

THE ESSAY AS AN ART FORM

A Study of Selected German Essays

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies

and Research

University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Irene Isabel Artes

April 1965

© Irene I. Artes 1965



Dedicated to
PROFESSOR K. W. MAURER
in grateful appreciation
of his encouragement and help

THE ESSAY AS AN ART FORM

A Study of Selected German Essays

AN ABSTRACT

In this thesis the attempt was made to consider in the most careful way possible the nature of the essay, and from this premiss to discover and to show whether the essay can claim to be an art form in its own right. It soon became evident that any attempt at a clear-cut definition of the essay as a literary genre would prove futile, if not impossible. The essay writer is attracted to it not least because of the range and freedom it gives him in the handling of his chosen subject.

This genre confronts us with such a wealth of material that a severely, but judiciously selective method is forced upon the critic who ventures to deal with the inexhaustible material which lies ready to hand. In any case, a limited number of essays can throw as much, if not more light on the essay, especially if they claim to be representative of German literature, than a greater number of arbitrarily assembled material. The essays selected in our context have been chosen with this claim to validity in mind. By interpreting them singly and closely, it was hoped that a pattern might emerge from which certain and definite conclusions could be drawn.

To avoid facile generalizations, the best method ap-

peared to be to start with an interpretation of an essay by none other than Montaigne, who established this genre, and to consider it in a comparative way with one by Francis Bacon on the very same topic. Though Bacon took both the idea and the name from Montaigne, his essays differ widely from those of his distinguished predecessor. As time went on essay writing became ever more popular in England, and two separate traditions made themselves felt: the one which may be regarded as the follower of Montaigne, and Charles Lamb might serve as an outstanding example, and the other following the line of Bacon's more formal approach, and here Thomas Macaulay may be called a representative.

The name "der Essay" was first introduced in Germany in the Nineteenth Century by Hermann Grimm, who in his own practice of it, and on his own testimony, owed much to essayists like Bacon, Macaulay, and in particular Ralph Waldo Emerson, with the result that the German essay at that time joined in this English tradition. In the Eighteenth Century the essay was called Versuch, and Lessing may be called its pioneer in Germany. It was taken up by Herder, who made the essay more personal in form and style by using it as a vehicle for the presentation and sorting out of his own experience and responses. The essay, "Journal meiner Reise im Sommer 1769," is an example of this.

As in so many other fields, Goethe proved his mastery

in this new genre also, so that with him it reaches a height unsurpassed before or since. Some of his essays may be taken as supreme examples of what an essay can and should be, namely, "Uber den Granit" and "Winckelmann." The reason for Goethe's artistry must be looked for in his technique, which takes something specific and impersonal, for example, granite, and achieves a wholeness in which the impersonal merges with the personal and vice versa.

Schiller naturally handles this form very differently from Goethe, but again in his own characteristic way. An essay such as "Uber das Erhabene," which may appear to be an abstract and impersonal study, at the same time betrays the fact that Schiller had his subject matter very much at heart.

The next important stage is reached when we come to Kleist and his outstanding achievement, "Uber das Marionettentheater." The essay re-creates a conversation between the writer and a dancer on the subject of marionettes and gives unexpected and always surprising insights, thus illuminating the unconscious and conscious elements in man's nature.

Once more Bacon's tradition becomes evident in the Nineteenth Century, when the essay took on distinctly naturalistic and scientific aspects. The already-mentioned Hermann Grimm and others wrote their essays in this vein, which continued until we come to a representative of the Twentieth Century, Josef Hofmiller, who with his approach succeeded in adding a

new element to essay writing. We have now entered upon the period of our own time, in the course of which the personal element becomes ever stronger due to man's increasing sense of aloneness and isolation. In this context Hugo von Hoffmannsthal's essay, "Ein Brief," is an outstanding example. Even Thomas Mann looks at himself in an essay such as "Im Spiegel," although he uses irony in order to create distance for himself. Hermann Hesse remains avowedly on a personal plane whether he writes essays or Erzählungen. Albrecht Goes extends the approach and method used by Hermann Hesse in that his essays are Auseinandersetzungen mit sich selbst, in other words, revealing Selbstgespräche or interior monologues.

Finally it should be pointed out that the essay may take on various guises; it may be in the form of a letter, a diary, a piece of autobiography or biography, and not least, a critical study. As long as it reveals an inner form, a consciously achieved artistry, the essay is most certainly an art. It is not hampered by strict rules and regulations; the heart and the imagination, together with the artistic determination to create form, help to shape and to raise the essay to the level of valid art.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix
I. BEGINNINGS OF THE ESSAY	1
Michel de Montaigne	1
Francis Bacon	6
The Essay in England	10
The Essay in Germany	13
II. THE ESSAY IN GERMAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE	17
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing	17
Johann Gottfried Herder	20
Johann Wolfgang Goethe	24
Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller	35
Heinrich von Kleist	44
III. THE ESSAY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	51
Josef Hofmiller	54
Hugo von Hofmannsthal	58
Thomas Mann	63
Hermann Hesse	74
Albrecht Goes	81

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. THE NATURE OF THE ESSAY	89
Outer and Inner Form	90
Personal and Impersonal Elements	96
Reflective and Concrete Elements	101
The Essay as an Art Form	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY	108

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this investigation is to discover and to show whether the essay may claim to be an art form in its own right. When we consider the wealth of essay material which exists in German literature, and the fact that the number of essays being written in our time is not diminishing, but increasing, the question naturally arises as to what and how an essay distinguishes itself from other prose forms.

Since the genre as such lacks definition and a clear-cut delineation, the method chosen was to select representative essays and to attempt a close interpretation and analysis of them, so that perhaps a pattern might emerge by which the essay would reveal its meaning and form. It goes without saying, that within the compass of this thesis, it is not possible to be definitive and exhaustive. However, an attempt is made to arrive at and to draw certain conclusions which appear to be called for.

Because of the need to limit oneself in the face of existing material and the desire to do justice to the individual essay, I have chosen a relatively small number. It was imperative to be on guard against a method which would lead to a superficial and statistical survey at the expense of more valuable data and insights. Also I have restricted myself chiefly to the best-known German writers. Some of the

most distinguished names in German literature have made notable contributions in the field of the essay; the names of Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist and Novalis come readily to mind, and in our own time, Thomas Mann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Hermann Hesse, Gottfried Benn, and many others.

The fact that the essay can and does appear in various guises such as the letter, diary, autobiography, biography, dialogue, interior monologue (Selbstgespräch), has been kept in mind, and examples of these were included. It must also be mentioned that since the interpretation of essays is involved, personal preferences play a role in the selection, too.

Some of the studies on the essay which are available are Hugo Friedrich's book, Montaigne, which deals with the form of the essay in its last chapter; Max Bense's article, "Über den Essay und seine Prosa"; Rudolf Bach's appreciation of Goethe's "Winckelmann," and Josef Hofmiller's "On Goethe's schönste Essays"; a newspaper article, "Essay--zum Wort und zur Sache" by Kurt Wais and Hans Hennecke, as well as Robert Musil's observations on the essay in his novel, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Hans Egon Holthusen deals briefly with "Die Kunst des Essays" in his study of Max Kommerell, and Theodor W. Adorno has written a short treatise on "Der Essay als Form." These are all recent studies published within the last thirty

years. The earliest one available is Georg von Lukács' "Über Wesen und Form des Essays," included in his book, Die Seele und die Formen (1911), and two articles, one by Otto Doderer, "Der dichterische Essay," and the other by Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm, "Der Essai." All these studies however are either introductions to, or, as it were, essays on the essay. Though they contain illuminating and helpful observations, they are on the whole general and limited; most of them are a searching for, rather than a revealing, the essay's character and form. A book by Bruno Berger, Der Essay: Form und Geschichte (Bern: Francke, 1964), which appears to be a definitive work on the essay, was unfortunately not available to me at the time of writing.

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS OF THE ESSAY

The French word, "essai," which literally means an attempt or experiment, derives itself from the Latin "exagium": a weighing or trial. It was first used in connection with a literary work in 1580, when the Frenchman Michel de Montaigne chose it as the title for his book, Les Essais. For Montaigne the word, "essai," was not yet a literary term; he used it to indicate his method of writing, which did not follow externally-imposed rules, but was a casual dwelling^{on} and tasting of the subject, an attempt at it, in contrast to the exhaustive treatment given to it by the traditional scholastic treatise of his day.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE (1533-1592)

This open form of the "essai" adopted by Montaigne, suited his cast of mind; it allowed him to express his moods and his thought which moved freely from picture to experience to the wise observation. He remarked in one of his essays: "I know by experience this sort of nature that cannot bear vehement and laborious premeditation. If it doesn't go along gaily and freely, it goes nowhere worth going."¹

¹Michel de Montaigne, "Of Prompt and Slow Speech," The Complete Works of Montaigne (London: Hamish Hamilton, [n.d.]), pp. 25-27, 26.

Having this spontaneous quality, do the Essais have a form, and if so, what is its nature? The best way to answer this is to examine an essay by Montaigne, which would at the same time throw light on other aspects of the essay, as it first appeared in literature. The essay chosen is the one, "Of Friendship."

He begins with a reference to an artist whom he has observed and who in

the middle of each wall. . . put a picture labored over with all his skill, and the empty space all around it he fills with grotesques, which are fantastic paintings whose only charm lies in their variety and strangeness.²

In this he sees a comparison to his own method of working, for he continues: "And what are these things of mine, in truth but grotesques and monstrous bodies, pieced together of divers members, without definite shape, having no order, sequence, or proportion other than accidental?"³ He says he can only paint the grotesques, "for my ability does not go far enough for me to dare to undertake a rich, polished picture, formed according to art."⁴ As an afterthought he adds: "It has occurred to me to borrow one from Etienne de La Boétie. . . ."⁵ by which he means an early piece of writing by his friend, and begins to discuss it, observing that this work was the means by which they first became acquainted. With that the whole

²Montaigne, "Of Friendship," pp. 135-144, 135.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

wonder of his friendship is recalled, "which together we fostered. . . so entire and so perfect that certainly you will hardly read of the like. . . ." ⁶ and he launches out on a new theme, one which constitutes the "grotesques" around the "picture" which he said was to be his subject, and these become the actual subject of the essay.

When he talks about friendship it is in terms of his own experience, telling how he met Etienne de La Boétie and how he felt:

In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I. ⁷

What he says is concrete and personal. To illuminate certain aspects of friendship, he takes two examples of friendship from ancient times, but adds: "the very discourses that antiquity has left us on this subject seem to me weak compared with the feeling I have." ⁸

The essay reaches a peak, where it becomes an expression of his grief for the loss of his friend:

if I compare it all, I say, with the four years which were granted me to enjoy the sweet company and society of that man, it is nothing but smoke, nothing but dark and dreary night. Since the day I lost him,

Which I shall ever recall with pain,
Ever with reverence--thus, Gods, did you ordain--

Virgil

⁶Ibid., p. 136.

⁷Ibid., p. 139.

⁸Ibid., p. 143.

I only drag on a weary life. And the very pleasures that come my way, instead of consoling me, redouble my grief for his loss.⁹

Feeling fuses with his prose, raising it to the level of poetry. Even the frequent quotations from ancient authors become an organic part of his words to express his sorrow.

The essay breaks off at the height of his grief, and the eye moves back from the "grotesques," as he calls his digressions, to the "picture," the work by La Boétie with which he had started off as his formal subject, and in a calm paragraph about it, the essay ends.

Compared to a formal piece of writing, "Of Friendship" is fragmentary and rambling, a weaving of fancies, about which he says, "And what are these things of mine. . . having no order, sequence or proportion other than accidental?"¹⁰ Strangely enough, however, the impression given by the reading of the essay is one of completeness. He has succeeded in communicating not only the depth and beauty of his friendship but even more so, of friendship itself. There is no need for anything in the essay to be said in any other way or that anything be changed. It is complete the way it is.

The form of the essay is an intuitive one which is as right and true as it is unexplainable. But conscious effort is combined with intuition and feeling, for his approach is a careful one. Hugo Friedrich observes: "Sieht man, wie gründ-

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 135.

lich er über seine Essais nachdenkt, wie er sie immer wieder vornimmt, verbessert, erweitert. . . ."¹¹ Different versions exist of the same essays, showing how he revised and added to them. This is the paradox of the essay, as revealed in Montaigne's work, that it is free and casual and intuitive, and yet carefully wrought.

"Of Friendship" also shows his love for the concrete. Not only is there a basis of personal experience to all his reflection, but even in his style, his frequent use of imagery, he reveals this quality, as for example:

Just as the man who was found astride a stick, playing with his children, asked the man who surprised him thus to say nothing about it until he was a father himself, in the belief that the passion which would then be born in his soul would make him an equitable judge of such an act, so should I like to talk to people who have experienced what I tell.¹²

He is charmingly personal. The reader responds not just to what Montaigne says, but ^{to} what he is, as he reveals himself, for as he says in his preface, "To the Reader": "It is myself that I portray. . . ."

His essays are a "Selbstgespräch," a dialogue within himself:

In ihrem Kerne sind die Essais ein Selbstgespräch. . . . Sie wollen schliesslich nichts anderes, als mit sich selber ins klare zu kommen und nebenbei andere einzuladen,

¹¹Hugo Friedrich, Montaigne (Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag, 1949), p. 407.

¹²Montaigne, op. cit., p. 142-3.

es auf ihre Weise ebenfalls zu tun.¹³

Moreover they go beyond the personal element to acquire a universal significance, for the reader sees himself mirrored in Montaigne's Essais. "One of the mysteries of the Essays is how the portrait of Michel de Montaigne seems to become that of every man. . . ,"¹⁴ says Donald M. Frame, one of Montaigne's modern translators.

In the essay, "Of Friendship," prose statements and poetry, trivialities and profound thought and experience are found side by side, and above it all the reflective tone, a calm and detachment, for the essay is a looking back to an experience.

FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)

Montaigne's innovation in portraying his own feelings and personal reflections struck a ^hcord in the growing self-awareness of the individual which characterized the Renaissance period. The popularity of Montaigne's Essais spread to England, where John Florio's translation, The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne, appeared in 1603. And even before that, Francis Bacon adopted this word, naming his book, published in 1597, Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall.

¹³Friedrich, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁴Donald M. Frame (trans.), The Complete Works of Montaigne, p. vi.

Though they have the same name, Bacon's essays differ in form and style from those of his French predecessor. Montaigne's are characterized by concrete examples and constant references to himself, for, as he says in his Preface: "I am myself the matter of my book." Bacon's however, are impersonal and abstract. The style has been aptly characterized by Hermann Grimm as "Diese knappe Art, von Behauptung zu Behauptung zu eilen. . . ."¹⁵ The aim of Bacon's writings is to teach and to impart his wisdom to others; he himself is hidden behind his words. There is no fanciful weaving of "grotesques" or disarming little confessions of weaknesses characteristic of Montaigne, nor the contrasts or spontaneous expression of feeling achieved by the latter, but an even and serious tone. He uses examples and imagery sparingly, being too business-like to muse long at any point. However when Bacon does use imagery and balanced sentences he does so with telling effect, for example:

You may take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flowers of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart, but a true friend. . . .¹⁶

Bacon's imagery gives the appearance of being consciously striven for, whereas Montaigne's has a spontaneous effect,

¹⁵Hermann Grimm, "Vorwort," Fünfzehn Essays, Vierte Folge (Gütersloh, 1890), pp. V-XXII, VII.

¹⁶Francis Bacon, "Of Friendship," The Essayes or Counsels (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1922), pp. 80-86, 80-1.

as if he cannot help it.

The form, too, differs from that of Montaigne's essays. This is shown, for example, in the way Bacon handles a similar theme in the essay, "Of Friendship." He begins with a praise of friendship; how necessary it is for a man to have friends; how great men of history have valued it. Then he considers its fruits, of which there are three. He discusses these at length, and concludes: "But to enumerate these things were endless: I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part: if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage."¹⁷

He stops when he has sufficiently illuminated the benefits of friendship. His treatment of the subject is general; not once is there a reference to his personal experience, in contrast to Montaigne whose whole essay evolves around it.

The form of the essays shows a straightforward arrangement; there is no inner development. The order is guided by reason, not the muse. Hugh Walker observes that Bacon regarded the essay as a receptacle for detached thoughts, a fact which is evident from the essays themselves, and from Bacon's own words about them, for he speaks of them as "dispersed meditations."¹⁸ Hugh Walker observes that:

We feel that many of his essays might be expanded into treatises; they have not an organic completeness as they

¹⁷Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁸Francis Bacon, quoted by Hugh Walker, The English Essay and Essayists (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1923), p. 16.

stand. But Montaigne's have this organic completeness. . . .¹⁹

Bacon called his writings "essays" because they were not complete treatises. For Bacon, "it was something incomplete, something which ought to bear on its face the visible marks of its unfinished condition."²⁰ For Montaigne it meant more; for him method was as important as the subject.

However, in the sense that the writings present the fruit of Bacon's thought and experience in the world of men, they are personal and share a common ground with Montaigne's Essais. Bacon's essays, too, illuminate his subject from various sides, as do Montaigne's. Perhaps the difference can be summed up in the fact that Bacon has two names for his writings: Essayes or Counsels, showing that the giving of advice and counsels is an essential element. This would also account for the aphoristic and matter-of-fact style.

Bacon was the first to use the name "essay" as a literary term, and his works, which were widely read, established the name in English literature. He did not imitate Montaigne's style of writing, but formed his own. Under his influence it became a "lehrhafte Form der Betrachtung,"²¹ which led to the later periodical essays of Addison, Steele and Johnson. The

¹⁹Hugh Walker (ed.), "Introduction," Dreamthorp by Alexander Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. xvi.

²⁰Ibid., p. 18.

²¹Emil Dovifat, "Essay," Handbuch der Zeitungswissenschaft, Band 1 (Leipzig, Verlag Karl W. Hiersemann, 1940), pp. 938-9, 938.

latter defines the essay in his dictionary as a "loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece. . . ," a definition which would fit more Bacon's essay than that of Montaigne.

The type of essay established by Bacon has a didactic purpose: to pass on knowledge and wisdom gained through experience, reflection and study, and to illuminate a subject from a consciously limited view. The writer is aware that it is a contribution to a large body of knowledge which he cannot exhaust. Hence it is fragmentary and a name meaning "to attempt" is most suitable. Humour, charm and a personal response are not essential; the writer recedes into the background, although he is aware that his selection is based on a personal viewpoint.

