CONRAD FERDINAND MEYER: AN APOLOGIA OF THE UPPER MIDDLE CLASS*

by Leo Lowenthal

Meyer's prose fiction appears at first to have nothing to do with sociological categories in either form or content. The presence of sociological information will, however, be the subject of this investigation. The question will be whether the meanings and functions noted by the sociologist could in retrospect have been intended or sanctioned by the author, and whether their effect among the readers can be traced.

The study of Meyer's concept of society is both challenging and simple: simple because all his stories are of an exclusively historical nature, challenging because the subjects of these stories are consistently taken from the more distant past, never from the present. If one considers merely the titles of his stories, one notes that they often contain the names of historical personages, such as Gustav Adolf, Pescara or Jürg Jenatsch. Otherwise they emphasize certain types of individuals — *The Saint, the Judge* — or refer to unusual situations — someone shoots from the pulpit, a monk marries. Everything is out of the ordinary, and the stories are consistently centered around an extraordinary individual.

All of Meyer's prose fiction can be considered novellas, even *Jürg Jenatsch*, which is often categorized as a novel. A novel covers the whole breadth of a network of relations, grasps the wealth of phenomena in human life and institutions, in short, "records" the world, as Zola put it. Meyer's novelistic approach, however, as even the titles indicate, is very particularly characterized by selection. The process of selection in itself would not be enough to justify sociological conclusions. The history of the novella's development in the Renaissance is closely tied to the selection of and emphasis on certain situations. In the Renaissance context, however, subject matters that already have been given a literary form by tradition are retold. Further, unusual events are also depicted in the German novel of the 19th century — by Kleist, for example. But it is characteristic of Meyer that his novellas confine themselves to certain times, characters, situations and types. In his novellas the individual is neither cradled in a basically harmonious, ordered world, as in Goethe, nor is the individual driven out in search of fulfillment. Rather, the stylization of place, time and character represents the construct that an ordinary man would like to impose upon the world.

In order to make the sociological meaning of the selection process clearer, let us look more closely at the subject matter itself. An especially fitting and clear example is provided by the story *The Amulet*. The author selects in three areas — in history, landscape and characters — until the sole object of importance presents itself. Next the time is chosen. The view is narrowed among the turbulent struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries to the especially adventurous locale of the Huguenot battles. In this manner, an episode is again chosen that ultimately centers on a certain great personality. Amid all the confrontations of the opposing groups, in the form of heated argument or bloody man-to-man combat, the author takes neither side. In regard to

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the thought process in question, this means that the contents of these great historical struggles are totally insignificant. They are only important in their role as colorful and fascinating foils for Admiral Coligny.

The choice of locale is matched by the choice of time. In this regard one might speak of the shrinkage of spatial distance. If characters travel in these stories, it is related to the off-hand tone with which a wealthy merchant speaks of his business trips. At the beginning of the third chapter, the narrator travels through Burgundy, then along the Seine to a small village outside Paris. This journey, certainly requiring days and weeks, is dispatched in three lines.[1] The only sentence relating the journey would even have had enough steam left to reach Paris, had the narrator not encountered an adventure in Melun, which already points to the true hero. For the description of Paris by a man of simple rural origin, the author has only this single line at his disposal: "The first week passed with viewing the grand city." Paris reveals its external contours only when the admiral's home and thereby the admiral himself enter the narration.

This tendency toward abbreviation of the landscape is visible also in the description of a journey that the narrator takes on Coligny's behalf: "Coligny dispatched me on a mission to Orleans where German cavalry were stationed. When I returned and entered my lodgings Gilbert [of the admiral's party] came toward me with contorted features."[2] Here, the purpose of the concentration becomes clear. The journey — described in half a sentence — begins with Coligny and logically ends with him. Time and place are not heroicized in the sense of a romantic mythology, but are styled into ornaments for the hero, for he alone is important. This reveals, thirdly, the selection of character material. Coligny rules over everything. He is both leader and hero, always superior. At the same time, he is gifted with the inscrutability of dominance, which we have yet to analyze. The first-person narrator retreats completely into the background.

Such stylization and selections can be traced throughout. Consider, for instance, the abruptly dramatic presentation of Henry's apparently final break with Becket, which disposes of every detail: "Finally, Sir Henry came to a decision. He summoned the primate before a court of his barons, had him condemned as a traitor to the kingdom, and banished him forever from his territories. But on the same day that Sir Thomas was forced to flee across the ocean like a criminal, Lady Ellenor left her husband and Windsor Castle with a cry of woe that was heard far and wide."[3]

The same heroic stylization is revealed in the composition of *Jürg Jenatsch*. It treats an episode from the Thirty Years' War, but in such a way that the milieu of a world war develops. All powers, interests and passions of this turbulent epoch are concentrated in the Swiss landscape and the figure of Jürg Jenatsch. The Reich, Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland itself purge their conflicts. Great generals and politicians lust for glory, love, greed, ambition, "fire and ice" — all can be felt in every sentence. The dynamics of the story are similar to *The Amulet*. It is constructed in individual, isolated images of greatness or stark contrasts to it.

The material provided here should suffice to illustrate that the selections are made according to a heroic concept of history. History becomes a stage for heroes, an

1. Cf. *Das Amulet* in *Sämtliche Werke in vier Bänden*, intro. by Robert Faesi, Vol. 3, p. 19. English translations are from *The Complete Narrative Prose of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer* (2 vols.), translated by George F. Folkers, David B. Dickers, and Marion W. Sonnenfeld (Bucknell University Press: Lewisburg, 1976). English references will be provided when available.
2. *The Complete Narrative, op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 61.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 334.

opportunity for the portentous games of great individuals. In *The Amulet,* a French officer plays the highest members of the Court against each other without confiding in anyone. Pescara also plays a political game. This is true even of such a seemingly innocuous story as *The Shot from the Pulpit.* Here the old general has no opportunity for heroic action but only for a successful prank. But at the end, enough light still falls on the dying hero, who in his best years was a hero of life, so that he remains the hero of this story. The people who "move the world" are those who matter.[4] Pescara lets the following phrase slip out at one point: "The finest thing in life is to move men and objects with invisible hands, and whoever has known that will long to taste nothing else."[5] For the history of heroes, time is not recorded according to centuries or epochs but according to geniuses. History becomes a hall through which the great man roams. "Anteroom" is the title of one group of poems. "God," "Pious and Impudent," "Genius," "Men" — all these titles of poetry collections reveal what is paramount — never the common, never the group. Only the hero is the endlessly varied theme of history. Therefore it is not the duty of the characters celebrated by Meyer to act as the times require. Instead, it is their great deeds that constitute time in the first place. Morone exhorts Pescara to action: "My dear Pescara, what a constellation above you and in your favor! The cause is ripe, and you, yourself, are mature! A decisive time, a desperate struggle, gods and titans, freedom rearing up against rule by force [today the world still in motion and flux, tomorrow, perhaps, freezing to lava!]. And a deed that is prepared for you and for which you were born! Does not your forming hand twitch for this deed?"[6] But Pescara does not act, and thereby "the world freezes to lava."

