

OTTO WEININGER AND THE THEME OF GERMAN-JEWISH FRIENDSHIP IN GÜNTER GRASS'S *HUNDEJAHRE*

Jerry Schuchalter

Turku (Åbo)

It has become a truism of contemporary criticism that every text contains overt and covert texts within its construction, that in other words each new text moulds and fits previous texts into a new context. In Günter Grass's *Hundejahre* (1963) this is especially discernible, since Grass's novel is *inter alia* nothing short of a rewriting of a prominent German cultural narrative – namely, the narrative of friendship of two boys who grow into adulthood, one German and one Jewish. This narrative was familiar enough to broad sections of the reading public before the Second World War but disappeared from public consciousness as a result of the traumatized memories attached to German-Jewish relations emanating from the Third Reich.¹ It is possible to exhume many texts in a work of such magnitude, but one text in particular appears with surprising frequency throughout *Hundejahre* – a fact which has received surprisingly little commentary from Grass critics – Otto Weininger's

Geschlecht und Charakter (1903).² Enormously popular at the time of its initial reception, Weininger's work created a veritable sensation in *fin de siècle* Vienna. The publishing history of *Geschlecht und Charakter* reveals that it was a perennial bestseller, enjoying repeated new editions before and after the Great War. On the other hand, Weininger's book at the time Grass was writing *Hundejahre* was almost completely unknown to the majority of Grass's readers, having disappeared from the canon of popular as well as highbrow taste.³

The fact that *Geschlecht und Charakter* is virtually unknown to contemporary readers, yet enjoyed at an earlier period an enormous popularity bordering on the sensational is an important thematic element of *Hundejahre*. For Grass's seminal theme in *Hundejahre*, simply stated, is that texts mould consciousness. For example, Otto Weininger's work is referred to on numerous occasions as a "Standardwerk":

- 1 Grass criticism has noted the significance of this theme but seems to have neglected to place it into any literary-historical context. See Völker Neuhaus, *Günter Grass* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlerische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1979), 88-89. See also Hanspeter Brode, *Günter Grass* (München: Beck, 1979), 91.
- 2 The importance of Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* for an understanding of *Hundejahre* has been noted by W.V. Blomster, "The Documentation of a Novel: Otto Weininger and *Hundejahre* by Günter Grass," *Monatshefte*, 61, No. 1 (1969) 122-138. In addition Hanspeter Brode in the above-mentioned work mentions Weininger in the most obvious sense in his effect on Albrecht Amsel: "Er [Albrecht Amsel] ist Produkt des antisemitischen Druckes, den die Gesellschaft ausübt, wobei dem Buch von Otto Weininger *Geschlecht und Charakter* mit seinen jüdenfeindlichen Klischees die entscheidene Hebelwirkung zukommt." (91) A more recent study of Grass by Heidi Müller also treats Weininger *en passant* by noting, "Die Lektüre von Otto Weiningers Elaborat 'Geschlecht und Charakter' fordert noch seine Minderwertigkeitsgefühle und Kompensationsversuche, obwohl er [Eduard Amsel] - von seiner Unsportlichkeit abgesehen - Weiningers Judenbild kaum gleicht." Heidi M. Müller, *Die Jüdenarstellung in der deutschsprachigen Erzählprosa (1945-1981)* (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1984), 156. Perhaps Marc Silberman makes the most suggestive comment when writing, "Der Halbjude und Künstler Amsel übernimmt das Buch [*Geschlecht und Charakter*] als Bibel und als Inspiration seiner Kunst, weil er darin die Rechtfertigung seiner Existenz entdeckt: Vogelscheuchen als der Widerstand, womit das Anderssein die Identität konfrontiert." See Marc Silberman, "Schreiben als öffentliche Angelegenheit: Lesestrategien des Romans 'Hundejahre,'" in Manfred Durzak, ed. *Zu Günter Grass: Geschichte auf dem poetischen Prüfstand* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1985), 86-87.
- 3 The Weininger criticism is rather negligible. On the reception of Weininger in *fin de siècle* Vienna, see Hans Mayer, *Außenseiter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 118-126.

Drauf aufgeschlagen: Das Standardwerk, Sechshundertseitenwerk, Werksondergleichen, Teufelswerk, Weiningerswerk, der verkannte überschätzte gutverkaufte falschverstandene zugutverstandene, mit Randnoten väterlicherseits, mit Fußnoten wenigerseits versehene Geniestreich: "Geschlecht und Charakter", dreizehntes Kapitel, Seite 405:⁴

In the first reference to Weininger in *Hundejahre*, the narrator explains the reasons for its initial success and notes how an entire generation was moulded by its thinking:

Da schrieb im Jahre neunzehnhundertdrei ein junger altkluger Mann namens Otto Weininger ein Buch. Dieses einmalige Buch hieß 'Geschlecht und Charakter', wurde in Wien und Leipzig verlegt und gab sich auf sechshundert Seiten Mühe, dem Weib die Seele abzusprechen. Weil sich dieses Thema, zur Zeit der Emanzipation, als aktuell erwies, besonders aber, weil das dreizehnte Kapitel des einmaligen Buches, unter der Überschrift 'Das Judentum', den Juden, als einer weiblichen Rasse zugehörig, gleichfalls die Seele absprach, erreichte die Neuerscheinung hohe, schwindelerregende Auflagen und gelangte in Haushalte, in denen sonst nur die Bibel gelesen wurde. So fand Weiningers Geniestreich auch in Albrecht Amsels Haus. (HJ, 37)

Not only does Weininger's work in *Hundejahre* serve to influence an entire generation struggling with changing gender and ethnic norms, but individuals – in this case, the father of the Jewish protagonist – shapes his identity according to this text:

Dieses Standardwerk hatte seinem Vater viel bedeutet. Weininger versuchte, in zwölf langen Kapiteln, dem Weib die Seele

abzusprechen, um dann im dreizehnten Kapitel, unter der Überschrift "Das Judentum" zu spekulieren, die Juden seien eine weibliche Rasse, mithin seelenlos, erst wenn der Jude das Judentum in sich überwinde, könne Erlösung vom Judentum erwartet werden. Einprägsame Sätze hatte Eddie Amsels Vater mit seinem Rotstift unterstrichen und am Rande oftmals mit einem "Sehr richtig" versehen. Der Reserveleutnant Albrecht Amsel auf Seite 408 sehr richtig: 'Die Juden stecken gerne bei einander wie die Weiber, aber sie verkehren nicht miteinander . . . ' Auf Seite 413 hatte er drei Ausrufungszeichen gesetzt: "Männer, die kuppeln, haben immer Judentum in sich . . ." Das Schwanzstück eines Satzes hatte er mehrmals unterstrichen und, auf Seite 434, mit einem "Gott helfe uns!" versehen: ". . . was dem echten Juden in aller Ewigkeit unzugänglich ist: das unmittelbare Sein, das Gottesgnadentum, der Eichbaum, die Trompete, das Siegfriedmotiv, die Schöpfung seiner selbst, das Wort: 'Ich bin.' (HJ, 202-203)

"Einprägsame Sätze" and "immerzu Weininger" are basic motifs in *Hundejahre*, referring to those forgotten or repressed cultural products or icons that are resurrected in Grass's work. For *Hundejahre*, by repeating as in a litany the enormous importance of Weininger ("Standardwerk", "Geniestreich" – epithets that were presumably applied at the initial reception of the work) to his *Nachkriegs*-readership restores the severed dialogue, the cultural tradition that underwent a severe form of psychological censorship after the nightmare of Nazism. To understand the horrors of Nazism, then, *Hundejahre* sets as its objective the rediscovery and invocation of the missing or subterranean tradition – in this case the forgotten or repressed lore of anti-Semitism – imparting this to Grass's readers.⁵

Weininger's book is for this purpose the ideal text. Only in a few instances do we find in

4 Günter Grass, *Hundejahre* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1963), 220. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition and designated (HJ, + page number).

5 While many anti-Semitic prejudices are not so latent in contemporary Germany, (see the issues of *Der Spiegel* from January 13 and January 20, 1992 respectively), the sources of these stereotypes are missing from those books accessible to the reading public today. The books, for example, that influenced Weininger are almost unknown to the contemporary, educated reader apart from a few specialists.

German cultural production before Nazism such a comprehensive and massive assault on Jewry and its cultural and intellectual traditions.⁶ But it is not so much the content of Weininger's attack on Jewry that is significant as the point of view from which he is arguing. In his treatment of Jewry Weininger adopts the ideas and language of German idealism and Romanticism. At the beginning of his infamous chapter, Weininger, after asserting racial affinities between Jews and Africans and Mongolians (all of which would have reinforced traditional stereotypes), suddenly explains his vantage point:

Es handelt sich mir nicht um eine Rasse und nicht um ein Volk, noch weniger freilich um ein gesetzlich anerkanntes Bekenntnis. Man darf das Judentum nur für eine Geistesrichtung, für eine psychische Konstitution halten, welche für alle Menschen eine Möglichkeit bildet, und im historischen Judentum bloß die grandioseste Verwirklichung gefunden hat.⁷

Weininger defines this even more carefully when he writes, "Keine Nation und keine Rasse, keine Konfession und kein Schrifttum. Wenn ich fürder vom Juden spreche, so meine ich nie den einzeln und nie eine Gesamtheit, sondern den Menschen überhaupt, sofern er Anteil hat an der platonischen Idee des Judentums. Und nur die Bedeutung dieser Idee gilt es mir zu ergründen." (GC, 415) Indeed Weininger may have believed that he was examining the "Platonic" form of Jewry, but his readership, already programmed by centuries of anti-Semitic phobias and stereotypes, could not always be expected to observe this distinction. If anyone was capable of being a Jew, if rabid anti-Semites exhibited more "Jewish traits" than others, because "projection" was the most common human technique of dupli-

city according to the author, then the all-important marker "Jew" lost all significance. (GC, 413) Further, the reception of this work did not respond to nor acknowledge Weininger's attempt at adding complexity to the *Judenfrage*. Quite the contrary, *fin de siècle* Vienna, the immediate place of reception of the work, as the careers of Karl Lueger, Georg Ritter von Schönerer and others show, was quite intent on simplifying it.⁸ Further the reception of *Geschlecht und Charakter in Hundejahre*, since *Hundejahre* is a book about the reception of previous texts (e.g., Heidegger and Weininger), assigns the text to the cultural legacy of anti-Semitism, a legacy which insinuates itself into the lives of all of Grass's characters.