Since Bacon's day two traditions have been evident in England: that emanating from Bacon himself, usually referred to as the formal essay, of which Thomas Macaulay's essays are an example, and that of Montaigne, the informal essay, of which Charles Lamb is the most famous representative.

THE ESSAY IN ENGLAND

Abraham Cowley, in contrast to Bacon, was the first to follow the example of Montaigne in his "Essays in Verse and Prose," published in 1668. His essays are personal and discursive.

In the Eighteenth Century the essay became popular through the periodicals, The Tatler (1709-11) and The Spec-

tator (1711-12, 1714), which contained essays by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, and The Rambler (1750-52), published by Samuel Johnson.

The periodical essays, as developed by these writers, are urbane and witty. They have an intimate and chatty tone, but the writer speaks through a mouthpiece, a character representative of certain elements of society, as for example, "Mr. Spectator," "Isaac Bickerstaff," or "the Clergyman." They imitate the witty conversation of the coffee-shop and their subject matter is usually the manners and foibles of the time, and their purpose to "raise the ideals and standards of their age."²² Thus the essays are not really a part of the tradition of the personal essay, as Melvin R. Watson observes:

the purpose of the eighteenth-century essay--to hold the mirror up to nature and reform society of its foibles if not of its vices--is at variance with the spirit of the familiar essay. . . . The essay periodical depicts a social age; the familiar essay, an individual.²³

However the essays of Addison and Steele are an exploration of new possibilities of the essay.

The familiar essay blossomed in the Nineteenth Century, especially in the writings of Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey, Leigh Hunt, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Essays like "A Dis-

²²Robert Withington, "Essay," The Encyclopedia Americana (Canadian Edition, 1953), X, 510.

²³Melvin R. Watson, Magazine Serials and the Essay Tradition, Louisiana State University Studies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), pp. 69-70.

sertation on Roast Pig," or "On Chimney Sweepers" by Lamb reach a high level of literary excellence and individuality, so that one can say with John M. Berdan that Lamb "elevated the essay to the plane of high art. . . ." ²⁴

The contemporaries of Charles Lamb, equally popular, like Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold, represent a different tradition, that of the formal type, harking back to Bacon, but also adding new dimensions to it.

The Twentieth Century has made its own contribution, that of the humorous essay for popular consumption, as it is found in many present-day magazines and periodicals. These essays of today amuse and relax the mind, but sometimes give the impression of mass-production; trivialities of daily life are taken and whimsically presented; they are fun to read, but are just as soon forgotten.

However many have a value of their own. The charming and humorous essays of Sir Max Beerbohm stand out, as do those of Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, and Augustine Birrell. The essays of Virginia Woolf are notable for their literary craftsmanship and variety. Her essays, like "The Moth," "Street Haunting," or her sketches of people in history and literature, as for example, "Madame de Sévigné," or "The Man at the Gate,"

²⁴John M. Berdan, "Essay," Collier's Encyclopedia (1963), IX, 318.

"Sara Coleridge," and her many others on literary themes, mark her as one of the outstanding essayists of this century.

From the time Bacon called his "dispersed meditations" essays, there has been confusion as to the form which this word implies. The name itself is vague; at most it says it is an attempt at a subject, but says nothing about form or how to recognize it, thus giving the writer much leeway and including many different prose creations. Charles E. Whitmore sums it up well, when he says:

Of all the literary terms in common use, the word "essay" has perhaps the widest field and the most indeterminate content. Since the form to which it applies has taken on a fresh character in the hands of almost all its chief exponents, it has become in practice the designation for any piece of prose of moderate length. . . .²⁵

The word became fashionable in England in the Eighteenth Century and since then has often been used indiscriminately. Many a writer, to be modest, called his scholarly piece of writing an "attempt." At the same time the name was used for philosophical treatises to indicate their fragmentary nature. Thus a work like Lamb's "A Dissertation on Roast Pig" and Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Pope's "Essay on Man" are all called essays.

THE ESSAY IN GERMANY

When Johann Joachim Christoph Bode translated Montaigne's Essais in 1797, he translated the title as "Montaigne's Gedan-

²⁵Charles E. Whitmore, "The Field of the Essay," PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 551.

ken und Meinungen über allerley Gegenstände." Other writers used "Gesinnungen," "Meinungen," "Gedanken," as translations for the word, "essai." They did not try to translate it literally, but rather the meaning inherent in this kind of writing as compared to the scholastic style of the time. Generally, the words, "Abhandlung," and more often "Versuch" were used in the time of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller.

Due to English influence in the Nineteenth Century the word "Essay," with the English spelling, became popular in Germany. Hugo Friedrich notes that:

Von England aus geht der Essay als eine kunstvoll gepflegte, urbane, mit autobiographischen Elementen und einem starken Subjektivismus durchsetzte Gattung dem Titel und der Sache nach. . . in die Weltliteratur über.²⁶

Hermann Grimm used the word for the first time in 1859, as the title for his book, Essays.

The American Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the English essayists Thomas Babington Macaulay and Matthew Arnold, were widely read in Germany at this time. Hermann Grimm, an admirer of Emerson, states in his "Vorwort":

Was meine Aufmerksamkeit auf den Essay als literarische Form zuerst hinlenkte, waren weder Montaigne's, noch Bacon's, noch die Essays Addison's. . . sondern die Emerson's.²⁷

The essays of Emerson, Macaulay and Matthew Arnold were the models for a number of other German essay writers, among them

²⁶Friedrich, op. cit., p. 425.

²⁷Grimm, op. cit., p. VIII.

Otto Gildemeister and Karl Hillebrand. Their writings, too, show the characteristics of the formal essay. They deal largely with politics or the history of art and literature, and the essay form is for them chiefly a means of expressing the fruits of their reflection and studies. A consideration of the literary aspects of the form is absent. Thus Hermann Grimm says of the essay and why he chose to write in this form:

Ich für mein Theil habe diese Form oft gewählt, um Studien, die ich nach verschiedenen Richtungen gemacht hatte, mehr anzudeuten als ihrem gesammten Inhalt nach mitzutheilen. Ich suchte einstweilen Proben dieser Studien zu geben, zusammenfassende Vorreden gleichsam zu ungeschriebenen Büchern, und fand, dass der Name Essay dieser literarischen Form der angemessenste sei. . . .²⁸

Thus for him it is but a form in which he treats a subject in a cursory manner, or gives a foretaste of books he would like to write.

This understanding of the essay form was not limited to Hermann Grimm. Emil Dovifat comments years later about the essay in Germany:

Was in Deutschland als E[ssay] bezeichnet wird, ist. . . oft eine in lesewerbender, volkstümlicher Form gehaltene wissenschaftliche Abhandlung oder auch ein ruhig betrachtender politischer Aufsatz. . . .²⁹

Another writer, Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm, complains that, "Namentlich in Deutschland wird der Essai vielfach mit einer gelehrten Abhandlung verwechselt. . . ."³⁰

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Dovifat, op. cit., p. 939

³⁰Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm, "Der Essai," Das litterarische Echo (1903-04), VI, 747.

However there are also many examples of other kinds of essays in Germany which for want of a better term may be called literary essays. As early as Goethe's time this "literary essay" had reached a height which is unsurpassed. In modern times this tradition continues in the essays of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Josef Hofmiller, Albrecht Goes, Gotfried Benn and a host of others.

CHAPTER II

THE ESSAY IN GERMAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

The Essais of Montaigne give a picture of this literary form, but it is only an introduction and a beginning, for there is nothing static about the essay as a literary form. On the contrary, each essayist has his own understanding of this form which bears more than any other the stamp of the writer's personality and style.

In trying to understand the essay form, the study of individual essays is therefore imperative, and each one must be approached in a way which will do justice to it as a whole, and not by way of fragmentation. Hugo Friedrich has expressed the approach well when he says: "die beste Art, ihm [dem Essay] beizukommen, ohne ihn zu erdrücken, ist das mitgehende Beschreiben."¹

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING (1729-1781)

Among Lessing's prose writings, many of which are polemical and didactic, are some which reveal another quality. An example is the essay, "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet" (1769). Lessing calls it "Eine Untersuchung" and in many ways it is closer to a formal "Abhandlung" than an essay in Montaigne's sense of the word. It is divided into four parts: a "Vorrede,"

¹Friedrich, op. cit., p. 8.

"Veranlassung," "Untersuchung," and "Prüfung," and the sharp reasoning characteristic of Lessing is evident throughout. As always he writes carefully and with a wealth of detail, summoning all the evidence obtained from a study of a number of Greek works of art and passages from ancient authors. However a personal element is also present. In his "Vorrede" he remarks about his work:

Allerdings hätte ich mit mehr Ordnung zu Werke gehen können. . . ich hätte noch dieses und jenes seltene oder kostbare Buch nutzen können. . . .

Dabei sind es nur längst bekannte Denkmale der alten Kunst, die mir freigestanden, zur Grundlage meiner Untersuchung zu machen.²

His approach is a personal response to the subject, even more than it is a systematically presented argument.

Lessing refutes a certain "Herr Klotz," who stubbornly maintains that the Greeks depicted death as a skeleton and that every youth with wings, found on ancient works of art, must of necessity be Cupid. He intends to show that, contrary to common opinion, the Greeks pictured death as a youth, the twin-brother of sleep. As his name suggests, Herr Klotz represents a person who ignorantly and without thinking, draws rash conclusions about a subject.

The mentioning of Herr Klotz lends the "Untersuchung"

²Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet," Gesammelte Werke, Zweiter Band (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1959), p. 964.

a concrete setting, which makes it more than a bare "Traktat." Lessing is aware of his limited sources, sees his work more as a "Versuch," and often inserts qualifying statements. The work is not exhaustive, though it illuminates the subject from various sides and presents his point convincingly.

"Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet" stands between an "Abhandlung" and an essay. On one hand it is a piece of scholarly writing and has this framework. On the other hand a growing clarification of his understanding of the subject and a personal response to it are evident. These lead to a new insight, in this way creating an inner unity within the outward structure.

Lessing closes with the observation that if, presumably, it was "unsere Religion" which pushed aside "das alte heitere Bild des Todes aus den Grenzen der Kunst,"³ then it should be remembered that this same religion has taken away the terror of death, and the Scriptures themselves speak of the angel of death. Therefore, he asks: "und welcher Künstler sollte nicht lieber einen Engel als ein Gerippe bilden wollen?"⁴

Lessing concludes with these words, which express a new thought, are not part of his subject matter anymore, but at the same time are the fruit of his reflecting on it:

Nur die missverstandene Religion kann uns von dem Schönen entfernen, und es ist ein Beweis für die wahre, für die

³Ibid., p. 1014.

⁴Ibid., p. 1015.

richtig verstandene wahre Religion, wenn sie uns überall auf das Schöne zurückbringt.⁵

JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER (1744-1803)

An indication that Lessing's essay is not just a scholarly treatise, but contains elements which have a personal impact on the reader, is the fact that Johann Gottfried Herder responded with an essay on Lessing's work, also entitled, "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet?" (1774).

Herder's essay is a personal response to the work by Lessing. What excites him is not the fact that "Herr Klotz" is cleverly refuted, but by what he calls Lessing's "schöne, beneidenswerthe Entdeckung."⁶ Herder illuminates the subject anew in the light of his own feeling and point of view. Rudolf Bach's observation, "Herder packt seinen Gegenstand immer vom persönlichen Erlebnis her,"⁷ is evident here.

The essay is not a scholarly piece of work in the way Lessing's is, but it, too, makes a valuable contribution to the subject. He points out, for example, that the characteristic pose of the feet seen in the figure representing death is of Egyptian origin. His style is smoother and moves more

⁵Ibid.

⁶Johann Gottfried Herder, "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet?", Sämmtliche Werke, Fünfter Band, B. Suphan, editor (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1891), p. 656.

⁷Rudolf Bach, "Goethes 'Winckelmann'," Das Deutsche Wort, Jahrgang 11, Nummer 28 (München, 1935), p. 4.

freely and reveals strong feeling: "Also die Griechen! die Griechen!"⁸ exclaims Herder in admiration and every sentence in that paragraph ends with an exclamation mark.

The two essays bearing the same title, the one sparked by the other, are complementary; the reader never has the feeling that they repeat or duplicate each other, but rather that Herder's is a new approach to the subject matter, and has a tone and quality all its own.

Another essay by Herder which brings us closer to an understanding of this form is "Journal meiner Reise im Sommer 1769." It is not, as its name suggests, a diary in the strict sense of the word, because dates and events of the journey are omitted or only mentioned in passing. It is an interior monologue of the writer, who is trying to find himself and his purpose in life. On board ship, bound for no fixed destination as far as he is concerned, cut off from his past life, he is able to examine his past from a distance.

He took this trip because he felt the need to get away: "Mut und Kräfte genug hatte ich nicht, alle diese Miss-situationen zu zerstören und mich ganz in eine andre Laufbahn hineinzuerschwingen. Ich musste also reisen. . . ." ⁹

On board ship his thoughts dwell on his old life in

⁸Herder, op. cit., p. 660.

⁹Johann Gottfried Herder, "Journal meiner Reise im Sommer 1769," Mensch und Geschichte, Kröners Taschenausgabe, Band 136 (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1935), p. 120.

Riga and the time and opportunities he has not used to improve his Bildung. To him, everything, including himself, appears now in the clearer light of detachment:

was gibt ein Schiff, das zwischen Himmel und Meer schwebt, nicht für weite Sphäre zu denken! . . . Der enge, feste, eingeschränkte Mittelpunkt ist verschwunden. . . Welch neue Denkart! aber sie kostet Tränen, Reue, Herauswindung aus dem Alten, Selbstverdammung!¹⁰

A profound re-thinking of his situation follows. He is dissatisfied even with himself: "bis auf meine Tugend war ich nicht mehr mit mir zufrieden; ich sah sie für nichts, als Schwäche, für einen abstrakten Namen an. . . ."¹¹ Self-doubt and the realization of his weakness fill him. The word "virtue" has become abstract and meaningless to him: "o warum ist man durch die Sprache zu abstrakten Schattenbildern wie zu Körpern, wie zu existierenden Realitäten verwöhnt!"¹²

These words bring to mind another essay, Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief," in which the writer expresses the same helplessness in the face of abstract words which are suddenly emptied of meaning. And not only this realization of the failure of abstract words, but also the solution, the turning to concrete things, is the same. When he is at his lowest ebb and his ideals are pulled down by doubt, he becomes aware of the sailors and the sea around him. It is a healing process.

He looks at the sea, not preoccupied with his own con-

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 124-5.

¹¹Ibid., p. 125.

¹²Ibid.

flicts and thoughts, but directly, and is strongly affected by it. His imagination leaps from a vision of the wonders in the depths of the sea, to all the countries the ocean touches and their history. Always he shows an awareness of the concreteness of nature, of water and sea, air and earth:

Wie sich Welle in Welle bricht: so fliessen die Luftondulationen und Schälle ineinander. Die Sinnlichkeit der Wasserwelt verhält sich also wie das Wasser zur Luft in Hören und Sehen. . . Wie die Welle das Schiff umschliesst: so die Luft den sich bewegenden Erdball. . . .¹³

He observes the coast seen from the ship and, renewed in his inner being, he is able to turn in his thoughts to the coast of the country he left when he boarded the ship, and new dreams and hopes of what he wants to become and do when he goes back, arise. Instead of returning to theories and abstractions, he wants to turn to man first: "Lasst uns also anfangen, den Menschen und menschliche Tugend recht kennen und predigen zu lernen, ehe man sich in tiefere Sachen mischet."¹⁴ His desire is to prepare himself so that he will be able to further the Bildung not only of himself, but of others: "Wieviel habe ich zu diesem Zwecke an mir aufzuwecken und zu ändern!"¹⁵ The essay ends in a rhapsodic sweep which covers all the wonderful things he hopes to do in his lifetime.

This essay shows the highly personal and reflective nature of the form. It is a Selbstgespräch, a deep involve-

¹³Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 145.

ment of the writer with himself and his experience. The form is not that of the day-to-day recording of events in a diary, but of a spontaneous development leading at the end of the essay to an illumination and insight. This essay reveals itself also as the union of concrete things and the vitality and movement of the human spirit as it meditates upon them, a phenomenon which is even more clearly illustrated in Goethe's essay, "Über den Granit," discussed in the following section.

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE (1749-1832)

Josef Hofmiller says that Goethe is "nicht nur unser grösster Dichter, sondern auch unser grösster Essayist. . . ." ¹⁶
 Rudolf Bach, in his survey of the essay in Germany adds to this observation, when he says:

Was noch fehlte, was Lessing nicht geben konnte, weil es weder in seiner Möglichkeit, noch in seinem Willen lag, war naturhafte Fülle und Gelassenheit. Beides gab Goethe. ¹⁷

"Das Andenken merkwürdiger Menschen, sowie die Gegenwart bedeutender Kunstwerke, regt von Zeit zu Zeit den Geist der Betrachtung auf": this is how Goethe begins his essay on Winckelmann, and continues: "Jeder Einsichtige weiss recht gut, dass nur das Anschauen ihres besondern Ganzen einen wahren Wert hätte, und doch versucht man immer aufs neue durch

¹⁶Josef Hofmiller, "Goethes schönste Essays," Wege zu Goethe (Hamburg-Bergedorf: Stromverlag, 1947), p. 25.

¹⁷Bach, op. cit., p. 4.

Reflexion und Wort ihnen etwas abzugewinnen."¹⁸ The approach of an essayist, not just that of Goethe, is expressed in these words. He cannot deal with the subject in its entirety, but tries to select and capture something of its truth and beauty. Here we grasp the meaning of Josef Hofmiller's observation, that "Wie es beim Maler zuletzt doch nicht auf die Geschicklichkeit der Hand ankommt. . . sondern aufs innere Auge, auf die ihm und ihm allein eigentümliche Art die Welt zu schauen, so auch im Geistigen."¹⁹

In its outward form the essay by Goethe consists of twenty-five headings loosely held together, each dealing with some aspect of Winckelmann's personality. But it has an organic unity, that of the writer's intention and vision. He has selected only those things which matter to him. Details, such as the date of Winckelmann's death, which a biographer would consider indispensable, are left out, Goethe choosing rather to tell what his death meant to him and the world.

The central element of the essay is Winckelmann's affinity to the ancient Greeks. Goethe shows that he possesses their qualities, shows how they reveal themselves in what he does and how they determine his destiny:

¹⁸Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Winckelmann," Schriften zur Kunst, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1949), p. 415.

¹⁹Hofmiller, op. cit., p. 25.

