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*Wer die Wahrheit des Welzusammenhanges Gottes  
und der Welt mit eigener Wahrhaftigkeit sucht, wird  
immer verzweifeln, aber gerade in dr Verzweiflung  
liegt der Beruf.*

Partington, J. A.

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" Wer die Wahrheit des Weltzusammenhanges  
Gottes und der Welt mit eigener Wahrhaftigkeit sucht, wird  
immer verzweifeln, aber gerade in der Verzweiflung liegt  
der Beruf."

von Ranke.

( Zeitschr. f. Gesch. Wiss. 1891 )  
p. 241.

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CHAPTER ONE:- Introduction.

On the 21st. of November 1811, the results of a suicide pact were discovered on the shores of the Wannsee, the lake near Berlin. The victims were Heinrich von Kleist, a minor figure in contemporary letters, and Henriette Vogel, the wife of a Prussian civil servant. The Press gave the tragedy some publicity at the time, but it was quite clear that its interest was confined to the dramatic nature of the deaths and to the juicy scandal that the man belonged to one of Prussia's aristocratic families. Nor did any of Kleist's literary colleagues bemoan the passing of a great talent; indeed, as one of the foremost writers of the day, Arnim felt called upon in 1812 publicly to disassociate Kleist's work from the " neuere Schule " of Romanticism, and further criticised him on the grounds that he had always refused to pay sufficient attention to the views and judgements of his fellow writers (1). Arnim is also reputed to have referred to Kleist as " der arme Kauz aus Brandenburg ", a view which was certainly shared by many at the time, for, during the ten or so brief years which Kleist devoted to writing, he had been beset by all kinds of misfortune and ill-luck. His attempts to found two literary periodicals had both collapsed, and he had seen two of his plays badly received by no less an august person than Goethe himself; one, " Der zerbrochene Krug " had been mis-produced at Weimar and became a court scandal, and the other, " Penthesilea " had been rejected out of hand. In the days when patronage was an invaluable asset to a young writer, such harsh treatment by a leader of German thought could be only a severe stigma and a bar to public acceptance. Furthermore, Kleist's resignation

(1) Kleist, Werke, ed. Erich Schmidt, 5 vols.  
Leipzig und Wien (1904-5); Vol. 1, pp. 30.f

Henceforth quoted as K.1.p.30.

from the army caused him to be branded an outcast by his family which for years had regarded the army as the only possible career for a Kleist, and the only member of his family with whom he had any lasting relationship seems to have been his long-suffering sister Ulrike. He was dogged by persistent ill-health which was aggravated on occasion by major emotional and nervous breakdowns and took him to bed for considerable periods at once. Loneliness and isolation also played a large role in Kleist's life, as they do in the lives of many of the literary figures he created. Much of this may of course have been self-induced, for perhaps he was very conscious of his tendency to stammer, but nevertheless he always seemed incapable or afraid of lasting friendships with either men or women, or, indeed, of taking permanent root in any one place for very long at once. His problematical nature drove him from one end of Europe to the other - Königsberg, Strassburg, St. Omer, Paris, Prague, Geneva, Pillau and Lyons are but a few of the places Kleist visited.

It is thus hardly surprising that Kleist was regarded by many as something of an oddity, and, looking at his literary work from the point of view of a reader in the first decade of the nineteenth century, we must admit that it could well enhance that reputation. The literary climate of Germany was dominated by the Classicism of Goethe and Schiller and, to a public nurtured on this, the metaphysical depths of Kleist's work with its predilection for extreme situations and the depiction of a totally un-Classical "Weltzerrissenheit" with dramatic realism, not to mention the sexual pathology of "Penthesilea", all this tended to make his work unpalatable. Ironically enough it was Goethe who realised the true worth of Kleist's work, when, in the letter rejecting "Penthesilea" he wrote "---- dass es mich immer betrübt und bekümmert, wenn ich junge Männer von Geist und Talent sehe, die auf ein Theater warten, welches da kommen soll." (1st. February, 1808). Although Goethe undoubtedly intended his remarks to be disparaging, it has been shown that much of Kleist's thought has a positive relevance to the situation in our own day (1)

(1) A. Schlagdenhauffen, "L'Univers existentiel de Kleist."  
(Paris 1953)

as one is reminding<sup>ed</sup> in reading parts of the Freudian work on human psychology. However, with one or two notable exceptions,(1) German scholarship tended for the remainder of the century to ignore Kleist and there was little attempt at any re-appraisal of his contribution to life and letters. Today, after the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his death, his reputation stands at least as high as that of any of his contemporaries; he will be presented here not as a crank and an eccentric but as a man who, as he testified of himself (2), was intimately acquainted with the philosophical problems of his time, who grappled with them more fiercely and personally than any of his fellows and who, within his own terms of reference, found an acceptable solution. This is not to say that Kleist devised any metaphysical system like Kant's or Fichte's, for the former's approach was intuitive and irrational rather than logical: one might reasonably also object that Kleist's philosophical difficulties arose because he persistently misunderstood the great philosophers of his day. But Kleist's life's work illuminates the dangers and weaknesses in German Idealism, and his interpretation of contemporary philosophy was at least a possible one. In short, Kleist was a man who reacted violently to the spiritual forces of the age and felt his problems not objectively as figments of the human mind, but subjectively as a profound influence on his every action in this world. His poetic creations are thus saturated with his own outlook - small wonder that he had little time for the opinions of others.

#### The Background.

As the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment - the "Aufklärung" - spread through Europe, so the absolute power of the church tended to go into decline. The mediaeval darkness

(1) Kleist, Werke, ed. Ludwig Tieck. (1821, 1826, 1846)  
E.v. Bülow, "H.v. Kleist's Leben und Briefe" (1848)  
F. Hebbel, "Über Körner und Kleist". Werke ed. Carl Hanser Verlag, München, 1952, vol 2, p. 313.

(2) K.V. p. 341.

which had been induced by the church largely for its own ends, was replaced by a higher estimation of man's individual responsibility and worth. Whereas the church in the Middle Ages had been man's obligatory tutor in the ways of life, man was now enabled to follow the dictates of his free intellect, a view fundamental to the conception of " Aufklärung " in Germany. This movement conceived an optimistic view of the universe, based on " Vernunft " or reason as the arbiter of all matters. At the hub of the cosmos God ruled wisely, benevolently and harmoniously.

But in the work of Kant reason, as it were, criticised itself, and reached the ultimate clarity necessary to define its own limitations. The philosopher showed that reason was not a power of infinite capability; he demonstrated that sensory perception is no basis for the assumption of metaphysical knowledge, and that we cannot know through empirical means the true nature of things. Such a philosophy, which establishes an idea or an ideal as primary, which lays emphasis not on external phenomena but on man's subjective modes of perceiving them, is but a short step from a philosophy which views all objects as products of the subject. This was the step taken from Kant's position by Fichte, when the latter defined the world as we know it as merely a projection of the individual ego. Despite his divergence from Kant, Fichte became widely known as the mouthpiece of the Kantian view, probably because he set out to make his work known to a wider audience and to this end used simpler, clearer language in his treatises than Kant's dry, scholarly style. On no-one did the ultimate consequences of this line of thought exert a more painful influence than on Kleist. The Idealist philosophy took from him as well as from the " Aufklärung " their basic moral support, and the drama of this period in Germany is pre-occupied particularly in Schiller, about the nature of man and his purpose in the world. This marked a profound change from the purpose of the drama as Lessing had envisaged it; for him it was in no way the proper task of the dramatist to query the established view

of the " enlightened " universe. Lessing insisted in his " Hamburgische Dramaturgie " that the drama should show how God brought everything to an harmonious conclusion, and that the poet " vergisst diese seine edelste Bestimmung so sehr, dass er die unbegreiflichen Wege der Vorsehung mit in seinen kleinen Zirkel flicht und geflissentlich unseren Schauder darüber erregt----" (1). Since Kant had now cast doubt on the validity of man's hitherto accepted relationship to the universe, so the Lessing - Shakespeare view that human misfortune lay in some inadequacy of character was superseded by the view that man was a helpless victim of fate, (2) or, at least, that the tragic hero could not rely on any form of supra - mundane assistance. An optimistic view of God is a feature quite clearly lacking in Kleist's earlier works.

It is in the midst of the philosophical upheaval caused by the decay of Rationalism in Germany that Kleist played his significant part in the development of German literature. After the shattering effects of his encounter with Idealism, he was left with the problem of finding a new truth to replace the old, a re-assessment of the position of man and his works in the universe. God was no longer a reality for him, or even approachable, and seems not to care for mankind. It is no wonder that since philosophy had failed to establish valid contact between man and God, that many should turn to religion for solace. The quietly confident Eichendorff, for example, offers an interesting comparison with Kleist's agitated questionings;

" O Herr! auf dunkelschwankem Meere  
Fahr' ich im schwachen Boot.  
Treu folgend deinem goldenem Heere  
Zum ewigen Morgenrot. "

(1) Lessing, Werke ed. Stenzel, Bergland Verlag, Salzburg, 1953. p. 765.

(2) Notably the Romantic Fate tragedy. c.f. Z. Werner's "Der vierundzwanzigste Februar." : printed in J. Minor's "Deutsche Nationalliteratur", vol. 151.



The literary character of Kleist and many of his contemporaries is distinguished by a dualism of rationalism and irrationalism. They ~~were~~ were influenced by both the intellectual and the emotional forces of the eighteenth century; Kleist was greatly influenced by Rousseau and Kant - or rather perhaps Fichte's version of the latter's philosophy. The philosopher cured Kleist of a narrow rationalism and opened the door to an acceptance of irrationalism, this process creating in Kleist an idealistic rationality. But fully to understand how this was achieved in Kleist, we must investigate his early life in some detail.

CHAPTER TWO:- The young " Aufklärer ".

Even Kleist's earliest letters show his deep concern for moral and philosophical treatises and discussions. In them he rejects traditional Christianity and the customs of the various churches as " menschliche Vorschriften, die zu allen Zeiten verschieden waren "; for Kleist these were nothing more than "Zeichen eines Gefühls, das sich auch ganz anders ausdrücken (könnte)" (1) He shared with Lessing the view that true religion, or rather the truly religious life, lay in tolerance, gentleness and generosity. Kleist would certainly have agreed with the sentiment expressed in the parable of the rings in Lessing's " Nathan der Weise ", where the wise Jew shows that man cannot know which is the true faith, for none really represents the innermost truth;

" ,.....der echte Ring war nicht  
Erweislich: fast so unerweislich als  
Uns itzt - der rechte Glaube." (2)

For both these writers, the principles of moral conduct are superior to the mere trappings of sectarian faith. " Wem ein Gott in seinem Innern anvertraut, was recht sei, der braucht alle diese Zeichen nicht (3)" wrote Kleist, echoing a thought from Lessing's " Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts "; " Vielmehr sind dergleichen Spekulationen ( über die Religion ) - mögen sie doch ausfallen, wie sie wollen - unstreitig die schicklichsten Übungen des menschlichen Verstandes überhaupt, solange das menschliche Herz überhaupt höchstens nur vermögend, die Tugend wegen ihrer ewigen glückseligen Folgen zu lieben." (4) Kleist believed at that time that the purpose of life was the infinite perfection of the individual through " Tugend " or virtue, a perfection which did not cease at death, but continued hereafter on another star or

(1) K.V. p.130

(2) Lessing, Werke, ed. cit. p. 508

(3) K.V. p. 130

(4) Lessing, Werke, ed.cit. p.1030

planet. He explained this in simple terms to his fiancée, Wilhelmine von Zenge, in a letter dated 1801; " Ich hatte schon als Knabe, mich dünkt am Rhein, durch eine Schrift von Wieland, mir den Gedanken angeeignet, dass die Vervollkommnung der Zweck der Schöpfung wäre. Ich glaubte, dass wir einst nach dem Tode von der Stufe der Vervollkommnung, die wir auf dieser Sterne erreichten, auf einem anderen weiter fort schreiten würden, und dass wir den Schatz von Wahrheiten, den wir hier sammelten, auch dort einst brauchen könnten. Aus diesem Gedanken bildete sich so nach und nach eine Religion und das Bestreben ..... einem höheren Grade von Bildung entgegen zu schreiten, ward bald das einzige Prinzip meiner Tätigkeit." (1) This was one of the philosophical tenets on which Kleist self - confessedly built his existence and which cruelly let him down in the crisis of 1801.

A second feature of Kleist's early " Weltanschauung " is his eudemonism. Firmly believing that man is destined ultimately to find happiness on this earth, Kleist handed in his resignation and left the army, " dem er nie von Herzen zugetan war." (2) But he argues that happiness must not necessarily depend on outer circumstances, and praises an inner spiritual contentment: " Es muss ein Glück geben, das sich von den äussern Umständen trennen lässt," he wrote (3) qualifying a view which he had also expressed in the essay " Aufsatz, den sicheren Weg des Glücks zu finden." " Der Inbegriff aller Dinge muss die Ursachen und Bestandteile des Glücks enthalten ..... denn die Gottheit wird die Sehnsucht nach Glück nicht tauschen, die sie selbst unauslösllich in unserer Seele erweckt hat." (4) Kleist identifies this inner happiness with his " Tugend " or the virtuous life: " Die Tugend allein macht nur glücklich ..... einzig allein nur die Tugend ist die Mutter

(1) K.V. p.203

(2) K.V. p.31

(3) K.IV. p.58

(4) K.V. p.58

des Glücks und der Beste ist der Glücklichste," (1) and he describes it also as " ein hohes, erhabenes, unnennbares Etwas, für das ich vergebens ein Wort suche," (2). He admits that he strove for his ideal " mit der innigsten Innigkeit ", convinced that it would become clearer and clearer to him. (3)

But Kleist takes this view further. Happiness is for him the outward sign of virtue, yet at the same time virtue is the key to the universe. Through it, Kleist believed that man was able to approach the divinity after man had passed through his future life or lives on other stars. There is an obviously Platonic vein in Kleist's thought at this time, probably culled from Wieland's " Platonische Jugendschriften " which Kleist is reported avidly to have read.<sup>(4)</sup> The basis of this view is that of God as the most perfect man, who leads mankind on and up to that same perfect state. It is Leibniz' view of God as the central " Monad ", the final answer to all secrets of the universe. Kleist's one fanatical aim was now to acquire " Bildung," and he devoted himself to the study of science, in order, as he put it in 1801, " ein Eigentum zu erwerben, das uns auch in das Grab folgt." (5) A typical aspect of his search for knowledge is his attitude to his female friends, that of a pedantic schoolmaster who was introducing them to a much higher way of life, - romantic ardour was singularly lacking. Kleist saw in woman at that time little more than the agent of man's happiness, and he believed that woman's prime duty was to ensure the well - being of others. In consequence he had a high regard for love; " edler und besser sollen wir durch die Liebe werden, und wenn wir diesen Zweck nicht erreichen, so missverstehen wir uns," is a typical utterance (6), as is " andere beglücken, es ist das reinste Glück auf dieser Erde." (7)

(1) K<sup>V</sup> IV. p.60  
(2) loc. cit.  
(3) loc. cit.

(4) c.f. F. Braig " H.v.Kleist " München 1925, p. 12: also K.V. p.203, quoted above.  
(5) K.V. p.204  
(6) K.V. p.58  
(7) K.V. p.258

But below the surface of Kleist's naive and over - simplified optimism there lay a profound disquiet. His whole uncritical acceptance of the creed of the " Aufklärung ", the intensity and frequency with which he discussed his views on life in letters , essays and conversation, leads us to suspect that this was not merely the exuberance of a young student of philosophy. When Kleist tried to convince others of his views, he was probably making a sub - conscious attempt to convince himself. His attempt to create and abide by a " Lebensplan " showed Kleist to be desperately afraid of becoming a victim of chance or " Zufall " as he called it; it was a defence against what he felt to be the real truth. Kleist needed to know his destiny, what he was called upon to achieve in this world, and this was a need which never left him throughout his life. This was why his " Lebensplan " was such a comfort to him; " Es ist mir so unbegreiflich," he wrote to Ulrike (1), " wie ein Mensch ohne Lebensplan leben könne, und ich fühle an der Sicherheit ..... mit der ich in die Zukunft blicke, so innig, welch ..... ein Glück mein Lebensplan gewährt." The underlying uncertainty, however, breaks through in his use of the puppet image, which occurs for the first time in a letter of 1799, but which later was to become his symbol of life in his essay on the marionettes of 1810. Speaking deprecatingly of the man without a definite purpose, he says; " (der Zustand ohne Lebensplan) .... ein Spiel des Zufalls, eine Puppe am Drahte des Schicksals, dieser unwürdige Zustand scheint mir so verächtlich ....." (2) In "Tugend" Kleist recognised " eine geheime göttliche Kraft, die den Menschen über sein Schicksal erhebt," (3) and the claims of his friends and even of his bride-to-be had to take second place to his " höchsten Zwecke"; -- " Wahrheit zu sammeln und Bildung zu erwerben," to which he " die kostbarsten Opfer brachte." (4) This agitated desire to widen his experience and to gain " Bildung " is, I believe, the root cause of the outward changefulness of Kleist's life and his dislike of sedentary

(1) K.V. p.43

(2) K.V. p.44

(3) K.IV. p.62

(4) K.V. p.59

occupations in the period before his philosophical crisis of 1801.

In this crisis the Idealist philosophy confirmed to Kleist what he had hitherto dreaded to believe. It shattered his naively simple belief in a benevolent Deity and a well-ordered cosmos. More cruelly, it took from Kleist his confidence in a clearly prescribed destiny for all men, and it is from this that the bewilderment and confusion of so many of his literary figures stems. His very first play, " Die Familie Schroffenstein ", shows man as a helpless victim of " Zufall ", that very state which Kleist's youthful philosophy had fervently tried to overcome.

CHAPTER THREE:- Kleist and the philosophy of Idealism.

Many of the changes undergone by Kleist's view of man's destiny become clear only when we know the actual source of his pessimism and revised ideas. Unfortunately the effect of the new ideas upon him proved to be so physically and mentally paralysing that there are few documentary proofs of <sup>the state of his</sup> mind still in existence in Kleist's hand. Apart from occasional backward glances in later years, we have only four letters on which to work - those dated 18th. September, 1800, and 22nd. March, 21st. July, and 15th. August 1801 (1). Then again, the names of Kant and Fichte are very rarely mentioned in Kleist's writings, and never in conclusive circumstances. In his "Abendblätter" of the 2nd. October 1810, for example, Kleist mentions Kant's "Kritik der Urteils<sup>h</sup>kraft" en passant in a theatre review, (2) and Fichte appears as a pedagogue on occasion in Kleist's epigrams. (3) Thus with such a shortage of evidence, both internal and external, any conclusion must of necessity be based on nothing more secure than degrees of probability.

Ernst Cassirer writing (4) in 1921 argued convincingly that, if Kleist did in fact read the Kantian "Kritik der reinen Vernunft" before his collapse, as had hitherto been generally supposed, then it could not have induced Kleist to write to his fiancée in the following terms: "Vor kurzem ward ich mit der neueren sogenannten kantischen Philosophie bekannt - und dir muss ich jetzt daraus einen Gedanken mitteilen, indem ich nicht fürchten darf, dass er dich so tief, so schmerzhaft erschüttern wird, als mich. Auch kennst du das Ganze nicht hinlänglich, um sein Interesse vollständig zu begreifen. Ich will indessen so deutlich sprechen, als möglich.

Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden sie <sup>h</sup>urteilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken, sind grün - und nie würden sie entscheiden können, ob

(1) K.IV. pp. 130, 203, 244, 249.

(3) K.IV. p.215

(2) K.IV. p.129

(4) E. Cassirer, "Idee und Gestalt", Berlin, 1921.

ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzutut, was nicht ihnen sondern dem Auge gehört. So ist es mit dem Verstande. Wir können nicht entscheiden, ob das was wir Wahrheit nennen, wahrhaft Wahrheit ist, oder ob es uns nur so scheint. Ist das Letzte, so ist die Wahrheit, die wir hier sammeln, nach dem Tode nicht mehr - und alles Bestreben, ein Eigentum sich zu erwerben, das uns auch in das Grab folgt, ist vergeblich." (1) Cassirer's point is that Kant was concerned with man's metaphysical questionings and certainly did not intend any "Relativierung des Wahrheitsbegriffes" as it is found in Kleist's letter. (2) Cassirer refutes the argument that Kleist's reference to the "kantische Philosophie" can mean only one thing, and suspects that the real source of Kleist's pessimism was not Kant at all but Fichte, the particular work being the latter's "Die Bestimmung des Menschen." Cassirer's thesis, which has never been invalidated, was then taken up by Braig, (3) who rather confuses the issue with numerous illogicalities.

D.F.S. Scott, writing in the "Modern Language Review", reproduces a quotation from Braig, originally from the third book of the Fichte work, and makes the following comment; "If Kleist had worked his way through the book to these thoughts, which Braig seems to think possible, and is at least plausible, it seems strange that the thoughts which are said to have annihilated Kleist should have been passed over by him, since they are to be found at the end of book two, "Wissen". "Alle Realität verwandelt sich in einen wunderbaren Traum," -..... are we then to suppose that Kleist read the book backwards?" (4) This is a valid argument and the following points arise. Braig draws parallels of thought between Kleist's letters and book three of Fichte's work. He then supposes that Kleist put down the book, "im Innersten

(1) K.V. p.204

(2) Cassirer, op.cit.  
p. 160

(3) Braig, op.cit. pp.52ff.

(4) D.F.S.Scott, "Kleist's Kant crisis," Mod. Lang. Review, vol.42, 1947, p. 474.



gelähmt," after reading the first two chapters only (1). Previously, however, Braig has supposed that Kleist read the whole work, and then comments: " Allein in der scheinbaren Übereinstimmung Fichtes mit seinen eigenen Gedanken lag ein ungeheueres Missverständnis verborgen." (2) This is almost unlikely thesis, for a Kleist who was able to study Kant - and claim to be sufficiently acquainted with the philosopher's ideas to go to France to lecture on them - would find Fichte's writings very easy of comprehension after Kant's difficult style. (3) Again, in the first two books, " Zweifel " and " Wissen " of his work, Fichte demolishes the Kantian " Ding-an-sich ", but with the intention of reconstructing the world of appearances on the basis of faith, or " Glaube". Kleist, then, can hardly have read this third book, which is essentially optimistic in its outlook.

These inadequacies do not, however, rule out the possibility that Kleist read books one and two of " Die Bestimmung des Menschen," and then found himself unable to read on. Indeed, many of the similarities of thought which Braig claims to recognise between Kleist and the third book of Fichte's " Bestimmung des Menschen" do not stand up to close scrutiny. We find, for example, the following excerpts compared: (4)

Kleist " Die Bestimmung unseres irdischen Daseins, die können wir allerdings unzweifelhaft herausfinden und diese zu erfüllen, das kann daher die Gottheit auch wohl mit recht von uns fordern. Ich schränke mich daher mit meiner Tätigkeit ganz für dieses Erdenleben ein ....."

Fichte " Jene Stimme in meinem Innern ..... diese Stimme meines Gewissens, gebietet mir in jeder besonderen Lage meines Lebens, was ich bestimmt in dieser Lage zu tun, was ich in ihr zu meiden habe ...."

(1) Braig, op.cit. p.58

(2) Braig, op.cit. p.56

(3) c.f. Cassirer op.cit.

p.159  
Scott op.cit.  
p.477

(4) Braig, op.cit. p.55-56

There is a very superficial similarity of terminology in these quotations, and indeed this may be due to a study of other parts of Fichte, but the content is surely totally different. Kleist is speaking in general terms about his destiny and that of man in the world, whereas Fichte is explaining how, in his view, the human destiny communicates itself. A similar lack of sympathy is apparent in the next pair of quotations put forward by Braig, (1) when Kleist's view that man should consider his destiny rationally or "vernünftig", is pointlessly compared with Fichte's assertion that the intellect should be used solely in the execution and not in the determination ( as in Kleist ) of the aim of life.

It would seem at least obvious then that Kleist did not know the third book ( "Glaube" ) of Fichte's "Bestimmung des Menschen" at the time of his crisis, although there is considerable evidence that he came to terms with it in later life. Now the gist of D.F.S. Scott's essay is to draw attention to another work by Fichte, the " Sonnenklarer Bericht ", and to show that here lies the cause of Kleist's distress. At the very lowest valuation, this essay shows how much Kleist was indebted to Fichte, for, inter alia, Scott admirably takes Cassirer's part in the attacks made upon his thesis by Kühnemann, and demolishes the latter's objections to Cassirer. (2) The external evidence for Scott's theory lies in the proven availability of the text and the fact that it was topical and Fichte was very much a "man of the moment". (3) The following points however may be adduced in favour of the " Bestimmung des Menschen ". It was equally available, if not quite as topical. The first effects of the coming crisis can be seen as far back as September 1800, at the time of Kleist's close friendship and association with Ludwig Brockes on their mysterious journey to Würzburg. (4) Then Kleist wrote: " Dass ein Gott sei, dass es ein ewiges Leben, einen

(1) Braig, op.cit. p.56

(3) Scott, op.cit. p.478/9

(2) E. Kühnemann, "Kleist und Kant"  
Jahrbuch der Kleistgesellschaft  
(1921)

(4) K.V. p. 86  
K.V. p. 108

D.F.S. Scott, op.cit. p.477-478

Lohn für die Tugend, eine Strafe für das Laster gebe, das alles sind Sätze, die wir also entbehren können. Denn gewiss sollen wir sie nach dem Willen der Gottheit selbst entbehren können, weil sie es uns selbst unmöglich gemacht hat, es einzusehen und zu begreifen. Würdest du nicht mehr tun, was Recht ist, wenn der Gedanke an Gott und Unsterblichkeit nur ein Traum wäre? Ich nicht!" (1) Kleist's simple optimism was already being undermined when he began his travels with Brockes. Both Braig (2) and Scott (3) concede that Kleist's companion was well versed in Fichte's philosophy, and from his letters we can see clearly that Kleist knew of his friend's interests: " Sein ( Brockes ) Grundsatz war : Handeln ist besser als Wissen. Daher sprach er zuweilen selbst verächtlich von der Wissenschaft - aber er meinte eigentlich bloss die Vielwisserei ..... immer nannte er den Verstand kalt....." (4) This was just what Fichte had taught in the " Bestimmung des Menschen ": " Nicht blosses Wissen, sondern nach deinem Wissen tun, ist deine Bestimmung ..... dein Handeln, und allein dein Handeln bestimmt deinen Wert." (5) We also know from Kleist's paeon of praise of his friend of the 31st. January 1801, that he stood greatly under Brockes' influence, and that the question of the human dilemma had figured prominently in their conversation. Kleist, for example, says of his companion that he " unaufhörlich mit der Natur im Streit ist, weiler, wie er sagt, seine ewige Bestimmung nicht herausfinden kann, und daher nichts für seine irdische tut." (6) This Kleist clearly considers worthy of repetition, since his own view was, or rather had been, different: " Ich schränke mich daher mit meiner Tätigkeit ganz für dieses Erdenleben ein." (7) Brockes was also significantly in Berlin when Fichte arrived there amid great interest from Jena during his religious disputes, and it would thus be

(1) K.V. p.130

(2) Braig, op.cit. p.45

(3) Scott, op.cit. p.476

(6) K.V. p.128

(4) K.V. p.136

(5) Fichte, Werke; Auswahl ed. Fritz Medicus, Leipzig 1910 Vol. 3, p.345

Henceforth quoted: Med.3.p.345

(7) K.V. p.126

reasonable to suppose that Brockes became acquainted with Fichte's thesis, or even purchased a copy of the "Bestimmung des Menschen" which was then discussed by the friends during their Würzburg trip.(1)

The objection raised by Scott to this theory is that it in no way explains why the crisis announced in the letter of March 1801 was delayed in its arrival for some three or four months after the Würzburg trip. (2) Assuming, however, that the real reason for the journey was a serious medical matter, (3) then it is most likely that Kleist's pre-occupation at the time was with just that. He was also deeply concerned with Kant's philosophy (4) and, in any case, his fundamental ideals were still more or less intact. Thus the conversations with Brockes might well not have penetrated to the core of Kleist's mind, which would explain why Kleist suffered "a rude shock ..... but for the time being, the crisis was averted." (5) I thus incline to the view that when the full import of the Kantian philosophy slowly dawned upon him, Kleist turned to Fichte - who was generally regarded as a "Kantianer" (6) - for simple clarification of what he feared. And in view of his previous contact with Brockes and the "Bestimmung des Menschen", not to mention the all too obvious connection between the title of the work and Kleist's own deep concern, what would be more natural than for him to turn to that work?

This point has so far been argued solely on external evidence. The difficulty of establishing it on the basis of internal proof is greatly complicated by Fichte's tendency to repeat his ideas in many different essays; indeed, the "Sonnenklarer Bericht" was intended to be Fichte's answer to all those readers who had persisted in misunderstanding him. Several points therefore arise.

Scott quotes from the "Bericht" to show the end of

(1) Scott op.cit. p.475c.f.

(2) loc.cit. p. 477

(3) M. Morris, "Kleists Reise nach Würzburg", Berlin, 1899: and H. Meyer-Benfey's comments on Morris' theory in: Ztschr.f.d. deut. Unterricht, 1916, p. 530

(4) supra. p.14

(5) Scott op.cit.p 476

(6) F. Schlegel, for ex, called Fichte "einen Kant in der zweiten Potenz.":c.f. his Athenäum, Münden 1924 (Meyer u. Jessen), vol. I, p.77

Kleist's attempt " to prove for himself the existence of an independent, absolute God, which Fichte tells him is impossible other than by faith - "keineswegs aber philosophisch - wissenschaftlich" " Die Freiheit des Geistes kann ins Unendliche trennen, und verbinden, das im Grundbewusstsein Gegebene, aber sie kann nicht erschaffen." (1) The same trend can be found in the "Bestimmung des Menschen" however: "Wahrheit geben kannes nicht.( Fichtes System ) Denn es ist in sich selbst absolut leer. Nun suchst du ..... eine andere Realität ..... aber du würdest dich vergebens bemühen, sie durch dein Wissen and aus deinem Wissen zu erschaffen, und mit deiner Erkenntnis zu umfassen. Hast du kein anderes Organ, sie zu ergreifen, so wirst du sie nimmer finden." It is worthy of note at this point that the "anderes Organ" to which Fichte refers (2), namely faith, re-enters Kleist's life at the time of the writing of " Das Käthchen von Heilbronn ", coinciding with his periodic leanings towards the Catholic faith.

Similarly, Kleist's use of the expression " der neueren sogenannten Kantischen Philosophie " from the letter of March 1801 may have been inspired by a similar term used by Fichte in the " Sonnenklarer Bericht," as Scott surmises. (3) But, maintaining the view that Kleist's first knowledge of Fichte was not direct but probably through Brockes, might not Kleist equally well be reporting what his friend had said ? Brockes might well have called Fichte's work " die neuere Kantische Philosophie ", and Kleist, who from his study of Kant would recognise the different tendencies of Kant's and Fichte's philosophies, would probably add the term " sogenannt " to imply that he doubted the accuracy of the word " Kantisch". (4)

The eudemonist trend of Kleist's early years was already also tottering in September 1800 under the influence of Brockes.

(1) Scott op.cit. p.481

(2) Fichte, Med.3.p.343  
(Book two,"Wissen")

(3) Scott op.cit. p.479

(4) supra: K.V. p. 204

At the time Kleist wrote: " ..... auszuforschen, ob der Genuss der Glückseligkeit ( wie Epikur meinte ) ..... der letzte Zweck des Menschen sei, das ist selbst für Männer unfruchtbar und oft verderblich." (1) This too is a thought which is to be found in Fichte, this time in his " Appellation an das Publikum " of 1799: " Dass ihr Gott ..... der Geber der Glückseligkeit, dass es bei Schöpfung der Welt sein Plan gewesen sei, die höchstmögliche Summe des Genusses hervorzubringen, dessen haben sie gar kein Hehl ..... wer da Genuss will, ist ein sinnlicher fleischlicher Mensch, der keine Religion hat und keiner Religion fähig ist .... wer Glückseligkeit erwartet, ist ein unbekannter Tor..." (2) Here surely is the exact opposite of Kleist's view expressed in the " Aufsatz, den sicheren Weg des Glücks zu finden."

Similarly, Kleist's doubts about the validity of the ordinary world of appearances could have been derived from either of the following sources, and not solely from the " Sonnenklarer Bericht" :

" Sonnenklarer Bericht "

Ein Leser ( der noch dazu ... ein berühmter Philosoph sein kann ): "Ich will nichts davon hören ..... ich gehe von einer Realität an und für sich, von einem absoluten Seyn aus. Höher kann ich nicht und will ich nicht .....

Der Autor:- So! Du vermagst von einer Realität zu reden, ohne von ihr zu wissen ..... du vermagst mehr als ich. Lege das Buch hin, für dich ist es nicht geschrieben." (3)

" Die Bestimmung des Menschen "

Der Geist:- " Du nimmst doch an, dass diese Gegenstände da, und jene dort, wirklich ausser dir vorhanden sind ?

Ich:- Allerdings nehme ich das an.

Der Geist:- Und woher weisst du dass sie vorhanden sind ?

(1) K.V. p.129

(3) Scott.op.cit. p.481

(2) Fichte, Med.3.p.178-9

Ich:- Ich sehe sie, ich werde sie fühlen, wenn ich sie betaste, ich kann ihren Ton hören; sie offenbaren sich mir durch alle meine Sinne."

Der Geist:- So! Du wirst vielleicht weiterhin die Behauptung dass du diese Gegenstände sehest, und fühlst und hörst, zurücknehmen!" (1)

Is this latter not the very essence of the dilemma of the characters in " Die Familie Schroffenstein " and more notably in " Amphitryon ", namely the inability to judge accurately by appearance or indeed by any sensory perception ? It is the spirit of Kleist's "Grüne Gläser ", the image he used in the crisis letter of March 1801, which Scott again derives from the " Sonnenklarer Bericht," but which is no less present in the " Bestimmung des Menschen ", Book two, " Wissen ":

Der Geist:- " Also, dass Gegenstände sind, weisst du nur dadurch, dass du sie fühlst, siehst und so weiter, und dass du siehst oder fühlst, weisst du nur dadurch, dass du es eben weisst, dass du es unmittelbar weisst. Was du nicht unmittelbar wahrnimmst, das nimmst du überhaupt nicht wahr ?

Ich:- Ich sehe das ein." (2)

Indeed the Fichte quotation in Scott's essay (3) has as its basis specifically visual perception, ( " Eine Abschilderung .....mit blassen Farben ..." ) whereas Kleist takes pains in a later letter to Wilhelmine to point out that " Ich habe mich nur des Auges in meinem Briefe, als eines erklärenden Beispiels bedient, weil ich dir selbst die trockene Sprache der Philosophie nicht vortragen konnte." (4) Surely what he had read was Fichte's assertion in the second book of the " Bestimmung des Menschen " that " in aller Wahrnehmung nimmst du..... nur dich selbst ..... wahr," (5) and this was what he simplified to Wilhelmine's unspecialised ear as

(1) Fichte, Med.3.p.296  
(Book 2, "Wissen")

(2) Scott op.cit. p.482  
Fichte, Med.3p.297  
(Book two, "Wissen.")

(3) Scott op.cit. p.482

(4) K.V. p.209

(5) Fichte, Med.3. p.297  
(Book two, "Wissen")

visual perception only. It should also be remembered that the characteristic Kleistian confusion of senses, which afflicts so many of his literary figures, is not restricted to visual error.

In the "Sonnenklarer Bericht" Fichte deals with the purpose of science and its relationship to philosophy (1), a theme which is not dealt with in the first two books of the "Bestimmung des Menschen". However, as far back as the beginning of February 1801, some six weeks or more before the full impact of Fichte made itself felt in late March, Kleist wrote that his faith in the purpose of scientific study, "die Säule, an welcher ich mich sonst in dem Strudel des Lebens hielt, wankt." (2) I have already tried to show that Brockes had no high regard for the sciences, and it seems very likely in this case that it was the latter's knowledge of either the "Sonnenklarer Bericht" or possibly Fichte's major work on the subject, his "Wissenschaftslehre", which was communicated to Kleist, probably orally. If we do not accept this, then we must believe that Kleist read the "Bericht" himself before the 5th. of February 1801: does it then seem likely that he would wait another six weeks at least before writing to his fiancée on the 22nd. of March?

Fichte caused Kleist to re-assess man's purpose in the world. This life was not an end in itself, but still a means of preparation for the next, as it had always been in Kleist's view. But now the key to the door of the next life had gone, truth was not to be found on earth, and the sciences had been invalidated. So a new key had to be found to replace the old. Here we have the origin of Kleist's extra-ordinary pre-occupation with death. (3) He believed that the greatest mishap which can befall man is that he should die or be killed before he has found his true path into the hereafter. I cannot agree with D.F.S. Scott when he writes that "Fichte had only destroyed the world ..... not eternal

(1) Scott op.cit. p.480

(2) K.V. p. 198

(3) c.f. R. Unger, "Herder, Novalis, Kleist: Studien zum Todesproblem."  
( Berlin, 1922 )



truth and it was the loss of this latter which overwhelmed Kleist." (1) Surely when Fichte invalidated and destroyed the world, he did in fact destroy eternal truth. His philosophy shows ultimately that man can know nothing, but may will himself to believe in a "truth". This is precisely Kleist's dilemma: what he had taken to be the truth had disappeared, but he drove himself to search for an answer, almost in a spirit of "Glaube". This same predicament and attitude is the fundamental characteristic of many of the figures in Kleist's works.