In fact, even contemporary critics have generally regarded Weininger's book as the classic example of "Jewish self-hate."⁹ The wonderful irony in *Geschlecht und Charakter* is that a precocious Viennese Jewish intellectual (Otto Weininger was only twenty three when he published his work) assumes the *persona* of the German idealist philosopher, initiating, as his Christian counterparts were fond of doing, a cultural critique of Judaism: "Der Jude ist der unfrome Mensch im weitesten Sinne. . . Alle echte innere Kultur, und und was immer ein Mensch für Wahrheit halte, daß es für ihn Kultur, daß es für ihn Wahrheit, daß es für ihn Werte gibt, das ruht auf dem Grunde des Glaubens, es bedarf der Frömmigkeit." (GC, 439) "Frömmigkeit," "echte innere Kultur," "Wahrheit," "Werte" are all direct borrowings from German idealism. But also the following argument: "Der Jude ist Individuum, aber nicht Individualität; dem niederen Leben ganz zugewandt, . . . : es fehlt ihm das wahre, unveränderliche, das metaphysische Sein, er hat keinen Teil am höheren, ewigen Leben" (GC, 436) could have – at least the language ("Individualität," "niederen Leben," "das wahre,

6 If we wanted to make a list of those anti-Semitic works which set the stage for the ideological foundation of the holocaust, we would have to emphasize above all those works that Weininger refers to: Richard Wagner, "Das Judentum in der Musik" (1850) and Houston Stuart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1898). We would also have to add Heinrich von Treitschke's "Ein Wort über unser Judentum" (1879-1880) which precipitated the *Antisemitismusstreit* of the 1880s in Germany.

7 Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung* (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1913), 412. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition and designated (GC+ page number).

8 For a very original analysis of the careers of Georg Ritter von Schönerer, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian, 1958), 43-45. Karl Lueger's career is trenchantly analysed by Allan Bullock in *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Bantam, 1961), 22-23.

9 An important early study of Weininger can be found in Theodor Lessing's work *Der jüdische Selbsthass* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930), 80-100. For a more recent treatment of Weininger and Jewish self-hate in general, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "The Throes of Assimilation and Self-Hatred and the Jewish Revolutionary," in *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 67-76.

unveränderliche, metaphysische Sein," "höheren, ewigen Leben") – been derived from any of the classic works of German philosophy.¹⁰ *Geschlecht und Charakter* is then not an aberration within the German intellectual tradition, but an integral part of the century old European condemnation of Jewry. Weininger himself makes this clear when he invokes his intellectual forbears: "Auch darf ich hier wohl auf Wagner mich berufen, den das Problem des Judentums am intensivsten, von Anfang bis zuletzt beschäftigt hat." (GC, 435) Weininger is constantly building on a tradition, criticizing, revising, amending previous utterances of earlier critics. For example, he refers to Houston Stuart Chamberlain's, *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1898), a book widely read and well received at the time of its publication, gently reproving his mentor: "Nicht also, wie Chamberlain glaubt, Mystik, sondern Frömmigkeit ist das, was dem Juden zu allerletzt mangelt." (GC, 441)

But there are also covert texts in Weininger that must have struck an immediate chord with the reader at the turn of the century that strike the present day reader as curious or even repugnant. As George L. Mosse and Fritz Stern have clearly shown, anti-Semitism was an ideology intimately linked (though not exclusively) with those intellectuals or those who entertained intellectual pretensions who developed their ideology of anti-modernity, an ideology which was widely shared or at least implicitly understood by their readership, which generously and often indiscriminately borrowed from the traditions of romanticism, historicism, and idealism.¹¹ When Weininger writes,

Jüdisch ist der Geist der Modernität. . . Unsere Zeit, die nicht nur die jüdischeste, sondern auch die weibischeste aller Zeiten ist; die Zeit, für welche die Kunst nur ein Schweiß Tuch ihrer Stimmungen abgibt, die den künstlerischen Drang aus den Spielen der Tiere abgeleitet hat; die Zeit des leichtgläubigsten Anarchismus, die Zeit ohne Sinn für Staat und Recht, die Zeit der Gattungs-Ethik, die Zeit der seichtesten unter

allen denkbaren Geschichtsauffassungen (des historischen Materialismus), die Zeit des Kapitalismus und des Marxismus, die Zeit, der Geschichte, Leben, Wissenschaft, alles nur mehr Ökonomie und Technik ist; die Zeit, die das Genie für eine Form des Irrsinns erklärt hat, die aber auch keinen großen Künstler, keinen einzigen großen Philosophen mehr besitzt, die Zeit der geringsten Originalität und der größten Originalitätshascherei. . . (GC, 452)

he assumes the voice of a Julius Langbehn, perhaps the most exemplary of those prophets of anti-modernity, whose *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (1890), published only thirteen years before Weininger's work and within the first two years of its initial appearance reprinted in over forty editions, reflected a powerful, if not endemic undercurrent in German culture. With Langbehn as with Weininger anti-Semitism played a pivotal role in defining an escape from the modern malaise: "To him [Langbehn] it had become an article of faith that Jews and modernity were one, and the fury of his anti-Semitism sprang from his resentment of everything modern."¹²

Weininger's work is then an integral part of a significant complex of beliefs and values within German culture. His work, however, is also uncannily reflected in later, even less moderate outgrowths of anti-Semitism. When Weininger writes,

Im Juden liegt zunächst unleugbar eine gewisse Agressivität: nicht durch den großen Eindruck, den andere auf ihn hervorbringen, wird er rezeptiv, er ist nicht suggestibler als der Arier; sondern er paßt sich den verschiedenen Umständen und Erfordernissen, jeder Umgebung und jeder Rasse selbsttätig an; wie der Parasit, der in jedem Wirt ein andere wird, und so völlig ein verschiedenes Aussehen gewinnt, daß man ein neues Tier vor sich zu haben glaubt, während er doch immer derselbe geblieben ist. Er assimiliert sich allem und assimiliert es so sich; und er wird hierbei nicht vom

10 For an excellent summary of German idealism, historicism, and romanticism, see Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), especially chapter 2, "The Mandarin Tradition in Retrospect," 81-127.

11 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) and George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

12 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 142

anderen unterworfen, sondern unterwirft sich so ihm. (GC, 436-37)

heute und jederzeit aufgeschlagen werden kann: . . . (HJ, 38)

he could be writing the commentary for the widely shown National-Socialist film, *Der ewige Jude* (1938). The Jew as monster, as fiend, so carefully cultivated by the *Stürmerpresse*, finds its antecedents here. The principal metaphors ("Parasit", "Wirt", "jede Umgebung und jeder Rasse anpassend") borrowed from biologism, from pseudo-Darwinism, already adumbrate beliefs entertained by later exponents of the volkish movement in Germany who conjured up images of the organic, racially homogeneous body politic or community, of which the Jew could only undermine or infect. The image or popular belief of the Jew as chameleon, as a demonic poseur donning different masks and guises, inhabiting a *demimonde* world of conspiracy and corruption is also perpetuated in Weininger's *Standardwerk*.

In *Hundejahre* Weininger's text then serves as an important link in a tradition that was to find its consummation in the self-styled *Götterdämmerung* of the *Führerbunker* and Auschwitz. In the first reference to *Geschlecht und Charakter* we find that it has become a cultural artifact in the young Jewish boy's existence – omnipresent and implicitly accepted as an intrinsic part of the cultural environment.