Eine solche antike Natur war. . . in Winckelmann wieder erschienen, die gleich anfangs ihr ungeheures Probe-
stück ablegte, dass sie durch dreissig Jahre Niedrigkeit,
Unbehagen und Kummer nicht gebändigt, nicht aus dem Wege
gerückt, nicht abgestumpft werden konnte. Sobald er nur
zu einer ihm gemässen Freiheit gelangte, erscheint er
ganz und abgeschlossen, völlig im antiken Sinne.²⁰

One of the characteristics of this pagan nature is wholeness:

Wenn die gesunde Natur des Menschen als ein Ganzes wirkt,
wenn er sich in der Welt als in einem grossen, schönen,
würdigen und werten Ganzen fühlt. . . .²¹

Noch fand sich das Gefühl, die Betrachtung nicht zerstück-
elt, noch war jene kaum heilbare Trennung in der gesunden
Menschenkraft nicht vorgegangen.²²

Another pagan characteristic possessed by Winckelmann is an
instinctive and unconscious way of doing things. Goethe speaks
of his "Geradsinn" which guides him. He has no definitely
thought-out principles, but "sein richtiges Gefühl, sein ge-
bildeter Geist dienen ihm im Sittlichen, wie im Ästhetischen,
zu Leitfaden."²³ Concerning his work he says:

Er arbeitet nie planmässig, immer aus Instinkt und mit
Leidenschaft.²⁴

. . . doch finden wir auch hier jene altertümliche Eigen-
heit, dass er sich immer mit sich selbst beschäftigte,
ohne sich eigentlich zu beobachten.²⁵

Winckelmann lives in the present, like the ancient Greeks, who
"mit allem Sinn, aller Neigung, aller Kraft auf die Gegenwart
wirkten. . . ."²⁶ He is receptive to everything which happens

²⁰Goethe, op. cit., p. 418.

²¹Ibid., p. 417.

²²Ibid., p. 418.

²³Ibid., p. 444.

²⁴Ibid., p. 445.

²⁵Ibid., p. 444.

²⁶Ibid., p. 417.

around him:

Wir finden ihn immer in Tätigkeit, mit dem Augenblick beschäftigt, ihn dergestalt ergreifend und festhaltend, als wenn der Augenblick vollständig und befriedigend sein könnte, und ebenso liess er sich wieder vom nächsten Augenblicke belehren.²⁷

Nothing is static about him. He is constantly learning and growing: "alles was. . . durch seine Hände ging, vermehrte den Schatz, den er in seinem Geiste angefangen hatte aufzustellen."²⁸

Goethe creates a living portrait of a man by suggesting the illimitable quality which surrounds him. The essay is not built up in chronological order, beginning with Winckelmann's childhood and ending with his death, neither does the writer deal separately with his life and then with his writings, but everything is woven together. The first section, which deals with Winckelmann's beginnings, contains references to his later destiny, his way of experiencing life, his journey to Rome. The young Winckelmann is like a seed which carries within it the tree which will grow when conditions are favourable and bear the fruit appropriate to it:

Er war dreissig Jahre alt geworden, ohne irgendeine Gunst des Schicksals genossen zu haben; aber in ihm selbst lagen die Keime eines wünschenswerten und möglichen Glücks.²⁹

The indestructable wholeness of Winckelmann's personality leads him to seek out instinctively that which is appropriate to it. He feels a kinship with the ancient Greek world, and it is

²⁷Ibid., p. 438.

²⁸Ibid., p. 437.

²⁹Ibid., p. 416.

through its art and its ideals that he is able to realize himself:

so kam er doch früher oder später immer zum Altertum, besonders zum Griechischen zurück, mit dem er sich so nahe verwandt fühlte, und mit dem er sich in seinen besten Tagen so glücklich vereinigen sollte.³⁰

Another aspect of Goethe's presentation, which gives the essay its individual character, is the fact, that a large number of paragraphs do not deal directly with Winckelmann. Goethe makes a general statement about something and then applies it to Winckelmann. A case in point is the section dealing with the character of the ancient Greeks which ends with the statement: "eine solche antike Natur war. . . in Winckelmann wieder erschienen."³¹ He discusses the nature of friendship in antiquity and then says, "Zu einer Freundschaft dieser Art fühlte Winckelmann sich geboren. . . ."³² Or, in talking about the concept of beauty in ancient times, he says in conclusion: "Für diese Schönheit war Winckelmann, seiner Natur nach, fähig. . . ."³³

Goethe inserts descriptions of Rome written by a "friend," discusses the history of Greek art because it interests him, or tells what happened to Cardinal Albani's art treasures. This freedom and Zwanglosigkeit give the essay a greater scope and add a new dimension to the portrait of Winckelmann.

³⁰Ibid., p. 419.

³²Ibid., p. 420.

³¹Ibid., p. 418.

³³Ibid., p. 422.

In the essay, Goethe never refers to himself directly, but nevertheless reveals himself in the way he has selected and arranged his subject matter. It is not a conscious self-revelation, but rises to the surface and recedes again in the flow of the subject matter. "Was ein Essai auch behandeln mag, er ist immer der Ausdruck einer Persönlichkeit,"³⁴ says Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm.

There is an attitude of understanding and respect towards the subject which pervades the essay. Occasionally Goethe expresses his personal opinions with respect to Winckelmann's actions:

Und so erscheint auch Winckelmann bei seinem vorgehabten Schritt besorgt, ängstlich, kummervoll und in leidenschaftlicher Bewegung, wenn er sich die Wirkung dieses Unternehmens, besonders auf seinen ersten Gönner, den Grafen, bedenkt. Wie schön, tief und rechtlich sind seine vertraulichen Äusserungen über diesen Punkt!³⁵

Sometimes Goethe inserts truths which he himself has culled from his experiences: "denn Beschränkung ist überall unser Los."³⁶ In these ways the essay is personal.

It is even more so in another way. The writer of the essay is attracted to his subject, because he finds in Winckelmann a kindred spirit. The similarity in their character is apparent; again and again Goethe makes statements about Winckelmann which are also true of himself:

³⁴Gleichen-Russwurm, op. cit., p. 447.

³⁵Goethe, op. cit., p. 424.

³⁶Ibid., p. 438.

. . . wie Winckelmann mit Begierde des Schauens geboren ist.³⁷

Wir finden ihn immer in Tätigkeit, mit dem Augenblick beschäftigt. . . .³⁸

. . . so kam er doch früher oder später immer zum Altertum, besonders zum Griechischen, zurück, mit dem er sich so nahe verwandt fühlte. . . .³⁹

Wenn bei sehr vielen Menschen. . . dasjenige, was sie leisten, als die Hauptsache erscheint, und der Charakter sich dabei wenig äussert, so tritt im Gegenteil bei Winkelmann der Fall ein, dass alles dasjenige, was er hervorbringt, hauptsächlich deswegen merkwürdig und schätzenswert ist, weil sein Character sich immer dabei offenbart.⁴⁰

Meeting Winckelmann through his letters and writings was a personal experience for Goethe. Because it was an encounter of kindred spirits, Goethe understood Winckelmann and was able to communicate more than biographical facts in themselves could do.

Rudolf Bach remarks about Goethe's "Winckelmann," that the biography is "knapp," but nevertheless "vollkommen gerundet."⁴¹ That is the wonder of this essay. Out of the richness of the material, Goethe has selected carefully and has illuminated the personality of Winckelmann in such a way that the reader feels that he knows him, that he has met him and gained an insight into his character and the age in which he lived. The following words by Rudolf Bach convey a little of the greatness of this essay:

³⁷Ibid., p. 448. ³⁸Ibid., p. 438. ³⁹Ibid., p. 419.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 443.

⁴¹Bach, op. cit., p. 5.

Wenn man zu lesen beginnt, scheint es ein schöner kluger Essay im alten Stil. . . . Rein äusserlich betrachtet, ist es sogar noch weniger: eine blosse Anzeige der. . . Briefe Winckelmann's. Wie aus dem Munde eines vornehmeren, gebildeten Weltmannes hebt es an. . . . Aber dann drängt es sachte herauf, und wächst und wächst, schliesst immer tiefere Sphären des Lebens und des erkennenden Gedankens auf, aus einer bedeutenden Existenz rührt uns das Geheimnis des Seins an und zuletzt haben wir einen wahrhaften Mikrokosmos durchwandert.⁴²

In the essay, "Über den Granit," Goethe presents, on the one hand, some factual information about granite. It begins with a brief account of the role of granite in human history, how it was prized by the ancient Egyptians who used it for their obelisks, and then follow observations made in more recent times about its nature. At the conclusion of the essay, the writer expresses his desire to devote his energies to finding a "Leitfaden zu ferneren Beobachtungen,"⁴³ which will guide others in their study of granite. He concludes with an exhortation to other naturalists to observe carefully and accurately. As a scholarly piece of work the essay is limited and of a fragmentary nature; the writer is aware that much remains to be learned about this stone. On the other hand, "Über den Granit," which has been called "das dichterisch tiefste"⁴⁴ of Goethe's essays, has an inner unity. Read-

⁴²Bach, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴³Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Über den Granit," Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1958), p. 257.

⁴⁴Bach, op. cit., p. 4.

ing it gives the impression that it is vibrant and rounded off, not a scholarly fragment, and closer acquaintance heightens this feeling of form and depth, and of an unfathomable quality possessed by the essay. The reader feels the essay writer is sharing something close to him, a personal experience. The reader is drawn into it, with the perception that he has felt that way too, only has never been able to express it.

The writer of the essay, acquainted with the changeableness of "menschlichen Gesinnungen"⁴⁵ and the suffering it has caused him, is drawn to the immovableness, simplicity and mystery of granite. The word "unerschütterter" appears again and again: the granite rests "in den innersten Eingeweiden der Erde. . . unerschütterter,"⁴⁶ "unerschütterlichsten Sohnes der Natur,"⁴⁷ "jedoch unerschütterter bleibt die Grundfeste."⁴⁸ This word is the ever re-appearing bass note of permanence in the essay, which is derived from the granite itself. Closely entwined is the word "erhaben": "erhabene Ruhe,"⁴⁹ "meine Seele wird über sich selbst und über alles erhaben und sehnt sich nach dem nähern Himmel."⁵⁰

The timeless, immovable rock grows into a symbol of permanence and the peace and rest he seeks within himself.

⁴⁵Goethe, op. cit., p. 255.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 255.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 255.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 254.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 257.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 256.

The valley with its graves and ruins of countless generations, its teeming life and fruitfulness, its cycles and seasons, forms a contrast to the sublime grandeur and changelessness of the granite. It, too, acquires symbolic overtones within the structure of the essay. The valley is timebound, limited (he refers to its "engen Kreis"⁵¹) and is full of the rubble of "Irrtümern und Meinungen."⁵² The sublime calm and strength of the granite cliff towers above the petty restlessness of human life in the valley.

Another pair of opposites are the granite and the human heart. The heart is referred to as the "jüngsten, mannigfaltigsten, beweglichsten, veränderlichsten, erschütterlichsten Teiles der Schöpfung."⁵³ The world of man has caused him pain and weariness and he is drawn to its opposite, the "ältesten, festesten, tiefsten, unerschütterlichsten Sohnes der Natur. . . ."⁵⁴

There is also contrast in the feelings which come to the essay writer as he meditates on top of the granite cliff. He feels the loneliness of the bare rock towering above the vegetation, whose "Gipfel haben nichts Lebendiges erzeugt und nichts Lebendiges verschlungen. . . ."⁵⁵ His heart is lifted up in meditation and worship when he beholds the granite:

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., p. 255.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

"Hier auf dem ältesten, ewigen Altare, der unmittelbar auf die Tiefe der Schöpfung gebaut ist, bring ich dem Wesen aller Wesen ein Opfer."⁵⁶ But he cannot endure this rarified atmosphere of soul-uplifting calm for long; thirst and hot sun recall to him his human weakness, and he looks longingly down to the "fruchtbareren quellreichen Ebenen," whose inhabitants "auf dem Schutte und Trümmern von Irrtümern und Meinungen ihre glücklichen Wohnungen aufgeschlagen haben, den Staub ihrer Voreltern aufkratzen. . . ."⁵⁷

Then his imagination is inspired to think of the beginnings of the earth: "Vorbereitet durch diese Gedanken, dringt die Seele in die vergangene Jahrhunderte hinauf. . . ."⁵⁸ He considers the time when seas and volcanoes threatened the firmament, however "unerschüttert bleibt die Grundfeste, auf der ich noch sicher ruhe. . . ."⁵⁹ He becomes aware of himself again and looks at the granite boulders strewn around him and sees the chaos and disorder, the rifts and fissures in the stone.

The thoughts that came to Goethe on the top of the granite cliff could not have had the organization or the form which they have in the essay. Sharp contrasts, the juxtaposition of opposites, the chiselled prose, the metaphors have

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 256.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

shaped the raw material of the original experience. Thus there are, as it were, two experiences, the first one which happened to Goethe as he rested on the granite boulder above the valley; the second one, when it was transformed through the medium of language into an artistic form, a Spracherlebnis, in which objects like the granite become symbols which open up new levels of meaning.

Through this process of language creation the artistic form of the essay is achieved. The essayist is able to communicate his experience to the reader, who then does not merely gain information about granite, but a sense of wonder towards granite and towards its opposite, the human heart as well. This essay is to me a highlight of what an essay can be. Goethe "prägte. . . den deutschen Essay zu seiner höchsten und reinsten Form, zu allseitiger, ausgewogener Vollendung."⁶⁰

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH SCHILLER (1759-1805)

Schiller's essay, "Brief eines reisenden Dänen" is in the form of a letter with a fictitious recipient and sender, in which a traveller tells of his visit to the "Antikensaal zu Mannheim." The choice of the letter form gives the essay effectiveness and economy, and enables him to put the experience he wishes to share into a personal context, since he is

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 4.

writing to a friend and therefore can reveal his innermost thoughts and impressions with ease and appropriateness. He is free to be himself, and, since the recipient knows him well, he can plunge into his subject without having to introduce or explain himself. In a systematic account he would be responsible for all the works of art at the exhibition, but in a letter he need mention only those which appeal to him, and suggest their beauty by showing the feelings it evoked in him, not by what an art critic may have said.

His words at the beginning of the letter, "Heute endlich habe ich eine unaussprechlich angenehme Überraschung gehabt. Mein ganzes Herz ist davon erweitert. Ich fühle mich edler und besser,"⁶¹ suggest the impact the visit had on him and his wish to share it with someone.

In conveying his experience to his friend, he often speaks in the second person, even when relating his own impressions, and in this way tries to make what he sees appear immediate:

Empfangen von dem allmächtigen Wehen des griechischen Genius trittst du in diesen Tempel der Kunst. Schon deine erste Überraschung hat etwas Ehrwürdiges, Heiliges. . . zwei Jahrtausende versinken vor deinem Fusstritt; du stehst auf einmal mitten im schönen lachenden Griechenland. . . .⁶²

⁶¹Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller, "Brief eines reisenden Dänen," Philosophische Schriften, Grossherzog Wilhelm Ernst Ausgabe (Leipzig: Im Inselverlag, [n.d.]), p. 63.

⁶²Ibid., p. 64.

In beholding a work of art the essayist notes its beauty and grace and the emotion it tries to convey. About a statue of Hercules he says: "Welche Kühnheit, Grösse, Vollkommenheit, Wahrheit, die auch die strengste Prüfung des Anatomikers nicht fürchtet."⁶³ He is not concerned so much with the history of this statue or what other men may have said about it, but is filled with wonder at the miracle of immovable stone representing the movement of muscle, and admires the effect achieved by the sculptor in portraying this strongest of mortals in a state of relaxation.

The essayist does not describe a statue directly, but suggests its greatness by its effect on him. For example, about the Laokoon, he says "du kennst sie bereits, und der Anblick selbst überwältigt alle Beschreibungskraft."⁶⁴ The reader is convinced of the greatness and truth of the work of art because it is reflected in the writer's excitement and wonder.

While casting a last look at all the works of art in the museum, he wonders why all the artists of Greece chose to portray the ideal. The fact that they did so tells him that man is more than he appears to be. If he could create such gods then he may one day rise to realize this ideal. It is a proof of the immortality of his soul:

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 67.

Der Mensch brachte hier etwas zu stande, das mehr ist, als er selbst war, das an etwas Grösseres erinnert als seine Gattung. . . So könnte uns ja dieser allgemeine Hang nach Verschönerung jede Spekulation über die Fortdauer der Seele ersparen. Wenn der Mensch nur Mensch bleiben könnte, wie hätte es jemals Götter und Schöpfer dieser Götter gegeben?⁶⁵

Of all the famous statues, a damaged torso makes the deepest impression on him:

In dieser zerschmetterten Steinmasse liegt unergründliche Betrachtung--Freund! Dieser Torso erzählt mir, dass vor zwei Jahrtausenden ein grosser Mensch dagewesen, der so etwas schaffen konnte. . . dass dieses Volk an Wahrheit und Schönheit glaubte, weil einer aus seiner Mitte Wahrheit und Schönheit fühlte. . . . Siehe, Freund, so habe ich Griechenland in dem Torso geahnet.⁶⁶

Even though ragged shepherds graze their sheep where Socrates died for his wisdom, ancient Greece still lives in these sculptures, and this torso "liegt da--unerreicht, unvertilgbar--eine unwidersprechliche ewige Urkunde. . . dieses Volks an alle Völker der Erde."⁶⁷

The essay writer, overcome by a new self-awareness, concludes with a personal note. He cannot create anything like that and neither are other great deeds which are done in the world and which bring fame, sufficient to equal this. The only way to respond to this vision is to act in the spirit of this ideal and perhaps do a beautiful unwitnessed deed.

Schiller's "Brief eines reisenden Dänen" has the outward form of a letter, and also an inner form which is evi-

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 68.

⁶⁷Ibid.

dent in the development of the thought. The brief introduction tells what a happy day it was for him to visit the museum and how well the pieces are set up. His response to what he sees is a personal one; he is excited and overwhelmed by these works of art: "Schon deine erste Uberraschung hat etwas Ehrwüdiges, Heiliges."⁶⁸ He feels as if the very spirit of Greece was there. In the essay the writer not only expresses his feelings, but his reflection and meditation on what he has seen and experienced, which leads him to a new insight into these works and even beyond that, to man himself.

The inner form is also shown by how he selects certain works of art about which he wishes to talk. Last of all he chooses a headless torso to symbolize the essence of his whole experience. In this way he unites everything, bringing it to a climax and resolution. The essay has not only the outward form of a letter, but the inner completeness of a work of art.