Much of the thesis which considers Fichte to have been Kleist's tormentor and not Kant is, admittedly, based on some supposition. The remainder however is very sound and Ludwig Muth's recent attempt to prove that the trouble-maker was Kant after all should have paid considerably more attention to the case for Fichte than it does. As it stands, Muth's view cannot be regarded as anything more than an improbable alternative to the Cassirer - Scott thesis, for his objections to the latter are vague and inconclusive. It is, for example, a rather pedantic view of academic conservatism to suggest that the Kleist who wished to become a tutor would automatically turn away from Fichte's "populäre Darstellungsweise," since, surely, clarity and simple language in a philosopher is not ipso facto dilettantism ! (2) Neither can Muth suggest a satisfactory reason for Kleist's use of the term "sogenannt" in the crisis letter, for he simply points out that the word is not used elsewhere. He overlooks the tendency of all the Idealist philosophers to regard themselves as "Kantianer". (3)

Muth experiences further difficulty when he comes to ascertain the date on which he believes that Kleist read the Kantian "Kritik der Urteilskraft," the work which he sees as the source of Kleist's discomfiture. He argues that Kleist did not

(1) Scott, op.cit. p.475 (3) c.f. supra, p.17

(2) Ludwig Muth, "Kleist und Kant"  
Köln, 1954 : p. 11

read the critique after the crisis (1) , also not before it, - the whole of Muth's thesis obviously rests on this - and so the reading must have taken place during March 1801. The weakness of this argument is obvious, and becomes even greater when we bear in mind that Cassirer (2) concedes that Kleist knew the work in question and goes on to build his Fichte thesis in spite of it. Furthermore Muth's assertion that "(der Zusammenhang der Welt) ..... scheint jene Wissenschaft zu sein, der Kleist eine Kraft der Vervollkommnung zugetraut hat. Aber seine Überzeugung ..... ist in der Kantkrise zusammengebrochen, nun ist Anfang und Ende jeder Wissenschaft in Dunkel gehüllt," (3) may well be relevant to the Kantian critique, but would also equally well explain the effect that Fichte would have on Kleist. In his review of Muth's book, Scott quite correctly makes a similar point with regard to other sections in Muth. (4) We may also disagree with Muth when he writes: " Bei Kleist ist die äussere Welt ein ungefügtes bedrohliches Chaos, dem die innere Welt mit ihrer Gefühlssicherheit entgegenstemmt - bei Fichte ist die Aussenwelt aufgehoben, darum leistet sie keinen Widerstand, darum kann sie nicht mehr bedrohen." (5) Kleist, I believe, saw the " äussere Welt " as a chaos because he had not read the whole of Fichte's " Bestimmung des Menschen " at the time of his collapse, but only the first, negative aspects of it. As a result he did not realise why Fichte had attacked the world of appearances - a reason which became clear to him only when he returned to Fichte in later life.

The gravest weakness in Muth's case is his failure adequately to attack Cassirer. The large amount of textual proof adduced by the latter makes the Fichte thesis more tenable, and conclusions here will be based on that view. Yet none of these critics makes the point that Kleist may not actually have read the offending essay, or at least, not at the time of writing

(1) Cassirer, however, indicates that Kl. later had dealings with Kantian circles in Königsberg, and prob. studied his work: Cass. op.cit.p.186

(2) Cassirer, loc.cit. p.183

(3) Muth, op.cit.p.41

(4) D.F.S.Scott, "Dtsche. Literaturzeitung." Vol.6, June 1955

(5) Muth, op.cit. p.76

the significant letter of the 22nd. of March, 1801. His words are " ward ..... bekannt " and the simile, for example, of the green spectacles might not be original, in the sense that it could have been used by some third person, perhaps by Brockes, during their discussions. This would account for Kleist's partial assimilation of Fichte's train of thought, and the consequential misunderstanding, since the over-simplifications which are to be found in the letter are just those which might arise in oral communication. But this again is pure hypothesis and serves only to illuminate the difficulty of speaking with anything like precision on this subject.

1. The after-effects.

The origins of Kleist's poetic activity are shrouded in mystery, since he was reticent to write about such matters and his letters are thus few in number. But somehow Fichte's philosophy contrived to bring to light in Kleist the tragic dramatist and poet and to turn him from the path of a rather uninteresting and stereotyped " Aufklärer." At this stage there is no question of any retaliation against the new ideas: unlike his contemporary, Schiller, who argued with Kant in the essay " Über Anmut und Würde," (1) Kleist passively accepted the negative side of Idealism and laboured sorrowfully under it for many months, pouring his pessimism into his plays and " Novellen."

The extent and degree of Kleist's collapse is explicable only in terms of his need for what we might call " metaphysical security " or a permanent, logical and explicable destiny for man. This need will probably never be satisfactorily explained, and is of equal interest to the philosopher and the psychologist. On the other hand, the reasons for the distress are clearer. The study of the sciences pre-supposes a complete acceptance of the ordinary world of appearances. Thus we can see the destructive effect on

(1) F. Schiller, Werke, ed. Bergland Verlag, Salzburg, 1952. Vol. 1, p. 415.

Kleist of Fichte's argument in the "Bestimmung des Menschen": "Du siehst sonach ein, dass alles Wissen lediglich ein Wissen von dir selbst ist, dass dein Bewusstsein nie über dich selbst hinausgeht, und dass dasjenige, das du für ein Bewusstsein des Gegenstands hältst, nichts ist, als das Bewusstsein deines Setzens eines Gegenstandes, welches du nach einem inneren Gesetze deines Denkens mit der Empfindung zugleich notwendig vollziehst." (1) Since, according to Fichte, the world is no more than a product of the individual imagination, Kleist found himself without one of his supports, and his immediate reaction was to attack his previous conception of "Bildung": "Ich kann dir nicht beschreiben," he wrote, "wie ekelhaft mir ein wissender Mann ist, wenn ich ihn mit einem handelnden vergleiche. Kenntnisse, wenn sie noch einen Wert haben, so ist es nur, insofern sie vorbereiten zum Handeln." (2) He now saw that action was a more valid principle in life, but Fichte did not tell him what form or direction such action should take. Even before the height of the crisis Kleist felt the lack of such an aim. He wrote on the 5th. of February 1801: "Gern will ich immer tun, was recht ist, aber was soll man tun, wenn man dies nicht weiss," (3) and by the 14th. of April he was in despair: "Alles ist dunkel in meiner Zukunft, ich weiss nicht, was ich wünschen und hoffen und fürchten soll." (4) It is thus hardly surprising in this frame of mind that a fatalistic element begins to make itself heard in Kleist's letters. (5) "Ach, Wilhelmine, wir dünken uns frei und der Zufall führt uns allgewaltig an tausend feingesponnenen Fäden fort" is one of many similar utterances from this period, as is "wenn uns das Schicksal so unerbittlich grimmig auf der Ferse folgt, so haben wir alle Besinnung nötig, um uns vor seinen Schlägen einigermaßen zu retten."

(1) Fichte, Med. 3. p. 317-8

(3) K.V. p. 195

(2) K.V. p. 260

(4) K.V. p. 217

(5) K.V. p. 309

For months Kleist pondered this " dunkle rätselhafte Dasein ," (1) lamenting that " mein einziges, mein höchstes Ziel ist gesunken, und ich habe nun keines mehr," (2) and demonstrating in his own existence the same desperate searching and frustration which characterises most of his literary figures in their conflicts with the world. In vain he tried to forget " die ganze unselige Spitzfindigkeit ..... die Schuld an dieser inneren Verwirrung ist," hoping to find " ein stilles Glück ..... jenseits der Berge." (3) Yet he was never able to convince himself that the actions of his " thatenlechzendes Herz " (4) were relevant to his own personal destiny, " So widersprechen sich in mir Handlung und Gefühl - ach! es ist ekelhaft zu leben." (5)

## 2 . " Robert Guiskard."

The third of June 1801 brought a letter from Kleist in which he made first mention of a possible new aim in his life. " Ich habe eine Ahnung von dem rechten ( Ziel) - wirst du ..... mir dahin folgen, wenn du dich überzeugen kannst, dass es das rechte ist? Doch lass' mich lieber schweigen von dem, was selbst in mir noch ganz undeutlich ist." (6) This premonition came to fruition during the Autumn of 1801 with the commencement of " Robert Guiskard, Herzog der Normannen " in Paris. The significance of this play has all too frequently been overlooked by critics of Kleist's work. Meyer - Benfey (7) comes, in my opinion, closest to the truth in his first volume, but fails to carry his conception through to its conclusion. " Guiskard " symbolised to Kleist his destiny as a poet, and, like his earlier philosophy (8), took on an almost religious significance and importance for him. It was to

(1) K.V. p. 248

(2) K.V. p. 204

(3) K.V. p. 225

(4) K.V. p. 259

(5) K.V. p. 227

(6) K.V. p. 226

(7) H. Meyer-Benfey, "Das Drama

H.v.Kleists." Göttingen 1911-3

(8) c.f. his letter to Wilhelmine K.V. p.203 : supra, p. 8

be the work of art which he alone was called upon to create, a conception with which - although this was quite incidental to its metaphysical significance - Kleist would win the laurels of German poetry hitherto worn by Goethe. " Guiskard " became at once the justification and the purpose of Kleist's life, and it was only in those periods when he was working at the play that he ever really gained peace of mind. (1) In it he grappled with one of the great artistic problems of his age, the fusion of the ancient and the modern, the spirit of Classical tragedy with that of Shakespeare, the same problem on which Schiller was also working at that time in his " Die Braut von Messina." (2) Kleist's drama falls very much into the Classical tradition of being the focal point of moral contemplation, the conception of the theatre as a means to the moral education of man, and the spirit of Kleist's original masterpiece haunted him for the rest of his life. In 1808, for example, he resurrected the then remaining fragment of the manuscript and published it in his literary magazine " Phöbus." But when he finally achieved his ideal, it was in a different form altogether, that of " Der Prinz von Homburg," and this latter was the work in which Kleist ultimately achieved his poetic destiny. All this, as we shall see, has a direct bearing on Kleist's voluntary death.

But when Kleist was unable in 1803 to complete the first draft of the play to his own satisfaction, he felt driven (3) to destroy what little he had already done: this caused a second spiritual collapse as painful as the first. Yet in this personal tragedy Kleist again demonstrated the principle that is fundamental to the understanding of his poetic work - that every man has a personal destiny in a given situation. To fail to follow this destiny is an error of metaphysical importance. Kleist thus wrote of his concern over " Guiskard " : " Was mich beunruhigt ist .... die Besorgniss, wenn ich zu schnell ein falsches (Ziel) ergriffe

(1) R. Unger, op.cit. p.131 (2) Schiller, Werke, ed.cit. Vol. 2, p. 461

(3) c.f. his letter:K.V.p.301

die Bestimmung zu verfehlen, und so ein ganzes Leben zu verpfuschen." (1) He must have felt that this problem of " Guiskard " was his last chance, that the consequences of failing to solve it were too terrible for contemplation : " O! Gott! Wenn ich doch nicht fände, auch hier nicht fände, was ich suche, und doch nothwendiger bedarf, als das Leben." (2) Clearly Kleist felt that to live without a purpose was akin to not living at all: in other words, "Guiskard " now represented to Kleist just what his pre-Fichte philosophy had represented, but in a different form - it gave him a feeling of security with regard to the hereafter. He refers to the play as his " grosse Tat," ( Fichte's influence ?) (3) and implores Heaven to permit him to complete it before his death: " Der Anfang meines Gedichtes ..... erregt die Bewunderung aller Menschen, denen ich es mittheile. O! Jesus! Wenn ich es doch vollenden könnte ! Diesen einzigen Wunsch soll mir der Himmel erfüllen, und dann mag er tun, was er will." (4) The interesting point here is that Kleist seems now to regard his view of the human destiny as a principle unrelated to God or whatever power in his view ruled the cosmos and, indeed, that that same power might actively impede Kleist's achieving of his destiny, rather than helping him to it. Obviously he had come a long way from the earlier view of a benevolent Deity. His hopes of immortality now rested in " Guiskard " : " wenn jeder eben so viel täte, so würde es unserm Namen ein Platz in den Sternen nicht fehlen." (5) Characteristically, too, he turned to his sister for help - as usual financial - in gaining his " Kranz der Unsterblichkeit," as he called it, and added that the world would one day thank her for it. (6) Superficially this may sound like gross conceit, but was probably no more than great awe before the magnitude of the task which Kleist felt himself obliged to carry out.

(1) K.V. p.226

(4) K.V. p. 291

(2) K.V. p.271

(5) K.V. p. 300

(3) K.V. p.287

(6) K.V. p. 297

(in the sense that Fichte  
praised action.)

### 3. " Die gebrechliche Einrichtung der Welt."

It is essential to separate " Robert Guiskard " in spirit from Kleist's other early dramas and " Novellen." The latter are representations of Kleist's pessimistic view of the alien world in which man is called upon to recognise and follow his true destiny, and these works reflect to a high degree Kleist's own reactions after his philosophical crisis. " Guiskard," on the other hand, was for Kleist the metaphysical destiny which the characters in the other works seek with varying success: in a sense, " Guiskard " was written objectively, the others subjectively. So the reasons for the problematic world as it appears to Kleist's figures must again be sought in the Fichte crisis.

Because of his partial reading of the philosopher, Kleist missed Fichte's major point. In destroying the validity in human terms of the world of appearances, Fichte was trying to establish an inner, more reliable and impregnable world within the soul of man. Kleist's image of the green spectacles is thus a distortion of Fichte's view, for it shows that the former has accepted not the philosopher's ultimate intention, but his means of achieving it. For Kleist, the world exists as a " Ding-an-sich" but man is unable to enter into a valid relationship with it because his perceptive powers are unreliable. To the figures in Kleist's works the world reacts in irrational and unpredictable ways, and seems totally indifferent to <sup>their</sup> his happiness or <sup>their</sup> his distress. In this respect Kleist is closer in spirit to Kant than to Fichte, whose dissolution of reality led not to the fateful clashes of Kleist's figures, but to the essentially escapist and imaginative work of the Romantics. Windelband writes for example: " Fichte gründete im Sinne des transzendentalen Idealismus die äussere Welt auf eine Funktion der schöpferischen Phantasie, derselben Phantasie, schien es, welche im Künstler tätig ist. Bei geringer Neigung zu begrifflicher Schärfe sahen die Dichterphilosophen darin eine vollkommene Gleichsetzung beider Funktionen und so verwandelte sich bei Novalis die natürliche Wirklichkeit in eine traumhafte Schöpfung der Phantasie." Such a variation of Fichte's ideas as we

(1) W. Windelband, "Die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie."  
( Leipzig, 1878 ) Vol. 2, p. 265



find in Kleist is inevitable when we call to mind his pre-crisis beliefs. Kleist could not bring himself to renounce at one stroke his confidence in the world of appearances which had been as intrinsic a part of his philosophy as it had been, for example, of Leibniz' : " Il y a deux vérités generales absolues ..... l'une que nous pensons, l'autre qu'il y a une grande variété dans nos pensées. De la première il s'ensuit que nous sommes, de l'autre s'ensuit qu'il y a quelque autre chose que nous ..... qui est la cause de la variété de nos apparences. Or l'une de ces vérités est aussi incontestable que l'autre." (1) The outcome was thus the exact opposite of what Fichte proposed. For him the ego is alone absolute, for Kleist it is a frail and powerless ego which is forced to struggle for existence in a hostile world. Kleist's characters are driven to test the validity of their worlds, and clash with the "götrechliche Einrichtung der Welt " as Kleist so often called it. (2) Alkmene is required to believe that she has loved a man who is not her husband, despite the fact that his appearance and manner are identical to Amphitryon's. The characters in " Der Zweikampf " must conclude that God himself has lied, if they are to continue to believe in their apparent truths, and Ruprecht in " Der zerbrochene Krug " is asked to believe in Eve's innocence, when, by any normal human standards of judgement, she is guilty. Similarly the Marquise von O.... must accept that she has become pregnant, without knowing how or why, and, like Littegarde in " Der Zweikampf " is obliged to suffer in innocence in a disbelieving world. Like their creator these people lament: " O! wie unbegreiflich ist der Wille, der über uns waltet !" (3) and the world seems to be governed by a cruel fate which manifests itself in the forms of lies, distortion and deceit. Jupiter in " Amphitryon " is at the same time god and seducer, and Adam in the " Krug " is not the pillar of justice in the village of which

(1) R.L. Saw, "Leibniz"  
(Penguin Books) p.140

(3) K.V. p. 244

(2) c.f. K.3.p.149,294

he is judge, but the true criminal. So too a child's little finger brings about the downfall of the houses of Warwand and Schroffenstein, and a mere scrap of paper causes the spiritual destruction of the nobleman who wishes to acquire it in " Michael Kohlhaas." A final example among many is Kunigunde in " Das Käthchen von Heilbronn," who is not the beautiful lady she appears to be. The most pernicious form of this irrationality is chance, that same force which the Enlightened Kleist had so abhorred. Fricke describes this as " das sonderbare willkürliche Zusammentreffen an sich belangloser Einzelheiten ..... das allem Bemühen des Menschen um Ordnung, um Gesetz und Gewissheit zuwiderläuft." (1) In this sense Fricke calls " Die Familie Schroffenstein " quite aptly " die Zufallstragödie." (2)

An important distinction must be drawn here. The view advanced by H. Prang (3) that Kleist's figures are responsible to some extent for their own dilemmas because they make grave errors of human judgement or misunderstand their situations, seems to me to place responsibility for the human dilemma on to man himself rather than on to the world. Kleist's concern is, after all, with the impenetrable deception of appearances, with the contrast of " Schein und Wirklichkeit," (4) and his characters are no more fallible than other men. It is the world which drives these men to a shattering realisation of their own inadequacy, " im Zufallspiel des Lebens tauchen ihnen die letzten Fragen auf." (5) To the pessimist Kleist the only incontestable truth seemed to be the irrationalism of the world, " dieses Ding-an-sich ist für ihn der Zufall." (6)

#### 4. " Die Familie Schroffenstein."

Three works form the core of Kleist's poetic pessimism, "Die

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|---|---|
| (1) G. Fricke, "Gefühl und Schicksal bei H.v. Kleist." Berlin 1929, p. 54           | (4) c.f. Benno von Wiese, "Die dtische. Trag. von Lessing b. Hebbel." 4th. ed. Hamburg 1958, p.294. |
| (2) Fricke, op.cit. p. 55   | (5) E.Kühnemann, op.cit. p.17   |
| (3) H. Prang, "Irrtum und Missverständnis in den Dichtungen Kleists." Erlangen 1955 | (6) M. Kruhoeffter, "Kleist's Religiosität." Kleist-Jahrbuch, 1922, p. 64                           |

Familie Schroffenstein," " Amphitryon " and the " Novelle," " Der Findling." Between them, these works contain the germs of much of Kleist's later thought, albeit in a very crude form.

In the first play Kleist is concerned to show the ultimate powerlessness of man, whatever his good intentions. He sets one conviction in opposition to another, belief against belief. Jeronimus is tied by his feelings to the house of Warwand, whilst on the intellectual plane he sees that this is wrong. He goes over to Rupert Schroffenstein, but on revisiting Warwand he is so deeply impressed by Sylvester's goodness that his feelings, this time supported by his intellect, draw him back. Again he cannot reconcile his feelings and his intellect, and he admits utter confusion:

" Aus diesem Wirrwarr finde sich ein Pfaffe!

-- Ich kann es nicht ! " (1)

The whole drama revolves round the terrible secret of Peter's death. Without this secret, itself a product of chance, there would be no tragedy; but in Kleist's world man is powerless to pierce it. Ottokar and Agnes on the other hand, occupy by virtue of their love a central position in the action, and their implicit trust in each other is a theme to which Kleist returned time and time again in his works. Ultimately he saw it as the only possible basis for human co-operation in face of the vicissitudes of the world of appearances. So the lovers in " Schroffenstein " seem destined to overcome the family feud. Their respective feelings contradict each other, for each is naturally convinced of the innocence of his or her father, but in their love they regard this not as a reason for separation, but as a spur to unravel the mystery. Ottokar succeeds. But, characteristically, events prevent him from taking the truth to his father, and the final ghastly mistake occurs when two human lives are lost and infanticide is committed simply because two people have exchanged clothes. There is profound significance in the fact that the truth of this insane puzzle is brought in the last act by a madman ( all of whose perceptive senses are faulty ), by a blind man ( whose visual perception is gone ) and lastly by a superstitious old woman, apparently a symbol of Kleist's cynical view that

superstition is as good an answer as any to the riddle of life.

5. Kleist's view of feeling : "Amphitryon" and "Der Findling".

There is much in his first play to show that Kleist was interested particularly in the human capacity of feeling. This would seem to be a natural reaction after Fichte's attack on normal sensory perception, and on this capacity Kleist built his hopes of some retaliation against the world around. Its manifestation as a spirit of unconditional trust in "Schroffenstein" is only one aspect of the idea which became the core of Kleist's revaluation of life. Eventually, and here his thought runs parallel to that of Fichte, Kleist conceived an inner world which would reduce the troubles of the outer world to insignificance : but at this stage feeling to Kleist was impotent, for, however optimistically the lovers in his first play view the future, the end is still tragedy.

Feeling may be defined as the inspiration and source of any human activity which is not the product of any logical or rational argument. Whatever personal inflections Kleist gives to "das Gefühl" as it is usually described in German literature, it is certainly not his innovation, for it can be traced far back into the eighteenth century. It played, for example, an important role in Klopstock's attitude to religion and Herder's conception of the original soul of man. It quite naturally grew in status in the "Sturm und Drang" revolt against the stilted and pedantic Rationalism of Nicolai, for example, and in the latter half of the century it came to be regarded as man's instinct for the good and true (Rousseau). "Gefühl ist alles," was the often-quoted cry of the Stürmer und Dränger, and Iphigenie appeals to Thoas to be guided by his instinct:

"Bedenke nicht, gewähre wie du's fühlst !" (1)

Similarly the Pastor in "Hermann und Dorothea" advises:

"Immer gefährlicher ist's, beim Wählen dieses und jenes,  
Nebenher zu bedenken, und so das Gefühl zu verwirren." (2)

And, lastly, Goethe also puts these words into the mouth of man's creator in the prologue to "Faust", part one:

(1) Goethe, Werke, ed. R. Friedenthal,  
Knaur Verlag, München, 1953. Vol.1, p.663

(2) ed. cit.  
Vol.1p.318

" Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange  
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst." (1)

Such confidence in the final goodness of man's instinct no longer appealed to Kleist. Once he had believed in a higher power which rewarded man for moral rectitude, but he now saw that the nature of this power, indeed its very existence, was suspect, since it too might well be a figment of man's imagination. This was the end of Kleist's eudemonism. " Ja, wahrlich, wenn man überlegt, dass wir ein Leben bedürfen, um zu lernen, wie wir leben müssten, dass wir selbst im Tode noch nicht ahnden, was der Himmel mit uns will, wenn niemand den Zweck seines Daseins und seine Bestimmung kennt, wenn die menschliche Vernunft nicht hinreicht, sich und die Dinge um sich zu begreifen, wenn man seit Jahrtausenden noch zweifelt, ob es ein Recht gibt - kann Gott von solchen Wesen Verantwortlichkeit fordern ? ..... Was ist böse ? Absolut böse ? "

(2) This, of course, is the same frame of mind which created the figure of Nicolo in " Der Findling ", the character who comes closest to being the personification of evil of any of Kleist's figures, a man without any instinct for good. Kleist thus argues that God implants desires or wishes in man which He then frustrates by limiting our means of satisfying them - among these wishes of course being Kleist's own desire to know his personal destiny. Kleist then goes on in the same letter to attack in essence the Humanist trend in German thought : " Man sage nicht, dass eine Stimme in unserem Innern uns heimlich und deutlich anvertraue, was recht sei. Diesselbe Stimme, die dem Christen zuruft, seinem Feinde zu vergeben, ruft dem Seeländer zu, ihn zu braten, und mit Andacht isst er ihn auf. - wenn die Überzeugung solche Taten rechtfertigen kann, darf man ihr trauen ?" (3) Thus, while admitting the existence of inner impulses, Kleist at this stage doubts their ultimate reliability as guides to the truth. This is the significance

(1) Goethe, ed. cit. Vol. 1      (3) K.V. p. 249  
p. 726

(2) K.V. p. 249

of the problem of confusion of the feelings or "Gefühlsverwirrung" as Kleist often calls it, which besets most of his characters to a greater or lesser degree and marks his antipathy to the optimistic trends of the eighteenth century.

This awareness in Kleist of the power of "das Gefühl" over human behaviour can probably be traced back again to his interest in the works of Wieland. F. Röbbeling has shown quite conclusively to what extent Kleist's view of woman and the nature of love is dependent on the elder poet, who gives a positive valuation to feeling: "Das innige Bewusstsein dessen, was wir fühlen, ist unläugbar das sicherste ..... Beweiset einem Menschen, seine Vernunft sei eine Zauberin, die ihn alle Augenblicke täusche und irre führe - das wird ihn noch nicht verwirren; beweiset ihm, dass er seinen Sinnen, seinem inneren Gefühle nicht trauen dürfe - das verwirrt ihn." (1) Indeed the above quotation might well serve as an unwitting epitaph by Wieland on Kleist, in the sense that Fichte did prove to Kleist the fallibility of the senses.

Kleist's concern with such confusion of feeling is yet another indication that he was unaware of the constructive aspects of Fichte's philosophy. On this count alone, Braig's attempt to equate Kleist's "Stimme in unserem Innern" with the philosopher's "innere Stimme" from the "Bestimmung des Menschen" is invalidated, (2) since Fichte's faith lies in an omnipotent moral force within man. The Romantics too saw in "das Gefühl" a sure guide and path to the truth; the following excerpt from Hoffmann's "Das Fräulein von Scuderi" might equally well have come from a later Novelle by Kleist. "Gewiss, sprach er, gewiss wollt ihr nun, mein gnädiges Fräulein, Eurem Gefühl, der innern Stimme mehr vertrauend, als dem, was vor unseren Augen geschehen ist, selbst Oliviers Schuld oder Unschuld prüfen." (3)

- (1) F. Röbbeling, "Kleist's Käthchen von Heilbronn," Halle, 1913, p.81ff.      (2) Braig-op.cit. p.56 : K.V. p. 249
- (3) E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Das Fräulein von Scuderi." pub. Condor Verlag, Lindau. p. 40

This positive treatment of feeling is probably one reason why, in a more optimistic mood, Kleist turned to the Romantic half - scientist G.H. Schubert in Dresden, and, apparently, was an enthusiastic attender at the latter's lectures. (1)

It was essential to Kleist that feeling should be entirely free from all outside influence. He had recognised that any action based on what we believe we see, or on any intellectually contrived principle, must ipso facto lack integrity, since it is based on a false knowledge. Cassirer makes the comment: " ( Kleist erfährt ) .... dass unser Urteil über den Sinn und Wert des Lebens selbst von der Entscheidung dieser Frage in keiner Weise abhängig sein könne und dürfe. Denn dieser Wert .... kann nicht auf die Annahme dieses oder jenes Lehrsatzes, nicht auf ein Wissen gegründet sein, das zu erreichen nicht in unserer Macht, sondern er muss sich auf den Wert gründen, den die Persönlichkeit sich selbst gibt und den nur sie allein, unabhängig von allen fremden Stützen und Hilfen sich zu geben vermag." (2) Because Rupert in Kleist's first play allows passion to obscure his true feeling, he falls victim to the demonic forces which apparently rule the world. As a symbol of his conception of true feeling, Kleist uses the principle on which an archway of stone blocks is constructed, an idea which came to him, as he reports, when passing through a gateway in Würzburg. " Warum, dachte ich, sinkt wohl das Gewölbe nicht ein, da es doch keine Stütze hat ? Es steht, antwortete ich, weil alle Steine auf einmal einstürzen wollen ..... " he wrote in November 1800, (3) and goes on to say what comfort he drew from the thought. Six years later he was to use the same image in " Penthesilea " :

" Sinke nicht,  
Und wenn der ganze Orkus auf dich drückte !  
Steh', stehe fest, wie das Gewölbe steht,  
Weil seiner Blöcke jeder stürzen will!" (4)

(1) c.f. E.L.Stahl, "H.v.Kleist's Dramas" Oxford, 1948, p.37 ff. (3) K.V. p. 160

(2) Cassirer op.cit. p. 161 (4) K.2. p. 81

The problem which confronts many of Kleist's figures is how to act for the best in a given set of circumstances : this is possible only through " das innerste Gefühl." There are many other human feelings portrayed in Kleist's works, such as wild fury (" Penthesilea "), lust (" Der Findling ") despair (" Der Zweikampf ") and vengefulness (" Die Hermannsschlacht "), but only one which is the guide to salvation as Kleist understands it. Though introduced in " Schroffenstein ", this theme is distorted in " Der Findling " and " Amphitryon ", where the characters are not at odds with the irrational powers over the world, but with a positive force for evil in the figures of Jupiter and Nicolo. These characters are intent on the destruction of man's confidence in his already meagre powers.

Feeling, then, is the core of man's metaphysical nature for Kleist, and a higher organ of perception. When his figures find themselves at variance with the world, they fall back onto their feeling, only to find at this period of pessimism that it too is unreliable. It is also very probable that feeling played an important part in determining Kleist's own attitude to the destruction of his early philosophical views. Fricke argues for example : " Hier überwand Kleist den Idealismus, indem er, unfähig ihn denkend zu widerlegen, sich von ihm überwinden liess."

(1) It is a justifiable contention that Kleist's dilemma came about when he felt that the " gebrechliche Welt " was actively thwarting what he believed to be his destiny. Throughout the crisis he was aware of an inner driving force : " Ich bin durch mich selbst in einen Irrtum gefallen, ich kann mich auch nur durch mich selbst wieder heben ..... Aber ich werde das Wort, welches das Rätsel löset, schon finden." (2) Even before the fateful month of March 1801 he had advised Wilhelmine, : " ... was dein erstes Gefühl dir antwortet, das tue." (3) Indeed, what else could have prompted Kleist to continue his search for his

(1) Fricke, op.cit. p.37 (3) K.V. p. 180

(2) K.V. p.209



destiny, when Fichte had convinced him on intellectual grounds that this was an impossibility ?

Further light is cast on the possible source of Kleist's faith in feeling by the above quotation from "Penthesilea". In the midst of his strivings to complete " Guiskard ", he was greatly inspired by a letter from Wieland, which urged : " Sie müssen Ihren Guiskard vollenden, und wenn der ganze Kaukasus und alles auf Sie drückt !" (1) It is surely significant that when Kleist uses the archway symbol in "Penthesilea", he should link it with what is almost a verbatim quotation from Wieland's letter. This, I believe, goes deeper than the respect of a young author for a famous man of letters : it indicates a strong affinity of ideas.

Because the characters in " Schroffenstein " fail to come to adequate terms with the world of appearances, they suffer physical destruction. In " Amphitryon " Kleist concentrates on mental destruction. What obviously appealed to him in the theme of the Molière play was the identical appearance of Jupiter and Amphitryon, since here was the perfect representation of what he had learned from Fichte - that visual perception is unreliable. For this reason the alterations which Kleist made in his adaptation of the play give us a clearer indication of his intentions. The crux of the matter lies in the new scenes which were inserted to enlarge the role of Alkmene : the last two scenes of Act two, scene four, in which Kleist depicts confusion of the senses in Alkmene, and scene five, where the emphasis lies on confusion of feeling. As she becomes more and more aware of the deception which has been practised on her, so she relies on her feelings :

Alkmene: "

Nimm mir

Das Aug; so hör' ich ihn: das Ohr, ich fühl ihn,  
Mir das Gefühl hinweg, ich atm' ihn noch ;

(1) c.f. J. Maass, "Kleist, die Fackel  
Preussens" : Wien, München, Basel, 1957  
p. 120.

Nimm' Aug' und Ohr, Gefühl mir und Geruch,  
Mir alle Sinn' und gönne mir das Herz:  
So lässt du mir die Glocke, die ich brauche,  
Aus einer Welt noch find' ich ihn heraus." (1)

She is driven to curse the senses that have deceived her (2) and of which the diadem is proof. Realising that she is finally unable to deal with the situation, she despairs, for she now loves Jupiter as her husband: (3)

Alkmene: " Auf der Gebirge Gipfel will ich fliehen,  
In tote Wildnis hin, wo auch die Eule  
Mich nicht besucht, wenn mir kein Wächter ist,  
Der in Unsträflichkeit den Busen mir bewahrt."

The bitterest twist, however, occurs as Alkmene in the final scene believes that she has seen through the deception and cries " Amphitryon " after the departing Jupiter. For Alkmene, her lover and her husband must be the same person. Since the god has won her love, so her real husband may not have it : and Jupiter cannot remain on earth to share her love. Alkmene is utterly shattered.

Amphitryon, too, suffers similar defeat. He is essentially no philosopher or thinker and he has supreme confidence in the power of the human intellect to solve all his difficulties. As the tragic situation becomes clearer to him, Amphitryon realises his growing helplessness:

Amphitryon: " O! Himmel! Jede Stunde, jeder Schritt,  
Führt tiefer mich ins Labyrinth hinein.....  
O! Hier im Busen brennt's, mich aufzuklären,  
Und ach! ich fürcht' es wie der Tod!" (4)

How strikingly different is this from the youthful optimistic Kleist who confidently pontificated in an early letter : " Denn der Mensch hat ein unwidersprechliches Bedürfnis, sich aufzuklären; Ohne Aufklärung ist er nicht <sup>Viel</sup> mehr als ein Tier." (5) And it is

(1) K.1. p. 254

(2) K.1. p. 253

(3) K.1. p. 307

(4) K.1. p. 287

(5) K.V. p. 248

a biting irony by Kleist that it is finally not his intellect which saves Amphitryon, but his submission to those very irrational powers which he had hitherto derided.

The theme of this play gave Kleist an opportunity to investigate the strength of the marriage bond, the relationship which is to the greatest extent dependent on feeling and which he praises so highly in his letters to his female friends. He shows that even the deep, confident love of Alkmene for Amphitryon is unable to penetrate the deception. This is an even crueller rejection of the strength of feeling than is to be found in " Die Familie Schroffenstein ":

Agnes: " Denn etwas gibt's, das über alles Wähnen  
Und Wissen hoch erhaben - das Gefühl ist es  
Der Seelengüte anderer." (1)

Whereas the characters in " Schroffenstein " are in conflict with a terrible secret, there is no deliberate deception as we meet it in " Amphitryon." The theme of deceit is one to which Kleist frequently returns, but nowhere with such tragic results as in " Der Findling."

Just as Jupiter impersonates Amphitryon, so Nicolo impersonates the portrait in order to deceive Elvire. The ensuing confusion of the senses which she suffers proves to be fatal, whereas Alkmene had only fallen into despair. The generous Piachi who has lost his son in the plague, takes his finding and adoption of the foundling as a sign of a benevolent Providence: this turns out later to be a most unfortunate happening, an expression of the fragile world which had produced the secret of Peter's death in " Schroffenstein." Like this latter, and the identity of Jupiter - Amphitryon, the secret in " Der Findling " concerns the identity of Elvire's lover, and this is what Nicolo sets out to discover. But the answer is neither concrete ( Peter's finger ), nor an impersonation ( Amphitryon ) but a horrible error, a phantom. And, just as the initial on the diadem causes

Alkmene to doubt her senses, so is Nicolo's lust sharpened by the realisation of the possible anagram of his name, Colino - Nicolo. Kleist's intention here, as with Jupiter? is to show the error of sexual desire where it is not linked with spiritual love. Such desire, like passionate, anger, can only lead man astray, and must not be confused with true feeling as Kleist understands it.

The fundamental problem in " Schroffenstein " is the inability of upright people, whatever their good intentions, to find their right way through a bewildering world. " Amphitryon " deals with the effect on man of the realisation of his lack of reliable powers, but the plot has a certain weakness in that the dilemma is not a caprice of the irrational world of man's normal experience, but the result of a very improbable divine interference. In " Der Findling " Kleist takes a step nearer to profound pessimism by making his deliberate evil - doer not a god but a mortal.

#### 6. Kleist and God

God as the ultimate truth and power played a large role in Kleist's early philosophy of life, but paradoxically Kleist's attitude was not to a very great extent Christian. His philosophy needed to revolve around an omnipotent force which, as we have seen, was supposed to rule the world wisely and to guide man to happiness. In other words, God to Kleist was part of an objective " Weltanschauung " and not part of a subjective Christian creed. This is the reason why Fichte's ideas were able to influence him in his relationship with God, for Kleist simply applied to that relationship the very same reasoning which he applied to the normal world of appearances. In this he struck the very opposite path from the Romantics, who, similarly affected by Fichte, did not feel themselves isolated from God, but drawn nearer through faith; among the many converts to Roman Catholicism at that time the names of Friedrich Schlegel and Adam Müller, Kleist's co - editor on " Phöbus," spring readily to mind. Indeed, Ludwig Tieck once complained that the terms Romantic and Catholic had

become almost synonymous. (1) Had Kleist approached God through faith, it is doubtful whether Fichte could have influenced him to such a degree. Thus the pattern of his religious life begins with optimism, but progresses to pessimism at the time of writing "Schroffenstein" and then to atheism in "Amphitryon" and "Der Findling." In later life Kleist returned to a rather guarded optimism, but never identified himself with any Christian church. Even "Das Käthchen von Heilbronn" which might seem superficially to refute this view, is at bottom no exception, as I shall try to show later.

This is where Braig goes astray. He believes that Kleist became a religious dramatist in the Christian tradition after his philosophical crisis. It is probably for this reason that Braig is so concerned to show that Kleist at that period knew Book Three, "Glaube", of Fichte's "Bestimmung des Menschen," for it is here that the philosopher's thought first takes on a religious bent. Braig sees the point of transition to optimism and Christianity as the writing of "Der zerbrochene Krug;" few would dispute the former, but Braig's reasons for the latter are dubious in the extreme. He writes of the "Krug" for example: Die Tragödie wird zur Komödie umgewandelt, dadurch, dass hinter dem Schein und Willkürspiel des Menschen die rettende Vaterhand Gottes eingreift, und zum guten Ende führt, was so schlimm begonnen worden ist." (2) This play certainly contains traces of a positive force for good in human affairs, but there is no evidence at all that it is divine in origin. From this Braig develops his thesis that Kleist's life's work spans the gap between fate - tragedy and a drama of divine redemption and deliverance.