Eduard Amsel erbt zur Zeit der scharften Gesetze – . . . – das Geschäft und Vermögen, Haus und Inventar, so auch ein Regal Bücher: Preußens Könige – Preußens große Männer – der Alte Fritz – Anekdoten – Graf Schlieffen – Der Choral von Leuthen – Friedrich und Katte – Die Barbarina – und Otto Weiningers einzigartiges Buch, das Amsel, während die anderen Bücher nach und nach verloren gingen, fortan mit sich trug. Er las auf seine Art darin, las auch die Randnotizen, die sein turnender singender Vater gemacht hatte, rettete das Buch über schlimme Zeiten hinweg und sorgte dafür, daß es auf Brauxels Schreibtisch

In effect *Hundejahre*, by quoting large excerpts from Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter*, becomes a palimpsest, allowing the reader to unravel a whole array of previous texts. However, not only does it permit the anti-Semitic text to be rendered accessible; it also enables the anti-Semitic tradition to be examined relationally through the foremost layer of the palimpsest – the narrative of *Hundejahre*. Hence just as *Geschlecht und Charakter* serves as an important link in perpetuating the tradition of anti-Semitism by reviving and reinterpreting the texts of Wagner and Chamberlain, so does *Hundejahre* continue this tradition, however, pursuing a different intention, viz, to articulate that which has been allowed to slip into that area of culture which has now become silent and traumatized, in other words, devoid of visible signs. As a result *Hundejahre* creates the possibility for the text to be reopened at any time. The themes of anti-Semitism and responsibility and guilt once again are allowed to return to consciousness.¹³

Hundejahre then paradoxically attempts to refute the tenets of anti-Semitism by restoring the subterranean tradition, demonstrating by means of one eccentric work the enormity of the anti-Semitic heritage. For *Geschlecht und Charakter*, as reinterpreted by Grass, is a book filled with essentialist doctrines. The Jew is devoid of a soul; the Jew is not heroic; the Jew does not sing. The list of attributes allegedly belonging to Jewry is rendered absurd and comical to the modern reader, yet within the context of *Hundejahre* and the infinitely larger context of German history receives a profound pathos. The tradition of anti-Semitism of course exists for the modern reader, but placed against Weininger's anti-Semitism as mediated by Grass seems already reduced to absurdity. Further the fact that the two Jewish protagonists, Eddie Amsel and his father, construct their identities on the basis of Weininger's text and consciously attempt to refute Weininger through Weininger's own credo of "Überwindung" reveals the tragic effects of anti-

13 Marc Silberman also notes the importance of the reader as a structure in understanding *Hundejahre*: "Das Spiel des Ineinanders und Miteinanders, die sogenannte Intertextualität, wird von Grass meisterlich konstruiert, damit der Leser veranlaßt wird, einen Lemprozeß durchzumachen. Gleichzeitig wird dieser Leser im Text selbst als Rezipient entworfen und manipuliert. . . Der Leser trägt die Verantwortung, daß es nicht [the apparent chaos of the narrative] dabei bleibt." In another pertinent comment, Silberman writes, "Grass zielt nicht darauf hin, Frieden mit seinem Publikum zu schließen, sondern er hat vor, in seinem Roman eine ästhetische Lösung für ein politisches Problem zu finden: Wie erinnert man sich in einer vorgefertigten Welt?" See the essay previously cited, "Schreiben als öffentliche Angelegenheit," 82-83.

Semitic texts on its victims.¹⁴ But there is still another element suggested here. Not only are the characters "deformed" by their culture; they are also capable of altering and hence refuting the cultural text prescribed for them. In *Hundejahre* the essentialist doctrine is rewritten: the Jewish character is genuinely artistic; he is capable of true friendship; he [the father] even serves in the armed forces on the side of the German Empire – all are new thematic entries to the cultural narrative of anti-Semitism.

I. Itzich and the Paradigm of German-Jewish Friendship

Weininger's work then serves as both the text and the context of anti-Semitism in *Hundejahre*. But it also, without Grass explicitly stating it, provides a link with Grass's principal theme – German-Jewish friendship. *Geschlecht und Charakter* posits the inherent inability of the Jew to sustain genuine friendship. This is explained by the argument that the Jew lacks an "intelligiblen Ich" (GC, 418), "ein Bewußtsein eines Selbst," (GC, 418) in other words, the Jew lacks a soul. According to Weininger, Jewish textual tradition also confirms this deficiency:

Wie mag man übrigens an eine historische Erzeugung des Judens denken, da doch bereits das Alte Testament sichtlich zustimmend davon spricht, wie Jakob, der Patriarch, seinen sterbenden Vater Issak belogen, seinen Bruder Esau hinters Licht geführt und seinen Schwieger Laban über-vorteilt hat? (GC, 420)

Curiously enough Weininger also – and this is also recorded and commented upon in *Hundejahre* – takes up the question posed by Richard Wagner of the similarity of the British and the Jews. (GC, 432-33) But in Weininger the main dichotomy centers around the German or "Aryan" as embodying heroic values and the Jew embodying anti-heroic values or those values associated with the merchant. Taking the familiar romantic-volkish standpoint, Weininger avers,

"Der Jude aber glaubt nichts, weder in sich noch außer sich; auch im Fremden hat er keinen Halt, auch in ihm schlägt er keine Wurzeln gleich dem Weibe. Und nur gleichsam symbolisch erscheint sein Mangel an irgend welcher Bodenständigkeit in einem so tiefen Unverständnis für allen Grundbesitz, und seiner Vorliebe für das mobile Kapital." [italics mine] (GC, 438) It follows then almost logically in Weininger's conception that because Jewry is devoid of a spiritual capacity ("Einfalt des Glaubens" (GC, 442)), because the Jew is incapable of being heroic or creative, "flüchtet er ins Materielle; nur daher stammt sein Geldgier: er sucht hier eine Realität und will durchs 'Geschäft' von einem Seienden überzeugt werden – der einzige Wert, den er als tatsächlich anerkennt, wird so das 'verdiente Geld'." (GC, 444)

In his description of so-called "Jewish materialism" as the absence of all those virtues and values commonly attributed to *Kultur*, Weininger betrays his debt to another text that plays a central role in *Hundejahre*: "Aber dennoch ist er [der Jude] nicht einmal eigentlich Geschäftsmann: denn das 'Unreelle', 'Unsolide' im Gebaren des jüdischen Händlers ist nur die konkrete Erscheinung des der inneren Identität baren jüdischen Wesens auch auf diesem Gebiete." (GC, 444) Weininger's "jüdische Händler" is the theoretical construct of a stock character that had already captured the imagination of Central Europe, finding expression most notably in popular culture, especially in one novel in particular, which was reprinted again and again, becoming perhaps the most popular novel in nineteenth century German literature: Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855).¹⁵

But the stock character or type of the "jüdische Händler" also belongs to the subterranean tradition which *Hundejahre* seeks to exhume that is known by a particular name or imprecation which is equally taboo, almost totally effaced from the memory of *Hundejahre*'s contemporary postwar audience--both from the consciousness of the characters in the novel as well as from the potential reader of Grass's novel. In Walter Matern's *Fernsehdiskussion*, the narrative of culture is transplanted to a new medium, where the past

14 This is already noted and explored by Albrecht Goetze in *Pression und Deformation: Zehn Thesen zum Roman HUNDEJAHRE von Günter Grass* (Göppingen: Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, 1972), 47-48, whereby Goetze appears to place special emphasis on the deleterious influences of totalitarian systems on the individual.

15 For an analysis of the effect of *Soll und Haben* on nineteenth century readership, see George L. Mosse, "Literature and Society in Germany," in *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 21-51.

can be rendered in a new form (even if this is treated parodically in *Hundejahre*), allowing the name *Itzich* or *Itzig* to appear. In Matern's live *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, he does not seem to remember how he had insulted his friend Eduard Amsel when he became angry, but finally after being threatened with public exposure, he reveals the taboo term. The term, *Itzig* or *Itzich*, must, however, be clarified, since it lies outside the audience's consciousness:

Walli S: Itzig, zumeist mit weichem g, doch nicht selten mit hartem ch ausgesprochen, hat sich aus den bei den Juden häufigen Vornamen Issak und Jizchak entwickelt und findet als verächtliche Bezeichnung der Juden, etwa von der Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts an Verwendung. Vergleiche auch Gustav Freytag "Soll und Haben", ferner das erst im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert vom Volksmund geprägte Spottliedchen . . . (HJ, 606)

Hundejahre has thus added to the knowledge present in the German *Duden* - the official source of memory of the German language:

Itzig [itsic], der; -s, e [nach dem männlichen Vorn. Issak. hebr. Yitzhak (ugs. abwertend): *Jude*: Der ... Groth war ein Mitesser in der großen krummen Nase eines gewissen Blumenthal gewesen, der Lakai von diesem I. (Kant, Impressum 50).¹⁶

What is surprising here is that the *Duden* cites as the source of the term *Itzig* Hermann Kant's novel first published in 1972. *Hundejahre* then resurrects historical memory, inserting that which is missing, returning the repressed to its rightful and necessary place. The link from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present is reestablished.

The resurrection of the past proceeds further in *Hundejahre*. Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* and Günter Grass's *Hundejahre* both contain the name *Itzig* with the important difference that in Freytag's work *Itzich* is the permanent and recognized attribute of the Jewish character and in Grass, it has lost its essentialist character, becoming a term of aspersion which is increasingly called in question as the novel progresses. In general in *Hundejahre* the category *Jude* is slow-

ly dismantled. In the second reference to Albrecht Amsel in *Hundejahre*, the narrator writes, "Natürlich war Albrecht Amsel kein Jude", kann er jetzt, mit gleichem Recht - denn beliebig ist alle Herkunft - überzeugen wollen: Natürlich war Albrecht Amsel ein Jude. Einer alteingesessenen Schneiderfamilie aus Preußisch-Stargard in Richtung Schneidemühl, Frankfurt an der Oder, Berlin verlassen müssen-- . . ." (HJ, 36) The refrain "Albrecht Amsel war 'natürlich' kein Jude" (HJ, 39) is further called in question when Albrecht Amsel is described:

ob er als getaufter Jude oder getaufter Christ sonntags in der Fischerkirche zu Bohnsack saß; Albrecht Amsel, der rührige Händler vom Weichselufer, ein, nebenbei gesagt, breitschultriger Mitbegründer des Turnvereines Bohnsack 05 e.V. und stimmstarker Bariton im Kirchenchor, brachte es an den Ufern der Flüsse Somme und Marne zum mehrfach dekorierten Reserveleutnant und fiel im Jahre siebzehn, knappe zwei Monate vor der Geburt seines Sohnes Eduard, nahe der Festung Verdun. (HJ, 31)

In a few sentences the narrator has amended Weininger's text and the text of anti-Semitism in general. The so-called essentialist categories of Judaism have been ironically altered: Amsel - the father - is heroic, sings, and dies for his country or fatherland - all attributes which Weininger denies Jewry.

