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Friedrich Gundolf's Reading of Seventeenth-Century German Literature:
The Scholar-Artist and his Context

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Andrew Nash

Abstract

Friedrich Gundolf's critical approaches to Baroque German literature are explored in this thesis, which aims to contribute to knowledge by examining a largely unknown body of material, and by paying close attention to Gundolf's language, style, and use of religious terminology. His ideas are viewed in historical and comparative terms, and works by Charles Taylor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, George Steiner, Frank Kermode, and Terry Eagleton are used as reference points. The reception of Baroque literature among Gundolf's contemporaries is considered. Gundolf's papers in the University of London Senate House Library contain several lecture series on seventeenth-century German literature, which extend to over 1,600 pages. This is surprising given his apparent lack of sympathy for much of his subject matter, as he regarded the Baroque in literature as being both a time of dissolution caused by the anarchy of Protestant individualism, and also one of domination by rationalistic rules. Nevertheless, issues related to his views on seventeenth-century literature pervade his thought. Gundolf's critical methods and aesthetic principles are compared to those of T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, Heidegger, Adorno and Benjamin. All were concerned with the relationship between literature, culture, and social context. Gundolf's writing crosses the boundaries between academic discourse and creative expression. This led to tension with Stefan George, who viewed Gundolf's post-war academic work, with its interest in a number of German writers since Luther, as a sign that Gundolf was moving away from the creative ideals of the *George-Kreis* and accommodating himself to the academic world. The thesis argues that Gundolf's work is still relevant because it raises enduring questions about literature and criticism, even when it is dealing with a topic with which it is often unsympathetic. It challenges us to reflect on our own responses and how they are influenced by historical and cultural contexts.

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A Note on Sources and Quotations

This thesis was submitted at almost exactly the time that Wallstein Verlag's edition of Friedrich Gundolf's lectures was published, and it is therefore based directly on the material held in the Senate House Library, London, hereafter referred to as FGP. A list of the principal sources will be found in the Bibliography. All quotations, including those from printed books, reproduce the spelling, punctuation and capitalisation of the sources, which can be idiosyncratic and inconsistent. In particular, the publications of the *George-Kreis* and Gundolf's own works sometimes do not capitalise nouns, and often omit commas marking subordinate clauses where they would be expected in modern standard German. Gundolf frequently ends a phrase or a sentence with a two or three dot ellipsis ('..' or '...'); the omission of words from a quotation will be shown as [...]. The FGP manuscripts and typescripts contain many alterations; often these are insignificant, but where the original wording is of interest, it has been retained with an ~~overstrike~~. Some of the textual issues are discussed in more detail below.

Introduction

This thesis will examine writings on seventeenth-century German literature by Friedrich Gundolf (1880–1931), who was one of the best-known literary figures of the Weimar Republic. It will use these to explore themes in literary criticism and related philosophical, social, and religious issues. The emphasis will be on understanding ideas in historical and comparative terms using a structured, but not overtly theoretical approach: questions of theory will be addressed as and when they arise. It aims to make an original contribution to knowledge by examining a largely unknown body of material and by paying closer attention to Gundolf's language and style than other accounts of his work have done. The fact that this material has recently (October 2023) been published by Wallstein Verlag shows that the thesis has been written at a time when interest in Gundolf is increasing.¹

A notable feature of his method is that he synthesizes terms and collapses disparate concepts into one, rather than making analytic distinctions. In the process he often uses alliterating or rhyming word pairs or series: 'Sprachschöpfer/Sprachmeister', 'Natur-, Schicksal- oder Sittengesetze', 'Die verschiedenen Schichten des deutschen, des europäischen, des menschlichen Sprach-, Bildungs- und Lebensgehalts...', 'die Natur und die Zeit, Blut und Geist, Eigenschaften und Eindruck', 'die wesenhafte (göttliche oder natürliche) Grundform des Menschen'. On the general question of style, it is notable that, in their different ways, Heidegger and Adorno (who both treated literature as an integral part of their philosophical writing) and F.R. Leavis wrote in contrarian styles which go against the grain of existing thinking and so by their very nature challenge the reader's assumptions. There are

¹ *Deutsche Literatur im 17. Jahrhundert: Deutsche Literatur von Opitz bis Lessing*, ed. by Mathis Lessau, Phillipp Redl and Hans-Christian Riechers. Vol. 3 of *Friedrich Gundolfs "Geschichte der deutschen Literatur. Heidelberger Vorlesungen 1911-1931"* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023)

places where Gundolf's thinking is obscure, but his style is mainly clear, elegant, and rhetorically forceful, though it can also be flat and factual, or precious and mannered.

Gundolf sometime uses neologisms of a type often associated with Heidegger and that J.P.

Stern describes as:

... derived from the medieval mystics and taken over by Hegel from Jakob Boehme's speculations on the borderline between mysticism and philosophy. It consists in squeezing new meanings from old words by sweeping aside their contemporary meanings, etymologising them or their component parts, asserting that the earlier, supposedly 'original' meanings as compounded in their new forms are the 'real' or true ones, and finally offering the result as rational proof that the insight which initiated the process is valid; and if etymology won't yield the truth, then punning will.²

In a way that could be compared to Nietzsche, he crosses the boundaries between the academic and the essayistic, and this provides useful points of comparison and contrast between him and contemporaries both inside and outside Germany. It will connect Gundolf's writings on the Baroque to the work of other critics both in Germany and elsewhere, and ask whether any lessons about questions of aesthetic judgement and the authority of the literary critic can be learned from them. It will also ask whether it is fair to see these writings simply as Gundolf's attempt to apply the critical attitudes of Stefan George to seventeenth-century literature. Contemporary German scholars who have written about Gundolf include Hans-Harald Müller, Herbert Jaumann, Ulrich Raulff, Carola Groppe, Alexander Weber, Maximilian Nutz, Ernst Osterkamp, Rüdiger Görner, Anna Maria Arrighetti, and Gunilla Eschenbach. Jaumann, Müller, Weber, and Nutz have dealt specifically with Baroque literature; Groppe mentions it in passing. These works will also be discussed in later chapters.

² J.P. Stern, *The Dear Purchase: a Theme in German Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 58.

That the language of his literary criticism (and not only that of the writings devoted to the Baroque) sometimes uses religious, and specifically Christian, vocabulary and concepts is something that has been neglected by earlier commentators and will be dealt with more fully here. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (first published in 2007) will be used as a reference point: Taylor argues that what he calls the 'subtraction story' that sees secularism as resulting purely from the advance of scientific discovery, is an oversimplification. The process of secularization, the 'disenchantment' described by Gundolf's colleague and acquaintance Max Weber, has also led to new forms of religious consciousness, and both religion and secularism are concerned with ethical questions, with what is most important in human life. In addressing the interpretation of literature in historical contexts the thesis will refer to Wilhelm Dilthey, who was both a teacher and an admirer of Gundolf, and to Hans-Georg Gadamer. The work of Terry Eagleton, who writes from an eclectic viewpoint that has elements both of Marxism and Catholicism, is a fruitful source for discussion of questions of the history and purpose of literary criticism. The thesis will suggest that valuable insights into the history of literary criticism and the general history of ideas can be gained by comparing Gundolf's views with English critics such as T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis, and by drawing out some correspondences with German thinkers including Heidegger and Adorno. All of these thinkers have been the subjects of a large amount of scholarly debate and disagreement for which there is clearly no space for extensive treatment here, but their ideas can be used to enhance the understanding of Gundolf's work. His insights, and those of the other critics discussed, are often overlooked in the current academic and literary worlds, but the assumption behind the thesis is that this is regrettable and that much can be learned from discussing them. Many of the writers and thinkers discussed below were of Jewish background, but on the other hand some of them, such as Eliot and Heidegger, held antisemitic views. There are also contexts of war and social upheaval, both in the seventeenth

century and the early twentieth. There will not be space in the thesis to examine these issues in detail, but they form a background to it, and in the 2020s there is no room for complacency or assumptions of moral superiority about them.

The thesis will not be primarily about Baroque literature in itself, but about the reaction of a particular writer to it and about the context of his thought. This is open to the objection that it is using ‘the Baroque’ as a pretext for talking about something else. However, we cannot claim that it is possible to have a completely unmediated access to the past. By examining Gundolf’s reaction to seventeenth-century German literature it may be possible to learn something about present-day reactions, and about how such reactions are always to some extent conditioned by the circumstances of time and place. This is the question addressed by Gadamer’s concept of *Horizontverschmelzung*:

In relying on its critical method, historical objectivism conceals the fact that historical consciousness is itself situated in the web of historical effects. [...] A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand, "to have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. A person who has a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small. Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.³

Arguably Gundolf himself, and T.S. Eliot, who also wrote about seventeenth-century literature in the early 1920s, were both using the seventeenth century as a symbol of something else, a proxy for artistic, moral and religious issues of their own time. So both, in Gadamer’s terms, can be said to have in some ways over-valued what was nearest to them. Yet it will be seen that they were also ‘not limited to what is nearby’. Whether Gundolf acquired ‘the right horizon of enquiry’ is a question that will be explored.

³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G Marshall, rev. 2nd edn (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 311, 313.

The thesis will suggest that, while some aspects of Gundolf's work may appear to be obsolete, his work raises enduring questions about the role and significance of literary criticism and its relation to society. Literature mattered to Gundolf, the *George-Kreis* and the other critics under discussion in a fundamental and transformative way. It is hoped that these questions will be raised more starkly by using a body of German literature to which Gundolf was in many ways unsympathetic. Close attention will be paid to his style, use of metaphor and vocabulary, and to his rhetorical manner, which is usually highly confident and emphatic. The thesis assumes that the style of a work of literary criticism, as well as its content, can reveal significant issues, Gundolf's use of figures of speech will be considered, as will the rhetorical devices that Aristotle classified as *Pathos* (exhortation of the audience and use of emotive language), *Ethos* (appeal to authority and moral character), *Logos* (use of facts and reason), and *Kairos* (timeliness, the sense of the appropriateness of a given historical moment). This is not to imply that Gundolf was consciously writing in the direct tradition of classical rhetoric, but that the descriptive terms are useful in this context. The final chapter will consider how far Gundolf succeeds in combining the roles of the scholar and the imaginative writer.

Gundolf does not have a systematic philosophical or theoretical framework: the Brazilian scholar Walkiria Oliveira Silva comments on this in her discussion of the ideas about history of Gundolf and other members of the *George-Kreis*: 'Gundolf was not a theorist of history, and thus never composed a systematic treatise on his ideas about the epistemology of historical science. His reflections and contributions are, in general, to be found scattered in his books, articles and correspondence.'⁴ A similar point can be made about his perspectives

⁴ Walkiria Oliveira Silva, 'A História é Força para o Presente: A Narrativa Histórica de Friedrich Gundolf', *Expedições: Teoria da História & Historiografia* Year 7, no. 2 (August–December 2016),

on literature. This is both a strength and a weakness: a strength because it potentially allows individual responses to literature to float free of a fixed system of ideas; a weakness because the underlying presuppositions of his ideas are never questioned. This is a criticism that René Wellek made of F.R. Leavis and led to a debate between them in Leavis's journal *Scrutiny* in 1937. This will be considered more extensively in a later chapter.

The following, then, is an attempt to describe some of the underlying concepts of Gundolf's work on Baroque literature, and the means he uses to persuade his listeners and readers, and to contextualize them. This is being done to throw light on certain methods and concepts in literary criticism on the early years of the twentieth century and to suggest ways in which they may still be of interest today and therefore deserve further investigation. It is hoped that two factors will throw these issues into a sharper light than might otherwise be the case: firstly, taking a body of literature that, while it speaks to universal issues of the human condition, is not always easy for a modern reader to relate to, and secondly, that while Gundolf was intrigued enough by this literature to write extensively about it, he frequently took a hostile position towards it. The first group of works to be considered is the main focus: the lecture series mentioned above and the associated short books *Martin Opitz* and *Andreas Gryphius*, and the essay 'Grimmelshausen und der Simplicissimus'. The second group, which will give a wider perspective on Gundolf's thought, is his book *George*, published in 1920, and the lecture 'Stefan George in unsrer Zeit', given in Göttingen in 1913 and subsequently published in the collection *Dichter und Helden* in 1921. Reference will be made to other works where necessary, in particular *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*,

Goethe, and the essays ‘Wesen und Beziehung’ and ‘Dichter und Helden’⁵. In choosing these works for specific comment one area of literature will be examined of which Gundolf is frequently critical (the German Baroque), and one (the work of Stefan George) for which he is full of extravagant praise.

The thesis will not attempt to deal with everything that Gundolf wrote on the Baroque, because of the sheer volume of the material. After his death at the age of 51 from complications of stomach cancer, Gundolf’s widow Elisabeth, fleeing the Nazi persecution that had seen her late husband’s work banned in Germany on racial grounds, came to London via Italy and eventually bequeathed his papers to the University of London Library, where they now form the Friedrich Gundolf Papers.⁶ The manuscripts of several lecture series that Gundolf delivered at Heidelberg in the 1920s are preserved there. As well as lectures on the Reformation era and the nineteenth century, they include a series entitled ‘Von Opitz bis Lessing’, catalogued as ‘Barock I’, ‘Barock II’ and ‘Barock III’. It appears that from p. 480 onwards the material was dictated to assistants: the sections that are not in Gundolf’s own handwriting are not lecture notes by students but are fully written up continuous prose in a consistent style. The 751-page manuscript (files M12 and M13 in the FGP catalogue) is written in six different hands which an unknown writer, possibly Elisabeth Gundolf, has identified on the first page: pp. 1–479 Gundolf, pp. 480–524 Margot Ruben, pp. 525–39 Ursula Mayer, pp. 540–80 Margot Ruben, pp. 681–710 Dolf Sternberger, pp. 711–51 Marga Oppenheimer. Fortunately, most of the handwriting is legible. It is fairly certain that the

⁵ ‘Wesen und Beziehung’ was published in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* 2 (Berlin: Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1911). ‘Dichter und Helden’ was published in full in a collection of three essays to which it gave its title: Friedrich Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden*, (Heidelberg: Weiss’sche Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1921), though the first section of it originally appeared under the title ‘Vorbilder’ in *Jahrbuch* 3 (1912).

⁶ The catalogue, compiled around 1960, can be found at <http://archives.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/resources/Gundolf.pdf>.

dictated sections date from around 1930 because some of the people listed above, such as the political scientist Sternberger (1907–1989), would have been too young to have been students at Heidelberg in the early 1920s, when Gundolf wrote the sections which are in his own handwriting. It is possible that this group of young people, led by Elisabeth Gundolf, helped him with the writing down of the material now preserved in the archive during his final illness in the late 1920s.⁷ While the lectures are called ‘Von Opitz bis Lessing’ they are incomplete, ending with an 88-page section on Angelus Silesius; there is no treatment of Lessing, and no overall summing-up or conclusion. However, comments on later authors, including Lessing, can be found scattered throughout Gundolf’s other works. The lectures deal with Opitz, Weckherlin, Hübner (in FGP M12 pp. 17–376), and Tscherning, Neumarck, Kornfeldt, Männling, Werder, Rompler, Buchner, Fleming, Dach, Greflinger (‘Celadon’), Schottel, Harsdörffer, Zesen, Rist, Andreas Gryphius, Lohenstein, Hoffmannswaldau, Ulrich, Grimmelshausen, Reuter, Logau, Olearius, Wernicke, Lauremberg, Rachel, Scheffler (‘Angelus Silesius’) (in FGP M13 pp. 377–751). Not all of these are poets, dramatists, or novelists: a few are historians or travel writers.⁸ The omission of female authors is notable. The archives of Heidelberg University show that student attendances at his lectures on various subjects from the Reformation to the late Romantics were large.⁹ The last page of the

⁷ The source for this suggestion is a personal communication from Professor Wolfgang Schneider of Hildesheim.

⁸ Gundolf had seventeenth-century editions of this literature in his personal book collection. See Michael Thimann, *Cäsars Schatten: Die Bibliothek von Friedrich Gundolf—Rekonstruktion und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Manutius Verlag, 2003), and the brief article <https://modernlanguagesresearch.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2019/07/31/the-library-of-poet-and-professor-friedrich-gundolf/> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁹ Carola Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung. Das deutsche Bürgertum und der George-Kreis 1890–1933*, Bochumer Schriften zur Bildungsforschung 3, (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2001) p. 318, n. 150, cites the attendance figures, which averaged around 150–200; a substantial number considering that there were around 500 students enrolled in the *Geisteswissenschaften* at this time. Among the attendees were Carl Zuckmayer, Max Kommerell and Ernst Kantorowicz (<https://www.wallstein-verlag.de/9783835351387-friedrich-gundolfs-vorlesungen-zur-geschichte-der-deutschen-literatur.html>, accessed 20/02/2024).

manuscript (M13 p. 751) has just seven lines of handwriting at the top: ‘Scheffler bleibt uns denkwürdig als derjenige deutsche Mystiker, der die Not aller sprechenden Mystiker sinnfällig macht durch die weiteste Kluft zwischen seinem Ausdrucksgehalt und seinem Ausdrucksmittel, zwischen stummem Innesein und geschwätziger Äusserung.’ The text breaks off in mid-flow, presumably because of Gundolf’s decision to change his subject matter during his final illness: his last dictated work was part of a section of over one hundred pages on Hans Sachs added around 1931 to the lecture series ‘Deutsche Literatur in der Reformationzeit II’, which was mainly written in 1923; the final words are dated 7 July 1931. File L16, ‘Gundolf’s notes’, contains an undated list of the number of pages he had written since 1928 and shows, among others, four hundred and fifty dedicated to Shakespeare, two hundred each to late Romanticism, Klopstock, and the Baroque, forty to Mörike, thirty-five to Wedekind and twenty to Rilke. Heidelberg University Library request slips from early 1931 in the same file show Gundolf asking to see books by Aegidius Tschudi, Walter Scott, Goethe, and the scholar of semitic languages Hubert Grimme. Whilst the Baroque material is extensive, it was by no means his only preoccupation. During the 1920s, in addition to his lectures and shorter essays and journalism, he worked on books on George (1920) and Kleist (1922), on two longer books, *Cäsar: Geschichte seines Ruhms* (1924) and *Shakespeare: Sein Wesen und Werk* (1928), and articles on various Romantic authors collected as *Romantiker* (1930) and *Romantiker, Neue Folge* (1931). He also delivered a lecture on Rainer Maria Rilke that was published posthumously.¹⁰ His work on

¹⁰ Friedrich Gundolf, *Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. by Elisabeth Gundolf (Vienna: Johannes-Verlag, 1937). For a view of this see Rüdiger Görner, ‘The Poet as Idol: Friedrich Gundolf on Rilke and Poetic Leadership’, in *A Poet’s Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle*, ed. by Melissa S. Lane and Martin A. Ruehl, *Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture* (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 81–90.

the Baroque period was clearly especially important to him as his life neared its end, but it was by no means an exclusive interest.

The early sections were written and delivered as lectures at Heidelberg University in the early 1920s, and lengthy extracts from them were published with little revision in the form of short books on Martin Opitz and Andreas Gryphius, and articles on Justus Georg Schottel and Grimmelshausen.¹¹ There are many textual variations, and whilst a detailed comparison of these would be of interest, they will be noted here only where they are relevant to the overall argument. The manuscript sheets contain a certain amount of repetition of phrases and sentences. Gundolf appears to have written out some sections more than once, and the first version is not always crossed out. Indeed, there are alternative page numbers on many of the sheets, as well as crossings-out of whole paragraphs, suggesting that the material preserved in the archive was very much a work in progress. It is possible that some of the deletions and rewritings are due to Gundolf using the material in different lecture series. There are occasionally differences between the text of the lectures and those of the books that he excerpted from them. It will not be assumed that the printed books represent Gundolf's definitive thoughts; as has been seen, he was revising the material right up to the end of his life. There are amendments in ink which Gundolf and his assistants appear to have made while the original was being written down. There are also amendments in pencil, presumably

¹¹ According to Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, p. 318, n. 150, the lecture series were 'Deutsche Literatur von Opitz bis Lessing', (Winter Semester 1919–20), 'Deutsche Literatur im 17. Jahrhundert' (Winter 1921–2 and Summer 1926), and 'Deutsche Barockliteratur' (Summer 1930). The books are *Martin Opitz*, (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1923). *Andreas Gryphius* (Heidelberg: Weiss'sche Buchhandlung, 1927). 'Justus Georg Schottel' in *Deutschkundliches. Friedrich Panzer zum 60. Geburtstag überreicht von Heidelberger Fachgenossen*, ed. by Hans Teske. (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1930), pp. 70–86. 'Grimmelshausen und der Simplicissimus', in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 1 (3) (1923), pp. 339–58.

made at a later date. Although the pencil strokes are thicker than those of the blue and black pens, there is no obvious reason to doubt that they are in Gundolf's own hand. It is possible that where a lengthier passage is struck through in pencil, this is due to the notes being amended for re-use in a different lecture series. Sometimes these pencilled changes do not occur in the printed books, which could mean that he changed his mind again and that the changes were made after the book was published. Some of the changes will be examined in the following chapters.

To keep the discussion manageable, and to make it easier to compare him with other critics, the authors dealt with in the following chapters will be mainly lyric poets, and Grimmelshausen. Reference will be made to the specialist topic of seventeenth-century German drama where it is relevant, but without getting drawn too deeply into the subject of Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928), which would risk overwhelming the discussion with theoretical concepts arising from Benjamin's thoughts on allegory. Erika and Michael Metzger noted this problem in connection with the reception of *Gryphius* in the United States, writing that: 'While Benjamin's thesis that the Baroque tragedy functions as the mystery play of a secularized ideology has found wide acceptance, the works by Gryphius that shaped Benjamin's ideas continue to receive too little attention.'¹²

Gundolf distanced himself from the *Barockforschung* of his contemporaries, calling it 'der modische Taumel, der die erwünschte Neuerforschung der deutschen Barockpoesie begleitet', yet his use of the words 'erwünschte Neuerforschung' and his extensive writings on the seventeenth century, which continued until the end of his life, show that he remained

¹² Erika A. Metzger and Michael M. Metzger, *Reading Andreas Gryphius: Critical Trends 1664–1993*. (Columbia SC: Studies in German Literature, Linguistics and Culture, Camden House, 1994) p. 128.

fascinated by Baroque German literature.¹³ There have been useful attempts to explain Gundolf's largely negative attitude to it by Hans-Harald Müller (1973) and Manfred Nutz (1991), but they are based solely on the published short books and do not have the benefit of access to the extensive archive material.¹⁴ While writing her large-scale study of the topic of *Bildung* and the *George-Kreis* from 1890 to 1933, Carola Groppe saw a 'lecture typescript' of *Von Opitz bis Lessing* in the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach; the Literaturarchiv's catalogue entry suggests that this is a carbon copy (*Durchschlag*) of the material held in the typescript FGP files M12A and M13A, given to the Literaturarchiv by Erich von Kahler. While she quotes briefly from the lecture, her work is not concerned with the theme of Baroque literature as such.¹⁵ While these authors discuss *Barockforschung* and the beliefs of the *George-Kreis*, none of them carry out the wider-ranging discussion that will be attempted here.

The 'modischer Taumel' jibe can be understood as much as a rejection of the attempt to assimilate the Baroque to Expressionism as a rejection of its assimilation to Goethe-style *Erlebnisdichtung*. Hans-Harald Müller writes:

Rätselhaft bleibt, weshalb Gundolf ausgerechnet dieser trostlosen Zeit des Rationalismus, gegen die er ähnliche Vorurteile geltend macht wie der literaturwissenschaftliche Positivismus [...] in den Zwanziger Jahren noch drei Monographien widmete, die sich – mit Ausnahme Grimmelshausens – in der Bewertung des literarischen Barock nicht von dessen Einschätzung in 'Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist' unterscheiden.¹⁶

¹³ Andreas Gryphius, 'Vorwort', p. 4.

¹⁴ Hans-Harald Müller, *Barockforschung: Ideologie und Methode. Ein Kapitel deutscher Wissenschaftsgeschichte 1870–1930*. (Darmstadt: Thesen Verlag, 1973). Maximilian Nutz, 'Messianische Ortsbestimmung und normative Menschenkunde. Gundolf und die Barockliteratur', in *Europäische Barock-Rezeption*, ed. by Klaus Garber and others. *Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung* 20, (Wiesbaden: 1991), 2 vols, 1, pp. 653–73.

¹⁵ Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, p. 318.

¹⁶ Müller, *Barockforschung*, p. 140.

It is indeed puzzling that Gundolf continued to write extensively, and more extensively than Müller probably knew, about a literature with which he found so many faults. One of the aims of the thesis will be to show that Gundolf's reactions to the literature were more complex than Müller allows, and that it is not simply that he had 'prejudices similar to those of literary critical positivism', and that he found himself drawn to this literature in spite of his prejudices. Finally, it needs to be borne in mind that since Gundolf's time, complex issues have arisen around the description and periodisation of early modern literature.¹⁷ However, there will be no enumeration here of ways in which Gundolf is 'wrong' by modern standards; the emphasis will be on what is distinctive about his approach.

As has been noted, modern evaluations of Gundolf's published writing on seventeenth-century literature have tended to be negative. Here are two examples, one German and one from the English-speaking world:

Gundolfs Barockwertungen, die sich in Aufsätzen zu Opitz (1923), Gryphius (1927) und Grimmelshausen (1923), aber auch bereits im Shakespeare-Buch (1911) finden, hatten auf die Wege der neuen Barockforschung keinen Einfluß mehr und sind daher weniger wertungsgeschichtlich als vielmehr im Hinblick auf Gundolfs Literaturästhetik von Interesse.

Friedrich Gundolf's views, much more in tune with the nineteenth century, were either soon forgotten or were more of a conceptual obstacle to an understanding of the world of the Baroque that Gryphius represented.¹⁸

Again, these views are based on his published writing only and they do not give due weight to his article on Grimmelshausen, which is much more positive in tone. There are conceptual

¹⁷ One attempt to deal with these issues is Jane O. Newman, 'Periodization, Modernity, Nation: Benjamin Between Renaissance and Baroque', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, Issue 1, 2009, <http://www.northernrenaissance.org/periodization-modernity-nation-benjamin-between-renaissance-and-baroque/> [accessed 1 November 2023].

¹⁸ Herbert Jaumann, *Die deutsche Barockliteratur: Wertung – Umwertung: Eine wertungsgeschichtliche Studie in systematischer Absicht* (Bonn: Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft, 181, 1975), p. 459. Metzger and Metzger, *Reading Andreas Gryphius*, p. 115.

problems with both of them. The comment by Jaumann ignores the fact that any critic's views are bound to be an expression of their literary aesthetics, and nor is it obvious that such views are only of interest if they can be fitted in to a study of how their value or importance has been judged historically, which is what the word *wertungsgeschichtlich* seems to imply. Why should Gundolf's views not have their own autonomous interest? Some would argue that he applies anachronistic categories such as *Genieästhetik* to seventeenth-century literature. The comments by Metzger, besides making a sweeping judgement about nineteenth-century views, imply that the 'understanding' is established and unquestionable: dissenting views are to be ignored. Both comments take no account of the fact that one of the reasons why he was 'forgotten' may have been something hinted at above: that it was unclear whether he was a *Wissenschaftler* or a *Künstler* and this was felt to be disconcerting. These negative comments also ignore the wider picture, both in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. The presence of German Idealism and Romanticism as strands in English literary criticism, implicit or explicit and transmitted by Coleridge and others, has often been noticed by others, but it will be argued here that there are fruitful comparisons, though not necessarily direct links, with the thought of Gundolf. His generally negative evaluation of baroque literature will, it is hoped, shed a new light on his positive evaluations of other literature. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Gundolf knows the primary sources extremely well and that he is unafraid to state his views in a style that is vigorous, confident and elegant; to that extent reading him can be an inspiring experience even if the reader disagrees with him.

Maximilian Nutz, who, as was noted above, wrote one of the very few comparatively recent accounts of Gundolf's short books on Baroque literature, mentions Gundolf's extreme patriotic enthusiasm at the outbreak of the First World War. Whether this affected his 'horizon of enquiry', and whether it can be linked to his reflections on the Thirty Years' War, is another topic that will be considered later. The first chapter will deal with the background

of *Barockforschung* and some general issues about Gundolf's treatment of seventeenth-century German literature.

Chapter One

The Background and the Problems

Friedrich Gundolf (1880–1931) was a university teacher and member of the *George-Kreis*, the circle of writers and scholars centred on the poet Stefan George (1868–1933). He conducted an extensive correspondence with leading intellectual and artistic figures of his time, much of which has been published. While he is remembered as a literary critic and historian, he thought of himself primarily as a poet: he published poetry in the *George-Kreis* journal *Blätter für die Kunst*, and a volume entitled *Gedichte* which appeared in 1930.¹ This contains the poem ‘Schließ Aug und Ohr’, which became a favourite of the *Weißer Rose* movement in the 1940s. He was also a translator of Shakespeare. The relationship of the artistic and the scholarly in his work is a topic that will be explored further, but there is something that reveals his ambivalent feelings in a letter of 28 April 1913 to the scholar Ernst

Robert Curtius:

Hass gegen Bücher (die doch nun einmal mein Medium sein müssen und deren Vivifizierung mein bedeutendes, mir nicht mehr wertvolles Talent ist) und Sehnsucht nach Lebendigen Anschauungen bei angewachsener Denkbrille quält mich – Es ist keine Freude wenn der Wert, die höchste Wünschbarkeit für einen nicht in der Richtung der eigenen Kräfte liegt, und ich beginne an Goethes Wort irre zu werden, dass unsre Wünsche die Vorgefühle unsrer Fähigkeiten sind.²

¹ ‘[Gundolf] verstand sich primär als Dichter, der daneben aus lebenspraktischer Notwendigkeit auch der Wissenschaft oblag [...]’. Ernst Osterkamp, ‘Friedrich Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft’, in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 1910 bis 1925*, ed. by Christoph König and Eberhard Lämmert (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1993), pp. 177–198 (p. 181).

² *Friedrich Gundolf: Briefwechsel mit Herbert Steiner und Ernst Robert Curtius*, ed. by Lothar Helling and Claus Victor Bock, (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1963), pp. 229–30 (p. 230).

There is currently no comprehensive biography of Gundolf, though details of his life can be found in his extensive correspondence, much of which has been published, and in works dealing with Stefan George and his circle.³ Gundolf came from a middle-class Jewish background, yet never seems to have practised Judaism as a religion or way of life, and regarded himself as a fully assimilated German. His birth name was Gundelfinger; the name ‘Gundolf’, which he used for the rest of his life, was conferred on him by Stefan George for reasons that are not clear, though George liked to give his protégés nicknames. There are no obvious traces of Jewishness in Gundolf’s work, and his Jewishness barely gets a mention in modern discussion of the *George-Kreis*, except in the context of showing that George cannot straightforwardly be described as an antisemite. George had many Jewish associates and friends, though he is on record as having made disparaging remarks about Jews in general. Members of his Circle such as Alfred Schuler and Ludwig Klages were certainly antisemitic, which led to conflict with George himself. A letter from Gundolf to Hanna Wolfskehl reveals his lack of sympathy with Jewish culture: ‘Ich bin widerzionistischer als je, dass mir die Auflösung des Judentums als ein Wünschenswertes erscheint...ich selbst will Shakespeare dienen und nicht Jaweh oder Baal.’⁴ As will be seen later, the religious language and concepts that he deploys in his work are Christian.

³ For example, *Stefan George–Friedrich Gundolf Briefwechsel*, ed. by Robert Boehringer and Georg Peter Landmann (Munich and Düsseldorf: Helmut Kupper previously Georg Bondi, 1962); *Briefwechsel mit Steiner und Curtius* (see note 2 above), *Friedrich Gundolf – Elisabeth Salomon: Briefwechsel 1914–1931* ed. by Gunilla Eschenbach and Helmut Mojem (Berlin; Boston: 2015); Kai Kauffmann, *Stefan George: Eine Biographie*. Castrum Peregrini, Neue Folge, 8, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015); Robert Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁴ *Karl und Hanna Wolfskehl, Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Gundolf 1899–1931*, ed. by Karlhans Kluncker and C.V. Bock, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, Publications of the Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London 24, 1976–7), 1, p. 173. The question of Gundolf and Judaism is discussed by Claude Haas, ‘“Auflösung des Judentums”. Zu einem literaturwissenschaftlichen Großprojekt Friedrich Gundolfs’ in *Meine Sprache ist Deutsch: Deutsche Sprachkultur von Juden und die Geisteswissenschaften 1870–1970*, ed. by Stephan Braese und Daniel Weidner (Berlin:

He studied *Germanistik* and art history at the Universities of Munich, Berlin and Heidelberg, received his doctorate in Berlin in 1903 and his *Habilitation* in 1911 with a thesis which was published as *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*. This book, which contains a chapter on German seventeenth-century literature, was an enormous success and was reprinted several times.⁵ From 1916 he taught at Heidelberg, receiving a full professorship there in 1920, which, in the German university system, meant that he was a salaried government official, though professors' incomes were supplemented by fees paid by students. Whilst Gundolf enjoys a reputation in the German-speaking world as a writer on German literature and thought, there has been little work in English that discusses him in any detail, though there are many informative mentions of him and his work in Norton's *Secret Germany*. Gundolf is discussed briefly and superficially by Jethro Bithell in an account of modern German literature first published in 1939. There is a much more substantial essay of 1985 by Roger Paulin entitled 'Gundolf's Romanticism.' This deals with Gundolf's writings on Romantic literature and Shakespeare, but it does not mention seventeenth-century German authors.⁶ T.S. Eliot published translations of essays by Gundolf on Mörike and Bismarck, as well as an obituary of him by Max Rychner, in his journal *The Criterion* in the 1930s, and

Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2015). See Norton pp. 155–56 on George and antisemitism, pp. 304–10 for Schuler and Klages, and p. 267 for Gundolf's change of name from Gundelfinger.

⁵ Friedrich Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, (Berlin: Bondi, 1911). One enthusiast was Wilhelm Dilthey, who saw in it the continuation of his own form of intellectual history and said that it had given him a view of the Promised Land like that of Moses from the mountain. See Jürgen Egyptien, "„...eine solche Einheit so zu erleben das ist schon einen Weltkrieg wert“. Friedrich Gundolf als Deuter des Ersten Weltkrieges, Goethe-Interpret und Georg-Jünger" in *Die Universität Heidelberg und ihre Professoren während des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. by Ingo Rund (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017), pp. 215–40 (p. 216).

⁶ Jethro Bithell, *Modern German Literature 1880–1950* (London: Methuen, 1939), p. 152. Roger Paulin, 'Gundolf's Romanticism' in *Deutsche Romantik und das 20. Jahrhundert. Londoner Symposium 1985*, ed. by Hanne Castein and Alexander Stillmark, Stuttgart Arbeiten zur Germanistik 177 (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1986), pp. 25–40, repr. in Roger Paulin, *From Goethe to Gundolf: Essays on German Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), pp. 161–76. [From Goethe to Gundolf \(oapen.org\)](https://oapen.org), [accessed 1 November 2023].

there are accounts of him by the literary critic and historian of literary criticism René Wellek. These and other mentions of him by non-German writers will be considered later. Among the writings on him in German are two special issues of the journal *Euphorion*: 14 (1921), and 75 (1981) marking the 50th anniversary of his death. The *Friedrich-Gundolf-Preis* was established by the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung in 1964 to promote German culture outside Germany; in 1990 it was renamed the *Friedrich-Gundolf-Preis für die Vermittlung deutscher Kultur im Ausland*.

There are several surviving accounts of Gundolf's lecturing style, and these provide a vivid context for the experience of reading the lectures on the page. René Wellek describes attending a single lecture in Heidelberg in June 1923:

A tall, darkly handsome man, standing in the light of the window, turned his profile with a strong nose self-consciously to the large audience filling the hall and recited, in a level monotone, a lecture that could have been printed, word for word, in any of his books. I now remember little except the aura of a solemn ceremony and the worshipful attitude of the listeners. Later [...] a visit to his house [...] revealed a more humane human being: a brilliant talker accustomed to the deference of his youngers. (He was then not quite 43 years of age.)⁷

Wellek notes that he was 'accustomed to the deference' of his students: this may reflect a German sense of the authority of the professor in the *Ordinarienuniversität* which existed until the university reforms of the 1960s. Wellek's portrait is strikingly confirmed by Melitta Grünbaum. According to Gunilla Eschenbach's *Afterword* to Grünbaum's memoir this would have been during the years 1924 to 1927:

Er stürmt mit Siegesschritten den Katheder, wirft in scheinbarer Künstlermanier die lange Haar (*sic*) zurück, lässt den Blick nachlässig über die dichtgedrängte Menge der Zuhörer schweifen und beugt sich dann in gewundenem Schwung über seine vor ihm aufgeschlagenen Skripten. Denn zu allem *liest* er auch noch, was er sprechen will, Wort für Wort von seinen Papierblättern herunter und schaut von ihnen anscheinend

⁷ René Wellek, 'The Literary Criticism of Friedrich Gundolf', *Contemporary Literature*, 9, no. 3, (Summer 1968), pp. 394–405 (p. 394) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1207810>> [accessed 4 October 2023].

nur auf, um von Zeit zu Zeit die Augen, durch einen langen, ziellosen Blick aus dem Fenster auszuruhen.⁸

Both Wellek and Grünbaum wrote dramatic and evocative descriptions. Both describe how Gundolf read out lectures word for word, rather than improvising from notes. Yet there was surely an element of self-conscious posing in Gundolf's manner, the cultivation of the atmosphere of a ceremony which was religious and artistic as well as academic. Grünbaum goes on to describe her disappointment with the lectures; she believes that what the students were truly enthusiastic about was not the subject matter but the phantom presence of Stefan George. She found the lectures of Karl Jaspers much more exciting. As time went on, though, she came to increasingly like and respect Gundolf, referring to his 'in großartigen Gesten verkleidete Schüchternheit', and eventually became a close friend. Eschenbach believes that, unlike George, Gundolf wanted female disciples as well as male ones. Dolf Sternberger, in a memoir originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 12 January 1936, both confirms and modifies these views.⁹ Like the others, he writes that Gundolf's delivery effaced the difference between speech and written prose. Gundolf was a master of persuasive rhetoric in writing, but this did not translate into lively speech:

In der Tat konnte es leicht so scheinen, als verachte er seine Zuhörerschaft. Meist stand er hoch aufgereckt auf dem Katheder, mit verschränkten Armen, in getragenen Tone lesend, ohne im geringsten auf Kontakt mit den unten Sitzenden bedacht zu sein, ohne irgend seinen Vortrag zu "vermitteln", Erklärungen einzuflechten oder durch Gesten und Blicke seine Gedanken dem Hörer fühlbar oder eingängig zu machen.

He then says that Gundolf's crafted and refined manuscripts left no spaces which the listener could have filled with thoughts or answers of their own. That Gundolf was aware of his

⁸ *Melitta Grünbaum: Begegnungen mit Gundolf*, ed. by Gunilla Eschenbach, (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2012) pp. 11–12.

⁹ Repr. as Dolf Sternberger, 'Einige Striche zu einem Porträt', in *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*, 75, Issue 2 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1981), pp. 127–29.

mixed reception is seen a letter of 9 May 1919 to Friedrich Wolters: ‘Ich lese vierstündig vor bisher über 200 Hörern, höre aber manchmal Klagen über Unverständlichkeit. Die Teilnahme ist aber doch, soviel ich merken kann, gespannt.’¹⁰ Yet Sternberger believed that this apparent lofty indifference was due to modesty rather than to arrogance. Like Grünbaum, he describes Gundolf’s private warmth and sociability, as well as his impeccable manners towards all kinds of people, his sense of humour and ability to improvise comic verse, his love of the comic poet and illustrator Wilhelm Busch, of the film comedians Charlie Chaplin and Karl Valentin and of the dialect farce *Datterich* by Ernst Elias Niebergall. Sandra Pott has written about Gundolf’s unpublished verse parodies of Goethe, Hölderlin, Platen and Hofmannsthal, suggesting that as well as teaching himself the art of writing poetry, he may have been expressing a more irreverent side of his character in these poems.¹¹ This does not absolve Gundolf of the criticism that he displayed an excessively lofty and apodictic seriousness in his published writings, but it does suggest that he was a more complex character than his public image as a disciple of Stefan George suggests. In contrast to Welck and Grünbaum, the future literary critic Max Kommerell (1902–1944) was greatly impressed by Gundolf’s Heidelberg lectures in May 1920, even though he did not meet Gundolf in person until August 1921 (Norton, pp. 627-9).

Gundolf’s prose writings consist of highly developed arguments that build up over phrases, sentences, paragraphs, whole lectures and whole books. They show confident and

¹⁰ *Friedrich Gundolf – Friedrich Wolters. Ein Briefwechsel aus dem George-Kreis*, ed. by Christophe Fricker (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau 2009), pp. 199–200. (n. 387 refers to Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, p. 319).

¹¹ Sandra Pott, ‘Parodistische Praktiken und anti-parodistische Poetik. Friedrich Gundolf über Goethe, Hölderlin, Platen, Heredia und Hofmannsthal (mit einem Abdruck unveröffentlichter Texte)’, *Euphorion* 100, Issue 1 (2006), pp. 29–77.

sweeping deployment of generalisations with sharp, pithy characterisations of authors and historical periods; there is no doubt of the breadth and depth of Gundolf's reading, whether or not a later reader can agree with his views. Both the printed works and the manuscripts are difficult to paraphrase briefly, which is a sign of the integrity and continuous flow of his thinking. There are no drafts or writing plans in the Friedrich Gundolf Papers, which suggests that he was able to write directly from memory, and his ease of writing clearly came naturally to him. There are a few rough notes on several topics in FGP file L16, 'Gundolf's notes'; these include a notebook found in his coat pocket after his death of which he used only the first three pages, untidily filling them with random words and phrases including 'Corneille', 'Gelehrtenrepublik', 'Leibniz' and 'Newton'; poignantly, the very last word, underlined, is 'Poetik'. There are corrections and alterations in both manuscripts and typescripts of the lectures, but no sign of substantial rewriting. There are no unambiguous markings of the start and finish of individual lectures. This impression is confirmed in the report by the scholars who first looked at the collection in London:

2. Manuscripts. This section contains the text, handwritten and/or typed, of courses of lectures, books and articles, some published, some published posthumously, others unpublished. Generally speaking, typescripts as yet unpublished show numerous errors which go back to Gundolf's habit of dictating and of quoting from memory... None of them have footnotes; there are few indications of editions used; no divisions into chapters or even separate lectures...Barock (series of lectures, 854 pages, typescript. Planned as a survey of German literature from Opitz to Lessing, ends with Angelus Silesius. Certain sections have been published: Opitz, 1923; Gryphius, 1927; Schottel, 1930. Teeming with typing errors but of considerable interest.¹²

There is also a typed-up version of eight hundred and fifty-four pages in FGP files M12A, M13A and M14. When all this is added together, the material on seventeenth-century

¹² Claus Victor Bock, 'First Report on the Gundolf Papers at the Institute of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of London', *German Life and Letters*, 15, Issue 1, October 1961, pp. 16–20, (p. 17).

German literature extends to over one thousand six hundred pages: a surprising amount, in view of Gundolf's apparent lack of sympathy for much of his subject matter, and it is also surprising that he should return to it after a major operation for cancer in 1927. Any account of Gundolf's work is bound to contain abstraction and simplification, as it will have to attempt to distil the essence of many pages of writing which demonstrate continuous and supple movement of thought.

There are differences between the manuscripts and the books. For example, in the printed book on Gryphius he writes: 'Aber Corneille, an Begabung, Ernst, Gewicht: d.h. als bloßer Charakter betrachtet, Gryphius kaum überlegen – hatte ein überlegenes Schicksal, einen Kairos, eine Welt zu seinen Gaben – ächte Gesellschaft und Geschichte' (p. 6). In the lecture on the other hand, the passage reads, with the pencilled changes: 'Aber Corneille, an Begabung, Ernst, Gewicht: das h. als blossen Charakter betrachtet, dem Gryphius nicht überlegen – hatte ein besseres Glück, eine fruchtbare Stunde, eine Welt zu seinen Gaben' (FGP M12, p. 287). The repetition of *überlegen* has been removed, *Schicksal* and *Kairos* have been toned down, the problematic terms 'ächte Gesellschaft und Geschichte' deleted. Corneille is now definitely 'not', rather than 'barely' superior to Gryphius. The rhetorical tone has been flattened. The first sentence of the second paragraph of p. 5 in the book reads 'Im 17. Jahrhundert ist unter den deutschen Dichtern Andreas Gryphius der deutlichste Träger dieses deutschen Fluchs'. It is hard to tell whether the repetition of *deutsch* in this sentence is a momentary slip or deliberate rhetorical emphasis, but in the lecture notes *deutschen Fluchs* has been crossed out in pencil and replaced by the single word *Verhängnisses*; again, there is a toning down, this time of a 'German curse' to a general 'fate'. Perhaps the toning down effect is due to a wish to appear more formal and objective in the environment of the lecture hall. It is striking that while his style is often flamboyant and hyperbolic, he is capable of changing to a more cautious manner on later reflection.

He used material from lectures on the Baroque in talks given elsewhere. In early 1920 the student association of Basle University invited him to give three talks on ‘Die geistigen Grundlagen der deutschen Barockliteratur’. A report appeared on the front page of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 25 February 1920. Whilst the anonymous journalist largely paraphrases Gundolf’s arguments rather than critiquing them, the enthusiasm is striking. It is claimed that the literature under discussion is of little merit, but Gundolf’s exposition of his own positive values made a strong impression: ‘mancher Hörer hat vielleicht aus dieser Darstellung einer schlechten und nichtigen Literatur über wahre Dichtung und wahre Menschheit mehr erfahren, als er aus einem Kolleg über Goethe oder Shakespeare je erfuhr.’ That Gundolf’s critique of this literature says more about other things than about the literature itself is a claim that will reappear in this discussion.

While they contain a certain amount of factual biographical information, it is difficult to see the lectures as teaching materials. They cover an enormous number of seventeenth-century authors, so many, in fact, that we may wonder how much he could have expected his students to read. It must have been nearly impossible for students to make use of them in that way, even those who were not the *Examensbüffel* whom, as will be seen, he disparages in the introductory remarks to ‘Opitz bis Lessing’. There is no reason to think that Gundolf was simplifying his thoughts or talking down to the students. Perhaps the lectures are best understood as an invitation for the students to participate in Gundolf’s thinking; as the transfer of cultural and spiritual values, as *Bildung*, rather than the stimulation of independent thought and the encouragement of detailed individual responses to literature. This is what Dolf Sternberger implied when, as was noted above, he wrote that Gundolf’s lectures left no gaps for the hearers to fill in with their own thoughts. It should not be assumed that the students were expected to be tested in detail on the content. The ideal of *Bildung* assumes that close engagement with the great artistic and intellectual products of Western civilization

will transfigure and elevate the aspiring student to the highest level of virtue and wisdom. It is contrasted with *Unterricht*, mere training.¹³

The command of his material is highly impressive, yet readers may be troubled by Gundolf's failure to produce detailed textual references or analysis to justify what he is saying, and additionally, in the printed books, by the lack of the normal scholarly apparatus of references and footnotes. Stefan George and members of his Circle, even those who themselves held university posts, in many ways opposed what they saw as the dry positivistic nature of the German academy, with its emphasis on scholarly scrupulousness and detailed analysis. George was impatient with *Wissenschaft*, which he regarded as sterile and opposed to creative, life-enhancing values.¹⁴ This question will be examined further in Chapter Five.

The *Kreis* was not a group with a single ideology, nor was it a poetic movement like Imagism or Acmeism: many of its members were scholars with a diverse range of interests. Nonetheless, George, who liked to be called *Der Meister*, expected his followers to share his aesthetic norms and could be hostile if they deviated from them. The ideal was to grasp the inner essence of a historical person's life or of a work of literature, and to demonstrate the acuteness and authority of the interpreter's insights. Besides Gundolf's *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* (1911), *Goethe* (1916) and *Caesar. Geschichte seines Ruhms* (1924), other members of the group produced monumental books celebrating charismatic great men: these include Ernst Bertram's *Nietzsche* (1918), Berthold Vallentin's *Napoleon* (1923), Ernst

¹³ See Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 86–87.

¹⁴ 'Wissenschaftler des George-Kreises haben nach Kräften daran mitgewirkt, das Gefüge der Universität des 19-Jahrhunderts zu erschüttern [...]'. Rainer Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung am Beispiel des George-Kreises 1890–1945*, *Communicatio* 17, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998) p. 9. See also Norton pp. 439–42, which discusses George's attitude to scholarship and sees it as exemplified particularly in Friedrich Wolters's essay 'Richtlinien', published in the 1910 number of *Jarhbuch für die geistige Bewegung*.

Kantorowicz's *Kaiser Friedrich II* (1927), and Friedrich Wolters's *Stefan George* (1930). Max Kommerell's *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik* (1928) expounds the notion of the poet as spiritual leader of the German *Volk* to its salvation, expressed in language that is sometimes violent and militaristic (Walter Benjamin reviewed it and, while acknowledging the genius of Kommerell's book, also saw it as a symptom of nationalistic and elitist elements of the political and intellectual climate of the time, and warned of its dangers).¹⁵

However, George began to see Gundolf's post-war academic work, with its interest in a broad range of German writers since Luther, as a betrayal of the ideals of the *Kreis* and this is one of the things that led to their estrangement in the early 1920s. Instead of concentrating on heroic, 'ahistorical' figures such as Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and, presumably, George himself, Gundolf now turned to a range of allegedly lesser writers from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. George singled out the essays on Kleist, the Romantics and Paracelsus as signs that Gundolf was moving away from the *Kreis* and accommodating himself to the academic world.¹⁶

That Gundolf's failure to quote sources was due to ignorance of the work of previous scholars, one of the options suggested by Rainer Kolk, is improbable: there is no doubt about Gundolf's extraordinary erudition. Kolk's other suggestion, that Gundolf simply presupposed knowledge of existing scholarship, is more likely, as is the possibility that he knew of it but disregarded it.¹⁷ Whatever the reasons, the consequence is that, even if he implicitly offers

¹⁵ Max Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik. Klopstock, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Jean Paul, Hölderlin* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1928). Walter Benjamin, 'Wider ein Meisterwerk', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1977) pp. 1237-1245. For an account of Kommerell's book and Benjamin's response, see Norton, pp. 671-4.

¹⁶ Osterkamp, *Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, pp. 186-87.

¹⁷ Kolk, p. 392.

his work as a contribution to scholarship (*Wissenschaft*), he does not invite his audience to participate in ongoing discussions: a sign both of high-handedness and of ambivalence about academic work. These issues will be explored further in Chapter Five. Another outstanding German academic work, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946), was produced without using secondary literature but for a different reason: Auerbach was in exile without access to a research library. Despite their very different approaches and allegiances, both Gundolf and Auerbach bring to their subject matter great self-confidence and formidable powers of memory and organisation.

A great deal has been written about the definition of the term 'Baroque' and its applicability to different art forms, and on the topic of *Barockforschung*, a branch of German literary scholarship. It is therefore not necessary to rehearse all the arguments here, but a sketch of them is helpful for an understanding of Gundolf's work.¹⁸ The term 'Baroque' is difficult to define precisely; it tends to refer to the art of the seventeenth century, but there are significant thinkers of that century who are not labelled as 'Baroque', among them Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton (it is noteworthy that these three are associated with the type of rationalism that Gundolf and other members of the *Kreis* deplored). In art and architecture, the term evokes visions of exuberance, detail, contrast, drama, surprise, ornamentation, and movement. It was seen by some as a decline from the harmonious standards of the Renaissance, notably by Jacob Burckhardt, who wrote in *Der Cicerone*

¹⁸ A useful summary of publications on *Barockforschung* in the first decades of the twentieth century is Werner Milch, 'Deutsches Literaturbarock: Der Stand Der Forschung', *The German Quarterly*, 13, no. 3, 1940, pp. 131–36. More recent works include Richard Alewyn, *Deutsche Barockforschung. Dokumentation einer Epoche* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1965); Müller, *Barockforschung*; Jaumann, *Die deutsche Barockliteratur*; Wilfried Barner, *Der Literarische Barockbegriff, Wege Der Forschung* 358, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975); Marcel Lepper, 'Die "Entdeckung" Des "Deutschen Barock". Zur Geschichte Der Frühneuzeitgermanistik 1888—1915.' *Zeitschrift Für Germanistik*, 17, no. 2, 2007, pp. 300–21. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23978783> [accessed 5 October 2023], Volker Meid, *Die deutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Barock. Vom Späthumanismus zur Frühaufklärung* (Munich: C.H. Becker, 2009).

(1855), that ‘Die Barock-Baukunst spricht dieselbe Sprache wie die Renaissance, aber einen verwilderten Dialekt davon.’¹⁹ Gundolf, as will be seen, regarded the Baroque in literature as being both a time of dissolution and yet also one of being dominated by rigid rules which had rushed in to fill the gap created by what he saw as the anarchy of Protestant individualism. Some have claimed that ‘Baroque’ is not tied to a particular time, among them Nietzsche, who wrote:

[...] es hat von den griechischen Zeiten ab schon oftmals einen Barockstil gegeben, in der Poesie, Beredsamkeit, im Prosastile, in der Skulptur ebensowohl als bekanntermaassen in der Architektur – und jedesmal hat dieser Stil, ob es ihm gleich am höchsten Adel, an dem einer unschuldigen, unbewussten, sieghaften Vollkommenheit gebricht, auch Vielen von den Besten und Ernstesten seiner Zeit wohlgethan [...]²⁰

This idea was also promoted by Gundolf’s teacher Heinrich Wölfflin in his books *Renaissance und Barock* (1888) and *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915), which attempt to rescue the Baroque from unfashionability and the ridicule to which it had been subject by art critics such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann and John Ruskin.²¹ The second of these books, in particular, contrasts Renaissance and Baroque as the two major types of style and defines them in detail; this made a great impression on some German literary scholars, who attempted to transfer Wölfflin’s concepts to literary history. Such transfers of paradigms are often associated with new developments in criticism and in philosophy. Gundolf himself attempted to apply some of the aesthetic ideals of the George circle to literary history: the extent to which he was successful, and whether he continued to do this

¹⁹ Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone: eine Einleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens*, (Basle: Schweighaus’sche Buchhandlung, 1855), p. 368, cited in ‘Baroque’, Brill’s *New Pauly: Classical Tradition*, ed. by Manfred Landfester, English edn by Francis G. Gentry, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008), 1, A–Del, pp. 431–54 (p. 434).

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister*, 1878–1880, Vol. 2, Part 1, ‘Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche’, §144. <http://www.nietzschesource.org/?#eKGWB/MA-144> [accessed 1 November 2023].

²¹ Peter J. Burgard, *Baroque: Figures of Excess in Seventeenth Century European Art and German Literature*, (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019), pp. 3–4.

after his personal break with Stefan George, are themes that will be discussed later. Although he does not mention Wölfflin, Fritz Strich uses the term ‘baroque’ in a 1916 essay on the style of seventeenth-century lyric poetry.²² In 1922 the title of Arthur Hübscher’s article ‘Barock als Gestaltung antithetischen Lebensgefühls’ introduced a phrase that gained much currency.²³ Herbert Cysarz published *Deutsche Barockdichtung* in 1924, and Karl Viëtor produced *Probleme der deutschen Barockliteratur* in 1928. A great deal of work followed. The reasons for this new vogue are not entirely clear, but René Wellek ascribes it partly to a vague use of the term ‘baroque’ in Oswald Spengler’s much-read *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918 and 1922), partly to a perceived kinship between the art of the seventeenth century and that of Expressionism, and partly to what he calls ‘a genuine change of taste, a sudden comprehension for an art despised before because of its conventions, its supposedly tasteless metaphors, its violent contrast and antitheses.’ The second and third of these issues are clearly related.²⁴ That Gundolf himself had a low opinion of Spengler is revealed in a letter to Curtius of 24 January 1920: ‘Der Spengler gehört zu den Kulturphilosophen die bei uns alle Jahrzehnte den jeweils gelockerten Bildungsstoff bequem schematisieren – und durch billige Scheinuniversalität die Schmecker und Sucher verwirren, und befriedigen.’²⁵ Richard Alewyn is in broad agreement with Wellek, noting both the influence of Wölfflin and the fact that intellectuals of the 1920s saw their experiences mirrored in the seventeenth century:

²² Fritz Strich, ‘Der lyrische Stil des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts’, in *Abhandlungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Franz Muncker zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht* (Munich, 1916). Repr. in *Deutsche Barockforschung* ed. Alewyn, pp. 229–59.

²³ *Euphorion* 24, 1922, pp. 517–62.

²⁴ René Wellek, ‘The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 5, no. 2, (1946), pp. 77–109.

²⁵ *Briefwechsel mit Steiner und Curtius*, pp. 280–81.

Die Entdeckung des Barock traf aber auch in eine durch Krieg und Revolution, Hunger und Verarmung gesellschaftlich erschütterte und seelisch aufgewühlte Zeit, der die Kriegsnot und die Weltklage, die philosophische Grübelei und die religiöse Schwärmerei des 17. Jahrhunderts vertraut erscheinen konnte, Erfahrungen, die unverloren blieben, auch nachdem die vorübergehende Wiederherstellung der sozialen und geistigen Sicherheit das Bedürfnis nach Identifizierung verringert hatte.²⁶

Walter Benjamin refers in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* to ‘frappante Analogien’ between the Baroque and the current situation of German literature, though he qualifies this by calling the new absorption in the Baroque ‘meist sentimental... so doch positiv gerichtet...’.²⁷

The issues discussed above are those of critical debates of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Inevitably the views of scholars today have moved on, but it is helpful to understand the context of Gundolf’s thought. Some present-day critics of art and literature distinguish or imply a ‘good’ baroque involving a sense of the dramatic, naturalism, emotion and sensuality, and a ‘bad’ baroque of mannerist sensibility – ‘intellectual, artificial, formal, particularistic’.²⁸ Gundolf’s views of seventeenth-century German literature tend to be of the second kind, though he takes a more positive view of Grimmelshausen. However, there were other contemporary critics whose evaluations of the literature as a whole were more favourable, for example Victor Manheimer (1877–1942), Herbert Cysarz (1896–1985), Günther Müller (1890–1957), author of *Deutsche Dichtung von der Renaissance bis zum Ausgang des Barock* (1927), Gundolf’s friend and fellow-member of the *George-Kreis* Karl Wolfskehl (1869–1948), and, as has been seen, Walter Benjamin (1892–1940).

Gundolf devoted the second chapter of *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* to the topic of what, in his view, were the limitations and failings of German literature of the

²⁶ Alewyn’s Introduction to *Deutsche Barockforschung*, p. 10.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt-a-M.: Suhrkamp, 1963), p. 41.

²⁸ Gregg Lambert, *The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 27.

seventeenth century. These were caused, he believed, by the dominance of what he calls *Rationalismus* or *Verstand*, and *Gelehrtheit*, as well as to various social and political factors which distinguished the German territories from their neighbours. The lecture material amplifies his reflections on these issues. He occasionally compares the seventeenth century crisis to that of his own time, though not by relating it to Expressionism. Whilst the lectures are about German Baroque literature, the introductory twenty-three pages set out the vision of German literature and *Geistesgeschichte* that Gundolf had reached by the early 1920s. He begins with an exhortation to the students:

Weder für Examensbüffel noch für Schöngelster sind diese Vorlesungen...weder blossen Gedächtnisstoff noch blosser "Kulturphilosophie" sollen sie bringen, sondern geschichtliche Erscheinungen, ihre Herkunft, ihre Art, ihren Raum und ihren Rang. Wer etwas davon behalten will, wird gut tun, nicht nachzuschreiben und nachzureden, sondern nachzulesen, möglichst die Autoren selbst. Überhaupt immer, soweit es irgend geht, auf die Quellen zurück! Alles andere führt nur zur Halbbildung, zur Schöngelsterei. (FGP M12, p.3)

Certain rhetorical devices are notable here: the repetition of words (*ihre-*, *nachzu-*) to emphasize his points; the exhortation 'auf die Quellen zurück!' which is a version of the motto *ad fontes* used both by Renaissance Humanists to refer to the Greek and Latin classics and by Protestant Reformers to refer to the Bible. There is a negative appeal to *ethos* in his use of the contemptuous terms *Examensbüffel*, *Schöngelster*, *Halbbildung*, implying that the students should know that they are better than this. These terms are reminiscent of Schiller's remarks about 'Brodstudien' in a lecture of 1789, suggesting that the tradition of disdain for students who regarded their studies as mere means to practical ends was a long one.²⁹

These are of course lectures, not seminars, yet for all the talk of 'auf die Quellen zurück', he does not encourage close reading of individual texts or ask the students to think

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* Inaugural lecture in Jena, 26 May 1789 (Jena: 1789), p. 5.

about their personal responses. At the beginning of ‘Deutsche Literatur von Opitz bis Lessing’, he sets out his verdict on this literature, as if he is putting the conclusion first:

Damals wurde die deutsche Literatur beherrscht von Zwecken des Nutzens, der Lehre oder des Schmuckes/Zierzwecken.³⁰ Sie empfing ihr Gesetz, ihre Formen, oft ihren Stoff mit Bewusstsein von aussen her, und wollte ein Anhang der Wissenschaften oder ein künstliches Spiel der sinnlichen Unterhaltung sein, allenfalls ein Seelsorgeamt. Die Schriftsteller bedienen sich überlieferter poetischer Mittel, um bewusst ausserdichterische Zwecke zu erreichen (ausserdichterisch: sofern wir unter Dichtung den unwillkürlichen Sprachausdruck der Lebensfülle eines Einzelnen oder einesr Volkes Gesamtheit verstehen, der sich in Kunstformen vollzieht). Literatur ist in der deutschen Barockzeit von etwa 1620–1750 wesentlich die dekorative oder rhetorische Anwendung von Gelehrsamkeit, mit gelegentlichen unwillkürlichen Durchbrüchen der dunkleren Lebenskräfte Schicksal und Seele. Ihr bewusstes Gesetz aber empfing sie, wie keine frühere und spätere Produktion von zwecke=, regel= und mustersetzenden und suchenden Verstand, der selbtherrlich die anderen Kräfte in seinen Dienst gezwungen hat. (FGP M12A, p. 5).

German literature of this period is, he claims, dominated by the rational, the decorative, the merely edifying. These features have been taken from classical models or from other countries. The only redeeming quality is the occasional involuntary emergence of ‘the darker life forces, Fate and Soul’. It is a pity he does not explain terms such as ‘unwillkürlicher Sprachausdruck’, ‘Lebensfülle’, ‘unwillkürliche Durchbrüche’ using specific examples. It will be seen that Gundolf repeatedly uses the word *unwillkürlich*, and it is not always clear whether it corresponds to an English word such as ‘involuntary’, implying that these poets sometimes expressed things that they did not intend to, or whether it is more like ‘spontaneous’, suggesting that they were sometimes able to break free of a rigid system of poetic rules (though it is not clear how). He opposes the terms *unwillkürlich* and *bewusst*: *unwillkürlich* is reminiscent of the ‘return of the repressed’ of psychoanalysis (though searches of Gundolf’s major works and correspondence find no mentions of Sigmund Freud), of the deconstructive view that language escapes the purposes of its users, of mysticism, as

³⁰ Possibly a reference to the *ornamenta verborum* of Cicero’s *De oratore*, or to the *prodesse et delectare* of Horace’s *Ars poetica*.

well as of the *Genieästhetik* of Goethe's early poetry; *bewusst* of a negative notion of rhetoric as merely rule-bound. He does not acknowledge that rhetorical devices can be used to arouse emotion. *Durchbruch* and *dunkel* also suggest forces that are not subject to rational control or explanation, like those found in the Romantic idea of genius, in which the work of art has no causal explanation in factual biography or social conditions, but rather in the unfathomable individuality of the artist. But Gundolf does not ask whether the artist's intentions have a role in the production of art. It is unlikely that anyone in the grip of a strong emotional impulse would immediately express it by writing highly wrought verse. He does not explain why only 'darker' life forces sometimes appear, or who is to judge where the 'unwillkürliche Durchbrüche' occur, and how. He seems unwilling to give authors the credit for what he sees as their most valuable achievements; it is he, the critic, who has identified them. As was suggested, he may have in mind the idea of *Erlebnisdichtung* or *Erlebnislyrik*, which he would have associated principally with Goethe: in this genre states of mind are, supposedly, depicted immediately and spontaneously, without revision or reflection, and often in relation to images drawn from the natural world.³¹ *Leben* and *Lebensfülle* are key terms in Gundolf's work and will be discussed later. We note that he has substituted *Gesamtheit* for *Volk* in the third sentence of the quoted passage, although he is happy to use the word *Volk* elsewhere. This may mean that he recognizes that some aspects of literature transcend nationality in a

³¹ But Gundolf recognised that this was not an unmediated depiction of the world: 'Nicht den Frühling, die Geliebte usw. hat der Lyriker zu gestalten, sondern das Erlebnis, die Schwingung in welcher er durch diese äußeren Dinge versetzt wird. Das Erlebnis des Frühlings ist sein Stoff, nicht der Frühling selbst. Die Verwechslung dieser beiden grundverschiedenen Inhalte, eines Gegenstandes mit dem Erlebnis eines Gegenstandes, ist ein Grundirrtum der alten Ästhetik.' Gundolf, *Goethe*, 7th edn (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1920), p. 21. Kommerell, on the other hand, suggests that the relationship of experience and reality in poetry is more subtle. Experiencing the world is itself a form of acting upon it: 'Jedes Goethe-Gedicht ist ein begriffenes Erlebnis; ja, das Begreifen darf schon im Erleben mit gedacht werden; erleben heißt: den Gehalt des Begegnenden erschöpfen. Und weiter: in jedem Moment berührt das Ich die Welt; von einem Gegenstand, die sie vertritt, wird es nicht nur dumpf betroffen; es handelt und eignet ihn an.' Max Kommerell, *Gedanken über Gedichte* (Frankfurt-a-M.: Klostermann, 1956), pp. 74-5.

narrow sense. From a current historical perspective we are bound to be suspicious of the use of the word *Volk*, but there is no suggestion here that Gundolf believed in notions of racial struggle or racial superiority. He is not saying that the German *Volk* or ‘Nation’ are superior to others in any obvious sense (Stefan George himself detested the Prussian, nationalistic, and anti-French Second Reich). Gundolf was, however, preoccupied with the question of how certain non-German writers (Shakespeare, Dante) could be understood by, or assimilated into, a German literary tradition, while rejecting the influence of others.

His manner does not invite argument or questions, though he does allow for the possibility of disagreement about his underlying assumptions. Whilst it is often heavily judgmental, it does not in itself call attention to or enact the process of striving to make judgements, in the way that the prose of his near-contemporary F.R. Leavis (1895–1978) does at its best. Some of his statements, however, pull in a different direction. They suggest momentary hesitation, an awareness that all perspectives are limited. Describing what he sees as the seventeenth century’s ‘Vorherrschaft des Verstandes’ he writes: ‘Ich nenne es (immer bewusst der Unzulänglichkeit solcher Sammelworte, die mehr die Blickrichtung bestimmen als die fakta selber in ihrer Fülle umfassen sollen) die Zersetzung des Gesamtmenschlichen...’ (FGP M12, p. 2). The phrase in parentheses opposes the observer’s viewpoint to the facts themselves ‘in their fullness’, acknowledging the inadequacies of language in the face of reality. The reader may wonder whether this is a genuine doubt or the device of *aporia*, the expression of doubt for rhetorical effect. Even if, as seems likely, it is genuine doubt, Gundolf does not go on to develop this line of thought, although such perspectives were very much in the air at the time. He lived through the time of the *Sprachkrise* and the development of *Sprachkritik* by writers such as Fritz Mauthner, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Hofmannsthal’s *Chandosbrief* of 1902

expressed a vision of mystical wholeness as well as one of the breakdown of language. The last chapter will return to this question.

With an echo of Goethe's 'Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis' (*Faust* Part II, 1832, Act V.), Gundolf now begins to state a philosophy of human beings in history and of the correct and incorrect ways of investigating it: 'Alle geschichtlichen, vergangenen, vergänglichen Erscheinungen sind Gleichnisse für ewige Vor=gänge, die uns noch an=gehen...' (typescript M12A p. 2³²). The '=' signs may be intended to emphasize the common lexical origin of *-gänge* and *gehen*, and may have been conveyed by special emphasis in the act of speaking the text. The separation of prefixes is reminiscent of Heidegger and of J.P. Stern's comments quoted above. At this point Gundolf is talking about abstract *Erscheinungen* and *Vorgänge*, but he then uses a scientific simile to describe human culture:

Die verschiedenen Schichten des deutschen, des europäischen, des menschlichen Sprach-, Bildungs- und Lebensgehalts wollen wir an den einzelnen Autoren erkennen – wie ein Naturforscher aus Muscheln und Steinen die Erdlagen und die Prozesse ihres Werdens erforscht. Sonst bleibt das Beschreiben von Werken und Personen nur ein Sammelsport ohne geistigen Wert. (FGP M12 Introduction, p. II).