One could be tempted to compare Meyer to Friedrich Hebbel. They have in common not only the love of historical themes, but to a great degree also the principles by which they choose these themes from history. Hebbel's dramas tend to take place at those turning points in world history where one epoch gives way to another. Transitions from Germanic tribes to Christianity, from barbarism in Asia Minor to Greek culture, from a feudal social order to bourgeois liberalism — these are Hebbel's characteristic themes. Meyer prefers such turning points as well: Germanic tribes and the Carolingian Empire, Renaissance and Reformation, the Three Estates and Absolutism provide the background for a few of his stories. Hebbel wants to show that the individual is basically subservient to overall historical processes, even if he strives in the opposite direction. World history runs over the individual blindly, and precisely these great situations of historical conflict show that even a great man is finally crushed by the wheels of events. For Meyer, on the other hand, the historical junctures exist for the sole purpose of giving the great ones their greatest chances, to let them show what they truly are and can do. Indeed Meyer's stories express the opinion that it is the "Men" out of whom the dialectics of history arises. In this way Meyer stands Hebbel's Hegel on his head. The transformation of historical period into functions of the heroes even influences the nomenclature of chronology. A historical date is found in the first line of *The Amulet,* for instance, but there only with the significance of an autobiographical reference. A truly chronological manner of speaking in Meyer's work generally takes the form "In those days..."[7] The exclamation of a short-tempered Armbruster in the same story is also very revealing: "Leave me alone with your

4. *Die Versuchung des Percara* in *Sämtliche Werke, op.cit.,* Vol. 4, p. 159.
5. *Ibid.,* p. 184.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 205 (English Vol. 2, p. 261).
7. *Der Heilige, op.cit.,* Vol. 4, p. 75.

meaningless numbers!"[8]

This sovereignty in face of the variety of people and situations renders the true course of history a matter of indifference to the author. His access to history therefore bypasses research into sources but he takes it over in mediated form, such as provided by Gregorovius and Burckhardt.[9] Theirs is a treatment of the past compatible with his own views and appropriate as a background for heroic history. The social role of the historian passed through various stages between the end of the 18th century and Meyer's time. In the Enlightenment — Arnold Heeren, for example — historical research supported bourgeois progress. The history of states was pursued in order to refute the inevitability of Absolutism and to reveal the hollowness of its structure of domination.

During the great era of bourgeois defeat in the Romantic period, scholarly approaches to history aided in a transfiguration of the past, which could transport one out of the desolation of the present. At the beginning at least, Ranke does not seek anything in history that would be of significance to the present. He pursues instead a perception of the "past as it really was." Turning to the proletariat, historical materialism searches for laws of history in order to understand and change the present. Writings in Renaissance history in the second half of the 19th century are connected to the spread of bourgeois ideology. The history of Great Men and the discovery of the "Renaissance Man" in contemporary life provided models for contemporary rulers. For this view, the Renaissance offered welcome objects of admiration. In concrete correspondence to the bourgeois *Führerideal*, this epoch appears to be a powerful proof for a heroic concept of history.

From the standpoint of the revolutionary bourgeoisie or the proletariat, the 15th and early 16th centuries are seen primarily as the times in which secularization first met with success in European culture. The Renaissance is therefore seen as the first stage of the great bourgeois Enlightenment in modern history — indeed, this was the view of the 18th century and the Hegelian Left. The above being the case, then the works of Gregorovius and Burckhardt can be termed romantic insofar as their concept of history finds a higher reality behind the "crude and transitory facts." This higher reality is the enduring, influential and exemplary role — for better or worse — of great men. It must of course be noted that Renaissance historians, above all Burckhardt, did indeed include other, even materialistic elements. But the influence they have had, and have yet today, still lies in the direction of fascination with the Great Man. And this is the influence they had on Meyer.

One of the more interesting consequences of Meyer's heroic concept of history is its application to the relation between nature and history. The following should illustrate it as clearly as possible.

The relation between history and nature has always been topical for the philosophy of history, whether it bears the label of natural, mythical or archaic. For the triumphant bourgeois consciousness in the Enlightenment, with its stress on accumulation, nature appears as unquestionably material and physical. It is there for one-sided service to an unending enjoyment by the human community. The importance of the rise of the Third Estate lies in the fact that it made possible a direct and unembellished approach to nature, in order to further social development

8. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

9. Cf. the letter to Spitteler (1884?): "I have never looked for subjects, nor have I ever done so-called 'preliminary research.'" *Briefe C.F. Meyer,* Adolf Frey, ed. (Leipzig, 1908), Vol. 1, p. 427.

through its exploitation. Behind the concept of nature, which emerges in the French Enlightenment as something good and well-ordered, is hidden also its function as economically useful resource. It may well be that Rousseau depicts nature as both a real and a fictional historical quantity, and a natural state as a factual or conceivable historical social order. But it would be entirely beside the point to find a mythological thought construct in this, as if for Rousseau life in nature made ontological realities visible which are suppressed in a technically and organizationally structured society. On the contrary, the natural state is the way of life in which nature has an economic meaning as a practical provider subservient to human purposes. Only in a physical-chemical sense did humanity "redeem" nature with the rise of the bourgeoisie. In Romanticism, an epoch of depression for this class, the polarized confrontation of nature and man is removed. The dominating Enlightenment relation becomes its opposite. Rather than nature being the servant of historical progress, man abandons history to serve nature. The true home of humanity is seen as the ancient empire of myth, legend and a heavenly age as well as the merely vegetative quality in the world of children or in the image of the earth found in physical atlases. This submission of man to "naturalness" is seen as the very key to becoming human.

The rejection of the bourgeoisie by the late feudal and absolutistic society in the times of the Congress of Vienna is transformed by ideological magic into the bourgeoisie's rejection of a contemporary reality constituted by such hostile forces. One could even venture to suppose that in the historical school, in German philology, and in the writings of Ranke and related historians, history takes on absolute being and immutability. Such a categorical treatment permits historical reality to be treated as another "natural" element with nature itself. For even the organicism of the Romantics subscribes to a static concept of nature. Neither the idea of laws of history on the one hand, nor the organic view on the other, may conceal the fact that for both these sides of bourgeois thought nature is seen as completely given and fore-ordained. For the 18th century this certainly has ideological significance in guaranteeing the endurance of society. For the Romantics and their audience it is an emotional guarantee, within a contemptible world of appearances, to have a link to the more beautiful "reality." Only art sees "progress," as witnessed by Schlegel's concept *progressive Universalpoesie.*

Meyer does not place nature and myth before, but rather within or even beyond, history. Meyer's position can be described as follows. Gone are the battles of great warriors, whether as individuals or whole peoples. Gone is the Hero, who can bestow on human life the blessing of reality. Now heroism, the secret of history, flees to nature, or rather it takes the new morphological form of nature itself. History is not a continuation of nature, but rather nature is the continuation of history by other means. Rock and tree are the legitimate successors of Alarich, Saracens, Hohenstaufens and Caesar Borgia. Nature as well points to the grandiose, unique, victorious elements in every segment of life.