Soll und Haben then looms in the background in *Hundejahre* as the second and considerably more significant anti-Semitic text in its effect on moulding popular attitudes and prejudices. However, except for the one allusion to this novel and the significance of the name *Itzich*, there is little that immediately evokes associations with Freytag's work. Yet the general topos of a Jewish boy and a German boy growing up as friends on the Eastern frontier with Poland and the Slavic world provides the narrative frame for an entire tradition of anti-Semitic texts. As Hans Mayer writes, the theme of "parallel lives" was a recurrent motif and narrative structure in German fiction dating back to the sixteenth century. This motif assumed various nuances from the virtuous burgher son and the effete aristocrat to the good brother and bad brother, finally culminating in nineteenth century fiction with the virtuous Ger-

16 See *Duden: Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1977), vol. 3, 1371.

man and the treacherous Jew occupying this contrapuntal scheme.¹⁷ The theme of *Aufstieg* and *Abstieg* is of central importance here, with the virtuous German exhibiting all the proper bourgeois values and finding his niche around home and *Comptoir* while the Jewish rogue ultimately transgresses these norms and suffers then a "bürgerlichen Todt." This charming tale would not be of any further importance, Meyer notes, if it didn't illuminate a larger cultural and historical tradition – a tradition that Grass, of course, is acutely aware of – that was based on a novel and perhaps specifically German response to contemporary developments:

Diese gesellschaftlich unreife Epik lebt aus einer dreifachen Animosität, die sie mit vielen deutsche Lesern teilt. Feindschaft gegen die moderne Gesellschaft mit ihren modernen bedrohlichen Proletariat. . . . Feindschaft gegen den aufgeklärten bürgerlichen Intellektuellen sodann. Judenfeindschaft schließlich, die alles in sich einbegreift: Großstadt also Wurzellosigkeit; Aufklärung also Glaubenslosigkeit; Gleichberechtigung also Ernstnehmen der bürgerlichen Revolution und Emanzipation. So wird der ideologische Prototyp einer Freund-Feind-Relation geschaffen: der jüdische großstädtische Intellektuelle, den man je nachdem, pejorativ als Asphaltliteraten, Kaffeehausliteraten, schließlich als Kulturbolschevisten abqualifiziert. sein Gegenspieler ist, abermals je nachdem, der solide deutsche Kaufmann, der Hungerpastor, der Dorfschulmeister, der tapfere Offizier, der von Sorge um das 'Volk ohne Raum' erfüllte Kolonialpolitiker in Südafrika, der Cornelius Friebott seines Romanerfinders Hans Grimm.¹⁸

The topos of German-Jewish friendship then comprises a variety of motifs, all of which are initially or traditionally based on the structural characteristic of *Andersartigkeit*. The opposition also established in Weininger between "Arier" and "Jude" (which can only be resolved through "Überwindung") reveals itself in the first motif which clearly identifies the topos – the

motif of the *Schutzfreund*. Obviously this evokes associations with the *Schutzheilige* and *Schutzengel* – motifs derived from other traditions and genres – with the difference being that the little Jewish boy enjoying the protection of his Christian friend in *Soll und Haben* is not worthy of this beneficence. In Freytag's novel Veitel Itzig's appearance is juxtaposed and negatively contrasted with the word "edel" after the word "edel" has left the hero Anton Wohlfahrt's lips as soon as Anton has left the idyllic environs of Baron von Rothsattel's castle and entered – as if being expelled from paradise – the more profane setting of the dusty road, where he meets Veitel, who is equated with the city and its urban corruptions. The relationship of the two young men is then summarized in the following way:

Anton hatte in früherer Zeit Gelegenheit gehabt, durch tapferen Gebrauch seiner Zunge und seiner kleinen Fäuste den Judenknaben vor Mißhandlungen mutwilliger Schüler zu bewahren und sich das Selbstgefühl eines Beschützers der unterdrückten Unschuld zu verschaffen. Namentlich einmal in einer düsteren Schulszene, in welcher ein Knackwürstchen benutzt wurde, um verzweifelte Empfindungen in Itzig hervorzurufen, hatte Anton so wacker für Itzich plädiert, daß er selbst ein Loch im Kopfe davontrug, während seine Gegner weinend und bluttrüchtig hinter die Kirche und selbst die Knackwurst auffaßen.¹⁹

In *Hundejahre* Grass also describes this *Schutzfreund* relationship:

Diesen Prügeleien und nachfolgender Konterfeis vorangegangener Prügeleien bereitete Walter Matern ein Ende. Er, der geraume Zeit lang mitgeprügelt, sogar das Wörtchen 'Itzig' absichtsvoll absichtslos eingeführt hatte, ließ eines Tages, womöglich, weil er am Strand eine zwar zerfledderte, dennoch blindwütig umschlagende, ihm nicht unähnliche, ihn vielmehr verneunfachende Vogelscheuche entdeckt hatte, mitten im Prügeln seine Fäuste sinken, . . . ; den übriggebliebenen Peinigern

17 Hans Mayer, *Außenseiter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 381-91.

18 Hans Mayer, *Außenseiter*, 384-85.

19 Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben* (Berlin: TH. Knaur Nach f., 1923), 24. All further citations will be taken from this edition and designated with SH + page number.

Amsels setzte er zu, tat das so hingegeben und unter gleichmäßigem Zähneknirschen, daß er lange in die weiche Summerluft hinter Folcherts Schuppen boxte, obgleich niemand außer dem blinzelnden Amsel dem Schuppen verblieben war. (HJ 42-43)

Comparing these two passages, we note that the motif has undergone specific changes. In the first place, in *Soll und Haben* the name *Itzich* is an indelible attribute of the young Jewish boy as inherent and permanent as any Christian name, providing a cue for the reader to recognize automatically that this is a Jewish protagonist (the name *Itzich* is equated with Jew), conjuring up all the stock characteristics and images attached to this motif within the culture and then allowing the standard array of negative characteristics to unfold in the narrative which are already known and tacitly accepted by the reader. Veitel is "unedel," "frech," physically unattractive, "einem Gendarmen ungleich interessanter sein mußte als anderen Reisenden." (SH, 24) Infinitely more clever and experienced in the dubious ways of the world, Veitel *Itzich* is also capable of taking advantage of the "humanity" of his Christian friend. He is also, as in Weininger's description, devoid of deference – an important attribute with which the German hero is endowed. Unlike Anton Wohlfahrt, who religiously accepts class distinctions as an unchallengeable given of the universe, Veitel openly expresses his desire to acquire the Baron's castle and enter into this paradisiacal state:

Tausendgüldenkraut heißt das Kraut, womit man vieles kann machen in der Welt," erwiderte Veitel, "aber wie man es muß machen, daß man auch als kleiner Mann kriegen kann so ein Gut, welches nur wenige haben. Wer das Geheimnis hat, wird ein großer Mann, wie der Rothschild, wenn er lange genug am Leben bleibt.(SH, 26)

A variety of familiar motifs and images rooted in German culture emerge in this passage. Veitel the Jew evokes associations with Mephistopheles – an old motif reaching back to the Middle Ages, which closely connected Jews with the devil and ritual murder and the desecration of the Host – who tempts the innocent Christian youth with Faustian visions of power and wealth. But Veitel also represents a new motif for the nineteenth century – the specter of insurrection, the Jacobin, communist agitator, representative of the mobocracy – who epitomizes the *Auf-rührer*--in other words, the terror of the German propertied classes, whose wretched goal is to topple the existing social order – a motif that was frequently used to awaken the anxieties of the bourgeois reader in the nineteenth century. Coupled with the Mephistopheles motif and the Jacobin agitator, was the motif of the cabal. Much of nineteenth century thought was focused on conspiracies, and it took no great leap of the imagination to connect the Jew as devil and the Jew as Jacobin with the idea of a conspiracy threatening to destroy the essence of German nationhood and German *Kultur* – a kind of black magic cause at the root of the incomprehensible, dehumanized, technicized modern world.²⁰

In Hundejahre Eduard Amsel, the Jewish boy, is suddenly free of all those identifying markers that allegedly define the essence of Jewishness, except for the curious red hair which seems to have been a favorite characteristic of Jews in German literature.²¹ The name *Itzig* is introduced haphazardly and arbitrarily as an additional means of persecution without any legitimation or justification, since Amsel has not behaved in a way recognizable to the reader generally regarded as typical of Jews. But Amsel is distinguished from his earlier prototype in the sense that while he can be unfairly and arbitrarily defined by his persecutors, he also possesses the power to define and expose his persecutors. Through his "scarecrows," Amsel succeeds in making the Christian boy – Walter Matern – aware of his unjust behavior, thereby suggesting

20 Hannah Arendt writes, "It is well known that the belief in a Jewish conspiracy that was kept together by a secret society had the greatest propaganda value for antisemitic publicity, and by far outran all traditional European superstitions about ritual murder and well poisoning." See *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 76.

21 A very recent study of the image of the Jew in German literature mentions the significance of the red haired Jew: "Darin wird auch wiederholt die alte osteuropäische Vorstellung hervorgehoben, der Anblick eines rothaarigen Juden bedeutete Unheil. Diese spielt in der Novelle eine entscheidene Rolle. Der Überlieferung nach soll Judas Ischariot rothaarig gewesen sein." The figure of the red-haired Jew, Frank shows, appears frequently as a motif in the fiction of the Weimar Republik. See Margit Frank, *Das Bild des Juden in der deutschen Literatur im Wandel der Zeitgeschichte: Studien zu jüdischen Gestalten und Namen in deutschsprachigen Romanen und Erzählungen, 1918-1945* (Freiburg: Burg Verlag, 1987), 156.

that the persecuted through art also have access to determining the cultural signs and symbols of society, thus sharing in the societal representation of reality.