Schiller's essay, "Über das Erhabene," is very different from the personal letter of the Danish traveller. In comparison to it, this essay is formal and abstract. Schiller is trying to clarify his understanding of the emotion he calls "das Erhabene."

The writer begins by saying that man is a creature of freedom, but in life he is often forced to do what he does not want, because the forces around him are stronger. In order

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 64.

to maintain his humanity and freedom he has to submit to the circumstances which are beyond his control. Thus though he cannot be free in the physical sense, he can be so in spirit.

The feeling for beauty gives man an inner independence because he can enjoy beauty without having to possess the object. Beauty causes him to feel at harmony with the world, but the sublime raises him above worldly necessity, showing him the independence of the spirit.

The writer analyzes the experience of the emotion he calls the sublime, and he finds it to be a mixture of joy and pain. The object which arouses this feeling is one which shows us our powerlessness in the world of nature, but nevertheless attracts us. It inspires terror and fear but raises the imagination and spirit to a higher level of experience:

Wir ergötzen uns an dem Sinnlich-Unendlichen, weil wir denken können, was die Sinne nicht mehr fassen und der Verstand nicht mehr begreift. Wir werden begeistert von dem Furchtbaren, weil wir wollen können, was die Triebe verabscheuen, und verwerfen, was sie begehren.⁶⁹

The sublime is a doorway out of the world of the senses, in which beauty likes to keep us prisoner.

All men have the capacity of experiencing beauty and the sublime, but the feeling for the sublime is the last one to be developed. The writer discusses the ways in which "das

⁶⁹Schiller, "Über das Erhabene," Philosophische Schriften, p. 359.

Erhabene" is present in nature, to teach man this "idealistischen Schwung des Gemüts."⁷⁰

The highest ideal is to be at harmony with the physical world, "die Bewahrerin unserer Glückseligkeit. . . ohne darum genötigt zu sein, mit der moralischen zu brechen, die unsre Würde bestimmt."⁷¹ But this is often impossible, for man is helpless against the vagaries of fate. Then the only thing is to submit with dignity. The ability to do this is awakened and strengthened by "erhabene Rührungen," "ein öfterer Umgang mit der zerstörenden Natur," and most of all, the theatre.

The essay arrives at a vision of man possessing a harmony achieved through "ästhetische Erziehung," where the ability to experience beauty and the sublime are developed and balance each other:

Nur wenn das Erhabene mit dem Schönen sich gattet und unsre Empfänglichkeit für beides in gleichem Mass ausgebildet worden ist, sind wir vollendete Bürger der Natur, ohne deswegen ihre Sklaven zu sein und ohne unser Bürgerrecht in der intelligibeln Welt zu verscherzen.⁷²

The essay closes with an assertion that art is the best means of training this faculty in man, because it imitates the sublime without the distracting and accidental elements which always appear in real life. The spectator is detached, since it imitates appearances and not reality. And after all, that in which the magic of the sublime and the beautiful rests

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 356. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 367. ⁷²Ibid., p. 369.



is appearance and not content, and art has therefore all the advantages of nature without sharing its limitations.

The essayist treats his subject in a formal and abstract way. The style is lofty and the sentences complex and weighted with thought, so that one has to think each statement through before proceeding to the next one. He deals with absolute, abstract terms: "die Natur," "der Mensch," "die Vernunft," "das Schöne," "die Freiheit." At times he touches as it were the limits of human existence, for example:

Fälle können eintreten, wo das Schicksal alle Aussenwerke ersteigt, auf die er seine Sicherheit gründete, und ihm nichts weiter übrig bleibt, als sich in die heilige Freiheit der Geister zu flüchten--wo es kein andres Mittel gibt, den Lebenstrieb zu beruhigen, als es zu wollen--und kein andres Mittel, die Macht der Natur zu widerstehen, als ihr zuvorzukommen und durch eine freie Aufhebung alles sinnlichen Interesse, ehe noch eine physische Macht es tut, sich moralisch zu entleiben.⁷³

Illustrations and figures of speech are used rarely. One of the few metaphors used is the following:

Zwei Genien sind es, die uns die Natur zu Begleitern durchs Leben gab. Der eine, gesellig und hold. . . führt uns unter Freude und Scherz bis an die gefährlichen Stellen, wo wir als reine Geister handeln und alles Körperliche ablegen müssen. . . . Hier verlässt er uns, denn nur die Sinnenwelt ist sein Gebiet, über diese hinaus kann ihn sein irdischer Flügel nicht tragen. Aber jetzt tritt der andere hinzu, ernst und schweigend, und mit starkem Arm trägt er uns über die schwindligte Tiefe.⁷⁴

This passage illustrates his lofty and majestic style, and also the fact that even the poetic images have an abstract

⁷³Ibid., p. 367.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 357.

quality. In one instance he uses a man's life to show a character which exemplifies the sublime, but it is a hypothetical case and the man is just "ein Mensch." In short, everything is said in general terms:

. . . der mit dem Schicksal ringenden Menschheit, der unaufhaltsamen Flucht des Glücks, der betrogenen Sicherheit, der triumphierenden Ungerechtigkeit und der unterliegenden Unschuld, welche die Geschichte in reichem Mass aufstellt. . . .⁷⁵

The form of the essay suits the theme, "the sublime," which is lofty and abstract. The essay in its form is like a mountain range, bare and rugged, majestic, rays of light illuminating the peaks. It has a largeness and freedom about it, and the tone is one of seriousness and serenity.

"Über das Erhabene" is formal and the writer does not enter the essay at all, in the sense that there is no "ich," no reference to himself. However, the essay is personal and the essayist reveals himself unconsciously. There is an honesty and nobility in his writing, that one feels he must have experienced these things himself, or certainly be capable of doing so, that he himself is the "edle Gemüt" he writes about.

Also it is personal in another way. Schiller must have been gripped by the subject and struggled with it until he had clarified it in his own mind. It is an intense Selbstgespräch. The clarification and the rounding out of the sub-

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 368.

ject is evident in the way the essay develops and concludes. The subject is not exhausted, but he has done justice to it and has given it a completeness in such a way that the personal experience treated in the essay becomes universally valid. He throws a light upon the dichotomy of man as a physical and spiritual being. He gives a vision of a harmony in man which is new and inspiring. Beauty, a state in which the reason and the senses are in harmony, makes us love the world; the sublime, where the reason and the senses do not agree, makes us aware of our dignity and independence of spirit and reminds us of "unser wahres Vaterland."⁷⁶ If only one's feeling for beauty were developed, we would not be truly human, if only the sublime, then we would always remain strangers in the world. Both have to be developed equally through "ästhetische Erziehung," so that a human being can achieve a harmonious balance in himself.

HEINRICH VON KLEIST (1777-1811)

As we move from Schiller to Kleist, we find ourselves confronted by an entirely different handling of the essay. What stands out and makes Kleist's contribution striking is the fact that in his practice of this form, he uses the approach and method which characterize his notable contribution

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 369.

to the German Novelle, namely, his marked detachment and lively style.

Kleist's essay, "Über das Marionettentheater," begins in a disarming, matter-of-fact way, which captures our interest immediately: "Als ich den Winter 1801 in M. . . zu- brachte, traf ich daselbst eines Abends in einem öffentlichen Garten den Herrn C. an. . . ." ⁷⁷ Mr. C. is a famous dancer, whom he has often seen watching the marionettes in the market place. That a master dancer should watch mechanical puppets is a paradox which arouses our curiosity. When Mr. C. says, in all seriousness, that a dancer who is concerned in perfecting his art, can learn from them, we are ready to learn more and wish to join the author, as he sits down beside Mr. C. "um ihn über die Gründe, auf die er eine so sonderbare Behauptung stützen könne, näher zu vernehmen." ⁷⁸ Most of the assertions of Mr. C. are at first met with a gentle incredulity and slight clumsiness in comprehension on the part of the listener.

Both agree that the dancing of the marionettes is graceful. When Mr. C. explains the movements of the puppets, we are impressed with his knowledge and accept him as an authority.

⁷⁷ Heinrich von Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater," Werke, Deutsche Klassiker Bibliothek (Leipzig: Hesse and Becker Verlag, [n.d.]), p. 113.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Therefore when he states ^{that} the line of movement of the point of gravity is "der Weg der Seele des Tänzers"⁷⁹ we accept it. With this remark the metaphysical element is linked with the marionettes. The mathematical imagery used to suggest the complex relationship of the movements of the fingers of the puppeteer to those of the marionettes, not only lends it the preciseness of an art, but prepares the reader for the important mathematical image used later. It also fits in with Mr. C.'s knowledge and understanding of these things which we have come to expect. His knowledge and experience are above the ordinary, and this increases the credibility of everything else he says afterwards. "Ich äusserte meine Verwunderung, zu sehen, welcher Aufmerksamkeit er diese für den Haufen erfundene Spielart einer schönen Kunst würdige,"⁸⁰ says his listener, and the reader too is impressed and fascinated.

Mr. C. says if a craftsman could make a marionette according to his specifications, its dance would surpass that of the greatest dancer. This is a surprising assertion which needs to be explained, for either his specifications must be beyond human skill or he is trying to say something else. Mr. C.'s listener merely casts his eyes to the ground, expecting him to explain himself further. He does so, by asking whether he has heard of those "englische Künstler," who can

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 114.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 115.

make artificial limbs, which enable their wearers to dance, and though limited in their movement, move with a "Ruhe, Leichtigkeit und Anmut, die jedes denkende Gemüt in Erstaunen setzen."⁸¹ That they are English craftsmen who can do this, gives it an aura of the wonderful and increases its plausibility.

Mr. C.'s response to his companion's remark, that surely he has found his craftsman who can fashion his perfect marionette, is that he "ein wenig betreten zur Erde sah,"⁸² as if saddened at something he knows. In the comparison of the marionette and the human dancer which follows, man comes short. The dancing of the puppet is not marred by affectation, which is a disharmony of the soul with its center: "Denn Ziererei erscheint, wie Sie wissen, wenn sich die Seele. . . in irgend einem anderen Punkte befindet, als in dem Schwerpunkt der Bewegung."⁸³ The puppeteer can only control the marionette's center of gravity and therefore it is always "at one" in its movements. These observations recall what the essayist had previously stated about "der Weg der Seele des Tänzers." The other advantage is that the marionette possesses a force striving upward, while the human dancer is earth-bound.

In this comparison man comes short because he is split,

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., p. 116.

is in disharmony with himself. This is echoed quite strongly in the reference to the Tree of Knowledge:

Solche Missgriffe. . . sind unvermeidlich, seitdem wir von dem Baum der Erkenntnis gegessen haben. Doch das Paradies ist verriegelt und der Cherub hinter uns; wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo wieder offen ist.⁸⁴

The reference to the closed Paradise and the necessity to travel around the world to find a back door to it, anticipates the images of the concave mirror and the intersecting lines, which appear near the conclusion.

From now on man is the center of interest in the essay. The marionette is an opposite pole which brings out the predicament of man.

With each step in the development of the thought, the essayist digs deeper and deeper. With the reference to the Free of Knowledge, and the pointing out of the difficulties man has in comparison to the marionette, he has broached the metaphysical element. That which follows is the most complex part, but the understructure has been laid so well, that the reader is prepared for it.

Now comes the last part in the argument before the resolution can begin:

Ich sagte, dass, so geschickt er auch die Sache seiner Paradoxe führe, er mich doch nimmermehr glauben machen würde, dass in einem mechanischen Gliedermann mehr Anmut enthalten sein könne, als in dem Bau des menschlichen Körpers.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 117.

Mr. C. answers right away that "es dem Menschen schlechthin unmöglich wäre, den Gliedermann darin auch nur zu erreichen: nur ein Gott könne sich auf diesem Felde mit der Materie messen, und hier sei der Punkt, wo die beiden Enden der ringförmigen Welt ineinander griffen."⁸⁶ Man does not reach the level of perfect harmony and grace. Only a God and matter, both of which are at one with themselves, can meet on this level. The ring or circle suggests perfection and man cannot approach this world. He is excluded because of his defect.

The essayist gives us time to let the thought expressed in this paragraph have its full effect, and anticipates any opposition or bewilderment the reader may have, by having the other man say: "Ich erstaunte immer mehr und wusste nicht, was ich zu so sonderbaren Behauptungen sagen sollte."⁸⁷

Mr. C. tells his companion that he must know well the third chapter of Genesis, "und wer diese erste Periode aller menschlichen Bildung nicht kennt, mit dem könne man nicht füglich über die folgenden, um wieviel weniger über die letzte sprechen."⁸⁸

With this the essay writer has tightened his argument and has given it universal overtones. The anecdote about the boy who lost his natural and unconscious grace by becoming self-conscious is an illustration of the third chapter of Genesis. Mr. C.'s anecdote shows that a human being, no matter

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

how skilled, cannot attain perfection because he is hampered by his self-consciousness, whereas an unselfconscious creature like the bear is perfect and can perceive through any feint.

Mr. C. sums up the argument: "Nun, mein vortrefflicher Freund, sagte Herr C., so sind Sie im Besitz von allem, was nötig ist, um mich zu begreifen."⁸⁹ With these words begins the resolution. He says that to the extent to which reflection or consciousness become less, grace ("die Grazie"), which is characterized by a lack of self-consciousness, becomes more dominant. But this grace can only be regained when knowledge has passed through infinity. This is impossible for man. This grace can only appear in a being or creature who has no consciousness (the marionette or bear), or in a God whose knowledge is infinite. Man cannot go back or regain what has been lost, but must go ahead and eat of the Tree of Knowledge again:

Mithin, sagte ich ein wenig zerstreut, müssen wir wieder von dem Baum der Erkenntnis essen, um in den Stand der Unschuld zurückzufallen?

Allerdings, antwortete er; das ist das letzte Kapitel von der Geschichte der Welt.--90

With these words the essay concludes. The essayist has re-created a fascinating conversation in which he has moved step by step from a discussion of the marionette to man himself, and from the particular and concrete to a level where his statements take on universal significance.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 119.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 120.

CHAPTER III

THE ESSAY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Otto Gildemeister (1823-1902), Hermann Grimm (1828-1901), and Karl Hillebrand (1829-1884) are considered to be the foremost essayists of the Nineteenth Century. They were eminent critics and scholars, and their essays make up the main part of their writings. However, they were not concerned with the form of the essay; to them the name "essay," in its meaning "to attempt," was synonymous with an incomplete treatment of the subject; they did not designate it as a literary form in its own right. Hermann Grimm says in the "Vorwort" to his Essays: "Ich suchte einstweilen Proben dieser Studien zu geben, zusammenfassende Vorreden gleichsam zu ungeschriebenen Büchern, und fand dass der Name Essay. . . der angemessenste sei. . . ." ¹

Hermann Grimm introduced the name "essay," with its English spelling, into German literature in 1859. He, as well as Hillebrand and Gildemeister, were influenced by the English essayists Thomas Macaulay, Matthew Arnold and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Their essays deal largely with politics, criticism, the history of art and literature and philosophy. Heinrich Merk says of Hillebrand's works: "Seine Essaysammlung ist

¹Grimm, op. cit., p. VIII.

ein Kompendium der europäischen Kultur, worin alles auf den kürzesten Ausdruck gebracht ist."² This being so, their essays have not been included in this study.

Josef Hofmiller (1872-1933), a critic whose achievement lies almost exclusively in the field of the essay, follows this tradition. But though he has written many critical and historical essays, they possess a unique quality which raises them to a different level from those of his immediate predecessors. Jan Thorbecke, an editor of his essays, remarks:

Wie aber kann von einem Kritiker, der nach der landläufigen Meinung "nur zitiert," nicht selbst aus den Quellen schöpft, eine so ungewöhnlich lebendige--man kann ohne Übertreibung sagen: bezaubernde--Wirkung ausgehen wie von den Schriften Hofmillers?³

His essays are lively and spontaneous; they are not so much the works of a clever critic, as they are a man's personal response to his subject. When he chooses to write about the monastery of Ottobeuren, for example, it is because he has visited it many times until it has become a part of him, and he wants to discover why this place has made such an impact on him, why it is so beautiful and impressive.

Josef Hofmiller's essays, however, must not be assigned to the mainstream of the Twentieth Century essay. There pre-

²Heinrich Merk, "Deutsche Essayisten," Neues Jahrbuch (1937), p. 554.

³Jan Thorbecke (ed.), "Geleitwort," Einkehr bei Josef Hofmiller (Im Jan Thorbecke Verlag zu Lindau, 1948), p. 6.

vails in this modern age a sense of restlessness and haste, and there is less time to follow something through with the concentration and thoroughness of writers of previous periods. Modern man is confronted by an ever-continuing and growing fragmentation of values, with its resultant decay of the power of language. Emil Preetorius points out that:

Die heutige Wirklichkeit ist unübersehbar komplex, zu einem Netz schwebender Beziehungen, in steter Umwandlung begriffen, ihr Grund ist fliessend geworden. . . . Und darum ist sie nicht mehr wie ehemals gleichbedeutend mit einer Welt, die einmal unmittelbar mit Auge und Ohr zu fassen, die fraglos beschlossen und aufgehoben war im Reiche unserer vertrauten Sinne. Eher könnte man sagen, das die gültige, die entscheidende Realität unserer Tage gerade zu in einen unruhvollen Widerspruch geraten ist mit unseren gewohnten Menschensinnen.⁴

The poet, writer, and not least of all, the essayist, finds himself more and more thrown back upon himself, and has to search out and discover his own values and meanings and the language in which to couch and express them. The essay becomes more and more dominant as a form in the Twentieth Century. The reasons are not far to seek; they are found within the nature and scope of its form; through its medium the writer tries to find an expression and a meaning for his experience. The essay often presents an interior monologue, a coming to grips with himself and whatever engages him, in an effort to give it shape and perspective.

⁴Emil Preetorius (ed.), Die Sprache, Fünfte Folge des Jahrbuchs Gestalt und Gedanke (München: Im Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1959), p. 9.

No writer or poet illustrates the features which have been singled out as being characteristic and representative in our time more than Hugo von Hofmannsthal, poet, playwright and essayist. His essay, "Ein Brief," shows in a masterful way that which is essential and revealing in the way this poet handles the essay as an art form. "Ein Brief" is a monologue; it states and presents a crisis, and its nature and central problem is one which many, if not most, writers in the Twentieth Century have come up against, as is apparent in the amazing appeal and impact it has made on artists and the reading public.