The thought here is opaque. He says that the collection of biographical data about individuals without any wider context has no spiritual value, that it is a collector's game; but on the other hand, that the process of 'becoming' is more important than the individuals involved in the process. He does allow that there are European and general human 'layers' as well as a German one. He further describes the shortcomings of positivistic scholarship, in contrast to his own methods, employing the vivid practical metaphor of 'a marshalling yard without trains and goods':

³² The MS. FGP M12 p. II has just 'ewige Ideen/Kräfte die uns noch angehen'.

die Geschichtswissenschaft der letzten Jahrzehnte, von ihrer Tochter und Helferin Philologie mehr und mehr bevormundet, hat sich zumeist nach Herkünften und Einflüssen erkundigt, und darüber fast ganz vergessen, was eigentlich herkommt und einfließt. Man hatte schliesslich nichts als ein Bündel von gegenseitigen Abhängigkeiten, und gar keine Wesen oder Gestalten mehr, kaum noch Kräfte – einen Rangierbahnhof ohne Züge und Güter. (Auch hier nur die allgemeine Neigung unsren Zeitalters, Wesen in Beziehungen, Substanzen in Funktionen aufzulösen). (FGP M12 Introduction, p. III).

Here he uses one of his favourite preferred figures of speech: the setting up of pairs of concepts, either opposing (one good and one bad, such as *Wesen* and *Beziehungen*), or enhancing each other ('Herkünfte und Einflüsse'). His objections to the literary scholarship of his own time are similar, then, to his objections to seventeenth-century German thinking: both, he believes, are a consequence of a dry rationality that suppresses or ignores the living totality of existence.

Rather than describing his subjects by the enumeration of facts, Gundolf tries to encapsulate the essence, the true meaning, of an author, a period, a style in brief, synoptic phrases. He believes in discrete historical epochs, each with its own 'Ganze des öffentlichen Lebens oder des einzelnen Werks': *Lutherzeit*, *Verstandeszeit*, *Goethezeit*, *Romantik*, and in fixed national and ethnic identities: *Volk*, *Deutsch*. This was characteristic of German historiography at this time. Fritz K. Ringer writes that the Romantic conception of individuality acquired a mystical and metaphysical sense: 'In the German historical tradition, this dimension engendered an unusually insistent emphasis upon great 'historic' individuals; a tendency to treat cultures, states, and epochs as personalized 'wholes'; and the conviction that each of these totalities embodied its own unique spirit.'³³ According to Gundolf, some of these eras are *dumpf* - dull or dead - others have an 'active centre':

³³ Ringer, pp. 101–02.

Eine solche bewegende Mitte, verkörpert in einer Weltidee wie Reich oder Kirche, oder in einer Weltperson, wie Luther und Goethe – eben verkörpert, leibgeworden, sichtbar wirksam, nicht nur gedacht, bezweckt, empfunden – eine solche Person=, Volk= oder Weltwerdung des lebendigen Geistes fehlte dem deutschen Barock (wie dem nachgoethischen Zeitalter). (M12, p. 2).

The era of Weimar Classicism is the summit of achievement; the times immediately before and after are deficient. The Christian overtones of verkörpert are clear: ‘Die Verkörperung’ is one of the ways in which German can denote the Incarnation. There is a ‘living spirit’ which can become embodied in a ‘world idea’ or a ‘world person’: Gundolf’s vision of historical forces shifts between seeing them as abstract ideas and seeing them as exceptional people. His only two examples of ‘world people’ are German, but they are hardly thought of as personalities, as people in an everyday sense. The ‘Person=, Volk= oder Weltwerdung des lebendigen Geistes’ was absent not only in the Baroque period but in the time following Goethe – namely in the time preceding Stefan George. The idea of the importance of the ‘great men’ of antiquity was widespread in the *George-Kreis*. Such people could be political figures, as can be seen in the case of Gundolf’s own book on Caesar, but also sometimes writers and thinkers (Caesar of course was both a statesman and a writer). In the second volume of the *Jahrbuch für die Geistige Bewegung* (1911), Kurt Hildebrandt (1881–1966) wrote ‘it was not as a thinker, but as a living figure that he (Plato) was the founder of an intellectual empire and the conversations in the streets (...) were at the same time acts of that intellectual empire (...) In the Academy he created for himself the living nation of the spirit’³⁴.

There are certain key words, such as *Geist*, *Erlebnis* *Verstand*, and *Volk*, that occur frequently in Gundolf’s writing. It was Gundolf who devised the motto ‘Dem lebendigen Geist’ which appears above the main entrance to the new Heidelberg University building that

³⁴ Cited in Carola Groppe, ‘New Humanism’, Section E. ‘Philosophical-Ideological Developments after 1900’, in *Brill’s New Pauly* 3, Jap–Ode, pp. 1144–51, (pp. 1144–45).

was opened in 1931. *Geist* is of course a key concept in German thought; its meaning is wide-ranging and has undergone many changes. Sometimes it is a literal supernatural force that somehow influences human affairs and is embodied in them, sometimes it is the explanatory power of the human intellect itself, sometimes it is the overall characterisation of a particular historical era, sometimes the sum total of human knowledge and culture, sometimes it is an aspect of individual human psychology.³⁵ It is not surprising that what Gundolf meant by it is not always consistent and clear. The second of these key concepts, *Erlebnis*, has been comprehensively described in a standard reference work:

Um die Jahrhundertwende werden Erlebnis und Erleben schlagartig zu philosophischen Modebegriffen, die für die verschiedensten systematischen Intentionen in Logik, Erkenntnistheorie, Ästhetik, Ethik, Psychologie und Anthropologie eintreten. Sie treten nun auch massenhaft in den Psychologien und psychologischen Subjektivitätstheorien auf, die unmittelbar oder in ihren Konsequenzen naturalistisch bleiben. In vielfältig schillernder Auslegung seiner hermeneutisch-anthropologischen Bedeutung bleibt Erlebnis ein Grundbegriff der Lebens- und der Weltanschauungsphilosophie des ersten Drittels des 20. Jahrhunderts., die weniger auf die Wirksamkeit Diltheys als auf den Einfluß Nietzsches und Bergsons zurückgehen.³⁶

The third and fourth of these key concepts will now be examined in more detail:

Verstand and the related term *Vernunft*, and *Volk*. Some of Gundolf's uses of these terms in his writings on seventeenth-century literature will be discussed.³⁷ As was noted earlier, Gundolf claims that the seventeenth century was 'das Zeitalter des Verstands', mentioning Kepler and Leibniz as the greatest Germans of this time. He equates *Verstand* with *Wissenschaft* (it is not clear whether he means the hard physical sciences or scholarship generally; possibly he means both), and opposes both to art: 'Das Jahrhundert lief in der

³⁵ See the extensive account of *Geist* in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter and others, completely rev. edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971–2007), 3, G–H, pp. 154–203.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 2, D–F, p. 707. For ease of reading, the quotation has been slightly modified to remove the dictionary's internal system of abbreviation and cross-referencing.

³⁷ The accounts given here follow *Ritter* 9, U–V, 'Verstand; Vernunft', pp. 747–863.

Richtung des Verstandes, der Wissenschaft – der Kunst war es entgegen' (FGP M12 p. 7). It now needs to be asked whether Gundolf's account of the seventeenth-century concept of 'reason', 'understanding', or 'rationalism' was accurate, and then to look at the accounts of these concepts in his own time in the early twentieth century. The descriptions of these will necessarily have to be brief and to the point, as they are large subjects in themselves.

According to the article 'Verstand; Vernunft' in *Ritter*, the two terms are complementary and contrasting, and this represents a uniquely German development ('charakterisiert eine deutsche Sonderentwicklung'). Their history is complex, and encompasses Greek terms such as *logos*, *nous*, *dianoia*, *episteme* and *sophia*, and Latin ones such as *ratio*, *intellectus*, *mens*, *animus*, *spiritus* and *ingenium*. In the thought of Meister Eckhart and other members of the Dominican School, *Vernunft* was the Latin *intellectus* and *Verstand* was *ratio*, with *Vernunft* being the superior quality: understanding as opposed to calculation. At the very beginning of the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes refers to, 'the power to judge well, and to distinguish the true from the false, which is properly what is called good sense or reason', claiming that this faculty, which is the one thing that distinguishes humans from animals, is equally distributed among people but that what counts is the ability to make good use of it.³⁸ These are innate human qualities, not necessarily the same as the empirical scientific method as such, though they may be one of its foundations. The expression *bon sens* which Descartes equates with *raison* is employed by Boileau in his *L'Art Poétique* of 1674:

Quelque sujet qu'on traite, ou plaisant, ou sublime,
Que toujours le bon sens s'accorde avec la rime:
[...]
Aimez donc la raison: que toujours vos écrits

³⁸ '[...] la puissance de bien juger, et distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, qui est proprement ce qu'on nomme le bon sens ou la raison'. [Descartes DM1_fr \(stanford.edu\)](#). [accessed 4 October 2023].

Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix.³⁹

This is not the principle of abstract reason, but rather that of good taste or decorum, which should govern the treatment of whatever subject the poet selects.

In contrast to Descartes, Spinoza distinguishes clearly between *intellectus*, which the article on 'Verstand; Vernunft' in Ritter equates with *Verstand*, and *ratio*. *Intellectus* is the ability to recognize true ideas and to distinguish them from false and dubious ones.

Happiness consists in the perfection of *intellectus*. Following the Stoics, he saw reason as a therapeutic force that tames unhealthy emotions.⁴⁰ In German-speaking Europe, Samuel

Pufendorf saw reason as a power that led to the development of natural human sociability, freed from the claims of theology. This would manifest itself first in a relatively benevolent 'state of nature' (in contrast to the view of Hobbes that a state of nature is one of perpetual warfare), and then in a more politically developed state founded on contract or agreement.

That there were currents of thought in the seventeenth century that were aware of the limits of reason can be seen from the work of Pascal, who, while acknowledging the importance of reason for the natural sciences, opposes to it the notion of *cœur*, 'heart', which alone gives access to God and eternal truth.

From this brief sketch, it can be seen that there was a variety of conceptions of 'reason' in the seventeenth century, that it was an idea of great complexity, that it had a range of meanings and is by no means to be equated with scientific instrumental reason in the way that Gundolf appears to believe (though his use of the term was not always consistent, as will

³⁹ [Nicolas Boileau: "L'Art poétique, Ch. I" from L'Art poétique \(1674\) \(kalliope.org\)](https://kalliope.org/), 28–9 and 37–8. [accessed 4 October 2023]. 'What-e're you write of Pleasant or Sublime, /Always let sense accompany your Rhyme [...] Love Reason then: and let what e're you Write/Borrow from her its Beauty, Force, and Light.' Translation by Sir William Soame and John Dryden, 1683.

⁴⁰ Firmin DeBrabander, 'Psychotherapy and Moral Perfection: Spinoza and the Stoics on the Prospect of Happiness,' in *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. by Steven K. Strange and Jack Zupko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 198–213.

be seen). He did not take account of any role that reason might play in the encouragement of virtue or general human flourishing, or as a healing force for the theological disputes that were among the causes of the Thirty Years' War. *Verstand*, which Gundolf saw as suppressing individual uniqueness, can also be viewed as a drive to toleration and the removal of division and enmity; it can refer to the communicative practices of society as a whole. Perhaps his attitude is best understood as hostility to the Enlightenment, which some have said 'to have instilled a narrow, calculating form of rationality that places ends above means in seeking efficiency at all costs, without reference to morality or compassion.'⁴¹ But he does not go as far as Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* and claim that reason itself, in an attempt to escape from myth and magic, can itself become a destructive mythology. Gundolf furthermore does not describe 'reason' as the servant of economic or class interests. While he deals with writers such as Angelus Silesius and Grimmelshausen who, in their different ways, do not fit his narrative of the dominance of *Verstand*, he struggles to account for their existence in an epoch allegedly subject to its domination. In a discussion of David Hume, Ritchie Robertson describes two contrasted views of 'reason': 'a narrowly cerebral pursuit of truth, which can lead one into strange deserts of abstraction; and a social conception of reason and judgement that reunites one with ordinary human living.'⁴² Reason could therefore be seen not as a destructive force in human life but as reconciling and cohesive, leading to peace and greater sociability.⁴³ Gundolf takes the negative view of 'reason': he rarely sees any positive meanings. His objection to *Verstand*

⁴¹ Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness 1680–1790* (London: Penguin Books, 2020), p. 769.

⁴² Robertson, *Enlightenment*, p. 281.

⁴³ For this strain in seventeenth-century thought see Alfred Dufour, 'Pufendorf,' in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. by J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 559–88.

is that it stifles true, heroic, creativity. Hans-Harald Müller calls Gundolf's concept of *Rationalismus* 'unhistorisch und ideologisch', claiming that it is vague and does not reflect historical reality, but is a product of the 'ideological antirationalism' of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁴⁴ There is no doubt an element of truth in this. But it does not address the question of the extent to which any literary criticism is in the end conditioned by the circumstances of its time, and this returns us to the issues raised by Gadamer.

The question of *Verstand* features prominently in the seventy or so pages of 'Von Opitz bis Lessing' that Gundolf devotes to Opitz's *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* of 1624. Much of this material found its way into his short book *Martin Opitz*. Gundolf claims that German baroque literature differs fundamentally from that of other countries because 'ihre Formen nicht heimisch gewachsene oder einverleibte sind, sondern willentlich nachgemachte' (p. 2). Once again, the image of a national organism is visible: German literature of this period is not a home-grown living body but has been built by a deliberate act of will in imitation of foreign models (Grimmelshausen is an exception). 'Willentlich nachgemacht' is presumably the opposite of *unwillkürlich*. Writers such as Gongora, Marini and Voiture are 'echteres Gewächs ihrer Volksart' than any German writer, while 'French classicism' is 'reinste[r] Ausdruck nicht nur französischen Sinns, sondern auch Geblüts.' The word *Sinn* has some overlap in meaning with *Verstand*, but it is not being used in a derogatory way here: possibly it corresponds to the *bon sens* of Descartes. The contrasted term *Geblüt* suggests not only blood but also lineage and race, echoing *Volksart*. There is a suggestion here that the truth of works of art is tied to particular communities, to nations defined using the modern, and problematic, sense of the word 'ethnicity'.

⁴⁴ Müller, pp. 135–38.

German literature and Humanism of this period were, Gundolf believes, uniquely disadvantaged, dominated as they were by Protestant *Innerlichkeit*, which led to a fantastic and undisciplined imagination, and by the deadening forces of reason and science. This led them to implode and then mechanically copy foreign models:

Das faustische Suchen, das romantische Schweifen, die Lust am ewigen Werden, die Unbefriedigung im Sein - all das sind urdeutsche Züge, die durch die deutsche Reformation erst ihre geschichtliche Fassung und Wirkung gefunden haben. – Im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert kam nun vor allem die negative Seite dieser deutschen Eigenschaften zur Geltung. - Die tiefe Formlosigkeit, die ihren Sinn und ihren Wert in einem formsprengenden Lebensüberschuss haben kann, führte damals gerade zur Leere und zum Chaos – und der horror vacui, von innen her nicht zu stopfen, suchte von aussen her immer neue Füllung. (FGP M12A, pp. 11–12).

On pp. 11 and 13 he refers to ‘Übergewicht des formfeindlichen Glaubens’ and ‘das Übergewicht des protestantischen Sinns’. Two points should be noted. Firstly, it is an imbalance, an excess, of religious feeling, and specifically Protestant religious feeling, that has been one of the major determinants of the perceived decline of German literature in this period as much as abstract reason, though he does not blame religion or the Church in themselves (on FGP M12 p.7 he states that Protestant *Sinn* – sense, feeling, consciousness – prevailed independently from Protestant dogma). Perhaps he overlooked the fact that *Erlebnisdichtung* is also connected with Protestant and Pietist *Innerlichkeit*. Gundolf’s own use of religious language and imagery will be explored further in Chapter Four. Secondly, he is hostile to the idea of imitation in literature, seeing it as no more than derivative copying. He is not alert to the more complex and fruitful possibilities of the classical idea of *imitatio*, that it is not a second-best to supposedly original creation; that it allows for reversal and irony as well as mere plagiarism. that the use of conventional forms nonetheless permits originality. The rhetorical term *imitatio* has a rich variety of meanings, going well beyond simple copying or plagiarism, which were despised by ancient authors, to denote many different ways in which a

later writer may depend on an earlier one.⁴⁵ It may involve notions of concealing as well as of transforming (see the metaphors of pollen-gathering bees and of digestion in Seneca's *Epistolae Morales*, 84), it may have what one scholar has called an 'eristic', or combative, relation to an original.⁴⁶

Gundolf uses the term 'willentlich nachgemacht' to describe how the German literature of this time was artificially made, as he sees it, not naturally grown. Gundolf does not deal with the questions of whether literary imitations are meant to be obvious, or are expected to be disguised, to positively transform the models they are imitating or to be in conflict with them, nor with that of whether the 'models' are themselves 'imitations' in some sense. He is too involved in the idea of a negative German exceptionalism to be interested in the nuances of the concept of *imitatio* that was noted earlier: German authors simply 'copied' and this in his view was a profound weakness.

There follows a passage which is worth quoting at greater length because it encapsulates Gundolf's thinking about the period:

Am meisten litt an dem Sieg des formfeindlichen Glaubens über die Bindung der Kirche und die Bildung der Renaissance gerade das deutsche Dichten: die Gestaltung der Weltkräfte in Sprachgebilden des Ich zersetzte sich, als zwischen der Seele und Gott und Welt eine Kluft gähnte die nur durch "Beziehungen" geschlossen werden sollte. Dagegen gedieh eben dadurch die Wissenschaft, die gerade ja Beziehungen herstellt und zeigt, Gesetze, Maße, Wirkungen. Das Zeitalter lief mit der Wissenschaft und wider die Dichtkunst – es ist das grundlegende Jahrhundert der "Wissenschaft", die die Welt als Ganzes mit dem Verstand deuten will als eine berechenbare Einheit gesetzlicher Funktionen, nicht mit der Phantasie schauen oder mit der Seele fassen wie die Repräsentanten des deutschen Mittelalters, oder mit der Vernunft erschaffen, wie der Idealismus um 1800, oder die Teile erkennen, verknüpfen und anwenden, wie die "Forschung" des 19. Jahrhunderts (*Martin Opitz*, pp. 2–3).

⁴⁵ Gian Biagio Conte and Glenn W. Most, 'imitatio.' in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴⁶ G. W. Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 30, no. 1, (1980), pp. 1–32 (p. 4) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2861533>> [accessed 4 October 2023].

Verstand and *Vernunft* are not the same thing here: *Verstand* is the power that measures and calculates relationships of cause and effect in the external world, while *Vernunft* is abstract philosophical reason, concerned with the metaphysical underpinning of thought. Gundolf also distinguishes the science of the nineteenth century from that of the seventeenth, though the ‘research’ of the former is put in quotation marks, suggesting some doubt or distaste on Gundolf’s part (possibly he is using *Wissenschaft* to mean positivistic literary scholarship as much as the hard physical sciences). He then claims that it was undisciplined private religious belief, unleashed by Protestantism with its emphasis on individual conscience and individual reading of the Bible, which opened up a gulf between perception of the physical world and the human sense of meaning in the seventeenth century. Science filled this gulf, like natural forces rushing in to fill a vacuum. The ‘formfeindliches Glauben’ itself then appears to be put on one side; it created a problem, Gundolf thinks, but it is of no further interest to him. It is not clear whether his view of the problem created by a certain kind of religious belief can be reconciled with his interest in the mysticism of Boehme and Angelus Silesius, and his quasi-religious veneration of Stefan George. Religion appears to be, for Gundolf, both the origin of the problem and the solution to it. It is also not clear why he thinks that the establishment of *Beziehungen* and *Wirkungen* is only a negative property of a mechanistic world view; it could just as easily be argued that one of the powers of art is that it can create relationships and connections, sometimes in unexpected ways. He is determined to see the seventeenth century as hostile to the art of poetry, and poetry for the most part as succumbing, almost helplessly, to this hostility. There is no sense of the agency or choice of individuals, or of the material realities of human society; all are subject to the workings of impersonal intellectual forces (but not, as noted earlier, economic and political ones; the *Beziehungen* are not economic relations). This is clearly related to the notion of *Zeitgeist*, believed to have been first used by Herder in his *Kritische Wällder oder Betrachtungen, die*

Wissenschaft und Kunst des Schönen betreffend, nach Maßgabe neuerer Schriften (1769).

Zeitgeist is not only a term for a neutral historical description of the characteristics of an era.

It also refers to normative assumptions about behaviour, morality and beliefs to which the individual to a greater or lesser extent voluntarily submits, surrendering some degree of freedom of thought and action in the process. Elsewhere, of course, Gundolf very much believes in the agency of ‘great men’ as the driving force of both history and art: Caesar, Dante, Shakespeare, Napoleon. Such people both embodied the *Zeitgeist* and created it. Fritz K. Ringer’s related comments on the ‘Romantic conception of individuality’ were noted earlier.

Gundolf attempts to show that *Verstand* is both universal and also impoverished, but that he was struggling with his thoughts, despite the surface clarity of expression, can be seen a few sentences later:

Die Werke solcher Poeten sind mehr verschiedene Kombinationen gegebenen Stoffs als neue Geburten. Denn der Verstand, der Führer des Zeitalters, hat zwar verschiedene Umfangsgrade aber keine ‘Persönlichkeit’. Die Denkgesetze wonach er Stoffe nimmt, verknüpft und teilt gelten für jedes Hirn, wenn auch nicht jedes Hirn gleich geschickt ist, ihnen zu dienen. Was den Menschen zum Eigenwesen, zur ‘Individualität’ macht, liegt über oder unter dem Verstand – und mag Blut, Seele, Wille, Geist, Schicksal, oder wie immer man das eben Unfaßbare, Unteilbare, Unmittelbare nenne, im Dasein des Opitz gewaltet haben: zu Sprache ist es nicht geworden und ihre Biographie verrät keine Einheit von Leistung und Leben. (*Martin Opitz*, p. 5)

What makes a person a true individual are the portentous concepts ‘blood, soul, will, spirit, fate’, yet they are ‘ungraspable, indivisible, immediate.’ Opitz is criticized for not expressing the ineffable in language, even though these forces may have ‘held sway in his being’:

Gundolf seems to be holding him to an impossible standard.⁴⁷ He claims that the Baroque

⁴⁷ The lecture MS (FGP M12 p. 18) has some notable differences, in particular: ‘keine eigentliche Individualität’ instead of ‘keine ‘Persönlichkeit’ ’; ‘Das was den Menschen zum Sonderwesen macht, liegt höher oder tiefer als sein Verstand’ instead of ‘Was den Menschen zum Eigenwesen, zur ‘Individualität’ macht, liegt über oder unter dem Verstand’, and ‘in ihrem Werk ist nichts

authors must have possessed individual human characteristics (the word *Sonderwesen* is reminiscent of the phrase ‘individuum est ineffabile’ used by Goethe in a letter of 20 September 1780 to Johann Caspar Lavater), yet these are not manifested in their works. Elsewhere, as will be seen in a later chapter, Gundolf writes about Hölderlin, whose poems are said to embody both his own personality and the spirit of his time: the German poets of the seventeenth century achieve only the second of these, it seems. *Verstand* does not make a human being into a *Sonderwesen*, even though the extent to which any given individual is able to use it varies, yet similarly generalized concepts such as *Seele*, *Blut*, *Wille* and *Geist* somehow do have the effect of making a particular person unique. Moreover, these forces are entirely separate from *Verstand*, lying above or below them in Gundolf’s spatial and hierarchical metaphor of the constitution of the human personality. This prompts the thought that one of Gundolf’s objections to *Verstand* is that it is potentially available to everyone, not just to an exclusive group (he would no doubt have strongly disagreed with Joseph Beuys’s saying, ‘jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler’). His own ability to understand and describe the historical reality of the seventeenth century can be understood as a version of Dilthey’s view of the *Geisteswissenschaften* as being able to comprehend spiritual and mental life in a way that the natural sciences cannot: Gundolf’s own *lebendiger Geist* can grasp the *toter Geist* of the Baroque. What Gundolf objected to is the lack, as he saw it, of the expression of a unique individual sensibility in the poetry of this time. With our knowledge of the Nazis the words *Blut* and *Wille* will ring alarm bells: such conceptions are not characteristic only of poets, and neither is hostility to reason. Does his talk of *Blut* refer to supposed innate differences

davon gekommen...’ instead of ‘zu Sprache ist es nicht geworden’. The book elaborates the thought and elevates the tone of the MS.

between races or is it sometimes a way of referring to the felt experience of unique individuals, as when English speakers refer to ‘feeling something on the pulses? It should be remembered, though, that Gundolf’s works were later banned by the Nazis and that the relationship of the *George-Kreis* to the Nazis was ambivalent: while George was admired by some Nazis, on the other hand he refused official honours from the Nazi government and was also admired by some resisters such as Claus von Stauffenberg.⁴⁸

Gundolf is not claiming that Baroque poetry overtly affirms a scientific ideology, but that *Verstand* is manifested in formal or aesthetic features. As such, he recognizes that ideology (though he does not use the term) can be found in form as well as in content, though he does not explicitly say this. According to him, *Verstand* is an intellectual current that can possess or inhabit individual people; it is not a drab or unjust social order. It is a mindset, not technology or materialistic civilization as such. It is as if Gundolf is grafting an external notion of *Verstand* on to this era, one that is not really known to the seventeenth century itself: it is a concern of his own day. Reason was autocratic, high-handed, somehow it managed to compel other human powers to its service. It was noted that Gundolf argues that this is due to ascendant Protestant individualism creating a spiritual vacuum which *Verstand* filled. He does not appear to consider that what he calls *unwillkürliche Durchbrüche* may in fact be conscious and calculated artistic effects. ‘Genius’ may be arduous work as well as inspiration from some mysterious source, as Nietzsche observed:

Die Künstler haben ein Interesse daran, daß man an die plötzlichen Eingebungen, die sogenannten Inspirationen glaubt; als ob die Idee des Kunstwerks, der Dichtung, der Grundgedanke einer Philosophie wie ein Gnadenschein vom Himmel herableuchte. In Wahrheit produziert die Phantasie des guten Künstlers oder Denkers fortwährend

⁴⁸ See Norton pp. 743–46.

Gutes, Mittelmäßiges und Schlechtes, aber seine Urteilskraft, höchst geschärft und geübt, verwirft, wählt aus, knüpft zusammen [...] ⁴⁹.

The question of whether Gundolf sees that the use of conventional forms and language by Baroque authors does not rule out originality, or the possibility of communicating with a modern person, will be discussed in Chapter Two. He tends to describe Baroque literature with disparaging terms such as *Schwulst* and *Gelehrtheit*, without paying close attention to the workings of language. He talks contemptuously of *Gelehrtheit* without mentioning the material culture of libraries and books: things of which Walter Benjamin was well aware.

In a passage that was noted above (p.39) in the context of discussion of the apparent inadequacies of language, Gundolf asks:

Was bedeutet, mit andren Worten, die Vorherrschaft des Verstandes? oder seine beiden greifbarsten Wirkungen: die Verzwecklichung des menschlichen Ich und die Verstofflichung der sachlichen Welt? Ich nenne es [...] die Zersetzung des Gesamtmenschlichen, des beseelten Kosmos in teilhafte Funktionen und Substanzen, die Zerreissung der leibhaften Einheit von menschen= volk= und weltbildenden Lebenskräften in ein vom Verstand allein reguliertes Nebeneinander. (FGP M12A, p. 6).

This can be compared to Charles Taylor's idea of the 'buffered self', a modern self that was no longer 'open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers', 'for whom it comes to seem axiomatic that all thought, feeling and purpose, all the features we normally can ascribe to agents, must be in minds, which are distinct from the 'outer' world'. ⁵⁰

Gundolf's strictures on the 'Verzwecklichung des Ichs' can be also understood against a background of disdain among some German intellectuals for the perceived deficiencies of a positivist psychology '...it was considered one of the dangers of psychologism that the logical subject of epistemology, the conscious "I", might come to be regarded as a mere

⁴⁹ *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Vol I, 4th Section, §155.

⁵⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, paperback edn, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 27, 539.

construct, a hypostatized bundle of psychic structures and events.’⁵¹ This is not to comment on the truth of these allegations about the psychological theories of Helmholtz, Wundt, Mach and others, but simply to state that they were believed. There is also an echo of the lecture *Wissenschaft als Beruf* by Max Weber:

Es ist das Schicksal unserer Zeit, mit der ihr eigenen Rationalisierung und Intellektualisierung, vor allem: Entzauberung der Welt, daß gerade die letzten und sublimsten Werte zurückgetreten sind aus der Öffentlichkeit, entweder in das hinterweltliche Reich mystischen Lebens oder in die Brüderlichkeit unmittelbarer Beziehungen der Einzelnen zueinander. Es ist weder zufällig, daß unsere höchste Kunst eine intime und keine monumentale ist, noch daß heute nur innerhalb der kleinsten Gemeinschaftskreise, von Mensch zu Mensch, im pianissimo, jenes Etwas pulsiert, das dem entspricht, was früher als prophetisches Pneuma in stürmischem Feuer durch die großen Gemeinden ging und sie zusammenschweißte.⁵²

But while Weber’s diagnosis of the modern world is similar to that of George and his circle, his solution is very different. He maintains that *Wissenschaft* cannot provide answers to ultimate questions: the scholar is not a sage or a prophet, but someone who investigates and describes the world. He or she cannot bring back the old certainties, and attempts to do so are dangerous, leading to delusion and fanaticism. Weber knew both Gundolf and George and had a great appreciation for George’s poetry, yet he deplored the quasi-religious atmosphere of the *Kreis* and the reverence for the *Meister*, and George’s contempt for modern mass culture. Gundolf, George and Marianne and Max Weber met regularly from 1910 to 1912, and engaged in heated, if respectful, discussions but there was no possibility of them finding any kind of agreement about the solutions to the problems of the modern world.⁵³ What is clear is that unease about the perceived ills of positivism and rationalism were widespread. It

⁵¹ Ringer, p. 297.

⁵² Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1919), p. 36.

⁵³ Norton pp. 475–80.

was not confined to the *George-Kreis*. In spite of George's hostility to academia, he shared some of his views with people within it.

The concepts of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* were of course extensively discussed by, among others, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. However, there is no reason to think that Gundolf was philosophically influenced by any of them in any strong sense, or even that he had a great interest in abstract, general philosophical concepts as such, though he clearly had a good knowledge of the major figures and currents of philosophy.⁵⁴ The main influences on Gundolf's theory and method of literary history and criticism were the *Genieästhetik* of *Sturm und Drang* and Wilhelm Dilthey's conception of *Geistesgeschichte*.⁵⁵ The *Genieästhetik* saw the original genius as the paradigm of the creative human being. This was a writer or artist who, free from the influence of cultural traditions, related to nature in a direct, personal way and recreated it in their work, Shakespeare being one of the archetypes of this image of artistic creation. Gundolf made it clear in a letter to Stefan George that at least one of the major philosophers mentioned above lacked this insight:

Nietzsches mystisches Raunen ist mehr Ausplaudern als Goethes behaglichste Redseligkeit. [...Goethe] HAT das Wissen, das Nietzsche kennt und sucht, aber nie gelebt hat. Nietzsches Verhältnis zur Dichtkunst: er begreift den Geist und die Musik darin, aber nicht die einmalige Seele und das Bildnerische..sehr flach alles über Dante und Shakespeare.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The entry on Gundolf in [Deutsche Biographie - Gundolf, Friedrich \(deutsche-biographie.de\)](https://www.deutsche-biographie.de) [accessed 4 October 2023] describes him as being 'von Dilthey und Bergson philosophisch angeregt'. Gundolf studied at the University of Berlin, where Dilthey taught for many years. Dilthey was an admirer of George's poetry and wrote a letter of thanks to Gundolf after receiving a copy of the *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung*. See Norton pp. 407, 444.

⁵⁵ Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, p. 299.

⁵⁶ Letter to George of 22 November 1918 recording his response to Ernst Bertram's biography of Nietzsche. *George–Gundolf Briefwechsel*, p. 316,

In Dilthey's view, Kant's philosophy reduces human beings to purely abstract thinking subjects: it fails to deal with the full reality of human existence in society and in history. Only the human sciences, the *Geisteswissenschaften*, can give access to this total human reality. For Gundolf, the work of art contains not only the author's personality, but also their entire epoch; the study of literature means to encounter the thinking and feeling of an era, and literary history becomes, at least in part, intellectual history. He writes in his essay 'Hölderlins Archipelagus': 'In jedem Gedicht Hölderlins wirkt sein Gesamtwesen (d.h. seine Eigenschaften und sein Schicksal) und seine Gesamtwelt (d.h. die Natur, die Gesellschaft, der er angehört, und die Geschichte, die er voraussetzt) ...'.⁵⁷

Turning now to the term *Volk*, two broad senses can be distinguished, one cultural and one civic, which began to take on their modern meanings in the eighteenth century⁵⁸. Herder used the term to denote a kind of collective personality embodied in language, poetry and folksong and endowed with its own spirit and soul. He assumes the equality of different *Völker*, so this is not straightforward German nationalism. In contrast, under the influence of the radical thinkers of the French Revolution, the term *Volk* was also adopted as a translation of *peuple*, the body of citizens which was the bearer of popular sovereignty and dedicated to the egalitarian ideals of the Revolution: thus, it tended to exclude the aristocracy but include the poorest people, the *Sans-culottes*. In the Napoleonic era, though, the idea of the *Volk* began to be associated with resistance to French domination and thus acquired overtones of German nationalism, though with a liberal element to it. However, the article in Ritter records that antisemitic feelings also began to increase at this time, which also saw the delivery in 1807–8 of Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (see p. 152 below). Towards

⁵⁷ 'Dichter und Helden', pp. 5–6.

⁵⁸ Ritter, *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, 9, (U–V) 'Volk', pp. 1081–90.

the end of the nineteenth century, racial (*völkisch*) and Social Darwinist elements were added to the mix of protests against the liberalising consequences of modernity, and these found formal expression in the *Alldeutscher Verband*, founded in 1891, which promoted German expansionism and the unification of German-speaking people in Europe.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the term was still employed in liberal democratic contexts. According to Article I of the Weimar Constitution of 1919, the power of the state (*Staatsgewalt*) derives ‘... vom Volke aus’. The preamble contains these words:

Das Deutsche Volk einig in seinen Stämmen und von dem Willen beseelt, sein Reich in Freiheit und Gerechtigkeit zu erneuern und zu festigen, dem inneren und dem äußeren Frieden zu dienen und den gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt zu fördern, hat sich diese Verfassung gegeben.

On the other hand, the defeat in the War also led to anti-democratic right-wing radicalism which regarded the *Volk* as an indissoluble natural community that transcended the state, the latter being merely an arbitrary association of individuals. Here, of course, can be seen the beginnings of concepts that were to be exploited by the Nazis.

This brief account gives some idea of the complexity surrounding this concept. Gundolf does not appear to be interested in the political sense of *Volk* as the collective citizenry of a democratic state. He uses the word in a cultural sense, that sometimes has overtones of the ethnic and nationalistic. Literary histories were instruments to help create a German national identity in order to catch up with nations like Britain and France (though clearly issues of national identity in all three countries were, and remain, complex and contested). The term *Volk* was used in an attempt to bind the subjects of the numerous principalities together. When Gundolf employs the term, which undoubtedly paved the way to *völkisch* ideology, the reader cannot help being aware of its Nazi connotations, but again,

⁵⁹ See Ritter 9, ‘Volk’, p. 1082 for antisemitic tendencies in German nationalism before 1820, and p. 1083 for later *völkisch* tendencies.

this does not mean that either he or the other members of the *George-Kreis* can be regarded in any uncomplicated way as proto-Nazis.

Gundolf discusses the similarity of the perceived seventeenth-century crisis to that of his own time:

All dies ist ein wesentliches Kennzeichen der Epoche, womit wir uns befassen, und eben dadurch ist sie als Ganzes lehrreich: Keine zweite zeigt uns gewisse Entartungen des Geistes, die uns heute wieder besonders angehen, so mustergültig, zugleich in ihrer Entstehung. Damals beginnen sie. Es ist eine Epoche nicht der grossen selbstgenügsamen Volkheiten oder Persönlichkeiten, sondern eines typischen Prozesses...Die geschichtlichen Grenzen und Wirkungen des Verstandes können wir hier studieren. Die Ratio ist damals die Gottheit selbst. (FGP M12A, pp. 9–10).

In the essay ‘Wesen und Beziehung’ he diagnoses the problem as very much a contemporary one, and does not see it simply as an aesthetic issue.⁶⁰ This will be discussed further in Chapter Four. With a few exceptions, Baroque literature, he believes, is a symptom of a spiritual problem to which it does not offer any solutions. But arguably readers expect literature to explore the nature of such problems, rather than claiming that there is a problem and then offering works of literature as illustrations of it. Gundolf is asking the context to take the responsibility for making judgements of the literature. This is not to say that a feeling for context has no value, but that it is only part of the story.

Victor Manheimer, on the other hand, believed that this literature had affinities of a different kind with that of his own day:

Manheimer’s greatest achievement may well lie in the fact that he treated Gryphius as a living poet. He saw analogies between the literary tendencies to which Gryphius was subject and those of the *fin de siècle* that affected poets like Rimbaud and Verlaine [...] He was striving to achieve a standard of aesthetic criticism that was true to the poet’s text and to his values alike, taking Gryphius “at his word,” as an artist in the context of his age, just as the Symbolists whom Manheimer admired, including Stefan George, wished to be read.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Repr. in Friedrich Gundolf, *Beiträge zur Literatur und Geistesgeschichte*, ed. by Victor A. Schmitz and Fritz Martini (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1980), pp. 150–175.

⁶¹ Metzger and Metzger, *Reading Andreas Gryphius*, p. 100.

In the introduction to his 1904 book on Gryphius, Manheimer claims that ‘hiding behind the monotonous uniform of the Alexandrine are the most varied and in some cases significant individualities’, and that ‘it seems to me that at no other period in two hundred years has the feeling for art been as closely related to the baroque literature of the seventeenth century, which was searching for its own style, as is the feeling for art in our day.’⁶² In striking contrast to Gundolf, Manheimer sees seventeenth-century poetry as searching for its own style, not as taking one at second hand from foreign sources. As well as commenting on the textual problems of nineteenth-century editions of Gryphius, Manheimer provides careful and detailed accounts of Gryphius’s metrics and style. Describing assonance in Gryphius’s verse, he maintains that contemporary German poets such as George and Hofmannsthal have pursued the imitation of French *Klangrösche* to an extreme similar to that of the ‘Nurembergers and Lohenstein in the seventeenth century’, and, identifying *Klangfarbe* in Gryphius’s use of vowels, he mentions Rimbaud’s sonnet ‘Voyelles’, which associates vowels with colours.⁶³

Although, as will be seen, Gundolf’s lecture manuscripts contain a couple of barely legible references to the influence of Grimmelshausen on later novelists who wrote about the Thirty Years’ War, he does not agree with Victor Manheimer’s mainly positive connections between the lyric poetry of the seventeenth century and that of his contemporaries. Apart from Shakespeare (an honorary German), Grimmelshausen, and occasional moments in certain writers, such as Gryphius, Gundolf thought that the seventeenth century was a deviation from the true path of German literature. In Britain, in contrast, T.S. Eliot felt the

⁶² Victor Manheimer, *Die Lyrik des Andreas Gryphius: Studien und Materialien* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904), p. xiii.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 32.

presence of the seventeenth century deeply: the religious community at Little Gidding, the writings of Lancelot Andrewes, the Metaphysical Poets, the work of Jacobean dramatists. Partly this was due to Eliot's Anglo-Catholic religious beliefs, for which he found sustenance in the writers just mentioned. From a secular viewpoint, F.R. Leavis believed that the seventeenth century was crucial to the understanding of the modern world and that literature was key to this understanding; he accordingly proposed making study of the seventeenth century central to the Cambridge English Tripos: '[the seventeenth century] is at one end in direct and substantial continuity with the world of Dante, and it shows us at the other a world that has broken irretrievably with the mediaeval order and committed itself completely to the process leading directly and rapidly to what we live in now.'⁶⁴ Gundolf might have agreed with the second statement. His evaluation of most seventeenth-century German literature, however, was negative. He suggests that there is something uniquely German about the perceived failings of Germany's seventeenth-century literature. He refers to a *Deutscher Fluch*: the pathos of exceptionalism or martyrdom, a unique and troubled destiny. Direct comparisons between English and German literature of the seventeenth century pose problems that will be examined more closely in the next chapter, but the point being made here is that critics in both Britain and Germany felt that the literature of this time posed questions and challenges for their own day.

On pp. 13–14 of FGP file M12A, taking issue with critics who have seen the Thirty Years' War as decisive for the character of seventeenth-century German culture, he writes:

Keinesfalls ist der dreissigjährige Krieg als ein von aussen her zerstörendes Verhängnis für den geistigen Niedergang Deutschlands allein verantwortlich zu machen, wie es gewöhnlich geschieht. Man nimmt hierbei ein Symptom für die Ursache. Der 30jährige Krieg ist nur die politische Seite derselben Krankheit, die den Geist des Deutschtums damals befallen hatte und nur dadurch ist er so grauenvoll

⁶⁴ F.R. Leavis, *Education and the University: A Sketch for an 'English School'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; first published by Chatto and Windus, 1943), pp. 48–58, (p. 48).

geworden, dass er einen bereits faulenden Organismus ergriff – ich kann das in Einzelnen nicht hier ausführen. Nur gegen die Ansicht will ich mich wenden. Wir wollen überhaupt geistige Wendungen nicht durch äussere, politische oder wirtschaftliche Ereignisse erklären. Umgekehrt ist es: selbst die materiellen Zustände sind nur Zeichen oder Folgen gewisser menschlicher Gesinnungen. Die sogen.[annten] “Verhältnisse” werden bestimmt durch das, was die Menschen für Mächte, für Werte oder Unwerte halten, und diese Werte, geistige Inhalte, sind wiederum Ausstrahlungen der Lebenskräfte. Die mögen wir auf Gott oder Natur oder auf irgend ein unergründliches Urwesen zurückführen, das wir Menschen einfach hinnehmen oder tausendfach ausdeuten. Die materiellen ‘Ur=sachen’ sind alles eher als Ur=sachen – es sind die letzten abgeleiteten Niederschläge des von innen heraus wirkenden Geistes.

On the one hand, Gundolf is asking about the underlying causes of the War. That he is attributing them to ‘gewisse menschliche Gesinnungen’ has similarities with Gryphius ascribing the origins of ‘der ungehewre Krieg’ to ‘der zungen macht’ in lines 525–38 of *Leo Armenius* (published 1650). On the other hand, he dismisses an enormously destructive war, with all its terrible human suffering as just ‘the political aspect’, a symptom, of a spiritual disease. This is problematic. It is reminiscent of the lines in Stefan George’s poem *Der Krieg* about the figure of ‘Der Seher’: ‘Was ist IHM mord von hunderttausenden/Vorm mord am leben selbst?’ (lines 30–31). It was an existing underlying spiritual decline that made the war as terrible as it was. He views the aesthetic and spiritual not as an autonomous realm, still less as one that is, in Marxist fashion, determined by social and economic circumstances, but as one which influences or even controls the material and political world and which eclipses the suffering of individuals. The phrase ‘ich kann das in Einzelnen nicht hier ausführen’ may strike the reader as evasive; does he suspect that spending more time on the details would reveal weaknesses in his argument? There is ambiguity and uncertainty here. Is it *Menschen* or *Geist* that is ultimately responsible, ‘certain human attitudes’ or the dynamic ‘emanations of life-forces’? These views may not, however, be as opposed as they first appear. A passage from the essay ‘Vorbilder’ of 1912 which will be discussed shortly, suggests that humans always have priority over ideas. What significance should be attached to ‘einfach hinnehmen

oder tausendfach ausdeuten’? Does it mean that humans understand these processes, or that they do not – either by unthinkingly accepting them or by overinterpreting them? In this passage from the lectures there is a subtle shift of emphasis from individual human agency to the ‘von innen heraus wirkenden Geistes.’ Either way, Gundolf sees history as the advance through time of Great Men and Great Ideas: German history is not just a sequence of things that happened, it is a grandiose *Schicksal*. Gundolf assumes that there is a narrative coherence in history, and that it is waiting to be found and described. He is not concerned about those who are the victims of history, about the suffering or the quality of the lives of ordinary people. Whether this comment can be qualified in Gundolf’s case by admiration for his Grimmelshausen is a question that will be discussed in Chapter Four. Gundolf claims that the intellectual climate caused the War, but without explaining how, or asking whether it might also have caused the Peace of Westphalia and the pursuit of religious tolerance, revealing instead a disregard for suffering and a vague, portentous intellectual disdain. Gundolf sees *Verstand* as an intellectual force, not a social one: it is a mindset that troubles him, not science and technology or political theory. He places this mindset in a historical context, yet he cannot distance himself from it, he finds it troubling, because to him it is still a problem.

It was noted earlier that Gundolf wrote in FGP M12, p. 2, of ‘Eine [...] bewegende Mitte, verkörpert in einer Weltidee wie Reich oder Kirche, oder in einer Weltperson, wie Luther und Goethe.’ That an embodiment of the living spirit, a *Weltidee*, can be either a person or an institution, sits uneasily with his claim that ideas cannot exist independently of people. Embodiment, incarnation, are terms that he constantly returns to (Gadamer argues

that the two words are not interchangeable ⁶⁵). The concept of a unifying spirit or *Weltidee*, embodied in authority figures who may be statesmen as well as artists and thinkers, makes his writings challenging for us today (unlike T.S. Eliot, he did not presuppose the authority of the Church). But Gundolf did not believe that there is a necessary link between great men and their social context; he comments in the lectures that Bach, Leibniz, and Kepler flourished despite what Gundolf sees as the intellectual and spiritual desiccation of their times. He implies that the *Weltidee* is desirable, but not essential, which is presumably how he is able to explain the existence of Grimmelshausen in the seventeenth century and Stefan George in the twentieth. Gundolf's words on the primacy of ideas over economics or politics form a challenge to a particular type of historiography (particularly, though not exclusively, a Marxist one), but as has been seen, he does not develop this argument systematically. Can reason provide a comprehensive account of all human activity, or are there things such as art and religion which stand outside it? Some versions of literary criticism, such as Raymond Williams's cultural materialism and Terry Eagleton's neo-Marxism effectively claim the former. Similarly, Freudian psychoanalysis claims that even the irrational elements of the human mind can be understood by rational investigation.

Gundolf claims that he does not believe that literary works can be explained solely in terms of biographical details; in fact, the artist's life is only of interest in the context of their work:

Darum läßt sich aus der Biographie nie das Werk erklären, erst vom Werk aus gewinnt die Biographie einen Sinn, und das ist das einzige Recht das ihr in der Geistesgeschichte überhaupt zukommt. Uns geht kein Leben an das sich nicht im Werk geäußert und gestaltet hat. ('Hölderlins Archipelagus', p. 6).

⁶⁵ Gadamer, p. 436.

As was seen with the passage on the significance of the Thirty Years' War, Gundolf likes to reverse the logic of the empirical academic discourse of his time. Nonetheless, the Baroque lectures contain long passages of biographical facts that serve to introduce the work of each major author discussed. This may have simply been a matter of academic convention: an account of the life followed by commentary on the work. It will be seen in the last chapter that Gundolf's attempt to relate biographical facts to the work of Lohenstein und Hoffmannswaldau is not particularly convincing. What the students would have used this information for is unclear: Gundolf could have directed them to consult standard biographical reference works if they wished to, rather than relaying the information himself. Gundolf's reduction of seventeenth-century literature to questions of rationalism seems to lead him here to the kind of biographical positivism that he rejects elsewhere.

To bring this chapter to a conclusion, there is a passage on FGP M12A pp. 20–21 that is again worth quoting at length as it illustrates Gundolf's literary and imaginative gifts, while at the same time revealing some of his limitations:

In der Barockzeit wird auch der Stoff selbständig, d.h. unabhängig von der Form, die ihm der Menscheng Geist gibt: der Emancipation des Verstandes entspricht die Anhäufung von Wissensstoff, das formlose Sammlertum und ordnungslose Vielwissertum, die Polyhistorie, deren rechte Blütezeit eben dies Jahrhundert ist. Der Emanzipation der Phantasie und der Sinne entspricht die Barocke Aufschwellung von Dekorationsstoff, das bunte Theater=und Opernwesen, die tollen Modefratzen und die sinnliche Rohheit oder Schlüpfrigkeit, zugleich das unverantwortliche politische Abenteuerium, die Goldmacherei und die ganze entartete Magie an den kleinen Höfen...auch das barocke Hof=, Kirchen= Geistzeremoniell, die Schäferien oder Oden...Erscheinungen wie Wallenstein, wie der Diplomat Alberoni, wie Kaiser Rudolf II, wie Abraham a Sancta Clara, wie der Alchimist Bötticher riechen danach, sie sind nur in dieser Zeit möglich und bezeichnen sie. Auch ist gerade die Zeit der verstofflichten und verhirnlichten Phantasie die Blütezeit der Hexenprozesse... All das gehört innig zusammen.

This is an ambitious attempt to explain the history and society of the seventeenth-century German-speaking countries in terms of an idea: the divorce of the human mind and the material world. The piling-up of images is colourful and gripping as it rushes onward, yet as a

description of the seventeenth century it will not pass any test set by a serious historian today. Though its method may derive ultimately from Jacob Burckhardt's influential book *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* of 1860, it is in effect a series of scenes from a costume drama.⁶⁶ It tries to persuade by means of a swirl of vignettes that is intended to build up a picture of a whole era. As with his account of the Thirty Years' War, Gundolf reduces and suppresses the complex human reality of the 'irresponsible political adventurism' and the witch trials. He is writing neither fully-fledged historical fiction nor actual history (the criticism that he was a hybrid *Wissenschaftler* and *Künstler* will be discussed in the final chapter). The term *Abenteuer* has its roots in the *aventiure* of medieval epic and the episodes of the picaresque novel, and suggests action without thought for its wider implications, but as a description of historical events it has limited value. Although readers may see the concepts of 'formloses Sammlertum' and 'ordnungsloses Vielwissertum' as a disguised critique of the literary culture of his own time, they may also feel that Gundolf the literary historian, the *Geisteswissenschaftler*, has overreached here; his attempt to take over territory from the historian is unconvincing. Signs of this are apparent elsewhere in Gundolf's work, and it is another instance of the uneasy balance of the *Wissenschaftler* and the *Künstler*. In *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, he tries to explain why the English drama of this period is superior to the German:

Auch auf diesem Spezialgebiet werden wir daran erinnert daß England seine damalige Kultur der Renaissance verdankt, Deutschland der Reformation: daß dort der Ritter, der Hof den Ton angab, hier der Prediger, die Kanzel und die Kanzlei: eine der

⁶⁶ See the discussion in Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought*, (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1952), pp. 67–71. Heller asks whether anecdotes related by Burckhardt have 'the romantic flavour of a fanciful dramatization rather than the authentic ring of precise recording' (p. 69), but concedes that if they do not contain reliable facts, they nevertheless reveal 'something more important to [Burckhardt]: the *quality* of the life of the period, or as he would have called it, the *Geist* of the epoch.' (p. 70). Similar comments could be made about Gundolf.

Hauptursachen warum in England eine Blütezeit des Dramas sich ausbilden konnte, in Deutschland nur barbarische und kümmerliche Ansätze blieben.⁶⁷

He argues that the court and chivalry are concerned with lively human interaction, which are essential for the drama. In Germany, the relationship with God had become more important than relations between human beings. This is highly questionable, overlooking the English Reformation and the Puritan movement, implying that the Renaissance had no impact in German speaking lands. And was the English theatre really dominated by chivalry and courtliness? As with the phrase ‘ich kann das in Einzelnen nicht hier ausführen’ noted earlier, writing ‘eine der Hauptursachen’ – implying that there are others but not listing them – is evasive. Reading literature cannot fail to provoke questions about history, society, politics and philosophy, yet we need to bear in mind Stefan Collini’s cautionary view that ‘literary critics are always, by default, second-hand historians, especially when they aspire to be social critics, too; but it is no part of my case that the historical assumptions that can be teased out of their work need necessarily be seen as either consistent or persuasive.’⁶⁸ He is talking about English critics, T.S. Eliot among them, but the comment could be extended to Gundolf. It is easy to dismiss him using our contemporary knowledge, but taking a more charitable view, it could be said that the use of history by literary critics may have a symbolic value, that it may produce genuine insights even if it cannot be seen as convincing in purely historical terms.

Is the real problem with Gundolf that we have left him behind, or is it that we no longer know how to read him? To what extent does Gundolf belong to a different and now largely forgotten and denigrated critical tradition, or does he in fact share some of the

⁶⁷ Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, p. 12. Modern historians will not take for granted the inflexible explanatory framework of terms such as ‘Reformation’ and ‘Renaissance’.

⁶⁸ Stefan Collini, *The Nostalgic Imagination: History in English Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 76.

approaches of critics who are celebrated as belonging to modernity? Or is this a false opposition? To answer these questions, we need to look in more detail at his writing on specific authors.

Chapter Two

Opitz and Lyric Poetry

This chapter will look at Gundolf's writings on seventeenth-century German lyric poetry and contrast them with the views of some other critics writing at the same time (see p. 36 above). This will be combined with further close reading of Gundolf's style and language, in an attempt to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of his approach. His published work on Goethe and on Stefan George will be examined to establish the underpinnings of his views of poetry.

Reflecting the intellectual complexity of the age as well as its wars and social upheavals, Baroque literature deals with themes of mortality, the transience of life and the futility of earthly pursuits, the brutality of the world as well as its beauty, of faith, doubt, and the nature of God; often employing a rich, extravagant style with elaborate metaphors and similes, and a focus on sensory details and the grotesque. 'German Baroque Literature' is a convenient term for describing literature written between the late sixteenth century and the early eighteenth, but it cannot be said that what it all has in common is a style that can easily be labelled 'baroque'. Even 'German' is problematic, as there was much Neo-Latin writing and translation from foreign languages, as well as work originally written in German. The vogue for the term *Barock* at the turn of the twentieth century as a description of a literary style may be in part ascribed to the realisation of the inadequacies of earlier descriptions such as 'first and second Silesian school'. Interest in this literature did not disappear between the seventeenth century and the start of modern *Barockforschung* at the turn of the twentieth, nor was it always purely antiquarian: the German literature of the seventeenth century had had an

afterlife during which its readers were not concerned with whether it conformed to a paradigm of ‘the Baroque’. There is space here only to give a few illustrations of this, but they should be enough to show that *Barockforschung* was not a revival of a totally forgotten literature. Perhaps it is not a surprise that the great rule-giver of eighteenth-century German literature, Johann Christoph Gottsched, should, rightly or wrongly, have considered Opitz a kindred spirit and have delivered a eulogy to him at the University of Leipzig on the centenary of his death in 1739.¹ Though Gundolf invokes Goethe as a measure for describing the perceived inadequacies of the literature of seventeenth century, Goethe in fact seems to have been much more interested in its philosophy. August Wilhelm Schlegel, in his course of lectures *Ueber dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*, which were delivered in 1808 and published in three volumes from 1809 to 1811, was disparaging about the plays of Gryphius and Lohenstein in his account of German drama in lecture XXX.

Yet Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), best known today as the author of lyric poetry set to music by Franz Schubert, edited a multi-volume anthology of seventeenth-century poetry. In the introduction to the Opitz volume, Müller writes that the Germans should pay as much attention to their seventeenth-century poets as the French and the English do to theirs. After praising them as ‘die Schöpfer unsrer Metrik und Prosodie’, he goes on to say:

Abgesehen von dieser geschichtlichen und sprachlichen Wichtigkeit der Dichter des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts, sind viele derselben, namentlich als Lyriker, immer noch unübertroffene, nur von Wenigen unsrer Zeitgenossen erreichte, Muster des ächten deutschen Gesanges, und die Namen eines Flemming, Simon Dach, Andreas Gryphius, Günther u.A.m. verdienen unter den ersten Dichtern unsres Parnasses genannt zu werden.²

¹ *Lob- und Gedächtnisrede auf den Vater der deutschen Dichtkunst, Martin Opitz von Boberfeld* (Leipzig, Breitkopf, 1739). For a discussion of its significance see Klaus Garber, *Martin Opitz – ‘der Vater der deutschen Dichtung’, eine kritische Studie zur Wissensgeschichte der Germanistik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976), pp. 44–54.

² *Bibliothek Deutscher Dichter des 17. Jahrhunderts* ed. by Wilhelm Müller and Karl Förster (Leipzig, F.A. Brockhaus, various dates, c. 1822–c. 1838). Here Vol I, *Opitz*, 1822, pp. ix–x.

While he uses conventional phrases such as ‘true German song’ and ‘Parnassus’, Müller clearly believed that many of these poets could bear comparison with the best of his own day and speak directly to contemporary readers. Ludwig Tieck included Opitz’s *Dafne* in his anthology *Deutsches Theater* (Berlin: 1817). The second volume of Friedrich Schlegel’s *Deutsches Museum* contains a discussion of Opitz by D.H. Hegewisch.³ The Romantic poet and novelist Eichendorff evidently had an extensive knowledge of seventeenth-century literature, though he seems not have had a very high opinion of most of it; using a striking turn of phrase, he makes an exception for Gryphius: ‘in seinen Oden und den berühmten ‘Kirchhofsgedanken’ hat die geächtete Phantasie plötzlich alle Gelehrsamkeit, Schäferei und fade Zierrath von sich geworfen, und steht fast gespenstisch in der steifleinenen Zeit.’⁴ There is something spectral or uncanny about Gryphius’s ability to transcend the conventions of an otherwise ‘strait-laced’ time. These examples show that there were nineteenth-century writers who did not regard the poetry of the seventeenth century as no more than formal exercises under foreign influence. They could see German elements in it, as well as qualities of imagination and feeling that could appeal to modern readers. It could to some extent be accommodated to growing nationalistic and Romantic sentiments. This issue will arise again in the following chapter in connection with Grimmelshausen.

In the later part of the nineteenth century, perceptions of seventeenth-century literature were enhanced by the growing professionalisation of academic German Studies as well as by advances in systematic library cataloguing and bibliography. This led to the

³ See Marian Szyrocki, *Martin Opitz* (Berlin: Rütten und Loening, 1956) p. 212.

⁴ Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, *Geschichte der poetischen Literatur Deutschlands* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1857), p. 176. There is a digitised copy on the Bodleian Library website: the first of two initial pages bears the words ‘FROM THE LIBRARY OF FRIEDRICH GUNDOLF (1880–1931) Professor of German Literature at HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY.’ and Gundolf’s signature is on the second. See [Geschichte der poetischen Literatur Deutschlands \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/) [accessed 5 October 2023].

publication of new scholarly editions such as *Deutsche Dichter des 17. Jahrhunderts* (edited by Karl Goedeke and Julius Tittmann, 1869–1885), *Neudrucke deutscher Literaturwerke des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (edited by Wilhelm Braun, Halle, 1876), and some of the volumes of the series *Deutsche National-Litteratur* that appeared in the 1880s under various editors (volumes 33 and 34, Berlin, 1882, were an edition of Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*).⁵ Gundolf's writing on seventeenth-century German literature had a background that he acknowledges in the introductory section of the lectures with mentions of Goedeke and Tittmann, and later where he mentions that 'Schon der späte Tieck, der Vermittler zwischen Frühromantik und Spätromantik, fand wieder Geschmack an Gryphius und Lohenstein [...] (FGP M13 pp. 435–36)', but does not refer to it in detail. Aside from the context of growing academic interest in this literature and in the concept of the Baroque that was noted in the first chapter, a fuller understanding of his thinking about this literature and about poetry in general can be gained from his work on Goethe and on Stefan George.

Some remarks in Gundolf's huge biography of Goethe form a starting point. He writes that the main issue is not that passion and feeling are absent from the poetry of the time from Opitz to Gottsched, but that living experience is rationalized ('die Rationalisierung alles Lebendigen') (*Goethe*, p.60). It is a question of the way in which experience is depicted. On pp. 140–41 Gundolf writes of Goethe's 'Sesenheimer Lieder', inspired by his love for Friederike Brion. The poems are about Spring, but freed from pastoral conventions; this testifies to a new force in German poetry ('kosmisch' is one of Gundolf's key words):

Frühling als eine kosmische Gewalt, als das morgendliche Erwachen der göttlichen Kräfte das überall Sichtbares hervortreibt und sich verlautbaren, versichtbaren, fühlbar machen muß - das kundgewordne Geheimnis des Schöpfungsprozesses in Mikrokosmos und Makrokosmos. Die Liebe zu Friederike, als die erste Liebe des durch Herder aus dem Rationalismus und aller sonstigen Heteronomie befreiten

⁵ For an account see Lepper, p. 312.

Goethe, hat die Keime seiner kosmischen Lyrik erst zur Reife gebracht und der deutschen Lyrik die ersten vollkommen naturhaften, rein gewachsenen, gar nicht gedachten, sprach- und klanggewordenen Liebes- und Frühlingserlebnisse geschenkt.

This is not to say that feelings of this kind were completely absent from poetry before Goethe. It is rather a question of the way in which they are presented. Part of this is to do with freshness and originality of expression, part with the internal movement of thought and feeling:

Die deutsche Dichtung vor Klopstock ist wohl fähig Vorstellungen, und zwar Vorstellungen aus dem ganzen Bereich des Lebens, d.h. abgezogene, feste und vertauschbare Bilder aus dem Sinnen= oder Begriffe aus dem Geistes=leben, aneinanderzureihen, Beschreibungen oder Sentenzen, Landschafts= oder Seelen= oder Gesellschaftsschilderungen zu geben, aber unfähig Bewegungen und Entwicklungen als solche, Wallungen, Stimmungen, Schwingungen, kurz jede Art Bewegung, in der Bewegung darzustellen.

Charles Rosen notes a similar issue in relation to the serious opera of the later Baroque period:

Dramatic movement was impossible: two phases of the same action could only be statically represented, with a clear division between them. Even a change of sentiment could not take place gradually: there had to be a definite moment when one sentiment stopped and another took over. This reduced the heroic opera of the Baroque to a succession of static scenes, with all the rigid nobility of Racine and little of his extraordinary and supple inner movement.⁶

Gundolf does not find that 'supple inner movement' in German poetry before Klopstock, seeing only an inability to depict 'movements and developments' at all. On page 61 of

Goethe he writes:

War der Gehalt der deutschen Dichtung von Opitz bis zu Klopstock allegorisch, nicht lyrisch - gab sie Vorstellung von Erlebnissen, nicht Erlebnisse, so war sie der Form nach metrisch, nicht rhythmisch. Das Metrum ist das Meßbare, Zählbare, Faßbare, ist

⁶ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*, rev. edn, Faber Paperback, 1976. (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 167. An example of what Rosen means by this can be found in the final speech of the title character in Act V of Racine's *Bérénice*, beginning 'Arrêtez, arrêtez, Princes trop généreux', where Bérénice describes the progression of her feelings from love to despair and then acceptance of Titus's rejection of her because of the demands of Roman politics.

die verstandesmäßig zerlegte, nach Länge und Gewicht eingeteilte Bewegung, der Rhythmus ist diese individuelle, als solche dem Denken nicht zugängliche Bewegung, Wallung, Schwingung selbst, dargestellt im Material der Sprache.

Thoughts on *Rhythmus*, which is a more wide-ranging and complex idea than that of regular poetic metre (*Metrum*), can be found scattered throughout Goethe's own writings.⁷ It is comparable to the idea of 'supple inner movement' that Charles Rosen finds in Racine.⁸ Gundolf opposes 'allegorical' to 'lyrical', not as many others have, to 'symbolic', and is possibly using the word 'allegorical' in a specialized sense: 'allegory' suggests something that needs to be interpreted in order to be properly understood. Gundolf is not concerned here with issues of interpretation, but with the idea that there is a distance between a certain type of language and experience. But even 'lyrical content' must be 'presented in the material of language' and so it is difficult to see how it cannot be accessible at all to thought. Gundolf appears to restrict the meaning of *das Denken* to rational instrumental thinking (a restriction that Heidegger, T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis all resist), and that of 'metre' to metrical analysis (identifying such features as hexameter, pentameter, iamb, trochee, and so on), which can be applied to any poetry, including that of Goethe. These restrictions are questionable and Gundolf does not develop his insight, yet this is a complex and thought-provoking passage, pointing to issues about what it means to understand and appreciate poetry.

He had defined the lyric earlier in the book on Goethe:

In der Lyrik ist die Bewegung, die Schwingung, selbst schon die Gestaltung: d.h. das bewegte Ich bedarf keines anderen Materials, keiner Auseinandersetzung mit fremdem Material, um sich auszudrücken und zu verkörpern als sich selbst. Indem es

⁷ For one account see Charlotte Lee, [Rhythmus \(Rhythm\) | Goethe-Lexicon of Philosophical Concepts \(pitt.edu\)](https://www.pitt.edu/~charlotl/Goethe-Lexicon/Philosophical_Concepts/Rhythmus_(Rhythm).htm) [accessed 4 October 2023].

⁸ Kommerell also made this point in his posthumously published work on Calderón: 'Racine und Goethe gewöhnten uns daran, daß die feinsten inneren Vorgänge zur Öffentlichkeit der Bühne gelangen. Das Mittel dieser Dichter war ein anwachsendes Vermögen, mit der Sprache den seelischen Vorgang nachzuzeichnen. Die sich vielfach im Barock fortsetzende Kunst des Mittelalters, seelische Vorgänge gegenständlich zu machen, scheint uns veraltet.' Max Kommerell, *Die Kunst Calderons* (Frankfurt-a-M: Klostermann, 2nd edn 1974), p. 46.

sich bewegt, gestaltet es sich schon. [...] Der primär chaotische Mensch kann ein großer Symboliker und Allegoriker werden, weil aus dem Ringen eines chaotischen Ich mit fremdem Stoff, aus der heiligen Ehe zwischen Ich und Welt Gestaltung hervorgehen kann: aber gerade beim Lyriker ist ja ein solcher Weg vom Chaos zur Gestalt, welcher das Wesen des künstlerischen Prozesses ist, nicht möglich, es gibt in der Lyrik keine Vermittlung zwischen Ich und Welt, da ja die einzige Welt des Lyrikers sein Ich selbst ist — es gibt keinen Umweg von der Bewegung zur Gestalt, da ja die Bewegung hier selbst schon Sprachgestalt sein muß. (*Goethe* pp. 21–22)

It is notable that he equates *Ringen* and *heilige Ehe* (a term he will use later), but then says that neither of these play a role in the lyric, where there is ‘no mediation between ‘I’ and world’. It seems that neither language itself, poetic form, nor reality outside the self, play any role in lyric poetry: claims that it is difficult to accept at their face value. Gundolf could have improved his argument by giving a specific example of a poem that contains an ‘indirect route from movement to *Gestalt*’ and of one that does not; by demonstrating the distinction rather than just affirming it. As so often, he makes sweeping high-level pronouncements without reference to texts or to the arguments of other critics. If the essence of the artistic process is a journey from order to chaos, how can it not also be present in the lyric? In fairness to him, Gundolf develops his arguments at length. In fact, they show the kind of organic movement and development that he accuses pre-Goethean poetry of lacking, and short quotations risk distorting them. He does mention specific authors and works, but the failure to show how his claims are manifested in specific texts, in concrete examples of the working of language, must be considered as a significant weakness. This is a question which will recur.

The essay ‘Stefan George in unsrer Zeit’ deepens our understanding of Gundolf’s style, rhetorical strategies, and views on poetry.⁹ A connection with his work on

⁹ ‘Stefan George in unsrer Zeit’, Göttingen, 15 December 1913. Published in *Dichter und Helden*, pp. 59–79; page references are to this edition.

seventeenth-century literature is found in the passage in the lectures where he states that what distinguishes the best poets is not ‘das virtuose Können’ but ‘das ächte Sein’ (FGP M12A p. 12). ‘Das Zeichen gesamt menschlicher Kultur auf der höchsten Stufe ist die allseitige Ausdruckskraft des Geistes in der Sprache, die der eigentliche Lebenssaft, das Blut des Geistes ist.’ (FGP M12A p.13). The image of language as ‘the blood of the spirit’ is vivid and unsettling, and the word *Blut* will reappear in the discussion of George. Indeed, he begins the essay by saying:

In jedem Menschen kreuzen sich die Natur und die Zeit, Blut und Geist, Eigenschaften und Eindrücke [...] Das Sein, das Wesen eines Menschen, seine Natur, ist aber mehr und tiefer als seine Geschichte, oder vielmehr als Ausfluß, als Anwendung dieser seiner Natur kann seine Geschichte verstanden werden.’ (p. 59)

Of course, *Sein*, *Blut*, and *Volk* were catchwords of the time and even though Gundolf in some ways opposes the spirit of his age, he is still immersed in its terminology, some of which is related to the *Lebensphilosophie* which was inspired by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and is associated with, among others, Wilhelm Dilthey. The language of literary criticism constantly changes, with later readers always finding peculiarities in that of earlier generations, but the difficulty that words such as *Blut* and *Volk* pose now was noted in Chapter One. The richness of vocabulary and the complexities of metaphor are striking in this passage. Gundolf takes a statement – ‘Die Geschichte eines Menschen kann als Anwendung seiner Natur verstanden werden’ – and reshapes it into a sentence which uses the rhetorical devices of repetition and parallelism to extend and deepen its meaning. As often with Gundolf, the reader may ask whether the use of parallel terms such as ‘Sein...Wesen’ and ‘Ausfluß...Anwendung’ enhances the meaning or makes it more elusive. He follows this with a simpler statement, which repeats the word ‘Natur’ but replaces ‘Geschichte’ with ‘Zeit’:

‘Erst aus der Anschauung seiner Natur kann seine Beziehung zur Zeit begriffen werden, nicht umgekehrt’. This shorter sentence brings a moment of rest from the development of the argument, a chance for the reader to stop and reflect. Then he continues:

An einem Punkt müssen wir, wie weit wir auch von Ursache zu Ursache schreiten mögen, halt machen, und einfach schauen, einfach erleben, einfach hinnehmen, ohne weiter zu erklären: dieser Punkt ist die wesenhafte (göttliche oder natürliche) Grundform des Menschen, sein So-und-nicht-anders Sein, sein wirkendes Selbst, unabhängig von seinen Beziehungen zum Stoff den er vorfindet und von den Spiegeln in die er fällt.

