VII THE ORIGINS OF NARRATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dies vorlaute Wesen, das hat sie von dir, Lisbeth.
Das hast du von mir, Gesine. Und sieh dich vor, daß nicht dein Kind einst dich entschuldigen will wie du mich. (*JT*, 143)

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

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

> Sie hatte nach dem Jahr 1937 gesucht und wieder nichts bekommen als ein statisches, isoliertes Bruchstück, wie es ihr der Speicher des Gedächtnisses willkürlich aussucht, aufbewahrt in unkontrollierbarer Menge, nur mitunter empfindlich gegen Befehl und Absicht:
> 1937 ließ Stalin einen großen Teil seines Generalstabs hinrichten,
> 1937 hatte Hitler seine Kriegspläne fertig ausgearbeitet. . . . (*JT*, 63)

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

> Mr. Shuldiner hat sich unterbrochen in seiner Darlegung der neuesten Verstöße gegen das Völkerrecht, als Mrs. Cresspahl ihre Handtasche aufnahm, die Hand im Rücken des fetten schwarzen Beutels wie im Nacken einer Katze, sich die Tasche über die Hand setzte und dazu etwas aussprach in einem deutschen Dialekt. Er läßt es sich erklären, unbeleidigt, vorgebeugt wie ein aufmerksamer Zuhörer:
> Das sagte mein Vater, als ich Angst hatte vor einer Katze unter dem Tisch. Sie legte sich über das Leder seiner Holzpantoffeln zum Schlafen. Das muß auch 1937 gewesen sein. An dem Tag war ich in die Regentonne gefallen.
> Und Ihre Muter, Ihre Mutter stand dabei? sagt Mr. Shuldiner eifrig.
> *Lisbeth ick schlå di dot.*
> Meine Mutter stand nicht dabei. Entschuldigen Sie. Es war ein Tagtraum, Mr. Shuldiner. (*JT*, 64)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wer seinen Kindern gibt das Brot
Und leidet nachmals selber Not
Den soll man schlagen mit der Keule tot[17]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Volume 3 begins in the now-familiar fashion:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> *Geh, du schwarze Amsel,*
> *Wann ich schon schwarz bin,*
> *Schuld ist nicht mein allein,*
> *Schuld hat mein Mutter gehabt,*
> *Weil sie mich nicht gewaschen hat,*
> *Da ich noch klein,*
> *Da ich —*
>
> (*JT*, 835)

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

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

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

> Das Kind war mit seinem Vater zugange, auf Spaziergängen, auf Spazierfahrten, beim Arbeiten im Garten, beim Baden in der Ostsee, immer, überall, wann immer er sich außerhalb der Werkstatt zeigte, und weil du dies alles nicht gehabt hast, gebe ich dir sofort und unwiderruflich und unter Androhung von Weiterungen einen Punkt. Eins zu Eins und Ende.
> — Wein doch nicht Gesine. Hör doch auf. Soll ich dir ein Glas von DEs Whiskey bringen? Wein doch nicht, Gesine! (*JT*, 458–59)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Er sei in Cuba gewesen. Die Agenten der CIA auf dem Flugplatz von Mexico City hätten jeden Passagier nach Cuba fotografiert!
Das lassen andere Länder ihre Geheimdienste nicht tun: fotografieren.
Sie dringen auch nicht in kleinere Länder ein und hinterlassen dort Spuren; ihr wirtschaftliches System hinterläßt keine Narben auf Leib und Geist eines kleinen Landes. So ist es. Herr Enzensberger hat es selbst gesehen.
Herr Enzensberger hat sich entschlossen, nach Cuba zu gehen und dort eine beträchtliche Zeit zu verbringen. Das dürften drei Jahre sein.
Es sei dies kaum ein Opfer.
Er hat eben einfach so den Gedanken, daß er von den Bewohnern Cubas mehr lernen kann ("Freude"), als den Studenten der Wesleyan University an politischer Haltung beibringen.
Er will dem cubanischen Volke von Nutzen sein. Er selbst, in eigener Person, will einem ganzen Volk von Nutzen sein.
Die Verwandlung des Herrn Enzensberger in den Nutzen des cubanischen Volkes, dargestellt auf offener Bühne. Keine Tricks, keine doppelten Vorhänge, keine Schleier! (*JT*, 802)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> Wenn Herr Enzensberger sich erinnert, kommt ihm hier alles bekannt vor. So wie in den USA heutzutage war es in den mittleren dreißiger Jahren in Deutschland. Da kamen Staatsmänner und schüttelten dem Führer die Hand. Dergleichen geschieht auch in den USA.
>
> . . .
>
> In Deutschland gab es Benachteiligung und Verfolgung einer Rasse. Wie in den USA.
>
> . . .
>
> Hier erst, nach dem spanischen Bürgerkrieg, der für den in Viet Nam steht, sieht Herr Enzensberger seine Analogie zusammenbrechen. Da sei zum Beispiel die Vernichtungskraft von Herrn Enzensbergers gegenwärtiger Herrschaft. Davon hätten die Nazis nie träumen können. (*JT*, 800–01)[34]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sag es ihr, Gesine.
Damals war ich ein Kind. Zwölf Jahre alt. Was kann ich wissen?
Was du von uns gehört hast. Was du gesehen hast.
Sie wird das Falsche benutzen.
Sie ist ein Kind, Gesine.
Die Toten haben leicht reden. Seid ihr aufrichtig gewesen zu mir?
Mach es besser als wir.
Und damit sie weiß, wohin sie mitkommen soll, und zu wem.
Und uns zuliebe, Gesine. Sag es ihr. (*JT*, 1029–30)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> M. H. C. . . . Die Anstände, die ich in der Schule hatte, bloß weil ich Francine helfen wollte, und sie war eine Negerin. I had it right in front of my nose, und wünschte bloß, es wär nicht. Es möchte besser sein. Ja: ein unbehagliches Gefühl, wie von Mitschuld. Jedoch war ich loyal gegen mein Land die USA und mochte nicht, daß mein Großvater sein Land verriet.
> Frage Es war doch in der Hand von Verbrechern.
> M. H. C. Das hat Gesine mir mit so vielen Geschichten erzählt, bis ich es freiwillig aussprach. Aber ich war dumm —
> Frage Zehneinhalb.
> M. H. C. — was ich mir nicht als Entschuldigung rechne, und ich konnte nicht denken bis hin zur Illoyalität gegen mein Land. ('Interview', p. 132)

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