JOSEF HOFMILLER (1872-1933)

"Ottobeuren liegt schön"--with this statement begins Josef Hofmiller's essay, "Ottobeuren" (1927). In a vivid and telling way the monastery is pictured as it spreads out on the hillside in its setting of meadow and woods which form an integral part of the total architectural effect: "Lebendig steht alles in Licht und Luft. . . ." ⁵

Many times he has visited Ottobeuren, and each time has felt a greater helplessness in trying to express the effect it has on him in words. He wants to discover why it is so beautiful, according to the words of Winckelmann: "es genüge

⁵Josef Hofmiller, "Ottobeuren," Einkehr bei Josef Hofmiller, ed. Jan Thorbecke (Lindau: In Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1948), p. 97.

nicht zu empfinden, das etwas schön sei, man müsse auch erkennen, warum es schön sei."⁶

Hofmiller indicates his method of approach when he says:

Vergleiche anzustellen und von ihnen aus über Ottobeuren zu urteilen, ist eine müßige Zwischenstufe nach der ersten Begeisterung, die man überwindet, weil auch sie zu nichts führt. Wenn man das Werk rein für sich betrachtet und fürs erste den kunstgeschichtlichen Wissenskram zu Hause lässt, wird man still, und das Werk beginnt zu reden.⁷

He does not want to classify and label it according to its place in the history of architecture, but to be silent and open to this achievement and let it speak for itself.

He concentrates his attention on the church, which architecturally as well, is the center of the monastery. The first impression he gains when he enters it is one of space, as if it is larger inside than it appears from the outside. To this impression two others are immediately added, those of colour and of light. "Woher kommt das viele Licht? . . ." he asks, "Von allen Seiten bricht es herein, ungehemmt. . . nirgends das Glas getont, das Licht im Innern ist fast so stark wie das aussen, eine Seite wirft es der andern zu, die gibt es, um ihr eignes vermehrt, zurück. . . ." ⁸

Hofmiller's prose, in which he tries to express the beauty before him, rises to equal its subject, for example: "Erst im Priesterchor mit der fensterlos abschliessenden Wand

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 98.

des Hochaltars. . . beruhigt sich das siegreiche Licht und wird dienend. . . ."9

The essayist tries to gain an insight into the architectural design, but in doing so, he does not allow himself to be cumbered by "kunstgeschichtlichen Wissenskram."¹⁰ He often uses the word "fühlen" when he examines the way the church is built:

. . . der Beschauer fühlt sich gebannt inmitten eines magischen Kreises, der sich nach vier Richtungen weitet wie nach einem Steinwurf Wellen im See.¹¹

Man fühlt sich zutiefst inmitten einer verstandesmässig nicht fassbaren Raumeinheit. . . .¹²

He finds that reason and a knowledge of the history of art alone are not sufficient to comprehend the work before him; Einfühlung and Ehrfurcht are necessary in approaching it, only then "erschliesst sich das Geheimnis. . . ."13

He discovers how the illusion of unusual height and space is created: "Alles, was senkrecht stemmt, ist farbig. Alles, was waagrecht trägt, ist weiss,"¹⁴ and that the effect of colour is achieved in the way white areas are used to set off the tinted ones. But analysis is not the final note; the total effect is emphasized: "Der Raum ist Einer und lässt sich nicht teilen."¹⁵

⁹Ibid., p. 98-9.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 97.

¹¹Ibid., p. 100.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁵Ibid.

As the essay develops, the essayist's increasing understanding and insight into his subject become apparent. He perceives that the harmony of the church is the result of opposites which are held in balance: "Die Harmonie des Eindrucks von Ottobeuren setzt sich aus mehr Spannungen zusammen als sich beim ersten Eindruck enthüllen. . . ." ¹⁶ He notes that the altar, the chancel, the choir stalls and other furnishings are in the Rococo style, which forms a strong contrast to the geometric clarity and grandeur of the sanctuary. Yet somehow, although the "wimmelnden Überreichtum" ¹⁷ of the Rococo style creates "eine seltsame Unruhe," ¹⁸ the two opposite elements balance each other, and he can say of the total impression: ". . . alles strömt und alles ruht." ¹⁹

He concentrates for a moment with loving attention on the carved choir stalls: ". . . es ist das letzte Wort eines Handwerks, das höchste Kunst geworden ist. . . dazu gibt es kein Seitenstück, nicht nur in deutschen Landen." ²⁰

The climax of the overwhelming total effect, the result of the essayist's analysis and synthesis, comes when the organ starts to play:

Und doch ist eine allerletzte Steigerung vorbehalten:
leise schwebt ein flötenhafter Ton hauchzart zwischen den
Gewölben. . . selig schwebt die unirdische Stimme zwischen
braunsamterer Tiefe und himmlischem Licht, als offenbarte
das grosse Fresko tönend sein Geheimnis. ²¹

¹⁶Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 103.

²⁰Ibid., p. 106.

²¹Ibid., p. 106-7.

The essayist concludes by saying that he chose to talk only about the church because "die Kirche blüht aus dem Kloster hervor. Alles ist von Anfang an auf sie hin angelegt, sie ist die Krönung des Baugedankens, sie sein letzter Sinn."²² But more than that, he feels the uniqueness of this work of art, for, as he says, there are many Baroque churches, but "den Ottobeurer Raum. . . gibt es nur einmal. Das Ottobeurer Chorgestühl gibt es nur einmal. Die Ottobeurer Orgel gibt es nur einmal."²³

HUGO VON HOFFMANNSTHAL (1874-1929)

The essay, "Ein Brief," by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, has the form of an imaginary letter written by a young Elizabethan nobleman, Lord Chandos, to Francis Bacon, in which he explains the reason for his inability to continue his literary activities. In the letter, the twenty-six-year-old lord speaks of his achievements of former years, his early fame at court, but adds that now an abyss separates him from the creativity of his early youth.

In his days of effortless literary output, his perception of life and the world around him was an intense awareness of the wholeness of existence: "Mir erschien damals in einer Art von andauernder Trunkenheit das ganze Dasein als eine

²²Ibid., p. 108.

²³Ibid., p. 109.

grosse Einheit. . . ."24 He felt himself to be a part of it: "in allem fühlte ich Natur. . . und in aller Natur fühlte ich mich selber. . . überall war ich mitten drinnen, wurde nie ein Scheinhaftes gewahr. . . ."25 He reacted spontaneously and completely, seeing everything as a whole, the way a child sees.

But an unaccountable change has come over him. Doubt assails him and spreads like a corroding rust. Everything is disconnected and meaningless: "Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr liess sich mit einem Begriff umspannen."26 Generalizations and value judgments have become impossible for him, and with it, language has dissolved into isolated, rootless words, over which he has no mastery anymore:

Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich; sie gerannen zu Augen, die mich anstarrten und in die ich wieder heineinstarren muss: Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindelt, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt.27

He calls this disintegration a temptation, a destructive thing against which he is helpless: "Allmählich aber breitete sich dies Anfechtung aus wie ein um sich fressender Rost."28

In this life of effort and emptiness, however, he some-

²⁴Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," Die Prosaischen Schriften Gesammelt (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1919), p. 60.

²⁵Ibid., p. 60-1.

²⁶Ibid., p. 64.

²⁷Ibid., p. 64-5.

²⁸Ibid., p. 63.

times experiences moments of unusually intense perception which approach a state of ecstasy. The objects which evoke this are simple, concrete ones, such as a watering can, a harrow in a field, an insect, an animal. It is as if strong but splintered emotions find a new focus in these objects. He calls it a divine emotion and "ein ungeheures Anteilnehmen, ein Hinüberfliessen in jene Geschöpfe. . . ." ²⁹ He catches a glimpse of a new relationship to the world around him: "als könnten wir in ein neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein treten, wenn wir anfangen, mit dem Herzen zu denken." ³⁰ A new language would have to be found to express this: "eine Sprache, von deren Worten mir auch nicht eines bekannt ist, eine Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen. . . ." ³¹

When Hofmannsthal wrote this essay in 1902, he was the same age as the young lord writing the letter. At an early age he had produced poetry of depth and beauty, revealing a remarkable sense of form and a maturity altogether unusual in a poet who had not yet reached the age of twenty. Some years later his spontaneous production came to a stop and he never returned to the lyric. Where formerly he owed much to sheer imaginative leaps and inspiration, he found himself engaged in his later work, that is, his plays and essays, in a conscious and unending struggle in matters of composition.

²⁹Ibid., p. 69. ³⁰Ibid., p. 71. ³¹Ibid., p. 76.

The essay, "Ein Brief," can be enjoyed as a work of literature in itself, but the experience which is the subject of the letter is too unusual not to require a key from the poet's life to help us understand it. It is therefore permissible to assume that the basis of the experience set forth in the letter is one which really happened to Hofmannsthal, and which, as seen in its effect on his poetic production, must have been an urgent and overwhelming one, difficult to communicate. The essay reveals a courageous and fearless attempt at self-appraisal.

Hofmannsthal chooses the most personal form, that of a letter. He creates distance by pushing it back in time to another age, by choosing a fictitious young Elizabethan lord as the writer of the letter, and Francis Bacon as the recipient. This gives the whole experience its peculiarly and sharply delineated setting. Having to maintain the role of Lord Chandos, and having to clarify his feelings to someone else, who however is not a bosom friend and towards whom he stands in a particular relationship, forces the writer to discipline himself. Added to these restraining elements is the fact that he is answering Bacon's letter in which he has asked him a definite question, as well as the courtesies and tone proper for a letter written by a nobleman to an eminent statesman. Thus the letter is kept from becoming an outpouring of feeling, for the writer is compelled to order and shape his experience.

Hofmannsthal has succeeded in making the letter convincing in its outward form. Lord Chandos is a clearly outlined figure, the owner of an estate, with a family and tenants; a young nobleman who has enjoyed the typical education of his time with its emphasis on classical authors, and the customary travels abroad. He has the polish of a courtier, and his style shows the poet, always seeking a metaphor or recapturing some glimpse of beauty:

Denn mein unbenanntes seliges Gefühl wird eher aus einem fernen, einsamen Hirtenfeuer mir hervorbrechen als aus dem Zirpen einer letzten, dem Tode nahen Grille, wenn schon der Herbstwind winterliche Wolken über die öden Felder hintreibt. . . .³²

The recipient of the letter also appears as a convincing figure in the essay. This illusion is created not through anything that is said about him, but through the writer's constant awareness of the person to whom he is addressing the letter. He never forgets to address his friend, make a compliment or some respectful reference to his wisdom, or express his gratitude for his concern.

Another conspicuous feature of the technique of this essay is to be found in the powerfully expressive prose, and the symbolic overtones which certain objects acquire. For example, the beetle on the water in the watering can, or Crassus' little fish become symbols of an emotional reality.

³²Ibid., p. 73.

The writer's imagination has transformed the ordinary objects, so that they acquire depths of meaning outside their own limits. The control and discipline of the style are equally striking.

The way the material of his experience has been ordered and given shape lifts this letter to the level of a work of art. But "Ein Brief" can also claim to be this in another sense. It was Goethe who stressed again and again that in a work of art, the most highly personal element can at the same time claim impersonal validity. The personal crisis of one poet takes on the representative character of the predicament in which poets in the Twentieth Century find themselves increasingly caught up in. "Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich. . . Wirbel sind sie. . . die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt,"³³ says Hofmannsthal. Fragmentation and the breaking down of language in expressing relationships and meaning leave the poet with a sense that his medium is escaping and eluding him more and more.

THOMAS MANN (1875-1955)

When we come to Thomas Mann, we at once think of him as the author of many outstanding Novellen and novels, but considering his turn of mind and also the essayistic character of chapter after chapter of his major novels, such as Der Zau-

³³Ibid., p. 64-5.

berberg, Lotte in Weimar, Josef und seine Brüder, it should not come as a surprise that he practised and excelled also in the sphere of the essay. However, the fact that his essays embrace in their collected form as much space and volume as his fiction, comes as an astonishment.

As we read Thomas Mann's essays, it soon becomes clear why the essay should occupy such a favoured position within his total output. Foremost amongst these reasons is undoubtedly an attempt in self-examination, a stock-taking by which he sought clarification of a given subject matter, both of himself and ^{of} the chosen topic. This is the case of the autobiographical essay, "Im Spiegel," and also of the essay in diary-form, "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote." The biographical essay, "Theodor Storm," shows a more detached way of handling the chosen theme, but here, too, the essayist has singled out certain characteristics and shaped the subject from a personal point of view.

The Scottish essayist Alexander Smith notes that "the essay, as a literary form. . . is moulded by some central mood. . . . Give the mood, and the essay, from the first sentence to the last, grows around it as the cocoon grows around the silkworm."³⁴ This observation is illustrated in Thomas Mann's essay, "Im Spiegel." The central mood which

³⁴Alexander Smith, "On the Writing of Essays," Dreamthorp (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 22.

infuses and shapes this autobiographical essay is one of irony, with its attending humour and self-detachment.

As the title of the essay suggests, Thomas Mann, as the artist, is looking at his reflection in a mirror, which in this case represents the values and attitudes of conventional, successful middle-class society. Seen in this mirror, he is nothing but a "Taugenichts." He is incorrigible in school:

Faul, verstockt. . . verhasst bei den Lehrern der alt-
ehrwürdigen Anstalt, ausgezeichneten Männern, die mir--
mit vollem Recht, in voller Übereinstimmung mit aller
Erfahrung, aller Wahrscheinlichkeit--den sicheren Unter-
gang prophezeiten. . . .³⁵

The way he presents it, ending with "so sass ich die Jahre ab," suggests a hardened criminal. He escapes to Munich, and, not wishing to succumb completely to a life of loafing, he works in the offices of a fire insurance company. But instead of devoting himself single-mindedly to his job, he writes love stories behind his desk and has to leave before they throw him out. His brief career as a university student ends abruptly with a journey to Rome, "wo ich mich ein Jahr lang plan-und beschäftigungslos umhertrieb."³⁶ He spends his time reading belletristic literature which "ein anständiger Mensch" reads only when he has nothing better to do. On his return to Munich he enters military service, but again:

³⁵Thomas Mann, "Im Spiegel," Rede und Antwort (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922), p. 383.

³⁶Ibid., p. 384.

Wenn man aber zu vernehmen hofft, dass ich mich auf militärischem Gebiete irgend tauglicher erwiesen hätte als auf anderen, so wird man enttäuscht werden. . . .

Genug, ich quittierte den Dienst und setzte in Zivilkleidern mein fahrlässiges Leben fort.³⁷

In every respect he is a good-for-nothing fellow in a society whose citizens are hard-working, order-loving and respectable. The poet is

ein auf allen Gebieten ernsthafter Tätigkeit unbedingt unbrauchbarer, einzig auf Allotria bedachter, dem Staate nicht nur nicht nützlicher, sondern sogar aufsässig gesinnter Kumpan. . . . übrigens ein innerlich kindischer, zur Ausschweifung geneigter und in jedem Betrachte anrüchlicher Scharlatan, der von der Gesellschaft nichts anderes sollte zu gewärtigen haben. . . . als stille Verachtung.³⁸

Thus he cannot understand why, instead of ending up in the gutter as he deserves, he is surrounded by honour and success. All he has done is continued to write and to be himself: "Ich habe mich nicht geändert, nicht gebessert. . . . Dafür sitze ich nun in der Herrlichkeit."³⁹ He is astonished over the fact that society showers such creatures with honour. He concludes the essay by protesting: "es ist nicht in der Ordnung. Es muss das Laster ermutigen und der Tugend ein Arger sein."⁴⁰

The style is colloquial, lively and humorous, and at the same time, polished and urbane, for example:

Und nun? Und heute? Ich hocke verglasten Blicks und einen wollenen Schal um den Hals mit anderen verloren-

³⁷Ibid., p. 385. ³⁸Ibid., p. 387. ³⁹Ibid., p. 386.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 387.

en Gesellen in einer Anarchistenkneipe? Ich liege in der Gosse, wie sich's gebührte?

Nein. Glanz umgibt mich. Nichts gleicht meinem Glücke.⁴²

He writes about himself in a humorous and delightful way:

Erstens bin ich ein verkommener Gymnasiast. Nicht dass ich durchs Abiturientenexamen gefallen wäre,--es wäre Aufschneiderei, wollte ich das behaupten. Sondern ich bin überhaupt nicht bis Prima gelangt; ich war schon in Sekunda so alt wie der Westerwald.⁴³

In the ironic po^rtrayal of himself in the essay, Thomas Mann singles out events from his personal life, but the statements take on a detached and impersonal quality as the essay develops, so that he becomes representative of the artist and his place in society. He shows that the artist is different in his way of living and working, and that the majority, the every-day people who run the affairs of the world, cannot understand him, and see in him a threat to their order, but also find a need for what he is and what he contributes.

We know that throughout his life and in many of his imaginative writings Thomas Mann was preoccupied with what appeared to him the insoluble conflict between art and life, between the artist and society, between the realm of the imagination and the claims of daily life. In this portrayal of his own life, Thomas Mann brings this problem to the fore, but through his use of the double-storied structure of irony, he appears not just as a particular individual, but becomes

⁴³Ibid., p. 383.

representative of the artist and his role in society. Thus the autobiographical sketch approximates the essay form rather than being a personal confession.

Another essay chosen from the great number written by Thomas Mann is the one on Theodor Storm. An observation made by the author in "Theodor Storm" suggests the nature of a biographical essay in contrast to a more extensive biographical study:

Die Einzelheiten von Storms Biographie sind in jedem Konversationslexikon zu finden. Ich begnüge mich damit, das Bild seines Wesens, das ich hier angelegt, durch einige weitere Züge zu vervollständigen.⁴⁴

The essayist's concern is to give a picture of Theodor Storm, not information about his life. Consequently, he omits dates and does not dwell on external details, but rather selects and highlights those aspects of his character which appear vital to him and which capture the characteristic pose of the man. Throughout the essay Thomas Mann quotes frequently from Storm's works to illustrate his points; he never loses himself in abstractions.