Firstly, Kleist's is no Fate - tragedy, even at his most pessimistic period. Stahl quite rightly notes that in "Schroffenstein"

(1) F. Schultz, "Klassik und Romantik." Stuttgart, 1952 p. 356

(2) Braig, op,cit. p. 405

there are no " dreams, oracles, legends and other devices " which characterise the Romantic fate - tragedy, where Fate is usually malicious.(1) On the other hand, it is not true to say that the characters are responsible for the calamities which befall them, in the sense that they make errors which any other person in the same dilemma would not make. (2) These figures are best described as boats set adrift without compass on the vast treacherous sea of life, an image used by Kleist of himself : " Ich habe mich wie ein spielendes Kind auf die Mitte der See gewagt, es erheben sich heftige Winde, gefährlich schaukelt das Fahrzeug über den Wellen ..... ich kenne nicht die Himmelsgegend, nach welcher ich steuern soll." (3) Kleist's dramatic intention in his first play is clearly indicated by a marginal note scribbled on the original version : " Das Schicksal ist ein Taschenspieler. - - Sturm der Leidenschaft - - Raub des Irrtums, Grimm - - hat uns zum Narren." (4) It is not the individual man for Kleist who has some defect of character or who errs, but the human construction in general which is frail and inadequate to face the world. There is no comprehensive power for good or evil at this stage in Kleist's thought : both mankind and the world at large seem to wander aimlessly.

Secondly, it is dangerous to read too much into the occasional leanings towards Catholicism which Kleist shows in his letters. They are little more reliable than, say, the words which Schiller puts into the mouth of his Mortimer in " Maria Stuart." (5) Before his crisis, Kleist's references to Catholicism were usually derogatory and he called Catholics slaves in chains (6) After Fichte, the church seemed to offer a hope of escape from his problems : " Ihn quälte kein Zweifel, er glaubt," Kleist wrote

(1) Stahl, op.cit. p.49

(2) loc.cit. p.50

(3) K.V. p.212

(4) Meyer-Benfey. op.cit.  
Vol.1, p. 127

(5) Schiller, ed.cit.  
Vol. 2, p. 255

(6) K.V. p.125: c.f. also  
K.V. pp. 112, 116.

of the solitary figure praying at the altar in Dresden. (1) But this is just the point : for Kleist, blind faith would not give an answer to his doubts but <sup>would be</sup> a circumnavigation of them, and as such could not appeal to him. Perhaps his closest approach to religion is contained in a letter of the 31st. August, 1806, when Kleist wrote to his friend Rühle von Lilienstern: " Es kann kein böser Geist sein, der an der Spitze der Welt steht, es ist ein bloss unbegriffener. Lächeln wir nicht auch, wenn die Kinder weinen ?" (2)

Braig's thesis then is a distortion and an exaggeration. He fails to justify in any way this type of remark, for example, about " Penthesilea." " Penthesilea stibt den Sühne- und Erlösungstod ..... geht nicht in die Vernichtung ein, im Gegenteil ; aus der Reue, das heisst, aus der Erkenntnis des Irrtums und der Sünde dieser Welt - sie hat sie auf sich genommen in stellvertretendem, übermenschlichen Leiden - wachsen die Hoffnung und der Glaube an die Unsterblichkeit in ihr auf." (3) Indeed, it is apparent from Zacharias Werner's <sup>adaptation</sup> ~~re-writing~~ of the <sup>same theme</sup> ~~Kleist play~~ into his own " Wanda," that he considered the further introduction of more Christian views, particularly of a meeting in the hereafter, to be essential. And, lastly, it is impossible to reconcile Kleist's obviously joyful suicide with membership of the Catholic church, or of any Christian church for that matter.

But we are concerned for the time being with the works dating from Kleist's pessimism. Here God either remains silent, or intervenes to cause destruction, as in the case of Jupiter. It is typical of the outlook of Adam Müller and many of his like - minded Catholic friends, that he should read into "Amphitryon" an adaptation of the Immaculate Conception, but in doing so he betrayed only a very superficial reading of Kleist's text. (4) This view does not at all explain why we leave the heroine with

(1) K.V. p. 222

(3) Braig, op.cit. p. 239

(2) K.V. p. 326

(4) c.f. Braig, p. 214

Fichte expresses a very similar view. c.f. Fichte, Med.3. p. 401

her despairing " Ach!" and not in a joyous mood, as one would expect: and the news of the child is inserted at the end of the play, almost as an afterthought. The true significance for Kleist of Alkmene's pregnancy will be dealt with in a later chapter, but it is not essentially religious. Again, does not the frivolity and comedy of the Sosias sub - plöt verge on blasphemy when the play is interpreted as Müller thought ? There is too much emphasis on Alkmene's discomfort for Kleist to be primarily concerned with a happy miracle, and one would not expect the true divine representative to regret his visit, (1)

Jupiter:" Verflucht der Wahn, der mich hieher gelockt!"

Sylvester Schroffenstein initially views the puzzling conflict with optimism. Like the young Kleist, his watchwords are " Gott " and " Tugend " and, when he is in difficulty, he feels sure that they will not let him down :

Sylvester: " .... Was mich freut  
Ist, dass der Geist doch mehr ist, als ich glaubte.  
Denn flieht er gleich auf einen Augenblick,  
An seinen Urquell geht er nur, zu Gott,  
Und mit Heroenkraft kehrt er zurück." (2)

But Sylvester's world slowly collapses around him, and the unpredictable course of events causes him to commit the final dreadful act. His God has become a mystery: (3)

Sylvester: " .... Ich bin dir wohl ein Rätsel ?  
Nicht wahr? Nun, tröste dich: Gott ist es mir."  
and " ..... Gott der Gerechtigkeit !  
Sprich deutlich mit dem Menschen, dass er's weiss  
auch  
Auch, was er soll !" (4)

Ottokar has a similar experience. He is the first to find out the truth and realises the whole ghastly confusion. His

(1) K.1. p. 258

(3) K.1. p. 72

(2) K.1. p. 56

(4) K.1. p. 151



immediate reaction is to hold God responsible for letting such things happen:

Barnabe: " Warum stehst du so tiefsinnig ? Woran denkest du ?

Ottokar: " An Gott." (1)

God is equally silent in " Der Findling." The kind and generous Piachi interprets the foundling as a divine compensation, only to be ruined by him. God fails to intervene when Nicolo quite cold - bloodedly causes the deaths of both Constanze and Elvire. And Kleist goes as far here as to attack the clergy as the representatives of God, by alluding to their misconduct and lust : Xaviera is the Bishop's concubine, and, at his execution, Piachi steadfastly refuses the last rites of the Church. He dies a victim of unfortunate chance and deliberate evil.

While Kleist's thought at this time hovered between agnosticism and atheism, he never lost his belief in some future existence. His inflection of this idea was again not predominantly Christian: he still saw the future of man as a long migration from planet to planet. When, before Fichte, Kleist thought that he knew the truth about this, the idea of death held no great attraction for him. After Fichte, in the new awareness of man's ignorance, death became for Kleist an all - important mystery which fascinated him and finally bore him off on a great journey of discovery. Like Novalis, (2) Kleist felt a longing for stellar space, and references to the stars, the planets and the milky way abound in his works (3). He wrote, for example, of the sun rising over the Wartburg: " Sonderbar ist es, was solch ein Anblick bei mir für Wirkungen zeigt. Tausend andere heitert er auf .... " (4) and it will be remembered that his prime concern over " Guiskard " was to establish a " Platz in den Sternen " for the family name. (5) It is this progression to which Kleist

(1) K.1. p. 128

(4) K.V. p. 16

(2) c.f. Unger, op.cit. p.  
115

(5) supra.

(3) c.f. pp. 95, 250,  
K.V.

( K.V. p. 300 )

refers when he speaks at this stage of " Unsterblichkeit."

The attitude to death shown in " Guiskard " is unlike that shown even in " Schroffenstein." A typical reference to the planets is to be found :

" Wir begrüßen dich, O Fürst !

Als stiegst du uns von Himmelshöhen nieder,

Denn in den Sternen glaubten wir dich schon!" (1)

but here death is not a deliverer, but a destroyer. Here is a hero, who, by the greatness of his nature and spirit, has risen to the leadership of a mighty army, and yet is just as vulnerable to the plague as the most humble soldier in that army. This for Kleist was the greatest irony of all - that the infinitely productive intellect of man should be harnessed to so frail a carriage as the human body. He wrote from Königsberg in the late autumn of 1805 of the " wunderbaren Verknüpfung eines Geistes mit einem Konvolut von Gedärmen und Eingeweiden." (2)

It is from the period of Kleist's collapse over his " Guiskard " and his pre-occupation with death, that many of the rumours about his desire to commit suicide stem. Some of these may well be substantiated, such as his wish to sail with Napoleon to a soldier's death, (3) but the most we can say with certainty is that he often thought of death. He wrote, for example (4) " So wie der Schlaf, in der wir uns erholen, etwa ein Viertel oder Drittel der Zeit dauert, da wir uns, im Wachen, ermüden, so wird, denke ich, der Tod, und aus einem ähnlichen Grunde, ein Viertel oder Drittel des Lebens dauern. Und gerade so lange braucht ein menschlicher Körper, um zu verwesen. Und vielleicht gibt es für eine ganze Gruppe von Leben noch einen eigenen Tod, wie hier für eine Gruppe von Durchwachungen ( Tagen ) einen," echoing a view, incidentally, which frequently occurs in Novalis' "Fragmente." In a similar vein he wrote to his friend: " Wenn Sie auf diesem

(1) K.1. p. 187

(2) Not in the Schmidt edn.  
c.f. G. Blöcker, "H.v.Kleist"  
Berlin 1960, p. 127

(3) c.f. Maass, op.cit.  
p. 126

(4) K.V. p. 237

Sterne keinen Platz finden, der Ihrer würdig ist, so finden Sie auf einem anderen einen um so besseren." (1) On parting from a friend, Kleist feels himself " so friedliebend, so liebe reich, wie in der Nähe einer Todesstunde." (2)

Kleist's characters tend to reflect his own attitude to death and many greet it with happiness or equanimity. " Ihre Seele war zu besseren Sternen entflohen," Kleist wrote of Toni, the heroine in his Novelle " Die Verlobung in St. Domingo," (3) and when Sylvester Schroffenstein remarks " Mir ist so wohl, wie bei dem Eintritt in ein anderes Leben," (4) he is again echoing a sentence from one of Kleist's own letters : " Es ist, als ob wir aus einem Zimmer in das andere gehen." (5) Piachi refuses to take the sacrament because " Ich ( Piachi ) will in den untersten Grund der Hölle hinabfahren. Ich will den Nicolo, der nicht im Himmel sein wird, wiederfinden, und meine Rache, die ich hier nur unvollkommen befriedigen konnte, wiederaufnehmen." (6) A similar idea, this time however with undercurrents of Romantic mysticism, is symbolised in the child to be born to Alkmene. The omnipotent god has descended from Mount Olympus and brought about the mental destruction of the heroine, but her spirit lives on in the child. Kleist also makes this into the theme of an essay in (7) his " Berliner Abendblätter." In " Penthesilea " the festival of roses is set on a bloody battlefield, and the creative and destructive elements of love strangely intermingle. The mock execution of the Prince of Homburg signifies the end of one life and the beginning of another, and in the midst of the destruction caused by the earthquake in " Das Erdbeben in Chili," the love of the young couple for each other blooms. Kleist's variations of this idea will be discussed later in the contexts of the works in which they occur.

(1) K.V. p. 239

(4) K.1. p. 54

(2) K.V. p. 271

(5) K.V. p. 327

(3) K.3. p. 35

(6) K.4. p. 375

(7) " Wissen, Schaffen, Zerstören, Erhalten."  
( K.4. p. 182 )

7. The influence of Rousseau. The idea of Paradise.

Kleist's first desire after his crisis was to leave his scientific studies for "einen menschenfreundlicheren Zweck!"(1) The mental and physical (5) discomfort caused by Fichte made the prospect of a renunciation of life seem very attractive to Kleist and in this frame of mind he approached the ideas of Rousseau, who from now on is mentioned rather frequently in Kleist's letters. (2) A typical example comes from a letter to Wilhelmine: " Ach, Wilhelmine, welch unsägliches Glück mag in dem Bewusstaein liegen, seine Bestimmung ganz nach dem Willen der Natur zu erfüllen." (3) Kleist now felt the need to live a simple natural life, and to this end he proposed to buy a farm and settle in Switzerland. But this turned out to be no more than a passing phase, an idea which, once investigated, could be discarded: the world of " Schroffenstein" could not be reconciled with Rousseau's belief in the ultimate goodness of man. Rupert himself expresses Kleist's attitude:

" Doch nichts mehr von Natur.

Ein halb ergötzend Märchen ist's der Kindheit,  
Der Menschheit von den Dichtern, ihren Ammen,  
Erzählt. Vertrauen, Unschuld, Treue, Liebe,  
Religion, der Götter Furcht sind wie  
Die Tiere, welche reden. Selbst das Band,  
Das heilige, der Blutsverwandtschaft riss... " (4)

Although Kleist shared with Rousseau the view that the human dilemma originated in the Garden of Eden, he could not at all agree that the way to regain Paradise was by turning the clock back, so to speak. He needed to believe in the ability of man to attain a state of paradise, perhaps as an antidote to his own despair. But whereas before his acquaintanceship with Idealism he had seen Paradise as part of the hereafter, Kleist now felt that, if it existed at all, then it must be attainable in this life.

(1) K.V. p. 250

(3) K.V. p. 262

(2) c.f. pp. 202,218,227,238.

(4) K.1. p. 13

(5) For a time Kleist was really ill with despair.  
c.f. R.March's biography (bibl.p.171),p.14,  
and Maass op.cit. p. 49.

Blöcker writes, for example: " So zerklüftet Kleists Universum ist, auf seinem Grunde liegt die Vorstellung einer paradiesischen Ordnung, die der Mensch nur wiederherzustellen braucht." (1) But Kleist believed that this could be reached not by renouncing life in the world, but by actually struggling with it. This is the point of the significant dialogue in " Schroffenstein." (2)

Sylvester: " Führe mich heim, Knabe, heim!

Johann: Ins Glück? 's geht nicht, Alter; 's ist  
Inwendig verriegelt. Komm', wir müssen vorwärts!"

Schiller also takes the same view of the cultural mission of the modern poet in his essay " Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung," " Er führe uns nicht rückwärts in unsere Kindheit, um uns mit den kostbaren Erwerbungen des Verstandes eine Ruhe erkaufen zu lassen, die nicht länger dauern kann, als der Schlaf unserer Geisteskräfte, sondern führe uns vorwärts zu unserer Mündigkeit, um uns die höhere Harmonie zu empfinden zu geben, die den Kämpfer belohnt, die den Überwinder glückt," (3) and Kleist wrote later in his profound essay on the marionettes: " Das Paradies ist verriegelt und der Cherub hinter uns. Wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten wieder offen ist." (4)

One of Kleist's more common literary habits was to crystallise his important views in either anecdote or epigrammatic form, and then possibly to expand them in prose or drama (5) His " Fabel ohne Moral " is one such prose item, and it becomes far different from what Kleist called it, when it is recognised that the wild animal, the horse, is a favourite Kleistian symbol for life itself, and that Kleist is talking in the spirit of Rousseau about the human dilemma: " Wenn ich dich nur hätte," sagte der Mensch zu einem Pferde, das mit Sattel und Gebiss vor ihm stand, und ihn nicht aufsitzen lassen wollte, " wenn ich dich nur hätte,

(1) G.Blöcker, op.cit.p.206

(2) K.1. p. 152

(3) Schiller ed.cit. Vol.1  
p. 463ff..

(4) K.4. p. 137

(5) c.f.,"Gesch. eines  
merkwürdigen Zweikampfs"  
K.4.p.160, and "Der  
Zweikampf."

wie du zuerst, das unerzogene Kind der Natur, aus den Wäldern kamst ! Ich wollte dich schon führen, leicht wie ein Vogel, über Berg und Tal, wie es mich gut dünkte; dir und mir sollte dabei wohl sein. Aber ~~dabe~~ haben sie dir Künste gelehrt, Künste, von welchen ich, nackt, wie ich vor dir stehe, nichts weiss; und ich müsste zu dir in die Reitbahn hinein, ( wovor mich doch Gott bewahre ) wenn wir uns verständigen wollten." (1) Since the time of an earlier paradise, man has lost contact with the true nature of life, and is now unable to master it again. The only hope for Kleist was now, he believed, to go to school as it were with life ( in die Reitbahn hinein ) and learn to understand the vicissitudes of life through experience, before attempting to conquer its riddle. But Kleist's own unhappy and distraught existence led him to regard this approach with considerable trepidation, "wovor mich doch Gott bewahre."

This anecdote also points in another direction. Kleist and many of his contemporaries believed in a power beyond the comprehension of man which reacted with crushing force on any attempt by man at a selfrealisation. The more man tended to assert his individualism, the more this power suppressed him. This is the significance of the sick and the healthy oak trees in " Die Familie Schroffenstein."

Sylvester: "....

Freilich mag

Wohl mancher sinken, weil er stark ist: Denn  
Die kranke abgestorbene Eiche steht  
Dem Sturm, doch die gesunde stürzt er nieder,  
Weil er in ihre Krone greifen kann." (2)

The same image is to be found also in the closing lines of " Penthesilea " and Ottokar recognises the destructive tendency of fate in this respect:

".....

Sind wir

Nicht wie Kinder? Denn das Schicksal zieht  
Gleich einem strengen Lehrer, kaum ein  
Gesicht, sogleich erhebt der Mutwill wieder <sup>freundlich</sup>  
Sein keckes Haupt." (3)

(1) K.4. p. 126

(2) K.1. p. 59

(3) K.1. p. 90

Goethe makes a similar point about Shakespeare in the "Shakespeare Rede" of 1771: "..... aber seine Stücke drehen sich alle um den geheimen Punkt ( den noch kein Philosoph gesehen und bestimmt hat ) in dem das Eigentümliche unseres Ichs, ~~mit~~ prätendierte Freiheit unseres Wollens, mit dem notwendigen Gang des Ganzen zusammenstösst." (1) This power strikes down Robert Guiskard at the peak of his career, and the Roman legions in "Die Hermannschlacht" as they are about to conquer the Germanic tribes. The Roman officer Varus realises the futility of his country's policy, and his words are particularly significant when we remember the relationship of man to the world as Kleist sees it:

Varus: " Da sinkt der Plan, die Welt zu unterjochen,  
Vor eines Wilden Witz zusammen,  
Und kommt, die Wahrheit zu gestehen,  
Mir wie ein dummer Streich der Knaben vor." (2)

" Das Leben selbst ist ein Kampf mit dem Schicksal," wrote Kleist(3) in the " Abendblätter," and betrayed an attitude which expresses itself in his favourite theme of revenge. When the blows of the irrational world attack man's spiritual integrity, he often retaliates violently. Thus we find the warring houses of Warwand and Schroffenstein, and no less Piachi's desire for revenge on Nicolo. The prime example of this reaction is, of course, Michael Kohlhaas, and Kleist's Novelle of the same name will be considered in a later chapter.

Two incidents in Kleist's life which he saw fit to record in his letters, demonstrate, like the letter about the archway, his habit of drawing philosophical conclusions from his own life and experience. During a coach journey with his sister Ulrike, the coach stopped at Butzbach near Frankfurt and the driver descended from his box. Suddenly the horses, startled by the braying of an ass, bolted, and only by a freak of chance were brother and sister not killed. Later during the same trip they

(1) Goethe, ed. cit. Vol. 1. (3) K. 4. p. 180  
p. 1019.

(2) K. 2. p. 445

undertook a journey by boat down the Rhine; a fierce storm blew up suddenly, and for a while it seemed that all would be drowned. (1) Of the Butzbach affair Kleist wrote: " Und an einem Eselsgeschrei hing ein Menschenleben? Und wenn es nun in dieser Minute geschlossen gewesen wäre, darum also hätte ich gelebt? Darum? Das hätte der Himmel mit diesem dunklen, rätselhaften, irdischen Dasein gewollt, und weiter nichts - ?" (2) Here in a nutshell is the whole dilemma of the pessimistic Kleist. Life is apparently pointless, fraught with imminent danger, and open to destruction by trivial, even ridiculous, influences such as the braying of an ass. The world is a huge puzzle and God seems to be indifferent towards man's sufferings and does nothing to make his will known on earth. Kleist's characters cannot find comfort in a moral attitude like Schiller's figures: moral principles for Kleist were valid only as long as they concealed a higher purpose, and after Fichte he saw that the conceptions of good and evil in the universe were hollow and subjective. Neither can Kleist's characters view the world in the Romantic sense as an unhappy illusion, an unreality. Their struggle with fate or chance is vital and concrete and deliberately quite unavoidable. In this respect Kleist's thought takes up a position midway between Classicism and Romanticism. He is not generally concerned with the major figures of history as is Schiller, for their position in his view of the metaphysical scheme of things is no different from that of any man. Man is essentially alone in his dilemma, he is mistrustful lest his trust in his fellows should be betrayed and he should fall victim to the renewed blows of fate. Thus Rupert mistrusts Sylvester Schroffenstein's attempt to seek him, and the worst interpretation is put on the ambiguous words of the man under torture. Stahl notes this lack of valid communication between man and man: " Kleist's figures are engrossed in their own thoughts and feelings, they do not listen to the arguments of those with whom they are speaking ..... His dramas

(1) K.V. p. 244

(2) K.V. pl 240



..... give an impression of presenting a series of self contained rather than related exchanges of thought and feeling." (1) Yet in the midst of this confusion and frustration, there is evidence in the story of Agnes and Eustache, and in Alkmene's unshakeable love for her husband which survives in spite of the physical deception by Jupiter, that Kleist sees in " das Gefühl " some possibility of a compromise with life. On this he later built his optimism, for which he found confirmation, ironically enough, in Fichte.

#### 8. Kleist and Tieck.

The influences which came to bear on Kleist in the years 1800 and 1801 were the same as those which afflicted his contemporaries, and Kleist is different only in the degree of pessimism to which he sank. A brief study of the attitude of Ludwig Tieck as shown in his novel " William Lovell " will show this, and I choose Tieck in particular because he apparently felt some spiritual affinity with Kleist when he edited the latter's work into the first collected edition of 1821. Tieck's novel is to a great extent the result of his study of the Kantian philosophy during the years 1792 to 1793 at the Universities of Halle and Göttingen, but the effects of that philosophy were not as sudden or as violent as they had been in Kleist's case. Unlike Kleist again, Tieck abhorred the idea that man could produce any valid philosophical system, and, even though he could agree with Kant's reasoning and conclusions, the whole smacked nevertheless of a " system." Köpke writes: " Es missfiel ihm, weil es System war " and " seine innerste Natur widerstrebte dem System." (2) But ultimately, in " Lovell ," Tieck came to agree that the human intellect is incapable of grasping metaphysical truth, and this work has as its theme " das Streben, den Sinn und das Ziel des Lebens zu erfassen, den Wert der Geisteskräfte zu prüfen, sei

(1) L. Stahl, op.cit.  
p. 25

(2) R. Köpke, "Ludwig Tieck"  
Leipzig 1855, vol.1, p.148.

(1)

es für theoretische, sei es für praktische Zwecke." Tieck saw the problem of his age as the clash between Rationalism and Irrationalism, and sought to reconcile these two trends. " O! der Verstand! der unglückselige Verstand!" lamented Kleist in 1807(2) and the group of figures in " Lovell " who are motivated solely by the intellect ( Old Burton, Rosa and Andrea ) find that they are driven to extremes of egotism and materialism, and lose all feelings of love or sympathy thereby. At the same time they realise that an outburst of passion can undermine their principles suddenly and brutally, a motif, of course, which is to be found in Kleist's characterisation of Rupert. One thinks also of the figure of Amphitryon, similarly baffled by his own intellect.

But just as extreme Rationalism for Tieck drives man to despise his fellows and to be isolated from them, so also there is a profound danger in the exaggerated cultivation of feeling. Lovell himself and Balder are swept from profound melancholia to heights of happiness until they to lose all contact with the world of reality, and become acute introverts. This too provides a point of contact with Kleist's thought. He admits that many of the feelings which compel man are bad, some good. He writes, for example, of " Schmerzgefühl," (3) " Gefühl des Elends," (4) "Gefühl der Unruhe," (5) and of a " widerwärtiges und verdriessliches Gefühl," (6) to mention but a few. Kleist and Tieck agree that these feelings cannot lead man to the purpose of life: there is, however, a deeper, truer feeling which has a metaphysical validity. As Lovell says: " Das Bewusstsein unserer Seele und der tiefe innige Wunsch nach Unsterblichkeit, das Gefühl, das uns in unbekannte ferne Regionen hinüberdrängt, so dass wir uns eine Nichtexistenz gar nicht denken können; diese Gefühle sprechen am lautesten und innigsten für das Dasein der Seele, so wie für ihre

(1) F. Wüstling, "Tiecks William Lovell", Halle, 1912, p. 72ff.

(2) K.V. p. 328

(3) K.1. p. 14

(4) K.4. p. 128

(5) K.3. p. 326

(6) K.3. p. 326

Fortdauer," (1) a view which closely follows Kleist's own attitude to his philosophical crisis. Similarly, the recognition of true feeling amidst so many false ones is a recurring theme in Kleist's work, particularly in "Der Prinz von Homburg." But very close to Kleist's view of the fallibility of feeling, or "Gefühlsverwirrung" is Lovell's, who, similarly labouring under the idea of man's metaphysical inadequacy, maintains: " .. dieses Gefühl stösst so Zweifel als Gewissheit um ..... der Mensch, der auf diesen Punkt gekommen ist, kehrt zu irgendeinem Glauben zurück, denn Glaube und Gefühl ist eins: so wird der wildeste Freigeist am Ende religiös." (2)

Tieck's ideal lay in the harmony of intellect and feeling, both in moderation, a view which also finds expression in a different form in Schiller's writings - the harmony of head and heart, or "Pflicht" and "Neigung." Tieck develops this idea in the figures of Karl and Amalie Wilmont. Kleist, on the other hand, tended to lay greater stress on man's emotions than on reason. He came to have confidence in the "metaphysisches Gefühl" in the individual, and this links him with many prominent Romantic authors of the period. Friedrich Schlegel wrote for example of man's transcendental self as the "Grundgefühl vom Verhältnis des endlichen und unendlichen Ich," (3) an idea which occurs frequently in the works of Schleiermacher. (4) It is one of the many Platonic conceptions common to the thought of this era in Germany, and can be traced in Wieland and no less in Fichte's "Bestimmung des Menschen." We find it in the mysticism of Jakob Boehme, and quite explicitly in this letter to Hamann from Jacobi, to whose thought Fichte was clearly indebted. (5) "Mit Plato glaube ich an ein göttlich wahr- und weissagendes Wesen in mir, das ich meine Seele nenne, die bessere, die unsterbliche. Sie

(1) "William Lovell" pub.  
Berlin/Leipzig, 1795,  
Vol. 2, p. 258

(2) loc.cit. p. 257

(3) c.f. P. Kluckhohn, "Ideengut  
d. dtsh. Romantik" 3rd. ed.  
Tübingen, 1953, p. 43 - 46

(4) Kluckhohn, op.cit.  
loc.cit.

(5) c.f. Braig, op.cit.  
p. 61.

verkündet und offenbart das höchste wesenhafte und wahre und ist deswegen angewiesen zu säen auf den Geist in Hoffnung." (1)

Like Kleist, Tieck believed in a better life hereafter, but he was not so actively concerned with the idea of death. Nevertheless, Eduard Burton, on hearing of Lovell's supposed death, comments: " Ihm ist gewiss wohl, da er nun gestorben ist." (2) Again, many of Lovell's thoughts are strikingly like those to be found in Kleist's letters in the period immediately after his crisis. It seems also likely here that Tieck too was working under the influence of Fichte (3) and not of Kant as Wüstling surmises. (4) Typical extracts are: " Wir können nicht die wahre Gestalt der Dinge erkennen," for " alles, was ich ausser mir wahrzunehmen glaube," may " nur in mir selber existieren. Meine äusseren Sinne modifizieren die Erscheinungen, und mein innerer Sinn ordnet sie und gibt ihnen Zusammenhang." (5) Rosa's thought moves in the same direction: " Mögen die Dinge ausser mir sein, wie sie wollen ..... alle unsre Gedanken und Vorstellungen haben einen gemeinsamen Quell - die Erfahrung." (6) Other examples of the agreement of these authors abound.

(1) F. Jacobi, Sämtliche Werke,  
pub. Leipzig 1812, Vol.1, p.404  
(2) ed.cit. vol.3, p. 314  
(3) c.f. R. Tymms, " German Romantic  
Literature" London 1955, p. 60

(4) op.cit. p.167ff.  
(5) ed.cit.p.314,320  
(6) ed.cit. <sup>and</sup> vol.1  
p. 316 - 317

CHAPTER FOUR:- The search for certainty.

One of the most difficult features in showing the development of Kleist's thought is his repeated tendency to begin a work, abandon it, and perhaps return to it on various isolated occasions, before finally completing it: even then, it probably contains new ideas and shows different influences from those dating from <sup>the</sup> period of origin of the work. Many years often elapse between the first and final versions, and this, coupled with Kleist's reticence to talk about his work, makes it rather difficult to say whether, for example, a work belongs to any particular period, other than on internal evidence. Such a work is (1)

1. " Der zerbrochene Krug."

This play originated as Kleist's contribution to an agreement with two of his friends, that each should write a work on the subject of a picture which they saw in Switzerland early in 1802. It was, however, not completed until the middle of 1806, and by that time Kleist's thought had undergone a more optimistic change, so that in the " Krug " he uses themes from his pessimistic days, but which here find a happier solution.

Kleist had gone to that country, it will be remembered, to search for Rousseau's ideal, simple life, and it is thus most likely that the philosopher's views were uppermost in his mind at the time of the conception of the play. It would also seem probable that the temporary optimism offered by Rousseau crumbled so rapidly that Kleist was unable to continue the play. In any case, a comedy was hardly the ideal art form into which Kleist could pour his doubts. From this standpoint, then, we may look at the " Krug " as a parody on Rousseau's view of original sin and the Garden of Eden. The names of the characters offer very

(1) c.f. T. Kaiser, "Vergleich der verschiedenen Fassungen von Kleists Dramen," Sprache und Dichtung " 1944 .

See also Appendix p. 169.

interesting comparisons: the original Adam lends his name to the village judge at Huisum. In the first scene Licht shows that the parallel is intentional:

Licht: " Ihr stammt von einem lockeren Ältervater,  
Der so beim Anbeginn der Dinge fiel,  
Und wegen seines Falls berühmt geworden." (1)

This Adam too is tempted by Eve ( Evchen ) and for his pains is expelled from his home. The name Walter is given by Kleist to the character whose task it is to " control " and " supervise " the law. But in the figure of Licht we have for the first time in Kleist's work a personification of a positive force for truth and good, a character who, by his apt questions and interventions, casts " light " onto the real facts of the case. His existence is a sign of a renescent optimism in Kleist, who now seems to regard base deceit as a crime too great for the powers over the universe to ignore. There was no power to thwart the deceit of either Jupiter or Nicolo, but Adam is less successful. The root cause of Adam's crime for Kleist is sexual desire and not the true sentiment of spiritual love. Again like Jupiter and Nicolo, of (2) whom Kleist tells us that his wife was scarcely interred before Nicolo's lust drove him on further amorous adventures, Adam's concern with Evchen is that of an ephemeral nocturnal escapade, and not of true love as Kleist draws it in " Schroffenstein."

" Der zerbrochene Krug " introduces a theme which came to be of great interest to Kleist - the law. The law is the force which is the basis of human society, and which must guarantee the individual his place in the community and his rights to personal liberty. But the law is administered by man, and man is not a perfect being for Kleist: so like other human institutions, the law is fundamentally weak, as the figure of the judge - criminal shows. Likewise a victim of the world of appearances is

(1) K.1. p. 323

(2) c.f. " Der Findling"  
K.4. p. 365.

Rupprecht. He relies on what he calls reality or the truth, and believes that Evchen is guilty, until he finally realises that his reality is a cruel deception. She, on the other hand, expects him to trust her, to follow his feelings for her and not his eyes and thoughts: and, even if this life does not vindicate her, Evchen is sure that all will come right in the next:

Eve) " Du hättest denken sollen: Ev' ist brav,  
Es wird sich alles ihr zum Ruhme lösen,  
Und ist's im Leben nicht, so ist es jenseits,  
Und wenn wir auferstehen ist auch ein Tag." (1)

It is also perhaps because of her lover's refusal to trust Evchen implicitly that Kleist gave him the name Rupprecht - possibly a play on the German " ruppig " or mean, and his self-righteous attitude to Evchen's apparent guilt.

It is clearly only the development of the plot at the hands of the wise Licht which prevents the Evchen-Rupprecht action from becoming tragedy. Indeed, we have only a statement by one of the three friends in Bern, Heinrich Zschokke, to indicate that the play was conceived as a comedy and not, as one might with good reason suspect, as a tragedy. (2) There is here more or less the same situation which is met in " Amphitryon," with a conscious deceiver destroying the bonds of trust between lovers. In the preface to his contribution, Zschokke wrote that Kleist produced a " Lustspiel " (3) - but Kleist referred to his " Amphitryon " as a " Lustspiel " (4), which shows that he did not attach the conventional significance to the term. The fact that the " Krug " is a comedy in the final version may be taken as an indication of a more optimistic outlook by Kleist, especially as he works out a happy ending to pessimistic themes.

## 2. " Penthesilea "

The second play which is indicative of a limited

(1) K.1. p. 386

(3) loc.cit. p. xxxii

(2) c.f. " Der z. Krug" ed.  
R.H. Samuel, London, 1950  
p. xxxi ff.

(4) K.1. p. 193

optimism in the years 1805 to 1807 is Kleist's drama "Penthesilea." All the evidence shows that the conception and the execution of the work fall entirely within this period, so the consideration of more than one version does not become necessary. Here Kleist examines the clash of an individual human destiny with the demands again of the law or society. There is a different atmosphere from the earlier works, in that the catastrophe is not precipitated by a god or an evil-doer: nevertheless, the divine representative Mars remains silent, and does not become involved in the conflict.

The Amazon law which binds Penthesilea is not the same type of law with which Kleist is concerned elsewhere, for example in his "Michael Kohlhaas." Here it is not an external arrangement or organisation to which man in society must pay homage, but a principle which involves the negation of the female capacity for love. As will be seen in a later chapter on Kleist's view of woman's destiny, the law in "Penthesilea" contradicts the deepest personal needs of the Amazon queen. For her tribe, man is solely the means to the propagation of the race, and the relationship of man to Amazon is of necessity devoid of affection. Kleist's intention is to show that Penthesilea, as the symbol of this principle, must inevitably follow it, unless the state of which she is queen is to disintegrate. Her attitude is governed by the "Wirklichkeit der schicksalhaft gegebenen, lebensnotwendigen Gemeinschaft." (1)

But Penthesilea cannot be aware in the early stages of the drama that this hallowed law is another figment of this fragile world. Like the relationship of Adam and Evchen which was not based on spiritual love, the Amazon law for Kleist is invalid and reprehensible, and only time, and not its worth, has made it into a tradition so important to the queen. When, however, she meets Achilles, her feeling for her true destiny as a woman is awakened, and the insoluble conflict arises. If she is to remain

(1) G. Fricke, "Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist," Berlin, 1929, p. 103.



faithful to the Amazon law, she must renounce Achilles and vice versa. This is not, therefore, the type of conflict which meets us in Schiller's dramas, for one side of the dualism does not have a clearly defined moral supremacy over the other: Penthesilea is not faced with any choice to make.

Even though this dilemma would seem superficially to be another tragic one, it marks a step forward by Kleist. Evchen maintained her love for Rupprecht even in the face of his rejection of her, but it was Licht who saved her from final defeat. In "Penthesilea" feeling ultimately triumphs: but the queen's curse, as we have seen, is that she has not one recognisable destiny, but two, or so she believes. In this respect she is another victim of the world of appearances.

After the initial shock of seeing Achilles, the queen attempts to reconcile the elements warring within her. In the early scenes she tries to stifle the feelings of love for Achilles which are stirring within her. The Priestess is however not deceived, and ascribes Penthesilea's desire to conquer Achilles not to the law but to the woman in her:

"Ziemt's einer Tochter Ares, Königin,

Im Kampf auf einen Namen sich zu stellen?" (1)

On actually seeing him again, the queen's womanhood takes the upper hand and she falls prostrate. Again she tries to reconcile her conflicting instincts, to conquer him in battle: but she is defeated, the queen who became a passionate woman through Achilles is rejected by him, and she realises that her deepest feeling has been frustrated. Her immediate reaction is typically one of revenge. "Mit Feuerbränden peitschet auf ihn los!" she commands, as she is borne off the battlefield.(2)

The essence of the problem here is that Penthesilea cannot leave her people and neither can Achilles. Neither can the queen ignore her destiny as Achilles' lover, so yet again she

(1) K.2. p. 66

(2) K.2. p. 145

has to face the problem squarely. She claims that the Amazon law does not permit her allies to rescue her from Achilles and, in doing so, she cuts herself off from her friends, and the High Priestess regards her as an outcast. Achilles however makes the fatal error of underestimating the significance for Penthesilea of the law. He regards it simply as a personal idiosyncrasy, "eine Grille, die ihr heilig." (1) So, just at the point where her people reject Penthesilea, he challenges her. But in his trick upon her, in his voluntary submission to her, he has in fact deceived her. From her point of view he has insulted her feelings as a woman: for himself, he must now suffer the unmasking and destruction which is now the just lot of all deceivers after the village judge Adam.