This becomes especially clear in *Jürg Jenatsch.* The disturbing conversation with Waser carries over into the gathering clouds and the darkening sky. [10] The shared journey of Jürg and Lucretia is accompanied by a sky of "a southerly blue, deep and clear."[11] Towards the end, as the hero's fate is sealed, the foehn wind is raging. [12] Shortly before the catastrophe, "pale yellow lightening tore through the low-hanging

10. *Jürg Jenatsch* in *Sämtliche Werke, op.cit.,* Vol. 1, p. 15.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 110.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 229.

clouds."[13] Nature simultaneously continues the heroic history.[14] From here the sociological line runs straight to the Stefan George Circle, where the glorification of historical singularity found its last serious expression in Ernst Kantorowicz' book on Friedrich II.

There has been no want of attempts to make a religious writer out of Meyer.[15] But neither his studies of Pascal nor his ties to Protestantism can hide the fact that his heroes are guided by neither religion nor morality. On the contrary, they are characterized by an amorality that tends toward the demonic. As we shall see, it is even misleading to speak of Meyer's heroes in this way, since what really animates the souls of his heroes finally cannot be divined. Critical analysis reveals, however, that the rule of conventions and practical moral precepts is a pale contrast to the dictates of a life of greatness.

All of Meyer's heroes meet with temptation. That is, they face conflict between overpowering personal desires and prevailing social norms. The hero resolves his conflict by surrendering as it were to his own demon and thus his own genius triumphs over conforming concepts of right and wrong. Giving way to convention becomes the sign of failure. His defeat in the battle with forces of tradition becomes, at best, a consolation provided by the historian, because it confirms the hero's character. Individuality is all that counts.

In *The Amulet*, the French admiral Coligny dictates the following letters to the Prince of Orange: "To bring about war with Spain at any price and without any delay is our salvation,' " the admiral wrote. 'Alba is lost if he is attacked simultaneously by us and by you.' .... 'My plan is the following: A Huguenot volunteer army has invaded Flanders during these last days. If this army can hold out against Alba — and this depends in great measure on your attacking the Spanish general from Holland simultaneously — then this success will move the King to overcome all obstacles and to proceed in a determined way. You're familiar with the magic of initial success.' "[16] This passage permits a look into the world of Meyer's heroes. Momentous undertakings are planned, always a daring gamble with high stakes. The French officer is engaged in high-level politics. He plays the high members of the Court against each other without confiding in anyone. He resorts to illegal means by arming irregular troops — in short, he goes right to work as any of Meyer's heroes would in the face of temptation.

This completes the process of individualizing selection: the lives of many depend on this hero and his decisions, and only thus are they worthy of the author's attention. Where history is produced by the acts of a few "big boys" — the machinations of a few figures — the author can confine himself to a small ensemble of characters. In the confusion of the Paris streets a person seldom appears with a memorable face — unless it is a hero.

The novella is formally a framed story — a tale within a tale. Even the framing device points out the central theme from the beginning. The narrator enters on the very first page,[17] or rather rides into the scene, to provide sharp contrast to a calculating

13. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

14. The poem "Die Schlacht der Baume" ("The Battle of the Trees") expresses it in similar terms. Nature is the last conservatory of the heroic, after historic diversity has failed.

15. See, for example, Walter Köhler, *C.F. Meyer als religiöser Charakter* (Jena, 1911), as well as Otto Frommel, *Neuere deutsche Dichter in ihrer religiösen Stellung* (Berlin, 1902), p. 143ff.

16. *Das Amulett, op.cit.*, p. 89ff. (English Vol. 1, p. 53).

17. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

and petty man of money, who in reality leads no life at all. The 58-year-old narrator is not an old man, but one with a strong bond to his livelier years. His memories are not pale ghosts of the past, but sharply articulated images.

The category of the image plays a considerable role in general. In Lessing's aesthetics, presented mainly in *Laokoon,* literature has primarily to do with plots that are thoroughly fitting to the chronological form of language. Presentation belongs to the realm of the visual arts and the image is banned from literature. It must be added that Lessing's spirited and exhortative *Hamburg Dramaturgy* reveals how much the variety of action in dramatic literature meant to him as a sign that change was possible in a world badly in need of it. A passage such as the following from *The Amulet* would never have been tolerated by Lessing: "I had time to observe his face, sympathetically, which had been indelibly impressed upon me by means of a very good and expressive woodcut that had reached as far as Switzerland. The admiral at that time might have been fifty years of age, but his hair was snow-white, and a feverish pink showed through his emaciated cheeks. On his powerful forehead and on his lean hands the blue veins appeared, and there was a terrible seriousness in his mien. He looked like a judge in Israel."[18] Coligny shares many traits with Jürg Jenatsch. Again, the hero is in a position of temptation. Jürg Jenatsch is a great maker of history, but he does it objectively through treason. The conventionally evil is completely vindicated as good, because it is grandiose, powerful and victorious. The decisiveness of Jenatsch is superior to the morality of Cardinal Rohan, whose trustfulness is less a virtue than a sign of weakness, deserving of defeat. Granted, even this raises Rohan into the sphere of heroic internationalism. When forced into a conflict of loyalties, his spotless good name stands above the fatherland: "The duke's hand went to his heart. He knew already, but today he was being told for the first time: he had lost his fatherland." "If it is impossible for me to be a Frenchman and a man of honor at the same time,' he remarked softly, 'then I choose the second, even if it means I am without a country.' "[19]

Pescara's *Temptation* expresses even in its title the typical situation of all Meyer's heroes. Even the virtuous Angela Borgia does not care much for virtue.[20] All conventional moral precepts are irrelevant when the men who determine the course of history confront reality: "Violence, bribery, deceit...and wicked means...rule the empires of the world."[21]

Difficult as it would be to catalogue the virtues of Meyer's characters, patriotism is certainly not among them. In a letter to his friend Julius Rodenberg, publisher of the *Deutsche Rundschau,* Meyer himself claimed to have removed all "ornament and chauvinism" from the second edition of "Hutten."[22] It has been said that for Meyer love of the fatherland was the key to the character of Jenatsch.[23] Doubtless the key to this character is instead the drive to power and domination in a personality that accepts every great gamble that comes along. The fate of Switzerland is such an opportunity, but Lucretia represents an absolutely equal alternative. This is precisely

18. *Ibid.,* p. 28ff.
19. *Jürg Jenatsch,* Vol. 1, *op.cit.,* p. 206 (English Vol. 1, p. 46).
20. *Angela Borgia,* Vol. 1, *op.cit.,* p. 316 (English Vol. 1, p. 200).
21. *Der Heilige,* Vol. 4, *op.cit.,* p. 87. Cf. Meyer's thoughts on southern German politics, closing with the remark, "You see, that is very egotistical, but isn't that true of all politics?" written to Haessel, August 5, 1866, in *Briefe,* Vol. 2, *op.cit.,* p. 6.
22. *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer und Julius Rodenberg: Ein Briefwechsel,* August Langmesser, ed. (Berlin, 1918), p. 200, August 24, 1884.
23. Robert Faesi, *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer* (Leipzig, 1925), p. 71.

