth and untruth, past and present, reality and its fictional representation. The attempt at description fails; the origins of that failure become the object of description in our novel.

*Das dritte Buch über Achim* tells the story of Karsch, a Hamburg journalist, who travels to the GDR in response to a telephone invitation from the actress Karin S., a former girlfriend. The latter is now closely involved with Joachim T., famous racing cyclist and folk-hero, subject of two biographies which treat the cyclist in his capacity as a sportsman. Having spent a week socially with Achim, Karsch is approached by Herr Fleisg, assistant editor of the regional newspaper, and asked to write an article on Achim, who is 'ein Sinnbild für die Kraft und Zukünftigkeit des Landes. In Herrn Karsch jedoch treffe die westdeutsche Publizistik auf dies Sinnbild' (DBA, 40). The plan for an article quickly develops into one for a fully-fledged biography (the third book about Achim), which, though written in parts, is never finally produced. Acknowledging defeat, Karsch returns to the West, where he describes his attempt at description: *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*. The story is told by means of first-person narration, whereby the Karsch of the GDR trip is referred to in the third person, forming a text which is interrupted on seventy occasions by an unidentified voice typographically indicated by italics. The voice poses questions as well as making comments and suggestions; the interaction between voice and narrator (that is, Karsch in Hamburg) will be discussed in more detail under the rubric of narrative cognition (see pp. 48–54 below).<sup>19</sup> For the moment this investigation of *Wahrheitsfindung*'s practical manifestation requires identification firstly of the difficulties Karsch experiences recounting the story of his failure,<sup>20</sup> and secondly of the reasons for that failure itself. Since in many ways these matters are prototypes of similar questions in *Jahrestage*, it is worthwhile examining them in some detail.

Logically enough, the first practical problem which confronts any writer in possession of a theme is how to begin. In common with *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, *Das dritte Buch über Achim* begins in a way which is barely comprehensible unless the whole novel has been read through once. For not only is the structure of the work cyclical, but unlike more conventional narrative cycles such as that to be found in Martin Walser's *Ein fliehendes Pferd* (1978), the logical point of entry into the cycle is to be found neither at the beginning nor the end, but in the body of the text. The twentieth interruption by the voice consists of the question: 'Wie dachte Karsch aber anzufangen?' (DBA, 44), which is ostensibly an enquiry into how Karsch intended to start his biography of Achim T. Karsch

expresses his original, teleological intention of relating the beginning to the final scene of Achim's election to parliament: 'auf dies Ende zu sollte der Anfang laufen und sein Ziel schon wissen' (DBA, 44). But the matter is complicated by the unknown and unknowable criteria of responsibility to the recipient: 'Er dachte anzufangen wie du and wie ihr es gebilligt hättet; darüber wußte er nicht Bescheid, durch diese Frage dachte er oft. Wo fing das an?' (DBA, 44). Although Karsch then enumerates a number of possible points at which to pitch into Achim's life, each choice seems arbitrary in view of all the potential variants.<sup>21</sup> But the wording of the question 'Wie dachte Karsch aber anzufangen', as well as of the reply 'Er dachte anzufangen . . .' directs us back to the beginning of the book we are reading: 'da dachte ich schlicht und streng anzufangen so:' (DBA, 7), raising issues similar not only to those which beset Karsch in his GDR venture, but also to those which are involved in the opening of any work of fiction.

Beginning a novel may be regarded as crossing the frontier into a fictional continuum. This means deciding not only where (or, as it were, when), to make the crossing, but also how it should be achieved without placing unnecessary burdens on the reader, yet while still remaining relevant to the issues at hand. Since any point of entry must to some extent be arbitrary, the narrator of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* (Karsch in Hamburg) defuses the problem by addressing it directly, simultaneously destroying any tendency on the reader's part to be drawn into an illusion of reality, thus confirming the fictional continuum's status as a separate universe in its own right, independent of the empirical world.<sup>22</sup> The novel begins as follows: 'da dachte ich schlicht und streng anzufangen so: sie rief ihn an, innezuhalten mit einem Satzzeichen, und dann wie selbstverständlich hinzuzufügen: über die Grenze, damit du überrascht wirst und glaubst zu verstehen' (DBA, 7). Karsch as first-person narrator hypothesizes what his first sentence might have been: 'sie rief ihn an . . . über die Grenze' (DBA, 7), at the same time explaining his misgivings about that attempt at strict simplicity; the introduction of 'die Grenze' at this point would be anything other than 'selbstverständlich' (DBA, 7). Karsch continues to describe the approach he would have taken had he been prepared to choose the border as a starting point: 'Dann hätte ich dir beschrieben . . .' (DBA, 7). (As will become clear in due course, the use of the second person refers to the voice as recipient.) The informal tone of the first line betrays that we have broken into the narrator's train of thought as he is pondering on the very problem facing him as he puts finger to typewriter-key. The lack of a capital letter as well as the incomplete opening sentence ease the transition into the narrative world, in the same way as Günter Grass's *Katz und Maus* opens with three dots signifying a merely interrupted text.

The *Ich-Erzähler* of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* thus deals ironically with the problem by isolating and simultaneously trying to exclude the main feature which will condition the novel's external events; the existence of a border which

restricts traffic of all kinds between two parts of a once-whole country. But the mere mention of 'die Grenze' compels further explanation whose necessary clumsiness immediately shakes the self-confidence with which the novel was opened: 'Kleinmütig (nicht gern zeige ich Unsicherheit schon anfangs) kann ich nicht anders als ergänzen daß es im Deutschland der fünfziger Jahre eine Staatsgrenze gab; du siehst wie unbequem dieser zweite Satz steht neben dem ersten' (DBA, 7). But the mention of this political division invites physical description: 'Dennoch würde ich am liebsten beschreiben daß die Grenze lang ist und drei Meilen vor der Küste anfängt mit springenden Schnellbooten . . .' (DBA, 7). Yet this too proves unsatisfactory, for 'ich gebe zu: ich bin um Genauigkeit verlegen' (DBA, 7-8). That 'Genauigkeit' refers not to precise statistical data, but to the endless ramifications and repercussions which the border's existence engenders. Nevertheless a depiction is provided, not as a matter of choice, but as an inevitable circumstance arising from the innumerable implications of the apparently simple, hypothetical reference to Karin's cross-border telephone call in the first three lines: the narrator finds himself involuntarily describing an attempted escape: 'eifriges dummes Hundegebell, amtliche Anrufe, keuchender Atem, ein Schuß, unversehens fällt jemand hin, das wollte ich ebensowenig wie der Schütze es am besten behaupten sollte gegen Ende seines Lebens; ich hatte ja nichts im Sinn als einen telefonischen Anruf . . .' (DBA, 8). Both guard and narrator are equally subjected to the border's constraints; linguistically merged, both are compelled to act against their will, the guard in a manner which is likely later to be a source of remorse. Even though Karsch is introduced on the first page, allowing a tentative connection to be made between this character and the 'ihn' of the first line, he only appears in the context of his *Grenzübergang*, and is quickly discarded in favour of the attempted border description: 'Aber der und sein Aussehen und der Grund seiner Reise sind bisher weniger wichtig als der naturhaft plötzliche Abbruch der Straßen . . .' (DBA, 7). Although the book's opening implies a conscious decision to place a specific restriction on the narrative material by treating the border as though it were 'selbstverständlich', that frontier, and the attempts to avoid it, nonetheless irresistibly serve as the initial object of the narrator's attention.

But 'die Grenze' has wider implications; Hans Blumenberg sees a literary *Grenzgebiet* as the novel genre's fundamental theme, defined by 'die Konkurrenz der imaginären Kontextrealität mit dem Wirklichkeitscharakter der gegebenen Welt'.<sup>23</sup> The nature of this competition, implied at the beginning of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, is directly broached in *Zwei Ansichten*, acquiring primary importance in *Jahrestage*. A further theoretical reason exists for choosing — or being forced to choose — the border as a starting point. For description pre-supposes distance between subject and object, a distance which in turn implies indistinctness: hence the need for description. But if the description



were entirely to overcome that distance, and reproduce the object absolutely, the descriptive process would resolve itself into nothing, subject merging with object. Since the alternative is unsatisfactory indistinctness, only the dividing line which that indistinctness represents remains as the sole legitimate object of description; the barrier, the difference between describer and described.<sup>24</sup> The compulsion to start with 'die Grenze' thus derives also from constraints imposed by the literary medium itself.

The narrator's uncertainty is admitted at the very beginning of the book, an insecurity largely explicated by means of the gradually emerging relationship between the narrative 'ich' and the recipient 'du', towards whom the admission is directed. This relationship is established in the third line, when the narrator justifies his original choice for the opening sentence: 'damit du überrascht wirst und glaubst zu verstehen' (DBA, 7). The failure of this feeble attempt at deception by surprise continues to emerge in the narrator's diffident inability to depart from the conditional tense. Potential expectations on the part of the recipient are not fulfilled: 'Nun erwarte von mir nicht den Namen und Lebensumstände für eine wild dahinstürzende Gestalt im kalten Morgennebel . . .' (DBA, 8). This reluctance stems from a fear of amplifying in a way which may prove to be misleading: 'Ungern setze ich hinzu daß es aber unverhältnismäßig wenige Leitungen sind, die demnach leicht im Ohr zu behalten wären: man könnte an angeschlossene Tonbänder denken und meinen ich sei gehässig' (DBA, 8). In this case the mention of the telephone call has released possible associations which reflect undesirably on the narrator and the narrative itself.

Yet the ultimate consequence of such considerations would be to stop writing altogether. For that reason the tone suddenly becomes precise, almost clipped: 'Zum Glück auch war Karsch noch wach, er hatte getrunken, er erkannte ihre Stimme sofort und sagte ohne zu fragen ja' (DBA, 8–9). This is the earliest clue to the congruence of the first-person narrator and Karsch, a congruence, only recognizable by the end of the book, which is apparently belied by the perspective distinction of *Ich-Erzählung* and *erlebte Rede*. Paradoxically, the narrator moves almost immediately from such confident precision to hearsay: 'Er soll nach dem Krieg mit einer Schauspielerin zusammengelebt haben . . . augenscheinlich hatten sie bei ihrer Trennung einander gesagt . . .'; 'Er soll von einem Augenblick auf den anderen abgereist und verschwunden sein' (DBA, 9). The hearsay is identified as originating from a group addressed in the familiar second person plural: 'So habt ihr gesagt' (DBA, 9). With hindsight it is possible to establish that the 'ihr' the narrator addresses are in fact Karsch's Hamburg friends (see DBA, 12). Karsch as insecure narrator thus introduces alternative perspectives, unwilling to rely solely on his own experience. The uncertain and unwanted autonomy of the narrator is then broken by the first outside interruption: 'Wie war es denn?' (DBA, 10).

The question refers to Karsch's stay in the GDR, and constitutes a fundamental structural element of the book, establishing the narrative cycle. On the final page of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, Karsch is described returning to his room in Hamburg, surrounded by instruments designed to record and communicate sound and writing. He sits at his desk in order to 'anfangen mit der Rückkehr' (DBA, 300). We can only surmise that the 'Rückkehr' is that of Karsch from East Germany. There follows a description of the room:

Das Zimmer war an den Wänden entlang mit Bücherregalen Schränken Couch Sessel Kochnische bewohnbar, in der Mitte unter dem langen Fenster zur abendlichen nassen Strasse hin stand der Tisch, Telefon neben Plattenspieler neben Tonbandgerät, die Schreibmaschine links vorn, der Stuhl konnte auf Rollen bewegt werden. Er schrieb bis hier und  
Telefon.

— Karsch: sagte er. (DBA, 300)

'Er schrieb bis hier' seems to indicate that what Karsch was writing is what we are reading. The lines which follow confirm that suspicion:

Die meisten Briefe hatten zu lange gelegen und liessen sich nicht mehr beantworten. Das Bankkonto war leer. Nach einer Stunde war der Tisch aufgeräumt. Sah auf die Uhr. Nahm das Blatt aus der Maschine  
Telefon

— Wie war es denn? sagtest du. (DBA, 300)

There is no indication whether 'Sah auf die Uhr. Nahm das Blatt aus der Maschine' means 'ich sah' or 'er sah'; at this point the 'ich' and 'er' forms merge. Karsch, the object of narration, has moved in time to the point where he has become the narrator. The *erzählte Zeit* has caught up and coalesced with the *Erzählzeit*, 'Wie war es denn?' was the first question posed by the voice (see DBA, 10), which is addressed throughout by the narrator as 'du'; we find ourselves back at the beginning of the book with the identity of the narrator established as Karsch. Various clues are left to indicate that the narrator and Karsch are the same man at different stages of his life. Perhaps the most obvious is the question posed by the interlocutor when she<sup>25</sup> is trying to discover why Karsch stayed in the GDR beyond the time he had originally intended: '*Deswegen bleibst du da? Blieb Karsch da?*' (DBA, 34). This possibly deliberate error helps to reinforce the tiny clue left by the sudden use of the present tense in answer to a previous question: 'Karsch weiß nicht mehr als ihm auffiel' (DBA, 26). The difference between the 'Ich'-perspective of the narrator and the 'Er'-perspective of Karsch in the GDR is a temporal one. The narrator preserves the distinction partly for structural reasons, in aid of a plan to guarantee the integrity of *Wahrheitsfindung* (which will be discussed in the next chapter of this study), and partly to facilitate a more objective analysis of his failure in the GDR.

The most obvious thematic — in this case political — obstacle to Karsch's progress with his book lay in the dissimilarity between Karsch's conception of

what a book should achieve and that held by the East German authorities. Ostensibly, Karsch and Fleisg hope to achieve the same object; in the previous two books on Achim 'sei nicht die ganze Person gegeben' (*DBA*, 54). As will become clear, Karsch's primary aim is to tell the truth about Achim, but to do so using fictional means: his preliminary sketch of Achim's first encounter with a bicycle is an unashamedly fictional reconstruction which uses the criterion of probability: 'Karsch ergänzte nun bedenkenlos was er wußte aus dieser Zeit und was er für Achim wahrscheinlich glaubte. Er beschrieb das verbotene Baden in dem seichten aber schnellen Fluß vor der Stadt . . .' (*DBA*, 71). Karsch's efforts may thus be regarded as a paradigm for the genesis (or, in this case, miscarriage) of a fictional text. In this way he hopes to portray Achim's whole personality. But for Fleisg 'die ganze Person' implies a moral example for the sporting youth of the country. Karsch's gradual discovery of evidence quite incommensurate with the desired hagiography precipitates the biographer into a crisis of conscience. The matter eventually comes to a head when Karsch receives by anonymous letter a photograph documenting Achim's part in the 1953 uprising. Faced with such a flagrant discrepancy Karsch cannot but finally repudiate the Socialist Realist pattern which Frau Ammann, the publishers' representative, had described to him at the outset (see *DBA*, 114–17). Unable to preserve his integrity as a writer and simultaneously connive at the State's self-interested remodelling of Achim's image, the journalist makes his decision to return empty-handed to the West, offering a practical example of the moral constraints imposed by *Wahrheitsfindung*.

Further difficulties are of a less specifically political nature. When Karsch discusses his research with Achim, the latter hits upon a problem fundamental to writing of all kinds; the selection of material:

— Alles können Sie ja doch nicht schreiben, ja? sagte er.

— Nu müssen Sie auswählen, ja, und da nimmt man doch das Wichtigste, ja? worauf es ankommt, Mensch! (*DBA*, 174)

Karsch's opinion of what constitutes important material differs radically from Achim's; the former wants material of whose veracity he may assure himself, whereas the latter wants material commensurate with the image desired by the Party: 'Er wollte gelebt haben schon wie immer jetzt und seit fünf Jahren Mitglied in der Sachwalterpartei . . . das wollte er von seinen Wahrheiten, und ihm gehörten sie wohl' (*DBA*, 214). The finite dimensions of any text require the establishment of criteria for the selection of relevant material. The writer is faced with a dilemma which Karsch encounters when deciding which scenes of Achim's childhood to include:

Die Tage alle hatte Karsch nicht beschrieben, die hatten nicht gepaßt in seine Auswahl oder waren zu viel, die hätten sie vervollständigt, immerhin, unvollständig aber ist lügenhaft? Karsch wollte nicht alles von Achim sondern nur beschreiben was ihn (nach seiner Auffassung) kenntlich machte vor den Menschen und den Radfahrern, dazu

wählte er aus unter den einzelnen Teilstrecken eines Lebenslaufes, das wollte er von den Wahrheiten. Und was willst du mit der Wahrheit? (DBA, 212)

At this point Karsch attempts to elucidate his aims. He realizes that his version of Achim's life will be subjective. He cannot separate himself from the work he produces; he will select material 'nach seiner Auffassung'. While Karsch's responsibility is to decide when he has told the truth as fully as possible, the problem does not end there, for the narrator is at liberty to put the ball in the recipient's court: 'Und was willst du mit der Wahrheit?'. The basic premise of *Wahrheitsfindung* — its inherent desirability — is called into question.

Karsch's use of the episode from Achim's youth when he illegally bought a set of gears in West Berlin casts doubt on the validity of fictional reconstruction as a vehicle of truth, since the natures of memory, volition and communication between people create an efficient filtering system which hopelessly distorts the original past reality. Having written a version of the episode, Karsch then disputes its accuracy: 'War Achim über die Grenze gegangen, kam ihm die Fremde sonntäglich, besass er vor neun Jahren eine Schaltung mit drei Gängen? Das ist alles lange her. Das weiss keiner zu erinnern. Was war in dem Jahr?' (DBA, 210). This is one of an increasing number of expressions of despair at the possibility of recreating the past that appear as the book progresses. The problem arises when it becomes apparent that Achim's private version of the truth does not correspond with the official one, which Karsch has been commissioned to portray by Herr Fleisg and Frau Ammann. Achim simply mentioned the episode in passing and refuses to confirm its veracity for the book: 'Im Gespräch vertraulich ja aber nicht in der Beschreibung wollte er erlebt haben mit dem Erwerb eines Zubehörteils' (DBA, 210). The only evidence that the incident took place lies in Achim's account of it. To all intents and purposes, if Achim denies that the incident occurred, then it did not occur. Achim is empowered by his position in society to manipulate society's perception of the past, adjusting what is commonly held to be the truth in accordance with the requirements he, as a representative of the State, regards as necessary. Karsch attempts to furnish an alternative version to that proposed by Achim invariably end in failure. Hence Karsch's query 'Ist wahr wie es gewesen ist?' (DBA, 210). He lacks the means with which to judge the objects of his descriptions and so finds himself unable to guarantee the probity of his own truth. The consequence of such a state of affairs is that the cause-and-effect relationship between past and present may not only be obscured — as was the case in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* — but reversed; the past becomes a result of the present. The narrator questions Achim's account of his acquisition of a first bike: 'Vielleicht wäre die Geschichte auch gar nicht vorgekommen, wenn sie nicht passte zu seiner späteren Laufbahn?' (DBA, 152). Such a reversal makes nonsense of any attempt to produce an account which lays claim either to historical objectivity or to morally defensible subjectivity.

The way memory itself functions represents a major obstacle to Karsch's endeavour, and, by analogy, to writing fiction in general: 'Nämlich Karsch schrieb auf was Achims Gedächtnis unsichtbar und ungesehen zurückfischen mochte an Wrackteilen eines vordem verlebten Nachmittages, Achim wusste was Karsch nur vermuten konnte' (DBA, 211).<sup>26</sup> Not only does Achim consciously censor his account of the past, but the inefficiency of his memory acts as an involuntary editor; Achim's memory, not Achim himself, is the subject of 'mochte'. Memory consists of two faculties; storage and retrieval, and either or both may be at fault. When Achim tells the story of how he used to cycle several hours to visit his girlfriend, he admits that he may be confusing his memories with a certain scene from a film: '(allerdings fühlte sich Karin hiermit erinnert an die letzte Szene eines Spielfilms aus dem eben vergangenen Jahr, der eine Liebe zwischen Kindern in solcher Helligkeit von Frühling enden läßt an der Schwierigkeit der politischen Verhältnisse, und Achim gab zu er könne ihn gesehen haben)' (DBA, 164). On this occasion Achim's memory has retrieved a much more recent image and incorporated it into a series of childhood recollections. His memory automatically suppresses some elements of the past and brings others to the fore in an apparently arbitrary fashion: even Achim's involuntary concept of his own past is distorted.

Correspondingly Karsch's memory of what Achim said in conversation may also be defective, and he too gives involuntary rein to unconscious prejudices. In reply to the question '*Ist das genau wie Achim es gesagt hat?*' Karsch says: 'Das ist nach Gedächtnis aufgeschrieben. Achims Sätze waren mehr in der Zeit der unvollendeten Vergangenheit gehalten, und einige Worte würde er nicht freiwillig benutzen' (DBA, 94). The original events become conditioned by Achim's limited immediate perception of them, then by his defective memory, his power of choice, and in turn by Karsch's memory, power of selection and ability to express himself. Documentary evidence is barely available to Karsch back in Hamburg: 'Es waren ja Vorarbeiten . . . so ungefähr ich sie dir eben herausschreiben kann (das Manuskript hat Achim behalten)' (DBA, 78); 'Karsch fing an auf den wieder angelaufenen Tonband, das haben wir nicht, ich wiederhole nach ungefähigem Gedächtnis' (DBA, 128). A series of barriers is erected between present and past which render access to the latter all but impossible. Their effectiveness in restricting traffic matches that of the border between the two Germanies. The writer who creates a fictional world populated with fictional characters is dealing with a system which operates in much the same way as mental recall. The figures in the mind have no counterparts in reality, they cannot be verified, so the writer can only deal with them in the same way Karsch does, who fails to finish his book. The long delay in the completion of *Jahrestage* owes something to difficulties of this kind. Many of the issues mentioned above find further and deeper expression in the later novel; indeed in many ways *Das dritte Buch über Achim* can be regarded as a prototype for *Jahrestage*, a point investigated more fully below.

The barriers which obstruct Karsch's endeavour are recognizably similar to those which Johnson set out in 'Berliner Stadtbahn'. Like *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, 'Berliner Stadtbahn' describes problem of description. The essay begins as follows:

Erlauben Sie mir, unter diesem Titel zu berichten über einige Schwierigkeiten, die mich hinderten einen Stadtbahnhof in Berlin zu beschreiben. Da tritt unter vielen anderen eine einzelne Person aus dem eingefahrenen Zug, überschreitet den Bahnsteig und verläßt ihn zur Straße hin. Dieser Vorgang bleibt sich ähnlich, so oft er vorkommt; ich habe ihn fast täglich gesehen oder beobachtet, daher glaubte ich ihn erwähnen zu dürfen. Bei der Arbeit an einem größeren epischen Text wurde eine Episode benötigt, die den Zusammenhang unterbrach. Vier verbundene Sätze sollten lediglich quantitativ auftreten, etwas anderes sein, eine Pause bewirken. Dafür war der angedeutete Vorgang ausgewählt. Er fügte sich weder in einen langen noch in vier kurze Sätze vom erwünschten Umfang, also wurde er ausgewechselt gegen einen anderen Anlaß, der dieselbe Wirkung tat. Nach einiger Zeit war es aber ärgerlich, daß diese einfache Bahnhofsszene nicht für den Namen Berlin hatte stehen wollen, und ich versuchte mit ihr eine Geschichte: eine Beschreibung für sie allein. Damit gab es Schwierigkeiten. (BS, 7)

Since the lecture was delivered while Johnson was working on *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, the 'größerer, epischer Text' is almost certainly Johnson's second novel; there is no reason to suppose that the remarks of 'Berliner Stadtbahn' refer to the writing of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. So the essay is clearly dealing with a particular problem arising from a particular piece of work: the critic should be wary of excessive generalization. The text goes on to explain in more detail the difficulties involved in describing a Berlin *S-Bahn* station at the beginning of the 1960s. The circumstances of Berlin make 'Groß-Stadt' an inadequate vehicle of description; the former capital is a unique model for the meeting of two political and social orders, requiring unique literary techniques. 'Eine Grenze an dieser Stelle wirkt wie eine literarische Kategorie. Sie verlangt die epische Technik und die Sprache zu verändern, bis sie der unerhörten Situation gerecht werden' (BS, 10). As we have seen, it is precisely these kinds of literary difficulties raised by 'die Grenze' which are extensively discussed in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, particularly as the novel opens. The epistemological problems discussed in the essay bear a strong resemblance to the ones which Karsch encounters; they consist primarily of 'Fehlerquellen bei der Herstellung und Übermittlung von Information' (BS, 11). Eyewitnesses have defective memories or powers of observation; they are biased and their capacity for self-expression is limited. Mass communications media represent a further distortive filter. 'Sie alle schädigen die Realität (vorausgesetzt, daß dies Wort noch zutrifft) je nach ihrer technischen Eigenart um eine oder mehr Dimensionen' (BS, 11). Both sides may present their own reality quite independently of each other: 'Die Nachbarschaft dieser zwei politischen Ordnungen ist nicht mehr als eine Alternative von Wirklichkeiten. Sie sind nicht durch Logik verbunden, sondern durch eine Grenze' (BS, 12).

Alternatively the writer may be at fault. He may choose the typical which may not be as typical as he thinks. He may choose the typical while the reality lies in the atypical. The focus of description itself is by no means a straightforward matter; the writer must decide how, and whether, to incorporate external description into an exposition of abstract motives: 'Will man die Gründe des Reisenden, die sich nämlich auf den Grad von Demokratie in einem Gemeinwesen beziehen, sichtbar machen, so ist dafür das Aussehen des Stadtbahnhofes nicht geeignet: es lenkt ab von seinen Gründen' (BS, 17). All these are faults which beset Karsch. Language presents further difficulties: the two sides have developed different terminology over the years. 'Das Gefüge der Assoziationen ist anders gruppiert' (BS, 18), and the respective linguistic structures are consequently at variance with each other.<sup>27</sup> This linguistic divergence between the two Germanies is one of the first difficulties Karsch meets when he enters the GDR: 'Die Sprache, die er verstand und mit der er verständlich über den Tag gekommen war, redete ihn noch oft in die Täuschung von Zusammengehörigkeit hinein . . . die Sprache der staatlichen Zeitungen verstand Karsch nicht' (DBA, 23–24). Linguistic difficulties are just one obstacle to the 'Genauigkeit' which, 'Berliner Stadtbahn' states, is demanded from the writer (see BS, 21); Karsch admits his inadequacy in that respect early in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*: 'ich gebe zu: ich bin um Genauigkeit verlegen' (DBA, 7–8). 'Berliner Stadtbahn' appeared two years after the publication of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* and was clearly written with Johnson's second published novel in mind, which, as we have seen, is nothing if not an 'ausdrückliche Vorführung der schwierigen Suche nach der Wahrheit'. But, as will become clear in the next chapter of this study, to apply the 1961 essay indiscriminately to other works by Johnson could lead to serious distortion. Johnson calls it 'veraltet' in the 1975 edition of *Berliner Sachen* in which the essay appears, and he says in an interview with Ree Post-Adams: 'der Aufsatz weist vielleicht hin auf den Zustand, in dem ich mich damals befand und in dem ich mich wahrscheinlich nicht mehr befinde, deswegen vielleicht der Zusatz "veraltet"'.<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly Johnson's first two published novels and 'Berliner Stadtbahn' seriously question the means of fiction. But at the same time strenuous efforts are made to combat those inadequacies: the most important weapon Johnson reached for, readily apparent in 'Berliner Stadtbahn', was restriction of narrative cognition, a policy which requires detailed examination.

### III THE PROBLEM OF OMNISCIENCE

The assumption of limited narrative cognizance in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, whereby the narrator is taken to be as limited in his perceptions of the events portrayed as any of the participants, has become something of a commonplace wisdom in Johnsonian critical literature, one which is frequently incorporated into an examination of some other aspect of the author's work. Reference works tend to accept that view axiomatically: 'Der Roman *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* erzählt . . . mit Hilfe verschiedener Techniken des Dialogs, des Monologs und eines "nicht-allwissenden" Erzählers . . . die Geschichte des tödlich verunglückten Eisenbahners Jakob Abs'.<sup>1</sup> Wilfried van der Will is quite categorical: 'There is indeed no omniscient narrator, and an authoritative voice is never heard',<sup>2</sup> while one of the rare articles on Johnson to appear in a Socialist country (Yugoslavia) is no less unequivocal, even extending the maxim to all three of the author's early novels: 'Der Erzähler weiß von Anfang an nichts mehr als irgendeine dargestellte Figur — das ist ein Grundzug Johnsonscher Erzählwerke'.<sup>3</sup> Hugo Steger refers to the passage on the narrator in 'Berliner Stadtbahn': 'Wenn wir Johnsons schon zitiertes Eingeständnis betrachten, wonach der Erzähler selbst nicht vollständig informiert sei, sondern die Suche nach der Wahrheit erst vorführen müsse, so wird klar, daß es in unserer Geschichte keinen allwissenden Erzähler geben kann, dem Erzähler kann nur die Vermittlung eines Teiles der Geschichte anvertraut werden'.<sup>4</sup> There are enough similar examples of this notion, whose provenance can invariably be traced to 'Berliner Stadtbahn', and thus to the author himself.<sup>5</sup>

It seems clear that critics have not been referring to an inability to explain causal relationships, an inability which can be detected in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, but to non-omniscience in the sense of 'Berliner Stadtbahn', that is, the absence of a narrator who can know all characters' thoughts from a central standpoint and co-ordinate the fictional world 'göttergleich'. It is my contention that although an attempt was made to remove such a narrator from *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* in the interests of *Wahrheitsfindung*, that attempt failed, leaving its mark on the novel in the form of internal contradictions. Discovering the reasons for this failure will explain how and why Johnson's narrative techniques developed as they did in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*: in this second published novel Johnson was to give up the frontal assault on narrative omniscience and circumvent the problem by means which will be explained towards the end of this chapter.



Two full-length studies of Johnsonian narrative technique illustrate the misconceptions which can result from regarding a non-omniscient narrator as an axiomatic feature of Johnson's prose. Both Ree Post-Adams and Ingrid Riedel accept wholeheartedly the sentiments of 'Berliner Stadtbahn', making the supposition of non-omniscience an integral feature of their analyses. Post-Adams fails to challenge Johnson's neglect of the distinction between author and narrator, resolving the difficulty by contending that Johnson's narrator is invariably a projection of the author himself, a contention frequently unsupported by textual evidence: 'Der Autor-Erzähler, der so in die Erzählung eingeht, ist nicht der Schriftsteller als bürgerliche Person, sondern eine von diesem geschaffene Erzählerfigur, in der die eigene Problemstellung gestaltet werden kann, und ist damit eine spezifisch epische Erzählfunktion'.<sup>6</sup> She even goes so far as to say that '... die Fragen und Einsichten des Autors und Bürgers Johnson sind auch die seines Erzählers' (Post-Adams, p. 40). Furthermore, she unifies the narrator's role throughout Johnson's early work, as though the narrator were the same in each book: 'Der Autor-Erzähler in Uwe Johnsons Prosa macht ebenfalls auf den Erzählprozeß aufmerksam, den er leitet. Die Omnipotenz dieses Erzählers ist allerdings erschüttert; er kann als ein paradoxes Phänomen beschrieben werden: ein auktorialer Erzähler ohne Autorität. Durch die Abwesenheit der Allwissenheit unterscheidet sich dieser Autor-Erzähler von dem Autor als Erzähler Fieldingscher Prägung' (Post-Adams, p. 5). Post-Adams is unable to resolve her conflicting desires on the one hand to see the narrator as a cipher for Johnson, and on the other to conform to Johnson's statement in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' that the narrator cannot be omniscient. The weakness of her position becomes apparent as she discusses the role of the narrator in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*:

Die wichtigsten Charakteristika des Erzählers sind Nichtwissen und begrenzte Perspektive; er weiß von Anfang an nicht mehr als irgendeine der Romanfiguren... Der Erzähler kann nur Greifbares beschreiben, Gegenstände, Äußeres; psychologische Deutungen kann er nicht geben, Motivationen der handelnden Personen bleiben ihm unklar, lediglich ihr Verhalten kann beobachtet werden. Das gilt vor allem für Jakob. Der Blickpunkt des Erzählers wird nie in ihn hineinverlegt. (Post-Adams, pp. 48-49)

While Post-Adams is correct in maintaining that motivations tend to remain concealed in the novel, her final categorical assertion in the above quotation, as well as her suggestion of limited narrative perspective, are easily disproved.

The first substantial passage of narrative (*MJ*, 14-19) provides enough evidence that the narrative voice has a considerable body of information at its disposal. The summary of Gesine's family and personal relationships and her departure to the West draws not only on facts such as Rohlf's might have assimilated, but also on intimate details which only personal knowledge of Cresspahl, Gesine, Jakob and Frau Abs could provide. We learn, for example, that after Gesine's departure Cresspahl 'kaufte... in den nächsten Jahren nur

Schwarzbrot, Ilse Papenbrock bekam zu hören dass seine Tochter auf Reisen gegangen sei' (*MJ*, 15). Similarly, Jakob and his mother seem less than opaque to the narrator's gaze: 'Gesine Cresspahl war zu der Zeit in die Oberschule aufgenommen worden, auf einen solchen Gedanken für sich kam Jakob nicht, seine Mutter hielt es überdies für unnützig; zu der Zeit war Gesine fünfzehn Jahre alt, sie kam immer noch mit auf seine Wege, immer noch nahmen sie sich für Geschwister' (*MJ*, 16–17). Almost any narrative passage picked out of the novel at random will furnish similar evidence.

The narrator's privileges are not limited to familiarity with the characters' lives. He may enter their minds and read their thoughts at will, an ability which is implicitly or explicitly indicated on many occasions. Jakob offers a prime example: during a description of his daily journey from work (designed to indicate the extent of Rohlf's surveillance) the narrative perspective shifts from external observation into Jakob's mind: 'Er dachte an nichts. Einmal entsann er sich der Studentin unter seiner Schulter und dass das Kind seine Blicke gar nicht beachtet hatte, nun war das blosse Nebeneinander eine wohlgefällige Erinnerung' (*MJ*, 27). On another occasion Jakob's perspective is used in the best tradition of hero-view narration: 'Wenn einer nun immer den Grundsatz macht aus seinen neuesten Umständen: dachte Jakob, er dachte aber nicht an Herrn Rohlf's. Ihm war eingefallen dass er Peter Zahn einen Anruf versprochen hatte, und es war ihm unbehaglich dass er diesen Anruf zu vergessen vorhatte' (*MJ*, 136).

That the narrative perspective may be manipulated as necessary becomes apparent during the scene where Jakob and Jöche are observed (sometimes as though through a film camera) during their discussion in the railway canteen of Cresspahl's apparent flight to the West. The scene is initially described in a way which betrays Jakob's impressions: 'Aber Jakob kam durch die Tür und sah Jöche sitzen in seiner zähen Art von Geruhigkeit, die war ihm einsehbar und kenntlich' (*MJ*, 60). The description is continued in the manner of a narrator who is fairly conversant with the personal details of the characters until the point at which Jakob and Jöche begin to eat, when another stance is adopted, reminiscent of a long shot in film; that of a more distant observer with no preconceptions of the two characters: 'An dem breiten geräumigen Fenster sassen zwei junge erwachsene Männer, der eine in der sauberen gebügelten vornehmen Uniform mit den drei Sternen auf den silbernen beflochtenen Achselklappen, der andere in dem verschwitzten russigen öligen Päckchen des Lokomotivführers . . .' (*MJ*, 61). On the following page Jakob's thoughts are revealed once more: 'Jakob wunderte sich aber dass aus dem dicken Sumpf von Scham allmählich Spottlichter auf flackerten in ihm' (*MJ*, 62). The apparent extent of the storyteller's knowledge may be manipulated to suit the purposes of his story, in this case to reveal that although Jakob knows that Cresspahl has in fact remained in the GDR, he is unwilling to reveal the truth of the matter to

Jöche: “‘Jöche. Es ist wohl nicht zu glauben Jöche’ . . . ‘Was die Leute reden’ sagte Jakob, er dachte wirklich: Dann haben sie Cresspahl bloss einsteigen nicht aussteigen sehen . . .’ (MJ, 62–63). Even potential misunderstandings may thus be corrected by a narrator able to compare external appearances with private thoughts. Nor is Jakob’s the only mind to which the reader is granted access; towards the end of the episode Jöche’s viewpoint is taken up: ‘Jöche bedachte schweigend die Liebe der Väter zu ihren Töchtern’ (MJ, 63). On other occasions the narrator uses the perspective of Cresspahl: ‘Cresspahl war kaum noch Gäste gewohnt . . . Er versuchte sich zu erinnern wie Frau Abs für Gesine gesorgt hatte, als sie noch kam aus dem Studium an den Wochenenden’ (MJ, 169). Through the eyes of Jonas: ‘[Jonas] dachte aber an Cresspahls Tochter. Und war erstaunt wie wenig das Gefühl der Entbehrung der heftigen Ungeduld glich, die er aus früheren Zeiten an einigen Gewohnheiten kannte’ (MJ, 181). Even the thoughts of Sabine, a relatively minor character, are implicitly available (see MJ, 140). Clearly, the minds of the characters are open to the narrator whenever necessary, in a way which owes much to the tradition of omniscient narration: Post-Adams’s assertions, therefore, hardly stand up to comparison with the text. How she arrived at her view of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, is, however, readily apparent.

The suspicion that Post-Adams has seized upon ‘Berliner Stadtbahn’ as a set of rules, without taking full account of the textual evidence in Johnson’s novel, is difficult to avoid. Led astray by Johnson into confusing author and narrator, she proposes that the narrator of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* ‘erfindet, was er nicht wissen kann’. This is one more assertion that finds no corroboration in the text. Nowhere can it be shown that the storyteller is dramatized as a fictional author or reporter in the novel, which would be the only explanation for Post-Adams’s statement, whose wording is drawn directly from ‘Berliner Stadtbahn’. Information is constantly supplied from the most diverse sources; how that information is acquired — whether by invention or otherwise — it is impossible to establish.

Johnson’s deliberations on narrative technique seem to have made such an impression on Post-Adams that the critic feels moved to deprive *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*’s narrative structure of much of its literary validity: ‘Die Geschichte Jakobs scheint für den Autor-Erzähler oft lediglich ein Vehikel für seine Reflexion zu sein, dafür, die Schwierigkeiten der Geschichte vorzuführen’ (Post-Adams, p. 67). Ingrid Riedel, by contrast, is less inclined to view the novel in such programmatic terms. Nevertheless, she too takes the section on narrative manners in ‘Berliner Stadtbahn’ as a central plank of her argument.<sup>7</sup>

The strength of Riedel’s study lies in the well-conceived demonstration of the relationship between Cubist theory and *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*: ‘Es wird sich aufweisen lassen, wie eng sich gerade das ästhetische Programm des Kubismus, das einen neuen Realismus postuliert, mit dem von Uwe Johnson berührt’.<sup>8</sup>

The undertaking founders, however, on her increasingly desperate efforts to create a unified theory of literary Cubism to cover all of Johnson's work up to 1970. Riedel too has an unconvincing explanation of why the narrator should be considered non-omniscient: 'Der Erzähler bemüht sich zwar grundsätzlich wie ein Untersuchungsrichter, objektiv darzustellen, was er in Erfahrung gebracht hat, da er an den Geschehnissen, über die gemutmaßt wird, nicht persönlich beteiligt war. Aus diesem Grunde ist er auch nicht "allwissend" wie der auktoriale Erzähler' (Riedel, p. 31). Once again, this observation is based on external evidence from Johnson, since the narrator is not sufficiently defined in the novel to allow any determination of his personal involvement in or remoteness from the action, or of how he acquires his information. Although Riedel only devotes a short section to the narrator's status, she nevertheless, unlike Post-Adams, realizes the inconsistency in her position: 'Abschließend ist über den Erzähler zu sagen: Er versucht . . . objektiv zu erzählen und begehrt doch an einigen Stellen die Inkonsequenz, in das Bewußtsein seiner Personen hineinzuleuchten' (Riedel, p. 32). 'An einigen Stellen' is something of an understatement: in fact the 'Inkonsequenz' is so widespread as to be, as it were, consistently inconsistent.

Confusion of this kind arises in part from efforts to force the narrator of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* into an ill-fitting compartment, namely either that of an authorial narrator with limited cognizance, or of a first-person narrator with certain authorial powers. The most important influence on German critics regarding the typology of narrative situations is Franz K. Stanzel's *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman* (1955).<sup>9</sup> Both Riedel and Post-Adams make clear their familiarity with that critic's classification of narrative point of view. It would be fair to say that Stanzel's classification is a tool which has tended to obscure rather than elucidate narrative techniques in Johnson's prose. However, it must be said that Johnson's comments in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' do in fact implicitly describe the kind of category which Stanzel proposes, and so there is a case to be answered on these albeit old-fashioned premisses.

Stanzel distinguishes between three sets of opposing characteristics; namely 'telling' and 'showing', external perspective and internal perspective, and first and third person reference. The latter category designates whether the narrator participates in the fictional world's reality, in which case the narrative reference is fundamentally first-person.<sup>10</sup> Stanzel depicts these characteristics diagrammatically, elucidating three classifications of narrative situation, each identifiable by reference to two of the above six characteristics. According to Stanzel's theory, any novel may be described by using these classifications, which consist of *Ich-Erzählsituation*, *Auktoriale Erzählsituation*, and *Personale Erzählsituation*. In terms of narrative cognizance, these categories may be explained as follows. The *Ich-Erzähler*, as a defined character in the novel, actively participating in the fictional world, has clearly limited knowledge whose plausible extent may be

inferred from the possibilities open to the character in question within the constraints of the novel's fictional setting. The *auktorialer Erzähler* makes no secret of his omniscience, and may come forward to address the reader directly or dispense his views on one subject or another; this is the narrative stance typified by the storyteller in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Thomas Hardy's narrators similarly tend to offer opinions on life and the way of the world, including the follies and wisdoms of the particular novel's fictional characters. The *personaler Erzähler* refrains from commenting on the action, yet is still able to offer varying perspectives, look through characters' eyes, into their minds and so on. So long as this ability is not confined to one character (which would result in hero-view narration), such a narrator is unable to lay any claim to being non-omniscient. The last two categories are labelled more clearly by Norman Friedman, who employs the terms 'editorial' and 'neutral' omniscience.<sup>11</sup> Although the narrator of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* is clearly not an editorial narrator, there is nothing in the text to refute the assertion that he is neutrally omniscient, a possibility neglected by both Post-Adams and Riedel. At the same time the mistrust of omniscience expressed in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' is not confined to the authorial category: a dichotomy between the often-quoted passage on narrative technique and the textual evidence may be established.

A serious effort to refute that dichotomy was made by Colin H. Good in the course of arguing that *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* is speculative in form as well as content.<sup>12</sup> Good recognizes the traits of narrative omniscience which characterize *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, but sets out to show that in fact the narrative cognizance is much more limited than it appears. In the absence of convincing textual proof, it seems likely that some of Good's reflections derive from an interview Johnson gave in 1962, where the writer responded to the following suggestion from Arnhelm Neusüss: 'Im *Jakob* sind Sie ja auch eigentlich kein psychologischer Autor. Vielmehr scheinen da die Personen gleichberechtigt mit ihrem Autor, der ihnen nur den Platz einräumt, ihre Meinungen zu sagen'.<sup>13</sup> This suggestion in turn probably derives less from textual evidence than from Johnson's 1959 interview with Rühle (see below, p. 42). Johnson's response: 'Ja. Der Verfasser weiß die Geschichte von außen, und man könnte sagen, daß der Verfasser mit den Personen zusammenarbeitet, wo Gelegenheiten auftreten in denen sie es eigentlich besser wissen müßten . . .'.<sup>14</sup> Making a similar point, Good says that the narrator is 'as solid a person as the other characters; he is indeed a character himself and, like them, is plagued by an uncertainty not only with regard to the mystery surrounding Jakob's death, but even to the very things he has witnessed'.<sup>15</sup> Yet at the same time, Good is willing to acknowledge the narrator's abstract nature; the characters' speculations 'are, as it were, "compiled" and linked by some kind of narrator' (Good, p. 358). He then finds himself compelled to contradict his own declaration that the narrator is a 'solid

person': 'we can hardly speak of any dramatization of his person' (Good, p. 362). Furthermore, Good tacitly admits that the narrator is in possession of authorial powers in the sense that he (or she: even this is indeterminate) may choose the form in which to present material; he can 'dramatise in the form of the monologue and the dialogue' (Good, p. 359). So according to Good, the narrator is at once a character and an authorial narrator.

Good cites three appearances of an unidentified 'ich' to support his view that the narrator is indeed a character (see Good, p. 363). The first such manifestation of personality appears near the beginning of the book, when the importance of time for Jakob's job has just been mentioned: 'In diesem Herbst nun: wie ich sage: fiel ihm die Zeit nicht erst wieder ein, wenn er die Tür verschlossen hatte . . .' (*MJ*, 20–21). Although the interpolation 'wie ich sage' is not solely designed in order to establish the narrator's status (it refers to the repetition of 'in diesem Herbst', with which the paragraph had begun), the implication of first-person narration is clear. A similar interpolation appears slightly later: 'wie ich ja sage' (*MJ*, 31). The 'ich', however, is never dramatized or further defined during the course of the novel. On only one other occasion does an 'ich' appear which might refer to the storyteller; during a description of a meeting in the canteen: 'Jakob? der war doch immer dabei. Als ich kam, war er schon weg' (*MJ*, 137). This could, of course, be the same speaker as the undoubtedly narrative 'ich' of earlier in the book. That can be no more than an assumption, however, for only a few lines earlier the narrator had briefly adopted Jakob's standpoint, using not *erlebte Rede* but the first person singular: '. . . [Gesine] war aber in die Ferne gereist. Und Jonas nach Jerichow. Und meine Mutter in die Flüchtlingsbaracken von Westberlin mit der Eisenbahn, und ich Sorge dafür dass sie alle sicher und pünktlich kommen wohin sie wollen' (*MJ*, 137). If the 'ich' may here refer to Jakob, then, by analogy, there is no obstacle to a first-person reference which denotes not the narrator, but some other unidentifiable character, in the previously quoted example.

However, a first-person narrator does undoubtedly exist, even if its manifestation can only be established with certainty on two occasions. Ironically, it is this very presence of an undefined, undramatized narrative 'ich' which scotches the potentially convincing argument in favour of narrative non-omniscience in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, namely that the evident omniscience is merely that of an implicit 'second self' which simply orders and presents material compartmentalized by perspective.<sup>16</sup> An example of such a 'second self' would be the implied presence of a medium, or organizer, which presents the inner monologues of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. In that case there is no evidence of a fictionally-projected narrator as such, and so the question of cognitive range is not one which may be asked. In *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, however, we are dealing with a narrator, the plausible extent of whose knowledge may be subjected to investigation.

In undertaking such an investigation, Good also fails to make the crucial distinction between Johnson, the author, and his narrator, a fictional projection. Given the importance and complex nature of this very distinction in Johnson's major work *Jahrestage*, it is worthwhile settling the issue as far as the early novels are concerned. Good says: 'If we accept, as indeed we must, that, in Johnson's own words "Man weiß die Geschichte, bevor man anfängt, sie zu erzählen", then it is clear from the beginning that the narrator cannot be, as is often the case, a relatively close synonym of author' (Good, p. 360). This assumption is unacceptable for two reasons. Firstly, Johnson's statement casts no light on the role of the narrator, only on technical details of composition: as the original interview shows, Johnson meant by this that he, as an author, composed his story for a year without taking notes until it was fully developed in his mind, before writing it down.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, even if it was the narrator who knew the story from the beginning, such a state of affairs would not necessarily preclude authorial narration. Good acknowledges that despite this 'seemingly sound assumption' of non-authorial narration, there is much in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* to indicate that the opposite is the case. The narrator is privy to thoughts and details which limited cognizance should deny him.

In refutation of this evidence, Good argues that the narrator's knowledge is imperfect by pointing out such instances as: 'sie hatten einen Tisch für sich, dass sie den einem Dritten dann gleich gänzlich überliessen mochte wirklich Zufall gewesen sein' (*MJ*, 29). There are many similar examples in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*; Marianne Hirsch refers to another 'When [the narrator] relates the occasion on which Jakob gives Cresspahl Gesine's gun, he is unable to choose between two possible versions and so presents both. The reader must decide which is the more truthful. Thus the narrator conforms to the requirements of "Berliner Stadtbahn"; he admits the limits of his knowledge'.<sup>18</sup> But such instances are part of the narrative strategy already discussed, namely the wilful concealment of cause. The reader is free to decide whether Jakob left the table for fear of being overheard. There is no indication of whether the narrator knows the answer to that question, nor of whether he is 'unable' to choose between two versions of the gun episode. Similarly, on one occasion the comment 'Was denkt er sich eigentlich' (*MJ*, 298), referring to Jonas Blach, superficially indicates that the narrator cannot know what Blach is thinking. Yet only two lines before we are told what Blach is thinking about: '[Jonas] berechnete auch die ungefähre zeitliche Entfernung bis zur Elbe zu dem Turm, in dem nach seiner Meinung Jakob (oder einer von ihnen) sass und den Halt des Zuges angewiesen hatte' (*MJ*, 298). The narrator's comment 'Was denkt er sich eigentlich' creates the impression of an afterthought designed to indicate a limited omniscience which is not reflected in the narrative structure itself.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, these examples of apparent narrative uncertainty might equally well denote a refusal on the narrator's part to divulge all the information at his disposal.

It has long been the prerogative of omniscient narrators openly to withhold information in this way if such concealment suits their purposes. An illustration might be found in the otherwise authorial narrator of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, who, having offered various profound insights into the mind of Wilhelm, suddenly professes ignorance: 'man frage, ob er sich glücklich, ob er sich selig fühlte'.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the narrator of Barlach's *Der gestohlene Mond*, who, being a quintessentially *auktorialer Erzähler*, does not otherwise refrain from plumbing the depths of his characters and their fictional world, nevertheless coyly passes over a discussion between Frieda and Henny: 'Was nun draußen auf dem Bänkchen geschah, läßt sich wohl nur andeutend mitteilen'.<sup>21</sup> The narrator in Thomas Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*, also otherwise not averse to elucidating motive and dispensing commentary, refuses to reveal how much Lucetta tells Farfrae of her past on the night of her death.<sup>22</sup> Apparent conjecture, therefore, is nothing foreign to the traditional omniscient narrator, for whom studied reticence can on occasion be a useful artifice.

The example of narrative reticence in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* perhaps most frequently adduced in support of the non-omniscience theory appears in the novel's third paragraph, as a figure is described crossing the rails in the fog: 'An der langsam stetigen Aufrechtheit des Ganges war vielleicht Jakob zu erkennen . . .' (MJ, 7–8). The 'vielleicht' is cited by Good as proof that the narrator cannot know whether the figure definitely was Jakob. But the artifice is exposed in the next sentence: 'Je mehr er unter seinen Turm kam verdunsteten seine Umrisse zwischen den finster massigen Ungeheurn von Güterzugwagen . . .' (MJ, 8). The use of the possessive pronoun, referring to 'seinen Turm', betrays the narrator's awareness that the figure is indeed that of Jakob. The narrator in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, far from being as much at a loss as the characters, is thus capable of manipulating both reader and characters in a way which owes much to the novel of earlier centuries, though with different aims.

Good resolves the paradox of the narrator's status by concluding that the point of view is 'peculiarly shifting and fluid' (Good, p. 363), finally arguing that since the thoughts and speech of the characters are often not identified as such, they must be regarded as narrative in their own right. Yet this is no more than a confirmation of the narrator's all-embracing central manipulation: that the perspective shifts are not expressly indicated is part of a different narrative tactic and immaterial to the question of omniscience. For (as Good himself notes) the interior monologues offer no alternative stylistic perspective untouched by the narrator's hand. There is no attempt to make them apparently unmediated reflections of the characters' thoughts; the language is as stylized and literary in each monologue as it is in the narrative sections. By contrast, Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* maintains clear stylistic distinctions between each internal monologue; each character's identity may be deduced from the narrative style. In Johnson's case, the distinctive narrative style common to all the perspective



modes differs from *erlebte Rede* only in pronoun use and concomitant grammatical alterations; in each case the same narrative hand is distinctly present. Since *erlebte Rede* through the eyes of several characters is usually accepted as evidence of narrative omniscience, there seems no need to make a distinction between the narrator in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* and the traditional neutrally omniscient narrator.

A sentence in Good's last paragraph reveals the fundamental flaw in his assumption: 'It is idle to put the question of the identity of the narrator into the foreground' (Good, p. 370). The identity of the narrator is precisely the point on which the question of his omniscience stands or falls. As long as the reader has no means of establishing the narrator's identity it is impossible to determine the extent of his knowledge. If he is able to take up the most disparate physical standpoints and repeatedly change the narrative point of view, reading the characters' minds, then we cannot assume that there are certain limits to such powers. Since the narrator has a literary but no defined physical identity within the story, we cannot deduce that he has arrived at his insights by means of inference or by talking to the other characters. Despite Johnson's asseverations, logical examination of the text indicates that *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* is coordinated by an omniscient narrator aiming to produce particular effects in the reader, namely, amongst others, those effects described in the previous chapter of this study. He does indeed occupy the position of a 'Schiedsrichter beim Tennis', and possesses a 'göttergleiche[r] Überblick' (BS, 20). The evident attempts to conceal, avoid, or distract attention from this omniscience are unconvincing in the face of the narrator's manifest authority and in the absence of a formula of arbitration to which the reader may resort.

Although not convincingly realized in literary terms, the misgivings with regard to 'die Manieren der Allwissenheit' can, as we have seen, be detected in the novel. They are, of course, by no means exclusive to Johnson, being part of a trend common in twentieth-century literature. Precisely why Johnson should have felt it necessary to express such scepticism at all is a question which would undoubtedly repay investigation.

The publication of Johnson's first novel, *Ingrid Babendererde*, in 1985, has provided striking evidence that before *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, the author seemed not to question the kind of narrative approach which is rejected in 'Berliner Stadtbahn'. The narrator of *Ingrid Babendererde* is not a little reminiscent of nineteenth-century counterparts. Walter Maria Guggenheimer, who read the manuscript for Peter Suhrkamp, was put in mind of Fontane, referring to Johnson as 'Ein zwanzigjähriger Klassiker' (KP, 87). The novel is divided into sixty-one chapters and four parts. Each part is preceded by a short italicized section, the first of which describes Klaus and Ingrid's train journey to the West (chronologically the end of the story), the second indicating their arrival in Berlin. The section which begins part three shows a scene of the couple at their

destination. Part four begins by showing them departing for separate destinations in the Federal Republic. The book ends with a further italicized section describing the very beginning of their departure from the GDR; the trip by motor boat which precedes their train journey to West Berlin. Although by no means an innovative technique, this out-of-sequence *Rahmenerzählung* constitutes the only departure from structural convention. The main story tells how Ingrid Babendererde comes into conflict with the authorities by taking a moral stance against the treatment of the *Junge Gemeinde*, which in April 1953 became the target of an official smear campaign. She and her boyfriend Klaus are left with no choice but to leave for the West.

The way the story is told betrays no lack of confidence in the traditional role of the narrator. Chronology is adhered to almost demonstratively, each of the four parts being devoted to the events of one day, from Tuesday to Friday, the Thursday being 'der Donnerstag nach Pfingsten' (*IB*, 150). Selected events of each day are described in detail, resulting in sixty-one windows on a fictional world (based on historical events) which lasts the four days leading up to an educational, political, and moral *Reifeprüfung*. Scenic descriptions are minutely observed in a manner not unworthy of Flaubert or Balzac: chapters 2 and 3 describe the last few minutes of a geography lesson in such detail as to mimic the creeping of the clock's minute hand. Any character's recent history may be summarized for purposes of exposition; see, for instance, the justification of Franz's boat journeys (*IB*, 13). Each of the sixty-one chapters concentrates on a particular character, generally keeping to that character's point of view, although a superior vantage point is always implied, and, if necessary, an alternative or external perspective may be adopted. The narrative privilege is not restricted to a certain number of characters, in the manner of Henry James's limited point of view, but has access to whichever is most convenient: that, for example, of Frau Petersen, Jürgen's mother (chapter 16, *IB*, 69–72), who otherwise plays only a minor role. The use of a narrative 'wir' (*IB*, 171) is reminiscent of nineteenth-century manners. The narrative standpoint is conventional, remaining as unquestioned as it was by a Fontane or a Balzac. No attempt is made to delineate the extent of the narrator's knowledge of his own fictional world.

Indeed, many of the features which I have adduced to show that *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* also belongs within the tradition of omniscient narration can be detected in this early work. Chapter 2 opens with a film-like technique whereby the town is observed from a distance (a long shot, as it were). Subsequently the school building is focused on, from which a voice can be heard through an open window. From there we are guided into the classroom, finally to focus on the teacher (*IB*, 15–16). Precisely this technique is employed in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, betraying a storyteller whose narrative assumptions are not limited by a modern inability to know. As in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, inside and outside

views of a character may be used to reveal inconsistencies, as in chapter 3: 'Das war so, Jürgen war ärgerlich. Er hatte zur Uhr gesehen als könne er das Ende der Stunde nicht abwarten: während doch so grossartige Dinge vorkamen. Er meinte wirklich: dieser Kanal sei eine gute Sache . . .' (IB, 19).

Moreover, some of the very features of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* which have been used to argue that the narrator in that novel accords with the demands of 'Berliner Stadtbahn' appear in *Ingrid Babendererde* without any modernistic implications. The frequent use of 'wohl' and the verb 'mögen' (both expressing doubt or uncertainty) in Johnson's first published novel has been cited as evidence of narrative uncertainty at a linguistic level. But in chapter 50 of *Ingrid Babendererde* 'wohl' is used no less than twenty times, and 'mochte' four times, in eight pages. One quotation will serve to illustrate: 'Nämlich Ingrid's Augen gingen plötzlich auf gegen Dümpelfeld, es war ihr wohl etwas eingefallen. Das mochte sie aber überrascht haben, denn ihr Abschied kam ganz ohne Übergang, sie war plötzlich fort' (IB, 206). In this chapter Ingrid is shadowed by an agent of the *Staatssicherheitsdienst*, and 'wohl' no doubt functions as a linguistic reflection of his investigative activities. At the same time its ability to convey the opposite of uncertainty, as in 'Ja wohl' (IB, 207) is ironically explored. But what emerges is that precursors of techniques used in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, and in that case interpreted by critics as evidence of narrative uncertainty, here sit easily with a narrative approach owing little to post-nineteenth-century insights.

There is, then, a clear line of descent in terms of narrative technique from the first novel Johnson wrote and (after much revision) unsuccessfully presented for publication in 1957, and that which was actually accepted for publication in 1959. The same tradition of omniscient narration can be detected in both. Yet *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* patently has quite a different stamp to it: while the fundamental assumptions remain the same, it is perfectly clear that a determined (though, as I have argued, unsuccessful) effort was made to challenge those assumptions. No such challenge may be detected in *Ingrid Babendererde*. Between the two novels Johnson clearly underwent a radical transformation as far as his approach to literature was concerned. As early as 1959 the author had publicly expressed the kind of doubts which led to that change: 'Der Autor kann nicht alles wissen über Jakob. Auch Gesine weiß etwas und Herr Rohlfs (vom SSD) und Cresspahl usf.'<sup>23</sup> One reason for the inadequate practical fulfilment of these reservations may lie in the fact that *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* was originally conceived as a traditional story but altered, as it were, in mid-stream (probably around 1957–58), under the influence of new insights. As Johnson explained to Arnhelm Neusüss:

Ich habe auch den ersten Versuch zu diesem Buch auf eine ganz treuherzige Weise gemacht. Ich habe so ungefähr ein Viertel chronologisch geschrieben, ohne da irgendwelche Gespräche oder Monologe dazwischenzuschieben, aber dann ergaben sich stilistische Schwierigkeiten, etwa von der Art, daß ein unbeteiligter Erzähler nicht gut

die entschiedene Haltung und Meinung von Herrn Rohlf's wiedergeben kann, ohne sich in seiner allzu kritischen oder allzu ironischen oder allzu feindseligen Art dazu zu verhalten. Das schadet natürlich der Gestalt Rohlf's, und darum wurde aus Herrn Rohlf's ein innerer Monolog. Außerdem: die Gewohnheiten, mit Hilfe derer man sich eines Verstorbenen erinnert, sind eben Gespräche und erinnernde Monologe. Das ist dann alles so ziemlich von selbst gekommen. (Gerlach/Richter, p. 40)

He gave a similar explanation to Michael Roloff in 1964:

First I tried to write the entire story from the point of view of one narrator. Then stylistic difficulties developed because the narrator would in one sense have had to reproduce sympathetically the opinions and intentions of a captain of the State Security Service. Because I could not assume this point of view at the same time that I held others, I was forced to let Rohlf's speak for himself. Besides, larger complexities developed which opposed a chronological narration, which demanded separate treatment and had to be treated independently therefore; for instance, the railroads. (Roloff, p. 38)

These remarks explain why the stance is still essentially that of an omniscient narrator, in that, while the concept of the work was altered in formal terms, the modifications did not penetrate to the fundamental narrative assumptions. As a result a number of traits common to nineteenth-century fiction can still be determined. But Johnson's commentary still throws no light on precisely why the convention of omniscience was cast into doubt.

There is some evidence that Johnson abandoned the orthodox approach of *Ingrid Babendererde* after reading the works of William Faulkner.<sup>24</sup> Johnson always insisted that he merely adopted the typographical techniques of that author. Sara Lennox's examination of Johnson's debt to Faulkner explains both writers' approach in terms of the inability of traditional fictional methods to cope with the complexities of modern life (see Lennox, p. 161). This idea has, in general terms, had wide currency throughout the twentieth century. Theodor Adorno's rejection of the illusory Realism typified by Flaubert was particularly influential in German literature.<sup>25</sup> But there are some grounds for seeking specific reasons for the narrative stance adopted in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, rather than labelling it a general literary tendency or an inescapable echo of today's reality.

Lennox and Riedel mistakenly assume that narrative omniscience restricts the possibilities of using the multiple narrative perspectives necessary to a depiction of twentieth-century life; Riedel says: 'Der Konstrukteur eines zentralperspektivischen Raumes wie der allwissende auktoriale Erzähler haben eines gemein: daß sie von einem einzigen Standort außerhalb des Werkes wie "kleine Götter" die gesamte darzustellende Welt überblicken und von ihrem Standort her konstruieren. Dadurch erwecken sie die Illusion, als kenne die Realität keine weiteren Perspektiven' (Riedel, p. 73). But the omniscient narrator has ample opportunity to use innumerable viewpoints, and can dissociate himself from them either stylistically or technically, by using, for instance, the epistolary

mode. Indeed, the attraction of omniscience lies precisely in the broad — unlimited — range of perspectives it can offer. A desire for polyphony is not sufficient as an explanation.

Post-Adams uses a slightly different argument, quoting the section on narrative technique from 'Berliner Stadtbahn' and commenting:

An diesem Zitat wird deutlich, daß für Johnson die Haltung des omnipotenten Erzählers veraltet und obsolet geworden ist. Angesichts der Undurchdringlichkeit der Welt und der Unmöglichkeit, sie adäquat festzuhalten, kann der Autor seine traditionelle autoritäre Stellung nicht mehr halten. Will er dennoch der Erzähltradition treu bleiben und erzählen, wie die Wirklichkeit ist, so bleibt ihm nur, seine verunsicherte Stellung und eingeschränkte Perspektive und seine Ohnmacht gegenüber der Vielfältigkeit der Erscheinungen einzugestehen. Er muß zeigen, daß er, wie Walter Benjamin es formuliert, 'selbst unberaten ist und keinen Rat geben kann'.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, Benjamin's formulation refers not to a modern phenomenon, but to a feature which characterizes the novel's storyteller from *Don Quixote* onwards.<sup>27</sup> Adorno's comment on this question would be more appropriate in terms of the twentieth-century novel: 'Eben jener immanente Anspruch, den der Autor unabdingbar erhebt: daß er genau wisse, wie es zugegangen sei, will ausgewiesen werden'.<sup>28</sup> But while citing the author's recognition of his own limited ability to comprehend the world may explain the rejection of traditional narrative structure as an artificially designed aid to deceptive understanding, that inability cannot be directly applied as a criterion to elucidate the restriction on narrative omniscience. The source of fiction does not lie outside the writer's awareness: the author must indeed know all that can be known about the fictional universe he or she creates, since that universe only exists in so far as it is consciously recorded. (What can be known excludes, of course, matters which are a mystery to us all, such as, for instance, how gravity works.) The answer must be one which concerns the narrator as a storytelling device. While it is possible that the author's bewilderment may be fictionalized and transposed to the narrator, efforts to justify the particular approach of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* merely by reference to the inadequacy of well-established fictional means in a modern context overlook several issues of some relevance.

That kind of justification is a perfect vehicle for the jargon of West German *Literaturwissenschaft*:

Bedingt durch Spezialisierungszwänge in allen Lebensbereichen, verengt sich der Perzeptionshorizont des Individuums relational zur gesamten gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit. Diese zunehmende Komplexität und Unüberschaubarkeit der Umwelt bringt es als ästhetische Notwendigkeit mit sich, die Instanz eines allwissend-eindimensionalen Erzählers aufzugeben zugunsten einer offenen Textstruktur, in der durch das Nebeneinander unterschiedlicher Erzählebenen und Textsorten einerseits der Bereich der Erkenntnisobjekte erweitert und andererseits erfahrbare Wirklichkeit in adäquater Art und Weise als gebrochen und lückenhaft fiktionalisiert wird.

Dieses Postulat wird unter anderem von Uwe Johnsons Roman 'Mutmaßungen über Jakob' in etwa eingelöst.<sup>29</sup>

In response to such asseveration of the complexity of modern life in comparison with, say, the nineteenth century, it is worth pointing out, as Peter Demetz does, that Honoré de Balzac considered the technologically sophisticated world of 1840 to have become so complicated as to require an eclectic combination of narrative methods in depiction.<sup>30</sup> Reserving such social intricacy for our own era by suggesting that the reality of post-war Europe is necessarily more labyrinthine than that, say, of pre-Bismarck Germany, or the Napoleonic era, is evidence of a complacent technological arrogance which often carries with it the intimation that the quality of today's world is superior to that of the past. One cannot help but think of the scorn which Kurt Tucholsky reserved for the kind of people he called 'Kleinzeitler', those who fall victim to the 'Größenwahn, den jede Epoche ihr eigen nennt'.<sup>31</sup> Yet even if one were to accept modern life as more complex than ever before, the fact remains that numerous twentieth-century writers of great stature have not found it necessary to resort to measures radically different from those of earlier times. Indeed it is becoming increasingly common, at least among authors writing in German, to look to the past for inspiration; Christa Wolf, Ulrich Plenzdorf, Peter Schneider, and Wolfgang Hildesheimer spring to mind. To argue that formal complexity in the modern novel is the *inevitable* aesthetic consequence of complex modern reality is not only fallacious, but unhelpful: such an argument can be applied so widely that it loses its value in terms of specific explanations. But perhaps the problem is an epistemological one.

Undoubtedly, man's view of the universe has undergone frequent alteration during the last two hundred years, not to say the last fifty. Mass communications media have provided a many-faceted window on the world which may have added new complications to the perceptive process. Indeed, Gesine's preoccupation with the moral implications of our vicarious participation in far-off events plays a central role in *Jahrestage*. On the other hand, media technology has equally provided a far better opportunity to comprehend things normally beyond the reach of our sensory apparatus. And while the objective field has been extended, the capacity for awareness has remained unchanged. The ability to distinguish rumour from fact and to take into account deliberate misleading or outright deception by those who purvey the news was as vital in previous centuries as it is now. Some would argue that although man's environment has always been, in relative terms, deceptively complex, only twentieth-century writers have realized or taken note of that fact. Jean-Paul Sartre rejected nineteenth-century fiction because it formally implied an acceptance of the order and stability of bourgeois existence. Modern recognition of the true chaos in which we live demanded new and different literary methods.

In the light of this argument it would be tempting to interpret the form of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* as an acknowledgement of a disordered world which has always existed, but which has gone unrecognized or unheeded by previous centuries and some modern writers. That would be, however, no more than a return to the truism of formal and thematic unity. Johnson said on many occasions that the form of each novel was as complicated as the story demanded: 'Aber mit der Schwierigkeit und der Komplexität eines Gegenstandes muß sich auch seine Darstellungsweise verändern'.<sup>32</sup> Post-Adams uses this to explain the form of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*; it is as complicated as the particular reality it portrays:

Die Einsicht in die Dialektik von Form und Inhalt hat sich bei Johnson aus der erkenntnistheoretischen Position ergeben und wurde in der schriftstellerischen Praxis bestätigt. Der Autor sieht einen unmittelbaren Zusammenhang zwischen der Entwicklung der empirischen Wirklichkeit und der Veränderung einer literarischen Struktur, die diese Realität darstellen will; sie sind in einer dialektischen Bewegung verbunden. Mit dem Inhalt ist auch die Form der Vermittlung fragwürdig geworden. Damit sind der Prozeß der Wahrheitssuche und der Prozeß des Schreibens für ihn zur letztmöglichen Position geworden. (Post-Adams, p. 41)

That is indeed broadly the message of 'Berliner Stadtbahn'; the distinctive narrative approach arises from the 'unerhörte Situation'. But once again, it is dangerously misleading to incorporate such statements from the author directly into a critical apparatus. While Johnson's explanation is valid, indeed a fact of life, for the writer, it is of little use to the critic. There is no way of determining which reality is more complex than the next except by putting the cart before the horse and deducing the object from its artistic representation. Johnson's own work supplies an example. 'Berliner Stadtbahn' implies that writing about the division of Berlin requires complex literary means, yet the only Johnson novel to be set almost exclusively in Berlin 1961 is *Zwei Ansichten*, formally the simplest of his works. It might be argued that the intricacies of theme (rather than reality as such) determine those of form; but of course the theme is as complex as the author chooses to make it, and to deny the appropriateness of a particular form to a particular theme is otiose.

Johnson's mistrust of omniscience remains; its origins are best sought in the specific rather than the general. One principle specific to Johnson's work stands out above all others: the obligation of honesty which underpins *Wahrheitsfindung*. The plot of *Ingrid Babendererde* revolves around the central characters' insistence on honesty and political morality in circumstances where such insistence means running a considerable personal risk. The principle of honesty can be detected in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*: Gesine's determined declaration 'Ich möchte nur wahrhaben dass keiner sich hinstellen kann und sagen: so war es und nicht anders. Die Schuld hat der und der' (*MJ*, 167) is symptomatic of a moral obligation which equally applies to writer and narrator. Karsch's fear in *Das*

*dritte Buch über Achim* that ‘unvollständig aber ist lügenhaft?’ (DBA, 212) eventually becomes one of the primary obstacles to the completion of his book. In *Jahrestage* Gesine’s battle to convince Marie of the veracity of her Jerichow story almost destroys the narrative. Again in *Jahrestage*, Hans Magnus Enzensberger is subjected to a clever, sarcastic, bitter attack for publishing private views, and calling them truth; it is the implicit claim to objectivity of ‘seine Wahrheiten’ (JT, 796) more than all Enzensberger’s posturing which provokes the bitterness of this polemic. But keeping to such a self-imposed moral contract with the reader precludes omniscient narration. In Johnson’s search for fictional truth the employment of an all-knowing storyteller represents a tacit denial of the very assumptions which lead to that search. The problem of omniscience is thus crucial to an understanding of the ethics, and therefore the development, of Johnson’s narrative technique.

While the writer’s awareness of his real world is plainly subject to human limitation, it is in the nature of an omniscient narrator to know everything which can be known about his fictional world, whether or not he comments on such knowledge. A narrator who can look into the minds of characters at will cannot plausibly claim to be ignorant of their motives, their values, their relationships. The nineteenth-century writer could employ such a narrative device with impunity, since exhibition of the fictional world was sufficient in itself: how that world was arrived at was no concern of the reader’s, while its fictional truth was taken for granted. But since narrative knowledge in fictional terms means that which is recorded — no knowledge can exist in a novel unless it is recorded — not only may any statement be adjusted to fit its object, but the reverse process may be set in motion. As a result, any omniscient narrator must logically be in full possession of his own fictional truth: under such circumstances it would be insufferably arrogant for this kind of narrator to pretend to show the reader ‘die schwierige Suche nach der Wahrheit’, a ‘Wahrheit’ over which he wields sovereign control. As a technical device used to portray a fictional world underpinned by an urge to reach truth by exposing that effort, the narrator with unlimited knowledge is unsatisfactory. This was the problem Johnson described in ‘Berliner Stadtbahn’. Finding a way of solving that problem was not, however, as straightforward as has previously been proposed.

The obvious solution — placing restrictions on the narrator’s cognizance — gives rise to new complications. For, as we have seen, such restriction would involve providing a separate standard by which the reader may judge the credible extent of the narrator’s knowledge. The only plausible way to do that is to define the narrator, making it possible to infer what he or she could reasonably be expected to know or not to know. The logical consequence would be to use either an *Ich-Erzähler* or *erlebte Rede* from the viewpoint of a protagonist. But this in turn might tend to interfere with the search for truth by



precluding exposition of that search, and by limiting the range of perspective. Yet to use several such perspectives would mean no more than a return to the Jamesian limited point of view and the implied authorial omniscience coupled with what is no more than a convention which the reader must accept unquestioningly, namely that the narrator is only privileged to see into the minds of some of the characters. As Wayne Booth puts it, the Jamesian narrator 'signs an agreement with the reader not to know everything' (Booth, p. 53). The result is the following dilemma: if the narrator is to be non-omniscient and so display the search for truth, he must have defined limits to his knowledge. If his knowledge is to be limited, he must be dramatized as a character. Yet dramatization of the narrator severely limits the range of perspectives. And if the search is to be 'ausdrücklich vorgeführt', then the narrator must be seen to be a fictional narrator engaged in the process of presenting his material. In his pursuit of a way to tell fictional truth, Johnson faced a dilemma which boils down to the difficulty of plausibly combining two requirements: the narrator must be a character in the novel, yet at the same time a self-conscious narrator shown to be confronted with the problems of narration.

*Mutmaßungen über Jakob* shows evidence of a belated, and, in comparison with the later works, an ill-conceived attempt to resolve the dilemma by placing apparent restrictions on the knowledge of what has been an omniscient narrator in the tradition of Fontane. But there is nothing in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* to convince the reader that the narrator is anything more than a co-ordinating omniscient narrator who is manipulating his knowledge to create an illusion of restricted cognition; a double fault, exhibiting his strength rather than his weakness, and displaying a capacity for illusion which is antipathetic to *Wahrheitsfindung*.

A determined attempt to reconcile the disparate requirements mentioned above can be detected in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Karsch is a clearly delineated character, the plausible degree of whose cognizance may thus be inferred with some confidence. Admissions of ignorance similar to those which appear in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* are therefore invested with a plausibility which is crucially absent in the earlier novel. A description of Achim's father may legitimately conclude with the words 'Wer weiß woran er dachte' (DBA, 135), for Karsch as protagonist cannot be expected to know the thoughts of fellow-characters. By the end of the work, as we have seen, it is apparent that Karsch is also the narrator of our novel, on the primary time-level of *Erzählzeit*, a narrator who grapples with the problems (such as how to begin) of the narration on that level. He thus combines the disparate attributes of being simultaneously a defined character in the novel and a self-conscious narrator who openly admits the difficulties of his task. On the face of it, *Das dritte Buch über Achim* would appear to have solved the problem of omniscience without compromising the moral obligations of *Wahrheitsfindung*.