From even such a short analysis of this play it will be seen that the theme of the relationship of lust and sadism, which all too often has been taken to be the central idea of this work, is really only a minor theme, since it implies no sound recognition of the two forces impelling the heroine. (2) Her destruction of Achilles is crude and borders on the dramatically sensational, but it is a logical step in the queen's desire to follow both her instincts simultaneously. Kleist clearly indicated as much in his letter to Goethe about his play: " So, wie es hier steht, wird man vielleicht die Prämissen, als möglich, zugeben müssen, und nachher nicht erschrecken, wenn die Folgerung gezogen wird." (3) This topic will, however, concern us again in another context.

When Kleist wrote of his " Penthesilea " that " Es ist wahr, mein innerstes Wesen liegt darin ....., " (4) he was unknowingly giving carte blanche to that school of literary criticism

(1) K.2. p. 136

(3) K.V. p. 370

(2) c.f. M. Corssen, "Kleist und Shakespeare", Halle, 1930, p.89. Nevertheless, the influence of G.H. Schubert on Kleist here is quite significant; c.f. below and Stahl, op.cit. p. 38 and 92.

(4) K.V. p. 358

which seeks to recognise details of the author's life, however insignificant, in his works.(1) There is obviously a great danger of exaggeration and distortion in this approach, but some of the theories advanced are at least thought - provoking. It may be that the play presents Kleist's own conflict between his urge to follow the traditions of his family in military service, and the awakening realisation of his destiny as a poet. It may on the other hand be excessively imaginative to regard Achilles as a symbol of "Guiskard." The main similarity exists in the violent destruction by both Kleist and his Penthesilea of what is nearest and dearest to them, because the ideal has cheated them: Achilles deceives the Amazon queen, and Kleist burned his manuscript since he felt that it might not be the symbol of his destiny after all. Both Kleist and his heroine demonstrate in this a characteristic confusion of feeling. If these parallels were intentional, then one important fact emerges: that Kleist has now achieved a greater state of objectivity towards his dilemma. He can now look back on his distress and evaluate the [ ] factors involved.

The element of fate or chance retires into the back - ground in "Penthesilea," and acts less directly than indirectly. The final catastrophe is decreed by the very nature of the queen, and once fate has set the scene, the action follows logically from that point. The end is not despair, for Penthesilea has followed her destiny as she felt it, and, even though she finally admits to the "gebrechliche Welt," she feels supremely happy: death is a trivial thing beside the failure of man to follow his destiny. (2)

Penthesilea:- "Ich bin so selig, Schwester! Überselig!  
Ganz reif zum Tod, o Diana, fühl'ich mich!"

Kleist's depiction here that the fulfilling of a personal destiny might include death casts light onto his persistent faith in a

(1) c.f. Unger, op.cit. p.131  
in an otherwise excellent  
treatise: also J.Petersen,  
"Kl. dram. Kunst", Jahrbuch d.  
Kleistgesellschaft, 1921:e.g.

Goethe = Achilles, Byzanz("Guiskard") = Goethe.

(2) K.2. p. 158

future life. To have no destiny, or not to have recognised it, is that same unworthy condition of which Kleist wrote in the days before he encountered Fichte's philosophy. (1) So Penthesilea is obliged to maintain the integrity of her feeling for her destiny whatever the cost. This done, she achieves the only true happiness open to man in Kleist's world, hence she becomes "selig." So, argues Kleist, if this fulfilment coincides with physical death, what point has it? Why is it superior to the mere clinging on to life itself? Surely because the ultimate reward is to be enjoyed after death, in the hereafter. Thus we can say that the Amazon queen attains immortality in Kleist's sense of the term, and Kleist himself could say that "Penthesilea" contained not only the anguish of his poet's soul, but also its triumphant affirmation of a positive approach to the human dilemma.

"..... den ganzen Schmerz zugleich und Glanz meiner Seele." (2)

(1) c.f. Kleist's essay, "Aufsatz, den sicheren Weg des Glücks zu finden." K.4. p. 58

(2) K.V.p.358

CHAPTER FIVE: Confidence regained.

By the time Kleist reached Dresden in 1807, after his unfortunate wrongful imprisonment at Fort Joux, he was in a more optimistic mood, to judge from the "Krug" and "Penthesilea" at least. In the town he sought out his friends Adam Müller and Rühle von Lilienstern, who had been advised of his impending arrival. As a result of Müller's intercessions, "Amphitryon" and "Der zerbrochene Krug" were widely read and admired in intellectual circles, and suddenly Kleist found himself for the first time the centre of attention and a man of some importance in the world of letters. The "Krug" was performed at the house of the Austrian ambassador, and excited favourable comment.

Of particular significance at this time, however, is Kleist's contact with literary circles devoted to the tenets of Romanticism. Here Fichte himself was a figure of great influence, and Kleist can hardly have failed to become better acquainted with the views of the latter. Both poet and philosopher were members of the "Christlich - Deutsche Tischgesellschaft," a semi - religious society, and the assumption that they actually met is indeed tempting, but unfortunately ill - substantiated. (1) Nevertheless, there is many an indication from now on that Kleist made some attempt at a reconciliation with Fichte's philosophy, and in particular with Book three of "Die Bestimmung des Menschen."

Kleist also continued his habit of showing the error of his earlier ideas, and the old themes return with a new significance. The seduction of the deceived Alkmene is reflected in the mysterious pregnancy of the Marquise von O.... in Kleist's Novelle of that name: like Alkmene again, Wetter vom Strahl in "Das Käthchen von Heilbronn" is required by Kleist to choose between two lovers, one of whom is bent on deceiving him. Kleist also refers to Käthchen and Penthesilea as the same figure under different conditions, as opposite sides of the same coin. (2)

(1) c.f. H. Rogge, "Kleists letzte Leiden," Jahrbuch d. Kleist - gesellschaft, 1922, p. 36.

(2) K.V. p. 380

And, having commenced " Michael Kohlhaas " in more pessimistic days, Kleist decided now to rewrite the ending to be more representative of his changed outlook. This desire to argue with himself shows how important it is that Kleist's work should be considered as a homogenic whole, for only from this point of view do many of his ideas take on a deeper significance.

1. " Die Marquise von O..... "

In this Novelle Kleist is clearly coming to terms with the fragile world. His heroine is a titled lady of impeccable moral reputation and high social position. Her dilemma arises when she discovers that, in some mysterious way, she has become pregnant without knowing the identity of her seducer. So, like the Amazon queen, she finds herself with two " Bestimmungen ". On the one hand she must solve the riddle on the social level, in order to vindicate the good name of her family and herself: on the other, her condition is in Kleist's view a necessary part of woman's metaphysical destiny. (1) Unlike the theme of "Penthesilea" however, the unreliable world of appearances does not manifest itself so much as an unnatural social order, as in the unusual manner in which the Marquise's destiny as a woman reveals itself. She is therefore obliged to seek the father of her child and to regularise the situation to the best of her ability. When she accepts the Count's proposal of marriage before her condition becomes clear to her, the news of it makes her position quite desperate. If she were to marry him, she would be contradicting her destiny as a woman - that of finding her seducer. If she decided to find her mysterious lover, she would have to renounce all hope of happiness with the Count.

Characteristically, the Marquise's parents rely on what they call truth. To them, the only possible explanation can be that their daughter is guilty of immoral conduct. But it is significant that it is the mother who finally lets her feelings

(1) This will be discussed more fully in a later chapter, " Kleist's view of woman."

for her daughter gain the upper hand, and it is she who finally persuades the old Colonel - a man of short-sighted, ugly passions,- and a direct descendant from Rupert Schroffenstein - to regain his trust in his daughter.

In the case of Alkmene the realisation of the fallibility of her feelings and senses had signalled disaster. On waking from her ordeal, Penthesilea realised that she too was a victim of the irrationality of the world: Prothoe recognises her queen's state of mind:

" Es ist die Welt noch, die gebrechliche,  
Auf die nur fern die Götter niederschauen." (1)

Both heroines, then, conclude that this world of appearances is a huge puzzle: Kleist's Marquise, however, is aware of this at the outset. " Ihr Verstand, stark genug, in ihrer sonderbaren Lage nicht zu reissen, gab sich ganz unter der grossen, heiligen und unerklärlichen Einrichtung der Welt gefangen. Sie sah die Unmöglichkeit ein, ihre Familie von ihrer Unschuld zu überzeugen, ..... der Schmerz ( machte ) ... dem heldenmütigen Vorsatze Platz, sich mit Stolz gegen die Anfälle der Welt zu rüsten. Sie beschloss, sich ganz in ihr Innerstes zurückzuziehen." (2) She thus relies on her instinct and disregards misleading appearances, and her attitude to the problem of finding her seducer is coloured by the awareness that she can expect no help from the disbelieving world. Here can be seen in all probability the influence of Fichte. " Der Glaube ist es, dieses freiwillige Beruhen bei der sich uns natürlich anbietenden Ansicht, weil wir nur bei dieser Ansicht unsere Bestimmung erfüllen können; er ist es, der dem Wissen erst Beifall gibt, und das, was ohne ihn blosser Täuschung sein könnte, zur Gewissheit und Überzeugung erhebt. Er ist kein Wissen, sondern ein Entschluss des Willens, das Wissen gelten zu lassen"(3) And a further mark of progress beyond Penthesilea's dilemma may

(1) K.2. p. 157

(3) Fichte, Med,3, p,347

(2) K.3. p. 274

be seen in the decision of the Marquise not to marry the Count when she realises her condition. Whereas Penthesilea tried repeatedly to reconcile her two apparent instincts, the heroine of this Novelle rejects her obligations on the social plane in order to follow her greater obligation as a Kleistian woman.

When the Count reappears as her seducer - a variation on the deceit theme here - the Marquise's love for him turns, like that of the Amazon queen, to hatred. Because he has deceived her she will now have none of him: but for the sake of her Family, her reputation, and equally for the sake of "die gebrechliche Welt," she lets herself be persuaded to marry, and goes through a ceremony with him.

After twelve months or so, as Kleist tells us, (1) the Count is able to woo the Marquise again. A second wedding is celebrated and the pair then live happily together. Quite clearly, a new atmosphere prevails here for Kleist. The second wedding signifies that both sides of the conflict which has beset the heroine have been resolved happily, and not as in "Penthesilea" in death. Not only has the Marquise found her lover, but she has also married him and found happiness solely through her steadfast attitude to her dilemma. The Amazon queen died because, even though she ultimately followed both her instincts, one of them was a false one: "Penthesilea" is thus a paean of praise of reliance on "das Gefühl" - the tragedy lies in the fact that one of her instincts has no metaphysical validity for her creator. Presumably because the Marquise chooses her destiny as a woman rather than her social position, she is rewarded by the kind, but essentially mis-understood, power which at this stage for Kleist ruled the cosmos. (2) It is this same power which Kleist attempted to depict in his next Novelle,

## 2. "Der Zweikampf."

Like the Marquise, Littegarde the heroine appears to

(1) K.3. p. 294

(2) K.V. p. 326



society to be guilty of immorality and is in truth the victim of deceit. In her struggle to restore her good name she enlists the help of Friedrich von Trota, and it is in their relationship that Kleist is particularly interested. Friedrich has no cause to believe in Littegarde's innocence in the sense that he has information which is not generally known. His desire to champion her cause in the duel stems from his utter trust in her, and he refuses to heed his other senses: " Genug, meine teuerste Littegarde ! " rief Herr Friedrich, indem er mit edlem Eifer ihre Hand nahm und an seine Lippen drückte, " verliert kein Wort zur Verteidigung und Rechtfertigung Eurer Unschuld ! In meiner Brust spricht eine Stimme für Euch weit lebhafter und überzeugender als alle Versicherungen, ja selbst als alle Rechtsgründe und Beweise."

(1) Although Littegarde too is rejected by her family, she is more fortunate than the Marquise in that she has a champion to support her. Friedrich's determination to trust her from the very beginning, and not only after much suffering on her part, as in the case of the Marquise's parents, makes him unique among Kleist's figures hitherto.

What then can shake this faith and confuse Friedrich's feeling for Littegarde ? Certainly not Jakob's deceit, since this for Kleist cannot be stronger than trust. The near-fatal blow comes here from society's unquestioned acceptance of the merits of the duel system as a means of discovering the truth. Like the Amazon law, this view takes no account of the true relationship for Kleist of man to the world around him. As that law tended to frustrate the real destiny of woman, so here the duel law misunderstands the nature of God. Even though God is no longer regarded by Kleist as vindictive, He is nevertheless totally incomprehensible; the duel system is an attempt on man's part to force God to decide matters which man's meagre powers cannot. For

(1) K.3. p. 403

God to speak under these circumstances would be to render Him the servant of man, to be used at man's whim. So when Friedrich fights the evil Jakob, God decrees that the winner should be Jakob, as a sign of His independence of man. But since Friedrich so well upholds the Kleistian ideal of trust, it is ultimately he who is the conqueror, for Jakob's slight wound becomes worse and brings about his death, whereas Friedrich recovers quickly from his apparently serious wound. The essence of Kleist's view is contained in this extract from the end of the Novelle: "Wo liegt die Verpflichtung der höchsten göttlichen Weisheit, die Wahrheit im Augenblick der glaubensvollen Anrufung selbst anzuzeigen und auszusprechen?" (1) and we are told finally that the Emperor "liess ..... in die Statuten des geheiligten, göttlichen Zweikampfs, überall wo vorausgesetzt wird, dass die Schuld dadurch unmittelbar an Tageslicht komme, die Worte einrücken, ' Wenn es Gottes Wille ist." (2) Thus God appears to have entered the conflict, saved Friedrich in God's own inscrutable fashion, and proven the fallibility of the duel custom. Now the Emperor can change the law, and man has progressed some little way towards a fuller comprehension of God's ways.

The effect of the immediate outcome of the duel on the heroine is shattering. Not only does she appear convicted in the eyes of the world, but it seems to her that God himself is denying what she knows to be the truth. She feels utterly rejected: " Schuldig, überwiesen, verworfen, in Zeitlichkeit und Ewigkeit verdammt und verurteilt." (3) Her champion suffers the same way, for, although he is prepared to doubt the whole world before the heroine, he cannot bring himself to doubt God. He falls a victim as many another to the weakness of sensory perception, for he is unable to recognise that the manifestations of God's will in the world are just as much subject to a natural mis-interpretation by man as any other aspect of the world of appearances. Not until

(1) K.3. p. 149

(3) K.3. p. 416

(2) K.3. p. 427

his own bodily recovery does he see the answer, and then he is able to restore Littegarde's faith in herself and in God: " O! meine teuerste Littegarde!" rief der Kämmerer, ' bewahre deine Sinne vor Verzweiflung! Türme das Gefühl, das in deiner Brust lebt, wie einen Felsen empor; halte dich daran, und wanke nicht, und wenn Erd' und Himmel unter dir und über dir zugrunde gingen! Lass uns von zwei Gedanken, die die Sinne verwirren, den verständlicheren und begreiflicheren denken, und, ehe du dich schuldig glaubst, lieber glauben, dass ich in dem Zweikampf, den ich für dich gefochten, siegte! - Gott, Herr meines Lebens, bewahre meine Seele selbst vor Verwirrung ! ..... Im Leben lass uns auf den Tod, und im Tode auf die Ewigkeit hinaussehen und des festen unerschütterlichen Glaubens sein, deine Unschuld wird, und wird durch den Zweikampf ..... zum heitern hellen Licht der Sonne gebracht werden !" (1) Kleist's theme here is that man must not allow the illusions of this world to destroy the bonds of trust which should exist between men and man and God.

### 3. " Michael Kohlhaas."

The problem in this next Novelle is the recognition by the hero of his personal, highly individual destiny. There is no question here of any conflict like the dualism which confronted the Marquise and Penthesilea, unless it be the apparent contradiction of Kohlhaas' life and happiness as a horse-dealer, and his profound feeling for the spirit of justice.

It is the latter which brings about the hero's dilemma. His fundamental instinct, his " innerstes Gefühl," guides him along the path of ideal justice on earth for all men. So when the Junker denies Kohlhaas his rights under the law and steals his horses, he is assaulting the integrity of Kohlhaas' metaphysical self. The hero's first reaction is to try to solve the matter on a temporal level by seeking redress in the law itself.

(1) K.3. p. 419

Only when the world of appearances seems to have exhausted all possibility of a solution, does Kohlhaas, like the Marquise, have to fall back on his innermost self. The final impetus to do this comes from the unfortunate death of his wife while she is at the Court championing her husband's cause. Kohlhaas realises that the incident is no longer either an accident or a triviality, but an insult to his metaphysical self. Now he is fighting not for any principle in the worldly sense, but for the sanctity of his metaphysical existence, and his alone: " Er will sich ..... Genugtuung für die erlittene Kränkung ..... verschaffen." (1) This is where his wife misunderstands him, albeit characteristically for Kleistian woman, for she can see only the worldly aspect of his position, and believes that he should try to forgive his enemies. (2) This solution could of course apply solely to the horse-dealer's earthly existence, and what he fears above all is that he might become a victim of chance, and the irrational world, through this situation which denies him justice thanks to the corruption of minions. He does not of course know, until Luther tells him, (3) that the Prince has not been adequately informed about the matter, and in this his position is akin to that of the appellants in the courtroom at Huisum, for whom Adam stands between them and real justice. To Kohlhaas this affront threatens to destroy his dignity and almost his very manhood: " Lieber ein Hund sein, wenn ich von Füßen getreten werden soll, als ein Mensch." (4)

Kleist introduces Luther into the story in order to point the weakness in the hero. The theologian can see only the element of revenge in the horse-dealer's revolt, just like Lisbeth. But a new factor enters the dispute. Previously, Kleist had tended to regard revenge as man's reaction to bewilderment by appearances. Now Luther subtly suggests to Kohlhaas that this

(1) K.3. p. 149

(3) K.3. p. 180

(2) K.3. p. 163

(4) K.3. p. 162

personal drive to rectify matters may not after all be the horsedealer's metaphysical destiny, but a purely selfish, earthly instinct. If this were so, Kohlhaas realises that his whole enterprise could end only in earthly disaster and have no metaphysical significance at all. He cannot distinguish in himself whether he is following the right instinct, whether he is following an "endliches" or an "unendliches Gefühl", as Kleist uses the terms in his essay on the marionettes. (1) His feelings are thus confused: "Kann sein," is his suddenly doubting reply to Luther's insinuation. (2) That Luther also misunderstands Kohlhaas is again made clear by the horse-dealer's attitude to the second lawsuit which he undertakes. If he were to receive his horses back from the nobleman the appearance would be created that the latter had atoned for his misdemeanours. Luther is prepared to abide by this state of affairs: to Kohlhaas, however, the horses are the symbol of an insult which is not to be lightly forgotten or forgiven. In themselves these animals are of little value - Kohlhaas himself says that the case would be just the same if a mere pair of dogs had been involved. (3) It is the very insult itself to the true spirit of the law for which the Junker can never atone. When the horse-dealer's wife implores him to forgive his enemy, he naturally does so in order to please her. But he forgives the Junker only on a worldly plane, since the greater metaphysical implications of the Junker's actions cannot be overlooked. He forgives him as a pitiful, trivial creature, with the prayer that God should never forgive him. (4) When, then, the court rejects Kohlhaas' second suit against the Junker, no confusion of feeling can hide from the horse-dealer his valid course of action: " ( da zuckt in ihm ) ..... mitten durch den Schmerz, die Welt in einer so ungeheueren Unordnung zu erblicken, die innerliche Zufriedenheit empor, seine eigene Brust nunmehr in Ordnung zu sehen." (5) It is a symbol of

(1) See below, Chapter six.

(4) K.3. p. 165

(2) K.3. p. 185

(3) K.3. p. 158

(5) K.3. p. 159

the importance to Kohlhaas of his destiny that he should at once make arrangements to sell lock, stock and barrel and take to a wild life.

This Novelle enters Kleist's life on three major occasions, in 1805, 1808 and finally in 1810. In its earliest form, the motivation was probably akin to the revenge theme of "Der Findling." Kleist's original "Kohlhaas" probably ended in total pessimism and despair, but in his second version Kleist may have interpreted the horse-dealer's position in terms of the outlook evident in "Penthesilea." Here Kohlhaas could be saved, after suffering in this unhappy world, because his metaphysical destiny for Kleist caused him to transgress on earth. In the final revised version Kleist takes up again the 1808 version, but with a revised ending in which the element of chance or fate is increased and now works to Kohlhaas' advantage. It may well be that the Saxon Prince, who betrays the horse-dealer's trust, thereby incurs the wrath of the power which rules Kleist's world. (1) Certainly, whatever the enormity of his crimes, Kohlhaas seems to receive divine approval: his horses are returned to him well fed, the Junker is finally disgraced, and a strange gypsy woman, the double of Kohlhaas' wife, acts as a well-wishing instrument of providence. This new conclusion to the Novelle leads us to think that Kleist now believes that Kohlhaas acted rightly in the circumstances, and that whatever punishment man must misguidedly meet out to him, his position in Kleist's metaphysical scheme of things is a happy one. Kleist's frequent use of expressions like "Es traf sich, dass...." in the revised ending (2) betrays a desire on his part to imply a force working through the medium of coincidence on Kohlhaas' behalf.

Remarkable too in "Michael Kohlhaas" is the similarity of Kleist's views to those of Fichte. The philosopher differentiates sharply between two worlds: an inner world where duty and the will

(1) This is Fricke's view.  
c.f. Fricke, op.cit.  
p. 136

(2) c.f. K.3. pp. 221,  
224, 238 (twice), 240  
243, and many others.

are paramount, and the world of appearances which, as he taught Kleist, is of an unreliable nature, dominated by the laws of material causality. " Und hiermit geht die ewige Welt heller vor mir auf, und das Grundgesetz ihrer Ordnung steht klar vor dem Auge meines Geistes ..... ich stehe im Mittelpunkte zweier gerade entgegengesetzter Welten, einer sichtbaren, in der die Tat, einer unsichtbaren, in der der Wille entscheidet: ich bin eine der Urkräfte für beide Welten," wrote the philosopher in his "Bestimmung des Menschen," (1) and again in the same work: " Ich bin Glied zweier Ordnungen: einer rein geistigen, in der ich durch den blossen reinen Willen wirke, und einer sinnlichen, in der ich durch meine Tat herrsche." (2) Fichte would completely avoid the assumption that these two worlds are in any way inter-dependent, for he wrote elsewhere: " Darum sind ihm auch die Folgerungen seiner pflichtmässigen Handlungen in der Welt der Erscheinung völlig gleichgültig; wie sie auch scheinen mögen, an sich sind sie sicherlich gut: denn wo die Pflicht geübt wird, da geschieht der Wille Gottes." (3) This is surely the very justification which Kleist needed to be able to overlook Kohlhaas' crimes and show the probability of his metaphysical salvation ? Once Kleist has established the sanctity of the human destiny in the horse-dealer, then Kohlhaas is carrying out God's will, and the burnings and killings become insignificant. Why else would Kleist describe his hero as " der wahre Statthalter Gottes auf Erden," and as " einen Statthalter Michaels des Erzengels, der gekommen .....an allen, die in dieser Streitsache des Junkers Partei ergreifen würden, mit Feuer und Schwert die Argl<sup>(4)</sup>ist, in welcher die ganze Welt versunken ..... zu bestrafen " ? The same Fichtean dualism is also fundamental to Kleist's play,

4. " Die Hermannsschlacht."

The relationship between Hermann and the German peoples

(1) Fichte, Med.3. p. 378

(2) loc.cit. p. 384

(3) " Appellation an das Publikum," Fichte, Med. 3. p. 172

(4) K.3. p. 178

is an extension of the relationship between Kleistian man and his innermost feelings. Just as Alkmene, the Marquise and many others of Kleist's figures fall back upon their feelings when the contradictions of appearances are too much for them, so a whole people, when similarly threatened, will, for Kleist, find some central, fundamental source of self-preservation. Under the threat of a Roman occupation, the German tribes find their source of action, their "innerstes Gefühl" as it were, in the figure of Hermann himself.

In the theme of this play Kleist adapts his conception of a metaphysical destiny. This time it is not an individual, but a national destiny which must at all costs be fulfilled. In his attitude towards this destiny Kleist stands very much in the shadow of Fichte again, and like so many of his contemporaries, he seems to have (dangerously) mis-understood the philosopher. Fichte's absolute ego as a metaphysical concept became all too easily confused with the empirical Fichte: since the ego postulating the world was Fichte and Fichte was German, then it followed illogically that the Germans were the superior race with a great metaphysical destiny. (1) Here can be seen the beginnings of a potentially evil self-esteem which came to fruition so disastrously in our own century. It comes across very clearly in Kleist's political essay "Was gilt es in diesem Kriege," where he writes: "Gilt es, was es gegolten hat, sonst in den Kriegen, die geführt worden sind auf dem Gebiete der unermesslichen Welt? Gilt es den Ruhm eines ..... Fürsten ..... oder Genugtuung für die Empfindlichkeit einer Favorite ..... oder gilt es sonst irgendetwas, das nach dem Wert des Geldes auszumessen ist, heut besessen, morgen aufgegeben.....<sup>werden kann</sup>?" (2) The Napoleonic wars to Kleist are not a matter of transient national honour or worldly gain, but a struggle for nothing less than the metaphysical destiny of

(1) c.f. Bertrand Russell,  
"A history of Western  
Philosophy."  
London, 1947.

(2) K.4. p. 115



Germany. He bases his arguments on the cultural services of Germany to the world, describing his fatherland as "eine Gemeinschaft, die, an dem Obelisk der Zeiten, stets unter den wackersten und rüstigsten tätig gewesen ist: ja, die den Grundstein desselben gelegt hat, und vielleicht den Schlussblock darauf zu setzen bestimmt war." (1) Here are the roots of the passionate intensity with which Hermann pursues his aim: and the apparently divinely-ordained destiny of the German tribes is deeply offended when the Romans treat them as animals. The words used by Hermann:

" Was ist der Deutsche in der Römer Augen ?

..... Eine Bestie,

Die auf vier Füßen in den Wäldern läuft," (2) remind us of those used by Kohlhaas to describe his feelings about the Junker's insult to him.

Given the above premises, we can see what Kleist has in mind when he describes Hermann's horrible use of Hally's dismembered body. Like Kohlhaas when he commits his acts of brutality, Hermann is acting in Fichte's moral world, and his deeds in this pale to insignificance. Ironically the irrational world intervenes not with the typically Kleistian evil blow of chance, but with a humane deed; but in this national conflict, the selfless bravery of the Legionary, who risked his life to save the German child, must be regarded as a threat to the solidarity of the tribesmen in the face of the Romans. A good deed might well prevent the nation from reaching its destiny, and Hermann's feeling is momentarily confused:

" Er sei verflucht, wenn er mir das getan !

Er hat auf einen Augenblick,

Mein Herz veruntreut, zum Verräter

An Deutschlands grosser Sache mich gemacht !!! (3)

It is vital to Hermann's great task that the Romans appear as

(1) K.4. pp. 116f.

(3) K.2. p. 406

(2) K.2. p. 373

evil as possible to the Germans, which is why he deliberately spreads malicious lies about them. Kleist here is even justifying that same deceit which he had so often castigated in his earlier works, and the standards of good and evil <sup>are</sup> twisted to suit the German's own ends.

It is this lack of moral and ethical standards in " Die Hermannsschlacht " which has evoked most of the adverse comments on the play, yet many critics fail to observe in Kleist's defence that many of the ideas in the play are typically Kleistian and are to be found elsewhere in his works: the difference here is that characteristically he has taken them to their extreme conclusions. Stahl writes for example, " When patriotism becomes the mere substitute for metaphysics in human life, we get that confusion of values ..... " (1) When conceiving this play, I believe, Kleist was not substituting politics for metaphysics, but quite deliberately identifying one with the other. He believed, as we have seen, that man's destiny, man's purpose in life, would reveal itself only once and must be followed: the same is true for Kleist of the future destiny of Germany. The conflict for supremacy between Roman and German was not another expression of " die gebrechliche Welt " but an opportunity which must at all costs not be ignored, if Germany's metaphysical future was to be assured. For this reason the play is very much more than a piece of political hack-writing and, bearing in mind Kleist's urgent concern with the destiny of mankind, we can see why his dislike of Napoleon bordered on obsession. The following description of the Emperor appears in Kleist's " Katechismus der Deutschen, "

Frage:- " Was hältst du von Napoleon ?

Antwort:- Für einen verabscheuungswürdigen Menschen. Für den Anfang alles Bösen, und das Ende alles Guten; für einen Sünder, den anzuklagen die Sprache der Menschen nicht hinreicht und den Engeln einst, am Jüngsten Tage, der Odem vergehen wird." (2)

(1) Stahl, op.cit. p. 102

(2) K.4. p. 105

CHAPTER SIX:- "Über das Marionettentheater."

The image of the puppet, which dances gracefully at the end of strings held by the puppeteer, is one which originated for Kleist in his Enlightened days, and it is very much in keeping with his aptitude for self-criticism that he should use it again to define his changed attitude. The marionette essay is very like the earlier essay " Aufsatz, den sicheren Weg des Glücks zu finden," in that it represents the crystallisation in Kleist's mind of a new approach to his philosophical problems. In the absence of his " Geschichte meiner Seele," which has regrettably never been traced, the marionette essay is probably the most illuminating single work which Kleist wrote on the subject of his later ideas. (1) Although it was not published until 1810, the germs of the thought contained in the essay are to be found much earlier in Kleist's poetic work, and reach back as far as " Die Marquise von O...." and, conceivably, " Penthesilea." In spite of this, the attempt made by Hellmann (2) to interpret Kleist's entire work from the essay seems to me to be ill-founded. This critic is misled by her recognition that most of the major themes of Kleist's thought appear in his first works, notably " Die Familie Schroffenstein." This is undoubtedly so, but the radically different treatment of these themes in the later works - one thinks, for example, of the deceit theme and the attitude of God to man - <sup>shows</sup> that the marionette essay must be a product and distillation of Kleist's later thought.

The puppet here, as before, represents Kleistian man. The puppeteer clearly is unable to control every single detailed action and movement of the doll's limbs, but he can move the centre of gravity of the doll, and it is through this that the mysterious laws of nature produce the grace of the dancing puppet. However, before the doll can respond to the impulses

(1) c.f. Braig, op.cit.  
p. 3, 303

(2) H. Hellmann, "Kleist,  
Darstellung des Problems"  
Heidelberg, 1911

from its centre of gravity, it must overcome the downward drag of gravity by being pulled upwards. If it is not clear of the ground, then its movements will be impeded.

This can be translated into Kleist's own terminology. The centre of gravity is what he means by the " Seele " or " vis motrix " of the doll, and is the symbol of man's deepest feeling or his metaphysical self, - " das Gefühl." The man who bases his actions on this inward certainty attains the grace of the dancing puppet. On the other hand, Kleist uses the power of gravity to represent any force which militates against the execution of man's prescribed destiny. One such force which is mentioned specifically is " die Reflexion " or consciousness, a conception which clearly owes something to Rousseau's view of an original harmonious condition of mankind before the advent of a disruptive civilisation and culture. Kleist writes: " Ich sagte, dass ich gar wohl wüsste, welche Unordnungen in der natürlichen Grazie des Menschen das Bewusstsein anrichtet." (1) This is the theme of the story in this essay of the young bather who suddenly realises, on seeing his reflection, that his appearance at that moment closely resembles a famous statue. At the very point at which the youth becomes aware of this, he falls from the state of grace which he had unconsciously attained, because vanity enters his outlook. (2) By trying to imitate the statue, he becomes merely ridiculous. In the same way, passion is an enemy of the attainment of grace, which Kleist demonstrates in the story of the fight with the bear. (3) Since the animal is not civilised or spoilt in the Rousseau sense, it does not fall victim to the human passions, and in consequence defeats its opponent. Kleist's intention here is reminiscent of his earlier " Fabel ohne Moral."

The potentially greatest danger to man is that he might confuse a true feeling with a false one, or that the affairs

(1) K.4. p. 138

(3) K.4. p. 140

(2) K.4. p. 139

of the world cause even his confidence in true feeling to waver. In this essay Kleist defines feeling with a metaphysical validity as an " unendliches Gefühl," and its opposite as an " endliches"(1) It will be remembered that Kohlhaas in his interview with Luther becomes momentarily confused when it is put to him that he might be motivated by the " endliches Gefühl " of earthly revenge. Prinz Friedrich is concerned initially solely with his right to personal happiness, and adopts a selfish outlook: these are finite worldly considerations only, and can be only a hindrance to the Prince's recognition of his true destiny. A further definition is to be found in Kleist's short essay " Von der Überlegung ":- " Der Athlet kann, in dem Augenblick, da er seinen Gegner umfasst hält, schlechthin nach keiner anderen Rücksicht als nach blossen augenblicklichen Eingebungen verfahren, und derjenige, der berechnen wollte, welche Muskeln er anstrengen, und welche Glieder er in Bewegung setzen soll, um zu überwinden, würde unfehlbar den kürzeren ziehen und unterliegen. Aber nachher, wenn er gesiegt hat, oder am Boden liegt, mag es zweckmässig und an seinem Ort sein, zu überlegen, durch welchen Druck er seinen Gegner niederwarf, oder welches Bein er ihm hätte stellen sollen, um sich aufrecht zu erhalten." (2) In the heat of the moment, the athlete must necessarily rely not on contemplation, but on instinct, in order to conquer, or, indeed, in order to make any headway at all. The new direction of Kleist's thought here is that he now regards the intellect as the bar to the attainment of man's destiny, that instinct reacts in man totally independently of thought. This clearly marks a change from Kleist's view in " Die Marquise von O...", where the heroine made a conscious decision to trust her feelings.(3) Another example of Kleist's revised ideas is found in one of his letters dated 1807 : "... alles Unwillkürliche ist schön; und schief und verschoben alles, so bald es sich selbst

(1) K.4. p. 141

(3) K.3. p. 274

(2) K.4. p. 180

begreift." (1)

Previously Kleist had conceived independent feeling as an archway, with each stone held in place by its neighbour: the whole construction was held together only by the natural laws of its structure. (2) Now Kleist seems to hold a different view. The soul of the puppet is firmly linked by strings to the puppeteer or the Deity, and is now controlled by that power and not by itself. From this change we may perhaps estimate the extent of the influence of the ideas in the essay, and with it see the beginnings of Kleist's most optimistic period. The last use of the symbol of the archway is in "Penthesilea," and henceforth there is evidence of a more benevolent Deity involving itself in human affairs. This change might also be ascribed to Fichte again and his division of the two spheres of human activity. Most clearly is this to be seen in

1. "Das Käthchen von Heilbronn."

Theobald, describing the effect on Käthchen of her first meeting with vom Strahl, says: "Wenn mir Gott der Herr aus Wolken erschiene, so würde ich mich ohngefähr so fassen wie sie," (3) and, ironically, comes very close to the truth. God has sent these lovers together and the heroine, in a sudden shock, is aware of her destiny. This she accepts personally, without any question: as Fichte writes:—"Du wirkst in mir die Erkenntnis meiner Pflicht, von meiner Bestimmung in der Reihe der vernünftigen Wesen; Wie, das weiss ich nicht, noch bedarf ich es zu wissen." (4) Käthchen has utter confidence in her right course of action, wherever it may lead her, and this gives her the strength of will and purpose to suffer maltreatment at the hands of her lover vom Strahl, just as it gave the Amazon queen the strength to fight back. This is why Kleist could refer to his two heroines as opposites. Again, the character of the heroine and her dilemma

(1) K.V. p. 328

(2) K.V. p. 160

(3) K.2. p. 186

(4) Fichte, Med,3.  
p. 401

in a misunderstanding society, could well have been modelled on Fichte's ideal: " Am besten fasset dich " wrote the philosopher, " die kindliche dir ergebene Einfalt. Du bist ihr der Herzenskündiger, der ihr Inneres durchschaut, der aklgegenwärtige treue Zeuge ihrer Gesinnungen, der allein weiss, dass sie es redlich meint, und der allein sie kennt, ob sie auch von aller Welt misskannt würde. Du bist ihr der Vater, der es immer gut mit ihr meint, und der alles zu ihrem besten wenden wird. In deine gütigen Beschlüsse gibt sie sich ganz mit Leib und Seele. Tue mit ihr, wie du willst, sagt sie, ich weiss dass es gut sein wird, so gewiss du es bist, der es tut." (1) Also quite in the spirit of Fichte's religiosity is the appearance in Kleist's play of the heroine's guardian cherubs, and the happy chance that she should discover the truth about her rival Kunigunde.

Whereas Käthchen has the strength of purpose to resist the blows of fate, vom Strahl falls into the pattern of many of Kleist's male lovers. He admits often that he loves the heroine, but stifles these good feelings because she does not appear to conform to the earthly requirements which he has for the woman to be his wife: vom Strahl believes that he is to marry an emperor's daughter, which is why he rejects Käthchen in favour of Kunigunde. In the early stages of the play he is confused because his senses seem to contradict his common sense, and in the Phöbus print of the play, for example, Kleist confused Strahl still more by letting Kunigunde throw herself at Strahl's feet in exactly the same way as Käthchen. (2) But later Strahl is so confident in his error that he is prepared to whip the heroine as a threat to his destiny in marriage to Kunigunde, just as Penthesilea avenged herself on Achilles. There are tragic undertones here, as there were in the relationship of Rupprecht and Evchen in " Der zerbrochene Krug." But Kunigunde's use of cosmetics disguises her true self as Adam's wig disguised the true criminal and, as a deceiver, she must fail.

(1) Fichte, Med.3.  
p. 400

(2) c.f. Röbbeling, op.cit.  
p. 111.