The phrases without conjunctions amplify each other. There is an image of someone walking along then pausing, looking, experiencing, accepting someone’s ‘basic essence’. By putting ‘göttliche oder natürliche’ in brackets he seems to be evading a large philosophical and theological question, but is perhaps alluding to Spinoza’s *deus sive natura*¹⁰. The choice of verb in ‘von den Spiegeln in die er fällt’ is unusual, suggesting an involuntary movement. He contrasts verbs denoting physical action (*schreiten, schauen, fallen*) with verbs denoting mental actions (*erleben, hinnehmen, erklären*). What he is proposing is that every human being has an irreducible basic essence which is separate from time and space, from social relationships and obligations: this may be divine, or it may be natural. ‘Was Stefan George in sich für eine Natur ist und was eine solche Natur in unsrer Zeit bedeuten kann, davon will ich sprechen, nicht mit unbeteiligter Objektivität, aber mit der Sachlichkeit eines Glaubens der auf Anschauung beruht’ (p. 60). The repetition of *Natur* and the placing of ‘davon will ich sprechen’ for emphasis is notable, as is the fact that Gundolf uses the word *aber* to make the contrast rather than the starker *sondern*. Instead of repeating the Latin-derived *Objektivität* or using a pronoun, he transforms it into the German *Sachlichkeit*. There are two kinds of

¹⁰ Gundolf refers to Goethe’s gratitude for Spinoza’s insight ‘daß die Welt selbst göttlicher Natur sei’, although he goes on to say that Goethe’s pantheism was *vitalistisch* whereas Spinoza’s was *mechanistisch*. *Goethe*, pp. 269–70.

objectivity, he seems to be saying, one is a kind of faith based on perception, the other is impartial. This is another paradox: the essence of a great poet and the nature of God can only be discussed in mystical ways; the language of reason cannot do them justice, though it seems they can be apodictically affirmed. As has been seen elsewhere there is either a subtlety, or an evasiveness, of expression here, and there are difficulties in translating it into English.

On page 61 he employs scientific similes, as he did with the image of the *Naturforscher* in the Baroque lectures:

Denn wir erleben nichts aus der Vergangenheit, was die Vergangenheit uns vorenthält: auch Homer und Shakespeare verstehen wir solange nur psychologisch, bis uns ein Zeitgenosse kosmische Dichtung erneuert hat. (Das Psychologische verhält sich zum Kosmischen wie das Seismogramm zum Erdbeben, wie die Landkarte zur Landschaft, wie der Barometerstand zum Wetter).¹¹

In the rush of adulation for George, Gundolf's argument loses some of its coherence and his similes do not necessarily help him. Agency is ascribed to *Vergangenheit*, it somehow actively withholds things from us, yet how it can do so is not clear. This tendency to hypostatisation occurs elsewhere in Gundolf's thought. The operations of the human mind, Gundolf says, reduce reality to a secondary, stylized depiction which is at a distance from the truth. We are helpless to understand that truth until an individual genius has unlocked it for us. While he is clearly trying to distinguish between art and science and is rejecting scientific reductionism of the human condition, it escapes him that no-one is in danger of confusing the operations of scientific devices with the phenomena that they record, that such devices reflect the ingenuity of the human mind rather than its limitations, that they help humanity to keep

¹¹ The passage in *Goethe* (p. 61) mentioned above, about the difference between *Metrum and Rhythmus*, uses the same kind of comparison: 'Das Metrum verhält sich zum Rhythmus wie ein Seismogramm zum Erdbeben, wie das Thermometer zur Temperatur, der Barometerstand zur Witterung, die Landkarte zur Landschaft: kurz, wie die begrifflichen Mittel zur Feststellung eines Zustandes oder einer Bewegung zu diesem Zustand oder dieser Bewegung selbst.' Again, Gundolf raises questions of the philosophy of perception and the relation of language to the world that he does not develop.

safe in a treacherous world, not to mask its reality. If taken at face value, the implied belittling of science is unconvincing and does not reinforce his denigration of the ‘psychological’. His comparison reveals the linguistic pitfalls that await those who try to discuss these subtle and complex issues.

Elsewhere on page 61 Gundolf describes how George stands apart from the other currents of thought of his time: ‘Darin sehe ich Georges Gegensatz gegen die moderne Denkart und seine dichterische Tiefe, daß er noch die Sprachwerdung kosmischer Wesenheiten unmittelbar erfährt, nicht bloß Beziehungen des Ichs zur Zeit oder Spiegelungen der Zeit im Ich.’ He does not mention *writing*, only *experiencing*; the *Sprachwerdung* is an impersonal or extra-personal process. The nature of these ‘kosmische Wesenheiten’ is unclear, though it is plain that Gundolf rejects the modern individualistic ego. There is a hint of Heidegger here in the rejection of mind/body dualism in favour of a deeper unitary experience unveiled in language. He names as false and superficial:

‘Technik...Kapitalismus... Rationalismus...Sozialismus...’ and their deceitful countercurrents ‘Romantik und Individualismus’ (p. 63). ‘Unabhängig von ihnen ist nicht wer sie beklagt, sondern außerhalb ihrer wurzelnd eigenes Leben gestaltet.’ It is not enough to bemoan these things; the task is to form a life rooted outside them. ‘Wurzelnd eigenes Leben’ is another phrase that some readers will take as showing poetic density of thought, others as vagueness, while *gestaltet* reminds us of the centrality of the term *Gestalt* in the thinking of the *George-Kreis*. *Leben*, as we have seen, is another of Gundolf’s key, irreducible concepts. It is found in other contemporary writers: in philosophical vitalism (notably Henri Bergson’s *élan vital*) and *Lebensphilosophie*, in ‘life’ as used by F.R. Leavis and by D.H. Lawrence. He goes on to claim of George: ‘Für einige ist er heute die Bürgschaft daß die abgeleitete Fortschrittswelt nicht ‘das Leben’ bleiben muß, daß der Mensch, erfüllt mit weltanschaffender Kraft, auch uns Heutigen, Allzuheutigen das Maß der Dinge bleiben

darf' (p. 64). He alludes here of course to Nietzsche's title *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* and to Protagoras's saying 'man is the measure of all things'. The creative power of the great artist restores true human values in the face of a vaguely defined 'derived world of progress'. A footnote glosses 'Mensch': 'das heißt nicht der subjektive Herr Soundso, nicht die Menschheit, nicht der internationale Affe, nicht die intersoziale Ameise oder Drohne, sondern ein objektives gestalthaftes Gesetz.' This scornful comparison of contemporary humanity to apes and insects goes beyond disdain for mass culture and invites the reply that each one of us is in fact a Herr or Frau Soundso, precisely a 'So-und-nicht-anders-Sein' of the earlier passage. For Gundolf, though, this uniqueness is reserved for an elite.¹² And the phrase 'objektives gestalthaftes Gesetz' will not stand up to close examination: it implies something solid, fixed, incontestable. Such an abrupt summing-up of human nature leaves a great deal to dispute and discuss.

He writes: 'In der Dichtung wie in der Religion, gilt nur das Wort das Fleisch wird' (p. 65). There is an echo of John 1.14–15 here, and a clearly hyperbolic implication that Gundolf is John the Baptist to George's Christ: the prophet of a saviour figure. The statement that 'only the Word that becomes flesh' is valid or valuable seems to say that only the poet is a true human being, a claim that arouses the same uneasiness in the reader as did the phrase *intersoziale Ameise*. He continues:

[Die Sprache] ist die Substanz der menschlichen Seele selbst, sie ist im geistigen was im Leiblichen das Blut ist, und Sprachkraft ist die Zeugungskraft der Seele. Dies Blut der deutschen Seele zu reinigen, zur Zeugung echter Geschöpfe fähiger zu machen, das war Georges dringlichster Wille...' (p. 66).

¹² '[...] to describe others as a 'mass' is itself a symptom of alienation on the part of the observer. There are, in fact, no masses, simply ways of seeing people as masses.' Terry Eagleton, *Critical Revolutionaries: Five Critics Who Changed the Way We Read* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022), p. 276.

A reference to metaphorical ‘blood’ occurred earlier, and to the modern reader this again has unfortunate overtones of eugenics, but again there is no reason to think that George or Gundolf subscribed in any simple sense to views of Aryan racial superiority. He turns George’s cultivation of oblique poetic expression into something that purifies the ‘blood of the German soul’ (inviting the question of what ‘impurity’ of this blood would be). This reminds us initially of Eliot’s ‘to purify the dialect of the tribe’ in *Four Quartets* and Mallarmé’s ‘donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu’ in *Le Tombeau d’Edgar Poe*, yet Gundolf adds the concept of ‘blood’, which has connotations that are at once vitalist, racial and Christian. One thing in these nebulous and portentous sentences is clear: this is not a programme of educational reform. Rather Gundolf envisages some kind of general cultural rebirth:

Sprachschöpfung setzt die Wiedergeburt der Seele voraus. Darum sind alle religiösen Genien Sprachschöpfer gewesen, und alle Sprachschöpfung, auch die nicht geradezu religiösem Trieb entstammt, trägt den Charakter der Weihe. Der Vers, das eigentliche Symbol der Dichtung, ist liturgisch und magisch, und nur dem Litteraten wird er zufälliger Redeschmuck. (p. 66).

Gundolf denigrates the idea of the craft of the poet, the ‘maker’, the mere ‘Litterat’, in favour of the belief that poetry is the welling up of inner forces, and that it has the characteristics of religion, liturgy and magic. Versions of this claims are of course not new: they can be found in Sidney’s *Apology for Poetry* (1580) and Shelley’s *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), among others. But what is new here is the influence of vitalism and *Lebensphilosophie*, the rejection of mechanistic and positivistic explanatory methods in favour of life-affirming forces that moreover could be explained only from within life itself. Similar currents of thought were seen earlier in connection with account in *Ritter* of the idea of *Erlebnis* at the beginning of the twentieth century.

As was seen in Chapter One, throughout the Baroque lectures and the books, Martin Opitz and his book *Von der deutschen Poeterey* (1624), which stands in the same line of

Renaissance defences of poetry as Sidney's book, are invoked to suggest the dominance of ideas and poetic rules derived from the classics and from contemporary non-German literature. These are the realm of literary dilettantes, not of the *Sprachschöpfer*, those who creatively reforge language. He acknowledges that Opitz subscribes to the view that *poeta nascitur, non fit* (a phrase of uncertain age and provenance) but qualifies the force of Opitz's argument by pointing out that this idea itself is a *topos*. Gundolf saw this many years before the critics of our own time.¹³ The Baroque poet is not a true *Sprachschöpfer* in Gundolf's view:

Er verwahrt sich aber dagegen, durch Regeln einen zum Poeten machen zu können. Die Praxis sei vor der Theorie dagewesen und die Poesie, laut Plato, göttliche Eingebung. Dieser Satz, der die ganze Regelnpoesie hätte aufheben können, ist weniger eine tiefe Überzeugung als eine gelehrte Anführung Opitzens, eine Lehrmeinung aus Plato... (FGP M12 p. 71)

And then, in telling the story of Opitz's life, he writes that 'Sein poetischer Gehalt stammt nicht aus Herzenerlebnissen und Seelenschicksalen, sondern aus litterarischen Anregungen durch Reisen, Bekanntschaften, und auch hier nehmen die Bücher, das abgezogenste, rationell fasslichste Medium des Wissens, die erste Stelle ein...' (FGP M12, p. 17). In the printed book (p. 5), 'nicht' is replaced by 'weniger', and the phrase 'auch hier nehmen die Bücher, das abgezogenste, rationell fasslichste Medium des Wissens' by 'auch hierbei sind Bücher, die abgezogenste Erfahrung, am fruchtbarsten.' There is some toning down here: 'less' from the experiences of the heart and soul rather than 'not'; books still deliver abstract

¹³ A modern scholar makes way the same point in a more laboured way: 'The autonomy of the vernacular poet is signalled in the *Poeterey* by references to two constellations: the first, the German poet's 'natural talent', his innate imaginative creativity independent of the *ars imitativa*, and the second, the vernacular poet's heightened susceptibility to the *furor poeticus*, or poetic inspiration. These two gestures in the direction of independence from tradition are of course themselves traditional *topoi*. Thus the very appeal to independence is itself a citation from the past.' Jane O. Newman, 'Marriages of Convenience: Patterns of Alliance in Heidelberg Politics and Opitz's Poetics.' *MLN* 100, no. 3, (1985), <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2905530>> pp. 537–76 [accessed 4 October 2023].

experience but not necessarily the most rationally graspable. These are not huge changes, but again they show that Gundolf was willing to refine and qualify his thought. Books, Gundolf says, deliver remote or abstract experience, as contrasted with the true experience found in the heart. The same point, expressed somewhat differently, is found in *Andreas Gryphius*, (p. 17): ‘Gryphius ist nun nicht deswegen stoffreicher, weil er mehr gelesen hat, sondern weil er mehr gelitten hat und seine allgemeinen Themata, vor allem das Memento mori und die vanitas vanitatum, aus eigener Anschauung füllen wollte.’ This disparaging and limited view of books – to many readers, as well as authors, books themselves have been *Herzenerlebnisse* – may be less surprising when we remember the letter to Ernst Robert Curtius of 28 April 1913 quoted in Chapter One, in which Gundolf wrote of his ‘Hass gegen die Bücher’. It also reminds us of Gundolf’s indifference to the destruction of the University of Leuven library, a topic that will be explored in Chapter Five.

The difference in meaning between *Erlebnis*, as in *Herzenerlebnisse*, and *Erfahrung*, as in ‘die abgezogenste Erfahrung’, needs further explanation in English: *Erlebnis* suggests something lived and felt, *Erfahrung* has more the sense of knowledge that is acquired. Yet it is not sterile, it can also be *am fruchtbarsten*, Gundolf claims in his comment on Opitz. Indeed in his summing-up of Opitz, Gundolf attributes to him a remarkable achievement: the ‘salvation’ of Germany, not just its literature, from ‘total brutalisation and paralysis’. He is referring to Opitz’s achievements in both religious and occasional poetry:

Zum geistlichen Lied gehört das Anlaßgedicht übrigens als Gegenstück und beiden half derselbe Zustand zur Blüte: die Emanzipation des inneren und äußeren Privatlebens. Indem Opitz auch für diesen Zustand die lernbaren Regeln und die wirksamen Muster gab, hat er vielleicht das damalige Deutschland vor der völligen Verrohung und Erstarrung gerettet: denn bloße Mystik kann das nicht. Vielleicht liegt sein Verdienst weniger in dem was er geschaffen als was er verhütet: die Flucht deutschen Geistes aus der europäischen Bildung. Er hat eine Brücke gebaut zwischen Petrarca und Goethe über den von Luther gerissenen Abgrund hinweg (*Martin Opitz*, p. 52).

Luther was responsible for the chaos of Protestant individualism, yet Opitz enabled the German spirit to stay within the mainstream of European culture (though there is some ambiguity in the phrase ‘die Flucht deutschen Geistes aus der europäischen Bildung’: was it Germany or the rest of Europe that benefited from the prevention of its flight?). And this was at least in part due to Opitz’s use of rules and patterns – to rationality, in fact. What should be the concern here is less the accuracy of Gundolf’s historical-critical judgements of the seventeenth century – inevitably the judgement of later critics and historians will be different – but the significance of his views for the situation in his own time. Gundolf sees Opitz’s life-story as one typical of the age:

nicht gelenkt durch einen Dämon der Unruhe oder Sehnsucht, durch den sittlichen Willen oder das geistige Streben (auch wenn sie ein solches hatten), durch Pflicht, Leidenschaft, Ideal, Gesetz oder Sitte, wie die sinnbildlichen Lebensläufe unserer Minnesänger, Humanisten, Reformatoren, Klassiker oder Romantiker, sondern durch das Verlangen nach nutz- und ehrbringender Gelehrsamkeit und nach leidlichem Fortkommen, mit Hilfe von Verbindungen und Gönnern. Es ist ein heteronomes Leben, beherrscht von äußeren Zwecken, Gelegenheiten, Zufällen (*Martin Opitz*, p. 6).¹⁴

Besides noting that Gundolf is again not suggesting that the people of the seventeenth century did not possess the inner qualities that he values, the reader may question whether Gundolf is being consistent in applying his idea that the life is always to be explained in terms of the work, not *vice versa*. The seventeenth century is an aberration: the Minnesänger, Luther and Goethe have more in common than do any of them with Opitz. He continues:

‘Abenteurertum, das ist der Charakter der damaligen Schriftsteller wie der damaligen Fürsten, Staatsmänner und Feldherren, ja von den Staaten selbst.’ The dominant characteristics of the time were *Verstand* and *Abenteuertum*, though they are not directly

¹⁴ The MS FGP M12 p. 19 has a few differences: in particular, the book changes the adjectives in the phrases ‘die typischen Lebensläufe’, and ‘nach äusseren Fortkommen’ to the more vivid ‘sinnbildlichen’ and ‘leidlichen’.

compared in this passage. What then did they have in common? Gundolf distinguishes the *Abenteuertum* of the seventeenth century from the literary ‘halbdunkleres Schweifens in die Ferne, Gralsfahrt und Wundersuche’ of earlier times, calling it instead ‘unverantwortliche Stellensuche der Privatperson.’ As the former spiritual unities of Empire, Church and social rank had disintegrated, but modern political and social bonds (*Verbände*) had not yet developed, there arose the ‘freier Beruf’, ‘der in seinen Anfängen weder innerer Berufung noch behördliche Anstellung noch geregelte Zunftübung ist, sondern unverbindliche Wahl des Wirkungskreises nach Nutzen und Bedürfnis.’ (FGP M12 pp. 19–20). Once again, the thinking here is reminiscent of that of Max Weber: the process that Gundolf describes can be understood as part of a transition to a rationalised, bureaucratized modern society. Whilst *Abenteuertum* appears to be an anti-Weberian concept, Gundolf here links the *Abenteuertum* of the seventeenth century to the rise of the modern idea of the professions; both are essentially rootless. Gundolf continues with his description of *Abenteurer*:

[...] sie haben weniger eine Aufgabe als sie eine suchen, und die sie suchen ist fast zufällig, ohne wesentlichen Grund in ihrer eignen Seele...[Daher die tiefe unfruchtbarkeit selbst so grosser Genies wie Wallenstein: es fehlt der $\text{\iota\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma \gamma\alpha\mu\omicron\varsigma}$ zwischen Daimon und Tyche, zwischen Eros und Ananke...] (FGP M12, p. 20)¹⁵

In Greek myth, notably at Iliad XIV, 330–60, the marriage of Hera and Zeus serves as the model for the festival of the Theogamia or *hieros gamos*.¹⁶ The sacred marriage of Daimon and Fortuna, Eros and *Necessitas* is lacking in the world of the *Abenteurer*. This, it seems, is another instance of the lack of *Kairos*: the events of people’s lives are random, having no essential basis in their souls. This passage appears to refer to Goethe’s poem ‘Urworte. Orphisch’ of 1817, which glosses *Tyche* as *Das Zufällige*, the other key words in it being

¹⁵ Possibly an echo of ‘Was fruchtbar ist, allein ist wahr.’, from Goethe’s poem *Vermächtnis* of 1829. The square brackets enclosing ‘Daher...Ananke’ are in the MS.

¹⁶ Book 14, 413–21 in the English translation by Robert Fagles (Penguin Books, 1998).

Daimon/Dämon, Eros/Liebe, Ananke/Nötigung, and Elpis/Hoffnung. According to the *Goethe-Handbuch* (Vol. 1, p. 358), Goethe did not necessarily understand *Daimon* as a divine madness or frenzy (*furor poeticus*), but as entelechy, the development of existing potential. The figure whom Gundolf may have had in mind as embodying the ‘sacred marriage’ is Caesar, a constant preoccupation of his and the subject of two of his books.¹⁷ Yet it has been pointed out that the theme of the *unio mystica* in the form of a spiritual marriage with the wounded Christ is found in Angelus Silesius and other mystical poets.¹⁸ As the lectures break off in the middle of a discussion of Angelus Silesius, it is possible that Gundolf simply did not have time to think and write about this more extensively.

Opitz claims that ‘Die Poeterey ist anfanges nichts anders gewesen als eine verborgene Theologie und unterricht von Göttlichen sachen.’ (p. 14). This is a familiar Renaissance *topos*, found for example in Petrarch’s *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus* X.4 (c. 1359), Ronsard’s *Abrégé de l’Art Poétique François* (1565), and, as was noted, Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Defence of Poetrie* (c. 1580, published 1595).¹⁹ Gundolf quotes this sentence on FGP M12 p. 72 and goes on to say that, in a passage that reveals much about his poetics and thought:

Poetische Bilder bedeuten nichts ausser ihnen selbst, sie sind eine Wirklichkeit in der Wirklichkeit, sie beziehen sich auf nichts, sie sind, sie ahmen nicht nach, sie stellen dar. Aber der ganze Rationalismus lebte freilich davon, dass alles bloss Bildhafte, Gestaltige, Sinnliche sich auflösen liess in Begriffliches, Gedachtes, Zweckmässiges. Aus dieser Auffassung der Dichtkunst als eines Unterrichts von göttlichen Dingen ergibt sich die Auffassung der ersten Dichter Orpheus, Eumolp, Linus, Musaeus, Homer, Hesiod usw: sie gelten als ‘die ersten Väter der Weisheit und aller guten Ordnung, die die bäurischen und fast viehischen Menschen zu einem höflicheren und besseren Leben anwiesen.’ [...] Poesie ist eine Form der Belehrung und Wissenschaft,

¹⁷ Gundolf, *Caesar in der deutschen Literatur*. Palaestra 33, (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1904); *Caesar, Geschichte seines Ruhms* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1924).

¹⁸ Joseph B. Dallett, ‘The Mystical Quest for God’, in *German Baroque Literature: The European Perspective*, ed. by Gerhart Hoffmeister (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), pp. 270–91 (p. 281).

¹⁹ See Opitz, *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* ed. by Herbert Jaumann, editorial note on p. 128, for a brief treatment of this issue.

nicht bloss Spiel und Ergötzung. Damit wird die Poesie grundsätzlich gerechtfertigt vor dem Geist des Zeitalters, für den nichts Geltung hatte als Vernunft und Zweck

Presumably the first sentence is to be taken as Gundolf's own view of poetry, rather than as a paraphrase of Opitz's, though this is not clear at a first reading. The claim is that rationalism demands that the figurative and the sensual are reduced to the practical and the conceptual. Therefore, seventeenth-century poets were required to justify themselves in terms of their usefulness, whether that consists of imparting moral doctrine or of celebrating public events. There is a symbiosis between 'verborgene Theologie' and 'Rationalismus'. This makes sense of Gundolf's claim that the Renaissance idea that poetry is 'vnterricht von Göttlichen sachen', 'links poetry to theology, the ruling science of those days'. Otherwise his statement that theology was the dominant field of knowledge of the time sits rather oddly with his belief that it was in fact natural science that had filled the gap left by the disappearance of the authority of the universal church. The religious language that he uses in his writing on George shows no sign that he wished to personally submit to the 'Bindung der Kirche'. Yet the need for authority, in the shape of George himself, is still there.

Opitz defends love poets against the charge of immorality:

Man kan jhnen auch deßentwegen wol jhre einbildungen lassen / und ein wenig vbersehen / weil die liebe gleichsam der wetzstein ist an dem sie jhren subtilen Verstand scherffen / vund niemals mehr sinnreiche gedancken und einfälle haben / als wann sie von jhrer Buhlschafften Himlischen schöne / jugend / freunlichkeit / haß unnd gunst reden (p. 21).

This is a striking phrase: love is a 'whetstone' that gives rise to 'ingenious thoughts and ideas'. Gundolf quotes this phrase (FGP M12 p. 75) but does not comment on Opitz's use of the word *Verstand* or the adjective *subtil*, thus silently acknowledging, or not noticing, that the semantic range of *Verstand* in the seventeenth century is not as narrow as he claims elsewhere. *Subtil* may equate to the English words 'sophisticated' and 'ingenious', among others, pointing to a further range of meaning.

On FGP M12 pp. 35–36 Gundolf continues by relating that the universal church and empire disintegrated, Latin lost ground as an international language, new national states formed, and human beings claimed possession of ‘dieser neugesehenen, eroberten, erweiterten, sinnlich gewichtiger und wertvoller gewordenen Erde’ (it is most likely from the context that in using the word *erobert* Gundolf is referring to the acquisition of new mental states and attitudes, not to the colonisation of non-European countries). He chooses a striking, indeed horrific, simile from the natural world to describe this process. ‘Unter der Scheinhülle von Welt=ordnungen entwickelte sich das rege Gewimmel der Besonderheiten wie unter der noch immer prallen bunten Haut einer grossen Raupe das Gewimmel der Schlupfwespenmaden von denen sie schon ausgehöhlt und aufgefressen ist.’ The new forces are compared to parasitic creatures that devour and kill their host. This is so reminiscent of a passage in one of Charles Darwin’s letters that it is difficult to believe that it is a coincidence: ‘I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidæ with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars [...].’²⁰ Gundolf may have seen this in German translation.²¹ On the other hand, he may have come across the quote at second hand, so it is not possible to reach any conclusions about his knowledge of Darwin or the latter’s influence on his thought as a whole, but it obviously struck a chord with him. There is also a resemblance to Jakob Burckhardt’s lecture ‘Die geschichtlichen Krisen’ of 1870, which describes how civilisations have repeatedly been disrupted by crises.²² Gundolf’s words suggest a nostalgia for an

²⁰ Letter to Asa Gray, 22 May 1860. Darwin Correspondence Project, “Letter no. 2814,”], <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-2814.xml> [accessed 28 November 2023].

²¹ *Leben und Briefe von Charles Darwin*, trans. by J Victor Carus, 3 vols (Stuttgart: 1887). The letter to Gray is on pp. 302–04 of vol. 2.

²² Jakob Burckhardt, ‘Die geschichtlichen Krisen’, in *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, ed. by Jakob Oeri (Berlin and Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1905), pp. 160–209.

imagined lost unified civilization of Catholic Church and Holy Roman Empire, destroyed by the predatory forces of modern individualism that Protestantism, as he saw it, had unleashed. How this critique of individualism harmonises with his veneration of individual *Erlebnis* as the motive force of true art is not clear: it is one of the unresolved issues in Gundolf's work. In his descriptions of the development of historical, intellectual, and artistic movements Gundolf constantly uses metaphors of struggle, development, holding back, adaptation, unification and reconciliation. It is tempting to call this 'organic development'. Certainly, he sees a teleological process at work here; history develops in a comprehensible way. If this is indeed to any degree influenced by Darwin then there is a misunderstanding of natural selection, which in Darwin's view is random, but Gundolf was of course not alone in this misunderstanding.

The lecture continues: 'Hier traf also das geistesgeschichtliche Problem im fruchtbaren Augenblick den 'Werkführer' (um Hegelisch zu reden) der durch seine persönlichen Anlagen und Bedürfnisse dafür empfänglich war: das war Opitz.' (FGP M12 p. 39). Here as elsewhere Opitz is the 'man of the moment', of *Kairos*, but of a lesser order than Shakespeare or Kepler. Again, the reader is asked to observe the working out of impersonal or suprahuman processes, but here embodied in an individual, and this is also seen in Gundolf's hero-worship of Stefan George. Opitz, it seems, is not an *Abenteurer*, not someone one whose life is merely *zufällig*. Though some of his predecessors possessed some of them to greater or lesser degrees (Paul Rebhun is mentioned as an example), Opitz was the only writer who had all the qualities necessary to carry out what Gundolf calls 'die Nationalisierung des Humanismus', which would make a new German poetry out of classical forms and images: apart from personal ambition to create a new path, he possessed general erudition, mastery of both German and the Western classical languages, an adherence to humanistic rather than purely theological values, and familiarity with contemporary European

culture. There is a tension, though not necessarily a contradiction, here between the fact that humanism is pan-European, yet making it national is to be praised.

Yet theology and religion are not to be set aside completely. Jumping across centuries and countries, Gundolf links Dante, Pascal, Bossuet, and Shakespeare, claiming that all have in common a religious sensibility. This is another passage that merits quotation at length:

[...] überall war es eine Sache der Religion, oder der Leidenschaft gerade auch das gegebne Erden= und Zeitleben in Bild und Wort in ‘Mythos’ das h. bildhaltiges bildschaffendes Wort zu bannen und das Jenseits im farbigen Abglanz hier schon zu fassen. Nur in Deutschland hielt man es aus, Seelenheil, Gottesreich und Körperwelt neben= oder gar auseinander laufen zu lassen und sich bestenfalls mit einer lockeren Verknüpfung der Bildungselemente zu vergnügen, deren Verschmelzung, Anverwandlung, Einverleibung bei den Nachfahren des Imperium Romanum Lebenstrieb war. Man hat das wohl als Tiefe gerühmt gegenüber der romanischen Oberflächlichkeit, und man mag aus der Not eine Tugend machen. Sicher hat diese Tugend uns auch wieder Not um Not gebracht, indem sie die deutsche Bildung, (das Wort im dichtesten plastischen Sinn genommen) die deutsche ‘Kultur’ verzögert und verspätet hat innerhalb der neueren europäischen, welche eben auf der ‘Ein=verleibung’ christlicher, antikischer und nationaler Elemente beruht und nicht bloss auf ihrer ‘Auseinandersetzung’ (wie tiefsinnig ist die Sprache!): darin haben wir Deutschen es allerdings am weitesten gebracht. Um dieser Tugend der Tiefe willen haben wir immer wieder von neu anfangen müssen, statt uns einer tragkräftigen Tradition mit Freude am Dasein zu bedienen, und als bei uns spät der wirkliche Synthetiker erstand, Goethe ausser genialen Auseinandersettern wie Luther und Kant, oder erhabenen Überschwingern wie Bach und Beethoven, da waren Geist und Masse, Gebildete und Volk schon zuweit auseinandergedrungen, um noch einheitlich durchseelt zu werden: unsere Führer blieben verglichen mit denen anderer Völker, immer etwas ex=centrisch. (FGP M12 pp. 37–38).

Again, Gundolf’s language here is compact and complex and invites explication and interpretation (as ‘wie tiefsinnig ist die Sprache!’ suggests). Germany practises *Auseinandersetzung*, ‘dispute’ or ‘argument’; the rest of Europe *Einverleibung* (‘embodiment’ again). The concern with the ‘Nachfahren des Imperium Romanum’ was something that may have derived from Stefan George. The meaning of the phrase is not clear: was he referring to the Roman Catholic Church or to the Holy Roman Empire, both of which were mentioned above? George saw certain eras of the Holy Roman Empire as a ‘cultural zenith’, and the collapse of it had led to the modern German Prussian-led state, which he

detested.²³ The ‘successors of the Roman Empire’ were able to ‘fuse, transform and embody’ ‘spiritual welfare, the kingdom of God and the physical (bodily) world. *Seelenheil* may mean ‘salvation’ in a doctrinal sense, or spiritual well-being more broadly conceived. This passage reveals another version of the *deutscher Fluch*: Germany embarked on a path in which these elements were separated or only loosely associated, and yet this was celebrated as ‘depth’. Again, Germans ‘separate’, other Europeans ‘unite’, though Goethe was the ‘genuine synthesizer’. ‘Depth’ is in fact of a lesser order than ‘strong tradition with joy in existence’. ‘Spirit/mind’ and ‘mass’, ‘the educated/cultivated’ and ‘the common people’ were too far separated. Perhaps the *deutscher Fluch* is to be understood here as Gundolf’s disappointment with contemporary Germany, its defeat in the war, its descent into materialism and popular culture, its embrace of Weimar democracy. Talk of this kind can easily be exploited politically by crude forms of extremism, though again it should not be assumed that this is what George and his followers intended. Neither should it be seen as the idea that Gundolf believed that Germany was in some essential way inferior to other countries. It does seem, though, that Germany was subject to some kind of ‘dissociation of sensibility.’ T.S. Eliot’s famous phrase is the idea that literature, science, philosophy and theology became separate areas of discourse during the seventeenth century, so that thought and feeling could no longer be amalgamated in poetry.²⁴ This idea has been both influential and controversial, as will be seen in a later chapter, but it appears that Gundolf and Eliot were thinking along similar lines.

²³ See Norton pp. 193, 201, and George’s poem ‘Die Gräber in Speier’ from *Der Siebente Ring* (1907).

²⁴ See T. S. Eliot, ‘The Metaphysical Poets’, in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Vol. 2, The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. by Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber Ltd, 2014), pp. 375–385, (p. 380).

In other times and places religion and form, or language and *Geist*, have been unified, and the *Gebildete* are as much disadvantaged as the *Volk* by their separation. Gundolf implies that it is desirable that all people should be ‘*einheitlich durchseelt*’; this is not the same as the contempt for the masses that is often associated with the *George-Kreis*, and that was seen above in Gundolf’s own description of the ordinary person as *Affe, Ameise, Drohne*. Possibly the *Volk* could be redeemed under the right circumstances. There is an idea here of a unifying force possessing and inspiring a whole nation, regardless of social class, literacy, and regional differences. These are large generalizations, especially about national characteristics. There is more neologistic coinage with ‘*ex=centrisch*’. Again, there is a sense of a continuous development with transitional phases in between, and again there were *Gestalten*, or ‘great men’, in this period but they were also in some ways at the mercy of larger forces. Gundolf’s difficulties in distinguishing between abstract currents of thought and the actions of individuals are apparent. There are ‘great men’, but also impersonal forces whose ebb and flow determine the value and fate of literature: some cause change and disruption (Protestant individualism, *Verstand*) and others (*Volk, Deutschtum*) that remain fixed and immutable. Where they come from and how they operate is not always clear. These are not based on purely economic or class issues, or on issues of political, diplomatic, or military history.

Gundolf interrupts his commentary on Opitz with a lengthy discussion of Weckherlin’s Ode ‘*Drunckenheit*’ in order to compare the relative merits of the two poets. He has already distinguished the traditions from which, as he sees it, these two writers emerge: that of Opitz is from books, the ‘*museum of the humanist*’, whereas that of Weckherlin is from public or private conviviality, where a skilful rhymester could dispense jokes and compliments. But neither of these had any footing in the popular spaces of the market and the street; they were confined to the schoolroom or the court (FGP M12, p. 44). The lecture manuscript at this point contains even more afterthoughts and corrections than usual, both in

Gundolf's own handwriting and in those of others: possibly the latter were dictated by him during the process of revision that he seems to have undertaken towards the end of his life. Gundolf was clearly fascinated by this poem, and comments extensively on its use of language. What he avoids, though, is the fact that one of the themes of the poem is that the *ich* who narrates and his companions are 'waging war' on food and drink as an escape from thoughts of real war:

Überlegenheit und umständlich froher Lärm ist der Verkehrston und diesen Ton stellt W. fest nicht nur vor, er stellt im Wortaktion ihn dar. Hier erzeugt der Rausch die Verse und die Verse rollen den Sänger weiter in den Rausch hinein. Das geistige Element Sprache wirkt hier völlig als sinnliches Reizmittel, der Wein, das Fressen und Küssen als ein wortschöpferisches Element, sodass man zwischen dem leiblichen Zustand und dessen geistigem Ausdruck, ja Ausbruch nicht mehr sich auskennt: es ist genialisches Sprechen und Brechen in Einem. (FGP M12, p. 47).

The wordplay on *Ausdruck*, *Ausbruch*, and *auskennt* is notable here. Language is the spiritual expression of a bodily state. There is an insistence on the unity of sensuous experience and its expression in language, on poetry as an incarnation of experience. For a British reader this is reminiscent of F.R. Leavis, as in his comment on the phrase 'bend with apples the moss'd cottage-tree' in Keats's *Ode to Autumn*²⁵. 'Hinter all der oft kalten und klugen Rednerei pocht das sprachfreudige gefräßig geistreiche Temperament', Gundolf concludes. It is possible to disagree with the notion that the rhetorical foreground is bad and the *geistreich* (witty or ingenious) background is good – might they not be in creative tension, and the spatial metaphor (*hinter*) be in fact misleading? Can *Rednerei* not be *sprachfreudig*? It seems that what Gundolf cannot accept here is the idea of a poet adopting a persona that employs rhetorical devices: the supreme test of value for him is *Erlebnisdichtung* with its senses of

²⁵ Leavis, F.R. *The Common Pursuit*, (Harmondsworth, 1962): 'there stand the trees, gnarled and sturdy in trunk and bough, their leafy entanglements thickly loaded.' The reader may, however, agree with Terry Eagleton that this is an example of what he calls the 'incarnational fallacy': 'If this is not fanciful, it is hard to know what is'. Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 59. For further discussion of Eagleton's idea see pp. 140–41 below.

immediacy, sincerity, and personal confession, expressed through symbolic rather than rhetorical or allegorical language, and for the poet to reveal their artistic self-consciousness is a kind of betrayal.

Continuing his discussion of Weckherlin, Gundolf writes:

Aus dem Temperament, nicht bloss aus der spitzfindigen Wortspalterei und =drechslerei des Prunkredners, aus der gelehrten Bilder und Anspielungsmenge des Vielwissers, nicht aus dem unbeherrschten Lehrbedürfnis des Schulmeisters, kommen seine Wortanhäufungen und Wiederholungen: Er redet lebhaft auf den Hörer ein, er überrennt ihn mit einer dichten Rotte gedrängter Worte, durch die Stosskraft nicht seiner Gedanken sondern seiner Tonfälle, seiner Stimme. (FGP M12, p. 48).

In arguing that Weckherlin put more emphasis on poetic expression than thought, Gundolf seems here to place the expression on a higher level than the thoughts of the poet, as if the two could be entirely separated. Indeed he writes ‘Der Gedanke selbst ist armselig genug’ ... ‘es wirkt vom Geblüte auf Geblüt, ganz unabhängig von dem Wert der Aussage für Sinn und Seele – und das ist in dieser rationalisirten Zeit ein fast willkommener Rest des Irrationellen, freilich mehr des Unter= als des Überrationellen.’ The thought itself, then, is banal, but its expression is so powerful that it makes a welcome appeal to the irrational. This is noteworthy in that it shows Gundolf’s ability to think beyond his ideological view of the period, at least in part. It does not lead him to completely abandon the constraints of his obsession with *Verstand*, but he is able to recognize the presence of other elements in this literature. Perhaps he sees Weckherlin’s ‘temperament’ and ‘intonation’ as instances of the ‘unwillkürliche Durchbrüche der dunkleren Lebenskräfte Schicksal und Seele’ that, as was seen earlier, he regards as its redeeming feature. He continues: ‘All diese Neuerungen entstammen nicht einer konsequenten Prosodik sondern der Bequemlichkeit.’ Having praised Weckherlin’s innovations and feeling for language, he now condemns him for being opportunistic rather than developing a thought-out technique. This is a rather devious criticism, and typical of Gundolf’s ambivalent view of this literature. Instead of allowing Weckherlin and his poem

their artistic autonomy and individuality, Gundolf criticizes him for not developing a consistent prosody.

There follows an extended comparison between Weckherlin's poem and architecture:

Was die Wortwiederholungen und Wörterhäufungen im Einzelnen, das bedeuten die künstlichen Strophenformen und Reimverschlingungen im Ganzen: ein Sichnichtgenugtuenkönnen, ein lebhaftes Insistiren: der Ursprung des Barock aus einem Missverhältnis zwischen Stoff und Raum lässt sich auch bei diesem ersten deutschen Barockpoeten wahrnehmen: er will mehr und stärker sagen als seiner geistigen Fassungskraft, seinem gegebenen Raum, seinem geistigen Gehalt eigentlich zukommt [...] Bei Michelangelo entstammt die Schwellung und Brechung des Stoffs einer überstarken und übervollen Seele der kein Raum genügte... [...] Das kam allerdings der Seelenverfassung eines Zeitalters entgegen, dem der geschlossen katholische Himmel zerbrochen war, und dessen Einzelkräfte nicht mehr in einem unausweichlich geordneten Gefüge ihren sichern Platz fanden, sondern eben ihren Raum suchen mussten, nicht ihn haben und nicht ihn schaffen konnten. Derselbe Zug den wir augenhaft deutlich an der Bildkunst wahrnehmen, ist geistig in der Wortkunst nachzuweisen. (FGP M12, p. 51).

The comparison with art and architecture is not surprising in view of Gundolf's studies with Wölfflin, who called Michelangelo 'Vater des Barock'²⁶. Conspicuous here is the notion that Baroque artists of all kinds must seek their own 'space', it is no longer revealed as part of a given cosmic order, nor can they straightforwardly create it for themselves. *Raum* is best understood metaphorically as much as literally here. The opposition of *suchen* and *schaffen* implies that this quest, at least for the poets of the German Baroque, is doomed to failure. Gundolf recognizes the worldly good sense and decorum of Weckherlin's poem but sees it as inadequate. He is rejecting a certain kind of reason, that of *bon sens*, here,

²⁶ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock: eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien*, 3rd edn (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1908), p. 60. Whether the direct comparison of poetry and architecture is successful here, and whether Gundolf's ideas straightforwardly reflect Wölfflin's, is doubtful.

even though he does not use the expression and possibly does not see that that is what it is. Of an epigram dedicated to Weckherlin's own son, after an epigram of Martial (10.47: 'Vitam quae faciant beatiorem'), Gundolf writes, comparing it to Goethe's Venetian Epigram 119':

Seine Ansprüche an sein irdisches Dasein, hat er in einem seiner besten, kernigsten Gedichte zusammengefasst. [...] Weckherlins Verdienste liegen also, (um zusammenzufassen) weder in einer besonders überragenden Persönlichkeit, die mit sich in einem eigenem neuen Seelenton gefunden hätte, noch in einem weiten und tiefen dichterischen Gedanken, in einer originellen Weltansicht, sondern in einer neuen dekorativen Wortekunst, die er mit ungemeiner Gewandtheit und ungemeinem Temperament betrieb: ich stelle dabei 'Wortkunst' ausdrücklich der 'Dichtung' entgegen.

This sentence exemplifies many aspects of Gundolf's aesthetic outlook. He prizes an 'original', 'deep' 'poetic' 'world view' and does not find it in this poetry. Note once again the use of the word 'Temperament', which here is opposed to Weckherlin's 'not particularly imposing personality'. As so often in his writing on the seventeenth century, he damns with faint praise, or constantly qualifies his praise. There is a summing up of Weckherlin that shows this: 'seine Gedichte haben nur sinnlich klangliche isolirte Effekte, keine Seelenwerte: aber die deutsche Sprache haben sie geschmeidigt, bereichert, gefärbt und gestrafft.' If Weckherlin falls short of the highest standards of poetry, he nonetheless had a beneficial effect on the German language, which is implicitly seen as being in a state of development towards a higher goal. It is revealing that Gundolf does not feel the need to justify his use of the phrase 'die deutsche Sprache' to mean solely the language of German high art.

On FGP M12 p. 71 Gundolf returns to Opitz. 'Sein Geschmack ist entartet wie der seiner Umwelt – sein Verstand, der ihm allein angehört, ist innerhalb dieser Blutkrankheit wach und sicher geblieben...er ist kein unwürdiger Vorläufer Lessings, und seine Mängel zeigen mehr die Grenzen des Verstandes überhaupt, als die des besonderen Individuums.'

Blutkrankheit and *entartet* are strong words: in the twenty-first century we cannot help

picking up hints of Nazi racial thinking here, however inchoate²⁷. The thought is again paradoxical. The problem, as Gundolf sees it, is not *Verstand* in the individual, but the general corruption of taste, which, as has been noted, Gundolf attributes to *Verstand* in general. Opitz's own *Verstand* is a kind of personal integrity, something which remains intact in a degraded environment.

The question of imitation recurs on FGP M12 p. 74: the Baroque poet must choose allegory as a middle course between 'naturalism' and 'lies'.

Hier finden wir schon den schüchternen Versuch die Nachahmungstheorie, die konsequenterweise zum Naturalismus führen muss, mit dem Idealismus zu versöhnen, und der Phantasie innerhalb einer Zweck- und Nutzwelt ihren Spielraum zu sichern. Zwischen diesen beiden Klippen, 'Lüge' oder 'Nachahmung' galt es hindurchzusteuern. Das Allheilmittel ist die Allegorie: was für Lüge gilt ist nur angenehmes, reizendes Gleichnis einer höheren Wahrheit [...] Hier wird der Ursprung der Barockpoetik besonders deutlich: sie wurde nötig aus dem Bedürfnis die klassizistischen Renaissanceelemente zu versöhnen mit den Anforderungen der modernen Christlichkeit und Sittlichkeit.

Since Gundolf wrote this, works such as Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928), C. S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936), and *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie: Symposium Wolfenbüttel* edited by Walter Haug (1978), have, in different ways, developed views of allegory that are much less negative. But it might be asked: why reconcile these different tendencies at all, why not just discard the 'Renaissance elements'? The answer is possibly because the romantic or modern expectation of complete originality did not apply:

Poesie und Redekunst wirken durch Dinge (d.h. durch Gegenstände die sie darstellt) und durch Worte, (d.h. durch die Kunstmittel, vermöge welcher sie darstellt) kurz durch Stoff und Form. Opitz will also erst vom Stoff, (der für ihn noch mit dem Gehalt zusammenfällt, denn erst nachdem die Welt als unsre Welt, als eine erlebte, erfahrene Welt anerkannt wird, ist die Sonderung von Stoff und Gehalt, von Gegenstand und Erlebnis möglich gewesen, nach Kant und der Romantik) dann von

²⁷ The word *entartet* had entered wider discourse following the publication of Max Nordau's *Entartung* (Berlin: Carl Duncker, 2 vols, 1892–3).

der Form reden – erst von ‘Erfindung und Einleitung der Dinge, dann von Zubereitung und Zier der Worte’ und schliesslich von Silbenmaass, Reim und Strofen. (FGP M12, p. 77)

Presumably these are the thoughts of Opitz, at least in the first sentence, rather than Gundolf’s own: language works by means of a correspondence to objects, in poetry as well as in any other type of usage. This reduces the language of poetry to a one-to-one correspondence with things, in the manner of Wittgenstein’s picture theory of language in the *Tractatus*. But what kinds of *Gegenstände* does poetry have? We have already noted Gundolf’s remark that: ‘Poetische Bilder bedeuten nichts ausser ihnen selbst...’. Gundolf attributes this ‘dissociation’ to Kant and Romanticism. It is unclear whether he sees it as good or bad: ‘eine erlebte, erfahrene Welt’ seems to be a good thing, but a *Sonderung* a bad one. But presumably it is not the same as the dominance of *Verstand* which for him mars the literature of the seventeenth century, though a *Zusammenfall* of *Stoff* and *Gehalt* would seem to be desirable in poetry. What Opitz’s book lacks, in Gundolf’s view, is ‘der Sinn für die geschichtliche Sonderart, für den neuen Lebenssinn etwaiger moderner Gattungen, für den neuen Wein im alten Schlauch, geschweige für neue Schläuche.’ (FGP M12, p. 78). Is he saying that Opitz cannot see the signs of new life in modern genres, or that such new life did not exist? The unforced and natural use of biblical references to make his point (Matthew 9:17, Luke 5:37) is notable, though the verses in fact state that new wine will destroy old wineskins, thus spoiling the wine as well. It is therefore striking that Gundolf later says of Opitz’s book:

Wir dürfen es nicht nach unsren Ansprüchen beurteilen, sondern nach den Bedürfnissen seiner Umwelt, und die wollte nichts vom ‘Schöpferischen’ wissen, sondern verlangte Anweisungen zum richtigen Gebrauch der geistigen Anlagen. Opitz war der erste der dies für den Gebrauch der deutschen Sprache überhaupt systematisch versuchte, und die Vorwürfe gegen ihn, er sei oberflächlich gewesen und habe fremdes Gut benutzt, sind ebenso unhistorisch gedacht und unbillig wie etwa die Mommsens gegen Ciceros Schriftstellerei. Die Aufgabe beider war nicht eine neue Bildung zu schaffen, sondern eine geschaffenen zu übertragen, d.h. auszuwählen und

anzupassen. Dazu gehört keine ‘Tiefe’, sondern Takt, Überblick und Verstand. (FGP M12, p. 87)

Opitz then, like Cicero, needs to be judged by the standards of his age, and the demand of later German scholars for creativity in a Romantic sense is unhistorical and unjust. And the word *Verstand* is used here in a sense which is neutral or even positive; again, it is more like *bon sens*. In a passage on the same page which has been enclosed in square brackets, he writes ‘Soviel gescheiter sind wir nicht geworden, nur andre Bedürfnisse und Standpunkte haben wir. Die müssen wir nicht verleugnen, aber ohne Dünkel und Befangenheit geltend machen.’ This is reminiscent of Dilthey: Gundolf rejects a belief in the progressive improvement of our judgements in favour of the view that the task is to understand the past in its own terms: ‘nicht der Werturteile sollen wir uns entschlagen, aber keine Person tadeln und keine Gesellschaft aus nur=heutigen Ansprüchen weil ihr fehlt was wir nicht mehr entbehren können.’ (FGP M12, p. 88). People can make value judgments but should beware of anachronism in doing so. This is an insight that Gundolf does not always apply, sometimes drawing his judgements of seventeenth-century literature from the aesthetics of Goethe and of Stefan George and occasionally from nineteenth-century literary histories. But what needs to be decided is the extent which this constitutes an application of new paradigms, almost in spite of itself. Chapter Five will consider the question of Gundolf as someone who stood on the borders between the academic and literary worlds and was regarded with suspicion by both.

Despite the disparaging remarks about books that were seen earlier, on FGP M12 p. 89 Gundolf summarizes some ‘Hauptwirkungen von Büchern’: first religious scriptures, then the works of the philosophers and writers (he lists Plato, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe). He says that ‘Immer neue Geschlechter lesen, erforschen, verwandeln ihren Sinn und sich mit ihm.’ This is reminiscent in some ways of Gadamer’s ‘fusion of horizons’: ‘...

the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come.’²⁸ But Gundolf’s approach does not apply to all literature, as Gadamer’s seemingly does; it is a valorisation of certain great classics, not a universal hermeneutic insight. ‘Opitz hat gewusst was seiner Zeit not war und das hat er gebracht: nach einer schlaffen Verwilderung ohne wirkliche Fülle eine gewisse Zucht und Würde. Kraft und Schönheit lassen sich nicht rufen, sie sind Geschenke der Gnade’ (the horticultural metaphors in *Verwilderung* and *Zucht* are conspicuous). Opitz had the insight to see what his time needed and was able to provide it. What is not clear is whether Gundolf believed that the time did not need ‘Kraft und Schönheit’ in their true senses, or whether there was no-one who was given the gift of grace to provide them. And what exactly is *Gnade*? Is Gundolf just using precious literary language here, or does he really believe in the intervention of God, or in a Heideggerian revelation of Being? An overall evaluation of Gundolf’s style, and its relation to that of other critics and philosophers, will also be undertaken in the concluding chapter, but it is worth noting here that Gundolf both deals with language as an academic topic and cultivates it as a stylist.

Gundolf notes Opitz’s long-lasting influence:

von etwa 1630 bis 1750 blieb das Buch [von der deutschen Poeterey], das die ganze Poesie in Verstandesregeln zu fassen wusste, unentbehrlich, legitim und kanonisch. Diese Regeln selbst wandeln sich kaum, denn der pure Verstand kennt keine Entwicklung, wie das Gefühl und die Seele, weil er es mit dem fertigen, erstarrten, dem ‘Eingereihten und Rückgewandten’ zu tun hat, nicht mit dem Werdenden, lebendig Bewegten. (FGP M12 p. 90)

²⁸ Gadamer, p. 317.

The phrase ‘Eingereihten und Rückgewandten’ is not on page 37 of the book *Martin Opitz*, and appears to be a quote from the poem beginning ‘Bangt nicht vor rissen brüchen wunden schrammen’ from George’s *Der Stern des Bundes*. Here are the last four lines:

Was schon genannt ist liegt gefällt umher
 DER leer gehäus – ein stumpfes waffen DER:
 Die eingereihten und die rückgewandten ..
 Bringt kranz und krone für den Ungenannten!

The ‘rissen brüchen wunden schrammen’ of the first line and the ‘Ungenannten’ of the last line are opposed to ‘DER leer gehäus – ein stumpfes waffen DER’, and ‘Die eingereihten und die rückgewandten’. Gundolf seems to regard Opitz as belonging with the second, negative set of terms. ‘ein waffen’ can be seen as an archaic or dialect form of ‘das Wappen’ but the sense of ‘die Waffe’ is present as well. *Gehäus* is a neuter noun, so the sense is ‘DER ist leeres Gehäuse’, the definite article itself is empty and meaningless, a dead token like a coat of arms as well as imperious and domineering, as the upper-case letters, and the hint of a ‘weapon’ suggest: in a way it epitomizes *Verstand*. The word *Gehäuse* reminds us of Max Weber’s expression ‘stahlhartes Gehäuse’ which he uses to describe the bureaucratisation and rationalisation of modern social life.²⁹ *Bringt* is an imperative, seemingly addressed to initiates, the members of the *Kreis*: it is the unnamed and undefined (which are also seen as ‘cracks, fissures, scratches, wounds’, according to earlier lines in the poem) that deserve the wreath and crown – the laurel wreath of the poet. Whether or not the reader agrees with Gundolf’s view of Opitz’s *Verstandesregeln*, the fact that he is able to make an imaginative connection between the verse of the seventeenth century and that of his mentor shows a true

²⁹ Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*, 4th edn, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1947), p. 203. Charles Taylor refers to Weber’s description of a ‘stahlhartes Gehäuse’ as ‘an environment in which we live a uniform, univocal secular time, which we try to measure and control in order to get things done.’ *A Secular Age*, p. 59.

feeling for poetry: in spite of his belief in distinct historical epochs, he does not always think in terms of narrow periodisation and compartmentalisation.

On FGP M12, p. 101 Gundolf turns to discussion of Opitz's poetic practice, first pointing out that Opitz sometimes breaks his own rules on issues such as rhyme, grammar, and metre. There follows a key phrase: Opitz is not a true poet because his imagination and creative ability never exceeded the bounds set by his theory (though this is not the same as saying that he did not have those qualities): 'Seine Phantasie und Bildnerkraft überschritt nach keiner Seite hin die seinem Geiste erkennbaren und von seiner Theorie abgesteckten Grenzen, wie dies bei echten Dichtern stattfindet' (Eichendorff had remarked of Opitz: 'der Verstand kann ordnen, aber nicht dichten.'³⁰) *Geist* here is not *Zeitgeist* but a property of the individual, combining the notions of 'mind' and 'taste'. Then he remarks that 'Beschreibungen, unmittelbare oder gleichnishafte, Sentenzen aus allgemeiner Weisheit oder individueller Erfahrung, sowie mythologische und geschichtliche Exempel: das sind die drei Elemente der Opitzischen Poesie, die in ziemlich regelmässiger Abfolge durch den Verstand miteinander verknüpft werden' (p. 103). Gundolf allows that this poetry may contain 'direct descriptions' and 'aphorisms from individual experience'. Not everything is trope or convention, but 'Hier liegt das Entscheidende, nicht die Armut des Erlebens oder der Mangel der Anschauungen an sich unterscheidet Opitz, und seinesgleichen, von wirklichen Dichtern, sondern die Unfähigkeit das etwaige Erleben, die Anschauung oder Erschütterung, unmittelbar aus dem Herzen in den Sprachbereich zu bringen' (FGP M12, p. 103). There is a paradox here: Gundolf claims somehow to be able to detect 'experience' 'insight' and 'powerful emotion' in these poets, but says that these are not manifested in their actual

³⁰ Eichendorff, p. 171.

language, or at least not directly (*unmittelbar*). Either his claim is mistaken (what evidence is there for these poets' feelings other than their works?), or he is making the questionable assertion (one that was seen in his comments on Weckherlin's 'Druckheit') that only the 'direct' expression of emotion is truly valuable.

[Opitz] gelangt nirgends zur Verschmelzung von Bild, Trieb und Gedanke, von Eros, Logos und Idee, von Gehalt, Stoff und Form, die den eigentlichen Dichter ausmacht: er bleibt bei der Verknüpfung, und die dichterischen Elemente liegen alle oberhalb der eigentlichen Schöpfersfäre, oberhalb des Innenfeuers, das sie zur Einheit verschmelzt, im Bereich des abgezogenen Denkens (FGP M12, p.103).

Gundolf here contrasts the image of fusion or smelting in an inner fire with the idea of linking or joining by reason or understanding. He lists three groups of three concepts that the true poet can fuse together, but does not define any of them. Once again this is itself a kind of poetic thinking, rather than a systematic one, though a sceptical reader or listener might conclude that this is no more than a rhetorical flourish. Gundolf's writing is again on the borders of scholarship and art.

Continuing his evaluation of Opitz, Gundolf writes:

Über die Seelenvorgänge eines Dichters wissen wir nur, sofern sie Sprache geworden sind, und den Wert eines Dichters macht eben seine Fähigkeit aus, uns das unmittelbare Wesen der Seele und der Welt, jenseits der blossen Kausalverknüpfung und der Verstandeskategorien (wozu auch die sogenannten fünf Sinne gehören) zu vergegenwärtigen durch Urschau, durch Traumschau als Sprachbild, als Sprachgebild, als Ton und Rhythmus. (FGP M12, p. 103)

Seelenvorgänge are clearly not to be understood as events that could be described in a biography; they are the hidden processes of the poet's mind. There is again something proto-Heideggerian here, reminding us of the phrase in Gundolf's book on Stefan George: 'Die Sprache ist das innerste Bollwerk des Geistes in einer Welt der Dinge'³¹. The world can be saved by the poet's remaking of language.

³¹ Gundolf, *George*, (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1920), p. 1. Russell A. Berman refers to 'a Heideggerian thinking *avant la lettre*' in 'The subjects of community: aspiration, memory, resistance 1918–1845' in

It cannot be concluded, then, that Gundolf believed that the Baroque era in literature simply denied individual experience and replaced it with the use of empty conventions. His thought turns out to be more complex and nuanced. On FGP M12 p. 104 he writes:

Es ist ein Vorurteil dass erst mit Klopstock und Goethe die deutschen Dichter sich um Ausdruck des Selbsterleben bemüht hätten und dass im Zeitalter der Opitz, Lohenstein, Gottsched die Poeten, zumal in der Liebe, erfundene Buhlschaften besungen hätten. Von den besten Schriftstellern dieser Zeit gilt das nicht wenngleich auch diese und die meisten mehr als die freien Sänger des Gefühlszeitalters, die Poeterey als ein Gewerbe und als ein Handwerk betreiben mussten: aber Opitz, Fleming, Gryphius, *Logau*, Dach, Rist, von Günther zu schweigen nahmen sogar wie Klopstock und mehr als die meisten Romantiker ihren 'poetischen Gehalt aus dem Gehalt des eignen Lebens..' (wie Goethe es verlangte) Nur bis zum eignen Sprachausdruck ihres eigensten Lebens sind sie nicht gelangt, nur in starre Chiffren, nicht in lebendige Formen gerann die ursprüngliche Bewegung. Freilich den Erlebnisbegriff, oder besser noch das Erlebnis des Erlebnisses kannten sie nicht: die einmalige Erschütterung oder Wallung: sie wollten und konnten nicht ausdrücken was ihnen als besonderen Personen widerfuhr, sondern was sie mit allen Menschen teilten: sie sahen von der ganzen Welt, also auch von ihrem eignen Dasein, nur das Übertragbare, Gemeinsame, Wiederholbare – die mathematischen Funktionen sozusagen: daher ihre Lehrhaftigkeit, ihre Gleichnishaftigkeit (denn das Gleichnis – im Gegensatz zum Bild – gibt eben das Uneigentliche, Un=eigene) ihr Allegorismus und ihre Regel und Mustersucht.

This is another difficult passage. Gundolf is certainly not saying that convention in literature is no more than cliché. Parable, similitude, allegory, he appears to say, lead to general rules and patterns which are incapable of conveying the living truth of individual experience: only the symbol or image, the *Bild*, can do this. This is not so far from the distinction made in Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, though Benjamin draws a quite different conclusion: he believes that the unity promised by the symbol is an illusion, whereas the mechanistic character of allegory actually reveals the illusory nature of the knowledge that it appears to offer. According to Andrew Bowie, both Goethe and Benjamin claim that there is 'in symbol...a metaphysical continuity between the

particular and the universal’, while allegory has meaning only by means of a totally conventional relationship between words and objects or ideas.³² Gundolf too believes, in his account of the *ens realissimum* in his essay ‘Wesen und Beziehung’, to be considered in a later chapter, that truly meaningful language requires a divine or metaphysical underpinning. Benjamin, at least in one stage of this thinking, relates this to the story in the Hebrew Scriptures of Adam naming creation; Gundolf does not do this.

Sometimes Gundolf cannot fully reconcile his beliefs about the nature of seventeenth-century literature with his observations about its reality. In a passage on Johann Rist’s *Entrüstungsstücke* – the dramas *Das friedewünschende Teutschland* (1647) and *Das friedejauchzende Teutschland* (1653) – he writes:

der unverhüllte Naturalismus überrascht bei einem opitzischen Rhetoriker so, dass man sie mit dichterischer Gestaltungskraft verwechseln könnte. Gerade hier kann man sehen, wie etwa diese Künstler und Schäfer wirklich redeten und was sie wirklich sahen, wo sie nicht durch Regeln und Muster hypnotisiert waren: da waren sie manchmal virtuose minutiöse Abschreiber einer niedrigen und -fratzenhaften Wirklichkeit, und wenn scharfe Beobachtung und Schilderung des Rohstoffs allein zum Dichter genügt, so darf man Rist unter die besten Vorläufer des deutschen Naturalismus rechnen. (FGP M12 pp. 281–82).

Whilst scholars might not now use the term ‘German Naturalism’ with the sense of confident and unquestionable categorisation that Gundolf does, this passage raises some intriguing questions. Gundolf cannot quite bring himself to say that genuine creative poetic power is at work here, but there is something that might be mistaken for it because its naturalism emerges from the background of Opitzian rhetoric. ‘Regeln und Muster’ are possibly not the same thing as the *Verstand* that he so often fears and despises, as this passage implies that these writers – Rist is an exception – were normally ‘hypnotized by rules and examples’, not

³² Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, pp. 224–25.

that their intellects were totally dominated by the philosophical temper of the age. Yet presumably Gundolf believed that the two issues were linked. Classical Latin and Greek poems, after all, use regular metres and forms, formulaic expressions such as the Homeric epithets, tropes and *topoi*; this does not mean that what they can express is limited by a mechanistic philosophical worldview. Gundolf cannot deny Rist's naturalism and recognizes it as a positive achievement, but his overarching conceptual framework does not allow him to give it full credit.

The recurring idea of a 'deutscher Fluch' serves as a link to a discussion of Gundolf's treatment of Andreas Gryphius, whom he calls 'neben Grimmelshausen, das einzige poetische Genie.' The notion of *Kairos* was mentioned above, and Gundolf employs it in the book *Andreas Gryphius*, where he contrasts Gryphius with Corneille. The passage (pp. 5–6) follows the text of the lecture (FGP M12 p. 286), though there are some notable alterations.

The lecture reads:

War dort [i.e. in Opitz] die Sprache spielerischer Selbstzweck, pompöser Behang eines dürftigen Gestells, so erscheint sie hier als zu dürftiges Kleid, ja als Zwangsjacke einer mächtigen Gestalt...und nicht die persönliche Kraft fehlt sondern die überpersönliche Gnade, die Glückstunde, um sie -fruchtbar zu machen, um mit einem Ruck die deutsche Dichtung aus zünftigem Getändel oder mühseligem Lehramt zum hohen Spiel und gesteigerten Bild des Lebens zu erheben. Aber beides gehört zusammen. das Schicksal anzuklagen hat keinen Sinn; die Eintracht [*Einheit* in the book] von Virtus und Fortuna bestimmt den geschichtlichen Wert eines Mannes, und die beste Kraft, die ohne Glück, oder christlich gesprochen, ohne Gnade kann vergeblich sein [the main verb *schafft*, which appears in the printed version, has been deleted in pencil]. Kein Volk ist an titanisch/ gnadenlosen Genies, an herrlichen Umsonsts an solchen zu früh oder zu spät, zu einsam gekommenen reicher als das deutsche. Fast immer überwiegt bei den grossen Deutschen die Virtus die Fortuna (ich meine nicht in Leben, sondern in der geschichtlichen Fruchtbarkeit), die Leistung ihre Macht, ihr Mittel den Zweck oder auch ihr Zweck ihre Mittel.³³

³³ FGP M12, p. 286. Some further minor changes have been made in the printed book, such as omitting the word *Glückstunde*, which equates to *Kairos* (*Andreas Gryphius*, p. 5).

Gundolf evidently struggled to clarify his thinking here. He made extensive changes in both ink and pencil to this passage in the manuscript. The penultimate sentence originally read:

Aber beides gehört zusammen und das Schicksal anzuklagen hat keinen Sinn, nicht nur die Jugend, auch das Glück bestimmt den geschichtlichen Wert, ja den Wert, nicht nur die Wirkung eines Mannes, und die beste Kraft, die nicht im Schicksal steht, oder christlich gesprochen, ohne Gnade wirkt, ~~steht tiefer~~ kann vergeblich sein.

Gryphius, Gundolf claims, had much talent, but did not benefit from a favourable historical moment – *Schicksal* or *Kairos* or ‘ächte Gesellschaft und Geschichte’ – in the way that his French contemporary did. Gryphius lacked not ‘persönliche Kraft’ but ‘überpersönliche Gnade’. ‘Die Eintracht/Einheit von Virtus und Gnade bestimmt den geschichtlichen Wert eines Mannes’ – power without grace is ineffectual. Gundolf claims once again that there is something unique about the failings of German seventeenth-century literature. He again invokes a ‘superpersonal grace’, surely a Christian notion, reminiscent of the teachings of Luther, but he employs it outside the framework of Christian belief and practice. He does not say that it is only artists who have historical worth: the union of *virtus* (not necessarily the same thing as *Kraft*) and grace can distinguish a political leader such as Caesar as well as a poet. In accordance with his notion of a ‘German curse’, Gundolf regards Gryphius as the carrier of a disease, or the bearer of a tragic destiny, rather than as an autonomous individual artist. It is not easy to tell whether Gundolf regrets or celebrates this. As Wolf Lepenies puts it:

Whether, like Hugo von Hofmannsthal, one laments the breaks with tradition recurring repeatedly in the spiritual life of the Germans, that secretive nation; or, like Ernst Troeltsch, one speaks of Germany as the country of continually harsh destiny; in either case, there are in such statements the overtones of proud melancholy and the admission of the role of outsider in which one feels all too comfortable.³⁴

³⁴ Wolf Lepenies and Barbara Harshav, ‘Between Social Science and Poetry in Germany.’ *Poetics Today*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1988, pp. 117–43 (p. 117). <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1772891>> [accessed 5 October 2023].