However, close examination of the text reveals that Karsch does enjoy certain narrative privileges incommensurate with his position as character in the novel.<sup>33</sup> Karsch's arrival is observed by Karin, apparently without Karsch's knowledge:

Sie drückte das Fenster auf und sah ihm beim Aussteigen zu; von oben hatte sein Wagen ein langes herrschaftliches Aussehen, und als er vor der Tür gebückt sie abschloß, schien er Abschied zu nehmen. Enttäuscht bemerkte sie das Mißtrauen, das ihn nach wenigen Schritten innehalten ließ und in der Tasche nach den Papieren fühlen, die seine Anwesenheit erlaubten. Er hatte sich aber nicht umgesehen, trat rasch und gleichmäßig auf die Haustür zu. Er stand zwischen den verbrauchten Möbeln und wandte sich um. Sie beschloß in ein andres Zimmer zu ziehen, das zu seiner Ankunft paßte. (DBA, 11)

While on this occasion one might assume that the description is based on something Karin told Karsch later (although that seems improbable), it is highly unlikely that the same could be said of the typewriter-salesman's impressions of Karsch and Karin: 'Dies ist nach kurzem Bedenken der vollständig erhaltene Eindruck des Verkäufers von den Herrschaften . . .' (DBA, 103). Similarly, Karsch and Achim are observed by two sentries: 'Sie sahen auf der anderen Straßenseite die beiden Herren wiederum neben den Parkbänken herankommen. Der eine im grauen Straßenanzug mit der Sonnenbrille, der so lockere Schritte tat, erinnerte sie an jemand' (DBA, 209). It is conceivable that Karsch merely deduced the reactions of salesman and sentries, reactions which in neither case are improbable; furthermore, their thoughts are not represented as such. Omniscience free from internal constraints, such as that which exists in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, cannot, therefore, be established in Johnson's second published novel. Nevertheless, in some level of the text there appears to be potential for extended cognizance which leaves the reader with little recourse to arbitration: Karsch still has a degree of autonomy incompatible with an attempt to show the search for truth. Attacking the narrator's knowledge ultimately transpires to be a futile, Sisyphean method of eroding this autonomy.

In *Das dritte Buch über Achim* a new approach was employed which circumvented, rather than directly assaulted, the problem of omniscience: the decentralization of narrative authority. Johnson once used the phrase 'Verteilung der Kompetenzen' with regard to the characters' roles in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* (see Gerlach/Richter, p. 46). That distribution took place only, however (as Johnson says), with regard to perspective; that is, each character had a different perspective on, and knowledge of, the object in question. The distribution of narrative authority, on the other hand, is no matter of varying perspective, but rather a decentralization of narrative influence. It is the introduction of the interlocutor which erodes the narrator's independence, providing a means by which to restrain the potential for unbridled omniscience. The unacceptable central authority of the traditional narrator is replaced by a decentralized system of narrative forces — not merely perspectives — which hold the narrative on

course by a system of checks and balances. The interlocutor's influence is not derived from knowledge of the story in question — she has almost none at the start — but from her status as recipient, a hypothetical reader to whom Karsch is beholden, as writers are to their reading public.

While the identity of Karsch's interlocutor is indeterminate, she seems to know Karsch personally; the question '*wie war es denn?*' (DBA, 10) presupposes knowledge which an independent questioner would not possess. The inquiry after Karin ('*Wie geht es ihr?*' (DBA, 25)) seems to suggest that she also knew the actress. As we have seen, the first question, as posed at the end of the book, also constituted the first words of a telephone call. But at the same time there is enough textual evidence which indicates the voice to be a fictitious reader who is following the book as it is being written. That the owner of the voice is reading the book becomes clear when the narrator tells how Karsch described his first meeting with Achim: 'Es war eigentlich der Text, den du jetzt als Antwort auf die Frage "wer ist denn Achim" gelesen hast' (DBA, 41); in other words, the text which appears on pages 12 to 16. These circumstances are not free from paradox, however, for when it seems that Karsch is on the point of leaving the GDR, the voice is puzzled: '*Und wieso sind es dann noch so eine Masse Seiten?*' (DBA, 108). This question implies that the owner of the voice has the completed book before her. Yet at the same time the interlocutor exerts an influence on the narrative in progress; Karsch is fully aware that he is attempting to answer the questions put to him: '*wie ich dir nun beantworte was du fragst*' (DBA, 169). The progress of the narrative, it will be seen, is in part conditioned by the abstract presence of the voice. The narrative circumstances, therefore, cannot be elucidated by reference to any realistic state of affairs. While the starting point — the telephoned question — is set in a realistic context, the narrative relationship quickly moves into a realm of fictional abstraction, a structure of purely literary values which could have no counterpart in the real world. The interlocutor inhabits the dual, and paradoxical, positions of a hypothetical reader who is perusing the finished work and of a co-narrator who helps shape the course of the narration. Her status is more that of a narrative device than of a character in the work. The function of the interlocutor is twofold; her co-operation with the narrator results in dynamic narrative form which breaks down the concept of a single, unrestrained narrative force, making the narrator answerable to criticism, and secondly, her inclusion allows the provision of a model of the literary process, ironized and reduced to its abstract essentials, encompassing the whole range from composition to reader reception.

The hypothetical reader's presence keeps the awareness of reader reception constantly to the fore. Karsch's efforts are clearly directed towards responding positively to his abstract auditor: '*Ich habe versucht dir zu beantworten ob es Achim recht war*' (DBA, 182). The danger of misinterpretation and misunderstanding which conditioned Karsch's cautious approach as the novel opened

does not abate; he expresses reservations about describing the ease with which the official responsible granted a residence permit and accommodation:

... denn würdest du nicht aus seiner Redensartlichkeit und dem höflichen Armkrümmen beim Bestempeln und Beschreiben von Karschs Aufenthaltspapier die glückhafte Fügung lesen wollen, die märchenhaft zusammenwuchs aus der überhängenden Wohnlichkeit des Amtszimmers und persönlicher Dienstwilligkeit eines Handlungers, dem Karschs Wünsche gefielen, also ließ er sie zurecht kommen, der Mann ist in Ordnung, der soll mal zeigen was er kann? (DBA, 110)

But at the same time he is not prepared to make compromises, refusing to portray the more lively aspects of his stay merely for their own sake: 'das wäre gewiß sehr viel erregender darzustellen aber wozu' (DBA, 112). Nevertheless he makes little attempt to conceal the inadequacy of his responses: 'Du magst es weniger für eine Antwort halten als für eine unentschiedene Zusammensetzung von Ungefährtem' (DBA, 159). As passive recipient, therefore, the questioner indirectly influences Karsch's narrative approach. But that passivity is balanced by an active readiness to sway the direction and constitution of Karsch's story.

The questioner provides the initial stimulus for the narrative by ringing up Karsch with the question 'Wie war es denn?' (DBA, 10). The latter soon subsides having exhausted what he has to say in answer to the original enquiry and demands another question: 'Frag mich was anderes' (DBA, 12). Already he looks to the questioner to supply the necessary narrative impulse. The query which follows is probably the one uppermost in the reader's mind: 'Wer ist denn Achim?' (DBA, 12). Some of the responsibility for the course of the narration has at this point been relinquished to the interlocutor, whose question determines what will follow. Prey to the insecurity expressed on the first page, the narrator needs the questioner's help in organizing and co-ordinating his material. The query concerning Achim's identity is of no slight importance, since it is one which this book and that of Karsch attempted to answer. The narrator is constantly aware of the question; much later he repeats it to himself: 'Wer war Achim? Er war ein Rennfahrer, denn er fuhr mit anderen auf dem Rade und versuchte schneller zu sein als sie' (p. 98). Similarly the interlocutor raises a major problem which faced Karsch in the GDR and, for that matter, Uwe Johnson writing *Das dritte Buch über Achim*: 'Läßt sich faßlich und genau beschreiben wie die Unterschiede der beiden deutschen Staaten ihm entgegenkamen auf der Straße?' (DBA, 22). The actual differences are not so important as whether they can be described in a way which is 'faßlich und genau'; the focus of interest has been diverted to the central issue of *Wahrheitsfindung*. The questioner, then, is in a position to determine the areas on which emphasis is to be placed during the narration.

The narrator is not entirely powerless to influence the questioner, however, for he repeatedly lays bait to entice her to ask precisely the question which he wants to answer. From page 37 onwards we become aware that Karsch is

engaged in some kind of writing project, and on page 38 we learn that he is writing a book about Achim. The natural question is *'Wie kam das?'* (DBA, 38), which gives the narrator the perfect opportunity to describe Karsch's meeting with Herr Fleisg, and by page 42 the obvious question is *'Was gab Karsch den Gedanken ein zu einem Buch über Achim?'* Similarly, the narrator offers no explanation of why Achim suddenly began to help Karsch with information about his life, and it is clear when the questioner asks why this is so that this was the very cue the narrator had been waiting for:

*Warum hatte Achim sich zur Mitarbeit entschlossen?*

Ja. Warum gab er einen ganzen Vormittag her zu einer Zeit des Trainings, da er nicht einmal im Auto zurückfahren durfte ins Lager sondern sich mit dem Rad um die ganze Stadt herumarbeiten mußte, nur damit ihm keinen Augenblick aus dem Sinn ging welche Bewegungen das Fahren auf dem Rad erforderte? (DBA, 96)

The narrator is perceptibly relieved at having finally been asked the question which will allow the explanation he wants to provide. The answers may be shaped in such a way that the interlocutor is subtly guided into asking the questions the narrator requires to steer the narrative in the direction he wants.

Each of the two may exercise certain influences on the narrative course, occasionally conflicting in a way which disrupts their harmonious relationship. When Karsch in the GDR decides to replace sections made sparse by Achim's reticence with detailed descriptions of his subject's cycle races, the interlocutor is clearly unconvinced, laconically commenting: *'Na, Radfahren bleibt aber Radfahren'* (DBA, 221). In response, the narrator describes in precise detail the years of technique and skill which went into the maturing of Achim's superlative ability. He concludes with a rhetorical question not untinged with sarcasm: *'Bezahlst du Geld um das zu sehen, wenn Radfahren Radfahren bleibt, und der kann es nicht einmal besser?'* (DBA, 223). Thus challenged, the interlocutor sullenly retorts: *'Gib bloß nicht so an'* (DBA, 223), a reaction which Karsch as narrator sees fit to ignore: *'Du kannst es ja so finden'* (DBA, 223). This implicit devaluation of the questioner's opinion, followed as it is by Karsch's return to Achim's first acquisition of an (inadequate) racing bike, merely provokes the irritable comment: *'Na ja und?'* (DBA, 230). Ignored once again, the interlocutor finally loses patience with the technical descriptions of cycling: *'Hör endlich damit auf!'* (DBA, 237). This prompts the sharp rejoinder: *'Beschwere dich nicht. Genauigkeit, mit der du bedient werden willst, würde noch mehr als den Zusatz erlauben: wie lang sind so Rennräder eigentlich, ich meine über alles'* (DBA, 237). The narrator does agree to stop, however. Despite resistance, the interlocutor has performed the very necessary task of restricting the narrator, forcing him to re-examine his criteria of selectivity, and so averting the growing threat of Karsch exploiting uncontrollably the vast, potentially limitless, corpus of information which is plainly at his disposal. After this nadir in the narrative relationship Karsch has to work hard to regain the questioner's interest, which

he does by listing the various alternative means he had considered for depicting Achim's life, leaving an obvious possibility for the questioner to contribute: '*Oder als Film, nicht wahr?*' (DBA, 247). Although the 'nicht wahr' might imply concealed criticism of the veracity accessible to that medium, harmony has clearly been restored between the two. Nevertheless, the conflict imposed vital constraints on the narrator, who, in his search for 'Genauigkeit', had threatened to go beyond the bounds of what might reasonably be expected to form part of our book.

The questioner plays the role of a kind of watchdog over the narrator on other occasions too, stiffly suggesting that he may be guilty of manipulating facts: '*Will der Verfasser damit die Übergriffe der Besatzungsmächte vergessen machen?*' (DBA, 153). She insists on a return to the subject in hand when the narrative appears to be straying into irrelevance: '*Also bitte. Wie wuchs Achim auf?*' (DBA, 148). Severity does not always characterize this kind of intervention; after Karsch's despairing cry of '*Wieviel Buchstaben hat das Alphabet?*' (DBA, 252), which concludes his abortive effort to find alternative ways of depicting Achim's life (labelling each one with a letter), the questioner steps in to distract him by requesting a change of subject: '*Nun mal was anderes*' (DBA, 252). Although Karsch clearly compensates for his own insecurity by reliance on the interlocutor in this way, he by no means entirely relinquishes his narrative authority. He is not afraid to assert himself with a flat negative if misunderstanding threatens:

*Hatte er denn inzwischen ein Bier trinken können mit Herrn Fleisg, begriff er ihn nun?*  
Nein. (DBA, 111)

Neither is the questioner allowed to impose her preconceptions on the narrative unhindered:

*Man lernt doch die Leute kennen, bevor das Geschäft anfängt*  
Nein (DBA, 113)

In each case Karsch as narrator has rejected the questioner's intervention as inappropriate; he is able to defend himself against what might be detrimental influences exerted by his partner.

The narrative strategy of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* is a dynamic process which results from the interaction of two discrete forces, producing a form of narration which owes little to the tradition of a single, all-knowing story-teller. The focus of interest finds its own course balanced between the twin influences of narrator and interlocutor. Their opposition results in a kind of narrative dialectic, in this case cyclical, which is resolved on the last page of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, only to begin implicitly once more. This dialectic emerges more distinctly in the narrative relationship between Marie and Gesine in *Jahrestage*, which moves from disagreement through conflict to the point of self-destruction, but, averting that fate, finally resolves into synthesis, allowing the

narrative to reach its appointed end. Distribution of narrative authority is thus more than just a 'Verteilung der Kompetenzen' in Johnson's sense, more than merely allowing different characters to dispense varying views of the same events. The decentralization detectable in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* is a matter of structural dynamics; the interplay of narrative forces. This is the major advance in technique which made the battle with omniscience superfluous by placing immanent structural constraints on the narrator, a technique which was to be immensely refined in *Jahrestage*, determining the intricate complexity of that novel's narrative structure. But the newly-won technical advance was not to be exploited for another five years; in the intervening period both *Karsch, und andere Prosa* and *Zwei Ansichten* ironically acknowledged defeat in the face of narrative omniscience.

## IV TRANSITION

All the stories in *Karsch, und andere Prosa* (1964) are unashamedly traditional in form. With one exception none of them, however, should be regarded as self-contained pieces of prose.<sup>1</sup> 'Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960' offers, for instance, an alternative perspective on *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, highlighting the detrimental psychological effects which the GDR experience had on Karsch.<sup>2</sup> The story is told using an unambiguous neutrally omniscient narrator, which suggests that Johnson, at least, did not consider departure from traditional narrative patterns to be a matter of universal aesthetic necessity. If the '1960' of the title refers to the writing as well as the setting of the story, it may well have been the original sketch for *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Some of the other stories, it is now clear, are prototypes for episodes of *Jahrestage*; the story 'Osterwasser' (*KP*, 7–17), for instance, is mentioned by Marie in *Jahrestage* (see *JT*, 1254), while Grete Selenbinder, in 'Beihilfe zum Umzug' (*KP*, 18–28), figures prominently in Johnson's final novel. As Ingrid Riedel notes, *Karsch, und andere Prosa* is made up of story elements which are parts of wider contexts: they are not unified by an underlying concept.<sup>3</sup> A cynic might suggest that the volume was produced to sustain public interest in Uwe Johnson during the four-year gap between *Das dritte Buch über Achim* and *Zwei Ansichten*. Comprising only eighty-nine pages of large, well-spaced type, these texts have only a peripheral relevance to this analysis of the technical evolution in Johnson's novels. All the same, the omniscient narrative perspective adopted is symptomatic of the rather more complex, but related approach to be found in *Zwei Ansichten* (1965).

In common with Johnson's other works, *Zwei Ansichten* is frequently not excepted from the assumption that Johnson religiously employs a non-omniscient narrator. Marcel Reich-Ranicki maintained that 'Johnson hält es für angebracht, über das Wissen seiner Hauptfiguren nicht hinauszugehen. Nur das wird also dem Leser geboten, was B. und D. sehen, erkennen, erleben'.<sup>4</sup> That view is belied, however, in the novel's final pages, which reveal that in fact a first-person narrator has been responsible for telling the story. Other critics consequently accept (with some reluctance) the existence of an omniscient narrator in Johnson's third published novel, but are at a loss to explain his presence. Riedel, for instance, asserts that 'Das Auftauchen des Erzählers. . . wirkt . . . unorganisch, wie angeklebt' (Riedel, p. 123). Indeed, in the light of the manifest importance accorded to narrative reflexion in Johnson's other novels after 1959, *Zwei Ansichten* apparently represents a remarkable exception. At first



sight the novel only seems to concern itself with the narrator's role in the most perfunctory manner, so that at least one critic has relegated the status of the narrator to that of an inconsequential joke: 'only a minor ploy at the very end of the book when the story teller suddenly materializes as a participant in the action. . . playfully disrupts the sense of a conventional narrator who is omniscient'.<sup>5</sup> But detailed textual examination reveals that the narrator in *Zwei Ansichten*, while omniscient, is by no means conventional; nor is his appearance in the final pages of the book a disruption, but confirmation of a narrative strategy whose framework can be traced throughout the whole of the novel.

The structure and external events of the novel are clear enough for them to be schematically represented, a task which the reader of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* might face with trepidation. On a cursory reading the narrative perspective does indeed initially appear to be confined to the 'zwei Ansichten' of the title, namely B., a young West German photographer-cum-chemist's assistant, and the East German nurse D. The book is divided into ten chapters devoted alternately to each main protagonist, beginning with B. The brief but abortive relationship which the two enjoyed early in 1961 is gradually revealed through the memories of the ex-lovers. The plot concerns the attempts of B. to replace his newly acquired but soon stolen sports car and to fulfil his dreams of parading the vehicle before D., who meanwhile grows more and more dissatisfied with her way of life, eventually seizing the opportunity to depart for the 'neue Welt' of the West. As the story progresses a strong impression is created of purely implied authorship. Yet when B. is struck by a bus on his final arrival in Berlin, the narrator unexpectedly dramatizes himself: 'Ich habe ihn aufheben helfen und bin mit dem heulenden Krankenwagen zur Unfallstation gefahren' (ZA, 239). Our narrator also has personal contact with the other main character, D. When the latter receives her Western identification papers she seeks accommodation:

Sie wurde eine Woche lang aufgenommen von einem jungen Ehepaar, das ein kleines Kind hatte. . . Sie erzählte höflich, ein wenig befangen, von Ostberlin. Später nahm sie mir ein Versprechen ab. — Aber das müssen sie alles erfinden, was Sie schreiben! sagte sie. Es ist erfunden. (ZA, 242)

We can surmise that D.'s host is the narrator of our novel; his information is drawn from D., and presumably B. as well.

But although the narrator only admits his first-person identity in the closing stages of the book, his explicit presence can be detected on several occasions throughout the novel. D. falls asleep in the *U-Bahn*: 'und sie fuhr erst auf, als drei (drei? ja) jüngere Herren. . . den Mann vom Sitz zogen zum Türgang. . .' (ZA, 53–54). The narrator momentarily interrupts D.'s *erlebte Rede*, on the pretext of having to verify the accuracy of his information, and simultaneously registers his presence as an independent figure in the narrative structure. Similarly the illusion of a disinterested, impersonal story teller is broken for the briefest of moments as D. tries to discover why she has begun to travel aimlessly

through the town: 'die ziellose Fahrerei, die müssigen Gänge hatten (meint sie) aber auch zu tun mit wahlloser Neugier auf die Stadt, in der sie lebte' (ZA, 108). The use of the present tense, 'meint sie', provides a clue to the narrative dynamics, indicating a time level different to that of the *erzählte Zeit*; the narrator momentarily emerges into the *Erzählzeit*, the time when he is telling the story. A further hint is to be found when the narrator mentions B.'s return to Berlin in early October: 'Er kam zurück nach West Berlin' (ZA, 132). The choice of words suggests that the teller of our story is himself in Berlin. The narrator represents a third strand of consciousness, a third point of view, whose proximity can intermittently be determined by the reader.

A model for the system of narrative relationships in *Zwei Ansichten* is furnished by a dream D. has when she is visited by fear and anxiety towards the end of her time in the GDR: 'Ein anderer Traum, der nur einmal kam, ging in drei durchsichtigen Schichten übereinander. Sie berichtete, sie machte eine Aussage. Sie war aber auch mitten drin' (ZA, 204). D. makes an 'Aussage' to the narrator about her experiences in the East, material which is then transformed into our story. Hence the figure of the nurse is present on two levels, that of the construction of the story, and that of her meeting and subsequent relationship with B. The consciousness of the latter character, which is treated with a distinct measure of irony, might be represented by the third 'Schicht' in D.'s dream. This image of narrative structure bears striking similarities to those of Johnson's other major novels. All three strands of time and consciousness merge in the penultimate and final chapters as the *erzählte Zeit* reaches the *Erzählzeit*, just as it does in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, and *Jahrestage*.

These circumstances involve a certain amount of paradox. Ingrid Riedel sees the revelation of the authorial 'ich' as an indication of the presence of an 'auktorialer Erzähler' as defined by Stanzel (see Riedel, p. 122). This cannot in theory be the case, since an authorial narrator in this sense may comment on the action but may not actually take part in it. To do so, as the narrator of *Zwei Ansichten* does, is to become an *Ich-Erzähler* and hence limited to the information plausibly acquired within the parameters of the particular fictional world at hand. There is much in the text to support the view of an *Ich-Erzähler* who acknowledges the sources of his information and so the limits of his knowledge. As we have seen, apart from the appearance of the 'ich' in the final pages, there are clues which indicate the true circumstances of narration throughout the novel. Yet by making the supererogatory assurance that his fictional information is fictionalized, the narrator deliberately dismantles the device of a first-person narrator, replacing it with what might be regarded as an authorial projection. For the details given of the 'junges Ehepaar' living in Berlin tally with those of Johnson's own life, though in 1965, not in 1961. The author was also certainly involved in a project to write about the activities of the

Girman-Gruppe, an escape organization. This stratagem may be designed to imply a fictional projection of the author into the setting of his book, the creation of an identifiable alter ego in his fictional world. In this the narrator, intimating as he does the similarity between the 'Ich' of *Zwei Ansichten* and Johnson's own circumstances at the time, would appear once more to be delineating the parameters of his knowledge: the implication is that the teller of our story has access to a similar corpus of information in his fictional universe as Johnson the author might reasonably be supposed to have in the historical world.

But that kind of delimitation is disrupted in turn by the use of perspective in the text. Although demonstrably an *Ich-Erzähler*, who, if in the main quiescent, is nonetheless involved during the whole of the novel, the narrator at the same time enjoys a sovereign ability not only to occupy the minds of the two main characters, but also to take up a perspective from incidental outside figures in order to view B. and D. externally. This omniscience is apparent when a customer comes into B.'s shop: 'Der war nur erstaunt, daß der Verkäufer, dem überdies der weiße Mantel offenstand, über eigenen Angelegenheiten ihn warten ließ' (ZA, 28). D. is likewise seen through the eyes of incidental characters; as the nurse wanders aimlessly through the autumn streets, the narrator briefly employs the viewpoint of passers-by, in order to determine the success of D.'s efforts to appear purposeful:

Der helle Mantel, die fest in die Taschen gestemmtten Hände ließen sie entschlossen aussehen, die Lippen lagen nicht fest aufeinander, den Nacken hielt sie gerade, so daß die Entgegenkommenden doch nicht auf einen versonnenen, eigentlich auf einen zielbewußten Blick zu treffen meinten. (ZA, 107).

Similarly, when the drunk and maudlin B. relates the loss of his car to the *Wirtin*, the narrator adopts a perspective outside B.:

Sie ließ ihn erzählen vom Diebstahl seines Wagens, und bewegte mißbilligend den Kopf, gerade als er Mißbilligung für den Dieb erwartete, ihm fielen die spöttischen Laute gar nicht auf, die sie mit der Zunge an den Zähnen hervorbrachte, das gespielte Mitleid für Kinder. (ZA, 168)

On other occasions, too, the narrator is able to make observations outside B.'s field of perception: 'Die Frau am Stand mit den Ansichtenpostkarten sah dem Kerl groß hinterher, wie er lang und angeregt die Promenade hinunterstelte' (ZA, 36). The teller of our story adjusts the perspectives just as it suits his purposes to do so, adopting an ironic distance to B. whenever necessary. He is able to wander freely through the text, speaking in the first person as well as through the perspective of any third person of his choice. That he does not necessarily use the perspective of every character is by no means evidence that he cannot do so.

Furthermore it is quite apparent that he does indeed comment, if only implicitly, on the action, by adopting an ironic stance towards B., viewing him

with a distinctly jaundiced eye, while making his sympathies for D. equally obvious. Despite his dramatization, the narrator of *Zwei Ansichten* does bear an extremely close resemblance to the traditional authorial narrator so emphatically rejected in 'Berliner Stadtbahn'. The essay of 1961 clearly has no bearing whatever on the novel of 1965. More than that, *Zwei Ansichten* belligerently runs counter to the policy (the pragmatism of which is thus finally confirmed) of attempting to restrict narrative omniscience directly, a policy which was tested to the limits of its practical usefulness in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Both the narrative cognizance and the narrative authority are firmly united in the author-narrator figure of *Zwei Ansichten*, a figure which is defiantly paradoxical and beyond the range of theoretical classifications such as those put forward by Stanzel. The narrative tactics of this novel reinforce rather than question the supremacy of the author in his own fictional world.

Indeed, this curiously negative, pessimistic approach extends to other questions which are an integral part of Johnson's approach to literature. D. might be termed a typical Johnson character; conscientious, intelligent, observant, principled, though quite naturally capable of mistakes and wrong decisions. Indeed she is very reminiscent of Gesine Cresspahl. It is all the more noticeable, then, that B. is by no means typical of Johnson. He is mean, immature, shallow, foolish, selfish, self-deceptive, and altogether a quite unpleasant character on the edge of caricature. Unlike Joachim T. he cannot be excused on the grounds of political idealism; his thoughts hardly stray from himself long enough to allow any consideration of wider issues. If B. is a cipher for the *Bundesrepublik*, as has been maintained by several critics, then *Zwei Ansichten* contains a terrible and bitter indictment of West German society.<sup>6</sup> The ironic treatment of love in *Zwei Ansichten* (B.'s love is directed more towards himself than D., while the latter quickly becomes indifferent to the West German's attentions) stands in sharp contrast to the credible, tender love of Jonas Blach for Gesine, or Gesine for Jakob. The sentimentality of the *Bauernsohn* confessing to B. that he cannot bear to be apart from his girlfriend is rare in Johnson, although the incident serves as a foil to B.'s behaviour and indeed to that of D.; the girlfriend of the farmer's son is afraid to run the risk of crossing the border (see ZA, 66-67 and 80). In another unusual departure for Johnson, the plot is set in motion by an unmistakable phallic symbol, namely the powerful, red sports car, stolen from B., with which he had intended to impress D. The sexual connotations of such an object can hardly be ignored, particularly when it is repeatedly referred to as 'sein rotes Ding' (ZA, 15). Cheated of the chance to display his 'rotes Ding' to D., B. puts all his efforts into retrieving what he has lost; the absent status symbol conditions the course of the novel's external events. Moreover, the nearest Johnson ever gets to portraying explicit sex is in *Zwei Ansichten*; an unwritten rule which pervades the author's work is broken, unfortunately resulting in a rather clumsy euphemism: 'B. zog die Frau von der Bettkante hinter das Fußteil

auf den staubmuffigen Teppich und zwängte sie aus den Kleidern, bis er ihr seinen lebendigsten Teil beibringen konnte. . .' (ZA, 93).

More importantly, the characters occasionally deal with the problem of memory and the past in quite the reverse of the manner adopted by characters elsewhere in Johnson's work. The familiar endeavours to recreate the past, to preserve and reassemble fragments of memory in order to overcome the erosive power of time which are so important in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, and above all *Jahrestage*, find little place in *Zwei Ansichten*. In this novel evasion of the past, the eradication of undesirable or unpleasant memories assumes a dominant position.

In Berlin, B. tries to suppress the shame and indignity caused by the theft of his car by swamping his mind with alcohol. On returning to his home town the young West German 'hoffte hilflos, er könne alles ungeschehen machen, und sei es mit Vergessen' (ZA, 22). He tells nobody what has happened, explaining his return by public transport with implausible lies: 'er brachte es nicht über sich, von den vier Stromkreisen und dem leeren Platz vor dem Hotel zu erzählen, mochte daran auch nicht denken' (ZA, 24). After his drunken excursion to Stuttgart he is unwilling to remember his indignity on the train: 'er traute sich nicht jemandem in die Augen zu sehen, er mochte sich nicht erinnern' (ZA, 90). Directly after this he is visited by the couple at whose flat he met D.; he tries to suppress thoughts even of her: 'er. . .erkannte. . .das Ehepaar, in dessen Wohnung in Westberlin er die D. kennengelernt hatte, so daß wieder nicht abgetan war, woran er nicht noch einmal hatte denken mögen' (ZA, 90). In time this kind of memory suppression leads B. to create a new, self-orientated image of D.: 'willentlich bekam er [die Einzelheiten] nicht zusammen, bildete sich inzwischen ein überschmales, blutjunges, verängstigtes Wesen ein an Stelle der D. und überließ sich schwärmerisch dem Genuß des Verlustes, den er sich zugute hielt, fühlte sich ehrenhalber angehalten zu Treue, er meinte Enthaltung' (ZA, 152). This false reconstruction becomes a dangerous matter, almost proving the downfall of his plan to see D. in the West, and indeed nearly resulting in D.'s imprisonment. B. wrongly gives the colour of D.'s eyes as grey-green when her false passport is being assembled by the escape organization; her fury at this most obvious revelation of the emptiness of B.'s declarations of love make her refuse to meet him and his new 'rotes Ding' in Hamburg, indeed even to speak to him. B.'s pursuit of 'Angesehensein' (ZA, 130) has finally been foiled by his own self-deception: his failure in reconstructing indistinct memories becomes a personal catastrophe.

D. also suppresses thoughts and memories as her family breaks up and her surroundings become less and less bearable: 'So wich sie jetzt aus vor Einfällen, von denen sie nicht hätte zurücktreten können, auf der Hut, der Flucht vor einem Entschluß, sie schwärzte die Stelle in Gedanken, klinkte sich aus, verzog sich auf die erstbeste Seite' (ZA, 108). She even seems to transform her efforts to

wash away memories into physical action: '[sie] wusch sich aber auch die Haare, wenn sie mit der Handfläche an die Schläfe gekommen war und vielleicht doch nur leichte Haftung der Strähnen gespürt hatte und nicht eine Erinnerung' (ZA, 109). In the same way as alcohol was for B., physical work becomes a means of repressing mental activity as far as D. is concerned: 'sie wusch Geschirr aus Gefälligkeit für andere, polierte den Fußboden mit dem schweren Bohnerbesen, die gleichförmigen Bewegungen drängten das Denken so wohltätig zurück' (ZA, 182). D. leaves her subconscious to grapple with the problem of her dissatisfaction, a problem to which she avoids applying any conscious deliberation. The letter from B. saps her of any further will to suppress thoughts of leaving for the West: 'Danach war die Erinnerung kaum noch wegzudrängen' (ZA, 187). The memory of West Berlin increases in strength, and D.'s final capitulation solves the problem for her. But in her case, suppression of the mental images memory represents extends to other workings of the imagination as she envisages showing B. round the hospital: 'Mit der Wiederholung wurden die Vorstellungen ausgelaut, das lebendige und bewegte Bild ungreifbarer, ausgedörnt zu Wortfolgen' (ZA, 190). This barren image is both indicative of D.'s despair and symptomatic of the unprofitable road along which *Zwei Ansichten* travels.

Both the thematic and the narrative approach of *Zwei Ansichten* amount to an almost mechanical reversal of the techniques tested in Johnson's second novel, creating an ironic counterpoint to the successful strategy which was to be adopted with renewed vigour and sophistication in *Jahrestage*. The employment of an omniscient narrator ironically concealing his omniscience by dramatizing himself as an *Ich-Erzähler* has none of the advantages and refinements of the narrative scheme of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. The only detectable narrative legacy of *Zwei Ansichten* to emerge in Johnson's major novel is the authorial projection, which, however, far from assuming the sovereign position evident in *Zwei Ansichten*, is incorporated as an element of the narrative dynamics. The question arises of why the moral imperative which so dominates Johnson's narrative approach in other cases seems here to diminish in importance. The answer lies in the nature of the subject matter: Herr B. is a paradigm of cynicism who is as dishonest with himself as with others. This cynicism is documented in *Jahrestage* by Gesine Cresspahl's letter to Anita Gantlik (the *Wirtin* of *Zwei Ansichten*); Gesine asks her if she remembers Dietbert B., 'den Fotografen, den Weltmann' and others who asked for escapes to be organized:

Hörte man sie reden, so ging ihnen die Entfernung von der geliebten Person ans Leben, waren sie einander unentbehrlich um jeden Preis, und tatsächlich reichte es ihnen nicht einmal zu einem beliebigen Ort, da zusammen zu leben. Dann war die absolute, bedingungsfreie Liebe doch nur möglich in der kapitalistischen Konjunktur. Schiet, Mensch! (JT, 189)

Perhaps it was with Gesine's contemptuous exclamation in mind that Johnson made his farewells to Berlin and West Germany. After D.'s arrival in the 'neue

Welt' of West Berlin, Johnson turned his attention to the new world of Gesine Cresspahl in the USA. The unproductive course pursued by *Zwei Ansichten* was to be abandoned in favour of renewed efforts to hinder the erosive progress of time.

PART TWO  
*JAHRESTAGE*





## V JAHRESTAGE: NARRATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

In the struggle to salvage by fictional means a world submerged in the past, *Jahrestage* resorts to a set of narrative circumstances whose paradoxical complexity requires comprehensive explication. The novel shows at its most distinctive the familiar Johnsonian structural pattern of *erzählte Zeit* beginning at a point well previous to the fictional present, gradually catching up and merging with the *Erzählzeit*: to paraphrase Johnson in *Begleitumstände*, 'hier sollte es einmal einer Katze gelingen, den eigenen Schwanz zu fangen' (*BU*, 416). Expanding on a model already familiar from *Zwei Ansichten*, Johnson projects himself quite explicitly into the narrative world of *Jahrestage* as 'Genosse Schriftsteller' (hereafter abbreviated to GS and treated as a name). As usual, it is important to preserve the distinction between GS, a fictional narrator, and Uwe Johnson the author, who, also as usual, is reluctant to accept any such differentiation. He peremptorily informed Manfred Durzak, who broached this topic, that 'Ich bin gar keine Fiktion'. However, he is for once willing to compromise, settling on the formulation 'ich gehe rein'.<sup>1</sup>

The novel which Johnson admits to entering records a year in the life and a life in the year of Gesine Cresspahl, who is living and working in New York with her daughter Marie. Gesine spends the year retracing the story of her family and forebears from around 1920 to the fictional present in 1968. At the same time she gradually unfolds an account of her experiences since arriving in New York seven years previously. Some of the family story she relates in dialogue with Marie, while some is in the form of direct narration which bypasses the child. Other means of access to the past include photographs, letters, newspapers and the voices of Gesine's dead family and friends, who live on in her mind. The daily life of New York is registered by such diverse means as the *New York Times*, television, photographs, narration, discussion, dialogue, and dramatic representation, interspersed with the odd pastiche or polemic. Of those means the *New York Times* is undoubtedly the most important, in terms of both frequency and significance, supplying as it does Gesine's image of the outside world. That supply is frequently subjected to the most critical examination, however, the newspaper being personalized in Gesine's mind as 'Tante Times' for the purpose. Ironically referred to on one occasion as 'unsere erprobte Lieferantin von Wirklichkeit' (*JT*, 609), the *New York Times* offers a foil to Gesine's crises of social conscience, providing a kind of polemical adversary which allows such crises to be debated. The year with which the novel concerns

itself is distinguished on a personal level by Gesine's preparation for her assignment in Prague (the last chance she is granting socialism) and the progress both of her relationship with DE (abruptly terminated by his death) and of that with her daughter.

The diary-like format allows an entry to be made for each day from 20 August 1967 to 20 August 1968 inclusive, resulting in a book comprising three hundred and sixty-seven chapters of varying length (1968 being, of course, a leap year). Reviewers and critics very soon noticed that the final entry would coincide with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. There seems no reason to disbelieve Johnson's assurance that the coincidence was not intentionally programmed since he conceived the time-structure before that historical event ever took place.<sup>2</sup> In any case, whether the date was fortuitous or not is irrelevant to the literary quality of the work. But Johnson's description in a 1973 interview of how that date was arrived at is interesting if only for the discrepancy between the original concept and the final result, particularly in terms of dimension. With reference to 20 August 1968, Johnson explains:

... ich wußte nicht, als ich zu schreiben anfing, was an dem Tag sein würde. Denn ich war am 19. August (1967) an der See von New Jersey, am Atlantik, und habe mir gedacht, hier könnte ich diese Person mir vorstellen, hier ist sie wahrscheinlich. Und am nächsten Tag habe ich angefangen zu schreiben. Ich dachte ja, einen Tag etwas anzusehen, am nächsten Tag zu schreiben — ich dachte, pro Tag drei Seiten, was kann das werden, das sind 700 Seiten dann, das ist mir dann nicht gelungen. Aber ich war nun mal festgelegt auf den Anfang 19. August 1967, und was da passierte am 20. August 1968, das war nicht zu ahnen, das war aus keinem Akzent der Zeitungsberichte zu erkennen; das war noch gar nicht da.<sup>3</sup>

From Johnson's description in *Begleitumstände* (BU, 405–16) his first thoughts of *Jahrestage* were in April 1967. The concept having crystallized in August of that year, he began writing on 29 January 1968. A note at the end of *Jahrestage 4* reveals that the project was finally completed on 17 April 1983. Obviously Johnson must quite quickly have abandoned his original intention of producing *Jahrestage* as one volume of seven hundred pages in a year or two, but the ten-year delay in completion requires some explanation.

Concluding *Begleitumstände* in 1980, Johnson described discovering in 1975 that for most of their married life his wife had deceived him with 'einem Vertrauten des S.T.B., des tschechoslowakischen Staatssicherheitsdienstes' (BU, 451). Apart from suffering heart disease and depression as a result, Johnson found that his ability to write was severely damaged by the realization that many of the personal experiences on which he had been basing the 'Wahrheit' of *Jahrestage*, indeed all of his works after 1961, were in fact illusions, founded on lies. This meant that the author's ability to preserve the integrity of his fictional production was acutely compromised. Johnson never provided any evidence to prove his extraordinary allegations, which included the accusation that he had

been exploited as a source of information for the Czechoslovakian secret service; acquaintances of the author are at a loss to explain why he should have propagated such an improbable story. But the ensuing writer's block, explained as the refusal of Gesine to communicate, was real enough, and took several years to overcome. The writer finally confronted his personal distress in *Skizze eines Verunglückten* (1981). But it is fair to say that almost no detectable traces of the experience were left on *Jahrestage 4* except as far as the date of appearance is concerned, and so the admissions of *Begleitumstände* have little place in explaining the literary problems which delayed *Jahrestage*.

Yet even without personal upsets the final volume would still have been around three years late. By 1979 Rolf Michaelis was speculating that the novel was unfinishable in the light of 20 August 1968.<sup>4</sup> But that problem was less imponderable than the stresses imposed on narrative relationships, stresses which become more and more apparent throughout volumes 2 and 3, and which are an inevitable byproduct of the distribution of narrative authority essential to Johnson's literary approach. In particular, the narrative interplay between GS and Gesine is mirrored in the latter's relationship with the dead (the characters in her story) and with Marie (the recipient of Gesine's account), thereby offering a paradigm of the primary narrator's relationship with the reader, a constellation already familiar from *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Apart from exposing more general truths about the workings of fiction, an examination of the novel's narrative dynamics will furnish some important clues to the structural imbalances which threatened the completion of *Jahrestage*.

For reasons which will be explained in due course, it is Gesine who should be regarded as the chronicler of her family's prosperity and decline from 1920 onwards; that is, she rather than GS carries the bulk of narrative responsibility. Her recreation of the Papenbrock-Cresspahl saga, however, while based on as many facts as Gesine can muster, takes the form not of a history, but of a story. Although the status and validity of her information will require further investigation, suffice it at this stage to say that Gesine is in search of a fictional truth, a possible version of a lost reality, rather than a historical account, as she self-correctingly tells Marie: 'Ich wollte dir nur erklären wie es war. Wie es gewesen sein könnte' (*JT*, 560). The Jerichow story therefore constitutes a working model of literature in production, set itself in the framework of a fictional world, just as the story of Karsch was in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. The fictional setting allows the model to be examined and analysed in a way which is impossible with a work of literature per se, isolated as it is by the divide between fiction and reality, and thus between author and work. The Jerichow level in *Jahrestage*, on the other hand, offers an opportunity to study author, narrator, story, and recipient on the same terms, since the literary process is itself fictionalized.

Matters are complicated, of course, by the involvement of GS, whose presence allows the depiction of a relationship between narrator and character which, one might speculate, echoes that between author and character. By observing this narrative complex, inferences might be drawn from the fictional representation which illuminate the circumstances surrounding the creation of literature in the real world. The analysis of dynamics will thus be largely (but not entirely) undertaken with reference to the Jerichow story, in which Gesine's authority dominates. From that analysis broader conclusions may be extrapolated.

'Dynamics' is a word used here in a sense akin to its physical meaning of the various forces operating in any field, and the way such forces operate mutually'.<sup>5</sup> The Jerichow story has a natural forward inertia responsible for its progress, as do all stories by definition, which arises from the inevitability of chronology and causal sequence rendered coherent by thematic unity. But the narrative only exists by virtue of Gesine's willingness to harness and supplement that inertia, and continue despite the inherent entropic tendencies of her material and dissent on the part of her recipient. This brings us to the first of two sets of forces which control the narrative.

Linear forces include the narrative origins (Gesine's aims and motivations), which both generate and nurture the story, as well as secondary narrative impulses which help sustain the impetus. These propellant energies are opposed by hindrances which work against the inertial flow, impeding and almost preventing the story's continuation. They might take the form of recalcitrant material, memory deficiency, descriptive difficulties, emotional blocks and other obstacles. The second broad group, lateral forces, influence the direction of the narrative. Although GS assumes the main burden as far as the New York level of narration is concerned, he does not have a free rein; he and Gesine engage in some explicit and much implicit discussion of the narrative material. On the Jerichow level there is a similar dual (and sometimes conflicting) effort between Gesine, who has primary responsibility for telling the story, and Marie, who acts as a kind of critical interlocutor, a reader figure with a very similar (though more concrete) role to that of the questioner in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Marie has the power to influence Gesine's story in various ways. Sometimes she doubts its veracity in terms both of historical and fictional truth. She expresses preferences as far as content is concerned and not infrequently objects on both moral and political grounds. An emotional inability or refusal to accept certain elements of Gesine's story on the part of Marie forces her mother to think very carefully about the course the narrative is taking. A further directional influence on the story is exercised by the dead. They too have an independent status, and manifest themselves as voices Gesine hears in her head, voices over which she has no control. Their main function is that of a conscience, taking Gesine to task particularly with regard to her handling of the story in which they are the primary figures.

The decentralization of narrative authority is thus refined in *Jahrestage* by the construction of a dynamic system of forces which act in different directions in such a way that their oppositions are neutralized, so that the course, rate, and consequently substance of the narrative are determined by the residue. Underlying is the inevitable progression of time which is built into the structure of the work, so that the focus of interest moves from the 1920s to the present, signified by a point which is itself moving a day at a time, ultimately to coalesce and so be resolved on 20 August 1968. That much can be said in general terms, but as usual in Johnson, elucidating the parameters of the fictional world in question is no simple matter: the narrative circumstances of *Jahrestage* are as apparently paradoxical as those of the earlier novels, but distinctly more complicated.

Johnson was not afraid to reveal his own notion of the *Jahrestage* universe, making public what is essentially a private matter, namely his relationship to Gesine Cresspahl: 'Hier in den "Jahrestagen" habe ich von einer zugegebenermaßen erfundenen Person quasi den Auftrag oder ich habe mit ihr den Vertrag, hier ihr Leben wiederzufinden und aufzuschreiben in einer Form, die sie billigen würde' (Durzak, *Gespräche*, p. 429). Not only is her approval necessary to his enterprise, but also her permission to delve into her consciousness, from which, according to Johnson, the material of *Jahrestage* is drawn, as he explained in 1971:

Begonnen hat das Buch ja als ein Versuch, dieses Bewußtsein Gesine Cresspahl darzustellen — was es alles enthält an Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Durch das Verhältnis zur Tochter ist die Möglichkeit hinzugekommen, es hier und dort in Gespräche aufzuteilen. Es gibt im zweiten Band gewisse Mitteilungen, die Gegenwart betreffend, die dem Kind vorsorglich gemacht werden, damit es in zehn Jahren sich nicht den Kopf zerbrechen muß über Entschlüsse ihrer Mutter im Jahre 68. Grundsätzlich aber ist es so, daß der Verfasser von seiner Person die Lizenz und den Auftrag hat, die Vorgänge in ihrem Bewußtsein darzustellen.<sup>6</sup>

Once again Johnson does not distinguish between author and narrator; once again for our purposes 'der Verfasser' (or any other expression Johnson uses with reference to himself as author-narrator) must be taken not to mean simply the implied author, but the narrator; in this case GS. In interview with Durzak Johnson energetically denies that GS narrates from an independent position; although he undertakes the task of recording Gesine's consciousness, he adopts her persona to do so (see Durzak, *Gespräche*, p. 439). As the author put it elsewhere 'ich habe immer nur versucht, sie auszudrücken und nicht mich und meine Reaktionen' (Lehner, in Bengel, p. 113).

It is noticeable that Johnson talks of Gesine as though she were a real person, admitting that she had 'für mich . . . einen sehr hohen Realitätsgehalt, sie ist ein Charakter in der Realität', insisting that she was an independent being whom he could not simply force to fit in with what might be for Johnson a more convenient plot: 'Je mehr Eigenschaften, je mehr Äußerlichkeiten, je mehr

Ansichten ich ihr zulege, desto unabhängiger wird sie und desto weniger willkürlich kann ich sie bewegen'.<sup>7</sup> Undeterred by the knowledge that his attitude was likely to provoke disbelief, or at least indulgent amusement amongst his lecture audience, Johnson described in *Begleitumstände* the meetings and negotiations with Gesine which led to the writing of *Jahrestage*.<sup>8</sup> But in spite of it all Johnson was always aware and ready to admit, if regretfully, that Gesine was 'leider leider eine erfundene Person': Gesine could never enter Johnson's world (Post-Adams, *Gespräch*, p. 244). But Johnson was able to enter her world, in a sense, by projecting himself into *Jahrestage* as the fictional creation 'Genosse Schriftsteller', and so it is advisable to assess the novel's narrative circumstances in the light of the above comments. As statements of authorial intention, these comments will be tested against the evidence of the text, not least in order to compare observations on what was still a fragment with the finished product. But first, a number of proposals put forward in the critical literature referring to the narrative circumstances of *Jahrestage* need to be considered.<sup>9</sup>

Although Bernd Neumann's *Utopie und Mimesis* devotes only a comparatively brief final chapter to *Jahrestage*, it does broach an issue of considerable importance: namely that of who tells the story of *Jahrestage*. This is a matter which must be settled if the narrative relationships are to be satisfactorily elucidated. Neumann considers *Jahrestage* to be a reversion from the 'Brechtsche Positionen' of Johnson's earlier novels to the 'epische Totalität' propagated by Lukács.<sup>10</sup> Manfred Durzak takes a similar view, even intimating that Johnson might be criticized for arrogantly writing a trilogy 'die keinen Zweifel an ihrer Befähigung zu haben scheint, die Totalität der modernen Wirklichkeit im erzählerischen Gleichnis einfangen zu können'.<sup>11</sup> Since he had long maintained that all the events of *Jahrestage* arise from Gesine's consciousness, in 1974 Johnson was able to deny any attempt at epic totality in the following terms: 'Solange ich mich auf die Wahrnehmungsfähigkeiten und das Bewußtsein eines einzelnen Subjekts beschränken muß, werde ich ein totales Panorama, ein totales Geschichtsbild wohl nicht erreichen können. Das ist auch nicht meine Absicht. Es käme mir höchst unnatürlich vor, wenn ich einem Subjekt statt individueller Reflexionen und Spiegelungen geschichtliche Gesetze oder sogar Geschichtsschreibung unterlegen sollte'.<sup>12</sup> And again in October 1976: 'ich erzähle soviel wie die Person wissen kann, nicht aber, was sie nicht wissen könnte' (Post-Adams, *Gespräch*, p. 243). That is a view with which Ingeborg Gerlach concurs in the well-conceived image of the narrative circumstances set out in her published thesis *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Identität* (1980).

Unlike Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* or Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, Gerlach maintains, the object of attention is not the city: 'Nicht das Faszinosum New York (respektive Manhattan) soll literarisch bewältigt werden; sondern nur, was Gesine davon direkt oder indirekt wahrnehmen kann und will'.<sup>13</sup> She sensibly notes that Gesine could not possibly literally be telling all of the

Jerichow story to Marie, since some of it is related while she is asleep, some while Marie is absent, and furthermore it would be an impractical enterprise in terms of time, so 'Gesines Bewußtsein erweist sich als konstitutives Moment des Romans und zugleich als dessen Inhalt' (Gerlach, p. 9). On the whole, Gerlach is correct to go along with Johnson in refuting the allegation that *Jahrestage* attempts to achieve epic totality. But she does not notice that on at least one occasion, near the beginning of *Jahrestage 1*, information is imparted of which Gesine knows nothing.

The matter under discussion, it should be noted, concerns the source of narrative material in *Jahrestage*, that is, the extent to which the information imparted derives from Gesine's mind. When the question of narrative perspective is discussed, it will be seen that while a viewpoint outside Gesine may be employed, the information normally only comprises that which Gesine knows or could plausibly surmise. But on the occasion mentioned above, Gesine is assuredly unaware that Marie buys a comic on Sundays from the newspaper dealer, whose perspective is adopted here:

Der Händler kennt auch das Kind dieser Kundin [Gesine] vom Sonnabend, wenn beide mit dem Einkaufswagen die Straße abfahren; das Kind, ein zehnjähriges Mädchen mit einem ähnlichen kugeligen Kopf, aber sandblonden, ausländischen Zöpfen, sagt guten Morgen, als hätte es das auf der 75. Schule einen Block weiter gelernt, und kommt heimlich an Sonntagmorgen, sich eine Zeitung zu holen, die ganz und gar aus gezeichneten Bilderstreifen besteht. Davon weiß die Kundin nichts, noch daß das Kind selten bezahlen muß. (*JT*, 14)

Since GS can be the only source of information in this case, his consciousness must be present as more than just a narrative voice. There are further corroborative examples. On the first *Jahrestage* day the coastal scene at New Jersey is described while Gesine lies asleep on the beach; again her mind could not have furnished the necessary information. On another occasion a conversation between Marie and DE is reported, at which Gesine is not present (see *JT*, 1319). And at the end of the Jewish Congress episode, which in the main is narrated as it must have seemed from Gesine's viewpoint in the audience, four sentences appear which could only emanate from the mind of GS, expressing his future intentions after the harrowing experience: 'Der versucht nicht noch einmal, als Einzelner Juden seine Einzelheiten zu erklären. Der hält sich in Hinkunft versteckt, solange eine Regierung in seinem Namen spricht. Über den neuen westdeutschen Regierungssprecher sagt der keinen Ton mehr. Der macht das nicht noch mal' (*JT*, 257). In the final volume, too, GS allows the fact to emerge that he may serve as an alternative information source to Gesine, although in the most tentative possible manner, speculating on whether Gesine's memory is accurate about which refugee camp she attended after leaving the GDR: 'Daß sie vorstellig wurde im Flüchtlingslager Berlin-Marienfelde, die Erinnerung bietet es an; besteht darauf. Der dies schreibt möchte zweifeln, ob das schon benutzt



wurde im Juli 1953. Das Gedächtnis will, es sie im Bau gewesen seit dem 4. März' (*JT*, 1853). It would be unwise, then, to accept unreservedly Johnson's claim of October 1976 that the cognitive parameters of *Jahrestage* coincide with Gesine's consciousness. The examples quoted above are few enough compared with the bulk of the novel, but nevertheless symptomize the co-operative effort mounted by two narrative consciousness which characterizes *Jahrestage*: GS is not merely a recording tool at Gesine's disposal. But the problem of cognizance does not end here; Gerlach unwittingly reveals a further complication.

In attributing responsibility for the selection of material to be narrated, Gerlach proposes that the narrative is constituted by what she calls 'Gedankenprotokolle'; 'Genauer gesagt: Protokolle von Gesines bewußten Gedanken, von ihrem "zensierten" Bewußtsein. Denn aufgenommen wird nicht der Strom des Halb- und Unbewußten, sondern nur das, was Gesine für überlieferenswert erachtet' (Gerlach, p. 9). Undoubtedly stream-of-consciousness is a technique which has little place in *Jahrestage*. But Gerlach has just mentioned that the report of Lisbeth's death arises when Gesine is 'im Fieber einer schweren Krankheit' (Gerlach, p. 9). It is clear from the chapter for 20 February 1968 that Gesine was confused and delirious while Lisbeth's death was being described; she does not even know that four days have elapsed since she became ill, and remembers little of her dreams and ramblings. 'Bewußtsein', then, is perhaps the wrong word; GS must have access to her unconscious, to her mind as a whole. Gerlach has been misled by the absence of any attempt to reproduce Gesine's thoughts mimetically, absolutely, or consecutively. That would be a haphazard operation at best, and in any case would tend to negate the decentralization of narrative authority. Transformation of Gesine's mental processes into literary terms is favoured instead. In other words, the workings of Gesine's mind, her desires, aversions, fears, and confusions are woven into the text by GS. Conscious thoughts form the resulting fabric's pattern, but (to continue the analogy) subconscious mental operations are represented in the weave. Her unstable sense of identity, for instance, is made apparent by pronominal transitions with reference to Gesine, as will be explained in due course. In this way GS presents a literary representation of Gesine's mind, which may have recourse to such literary devices as *Leitmotiv* and image complexes, if necessary. GS has more responsibility for selecting and organizing the narrative elements than Gerlach gives him credit for.

As Ingeborg Hoesterey notes,<sup>14</sup> the report on Lisbeth's death also undermines the suggested division of roles between GS and Gesine, which Gerlach explains thus: 'Gesine "erzählt"<sup>15</sup> von ihrer mecklenburgischen Vergangenheit, freilich distanziert, was ihre eigene Person betrifft ("das Kind, das ich war"). Ihre Erfahrungen und Reflexionen auf der New York Ebene läßt sie zum guten Teil vom "Genossen Schriftsteller" berichten' (Gerlach, p. 16). Apart from showing that GS must have a narrative role on the Jerichow level (since he, rather than

Gesine, must have narrated the story of Lisbeth's death), Hoesterey objects to Gerlach's implication that GS is at all involved in narrating the New York passages via *erlebte Rede*. For reasons which will be discussed below, she insists that the events in New York are narrated by Gesine in the first person.

In rather an unexpected logical leap from a discussion of pronominal differentiation in *Jahrestage*, Gerlach goes on to assert and justify a renunciation of omniscience on the part of GS: 'Der Autor, indem er auf auktoriale Allwissenheit verzichtet, gewinnt Freiraum für Leerstellen' (Gerlach, p. 18). Neither authorial omniscience nor reception theory<sup>16</sup> have previously been touched upon, but in later chapters Gerlach elucidates. It transpires that she has transferred Neumann's concept of non-aristotelian narration, which includes a renunciation of omniscience, to *Jahrestage*, and, more specifically, to Gesine herself.<sup>17</sup> Although the present study fundamentally rejects the notion that the narrator in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* is non-omniscient, Gerlach is partly correct in assuming that Gesine's knowledge is restricted: since she is a defined character, the limits of her cognition can be established. Nevertheless the matter is a complicated one which deserves further attention; in due course the criteria which Gesine applies to assess the validity of information at her disposal and the extent to which she feels confident enough to elaborate with invention will be examined.

Ingeborg Hoesterey's 1983 article on narrative circumstances in *Jahrestage* took issue with several fundamental points of Gerlach's book. Hoesterey explains the complexities of the narrative situation in *Jahrestage* by reference to 'die beinahe sprichwörtlich gewordene Verunsicherung des modernen Romanciers, der nur noch "Anleihen auf eine Wirklichkeit" machen kann, da er sich der immensen Komplexität zeitgenössischer Realität schmerzhaft bewußt ist' (Hoesterey, pp. 14–15). For reasons already set out, the present study rejects that commonly-proposed explanation for the complexities of Johnson's narrative technique, despite its endorsement (with regard to the modern novel generally) by such an eminent figure as Theodor W. Adorno, the crux of whose 1954 essay on the narrator Hoesterey paraphrases. Nevertheless Hoesterey suggests an interesting image of the *Jahrestage* narrative situation, describing what she calls the 'Makrostruktur' as follows:

Gesine führt/erzählt<sup>18</sup> sowohl das New Yorker Tagebuch, d. h. die Zeit von August 1967 bis Juni 1968, als auch die Rückblenden in die Jerichower (und andere) Vergangenheit, beginnend mit dem Jahre 1931.<sup>19</sup> Indes muß unmittelbar hinzugefügt werden, daß ihre zweisträngige Erzählung kein Unternehmen im Alleingang ist, sondern problematisch überlagert ist durch die Assistenz des Autor-Erzählers. (Hoesterey, p. 14)

Hoesterey never makes it quite clear in what sense the 'Tagebuch' is to be understood; whether Gesine is literally writing a diary, or making mental notes, or telling the story out loud, or mixing several modes of expression remains unexplained. Yet the matter is essential to Hoesterey's argument. She rejects Gerlach's proposition that GS is responsible for the New York level, since that

would imply an 'Er-Erzählung, von der aus Abweichungen stattfinden' (Hoesterey, p. 16), i.e. excursions into the *Ich* form:

So allerdings würde den New Yorker Aufzeichnungen die Qualität des Tagebuchs (und damit der Ich-Aussage) vollends aufgekündigt, eine Identität, welche durch die Datumsangabe durchaus etabliert ist. Uns erscheint es für die Sinnstruktur des Romans unentbehrlich, die New York-Passagen *im Grunde* als Ich-Erzählung Gesines anzusehen, von der aus die diversen Ausflüge in den Er-Bezug unternommen werden. (Hoesterey, p. 16)

Although it seems a flimsy justification to regard Gesine as a first-person narrator simply on the basis of the diary-like construction of *Jahrestage*, it is an indispensable cornerstone of Hoesterey's thesis to establish not only a narrative partnership between Gesine and the 'Autor-Erzähler' (whom Hoesterey seems not to equate unambiguously with the fictionally projected Johnson, i.e. GS of the Jewish Congress episode), but a partnership between two first-person narrators, whereby Gesine's role is 'hauptamtlich' (Hoesterey, p. 23). For Hoesterey proposes that by using a 'strukturelles Doppel' (p. 15) in this way, Johnson implicitly calls into question the authenticity of narrating itself, breaking down the impression of a report, of what Käte Hamburger terms 'fingierte Wirklichkeitsaussage'. Thereby he turns the introspective tendencies of the first-person narrator on to the genre itself, so dealing with 'die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Realität und poetischem Text, die den modernen Roman präokkupiert' (p. 15). The final result, according to Hoesterey, is to precipitate both reader and author into a position of epistemological insecurity: 'Der Text und seine Gestalt sind Instrument und zugleich Manifestationen eines Erkenntnisprozesses von Autor wie Leser, der alles Definierte kritisch in einen Zustand der permanent zu befragenden Polysemie verweist' (p. 24). This argument resembles that used by many reviewers who, encountering *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* for the first time and liking the novel, but unable to explain the labyrinthine structure, were obliged to consider it a formal expression of the complexity and uncertainty of modern existence. In contrast to the pronouncements of those early critics, Hoesterey's case rests on reasoned argument which, however, arises from questionable premises. Hoesterey offers no convincing reason why Gesine should be regarded as an *Ich-Erzählerin* in the first place, and neglects to detail precisely the position which GS occupies in the structure of narrative relationships.

Above all, neither Hoesterey nor Gerlach take full account of a further dimension, namely the widespread use of quite another perspective, external to Gesine. *Jahrestage* actually opens with an independent, camera-eye viewpoint, which transpires to be a constant feature of the novel, particularly when Gesine is observed in her daily New York life. But this viewpoint displays an occasional, if infrequent, tendency to drift into the perspective of figures other than Gesine, while using information of which she is presumably aware, or can

surmise. This feature argues strongly against Hoesterey's narrative concept, which accords Gesine primary status as a first-person narrator. To take just one example; when Gesine and Marie are waiting to meet DE for lunch at Kennedy Airport on 30 April 1968, an outside perspective is employed which identifies with the waiters, if anybody: 'Fast ist es kein amerikanisches Restaurant. Mögen hier Touristen aus Europa sich an die Rückkehr gewöhnen oder Inländer sich einstimmen auf die fremden Sitten in Übersee, heftig bezahlen müssen sie alle, und vorerst halten die Kellner, bunt befrackt nach dem Muster verschollener Hoftrachten, die Mutter mit Kind am Fenstertisch drei für ein Risiko' (*JT*, 1085). While the information may be drawn from Gesine's observations and conjectures, the locus of narration is not only distinctly outside Gesine, but inside other characters, which belies the notion of a first-person narrative. Similarly the waiter's point of view is adopted as he serves Marie with water: 'Man geht da vorbei, blicklos, und läßt den Blick zur Seite ziehen und schenkt der jungen Dame ihr verdammtes nichtberechenbares Wasser nach und bekommt eine anerkennende Miene zum Lohn, ein kumpelhaftes Nicken geradezu. Grau und grüne Augen, anders als die der Mutter' (*JT*, 1087). Once more, the information may be drawn from Gesine's speculations, but again the tone and focus of narration are quite incompatible with Hoesterey's 'unterschwellige Ich-Erzählsituation' (Hoesterey, p. 24). Logic dictates that GS should be held to be the instrument of narration, employing various perspectives and narrative modes as necessary, including the first person with regard to Gesine (since he has full access to her consciousness), as well as external standpoints. At the same time there is a logical reason for regarding Gesine as, in effect, a medium of *erlebte Rede*, though not entirely in the traditional sense. For, as both Gerlach and Hoesterey describe, Gesine's fictional nature is established at the very beginning of *Jahrestage*.

On the second day of the *Jahrestage* year GS's identity is engendered at the same time as Gesine's fictionality in the phrase 'Ich stelle mir vor' (*JT*, 12), which occurs three times, followed by a brief physical description of Gesine, one of her reading the *New York Times*, and an outline of her daily routine. In *Begleitumstände* Johnson reproduces the notes he made about Gesine on 12 April 1967, setting down the details of his search for her characteristic features:

GC

Ob sie wohl in Restaurants in ihrem Mantel sitzt? die Brille im Haar traegt? das Fleisch klein schneidet bevor sie beginnt zu essen? (*BU*, 405)

The answer to at least one of these questions is to be found in the above-mentioned dramatization of her imbuelement with physical characteristics at the beginning of *Jahrestage*:

Ich stelle mir vor: Unter ihren Augen die winzigen Kerben waren heller als die gebräunte Gesichtshaut. Ihre fast schwarzen Haare, rundum kurz geschnitten, sind bleicher

geworden. Sie sah verschlafen aus, sie hat seit langem mit Niemandem groß gesprochen. Sie nahm die Sonnenbrille erst ab hinter dem aufblitzenden Türflügel. Sie trägt die Sonnenbrille nie in die Haare geschoben. (JT, 12)

But it would foolhardy to dismiss the three passages prefaced by 'Ich stelle mir vor' as a mere self-indulgent, but otherwise nugatory, representation of personal experience.

The invention of a fictional character Gesine Lisbeth Cresspahl is registered by means of a formula borrowed from Max Frisch's *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*. But in *Jahrestage* 'Ich stelle mir vor' is not used, as it is in Frisch's novel, to explore the variations and potential of a fictional world which is, after all, only a mental construct, and consequently susceptible to mutation, resulting in a multiplicity of identities based on the same indeterminate first-person narrator. In Johnson's world every effort is made to avoid inconsistencies; as far as possible all his characters and their milieu are presented as immutable. The *Gantenbein* phrase does, however, imply the created character's independence: 'Ja, sage ich auch, ich habe ihn gekannt. Was heißt das! Ich habe ihn mir vorgestellt, und jetzt wirft er mir meine Vorstellungen zurück wie Plunder; er braucht keine Geschichten mehr wie Kleider'.<sup>20</sup> Gesine Cresspahl enjoys a similar freedom to accept or reject narrative material, a freedom which forms the very basis of distributed narrative authority. But mere allusion cannot be the sole justification for such a striking formulation: there must be other reasons more directly concerned with the structure of *Jahrestage* for the inclusion of a phrase designed to emphasize the main character's fictionality.

Ingeborg Gerlach says that the admission of invention 'den fiktiven Charakter des Beschriebenen hervorhebt und die Urheberschaft des Erzählers unterstreicht' (Gerlach, p. 16). But apart from that statement of fact, there is no explanation of why it should be necessary to make an emphasis which seems to assume that Johnson readers, like soap-opera watchers, may be liable to regard a fictional character as a real person. Hoesterey makes the following comment on the passage in question: 'Ein Ich-Erzähler thematisiert seine Schreibwirklichkeit, und der Leser rezipiert ihn als Autor-Erzähler, der weder eindeutig der Autor, noch aber ein figürlicher Erzähler alten Stils ist' (Hoesterey, p. 14). But on careful analysis Hoesterey's apparently erudite explanation transpires to be a redundant statement to the effect that the reader recognizes the introduction of an as yet indeterminate, but self-conscious, narrator. A little later she adds: 'Es spielt sich der Autor als Erzähler in den Vordergrund und thematisiert das Machen von Fiktion' (p. 16). Fictional creation as a theme is nothing new in Johnson, however: once more, no justification for the particular circumstances of the narrator's self-conscious admission of role is forthcoming in Hoesterey's article.

Although it is not immediately apparent so early in the novel, 'Ich stelle mir vor' is the first hint of the existence of GS, who only appears concretely in the

chapter for 3 November 1967. We know from the Durzak interview that the Jewish Congress episode is based on an actual incident in Johnson's experience which, we may surmise from *Jahrestage*, took place on 16 January 1967 (see Durzak, *Gespräche*, p. 440). One might speculate that Johnson felt it necessary to include the incident as a form of cathartic therapy to alleviate the effects of a painful memory, but such therapy was bound to create literary problems. In *Jahrestage*, we learn that 'auch der Schriftsteller Johnson hat etwas nicht begriffen' (*JT*, 253). He had presumed to explain to a hostile Jewish audience that the election of Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, an ex-Nazi, as chancellor of the Federal Republic 'wasn't meant as a slap in the face of surviving victims, though the world felt it was. Es mangle lediglich an Verständnis dafür, daß jede deutsche Regierung dieses Jahrhunderts gemessen werde an ihrer Distanz zum Establishment der Nazis' (*JT*, 255). His subsequent rejection by the audience was palpably a painful, but well-noted lesson.

But although one might easily surmise from the text that the description is based on a real incident, it is essential to avoid potential confusion between that historical event and its fictional counterpart. For in the world of *Jahrestage* on 16 January 1967 Gesine and GS occupied the same room: 'Dann war Schriftsteller Johnson noch einmal zu sehen im Foyer des Roosevelt . . . Wir standen nur wenige Schritte von ihm entfernt und erkannten an seiner Kopfhaltung, daß er gerade eine waschechte, lichtechte, luftdichte Lüge von sich gab' (*JT*, 257). And on 3 November 1967 Gesine and GS discuss the events of that January evening:

*Wo hast du gegessen, Gesine.*

*Gut genug, dich zu sehen, Genosse Schriftsteller.*

*Hinten.*

*Ja, weit weg, dicht an einer Tür. (JT, 253)*

The close similarity and consequent potential for confusion between the historical event and its literary counterpart implicitly calls Gesine's fictionality into question. Since, as we have seen, the truth of a novel can only be valid in fictional terms, such an implication would constitute mendacity severe enough to undermine the foundations of *Wahrheitsfindung*. Hence it is morally imperative for Gesine's fictionality to be affirmed in the text at the very outset: 'Ich stelle mir vor'. That affirmation in turn emphasizes the fictionality of GS, for if the two characters are to co-exist in the book, they must both occupy the same — indubitably fictional — universe. Thus 'ich stelle mir vor' dramatizes not only the fictional status of the *described*, as Gerlach has it, but also that of the *describer*. In view of their co-existence in the *Jahrestage* universe, moreover, the creation of Gesine by GS needs to be established beyond doubt, since otherwise the access he enjoys to her mind would remain unexplained. But — crucially — the fact of her creation by GS does not preclude Gesine from independent thought and action, both of which are essential if she is to restrict GS's influence over the events of *Jahrestage*, a restriction necessary to the effective decentralization of

narrative authority. At the same time the assurance of fictionality does prove GS to be the originator of the text, and responsible for the act of narrating, for taking the material from Gesine's mind (both conscious and unconscious) and transforming it into literary terms. In so doing he is able to adopt either a third-person or a first-person narrative mode with regard to Gesine. Why he should make use of such a facility is a matter which deserves detailed consideration.

In the New York present, Gesine's consciousness tends chiefly to be conveyed in the third person, particularly when she is at work or amongst acquaintances: that is, in a social rather than a reflective context. The early stages of the Jerichow story, too, are frequently related using that narrative mode, except when Gesine refers to Lisbeth, whom she often calls 'meine Mutter'. Her father, on the other hand, is usually called by his name, thus circumventing the need for a possessive pronoun. Once the story has progressed to the point where Gesine's own memories begin, the first person is used with increasing frequency, although by no means exclusively. That is no more than the most general of outlines, however, for fluctuations between first and third person may occur within a single sentence. For instance, in the course of a four-page passage concerning Gesine at work, she is referred to in the third person throughout except for two sentences in each of which a first-person pronoun is used. In the second of these sentences, the reference moves from third to first person in successive clauses. The incident which the sentences describe concerns the removal of Gesine's nameplate by a young janitor as she moves into a new office: 'Er bog sich halb zurück, hinter die linke Seite der Tür, zog das kunststoffene Schild aus der Schiene und hielt es mir entgegen zwar nicht wie ein Arzt, doch wie ein Krankenpfleger, der genug Fälle gesehen hat und sich auskennt. Mrs. Cresspahl fühlte sich nicken, und er warf meinen Namen leichthin in einen der Behälter, die er auf dem oberen Deck seiner Karre aufgebaut hatte' (JT, 715). This pronoun change hardly seems explainable in terms of relative objectivity. One might speculate that the transition expresses a sudden surge of self-confidence on Gesine's part, or a sensitivity on the subject of identity which is injured by the young man's cavalier treatment of her name. It seems unlikely that the intention is to prevent the possibility of syntactical confusion. Nor is this a unique instance: it is worthwhile assembling a variety of exemplary contexts to illustrate both narrative modes, in order to discover whether an underlying principle governs their operation. But first of all the implications of first and third-person reference in general need to be considered.

Paul F. Botheroyd has made a study of precisely that problem, taking particular account of *Die Blechtrommel* by Günter Grass, Johnson's *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* by Max Frisch. He considers the variations in narrative mode with regard to the same character which typify these three novels to be an expression of disrupted personal identity. Going

beyond such 'inner-literary models' as Goethe's concept of Classicism as identity, or the contrasting Proustian notion of temporally fragmented personality,<sup>21</sup> Botheroyd looks to post-war societal developments for an explanation of the dissolution of identity which he detects in the novels under discussion. The pre-mid-1960s intellectual, Botheroyd contends, was increasingly bombarded with a mass of distorted, often ideologically biased information by newspapers, television, and other communications media. A dawning awareness of his manipulation granted no relief to this beleaguered mid-twentieth-century highbrow, who was constrained to opt either for dignified, but ignorant isolation, or for neurotically suspicious acceptance of information whose validity he was in no position to verify. He began to appreciate his true role in society, becoming conscious of the way in which 'his relationships with the people who surrounded him were not living, but were as functionalized as the interlocking parts of a machine', and realizing 'that in no daily situation was his "real" personality expressed, but that he was working through a set of roles, continually changing masks and behaving appropriately and tropistically to others' behaviour' (Botheroyd, pp. 4-5). Botheroyd suggests that these realizations, in the context of divided Germany, are aesthetically structured in the narrative situation of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Hoesterey, it will be seen, advances an almost identical view with regard to *Jahrestage*.

The second extra-literary approach to the problem of identity which Botheroyd advances is psychiatric. He points out that schizophrenia involves, amongst other things, a merging of subject and object: 'For the schizophrenic the normal situation and balance is disturbed: borderlines between the self and the exterior world, between the self and the representations of other objects and between the self as subject and object are indistinct' (Botheroyd, p. 6). Indeed the confusion is such that schizophrenic patients commonly refer to themselves in the third person. According to Botheroyd, a mixture of third and first-person reference to the same narrator is symptomatic of that narrator's attempts to come to terms with, to stabilize or to radically alter his personality: a kind of literary schizophrenia. These remarks should be borne in mind when considering the use of grammatical person in *Jahrestage*, although the narrative circumstances are rather different from the novels Botheroyd concentrates on (which are all fundamentally *Ich-Romane*), for it is largely GS, rather than Gesine, who determines which narrative mode should be used with reference to her. Since he is expressing her consciousness in literary terms GS does, of course, endeavour to represent Gesine's insecurities, self-doubt, and occasionally precarious sense of identity by means of pronominal variation, and so some of Botheroyd's observations may well be valid for Gesine, too.

The most common, and, perhaps, obvious use of pronoun alternation in *Jahrestage* will serve as a starting point. In a manner already familiar from Karsch in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, Gesine's past self is frequently referred to in the



third person from a first-person standpoint. This kind of temporal distinction has literary precursors, although it is perhaps not usually indicated by alternation of pronouns, as is the case in *Jahrestage*. In 1922, for instance, Stefan Zweig's Baron Friedrich Michael von R . . . discovered the unexpected codicil adhering to the simple word 'ich' while recounting the shattering experience of insight into his own being which had occurred during one 'Phantastische Nacht' four months previously:

Aber noch einmal, spüre ich, muß ich innehalten, denn schon wieder werde ich erschreckt der Zweischneidigkeit, der Vieldeutigkeit eines einzelnen Wortes gewahr. Jetzt, da ich zum ersten Male im Zusammenhange etwas erzählen soll, merke ich erst, wie schwer es ist, jenes Gleitende, das doch alles Lebendige bedeutet, in einer geballten Form zu fassen. Eben habe ich 'ich' geschrieben, habe gesagt, daß ich am 7. Juni 1913 mir mittags einen Fiaker nahm. Aber dies Wort wäre schon eine Undeutlichkeit, denn jenes 'Ich' von damals, von jenem 7. Juni, bin ich längst nicht mehr, obwohl erst vier Monate seitdem vergangen sind, obwohl ich in der Wohnung dieses damaligen 'Ich' wohne und an seinem Schreibtisch mit seiner Feder und seiner eigenen Hand schreibe. Von diesem damaligen Menschen bin ich, und gerade durch jenes Erlebnis, ganz abgelöst, ich sehe ihn jetzt von außen, ganz fremd und kühl, und kann ihn schildern wie einen Spielgenossen, einen Kameraden, einen Freund, von dem ich vieles und Wesentliches weiß, der ich aber doch selbst durchaus nicht mehr bin. Ich könnte über ihn sprechen, ihn tadeln oder verurteilen, ohne überhaupt zu empfinden, daß er mir einst zugehört hat.<sup>22</sup>

The experiences described by Zweig's narrator parallel with extraordinary accuracy Gesine's alienation from her former self. In her case the transformation came about not through one sudden shattering experience, but through gradual disillusion and disappointment marked by her own and Germany's betrayal at the hands of the Nazis, the dashing of high ideals by the SED, and the moral insolvency of the capitalist system. Zweig's narrator, however, does not draw the linguistic consequences of his insight. Apart from the tentative use of the third person in the last sentence of the above passage, and of the formula 'Der Mensch, der ich damals war' immediately afterwards, the 'ich' form is used throughout, in accordance with the convention of an apparently true story published after the (fictional) author's death. In *Jahrestage*, on the other hand, the Proustian multiplicity of personalities, each subtly conditioned by its immediate temporal environment, is constantly recalled by the transition from 'ich' to 'sie' and vice versa. Phrases such as 'das Kind, das ich war' occur regularly, and are to be found on the second and last pages of the novel. A qualification like 'die Gesine Cresspahl von 1948' (*JT*, 1600) is an emphatic reminder that even to herself, or especially to herself, Gesine is not a distinct character with a fixed identity, but is composed of innumerable personae which merge, yet are differentiated.