Käthchen conceives her destiny through feeling and triumphs, but vom Strahl is trapped by the deficiencies of his human intellect. Not until Käthchen is miraculously rescued from the burning building does vom Strahl reject appearances and follow his feelings for her. Now it is his turn to throw himself down before Käthchen, and thank her for saving him from disaster and unhappiness through her selfless devotion to him. (1) And at the end of the play the heroine achieves her divine purpose when she becomes vom Strahl's wife: at the same time the ceremony also demonstrates to the world that Käthchen has triumphed over the world of appearances and has defeated Kunigunde, who is the symbol of that world.

In spite of Käthchen's success and the conversion of her lover to a more valid outlook, it would be erroneous to infer from the play that Kleist has reached a new peak of optimism. In the first place, "Käthchen" is a fairy-tale with all that the name implies. The sense of personal urgency, which accompanied Kleist's search for truth, led him normally to seek dramatic plots and situations in far less miraculous and more recognizable circles of life, and this play is intentionally, I believe, unreal. Again, the skilful dramatist who wrote "Der zerbrochene Krug" and "Der Prinz von Homburg" would certainly not descend without a good purpose to the extreme technical improbabilities of "Käthchen", with its divine intervention, dreams of a prophetic nature, the exchanged letters and generally unreal atmosphere. It is no less odd that Kleist should write here a drama of divine providence and then, some few months later, create in "Der Zweikampf" a dilemma which stresses the ambiguity of God's ways to man.

The probable interpretation is this: the pessimism engendered by Fichte in Kleist led him to view the world as essentially barbaric and unreliable, a view which was no doubt greatly fostered by Kleist's wrongful imprisonment at Fort Joux. Shortly after this unhappy event Kleist arrived in Dresden and



became acquainted with Fichte's solution to Kleist's dilemma, a solution based on religious "Glaube." But Kleist saw God not as a redeemer from the world, but rather as the creator of man's dilemma: so "Käthchen" came into being as a dissertation on Fichte's views, but with Kleist trying at the same time to show perhaps wistfully, that man does not live in an ideal world of dreams and miracles where all must finally come right, but in a frail and frightening one. For this reason probably the relationship between the heroine and vom Strahl must border on tragedy, and God is shown to take a keen and direct interest in the affairs of man. In short, Kleist saw Fichte's solution to the human dilemma as unreal, inapplicable and unacceptable to him.

Another influence on Kleist at this time is generally considered to have been the Romantic half-scientist, G.H. Schubert. Such an influence is historically ill-substantiated, since the sole evidence is a statement by Schubert to the effect that Kleist was an enthusiastic attendee at the former's lectures in Dresden. But Schubert proffered this information only some twenty years after the event in question, and one suspects that his memory may have been faulty, or that he perhaps wished to associate himself with the growing reputation of Kleist after Tieck had published Kleist's collected works. (1) However, there appear in "Käthchen" both the dream motif and a higher estimation of the validity in the metaphysical sphere of the unconscious state, and these are certainly themes which can be traced in Schubert's lectures.(2) But the dream motif, for example, seems to have been only of transient interest to Kleist, for nowhere else in his works does it play such a prominent role as in "Käthchen," and similarly Kleist was well aware, as we have seen, of the value of true feeling and subconscious instinct before his time in Dresden.

(1) c.f. A. Lütteken, "Die  
Dresdener Romantik u. H.  
v. Kleist, Leipzig, 1917,  
p. 35

(2) c.f. Röbbeling,  
op.cit. p.73ff.

Nevertheless he might well have been comforted to find a spiritual rapport with Schubert, and agreed wholeheartedly with the latter's assertion: " Wir finden selten, dass der natürliche Trieb Täuschungen oder Missgriffen ausgesetzt sei, wohl aber ist dieses in gewisser Hinsicht der Wille." (1) In any case it must not be forgotten that Schubert, like Kleist, stood very much in the shadow of the philosopher Fichte, and an affinity of ideas would be well-nigh inescapable.

## 2. " Prinz Friedrich von Homburg."

In " Käthchen," " Michael Kohlhaas " and " Die Hermannsschlacht " the central characters become aware of their true destinies and struggle to realise them in the " gebrechliche Welt!" In " Prinz Friedrich von Homburg " Kleist takes the actual process of recognition and magnifies it into the theme of his play. Thus the struggle to bring about this destiny plays a relatively small role in the play.

In the early scenes we are shown how the hero becomes increasingly embroiled with the transient things of this world, until he is finally unable to comprehend it. In the first scene he is discovered in a dream-like state in the palace garden, pre-occupied with visions of personal fame and happiness. Hohenzollern comments:

" ..... ein Nachtwandler....

..... beschäftigt,...

Sich träumend, seiner eignen Nachwelt gleich,

Den prächtigen Kranz des Ruhmes einzuwinden." (2)

This concern for the good opinion of the world and what it has to offer is a factor which, like vom Strahl's love for Kunigunde, can only impede the attainment of true grace for the prince. It is an example of an " endliches Bewusstsein " from the marionette essay, an example of " Reflexion ". Indeed, Hohenzollern uses that very image:

(1) cit. Stahl, op.cit.  
p. 38

(2) K.3. p. 22

" ..... Schade, ewig schade,  
Dass hier kein Spiegel in der Nähe ist !  
Er würd' ihm, eitel wie ein Mädchen, nahn  
Und sich den Kranz bald so, und wieder so,  
Wie eine florne Haube aufprobieren." (1)

These instincts in the prince are not truly metaphysical, but finite and worldly: this is why Hohenzollern can say that the prince's attitude is " ewig schade " for it will not help his attainment of his true destiny. It is, of course, very much akin to the spirit of the story of the bather in the essay. The Elector is the first to recognise the dangers in Homburg's behaviour, and he remarks how unreal and fantastic the scene is: " Fürwahr, ein Märchen glaubt' ich's !" (2) and again later:-

" Ins Nichts mit dir zurück, Herr Prinz von Homburg,  
Ins Nichts, ins Nichts! In dem Gefild' der Schlacht  
Sehn wir, wenn's dir gefällig ist, uns wieder!  
Im Traum erringt man solche Dinge nicht !" (3)

To the Elector the dream state is out of place in a military world; this is no longer the imaginary world of " Käthchen," and the prince's condition is an empty " Nichts."

What confronts Kleist's hero here is not the world of appearances as in the earlier works, but the real world. The problem here is not so much that appearances are contriving to deflect the prince from his purpose, as in the case of, say, vom Strahl or Rupprecht, but that the prince himself refuses to accept life for what it really is, and falls instead into a dream. His whole attitude to life at this stage is that of an unreality.

The Elector takes the laurel wreath from the prince and, winding it about his chain of office, he gives it to Natalie. To the susceptible Homburg this is a symbol - he sees his personal laurels linked with the dignified chain of state, and both seem

(1) K.3. p. 24

(3) K.3. p. 25

(2) K.3. p. 23

linked with the figure of Natalie. He feels in his dream that his destiny lies just before him - " Er steht lebhaft auf "(1) and stretches out his arms to greet Natalie who has holding the wreath and the chain, only to watch her disappear from sight.

Yet, in his half-conscious state, Homburg manages to snatch from Natalie a glove. When he fully awakes, this seems to him to be proof that his dream had some real significance:-

" Du hast mir, Glück, die Locken schon gestreift;  
Ein Pfand schon warfst du im Vorüberschweben,  
Aus deinem Füllhorn lächelnd mir herab." (2)

This is the prince's second error. First he committed himself to an attitude conceived in a dream, and now he sees the glove as proof of the validity of that dream. The truth of the matter for Kleist is that the glove is yet another misleading figment of the world of appearances, and is no more a guide to the truth than the wig of Judge Adam. The practical result of the prince's errors is that he muses on the happiness apparently in store for him, when he should be concentrating on the Elector's battle plan. Thus he arrives on the field of battle ignorant of the vital facts.

In the heat of the conflict the prince launches an attack in defiance of orders, acting upon impulse. He reproaches Kottwitz who reminds him of the orders:

" Auf Ordr'? Ei, Kottwitz! Reitest du so langsam ?  
Hast du sie noch vom Herzen nicht empfangen ?" (3)

But the prince is not alone in his decision and actions, like the athlete of whom Kleist wrote in " Von der Überlegung." He is a part of a greater organisation and his individual action is just as likely to cause disaster as success. In this case, the action of the prince is not motivated by the Romantic conception of the ultimate goodness of the instinct, but by a very selfish, " endliches Bewusstsein." Because vanity and personal

(1) K.3. p. 24

(3) K.3. p. 52

(2) K.3. p. 44

happiness have dominated his outlook hitherto, he has failed to acquire the piece of information which would have prevented his impetuous action at Fehrbellin.

This same self-centered attitude persists in the arguments put forward by the prince as to why the Elector should grant his release from prison. None of these significantly is based upon a sincere recognition by the prince of his guilt. His friend Hohenzollern realises the implications of this:-

Hohenzollern:-" Du Rasender.....

Und worauf stützt sich deine Sicherheit ?

Homburg :- Auf mein Gefühl von ihm." (1)

The prince has entirely misunderstood the position of the Elector, and sees him as the creator and the embodiment of the law, as a benevolent despot. He refers to the Elector in this spirit as " der Kurfürst mit der Stirn des Zeus " and compares him elsewhere with a " Genius des Ruhms." (2) Homburg cannot appreciate that the Elector is only the guardian of the law, and that, like the Amazon queen, he is responsible for the maintenance of the state, in this case the Prussian State. Neither can the prince at this point in the action envisage any system of law which does not guarantee him a right to personal happiness in this life: here we are reminded of Kleist's own earlier eudemonism.

But when the full implications of the Elector's position slowly dawn upon him, Homburg is forced to reconsider his own position. Faced with imminent death, he realises that it will bring total annihilation for him, for all his activities and actions hitherto have been solely concerned with this life and not the next. He certainly could not say with Friedrich von Trota in " Der Zweikampf," " Der Tod schreckt mich nicht mehr, und die Ewigkeit, soeben noch wie ein Meer unabsehbaren Elends vor mir ausgebreitet, geht wieder, wie ein Reich voll tausend

(1) K.3. p. 75

(2) K.3. p. 30,31.

glänziger Sonnen vor mir auf !" (1) Homburg's whole world has collapsed around him, and he realises that the only remaining truth in his universe is that he has life. It is typical of him that he should use these words when he begs the Eledress to intercede on his behalf for his life:-

" Nur ich allein, auf Gottes weiter Erde,  
Bin hilflos, ein Verlassener, und kann nichts!"(2)

and again,

" Ich gebe jeden Anspruch auf an Glück," (3)

he says, for

" Seit ich mein Grab sah, will ich nichts als leben  
Und frage nichts mehr, ob es rühmlich sei!" (4)

Kleist has thus stripped the prince of all his personal ambitions, his selfish desire for happiness and all those human traits of personality which surround and conceal what Kleist considers to be the essential metaphysical man. All the prince has now is life itself: and at this point he receives the letter which Homburg's friends have prevailed upon the Elector to send. The letter which offers the prince his life, if he can honestly say that he has been unjustly condemned, causes Homburg to re-value the Elector. He recognises now that the Elector is the representative of a far greater force in human affairs - the law. The custodian of the law has placed responsibility for the law into the prince's own hands, trusting that the feeling for the law, lying dormant in Homburg, will reveal it to him not as a tyrant, but as an organisation to which all men should belong voluntarily, and whose rules should be obeyed similarly. It is this act of trust by the Elector which stirs Homburg's "innerstes Gefühl," and he sees that by persisting in his selfishness, he is propagating the disease which would ultimately destroy the state. So he voluntarily accepts the Elector's sentence upon him:-

(1) K.3. p. 418

(3) K.3. p. 83

(2) K.3. p. 82

(4) K. 3. p. 84

" Ich will ihm, der so würdig vor mir steht  
Nicht, ein Unwürdiger, gegenüberstehen!  
Schuld ruht, bedeutende, mir auf der Brust,  
Wie ich es wohl erkenne: kann er mir  
Vergeben nur, wenn ich mit ihm drum streite,  
So mag ich nichts von seiner Gnade wissen." (1)

Homburg's true feeling for what he must do is able now to act untrammelled by his earlier "endliches Bewusstsein," to use the term from the marionette essay.

There is again a striking similarity between some of the fundamental conceptions of "Homburg" and those to be found in Fichte's writings. Like Kleist, Fichte argues that this life cannot be an end in itself but is a stepping-stone to others, and he maintains that the aim of this present existence is that man should learn to follow a "guter Wille." - "Der gute Wille nur kann es sein, er muss es sein, durch den wir für ein anderes Leben und für das erst dort aufzustellende nächste Ziel desselben arbeiten: die uns sichtbaren Folgen dieses Willens sind es, durch die wir in jenem Leben erst einen festen Standpunkt, von welchem aus wir dann weiter in ihm fortrücken können, uns erwerben." (2) Fichte's ideal here is exactly the same in its purpose as Kleist's conception of the dancing puppet; both represent the key to a future existence, the fulfilment of "die Bestimmung des Menschen." When Kleist's characters act in accordance with the dictates of their "innerstes Gefühl," they enter, as it were, the philosopher's "ewige Welt." At the beginning of the play Kleist shows the prince to be unworthy of the "ewige Welt" because his outlook is "endlich" - a term common to both Kleist's and Fichte's writings. Then, at the heart of the crisis, Homburg realises that the nature of man's actions in this life is far more important than life itself, and so he can make the superior moral decision. Life here ceases to

(1) K.3. p. 102

(2) Fichte, Med.3.p.378

be of value in itself, since it will continue into the infinite. Käthchen, too, was prepared to risk life itself for her love when she dashed into the burning building: and after his decision, the prince casts away his life lightly. His mood is very much that of Fichte:- " So stehe ich mit dem Einen, das da ist, in Verbindung, und nehme teil an seinem Sein. Es ist nichts wahrhaft Reelles, Dauerndes, Unvergängliches an mir, als diese beiden Stücke: die Stimme meines Gewissens und mein freier Gehorsam. Durch die erste neigt die geistige Welt sich zu mir herab, und umfasst mich, als eins ihrer Glieder; durch den zweiten erhebe ich mich selbst in diese Welt, ergreife sie und wirke in ihr." (1) In facing death with confidence, the prince no longer "sees" forwards, but rather "feels". This is the significance of the blindfold which he wears in the last scenes; he is symbolically cut off from the world, and is acting in accordance with an inner personal law. For this same reason Homburg is unable to answer Natalie when she asks him in the prison scene why he has changed his attitude:

Natalie: " Du Unbegreiflicher ! Welch eine Wendung -  
Warum ? Weshalb ?

Homburg: Bitte, frag' mich nicht!" (2)

For Homburg as for Kleist feelings defy accurate description, and words merely stultify them. The hero here is motivated by this indefinable metaphysical impulse: as he himself says, (3)

" Er handle, wie er darf;

Mir ziemt's hier zu verfahren, wie ich soll!"

This is not in any way a revised objective attitude to the law on Homburg's part. He is not fulfilling his duty in the sense that Schiller's figures do, but is following a purely personal destiny based upon his "Gefühl". Kommerell describes this process thus:

(1) Fichte, Med.3. p. 397

(2) K.3.p.100

For other aspects of the  
influence of Fichte on Kleist, c.f.

Unger, op.cit. p.137 (F. and "Homburg")

H. Gilow, Kleistjahrbuch 1922, p.49

(3) K.3.p.101

( Kottwitz is rep. of Fichte's ideas)



" Um zu fassen, was hier vorgeht, muss man das sterbliche Ich und das tragische Ich im Prinzen unterscheiden. Der Wunsch des Sterblichen ist, unter allen Umständen zu sein. Der Wunsch des tragischen Ich ist ..... "es" zu sein. Mit diesem "Es" ist ..... die mystische Selbstgewissheit und das Leben aus der Wahrheit des eigenen Wesens ( gemeint ), die statt Gott und Unsterblichkeit steht." (1) Kleist is trying to show in " Homburg " that the destiny of the individual is essentially bound up with that of the state, that the destiny of the state is the destiny of the individual, and vice versa. As Kohrs writes, ( das Gesetz ) ist ... unmittelbare Wirklichkeit in den Einzelnen. Gesetz und Gefühl stimmen hier überein, der Staat ist Anliegen des Einzelnen geworden." (2) There are, of course, here the same dubious political overtones to Kleist's thought as there were in " Die Hermannsschlacht." The political message to the German peoples from Kleist is the assertion that man's metaphysical instinct is in harmony with the demands of the Prussian law, and consequently that man's obligation to that law is metaphysically ordained. Fortunately the authorities of the time failed to recognise this feature of the play and banned it on the grounds that a Prussian officer never begged despicably for mercy. Ironically, of course, it is only because the prince is driven to this state that he realises his misdemeanours against the state. It seems also likely that after Kleist had established the existence of a " Rechtsgefühl " in " Homburg," he was prompted to resume work on his Novelle " Michael Kohlhaas," where he depicts the disastrous consequences of a break-down in the law.

Thus it is that the prince can finally be acclaimed as " Sieger in der Schlacht bei Fehrbellin," (3) for only through his error in battle has he achieved a truer relationship with the law. His final monologue of Act 5 Scene 10 shows him aware of his

(1) M. Kommerell, " Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche", Frankfurt am Main, 1940, p. 279-280

(2) I. Kohrs, "Vom Wesen d. Tragischen i. Drama Kleists" Marburg, 1950, p. 103

(3) K.3. p. 126.

destiny and sure of immortality- " Nun, O Unsterblichkeit, bist du ganz mein!" (1) Unger quite rightly speaks here of an " innere Überwindung des Todes;" (2) for the prince's perception of what lies ahead for him is unaffected by the covering over his eyes - " Du strahlst mir durch die Binde meiner Augen." (3) Like the imagery of the dancing doll is the hero's description of his mood:

" Es wachsen Flügel mir an beiden Schultern,

Durch stille Ätherräume schwingt mein Geist." (4)

A similar image can also be found in Fichte's writings, although Kleist's earlier use of it suggests that he did not borrow it from the philosopher when he wrote the marionette essay. Nevertheless the similarity to Homburg's outlook is unmistakable. Fichte wrote, " Für diese wird jene Philosophie, die ich erst jetzt durchaus verstehe, die erste Kraft, welche Psychen die Raupenhülle abstreife, und ihre Flügel entfalte, auf denen sie zunächst über sich selbst schwebt, und noch einen Blick auf die verlassene Hülle wirft, um sodann in höheren Sphären zu leben und zu walten." (5) The spirit of Homburg's rebirth can also be traced in many of Novalis' works, particularly in his " Fragmente." " Nur durch Sittlichkeit gelangen wir zu unseren Zwecken ..... ein Mensch, der Geist wird, ist zugleich ein Geist, der Körper wird ..... Diese höhere Art von Tod, wenn ich mich so ausdrücken darf, hat mit dem gemeinen Tod nichts zu schaffen - er wird etwas sein, was wir Verklärung nennen dürfen ..... Jeder Mensch kann seinen Jüngsten Tag durch Sittlichkeit herbeirufen..... Die besten unter uns, die bei ihren Lebzeit<sup>n</sup><sub>en</sub> zu der Geisterwelt gelangten - sterben nur scheinbar ..... Wer hier nicht zur Vollendung gelangt, gelangt vielleicht drüben - oder muss eine abermalige Laufbahn beginnen." (6)

The fact that the prince lives on and is forgiven for

(1) K.3. p. 124

(2) Unger, op.cit.p. 142.

(3) K.3. p. 124

(4) K.3. p. 124

(5) Fichte, Med.3.p. 405

(6) Novalis, Werke, Auswahl, ed. W.Rehm, Fischer - bücherei, 1956, p. 160

his transgressions, marks a change in Kleist's attitude. He seems now to believe that reliance on " das Gefühl " does not necessarily produce tragic isolation and obliteration, and that it is quite possible to come to terms with the fragile world. Fichte again strikes a revealing note: " Nicht erst, nachdem ich aus dem Zusammenhange der irdischen Welt gerissen sein werde, werde ich den Eingang in die überirdische erhalten. Ich bin und lebe schon jetzt in ihr, weit wahrer, als in der irdischen; schon jetzt ist sie mein einziger fester Standpunkt, und das ewige Leben, das ich schon längst in Besitz genommen, ist der einige Grund, warum ich das irdische fortführen mag." (1) After Homburg has realised his true metaphysical self, and followed the dictates of the law, it becomes pointless to punish him, for he has shown in his attitude to the Elector's letter that he is fully in tune with the spirit of the law. Kleist describes this development in mathematical terms in the marionette essay, using the examples of a hyperbola and a concave mirror. " Doch so, wie der Durchschnitt zweier Linien, auf der einen Seite eines Punkts, nach dem Durchgang durch das Unendliche, sich plötzlich wieder auf der anderen Seite einfindet, oder das Bild des Hohlspiegels, nachdem es sich in das Unendliche entfernt hat, plötzlich wieder dicht vor uns tritt; so findet sich auch, wenn die Erkenntnis gleichsam durch ein unendliches gegangen ist, die Grazie wieder ein." (2) Accordingly, after his collapse, Homburg's spirit passes symbolically through infinity, but returns to its original point transformed - in the graceful state of the doll, or as a member of Fichte's "ewige Welt."

Homburg's experience shows that, in Kleist's view, the answer to the problem of life lies in life itself, and only by coming into conflict with the manifestations of this unhappy world of appearances can man discover his true destiny. Kohrs describes Homburg as a " Bild für das völlige Durchleben und

(1) Fichte, Med.3. p. 379

(2) K.4. p. 141

Durchleiden des Weltbezuges," (1) and we may also view the symbol of the puppet in the same light. Although the doll is controlled by strings from above, the puppeteer relies on the downward pull of gravity to keep the strings taut. But for gravity, the puppeteer could exercise no control over his doll. In "Homburg" the hero struggles with life and finally overcomes it: and in doing so he breaks through into that state of paradise in which Kleist had always believed, even from the darkest days of "Die Familie Schroffenstein." Whereas Käthchen, Kleist's ideal in this respect, never falls from paradise, Homburg finds his way into that condition after making "die Reise um die Welt", as Kleist defines it in his essay. (2) Homburg himself lives on here, and not merely his name, as happens in "Amphitryon" (Alkmene's child) or "Michael Kohlhaas" (the hero's sons who are finally knighted as their father dies on the scaffold.) That Kleist regards his hero as having regained paradise, is seemingly evident from a letter he wrote to Sophie Haza-Müller in November 1811, in which he describes paradise as a place "lauter himmlischer Fluren und Sonnen ..... in deren Schimmer ..... wir ..... mit langen Flügeln an den Schultern umherwandeln werden." (3) Surely this is the same imagery used by Homburg in his final monologue? The play begins and ends with the hero in an unconscious state in the palace garden: from his early, blissfully naive outlook the prince makes the long painful journey through the real world to ultimate paradise. The action of "Homburg" is, as it were, a vast circle from the old prince to the new. Suddenly aware that he has triumphed in the last scenes, the prince faints. "Himmel! die Freude tötet ihn!" says Natalie (4) - this is not relief on the part of Homburg, but the joy of paradise. "Schlug meiner Leiden letzte Stunde?" he asks, as he looks back on this life. (5)

(1) Kohrs, op.cit.p. 126

(4) K.3. p. 126

(2) K.4. p. 137

(3) K.V. p. 436

(5) K.3. p. 125

Stranz gives Homburg the flower growing in the palace garden, that same symbol of happiness, the "Pflänzchen des Glücks," to which Kleist referred many years before. (1) It is not without significance that Kleist chose the diminutive form of the noun to represent that delicate and beautiful condition of happiness, which at that time eluded him. Whereas, too, Kleist had described man's vision as too feeble "für die leuchtende Sonne des Glücks," (2) Homburg stares happiness in the face: "Du strahlst ..... mit Glanz der tausenfachen Sonne zu." (3) He has left this vale of tears behind him, like an unpleasant dream, "Ist es ein Traum?" he asks, "Was sonst?" replies Kottwitz (4).

In the course of this play Homburg discovers his true self: the Elector, on the other hand, experiences confirmation of ideals which he has cherished for some time. He does not condemn the prince simply out of an over-zealous approach to the detail of the law of which he is the guardian. The stage directions tell us that he is "betroffen," (5) when Natalie bears him the news of Homburg's ignominious collapse. Hitherto he has regarded the Prussian state in the abstract sense as the expression of human ordered society, an arrangement through which man is able to find true self-expression. In other words, it has not occurred to the Elector that Homburg's destiny would not be in harmony with the state. Now he is forced to the conclusion that, to the prince, the state appears as a dreadfully repressive force, and that the Elector himself must appear to be an evil, heartless tyrant. If, on the other hand, the prince's feeling for the law is an "endliches Bewusstsein," then it would be pointless to compel him to obey. The Elector is thus on the horns of a dilemma: the spirit of the law must be maintained, yet the final decision must be left to Homburg himself, for the state is nothing if it lacks the support of its members - the same view which

(1) K.2. p. 25 and  
K.3. p. 124

(2) K.2. p. 25, 41.

(3) K.3. p. 124

(4) K.3. p. 126

(5) K.3. p. 89

dominated the outlook of the Amazon queen to the law of her state. This conflict threatens to confuse the Elector's feeling for the law, but characteristically he decides to trust Homburg's instinct. The risk is that the prince might not recognise the law, in which case the Elector and everything he stands for would be in the wrong. But after his affirmation,

" Die höchste Achtung, wie dir wohl bekannt,

Trag' ich im Innersten für sein Gefühl," (1)

neither the warning issued by Dörffling, nor the assembled generals can shake him from his purpose. Through Homburg's decision he is vindicated:

" Blüht doch aus jedem Wort, das du gesprochen,

Jetzt mir ein Sieg auf..... " (2)

The Elector's instinct that the individual human destiny is a *sine qua non* of the national destiny has been justified. At the same time trust has been shown to be the factor which holds the state together, and is the valid relationship between men. Because the law has been recognised, Homburg's death becomes pointless, so the Elector can tear up the warrant. When he had previously thought about doing this, it was because he realised that the compulsory subjugation of the prince would be a denial of the true nature and spirit of the law.

D.F.S. Scott notes that " Homburg " is in some measure Kleist's " Faust," "if one is prepared to accept it as a distillation of Kleist's life and thought." (3) Certainly there is much in common between Kleist's own dilemma and that of his hero Homburg. The poet's early optimistic eudemonism is reflected in the prince's desire for the personal happiness of which Natalie is to him the

(1) K.3. p. 90

(3) Scott, op.cit. p.483.

(2) K.3. p. 121

symbol. Similarly, the prince's eager search for fame and fortune resembles Kleist's own attitude to his "Robert Guiskard," the work with which he was to become at one stroke a second Shakespeare and win the laurels of German poetic art from Goethe. Whether Kleist ever, in truth, made the remark "Ich werde ihm (Goethe) den Kranz von der Stirne reißen!" (1) will probably never be known, but it is nonetheless characteristic of him.

Both Kleist and his hero experience the utter collapse of the world as they conceive it. Homburg's semi-conscious state in the first scenes of the play is conceivably a symbol of Kleist's own early, naive philosophy. At the time of writing "Homburg," Kleist now seems to regard his enlightened views as little more than an idyllic dream before his rude awakening to the brutal realities of this life. One thinks here of Fichte's sharp reminder: "Nicht zum müßigen Beschauen und Betrachten deiner selbst, oder zum Brüten über andächtigen Empfindungen, - nein, zum Handeln bist du da." (2) It is no less possible that the prince's impulsive action at Fehrbellin is Kleist's poetic image for his own impulsive grasping at the ideal of "Guiskard," for each turns out to be a "falsches Ziel," and evokes disaster. (3) In their subsequent re-appraisal of life, both men confess that the search for fame and distinction in this life is of little value: "Denn es ist doch nicht, um etwas zu erwerben, dass wir hier leben: Ruhm und alle Güter der Welt, sie bleiben ja bei unserem Staube," (4) wrote Kleist in 1805, echoing the words used by Natalie in pleading for Homburg:

"Ach, was ist Menschengröße, Menschenruhm!" (5) Similarly the spirit of Homburg's monologue of Act 4, Scene 3 is akin to that of Kleist in a letter dated 1806: "Welch eine Kurzsichtigkeit ..... gehört dazu, hier, wo alles mit dem Tode endet, nach etwas zu streben!" (6), since both establish a

(1) c.f. R. March, "Kleist"  
Cambridge, 1954, p. 22

(2) Fichte, Med.3. p. 345

(3) c.f. supra: K.V. p.226

(4) Not in Schmidt edn.  
c.f. Unger, op.cit.  
p. 110

(5) K.3. p. 90

(6) K.V. p. 326

decidedly " diessseitige " outlook. But both men realise ultimately that " das Leben ist das einzige Eigentum, das nur dann etwas wert ist, wenn wir es nicht achten," (1) and are carried through the conflict by feeling and not by any intellectual principle. Now Homburg, by relying on this inward certainty of what to do, gains the fame and happiness of which he had dreamed: it is of course typical of Kleistian incomprehensible providence that he should win it in a most unusual and unexpected way. In doing so, the prince fulfils his destiny in this world. Here the parallel with Kleist's life seems to end abruptly, unless we are prepared to assume that, in some way, Kleist feels that he has at last achieved his own destiny as a poet, the feeling for which developed in him during his philosophical crisis. This assumption is not unreasonable, when we consider that all Kleist's works hitherto have been saturated with reflections of Kleist's experiences with Fichte's philosophy. At any rate, it is surely to the attainment of his destiny to which Kleist refers in his " grossartiges, dunkelvielsagendes ' Gebet des Zoroaster," (2): " Nun lässtest du es, von Zeit zu Zeit, niederfallen, wie Schuppen, von dem Auge eines deiner Knechte, den du dir erwählt, dass er die Torheiten und Irrtümer seiner Gattung überschaue; ihn rüstest du mit dem Köcher der Rede, dass er, furchtlos und liebevoll, mitten unter sie trete, und sie mit Pfeilen, bald schärfer, bald leiser, aus der wunderlichen Schlafsucht, in welcher sie befangen liegen, wecke. Auch mich, O Herr, hast du, in deiner Weisheit, mich wenig Würdigen, zu diesem Geschäft erkoren." (3) The symbol of the divine poetic mission of which Kleist speaks is, I believe, " Prinz Friedrich von Homburg," and it is a mark of Kleist's genius that he was able to introduce into the objective work a figure who owes so much to Kleist's own experience.

But what innovations are there in this play to justify

(1) K.V. p. 244

(3) In the "Abendblätter"  
K.4. p. 127

(2) c.f. Rogge, op.cit. p. 39



its claim to be a unique contribution by Kleist to German poetry ? Von Wiese sees in the work the happy reconciliation of the poet in general with society, a theme reminiscent of Goethe's "Tasso". This critic argues that Kleist does not intend " das Dichtertum durch den Staat oder den Staat durch den Dichter zu entwerten, sondern die holde Bewusstlosigkeit des im Traume gefangenen Prinzen erweitert sich ..... zu einer Freiheit, die auch noch den ..... Staat in ihre Wesensmitte aufnehmen kann." The Prussian state on the other hand recognises that " alle menschlichen Satzungen und Ordnungen bedingt bleiben im Hinblick auf die unfassbaren, schöpferischen Lebenskräfte, auf die Unmittelbarkeit der Existenz, aus der allein neue Ordnungen, neue Werke, neue Taten hervorgehen können." (1) Insofar as Kleist admittedly had continual difficulties with the civil authorities during his life, this conception is valid, but the real problems of Kleist's life were philosophical and not material or social, as von Wiese's view would seem to imply. The real metaphysical significance of " Homburg " for its creator lay in the stylistic problem which Kleist took up originally when he was writing " Guiskard " - the synthesis of ancient and modern poetic styles. Lessing and Herder, Goethe and Schiller and the Schlegel brothers, all wrestled with it, and, if we can attach significance to the elder Wieland's all too often quoted eulogy, " Wenn die Geister des Aeschylus, Sophokles und Shakespeares sich zu einer Tragödie verbänden, so würde ein diesen Bruchstücken gemässer Guiskard ans Licht treten und die grosse, auch durch Schiller und Goethe noch offengelassene Lücke der deutschen Literatur ausfüllen," (2) Kleist's play would seem to have been the most gifted. In " Wallenstein " - a play which Kleist particularly admired (3) - Schiller aimed to combine the analytical technique of Greek tragedy with Shakespeare's tragedy of character and the latter's greater theatrical richness

(1) B.v.Wiese, "Die deutsche Tragödie v. Lessing bis Hebbel," 4th edn. Hamburg 1958, p. 335

(3) K.5. p.180

(2) Letter, 10th. April, 1804 c.f. F.Martini, " Deutsche Lit. Gesch." Stuttgart, 1952, p.294

and life, as he also did in " Maria Stuart." In the prologue to " Wallenstein," Schiller specifically lays out for the German drama a path midway between Shakespeare and antiquity, (1) and long before Goethe symbolised the synthesis in the union of Faust and Helena, Friedrich Schlegel wrote to his brother: " Das Problem unserer Poesie scheint mir die Vereinigung des Wesentlich - Modernen mit dem Wesentlich - Antiken: wenn ich hinzusetze, dass Goethe, der erste einer ganz neuen Kunstperiode, einen Anfang gemacht hat, sich diesem Ziele zu nähern, so wirst Du mich wohl verstehen." (2) This, too, was the fusion of styles which Schiller confessed to be a feature of his " Braut von Messina." (3)

Kleist never renounced his "Guiskard" ideal. In "Amphytrion" there is the largely unsuccessful attempt at a combination of pagan and Christian mythology: Sophocles' technique in "Oedipus" clearly influenced " Der zerbrochene Krug " (4). The style and diction of " Penthesilea " are antique while the characterisation and the dramatic situation are essentially of Kleist's own age and temperament. In a review of this play Zschokke commented of Kleist: " Er kommt mir wie ein werdender Shakespeare vor, der sich in den tragischen Formen des Sophokles bewegen möchte." (5)

" Prinz Friedrich von Homburg " is outwardly quite regular in structure, and of all Kleist's plays it most nearly upholds the tenets of Classicism. Yet the author's psychological insight is essentially modern and goes much deeper than that of the older poets, reaching almost unheard of extremities in the central figure of Homburg himself. The prince is, at the same time, a responsible military commander and a Romantic dreamer, but not in such a way as to make him incredible. The minor characters too receive treatment which makes them individuals with life - such a one is the traditional confidant Hohenzollern. And the poetic

(1) Schiller, ed.cit. vol.2. p.17 (5) K.2. p.18-9

(2) "F.Schlegels Briefe an seinen Bruder" ed. O.Walzel, Berlin 1890, p.170

(3) Schiller, ed.cit. vol.2.p.465

(4) c.f.W.v.Gordon, "Die dram. Hand. in "Ödipus" und Kleists "Krug", Halle, 1926

conciliation is symbolised in the conflict between the prince and the Elector: neither the former, " das deutsche Herz ", nor the latter, " die starre Antike " (1) is victorious over the other. Instead, each learns something from the other. The law can be humane, and feeling and individualism can be disciplined, because they share the same common denominator, "Das Gefühl." And can it be a coincidence that the laurels of Classicism grow side by side with the night-flowers of Romanticism in the palace garden ? The whole atmosphere of the garden scenes at the beginning and end of the play forms an attractive fringe of the infinite around an action which is decidedly of this world. The Classical play with a realistic bias gains an element of the world of dreams.

In the literary journal " Phöbus," Kleist's co-editor Adam Müller published a series of articles giving his views on tragedy. According to Müller, tragedy will eventually overcome and surpass the significance it had for the Greeks. This new tragedy is superior for Müller by virtue of its religious significance. In it, as in every historical tragedy, he distinguishes three stages: the moment of resurrection at the beginning, the catastrophe or higher moment of death which is the turning point of the action, and finally the moment of assumption. Müller believes, that between the catastrophe and the end, the hero rises to freedom and at length gains a balance between freedom and necessity. In Greek drama we find many examples of contempt of death, but none of a conquest of death, which for Müller is to be the theme of the new, ideal tragedy. Novalis, incidentally, is Müller's example of a personification of his view. (2) As many critics have noted, there is a strong agreement between the theme of " Homburg " and Müller's thesis, (3) and this is probably one of the intellectual affinities on which the Kleist-Müller relationship was based. (4) But even

(1) K.3. p. 70

(2) "Phöbus" ed. Meyer u. Jessen  
München, 1924, p. 3-13.

(3) c.f. Lütteken, op.cit. p.71-2  
P. Kluckhohn, "Dtsch. Romantik"  
Bielefeld, 1924, p. 259-60

(4) Scott, op.cit.  
p. 483.

discounting the possible influence of Müller, there is evidence in Kleist's last play that Kleist holds a new view of tragedy. The climax does not bring with it the death of the hero, but is much more a passing phase. Death here is seen not as the end but a beginning, and, in a sense, the Homburg who speaks the beautiful monologue of Act 5 scene 10 has already passed the door of death. Death is here, with tragedy, a beneficent and purifying process. (1)

In Kleist's attitude to "Homburg" lies, I believe, the reason for his suicide. It is not true to say, as Rieschel does, (2) that Kleist's desperate search for his destiny ceased at the time of his collapse over "Guiskard." Rieschel's evidence of this is principally that Kleist does not use the term "Bestimmung" at any time in a letter after that time, a method which is hardly conclusive. It is nearer the truth to say that even though "Guiskard" seemed to have eluded him at the time, Kleist was aware that he was destined to solve the problem, if not then, sometime in the future. Having recognised what he was called upon to do, his need to talk of his search for it of course disappeared. If now we assume that "Homburg" was to Kleist his poetic destiny, then he had entered the state of his own puppet, and, like his self-portrait Homburg, he ceased to have any regard for this life. When the Elector gives the prince the wreath at the end of the play, he gives him symbolically that same "Kranz der Unsterblichkeit" which Kleist said would be his one day. (3) Like so many of his literary figures, Kleist felt that he had won a foothold in the hereafter. Unger says of the "Guiskard" ideal " (Kleists Prograamm) lautete .... erst das Werk vollenden, dann sterben." (4) This is why his suicide was so happy an event for Kleist: it was not the end, but the beginning of that migration

(1) W. Silz, "Kleist's conception of the tragic." Göttingen and Baltimore, 1923, p. 17-19c.f.