what makes the story singularly intriguing, that the lover and the fatherland play equal roles in initiating Jenatsch's actions. It is even difficult to decide whether the religious conversion and betrayal of Rohan occur only for the sake of the country and not also to help win Lucretia's affections. Lucretia represents an even more intimate counterpoint to Jentasch than Cardinal Rohan. Although the spark of the chosen personality is struck in him at the last minute, Lucretia is just as much a creature of demonic powers as the beloved and despised Jürg. In Mörike's *Maler Nolten*, death is linked to the defeats of the bourgeoisie in his generation, and transitoriness is seen as the essence of life. In Meyer's story as well, death becomes a highly intensified moment amid the fullness of life. Lucretia kills Jürg Jenatsch, and we may suppose that this act is the beginning of her physical destruction as well. But this implied double murder is only the expression of heroic life. Only these two are worthy of each other, bonded to each other by fate and character, and only they have the right to eliminate each other. The solidarity of the leading international minority proves itself in this case literally to the death: "With trancelike resolution she now raised the family weapon with both hands and brought it crashing down with all her strength upon the head she loved so much. Jürg's arms fell; with eyes full of love he looked at her standing tall before him; somber triumph flashed across his face; then he collapsed heavily."[24] The same international atmosphere referred to regarding Cardinal Rohan is evident in *The Saint*. It is present as the young Armbruster consoles the half-Arabian Becket with a quotation from the Koran,[25] or as the rich rug merchant Ben Emir is introduced[26] into court society in Ferrara, or finally when the papal functionary Guicciardini praises that "great Germanic heretic Luther."[27] Against this atmosphere of internationalism, where is the glorification of patriotism in Coligny or Leubelfing or Becket or Pescara or Wertmüller? In the case of Gustav Freytag the importance of nationalism is unmistakable. The creation of a unified customs network, a policy of protective tariffs and the development of an administrative state were necessarily tied to the rise of the German liberal middle class. The upper middle class merchant and industrial interests require expansion of international relations.

Certainly, Meyer's stories are not psychological. In fact, to exaggerate only slightly, one could term them anti-psychological. That is to say, the hero is not at all susceptible to psychological interpretation. He is a lord and master, and therefore inscrutable. The inscrutability of the great ones is so great that it seems they are inexplicable to themselves as well.[28] No one can guess how Pescara will react, "as such a wall against us arose within him, just as we believed we had won his soul."[29] To his political partners as well as his own wife he is "impenetrable and his thoughts and beliefs are concealed."[30] Someone such as Don Juan is therefore all the less able to know what Pescara will do.[31] Even the author does not know what motivates his heroes: "And he [Morone] embraced the general's knee with such a fervent gesture that the latter, springing to his feet, withdrew from such adoration, but still appeared inwardly touched. Perhaps it was because his great intelligence involuntarily formed a viable whole from the hinted traces of his and Italy's possible greatness."[32] Pescara's

24. *Jürg Jenatsch*, Vol. 1, *op.cit.*, p. 256 (English Vol. 1, p. 231).
25. *Der Heilige*, Vol. 4, *op.cit.*, p. 244.
26. *Angela Borgia*, *op.cit.*, p. 244.
27. *Die Versuchung des Pescara*, *op.cit.*, p. 160.
28. Cf. Morone's exclamation, "But you know not even yourself, Pescara!" *Ibid.*, p. 211.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Cf. also p. 169, "If Pescara will not...," etc.
30. *Ibid.*,p. 184.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 212 (English Vol. 2, p. 266).

soul remains an "abyss and a mystery" to all.[33] One would expect the love-hate relation of Jürg Jenatsch and Lucretia to be a rewarding object of psychological analysis. But the author's interest in them lies elsewhere. These two are exposed to no critical appraisal at all, but rather are extremely rare and unique beings, who must be accepted as they are.

One might mention the role of chance in this context, especially in *The Saint* and *The Judge*. At times, chance functions merely as a symbolic representation of invisible interior processes. But there is also a mythic side to chance that eludes human influence as well as probing of its origins. The latter trait of the myth of greatness is indeed the impenetrable riddle of such figures. Here, again, an ideological element may be suspected. Symbols and myths devalue the process of history. Their emphasis is not on events to be taken as they are, as social reality with natural, material consequences. Instead, they have a higher purpose, and are merely functions of the singular individual and his fate.

The inadequacy or even rejection of a psychology of great individuals raises the possibility if not the demand to psychologically approach the masses, the little people, the objects of history. They can be understood without much trouble.[34] Consider the relation of the Italians to Pescara.[35] Waser, the good citizen of Zurich, is the object of psychological study in *Jürg Jenatsch*. He embodies narrow bourgeois caution and pedantry with all his categories and computations. To his mediocre mind it is even possible to envision Jenatsch "leading his troubled soul onto more peaceful paths by founding home and hearth on his Davos estates."[36] This philistine is well suited to psychological analysis. In the literal sense of the phrase, it serves him right. By reporting one of Waser's dreams, Meyer wishes to expose the petty and insignificant world he symptomizes: "In a short time Waser was stretched out on the bed trying to sleep, but sleep wouldn't come. He dozed for a moment; dream figures materialized before his eyes, Jenatsch and Lucretia, Professor Semmler and the old woman at the stove, the Moloja innkeeper and rough old Lucas, all of them seemed to mingle together in the strangest relationships. Suddenly they were all seated at a school desk. Remarkably, Semmler was lifting the huge powderhorn to his mouth as though it were the Greek musical instrument. From it came the oddest lamentations, which were greeted on all sides by peals of diabolical laughter."[37]

Not only this stuffy *Bürgermeister* but also the candidate in *The Shot from the Pulpit* tell of dreams. The latter possesses willful independence and powerfully dispatches extraordinary tasks, not as a hero but as a scared rabbit. He awakes "not covered with his own blood, but bathed in a cold sweat."[38] Hans Armbruster tells of a dream[39] he has just before the catastrophe that seems to promise a good outcome. The horizon recedes grandly when the dreams of the great are at issue. As a matter of fact, none of their dreams is reported at all. They have, figuratively speaking, no time to sleep. Dreaming is itself an element of their activity — for instance, there is reference to a "dreamlike" decision as Lucretia kills Jürg Jenatsch.[40] The enticing speech of

33. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
34. Franz Ferdinand Baumgarten's conclusion is much too simplistic: "Meyer rejected psychological analysis. . . ." in *Das Werk Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: Renaissance-Empfinden und Stilkunst* (Munich, 1917), p. 171.
35. *Die Versuchung des Pescara, op.cit.*, p. 170.
36. *Jürg Jenatsch, op.cit.*, p. 242.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 29 (English Vol. 1, p. 90).
38. *Der Schuss von der Kanzel* in *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 3, *op.cit.*, p. 105.
39. *Der Heilige, op.cit.*, p. 61ff.
40. *Jürg Jenatsch, op.cit.*, p. 256.