When describing her past self, Gesine may be forced to speculate on forgotten motives. Her isolation and lack of identity at the age of fourteen have, for instance, become partly a matter for conjecture in adulthood:

Das Kind das ich war, Gesine Gresspahl, Halbweise, dem Andenken des Vaters zuliebe entzweit mit der überlebenden Verwandtschaft, auf dem Papier Besitzerin eines Bauernhauses am Friedhof von Jerichow, am Leibe einen schwarzen Mantel, sie muß sich eines Tages entschlossen haben, den Erwachsenen das verlangte Teil zu geben, dabei sich selbst von dannen zu schmuggeln und in ein Leben zu kommen, in dem durfte sie dann sein, wie sie würde sein wollen. (*JT*, 1450)

The grammatical third person is thus an invaluable method of dividing the adult Gesine from a past self she barely recognizes, and possibly associates with pain and distress. Using the first person would imply the continuation of an identity which no longer exists except as a construct of Gesine's mind; 'sie' becomes a literally personal defence mechanism. Only when Gesine feels confident enough of her own memories and emotions to break down the alienation induced by the passage of time can the first person be used.

Paul Botheroyd interprets Karsch's narrative position in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* as a similar form of self-protection:

This position, overlapping the purely authorial position and that of the apparently autonomous Ich-Erzähler is an artifice which allows Karsch to transcend his ever-shifting, ever-widening, yet still limited perspective, and through the objectifying mechanism of third-person reference to himself, see himself as an object amongst other objects and often adopt an ironical attitude towards himself on his East German adventure and his difficulties on his return to the West. (Botheroyd, p. 70)

Karsch's unconventional use of grammatical person is seen as part of a therapeutic attempt (described in 'Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960') to reconstitute his identity after the critical, intimate experience of his nation divided. There can be little doubt that the fluctuation in narrative mode in *Jahrestage* is symptomatic of Gesine's confusion over her identity, a confusion which can also be registered by the absence of personal pronouns. One of the few passages narrated by means of a technique akin to stream-of-consciousness shows Gesine's bewilderment and sense of vacuity as she awakes from a dream on 23 April 1968:

War niemand; ein Feld aus Erinnerung, die fremde Gräser wachsen ließ, Gewitterhimmel über der Baltischen See, den Geruch von Gras nach dem Regen. Wenige Blicke auf den Hudson noch, und im Gegenlicht würde das Gefühl der Zeit rascher laufen, darin sie, Mrs. Cresspahl, Angestellte, eine vierstellige Zifferngruppe unterm Telefonamt 753, nicht hier, Stadtmitte. Noch nicht. Es gab Aufschübe. War noch eine Weile ich Gesine, ich Marie, wir das Kind und ich und die Stimmen aus dem Traum. Allmählich zerfiel die filzige Empfindung des Schlafens zu trockenem Pulver. (*JT*, 1035)

At a vulnerable moment on the border between sleep and wakefulness she loses her sense of particularity, only to have it replaced by the figures who occupy her mind; herself as a child, her daughter, and the characters of the Jerichow story. In this state of existential uncertainty, the absence of personal identity is paralleled in the text by the absence of pronouns: 'War niemand': 'War noch', and is very reminiscent of the merging of 'ich' and 'er' at the end of *Das dritte*

*Buch über Achim.* Here an intermediate state prevails which is beyond the grasp of grammatical expression, a state of anonymity which is normally externalized as a means of camouflage designed to deflect the attention of Gesine's fellow employees, to whom she remains an enigma: 'Wer ist das? . . . Keiner kennt sie . . . Fazit: Unbekannt. Niemand, getarnt. Nicht kenntlich' (*JT*, 1037). When Gesine suffers internally from such obscurization of personality, neither the objectified 'sie' which pertains to her social function nor the self-related 'ich' are adequate terms of expression; and neither is used. A secondary effect of the omitted pronouns is momentarily to give the impression that the two narrative consciousnesses have merged, relinquishing their discreteness while Gesine is neither fully conscious nor unconscious.

That impression is reinforced at the beginning of the entry for 1 July 1968:

Manchmal denke ich: das ist nicht sie. Was heißt hier sie, was ich; gedacht kann es werden. Es ist nicht zu denken. Sähe Einer allein sie, ich müßte meinen: das ist Gesine Cresspahl (Mrs.), eine Frau um die Fünfunddreißig . . . von fern müßte ich sie erkennen an den kurz geschnittenen Haaren . . . Von nahem wäre sie unzweifelhaft . . . Es müßte schon ein Verliebter sein, der sie eigens beobachten wollte, wenn sie einen schicklich abgemessenen Bissen Fisch von der Gabel nimmt und ihn mit kaum erkennbarem Kauen zerlegt, damit ihr der Mund gleich leer wird, bereit zu Lächeln oder Antwort; uns fällt da wenig auf. (*JT*, 1463–64)

Again Gesine has difficulty in reconciling what she believes to be herself with the physical evidence as it must appear to others. The initial sentence, however, could equally well emanate from a GS who goes on to ponder about the character he has created; indeed the 'uns' at the end of the quotation gives credence to that suggestion. Neither Gesine nor GS, then, is able to make Gesine's sense of self conform satisfactorily to either of the grammatical categories 'ich' or 'sie', with all their implications of greater or lesser objectivity and personal identification which have been built up over centuries of storytelling. The truth lies in neither of these classifications, and so, as far as is possible within the constraints of the German language, an attempt is made, through consonant variation, to construct a new category of grammatical person which can barely be judged under traditional criteria.

Ingeborg Hoesterey finds three fundamental reasons for the pronominal transitions. Firstly, they enable Gesine to discriminate between her image in society and her own self-image. As an advocate of liberal socialism she distances herself by third-person reference from her socio-economic function as an employee at a bastion of capitalism, a role distance she needs in order to allow her disputation with the Jerichow past to operate freely.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, 'sie' rather than 'ich' is used when Gesine is regarded by others as a representative German; when, for instance, she speaks with Mrs Ferwalter: 'Indem nicht das Ich Gesines, sondern ihre gesellschaftliche Identität als "Mrs. Cresspahl" im Vordergrund steht, wird die Konfrontation einer jungen Deutschen mit einer Jüdin,

die die Naziverfolgung mitgemacht hat, entindividualisiert und zu einer paradigmatischen Begegnung, dreißig Jahre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg'.<sup>24</sup> Sociological factors also underpin the second of Hoesterey's explanations, in that she considers the pronoun changes to be a further expression of narrative uncertainty designed to reflect the complexity of modern man's self-image:

Das pronominale Wechselspiel innerhalb der einen Erzählstimme kündigt dem definitiven, eindeutigen Personalbezug die Hierarchie auf und macht in der Ambivalenz der Erzählsituationen die Uneindeutigkeit der modernen Romangestalt sichtbar — und letztlich die Komplexität des modernen Menschenbildes (wodurch die Krise der Romanfigur ja heraufbeschworen wurde). (Hoesterey, p. 23)

Essentially this is the same argument as Botheroyd had put forward seven years previously with regard to *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, an argument which, if one accepts the premise of formal reflection of societal phenomena, there seems no reason to refute, despite the perhaps excessively broad potential for application which it admits.

Finally, Hoesterey sees the alienating potential of third-person narration as a way of avoiding the danger of kitsch in the (rare) scenes of emotion, such as that in which Gesine cries in DE's arms, distressed at her estrangement from Marie: 'Ein zeitgenössisches Bewußtsein hat nicht mehr die Naivität, die Einfachheit zu sagen: Ich lege mich an die Brust von D. E., ich weine ohne Unterbrechung — das geriete unversehens in die Nähe des Kitschromans. Nach einem Jahrhundert von Trivalliteratur, die solche Szenen ins Melodrama abrutschen ließ, sind sie für den zeitgenössischen Autor suspektes Terrain — wie auch für seine Figur'.<sup>25</sup> Gerlach finds an example to prove the opposite, however, whereby the *Ich* form is used precisely at a time of close emotional involvement, although admittedly the question of kitsch is not at issue: 'Evident ist die unmittelbare persönliche Betroffenheit, die stets diesem "Ich" anhaftet. Die "Gedächtnis"-Passagen, in denen sich Gesine mit dem Problem des Vergessens befaßt, sind selbstverständlich in der ersten Person Singular abgefaßt'.<sup>26</sup> Indeed Gerlach views the use of pronouns representing Gesine in general as a matter of empathetic graduation, ranging from the impersonal 'sie' through 'wir' to the personal 'ich': 'Die jeweilige Abstufung zeigt den Grad der Emphase an, er erlaubt eine Steigerung, die bei durchgängigem Erzählen in der Ich-Form nicht möglich gewesen wäre' (Gerlach, p. 17). The first and third-person differentiation is, therefore, explained as a variation in degree rather than principle: 'Gesine und Johnson erzählen vom selben "point of view", aber je nach Nähe oder Ferne des Erzählens läßt sich die persönliche Betroffenheit differenzieren' (p. 18). The explanations put forward by both Gerlach and Hoesterey are valid in particular circumstances. That they are to be a certain extent mutually contradictory indicates that listing individual cases with a justification for the particular pronoun shift will not necessarily result in a unified explanation for this device. Such an explanation may, however, be found in the novel's general narrative strategy.

For this arrangement confers a technical advantage which would be lost were a conventional structure of narrative relationships to be adhered to. GS needs to stamp his mark on the text, in order to reinforce the narrative authority made apparent at the beginning of the novel, and only occasionally restated by his infrequent explicit communications with Gesine. He guards against the danger of excessive self-effacement by diffusing the narrative modes and perspectives while confining himself largely (but not exclusively, as we have seen) to the information contained within Gesine's field of perception. The use of the third-person mode and external perspectives prevents an excess of narrative authority from being concentrated in Gesine, breaking down the impression that she is in sole control after the manner of the traditional *Ich-Erzähler*, while first-person narration precludes the opposite effect, namely that Gesine has no influence over the narrative whatever. Thus the changes in grammatical person, far from representing a fundamental dichotomy in the narrative circumstances, are a constant reminder of the shared narrative responsibility, and so fulfil a structural function beyond their various individual uses.

It transpires, then, that narrative responsibility cannot be surgically divided in terms of the Jerichow level and the New York level, as Gerlach suggests, since both present and past are components of Gesine's consciousness, which GS reformulates in literary terms. But Gesine retains an independent narrative function. GS is empowered and willing to carry out her wishes as far as the selection of material is concerned, and she is directly responsible for composing much of the Jerichow story (in the form of tapes and dialogues with Marie), even if GS is the medium by which her efforts are conveyed.

Apart from any intrinsic shortcomings which mar some of the theories put forward in the secondary literature to date, almost all of them were formulated by critics who were dealing with what was still a fragment. With the benefit of *Jahrestage 4* it is possible to propose a complete picture of the narrative circumstances.

Perhaps the most striking new feature to appear in the final volume of *Jahrestage* concerning the nature of our novel is the penultimate incident of the whole book, where Gesine hands over to Kliefoth what one can only assume to be a fictional representation of what we have been reading: '— Wie es uns ergeht, haben wir aufgeschrieben bis zu unserer Arbeit in Prag, 1875 Seiten, mit ihrer Erlaubnis werden wir es Ihnen überreichen' (*JT*, 1891). The 'wir' in this case must refer to Gesine and GS, possibly including Marie. As for 'mit ihrer Erlaubnis', either the lower case 'i' is a misprint or the comment emanates from the GS component of the composite 'wir' identity and refers to Gesine. A further possibility is that the permission referred to is Marie's, for whom in large measure *Jahrestage* is intended. But more importantly, it seems that the typescript of *Jahrestage* actually exists within its own fictional world. This is more

than a whimsical trick: it offers confirmation of a set of narrative circumstances which have been consistently hinted at.

The very term 'Genosse Schriftsteller', which first appears on page 230, is the primary clue to the way in which we are to suppose the book to have come into being. Not until the entry for 26 June 1968 is the point explicitly pursued, however, as Gesine realizes that the acquittal of seventeen Mafia members will have dire consequences for the book Karsch is writing; 'Üble Nachrichten für Karsch. Mindestens ein halbes Kapitel muß er nun umackern in seinem Buch. Das Register ist hin. Das kriegt er nicht mehr fertig bis Ende Juli. Na. Wir werden nicht so sein' (*JT*, 1422). The 'wir' clearly refers to Gesine and GS, who, by implication, must also be engaged on a literary project. GS's precise status is defined when Gesine describes the diary, begun in the spring of 1947, which she uses as an aide memoire in July 1968. Hers was not a conventional diary, she explains, adding in parentheses: 'Wie dies keins ist, aus anderen Gründen: hier macht ein Schreiber in ihrem Auftrag für jeden Tag eine Eintragung an ihrer Statt, mit ihrer Erlaubnis, nicht jedoch für den täglichen Tag' (*JT*, 1474). The last, qualifying phrase is an essential criterion for the selection of material from Gesine's New York life, and one which in *Jahrestage 4* causes open disagreement between Gesine and GS. But the innovatory textual evidence of the above explanation is that the title 'Genosse Schriftsteller' is a literal expression of role, his narration constituting a concrete element of the *Jahrestage* universe. Gesine's contact with GS is more substantial than the ethereal abstraction implied by italics in the text, and more extensive than the isolated instance of the corporeal encounter which took place on 16 January 1967. Their contact may, it seems, be of a practical nature: while GS is recording the details of her experience, Gesine may apparently entrust him with any written work. In a letter to Jonas Blach announcing the termination of their friendship, Gesine describes the practical problems of writing the biographical account of Blach which her former lover had requested as a preface to the *Festschrift* being compiled in his honour:<sup>27</sup> 'Wir sind, dir erinnerlich, an fünf Tagen einer Arbeit von acht Stunden unterworfen; im Vertrauen sage ich dir: es sind mehr. Blieben die Wochenenden. Zwar hätten wir es abwälzen können auf einen Genossen Schriftsteller, den haben wir an der Hand, sogar in der selben . . .' (*JT*, 1638). Although the confidence implied by 'abwälzen' shows Gesine to be the dominant partner, it has become quite apparent that the job of actually writing, the concrete act of narration, is reserved for GS. The circumstances of the arrangement are placed beyond doubt as Gesine laments the volume of written material she is either engaged in or associated with: 'Es nimmt das Geschriebene überhand. Seit Juni J.B., seit bald einem Jahr die Tage, die der andere Jugendfreund und Genosse Schriftsteller aufschreiben will. Wie werden wir froh sein, wenn es ein Ende hat mit dem Unveröffentlichten' (*JT*, 1657). In the world of *Jahrestage*, GS is actually writing this novel for publication on behalf of Gesine.<sup>28</sup>

These narrative circumstances seem at first sight to be not only fanciful, but pervaded with paradox. Genosse Schriftsteller's writing creates the *Jahrestage* universe, and yet simultaneously exists as an explicit literary process within itself. But the apparent paradox is in fact only a matter of the reader suspending disbelief in an unconventional way. We are used to doing so when we forget, for the purposes of reading a book, that Walter Faber is not Max Frisch, or that Henry Fielding had in reality no telepathic powers. But that lesson had to be learned once; mediaeval *Schwänke* took pains to assure the reader or audience of the story's veracity in order to relieve the uncomfortable appearance of untruth, while the moral conundrum of how theatrical presentations of invented characters could be anything but lies persisted for a considerable period. Certain concessions are demanded from the reader (GS's creation of Gesine and access to her mind, the existence of a typescript of *Jahrestage* within *Jahrestage*) which become conventions to be observed, in the same way that the reader has traditionally conceded certain improbabilities of plot, such as Taugenichts's unlikely coincidences, the very premise of Gregor Samsa's unorthodox experience, or Oskar Matzerath's failure to grow between the ages of three and twenty-one.

But the paradox we are asked to accept in *Jahrestage* concerns the way we look at fiction. While intellectually we know that Uwe Johnson wrote *Jahrestage*, incorporating quotations from a real newspaper and descriptions of a real city, the work can only make sense as a literary creation, in the same way as the narrative circumstances of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* can only exist on an abstract literary plane. To accept *Jahrestage* in this spirit is to accept the ultimate self-containment of fiction, a world which arises from within itself, a literally fabulous universe hermetically sealed in its own fictionality, whose internal origins are an inevitable consequence of its own narrative structure. Johnson himself urged the recognition of any novel's self-sufficiency while answering his own question 'Wozu taugt also der Roman?':

Er ist ein Angebot. Sie bekommen eine Version der Wirklichkeit.

Es ist nicht eine Gesellschaft in der Miniatur, und es ist kein maßstäbliches Modell. Es ist auch nicht ein Spiegel der Welt und weiterhin nicht ihre Widerspiegelung; es ist eine Welt, gegen die Welt zu halten. (VPR, 402–03)

Acceptance of that world admits the final self-justification of fiction as more than a device for entertainment, instruction, or even spiritual enlightenment. The fictional universe of *Jahrestage* is shown to be valid on its own terms, but separate from reality, for programmatically transferring the epistemological parameters with which we define the real world will not lead to an understanding of this novel. Only by considering what constitutes fiction and how it differs from reality may the reader comprehend its narrative circumstances. Although illusion is shattered, leaving fiction stripped and isolated from its source, the destruction takes place not for its own sake, but to clarify our perception. That

is, the fictional world thus portrayed may act as a model observable in its entirety, a model which allows our assumptions about the real world to be tested and examined.

As far as the tactics of creating such a world are concerned, distribution of narrative responsibility allows the information which might plausibly be available to be restricted to Gesine's cognitive range, and yet allows GS the freedom to operate as a literary narrator not directly involved in the action. As was the case in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, GS is not entirely successful in suppressing information which cannot have been filtered through Gesine's consciousness, and so betrays more than simply an executive function. But the division of narrative roles prevents the possibility of his superior knowledge undermining the requirements of *Wahrheitsfindung*; that is, the course of the story and the events depicted are not determined by a single seat of authority which must logically be in full possession not only of the facts, but also of all potential facts, and therefore of truth. GS and Gesine are able to exert varying degrees of influence in different ways over the narrative, which thus follows a course regulated by consensus. Nevertheless, there are undercurrents of tension in the relationship, submerged power struggles which manifest themselves at certain points throughout the novel.

The tribulations which mark the co-operation between GS and Gesine are undoubtedly in part responsible for the increase in length (compared with the original plan) and concomitant delay in completion of *Jahrestage*. While the delay was compounded by extra-literary factors, intrinsic problems of composition were the original cause. The fundamental stumbling block is a familiar one, namely assessing which components of a potentially limitless fictional continuum are suitable for inclusion in the text and so deemed to be valid as fictional truth. In a published letter to Siegfried Unseld of 20 August 1973 Johnson, in jocular mood but with an unmistakable undercurrent of seriousness, explained why he had not delivered the manuscript for *Jahrestage 3*. The letter was prompted by a newspaper item publicizing something which 'ich bisher ansah als unser Geheimnis, nämlich daß ich Ende September auf der letzten Seite angekommen sein möchte'.<sup>29</sup> Johnson reports to Unseld a conversation held with 'die Partnerin in diesem Buch' ('Ein Brief', p. 65). Their discussion largely consists of Gesine's complaints against GS for his handling of the narrative. Under normal circumstances, one would tend to regard such a 'Gespräch' as no more than an amusing effort by an author to stall his publisher for more time. However, it does not seem unreasonable, against the background of *Jahrestage*, to treat this conversation as legitimate evidence of communication between Gesine and the persona of GS (although it is not expressly fictionalized), particularly since a conversation dealing with similar issues appears in *Jahrestage 4*.

Gesine starts by deprecating the neglect of Mecklenburg's agrarian economy and her own experience of rural life. GS counters that their original agreement



specified a certain length of chapter (two pages, one may surmise from other sources) to which Gesine retorts that GS's declared intention of compiling a record of her life automatically dissolved an agreement which admitted such limited dimensions. GS reminds her that 'Alles sollte es nicht sein', and asks '— Sind das nicht doch quantitative Beschwerden?' to which Gesine replies 'Qualitative. Qualität der Beziehungen' ('Ein Brief', p. 66). For all Gesine's assurance that quality is her prime concern, her arguments adumbrate a policy for a succinct description of which one might do worse than look to Jean-Paul Sartre's Antoine Roquentin in *La Nausée* (1938):

Le mieux serait d'écrire les événements au jour le jour. Tenir un journal pour y voir clair. Ne pas laisser échapper les nuances, les petits faits, même s'ils n'ont l'air de rien, et surtout les classer. Il faut dire comment je vois cette table, la rue, les gens, mon paquet de tabac, puisque c'est cela qui a changé. Il faut déterminer exactement l'entendue et la nature de ce changement.<sup>30</sup>

GS recognizes that to adopt a policy which even approaches the one contemplated by Roquentin (although with a different purpose in mind) for each day of a year in Gesine's life would result in an unwieldy, amorphous text lacking form and direction. The standards of material selection designed to obviate that danger are more than just a means of regulating size, they are part of the operation of *Wahrheitsfindung*. For since fictional truths acquire a certain measure of validity simply by virtue of incorporation into a text, an absence of selective criteria would imply that, potentially, nothing should be excluded, in which case no literary project would be worth contemplating. Initially, certain comparatively crude constraints must be imposed on the material to act as a primary yardstick; in the case of *Jahrestage* these constitute, roughly, Gesine's consciousness and the rigid form of three hundred and sixty-seven daily entries. Yet, as we have seen, the first of these constraints is not adhered to absolutely, and, as for the second, while in *Jahrestage 1* each chapter comprises on average between two and four pages, by *Jahrestage 3* the average length is nearer eight pages. As a result, GS is forced to examine his secondary selective criteria more closely.

In the interests of pertinence and formal coherence GS aims to emphasize that which gives Gesine's life its distinctive essence and which impinges most strongly on her conscious and subconscious mind. Gesine does not entirely disregard the point; indeed when defining GS's role she herself says that he makes entries in *Jahrestage* 'an ihrer Statt, mit ihrer Erlaubnis, nicht jedoch für den täglichen Tag' (*JT*, 1474). He is not, therefore, simply a surrogate diarist. But it is clear from the objection Gesine has already made that she considers some parts of her life to have been unjustly dispensed with by GS, and feels that he has been overzealous in his exclusion of everyday existence:

— Und mehr Alltag soll in das Buch. Wie man darin verschwinden kann. Eine Stunde sind Marie and ich über den Broadway gezogen, davon ist uns beiden nicht ein Gesicht, nicht ein faßlicher Gedanke verblieben. Was ist da mit uns passiert?

— Und zwar das Eintönige nicht mit eintönigen Mitteln.  
 — Gewiß. Wir sind dir nicht nur Lieferanten. ('Ein Brief', p. 67)

Here Gesine makes severe demands on GS. On the one hand she deplores the wholesale omission of substantial biographical episodes from the text, yet on the other she agrees with GS that excessive subjection of form and method to them conveys nothing which the reader may not experience more conveniently in person. GS is obliged to persist in selecting illustrative, distinct examples from Gesine's life, although the argument will resurface in *Jahrestage 4*.

Gesine finally insists that her holiday in Bornholm should be included, because 'es gehört zu unserem Leben. Sieh dir an, Genosse Schriftsteller. Sieh es dir an' ('Ein Brief', p. 68). But that in itself is not sufficient justification, for as GS points out, if Gesine and Marie's holiday in Bornholm were to be included with all its salient details, at least fourteen days of *Jahrestage* would be swollen to unmanageable proportions. He adds: '— Fru Cresspahl, du hast nun mehr Zeit als du willst. Mit Bornholm aber erreicht der Schriftsteller den Termin nicht mit Müh und nicht mit Not. Ende September. Der Verlag hat es in die Zeitung setzen lassen'. But Gesine stands firm: '— Bornholm muß ins Buch. Oder wir kündigen den Vertrag, dann steht ihr da mit flatternden Enden. Noch gibt es eine Wahl' ('Ein Brief', p. 68). Although Gesine threatens to deploy the ultimate sanction of ceasing to co-operate further, Bornholm never did appear in the novel, so it seems that GS won the battle after all, perhaps by trading off the exclusion of Bornholm for the increase in overall volume provided by *Jahrestage 4*. This kind of bargaining between GS and Gesine can equally well be observed in the text of *Jahrestage* itself.

The relationship between the two who share narrative responsibility is frequently evinced in mild, friendly exchanges. By the tone of their conversation during the Jewish Congress episode, the two narrative voices seem to co-exist harmoniously:

*Gesine Cresspahl geniert sich für einen Deutschen.  
 Ein bißchen nehm ich zurück, deiner Eitelkeit zuliebe, du Schriftsteller.  
 Einem meiner Lehrer zuliebe. O.K.?  
 Na gut. (JT, 254)*

Despite the friendly atmosphere, however, a certain lack of respect, even cheekiness, on Gesine's part is detectable as she testily demands: '*Bist du immer so begriffsstutzig?*' (JT, 255). It is in this episode that the famous lines appear:

Wer erzählt denn hier eigentlich, Gesine.  
 Wir beide. Das hörst du doch, Johnson. (JT, 256)

Gesine's answer has frequently been taken as an umbrella explanation to cover the whole of the novel. But the word 'hier' is more than an inconsequential particle, for it is in this chapter alone that Gesine and GS are simultaneously

physically present in *Jahrestage*, so only on this occasion does the question of narrative responsibility become pressing. Otherwise in *Jahrestage* the allocation of role is silently understood, namely that Gesine provides the material while GS narrates. The arrangement proceeds amicably enough, emerging at several points in the form of italicized dialogue or an appeal by Gesine to GS.

After Gesine has written a memo (which we read in German) to de Rosny in English, for instance, GS consoles her about the weaknesses in her command of that language (see *JT*, 1039). In the final volume, too, Gesine fervently addresses GS in her eagerness to describe the crashing, futile, tedium of searching potato fields for Colorado beetles supposedly seeded by American aeroplanes: 'Ein ganzes Buch müßtest du schreiben, Genosse Schriftsteller, diese Nachmittage angehend, so unendlich lang waren die, so infinitesimal drehte die Erde sich gegen die Sonne in eine östliche Kurve' (*JT*, 1726). Such observations serve to remind the reader of GS's continuing presence, and in this case the problem of how to represent boredom without being boring is cleverly circumvented. But the authority which Gesine wields, evident from the 'Brief an den Verleger', is also readily detectable in *Jahrestage* itself.

The very first indication that there is communication between Gesine and GS takes the form of a peremptory command from Gesine as she sets out to disprove the Princeton memory experiments: 'Schreib mir zehn Worte für mich, Genosse Schriftsteller' (*JT*, 230), which he duly does. As well as openly designating what is to be written, Gesine can do the opposite, exercising an assertive censorial power: 'Sie sagte etwas, als sie seine Seiten aus ihrem Sammelbuch riß, aber das wird nicht aufgeschrieben, Genosse Schriftsteller. Kannst ja sagen, sie hat vielleicht geheult, solange sie in ihrem Zimmer allein blieb, und dann nicht mehr' (*JT*, 1075). But on one occasion in *Jahrestage 2* GS betrays a reluctance on his own part to incorporate certain matters: 'Der Schriftsteller mag es nicht schreiben, und doch war es Hilde: schön von (gestrichen)' (*JT*, 838). Here it seems GS was successful in exerting his will to excise from the text what he may have considered to be improper, yet felt it necessary to make his own power of censor apparent, rather than simply opting for silent omission. In the final volume, however, he openly challenges Gesine's authority.

Ginny Carpenter, a neighbour with whom Gesine has regular contact, is portrayed in a description full of ironic, not to say humorous, social criticism; for instance Ginny Carpenter visiting the Blumenroths:

Sie saß auf der Kante des Sofas und aß Kuchen, die hohle Hand unterm Kinn, um ihr Rotseidenes von Lord & Taylor zu schützen; ihrer strammen Stirn war die Erwägung anzusehen, daß sie mit einem ausführlichen Besuch bei (zwar vermögenden) Juden mal wieder eine tolle Toleranz vorführe; wem sie das erzählen dürfe und wem besser vorenthalten, schließlich die schlingende Neugier: ob diese Kekse wohl koscher seien. (*JT*, 1426)

This and Mrs Carpenter's views on the neighbourhood's future ethnic composition precipitate Gesine into incapacitating convulsions of laughter. But she immediately registers an objection to GS's portrayal of the episode: '*Ich will dir mal was sagen, du Schriftsteller*' (JT, 1426). Gesine maintains that she saw Ginny Carpenter frequently, and laughed at her equally as often, indeed, '*sie gehört zu meinem täglichen Leben*' (JT, 1427). Gesine objects specifically to GS's choice of this most dramatic occasion to report her amusement, and wants the balance redressed. In reply GS recalls an ever-present danger, and one which might be the unwanted consequence of listing every incidence of amusement:

*Soll es denn doch ein Tagebuch werden?*

*Nein. Nie. Ich halt mich an den Vertrag. Nur, schreib sie öfter hin.*

*Dann könnte verloren gehen, was heute wichtig war an dem Lachen.*

*Jetzt fängst du wieder an mit Quantität und Qualität! Summier doch das eine, wenn du das andere willst!* (JT, 1427)

The arguments on both sides are those which were first aired (though to a much smaller audience, and out of context) ten years previously in 'Brief an den Verleger'.<sup>31</sup>

The flaw in Gesine's argument is the same in each case, namely an apparent desire for a more mimetic representation of her life which is contradicted by her own appreciation of the necessity for editorial decisions which create a text whose effect is to inform rather than overwhelm. To gather and report all Gesine's meetings with Ginny Carpenter would only result in more of Mrs Carpenter, rather than the essence of Mrs. Carpenter's impact on Gesine's life. Nothing should be included which does not throw new light on Gesine's existence, for truth is rendered no more true by continual restatement.

The issue at hand is a very practical one, for at least one English reviewer has castigated *Jahrestage* for the very fault against which GS warns Gesine: 'Plenty of the bits and pieces that go to make up *Jahrestage* are eminently re-readable, but the whole is a huge, intricate, unshapely conglomerate, much of it already unavoidably dated, and much no less in need of annotation, glossaries and an index, than Grass at his most cryptic'.<sup>32</sup> The reader, however, is normally in no position to decide on what grounds a particular addition to this 'huge conglomerate' has been made, and so could hardly suggest excisions.<sup>33</sup> GS explains that in the case of Ginny Carpenter he wanted to show how Gesine was trying to make her departure from New York more bearable by confronting herself with the city's less desirable faces: 'Was du zurückläßt, es soll nicht alles unentbehrlich sein' (JT, 1427). Under normal circumstances an explanation of this kind would be redundant (since a correct editorial decision is inconspicuous and self-explanatory) and here only stings Gesine into asserting her independence, declaring that GS has no right to determine what her moods and desires are, although the comment is hardly helpful: '*Meine Psychologie mach ich mir selber, Genosse Schriftsteller. Du mußt sie nehmen, wie du sie kriegst*' (JT, 1428). The

altercation ends on a note of compromise, whereby GS offers the qualification that this particular incident stood apart from other occasions of amusement; it is an extraordinary example of a general truth, and so able to stand alone. Gesine agrees that GS should write 'So hatte Mrs. Cresspahl noch nie über Mrs. Carpenter gelacht' (*JT*, 1428). But he has the final word, rebelliously adding 'So? Nie.' with its implication of doubt, displaying an ability to subvert Gesine's authority which is undoubtedly more widespread than appearances betray.

On one further occasion in *Jahrestage* Gesine emphatically asserts her right of determination. In this case her observation of style and tone of narration is revealed, as GS, one may surmise, self-critically observes that the narrative tone has become excessively rich. During a school visit to Ernst Barlach's house in Güstrow in September 1951, Gesine and Anita Gantlik had slipped away from the main party, meeting each other

... auf dem Kamm des Heidberges, wo ein Abhang sich öffnet, güstrower Kinder wohlbekannt als Schlittenbahn, auch dem Auge freien Weg öffnend über die Insel im See und das hinter dem Wasser sanft ansteigende Land, besetzt mit sparsamen Kulissen aus Bäumen und Dächern, leuchtend, da die Sonne gerade düstere Regenwolken hat verdrängen können; welch Anblick mir möge gegenwärtig sein in der Stunde meines *Es ist uns schnuppe, ob dir das zu deftig beladen ist, Genosse Schriftsteller! Du schreibst das hin! wir können auch heute noch aufhören mit deinem Buch. Dir sollte erfindlich sein, wie wir uns etwas vorgenommen haben für den Tod.* Sterbens. (*JT*, 1821–22)

Gesine angrily threatens her ultimate right of veto. In the end the balance of power will always be in Gesine's hands, since GS has a vested interest in the continuation of the text (a desire to complete a task begun) whereas Gesine has none. GS can only circumvent this subjugation to Gesine's authority by negotiation and subversion.

The evidence of the text is, in this case, paralleled by Johnson's testimony on his perception of the relationship between himself and Gesine. In *Begleitumstände* he mentions an agreement reached with Gesine in New York on the concealment of real names, describing his assent to her conditions as 'eine Verständigung und eine Prüfung in einem, sie konnte die verlangen von jemand, der fortan in ihrem Namen schreiben wollte, für sie und an ihrer Stelle. Das wurde nun kenntlich als der Vertrag über den Auftrag, mit ihr als Generalanwalt für alle Personen und ihrem unbedingten Vetorecht' (*BU*, 425). But it should be remembered that most of the literary corroboration for this explanation lies dormant until *Jahrestage* 4, and it is impossible to determine how far what purports to be a factual explanation of Johnson's attitude to his character arose from the interplay between GS and Gesine, rather than preceded it, as *Begleitumstände* would have it. Earlier interviews are less specific on this point (indeed on almost everything) than the lecture series of 1979. That apart, it is clear from the text that GS and Gesine are able in different ways to exert influences on the

nature and course of the narrative. Their apparent co-operation transpires to be a submerged power struggle in which Gesine will apparently always have the upper hand. But that imbalance, it will be seen, is corrected by other sources of influence in the narrative dynamics.

For although the interaction between GS and Gesine constitutes the primary narrative relationship which begets the novel's fictional universe as a whole, that universe, of course, encompasses a further fictional world. The precise internal conjunction of the two spheres and the status of the immanent narrative have largely been neglected by the critical literature, yet the Jerichow story offers an opportunity to analyse fictionality in a way which is ordinarily impossible. However beguiling the prospect of determining the way in which elements of the real world are transformed into fiction, that creative process can never be laid bare by reference to a work of literature per se, because in the absence of a complete and finite set of data to describe the reality from which the fiction is supposedly drawn, only the most partial and unconfirmable of comparisons may be made. In the case of a contextual narrative complete with storyteller and recipient, on the other hand, the communicative structure becomes a legitimate object for examination: the speculation necessary when author, reader, and material are external to the work may be dispensed with. Naturally such an examination can lay no claim to universality, since the object of scrutiny ultimately derives from the experience of one writer, but may nevertheless, as a model, relinquish some useful insights into the creative process itself.

While for convenience's sake the present study examines the Jerichow story separately from the New York level, their interdependence, expressed largely in Gesine's motivation for seeking to reconstruct a past reality in this way, will be considered specifically in due course. Anita Krätzer does not do justice to the narrative concept by dividing the two spheres into discrete elements, as though it were possible to isolate the New York level without distorting the effect of the whole novel:

Die in den einzelnen Tageseinheiten splitterartig aufgefächerten Amerikapartikel werden hierbei zu zusammenhängenden Erzählsträngen und Themenkomplexen geordnet, wobei die Erzählpassagen, die sich zu einem eigenen Jerichow-Teil zusammenfügen, nur insoweit zu berücksichtigen sind, wie sie als innerer Bezugsrahmen Gesines deren Reaktionen auf und ihr Urteil über Amerika direkt beeinflussen.<sup>34</sup>

Krätzer's notion of what constitutes direct influence is never clarified, so that in practice she is able largely to discard the Jerichow story, although Gesine's daily life in New York and the past in Germany are both present in her consciousness almost every day. Indeed, on balance she devotes rather more specific attention to the past than the present, since much (but by no means all) of the latter merely registers on her consciousness and is duly noted by GS, whereas she consciously grapples with the problem of the former, disregarding her immediate surroundings.

Although a similar narrative relationship obtains as on the New York level, for at least part of the time Gesine narrates the Jerichow story directly, since her discussions about the past with Marie are transcribed rather than described. These dialogues are frequently set in recognizable locations, on the South Ferry, for example, or at the swimming pool. At least twice it is clear that the dialogues have been recorded on tape in Gesine's flat: '— Mord und Totschlag! sagt Marie in festem Ton. Aber das Tonband täuscht ihre Empörung nur vor, ihr Lachen folgt unverhofft, läßt die eingestellte Modulation klirren vor inniger Belustigung. — Mein Fuß! sagt sie' (*JT*, 298). And again in volume 2: '— Es gefällt mir nicht: sagt Marie. Es ist ihrer Stimme anzuhören, daß sie auf dem Rücken liegt; seit der Ankunft der Familie Killainen schläft sie in dem Zimmer der Schweizerin mit Annie und mir zusammen. Sie spricht langsam, bedächtig, unzufrieden' (*JT*, 607). No explanation is given for these rare indications that the dialogues are taped, although there is a suggestion that the activity is not sporadic. When Annie Fleury and the children share the flat with the Cresspahls in Riverside Drive, Gesine and Marie have less opportunity to pursue the Jerichow story: 'Da bleibt der Zähler des Tonbandgerätes unerschütterlich auf der Ziffer des Vorabends stehen. . .' (*JT*, 581). The suspension of taping is here clearly associated with the interruption of Gesine's story to Marie. Despite the lack of explanation, one important effect of the taping is to reinforce the impression of verbatim reporting on those occasions when the Jerichow story is narrated by means of a dialogue between mother and daughter, in other words that Gesine is responsible for what appears without the intervention of GS. The storage of their discussions also allows both participants to make detailed reference to what has gone before, with interesting results, as we shall see.<sup>35</sup>

But direct narration by Gesine to Marie accounts for only part of what actually appears in *Jahrestage*, because on some occasions the child plainly cannot have been privy to what we have heard. Not until page 72, on 10 September 1967, is there any indication at all that Marie has been listening to the story; she asks two short questions, followed by another nearly fifty pages later. Only at the end of September (*JT*, 128) does the first actual dialogue between mother and daughter concerning the Jerichow story appear. Up to this point, then, one can only speculate that Marie is aware of the story we have been reading. Eventually it becomes clear that Gesine in fact withholds parts of the story from her daughter. After the account of how Lisbeth starved Gesine as a child, Lisbeth thanks her for having preserved Marie from such knowledge:

*Dank di ook, Dochte.*

*Da hab ich nicht zu Dank verdient.*

*Doch. Weil du es deiner Marie nicht erzählt hast. (JT, 695)*

Gesine must, therefore, have mentally reconstructed the story for GS to set down, for we have just read it. There are certain similarities with the way

Lisbeth's death is conveyed; of that, too, Marie is unaware, for Gesine passes over the episode as far as her daughter is concerned:

. . . über meine Mutter sprechen wir nicht mehr. Die ist inzwischen tot.  
— Ist sie in dem Feuer —? O.K. Ich will es nicht wissen. Ich versprechs. (*JT*, 784)

Furthermore, Gesine was unconscious on the *Jahrestage* day during which the incident is recounted in the text; as Hoesterey notes, GS must therefore take over the narration: 'Die schwierigste Etappe der Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit ist für sie der Tod der Mutter; sie kann ihn nicht bewältigen — und wird krank. Da springt der Autor-Erzähler ein' (Hoesterey, p. 20). The reason given in the text for Gesine's illness is flu, so how far her difficulty with the past contributes is a matter for conjecture. Hoesterey may or may not be right in her justification for GS's involvement; this study would maintain that since he is always responsible for reporting the events in her (un)conscious mind, this manifestation is not exceptional, even on the Jerichow level.

Indeed it would be highly implausible to regard the other narrative sections, (as distinct from the dialogues), which make up the bulk of the Jerichow story, to be wholly Gesine's responsibility, as Hoesterey's interpretation of the presentation of Lisbeth's death would imply. The status of the Jerichow information is less straightforward than that of Gesine's New York present, which can mostly be explained as that which lies within her field of perception. Much of the Jerichow material Gesine could not possibly know, since the standpoint of a neutrally omniscient narrator is frequently adopted. When Horst Papenbrock (to take just one of many examples) decides to tell Lisbeth of his decision to join the *Wehrmacht*, we are supplied with a wealth of scenic detail as well as both characters' thoughts:

Es war ein warmer Nachmittag, im späten Juli, das Gartenlicht, vom Fenster in Rechtecke aufgeteilt, war schon niedrig. In der Nähe machten die Stare sich mausig und über die reifen Kirschen her, von ganz weit her war Paap beim Umstapeln von Balken zu hören. Es war ein Sonntagnachmittag, das Gefühl von Arbeitsruhe schlug schon durch. Horst mochte nicht gleich anfangen, so daß Lisbeth an einen gewöhnlichen Besuch glaubte und zu erzählen anfang von der Reise, die sie am Vormittag zum Heeresbauamt in Gneez hatte tun müssen, auch von den Gesprächen in der Eisenbahn. Ingeheim dachte sie daran, daß sie ihre Haare hätte waschen sollen, und war ärgerlich, daß auch Horst nun einen Augenschein bekam für das Jerichower Gerede, sie halte nicht auf sich. Horst war ein wenig nach Abschied, und er sah seine Schwester genauer an als sonst, bemerkte wohl die strähnigen, aufgelösten Flechten, hielt Lisbeth doch für das Kind, die Jüngere, auf deren Ruf von Hübschsein er oft sich etwas eingebildet hatte. (*JT*, 568)

This is quite clearly fully-fledged omniscient narration, with as much information available as necessary to describe the scene and atmosphere in detail along with the inner feelings of the two characters. One could hardly imagine in this case, then, that Gesine had extemporized such thoughtful, balanced prose for Marie; in fact we must assume that GS has taken the raw material of Gesine's imaginative reconstruction and narrated on that basis.



There is some evidence to support that assumption, for the differences between what GS includes in the text and what Gesine tells Marie are more than just a question of omission. The story which Marie hears, while similar to the textual version, differs not only in extent but also in material. A good example is provided when Marie questions Gesine about the end of a particular story line, namely Semig's arrest for his involvement in the Warning/Hagemeister case:<sup>36</sup>

— Am Donnerstagabend hast du aufgehört, als Semig unter Bewachung nach Gneez fuhr, mit dem Eisernen Kreuz an der Jacke.

— Das nahm ihm Wachtmeister Fretwust gegen Quittung ab.

— Es war aber eine von Lisbeths Geschichten, und du hast ihr nicht ihren Schluß gegeben.

— Lisbeth hat sich, sie — (*JT*, 587)

At this point their discussion (which takes place on the South Ferry) is interrupted by the return of Annie Fleury and the children. The following evening, Marie pursues the point that Gesine has not satisfactorily finished the story line, and to furnish proof of her suspicion she plays back the tape of Gesine's story from the previous week:

— Hör zu, Gesine: sagt Marie. — Ich werde dir jetzt zeigen, was du am Donnerstagabend als Letztes gesagt hast:

— 'Allerdings trug Fretwust Semigs Kriegsauszeichnungen nicht in die Effektenliste ein. Er rechnete nicht damit, daß der Jude seine Orden zurückerhalten werde. Fretwust war auch noch nicht lange Wachtmeister gewesen; von Rechts wegen hätte er im Pumpwerk Gneez den Klärschlamm absaugen sollen. Und Fretwust genierte sich nicht für den Namen; im Gegenteil war er stolz darauf'. Ja. Ist das kein Schluß? [asks Gesine]. (*JT*, 589)

What Marie has heard, and replayed on tape, is in our text briefly summed up, but amplified by the description of Lisbeth's attempted suicide in the sea: the increasing desperation signified by that attempt is associated unmistakably with official, unjust persecution of the Jewish Semig. Clearly, Gesine had wanted to save Marie from this unpalatable information; her confusion on the South Ferry when she realizes Marie has detected the gap is noticeable.

For Marie recognizes (with an astuteness that beggars belief) that Semig's fate is intertwined with Lisbeth's refusal to eat meat, of which we learned over a month before on 10 December 1967.<sup>37</sup> In response to Gesine's question 'Ist das kein Schluß?' (*JT*, 589), Marie asserts:

— Nicht für die andere Geschichte, Gesine. Das will ich dir doch beweisen. Du hast gesagt, Bandposition 266:

— 'Die Arbeitsdienstmädchen mochten den Einkauf von Fleisch noch nicht genug gelernt haben, Lisbeth wollte lieber, daß an ihrem Tisch mit hohen Zähnen gekaut wurde, als daß sie auf die Stadtstraße von Jerichow ging'.

— Das ist der richtige Anfang, Gesine! (*JT*, 589)

In the ensuing discussion Gesine manages to divert Marie from the issue, and so avoids revealing Lisbeth's attempted suicide, which would complete the

sequence of events whose beginning Marie has found on tape. But on this occasion at least it is clear that both the wording and emphasis of the story which Gesine physically tells in the *Jahrestage* world vary crucially from the textual account.

There is even some evidence of factual variation between the two versions. In Marie's story, Lisbeth apparently refuses to serve meat because her maids are insufficiently experienced in its purchase, while Lisbeth is too proud to do their job for them. But in the text we read, Lisbeth develops a sudden moral aversion to meat after noticing a certain resemblance to the human body in a piece of pork, 'also kam bei Cresspahls nur Fleisch auf den Tisch, wenn er darauf bestand, und sie aß nicht mit' (*JT*, 433). Furthermore, in December 1933 Lisbeth was observed pointedly doing her own shopping: 'Sieh dir das an, wie Lisbeth jeden Mittag um zwölf aus Papenbrocks Tür kommt mit dem zugedeckten Henkelkorb und ihn wie ein Dienstmädchen durch die Stadtstraße, na, die Adolf Hitler-Straße trägt. Ist doch wahr, kann sie Edith machen lassen. Tut sie aber nicht, will dem Mann beim Essen zusehen, gehört sich auch so für eine Ehefrau' (*JT*, 409–10). In this case Gesine has not only excised parts of the mentally-reconstructed past (as she did with Lisbeth's death), but actually changed it for Marie's consumption. All the detectable alterations and omissions concern Lisbeth (her increasing desperation, attempted suicide, and death): evidently Gesine feels such matters to be irrelevant, unsuitable, or perhaps potentially damaging as far as Marie is concerned. Coming to terms with her mother is a private, internal matter for Gesine. Apart from where Lisbeth is involved, there is no evidence to show that the two versions differ widely; in the main Marie's reactions can be clarified by reference to the text we have read. But the very fact that the potential for two versions is present shows that GS is responsible for the actual act of narration on the Jerichow level, too, providing what we may regard as an honest representation of Gesine's thoughts which might, on rare occasions, contrast with what Marie hears by reason of Gesine's inadequate powers of expression or because of maternal consideration. When there is no evidence to the contrary (the normal state of affairs) we can only assume that the two stories coincide.

There are two main reasons for the Jerichow story's occasional explicit separation into distinct versions. In purely practical terms, it would be unreasonable and implausible to expect Gesine to spend every day of a whole year telling the story in such detail to her daughter. Moreover, such a state of affairs would severely limit the scope of the novel's external events on the New York level. But more importantly in narrative terms, this arrangement allows the tension to be revealed which exists between the story's potential — the parts which Marie never hears — and what is actually revealed to the child, a tension which arises from the disparity between Gesine's narrative motivation with regard to herself as storyteller and that with regard to Marie as recipient. Those

matters will be discussed in due course; for the moment another question must be settled.

Despite GS's narrative involvement, the kind of mental reconstruction which is aimed at, along with the source and validity of its fundamental data, remain Gesine's responsibility.<sup>38</sup> The problem of her omniscience is still unsolved, for Gesine too is subject to the moral and practical constraints which narrative omniscience entails. She seeks a truth which is not historical, but valid for herself, as she tells Marie:

— Nie habe ich die Wahrheit versprochen.

— Gewiß nicht. Nur deine Wahrheit.

— Wie ich sie mir denke (*JT*, 670)

The validity of Gesine's story has to stand up to examination not only from the outside recipient but from her own conscience; that is, a distinction exists between external and internal narrative validity. But since she herself, therefore, sets the parameters of acceptability, she is quite at liberty to interpret the dictates of her conscience in a manner which enables her to alter the criteria for internal validity at will. The mechanism by which that danger is overcome will be considered in the next chapter of this study. But as in earlier novels, there can be little doubt that the multifarious fallibility of memory represents the greatest single threat to valid reconstruction of the past as fictional truth.

## VI THE VALIDITY OF FICTIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

The summer of 1947 saw Gesine's first deliberate attempt to reconstruct the past, and so her first recognition of the associated problems. The description of that attempt is in effect a reconstruction of a reconstruction, but provides a number of insights into the creative process which Gesine later felt herself compelled to enter on. The fourteen-year-old returned to what had been the Paepckes' home, hoping to rediscover her time there with Alexandra. She naïvely seeks not just memories, but what might be termed authentic memory; experience in fully the same broad, vibrant, yet intelligible terms as it was originally perceived. Gesine soon realizes the futility of her hopes, however, despairing of anything more than isolated stimuli from the past, which, though intense, are almost devoid of life, and certainly neither coherent nor comprehensive:

Einmal ging sie durch die Boddenwiesen, bis zum Knöchel im quatschenden Wasser,<sup>1</sup> wollte Paepckes Katen heimlich von hinten ansehen, hoffte gar nicht mehr als auf den Anstoß. Sie sah die verwilderte Hecke, den Rundlauf, ein Stück Fenster vom Boddenzimmer. Die Stahltür mit dem Maschendraht war mit Kette und Vorhängeschloß gesichert. Sie hörte eine Frau sprechen, wie man es tut mit kleinen Kindern, die schon Worte annehmen. Alles das brachte die verlorene Zeit nur wieder als einen Gedanken: Als wir . . . ; die gedachten Worte kamen nicht zum Leben. Fast jeden Abend beim Milchholen geriet sie in die Nähe des Moments, in dem Grete Nagel Alexandra und ihr ein Glas Milch angeboten hatte, jedoch frisch aus dem Euter, und die Kuh wandte ihre Augen um zu ihr. (*JT*, 1494)

The gap between Gesine's expectations and what she finds to be the case presupposes two separate, yet overlapping, ways of thinking. Firstly, thought using images, which are fragmented, and organized in no perceptible pattern. Secondly, thought formally structured as language; that is, not some linguistic representation of anterior images, but thought in the form of language, only existing by virtue of its formal linguistic organization. In order to make sense of the remembered images and sensations, Gesine needs to place them in a coherent framework. Her striving is for a depiction of the past which includes non-linguistic images, but structured in a way which only language can offer. As the sense-impressions which go to make up parts of immediate experience fade to fragmentary glimpses, Gesine is left with no formal apparatus with which to reconstruct them faithfully in their original entirety. While language is the only means available for Gesine to make a previous experience intelligible, it cannot

fully encompass such remembered sensations as were not originally grasped in linguistic terms. So in the end Gesine cannot incorporate the images which would revivify the past into the coherent organization of language. Efforts to integrate such images into a comprehensible vision almost result in their obliteration: 'Sie versuchte, beschreibende Ausdrücke zu finden für Alexandras Stimme in jenem Augenblick; da entging ihr fast die Ahnung davon' (*JT*, 1494). This is the fundamental dilemma which the process of memory engenders. Words obscure the unarticulated image, yet only with words can she construct any view of the past which consists of more than fleeting glimpses:

Abends saß das Licht von Malchen Saatmanns Hinterzimmer im Gebüsch. Sie konnte denken: Der Abend, als wir noch Brot von Malchen holen mußten, Alexander saß vornehm auf dem Sofa, angedübelt wohl, sagte zu seiner Tochter: Nun, du braves Kind? als kannte er sie nicht wieder. . . Gesine konnte es denken. Sie konnte es sich vorstellen als geschrieben. Es war nicht da. Sie war sich bewußt, daß in dieser Minute Stillstehens vor Frau Saatmanns freundlich verstreutem, heimlichem Licht der Wind stillstand, als verhalte er den Schritt. Sie fragte sich, ob sie das dereinst auch werde vergessen haben und bloß noch in Worten aufbewahrt. (*JT*, 1494–95)

Gesine thus fails in her search for authentic memory. This failure is shattering enough, it seems, to lead her at least to consider committing suicide, although in the event she makes no attempt to do so. But she does make records of the present in every way possible (as indeed Johnson did): 'Das Fotografieren ging erst mit mir an; ich war die erste von uns, die das Vergessen fürchtete' (*JT*, 937). But these are only ways of preserving scraps of what has gone before; the Paepcke experience taught Gesine that, however, inadequate, language is the only practical means of regaining even some small part of what has been lost.

That means enables Gesine to produce an extremely detailed — though inauthentic — version of the past. In her first taped letter to Marie 'für wenn ich tot bin', Gesine describes how the process of linguistic rebuilding and enlargement takes place, by citing the example of Jakob:

Dein Vater ist gestorben als er noch nicht einmal das Wort Sterben ordentlich denken konnte. Von deinem Vater weiß ich nur das Notwendigste. Und ich trau dem nicht was ich weiß, weil es sich nicht immer in meinem Gedächtnis gezeigt hat, dann unverhofft als Einfall auftritt. Vielleicht macht das Gedächtnis aus sich so einen Satz, den Jakob gesagt hat oder vielleicht gesagt hat, gesagt haben kann. Ist der Satz einmal fertig und vorhanden, baut das Gedächtnis die anderen um ihn herum, sogar die Stimmen von ganz anderen Leuten. Davor habe ich Angst. Mit einem Mal führe ich in Gedanken ein Gespräch, bei dem ich gar nicht dabei war und Wahrheit ist daran nur die Erinnerung an seine Intonation, wie Jakob sprach. (*JT*, 387).

Gesine's doubts about her version's validity are very apparent; even if the original memory does provide a reliable foundation of truth (which it is not certain to do), the edifice which subsequently arises is to all intents and purposes invented, but plausibly invented. The above passage describes literary composition, to which, although it is a method wanting in many respects, Gesine can

find no alternative. But memory, while it provides the foundation stones on which Gesine may build her story, is quite inadequate on its own to help her complete that task. Gesine's account extends back to before her memories began, so for that period at least documentary and hearsay evidence must have formed the basis of her invention. But invention, while it circumvents the deficiencies of memory, gives rise to new problems of its own: Gesine's doubts about the truth and validity of her story and her efforts to overcome such doubts are apparent in several ways.

Early in the novel Gesine realizes that to forestall accusations of untruth and potential invalidity from Marie, she must explore the potential for supplementing her knowledge, memories, and imagination, the first two of which may be unreliable, and the last in need of restriction. In a taped letter to DE she describes first Marie's views of the story, and then her own:

. . .was sie wissen will ist nicht Vergangenheit, nicht einmal ihre. Für sie ist es eine Vorführung von Möglichkeiten, gegen die sie sich gefeit glaubt, und in einem andern Sinn Geschichten. (Gefragt habe ich sie nicht.) So verbringen wir einige Abende. Mein Erzählen kommt mir oft vor wie ein Knochenmann, mit Fleisch kann ich ihn nicht behängen, einen Mantel für ihn habe ich gesucht: im Institut zur Pflege Britischen Brauchtums. (*JT*, 144)

At this point Marie still regards Gesine's 'possibilities' as matters foreign to her own concerns. Later on she will relinquish this disinterested attitude and begin to question the stories and their status as truth, having recognized their relevance to her life. Possibly Gesine had already foreseen the problem by accounting for her information sources in advance. The image she chooses corresponds to her realization that the dead past is beyond hope of revivification in the strict sense; she can only weave a coat to cover the bones of her memory, creating an unsatisfactory but better than nothing representation. The approach she describes here involves consulting contemporary newspapers, namely the *Richmond and Twickenham Times* of 1932. Other documentary sources may include photographs, diaries, and letters. But this kind of evidence can only provide the coarsest of threads with which to weave her coat, inadequate for the purpose of creating an acceptable version of the past. The threshold of acceptability will be defined as far as possible in Chapter VIII of this study; for the moment suffice it to recall the definition of how fiction may reconstitute the past which Uwe Johnson advanced with reference to *Jahrestage*: 'da handelt es sich dann um den Versuch, eine Wirklichkeit, die vergangen ist, wiederherzustellen. Und das heißt nicht etwa, eine Wirklichkeit in verkleinerter Form nachzubauen, sondern eine Wirklichkeit in allen ihren Beziehungen zusammengefaßt noch einmal möglich zu machen' (Simmerding, *Literarische Werkstatt*, p. 71).

By using photographs and textual evidence, Gesine may reconstruct with some accuracy a certain sequence of events, but elucidating why and how the life of her family influenced her own life requires the explanation of personal

motivations and interpersonal relationships. Remembering a picture she had seen of her parents' wedding, Gesine surmises the feelings of those portrayed towards each other, what they were saying, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Immediately before, she had reconstructed a picture she had never seen from what she knew of the wedding. The effect of such reconstruction emerges in literary terms as omniscient narration, which is not restricted to the time before Gesine's memory began; the perspectives of both Jakob and Frau Abs are adopted as the story progresses into the 1950s, for example. In effect, Gesine has to fill in the gaps between documentary evidence with invention. As Marie puts it in the 'Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl': 'Als Gesine nachsehen konnte in Richmond, durfte sie nicht mehr zurück zu ihm [Cresspahl] und vergleichen. Was sie gesucht hat, es wird ihr geholfen haben zum Erfinden'.<sup>3</sup> But Gesine's citing of her sources and subsequent attempts to persuade Marie of her procedure's validity show her to be aware that the advantages offered by detailed re-creation of her past in this manner are partly offset by an inevitable reduction in credibility. Nor is she spared the wider problem of omniscient narration, namely the moral objection that such an approach automatically repudiates limitation; Gesine could invent entirely at will, giving rise to an account devoid of regulation which may, as a result, be conscious or unconscious falsification. Without any means of arbitration, a claim to fictional truth is morally unsupportable. Moreover, Gesine's approach plainly does not share the mistrust of fiction's ability to elucidate motivation which is apparent in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. In addition, therefore, to the external constraints imposed on Gesine by both Marie and GS, her narrative has an ingenious inbuilt safeguard which both accounts for a proportion of her knowledge and delimits the extent of her invention; that safeguard being the voices of the dead.

The nature and status of these voices is not entirely straightforward, however. Gerlach equates the conversations between Gesine and the dead with the frequent snatches of conversation from the New York present (also italicized in the text), and explains them as a way for Gesine to counteract her inability to communicate in daily life: 'In dieser Situation, in der Gesine kaum ein offenes Gespräch mit einem Partner führt, gewinnt die Tendenz zum Schweigen mehr und mehr die Oberhand. Trotzdem verstummt Gesine nicht völlig. Sie führt "Gedankengespräche", fiktive Dialoge mit lebenden oder — öfter noch — mit toten Personen ihrer Umgebung. In diesen Gesprächen wird gesagt, was sonst nicht zur Sprache kommt' (Gerlach, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Identität*, p. 57). Yet there are certain differences between the two kinds of dialogue. The main distinguishing feature is that the dead have access to Gesine's thoughts. They can see through her dishonesty, detect her motives, and, consequently, discuss her mental reconstruction of the past with her, allowing an exchange of views which would otherwise be impossible since that version of the Jerichow story remains physically unexpressed by Gesine. The New York voices do not

possess this facility, but appear instead to be bits of genuine discourse italicized to indicate their removal from original context. While the dialogue from New York does sometimes apparently rationalize unspoken feelings in the form of conversation such as Gesine might conceivably imagine to have taken place, there is mostly no real proof that they did not in fact occur. Furthermore, whether Gesine actually hears the voices in the New York present is not made clear except in one case, and that is negative, referring to Amanda Williams: 'Aber es ist so, ihre Stimme hören wir nicht in Gedanken' (JT, 291). It seems more likely that in general they represent actual conversations or the kind of imaginary brief mental exchange which is a familiar element of human thought processes. The voices of the dead, on the other hand, seem to arise quite independently in Gesine's mind. Gerlach says of the phenomenon 'Mit derselben intuitiven Einsicht, mit der sie sich in lebende Personen zu versetzen vermag, denkt sie sich in Tote hinein und "hört" auch deren Stimmen' (Gerlach, p. 58). But Gesine really hears the voices, involuntarily; they are no purposefully imagined constructs of the mind.

More than just echoed memories from the past, the dead communicate reciprocally with Gesine in a way which takes account of the whole *Jahrestage* world, including both the Jerichow and the New York levels. The conversations are set in the fictional present, referring back to what has gone before. They are able to argue with Gesine, confronting her with unpalatable facts about her own life, cajoling and persuading. She seems unable to control or silence them: 'Wenn nur die Toten das Maul halten wollten' (JT, 278) she says despondently at one point, expressing her inability to curb their garrulity. Gesine cannot simply ignore the voices' nagging even if she would rather be left in peace. 'Diese Ausfragerei immer! Nur weil ihr es hinter euch habt!' (JT, 581) she bursts out angrily before a renewed bout of questioning, and on another occasion: 'Ich will nichts von den Toten jeden Tag' (JT, 1178). The exchanges occur most frequently between Gesine and Cresspahl, although the 'Ausfragerei' is usually conducted by the dead as a collective entity. But other characters less close to Gesine also figure as conversation partners: Aggie Brühshaver for example (JT, 761). It is unlikely, then, that Gesine reconstitutes their identities in her mind because she has been unable to come to terms with their death. And while Gerlach's view of the voices as a substitute for deficient communication has its merits, Gesine does undeniably spend many hours a week in conversation with her daughter, and may talk to DE almost whenever she likes. Nor does Gerlach explain the voices' independent status. A further complication is introduced when it becomes clear that neither being dead nor being previously known to Gesine are apparently essential qualifications for the voices from the past.

While recounting how she was named after a woman from Heinrich Cresspahl's past, Gesine hears the voice of that woman, Gesine Redebrecht,



describing her childhood meeting with Cresspahl in 1904. Strangely, however, neither the identity nor the circumstances of the voice's owner are immediately apparent to Gesine:

*Du bist das, Gesine?* [asks Gesine Cresspahl]

*Das bin ich, Gesine.*

*1904 in Malchow am See?*

*Ich war fünfzehn. Er war sechzehn. Ich war die Enkelin von Redebrecht.*

*...*  
*Gesine, bist du auch tot?* [asks Gesine Cresspahl]

*Das muß nicht sein, Gesine. Ich wär ja erst neunundsiebzig. Die Olsch, die dir 1952 auf dem Bahnhof von Wendisch Burg im Weg stand, ich könnte sie gewesen sein. Die Olsch mit dem Stock auf der Bank vor dem Altersheim in Hamburg, vielleicht war ich sie. Das kannst du doch denken, Gesine.*

*Kann ich, Gesine.* (JT, 217)

Gesine Redebrecht sketches in her own outline in Gesine Cresspahl's mind, not definitively, but suggestively, offering various possibilities for Gesine to accept or reject. The main criteria are probability and consistency; if Gesine Redebrecht fits harmoniously into Gesine's picture of the past, then she can take her place there. She may or may not be dead, for instance, since she might plausibly still be living. There is, then, a curious quality of independence coupled with a lack of definition in this case, which we might regard as an example of the genesis of the fully-formed characters who speak to Gesine in her mind. Once the fundamental features are established in this way, the figures acquire complete freedom from Gesine. One is reminded of Johnson's description to Dieter E. Zimmer of how he realized that Gesine lived in New York: 'So kam ich in New York auf die Erkenntnis, daß Gesine seit 1961 dort leben müsse, wahrscheinlich in der Nähe des Viertels, das ich bewohnte, daß sie wahrscheinlich in dem kommerziellen Viertel auf der Ostseite Manhattans in den vierziger Straßen arbeitete. Da konnte ich dann nach ihr suchen, weil ich schon genug von ihr wußte' (Zimmer, in Bengel, p. 102). The use of the subjunctive in both cases is striking; the possibility that certain parallels may exist presents itself.

That possibility is strengthened when Gesine hears the voice of Kliefoth. During their conversation he apparently detects a further presence, perhaps that of Heinrich Cresspahl, who, like Gesine with Gesine Redebrecht, cannot determine Kliefoth's circumstances:

*Denn hört mich noch einer?* [asks Kliefoth]

*Ja, Herr Kliefoth. Ich hör Sie gut. Sind Sie nun auch tot?*

*Die verlangen ja nur den einen Mitgliedsbeitrag für ihren Club. Den hab ich.*

*Wann, Herr Kliefoth?*

*So gegen Abend, wenn in New York Mittag vorbei ist. Ich denke so kommenden November.* (JT, 1177)

Although Kliefoth is obviously aware of his impending death (an awareness which constitutes the 'Mitgliedsbeitrag'), he is certainly still alive when this

conversation is held. His position is identical with that of the dead, however, for he, like them, is able to comment on the story told in *Jahrestage*, and explain his own part in it, as for instance when Gesine asks him about his enforced retirement during another dialogue:

*Aber Sie sind doch erst abgesetzt worden im April danach.*

*Dunn kem dat dicke Enn rut. Oewerall in Mecklenburg müßt ein Upsatz schrewn warn, und von mine Schaul kem kein. "Was mir mein Lehrer von Stalin erzählt hat." (JT, 1633–34)*

Finally, Gesine even places her past self in the same category as the dead: 'Ich habe gelebt in Jerichow, Mecklenburg, Sachsen, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Berlin. Da sind die Gegenden übrig, nicht die Toten, Cresspahl, Jakob, Marie Abs. Sie, die ich war' (JT, 1008). The common denominator is neither death nor merely an emotional closeness to Gesine, but the fact that all the voices Gesine hears figure prominently in the Jerichow story. They are akin to literary characters, whom Gesine creates by a mental process which she herself does not fully understand, but who then acquire their own independence and freedom of thought.<sup>4</sup> In that sense, therefore, they stand in the same relation to Gesine as Gesine does to GS. The impression of such a relationship is reinforced by the perplexing chapter for 12 November 1967.

The chapter comprises less than a page of italicized conversation, or rather unilateral accusation, which at first sight appears to lack continuity. The beginning is preceded by no explanation:

*Jetzt halten wir die jährliche Rede auf deinen Tod. Es kommt auf den Tag nicht an.*

*Du bist tot, verstanden. Das ist deine Sache.*

*Es ist unsere Sache, ob wir dich behalten wollen. Immer willst du gedacht werden. Es ist genug ohne dich. (JT, 286)*

The pronouns in the passage are never expressly identified, but the 'du' undoubtedly refers to Lisbeth, who died on 10 November 1938; 12 November 1967 is therefore not only Lisbeth's sixty-first birthday, but also almost exactly the twenty-ninth anniversary of her death ('Es kommt auf den Tag nicht an'). An elapsed time of twenty-nine years mentioned near the end of the passage confirms this suspicion. 'Wir' stands partly for Gesine and GS in their capacity as co-narrators of *Jahrestage*, which explains the assertion that they decide 'ob wir dich behalten wollen'; their rebukes are those of narrator to character. Although she wants to be a part of the mental reconstruction ('Immer willst du gedacht werden'), Lisbeth is not essential to the Jerichow story, which is 'genug ohne dich' (or at least so Gesine and GS maintain for the purposes of their argument). While they may be deduced with little difficulty, Lisbeth's answers to this threat of exclusion are not recorded. This imparts a disjointed effect to the passage, which throughout comprises only one side of a dialogue between Lisbeth and a collective consisting of Gesine, GS, and perhaps Cresspahl. Yet the suppression of her replies underlines the point that exclusion from the story is a sanction

which may well be employed against the accused. It is already evident that the passage, and the charges against Lisbeth, may only be understood in terms of Lisbeth as a literary character in Gesine's mental reconstruction of the Jerichow past.

Gesine/GS go on to reproach Lisbeth for her suicide, repulsing, one may infer, her protest to the effect that no help was available, with the suggestion that she was too proud to accept help, and self-centredly 'ging weg'. 'Weggehen' belongs to the Johnsonian concept of death as a journey to another place; at the very end of *Jahrestage* the dying Kliefoth is described as 'ein Mann unterwegs an den Ort wo die Toten sind' (*JT*, 1891). Again Lisbeth's defence may be surmised; she had not intended to upset anyone.<sup>5</sup> That excuse elicits the rejoinder 'Du wolltest nicht alle kränken. Ihn hast du gekränkt. Du hast mich gekränkt. Ein Kind. Wir verzeihen dir gar nicht. (*JT*, 286). This is the only time where an 'ich' which undoubtedly refers to Gesine appears, yet it is enough to specify that component of the first-person plural used in the passage. 'Ihn' refers of course to Cresspahl. As the passage continues, imagery drawn from travel is taken up once more:

*Du sollst deinen Willen haben. Wir machen die Reise. Wir träumen das Flugzeug, wir träumen den Flug, wir reisen in der Nacht, wir hängen in der Luft, wir steigen um an einem Ort, wir müssen weiter durch die Zeit, umso undurchdringlicher als vergangener. Jetzt sind wir wo du warst. Da wo du tot bist, sehen wir dich nicht.<sup>6</sup> Und nichts wie zurück über England und Irland und Neufundland und Canada nach New York mit zehn Minuten Verspätung. Dahin kannst du nur folgen mit unserer Erlaubnis. (*JT*, 286–87)*

Association of the past with flying is a concept which has already been established in *Jahrestage*; on 25 September 1967 Gesine had dreamed of a flight to Minneapolis she undertook in April 1962. Marie woke her up with the question: '— Gesine, wach auf. Wo warst du', to which Gesine replied, conflating time and space, '— Vor ein paar Jahren' (*JT*, 120).<sup>7</sup> In the passage under discussion here, the past is reached by flying through time.<sup>8</sup> This image represents the act of narration: Gesine and GS 'träumen das Flugzeug', that is, tell the story, and Lisbeth can only follow (take part in the story) with their permission. The narration, as a means of access to the past, is depicted spatially by the geographical distance between New York and Jerichow. Such representation of temporal differentiation in terms of physical displacement has corroboration elsewhere in *Jahrestage*. When, in the years after the war, Gesine tries to find her time with Alexandra Paepcke again, she looks for the 'Eintritt in die ganze Zeit der Vergangenheit, der Weg durch das stockende Herz in das Licht der Sonne von damals' (*JT*, 1494). That entrance can only be effected with words, however inadequate the result: 'Sie konnte es sich vorstellen als geschrieben. Es war nicht da' (*JT*, 1494). The image of narration as a round trip into the past and back to the present is finally confirmed by Marie's exclamation near the end of the book: '— In New York wurde ich vier. Endlich sind wir angekommen, wo

meine Erinnerung Bescheid weiß. Welcome home!' (*JT*, 1875). But whether Lisbeth may take part in the journey (and her very existence depends on participation) is a matter for Gesine, GS, and the dead to decide:

*Es gäbe dich nicht, wenn wir dich nicht mehr wollten.*

*Mach dir keine unnützen Hoffnungen.*

*Sei nicht ungeduldig. Haben wir dich seit 29 Jahren je im Stich gelassen?*

*Benimm dich. Widersprich nicht. Nicht heute. (*JT*, 287)*

There is no middle ground of control between inclusion and omission (and therefore extinction); if Lisbeth wants to join in the narrative (and her excuses show that she does) then she must not abuse her independence, according to the final stern admonition.

Further evidence appears in *Jahrestage 4* to support a view of 'die Toten' as literary characters which only exist in Gesine's mind, and therefore in *Jahrestage*, by virtue of her efforts to re-create the past through storytelling. Five weeks before departing for Prague, Gesine seeks some reassurance that the voices she hears are not indicative of mental instability or illness. Driven by a fear of being unable to carry out her duties in Czechoslovakia, and worried not only that Marie may inherit the illness (if it is one) but that the child might even need to be protected from her, Gesine writes for advice to an eminent psychiatrist in Frankfurt, who, we may deduce from the initials A.M., is almost certainly Alexander Mitscherlich.<sup>9</sup> She has forgotten when the phenomenon first began, but assumes it was at the age of thirty-two (in 1965).<sup>10</sup> She has no idea of the cause, and is powerless to affect the symptoms:

Ich will es nicht. Dennoch gelange ich (manchmal fast vollständig) zurück in vergangene Situationen und spreche mit den Personen von damals wie damals. Das ereignet sich in meinem Kopf, ohne daß ich steuere. Auch verstorbene Personen sprechen mit mir wie in meiner Gegenwart. Etwa machen sie mir Vorhaltungen wegen der Erziehung meiner Tochter (geb. 1957). (*JT*, 1539)

Gesine goes on to explain that she also speaks with dead people she hardly knew, both from the standpoint of a thirty-five-year-old and that of an eight or fourteen-year-old child. She mentions changes in perspective: 'Gelegentlich wechselt beim Hören die eigene Situation von damals, des vierzehnjährigen Kindes, in die des Partners von heute, die ich aber doch kaum habe einnehmen können' (*JT*, 1539). This is a clear enough reference to the narrative circumstances of *Jahrestage*; 'der Partner von heute' is GS. The dead are established as a functioning part of the narrative process to which they owe their existence. The letter proceeds with an illuminating account of the characters' inception in Gesine's mind:

Viele solcher imaginären Gespräche (die mir wirklich vorkommen) erschaffen sich selbst aus geringfügigen Ansätzen, aus einem Stimmtönen, aus einer charakteristischen Betonung, aus Heiserkeit, aus gleichen Wortwurzeln [*sic*] des Englischen und Mecklenburgischen. Diese Fetzen genügen, in meinem Bewußtsein die Anwesenheit einer

vergangenen Person zu erzeugen, ihr Sprechen und damit einen Zustand weit vor meiner Geburt, so den März 1920 auf dem Pachtgut meines Großvaters, als meine Mutter ein Kind war. (*JT*, 1539–40)

Gesine's explanation is very reminiscent of a comment Johnson once made concerning the creative process: 'Diese Personen sind erfunden, sind zusammengelaufen aus vielen persönlichen Eindrücken, die ich hatte' (Simmerding, p. 65). The dead are reconstituted in Gesine's consciousness too from a multitude of impressions. Even more striking is Johnson's description of how he came to write *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. First reporting Ernst Barlach's experience of unexpectedly encountering a complete work in some mental recess while washing hands or cleaning teeth, Johnson then outlines his own experience:

Bei einer von solchen nichtigsten Verrichtungen war das Bewußtsein des Verfassers plötzlich fertig mit der gestellten Aufgabe, ohne seine Aufsicht hatte es die Lösung gefunden und warf sie ihm in die Gedanken: Er hörte seine Leute reden. Es war ein Ton, der aufbekehrte gegen eine Gewissheit, die war so unwiderruflich, die war in ein Grab getan; ihm wurde deutlich vorgesprochen, und gehorsam schrieb er nach:

Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen.