(2) H. Rieschel, "Tragisches Wollen" Berlin/Wien/Leipzig 1939, p.92-3

(3) K.V.p. 297

(4) Unger, op.cit. p. 128

into the infinite from planet to planet, to which he refers so often. He describes his attitude before his death as "zufrieden und heiter ..... mit der ganzen Welt versöhnt," (1) and like Homburg could indeed say of his struggles in this world:

"Fort! - Mit der Welt schloss ich die Rechnung ab!" (2)

(1) K.V. p. 440

(2) K.3. p. 122.

CHAPTER SEVEN:- Kleist's view of woman.

In Kleist's world the problem which confronts man is how he should act for the best in a given set of circumstances. The essence of the dilemma is that the world of appearances will offer little reliable assistance, and may even seduce Kleist's heroes and heroines into disastrous courses of action. Yet while man's destiny for Kleist may direct him, like Kohlhaas, into totally uncharacteristic actions, woman is in the more fortunate position of having an earthly destiny which is recognisable and at the same time valid within Kleist's metaphysical scheme of things. He wrote, for example, in a letter (1) " Deine Bestimmung, liebe Freundin, oder überhaupt die Bestimmung des Weibes ist wohl unzweifelhaft und unverkennbar: denn welche andere kann es sein, als diese, Mutter zu werden, und der Erde tugendhafte Menschen zu erziehen? Und wohl euch, dass eure Bestimmung so einfach und beschränkt ist! Durch euch will die Natur nur ihre Zwecke erreichen, durch uns Männer auch der Staat noch die seinigen, und daraus entwickeln sich oft die unseligsten Widersprüche."

Kleist's conception of woman evidently owes something to his study of Wieland, for there are frequent similarities of terminology in these authors' works. When Kleist wrote to Wilhelmine " O, lege den grossen Gedanken wie einen diamanten Schild um deine Brust: ich bin zu einer Mutter geboren," (2) he seems to echo Wieland: " Und lege um diese allzu zarte Brust, wie einen diamanten Schild, den grossen Gedanken: ich bin für die Ewigkeit geschaffen." (3) Röbbeling also senses the influence of Wieland on " Käthchen ": " Ist es ein Zufall " he writes, " dass auch gerade in ' Sixt und Klärchen ' sich der Hinweis auf Diogenes befindet und von den ' zweigebeinten federlosen Tieren ' die Rede ist, dass gerade die Kindlichkeit, Schönheit und Engelkeuschheit Käthchens so wie Klärchens so hervorgehoben wird, dass auch 'O, du, wie nenn' ich dich?' das sich bei Wieland öfter

(1) K.V. p. 132

(2) K.V. p. 143

(3) c.f. Röbbeling, op.cit.  
p. 83

findet, im " Käthchen" wörtlich vorkommt ? Noch viele Kleinigkeiten, die in dieser Fülle und in diesem Zusammenhange von Wert sind, liessen sich anführen, z.B. " Cherubim " als Singular, " Iris," " dieser gefährlicher Affe der Vernunft u.a. " (1)

The female characters in Kleist's works are seen usually in the light of their peculiar destiny of love in all its aspects. A random but typical example is Ortrere's advice to the Amazon queen: " Werd' eine Mutter stolz und froh, wie ich!" (2) This destiny thus has a more earthly and less metaphysical implication for woman, and it is evident that Kleist ascribed to her little metaphysical significance or importance. (3) His attitude to his female correspondents was one of a teacher who was trying to educate them to a greater awareness of metaphysics as he conceived it. In this respect Lisbeth in " Kohlhaas " is a typical example, for she seems totally unable to comprehend the metaphysical aspects of the dilemma faced by her husband. She can see only the Christian principle of forgiveness as the solution for him, but he sees the problem on a metaphysical and not a social or earthly plane: to him the approach which she advocates would be tantamount to admitting the supremacy of the power of chance, and he regards it as irrelevant. (4) Natalie too fails to grasp the metaphysical aspect for Kleist of Homburg's conflict with the law. She regards the state in this instance simply as a product of the irrational world and a heartless despotism:

Natalie: " Das Kriegsgesetz, das weiss ich wohl, soll herrschen, Jedoch die lieblichen Gefühle auch." (5)

Here she uses the term "Gefühl" to signify love of one's fellow men, and not in the sense of the metaphysical " innerstes Gefühl" upon which the hero ultimately pins his faith in salvation.

It is this same awareness of her destiny as a woman

(1) Röbbeling, op.cit. p.87

(4) K.3. p. 165

(2) K.2. p. 119

(3) c.f. E. Stranik, "Kleist und seine Novellen" Kleistjahrbuch 1922, p. 106

(5) K.3. p. 88

which provokes Penthesilea's tragic dilemma. Kleist chose this rather unusual post-classical legend because he needed for his central figure, <sup>a character</sup> who possessed apparently two equally valid, but self-contradicting, personal motives. One of these was to be relevant to the world of appearances, and the other of a metaphysical significance. Despite her responsibility to her state, the queen has always had a premonition of her other destiny as a woman in this world, hence her remark to Achill: "Mein ewiger Traum warst du." (1) On the one hand, as a warrior she must conquer and subdue, on the other, as a woman, she must be conquered and subordinated to her lover. From these premises the play moves to its inescapably tragic solution. Käthchen too is motivated by two destinies, one which arises in her God-sent dream, and the other in her personal love for vom Strahl: but in this play both destinies are focussed on the same end, namely marriage with the hero, and thus no tragic situation can arise in this aspect of the play. Kleist's view of his heroines as opposites is thus vindicated and further illuminated.

Yet even given this relative clarity about their own destinies, Kleist's women have often just as much difficulty as their male counterparts in bringing them to fruition. In this light, "Amphitryon" must be viewed as much more than a simple tragedy of sensory perception. It is the tragedy of a woman whose eternal destiny has become a torture, hence, perhaps, Alkmene's final "Ach!" (2) Similar, too, is the situation in "Die Marquise von O...", where the irregular nature of the child's conception, like Jupiter's visit, is an affront to the female function in this world, which accounts for the heroine's hatred for her lover. The point of difference between the Marquise and Alkmene, as we have noted, lies in their attitudes to their situation. By way of contrast, Josephe in "Das Erdbeben in Chili" knows the identity of her lover, and conceives her child under circumstances which are not at all miraculous or mysterious. But the fragile world

(1) K.2. p. 121

(2) K.1. p. 312



reveals itself in the incompatibility of their social positions, and, as a nun guilty of misconduct, she is condemned to die.(1)

In his essay in his "Athenäum", "Über die Philosophie-an Dorothea," Friedrich Schlegel wrote: " Ist aber die männliche Gestalt reicher, selbstständiger, künstlicher und erhabener, so möchte ich die weibliche Gestalt menschlicher finden. In dem schönsten Manne ist die Göttlichkeit und Tierheit weit abgesonderter. In der weiblichen Gestalt ist beides verschmolzen, wie in der Menschheit selbst," (2) a view which comes remarkably near in spirit to Kleist's own. Woman is less intellectual and more sentimental than man, and, as such, she is a more fitting representative of Kleist's view of unconditional trust as the only valid basis of human relationships. Generally speaking, it is the women in Kleist's works who follow this ideal most closely, and thus set an example for the men. Significantly too, Kleist sees this capacity as an intrinsic part of woman's destiny, since the most sincere expression of trust is love. " Vertrauen und Achtung sind die beiden Grundpfeiler der Liebe," Kleist wrote in an early letter, and again later, " Was ist des Strebens würdig, wenn es die Liebe nicht ist?" (3) Even in the dark days of " Die Familie Schroffenstein," Kleist held to the belief that trust and love might conquer the vicissitudes of the world of appearances, and it was for this reason probably that he chose the Romeo and Juliet theme for his play. Here he found a ready-made story of the power for good contained in love:

" A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Do with their death bury their parents' strife." (4)

Thus Ottokar demands of his love,

" D'rum will ich, dass du nichts mehr vor mir birgst,  
Und fordre ernst dein unumschränkt Vertrauen."(5)

(1) K.3. p. 295

(2) ed.cit. vol.2,1, p.2ff.

(3) K.V. p.57 and 326

(4) Shakespeare, Prologue,  
"Romeo and Juliet"

(5) K.1. p. 49

Evchen in the "Krug", as we have noted, demands a similar trust from her lover; Littegarde in "Der Zweikampf" gains the trust of her protector, but loses it when it appears that he must choose between that trust and the clear will of God. So great is Kleist's faith in the value of trust that he seems to say, in "Der Zweikampf", that man should be prepared to trust his love even if it appears to contradict God. And God himself deliberately puts man's trust on trial by causing the initial illogical result of the duel: the result is a greater appreciation by the characters in this Novelle of the power of trust.

Here again Kleist argues with himself. Toni, the heroine of "Die Verlobung in St. Domingo" perverts the goodness of trust. She is the decoy, who lures unsuspecting white men into the clutches of the evil Hoango by making use of her charms, and relying on their trust in her. She deceives their trust, just as Kunigunde deceives vom Strahl by her use of make-up. But Kleist sees something almost holy in the true relationship of lovers, a view which he depicts in the dress-changing scene in his first play:

Ottokar: "

Denn wozu noch

Das Unergründliche geheimnisvoll

Verschleiern? Alles Schöne, liebe Agnes,

Braucht keinen anderen Schleier, als den eignen,

Denn der ist freilich selbst die Schönheit."(1)

So Toni and Kunigunde as deceivers must be punished, like Judge Adam and Ventidius. In Gustav, Toni recognises the fulfilment of her destiny as a woman. But he, the only man she has ever honestly loved, is the only one who fails to trust her, and she dies with the biting ironical cry: "Du hättest mir nicht misstrauen sollen!" (2)

Like her male counterpart, Kleistian woman can achieve the

(1) K.1. p. 144

(2) K.3. p. 351

grace of the puppet in fulfilling her destiny, and is thus in direct rapport with the Deity. Thus Josephe in "Das Erdbeben in Chili" is condemned by the frailty of this world, and God, outraged, acts directly and liberates her through the earthquake: similarly, by her determination to solve the mystery and regularise her situation, the Marquise succeeds. Because of this link with God, some of Kleist's female characters are able to act as foreboders of the future, as Cassandra-like figures. Braig comments: "In der Stimme der Liebe spricht Gottes Stimme, wenn sie rein und unschuldig ist. Durch die irdische Liebe kann so die Vorsehung wirken ...." (1) Typical of these are Donna Elizabeth in "Das Erdbeben" and Kohlhaas' Lisbeth, who act as God's agents. Through Lisbeth's death, God gives her husband the spiritual impetus to make him sure of what he must do, for, while she was alive, she had been a source of confusion of feeling for him: his responsibilities as a husband and father had weighed very heavily in Kohlhaas' considerations of what he should do. Nevertheless, Lisbeth's untimely death rudely prevents her from fulfilling her destiny as Kohlhaas' wife and protector. For his part, he becomes progressively more involved with the trammels of the world, and so God sends Lisbeth back to him, so that she might finally achieve her purpose in helping and comforting her husband. But when she reappears, it is as a broken, haggard old woman, Kleist's symbol of a woman destroyed by her failure to fulfil her destiny on earth. Even the change of name from Lisbeth to Elizabeth shows a change to a colder, less intimate name. Because she is sent to help Kohlhaas, the old woman can say on leaving: "Auf Wiedersehen, Kohlhaas, auf Wiedersehen! Es soll dir, wenn wir uns wiederfreffen, an Kenntnis über dies alles nicht fehlen." (2) For Kleist both people can, like Homburg, look forward to immortality as the reward for achieving their divine destinies. It is significant that in the

(1) Braig, op.cit. p. 176

(2) K.3. p. 243

first version of " Kohlhaas ", dating back to 1805, there was no " Doppelgänger " of Elizabeth. We assume that at the time Kleist saw no power in the cosmos which could counteract the wilful evil-doer such as Nicolo or the Junker, and that man might well be prevented by the world and circumstances from achieving his true destiny. Thus man and wife would die cruelly and pointlessly, like Piachi in " Der Findling."

Gustav, the hero of " Die Verlobung in St. Domingo," has an experience akin to Kohlhaas'. His fiancée, Marianne Congreve, had sacrificed her own life in order to save him from the guillotine. She had seen her true course of action in saving her love, and, unlike Kohlhaas' wife, had achieved it. So God grants her a way to a possible measure of happiness, when he makes Toni into Marianne's double, and sends her again to Gustav. At the same time, this reincarnation is for Kleist the symbol of the immortality of pure love, that only indestructible force. (1) There is a point of contact here between Kleist's thought and that of Novalis, who wrote in his novel " Heinrich von Ofterdingen " " Mich dünkt, sagte Mathilde, ich kannte Dich seit undenklichen Zeiten," (2) and " Ja, Mathilde, wir sind ewig, weil wir uns so lieben." (3) But whereas Marianne was white, Toni is black; like Penthesilea and Käthchen they are opposites, Marianne pure and virtuous, Toni the temptress. To be more accurate, Kleist tells us that in fact Toni is a half-caste, the product of both black and white. (4) She is a fundamentally moral woman forced by unhappy circumstances into an immoral existence. But because Gustav identifies his love with the outward appearance of Marianne and her impeccable moral reputation, he is blinded by appearances and fails to recognise the spirit of his love in Toni. This is his personal tragedy. Kleist's point in the stories of these

(1) K.3. p. 329

(3) loc.cit. p. 262

(2) Novalis, "Heinrich von Ofterdingen," Schriften, 1802, p. 260

(4) K.3. p. 314

heroines is again the incomprehensibility of God's ways to man, and his methods of making his will known on earth. There is very little sectarian religious colouring in these works, which is one factor which distinguishes them from Käthchen's story: it is her task quite clearly to make known God's will to her very reluctant lover vom Strahl, hence Theobald's comment:

" Was Gott fügt, heisst es, soll der Mensch nicht scheiden!" (1)

Thus, in many ways, these figures fulfil the same role as the duel itself in " Der Zweikampf."

" Die Heilige Cäcilie, oder die Gewalt der Musik " is very much a personal confession on Kleist's part, and it sheds light on his views on formal religion toward the end of his life. The four " Bilderstürmer " are cynics, like the young Kleist in Dresden at the time of his first experiences with the Catholic church. In the Novelle, God acts directly through the double of Sister Antonia and averts the catastrophe which was imminent. But it is significant that the young men in the story are not so much converted to Catholicism, but are rather driven to realise the magnitude of their sins. Kleist, in a sense, is here regarding the church from afar, not the misguided church of " Das Erdbeben in Chili," but here a power for good. In very much the same way, Kohlhaas receives a warning from the Abbess at Erlabrunn, and a thunderbolt strikes as he prepares to attack, a clear statement of God's displeasure. (2) Kleist's attitude to the church here is that God protects his own, and that his ways are bewildering and unclear to all but the uninitiated. Perhaps this is why the only deeply religious figures in Kleist's works are nuns in religious orders: there is evidence that Kleist envied them, but yet was unable to join them in complete faith.

The existence of a personal destiny for each man was for Kleist the difference between man and animal. The animal is a lower species, motivated largely by the need for self-preservation.

(1) K.2. p. 307

(2) K.3. p. 171

Thus Kleist wrote: " Nämlich ist er bestimmt, mit allen Zügen seines künstlichen Instruments einst jene grosse Composition des Schöpfers auszuführen, indessen das Tier, auf seiner Rohrpfife, nichts mehr als den einzigen Ton hören lassen soll, den sie enthält. Daher konnte dies freilich seine geringfügige Bestimmung früher erreichen, als der Mensch seine unendlich schwere und mannichfaltige." (1) If, then, the irregularities of the world contrive to prevent man from acting as he should, and achieving his purpose, he is effectively reduced to the level of the base animal. The meaning of Thusnelda's outburst on hearing of her lover's deceit is thus apparent: " Er hat zur Bärin mich gemacht!" (2) as is also the gruesome murder of Achill by the Amazon Queen. There is however a subtle difference in the actions of the two heroines: Penthesilea avenges the insult to her in a direct and uncompromising manner, whereas Thusnelda, " die Bärin von Cheruska," (3) inveigles Ventidius into the claws of the bear by playing on his trust in her - that same trust between lovers which he had deceived.

From this point of view the very short Novelle " Das Bettelweib von Locarno " is much more than the run-of-the-mill Romantic horror-story as which it was held in great esteem by E. T.A. Hoffmann. The central character is an old beggar-woman, a pitiful figure who has sunk almost to an animal-like existence. The final symbolical transition to the animal takes place as the uncharitable nobleman, whom the world has made rich as it has made the woman poor, bids her go like a dog behind the oven. (4) But this insult to human dignity cannot be avenged on earth, for the old woman stumbles, falls and dies cruelly. So, like her fore-runners in Kleist's works, she returns and spoils the good fortune which hitherto had smiled upon the nobleman. Since she is the spirit of an animal, it is not surprising that she is not

(1) K.V. p. 173

(2) K.2. p. 436

(3) K.2. p. 441

(4) K.3. p. 354: c.f. Kohlhaas image, K.3. p. 162, quoted above.

visible to the nobleman, but only to his dog. (1) As the agent of fate she brings about the destruction of the Marquis at his own hands. This Novelle is not a product of Kleist's pessimism as one might presume from a casual reading, for as such it would stand isolated in a period of comparative optimism in Kleist's later life. It is better seen as evidence of the sanctity of mankind and its destiny and of the disastrous consequences evoked by any wilful attempt to debase human dignity. Madness and destruction are not for Kleist incompatible with God's ways to men as can be seen from " Die Heilige Cäcilie " and " Das Erdbeben in Chili;" and, if the old woman were a revenant from the powers of darkness, then she must necessarily invite comparison with Nicolo in " Der Findling." The essential difference here, however, is that Piachi and his family do nothing to incur the attentions of evil, whereas the Marquis is directly responsible. Kleist's main interest in this Novelle is the action which brings about the catastrophe.

The same animal motif occurs in " Käthchen." Vom Strahl, unable to appreciate the heroine's motives, seizes a whip in anger and prepares to strike Käthchen. (2) Fortunately the servant Gottschalk and the reason for Käthchen's arrival prevent him from taking this extreme step. Kleist intended this scene to be one of the cruellest tests of his heroine's passive nature: he wanted to show perhaps that the strength of her love would withstand even the ultimate debasement to the animal. This becomes clear when vom Strahl's anger has subsided and he then notices the whip:

(3) vom Strahl: " Was macht die Peitsche hier?

Gottschalk: Ihr selbst ja nahmt sie - !

vom Strahl: Hab' ich hier Hunde, die zu schmeissen sind?"

Like Penthesilea after her bloody deed, vom Strahl is now no longer aware of what he has done, and he " wirft die Peitsche,

(1) K.3. p. 356

(3) K.2. p. 258

(2) K.2. p. 251

dass die Scherben niederklirren, durchs Fenster." (1) Kleist's treatment of the incident and motif here are all the more effective because the whipping does not in fact take place: the dramatist prefers to leave the realisation of what might have been the outcome to the imagination of the audience. This again shows how necessary it is that Kleist's works be considered as a whole, for without a wider knowledge of Kleist the thinker, such incidents as the one from " Kätchen " lose much of their deeper significance.

Natalie in Kleist's last play is, perhaps, his clearest depiction of ideal womanhood. Her love for the errant Homburg is the very core of her existence, and it is through her that he finds his true destiny. Even when the prince begs ignominiously for his life, and must appear to her totally unworthy, she continues to trust his ultimate goodness and is prepared to renounce all hope of personal happiness when she intercedes on Homburg's behalf with the Elector. But, unlike her predecessors in Kleist's works, Natalie has an intuition - it is no more than this - of the prince's position in respect of his metaphysical destiny, and Kleist brings this out well in Act 4 Scene 4. Since Natalie's intuition is a feeling which cannot adequately be expressed in words, so the realisation is introduced into the scene without the use of words. Natalie brings Homburg the important letter, yet is not aware of its full implications. She believes that it simply contains his release. (2) As soon as the prince is confronted with his dilemma, she 'feels' in the Kleistian sense that he will choose death: " Sie erblasst." Nevertheless, for the sake of her finite self in the language of the puppet essay, she tries to gloss over the meaning of the letter, and to persuade Homburg to write the reply which would relieve him. She snatches the letter from him, lest he read it too closely: but her very actions, hasty and unusually demanding, cause him to wonder. Natalie turns " bleich " (3), tortured by the conflict that her joy at Homburg's self-realisation

(1) loc.cit. Stage direction. (3) K.3. p. 100

(2) K.3. p. 97



is at the same time a painful awareness that he must die, and that little earthly joy lies ahead. Yet if she is to fulfil her destiny in showing Homburg selfless love, she must encourage the prince to act as is fitting for him and him alone, and must pay no attention to the claims of this life. This she finds the strength to do:

Natalie:- " Nimm' diesen Kuss! - und bohrten gleich zwölf  
Kugeln

Dich jetzt in Staub, nicht halten könnt'ich mich,  
Und jauchzt' und weint' und spräche: du gefällst  
mir!" (1)

The anecdote " Mutterliebe " from the " Berliner Abendblätter " is a clear depiction of the Kleistian destiny of woman. (2) In her absence, a woman's children are attacked by a mad dog. When she suddenly returns, her first thought is typically for the children. Full of rage and revenge against this threat to her function as a woman, she attacks the dog with bare hands. " Wer das Leben nicht, wie ein solcher Ringer, umfasst hält und tausendgliedrig, nach allen Windungen des Kampfs, nach allen ..... Ausweichungen und Reaktionen, empfindet und spürt; der wird ..... in keiner Schlacht ( durchsetzen )." wrote Kleist in " Von der Überlegung," which sheds light on the " Mutterliebe " anecdote. (3) But, although the mother finally kills the dog, she is not the ultimate victor, for like Jakob in " Der Zweikampf," she dies from her injuries. She is buried with her children.

Kleist's women, then, often set an ideal example for their erring neighbours. One thinks here of Natalie and the mother of the Marquise von O..., who persuades her husband to forgive his daughter. In " Käthchen " Kleist goes a step further and shows that in his view the selfless lover can expect divine surveillance. From this it is a very short step to the exalted conception of woman as a redeemer from this unhappy world. This

(1) K.3. p. 102

(3) K.4. p. 180

(2) K.4. p. 167

is where Kleist's view of love becomes most religious in its colouring. In Act 1 Scene 1 in church in " Die Familie Schroffenstein," Ottokar says of Agnes:

" ..... Möge  
Die Ähnliche der Mutter Gottes auch  
Maria heissen."

and again later:

" Weil du ein Ebenbild der Mutter Gottes,  
Maria tauf' ich dich." (1)

Thus it can be seen why so many of Kleist's characters pray to the Madonna when they are in distress. (2) Nevertheless Braig, I think, goes too far when he refers to Käthchen as " die kleine Heilige." (3) God does not choose this heroine to be a saint: it is the heroine herself who finds her way to God's grace through her devotion to her love. Kleist's conception of love has again much in common with contemporary Romantic idealisation. In " Heinrich von Ofterdingen " for example, Mathilde is idolised by her lover: " O, Geliebte, der Himmel hat dich mir zur Verehrung gegeben. Ich bete dich an. Du bist die Heilige, die meine Wünsche zu Gott bringt, durch die er mir die Fülle seiner Liebe kundtut. Was ist die Religion, als ein unendliches Einverständnis, eine ewige Vereinigung liebender Herzen ?" (4) Similarly, in Werner's drama " Martin Luther, oder die Weihe der Kraft," the nun Katharina sees her vision of Luther as a Saviour, and, in praying to the god, Alkmene continually confuses God and her husband. Here, too, the Platonic view of lovers as divided halves who must of necessity come together, shows its influence: Kleist may well have culled this too from the " Jugendschriften " of Wieland. Both Käthchen and Penthesilea tell us that their first meetings with their lovers have not come unexpectedly, even though they came suddenly. (5)

(1) K.1. p. 76

(2) c.f. Chapter 8, "Kleist's imagery."

(3) Braig, op.cit. p. 321

(4) Novalis, ed.cit. p. 262

(5) c.f. "Penthesilea" K.2. p. 121  
"Käthchen",  
K.2. p. 187

Kleist's ideal of woman obviously owed a great deal to the selfless interest and consideration shown to him by his ever-reliable sister Ulrike. He wrote in a letter: " Es giebt eine himmlische Güte des Weibes, <sup>A</sup>alles, was in ihre Nähe kommt, an sich zu schliessen, und an ihrem Herzen zu hegen und zu pflegen mit Innigkeit und Liebe, wie die Sonne ( die wir darum Königin<sup>n</sup> nennen, nicht König ) alle Sterne, die in ihren Wirkungsraum schweben, an sich zieht mit sanften, unsichtbaren Banden, und in frohen Kreisen um sich führt, Licht und Wärme und Leben ihnen gebend ..... "(1) He shares with Schiller the tendency to idealise his female figures, and to make them into islands of pure virtue in the midst of a sea of evil and mistrust. One thinks immediately of Agnes, Evchen and Käthchen, and of Wallenstein's daughter Thekla, to whom Max turns in distress as a source of integrity and unselfish truth. Tieck on the other hand often depicts woman as an ensnarer of man, who lures him from the safety of seclusion into the base world outside. Thus love and trust, which are for Kleist the only valid metaphysical basis for human relationships, cause the downfall of Tieck's hero Eckbert in the Novelle " Der blonde Eckbert." When he marries his beloved Bertha, he condones his wife's crimes, and falls victim to those dark Romantic powers which punish greed. His friendship for Walther and Hugo leads him to confide in them, and this act of trust becomes an obsession with him, since he fears that they may use it against him. So Eckbert kills both friends. The figure of the temptress Venus, in Tieck's version of the Tannhäuser legend, is founded on a similar conception of woman, as is the fairy woman encountered by Christian in " Der Runenberg." Whereas Tieck's philosophical experiences with Idealism produced this unhappy reaction, Kleist strove to break down human insularity and re-establish valid contact with the world of appearances.

(1) K.V. p. 138

In his play "Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen," Grillparzer attempts a similar theme to Kleist's "Penthesilea," but the former views love as the cause of his characters' downfall, rather than their salvation. Love, in the Grillparzer play, is part of the fragile world, if we can apply that expression to the author's view. The terms of Hero's renunciation cannot be reconciled with her love for Leander, which thus causes her tragic involvement and insuperable conflict. This is why the Priest must not be seen as an evil figure when he extinguishes the fatal lamp; his sincere intention is directed towards preventing Hero's deeper entanglement with the world, and securing her return to the fold. Hero and the Amazon queen both die after their beloveds - Kleist's heroine in the conviction that she has fulfilled her divine obligation to follow her destiny, and Grillparzer's heroine in the sad recognition that she has irretrievably lost her other self, the priestess, and her Leander as well. Penthesilea triumphs, Hero despairs. "Es ist und bleibt das tragische Geheimniß der Liebe," writes von Wiese, of Grillparzer's tragedy, "dass sie die menschliche Selbstbewahrung zerstört, aber dafür mit einer Fülle begnadet, die dem Menschen sonst auf ewig verschlossen geblieben wäre." (1)

(1) Benno von Wiese, op.cit.  
p. 426

CHAPTER EIGHT:- Kleist's imagery and dramatic technique.

The frequent repetition in Kleist's writings of certain commonplace actions, symbols and situations leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that he intended them to have considerable significance in his depiction of the human problem. At first glance there would seem to be nothing particularly noteworthy in the fact that the Elector in Kleist's last play turns to the window in moments of doubt: but when it is realised that so many other Kleistian characters do just the same, then we are obliged to look for a deeper implication. Far from proving that Kleist's powers of creating images were limited, this unobtrusiveness in his imagery was quite deliberate. He wrote, for example, in a letter: " Wenn wir dann einmal, in der Gartenlaube, einsam diese Briefe durchblättern werden, und Du, mit dem Ausruf des Erstaunens: ja, so, so war das gemeint, ..... " (1) This tendency can be seen even in the early days of his " Ideenmagazin," when Kleist tried to equate everyday physical human states and actions with those from the realm of nature. Indeed, in the essay " Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden," he speaks specifically of the " merkwürdige Übereinstimmung zwischen den Erscheinungen der physischen und moralischen Welt." (2) Typical of this procedure is the reference to the archway in the letter to Wilhelmine from Würzburg, where Kleist also speaks of moments " wo uns .... die Winke der Natur wie die freundliche Rede eines Lehrers entzücken können," and compares his happiness to the setting sun: " als die Sonne herabsank, war es mir, als ob mein Glück unterginge." (3) Thus we find that Kleist's literary figures suffer usually from physical and spiritual discomfort simultaneously.

Kleist regards life as the human struggle to comprehend the world and the mysterious power which governs its manifestations. From the outset man is handicapped by his inadequate powers, and

(1) K.V. p. 108

(3) K.V. p. 160

(2) K.4. p. 75

c.f. K.V.p.160

thus expressions such as " verstrickt, Verstrickung, Verstricktheit, umstrickt, tragische Verstrickung des Seins " and " Umstrickung " occur time and time again in critical works on Kleist. (1) The Amazon queen uses this same image: " Umstrickt an allen Gliedern lieg' ich ... " (2) and in the thirteenth scene Prothoe says:

" Wenn du .....

Die Leichtgereizte nicht verstricken willst,

So gönne eine Bitte mir." (3)

It may well thus be significant that, when the dark powers of evil have descended inescapably on Piachi in " Der Findling," the final symbol of his defeat is given in his execution by the rope or " Strick;" and in the opening lines of " Das Erdbeben in Chili," Jeronimo prepares to hang himself because he sees no way out of his predicament.

One of the consequences of this view is that man feels himself dominated by chance, and Kleist uses the symbol of the dice to represent the gamble which man must take in life. According to Willbrandt,(4) Kleist intended at one time to write a play on the subject of " Leopold von Österreich," in which the first scene showed soldiers gambling before the battle of Sempach. All the players throw black, the symbol of death. Similarly Penthesilea laments:

" Wenn~~e~~s mir möglich wär'! Wenn ich's vermöchte!

Das ~~Ke~~usserste, das Menschenkräfte leisten,

Hab' ich getan - Unmögliches versucht -

Mein Alles hab' ich an den Wurf gesetzt;

Der Würfel, der entscheidet, liegt, er liegt....." (5)

and the Roman leader Varus recognises the dangers in tempting fate:

" Rom, wenn, gebläht von Glück, du mit drei Würfeln doch

Nicht neunzehn Augen werfen wolltest!" (6)

(1) P. Witkop, "H. v. Kleist"  
München, 1922, p. 61, 117, 149.  
Braig, op.cit. p. 465  
Fricke, op.cit. p. 116  
R. Steig, "Ks. Berliner Kämpfe"  
Berlin, 1901, p. 689

(3) K.2. p. 92

(4) A. Willbrandt, "H.  
v. K." Nördlingen,  
1863, p. 154

(5) K.2. p. 79

(2) K.2. p. 137

(6) K.2. p. 445

This power which pits itself against mankind is frequently represented by the wild animal. This is the principal point of interest in Kleist's anecdote, "Uralte Reichthagsherrlichkeit, oder Kampf der Blinden mit dem Schweine," again from the "Abendblätter." Twelve blind peasants stand in a circle, armed with heavy clubs. In the centre of this circle stands a stake, to which a pig is tethered by means of a long rope: the animal is to be presented to whichever competitor is able to kill or stun it. As all and sundry strike out wildly with their weapons, trying to find the invisible target, so the animal swerves, manoeuvres and dodges, with the obvious result that the poor peasants do more harm to themselves and their neighbours than to the pig. Finally the animal is slain - but characteristic of Kleist's view, only by a chance blow. Here the blindness of the peasants is a symbol for man's inadequate perceptive powers, and the pig - no accidental or random choice of animal! - is the symbol of that ultimate truth or reality from which so many of Kleist's figures are cut off by the barrier of appearances. The same theme returns in the essay on the marionettes. This time a man engages a bear in a fencing duel, and, because he fails to remain calm, and lets his passions be aroused, he suffers from confusion of feeling and is defeated by the bear. (1) I suspect that the choice of fencing as the sport here was quite intentional: it involves all the twisting, turning and feinting which characterises Kleist's figures in their search for their personal destinies. But should man fail to play the game of life according to Kleist's rules, then the wild animal might well destroy man. Thus the deceiver Ventidius dies at the claws of Thusnelda's bear, and Achilles' trickery looses the animal instincts of Penthesilea.

As the conflicts facing Kleist's figures draw in menacingly, so these people often find themselves at the same time in restricted physical circumstances. Prinz Friedrich's

(1) K.4. p. 140

prison cell, and those into which are thrown Jeronimo ("Erdbeben") Littegarde ("Zweikampf") and Ottokar ("Schroffenstein"), the houses in " Die Verlobung in St. Domingo " and " Das Bettelweib von Locarno," and no less the enclosure in which Ventidius faces the enraged bear, are all typical examples, as is also the courtroom at Huisum where Judge Adam desperately seeks his escape. The use of a confined space to symbolise man's isolation from life and his fellows, can be found also in a letter by Kleist which has already been quoted in another connection: in it he refers to death as the passing from one room to another. (1)

Once man has entered this room, there can be no return, for his means of entry has closed behind him. This is the point of the significant dialogue at the end of " Schroffenstein," when the blind Sylvius asks to be taken home, "ins Glück". Johann replies that they must go forward, for the door is " inwendig verriegelt." (2) None of Kleist's figures then can withdraw from the fight, so they look around for another escape, in the same sort of way, for example, as the Amazon queen tries to find a compromise solution to the conflict of her two destinies. Not surprisingly, they turn to the window. Kleist originally used this symbol in a letter dated March 1801: " ..... ich bin untätig in meinem Zimmer umhergegangen, ich habe mich ans offene Fenster gesetzt, ich bin hinausgelaufen ins Freie, eine innerliche Unruhe trieb mich... "(3) Eustache in " Schroffenstein " dashes to the window crying: " Um Gottes Willen, rette, rette!", (4) while the bewildered Sylvester opens the window in search of the truth. (5) In the plantation house, Gustav looks questioningly out of the window, but sees only the storm - incidentally another Kleistian image, - and with one last look out into the infinite, he stands at the open window and shoots himself. (6) Looking through the

(1) K.V. p. 327

(2) K.1. p. 152

(3) K.V. p. 205

(4) K.1. p. 107

(5) K.1. p. 118

(6) K.3. p. 326 and 351



window of the Huisum courtroom in which their love has been on trial, Evchen and Rupprecht with Licht see their enemy Adam running away. In the interview with Luther, when Kohlhaas is made to doubt the validity of his intentions, (1) he characteristically steps to the window, as in similar circumstances do the Prince and the Elector. (2) And as the other Elector ("Homburg") begins to feel that he may be acting not for the sake of the law but as a tyrant, he too turns on two occasions to the window.(3)

The window, however, does not always merely symbolise an escape route, it frequently also actually provides one. Käthchen, for whom confinement in Theobald's house represents a threat to the fulfilling of her duty to follow vom Strahl, leaps from an upper window to her "hoher Herr:" (4) Ottokar also escapes from confinement by jumping from an "unvergittertes Fenster." (5) Yet such is the perverseness of this fragile world, that Adam leaps from Evchen's window only to find himself in a further dilemma - a victim in his own courtroom.

The helpless situation symbolised by the room or building does not always remain static or undeveloping. The vital need to discover man's destiny is hampered by the nature of the world, which may destroy man before he has found it. This is the spirit of the Butzbach affair and it explains Kleist's own restlessness and impatience particularly where "Guiskard" was concerned. From this attitude grew the image of the burning building, which can not only trap man, but, because it must sooner or later collapse, gives him, as it were, a time limit to find his way out. Josephe ("Erdbeben") who as a woman is well aware of her responsibility to the trapped child, rushes into the blazing house and emerges in the nick of time. (6) Similarly the horse-dealer's servant Herse rescues his master's horses from the

(1) K.3. p. 185

(4) K.2. p. 192

(2) K.3. p. 190 and 193

(5) K.1. p. 137

(3) K.3. p. 105 and 109

(6) K.3. p. 300

burning stables at the Junker's castle. (1) This image is varied in " Käthchen " for a specific purpose: the heroine enters the inferno and it collapses around her. Thereupon she reappears, led by a cherub, Kleist's symbol of her protection by God. Another variation occurs in " Kohlhäas," for, when the Junker like Adam twists the law to suit his own evil ends, his world goes up in flames as the horse-dealer pursues him with fire and sword. In this connection, the consequences of the earthquake in " Das Erdbeben in Chili " spring also to mind. In the " Bettelweib " the unhappy nobleman is trapped in his castle with the spirit of the old woman. No escape is possible, for Kleist tells us how all attempts to circumnavigate the dilemma and sell the castle have foundered. The only retreat lies as symbolically in "Schroffenstein" in madness, and the Marquis dies in a self-ignited inferno, a Kleistian symbol of human powerlessness in the face of the irrational unknown. (2) Again, in the " Hermannsschlacht," the rescue of the child from the blazing building is seen not as a stroke of good fortune, but as a threat to Hermann's mission. (3)

The prison cell represents for Kleist the scene of a conflict from which there can be no escape by door or window, and yet is not so urgently demanding a solution as the situation depicted by the burning building. Thusnelda locks Ventidius in his cage, (4) and the servant Nanky closes the main gates for the night and imprisons Gustav - these are but few of the many who are imprisoned in Kleist's works. (5) It is of significance that the earliest use of the motif of the escape proof cell is to be found in " Das Erdbeben," and it obviously owes something to Kleist's own imprisonment at Fort Joux at about the same time. In this Novelle, Jeronimo's deliverance from prison must rank with Käthchen's experience as the product of divine surveillance. From this point on in Kleist's philosophical development, however,

(1) K.3. p. 168

(4) K.2. p. 440

(2) K.3. p. 357

(5) K.3. p. 354

(3) K.2. p. 406

he argues that the only possible escape is by utter confidence in the dictates of " das Gefühl." Thus Littegarde and Friedrich cling to what they know to be true, and, in spite of transient waverings, they are saved and vindicated. On the other hand, since he is a deceiver and motivated by false feelings, Ventidius finds no way out. Much the same is true also of Gustav.