Morone, offering the Italian crown to Pescara, receives Pescara's retort, "Dream on, Morone!"[41] One can speak of a psychological function of dreams for the hero. One may, of course, speak of a candidate such as Rosenstock or Wacholder in a psychological, that is almost to say a mocking, way. Imagine Rosenstock transported into a novel by Stifter or Mörike. Nothing but compassion would be due a man who refuses to become a "Venetial field chaplain" to avoid leaving his vineyard.[42] But Meyer says at the same time that this "rooted man"[43] with his ties to home and fatherland, is "in spite of his youth, almost corpulent."[44] For him, "reason" is reduced to the nervous, cautious and petty aphorism of a chance participant: "Stay in the country and feed yourself well."[45]

These people and their vacuous way of life are fully condemned in the character of Krachhalder.[46] This is not merely the mocking of a single farmer and his community. Rather, it mocks any moderate way of living that is capable of enjoying the advantages of material well-being and social responsibility through balanced harmony of interests. Here is the literary predecessor of the modern petty bourgeois, a Babbit or figures from Sternheim. This is to show the mediocrity, insubstantiability and corruptibility of middle or lower bourgeois mass existence. The morally enraged Krachhalder sells out his principles for a considerable expansion of the common forest.

When one recalls Gustvav Freytag's glorification of bourgeois commerce, accumulation and ostentatious lifestyle, Meyer's position is clearly the sociological opposite. Not that Meyer is a critic of bourgeois society or that he even shows an awareness of the phenomenon of crisis as Spielhagen does in his social philosophy of consistent liberalism. Such interest and deep concern for the actual life processes of society are completely missing from Meyer. Instead, as seen from elevated command posts, all battles and skirmishes among the many who are not holders of power appear merely as illusion or as the motions of puppets to the great ones. For the upper middle-class consciousness, the order of the world is indeed produced by individuals, not by classes or by tradition. In the composition and content of Meyer's novellas, the little people, the masses, occupy an exclusively servile position. There is perhaps only one point at which the author devotes more than a few words to the broad lower strata. It is found in *Angela Borgia*. During a visit he pays to the blinded Don Giulio, Ariosto's impressions are described thus: "From remarks of that sort, the poet deduced that young Este was beginning to make a place for himself in a new stage of life, amid a class of people, different from the class to which he had belonged until this time, amid the unhappy and suffering, the deprived and disinherited, in a sphere of life subject to a different set of conditions and laws than the sphere of the voluptuous people entitled to enjoyment."[47] This passage is perhaps exceptional because *Angela Borgia* is Meyer's latest novella and, due to impending old-age melancholy, does not correspond in all respects to the rest of his prose. Still, it is interesting to note this exaggerated and historically distorted reference to a certain lower social stratum. Not only is this conglomeration of pitiable manifestations of misery not applicable to the population

41. *Die Versuchung des Pescara, op.cit.*, p. 209.
42. *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 3, *op.cit.*, p. 75.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 116ff.
47. *Angela Borgia, op.cit.*, p. 311ff. (English Vol. 2, p. 343).

of Italy toward the end of the 15th century, but the manner of referring to the "other class of people" is reminiscent of descriptions of wild tribal peoples by European explorers. This inclusion is motivated by folklore, not compassion. Similar tendencies are behind Armbruster's words, "It is one thing when kings and saints oppose each other, and another when brawlers stab and howl in our Swabian taverns."[48] Only a declassed man such as the King's son Hans can laugh so hard that the earnest narrator says, "I have never in my life heard such a depraved laugh, neither in inns nor at the market place."[49] The author's concern is for those "with command of their senses and entitled to enjoyment." To them belongs "the jewelled world smiling to itself in the mirror," as one reads a few pages earlier in the same novella.[50]

In a letter to Rodenberg,[51] Meyer refers to this central impulse, the "connection of the small life with the life and struggle of humanity." The word "small" is to be taken literally here. The little people are indeed only present when they are somehow foils for great events. We would never have heard of Hans Armbruster if his "little boat" had not taken a sudden turn "out of the channels of his own life and into the tide of a greater one."[52] The narrator of *The Amulet* would never have been noticed if his life had not fallen within the circle of the great Coligny. Petty private worries and joys mean nothing; the universally human is all too human to have a place in the life of genius. Aside from the function of the framing story elucidated earlier, in these two cases it also serves to emphasize the distance between the great and the small. The little people have no business in this world except to tell about the great ones, and in the process to reveal that they are only objects of the great. "The best of existence, beauty and strength of heart"[53] does not belong to them, they are not entitled to enjoyment. But the great are thereby also the only ones to run the risk of a tragic fall. They display "tortuous struggles and two pain-distorted human countenances," while such a small-spirited man as Burckhardt of Zurich looks only for "a few stories and personages from the life of the saint."[54] Meyer unabashedly sent his publisher Haessel the following sentence for an autobiography: "In German literature, Meyer is the representative of the historical novella and the chronicler of the forces of world history."[55] But these "forces" are basically nothing other than the strong personalities.[56] In summary, one can say of Meyer's concept of history that the formation of history depends on the deeds of single individuals. As they meet with the resistance of their adversaries, one can never predict what will develop from the conflicts.

For Meyer, nothing essentially new occurs in history. All that is important in it are the great deeds of great individuals. What kind of deeds these are, whom they serve and whom they injure is completely irrelevant. As far as we hear of the masses, they express only the pettiness of their needs and concerns. We do not need to bother with their concerns because it would not further our understanding of history if we did. For

48. *Der Heilige, op.cit.*, p. 18.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
50. *Angela Borgia, op.cit.*, p. 263.
51. December 14, 1877, in *Briefwechsel, op.cit.*, p. 11.
52. *Der Heilige, op.cit.*, p. 27.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
55. October 3, 1887, in *Briefe*, Vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 139ff.
56. In the words of Louise von Francois, Meyer "has turned his gaze to the pinnacles of life," and seeks "to portray the problems of tempestuous times and exceptional people." A. Schaer, "Betty Paoli und C.F. Meyer," in *Euphorion*, Vol. 16 (1901), p. 499.

history is the history of the struggles of individuals, not of groups protecting their interests. Economic questions, power struggles and social revolutions are left out, despite the wide range of material treated by Meyer's historical tales, and despite the fact that these stories from the Renaissance and the age of Absolutism would have lent themselves especially well to a treatment of class struggle.[57]

If we ask ourselves what ideological needs are served by such a view of history and society, there is no doubt that it is the world view of the ruling class. One can see this most readily through a negative argument. The opposite of the points just presented would be the wishes of the others, of those not in power. For them, everything depends on important changes taking place in history, especially insofar as they have meaning for the future. The "meaning" of their life does not consist of chosen deeds, but in ongoing labor, the only way to secure their existence. Daily physical, social and mental struggle for existence makes up their world. But here we are dealing with the literature of the liberal upper middle class. As one of its members, C.F. Meyer sees the world only as a chance for the "personality" to raise himself above the petty mundane worries of the little people. He is constantly preoccupied with grand designs and grand ideals.