Er hörte sie reden, ihre mutlose, ihre unentwegte Gegenwehr. . . . (*BU*, 133)

Once more the parallels with Gesine can hardly be ignored. Gesine's interaction with the dead may be regarded as a model of the author's interaction with his characters, represented in its own fictional context and so comprehensible in its entirety.

Gesine's attitude to the dead, particularly her inability to control them, are recalled when Johnson reveals his own perception of Gesine:

. . . sie zu erfinden, war zwar der Anfang der Bekanntschaft gewesen; spätestens seit sie einen Namen hatte, war sie unabhängig geworden als eine Gesine Cresspahl. Was sie einmal bezogen hatte an Herkunft, menschlicher Umgebung, Ausbildung, Arbeitsstelle, alles hatte sie sogleich in Besitz genommen, sich anverwandelt als Eigenschaft und jenes unverlierbare Eigentum, das beschlossen ist in der Vergangenheit einer Person. Das machte sie zu einem ebenbürtigen Partner in dem Bewußtsein, in dem sie umging, so wirklich anwesend wie sonst Personen des Alltags, von denen Mimik, Sprechweise, Gangart erinnerlich waren. (*BU*, 299)

In their autonomy the dead are able to influence Gesine just as she influences GS. The details of that arrangement's operation, however, remain a mystery.

Whether the dead should be thought of as actual independent beings, or whether they are a rationalization of a process of creation and invention which Gesine does not fully understand herself, cannot be said. As we have seen, it seems probable that the dead fictionally represent Johnson's perception of his own literary characters. On occasion he did refer to 'die Toten' in interview: 'Und selbst die Toten sind ja in der Literatur nicht völlig beseitigt, weil sie in der Erinnerung der Personen weiterleben und durch die Vorstellung ihrer Wirklichkeit immer noch einwirken können auf Entschlüsse, auf Emotionen, auf

Zustände (Zimmer, in Bengel, p. 102). As far as Gesine is concerned, they exist in a much more real sense than Johnson allows in the above description. In answer to Gesine's enquiry, 'A. M.' offers the opinion that Gesine is unlikely to be suffering from any clinical illness other than psychological effects which began with her mother's death. The gist of his reply is reported: 'Sie (Gesine) ist auf dem richtigen Wege mit der Vermutung, hier wirkten Folgen von Verletzungen fort, von Verlusten; sie irrt sich, wenn sie da an Jakob denkt, an Cresspahl; angefangen hat es in der Tat mit der Mutter, die sich aus der Welt "ver-rückt" hat. Wir reden von dir, du Lisbeth geborene Papenbrock! Entfremdung ja, keine Wahnbildung. Nur daß sie unerledigt ist, die erste Verstoßung durch die Mutter (die zweite, die dritte)' (JT, 1856). As we shall see, Lisbeth is indeed one of the major reasons why Gesine looks to the past in the first place; the voices result from the narrative which arises in consequence. Mitscherlich does conclude with some friendly advice to see a psychiatrist in person, but makes no claim to a postal diagnosis. Schizophrenic tendencies are, however, apparent in the pronoun alternations; it is perhaps worth noting that another common symptom of schizophrenia is hearing voices in the head. Defining the precise psychological circumstances surrounding the dead's existence is, however, of slight importance, because, whatever those circumstances might be, the voices' importance lies in their independence, even if that independence is no more than a rationalization of the inventive process in Gesine's mind. In practical terms the dead exert a tangible, autonomous influence on the narrative method by virtue of their editorial power as an information source.

To turn, therefore, to the original question: the dead are clearly an important means by which Gesine can acquire sufficient data to make up the information necessary to such passages of omniscient narration as quoted earlier, in which Horst informs Lisbeth of his decision to join the *Wehrmacht*. 'Was kann ich wissen?' Gesine asks the dead, 'Was du von uns gehört hast. Was du gesehen hast' (JT, 1029). The dead may be referring to what Gesine heard from them when they were alive; indeed the appendix to volume 2, 'Mit den Augen Cresspahls', apparently consists of 'Auskünfte, gegeben unter den Umständen des Jahres 1949, auf die Fragen einer Sechzehnjährigen. Er war 61 Jahre alt'.<sup>11</sup> But there are enough instances of Gesine obtaining previously unknown information directly from the voices in her head. The Jerichow story in the autumn of 1938, for example, is narrated from Lisbeth's perspective, encompassing a multitude of detail such as that week's cinema programme in Lübeck. Facts of that kind may have been gleaned from contemporary newspapers, but a short conversation with the dead Lisbeth shows that Gesine has been tapping her for at least some of the necessary information:

*Clark Gable?*

*Und Coca-Cola gab es auch, Tochter.*

*Das hiesige? Wie deine Marie es trinkt, Tochter.*

*Hab ich es als Kind getrunken?*

*Gewiß, Tochter. Aufdem Schlüsselbuden in Lübeck, und du mochtest es nicht. (JT, 686)*

In this case the information imparted is factual, and intended by Lisbeth to show that her treatment of Gesine was not always detrimental. But more usually Gesine is interested in motives; why Cresspahl remained in England for eight months after Lisbeth returned to Germany, for instance, or why he agreed to remain in Germany rather than following the original plan of returning to England after Gesine's birth.

This arrangement presents one major difficulty. If Gesine has free access to the figures from her story in this way, why can she not simply ask them for all the information she needs? On the face of it Gesine could have been in the same advantageous position as Karsch; as a defined figure on a previous time level, who is the narrator in the fictional present, she could have had clearly limited cognizance. But that useful possibility is squandered by the apparent omniscience which Gesine enjoys by courtesy of the dead. While certain constants, such as the weather, or a quality of light, may be described without any special knowledge, other more specific matters are less susceptible of resolution through comparison with previous experience, and it is those matters which one might expect the dead to be capable of clarifying effortlessly on Gesine's behalf. The answer is that in practice, the dead do not dispense what they know freely. This imposes vital constraints on the material available to Gesine; without such restrictions, the apparently omniscient narration would violate the moral code which underlies *Wahrheitsfindung*, a moral code to which Gesine must also subject herself if her story is to have any validity as fictional truth. Thus, in the Jerichow story, what under other circumstances one might assume to be unlimited cognizance is not just theoretically limited, but shown to be so in practical terms, since the sources of information and their restrictions in turn are defined. Cresspahl, for instance, does not balk at simply refusing information which he seems to possess. Gesine, at a loss, finally asks her dead father, one may assume, just why he did stay in England for the statutory six months to work out his contract when he could easily have goaded Gosling into firing him on the spot:

*Wenn ihm um Bedenkzeit zu tun war, so hatte er sich reichlich damit eingedeckt.*

*Nich, Gesine?*

*Oder sollte Lisbeth sich besinnen können?*

*Nich, Gesine?*

*Du hattest noch was vor in Richmond, Cresspahl!*

*Nich, Gesine? (JT, 353)*

Despite Gesine's evident frustration, she is unable to elicit a satisfactory response from Cresspahl. Whatever the reasons for his refusal, it is clear that the dead do not provide unlimited access to the past for Gesine, and so do not imbue

her with complete omniscience. But that is not simply a conscious decision on their part, for they are not always capable of answering her enquiries fully. Early on in the *Jahrestage* year, on 6 September 1967, Gesine wants some information on the Papenbrock family:

*Papenbrock wurde die Pacht von Vietsen nicht verlängert, weil er nicht nach Vertrag drainiert hatte.*

*Weil alle über sein Kinderzimmer lachten.*

*Weil er nicht drainiert hat.*

*Wir wissen es nicht, Gesine.*

*Warum willst du das wissen, Gesine.*

*Wegen Cresspahl. Was wollte Cresspahl in einer solchen Familie. (JT, 59)*

Although facts seem to present less of a problem, information evidently becomes restricted as far as motives are concerned. Why things happened, cause and effect sequences, are the real object of investigation for Gesine's story. Relationships between people tend to belong to that complex. Gesine is puzzled about the peculiar relationship between Cresspahl and K. A. Pontij, but is unable simply to ask the dead Cresspahl for help: 'Könnten wir Cresspahl fragen! Der Umgang der beiden hatte, von einem Kind gesehen, oftmals die Manieren einer heftigen Freundschaft, taumelnd zwischen schlichter Treue ohne Bedingung, mörderischem Streit und innig-mürrischer Versöhnung' (*JT*, 1063). Recognizing Cresspahl's disinclination to clarify such questions, Gesine is forced to rely on her own unsatisfactory child's perspective of 1945; once more legitimate and plausible restrictions are placed on her narrative cognizance. Problems of motivation are thus left for Gesine to pursue in her attempts to understand the moral issues confronting her in New York by reference to those which her parents faced. (The solving of such problems, it will be seen, is a matter for the narrative relationship between Marie and Gesine.)

The influence of the dead extends beyond their ability to supply or withhold information, however. On at least one occasion they criticize Gesine for her treatment of the Jerichow narrative, comparing her approach to the past with the way she views her life in New York. In particular they are unhappy with the extent to which Gesine apparently provides an authoritative version of the past. Gesine mistrusts the motives of Annie Fleury in her opposition to the Vietnam war, yet as far as the Jerichow story is concerned, she seems to be on certain ground, the dead contend:

*— aber bei uns gibt es keinen Zweifel. "Papenbrock wollte nicht dem Juden Semig aus dem Land helfen und begnügte sich damit, daß er nun auch noch selber von sich wenig hielt." Punktum. Kein Wort über den Rest.*

*War es so?*

*Selbst wenn es stimmt, du erfindest das doch!*

*Das mache ich zurecht, damit es zu verstehen ist. (JT, 584)*



The sentence quoted presumably derives from Gesine's story to Marie, since it does not appear in our text. Nevertheless, Gesine makes no attempt to refute the charge of having invented the final elements which her story lacks, nor does she deny that she has been selective in her use of material. Although the dead apparently entertain no doubts about the accuracy of her conclusion, they do object that Gesine's reconstruction of motive presents speculation as fact. Gesine argues that she uses such fictive components in the interests of imposing a comprehensible form on what would otherwise be an amorphous, eclectic mass. Indeed this is the very nub of her efforts to re-create the past with the only practical means possible, namely those of fiction. Towards the end of this study it will become clear that the reproaches made by the voices Gesine hears are part of much wider moral and political issues implicit in the narrative relationships of *Jahrestage*. On this occasion, their strictures are in fact rather unfair, ironically recalling Gesine's reproach to GS over Ginny Carpenter. But in both cases an essential check is placed on the narrative authority, drawing the respective narrator's attention to the strict requirements of honesty and openness to external arbitration so essential to *Wahrheitsfindung*. The dead simultaneously expose at this early stage a problem which is to dog the narrative relationship between Gesine and Marie, and constitute an important counteractive force to the narrative's natural forward inertia; namely the degree of validity which can be accorded to Gesine's story.

All in all the dead are able, by virtue of their autonomy and facility to supply essential information (even if that facility is no more than an unconscious rationalization of the inventive process which takes place in Gesine's psyche), to influence Gesine just as she influences GS. In the same way that GS tells her story, she tells theirs, although of course GS is involved in the latter narrative process as well. The dead therefore represent an additional lateral force whose ability to modify the narrative direction is not confined to the Jerichow level. Their activity as the voice of Gesine's conscience in the New York present is a vital means of warning Gesine of the dangers of self-deception, a fault which would lead to a distorted expression of Gesine's life in New York, filtered as it is through her consciousness. The activities of the voices Gesine hears therefore effect a further distribution of narrative authority. They act as a watchdog committee to which Gesine is answerable and which she is incapable of ignoring. Any temptation on Gesine's part to be less than wholly honest with herself, even in thought, can be dealt with swiftly by the dead. While the dead are in a position to influence the means of production, Marie, as consumer, surveys the goods produced with an ever more critical eye. But before looking at the narrative relationship between mother and daughter, which works both against the narrative flow, necessitating frequent self-criticism and analysis (which prevents the story's natural inertia from running out of control), and with the narrative flow (when the story seems to be in danger of grinding to a halt), it will be necessary to distinguish the original impetus, the motive power for Gesine's story; namely her motivation to narrate.

## VII THE ORIGINS OF NARRATION

In casting about for the aims of the Jerichow chronicle, Reinhard Baumgart concludes that while it may have started as 'ein Erziehungsprozeß für das Kind Marie', the narrative gradually frees itself from any such specific aims and becomes self-perpetuating: 'die Chronik . . . entfaltet ihren Eigensinn, den Eigensinn des Erzählten, aber auch einen Eigensinn des Erzählens'.<sup>1</sup> Narrative does indeed develop its own momentum, although to be maintained it requires a regular supply of new energy. Nevertheless a number of particular objectives may be discerned in Gesine's efforts to recreate the past, objectives which must be examined if the Johnsonian narrative technique is to be explicated effectively. There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, in common with other aspects of the Jerichow story, Gesine's motivations (and therefore her narrative aims) might well parallel those of the fictional work *per se*. If so, their investigation may, by extrapolation, throw some light on the origins of Uwe Johnson's fiction as a whole. Secondly, the stimuli which impel Gesine and the results she hopes to derive from the story must previously be distinguished if her interests are to be contrasted with the conflicting desires of Marie. The divergency of the routes along which storyteller and listener variously endeavour to direct the narrative underlies the tension which characterizes their roles in the archetypal communication model they represent, a model founded on the inherent human desires to teach, learn, and entertain; what Johnson referred to as 'das Bedürfnis, von den Menschen etwas zu erfahren, von anderen Leuten, von Nachbarn, die man so nicht kennen lernt'.<sup>2</sup> In addition, as we have seen, the internal narrative and Marie's version are not always identical; in each case Gesine's narrative aims differ slightly. The direction of the textual narrative, therefore, reaches a compromise between several areas of concern which may be at variance with each other.

Gesine's motivations can be divided roughly into two; an introspective need to find herself by looking to a lost past, lost people, lost places; and a maternal desire to preserve her daughter Marie from experiencing a similarly painful yearning. Although these dual motivations are concentrated separately in Gesine's internal story and the version she tells Marie respectively, they intermingle (although occasionally at odds) in the same way as the two versions of the Jerichow story.

Johnson did not fight shy of defining what he saw as Gesine's reasons for looking to the past:

Das ist eine Person vom Jahre 1933, die im Jahre 67/68 nicht mehr in Deutschland sitzt, wo sie geboren ist, sondern in New York, und die in den eigentümlichen Zustand geraten ist, der manche Leute um die 30 ankommt. Das ist der Zustand, in dem man sich unverhofft, ohne daß man es vorher geahnt hat, fragt: 'Woher komme ich eigentlich, was sind meine Eltern gewesen, was ist das für ein Land, in dem ich aufgewachsen bin, wie kamen meine Eltern dazu, daß ich 1933 geboren wurde in dem Zustand Deutschlands, der damals war?' Das fragt sich diese Person. Sie ist sicherlich nicht die einzige, die sich das fragt, und sie versucht nun durch Erinnerungsversuche, durch Rekonstruktionsversuche, sich selber zu finden.<sup>3</sup>

Gesine's self-questioning is not merely a matter of idle curiosity. It derives in part from a certain nostalgia, a yearning for some (but not all) elements of her youth which have assumed idyllic aspect with the passage of time, acquiring a patina of charm for which the unreliability of memory is largely responsible. It is important here to make the distinction between Sara Lennox's mistaken view of 1930s Jerichow as an idealized haven of lost values akin to Faulkner's Jefferson and the idyllic memories presently under discussion, which tend to refer to a brief period between Cresspahl's return from imprisonment and Gesine's departure from the GDR, a time which was (at least in part) characterized by summers, sailing, and friendship.<sup>4</sup> Certain such memories may be beguilingly attractive, but at the same time forgeries, transformed by present stimuli on Gesine's mind to treacherous, shining days of legend:

So der dick bedeckte Tag aus Dunst über dem jenseitigen Flußufer, über den austrocknenden Laubfarben vor dem verwischten Wasser, verspricht einen Morgen in Wendisch Burg, das Segelwetter zum Morgen vor vierzehn Jahren, erzeugt Verlangen nach einem Tag, der so nicht war, fertigt mir eine Vergangenheit, die ich nicht gelebt habe, macht mich zu einem falschen Menschen, der von sich getrennt ist durch die Tricks der Erinnerung. (*JT*, 125)<sup>5</sup>

This kind of falsification is anathema to one in search of truth, especially a truth which is personally, rather than historically, valid. Yet at the same time the memory's very attractiveness entices Gesine into making as complete a picture as possible out of what she has.

While nostalgic memories are to some extent responsible for Gesine's 'Erinnerungsversuche', as Johnson puts it, a more important motivation consists of the powerful sense of guilt which increasingly dominates her mind. That Gesine should reach a crisis point at the age of thirty-five is not coincidental, according to Johnson, for in *Begleitumstände* he draws particular attention to that age as the exact mid-point of our allotted Biblical span, a kind of watershed which the author terms 'der Beginn der biologischen Rückbildung' (*BU*, 415). The figure thirty-five, however, is no more than vaguely consistent with the 'um die 30' Johnson mentioned in 1973 (see above). Moreover the assertion in general finds little corroboration in the text. The original causes of the crisis, if not the reason for its timing, may, however, be determined. Once again memory is the ultimate culprit, compelling Gesine to confront a guilt which she would prefer

to evade. The nature of that compulsion is identified with a new directness early in *Jahrestage*, indeed immediately before the first reference to the *Regentongeschichte*, which itself serves as the emblematic nexus of the memory problem.

Following Mr. Shuldiner's well-meant compliment 'Sie haben ein Gedächtnis wie ein Mann, Mrs. Cresspahl!' (*JT*, 62) Gesine's memory is revealed to be, in one sense, comparatively reliable and accurate: 'das Gedächtnis hat ihr geholfen durch Schulprüfungen, Tests, Verhöre, es bringt sie durch die tägliche Arbeit' (*JT*, 63). But this constitutes factual memory, an ability to memorize useful facts and figures with a high degree of accuracy and recall them on demand, an ability which may be controlled by an effort of will. Gesine's requirements go beyond, to another faculty of memory. Her real aspiration is, as we have established, to experience the past in all its sensual ramifications once more. But although she realizes intellectually (and has done so since 1947) that 'darinnen noch einmal zu sein, dort noch einmal einzutreten' (*JT*, 63) lies beyond the bounds of possibility, she nevertheless still wistfully longs for authentic memory:

Daß das Gedächtnis das Vergangene doch fassen könnte in die Formen, mit denen wir die Wirklichkeit einteilen! Aber der vielbödige Raster aus Erdzeit und Kausalität und Chronologie und Logik, zum Denken benutzt, wird nicht bedient vom Hirn, wo es des Gewesenen gedenkt. (Die Begriffe des Denkens gelten nicht einmal an seinem Ort; damit sollen wir ein Leben führen.) Das Depot des Gedächtnisses ist gerade auf Reproduktion nicht angelegt. Eben dem Abruf eines Vorgangs widersetzt es sich. Auf Anstoß, auf bloß partielle Kongruenz, aus dem blauen Absurden liefert es freiwillig Fakten, Zahlen, Fremdsprache, abgetrennte Gesten; halte ihm hin einen teerigen, fauligen, dennoch windfrischen Geruch, den Nebenhauch aus Gustafssons berühmtem Fischsalat, und bitte um Inhalt für die Leere, die einmal Wirklichkeit, Lebensgefühl, Handlung war; es wird die Ausfüllung verweigern. Die Blockade läßt Fetzen, Splitter, Scherben, Späne durchsickern, damit sie das ausgeraubte und raumlose Bild sinnlos überstreuen, die Spur der gesuchten Szene zertreten, so daß wir blind sind mit offenen Augen. (*JT*, 63–64)

While memory in these terms, Gesine recognizes, can at times be fitfully effective and evocative, it can never be complete, coherent or controllable. As she learned twenty years previously, Gesine cannot fulfil her desire for a comprehensible, comprehensive image of the past simply by allowing her mind to take its natural course in contemplation of what has gone before. DE precludes any such problems by expelling the past into a sealed mental compartment, where it remains devoid of life and feeling:

Seine Vergangenheit, die Leute und das Land, Schusting Brand und Wendisch Burg, achtet er gar nicht für Wirklichkeit. Er hat seine Erinnerung umgesetzt in Wissen. Sein Leben mit anderen in Mecklenburg vor doch nur vierzehn Jahren, es ist weggeräumt wie in ein Archiv, in dem er die Biographien von Personen wie Städten fortführt auf den neuesten Stand oder nach Todesfällen versiegelt. Gewiß, es ist alles noch vorhanden, beliebig abrufbar, nur nicht lebendig. (*JT*, 339)

But the option of similar archivization, consignment of the past to factual memory, is not open to Gesine, for she finds herself unable to repress the pain and emotion associated with certain experiences. It is that inability which leads her to take forceful issue with the *New York Times* article of 27 October 1967 which reports an attempt to deduce the neurological processes according to which memory operates, not through biological analysis, but by means of empirical psychological experiment.

The experiment set out to test the commonly-held belief that people tend to forget things which are associated with pain and unpleasantness. This it did by asking a group of university students to memorize a list of meaningless, invented words corresponding to a list of English words. The subjects were then presented with a new word-list which could be subconsciously associated with the first set. By projecting words from the first and second lists on to a screen, some of them accompanied by electric shocks, the scientists were able to show that the artificial correspondences, when accompanied by pain were forgotten, but otherwise remained memorized. Gesine enters upon a dialogue with the mental personification of her daily newspaper, the 'Tante Times', in which she declares her objections not only to the results achieved and the experimental method adopted by the Princeton scientists, but also to the *New York Times's* presentation of the results as proven scientific fact (see *JT*, 227–29). Broadly, Gesine maintains that the experimental sample of sixteen people is too small to be statistically significant, and the conditions, especially the use of a non-existent 'language', too artificial to have any bearing on reality. Consequently, according to Gesine, the experiment proves nothing but the experiment. Gesine finally pins down 'Tante Times' with the accusation, unrefuted, that the article failed to highlight the implications of the fact that the Princeton scientists had been dealing only with meaningless words, or groups of letters, rather than things; that is, real experiences with all the attendant complexities of emotion and association.

In the subsequent chapter Gesine endeavours to prove her point by reference to personal experience, which in her case not only diverges radically from the Princeton findings, but underlies her problems with the past. In a stronger section of her book, Roberta T. Hye elucidates Gesine's explanation in some detail. Unfortunately, however, Hye greatly simplifies the reasons for which Gesine undertakes her own analysis: 'Für sie geht es um das Behalten, nicht um das Vergessen, ein deutlicher Hinweis darauf, daß es für sie eben kein Vergessen gibt'.<sup>6</sup> Gesine does not in fact complain that 'es kein Vergessen gibt', but that she cannot control what she remembers and what she forgets, in other words that the faculty which, though fragmented and irreconcilable, comes closest to authentic memory, is largely an involuntary mechanism. Johan Nedregard, drawing on Walter Benjamin's use of the terms *mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire* with regard to Proust, makes that necessary distinction which Hye

fails to clarify, deeming *Jahrestage* an attempt to reconstitute in Gesine's consciousness 'vergesellschaftete Erfahrung' in the sense of Benjamin.<sup>7</sup> As far as the present study is concerned, however, the dilemma in which the vagaries of memory place Gesine is of primary interest: in particular, memory presses itself irresistibly into Gesine's service, only to frustrate with the kind of inadequacies which Gesine first encountered when trying to rediscover her time with Alexandra Paepcke.

The very pain associated with the past makes certain memories ineradicable in Gesine's mind, pain which forces her to try and harness memory in order to come to terms with her distress. This Gesine demonstrates in her refutation of the *New York Times* article, using as an example her indoctrination by Nazi propaganda coupled with the subsequent horrifying discovery of the true state of affairs and physical confrontation with the gruesome evidence of what eventually resulted from antisemitic taunts such as the apparently harmless epithet 'Schmulchen Schievelbeiner' drawn from Wilhelm Busch.<sup>8</sup> The horror she experienced compelled Gesine not to forget, but to investigate more closely the circumstances surrounding the origins of these uncomfortable memories, in direct opposition to what the Princeton experiments might lead one to expect.<sup>9</sup> A practical example of this phenomenon appears in *Jahrestage 4*, when the pain associated with a particular memory actually seems to enhance the image's distinctness in Gesine's mind, creating a harrowing vicious circle. Gesine's recollection of Robert Papenbrock's brief visit to Jerichow at the end of the war is prompted by the entry 'R. P.' which appears in her diary of 1947:

'R. P.'. Ein Strich zwischen den beiden Buchstaben hatte daraus die Formel für Requi-scat in Pace gemacht. Das half wenig, den Vorfall zur Ruhe zu bringen, auch war er eher gemacht von ihr als vorgekommen; die Erinnerung daran kam so scharf und schmerzlich wieder, sie zuckte zusammen wie unter einem Stich. Jakobs Mutter versuchte ihr jenen Abend auszureden, sie sprach so leise, so tröstend, bis ins Einschlafen. Am nächsten Morgen war es unvergessen. (*JT*, 1479)

The increasing distress caused by this recurring memory provides Gesine with enough incentive to investigate its workings. She may have been tempted to alleviate her suffering by allowing uncomfortable memories to become blurred, something which may be achieved, she tells Marie at one point, by avoiding too stringent an education: '... die Erinnerung wäre weniger scharf, bequemer glaub ich. "Dumm sein und Arbeit haben/das ist..." das wünscht ich mir' (*JT*, 1828). But Gesine did opt for education, and is saddled with both the uncomfortable clarity and the frustrating inadequacy of a trained memory. It is this mental capacity which prevents Gesine from dismissing or ignoring the kind of question which she poses with regard to the Robert Papenbrock trauma mentioned above: 'Wie kann etwas werden zu einer Furcht vor Schuld, das angefangen hat so klar und kalt und sauber wie ein nass geschliffenes Messer sich anfühlt?' (*JT*, 1479).

The sensation of guilt which afflicts Gesine is no existential 'irrationales Schuldgefühl',<sup>10</sup> as Hye would have it, but has definite causes which give rise to three approximate categories of response. These are: inherited guilt, which derives overwhelmingly from Lisbeth, but partly from Gesine's father; personal guilt, which she incurs by living in the socially unjust, war-waging America of 1968; and collective, organic guilt, which derives from her Germanness. This complex of issues is embodied in the narrative structure, pivoting on the *Regentonnegeschichte*. The question looms so large, not least as a primary motivation for Gesine's recreation of the past, that it cannot be dismissed even on the grounds that the issue has become rather well-worn in post-war German literature and society.

In terms of inherited guilt, Gesine's uneasiness derives in no small measure from an awareness that her parents made mistakes leading to violations of their responsibility towards Gesine, but for which Gesine unjustly had to suffer. She needs to clarify the circumstances of Lisbeth's guilt in particular, and to a lesser extent that of Heinrich Cresspahl, in order to crystallize the amorphous sensation of betrayal and yet culpability which Gesine finds herself subjected to. Before the focal point represented by the *Regentonnegeschichte* can be considered, however, the increasing burden of responsibility experienced by Lisbeth needs to be distilled from the Jerichow story.<sup>11</sup>

Although the potential for her mental debilitation in the form of a socially-conditioned religious awareness instilled by Louise Papenbrock is already present within Lisbeth, the final steady decline is undoubtedly precipitated by her marriage.<sup>12</sup> Even on her wedding day ideals and illusions are destroyed: 'sie wurde wahrhaftig am Reformationstag nach dem Mittagessen in einem von Swensons schwarzen Leihwagen durch die Stadtstraße zur Kirche chauffiert; nun kam sie nicht zu einem heilen Gefühl. So oft hatte sie die Empfindung erwartet, jetzt knitterte und brach schon die Hoffnung darauf' (*JT*, 111). Signs of a propensity to adopt (and believe) the role of victim and an unwillingness to accept blame for unfortunate circumstances are already detectable in her crossness at Cresspahl's 'nachgiebiges Gehabe' (that is, his readiness to make concessions in return for her agreement to a life in England; *JT*, 112), yet simultaneous inability to suppress an obscure irritation that he does not fully appreciate what she regards as the greater sacrifice, namely her part of the bargain: 'Dat dau ick föe di, Cresspahl. Föe di dau ick dat. Öwe sühst du dat?' (*JT*, 133). Her natural difficulties in adapting to life in Richmond are particularly exacerbated by the diversity and strangeness of religious worship in the foreign country. For Lisbeth, the Church was a fixed landmark not only physically but also in her social environment, reliable and familiar, and so she feels insecure amongst the confusion of High Church, Low Church, Broad Church ('so recht protestantisch war keine von denen' *JT*, 129), as well as the Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Methodists, and Presbyterians; for 'in Jerichow gab es nur die Petrikirche' (*JT*, 129).

She begins to equate that insecurity with her marriage: 'Als sie noch Papenbrock hieß, war sie sicher gewesen' (*JT*, 142). Previously the Protestant Church had provided her with a feeling (but no rational concept) of justice, which was concomitant less with any ethical than with her social position: 'Die Armut in Mecklenburg war vor ihr versteckt gewesen: in der Verspätung der mecklenburgischen Seele, im Vertrauen der Familie Papenbrock auf ihr Recht zu bevorzugtem Leben, in regelmäßigen Spenden an die Kirche, in dummen Sprüchen, wie dem von dem Tüchtigen und seinem Lohn, oder dem, daß auf dem Lande noch niemand verhungert sei' (*JT*, 142). But in Richmond Lisbeth is not only confronted with the reality of unemployment and poverty, but with Cresspahl's revelation of the economic sources which underlie such evils: 'Es waren also wirtschaftliche Gesetze und wirkliche Personen, von denen ihre Lage abhing, nicht ein Schicksal' (*JT*, 142). She can no longer rely on a deterministic belief in a future over which she has no control, yet is uneasy at the prospect of exerting her will to influence matters: 'Ihr war nicht geheimer bei dem Gedanken, daß sie vielleicht nur mit dem Willen hier würde anwachsen können' (*JT*, 147). Deprived of her accustomed, comfortable fatalism, Lisbeth is forced to recognize for the first time that she herself bears some responsibility not only for her own life but for that of others. That responsibility, however, she perceives to have been generated by her marriage, with the result that she is able to construct a sense of grievance, of unjust imposition, which in turn allows her to decline the obligation, yet to blame her husband for its presence. Her progressive unwillingness to shoulder the burden is visited not only on Cresspahl (who to some extent brought the problem on himself), but also on Gesine, the product of their union.

Cresspahl incurs the consequences of Lisbeth's insecurity by failing to recognize the central importance of the Church, as a stanchion of a familiar environment, to Lisbeth's mental well-being: 'Nun fand sie grausam von ihm, daß er schon bei dem Wort Kirche aus dem Gespräch ausscherte, ohne Aufhebens und gutmütig, als sei hier nur für sie ein Raum ausgespart, den zu betreten ihm nicht zustand' (*JT*, 148). Although a certain distance arises between them, Cresspahl had not suspected Lisbeth's secret intention to bear her child in Jerichow, rather than England. That intention was first betrayed when she accidentally suggested the name 'Heinrich' rather than 'Henry' should the child be a boy (see *JT*, 159). When she asks him to book her ticket, Cresspahl realizes that this was no sudden decision: 'Dann sah er, daß sie sich auf den Streit vorbereitet hatte wie auf eine Arbeit und daß sie beliebig lange sitzen würde wie jetzt, ein wenig krumm, mit den Unterarmen auf den Knien den Bauch abstützend, ergeben und unbeugsam' (*JT*, 182–83). This attitude of submissive inflexibility is to characterize Lisbeth's approach in the succeeding years. She has already reneged on one promise to Cresspahl, and indeed will finally refuse to return to England after Gesine's birth. Her abrogation of responsibility and



refusal to face up to a life outside the confines of her upbringing is complemented by a sense of martyrdom which enables her to ignore all infringements of their original agreement: 'Das Kind hatte sie für Cresspahl getragen; das war eins von den erfüllten Versprechen. Warum war das nicht genug?' (*JT*, 363).

Having successfully coerced Cresspahl into settling in Jerichow, Lisbeth gradually becomes aware of her true failure. She recognizes the dangers of Nazism, yet can find no comfort in the Church, for Pastor Methling has thrown in his lot with the Nazi government, while Brühshaver is still too unfamiliar: 'Hätte sie den fremden Pastor Brühshaver nur besser gekannt, sie hätte zu ihm gehen mögen und ausdrücklich fragen, ob die Kirche ausreichend Unrecht erkannte für ein Leben in einem anderen Land' (*JT*, 364). Only with the support of an official Church representative would she have had the courage to heed Cresspahl's warnings about the Nazis and let the decision to keep her promise to live in England be imposed from without. Only when it is too late does Lisbeth realize that the Nazis were not only mistreating Jews, Communists, and others outside her social sphere, but were also distorting the very Church to which she clings for protection. Aggie Brühshaver enlightens her about the details of the conflict between Church and State, and Lisbeth sees the evidence with her own eyes when the Bishop of Mecklenburg is deposed and replaced by a committed Nazi: 'beim Abendmahl berief er sich doch reinweg auf den Österreicher und erklärte das symbolische Blut des Herrn für das Blut der Märtyrer der faschistischen Bewegung. Das waren nicht ungefährliche Nachrichten für Lisbeth Cresspahl, geborene Papenbrock' (*JT*, 426). Lisbeth, as ever, is incapable of taking any action to oppose such attacks on her sense of security, and traces their source back to her marriage with Cresspahl, as the frequent mentions of her maiden name testify.

The problem is compounded when Lisbeth realizes her complicity in the preparations for war by virtue of Cresspahl's carpentry work in building the airfield installations near Jerichow and her administrative help:

*Aber ich werd doch mitschuldig, Heinrich!*  
*Woran wirst du mitschuldig.*  
*Am Krieg! Die Kasernen sind doch für den Krieg.*  
*Lisbeth, ick kann di nich helpn.*  
*Könnten wir nicht . . . kannst du nicht rausgehen aus dem Auftrag?*  
*Und wovon leben wir dann, Lisbeth?*  
*Ach Heinrich, leben. Aber die Schuld dabei.*  
*Wistu nå Inglant?*  
*Nee!*  
*Weiß nich was du willst, Lisbeth.*  
*Cresspahl.*  
*Hörst du nicht, daß das Kind schreit? (JT, 470)*

Once more Lisbeth takes little account of the fact that it was she who engineered their move to Jerichow; once that move is accomplished, she is unwilling to live

with the consequences. Even her suggested solution (impractical though it is) she makes Cresspahl's responsibility, by substituting 'kannst du' for 'könnten wir'. The final line of the above quotation, furthermore, is an early indication of Lisbeth's neglect of Gesine in her obsession with her own waxing guilt, which is fed by the realization that the Cresspahls' involvement in Nazi Germany is a result of Lisbeth's failure to keep her part of the bargain struck with her husband. Unable to accept the implications of her breach of trust, Lisbeth directs all her efforts towards personal absolution by whatever means possible. She has already, for example, ceased sexual relations with Cresspahl, thereby distancing herself from the marital state which she views as the root of her predicament, but at the same time incurring new guilt by failing to fulfil what the Church would regard as her wifely duties. By 1936 even Papenbrock has become aware of the external effects of Lisbeth's internal debilitation:

Die sieht nicht aus wie 30; wer das nicht weiß, gibt fünf Jahre zu. . . .  
Ihr ist immer alles so anzusehen gewesen. Heut magst sie gar nicht ansehen.  
Verkniffen. Vertückscht. Nein, vertückscht nicht; als ob sie eingesperrt wäre. Und war ein Mädchen, wenn die vor dem Spiegel gebetet hat, wußte sie warum. Ihre großen Augen jetzt, daran erkennst sie noch. Am Blick nicht; sieht dich an, als wärest nicht da, als träumte sie was Ängstliches. (*JT*, 508)

If Lisbeth is imprisoned, then she built the prison herself. The only escape she can contemplate is a new existence beyond the sins of the world.

It is on Christmas Day 1936 that Lisbeth makes her first serious attempt to absolve herself through suicide. Pregnant, she becomes ill and miscarries. Dr. Berling later tells Cresspahl what Lisbeth had said in her fever; Gesine reports: 'Meine Mutter hatte gehofft, mit dem zweiten Kind auch das Leben zu verlieren, um zu entkommen aus der Schuld' (*JT*, 511). In the catalogue of Lisbeth and Heinrich's guilt which then follows, it becomes clear that apart from her sins of omission (flight from responsibility), she feels rightly that Gesine will automatically acquire a portion of her guilt, as would the further three children which Cresspahl wants. For that reason the suspicion arises that Lisbeth deliberately poisoned herself, committing an even greater sin: 'Um so viel Schuld nicht zu behalten, und nicht zu vermehren, hatte sie eine der größten begehren wollen: zwar ein ungeborenes Kind vor Schuld bewahren, aber das eigene Leben weggeben' (*JT*, 512). While it may be that Lisbeth simply hoped not to be saved from what in her eyes was a fortunate accident, an attempt at suicide by poisoning, with its implications of scourging, would be in common with later attempts to end her life. Certainly poisoning, whether deliberate or otherwise, was the cause of her illness; as Berling puts it 'Se hett wat actn; was gegessen hat sie. Was ein Mensch nicht verträgt' (*JT*, 510): echoes of Agnes's manic, voracious fish-eating in *Die Blechtrommel* are detectable here. Finally, Lisbeth may well deliberately have chosen Christmas Day, the celebration of man's redemption, to achieve her own. During the summer following her

miscarriage, Lisbeth endeavours to preserve Gesine from future guilt (as she sees it) by not saving her when she nearly drowns in the water butt outside the kitchen window. The circumstances of this vital episode and its integration in the text will be examined in some detail when Lisbeth's decline and eventual suicide have been fully traced out.

As the Nazis achieve absolute power, the manipulation of which is openly displayed, Lisbeth begins to appreciate the impossibility of reconciling even her socially-conditioned version of Christianity in the mid-1930s: 'Es war eigentlich nur, daß Lisbeth es zu ernst mit der Kirche nahm, und daß Einer mit beidem nicht über die Jahre kam, mit den Lehren der Kirche und mit den Anforderungen der Nazis' (*JT*, 525). At the end of September 1937 Lisbeth tries to wash away her sins by drowning, but is thwarted by a chance fishing boat. She refuses, however, to give Cresspahl a complete assurance that she will not try to kill herself once more:

*Dau dat nich noch eins, Lisbeth!*

*Ne, Cresspahl. Dat dau ick nich noch eins. Nich so. (JT, 580)*

Not only does Lisbeth avoid making any attempt to come to terms with the problem, but she appears fatally determined to assume whatever burden of guilt happens to be available, or may be constructed; even bearing witness in the Hagemeister/Warning case is absorbed into her guilt complex and sense of martyrdom: 'Lisbeth Cresspahl glaubte sich nun im Streit auch noch mit Jerichow, darin über zweitausend Leute waren, nicht gerechnet das Vieh. Sie wollte gar nicht verziehen haben, daß sie vor einem Gericht gegen andere ausgesagt hatte; blieb ihr so doch dies Schuld erhalten' (*JT*, 613). Cresspahl has become fully aware of Lisbeth's unstable mental state, but lacks experience and expertise in dealing with such matters. Her behaviour becomes more and more curious, and from 1937 the consequences of her guilt are once more visited on Gesine, who is systematically subjected to a starvation diet by her mother. In October 1938 Cresspahl discovers Gesine's inadequate nutrition, but can only react with bafflement and anger; he withdraws into silence and looks after the child himself, quite unable to comprehend Lisbeth's attitude, a defiant Lisbeth, who 'sah ihn klaräugig an, den Kopf unverzagt angehoben, mit der Spur eines Lächelns im Mundwinkel, als werde Cresspahl sie ohnehin nicht verstehen, wo sie jetzt war' (*JT*, 694).

Each perverse attempt Lisbeth makes to save Gesine from her own fate only serves to aggravate that fate even further. Her increasing fear of war (which Cresspahl had long predicted, but Lisbeth had not believed) contributes to her determination. She clearly sees death as a release; when Cresspahl takes Gesine to the cemetery where his parents are buried, the child asks whether they can ever leave their graves. He answers: '*De sünd dor inspunnt fœ alle Tiden, Gesine*', whereupon Gesine counters with the view expressed by her mother: '*Mudding*

*secht de Dodn kåmen fri*' (JT, 726). Lisbeth's final decision to commit suicide must, then, have been made in the belief that this was the route to freedom. Although her death seems to have been immediately precipitated by witnessing the murder of Marie Tannebaum at the hands of Jansen, Lisbeth must have decided firmly on her course of action at the latest by Easter 1938, because the dead Lisbeth admits to Gesine that she only agreed to visit the Paepckes during the holiday to see if they would be able to take Gesine after her death. Ironically, her suicide follows the only tangible opposition she ever puts up, namely her courageous, if ineffectual, physical attack on Jansen in front of the Tannebaums' house.

Despite the determination of Kommissar Vick (a marvellous comic figure) to establish a case for murder against Jansen, all the evidence, as plausibly reconstructed by Cresspahl, points to Lisbeth having sought the ultimate expurgation of self-immolation (although in the event she is hardly burned) by setting Cresspahl's workshop on fire. Why she should choose this method of dying is a moot point. She may have deliberately adopted the form of death traditionally associated with martyrs, or have perceived her burning as a kind of ritual sacrifice to atone for her sins. Boulby points out a parallel instance in post-war German literature of 'self-immolation by fire as a form of personal expiation for the persecution of the Jews', namely Albrecht Goes's 'Das Brandopfer'.<sup>13</sup> In that story, however, the fire victim, Frau Walker, is burned in a bombing raid; there is no definite suggestion that her injuries are self-inflicted; nor does she die as a result. But if parallel instances outside *Jahrestage* are to be considered, then an incident in Uwe Johnson's life certainly deserves a mention.

In the early hours of Sunday, 12 November 1967, Uwe Johnson's sister-in-law, Jutta Maria Schmidt, died in a fire at Johnson's flat, Niedstraße 14, in Berlin-Friedenau.<sup>14</sup> The author was, of course, in New York at the time with his daughter and wife, whose sister was occupying the flat in their absence. The fire seems to have been accidental, probably started by a bedtime cigarette. The cause of death was suffocation by smoke, as in Lisbeth Papenbrock's case (see JT, 741). 12 November, the date of the fire in Johnson's flat, is the same as Lisbeth's birthday and 'die jährliche Rede auf deinen Tod' discussed earlier in this study; Lisbeth died on 10 November 1938. Jutta Schmidt was thirty at the time of her death, as compared to Lisbeth's life-span of almost thirty-two years. Both the real and the fictional incidents occurred in the early hours of the morning. This may all be a matter of chance, since Johnson claimed to have known Lisbeth's death since the writing of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. The death of Ingeborg Bachmann under strikingly similar circumstances in 1973 added an undoubtedly coincidental dimension to the macabre correlation between reality and fiction. Nevertheless, Johnson's personal tragedy may go some way towards explaining the choice of what would indeed be a most unpleasant way of committing suicide.

Gesine has plainly collected a substantial reservoir of bitterness towards her mother, which is expressed in the internal narrative outlined above. That bitterness derives from Gesine's sense of betrayal by a mother who twice almost killed her daughter through deliberate negligence, and then left her motherless until the arrival of Frau Abs. The problem is self-perpetuating, for the bitterness generates shame, as well as guilt at such disrespect for a parent, which in turn results in further resentment, amply demonstrated in the chapter for 12 November 1967 ('die jährliche Rede auf deinen Tod'). In some ways this aspect of the internal Jerichow narrative constitutes a dialogue between Gesine and her dead mother, which on occasion concretely emerges in the text as italicized exchanges. These exchanges commonly consist of attempts on the part of the dead Lisbeth not to defend herself against the charges Gesine lays, but to redress the balance by citing instances of attention and love towards the child. But Gesine's resentment seems often only to be exacerbated by such pleas; a list of things Lisbeth prayed for in 1933 is interrupted by Lisbeth's voice in her mind:

*Und daß du lebst, Gesine.*

*Darauf, denkst du, weiß ich keine Antwort. Ich wüßte schon. Ich sage es nicht. (JT, 364)*

Gesine is obviously unimpressed by, even scornful of, Lisbeth's claim that she prayed for Gesine's life. This sceptical undertone runs through many of the sections of internal narrative which deal with Lisbeth; it seems, then, that Gesine is bent less on reconciliation with her dead mother (that is, with her mental image of Lisbeth) and on assuaging her feelings of guilt and bitterness than on a cathartic process of recreating and understanding the origins of her own mental suffering, a process which does not necessarily include forgiveness.

As far as Marie is concerned, however, Gesine quite clearly *does* defend Lisbeth, that is, she excuses her behaviour to Marie, and simply conceals (with varying degrees of success) those aspects which are to all intents and purposes inexcusable. Even the dead Lisbeth recognizes that, as her answer reveals when Gesine comments on a certain cheekiness she has observed in Marie:

*Dies vorlaute Wesen, das hat sie von dir, Lisbeth.*

*Das hast du von mir, Gesine. Und sieh dich vor, daß nicht dein Kind einst dich entschuldigen will wie du mich. (JT, 143)*

Lisbeth's warning to Gesine is perhaps unnecessary, since it is precisely because she fears a repetition of Lisbeth's fate, or of such maternal inadequacies in her own case, that Gesine is impelled to reconstruct her mother's life and death. But her desire to exculpate Lisbeth as far as Marie is concerned while at the same time mentally pillorying her, necessary in order to preserve her daughter from the pain Gesine feels, leads, as we saw earlier, to a dichotomy which is expressed by divergent narrative forces in the text. The reasons for the contrast between Gesine's private attitude to Lisbeth and the way she depicts her to Marie are brought into focus by the *Regentonnegeschichte*.

Initially this episode is included neither in Gesine's mental reconstruction nor in her account to Marie. The chapter for 8 September, however, which tackles the frustrating vagaries of memory, comprises snatches of Gesine's recollections and subsequently gleaned knowledge about the year 1937 as GS depicts the workings of Gesine's consciousness while she lunches with Mr. James R. Shuldiner, a tax expert she has known since 1966 (see *JT*, 1884). A report in the *New York Times* on the effects of trade union action prompts Gesine to think back to her own perception of 1937: 'Vor dreißig Jahren gab es in den Rouge-Werken in Dearborn, Michigan, Aufruhr, Straßenkämpfe und Schießereien. Vor dreißig Jahren fiel ein Kind von Cresspahl in die Regentonne hinter seinem Haus' (*JT*, 62). This earliest reference to the episode is made in the most generalized of terms; the indefinite article is used even though Cresspahl only had one child. Gesine's personal memory of that year seems quite arbitrary, divorced from the wider context of the world in 1937, which itself is only accessible in the most arbitrary and incomplete fashion:

Sie hatte nach dem Jahr 1937 gesucht und wieder nichts bekommen als ein statisches, isoliertes Bruchstück, wie es ihr der Speicher des Gedächtnisses willkürlich aussucht, aufbewahrt in unkontrollierbarer Menge, nur mitunter empfindlich gegen Befehl und Absicht:

1937 ließ Stalin einen großen Teil seines Generalstabs hinrichten,  
1937 hatte Hitler seine Kriegspläne fertig ausgearbeitet. . . . (*JT*, 63)

This segment of the past thus emerges only in the form of historical facts whose effects, although disastrous for countless people, are barely detectable in these simple sentences. But Gesine is unable to discard her unsatisfactory conception of the year in question, even on the grounds of incompleteness, for during lunch she obviously tells Mr. Shuldiner enough about her personal window on 1937 (although the full extent of this account does not appear in the text) to reveal that Lisbeth stood by as Gesine fell into the water, although she is unwilling either to confirm the truth of what she has said or to expound on its implications. Unwittingly uttering the words '*Dor kann se ruich sittn gân*' (*JT*, 64) Gesine draws Shuldiner's attention:

Mr. Shuldiner hat sich unterbrochen in seiner Darlegung der neuesten Verstöße gegen das Völkerrecht, als Mrs. Cresspahl ihre Handtasche aufnahm, die Hand im Rücken des fetten schwarzen Beutels wie im Nacken einer Katze, sich die Tasche über die Hand setzte und dazu etwas aussprach in einem deutschen Dialekt. Er läßt es sich erklären, unbeleidigt, vorgebeugt wie ein aufmerksamer Zuhörer:

Das sagte mein Vater, als ich Angst hatte vor einer Katze unter dem Tisch. Sie legte sich über das Leder seiner Holzpantoffeln zum Schlafen. Das muß auch 1937 gewesen sein. An dem Tag war ich in die Regentonne gefallen.

Und Ihre Mutter, Ihre Mutter stand dabei? sagt Mr. Shuldiner eifrig.

*Lisbeth ick schlâ di dot.*

Meine Mutter stand nicht dabei. Entschuldigen Sie. Es war ein Tagtraum, Mr. Shuldiner. (*JT*, 64)

The italicized line of dialect is Cresspahl's impotently furious reaction to the numbed Lisbeth, which flashes into Gesine's mind as she speaks. It is worth noting at this point Mr. Shuldiner's catalytic function; his *sprechender Name* suggests not only *Schuld*, but *deine Schuld*. That he is Jewish only reinforces the point; moreover it may be less than accidental that Gesine uses the phrase 'Ent-schuld-igen Sie' to Shuldiner. Yet despite the suggestive impulses provided by Shuldiner and the cat-like black handbag, at this early stage Gesine either fails to make sense of this persistent personal recollection, or (more probably) she deliberately avoids any attempt to do so, fearful of the consequences: there is no doubt that she pointedly denies the crucial matter of Lisbeth's inaction both to Mr. Shuldiner (the catalyst of these obscure feelings of guilt) and, for a time, to herself. But the incident's importance in Gesine's mind is revealed at the end of this chapter, where one or two further salient points come to light: 'Wenn da eine Katze innen am Küchenfenster lag, bin ich auf einen umgestülpten Eimer gestiegen und von da auf die Regentonne. Wenn auf der Tonne der Deckel fehlte, war meine Mutter in der Nähe. Wenn Cresspahl mich herauszog, hat sie zugesehen. Was soll ich dagegen tun!' (*JT*, 65). These sentences are susceptible of more than one interpretation.

Grammatically, the use of 'wenn' here can only signify a repeated action in the past, in the sense of English 'whenever'. Indeed, it would be reductive to ignore the suggestion that the image of those few seconds has repeatedly haunted Gesine's dreams and memories during the subsequent thirty years. But more importantly, the construction adopted calls the causality of the sequence of events into question. The incident is divided into three crucial circumstances, each encapsulated in a separate sentence: Gesine's climbing on to the water barrel; the lid being missing and Lisbeth's presence; Cresspahl's action and Lisbeth's inaction. Only if placed in a causal relationship would these circumstances relinquish their full import. They are defused, therefore, by being linked to each other and within themselves not with the semantically conventional 'weil', 'dann', or 'und', but with a conjunction designed to imply in this context a certain sense of arbitrariness, suggesting something like 'und wenn dies alles schon so gekommen ist, was kann ich dafür?'. Gesine protests her powerlessness, thereby removing the need for action, and simultaneously fails to apportion responsibility for what happened, implicitly attributing the incident to unfortunate chance. In fact this is self-deception; inwardly Gesine knows that Lisbeth was not merely negligent, but actively responsible for placing the four-year-old in mortal danger, and that she herself bears a considerable burden of guilt and shame at her mother's irresponsibly self-centred action. The use of 'wenn', therefore, represents a self-deceptive attempt by Gesine to deny not only the real cause and course of events, but also her ability to affect the consequences. Yet at the same time her final, frustrated cry is in fact more than a rhetorical question: aware that she can no longer remain passive in the face of

this mental pain, Gesine has already been compelled to take action by embarking on her private reconstruction of Lisbeth's life and death. But it is clear from the evasiveness of the sentences concluding the chapter for 8 September 1967 that enough pain and distress are concentrated in this brief childhood image to discourage Gesine from confronting the unpalatable truth it represents.

Indeed, when Gesine's internal and external narratives broadly progress to the summer of 1937, there is no mention whatever of the *Regentonnesgeschichte*; the Jerichow story during this period deals mostly with the gradual exclusion of the Semigs by both the authorities and many local inhabitants. Once more it is Mr. Shuldiner, as a representative of Gesine's nagging guilt feelings, who brings the story to light by betraying its existence to Marie while talking to her at the swimming pool (a fertile environment for discussing problems of memory and the past, as we shall see). Gesine had obviously hoped to pass over the episode altogether as far as Marie is concerned, in the same way that she does with the accounts of Lisbeth's attempted suicide by drowning and her starvation of Gesine. Significantly, she has also declined to include the *Regentonnesgeschichte* in her mental reconstruction.

The way Gesine describes what happened shows that she has for many years suppressed the true nature of Lisbeth's involvement. Even now she tries to distract Marie's attention from the real import by describing in unnecessary detail the chemical constitution of the water in a rain butt. The ploy fails to deceive Marie, who steadfastly rejects Gesine's warning: 'Du wirst wünschen, sie [die Geschichte] nicht zu wissen' (*JT*, 616). Gesine's prevarication indicates that in her warning she is speaking from experience, for much of the Jerichow story is a way for Gesine of laying to rest or disarming knowledge which she cannot simply forget, much as she would like to. Again memory transpires to be a two-edged sword, preventing as full a picture of the past as might be necessary for proper comprehension, yet creating the conditions for its reconstruction by retaining persistent, painful images such as the *Regentonnesgeschichte*, images which, although irrepressible and essential to the therapeutic reconstruction, exacerbate during the process of inclusion the distress they originally cause.

At Marie's insistence, Gesine finally agrees to detail the events of that day in 1937. With familiar workmanlike efficiency, Cresspahl had made a new lid for the water butt in the interests of safety: on this occasion the lid was missing. Marie proposes that its absence could have been accidental, but Gesine points out that no strangers were allowed on the Cresspahl property, while the whole household was aware of Gesine's fascination with the venerable grey cat which habitually sat in the kitchen window above the rain barrel. Gesine's implication is that Lisbeth deliberately removed the lid in order to set a trap which would drown the child whilst involving Lisbeth in the least amount of direct responsibility. Marie then uses the precise wording (except, of course, for the substitution of 'du' for 'Sie') as Shuldiner did when he first heard the story: 'Und deine



Mutter, deine Mutter stand dabei?' (*JT*, 617). But once more Gesine equivocates:

— Ja. Nein. Wenn ich daran vorbeidenke, sehe ich sie. Sie steht dann vor der Hintertür, trocknet ihre Hände in der Schürze, wringt ihre Hände, eins kann das andere sein. Sie sieht mir zu wie ein Erwachsener sich an einem Kinderstreich erheitert und wartet wie er ausgeht; sie sieht mir ernsthaft zu, belobigend, als vertraute sie darauf, daß ich es richtig mache. Wenn ich die Erinnerung will, kann ich sie nicht sehen. (*JT*, 617)

Gesine seems to be experiencing a kind of mental night vision, whereby a clear image can only be obtained by looking slightly to one side of, rather than directly at, the object in question. This may be an involuntary defence mechanism, but now at last Gesine has overcome the block and admitted not only Lisbeth's failure to rescue Gesine, but her part in bringing about the perilous circumstances; indeed her impending pleasure at a successful outcome. This mental image of Lisbeth standing and wringing her hands is the very crux of Gesine's motivation for recreating the past, at least the period up to the outbreak of war; she needs to rationalize the behaviour of a mother who was capable of attempted infanticide. There is enough evidence in the internal narrative to show that Gesine makes little attempt at reconciliation with the Lisbeth whose voice echoes in her mind, yet here (and elsewhere) Gesine defends her mother against Marie's accusations:

- Sie hat dich umbringen wollen!
- Sie hat mich abgeben wollen, Marie.
- Sie muß dich gehaßt haben.
- Es hätte ja nicht lange gedauert, das Ertrinken.
- Aber sie wollte dich los sein!
- 'Wer sein Kind liebt', Marie, der . . . Sie hätte das Kind sicher gewußt, fern von Schuld und Schuldigwerden. Und sie hätte von allen Opfern das größte gebracht.
- Du willst sagen, sie liebte dich.
- Das will ich sagen. (*JT*, 618)

The reasons for Gesine's defence are the same as those for which she concealed the *Regentonnegeschichte* in the first place, namely to avoid transmitting the burden of guilt and shame to another generation; and in consideration of Marie's tender years. But Gesine is patently not fully convinced of what she tells the ten-year-old. She starts to quote the Biblical maxim 'Wer sein Kind liebt, der züchtigt es',<sup>15</sup> but stops short in the realization that Lisbeth's indirect assault was no matter of corporal punishment. In fact it was Cresspahl who beat Gesine so severely on this occasion, precisely because he loved his daughter;<sup>16</sup> as Gesine told Marie in her description of the episode's aftermath: 'Er gab sich nicht viel Mühe, leicht zuzuschlagen; ich sollte mir die Regentonne merken ein für alle Male. Nur so konnte er mich vor Lisbeth schützen' (*JT*, 618). Gesine's aborted formulation also arouses echoes of the proverb which used to be written on the gates of many North German towns:

Wer seinen Kindern gibt das Brot  
 Und leidet nachmals selber Not  
 Den soll man schlagen mit der Keule tot<sup>17</sup>

Lisbeth followed this maxim to the letter, actually depriving Gesine of food, while running no real risk of personal privation, despite her assertion to Cresspahl that she too had hungered. She is prepared to sacrifice nothing for Gesine, as the latter well knows even as she tells Marie that 'sie hätte von allen Opfern das größte gebracht' (*JT*, 618). In consequence, Lisbeth is shielded from the violent punishment which defiance of the proverb's warning carries: although Cresspahl heatedly threatens '*Lisbeth ick schla di dot*' (*JT*, 619), he never shows the slightest sign of actually lifting a hand to her.

The incident from 1937 embraces much wider issues, however. Gesine's original murmured utterance to Shuldiner, which indirectly resulted in the story's being told, is also explained in the description she gives Marie. After her beating, the four-year-old Gesine had sought some means of reconciliation with Cresspahl, and found one in the shape of the cat which had baited Lisbeth's trap: 'Da sah ich, wie die Katze von einem Gang vors Haus zurückkam und unter Cresspahls Stuhl schritt und sich über seinen Fuß und Holzpantoffel legte. Und ich sagte: Vadding de Katt! Und er sagte: Dor kann se ruich sittn gân. Und sah mich an, als wundere er sich mit mir gemeinsam über die Katze und sei mit mir zusammen wie sonst' (*JT*, 618). It is the cat, then, which sticks in Gesine's mind as an emblem of the episode, and indeed the *Regentonnegeschichte* combines the two most pervasive and powerful of Johnsonian image complexes: feline imagery and water imagery, in their major functions as representative of two separate recollective faculties.

Water is such a fundamental, literally elemental image in all art that trying to place Johnsonian water imagery fully in context would be a futile endeavour within the confines of this study. However, one or two profitable insights may be gained from sources which Johnson is likely to have been familiar with. Writing on Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Jean-Paul Sartre uses an image of memory as a pool to explain how the characters' perception of their own past is conditioned less by chronology than by emotional intensity:

... l'ordre du passé, c'est l'ordre du coeur. Il ne faudrait pas croire que le présent, quand il passe, devient le plus proche de nos souvenirs. Sa métamorphose peut le faire couler au fond de notre mémoire, comme aussi bien le laisser à fleur d'eau; seules sa densité propre et la signification dramatique de notre vie décident de son niveau.<sup>18</sup>

This conceptual formulation clarifies certain distinctions helpful to an understanding of Johnson's use of water imagery. The body of water represents 'Gedächtnis'; that is, the element in which 'Erinnerungen' are stored. Their location relative to each other within that continuum lies largely beyond the individual's control and beyond the grasp of chronology and reason. Retrieving

those 'Erinnerungen' means making use of 'Erinnerung', the faculty of remembering. Swimming and diving thus both represent that faculty. Swimming becomes a metaphor for writing in Günter Grass's *Katz und Maus*, in which the sea appears both as a repository of guilt and a womb-like environment (sea-water is chemically similar to amniotic fluid). Johnson's systems of water imagery contain elements of all these associations, while the latent violence present in any large body of water, particularly the sea, is never far.

Seas, lakes, rivers, and swimming pools seem to have figured largely in Johnson's life, just as they do in Gesine's, although the author insisted that the two should not be confused. He said as much in a 1974 interview: 'Ich habe die Ostsee erst im Jahre 1950 kennengelernt und habe also kein naives Verhältnis zu ihr. Es ist nicht mein Verhältnis zum Wasser, das dieses Buch zu schildern hat, sondern das Verhältnis dieser erfundenen Person Gesine Cresspahl. Sie ist an der Ostsee aufgewachsen, sie ist nach dem Kriege auf Leistungsschwimmen trainiert worden, und das Schwimmen in den Seen Mecklenburgs hat für sie des öfteren biographische Bedeutung gehabt' (Prangel, *Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson*, p. 48). Johnson's first novel, *Ingrid Babendererde*, is set in a landscape characterized above all by water, the very setting which Gesine looks back to from New York twenty-five years later. While in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* and *Das dritte Buch über Achim* lakes, rivers, and the sea are accorded less prominence, *Zwei Ansichten* shows some evidence of the importance they are to assume in *Jahrestage*. D.'s memories of B., for instance, are aroused by a letter she receives from him and reads on a boat, a letter whose paper is thin enough to allow reflections of the water's surface to shine through (see ZA, 44). A later note from the young West German arouses curious, one-dimensional memories of B. and West Berlin: 'Es war . . . eine Erinnerung ohne Hintergrund, brüchig und rissig, wie Lufteis, wie ein Halbtraum, unbeständig' (ZA, 187). The tenuous associations established here between water, memory, and dreams (and hence, indirectly, narration), are rather more pronounced in *Jahrestage*.

The first three volumes all open with a description of water, and the book's final scene is set by the sea. These scenes divide the book into three parts of four months, which would presumably have been of equal length occupying one volume each according to the original plan. The unexpected abundance of material resulted in the second part comprising fifty pages more than the first, and the third part nearly three hundred and fifty more than the second. Nevertheless, the structural framework of a setting which refers particularly and in detail to water at the four-month intervals of 20 August 1967, 20 December 1967, 20 April 1968, and 20 August 1968, was preserved.

The first words of *Jahrestage* describe waves breaking on a New Jersey beach: 'Lange Wellen treiben schräg gegen den Strand, wölben Buckel mit Muskelsträngen, heben zitternde Kämmе, die im grünsten Stand kippen. Der straffe Überschlag, schon weißlich gestriemt, umwickelt einen runden Hohlraum

Luft, der von der klaren Masse zerdrückt wird, als sei da ein Geheimnis gemacht und zerstört worden' (*JT*, 7). The final image of the bursting bubbles is a telling one: the waves both create and destroy the airpockets just as memory offers tantalizing glimpses of the past, only to eradicate them once more. 'Geheimnis', moreover, as a secret of the past, is closely associated with the cat in the *Regentonnegeschichte*. The rolling waves evoke memories of the Baltic in years gone by: 'Der Wind ist flatterig, bei solchem drucklosen Wind ist die Ostsee in ein Plätschern ausgelaufen. Das Wort für die kurzen Wellen der Ostsee ist kabbelig gewesen' (*JT*, 7). Not only does the sudden shift in tense stimulate the first association with the past, but the choice of tense emphasizes the irrevocable finality of the world it refers to, a world which 'ist gewesen', but no longer has any claim to existence. The fact that the word 'kabbelig' certainly still exists only reinforces the impression that at this stage Gesine views her past as irretrievable even on the linguistic level.<sup>19</sup> The gently breaking waves serve as the catalyst and background for Gesine's memories of Mecklenburg as she lies on the beach: 'Zwischen den kostspieligen Liegestühlen und Decken ist viel Strand unbelegen, aus den benachbarten Gesprächen dringen Worte wie aus einer Vergangenheit in den Schlaf' (*JT*, 8). The simile is indicative of Gesine's state of mind, for scraps of memory from various stages of her life are indeed drifting through her consciousness. At this early stage the association between water and the past, water as a stimulative, connotative means of mentally reconstructing a lost reality is established: 'Sie wacht auf von einzelnen Regentropfen und sieht wieder das bläuliche Schindelfeld einer Dachneigung im verdüsterten Licht als ein pelziges Strohdach in einer mecklenburgischen Gegend, an einer anderen Küste' (*JT*, 8). The raindrops prompt in Gesine the illusion of what she has lost. The Jerichow story germinates in this environment. It is here that Gesine writes, or at least composes, a letter to the present-day Jerichow authorities requesting statistics on the use of the seaside resort Rande by those of the Jewish faith before 1933: it was lying on this beach in the USA, where negroes and Jews are discouraged, which has prompted Gesine to take the first detectable concrete step towards recreating the Jerichow past.<sup>20</sup>

The second volume opens on 20 December 1967 with a description of the water which feeds the Mediterranean Swimming Club: 'Das Wasser ist tief unter der Straße versteckt, wo sie über einen Felsbuckel muß, chlorgrünes, laues, pralles Wasser in einem Fliesenkasten unter dem Hotel Marseille an der West End Avenue, Manhattan, Obere Westseite, New York, New York' (*JT*, 487). The whole chapter is set in the swimming pool, as Gesine once again ponders on the past:

Das Becken des Mediterranean Swimming Club, zwanzig Meter lang, achtbahnig, ist vielleicht geräumiger als das der 'Mili' in Jerichow, in dem Gesine Cresspahl schwimmen gelernt hat, das Kind das ich war. Erinnerung baut an, sagen die, die noch einmal zurückgegangen sind. Dahin zurück darf ich nicht. Das ist weit von hier. Das ist mehr als

4500 Meilen entfernt, und mehr, noch acht Stunden Flug muß man dahin gehen, bis man in die Nacht gerät, und kommt nicht an. (*JT*, 489–90)

This is a restatement of Gesine's need to recreate mentally a world whose reality is hopelessly inaccessible. Yet in order to achieve such a recreation Gesine has to immerse herself in memories. The association of water with memories is reinforced as Gesine dives into the pool: 'Jetzt schlägt das Wasser gegen die Schädeldecke. Die rasche Fahrt unter dem Wasser, den Händen hinterher, geht durch halbblindes Zwielflicht' (*JT*, 487). The quality of light and vision underwater, caused by the difference in refractive index between air and water, parallels the distorted view of the past which memory provides. Moreover, a certain disorientation is induced at the point of entry into the water: 'Der harte Schlag des Wassers gegen den Kopf läßt für einen Augenblick Betäubung zu, Blindheit, Abwesenheit; nicht lange' (*JT*, 491). The swimming-pool environment is once more associated with the distortive effects of memory during a later visit of mother and daughter to the Mediterranean Swimming Club. Gesine enters the women's side:

Hier ist viel Lärm eingesperrt, das Geräusch strömenden und schwappenden Wassers, das Kindergeschrei vom Becken her, die beiläufigen Gespräche zwischen den Schränken und das Murmeln hinter den weißen Wänden der Sauna. War es auch in Deutschland so, daß sie so unbefangen nackt ihre Wege in der Kabine machten, ob Schulmädchen, Matronen oder Greisinnen, einander musterten in der Muße unter den prasselnden Duschen, mit gelegentlichem Lob für einen Busen oder Beileid wegen einer noch rötlichen Operationswunde? es ist vergessen. Vergessen. Wie war es damals? (*JT*, 670)

There follows an important discussion between Marie and her mother on how Gesine should use those scenes from the past which her memory has arbitrarily preserved; a discussion which, of course, takes place at the poolside, and ends with Gesine demonstrating a dive to Marie.<sup>21</sup> Later in volume 2 a lapse of memory is described in a way which betrays the ever-present associations of that mental faculty: 'noch heute ist der Name Karow im Gedächtnis eine trockene Stelle' (*JT*, 725).

Volume 3 begins in the now-familiar fashion:

Das Wasser ist schwarz.

Über dem See ist der Himmel niedrig zugezogen, morgendliche Kiefernfinsternis schließt ihn ein, aus dem Schlammgrund steigt Verdunkelung auf. Die Hände der Schwimmenden rühren voran wie gegen eine schwere Farblösung, kommen erstaunlich rein an die Luft. Überall sind Ufer nahe, in der Dämmerung glaubte ein Betrachter zwei Enten in der Seemitte unterwegs, eine dunkel, eine hell befiedert . . . Laß dich zwei Fuß sinken unter die stillstehende Fläche, und du hast das Licht verloren an grünliche Schwärze. (*JT*, 1017)

The impenetrable, sinister, almost viscous qualities of this lake water evoke once more Gesine's often-expressed, vain protestations against similarly opaque periods of the past. In this water Gesine and Marie remain on the surface (the

child for reasons of politeness), but as they swim Marie's question (*JT*, 1017) '— How many lakes did you make in your life now?' (rather odd to English ears) sparks off a string of recollections which accompany their swim. This association of swimming with recounting the past is reminiscent of Pilenz's vain, involuntary, paradoxical efforts in *Katz und Maus* to distract himself from uncomfortable thoughts of Mahlke by writing and swimming, although that conflated activity is the very means by which he willy-nilly confronts and represents his sensation of guilt: 'Mit flachem Kopfsprung ging ich vom Laufsteg ab, schwamm los, wechselte oft die Lage und beeilte mich nicht. Während ich schwamm und während ich schreibe, versuchte und versuche ich an Tulla Pokriefke zu denken, denn ich wollte und will nicht immer an Mahlke denken'.<sup>22</sup> In Gesine's case swimming is less a self-deceptive diversionary tactic than a symbol of her limited ability to do much more than penetrate the surface of the past, and even if that is achieved, of her distorted perception of what is to be found there. The chapter ends with a sentence suggesting a close correlation between the lake-water and an afternoon spent recollecting the past: 'Viel schweres schwarzes Pattonwasser für den Nachmittag' (*JT*, 1020). In this scene water is the very element of memory.

A Danish coastal resort provides the setting for the final chapter, 20 August 1968. The structural framework is completed in the very last sentences of the book: 'Beim Gehen an der See gerieten wir ins Wasser. Rasselnde Kiesel um die Knöchel. Wir hielten einander an den Händen: ein Kind; ein Mann unterwegs an den Ort wo die Toten sind; und sie, das Kind das ich war' (*JT*, 1891). Essential representative components of Gesine's recreation of the past are all present and linked here in the water: Marie, the recipient; Kliefoth, a character; Gesine, the storyteller. Gesine, however, does not refer simply to 'ich', but regresses to her past self, thereby providing the final link between the Jerichow world in her mind and her present consciousness.

The seas, swimming-pools, and lakes in *Jahrestage* recall the storage facility of memory, pools of mental images which may be penetrated to some limited extent, but will not necessarily relinquish the secrets they hold with clarity. But the potential for violence and death which is a part of water is recalled not only by Lisbeth's attempts to drown first herself and then Gesine, but by the deaths of between seven and eight thousand concentration camp prisoners on the *Cap Arcona* and the *Thielbek* in the sea off Lübeck. The sea in that case becomes almost literally a repository of guilt: 'Aus der Ostsee haben wir Fische gegessen. Bis heute essen die Deutschen Fische aus der Ostsee. Es liegen noch fast dreitausend Häftlinge auf dem Grund der See' (*JT*, 1116).<sup>23</sup> While delving into the past may in some ways be enlightening, or even unavoidable, it carries with it the danger that intolerably unpleasant insights may be revealed. Everything water represents in *Jahrestage* is concentrated in that powerful, split-second image as Gesine strains to reach the cat, momentarily balanced on the point of

falling into the water barrel; Lisbeth watching. But the image would be enervated without the counterpoised cat component.

While water in Johnson is associated with the storage facility of memory, cats represent the retrieval system; independent, capricious, unpredictable in allegiance. At the same time cats embody the tantalizing frustration induced by the past, that of being fascinatingly attractive, and yet enigmatically silent: disinterested refusal to be harnessed to human purposes is a feline characteristic. Their inscrutable reserve, however, is accompanied by a potential for enormous danger to an unsuspecting prey. 'Die Katze Erinnerung', one of *Jahrestage's* most well-known images, is constructed by Gesine both to render the operation of memory more comprehensible and to help her accept its immutable nature, as impossible to control as a cat. During the second swimming-pool discussion mentioned above, Gesine tells Marie that she has no idea why certain childhood memories have been preserved at the expense of others. She remembers Jansen's proud boast that legs-astraddle he could measure precisely one metre, 'aber ich weiß nicht, warum meine Erinnerung es aufgehoben hat. Warum nicht einen anderen Anblick, einen mehr vernünftigen Wortwechsel? — Die Katze Erinnerung, wie du sagst. — Ja. Unabhängig, unbestechlich, ungehorsam. Und doch ein wohltuender Geselle, wenn sie sich zeigt, selbst wenn sie sich unerreichbar hält' (*JT*, 670). Gesine cannot simply ignore the problem, because memory, in spite of all unreliability, is indispensable to her narration. Indeed, as we have seen elsewhere in Johnson's work, remembering and narrating are similar in many ways: the analogy between the operation of memory and fictional creation, and so between a particular memory and an element of fictional truth, extends to the complex of feline imagery even before *Jahrestage*.

In *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, Cresspahl's cat is Jonas's constant companion as he writes the treatise which will lead to his eventual arrest. The cat sits on his chair watching him typing, while Jonas imagines a conversation with the animal. Gradually Jonas begins to depend on the cat for inspiration, casting his eyes wildly around the room if he cannot see her immediately on looking up from his work (see *MJ*, 180–81). Finally he wakes in the night to see the cat crouched under the typewriter:

Gegen Mitternacht, als er die Schlaflosigkeit wieder vor sich anerkannte und die Lampe wieder einschaltete zum Lesen, kauerte sie sehr wild geduckt und wach mit gestäubten Barthaaren (er sah nur ihren Kopf) unter der Schreibmaschine. Er fühlte sich so ruhig dass es ihn befremdete. Er wunderte sich dass er niemanden geschrieben hatte und auch nicht Briefe vorbedachte. Ihm fiel ein dass er Jakob nichts zu schreiben wußte. (*MJ*, 183)

This deliberately contrived combination of writing and cat is made all the more striking by its awkwardness; how, after all, could a cat possibly fit under a typewriter?

The image is briefly echoed in *Jahrestage*, although in a slightly more felicitous manner, during a description of DE's house: 'Das Haus ist an jeder Stelle

beaufsichtigt durch einen Plan; da mögen die Lederkissen schief liegen, da mag ein Telefon mitten auf dem Teppich vergessen sein, da mag eine Katze auf einer Schreibmaschine schlafen . . .' (*JT*, 269). This time the cat's position is at least feasible, although not entirely free from an element of contrivance; the choice of such a hard and unfriendly object as a typewriter to sleep on seems a trifle unlikely, unless the machine were covered. This association of cats and writing is reinforced by means of a literary allusion, namely the two references to Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat.

These references initially arouse specific, contextually relevant images. On the first occasion the lingering qualities of the Cheshire Cat's smile are used to describe Joseph, Gräfin Seydlitz's barkeeper: 'Auf Leutseligkeiten antwortet er mit einem genau geplanten Lächeln, das im Gedächtnis zurückbleibt wie das der Cheshire Katze' (*JT*, 875). The primary comparison is clear in its effect, but the secondary associations released by that allusion are helpful adjuncts to the use of cats in representing the workings of memory and literary creation. Alice, it will be remembered, is astounded at the Cheshire Cat's ability not only to appear and disappear at will, but especially at its aptness to disappear gradually, leaving only a grin: "'Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin,'" thought Alice; "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!"<sup>24</sup> Martin Gardner's notes to *Alice* observe that 'the phrase "grin without a cat" is not a bad description of pure mathematics' (*Alice*, p. 91). That phrase may equally well be applied to the literary process. A fictional representation is merely an expression of a reality which has disappeared, conveying its essence, its most salient features, without any supporting physical evidence. It is not the Cheshire Cat's mouth which is said to remain, but its grin; an abstract expression of a non-existent physical object.