The theme of the irreconcilable opposition of *Anstand* vs *Gemeinheit* (*Anstand*=German hero; *Gemeinheit*=Jewish rogue), a cultural given in *Soll und Haben*, is profoundly altered in *Hundejahre* since Matern belongs to the persecutors – the nobility and selflessness traditionally associated with the Christian hero in German fiction have disappeared to be replaced by a randomness of behavior – a sporadic violence that erupts at various times in the novel. But also the standard dichotomy of *Geld* and *Geist* is revised in *Hundejahre*.²² In *Soll und Haben* the German hero is morally superior to his Jewish counterpart. He is imbued with various forms of reverence: reverence for the past, reverence for the group or firm of equal members within a carefully stratified hierarchy, reverence for class distinctions and traditional societal structures, reverence for honest and legitimately earned money.²³ In *Hundejahre*, however, the roles are reversed. Amsel becomes the artist and Matern becomes his *Geldmann*:

Nicht Amsel kassierte. Walter Matern hatte, während Amsel gleichgültig tat, den Kaufpreis zu nennen, den Kauf durch Handschlag nach Viehhändlermanier zu besiegeln und die Münzen einzustreichen. Zudem war Walter Matern für den Transport der verkauften wie die ausgebliebenen Scheuchen zuständig. Er geriet in Abhängigkeit. Amsel machte ihn zum Paslack. Die Geschichte mit dem Taschenmesser war solch ein ohnmächtiger Versuch; den Amsel blieb ihm, so kurzbeinig dicklich er

durch die Welt kugelte, immer voraus.(HJ, 72)

This is not, however, the "Abhängigkeit" of the devious Jewish usurer and the gullible Baron von Rothsattel in *Soll und Haben*. Amsel and Matern's relationship is, "wie der liebe Gott und der Teufel, dergestalt ineinander vergafft, . . ." (HJ, 73) Instead a new element has emerged in this motif – that of the *Blutsbrüder*. Amsel and Matern are linked together by blood. The irreconcilable differences between German and Jew have been replaced by another possibility – the bond of love.

The *Blutsbrüder* motif appears in the crucial catacomb scene in the Trinitätskirche, where Matern and Amsel uncover a skeleton which Matern assumes may be that of his famous ancestor. The responses of the two boys evoke at first reading associations of Anton Wohlfahrt and Veitel Itzig. Matern is filled with awe, with reverence for the dead, with a sense of sacrilege at entering such a sacred sanctum. Amsel, by contrast, is devoid of feeling, looking at the skeleton as if it were an object of scientific inquiry. The image of the Jew, as defined by Weininger, lacking in piety, in spiritual depth, coldly rational, in short, "seelenlos" seems to be invoked here. Finally when Matern, again resorting to violence, knocks his friend down, cursing him with the expletive *Itzich*, the entire Freytag motif seems to be resurrected. But Grass is intent on redefining the motif. The old dichotomies are no longer valid. As Siegfried Jäckel writes,

Von solch nationaler und christlich-religiöser Gebundenheit ist Amsel frei; deshalb regt sich in ihm kein Gefühl beim Anblick des Skelettes, sondern er steht ihm mit sachlicher Interessiertheit gegenüber, un-

22 In his detailed discussion of character in *Hundejahre*, Michael Harscheidt notes the change in Grass criticism from assessing Amsel-Matern as "complementary" figures to treating them as "antagonistic" characters. Harscheidt himself, responding to Grass's own artistic credo of "ambivalence," perceives the characters as fragile, contradictory constructs: "Den Figuren haftet also eine gewisse 'Brüchigkeit' und 'Unwirklichkeit' an, was sich gelegentlich schon an ihre Gestaltung zeigte . . ." (519). Matern, according to Harscheidt, is defined by a kind of "homogene Ambivalence," comprising such motifs as Cain, Judas, and Hitler. (520) By contrast, Amsel is characterized by a "heterogene Doppeldeutigkeit," comprising such motifs as "Christus-Kapitalist-Heiliger." (563-564) See Michael Harscheidt, *Günter Grass: Wort Zahl Gott. Der phantastische Realismus in den Hundejahren* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1976). This would tend to support the thesis that Grass was attempting to redefine traditional narrative patterns and give them a new interpretation.

23 J. Schulte-Sasse and R. Werner, in discussing the works of Marlitt, note the importance of the concept of "das ganze Haus" as a means of elucidating the societal model governing the ideological underpinnings of much of nineteenth century German fiction. Schulte-Sasse and Werner explain this symbol in the following way: "Dann ist dies Ausdruck jener Anfälligkeit für ein antimodernes Denken, für konservative Sehnsüchte nach einer vorindustriellen, ja selbst vorbürgerlichen Gesellschaft, wie sie vor allem seit der Mitte des Jahrhunderts immer wieder artikuliert wurden." The *Comptoir* in *Soll und Haben* presents an interesting paradox of a mercantile firm that is at the same time its very opposite—an organic community. See *Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977), 181.

voreingenommen, d.h., hier frei von Emotionen. Demgegenüber ist sein Freund Matern eben diesen Gefühlen, die sich bei ihm bis zu Emotionen steigen; und das ist wiederum das Motiv für sein Verhalten, für das Anwenden von Gewalt. . . Darin hat man wohl die Grundmotive im Verhalten der Freunde zu sehen: Auf der einen Seite die Gewaltanwendung bedingt durch nationale und christliche Emotionen andererseits die Vorurteilslosigkeit des Juden, der von Gefühlen und Emotionen frei, nichts als die Sache selbst, in diesem Fall die Darstellung der Angst durch den Bau seiner Scheuchen im Blickfeld haben kann. Damit hat man zugleich das Heldentum Amsels, für die Besonderheit seiner Person und seiner Leistung gefunden.²⁴

Grass has accomplished – in other words – nothing short of redefining the motive of German-Jewish friendship, while at the same time standing Weininger on his head, placing a positive valuation on those values that were once defined as negative and conversely assigning a positive value to those attributes traditionally associated with the Jewish villain. For example, Amsel's detachment from generally accepted norms, his cool appraisal of existing realities is no longer seen as a Heine-like irreverence and lack of genuine feeling; on the contrary, this detachment is a necessary pre-requisite for the preservation of one's integrity in view of threatening ideologies, corrupt institutions, and deceitful discourse. On the other hand, Matern emerges as the debased version of the German hero. His sensibility is sentimental and unconvincing. His depth of feeling is reduced to mere posturing and mindless violence. This is illustrated by his constant ideological shifting, moving from being a member of the K.P.D. to the S.A. to his frenetic odyssey all over divided Germany – East and West, which the narrator then explains, "Ein leerer Schrank voller Uniformen jeder Gesinnung. Ich war rot, trug braun, ging in Schwarz, verfärbte mich: rot." (HJ, 514)

The metamorphosis of the German hero in *Hundejahre* to a modern *Wandering Jew* (the irony seems not to have gone unnoticed in Grass criticism) and the redefining of the topos of German-Jewish friendship become evident with the further development of the motif – *Trennung der Lebenswege*.²⁵ In *Soll und Haben* it belongs to the nature of things that the German boy parts ways with his Jewish friend after the *Grundschule*. This is so generally accepted that Freytag need only summarize this separation in a few sentences. Later in the novel they meet again, but this time they represent complete antipodes. Veitel has become part of Freytag's urban underworld of *gonifs* and Jewish peddlers, being metamorphosed into a kind of monster of Gothic fiction: "Zu allen anderen Menschen [with the exception of his mentor Hippus] stand er auf *Kriegsfuß* und erwartete auch von ihnen nichts anders als Krieg." (SH, 314) Anton represents of course the forces of good, the noble knight and savior, trying to restore the solvency and perform the honor of Baron von Rothsattel. The reunion of the two friends, as the narrator says, resembles a "Kampf" akin to a chess match, but with a fatal denouement for one of the two parties.

In *Hundejahre* the motif – *Trennung der Lebenswege* – is fused with another motif which is missing in *Soll und Haben* – *Verrat*. It is not, however, the Jewish boy who is guilty of betrayal, but his German friend. In a paradigmatic scene in *Hundejahre*, Matern, now a member of an S.A. *Sturm*, descends upon Amsel's property and knocks out all of Amsel's teeth. Since *Hundejahre* is obsessively concerned with memory, *Verdrängung* and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the narrative leads Matern to travel all over Germany – East and West – to avenge what had happened to Amsel on that fateful night, refusing to recognize that he bears the principal responsibility for the fate of his Jewish friend. When Matern asks his former S.A. comrade about Amsel, he receives the following answer, "Nä Mänsch, da mußst doch nech miä fragen. War doch Daine Idee, der klaine Besuch. Hab ech ja nie rechtich västähn kennen, zumal der doch mit

24 Siegfried Jäckel, "Aspekte zur Danziger Trilogie von Günter Grass," in *Sprache als Experiment: Beiträge zur Literaturkritik in Antike und Neuzeit* (Turku: Turun Yliopisto, 1989), 135.