I do not use the term "bourgeois upper middle class" as a mere economic category. True, the social stratum most likely to identify with the lifestyle Meyer depicts consists mainly of southwest German industrialists, northern German merchants, bankers and the appending intellectual circles. This 19th-century upper crust bourgeoisie has some traits in common with contemporary ruling groups, for instance, tremendous economic influence and contempt for the average existence. They also share the wider perspective of time and space and thereby are independent of moral, philosophical and religious reifications. These common elements, however, arise from contrasting situations and have different meanings. Our monopolistic upper class, unlike its liberal predecessor, is no longer part of a broad middle class, convinced of its mission in society, even though it did arise through the same process of rapid concentration and centralization. The modern economic ruling class no longer accommodates vigorous, independent small entrepreneurs, but is on the way to becoming the sole moving social force — one of the power groups now ruling all over the globe. With the ever-increasing gulf between these rulers and the rest of society, their functions and ideology have become transformed. Meyer's positive view of education, today completely antiquated, reflects a time when both individuals and society could expect real advancement by increasing their scientific knowledge. Meyer's open admiration of the religious and national nonchalance of his Renaissance Men is anachronistic now, given the organizational responsibility of the upper middle class within the larger society. The current view even tries to restrict the humanistic and revolutionary elements of the Renaissance by emphasizing the traditional. But the German upper middle class of Meyer's time and of the present does present a sociological concept that can be related to a literary work, as in the present essay, even without previous economic analysis.

Of course, a serious objection could be raised here, namely that the link between Meyer's concept of history and the ruling class of his time is improper, since he was far from a typical representative of the modern elite, but rather a carry-over from the

57. We are confident that our analysis has shown Baumgarten's view to be untenable. As he formulates it in the decisive passage of his book, "The irony of life is the atmosphere which shapes Meyer's characters. Historical man is for Meyer the ironic tool of fate and no hero. Heroes shape the world according to their own laws. The course of history for Meyer's figures is a role in which fate twists and turns their lives, and this role often becomes their nemesis." *Op.cit.*, p. 84.

dying Swiss patriciate. But since Meyer does not draw his view of society from traditional sources, his patrician background does not lead him to glorify the history of this class. Instead, he can approach social contradictions from a disinterested perspective. The speech of General Wertmüller is evidence of this, where he rejects the arrogance of aristocracy and patriciate and is proud of the simple name Müller, which receives its power not from the past, but from the extraordinary deeds of the one who bears it.[58]

The importance of Meyer's travels,[59] especially his stay in Paris, is a further example. In his biography, Robert Faesi writes of Meyer's opinion of Paris: "He had to condemn it ethically and praise it aesthetically."[60] This represents an accurate distinction. For despite his pronouncedly Protestant super-ego, Meyer still felt the grandness of bourgeois self-confidence in France. He confronted it predominantly in the Paris lifestyle of worldly elegance and the depictions of it by Balzac, Stendhal and other writers. What he found in Paris was complemented by his visit to Rome in 1858. "Come to Italy and taste of life," he wrote later in *Engelberg*. The lively image of Paris is complemented in the south by the grand style that he appreciates in Italy. His friendship with Ricasoli, the Italian statesman, and his unqualified admiration of Bismarck belong entirely to this period. In both men he found the synthesis of what his novellas preach: grandiose history, strong individual personality and extraordinary style.[61]

There are even more interesting and convincing examples of Meyer's ideological function that have as yet been largely ignored by literary history. An analysis of his correspondence, especially with Rodenberg, belies the image of the isolated, hermit-like poet and exposes it as a legend Meyer was thoroughly acquainted with contemporary political as well as social issues. He and very specific views on such issues, and his social impact is strikingly visible as well. One could sum up Meyer's politics by saying he would have belonged to the National Liberal Party as it was pursuing its cartel policy with the conservatives. This policy promoted a large united national state with a very consciously pursued and consciously economic class character. It united industrial and merchant classes with big agrarian interests and the military while maintaining a liberal cultural policy.[62] This is more or less the hallmark

58. *Der Schuss von der Kanzel, op.cit.*, p. 91. One might suppose that the relative well-being of the Swiss industrial proletariat inhibited Meyer from developing a guilty conscience, which one would otherwise expect, given his psychological make-up. But thus the rigidity of his social thought can continue undisturbed.

59. Even the eulogy in the *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* (Munich, November 29, 1898) stresses the significance of the fact that Meyer "was a well-travelled man whose material independence made most incisive studies possible."

60. *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, op.cit.*, p. 16.

61. Adolf Stern describes *Jürg Jenatsch* and its reception as follows: "As true as the historical setting appears, it was doubtless Meyer's personal experience of history through figures such as Cavour, Ricasoli and Bismarck, the greatest of all, which provided him an awareness and understanding of characters of political action who were guided by passionate yet impersonal feelings. The readers of *Jürg Jenatsch* were also unconsciously moved by this harmony between old and new atmospheres." *Studien zur Literatur der Gegenwart: Neue Folge* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1904), p. 51.

62. He had a decided distaste for the bourgeois-democratic opposition. This may also have clouded his relation with Graf Platen, of the neighboring estate. Cf. the letter to Haessel below, in *Briefe*, Vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 41, and the letter of January 29, 1889, *op.cit.*, p. 168: "I admit I am as unenthusiastic for Baron Roggenbach, who is supposed to have bought land here, as I am for Geffcken. Please in the name of Hell let Bismarck make you into a great imperial nation!" Further, after the election defeats of the Free-Thinkers in 1887 to Rodenberg, "I pity the

of the politics of the upper middle class after the foundation of the Reich. Meyer's positive view of Bismarck, with whom he would go "through thick and thin," is already known.[63] He said his main interest in Bismarck was psychological.[64] In a conflict between Bismarck and the Kaiser he speaks of being in total sympathy with the Kaiser,[65] but adds later that it may have been a grave error for the Kaiser "to give up Bismarck."[66] In this context, it is of more significance that he claims to be worried about "the young ruler sometimes, because, for example, I think Bismarck was clearly right on the social issue."[67]

This is clearly a class orientation, which can be further illustrated in other passages. After the elections in Saxony and Swabia in February 1887, he expressed satisfaction at the "defeat of socialism in the one case and sectionalism in the other."[68] He wrote to Haessel, his publisher, "Italian democrats (and democrats in general) interest me as little as they do you. In fact, in Davos I cut off short a Russian (so-called nihilist) democrat who was boring me with his verbiage."[69] One sees a similar detachment from the general populace as he writes in July 1878, the time of the Socialist Laws, "I can easily believe that things are not running smoothly out there in the Reich. Here we have had a popular veto of the Gotthard Subsidy (an unparalleled vulgarity), floods, hail, and I personally have had a complete change of servants."[70] These associations of personal and general maladies concerning the proletariat and related groups are characteristic not only of Meyer's highly individual idiosyncrasies, but of his class consciousness as well.

Aside from the exaggerated passage on the farmers from *Angela Borgia*, I know of only one other instance where Meyer made any positive reference to subservient groups. Out of concern about the printing of *Angela Borgia* due to the great Leipzig printers' strike of 1891, he wrote to his friends Wille, "The young managers are applying Draconian measures and many a poor devil who had been able to shuffle along in a big publishing house is now being mercilessly dismissed. Neither clever nor Christian."[71] Management is condemned, not out of consideration of economic justice, but out of a clear sense of self-interest.[72] His class consciousness in economic

erstwhile secessionists Forkenbeck, Bamberger, etc., but by God they deserved it." February 27, in *Briefwechsel, op.cit.*, p. 239. It is also interesting here that Meyer supported Wille's attempt to remove the passage in Heine's *Germany: A Winter's Tale* condemning the cowardice of the Prussian Junkers. Meyer called them "undignified verses." Cf. Karl Emil Franzos, "Konrad Ferdinand Meyer," in *Deutsche Dichtung*, Vol. 25 (1898-1899), p. 247, note.