The second time this fabulous animal is enlisted in *Jahrestage* refers to its second appearance in *Alice in Wonderland*, at the Queen's croquet ground. Carroll's incorporeal creature illustrates the behaviour of Cresspahl, who remains unmoved under repeated threat of execution from K. A. Pontij. The Cat's propensity to defy the King and Queen's authority simply by disappearing allows an appealing analogy between King and executioner searching frantically for the vanished animal and Gesine in fruitless quest of elements of her past which have just as wilfully disappeared. Yet the smile remains in Gesine's mind:

Das Lächeln der Katze von Cheshire ist noch mitgekommen in den letzten Traum, und mit ihm der Sonnenregen von gestern abend, der den Fahrdamm seitlich beleuchtete und schwarz machte, als das Geräusch der Autoreifen plötzlich zunahm. Minuten später verschwand die Sonne hinter einem dicken bläulichen Vorhang, wie vor dem Aufwachen heute das Lächeln der Katze von Cheshire. (*JT*, 1106)

Again the image emerges strongly; we have already seen 'Traum' used in *Jahrestage* to denote the act of narration, recreating the past ('Wir träumen das Flugzeug'). Furthermore, in this case the cat and water image complexes are



once again combined, as the 'Sonnenregen' is associated with Carroll's fantastic beast. The Cheshire Cat allusions help to extend the feline imagery to include both memories as such and the act of retrieving and representing those memories. Finally, the reference perhaps implies a warning contained in Alice's reaction to the Cat when she spies it in a tree: 'The Cat only grinned when it saw Alice. It looked good-natured, she thought: still it had *very* long claws and a great many teeth, so she felt that it ought to be treated with respect' (*Alice*, p. 88).

The latent danger represented by the cat's predatory instincts is depicted in a brief scene at Cresspahl's after the war, a scene which directly follows the burning down of half the buildings on a Sunday morning in June 1948: naturally the death of Lisbeth under similar circumstances nearly ten years before is recalled. Cresspahl and Gesine are sitting on a bench behind the house one morning when they see in the dewy-wet grass 'die älteste Katze' (*JT*, 1532) which spots and stalks a baby blackbird unable to fly. The fledgling is helpless, the cat has no need of concealment, and advances single-mindedly. Able to dispose of both birds with ease, the attacker ignores the mother blackbird's desparate attempts to offer herself as an alternative victim. This is a model of the normal course of nature, yet Gesine interferes, as *deus ex machina*, by removing the 'Raubtier'. Afterwards she notices that Cresspahl had had a stone at the ready for a similar purpose: 'Das sind von den Künsten die brotlosen, die bringen weder Umsatz noch Verdienst' (*JT*, 1533). Echoes are inevitably raised of Lisbeth's behaviour towards her daughter in 1937. Far from attempting to save Gesine, Lisbeth put her at the cat's mercy, and only Cresspahl's outside interference was able to interrupt the course of events. No other than the most charitable interpretation of Lisbeth's eventual self-sacrifice would consider it to have been made entirely selflessly in order to divert an unpleasant fate from befalling Gesine, although that is the version which Gesine tries to persuade Marie to accept. If it seems fanciful to associate the blackbird scene with Lisbeth and Gesine, then it would be as well to remember the nursery rhyme which is interpolated into the description of Cresspahl's rejection by many Jerichow people after Lisbeth's death because of his association with ill-luck:

*Geh, du schwarze Amsel,  
Wann ich schon schwarz bin,  
Schuld ist nicht mein allein,  
Schuld hat mein Mutter gehabt,  
Weil sie mich nicht gewaschen hat,  
Da ich noch klein,  
Da ich —*

(*JT*, 835)

The cat image thus incorporates the inherited guilt against which Gesine is powerless.

However superficially inoffensive, the past has a similar latent capacity for danger: indeed its seemingly harmless, beguiling nostalgia is an active constituent of the peril. Gesine's recognition of this emerges from the comparison made before the earliest reference to the *Regentonnegeschichte*: 'Das Stück Vergangenheit, Eigentum durch Anwesenheit, bleibt versteckt in einem Geheimnis, verschlossen gegen Ali Babas Parole, abweisend, unnahbar, stumm und verlockend wie eine mächtige graue Katze hinter Fensterscheiben, sehr tief von unten gesehen wie mit Kinderaugen' (*JT*, 64). The enticing, frustrating properties of being both 'stumm' and 'verlockend' drew the child Gesine into a deadly trap which she overlooked in her haste and youth. Her mother's putative involvement in setting the trap completes a set of images which embrace the reason for Gesine's internal narration; the attraction of the past coupled with the dangers and problems associated with attempting to gain access to that past by seeking and complementing memories; the attractions and hazards of narration itself. The *Regentonnegeschichte* gathers and concentrates not only a whole range of motivations which provide the narrative with its original impetus, but also the emotional complications which oppose that impetus: for Gesine's early experience is a prophetic illustration of the potential danger encountered by one whose fascination with a universe lacking physical existence is such that its fictional re-creation assumes pre-eminent importance.

This danger is no mere theoretical abstraction, but expresses itself tangibly in the kind of emotional pain which writers have often reported experiencing whilst coming to terms fictionally with a disturbing part of their life. On at least one occasion Gesine starts crying after a question-and-answer session (in the form of a game, with points) which ended with Gesine emotionally describing to her daughter the occasion on which 'Lisbeths Fähigkeiten als Mutter zum ersten Mal in Jerichow ins Gerede [kamen]' (*JT*, 458). Lisbeth had not understood her daughter's demand for an *Apfelsaft* during a walk through town. The reason for her incomprehension was Gesine's fixation on Cresspahl, as she tells Marie:

Das Kind war mit seinem Vater zugange, auf Spaziergängen, auf Spazierfahrten, beim Arbeiten im Garten, beim Baden in der Ostsee, immer, überall, wann immer er sich außerhalb der Werkstatt zeigte, und weil du dies alles nicht gehabt hast, gebe ich dir sofort und unwiderruflich und unter Androhung von Weiterungen einen Punkt. Eins zu Eins und Ende.

— Wein doch nicht Gesine. Hör doch auf. Soll ich dir ein Glas von DEs Whiskey bringen? Wein doch nicht, Gesine! (*JT*, 458–59)

Gesine's story has put her in mind of Jakob, whose early death prevented him from being the father to Marie that Cresspahl was to Gesine. This is a rare and obvious instance of the pain which reliving such experiences (particularly as far as her parents are concerned) causes Gesine, but the example may be regarded as symptomatic, particularly in the knowledge that such scenes of emotion tend to

be eschewed in *Jahrestage* generally. In fact the *Regentonnegeschichte* becomes shorthand between Gesine and Marie for any incident which is painful for Gesine to relate and for Marie to hear. On occasion they do indeed agree to omit such stories. Gesine's fear of insanity, expressed in the letter to A. M., is a further result of delving into the past. Mentally reconstituting the voices of her characters makes Gesine doubt her faculties gravely enough to consider herself a potential danger even as far as Marie is concerned. Should Gesine show signs of instability as Lisbeth did, Marie may eventually suffer the same fate as her mother. Moreover, Gesine may yet be in danger of taking the same final course as Lisbeth. Her dreams of death show that the subject is not far from her mind. There are indeed tangible dangers in that state typified by Cresspahl after the war: '... anwesend und weit weggetreten in eine Zeit, die es nur noch im Gedanken gab' (*JT*, 176). But that incompatibility of physical presence and mental absence may yet be turned to advantage. Gesine's defensive position, repulsing the painful attacks made by the irrepressible image of the water butt incident, is counterbalanced by a positive effort to reap some benefit from her reconstruction of the past. While the *Regentonnegeschichte* thrusts itself on Gesine, there are some aspects of her parents' guilt which she goes in search of, recognizing their relevance to her own life in New York. In this respect, the two narrative levels are indeed bound inextricably together.

In various circumstances throughout her life, but particularly in New York, Gesine has been deeply perturbed by the same question which preoccupied Uwe Johnson and his wife Elisabeth as they questioned the historian and political writer Margret Boveri about her life in a series of tape-recorded conversations transcribed in *Verzweigungen*, Boveri's unfinished autobiography which Uwe Johnson edited into book form after her death.<sup>25</sup> At one point in the transcripts Johnson compels Boveri to make a statement on her decision to remain in Nazi Germany and continue her association with *Berliner Tageblatt*, which, like all newspapers, had to toe the Party line, although it was perhaps the most adventurously liberal. Johnson levels what amounts to an accusation of complicity at Boveri: 'Sie haben durch Verbleiben in Deutschland und durch Berichten für Deutschland sich sowohl für Rassenschande-Urteile wie die Intervention in Spanien erklärt, in Form einer Stellungnahme' (Boveri, p. 291). This is in spite of Boveri's own arrest by the Nazis and clear opposition to their ideology. Johnson rejects such credentials as evasive, and becomes rather impertinent to the seventy-year-old: 'Jetzt gehen Sie weg in eine Ecke wie eine Katze, die nicht angefaßt werden und nicht spielen will. Kommen Sie doch noch bitte einmal zurück zu dieser Gesellschaft. Eine Dame, die sitzt da und wird rot. Entweder sie spricht sofort etwas oder der Abend ist hin' (p. 292). Finally he is point-blank aggressive:

Das Deutschland, dem Sie sich zugehörig fühlten, war nicht das, in dem Sie aufgewachsen sind. Sie haben sich eine Lebensmöglichkeit geschaffen, in der Sie rundum

sich zu umgeben trachteten mit einer Atmosphäre guter Taten, guter Freunde. Sie haben sich kleine Alibis verschafft durch eingeschmuggelte Adjektive oder Nebensätze. Im Zentrum immer Frau Boveri, die ihre nicht genau durchdachten, aber vorhandenen Bedürfnisse in dieser Art befriedigte. Das nenne ich amoralisch.<sup>26</sup>

The moral dimensions of the disagreement are such that the relationship, indeed the friendship, between the Johnsons and Boveri is placed under some strain. This question is of paramount importance to Johnson, who returns to it in his postscript: several of Boveri's acquaintances emigrated, 'sie aber zog das Deutschland Hitlers vor, und als Grund sollten wir ungefähr verstehen, daß sie bei dem Deutschen daran and den Deutschen darin aushalten wollte, was immer fällig war. Es war unbegreiflich . . .' (Boveri, p. 357).

The dilemma's fictional representation precedes the Boveri episode, yet the importance of the former is highlighted by the very existence of the latter. Indeed Boveri herself refers to Heinrich Cresspahl in this connection:

Vielleicht erlauben Sie, daß ich eine Romanfigur als Beispiel nehme: Heinrich Cresspahl, ein Mann, für den ich eine große Sympathie habe. Er hat einige Dinge getan, die seine Enkelin, in einem anderen Land und in anderen Anschauungen aufgewachsen, nicht gern gehört hat. Also da läßt sich aufzählen eine Reihe von Minuspunkten und dann wieder von Pluspunkten. Die könnte man in einer Rechnung gegeneinander aufstellen, und ich habe keinen Zweifel, daß die Pluspunkte in der Mehrzahl wären. Aber worauf ich hinaus will, ist etwas anderes, nämlich daß viel wichtiger war sein Verhalten von Tag zu Tag, zum Beispiel eine Zuverlässigkeit, die mit der Zeit jeder kannte; daß also die Leute von Jerichow wußten, wie sie diesem Mann vertrauen konnten, daß Gesine sagen konnte 'er war ein geachteter Mann'. (Boveri, pp. 296–97)

Boveri points out Marie's reaction to Cresspahl's covert activity during the war years. His decision to remain in Germany and subsequent espionage becomes a major point of discord between mother and daughter during the course of Gesine's narration, for although both of them object to his behaviour during the war, they do so for different reasons. This complex of issues is at once a major motivation for the Jerichow chronicles and a potentially disastrous hindrance.

While Marie cannot accept what she regards as Cresspahl's betrayal of Germany, Gesine is chiefly concerned with the moral problem of how far the individual can or should bear responsibility for the actions of the State. Cresspahl's activity during the twelve years of Nazi rule provides a focal point for her concern. Once again the dilemma centres on guilt, but a guilt which has indentifiable roots in Gesine's own life, namely the disparity between the dictates of conscience and the behaviour of a government which speaks in a particular individual's name, or which the individual implicitly endorses by choosing to live under that government's jurisdiction. Before examining the way Gesine uses the Jerichow story to throw light on the question, it is necessary to investigate the quandary which she faces in New York.

Perhaps the most famous quotation from *Jahrestage* used to illustrate the point is the ironic advice of the dead to Gesine: '*Gefällt dir das Land nicht, such dir ein*

*anderes*' (JT, 1007). Although Peter Bekes uses the quotation to entitle a perceptive article on the subject,<sup>27</sup> he, like other critics, does not fully highlight its implications. In particular, Gesine's reason for looking to the past in this connection is not quite as Bekes would have it: 'An dieser Vergangenheit sieht sie die Verflochtenheit von Familien- und Zeitgeschichte, die würgende Verklammerung der Privatheit mit der Öffentlichkeit präfiguriert, aus der sie sich selbst befreien möchte' (Bekes, p. 69). Gesine is never so naive as to imagine that her life or that of her family could be or have been divorced from the effects of world events, particularly in Germany 1933–45; nor does she seriously consider that it is possible to free oneself from this kind of personal involvement in wider political events.<sup>28</sup> The point of the airily dispensed advice is that 'das Land' as such represents no great source of disquiet for Gesine. Both she and Marie enjoy their life in America, much as Johnson did, according to the Schwarz interview: 'In New York habe ich mich wohlgeföhlt. Das Leben war leicht, ich verdiente genug Geld, außerdem genoß ich alle Privilegien der Weißen. Das bedeutet unter anderem, daß ich eine Wohnung hatte, wie ich sie mir wünsche, daß unsere Tochter in einen guten Kindergarten ging und so weiter'.<sup>29</sup> Gesine, too, is personally inclined to remain in a position of similar comfort, but her conscience and what others regard as her moral duty conflict with that inclination. Furthermore her perception of duty is bifurcated. On the one hand she finds American foreign policy and social injustice morally repugnant, and is afraid of the effect American ways of thinking might have on her daughter. On the other hand she does not want to uproot Marie from a happy and settled environment, from a childhood the like of which Gesine was denied. Her aim is to evolve a method of balancing conscience and inclination by considering whether, in the light of her father's approach to the moral decision he faced, she need feel any responsibility whatever for the government's stance. She looks to the past for guidance in the hope of establishing a pragmatic borderline to delimit passive, inevitable involvement, a line which her conscience will not allow her to cross. For it is one thing to be inevitably, perhaps unwittingly, implicated in morally unacceptable activities undertaken by the system of which one is a part, and another to become unnecessarily involved in such activities for personal advantage. Her first problem is to decide how far mere residence in the USA constitutes an unacceptable level of passive implication in immorality.

The comment appended to a *New York Times* item of 21 March 1968 serves to illustrate Gesine's attitude:

Ein westdeutscher Schauspieler, der einmal ein ostdeutscher Schauspieler war, ist zurückgegangen nach Ostdeutschland, weil er weiß, daß die dortige Herrschaft nicht beteiligt ist an der Unterdrückung der Neger in den USA und auch nicht am amerikanischen Krieg in Viet Nam. Er wußte das vorher nicht. Wenn Einem eines Landes Verbrechen in Gewissen liegen, geht man schlicht in ein anderes. (JT, 894–95)

Gesine's reaction may be a little petulant, but her ironic rejection of what she sees as the actor's hypocrisy highlights her own view that even if one were simply to go to another country or take other measures designed to isolate oneself from the strictures of collective responsibility, the question would always arise anew. The use of Dow Chemical's napalm in Vietnam prompts Gesine to avoid products manufactured by that firm, but she is under no illusions that her personal boycott will achieve anything but some small, personal alleviation of a nagging inner voice:

Haushaltsprodukte der Firma Dow Chemical kaufen wir schon lange nicht mehr. Aber sollen wir auch nicht mehr mit einer Eisenbahn fahren, da sie an den Transporten von Kriegsmaterial verdient? Sollen wir nicht mehr mit den Fluggesellschaften fliegen, die Kampftruppen nach Viet Nam bringen? Sollen wir verzichten auf jeden Einkauf, weil er eine Steuer produziert, von deren endgültiger Verwendung wir nichts wissen? Wo ist die moralische Schweiz, in die wir emigrieren könnten? (*JT*, 382)

Since simply living in a particular system, Gesine believes, implies a certain amount of collective responsibility, the only action that can be taken is private, without wider practical significance. Public demonstration of moral rectitude, such as that practised by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, provokes only savage scorn from Gesine.

The politicized poet's open letter<sup>30</sup> declaring his intention of renouncing his American visiting fellowship at the Wesleyan University on moral and political grounds is subjected to a vitriolically sarcastic analysis, the irony peaking in reaction to the West German's decision to replace the USA with a suitable alternative:

Er sei in Cuba gewesen. Die Agenten der CIA auf dem Flugplatz von Mexico City hätten jeden Passagier nach Cuba fotografiert!

Das lassen andere Länder ihre Geheimdienste nicht tun: fotografieren.

Sie dringen auch nicht in kleinere Länder ein und hinterlassen dort Spuren; ihr wirtschaftliches System hinterläßt keine Narben auf Leib und Geist eines kleinen Landes. So ist es. Herr Enzensberger hat es selbst gesehen.

Herr Enzensberger hat sich entschlossen, nach Cuba zu gehen und dort eine beträchtliche Zeit zu verbringen. Das dürften drei Jahre sein.

Es sei dies kaum ein Opfer.

Er hat eben einfach so den Gedanken, daß er von den Bewohnern Cubas mehr lernen kann ("Freude"), als den Studenten der Wesleyan University an politischer Haltung beibringen.

Er will dem cubanischen Volke von Nutzen sein. Er selbst, in eigener Person, will einem ganzen Volk von Nutzen sein.

Die Verwandlung des Herrn Enzensberger in den Nutzen des cubanischen Volkes, dargestellt auf offener Bühne. Keine Tricks, keine doppelten Vorhänge, keine Schleier! (*JT*, 802)

The strength of feeling evident in this attack underlines the several issues it confronts.<sup>31</sup> Firstly, to leave one country for another for reasons of political morality is a futile fallacy, particularly when the exchange involved is a simple

replacement of one economic system by its opposite with the minimum of geographical inconvenience. Secondly, in practical terms the influence which a single private person, with whatever access to media, can exert against the State machinery is negligible. Gesine also takes issue with Enzensberger, a guest in the USA, for biting the hand that fed him, as it were, when he must previously have been aware of what the body attached to the hand was doing. Finally, it is inadvisable to take public moral stands unless one can be quite sure of one's own credentials.

The last point is further illustrated by a reference to Jean-Paul Sartre; a *New York Times* item is used to exemplify the inconsistency which might dog those unwary people who heroically publicize their principles: 'Jean-Paul Sartre, ein Mitglied des Internationalen Gerichtshofes zu Roskilde, hat die USA schon einmal gestraft, als er vor zweieinhalb Jahren eine Einladung in dies Land ablehnte, weil seine Regierung einen Krieg in Viet Nam führe. Sartres Begründung machte jeden Ausländer, der in die USA reist oder dort lebt, zu einem Mitschuldigen' (*JT*, 397). Whether Gesine's judgement is right or wrong, the French philosopher's protest is then juxtaposed with his participation in a scheme set up by the Italian government which allowed foreigners a seventy per cent reduction in train tickets to Italy if they would view a 'Fascist Exhibition' of 1933. In the autumn of the same year Sartre did not feel he was compromising his principles when he began a year-long sojourn at the Institut Français in Berlin.

Despite the criticism levelled at Sartre and Enzensberger, the dead, acting as the voice of Gesine's conscience, encourage her to leave. Jakob is concerned about Marie's welfare:

*Nimm das Kind da weg, Gesine.  
Wohin, Jakob? Auf den Mond?  
Dublin, Gesine. London. Kopenhagen. (JT, 315)*

Gesine's ironic rejoinder 'Auf den Mond?' is perhaps an unconscious revelation of an alternative broached in *Jahrestage 4* which will be considered shortly. But the dead in concert are not disposed to accept an argument which they consider avoids an issue of principle:

*Wie kannst du leben wollen in einem solchen Land, Gesine.  
Weil es das Leben von Marie geworden ist.  
Das Kind, das Kind. Dein Notfallschirm, deine heilige Ausrede. (JT, 583)*

In the same protracted conversation with the dead, Gesine insists that nothing will be achieved by her leaving, and is, in contrast to Annie Fleury, unwilling to take part in any more demonstrations than the one she has already attended, firstly because, Gesine professes to believe, such activity will have no effect on government policy, and secondly 'weil ich nicht aus dem Land müssen will' (*JT*, 582). But Gesine's almost petulant self-defence is a sign that the dead have

hit on a valid argument (she is indeed using Marie as an excuse), and that Gesine is uneasy about her own reasons for staying. The very existence of her bad conscience, of her dispute with the dead, is proof of that. Although Gesine is right to deny the real existence of a society congruent with the requirements of her own moral sense, she has no satisfactory answer to Jakob's plea that she remove herself to Dublin, London, or Copenhagen: at heart she must be aware that there are differences of degree as far as governmental irresponsibility and immorality are concerned. She could at least lessen the weight on her conscience by moving to another country.

Yet the fundamental question of what would be achieved by such an action remains unanswered. Gesine tests out the possibilities on her parents' lives. She imagines a righteously indignant Lisbeth searching desperately for reasons why Cresspahl should not remain in England, in spite of his correct predictions about the Nazi danger (indeed his vindication only irritates Lisbeth further): 'Es war nur, daß Cresspahl das Unrecht in seinem England verpassen wollte, bloß um keine Schuld abzukriegen. War das nicht selbstsüchtig? Durfte Einer aus seinem eigenen Land weggehen, bloß um in Sicherheit zu leben?' (*JT*, 365). The safety referred to is, of course, moral rather than physical, security from potential *Mitschuld*. But Lisbeth's accusations are merely an outlet for her own guilt feelings at wanting to remain in a Germany she knows to be approaching the kind of injustice which disturbs her: 'die Ungerechtigkeit, was die Vorschriften der Bibel untersagten und mit Strafe belegten' (*JT*, 365). In her self-justification Lisbeth deceives herself: she knows that her husband's desire to live in England does not predominantly or initially spring from cowardly, selfish evasion of a responsibility he ought to shoulder as a German. His decision to leave Germany had been taken more than ten years previously; in 1922 he had gone to work in the Netherlands, and six years later he moved to England. Gesine hints at his reasons for leaving: 'Heinrich Cresspahl, Jahrgang 1888, von den deutschen Kriegen weggegangen in die Niederlande, nach England, und doch mit meiner Mutter zurückgekehrt nach Mecklenburg, damit ich in Deutschland zur Welt käme, wenige Jahre vor dem nächsten Krieg' (*JT*, 490). There is no question of Cresspahl fleeing before the possibility of guilt by association; his original departure must have stemmed from a private conscientious objection to taking part in any subsequent German war. More mundane impulses also played their part; in Holland Mine Goudelier and in England Mrs. Trowbridge (see *JT*, 1284). As Cresspahl puts it in the *Anhang* to volume 2, in each case 'der Grund sei lebendig gewesen, und habe einen Rock angehabt' (*Anhang*, p. I).

If personal motives played a part in Cresspahl's decision to leave Germany, they were paramount in his return. A sense of duty not only to his wife, but also to his unborn child left him with no choice but to return to Mecklenburg. He was unwilling to accept the alternative of allowing Gesine to be brought up by the Papenbrocks: his private conscience held sway over his sense of political



responsibility. But over the years he pays a heavy price for his decision, a price in which his daughter's requests that he explain himself bulk large.

Gesine imputes no intention to her father for allowing her to be born in Nazi Germany; she is, however, critical of his subsequent inaction: 'Nicht einmal hat er ein Kind in die Welt gesetzt im Vertrauen auf eine Zukunft unter den Nazis, wie die jungen Eltern von 1934; sein Kind sollte in England aufwachsen. Es ist nur, daß er es dann bei den Nazis ließ' (*JT*, 390–91).<sup>32</sup> This is the crux of Gesine's reproach. She does not doubt her father's opposition, indeed practical resistance to the regime, but protests that Cresspahl's failure to balance his political and private conscience by insisting on Lisbeth's return to England resulted in Gesine being burdened with the national German guilt, not to mention the privations of life in Mecklenburg 1933–53. In common with her treatment of Lisbeth, Gesine construes Heinrich Cresspahl's behaviour during that period in two ways. In her own reconstruction of his life she is critical and sceptical. In those parts of the narrative which Marie hears, she defends him against the child's objections. The first mode of presentation reflects Gesine's motivations for recreating the Jerichow past, the second reflects Marie's unwillingness to accept her grandfather's political past, an unwillingness which is instrumental in delaying the story's progress.

For her part, Gesine needs to understand her father's failure to respond to the increasingly obvious illegality of Nazi Germany. Avoiding the assumption that Cresspahl's political acumen would have made all crystal clear to him in advance, she puts the question 'war Anfang 1933 etwas zu sehen?' (*JT*, 169). From Richmond, Cresspahl may have been in a particularly bad position to judge. Indeed, it seems that the dangers were not superficially apparent, although Peter Wulff advises Cresspahl that he is better off in England. But Gesine is particularly disturbed by the idea that Cresspahl may have foreseen the war as early as 1933 and yet still returned to Germany, in spite of having experienced the aftermath of the gassing at Langemarck, whose victims were later glorified, the experience which originally led him to leave Germany ('*Du kannst mich mal mit Langemarck*'; *JT*, 171).

The disparate bits of information concerning Cresspahl's putative prediction of war have been carefully sown in *Jahrestage 1* to preclude any provable version of events. The dead Cresspahl does indeed tell Gesine that the conflict 'war doch noch nicht zu sehen' (*JT*, 391). Yet he had obviously assured Lisbeth that there would be a war (see *JT*, 365), since she is prematurely pleased at the inaccuracy of at least that prediction. Furthermore, Cresspahl has at least some inkling of the future; while hurrying back to Jerichow for Gesine's birth he has a premonition: 'Er hatte ein flaes, widerwärtiges Gefühl künftiger Schuld' (*JT*, 194). It might be argued that the information from Lisbeth has little validity, being related via Gesine, who is clearly prejudiced and believes Cresspahl was aware of the danger ahead. The view might equally well be put

forward that the voice of the dead Cresspahl is unreliable, being a construct of Gesine's mind, a devil's advocate she requires in order to come to terms with the problem. Or it might be the case that Lisbeth's view is the correct one and that the dead Cresspahl does speak for himself as a character but is unwilling to admit his error of judgement. Typically for Johnson, the reader is prevented from proving that one or the other version is true. Yet it seems probable that Cresspahl was convinced of the likelihood of renewed hostilities, but nevertheless returned to Germany because, as Gesine puts it: 'du harst din Fru in Dütschlant, un süss hest du di nich vel dacht' (*JT*, 392); his personal duty held sway.

The fact remains that by 1938 the effects of Nazi rule are plain to everyone; Mr. Smith's visit to Jerichow is postulated with ominous irony before Lisbeth's funeral provided the real opportunity: 'Und was für Zweck und Ende hätte Mr. Smith denn finden können in Jerichow. Was war da zu denken?' Then, harking back to the question concerning 'Anfang 1933', 'Jedoch sogar er hätte etwas gesehen' (*JT*, 657). Which leaves the question of why Cresspahl stayed on after Lisbeth's death had removed the compulsion to do so. It is a question which is to cause much dissension between Gesine and Marie, as will become clear later in this study.

Gesine's standpoint is strikingly similar to that adopted by the Johnsons towards Margret Boveri. Presumably the couple received the same criticism when they lived in New York as that which Cresspahl is able to level at Gesine in response to her imputations: 'Wo sitzt denn du, Gesine? Kannstu din Kriech nich seh'n? Worüm gehst du nich wech, dat du kein Schult krichst?' (*JT*, 391). His daughter does indeed feel uncomfortable about her association with violence and racism in America, as well as US foreign policy. Her close involvement with de Rosny and the bank, so diametrically opposed to any socialist ideals she might retain, is another source of unease. Still Gesine stubbornly insists that her father should have left Germany, whereas it is not imperative for her to leave the USA. There may be parallels between Germany in the 1930s and America in the 1960s, but there are also fundamental differences.

In de-emphasizing these dissimilarities, Roberta T. Hye distorts the world of *Jahrestage* in such a way that she sets up a moral equation between Nazi Germany and 1960s America. Hye discovers the novel's central theme to be 'Gegenwart als variierende Wiederholung der Vergangenheit' (Hye, p. 11), which is to say that although history does not repeat itself precisely, similar events constantly recur: 'obwohl der Zweite Weltkrieg einmalig ist, kommen Kriege in der Geschichte immer wieder vor und mit ihnen verwandte Erscheinungen' (Hye, p. 11). That may seem enough of a truism, but Hye overtrumps with a deterministic view of history whereby men and women are at the mercy of their immutable human nature: 'der Mensch ändert sich nicht; das besagt, er ist genauso böse in Amerika 1968 wie er in Deutschland 1938 war' (Hye, p. 11). For

Hye, *Jahrestage* is profoundly pessimistic; 'Die Möglichkeit zu einer Veränderung dieser Welt ist im Roman nicht vorhanden, weil das Böse sich auf ewig wiederholt' (Hye, p. 13). Hye leaves no room for compromise; the world view she detects in *Jahrestage* is reminiscent of the mediaeval 'Frau Werlt', with its cut and dried oppositions, and the American critic's predilection for moral absolutes implicitly levels all human society in all places at all times with Nazi Germany: 'Johnson schildert eine Welt in seinem Roman, die von dem Bösen durchdrungen ist, gleichgültig ob es Amerika 1968, Deutschland 1938 oder irgendein anderes im Roman dargestelltes Land ist' (Hye, p. 13). Not content with this disservice to Johnson, Hye goes on in her conclusion to make value judgements which give rise to irresponsible exaggeration, and, in passing, to the implication that ten-year-old Marie is at fault for lacking sufficient moral sense not to find Francine ugly:

Wie die Mutter zeigt Marie ein außerordentliches Interesse für die Zeitung. Die Bilder, die sie daraus schneidet, gehen um Begebenheiten, die genau so schlimm sind wie Bergen-Belsen. Dazu ist Marie hochmütig gegen Neger und sie nimmt es übel, daß sie der schwarzen Francine, die sie sogar häßlich findet, helfen muß.<sup>33</sup> Dabei macht sie sich dasselbe Bild, das sich die Deutschen vor dreißig Jahren von den Juden machten. (Hye, p. 115)

Leaving aside the comparison drawn between a small girl's view of her black school friend, and one entire ethnic group's view of another, it must be said that Hye has in any case misrepresented Marie's attitude. In fact the child is friends with Francine, but comes under peer group pressure to exclude the black girl from the other children's social circle, pressure for which Gesine is responsible by virtue of having placed Marie in an educational environment of that kind. But to return to the issue at hand: it is clear that Gesine, at least, does not share Hye's opinion, since if she saw such clear-cut parallels between Marie's perception of ethnic minorities and that which the Nazis propagated, then she would undoubtedly leave the USA, just as she fervently wishes her father had not returned to Germany before the war. If any further corroboration is needed to show the flaw in Hye's thesis, then the heavy irony of Gesine's onslaught on Enzensberger's promulgation of a similar view will suffice:

Wenn Herr Enzensberger sich erinnert, kommt ihm hier alles bekannt vor. So wie in den USA heutzutage war es in den mittleren dreißiger Jahren in Deutschland. Da kamen Staatsmänner und schüttelten dem Führer die Hand. Dergleichen geschieht auch in den USA.

...  
In Deutschland gab es Benachteiligung und Verfolgung einer Rasse. Wie in den USA.

...  
Hier erst, nach dem spanischen Bürgerkrieg, der für den in Viet Nam steht, sieht Herr Enzensberger seine Analogie zusammenbrechen. Da sei zum Beispiel die Vernichtungskraft von Herrn Enzensbergers gegenwärtiger Herrschaft. Davon hätten die Nazis nie träumen können. (*JT*, 800-01)<sup>34</sup>

If, then, one motivation for Gesine's looking to the past is to help her deal with her own immediate problems, the extent of her success must be deemed limited. That is not to say that she learns nothing, as Hye would maintain. Gesine in fact recognizes that her father's position was so different from her own that she cannot justify her behaviour on his model. The Semigs possibly owed their lives to Cresspahl's help, but that is of no use to Gesine in determining her attitude to Mrs. Ferwalter. The concentration camp survivor is overjoyed at finally having the opportunity to become a US citizen. Gesine knows that Mrs. Ferwalter 'konnte nicht verbergen, daß die Aussicht auf den amerikanischen Paß ihr bevorstand wie eine neue schützende Hülle, noch ein Bollwerk gegen die Vergangenheit' (*JT*, 1166). But how should Gesine react? 'Sollen wir ihr die Freude verderben und widersprechen? Sollen wir sie stehen lassen, weil sie in die Bürgerschaft eines Landes gegangen ist, das ein anderes in Südostasien ausrotten will?' (*JT*, 1169). The Jerichow story can give her no answer to questions such as these. But as that story progresses into the 1950s, Gesine takes the opportunity to re-examine her own reasons for leaving the GDR and the FRG in an attempt to resolve her present conundrum.

Undoubtedly Gesine's experiences at school were involved in her decision to leave the GDR; in particular the betrayal of Dieter Lockenvitz, Anette Dühr, Gesine, and Anita, by Gabriel Manfras. As a result of that betrayal Gesine was arrested on 2 January 1952 and interrogated for ten days under suspicion of having been a typist for Dieter Lockenvitz, aiding him in his 'verbrecherisches Treiben' (*JT*, 1799). At university she is approached by a 'Schnüffler nach Gesinnungen' (*JT*, 1832), who, being no match for Gesine, 'glaubte sich unterwegs zu einer unentgeltlichen Liebschaft; den hielt ich mir als Begleitdogge' (*JT*, 1833). Although Gesine, with some help from Jakob, deals effortlessly with the spy, the echoes of antisemitism which reached the GDR from Moscow early in 1953 added to Gesine's disquiet. Not only does she find the restrictions on free discussion tiresome and dangerous, but she also notices that 'seit Mai 1952 zu fürchten war, der Sachwalter würde die Grenzen dicht machen' (*JT*, 1836). The law passed on 23 July 1952 dissolving Mecklenburg as an administrative unit struck to the roots of Gesine's regional attachment. The concomitant abolition of the Mecklenburg flag made 'ein Stück Herkunft unkenntlich' (*JT*, 1837). Gesine was further dismayed by the senseless destruction of Johnny Schlegel's perfectly functioning, but privately organized farming commune (which was far in advance of the scheme proposed by the authorities), and particularly by his subsequent fifteen-year prison sentence. She sees her loss of confidence symbolized by the shooting of 'Jakob sin Voss' (*JT*, 1844).<sup>35</sup> The final straw is the sight of Elise Bock's furniture being auctioned after the owner had left for Berlin: 'Nun fing ich an, wegzugehen' (*JT*, 1844). Although the 1953 rebellion undoubtedly strengthened Gesine's conviction that the East German system was not socialist, her reasons for leaving mostly concern the

intrusion of State power and judiciary into the private sphere. Moral scruples in themselves seem not to be as important as her own direct experience of governmental injustice.

Her decision seven years later to move away from the FRG, although partly a personal matter (she was offered the chance to work in Brooklyn), was made for reasons much more similar to those which cause her crisis of conscience in New York: 'Am Weihnachtsabend 1959 war in Köln, in der Nachbarschaft, eine Synagoge mit Hakenkreuzen beschmiert worden und mit Sprüchen: "Deutsche fordern Juden raus"' (*JT*, 1872). Another reason was the career of Franz Josef Strauß, which Gesine describes in some detail. But although similar slogans, and similar public figures, were to be found in New York, Gesine does not feel compelled to leave the city: perhaps her recreation of the past has enabled her to come to terms with these realities of life in the West.

There are two potential, if not entirely satisfactory solutions to Gesine's crisis of conscience in New York. One is practical, yielded by the Jerichow story, fittingly proposed by Cresspahl. The other is less practical; indeed, in the context of *Jahrestage*, somewhat speculative. Both are worth considering.

In the section at the end of *Jahrestage 2* entitled 'Mit den Augen Cresspahls', Heinrich Cresspahl activates a defence mechanism by denying any part in collective national culpability, restricting a widening of individual responsibility to his regional identity as a Mecklenburger, and that only until the Kapp-Putsch of 1920:

Er begreife sich nicht als 'Deutscher'. Er halte es mit denen in Mecklenburg, die von den 'Preußen' sprächen; er habe auch schon vor den Aufhalten in Holland und Großbritannien an sie gedacht als an 'de Dütschen', die anderen. Er habe keine Lust, für die verantwortlich zu sein, weder für ihre Weltkriege noch für ihr Bild der Welt. Kein Mal sei er von den Deutschen gefragt worden wegen der Gesetze, die sie über ihn verhängten. Was sie in seinem Namen aussprachen, es lasse sich auf Niederdeutsch gar nicht in Worte bringen. Auch nicht auf Niederländisch. Er habe seinen Anteil für das Leben in Deutschland jeweils pünktlich bezahlt, die Steuern wie die Abgaben für die Müllabfuhr; er komme sich nicht ordentlich bedient vor, nicht einmal dafür. Also habe er sich genötigt und frei gesehen, von Mal zu Mal selbst und für sich selbst zu entscheiden.<sup>36</sup>

Cresspahl's retreat into individualism, disclaiming responsibility for the actions of a nation he feels no affinity with, enables him to reject demands such as that of Enzensberger for 'persönliche Verantwortlichkeit für die Handlungen der eigenen Regierung' (*JT*, 800). Unlike Lisbeth, Cresspahl is fully prepared to take the blame for any mistakes he might personally have made; after the description of Gesine being sent to the Paepcke's following Lisbeth's death, the dead Cresspahl warns his daughter: 'Du sollst es mir nicht vergessen, Gesine' (*JT*, 830). But his very shouldering of the responsibility enables Gesine to say 'Ich vergeß dir das, Cresspahl' (*JT*, 830). With Lisbeth the opposite is the case. Gesine is left to assume the responsibility for her mother having starved the

child Gesine. The dead Lisbeth is grateful that her daughter has not told the story to Marie:

*Es ist fast, als könntest du es mir nun vergessen.  
Ich vergeß es dir. Ick vegaet di dat. Ick vegaet di dat!* (JT, 695)

To a certain extent Gesine is able to echo Cresspahl's attitude. One of the arguments she puts to the dead concerning her refusal to leave the USA is that 'ich bin ein Gast in diesem Land' (JT, 582).<sup>37</sup> But although Gesine can disclaim responsibility for the actions of any government, having divorced herself, as it were, from that of the GDR, she finds it impossible to deny her Germanness to herself, and consequently dispel her strong sense of national guilt, particularly as far as Jews are concerned.

Gesine cannot co-operate with the demands which are being made of her, demands such as 'Erklären Sie uns das. Sie sind doch auch eine Deutsche, Mrs. Cresspahl. Versuchen Sie, uns das zu erklären' (JT, 794). Her powerlessness against such guilt is barely offset by trivial personal actions which bring no more than ephemeral relief from self-accusation. When, for example, she is looking for a flat soon after arriving in New York, she departs from a Jewish flat agent's office in a fury after encountering discrimination against blacks. Similarly she avoids Don Mauro's shop after he ill-treats a beggar. Undoubtedly some would argue that Gesine is being evasive in refusing to speak as a German, assuaging her conscience with measures which in practical terms are meaningless; trying to come to terms with her complicity by a private reckoning with the past. That is, however, the approach which Johnson obviously adopted and presumably hoped to propagate as well as expiate in personal terms by depicting his fictional projection, GS, at the Jewish Congress. The author seems to have drawn one particular lesson from that experience of rejection and humiliation by the Jewish audience: 'Der hält sich in Hinkunft versteckt, solange eine Regierung in seinem Namen spricht' (JT, 257). The notion of collective guilt has become a matter between him and his conscience; the public personality will remain hidden.<sup>38</sup> As Johnson puts it in a tribute to Günter Eich, 'Ein sicheres Versteck ist unerläßlich'.<sup>39</sup> In *Jahrestage 4*, Gesine describes what might well be 'ein sicheres Versteck', the 'moralische Schweiz' of her dreams.

Cydamonoe is the four-year-old Marie's fantasy land. Its existence may only be revealed to those who display not the slightest sign of cynicism or scepticism: Gesine's acceptable reaction allows her to become an honorary citizen, honorary because Cydamonoe is a Republic of Children. It can only be reached by flying: 'Das Fluggerät war Kopf und Körper, selbstgesteuert' (JT, 1484). The flight is undertaken at night, as though a dream, so that Cydamonoe offers 'Entschädigung für den falschen Tag vom Aufstehen bis zum Schlafengehen' (JT, 1484). Inevitably, echoes of Gesine's access to the past through narration are raised, that access being represented by dreams and flying also. Cydamonoe provides a

palliative for the sins and deceptions of everyday life, antidote for a counterfeit existence devoid of truth or morality. Perfect anarchy reigns; rules are hardly needed since no inhabitant hurts another, property is unnecessary since there is always enough provided for all. Adults occasionally enter uninvited and behave abominably; for this they are imprisoned until they find the secret exit from Cydamonoe. The conditions for entry are strict, 'denn Cydamonoe ist das einzige Land in der Welt, in dem zu leben sich lohnt' (*JT*, 1485). Marie invents this country at a time when she is yet unable to accept the reality of New York. Escape into another world, one empty of personal moral dilemma, might be the only possibility for Gesine too: a world of the past for which she is personally not responsible; a world of the present only accessible through the medium of newspapers. Uwe Johnson may have taken the same course, finding his Cydamonoe in Sheerness (a secure hiding place if there ever was one); in the world of *Jahrestage*; in alcohol.

Although the motivations so far discussed largely address Gesine's own needs and desires, a considerable part of the Jerichow story is intended directly for her daughter's benefit. In order to retain Marie's attention the account has to be made sufficiently entertaining, but in a way which does not preclude certain instructional effects. No such didactic purpose is usually attributed to Johnson. Boulby, for instance, remarks that Johnson's concept of his fiction 'involves the illusion, or possibly the deception, that a writer can compose a novel out of facts without imposing implications' (Boulby, pp. 119–20). But there are grounds for supposing that the author does not entirely eschew educational stratagems of one kind or another, even if only in the form of pointed suggestion, as he hinted to Manfred Durzak in 1974:

Beim Erzählen geht es mir ja nicht darum, daß der Leser wiedererkennend sagt: So ist es, und so leben wir, was immerhin, bitteschön, ein Genuß sein kann, ein Vergnügen, das nicht ausgeschlossen sein soll. Aber mir käme es noch auf eine zweite Stufe, auf das Wiedererkennen und auf die darin wiederum enthaltene Frage an: Ja, so wie es da geschrieben steht, so ist es, so leben wir. Aber wollen wir so leben? Das verlagert dann die Botschaft wiederum in die Reaktion des Lesers hinein. Ich kann ihm nur etwas zeigen und hoffen, daß er sich daraus etwas macht.<sup>40</sup>

Although Johnson's modest claims deny an expressly didactic purpose in the manner of Brecht, the reader, confronted with selected but uncommented bits of information, may nevertheless be nudged into drawing particular conclusions. Gesine adopts a similar approach with her daughter, who is discouraged from mistaking what is meant to be a story for a lesson, a propagandistic blueprint for her own life. Marie is warned, for instance, against comparing the shunning of Cresspahl's daughter during her father's mayoralty under the occupying armies with the social exclusion of Francine at school:

— Jetzt soll ich an Francine denken, an ein schwarzes Kind in einer weißhäutigen Schule, und wenn sie morgens ankommt und grüßt —

- Vergleich es nicht. Das Kind das ich war —  
 — Schon gut, Gesine. I dig you. Du wolltest mir was erzählen, nicht aber etwas beibringen. Und doch denk ich mir was.  
 — Nicht den Vergleich.  
 — Aber was ich will.  
 — Was du willst, Marie. (JT, 1048)

Hye explains away the above passage with the single sentence ‘Es geht nicht um das Vergleichen, sondern um die Gedanken, daß Ähnliches sich in der Gegenwart wiederholt’ (Hye, p. 24). This fine distinction weakens before Johnson’s sedately logical observation, of which Boulby reminds us,<sup>41</sup> to the effect that drawing historical parallels is an intrinsically futile exercise, since parallels never meet. Equally futile, however, would be to deny that the past may illuminate the present; Marie is able to understand more about her own life by appreciating the circumstances of her mother’s. And despite Gesine’s antipathy (shared by Johnson) to such *Ver-gleichung*, with its implication of sameness and consequent inaccuracy, she would be idealistic indeed to hope that Marie could entirely ignore correspondences of this kind. The Western tradition of deductive thought arises from the syllogistic assessment of difference and similarity, and Gesine herself can hardly expect to shake off what constitutes the structure of her own reasoning. But she can encourage Marie to remain critical, acquiring and retaining the sceptical approach to her formal education without which Gesine would not have survived even as well as she did.

The sophistication necessary to the development of such critical faculties has aroused a good deal of comment on the ten-year-old’s ability to participate in discussions which might leave some university students floundering. Untypically (before *Begleitumstände*) Johnson even went so far as to answer widespread questioning of Marie’s precocity in his ‘Büchner-Preis-Rede’ of 1971:

Dem Verfasser war auf seine bisher vorgelegten Berichte von dieser Marie entgegeng gehalten worden: dies Kind sei zu fix, im Denken wie im Handeln. So um die Ecke zu fragen vermöge ein Kind nicht in diesem Alter, es könne mit erwachsenen Manieren nicht so firm, wenn auch spielerisch, umgehen, und es sei vor allem außerstande, sein Verhalten mit einmal akzeptierten Folgerungen kongruent zu halten.<sup>42</sup>

Having accepted the criticism, he made some attempt to act on it, but finally decided that his original concept of her character was the correct one. As if to strengthen his resolve, Marie is allowed to make her own protest against those people who ‘nennen mich altklug’.<sup>43</sup> In Johnson’s whimsical, mildly self-indulgent ‘Interview mit Marie H. Cresspahl’, the fourteen-year-old argues that her mother always talked to her as an adult equal, and expected answers:

Als sie mich ins Sprechen gelockt hatte, war noch immer nicht Ruhe, nun sollte ich denken lernen. Vom Kindergarten durfte ich nicht sagen: Es ging. Sie fragte, was nicht ging, und ließ mich so genau erzählen, daß ich am Ende sogar begriff, was ich sagte. Es



war immer noch nicht genug. Neuer Lehrstoff: Wie drückt man eine Sache durch ihr Gegenteil aus? ('Interview', p. 139)

The reader's credulity may well be strained, but Marie's precociousness has to be accepted in the same spirit as Johnson's unwillingness to adapt his style according to different characters' perspectives. There also seems to be a sound literary reason for the inconsistency; in order to distribute the narrative authority effectively and preserve the parallel narrative models of reader-Johnson-characters and Marie-Gesine-the dead, Marie has to be endowed with maturity beyond her years. She could hardly be made any older, given the background of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, so her mental faculties were simply extended to fill the gap. The critic can only treat the character as she is represented in the book; in other words roughly as a highly intelligent, well-informed sixteen-year-old.

That apart, Marie's answer does emphasize that the narrative relationship between mother and daughter is not only one of storyteller and listener but also one of teacher and pupil, in a way which goes beyond the conventional supportive role of the parent as far as formal education is concerned. By means of the Jerichow narrative Gesine hopes not only to stimulate Marie into thinking for herself, but also to equip the child with an awareness of morality, that is, with an apparatus on which to construct her own principles; not necessarily those of Gesine. Naturally the principles by which Gesine lives (or professes to live) will emerge more strongly than others, but Marie's brash American self-confidence can be relied upon to preserve her from mere flaccid emulation. Indeed it is Gesine's inordinate success in her endeavour to augment Marie's already burgeoning critical and moral sense which sets the conditions for narrative disruption in *Jahrestage*, volumes 2 and 3. Consequently, the telling of the Jerichow story creates the circumstances for its own near failure: the paradox of all fiction evident in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* re-emerges in the model of narration depicted in *Jahrestage*.

Although a certain reservoir of natural curiosity on Marie's part is a prerequisite for Gesine's venture, her interest must nevertheless be frequently stimulated. In consequence, Gesine eventually encounters some difficulty in balancing narrative integrity against Marie's desires; a dilemma already familiar from *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. But while the story entertains Marie, it is also beneficial to Gesine, who learns just as her daughter does. In a taped letter to DE of 5 October 1967 Gesine explains: 'Marie besteht darauf, daß ich ihr weiter erzähle wie es gewesen sein mag, als Großmutter den Großvater nahm. Ihre Fragen machen meine Vorstellungen genauer, und ihr Zuhören sieht aufmerksam aus' (*JT*, 143). This an early indication of a relationship defined more precisely near the end of *Jahrestage*: 'wir lebten in einer Symbiose...' (*JT*, 1868). The interdependence refers to the years when Marie was still a baby: 'Du wurdest krank, es mußte mir nur ein wenig jämmerlich gehen' (*JT*, 1868).

But it is true that in later years Marie contributes as much to Gesine's continuing education, formalized by the Jerichow narrative, as vice versa. In the train back from holiday with Naomi Gehrig and Amanda Williams, Gesine fetches double bourbons; Marie's reaction is symptomatic of her concern: 'Bei dieser Gelegenheit wendet Marie sich doch um und nimmt der Mutter Maß mit kühlem erzieherischem Blick' (JT, 1264). As Gesine recounts how Marie became used to America, she notes 'wir sind angewiesen aufeinander seit fast elf Jahren' (JT, 1020), and recognizes that the relationship is mutually beneficial in practical terms, too, since Marie is soon very much more at home in America than Gesine. Indeed the intense Americanization of Marie becomes a target for Gesine's story, as the European mother tries to break down attitudes she finds repugnant, or at least one-sided, before they become ossified.

The natural curiosity of a ten-year-old child is complemented by inducement from the dead, who actively encourage Gesine to pass on the story of their lives, so that Marie might learn to avoid the mistakes of her antecedents. The encouragement comes at a difficult point in the narrative (the beginning of *Jahrestage 3*) when Gesine's resolve is beginning to flag:

*Sag es ihr, Gesine.*

*Damals war ich ein Kind. Zwölf Jahre alt. Was kann ich wissen?*

*Was du von uns gehört hast. Was du gesehen hast.*

*Sie wird das Falsche benutzen.*

*Sie ist ein Kind, Gesine.*

*Die Toten haben leicht reden. Seid ihr aufrichtig gewesen zu mir?*

*Mach es besser als wir.*

*Und damit sie weiß, wohin sie mitkommen soll, und zu wem.*

*Und uns zuliebe, Gesine. Sag es ihr. (JT, 1029–30)*

This is perhaps the clearest statement of the didactic compulsion in Gesine's motivation to tell her story, motivation in which the dead play a prominent role by providing her with an obligation to them to continue for Marie's sake. One is reminded of the obligation to his characters which Johnson frequently mentioned, most extensively in *Begleitumstände*. As the narrative progresses, Gesine becomes increasingly aware of her own parents' shortcomings in bringing her up, and barely needs their exhortation 'mach es besser als wir', but has identified a further benefit the Jerichow story can provide, namely preparing Marie for death: Gesine is bound to continue '... damit sie weiß, wo sie hinkommen soll, und zu wem'.

In this exchange with the dead, Gesine also notes a danger which accompanies her undertaking: 'sie wird das Falsche benutzen'. But although it is inherent in Gesine's didactic approach, her unwillingness to provide solutions, or even explanations of any kind, for certain matters she does not fully understand herself, that Marie might draw false conclusions or make what Gesine would regard as wrong use of the story, the risk has to be run if any benefit is to be gained from the exercise at all. By this point Gesine has perceived the problem

which is already upon her, namely that Marie will seek to justify the present (namely her anti-communism) by reference to the past (particularly Cresspahl's treatment at the hands of the Russians), although the narrative is intended to prevent precisely that.

Conscious of the responsibility she bears for the constitution of Marie's character, Gesine admits (in an allusion to her own parents' lack of complete honesty), that she is 'so unaufrichtig, wie ich sie erzogen habe' (JT, 493). Here the mother sees her own faults reflected in her daughter, who only wears an anti-Vietnam badge as long as it is fashionable to do so in her class, echoing the middle-class white American liberals whose social conscience is a function of their social life. But although Gesine is prepared to take responsibility for the evasiveness Marie displays in matters of principle, she finds herself in an ethical conundrum comparable to that caused by her continuing residence in the USA.

Early in the first volume Gesine is subjected to intense, intensive criticism about Marie's upbringing by an unidentified interrogator, who might be GS or Gesine herself.<sup>44</sup> Again she is berated for not admitting that she is compromising her principles so that Marie might have a comfortable, materially and socially advantageous life. The questioner demands to know why Gesine felt it necessary to enrol Marie in an expensive kindergarten devoted to the inculcation of middle-class values. Once more Marie's well-being is cited as an excuse: "*sie soll es bequem haben beim Lernen der fremden Sprache*" (JT, 99). But the inquisitor derides this cushioning of the child: '*Sollte dein Kind nicht Ansprüche lernen?*' (JT, 99). Similarly Gesine is upbraided for not sending Marie to a state school, although the anonymous accuser scrupulously details the appalling conditions in such institutions (for reasons more complicated than Heinz D. Osterle supposes);<sup>45</sup> but the principal criticism is '*gibt es für dich Kenntnisse, vor denen du dein Kind bewahren willst?*' (JT, 100). It seems unlikely, however, that Gesine realistically hopes to shield her daughter from the knowledge of New York's very apparent social inequality; their walks in the slums would belie such an intention. Rather she sees no advantage in actively exposing the child to the tangible, undoubtedly damaging effects of urban deprivation. The accuser must have powerful principles indeed to begrudge Gesine such an attitude, advocating the pointless sacrifice of Marie's welfare for that of her mother's integrity. If, as seems probable, the disquisition is self-accusatory, this particular argument lacks conviction.

The next criticism is better founded; not content with sending her daughter to an exclusive private school with a two-year waiting list and very high fees, Gesine chose an institution run by Catholic nuns: '*Dein Kind soll schon jetzt behandelt werden wie eine einzelne und unabhängige Person, seine Fähigkeiten sollen so früh als möglich erkannt und ausgebildet werden; warum aber von Leuten, die lange braune Kutten tragen, einen weißen Strick um den Bauch und milde Beschränkung unter der Haube?*' (JT, 100). Gesine is willing to accept the nuns' limited intellectual

capabilities, unconcerned with socialist ideals in her determination to give Marie the best possible start in this most capitalist of countries. Considering the role religion played in Lisbeth's demise and the resulting burden of guilt inherited by Gesine, it is indeed difficult to account for the choice of a Catholic school of all places, where religious education must play a substantial part even if it does not condition the whole curriculum. The accuser pinpoints the real reason: *'Es ist wahr, mit einem Zeugnis dieser Anstalt wird das Kind zugelassen bei den ausgenommenen Universitäten, anders als Abgänger von der Public School Nummer 75, und sie wird Freude haben in den reichen Familien, zu denen sie nicht gehört'* (JT, 100).

Gesine's determination to provide Marie with advantages she never had becomes an obligation which overrides all other considerations. A symptom of this determination is the resolution she made while occupying an unpleasant room at university in the GDR: *'Das Wasser auf dem Lavoir, im Januar war es morgens gefroren. Da hab ich den Vorsatz gefaßt für ein Kind, sollte ich mal eins bekommen . . . es sollte aufwachsen außerhalb einer Untermiete, in eigenem Zimmer, mit fließendem Warmwasser und Dusche'* (JT, 1832). Her strength of feeling in this matter was earlier betrayed by the argument she advanced to the dead for staying in the USA with Marie: *'Das Kind soll haben, was ich nicht bekam'* (JT, 583). One can appreciate the logic of Gesine's energetic objection to her dead family's rejoinder *'Und nicht was Kinder in Viet Nam bekommen'* (JT, 583), but it is inescapable that the advantages Marie gains from her formal education will have to be paid for not only in terms of the sixteen hundred dollars per year school fees, but also of Marie's indoctrination with the kind of American values (anti-communism, faith in the incorruptibility of US democracy, misplaced patriotic zeal) which her mother would prefer the child not to have. Gesine is left with a duty not to deprive Marie of the social advantages of an education from a highly-regarded school, while at the same time considering education to be a right, not a privilege: *'Ein Kind hat sein Recht auf Erziehung'* (JT, 1406). She has no choice but to provide an alternative view of the world, conveyed to no small extent by the Jerichow story. Yet this too demands a compromise on Gesine's part; while still at school she decided against the teaching profession because it involves restricting the truth: *'Das Verlangen nach einem solchen Beruf war mir ausgetrieben auf der sozialistischen Oberschule von Gneez. Vor einer Klasse stehen mit dem Wissen, etwas zu verschweigen, von den Schülern des Lügens verdächtigt; mir wollte ich es ersparen'* (JT, 1858).<sup>46</sup> But just as the writer may not capitulate before the problem of selectivity, Gesine may not refuse the role of teacher with respect to Marie, and her struggle to balance the exigencies of truth with the practicalities of inclusion as well as unconscious suppression of unpalatable memories is evident in the narrative structure.

Gesine uses the account of her own education for a specific didactic purpose whose operation is expressed by the question Marie puts in the 'Interview': 'Wie

drückt man eine Sache durch ihr Gegenteil aus?' (p. 139). In this way Marie has an opportunity to understand more about her mother's approach to education, as well as to identify and avoid similar mistakes in time. Gesine's account is concerned far less with the actual teaching matter than with method: most of the episodes she selects illustrate betrayal of trust or destruction of illusion in one form or another. Indeed Gesine's views on her own education almost read as an exploration of the origins of cynicism; small wonder that Marie is old beyond her years.

Gesine's school career, dominated by the 'Zwei Bilder'<sup>47</sup> which made such an impression on Johnson, was clearly less than adequate in pedagogical terms. But in moral terms, too, it was marked by disappointment after disappointment. Gesine already felt betrayed by her mother's death: 'dem Kind war die Mutter weggegangen schon im November 1938, es war verraten worden mit viereinhalb Jahren' (*JT*, 1449). Even Cresspahl abetted the noisome propaganda dealt out at school by presenting his seven-year-old daughter with books on German military might so as not to arouse suspicion: 'das Kind sollte in der Schule harmlose Begeisterung für die deutschen Waffen zeigen, insbesondere für die Luftwaffe: Cresspahl bekam seine Mimikry. Das Kind bekam seine Verletzungen' (*JT*, 895). The harm Cresspahl unwittingly causes Gesine is augmented by her teachers at the Jerichow school she attends until 1943. The headmaster, Franz Gefeller,<sup>48</sup> is a sadistic, ridiculous, but dangerous Nazi who exploits a knack of resembling Goebbels to his own advantage and his pupils' detriment. Initially Gesine trusts her first teacher possessively, and so subsequently feels betrayed when she is excluded from Hallier's first discussion with Cresspahl and when she is denied the top mark for behaviour in an underhand fashion; Hallier 'hatte sie ein Schuljahr lang beobachtet, nie gewarnt, und in die Falle gestoßen' (*JT*, 896). Trust and confidence in the teacher are a high priority for Gesine, but Hallier's replacement on his call-up in 1940, Olsching Lafrantz, is a similar disappointment in that respect.

Enthusiasm goes unrewarded by the emotionally immature Lafrantz: 'Olsching Lafrantz war gekränkt, daß das Kind Cresspahl auffiel; das Kind war gekränkt, weil es nicht auffallen durfte' (*JT*, 897), and soon the child's natural sense of justice (which is later to form the basis of her conscientious dilemmas) is offended at her being sent to the unpleasant headmaster for having broken a window by accident: 'sie fand es ungerecht, daß sie bestraft werden sollte für ein Versehen' (*JT*, 897). The nine-year-old turns to Cresspahl for protection against the unwarranted, not to say absurd, charge of 'Beschädigung staatlichen Eigentums und . . . Verschwendung kriegswichtiger Vorräte wie Glas und Heizmaterial' (*JT*, 898). Her father sorts the matter out, but Gesine's confidence in adult wisdom, authority, and justice are dealt an early blow.

Undeserved corporal punishment is a feature of classroom life under Ottje Stoffregen, who also effects a considerable weakening of Gesine's respect for her

educators. Stoffregen sacrifices any integrity he may have to a personal vendetta against Gesine, oddly combined with a lachrymose, alcohol-induced latitude where the child is concerned: 'Ottje vergaß nicht, daß dies das Kind Lisbeths war, der er mit Gedichten und Briefen die Heirat angetragen hatte, bis er lächerlich war in ganz Jerichow' (*JT*, 898). In addition to bearing Stoffregen's victimization, Gesine witnesses sadistic injustice by Gefeller, which leads her to spit indignantly at his feet in the playground, relying on Cresspahl to preserve her from the undoubted danger of that action. Gesine learns that teachers do not possess integrity or deserve respect simply by virtue of their position, a position whose authority can very easily be misused for personal ends. In later years she will recognize Stoffregen's enmity as her first experience of punishment for the actions of her parents.

In 1943 Cresspahl sends his daughter to the Gustaf Adolf-Lyzeum in Gneez 'weil der Lehrer Stoffregen schlug; weil sie ihn eines Tages noch verraten würde vor dem sudetischen Gfeller, Schuldirektor und Gauredner der Nazis' (*JT*, 1451). Only through Kliefoth's support did she avoid the reform school Gefeller and Stoffregen had in mind for her. In Gneez her thinking becomes stunted by the mindless indoctrination of Nazi propaganda, typified by Hitler's life story: 'Den [Lebenslauf] haben sie uns so ins Gedächtnis gerammt, er ließ sich herunterleiern mit taubem Hirn. Aber wenn ich etwas zu denken lernen sollte . . .' (*JT*, 934). Gesine is resolved that under no circumstances should Marie's intellectual development be thwarted in this way. By this time her sense of justice is well-developed, so much so that even in 1968 Gesine is still upset by an incident of undeserved corporal punishment received from Julie Westphal, who was not astute enough to explain why forgetting an arithmetic book incurred such penalty. As a result 'ich hatte bloß Angst vor ihr, nicht Achtung' (*JT*, 935). By 1945 she has learned to sit still and silently observe, oppressed by fear, concealing her thoughts to avoid sanctions, but comforted by the knowledge (acquired from Cresspahl) that the war would soon be over. She expects nothing but an eventual qualification for her educational career: 'Dann blieb ihr nichts übrig, als die Ohren anzulegen und geradeaus dorthin zu gehen, wo die Schule aufhörte, an den märchenhaften Platz, der Abitur hieß und Erlaubnis, etwas auszusuchen' (*JT*, 1451).<sup>49</sup> Gesine's Utopian search begins as her disillusionment with formal education reaches a nadir.

While Gesine recognized the subject matter itself under the Nazis to be worthy only of derision, under the Soviet regime the curriculum distinctly improves, although propaganda is ever present. Her enthusiasm for Weserich's teaching of *Schach von Wuthenow*, an account of which appears in the chapter for 2 August 1968, is palpable. But nevertheless, with the honourable exceptions of Kliefoth and Weserich, the moral inadequacies of the teachers continue. Immediately after the war the curriculum is characterized by an interregnum whereby Soviet guidelines and restrictions (apart from the introduction of Russian) have

not yet been imposed. The new teachers, retired Frau Dr. phil. Beese and the Pagels sisters (Lottie and Fifi), are free to adopt the kind of teaching methods they are used to: 'Wir sollten weiterhin für den bürgerlichen Haushalt erzogen werden' (*JT*, 1253). Once more Gesine feels betrayed, although on this occasion one might be forgiven for considering her a trifle pedantic. While her resentment against Dr. Beese for drawing attention to Cresspahl's arrest is understandable, Gesine's refusal to forgive Lottie Pagels for being particularly kind to her in the light of her father's absence seems rather hard, although Gesine explains that such leniency only highlighted her predicament in her classmates' eyes. Nevertheless, her sense of repeated betrayal escalates still further.

Once in the Fritz-Reuter-Oberschule Gesine, like her fellow pupils, has thoroughly learned the meaning and use of cynicism, and becomes ever less susceptible to indoctrination. Secretly she is suspicious of Stalin's attacks on Tito, although publicly all schoolchildren are obliged to express hate for the Yugoslavian leader. In this case truth becomes the victim: '... lügen taten wir alle, unseren Eltern zu gefallen' (*JT*, 1556). Kliefoth's honourable refusal to participate in the machinery of lies leads to his enforced retirement after he declined to co-operate with election chicanery. The authorities' removal of Kliefoth is an enormous blow to Gesine, who regarded him as a paragon of integrity and pedagogy. Indeed he in many ways acts as a supplementary father to Gesine, a source of advice, information and help; in the very last scene of the book he substitutes for Cresspahl in the life-cycle constellation child-parent-grandfather.

Kliefoth's replacement, Bettina Riepschläger, is yet another disappointment. Gesine had first met her three years previously in 1947, and at that time 'hielt sie diese Bettina für eine von den vernünftigsten Lehrerinnen ihres ganzen Lebens, und es war etwas an ihr, das wollte sie Cresspahl erzählen' (*JT*, 1476). The shock of Riepschläger's return as a shrill, humourless, tight-lipped Party member is not alleviated for Gesine by Pius Pagenkopf's ability to get the better of such people.<sup>50</sup> The crude propaganda in her teaching of *Gegenwartskunde* (no better than that of the Nazis)<sup>51</sup> elicits only scorn. 'Was den westdeutschen Bundeskanzler anging, so wies uns Bettina Selbich<sup>52</sup> auf die erhellende Ähnlichkeit seines Namens mit dem des Präsidenten der Columbia-Universität, Oberbefehlshaber der Streitkräfte im nordatlantischen Vertrag seit 1950. Eisenhower-Adenower. Gegenwartskunde' (*JT*, 1686). The erosion of Gesine's faith in the educational system she is part of, not to say in the GDR as a whole, is complete after the trial and imprisonment of Dieter Lockenvitz. With the benefit of all her mother's experience, Marie ought to be well-placed indeed.

But Gesine's success in providing an antidote to those elements of Marie's formal education with which she disagrees causes considerable difficulty for her daughter in school.<sup>53</sup> At a specially-arranged meeting with Gesine, Sister Magdalena complains of (amongst other things) the child's attitude to the

Vietnam War, citing 'eine Hinneigung der Schülerin zur Parteinahme, zur fast moralischen Solidarisierung mit Unterlegenen in geschichtlichen Vorgängen', and pointing out that 'das Augenmerk der Schule war nicht gerichtet auf die Vermittlung der ungerechten Aspekte des Lehrstoffs, sondern nur auf die Sache des Lehrstoffs an sich' (*JT*, 313). Gesine lays precisely the opposite emphasis in her alternative education of Marie, imbuing her with non-Catholic status to set the child apart at school: 'ihr Verhalten in Religion hatte sie von ihrer Mutter bezogen, das zu den Juden auch, das zu Versprechen desgleichen, alles europäische Sachen womöglich, aber Fremdes' (*JT*, 1024). The ideas Gesine propagates through her Jerichow story are unsuitable in other ways too, causing a whole set of difficulties for Marie: 'Die Mutter hatte aus ihrem Europa Ideen mitgebracht, die sollte das Kind hier gebrauchen. Alle Menschen seien mit gleichen Rechten ausgestattet, oder zu versehen . . . Die Mutter lehrte einen Unterschied zwischen gerechten und ungerechten Kriegen' (*JT*, 1024). But the enhancement of Marie's critical faculties enables her to detect flaws in the implications of Gesine's stories; in particular a conflict of theory and practice. Like the dead, Marie notices that Gesine's defence of socialism is at odds with her direct and intimate participation in American capitalism. Her lover even designs weapons systems for the USA. Furthermore, even though Marie can assimilate her mother's code of behaviour, she is in no position to practise it, considering the kind of school she attends and the kinds of circles she moves in, for which, of course, Gesine must be held responsible: 'Begriff sie [Gesine] denn nicht, daß ihr Kodex akzeptiert war, aber nur in der anderen Sprache möglich, nicht ins Denken und nicht ins Tun zu übersetzen?' (*JT*, 1025). Gesine places her daughter in an invidious position whereby she is taught to believe in social equality, yet is sent to school in a 'diskrete[r] Bus, der die Kinder an den Slums vorbei entführt zu der unvermischten Wissenschaft' (*JT*, 100). As a result Marie is forced to conceal certain aspects of school life from her mother: '. . . die einzige schwarze Francine in der Schulklasse unter eine europäische Obhut nehmen, wie sollte das ausgehen mit den hellhäutigen Freundinnen?' (*JT*, 1024). And 'wie kann ein Kind von der Jahreszahl 1811 (Aufstand der Shawnees unter Tecumseh) noch einmal überleiten auf den amerikanischen Krieg in Viet Nam, wenn schon der erste Versuch Freundschaften und fast eine Zensur riskiert hatte?' (*JT*, 1024). Gesine's Jerichow story unfairly forces Marie to confront an idealistic European liberalism with the realities of American capitalism. The ten-year-old's understandable difficulty in reconciling these two conflicting aspects of her education, and her recognition that Gesine is at fault, contribute to the friction which arises during the course of *Jahrestage 3*, a friction which might be termed 'consumer resistance' on Marie's part, and which reflects the delays attending the completion of *Jahrestage*.

It would be false, however, entirely to derogate the didactic effects of their narrative relationship; Gesine's mildly triumphant tone in the following observation testifies to a certain degree of achievement, as well as underlining her



didactic intention: ‘Marie mißtraut Geschichten, die in allem zusammenpassen; so weit hab ich sie nun’ (*JT*, 1455). In the ‘Interview mit Marie H. Cresspahl’, Marie admits to having learned a certain amount from Gesine’s portrayal of the past:

M. H. C. . . . Die Anstände, die ich in der Schule hatte, bloß weil ich Francine helfen wollte, und sie war eine Negerin. I had it right in front of my nose, und wünschte bloß, es wär nicht. Es möchte besser sein. Ja: ein unbehagliches Gefühl, wie von Mitschuld. Jedoch war ich loyal gegen mein Land die USA und mochte nicht, daß mein Großvater sein Land verriet.

Frage Es war doch in der Hand von Verbrechern.

M. H. C. Das hat Gesine mir mit so vielen Geschichten erzählt, bis ich es freiwillig aussprach. Aber ich war dumm —

Frage Zehneinhalb.

M. H. C. — was ich mir nicht als Entschuldigung rechne, und ich konnte nicht denken bis hin zur Illoyalität gegen mein Land. (‘Interview’, p. 132)

But such gains have been bought dearly, as Marie graphically illustrates with her succinct comment on the debt of gratitude which the interviewer feels she owes her mother: ‘Bedankt soll sie sein für solche Hilfe! Ein Schiet war das von Hilfe!’ (‘Interview’, p. 127). The rebellious acerbity in Marie’s tone characterizes many of the discussions with Gesine which have such a decisive influence on the course of the narrative. Those discussions not only depict, but are the means by which Marie gradually acquires a certain degree of control over the narrative, relieving Gesine of a sole responsibility which may threaten to become despotic. Her responsibility derives from the motivations described in this chapter; the power struggle (in narrative terms) between mother and daughter is indicative of the disparity between Gesine’s narrative aims and Marie’s expectations. That disparity in turn effects a further displacement of narrative authority into the realm of Marie as recipient, who occupies a position similar (though more concrete) to that of the interlocutor in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*.

## VIII GESINE AND MARIE: A NARRATIVE PARADIGM

Marie's activity, though similar in result, does not correspond exactly to that of the dead with regard to the internal narrative: since she is handicapped by being largely unable to compare Gesine's version with an alternative, however subjective, of her own, Marie's efforts must restrict themselves to discovering intrinsic implausibilities and inconsistencies in Gesine's story, testing, as it were, the narrative's structural strength. But before undertaking such a task, the recipient needs to recognize her ability to repudiate the passivity normally ascribed to listener or reader. In doing so the child acquires an ever-increasing maturity which eventually enables her to subordinate the progress of the story to her own objections and the trepidation which those objections arouse in Gesine. This becomes a narrative crisis which peaks at the end of *Jahrestage 3*, the point at which Johnson, faced with an embarrassment of riches, decided to split the unwieldy final four-month section into two volumes.<sup>1</sup> It is Marie's view of the story, characterized at first by innocent acceptance, becoming by degrees incredulous, cynical, and finally critical, which determines the distribution of narrative authority. For as she becomes less ready to assimilate Gesine's version unconditionally, so she increasingly endeavours to impose her own will on the narrative's progress.

If the question of validity, of reaching a version in accordance with Gesine's conscience, if that question was problematic with regard to the internal narrative, then the external narrative presents an even greater difficulty in that respect. Ultimately the question is one which must concern every writer of fiction; namely establishing standards by which to judge whether or when a text is ready for presentation to another reader, a recipient to whom the writer has an obligation of quality (and, in Johnson's case, honesty). Since Marie constitutes an immediate audience, Gesine must constantly confront the question of what may be termed valid, of determining and justifying the criteria according to which her narrative may be deemed to be acceptable not only to her own conscience (in the shape of the dead), but to an outside arbitrator. As a kind of constitutional code crystallizes between the two who govern the external narrative's course, Marie comes to assume the role, in political terms, of a parliamentary second chamber: able to revise, adjust and delay the procedure, but constrained to avoid attempts to wrest too much power from the original seat of authority if a constitutional crisis is to be avoided. The discussions

between mother and daughter which express the workings of that procedural relationship simultaneously define and redefine the criteria of acceptance which are the subject of dissent between GS and Gesine in *Jahrestage* 4.

Marie's self-assurance grows with her appreciation of the critic's power, a power which can only be acquired through a maturing process of objection and argument. She is not supplied with a ready-made set of rules for criticism, or with a critical theory as such, but merely allowed gradually to develop her own pragmatic procedure by which to judge the narrative validity. Her critical approach is as highly subjective as Gesine's artistic approach, and thus, by its very nature, not one which could, if elucidated, be generalized as a uniquely legitimate way of looking at literature. Indeed the relationship between Gesine and Marie represents a rejection of any claim to objectivity or exclusive validity; a plea not for critical anarchy, but for tolerant pluralism underpinned by indispensable precepts of honesty and integrity.

Marie's education in the role of recipient may be interpreted as a plea for constructive criticism: Johnson's resentment of certain critical judgements is all too obvious in *Begleitumstände*, which he uses as an opportunity to reply to criticism levelled many years earlier.<sup>2</sup> Johnson's sceptical (though affectionate) attitude towards the *Gruppe 47* might partly have arisen because authors were forbidden to reply to criticism, however damaging, although the opportunity to do so might have been one of the few that arose before publication.<sup>3</sup> Naturally there is a clear distinction between the activities of West German *Feuilletonisten* and Marie's seat at the ringside of literary production, which allows her privileges normally denied to the modern reader and critic (but which may for thousands of years of oral literature have been taken for granted). *Jahrestage* presents a peculiar case, however, for since the book was a continuous text appearing in separate 'Lieferungen', the author was able to reply and respond to criticism as the work proceeded, although admittedly in a limited fashion (Johnson complained on at least one occasion of the uselessness of most criticism).<sup>4</sup> The interplay between Gesine and Marie does have its counterpart in reality, although limited in scope, and with one major difference: Gesine has no opportunity simply to ignore Marie's objections.