25 The Ahasverus motif in modern literature has been noted by several recent critics. Heidi M. Müller writes, "Die ahasverischen Eigenschaften werden nicht nur Juden angedichtet, sondern mit besonderer Vorliebe auch nicht jüdischen Helden verliehen. Unrast, das Gefühl der Heimatlosigkeit und eine leidvolle Vergangenheit sind charakteristisch für viele nichtjüdische moderne Romangestalten. Das Stereotyp des 'Ewigen Juden' wurde in der Nachkriegsprosa zu einem Grundmuster und Identifikationsmodell für literarische Lebensentwürfe." See Heidi M. Müller, *Die Judendarstellung in der deutschsprachigen Erzählprosa, 188*.

Diä befreundet jewesen ist – odä." (HJ, 450) In the "Fernsehdiskussion" the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is complete. Matern is compelled to relive in the form of children's doggerel his act of betrayal:

Neun stiegen über den Gartenzaun,
 mein Onkel war dabei.
 Neun traten nieder den Januarschnee,
 mein Onkel im Schnee dabei.
 Ein schwarzer Lappen vor jedem Gesicht,
 mein Onkel verummmt und dabei.
 Neun Fäuste meinte ein zehntes Gesicht,
 des Onkels Faust schlug entzwei.
 Und als neun Fäuste müde waren,
 schlug Onkels Faust noch zu Brei.
 Und als alle Zähne gespien waren, erstickte
 mein Onkels Geschrei.
 Und Itzich Itzich Itzich hieß
 des Onkels Litanei.
 Neuen Männer entwichen über den Zaun,
 mein Onkel war dabei! (HJ, 610)

The name *Itzich* in *Hundejahre* is thus transformed from an essentialist definition of Jewishness enshrined in a once canonical text like *Soll und Haben* to an incantation of violence, a ritual-like formula employed by society in order to define and at the same time destroy those individuals, whose identities – whether through social deviance (Amsel as artist) or through apparent ethnic deviance (Amsel as Jew) lie outside its established and sanctioned norms. This illuminates two other instances in *Hundejahre* when the chant *Itzich* is used. The farmers on the Weichsel chant *Itzich* in "the auto da fe" episode when they burn all of Amsel's scarecrows and Tulla uses it when Amsel begins to sketch Prince. Both exemplify the attempt to control heterodox forms of behavior (which of course are experienced in themselves) through collective ritual and organized violence – two social patterns that recur in German society in the narrative frame (1917-1962) presented in *Hundejahre*. In this sense *Itzich* is more a linguistic marker, a sign, revealing the fathomless depth of society's fear and powerlessness – an explanation for the renewable sources of violence that have afflicted history in the twentieth century.

II "Goldmädchen" and the Theme of German Jewish Friendship

In *Geschlecht und Charakter* Otto Weininger vents his spleen and self-hate upon one historical personality who supposedly is in some way the embodiment of everything Jewish:

Wäre er [der Jude] nur ehrlicher Materialist, wäre er nur bornierter Entwicklungsanbeter! Aber er ist nicht Kritiker, sondern nur Kritikaster, er ist nicht Skeptiker nach dem Bilde des Cartesius, nicht Zweifeler, um aus dem größten Mißtrauen zur größten Sicherheit zu gelangen; sondern absoluter Ironiker wie – hier kann ich eben nur einen Juden nennen – wie Heinrich Heine.(GC, 441)

The figure of Heinrich Heine and the reception of his work and person exercised a significant influence upon the invention of the Jew in nineteenth and twentieth century Germany. Just as Goethe in the course of the nineteenth century became a sanctified cultural icon, so in a sense was Heinrich Heine perceived within the educated bourgeoisie as his antipode – the poseur, the blasphemous, frivolous pseudo-artist, lacking in depth and patriotic feeling.²⁶ In another former canonical work in German literature, *Der Hungerpastor* (1864), the Heine theme again surfaces, this time in a new context. When Moses Freudenstein alias Dr. Theophile Stein expatiates on his relationship to Judaism and to his German fatherland, the Heinrich Heine theme again emerges:

. . . mein Freund Harry Heine in Paris bleibt trotz seines weißen Katechumenengewandes ein echter Jude, dem alles Taufwasser, aller französische Champagner und deutsche Rheinwein das semitische Blut nicht aus dem Adern spült. Weshalb sollte er deutsche Schmach und Schande nicht mit einem Anhauch von Wehmut verspotten? Jede Dummheit und Niederträchtigkeit, die man diesseits des Rheins begeht, ist ja ein Gottesseggen für ihn!²⁷

The German liberal Raabe curiously enough adumbrates many of the theses of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, a book that Weininger

26 On the Heine image in German culture, see Marcel Reich-Ranickie, *Über Ruhestörer: Juden in der deutschen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1989), 78-91.

27 Wilhelm Raabe, *Der Hungerpastor* (Berlin: Verlag von Th. Knauer Nach f., 1931), 145-46.

frequently quotes and which had a considerable influence upon the educated middle classes in Germany. First the Jews were not attached to any particular nation or culture except their own unalterable mission and faith. Second the Jews were the manipulators of the conflicts between the European states which they fomented for their own advantage, betraying these states as soon as their best interests were not represented. Finally the most important question in the discussion of Jewry is posed for the nineteenth century mind: what happens when a Jew converts to Christianity? Does he still remain a Jew or does he become a Christian or even a German like any other German Christian?²⁸

Der Hungerpastor seems to answer this question in the negative. By having the Jewish villain, despite his conversion, profess allegiance to his Jewishness, the narrator implicitly confirms the motif of *Andersartigkeit*. Jews and Germans are intrinsically different. Regardless of the influences of culture and language and religion, the difference remains unalterable. The German hero Hans Unwirrsch and his Jewish friend-villain Moses Freudenstein are predisposed to travel a different route, exploring different forms of *Hunger* – presumably the Jewish form and the German form, Hans becoming a pastor in a cozy German village and Moses becoming a *Geheimrat* in a Prussian ministry and suffering a "bürgerlichen Todt."

Just as *Hundejahre* alludes only once to Gustav Freytag and *Soll und Haben*, so is there only one reference to Wilhelm Raabe in Grass's work. (HJ, 111) Yet the fact that *Hundejahre* shares even more similarities with *Der Hungerpastor* than *Soll und Haben* suggests the intertextual connections between these two works. In the first place the motif of identical birth is common to both texts. Moses Freudenstein and Hans Unwirrsch were born almost at the same hour in the year 1819 and Eduard Amsel and Walter Matern were born almost exactly a hundred years later in the fateful year 1917. Second the motif of the *Schutzfreund* in *Hundejahre* conforms more closely to the version in *Der Hungerpastor*. Like Walter Matern, "Hans Unwirrsch hatte bis zu dieser Stunde auch hier mit den Wölfen geheult,

und was die anderen taten, hatte er leichtsinnig, ohne Erbarmen und ohne Überlegung ebenfalls getan." (HP, 46) In other words, Hans, like Walter Matern, is at first an accomplice and then separating himself from the group, becomes a protector. Third the theme of *Abhängigkeit* is also developed in *Der Hungerpastor* and completely omitted in *Soll und Haben*. Significantly, as in *Hundejahre* the Jewish character is more gifted than his Christian friend, luring as a result the Christian boy into his own world. In *Der Hungerpastor* instead of the Jewish figure being an artist, it is the father of the Jewish child who fascinates young Hans with his art. Finally even the motif of the idiosyncratic physical characteristic in *Hundejahre* has its counterpart in *Der Hungerpastor*. Instead of Walter Matern's "Zähneknirschen," however, Moses Freudenstein in critical situations exhibits "mit dem Auge zwinkerte und die Knie aneinander rieb – eine Gewohnheit, die er von allen anderen Eigentümlichkeiten allein nie ganz ablegen konnte." (HP, 106)²⁹

On the deep structural level, however, it is the semantic feature of *detachment* that governs the themes and motifs of both *Hundejahre* and *Der Hungerpastor*. The counterpart of the skeleton scene in the *Trinitätskirche* in *Hundejahre* is the death of the two boys's playmate in *Der Hungerpastor*. "Wohin wird sie nun gehen, wenn sie tot ist?" fragte der Jude, ohne dabei seinen Freund anzusehen. Moses schien für sich allein tief darüber nachzugrübeln, und das Grübeln schien das Gefühl in den Hintergrund zu drängen." (HP, 60) The topos of detachment recurs continually throughout the text: "Letzterer [Moses] hatte den Vorteil, daß die Phantasie sich ihm nicht hindernd in den Weg stellte." (HP, 97) Hans Unwirrsch, by contrast, "Die Phantasie behielt noch das Übergewicht über den Verstand." (HP, 70) This state of *detachment*, the narrator suggests, seems to be intrinsically Jewish, since Moses is frequently given identifying epithets, such as "der semitische Grammatiker" or "der kleine semitische Dialektiker." (HP, 60-61, 97)

The semantic feature of *detachment* creates the categories of opposition in the novel, ultima-

28 Houston Stuart Chamberlain, *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (München: F. Bruckmann A.G.: 1919), 380-400. See also an interesting discussion of the plight of the assimilated Jew in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Arendt argues that even the assimilated Jew was not permitted to become just another citizen, but instead became a recognizable social type with a special relationship to society and an "ambiguous situation," 65-68.