A most striking example of what Kleist intended by this motif is given by its different usage in " Homburg " and "Michael Kohlhaas." Both men are trapped in prison, as it seems to them, by the viciousness of the world: Homburg in his egoism, that he sees nothing wrong in his own selfish attitude, and the horse-dealer because of the apparently treacherous breach of his amnesty by the authorities. At the crucial points in their imprisonments, both heroes receive letters which force decisions upon them, and it is here that they differ. For Homburg the letter heralds his symbolical elevation to the gracious state of Kleist's puppet. Kohlhaas by contrast remains firmly earthbound, for he is obsessed by the notion that the Elector has broken his word. The truth of the matter is that the Elector is totally unaware of Kohlhaas' position, as this has been contrived illegally by the minion, Freiherr von Wenk who, incidentally, must rank as a descendant of Kleist's other deliberate evil-doers. This in itself is very significant: whereas at the outset the horse-dealer's sense of justice, his " Rechtsgefühl " as Kleist calls it, was enraged by a real injustice when his horses were stolen, this time the injustice is imaginary, and Kohlhaas has fallen victim to misleading appearances. Then Nagelschmidt's letter arrives, and offers the prisoner help in an illegal escape from captivity. Because he has been persuaded by appearances to mistrust the Elector, Kohlhaas accepts the outlaw's proposal - only to find that the letter has been shown to the Elector previously. The Elector here, like his counterpart in " Homburg," has placed his

trust in the fundamental instinct in man to act in the most upright fashion. Kohlhaas fails to trust the Elector and thereby estranges himself from the man who might have been his greatest ally: Homburg rejects all appearances and wins through to his final acceptance by the law and society. At the critical moment Kohlhaas succumbs to the world, the prince conquers it.

As the conflicts in Kleist's works draw to a head, the motif of the storm is often used. This too can be traced in his letters, where he speaks of his own distress over the Idealist philosophy as a storm: " Seit einigen Wochen scheint es mir, als hätte sich der Sturm ein wenig gelegt." (1) This image is often used to indicate an omen or a warning from the unknown. It is a " stürmische und regnigte Nacht," as Gustav first knocks at Hoango's fateful door, (2) and a storm growls in the distance as Kohlhaas approaches the Convent at Erlabrunn bent upon destruction. (3) Ottokar uses the image in the same spirit as his creator:

" 's ist plötzlich mir so ernst zu Mut geworden  
Als wäre ein Gewitter in der Luft." (4)

and it occurs again as Penthesilea experiences her first fateful meeting with Achill:

" Auf einem <sup>leuchtend</sup> Hügel, steht er da, .....  
..... Die Erde rings, die bunte, blühende,  
In Schwärze der Gewitternacht gehüllt." (5)

In the same play the approaching storm makes itself heard as the queen makes her preparations for battle. The stage directions for the twentieth scene tell us that " der Donner rollt," and then that " der Donner rollt heftig," and the storm finally breaks as Penthesilea goes off with her followers " unter heftigen Gewitterschlägen."

Since Käthchen enjoys divine protection, it is not surprising that her rival appears on the scene to the accompaniment

(1) K.V. p. 246

(4) K.1. p. 134

(2) K.3. p. 315

(3) K.3. p. 171

(5) K.2. p. 66

of a storm. In Act 2 Scene 4, Freiburg is interrupted by violent thunder and lightening each time he tries to mention Kunigunde's name, and the motif is repeated in the following scene. The burning building, which is intended by Kunigunde to bring about Käthchen's death, is likewise accompanied by a storm. Similarly, the Cheruskans feel a storm drawing near with the prospect of battle: (1)

Septimius: " Die Nacht war heiss, ich fürchte ein Gewitter" and a storm has actually broken when we meet the Romans wandering in the Teutoburger Wald. (2)

If the storm runs parallel to the crises in the lives of these characters, so it abates when the conflict is over, even if only temporarily. After Penthesilea's ghastly deed she is once more calm: (3)

Die Priesterin: " Gewiegt im Eichenwipfel~~x~~ sass sie da  
Und flötete und schmetterte und flötete  
Die stille Nacht durch, dass der Wanderer  
horchte  
Und fern die Brust ihm von Gefühlen  
schwoll."

Immediately after Käthchen's miraculous rescue, Ritter von Thurneck remarks that the storm is now over, (4) and, after the events in the plantation house ("Die Verlobung in St. Domingo") have reached their tragic conclusion, we read that " der Tag ( schien ) ganz hell schon durch die Fenster." (5) After the miraculous deliverance of the Church in " Die Heilige Cäcilie " we are told: " Dabei stand ein Gewitter, dunkelschwarz mit vergoldeten Rändern, im Hintergrund des Baus; dasselbe hatte schon über die Gegend von Aachen ausgedonnert, und nachdem es noch einige kraftlose Blitze gegen die Richtung, wo der Dom stand, geschleudert hatte, sank es, zu Dünsten aufgelöst, missvergnügt murmelnd im Osten herab," (6) where Kleist is quoting almost verbatim from

(1) K.2. p. 403

(2) K.2. p. 414

(3) K.2. p. 147

(4) K.2. p. 271

(5) K.3. p. 352

(6) K.3. p. 387

one of his letters. (1) God's warning through the storm has gone unnoticed, and so He has been obliged to act directly in the affairs of the world. The storm thus dies away.

Such immediate action by the Godhead in Kleist's works takes usually the form of lightning and thunderbolts. In true Classical tradition Jupiter first appears " mit Blitz und Donnerschlag ..... es schwebt ein Adler mit dem Donnerkeil aus den Wolken nieder," (2) and Kohlhaas receives a clear warning against carrying out his attack on Erlabrunn, " als ein ungeheurerer Wetter-schlag dicht neben ihm zur Erde fiel." (3) Very similarly, God warns the Romans that they must not attack His chosen people, the German tribes, yet they fail to heed even the following clear signs: (4)

Erster Feldherr: "Dass durch den Mantel doch, den ~~Sturm-~~  
zerrissenen,  
Der Nacht, der um die Köpf' uns hängt,  
Ein einziges Sternbild schimmernd nieder-  
blinkte!  
Wenn auf je hundert Schritte nicht  
Ein Blitzstrahl zischend vor uns niederkeilte,  
Wir würden wie die Eul' am Tage,  
Haupt und Gebein uns im Gebüsch zerschellen!"

Perhaps the clearest indication of Kleist's intention with this motif is contained in his anecdote " Der Griffel Gottes " - the title itself is significant. A wicked woman buys herself a large memorial gravestone by leaving her wealth to a Convent. A few days later, lightning strikes the metal headpiece and obliterates some of the letters engraved there. Those left read " Sie ist gerichtet."

(5)

This same image has a special implication for Kleist's female characters. Because as women they are in closer rapport with the deity, they often become aware of their personal destiny more quickly than their male counterparts who often suffer greatly

(1) K.V. p. 147

(4) K.2. p. 415

(2) K.1. p. 309

(3) K.3. p. 171

(5) K.4. p. 196

before it reveals itself to them. We have already seen how Käthchen reacts to her first meeting with vom Strahl, as it is described by Theobald. (1) Indeed the very name Wetter vom Strahl is descriptive of his effect upon her, and Kleist uses the same motif in "Die Verlobung in St. Domingo," when Toni realises on Hoango's return that she must save her Gustav: "Toni ... stand .. ... als ob sie ein Wetterstrahl getroffen hätte ...." (2) The meeting of Achille and Penthesilea, as described in the first scene by Odysseus, is couched in very similar terms, although the actual reference to a bolt from the heavens is omitted. With this must be ranked the reaction which Kleist specifically demands for his hero Homburg in the first scene of the play: on seeing his beloved Natalie, "der Prinz steht lebhaft auf." (Stage direction )

God's other means of expressing His will are the doubles of Sister Antonia, Kohlhaas' Elisabeth and Gustav's Marianne. To these we must now add the sinister figure of the Alraune, who issues a final warning to the Roman invaders, and the superstitious old woman who appears towards the end of "Die Familie Schroffenstein." I would agree with Stahl that this latter figure "makes the impression that she knows more than she does ...," (3) but there can be little doubt that she is the fore-runner, admittedly in a very distant sense, of Kleist's later divine message-bearers. And lastly, a gentle breeze wafts through the window and plays on Gustav as he lies by Toni, a sign to her of her destiny. But Heaven's antipode, or whatever Kleist understands by the term, has weapons also, notably the plague. This motif disappears from the later works as Kleist came round to the view that there is no metaphysical force for evil, but rather that man's dilemma is of his own making, because he fails to trust or misunderstands God. However, the plague robs Piachi of his son and gives him instead the evil Nicolo, and it strikes down Guiskard at the peak of his

(1) K.2. p. 186

(3) Stahl, op.cit. p. 49

(2) K.3. p. 341

career. It is also used as a weapon by the negroes against the white man in " Die Verlobung in St. Domingo," and its ravages are hinted at in the pock-marked face of Kunigunde, and her consequent need to use cosmetics. It is in the spirit of this same motif also that Hermann regards the Romans as emissaries from Hell. (1)

Kleist's conception of woman as a means of redemption for man from the attacks of fate, has, as has been noted, considerable religious overtones. Frequently Kleist's figures prostrate themselves before an image of the Madonna when they find themselves in desperate situations, and Kleist recreates the scene in the church at Dresden when he described the lonely figure praying at the altar. Thus in the opening scene of " Schroffenstein " we find:

" Warum denn so in Tränen? So erhitzt?  
Hat dich die Mutter Gottes so begeistert,  
Vor der du knietest?"

to which Johann replies:

"Gnäd'ger Herr - als ich  
Vorbeiging an dem Bilde, riss es mich  
Gewaltsam zu sich nieder." (2)

Although it is not the Christian God to whom Alkmene prays, nevertheless she acts like many other Kleistian characters:

" Verglüh't ein Tag, dass ich an seinem Altar,  
Nicht ..... niedersänke?" (3)

Similarly, in the Chilean prison, as the minutes to the execution of his beloved Josephe pass away, Jeronimo " warf sich vor dem Bildnisse der Heiligen Mutter Gottes nieder, und betete mit unendlicher Inbrunst zu ihr als der einzigen, von der ihm jetzt noch Rettung kommen könnte," (4) and Toni " stellte ..... das Bildnis der heiligen Jungfrau ..... auf einen Sessel und liess sich mit verschränkten Händen auf Knien davor nieder." (5) Ottokar

(1) K.2. p. 406

(4) K.3. p. 296

(2) K.1. p. 22

(3) K.1. p. 266

(5) K.3. p. 339



likewise cries in anguish: " So helfe mir die Mutter Gottes denn!"

(1) and before the battle Homburg enters the church:

" ... Ich war in der Kapelle,  
.... Man läutete, da wir vorüberzogen,  
Zur Andacht eben ein, da trieb's mich an,  
Am Altar auch mich betend hinzuwerfen." (2)

Here Kleist uses the motif not at the height of the conflict but before it and probably intended it to have a slightly different significance. The God to whom the prince prays brings about the prince's salvation in a way that Homburg could never have conceived beforehand, and which he least expected - the same conception of God's mysterious ways which Kleist displayed in " Der Zweikampf."

The intensive reading of Greek drama, which preceded the first attempt at " Guiskard," doubtless led Kleist to the "Antigone" of Sophocles, where he found an image which was of considerable interest to him: (3)

Hämon: " .... Die Bäume, die  
Sich schmiegen, steh'n an ihren Zweigen unversehrt,  
Und die sich sträuben, kommen samt der Wurzel um."

Kleist modifies this to include an oak tree and uses it as a symbol of the steadfast " Gefühl," or unconfused feeling for one's destiny. It occurs first in " Schroffenstein," (4) and then again in the final lines of " Penthesilea,"

" Die abgestorbene Eiche steht im Sturm,  
Doch die gesunde stürzt er schmetternd nieder,  
Weil er in ihre Krone greifen kann." (5)

where Kleist blends it with his storm image. The deeper implications of these lines will concern us later: for the time being it should be noted that Hermann, the " Gefühl " of his nation, erects his tent and holds council before an oak tree.(6) Neither is it a coincidence that the idol of the tribes should be a " Wodanseiche,"

(1) K.2. p. 138

(4) K.1. p. 59

(2) K.3. p. 47

(5) K.2. p. 168

(3) trans. J.J.C. Donner, ed. Goldmanns Taschenbücher, Band 390 (1956): this trans. was not available to Kleist, but the image remains. (p.133)

(6) K.2. p.362

and that an attack upon it by strangers, like the affront to the horse-dealer's "Rechtsgefühl," should produce "Feuer, Raub und Mord" as a reaction. (1) Kleist uses the image in a letter to Altenstein on 30th. of June 1806, when he writes: "Es ist, als ob das, was auf mich einwirkt, in eben dem Masse wächst als mein Widerstand; wie die Gewalt des Windes in dem Masse, als die Pflanzen, die sich ihm entgegensetzen." (7) In the opening scene we find Homburg "halb wachend, halb schlafend, unter einer Eiche" a symbol of his unawareness of the realities of this life: (2) and, just as the Amazon queen who has followed her feelings to the bitter end sits "gewiegt im Eichenwipfel", (3) so the prince finally sits down, this time wide awake, "auf die Bank, die .... um die Eiche aufgeschlagen ist." (4) Here Stranz offers him the flower, and Homburg, in the full awareness of having fulfilled his destiny, replies:

"Ich will zu Hause sie in Wasser setzen." (5)

This is the same symbol of home or the state of paradise to which Sylvius longed to be led in "Schroffenstein." It is the same conception of home as the final goal of humanity which Novalis held: "Wo gehen wir hin?" he asks in "Ofterdingen," and the answer is "Immer nach Hause." (6) The use of this image in Kleist's last play is a clear indication that, in Homburg, he was depicting the attainment of the state of <sup>Pa</sup>paradise, which he had always held possible: hitherto this had been achieved only in the fairy-tale world of "Käthchen!"

Whereas the oaktree represents for Kleist the "unendliches Gefühl," or the feeling upon which the metaphysical destiny of man is based, so he uses the image of the mirror to indicate the presence of finite or worldly feelings. This is founded on the terminology of the puppet essay, where Kleist describes such finite feeling as the product of "Reflexion", that state where feeling

(1) K.2. p. 376

(2) K.3. p. 21

(3) K.2. p. 147

(7) cit. Braig op.cit, p.35. (from

(4) K.3. p. 124

(5) K.3. p. 125

(6) Novalis, Werke ed.

Minor, Jena, 1923, vol.4  
p. 224

Deutsche Rundschau, Oct. 1914,  
p. 115.)

does not pass through the " Hohlspiegel " to infinity, but is reflected back on to the subject. Thus it is that many of Kleist's figures gaze into a mirror. When Adam consults his appearance after his nocturnal excursion, he is guilty of " Ziererei " like the young bather in the essay, and thus falls from grace. (1) The deceiver Kunigunde naturally has a mirror on her dressing table, and uses it to ensure that her false appearance is impenetrable. (2): Xaviera in " Der Findling ", " in deren Brust das bittere Gefühl der Eifersucht rege geworden war, warf einen Blick auf ihn; sie sagte, indem sie vor den Spiegel trat, zuletzt sei es gleichgültig, wer die Person sei." (3) Similarly, Hohenzollern refers to the entranced prince as a young vain girl who gazes into the mirror. (4)

Certain reactions to the conflict are common to many of Kleist's characters. Often they faint, a sign of their utter bewilderment and powerlessness. (5) These figures find the world frightening and totally inexplicable, and thus they maintain a baffled silence when they are invited by others to explain the inexplicable.(6) At other times they are " voll Entsetzen," like the assembled Priestesses in " Penthesilea " as they hear of their queen's deeds. (7) As the twists of fate seem to increase, Kleist's characters try to preserve the integrity of their instincts, or, at least, to meet fresh onslaughts with equanimity: thus frequently we find the reply " Gleichviel ". Homburg uses it in Act 3 Scene 1 in reply to Hohenzollern's confirmation that he has not brought the pardon which the prince expected. Homburg is convinced that he will be released, and refuses to see anything ominous in his friend's arrival without the warrant. A similar persistence can be traced in Kleist's letters, where he writes: " Aber dieser

(1) K.1. p. 325

(2) K.2. p. 290

(3) K.3. p. 369

(4) K.3. p. 24

(5) K.1. p. 44; 2.p.443; 2.p.192  
2.p.312; 3.p.364; and many  
others.

(6) K.3. p. 292 and 293: "Schroff."  
Act 2 sc. 2; Act 3, sc. 1,  
(.four times here!)

(7) K.2. p. 147

Glaube sei irrig oder nicht - gleichviel!" (1) and it is characteristic of many of his figures.(2)

The courses of great rivers, as Stahl points out (3), had symbolical value for Kleist, and his poetic descriptions of the Rhein and Elbe seem clearly to be representations of his ideal heroes and heroines. I believe that one can go further, and surmise that the poet's interest in this particular symbol lies in the fact that each river has a definite "Bestimmung" or aim, namely to reach the sea: for the river, "home" is the sea. Bearing in mind that both descriptions date from the months of pessimism after the Fichte crisis, they also give evidence of the fatalistic trend in Kleist's thought. He probably had recognised that the path of all rivers is inescapably downhill, and that the waters cannot determine their own course. At any rate, that is how he described his mood to Adolphine von Werdeck on 28th. of July 1801: (6)

"Wir sinken und sinken, bis wir so niedrig stehen, wie die anderen, und das Schicksal zwingt uns, so zu sein, wie wir verachten ..... es fließt nur fort, indem es fällt - in das Meer müssen wir alle." This is the world of "Schroffenstein," where the characters become more and more entangled in the world of treacherous appearances.

Related to the river symbol is the symbol of the stag. It is found for the first time in a letter of 1801 to Wilhelmine: "..... und ich sehne mich nach einem Tage, wie der Hirsch in der Mittagshitze nach dem Strome, sich hineinzustürzen.." (4) This is the lament of the poet who felt himself at odds with the world, a man, who, by reason of his temperament and lack of philosophical security, was destined to be an outsider. He longed to live a normally ordered existence with a wife and family (5), to plunge, as it were, into the broad stream of life. In his usage of this motif, Kleist again identifies the river simultaneously with life

(1) K.V. p. 131

(4) K.V. p. 245

(2) c.f. K.3. p. 30

(5) c.f. Stahl, op.cit.

(3) Stahl, op.cit. p.15-16

p. 15: K's letter to Ulrike (1st. May, 1802:)

(6) cit. Blöcker, op.cit. p.65,

Braig, op.cit. p.86

from the Kleist edition of the

Carl Hanser Verlag, München 1952.

and woman: vom Strahl confesses his love for Käthchen, but his false conception of his destiny prevents him from following it, just as Kleist himself rejected Wilhelmine von Zenge in the belief that his true destiny lay elsewhere.(1) Unlike Kleist, however, vom Strahl is finally able to marry his love:

vom Strahl: " Zuerst,mein süßes Kind, muss ich dir sagen,  
Dass ich mit Liebe dir, unsäglich, ewig,  
Durch alle meine Sinne zugetan.  
Der Hirsch, der, von der Mittagsglut gequält,  
Den Grund zerwühlt mit spitzigem @geweiht,  
Er sehnt sich so begierig nicht,  
Vom Felsen in den Waldstrom sich zu stürzen,  
Den reissenden, als ich, jetzt, da du mein bist,  
In alle deine jungen Reize mich." (2)

The sexual desire of Ventidius for Thusnelda in " Die Hermanns-schlacht " is couched in similar language. (3)

The river motif is still further developed in the image of the swan,which is really the fore-runner of the puppet image in " Über das Marionettentheater." Like the doll over the stage, the swan glides gracefully over the surface of the water. But,if the swan becomes dirty, it may cleanse itself only by immersing itself in the water. Kleist is trying to show by this image that man can achieve the ultimate happiness of paradise only by painful conflict with the world, that no permanent renunciation is possible. Even Käthchen who enjoys divine protection has to suffer an ordeal by fire,( Kleist sub-titled his play " Die Feuerprobe") before she wins her predestined happiness with vom Strahl. For the same reason,the Marquise admits the supremacy of the world over her when her reputation is besmirched, (4) and,in his dream,the Count specifically identifies the Marquise with the swan: " ( er hätte ) die Vorstellung von ihr ..... mit der Vorstellung eines Schwans verwechselt .....(er hätte) diesen Schwan einst mit Kot beworfen,

(1) K.V. p. 289

(3) K.2. p. 439

(2) K.2. p. 308

(4) K.3. p. 274

worauf dieser still untergetaucht und rein aus der Flut wieder emporgekommen sei....." (1) After her frenzy, Penthesilea similarly pours water over herself, and Prothoe says:

" Das Haupt ganz unter Wasser, Liebe! So!

Und wieder! So, So! wie ein junger Schwan!" (2)

Käthchen also goes bathing in the grotto. (3)

In a previous chapter it was noted that Kleist used a little flower as a symbol of happiness. His expressed longing for contentment within the Church is probably why he uses this image in his description of the Dominican cathedral at Santiago, where we find " (eine).. grosse, von gefärbtem Glas gearbeitete Rose in der Kirche äusserstem Hintergrund." (4) Yet this church is the scene of dreadful horrors in Kleist's Novelle, and, when he later turned to a more benevolent view of the church, he made his reader well aware of the change by closely identifying the church in "Die heilige Cäcilie " with the earlier one. In the latter we find " die prächtig funkelnde Rose im Hintergrund der Kirche" - and it is typical of Kleist's own outlook that the old woman, who tries to peer into the building through the planks surrounding it, can see only the flower of happiness. (5)

Kleist's dramatic creations are not beautiful works of art when they are viewed objectively. He cared little for the elegance and flow of words and phrases such as are found for example in Goethe's " Iphigenie." The whole of Kleist's dramatic work is an exposition of the human dilemma, and this was his first and foremost concern. In his " Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen " Kleist stresses the relative unimportance of words and verse when compared with the ideas they are trying to express. (6) Thus he makes use of every realistic dramatic device to illuminate the situations and attitudes of his figures, particularly in

(1) K.3. p. 263

(4) K.3. p. 307

(2) K.2. p. 156: c.f. also  
K.2. p. 100.

(5) K.3. p. 387

(3) K.2. p. 287

(6) K.4. p. 149

his dialogues. In the essay "Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden" Kleist confesses that for the sake of utmost clarity of expression he often repeats images, works in semi-articulate words and phrases, and lengthens or shortens sentences to achieve the desired result. (1) Of particular interest, however, is his use of the dramatic pause, and it is frequently the case that what Kleist's characters do not say, is more effective and thought-provoking than what they do say. In Act 4 Scene 2 of "Käthchen," for example, the heroine lies apparently asleep. Vom Strahl approaches and embraces her, then asks:

"Käthchen! Schläfst du?"

Käthchen: Nein, mein verehrter Herr."

(Pause)

Here we are given time to realise the remarkable somnambulistic state of the heroine. But perhaps she is teasing the Count, so he tries a friendly deception.

Käthchen: "Ich sehe dich ja, wie du zu Pferde sitztst.

vom Strahl : So! Auf dem Fuchs - nicht?"

Käthchen: Nicht doch! Auf dem Schimmel."

(Pause)

With this second pause Kleist has reinforced his point that, while his heroine dreams of Strahl in her vision, she is still able to carry on a conversation with him. She continues to make statements which bewilder him, and each is punctuated by a pause:

Käthchen: "Ein grosser, schöner Ritter würd' mich heuern.

Strahl: Und nun meinst du so frischweg, das sei ich?"

Käthchen: Ja, mein verehrter Herr."

(Pause)

Yet again, she speaks of her lover's nocturnal visit:

Strahl: "Wo? In dem Schloss zu Strahl?"

Käthchen: Nicht! In Heilbronn;

Im Kämmerlein, wo mir das Bette steht.

Strahl: Was du da schwatzest, mein liebes Kind - ich lag  
Und obendrein totkrank, im Schloss zu Strahl.

(Pause)

.....

Strahl: Seltsam, beim Himmel! In der Sylvesternacht -

( Er träumt vor sich nieder )

The heroine's instinctive approach has unconsciously led her to the truth, while Strahl is striving here to find an answer which will satisfy him rationally and intellectually. Thus each attempt leads him to a baffling dead end. In just the same way Sylvester Schroffenstein finds himself driven to an impossible conclusion. In Act 2 Scene 3, knowing himself innocent, he says:

"

Aber

Du sagtest ja, der eine meiner Leute  
Hätt's in dem Tode noch bekannt, er wäre  
Von mir gedungen zu dem Mord. (Stillschweigen)

Jeronimus: Der Mann, den ich gesprochen, hatte nur  
Von dem Gefolterten ein Wort gehört.

Sylvester: Das war?

Jeronimus: Sylvester. (Stillschweigen)

.....

Sylvester: So?

Dann freilich bin auch ich ein Mörder.

(Stillschweigen)

In the following scene, Act 3 Scene 1, Agnes and Ottokar are also driven to uncertainty.

Agnes : " Soll ich nun deinem Vater mehr  
Als du dem meinen trau'n? (Stillschweigen)

Ottokar : In jedem Falle  
War zu der Tat Johann von meinem Vater  
Gedungen nicht.

Agnes: Kann sein. Vielleicht so wenig,  
Wie von dem meinigen die Leute, die  
Den Bruder dir erschlagen. (Stillschweigen)

Ottokar : Hätte nur  
Jeronimus in seiner Hitze nicht  
Den Menschen mit dem Schwerte gleich verwundet,  
Es hätte sich das Rätsel gleich  
Gelöst.



Agnes: Vielleicht - so gut, wie wenn dein Vater  
Die Leute nicht erschlagen hätten die  
Er bei der Leiche deines Bruders fand."

(Stillschweigen)

By the repeated use of the pause in this scene, Kleist builds up an atmosphere of confusion and bewilderment amongst his figures, and creates the same impression in his audience. So, when he comes to make his important point about the value of love and trust in one's neighbour, Kleist replaces the broken, hesitant and tentative style which he has hitherto employed, by Ottokar's forthright exclamation:

" Wir glauben uns.

- O Gott, Welch eine Sonne geht mir auf!

Wenn's möglich wäre, wenn die Väter sich

So gern, so leicht wie wir verstehen wollten!

- Ja, könnte man sie nur zusammenführen!"

The dramatic pause produces a mood for Kleist which is far more expressive than that which words could achieve: nevertheless it is but one of several wordless, dramatic devices. Judge Adam plays with verbal lies, deceits and distortions, and seems almost to succeed in wriggling out of his predicament. But the trivial wig which is clapped on his head, and which fits him so well, is a silent testimony to his guilt, and defeats all his machinations. The scene in the Elector's prison where we witness the rebirth of the prince is conducted largely by insinuation, implication and innuendo, not by direct dialogue. Noteworthy, too, is Kleist's use of the blush to indicate a severe emotional reaction. In a sense, this is the opposite reaction to the characteristic faint: it is a sudden provoked rush of sentiment, which Kleist often uses as a key to the real truth. When the Graf von F... is complimented on his bearing in the siege, he blushes, well aware of his real activities. Kohlhaas wrongly accuses his servant Herse of negligence and the latter turns red. To these we can add the frequent blushes of Käthchen, and the reaction of Penthesilea on first seeing Achill.

The fact that so many of Kleist's images originate in his private letters, coupled with the intensity of his dramatic works, leaves little doubt that his life's work is very much a personal confession. His images are striking because they are simple, and this would indicate that Kleist was concerned with the realities of life on earth. It has been said, perhaps understandably, that many of these images lose all significance if they are viewed in the context of one work only. But Kleist cared little or nothing for such criticism: he regarded his type of image as the best suited to the task in hand, and the gravity of the problems which he debated in his works called for only the most sincerely personal approach.

CHAPTER NINE:- Kleist's " Weltanschauung."

Schiller and Kleist share the view that the world, as it appears to man, is fundamentally treacherous, unpredictable and decadent. Goethe, too, saw the relationship of man to the world as saturated with an indefinable, irrational element which in the Classical spirit he chose to call " das Dämonische." For Schiller, the tragic dilemma of man was often the choice between a moral principle and the commission of some worldly deed: by committing themselves to the moral idea his figures attain a certain moral freedom. This could not satisfy Kleist because he saw man's dilemma on a more practical and less idealistic basis. His characters do not struggle to do what they know to be right, because they frequently do not know what is right. Homburg, for example, does not accept the Elector's sentence by exercising his will and making a choice; his instinct tells him that in this particular case he must act as he does. Kleist clings firmly to reality and his figures have all the human failings inherent in flesh and blood, just the opposite of Schiller's, whose " Bestimmung ist, auch bei allen sinnlichen Schranken<sup>(sich)</sup> ... nach dem Gesetzbuch reiner Geister zu richten." (1) In their trials Kleist's figures are not helped by any Schillerian heroic self-composure, indeed Homburg grovels for his life. Neither can they rely normally on any divine intervention to relieve their suffering, such as we find in the neo-Catholic redemption miracles of " Die Jungfrau von Orleans " or the first part of " Faust." " Käthchen," of course, is a deliberate exception on Kleist's part. The essential characteristic of Kleist's figures is that they are entirely alone, and that they cannot rely on the validity of anything or anybody around them. The world to them is in a state of flux and ever-changing. What they seek with their creator is ultimately the absolute, the last unshakeable metaphysical truth, what Kühnemann calls " das Unbedingte." (2)

(1) Schiller, "Über das Erhabene."  
Werke, ed.cit.vol.1, p.513ff.

(2) E.Kühnemann, op.  
cit. p. 26

It was this truth which the young Kleist was convinced that he had found before Fichte proved to him that it was quite untenable. The fact that Kleist and his figures continue to search for the truth, is perhaps in itself further proof of Kleist's indebtedness to Fichte. The philosopher's aim is to show that whereas little can be proven objectively, truth lies within the province of faith or "Glaube." This is but a short step from Kleist's view of the value of trust in human affairs. Eve in the "Krug" for example, has invincible faith in the final revelation of the truth, as has also the Marquise von O.....

After Fichte, a barrier of appearances seemed to Kleist to separate him from the ultimate truth. Yet Kleist's figures do not passively abide by this state of affairs, they challenge it. From the Marquise to Kohlhaas they set themselves against the world with great determination, and seek a certainty "was die Probe auch vor einer letzten Instanz des Seins bestehen kann." (1) The destiny of man, in Kleist's view, is to seek to attain the truth, and this holds true of the periods before and after the Fichte crisis. The indestructible truth at which Kleist ultimately arrived was the existence of "das Gefühl", really the absolute ego. The state of Paradise for Kleist is the harmonious relationship between the affairs of the world and the reactions of this ego, which can be reached only by penetrating the barrier of misleading appearances. Käthchen, for example, is permanently in this ideal state, Homburg graduates to it. Although, as we have seen, Kleist wrote in 1801 that "wir selbst im Tode noch nicht ahnden, was der Himmel mit uns will," he was later to show in the puppet essay that paradise can be attained in this life, that temporal and spiritual life are really one and are co-existent. The Prince as we leave him in Act five is, like the doll, a citizen of both worlds: similarly the spiritual or eternal world can communicate with the temporal through premonition ("Penthesilea"), the dream (Käthchen)

(1) G. Blöcker, op.cit. p. 64.

and through physical agency, (Lisbeth-Elizabeth in "Kohlhaas", and Sister Antonia in "Cäcilie")

An intrinsic part of Kleist's search for the absolute is his interest in music. Words and even the dramatic form itself are a feature of the world of appearances and are thus equally subject to its irrational laws. For this reason Kleist felt that they were no vehicles for the expression of truth: " Sie ( die Sprache )..... kann die Seele nicht malen, und was sie uns gibt sind nur zerrissene Bruchstücke.." wrote Kleist to Ulrike, and further, " wie kann ich es möglich machen, in einem Briefe, etwas so zartes, als ein Gedanke ist, ausprägen? Ja, wenn man Träne schreiben könnte!" (1) He felt himself called upon to express what was inexpressible: " Wenn ich beim Dichten in meinen Busen fassen, meinen Gedanken ergreifen, und mit Händen, ohne weitere Zutat, in den Deiningen legen könnte: so wäre, die Wahrheit zu gestehen, die ganze innere Forderung meiner Seele erfüllt." (2) Elsewhere he also wrote: " Ich wollte, ich könnte mir das Herz aus dem Leibe reißen, in diesen Brief packen, und dir zuschicken." (3) Similarly the adjectives " unaussprechlich " and " unbeschreiblich " are two of the most frequent in Kleist's letters. (4) Only music is the truly unlimited art form, and, as a competent musician himself, Kleist became convinced of the necessity of expressing his ideas musically as well as verbally. He wrote in 1811: " So habe ich von meiner frühesten Jugend an alles Allgemeine, was ich über die Dichtkunst gedacht habe, auf Töne bezogen. Ich glaube, dass im Generalbass die wichtigsten Aufschlüsse über die Dichtkunst enthalten sind." (5) By fusing his works with this element of music, Kleist believed that he was breaking through the restrictions imposed by the dramatic form, and that his works were, therefore, purveyors of an absolute truth. In this sense he shares the view of Wackenroder's music-loving Friar, who longed " sich in .... das Land der Musik, als in das Land des Glaubens,

(1) K.V.p.195 and Deutsche Rundschau, 161 (Oct.1914) p. 117.

(2) K.4. p. 148

(3) K.V. p. 293

(4) c.f.K.V.p. 86, 118, 189, 193, 195, 205, 214, 222, 225, 226, 227, 229, 242.

(5) K.V. p. 429

wo alle unsere Zweifel und unsere Leiden sich in ein tönendes Meer verlieren." (1) For a long time it seemed to Kleist that in the study of music lay a way to the understanding of the human dilemma, that music was trying to say something to man: " Ich höre zuweilen .... in der Dämmerung .... in dem wehenden Atem des Westwinds .... ganze Concerte, vollständig mit allen Instrumenten von der zärtlichen Flöte bis zum rauschenden Contraviolon ... vor neun Jahren ... als ich ... den Rhein hinaufgieng .... ein schmelzendes Adagio ... mit allem Zauber der Musik, mit allen melodischen Wendungen und der ganzen begleitenden Harmonie. Es war wie die Wirkung eines Orchesters, wie ein vollständiges Vaux-hall. (Ich habe) ... nichts Weicheres, Schöneres, Himmlischeres, als diese seltsame Träumerei.. (gehört)" (2) There is here a striking similarity of thought between Kleist and Hoffmann, who writes in " Dichter und Komponist " of Beethoven: " Die Musik schliesst dem Menschen ein unbekanntes Reich auf, eine Welt, die nichts gemein hat mit der äusseren Sinnenwelt, die ihn umgibt .... ist nicht die Musik die Sprache eines fernen Geisterreichs, deren wunderbare Akzente .... ein höheres intensiveres Leben erwecken?" What Kleist envisaged was a fundamental unity and harmony of words and music, and not, like Tieck for example, a superficial melodiousness of construction. Novalis held a similar view: " Komposition der Rede: musikalische Behandlung der Schriftstellerei: man muss Schriftstellern wie komponieren..." (3) Kleist's whole conception of the use of words, images and the drama itself is not one of " Wohlklang, sondern Seinsbewegung. Ihr Geheimnis ist nicht Klangzauberei, sondern das Vermögen, die Grundmelodie menschlicher Existenz, dieses Gemenge aus Träne und Jubel, Verzweiflung und Hoffnung, Resignation und klammernder Begierde, durchklingen zu lassen durch die diskursive Rede." (4) So much is evident from the "Brief eines

(1) Wackenroder, Werke, ed. von der Leyen, Jena, 1910, vol. 1, p. 64.

(2) K.V. p. 133.

(3) Novalis, ed. cit. Vol. 1, p. 284, no. 712.

(4) Blöcker, op. cit. p. 277.

Dichters an einen anderen," where he argues that the combination of words and <sup>h</sup>rythms is in itself an "Übelstand"; nevertheless it may produce an abstract infinite idea. Here again Kleist uses the image of the mirror which <sup>A</sup>acts as a filter and passes only infinite ideas while it rejects finite ones: " Ich bemühe mich ..... dem Ausdruck Klarheit, dem Versbau Bedeutung, dem Klang der Worte Anmut und Leben zu gehen .... denn das ist die Eigenschaft aller echten Form, dass der Geist augenblicklich und unmittelbar hervortritt, während die mangelhafte ihn, wie ein schlechter Spiegel gebunden hält und an nichts erinnert, als sich selbst. Wenn Du mir daher, im Moment der ersten Empfängnis, die Form meiner kleinen, anspruchlosen Dichterwerke lobst; so erweckst Du in mir, auf natürlichem Wege, die Besorgnis, dass darin ganz falsche rhythmische und prosodische Reize enthalten sind und dass Dein Gemüt durch den Wortklang oder den Versbau ganz und gar von dem, worauf es mir eigentlich ankam, abgezogen worden ist." (1) Kleist then goes on to attack some of his contemporaries for their " Unempfindlichkeit gegen das Wesen und den Kern der Poesie " and their " bis zur Krankheit ausgebildeten Reizbarkeit für das Zufällige und die Form." (2) He says that they are unable to see the woods for the trees.