That Marie is involved in the story at all is (as already described) for some time on the *Jahrestage* time-scale nothing more than an assumption, although, from her later comments, a sound one. Not until the end of the chapter for 30 September 1967, after around five weeks of listening, is a reaction forthcoming which is other than a request for more information. That reaction comes when Gesine and Marie are aboard the South Ferry. It is worth noting that many of their discussions take place either on the Hudson river, as in this case, or in or near other bodies of water (lakes, the swimming pool). The association of water with memory has already been pointed out; the memory-narration analogy now becomes apparent in similar terms. On the occasion in question Marie has

put a series of mild-mannered queries to Gesine concerning the relationship between Lisbeth and Cresspahl; Gesine thereupon reveals how Lisbeth learned via an anonymous letter of the existence of Cresspahl's mistress, Mrs. Trowbridge. Marie's comment: '— Wetten? sagt das Kind: wetten, daß es kracht? Wetten?' (*JT*, 131). Marie is referring ostensibly to the possibility of a slight collision between ferry and quay, as the subsequent, final paragraph of the chapter seems to indicate:

Denn manche Fährkapitäne zielen zu spät auf das Becken, so daß das schwere Schiff gegen die hölzerne Pfahlwand der Einfahrt kracht, beim ersten Mal hart, dann mit einem mehr gedämpften Ton. Dann ist das Ächzen der Stämme im aufquirlenden Wasser zu hören. (*JT*, 131)

But the context of her remark as well as the association of water with narration give rise to the suggestion that Marie's comment may well refer both to her own relationship with Gesine and to that between Lisbeth and Cresspahl. In terms of the former she is prophetically correct; as for the latter, the accuracy of her prediction is less interesting than her attitude. For at this point she still accepts the story as an established, unalterable history, unsusceptible to influence either from teller or listener. She seems to assume that even Gesine is unaware of the events in store: her credulity is entirely intact, the narrative's validity unquestioningly accepted.

The honeymoon of childhood innocence is soon over, however, for the first signs of Marie's awakening critical faculty are detectable only a week later on the *Jahrestage* time-scale. The child had obviously been devoting some thought to Gesine's account, for her question is reserved until the day after the discrepancy appeared in the story. Gesine had explained how Lisbeth, frustrated at her inability to articulate some vaguely held grudges against Cresspahl, decided to write down her complaints. Suddenly alarmed that Cresspahl might discover her thoughts if she were to die, Lisbeth burned the book. Marie discovered a logical gap in Gesine's explanation:

- Wenn sie ihr Beschwerdebuch gegen Cresspahl verbrannt hat. Woher weißt du davon?
- Sie hat ein neues angefangen. Es liegt zuhause im Schließfach.
- In New York? Im Hanover Trust?
- In Düsseldorf. (*JT*, 151)

The Marie of later on in *Jahrestage* would be unlikely to surrender so easily under such circumstances; she might, for instance, have enquired why Gesine should refer to Düsseldorf as 'zuhause' when all the signs indicate that she has no emotional ties with either Düsseldorf or West Germany, except in the form of aversion. The suspicion may well arise that Gesine named the most inaccessible place she could think of so as to avoid the danger of being asked to produce the exhibit in question; that is, to provide historical proof. But at this harmonious

stage of the narrative relationship Marie's manner is still devoid of aggression, her question apparently prompted by genuine puzzlement rather than a desire to trap Gesine into admitting inconsistency, and so the storyteller is not forced to justify this relatively implausible element of her account any further.<sup>5</sup> It may be assumed, however, that the first seeds of doubt have been planted in Marie's mind as far as the sources, and therefore validity, of Gesine's information are concerned, a problem which, in its capacity as a justification or otherwise for omniscience, extends to the moral foundation of Johnson's work.

Marie's next challenge is characterized by confidence, assertion, and a certain incredulity. Gesine has just given a detailed description of herself as a baby:

- Das kannst du von dir nicht wissen: sagt Marie, als Feststellung, nicht im Protest.
- Ich weiß es von dir.
- Wir sind einander nicht ähnlich.
- Einmal, im Juli 1957, warst du mir ähnlich. (*JT*, 203)

Marie once more remains passive, failing or refusing to seize on the implication of Gesine's rejoinder, namely that in order to compare herself with Marie in July 1957 she would still have to know what she looked like as a baby herself. But the child nevertheless displays a positive reaction which is the first indication that she may be in a position to influence the narrative approach: '— Es wäre mir lieber, du erzähltest davon, als sei es dir erzählt worden: sagt Marie' (*JT*, 203). Gesine willingly concurs, thus making her first apparent concession of narrative authority. But what would, if closely adhered to, represent a substantial capitulation in terms of narrative stance, in fact only takes the form of prefacing the subsequent remarks with 'Mir ist erzählt worden, daß . . .' (*JT*, 203), only to continue in the customary vein. But Marie's wish does express her dissatisfaction at the literary artifice Gesine has adopted (for reasons explained above), one which distances herself as narrative subject from herself as narrative object. That dissatisfaction (even, perhaps, uneasiness) signals Marie's growing realization that the story is indeed a fictionalized account. In order to reconcile the paradox of seeking truth in fiction, Marie wants the story told as though it were reliable hearsay, in the manner of the mediaeval troubadour who would assure his audience that he could vouch for the veracity of the events they were about to hear, since he had derived them from the most reliable authority.<sup>6</sup> This is only the first of a number of stratagems (on this occasion probably unconsciously deployed), which Marie uses to fend off the uncomfortable recognition of potentially unpleasant truth in Gesine's account. She is becoming aware of gaps in what she thought were her defences against the stories, an awareness perhaps prompted by the birth of Gesine on the past time-level, the first direct emotional link between Marie and the Jerichow story.

In the same chapter Marie begins to exert an assertive lateral influence on the narrative progress, determining which areas of the story should be touched on next:

- Und nun die Geschichte mit der Tassenwanne: sagt Marie.
- In der du gebadet wurdest, weil du so klein warst. [continues Marie]
- Das war Louise Utecht,<sup>7</sup> die so winzig ausgefallen war, und es war 1871 in der Hageböckerstraße in Güstrow. Das ist nicht meine Geschichte.
- Also, etwas aus dem ehelichen Leben. (*JT*, 204)

Although Gesine patently reserves the right to take editorial decisions on matters which, as it were, clearly fall outside the confines of her brief, Marie has nevertheless unconsciously begun to grapple some degree of narrative authority from her mother, in terms not only of the narrative approach, but also of the story's direction. Initially Marie's determination of narrative direction appears in such harmless, disinterested requests as this. Later, however, her influence is to become far more hostile as she brings her own prejudices and preconceptions to bear.

Those preconceptions emerge in the chapter for 15 November 1967, in which Marie introduces an important new element of influence: '— Ich mag nicht was nun folgt: sagt Marie: Kannst du es nicht ändern?' (*JT*, 296). Marie's displeasure pertains to Gesine's christening in Jerichow, since that ceremony implies that Cresspahl must be staying in Jerichow for Lisbeth's sake, while Marie feels he ought to have returned to England. Gesine would in fact prefer the story to take the course Marie had hoped for, since she has no desire to turn her daughter against Cresspahl. But a change of such magnitude would be too radical for consideration; she can do no more than negotiate a compromise with her listener. That Marie makes such a request at all betrays, however, her dawning perception that the story is no fixed, unalterable entity, and that her belief in its inviolability may be misplaced. This erosion of credulity on Marie's part is crucial, since the external story's validity, indeed its very existence, depend on her willingness to believe. The child has appreciated that Gesine is neither simply repeating a prescribed text, in the manner of a traditional tale, nor is she inventing freely in the interests of harmless amusement, but has a certain measure of control whose limits may be tested. Marie's recognition of Gesine's narrative authority apparently rouses a natural opposition in the child, as though the concentration of power in one narrative moment were automatically to require a balancing force elsewhere. At this stage the opposition is decidedly tentative; Marie immediately modifies the question from requesting a change in narrative direction to the less serious matter of adopting a revised narrative approach: '— Kannst du es nicht anders erzählen?' (*JT*, 297). The child has not yet the confidence to demand that Gesine should recast the subject-matter, perhaps sensing the complications that such an imposition would (indeed will) precipitate, and so she settles on the formula 'anders erzählen'.

But she is confident of her own feelings on the matter, feelings which concentrate overwhelmingly on her grandfather. Indeed Cresspahl repeatedly acts as the focus for Marie's discontent, representing a powerful pivot in the

narrative dynamics: Gesine has yet to reconcile her internal approaches to her father with her efforts not to portray him in a bad light to Marie, while Marie is intent on persuading her mother to distort the story so that it will fit in with her own preferences as far as Cresspahl is concerned. In the present case, Marie is dissatisfied because her grandfather's actions signal his intention of remaining in Jerichow, actions such as his insistence on antagonizing the local population by inviting Semig to Gesine's christening:

- Es gefällt mir nicht: sagt Marie.
- Daß Cresspahl den Tierarzt von Jerichow zu einer Taufe lud?
- Wenn er sich mit Jerichow anlegen wollte, mußte er in Jerichow sein. Mußte er bleiben.
- Das soll ich ändern?
- Du sollst es anders erzählen.
- Wir werden es ein wenig anders hinstellen. (*JT*, 299)

Although Marie wants to assert herself, she is clearly not yet ready for, or perhaps even capable of direct confrontation. Instead a kind of diplomatic bargaining ensues, both parties agreeing to rephrase their demands. Marie maintains her request for an amended approach, a request whose vagueness betrays that her burgeoning critical faculty will not yet allow her to pinpoint her general uneasiness. Gesine's rephrasing is even more tentative, including the words 'ein wenig' as well as a much more imprecise choice of vocabulary in 'hinstellen', yet at the same time an element of compromise through the implicit inclusion of Marie in the process by using the first person plural. Relations between storyteller and listener are still characterized by cordiality and an eagerness to avoid confrontation. Nevertheless the concessions which Gesine makes are so far without any real substance. She concerns herself with retaining as much narrative authority as possible without either dampening Marie's tendency to provide beneficial narrative impulses through her questions or provoking her into open opposition. At the same time even her apparent willingness to compromise has its limits; she is adamant in the face of Marie's most forcefully-put accusation to date, namely that Cresspahl's refusal to return to England was motivated by cowardice:

- Er war feige! Er wollte nicht wissen, wozu sie notfalls imstande war!
- Mehr ändern kann ich es nicht. (*JT*, 300)

Gesine tacitly admits that she can indeed adjust the story: the discussions with Marie establish the boundaries of that freedom.

One other fundamental problem of narration arises from the discussion in this chapter, pointed out by Marie after the confusion over Gesine's middle name: '— Siehst du, Gesine Lisbeth. Wer erzählt, muß an alles denken' (*JT*, 298). The ability to think of everything includes not only the mental capacity to regulate numerous levels of abstract fictional reality simultaneously (as Johnson put it in

an interview),<sup>8</sup> but also the necessity of constantly observing the reader's vantage point, anticipating what may or may not be acceptable or reasonable, yet at the same time guarding against being seduced into what might be falsification by excessive concern for the recipient. The discussions with Marie represent these deliberations in action, the pitfalls concealed in them being indicated by the telling detail from everyday life which concludes the chapter: 'Die Kassierer der Ubahn nehmen keine Fünfdollarscheine mehr an, aus Angst vor Fälschungen. Einiges Geld in unserer Tasche ist wahrscheinlich falsch' (*JT*, 300). Apart from the tacit warning against forgeries hidden in a genuine background, the use of 'wahrscheinlich' in association with 'Fälschungen' and 'falsch' highlights the implication of 'wahr-scheinlich', 'seemingly true', in a way which will be of assistance when Gesine comes to assess the criterion of probability in establishing a standard of validity for her story.

Heinrich Cresspahl continues to develop as the catalyst which encourages Marie's rebelliousness against her mother's authority. This places two of Gesine's primary narrative aims at odds with each other: she has to maintain her narrative integrity by preserving the fictional truth, yet at the same time teach Marie by example that moral questions such as those faced by Cresspahl cannot be solved simply by imposing the moral pattern which works for oneself in one's own time and society.<sup>9</sup> Like all readers, Marie has ideas which she brings to the story;<sup>10</sup> the problem arises because the child would like to see certain of those ideas realized or reflected in what she hears: 'Marie will es nicht billigen, daß Cresspahl noch acht Monate unterschlug in Richmond, Greater London. Sie verlangt, daß die Leute zusammen leben, sind sie einmal verheiratet. Hier hat sie Vorstellungen von Ordnung' (*JT*, 348). Gesine is at this point coming to realize that since no one can be sure of their own credentials, making moral judgements on the past ('die Geschichte mit Vorwürfen bedenken'<sup>11</sup>) achieves little. Marie needs rather more time to assimilate this insight, and becomes increasingly prepared to criticize openly and vehemently.

Between 24 September 1967 and 15 December 1967 Marie seems silently to accept Gesine's story. But on the latter date it transpires that she has merely been marshalling her forces for an assault which signals open conflict between teller and listener, albeit disguised in the form of a game, or contest, as Marie would prefer. The underlying seriousness of this contest is, however, continually apparent, surfacing openly at the end of the chapter as Gesine breaks down in tears. Marie's confidence is unmistakable in her tone: '— Ich werde dich jetzt prüfen: sagt Marie. — Ich werde jetzt mal nachsehen, woher du deine Vergangenheiten hast. Das hat jetzt ein Ende mit dem Anlügen. Erzähl mal was über das Kind Gesine, als es zwei Jahre alt war!' (*JT*, 454). Marie's use of 'anlügen' apparently indicates that she is challenging Gesine for the first time to confirm the truth of her story, having passed over two earlier opportunities to press for proof. Superficially the challenge seems to imply a failure or refusal on



Marie's part to distinguish between historical truth, which claims objectivity but is in fact merely intersubjective, and fictional truth, or narrative validity. This would be a serious matter, for Gesine depends on both Marie and the dead to guarantee her narrative integrity; if, therefore, her daughter's assistance and co-operation are to be retained, the story itself must make it plain to Marie that the inventive process of building up the narrative with scraps of information drawn from sources other than the original events described is not 'anlügen' but a legitimate procedure.

In the event, Marie's choice of 'anlügen' is misleading, since she hardly seems intent on proving that a certain matter was not indeed objectively true. She asks whether Gesine knew the word 'Mutter' at the age of two. Gesine replies: '— Es ist möglich. Da es wahrscheinlich ist, laß uns das annehmen' (*JT*, 455). Accepting these criteria, Marie takes no exception to Gesine's surmising of her own capacity to talk at that age, merely wanting to know whether she as a two-year-old also used that word. What she apparently suspects, and opposes, is that Gesine might be transposing bits of information gleaned from quite a separate experience, namely Marie as a child, and integrating them unaltered into the story of Gesine as a child. Marie seizes, for instance, on Gesine's mention of Winnie-the-Pooh:

— Jetzt hab ich dich: sagt Marie, gelassen und kühl wie eine Gurke.

— Das hast du von mir. Denn wir haben die deutsche Übersetzung, da in deinem Glasschrank, und darin steht: Copyright 1938. Wir sprechen aber von März 1935. Da gab es das noch nicht. Das hast du aus meinem Leben gestohlen, und es steht nunmehr Zwei zu Eins. Für mich.

— Vielleicht nicht. Denn in dem Schrank steht auch ein Buch, darin findest du unter dem Namen Milne, Alan Alexander: Winnie-the-Pooh, 1926 (Pu der Bär, 1928).

— Verdammt: sagt Marie. (*JT*, 455)<sup>12</sup>

Marie is scrupulously honest in her questions and answers, demanding similar straightforwardness from Gesine, to the extent that the latter should not pretend to have been caught in the wrong simply in order to allow Marie a point in their contest. The child is quite adamant: 'Ich will keine Schummelei' (*JT*, 457). Indeed this is the crux of Marie's concern: by 'anlügen' Marie does not mean that she suspects Gesine of literally lying in the sense of telling something which is demonstrably untrue, but of impugning the narrative integrity by incorporating untransformed and unacknowledged bits of a separate reality. In this respect Marie fulfils a similar role to the dead, acting as guarantor of Gesine's honesty, an honesty on which the fictional truth depends. In fact Gesine has no need to cheat: '— Es ist nicht ein fairer contest, Marie. Ich meine: Wettstreit. Ich kann ja gar nicht anders als gewinnen, wenn ich nicht Schmu mache' (*JT*, 457). Gesine's victorious emergence from the contest (despite her final surrender to emotion) is proof enough that she has remained faithful to the demands of fictional truth: a further guarantee of arbitration to prove the legitimacy of her omniscience has been provided.

Although the episode is highly inconclusive as far as the actual sources of Gesine's information are concerned, Marie's identification of the regard which must be accorded to fictional truth — by observing certain precepts of narrative integrity — has been established. This discussion or contest between Marie and Gesine fictionally represents the ever-present problem of validity, of constantly testing the story's mettle, a problem which underlies the development of Johnsonian narrative technique from beginning to end. That the discussion terminates with Gesine in tears, having rendered only too immediately the sense of loss associated with Lisbeth's failure to fulfil her maternal obligation adequately and with Marie's fatherlessness, only serves to emphasize the painful impact such scrupulous honesty might bring with it: maintaining narrative integrity is not always the easy way.

While the accusation of 'anlügen' showed signs of incipient scepticism on Marie's part, in the chapter for 7 January 1968 that scepticism matures to full-blown, amused incredulity when she is asked to consider the notion of Robert Papenbrock having acquired a haulage business<sup>13</sup> at Hoboken on the bank of the Hudson opposite Riverside Drive, as well as a share in a restaurant on Broadway. For the first time Marie disputes Gesine's standards of plausibility: she cannot accept the likelihood of the geographical coincidence suggested by her mother, and considers the notion of Robert Papenbrock buying and running a business during the Depression to be bordering on the impossible. The ironic, grudging admiration she expresses reveals a new, and cynical, attitude to Gesine's account: '— Das gebe ich dir ja zu. Schlecht ausgedacht ist es nicht' (*JT*, 560). Marie's original view of the story as an established, unalterable, unforeseeable entity has now plainly given way to one of it as an artificial construct subject to Gesine's whim. Yet this seems not to disturb her especially or to affect her appreciation of the narrative. Instead she maintains (temporarily, at least) an ironic detachment, secure (or so she thinks) in the knowledge that the events described can have no bearing on her personally. Gesine feels no compulsion to offer documentation of her claim; it is during this discussion that she says the words already quoted on p. 67 of this study: '— Ich wollte dir nur erklären wie es war. Wie es gewesen sein könnte' (*JT*, 560).

But the credibility of the version Gesine offers lies in Marie's hands: the narrative loses its validity as soon as Marie is no longer prepared to consider it plausible, or even possible. The truth of the text depends on its credibility, which in turn depends on the recipient's willingness to perceive a correspondence between preconception and received image. Gesine's failure to convince Marie constitutes an undermining of her narrative authority, which leads to a struggle for domination in their subsequent altercation.

That Gesine has placed other parts of her story in jeopardy becomes apparent as Marie scornfully discounts the idea that Robert Papenbrock was who he said he was:

- Zweiter Beweis, Mrs. Cresspahl: Mrs. Cresspahl ist traurig, daß ihre ganze Familie sich eingelassen hat mit den Leuten, die damals in Mecklenburg an der Macht waren (und in Deutschland, ich weiß). Bei denen hat jener 'Robert Papenbrock', oder dessen Mörder, nicht einmal angefangen mit kleiner Arbeit, groß eingestiegen ist!
- Du nimmst nicht einmal für wahr, daß er es ist?
- Soll ich das nicht glauben?
- Es ist nur gesagt, wie es damals aussah.
- Warum nicht, wie es war?
- Weil es erst Jahre später herauskam, ob seine Geschichte stimmte. Soll ich in der Zeit durcheinander erzählen?
- Nein. Obwohl ich jenes Jerichow nicht nach Jahren sortiere.
- Sondern.
- Nach deinen Leuten. Was ich von ihnen weiß. Was ich von ihnen halten soll. (JT, 560–61)

Marie has acquired enough critical detachment during her weeks of listening to be able to refer to the town of her mother's birth as 'jenes Jerichow', and to the characters which inhabit it as 'deine Leute'. As she goes on actually to state her opinions of Gesine's 'Leute', it becomes clear that Marie has also accumulated sufficient independent judgement to prefer (or at least to pretend to prefer), for instance, Albert Papenbrock, who is generally portrayed in an unflattering light, to Cresspahl, for whom Gesine displays the most sympathy (especially in the external narrative), despite his mistakes. This self-sufficiency forms the basis of the child's increasing challenge to Gesine's invulnerability as narrator, allowing Marie to fight fire with fire by charging Gesine with distorting the story to fit her own prejudices, just as the dead do in the internal narrative. Gesine may no longer shape the story entirely in accordance with her own wishes, for as soon as Marie, as recipient, rejects Gesine's version, then it ceases in effect to exist. Nor can she hope to pull the wool over the ever-more-mature child's eyes, as was possible at the end of September on the *Jahrestage* time-scale.

The new substance in Marie's opposition allows her to extend her repertoire of narrative influences by creating obstacles to the flow of the story, braking a potential to gather momentum in an uncontrolled fashion, by means, for instance, of avoiding improbable coincidences, and subjecting what would otherwise be unassailable information to mistrustful scrutiny. Marie is thus gradually assuming the role of arbitrator, a recourse which may be taken whenever the central authority threatens to become excessively dominant and so exert a negative influence on the narrative integrity. The build-up of tension between the two protagonists is an essential part of the literary process if the requirements of truth and honesty are to be adhered to.

While in the last-mentioned case Gesine fails to convince Marie entirely (although their discussion reaches no conclusion on the matter of Robert Papenbrock), they plainly agree in principle on the kind of criteria which may be brought to bear, for a period of relative harmony lasting nearly three months

ensues. During that period Gesine scores a notable success in persuading Marie of her story's validity when the child takes issue with Gesine's representation of the Warning/Hagemeister case:

— Es gefällt mir nicht: sagt Marie.

...

— Daß es so glimpflich abging? Das ist noch nicht zu Ende.

— Daß Unglimpfliches angekündigt war, und kam nicht.

— Die enttäuschte Erwartung?

— Ja. Und daß es keinen Schluß hat. Und daß das Ende nicht erklärt ist. (*JT*, 607)

Ironically, Marie's typically child-like criticism of the story on the grounds of unpredictability and unsatisfactory incompleteness differs conspicuously from her later animadversion to such representations of events as are free from contradiction. Her recently emerged, and so perhaps excessively sensitive, concern for plausibility threatens to obtrude on her appreciation of the issues at hand. In consequence, Gesine needs to make an intensive, determined effort to secure Marie's belief in this important section of the story by offering, as a persuasive proposal, a description of Peter Niebuhr's behind-the-scenes manipulations to explain the questionable outcome of the court-case. Her explanation is demonstratively couched in the subjunctive, not proffered as an authoritative version but as a possibility for consideration:

— Und wenn ich dir nun etwas von Peter Niebuhr erzähle.

— Ach was, Peter Niebuhr. Ein Schwager von Lisbeth wie von Cresspahl. Ein junger Mensch. Der kam doch gar nicht vor in dieser Geschichte.

— Und wenn er nun käme, Marie? Wenn er längst beurlaubt wäre von der Unteroffiziersschule in Eiche bei Potsdam, und beschäftigt in einem Büro unter Reichsnährstandsführer Eugen Darré, und wäre da gestoßen auf einen Nazi mit Durchstechereien von Geld und Erkenntlichkeiten . . . (*JT*, 607)

As in previous cases, Gesine offers no documentary evidence to support her suggestion; it is up to Marie to assume the duty, mentioned in 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans', of establishing the limits of plausibility. In this way, Marie as recipient makes further incursions into the narrator's sovereign territory, some of which the latter is compelled to relinquish if the story is to continue. The version which Gesine offers is in the event clearly satisfactory, for she receives an unequivocal assent: '— Ja: sagt Marie. — Ja: wiederholt sie, ganz tief und genußvoll in der Kehle, so überzeugt ist sie. Das glaube ich sofort' (*JT*, 608). The criteria which she employed to reach this positive decision in contrast to the earlier rejection cannot be established. The matter is governed purely by subjective responses. As far as fictional truth is concerned, subjectivity is a positive characteristic. The truth of a text lies in a contract between writer and reader, a contract which the reader may accept or declare invalid, for, as Johnson puts it in 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans': 'die Wahrheit des Romans . . . unterliegt der Kontrolle des Lesers' (*VPR*, 401). The interaction

between Marie and Gesine in this case provides an illustration of how such a contract might be successfully negotiated, yet can dispense no regulatory advice, precisely because the truth lies in the domain of the particular recipient.

The chapter following the episode which ends with Marie's expression of faith is devoted, by way of emphatic contrast, entirely to a vitriolic attack on the claimed objectivity of the *New York Times*, 'unsere erprobte Lieferantin von Wirklichkeit' (*JT*, 609). The impression of sanctimoniousness conveyed by the front page ('Alles auf der ersten Seite, als fehlte nichts'; *JT*, 608), glosses over the newspaper's own shortcomings: a report issued by a federal investigative committee which reveals the racial imbalance amongst *New York Times* reporters is hidden away on an inside page. After being forced into the shaming admission that the *Times* staff had, for instance, only three black reporters out of two hundred, and unable to explain how this corresponded to the paper's editorial policy, 'Tante Times' takes recourse in facts:

Dann kommt sie auf die Juden.

Die Juden sind doch gar nicht der Gegenstand der Untersuchung!

Das macht nichts. Das gibt mindestens noch zwei Absätze. Lauter Fakten, also berechtigt. (*JT*, 611–12)

The scornful portrayal of 'Tante Times' morality, with its implicit, hypocritical claim that impartiality and objectivity may be achieved by adherence to facts, any facts, is set in stark and disadvantageous contrast to the subjective basis of Gesine's fictional truth, which derives its legitimacy from a complex process of selectivity scrutinized and criticized repeatedly from several sources.

As already noted, Gesine is extremely reluctant to incorporate the *Regentongeschichte* either in the internal or the external narrative. Marie's insistence that this story should be told constitutes perhaps the most important single narrative impetus which she provides. At no other time does she more persistently urge Gesine into continuing, with questions and provocations such as '— Und nun die Geschichte mit der Regentonne', 'Fang an, Gesine', '— What is a water butt, anyway?' (*JT*, 615) '— Du drückst dich vor der Geschichte mehr als vor Robert Papenbrock', and, finally, the coup de grâce: '— Manchmal behandelst du mich, als wäre ich nicht zehn Jahre. Zehneinhalb' (*JT*, 616). There can be little doubt that Marie's help is quite indispensable to the revelation of this key episode, which in many respects forms the basis of the whole Jerichow narrative. Yet at the same time a precedent is established which tends to hinder the possibility of a repetition, for, having heard the story, the child observes: '— Das nächste Mal, Gesine, wenn du mir eine Geschichte nicht erzählen willst, tu es nicht' (*JT*, 619). And indeed the words *Wassertonnesgeschichte* or *Regentongeschichte* do become a formula which Gesine may use to restrict Marie's curiosity if she thinks it appropriate. However, in practice Marie nevertheless occasionally overrules such warnings, with the result that a balance establishes itself whereby

neither side ends up in possession either of a veto or an absolute dispensation to continue.

The swimming pool provides a suitable setting for the next exchange of views, one of the most wide-ranging, in which discussion of Gesine's narrative techniques alternates with swimming as Marie dives into the water at intervals, only to return and take up the conversation once more at the point of interruption. All tension between mother and daughter appears to have vanished after their successful co-operation over Warning/Hagemeister and the *Regentonnegeschichte* just over two weeks earlier. Persuasion and acrimonious argument have given way to fruitful discussion. Previously Marie has silently taken for granted that Gesine's story is not purely the result of historical research or photographic memory: she has never questioned the inventive process in principle. Now she displays an interest both in its workings and its implications for the narrative: 'Was du nicht weißt, wirst du auslassen, und ich bin kein Stück klüger: sagt Marie milde' (*JT*, 670). Marie cannot know that the obvious weakness of her position, namely that she can only consider what Gesine actually tells her, is compensated for in the internal narrative by the dead. She has clearly, in consequence, been devoting some thought to the kind of truth which Gesine offers and the kind of credulity she requires in return.

- Was dir fehlt beim Erzählen, füllst du auf mit anderem, und ich glaube es doch: sagt sie.
- Nie habe ich die Wahrheit versprochen.
- Gewiß nicht. Nur deine Wahrheit.
- Wie ich sie mir denke. (*JT*, 670)

The harmony of their co-operation is confirmed here as the principle of subjectivity on the narrator's part is openly asserted. Gesine's choice of vocabulary in response to Marie's comment 'nur deine Wahrheit' is revealing: 'denken' is already well established as a correlative of 'erzählen' in *Jahrestage*. These remarks corroborate what has been implied in previous exchanges, namely that the story's truth is by no means universally valid; it has to be true for the narrator and accepted as such by the recipient. When the two images (both subjective) coincide, fictional truth may be said to exist.

It is at this point that Gesine mentions the arbitrary nature of involuntary memory — 'die Katze Erinnerung' (*JT*, 670), Marie reminds her — which forces a certain amount of invention on her part, when important matters have been forgotten in favour of insignificant details. Marie identifies a potential obstacle, a further criterion which must be heeded if the narrative validity is to be preserved, namely consistency:

- Was Cresspahl 1951 tat, muß es nicht passen zu Cresspahl im Jahr 1938?
- Ungefähr, Marie.
- Wer entscheidet das besser als du? (*JT*, 671)

Marie seems ready to invest a good deal of trust in Gesine's judgements on such matters as consistency of character, as her rhetorically-meant question indicates. Gesine's evasive answer betrays her unwillingness to reveal that on occasion such decisions are indeed not necessarily hers alone.

The problem of maintaining consistency arises again in later discussions, but for the moment Marie is hardly interested in that matter, being thirsty to learn precisely how Gesine sets about inventing material to fill the gaps:

— Mich stört es nicht, daß du nur sicher bist, wie Friedrich Jansen im gneezer Stadtwald stand, und daß der Rest der Geschichte später anwuchs. Ich möchte nur wissen, wie du es anstellst.

— Obwohl Jansens Geschichte nur möglich ist?

— Es ist die Möglichkeit, auf die niemand kommen kann als du. Was du dir denkst an deiner Vergangenheit, wirklich ist es doch auch. (*JT*, 671)

Marie expresses whole-hearted agreement with the concept of Gesine's narrative; its independence from any claim to objectivity, its particularity to Gesine, even its reality to Gesine. This individuality does not disturb Marie, whose enquiries are in fact directed towards a specific aspect of Gesine's invention. After Gesine has cited several sources (later conversations with and letters from those who took part in the events described; books, etc.), Marie asks, with a note of criticism in her choice of vocabulary: '— Ja. Aber stiehlt du auch aus diesem Jahr?' (*JT*, 671). This question has arisen before, when Marie suspected Gesine of modelling herself as a child on her daughter. In that case the child's concern seemed to be partly prompted because her own person was involved; now she questions the principle.

Initially, Gesine flatly denies that there is any need to plunder the present for images to incorporate into the past: rain or house-burnings are non-specific enough. Marie, dissatisfied, cites a particular example which would suggest the contrary: '— Aber das Flugzeug mit der Wasserstoffbombe, das die Air Force vor elf Tagen bei Grönland verlor? Am gleichen Tag hast du von den Flugzeugabstürzen bei Podesuch erzählt, von ungeheuren Kratern' (*JT*, 671). Gesine is able to contradict: '— Die Geschichte war in der Familie, Marie. Die hat sich festgesetzt wegen der Raketenerprobungen in Peenemünde, später' (*JT*, 671). Gesine is obviously unwilling to admit that she 'steals' from everyday news to fill gaps in the past. For to do so would result in a kind of *Doppelgänger* in the past of present events. If the present were allowed to condition the past more than is unavoidable, all hope of validity would be lost to the present's distorting lens. Yet there are enough examples to show that the transitions from present to past may at least be prompted by stimuli from Gesine's past life, in the form of words or concepts, for instance from the *New York Times*:

Als gestern Nachmittag Robert Smith, 470 Sheffield Avenue in Brooklyn, laut mit seiner Frau Clarice stritt, ging ihr sechsjähriger Sohn Randy in die Kleiderkammer, holte seines

Vaters Gewehr, lud es, legte an und schoß den Vater in die Brust. Der macht der Mutter nie mehr einen Krach.

Cresspahl 1933 in Jerichow fühlte sich behandelt, als sollte er von einem Krach abgehalten werden. (*JT*, 214)

The present event has either provided a convenient entry-point to the narrative of the past, that is, has been sought out deliberately, with the result that the past has determined that which impinges on Gesine's consciousness in the present; or has acted as a stimulus, a link in a chain of thought, a narrative sequence in Gesine's mind, leading from present to past. In either case there can be no question of a suggested connection apart from the linguistic or conceptual stimulus of 'Krach', since the violence of the incident in modern America stands in direct contrast to the exaggerated friendliness which Cresspahl is at this time encountering from the Papenbrocks. That is, material from the present has not been transposed into the past. On another occasion, almost a full chapter is devoted to Gesine's experiences of learning English, an account of the past prompted by her present difficulty with the English word 'derelict' (see *JT*, 776–80). In this case 'derelict' has provided a highly effective stimulus from the present, the pebble which started an avalanche of past narrative. Particular *Stichworte* can supply stepping stones which ease or prompt the transition from present to past. In the following example the words 'nicht vergessen' (itself a loaded expression) and 'Haar' form a sequence of access from an item in the *New York Times* to the unpleasantness of being hairless which Gesine suffered after catching typhus in the summer following the war. A *New York Times* quotation stating the paper's noble aims is followed by:

Wir werden es behalten, und nicht vergessen.

Nicht vergessen werden wir jenes Mädchen, das sich im Filmstreifen rechts oberhalb der Fahrkartenschalter im Grand Central unaufhörlich, immer wieder, in einem fort zum Ruhme einer Firma die Haare kämmt.

Das Kind, das ich war, es hatte seine Haare verloren am Typhus im Sommer nach dem Krieg. (*JT*, 1096–97)

Once again words which one may surmise are highly charged with emotional connotations have served as either impulses or stepping stones into the world of the past, but once again there is no suggestion either that parallels should be drawn or that Gesine has 'stolen' from the present to make up for gaps in her knowledge about the past. In the subsequent chapter, a *New York Times* report on grain exports from the USSR to Czechoslovakia precedes a description of the first post-war harvest in Jerichow. But the news item from May 1968 provides not so much material for the past, as additional, perhaps inevitable, sources of impetus to supplement the intrinsic momentum of the past narrative. In this sense they do represent an undeniable influence, an element of the narrative forces, but a positive element which imbues the story with fluidity, motivating what would otherwise be apparently arbitrary pieces of narrative.



This is not to say that aspects of the present have no place whatever in Gesine's reconstruction of the past. In direct answer to Marie's question '— Und was noch an Heutigem?' (*JT*, 672) Gesine replies: '— Was ich damals nicht habe sehen können. Was ich nicht gelernt habe und nachholen muß. Nimm die heutigen Bilder aus Saigon in der New York Times —' (*JT*, 672). These famous pictures, showing the execution of a Viet Cong prisoner in Vietnam, provided Gesine with a second-hand experience suitable for use in her story, which she needs because 'Ich habe nie gesehen, wie ein Mensch erschossen wird' (*JT*, 673). In cases such as this, where experience and memory supply no relevant model, Gesine feels within her rights to draw on certain general, non-specific aspects of the present if necessary. Those aspects are fictionally transformed, however: the essence of murder or violent death is extracted from the present and applied to the fictional reconstruction of the past. Indeed such an activity is necessarily part of any literary process, since otherwise the choice of narrative material would be stiflingly confined. Marie is obviously persuaded that Gesine's approach is acceptable, for the discussion ends in consensus, Gesine capping her explanation of narrative technique with a demonstration of diving technique.

That consensus results in easily-flowing narrative encouraged by uncontroversial impulses from Marie, such as her question '— Wie sah Cresspahl aus im September 1938?' (*JT*, 673). The unspoken agreement which resulted from the *Regentonnegeschichte* tends to smooth the narrative path, removing potential obstacles such as controversy over Gesine's editorial decisions with respect to the external narrative:

- Ist das wieder etwas, was du nicht erzählen willst? sagt Marie . . . — So eine Wassertonnegeschichte?  
 — So eine.  
 — Erzähl sie mir nicht, Gesine. (*JT*, 725)

Although the external narrative had been held up by the presence of Francine (in the meantime the internal narrative had told the story of Lisbeth's death), the narrative authority is at this stage distributed by consent, which is only to the advantage of the story's progress. Marie's encouragement consists not only of questions, but also of direct imperative formulations: 'Fang an, Gesine' (*JT*, 780) for example. Her willingness to co-operate is clear when she finds the *Reichskristallnacht* a difficult notion to swallow: 'Ich will dir ja glauben, aber erklär es mir noch einmal' (*JT*, 780). The harmony in narrative relations is important during this most difficult section of the narrative, which deals with the year 1938, that of Lisbeth's death and further decisive stages in the build-up of Nazi terror. But despite Marie's goodwill, Gesine's troubles are not yet over, for both sides are determined to realize their own concept of narrative integrity, which involves making compromises only after detailed discussion.

The next dispute arises when Marie realizes that Gesine has been withholding something. Her reluctance to tackle the subject in hand cannot be assigned to the *Regentonnegeschichte* category, which applies only to such stories as might be unsuitable for a child of Marie's age. In this case Gesine anticipates an objection from Marie, and so while indicating that for six weeks after Lisbeth's death Cresspahl was absent with the four-and-a-half-year-old Gesine, she omits to mention his whereabouts as well as the reason and means of his departure. Marie's reaction: '— So kannst du es mit mir nicht machen! . . . — Wo er war, Gesine! Wo er war!' (*JT*, 784). This intense curiosity leaves Gesine no option but to forgo her policy of reticence. Indeed, for pedagogical reasons the story may well have been deliberately shaped to produce precisely that effect, in order to facilitate the introduction of difficult material by nudging Marie into demanding what is required off her own bat. The reason for Gesine's reticence soon becomes apparent; Cresspahl allegedly undertook a journey with his daughter which included New York:

- Du willst mich reinlegen. Cresspahl in New York?
- Der Fahrpreis für einen Erwachsenen fing an mit 605 Mark, und damit war schon für einen sechstägigen Aufenthalt in New York bezahlt. Traust du ihm das nicht zu?
- Gesine, ist es eine Wasser tonnegeschichte?
- Nein. Nur, über meine Mutter sprechen wir nicht mehr. Die ist inzwischen tot.
- Ist sie in dem Feuer —? O.K. Ich will es nicht wissen. Ich versprechs. (*JT*, 784)

A curious mixture of suspicion and trust is evident in Marie's attitude. On the one hand she suspects Gesine of attempted trickery, yet on the other she accepts immediately the decision not to elaborate on Lisbeth's death. By implication, Marie must recognize the division of narrative authority; accepting Gesine's competence to decide on what constitutes a *Regentonnegeschichte*, yet insisting on her own right to question on the grounds of plausibility. The child is burningly curious to discover what Cresspahl did during his six-week absence, a curiosity which indirectly leads to the gravest disagreement yet between mother and daughter. That Gesine's trepidation partly concerned the consistency of Cresspahl's character is implicit in her question 'Traust du ihm das nicht zu?' (*JT*, 784). Marie can hardly object in these terms, but her tendency to curb potential excesses by the narrator comes to the fore as she insists on a certain standard of probability:

- Also New York ist nichts für Cresspahl?
- Es wäre mir nicht angenehm. Es würde mir zu deutlich passen. Erst ein zufälliger Robert Papenbrock, danach noch dein Vater. Und dreißig Jahre später sitzen wir in New York. Es sähe so ausgedacht aus. (*JT*, 784–85)

Marie's final comment betrays that she still regards the story as something remote from herself. Her attitude is ironic, almost cynical, implying that while knowing the story to be 'ausgedacht', she would prefer that fact to be unobtrusive. But she neglects to consider that while some of the story may be invented,

reconstructed, or padded out, there is nevertheless a core of material which, one may safely assume, represents as closely as any linguistic account ever can the original events; the 'Knochenmann' which Gesine referred to in her letter to DE. Marie is soon to learn that her acceptance of the story as fictional truth means accepting also that which is unpalatable, even personally objectionable; her cynicism then becomes a harder pose to maintain. The actual criticism made by Marie is similar to one which Johnson occasionally heard with reference to himself; namely that he was simply disguising his own autobiography in fictional terms.<sup>14</sup> The discussions between Marie and Gesine on this subject constitute a detailed fictional representation of all the considerations involved in including what might be seen to be gratuitous autobiographical material.

As far as Cresspahl's putative journey is concerned, Gesine does for the first time supply documentary evidence, not to prove her case, but to improve the standard of credibility from the merely possible through the plausible to the probable. But she freely admits her lack of proof. The theory put forward simply helps to explain a series of vague, fleeting memories which were temporarily re-activated on viewing certain scenes on the route of Cresspahl's alleged journey: 'Im Augenblick des Ansehens klappte das Gesehene in eine vorbereitete Gehirnstelle und war wirklich; im Nichtmehrsehen war es vergessen' (*JT*, 787). Gesine's success is such that Marie enthusiastically embraces the theory and reinforces the standard of probability by supplying a reason for Cresspahl's action: '— Du warst da, Gesine, Cresspahl war da. Er hatte sich noch einmal umgesehen in England, in Dänemark, vielleicht sogar in den Niederlanden. Ob da ein Platz wäre für ihn. Er wollte auswandern, Gesine! — Ich wünschte es mir' (*JT*, 787). The very fact of discussion has simultaneously defused the original problem and created another. Marie's enthusiasm is in fact misplaced, deriving as it does less from a consideration of Cresspahl's circumstances in the story than from her own narrative preconceptions; she has seized on the most appealing explanation. The regretful tone of Gesine's reply betrays that while she finds Marie's solution unlikely, she too would prefer it to be true. Faced with a conflict of duty and inclination, both must overcome the temptation to tell the story as they would like it to be, since that would compromise the narrative integrity. The fact remains that Cresspahl once again did not emigrate, and to attribute such an intention to his journey would, though an attractive prospect, constitute deliberate falsification. Both Marie and Gesine will now be compelled to face the truth of the reason behind his absence, however unpalatable. For Gesine the difficulty lies in explaining something to her daughter which she knows is likely to be gravely misunderstood, even misused; for Marie in understanding and accepting an aspect of her own grandfather's life which is quite incompatible with her present educational environment. This becomes the real test of the teller's and listener's integrity, and so of the narrative's validity.

Marie's eagerness to have Cresspahl's journey<sup>15</sup> (and her reason for it) accepted into the story results in a minor role-reversal as she urges Gesine to believe her own version of her father's route. Gesine is sceptical: 'Wer sich das einbilden will, kann es glauben' (*JT*, 788). The story at this point becomes a matter of faith:

- Glaub es doch, Gesine.
- Es ist aber nicht zu beweisen. (*JT*, 788)

The core material is, in this case, so flimsy that Gesine is only prepared to accept the route of Cresspahl's journey as a possibility, guarding against Marie's tendency to raise the level of credibility to suit her own desires. Yet at the same time their discussion has allowed the possibility to be mooted, and its limitations exposed. Finally Marie alights upon what is in fact the crux of the matter:

- Lieber hätt ich einen Beweis dafür, warum Cresspahl zurückging nach Deutschland, nach Jerichow.
- Ich weiß es nicht.
- Gesine, die Stadt war nicht geworden, was Richmond war. Die Verwandtschaft kam ohne ihn aus, und die Freundschaften auch. Und vor dem Haus, fünfzig Meter weiter hatte er einen Erdhaufen, unter dem lag seine tote Frau.
- Vielleicht hat Cresspahl aufgegeben.
- Traust du ihm das zu?
- Noch nicht. (*JT*, 788)

Marie's final question is the fourth time such a formulation has occurred during this discussion: in the absence of basic information, consistency of character has become the critical factor. But more interesting is Gesine's apparent ignorance of Cresspahl's motives. Either she is concealing her knowledge from Marie, or she has not yet herself realized the real reason for his return. The detail with which she later describes that reason makes it seem likely that the former case is correct. Gesine, in the wider interests of the story, apparently prefers to lie at this point, or at least to conceal her knowledge, in order to await an opportune moment when, Marie's spontaneous enthusiasm having abated somewhat, she will be more liable to be receptive towards Gesine's news.

Gesine initially diverts Marie by devoting 1 March 1968 to Wallschläger, a tactic which elicits the mildly dissatisfied response '— Bißchen viel Kirche' (*JT*, 809) from the listener, a comment which Gesine will refer to again. Immediately afterwards, however, she grasps the nettle. It is possible that the present prominence of the Lübke affair<sup>16</sup> and, indeed, of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's publicly expressed attitude towards the relationship between individual and State, which Gesine had attacked the previous day, induced her to delay no longer in making clear Cresspahl's concrete opposition to the Nazis.<sup>17</sup> Be that as it may, the information is finally introduced in a fashion remarkable for its inconspicuousness, or rather attempted inconspicuousness. This major revelation is phrased in such an offhand, indeed innocuous manner (even avoiding actual mention of the word espionage) that it seems as though

Gesine has tried to circumvent Marie's resistance by imbuing the information with an impression of inconsequentiality: 'Wann Cresspahl damit anfing, habe ich zu fragen vergessen; im September 1939 arbeitete er schon einige Monate für die britische Abwehr' (*JT*, 809). But Marie is not so easily deceived, and makes no secret of the fact: '— Das paßt mir nicht: sagt Marie mürrisch, aufgebracht. Heute ist es so kalt und windig, sie ist ihr Schiff nur innen abgegangen. Sitzt widerwillig da, sieht gelangweilt auf die undeutlichen Wolken über dem Hafen. Es paßt ihr nicht' (*JT*, 809). The bad weather during the South Ferry trip is paralleled by the negatively-charged vocabulary used to describe Marie, providing an adequate indication of what proves to be her most stubborn, and important, opposition to date. Gesine's repetition of Marie's comment betrays her resigned recognition of the struggle to come. That struggle might have been avoided by silence or deception. But although Gesine uses such means as a delaying tactic, to maintain them would entail sacrificing every tenet of the fictional truth, thereby betraying the most fundamental of her narrative aims, aims which constitute the story's primary motive power. Indeed Marie's very objection concerns what she regards as a breach of trust; Cresspahl's betrayal of his country. Yet her attitude, and so the breakdown of the external narrative which Marie's opposition threatens, was originally caused by Gesine when she installed her daughter in a school which led the child to make what she later admits to have been a wrong-headed judgement.<sup>18</sup> Gesine has, therefore, simultaneously created the urgency to tell the external narrative (in order to counterbalance Marie's formal education) and the conditions for its disruption. The positive and negative forces which maintain the narrative balance are thus implicit in the narrative's origins.

In this case, however, the balance is disturbed by Marie's inability to accept that Cresspahl's 'Verrat' (as she puts it) was justified by the fact that Germany was undoubtedly in the wrong. She cites America as an example: '— Gesine, ist dies Land nicht im Unrecht? Kannst du nicht lange davon reden, und das ist nur die Aufzählung? Gehst du deswegen hin und verrätst es?' (*JT*, 809–10). The comparison shows that Marie has recognized in the story she has been listening to a relevance to herself and her own life. Her strong patriotic feeling, perhaps partially engendered by a sense of comparative rootlessness which Gesine is endeavouring to correct with her story, is wounded at the thought of her own grandfather offending against his obligation of loyalty to Germany. As a form of protection Marie tries to generate an ironic distance to the story by stubbornly withholding her belief in the truth of what Gesine says, injuring the all-important credibility without which the story may not continue. Marie justifies her incredulity by accusing her mother of sacrificing narrative integrity for motives of personal satisfaction (ironically, this is precisely Marie's fault), a means of attack she has used before: '— Alle in deiner Familie haben den Nazis in die Hand gearbeitet, und Cresspahl erst recht. Nun willst du wenigstens einem

die Ehre retten, und deinem Vater am liebsten' (*JT*, 810). This accusation, if proved, would fundamentally invalidate Gesine's narrative approach. But its origin in emotional repugnance is clear from Marie's reviling of Cresspahl; to single him out as a collaborator amongst the Papenbrocks smacks of petulance. So long as Marie can believe the story to be manipulated by Gesine for her own ends, she can remain 'dagegen gefeit'.<sup>19</sup>

But on this occasion Gesine is able to produce a concrete item of proof, in the form of the 1940 halfpenny the British gave Cresspahl. This shakes Marie from her casual cynicism into perturbed agitation, as she distractedly demands to know more:

- Erzähl es mir! Erzähl es mir! Warum hast du mir das nicht früher erzählt!
- Hättest du es verstanden?
- Nein. Ich versteh es ja auch jetzt nicht. Erzähl es mir. (*JT*, 810)

That item of proof stimulates Marie into supplying an active essential narrative impulse, forcing Gesine to formulate a fundamental element of the story which might otherwise have remained undisturbed, one which does much to explain Cresspahl's decision to stay in Germany after 1938. That decision, of prime importance, generated in Gesine many of the concerns which originally impelled her to retrace the Jerichow past. Gesine's innovatory production of irrefutable proof to confirm a matter Marie would rather reject has effected an alteration in the listener's attitude towards the story: '—Du, Gesine. Ich dachte, es ist ausgedacht. Ich bin ja einverstanden mit deinem Ausdenken, ich geb dir meine Unterschrift darauf; dies wär mir als Wahrheit lieber. Ist es wahr?' (*JT*, 810). Marie's enquiry vainly attempts to draw a distinction between 'ausgedacht' and 'wahr', fictional and historical truth, in terms of their respective potency. Yet Gesine neither can nor has any need to answer directly Marie's final heartfelt question. Judging the truth of her own narrative lies outside her competence, in the domain of the recipient. She only needs to remind Marie that she must answer the question herself by testing the fictional truth of the explanation to come. Gesine does this simply by starting, with an unmistakable signal of narrative initiation, the story of how Cresspahl became a British spy: 'Es hat mit Geld angefangen' (*JT*, 810). Marie immediately recognizes her intention and admits the futility of her request for historical truth: '— Du weißt gut, worauf ich hineinfalle. Du bist so im Vorteil; du kennst mich, Gesine' (*JT*, 810). That admission is in spite of herself, for this is the point at which Marie finally recognizes her vulnerability, recognizing that the kind of truth which Gesine's story represents can (like religious truth) be as highly potent as that which normally passes for objective truth.

Having made the crucial admission, she wholeheartedly encourages Gesine to bring her process of fictional reconstruction into play, in order to produce a version of events which may be tested and improved by discussion. Her mother

describes how the fire insurance company sent a representative to find out why Cresspahl had not paid his contributions for December and January.<sup>20</sup> After speculating on the stranger's appearance and describing his arrival at Cresspahl's house, Gesine has to pause:

— . . . Nun weiß ich etwas nicht.

— Stell es dir vor, Gesine!

— Ich stelle mir vor, daß die einander vom November aus Dänemark kannten (oder vom Dezember aus England); dann hätte das Gespräch mit einer Erinnerung angefangen. (*JT*, 811)

The wording used in Marie's command and Gesine's reply alludes so clearly to the description of fictional invention in the second chapter of *Jahrestage* that there can be no doubt that Marie is actively encouraging Gesine to use fictional means in search of truth. She has agreed to such an approach as a valid method of answering her question 'Ist es wahr?' (*JT*, 810), and so has accepted that 'ausgedacht' and 'wahr' are by no means mutually exclusive. By implication, the process of 'ausdenken' (analogous to 'erzählen') is as capable as historical truth (such as, for instance, the death of Robert F. Kennedy) of affecting Marie emotionally. But while she takes no exception to the notion of fictional truth in principle, her scepticism must necessarily remain. For the story must earn acceptance; its success is a personal, subjective matter for the recipient. Marie has to grapple with her personal disinclination to admit Gesine's version of events to herself, for, after all, 'Es paßt ihr nicht' (*JT*, 809). This choice of words to indicate her disapproval, indeed, indicates the nature of the problem at hand. On two previous occasions she had used the formulation 'Es gefällt mir nicht' (*JT*, 299 and 607). 'Passen', however, raises echoes of the view Johnson expressed in 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans' concerning the challenge which a novel presents to the reader: 'Sie sind eingeladen, diese Version der Wirklichkeit zu vergleichen mit jener, die Sie unterhalten und pflegen. Vielleicht paßt der andere, der unterschiedliche Blick in die Ihre hinein' (VPR, 403). Marie has yet to learn that she must be prepared at least partly to adjust her world-view to the story rather than simply demanding the reverse, if the two are to become congruent.

For the moment Marie appears convinced by Gesine's description of the complex circumstances surrounding Cresspahl's being bribed and blackmailed by the English authorities. But Gesine is concerned to refute Marie's implicit charge that he thereby sacrificed his integrity:

— Nun hatten sie ihn obendrein gekauft. [says Marie]

— Erpreßt und gekauft und sicher. Nur daß er sich aus eigenem entschlossen hatte und seine Freiheit zuverlässig behalten hatte. (*JT*, 814)

Marie nevertheless obviously regards the matter as a cause for shame: 'Es ist so etwas wie ein Skelett im Wandschrank' (*JT*, 814), whereas Gesine regards it

simply as private business: 'Für mich nicht. Es ist meines Vaters Sache; jedem mag ich sie nicht zeigen' (*JT*, 814). Despite her apparent factual acceptance of Cresspahl's espionage, the sense of disgrace which clearly afflicts Marie fuels her efforts to persuade Gesine against this version of events during the next discussion. It may not be coincidental that in expressing her shame Marie should choose to employ a literal translation of the English idiom 'skeleton in the cupboard', for 'Skelett' arouses echoes of Gesine's 'Knochenmann', the skeleton of facts (represented by the halfpenny piece) which needs to be clothed to become truth.

Gesine's success in that endeavour is demonstrated in the letter from DE to Gesine which forms the next chapter (3 March 1968; Gesine's birthday). One may surmise from his remarks that DE is frequently party to Gesine's narration,<sup>21</sup> for he undoubtedly recognizes the power of her fictional truth:

Nie werde ich von meiner eigenen Mutter so bestimmt sagen können, sie sei mehr gewesen, als ich von ihr gesehen, gehört, angehört habe; du gehst hin und sagst: Meinem Vater ging es nicht um eine Rache, an den Nazis machte er sich nicht die Hände schmutzig; was eine unbegreifliche Feststellung ist, weil nicht beweisbar. Und ich glaube es dir aufs Wort, als eine Wahrheit, mit der du dich durchs Leben bringst, oft als Wahrheit. (*JT*, 817)

DE's normal view of the world is a non-literary one, drawn from observable facts, yet he allows himself to be persuaded into receiving Gesine's truth, not just 'als eine Wahrheit', valid for Gesine in her life, designed to help her lead her life, but 'als Wahrheit', as absolute truth. The proof DE would require is lacking, being replaced by credulity, belief, perhaps even faith. Indeed the operation of Gesine's fictional truth does have much in common with religious faith, being largely unprovable and a matter between the individual and his or her conscience. This analogy may not be exaggerated; casting Gesine in a Messianic role would certainly constitute little more than extravagant speculation. Yet her obvious success in persuading the scientist DE, trained to analyse the world logically and methodically, testifies to the narrative's potency when the recipient is prepared to pass judgement using the standards the narrative itself sets forth.

Marie's reluctance to co-operate according to DE's admirable example remains, however, intact. In the chapter for 7 March 1968 she once more asserts that Gesine is manipulating the story to place Cresspahl in a better light: '— Du willst Cresspahl besser machen als er war: sagt Marie' (*JT*, 831). This is in fact a perceptive comment, for the internal narrative does indeed convey a less advantageous view of Gesine's father. That disparity contributes to the familiar problem, whose presence Gesine notes: '— Du glaubst es nicht' (*JT*, 831). Marie is not prepared to go this far, countering with a different phrase, which is just as familiar: '— Das traue ich ihm nicht zu' (*JT*, 831). In fact Marie's claim of inconsistency is merely a pretext; she simply does not want Cresspahl to have



been a British spy. She similarly misuses the critical advantage conferred by her status as immediate recipient to impose (as she hopes) her will on the story by protesting on the grounds of plausibility. Marie contends that a humble joiner, even if he were a spy, would be in no position to betray secrets of any value:

— . . . Vielleicht hat er ein paar Flugzeuge von fern gesehen.

— Von nahem, Marie. Selbst aus der Entfernung, er hätte sie zählen können. Es war schon viel, wenn er die zivilen Angestellten zählte, mitsamt ihren Berufsbezeichnungen.

— Und militärtechnische Kenntnisse willst du ihm auch noch andichten.

— Hier wird nicht gedichtet. Ich versuche, dir etwas zu erzählen.

— O.K. Jetzt wissen die Briten, wieviel Flugzeuge auf Mariengabe bei Jerichow stehen. (JT, 832)

The substance of Marie's argument is limited, since she lacks the relevant knowledge to justify her case. Its tone is more revealing, bearing witness to an undercurrent of tension, even of hostility, such as has not previously been evident in relations between the two. The struggle of wills, though apparently resolved in the previous discussion, has re-emerged with unaccustomed vehemence. With experience Marie has acquired such excessive self-confidence as a critic that she now begins to breach the limits of her competence. While she may certainly compel Gesine to maintain the narrative integrity, and to some extent determine the narrative speed and direction, she possesses no dispensation to alter its fundamentals, limited as she is, in political terms, to the powers of amendment accorded to a parliamentary second chamber. Yet distorted by her desire to free Cresspahl from what she regards as a character-stain, Marie's otherwise healthy, indeed necessary scepticism acquires a patina of scorn which emerges in her choice of the word 'andichten'. Gesine is as anxious as Johnson was to reject the appellation 'Dichter',<sup>22</sup> drawing back from the implicit claim to artistic production which that word conveys. 'Erzählen', with its overtones of craftsmanship, thoroughness (*er-zählen*) and honest integrity, is far preferable. Gesine's aim is not art, but truth, although the truth she seeks can only be attained by artistic (literary) means. Marie's imputation merely effects a deterioration in relations between narrator and recipient without providing any compensatory benefit for narrative integrity or progress.

Gesine's task of convincing Marie now demands skilful administering of the information which might potentially be brought into play. A tendency is becoming apparent for Gesine to overcome Marie's resistance by revealing precise factual knowledge, an approach which, however, may be taken too far. Having enumerated in considerable detail the various types of aircraft which Cresspahl might have seen at the airfield, she is interrupted by Marie's doubts once again: '— Eben habe ich dir geglaubt, Gesine. Schon übertreibst du wieder' (JT, 832). This is a new criticism, accusing Gesine of excessive technical knowledge, rather than the story of being unlikely. Gesine has undoubtedly gleaned such details from factual research as a means of buttressing the

credibility of her case. Removing such buttresses would only weaken the narrative, and so, paradoxically, her only response can be to provide further information in justification of what she has previously said. All such efforts are nevertheless subject to criticism from her listener, however. In this case Gesine supplies more details about the Stuka divebomber (the JU 87), at the mention of which Marie had interrupted. Gesine refers to the 'Jerichosirenen' built into the aeroplane's wings, designed to inspire terror into those under attack. But the coincidence of names between the town and the sirens is too much for Marie, or so she claims:

— Jerichosirenen. Es ist mir ein Zufall zuviel.

— Und was sollten die Leute in dem anderen Jerichow sagen, dem großen, bei Magdeburg?

— Ich mag es nicht, wenn etwas so genau zusammenfällt. Also Jerichosirenen in Jerichow, nicht erfunden.

— Nicht von mir. (*JT*, 833)

Although her final objection indicates a radical change in attitude from that which conditioned her initial unwillingness to accept Gesine's version of the Warning/Hagemeister case, the matters to which Marie takes exception are becoming increasingly trivial; in this case so trivial that she must immediately concede. Unwilling to adapt her preconception to the story rather than vice versa, Marie lets her concern with the story's progress flag in favour of making ever more desperate attempts to absolve Cresspahl.

Any potential loophole in the story is eagerly seized on by Marie to press her case, even if that means making highly improbable suggestions, which would, if accepted, gravely offend against the narrative's validity. Gesine mentions, for example, that Cresspahl's 1940 halfpenny in itself was not proof enough that he could trust the English. Marie observes a chance to undermine the foundation stone of Gesine's argument, and exclaims delightedly:

— Das wollte ich dir schon vor zehn Tagen sagen! Den kann ein abgeschossener englischer Flieger in der Tasche gehabt haben, aus Vergeßlichkeit, als Talisman! Und es waren die Deutschen, die ihn damit köderten! Womöglich hat er die ganze Zeit für sie gearbeitet, und nicht für die durch und durch verluderten Engländer: sagt Marie, nicht sehr bestimmt, jedoch hoffnungsvoll. Sie hat sich den Einwand seit dem vorigen Sonnabend aufbewahrt, für den Moment der besten Wirkung. Sie mag nicht, daß Einer sein Land verrät. (*JT*, 859)

None of Marie's proposals are remotely logical. That the German authorities would be able, or, more particularly, need to use an English coin to entice Cresspahl into working for them is nothing short of ludicrous, especially since the coin itself (hardly untold riches) was not bait but a means of identification. Furthermore Marie appears readier to contemplate Cresspahl as a Nazi agent than as a British informer, although what use Cresspahl would be to the Germans in Jerichow is unclear; as a source of misinformation to the British he

would be far better placed elsewhere. Marie here not only subordinates the good of the story to her own will, but actively attempts to subvert the narrative integrity to that end. Yet Gesine is able to compensate for Marie's failure to control the standard of plausibility.

Since at this point Marie cannot be relied upon to wield responsibly the portion of narrative authority she has gradually acquired, the narrative validity must be confirmed by other means: Gesine determines to re-assert her narrative dominance in order to restore the necessary discipline. Temporarily shelving the wider narrative aims, Gesine concentrates on displaying her authority to Marie, reminding the latter of her restricted, but essential, role. This she does by demonstrating how easily the child's attention may be captured at the expense of narrative integrity. In explanation of how Cresspahl received confirmation that his halfpenny piece was indeed of trustworthy provenance, Gesine embarks upon a story, deliberately made exciting, of Cresspahl risking concentration camp by travelling to Alexander Paepcke under instructions to receive the relevant verification over BBC radio. The dramatic element of danger in the story has been prepared in previous pages: 'Ich weise nochmals darauf hin: Wer zum Vergnügen reist, wird bestraft, in schweren Fällen mit dem K. Z.!' (*JT*, 858) has just appeared as one of Bürgermeister Tamms's official announcements. The risk of Cresspahl's journey is thus underlined: 'Cresspahl hatte Gesine von Alexander Paepckes Radio mit dem magischen Auge erzählen lassen und unternahm am 25. März eine Reise, im Grund zum Vergnügen, obwohl K. Z. darauf stand' (*JT*, 860). Cresspahl's secondary task escalates the drama: 'er sollte auch in der Gegend von Rechlin nachsehen, was es mit der nächtlichen Knallerei auf sich hatte. Hörte sich nach Raketen an' (*JT*, 860). As long as Marie remains unconvinced, Gesine is careful, however, to justify her possession of the precise information (the radio message) which she is about to divulge; one may surmise that Kliefoth is her source: 'Als Cresspahl in Podejuch vor Alexanders magischem Auge saß, war Dr. Kliefoth auf Urlaub von der Rußlandfront in Jerichow, hörte die BBC und wunderte sich sehr über die Geschichte, die in der Sendung nach den vier Beethovenschen Tönen erzählt wurde. Er kannte sie anders' (*JT*, 860). Marie takes the bait. The prospect of an encoded message is enough to stimulate her childish curiosity and sense of adventure, prompting her to utter what has become a set formula for narrative impulse, indicating her readiness to accept the fictional truth: '— Fang an, Gesine. Ich glaub es schon wieder. Ich falle immer von neuem darauf herein. Fang an' (*JT*, 860). Cresspahl's message takes the form of a radio story, told, one might add, in questionable English, but sufficient to convince the child, in spite of herself, that the British authorities did indeed verify their association with Cresspahl: 'Verdammt! Ich glaub's dir, Gesine' (*JT*, 861).

But Gesine is not yet satisfied; the power potentially at her disposal must be unequivocally demonstrated if Marie is to remember the constraints under

which they must operate. Gesine therefore follows her daughter's expression of belief with a concise, mocking, yet sensational episode:

Und reicht es dir auch? Brauchst du nun noch eine Geschichte von einem abgeschossenen Piloten aus England, der sich nachts in Cresspahls Haus findet und für eine Weile in der Bodenkammer lebt, hinter einer Wand aus undurchdringlichem Ofenholz, bis Gesine ihn an der Hand nehmen kann und zu einer Adresse in Gneez führen, wieder ein Mann mit einem Kind —? (*JT*, 861)

As far as the narrative precepts are concerned, Gesine's suggestion is extremely problematic. The episode bears on the one hand no marks of reconstruction, for Gesine would have no need to invent an incident in which she herself took part, and would hardly be likely to forget such a remarkable experience. On the other hand it seems improbable that she would not have brought such a decisive matter (which would prove her case) into play before, or that it should be so casually and laconically used here as nothing more than a piece of supporting evidence. Even if considered too dramatic to be typical, the episode ought to be worthy of inclusion all the same. The incident can, therefore, only be a deliberate untruth, defying every precept of the narrative so far established.

In fact the supposed story is no more than a taunt aimed at Marie, who recognizes that fact with her resigned comment: '— Es ist genug für mich. Es reicht, Gesine' (*JT*, 861), with which she confirms her acceptance of all that went before the pilot story. Gesine has been forced into potentially compromising the narrative integrity in order to bring Marie back into line. Yet immediately afterwards the latter stubbornly baulks at the relatively uncontroversial information that Cresspahl was away when the RAF bombed Lübeck, accidentally hitting a hanger on the Jerichow airfield: '— Du treibst es wieder zu weit. Wieder stimmt alles zusammen. Du mit deinen Übertreibungen, Gesine!' (*JT*, 861). Their concluding remarks clarify the issue to some degree. Gesine explains that Cresspahl's absence on the night of the bombing raid was purely fortuitous: '— Das war ein Zufall, Marie. Es lohnte nicht, jemand wie Cresspahl wegzuschicken von einer Stelle, an der die R.A.F. demnächst Schiet of aflådn wird. So wichtig war er nicht. Er war ein Stück Faden in einem Netz, nicht einmal ein Knoten. Er war ersetzbar. Das Netz war leicht zu flicken' (*JT*, 861). But this prosaic explanation is not to Marie's taste; she would prefer his activities, if he must be a spy, at least to have been impressively worthwhile, as she says:

— Gesine: Wenn. Dann.

— Wenn es Verrat war, soll es ansehnlich gewesen sein?

— Nicht verkleinert. (*JT*, 861–62)

From this one may gather that Gesine has purposefully manipulated Marie, flexing her narrative muscles. The BBC radio message tempted the child into accepting Cresspahl's espionage, while the pilot story was deliberately aimed at

allowing her to hear, in sarcastically exaggerated form, what she expected from a spy story (drama and excitement), simultaneously illustrating, through its ironic untruth, the futility of such an approach.<sup>23</sup> Trapped into objecting to what turns out to be the unexciting, everyday, eminently plausible reason behind Cresspahl's absence during the bombing raid — commonplace coincidence — Marie is reminded that chance cannot altogether be ruled out as a determining factor; that, as in life, the most interesting and stirring explanation is not always the correct one. This is confirmed by Gesine's final comment: '— Verrat ist langweilig, Marie' (*JT*, 862). Recognizing her manipulation, Marie can only respond with a lame assertion to the effect that since Gesine's remark is merely an opinion, not an element of the story, whether she believes it or not is of little importance. Gesine has used Marie's own weakness first to elicit her assent as far as Cresspahl's espionage is concerned; then to highlight that weakness with mockery; then to remind the listener to preserve a sense of proportion when setting the standard of plausibility. Her success suppresses Marie's objections for the subsequent month.

A journey under and over water provides the setting for Marie and Gesine's discussion of 13 April 1968, combining the activity and environment most clearly associated with narration in *Jahrestage*. Despite all Gesine's efforts, traces of Marie's resistance to Cresspahl's espionage remain, testifying to a stubbornness which underlies the persistence of her objections throughout, regardless of their justification in narrative terms. But the espionage problem is about to be replaced by another, perhaps even more deep-seated prejudice in a child brought up in the USA of Cold War hysteria. Exposed for much of her conscious, highly impressionable life to anti-Communist, more specifically anti-Soviet propaganda (the Cuban missile crisis lies in the not-too-distant-past on the *Jahrestage* time-scale), Marie brings to the story a set of preconceptions which Gesine knows in advance will be difficult to dismantle.

The problem is one which Margret Boveri (who was, as already noted, a personal friend and professional colleague of Johnson) encountered as she edited for publication an epistolary chronicle, unread for many years, which she had written in Berlin between February and September 1945: *Tage des Überlebens. Berlin 1945*.<sup>24</sup> Boveri found herself compelled to insert qualifying passages in order to place her detailed descriptions of Soviet occupation in context, for, as she says in an introductory chapter:

Es ist Zeit, den zu unfäßbaren Dimensionen angeschwollenen antisowjetischen Mythos auf seine wahren Verhältnisse zurückzuführen und zusammen mit den Schrecknissen jener Tage im Frühjahr 1945 aufzuzeigen, daß der Kalte Krieg nicht erst mit Churchills Rede in Fulton oder der Byrnes-Rede in Stuttgart, nicht erst mit der Truman-Doktrin oder dem Prager Fenstersturz seinen Anfang nahm, sondern spätestens in den Tagen, als um die Stadt Berlin gekämpft wurde. Daß der Zustand belagerter Phantasie, wie er in dem Brief dokumentiert ist, sich in einen permanenten autohypnotischen Ausnahmezustand verwandelt hat, ist das Übel, das wir überwinden müssen.<sup>25</sup>

Yet without detailed counter-descriptions of three years of German atrocities in Russia, which might explain (if not necessarily justify) the Red Army's treatment of the civilian population in Germany, the balance is difficult to re-establish. For the fact is that the Russian soldiers' behaviour did in many cases correspond to the weary propaganda which drew on lurid stories of rape, killing, looting, wanton destruction, and primitive standards of personal hygiene. And although Boveri documents in her letters enough examples of gratuitous malice by the other occupying armies, the degradations imposed by Russian soldiers stand out simply because they represented Boveri's primary experience. Efforts to redress the balance by reaching for outside reports would only distort the impression directly conveyed of 1945. The addition, from Boveri's 1967 standpoint, of the historical and political background to relations between the Allies does indeed attack potential anti-Soviet feeling engendered by the description of everyday life under Russian rule, emphasizing the fallacy of drawing wider conclusions from Red Army brutality while ignoring the complex historical circumstances. But the book simultaneously shows, perhaps involuntarily, that direct, personal, painful involvement in one small part of an immense, unfathomable web of historical events makes adducing counter-examples which lie outside one's own experience (and thus, if the actual awareness of the time is to be preserved, cannot be rendered with the same impact) a delicate undertaking indeed. Johnson himself discovered quickly enough that being a GDR author writing for a West German public (as he still must be regarded at least until after the publication of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*) meant keeping a readership in mind which was likely either to be only too eager to discover grounds for condemning the 'sogenannte DDR' or to be on the lookout for hidden Communist propaganda in the work of a writer who had recently emerged from that (unrecognized) socialist country.

Gesine's problem resembles those of Johnson and Boveri in many respects. While much of what she must tell Marie will indeed confirm the child's hostile image of Soviet Russia, she cannot deny her own childhood experiences, particularly such a devastating ordeal as Cresspahl's three-year absence under Russian arrest. Yet attempting to explain the historical context (as Boveri does) would breach the bounds of her self-imposed narrative task. One reaction later becomes observable; namely a tendency to take refuge in wider political developments within Mecklenburg, avoiding as far as possible the personal, an approach which only proves to be detrimental for the story. For the moment, however, Gesine remains faithful to her personal standpoint. While Marie is later surprisingly prepared to understand and make concessions for the Soviets, trying to overcome her own repugnance by an effort of will, her attitude is highly distrustful when the subject first arises. Indeed it is she, obviously expecting conflict, who first raises the matter:

— Wie waren denn die Sowjets zu dir? fragte sie. Sie sah da nicht wenig mißtrauisch aus, und sie war bereit, mir von normalen Erzählungen über die Russen wenigstens die Hälfte abzustreichen, weil ich nicht wie sie die Sowjets für etwas Undiskutables halte, oder schlicht für ‘die anderen’. Sie hat ihren Antikommunismus gelernt wie etwas, das mit der Luft eingeatmet wird. (*JT*, 983)

The intensity of Marie’s conditioning is immediately apparent, as she assumes from the beginning (or so it seems to Gesine) that her mother’s narrative will be deeply biased in favour of the Soviets, while at the same time failing to consider, or even recognize, her own prejudices in that respect. Gesine endeavours to divert the child’s attention by the simple device of precision, pointing out that in fact the British reached Jerichow first. This only induces from Marie a final, extremely weak objection on the grounds of insupportable coincidence (the very troops arrive for whose country Cresspahl had been spying), but, knowing the cause to be lost, she does not persist.<sup>26</sup>

However, Cresspahl remains the focal point for her wider sense of dissatisfaction: ‘Es kann Cresspahl nicht gleichgültig gewesen sein, ob er sein Kind bei den Sowjets aufwachsen ließ. Gesine!’ (*JT*, 984). Once again Marie’s opposition is at its greatest when the story seems to concern her immediately, and unpleasantly, via her mother. As her emotional involvement grows, so do her efforts increase to preserve herself from implication in matters which she finds deeply repugnant. Marie’s determination to establish her exclusion from this stage of the story extends to such an apparently insignificant detail as Gesine’s use of the name ‘Mariengabe’ for the Jerichow airfield. This elicits from Marie: ‘— Ich wünschte, du würdest sagen: Jerichow Nord. Es ist, als wolltest du mich mit meinem Namen hereinziehen’ (*JT*, 984). Such attempted distancing from the story is to grow into a major problem for Gesine, as Marie begins to take issue with the whole notion of her family’s association with the Russians.

As was the case with Cresspahl’s spying, Marie expresses dissatisfaction with the failure of Gesine’s depiction of war to tally with the child’s film-orientated preconceptions: ‘— Nie machst du den Krieg aufregend, Gesine!’ (*JT*, 986). Marie expected Cresspahl to welcome the British officers with back-slapping ceremony, and baulks at the routine reserve with which her grandfather identifies himself: ‘— Und es kommt wirklich nichts Spannendes mehr mit den Engländern? Schüsse in der Nacht? Sprengstoffanschläge aufs Rathaus von Jerichow? Etwas Aufregendes?’ (*JT*, 987). This is another reminder of the questioner’s demand for excitement in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. But then as now the higher requirements of the story cannot be prostituted to gratuitous suspense.

