PART TWO

JAHRESTAGE

V *JAHRESTAGE*: NARRATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wo hast du gesessen, Gesine.
Gut genug, dich zu sehen, Genosse Schriftsteller.
Hinten.
Ja, weit weg, dicht an einer Tür. (*JT*, 253)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> Er ist ein Angebot. Sie bekommen eine Version der Wirklichkeit.
> Es ist nicht eine Gesellschaft in der Miniatur, und es ist kein maß-stäbliches Modell. Es ist auch nicht ein Spiegel der Welt und weiterhin nicht ihre Wiederspiegelung; es ist eine Welt, gegen die Welt zu halten. (VPR, 402–03)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Soll es denn doch ein Tagebuch werden?
Nein. Nie. Ich halt mich an den Vertrag. Nur, schreib sie öfter hin.
Dann könnte verloren gehen, was heute wichtig war an dem Lachen.
Jetzt fängst du wieder an mit Quantität und Qualität! Summier doch das eine, wenn du das andere willst! (*JT*, 1427)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dank di ook, Dochte.
Da hab ich nicht zu Dank verdient.
Doch. Weil du es deiner Marie nicht erzählt hast. (*JT*, 695)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Am Donnerstagabend hast du aufgehört, als Semig unter Bewachung nach Gneez fuhr, mit dem Eisernen Kreuz an der Jacke.
— Das nahm ihm Wachtmeister Fretwust gegen Quittung ab.
— Es war aber eine von Lisbeths Geschichten, und du hast ihr nicht ihren Schluß gegeben.
— Lisbeth hat sich, sie — (*JT*, 587)

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

— Hör zu, Gesine: sagt Marie. — Ich werde dir jetzt zeigen, was du am Donnerstagabend als Letztes gesagt hast:
— 'Allerdings trug Fretwust Semigs Kriegsauszeichnungen nicht in die Effektenliste ein. Er rechnete nicht damit, daß der Jude seine Orden zurückerhalten werde. Fretwust war auch noch nicht lange Wachtmeister gewesen; von Rechts wegen hätte er im Pumpwerk Gneez den Klärschlamm absaugen sollen. Und Fretwust genierte sich nicht für den Namen; im Gegenteil war er stolz darauf'. Ja. Ist das kein Schluß? [asks Gesine]. (*JT*, 589)

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

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

— Nicht für die andere Geschichte, Gesine. Das will ich dir doch beweisen. Du hast gesagt, Bandposition 266:
— 'Die Arbeitsdienstmädchen mochten den Einkauf von Fleisch noch nicht genug gelernt haben, Lisbeth wollte lieber, daß an ihrem Tisch mit hohen Zähnen gekaut wurde, als daß sie auf die Stadtstraße von Jerichow ging'.
— Das ist der richtige Anfang, Gesine! (*JT*, 589)

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Nie habe ich die Wahrheit versprochen.
— Gewiß nicht. Nur deine Wahrheit.
— Wie ich sie mir denke (*JT*, 670)

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