Gryphius's gifts, then, were severely constrained by the circumstances of his place and time – both the style of the Opitzianer and the 'gelähmtes Volk' around him. Were it not for these he could have become the German Corneille: 'Aber Corneille, an Begabung, Ernst, Gewicht, d.h. als bloßer Charakter betrachtet, Gryphius kaum überlegen – hatte ein überlegenes Schicksal, einen Kairos, eine Welt zu seinen Gaben – ächte Gesellschaft und Geschichte' (p. 6). This is the passage noted in Chapter One as subtly differing from the lecture text. The relationship of *Leben*, *Gesellschaft*, *Bildung* and *Dichtung* in the two playwrights is complex: 'Corneille konnte vom lebendigen Zustand zur Bildung hin dichten, Gryphius mußte aus der Bildung, ja aus der Gelehrsamkeit zur Gesellschaft hin dichten' (p. 7). In his lyric poetry Gryphius is rescued, at least in part, by his personal experience, his *Erlebnis*: 'Gryphius ist nun nicht deswegen stoffreicher, weil er mehr gelesen hat, sondern weil er mehr gelitten hat und seine allgemeinen Themata, vor allem das Memento mori und die vanitas vanitatum, aus eigener Anschauung füllen wollte.' (p. 17). Gundolf claims that Gryphius is 'richer in substance' not from using *topoi* like *vanitas* and *memento mori* but from genuine suffering, based on authentic experience. Gryphius's worldview is grounded in worldly suffering, his denial of earthly happiness is more real than his belief in salvation: qualities that are likely to make him appeal to modern readers:

Er ist also nicht geistlicher Dichter, sondern weltlicher Dichter, nämlich Weltschmerz-dichter mit christlicher Färbung. Er sieht nicht vom sicheren Gott aus aufs Weltleid herab, sondern ringt aus der Qual nach Gott, ohne eigentliche Erlösung, wenn auch mit vorläufiger Beruhigung, mehr weltlich verzichtend als geistlich erhoben. (*Andreas Gryphius*, p. 10).

Yet Gundolf's discussion is begrudging: any praise of Gryphius is constantly qualified. He falls short of being a great poet because he was unable to break the linguistic spell of Opitz's rules and establish a truly individual character:

Vielleicht hätte er schon die deutsche Barocklyrik erlöst, wenn sein Ich sprachlich über die bloße D e n k- und V o r s t e l l u n g sphäre herausgedrungen wäre: doch auch er brach den opitzianischen Bann nicht, und so fehlt ihm die weltgefüllte S e e-

I e n t o n, der erst anzeigt daß ein Ich seine eigene Merkwelt durchdringt und durchschwingt. (pp. 14–15)

We note the Gundolfian stylistic tic of ‘durchdringt und durchschwingt’ here, but what is also striking is the employment, twice, of *Ich* as a noun with a compound of the verb *dringen*: there is a poetic self that forces its way out of conventional thought and language and permeates the world that surrounds it. Gryphius does not have the personal energy to carry out the needed ‘redemption’ (another religious metaphor) of the Baroque lyric. He cannot, in the end, be regarded as a precursor of *Erlebnislyrik*.

As so often with Gundolf, there is little analysis, as opposed to quotation, of individual poems, although on pp. 19–20 of *Andreas Gryphius* he writes about the sonnet ‘Die Hölle’ (Book II, XLVII). Gundolf observes that it is a metrical experiment. ‘Das ist reines Virtuositum, wählerische Kombination von Metren über Opitz Gehege hinaus mit sonettthafter Reimbindung: nur der Verstand kann diese künstliche Lockerung mit der künstlichen Bindung kombinieren. Im Gefühl heben sich beide auf, das Gedicht hält nicht zusammen.’ This judgement is questionable; whilst it is indeed metrically virtuosic, is the sonnet meant to cohere, is the breakdown of coherence not in fact part of the effect of the poem? Is this not the question of the creative tension of form and content that was noted above, rather than a mutual cancelling out, as Gundolf claims, and is it not possible that *Gefühl* enables us to experience this as much as *Verstand*, even if it is assumed that the two can be separated in responding to art? Part of the poem’s effect derives from a deliberate movement from agonized incoherence to solemn reflection, from using isolated words (‘Mord! Zetter! Jammer!’ and so on) to repeating words in a way that draws out and emphasizes their meaning in sometimes paradoxical ways (‘ihr martret und Marter erduldet’, ‘der ewigen Ewigkeit Feuer’. ‘stets sterben / sonder sterben!’). ‘Verdirb / um hier nicht zu verderben’); there is a movement of thought, feeling and expressive means that Gundolf

ignores in his wish to find yet another indictment of *Verstand*. He also takes the sonnet out of its context. It is one of a set dealing with death, the last judgment, hell, the eternal joy of the elect, and the prophet Elijah. The sonnet on eternal bliss (XLIX) is also a metrical experiment, and the cries of joy of the saved stand in contrast to those of the damned in the ‘Hell’ poem³⁵. Gundolf sees what he wants to see here. And he is implying that Gryphius does not take the agonies of Hell seriously, a highly questionable view. That *Ewige Freude der Auserwählten* expresses ‘temporary reassurance’ without real confidence in salvation would make for an interesting discussion, as it ascribes to Gryphius a type of sensibility that seems to belong to the modern age, but Gundolf does not pursue this line of thought in his confident placement of Gryphius as a ‘worldly poet’. His treatment of Philipp von Zesen makes similar comments about what he sees as empty metrical virtuosity, but makes a link to nineteenth-century poetry and criticism by comparing him to Rückert (of whom he evidently had a low opinion), and claiming that it is no coincidence that the time in which Rückert was held to be one of the greatest of German poets (the 1850s to the 1870s) was also the time in which critics like Goedeke and Heinrich Kurz expressed enthusiasm for Zesen (FGP M12 p. 267). He dismisses Zesen, with more metaphors of ‘embodiment’ and ‘illness’, as ‘nicht ein dichterisches Gemüt mit zeitbedingten Beschränkungen und Entstellungen, sondern eine verkörperte Zeitkrankheit mit spärlichen poetischen Einfällen’ (FGP M12 p. 269).

The contrast with Victor Manheimer is again instructive. His book *Die Lyrik des Andreas Gryphius* consists partly of a biography of Gryphius, partly of an edition of the *Lissauer Sonette*, partly of an account of the technicalities of Gryphius’s versification. Whilst it would be wrong to see the book as coming from outside the university (it was his doctoral

³⁵ *Sonette Zweites Buch*, XLVI–L. In *Andreas Gryphius: Gedichte*, ed. by Thomas Borgstedt (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012), pp. 61–64.

thesis for the University of Göttingen), his approach is quite different from Gundolf's. He is not interested in nationalistic *Geistesgeschichte* and sweeping claims about the philosophical tendencies of the seventeenth century. He is concerned with precise philological details, with psychological interpretation of Gryphius's poetry and with connections between seventeenth-century literature and that of his own time. The Introduction (p. xiii) describes three aspects of the seventeenth century that command attention: a historical one, because it is a time of 'Anfänge, der Vorbereitung, des Tastens und Ringens'; a psychological one, because 'hinter dem einförmigen Alexandrinergewand stecken die verschiedensten und zum Teil bedeutende Individualitäten', and a connection with the poets of his own time. This is not necessarily a positive one:

Innerlich leer oder im Tiefsten aufgewühlt, äußerlich von technisch formalen Problemen absorbiert, die sich mit den Existenzfragen der Zeit zunächst sehr wenig zu berühren schienen, – so waren die meisten Barockdichter, und ähnlich sind, so weit man sehen kann, wenigstens die Dichter unserer Zeit, die ihrer Produktion das Gepräge geben.

But there is a qualification in the use of the word *zunächst*; the apparent lack of engagement with deeper questions may be deceptive, and Manheimer has already said that the formal regularity of seventeenth-century verse conceals 'diverse and to some extent significant individualities'. Again, the qualification in 'zum Teil' suggests hesitation or uncertainty. This is something that Manheimer and Gundolf have in common. If Gundolf tends towards grudging praise, Manheimer is reluctant to appear over-enthusiastic. On pp. xvi–xvii he describes Gryphius's *vanitas vanitatum* theme, but claims that it is negated by the sensuous qualities of the verse:

Eine Lehre der Verzweiflung: Mensch und Leben, Wissen und Kunst ist nichts, nur ein Wahn, ein Traum. [...] Die ununterbrochen nach formaler Vollendung strebende Arbeit des Gryphius an vielen seiner Sonette straft ihre Vergänglichkeitspredigt Lügen. Man glaubt nicht an sie, weil ihre Verse zu sinnlich-klangvoll berühren.

The message that art is a delusion and a dream is negated by art itself. But arguably this paradox is deliberate: Gryphius is not asking us to believe in the message literally. That Manheimer struggles with such paradoxes and uncertainties does not mean that he was a bad critic, but that the subject matter is difficult to write about. Despite this, Manheimer describes the interest in Gryphius of later poets such as Klopstock, Schiller, and the Romantics. His pessimism connects him with Byron and Schopenhauer. His technical abilities and ‘vor allem das Egozentrische, bekenntnishaft Dunkle seiner Dichtung steht ihn oft nahe neben Gestalten der Romantik’ (p. xvi). This contrasts with Gundolf’s confident dismissal of *Die Hölle* as ‘mere virtuosity’, though like Gundolf, Manheimer was able to make connections with the literature of different periods.

To develop this theme, Gundolf’s treatment of the poet Christian Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau (1616–1679), will be examined in more detail and contrasted with that of other critics, principally Herbert Cysarz (1896–1985), who was acquainted with both Gundolf and Stefan George and was an exponent of a *geistesgeschichtlich* approach to literature.³⁶ Gundolf recommends Cysarz’s book *Deutsche Barockdichtung: Renaissance, Barock, Rokoko* (Leipzig: 1924, based on his *Habilitationsschrift* for the University of Vienna) to his students in the introductory section of the lectures. Walter Benjamin also mentions him approvingly in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* for having insights into Baroque allegory that anticipate Benjamin’s own.

³⁶ Biographical information on Cysarz has been taken from https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Cysarz, [accessed 21 November 2023]. This article quotes Gundolf as stating that Cysarz was the bearer of a ‘Vermählung der konkretesten und der universellsten Durchdringung des Worts, der radikalen Kunstforderung und der Einsicht in die totale Ordnung’ but does not give the source of the quotation.

The nineteenth-century literary historian Karl Goedeke (1814–1887) states the conventional view of the so-called Second Silesian School in Volume 3 of his *Grundriss der deutschen Dichtung*, another work that Gundolf recommends to his students:

Die Dichter dieses Zeitraumes schrecken nicht nur vor keinem Gedanken unreinster Art zurück, sondern sind je vornehmer, desto mehr geflißen die Sinne der Leser durch umschreibende lüsterne Andeutungen zu entzünden. Da sie nicht rund heraus sagen, was sie wollen, nehmen sie eine ungewählte Masse von Gleichnissen, Anspielungen und Bildern zu Hilfe und behandeln diese wie die Sachen selbst, indem sie neue Gleichnisse und Bilder damit in Verbindung bringen. Damit besteht der berufne hofmannswaldauische und lohensteinische Schwulst.³⁷

Yet on reading this carefully, there is more than just prim moral disapproval of ‘Gedanken unreinster Art’. Goedeke claims that these poets have developed an oblique way of conveying these thoughts which ‘inflames the senses’ of the reader even more powerfully than direct statement would: he recognizes in them, approvingly or not, a powerful literary technique. He characterises this technique with the claim that the similes and images are *ungewählt*, by which he appears to mean a failure of taste or judgement, rather than a loss of conscious control over what is being said. This is reminiscent of Gundolf’s use of the word *unwillkürlich* to describe the moments in which the writers of this era impress him. They are somehow at their best when their overt standards of judgement fail them: for both critics this is a reason for uneasy and perhaps unwilling praise.

Looking first at Gundolf’s treatment, on FGP M12 p. 359 he writes:

[Lohenstein und Hoffmannswaldau] sind wohlhabende und hochmögende Ratsherren, Günstige des Kaiserlichen Hofes gewesen und im Gegensatz zu den Schriftstellern der vorigen Generation und noch zu Gryphius in ruhigen glückhaften äusseren Umständen. Das ist in diesem Fall nicht ohne Bedeutung. Die völlige Satttheit, Behaglichkeit und Gemütlichkeit, der Mangel an Streit und Streben, aber auch an Leichtsinn und Munterkeit wodurch wenigstens die galante Lyrik noch hie und da versöhnt, mag aus dem Milieu der Schwulstpoeten kommen. er gibt ihnen zugleich ihr seelisches Gepräge.

³⁷ Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen. Dritter Band: Von dreissigjährigen bis zum siebenjährigen Kriege*. Rev. 2nd edn, (Dresden: Ehlermann, 1887), p. 268.

The use of biographical information to introduce discussion of an author and give a general characterisation of their work has already been noted. This attempt is not very convincing. Gundolf assumes that the fact that someone lives in ‘peaceful and happy outward circumstances’ means that their inner circumstances, and thus the tone of their writing, will be similar. A comfortable, uneventful life leads to comfortable, uneventful work. This deterministic view is scarcely illuminating. This is the kind of positivistic biographical criticism of which Gundolf disapproves elsewhere, and illustrates the fact that his thinking can oscillate between the conventional and the radical. The use of *litotes* in the phrase ‘in diesem Fall nicht ohne Bedeutung’ is unfortunate: is he trying to say that their lifestyles are very significant, or that they may be significant but he does not want to commit himself to saying so? He continues on FGP M12 p. 360:

Die neue Wucht und Dichte die Gryphius, aus eigner Seelenschwere und Vorstellungsfülle dem Alexandriner mitzuteilen wusste, übernahm Hofmannswaldau (*sic*) als einen neuen Reiz, losgelöst von seinem Gehalt, und schwelgte in mastigen und massigen Bilderhäufen. Was bei Gryphius eben grade noch erträglich ist, weil man die gefüllte Empfindung hinter den gedrängten Worten spürt, ist bei Hofmannswaldau eiskalter Redetrick und bauschige Maskerade...

As so often, it is a pity that Gundolf does not refer to specific poems to illustrate his point and to expand on those strongly evaluative oppositions of ‘neue Wucht und Dichte’, ‘neuer Reiz’, ‘gefüllte Empfindung’ and ‘gedrängten Worten’. He finds the effect only ‘just about tolerable’ in Gryphius, a piece of typically grudging praise. The phrase ‘schwelgte in mastigen und massigen Bilderhäufen’ recalls criticisms that have been made of the English Metaphysical Poets: the imagery, it is claimed, is forced and extravagant. Gundolf’s language is loaded with disapproval of an artistic method that he finds uncongenial, but his objection is aesthetic: it is not the bourgeois discomfort with ‘thoughts of the most impure kind’ that was seen in Goedeke.

Cysarz takes a different view. To look first at his general attitude to the period: he claims in the introduction to his three-volume anthology *Deutsche Barocklyrik* that our time is indebted to the seventeenth century not for its spiritual but for its material values:

Nicht seelische, sondern sachliche Werte sind es zuvörderst, die das 17. Jahrhundert zum Gläubiger noch des unseren machen. Alle älteren Jahrhunderte christlicher Zeitrechnung übertrifft es an wissenschaftlichen, zumal an physikalischen und medizinischen Entdeckungen. Es begründet die Bürokratie und die stehenden Heere, es baut das Schalt- und Betriebswerk der neuzeitlichen Staaten auf... (p. 9)³⁸

The mind, the spirit of the seventeenth century on the other hand is alien to us:

Welches Festgeprägung um die Höfe, welche Blüte der Künste, doch welche Rohheit etwa der Gerichtsbarkeit, des niederen Unterrichts oder der häuslichen Sitte. Fassaden und Portale, Teppiche und Gobelins, Ziergerät jeder Art und schwelgender Aufwand an Kleidung – aber wie wenig Gesundheit der Wohnung, Zweckmäßigkeit der Möbel, Sauberkeit des Körpers. (p. 9)

This is reminiscent of Gundolf's 'costume drama' passage and may similarly be indebted to Burckhardt, yet along with a similar lively awareness of the differences between his time and the seventeenth, Cysarz has a greater emphasis on physicality and on politics and everyday life. Cysarz does not evoke philosophical *Verstand* as a dominant explanatory force. On the subject of science, he draws different conclusions from Gundolf's, and ones which are more in accordance with modern views of seventeenth-century science, as he sees that it continued to be intermixed with elements of religious thought:

Nun aber hebt solche Betrachtungsweise das christliche Weltgefühl keineswegs auf. Um von Kleinem wieder zum Großen zu kommen: Schon bei Copernicus und Kepler verbündet sich mathematisches, mechanistisches Denken einer tiefgläubigen, an mystische Gesichte streifenden Gesinnung. Galilei und Kepler haben die Scheidewand zwischen Erfahrung und Gedanken endgültig niedergerissen. ...Schwer zu entscheiden, wie weit hier die gläubige Schau den rechnerischen Gedanken beflügelt, wie weit die Rechnung den Glauben stärkt. Die Ausrechenbarkeit der Welt gereicht auch Gott zur Ehre.' (p. 24)

³⁸ Page references are to Herbert Cysarz, *Deutsche Barocklyrik. Band 1: Vor- und Frühbarock.*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964: unrevised reprint of the 1937 Leipzig edition).

Gundolf takes a more scientific view of the issue: ‘Das 17. Jahrhundert sah schliesslich die ganze Welt nur noch, so weit sie in Beweis und Gesetz zu fassen war...’ (FGP M12A, p. 9).

Cysarz also has a different attitude to the question of form and emotional content: ‘Nachahmerische Form und deutsche Natur treten in ein nicht paralleles, vielmehr reziprokes Verhältnis: je inniger oder stürmischer das Gemüt, desto üppiger die Form, in der es sich ausleben möchte, doch eben nicht auslebt, sondern verbirgt und durch seinen Gegensatz ausgleicht’ (p. 12). Cysarz’s use here and elsewhere of terms such as ‘deutsche Natur’ and ‘deutsche Seele’ remind us that he was writing in 1937 and that shortly afterwards he became a member of the Nazi Party, though his relationship with it was not straightforward (he was criticised for favourable mentions of Jewish and left-leaning authors in his lectures).

Nevertheless, he is not blinded by national chauvinism. He sees that the adoption of imitative models from antiquity or from contemporary Europe is not necessarily a constraint, but that it can be a fertilizing force: paradoxically, it can draw attention to strong emotion by concealing it. Gundolf does not see this; his view of *imitatio* is negative. Cysarz’s comment is astute and thought-provoking, but at the same time frustratingly condensed and tangled, a feature of his manner that is found elsewhere. On pp. 28–29 of his Introduction he discusses the nature of baroque imagery: ‘Das Spiel der Verhältnisse rührt alle Schichten der Wirklichkeit in eine Springflut der Bilder zusammen...Verhältnis bricht Inhalt, an die Gegenständliche Wirklichkeit wird zunächst nicht gedacht. So drängt auch das Bild nicht nach gegenständlicher Bündigkeit, nach bildhaftem Ersatz des Gegenstandes.’ Here Cysarz disagrees with Goedeke, who, as was noted above, claims that the poets of the Second Silesian School use their images ‘like the things themselves.’ He develops this thought:

Da das barocke Bild nicht in die Wirklichkeit hinein, sondern neben das Leben gestellt wird, da das barocke Gleichnis nicht mit dem Vergleichenen verschmilzt noch das Vergleichene vertritt, muß der Leser zugleich den Gegenstand festhalten und das Gleichnis betrachten, muß er inmitten der entgegenständlichten Bilder des

ursprünglichen Gegenstands vergewissert werden. Im Fall des mythologischen Gleichnisses und gar des christlichen Mysteriums bringt er vorweg einen reichen Vorrat an Stoff und Gehalt mit. (p. 30).

This is not the same as T.S. Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility'. Eliot was referring to what he perceived as a breaking of an earlier union of thought and emotion in poetry, Cysarz to the detachment of verbal imagery from the object to which it relates. This does not refer to the revelation of symbolic or allegorical meaning. It is a tension between stylized language and the 'imagined reality' that the reader has in their mind – a kind of defamiliarization, not stylisation or suppression. It is an intriguing and sophisticated thought: however stylised the language of a poem, it always sits alongside and interacts with our own memories and imagination.

Cysarz quotes Hoffmannswaldau's much-anthologized sonnet 'Beschreibung Vollkommener Schönheit' ('Ein haar so kühnlich trotz der berenice spricht'³⁹). 'Das ist für unsereinen noch nicht ein Gemälde. Und dennoch wirkt es, mit barocken Augen angeschaut, nicht als bloßes Puppengemächt. Schon den mechanischen Apparaturen haftet auch ein verschleiernd-enthüllender Schauer an' (p. 37). It is a pity that Cysarz did not expand that last sentence, in which he suggests that Hoffmannswaldau's poetry somehow manages to give an air of the uncanny to what are apparently just mechanical objects (the word *Puppengemächt* is an unusual coinage, itself drawing attention to the somewhat surreal effect). When he writes 'mit barocken Augen', he is saying that the modern reader can, and should, make an imaginative leap into a past sensibility, which complements Gundolf's comment, quoted above, about not judging the past by present-day standards. This is a sensitive, if brief, reading, and it contrasts with Gundolf's. It allows for a creative tension

³⁹ *Gedichte des Barock*, ed. by Volker Meid, 2nd edn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014), p. 278.

between emotion, conventional language, and strict form. The fact that we can recognize the use of convention in art does not mean that what is thereby expressed is automatically tame or harmless, that we are spared uncomfortable or difficult thoughts and feelings: the fact that the pretended helplessness of the male onlooker is induced by the transformation of the woman to a set of inanimate objects is something that it would be unwise to dismiss as 'conventional', at least if we give our full attention to the poem. In the twenty-first century, our views of what is 'veiled and revealed' in the poem are qualified by our sense that the objectification of the anonymous woman by a male gaze is problematic, although by Petrarchan convention the poem sees the man as being powerless to resist the effect of female beauty: the woman, however, is indifferent to him and makes him suffer and despair. The woman is described in terms of inanimate nature, of minerals (alabaster, rubies, pearls) and of flowers, yet also of her emotional impact on Hoffmannswaldau's poetic persona. Whilst this image derives from Petrarchism and the Song of Songs, it is bizarre and extraordinary if the reader really thinks about it rather than relegating it to 'convention'. The strange connotations in fact set our imagination free, rather than constricting it. It is not a portrait of a real woman, yet it has a power both to reveal beauty and to question the reader's responses to it, despite the conventional language. So while both Cysarz and Gundolf leave prominent issues frustratingly undeveloped, Cysarz is more willing to allow the poetry to speak for itself. They both touch on the question of how a reader can balance a sense of a work's historicity and conventionality with a fluid, open response to its possibilities of meaning. The comparison between them shows that it was possible for a critic writing at the same time and in the same general 'geistesgeschichtlich' context as Gundolf to have a more nuanced and complex sense of the past and of the working of language in poetry. For all his authoritative manner, Gundolf's was only one voice.

Identifying issues such as ‘conventions’ or ‘Gelehrtheit’ or ‘imitation’, may be an excuse for distancing ourselves from the work, rendering it harmless, a neutral historical datum. What is important is to interpret them, to understand what effects they have, why they are being used. Convention and formal discipline may in fact be ways of creating a fruitful, dynamic tension between form and content. Modern scholars may be as guilty in this respect as Gundolf, even where they may think they have overtaken him in identifying conventions and rhetorical techniques in seventeenth-century literature. Gundolf does not see that ‘convention’ is different from ‘cliché’, that it can be liberating as well as constricting. He himself values works of art which depends on what Terry Eagleton calls ‘an assured contract with their readers’ but cannot see that the same principle operated in the seventeenth century⁴⁰. ‘Behind the ‘universality’ of conventions,’ Andrew Bowie argues, ‘we modern readers may discover a particularity which itself has a ‘universal’ potential precisely *because* of its particularity’⁴¹.

Gundolf devotes the final eighty-eight manuscript pages of the lectures to the religious poet Johannes Scheffler (1624–1677), who wrote under the name Angelus Silesius, and he starts by comparing religious poets to founders of major religions: Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Moses. He believes that there is a common theme, namely the conflict between the mysteries that they wish to reveal and the sensuous medium, language, in which the revelation must take place:

Deutlicher: die Profeten oder Heilande empfangen ihr Gesicht als Sprache unmittelbar aus dem Grund ihres Wesens das sie als den Grund oder Schöpfer der Welt selbst erfuhren. Sie sprechen in Gleichnissen, weil anders ihr unmittelbarer Grund nicht nach aussen vermittelt werden kann. Diese Gleichnisse selbst sind den religiösen Denkern ihrer Gefolgschaft Aposteln, Kirchenvätern, Jüngern, Gläubigen, Reformatoren und Theologen schon Endpunkte und je nach ihrer grösseren oder geringeren Herzensgewalt und Geisteshelle fassen sie darin mehr oder weniger vom

⁴⁰ Terry Eagleton, *The Event of Literature*, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 94.

⁴¹ Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, p. 92.

ursprünglichen Sinn. Die meisten beruhigen sich bei den Zeichen selbst, bei den festen Sätzen. Schon beim frühen und beim späten Luther gewahrt man den Unterschied des Erringens und des Besitzes auch in der Sprache, und Goethes unheimliches Epigramm: ‘Jeglichen Schwärmer schlägt mir ans Kreuz im dreissigsten Jahre. Kennt er nur einmal die Welt, wird der Betrogne zum Schelm’⁴² gibt auch noch einen Wink über diese Gefahr der religiösen Offenbarung: dass die göttlichen Worte, sobald sie aus dem Herzen ihrer Empfänger und Schöpfer hinaustreten, ihren Geist trügen müssen, wie das Licht in Farben verfangen und gebrochen erscheint. Soweit gilt die Gleichsetzung von Erscheinung mit Schein und von Schein mit Trug. (FGP M13 pp. 664–65).

This vision, *Gesicht*, came to them directly as language, as allegory or parable, from a source which Gundolf suggests was actually deep within them, though they experienced it as coming from beyond. This reminds us again of his claim that the work of seventeenth-century writers is occasionally redeemed by ‘unwillkürliche Durchbrüche der dunkleren Lebenskräfte Schicksal und Seele’. Yet he says that such language contains within itself the danger of misunderstanding, even of deceit. On the other hand: ‘Die Geschichte der Mystik gibt uns von Platon bis Görres immer neue Beispiele von diesem Ringen der Eingeweihten gegen den Trug der Sprache als eines Aufhebens und Heraufhebens des Geheimnisses in Mitteilbares.’ The mystic, then, also has the power to dispel the deceptions of language and to communicate things that would otherwise be hidden. Yet the fact that the insight is ineffable leaves this issue unresolved, circling back on itself. This invocation of mysticism, of the ‘unsayable’ which can only be ‘shown’, is akin to that of Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, first published in 1921:

4.1212 Was gezeigt werden kann, kann nicht gesagt werden.

6.522 Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische.⁴³

⁴² Goethe, *Venezianische Epigramme* 52.

⁴³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Side-by-side-by-side edition, version 0.63 (14 July 2022), containing the original German, alongside both the Ogden/Ramsey, and Pears/McGuinness English translations. <https://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/tlp.html#bodytext> [accessed 28 November 2023].

Gundolf's *Mittelbares* is perhaps that which can be 'shown'.

Angelus Silesius found himself in the difficult situation of being under the influence of both Jakob Boehme and Martin Opitz. Gundolf refers to the stylistic dominance of Opitz in forceful terms, as the 'Redegewohnheiten, die Martin Opitz der deutschen Literatur aufgenötigt oder eingeschmeichelt hatte', leaving Angelus Silesius to attempt 'der gottfernten Rethorik (*sic*) und Stilistik zu bedienen, die es in der europäischen Christenheit jemals gegeben – wobei ich unter gottfern (auch gleichnishaft) das selbstgenügsame Beharren und Behagen des zweckmässigen Verstandes in seinen abgeleiteten Begriffszeichen oder Begriffsgleichnissen verstehe.' (FGP M13 pp. 667–68). These phrases do not yield up their meaning easily. Opitz has taken over German style either by sheer force (*aufgenötigt*) or by a sort of seductive charm (*eingeschmeichelt*). The words 'Beharren und Behagen' echo the sense of simultaneous dominance and beguilement that was seen in *aufgenötigt* and *eingeschmeichelt*. This stylistics is 'godless', then, because it manifests self-sufficient reason in 'derived' conceptual signs and similes, as well as being a kind of manipulative personal force. Gundolf tells his students that 'Ich muss nicht wiederholen, was ich fast bei allen Poeten der Opitz-Zeit in immer neuen individualen Brechungen darzulegen versuchte.' The same pattern is seen in all poets of the time. What Gundolf does not do here is ask why none of them were able or willing to resist these baleful influences. Maybe he would have said that this is due to the unfavourable *Kairos*, the *deutscher Fluch*, but he does not feel the need to explain himself. The influences are not necessarily fatal, however; a few sentences later Gundolf claims, that Angelus Silesius's work 'mehr den Jakob Böhme Opitzisch vergegenwärtigt als den Opitz Jakob Böhmisch verewigt.' The mysticism of Böhme is in the end the more enduring element, though the typical Gundolfian play on words implies that the two elements cannot be entirely separated. Again, Gundolf does not draw out the implications

of this, which might have qualified his implication that the influence of *Verstand* could not be resisted.

It is difficult to see how the following, from Angelus Silesius's *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, Book 1, 8, could be restated effectively without its poetic form:

‘Gott lebt nicht ohne mich’

Ich weiß, daß ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nu kann leben;
Werd ich zunicht, er muß von Not den Geist aufgeben.

For Gundolf, the issue is the lack of congruence between Angelus Silesius's style and technique, which are those of Opitz, and his content, which consists of mystical, ineffable, insight. Two points can be made here. The Alexandrine couplet with clear caesuras, on which Opitz had conferred full credibility as a German verse form, is in fact well suited to the antitheses and paradoxes that Angelus Silesius is trying to convey. Also, the apparent simplicity is deceptive. The poetic here is not just a matter of rhyme and metre, it is also a question of the choice of words, of the subtlety and depth of meaning that can be found in ‘weiß’, ‘ohne’. ‘ein Nu’, ‘leben’, ‘zunicht’, ‘Not’. A modern reader can appreciate the couplet quoted above without worrying about the influence of Opitz, and this is something that Gundolf misses, while Cysarz might have noticed it. Indeed, Jacques Derrida's essay on Angelus Silesius and apophatic theology, *Sauf le nom*, which takes the form of a fictional dialogue, claims that Angelus Silesius's aphorisms are a fundamental challenge to all certainty, yet they express this in an utterly assured manner. Without mentioning Opitz, he distinguishes ‘two voices’ in the poetic aphorisms and says that they have ‘an unusual alliance’:

These two powers are, *on the one hand*, that of a radical critique, of a hyper-critique after which nothing more seems assured, neither philosophy nor theology, nor science, nor good sense, not the least *doxa*, and *on the other hand*, conversely, as we are settled beyond all discussion, the authority of that sententious voice that produces or reproduces mechanically its verdicts with the tone of the most dogmatic assurance:

nothing or no one can oppose this, since we are in passion: the assumed contradiction and the claimed paradox.⁴⁴

Gundolf does not consider the ‘unusual alliance’, the fact that a contrast between formalized expression and deep emotion may in fact intensify the reader’s experience. We see the same paradoxical issue with poems by Gryphius that are concerned with suffering and with the devastation of war, such as *Über den Untergang der Stadt Freystadt* and *Thränen des Vaterlandes*. A further, related question is whether the value of such poetry lies in prior truths which can be stated independently of the work itself, or whether it is in the very presentation or expression of experience. In a book which will be discussed in a later chapter, George Steiner comments on this issue in relation to seventeenth-century mystics: ‘The ultimate intimacies of the speaking ego, the self in its final nakedness, are semantically formal. There is, so far as word and syntax go, a confessional propriety, a decorum...’.⁴⁵ Formality and intimacy cannot be separated. Alexander Pope wrote that ‘True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd/What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;/Something whose truth convinced at sight we find, /That gives us back the image of our mind.’⁴⁶ ‘What oft was thought’ may seem at first sight to be simply a conventional idea that is detachable from the means of expression, yet Pope says that by turning thoughts into ‘true wit’, into the language of poetry, the poet is in fact enhancing inchoate concepts and revealing truth to the reader in a way that a plain statement could not do.

⁴⁴ Jacques Derrida, ‘Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)’, trans. by John P. Leavey, Jr., in *On the Name*, ed. by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 35–85 (pp. 66–7).

⁴⁵ George Steiner, *Real Presences: is there anything in what we say?* (Chicago and London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1989), p. 83.

⁴⁶ *An Essay on Criticism*, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One Volume Edition of the Twickenham text*, ed. by John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) p. 153, lines 297–298.

Gundolf goes on to contrast the polemical writings and theological tracts of Angelus Silesius with his poetry, finding here the essence of the problem of this era as he sees it:

Beides sind aber Pole einer läufigen Spannung und wir würden aus der Sprache seiner Poesie selbst entnehmen können, wenn wir es nicht anderswoher wüssten, dass der innige Gottsucher einen überschüssigen, nicht in sein Herz hereingenommenen Verstand besass, ja dass seine echte Frömmigkeit nicht gebunden blieb an in die Denkinhalte oder Denkzeichen, deren er sich zu ihrer Verdeutlichung bediente. Das Verhängnis des Opitzianischen Zeitalters, das Auseinandertreten oder Nichtzusammenkommen der gesamt-menschlichen Kräfte und der Reflexion darüber, das die ganze Poeterei der Zeit verstört, liess auch dem Angelus Silesius die Freiheit seines rationalen Ich zur Betätigung derjenigen Gelehrsamkeit, Grübeleien und Spintisierkunst neben seinem Glaubens- und Lebensausdruck her, wie dem Opitz seine Schulbuchreime über Liebschaft, Freundschaft und dergleichen an seiner kräftigen Vitalität vorbei, wie dem Gryphius seine schrecklichen Sorgen und Nöte nur als Rede-Stoff, nicht als Sprachschwingung ins Bewusstsein und Wahrnehmung traten. (FGP M12 pp. 303–04).

The time in which Angelus Silesius lived allowed, or even forced, individuals to lead a double life, one in which the only language at their disposal was unable to express their true inner feelings, yet there is no doubt that these feelings existed (a point made earlier: see pp. 47–54, in particular the quote from *Martin Opitz* on p.52: ‘mag Blut, Seele, Wille, Geist, Schicksal, oder wie immer man das eben Unfaßbare, Unteilbare, Unmittelbare nenne, im Dasein des Opitz gewaltet haben: zu Sprache ist es nicht geworden’. These are, in Gundolf’s view, the characteristics of the ‘Opitzianisches Zeitalter’ as a whole). Religious content in itself is not enough, it is the underlying mental and spiritual disposition that counts. Angelus Silesius was one of the fortunate few who at this time could enchant (*hereinzaubern*: this word may be Gundolf’s own coinage) their longings and feelings ‘aus dem mittelbaren Buchstaben ihrer Schulen ins unmittelbare Wort ihres Herzens’ (the paired wordplay is once again evident: *mittelbar* and *unmittelbar*). This again recalls Eliot’s ‘dissociation of sensibility’: rational thought and feeling are divorced, although an exceptional individual such as Angelus Silesius could unite them. In Gundolf’s time too, individuals could escape the logic of instrumental reason: as we have seen, Gundolf regarded Stefan George as

someone who had revived language. But Gundolf's claim needs to be qualified. However esoteric or difficult it may be, however remote from everyday language and however individual its sources in the poet's mind, poetry cannot be a purely inward, private activity. It must in the end be discourse, having a shared, even if cryptic, meaning. This applies as much to Stefan George as to Angelus Silesius. Both Symbolism in poetry and mysticism in religion assume that the human mind can apprehend truths which cannot be conveyed directly in language. A poetic symbol may be very concrete and precise in itself, yet what it is trying to convey often is not. For that reason, Frank Kermode suggests, the poetic image is as much about 'the alienation of the seer as the necessity of existing in the midst of a hostile society'.⁴⁷ It is possibly the same heritage of Romantic thought that enables Gundolf to identify a kind of 'alienated seer' in Angelus Silesius and thus partly accounts for his fascination with him.

Despite his influences, Gundolf is often not just reproducing opinions derived from Goethe, Dilthey, or Wölfflin; he forges a synthesis of his own. Yet his attempt to characterize the seventeenth century as an era dominated by *Verstand* and to connect it with the problems of own time led him to raise some complex and subtle issues which he does not develop in a systematic way, such as that of how it is possible to ascribe thoughts and emotional states to poets which are not fully realised in their language (the implication being that the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century made it impossible for language to function in a fully poetic way). His language and manner are forceful, vivid, and confident, yet the images that he draws from science, religion, art, and social history occasionally undermine his overt arguments. His plays on words can sometimes be arch and meretricious,

⁴⁷ Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image*, ARK Paperback edition, 1968 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 2.

rather than adding real substance to what he is saying. We have seen that Gundolf rejected what he called ‘der modische Taumel, der die erwünschte Neuerforschung der deutschen Barockpoesie begleitet’, yet some of the other critics of his own day write about seventeenth-century literature with insight and sensitivity, and cannot be easily dismissed, despite later advances in scholarly knowledge of the period. On the other hand, Gundolf obviously sees himself as participating in the ‘desirable new research into German baroque poetry’. He recognizes larger questions about how the understanding and interpretation of literature always takes place within a historical context, one that may be very different from our own. He is unafraid, in his discussion of poetry, to raise large moral, social, religious and political issues, and to offer solutions to them in the shape of the great poet and a certain type of exalted poetic language. That other types of poetic language may be valid is something that he is willing to admit only occasionally and grudgingly. Yet his view of German seventeenth-century literature is not lacking in all enthusiasm. It will be seen in the next chapter that he regarded Grimmelshausen as one of the greatest of German authors, and with far less qualification than Gryphius, with whom, as was noted earlier, he bracketed Grimmelshausen as the two true geniuses of the time.

Chapter Three

Grimmelshausen

In 1930 the scholar and critic Richard Alewyn, who had studied with Curtius, Wölfflin and Gundolf himself, published an essay entitled ‘Grimmelshausen-Probleme’⁴⁸. It is a review of recent scholarly work on Grimmelshausen and a discussion of various editorial, biographical, and interpretative problems. He refers (p. 389) to ‘die Errungenschaften der sog. geistesgeschichtlichen Methode einerseits, das neue Verständnis für barocke Dichtung andererseits’, but says that this has led to ‘ein Chaos von Meinungen’. Scholars agree, Alewyn writes, on their high estimation of Grimmelshausen, but disagree on their reasons for it: ‘Für den einen ist er nichts als spannender Erzähler, für den anderen eine faustische gottsuchende Seele, für den dritten ein satirischer Beobachter der Welt und für den vierten ein Denker von bisher noch nicht ausgeschöpfter Tiefe.’ These positions may be less mutually exclusive than Alewyn implies, but he does reveal that Gundolf’s views must be seen as part of a wider scholarly debate. Alewyn’s views of Gundolf and of some other scholars will be considered later.

As with lyric poetry, the reception history of Grimmelshausen’s work is complex, and only some of the main points can be dealt with here. The true identity of the author of the *Simplicissimus*-cycle, concealed in anagrammatic pseudonyms on the title pages, was not established until long after his death. He became the subject of much interest in the nineteenth century, some of it for nationalistic rather than purely artistic reasons, and

⁴⁸ Richard Alewyn, ‘Grimmelshausen-Probleme’, in *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde* 44, 1930, pp. 89–102. Reprinted in *Der Simplicissimusdichter und sein Werk. Wege der Forschung* 153, ed. by Günter Weydt, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), pp. 389–408. The page numbers quoted here are Weydt’s.

certainly going beyond antiquarianism. In the eyes of Ludwig Tieck and others, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars gave *Simplicissimus*, and particularly the so-called ‘Jupiter episode’ (Book III, Chapters 3 and 4), in which an eccentric character expounds a project for German political renewal led by a hero-figure, a contemporary relevance. In his introduction to his 1836 edition of *Simplicissimus* Eduard von Bülow notes the many editions and imitations that appeared, listing the ones that he has seen (some of which he owned) and concludes that:

Danächst fand der *Simplicissimus* nicht nur bei seinem ersten Erscheinen eine große und rege Theilnahme im Publikum, sondern wußte sich dieselbe und fast ein Jahrhundert lang fortwährend zu erhalten, wie uns die vielen Auflagen oder Bearbeitungen und Nachahmungen, die er erlebt und vorgerufen hat, darthun. Ja man darf annehmen, daß er zu seiner Zeit wirklich Volksbuch gewesen ist, wogegen die übrigen Schriften des Verfassers dem Volke fremd und unbekannter geblieben sind.⁴⁹

Here von Bülow is using the distinction between ‘folk’ and ‘erudite’ writing that Gundolf was to employ later, though the term *Volksbuch*, first used by Görres and Herder around the end of the eighteenth century, while not without problems of definition, generally means chapbooks of adventures and legends aimed at the popular end of the market for printed books. The tendency of German politics to become more narrowly focussed on Prussian-German nationalism after the failed revolution of 1848 and the rise of *Germanistik* as an academic discipline were reflected in the critical assessment of Grimmelshausen.

Simplicissimus was debated in the Prussian Landtag in 1876, the question being whether it was suitable for encouraging patriotic sentiments in schoolchildren. This debate had religious as well as political dimensions, with some participants attempting to blame the Catholic Church for the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War, and is best seen as part of the *Kulturkampf*, Bismarck’s attempt

⁴⁹ *Die Abenteuer des Simplicissimus: ein Roman aus der Zeit des dreißigjährigen Krieges*, (Leipzig, F.A. Brockhaus, 1836), p. VIII.

to curb the power of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁰ It is striking that some present-day scholars also see Grimmelshausen's work primarily in terms of moral issues. An example is an article by Sarah Colvin that 'acknowledges racism and sexism as ethical problems in Grimmelshausen's novel *Courasche*' and attempts to decide whether Grimmelshausen replicates these problems or challenges them.⁵¹

In 1920 Gundolf wrote to his fellow member of the *George-Kreis*, Friedrich Wolters: 'Mein Winterkolleg hab ich zu leidlichem Abschluss gebracht mit einem Blick auf Grimmelshausen, den einzigen Deutschen der unsren deutschen Jammer aus ihm selbst, ohne römische oder griechische Ehe, schicksalhaft dar-stellt.'⁵² This sentence presents Grimmelshausen as a solitary German genius, free of the domination of classical sources, who described a uniquely German fateful suffering. *Winterkolleg* presumably refers to the lecture series 'Deutsche Literatur von Opitz bis Lessing', given in the 1919–20 term. *Abschluss* must refer only to a section of the lectures written by 1920, since the manuscript material catalogued in London under the title 'Deutsche Literatur von Opitz bis Lessing' goes on to deal with other authors. *Leidlich* suggests either he was not quite satisfied with it, or that he is indulging in some false modesty. Both manuscript and typescript have many handwritten corrections and alterations, with subtle changes of wording. In 1923 Gundolf published an article, 'Grimmelshausen und der Simplicissimus'.⁵³ It is based on material from the lectures contained in FGP file M13 from p. 381 onwards, though the whole of the Grimmelshausen section is pp. 372–76 of M12 and pp. 377–438 of M13. Some of this has

⁵⁰ Volker Meid, *Grimmelshausen: Epoche – Werke – Wirkung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1969), pp. 226–28.

⁵¹ Sarah Colvin, 'Doing Drag in Blackface: Hermeneutical Challenges and Infelicitous Subjectivity in *Courasche*, or: Is Grimmelshausen Still Worth Reading?' *Daphnis* 50, 4, (Brill, 2022), pp. 666–692, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18796583-12340045> [Accessed 5 October 2023].

⁵² Gundolf to Wolters, Heidelberg 27.1.1920, in *Gundolf – Wolters Briefwechsel*, p. 212, letter 177.

⁵³ In *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 1 (3), 1923, pp. 339–58. Reprinted in Weydt, pp. 111–32. Again, page numbers are as per Weydt.

been typed up and is held in file M13A. File M67 contains an unpublished introduction to the article. Much of the article closely resembles the manuscript material, though with some changes. There is no reason to assume that the article contains his final, definitive views. Indeed, what the alterations again suggest is that, for all the confidence and energy of his writing, his thinking could be fluid and changeable. As we know, he was working on this lecture series again in the last year or two of his life, after the article appeared. It is worth reiterating that the nature of his style and rhetoric is such that it is difficult to quote briefly. The manuscript deals at greater length than the printed article with the additional Simplician works such as *Springinsfeld* and *Courasche*. Gundolf lists numerous editions and imitations of *Simplicissimus*, continuing into the eighteenth century, and we know that he owned some of them, either the originals or reprints. It also deals with the reception history of *Simplicissimus* in the nineteenth century.

In Gundolf's account of seventeenth-century literature, Grimmelshausen presents him with an anomaly. He acknowledges Grimmelshausen's classical learning (which is not the same as domination by classical models, as we saw in the letter to Wolters above), as well as his debt to the Spanish picaresque novel, but issues of this kind are not the limiting factors that they were in his accounts of the poets:

Trotz manchen fremdländischen Einzeleinflüssen ist der *Simplicissimus* nach Wesen und Weg ein reindeutsches, nicht wie der *Faust* und der *Wilhelm Meister* ein europäisch-deutsches Werk, darum auch nicht von europäischer Strahlung. Uns bleibt er ehrwürdig als einziges Zeugnis deutschen Schicksalgehalts mitten im Fluch selbst als dessen bannendes Wort. . er rechtfertigt die bisher trostloseste Zeit unserer Geschichte (p. 132).

The last phrase needs to be qualified by the claims he had made for Gryphius, and those he was to make for Angelus Silesius (with the word *bisher* he appears to be saying that his own time can now be seen as the bleakest in German history). The phrase beginning 'Uns bleibt er ehrwürdig' is not easy to paraphrase in its context, but it suggests that Gundolf regarded

Grimmelshausen's language as having a unique power to drive out the curse of German destiny that he so strongly believed in. He cannot deny Grimmelshausen's greatness, yet he has to qualify his characterisation of the seventeenth century in order to explain how such greatness could arise: 'Die Zeit besass noch genug Masse, um ein solches Genie hervorzubringen, aber nicht die Kraft, es zu verarbeiten: Grimmelshausen liegt wie ein Block in dem zeitgenössischen Schrifttum' (FGP M12A p. 229). Again, the reader senses Gundolf's difficulty with describing the relationship between abstract currents of thought and specific individuals. He is willing to compare *Simplicissimus* with Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre*, but he does not say how Grimmelshausen's work could be possible if the German seventeenth century lacked a 'Person=, Volk= oder Weltwerdung des lebendigen Geistes' of the kind described in Chapter One. Part of the answer can be found in Gundolf's comments on Grimmelshausen's language: the key concepts are *Schicksal*, *Sinnbild* and *sinnbildlich*, *deutsch*, *Gleichnis*, *Überfremdung*, *Fülle*, *Leben*, and these will be discussed below.

In the published article Gundolf writes 'Grimmelshausen ist der einzige deutsche Erzähler seines Jahrhunderts, dessen dichterischer Gehalt zugleich Gehalt und Stoff seines eigenen Lebens ist, dessen Leben nach außen bunt und breit, nach innen tief und voll genug war, um einen großen Roman zu nähren...' (p. 115). Gundolf is suggesting that Grimmelshausen the man possessed psychological and emotional depths that enabled him to unify experience and language in a way that other seventeenth-century authors could not. Invoking John 1.14 again, he writes: 'nur bei ihm wird das Fleisch Wort, das Wesen Werk: er hat alle Dimensionen, und er hat sie im Fleisch wie im Wort.' (p. 211). Yet even this is qualified; compared to Luther he was 'freilich kein Sprachschöpfer, sondern nur ein Sprachmeister' (pp. 117–18). In spite of the comparison to the biblical Creator, his limitation is a lack of true creativity in language. But his linguistic range is huge: 'mit jeder

Klüngelsprache von der Predigersalbung bis zum Gaunerrotwelsch ist Grimmelshausen vertraut, besonders mit dem Soldatendeutsch und -welsch.’ (p. 119). This is contrasted with the learned classical language of the poets, though Grimmelshausen can also use this register: ‘Grimmelshausen vereinigt die unwillkürlichen Denk- und Blicksprünge des Volkssprichworts mit dem künstlichen Belesenheitsspiel des Barockgelehrten’ (p. 123): the use of the word *unwillkürlich* again is noteworthy. Here it suggests the questionable idea of an unconscious folk wisdom, which individuals play no part in shaping. It is unusual for Gundolf to acknowledge ordinary life and colloquial language, and this is not something he is prepared to do for the society and literature of his own time in the early twentieth century.

Gundolf’s account of Grimmelshausen draws on Herder’s idea of *Volkspoesie*, which was taken up by the Romantics. Volker Meid describes how the opposition of folk and art poetry was applied to Grimmelshausen by nineteenth-century scholars of literature (as was noted in the quotation from Eduard von Bülow above):

Zu den vorherrschenden Denkmustern der Germanistik des 19. Jahrhunderts gehört die Gegenübersetzung von Kunst- und Volksdichtung. Für Grimmelshausen bedeutete das freilich – jedenfalls nachdem der gesamte Umfang seines Werkes bekannt worden – daß er beiden Bereichen zugerechnet werden mußte: Und so ist höchst merkwürdiger Weise beides ganz äußerlich und unorganisch neben einander in demselben Manne: die formale Leerheit der Schulpoesie und der formlose Inhalt der Volkspoesie.⁵⁴

Gundolf develops von Bülow’s hint about the significance of imitations of Grimmelshausen on

FGP M13 p. 433:

Wenn man einen Anhalt gewinnen will, was dem Publikum einer Zeit jeweils bei einem erfolgreichen Werk zugesagt, so muss man sich besonders an die Nachahmungen halten, die es hervor gezeitigt hat: mehr als die Urteile der Kritik drückt die Witterung der Spekulanten oder die Empfänglichkeit der Unselbständigen die Bereitschaft eines gesellschaftlichen Bildungsbodens aus. So hat man am Werther nicht den titanischen Gefühlsphantheismus, sondern einerseits die rohstoffliche Selbstmordfabel, andererseits eine weinerliche Mär von unglücklicher Liebschaft oder allerlei Stimmungsschwelgereien gelesen, verlangt und nachgeahmt.

⁵⁴ Meid, *Grimmelshausen*, pp. 218–19.

We should not be concerned only with the mere fact that a work can generate imitations but should also consider that a work's later reception can be grasped by the nature of attempts to imitate it.⁵⁵ This is a fresh and thought-provoking idea for its time, and one that reveals Gundolf's acuteness as literary critic, though modern scholars might disagree with the idea that the early publics for Grimmelshausen and Goethe were wrong to see what they did see, namely the allegedly superficial elements of story and mood, missing the true greatness of the work, and by extension, that it is only the modern critic who can see the truth. However, Gundolf is only concerned with imitation in the sense of making an inferior copy, not with the classical concept of *imitatio* as an attempt to rival or surpass previous authors, or with anything like Harold Bloom's 'anxiety of influence', which supposes that artists achieve originality by struggling with and against their predecessors.

As noted above, Gundolf identifies 'titanischer Gefühlspantheismus' as the essence of *Werther*. This, he claims, was missed by its first readers. That only readers of later generations can truly see the 'titanic emotional pantheism' of *Werther*, with its suggestion of heroic, superhuman striving, and that the elements of narrative and individual emotion are unimportant, takes this claim too far. That *Werther* enjoyed huge popularity across Europe and caused great controversy, and that it was believed to encourage suicide, is surely not incidental or trivial. Gundolf here regards the 'message' as being more important than, and separable from, character or narrative. In a discussion of the history of the German novel, such a view cannot be easily reconciled with Gundolf's statement at the beginning of the section of the manuscript dealing with Grimmelshausen that his prime gift was that of an 'Erzähler' concerned with the 'Gang des Lebens':

⁵⁵ For a discussion of this see Alexander Weber, 'Die Grimmelshausen-Rezeption Friedrich Gundolfs und des George-Kreises' in *Euphorion* 90, Issue 3, 1996, pp. 362–82, (p. 371).

Unter den Frommen und Fragern des 17. Jahrhunderts war einer, der ohne Flucht nach innen oder oben, mit dem Geschehen, der sinnlichen Erscheinung des Verhängnisses, mit der Offenbarung Gottes im Gang des Lebens selbst zu ringen wagte: das ist Hans Jacob von Grimmelshausen, und seine Antwort ist der grosse Roman der deutschen Barockzeit der Abenteuerliche Simplicissimus. (FGP M12 p. 372)

There are some striking insights here: Grimmelshausen deals with religious questions, but sees them as embodied in the material reality of everyday life, the 'sensuous manifestation of fate', not as a flight to a mystical other-worldly realm. There is a resemblance to Auerbach's comment on the narratives of the Old Testament: 'the stories are not, like Homer's, simply narrated "reality". Doctrine and promise are incarnate in them and inseparable from them; for that very reason they are fraught with "background" and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning.'⁵⁶ The style and manner of the Hebrew Scriptures are of course hugely different from those of Grimmelshausen, though it will be seen later that Gundolf calls him 'Luther-bibelfest'.

At the beginning of the article, Gundolf stresses that, in his view, Grimmelshausen is not himself imitating other writers, but is motivated by his own inner needs, those of an original genius: 'Doch nicht in Nachfolge dieses Musters [i.e. the Spanish picaresque novel], sondern aus eigenen Bedürfnissen schuf Grimmelshausen den ersten neuhochdeutschen Bildungsroman, d.h. Weltbildroman, der über viereinhalb Jahrhunderte hinweg gleichsam Wolframs 'Parzival' wieder verkörpert und um vier Menschenalter dem 'Wilhelm Meister' vordeutet.' The manuscript states: 'man könnte eine vollständige wissenschaftliche Kulturgeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts allein aus dem Simplicissimus und den Simplicianischen Schriften herstellen, selbst wenn uns nichts andres erhalten wäre' (FGP M13 p. 382). The article qualifies and reduces this hyperbolic claim by removing

⁵⁶ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1953), fiftieth anniversary printing, 2003, p. 15.

vollständige and adding *fast*: ‘Man könnte die Kulturgeschichte eines Zeitalters fast allein aus dem ‘Simplicissimus’ herstellen.’ (p. 111). Taken at face value the statement is dubious, but it indicates Gundolf’s estimate of Grimmelshausen and of the significance of literature in general as a key to the understanding of an age in history.⁵⁷

On FGP M12 p. 373 he writes: ‘[Der *Simplicissimus* ...] ist für das 17. Jahrhundert was der *Wilhelm Meister* für das ausgehende deutsche Rokoko ist ~~und der beste deutsche Roman neben Goethes Werk überhaupt.~~’ It is notable that again a sweeping judgment – that *Simplicissimus* is the ‘best German novel’ alongside *Wilhelm Meister* – has been deleted, scaling down the claims being made for it. Gundolf was not the first critic to draw parallels with *Parzival* and *Wilhelm Meister*. Theodor Echtermeyer had compared *Simplicissimus* with *Parzival* in his review of Eduard von Bülow’s edition of *Simplicissimus*, and Carl Kläden had developed this in an article of 1850.⁵⁸ A work contemporary with Gundolf that deals with this topic is Melitta Gerhard’s *Der deutsche Entwicklungsroman bis zu ‘Goethes Wilhelm Meister’*.⁵⁹ Gerhard (1891–1981) met Gundolf when they were students at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. He made her aware of Stefan George, about whom she later wrote a book⁶⁰. Volker Meid (p. 94) describes the chapter ‘Grimmelshausens *Simplicissimus* als Entwicklungsroman’ as ‘ausführlichste ältere Darstellung der Bildungs- bzw.

⁵⁷ See A. Weber, p. 368 and pp. 373–74 on Gundolf’s use of superlative expressions. He intended them as pointers to the unique characteristics of an author; they should not be taken as sweeping, grandiose claims. The evidence for this is a cancelled passage in FGP M13 pp. 423–24. The fact that the passage is crossed out may simply mean that Gundolf decided that a lecture was not the right place for a digression on methodology. However, a reader of the published ‘Grimmelshausen und der *Simplicissimus*’ alone is likely to feel that Gundolf sometimes makes brash and overconfident assertions.

⁵⁸ Theodor Echtermeyer, ‘Rezension: ‘*Die Abenteuer des Simplicissimus*’, ed. Eduard von Bülow’, in *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, I, no. 52/54, (Leipzig:1838), columns 413–24, 430–32. Reprinted in Weydt, pp. 1–16. Carl Kläden, ‘Ueber die Bedeutung des *Simplicissimus* von Chr. von Grimmelshausen’, in *Germania* 9, 1850, pp. 86–92. Both articles are discussed in Meid, pp. 220–22.

⁵⁹ Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1926.

⁶⁰ Melitta Gerhard, *Stefan George: Dichtung und Kündigung*, (Berne and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1962).

Entwicklungsromanthese.’⁶¹ Alewyn (p. 396) raises objections to the *Bildungsroman* view held in their different ways by both Gerhard and Gundolf, pointing to the episodic and arbitrary elements of the novel that do not lend themselves to an overarching narrative of the development of the individual. The *Bildungsroman* is about a character being reconciled to the world, not bidding it farewell (‘vale’) as Simplicius does.

Gerhard maintains (p. 143) that for all his apparent childlike innocence, Simplicissimus is a judge of the world he inhabits, whereas Wolfram’s Parzival is its pupil or student. In Wolfram, the development of the individual starts from the external world, not from the individual ego, though in contrast to later authors, in Grimmelshausen God’s laws still stand above the individual. Gerhard points out (pp. 154–55) that Wolfram simply narrates events and leaves it to the reader to decipher their meaning. Grimmelshausen, either directly or in the words of his hero, offers commentary and interpretation. She relates this to the rise of individual self-examination encouraged by Reformation piety. Her views resemble a passage in Gundolf’s *Goethe*: Gerhard and Gundolf had similar views of the development of depictions of the individual in fiction:

Die Begründer des Seelenromans sind Rousseau und Sterne: durch sie grenzte der Roman an die Lyrik, ward zu einem Vorwand der Ichdarstellung, das Ich nicht mehr gefaßt als allgemeines Symbol des wesentlichen Menschentums überhaupt, wie im Simplizissimus des Grimmelshausen (oder in Bunyans Pilgerfahrt) sondern als eine spezifische Person, die des Autors.⁶²

Tracing a history of modes of representation in this way recalls the approach developed at much greater length in Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, though that work is not concerned with the German tradition.

⁶¹ Gerhard’s chapter is reprinted in Weydt, pp. 133–60.

⁶² Gundolf, *Goethe*, p. 338.

Gerhard's is a thoughtful, but more straightforwardly moral, religious, and psychological interpretation of the novel than Gundolf's. Her main interest is in contrasting the moral and spiritual development of *Simplicissimus* with that of *Parzival*. She is not interested in grand themes of the German spirit and the development of the German language, with Word becoming Flesh. Though she writes (p. 148) that 'eine fast heidnische Weltfreudigkeit leuchtet wider Willen vielfach im *Simplicissimus* durch', she is not concerned with *Odinsglaube* as the primary motive force of the novel (Gundolf's use of this term will be discussed later). Alewyn is not concerned with these themes either: both of them deal with stylistic, moral, and psychological issues which illuminate the workings of the novel for the reader.

On page 124 of his article Gundolf distinguishes between the cultural contexts of *Simplicissimus* and *Wilhelm Meister*: 'Die Welt des 'Wilhelm Meister' war sittig, behäbig, gebildet, geistig, empfindsam, die um das Simplex roh, böse, wirr und umständlich, eher ein Trümmerfeld vieler Bildungsreste und -ansätze als eine sichere Kultur.' What the heroes have in common is 'die dumpfe Wanderschaft im dunklen Drang zum Heil, nicht nur zum Glück [...]', and this transcends the historical circumstances of the composition of the novels they feature in. The description of the eighteenth century may seem strange in view of such devastating events as the Seven Years' War, the Lisbon Earthquake, the war of American Independence and the French Revolution, which Goethe himself described as formative influences on him.⁶³ Perhaps Gundolf is making a broad point about the rise of 'sensitivity' and the belief in the rational and civilized quest for happiness, as described by Ritchie Robertson.⁶⁴ But it is certain that he believed in a direct relationship between a supposed

⁶³ See, for example, Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, entry for 25 February 1824, and Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book I.

⁶⁴ Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, in particular Chapter 1, 'Happiness, Reason and Passion'.

abstract spiritual destiny, the forms of social life at any given time, and literary genre, since he writes of the works of Wolfram, Grimmelshausen, Goethe and Jean Paul that: ‘Das geistige Schicksal fand sein Sinnenbild jedesmal in Lebensformen der Zeit, die sich in Litteraturgattungen abdrückten.’ Again it is ‘spiritual destiny’ that dominates, an impersonal force that is subject only to its own laws.

Examining the question of autobiography and realism, Gundolf makes much of the supposition that Grimmelshausen’s own experience forms part of the novel. Quoting a passage near the beginning of Book I Chapter XXX of *Simplicissimus*, he writes:

Er schildert das Tafeln einer Soldatengesellschaft: ‘Man sprach das Tischgebet sehr still und allem Ansehen nach, auch sehr andächtig. Solche stille Andacht kontinierte so lang, als man mit der Supp zu thun hatte, gleichsam als wenn man in einem Capuzinerkonvent gessen hätte.’ Wie konkret, wahr und farbig ist hier die von Anschauung getränkte Erinnerung an den Capuzinerkonvent! Denn es ist Erinnerung, nicht blosse Erwähnung. (FGP M13, p. 401)

This passage is not in the published article, and Gundolf’s interpretation is disputable.

Grimmelshausen is using an image of pseudo-religious reverence to describe people eating.

They are surely more interested in their food than in God, as Grimmelshausen goes on to make clear, comparing the unruly banqueters to the companions of Odysseus whom Circe turned into swine. Gundolf misses the clue to Grimmelshausen’s irony that ‘allem Ansehen nach’ provides. Grimmelshausen is possibly being sarcastic about the Capuchins as well.

They are an order of Franciscan friars devoted to ideals of poverty and austerity: to depict them engrossed in eating is surely satirical. The reference to them is not the simple ‘memory’ that Gundolf claims it is.

The question of Grimmelshausen’s realism was debated in Gundolf’s own time. In 1932, Richard Alewyn analysed the style and rhetoric of the Battle of Wittstock episode in *Simplicissimus* Book II, XXVII which shows that it cannot be regarded as a realistic

description of Grimmelshausen's own military experience.⁶⁵ It is a long passage, but a quotation from the introductory paragraph will demonstrate Alewyn's general point:

Wir haben hier zwar eine ausgesprochene Häufung von Wirklichkeitsmerkmalen, aber die sinnliche Deutlichkeit wird durch sie kaum erhöht, sondern eher verwischt. Vor allem steht der reale Gehalt in keinem Verhältnis zu den daran verknüpften Reflexionen: Antithetische Kontrastierungen auf Aufspaltungen, negative Umschreibungen, ironische Spiegelungen, groteske Vergleiche, moralisch-satirische Ausfälle wetteifern, das Tatsächliche von innen aufzuschwellen oder von außen zu überwuchern. (p. 360).

Alewyn demonstrates a sensitivity to Grimmelshausen's actual use of language and invites his reader to apply his observations for themselves. More recent scholarship has shown that the passage has word-for-word similarities with the German translation of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590), which was first rendered into German by an otherwise unknown Valentin Theocritus von Hirschberg in 1629 from an earlier French translation and revised and republished by Martin Opitz in 1638.⁶⁶ This is not to question the vigour of Grimmelshausen's style in his own version.

Volker Meid writes (p. 138) that the figure of Simplicius presents problems: sometimes he is a distinct character and sometimes a type; sometimes an experiencing self and sometimes a narrating one. Simplex has multiple identities: he is split between a narrating and an experiencing character, he becomes a calf, a woman, and the Hunter of Soest, he changes military allegiance and religion, social class, and parentage.⁶⁷ Yet he

⁶⁵ Richard Alewyn, *Johann Beer: Studien zum Roman des 17. Jahrhunderts*, (Leipzig: 1932), pp. 200–12. Reprinted as 'Realismus und Naturalismus' in *Deutsche Barockforschung* ed. Alewyn, pp. 358–71. Page references are to the latter.

⁶⁶ See Walter Holzinger, 'Der Abentheurliche Simplicissimus and Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia.''' *Colloquia Germanica* 3, 1969, pp. 184–98. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23980007>> [accessed 5 October 2023].

⁶⁷ For a more recent view of the complex relations of writer, character and narrative perspective see Italo Michele Battafarano, 'Grimmelshausen's 'Autobiographies' and the Art of the Novel,' in *A Companion to the Works of Grimmelshausen*, ed. by Karl F. Otto (Columbia, SC: Camden House: Boydell & Brewer, 2002), pp. 45–92.

remains the same person, one who develops from a naïve simpleton to someone who has achieved a religious insight into the true nature of the world and finally withdraws from it to an island. As noted in connection with the *Bildungsroman* his final words are ‘Der Leser lebe wohl, vale’: a farewell to his readers and to the world.

Later in his article Gundolf claims:

Erzähler, nicht Fabulierer oder Schilderer ist Grimmelshausen, obwohl seinem Erzählergenie die Gabe des Schilderns und Fabulierens beiwohnt. [...] Grimmelshausens Erzählergenie wurde erregt und genährt von einem geschehnisreichen Abenteurersleben – es muß ihn gedrängt haben, sein wildes buntes Dasein einmal in der Fülle zu berichten, wie er wohl am Wirtstisch oder auf der Reise Stücke daraus mündlich mitgeteilt hat. (p.114)

This is a typical piece of Gundolfian rhetoric, confident in its distinctions, repeating words for emphasis, and full of wordplay and elegant paradox. The passage employs biographical speculation, though he does not attempt to find a one-to-one correspondence of events in the life to details in the work. In fact, he says:

Genug, der *Simplicissimus* ist keine eigentliche Autobiographie, sondern ein Bildungsroman, wie *Parzival*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, die *Flegeljahre*, und als der Bildungsroman einer zugleich wüsten und überbildeten Zeit eben Abenteuergeschichte. Er enthält nicht die Reihenfolge der Lebensstatsachen, sondern die Schichtung der Tatsachenarten die sein Verfasser erlebt, gehört oder gelesen hat. (p. 115)

Several issues are raised by this sentence. It has been seen in the passage above containing the comparison to the Capuchin friars, as well as in the passages on the Battle of Wittstock, that the question of what constitutes a fact in *Simplicissimus* is not a straightforward one. Gundolf does not here reject the gifts of the *Fabulierer* and the *Schilderer*: he recognizes their unique qualities and it is a pity that he does not give examples of writers of either kind. The reader may ask whether any autobiography in practice contains 'the sequence of the facts of real life', however 'honest' it is. *Simplicissimus* contains a layering of diverse kinds of facts; these may be things that the author has experienced, or things that she or he has heard or read (while Gundolf occasionally refers to the literary sources of *Simplicissimus*, such as

the Spanish *pícaro* novel, overall they are now seen as more important than Gundolf could have known. See for example the discussion of Sidney's *Arcadia* above). His era is both *wüst* and *überbildet*: these terms allude to the *Gelehrtheit* that Gundolf constantly denigrates, as well as to his story of the dominance of *Verstand* in the seventeenth century (the lecture reads '[...] einer wüsten, wirren, abenteuerlich zugleich rohen und überbildeten Zeit.', which gives more emphasis to the endeavour and the desolation of war. The word *überbildet* may be analogous to criticisms of Baroque style as over-elaborate). The 'Bildungsroman einer [...] überbildeten Zeit' is one of Gundolf's characteristic paradoxical plays on words. How such an age is capable of producing a true *Bildungsroman* is a question that Gundolf does not answer directly (and objections to the term *Bildungsroman* for *Simplicissimus* were noted earlier), but in the first sentence of the article there is a hint of a solution: 'In den simplicianischen Schriften vereinen sich die erzählerischen Errungenschaften des deutschen 17. Jahrhunderts und werden, über rohen Stoff und dürre Lehre, über Rüge und Zierrede hinaus, zum regen Ausdruck eines ganzen Menschen.' The manuscript (FGP M13 p. 381) has 'zum Ausdruck eines eigentümlichen ~~runden~~ vollen Menschen.' 'Ausdruck eines eigentümlichen vollen Menschen' is the idea of the greatest art as the expression of a unique, idiosyncratic, fully rounded or integrated human being (this description need not, of course, refer to the characters of a novel). The words *voll* and *Fülle* describe the highest form of human life.

Lebensfülle is a term used several times in the lecture manuscripts, but not in the published article, where it is either replaced by *Fülle*, or is paraphrased. We recall that he used it in the introduction to the lecture series, where he describes 'Dichtung' as '[der] unwillkürliche Sprachausdruck der Lebensfülle eines Einzelnen oder einer Gesamtheit [...], der sich in Kunstformen vollzieht'. Charles Taylor discusses 'fullness of life', which he describes as, among other things, a time when 'Our highest aspirations and our life energies

are somehow lined up, reinforcing each other, instead of producing psychic gridlock. This is the kind of experience which Schiller tried to understand with his notion of ‘play’.⁶⁸

Gundolf’s *Lebensfülle* can also be understood as something like Bergson’s *élan vital*, a creative and innovative force that is inherent in living beings. In discussing Grimmelshausen’s imagination and the relation of the events of the novel to those of the novelist’s life, Gundolf writes about the description of the witches’ sabbath in Book II, Chapter XVII of *Simplicissimus*. He contrasts Grimmelshausen’s description with that of Opitz in his *Schäferrei von der Nymphen Hercynia* (1630), which he claims is compiled (*zusammengeschrieben*) from demonologies such as that of Anton Praetorius and from passages in Lucan (presumably the account of the witch Erichtho in Book VI of the *Pharsalia*). In a phrase omitted from the book, the lecture calls this ‘nur angewandtes Buchwissen.’ In the article Gundolf writes:

Auch Grimmelshausen hat wohl keine Hexensabbath mitgemacht, doch sah er aus eigener Besessenheit das Hexentum so beklemmend echt, daß er es echt erzählen konnte. Er war ein so unverholter, strotzender, quellender Mensch mit jener mitschwingenden, ergänzenden, gebärdigen Einbildungskraft die sich nicht in das Geschehen hineindenkt, sondern in es steckt (p. 122).