Marie’s latest objection to Cresspahl’s action is reinforced when the story reaches the British hand-over of the occupied sector to the Russians. Just as in 1933 and 1938, Cresspahl remains in Jerichow when he could have left; again Marie suspects that Lisbeth may have determined his decision:

- Blieb Cresspahl wegen Lisbeths Grab?
- Er mochte nicht mit zwei typhuskranken Kindern auf die Landstraße.
- Hatte er nicht Angst vor den Sowjets?
- Warum, Marie.
- Gesine, er ließ dich bei den Sowjets!
- Das war eine gute Schule, die möchte ich nicht entbehren. Und nach acht Jahren konnte ich gehen. (*JT*, 1001)

Having previously resorted to cowardice as an explanation of Cresspahl's failure to leave Jerichow, Marie now cites lack of fear. She cannot prevent herself from viewing the past in terms of shame or honour, an attitude undoubtedly gleaned from the teaching of American history at school. Gesine's task is now to prove her penultimate assertion to the child without concealing the unpleasant aspects of Russian rule, and in so doing break down the fixed patterns of thought which Gesine's own choice of education and environment has imbued her with. But again the question of Cresspahl's motivation proves a most difficult problem, one which represents a distinct obstacle to the story's progress. In this case Gesine has to contend not only with Marie's unreceptiveness, but with her own unwillingness to articulate what she knows.

To start with, Gesine effectively keeps the discussion away from the Soviets, the object of Marie's original question, confining herself as far as possible to the period of British occupation. But when, on 17 April 1968, the story finally reaches the Soviet takeover of Jerichow, she shows a distinct reluctance to continue. On 21 April, while spending a weekend in a borrowed summer house on Lake Patton, Marie, prompted by an item in the *New York Times* asks her mother about the death in suspicious circumstances of Jan Masaryk, at that time Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, on 10 March 1948:<sup>27</sup>

*Hast du das geglaubt im Jahr 1948? als du fünfzehn Jahre alt warst?  
Gestern abend haben wir erst über den Juli 1945 verhandelt. Wollen wir springen in der Erzählung?  
Nein. Aber ich seh schon.  
Du siehst was.  
Du willst nicht darüber sprechen, Gesine. (JT, 1028)<sup>28</sup>*

Marie has noticed Gesine's reluctance to touch on subjects which concern Soviet influence; Jan Masaryk's death soon after the Communist takeover of February 1948 heightened tension (as Margret Boveri noted)<sup>29</sup> as the Cold War developed. Gesine affects an unwillingness to tell her story out of sequence: this is plainly an excuse, since firstly an historical event of this nature would not in any case normally assume a prominent position in her narration, and secondly she has displayed on many other occasions no qualms about ignoring strict chronological sequence. Having still received no answer to her original question '— Wie waren denn die Sowjets zu dir?' (*JT*, 983) except for the description of Cresspahl and Gesine's first meeting with K. A. Pontij (see *JT*, 1002–03), Marie recognizes the need to provide a renewed impulse to stimulate Gesine's sluggish



narration, since by 22 April 1968 the Jerichow story has made no progress for five days.

Marie is not satisfied with Gesine's response to the request for information one may assume she made, which is to assert that she only remembers the weather of summer 1945; again, Marie realizes, her mother is evading the issue:

Helles, ebenmäßig von Hitze abgestütztes Wetter, es war Marie nicht recht als einzige Erinnerung an den ersten Sommer der Neuen Zeit in Jerichow, und es ist doch fast einundneunzig Jahreszeiten her, und mehr als sechstausend Kilometer entfernt. Faulheit beim Erzählen nannte sie es. Hockte vor dem Ferienkamin, zog dem Feuer neue Stützen ein, bis sie im umsichtigen Arbeiten den Kienspan fand, der zum anderen Feuermachen taugte. — Die Russen sollen nicht fair gewesen sein als Sieger: sagte sie. (JT, 1029)

With the phrase 'Faulheit beim Erzählen' Marie diplomatically reformulates Gesine's reluctance to continue; she is fully aware that the deficiency of her mother's memory (here in any case wildly exaggerated) can always be compensated for by one means or another. The child now begins to display a mature understanding of the difficulty her mother is faced with, attempting to coax rather than goad the story along; hence the delicate circumspection which she employs finally to broach the subject Gesine has been avoiding. But in this case Gesine's resistance is so strong that Marie's stimulus alone will not suffice. In consequence, the dead extend their influence to the story Marie hears, strengthening the impact of her tentative query; the subsidiary agents governing both external and internal narratives must at this point combine to force the continuation of Gesine's story. This chapter offers one of the clearest illustrations of how the narrative dynamics operate; when Gesine's resolve, confidence and with them her narrative authority flag before the complexity of correctly weighting her narrative with regard to the recipient, a proportion of that authority devolves on to Marie and the dead.

Gesine continues to make excuses in the face of exhortations (worth quoting once more in full) from the inner voices she hears:

*Sag es ihr, Gesine.  
 Damals war ich ein Kind. Zwölf Jahre alt. Was kann ich wissen?  
 Was du von uns gehört hast. Was du gesehen hast.  
 Sie wird das Falsche benutzen.  
 Sie ist ein Kind, Gesine.  
 Die Toten haben leicht reden. Seid ihr aufrichtig gewesen zu mir?  
 Mach es besser als wir.  
 Und damit sie weiß, wohin sie mitkommen soll, und zu wem.  
 Und uns zuliebe, Gesine. Sag es ihr. (JT, 1029–30)*

The dead's formulation 'Sag es ihr' is equivalent to Marie's 'Fang an' (in both cases placed at the beginning and end of the section designating narrative impulse), but Gesine feebly claims lack of sufficient information, even though up to now she has successfully circumvented that problem. Rather like Marie,

recognizing her own objection to be worthless, she immediately discovers another argument, but this time a valid one, indeed the major obstacle; namely that Marie will misuse what she hears. Although the dead's reference to the child's immaturity takes little account of her otherwise often decidedly adult intellect, Gesine does have a point with her rejoinder: 'Seid ihr aufrichtig gewesen zu mir?' (*JT*, 1029). But since the betrayals which Gesine feels she suffered at the hands of Lisbeth and Cresspahl should not be any indication of how to behave towards her own child, the dead are able to exhort her not to repeat their mistakes, concluding with more general comments reminding Gesine of her pedagogic duties towards Marie, the external narrative's *raison d'être*.

The dead's final entreaty succeeds in persuading Gesine to continue for Marie's sake, although she does so with the potential pitfalls perceptibly uppermost in her mind. Gesine tackles the problem by listing the frightful rumours and propaganda about Russian barbarism and primitivism, followed by a contrasting picture of their actual, prosaic takeover of power in Jerichow. The chapter closes with a selection of comments by Jerichow inhabitants on the Russians' behaviour, of which Gesine's, the last-quoted, is the most perceptive: 'Töw du man, du' ['Wart mal ab, du'] (*JT*, 1034).

Although the most serious crisis yet has been overcome by mustering all the positive narrative forces available, a further, underlying obstacle emerges only two days later, in the chapter for 24 April 1968. It transpires that Gesine's unwillingness has been caused not solely by a lack of confidence in her own ability to shape the story so as to avoid creating an undesirable impression on Marie, but also by an emotional trauma which is painful to confront. The Jerichow inhabitants maliciously hold one person responsible for the Russians' arrival: 'Cresspahl, mein Vater. "Schuld an den Russen" hieß das Urteil über ihn, und betraf nicht nur die Klagen über die Fremden. So erholsam ließ es sich aussprechen, als seien sie ohne Cresspahl gar nicht erst gekommen' (*JT*, 1040). The extent of Gesine's emotional injury is apparent through her use of the syntactically unnecessary, and extremely rare, qualification 'mein Vater'. Her bitterness emerges in the word 'Urteil', as well as in the implication of parasitic self-consolation on the part of Jerichow citizens at Cresspahl's expense. In consequence the story needs to be begun twice: 'Angefangen hatte es mit der Gefangensetzung von Käthe Klupsch' (*JT*, 1040); 'Nein. So hatte es nicht angefangen' (*JT*, 1041). The problems Gesine experiences are testified to by the length of this Jerichow section: seven and three-quarter pages, in comparison with the average of less than three pages per chapter devoted to Jerichow during the first three months of the *Jahrestage* year. The relationship of material (expressed in numbers of pages) to progress of the story steadily increases to the crisis point in *Jahrestage* as a whole which comes at the end of volume three. Gesine can barely bring herself to articulate the unpleasant effects Cresspahl's social isolation had on the child Gesine:

- Wenn du zum Einkaufen geschickt wurdest —  
 — Ja.  
 — und sie drängten dich ab aus der Schlange. Sie traten dich versehentlich. Es gab Eltern, die verboten ihren Kindern mit dir —  
 — Das war es nicht, Marie.  
 — Sie sahen dich nicht.  
 — Sie sahen mich nicht. (*JT*, 1048)

Marie compensates for Gesine's inability to give expression to the painful memories, making active, positive suggestions which Gesine may accept or reject. During this moment of crisis, therefore, a radical reversal of role has taken place, Marie briefly assuming Gesine's primary task and vice versa. How far this occurs purely through chance may not be precisely established, but the emergence of Gesine's personal difficulty at this stage gives rise to a number of advantages. In particular, Marie's attention is diverted away from the Russians and towards the Jerichow inhabitants; it is they, not the invaders, who make Cresspahl's life a misery. Thus Gesine kills several birds with one stone, enlisting Marie's help (and, possibly, sympathy), as well as tackling her own problem.

If Gesine had hoped deliberately to distract Marie from potential anti-Russian prejudice, then her endeavour must be deemed successful, for a period of co-operation ensues, lasting for nearly a month. Marie twice makes a number of critical comments (see *JT*, 1065–68 and 1115–16), but has no serious objections to the narrative. The child even finds the eccentric figure of K. A. Pontij sympathetic: 'Sie denkt über K. A. Pontij so innig nach, fast belustigt, als sollte sie eine Freundschaft mit ihm erwägen (wie die Gesine Cresspahl von damals. Wie ich!)' (*JT*, 1065–66); indeed, he seems in part to be deliberately designed for the purpose of providing a human face to the Soviet occupation, the traditional likable rogue; Gesine even asks Marie:

- Aber war nicht K. A. Pontij auch ein Gauner?  
 — I like crooks. Wenn sie nur ihren Teil nehmen und die Menschen sonst nicht beschädigen. Don't you like crooks? (*JT*, 1068)

If K. A. Pontij helps to smooth the narrative path, then so does a factor which Gesine has failed to take fully into account, namely that her daughter is a child of New York, daily the scene of crime, violence, and brutality. The rapes committed by Red Army soldiers present, for instance, little problem to Marie: '— Gesine, was ist das Thema Nummer Eins bei weiblichen Personen in New York? Hörst du nicht hin, wenn die Damen ihre Geschichten vergleichen im Schwimmbad unterm Hotel Marseille? Soll ich mal Mrs. Carpenter nachmachen?' (*JT*, 1067). Nevertheless, the Jerichow story is undoubtedly progressing much more slowly, as the following statistics illustrate.<sup>30</sup>

The month during which Cresspahl's mayoralty under the Russians is described (23 April–23 May 1968) occupies 180 pages, in contrast to the

94 pages of the first *Jahrestage* month (20 August–20 September 1967). An *erzählte Zeit* of only sixteen weeks elapses between the Russian arrival and Cresspahl's arrest (2 July–22 October 1945), and yet 86 pages are devoted exclusively to its description, at an average of 6.15 pages per *Jahrestage* day in which the Jerichow story appears (14 in all during this period). This compares with 2.68 pages per day in which the Jerichow story appears during the first thirteen weeks of the *Jahrestage* year, whereby the *erzählte Zeit* broadly covers the relatively much longer period of August 1931 to March 1933.<sup>31</sup> It seems, then, that although the problem has temporarily been solved, it is only at the expense of long, careful, highly detailed descriptions of Cresspahl's work with the Russians, resulting in a two hundred and thirty per cent increase in the average space devoted to the Jerichow story. Part of the problem may stem from Gesine's increasing ability, as the story moves forward in time, to bring her own memories into play. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the question of selectivity — what to omit — is becoming increasingly pressing.<sup>32</sup>

Marie appears to take the news of Cresspahl's arrest with equanimity, her reaction being a display of cool irony:

- Cresspahl hatte seinem Pontij einmal zu oft vertraut. [says Marie]
- Zu lange, auch.
- Psychologie der Erwachsenen, und all das. Nichts für Kinder. (*JT*, 1209)

Yet the knowledge is clearly a source of unease for Marie, once again because of the difficulty she experiences in separating the standards by which she has been taught to live her own life from those she encounters in Gesine's story:

- So daß ich also zwei vorbestrafte Großväter hätte: sagte Marie, sobald wir auf dem Schiff waren. Sie versuchte die Neuigkeiten von ihrer Abstammung schurkig und im Übermut zu nehmen, solche Vorfahren waren ihr abermals bedenklich geworden. Was immer sie zu Hause hört, es hat doch nicht verfangen gegen die Lehren ihrer Schule, nach denen eine Verhaftung die Schuld schon beweist. Das sollte sie nicht lernen: das Denken des weißen Mittelstands. So denkt sie. (*JT*, 1214)

A certain hopelessness is evident in Gesine's comments; she despairs that her story can ever succeed against such conditioning. That lessening hope will soon bring Gesine to the brink of admitting defeat, at least for a time. Nevertheless she pragmatically directs her efforts against Marie's latest misconception, despite the child's stubbornness, expressed in the plea: '— Mach Cresspahl unschuldig, Gesine. Wenn du ein wenig lügen könntest' (*JT*, 1215). Although her question is little more than wistful longing, she is still unable to look any further than Cresspahl himself for the responsibility for his arrest. As it later turns out, she is unwilling, for fear of hurting her mother's feelings, immediately to lay the blame on the Soviets. She contents herself with disarming the unpleasant thought of an imprisoned grandfather by implying, though without perceptible conviction, that what Gesine says is in any case untrue: '— Lüg du

nur weiter, Gesine' (*JT*, 1215) is her answer to Cresspahl's being locked up in a henhouse. Nevertheless Marie has now become so closely involved in the narrative process that some eight pages of the Jerichow story arise from their discussion. Marie's contribution includes world-wearily predicting the film-familiar scenes of imprisonment: '— Nun die Flucht' (*JT*, 1216); '— Jetzt geht das los mit den Folterungen, der Wasserzelle, der Hungerkur' (*JT*, 1217); '— Das Wecken mitten in der Nacht. Dann Zahlen aufsagen' (*JT*, 1218). Gesine ignores the sarcasm, recognizing it as a defence mechanism. At the same time she conceals the true extent of Cresspahl's privation (which actually included many of Marie's ironically-meant suggestions), which dissemblance she will later have to admit.

Their discussion on this occasion turns out to be fruitful for a narrative section whose complexity is indicated by Marie's complaint that Gesine is not showing enough bias:

— Auf wessen Seite bist du, Gesine! Du gehörst zu Cresspahl, und für ihn sprichst du nicht.

— Warum soll ich auf einer Seite sein? was ich weiß hat mehr als bloß zwei. (*JT*, 1221)

Although Marie has previously been against Cresspahl, she now seems willing to take his part, unwilling to believe in the possibility of his guilt (although, paradoxically, assuming that he is guilty by virtue of his arrest), and even accusing Gesine of disloyalty towards her own father. Marie's reproach appears to be the soul of inconsistency, since she had earlier complained that Gesine was distorting the story in Cresspahl's favour. But as in previous cases, Marie falters if required to choose between loyalty and truth when the two happen to be mutually exclusive; her option for loyalty in its most obvious form tends to be the lowest common denominator of such apparently inconsistent objections. How to place loyalties in order of priority must be the lesson to emerge from Gesine's story; loyalty to the fictional truth is the narrator's prime concern.

During subsequent weeks, Gesine confines the narrative to her own experiences in the years immediately after the war, and Marie sees no cause for protest. The only protracted discussion between narrator and listener on the subject of Jerichow concerns Gesine's education, and proceeds without controversy, containing only a brief reference to the impossibility of establishing Cresspahl's whereabouts. It seems as though the absence of Cresspahl from the story deprives Marie of a focal point for any dissatisfaction she may feel. The chapter for 4 June 1968 records in some detail the conditions Cresspahl endured while imprisoned. Indeed, with sixteen and a half pages devoted solely to that subject, the chapter is more than six times as long as the average early in *Jahrestage*, although it does catch up with events stretching over a three-year period. These harrowing revelations elicit, however, no reaction from Marie, simply because she does not hear what we read; it later becomes clear that this extensive

description must be confined to the internal narrative.<sup>33</sup> On the following day Robert F. Kennedy's assassination leads to misunderstandings and an acute deterioration in relations between Marie and Gesine on a personal level. For a week the Jerichow story is entirely suspended as far as Marie is concerned.

During that week, on 9 June 1968, Gesine confides in DE, who has just helped to heal the rift caused by Kennedy's death. DE initially raises the question by asking how the story is proceeding:

- Wie weit bist du jetzt, Gesine?
- Ja berat du mich. Ich krieg Cresspahl nicht los von den Sowjets. 1947.
- Du solltest Marie mehr erzählen von denen.
- D. E., sie kriegt es in den falschen Hals.
- Sie begreift schon die Russen von heute daneben.
- Sie ist eine zuverlässige Antikommunistin. Da glaubt sie der Schule. (*JT*, 1327)

The stagnation of the narrative is directly linked with Marie's receptiveness; once more Cresspahl is at the crux of the matter. Much of the difficulty lies in Gesine's propensity to foresee resistance on Marie's part, which in the event will be tempered by an eagerness to co-operate and an understanding of Gesine's hesitation. Gesine's version has now entered into open competition with what her daughter learns in school; Gesine is afraid to tread the thin line her story must take between counteracting the undesirable aspects of Marie's schooling and achieving the very opposite, simply reinforcing her in her beliefs. DE's suggestion that she should provide more information is no solution; the sluggishness of the narrative at this point stems precisely from such an effort. Gesine recognizes that the problem is not a new one: 'DE, ich erzähl ihr, was ihr nicht paßt' (*JT*, 1329); 'Das sind nicht die Sowjets, wie Marie sie in der Schule lernt, und es paßt ihr nicht' (*JT*, 1330). This dilemma has more far-reaching ramifications than on earlier occasions, however. For now Gesine's plans for the future may depend on her reconstruction of the past. As DE puts it, referring to her representation of Cresspahl's imprisonment: '— Mit einer genaueren Vorstellung ließe sie dich nicht nach Prag' (*JT*, 1330). Furthermore a certain amount of pride is involved, an unwillingness to betray the trust which Gesine still, in spite of everything, places in socialism: '— Ich helf der Schule nicht! Hab ich Marie nicht erzählt, wie Cresspahl zu den Sowjets kam? es ist mir sauer genug geworden. Jetzt bloß noch den Speisezettel von Fünfeichen dazu, sie wird ihr Lebttag dem Sozialismus mißtrauen' (*JT*, 1330–31). In answer to DE's assertion that Marie would be better prepared for what she learns in school, Gesine maintains that her daughter is still too young to hear of such matters. Gesine actually considers giving up the story at this point until Marie is fifteen; whichever way she turns a new problem presents itself.

Although allowing herself to be persuaded by DE that such a decision would delay matters indefinitely, Gesine undertakes a practical demonstration of why she imposes such restrictions on herself despite Marie's possible good will. She

tells a story to illustrate Dr. Vollbrecht's absurd ineptitude; as headmaster of her school he removed with nail-scissors an unacceptable reference to 'die wilde Natur der Russen' from a *Nacherzählung* Gesine had based on a Pushkin novella, but was unable to deal with the new problems his solution created:

Ob das Loch nun übergeklebt werden sollte, mit richtigem Text oder unschuldig weiß, solche Entscheidung ging über seine Kräfte, das überwältigte ihn, dazu machte er Bewegungen wie Einer, der ist schon genug mit dem eigenen Ertrinken beschäftigt, nun fragst du ihn nach der Uhrzeit. (*JT*, 1333)

Even DE, a product of the *Neue Schule* himself, is hard put to accept this:

— Das ist nicht wahr.

— Siehst du. Hingegen Marie soll ich es erzählen. (*JT*, 1333)

DE is thus forced to admit that the problem seems susceptible of no solution. Having earlier had to overcome a barrier of incredulity in Marie, Gesine would now have to prevent the over-receptive child from eagerly and uncritically accepting what she wants to hear, especially since what she wants to hear is true. Finally, on 12 June 1968, she determines, in search of a last-ditch solution, to discuss the matter openly with her daughter.

From that date until the end of volume three (a week later in the *Jahrestage* year) the Jerichow story becomes entirely a matter of debate and bargaining between Marie and Gesine, the narrative itself being, if not subordinated to the circumstances of its telling, then of barely more than equal importance. Almost nothing can be left uncommented during this difficult period, the internal narrative being entirely suspended in our text in favour of the external. This state of affairs continues until 21 June 1968, and represents a concerted effort by Gesine to avoid what might become an indefinite postponement of the external narrative.

Gesine's discussion with DE was apparently more fruitful than her lover's final capitulation would suggest, for Gesine owes her resolution to rescue the Jerichow story to DE's intervention.<sup>34</sup> The new momentum which Gesine alone had felt herself powerless to apply stems, then, for the first time from a source outside the field of narrative influences which have hitherto obtained. DE has taken the initiative by assuring Marie of Gesine's readiness to continue:

— So lustig waren deine Sowjets nicht: sagt Marie. Wie sie waren, soll ihr erzählt werden, es ist versprochen; eine Versöhnung hängt noch daran. Versprochen hat das unser Professor Erichson, der hält die Wahrheit für konkret; warum war Mrs. Cresspahl so erleichtert über jeden Aufschub? Warum wollte sie dies vertagen, mindestens in den Herbst, am liebsten um ein ganzes Jahr? (*JT*, 1341)

Marie's statement betrays her realization that Gesine has been de-emphasizing the less palatable aspects of Soviet occupation; DE obviously feels that the truth is easy enough to tell. Gesine's doubts with regard to her lover's confidence, and her consequent desire for delay, reflect the circumstances surrounding the

writing of *Jahrestage* as a whole, just as her misunderstandings with Marie (as far as both R. F. Kennedy and the Soviets are concerned) reflect the underlying, implicit disharmony between GS and Gesine, which is soon to emerge in their discussion over Ginny Carpenter: the literary considerations which contributed to the delay in *Jahrestage's* completion are beginning to emerge from the structural tensions within the novel's narrative dynamics.

Since it is now Gesine's scepticism which must be overcome, narrator and recipient find themselves in the curious position of offering each other's original arguments. Marie endeavours to overcome Gesine's inertia by asking her to consider their roles reversed, the child having to explain New York to a class of schoolchildren in Gneez:

— Könnte ich denen nicht vortragen, was gefällig ist in New York, von Harlem bis zum Hudson?

— Es wäre bloß, was du gesehen hast. Was du weißt. Bloß für dich wirklich.

— Für mich wirklich. (*JT*, 1341)

Gesine noticeably excludes sources of information which would lie beyond Marie's personal experience. This seems to be an important part of her own problem, beyond that of how Marie will react to the story. For now Gesine has reached a time when her personal experiences are outweighing what she needs to reconstruct from sources other than memory. Of course she cannot abandon reconstruction, particularly as far as Cresspahl's imprisonment is concerned. But now much of what she says has the status of a report, based on what she saw, and the rest of the story must remain in accordance with the parameters set down by these reports. However, personal experience is not in itself necessarily a qualification for inclusion, merely a matter which is 'bloß für dich wirklich'. Narrative validity requires these experiences to be set effectively in context. The devaluation implied by 'bloß' crystallizes towards the end of *Jahrestage 3* into a serious imbalance between personal experience and wider context, in favour of the latter and to the detriment of narrative cohesion.

Inevitably the question of credibility arises once more, only this time in reverse. Gesine says to Marie of her hypothetical Gneez listeners:

— Sie würden dir nicht glauben, von Anfang an.

— Gesine, glauben will ich dir ja.

— Ich hätte eine geheime Bewandtnis beim Erzählen, du aber willst mir nicht mißtrauen. Was soll daraus werden! (*JT*, 1341)

Having overcome Marie's scepticism on many occasions, Gesine has now ironically manoeuvred herself into having to provoke that very attribute in her daughter, counteracting the possible danger of Marie's preconceptions coinciding so exactly with the story that she relinquishes all critical distance. That is her 'geheime Bewandtnis', which, incidentally, Marie in fact recognizes



(see *JT*, 1345); Gesine tends throughout this section to underestimate her daughter's perspicacity.

Left with no other option, Gesine now finally confesses her previous dissemblance:

- Also will ich zugeben, es erging Cresspahl übel in der sowjetischen Haft. Gelegentlich. Schlimmer, als ich dir erzählen mochte.
- Hunger?
- Auch Hunger.
- Körperliche Mißhandlung?
- Verletzungen unterschiedlicher Art.
- Es stieß ihm irrtümlich zu, Gesine.
- Es stieß ihm zu. (*JT*, 1341–42)

This admission relies heavily on Marie's co-operation, not only in the form of questions, but also of suggestions; the interjection of 'Gelegentlich' betrays Gesine's continued misgivings. The child is eager to compromise on the issue, an eagerness which tends to become excessive: Gesine ironically finds herself curbing a disposition on Marie's part to display an exaggerated willingness to excuse the Soviets purely as a means of pleasing Gesine and resolving their quarrel. In the above exchange the child's wording suggests that fate, not the Russians, was responsible for what happened to Cresspahl. Although relieved that the expected prejudice has not appeared, Gesine is careful, in her reply, to remove the word 'irrtümlich'. Creating the impression that the Soviets should be absolved of all blame for such unjustified arrests would be as wrong as using such incidents to condemn them outright. The matter is resolved with surprising ease when Marie admits that she would in any case prefer not to hear the details; they therefore agree on the formulation 'Er war einmal nicht da' (*JT*, 1342). Thus Gesine restricts the story to her own sphere during the years of Cresspahl's absence. But since Cresspahl has been acting as a narrative focus for Gesine too, she fails precisely in that endeavour. Losing the central strand of narrative direction, she finds the figure of Gerd Schumann to be a sorry alternative before settling upon Jakob.

As if to compensate for the loss of Cresspahl's story, Gesine reveals that she had also suppressed the disappearance of Slata, Robert Papenbrock's Russian common-law wife. In this section more than any previous one the Jerichow story arises from co-operation, question, answer, suggestion, discussion on a scale which has no parallel even in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Marie similarly appears to seek compensation for her acquiescence over Cresspahl, making no secret of her indignation that Slata's fate had remained untold: '— Die hab ich fast vergessen. Du hast mich mit Absicht an ihr vorbeigeführt!' (*JT*, 1342). And after hearing of Gesine's admiration for the Russian woman: '— So eine wichtige Person. Die unterschlägst du mir' (*JT*, 1344). Gesine does not deny the charge, but neither does Marie (to her subsequent cost) consider that her mother

may have had a reason for the concealment. In her eagerness to prove to Gesine that there need be no conflict between them, Marie tries to absolve the Russians from blame for Slata's disappearance in the same way as she had in Cresspahl's case: '— Es ist Slata irrtümlich zugestoßen, Gesine' (*JT*, 1344). But this time, although Gesine is prepared to accept Marie's suggestion with a similar telling modification ('Es ist ihr plötzlich zugestoßen', *JT*, 1345), she is not ready to enter upon yet another compromise. Marie seeks to justify Slata's treatment by pointing out that she, like Cresspahl, had betrayed her country:

— Sie war, wenn auch nicht vor dem Gesetz, die Frau eines Nazis. Hat Dörfer angezündet in der Ukraine.

— Das wußte das Dreifache J, als er sie zu seiner Vertrauten machte. Er hatte ihr vergeben.

— Sie hatte einen Sohn von diesem Robert Papenbrock.

— Der sprach besser Russisch. Er hieß nicht mehr Fritz. Hörte auf Fedja.

— Ihr Name ist in Cresspahls Akten gefunden worden.

— Ja. Sie wurde nicht deswegen geholt. (*JT*, 1345)

Although Marie's attempts to show that Slata's arrest was justified by her treachery fail, she imagines that the treatment meted out to her may be excused as a kind of poetic justice, deserved by one who has betrayed her country. She remains confident that Gesine's fears are groundless: '— Gesine, du wolltest mir dies nicht erzählen wegen deiner Bewandnis. Du denkst, ich mißverstehe die Sowjets gleich wieder. Ich verstehe sie aber' (*JT*, 1345). But Marie has once more been distracted by her preoccupation with betrayal, believing Gesine's denial that the Russian woman's arrest was for treachery to be an underhand method of devaluing a crime which the child regards as most serious: 'Ich mag nicht, wenn Einer sein Land verrät. Du willst es mir empfehlen. Erst Cresspahl, dann Slata' (*JT*, 1345). Gesine thereupon ironically proposes that Slata might be the one to ask, with which Marie eagerly concurs: 'Nicht wahr. Sie ist zurückgekommen. Man kann versuchen, es ihr zu erklären. Man hat es ihr längst erklärt' (*JT*, 1345). But Marie in her enthusiasm has plunged into free speculation, disregarding the narrative precepts which must be observed. She is rapidly sobered by Gesine's retort: '— Sie ist nicht zurückgekommen. Fedja hat noch die Fahrt in die Sowjetunion überstanden, im Lager ist er gestorben' (*JT*, 1345). This information immediately precipitates the child into a state of distracted confusion. Again the fictional truth has unexpectedly struck a nerve, causing an unfamiliar reaction in the ten-year-old '— Gesine, schieb das Band zurück bis zu Alma Witte. Ich will das alles nicht gesagt haben. Ich will darüber nachdenken dürfen. Das nächste Mal sag mir Bescheid. Sag: Halt' (*JT*, 1345). But if Gesine's lesson is to have any effect, Marie must stand by her mistake: erasing the two pages worth of proof from the tape will not make her argument unsaid. Gesine therefore ignores her plea, and continues by describing how Frau Witte lost not only Slata and Fedja, but also her pride, rubbing salt into the

wound, as it were, to press home the lesson. But Gesine does agree to provide her listener with a means of avoiding a repetition; like ‘Wassertonnegeschichte’, ‘Halt’, is to serve as a warning sign.

The Sleta episode teaches Marie why Gesine felt it necessary to suppress some of the story, and even considered terminating the narrative. Marie’s goodwill and readiness to understand are not enough to set Gesine’s mind at rest. Indeed, such attributes may, as in this case, be harmful if unthinkingly applied. Yet an important milestone in Marie’s critical development has been reached, for this experience prompts the first example of self-criticism on Marie’s part, as she seeks reasons for her efforts to divert the story along the lines she would prefer: ‘— Gesine, könnte es sein, daß ich eifersüchtig bin? Auf Sleta? Auf eine Besitzerin von einem Hamburger Hof in Gneez?’ (*JT*, 1347). Apparently determined to overcome this weakness, Marie ignores the warning ‘Halt’ which appears at this point, insisting that Gesine should answer the question: she has learned that a certain degree of self-sacrifice is involved in taking part in the creation of fictional truth.

Marie’s newly-acquired insight comes to light after she has heard about the drunken Russian soldier whom Gesine prevented from gaining access to Alma Witte’s Hamburger Hof:

- Solche Geschichten weißt du noch viele.
- Viele.
- Du bist sicher, daß ich etwas Falsches mit ihnen anfangen werde.
- Das fürchte ich.
- Wart es ab, Gesine. Wart es ab. (*JT*, 1349)

Although both are aware of the problem, Gesine knows that Marie may not be able to help herself; her fear was confirmed in this chapter. But the lengthy discussion has at least enabled them to reach a compromise whereby the story can continue: a revised set of ground-rules has been established for the narrative, Marie in particular having learned of the dangers inherent in Gesine’s plan. But at the same time the ten-year-old’s final comment (reminiscent of Gesine’s ‘Töw du man, du’; *JT*, 1034) reveals that her confidence remains unimpaired.

Continuing on the next *Jahrestage* day, their discussion, like that of 15 December 1967, now expressly takes the form of a game or competition, whereby each participant attempts to lead the other into exposing inconsistency:

- Gesine, darf ich dir eine Falle stellen? Gestern war ich ungeschickt. Heute werde ich dich hereinlegen.
- Darf ich dir auch eine Falle stellen, Marie?
- Deine weiß ich. Meine siehst du nicht.
- Mary Fenimore Cooper Cresspahl.
- Und Henriette. Los?
- Band läuft. (*JT*, 1350)

Up to now the interplay between Gesine and Marie has been examined intrinsically, with a view to exposing the immanent principles which govern the narrative dynamics. In view of the tone struck by the chapter presently under discussion, however, and of the general difficulties besetting *Jahrestage* at this point, it might be wise briefly to step outside these constraints in order to take stock of the book as a whole from a more distanced vantage point.

It must be said that the trap-setting mentioned above is evidence of an increasingly disturbing self-indulgence which has begun to characterize the Gesine-Marie discussions. The reader is invited to observe what can only be termed unctuous exchanges between a daughter who is the model of mature understanding, yet capable of spirited resistance, and an endlessly patient, agonizing mother; exchanges which, moreover, seem in part to operate by means of a silent intuition to which the reader is not privy.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Marie's precociousness becomes ever more implausible as we are asked on the one hand to expect the emotional reactions of a ten-year-old (although these too are improbably mature) and on the other a kind of insight and sophisticated thought process which, one suspects, are more characteristic of an intellectual writer in his forties. Indeed this is the root of the problem; Johnson has clearly begun to identify himself strongly with his characters; hence the impression of a *Streitgespräch* between equals who know each other's arguments in advance. In consequence Gesine too loses much credibility as a narrator, descending into a welter of detail concerning the political changes in Mecklenburg after the war, matters which, even if we assume the information to have been provided by GS (although there is no textual evidence for that)<sup>36</sup> would hardly be likely to sustain a child's interest. The characters themselves have been lost to sight in an obsession with detail resulting in the formlessness and lack of direction which has frequently been noted as characteristic of the concluding chapters in *Jahrestage* 3. This amorphousness may to some extent be justified in that Gesine has lost the focus of her narration in Cresspahl's absence. Yet the fact remains that at this stage *Jahrestage* is breaching the very guidelines of credibility and plausibility which Gesine attempts to achieve in the Jerichow narrative. Johnson seems to have diverted Frisch's maxim 'Und doch vollzieht sich das menschliche Leben oder verfehlt sich am einzelnen Ich, nirgends sonst'<sup>37</sup> away from his main characters and towards himself. Not until *Jahrestage* 4, when the story begins to concern itself with the person of Gesine once more, does the former vitality return.

The discussion of 13 June 1968 displays unmistakable signs of the malaise described above, the narrative relationships acting as a barometer for the wider problem. The 'Falle' which Marie referred to represents her first overt attempt actually to manipulate Gesine in much the same way as she herself has been unwittingly bent to Gesine's will.<sup>38</sup> She begins to lay her trap by asking the question: '— Gesine, hausten die Sowjets bei euch wüster als die Briten in

Indien?' (*JT*, 1350). Secretly expecting to see her image of the Soviets confirmed, and yet aware that if she does so the story may be prematurely terminated, Marie adopts what has become her habitually cautious, circumspect approach when referring to this matter. Gesine avoids committing herself to a comparison between Russians and British; Marie therefore steers the conversation on to the real object of her attention; the bourgeoisie. Inevitably, Louise Papenbrock is cited by way of example. Gesine suspects Marie of having deliberately enticed her on to the subject of her grandmother:

— Du mißtraust mir. Du denkst, ich biege die Erzählung um gegen sie. Bloß um ihr Schlechtigkeiten anzuhängen.

— Du haßt sie.

— Marie, an der war nichts zu hassen für ein dreizehnjähriges Kind. Der ging ich aus dem Weg, weil Cresspahl das ungefähr gewollt hatte, nun auch noch Jakob; wußte ich warum? Kannst du hassen auf Befehl?

— Das war gar nicht meine Falle, Gesine. (*JT*, 1352–53)

This illustrates clearly enough the new sophistication of which Marie is now capable; experience has provided her with the expertise at least to attempt manipulation, even if her success is limited. Similarly she is far more sensitive to what she thinks may be attempts at manipulation on Gesine's part. Gesine explains how the Soviets were surprisingly ready to hold to the agreement reached at Potsdam on the redistribution of agricultural land in a way incommensurate with socialist economic policy; Marie is suspicious of such exemplary generosity:

— Sie müssen es doch mit zusammengebissenen Zähnen getan haben. Bloß aus Vertragstreue?

— Das traust du ihnen nicht zu, Marie.

— Ach. Das war deine Falle. Stimmt das, Gesine?

— Das war noch nicht die Feder von der Falltür. (*JT*, 1353)

Clearly Marie's critical education has proceeded to the point where, able to perceive (even if mistakenly) abstract or concealed objectives in concrete description, she may meet Gesine almost on equal terms. This has the effect once more of diffusing the focus of narration into an abstruse, circumstantial plane, as though the two narrative forces represented by Gesine and Marie had cancelled each other out. The explanations of ulterior motive at the end of this discussion furnish a further illustration:

— Was immer deine Falle war, Gesine, meine hast du kaputt.

— Meine sollte dir bloß vorführen, daß du dich gelegentlich irrst mit deiner gnadenlosen Unterdrückung durch die Sowjets.

— Ich wollte dir beweisen, daß ich etwas einsehen kann. Daß wenigstens ein solcher Haufen zu Recht bestraft wird. Nun sind sie wieder dran.<sup>39</sup>

— Wie heißt eine solche doppelte Falle, Marie.

— Das weißt du recht gut.

— Dein Amerikanisch ist besser.

— Double cross heißt es. Vorspiegelung vermittels Tatsachen, oder wie immer die Deutschen sagen. (*JT*, 1358)

These remarks imply a barely credible prescience and perspicacity on the part of both narrator and listener. The term 'Falle' transpires to be merely a grandiose disguise for the same fundamental stratagems as both parties have previously been pursuing. Marie's scheme is referred to as a 'double cross', in that rather than attempting to trick Gesine into showing the Soviets in their true colours, she has in fact been proving her preparedness to co-operate. Yet since her dismay at Cresspahl's decision to remain in an area soon to be occupied by the Russians, Marie has made every effort to smooth the way for Gesine: this chapter was no exception. The word-play 'Vorspiegelung vermittels Tatsachen', Marie's erroneous version of 'Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen' is thus misleading, since no pretence was involved in her plan. Furthermore, although Gesine speaks of 'deine gnadenlose Unterdrückung durch die Sowjets', there is little textual evidence that Marie has maintained such a point of view; her prejudice can in general only be surmised through Gesine's reactions. The narrator's 'Falle' comprised nothing other than her usual efforts to overcome what she anticipates to be resistance from Marie. Since the latter offers less resistance than co-operation, their discussion cannot possibly reach a conclusion. Indeed the comments they exchange have, superficially, little common purpose; that the result is not confusion and a subsequent breakdown in communication can only be explained by the presence of a third, unifying consciousness detectable only by the fact that the discussion has continued. The debate between Marie and Gesine has degenerated into an end in itself. This discussion in particular marks time, exacerbating the narrative's virtual stagnation without offering compensatory advantage, representing a structural weakness symptomatic of the novel's crisis.

After this nadir, however, the interplay between Marie and Gesine begins gradually to resume its task of facilitating the sluggish narrative progress which does take place. On the next *Jahrestage* day, perceiving Gesine's misgivings, Marie asks: '— Und was willst du mir heute nicht erzählen?' (*JT*, 1359). There follows a description and representation in dialogue of the first post-war SPD meeting in Jerichow, in December 1945. One may assume that the depiction of the meeting takes place as part of the internal reconstruction, and thus that Marie's original query was met by silence, for the question is then repeated:

— Was ist es heute, das du mir nicht erzählen willst, Gesine.

— Ein Todesfall. Halt?

— Du machst dir dein Jerichow ganz leer. Bald kenn ich da keinen Menschen mehr. (*JT*, 1362)

Marie's persistence and refusal to accept the proffered alarm signal 'Halt' are rewarded with the story of Warning's fate, which, however, although it ties up

loose ends, contributes little to the interests either of internal or external narrative. Indeed Gesine is too preoccupied with the latter to devote herself with any consistency to the former; her attention has shifted almost exclusively from the introspective to the didactic aspect of her narration. In consequence the narrative course diversifies, as Gesine concentrates on describing circumstances and exemplary episodes designed to break down Marie's resistance, which, in so far as it exists, must be largely involuntary, as the following (rather artificial) question indicates:

- Gesine, ist es mecklenburgisch, daß ich eine Versöhnung mit dem Willen allein nicht hinkriege?
- Laß uns wieder warten.
- O.K. Nun erzähl mir was, das geht mich gar nichts an.
- Louise Papenbrock?
- Die geht mich gar nichts an.
- Machen wir es mit Falle oder ohne?
- Ohne. (*JT*, 1369)

The 'Versöhnung' actually refers to their misunderstanding over Robert F. Kennedy; but Marie's request for a story which cannot affect her creates a correspondence between that difficulty and the narrative disruption. Gesine's reply 'laß uns wieder warten' thus effects a further delay in the problem over the Soviets. The decision to omit any 'Falle' is, in view of the previous day's discussion, clearly a wise one, preventing aggravation of the already considerable difficulties. The deliberate choice of a subject which precludes emotional involvement on Marie's part further reduces the possibility of conflict. Yet even Louise Papenbrock plays a part in the political rebirth of post-war Jerichow (in Papenbrock's absence she is active in the CDU), and so the story once more diffuses into a detailed account of political conditions; young Gesine continues to play no more than a peripheral role, while Cresspahl, of course, can play none at all.

Undoubtedly Gesine's need to analyse the GDR's origins by examining the new system's political foundations is justified in terms of the *Jahrestage* fictional world, since that country represents a further source of betrayal, a breach of faith which was, however, far less devastating than that which Gesine feels she has suffered from her parents; particularly Lisbeth. Moreover, her projected journey to Prague, the last chance she is granting to socialism, helps to explain her pressing need to understand what went wrong in the GDR. The letter Johnson wrote to Siegfried Unseld in September 1973 suggesting that the final four-month section of *Jahrestage* should be split into two volumes refers to these matters:

Gewiß, diese G. Cresspahl geht später weg aus einem Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern, bloß weil Bauern und Arbeiter Aufstand machten gegen solchen Staat; jene frühe Erziehung in Sozialismus sitzt fest in ihr, sie hat ja auch das Schwimmen nicht verlernt

und nur mit ausführlicher Beschreibung des Anfangs werde ich zeigen können, wie sie es, im Alter von 35 Jahren, doch noch einmal versuchen will mit dem Sozialismus, nach reichlich Enttäuschungen mit dem, der in der Tschechoslowakei fast ein halbes Jahr dauerte.<sup>40</sup>

But unlike other such matters have been, this personal preoccupation is incorporated into the external rather than the internal narrative. This may be explained by Gesine's desire to counteract Marie's automatic antipathy to Communism; as Johnson put it in the same letter: '... obendrein muß sie es so ordnen, daß da in New York nicht eine 11 jährige Antikommunistin heranwächst in Gestalt der eigenen Tochter'. Yet the fusion of these two diverse aims demands a standard of intelligent co-operation from Marie which sets the final stamp on that character's incredibility. Furthermore this ill-chosen combination of personal and pedagogic narrative aims has resulted in Gesine's own story, on which the narrative progress depends, being almost lost to sight. The narrative progress is an important matter, since every *Jahrestage* day which is devoted to the period 1945–47 involves sacrificing later material if the cat is eventually to catch its tail. If the story is to be rescued, therefore, the narrative progress must be restored.

It is in fact Marie, once more exercising a crucial influence on the narrative, who recognizes the problem at hand, namely that a narrative focus, in the form of a particular character, is lacking. She therefore (after a particularly vague explanation by her mother of what was to be specifically German about the new socialism) simply asks Gesine to provide such an anchoring figure:

— Gesine, nun zeig mir endlich einen, dem das Spaß macht. Der am Drücker sitzt. Der das freiwillig tut. So einen. Der Bescheid weiß. Der glücklich ist damit. Einen mußst du doch wissen.

— Einen weiß ich. Stell dir vor, du bist dreiundzwanzig Jahre alt —

— Gern, Gesine. Gern. (*JT*, 1375)

Marie correctly guesses this orientation point, this 'einen', to be Gerd Schumann (although this character has only briefly appeared by name once before; *JT*, 1186–87), who organizes the establishment of the new order in the Gneez area, liaising between the civilian population and the Russian authorities.<sup>41</sup> The manner of description which follows is designed to overcome the abstraction which has been plaguing the Jerichow story; the sentences are long, comprising simple, insistent main clauses separated by commas, 'du' being hypnotically repeated in order that Marie might feel a positive affinity with the fictional world, able to accept this new figure as a replacement for Cresspahl's former narrative function:

— Du bist einer von den allerersten, dich haben die Sowjets mitgenommen in der Initiativgruppe Nord, du warst nicht mit dem Genossen Sobottka am 6. Mai in Stettin, du lerntest noch Verwaltung in Stargard, du warst mit in Waren an der Müritz, als die Gruppe Sobottka sich selber zur Landesparteileitung wählte für Mecklenburg und



Vorpommern, du sitzt nicht auf dem falschen Dampfer, du hast bewiesen, was du taugst. Dir hat keiner was geschenkt, du hast gearbeitet. . . . (JT, 1375–76)

The focusing of the story on a personality with whom Marie may identify, or at least by whom she may orientate herself, brings a certain degree of success, since interruptions are few; Schumann's story maintains a continuity which has for some time been lacking in Gesine's narrative. Nevertheless the child upholds an ironic attitude, curbing sentimental tendencies as Gesine touches on Schumann's homesickness:

— Mach mir den nicht weinerlich, Gesine!

— Du bist dreiundzwanzig! (JT, 1379)<sup>42</sup>

The fervour of Gesine's retort, in common with the intensity of her description, testifies to the energy she is investing in this effort to rectify the narrative diffusion. But Marie's response nevertheless lacks enthusiasm, being characterized more by a tone of petulant irritation:

— Die eine Sache, die er nicht einsieht. Slata?<sup>43</sup>

— Na ja. Du bist dreiundzwanzig —

— Dann will ich es nicht sein. Sie geht mit einem Deutschen, er läuft über zu den Sowjets. Womöglich zur gleichen Zeit.

— Wenn das Dreifache J sich nicht stieß daran, warum du?

— Es ist nicht reinlich.

— Slata mag eine reinliche Geschichte erzählt haben. Sie war nicht mit den Briten weggelaufen. Sie hatte auf ihre Landsleute gewartet. Was weiß ich.

— Eben. Was weißt du.

— Du hast zum Schaden noch den Spott. Es gibt in der eigenen Partei das Gerede, du hättest Slata schon genommen, wenn sie das Dreifache J mitgebracht hätte. Du kennst den Namen, Karrierismus heißt das. Sie denken von dir nicht so wie du. Darauf kommt es dir aber an.

— Du kannst es nicht wissen. (JT, 1381–82)

Marie is clearly not entirely satisfied with this approach, as her rejection of Schumann's role and the doubts she casts on the narrative validity indicate. Although the atmosphere thus remains one of disharmony at the end of *Jahrestage 3*, Gesine determines to persist with Gerd Schumann as a unifying device to draw the narrative threads together.

The next discussion, 21 June 1968, also revolves around Gerd Schumann, describing how he led the SED election campaign in Mecklenburg during September 1946. A quite implausible intellectual maturity on Marie's part is essential for this debate to function.<sup>44</sup> Yet despite the child's profound understanding of and improbable interest in political minutiae, the attempt to bind such circumstantial detail to the figure of Gerd Schumann, rendering the impersonal personal, continues. Marie complains '— Wer gewinnt, weiß ich. Das wird langweilig' (JT, 1394). In reply to one of the few protests which Marie has made on the grounds of tedium (otherwise, surely, one of the more

common criteria applied to literature of all kinds), Gesine focusses narrowly on the emotional responses aroused by these political events in the chosen figure: '— Für den Wahlkampfleiter der SED im Landkreis Gneez war es nicht langweilig. Unheimlich war ihm. Oft in den Wochen vor der Wahl bekam er ein Gefühl, als stünde Einer hinter ihm, im Dunkeln. Er konnte nicht herausfinden, was es war' (*JT*, 1394). The narrative perspective thus moves into a hero-view mode, which, while having the positive effect of stimulating Marie's interest, eliciting credulity and co-operative questions, at the same time raises the question of how Gesine could justify the kind of detailed knowledge revealed in this reply to Marie's suggestion that Schumann's fear stemmed from the possibility of losing the election: 'Deswegen wachst du auf in durchgeschwitztem Bettzeug? Im August? In einem so kühlen, dickwandigen Haus wie dem Hotel Stadt Hamburg, in einem Zimmer gegen den Westwind? Kann solche Sorge mitkommen in den Schlaf?' (*JT*, 1395). After all, Gesine never knew Schumann well enough to provide even a basis for reconstruction. But the effect of Gesine's timely departure from circumstantial narration is such that Marie remains silent on the issue, carried by the narrative flow; indeed almost no controversy arises during their discussion. Nevertheless, Gesine's information source is later revealed; namely a meeting with Schumann in 1962 (see *JT*, 1420).

This transpires to have been the last discussion of the narrative between Marie and Gesine for some time. The narrative reaps the benefits of Gesine's strategy, for the results of the Mecklenburg elections are analysed during the chapter for 25 June 1968 without opposition from Marie. In the following chapter, the open dispute between Gesine and GS over Ginny Carpenter appears. This airing of the selectivity problem represents a turning point, for the Jerichow story immediately shifts emphasis back to Gesine's personal experiences of post-war Jerichow, recounting her story from autumn 1946 until Cresspahl's return in May 1948 (told on 8 July 1968). During this period the narrative progresses smoothly, without apparent obstacle: both Jakob and the young Gesine have filled the gap left by Cresspahl. The differences between mother and daughter, narrator, and listener, have been reduced through restriction of the narrative focus to Gesine's personal sphere. Only after Cresspahl's return does a further discussion of the Jerichow story take place; Marie's reaction to the news is positive: '—Wenigstens hast du ihn nun zurückgeholt von den Russen, und ich danke dir: sagt Marie. — Beglückwünschen will ich dich auch, wie es sich gehört' (*JT*, 1523). Gesine's success in winning over Marie is confirmed when she speculates on why Cresspahl was released in May 1948 when he should, according to the sentence passed, have remained imprisoned until August 1952: '— . . . Heute meinen wir, die Sowjets hätten doch etwas erfahren von Cresspahls Nachrichtensammelei für die Briten im Krieg und wollten ihn aufsparen' (*JT*, 1524). In stark, encouraging contrast to her earlier attitude, Marie makes

not the slightest objection to the mention of Cresspahl's espionage, signalling her complete capitulation in the matter. Marie protests only once, on very familiar grounds: '— Warum seid ihr bloß geblieben! Cresspahl hatte Freunde in Hamburg, in England!' (*JT*, 1527). But her opposition is weak, almost formal; she accepts the reasons Gesine puts forward, particularly the final one: '— Nun hatte die Sowjetische Militär-Administration in Deutschland den Verkehr zwischen ihrer Zone und der westlichen auf Eisenbahnen, auf Autos und zu Fuß gesperrt' (*JT*, 1528). Marie's critical acumen, having progressed beyond overconfident cynicism and petulant pretension to thoughtful maturity, allows her to accept reasonable argument, repressing her preconceived desires rather than attempting to distort the story in their service.

The discussions become rarer, briefer, and almost entirely uncontroversial as far as the techniques of narration are concerned. Short conversations take place on 11 July 1968 (*JT*, 1536–37) and 14 July 1968 (*JT*, 1555), as the story progresses towards Gesine's *Abitur* via her first experience of love, first brush with the new State's power, and so on. On 22 July 1968, Gesine makes an ironic reference to earlier conflicts which highlights the present harmony; after an episode concerning the Brühshavers, she asks with transparent innocence: 'Bißchen viel Kirche, Marie?' (*JT*, 1604). It was this remark, made by Marie on 1 March 1968, which had preceded the original breakdown in narrative relations which eventually led to the crisis in *Jahrestage 3*; namely the revelation of Cresspahl's espionage. Marie does not rise to the mild, probing, yet confident jibe; indeed both sides are ready for agreement, concession and compromise: having heard how Gesine admitted to Brühshaver her inability to believe in the power of God, Marie asserts:

— Weil ihr überall lügen müßtet, hast du deine Wahrheit an Brühshaver ausgelassen. Gib es zu.

— Geb ich zu, Marie. Und es sollte endlich zu Ende sein.

— Du warst eben viel zu klein, Gesine. Wie soll ein Kind entscheiden, ob es glaubt. Ich laß mich konfirmieren, wenn ich Bescheid weiß, so mit achtzehn, vielleicht. (*JT*, 1605)

This discussion, although brief, is an important symptom of new harmony; the rift in narrative relations is healed, the narrative balance restored.

Five days elapse before the next discussion (on Gesine's schooldays) which is conducted in an atmosphere of playful irony, conveying an impression of high spirits as a result of past differences having been successfully overcome. What in the past had been serious points of dispute become matters for amusement, their gravity taken for granted. Marie wishes, for example, that Gesine had managed to best Bettina Selbich:

— Ich möchte ja bloß, du hättest mal gesiegt.

— Hab ich. Mit so viel Längen wie ein Badeanzug aufweist.

— Vertell. Du lüchst so schön! (*JT*, 1651)<sup>45</sup>

In response to Marie's desire to see her (modest) wish realized in the story, Gesine is able to supply a relevant example, while the issue of 'lügen' is defused by means of light-hearted banter. Marie's full acceptance of the narrative approach similarly emerges in a later exchange:

- . . . Zu Hause fand Jakobs Mutter ein Dutzend Eier in der Milch; die Abschnitte für Eier wurden in den Maidekaden beliefert mit Margarine.
- Gesine, du lüchst. Das sind meine explodierten Eier!
- Sollst bedankt sein; sonst hätt ich sie ja vergessen. (*JT*, 1653–54)

Marie playfully reiterates a previous complaint, namely that Gesine has incorporated an incident from their present life in New York into the story. Gesine has no need expressly to deny the charge, able now to reciprocate the irony with which the accusation was levelled. The discussion ends on an unequivocal note of mutual accord:

- . . . Nun wünsch dir was, Marie.
- Daß du jede Nacht so lange schlafen dürftest wie du brauchst, und wünschest. Yours, truly. (*JT*, 1657)

Such objections as do still occur are met with assiduous gestures of conciliation from Gesine. On 30 July 1968, Marie asks why Gesine and her classmates had not devised some form of revenge on Bettina Selbich for her part in the investigation of the illegal pamphlets which had been pasted up in the Fritz-Reuter Oberschule:

- Dreimal hättest du sie reinlegen können beim Verhör: sagt Marie; die beschwert sich.
- Bettina hat etwas geklebt gekriegt fürs erste. Und wir hatten einander versprochen: nur in einem Notfall.
- Wenn das keiner war, erzähl mir einen!
- Coming up! Coming up! (*JT*, 1680)

Gesine's eagerness to assuage Marie's unease is palpable, and further reason for dissent is indeed eliminated as she gives an account of Bettina's final humiliation.

A short exchange on 4 August 1968 contains a renewed allusion to past problems; indeed to the very inception of their discussions:

- Gesine! du hast dir die Platte mit Variationen für den Schüler Goldberg angehört bis nach Mitternacht. Das Quodlibet zweimal!
- Vesógelieke. Über uns war eine Party im Gang, da wollt ich meinen eigenen Krach.
- Reingefallen! Du dachtest, ich wollt streiten mir dir! Gut geträumt hab ich von der Musik.
- Marie, ich möcht mit dir wetten: erst von Ende Oktober an streiten wir miteinander.
- Wetten, daß ich gewinne? (*JT*, 1713)

Although Gesine's bet refers to the possibility of argument in general, its effects are most noticeable during their discussions of the narrative. Marie's final words are an unmistakable reminder of her prophetic remark 'Wetten, daß es kracht?' (*JT*, 131), yet their confident presence itself makes manifest the congenial accord

which now holds sway: this is a bet she will not win. Its very existence is convincing evidence of Gesine's determination to avoid renewed disputes. One reason for that determination may be to avoid jeopardizing Marie's assent to their projected six-week visit to Prague, which was to have lasted until the end of October, and which might have furnished further material for disagreement. The phrase 'erst ab Ende Oktober' thus becomes a formula for keeping the peace, to the narrative's benefit. Soon afterwards, for instance, Marie implicitly warns Gesine against overconfidence, reacting to a short-tempered remark from the latter: '— Gesine, du sagtest: Erst ab Ende Oktober' (*JT*, 1714). A further means is thus available to smooth the narrative path in *Jahrestage 4*, complementing two other distinct advantages which may have by now arisen: the discussions are now much less needed as a means of criticism of the narrative, partly because all such problems have been exhaustively discussed, and partly because Gesine can narrate with ever-increasing confidence as her memories become more complete and reliable. For the same reason the internal narrative becomes much less important; reconstruction is now less necessary. As a result the Jerichow story emerges organically from mutual co-operation between mother and daughter as it approaches final synthesis. Gesine's eagerness to avoid conflict is increased after DE's death, when she pours her energies (however misguidedly) into concealing that fact from her daughter. Yet the closing stages of their narrative relationship still reveal some insights into the literary process.

On a beach of Rockaway Island (13 August 1968), Gesine employs precisely the same excuse to circumvent a request for substantiation as she had in countering Marie's very first objection, which was to how Gesine knew Lisbeth had burned her 'Beschwerdebuch' (see *JT*, 151): 'Nun will Marie noch wissen, warum sie einen Brief von Jakob aus Mähren noch nie zu Gesichte bekommen hat. Weil er verwahrt liegt in Düsseldorf. Wird die Mutter schwören, daß es ihn gibt? Sie tut es, sie legt sich die Hand auf das Herz. (Und wenn's ein Meineid war, ich tät's gleich noch mal)' (*JT*, 1811). Although Gesine's explanation is precisely the same in either case, on this occasion, almost at the end of the narrative's course, the bracketed comment hints heavily at confirmation of what previously could only be suspected, namely that Gesine is ultimately prepared to defend the fictional truth against historical truth. This brief comment is a clear sign that Gesine has identified and rectified the problem which came to afflict the narrative towards the end of *Jahrestage 3*; that is, an imbalance in favour of the historical to the detriment of the fictional approach.

The narrative progress speeds up enormously in terms of the relation of *erzählte Zeit* to *Erzählzeit* during the final sixty pages and six days of *Jahrestage*. The years 1952 to 1962 are summed up in four chapters containing some thirty-five pages. The vast improvement in narrative relations and approach has thus exercised a tangible effect, enabling the story to complete its course, the cat to catch its tail. The improvement is such that in the chapter for 15 August 1968

Marie even goes as far as to apologize for doubting Gesine's superior knowledge regarding the East German army: '— Entschuldige, Gesine. Mir kannst du viel erzählen' (*JT*, 1837). Even the disparity between Gesine's version and that which Marie learns in school may be resolved with the formula agreed upon eleven days before:

— Und weil später die Arbeiter und Bauern einen Aufstand gemacht haben gegen eine Regierung der Arbeiter und Bauern, bist du weggegangen aus Mecklenburg.

— Was für großmächtige Worte, Marie!

— So heißt es in der Schule.

— Die amerikanische Schule bringt euch das bei als eine erste Auskunft über den Sozialismus, damit ihr vorbeisehen lernt an den Aufstehen der Neger von Watts bis Newark!

— Gesine, du sagtest: Erst ab Oktober.

— Vesógeliecke. Was Gesine Cresspahl war, die kannte keinen Arbeiter im Vertrauen. (*JT*, 1837–38)

Gesine's apology complements that of Marie just previously, and allows a reasonable discussion of what motivated her to leave the GDR, disturbed only by Marie's insistence on overruling Gesine's warning of a *Wassertonnegeschichte*, and subjection to the penalty for doing so. Having heard how Jakob's horse was slaughtered, Marie admits her mistake: '— Gesine, wenn ich noch einmal angebe mit meinem Alter, fährst du mir über den Mund, verstanden? Dann knallst du mir eine!' (*JT*, 1844).

That renewed lesson shows its worth when their discussion reaches Jakob's death, on 17 August 1968.<sup>46</sup> Marie points out (as have many critics and reviewers) that Jakob could have remained with Gesine in Düsseldorf:

— Er hätte bleiben können.

— Was wir beredet haben für das Jahr danach bis 1983, Veranstaltungen im Unsichtbaren, Aufbauten in einer Zukunft, es sind nunmehr Geschichten wie die, da fallen kleine Kinder in eine Wassertonne; da hängt es an den Fäden einer Minute, ob einer kommt und rettet sie.

— Gelernt ist gelernt, Gesine. Sag du es.

— Fährt zurück an die östliche Elbe, geht bei Morgennebel über ein Gleisfeld, das verwaltet er seit zwei Jahren, wird von Zugbewegungen erfaßt, stirbt unter dem Messer. Das Begräbnis hat Cresspahl ausgerichtet. Frau Abs und seiner Tochter gab er erst Bescheid, als Jakob unter der Erde war. Das war für die eine gesund; für die andere ein Schaden. Die eine hat versäumt, sich umzubringen. Sie wünschte erst klar Schiff zu machen, reinen Tisch. Das ist so eingerichtet, damit jemand überlebt. Als der Selbstmord mir verboten war, war er beinahe vergessen. (*JT*, 1867–68)<sup>47</sup>

Apart from Marie's acceptance of Gesine's warning, which allows Gesine to lay the emphases she sees fit, this section of her account is remarkable for its coolness and brevity. There are several possible reasons for this levelheadedness at what must be one of the most painful points in the story for Gesine. Firstly, in purely practical terms — as far as Johnson was concerned — the story had already been told in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, although he was not averse to

retelling the same story in a different way, as 'Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960' shows. More importantly, Gesine specifically excludes her plans with Jakob from the external narrative by using the *Regentonnegeschichte* warning; this is an important recognition of the difficulties which may be, and have been, caused by apportioning certain aspects of the narrative to one or the other mode. That she does not include this matter in the internal narrative may suggest that she has come to terms with his death during the intervening period. However, the reference to the *Regentonnegeschichte* is also reminiscent of her initial failure to confront that nexus of problems; her evasion of the issue might thus be seen as a form of necessary self-protection. She quickly moves on to Marie's birth, the start of a period untouched by personal catastrophe (her father's death being predictable enough) until the death of DE. The first four years of Marie's life are quickly dealt with during their discussion, until the first element of synthesis, of tail-catching, is reached, as Marie happily observes: '— In New York wurde ich vier. Endlich sind wir angekommen, wo meine Erinnerung Bescheid weiß. Welcome home!' (*JT*, 1875). Marie echoes the image of narration as a journey, a journey which is not quite over, although her final exclamation marks the end of the long narrative relationship between mother and daughter.

In the penultimate chapter of *Jahrestage* the Jerichow story and the New York time level coalesce. The New York years between 1962 and 19 August 1968 are recorded in a series of brief scenes chronologically arranged, recalling many of the major topical themes which appear in *Jahrestage*; Vietnam, US society, the divided Germany; as well as Gesine's personal life in New York and with DE. The threads of all the flashbacks to these years which have appeared throughout the novel are drawn together and woven, culminating in Gesine and Marie's departure from the USA: the passengers flooding into the subway from all directions mirror the convergent function of this chapter. Similarly the diverse narrative forces are depicted in final synthesis. In order to maintain its self-imposed standards of truth and integrity, the story has found its own course balanced by the influences exerted by Gesine, Marie, the dead, and (invisibly) GS. The final image of *Jahrestage* represents the harmony thus achieved, as the three representatives of each source of narrative influence walk hand in hand through the water of a Danish coast. Unification is complete, diversity and conflict resolved. In narrative terms at least, Cydamonoe has been found.

## IX CONCLUSION

Having elucidated the origins, development, and operation of the complex code of narrative ethics (and so narrative structures) evident in *Jahrestage* and the earlier works, I now propose to discuss briefly their implications under three rough headings: namely political, biographical, and literary. The first category sets *Jahrestage's* narrative circumstances in a much wider context than the self-referentially fictional; the second tackles a perplexing discrepancy between Johnson's fiction and his life; the third returns to the question of *Wahrheitsfindung* which was the starting point of the deliberations set down in this study.

A vital clue to the historical and political dimensions of the literary model depicted in *Jahrestage* may be found in the fact that Gesine should choose 'A. M.' — Alexander Mitscherlich — to write to concerning the voices she hears in her mind (see *JT*, 1538–41 and Chapter VI of this study). For in their book *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern*,<sup>1</sup> which first appeared in 1967 (when Johnson first conceived *Jahrestage*), Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich put forward the theory that the West German people had, up to that point, avoided *en masse* facing up to the consequences for themselves of the National Socialist period. This expressed itself in a tendency both to forget and to deny the unpalatable aspects of the past. In order to achieve this 'Vergessenkönnen' (Mitscherlich, p. 31), it was necessary to undergo a process of 'Entwirklichung', of making the past unreal, and therefore not an issue to be faced. The result was to avoid responsibility for the past, and so to regard oneself as a victim despite having been involved in mass aggression, or at least having stood by while it went on. Such evasion of responsibility took the form of the 'Gehorsamsthese' (p. 25), as well as the argument that dictatorship is a natural catastrophe for which the individual cannot be made to take responsibility. But although people's unwillingness to look back might be understandable, it meant that the majority of West Germans did not undergo the necessary process of mourning which ought to follow a disaster of national proportions, mourning for the victims of aggression by accepting one's own portion of responsibility, working through the trauma, remembering, repeating, and accepting the reality of what happened.

To term this process *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* would be seriously misleading, for no such thing can exist under these circumstances. 'Es ist klar, daß man millionenfachen Mord nicht "bewältigen" kann' (p. 24). What is possible is to accept the reality of what happened, learn to live with the consequences, and



to pass the lesson on to subsequent generations that such things must never happen again. The past must be subjected to this process, which Freud called 'Trauerarbeit',<sup>2</sup> if individual and societal wounds are to be healed. According to the Mitscherlichs, refusing to undergo the renewed trauma of mourning has resulted in a spate of individual and mass psychoses which might still be a danger for future generations of West Germans. The most important first step is remembering; the Mitscherlichs express the hope that 'ein Wiedergewinnen von Erinnerungen könne uns helfen, aus dem Geschehenen zu lernen' (p. 84). *Jahrestage* is nothing if not a working model of that very process, and, as such, a model of *Trauerarbeit*, with Gesine as the subject. Indeed the whole narrative structure of *Jahrestage* revolves around a person going through the necessary process which the Mitscherlichs describe as desirable in *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern*; that is, 'ein seelischer Prozeß, in welchem das Individuum einen Verlust verarbeitet' (p. 9). In his reply to Gesine, 'A. M.' confirms that she is indeed afflicted by a sense of loss: 'hier wirkten Folgen von Verletzungen fort, von Verlusten' (*JT*, 1856).

In dealing with loss, Gesine directs her efforts towards remembering the past in a way which makes it as real as possible. She is determined to achieve 'Verwirklichung', rather than 'Entwirklichung' of the past, an essential element of *Trauerarbeit*. But achieving the necessary sense of reality, bringing the past to life rather than consigning it to some realm of unreality, means, for Gesine at any rate, using methods of literary composition which inevitably result in a certain degree of invention, and therefore potential falsification. This matter goes beyond the abstract moral imperative of *Wahrheitsfindung* which both Johnson and his character Gesine set themselves. For there would be little point in remembering and working through a reality of the past which was dishonest; this would merely be another means of evading the issue. For this reason the voices arise in Gesine's head as a personified conscience, a means of guaranteeing as far as possible the integrity, and so the truth or reality of her reconstruction. This role is also filled by Marie, who, as the recipient of Gesine's story, is always ready to challenge the validity of what she hears. It is clear that both Marie and the dead have more than a literary function as recipient and characters respectively.

Furthermore, both Marie and the dead are means by which Gesine is forced to remember things she would prefer to forget, because some aspects of her past do indeed transpire to be so painful that they have become submerged.<sup>3</sup> The self-imposed stringencies of narrating force Gesine to remember what she does not want to: the *Regentonnegeschichte*, for instance. Gesine must force herself to accept that her mother was prepared to let her die, and must counteract the defence mechanism which has partially submerged the memory of this incident. The mental image of her mother watching the four-year-old about to drown is the very crux of Gesine's need to recreate the past. She needs to rationalize the

behaviour of a mother who was capable of attempted infanticide. Unable to escape the feeling that this betrayal by her mother was somehow her own fault, Gesine has reacted all her life by suppressing or obliterating the crucial image of her mother's inaction. Even for one born in 1933, a candidate for 'die Gnade der späten Geburt', it is essential to face the guilt by association of one's parents' own actions. But it is only by subjecting herself to the discipline of narration, which in itself functions in a way similar to memory, that Gesine is able to confront this uncomfortable truth. Discussing the narrative, sometimes unwillingly, with both 'die Toten' and Marie, compels Gesine to remember, repeat, and examine her own traumas in a way which approximates closely to Freud's own description of *Trauerarbeit*.

Clearly *Jahrestage* can only be a fictional model of *Trauerarbeit*, one which can do no more than draw attention to some of the problems involved in such a massive undertaking, and show what role literature can play. But it is firmly rooted in historical events, events which go beyond the National Socialist past. This *Trauerarbeit* must be gone through, the losses of the past must be accepted, if there is to be hope for the future. As the Mitscherlichs point out (p. 16), Germans must accept Germany's responsibility for the Second World War if they are to understand who is to blame for the division of their country. Without such acceptance the only alternative is flight into 'Realitätsverleugnung'. It would be fair to say that all of Johnson's fiction is profoundly concerned with counteracting such denial of present political reality. Moreover, the difficulties with which his heroine Gesine struggles derive not only from her parents' decision to bring her into the world in Germany in 1933, but also from her disillusionment with the 'real existierender Sozialismus' of the GDR. Gesine has needed to examine her own origins in order to decide whether her faith in socialism has not, after all, been misplaced. On 19 August 1968 she is due to leave for Czechoslovakia on a business trip, one which she hopes will lead her to a country which will practice the ideals of socialism. In the *Jahrestage* world she has yet to learn the irony of those hopes. Nevertheless, Gesine's recreation of the past must take place before she can look to the future with confidence, and if she cannot bring herself to live with her own past, then her daughter's future may be in danger. *Jahrestage* suggests a mode of behaviour which would enable all Germans to understand, not only intellectually but also emotionally, how the present division of their country came about, and accept the responsibility and the consequences for that. Only with such acceptance can there be hope for the future.

As the author of *Jahrestage* Johnson tested out the efficacy of 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit'<sup>4</sup> on a fictional character of his own invention. I have tried to discover the causes of the problems which accompanied that endeavour, and concluded that the delay in *Jahrestage*'s appearance was an inevitable result of self-imposed moral constraints, both in literary and in personal terms. Yet a

strange discrepancy may be observed between those two categories. While a devotion to truth forms the very basis and well-spring of Johnson's novel-writing, the extraordinary allegations he publicly directed against his estranged wife in 1980 can barely be accorded any measure of credibility. These circumstances make it a problematic undertaking to argue for devotion to literary truth in a writer of fiction who claims that he has been exploited as a source of information by the Czechoslovakian Secret Service, and thus by the East German *Staatssicherheitsdienst*: 'Die Leute vom S.T.B., als Gast die Genossen vom ostdeutschen S.S.D., hatten über ihre "Weggefährtin" erfahren können, was der Verfasser in einem Geheimnis gesichert wähnte, von Anfang der "Jahrestage" an' (BU, 451). Not only did the author offer no evidence to support these allegations, but he also failed to explain the implausibility of the SSD and the STB being interested in anything Johnson, as writer of *Jahrestage*, might know.

One might only conclude that the same strong — in this case too strong, as well as misguided and distortive — moral sense which dominates Johnson's literary works to positive effect was a catastrophic disadvantage in life.<sup>5</sup> There can be little doubt that the publication of *Skizze eines Verunglückten*, although a fictional work clearly intended as a tribute to Max Frisch,<sup>6</sup> was an effort by Johnson to undergo a form of *Trauerarbeit* in order to come to terms with the devastating crisis in his life. It is true that Johnson made a point of insisting on the fictionality of *Skizze eines Verunglückten*, but the parallels with the author's own tragedy are too striking to be ignored.<sup>7</sup> Even the dating of the events which Johnson believed to be real (as revealed in *Begleitumstände*) may be reconstructed by adding thirty years to the dates given in the story. Clearly the author was a bitter man at the end of his life, and he undoubtedly suffered serious physical illness after June 1975 (when the crisis occurred), the same illness as Joachim de Catt suffers in *Skizze eines Verunglückten*. It seems that Johnson believed the scenario which he depicted in the *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* and fictionalized in the story written for Max Frisch, providing the basis for a scandal and a betrayal of intimately private matters to the public (shamelessly exploited by the journalist Tilman Jens) which overshadowed his death and his reputation as a writer.<sup>8</sup> Discovering the truth of Johnson's allegations is a matter for future biographers, if anybody; at the present stage one must assume that Johnson deceived himself so profoundly that he, at least, regarded his accusations as true and himself as a severely, unjustly injured party. The code of morals to which he adhered in life and which he expected others to follow was as idiosyncratic as that which determined his fiction. This was a code, it seems, which others could not easily avoid infringing.<sup>9</sup>

*Wahrheitsfindung* has been described in this study as the motive power which fuels Johnson's fiction and ultimately determines the very narrative structures of his works. How far this search for truth is successful is a question which it is

worth at least considering in this conclusion. Johnson's obsession with providing precise factual detail wherever possible in his work has been well-enough documented, and forms the very premise of both his 'Büchner-Preis-Rede' and *Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt*.<sup>10</sup> The yards of collected newspaper clippings and reference works in the Uwe Johnson Archive in Frankfurt will allow these elements of his work to be precisely and thoroughly documented.<sup>11</sup> But amassing accurate historical evidence in this way does not necessarily guarantee fictional truth. That can only rest, as I have tried to show, on a degree of trust coupled with mutual respect between characters, author and reader. How that relationship can come close to breaking down is shown in *Jahrestage*. The mounting narrative crisis and its resolution are documented in the narrative relationship between Gesine and Marie, a relationship which tackles problems which might face any writer of fiction, representing them in the most effective way possible, namely fictionalized and set in a fictional context. In this way they may mirror the kinds of problems Johnson as a writer faced with regard to his characters and to the postulated reader for whom every author writes. Those problems concern, as we have seen, above all the question of how to guarantee the narrator's honesty — overcoming the age-old moral criticism of the story-teller as liar — and thus the integrity and worth of the narrative beyond its function as a means of entertainment and enlightenment. The success of such an endeavour cannot be measured in absolute terms, for the original mental model for the fictional world can only be perceived by means of its representation. But the literary approach Johnson adopted does display the enormous effort undertaken throughout his work, and particularly in *Jahrestage*, to offer as many internal safeguards as possible to reassure the reader of the narrative's integrity. In those terms, Johnson's search for fictional truth may be deemed successful. With that in mind, it might be best to leave the last word to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: 'Nicht die Wahrheit, in deren Besitz irgend ein Mensch ist oder zu sein vermeinet, sondern die aufrichtige Mühe, die er angewandt hat, hinter die Wahrheit zu kommen, macht den Wert des Menschen. Denn nicht durch den Besitz, sondern durch die Nachforschung der Wahrheit erweitern sich seine Kräfte, worin allein seine immer wachsende Vollkommenheit bestehet'.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

### NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. See Bibliography for publication details of all Johnson's novels.
2. In 1980 Johnson made a public declaration which seemed to accuse his wife Elisabeth of espionage and hint at sexual betrayal (see *BU*, 451). Johnson goes on to cite this extraordinary allegation against his wife as the cause of the writer's block which suspended work on *Jahrestage*. For more information on Johnson's biography, see chapter 1 of the PhD thesis on which this study is based: Colin Riordan, 'Narrative Technique in the Novels of Uwe Johnson' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1986); and Walter Schmitz, *Uwe Johnson* (Munich, 1984), pp. 7–23.
3. See Arnhelm Neusüss, 'Über die Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit. Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson', *Konkret*, 8, 1 (1962), 18–19. Reprinted in *Uwe Johnson*, edited by Rainer Gerlach and Matthias Richter (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), pp. 39–48 (p. 43); hereafter referred to as Gerlach/Richter. Reference will be made to the latter publication in view of its greater accessibility.
4. Uwe Johnson, 'Berliner Stadtbahn', *Merkur*, 162 (1961), 722–33. Reprinted in *Uwe Johnson, Berliner Sachen. Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), pp. 7–21. Page references are to the latter publication.
5. Uwe Johnson, 'Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans', in *Romantheorie. Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, edited by Eberhard Lämmert et al. (Cologne, 1975), pp. 398–403. Reprinted in Gerlach/Richter, pp. 30–36. The essay is based on lectures given during a tour of Italy in 1973. Page references are to the original publication.
6. Johnson expressed his dissatisfaction with this state of affairs in the blurb to *Berliner Sachen* (1975): "Berliner Stadtbahn", aus dem Sommer von ausgerechnet 1961, dieser Aufsatz wird ja manchmal verlangt, dann war er nicht zu haben. Das soll von Anständen beim Schreiben handeln, dabei geht der Verfasser keinen Schritt von der S-Bahn runter".
7. 'Bichsel-Grass-Johnson-Wohmann. Wie ein Roman entsteht', in *Literarische Werkstatt*, edited by Gertrud Simmerding and Christof Schmid (Munich, 1972), pp. 63–72 (pp. 67–68 and p. 71).
8. Aristotle, *On Poetry and Music*, translated by S. H. Butcher, edited by Milton C. Nahm, second edition (New York, 1956), p. 13.
9. For a more detailed and extensive discussion of the problem of defining 'Wahrheit' and 'Wahrheitsfindung', see the Ph.D. thesis on which this study is based, pp. 26–37.
10. Horst Bienek, *Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich, 1962), p. 95.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. *Ingrid Babendererde*, which was written in 1956 but not published until 1985, will be appraised later in this study as the starting point from which the narrative manners of *Jahrestage* finally evolved.
2. Bernd Neumann, 'Utopie und Mythos. Über Uwe Johnson: *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*', in Gerlach/Richter, pp. 105–39 (see p. 106). In the GDR the book was ignored except for condemnation such as that expressed by Peter Hacks, who gave his opinion of the result of Johnson's labour: 'Ein schlechthin unlesbares Buch, das ist es, was herauskommt. Und die Meute der Kunstaufpasser macht einen großen Jubel und lobt Herrn Johnson und bestärkt ihn in seiner Dummheit' (*Das Poetische. Ansätze zu einer postrevolutionären Dramaturgie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 22). In January 1986, however, a revised view of Johnson's work was offered from the GDR twenty-seven years after the event; *Sinn und Form* published an article which assesses the whole of Johnson's work in a relatively sympathetic light, laying the foundations for the publication of the author's works in his country of origin. See Jürgen Grambow, 'Heimat im Vergangenen', *SuF*, 1 (1986), 134–57.
3. The negative criticisms commonly took a form such as the following: 'Bücher wie dieses von Johnson oder *Die Blechtrommel* von Grass sind unlesbar. Hier haben wir die Situation unseres

jüngsten Romans, der ausschließlich am Experimentellen klebt, am gewollten Tiefsinn, ohne den Anschluß an die Literatur der Amerikaner und Franzosen finden zu können. Warum beschreibt niemand eine klare, einfache Geschichte, die die Ungeheuerlichkeit der deutschen Situation deutlich macht?'. From a review in the *Saarländischer Rundfunk*, broadcast on 7 January 1960.