Thomas Mann approaches his subject from the viewpoint of his personal experience. For example, when he talks about Storm's poetry, he remarks: "Sie [die Gedichte] bestimmten

⁴⁴Thomas Mann, "Theodor Storm," Leiden und Grösse der Meister (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1935), p. 197.

zusammen mit 'Immensee' das Bild des Dichters, das ich in mir trug, als ich jung war. . . ."45 As a young man he had read and re-read his poetry, and in doing so had felt its

bebende Konzentrationskraft der Lebens-und Empfindungsaussage. . . dies Sichzusammenziehen der Kehle, dies Angepacktwerden von unerbittlich süß und wehem Lebensgefühl bewirkt, um dessentwillen man mit sechzehn, siebzehn diesem Tonfall so anhing.46

The essay begins with a particular moment in Storm's life, the time just after his wife's death, when he meets the Russian poet Turgenjew and they spend some time together. Thomas Mann contrasts the two poets, who "verwandt nicht nur durch ihr Jahrhundert, in charakteristisch verschiedenen Sphären etwas Gleichartiges an Gefühl und Form, an Stimmungskunst und Erinnerungsweh repräsentieren."47 The writer adds a personal touch by remarking: ". . . so hat es mich doch immer gefreut, dass sie einmal beisammen waren, dass sie einander gekant und einander Freundschaft erwiesen haben, die beiden Meister. . . ."48

Thomas Mann selects and illuminates five facets of Storm's personality. First, he speaks of the poet's unusual and deep Heimatliebe, but also shows that the "hohe und innerlich vielerfahrene Künstlertum Storms"49 rises above any narrow provincialism:

45 Ibid., p. 186.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., p. 183.

48 Ibid., p. 183.

49 Ibid., p. 191.

Um seine Heimatlichkeit ist es etwas dichterisch Sonderbares. . . sie ist wesentlich Sehnsucht, Nostalgie, ein Heimweh, das durch keine Realität zu stillen ist, denn sie richtet sich durchaus aufs Vergangene, Versunkene, Verlorene.⁵⁰

Examples from his poems are given, with the note that Storm never writes about spring, but only as a recollection in autumn, when it has passed irrevocably.

Another quality consists of what he calls his "sensitive Vergeistigung, den Extremismus seiner Gemüthhaftigkeit."⁵¹ He refers to specific incidents in the poet's personal life, family, love affairs, and shows that there is nothing of what he calls "Bürgernormalität oder -sentimentalität"⁵² about him.

A third facet of his character is his sensuality, as revealed in his poems and his paganism, his "nordgermanischen Heidentums."⁵³ It is closely connected with his "Stammesheimatliebe" and his "unbürgerlich freies und positives Verhältnis zum Sinnlichen."⁵⁴ Closely connected with his paganism is a tendency towards superstition and a belief in spirits. The essayist speaks of Storm's "Neigung zum Aberglauben und Gespensterwesen, die auch ein Zubehör seiner Vorchristlichkeit war. . . ,"⁵⁵ and then shows how it reveals itself in his work, in Der Schimmelreiter and in his poetry.

Last of all he speaks of Storm's humanism: "Im Grunde

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 193.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., p. 199.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 201.

ist Storms Unchristlichkeit humanistischen Charakters, man findet in seinem Werk und Leben alle Ingredienzien humanistischer Überzeugung und Haltung. . . ."56

The concluding part of the essay deals with Storm's last illness and death, his attitude towards it, and the delusion that his illness was not fatal, which was necessary for him to have in order to be able to finish his most profound work, Der Schimmelreiter.

The essay, "Theodor Storm," shows how from the multiplicity of biographical details, the essayist spotlights and shapes the material, accents the shade and light, so that a living man and poet is portrayed.

Thomas Mann's essay, "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote," is in its outward form a diary, containing an entry for each day on board during a trans-Atlantic voyage. It reveals two themes: one is the author's experience of his first sea-voyage, and the other one, his encounter with Cervantes' Don Quixote, which is his "Reiselektüre." The leisure of a sea-voyage allows the writer's thoughts to roam freely and to reflect upon what he sees and reads. He says in the essay: "Phantasie haben heisst nicht, sich etwas ausdenken; es heisst, sich aus den Dingen etwas machen. . . ."57 This observation points to

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 203.

⁵⁷Thomas Mann, "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote," Leiden und Grösse der Meister (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1935), p. 215.

a basic characteristic of the essay.

The author looks forward to the adventure of his first ocean voyage. The elemental power of the sea cannot be completely silenced in the "Geborgensein in der menschlichen Zivilisation,"⁵⁸ which the luxury liner represents. Both elements, that of venturing into the unknown and that of human order and machines, remain in sharp contrast throughout the essay. Thomas Mann uses the word "kosmisch" several times in referring to the ocean, and at the same time, he indirectly suggests the cosmic overtones of Cervantes' novel: "Der 'Don Quijote' ist ein Weltbuch--für eine Weltreise ist das gerade das Rechte. Es war ein kühnes Abenteuer, ihn zu schreiben, und das rezeptive Abenteuer, das es bedeutet, ihn zu lesen, ist den Umständen ebenbürtig."⁵⁹

The voyage forms a framework and contrast to the book. Life on board is quiet and pleasantly monotonous, so that the colourful and unusual adventures of Don Quixote stand out in relief. The writer has the leisure time which the reading of such a book requires. The ship is an enclosed world surrounded by the limitless expanse of the sea; the world of Don Quixote is a world all by itself and has overtones which reach beyond its confines: "frei, kritisch und menschheitlich über die Zeit hinausragend."⁶⁰ Thomas Mann is excited about his trip,

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 213. ⁵⁹Ibid., p. 217. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 220.

and he is also full of expectation at the adventure of reading the book. He combines these two thoughts when he remarks, that he wants "mit diesem Meer von Erzählung zu Rande kommen, wie wir zu Rande kommen werden binnen zehn Tagen mit dem Atlantischen Ozean."⁶¹ On the last day on board, he finishes Don Quixote. Thus the total adventure, in which each part forms a contrast and complements the other, is rounded off.

Thomas Mann selects certain scenes from the novel which he discusses in detail, for example, Don Quixote's adventure with the lion: "ein herrliches Kapitel, mit einem komischen Pathos, einer pathetischen Komik erzählt, die die echte Begeisterung des Dichters für das heroische Narrentum seines Helden verrät."⁶² Then he adds: "Ich las es gleich zweimal, und unaufhörlich beschäftigt mich sein eigentümlich bewegendes, grossartig-lächerlicher Gehalt."⁶³ These words show the personal reaction and involvement of the essayist.

As the essay proceeds, one can see that the author weaves the contents of the book into his own understanding of life. Thus the diary form of the essay is suitable, and allows the writer to express and shape his experiences and thoughts from his individual point of view. He can include, moreover, any other ideas which come to his mind, as for example, his discussion of the social position of the artist in Cervantes'

⁶¹Ibid., p. 217. ⁶²Ibid., p. 249. ⁶³Ibid.

time and now, or the contrast of the primitive forces of the sea and of mechanization and civilization. The diary form enables the essayist to discuss any topics, but because this is an essay they are fitted together and subordinated to each other, so that the various ideas and thoughts enhance each other and the essay forms a totality. In addition, the writer communicates his experience of the book to the reader, who feels that he has gained an insight into this great novel, and that fundamental questions have been touched upon and illuminated as a result of the essayist's reflection on his two adventures, that of crossing the ocean and that of reading Don Quixote.

HERMANN HESSE (1877-1962)

Hermann Hesse's "Tessiner Herbsttag" is a lyric essay, showing an amazing quality of inner form and imagery interwoven to form a unity. The first impression is one of simplicity. This re-creation of autumn in Tessin has a rightness and completeness about it, and our response is one of enjoyment and awareness of beauty, colour and peace. Time is standing still; fulfillment, plenty, and drowsiness are everywhere, like the ubiquitous chestnuts roasting in every garden fire. The essay is complete in itself and can only be tasted and enjoyed.

Hermann Hesse captures the harmony and nostalgic beauty

of a fall day in the Tessin in an essay, which not only in its subject matter, but in its very form expresses this harmony. The essay's melody is made up of two notes, like the tune played by Tullio, the shepherd boy on his willow flute with its two tones. Tullio's is a simple, primitive song, which praises the land, its fruits, the gold, red and brown of the country-side, the blue of the mountains and lake, the serenity and cheerfulness and fulfillment which pervades the world of nature and the people who are part of it. It is an "Urmelodie" which arises from the earliest and deepest experiences of man which never change: "Auf und ab geht seine Urmelodie, so hat sie schon Vergil gehört und auch schon Homer."⁶⁴ The melody played by the child Tullio is effortless, unconscious.

The essayist's melody has been wrought artistically and consciously, a harmony woven together of pairs of opposites and contrasts, which are balanced and which complement each other, resulting in an intensification and heightening of meaning, which each part would not have if it appeared alone. The inner harmony and balance of the essay is an approximation, a striving after the "Urmelodie," which the boy achieves unconsciously.

The first two notes are two complementary colours, which appear with variations throughout the essay. One is blue:

⁶⁴Hermann Hesse, "Tessiner Herbsttag," Gedenkblätter (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1937), p. 174.

"die blaue Landschaft," "blauen Rauchsäulen," "das helle warme Violett der Berge," "Sein violett zerwaschenes Hemdchen steht schön vor der Seebäue." The other is the colour gold, and with it yellow, red and brown: "braungoldenen Weinblättern," "Die Rebe gelb und braun. . . der Kirschbaum scharlachrot, der Maulbeerbaum gold gelb," "den feurigen Herbst," "braunen Schmetterlingen und den roten Steinnelken." The writer says that everything is "ganz blau und gold,"⁶⁵ and that Tullio's melody "lobt dankbar das Blau, das Rot und das Gold."⁶⁶ The two colours are linked and joined in the landscape by the garden fires found everywhere:

[ich] sehe den blauen Rauch sanft und stetig wie eine Quelle fluten und zwischen den goldenen Maulbeerkronen hindüber ins Blau des Sees, der Berge und des Himmels schwimmen.⁶⁷

Closely connected with the theme of the two colours is that of "Ferne" and "Nähe." The distance is blue and violet and enveloped in a dream-like haze; the blue smoke rises upwards, awaking dreams and longing. The "Nähe" represents everyday reality, expressed by the dark brown soil, the chestnuts, the drowsy bees, the burning chestnut shells. The slow, steady smoke of countless garden fires unites these two visions:

die Nähe einhüllend mit der Ferne verbinden. . . .⁶⁸

Aber jeder Bauer, der. . . träumerisch sein Feuer schürt,

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 167. ⁶⁶Ibid., p. 174. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 172.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 168.

scheint es doch nur zu tun. . . um das Blau der Ferne mit den gelben, roten, braunen Klängen der farbigen Nähe zarter, inniger und musikalischer zu verbinden durch den träumerisch und launisch hinschleichenden Rauch. . . .⁶⁹

The idea of music is evoked in these lines: the two colours are "Klänge" in the two-tone melody. Music is also suggested by the verb "aufklingen" used by the writer when he refers to the red kerchiefs of the women harvesting grapes.

The picture of the wanderer and that of the farmer are contrasted. At first the essayist sees everything through the eyes of a wanderer. He looks over the fence and feels envy and longing: "Merkwürdig schön, beneidenswert und vorbildlich erscheinen die Bauern und Sesshaften dem Wanderer, wenn es Herbst wird. . . ."⁷⁰ The "Sesshaften," on the other hand, are part of the soil, the landscape, of nature. They partake of the rhythm of the seasons, of the fruit of the land. They all have their little garden fire in which they roast chestnuts and stir it with dream-like slowness and contentment. Again these notes are linked; the wanderer unexpectedly becomes a "Sesshafter": ". . . dies holde Los war mir. . . in den Schoss gefallen, wie eine reife Kastanie dem Wanderer auf den Hut fällt, er braucht sie nur zu öffnen und zu essen."⁷¹

Another set of opposites is that of the "Betrachter" and the active person. The "Betrachter" is on the outside,

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 169. ⁷⁰Ibid., p. 168. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 171.

alone, engrossed in reflection. The farmers are busy, participating in the activities of the season, closely involved, feeling the drowsiness of autumn:

Und immer hatte ich sie ein wenig beneidet. . . die Kastanienbräter an den Feldfeuern. . . die singenden Kinder, die schläfrig über die Blumen kriechenden Bienen, die ganze friedevolle, zur Winterruhe bereite, problemlose, angstlose, einfache und gesunde Welt der Natur und des primitiven, bäuerischen Menschenlebens.⁷²

These opposites are linked, too. He becomes involved with the soil and the people; he works in his garden, tends his little fire, roasts chestnuts and "Es kommt allerlei nachbarliches, vertrauliches Geräusch zu mir von meinen Mitbauern. . . ." ⁷³

Two other contrasting notes are the longing for a home and the fact of actually possessing one. At first the essayist has a feeling of homesickness:

immer um diese herbstliche Zeit tat es mir leid darum, und sah ich das Verlorene im verklärenden Licht eines nicht verzehrenden, aber doch tiefen Heimwehs. Irgendwo heimisch zu sein, ein Stückchen Land zu lieben und zu bebauen, nicht bloss zu betrachten. . . das schien mir ein schönes, zu beneidendes Los.⁷⁴

Then he does receive a home of his own, and for a moment at least, he finds satisfaction and fulfillment:

Zuweilen im Leben, mag es im übrigen sein wie es wolle, trifft doch etwas wie Glück ein, etwas wie Erfüllung und Sättigung. Gut vielleicht, dass es nie lange währen darf. Für den Augenblick schmeckt es wundervoll, das Gefühl der Sesshaftigkeit, des Heimathabens. . . .⁷⁵

⁷²Ibid., p. 170. ⁷³Ibid., p. 172. ⁷⁴Ibid., p. 170.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 172.

Two different perceptions of time are apparent. The wanderer, the one who observes from a distance, sees life as something cut up into moments: "Ein Stückchen bauerlichen Lebens. . . ,"⁷⁶ "Für den Augenblick schmeckt es wundervoll, das Gefühl der Sesshaftigkeit. . . ."⁷⁷ The farmers are aware of the endlessness and wholeness of time, which to them appears to be standing still. This is the experience of children, who are unconscious of time. Time follows the rhythm and seasons of the year. In fall, time pauses in its journey: "Langsam, langsam und auf viele Wochen verteilt färben sich die Blätter. . . ."⁷⁸ The farmers slow down in their work:

Oft hatte ich dem Rauche und den beim Feuer hockenden Männern und Buben zugehört, wie sie ihre letzten Feldarbeiten trüg und lässig besorgten mit einer Satttheit und leisen Schläfrigkeit. . . ,⁷⁹

just like the drowsy movements of the lizards and the bees. The activities of the farmers are part of a continuous pattern, an "in zweitausend Jahren unveränderten Rhythmus des ländlichen Kalenders."⁸⁰ It was known to the ancients, to Virgil and Homer, and it is still unchanged.

The essayist experiences time as a conscious individual, but in participating in the passing of the seasons and in becoming a "Sesshafter," he touches the other experience of it: "und möchte ohne Ende so stehen. . . in die farbenerfüllte,

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 171. ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 172. ⁷⁸Ibid., p. 167.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 169. ⁸⁰Ibid., p. 170.

reiche Landschaft blicken, die so beruhigt und so ewig scheint. . . ."⁸¹

In "Tessiner Herbsttag" the conscious, reflective element is contrasted with the unselfconscious, naive one. The essayist tries to reconcile them in himself. He does not have the unselfconsciousness of the child Tullio, or that of the "Kastanienbrater" overcome with the drowsiness of autumn and the approaching winter rest, or that of that of the cheerful old women washing at the spring, but he joins them in their activities and has a garden fire, too. He enjoys his new state and speaks of his "Mitbauern," but his is a conscious enjoyment; he is not part of the soil, he only imitates the "kindlich hirtenhaften Müssiggang"⁸² of the peasants. He is aware that his is an interlude, knows winter will come, and even knows that in the end it will not satisfy him completely.

Finally, two other qualities of the essay become apparent. The people about whom the essayist writes are more than just farmers of the Tessin; they represent a way of life which is close to nature and to the gods, a state of innocence. Their work, tending their fires, roasting chestnuts, burning the shells and the weeds, are more than just particular activities; they become rites:

wenn es Herbst wird und sie ihre halb festlichen Arbeiten tun, ihre bukolischen und georgischen Bräuche begehen,

⁸¹Ibid., p. 175.

⁸²Ibid., p. 169.

ihre Lieder singen. . . ihre Unkrautfeuer anzünden, um dabei zu stehen, Kastanien zu braten. . . .⁸⁴

Their actions link them with an idyll, one which Virgil and Homer sang about. They recall a lost ideal, a longing for a lost state. Every man who feels this loss, especially the civilized, selfconscious man, is attracted to the life of these shepherds and farmers, which "jeden geistigen und jeden heroischen Menschen im Tiefsten anzieht wie eine verlorene Heimat. . . ." ⁸⁵

Thus Hesse's "Tessiner Herbsttag" is shown to be a carefully wrought work, in which the personal experience of the writer finds expression in an artistic form. The vivid prose, the imagery, the symbolic quality which objects such as the garden fires and the chestnuts acquire, and the inner form, based on the interplay and contrast of opposing elements, raise the essay to the level of art.

ALBRECHT GOES (1908-)

The essay, "Wurzel und Werk," by Albrecht Goes, tells of a hike which the writer makes together with some boys through the Black Forest to the monastery at Maulbronn. This is its outward form, if it may be called that, in contrast to its inner form which becomes apparent as the essay proceeds. The

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 168.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 175.

title itself suggests two elements which complement and balance each other in the essay: the elemental human experience, "die Wurzel," and the "Werk," the form given to it by man. The forest becomes the expression of the elemental in life, the deep roots, the mysterious and chaotic forces. Its opposite is the monastery, "ein heiliger Bezirk,"⁸⁶ which the monks reclaimed from the wilderness, and gave it form, though it is still rooted in the forest. The inner form of the essay is a weaving together of these two elements.

The essay begins with a contrast between the noise and bustle of the villages and the darkness of the forest: "Schon hatten die Dörfer ihr reiches, weltfreudiges Gesicht verloren, schon fing der Himmel an, tiefer und drohender über die Landschaft zu hängen. . . ." ⁸⁷ The forest becomes deeper and more solemn and even the soul is affected: "Und we seltsam genau gab die Seele schon Antwort. Mehr und mehr sanken die Worte in uns selbst zurück. . . ." ⁸⁸ They meet no one, except a woodcutter who gives them a curt, uncommunicative greeting. A wordlessness, an inability to communicate the mystery and depth is evident in him and those who live in this region in which there are "Waldgeister genug und Dämonen in diesem Bereich, Furcht und Schrecken." ⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Albrecht Goes, "Wurzel und Werk," Die Gabe und der Auftrag (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1962), p. 138.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 134. ⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 134. ⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 134-5.