The manuscript, however, words part of the first sentence differently: ‘aber er sah aus seiner eignen Lebensfülle heraus, das Ganze hexenhafter Weiber so bedrängend deutlich und rege, dass er jede ihrer Geberden erzählen konnte wo es not tat’ (FGP M13 pp. 402–03). It is clear that *Lebensfülle* is not a literal experience of attending a witches’ sabbath: it reminds us of the passage quoted above in which Grimmelshausen’s life was said to be ‘nach außen bunt und breit, nach innen tief und voll genug [...], um einen großen Roman zu nähren.’ In the printed article the word *Lebensfülle* becomes *Besessenheit*, with its suggestion of *furor poeticus*, the

⁶⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 5–6. The Schiller reference is to *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), Chapter 15.

divine madness that possesses the poet according to a long tradition that appears in the ancient world, in the Renaissance, and in Romanticism. *Lebensfülle* complements the artist's imagination and creativity.⁶⁹

In attempting to describe the underlying moral and spiritual scheme of *Simplicissimus*, Gundolf compares it with a near contemporary English book: 'Vielleicht hat dem Dichter eine sinnbildliche, ja allegorische Geschichte des Menschenlebens schlechthin vorgeschwebt, wie etwa dem Bunyan mit 'The Pilgrim's Progress'.' (p. 130). Yet while the comparison shows Gundolf's willingness to look outside the German and Spanish traditions, it does not sit easily with his overall view of Grimmelshausen. *Simplicissimus* (1668) can be seen as a journey to salvation, via folly, sin, punishment, and repentance, but it is not a personification allegory in the way that Bunyan's 1678 work is. Bunyan delivers a guide to Christian salvation 'in the similitude of a dream', with its unsubtle character names (Christian, Faithful, Mr Worldly-Wiseman, Giant Despair, and so on). With a fervent Puritan sensibility Bunyan's book describes a journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, and cannot easily be assimilated to English nationalistic narratives. Simplicius is not a Protestant Christian everyman, but, at least in Gundolf's view, a restless, striving German hero. That the literary precursors of this are Spanish is something that Gundolf knows, but he is disparaging about; the Spanish works deal merely with actions, not with 'soul', 'character', and 'destiny': '[...]

⁶⁹ Kommerell took a perceptive, but more prosaic view of the question of the self in *Simplicissimus*, seeing it as a function of literary form: 'Dies Ich ist kein konkretes Ich, am wenigsten das Ich Grimmelshausens. Soviel auch Selbsterlebtes in diesem Roman geschildert sein mag - es ist eine literarisch allegorische Charaktermaske, Verbindung des Schelmen mit dem Toren, und Träger einer bestimmten, den Roman eigentlich begründenden Erlebnisart. Es ist ebenso, wenn auch nicht so deutlich, eine konstruktive Leistung der komischen Kraft wie Don Quijote: kein Charakter, sondern idealer Träger einer von der Gattung geforderten Erlebnisweise.' 'Don Quijote und der Simplicissimus' in *Max Kommerell: Essays, Notizen, poetische Fragmente*. Aus dem Nachlass herausgegeben von Inge Jens (Olten and Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter Verlag, 1969), pp. 37–80 (pp. 72–3).

dem Spanier liegt mehr an den Streichen seines Schelmen als an dessen Seele.. mehr an Handlungen als an Schicksalen und Charakteren.’ (p. 126). On pp. 128–29 he writes:

Noch Grimmelshausens “Humor” entstammt diesem Gefühl, dem schauenden Drübersein und dem leidenden Innesein. Bis zum Vieh und viehischen Menschen sieht er ein Geschöpf als eigenes Lebewesen und zugleich im Gottesraum, vom wilden Trieb und vom weisen Maß aus. Die meisten Sittenschilderer seiner Zeit bemerken keine Geschöpfe, sondern Eigenschaften und Begehungen, die unter ein festes Moralgelot fallen. Auch Grimmelshausen hat ein Maß in sich, aber er stellt es Gott anheim, zu richten. . er will nur das Licht sehen das über Gerechten und Ungerechten scheint, und die Gerechten und Ungerechten in diesem Licht betrachten.

We note here another New Testament reference of the kind that came naturally to Gundolf, namely Matthew 5.45: ‘er läßt seine Sonne aufgehen über die Bösen und über die Guten und läßt regnen über Gerechte und Ungerechte’. This does not appear in the manuscript version, where he writes ‘er hat nur die Geschöpfe in ihrem schicksalsvollen Erdendasein vor Augen, und kümmert sich mehr drum was sie tun und leiden und wie ihnen zumut ist als um ihren Platz in der Heilsordnung’ (FGP M13 p. 414). The use of the Gospel allusion adds concision and elegance, as well as a more elevated tone. Possibly the *Sittenschilderer* are the Spanish *picaro* novelists; the term is also reminiscent of Ben Jonson’s comedy of humours or Molière’s comedy of manners. But Gundolf also stresses that Grimmelshausen sees beings under the aegis of a divine plan. ‘Ganzes und Eigenes’ is opposed to ‘Weltplan Gottes’, although a believer might argue that there is no contradiction between God creating a unique individual and that individual having a place in the divine plan. But on the other hand, Gundolf claims that Grimmelshausen is less interested in the divine plan than in ‘earthly existence’. This is the opposite of Bunyan, who is not interested in ‘living beings in themselves’, and whose ‘suffering inner being’ is intense guilt over sin and the threat of damnation, not the physical suffering of individuals in war and earthly misfortune, although this is not to say that Bunyan does not have moments of quirky characterization and vivid colloquial speech.

Schicksal is a key word in Gundolf's discussion of Grimmelshausen. It occurs over forty times in the manuscript, and about ten times in the article, including in the compound *Volksschicksal* (p. 131). *Grundsichicksal* appears only in the manuscript. Neither word is found in *Grimms Wörterbuch*. Does it mean an active power, a kind of divine intervention or providence, or does it just mean a random outcome? *Grimm* gives the two principal meanings as:

- 1) das was dem menschen durch fügung bestimmt ist, ihm begegnet.
- 2) die macht, die über dem menschen waltet, oft personificiert; in christlichem sinne, als von gott ausgehend, gefaszt.⁷⁰

These meanings cannot be completely separated, as the entry in *Grimm* suggests, with its ambiguous *fügung*. Gundolf often connects *Schicksal* with the words *deutsch*, or 'die deutsche Seele'. What happened in German history is not just a series of events, it is *Schicksal*. Moreover, *Schicksal* cannot be separated from questions of literary form:

Das Schicksal des Simplicissimus, das der Ironie Grimmelshausens Tiefe und Weite gibt und sie über das Klugheitslächeln eines Wieland oder Tieck oder Fontane weit erhöht, verkörpert den Schauer der Vergängnis, ein Fluidum aus der Seele des Helden, aus der des Dichters, aus der deutschen Seele, die nur hier im 17. Jahrhundert zu Wort und Bild, d.h. zu Mythos gekommen ist, zu sichtbar gesagter Zeit ('Grimmelshausen und der Simplicissimus', p. 131).

It is not that Grimmelshausen employs irony to illustrate Simplicius's fate, but that fate gives depth and breadth to the irony, and this occurs at a specific moment in German history: a fateful moment, a *Kairos* in which word, image and myth are revealed (though as has been noted, he claims elsewhere that other aspects of the seventeenth century lack *Kairos*).⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/21, [Wörterbuchnetz \(woerterbuchnetz.de\)](http://woerterbuchnetz.de) [accessed 28 November 2023].

⁷¹ In George's poetry, we can distinguish a sense of *Kairos* derived from Classical Greek thought and meaning a favourable time and place, and one derived from the New Testament and meaning a messianic moment in which the Kingdom of God is announced. See Susanne Kaul, 'Kairos bei George', in *George-Jahrbuch 7*, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart and Ute Oelmann, (Berlin; Boston: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 1–19.

‘Schauder der Vergängnis’ reminds us of a principal theme of Gryphius’s poetry.⁷² *Fluidum* is here another organic, bodily image, as is *Schauder* (not to mention *verkörpert*).⁷³ ‘Wort und Bild’ ... ‘Mythus’ ... ‘sichtbar gesagte Zeit’ are terms that do not easily yield up their meaning in this context, and the question again arises of whether Gundolf should be allowed the freedom of a poet or whether he should be held to more rigorous standards.

On page 117 of the article there is another reversal of what might be expected: Gundolf argues that it is the content of Grimmelshausen’s imagination that is ornate, mannered, stilted, and that he uses language suited to it, rather than starting from mannered and stilted language as does Zesen. In the greater artist, experience and imagination are prior to the language that expresses them:

Freilich geht er hier mehr von der Sache aus als von der Rede – es schweben ihm gestelzte und verzierte Gestalten und Ereignisse vor, die ihm den Mund präziös spitzen, während Zesen und die anderen Schwulstschreiber für ihren Vorrat gestelzte und verzierte Redensarten sich Figurinen und Begebenheiten ausdenken. Grimmelshausen war von Gesichtern erfüllt die ihn reden heißen, nicht von Worten behext die er anbringen wollte. Dies macht ihn zum größten deutschen Schriftsteller seiner Zeit, daß er allein den rechten Weg gegangen von der eigenen Sicht zum Wort, nicht umgekehrt.

The idea of language as bewitchment is reminiscent of Wittgenstein’s ‘Die Philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsres Verstandes durch die Mittel unserer Sprache.’ For Gundolf and the later Wittgenstein language has a power to deceive and mislead unless it is used either with a philosopher’s discrimination or the vision of a literary genius, though Gundolf would of course have prized the artist’s vision above *Verstand*.⁷⁴ ‘Gestelzte und

⁷² *Vergängnis* is an unusual word, but there is no reason to think that it is a misprint for *Verhängnis*, since the MS reads ‘Schauder der Vergänglichkeit’ (FGP M13 p. 418).

⁷³ ‘*Fluidum*’ is not in Grimm and is listed in some dictionaries as a form of the adjective ‘fluidus’, not as a noun in itself. However, Cassell’s *German and English Dictionary* (12th edn, 1968), has ‘**Fluidum**, *n.* (-ums, -a) fluid, liquid; (fig) atmosphere, tone, influence, aura.’ Collins German Dictionary (7th edn, 2007), has ‘**Fluidum** NT, -s, **Fluida**, *a* (*fig.*) aura; *von Städten, Orten*)...**b** (*Chem*) fluid.’

⁷⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*. Dual language edn with English trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe, 3rd edn (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 47, para.

verzierte Gestalten’ is a phrase that belongs to the language of art criticism as much as to that of literary criticism, as does ‘von der eigenen Sicht’, suggesting the visual artist’s ability to see and recreate the uniqueness of a person or object. The final two sentences of the quote above are a revision of just one sentence in the lecture: ‘Nur dadurch ist er ein Sprachmeister geworden, dass er von Gesichtern erfüllt war und etwas zu sagen hatte, nicht von Worten behext, die er unterbringen wollte.’ (FGP M13 p. 394). Grimmelshausen is a master of language, not its servant. But *Meister*, like the Latin *magister*, can mean a teacher or an expert craftsman as well as a ruler or governor.

Gundolf develops the idea of the *Sprachmeister* on pp. 117–18 of the article:

Nur Grimmelshausen vereinigt mit der deutschen Gottsuche Luthers und Böhmies ein weltlich Herz, ein ringsum waches Auge und eine sprachgewaltige Zunge, nur in seinem Buch verschmelzen sich Vielleserei, Beredsamkeit und Erfahrungsmasse, statt sich zu behindern, nur bei ihm wird das Fleisch Wort, das Wesen Werk: er hat alle Dimensionen und er hat sie im Fleisch wie im Wort. [...] Indem wir Grimmelshausen, der freilich kein Sprachschöpfer, sondern nur ein Sprachmeister war, an Luther messen, gewahren wir was deutsche Rede seit diesem gewonnen und eingebüßt hatte.

The lecture manuscript (FGP M13 p. 395) reads ‘Sprachmeister oder Erneuerer’, and also spells out what those ‘Dimensionen’ are: ‘Den Mystikern seiner Zeit fehlte es an Breite, den Empirikern an Höhe, den Rhetorikern an Tiefe.’ There is a concealed theology here: the *Sprachschöpfer* is like God, creating the original Word that became flesh, or giving Adam the power to name the animals in the Garden of Eden. Luther cannot really be said to have ‘created’ the German language, but to have reinvigorated it: in that sense he was an *Erneuerer* as well. There is also a certain sleight of hand; the contrast of *Sprachschöpfer* and *Sprachmeister* is one of Gundolf’s frequent rhetorical alliterating or rhyming word pairs; it may point to a real distinction between writers of greater and lesser originality but will not in

109. Anscombe translates the noun *Verstand* here as ‘intelligence’ rather than as ‘reason’; elsewhere she uses ‘understanding’. It appears that she, and likely Wittgenstein himself, did not see it as ‘instrumental reason’ in the way that Gundolf usually does.

itself do the work that Gundolf wants it to, and needs more explanation and refinement. This is another instance of where style seems more important than argument and Gundolf's criticism becomes in itself a semi-literary form. Gundolf presumably saw Stefan George as a *Sprachschöpfer* rather than as a *Sprachmeister*, since he writes elsewhere:

[Die Sprache] ist die Substanz der menschlichen Seele selbst, sie ist im geistigen was im Leiblichen das Blut ist, und Sprachkraft ist die Zeugungskraft der Seele. Dies Blut der deutschen Seele zu reinigen, zur Zeugung echter Geschöpfe fähiger zu machen, das war Georges dringlichster Wille...⁷⁵.

'Er hat sie im Fleisch wie im Wort' (reminding us of John 1.14 again) is another example of Eagleton's 'incarnational fallacy':

On this view, form and content in poetry are entirely at one because the poem's language somehow 'incarnates' its meaning. Whereas everyday language simply points to things, poetic language embodies them. There is a theology lurking behind this poetics... For all its celebration of the muscularities of language, the incarnational fallacy reflects a covert distrust of it. Only when words cease to be themselves and merge into their referents can they be truly expressive.⁷⁶

Calling this a 'fallacy' is too judgmental on Eagleton's part: it is a type of poetics that has nourished much literature, even if its philosophical premisses can be called into question. It is seen in the belief of F.R. Leavis and others that poetry involves the sensuous enactment of experience. As one critic has described it: 'The value of literary art cannot be judged by the bias of its ideology or world-view, but rather by its rendering of felt experience, the intensity of its existential commitment, and above all the incontrovertible force of its concrete enactment.'⁷⁷ It also raises, but does not answer, the question: what are 'words themselves', can they ever truly be divorced from their 'referents', even in poems that make heavy use of sound and of typographical effects? Nonetheless, Eagleton's remarks are a useful reminder

⁷⁵ 'Stefan George in unsrer Zeit', p. 66.

⁷⁶ Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem*, pp. 59–60.

⁷⁷ Philip Rahv, 'On Leavis and Lawrence', *New York Review of Books*, 26 September 1968. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1968/09/26/on-leavis-and-lawrence/> [accessed 28 November 2023].

that we should always look out for a critic's unarticulated presuppositions and should not hesitate to question them. Is *Fleisch* to be taken as Grimmelshausen the actual historical individual, seen as an ideal human being, or does Gundolf mean, in Eagleton's terms, that his language 'embodies' things? Is the Leavisite secular view of poetic language interchangeable with Gundolf's theologically charged one, two complementary ways of saying the same thing, or is there a significant difference between them? Discussing the fact that many of Leavis's followers were Catholics, Nicholas Boyle writes:

They recognized in the immediacy of the contact [Leavis] postulated between secular words and moral values a continuation of the belief in the enfleshment of the divine which has been a mainstay of Catholic humanism in many different historical contexts – whether in the ninth or the thirteenth or the sixteenth centuries.⁷⁸

It is not necessary to share Boyle's liberal Catholic humanism to recognize the validity of this assessment. It should again be noted that Gundolf's time is often characterised as one of a *Sprachkrise*, a loss of confidence in the ability of language to convey reality in any straightforward way, a sense of it slipping out of the control of its users. This is seen in the *Chandosbrief* of 1902 of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who had for a while been close to Stefan George and had published poems in *Blätter für die Kunst*⁷⁹. Gundolf himself did not overtly share this sense, in spite of his occasional mentions of the potential deceits of language, and it will be seen in Chapter Four that he believed that meaning could be grounded in the idea of God or an *ens realissimum*.

On page 118 of the article Gundolf writes of the richness of Grimmelshausen's language, and its sources in, among other things, dialect, slang, and the language of trades:

Zunächst, der Sprachumfang! Grimmelshausens Wortschatz ist dem Luthers mindestens gleich. . die Luthersprache hat er aufgenommen. Er ist, als gebildeter

⁷⁸ Nicholas Boyle, *Who Are We Now? Christian Humanism and the Global Market from Hegel to Heaney*, (Notre Dame: London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), p. 250.

⁷⁹ Their relationship was complicated by George's dislike of Hofmannsthal's later work and by Hofmannsthal's father's disapproval of George's sexual interest in his son. See Norton pp. 98–107.

Frommer jener Zeit, trotz katholischen Neigungen, selbstverständlich Lutherbibelfest. Gleichnisse, Winke, Wendungen der heiligen Schrift sind ihm stets bereit, fruchtbares Erbgut wie kaum den Berufspredigern, denen mehr das Dogma als das Mythos, mehr der Buchstabe als das Pneuma wacht. Zudem lebt noch für Grimmelshausen der mündliche Sprachschatz des Volks [...].

In referring here to 2 Corinthians 3.6 ('Denn der Buchstabe tötet, aber der Geist macht lebendig'), he uses the original Greek word for spirit rather than the equivalent in Luther's translation. It is not clear whether he is trying to make a real and subtle distinction, or whether this is just a casual display of learning: this question recurs when we read Gundolf in bulk. The quotation from St Paul haunts Gundolf's thinking on language and poetry: for example, in a discussion of later Romanticism, he writes of 'die Verwechslung von erstarrten Buchstaben und flutendem Geist.'⁸⁰ 'Wendungen der heiligen Schrift' came as naturally to Gundolf as they did to Grimmelshausen.

A section of the published essay deserves quotation at length as it raises a number of questions about linguistic nationalism:

Inzwischen, etwa von 1550 bis 1650, war der deutsche Geist und seine Sprache überfremdet, nicht nur die Antike war minutiöser und gelehrter aufgeschlossen, auch die Hof-, Kunst- und Bildungsmoden aller Städte von London bis Neapel und Madrid, von Leiden bis Krakau hatten im Deutschtum Niederschläge zurückgelassen, zu schweigen von den Heerhaufen und Abenteurern, die mit und nach dem Krieg von unten her verwelkten, was von oben her noch nicht erreicht war. Gegen das Deutsch, worin Grimmelshausen zu atmen hatte war das Luthers einfach und erdhaft . . viel schwieriger war jetzt die Anverwandlungsaufgabe dessen der aus dem Geist seines Volks heraus reden wollte. Fast alle Zeitgenossen Grimmelshausens erlagen der Verwelkung: sie konnten die Fremdkörper weder entbehren und ausscheiden noch verarbeiten und eindeutsch. (Denn der bewußte Purismus ersetzt meist nur auswärtige Vokabeln mit deutschen, nicht fremden Wortgeist mit heimischem, es ist mehr Anpassung des Deutschen ans Fremde als Eineignung des Fremden ins Deutsche.) Satzbau und Tonfall wurden mehr und mehr durch die gelehrte und spielerische Nachahmung oder Mimicry der romanischen Perioden papierner und lederner. . die Deutschen, ohne rhetorische Naturanlage, überkam die Sprachgebärde rhetorischer Völker. (pp. 119–20)

⁸⁰ *George*, p. 5.

This emphasizes the idea that the Germans succumbed to external influences (*Überfremdung*). The manuscript version of the last sentence reads: ‘die Deutschen, ohne rhetorische Naturanlage, überkamen (sic) von aussen her die Ton- und Geberdensprache natürlich rhetorischer Völker.’ (FGP M13 p. 400). The ‘sound and sign language’ of the manuscript becomes ‘language gesture’ in the essay. Neither idea is particularly transparent. But the underlying thought is that some nations are more ‘naturally rhetorical’ than the Germans, who suffered as a result. Gundolf distinguishes here between the vocabulary and the ‘spirit’ of a language. When he refers to ‘der bewußte Purismus’ he presumably means the *Spracharbeit* of Schottelius, Zesen and others: the attempt to raise the status of the German language and to free it from foreign influence. Grimmelshausen himself had contributed to this debate in his short book *Deß Weltberuffenen Simplicissimi Pralerey und Gepräng mit seinem teutschen Michel* of 1673.⁸¹ But Gundolf believes that *Spracharbeit* proposed only superficial changes: it wanted to substitute native German words for foreign ones, but not to change the fundamental ‘spirit’ of the language. These were not entirely original ideas. The fourth of Fichte’s *Reden an die deutsche Nation* of 1808 had claimed that German was a truly living language and conferred on its speakers a linguistic and cultural superiority over users of languages descended from Latin: ‘Beim Volke der lebendigen Sprache greift die Geistesbildung ein ins Leben; beim Gegentheile geht geistige Bildung und Leben jedes seinen Gang für sich fort.’⁸² Gundolf’s claim that Grimmelshausen was a corrective to the overwhelming of the German language by foreign influences was also not original. Meid (p. 218) quotes a review of von Bülow’s edition of *Simplicissimus* by

⁸¹ Repr. ed. by Rolf Tarot (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976).

⁸² Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, (Leipzig: Herbig, 1824), p. 110.

Hermann Kurz, written in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the end of the Holy Roman Empire, which praises the editor for his efforts ‘an unsere nationalen Schätze [zu erinnern], während wir wieder einmal im Begriffe stehen, fremder Sitte und Gesinnung nachzulaufen, welche unserm innersten Gemüthe doch immer fremd bleiben wird [...]’⁸³

Duden records the first use of the noun *Überfremdung* in 1929 in an economic sense as ‘Aufnahme zu vielen ausländischen Geldes’, yet Gundolf uses the word a couple of times in the manuscript lectures, which were most likely drafted a few years earlier. The phrase ‘[...]war der deutsche Geist und seine Sprache überfremdet [...]’ quoted above from the article appears in the manuscript as ‘[...]war die Überfremdung des deutschen Geistes und seiner Sprache vollzogen[...]’. Obviously, there is more at work here than economic factors, and indeed more than the adoption of *Fremdwörter*: the ‘deutsche Geist’ was also overrun by foreign influences in the period from 1550 to 1650. The word *überfremdet* already had *völkisch* and antisemitic connotations, and it was taken up by the Nazis and by post-war extreme right-wing groups. In practice, the concepts of linguistic, cultural, and racial purity cannot be totally separated; while Gundolf himself certainly did not hold extreme racial views, the word *Überfremdung* itself is tainted by them. Gundolf implies that *Überfremdung* is a kind of sickness, a condition needing healing (*heilen*), and in another passage which deserves quotation at length, he describes two ways in which this can take place: by a new beginning (Hölderlin), and by *Verschmelzung* (Goethe and Jean Paul, and Grimmelshausen):

Auf zwei Arten lässt sich eine überfremdete Sprache heilen: durch neuen Beginn, wenn ein ursprünglicher, gotterfüllter Mensch aus der Reinheit des Herzens ausspricht was ihn bewegt, erhoben über das Wirrsal der schillernden, splitterigen Zeitfläche .. er hat nur mit ewigen Kräften zu tun, mit Gott, Natur, Schicksal, Volk, und ruft oder nennt sie in dem eignen Ton mit den ihnen gebührenden Worten zur neuen Stunde.

⁸³ Hermann Kurz, in *Der Spiegel. Zeitschrift für literarische Unterhaltung und Kritik*, (1837), no. 5, pp. 17–20, and no. 6, pp. 21–24. See Meid, p. 201.

Ein Beispiel ist Hölderlin: mitten in dem von Schulphilosophie und Zeitpolitik, französischer Geselligkeit und englischem Geschäft bereits beladenen Europa, trotz Kant, Rousseau, Adam Smith hat er die einfachen “Götter” gesehen und gesagt in einem morgendlichen Deutsch, das nie verjähren kann.⁸⁴ Der andere Weg ist die Vollendung oder Verschmelzung: Goethe und Jean Paul nehmen die Zuflüsse und Anschwemmungen ihres Jahrhunderts in den Strom ihres weltfreudigen und -hungrigen Geistes, der allem *seine* Farbe und Wallung gibt. Sie verwandeln den äußern Stoff in innern Gehalt, die Fremdschaft in Eigenschaft ... und wenn uns die Masse eines ganzen Zeitalters bei einem solchen begegnet, dann scheint sie nur auf ihn gewartet zu haben. Sogar fremde Worte bekommen dann den Ton des Volks dem der Verwandler angehört, der die Gegenwelt mit seinem ebenso empfänglichen als widerstandsfähigen Selbst aufwiegt. Im 17. Jahrhundert war Grimmelshausen ein solcher Verschmelzer [...] (FGP M13 pp. 399–400).

The quotation demonstrates Gundolf’s frequently extravagant tone and vocabulary. The poet of the ‘beginning’ is original and divinely inspired, concerned with ‘eternal powers’ that include *Schicksal* and *Volk*. Gundolf sees some of the most innovative thinkers and intellectual movements of later eighteenth-century Europe as a burden, which Hölderlin transcended with his vision of the gods expressed in a fresh and original German. While he emphasizes French and English influences, the fact that he includes Kant among the thinkers with whom Europe is *beladen* means that Gundolf’s claim cannot be taken simply as German nationalism. He is rejecting what he sees as superficial rationalism, sociability and commercialism in favour of a supposedly deeper German poetic spirituality. The writers of ‘completion or fusion’, on the other hand, are able to transform external influences into something that is characteristic of themselves (*eigen*). When Gundolf states that even foreign words then acquire the tone of the people to whom the transforming writer belongs, he is again not explicitly saying that only Germans can do this. There is some ambiguity about whether by *Volk* he means common or ordinary people in general, a linguistic community in a wide, neutral sense, or an ethnic group. Despite asserting that German culture had been

⁸⁴ Norbert von Hellingrath (1888–1916), who was introduced to Stefan George by Karl Wolfskehl, produced the first modern complete edition of Hölderlin’s works. See Norton p. 406.

overwhelmed by foreign influences, he claims that Grimmelshausen was able, through the reinvigoration of language, to express the unique essence of the ‘German Soul’. The words ‘satire’, ‘parody’ and ‘comedy’ do not feature very much in Gundolf’s writing on Grimmelshausen, which is not to say that he does not recognize these very prominent elements of *Simplicissimus* at all. Apart from one or two coy hints about the richness of Grimmelshausen’s vocabulary, he does not mention the scatological elements of the novel. Whilst this probably just reflects the sensibilities of his time and social class, he sees no reason to condemn Grimmelshausen for these elements either: the issue is simply passed over.

Gundolf raises further issues about Grimmelshausen and language. In Grimmelshausen, Gundolf claims, perception and expression are one:

Die saftige Dinglichkeit teilt Grimmelshausen mit Luther, er kann nicht gar anders als wahrnehmend denken und alle Gegenstände hat er greifbar, nicht nur begrifflich im Geist. Tierstimmen und Musikgeräte, Würfelsorten und Kleider, Speisen und Pflanzen, alles zeigt bis ins Kleine und Besondere, daß wir es zu packen meinen (‘Grimmelshausen’, p. 121).

Besides reminding us of poetry as the sensuous enactment of experience, an idea held, as was noted earlier, by F.R. Leavis, this has something in common with T.S. Eliot’s remark in his 1921 essay on the Metaphysical Poets:

A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.’⁸⁵

In an analogous way, Gundolf describes the vividness of Grimmelshausen’s similes on page 121 of the article: ‘Seine Vergleiche sollen nie bloß Gelahrtheit bekunden, nach Opitzischer

⁸⁵ T.S. Eliot, ‘The Metaphysical Poets’, p. 381.

Vorschrift einen Gedanken “einkleiden” oder aufputzen: es sind wirkliche Einfälle, die den Hergang verdeutlichen durch Umreiung und verlebendigen durch Frbung oder Verdichtung.’ Once again, *Umreiung*, *Frbung*, *Verdichtung*, are metaphors taken from the technique of the visual artist; *verlebendigen* is yet another compound of *Leben*. The object and its expression in a living language cannot be separated.

In a sentence in the manuscript which expresses its ideas by means of vivid physical imagery, Gundolf says that in the right hands a dead style can be brought to life, an unnatural one can be renaturalized:

Nur dem Unlebendigen quillt der Barockwulst tot und fest aus den Fingern, der Lebendige renaturirt selbst die Unnatur wieder: es gibt z.B keinen von vornherein unnatrlich gezielteren, gestelzteren, geschraubteren Redestil als den welchen Shakespeare vorfand und benutzte, den sogenannten Euphuismus, nach einem Modebuch. Und was hat er, kraft seiner alldurchdringenden Lebensflle daraus gemacht (FGP M13 pp. 403–04).

The natural and the unnatural, the alive and the dead; and once again the word *Lebensflle*.

The direct comparison between Grimmelshausen and Shakespeare is continued in the article (p. 122):

Wie Shakespeare schon mit der verblasenen Allegorik rang und an der Belebung und Besonderung von Allgemeinbegriffen einen seiner Zauber erprobte, an der Entsprdung und Renaturierung leergewordener Formen und mastig den Rohstoffs, so wird auch bei Grimmelshausen eine persnliche Tugend aus dem uneigentlichen Reden. Allegorik ist ein Zug der barocken Zeit: die klassische nennt die Dinge bei Namen oder vergleicht sie mit andern Dingen, aber deutet sie nicht aus oder um, die primitive sondert Dinge und Bild berhaupt noch nicht.

He seems to hold up *primitiv* as the ideal; it does not separate image and object, he claims.

This is another version of the incarnational view, and possibly also connected with *unwillkrlich* in its sense of ‘spontaneous’. Although he does not explicitly say so, it appears that Shakespeare and Grimmelshausen are both examples of the *primitiv*, which is perhaps close in meaning to Schiller’s *naiv*: poetry which directly describes or narrates, rather than

dwelling on the author's subjective impressions of the material. There is no reason to think that Gundolf is using the word *primitiv* to refer to non-European cultures.

Furthermore, Grimmelshausen has reinvigorated allegory. Comparing his work to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, Gundolf says of Grimmelshausen that 'Die alte Gattung ist aufgefrischt, das dürre Wissen in bewegte Erzählung umgesetzt, die Kluft zwischen Lehre und Zeichen ausgefüllt, die Allegorie wieder Bild und Sinn geworden' (p. 123). As noted earlier, for Walter Benjamin, the fact that allegory reveals its own artificiality and transitoriness constitutes its interest, as opposed to the symbol which claims to reveal what he sees as spurious transcendence. 'in allegory any person, any object, any relationship, can mean absolutely anything else.'⁸⁶ In sharp contrast to the ideas that language entails the incarnation of meaning or the sensuous enactment of experience, he holds that there is no natural connection between object and image. For him, allegory cannot be renewed or reanimated so as to become something more like the symbol; the fact that it is a kind of ruin, disrupting meaning and coherence by laying bare its own devices, is what is significant about it. There can be little doubt of the value of Benjamin's insights as a source of debate, but at the same time *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* has cast a huge spell over scholarly discussion of this period and a different perspective can be helpful.

This point can be further illustrated by Gundolf's discussion of the difference between Grimmelshausen and his Spanish models; the latter '[...] sind zweidimensional, sie geben nur Richtung, nicht runden Raum, Weg, nicht Welt. Sie bleiben im Bereich des Verstandes und der Sinne, ohne Leidenschaft und dunkle Herzensnot.' (p. 126). *Verstand* and *Sinn* are 'two-dimensional' (another visual metaphor), in contrast to *Leidenschaft* and *Herzensnot*, and we

⁸⁶ Benjamin, *Origin*, p. 175.

should not attempt to read the second pair of qualities into the earlier works: this approach is anachronistic: ‘Auch in die Faustbücher hat man erst von Goethe aus das “Faustische” zurückgedeutet, das vielleicht im Schicksal des Schwarzkünstlers angelegt war, gewiß nicht im Geist seiner Chronisten.’ The manuscript (FGP M13 p. 411) has ‘man hat von Goethe aus, rückwärts eine metaphysische Tiefe in die Faustbücher hineingedeutet’. Whilst this echoes Benjamin on allegory as ‘ruins’, rather than as spurious metaphysical depth, there can be no doubt that Gundolf, unlike Benjamin, believed in the reality of ‘metaphysische Tiefe’:

Der ‘Simplicissimus’ webt bei aller Prallheit seines sinnlichen Drum and Dran im Wissen um die Scheinhaftigkeit oder Gleichnishaftigkeit (d.h. nicht Unwirklichkeit) der Gesichte, ihn umwittert ein Gefühl des Spuks, der Vergängnis oder christlich gefaßt, der Eitelkeit aller Dinge in Gott.. ein Hauch des romantisch “Unendlichen.” (p. 127)

The manuscript (FGP M13 p. 411) reads ‘der geheimnisvolle überpersönliche Hauch’; notably the word ‘überpersönlich’ (reminding us of the phrase ‘überpersönliche Gnade’, which we have seen before) has been removed from the printed text.

Whilst Gundolf is much more positive about Grimmelshausen than he is about many other seventeenth-century German writers, his reasons for being positive will not be accepted by modern readers without qualification. Some of what he says is not original: his attempt to assimilate *Simplicissimus* to a supposed *Bildungsroman* tradition extending from Wolfram’s *Parzival* through *Wilhelm Meister* and the nineteenth-century novel, his emphasis on a unique German cultural experience expressed in literature, his use of words such as *Volksdichtung*, his belief that Grimmelshausen reinvigorated the German language. Meid (p. 233) summarizes Gundolf’s viewpoint: ‘Der *Simplicissimus* erhält seine Bedeutung als Verkörperung der deutschen, der germanischen Seele.’ But what is the essence of this ‘German soul’? According to Gundolf, what lies behind the Grail Quest of *Parzival*, the striving for *Bildung* in *Wilhelm Meister* and what he calls the *Gottverworrenheit* of

Simplicissimus is what he calls ‘das alte odinshafte Weltwallen’. He writes of a pagan

German fate that is bound up in ideas of endless, wandering, striving and downfall:

Die christliche Färbung darf uns nicht täuschen über das eigentliche Wesen der deutschen Seele, die sich hier bezeugt in Gleichnissen des dreißigjährigen Krieges: es ist das germanische Fahren und Schweifen, das Grauen, die trunkene Weltangst, das bild- und blickflüchtige, untergangssüchtige, untergangsscheue, untergangsselige Alleinsein mitten im Wirbel der Welt, das Erlöschen nicht in der Ruhe, sondern in der Bewegung, in der sausenden Zeit selbst: Das ist der Odinsglaube und das Odinschicksal: Glaube und Schicksal eines immer werdenden, nicht im geschlossenen Reich und nicht in der Gestalt sich erfüllenden Volkes. (p. 131)

And he continues:

Der dreißigjährige Krieg ist aus unserer früheren Geschichte der grausamste Wirbel dieses Sausens gewesen und Grimmelshausen der einzige deutsche Autor, der nicht nur einzelne seiner Zeichen oder Folgen beschrieben hat, sondern ihn als Seelenzustand wie als Volksschicksal verewigt. Bei allem nur zeitlich barocken Kram der ihm anhängt, unnötiger Gelehrsamkeit, theologischen Vorgesankten, schulmeisterischen und soldatischen Barbareien, bleibt der *Simplicissimus* das einzige unsterbliche Sprachbild der deutschen Not aus ihrem eignen Grauen heraus. (pp. 131–32)

These are complex and paradoxical ideas, some of which appear to be original to Gundolf.

They are expressed in vivid and intense imagery, and they prompt many questions. The phrase ‘Die christliche Färbung’ implies that Grimmelshausen’s Christianity is superficial here, although in *Martin Opitz* (p. 2) Gundolf states that some of these German characteristics have a Christian origin: ‘Die Reformation hat gewissen deutschen Grundzügen, dem Suchen, Schweifen, Werden mit der Unlust im gestaltigen Sein ihre geschichtliche Macht und Fassung gebracht.’ The phrase ‘in Gleichnissen des dreißigjährigen Kriegs’ invites further comment. Grimmelshausen’s descriptions of war, according to Gundolf, are similes or parables of the unique pagan essence of the German soul: it is *Seelenzustand* and *Volksschicksal*. Once again, as we saw in the introduction to the lectures, the grim reality of war is held at a distance, it is no more than an image of something allegedly more fundamental: ‘das eigenste Wesen der deutschen Seele’. The point about a *Gleichnis*, a parable, in the Gospels is that it is initially mysterious and requires interpretation. There is a

distinction between the deadening carnal sense, the letter, and the life-giving spiritual sense which is known only to insiders, as in 2 Corinthians 3.6, noted above. Once the interpretation is made, the literal meaning of the story largely, though perhaps not completely, disappears⁸⁷. *Gleichnis* is however a complex word, which has a lengthy entry in *Grimm*; ‘parable’ in the biblical sense is only a part of its meaning, which includes the English ‘image’, ‘simile’ and ‘comparison’. As with the ‘Thirty Years’ War’ passage in the introduction to the lectures, discussed in Chapter One, the suggestion is that the actual suffering and destruction of war are of less significance than currents of German thought and feeling (by ‘soldatische Barbareien’ Gundolf surely means linguistic expressions, not military atrocities). There is an emphasis on the uniqueness of German experience, which is seen, among other things, as *untergangssüchtig*. The notion of welcoming an apocalyptic military *Untergang* is troubling to most modern readers, though such ideas were known in the *George-Kreis*, and the word echoes Spengler’s *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, though we saw in an earlier chapter that Gundolf did not think highly of it. George’s poem *Der Krieg* of 1917 contains the lines ‘Der an dem Baum des Heiles hing warf ab/Die blässe blasser seelen’: a figure who could be either Odin or Christ will cast off the pallor of a faded world order by dying on a tree. Gundolf was an enthusiastic supporter of the war in 1914, sharing the *Augusterlebnis*, though George himself was more equivocal.⁸⁸ Even the German defeat in 1918 did not bring about the end of his hopes, as is seen in another letter to Friedrich Wolters, which contains more than a hint of *Untergangssucht*: ‘Der Tag kommt nicht, eh nicht völlig Nacht geworden, der Kosmos muss erst ein wirkliches Chaos vorfinden [...] unser Tag kommt noch, und Deutschland war

⁸⁷ See Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative*, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1979) 8th printing, 1994, pp. 24–25.

⁸⁸ See Jürgen Egyptien, ‘...eine solche Einheit so zu erleben das ist schon einen Weltkrieg wert’. Friedrich Gundolf als Deuter des Ersten Weltkrieges, Goethe-Interpret und Georg-Jünger’, in *Die Universität Heidelberg*, ed. Rund, pp. 215–40.

immer am tiefsten, wenn es nichts hatte als sein Leben und seine Götter’⁸⁹. Gundolf’s writing about Grimmelshausen was enmeshed in his feelings about the turmoil of his own time.

This leads back to a phrase quoted above: ‘Das Erlöschen nicht in der Ruhe, sondern in der Bewegung’. *Erlöschen* is seen as a goal or an endpoint, but not a peaceful one. The German identity is seen as unstable: constantly striving and moving. A passage in the manuscript relates this to questions of literary form:

Es ist sinnbilderisch, das auch der Simplizissimus ebenso wie der Parsifal (*sic*), wie der Wilhelm Meister, wie der Faust, wie die Flegeljähre, wie alle Bücher vom deutschen Werden – (es gibt auch solche vom deutschen und überdeutschen Sein) mit Resignation abschliesst, nicht mit Erfüllung endet, sich vollendet: d.h. über seinen Abschluss hinaus weiter zu drängen und beliebiger Fortsetzungen fähig scheint. (FGP M13 pp. 378–79).

Thus German identity involves an opposition of *sein* and *werden*, an idea that we have seen elsewhere in Gundolf, and this means that some of the greatest works of German literature are inherently incomplete and incompletable (what Gundolf means by *überdeutsch* is not clear). There is a point of contact here with Benjamin’s idea, mentioned above, that allegory in fact disrupts meaning and coherence.⁹⁰ There is more of the provisional, even the contradictory, in Gundolf’s thought than his magisterial rhetorical manner suggests. This does not have to be seen as a fatal flaw: strict philosophical coherence is not something that we have to demand from a creative artist or from a critic.

⁸⁹ Gundolf – Wolters *Briefwechsel*, p. 186.

⁹⁰ There is also a resemblance to a passage in Chapter XIV of Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* (1947), in which the character Deutschlin claims that ‘“Jugend im höchsten Sinn hat nichts mit politischer Geschichte, überhaupt nichts mit Geschichte zu tun. Sie ist eine metaphysische Gabe, etwas Essentielles, eine Struktur und Bestimmung. Hast du nie vom deutschen Werden gehört, von deutscher Wanderschaft, vom unendlichen Unterwegesein des deutschen Wesens? Wenn du willst, ist der deutsche der ewige Student, der ewig Strebende unter den Völkern...”’ But this should not be taken as Mann’s own view: it is filtered through the narrator Zeitblom’s reporting of the earnest conversations of idealistic and naive students. *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonkünstlers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde*. (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1990), p. 160.

Gundolf used the phrase ‘geschlossenes Reich’ on page 131 of the article, and there is some ambiguity about whether he is referring to a political entity or to a sphere of intellectual and artistic activity. When he adds ‘nicht in der Gestalt sich erfüllend’ is he saying that instability is a necessary characteristic of the German *Volk*? ‘Fahren und Schweifen, das Grauen, die trunkene Weltangst, das bild- und blickflüchtige, untergangssüchtige, untergangsscheue, untergangsselige Alleinsein mitten im Wirbel der Welt’: the emphasis on extreme individual emotion is reminiscent of Expressionism, though this term is notoriously difficult to define. What Gundolf and the *George-Kreis* had in common with Expressionism was a rejection of what were seen as the dehumanising aspects of modern civilisation such as industrialisation and urbanisation.⁹¹ But these uncertainties in Gundolf’s writing often raise the question of whether he himself was, in a way, ‘bewitched by language’, by terms such as *Schicksal*, *Leben*, and ‘deutsche Seele’?

Gundolf devotes much space to the question of the influence of *Simplicissimus* on later authors, and also on *Germanistik*. Much of this is, by today’s standards, fairly speculative and is best seen as Gundolf’s poetic vision of German language and tradition, rather than as rigorous literary history: ‘Aber vor allem die Erzählersprache Arnims greift über Tiecks und Goethes gepflegte kadenzirte Bildungsprosa wieder zurück nicht auf das naive Luther oder Volksbücherdeutsch, sondern auf das gelehrt körnige, precios saftige Deutsch des Grimmelshausen...’ (FGP M13 p. 438). He lists Joseph Victor von Scheffel (1826–86), Raabe and Gustav Freytag as having ‘simplicianisches Fluidum in vielfältig Verdünnung in ihrem Stil.’ ‘Einen “Bildungsroman,” ein Gipfel der Reihe, die von Wolframs Parzival bis zum Grünen Heinrich führt, hat erst die nachromantische Zeit, die germanistische

⁹¹ Walter Benjamin wrote of the revaluation of the Baroque ‘which began with the emergence of expressionism – and which was, perhaps, affected by the poetics of the school of Stefan George.’ Benjamin, *Origin*, p. 54.

Wissenschaft, den Simplicissimus erkennt: nur als Sprachmuster und als Stoff hat er gewirkt.’ Gundolf distinguishes here between the influence of Grimmelshausen’s language on later authors and scholarly recognition of his place in literary history. Gundolf records the enduring presence of Grimmelshausen in the German novel, through the nineteenth century and extending into the twentieth. There is a fascinating passage in the manuscript which does not appear in the printed article:

Bis auf den heutigen Tag fordert, absichtlich oder unabsichtlich jede Erzählung aus den Zeiten des Dreissigjährigen Krieges den Vergleich mit der mythischen Mär seiner Zustände (nicht Ereignisse). Auch die neuesten Wallensteinsromane, der eine romantischer Psychologie (Ricarda Huch), der andre (Döblins) mit Nervenexpressionismus arbeitend sind noch dem alten Sittenseher und -sager verschuldet (FGP M13 pp. 437–38).

The final sentence has been deleted and the names of Huch and Döblin appear above the line in brackets, so this is very much a provisional thought on Gundolf’s part; nevertheless, it shows his awareness of contemporary literature and a willingness to engage with it. The references are probably to Huch’s *Wallenstein. Eine Charakterstudie* (1915), and to Döblin’s novel *Wallenstein* (1920), though the first of these is more a biography than a novel. On the other hand, he does not here make anything like the thoughtful connections between the lyric poetry of the seventeenth century and that of his contemporaries in the way that Victor Manheimer did. Possibly Gundolf, already seriously ill, did not have enough time left to pursue these ideas.

That he mentions, in addition to Goethe, Jean Paul, Gottfried Keller, Freytag, Fontane, Dickens and Döblin (some of these only in the manuscript), indicates a personal interest in the novel generally, something that is not often associated with the *George-Kreis*.⁹²

⁹² However, Adorno’s claim in his radio talk ‘George’ given on Deutschlandfunk in 1967 that ‘The George School’s ban on the novel is well known’ is an exaggeration. George valued lyric poetry above the novel, but no ‘ban’ on the novel seems to have been in place. The talk was published as ‘Stefan George’, in *Notes to Literature II*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and trans. by Shierry W. Nicholson,

He uses a striking number of compounds of the word ‘Roman’ in the lecture manuscript: *Schelmenroman, Hofroman, Komödiantenroman, Abenteuerroman, Weltbildroman, Staatsroman, Erziehungsroman, Liebesroman, Ritterroman, Schäferroman, philosophischer Roman, ausschliesslicher Weiberroman*. This suggests not only an interest in the novel as form, but also Gundolf’s urge to classify and order, like a scientist identifying distinct species within the same genus. The tension between his intensely ordering intellect and his celebration of the imaginative is evident throughout Gundolf’s writing. It has been noted that he repudiated much of the Baroque literary scholarship of his own time, though as has been seen, he was in sympathy with the work of Karl Wolfskehl, Herbert Cysarz and Melitta Gerhard). Yet his approach to Grimmelshausen is quite different from those more recent ones that attempt to interpret him in terms of emblematics, scriptural fourfold interpretation, or astrology, as described by Meid (pp. 134–50). His account of *Courasche*, on the other hand, raises some of the feminist issues of recent discussion, and in a wide historical and literary context:

Aber die Frau als Mittelpunkt eines selbständigen Buchs, nicht um eine Liebesgeschichte willen, sondern um ihres Charakters willen, den all Geschichten erst erläutern und zum Vorschein bringen, nimmt als Curiosum vorweg, was eigentlich erst im 19. Jahrhundert die Frauenemanzipation zum Problem gemacht hat. Die Landstörtzerin ist freilich keineswegs als Problem behandelt, keinerlei Mme de Staelsche, Georg Sand’sche Tendenzen, Wedekindsche oder Strindbergische Passionen, Hebbelsche oder Ibsenische Grübeleien stehen dahinter: einfach dem lebensvollen Weltblick eines gebornen Beobachters und Erzählers ist diese erste, dumpfe und wüste Form des “emancipirten Weibes”, der soldatischen Abenteuerin erschienen, denn die blosse Kurtisane der Renaissance war ebensowenig wie die Hetäre oder wie die Priesterin emancipirte, selbständiges Weib, sondern Dienerin der Gesellschaft oder der Gottheit, Gattungswesen, während die Courasche, wie sehr sie auch Gattungswesen sein mag, in ihrer Geschichte vor allem Person ist, die aus ihrer Person ihren Beruf macht, ihre Sache auf nichts stellt als auf sich selbst, und die Welt geschlechtlich und geschäftlich ausbeutet, auch wenn sie selbst oft genug dabei zur Beute wird.- Wenn dieser Typus oder verwandte schon existirt haben: - niemand hatte

(New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 178–92. A discussion between Adorno and Hans Mayer, ‘Die veruntreute Gegenwart – der Fall Stefan George’ (NDR 1967), can be found at [UbuWeb Sound - Theodor Adorno](#)

vor Grimmelshausen die Unbefangenheit das erzählenswert zu finden, niemand die Gestaltungskraft es festzuhalten. Auch hier hat gewiss ein höchst persönliches Erlebnis, ein bestimmtes Individuum und nicht bloss ein Typus den Bann gebrochen und dichterisch zu einer Entdeckung im Bereich der menschlichen Gesellschaft geführt (FGP M13 p. 426).

By writing ‘dichterisch zu einer Entdeckung...’, Gundolf claims that Grimmelshausen has made a discovery about human society by artistic means. A woman in literature need not be, like the courtesans of the Renaissance, a subordinate generic type, nor the subject of earnest late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discussions of the ‘woman problem’, but a fully independent person. It is notable that he does not discuss female poets such as Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg in the lecture manuscripts, whereas Herbert Cysarz includes twelve of von Greiffenberg’s poems in Volume II of his anthology *Barocklyrik*, (pp. 192–97) under the rubric ‘Drei Meister’, along with Andreas Gryphius and Grimmelshausen. He also includes other female poets. It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions from Gundolf’s failure to discuss women poets. His writings on the seventeenth century are incomplete, and it could be that he intended to deal with von Greiffenberg and others at a later date.

Gundolf, then, holds up Grimmelshausen as a certain type of ideal human being, which he links with his ability to use the German language: ‘Kein lutherisches Gesprächdeutsch mehr, – ein stoßkräftiges, schnelles, warmes Schreibdeutsch trägt er vor, aus dem Drang des ganzen Mannes, nicht nur seines Kopfs oder Bauchs.’ (p. 122). Once again, there is an emphasis on fullness, the ‘whole man’ who is more than the sum of his intellect and his appetites; this is linked with an incarnational view of language and a particular sense of German national identity. Calling this ‘an intolerant Weltanschauung’ as Dieter Breuer does, linking Gundolf in this respect with Arthur Moeller van den Bruck and Herbert Cysarz as examples of a ‘völkisch-germanentümelnde’ strain in Grimmelshausen interpretation following the Prussian Landtag debates, is to focus too narrowly on a type of

German nationalism which is present in Gundolf but by no means predominates.⁹³ We have seen that Gundolf raises larger issues about the workings of language and the depiction of reality in fiction. This was appreciated in Gundolf's own time. Richard Alewyn ('Grimmelshausen-Probleme', p. 406) has qualified praise for Gundolf's article on Grimmelshausen, calling it 'der an meisterhaften Formulierungen reiche Aufsatz'. Yet he believes that, in dealing with Grimmelshausen's language, it concentrates too narrowly on the basic elements of vocabulary, not emphasizing enough that individual words build up into sentences, which further build up into textures (*Geflechte*), into connections and relationships between imagination and reality. Whether consciously and deliberately or not, this echoes Nietzsche's strictures on 'decadent' literary style: 'Das Wort wird souverain und springt aus dem Satz hinaus, der Satz greift über und verdunkelt den Sinn der Seite, die Seite gewinnt Leben auf Unkosten des Ganzen — das Ganze ist kein Ganzes mehr.'⁹⁴ Gundolf's approach to Grimmelshausen's style, Alewyn implies, risks falling into this trap. Yet this is not a fair view of Gundolf's thought as a whole. In his book on Opitz, he writes: 'Sprachschöpfer ersinnen neue Worte nicht am Schreibtisch, sondern zeugen neue Tonfälle aus dem Gespräch mit Gott und Menschen. Wir denken ja nicht in Worten, sondern in Sätzen. . . aus sprachbedürftiger Schau oder Erregung wachsen uns die Gebilde die sich in Worten gliedern' (*Martin Opitz*, p. 43). Alewyn concludes: 'Vielleicht, wenn diese Formen der Sprache einmal durchforscht sind, wäre von hier ein Zugang zum Wesen des Dichters zu gewinnen.' It is a pity that he did not further develop this

⁹³ Dieter Breuer, 'In Grimmelshausen's Tracks: The Literary and Cultural Legacy,' in *A Companion to the Works of Grimmelshausen*, pp. 231–66 (p. 255).

⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner. Ein Musikanten - Problem*, (Leipzig: Neumann, 1888). <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/WA-7> [accessed 1 November 2023]. Nietzsche took this idea directly from Paul Bourget's *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (Paris: Plon, 1883), p. 20: see Ben Hutchinson, *Modernism and Style* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 75–76.

tantalisating hint of a close reading of Grimmelshausen's style, which would have added something valuable to Gundolf's idea that Grimmelshausen reinvigorated the German language.

That Grimmelshausen remains, relatively speaking, popular, and not only in Germany, can be seen from the fact that a new English translation of *Simplicissimus* was published by Penguin Classics as recently as 2018.⁹⁵ But to what extent can the curiosity of the twenty-first-century reader about Grimmelshausen be satisfied by reading the works of Friedrich Gundolf? We have noted places where he reverses our normal expectations: the questions of irony and fate, and of mannerism of imagination and language, but is this enough to redeem his work in Grimmelshausen from being a chapter in the reception history of seventeenth-century German literature; can the modern reader learn directly from him, or is it rather that, after the passage of 100 years, we learn by questioning him and entering into a dialogue with him? A provisional answer is that he celebrates Grimmelshausen's ability to portray the sensuous reality of lived human experience in language, yet recognises that language is sometimes problematic. As we saw in the case of his comments on *Courasche*, he recognises that Grimmelshausen deals with important social issues, yet Gundolf sees them in a historical perspective and does not resort to the moralism that has characterised some commentary, both inside and outside the academy, in spite of recognising Grimmelshausen's Christian worldview. 'Die deutsche Seele' is a living reality for him; if it is sometimes *untergangssüchtig*, that does not mean that Gundolf has some doom-laden sense that the whole of German and Western culture has come to an end. What is striking, and refreshing, is the sense that, however much a reader may disagree with Gundolf's approach and his underlying assumptions (and we have seen that contemporaries such as Gerhard and Alewyn

⁹⁵ *The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus*, trans. by J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin Classics, 2018).

did so, as well as recent scholars like Sarah Colvin, though this is not to endorse Alewyn's pessimistic vision of 'a chaos of opinions'), the issues raised by a seventeenth-century novel really matter now, in the present; they are not to be treated only as questions for specialist scholarship.

Chapter Four

The Critical Context

Having looked at some of Gundolf's work on seventeenth-century literature, it is now time to ask what kind of literary critic Gundolf was, and how his work compares with that of other critics. The general context of the terms *Barock* and *Barockforschung* was discussed on pp. 33–6 above. We have seen how it differs in some ways from other contemporary German critics of seventeenth-century literature, such as Manheimer and Cysarz, but it is also possible to see him in a wider context. Comparisons with critics from the English-speaking world are useful, both in that some of them were concerned with the same historical period, but also because it is possible to identify certain commonalities, some of which are not obvious at first sight. These include the idea of 'life' (vitalism), preoccupation with perceived cultural decline, a belief that mass commercialised culture was a threat, issues of language, issues of religious belief. This broader survey will have to depart at times from the theme of seventeenth-century German literature itself, but will do so in the interest of showing that many people believed that the seventeenth century had a particular relevance for the modern world, and that certain critical preoccupations can be seen to emerge. The suggestion will be that a revealing light can be thrown on Gundolf's national, traditional and quasi-religious concerns by stepping outside the field of *Germanistik* and contrasting his views with those of T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis (and of George Steiner on certain topics) in Britain, and with Heidegger and others in the German-speaking world. The theme of religion, and the notions of 'embodiment' and 'incarnation', which have been raised in previous chapters, will be considered in more detail.

In the time between the seventeenth century and the early twentieth, there took place a general change in the idea or perception of literature as mimesis, or imitation of nature,

expressed in fixed genres, to one of literature as the unique personal expression of an individual sensibility.¹ In the earlier period, the study of literature involved translation, imitation and memorisation, but there was no significant emphasis on personal reaction and interpretation. Moving into the nineteenth century, the discussion of literature was carried out in terms of genre and aptness of expression, or of literary history and influence, the biographies of authors and the spirit of the age in which they wrote. These distinctions must be treated with some care. To take only some of the authors who have been discussed here, clearly the poetry of Gryphius uses rhetorical rules in a personally expressive way, and Stefan George sometimes used established forms such as the sonnet and the ballad. However, the broad point is a useful one. In both Britain and Germany, a series of great authors came to be seen as central to questions of national identity. Literary criticism was partly the biographies of these authors, partly fulsome and precious appreciative accounts of their work, and partly descriptive accounts of genre and content. Of course, there were attempts, in both Germany and Britain, to place criticism on a more rigorous basis. Romanticism, Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, German Idealism, and the continuing influence of classical authors all played a

¹ The classic statement of this distinction is M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953). Andrew Bowie also remarks on it: 'Instead of being conceived of principally in terms of mimesis, representation, or entertainment, art begins to be conceived of in terms of its ability to reveal the world in ways that may not be possible without art.' Andrew Bowie, 'German Idealism and the Arts,' in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy, 2nd edn, ed. by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 336–57 (p. 338). Charles Taylor's description of the transition to the modern notion of 'mind' provides a wider context: 'in the enchanted world, the meaning is already there in the object/agent, it is there quite independently of us; it would be there even if we didn't exist.' [whereas in the modern secular world] 'Thoughts, etc., occur in minds; minds are (grosso modo) only human; and they are bounded, they are inward spaces...meanings are "in the mind", in the sense that things only have the meaning they do in that they awaken a certain response in us, and this has to do with our nature as creatures who are thus capable of such responses' (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp.31, 33).

part here: nineteenth-century literary criticism as a whole should not be seen as conceptually naïve. However, in the early twentieth century, literary criticism came to be understood far more as a stringent, professional, academic activity, one which was believed to be able to deliver probing insights into social, political and historical issues, as well as into questions about the nature and quality of life itself.²

The model of literature as expression raises the question of what it is that is being expressed. Some possibilities are the author's thoughts, feelings, or personal conflicts; the social or ideological characteristics of the historical period in which the author wrote, issues about language itself; some combination of these. Differing views on these issues caused various schools of criticism to arise. What can very broadly be referred to as Anglo-American New Criticism, associated with such names as T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren tended to reject biographical and philological approaches in favour of close reading of individual poems or novels and the investigation of literary devices on their own terms, though this is not to say that all of these critics excluded social and philosophical issues from consideration.³ In Germany, there were schools of biographical positivism, philology, and *Geistesgeschichte* (the study of the development of ideas and beliefs over time in their cultural context). Yet even if there was not an identifiable school of 'close reading' in the New Critical sense, thinkers as diverse as Cysarz, Manheimer, Kommerell, Heidegger, and Adorno were

² There is a large amount of critical writing on these issues. The principal ones that have been consulted here are: Collini, *The Nostalgic Imagination* 'Introduction', Section I; Paul H Fry, 'Classical Standards in the Period', and David Simpson, 'Transcendental Philosophy and Romantic Criticism,' both in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism 5, Romanticism*, ed. by Marshall Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 7–28 and 72–91.

³ See Jonathan Culler, 'Hermeneutics and Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hermeneutics* ed. by M. Forster and K. Gjesdal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 304–25, in particular pp. 308–09.

concerned in their different ways with the analysis of texts. The idea that early twentieth-century German critics dealt in lofty abstractions, whereas English-speaking ones were concerned with the fine details of textual analysis, is too simplistic.

Turning back to the seventeenth century, the descriptive phrase ‘Metaphysical poetry’ forms a major, though not uncontested, part of critical discussion of British literature of this period. This poetry uses elements of colloquial speech, metrical irregularity, and elaborate, enigmatic and sometimes incongruous imagery (‘conceits’), sometimes derived from contemporary scientific discovery, to explore major issues: love, sex, death, religion. It breaks away from the Petrarchan lyric poetry of earlier decades that still predominated in Germany, exploring, in the case of John Donne, a decidedly un-Petrarchan erotic physicality. There is, however, evidence that some German poets, such as Hoffmannswaldau, had read Donne and learned from him.⁴ There are also conceptual and descriptive problems arising from the reluctance of English critics to use the term ‘baroque’, even when its use may be justified.⁵ A major revival of interest in this poetry in Britain was brought about by the publication in 1921 of an anthology of Metaphysical Poetry by Herbert Grierson (1866–1960), Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh from 1915 to 1935.⁶ Though he does not use the word ‘baroque’, Grierson claims in his Introduction (pp. xx–xxi) that John Donne brought his own unique abilities to ‘the game of elaborating fantastic conceits and hyperboles which was the fashion throughout Europe.’ As

⁴ See Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, ‘The Early Modern Period (1450–1720)’, in *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, ed. by Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 92–146. ‘Like Donne, whose work he clearly knew, Hoffmannswaldau was both a master of witty conceits and ornate language and a moving religious poet.’ (p.123).

⁵ These complex issues are discussed at length in Harold B. Segel, *The Baroque Poem: A Comparative Survey* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1974), Part One, pp. 3–139.

⁶ *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), edited with an introduction by H.J.C. Grierson.

will be seen, there were connections, which have not been examined at any length in existing scholarly work, between Eliot, Grierson and Gundolf, though they did not take the form of direct discussions of seventeenth-century literature. With his essay ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ of 1921, which is a review of Grierson’s anthology, Eliot also did much to bring these poets back into favour, though it has been argued that his originality here has been overstated (and it was noted in Chapter Two that renewed interest in German baroque poetry predated the *Barockforschung* of the early twentieth century)⁷. Besides describing their style, Eliot makes comparisons with nineteenth-century French Symbolist poets like Jules Laforgue, as well as linking them with Dante and Guido Cavalcante. He writes that ‘Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.’⁸ To ‘force or dislocate language into meaning’ could be a description of the language of conceits, hyperbole and antithesis that was characteristic of Metaphysical and baroque poetry, as well as that of modernism.

Gundolf states his own theory of lyric poetry in the introduction to *Goethe*:

Das Gefühl [...] daß er selbst nur das Zentrum einer überpersönlichen Gewalt sei, Gottes, des Schicksals oder der Natur, daß sein Wesen selbst nicht ein Schicksal *habe*, sondern ein Schicksal *sei*, all das drückt Goethe mit dem ahnungsvollen Wort vom Dämonischen aus (wie Cäsar von seinem Glück und Napoleon von seinem Stern

⁷ See David Hopkins, ‘Dr Leavis’s Seventeenth Century’, *Essays in Criticism* 64, Issue 3, July 2014, pp. 293–317. In particular, Hopkins writes that: ‘The canonical centrality of John Donne, for example, was well established before Eliot. Over the forty years following the publication of Alexander Grosart’s edition of Donne’s *Complete Poems* (1872), the poet’s fortunes had substantially revived, and praise of his fusion of wit and emotion, his originality, and his psychological insight had become common critical currency. By the appearance of Sir Herbert Grierson’s Oxford edition in 1912, Donne’s reputation had been securely reinstated. Grierson’s introduction to his anthology of *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (the original occasion for Eliot’s essay on ‘The Metaphysical Poets’) anticipates Eliot’s and Leavis’s account of Donne and his successors in several obvious ways.’ (pp. 299–300).

⁸ T.S. Eliot, ‘The Metaphysical Poets’, p. 381.

spricht). [...] Das Dämonische ist nicht eine von außen eingreifende Macht, es ist mit dem Charakter des Menschen untrennbar verknüpft, ähnlich wie der verwandte Begriff Genie. (p. 3).

There is an evasiveness here: if the demonic comes from God or nature (Spinoza's 'deus sive natura' again), then the natural reading is that it is indeed an external force:

Das Erlebnis des Frühlings ist sein Stoff, nicht der Frühling selbst. [...] Lyrik ist diejenige Dichtungsart in der Stoff und Gehalt von vornherein identisch sind, nämlich das Wesen des dichtenden Ich. Lyrische Form ist die Darstellung der Erlebnisse dieses Ich in den Schwingungen dieses Ich. (p. 21) [...] Goethe war mit seiner Welt nicht so gleichartig wie Dante Shakespeare mit der ihren: denn jene waren ursprüngliche Menschen in einer ursprünglichen Welt, Goethe war ein ursprünglicher Mensch in einer abgeleiteten, einer Bildungswelt.' (p. 26).

There is a resemblance here to one of the basic premises of Expressionism: that art should consist of the expression of the artist's innermost feelings in a flawed and hostile world.

Gundolf then distinguishes between two kinds of experience, one which is 'primal', and one which derives from the individual's personal development and education:

Unter Urerlebnis verstehe ich z.B. das religiöse, das titanische oder das erotische [it is notable that Gundolf capitalised the adjectival noun 'das Dämonische' on page 3, but not these three] – unter Bildungserlebnissen Goethes verstehe ich sein Erlebnis deutscher Vorwelt, Shakespeares, des klassischen Altertums, Italiens, des Orients, selbst sein Erlebnis der deutschen Gesellschaft. (p. 27).

Goethe's difficulty was that he had to struggle to express 'elemental content' ('urtümlichen Gehalt') using the material of a *Bildungswelt*, though interestingly Gundolf makes an exception for his lyric poetry, where he 'only had to express his primal self' ('wo er nur sein Ur-ich zu geben hatte'). Some will ask what *Ur-Ich* really means, but rather than try to pursue elaborate definitions, it is reasonable to assume that Gundolf means a deeper part of the self that experiences *Urerlebnis*, rather than that which experiences *Bildungserlebnis*. Indeed, he goes on to say that 'Zusammenfassend: Goethes Lyrik enthält seine Urerlebnisse, dargestellt im Stoff seines Ich.' (p. 28). Gundolf claims that Goethe was a 'foundational' person in a world that is secondary, mediated through *Bildung*, which is here seen in a negative light – even Goethe was partially alienated from the world that surrounded him. Probably Gundolf

would have regarded his own time as similarly derivative. In the essay ‘Wesen und Beziehung’ Gundolf writes of the distinction between fundamental values, which are quasi-religious, and the soulless world of his own time, which is in need of renewal:

Gibt es [...] in der welt eine nicht aufzulösende substanz, ein schlechthin in sich ruhendes, zeugendes, unzerstörbares, lebenszentrum? Gibt es einen leib, oder theologisch gesprochen, einen Gott, oder philosophisch, ein ens realissimum, eben eine substanz oder nicht? Das ist erst jetzt eine frage geworden: früher galt der streit dem wesen der substanz, heut dreht er sich um ihre existenz und zwar nicht nur mit gedanken, sondern mit instinkten. Wie man sie beantwortet – die antwort ist keine sache der demonstration sondern des erlebnisses – davon hängt die stellung zur zeit und ihren werten ab. Wenn ja, so ist eine neubelebung, eine bindung der zerstörenden kräfte möglich und jeder kampf dafür heilig und siegesgewiss. Wenn nein, so ist die völlige entseelung der menschheit, die amerikanisierung, die verameisung der erde, der sieg der Letzten Menschen aus dem Zarathustra, die das glück erfunden haben, nur eine frage der zeit. Zwischen den bejahern und den verneinern ist der kampf. Haben diese recht, so hat es nie etwas zentral lebendiges gegeben – nicht Homer, nicht Christus, nicht Cäsar, nicht Shakespeare: denn zur definition des lebens gehört die immanente, fortwirkende unsterblichkeit. Gab es solch leben, so gibt es noch heute eins, und den bejahern liegt ob, es zu hüten, zu finden, zu wecken, zu zeigen, zu formen, ohne jede neben-rücksicht.⁹

The meaning of *ens realissimum*, a term employed by Kant in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, has generated a huge philosophical secondary literature.¹⁰ In particular, is it an intellectual construct (a principle of understanding), or a metaphysical reality?¹¹ Gundolf seems to

⁹ ‘Wesen und Beziehung’, in Schmitz and Martini, pp. 159–60. First published in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* 2, (1911), pp. 10–35.

¹⁰ The version of Kant that has been consulted here is Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Max Müller and Marcus Weigelt, (London: Penguin Classics, 2007), ‘Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Division, Chapter III. The Ideal of Pure Reason’, pp. 485–525.