Kleist's interest in music has its roots in the problem of synthesis which he attempted in " Guiskard." Petersen sees this work as the fusion of the "Ohrenkunst" of the Classical drama with the "Augenkunst" of the <sup>e</sup>mediaeval theatre (3) and argues: "Es bedeutet nichts anderes, als der Plan, die Tragödie neu erstehen zu lassen aus dem Geiste der Musik, eine dionysische statt einer apollinischen Kunst zu pflegen." (4) One wonders if this is what Kleist meant by his comment to Goethe in 1808 about his "Penthesilea," that it was " ebensowenig für die Bühne geschrieben..... als Der

(1) K.4. p. 148.

(2) loc.cit.

(3) J.Petersen, "Ks. dramatische Kunst": Kleistjahrbuch 1922 p. 4.

(4) loc.cit. p. 16.

zerbrochene Krug." (1) If so, Goethe perceived the same quality in the play when he wrote to Adam Müller about Kleist's "unsichtbares Theater." Kühnemann holds a similar view about "Homburg": "nur in (Kleist's) letztem Werke ist ihm die Einheit des Dionysischen und Apollonischen gelungen." (2)

Among Kleist's epigrams appears a short verse which, I believe, sheds considerable light on Kleist's approach to music as well as on his philosophy of life. It is entitled "Musikalische Einsicht" and is dedicated to a certain "Fr. v. P."

"Zeno, beschirmt, und Diogen, mich, ihr Weisen! Wie soll ich  
Heute tugendhaft sein, da ich die Stimme gehört.  
Eine Stimme, der Brust so schlank, wie die Zeder, entwachsen,  
Schöner gewipfelt entblüht keine, Parthenope, dir.  
Nun versteh' ich den Platon erst, ihr ionischen Lieder,  
Eure Gewalt, und warum Hellas in Fesseln jetzt liegt." (3)

The significance of the last lines is revealed in Plato's "Republic". The philosopher alludes to music as a fundamental means of teaching morality, and sees both as closely related. This was an idea which Kleist had held for some time, and its confirmation clearly gave him much pleasure: he now felt that he would be able to lead a truly moral life ("tugendhaft") through music. Plato, however, goes further in his treatise, and delivers a solemn warning against the neglect of music, claiming that this would bring about a progressive decline of man's spiritual side and a decadent growth of materialism. Surely this is what Kleist means by his reference to "Hellas in Fesseln," - that the decline of the Greek empire was due to its failure to heed the warning. Significantly, the Prince's dilemma ("Homburg") is that he initially attaches too much importance to the things of this material world, and that his salvation is possible only after he has voluntarily renounced them. Further, the element of sudden realisation evident in "Nun

(1) K.V. p. 370

(2) Kühnemann, op.cit. p. 30

(3) K.4. p. 22.



versteh' ich den Platon erst" may well be a repetition of that in a letter of 1803 where Kleist speaks secretively of " eine gewisse Entdeckung auf dem Gebiete der Kunst," (1) and perhaps also it was his interest in the relationship of music to the drama which helped Kleist to recognise his poetic destiny in the dark confused days after the Fichte collapse.

The clearest depiction of Kleist's new insight into the nature of music is in his Novelle "Die heilige Cäcilie" of 1810. The sub-title of the story, " Die Gewalt der Musik," repeats the description of the " ionischen Lieder " in the epigram, and in this Novelle Kleist clearly establishes music as the link between man and the source of all truth, God. On the one hand, God averts disaster through the compelling power of music, and on the other, the " Bilderstürmer " praise God in their songs. Music is thus the language in both directions.

Here, too, lies the answer to the riddle of Kleist's concern with the Catholic Church and its attraction for him. That creed and dogma had no more attraction for him at the end of his life than it had had at any earlier period. But Catholicism makes great use of artistic media in its praise of God, notably music, sculpture and painting, and this is where Kleist's interest lay. The four intruders in " Cäcilie," it will be remembered, are not converted to Catholicism, but are driven solely to an acute awareness of what they might have done. The majority of Kleist's references to Catholicism show this essentially artistic bias, of which this letter dated 1801 is evidence: " Nirgends aber fand ich mich tiefer in meinem Innersten gerührt, als in der katholischen Kirche, wo die grösste Erhabenste Musik noch zu den anderen Künsten tritt, das Herz gewaltsam zu bewegen. Ach, Wilhelmine, unser Gottesdienst ist keiner. Er spricht nur zu dem kalten Verstande, aber zu allen Sinnen ein katholisches Fest." (2)

(1) K.V. p. 297

(2) K.V. p. 222.

Of a religious picture Kleist also wrote in a similar vein: " In der hiesigen Kirche ( most probably one at Châlons-sur-Marne, during the stay in France ) ist ein Gemälde, schlecht gezeichnet zwar, doch von der schönsten Erfindung, die man sich denken kann ..... Es sind ein paar geflügelte Engel, die aus den Wohnungen himmlischer Freude niederschweben, um eine Seele zu empfangen." Then follows a description of the work in some detail, ending with the comment: " Ich habe nie etwas Rührenderes und Erhebenderes gesehen." (1) Kleist also agreed with Plato that music, painting and sculpture are different ways of expressing the same truths, and are thus closely related. This is perhaps why Kleist was so attracted to the Dresden Madonna and later developed an interest in painting: he included, for example, in the " Abendblätter " an adaptation of Arnim and Brentano's " Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft." (2) " Penthesilea," incidentally, has been seen by Maass (3) to contain a large element " vom Malerischen," and the fusion of music and all the plastic arts forms the theme of an essay by Adam Müller, Kleist's co-editor. (4) Another essay by Müller, entitled " Etwas über Landschaftsmalerei " and published in " Phöbus," expresses artistic views very akin to Kleist's: " Die Seele fühlt in Betrachtung der Landschaft ein sanftes Getragenwerden, wie von einem unsichtbaren Geist ..... Auch das innerste Wesen der Landschaftsmalerei ... sei ... etwas Religiöses.." (5)

But art, as the expression of truth for Kleist, may be a part of Catholicism, but is not dependent upon it. This is the point he makes in his short essay " Brief eines Malers an seinen Sohn," where Kleist draws a sharp line between art and the dogmas of Catholicism, and at the same time clarifies his position vis-à-vis that religion. " Du schreibst mir, dass Du eine Madonna malst und dass Dein Gefühl Dir, für die Vollendung dieses Werks, so unrein und körperlich dünkt, dass Du jedesmal, bevor Du zum Pinsel

(1) K.V. p. 342

(2) K.4. p. 230

(3) J.Maass, op.cit. p.205

(4) Adam Müller, "Von der Idee der Schönheit"

and

(5) cit.Kluckhohn, op.cit. p. 168.

greifst, das Abendmahl nehmen möchtest, um es zu heiligen. Lass Dir von Deinem alten Vater sagen, dass diese eine falsche, Dir von der Schule, aus der Du herkommst, anklebende Begeisterung ist..... und die göttlichsten Wirkungen ..... gehen aus den niedrigsten und unscheinbarsten Ursachen hervor,.. " wrote Kleist, (1) and went on to state that any such ceremony would probably ruin the work. The shafts here are directed against the religious fanatics of the Romantic school, and it is clear that Kleist is concerned with the church as an aesthete and not as a convert.(2)

After the drama, however, it was in music that Kleist's main interest lay. Critics of his works have frequently commented on the musical structure of Kleist's plays. Servaes compares " Pentheseilea " to a symphony, and sees a close similarity to the works of Beethoven.(3) Petersen interprets the same play as a sonata and recognises an anticipation of Richard Wagner's " Leitmotiv " technique in Kleist's repetition of images and ideas. In this critic's opinion, it was the latter method of construction to which Kleist referred as his " gewisse Entdeckung " in the letter of 1803. It is also likely that the rejection of the usual division of the drama into acts and scenes which we find in " Guiskard," " Krug " and " Pentheseilea " was based on a musical conception of these plays. (4)

The musical elements in " Homburg " are also quite striking. The development of the hero, from being an egoist to a personality more in tune with the state, is reminiscent of an aphorism of Novalis, which also uses musical terminology: " Der Übergang von Monotonie zur Harmonie wird freilich durch Disharmonie gehen, ... und nur am Ende wird eine Harmonie entstehen." (5) The opening scene of Kleist's play sets the atmosphere and gives the theme of the whole. Each figure is heard with his or her own particular note. Then the theme is broken up, emphasised and repeated: the

(1) K.4. p. 145

(4) J.Petersen, op.cit.

(2) c.f. R.Ayrault, "Heinrich v. Kleist", Paris, 1934: particularly his chapter "Le Romantique."

(5) Novalis, ed.cit.

(3) F.Servaes, "Heinrich v. Kleist" Leipzig, 1902, p.94ff.

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climax is reached in the clamour of the Prince's utter collapse, when, at the same time, we hear in the background the call of Natalie which marks the beginning of his recovery. At last the theme of Homburg's personal victory asserts itself above the din of the contending forces in the palace at Fehrbellin, as he speaks his soliloquy "Nun, O Unsterblichkeit, bist du ganz mein!" Finally the original theme is repeated, but refined by the intervening development, and the work ends on the concerted note "In Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgs!" The emotional effect which Kleist achieves here is difficult to define rationally, as he would doubtless agree, but it is genuinely musical. And the musical structure of Kleist's last play has been amply demonstrated in our own day by Henze's opera, "Der Prinz von Homburg."

There is also evidence that Kleist looked upon music as a predominantly female art. It is the nuns in "Cäcilie" who are so adept at music and who teach the young intruders its true power. One might also reasonably suppose that this *Novelle* is a parable of Kleist's own experience, in that some unknown woman may have confirmed what he had always felt about the significance of music for mankind. The dedication of the epigram, "Musikalische Einsicht," written about the same time as the earliest draft of "Cäcilie", is to a certain Fr.v.P ; this may be Kleist's sister Augustine, who married Wilhelm von Pannwitz, although it is unlikely that Kleist would address his own sister in so formal a manner. On the other hand, the circle of friends of Kleist and Müller in 1808 contained many female acquaintances, perhaps even a lady called Antonia, who was later to be personified in the *Novelle*. Music was also one of the mutual interests of Kleist and Henriette Vogel, and Maass reports that they held frequent musical evenings for their friends.(1)

Kleist never lost his interest in Music. In a letter

(1) J. Maass, op.cit. p. 299.

of the year of his death he expressed a desire to further his study: " In diesem Falle würde ich die Kunst vielleicht auf ein Jahr oder länger ganz ruhen lassen und mich ..... mit nichts als mit Musik beschäftigen..." (1) In the same letter he defines music specifically as the algebraic formula of all other arts: what he meant by this we have seen in "Homburg" and "Penthesilea". We can only wonder what remarkable developments he may have inaugurated in the drama had he lived.

There are other points of interest in Kleist's epigram. He invokes, for example, the protection of Zeno and Diogenes and of course praises Plato, and with reason. Plato was one of the first Greek thinkers to oppose popular religion, and refuted the idea that God sent evil or good upon man according to this or that whim. He argued that what is in essence good cannot produce what is not good. Thus the responsibility for good and evil lies not with God, but with man, and the daughter of Necessity warms souls about to commence their earthly existence that the guilt is with the choice man makes. (2) This certainly is a view to which Kleist subscribed in his period of renewed optimism: "Es kann kein böser Geist sein, der an der Spitze der Welt steht....." (3) Zeno's name is linked with the Stoic indifference to pleasure and pain, and similarly Diogenes, the Cynic, held riches, arts, sciences, and amusements in contempt. Like them Kleist believed that the world as we know it holds little of lasting value for man, and that pain and pleasure are really of little significance. Michael Kohlhaas, for example, sells his flourishing business, sends away his family, and gives up his personal happiness in order to be free to follow a course of action which quite clearly can end only in personal disaster. Much the same can be said also of the Prince.

(1) K.V. p. 429

(3) K.V.p.326.

(2)c.f.R.L.Nettlehip, "Education in Plato's Republic", London, 1935, pp. 29-94.

What Kleist regarded as essential was that man should choose between good and evil without reference to the things of this world. Significantly, this is also a creed of Zoroastrianism, and doubtless explains why Kleist expressed his new confidence in the " Gebet des Zoroaster."

But how can man, to whom the absolute truth seems unattainable, make any valid decision between right and wrong? Fichte had shown Kleist that the manifestations of the world, by which man judges right and wrong, were invalid, and man's own interpretations of these terms untenable. In Kleist's view, if any number of truths, or apparent truths, seem to contradict one another, then only the ultimate truth, God, can say which truth is the real one. This is the dilemma in which so many of his literary figures find themselves, for they see God, as it were, hiding behind conflicting truths. Sylvester Schroffenstein, for example, is asked to explain the reason for the feud, but can say only: "Bin ich denn Gott, dass du mich fragst?" (1) In a world where two entire families can obliterate each other for no good reason, and where, in " Der Zweikampf ", the law and God seem to side with the evil Jakob, the values of good and evil seem indeed to have vanished. Thus Kleist was driven to set his own standard of good, and this he interpreted as the dictates of " das Gefühl."

As Kleist became more convinced that his was the right approach, so his view of God became more liberal and his works cease to show the conflict of good and evil on earth, at least as a major theme. The motifs of conscious deceit tend to become of secondary importance, and that of the plague with them. Kleist now finds God and the universe not bewildering but intriguing, as shown in a letter to Rühle: " Ach, was ist dies für eine Welt? Wie kann ein edles Wesen, ein denkendes und empfindendes wie der Mensch

(1) K.1. p. 61.

hier glücklich sein! Wie kann er es nur wollen, hier, wo alles mit dem Tode endigt! ..... Nur darum ist dieses Gewimmel von Erscheinungen angeordnet, damit der Mensch an keiner haften..... Denken Sie nur, diese unendliche Fortdauer! .... und dieses ganze ungeheure Firmament, das die Phantasie nicht ermessen kann, nur ein Stäubchen gegen den unendlichen Raum! O, mein edler Freund, ist dies ein Traum? Zwischen je zwei Lindenblättern, wenn wir abends am Rücken liegen, eine Aussicht, an Ahnungen reicher, als Gedanken fassen, und Worte sagen können!" (1) He now sees man's future as optimistic, and the universe not frightening but inviting, an infinity which man's meagre powers may only attempt to understand. Man can reach the God at the centre of this cosmos only by acting in accordance with what he feels to be good.

This is really why deceit particularly interests Kleist. He regards trust as the essential bond between man and his neighbour, because it is a spiritual force which takes no account of appearances. For this reason it is a source of good, because any contact between man and the world of appearances is potentially fraught with disaster. The deceiver, on the other hand, deliberately mocks this human capacity and strikes at what Kleist holds to be man's holiest and simultaneously most vulnerable spiritual urge. Nicolo in " Der Findling " is able to carry out his hideous crimes against Piachi largely because the old man persists in trusting him: in other words, the greater the wish to trust is, so much more vulnerable is man to the blandishments of the deceiver. In his period of pessimism, Kleist seems to have identified the conflict on earth of good and evil with that of trust and deceit. He stresses, for example, the near-divinity of his Agnes, who implicitly trusts Ottokar, and the dying Piachi states his intention of pursuing Nicolo to Hades.

If, then, obedience to feeling leads mankind to what is

(1) K.V. p. 326.

good and true, the problem now arises of whether the confusion of this feeling is the ultimate cause of the unhappiness and tragic dilemmas faced by Kleist's figures. Critics have been much bedevilled by Goethe's assertion, in reviewing "Amphitryon", that Kleist's principle theme was "Verwirrung des Gefühls," (1) and literature on Kleist has since tended to range itself for or against this thesis. Certainly the possibility that feeling could be fallible existed for Kleist, for he refers frequently in his works to "Verwirrung." In "Schroffenstein", also, there is ample evidence that feelings of trust between the main characters are stifled either by their own unbridled passions - as in the case of Rupert - or by the whims of the unpredictable world. But, in his "Amphitryon", Kleist goes beyond his earlier conception of confusion. Alkmene's normal worldly senses are confused, and she has given her love, both spiritual and physical, to the god. Yet at the same time her love for the idea - as opposed to the person - of her real husband Amphitryon never wavers. The only means open to Jupiter to win Alkmene is to impersonate her husband, and the god finally admits defeat and shows his approval of the power of love by granting a pardon. Alkmene's love, then, is not confused and Kleist is trying to stress the divine nature of true love. Von Wiese sees the heroine's child as a symbol of this love: "Damit verwandelt sich das Thema von der liebenden Alkmene in das mythische von der durch den Gott geliebten, die in ihrer Treue zu Amphitryon und gleichsam durch diese Treue hindurch sich dem Jupiter hingibt und damit an einem Göttlichen teilnimmt, das ihr eigenstes Ich aufschliesst und sie zur Trägerin eines göttlichen Geschehens macht." (2)

In the later works Kleist places the emphasis more on the threat of confusion. Hence Hermann cries "Verwirre das Gefühl mir nicht!" and the purpose of Friedrich's appeal to Littegarde

(1) In Goethe's diary  
July 13th, 1807.

(2) B.v.Wiese, op.cit.  
p. 306.



in "Der Zweikampf" is not to restore her feeling itself, but her basic confidence in it. In the twentieth scene the Amazon queen is faced with the problem that both her destinies seem to be turning against her. Her reaction is not one of resignation or despair, for Kleist describes her mood as "glühend." (1) When she sinks her teeth into Achille's flesh and tears his corpse, she is symbolising a mystical love-union with him. Both her destinies are satisfied, she is at the same time Achille's conqueror and spouse: "Küsst' ich ihn tot?" she asks. (2) Kleist clearly showed his intention at the end of his play when he wrote to Marie that "sie (Penthesilea) hat ihn wirklich aufgegessen, den Achill, vor Liebe," (3) and the queen herself comments after the deed "Ich war nicht so verrückt, als es wohl schien." (4) Indeed, the very enormity of Penthesilea's crime shows, in one sense, that there was no confusion of feeling.

Similarly, Fricke's attempt to define confusion of feeling as the root cause of Homburg's dilemma is insecurely founded. He states for example: "Der Prinz folgt seinem Gefühl...Aber das Gefühl ist verwirrt." (5) If we take this as implying that there is only one "Gefühl" in Kleist's view, then Fricke is arguing against Kleist's confessed view in the puppet essay, where the latter speaks of finite and infinite feelings. The same weakness is apparent in Fricke's further argument: "Will man den Prinzen von dem echten eigentlichen Kleistischen Begriff des Gefühls verstehen, so wird man also sagen müssen, dass es in den ersten drei Akten verwirrt ist," and "Es wird deutlich, dass es sich um ein Noch-nicht-Entwirrtsein des Gefühls handelt, dass hinter dieser Verwirrung eine grosse Möglichkeit wartet." Surely the point is not that Homburg's true feeling for his destiny is confused, but that it is dormant while his actions are based upon false feelings. The decision forced upon him by the letter releases his

(1) K.2. p. 132

(4) K.2. p. 165

(2) K.2. p. 164

(3) c.f. Maass op.cit.  
p. 185-186.

(5) G. Fricke, op.cit.  
pp. 179 - 181.

true feeling for what he must do. Furthermore, it is wrong to say that the prince "follows his feeling." The marionette essay sets out to show that true feeling is purely instinctive and that there can be no conscious decision on man's part to act in accordance with it. This feeling takes up a course and, as it were, takes man's physical self with it: it<sup>is</sup> essentially an unconscious and involuntary force, and is symbolised in the doll which has no independent consciousness. This principle is the whole raison d'être for the wordless action of the Homburg-Natalie gaol scene.

The Elector sees a threat also to the integrity of his feeling for the law in the pleas made for Homburg's life. His letter to the Prince is from his point of view an attempt to vindicate his feeling. By risking the authority of the law in his wish to trust Homburg, the Elector ultimately glorifies that same law, and at the same time avoids confusion of his own feeling.

In his later works Kleist is thus concerned largely with the recognition of the true instinct in man and not with its possible fallibility. The view put forward by Einsiedel (1) that feeling is in the final analysis unable to cope with the whims of the world of appearances seems to imply that Kleist's is really a fate-tragedy. The argument that feeling must be fallible because adherence to it frequently causes destruction and unhappiness is likewise groundless, because it pre-supposes an eudemonism which Kleist was driven to abandon after Fichte. Reliance on true feeling brings about the tragic isolation of many of Kleist's characters, which is really what he means by the image of the oak in the storm as he uses it in "Penthesilea." This is no less what he means in the significant epigram "Die Bestimmung", this time reflecting on the implications of his poetic instinct:

"Was ich fühle, wie sprech' ich es aus - der Mensch ist  
doch immer,

(1) W. Einsiedel, "Die dramatische Charaktergestaltung bei H. v. Kleist"; Germ. Stud. vol. 100, Berlin 1931

Selbst auch in dem Kreis lieblicher Freunde allein." (1)  
For Kleist, the integrity of feeling is greatly enhanced in death. Kohlhaas must die because, by acting in feeling, he commits crimes for which he must give his life in expiation. Similarly Penthesilea must kill her lover, a deed of singular personal unhappiness for her.

Kleist came to believe that morality and the source of goodness in the world was the result of obedience to the will of God which expressed itself through true feeling. As his view of God became more optimistic, so his faith in man's divine instinct grew. This was particularly where he came to agree with Fichte's view in the "Bestimmung des Menschen" : "Jene Stimme in meinem Innern ..... diese Stimme meines Gewissens gebietet mir in jeder besonderen Lage meines Daseins, was ich bestimmt in dieser Lage zu tun, was ich in ihr zu vermeiden habe: sie begleitet mich, wenn ich nur aufmerksam auf sie höre, durch alle Begebenheiten meines Lebens, und sie versagt mir nie ihre Belehrung, wo ich zu handeln habe...." (2) Yet paradoxically, by following the divine will, many of Kleist's figures are driven into conflict with their fellows and society. This is why Kleist returns so often in his works to the theme of the law. This world is but a pale and very inaccurate reflection of the divine moral world, and, according to Fichte, has been since man lost his innocence in the Fall. Human law does not always reflect God's law, and is often administered by evil men. Clearly this is part of the symbolism of "Der zerbrochene Krug": Adam is tempted by Eve and the law becomes merely a figment of the world of appearances. The mediaeval duel principle in "Der Zweikampf" is shown as an attempt by man to bridge the gap between the divine order and human order; it fails because the visual manifestations of God's will are subject to the irrational powers of interpretation in man. In "Kohlhaas" the law is twisted by

(1) K.4. p. 24

(2) Fichte, Med.3. p. 248

its administrators, and it is a biting comment on the organisation of the church on earth when Kleist lets Luther, the man of God, fail to see that the horse-dealer is in fact obeying the will of God. Luther's effect on Kohlhaas is rather like the effect of the duel on Friedrich and Littegarde: they think that they are being shown unequivocally the will of God, whereas in fact that will is manifesting itself within them. In "Penthesilea" Kleist deals with the effects of an unnatural law and man's unquestioning adherence to it. In "Homburg" we see how the failure to carry out a military order brings the hero into conflict with the law and the state, and Kleist goes on in the rehabilitation of his hero to give his ideal view of the state. He visualised with the Romantics (1) a state which the individual should serve with all his heart and soul, and yet at the same time remain a free individual. The tendency of Kleist's works had been to show the frailty of human laws and institutions, so it is not surprising that he should join the Romantics - and especially Adam Müller - in praising a state which was held together by non-legal and non-political ties. This is what Kleist achieved in "Homburg" where, as we have seen earlier, he makes man's metaphysical instincts into the power which holds the state together.

The instinct for what they must do expresses itself in Kleist's figures only when the conflict seems insoluble, and at the same time it reveals an attitude to the conflict. When it is clearly recognised, this instinct offers them the only salutary course of action in Kleist's world: to avoid the dilemma by any means would be to admit the supremacy of the world over their

(1) For a more extensive treatment of this aspect c.f. Hans Kohn, "The Mind of Germany" London, 1962, p.63ff.

innermost selves. The conflict is also coloured by the personality of the victims. The Amazon queen, for example, cannot ignore the conflict of her feelings, and neither may she ignore either of the elements which compose it. Kohlhaas' great strength and weakness simultaneously is his feeling for the law as the absolute moral order - he dies because the law in this world is not an accurate reflection of the divine law. Thus Kleist describes his hero as one of the most upright and at the same time terrible men of his age. Kommerell (1) makes this definition of Kleist's view: "Es muss etwas geschehen und man muss etwas sein, damit sich die Wahrheit eines Menschen entdeckt. Dieses Geschehen heisst Schicksal." It is very much what Prothoe recognises in Penthesilea: (2)

Meroe: " Unmöglich wär's ihr, zu entfliehen?

Oberpriesterin:

Unmöglich.

Da nichts von aussen sie, kein Schicksal, hält,  
Nichts als ihr töricht Herz -

Prothoe:

Das ist ihr Schicksal!

Dir scheinen Eisenbanden unzerreissbar,  
Nicht wahr? Nun sieh; sie bräche sie vielleicht,  
Und das Gefühl doch nicht, das du verspottest.  
Was in ihr walten mag, das weiss nur sie,  
Und jeder Busen ist, der fühlt, ein Rätsel."

Here lies also the essence of Kleist's antipathy towards the Romantic fate-drama. In his view the responsibility for the human dilemma is evenly divided between the subject and fate, whereas the Romantics saw man as the helpless victim of demonic powers. Kleist's view is as usual based on his own personal experience. In January 1802, only a few months after his first collapse, he wrote to Ulrike of his estrangement from his relatives and loved ones, and expressed in a nut-shell what was later to become Penthesilea's dilemma: "Ich weine, dass das Schicksal oder mein Gemüth - und ist das nicht mein Schicksal? eine Kluft wirft, zwischen mich und sie." (3)

(1) M.Kommerell op.cit. p.196

(2) K.2. p. 77-78

(3) K.V. p. 279.

At the moment when they feel what they must do, Kleist's characters experience a harmony with the world. When the Junker's insults have gone beyond the limits of the Horse-dealer's tolerance, Kohlhaas feels an "innerliche Zufriedenheit" because he is now convinced of how he must act. (1) Kleist's figures must grasp this opportunity as soon as it presents itself, and whatever the cost: this is what is intended by Käthchen's immediate leap from a high window - which results in personal injury - when it appears that vom Strahl is about to ride off and leave her. They then try to maintain this harmony, only to find that the world seems set against it. Thus the Amazon queen tries to harmonise her two conflicting feelings, and Homburg is wrongly convinced that his restriction in prison is merely the Elector's joke.

But Penthesilea's dilemma cannot be solved in this way, at least not in terms of normal life in the world of appearances. Her position offers an interesting comparison with that of Schiller's Johanna. The latter's divine mission to free France must oust her personal desire for happiness with Lionel, and that she makes the right choice in Schiller's view is evident from the poet's adaptation of her historical demise. The key to Schiller's dilemma is moral repentance, and once this has been achieved by an act of will, the true way to grace lies open. So Johanna demands to be punished for her betrayal of God's mission, (2) just as another Schiller heroine, Maria Stuart, sees her death at Elizabeth's hands as expiation for her implication in Darnley's death:

"Gott würdigt mich, durch diesen unverdienten Tod,  
Die frühe schwere Blutschuld abzubüssen." (3)

Repentance plays no part in the attainment of grace for Kleist. Homburg's ignominious collapse before the Electress is not the act which saves his life. Neither do Kleist's figures make any conscious choice in how to act: the point of the puppet essay

(1) K.3. p. 159.

(2) Schiller, ed.cit.  
vol.2. p. 433.

(3) loc.cit. p. 343.

is to stress the unconscious element in the motivation of Kleist's figures. For them the conflict is unavoidable and imminent, and they must find what Penthesilea in the twentieth scene calls "die Kraft . . . . ihm zu stehen." Grillparzer would probably regard this situation in "Penthesilea" as lacking all solution. His Sappho, for example goes to pieces on the conflict between her innocent spiritual isolation, and the guilt-laden demonic world. Like the Amazon queen she tries to effect a compromise and reconciliation of the dualism in her love for Phaon. But all is in vain, and the heroine despairs: (1)

Sappho: "Wen Götter sich zum Eigentum erlesen,  
Geselle sich zu Erdenbürgern nicht:  
Der Menschen und der Überirdischen Los  
Er mischt sich nimmer in demselben Becher.  
Von beiden Welten eine musst du wählen,  
Hast du gewählt, dann ist kein Rücktritt mehr."

For Grillparzer the elements in the conflict are of equal weight and man may not choose: the answer is resignation or isolation. Penthesilea's dilemma is also equally weighted, but for her to adopt an attitude of resignation would be to deny the absolute autonomy of feeling and make an admission of defeat. It would indicate also that the call to a personal destiny had been ignored. Rather than this, she suffers death by following her feelings wherever they lead her: in death itself, Penthesilea conquers death and the seductions of the world of appearances. There is no suggestion of religious redemption here. The queen is motivated solely by belief in the ultimate attainment of goodness and truth through unconfused feeling.

(1) Grillparzer, "Dramatische Werke"  
ed. R. Backmann, Liechtenstein  
Verlag, Vaduz, 1947, vol. 1. p. 146.

CHAPTER TEN: Conclusion.

A unifying theme of Kleist's works is his pre-occupation with the conduct of life and how man should regard death. Kleist's view is not essentially Christian, in the sense that he believed in a progression to Heaven after death: he saw the life after death rather as an infinite migration from planet to planet. A second unifying theme of the works is Kleist's evaluation of "das Gefühl" and its role in the human destiny.

Kleist took Fichte's philosophy as proof that the "Aufklärung" tradition of education as the collection of knowledge was not man's real destiny in this life. He deduced that man is inherently incapable of perceiving the truth through the accepted senses: this is the dilemma out of which his characters try to find their way. In other words, Kleist's figures usually receive some sudden shock in which they realise that they cannot understand the world and that they do not know what to do. This is a clear reflection of Kleist's own shattering experience with Fichte's ideas.

Kleist came to interpret "das Gefühl" as the only basis for valid action within his metaphysical scheme of things. In the early works this feeling is absolute and independent, and is symbolised in the archway. Later it becomes dependent on God and is symbolised in the dancing puppet in the essay.

God thus communicates his will to man through the agency of feeling, but the world may attack the sole integrity of such feeling by introducing one or more false feelings which in turn cause confusion of the true one. This is the basic theme of "Penthesilea." Man's task is now to recognise the true feeling, a process which Kleist describes in "Homburg."

The instinct for the true course of action communicates itself only once, and failure to follow it may mean the loss of a future existence, the key to the journey of the spirit through the universe. Deliberate evil-doers, particularly deceivers, suffer in Kleist's works, because they can actively prevent man



from fulfilling his destiny. Thus, also, Kleist and his figures care for little but their destinies when they become aware of them, and they follow their destiny with the same sense of acute urgency which characterises Kleist's own attitude.

Out of his philosophical crisis grew Kleist's awareness of his own destiny as a poet. In his last play "Homburg" he felt that he had fulfilled that destiny, that he had completed his life's mission. That was why his death, like that of his heroine Penthesilea, could be so full of "Freude und unaussprechliche Heiterkeit:" now he was sure that he was to reach "Jene bessere Welt, wo wir uns alle, mit der Liebe der Engel, einander werden ans Herz drücken können." (1)

Along with many of his contemporaries Kleist felt that passive acquiescence in this world can bring man only to despair. The cause of this suffering is for Kleist man's basically faulty attitude towards knowledge and the material things of this world, a view which clearly owes something to Kleist's study of Rousseau's philosophy. In Kleist's view, man may either reject knowledge outright and return to the state of the puppet, or may suffer throughout life on this planet in ignorance of the reason why - for this knowledge too is unreliable - but in a spirit of faith or "Glaube." In the early works Kleist seems to favour the latter approach, but in the works connected with the puppet image he later showed a way back to the paradise which mankind lost, this time, however, based on man's unconscious nature. In both cases Kleist acknowledged that God can be reached only through death, "und hier sei der Punkt, wo die beiden Enden der ringförmigen Welt ineinander griffen." ("Über das Marionettentheater") The present intermediate stage of reason, which Kleist felt he had overcome, is painful, but this will pass before the long journey of humanity from Paradise back to Paradise is completed; and "das ist das letzte Kapitel von der Geschichte der Welt."

(1) K.V. p. 435.

In the main, Kleist's view here is typical of his age. A fundamental tenet for example of Hegel's philosophy is the idea of an advance by mankind towards an Absolute Truth. The advice given to the scholar by Mephisto in "Faust", "Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum," (1) is a quotation from the Vulgate, from the same third chapter of the first book of Moses to which Kleist pointedly refers in the puppet essay. Kleist's reference in the same work to a second bite from the apple of the tree of knowledge occurs also in spirit in a Novalis aphorism: "Adam und Eva. Was durch eine Revolution bewirkt wurde, muss durch eine Revolution bewirkt werden ( Apfelbiss )," (2) and again "Wenn kein Sterblicher .... den Schleier hebt, so müssen wir Unsterbliche zu werden suchen..." (3). All these men believed in the final goodness of human endeavour with an optimism which is one of the best legacies of the Rationalism of the eighteenth century.

The generation of German writers who were active after the first quarter of the nineteenth century seemed, in general, to be far less concerned than Kleist with the abstract problem of man's metaphysical destiny. A more worldly and materialist strain enters German literature, which culminated in the work of the Poetic Realists and the social dramas of the latter end of that century. Just as the "Sturm und Drang" was primarily a revolt against the decadence of the later "Aufklärung", and Classicism was in a sense the opposite extreme of Romanticism, so one might expect the pendulum to swing far away eventually from Fichte's abstractions to exclusively material considerations. Heine laments for example at the end of his essay "Die romantische Schule" that " ... die grosse Menge glaubt nur an Geld. Besteht nun die heutige Religion in der Geldwerdung Gottes oder in der Gottwerdung des Geldes? Die Leute schreiben ( dem gemünzten Metall ) eine Wunderkraft zu: das Geld ist der Anfang und das Ende aller ihrer Werke"(4)

(1) Goethe, Werke, ed. Friedenthal,  
(Knaur Verlag), München 1953,  
(2 vols.): vol 1, p. 763

(2) Novalis, ed.cit. vol.3, p. 117

(3) loc.cit.vol.4,p.7.

(4) Heine, Werke, ed.  
H.R.Lieber, Salzburg,  
Bergland Verlag, 1954  
p. 1177.

Hegel saw the political state as the basis of human morality, a tendency already to be discerned in "Die Hermannsschlacht" and "Homburg", (1) and interpreted the destiny of man thus in worldly terms. Similarly Goethe's Faust, who was driven like Kleist to reject the pedantic amassing of knowledge as man's ultimate purpose, also changed his mind:

"Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt,  
Tor, wer dorthin die Augen blinzelnd richtet,  
Sich über seinesgleichen dichtet!  
Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um;  
Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm...." (2)

Hegel's conception of the infinite progress of mankind also tended to support the current doubt of permanent values. He wrote for example: " Es gibt nichts, was nicht wird ..... was nicht eine vermittelnde Aufgabe hat, zwischen Sein und Nichtsein...." (3) and was echoed by his pupil Engels: " Die dialektische Philosophie löst alle Begriffe endgültiger absoluter Wahrheit und eines endgültigen absoluten Zustandes des Menschen auf, die damit Hand in Hand gehen. Somit ist nichts endgültig, absolut, heilig." (4) A further reflection is to be found in some of Hebbel's dramatic characters. They do not act to oppose destiny or fate, for they cannot do that: after the moral struggle they overcome personal desire and acquiesce in the power of the Absolute - the only freedom which their creator regards as possible. Kleist's figures by contrast struggle against fate with greater or less success. And, finally, Heine expressed a typical view of the destiny of man in his cynical poem "Fragen" - and here the wheel has come full term from the faith in the ultimate revelation of the truth with which Kleist pursued his questionings.

" Am Meer, am wüsten, nächtlichen Meer,  
Steht ein Jüngling-Mann.

(1) c.f. H.Kohn, op.cit. p. 72.

(2) Werke, ed.cit.vol.1.p.980.

(3) Cit. Kluckhohn, op.cit.  
p. 90.

(4) loc.cit.

Die Brust voll Wehmut, das Haupt voll Zweifel,  
Und mit düstern Lippen fragt er die Wogen:-  
'O! löst mir das Rätsel des Lebens,  
Das qualvoll uralte Rätsel,  
Worüber schon manche Häupter gegrübelt,  
Häupter in Hieroglyphenmützen,  
Häupter in Turban und schwarzem Baret,  
Perückenhäupter und tausend andere  
Arme, schwitzende Menschenhäupter -  
Sagt mir, was bedeutet der Mensch?  
Woher ist er kommen? Wo geht er hin?  
Wer wohnt dort oben auf goldenen Sternen?'  
Es murmeln die Wogen ihr ew'ges Gemurmel,  
Es wehet der Wind, es fliehen die Wolken,  
Es blinken die Sterne gleichgültig und kalt,  
Und ein Narr wartet auf Antwort!" (1)

(1) Heine, ed. cit. p. 223.

Appendix.

Dates of Kleist's major poetic works.

<u>Plays</u>	<u>Started</u>	<u>Finally completed.</u>
Die Familie Schroffenstein	Oct.1801-Spring02.	pub. 1803
Robert Guiskard	April 1802-Oct.1803	pub. 1808 (first scenes)
Der zerbrochene Krug	1802. Then 1805	May-Aug.1806
Amphitryon	1805-early 1806	pub. 1807
Penthesilea	Late 1806-Autumn 1807	pub. 1808
Das Käthchen von Heilbronn	Late 1807-Spring 1808	pub. 1810
Die Hermannschlacht	May-December 1808	pub. 1821 (Tieck)
Prinz Friedrich von Homburg	1809-March 1810	pub. 1821 (Tieck)

Novellen

Das Erdbeben in Chili	1805-1806	pub. 1807
Der Findling	1805-1806	pub. 1807
Die Marquise von O...	1807	pub. 1808
Der Zweikampf	1808 or Spring 1809	pub. 1811
Die Verlobung in St.Domingo	1810(?)	pub. 1811
Das Bettelweib von Locarno	1810	pub. 1810
Die heilige Cäcilie	1810	pub. 1810
Michael Kohlhaas	1805:1808:1810	1810

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