29 Another curious parallel in the choice of motifs is that while Amsel, the artist figure, creates scarecrows, the artist figure in *Der Hungerpastor*, Samuel Freudenstein, creates stuffed birds.

tely defining the duality – Jew and German. For example, when Moses shows an aptitude for learning, this learning becomes negatively tainted, because, "Je mehr Wissen er aufhäufte, desto kälter wurde sein Herz." (HP, 99)³⁰ In contrast to the German hero Hans Unwirrsch, Moses is morally flawed. When his father lies dying, Moses displays "keine Spur von Tränen." (HP, 119) In effect the entire inventory of values and characteristics attributed to Jews in the nineteenth century proceeds almost systematically from this opposition. Moses's detachment is often replaced by irony – a Heinesque characteristic believed to be characteristic of Jews: "die metallische Stimme des Freundes durch eine ironische Frage." (HP, 100) Where Moses's posture of detachment is equated with the death of the heart, another cultural category commonly applied to Jews again emerges: "Der Egoismus richtet sich dräuend empor und streckte hungrige Polypenarme aus, um damit die Welt zu umfassen." (HP,) "Egoismus" was a favorite term of opprobrium levelled against modernity by German cultural critics. It also was frequently applied to Jews by critics like Chamberlain who also tied this attribute to conspiracies of world conquest.³¹

But the semantic feature of *detachment* leads to even more significant and dangerous inventions of the Jew. For example, in contrast to the instinctive patriotic fervor of Hans Unwirrsch, "Moses Freudenstein stand natürlich dem deutschen Vaterland ebenso objektiv gegenüber wie allem anderen." (HP, 144) His attitudes to his country are based on an admixture of self-interest, opportunism, *Realpolitik*, and an unrelenting desire for revenge:

Ich habe das Recht, nur da ein Deutcher zu sein, wo es mir beliebt, und das Recht, diese Ehre in jedem mir beliebigen Augenblick aufzugeben. Wir Juden sind doch die wahren Kosmopoliten, die Weltbürger von Gottes Gnaden, oder wenn du willst, von Gottes Ungnaden. Seit der Erschaffung bis zum Zehnten des Monats Ab im Jahre Siebenzig eurer Zeitrechnung haben wir

eine Ausnahmestellung innegehabt, und nach der Zerstörung des Tempels ist uns dieselbe geblieben, wenn auch in etwas veränderte Art und Weise. Durch lange Jahrhunderte hatte diese Ausnahmestellung ihre großen Unannehmlichkeiten für uns; jetzt aber fangen die angenehmen Seiten des Verhältnisses an, zutage zu treten. Wir können ruhig stehen, während ihr euch abhetzt, quält und ängstet. Die Erfolge, welche ihr gewinnt, erringt ihr für uns mit, eure Niederlagen brauchen uns nicht zu kümmern. . . Seit man uns nicht mehr als Brunnenvergifter und Christenkindermörder totschießt und verbrennt, sind wir viel besser gestellt als ihr alle, wie ihr euch nennen mögt, ihr Arier: Deutsche, Franzosen, Engländer. (HP, 145)

The myth of the Jew as "ein Staat im Staat" is presented here. More important, the motif of *Andersartigkeit* is reinforced. Between "Jew" and "Aryan" there can be no common ground. As Weininger writes, unaware of his frightening link to the future, "Zwischen Judentum und Christentum, zwischen Geschäft und Kultur, zwischen Weib und Mann, zwischen Gattung und Persönlichkeit, zwischen Unwert und Wert, zwischen irdischen und höherem Leben, zwischen dem Nichts und der Gottheit hat abermals die Menschheit die Wahl. Das sind die beiden Pole: es gibt kein drittes Reich." (GC, 452)

The metamorphosis from Moses Freudenstein to Eduard Amsel is interesting to observe. Both share another motif in common – *der Namenswechsel*. Moses Freudenstein *a la* Theophile Stein further illustrates the widely accepted belief, expressed by Weininger and other writers on Jewry, in the Jew's chameleon-like nature, his Machiavellian sense of purpose to pursue any means necessary to achieve knowledge and wealth ("Kunst und Geld" (HP, 68)) and hence power. Paradoxically it also implies, to cite Weininger again, the Jew's lack of roots and commitments, his inability to forge an autonomous self: "Der Jude hält nie wirklich etwas für echt und unumstößlich, für heilig und unverletzbar.

30 An interesting parallel can be shown here with the literature of another culture. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction, the figure of the German scientist-doctor displays the same sort of "detachment" as the Jewish intellectual in Wilhelm Raabe's work, suggesting that the German character in some respects provides a similar cultural function as the Jewish intellectual in German culture. See Horst Kruse, *Schlüsselmotive der amerikanischen Literatur* (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1979), especially chapter 2, "Dr. Materialismus," 41-93.

31 Houston Stuart Chamberlain goes even further, asserting that "Wir leben heute in einem 'jüdischen Zeitalter.'" in *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 381.

Darum ist er überall frivol, und alles bewitzelnd; . . ." (GC, 438) By contrast Eduard Amsel – Brauxel – Hasselhof – "Goldmälchen" dons names as masks of survival at the same time that society attempts to imprint him with its own categories and false identities (*Itzich*). In other words, Amsel is continually redefining himself in order to elude persecution and the violation of his integrity.

Perhaps the most controversial of Grass's Jewish *topoi* in *Hundejahre* is that of the *Drahtzieher* – the representative of *dunkle Mächte*. This has been, of course, one of the favorite depictions of Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, conjuring up images of demonic usurers and sinister cabals, intimately connected with the feared and loathed *Geldwirtschaft*. Already fourteen years before the publication of Theophile Stein's machinations in the opaque realm of international politics in *Der Hungerpastor*, Richard Wagner, in his infamous yet widely circulated essay, "Das Judentum in der Musik" (1850), wrote,

Was wir an jenem Wesen [Jewish] hassen; was wir dann bestimmt kennen, dem können wir die Spitze bieten; ja schon durch seine nackte Aufdeckung dürfen wir hoffen, den Dämon aus dem Felde zu schlagen, aus dem es sich nur im Schutze eines dämmerigen Halbdunkels zu halten vermag, eines Dunkels, das wir gutmütigen Humanisten selbst über ihn warfen, um uns seinen Anblick minder widerwärtig zu machen.³²

The *topos* of the innocent, gifted provincial German boy arriving in the metropolis and discovering a wide-ranging Jewish conspiracy runs the gamut from "Das Judentum in der Musik" to *Mein Kampf*. It is a highly insidious narrative because it is always based on the young man's assumed naivete (which the reader is supposed to

identify with) or, stated another way, liberal convictions. The young man begins his odyssey to the metropolis, implicitly believing in the innate goodness of humanity, not aware of any significant differences in humankind, until he slowly becomes initiated into the conspiracy and becomes a convinced anti-Semite.³³

The question posed by recent Grass criticism is whether *Hundejahre* reinforces traditional stereotypes of the Jew as the clandestine powerbroker, moving invisibly in the world of money and politics and controlling national destinies. Heidi M. Müller writes,

Offensichtlich hat Brauxel manche Züge mit dem Feindbild vom Juden gemeinsam, welches nationalsozialistische Autoren propagiert haben: Er versteht es, jede Situation zu seinen Gunsten auszubeuhen. Als einflußreicher Börsenspekulant verkörpert er die berüchtigte 'jüdische Finanzherrschaft' und als Besitzer des 'Mehlwurmorakels' gar die gefürchtete 'Weltherrschaft des Judentums'. Zwar tut Grass mit Hilfe surrealistischer Details und grotesquer Überspitzung unmißverständlich kund, daß sein Werk als Parodie auf die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus sei.³⁴

But Müller departs from the realm of literary analysis and imposes a moral judgment on the presumed literary effect of the text on the reader: "Die Judendarstellungen in den 'Hundejahren' ist nicht nur problematisch, sondern geradezu gefährlich, . . . weil durch die groteske Uebersteigerung nazistischer Klischeevorstellungen dem 'Leser' antisemitische Feindbilder nicht verleidet, sondern auf ergötzliche Weise in Neuauflage vor Augen geführt werden, ohne daß eine mögliche Alternative sichtbar gemacht würde, . . . weil die nazistische Judenverfolgung zwar als Absurdität entlarvt wird, deren repräsentatives Opfer im Roman jedoch dem abstrusen Ju-

32 Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Leipzig: Verlag von Breitkopf & Härtel, 1939), 4. For a recent discussion of Wagner's more vacillating relationship to Jewry, see the Finnish essay Hannu Salmi, "Uuden Sachsen Nousu ja Tuho: Tri Bernhard Försterin wagneriaani unelma," [New German Rise and Fall: Dr. Bernhard Förster's Wagnerian Dream"], 9. This essay discusses one of Wagner's rabid admirers who, adopting Wagner's ideas as a personal revelation, hoped to establish a colony of racially pure Germans in Paraguay as a response to all the decadent tendencies of the Second Empire. Part of Förster's mission was to agitate against Jewry. In trying to enlist the support of the master, Förster observed a certain reluctance, since by this time in the 1870s, according to Salmi, Wagner was more concerned with gaining support for the festival house in Bayreuth and thus was little interested in further antagonizing the Jewish population.

33 A completely different thesis or narrative is advanced by Hannah Arendt who argues that the Jews in the nineteenth century, while enjoying economic power and international connections, lacked the political astuteness or experience to exploit these advantages. See *The Origin of Totalitarianism*, ???