¹¹ For a working definition of Kant’s idea, see Pasternack, Lawrence and Courtney Fugate, ‘Kant’s Philosophy of Religion’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta [Kant’s Philosophy of Religion \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#), section 3.1.1 ‘The Ens Realissimum’: ‘the ens realissimum is the concept of an individual object that is completely determined and is such through reason alone. In the case of most ideals, their determinations are the result of various empirical concepts as well as various subjective interests (such as what one believes a pet would bring to one’s daily life). However, in the ens realissimum, all its determinations are set solely through reason’s formal application of the principle of complete determination, aggregating together all possible predicates and selecting from these predicates all those which have a fully positive reality (no negative predicates, no derivative predicates). That is, following the concept of “the most real being”, reason brings together all possible predicates and eliminates those which involve some limitation or deficiency’ [accessed 6 December 2023].

regard it as the latter, in which case he may well have misunderstood Kant's argument, and it seems that he regards the question of the nature of this 'substance' as having been solved; the question now is one of its existence, and this is no longer a purely philosophical question, it is one of 'instinct', or a particular orientation towards life. Kant is attempting to prove the existence of God as an 'object' (to use the Stanford article's term), but one that has a purely rational, not an empirical foundation. Gundolf's argument is less sophisticated: it is in essence an artistic and socio-political manifesto, based on the idea of a struggle with the forces of commercialisation and standardisation that he sees around him. At this time (1911) he saw the struggle as 'certain of victory'. The terms *substanz* and *ens realissimum* are analogous to theoretical terms such as 'metaphysics of presence' and 'logocentrism' (the latter term was in fact invented by Ludwig Klages, a contributor to *Blätter für die Kunst* and the author of the first book-length study of Stefan George, in his *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (3 vols, 1929–1932)¹²). But there is a sense of bravado in Gundolf's account. It is based on metaphors of 'struggle' and 'victory', of a stark choice between 'affirmers' and 'naysayers', with the entire fate of humanity at stake. Gundolf's use of the terms *leib*, *Gott*, *ens realissimum* and *substanz* in the passage quoted above can be seen as pragmatic, not truly foundational. Gundolf's near-contemporary Hans Vaihinger argued in *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* of 1922 that the fact that an idea has a practical function does not prove that it is true¹³. Belief in an underpinning *substanz* is, for Gundolf, a matter of existential choice, not of rational demonstration. He invokes a metaphysical underpinning of meaning and value

¹² The sixth unabridged edition of 1981 is available online here: [Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele \(thule-italia.net\)](https://thule-italia.net). [accessed 17 October 2023]. A search of the 1471 pages reveals thirty-two appearances of the word *logozentrisch*, which Klages uses to refer to Western rationality, as opposed to *biozentrisch*, which means the unification of soul and body.

¹³ See Stoll, Timothy, 'Hans Vaihinger', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta [Hans Vaihinger \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/vaihinger/), last paragraph of section 4. [accessed 1 November 2023].

without seeing that it must apply to bad uses of language, bad literature, less than ideal people, as well as great or ideal ones (*Gestalten*). He cannot just select Homer, Christ, Caesar and Shakespeare and claim that they alone are underwritten by the *ens realissimum*. The criteria for doing this are not to do with a philosophical determinant of fundamental being, they are a proclamation of aesthetic or moral significance. When he writes that ‘the definition of life includes immanent, ongoing immortality’ he is referring to the life of the great artists and great works of art that he has selected, not to the definition of the kind of life that the rest of us live. Whatever the notion of a transcendental, eternal essence may mean in philosophical terms, it clearly has a strong appeal to those who, like Friedrich Gundolf want to find a basis for great art that is outside time and change, and outside ordinary critical debate and discussion.¹⁴

John’s Gospel 1.14 (‘Und das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnte unter uns, und wir sahen seine Herrlichkeit, eine Herrlichkeit als des eingeborenen Sohnes vom Vater, voller Gnade und Wahrheit’) describes a mysterious outpouring of the divine into the human world, where transcendental language, reason and creativity become human language, reason and creativity, bringing with them God’s glory, grace, and truth. In the Gospel, the Word comes into the world in the person of Christ, only to leave it again. This has not stopped later thinkers from believing that human language retains a divine trace or underpinning. Gadamer distinguishes between incarnation and embodiment, arguing that the notion of embodiment that is central to Plato and Pythagoras ‘assumes that soul and body are completely different’; even when embodied ‘the soul retains its own separate nature’ and its separation from the body is regarded as a ‘restoration of its true and real being’. On the other hand, he believes that the Christian idea of incarnation is central to language because it prevented ‘the

¹⁴ See Simpson, ‘Transcendental Philosophy’ pp. 78–79.

forgetfulness of language in Western thought from being complete’¹⁵. By ‘forgetfulness of language’ he seems to mean the idea that language is purely an instrumental system of reference. ‘A word is not a sign that one selects, nor is it a sign that one makes or gives to another [...] Rather, the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself. It is meaningful already’ (pp. 434–35). ‘The greater miracle of language lies not in the fact that the Word became flesh and emerges in external being, but that that which emerges and externalizes itself in utterance is always already a word.’ (p. 437) ‘[...] the human relationship between thought and speech corresponds, despite its imperfections, to the divine relationship of the Trinity. The inner mental word is just as consubstantial with thought as is God the Son with God the Father’. (p. 438). However, Gadamer stresses that this is only an analogy, and he doubts whether the analogy really illuminates anything: ‘The mystery of the Trinity, which the analogy with the inner word is supposed to illuminate, must ultimately remain incomprehensible in terms of human thought’ (p. 441). This will not satisfy the sceptically minded. The point though, is that many have felt that it is possible to employ theologically charged language in secular contexts, in order to throw light on the nature of language and literature. But caution is needed, and not only because of the danger of falling into incomprehensibility. The degree to which such words retain sacred traces varies according to the writer and the context. For example, the German word *Verkörperung* and the English word ‘embodiment’ do not necessarily have overt religious implications. They may mean no more than ‘the greatest example of’, or ‘personification of’. When Dilthey writes ‘Descartes ist die Verkörperung der auf Klarheit des Denkens gegründeten Autonomie des Geistes’, he is

¹⁵ Gadamer, p. 436.

clearly not trying to make a theological point.¹⁶ When Gundolf writes of an *ens realissimum* and a *substanz* he is claiming that meaning and value are underwritten not by the pragmatic needs and conventions of a linguistic community, but by some ultimately inexplicable entity, which somehow also underwrites our ability to talk about it even though we may be unable to define it. His claim is not entirely convincing, as was seen earlier. It is not clear whether he is saying that there must be such a thing, or that humans must believe that there is, regardless of its actual existence. Is it in fact a necessary or convenient fiction, a pragmatic issue, as suggested by Vaihinger? The same questions could be asked about some of his other foundational concepts, such as ‘überpersönliche Gnade’, ‘Lebensfülle’, ‘das Dämonische’.

Similar ideas have been expressed by others since Gundolf’s time. George Steiner (1929–2020) was a prolific writer on an enormous range of subjects: he had a very distinctive style: intense, orotund, latinate; he was fond of asking big questions, of listing great authors and great works, and of claiming that he was only able to hint at the vastness and depth of the subjects he was discussing. Some find this irritating and accuse him of name-dropping and using inflated apocalyptic rhetoric. A grandiloquent style is characteristic of both Gundolf and Steiner and with both of them the reader may feel that rhetoric and performance sometimes outrun meaning. But it cannot be denied that Steiner was a fervent and deeply serious advocate of European high culture, while being alive to its problems and contradictions, and that he could practise intense and engaging close reading of texts. As we saw in his dismissal of the ‘modischer Taumel’ of *Barockforschung* in *Andreas Gryphius*, Gundolf disliked much of the literary scholarship of his time and did not employ the usual scholarly apparatus of references, footnotes and bibliographies in his writings. Like Gundolf,

¹⁶ Dilthey, ‘Descartes Idealismus der Freiheit’ in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1964), pp. 343–59 (p. 349).

Steiner takes a dismissive approach towards much contemporary literary criticism and scholarship. In his book *Real Presences*, which like Gundolf's works, does not use scholarly apparatus, he writes: 'In truth, the bulk of doctoral and post-doctoral 'research' into literature, and the publications which it spawns, are nothing more than a grey morass' (p. 35). One might ask how he can be so certain of this: his view is impressionistic. But it is clear that he is deeply concerned with the questions of whether the academic study of literature leads to a true understanding of it, and of whether either art or scholarship truly play a role in civilising people. His recognition of the coexistence of art and barbarity in the Nazi period is well known.¹⁷

In *Real Presences* he sets out to establish that the meaning of art rests on a kind of hidden theology, that in spite of differences in interpretation that it may give rise to, a work of art has an essence that cannot be paraphrased or subjected to reductive analysis:

This essay argues a wager on transcendence. It argues that there is in the art-act and its reception, that there is in the experience of meaningful form, a presumption of presence. Meaningfulness is not an invariant datum. There are indeed vacancies, deliberate or pathological 'ruptures' or spaces for 'non-sense' in otherwise intelligible modes of enunciation. But these are not of the essence. There are indeed indecipherabilities. But these are at the margin. There is, can be, no end to interpretative disagreement and revision. But where it is seriously engaged in, the process of differing is one which cumulatively circumscribes and clarifies the disputed ground. It is, I have argued, the irreducible autonomy of presence, of 'otherness', in art and text which denies either adequate paraphrase or unanimity of finding.¹⁸

Steiner earlier states:

In most cultures, in the witness borne by poetry and art until most recent modernity, the source of 'otherness' has been actualized or metaphorized as transcendent. It has been invoked as divine, as magical, as daimonic. It is a presence of radiant opacity. That presence is the source of powers, of significations in the text, in the work, neither consciously willed nor consciously understood (p. 211).

¹⁷ See for example 'To Civilize our Gentlemen' in *Language and Silence: Essays 1958–1966* repr. abridged edn, (London: Peregrine Books, 1979) pp. 77–90, and *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

¹⁸ Steiner, *Real Presences*, p. 214.

We saw that Gundolf invoked ‘das Dämonische’ in connection with Goethe; in Chapter Two (p. 18) we noted that Martin Opitz and others claimed that poetry began as a ‘hidden theology’ and ‘teaching of divine matters’, though Steiner possibly overlooks the fact that invocations of the divine or of the Muses in some literature, for example that of the Renaissance and the Baroque, is often a convention. To call all of them ‘daimonic’ is a misrepresentation. Steiner’s phrase ‘actualized or metaphorized’, implying that the two are exchangeable or equivalent, is evasive, and it is this that James Wood attacks:

One feels that Steiner is asking us to believe not in the presence of the divine, but in the easier presence of undefined greatness. The test is easy to apply. Were Steiner proposing a doctrine of meaning, it would have to be a universal doctrine, just as Christianity is a universal doctrine. If great work incarnates a Real Presence, then minor or even bad work must do so also, for meaning, divine or otherwise, cannot be present only in masterpieces. [...] The quality of the meaning is another matter; but vulgar meaning is not without any meaning at all.¹⁹

This ‘easier test of undefined greatness’ is also the one that Gundolf asks his readers to apply. He too is vulnerable to the charge that *substantz* and *ens realissimum*, if they do the work that he claims that they do, cannot be present only in masterpieces. Wood holds Steiner to the standard of formal religious belief and commitment. The notion of ‘real presence’, Wood claims, is a borrowing from the language of the Eucharist that tries to avoid the full implications of such a belief. This is an astute criticism, but possibly an unfair one. Steiner’s book is not an attempt to demonstrate the validity of religious belief, but a claim that religious language is meaningful, that a ‘wager on transcendence’ is an option for some people, and that this is how much existing art can be understood. The wager is on the significance of great art, not on the meaningfulness of language in all its forms. The claim is that this needs an imaginative sympathy for religion and religious language, rather than assent

¹⁹ James Wood, ‘George Steiner’s Unreal Presence’, in *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), pp. 155–73 (p. 165).

to it in a literal sense. As mentioned earlier, Steiner is evasive about this, but the question does not have a simple answer. The option to believe is no longer available for many people in the West, but this does not rule out an understanding that it was once a very real option and that it may continue to have value as a metaphor, as long as it is clearly understood as such. Whether it is *essential* for the understanding of art or the foundation of meaning – which is what both Gundolf and Steiner are claiming – is another question, and their slippery elision of the divine as metaphor and the divine as reality will provoke doubts in many readers. With both of them it is a matter of existential choice (a ‘wager’), or Gadamer’s ‘analogy’, rather than a demonstration. The criticism that both of them are applying an ‘easier test of undefined greatness’ is a telling one, and the mere affirmation of significance is no substitute for the experience of serious engagement with art. To quote Eliot’s ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’:

If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of ‘sublimity’ misses the mark. For it is not the ‘greatness’, the intensity of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts.²⁰

This is part of Eliot’s argument that great art is impersonal. The emphasis is on the work of the artist in achieving ‘intensity’ and ‘fusion’, not on a grand metaphysical underpinning or the supposed suprahuman qualities of an artist such as Goethe.

Steiner’s God (‘transcendence’) is remote and impersonal, metaphorical, shading easily (too easily, a believer might say) into his own concerns about art, literature, music, philosophy. The same could be said of Gundolf, though he uses the word ‘God’ more freely than does Steiner. Both, as we have seen, use Christian language without personal religious

²⁰ In *Complete Prose*, Vol. 2, pp. 105–14 (p. 109).

commitment, but perhaps this is a widespread feature of what Charles Taylor calls ‘a secular age’. Gundolf’s religious references may denote a real, if minimal, spiritual life, or may be just a way of evoking a type of authority, or ‘undefined greatness’? ²¹ Gundolf assumes that his readers will know what he means by *Gott*, but it is not really clear whether his God is that of German Protestantism, the God of any one of the monotheistic religions, the ‘God of the Philosophers’, or an indeterminate primeval force. But the sense is that he invokes artistic greatness, not divine revelation. In *Goethe* (p. 89) he discusses Herder’s belief that, in contrast to Lessing’s rationalist and Klopstock’s pietistic belief that God is an unchanging, omnipotent and benevolent power, God is in fact an active and constantly developing force, and language is the spiritual realisation (*Geistwerdung*) of this active force. Poetry is not inspiration from God, but ‘sprachegewordene Gotteskraft selbst, wie der menschliche Geist nicht Produkt, sondern Ausdruck des Geschichtsall=gottes.’ Not the *product* of a pantheistic God who is active in history, but an *expression* of him; not a force from outside the human world but one who has become an active part of it. Goethe’s religious achievement, according to Gundolf, is to have taken the lofty, mathematical pantheism of Spinoza and expressed it through his poetic language as a dynamic force in the world ²². Herder, he argues, along with Shakespeare, was one of the principal shaping forces of Goethe’s poetry. There are opacities here, and the more careful reader will want to stop and question the meaning of some of these expressions, rather than just be swept along by Gundolf’s rhetoric.

²¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 535 discusses the question of being ‘spiritual’ but not ‘religious’.

²² ‘Was Goethes religiöse Leistung ist, den werdenden und wirkenden Gott in der Welt durchgeföhlt und nicht nur verkündet, sondern ausgedrückt zu haben, den Allgott Spinozas in Kraft und Wirksamkeit umgesetzt zu haben — Spinoza selbst sah ihn mathematisch mystisch als Wissen und Ruhe — das können wir bis in seinen dichterischen Sprachgebrauch hinein wahrnehmen.’ *Goethe*, p. 106.

Gundolf writes that in the modern world, after the disintegration of the ‘ecumenical unities’ of empire and church, a new kind of hero-figure arose, representing a new kind of cultural unity: ‘In bestimmten Heroen stellt sich die Kultureinheit wieder her: an die Stelle der Gesamtkulturen treten Menschen welche in sich Kulturen sind und um sich her Kultur schaffen, Ausdruck und Leib für Stoff und Trieb der ohne sie Chaos bliebe: in ihnen wird das Wort Fleisch, das Wesen Gestalt.’²³ This cultural unity, then, is now to be found in charismatic individuals, not in social institutions or, in Gadamer’s fashion, in the essence of all language. In Chapter One we saw how Gundolf believed that the German Baroque and the post-Goethe era lacked a ‘Person=, Volk= oder Weltwerdung des lebendigen Geistes’ of the kind provided by the ideas of Empire and Church, or the personalities of Luther and Goethe. *Werdung* here has some of the sense of ‘incarnation’: the living spirit has become a reality in the world, as with the word *Geistwerdung* in the quote from p. 89 of *Goethe* mentioned above. Incarnational language is again being used to affirm a cult of heroism and greatness, one that has more to do with ideas of daimon or titanic demi-gods than with Christianity. And once again, Eliot’s strictures about ‘any semi-ethical criterion of ‘sublimity’ ’ and his emphasis on ‘the intensity of the artistic process’ come to mind as a corrective to Gundolf’s placing of the idealised personality of the artist above the art that they create. Neither Eliot nor Gundolf, though, locates true artistic value in Romantic concepts such as ‘beauty’ and ‘sublimity’.

Steiner’s ‘wager on transcendence’ may, then, be usefully compared with Gundolf’s wager-like ‘keine sache der demonstration sondern des erlebnisses’ in ‘Wesen und Beziehung’. But Gundolf is not putting the idea of God into quotation marks, there is no ‘or’ as in Steiner’s ‘actualized or metaphorized’ (or as in his own ‘göttliche oder natürliche’ in

²³ ‘Dichter und Helden’, in *Dichter und Helden*, pp. 23–58 (p. 31).

‘Stefan George in unsrer Zeit’). However, his views developed over time. In a passage written after the First World War, Gundolf connects *Gott* with *Volk*, *Nation* and *Bildung*:

[...] endlich bezeichnet “Volk” schlechthin die “Volkheit” (nach Goethes Wort), den gesteigerten und verdichteten Geist der Nation, ihren Bildungsgenius, wie er in seinen höchsten sinnbildlichen Personen und Werken sich ausdrückt, ohne darin endgültig verhaftet zu sein...Dieses “Volkes” Stimme ist Gottes Stimme, und nur auf diese Stimme, den sinn-vollen, tief-sinnigen Urlaut lauschen die echten Männer des Volks und fangen ihn auf in ihrer von Vor-sichten, Rück-sichten, Ab-sichten unbeeinträchtigen Einsamkeit, denken ihn, mehren ihn und erhalten ihn. Sie bedürfen dazu nicht eines neugierigen Ohrs und eines spähenden Blicks, sondern sie müssen nur selbst Volk sein, aber Volk und Geist zugleich. In ihnen muß die Stimme aufbrechen, hinunterreichen müssen sie schon mit ihrem Geblüt und Gewächs, in den keusch-fruchtbaren Grund woraus Geist und Form, Wort und Wissen erst sich klärt.²⁴

Gundolf is saying that ‘the voice of the people’ *is* ‘the voice of God’, not that it is a metaphor for it. God is not the *substanz* or *ens realissimum* of the earlier passage, but the primeval essence of a national culture, and it can only be truly felt by the ‘real men’ (*Männer*, not *Menschen*: the language is gender-specific) of a specific ethnic group. This is far from being the same thing as Steiner’s ‘transcendence’, though both invoke an idea of God and of authority based on a conception of God. From a current historical perspective there are bound to be suspicions about the repeated use of the word *Volk*, but there is no suggestion here that Gundolf believed in notions of racial struggle or racial superiority. He is not directly saying here that the German *Volk* or *Nation* are superior to others. He was, however, preoccupied with the question of how non-German writers such as Shakespeare and Dante could be understood by, or assimilated into, a German literary tradition. The question of Dante will be discussed below.

In *Real Presences* Steiner discusses Fritz Mauthner’s *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1899). Mauthner’s argument, according to Steiner, is that:

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35. The phrase ‘the people’s voice is God’s voice’ recalls the saying *vox populi, vox dei*, which has a long history and has been used to mean both the wisdom and the madness of crowds.

The uses of speech and writing current in modern Western societies are fatally infirm. The discourse which knits social institutions, that of legal codes, of political debate, of philosophic argument and literary construct, the leviathan rhetoric of the public media – all are rotten with lifeless clichés, with meaningless jargon, with intentional or unconscious falsehood. The contagion has spread to the nerve centres of private saying (pp. 110–11).

Whilst Gundolf's own writing, if sometimes opaque, certainly resists 'lifeless cliché' and 'meaningless jargon', there is no evidence that he had anything to say about Mauthner, or about Hofmannsthal's *Chandos Letter* (despite many references to Hofmannsthal in his writings, including his correspondence with Stefan George), or that he had a general philosophical interest in language. Nevertheless, he clearly shared the view that the language of his time was debased. Gundolf stated in his essay on Dante that George was the 'Erneuerer der deutschen Dichtersprache' – not, however, the renewer of the German language in a wider sense²⁵. Gundolf is not seeking a general social transformation. Neither is he promoting a pedagogical vision of *Germanistik* as a branch of academic activity that in itself has some kind salvific power, in the way that the study of English literature was promoted in Britain in the years after the First World War by teachers and critics such as I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis. Terry Eagleton describes how English as a branch of academic study began in the nineteenth century as the 'poor man's Classics', developed an 'emphasis on solidarity between the social classes, the cultivation of 'larger sympathies, the instillation of national pride and the transmission of 'moral values' (p. 23) then, rejecting German philology as a result of the First World War (p. 26), came to see itself as 'an arena in which the most fundamental questions of human experience [...] were thrown into vivid relief and made the subject of the most intensive scrutiny' (p. 27).²⁶ Gundolf finds the possibility of salvation in

²⁵ 'Dante (1922?)' in Schmitz and Martini, p. 202.

²⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Anniversary Edition, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

art and artists, not in an educational program. In particular, he finds it in the work of Stefan George:

Durch ihn haben die seit langem hohlen Zauber= und Schöpfungsworte endlich wieder Gewalt, Gehalt und Gestalt bekommen: Schönheit, Größe, Mensch, Volk und Gott. Durch ihn lebt wieder was Lug oder Traum oder Erinnerung war. Die Heimkunft der Wesen aus dem Werden, der Entwicklung, dem Jenseits, dem Andern in ihr Sein, in ihr Wort, in ihre Gestalt ist sein Werk..die Wiederbringung des Gottes aus dem Himmel und den Schatten des Himmels in den wirklichen Menschen, die Einkehr der leeren Dauer und der vergänglichen Zeit in den vollendeten Augenblick. Der Mensch hat seit Jahrhunderten sich entäußert, sich erlöst, sich fortgeschritten, bis er sein Selbst verlor und seinen Weg. George gründet ihn wieder ganz in ihn selbst und in seinen einfachen Ursprung: das gotthaft gestaltige SEIN.²⁷

The claims being made for George are, to say the least, bold. Indeed, some will regard them as absurdly exaggerated – and some contemporaries thought so, notably Ernst Troeltsch, as will be seen shortly. Their implications include the rejection, or at least the bypassing, of rational thought in favour of immediate experience, a new sense of time, and the return to the human world of a God previously seen as detached from it. It includes a rare mention of ‘beauty’, but only as one of a list of hypostasized qualities that also includes ‘greatness’ and ‘man’. He once again opposes *Werden* and *Wesen*, this time coming down firmly on the side of the latter. This is not a story of a linear decline, but of the possibility of restoration. His hieratically intoned alliterating disyllables ‘Gewalt, Gehalt und Gestalt’ are again not the same things as Steiner’s ‘transcendence’, but they play a similar role by claiming to underwrite meaning and artistic greatness. The passion (or overblown rhetoric) with which he states the case for ‘gotthaft gestaltige SEIN’ shows that this is far from a vision of literary criticism as adjudication of ‘good taste’, as polite *belles lettres*. The moral and political consequences of this vision do not include any idea of general social solidarity of the kind

²⁷ Gundolf, *George*, p. 269.

mentioned by Eagleton in his account of the development of English: Gundolf's *Volk* is not democratic or egalitarian – it is not the civic sense of the word discussed in Chapter One.

Gundolf mentions Mallarmé in his discussion of George, but simply as a poetic forebear. He does not mention the question of the severance of the link between language and meaning towards the end of the nineteenth century that so preoccupies Steiner, who refers to 'Mallarmé's repudiation of the covenant of reference' (p. 96). Steiner is of course writing in full awareness of post-structuralist theory and *Real Presences* is in part an attempt to grapple with the issues that it raises. He is much concerned with the writings of Heidegger, Adorno, Benjamin. But *Real Presences* is not a simplistic attack on postmodernism and deconstruction. Steiner is too well aware of the genuine issues that are raised by the best thinkers of this kind, though he is dismissive of much of the academic writing that they have generated. Moreover, his idea of 'presence' extends beyond the neo-religious. He writes: 'The presence, visibly solicited or exorcised, of Homer, Virgil and Dante in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in the epic satire of Pope and in the pilgrimage upstream of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, is a 'real presence', a critique in action... What the *Aeneid* rejects, alters, omits altogether from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is as critically salient and instructive as that which it includes via variant, *imitatio*, and modulation.' (*Real Presences*, pp. 12–13). This is reminiscent of Harold Bloom's idea of 'the anxiety of influence', that authors achieve greatness by rebelling against or creatively, even deliberately, misreading their predecessors as much as by imitating them.²⁸ It is a subtle and difficult idea, and one that goes beyond the notions of 'tradition' embraced in different ways by both Eliot and Gundolf, for all their

²⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

insistence that the past is relevant only insofar as it continues to exist as a living force in the present.

To develop the argument, the connections between Gundolf, Eliot, and some other German and British critics will now be examined in more detail. In a letter of 11 December 1930 to Edwin Muir, the poet and translator of Kafka, who had evidently proposed an essay for Eliot's journal *The Criterion: A Literary Review* (published from October 1922 to January 1939), Eliot wrote:

I am a little worried about *Kafka*. The trouble is that I have a long essay by Gundolf on Mörike – that is, an essay by a German whom no one in England has heard of about another German, equally unknown here; I have already held it up three months and it must go into the March number. I don't quite like to follow it up with an essay, however interesting, on an Austrian whom no one has heard of...²⁹.

Clearly there is some dry humour at work here. Eliot's 'whom no one has heard of' should be read, in the case of both Gundolf and of Kafka, as 'not many people have heard of'. Gundolf was one of the leading literary figures of the Weimar Republic and it would be strange if his name were not known in intellectual circles outside Germany. It is in fact clear that Gundolf's work was known in the British Isles by the time of his death, and some of this knowledge was found in a group of academics associated with *The Criterion*. Indeed, in issue no. XLVI, of October 1931, Eliot's editorial commentary states:

It is greatly to the credit of the intellectuals of post-War Germany, [...] that they have been able to produce so much that is first-rate, It is a pity that work of this kind finds little appreciation in England...Such names as those of Heidegger in philosophy and Heim in theology are known only to a handful; Friedrich Gundolf and Max Scheler are slightly known to some of our readers...³⁰.

This is not to suggest that British knowledge of Gundolf was confined to this circle: there are for example mentions of him in *Modern German Literature* by Jethro Bithell, who was not a

²⁹ All references are to *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 5, 1930–1931, ed. by John Haffenden, (London: Faber & Faber, 2014).

³⁰ *The Criterion* 13, no. 46, October 1931, p. 73.

contributor to *The Criterion*.³¹ Eliot and Gundolf were both friends of Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956). While Curtius is best known as a scholar of French and Medieval Latin literature, he translated *The Waste Land* into German in 1927 as *Das Wüste Land*, and in 1949 published a perceptive essay on Eliot's poetic and dramatic output to date, in which he translates some passages from *Four Quartets*.³² Eliot had read Curtius's *Die literarischen Wegbereiter des neuen Frankreich* (1919) and wrote to him in 1922 to ask him to contribute to *The Criterion*, which he did in the form of articles on Balzac and Proust. Curtius's relations with German scholars such as Worringer and Gundolf enabled Eliot to obtain their contributions to *The Criterion*.³³

In a letter of 25 May 1930 to Erich Alport Eliot wrote³⁴:

I am very sorry indeed to have given disappointment about Professor Gundolf. We took a long time over it, and I consulted two distinguished Shakespeare scholars, one of whom took a long time himself over reading and reporting. He was so much interested that he bought the book; but he could not encourage us to publish, for the reason that the public would be very small, and the expense of translation and publishing of such a massive book would be very heavy; and we felt that we simply could not afford it [...] I think that the time may come later, and meanwhile I want to arouse interest in Gundolf. I have asked an intelligent scholar who is very keen on Gundolf to write an article on him for the *Criterion*.³⁵ Would you mind telling Professor Gundolf this? I should also very much like Professor Gundolf to let me have something suitable, and of suitable length, to translate in the *Criterion* (about 5000 or 6000 words).

³¹ Bithell, *Modern German Literature 1880–1950*, 3rd revised edition, 1959, Chapter VI, 'Stefan George and his Circle.'

³² Ernst Robert Curtius, 'T.S.Eliot', in *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Europäisches Denken*, III. Jahrgang, Erstes Heft, (Stuttgart and Baden-Baden: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1949), pp. 1–23.

³³ See the account in Jason Harding, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 202–226.

³⁴ 'Dr. Erich Adolph Alport (1903–72) was born in Posen, Germany, and first went to the University of Heidelberg, before matriculating at University College [Oxford] in 1926, where he spent two terms, eventually settling in England.' See <https://www.univ.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Alport.pdf> [accessed 29 November 2023].

³⁵ This may refer to Max Rychner, 1897–1965, the Swiss literary critic and translator. He was a friend of Curtius and the editor of the journal *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*. Possibly he submitted the obituary mentioned below in place of the article.

The editor's footnote to Eliot's letter to Alport of 8 January 1930 clarifies that the book that Faber & Faber was unwilling to publish was *Shakespeare: Sein Wesen und Werk* (1928).

Eliot wrote on 18 March 1930 to Grierson, who was presumably one of the 'two distinguished Shakespeare scholars', thanking him for his report on Gundolf's book.

Footnote 1 on page 124 of the *Letters* states: 'Grierson wrote on 16 March: 'The more I read the more I feel doubtful. It is not critical but entirely interpretative in the tradition of Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*'. This echoes the comments made by German academics that Gundolf was not a scholar but an artist. Grierson's mixed feelings about Gundolf are also seen in his 1930 lecture *Carlyle and Hitler*, where he mentions him several times and quotes a few sentences from 'Dichter und Helden'. He describes him, in an ambivalent phrase, as 'The most vivid exponent of German Hero-Worship today'.³⁶

Eliot left the subject of the article to Gundolf, but suggested Stefan George.³⁷

In the event, Gundolf submitted an essay on Mörike and it was published in *The Criterion* of July 1931³⁸. Whilst it seems unlikely that Mörike would have aroused much sympathy in the author of *The Waste Land*, it should be remembered that Eliot used a wide range of contributors in *The Criterion* and that one of his concerns was to promote the idea of a pan-European culture. It was certainly not a journal that simply promoted his own literary tastes. The first two volumes of *The Criterion* contained contributions by, among others, Hermann Hesse, Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Gerhart Hauptmann. Curtius also recommended Max Rychner to Eliot as a suitable contributor, and it was

³⁶ Herbert Grierson, *Carlyle and Hitler: The 1930 Adamson Lecture in the University of Manchester*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 43.

³⁷ The original of Eliot's letter to Gundolf of 20 June 1930 is in FGP G6, 'Correspondence with Publishers'.

³⁸ It is a translation specially commissioned from Wilhelmine E. Delp of Royal Holloway College of an essay in *Romantiker. Neue Folge* (Ludwig Tieck, Karl Immermann, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Eduard Mörike) (Berlin-Wilmersdorf: Keller, 1930).

Rychner who wrote an obituary of Gundolf which was published in an English translation by Marjorie Garbain (1891–1950) in *The Criterion* of October 1931 as part of his occasional essay series entitled ‘German Chronicle’. In his article on Mörike, Gundolf had said of Goethe that ‘all men of judgement recognize Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe as grand-masters of their craft.’ Curtius had written in *Essays on European Literature* that ‘[Goethe] stands in the line of Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare.’³⁹ Eliot, in contrast, took a disparaging view of Goethe – and by implication, in Curtius’s eyes, of German culture in general – and this may have led to a cooling in relations between him and Curtius and the cessation of Curtius’s contributions to *The Criterion*.⁴⁰

Clearly there were personal links between these writers, and a comparison of their ideas is fruitful. This is not something that has been attempted in existing scholarly writing. In ‘The Metaphysical Poets’, the essay where he claimed that ‘A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility’, Eliot wrote ‘the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling’ is artistically superior to ‘meditating on them poetically’⁴¹. There is something here of Schiller’s distinction between ‘naive und sentimentalische Dichtung’. It also contrasts with Gundolf’s emphasis on the primacy of experience, *Erlebnis*: Eliot claims that thought and experience cannot be separated in the best poets. For Eliot, in this essay, the ‘dissociation of sensibility’ is an artistic phenomenon, one which eventually leads to Romanticism, which he deplored. He does not claim here that there is a socio-political cause for it, or that it is primarily a socio-political issue. In a lecture delivered in 1947, however, he had some rather cautious second thoughts on the subject:

³⁹ Ernst Robert Curtius, *Essays on European Literature* trans. by Michael Kowal, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 91.

⁴⁰ See Harding, pp. 222–23.

⁴¹ ‘The Metaphysical Poets’, p. 381.

All we can say is, that something like this did happen; that it had something to do with the Civil War; that it would even be unwise to say it was caused by the Civil War, but that it is a consequence of the same causes which brought about the Civil War; that we must seek the causes in Europe, not in England alone; and for what these causes were, we may dig and dig until we get to a depth at which words and concepts fail us.⁴²

This reminds us of Gundolf's comment, quoted in Chapter One, that 'Der 30jährige Krieg ist nur die politische Seite derselben Krankheit, die den Geist des Deutschtums damals befallen hatte', though Eliot is more judicious. He does not claim that war was only the political aspect of a spiritual issue, he looks beyond his own country to Europe as a whole, and admits that the issue may elude simple explanation. He claims instead that the Civil War and the dissociation of sensibility had the same causes, whereas Gundolf maintains that the spiritual causes of the Thirty Years' War are primary: 'Die materiellen "Ur=sachen" sind alles eher als Ursachen – es sind die letzten abgeleiteten Niederschläge des von innen heraus wirkenden Geistes.' Here he is being more confident than Eliot, who believed that the attempt to find an explanation would ultimately reach 'a depth at which words and concepts fail us'. Eliot as a poet was looking for creative models that would enable him to go beyond Romantic poetic practice. He found them in Symbolism and Imagism, and in Dante, as well as in the literature and thought of the seventeenth century. The idea of a 'unified' as opposed to a 'dissociated' sensibility, was as much a standard for his own poetic practice as an observation about literary history. As noted earlier, there were German critics such as Victor Manheimer who found similarities between Expressionism and the literature of the seventeenth century, but this was not done for the sake of finding models for contemporary poetry.

There will be no attempt here to establish whether a 'dissociation of sensibility' (Eliot) or a triumph of *Verstand* (Gundolf) really occurred. Indeed, it seems unlikely that either of

⁴² T.S. Eliot, 'Milton', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1947 (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 61–79, (pp. 67–8).

them did, or that these concepts have any useful historical application. Frank Kermode discusses this issue, claiming that there has never been a literate society where a naturalistic critique of its beliefs was not possible, and that the more interesting question is why certain early twentieth-century thinkers were so keen to establish that some kind of disaster had occurred in the seventeenth century⁴³. What is notable is that both Gundolf and Eliot felt that such a disaster had taken place and that it was reflected in the problems of their own time. Both also felt that the seventeenth century produced great authors, who were of continuing literary and spiritual relevance (Donne, Grimmelshausen). Neither is concerned with art as social critique in a straightforward sense, though both display a pessimistic view of the direction of contemporary cultural change. According to Eliot, the artist invents or discovers tradition in order to set himself apart from society, not to reconcile art and society. This is not to say that they (and, as will be seen later, F.R. Leavis) did not believe that improvement of some kind was possible. Eliot diagnoses the spiritual condition of his time in his poetry and wrote more explicit and programmatic analysis of cultural and religious issues in his essays, such as the collections *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948)⁴⁴. In *Stefan George in unsrer Zeit* (p. 61) Gundolf wrote:

Unter Schriftstellern welche die heutige Welt als technisches, soziales, religiöses Problem ausdeuten, verherrlicht er als Dichter die Kräfte wodurch Welt überhaupt erst entsteht und besteht: die – sagen wir – kosmische Wirklichkeit welche alle Aktualitäten schafft und vernichtet. Den Menschen, der in unsrem heutigen Schrifttum nur als historisches, psychologisches, moralisches Ergebnis erscheint,

⁴³ Kermode, *Romantic Image*, in particular, Chapter VIII, ‘“Dissociation of Sensibility”: Modern Symbolist Readings of Literary History’. The passages referred to here are on pp. 142–43.

⁴⁴ Whilst the topic of Eliot’s social thinking is too complex to be explored here, it is of interest that the Appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* consists of transcripts of three radio talks that Eliot made to Germany in 1946, which later were printed in translation as a pamphlet, *Die Einheit der Europäischen Kultur* (Berlin: Habel, 1946). Their aim was to contribute to the denazification of Germany and to help bring Germany back into the fold of European culture. Eliot mentions the network of European literary reviews in the inter-war years, and comments that in the end they failed due to ‘the gradual closing of the mental frontiers of Europe’. T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948), p. 116.

kündet er als ein welthaltiges und weltschaffendes (d.h. eben kosmisches) Wesen, nicht als ein Bündel von Beziehungen, sondern als ein Ursein.⁴⁵

Gundolf sees George's work as existing on a higher plane than the realistic and naturalistic novels and dramas of his time. In the second sentence he contrasts the contemporary world, a collection of facts graspable in technical and social terms, with 'World' (without a definite article): the poet, it seems, can express the underlying metaphysical reality that allows all experience to arise. It is surprising that Gundolf slips in 'religiös' as one of the types of problem that such less exalted literature deals with. This presumably refers to conventional religiosity: the idea of humanity as a world-creating cosmic primal being is not one that is likely to appeal to church-going Christians. Gundolf's views are grounded in ideas of the German language, the German *Geist*, the idea of heroes and great men, and the oracular powers of the individual poet, not in concrete historical facts about society, a grasp of a social community over time, with its customs and traditions, family life, sense of physical place, working lives of ordinary people – or even in a nostalgic appropriation of them. In contrast Craig Raine refers to 'the agrarian sentimentalist in Eliot whom we see in *After Strange Gods* praising unified, rooted culture, settled on the land and opposed to deracinated cosmopolitanism'.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Eliot countenanced a wider view of culture which included sport, holidays and food as well as religion and literature. In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (p. 51) he states that '[culture] includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar.' Gundolf and George did not have such a wide-ranging view: for them the historian, whether of art,

⁴⁵ Gundolf, 'Stefan George in unsrer Zeit', p. 61.

⁴⁶ Craig Raine *T.S. Eliot*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 161.

politics, or society has the task of relating the values of the great figures of the past to the needs of the present. The emphasis is on the great figures and works of art, the *Gestalten*, not on ordinary people.⁴⁷

Both Eliot and Gundolf were concerned with the authority and the significance of art. For Eliot, this came from his idea of tradition. For Gundolf, it came partly from a static idea of artists as an eternal, unchanging constellation of ‘great men’, but also from a dynamic one, that of a spirit of change and becoming:

Reliquienkult ist nicht unsere Aufgabe, kein Wiederbau der Vergangenheit, kein Autoritätsdienst. Die Grossen sind gross durch ihre nie versiegende Neuheit, nicht durch ihr wandellooses Altertum. weil sie nach tausend Jahren sind, nicht weil sie vor tausend Jahren waren. Zu befinden was aus ihrem unerschöpflichem und unauflösbarem Gesamtwesen bloß Historie und was mitwirkende Gegenwart sei: dazu sind die lebendigen Wähler und Wirker jedes Zeitalters da, das gehört zum Beruf der geistigen Bewegung⁴⁸.

Discussing this question, Ulrich Raulff writes: ‘Es ist Gundolf nie vollständig gelungen, seine beiden Geschichtsauffassungen, die kinetische und die statische, miteinander zu versöhnen’.⁴⁹

This is comparable to Eliot’s view in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, where he states that tradition is not just a matter of:

[...] following the ways of the immediate generations before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes...it cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, [...] which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Michael Winkler, ‘Master and Disciples: The George Circle’, in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 2005) pp. 145–60, (p. 152).

⁴⁸ *Dichter und Helden* p. 24. The original version is in *Jahrbuch für die Geistige Bewegung* 3, 1912, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Friedrich Gundolf, *Anfänge deutscher Geschichtsschreibung von Tschudi bis Winckelmann / Aufgrund nachgelassener Schriften Friedrich Gundolfs bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Edgar Wind; mit einem Nachwort zur Neuausgabe von Ulrich Raulff*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1992), p. 124.

⁵⁰ Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, p. 106.

Curtius's 1947 article in *Merkur* on *The Waste Land* explores how this idea is expressed in Eliot's poetry:

Was uns dichterisch trifft, ist das Ineinandergeschobensein der Zeiten und Räume: mythische Vorzeit des Tiresias und banaler Londoner Alltag...Die poetische Relativisierung der Wirklichkeit und der Zeit ist das spezifische Moderne an *The Waste Land*. Gleichzeitigkeit aller Zeiten – das bedeutet zugleich Entwirklichung der Zeit.⁵¹

Whilst this is perceptive as far as it goes, readers may query whether Curtius is right to imply that the only thing about *The Waste Land* that is specifically modern is 'the poetic relativization of reality and time' Is 'relativisation' the right word? – the poem expresses disillusionment and despair about the state of the modern world, with a hint of the possibility of spiritual rebirth at the end, not the equivalence of all times and places. The reader also encounters modernistic devices such as quotation and allusion, scraps of colloquial dialogue and diction, fragmentary language and structure. References to the past are not the same as 'relativisation' of it, still less 'making it unreal' (*Entwirklichung*). Gundolf also did not believe in 'relativisation' but in the fact that the only real significance of the past is its meaning for the present. As has been noted, however, there is a conflict of dynamic and static views of the past in Gundolf: 'es gibt keine Vergangenheit, nur verschiedene Wirkungsgrade der Ewigkeit' (*Dichter und Helden*, p. 47). Readers may query what meaning can be attached to the expression 'Wirkungsgrade der Ewigkeit': *Wirkungsgrad* is often a technical term referring to the degree of efficiency of a machine or a process, but at the very least *Ewigkeit* here suggests something static, whereas *Wirkung* suggests a dynamic process.

There are problems and ambiguities in the word 'tradition'. It tends to imply conservatism, and glosses over the fact that many alleged traditions, whether those of art and culture or of public ceremony, are comparatively modern inventions, or reinventions, often

⁵¹ Curtius, 'T.S. Eliot', p. 10.

with a conscious purpose behind them, rather than simply the reverential and unconsidered preservation of an idealised past, needing little thought or consideration. Eliot and Gundolf both wrote of the past in furtherance of a very contemporary agenda, aiming at the transformation of art and society. Both, therefore, stress the value of the past as a living force in the present. Eliot is much more concerned with the situation of the contemporary poet who is seeking inspiration and validation in the work of his predecessors. He uses terms such as ‘sense’, ‘perception’, ‘feeling’, to describe how we connect with the past; in his writings on Stefan George Gundolf uses metaphors of living energy which cannot be overcome or exhausted. These ideas can be illuminated by considering two areas about which both men wrote: Dante, and the literature of the seventeenth century.

In his essay ‘Dante’ of 1929, Eliot claims that Dante is a pan-European genius, and that he is the best model for the poetic practice of today:

[...] When you read modern philosophy, in English, French, German, and Italian, you must be struck by national or racial differences of thought: modern languages *tend* to separate abstract thought (mathematics is now the only universal language); but medieval Latin tended to concentrate on what men of various races and lands could think together [...] To enjoy any French or German poetry, I think one needs to have some sympathy with the French or German mind; Dante, none the less an Italian and a patriot, is first a European.’ [...] ‘The Italian of Dante, though essentially the Italian of today, is not in this way a modern language. The culture of Dante was not of one European country but of Europe.’⁵²

Here Eliot slides rather too easily from ‘language’ to ‘culture’, but the point he is trying to make is clear enough. He continues: ‘The language of each great English poet is his own language; the language of Dante is the perfection of a common language’ (p. 712).

⁵² T.S. Eliot, ‘Dante’, in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Vol. 3, Literature, politics, belief, 1927–1929*, ed. by Frances Dickey, Jennifer Formichelli and Ronald Schuchard, (Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber Ltd, 2015) pp. 700–45. (pp. 701, 702).

In opposing ‘his own language’ to ‘common language’, Eliot is hiding a belief about the sensibilities of individual poets behind a broad cultural generalisation about ‘language’ as an abstract entity.

In *Dichter und Helden* (p. 32) Gundolf holds up Dante as one of three ‘kosmische Menschen’, along with Shakespeare and Goethe. ‘Ohne Dante wäre dem heutigen Menschen, den eine ungestaltete und grenzenlose Welt umgibt, die Vorstellung eines “Kosmos”, d.h. einer abgeschlossenen, wandellos gesetzlichen Ordnung alles Seins, aus dem Lebensgefühl verschwunden, wäre bloßer Begriff oder historische Erinnerung’ (p. 35).

Gundolf does not describe the philosophical or psychological basis for the distinction between *Vorstellung*, *Begriff* and *Erinnerung*, but *Kosmos* seems to function here in a similar way to *Welt* in the passage from *George* mentioned above: the great poet conveys a fundamental ordering of being, not the chaotic experience of individual modern human beings. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* conveys that fragmented and disordered experience, and hints at the possibility of escape from it in the Sanskrit quotes from the *Upanishads* at the very end, but does not proclaim the ‘world-ordering’ powers of the poet in the way that Gundolf does. Gundolf devoted an entire essay to Dante, which was apparently written within a few years of Eliot’s but takes a quite different position⁵³. He begins by distinguishing the modern reception of Dante by Italians from that of Germans:

Er ist seinen Landsleuten wichtig vor allem als ein geschichtliches Sinnbild, als Vorkämpfer der Kirche, des Staats oder bestimmter Parteien – denn alles beruft sich auf ihn – und zudem als der Begründer ihrer Sprache, ihrer Kunst und ihres Gedächtnisses. Wir Deutsche stehen anders zu ihm...bei weitem deutlicher und mächtiger als seine Welt sollten wir den überzeitlichen Menschen uns aneignen können; das allfühlende große Herz, das zu jedem wachen Herzen spricht durch alle fremden fernen Zeiten hindurch...Dante geht uns heute näher an als je zuvor, und er geht uns auf eine Weise an, dränglicher, herzlicher als er selbst die Romantiker

⁵³ In Schmitz and Martini, pp. 196–204. Source given as ‘*Castrum Peregrini* (Amsterdam), Heft XCI, 1970, pp. 30–39’, but an editorial note states: ‘zuerst datierbar: Wien, 16. Oktober 1922’.

anging, von denen sein neuerer deutscher Ruhm erst begründet wurde: sie haben ihn als Dichter für die deutsche Bildung erst entdeckt (p. 196).

In other words, Germans are better placed to appreciate Dante than are Italians: 'wir' and 'uns' are 'wir Deutsche'. Gundolf dismisses attempts to translate or write about Dante in German-speaking countries from the fifteenth century to the mid-eighteenth: 'Erst die große Geisterwelle von Herder bis zur Romantik machte den deutschen Geist empfänglich für Poesie als Sprachausdruck allseitig regen Menschentums und Volkstums. Sie weckte damit auch den Sinn für Dante, den Dichter' (p. 198). This shows that he is aware that the interpretation of a text may change over time – in theory there is not an eternally valid view of Dante – but in one way he takes a 'Whiggish' view, (things have developed and improved), but on the other hand this development depend on random events, as will be seen shortly. A true appreciation of Dante, it seems, appeared only in Gundolf's own time:

Dazu war nötig ein neuer Sinn für Feuer, Würde und Schicksal, und den danken wir (einerlei ob es viele oder wenige sind) nicht dem verdienstlichen Sammeleifer der Forscher, sondern einem unermeßlichen Geschehen: der Weltkatastrophe und zwei ursprünglichen Menschen, Friedrich Nietzsche und Stefan George... Nicht daß der Krieg die Menschen gebildeter oder besser macht, aber das erbärmliche Behagen, die Sekurität hat er erschüttert... Das ist eine Luft, in der Dantes Seele eher atmen kann als in dem Gemuffel lauer Gefühle und zufriedener oder mesquiner Meinungen und Bestrebungen.' (p. 201)⁵⁴

Gundolf at no point quotes from Dante, not even in George's translation. In fact, his only quote is from Hans Sachs's *Historia Dantes, des Poeten von Florenz*, which is used to make a point about the inadequacy of earlier responses to Dante. Eliot, on the other hand, quotes Dante in Italian many times. For Gundolf, George and *Deutschtum* appropriate Dante, a process enabled by the catastrophe of the war and the thinking of Nietzsche. Eliot sees Dante

⁵⁴ Gundolf's attitude to the First World War and the destruction of the University of Leuven library by German troops in August 1914 will be discussed in Chapter Five.

as a universal figure (whether his claims about medieval Latin are accurate is another matter) and as a model for an aspiring poet.

Gundolf continues his essay on Dante with febrile praise of Stefan George as ‘der Erneuerer der deutschen Dichtersprache...seit Hölderlins Tod die erste deutsche Dichtergestalt:

Zum erstenmal erklingt die spezifische Schwere des dantischen Tons, das metallene Dröhnen, das mächtig holde Raunen und Rollen der Terzine als deutsche Sprache. Das erstemal sieht man Dante sich gebärden nicht wie ein Professor, Schauspieler oder Schriftsteller, sondern mit der Anmut und Würde eines freien, kühnen, frommen, durch und durch adligen Mannes (p. 203).

It is striking that he contrasts a ‘Professor’ and a ‘writer’, which were, after all, his own occupations, with ‘a free, bold, pious, thoroughly noble man’, as if there is something not only dull and lifeless, but also ‘unmanly’ about the former. But as has been noted, Gundolf, under the influence of George, was not entirely at ease in his role as an academic. George is seen as the ‘renewer’ of the German language, yet, as seen in the quotation from *Dante* above, this required the disaster of the war as a catalyst. He writes: ‘Die Sprache ist das innerste Bollwerk des Geistes in einer Welt der Dinge, sie ist die letzte Zuflucht des Gottes im Menschen, wenn es keine durchseelte Kirche, keine öffentliche Magie und kein Geheimnis mehr gibt.’⁵⁵ God is found in language; here he presumably again means language as employed by the greatest writers, not ordinary language, and this, as was noted above, gives both him and George Steiner a philosophical problem. He makes the extraordinary and mystical claim that God takes refuge in Man, rather than the other way

⁵⁵ Gundolf, *George*, p. 1, cited in Berman, p. 209. The word *durchseelen* is attested in Grimm’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch*: in particular, in Nietzsche’s *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878): ‘der künstler durchseelt die natur’.

round (an idea worthy of Angelus Silesius: ‘Ich weiss, dass ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nu kann leben/ Werd ich zunicht, er muß von Not den Geist aufgeben’: *Gott lebt nicht ohne mich* from Book I of *Der Cherubinische Wandersmann*, 1674). He implies that the Churches of his own day (both Catholic and Protestant, presumably) are spiritually empty. ‘Public magic’ and ‘secret’ are portentous terms, with no clear meaning, though there is a strong suggestion of the expression ‘Entzauberung der Welt’, a term Max Weber employed in the lecture ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf’ of 1917. The phrase ‘die letzte Zuflucht des Gottes’ is less a fully thought-out philosophical or religious position than a poetic insight that cannot be paraphrased in rational terms, or just a rhetorical flourish, a fine phrase. He is saying here that it is a religious sensibility that has been lost, not a purely literary one, though it was noted earlier that the two are intertwined in Gundolf’s thinking. This exalted notion of language is clearly related to his idea that ‘the voice of the people’ is ‘the voice of God’. Eliot also clearly believed that a religious sensibility (indeed an entire culture) had been lost, although his idea of ‘dissociation of sensibility’ referred initially only to poetry. He is not concerned about finding a metaphysical grounding for language or art, but with re-establishing the centrality of the Church in culture.

Despite his position within the German university system, Gundolf disdains scholarship in the traditional sense; Eliot grants that scholarship may be helpful. Gundolf is not concerned with textual explication, Eliot only occasionally so. Gundolf certainly uses quotations in the essays in *Dichter und Helden* on ‘Hölderlins Archipelagus’ and ‘Stefan George in unsrer Zeit’, though he is concerned with the poet’s ideas and emotions, not with verbal or metrical analysis, with ends, not means. Neither is overtly interested in questions of hermeneutics, theory of interpretation, or general philosophy of language. With Gundolf there is rarely if ever a sense, as there is with Eliot, of self-deprecation, of doubt and irony. This may sometimes be a conscious pose, for all Eliot’s lofty and authoritative manner. Neither

regarded the great writers of the past as subjects for antiquarian interest only: for both of them the past continued in some way to live in the present. Both seemed to need the idea of a debased present as a justification for their celebration of earlier writers. Both had prescriptions for how the past could remain alive in the present, yet Eliot's criticism (though not his poetry) separates art from religion, while Gundolf uses religious language, usually of a Christian kind, while keeping his distance from formal religion. An example to be added to those already noted is his use of pseudo-biblical language in this sentence from 'Dichter und Helden', (p. 25), which makes a strong case for tradition: 'Weh denen die keine Ahnen haben, keine lebendige Vergangenheit: sie haben weder Gegenwart noch Zukunft'. Eliot raises questions about religious authority and the individual struggling with the need for redemption which can only come from submission to that authority. 'Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion...it has its own function. But this function is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms.'⁵⁶ Gundolf, on the other hand, believes that language and art can take on some of the functions of religion. He claims that:

Dreierlei setzt der Heldenglaube voraus 1. Daß es ein Ewig-menschliches gibt und in allem Wandel (der formumformende Funktion dieses Ewigen)..2. daß dies Ewigmenschliche allgültige Maße hat, jenseits aller relativen Auffassungen und Methoden..3. daß diese Maße keine bloß willkürliche Abstraktionen sondern im Menschen verkörperte Wirklichkeit sind.⁵⁷

He uses religion-inflected terms such as 'ewig' and 'verkörperte Wirklichkeit' in defining his 'faith in heroes', but evidently believes that this can be done without assenting to formal religious doctrines. 'Die Verehrung der großen Menschen ist entweder religiös oder sie ist wertlos. Große Menschen als Genußmittel verwenden ist ärger als alle Großheit leugnen

⁵⁶ 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', in *Complete Prose* Vol. 3, pp. 245–60, (p. 254).

⁵⁷ *Dichter und Helden*, p. 46. The ellipses ('..') are in the original.

[...]Das Große ist Anspruch, Maß und Mitte: nur wer sich im Herzen davon umbilden läßt darf sich ihm nähern’⁵⁸. The suggestion is that ‘greatness’ can only be truly understood through something like a religious conversion; ordinary appreciation or connoisseurship is worthless. In ‘Dichter und Helden’ (p. 26) he makes a further claim that is imbued with the language of incarnation:

Da wir eine Trennung des Göttlichen vom Menschen so wenig wie die Trennung von Leib und Geist als wirklich anerkennen, so bedeutet unser Kult von Vorbildern nicht die moderne Genießerfreude an der sogenannten “Persönlichkeit”.. nicht den Individualismus der sich ergötzt mit Originalitäten, Eigenarten, Nuancen [...].

The reader may be reminded both of the contempt for ‘Herr Soundso’ in ‘Stefan George in unsrer Zeit’ that we noted in Chapter Two, and also of Eliot’s insistence on the impersonality of the true artist. Gundolf’s idea of the *Gestalt* may be seen as another version of the idea of impersonality, in that the *Gestalt* is not just the subjectivity of an individual. *Erlebnislyrik*, on the other hand, is, or crafts, a fiction of being, the direct expression of individual subjective experience. Heidegger also believed in the impersonality of art, or at least of great art:

Aber dahin geht doch schon das eigenste Absehen des Künstlers; das Werk soll zu seinem reinen Insichselbststehen entlassen sein. Gerade in der großen Kunst, und von ihr allein ist hier die Rede, bleibt der Künstler gegenüber dem Werk etwas Gleichgültiges, fast wie ein im Schaffen sich selbst vernichtender Durchgang für den Hervorgang des Werkes.⁵⁹

It is striking that the idea of impersonality mattered so much to thinkers of such different kinds as Eliot, Gundolf, and Heidegger, even when they are equivocal about it: there can be no doubt that Gundolf prized personal *Erlebnis* in literature or that Eliot expresses personal dilemmas in his poetry, despite the ironic and self-deprecating mask. This is too large a topic

⁵⁸ *Dichter und Helden*, p. 27, quoted by Ulrich Raulff in his Afterword to *Anfänge deutscher Geschichtsschreibung* (see n. 49 above), p. 122.

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, ‘Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks’, in *Holzwege*, 4th edn, (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950), pp. 7–68 (p. 29).

to be pursued in detail here, but perhaps the beginnings of an answer are to be found in a reaction against Romanticism resulting a suspicion of personal expression, reinforced by more pessimistic view of the human condition brought about by the Great War.

As was observed earlier, in contrast to George and his followers, Eliot did not believe that art was any kind of substitute for religion. In *The Sacred Wood* he wrote: ‘[...] poetry is not the inculcation of morals, or the direction of politics, and no more is it religion or the equivalent of religion, except by some monstrous abuse of words.’⁶⁰ But literary criticism is in a different situation. In ‘Religion and Literature’ he wrote that ‘Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint [...] The ‘greatness’ of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards, though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards’.⁶¹ There are separate literary standards in Eliot’s view, but they should not have the only word. This made it possible for others to use his critical principles without subscribing to his religious or political beliefs. Possibly Eliot was using the word ‘standards’ in different senses here: the first meaning ‘values’, the second meaning something like ‘formal properties’. In any event, F.R. Leavis also believed that there are no exclusively literary values: ‘[...] I don’t believe in any ‘literary values [...]; the judgements the literary critic is concerned with are judgements about life’⁶². There is an agreement with Eliot here about the fact that the most important things that can be said about literature are not purely literary, though Leavis did not subscribe to Eliot’s views about what those important things actually are. Clearly under Eliot’s

⁶⁰ Preface to the 1928 edition of *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, in *Complete Prose*, Vol. 3, pp. 413–15, (p. 414).

⁶¹ In *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Vol. 5: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934–1939*, ed. by Iman Javadi and Ronald Schuchard and Jayme Stayer, (The Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber Ltd., 2017), pp. 218–29 (p. 218).

⁶² F.R. Leavis, *Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion and Social Hope* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), p. 97.

influence (he acknowledges his ‘indebtedness to a certain poet and critic’ in the introduction to *New Bearings in English Poetry*, 1932), he described the business of the critic:

He endeavours to see the poetry of the present as continuation and development; that is, as the decisive, the most significant, contemporary life of a tradition, he endeavours, where the poetry of the past is concerned, to realize to the full the implications of the truism that its life is in the present or nowhere; it is alive in so far as it is alive for us. His aim, to offer a third proposition, is to define, and to order in terms of its own implicit organization, a kind of ideal and impersonal living memory.’⁶³

The claim that the life of poetry of the past is ‘is in the present or it is nowhere’ is similar to Gundolf’s claim in the quote from ‘Dichter und Helden’ above that ‘Die Grossen sind gross durch ihre nie versiegende Neuheit, nicht durch ihr wandellooses Altertum’, though it avoids Gundolf’s grandiloquent manner.

In contrast to Gundolf’s rapid ascent to a professorship, Leavis’s academic career was slow to advance, partly because of the academic politics and personal rivalries of Cambridge, partly because of his own belligerent and difficult character. This did not stop him becoming a figure of huge influence on the teaching of literature in universities and secondary schools in the UK and in English-speaking Commonwealth countries between the 1930s and the 1970s. The heart of his belief was the idea that the critical reading of literature was of supreme importance, both to the individual and to the national culture: ‘Literary study [...] should be the best possible training for intelligence—for free, unspecialised, general intelligence, which there has never at any time been enough of, and which we are peculiarly in need of today.’⁶⁴ His career saw the rise of English Literature as a separate academic discipline (the ‘poor man’s classics’ described by Eagleton), and later the questioning of it again in attempts to subsume it into ‘cultural studies’ associated with such figures as

⁶³ F.R. Leavis, *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (New York, George W Stuart, 1947), pp. 2–3.

⁶⁴ F.R. Leavis, ‘The Literary Mind’, in *Scrutiny* 1, (May 1932), pp. 20–32 (p. 25).

Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Whilst he was, like Gundolf and many others, contemptuous of what he saw as the debased mass culture of his time, he believed in the possibility of an educated and critical group whose influence would enhance society as a whole. However, he had no simple class assumptions about who the members and leaders of this group might be, no automatic contempt for the bourgeoisie or for industrial workers. This group would be a minority, and so the implications of his position can be seen as exclusive and elitist, but these were not his overt intentions, and he certainly had no time for secrecy or for exclusive coteries, as can be seen from his hostility to the Bloomsbury Group. This should be distinguished from the *George-Kreis*'s notion of a 'secret Germany' which was a realm of art and ideas that was separate from the realities of the surrounding society. Robert E. Norton describes how this idea was taken up enthusiastically by idealistic young people in the aftermath of the War, but it was not an educational or cultural program that was explicitly intended to benefit society at large, even indirectly. Those who devoted themselves to Secret Germany did so in an attempt to insulate themselves from the realities of the society around them.⁶⁵ Whether the ideal was an inward 'geistiges Reich', or a total reshaping of society by a great leader is open to discussion.⁶⁶

Whilst the contributors to *Scrutiny* were naturally sympathetic to Leavis, the journal was by no means devoted to expounding a dogmatically Leavisite viewpoint, and it published articles about literature from outside the British Isles. Of particular note here are two articles

⁶⁵ Norton, pp. 572–73.

⁶⁶ See Ritchie Robertson, 'George, Nietzsche, and Nazism,' in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, pp. 189–206. On page 198 Robertson quotes a sentence from Gundolf's 'Gefolgschaft und Jüngertum,' in *Blätter für die Kunst*, 8 (1908/09), pp. 106–12 (p. 106): 'Umbildung der seelen aber ist wunsch oder sinn jedes gewaltigen sagers und tuers — mit oder ohne sein eigenes wissen.' There is some ambivalence about what this 'reshaping of souls' is, but, as Robertson implies, the general thrust of Gundolf's rather nebulous and portentous essay seems to be more artistic and spiritual than political.

by D.J. Enright on Stefan George, and others by him on German literature, that were published during and shortly after the Second World War – a brave and civilised gesture ⁶⁷.

We will remember from Chapter One that René Wellek had studied with Gundolf, though he had misgivings about him, and in 1937 he entered into a debate with Leavis in the pages of *Scrutiny*. Whilst on the whole praising Leavis's book *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry*, he wrote:

I could wish that you had stated your assumptions more explicitly and defended them systematically. I do not doubt the value of these assumptions and as a matter of fact I share them with you for the most part, but I would have misgivings in pronouncing them without elaborating a specific defence or a theory in their defence.' ⁶⁸

Leavis's answer, 'Literary Criticism and Philosophy: A Reply' appears in *Scrutiny* 6, No. 1, June 1937, (pp. 59–70). He states that he knew that he was making assumptions and was aware of what they were. But the business of explicitly stating assumptions is that of the philosopher, not that of the literary critic. Philosophy is abstract and poetry is concrete: 'Words in poetry invite us not to 'think about' and judge but to 'feel into' or 'become' – to realize a complex experience that is given in the words.' (pp. 60–61). This possibly ignores poetry that deals overtly with abstract issues, such as Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, Boileau's *L'Art Poétique*, or Pope's *Essay on Man*, but it could be argued that the best of such poems invite us both to judge and to 'feel into'. 'The critic – the reader of poetry – is indeed concerned with evaluation, but to figure him as measuring with a norm which he brings up to the object and applies from the outside is to misrepresent the process' (p. 61). The task of the critic (or reader) is to articulate a 'fulness of response' to the poem and to

⁶⁷ D.J. Enright, 'Stefan George and the New Empire', *Scrutiny* 12, No. 3 (Summer 1944). 'The Case of Stefan George' *Scrutiny* 15, No. 4, (December 1948). Enright also contributed articles on Goethe, Hölderlin, and Rilke to *Scrutiny*.

⁶⁸ René Wellek, 'Literary Criticism and Philosophy', *Scrutiny* 5, No. 4, March 1937, pp. 375–83 (p. 376).

place this on a ‘map or chart of English poetry’. This last phrase reveals that Leavis shared some of the terrain of the literary historian, and was not concerned only with making supposedly contextless assessments of a poem on a page in the manner associated with the American New Critics. When Leavis tries to define his sense of the creativity of language, his prose style, which is rarely elegant, becomes particularly strained and difficult:

The fundamental truth or recognition I have gestured towards, fundamental truth or recognition to which a close interrogation of experience brings us, eludes discursive treatment – a fact that doesn’t prove it to be unimportant. It is when, I said, one considers one’s relation to the language one was born into, and the way in which that language – in which one has vital relations with other human beings – exists, that the fundamental recognition can least be escaped, but challenges thought insistently. Where language is concerned, ‘life’ is human life – is man.⁶⁹

Wellek’s perfectly understandable point about Leavis’s lack of theoretical rigour has validity, but it overlooks the fact that this very lack is the essence of Leavis’s insight into the nature of literature and his practice of literary criticism. On the other hand, while there is much about Leavis’s position that is attractive and stimulating (and his readings of individual poems are often acute and illuminating), one of its limitations is an indifference to, or fear of, ideas and systematic thought, and these cannot simply be dismissed as an irrelevance to the critical appreciation of literature. Affirmations of ‘fundamental truth’ and ‘life’ court the danger of hardening into a position that is both vague and dogmatic if they are assumed to be beyond challenge. One must be a thinker of a special kind, like Leavis, to sustain this position successfully.

Both Leavis and Gundolf use compact terms which are taken as self-evident, but which in fact have conceptual, historical and cultural implications, and it takes extensive reading of their works to have a useful sense of what these are. Examples are: Leavis’s

⁶⁹ F.R. Leavis, *The Living Principle: ‘English’ as a Discipline of Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 42.

‘enforce’, ‘life’, ‘movement’, ‘delicate’, ‘technologico-Benthamite’, and Gundolf’s *Urerlebnis*, *Bildungserlebnis*, *Leben*, *Stoff*, *Verstand*, *Geist*. Heidegger of course had his own specialised terminology, and this also frequently requires imaginative intuition rather than analytic definition.⁷⁰ Neither Leavis nor Gundolf uses obscure technical expressions: to that extent they both use ordinary language. But there is a danger of their repeated use of their terms becoming facile, that it replaces more detailed and searching thought. This leads back to Wellek’s point that underlying assumptions should be made explicit. That ‘theory’, with a small ‘t’, is present in both Gundolf and Leavis, is undeniable, but does it need to be stated in abstract terms? How far does the failure to explicitly state it render it vulnerable to charges of evasiveness, manipulateness, or having hidden agendas?

Reading a poem, for Leavis, requires an inner performative dramatization of the writer’s creative process, and then placing this in a wider cultural context. This involves making ‘concrete judgments’, but not generalizations that Leavis believes to be ‘too clumsy to be of any use’ (p. 63). (Gundolf, on the other hand has little sense of the creative struggle of the seventeenth-century authors he writes about, assuming that they were able to assemble their works from prefabricated materials. This, as we have seen, is a limited view of what literary conventions are, at their best.) When Leavis writes of philosophy he is referring to analytic philosophy in the Anglo-American tradition. He does not consider, and was possibly not aware, that thinkers normally classified as philosophers, such as Heidegger and Derrida, could make literature a part of their philosophical discourse without engaging in a reductive

⁷⁰ *Verstand* in Gundolf does some of the work that ‘technologico-Benthamite’ does in Leavis, but the latter attempts to give more precise socio-historical foundations for his claims, referring to G.M. Trevelyan’s *British History in the Nineteenth Century* (1922), Oliver Elton’s *Survey of English Literature 1830–1880* (1912) and Leslie Stephens’s *The English Utilitarians* (1900) among others. See Collini, p. 74.

process of ‘applying a norm from the outside’. Heidegger in particular, in his later writings, employs poetry to illuminate the nature of language and to criticise the metaphysical and Cartesian traditions of Western thought: among the poets that he considers are Hölderlin and Stefan George.

The ‘linguistic turn’ is a widely used term to describe the way in which numerous early twentieth-century thinkers came to see language as less a system of reference which mediates between the individual consciousness and a given external world, than as the very basis of thought and experience, a domain in which the individual and the world co-exist. Gundolf certainly shared this insight, though in terms of high culture and religion rather than in the philosophically detailed and explicit fashion of Saussure and analytic philosophy: in Chapter Two we noted a quote from the Baroque Literature lectures: ‘Das Zeichen gesamt menschlicher Kultur auf der höchsten Stufe ist die allseitige Ausdruckskraft des Geistes in der Sprache, die der eigentliche Lebenssaft, das Blut des Geistes ist.’. It is notable that Gundolf writes ‘auf der höchsten Stufe’: ordinary language, it seems, cannot function in this way. Leavis shared this view. Discussing parallels between Leavis and Heidegger, Michael Bell writes:

The insistence on language as the medium in which self and the world jointly inhere, rather than as a referential system mediating between the separate zones of consciousness and an external world, is crucial to Leavis and helps explain several controversial features of his critical readings, such as the appeal to an ‘enactive’ aspect in poetic language.⁷¹

As Bell says, the idea of ‘enactment’ is not without problems. In Chapter Two we noted Leavis’s comment on a line from Keats’s *Ode to Autumn* and Eagleton’s response that it was fanciful, an extreme example of the ‘incarnational fallacy’. Leavis makes a more subtle

⁷¹ Michael Bell, ‘F. R. Leavis’ in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism 7*, ed. by A. Walton Litz and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 389–422 (pp. 400–01).

attempt to describe enactment in a comment on seventeenth-century poetry – some lines from Milton's *Comus* describing silkworms:

And set to work millions of spinning Worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk...