Someone in the group, who has lived among these people for twelve years, says how difficult it is for a stranger to find roots here, or to be accepted by these people: "Dem Holzmann da, dem wir begegnet sind, dem siehst du nicht ins Herz. . . Du musst wissen, hier haben sie alle, oder nicht wenige doch, ihre eigenen Gedanken."⁹⁰ These people are the products of a country in which they have to live "sieben Monate vom Jahr zwischen nassem Nebel und brauendem Dunkel. . . ." ⁹¹

The writer himself experiences a little of the majesty and mystery of the forest when he leaves his lodgings and goes out alone into the night. A storm has arisen,

von allen Seiten her fuhren nun die Winde auf mich zu.
O Leben! Ich gedachte der vergangenen Jahre, wie alles
Wesentliche in ihnen in Stürmen geboren worden war, Stürme
hatten's herzugetragen und Stürme nahmen's mit fort. . .
Die Wurzeln freilich, die standen tief und gut. . . in den
Gipfeln tönten die Wechselgesänge von Liebe und Leid. Aber
wollt' ich's nicht so? O Leben, Leben!⁹²

The elemental forces of life are brought to the surface in this moment of ecstatic insight.

When he re-enters the house, order, comfort and friendliness meet him. During a restless night he dreams that there are treasure houses in the deep forest, but he is not allowed to find them. "Geheimnis über Geheimnis: so blieb es auch in den nächsten Tagen noch. . . hier waren Schwermut und dunkler Blick, Mühlrad und Vergänglichkeitslied. . . ." ⁹³

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 135.

⁹²Ibid., p. 136.

⁹³Ibid., p. 137.

Only when they come to Calw do lighter voices sound and everything becomes brighter and faster: "Die Nagold fuhr hurtig talabwärts. . . es roch nach Lohe und Leder, fleissige Hände regten sich gut."⁹⁴ He tells his companions about Hermann Hesse who is a native of Calw, and says that if they read some of his works, they will recall this day, recall it like music which is both sad and merry, and if they hear it rightly, then they will hear in it "die ganze schwäbische Wahrheit."⁹⁵

"Und dann kamen wir nach Maulbronn."⁹⁶ This sentence forms the axis in the essay's structure; here the other part, the "Werk," the achievement of form, becomes the subject. In Maulbronn:

Da zeigte sich's denn, dass man gut daran tut, mit dem Wurzelwerk in den schwarzen Wäldern da oben Freundschaft zu halten. Denn Wurzelwerk, das war's auch hier, in den Kreuzgängen und den Netzgewölben im Refektorium, und im geschnitzten Kirchengestühl auch.⁹⁷

But it has been transformed into "Werk"; the roots, the immediacy of nature has been given form:

Aber was war hier daraus geworden: Gestalt! Wie nur je einmal dort Gestalt wird, wo einer das Chaotische zu bändigen weiss. Grosse Gewalten mögen dann in seiner Seele streiten, er aber vertraut. Vertraut, dass kein Werk vergeblich geschieht, das dem ordnenden Geiste sich untertan weiss.⁹⁸

The Trappist monks of this monastery imposed form, subjugated chaos and built "einen heiligen Bezirk." This giving

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 138.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 138.

⁹⁸Ibid.

of form is epitomized in the fountain at Maulbronn, which is the height of harmony and form: "dieses Bauwerks vollkommener Ruhe und schier göttlichen Gleichgewichtes. . . ." ⁹⁹ When the author saw it once as a young man, he still thought that something like that can be expressed in words, that it was possible "so hohe Geheimnisse deuten, aussagen zu dürfen." ¹⁰⁰ At that time he had written a poem about this fountain, and the essay closes with it. The verses emphasize the timelessness and depth of this "Werk," created in a land with such "Wurzeln."

It is amazing how this Wanderung with its various episodes is given unity and meaning through the essayist's selecting and shaping, so that it becomes the literary work of art which this essay may rightly claim to be. At the conclusion of "Wurzel und Werk" all the diverse elements hang together, and all are part of an indivisible whole.

In the essay, "Die Strasse," Albrecht Goes illuminates various aspects of his subject, especially the role the highway plays in human life. However, this essay is not just a series of pictures about "die Strasse "; it reveals a development and an inner form.

It begins in a charming and unexpected way: "Ist dies schon das Abschiedslied? Nein, das nicht." ¹⁰¹ The super-

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 138-9.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰¹Albrecht Goes, "Die Strasse," Die Gabe und der Auftrag, p. 123.

highway, on which machines whizz past, along which filling-stations and "Coca-Cola-Stuben," not towns and villages, are found, makes one think that the highway as it was known in less hurried times, is past. However, besides the "Autobahn" there is still the road which turns off towards a village or town, which, though bumpy and inconvenient perhaps, enables us to move "aus der Welt der Automaten in die Welt des Wirklichen, zur Strasse, 'die der Mensch befährt'." ¹⁰²

"Rühmen wir die Strasse, so rühmen wir ein gutes Stück Menschentum und Menschenwürde." ¹⁰³ Goes depicts some of the famous ones: the Via Appia in Rome and the "Prachtstrassen" of Paris. Here people have their place as much as the automobiles. One is the silent street, weighted with remembrances and depths of human experience, and the other, with its sidewalk cafes, and people strolling along to see and to be seen, is full of life. The essayist emphasizes two aspects of the highway, which he calls "die zwei Grundmächte, die hier wirksam sind: das Herscherliche und das Gesellige." ¹⁰⁴ Conquerors and sovereigns have built them and "Unrecht genug hat sie gepflastert, die Strassen aus der Geschichte unsrer Länder, das ist gewiss. Aber das Unrecht verjährt, und das Geschenk der Strasse bleibt." ¹⁰⁵ Townships develop alongside the highway,

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

and he who travels on it enjoys the protection of the sovereign. The street is also "die 'grosse Gesellerin der Menschen'."¹⁰⁶

He who walks on it loves it for a two-fold reason: as a wanderer for its breadth and length,^{for} the beauty around it, and the excitement of the road, and he loves it because it leads to his destination. The street is part of life and shares in it:

Und was immer sich zu beiden Seiten der Strasse ereignet-- sie, die Strasse selbst, hat Anteil daran: Arbeit und Fest, Hochzeit und Tod. . . aus Gestern und Heute gewinnt sie ihr Leben und auch ihre Schönheit, die seltsame Schönheit vom bunten Menschenuntereinander.¹⁰⁷

The essayist contrasts this with the loneliness of the road, with that expressed by the words, "auf die Strasse gesetzt werden."¹⁰⁸ He recalls Schubert's "Winterreise":

eine Musik namenloser Traurigkeit. . . Haus, Sicherheit, Liebeswärme--das alles musste er hinter sich lassen, unser Winterwandersmann; die Wetterfahne und die Eisblumen im Fenster am Weg, und der Totenacker und der Leiermann sind sein Teil, und es ist die Wahrheit über die Strasse, das sie das auch ist: das Ruh-und Heimatlose.¹⁰⁹

Albrecht Goes makes a surprising, and yet as part of the development of the essay, not unexpected connection at the end of the essay, when he counters the idea of the "Ruh-und Heimatlose" with the words: "Zuletzt muss doch das Vertrauen des dreiundzwanzigsten Psalms wider die Schwermut fechten,

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 129.

und dass einer seine Strasse 'rechte Strasse' heissen mag, das geschieht, weil er: 'um Seines Namens willen' gehört hat und sich also geführt weiss."¹¹⁰ Everything that Goes has said about the highway takes on another level, that of human life itself, which is symbolized by "die Strasse." At its conclusion the essay strikes us as an affirmation of life and we recall the beginning of the essay, where it says, "Ist dies schon das Abschiedslied? Nein, das nicht." All the diverse elements suggested by the theme, "die Strasse," fit together to form a whole.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 129-30.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF THE ESSAY

In examining the essays in the previous two chapters, the impression gained is one of variety and freedom, because each writer gives this form its own character and tone. This is its merit and strength, but at the same time, it makes the essay, as Max Bense notes, "die am schwierigsten zu meisternde wie auch zu beurteilende literarische Form. . . ." ¹

The boundless freedom and variety of the essay form eludes and resists definition. If one used the Essais of Montaigne as a starting point in trying to find a common denominator, one cannot help noticing that when the essay makes its appearance in a different country, in Germany, for example, it changes remarkably. Moreover, the essay changes with the spirit of the times, and to add to the confusion, from author to author. Capable of myriad variations in expression and form, the essay offers much scope for the creativity of the individual artist, who in this case does not have to submit to the demands of a more strictly delineated form. At the same time he has to impose an inner order of his own, and this makes the essay "die am schwierigsten zu meisternde. . . Form," as well.

¹Max Bense, "Über den Essay und seine Prosa," Merkur, I (1947), 422.

OUTER AND INNER FORM

Outwardly the essay may appear in the form of a letter (Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief"), diary (Thomas Mann's "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote"), autobiography ("Im Spiegel," also by Thomas Mann), biography (Goethe's "Winckelmann"), an account of something experienced or seen (Goes's "Wurzel und Werk"), a meditation (Goes's "Die Strasse"), a re-creation of a conversation (Kleist's "Über das Marionettentheater"), or even a critical Auseinandersetzung (Schiller's "Über das Erhabene"). An outward form which is so variable cannot be brought back to any easy rule, except that the use of almost exclusively personal and open forms like the letter, diary, gives a strong suggestion of the personal nature of the essay, that it arises from something which concerns the essayist deeply.

Karl Viëtor states in his book, Geist und Form, that genres are not primarily recognized by their outward forms, but that the inner form, the peculiar proportions, an inner law, are also constituent elements in the recognizing of a genre.² An essay, therefore, must be seen as a living whole, subject to and knit together by the inner form given to it by the artist; only in this way can we acquire an insight and understanding of the essay. Outward form alone cannot tell us

²Karl Viëtor, "Die Geschichte Literarischer Gattungen," Geist und Form (Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag, 1952), p. 293.

enough about its nature; the work of art must be allowed to speak for itself, as creating its own terms of reference, so that its inner laws may be perceived.

Without this inner form it must be questioned whether the essay has achieved the level of a work of art. All it would do then is to communicate information, but would not make the impact and show the timelessness and uniqueness of a valid artistic achievement. Georg von Lukács feels that the essay, as distinguished from those useful writings which can never give us more than information, is an authentic literary form.³ "Why do we read essays?" he asks. Not necessarily to be taught something. We may evaluate classical tragedy differently now than Lessing did in his "Hamburgische Dramaturgie," or we may look at the Greeks in a different light than Winckelmann did in his writings about them, and yet we value these works, not for the accuracy of their points, but for something else which cannot be defined. There are critical writings which lose their value as soon as something better has been found, but not so essays, which never lose their validity, even though others may deal with the same subject. In science, content is important; in art, the form: "wenn etwas alle seine Inhalte in Form aufgelöst hat und so reine Kunst geworden ist, kann es nicht mehr überflüssig werden;

³Georg von Lukács, "Über Wesen und Form des Essays," Die Seele und die Formen (Berlin: Egon Fleischel & Co., 1911), p. 7.

dann aber ist seine einstige Wissenschaftlichkeit ganz vergessen und ohne Bedeutung."⁴

The essay form presents us with a paradox: it appears to be fragmentary and incomplete, and yet at the same time, it conveys the impression of completeness. Goethe's essay, "Über den Granit," is an example of this trait. On the one hand, it is a Versuch which does not pretend to deal exhaustively with its subject, and on the other hand, its inner form gives it unity and wholeness.

In contrast to an Abhandlung, or any treatise which tries to deal with its subject systematically and fully, the essay proceeds by means of selection. It usually begins abruptly and ends where the essayist felt like stopping; in the words of Theodor W. Adorno:

Er fängt nicht mit Adam und Eva an, sondern mit dem, worüber er reden will; er sagt, was ihm daran aufgeht, bricht ab, wo er selber am Ende sich fühlt und nicht dort, wo kein Rest mehr bliebe. . . .⁵

Selection, indispensable to the shaping and ordering of the subject, and a chief element in an artistic presentation, is one of the chief characteristics of the essay. The treatise tries to prove a point or a theory, and therefore attempts to be as complete as possible. The essay captures certain highlights, contrasts light and shade; it resembles a painting,

⁴Ibid.

⁵Theodor W. Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," Noten zur Literatur (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1958), p. 11.

not a photograph. A poetic wholeness is achieved in the essay by the illumination of judiciously selected aspects of the subject, and is satisfying and complete in itself. Theodor W. Adorno makes the point that "Der Essay muss an einem ausgewählten oder getroffenen partiellen Zug die Totalität aufleuchten lassen. . . ." ⁶ The biographical essays, "Winckelmann," by Goethe, and "Theodor Storm," by Thomas Mann may serve as an illustration of this. In each case, only certain aspect of the life and personality of these men are singled out and illuminated, and seemingly important details are omitted, such as the date of Winckelmann's death, and yet the reader feels that he comes in living and close contact with these singular men.

There are two sides to the inner form: the conscious shaping of the artist, and the unconscious and intuitive element at work. These cannot be divided or analyzed and are part of the organic form of the essay.

On the one hand, form is a conscious achievement, created by the essayist in his handling of the subject matter. "Der Gehalt springt freiwillig aus der Fülle seines Innern. . . ," says Goethe, "Aber die Form. . . will erkannt, will bedacht sein, und hier wird Besonnenheit gefordert, dass Form, Stoff und Gehalt sich zueinander schicken, sich ineinander fügen,

⁶Ibid., p. 36.

sich einander durchdringen."⁷ In the essay, "Wurzel und Werk," Albrecht Goes writes about a hike which he had taken; he orders and shapes his experience in such a way that a harmonious and meaningful whole is created.

On the other hand, the inner form of the essay also possesses a spontaneous and intuitive quality, in contrast to the step-by-step reasoning of didactic prose. Otto Doderer says about the essay: "Er. . . lässt dem Temperament das Vorrecht zu verweilen und zu überspringen, wie es der schöpferischen Formung als Notwendigkeit erscheint."⁸ In this intuitively creative way the material is formed into a living whole, where parts are subordinated and stand in relation to each other, so that the sum is greater than its parts: "wo alles mit allem zusammenhängt, wo nichts gerückt werden kann, ohne alles von der Stelle zu bewegen."⁹ One part supports the other and cannot be removed without destroying the whole. This is a characteristic of a work of art, for, as Georg von Lukács reminds us:

. . . die grosse Forderung allem Gestalteten gegenüber formuliert, vielleicht die einzig ganz allgemeine, aber die ist unerbittlich und kennt keine Ausnahme: das im

⁷J. W. Goethe quoted in Wege des Geistes, ed. Erwin de Haar (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, [n.d.]), p. 267.

⁸Doderer, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹J. W. Goethe quoted in Wege zum Gedicht, Band II, eds. Rupert Hirschenauer and Albrecht Weber (München: Schnell und Steiner, 1963), p. 84.

Werk alles aus einem Stoff geformt sei, dass jeder seiner Teile von einem Punkt aus übersichtlich geordnet sei.¹⁰

Part of the forming power in the essay is the spirit or tone which dominates each essay. Alexander Smith, in his essay, "On the Writing of Essays," points out that "as a literary form [the essay] resembles the lyric in so far as it is moulded by some central mood. . . ."¹¹ Hans Hennecke adds to this, that "In ihnen [den Essays] spiegelt ein unverwechselbarer Geist sich in dem, was er betrachtet oder auch ergründet, und dabei kann ihm grundsätzlich alles Gegenstand werden,"¹² and also:

Diesen Geist strahlt eine hinter ihm ständig spürbare, substanz-und facettenreiche, um alle Reize, aber auch um alle Verantwortungen des Lebens wissende Persönlichkeit aus. Ihr Magma vor allem bildet die Form dieser Essays--oder ersetzt sie jedenfalls.¹³

The essay does not follow a logically-worked-out sequence, but rather an intuitive one. The writer's way of seeing and experiencing his subject gives the essay its unity. "Eine literarische Individualität"¹⁴ is what Max Bense calls the essay. This fact is evident in all of the essays found in our particular context and it is consistent with the claim for their artistic unity and form. Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm

¹⁰Lukacs, op. cit., p. 13. ¹¹Smith, op. cit., p. 22.

¹²Hans Hennecke, "Essay--zum Wort und zur Sache," Neue Literarische Welt, Nummer 4 (24. Februar 1952), p. 2.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Bense, op. cit., p. 424.

compares the form of the essay to a freely-growing tree in contrast to a pruned and trellised one:

Beim Essai gleicht nichts der Gesetzmässigkeit eines Spalierbaums, bei dem der Gärtner die Zweige bindet und schneidet, sondern er ähnelt dem Wuchs einer freistehenden Buche, deren Aeste sich scheinbar regellos teilen und ausbreiten, aber dennoch die klassische Form der schönen Baumkrone bilden.¹⁵

PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL ELEMENTS

Montaigne set the tone, when he said of his Essais, "It is myself that I portray." The essay is a highly personal form of expression: "eine Gattung, wo der Mensch seine im grossen Kunstwerk geschehene Entpersönlichung wieder rückgängig macht, aber so, dass daraus selber wieder Kunstwerk wird. . . ."¹⁶ Consequently the writer always remains the key figure, for an essay is, as it were, the personal handwriting of an author. A reflective writer like Schiller handles his subject differently from Goethe, and thus, the essay, "Winckelmann," not only illuminates the personality of Winckelmann, but that of the author too, while Schiller works from a greater distance to his subject, as shown in his essay, "Über das Erhabene."

Josef Hofmiller remarks that "ein eigenartiger Kopf"¹⁷

¹⁵Gleichen-Russwurm, op. cit., p. 752.

¹⁶Friedrich, op. cit., p. 440-41.

¹⁷Hofmiller, op. cit., p. 24.

is essential, and Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm says that "Was ein Essai auch behandeln mag, er ist immer der Ausdruck einer Persönlichkeit,"¹⁸ and he observes further that "Der Essay führt zu einer geistigen, intimen Verbindung zwischen Autor und Leser,"¹⁹ something which can happen only because they meet on a personal, not just^{an} intellectual plane.

But whatever the nature of their personalities or their approach to the subject, the essays show that each writer was in some way gripped by his subject. Even in the essays of Lessing and Schiller, who have dealt with their subject in a more abstract manner, it is evident that they were deeply involved in their subject matter. Hugo von Hofmannsthal chose the essay form to express a state of crisis which he tried to clarify and master in himself. Even Josef Hofmiller's essay, "Ottobeuren," is not just an appreciative piece about the harmonious architecture of a certain monastery, but one in which he tries to discover the reason for its beauty and his response to it, so that it becomes a personal Auseinander-
setzung with his subject. Albrecht Goes's essay, "Die Strasse," which begins in such a light and humorous way, shows that the writer is himself a participant and experiences the things he writes about, and because of this, he is able to touch upon unexpected depths of existence.

¹⁸Gleichen-Russwurm, op. cit., p. 747.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 750.