63. To L.V. François, November 25, 1881, *ibid.*, p. 32; cf. also the letter to Calmberg, November 29, 1877, in *Briefe*, Vol. 2, *ibid.*, p. 232.

64. To Wille, March 1, 1886, in *Briefe*, Vol. 1, *ibid.*, p. 183.

65. To Rodenberg, March 28, 1891, in *Briefwechsel, op.cit.*, p. 297; cf. also the letter to Wille, January 16, 1891, in *Briefe*, Vol. 1, *ibid.*, p. 210ff.

66. To Wille, December 7, 1891, in *Briefe*, Vol. 1, *ibid.*, p. 220.

67. To Wille, August 28, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 207.

68. To Rodenberg, February 27, 1887, in *Briefwechsel, op.cit.*, p. 239.

69. To Haessel, October 5, 1871, in *Briefe*, Vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

70. To Haessel, June 15, 1878, in *Briefe*, Vol. 2, *ibid.*, p. 77; cf. also Meyer's lament over "the miserable state of our trade and railroads," to Meissner, April 14, 1877, in *Briefe*, Vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 270. Max Nussberger incomprehensibly identifies Meyer's German sympathies in the war of 1879 with "the century's cherished democratic ideals." *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: Leben und Werke* (Frauenfeld, 1919), p. 110.

71. To Wille, October 17, 1891, in *Briefe*, Vol. 1, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

72. Köhler, cited above, succeeds in finding in Meyer "the deepest impulse of religious socialism...forward-moving love of mankind." *Op.cit.*, p. 230ff. He naively says of Meyer's stand on social issues, "The aristocratic and proper Zuricher that Meyer remained was repelled by the raw and calloused hands of workers. One might even infer a purely aesthetic antipathy on

questions can be generally shown to be absolutely anti-revolutionary. In some places he refers to himself as conservative.[73] But this is not merely a sectarian, politically Swiss point of view, nor even a sign of resistance to German bourgeois liberalism. Rather it is another formulation of the static, comfortable upper middle class attitude.[74] His love for Germany was — "in the last analysis" — the longing for upper middle class *Lebensraum*, "the longing and the need...to belong to a larger whole."[75] He wishes he could have lived in a German city if social circles in Germany were as accessible as in Italy. If one reads the lists of recipients of complimentary copies of Meyer's works[76] or if one studies his half-aristocratic, half-upper middle class associations, one will realize that Meyer saw himself as a member of the same circles that read his works.[77]

It is unmistakable that Meyer's love of the upper middle class lifestyle led him, after France and Italy, to Germany only after the founding of the Reich. It is a kind of affinity with the splendor of power that induced Meyer for reasons of class to change his chosen homelands. In the "Authors' Album" of a German publishing house, Meyer wrote in 1881, "A Swiss writer should possess in equal degree the consciousness of his homeland's state sovereignty and the consciousness of its national affinity with Germany." In 1887 he referred to this affinity as an "immeasurable treasure" and to the strengthening of it as the "exact barometer of a thorough education."[78]

Another indication of Meyer's class consciousness is his opinion of other writers. He wanted to hold himself above the "brutal immediacy of contemporary topics." This is a very transparent ideological choice, since the atmosphere of his novellas is lacking neither in brutality nor in personal opinions on contemporary topics. But this is entirely compatible with the inattention to detail in his stories when it comes to the sufferings of the majority of mankind.[79] Therefore he was also against those artists of his time who tried to expose the brutality of contemporary topics. He was an opponent

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the part of this genteel poet of the aristocracy to anything related to 'workers.' For purely aesthetic reasons, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer would never have been able to write an *Arbeiterroman* or a social novella. That would mean alleys; he needed Renaissance palaces, the courts of sovereigns, warriors of course, but never the farmer." Köhler is doubtless correct in adding, "Socialism can therefore not count this author as one of its own." [!] *Op.cit.*, p. 230.

73. E.g., to Rodenberg, December 9, 1881, in *Briefwechsel, op.cit.*, p. 101.

74. To Haesse. September 5, 1866, in *Briefe,* Vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

75. To Rodenberg, August 23, 1881, in *Briefwechsel, op.cit.*, p. 89.

76. Cf. letter to Haessel, November 18, 1887, in *Briefe,* Vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 145ff. (a list of people who received a copy of *Pescara* with a card of dedication).

77. Cf. the description of his contact with Frau D. of the "upper bourgeoisie" to his sister in Ghent in 1857, quoted by Adolf Frey, *C.F. Meyer, Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Stuttgart, 1900), p. 89. Cf. also in this volume the importance of the relationship with François, Wille and Ricasoli. Also the letters to Wille, August 8, 1877, in *Briefe,* Vol. 1, *ibid.*, p. 157ff., and to Rodenberg, July 12, 1883, in *Briefwechsel,* p. 147. Cf. also the poetic phrase of W. Bolza: "The bitter misery of life never beat upon his door." "Keller und Meyer," in *Literarisches Echo,* Vol. 2 (1899-1900), p. 1348. Similarly, Heinrich Kraeger, *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung,* 1900, No. 12, p. 5.

78. Cf. Paul Wüst, *Gottfried Keller und C.F. Meyer in ihrem persönlichen und literarischen Verhältnis* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 6. Relevant as well is Pescara's sympathy with the Swiss, who, "lacking both leadership and the consciousness of a state, have given away what world position and foreign policy they had already won," p. 5. Cf. also the letter to Rodenberg, Easter, 1887, in *Briefwechsel,* p. 242: "...I am treating my present Holy Father [i.e., Clemens VII of *Pescara*] purposely somewhat more gently than I otherwise would, because I will stand by both Kaiser and Reich through thick and thin." See also the letter of December 9, 1881, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

79. Cf. Paul Wüst, *ibid.*, p. 37: "Meyer alone has a weakness for such beatings and brutality. When he hears or reads such things, he cries out, 'Excellent!' " Keller described with these words a trait that would become of great consequence in C.F. Meyer's art: " 'tragic desire' often, carried to the point of cruelty, an apt description employed by a later scholar."

of the naturalists because he was their class enemy. Even if Zola, Tolstoy and Ibsen might achieve a certain notoriety, whatever the German imitators did was "pure horse manure."[80] He finds only contemptuous words for Spielhagen, a very critical and radical thinker in the bourgeois sense. Spielhagen faced great obstacles, since he allegedly exploited his writing skills in Berlin and continued to do so, while Meyer in his own words was devoting himself to "grand style" and "fine art."[81]