Leavis writes:

The texture of actual sounds, the run of vowels and consonants, with the variety of action and effort, rich in subtle analogical suggestion, demanded in pronouncing them, plays an essential part, though this is not to be analysed in abstraction from the meaning. The total effect is as if words as words withdrew themselves from the focus of our attention and we were directly aware of a tissue of feelings and perceptions.⁷²

Not all readers will be convinced by Leavis's claim that words 'as words' here 'withdraw themselves from the focus of attention', indeed he seems to contradict himself by referring to pronouncing 'the texture of actual sounds', quite apart from questions of the reader's sense of the vocabulary and metre of Milton's two lines. But his insistence that the texture of sounds in poetry cannot be analysed separately from the meaning of the words is reminiscent of Heidegger's claim in the essay 'Das Wesen der Sprache':

Daß die Sprache lautet und klingt und schwingt, schwebt und bebt, ist ihr im selben Maße eigentümlich, wie daß ihr Gesprochenes einen Sinn hat. Aber unsere Erfahrung dieses Eigentümlichen ist noch arg unbeholfen, weil überall das metaphysisch-technisches Erklären dazwischen fährt und uns aus der sachgemäßen Besinnung herausdrängt.

And further:

Wir sprechen von der Sprache im ständigen Anschein, nur *über* die Sprache zu sprechen, während wir bereits *aus* der Sprache her, in ihr sie selbst, ihr Wesen, uns sagen lassen. Darum dürfen wir die begonnene Zwiesprache mit der gehörten dichterischen Erfahrung nicht vorzeitig abbrechen aus der Besorgnis, das Denken ließe das Dichten nicht mehr zu dessen Wort kommen, reiße vielmehr alles auf den Denkweg herüber.⁷³

⁷² Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 48.

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, 'Das Wesen der Sprache', in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1959), pp. 157–216, (pp. 205, 191).

What is expressed here is the idea that poetic language, whatever its physical properties, enacts not the external world, objectively mediating between it and the subject, but the subject's internal changing creative response to the world, and here 'thinking' (by which Heidegger presumably means something like 'abstract discursive thought', or 'metaphysischtechnisches Erklären') blocks access to the insights offered by poetic language. At his best, Leavis shares this view, as we saw above in his comment about 'the fundamental truth that eludes discursive treatment'. There is a similarity here with Wittgenstein's claim in the final sentence of the *Tractatus*: what is most important cannot be described in language. A generalised, theoretical account of language cannot do justice to its highest levels of creativity. Gundolf fundamentally shares this insight, though his rhetoric ('das Lebensblut des Geistes') has worn less well.

In the same essay Heidegger discusses George's poem *Das Wort* from *Das Neue Reich* (1928), as well as poems by Gottfried Benn and Hölderlin, and in particular George's final couplet: 'So lernt ich traurig den verzicht:/Kein ding sei wo das wort gebriht'. Heidegger's reading of *Das Wort* is dominated by his belief that the primary function of language is to disclose the nature of Being, but it is sensitive to the subtleties of George's vocabulary and punctuation, thus showing some affinities with the idea of 'close reading' that was so important to Leavis and other British and American critics of the time. To take one example: he points out that the form 'sei' can be seen either as a potential or as a jussive (imperative) subjunctive – an English translation would have to choose between 'may be' and 'should be'. His discussion is very much a 'feeling into' the creative process, not the imposition of external philosophical ideas. Language is more than a system of correspondence with objects, or of internal coherence – but this is not an 'enactive' view of language'. Heidegger's argument resists easy paraphrase, but he makes much of the 'neighbourhood' (*Nachbarschaft*) of poetry and thinking, and of the perils of the dominance

of a scientific-technological worldview. He insistently repeats the phrase ‘die Nachbarschaft von Dichten und Denken’ throughout ‘Das Wesen der Sprache’.

Leavis saw creative language as the expression of a particular culture: one bounded by the British Isles, for despite the attention that he and his colleagues on *Scrutiny* gave to writing from other countries, their historical and cultural focus was on Britain. A similar comment could be made about Gundolf and Germany. He wrote, for example, about Dante and Dostoevsky, but the ‘German spirit’ and the ‘German people’ were always at the centre of his concerns. Goethe’s *Weltliteratur* had been forgotten in Germany as the idea of a national literature emerged after the Napoleonic Wars. Heidegger’s cultural and historical context was a much longer and broader one, extending back to the pre-Socratics, and encompassing in his later years certain aspects of Eastern thought. Nevertheless, the narratives of cultural, philosophical and religious decline offered in their different ways by Gundolf, Leavis, Heidegger and Eliot are all vulnerable to historical and political critique, as are their solutions to this decline, whether they consist of the example or the leadership of a literary elite, the establishment of a national culture dominated by Anglo-Catholicism, or the belief that ‘nur ein Gott kann uns retten’.

In 1910 Gundolf wrote to Norbert von Hellingrath that the objective of literary history was:

im grammatisch konkreten, in den satzgefügen, im greifbar philologisch sachlichen selber den geistigen impuls, die lebenskraft, das werk= und wesenskonstituierende eines Menschen, einer Dichtkunst, einer geistigen Gesamtepoche zu packen: symbolisch die organisierenden Kraft eines umfassenden Ganzen selbst in den kleinsten auswirkungen dieser Kraft noch wahrzunehmen [...].⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Quoted in Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, p. 302. A footnote explains that the letter itself is undated and that the date of 1910 is that of the Friedrich Gundolf Bestand, Deutsche Literaturarchiv, Marburg. The capitalisation of nouns in the quote is as per Groppe.

Carola Groppe connects these ideas with those of Dilthey, in particular with the short essay ‘Der psychische Strukturzusammenhang’, which forms part of *Studien zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften*.⁷⁵ They also resemble those of Leo Spitzer in his 1948 article ‘Linguistics and Literary History’.⁷⁶ What is not clear is whether Gundolf proposes to start from the minute details and build up a picture of the whole, or whether it is more a case of forming an impression of ‘an entire spiritual epoch’ and then looking, arguably selectively, for evidence to support it. In the case of seventeenth-century poetry, it seems to have been the second of these. Gundolf argues that the essence of an era and of a person are to be found in the concrete workings of language, but in practice he rarely if ever pursue these issues down to the basic verbal level that he proposes by giving concrete examples of how it can be done (but the letter to von Hellingrath gives further support for the idea proposed in Chapter Three that Richard Alewyn’s criticisms of Gundolf for concentrating too narrowly on Grimmelshausen’s use of individual words are unfair).

Does this approach necessarily involve judgement or ranking of the literature that it deals with? On the face of it, it need not; it could simply be a neutral recording of issues in the history of ideas. But clearly Gundolf’s writing is laden with value judgements about ‘life’, ‘spirit’, about ‘living’ and ‘dead’ literature. And a further issue is the importance of the interpreter or literary critic in Gundolf’s letter: the literary work cannot achieve its aims, cannot be complete, without his or her aid, it seems. It is he or she who can perceive both the ‘comprehensive whole’ and the ‘smallest effects’: what is written about literary texts is really

⁷⁵ In Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* 8, (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1958) pp. 3–4.

⁷⁶ ‘[...] Spitzer’s method confidently assumes and then confirms with great flair a continuity that moves from the smallest grammatical, syntactic and even morphological feature of style to the literary work as a whole and then on to the author’s oeuvre and psyche as larger wholes, ultimately arriving at a characterisation of the period and the ‘spirit of its time’. Timothy Bahti, ‘Literary Criticism and the History of Ideas’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* 9, ed. by Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 31–42 (p. 34).

an amplification of the text, an interpretation is a part of what is interpreted, and the work of art is incomplete without interpretation. The question of the hermeneutic circle arises here: the 'entire epoch' cannot be understood except in terms of the 'smallest effects', but presumably the opposite must be true as well. The act of interpretation creates the context of the work as much as it describes it. This is different from George's ideas of the hero-genius and the *Gestalt* who create or dictate meaning, which permeate some of Gundolf's work, and show that even at this comparatively early date he was showing signs of independence from George's influence.

In 'Wesen und Beziehung' Gundolf raises the question of universal 'metaphysical sanctions': they exist, and the logic of the argument is that God, or the *ens realissimum*, do not require expression in art in order for them to exist; it is rather that art requires them as a foundation. (For Leavis, art and value cannot be separated in this way. Leavis is a thinker of creative human language and culture rather than of the Word: for him, literature has no metaphysical grounding that exists apart from its own expression, and the vitality of a living language organised in art does not depend on a notion of transcendence⁷⁷). To what extent Gundolf believed in the abstract philosophical logic of his argument is another matter. As we have seen, his claims about the *ens realissimum* can be seen as a willed affirmation; the metaphysics are a rhetorical device. Eliot was concerned with religion as the very foundation of a culture which is conceived in a very broad sense. Unlike Steiner and Gundolf, he is not concerned with affirming an explicit metaphysical or quasi-religious foundation for the meaning of language or the greatness of art. Neither is Leavis, but he did not share Eliot's religious beliefs; indeed, he sometimes found them to be at odds with the creative strengths of

⁷⁷ Michael Bell traces this idea back to Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* (1873), which sees 'imaginative literature as the ultimate values of the community come to be seen as collective cultural creations with no metaphysical sanction beyond their own expression.' 'F. R. Leavis', p. 400.

Eliot's poetry, as in the long and complex analysis of the *Four Quartets* in Part 3 of *The Living Principle*.⁷⁸ Eliot's overt religious position, Leavis claims, denies human creativity, yet his poetry affirms it. The poem does not require us to share Eliot's beliefs, and the resulting ambivalence cannot be overtly stated, it can only be experienced in the poem's own terms. In other words, this poetry is not Pope's 'What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed' that was noted in Chapter Two: to return to the point made above about art as mimesis as against art as expression, Eliot's achievement here is not mimesis, but neither is it purely the expression of a subjective viewpoint. This ties in with the view that Leavis saw reading as a kind of dramatic re-enactment of the poem. This does not have to mean literally reading a poem aloud, and is not the same as saying that language in general is a re-enactment of external reality. Leavis wrote:

The nature of livingness in human life is manifest in language – manifest to those whose thought about language, is, inseparably, thought about literary creation. They can't but realize more than notionally that language is more than a means of expression; it is the heuristic conquest won out of representative experience, the upshot or precipitate of immemorial human living, and embodies values, distinctions, identifications, conclusions, promptings, cartographical hints and tested potentialities.⁷⁹

Whilst Leavis's language is again straining here, he is close to what Gundolf appears to mean by the idea of the *Sprachschöpfer*: this is not just someone who invents new words, but someone who is able to transmute lived experience, in a long historical context, into creative language which transcends any paraphrasable meaning. Gundolf wrote in an early essay:

Den wert der dichtung entscheidet nicht der sinn (sonst wäre sie etwa weisheit gelahrtheit) sondern die form d. h. durchaus nichts äusserliches sondern jenes tief erregende in maass und klang wodurch zu allen zeiten die Ursprünglichen die Meister sich von den nachfahren den künstlern zweiter ordnung unterschieden haben.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Leavis uses the German word *Ahnung* in this book to mean something like 'apprehension' or 'foreboding': see pp. 62–65.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁸⁰ From *Blätter für die Kunst* 2,4 (October 1894), quoted in Jeffrey D. Todd, 'Stefan George and Two Types of Aestheticism' in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, pp. 127–44 (pp. 129–30).

Like Leavis, he states that creative language is more than a means of conveying ideas that can be summarized in other terms, and it is notable that he does not use grandiose metaphysical terminology here. Terry Eagleton writes: ‘...Wittgenstein's sense of this taken-for-granted context, one which must be unconsciously in place for any sort of intelligibility to emerge... [Gadamer's] “fundamental non-definitiveness of the horizon in which language moves” – in all these cases we are speaking of what might be called the social consciousness’.⁸¹ Like Leavis, Eagleton places the source of intelligibility in human society, not in a transcendental realm.

It is not clear that Gundolf ever reconciles the idea that God is required as the foundation of meaning with the idea that access to this God is only possible by some form of mysticism. Saying that the truths revealed by art cannot be straightforwardly paraphrased is not equivalent to saying that they are mystical (the tension between reason and mysticism is seen in an extreme form in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, with its transparent seeming format which is used to point to truths that cannot be captured in words). Gundolf wants an ahistorical *ens realissimum* to underpin meaning while at the same time recognizing the historical relativity of individual viewpoints. He also wants meaning in poetry (George, Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Hölderlin) to be somehow eternal, but also capable of being fully realized only in a later historical occurrence – for example, in George's translations of Dante:

[Dante] ist seinen Landsleuten wichtig vor allem als ein geschichtliches Sinnbild... Wir deutschen stehen anders zu ihm..bei weitem deutlicher und mächtiger als seine Welt sollten wir den überzeitlichen Menschen uns aneignen können... Unter den Ewigen fordert keiner strenger von uns als Dante und kein Heutiger hat seinen Anspruch so vernommen, erfüllt und erneuert wie George.⁸²

⁸¹ Eagleton, *The Event of Literature*, p. 160. The Gadamer reference appears to be to *Truth and Method*, p. 381, though the phrase in the edition cited here reads ‘every historian and philologist must reckon with the fundamental non-definitiveness in which his understanding moves’.

⁸² ‘Dante’, in Schmitz and Martini, p. 150 and p. 204.

In the essay ‘Hölderlins Archipelagus’, Gundolf shows that he understands that we must be alive to the difficulties and treacheries of language:

Auch das befleckteste und ausgepreßte Wort enthält für ein sinnliches Ohr – und dies muß man vom Historiker fordern – noch immer die Schwingung die sein Schöpfer ihm mitgeteilt. Noch hört es in dem Wort Idee, so hohl und nichtig es auch mißgebraucht wird, den Ton mit welchem es aus Platons gebieterischem Herzen hervorbrach in die Seelen erstaunter oder entrückter Athener...⁸³ In jedem Schlagwort ist eine Geschichte verfangen, in jedem Wort eine lebendige Bewegung: sie wieder zu vernehmen ist des Historikers, sie wieder tönen zu machen ist des Dichters Amt [...] Und wie es für den echten Dichter kein völlig abgestorbenes Urwort geben kann, so gibt es für den echten Historiker keine Platttheit hinter der er nicht einen ursprünglichen, verschollenen Sinn spürte.⁸⁴

The claim that he is making here, which echoes his 1910 letter to Norbert von Hellingrath, needs to be treated with caution. Gundolf believes that words and concepts have primeval meanings which the artist can recreate or the sensitive historian can recover. But the search for such meanings is arguably never-ending, and the belief that somewhere there is a God-like or Adamic power (that of the *Schöpfer*) that endows words with an original true meaning is highly questionable, especially if associated with the implied claim that the decision about these original meanings never involves political or moral choices, that it occurs only in some idealised realm of art or the intellect. He wants God as a guarantee of meaning, but the meaning does not appear to require interpretation: it is already plain to those who are initiated. The critic has an unmediated access to the text, and there is no general ‘Sprachkrise’. That a poet can use a word in a way that invokes a wide range of meanings is obviously true, as is the statement that the historian of political ideas or of culture can describe the way the usage of words has changed revealingly over time, but to argue that an

⁸³ The three dots are in the original text.

⁸⁴ Gundolf, ‘Hölderlins Archipelagus’, in *Dichter und Helden*, pp. 5–22 (pp. 5–6).

individual has the right to proclaim that something is an *Urwort* or 'ein ursprünglicher, verschollener Sinn' is quite another matter.

Steiner, Gundolf, Eliot and Leavis adopted a position of humility and reverence for certain artists and their works, while being themselves highly authoritative in manner. They saw themselves as being part of a chain of authority. In Gundolf's case, part of the authority derived from his position in the German university system, and part from his membership of the *George-Kreis*, which endowed him with a certain glamour. Stefan George was hostile to academia, and Gundolf disagreed with him over some issues, while remaining a loyal follower until their personal break in the early 1920s. He did not make proposals for educational reform in schools and universities in the way that F.R. Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group did in England, but seemed happy to accept *Bildung* as a self-evident concept. This may be in part because *Germanistik* was a long-established academic discipline in the 1920s, whereas English Literature was a new one in British universities. Nicholas Boyle has suggested some further points of comparison:

The Leavisite plan for the moral improvement of society through literature; its close affinity with the universities and, especially, the school-teaching profession; its derivation from figures such as George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, with links both with popular education and with German culture – all suggest that the movement was the nearest England could come to an ideology of bureaucratic enlightenment of the kind which sustained the German official classes in their struggle for power with the bourgeoisie.⁸⁵

Gundolf himself was only partly involved, through his university position, with 'bureaucratic enlightenment' and the 'German official classes', both of which Stefan George himself detested. As we have seen, Gundolf's 'religious' ideas are aesthetic, they are valued for the sensations they bring forth, not for the norms and rites of a distinct religious practice or tradition. They can be seen as pious mystification based on feelings of German cultural exceptionalism, the

⁸⁵ Boyle, p. 249.

alleged messianic status of Stefan George, a belief in Genius, an exalted language mysticism, and the prestige of a senior position in a German university. Such ideas have little traction in the third decade of the twenty-first century, though they are of historical interest for their points of contact with other thinkers. Like Steiner, Gundolf wishes to anchor meaning and artistic value in a mysterious transcendental realm, but one that requires a ‘wager’ or willed affirmation. Wittgenstein's words on 'das Mystische' in the *Tractatus* also have that quasi-religious aura of the sublime that some find seductive.

Max Weber described the how the religious impulses of intellectuals had become historically irrelevant:

So überaus gleichgültig es für die religiöse Entwicklung der Gegenwart ist, ob unsere moderne Intellektuellen das Bedürfnis empfinden, neben allerlei andern Sensationen auch die eines religiösen Zustandes als “Erlebnis” zu genießen, gewissermaßen um ihr inneres Ameublement stilvoll mit garantiert echten alten Gerätschaften auszustatten – aus solcher Quelle ist noch nirgends eine religiöse Erneuerung erwachsen –, so überaus wichtig war die Eigenart der Intellektuellenschichten in der Vergangenheit für die Religionen.

But Weber does not see such religious impulses as purely an affectation:

Stets ist die Erlösung, die der Intellektuelle sucht, eine Erlösung von “innerer Not” und daher einerseits lebensfremderen, andererseits prinzipielleren und systematischer erfaßten Charakters, als die Erlösung von äußerer Not, welche den nicht privilegierten Schichten eignet.

The modern intellectual sees the world in terms of problems of meaning, not of material conditions, and the positive aspects of this should be recognized.⁸⁶ Did Gundolf have any idea of what an enlightened general culture could be, or was he concerned only with an elite group of similarly minded individuals? It is unlikely that Gundolf believed, as did F.R.

Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group in England, that literary criticism as such was ‘the privileged

⁸⁶ Max Weber, ‘Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen’, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. 7th edn (Tübingen: 1978), pp. 237–573, (pp. 251 and 307). Quoted in Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung*, pp. 175–76.

arbiter of social thought’⁸⁷. When Gundolf writes of the quasi-religious issues of the *ens realissimum*, *Verkörperung*, and so on, he sees these as sources of deep aesthetic value, not of ‘total human significance’⁸⁸ or of social improvement. Or to put it differently, they are a way of trying to establish a kind of authority, not a spiritual life as traditionally understood. He does not argue how these values are to be disseminated in society at large, and possibly does not even care about this question. It was enough for the *George-Kreis* that there was a ‘Secret Germany’. This returns to the question of him not having an explicit theory – if his audience did not share his values, then they could not be educated in them; the circle is closed. Terry Eagleton takes a sceptical view of aesthetic theory, ‘art for art’s sake’ and the idea of the symbol as the basis of art: ‘Art was extricated from the material processes, social relations and ideological meanings in which it is always caught up, and raised to the status of a solitary fetish’ (the key expression here is ‘caught up’: Eagleton is not making a reductionist claim that art is wholly determined by social and ideological factors).⁸⁹ Gundolf tends to create an idealised or fantasy history, a literary and intellectual history which ignores social and political history. We saw earlier that Stefan Collini was sceptical about the claims of literary critics to function as historians. On the other hand, the term *Geistesgeschichte* could be translated as ‘history of ideas’, which need not be a negative term. To claim that the boundaries between social history and literature are porous and complex is not necessarily the same as reducing works of literature to historical discourse.

George Steiner wrote critically of what he called Dilthey’s ‘applied poetics’, a type of writing practised by his student Gundolf:

The plump typological differentiations between a Shakespeare and a Dickens, on the one hand, and a Goethe on the other, the analysis of Rousseau who, “from swirling

⁸⁷ Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of Scrutiny*, (London: Verso, 1981), p. 18.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸⁹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 19.

mists of dreams” condensed into palpable figures swirling images of felicity, are like archaic vestiges of Romantic bathos. Or more precisely, they illustrate all too faithfully that lyric-pedagogic strain in German academicism and high-journalism which climaxes in a figure such as Gundolf.⁹⁰

Victor A Schmitz confirms Gundolf’s contributions to ‘higher journalism’ when he refers in the afterword to his selection of Gundolf’s shorter writings to ‘viele Studien...die nicht als Buch oder als selbständige Schrift, sondern in Zeitschriften, Jahrbüchern und Sammelwerken erschienen sind’ and to ‘in Zeitschriften und Tageszeitungen veröffentlichte Rezensionen’.⁹¹ Steiner’s last sentence needs a certain amount of unpacking: it is itself a ‘plump typological differentiation’ (‘a figure such as...’) written by an academic who himself wrote a great deal of ‘higher journalism’ aimed at a wide readership – for example, articles in the *New Yorker* and *Encounter*, as well as the *TLS*. Gundolf, the poet and translator of Shakespeare with Stefan George, faced the challenge of balancing the influence of George on his scholarly work with the perception of his membership in the *Kreis* among his academic colleagues and with his wish to reach out to a wider audience. These issues were in an uneasy tension at times. George wrote a short poem, *An Gundolf*, published in *Der Siebente Ring*, which appears to call on Gundolf to return from academia to his vocation as a poet:

Wozu so viel in fernen menschen forschen und in sagen lesen
Wenn selber du ein wort erfinden kannst dass einst es heisse:
Auf kurzem pfad bin ich dir dies and du mir so gewesen!
Ist das nicht licht und lösung über allem fleisse?

In 1926 Gundolf was nominated to succeed Franz Muncker in the chair of modern German literary history at the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, but he was

⁹⁰ George Steiner, ‘Life grasping life.’ Review of Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works*, Volume V, *Poetry and Experience*, edited and translated by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4357, 3 October 1986, p. 1104.

⁹¹ Schmitz and Martini, p. 445.

rejected, despite some glowing recommendations, apparently on the grounds that his work was insufficiently *wissenschaftlich*: that it mingled scholarship and art to an unacceptable extent. The term *Wissenschaftskünstler* was applied to him in his own lifetime, and is part of the reason his work largely disappeared from view after his death.⁹² Critics outside Germany have commented negatively on this aspect of Gundolf. We recall Herbert Grierson's comment to Eliot that *Shakespeare: Sein Wesen und Werk* was 'not critical but entirely interpretative in the tradition of Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*', and Steiner's 'lyric-pedagogic', implying someone who combines teaching with artistic methods, also suggests the *Wissenschaftskünstler*. In this vein, the liberal Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) wrote, summarizing the views of the art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965):

Die neuen visionären Geisteswissenschaften eines Bertram, Gundolf, Scheler, Spengler, Keyserling seien eine völlige, aufregende Revolution der Geisteswissenschaften, eine Verschmelzung von Denken und sinnlich-plastischer Anschauung, wie sie der künstlerische Expressionismus vergeblich und unzulänglich mit den Mitteln der Malerei erstrebt hat'.⁹³

Pages 660–63 of Troeltsch's article are in the main extravagant praise of Gundolf. He writes that Gundolf's vision of Shakespeare is 'die göttliche Einheit von Leib und Geist in einer sonst gottlosen Welt' (p. 662). But Troeltsch has reservations about the 1920 book on Stefan George, writing of its 'ungeheurer geistiger Hochmut' and its lack of attention to social, political and economic factors. He mentions Gundolf's visionary claim that 'Eine neue Verleibung des Geistes wird nötig, eine neue Transsubstantion, wo alles Leibliche seelisch und alles Seelische Leib wird' (p. 663). Whilst he does not explicitly query the use of theological terms in the manner of James Wood, Troeltsch was also uneasy about the use of

⁹² See Osterkamp, 'Friedrich Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft' For the Munich episode, see pp. 177–78.

⁹³ Ernst Troeltsch, 'Die Revolution in der Wissenschaft', in *Gesammelte Schriften* 4 (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1925, pp. 653–77), (p. 665). Cited in English in Lepenies and Harshav, p. 125.

terms such as *Verleibung* and *Transsubstantion*. He wrote: ‘Damit nähern wir uns dann dem Dogma und Gesetz, wie es George gab’.⁹⁴ This may be unfair to George, but it illustrates some contemporary perceptions of him. The lecture by Worringer is ‘Künstlerische Zeitfragen’, Munich, 1921⁹⁵. Worringer’s argument is that Expressionism in the visual arts is exhausted and has become merely the possession of art connoisseurs; the true expression of the age is now to be found in intellectual discourse, by which he means books:

Bücher entstehen, die wissenschaftlich disziplinierte Visionen sind, gespeist von einer Sittlichkeit des historischen Schauens, die reinste Zeitinkarnation ist. Ob es sich um griechische Kunst oder indische, um javanische oder mittelalterliche Kunst handelt: plötzlich sind die Bücher da, die sie mit Mitteln der Wissenschaft, aber unter dem Antrieb eines überwissenschaftlichen Ahnungs- und Einfühlungsvermögens für uns transparent werden lassen und uns ihre Schau vermitteln. [...] Als Schaffende sind wir arm geworden, aber unser Reichtum häuft sich im Erkennen. Dort liegt jetzt der letzte Sitz unserer vitalen Konzentrationen, unserer neuschöpferischen Energien.’

Worringer’s essay attracted attention in Eliot’s circle. An abridged version of it was published in an unattributed English translation as ‘Art Questions of the Day’ in *The Criterion*⁹⁶. There is no reason to think, though, that Eliot fully endorsed its arguments: as mentioned earlier, *The Criterion* was host to a wide range of opinions.

Curtius describes the narrowing of Eliot’s focus in later life, his drawing back from wider European horizons: the lack of interest in French writing other than Maurras and Maritain, or in Spain or Germany as a whole. Indeed, Eliot was dismissive of Goethe in a lecture delivered at Harvard in 1932: ‘Als Gastprofessor in Harvard fällt der Kritiker Eliot das kühne Urteil, Goethe habe “in Philosophie und Poesie herumgepfuscht und es in beidem zu nichts Rechtem gebracht”’, though he also dismissed many British writers, among them

⁹⁴ See Norton, pp. 592–93 for comment on this article, and on how George’s spiritual revolution presages the end of rational liberal democracy; it is a ‘revolution against the revolution’.

⁹⁵ Reprinted in Wilhelm Worringer, *Fragen und Gegenfragen: Schriften zum Kunstproblem*, (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1956), pp. 106–29, (p. 124). See the discussion of Troeltsch and Worringer in Lepenies and Harshav, pp. 125–26.

⁹⁶ Vol. VI, July 1927–December 1927, pp. 101–17.

Shelley and Keats⁹⁷. Curtius does not mention Eliot's more mollifying words in the Appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* mentioned above: 'I do not know of any standard by which one could gauge the relative greatness of Goethe and Wordsworth as poets, but the total work of Goethe has a scope which makes him a greater man. And no English poet contemporary with Wordsworth can enter into comparison with Goethe at all.' (p. 112). Of course, this may to an extent have been Eliot choosing tactful, if equivocal, words to suit the purpose of his radio talks to a German audience, rather than a genuine change of mind about Goethe. But whatever the truth of Curtius's claim, in the last issue of *The Criterion*, dated January 1939, Eliot published a translation by R.H. Pender of Gundolf's essay 'Bismarck's *Reflections and Reminiscences* as a Literary Monument'⁹⁸. Eliot's editorial introduction does not mention his reasons for choosing this piece, and there is no mention of it in the volumes of Eliot's letters published to date, including the one for 1939. One can only guess that Gundolf's eulogy of Bismarck's personality and literary distinction was in part chosen as a celebration of qualities in German political and intellectual life which had been lost by the time that the piece appeared. This is not the place to attempt a historical evaluation of these qualities or of Bismarck himself; indeed Gundolf explicitly says that he is not going to expound or interpret Bismarck's political position in this article. He does, though, place him in a tradition of German writers as well as of political leaders, and is aware of the role of Bismarck's assistant Lothar Bucher in the composition of the book. But it is possible that there was another reason for Eliot's choice. Gundolf writes:

'Literary Monument' means something much more comprehensive than say a study in style. It is the spiritual expression of a human force, the comprehensible embodiment [the German original is 'die begreifliche Erscheinung'] of the secret of a life, the

⁹⁷ Curtius, 'T.S. Eliot', pp. 22–23.

⁹⁸ The original, 'Bismarcks "Gedanken und Erinnerungen" als Sprachdenkmal', is in Schmitz and Martini, pp. 302–17. It was first published in *Europäische Revue* 7, vol. 4 (Berlin: 1931), pp. 259–71. Pender's choice of the expression 'Literary Monument' for *Sprachdenkmal* is questionable.

verbal force which great power for action created for itself'. (p. 182) 'Bismarck's penetrating intelligence was dominated by an active concrete imagination which prevented him separating conceptions, ideas, principles from the unique experiences of his life'.⁹⁹ 'Bismarck's style is therefore, as official style, also conditioned by the burden of conscientious order, classification, and reference which, since the Baroque period, is the characteristic of all official documents, evolved under the influence of legal German. But his richness of vision (not only of things)..of ideas (not only of abstractions.. of aims (not only of duty and purpose.. permeates the dry shell and skeleton (of the official style) without shattering them.' (p. 188).

It is notable that Gundolf here sees the *Sprachdenkmal* as 'the comprehensible embodiment of the secret of a life' (of an individual life that is: not, as Carola Groppe claims, 'die sprachlichen Emanationen einer geistigen Epoche'¹⁰⁰). However far-fetched in other ways a direct comparison between the two men would be, it seems Bismarck had a 'unified sensibility' of the kind that Eliot had claimed for John Donne, one in which 'ideas' and 'experiences' cannot be separated. Leavis too might have celebrated 'active concrete imagination' and 'richness of vision', though 'great power for action' is more a virtue of the Gundolfian hero-figure than of any of Leavis's creative exemplars.

Turning back to the original question, Gundolf was a critic whose ideas can be found to have, sometimes unexpectedly, much in common with those of certain of his contemporaries, yet whose rhetoric, and nationalistic, hero-worshipping, quasi-religious position place barriers between him and the contemporary reader, as does his reputation as a *Wissenschaftskünstler*. So do views on the destruction of the Leuven University library, which will be examined in more detail in the final chapter. He attempted to establish a philosophical basis for his ideas, but one that is not wholly convincing or consistent. Others

⁹⁹ 'Bismarcks durchdringender Verstand war besessen von der tätigen Phantasie, die ihm verwehrte, Begriffe, Ideen, Grundsätze abzulösen von den einmaligen Erfahrungen seines gesamten Sinnesdaseins', Schmitz and Martini, p. 311. One may again query Pender's translation of certain terms, notably 'seines gesamten Sinnesdaseins' as 'of his life'.

¹⁰⁰ Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, p. 321.

have debated whether an explicit theoretical basis is necessary for literary criticism; this debate is unlikely ever to be resolved, but the discussion is of great interest. The significance of the barriers to understanding of Gundolf just mentioned, and the question of their relevance to the overall theme of seventeenth-century German literature, as well as Gundolf's own defence of his *Wissenschaftskünstler* position, are issues which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

The Scholar-Artist

We have seen that there was a revival of interest in German literature of the seventeenth century in the first decades of the twentieth, and that this was in part influenced by the movement known as *Geistesgeschichte*, which sought to explain literature in terms of intellectual currents and led to a view of works of art as the autonomous creations of the creative spirit. It stood in contrast to traditional scholarship which emphasized the production of critical editions of authors' works and the explanation of literature in terms of biographical facts. Robert Schütze has described this change:

Mit dem Einzug geistesgeschichtlicher Methodik erlebt die Germanistik zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts – darin ist sich die Fachhistoriographie einig – einen ihrer 'tiefgreifendsten und folgenreichsten Paradigmenwechsel' ja für den Teilbereich der Barockforschung gar eine Zäsur im Superlativ, eine, die ihresgleichen nicht hat, denn '[k]eine Epoche der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft und Literaturgeschichtsschreibung ist für die Barockforschung anregender und produktiver gewesen als die Zeit der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre dieses Jahrhunderts'.¹

Marcel Lepper's description of institutional factors in the revival of Baroque literature enhances this picture:

Der Konjunkturanstieg im Bereich der Forschungsarbeiten zur deutschen Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts ist nicht nur an programmatische Ausdifferenzierungsprozesse gekoppelt [...]. Sie sind auch an institutionelle Entwicklungen gebunden, so nicht zuletzt an eine Neubestimmung des Verhältnisses von deutscher Philologie und deutscher Literaturgeschichte sowie an die Etablierung der Neugermanistik und die

¹ Robert Schütze, 'Barockdichtung. Gryphius als paradigmatischer Autor der Barockforschung seit dem frühen 20. Jahrhundert' in *Gryphius-Handbuch*, ed. by Nicola Kaminski and Robert Schütze (De Gruyter, 2016). The quotations are from Knut Kiesant, 'Die Wiederentdeckung der Barockliteratur. Leistungen und Grenzen der Barockbegeisterung der zwanziger Jahre' in König and Lämmert pp. 77–91, (p. 77), and Wilhelm Voßkamp: 'Deutsche Barockforschung in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren' in *Europäische Barock-Rezeption*, 1 ed. by Klaus Garber and others, (Wiesbaden: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1991) pp. 683–703 (p. 683).

damit einhergehenden graduellen Interessensverschiebungen. Betroffen ist das seit der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts im Zug der Professionalisierung der Germanistik und des Bibliothekbetriebs systematisierte Katalogierungs- und Bibliographiewesen sowie das zusehends ausgebaute Editions- und Reihenwesen.²

This provides a context for Friedrich Gundolf's work. It was in the tradition of *Geistesgeschichte*, but in his lecture and book on Andreas Gryphius Gundolf distanced himself from aspects of the new *Barockforschung* of his time. He acknowledges the importance of Gryphius, but wishes to show his limitations, which he feels that the new movement has suppressed or overlooked. Gundolf's opposition to the 'modischer Taumel' can be ascribed partly to the fact that he opposed the conscription of the Baroque to *Erlebnisdichtung* and partly because some critics used it to validate contemporary literary modes, such as Expressionism, that he was not in sympathy with. Gundolf was also under the spell of Stefan George and his belief in the artist as a timeless heroic figure, or *Gestalt*. It is not surprising that Gundolf was often negative about seventeenth-century literature, much of which he believed to be dominated by dead conventions and a life-denying rationalistic mindset. Yet he continued to reflect on and write about this literature up until the end of his life. It was noted in Chapter One that Hans-Harald Müller raised the good question of how it is puzzling that Gundolf continued to write about a period with which he had so little overt sympathy, particularly when we now know from the Friedrich Gundolf Papers that Gundolf wrote far more than the three monographs to which Müller refers. We have seen that an examination of Gundolf's thoughts about seventeenth-century literature leads to a wider discussion about his work as a whole and about wider critical, philosophical and cultural issues which extend beyond Germany. It is now time to see what conclusions can be drawn

² Lepper, p. 312.

from this. Did this continuing preoccupation reflected any evolution in his thinking, or did he hold fast to the same principles up to the end?

It was noted in Chapter One that Herbert Jaumann thought that Gundolf's books had no further influence on the new *Barockforschung* and 'sind daher weniger wertungsgeschichtlich als vielmehr im Hinblick auf Gundolfs Literaturästhetik von Interesse.' He then makes a further claim about 're-evaluation': 'Die "Umwertung" dient so weniger dem materialen Erkenntnisfortschritt hinsichtlich der Eigenart des Gegenstandes als vielmehr bestimmten gegenwartszentrierten Interessen und Intentionen ihrer Autoren',³ Without denying that advances in objective knowledge about literature are possible, it is questionable whether, in a complex and multifaceted activity like literary criticism, it is ever possible for a critic to be completely free of their own interests and intentions, which will inevitably be influenced by the intellectual and social climate of their own time. Gadamer's concept of the 'fusion of horizons' attempts to address this issue. The same point can be made about Gundolf's own literary aesthetics. They were more complex than Jaumann implies, and it is unrealistic to suppose that we can judge them from some completely neutral standpoint. And Jaumann's term *wertungsgeschichtlich* is debatable: Gundolf's views belong to the history of evaluation, whether we agree with them or not, but Jaumann implies that the history of evaluation is progressive, that the present-day standpoint must be superior to Gundolf's.

In a letter of 14 March 1930 to Karl Wolfskehl, discussing Wolfskehl's suggestion that they should jointly compile an anthology of German poetry, Gundolf wrote: 'Im Barock ist wohl auch noch allerlei zu finden, was entdeckenswert bleibt: Zentren der Zahl nach:

³ Jaumann, *Die deutsche Barockliteratur*, pp. 367, 459.

Opitz, Gryphius, Fleming, Günther.’⁴ This was written near the end of Gundolf’s life when he was continuing to compose the lectures on ‘Opitz bis Lessing’. It is far from being a dismissal of Baroque poetry and shows an openness to new discoveries, although *entdeckenswert* could be read as damning with faint praise. As noted earlier, the lecture series ‘Deutsche Literatur von Opitz bis Lessing’ is incomplete: it does not reach Lessing and the eighteenth century but ends with Angelus Silesius. We do not know whether there would have been an overarching conclusion to the Baroque lectures, or whether Gundolf would have published the whole series as a book, but in a section which deals with the linguist and theorist of poetry Justus-Georg Schottelius (1612–1676), Gundolf writes a summing-up of his views of seventeenth-century German poetry:

Der Kampf kräftigerer Temperamente mit ihrem eigenen Schulglauben, der unbewusste, unterbewusste Widerstand heftigerer Geblüte oder üppigerer Phantasien gegen ihre unabweisbar gültiges Opitztum bildet den Hauptinhalt und fast den einzigen Reiz der deutschen Versgeschichte bis auf Klopstock und viele von den abgeschmacktesten Narreteien und Schrullen dieses Zeitraums sind nur verzweifeltes Bemühen verklemmter Eigenarten sich in der von Opitz gezimmerten Verstandeskaserne persönlich einzurichten. Gerade in dem Sonderlingsträchtigen Deutschland musste der grosse Gleichmacher Verstand seltsam verheerend wirken. Aber kein Sonderling war stark und frei genug, die Herrschaft zu stürzen oder auch nur zu bezweifeln, die ihn irgendwie drückte. Wie die Hühner hielten sie sich hypnotisiert innerhalb des Kreidestrichs den Opitz um sie gezogen, wenn auch jenseits das schönste Lebensfülle winkte.⁵

The phrase ‘unbewusste, unterbewusste Widerstand heftigerer Geblüte oder üppigerer Phantasien’ parallels the words ‘gelegentliche unwillkürliche Durchbrüche der dunkleren Lebenskräfte Schicksal und Seele’ that, as has been noted several times, Gundolf believed to be one of the defining characteristics of seventeenth-century literature. In a passage about the

⁴ Gundolf – *Wolfskehl Briefwechsel*, vol 2, pp. 208–09.

⁵ FGP M12 p. 225: quoted in ‘Justus Georg Schottel’, in Schmitz and Martini pp. 259–60 (originally published in *Deutschkundliches*, ed. Teske, pp. 70–86). The section of the lectures devoted to Schottelius ends on M12 p. 244. Most of the final paragraph in *Beiträge* p. 276 is an added conclusion. Otherwise, the printed text largely follows the lecture.

poet Christian Wernicke, Gundolf names representatives of the opposing sides: Rabelais and Descartes in France, Tasso and Galileo in Italy, Shakespeare and Newton in England, Fischart, Kepler and Leibniz in Germany, although, anticipating the objection that this is an oversimplification, he adds ‘Solche Überblicke sollen nur ungefähr die grossen Mächte zeigen, welche noch in die kleinsten Personen ihr Kampfspiel trieben.’ (FGP M13 pp. 565–66). This recapitulates many of the themes discussed in earlier chapters. We saw in Chapter One that Gundolf believed that the seventeenth century was a time of ‘Entartung des Geistes’: to this we could add the statement in *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* (p. 93) that ‘[...] das deutsche Temperament (auf dessen Unterdrückung eben die deutsche Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts beruhte) alogisch und irrationell war [...]’. The German literature of this time suppresses what is, in Gundolf’s view, truly German (it is difficult to know whether any significance should be attached to Gundolf’s choice of the past tense, ‘*war*’; there is no reason to think that he believed that the ‘German temperament’ changed over time). What is particularly striking in the extract quoted above is that the description of a struggle between the scholarly and the powerfully imaginative temperament echoes Gundolf’s own situation. We have seen that he felt torn between the life of a university teacher and that of a follower of Stefan George, and that others described him as a *Wissenschaftskünstler*, a term that was not always complimentary. Perhaps he is the hen who can cross the chalk line.

The ‘reason’ or ‘intellectualism’ that Gundolf sees as the defining feature of this age and its poetry is not confined to the seventeenth century. In ‘Wesen und Beziehung’ he diagnoses the problem as very much a contemporary one, and does not see it simply as an aesthetic issue. Beginning with the Renaissance and the Reformation, a purely instrumental reason has come to pervade the whole of society, Gundolf believes, and its dangerous effects can be seen particularly in technology, transport, work, science, education, popular entertainment and sport. Mind and body have been separated, so instead of a thinking body,

the modern human being consists of ‘thought and a body as the object of thought’ the connection between the two is purely arbitrary (‘wenn es nicht mehr einen denkenden leib, sondern ein denken und einen leib als gegenstand des denkens gibt: [...] die beziehung zwischen beiden wird rein willkürlich’). Both are now emptied of the divine, of life, and of true reality (‘entgöttert, entlebendigt, entwirklicht’). This separation has led to wide-ranging consequences that Gundolf sees as disastrous: romanticism in art, ‘atomism’ and ‘historicism’ in science that view everything as masses of individual facts, progress towards arbitrary goals in politics, individualism or socialism in ethics, capitalism in economics, Protestantism in religion. In other words, undisciplined individualism and the separation of fact and value. In the pre-lapsarian state, values arose from, were inseparable from, the body: ‘Mit der existenz des menschlichen leibs war Gott eo ipso gegeben, die substanz gesetzt [...] Denken, wissen, handeln, schauen ging vom leib aus, als natürliche funktion [...] Auch die inhalte des bewusstseins werden noch genährt vom gesamtorganismus, nicht ihm entgegengestellt.’⁶ With this has come an equally disastrous and barely noticed speeding up of human time and a shrinking of space (‘keiner denkt zu ende was denn damit erreicht sei, wenn man zwei stunden eher von Berlin nach Hamburg kommt als früher’, p. 154); this transformation is ‘eine sünde am menschlichen körper [...], ja vielleicht selbst schon eine geisteskrankheit’.

Such ideas were by no means original to Gundolf and were very much in the air at the time.⁷

⁶ Schmitz and Martini, pp. 150–51.

⁷ See, for example, Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918*, (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1983). On pp. 126–27 Kern notes remarks about speed and traffic by Robert Musil and Stefan Zweig. Also David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge MA and Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1990), p. 272: ‘The ideological labour of inventing tradition became of great significance in the late nineteenth century precisely because this was an era when transformations in spatial and temporal practices implied a loss of identity with place and repeated radical breaks with any sense of historical continuity.’

Whilst readers may find this passage to be something of an over-generalised rant, it is comparable in some ways to Charles Taylor's view: 'We have moved from an era in which religious life was more "embodied", where the presence of the sacred could be enacted in ritual, or seen, felt touched, walked towards (in pilgrimage); into one which is more "in the mind", where the link with God passed more through our endorsing, contested interpretations...' ⁸ 'Our contested interpretations' echoes, in a more muted way, Gundolf's views on the baleful effect of Protestant individualism. But Taylor also sees a positive side to this process which Gundolf does not:

This energy of disenchantment is double. First negative, we must reject everything which smacks of idolatry...the second energy was positive. We feel a new freedom in a world shorn of the sacred, and the limits it set for us, to re-order things as seems best...So we can rationalise the world, expel the mystery from it (because it is all now concentrated in the will of God). A great energy is released to order affairs in secular time. ⁹

For all Gundolf's talk of *Verkörperung* that we noted in earlier chapters, and of the body in 'Wesen und Beziehung', he lacks a feeling for the truly corporeal and contingent, of the kind to be found in Greek and Shakespearean tragedy. He often invokes *Blut*, but overlooks real bloodshed. *Blut* is an abstract life force. The body for him is the origin of metaphysics and 'greatness', but not also the site of suffering and brokenness – this is an aspect of Christianity and the Incarnation that he disregards. In Chapter One, we saw something similar in his comment on the Thirty Years' War, which he regarded as merely the symptom of abstract intellectual currents ('Der 30jährige Krieg ist nur die politische Seite derselben Krankheit, die den Geist des Deutschtums damals befallen hatte [...]': the phrase recalls the 'geisteskrankheit' mentioned above), and in Chapter Three, where he calls Grimmelshausen's treatment of the War *Gleichnisse*. The comment in *Dichter und Helden* (p.

⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 554.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

47) that ‘es gibt keine Vergangenheit, nur verschiedene Wirkungsgrade der Ewigkeit’ could be seen as a way of evading disconcerting or uncomfortable aspects of the past by placing them in an exalted timeless realm.

Gundolf’s view of the dire consequences of the separation of body and spirit can be seen, like Eliot’s ‘dissociation of sensibility’, as a fictitious fall from grace narrative of the kind discussed by Kermode in *Romantic Image*, Chapter VIII:

[...T.E.] Hulme was one of the first of the English to discover, what was later to become a dominating concept in modern criticism, some kind of disastrous psychological shift, some original moral catastrophe, in human history about the time of the Renaissance, and to couple it with a belief that another crisis, another major alteration of sensibility, was at hand. [...] But it seems to me less important that there was not, in the sense in which Mr Eliot’s supporters have thought, a particular and far-reaching catastrophe in the seventeenth century, than that there was, in the twentieth, an urgent need to establish the historicity of such a disaster.¹⁰

Kermode’s last point could be made about Gundolf: it is less a question of the historical truth of the account than of the need to believe in it. Baroque literature, he claims, stands at the threshold of the modern world, as Leavis, with his proposed Cambridge syllabus, and Eliot, with his turn to Metaphysical poetry and his ‘dissociation of sensibility’, also believed in their own ways, ones with which present-day scholars will not necessarily agree. And arguably the ‘threshold of the modern world’ can be pushed further back or forward in time to the point where it becomes a near-meaningless idea.

Following the ‘fall from grace’ after the Reformation, another one took place after Goethe, Gundolf claims. Hölderlin was its witness and the proclaimer of a future redemption, which has been mistaken for a lament for a vanished Greek past.¹¹ ‘Noch Goethe war mit wesentlichen Teilen seines Werkes Erbe, Vollender, Ausdruck einer beseelten Gesellschaft.

¹⁰ Kermode, *Romantic Image*, pp. 124, 143.

¹¹ As previously noted, Russell A. Berman comments on a resemblance to Heidegger in Gundolf’s writing; possibly what he is describing is the indebtedness of both Gundolf and Heidegger to Hölderlin. Berman, p. 209.

Hölderlin sah bereits den Untergang der Gesellschaft d.h. die Flucht der Götter aus diesem Zeitkreis, und ahnte, die Augen auf ihren Weg gerichtet, ihre Wiederkehr in noch verhüllte Zukunft.’¹² It was the error of Romanticism that it expressed dissatisfaction with its age by praying:

zu den toten Götterbildern ihrer eigenen und der vergangenen Zeiten. [...] Die Buchstaben worin die früheren begeisterten, durchseelten, gotthaltigen Zeitalter bis auf Goethe ihr Gesetz niedergeschrieben nahm sie für den Geist dieser Gesetze selbst. Die Verwechslung von erstarrten Buchstaben und flutendem Geist, der Kult der alten Formen, das ist die spätere, populäre ‘Romantik’.¹³

There is another echo of 2 Corinthians 3.6 here, as well as of other strands of meaning of the word *Geist*.

On page 16 of *George*, he launches an outburst against imitators of George who do not understand him, and against contemporary literary movements:

Sie alle sind verbunden durch die Wahllosigkeit gegenüber den Reizen, den Wirrwarr der Werte und die absichtliche oder unwillkürliche Mischung der menschlichen Ränge und Stufen. Nicht zufällig verherrlichen einige das Aas, denken sich andere ins Ungeziefer¹⁴, alle in Sachen hinein – und mit Wollust wühlen die meisten bald in untermenschlichen bald in außermenschlichen Zuständen, mit animalischem Stofftaumel, amerikanischer Maschinen-romantik, abstrakter Menschheitsumarmung: lauter Erregungen die nicht verpflichten, Hingebungen die nichts heischen, bloße Wallungen im Dumpfen und Rufe ins Leere.

He thus rejects whole areas of contemporary literature, and the disdain, the almost physical disgust, with which he does this is striking. Whilst it explicitly mentions Expressionism and Naturalism, the passage does not name the writers it so sweepingly condemns. But it would be wrong to call Gundolf a conservative or a reactionary. The phrase ‘absichtliche oder unwillkürliche Mischung der menschlichen Ränge und Stufen’ (the use of the word *unwillkürlich* again is notable), suggests a rejection of egalitarian social ideas, though it is

¹² *George*, p. 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ This word suggests that Gundolf may have read Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung* (1915), but did not view it favourably, or misread it.

possible that ‘Ränge und Stufen’ means degrees of aesthetic sensibility rather than social class as such. The ‘renewal’ that he proclaims is a spiritual reawakening, rather vaguely conceived. But it is not connected with the monarchy, the upper classes, owners of big business, nostalgia for a lost supposedly idyllic rural past; indeed, it is opposed to capitalism as such. It is also predominantly, though not exclusively, German. The term *untermenschlich*, used by Gundolf in the above passage, along with *Untermensch*, was to be employed by the Nazis to refer to non-Aryan people whom they regarded as inferior. But for Gundolf ‘ein Volk’ is a culture, not a race, or a political association:

Ein Volk entsteht und besteht nicht durch biologische Bande, auch nicht durch Institutionen und Wirtschaftsnetze, sondern durch ein (von all diesem ursprünglich doch unabhängiges) gemeinsames Pathos, eine Gesamtspannung, einen zentralen Willen, der durch all seine Glieder waltet. Sobald dieser erlischt, hört das auf was wir Kultur nennen: die Notwendigkeit und Einheit der Lebensäußerungen, ja das Volk selbst, sofern man darunter nicht einen Staatsverband, sondern ein Kulturgebild sieht.¹⁵

The lack of specific references, the abstraction, the encapsulation of entire countries and currents of thought and feeling in short phrases are features that we have seen before in Gundolf’s writing. They are taken further in his account of the causes of these problems:

Fragen wir nach dem einen Grundwillen dieser Zeichen, so heißt er: weg von leibhaften, gottgestaltigen welthaftigen Menschen! ‘Weil die dünne Lymphe Gottes Kraft nicht mehr erträgt’¹⁶, weil dem geschwächten Blut das menschliche Leibgesetz zu streng wird, strebt es vom europäischen Menschen der ewige Gestalt hinweg entweder zum tropischen Pflanzentum der unbedingten Ruhe, zum exotischen Tiertum der heißen Einfalt, zum russischen Seelentum der ausschweifenden Wallung, zum amerikanischen Maschinentum der sensationellen Wohlfahrt, zum Chinesentum der alt-klugen Wohlfahrt, zur Allerweltsmenschheit worin alles gilt und nicht mehr west. Diese Welten – in ihrer Stätte und Stunde richtig und sinnvoll – sind für wurzellose Europäer nicht "Welten" sondern Reize, Wähne, bestenfalls Gleichnisse ihrer unruhigen Selbstflucht inmitten der rollenden Welt.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, p. 4.

¹⁶ In the version of George’s *Gespräch des Herrn mit dem römischen Hauptmann* published a few years later in *Das neue Reich* (1928), the line appears as ‘weil *deine* dünne Lymphe Gottes Kraft nicht mehr erträgt’ (my italics), and it is a personal rebuke from the ‘Herr’ to the ‘römischer Hauptmann’, though clearly the Hauptmann stands for a disordered society.

¹⁷ *George*, p. 17.

Readers will query the generalizing objectification, the glib encapsulations, of those repeated compounds in '-tum' (just as they might query the 'costume drama' aspect of his description of seventeenth-century society), but it would be unjust to see them as examples of 'Orientalism'. For one thing, Gundolf includes America in the list. Moreover, he is not denigrating these other 'worlds' of China and Russia, but saying that Europeans do not really understand them, that they treat them only as symbols of their own alienation (Gundolf uses different terms here, but they express something like *Entfremdung*). It is in fact the Europeans who are 'rootless'. While *Pflanzen-tum* and *Tiertum* could refer to aspects of human nature, they might also refer literally to the non-human natural world. What he rejects is 'Allerweltmenschheit worin alles gilt und nicht mehr west' (it is notable that he chooses *Menschheit* (mankind) rather than *Menschentum* (humanity) as the basis of the compound word). This is a rejection of universalism, yet cannot be read as an affirmation of allegedly superior European values. Gundolf asserts the primacy of *wesen* over *gelten*, valuing the essential nature of things over their mere existence as items in a list of equivalent objects. This does not necessarily imply a hierarchy. On the other hand, it implies a disdain for the notion of universal human rights ('abstrakte Menschheitsumarmung'). This passage uses language of animality, of confusion and inversion of values, dead abstraction, and machinery to convey a huge contempt for much of the contemporary world. Once again, the word *Blut* appears. The force of the 'embodied, god-formed, world-affirming human' is too potent for the 'weakened blood' of modern Europeans. They cannot endure it, and so they reject it. That the greatest human beings are *leibhaft*, that they live in the body, in the world, not in a disembodied mind, recalls Nietzsche.¹⁸ Claims of this kind are a familiar theme in

¹⁸ The task of both Nietzsche and George is 'einer zerfahrenden Menschheit wieder Mitte, Maße und Tafeln zu bringen.' (p. 49). However, George goes further than Nietzsche in that 'George stellt ein

nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought, but Gundolf makes them here with a particular vehemence. Similar ideas are found in ‘Dichter und Helden’:

Es gibt Zeiten, scholastisch alternde, übergeistete, in Normen gefrierende, die nur der Einbruch selbst formloser Kräfte rettet.. andere Zeiten in denen alles zerfließt, verästel, in Gehirn– oder Trieb–Chaos splittert, nichts mehr organisch wächst, nur noch mechanisch willkürlich zusammengezwungen, bürokratisch geordnet wird: so eine ist unsre deutsche Gegenwart.¹⁹

The seventeenth century could be either of these types of ‘Zeiten’. With a few exceptions, notably Grimmelshausen, Baroque literature, Gundolf believes, is a symptom of a spiritual problem, and only the *Kairos* of Goethe and Stefan George can provide a solution to this (‘eine solche Person=, Volk= oder Weltwerdung des lebendigen Geistes fehlte dem deutschen Barock (wie dem nachgoethischen Zeitalter)’). In this he differs from those British critics who, as was seen, regarded certain aspects of their own seventeenth-century literature as being profoundly fruitful for the present day, whether in reinvigorating poetic practice or in sharpening our understanding of the complex origins of the modern world. F.R. Leavis wrote:

[...] the aim is certainly not that a ‘lesson’ should be drawn from the Seventeenth Century. The aim is to produce a mind that will approach the problems of modern civilization with an understanding of their origins, a maturity of outlook, and, not a nostalgic addiction to the past, but a sense of human possibilities, difficult of achievement, that traditional cultures bear witness to and that it would be disastrous, in a breach of continuity, to lose sight of for good.

Leavis also draws attention to ‘[...] the significance of what we have witnessed in our time: the reconstitution of the English poetic tradition by the re-opening of communications with the seventeenth century of Shakespeare, Donne, Middleton, Tourneur and so on.’²⁰ Clearly Leavis is alluding here to T.S. Eliot, who regarded Metaphysical poetry as the basis for a

gesteigertes Leben das er selbst schon verwirklicht, kein spannendes, ziehendes Droben und Drüben, sondern ein bindendes, verbindendes Hier und Jetzt.’

¹⁹ ‘Dichter und Helden’, p. 31.

²⁰ Leavis, *Education and the University*, pp. 56, 129–30.

revitalisation of poetry. Friedrich Gundolf does not see seventeenth-century German poetry as a source of 'reconstitution'. For him, the significance of the seventeenth century for his own time was that many of its spiritual problems had returned, and with a similar deadening force. With the exception of Shakespeare, who was an adopted German, of Grimmelshausen, of Angelus Silesius, and of the odd moment in certain writers such as Gryphius, Gundolf found the seventeenth century to be a deviation from the true path of German literature. Yet the deviation had re-emerged with the Romantics and in his own time.

It has been noted that Gundolf, like many others, believed in discrete historical epochs, *Zeiten*, each with its own character. 'Zeit' appears to refer to a fixed characteristic, not to duration or progression (this is an ambiguity in the word itself).²¹ It is the idea that classifying a historical event or an intellectual or artistic movement, giving it a name, gives some sort of control over it. Such categories can be called into question, but are often necessary for dealing with historical phenomena. Some things, according to Gundolf – Protestant individualism, *Verstand* – are disruptive, yet others – *Volk* and *Deutsch* – appear to be fixed and immutable. In spite of their differences, the 'history' and 'tradition' invoked by both Eliot and Gundolf operate in some independent realm that is supposed to transcend the messy historical reality of confusion and suffering. Gundolf understands literature

²¹ In a chapter on Leavis's hero D.H. Lawrence, Eric Bentley ascribes this kind of thinking to what he calls 'Heroic Vitalism': 'Heroic Vitalists have tended, since Carlyle, to regard history in terms of spiritual epochs and cycles. They have never shrunk from large generalizations about these cycles, although they are not always clear about the motive-forces of history. They are unwilling to grant much efficacy to everyday cause and effect. They hate mechanical determination. Heroic Vitalism is a protest against the machine, and therefore, Heroic Vitalists substitute a Higher Causality such as fate or destiny, or they assert free-will through the living power of the hero.' Eric Bentley, *A Century of Hero Worship: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with Notes on Wagner, Spengler, Stefan George, and D.H. Lawrence*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944), 2nd edn, 1957, p. 227. Bentley mentions Gundolf as a disciple of Stefan George, and as we have seen, 'a Higher Causality such as fate or destiny' (*Schicksal*) is one of Gundolf's key concepts, as is his belief in 'spiritual epochs'.

historically, but sometimes he sees it in terms of frozen historical categories, and sometimes as the encounter of a reader in the present in their own temporal lives with a dynamic work of art, an emanation from the past that continues to live in the present. That Gundolf never convincingly reconciled these views is something that has been noted before and will be discussed further below. In *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, (pp. 63–64), Gundolf writes:

In der Zeit von Opitz bis Klopstock wurde viel Geist, aber keine eigentliche Lebenskraft in der Litteratur verbraucht. Diese ganze Dichterei (mit wenigen Ausnahmen in der Lyrik, besonders der geistlichen, und dem einsam kräftigen Grimmelshausen) wurde ohne Leidenschaft gemacht, und wenn auch die Dichter dabei schwitzten: Seelenleben wurde keins dabei erschüttert. Eine Produktion von so gemächlicher Breite, Harmlosigkeit, Geschwätzigkeit und Spielerei war nur möglich, wo kein Pathos war: denn das Pathos, das die Völker schafft, verbraucht sie auch — darum sind Blütezeiten immer kurz.

The key nouns are *Geist* (seen here as a neutral or even negative force) *Lebenskraft*, *Leidenschaft*, *Seelenleben*, *Pathos*, and the key verbs are *erschüttert*, *verbraucht*: life force, passion, ‘soul’, pathos, that create, then shake and consume, whole nations (by using the plural Gundolf shows that he is not only talking about Germany). What counts is sheer emotional intensity. By the logic that Gundolf describes, the *Blütezeit* promised by the work of Stefan George would also have to be short and transitory, something that he either does not recognise or does not wish to confront. Much Baroque poetry is concerned with *Vergänglichkeit*, and *vanitas vanitatum*, a sense of change, decay, transitoriness. This sits uneasily with Gundolf’s idea that it was dominated by *Verstand*, with its systems and rules which deny what he sees as the true nature of poetry. It is perfectly valid to see the rhetorical effects and emotional intensity and flamboyance of Baroque art as a stark contrast to dry rationalism, not as an embodiment of it. Gundolf’s notions of *Leben*, *Geist*, *Gestalt*, may do as much of a disservice to the understanding of literature as the *Verstand* that he criticises. Possibly his distrust of *Verstand* was due in part to the fact that it could be an unruly, disruptive force that questioned the eternal verities of *Geist* and *Leben*. Rationalism can be

hostile to such portentous claims. One of his favourite terms of disparagement in the lectures is *schwärmerisch*, so some forms of emotional intensity, it seems, are excessive, and it is not clear that he succeeds in reconciling it with his view that the seventeenth century was dominated by rationalism. There is the passage where he claims that Protestant individualism led to undisciplined excess (*Schwärmerei* can of course refer to overblown religious as well as secular enthusiasm), which created a gap that dry rationality filled (though it is not clear why he believes that it was excessive rationality rather than excessive irrationality that filled it). But a reader may see the literature differently. Gryphius's Ode *Verleugnung der Welt* (Odes, Book 2, 1650) indeed follows rules. It takes the form of a sestina without a final tercet: a poem of six six-line stanzas in which the final six words of the lines are repeated in each stanza in a different order. The metre is the alexandrine iambic hexameter promoted by Opitz: six stresses in each line, with a caesura after the third stress. This strict form is used to describe the world as 'tolle Phantasie', a sin-burdened delusion which must be renounced in order to stand before the face of God after death. The effect is neither of *Verstand* nor of *Schwärmerei*, but rather one of intense anxiety about the deceits of worldly existence, with the strict form pointing to the poet's grasp of his situation and his determination to overcome it.

Our reaction to Gryphius's poetry can be ambivalent. We may feel that the constant dwelling on the theme of *Vergänglichkeit* tends to domesticate this topic by repetition. Alternatively, the slowly unfolding, poem by poem, meditation on the theme takes the reader ever deeper into it. But this, together with the array of technical devices that are obvious yet do not dominate the reader's response, illustrates the richness of the poetry. As we saw in Chapter Two, Gundolf singles out the sonnet *Die Hölle* for unfair treatment, confidently dismissing it as merely a display of technique, while Victor Manheimer was more sensitive to the possibilities of the tension between verse form and subject matter. Baroque poetry is,

according to Gundolf, putting pre-existing labels on things by means of convention and *Gelehrtheit*, rather than letting *Lebenskraft* or *Pathos* speak. He talks over *Die Hölle*, rather than letting it speak. Ignoring the poem's expression of genuine fear and horror of hell and eternal punishment, he is determined to deny its emotional power and find only empty technical display, thus neutralising it. We also noted in Chapter Two that Gundolf commented on Angelus Silesius's lack of congruence between style and technique, which are those of Opitz, and content, which consists of mystical, ineffable insight. He sees this as a defect: it was argued above that there is a different way of viewing this, which makes it a strength, not a weakness. We can respond to Gryphius's sense of transitoriness, even if it is conveyed in the poetic manner of an earlier time, and at the same time recognise that it is underpinned by very different assumptions from our own.

Sometimes Gundolf's beliefs lead him to misunderstand what seventeenth-century literary theory is actually saying. He claims that Opitz promoted classical metre:

[...] mit einem reinen Fetischglauben an [ihre] zeitlose Richtigkeit und Gültigkeit' [...] '[er] vermischte Rhythmik und Metrik. Er verhalf der Zahl, dem Berechenbaren, zum Sieg über die unmeßbare Bewegung. Das gehörte zum Weg des Rationalismus. Opitz wollte, wie sein Zeitgeist, eine schärfere Kontrolle des Versflusses, ein sicheres Schema, und benutzte die bereits feste antike Prosodie, den Niederschlag einer ganz anderen Tongesinnung. Das ist eine der Verschmelzungen zwischen antikem und neuem Sprachgeist geworden – nur fällt hier die Lötstelle besonders auf.' ²²

Gundolf exaggerates here. Opitz does not promote 'antike Prosodie': he is clear that German verse uses a stress accent, not a quantitative one:

Nachmals ist auch ein jeder verß entweder ein iambicus oder trochaicus, nicht zwar das wir auff art der griechen vnnd lateiner eine gewisse grösse der sylben können inn acht nehmen; sondern das wir aus den accenten vnnd dem thone erkennen / welche sylbe hoch vnnd welche niedrig gesetzt soll werden. ²³

²² Martin Opitz, pp. 32, 34.

²³ Opitz, *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey*, p. 52.

Arguably Gundolf is trying to import 'rationalism' and 'control' into questions of a perennial aspect of the poet's craft, and this leads to a misunderstanding. F.R. Leavis had a greater sensitivity for the possibilities that seventeenth-century poets could find in classical verse, as in his comments on Ben Jonson and Catullus: 'Jonson's effort was to feel Catullus, and the others he cultivated, as contemporary with himself; or rather, to achieve an English mode that should express a sense of contemporaneity with them [...] the English poet, who remains not the less English and of his own time, enters into an ideal community, conceived of as something with which contemporary life and manners may and should have close relations.'²⁴ This echoes Gundolf's theme of the great artist making the past alive in the present. Leavis claims that Jonson achieved this, whereas Gundolf implies that Opitz failed. He does not consider the possibility that what he calls 'unwillkürliche Durchbrüche der dunkleren Lebenskräfte Schicksal und Seele' may in fact be deliberate artistic devices.

What troubles Gundolf about seventeenth-century literature is a mindset: he sees *Verstand* as an intellectual force, not as a social or political issue. There is a passage in *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* where he discusses rationalism and *Schwulst*, saying:

Die Anlage aus welcher der Schwulst hervorging ist die Vereinigung von Pedanterie und Phantasie. Nur wenn man den Rationalismus für schlechthin phantasielos hält, kann man das durchaus rationelle Wesen der deutschen Schwulstepoche verkennen. Doch Rationalismus ist keine Eigenschaft, welche bestimmte andere Eigenschaften ausschliesse: es ist eine Geisteshaltung, welche sich an allen anderen Eigenschaften erproben kann, also auch an der Phantasie. Phantasie ist ein Inhalt, Rationalismus eine Form (p.82).

He is not arguing, then, that the poetry overtly affirms a scientific ideology, but that 'rationalism' is manifested in formal or aesthetic features, and that this is crippling. He places this mindset in a historical context, yet he cannot distance himself from it, he finds it troubling, because to him it is still a problem. The seventeenth-century past for him is indeed

²⁴ Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 19.

a living force in the present, though not of an affirmative or fruitful kind. His objection to *Verstand* and his embrace of what he calls God, *Substanz* or the *ens realissimum* constitute rejection of a utilitarian, materialistic society on fastidious aesthetic grounds: *Verstand* denies true, heroic, creativity. It is not to do with ethics, or political or social problems, or with the failure of *Verstand* to contemplate the darkest areas of human life. But if there was a tendency in early modern scientific reason to reduce things to abstractions and the motion and collision of inert matter, this is not what literature does. Indeed, by using formal, patterned, organised, metaphorical language it does the opposite.

Gundolf's writings on Baroque literature mix traditional literary history with an insistent moral and philosophical message about the limitations and pernicious effects of *Verstand* and of literary conventions, and the significance of 'great men'. As we have seen, the seriousness and intensity that he deploys are different from those of close engagement with verbal, emotional and intellectual nuances of the kind that 'close reading' requires, though it cannot be doubted that he read this literature with attention and engagement. In spite of his 'an die Quellen zurück' exhortation to his students at the beginning of *Opitz bis Lessing*, his criticism consists mainly of monumentalising and de-monumentalising rather than of analysis. We have noted the reproach by some of his contemporaries that Gundolf was not a scholar but an artist, which was one of the factors that led to his work disappearing from view. Though, as noted in Chapter One, Gundolf saw himself primarily as a poet, he defended himself against this charge in a letter of 11 January 1927: 'Grundsätzlich erstrebe ich nichts anderes als Scherer oder Ranke, Erkenntnis dessen was geschehen ist [...]', claiming that his approach was 'das Verlangen nach Formbewältigung und Stoffdurchdringung, nach möglichst plastischer Zeigung dessen was ich wahrgenommen und

gedacht habe.’²⁵ But this involved monumentalising, which is a form of mythologising, and can be seen as a consequence of the obsession with the whole, with *Gestalt*, rather than looking at detail.