Since the essayist is himself engaged and stands, as it were, within the circumference of his subject, the essay is an interior monologue, a coming to terms with an experience, with a work of art, a landscape, a problem, or life itself. The essayist takes as his starting point a personal encounter with something which fascinates or affects him; he weighs and reflects on it, as the word "essay" (to weigh and test) suggests; a stock-taking takes place and this determines the essay form.

The fact that the letter is a favourite form chosen by essayists strongly supports this, because the letter helps him to sort everything out for himself, answering an inner urge and necessity; an attempt to clarify something to oneself about which one has been unclear. For Schiller, an essay was an indispensable thing to clarify his thoughts about any given subject. Emil Dovifat declares that the essay "gewährt Einblicke in das Innere der eigenen Überlegung. . . ." ²⁰ Hugo Friedrich has observed this fact in the essays of Montaigne, about which he says:

In ihrem Kerne sind die Essais ein Selbstgespräch. Von niemandem erwarten sie mehr als die Geneigtheit, zuzuhören, was sie sagen. Ja sie setzen sogar diese Geneigtheit nur zweifelnd voraus. Sie wollen schliesslich nichts anderes, als mit sich selber ins klare zu kommen und nebenbei andere einzuladen, es auf ihre Weise ebenfalls zu tun. ²¹

²⁰Dovifat, op. cit., p. 938.

²¹Friedrich, op. cit., p. 11.

Josef Hofmiller sees Goethe's essay, "Über den Granit," as "ein ergreifendes Selbstgespräch."²² Max Bense has pointed out that the essay is "eine Art reflektierender Monolog. . . ,"²³ and Josef Hofmiller says that it is "immer irgendwie autobiographisch gewachsen, keine blosse Schriftstellerei, sondern persönliches Erlebnis. . . ."²⁴

The essay, "Ein Brief," by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, springs from the most intense and personal experience. He chose the letter, which suggests the highly individualized nature of the communication. The writer of the letter is a young man his own age; however Hofmannsthal succeeded in gaining distance and control to his experience by setting it far back in time, by writing to a definite person and putting on a definite disguise. At the conclusion a clearer grasp of his situation, which has been shaped and ordered in the essay, reveals itself. The words of Otto Doderer are to the point, when he says:

Eine Individualität betrachtet sich selbst, sondiert Eindrücke und Reflexe. . . lässt in dem Durchstich durch einen Problemkreis, in den sie sich versetzt fühlt, die Ungeheuerlichkeit des Kleinen im Kosmischen aufklaffen. So entsteht der dichterische Essay, die künstlerische Spätform. . . .²⁵

²²Hofmiller, op. cit., p. 28.

²³Bense, op. cit., p. 423.

²⁴Hofmiller, op. cit., p. 25.

²⁵Otto Doderer, "Der Dichterische Essay," Die Literatur, ed. Dr. Ernst Heilborn, 29. Jahrgang (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, Oct. 1926-Oct. 1927), p. 10.

The nature of a vital experience, because it is true of one individual, often becomes, when it is shared and communicated, universally valid and many see themselves reflected in it. As Goethe reminds us again and again, that which is personally valid takes on impersonal connotations and extends its validity to the level of the objective and general. This holds true in the case of the essay, too, and Rudolf Bach, in connection with Goethe's "Winckelmann," says:

Wieder zeigt sich die alte einfache Wahrheit, dass das Individuelle, wenn es nur tief genug angeschaut und sorgsam genug herausgearbeitet wird, das einzige und wirkliche Generelle bedeutet.²⁶

The personal aspect of the essay, when it is genuine and comes from the depths of experience and insight of the essayist, has immediacy in its appeal, for the reader comes to feel he shares in it, that it is part of him too, and the essay thus becomes universally true. Thus personal and even private experiences rise through the medium of art above their limitations. This can be clearly seen in Montaigne's Essais, where the personal element is very marked and yet it takes on a timeless quality, and the reader feels that what Montaigne says about himself is true of every man.

²⁶Bach, op. cit., p. 5.

REFLECTIVE AND CONCRETE ELEMENTS

Since the essay is an Auseinandersetzung, a coming to grips with an experience or object, the reflective element plays a conspicuous role. There are two states in experiencing life around us; one is being directly involved in it, and the other is standing at the side and reflecting upon it. As a result of this there are two kinds of human expression; the dramatic re-creation of life, which genres like drama, lyric, and epic represent, and the other state, that of reflecting upon life, is best expressed in the essay form. The essay is not concerned with fiction, and it does not merely recount a happening, but in addition explores its significance and meaning to the essayist. This may sound as an oversimplification perhaps, because poems, and even drama, and certainly novels, contain parts which express thoughts about the action, and vice versa, the essay uses dramatic ways of representing the interaction of the essayist and his subject; nevertheless this is the chief distinction and contribution of the essay.

Often novels contain essayistic presentation within the narrative and the difference between these two modes of expression can then be seen. For example, in Robert Musil's novel, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften,²⁷ the two ways of liter-

²⁷Robert Musil, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1956).

ary presentation, the narrative and essayistic, become intertwined, yet are clearly distinguishable: vivid and dramatic re-creation of actions and situations, alternating with passages where the author reflects upon the people, their conversations and actions and their motives, and asks questions about life. Robert Musil uses the essayistic approach consciously within the narrative body of the novel; he even discusses the essay in the novel and uses it as a comparison with the hero Ulrich's approach to life:

Ungefähr wie ein Essay in der Folge seiner Abschnitte ein Ding von vielen Seiten nimmt, ohne es ganz zu erfassen. . . glaubte er, Welt und eigenes Leben am richtigsten ansehen und behandeln zu können.²⁸

Although he attempts to represent a whole life, and those affected by that of the hero, Robert Musil is also essayistic in his approach in the sense that he illuminates a point here and there, is not omniscient, says only what he sees, or rather, as far as he feels he can see.

The element of reflection (Betrachtung) in the essay should not be taken as dullness, abstraction, passivity, or lack of feeling, for these are foreign to the good essay. The essay expresses what action cannot express: the barely perceptible movement, the relationship, the effect of an event or a work of art on a human being, his response to it, and its significance to him. The subject matter is something which

²⁸Ibid., p. 257.

actually has happened and which has left an impression on him, or taken hold of him, so that he is eager to think and write about it. In this sense is the essay reflective.

In his presentation however, the essayist uses concrete images, for he has to give body to what he wants to express. Form, after all, implies das Bildhafte. His way of handling the subject has to be imaginative in the way a work of art is imaginative, and even though the thing which has gripped him is an idea, he has to give it a concrete expression: "Der Essay erzeugt bewusst den konkreten Fall einer Idee, gespiegelt am Essayisten selbst."²⁹ Hugo Friedrich sees this as the quality which distinguishes the essay from the treatise:

Er sucht nicht das Gesetz, sondern das Bild. Damit ist er. . . tief geschieden von der naturwissenschaftlichen Methode, die nicht das Einzelne und das Bild, sondern das Gesetz sucht.³⁰

This is consonant with its claim of being a work of art, for, as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, with the authority of workshop experience, remarks: art never generalizes, but seeks the concrete, the individual, the personal.³¹ The essayist looks quietly and intently at an object until it yields its secret, its soul. Goethe observes one particular granite boulder on a certain mountain in his essay, "Über den Granit," and Kleist

²⁹Bense, op. cit., p. 424.

³⁰Friedrich, op. cit., p. 13.

³¹Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Der Schatten der Lebenden," Prosa IV, Gesammelte Werke (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1955), p. 233.

bases his essay, "Über das Marionettentheater," on a conversation which he had one evening with a famous dancer.

However, in the essay the concrete image becomes a symbol of a general truth, and the personal experience becomes representative of a universal human situation, as in any other work of art. The symbol is no longer static but becomes mobile and operates at several levels at once. Thus Kleist's essay, which began with a conversation about marionettes, rises above the concrete to suggest a universally valid truth about the state of man. In Hermann Hesse's essay, "Tessiner Herbsttag," the concrete objects which the writer sees around him, the chestnuts, the garden fires, the blue colour of the sky and mountains, acquire symbolic overtones, and at the conclusion of the essay, there is given a deeper insight into life, not just the picture of a perfect autumn day.

THE ESSAY AS AN ART FORM

In the essay, the response of the writer to his experience or an object undergoes through the ordering and creative power of the essayist a transformation; the particular experience becomes a comment on life, an insight, an answer. Georg von Lukács speaks of the moment in the essay, and in other creative writing, "wenn alle Gefühle und Erlebnisse, die diesseits und jenseits der Form waren, eine Form bekommen, sich zur Form verschmelzen und verdichten."³² An experience is inten-

³²Lukács, op. cit., p. 17-18.

sified and given artistic validity, raised to a level where it exists in its own right through the medium of language and the creative power of the essayist.

As much as each essay differs from another one because of the freedom it allows the essayist, there are certain recognizable characteristics common to all, and certain qualities which appear to a greater or lesser degree in each of the essays studied. These have been singled out and noted in the interpretations of the individual essays, and discussed in this chapter.

An art form presupposes certain definite factors in the absence of which communication proves impossible, because form, which is inseparable from a work of art, is the bridge, the means of communication. The presence of form, the artistic selection and the illumination of selected aspects, so that the subject is seen in a new and meaningful way, are basic characteristics of art, and also of the essay. The phenomenon of the strictly personal element in the essay acquiring universal validity and significance can only be achieved through the creative, shaping power of the artistic process. Another point which shows that the essay may claim to be called artistic is the ability of this form to create within the essay the impression of wholeness and totality, even though characteristic aspects only are illuminated. The essay does not exhaust its subject, for its very name suggests "an attempt," which

is something fragmentary. Only artistic form can round out the effect and make it total, make a series of parts an inseparable whole.

The way the essay resolves the paradox of being on the one hand reflective, of testing and weighing a subject, as its name suggests, and on the other hand, of using concrete imagery to convey meaning and shape the subject matter, demonstrates and proves that it is an artistic form. A mixture of concrete images and pointed thought, the essay is built up in a spontaneous and imaginative way. Otto Doderer observes:

Der Essayist ist nicht nur Betrachter, sondern auch Schöpfer kraft der Leidenschaft, Phantasie und Formgewalt des Dichters. Er formt aus dem Inhalt heraus, jedesmal neu den stärksten Ausdruck suchend. . . Ein Essay kristallisiert sich wie ein Gedicht.³³

An essay is well written and stilistically it can be counted among works of art. Max Bense does full justice to this when he says:

dass in jedem Essay jene schönen Sätze auftreten, die wie der Same des ganzen Essays sind, aus denen er also immer wieder hervorgehen kann. Es sind die reizvollen Sätze einer Prosa, an denen man studieren kann, dass es hier keine genaue Grenze gegen die Poesie gibt.³⁴

The essay affects us^{as} any other work of art does, not appealing to the mind and intellect alone, but also convincing the heart. It opens up unexpected relationships, something which occurs intuitively, and it communicates to the reader

³³Doderer, op. cit., p. 9. ³⁴Bense, op. cit., p. 418.

insights which cannot be arrived at by reason alone.

As in most works of art, we are always less aware of their form than ^{of} their content, because it appears to have happened so naturally, and it is only through a closer look and closer reading that we become aware of form and realize that its simplicity has been deceptive, that it is the result of craftsmanship. This is particularly true in the case of the essay, except that the essayist has the freedom and also the responsibility to shape his subject matter and create form in his own way, rather than follow sharply-delineated rules; however, as in the case of other art forms, he obeys and follows the peculiar laws which are found to be characteristic of the essay form.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

- Bacon, Francis. The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall. Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1922.
- Goes, Albrecht. "Wurzel und Werk," and "Die Strasse," Die Gabe und der Auftrag. Berlin: Union Verlag, 1962. Pp. 134-139 and pp. 123-130 respectively.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. "Über den Granit," Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften. Goethes Werke, Band 13, Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden. Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1958. Pp. 253-258.
- _____. "Winckelmann," Schriften zur Kunst, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche. Edited by Ernst Beutler. Vol. 13 of 24. Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1949. Pp. 415-450.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. "Journal meiner Reise im Sommer 1769," Mensch und Geschichte. Kröners Taschenausgabe, Band 136. Edited by Willi Koch. Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1935. Pp. 120-152.
- _____. "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet?," Sämmtliche Werke. Edited by Bernhard Suphan. Vol. 5 of 33. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877-1913. Pp. 656-675.
- Hesse, Hermann. "Tessiner Herbsttag," Gedenkblätter. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1937. Pp. 167-175.
- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. "Ein Brief," Die Prosaischen Schriften gesammelt. Vol. 1 of 3. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1919-20. Pp. 55-76.
- Hofmiller, Josef. "Ottobeuren," Einkehr bei Josef Hofmiller. Lindau: Im Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1948. Pp. 96-109.
- Kleist, Heinrich von. "Über das Marionettentheater," Werke. Deutsche Klassiker Bibliothek. Edited by Karl Siegen. Part 7 of 8 Parts. Leipzig: Hess und Becker Verlag, [n.d.]. Pp. 113-120.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. "Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet," Gesammelte Werke. Edited by Wolfgang Stämmeler. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1959. Pp. 962-1015.

- Mann, Thomas. "Im Spiegel," Rede und Antwort. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922. Pp. 383-387.
- _____. "Theodor Storm," and "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote," Leiden und Grösse der Meister, Gesammelte Werke. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1935. Pp. 183-207 and pp. 211-270 respectively.
- Montaigne, Michel de. The Complete Works. Translated by Donald M. Frame. London: Hamish Hamilton, [n.d.].
- Schiller, Johann Christoph Friedrich. "Brief eines reisenden Dänen," and "Über das Erhabene," Philosophische Schriften. Grossherzog Wilhelm Ernst Ausgabe. Leipzig: Im Inselverlag, [n.d.].

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

- Adorno, Theodor W. "Der Essay als Form," Noten zur Literatur. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1958. Pp. 9-49.
- Bach, Rudolf. "Goethes 'Winckelmann'," Das Deutsche Wort. Jahrgang 11, Nummer 28 (14. Juli 1935), 4-6.
- Bense, Max. "Über den Essay und seine Prosa," Merkur I (1947), 414-424.
- Berdan, John M. "Essay," Collier's Encyclopedia (1963), IX, 316-318.
- Beyer, H. "Essay," Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Edited by Paul Merker and Wolfgang Stammeler. Vol. 1 of 4. Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter and Company, 1925-31.
- Davis, William Hawley. English Essayists, A Reader's Handbook. Boston: The Gorham Press, 1916.
- Dobrée, Bonamy. English Essayists. London: Collins, 1946.
- Doderer, Otto. "Der dichterische Essay," Die Literatur. 29. Jahrgang (Oct. 1926-Oct. 1927), 8-10.
- Dovifat, Emil. "Essay," Handbuch der Zeitungswissenschaft. Edited by Walther Heide. Leipzig: Verlag Karl W. Hiersemann, 1940, I, 938-939.

- English Essays of Today. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- Friedrich, Hugo. Montaigne. Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag, 1949.
- Gleichen-Russwurm, Alexander von. "Der Essai," Das litterarische Echo. Jahrgang 6 (1903-1904), 747-753.
- Grimm, Herman. "Vorwort," Fünfzehn Essays. Vierte Folge. Gütersloh, 1890. Pp. V-XXII.
- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. "Der Schatten der Lebenden," Gesammelte Werke, Prosa IV. Edited by Herbert Steiner. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1955. Pp. 233-241.
- Hofmiller, Josef. "Goethes schönste Essays," Wege zu Goethe. Hamburg-Bergedorf: Stromverlag, 1947. Pp. 24-29.
- Holthusen, Hans Egon. "Die Kunst des Essays," Das Schöne und das Wahre. München: R. Piper Verlag, 1958. Pp. 134-153.
- Lobban, J. H. English Essays. London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1903.
- Lukács, Georg von. "Über Wesen und Form des Essays," Die Seele und die Formen. Berlin: Egon Fleischel and Company, 1911. Pp. 3-39.
- Merk, Heinrich. "Deutsche Essayisten," Neues Jahrbuch, 1937. Pp. 542-557.
- Musil, Robert. Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1956.
- Preetorius, Emil (ed.). Die Sprache. Fünfte Folge des Jahrbuchs Gestalt und Gedanke, hsg. von der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste. München: ImVerlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1959.
- Rhys, Ernest, Lloyd Vaughan (eds.). A Century of English Essays. London: J. M. Dent, 1929.
- Smith, Alexander. Dreamthorp with Selections from 'Last Leaves.' The World's Classics. London: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- Thrall, William Flint, Addison Hibbard. "Essay," A Handbook to Literature. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936. Pp. 163-4.

- Viëtor, Karl. "Die Geschichte Literarischer Gattungen," Geist und Form. Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag, 1952. Pp. 292-309.
- Wais, Kurt, Hans Hennecke. "Essay--Zum Wort und zur Sache," Neue Literarische Welt. Nummer 4 (25. Februar 1952), p. 2.
- Walker, Hugh. The English Essay and Essayists. London: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1923.
- Watson, Melvin R. Magazine Serials and the Essay Tradition (1746-1820). Louisiana State University Studies. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956.
- Whitmore, Charles E. "The Field of the Essay," PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 551-564.
- Withington, Robert. "Essay," The Encyclopedia Americana (Canadian Edition, 1953), X, 508-511.
- Woolf, Virginia. "The Modern Essay," The Common Reader. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Pelican Books, Penguin Books Limited, 1938. Pp. 210-221.
- _____. The Death of the Moth and Other Essays. London: Hogarth Press, 1947.

C. GENERAL REFERENCE WORKS

- "Essay," Cassell's Encyclopaedia of Literature. Edited by S. H. Steinberg. London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1953. Pp. 205-211.
- "Essay," Chambers's Encyclopaedia (New Edition), V, 393-394.
- "Essay," Der Grosse Brockhaus (16th ed.), III, 664.
- "Essay," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1963), VIII, 713-715.
- Johnson, Samuel. Dictionary. A Modern Selection by E. L. McAdam, Jr. and George Milne. New York: Pantheon Books, 1963.
- Kayser, Wolfgang J., et al. Deutsche Literatur in unserer Zeit. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1959.
- Kindermann, Heinz, Margaret Dietrich (eds.). "Essay," Lexikon der Weltliteratur (3rd ed.). Wien: Humboldt Verlag, 1951. P. 216.

Shipley, Joseph T. (ed.). "Essay," Dictionary of World Literature. New York: The Philosophical Library, 1943. Pp. 220-221.

Wilpert, Gero von. "Essay," Sachwörterbuch der Literatur. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1955. Pp. 152-153.