34 Heidi M. Müller, *Das Judenbild in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, 157.

denbild der Nazis in mehrfacher Hinsicht tatsächlich gleicht und es deshalb weniger parodiert als legitimiert.³⁵

Hundejahre, however, does not so much "legitimate" stereotypes as make the reader aware of the ways in which established and conventional texts distort one's vision of reality. The familiar narrative of the Jew as *Drahtzieher* is a persistent text, Grass suggests, still employed by large portions of the population to interpret and construct reality: "Jetzt kriegen wir bald neues Geld. Goldmälchen weiß sogar wann. Was, den kennste nicht? Den kennt doch jeder hier, der einigermaßen Bescheid weiß. Der hat, kann ich Dir sagen, überall den Daumen drauf. Der gesamte Markt, von der Trankgasse bis zu den Amis in Bremerhaven, hört auf Goldmälchen." (HJ, 482) The chaos and confusion resulting from the collapse of the German economy after the unconditional surrender is explained and organized by an old fairy tale-like text. "Goldmälchen" is the narrative of the *Nachkriegsgeneration* just as a more malevolent, hideous text was the narrative employed by the previous generation. The use of *Umgangssprache* shows on the one hand how deeply rooted the text is as a cultural narrative, and on the other hand, because of the ironic distance it creates to the reader, questionable as a valid representation of reality. The additional motif of "astrein": "Jochen sagt zwar, der [Goldmälchen] ist nicht ganz astrein" (HJ, 482) is further ironic evidence that some of the more sinister elements of the narrative from the previous generation still persist in a concealed and repressed form. The *Nachkriegsgeneration* is still, *Hundejahre* laments, conditioned to interpreting reality in the same disastrous way.

Thus the theme of German-Jewish friendship, Grass reveals, is a narrative that illuminates significant elements in German society and culture. It contains an underlying value system – bipolar in nature – that explains the development of German national identity and the oft-discussed crisis of modernity:

Jewish Friend (Villain) German Friend (Hero)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. materialist | 1. idealist |
| 2. internationalist | 2. nationalist |
| 3. egoist | 3. communitarian |
| 4. irony | 4. sensibility |
| 5. Geld | 5. Geist |
| 6. adventurer | 6. virtuous |
| capitalist | capitalist |
| 7. urban | 7. agrarian |
| 8. immoralist | 8. moralist |
| 9. free thinker | 9. canonical thinker |
| 10. classless | 10. class-rooted |

In *Hundejahre* Grass begins to undo this narrative. He makes Amsel into a *Halbjude*, invests Matern with qualities that Amsel should possess or reinterprets these qualities and traits that were assigned positive and negative values and gives them a new valuation.³⁶ As Horst Kruse trenchantly notes, "... dass die konkrete Gestalt eines literarischen Textes zugleich auch die Geschichte aller seiner Merkmale inkorporiert."³⁷ Grass examines each of these narrative characteristics, altering the text with the purpose of disrupting the previous ways of perceiving reality. When "Goldmälchen" says, "Ich jedoch liebe die Deutschen," (HJ, 646) ironic and absurd as this remark may be intended to be – this is a novel way of dislocating the narrative, since Jewish characters traditionally have not been assigned this role. Instead they have traditionally been invested with the credo, as Raabe shows, "Waffen, nur Waffen gegen die Welt schmiedete er, und keinen Augenblick der Ruhe, des Atemholens gönnte er sich bei der Arbeit." (HP, 99)

Ultimately the theme of German-Jewish friendship in *Hundejahre* is a study of the process and significance of narrative. As Hayden White tells us quite succinctly, narrative epitomizes the process of organizing reality, of making reality intelligible to us in coherent forms and patterns.³⁸ The theme of German-Jewish friendship is an established narrative in German culture. As Amsel says, "Diese Geschichte ist, sozusagen, eine Lesebuchgeschichte. Die kennt doch jeder." (HJ, 630) When Matern asks about the

35 Müller, 158.

36 Grass virtually states his intention when he characterizes *Hundejahre* as "ein Roman der angeschlagenen Vorstellungen und der angeschlagenen Figuren." . . . He also reveals in the same passage his desire to revamp traditional motifs, such as "die schöne Jüdin." See Harscheidt, *Günter Grass*, 520.

37 Horst Kruse, *Schlüsselmotive der amerikanischen Literatur*, 191.

38 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 1-2.

"Symbolgehalt," in other words, the deeper meaning of the narrative, the following discussion explores the meaning and purpose of narrative.

Ach was! Eine Allerweltsgeschichte! Ich bitte Sie, lieber Freund: zwei Knaben, ein Taschenmesser und ein Fluß. Das ist ein Geschichtchen, das Sie in jedem deutschen Lesebuch finden können. Moralisch und leicht zu behalten.(HJ, 631)

Amsel's irony of course goes unnoticed on Matern, but not on the reader. Indeed many of these texts are questionably "moral" and unfortunately "easy to remember," but Matern falls into the trap, repeating what Amsel actually means:

Sie überschätzen die Qualität deutscher Lesebücher gehörig. Da steht nach wie vor die alte Mist drin. Niemand, der die Jugend richtig aufgeklärt über die Vergangenheit und so weiter. Lauter Lügengeschichten! Nichts als Lügengeschichten.(HJ, 631)

The irony here of course is also evident, since Matern himself has adhered to the principal theme of this text. By repeatedly using the expletive "Itzig," Matern has tacitly accepted the underlying structure of "Andersartigkeit" between Germans and Jews. Although the traditional narrative has virtually broken down – Matern is not Anton Wohlfahrt or Hans Unwirsch and Eduard Amsel is not Veitel Itzig or Moses Freudenstein – the moral of the tale still appears to contain the same message: there can never be any genuine bond between Germans and Jews.

But there is one element that is added to the original text that was previously missing – *die Versöhnung*. Matern and Amsel find each other in Berlin, and it is Amsel who is given the chance of rewriting the narrative of German-Jewish friendship:

Um seine Zigarette herum lächelt Goldmälchen: Lieber guter Freund, auch meine Lesebuchgeschichte ist, obgleich durchaus moralisch und leicht zu behalten, gleichfalls eine Lügengeschichte. Schauen Sie hier. Der Schluß der Fabel weiß zu berichten: Der Knabe warf das Taschen-

messer in den Fluß. Und weg war es für immer. - Was aber habe ich hier? Na! Betrachten Sie es genau. Es ist unansehnlich geworden nach all den Jahren. Na? (HJ, 631)

The Jewish character attempts to restore the bond of intimacy, repair the connection severed by his German friend. After Auschwitz (in *Hundejahre* – Stutthof) the text is still capable of being rewritten. Amsel finds the pocket knife thrown away into the Weichsel by Matern, admonishes Matern not to let it happen again, and finally toasts to eternal friendship, not only to eternal friendship, but to all the discrete particles of memory, profound and superficial, sacred and profane, that belong to the construction of narrative, in other words, to the creation of meaning. For amid the madness of human history and the destructiveness of culture, all of which are represented by Amsel's "scarecrows," narrative contains the possibility of ordered meaning and hence the promise of healing:

'Erzählt Kinder, erzählt!' begeistert das Goldmälchen mit immer neuer Zigarette jene Gesellschaft, die nun mit dösendem Hund auf der Theke hockt. Laßt den Faden nicht abreißen, Kinder! Denn solange wir noch Geschichten erzählen, leben wir. solange uns etwas einfällt, mit und ohne Pointe, Hundegeschichten, Aalgeschichten, Vogelscheuchengeschichten, Rattengeschichten, Hochwassergeschichten, Rezeptgeschichten, Lügengeschichten und Lesebuchgeschichten, solange uns Geschichten noch zu unterhalten vermögen, vermag keine Hölle uns unterhaltsam sein. Du bist dran, Walter! Erzähle, solange Dir Dein Leben lieb ist.' (HJ, 641)³⁹

Narrative not only offers the promise of healing, but also the resurgence of traditional forms and patterns. Narrative, of course, is a collaborative enterprise. Not only is Amsel composing the story of German-Jewish friendship, but also Matern. For Matern the narrative of Amsel and Matern is still fixated on the old motifs and imagery, the familiar ritual words and

39 Hayden White expresses this quite succinctly when he writes, "Arising as Barthes says, between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language, narrative 'ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted.' And it would follow that the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself." *The Content of the Form*, 1-2.

formulas, the deep-rooted perceptions and attitudes. When Matern exclaims, "Nichts ist ihm rein. Und immer alle Werte auf den Kopf gestellt, damit die Hosen in die Kniekehlen rutschen" (HJ, 645), he is invoking the traditional and pernicious Weininger narrative of German-Jewish friendship. The bond must remain severed, according to Matern, friendship between two totally distinct species of humankind must be rendered impossible. Hence the pocket knife is again thrown away – this time into the Spree. However, Amsel also has a right to continue the narrative and promises to return the pocketknife, since the pocketknife, contrary to the Matern-Weininger narrative, makes the German boy and the Jewish boy into "Blutsbrüder" (647) – in

other words, leads to the transcendence of adventitious differences and the discovery of a common humanity. Matern's only retort is the ancient imprecation that underlies the Weininger text as well as the other texts that have contributed to the Weininger text – "Itzich" (HJ, 647).

Which narrative ultimately proves to be more viable in *Hundejahre* – Amsel or Matern's – is never resolved, but interacting with the text, the reader, confronted with the sources of the narrative of German-Jewish friendship, its distinct components, as well as its competing versions, can carry the narrative further, since narrative, to echo Amsel, suggests some tenuous yet essential form of redemption.⁴⁰

40 On the final lines of the novel, which have been ignored or glossed over by the majority of critics, Silberman writes, "Die Schlussätze entwerfen ein logisches Dilemma, das zwei entgegengesetzte und unüberbrückbare Positionen voraussetzt. In diesem Riss, der den Vollzug des Romanschlusses ersetzt, wird der Leser zum Schöpfer, zur Stelle, wo Bedeutung entsteht. Es ist durch seine Bereitschaft, auf die Öffnung der appellativen Struktur des Romans einzugehen, dass die Erinnerungsarbeit tatsächlich beginnt." See "Schreiben als öffentliche Angelegenheit," 94.