4. Kurt Leonhard, 'Zwischen Skylla und Charybdis', *Deutsche Zeitung mit Wirtschaftszeitung*, 14 November 1959, *Literatur Beilage*, p. vi. Leonhard's view is almost too optimistic; even the élite circle of literary specialists displayed, at first, distinct signs of bewilderment, some regarding the novel as a kind of literary Rubik's Cube, or 'Puzzlespiel' as Reinhard Baumgart put it in his review 'Hoffnungsvoll und hoffnungslos: utopisch', originally broadcast in 1960, printed in *Über Uwe Johnson*, edited by Reinhard Baumgart (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 15–19 (p. 18). Günter Blöcker wrote: 'Der Nebel, das Geheimnis, das schlechthin Undurchdringliche der Existenz wird bei Uwe Johnson zum Formprinzip'; 'Roman der beiden Deutschland', in *Über Uwe Johnson*, pp. 10–13 (p. 12). Even as perceptive a critic as Joachim Kaiser felt himself obliged to make 'ein Bekenntnis von Hilflosigkeit', remarking that Johnson 'mutet dem Leser Verständnis-Schwierigkeiten zu, die weit über das hinausgehen, was Faulkner oder Yacine fordern. Wer dieses Buch nur einmal gelesen hat, der kann über seine Konstruktion, ja oft über den Handlungsablauf und darüber, wer nun gerade spricht oder monologisiert, kaum mehr als nur vage Andeutungen machen' (*Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, in *Das kleine Buch der 100 Bücher*, edited by Karl-Heinz Kramberg (Munich, 1959), p. 44).
5. Hansjürgen Popp, *Einführung in Uwe Johnsons Roman 'Mutmaßungen über Jakob'* (Stuttgart, 1967). A condensed version appears under the title 'Einführung in "Mutmaßungen über Jakob"', in *Über Uwe Johnson*, pp. 29–59.
6. Sharon Edwards Jackiw, 'The manifold difficulties of Uwe Johnson's "Mutmaßungen über Jakob"', *Monatshefte*, 65, no. 2 (1973), 126–43 (p. 131). Although Jackiw supplies some useful insights into Johnson's novel, she has been particularly reluctant to accord Hansjürgen Popp full credit for his achievement in being the first to elucidate fully the plot of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. Jackiw mentions Popp nowhere in her article, although her depiction of the novel's plot not only claims to be the first such depiction, but is clearly indebted to that proposed by Popp six years previously.
7. See Karlheinz Deschner, *Talente–Dichter–Dilettanten. Überschätzte und unterschätzte Werke in der deutschen Literatur der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 187–202, and Richard Alewyn, 'Eine Materialprüfung. Bei Durchsicht eines sechs Jahre alten Romans', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28 August 1971, *SZ am Wochenende*, p. iv.
8. See Hugo Steger, 'Rebellion und Tradition in der Sprache von Uwe Johnsons "Mutmaßungen über Jakob"', in Hugo Steger, *Zwischen Sprache und Literatur. Drei Reden* (Göttingen, 1967), reprinted in Gerlach/Richter, pp. 83–104; and Herbert Kolb, 'Rückfall in die Parataxe. Anlässlich einiger Satzbauformen in Uwe Johnsons erstveröffentlichtem Roman', *NDH*, 10, no. 96 (1963), pp. 42–74, reprinted in shortened form in *Über Uwe Johnson*, pp. 74–94.
9. Ingrid Riedel, *Wahrheitsfindung als epische Technik. Analytische Studien zu Uwe Johnsons Texten* (Munich, 1971), p. 79.
10. Compare Bernd Neumann, *Utopie und Mimesis* (Kronberg/Ts, 1977), pp. 36–38; Neumann classifies *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* as 'ein de-tekstivischer Roman' [sic].
11. See the section entitled 'Die Erzählstruktur des Buches: ein nicht-aristotelischer Roman', in Neumann, *Utopie und Mimesis*, pp. 38–41. 'Aristotelisch' presumably refers to Aristotle's definition of plot in the *Poetics*, although Neumann is unspecific on the matter.
12. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, Abinger Edition (London, 1974), p. 18 and p. 60.
13. Simmerding, *Literarische Werkstatt*, p. 66. Marcel Reich-Ranicki has noted a similar tendency with regard to Wolfgang Koeppen's *Jugend* (1976): 'Koeppen verzichtet auf eine zusammenhängende Geschichte. Er mißtraut der Fabel, die dem Romancier zwar die übersichtliche Präsentation des Stoffes erleichtert, ihn aber gleichzeitig zu einer vereinfachenden oder gar verfälschenden Darstellung verführen kann. Die traditionelle Fabel empfindet Koeppen inzwischen, so scheint es, als eine Art Korsett, in das sich das Leben nicht zwingen läßt, oder vielleicht auch als ein Hilfsmittel, eine Krücke, deren er nicht mehr bedarf'; Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Entgegnung. Zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre* (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 63.
14. See Bodo Heimann, 'Experimentelle Prosa', in *Die deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart. Aspekte und Tendenzen*, edited by Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 230–56. With reference to Faেকে/Vostell's *Postversand-Roman* (1970), Heimann explains: 'Der Leser soll sich selbst an der Zusammenstellung und Bearbeitung des Materials beteiligen, er soll aktiv werden, nicht nur die künstlerische Komposition in ihrer Vollendung bewundern und zu begreifen suchen, sondern selber basteln' (p. 254). Heimann points out the obvious fallacy of this concept: 'Warum soll der dilettierende potentielle Autor sich für Geld Texte, Fundstücke, Nachrichten, Modelle, Fotos und Schallplatten von Faেকে/Vostell bestellen, wo doch sein eigenes Zimmer

- schon voll ist von Texten, Fundstücken, Nachrichten, Modellen, Fotos und Schallplatten? . . . Die Autorität eines jeden Autors und Manipulanten ist überflüssig, wenn jeder sein eigener Autor und Manipulant sein kann' (p. 254).
15. This idea was originally aired by Gotthart Wunberg, in the first scholarly article on Johnson's work, 'Struktur und Symbolik in Uwe Johnsons Roman "Mutmaßungen über Jakob"', *Neue Sammlung*, 2 (1962), 440–49. Six years later, two further attempts were made to interpret Jakob's death symbolically. Edward Diller, in his article 'Uwe Johnson's Karsch: Language as a reflection of the two Germanies', *Monatshefte*, 60 (1968), 35–39, accepts unquestioningly the view that Jakob's death was caused by the split between the two Germanies, whilst K. H. Lepper makes a particularly unconvincing attempt to justify the theory: 'schließlich kannte der Eisenbahner Abs ja das Terrain und wußte, daß man nicht so einfach über die Gleise gehen darf; schließlich müssen die Menschen im geteilten Deutschland ja wissen, daß man ein eindeutiges Bekenntnis abzulegen hat für oder gegen eine der beiden Lebensformen'; K. H. Lepper, 'Dichter im geteilten Deutschland: Bemerkungen zu Uwe Johnsons Erzählung "Eine Kneipe geht verloren"', *Monatshefte*, 60 (1968), 23–24 (p. 31).
  16. See Popp (original publication), p. 25.
  17. Ernst Barlach, *Das dichterische Werk*, 3 vols (Munich, 1959), III (= *Die Prosa II, Der gestohlene Mond*, pp. 435–670), 447.
  18. Johnson pursues this point in some detail while refuting assertions made in an article by Karl Pestalozzi to the effect that the figure of Joachim T. was based on the real East German racing cyclist Gustav Adolf Schur and that Johnson made use of documentary material on the subject when researching *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. Pestalozzi's article is in fact perfectly plausible and accurately researched; Johnson's determination to contradict stems from his urge to preserve the independence of his created fictional world from the real world. See BU, 170–93 and Karl Pestalozzi, 'Achim als Tåve Schur. Uwe Johnsons zweiter Roman und seine Vorlage', *St Z*, 2 (1962), 479–86, as well as Neumann, *Utopie und Mimesis*, pp. 124–36.
  19. Karl Migner, in his *Uwe Johnson: 'Das dritte Buch über Achim'* (Munich, 1966) fails to recognize the identity of Karsch and narrator as well as mistakenly regarding the whole book as a telephone call. Paul F. Botheroyd, in his *Ich und Er. First and Third Person Self-Reference and Problems of Identity in Three Contemporary German-Language Novels* (The Hague, Paris, 1976), points out the weaknesses in Migner's argument while presenting the first plausible description of the novel's narrative circumstances. Botheroyd's analysis of narrative techniques in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* is both original and perceptive, but naturally limited in scope to the question of first and third person self-reference (see Botheroyd, pp. 64–92).
  20. Karsch's admission of defeat apparently had serious psychological consequences: in 'Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960' (from the collection *Karsch, und andere Prosa* published in 1964), the Achim story is retold paying attention to Karsch's gradual nervous collapse and recovery in a sanatorium. Clearly the problems of writing are regarded as real and dangerous in Johnson's prose, not as artistic posturing. Ironically, Johnson himself suffered a devastating writer's block after his marital crisis of 1975.
  21. Pestalozzi notes that Karsch tries out and rejects the beginning which Klaus Ullrich used for his *Unser Tåve. Ein Buch über Gustav Adolf Schur* (which Johnson clearly drew on for his novel); that of the year 1931 evoked by the conversation of a group of workers in a railway carriage. See Pestalozzi, p. 483 and DBA, 47.
  22. A complete contrast to this purposeful preservation of the fact-fiction frontier can be found in Wolfgang Kayser's view of one implication of the preamble to Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*: 'Der Leser wird angesprochen. Aber wer ist der Leser? Es ist deutlich, daß es doch nicht mehr wir verschiedenartige und bürgerlich festgestellte Menschen sind. Denn als solche wissen wir alle, daß Werther, Tom Jones und Don Quijote gar nicht gelebt haben, sondern gedichtet worden sind. Von dem Leser aber wird verlangt, daß er diese Grenze auslöscht. Für ihn hat Werther Geist und Charakter und Schicksal, für ihn lebt Werther und stirbt Werther' ('Das Problem des Erzählers im Roman', in *Zur Struktur des Romans*, edited by Bruno Hillebrand (Darmstadt, 1978), pp. 190–91). In *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, on the other hand, the reader is required precisely *not* to eradicate this border.
  23. 'Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit des Romans', in *Zur Struktur des Romans*, p. 259.
  24. See Walter Schmitz, 'Grenzreizen. Der hermeneutische Realismus Uwe Johnsons', *TK*, 65/66 (1980), 29–47 (p. 40). For a political-historical and psychological interpretation of the border and its effects, see Klaus Siblewski, 'Alltag und Geschichte. Anmerkungen zum Frühwerk Uwe Johnsons' *TK*, 65/66 (1980), 96–111 (pp. 96–100).
  25. For the sake of convenience the interlocutor will be assumed to be female, so that a distinction may be made between the pronouns 'he', the narrator, and 'she', the interlocutor. (The terms 'questioner' and 'voice' will also be used in the interests of variation.) There is nothing in the text to suggest whether the interlocutor is to be thought of as male or female.

26. This image of memory as a body of water reappears as a major structural element in the narrative dynamics of *Jahrestage*.
27. This explains, incidentally, Johnson's anxiety in his early novels to avoid certain conventional expressions, since to use one or the other would express bias: 'Es wird ihn (den Reisenden) Mühe kosten, sein Zeichensystem dem Bezeichneten adäquat zu verändern . . . Ein Text, der sich mit diesem Aspekt des Vorgangs befassen will, wird eine Sprache gebrauchen müssen, die beide Gegenden in einen Griff bekommt und zudem überregional verständlich ist' (BS, 20).
28. Ree Post-Adams, 'Antworten von Uwe Johnson. Ein Gespräch mit dem Autor', *GQ*, 50 (1977), 241–47 (p. 243).

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. *Autorenlexikon deutschsprachiger Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Manfred Braunek (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1984), p. 303.
2. Wilfried van der Will, 'Approaches to Reality through Narrative Perspectives in Johnson's Prose', in *The Modern German Novel*, edited by Keith Bullivant (Leamington Spa, 1987), p. 180.
3. Darko Dolinar, 'Die Erzähltechnik in drei Werken Uwe Johnsons', *Acta Neophilologica*, 3 (1970), 27–47 (p. 34).
4. Steger, in Gerlach/Richter, pp. 84–95. Steger explains the non-omniscience as an unwillingness to reveal the underlying structural relationships in the story. While that unwillingness is certainly present, the kind of non-omniscience addressed in 'Berliner Stadtbahn' is of quite a different order.
5. As late as 1980 Johnson reiterated the argument of non-omniscience in *Begleitumstände* (see *BU*, 139). Eberhard Fahlke, in his extremely detailed study of *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, *Die "Wirklichkeit" der Mutmaßungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), concurs with the author's assessment of his own work: 'Die Allwissenheit des Erzählers wird von Anbeginn in Frage gestellt, sie soll als Manier erkennbar werden. Die Rolle des Erzählers wird auf die eines Protokollanten reduziert . . .' (p. 156). In *Utopie und Mimesis* Bernd Neumann takes an original line by transferring the omniscience to Gesine and Rohlf's during their conversation in Berlin: 'Schließlich verfügen Gesine und Rohlf's in etwa durchaus über die "Schlüsselgewalt" des herkömmlichen auktorialen Erzählers . . .' (p. 40). Neumann never satisfactorily proves this assertion, however, while there is enough evidence to show that their information is distinctly limited; Rohlf's admits at one point, in a way which the narrator never does, that '— Wir können ihn [Jakob] nicht fragen' (*MJ*, 286). The discussion between Gesine and Rohlf's demonstrably does consist largely of the title's conjectures, as the following extract (beginning with Gesine) indicates:  
 — Wir wissen doch ausführlich was sie an diesem Abend unternommen haben. Und wir wissen nicht welche von den Einzelheiten Jonas sich gewünscht hat, worauf er sich gefreut hat während der Reise,  
 — und es ist nicht bekannt was Jakob eigens in die Wege geleitet hat und was sich zufällig ergab, wir mutmassen also. (*MJ*, 242)  
 The narrator is not provably subject to such limitations, as will become clear.
6. Post-Adams, *Darstellungsproblematik*, p. 6.
7. It should be pointed out that Riedel's study, *Wahrheitsfindung als epische Technik* (Munich, 1971), was published six years before Post-Adams's book appeared, although the latter makes no reference to Riedel's full-length work, apparently under the impression that hers is the first such study.
8. Riedel, p. 58. The core of her argument appears in *Über Uwe Johnson*, edited by Reinhard Baumgart, under the title 'Johnsons Darstellungsmittel und der Kubismus' (pp. 59–74).
9. Franz K. Stanzel, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman* (Vienna, 1955). A refined and revised version of Stanzel's theory appeared in 1976 under the title 'Zur Konstatierung der typischen Erzählsituationen', in *Zur Struktur des Romans*, edited by Bruno Hillebrand, pp. 558–76.
10. Stanzel, in *Zur Struktur des Romans*, pp. 561–63.
11. Norman Friedman, 'Point of View in Fiction', *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 1160–84 (see pp. 1169–74).
12. Colin H. Good, 'Uwe Johnson's Treatment of the Narrative in "Mutmaßungen über Jakob"', *GLL*, 24 (1971), 358–70. Two years later S. E. Jackiw offered strikingly similar arguments to those proposed by Good, who, however, receives no acknowledgement from the American critic (compare Jackiw, pp. 139–41). In fact Good's basic premise of speculative form, derived from Robert Detweiler, "'Speculations about Jakob": The Truth of Ambiguity', *Monatshefte*,



- 58 (1966), 24–32, had been convincingly disproved four years earlier by Hansjürgen Popp, whose study Good appears to have overlooked.
13. Neusüss, in Gerlach/Richter, p. 46. (A capitalization mistake has been corrected.) Strangely, Good makes no reference to 'Berliner Stadtbahn' despite the essay's relevance to his theme.
  14. Johnson talking to Neusüss, in Gerlach/Richter, p. 46.
  15. Good, p. 360. Compare Roloff's interview with Johnson, where the author says: 'Consider me, or consider the narrator simply as someone who has also only heard of the accident and also knows only a few of the events, or was told of them'. Again, the text itself offers little convincing proof that this state of affairs does indeed pertain. See Michael Roloff, 'An Interview with Uwe Johnson', *Metamorphosis Literary Magazine*, 4 (1964), 33–42 (p. 38).
  16. Compare Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 70–73.
  17. See Bienek, *Werkstattgespräche*, p. 95. In fact the quotation runs 'wenn man anfängt . . . '.
  18. Marianne Hirsch, *Beyond the Single Vision: Henry James, Michel Butor, Uwe Johnson* (York, South Carolina, 1981), p. 102.
  19. Ree Post-Adams failed to notice that the impression of limited cognizance in this case is little more than a superficial artifice: 'An anderer Stelle weist der Erzähler auf das Erzählen selbst mit seinen Grenzen und Möglichkeiten hin. Einmal beschreibt er Jonas Blach im Zug: ". . . er stieg über die Beine der schlafenden Mitreisenden hinweg auf den Gang . . . Was denkt er sich eigentlich?"' (S. 196). Hier gibt der Erzähler zu, daß er nicht wissen kann, was Jonas denkt' (*Darstellungsproblematik*, pp. 53–54. Post-Adam's page reference is to the Fischer edition). In fact there is no question mark after 'Was denkt er sich eigentlich' (MJ, 298). Moreover, it might be argued that 'was denkt er sich eigentlich' is itself what Blach is thinking, speculating on why Jakob or another *Despatcher* had stopped the train. This reading would actually support the notion of profound narrative cognizance.
  20. *Goethes Werke*, Hamburger Ausgabe, edited by Erich Trunz, 14 vols (Munich, 1977), vii, 43.
  21. Ernst Barlach, *Das dichterische Werk*, III (= *Die Prosa II*), 515.
  22. See *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (London, 1974; first published in 1886), p. 310.
  23. Johnson talking to Rühle.
  24. See Sara Lennox, 'Yoknapatawpha to Jerichow. Uwe Johnson's appropriation of William Faulkner', *Arcadia*, 14 (1979), 160–76 (pp. 161–62).
  25. 'Will der Roman seinem realistischen Erbe treu bleiben und sagen, wie es wirklich ist, so muß er auf einen Realismus verzichten, der, indem er die Fassade reproduziert, nur dieser bei ihrem Täuschungsgeschäfte hilft'; Theodor W. Adorno, 'Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman', in *Zur Struktur des Romans*, edited by Bruno Hillebrand, pp. 104–10 (p. 106).
  26. Post-Adams, *Darstellungsproblematik*, p. 33. This statement is clearly drawn from Adorno's essay on the narrator (compare note 25 above).
  27. See Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), II, 2, 438–65 (p. 443).
  28. In *Zur Struktur des Romans*, p. 107.
  29. Bernd Koblenzer, *Staatspolitisch-gesellschaftliche Notwendigkeit und individueller Handlungsspielraum. Entfremdungssymptome und figurale Realitätsvermittlung in Uwe Johnsons Roman "Mutmaßungen über Jakob"* (Mannheim, 1979), p. 3. In fact Koblenzer's comments merely restate the view Johnson expressed in *Berliner Stadtbahn*.
  30. Peter Demetz, 'Uwe Johnsons Blick in die Epoche', in *Johnsons Jahrestage*, edited by Michael Bengel (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), pp. 194–200 (see p. 198). *Johnsons Jahrestage* is hereafter referred to as Bengel.
  31. Kurt Tucholsky, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz, 10 vols (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1975), x, 183. See also x, 20: "'In unserer Zeit . . ." sagen die Leute, und sind sehr stolz darauf. Das klingt oft wie: "Bei uns in Tuntenhäusern . . ." Es gibt Kleinstädter, und es gibt Kleinzeiter. Das Wort "heute" wird zu oft gebraucht'.
  32. 'Sie sprechen verschiedene Sprachen. Schriftsteller diskutieren', *Alternative. Zeitschrift für Literatur und Diskussion*, 38/39 (1964), 97–100 (p. 99).
  33. Compare Paul F. Botheroyd's *Ich und Er*, pp. 67–70. Botheroyd sees Karsch as occupying a narrative position which overlaps purely authorial and first person narration, facilitating ironic reference to himself.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. 'Jonas zum Beispiel' (KP, 82–85) is the only story in the collection which does not belong to the fictional universe of Uwe Johnson's novels.
2. 'Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960' contains a large number of explanatory details, particularly regarding Karsch as a character, which do not appear in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, as well as at least one discrepancy; Karin S. (see DBA, 13) becomes Karin F. (see KP, 32).

3. See Riedel, *Wahrheitsfindung*, pp. 144–63. Riedel's rather forlorn efforts to integrate the collection into her Cubist theory of Johnson's literary form are, however, hardly convincing (see Riedel, p. 150).
4. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Literatur der kleinen Schritte. Deutsche Schriftsteller heute* (Munich, 1967), p. 163.
5. Mark Boulby, *Uwe Johnson* (New York, 1974), p. 77.
6. See especially Karl Migner, 'Uwe Johnson', in *Deutsche Literatur seit 1945*, edited by Dietrich Weber (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 563–83 (p. 570): 'Beide Figuren sollen nach der Auffassung Uwe Johnsons ganz offensichtlich Symbolgehalt gewinnen. B. steht für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, D. für die Deutsche Demokratische Republik'. Such an attitude to the Federal Republic on the part of Uwe Johnson might be understandable in the light of his treatment at the hands of public figures in West Germany in the years following his departure from the GDR. Johnson denied, however, that D. stands for DDR and B. for BRD, pointing out the fallacy of suggesting that one individual could represent the enormous complexity of a whole society.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Manfred Durzak, *Gespräche über den Roman. Formbestimmungen und Analysen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976), p. 440.
2. It is apparent from *Begleitumstände* that Johnson would have preferred a rather less sensational day for the ending (see BU, 448).
3. Horst Lehner, 'Die letzten 123 Tage im Leben der Gesine Cresspahl? Ein Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson über den dritten band der *Jahrestage*', in Bengel, pp. 106–19 (p. 111).
4. Rolf Michaelis, 'Uwe Johnson "Jahrestage"', *Die Zeit*, 1 June 1979, p. 44. See *Begleitumstände*, pp. 448–51 for Johnson's description of the problem and how he overcame it.
5. Definition according to the Collins Concise English Dictionary (London and Glasgow, 1978).
6. Dieter E. Zimmer, 'Eine Bewußtseinsinventur. Das Gespräch mit dem Autor: Uwe Johnson', in Bengel, pp. 99–105 (p. 99).
7. The first quotation is from Lehner, in Bengel, p. 113, and the second from Werner Bruck, "'Ich habe kein Vertrauen in den Tod des Romans'. Gespräch mit dem Schriftsteller Uwe Johnson. Band vier der *Jahrestage* erscheint im Sommer'; radio broadcast by *Deutsche Welle*, 24 April 1975.
8. Johnson is not alone in regarding his characters as real; Günter Grass has described celebrating Oskar Matzerath's sixtieth birthday.
9. The present study deals only with those critical responses to *Jahrestage* which have a direct bearing on the matter in hand. However, at least three other critics have suggested detailed explanations of the novel's narrative circumstances. Ree Post-Adams's *Darstellungsproblematik* fails to distinguish sufficiently between the fictional and the real world. Roberta T. Hye, in her dissertation *Uwe Johnsons 'Jahrestage': Die Gegenwart als variierende Wiederholung der Vergangenheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), mistakenly deems the whole of *Jahrestage* to be a diary written by Gesine. Peter Pokay's 'Die Erzählsituation der *Jahrestage*', in Bengel, pp. 281–302, undertakes an analysis of narrative manners strictly according to the criteria proposed by Franz K. Stanzel. Pokay's approach tends to concentrate less on explanation than on detailed classification according to Stanzel's model. See the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation which underlies the present study for a more detailed discussion of the above.
10. *Utopie und Mimesis*, p. 305.
11. Manfred Durzak, *Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart*, first edition (Stuttgart, 1971), p. 228. This was written between the appearances of *Jahrestage* volumes 1 and 2.
12. Matthias Prangel, 'Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson', *Deutsche Bücher* 2 (1974), 45–49 (pp. 47–48).
13. Ingeborg Gerlach, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Identität. Studien zu Uwe Johnsons 'Jahrestagen'* (Königstein/Ts., 1980), p. 6.
14. See Ingeborg Hoesterey, 'Die Erzählsituation als Roman. Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage"', *ColGer*, 16 (1983), 13–24 (pp. 20–21).
15. Gerlach is never quite sure what she means by the notion of 'erzählen' with regard to Gesine, hence the inverted commas. She has noted that Gesine could not have the time or even the ability to write down the whole of *Jahrestage*, and so is at a loss to explain how the novel comes about. Her mistake is not taking fully into account the form of address which Gesine uses towards Johnson's fictional projection.
16. Gerlach has applied Wolfgang Iser's reception theory to *Jahrestage*, as she explains in her chapter 'Intermittierendes Erzählen': 'Die Rezeptionsforschung hat darauf hingewiesen, daß es die erwähnten "Leerstellen" zwischen den einzelnen Textabschnitten sind, die dem Leser

- einen Freiraum für seine Imagination gewähren. Johnsons Text, in Segmente der verschiedensten Art zerteilt, macht von dieser Möglichkeit vielfältigen Gebrauch. Indem er durch die Tagebuchform die erzählerische Kontinuität permanent unterbricht und den Handlungsablauf in eine Vielzahl von thematisch gegliederten Episoden unterteilt; indem er durch das Gegenüber der beiden Erzählebenen unzählige nicht ausdrücklich ausformulierte Beziehungen herstellt und indem er schließlich durch die Einschaltung der "zweiten Ebene", der "Stimmen", eine Kontrapunkt zur Erzählerin Gesine herstellt, deren genaueren Konkretisierung dem Leser überlassen bleibt, sind der "Innovationsfähigkeit" des Lesers mannigfaltige Aufgaben gestellt' (Gerlach, p. 142).
17. Neumann himself does the exact opposite, seeing in *Jahrestage* a reversion from non- aristotelian narration to a 'klassische Romanform' (*Utopie und Mimesis*, p. 305).
  18. Hoesterey is as insecure as Gerlach about how the novel is supposed to have come into being (compare note 15 above).
  19. In fact it begins around 1920, with flashbacks to the twenty years previous to that date.
  20. Max Frisch, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), p. 8.
  21. See Botheroyd, *Ich und Er*, p. 3. He is referring to suggestions on the concept of identity put forward in Monika Wintsch-Spiess, *Zum Problem der Identität im Werk Max Frischs* (Zürich, 1965).
  22. Quoted from the Fischer paperback edition; see Stefan Zweig, *Phantastische Nacht. Vier Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1954), p. 10. *Phantastische Nacht* originally appeared in a different collection, namely *Amok. Novellen einer Leidenschaft* (Leipzig, 1922).
  23. Hoesterey does not touch on the moral question of why Gesine, if her excessively intimate contact with the capitalist system interferes with her search for identity through the past, does not take another job less morally reprehensible, rather than shirking the issue, as it were, by compartmentalizing her working self as a separate entity at one remove from her 'Ich'. See the discussion of the 'moralische Schweiz' problem later in this study for an examination of that question.
  24. Hoesterey, p. 22. The choice of vocabulary is rather unfortunate here, 'mitgemacht' seeming to imply that Mrs. Ferwalter was a persecutor rather than a victim during the period of Nazi inhumanity.
  25. Hoesterey, p. 24. These remarks are something of a generalization, as a glance at the publishing lists of Mills & Boon would confirm.
  26. The 'Gedächtnis-Passagen' are to be found in *Jahrestage*, pp. 226–35.
  27. Gesine is terminating their friendship because, while she understands that Blach is not willing to have his name linked with a Western defector, and so would be prepared to withdraw her piece, Gesine has found out that Blach had been reading her biographical account aloud to friends: 'du liest das vor, in jeweils vertrautem Kreise, als Bitte um Mitleid für deine schlimme Lage, in der so nette Dinge über dich zu drücken von Staats wegen untersagt ist' (*JT*, 1641). Gesine is so shamed by this betrayal of confidence that she vehemently declares their acquaintance at an end. There seems to be an extremely subtle moral principle at work here, but one which Gesine obviously regards as a matter of utter betrayal. That Blach read the piece out to friends while not daring to put it forward for publication is apparently enough reason for Gesine to write this bitter letter. One cannot escape the suspicion that the incident is a fictionalized version of an event in Uwe Johnson's life, since it bears all the hallmarks of a Johnsonian moral stand.
  28. The question of publication is incidentally, an important one, since the fictional world cannot properly exist until it has been made public, available to a wide audience.
  29. Uwe Johnson, 'Ein Brief an den Verleger', *Suhrkamp Information* 2 (1973), 64–68 (p. 64).
  30. Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée*, *Oeuvres Romanesques*, Volume 1 (Paris, 1979), p. 17.
  31. This Gesine-GS conversation may indeed be a reworking of the 'Brief an den Verleger', not only because of the problem of selectivity, but because in the 'Brief' Gesine complains that she is portrayed as humourless. This incident may be intended to redress the balance, revolving as it does around her laughter (in a rather forced manner, it must be said). There are other cases where previously published material was later incorporated into *Jahrestage*: *Ein Brief aus New York* and *Brief an Walser*, for instance.
  32. G. P. Butler, 'Miseries of the Moment', *TLS*, 14 October 1973, p. 1142.
  33. Interestingly, the American translation of *Jahrestage* omits substantial parts of the original. For a discussion of this question, see G. P. Butler, 'Some talk of 'ju:vei 'dʒɔnsn, and some of Johnsonese', *GLL*, 38 (1985), 323–35.
  34. Anita Krätzer, *Studien zum Amerikabild in der neueren Deutschen Literatur: Max Frisch — Uwe Johnson — Hans Magnus Enzensberger und das Kursbuch* (Bern, 1982), p. 100.
  35. These tapes are not to be confused with those which Gesine makes at Marie's request after the child heard that Gesine drew some of her information from Lisbeth's 'Beschwerdebuch' to

Cresspahl: 'Kannst du so etwas nicht für mich machen? sagt das Kind, aus Angst vor einem Mißerfolg überhastet: Nicht Beschwerden. Was du jetzt gedacht hast, was ich erst später verstehe. Auch Beschwerden.

— Auf Papier, mit Datum und Wetter?

— Auf Tonband, wie Phonopost.

— Für wenn ich tot bin?

— Ja. Für wenn du tot bist' (JT, 151).

The resulting tapes concern not the Jerichow past, but the New York present, and Marie is denied access to them until 1973. In *Jahrestage* they take up one chapter each, namely 29 November 1967 (JT, 385–88), 8 December 1967 (JT, 419–23), and 18 March 1968 (JT, 887–89).

36. In 1937 Warning and Hagemeister are accused of defamation for having suggested (in Lisbeth's hearing; she is called as a witness) that Griem, previously a farmer and now a Nazi official, had had illegal business connections with the Jewish vet Semig in 1931. The authorities arrest Semig with the intention of making him a scapegoat in order to divert blame from Griem.
37. Semig is blamed for the shortage of meat in Jerichow too; Lisbeth apparently associates her guilt-feelings at his persecution with the eating of meat.
38. For convenience's sake, Gesine will sometimes be referred to as though she were the sole narrator. The dual narrative relationship should, however, be borne in mind, and will be highlighted when necessary.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Water is always a fertile environment for memory in *Jahrestage*. Water imagery will be dealt with specifically later in this study.
2. See *Jahrestage*, p. 114. Oskar Matzerath is fond of a similar technique of reconstruction on the basis of photos in *Die Blechtrommel*.
3. Uwe Johnson, 'Interview mit Marie H. Cresspahl 2.–3. Januar 1972', in Bengel, pp. 73–88 (p. 74). This 'Interview' offers an alternative perspective on *Jahrestage*, namely that of the fourteen-year-old Marie in 1972.
4. Compare *Skizze eines Verunglückten*, in which Joachim de Catt, who is, of course, an author, 'unterhält sich mit Toten' (SV, 7).
5. Alternatively, Lisbeth might have claimed that in ending her life she hoped to curtail the upset she was already causing those around her.
6. This is an advance hint of the difficulties Gesine will encounter when trying to come to terms with the manner of Lisbeth's death as she tells the Jerichow story.
7. The fusion of space and time is by no means an innovatory concept, being a feature of German Romantic writing.
8. This notion will be echoed in Marie's experience of going to Cydamonoe.
9. It is no coincidence that Gesine should write to Alexander Mitscherlich; the significance of her choice will be explained in the final chapter of this study.
10. Although Gesine here says the voices started when she was thirty-two, elsewhere she claimed that her first such experience was at the age of twelve (see JT, 1254–55).
11. *Jahrestage* 2, 'Mit den Augen Cresspahls', p. i.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. Reinhard Baumgart, 'Eigensinn. Ein vorläufiger Rückblick auf Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage"', *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, 422 (1983), 921–27 (p. 924). I shall return to the question of the Jerichow story as an educative process later in this chapter.
2. Simmerding, *Literarische Werkstatt*, p. 67. Indeed this is the very well-spring of narration, as Walter Benjamin wrote: 'Erfahrung, die von Mund zu Mund geht, ist die Quelle, aus der alle Erzähler geschöpft haben' (*Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 2, 440.)
3. Simmerding, pp. 69–70. Ingeborg Bachmann dealt with this very theme in *Das dreißigste Jahr*.
4. See Lennox, 'Yoknapatawpha to Jerichow', p. 161. Lennox's reference to Jerichow of the 1930s as 'a kind of last preserve of a certain ideal of community' is hardly tenable in view of the effects of Nazi rule.
5. Gesine's memory of summer 1953 is strongly redolent of the sailing summer described in *Ingrid Babendererde*, set in the same year.
6. Roberta T. Hye, *Uwe Johnsons 'Jahrestage': Die Gegenwart als variierende Wiederholung der Vergangenheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), p. 77.

7. Johan Nedregard, in his article 'Gedächtnis, Erfahrung und "Fotographische Perspektive"', *TK*, 65/66 (1980), 77–86, explains 'vergesellschaftete Erfahrung' as follows: 'Im 3. Kapitel ("Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire") seines Baudelaire-Aufsatzes geht Benjamin auf Prousts Werk "A la recherche du temps perdu" und die in diesem Zusammenhang zentralen Begriffe *mémoire involontaire* und *mémoire volontaire* ein. Benjamin übersetzt diese Begriffe mit *unwillkürlichem* bzw. *willkürlichem Gedächtnis*. Das *unwillkürliche Gedächtnis* meldet sich mehr oder weniger zufällig und trägt Spuren einer für den einzelnen bedeutungsvollen Situation. Es ist diese Spielart des Erinnerens, die das Wesentliche für die Erfahrung des Einzelnen enthält. Dagegen bezeichnet der Begriff des *willkürlichen Gedächtnisses* jene Bereiche der Erinnerung, zu denen der sich Erinnernde jeder Zeit Zutritt hat, in denen aber andererseits keine für ihn wesentlichen Erfahrungen angesiedelt sind. Nach Proust hängt es vom Zufall ab, ob der einzelne Mensch sich die für ihn wesentlichen Erinnerungen erneut vergegenwärtigen kann. Benjamin erinnert in seiner Proust-Interpretation daran, daß diese Zufälligkeit keine naturgegebene, sondern eine gesellschaftlich bedingte ist. Mit der Entfaltung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft wächst zugleich die Isolation der privaten Erinnerung gegenüber dem öffentlich-gesellschaftlichen Bereich. Persönliche, intime Erinnerung und gesellschaftliche Praxis treten immer mehr auseinander. Nach Benjamin ist Prousts "A la recherche du temps perdu" ein Zeugnis für diese Entwicklung. So droht innerhalb der modernen Gesellschaft eine allgemeine Erfahrungslosigkeit zu entstehen. Es wird immer unmöglicher, vergesellschaftete Erfahrung in dem beschriebenen Sinn zu machen. . . . Es ist nun meine These, daß Johnson mit den "Jahrestagen" in der Tradition der Proustschen Gedächtnis- und Erinnerungsproblematik steht. Johnson sieht diese Problematik freilich mit den Augen Benjamins. Er strebt die Aufhebung der Isolation zwischen privater und öffentlicher Sphäre an, indem er beides in der Erinnerung Gesines aufeinanderbezieht und teilweise miteinander verschmilzt. Die Erinnerung Gesines ist zugleich gegenwarts- und zukunftsbezogen. Private Erinnerungssplitter aus dem Dritten Reich werden mit öffentlichen Informationen über die spätkapitalistische USA-Gesellschaft zusammengestellt und sollen sich im Bewußtsein Gesines, das ja im wesentlichen zugleich der Handlungsraum der "Jahrestage" ist, zu dem Ort werden, an dem vergesellschaftete Erfahrung erneut konstituiert werden kann' (pp. 79–80).
8. This is the background which Hye supplies for the first four in Gesine's list of ten words: 'Die ersten vier Worte — Plisch, Plum, Schmulchen, Schievelbeiner — stammen aus einer kleinen Erzählung von Wilhelm Busch. Plisch und Plum sind zwei böse Hunde, die den Juden Schmulchen Schievelbeiner hetzen und demoralisieren. Er wird von ihnen in das Gesäß gebissen und um zu entkommen, muß er selbst wie eine Hund auf allen vieren wegkriechen. Er wird als eine linkische, komische Figur mit einer großen, krummen Nase gezeigt.

Kurz die Hose, lang der Rock,  
Krumm die Nase und der Stock,  
Augen schwarz und Seele grau,  
Hut nach hinten, Miene schlau —  
So ist Schmulchen Schievelbeiner.  
(Schöner ist doch unsereiner!)

Auch durch den Namen wird der Jude charakterisiert, denn Schmulchen, dem Wörterbuch nach, ist eine verächtliche Bezeichnung für einen Juden. In Buschs Zeichnung hat Schmulchen sogar schiefe Beine, die zu seiner Diffamierung beitragen sollen. Zudem betont Busch die Geldgierigkeit und zwar als jüdischen Zug. Schmulchen droht dem Deutschen, der ihn belacht, mit einer Klage beim Gericht, wenn er kein Geld von ihm als Ausgleich für das Aufhetzen der Hunde bekomme' (Hye, pp. 78–79).

9. The sight of bodies being unceremoniously dumped into a pit in 1945 may well have had a similar effect on Johnson (see *BU*, 29).
10. Hye, p. 76. One might well speculate on what Hye would regard as rational guilt.
11. For an overtly psychoanalytical study of Lisbeth, see Boulby, pp. 102–07. In his rather generalized account of Lisbeth's decline, Boulby detects a neurosis which becomes psychosis, as well as schizoid tendencies and an Electra complex, all set in the context of an Oedipal conflict. The present study, while acknowledging the inevitable influence of psychoanalytical interpretation on an attempt to discover the causes of guilt, aims rather at distinguishing the textually evident bearing which Lisbeth's fate had on Gesine in later life without necessarily speculating on the clinical condition of the characters' minds.
12. Boulby erroneously considers Lisbeth to be disturbed by an attack on some profoundly-felt religious belief; in fact she is upset more by the disintegration of the Church's comforting familiarity (compare Boulby, pp. 103–04).
13. Boulby, p. 106. See 'Das Brandopfer' (1953), in Albrecht Goes, *Aber im Winde das Wort. Prosa und Verse aus zwanzig Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main, 1963).

14. Information taken from: 'Eine Flammenwand versperrte den Weg. Schwägerin von Uwe Johnson in Dachwohnung erstickt', *Der Abend (Berlin)*, 13 November 1967, and 'Im Rauch erstickt', *Telegraf (Berlin)*, 14 November 1967.
15. The usual version of this saying is 'Wer sein Kind liebhat, der züchtigt es', drawn from Proverbs, 13. 24: 'Wer seine Rute schont, der haßt seinen Sohn; wer ihn aber liebhat, der züchtigt ihn beizeiten'.
16. Compare *JT*, 791: 'Rebecca [Ferwalter] ist lange erzogen worden nach finsternen Prinzipien des Alten Testaments: züchtige ich nicht mein Kind? beweise ich nicht, daß ich es liebe?'. Clearly, Gesine does not hold with this justification for corporal punishment; Cresspahl's recourse to such means, however, derives not from principle, but the necessity of protecting his daughter from his wife.
17. The origins of this saying are explained in *Geflügelte Worte*: 'Dieser Spruch ist einer Erzählung des Rüdiger v. Hünchhoven, der in den Urkunden 1290 bis 1293 erscheint, entnommen . . . Sie heißt "Der Schlägel" und berichtet, wie ein alter Mann sein ganzes Vermögen seinen Kindern überlassen hat, die ihn nun schlecht behandelten. Als er in ihnen den Glauben zu erwecken weiß, daß er noch einen Schatz zurückbehalten habe, halten sie ihn wieder in Ehren. Nach seinem Tode finden aber die Kinder in der vermeintlichen Schatzkiste nichts als einen Schlägel mit der Beischrift, man solle jedem, der seine ganze Habe seinen Kindern gibt und infolgedessen in Not und Elend lebt, mit diesem Schlägel das Gehirn einschlagen' (Georg Büchmann, *Geflügelte Worte. Zitatenschatz des deutschen Volkes. 32. Auflage vollständig Neubearbeitet von Gunther Haupt und Winfried Hofmann* (Berlin, 1972), p. 135).
18. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations I* (Paris, 1947), p. 91. Johnson, of course, has made no secret of the impression which Faulkner, and particularly *The Sound and the Fury*, made on him.
19. The first-time reader would be unaware that these memories are Gesine's, although it would be clear to anybody who looked back after a few pages.
20. According to his own testimony, Johnson first conceived *Jahrestage* while on a New Jersey beach.
21. The discussion itself will be examined in Chapter VIII of this study as part of Gesine and Marie's narrative relationship.
22. Günter Grass, *Katz und Maus*, first published in 1961; this quotation from the paperback edition (Neuwied und Darmstadt, 1974), p. 63.
23. This cycle of guilt may have been prompted by a passage from *Hamlet*, iv. 3. 26–30:

HAMLET A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING What dost though mean by this?

HAMLET Nothing, but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

It is also worth noting that in Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* (1959) a reference is made to people eating eels which have been fattened on bodies from the Battle of Jutland: 'Matzerath fand das gerecht, daß man Aale im Salz laufen ließ. Die gehen ja auch in den Pferdekopp, sagte er. Und in menschliche Leichen gehen sie auch, sagte der Stauer. Besonders nach der Seeschlacht am Skagerrak sollen die Aale mächtig fett gewesen sein' (Darmstadt und Neuwied (1980), pp. 129–30).

24. Lewis Carroll, *The annotated Alice: Alice's adventures in Wonderland and Through the looking glass. . . . Illustrated by J. Tenniel. With an introduction and notes by Martin Gardner* (London, 1960), p. 91. *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* was first published in 1865.
25. Margret Boveri, *Verzweigungen. Eine Autobiographie. Herausgegeben von Uwe Johnson* (Munich, 1977). Johnson was left all Boveri's papers with instructions to deal with them as he saw fit. He would therefore have been in a position to suppress the exchanges quoted, had he wished.
26. Boveri, p. 294. 'Eingeschmuggelte Adjektive oder Nebensätze' refers to Boveri's work on the *Berliner Tageblatt*, but also implies an accusation of using language to salve an uneasy conscience.
27. Peter Bekes, 'Gefällt dir das Land nicht, such dir ein anderes', *TK*, 65/66 (1980), 63–76.
28. In a collection of quotations from Max Frisch chosen by Johnson, pride of place is accorded to a passage from *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, p. 62. The excerpt is well-enough known, and set off from the rest of the volume at the very end by an asterisk: '(Manchmal scheint auch mir, daß jedes Buch, so es sich nicht befähigt mit der Verhinderung des Krieges, mit der Schaffung einer besseren Gesellschaft und so weiter, sinnlos ist, müßig, unverantwortlich, langweilig, nicht wert, daß man es liest, unstatthaft. Es ist nicht die Zeit für Ich-Geschichten. Und doch vollzieht sich das menschliche Leben oder verfehlt sich am einzelnen Ich, nirgends sonst.)'. Johnson seems to agree with the view expressed here that although one instinctively feels that literature should serve some practical purpose, concerning itself with the political realities of life, society nevertheless starts with the individual, and the individual has therefore to be the point of examination from which an understanding of world events will follow.

29. Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, 'Gespräche mit Uwe Johnson', in Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, *Der Erzähler Uwe Johnson* (Berne and Munich, 1970), pp. 91–103 (p. 98).
30. The original text may be found in *New York Review of Books*, 29 February 1968, reprinted and translated in *Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger*, edited by Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt am Main, 1970) pp. 233–38. Johnson's antipathy to such publication of private matters was recorded in 'Offener Brief über offene Briefe. Die Nützlichkeit des Postgeheimnisses', *Die Zeit*, 13 April 1962, p. 13.
31. In context the Enzensberger critique should be ascribed to Gesine, not to Johnson, as the author pointed out to me in conversation (Sheerness, 3 September 1982). But it must have been widely construed as an attack by the writer on a colleague, moreover a colleague who in the past had offered advice and support. Even so, the approach is in keeping with a comment on political activity by writers which Johnson made in 1962: 'Privat kann sich der Schriftsteller natürlich politisch äußern. Er kann auch dagegen protestieren, wenn ihm was mißfällt, aber er kann seine Meinung auch in seinen Werken äußern. Er sollte sich also nicht öffentlich in einer Rede über Politik äußern'. See Bo, 'Mutmaßungen über Johnson', *WIR (Schülerzeitung des Pestalozzi-Gymnasiums Herne)*, April 1962, 13–14 (p. 14).
32. The allusion to young parents of 1934, which would of course include Johnson's parents in the year of his birth, is a rare glimpse of a bitterness which the author himself may have felt.
33. Marie denies that this is the case, asserting, when Gesine asks her directly, that the issue is in fact quite different:
  - Du findest sie häßlich
  - Nein!
  - Du hast es gesagt.
  - Ich mag es gesagt haben, als ich sie nicht kannte. Jetzt weiß ich, wer sie ist. Darum geht es nicht.
  - Worum geht es?
  - Sie kann nicht so leben wie wir. (*JT*, 733)
34. Hye actually quotes this passage at length, but from her very brief commentary it is apparent that she has failed to appreciate the irony: 'Das besagt, daß die Potenz für Unmenschlichkeiten bei den Amerikanern 1968 sogar noch größer sei als bei den Deutschen der dreißiger Jahre' (Hye, p. 60).
35. This incident resembles the slaughter of the horse in Ernst Barlach's *Der gestohlene Mond*, in *Das dichterische Werk*, III (= *Die Prosa II*), 607.
36. *Jahrestage 2*, 'Mit den Augen Cresspahls', p. i.
37. Johnson made a similar point when I asked him his opinion of the Falklands War; as a guest in England he felt it inappropriate to make political comments (Sheerness, 3 September, 1982).
38. It is noticeable from newspaper cuttings that the frequency of Johnson's pronouncements on political matters fell markedly after 1967, to disappear altogether in the 1970s.
39. Uwe Johnson, 'Einatmen und Hinterlegen', in *Günter Eich zum Gedächtnis. Nachrufe und Erinnerungen*, edited by Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 74–77 (p. 74).
40. Durzak, *Gespräche*, p. 431. The wording here is taken from what one assumes to be the full text of the interview, published in 1976. A curtailed version, worded slightly differently, appeared in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 May 1974, *Bilder und Zeiten*, p. iv. Immediately before the excerpt quoted, Johnson expresses scepticism that literature contains a 'Botschaft' at all: 'Eine Geschichte ist aber etwas, was erzählt worden ist, keine Botschaft' (*Gespräche*, p. 430).
41. Boulby neglects to cite his source, but has clearly translated the following excerpt from the interview with Zimmer: 'Und was die Parallele angeht: Parallelen begegnen sich ja nicht, das eine bedeutet nicht das andere. Ich würde zum Beispiel von einem amerikanischen Faschismus nicht sprechen. Das Wort weist auf die historische Gebundenheit des Phänomens, das sich so nicht wiederholen wird' (Bengel, pp. 101–02). This question of the uniqueness of National Socialist crimes re-emerged in the *Historikerdebatte* in 1986, whereby the notion of drawing parallels between National Socialist inhumanity and that, say, of Stalin's Soviet Union was vehemently discussed in the West German press. The contributions to this debate have been collected in the volume *Vergangenheit, die nicht vergeht. Die "Historiker-Debatte": Darstellung, Dokumentation, Kritik*, edited by Reinhard Kühnl (Cologne, 1987).
42. See *Büchner-Preis-Reden 1951–71*, with a foreword by Ernst Johann (Stuttgart, 1972), p. 221.
43. 'Interview mit Marie H. Cresspahl', p. 138.
44. The interrogator is close enough to Gesine to conclude the diatribe by commenting 'du hast auch Post, Gesine' (*JT*, 101), which narrows the field to GS, DE, or the voice of Gesine's conscience: it could well be the last-named nagging her as she reads depressing news of the terrible state of the world while surrounded by the evidence of her own privilege.
45. In this respect Heinz D. Osterle takes a rather simplistic view of Marie's education as a vehicle used by Johnson to convey social criticism: 'Die sozialen Probleme sind besonders deutlich an

den krassen Unterschieden im amerikanischen Schulsystem zu sehen. Da Gesine viel Geld für die Erziehung ihrer Tochter ausgibt, kann diese eine vornehme katholische Schule besuchen, wo sie zusammen mit den Kindern der besten Familien unterrichtet wird und hoffen darf, später einmal an eine der privaten Eliteuniversitäten gehen zu dürfen. Als ein schwarzes Mädchen in Marias [*sic*] Klasse kommt, nimmt Maria sich nach langem Zögern seiner an, obwohl sie fürchtet, dadurch ihre weißen Freundinnen zu verlieren. Nun lernt sie die schrecklichen Verhältnisse kennen, in denen die Familie des völlig gehemmten und verschüchterten Mädchens lebt. Johnson zeigt auf eine Weise, die Lehrbüchern oder Zeitungen kaum möglich ist, welche unheilbaren Schäden die Kinder erleiden, die unter solchen Bedingungen aufwachsen'. See Heinz D. Osterle, 'Uwe Johnson, Jahrestage: Das Bild der USA', *GQ*, 48 (1975), 505–18 (p. 509).

46. This state of affairs was, of course, exacerbated by the GDR school system, as Marie subsequently points out.
47. That is, Hitler and Stalin; see *Begleitumstände*, chapter 1.
48. In *Jahrestage* 4 his name is spelt 'Gfeller' (*JT*, 1451).
49. This image arouses echoes of 'Prrr' Hallier, the teacher nicknamed thus because of the sound he made restraining children as though they were horses, and represents an unconscious allusion to a favourite admonition under the anti-intellectual Nazi regime; 'Überlaß das Denken den Pferden, sie haben den größeren Kopf'.
50. Pius photographs her in West Berlin, which means that 'keinen einzigen Schüler aus Gneez konnte sie eines friedensverräterischen Abstechers nach Westberlin bezichtigen, solange einer von ihnen ein Foto besaß, das überführte die Jugendfreundin und Frau Direktor als Opfer der kapitalistischen Verführung auf der Zirkulationsebene' (*JT*, 1660–61).
51. The Nazis would simply have given the subject another name: 'weltanschauliche Erziehung' (see *JT*, 1647).
52. Riepschläger was married (unsuccessfully) in the intervening period.
53. The Jerichow story is not the only method with which Gesine pursues this end, but it undoubtedly plays a major part.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1. See Uwe Johnson, 'Brief an Siegfried Unseld, südlich Ronne 21. September 1973', in Bengel, p. 94: 'Werden die Kapitel umfangreicher, dauert das Schreiben länger. Ich fürchte sehr um den Termin. Deswegen bitte ich Dich um die Überlegung ob wir nicht den dritten Band noch einmal teilen könnten: in einen dritten, der die Tage vom 20. April bis zum 19. Juni 1968 enthält, samt Vergangenheit. Er bekäme einen tragbaren Umfang. Den kannst Du gleich drucken'.
2. In *Begleitumstände* Johnson devotes twenty-three pages to an extremely detailed reply to Karl Pestalozzi's article 'Achim als Tave Schur', which had appeared in 1963, sixteen years previously (see *BU*, 170–93).
3. Johnson was wary of the criticism which took place at such meetings: '1960 hatte ich am eigenen Leibe die Risiken eines solchen Kritisierens aus dem Sprung erfahren dürfen: nachdem ich etwas vorgestellt hatte, in dem neben anderen Personen auch ein Vater vorkam, verwandelte Günter Graß sich aus einem Nachbarn und Freund in einen Psychologen, der bei mir ein Vater-Trauma feststellte, väterlich warnend. An dieser Funktion der Tagungen unterhielt ich seitdem Zweifel' (*BU*, 277).
4. Johnson drew attention to the opportunity the staggered publication of *Jahrestage* afforded him in *Begleitumstände*: 'Es gab diesmal einen Anlass, beim Erscheinen des ersten Bandes auf das Verhalten der Literaturkritik zu achten. Denn hier hatte sie neben ihrer gewöhnlichen Pflicht, die Leser von dem neuen Angebot zu unterrichten, obendrein die Chance, den Autor für seine Arbeit an den späteren Lieferungen zu beraten' (*BU*, 428). In the interview with Durzak, however, Johnson is less than complimentary about the results of this experimental consideration of critical voices: 'Ich habe Stimmen der Kritik zusammengestellt und habe so schöne Dinge gefunden wie: In diesem Buch wird ein Baum beschrieben; bei den Nazis — Blut-und-Boden-Literatur — legte man grosses Gewicht auf Baum- und Naturbeschreibungen, folglich ist dieser Verfasser ein — das wurde nicht ausgesprochen, aber deutlich. Dann: in diesem ersten Band wird Herr Cresspahl, also der Vater, gezwungen, einen Aufnahmeantrag für die Partei entgegenzunehmen. Er füllt ihn nicht aus, später einmal hat ihn ein Geselle gehabt, dann ist dieser Aufnahmeantrag verschwunden, es gibt ihn nicht mehr. Ich habe in acht Rezensionen gefunden: Cresspahl geht in die Partei. Daraus geht hervor, daß die Rezensenten oder die Kritiker — um das feinere Wort zu gebrauchen — nicht gelesen haben. Da habe ich gemerkt, daß es sinnlos wäre — selbst wenn die Kritiker wissen, daß die Rezension



nicht nur eine Zensur ist, sondern eine Beratung beim nächsten Band —, sich von der Kritik eine Beratung zu erwarten' (Durzak, *Gespräche*, p. 456).

5. Gesine later criticizes the *New York Times* for presenting an apparently hermetically truthful and complete version of events. She comments on a full-page advertisement the *New York Times* put in presenting a number of sub-editors whose sole job it is to check facts, and who derive from that task 'eine innere Genugtuung. . . Die Genugtuung: wenn wir eine Geschichte in der New York Times gelesen haben, wird all und jede unserer Fragen beantwortet sein' (*JT*, 648). Subsequently a number of misleading pieces of information about Vietnam are pointed out, as well as that the thirst for facts seems to increase as far as war casualties from the New York area are concerned: 'Muß einer aus New York und Umgebung sein, damit sein Tod in Viet Nam persönlich verzeichnet wird in der nützlichsten Zeitung, die er hätte lesen können?' (*JT*, 649). The objection is not so much to the actual selectivity, which is certainly not peculiar to the *New York Times*, but to the paper's explicit claim to objectivity, a claim which cannot be honoured.
6. In the most fundamental and durable of story-telling media, oral literature, the suppression of factual disbelief, and therefore receptiveness to fictional truth, can be extraordinarily effective. The modern myth, a story designed to arouse astonishment in the listener, tends to be sworn as true by the teller, who, however, is invariably unable to offer any supporting proof.
7. i.e. Louise Papenbrock.
8. Johnson refers to 'die Fähigkeit, grössere Wirklichkeitszusammenhänge oder gedankliche Zusammenhänge in vielen Schichten gleichzeitig im Kopf auseinanderhalten und ordnen zu können' (Bienek, *Werkstattgespräche*, p. 97).
9. It does not seem inappropriate to talk of a moral 'pattern' in this case, since that is what Marie's formal education in the USA provides her with. The problem is compounded for Gesine since she is only just learning this lesson herself, in internal dialogues with Cresspahl.
10. Compare Uwe Johnson on this matter: 'Der Leser ist fachlich vorgebildet. Er weiß wie es ist, wenn man eine Treppe hin- und herunterfällt, wie Charlie Chaplin das machte und wie ein Hund es ins Werk setzen würde' (VPR, 401).
11. This is the famous comment which Johnson made at the inception of the Kesten affair (see *BU*, 215).
12. Marie's objection is reminiscent of Johnson's repeated and strenuous efforts to demonstrate that he never imposed bits of his own life unadulterated on to those of his characters.
13. There is a discrepancy between Marie's version and what Gesine had said; the latter refers to three workers (*JT*, 588), the former to four (*JT*, 560).
14. Compare Fritz J. Raddatz, *Die Nachgeborenen. Leseerfahrungen mit zeitgenössischer Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), p. 128: 'Er ist Gesine Cresspahl, mehr als jeder Thomas Mann Aschenbach, jeder Musil Törleß, jeder Kafka Josef K. ist; so sehr, wie eben — das weiß man spätestens seit Sartres Studie — Flaubert Madame Bovary war'. Martin Walser has frequently been subjected to similar criticism.
15. While Cresspahl's *absence* is documented, his whereabouts are not.
16. Federal President Heinrich Lübke was accused of having signed plans for concentration camps. He refused to deny that he had done so, merely claiming an inability to remember.
17. Cresspahl's silent but effective opposition is contrasted with Hans Magnus Enzensberger's loud, but ineffectual, protest.
18. See the 'Interview mit Marie H. Cresspahl', p. 132: 'M. H. C. . . . ich war dumm — Frage Zehneinhalb. M. H. C. Was ich mir nicht als Entschuldigung rechne, und ich konnte nicht denken bis hin zur Illoyalität gegen mein Land.'
19. Compare *JT*, 144, where Gesine explains in her taped letter to DE how Marie views the Jerichow story: 'Für sie ist es eine Vorführung von Möglichkeiten, gegen die sie sich gefeigt glaubt, und in einem andern Sinn Geschichten.'
20. Presumably Cresspahl makes no claim since the investigation would reveal Lisbeth's suicide openly, which, apart from bringing discredit and emotional upset, would invalidate his application for compensation in any case. Why he fails even to cancel the insurance is less clear, unless the policy covers the whole property; but in that case Cresspahl would surely not have discontinued the payments.
21. There is evidence that he occasionally takes part in the discussions between Marie and Gesine out of which the story partly arises (see *JT*, 1149–50).
22. See Johnson's detailed discussion in *Begleitumstände* of the various terms used in German to describe his job (*BU*, 159–62).
23. This is a technique already familiar from *Das dritte Buch über Achim* (see *DBA*, 141–48).
24. Margret Boveri, *Tage des Überlebens. Berlin 1945* (Munich, 1968, 1985). In the afterword to Boveri's *Verzweigungen*, Uwe Johnson mentions this book as a reason for encouraging Margret Boveri to write the first part of her autobiography: 'Die pièce de résistance des

Argumentierens aber war ein ganzes Buch. "Tage des Überlebens" hieß es, von einer Frau Margret Boveri im Jahre 68 veröffentlicht, ein Buch, in dem aus einer persönlichen Sicht die letzten Monate des Hitlerreiches in Berlin dargestellt sind. Dies Buch ließ sich doch gar nicht anders auffassen als ein Band II, dem eben noch ein erster über die Jahre 1900 bis 1944 nachzuliefern wäre' (Boveri, *Verzweigungen*, p. 353).

25. Boveri, *Tage des Überlebens*, p. 31.
26. 'Zum letzten Mal versuchte sie, ihren Großvater reinzuwaschen von dem Verrat an seinem Land' (*JT*, 984).
27. The *New York Times* article reported the death of Major Bedrich Pokorny (found hanging in a wood), who had investigated the case.
28. This conversation is italicized because it is reported from the standpoint of later in the day, when Marie and Gesine are back in Manhattan. 'Gestern Abend' can only refer to 20 April, although the last time Marie and Gesine talked about July 1945 in our text was 17 April. The conversation is unlikely to have taken place on 18 April, since on that day there is no mention of 1948.
29. This is the 'Prager Fenster-Sturz'; see Boveri, *Tage des Überlebens*, p. 31, and compare *JT*, 1027.
30. In order to reach the figures quoted, four lines were counted as one-tenth of a page.
31. The *erzählte Zeit* during this time (indeed in general throughout *Jahrestage*) is not a continuous sequence, since flashbacks frequently appear.
32. It is also worth noting that Johnson clearly made use of a book (now in the Uwe Johnson Archive, in Frankfurt), which supplied copious details of the Soviet occupation: Oskar Eggert, *Das Ende des Krieges und die Besatzungszeit in Stralsund und Umgebung* (Hamburg, 1967). Johnson has made notes in the margins and underlined certain sections. It is clear, for example, that the name J. J. Jenudkide ('Das Dreifache J') refers to the real-life commandant of Mecklenburg and West Pomerania, General J. J. Fedjuninski (see Eggert, p. 57). (There is, incidentally, elsewhere (see *BU*, 421) a suggestion that the name of K. A. Pontij, the other town commandant of Jerichow, was a joking reference to the Italian film producer Carlo Ponti). Eggert's book contains many historical documents, and, in particular, details of the duties which small-town mayors appointed by the Soviets had to carry out. It seems that Gesine's problems with selectivity may be a reflection of Johnson's, who had at his disposal such a wealth of material on what is in fact a relatively short period of history in a very restricted area.
33. See *JT*, 1341; Gesine finally admits to Marie some of what we already know to be the case.
34. See *JT*, 1317–18: 'Hol sie mir zurück, DE . . . '.
35. The impression of smug self-satisfaction which thus arises reminds one of Fritz J. Raddatz's criticism of Johnson's occasional deliberate, but seemingly unnecessary, obscurity: '... es verrät ein Kichern des Autors — "Ich weiß, wißt ihr es auch?"' (Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Ein Märchen aus Geschichte und Geschichten', in Bengel, pp. 177–86 (p. 184)). It must be said, however, that Raddatz is not entirely free from this fault himself.
36. In the interview with Durzak Johnson explained how Gesine is supposed to have come by the details which are sometimes part of the Jerichow story: '[Es ist] meine Aufgabe, da sie den Tag über arbeiten muß und dann am Abend dieses verlorenen Tages ein Familienleben mit diesem Kind unterhalten muß, da ja ein anderer Elternteil nicht am Leben ist — dann ist es doch meine Aufgabe, ihr das herauszufinden, wie es damals war, und dann abzuwarten, ob das zu ihr, so wie sie ist, paßt oder ob es nicht zu ihr paßt' (Durzak, *Gespräche*, p. 438). Since there is no real textual corroboration for this, however, we have to assume that Gesine does her own research; indeed early in *Jahrestage* this is shown to be the case as she looks up the *Richmond and Twickenham Times* in a New York archive. Although, as I mentioned in note 32 above, the source of the material on Mecklenburg politics 1945–46 can now be traced to Eggert's history of the Stralsund area during those years, Gesine's access to such detail and the use she makes of it can only be viewed as a weakness in *Jahrestage*.
37. Max Frisch, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, p. 62. Compare Chapter VII, note 28 above.
38. Although the concept of setting traps seems unctuous in this context, it does have a history in oral tradition. Johnson's *Nachlaß* contains a collection of dialect folk tales from the Baltic sea: *Vineta. Sagen und Märchen vom Ostseerand*, edited by Albert Burkhardt (Rostock, 1965). One of the tales in this volume is called 'Du lüggst' (see pp. 348–49), and tells how Klaas, Hein and Krischan try to outdo each other with tall stories. The stories cannot be proved wrong, since evidence is not available; they therefore have to catch each other out by setting traps. In this case, Klaas claims to have been to Turkey and seen a cabbage big enough to shelter a regiment of soldiers. Hein and Krischan do not use the agreed formula of 'Du lüggst' to expose the story. Instead Krischan tells another: when he was in Turkey he saw a copper cauldron so enormous that twenty coppersmiths could work inside it, and none could hear the other, so far were

they apart. Thereupon, Klaas says: 'Du lüggst!'. Krischan can now counter by springing the trap he has set: "'Na", seggt Krischan, "denn betaal man, du Döösbatel. Dat weer doch de Ketel, in de dien Koolkopp schull kaakt warm'" (that was the cauldron they were going to boil your cabbage in). This is very much the kind of game which Gesine and Marie play in *Jahrestage 3* and *Jahrestage 4*; it may well be that this story is the pattern for their narrative games. Marie uses the phrase 'Du lüchst' on several occasions; see *JT*, 1651 and *JT*, 1654, for example. The story outlined above does help to explain the narrative relationship between Gesine and Marie; Gesine likewise stretches the limits of Marie's disbelief to see what she can get away with, while Marie has the function of calling her to task if she goes too far. We may therefore regard Gesine and Marie's narration as rooted in tradition, but it is a tradition of scepticism which Gesine has to fight against.

39. Marie's argument is that the middle classes deserved any mistreatment they may have received from the Russians.
40. 'Brief an Siegfried Unsel'd', in Bengel, p. 94.
41. Gerd Schumann seems to be drawn from the real-life figure of *Oberbürgermeister* Frost, mayor of Stralsund, who was 'ein 22jähriger, der wohl die russische Sprache beherrschte, auch durch seine Mitgliedschaft im "Nationalkomitee freies Deutschland" die russische Art verstand und vielleicht auch russisch gehorchte' (Eggert, *Das Ende des Krieges*, p. 194).
42. Gesine's plea for compassion on the grounds of youth is hardly credible; from the point of view of a ten-year-old, twenty-three is a fairly advanced age.
43. That Marie should notice this omission at all, quite apart from correctly guessing the reason, can only be ascribed to an almost telepathic intuition which contributes to the implausibility of her interplay with Gesine at this point.
44. Marie's answer to Gesine's question 'was benötigt man für öffentliche Wahlen?' (*JT*, 1393–94) serves well enough as an example: 'Parteien hattet ihr schon, erstens. Zweitens, die Leute in Parteien müssen Leute einladen, die nicht in Parteien sind. Denen müssen sie etwas versprechen, entweder mehr oder was anderes als die anderen Parteien. Eine Partei, die nicht an der Macht ist, muß dazu ebenso eine Erlaubnis haben wie die Partei, die an der Macht ist. Weil die Parteien nicht alle Leute einladen können, die nicht in Parteien sind, müssen sie auf den Rest einreden mit Zeitungen, Flugzetteln, Plakaten. Wenn es endlich ans Wählen geht, brauchen sie drittens Schiedsrichter. Die kümmern sich nur um die Regeln, als da sind Freiwilligkeit, Geheimhaltung und genaue Auszählung; die Parteien aber sind ihnen schnurz. Dann brauchst du noch Leute, die es nicht satt haben und überhaupt wählen wollen. Da weiß ich ein paar, die wollten sich gar nichts mehr aussuchen.'
45. This echoes Gesine's letter to Anita Gantlik of 13 July 1968:
  - Vertell, vertell.
  - Du lüchst so schön. (*JT*, 1548)
 Compare also note 38 above.
46. The problem of how to cope with the fact that these events have already been set out in *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* is solved as follows:
  - Erst mußst doch du zu Besuch gehen nach Jerichow!
  - Wer sagt dir . . . das sagt Einer mir bloß nach, ich sei auf einer Dienstreise über die ostdeutsche Transitstrecke nach Berlin ausgestiegen, gegen ein Verbot, und durch die Wälder geschlichen nach Jerichow. Weil du es bist, geb ich es zu. (*JT*, 1866)
47. i.e. when Gesine knew she was pregnant with Marie.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*, second edition (Munich, 1977).
2. See Mitscherlich, p. 78, where they refer to Freud's essay 'Trauer und Melancholie' (*Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Anna Freud and others, 18 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 1940–68), x, 428–46).
3. In defining *Trauerarbeit*, the Mitscherlichs quote from Freud as follows: 'Die Trauerarbeit ist das auffallendste Beispiel für die mit der Erinnerungsarbeit verbundenen Schmerzen' (Mitscherlich, p. 78). The pain which Gesine associates with certain memories can only be assuaged by undergoing the mourning process.
4. It is worth noting that the Mitscherlichs probably drew their inspiration from Adorno's 1959 essay 'Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit', for 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' is a useful term to describe the process which Gesine embarks on in *Jahrestage* and Johnson in

- his fiction. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Eingriffe. Neun kritische Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main, 1963), pp. 125–46.
5. Michael Hamburger, who knew Johnson, has provided some examples of this, commenting on how his principles affected personal relationships: 'Where Uwe's principles conflicted with his affections, it was the principles that prevailed, making no concessions to anyone or anything; but because his affections, too, remained immutable, he could not help destroying himself.' See 'Uwe Johnson. A Friendship', *Grand Street*, 4 (1985), 109–24 (p. 123).
  6. The text first appeared in *Begegnungen. Eine Festschrift für Max Frisch*, edited by Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt am Main, 1981), pp. 68–108. The title is reminiscent of Frisch's *Skizze eines Unglücks*, while the story contains a number of allusions to Frisch's works. See also Walter Schmitz, *Uwe Johnson*, pp. 102–06.
  7. Bengel mentioned in interview the events of *Skizze eines Verunglückten* and the 'Begleitumstände' which Johnson cited at the end of his *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*. The author's reaction: 'Ja, ich finde es immer ganz günstig, wenn man sich auskennt mit den Sachen, über die man schreibt. Aber so, wie der klatschselige Raddatz das macht, daraus eine direkte Ableitung meiner persönlichen Verhältnisse zu machen, das empfinde ich als Herabwürdigung der Mühen, die ich mir gegeben habe. Eine literarische Sache ist die eine, und die Privatsphäre ist die andere' (Bengel, p. 127).
  8. Jens broke into Johnson's house after his death and photographed the author's personal effects, as well as rifling through his private papers. The results were published in an article and a book, the latter being hastily padded out with quotations from Johnson's works. See Tilman Jens, 'Der Unbekannte von der Themse', *stern*, 24 May 1984, 126–36, and Tilman Jens, *Unterwegs an den Ort wo die Toten sind. Auf der Suche nach Uwe Johnson in Sheerness* (Munich, 1984).
  9. A clue to this kind of behaviour might be found in Martin Walser's character Rainer Mersjohann, who bears more than a passing resemblance to Uwe Johnson. Naturally Mersjohann is a composite figure and not merely a cipher for the real author, but there are enough parallels to make the resemblance clear, and Martin Walser said in a postcard to me dated 30 December 1985: 'Die Tragödie UJ habe ich nicht ganz abhalten können'. Amongst other things, Rainer Mersjohann constructs an individual moral system designed to let only him always be in the right, and therefore display an absolute, untouchable devotion to truth: 'Er hatte die Gabe, alles, was er für nötig hielt, auch für gerecht zu halten. Er konnte nichts tun, wozu er sich nicht vorher durch eine Art Rechtsprechung ermächtigt hatte'. See Martin Walser, *Brandung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), p. 289.
  10. The lengths to which Johnson went in anchoring his fictional world in a historical environment are documented, for example, in Irmgard Müller, 'Lokaltermin Richmond. Eine Untersuchung der örtlichen Begebenheiten in Richmond, Surrey, in Uwe Johnsons *Jahrestage*', *GLL*, 41 (1988), 248–70.
  11. For a description of the material in the archive, see Eberhard Fahlke, 'Das Handwerk des Schreibens — Das Uwe-Johnson-Archiv an der J. W. Goethe-Universität', *Forschung Frankfurt*, 1 (1985), 2–8.
  12. *Lessings Werke*, edited by Kurt Wölfel, 3 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), III, 321.

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Colin Riordan finds the key to Uwe Johnson's puzzling works in an idiosyncratic moral code to which both Johnson and his narrative figures adhere. This code underlies the development in Johnson's prose from his first novel *Ingrid Babendererde* (written 1956, published 1985), through *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* (1959), *Das dritte Buch über Achim* (1961) and *Zwei Ansichten* (1965), to the four-volume masterpiece *Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl* (1970–83). The complex narrative of *Jahrestage* is unravelled, revealing the problems Gesine Cresspahl encounters in reconstructing her past. These problems can only be solved by evolving a code of narrative ethics which forces Gesine — and the reader — to confront the kinds of painful truths which might otherwise remain submerged.