As already mentioned, the reception of Meyer's writings corresponded to his own position. Where his stories were published was no accident. Almost all appeared initially in the periodical *Deutsche Rundschau* and were later published by Haessel. Both publishing houses, the brothers Paetel and the book publisher, counted among their clientele the highest levels of the bourgeoisie and the leading political and military circles. The *Deutsche Rundschau* especially had a thoroughly international readership among the upper crust. Rodenberg asserts correctly that "hardly another German periodical could offer such an audience as ours, an audience made up of the best of all nations. Our distribution is universal: aside from America, Russia, the Scandinavian North, Holland and England, where we caught on from the start, we have gradually even penetrated into France. . . ."[82] One can follow especially well in Rodenberg's reports the gathering of more and more of an upper middle class audience around Meyer. As *The Saint* was published, he reports the enthusiasm of the publishers who "represent the general public, a wide echo, and are themselves two highly intelligent, educated men."[83] Only a few weeks later he can already report, "Politicians and business people, men and women — they all seem to feel equally attracted by your work."[84] A notable illustration of this upper middle class audience is also given by the following anecdote: "Recently at a ball given by Postmaster General Stephan a young lady said to me, her face aglow, that she had read *The Saint* all day long and even while dressing, and that she could not get it out of her thoughts."[85] In 1883 Rodenberg, himself a well-situated intellectual, called Meyer's poems, which "go their way victoriously," a "book for home and family in his entire circle."[86] By the end of the year he is again citing "the best audience and the leading press."[87] In the next year it is mainly respected intellectuals such as Julia Schmidt, Dilthey, Hermann Grimm[88] and Preyer, "a fine and critical reader"[89] who are praising Meyer. In 1885, "distinguished art circles" join in,[90] until one finally reads, "Your novellas and your

80. For the class-conscious opinion of naturalism, the following is also typical: February 12, 1890, Meyer writes to Rodenberg, "L. Tolstoy is probably the most prominent of the literary innovators (as far as he *is* one, since his is the religious impulse of rationalistic mysticism), but *The Power of Darkness* has greatness about it." *Briefwechsel,* p. 282. On the 15th Rodenberg answers, "You are right that we must not let the naturalists or realists take Tolstoy away from us." *Ibid.,* p. 283. But Meyer hadn't asserted it at all that clearly. It is as if the two great upper middle class writers had unconsciously agreed on the enemy and his positions.

81. To Haessel, June 16, 1879, in *Briefe,* Vol. 2, *op.cit.,* p. 86.

82. July 13, 1880, in *Briefwechsel,* p. 73. Cf. here also Rodenberg's report of his latest visit to Paris where he was pleased "to find the *Rundschau* so well respected in the leading circles of science and politics. Professors and high civil servants whom I met there spoke to me of the *Rundschau* in a way that showed me how carefully they read it, and how highly it is esteemed."

83. November 13, 1879, in *Briefwechsel,* p. 59.

84. December 6, 1879, *ibid.,* p. 61.

85. February 6, 1880, *ibid.,* p. 64.

86. February 5, *ibid.,* p. 138ff.

87. December 21, *ibid.,* p. 184.

88. January 1, 1884, *ibid.,* p. 186.

89. January 4, *ibid.,* p. 187; cf. also March 13, *ibid.,* p. 188.

90. November 26, *ibid.,* p. 216.

poems already are among the indispensable possessions of all our educated people."[91] For this National-Liberal writer, "educated" is only a collective term for the upper class. This includes the "enthusiastic admirer" Geheimrat Geffcken, and the military author Max Jähns, "one of our leading general staff officers," who has Meyer's poems on his desk, so that he can be "daily strengthened and edified, as if by the view or by the air in the Alps."[92]

One might argue that it is untenable to attribute upper middle class ideology to Meyer because a heroic view of history is irreconcilable with the prevailing bourgeois liberal theory of history. Here a study of Meyer can produce an important reappraisal: in Germany, liberalism was never properly the expression of ruling class consciousness. Instead, due to economic and political conditions, large landowners, merchants, and the military formed an alliance that was eminently susceptible to heroic irrationalism. At first glance, one might have assumed that Meyer's patrician background might create an imbalance between modern bourgeois ideology and the Swiss in him. But a closer analysis shows that, on the contrary, the bourgeois-patrician mixture has been extraordinarily effective in ideologically reflecting and glorifying the alliance of the German upper classes.

91. *Ibid.*

92. January 3, 1887, *ibid.*, p. 234ff. A few references will show the close correspondence between the class-reflected reception by later ciritics, the reception by contemporary readers and Meyer's own intentions. Friedrich Dorn speaks of the "golden holiday mood" which "does not let the soft undertones of day-to-day suffering come through"; "the common man is missing from C.F. Meyer's writings," in "C.F. Meyer. Zu Seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag," in *Die Nation,* Vol. 13 (1895-1896), pp. 19, 12. K.E. Franzos finds him "fine and elegant," *op.cit.*, p. 138; the "genteel artist" is no "democratic genre painter" and has "resisted the temptation to flatter the taste of the times." To Richard Specht as well, he is a "timeless artist" to those who come to him "from the confusion and the confusing noise of the much-too-living." In *Die Zeit,* Vienna, December 3, 1898, p. 152. His art "will not reach the common readership, but will remain confined to the circle of the truly educated," in W. Bolza, "C.F. Meyer," in *Das Literarische Echo,* Vol. 1 (1898-1899), p. 419. He can "never become a writer for the growing spread of the generally educated." Adolph Stern, "C.F. Meyer," in *Westermann Monatshefte,* Vol. 43 (1899), p. 702. Franz Ferdinand Baumgarten's interpretation is familiar, which speaks in sociologically unclear terms of the "opposition of a spiritual elite against realistic art and mechanistic life." *Op.cit.*, p. 12. "Meyer was a misplaced bourgeois. . . the seductions of his artist's blood troubled his bourgeois conscience." *Op.cit.*, p. 54. Hans Corrodi says of Meyer's Novella, "it expresses, if not the outlook toward living of many people, then the 'ego' and 'world view' of a great and genteel poet," in *C.F. Meyer und sein Verhältnis zum Drama* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 118. Similar is Harry Mayne's formulation that "C.F. Meyer is not a writer for everyone," in *C.F. Meyer und sein Werk* (Frauenfeld and Leipzig, 1925), p. 337. Werner Kaegis' introduction to Ernst Walser's collection, *Geistesgeschichte der Renaissance* (Basel, 1932, p. xxx), asserts that "the novellas of C.F. Meyer were understood by few in their tragically affirmed tension between the aesthetic and the ethical life." Expanding upon Baumgarten's position, cited above, Thomas Mann attempted to interpret C.F. Meyer along the lines of his Tonio Kröger: "To be Christian, bourgeois, German. . . these are the central features of his artistry." *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin, 1919), p. 158ff. This selection from the literature will at this point be neither continued nor interpreted in detail. It should serve, however, to point out that Meyer's reception exactly corresponds to the "principle of selection" that we illustrated as his construction scheme for both form and content. We saw it again in his personal attitudes and reflected in his first readers. Selection is the glorification of the elite, but this elite is none other than the upper middle class. Its ideology can also serve as an example for imitation by other bourgeois social strata.