Gundolf uncritically accepted Goethe’s self-mythologising, which was adapted for nationalistic ends in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He called the *Conversations with Eckermann* a gospel: ‘Die Gespräche mit Eckermann sind kein gedrucktes Lehrbuch und keine gesammelte Weisheitsernte, sondern ein Evangelium, d.h. die von der Gegenwart des Verkünders selbst unmittelbar hervorgebrachte, mit ihr durchdrungene, von ihr untrennbare Stimme einer heiligen Gestalt.’²⁶ A reviewer of a new English translation of Eckermann has written:

[...] the historiography of German literature is still recovering from the effects of Goethe’s public relations campaigns on such fundamental questions as that of literary periodization. It is possible that no other European author has been so successful in shaping a national canon around milestones in his career. [...] Germans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in search of a canonical hero for their new nation, would lap up these Goethe myths like mother’s milk.²⁷

Clearly Gundolf was one of those Germans. But there were dissenting voices in his own time. In his essay ‘Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften’, Walter Benjamin wrote: ‘Das gedankenloseste Dogma des Goethekults, das blasseste Bekenntnis der Adepten: daß unter allen Goetheschen Werken das größte sein Leben sei – Gundolfs *Goethe* hat es aufgenommen.’ Benjamin believed that human life cannot be viewed as an analogy to a work

²⁵ Gundolf, *Briefe. Neue Folge*, ed. by Lothar Helling and Claus Victor Bock, (Amsterdam: 1965), p. 223, quoted in Osterkamp, ‘Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft’, p. 193.

²⁶ Gundolf, *Goethe*, p. 746. See Pier Carlo Bontempelli and Gabriele Poole. ‘Wilhelm Dilthey and Geistesgeschichte’, in *Knowledge Power and Discipline: German Studies and National Identity*, pp. 69–93 (University of Minnesota Press, 2004) www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt3qz.8. [accessed 5 October 2023], p. 84 for a reference to the religious overtones of Gundolf’s adulation of Goethe.

²⁷ Angus Nicholls, review of Johann Peter Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*. Trans. by Allan Blunden. Introduction by Ritchie Robertson. (Penguin Paperback, 2022). *TLS* no. 6246, December 16 2022, p.19.

of art, and that Gundolf's book was ultimately a methodologically confused attempt at self-mythologising. He calls it 'dies ungefüge Postament der eigenen Statuette.'²⁸

The impulses of Gundolf and other academics towards teleology, marshalling, ordering, controlling are in contrast to the impulses of Modernism towards fragmentation, abrupt juxtaposition, accident, spontaneity, freedom, resistance to closure. Some of this can be seen in George's poetry: there is strict verse form, but the meaning has to be intuited. Whilst there is innovation in punctuation and typography, as well as metrical resourcefulness, in George's work, it never goes as far the experimental extremes of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*. George's poetry often follows rules: the clear stanzaic form, rhyme scheme and regular, though not always conventional, metre (often trochaic tetrameter with caesuras) of many of George's poems make the poems approachable at one level. There is a movement of thought, an argument, in them. The problems of understanding are at the level of diction, imagery and symbolism: George's poetry is hermetic. The rules, in this case, are a matter of the self-regulation of an individual for their own artistic ends, rather than of the adoption of norms from a rulebook or a tradition. We saw in the examples from Gryphius and Angelus Silesius that seventeenth-century poets could transcend the rules as well, but this is something that Gundolf seems to have found difficult to grasp. He denigrates the idea of the craft of the poet in favour of the idea that poetry is the welling up of the inner forces of a heroic life, as in the *Sprachwerdung* mentioned above.

The greatness of George, according to Gundolf, consists not in imitating reality, or in reconciling his readers with modernity, but in creating a self-enclosed world which is somehow to transform the real one. Precisely what the transformation that is to be initiated by

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften', written 1921–2, published in three parts in Hofmannsthal's journal *Neue Deutsche Beiträge* in 1924–5.

Stefan George will bring about is unclear, though notoriously some see it as a foreshadowing of the Nazi movement; Gundolf, had he lived, would of course have had to flee from Germany. And he did not believe that social transformation would be brought about by the study of literature in schools and universities. Unlike Leavis and *Scrutiny* in England, George and his circle were not interested in sending a discipleship of teachers into secondary schools, in a ‘Leavisite plan for the moral improvement of society through literature’ of the kind that Nicholas Boyle remarked on.²⁹ In his discussion of seventeenth-century literature Gundolf uses *Schulmeister* and *Schulmeisterei* as terms of disparagement. Gundolf does not propose how the values he holds are to be disseminated in society at large; possibly he did not even see the need to do so. There were proposals in Germany, both before and after the First World War, by thinkers such as Max Scheler and Paul Natorp, to dismantle the elitist structures of both school and university education, and to establish a more down-to-earth system based on principles such as *Volksbildung*, *Erdverbundenheit* and that of the *genossenschaftlich*.³⁰ Gundolf, in contrast, did not believe that formal education could bring any kind of salvation, indeed it is clear that he disdained many aspects of the educational system of his time:

Aber unsere lehrbetriebe sind von dem wahn besessen, wissen sei ein endzweck, der geist ein gefäss um wissen darin aufzubewahren, nicht das wissen ein mittel zur ernährung des geistes! So ist der hässliche typus der ‘gebildeten’ entstanden, des connaisseurs, des anschmeckers, des ‘gesehen haben muss’, des gelehrten der mit belesenheit und spürsinn prunkt wo sie hinpassen und wo nicht, jene ganz unechte geselligkeit und geschwätzigkeit, die ihr daseinsrecht aus der unterirdischen gedanken zieht: kenntnisse seien bildung.³¹

²⁹ Rainer Kolk draws attention to suggestions made by Hans Dahmen in ‘Die Darstellungen Friedrich Gundolfs im deutschen Unterricht’, in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung* 6 (1930), pp. 386–400 that Gundolf’s methods might be used in secondary schools, but these do not seem to have been realised. Kolk, *Literarische Gruppenbildung*, pp. 401–02.

³⁰ See the discussion of various proposed reforms in Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, pp. 269–82. On the other hand, after the War some saw attempts at reform as misguided, though they had little to offer in return apart from their own elitist convictions (p. 78).

³¹ ‘Wesen und Beziehung’, p. 156.

Those who deplore the ever more utilitarian direction that education has taken in recent decades will sympathize with some of this. On the other hand, disdain for bourgeois connoisseurship in favour of supposed ‘deeper truth’ is arguably a form of snobbery and is unconvincing without further elaboration. Connoisseurship can take many forms – in fact Gundolf’s own bibliophile activities could be seen as a form of it – and many readers will be suspicious of Gundolf’s attempt to claim a monopoly on the true appreciation of art.

Gundolf declines to use the apparatus of scholarship in his printed books, while deriving part of his authority from his position in the academic system. That does not mean that he completely disregarded scholarly issues. For example, in correspondence with Stefan George about their translations of Shakespeare, he refers to detailed textual questions in both the original English and earlier German versions.³² His professional standing in the German university gave Gundolf his authority, as much as did his membership of the *George-Kreis*. There have been intellectuals who have walked away from the university, such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and those who have wanted to revivify it from inside, such as Heidegger and Leavis. Gundolf seemed to have been happy to criticise and even scorn it, while remaining on the inside, as was seen earlier in the quotation beginning ‘Reliquienkult ist nicht unsere Aufgabe, kein Wiederbau der Vergangenheit, kein Autoritätsdienst’ (p. 193 above). The expression ‘kein Autoritätsdienst’ is disingenuous. Gundolf expects the reader to defer to the authority of the great writer and to that of the critic. We are reminded of Gundolf’s suspicion of Protestant individualism (one of the *Leitmotive* of this thesis), which allowed anyone to make their own interpretation of Scripture regardless of existing authority. It is perhaps this that he feared: the wasp larvae in the beautiful caterpillar that were noted in Chapter Two.

³² Gundolf – George *Briefwechsel*, pp. 184, 191, 275.

But his disdain for connoisseurship was to lead him to extreme views. In another passage in ‘Dichter und Helden’, dealing with Greek tragedy, he remarks ‘Besser alle Kunstschatze vernichtet als die Kunst je zur bloßen Zier und zum Genuß zu erniedern! Wenn das Schöne und Große nimmer zeugt, dann hat man kein Recht darauf. Daß es noch zeugt dadurch leben wir.’³³ Gundolf shared the widespread mood of nationalistic celebration among intellectuals at the outbreak of the First World War of the kind that can be seen in Thomas Mann’s ‘Gedanken im Kriege’, (*Die Neue Rundschau*, 1914), though he was not one of the ninety-three signatories of the manifesto ‘An die Kulturwelt’ of September 1914.³⁴ At the end of a letter to George of 2 October 1914, Gundolf wrote: ‘Ceterum censeo: écrasez la France’. This combines Cato the Censor’s maxim during the Third Punic War (149–146 BC) ‘besides, I consider that Carthage must be destroyed’, with Voltaire’s slogan ‘crush the despicable thing’ (meaning the Roman Catholic Church). George himself was more sceptical about the War, and his reply of 5 October 1914 takes issue with Gundolf’s extreme anti-French sentiment, which clearly goes well beyond concerns about *Überfremdung*.³⁵ But Gundolf’s views soon became even more alarming. On 25 August 1914, the German Army rampaged through the Belgian city of Leuven (Louvain), killing 209 civilians and destroying 1100 buildings including the University Library, which caused the loss of 230,000 volumes, among them medieval and renaissance manuscripts and early printed books. The French author Romain Rolland expressed his horror at the destruction in an article that was printed in German translation in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Gundolf then contributed an article to the same newspaper, and while it does not mention Leuven by name, its implication is clear:

³³ ‘Dichter und Helden’, p. 28.

³⁴ Ingo Rund in his introduction to *Die Universität Heidelberg und ihre Professoren*, pp. 19–22 discusses the general enthusiasm for the war among both academic staff and students at Heidelberg.

³⁵ *Gundolf – George Briefwechsel*, pp. 262–64.

Wir kämpfen nicht für die Bewahrung von Gewesenem, sondern für die Bewährung des Unvergänglichem und die Erschaffung der Zukunft, nicht um noch so kostbare Dinge, sondern um das Menschentum. Vor dem, was werden kann, ist aller gehäufte Besitz gleichgültig. Darum ist das Gegreine und Getobe um zerstörte Kunstschatze (soweit überhaupt ehrlich) nur welke Romantik und kommt aus einem flachen, falschen Begriff von Kultur, als sei sie Sammlertum und Betrachterpietät. Kultur ist kein Haben, kein Genießen, sie ist ein Sein, Wirken, Werden, ein Erschaffen, Zerstören, Verwandeln – und Attila hat mehr mit Kultur zu tun als alle Shaw, Maeterlinck, d’Annunzio und dergleichen zusammen. [...] Wer stark ist zu schaffen, der darf auch zerstören, und wenn unsere Zukunft nicht mehr schaffen könnte, hätte sie kein Recht, Vergangenes zu genießen.³⁶

The article ends with the first four lines of George’s poem *Bangt nicht vor rissen brüchen wunden schrammen* from *Der Stern des Bundes* which was encountered in Chapter Two in the context of Martin Opitz and which says that ‘cracks, fissures, scratches, wounds’ deserve the laurel wreath of the poet. But whereas the poem can be read as saying that the injuries are metaphorical (the poet must suffer in order for new thinking and creativity to arise), Gundolf implies here that they should be taken literally: real destruction must occur for culture to be reborn. A letter from Gundolf to Curtius of 26 October 1914 in which he claimed that the significance of this ‘cosmic war’ lay ‘gerade in dem unerhört Grauensvollen, das alle Romantischen Lügen von Zivilisation, Humanität, und selbst Tradition unbarmherzig zerstört [...] er ist Untergang alles was stimmungsmässig, romantisch und seelenvoll ‘schön’ war, und das ist gut [...]’, led to a year-long estrangement between the two men.³⁷ The word *Untergang* recalls the discussion of Grimmelshausen in Chapter Three, where it was seen that Gundolf believed that there was something uniquely *untergangssüchtig* about the German *Volk*. Grimmelshausen deals with the reality of the Thirty Years’ War; Gundolf regards the War as a symptom of the disordered intellectual climate of the seventeenth

³⁶ ‘Tat und Wort im Krieg’, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11 October 1914. The bracket before ‘soweit’ is missing in the original.

³⁷ See Norton pp. 521–25 for a full account of the events in Leuven and the ensuing newspaper correspondence, and pp. 530–31 for the break with Curtius.

century, without realising that the very same intellectual climate might also have led to the Peace of Westphalia, that it might have been capable of establishing a way out of partisanship and fanaticism. *Verstand*, which Gundolf sees as suppressing human uniqueness and creativity, can also be seen as standing for toleration and the removal of division and enmity, and for decorum or good sense, as we saw with Boileau. That someone who had celebrated the creative achievements of the ‘German spirit’ should come to believe that this same spirit could justify the loss of human life and the destruction of artistic treasures is something that is hard to comprehend, let alone excuse. The association of high art and barbarism is a subject that is central to George Steiner’s thinking. Gundolf was of course far from alone in expressing enthusiasm for the War: we think of Thomas Mann’s *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* of 1918. What is remarkable is that someone who wants to be *monumentalisch*, to rise above the *Zeitgeist* to timeless heights, gets so caught up in the *Zeitgeist*. Of the German scholars who have been referred to in this discussion, Osterkamp and Kolk do not mention the Leuven library incident (though Kolk mentions the war-fever of Gundolf and Wolfskehl). Nutz mentions it in passing but does not draw out the implications. Gundolf served on the Western Front for a while, but was transferred to the *Kriegspresseamt* in Berlin, seemingly on health grounds. The passage on the Thirty Years’ War in the lectures was written after 1918, and while it is tempting to see it as an attempt to repress or deny the horrors of the First World War and human responsibility for them, there is a danger of falling into over-simple psychological explanations. For the purpose of the present argument, it is enough to note that there are links and echoes between Gundolf’s views of present-day events and his writings on seventeenth-century literature.

The problem for him is partly that Baroque poetry is art of a kind that resists *geistesgeschichtliche* explanations, and partly because for him it lacks a ‘great man’ figure of the type of Luther, Goethe, or George. It is not that ‘great men’ as such did not exist – he

names Kepler, Boehme, and Grimmelshausen, among others – but that they lacked an essential connection with their times ('und dennoch war ihr Zeitalter durch sie nicht verkörpert'). In this respect they are different from Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Corneille. According to Gundolf, there is a link between the great man and society but it did not function in Germany in the seventeenth century. For Gundolf the Baroque poets: were not heroes, but mere *Gelehrte* or *Schulmeister*.³⁸ It is striking that the standard that he sets for a person's greatness is that they 'embody their epoch': not only does his view of seventeenth-century poets imply that they 'embody their epoch' only too well, but one could argue that the distinctive feature of some remarkable people is that they are at odds with the time in which they live. 'Embodying' here could be seen as a version of nationalism, which entails the idea that messy individual and social reality can be boiled down to a single essence.

It was noted earlier that Gundolf claims that there is something uniquely German about the failings of its seventeenth-century literature: the 'Deutscher Fluch'. One objection to such a view is that it presupposes that there is an identifiable norm from which Germany deviated, for good or for ill. Gundolf makes an exception of Grimmelshausen, but takes for granted his own right to talk of 'exceptions' in the first place. A more fruitful approach is to move on from talk of supposed norms and deviations and to look at the issues without such preconceptions. Gundolf does not always read seventeenth-century literature strictly according to his own principles. Perhaps in the sections on Angelus Silesius, Weckherlin, and Grimmelshausen we see him moving on from the rigid views seen in *Shakespeare und der*

³⁸ See Dina Gusejnova, 'Olympian or Pathologist? Cassirer, Gundolf, and the Hero Myth', in *The Persistence of Myth as Symbolic Form. Cultural Studies and the Symbolic* 3, ed. by Paul Bishop and R.H. Stephenson (Leeds: Maney, 2008) pp. 116–17 on 'the Carlylean category of intellectual leaders and poets', which Gundolf believed in but Cassirer did not, as for the latter, following Kant, 'the concept of genius was reserved exclusively to art [...] 'For this primacy of the personality meant that [Gundolf] was not interested in those individuals whose personality did not appeal to him. [...] Gundolf saw universal significance in those individuals whom he considered to be geniuses or heroes, and believed in their demonic calling.'

deutsche Geist. Baroque literature resists notions of *Genieästhetik* or heroic *Gestalt*. It is not making imperious claims about the autonomy of the artistic self, or embracing the grandeur of the universal spirit. This is something about seventeenth-century literature that Gundolf wishes to resist, yet he remained fascinated by it, as his huge amount of writing about it attests. Why did he carry on with work on the seventeenth century? Possibly because he thought it might help him and his readers and listeners to come to terms with present day problems. His concern with a 'failed' literature could have been an attempt to chronicle, or come to terms with, the devastation that followed the War. Unlike Eliot, he did not find inspiration in the idea of a 'classical, ordered, tradition-bound past' in the seventeenth century. Yet he also disapproved of the anarchic individualism unleashed by Protestant 'inner light'.³⁹ Baroque literature represented an alternative to George's aesthetics, about which he had now come to feel more ambivalent.⁴⁰ Towards the end, he clearly became fascinated by the mystical dimension represented by Angelus Silesius, which can be seen as a moving away from the dogmatic certainties of the idea of a *substanz* or *ens realissimum* that underpins meaning and culture. And further: whilst Gundolf had earlier shown an interest in non-literary figures such as Caesar, some of his late works show an increasing preoccupation with issues in history and the history of ideas, among them 'Bismarck', the lecture series *Deutsche Geschichtsschreiber von Herder bis Burckhardt* (FGP M16, 1931), and the writings published posthumously as *Anfänge deutscher Geschichtsschreibung von Tschudi bis*

³⁹ A view that was not original to him. See Metzger and Metzger, *Reading Andreas Gryphius* p. 76, where the authors mention '[...] the opinion of many Romantics that the Protestant Reformation had brought to a tragic end a harmonious Golden Age in Germany of religious, political and cultural unity'.

⁴⁰ Ernst Osterkamp discusses how George came to see Gundolf's academic work as a betrayal of the ideals of the *Kreis*, citing his work on Kleist, the Romantics, Caesar, and Paracelsus. And no doubt George would have thought the same about the lectures on seventeenth-century literature. Osterkamp, *Friedrich Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, pp. 186–87.

Winckelmann. He was, it seems, becoming less exclusively preoccupied with the figure of the canonical great artist.

Maximilian Nutz's *Messianische Ortsbestimmung und normative Menschenkunde. Gundolf und die Barockliteratur* is a comprehensive, though brief, treatment of Gundolf's writings on the Baroque, but one that is clearly only based on the published books.⁴¹ He identifies a change in Gundolf's thinking following the War and the break with Stefan George, one that tentatively moves away from the celebration of timeless great historical figures and acknowledges the historical relativity of interpretation: 'er nicht mehr wie früher von messianischen Perspektiven oder der Propagierung von Normen des Kreises beherrscht wird.' This reflects the passage in the lectures, quoted by Groppe from the copy available to her in the Deutsches Literaturearchiv in Marbach, where Gundolf writes: '[...] nicht der Werturteile sollen wir uns entsagen, aber keine Person tadeln und keine Gesellschaft aus nur=heutigen Ansprüchen, weil ihr fehlte, was *wir* nicht mehr entbehren können.'⁴² The confident certainties of 'Wesen und Beziehung' are no longer there, though his pronouncements on seventeenth-century literature can sometimes be no less confident. But when Nutz claims that it is the treatment of Schottelius that marks a change in Gundolf's views, he is apparently unaware that the lecture passage on Schottelius which is the source of the book is part of an unbroken sequence, following Opitz but before Gryphius and Grimmelshausen. The order of publication of the books does not reflect the order of composition of the material. The publication order of the books is *Opitz* and *Grimmelshausen*, both 1923, *Gryphius*, 1927, *Schottelius*, 1930. The order of the lecture material on which the books are closely based is Opitz, Schottelius, Gryphius,

⁴¹ In *Europäische Barock-Rezeption* 1, pp. 653–73.

⁴² DLA copy p. 94, FGP M12 p. 88. Discussed above (p.93).

Grimmelshausen, and it is interspersed with plenty of material on other authors. There is less linear development and more localised focus and agility (as we saw for example in the discussion of Weckherlin's 'Druckenheit' in Chapter Two) than Nutz believes, and changes in Gundolf's overall position did not take place suddenly. While many of Nutz's points are valuable, they require qualification and expansion, and one of the aims of this thesis has been to provide these, as well as to place Gundolf's critical thinking in a wider context.

Describing the limitations of criticism of Baroque literature which operates in terms of rhetoric, poetics and emblematics Robert Schütze comments: 'Der rhetorisch-poetologische Abgleich von Norm und Normanwendung läuft Gefahr, 'immer wieder das schon Bekannte [...] zum Vorschein' zu bringen: 'Das interpretierende Verfahren wird, überspitzt ausgedrückt, zur klassifizierenden Subsumption einer wachsenden Menge von Material unter ein statisches Schema von Begriffen und Vorstellungen, die durch Abstraktion aus der Sache gewonnen sind.'⁴³ A similar observation could be made, *mutatis mutandis*, about Gundolf's criticism: it tends to find what is already known in terms of pre-existing abstractions. Or to put it another way, the later form of criticism marks a change in emphasis, rather than of mindset. Gundolf is at least in part prepared to surrender the possibility of apodictic judgment in favour of a sense of the historical relativity of such judgements, but does not develop this fully. Perhaps this testifies to an inner struggle following the split with George. There is a problem shared by all types of literary criticism: that of having to discuss texts that do not necessarily proceed by the norms of rational, expository discourse in language that has to use these norms. Gundolf displays this problem in an acute way because of his overt hostility to *Verstand*, as expressed in rigid rule-based poetics. Gundolf rarely

⁴³ Schütze, 'Barockdichtung', p. 29, quoting Harald Steinhagen, *Wirklichkeit und Handeln im barocken Drama* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977) p. 506.

gives us a sense of what reading a work of literature over time is actually like: that it may involve puzzlement or uncertainty or even boredom as well as deep appreciation and enjoyment. In fairness, this is true of many critics. For Gundolf, there is a sort of high-level ecstatic rapture at the operation of genius, involving ideal writers and readers who float above messy historical reality and individual experience. The intensity and seriousness that Gundolf expects of his students and readers is that of engagement with cultural tradition and with 'genius', not that of wrestling with individual texts during the act of reading them, which is what Leavis and Steiner, among others, demand. 'Close reading' has the potential to open up the study of literature to a wider body of students by freeing up their powers of interpretation though of course, the academy will select the texts to be 'close read'. Gundolf's manner lays down both what is to be read and how to read it. To simplify: his work belongs to an idealistic tradition rather than to an empiricist one. Often it is not analysis, but monumentalising. With Gundolf, in spite of his lofty standards of knowledge and commitment, there is no sense that reading requires moral or hermeneutic effort, but rather that it demands the recognition of or submission to, the truths of *Gestalt* and *Geist*. The idea of being in awe of the image of the great writer is not the same as a genuine attentive love for literature. Gundolf expects the reader to bow to the authority of the great writer and to that of the great critic, yet he acknowledges, as we saw above, that interpretations may change over time ('Immer neue Geschlechter lesen, erforschen, verwandeln ihren Sinn und sich mit ihm'). What is not clear is whether these *Geschlechter* are critics or ordinary readers. His views tend to efface the complex self-consciousness of the reader in favour of a monolithic notion of the great artist, or of other semi-religious abstractions such as *Volk* and *Geist* (or *Verstand* – which performs a similar, though inverted, function). On 1 May 1926 Gundolf wrote to Karl Vossler:

Ehrfurcht ist heute, eben heute, auch für die Wissenschaft und um die Wahrheit willen so nötig wie Kritik, und sie ist viel bedrohter [...]. An klugen Tastern und Schnüfflern, Besserwissern und Topfguckern, Vorschmeckern und Nachmachern ist Überfluss, doch wenn es an freudigen und frommen Betrachtern fehlt, so lohnt es sich nimmer zu forschen und zu lehren. In der Zerstörung der Andacht seh ich heute eine weit grössere Gefahr als in der Verkümmern der (freilich mehr gepriesenen als geübten) 'Kritik', und im Dasein eines einzigen grossen Dichters (freilich nicht Wortkünstlers oder Schriftstellers) eine bessere Bürgerschaft echter Bildung und Menschenwürde als in dem von tausend Gelehrten.⁴⁴

He assumes that *Ehrfurcht* has no moral or political presuppositions. It could be argued that 'reverence' either has to be a very precise spiritual and intellectual discipline, or it is dangerous, leading to uncritical adulation in politics as well as in art. Is Gundolf asking us to love literature, or to be in awe of it, or perhaps to be in awe of the claims of a particular kind of critic? He does not allow for a just and attentive personal response that may deepen over the course of a lifetime. The study and enjoyment of literature is shaped by individual acts of reading, by private discussions, by reading groups, by informal conversations in classrooms, by choices made by publishers, by reviews in journals, as much as by the pronouncements of 'great critics', and the critique proceeds from the reader (possibly, though not inevitably, from what Leavis called the 'trained' reader), not from the 'great man'. We can make up our own minds about seventeenth-century literature, though we may sometimes need help from the specialist, and a good critic can help us to shape our evaluations. In the end, our aesthetic response is our own. Gundolf's *Vorbilder* and *Gestalten* have a coercive force, a top-down authority, rather than inviting us to lovingly contemplate literature, or actively engage with it in the manner of Leavis. He dictates our evaluations, rather than guiding them. What we expect from the significant artist is something unique to them, something which may touch on universal themes but which can be constantly refreshed and rediscovered by new

⁴⁴ Dirk Werle, 'Vossler gegen Gundolf: eine Kontroverse über die Ruhmesgeschichte' in *George-Jahrbuch* 8, 2010–2011 (Berlin; New York, NY: de Gruyter), pp. 103–27 (p. 121).

interpretations, not some generalised all-purpose 'greatness'. Similarly, when he says that history must be alive in the present, this could be seen as a way of saying that it should dictate to the present, rather than fertilise it, that it plays out in some timeless realm where no political or moral choices are involved and nothing changes. Implicitly, the 'living meaning' of history is one selected by the 'great critic', on grounds that we are not allowed to question. 'Literary meaning [...] does not reveal itself in a flash, and texts do not disclose themselves irrevocably and absolutely at the moment of their first appearance.'⁴⁵ Gundolf assumes that literary significance, whether it be that of the 'genius' or the 'great man', or that of (in his view) lower ranking literature such as that of the seventeenth century, does thus reveal itself, and that this occurs as a result of his own authoritative pronouncements. That the reader might want to work for it, and that the result of this might be to question the critic's findings, is not something that he seems prepared to countenance. A sense of 'greatness', that some works matter more than others, is a result of our engagement with, our critique of, works of art, it is not in any simple sense a property of the works themselves, which is not to deny that there is something inherent in the works that makes us want to talk about them in this way. It is also not a neutral term: Gundolf's ascription of greatness to Grimmelshausen arose from his own ideas about German language, culture and nationhood.

We should beware of taking Gundolf's own opposition of dry and lifeless rationalism and living *Gestalten* and *Geist* at face value. It was noted earlier that both German and English critics, such as Herbert Grierson and Walter Benjamin, had reservations about his methods and they cannot all be accused of being dull and blinkered pedants. Ernst Osterkamp writes that scholarship of a more traditional kind was able to absorb Gundolf's insights and

⁴⁵ Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 115.

move on, leaving these oppositions themselves to look like faded historical categories that no longer had any significant educational power.⁴⁶ On a more positive note, for all his sense of the dominant *Zeitgeist* of an era, his version of literary history does not see works of art as being only understood in terms of a chronological account of their contexts. He constantly makes links and comparisons back to the Middle Ages, Dante, the Minnesänger, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Hans Sachs, Luther, and forward to Lessing, Goethe, Herder, Jean Paul and even, as we saw in Chapter Four, Bismarck. This is both a strength and a weakness: it is a weakness in so far as it risks loose overgeneralisations, and a strength in that it breaks with the idea that literature can only be understood by being placed in its immediate chronological historical context: the parameters of imaginative interpretation are widened. His frequent insistence that historical eras must be understood in terms of a dominant *Zeitgeist*, often embodied in the genius of a remarkable individual human being, is tempered by his realisation that historical judgment is relative, that we cannot impose contemporary standards on the past. There is a tension in his thought between apodictic authority, the sense that his pronouncements on literature refer authoritatively to a given pre-existing reality, and his senses of historicity (in particular the historical relativity of the critic's judgements) and of

⁴⁶ 'Extrem wurde es dadurch, daß sich sein Wissenschaftsverständnis aus einer künstlerischen Erneuerungsbewegung speist. So wie diese ihr innovatives Potential verlor und in einer "George-orthodoxie" erstarrte, so dünnte sich auch das Erneuerungspotential von Gundolfs Schriften nach dem Goethe-Buch aus und erstarrte in einer auf Repetition angelegten Darstellungsschematik. Ihre Attraktivität verlor sie auch deshalb, weil die Philologie sich der Herausforderung durch die Geistesgeschichte gestellt und die von ihr ausgehenden Reformimpulse aufgenommen hatte, so daß der von Gundolfs Schriften vorausgesetzte historisch-positivische Gegner mehr und mehr zu einem leeren Popanz wurde. Damit verloren auch die von Gundolf gegen ihn entworfenen Bilder der Dichter und Helden ihren lebendigen Bildungswert und verblaßten zu mythologischen Schemen jenseits von Zeit und Raum.' Ernst Osterkamp, 'Friedrich Gundolf', in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik in Porträts*, ed. by Christoph König, Hans-Harald Müller and Werner Röcke (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter. 2000), p. 174.

the free play of literary meaning. Interpretation cannot be fixed for all time, indeed, Gundolf sometimes, as we have noted, sees that this is not possible.

In conjunction with *Verstand* and *Schwärmerei* he frequently uses the terms *gelehrt*, *Gelehrtheit* and *Schulmeister* in a disparaging sense to describe seventeenth-century literature. Teaching and learning are seen as negative, even unpleasant, activities. This attitude, which no doubt derives from Stefan George himself, sits uneasily with Gundolf's own position as a university teacher and as a collector of books, but fits in with the idea of the *Wissenschaftskünstler*. We can contrast it with Eliot's claim in 'The Metaphysical Poets' (p. 379):

It is certain that the dramatic verse of the later Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets expresses a degree of development of sensibility which is not found in any of the prose, good though it is. If we except Marlowe, a man of prodigious intelligence, these dramatists were directly or indirectly (it is at least a tenable theory) affected by Montaigne. Even if we except also Jonson and Chapman, these two were notably erudite, and were notably men who incorporated their erudition into their sensibility: their mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by their reading and thought. In Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne [...].

This is clearly a very different view of 'erudition' in seventeenth-century poetry though we may, of course, not agree with Eliot.

In his discussion of the seventeenth century Gundolf does not ask why literature continued to exist during this period despite the supposed dominance of rationalism and rules, why these forces did not lead to the abandonment of metaphor, of fiction, of art itself. While he deals with writers such as Angelus Silesius and Grimmelshausen who, in their different ways, do not fit his narrative of the dominance of *Verstand*, he struggles to account for their existence in an epoch subject to its domination. Nor does he hold them up as models for later writers, though they have been so used, notably Grimmelshausen by Günter Grass. He does not see that seventeenth-century literature could push back against these forces, instead of being subordinated to them. It was noted earlier that Opitz himself, employing an established

Renaissance *topos*, states that ‘Die Poeterey ist Anfangs nicht anders gewesen als eine verborgene Theologie, und Unterricht von Göttlichen sachen.’⁴⁷ Boileau praised sublimity and individual feeling as well as classical rules, writing in Chant II of *L’Art Poétique* that ‘Il faut que le cœur seul parle dans l’*élégie*.’

Gundolf might have answered this criticism by pointing to his belief that seventeenth-century authors at their best (Opitz, Gryphius, Grimmelshausen, Schottelius, Angelus Silesius) had helped to shape the German language and contributed to the tradition of German *Bildung*. Yet at the same time he believed in powerful autonomous selves, *Gestalten*, who exist in a timeless realm, outside history. There are other unresolved philosophical and methodological problems in Gundolf’s work. He claimed that ideas only existed in so far as they were embodied in individuals,

Denn Ideen, Gesetze, Pflichten, selbst Gottheit an sich, frei schwebend, gibt es nicht: nur in Menschen sind sie wirklich, in Menschen welche sie schaffen und in Menschen welche sie empfangen und tragen. Der große Mensch ist die höchste Form unter der wir das Göttliche erleben: alle größten Gedanken sind nur in Menschen, durch Menschen, aus Menschen. Die geistige und geschichtliche Welt existiert nicht und nirgends außerhalb wirklicher Menschen.⁴⁸

This is an idea that he may have taken from Dilthey, who wrote: ‘Das bedeutende Individuum ist nicht nur der Grundkörper der Geschichte, sondern in gewissem Verstande die größte Realität derselben’⁴⁹. In both cases, it is the great or significant individual who counts. ‘In jedem Gedicht Hölderlins wirkt sein Gesamtwesen (d. h. seine Eigenschaften und sein Schicksal) und seine Gesamtwelt (d. h. die Natur, die Gesellschaft der er angehört und die Geschichte die er voraussetzt) [...]’⁵⁰: the genius embodies and expresses the highest level of

⁴⁷ Opitz, *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ ‘Dichter und Helden’, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Inaugural speech upon admission to the Prussian Academy of Sciences, 1887, quoted in Ulrich Herrmann, ‘Materialien und Bemerkungen über die Kategorien der “Geistesgeschichte” bei Wilhelm Dilthey’, in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, ed. König and Lämmert, p. 47.

⁵⁰ ‘Hölderlins Archipelagus’, pp. 6–7.

thinking and feeling of their time, and so literary history and the history of ideas become one.⁵¹ Yet at the same time he ascribed a kind of agency to entities like ‘Deutscher Geist’ and *Volk*. It was noted in Chapter Three that he identified an unresolvable opposition of *Sein* and *Werden* in German literature, and in Chapter Four that Ulrich Raulff remarks that Gundolf never succeeded in fully reconciling his kinetic and static views of history (or to use terms identified earlier, reconciling the ahistorical *ens realissimum* and *Gestalten* with the historical relativity of individual viewpoints).⁵² These problems are not unique to him; they reflect problems in German philosophy and are maybe problems of all traditional philosophy. In a similar way, *Vergänglichkeit*, the subject of much Baroque poetry, is opposed to the apparent stability of the ‘system’ or ‘rules’ which Gundolf believed to dominate it. Simplicius is a hero whose characteristic is ‘Werden’, change and instability. He is not a lofty Olympian subject. Gundolf believed that true national and folk feeling had triumphed over dead literary codes in Grimmelshausen. Yet *Vergänglichkeit* and *Werden* are not the same thing: the former is dissolution and decay, the second implies the possibility of renewal, if not of a final goal. Gundolf is aware of all these issues, even if he cannot produce a final synthesis of them. He tries to do so in the early pages of *Goethe*, where he writes that the contradiction is resolved if we think of time not as linear development but as spherical emanations from a centre which transform the material that they encounter.⁵³ This is ingenious, though not altogether convincing as an account of the human experience of time.

Earlier we noted Gundolf’s struggle with the ‘Unzulänglichkeit [solcher] Sammelworte, die mehr die Blickrichtung bestimmen als die fakta selber in ihrer Fülle

⁵¹ See Groppe, *Macht der Bildung*, pp. 295–306 for a detailed account of these issues.

⁵² Ulrich Raulff. *Der Bildungshistoriker Friedrich Gundolf*, p. 124.

⁵³ *Goethe*, p. 14.

umfassen' (FGP M12A, p. 6), a phrase that echoes the linguistic doubts of Hofmannsthal's Chandos Letter, yet he does not develop this insight and generally does not share the sense of a *Sprachkrise*. But it is unreasonable to expect strict philosophical consistency of the literary critic, and we can see in the case of the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* that the quest to find an ultimate basis for meaning in logical rigour, however ingenious, can become tortured and fruitless. Perhaps the notions of 'eternal values' and 'great men' in the end rely themselves on a quasi-scientific claim to certainty, rather than being 'ways of phenomenological disclosure to human beings within the horizon of time'⁵⁴, which is one way of describing what art does.

Gundolf blends ideas from Goethe, Bergson, Dilthey, and Stefan George, with a deep knowledge of the German and European cultural traditions as they were understood in his time, and with neo-Christian language and concepts. His views are grounded in ideas of the German language, the German *Geist*, of heroes and great men, a cyclical view of history, not in concrete historical facts about society, a grasp of a social community over time, with its customs and traditions, family life, sense of physical place, and the working lives of ordinary people. The pronounced religious element in his thought owes something to Stefan George's private religion, with its creation of a pseudo-Catholic aura of ritual and mystery and its deification of Maximilian Kronberger ('Maximin'), yet in some ways it has its own individual character.⁵⁵ There are shards of religious ideas, portentous hints of religious

⁵⁴ Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1995) p. 34.

⁵⁵ Norton pp 339–44. Elsewhere in the book Norton discusses further instances of the air of religiosity that George cultivated around himself. See also the essays in *Stefan George und die Religion. Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte* 147, ed. by Wolfgang Braungart, (de Gruyter, 2015).

significance without actual religious convictions: we may view the near quotation of 2 Corinthians 3.6 mentioned earlier as one of these. The ideas that art can replace religion, or that ‘culture can save us’, however noble in intention, have not aged well. There was much new thinking about God and religion at this time such as that of Martin Buber, of Rudolf Otto (*Das Heilige*, 1917), Karl Barth (*Der Römerbrief*, 1919), Rudolf Bultmann (*Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 1921), Franz Rosenzweig (*Der Stern der Erlösung*, 1921). Whole dimensions of religious experience and practice, such as sin, repentance, and the community of the Church, are missing from Gundolf’s work, yet there is no reason to think that his use of religious language is insincere, or a mere rhetorical trick. Charles Taylor has described how such language has outlasted its institutional context.

Gundolf’s faults, as seen in the lectures, include the endless recital of names, and passing sweeping judgments without detailed textual evidence or convincing suggestions that his students should go away and look for it. Yet for all his judgmental ordering of literature in history, Gundolf is essentially promoting a form of mythology – the pathos of genius, of greatness, the mystical, the religious, the national. It is this that transcends or overcomes *Verstand* and *Gelehrtheit*. On the other hand, despite occasional opacities of expression, his writing is usually clear, emphatic, stimulating and sometimes flamboyant, though for all the vitality and rhetorical force of Gundolf’s style, it can sometimes be arch and precious. His knowledge of literature is hugely extensive and he deploys it with grace and usually with clarity: these are qualities to recognise and celebrate. Gundolf’s stylistic habit of drawing attention to the root meaning of German prefixes and words, coining new terms in a way that reminds us of Heidegger, has been remarked on, but Heidegger's neologisms are an attempt

to remove theology and the metaphysics of presence from language. Gundolf's are less philosophically bold. They are best regarded as an attempt to attempt to transcend and revitalise dry academic style. Heidegger wanted art and language to reconnect with a reality no longer obscured by domineering rationality. His project was not to uphold the self-sufficient bourgeois subject as the consumer of art. Art was about being in the here and now, not about supposed eternal values. Gundolf, on the other hand, presupposes a grand, cultured, heavyweight, leisured subjectivity which he does not question. Whilst he rejected the materialistic aspects of middle-class society, he did so from a position that shared many of the basic assumptions of that society about high culture, including a quasi-sacred conception of art and the artist.

Friedrich Gundolf was clearly a powerful, autonomous and charismatic personality, who believed in and personified the authority of the critic and teacher of literature. This authority derived from his position in the German university system and his membership of the *George-Kreis* as well as from his own talents. His writing exhibits a strong, autonomous self, judging, criticizing, evaluating, marshalling evidence. Gundolf takes possession of literature with the fierce energy of his intelligence and his language. George Steiner claims that a move of this kind is inherent in criticism: 'The prepotence of criticism over original composition, the interposition of the critic's persona between the text and the general light, are betrayals existentially rooted in the critical act [...] Finally, irremediably, the critic is judge and master of the text.'⁵⁶

How was it possible for this type of personality to arise and flourish? Charles Taylor distinguishes various models of personality and of the good life that have predominated in

⁵⁶ George Steiner, "'Critic'/'Reader'." *New Literary History*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1979, pp. 423–52. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468921> [accessed 2 November 2023].

Western culture: one that is based on fame and reputation (the ‘great men’ model of which George and Gundolf were so fond), another based on rational mastery of the emotions, and another based on transformation of the will (this may take a specifically Christian form – ‘grace’ – though there are secular versions). Both contrast altruism and selfishness, but Gundolf’s *Gnade* is an aesthetic value, not a moral virtue or a gift from God. There is also one that has developed in the last two centuries ‘based on vision and expressive power. There is a set of ideas and intuitions, still inadequately understood, which makes us admire the artist and the creator more than any other civilization ever has; which convinces us that a life spent in artistic creation or performance is eminently worthwhile.’⁵⁷ There is also a view, which had its origin in the theologies of the Reformation and is not incompatible with devout religious belief, which emphasizes the value of ordinary, everyday life. This is clearly opposed to the implicit elitism of the other views; such elitism was of course a marked feature of the *George-Kreis*: ‘...someone might see in the same everyday life which so enriches the householder only a narrow and smug satisfaction at a pitiable comfort, oblivious to the great issues of life, or the suffering of the masses, or the sweep of history.’ ‘The suffering of the masses’ does not appear to have concerned Stefan George and his followers. Gundolf is not interested in affirming the value of ordinary life: in fact, he and the *Kreis* treat the masses with disdain. He sees salvation as coming from a renewal of language, the language of the poet. How, if at all, that renewal is to be translated into the public, political world in which all of us must live for at least part of the time, is not clear, and for all his religious language, he does not advocate membership of the community of the Christian Church, which, in theory at least, is not tied to social class. Neither is he interested in moral

⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) pp. 22–3, 45.

prescriptions for conduct, private or public, or in the claim that literature can in some way make you a better person in everyday life (what he would have made of the adoption of his poem ‘Schließ Aug und Ohr’ by Sophie Scholl and the *Weißer Rose* group is a matter for speculation ⁵⁸). Rather he is concerned with the idea of allegiance to a higher cause that will somehow transform the world for a select few.

Gundolf, George, and the other members of the *Kreis* strove for a radical modern individualism, independent of and indeed superior to, the society which formed them. We have seen that Gundolf rejected the idea of a self and a poetry that were no more than ‘Beziehungen des Ichs zur Zeit oder Spiegelungen der Zeit im Ich’, opposing to it the poet who directly experiences ‘die Sprachwerdung kosmischer Wesenheiten’ (*Dichter und Helden*, p. 61), though we are left to guess at what these ‘kosmische Wesenheiten’ may be. Does Gundolf refer to them because they are part of a considered philosophical view of reality, or is this no more than a portentous phrase? Possibly they are manifestations of the ‘lebendiger Geist’, to which, as was noted earlier (p. 43 above), Gundolf chose to dedicate the Heidelberg University new building in 1931. The phrase has connotations of energy and inspiration, which are often associated with art, but also of intellect: thus it could be naturally seen as the work of a *Wissenschaftskünstler*. It is clear, though, that the ‘living spirit’ belongs to a minority, an elite, and it is not part of the general social order: those, like the *George-Kreis*, who stand in opposition to the dominant temper of their times ‘define themselves not just genetically, but as they are today, in conversation with others. They are still in a web, but the one they define themselves by is no longer the given historical community. It is the saving remnant, of the community of like-minded souls, or the company

⁵⁸ Background and interpretative information about the song, and a performance of it, can be found here: [Das Lied der Weißen Rose – „Schließ Aug und Ohr“ von Friedrich Gundolf | Deutsche Lieder. Bamberger Anthologie \(wordpress.com\)](#). Accessed 1 September 2023.

of philosophers, of the small group of wise men in the mass of fools, as the Stoics saw it, or the close circle of friends that played such a role in Epicurean thought.’⁵⁹ It is also clear that the Gundolf/George model of culture implies a lower status for those who are not elite and male, although this did not prevent women from playing roles in and around the *George-Kreis* that were by no means subordinate: Elisabeth Gundolf, Edith Landmann, Melitta Grünberg, Marianne Weber; and important work on the Kreis has been done by scholars such as Carola Groppe and Gunilla Eschenbach. And whilst George and his followers may have adhered to an elitist vision, there were contemporary currents of thought which can be grouped with the *George-Kreis* as ‘neo-romantic’, and yet pursued ideals of wider social reform.⁶⁰

The idea of *Gestalt* is ambiguous: on the one hand it refers to the self-contained work of art, on the other to the heroic figure of the artist.⁶¹ Gundolf proposes an intuitive conception of the artist as the embodiment of ‘cosmic forces’ and is only secondarily concerned with the actual language of the work of literature as the expression of these. This is not a positivistic or psychological explanation of the work of art, but rather the invocation of timeless life-forces manifested in heroic individuals that give rise to it. Inevitably, this leads

⁵⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 35, 37.

⁶⁰ See Margarete Kohlenbach, ‘Transformations of German Romanticism 1830–2000’ in Nicholas Saul (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, Cambridge Companions to Literature, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 257–80: p 261, ‘neo-Romanticism’ meant more than a new literary orientation or even a new world view. The term also referred to the cultural practice of numerous reform movements which emerged around 1900 and which adopted, at least in part, Romantic conceptions of nature, child or woman: the Jugendbewegung...and the movement for educational reform, the so-called Lebensreform...and early environmentalism and feminism.’

⁶¹ See Paul Böckmann, ‘Tradition und Moderne im Widerstreit: Friedrich Gundolf und die Literaturwissenschaft’, in *Die Wirkung Stefan Georges auf die Wissenschaft: Ein Symposium*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Zimmermann, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1985), pp 77–94. The idea of *Gestalt* was by no means confined to the *George-Kreis*. ‘Das ‘Gestalt’ –Konzept findet sich dabei bei so unterschiedlichen Schriftstellern wie Robert Musil, Thomas Mann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, den Georgeanern, Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger.’ Groppe, *Macht der Bildung* p. 330.

to oversimplification of the rich variety of literature and of individual works of art, and of their historical contexts.⁶² But while Gundolf is not a practitioner of close reading he does quote, and he demonstrates his huge knowledge of classical, German and European literature, of forms and of metrics. Gundolf's intensity is one of deep engagement with cultural tradition, not that of the act of reading itself, though he is capable of Leavisian 'placing', as in his comparison of the blank verse of Lessing and Shakespeare in *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, p. 153:

Mit einem Gleichnis: Lessings Vers ist eine Treppe auf der wir steigen müssen, die uns sicher von Stufe zu Stufe führt, Shakespeares Vers eine Strömung die uns trägt. Lessing veranlasst uns zu einer bewussten Bewegung, Shakespeare macht uns selbst zu Bewegung. Lessings Vers kann jederzeit einhalten, und wir sind immer an einem logischen Endpunkt. Wenn wir in einer Shakespeare-rede einhalten, so raubt es uns den Atem, wie wenn wir gegen eine Stauung schwimmen, denn die rhythmische Flut drängt nach.

We may not agree with his negative assessments and may regret the lack of specific quotation to make his point, but we see that he has experienced and described a considered personal response to the emotional force and the linguistic texture of the poetry, and this grounds his comparative judgements. It is a pity that he seems to have felt unable to give free rein to this. Maybe, in spite of the personal break with Stefan George and the vast changes brought about by the War, the hold of his former habits of thought was still too strong.

Conclusion

⁶² Böckmann, p. 87.

Gundolf has not been adopted into the canon of modern literary criticism in the way that Walter Benjamin, Heidegger and Adorno have. His reputation depended in part on his personal charisma and his striking personal appearance, but it rapidly declined after his death, initially because the Nazis banned his works due to his Jewish background. After 1945, some of the ideals that he celebrated – ‘timeless values’, ‘great men’, ‘mastery and service’ (‘Herrschaft und Dienst’), ‘discipleship and allegiance’ (‘Jüngertum und Gefolgschaft’), were seen as tainted by association with the Nazi movement, though he does not reach the level of nationalistic intensity of Kommerell in *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik* (which is evidently influenced by ‘Dichter und Helden’), and his works had in fact been banned in Germany after 1933. The years following the Second World War saw the increasing dominance in literary studies of *werkimmanente Interpretation* in Germany, and more generally of Marxism, feminism, gender studies, postcolonialism, deconstruction and New Historicism, and more recently, a growing concern with the environment and the natural world. In recent years, the suspicious, demystifying methods of critical theory and ideological criticism have themselves been the subject of questioning and debate⁶³. Moreover, the ways in which both art and education have been produced and consumed have undergone huge social and technological changes. All this has made Gundolf’s methods and concerns seem parochial and dated. Some of these movements called into question even the more progressive versions of liberal humanism, let alone the conservative ones represented by Gundolf (and some recent critics see Kommerell as a more impressive exponent of such conservative views, with one describing him as ‘arguably the most original philosophical literary critic who wrote in German during the twentieth century – second only, perhaps, to

⁶³ See for example Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), and *Critique and Postcritique*, ed. by Elizabeth S. Anker and Rita Felski (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

Walter Benjamin' (Norton, p.627)). One major difference that the theory of the later twentieth century has brought about is a degree of self-reflectiveness, of consideration of underlying presumptions and methods. There is no going back on this.

As far as the seventeenth century is concerned, a big expansion of academic work on the Early Modern period, with an increasing recognition of the importance of rhetoric, iconography and material culture in the study of its literature, contributed to the process of making Gundolf seem irrelevant; his reading of seventeenth-century literature was, as we have seen, regarded as an anachronistic attempt to apply the aesthetic norms of the *Goethezeit* and the *George-Kreis* to a poetry that invites being seen in terms of convention and tradition (though these need not be negative factors). His belief in clear and definite periodization, and his frequent use of hypostatization, with its consequent oversimplification (such as 'lutheranische Bibeldogmatik' in his discussion of Angelus Silesius), is also no longer in vogue. Readers should not blame Gundolf for not knowing things that subsequent Early Modern scholarship has discovered, such as the significance of rhetoric, or *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. But as we have seen in the discussion of Herbert Cysarz in an earlier chapter, this kind of scholarly approach courts the danger of ignoring how poets can creatively use and react against convention, of subsuming and taming everything into a limited set of conventions established by modern scholars. A more cogent objection to Gundolf is that he is determined to see this literature through an ideological lens. In the manner of certain other critics, he wants to make the literature fit a pre-existing theory.

The sheer volume of Gundolf's Baroque literature lectures raises the question of whether he expected his students to read everything he discussed, or whether they were simply meant as a display of his erudition and judgment. What did his hearers gain from the lectures on 'Opitz bis Lessing', especially given Gundolf's uninspiring lecturing style? Did they lead at least some of the students to an informed love of seventeenth-century German

literature? Or did they experience an expert in his subject setting out his authoritative pronouncements and his brilliant display of learning, with the added glamour of the spectral presence of Stefan George? There are times when the lectures appear to be a substitute for reading the original works: they disseminate *Bildung* rather than close engagement with literature. Gundolf both imparts, or creates, knowledge of his subjects, as well as providing evaluations of them. For all his mentions of changing historical interpretations and of the pitfalls of language, Gundolf, unlike Leavis and the New Critics, does not claim that it is the task of the individual reader, under guidance from teachers, to wrestle with difficulty and ambiguity: rather it is the role of the great critic to proclaim the supreme value and significance of art. This again raises the question of the reproach made against him in his own lifetime that he was not a scholar but an artist. For some a sympathetic understanding, an imaginative grasp and recreation of a work of art in all its historical reality is itself a scholarly method. This is the ideal held out by Dilthey. In his own way Leavis, as we have seen, aimed at a kind of dramatic re-enactment of the author's creative activity, though he would have resisted the suggestion that what he was doing was itself a form of art. Yet the danger of claiming that literary criticism makes the knower and the known identical is that the artwork is taken over by the subjectivity of the critic.⁶⁴

We are not obliged to assume that the first readers of German seventeenth-century would have accepted conventions as a given, and that we in turn must do the same. If convention depends on a contract with the reader, that contract does not have to be inert and unquestionable. And as has often been noted in this discussion, convention and formal discipline may actually be ways of creating a meaningful, dynamic tension between form and

⁶⁴ See the discussion of correspondence between Gundolf and Harry Maync on these issues in Osterkamp, *Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, p. 221.

content. Indeed, it could be argued that modern interpretations of Baroque or any other literature that seek to explain it purely in terms of its historical context in fact implicitly abandon the claim to discover any truth which is valid and intelligible for modern readers. The acknowledgement of a writer's otherness, which is supposed to make objective knowledge of them possible, leads to the suspension of their claim to truth. An imaginative reading of literature does not only ask what the work meant in its historical context, though that may be a perfectly valid question, but also where the work takes its readers. Gundolf asks this question, though we may feel that he often gets the answer wrong. Our knowledge of the social, material and historical contexts of seventeenth-century literature is greater than Gundolf's. On the other hand, reading is not an archaeological dig. It is carried on in numerous contexts, individual and institutional. Literature invites interpretation, explanation, exegesis, as well as more ordinary readerly experiences such as enjoyment, wonder, pleasure, puzzlement, self-recognition, boredom, among others (the two groups of terms are of course not mutually exclusive). What it does not obviously invite is reduction to ideology, *Verstand*, convention, discourse, the operations of *Geist*, witness to the uniqueness of a *Volk* or 'great men'. Putting *Geist*, or *Deutschtum*, or *Gestalten*, or *Volk*, in the foreground of our reading of literature is another form of reductionism, cutting through complex, nuanced debate. Gundolf rejects convention and *Gelehrtheit*, yet these involve the imposition of order, and imposing order is what he loves to do in his writing.

Gundolf tries to persuade by his use of language and by and the assumption of, and appeal to, authority rather than by philosophical precision, Aristotle's *pathos* and *ethos* rather than *logos*, though it may be unfair to hold him to standards of strict philosophical rigour. It is a standard that he implicitly repudiates. He does not step down from this lofty rhetorical manner: he uses scorn, but not irony or humour. While he is not personally rancorous like F.R. Leavis at his worst, he is rarely modest and gracious in the manner of Ernst Robert

Curtius. Despite the surface clarity of his style, when his thought is examined in detail it is often more problematic than it at first appears. It is sometimes dense, needing reflection and unpicking. This is as true of the lectures as it is of his books. Gundolf's ideas are complex, contradictory, and not always fully worked out. While it should not be assumed that the fact that there is no explicit theory or methodology in a critic's work means that they are unsophisticated or naïve, it can be argued that Gundolf did not develop his thinking as far as he could have done. This may be a result both of the intractability of the issues he is trying to address, as well as of the speed at which he wrote. This is not to suggest carelessness on his part, but that he was a restlessly and expansively energetic writer rather than a carefully systematizing one. He is not writing a systematic treatise on literary theory or philosophy, either in these lectures or elsewhere, and in fairness there is no reason to criticise him for not attempting to do this. The forcefulness, the confidence, the breadth of his reading, the commitment to art, are all things that can be admirable and inspirational at times. He is unafraid to speak his mind. He deals with issues of history and nationality, of the forces that drive individuals, societies and historical epochs, as well as ones of literary language, form and interpretation. That these issues arise in discussions of a literature towards which he is often unsympathetic shows that, as with Opitz's love poets, a questionable subject can serve as a *Wetzstein* for those who are prepared to engage with it. The issues that he raises in connections with the seventeenth century pervade his works. Furthermore, the fact that he devotes so much space to Baroque literature in his lectures holds it up as worthy of study in the university and so, whether intentionally or not, has the effect of canonising it.

Sometimes his responses to literature are nimble, agile and flexible, rather than monolithic, and this illustrates that it is not always easy to classify him. He needs to find an explanatory coherence in the subjects that he considers: a method that can be reductive.

Whether he is in sympathy with the writers he discusses or not, his approach tends to be one

of monumentalising rather than detailed verbal analysis. His style veers between dense thought and linguistic neologism combined with rhetorical flamboyance on the one hand, and flat and factual, or somewhat arch and belletristic, language on the other. It mixes what J.P. Stern, in a different context, calls ‘dark intimations’ and ‘the clarity of rational understanding’.⁶⁵ He likes surprising twists of the argument and exaggerations, literary effects at the expense of academic precision. If this is sometimes questionable, it also sometimes leads to the opening up of new perspectives. Gundolf constructs his writings with such integrity that selective quotation tends to unravel them, a quality that is impressive. Being resistant to easy summary or paraphrase is a quality associated with literature and this reinforces the view of him as a *Wissenschaftskünstler*. There is no doubt that he can sometimes be inspiring, even if we often disagree with him. Sometimes, as was seen in the case of Weckherlin, his occasional more positive evaluations of seventeenth-century poetry are at odds with his rejection of the rationalistic ideology that he sees them as exemplifying. If his views are at times reductive, he himself has been subject to reductive views. Some aspects of his work were not unique: as was noted above (pp. 31–2) other members of the *Kreis* produced monumental books celebrating charismatic great men. But he was a more diverse thinker than some have claimed, and cannot be simply pigeonholed as an uncritical follower of George or of the aesthetics of Goethe. The confidence and occasional boldness of Gundolf’s thought is something that deserves to be rediscovered.

His perspectives are connected to, and may be profitably compared with, those of other thinkers who are better remembered and more prominent in our own times – such as Heidegger, Benjamin, Adorno, Eliot, Leavis and Max Weber – to a greater extent than may

⁶⁵ Stern, p. 56.

be apparent at first sight. It is too simple to view him just as the apostle of Stefan George. When we read the work of literary critics of past generations, we ask whether it can 'generate new insights in different contexts, even when subsequent research invalidates some of their philological and methodological claims'.⁶⁶ Often Gundolf generates new insights into the problems of criticism, rather than into literature itself. Reading him can lead us to 'lost histories of aesthetic response'⁶⁷ This will, at the very least, remind us that some aspects of the critical preoccupations of our own day will also turn out to be ephemeral. For Gundolf literary criticism was a discourse which could shape the fate of nations: *Germanistik* had an impact on German politics and society and Baroque literature was for Gundolf, for better or worse, an element in the constitution of German identity. The discussion of it is more than a debate about academic method. If Gundolf did not have a personal Christian belief, his writing manner and his use of religious language reflect the former power of the Church: the religion of art finds an institutional home in the university.

As was noted earlier, Gundolf's manner is that of the sermon (another similarity with the Church): it does not invite, or allow, a question or a critical response, it uses *pathos* and *ethos* to proclaim closure, finality. The answers, it appears, are already known. It was this that both inspired and repelled René Wellek, whose attendance at Gundolf's lectures was described in Chapter One:

Gundolf's books – free of pedantry, dazzling by the boldness of their generalizations and the authoritative tone of their judgments – seemed to hold up a new hope for what literary history could be or could become. But somehow I was subtly repelled by what I had seen at Heidelberg. I could not but feel that the implied demand for complete allegiance and total subservience to a creed was foreign to my nature.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, p. 218. Bowie is referring specifically to the works of Walter Benjamin here.

⁶⁷ Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Wellek, 'The Literary Criticism of Friedrich Gundolf', p. 395.

In a way this is a failure of *ethos*: for all Gundolf's claim of authority, his listeners had reservations about placing their trust in him. That he was held in high esteem by his students, that he had personal charisma, cannot be doubted. On 2 July 1930 Elisabeth Gundolf wrote to Karl Wolfskehl describing a pageant staged by the Heidelberg students for Gundolf's 50th birthday in which Gryphius made an appearance: 'Es traten auf [...] Landsknechte als einzige Reminiszenz an Gryphius ...verkörperter "Geistesgrössenwahn", Schopenhauer, Paracelsus, Mignon, Caesar, Das Ganze war ein hinreissendes Dokument von der einzigen Wirkung die der Gunde auf die jungen Seelen ausübt [...]'. But Gundolf imagines that those who differ from him ('der subjektive Herr Soundso') are barely human, not that they can join in a conversation on equal terms, yet by venturing into the public realm of the lecture or the book he presupposes that dialogue is possible. Gundolf laments cultural and social barrenness and decline, then resorts to a very individual, idiosyncratic, and partial solution. That an audience could be persuaded that this holds up a new hope for society as a whole is something that may be found strange today, yet perhaps the critical preoccupations of the 2020s with social justice issues will in time be found to be no less strange: both overestimate the ability of the institutional study of literature to change the society in which it is embedded.

The differences between Gundolf's critical approach and that of close reading have been noted several times. It is too easy to assume that close reading and criticism generally are, or should be, suspicious, cerebral, analytical activities, opposed to 'mere' pleasure. Language and style can be sources of pleasure and involvement. There is a difference between pointing out the ambiguities and deceptions of language, and responding to them with attention, sensitivity and concentration. Andrew Bowie makes the following points about interpretation of literature:

If one reads a literary text and then either makes criticisms of its stylistic, formal and other features, or tries to explicate its meaning, what exactly is one trying to do? The subjective intentions that lie behind such activity can range from the desire for revenge of critics on what they in fact envy, to the desire to communicate one's own joy at the experience of engaging with the aesthetic text. Whatever way one looks at it, there is an undeniable sense in which one is trying to 'complete' the text: the very fact of writing about it means that the text cannot be assumed to be complete 'in itself' [...] This validation of what is written in relation to the text can thus be said to be an extension of the truth-content of the text: without interpretation the text is merely inert, and, without a text to interpret, the I which interprets cannot be engaged with the truth.⁶⁹

However, it could be added that no single interpretation has a total and lasting claim upon the work of art. It may require interpretation in order to exist, but this does not mean that the interpretation is a substitute for it. We can reject the claim of the absolute authority of an interpretation without resorting to an equally questionable one of the absolute autonomy of a work of art. Both are subject to ongoing dialogue and questioning, and both exist in the wider context of language and society and their histories. This throws doubt on Steiner's claim, mentioned earlier, that criticism is inevitably a kind of 'betrayal'. We may question whether being a literary classic, a work that has stood the test of time (and there is no point in trying to deny that these exist, even if we can see that some reputations have waxed and waned and that the canon is subject to extension and revision), depends on an idea of 'authority' that is vested only in the critic or the teacher. It makes no sense to claim that a work of art could exist independently of a perceiving and recreating subject. Yet the subject exists as part of a language community. The concepts of 'immortality' and 'timelessness', which occur throughout Gundolf's work, may be a hindrance rather than a help in the understanding of art. Such ideas may just serve to put a set canon of authors beyond discussion or revaluation, even if it is allegedly only of value if it 'continues to live for the present'. The question of

⁶⁹ Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, p. 212.

literary criticism shading into questions of morality, politics, philosophy, religion, of attempting to delineate the boundaries, is still with us. Leavis, whose work, as we have seen, has points of contact with that of Heidegger, wanted an intense and focussed critical engagement with literature, which would in turn mediate issues of language, history and society. This can no doubt be described as elitist in some ways, but it is not inherently self-enclosed or esoteric in the manner of George and his followers.

The following observation by Dagmar Barnouw can be extended to Friedrich Gundolf:

Though [Weimar intellectuals'] fictions were constructed precisely to avoid coping with the confusing, disturbing contemporary conflicts of interests, they presented a partial and partisan truth as, in each case, the comprehensive and only truth. Proclaiming a cultural crisis of unforeseen dimensions and the devaluation of social to eschatological time, they did not see the need or the possibility of bringing together different fragmented views to gain a more comprehensive, truer perspective. They both lamented fragmentation and declared it inevitable, withdrawing to so many particular individual truths about fragmentation, mechanization, and accelerated sociocultural change. The highly eclectic idiosyncratic Marxisms of Bloch, Benjamin, and Adorno do not differ in that respect from the various ethics and aesthetics of cultural catastrophe presented by Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, Gottfried Benn and Thomas Mann.⁷⁰

It is now possible to see that whilst the intellectual and artistic climate of the Weimar Republic was remarkably diverse, many of the leading figures of the time had shared intellectual concerns and that some of these were also found outside Germany.⁷¹ It should not come as a surprise that Gundolf can sometimes remind us of Heidegger or Adorno, or of Eliot and Leavis. On the other hand, some will think that identifying flashes of Adorno, Heidegger, Leavis, Eliot, and others in Gundolf is no more than a doomed attempt to rescue a

⁷⁰ Dagmar Barnouw, *Weimar Intellectuals and the Threat of Modernity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 38.

⁷¹ See *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon and John P McCormick, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 1–3.

critic whose thought has deservedly passed over the horizon, one who, as Barnouw says, presents ‘a partial and partisan truth as [...] the comprehensive and only truth.’ Yet his writings certainly demonstrate a sharp and lively intelligence at work, and an immense breadth of erudition. One of the ways he is distinguished from other critics is that we admire the style and manner as much as, and maybe sometimes more than, the substance. When we read him now, it is difficult to set on one side his wish for us to see him as an authority, a high priest, and this is a very real barrier to his reception today: his very manner is inseparable from his message. There are thinkers, such as Heidegger, Leavis and Derrida, whose style forces us to wrestle with their meaning and it could be that there was no other way that they could say what they needed to. On the other hand there have others, like Gundolf, Eliot, Curtius and Kermode, who did not feel the need to write in a contrarian style and are none the poorer for it. Although it has been seen that Gundolf is capable of ‘dark intimations’, his style is usually one of rational clarity and so the problems of reading him are different. Gundolf slips into obscurity sometimes, but this may reflect the difficulty of the issues about which he is writing. On the other hand, whilst the literary nature of his style was noted above, it is not necessary or helpful to excuse such obscurity by claiming that it is art. There have been other poet/critics, such as T.S. Eliot and William Empson, who did not write ‘poetic’ prose.

But the price of Gundolf’s refusal to use the usual apparatus of scholarly writing (footnotes, bibliographies, and so on) is that his works do not participate in scholarly conversation, that they affirm truths without allowing his sources and methods to be identified and questioned (much of the foregoing account of Gundolf’s writing on the seventeenth century has been concerned with lecture material, yet he did not add scholarly apparatus to the sections that he himself published in book form). At worst, his method risks

erasing the distinction between scholarship and art, thus making scholarship itself a kind of fiction in which nothing objective can be said.

The discussion has at times strayed outside the strict confines of Gundolf's writings on seventeenth-century literature. It has attempted to enhance existing knowledge of Gundolf's work by dealing with extensive material that has only recently been published, by situating it in a wider context than the German *Barockforschung* of the early twentieth century and the aesthetics of the *George-Kreis*, by making new connections and finding new comparative ideas, and by focussing on Gundolf's rhetoric and religious language. In so doing, it has attempted to argue that, if we cannot accept without question much of what Gundolf had to say, we can see that his criticism raises some important general questions, particularly when seen in a wider context, one that can be extended outside Germany. We can learn both from where Gundolf is critical as well as where he is adulatory, though that is not to say that we will agree with what he is saying. As with Opitz's description of love and the poets, he is a *Wetzstein* who enables us to have 'sinnreiche gedancken und einfälle'. Gundolf may be said to have failed to question his own pieties and certitudes (at least outside his private correspondence, where he occasionally shows signs of doubt), but reading him 100 years later raises the issue of how far we should question our own. This is not to advocate the total historical relativism of critical viewpoints, even if such a thing were possible, but to question absolutism. Judgement and evaluation, like meaning, are built inescapably into the fabric of human consciousness: with art, as was noted above, the important thing is to realise that no critical judgement has an undisputable claim on the work that inspired it.

Friedrich Gundolf's commitment to ideals of art and European civilization did not save him from uttering 'écrasez la France' or from excusing the destruction of the Louvain library. Indeed, he seems to have believed that both of these were the expression of higher ideals. But the message of the 'power to destroy' that he sets out in 'Tat und Wort im Krieg'

does not form part of Gundolf's critical stance generally, nor does he seem to have repeated it after the War. It is a distortion caused by German nationalism and war fever at a particular time, and however reprehensible it may be, we should be careful about dragging Gundolf in front of a court of moral character and finding him guilty of making remarks in response to a specific and hugely significant historical event. Similarly, looking for traces of *völkisch*-ness and general proto-Nazism in Gundolf and other members of the Kreis is too facile. While it runs the risk of being unfounded biographical speculation, it is possible that he was starting to change his mind about 'rationalism', as he began to see in the course of the 1920s what the forces of anti-rationalism had unleashed: the lost War, virulent antisemitism, extreme politics. It is also possible that Gundolf's difficulty with, and simultaneous evident fascination for, Baroque literature was due to the fact that it presented him with art in a pure form, with obvious artifice that can nevertheless point to psychological and emotional depths, instead of presenting an exalted sublime self. If the baroque lectures sometimes show the *Wissenschaftler* predominating over the *Künstler*, they also show that in many ways he remained in the sphere of Georgian aesthetics. He was suspended between the two outlooks. He shows a mixture of conventional and unoriginal elements with ones that are in tune with the ground-breaking thinkers of his time.

Friedrich Gundolf's life was cut short when he was only 51. There is no way of knowing where he might have gone, geographically or intellectually, though it is likely that, like his widow Elisabeth, he would have left Germany. Had he lived a normal lifespan, he would have witnessed the rise of the Nazis, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the foundation of the State of Israel, the Cold War. These would have moved his thinking onward, possibly dramatically. Whether he would have retained anything of the ethos of the *George-Kreis* and of the tradition of *Germanistik* in the post-Second World War era, or whether he would have changed his political and social views in the way that Thomas Mann

did, is unknowable. It is not possible to return to those positions. But thinking about them may help to see current preoccupations in a historical perspective.

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