

ASPECTS OF REALISM IN THE HISTORICAL DRAMAS OF CHR. D. GRABBE

A critical evaluation of the appropriateness of  
the term as applied to the dramatist's work

by

DAVID ALEXANDER HORTON

Thesis submitted to the University of Leicester  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Errata

- p. 8 line 15 for "It is with realism" read "It is realism"  
p. 53 line 14 for "der Gelbsucht" read "Der Gelbsucht"  
p. 60 line 6 for "Weltanschuung" read "Weltanschauung"  
p. 64 line 13 for "expecially" read "especially"  
p. 74 line 27 for "black night" read "black knight"  
p. 88 line 1 for "unquestionable" read "unquestionable"  
p. 110 line 5 for "his attractions" read "its attractions"  
p. 130 line 30 for "self-inerest" read "self-interest"  
p. 133 line 7 for "reacted" read "reached"  
p. 109 line 27 for "revounced" read "renounced"  
p. 138 line 13 for "quantative" read "quantitative"  
p. 141 line 19 for "unterlines" read "underlines"  
p. 144 line 28 for "quantative" read "quantitative"  
p. 156 line 12 for "Daß" read "daß"  
p. 160 line 2 for "Dort darf sich" read "Dort darf man sich"  
p. 161 line 27 for "ascribe" read "subscribe"  
p. 164 line 28 for "lakcing" read "lacking"  
p. 165 line 18 for "victors" read "victory"  
p. 179 line 22 for "did" read "he did"  
p. 186 line 10 for "emplifies" read "amplifies"  
p. 196 line 4 for "Entwiklungen" read "Entwicklungen"  
p. 204 line 5 for "system or relationships" read "system of relationships"  
p. 209 line 26 for "und Faust" read "und Faust"  
p. 240 line 4 for "Marius und" read "Marius and"  
p. 248 line 6 for "Fouché sich" read "Fouché begegnen sich"  
p. 256 line 7 for "apacope" read "apocope"  
p. 287 line 7 for "show down " read "slow down"  
line 15 for "tha" read "the"  
p. 288 line 22 for "drama; and" read "drama, and"  
p. 296 line 25 for "accomodate" read "accommodate"  
p. 309 line 25 for "das Rainmenschliche" read "das Reinmenschliche"  
line 30 insert "with his distortion of the historical figure, that  
he was concerned only " at end of line  
p. 319 line 5 for "of Grabbe's Napoleon" read "or Grabbe's Napoleon"  
p. 320 line 10 for "little romm" read "little room"

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## ASPECTS OF REALISM IN THE HISTORICAL DRAMAS OF CHR. D. GRABBE

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by David Alexander Horton

The notion that Grabbe's historical dramas display features commonly associated with literary realism was introduced into Grabbe scholarship early and has since become well-established. The term has, however, often been adopted uncritically and is still applied indiscriminately to the dramatist's oeuvre.

This thesis aims to contribute to the discussion of Grabbe's realism by examining central aspects of his plays with a view to their realistic quality. After an initial discussion of the problematic concept of literary realism (Introduction), the playwright's non-historical dramas are considered in their role as preparatory exercises for the major history plays (Chapter I). The second chapter, which deals with the nature and presentation of the dramatist's view of history, is conceived both as a contribution to an area of dispute which continues to occupy critics and as a stage in the realism discussion. It treats such fundamental issues as the role of the historical individual and the masses, social realism, and Grabbe's view of the historical process.

Having focussed on the history plays the study critically examines aspects of the works repeatedly cited in connection with Grabbe's realism. Psychological realism (Chapter III), the use of language, particularly of prose (Chapter IV), and dramatic form as the vehicle of Grabbe's new type of drama (Chapter V) are evaluated as factors which contribute to the alleged realistic effect of the dramas. The concluding section discusses the poet's attention to empirical detail and places his work within a literary-historical context before considering the overall appropriateness of the concept of realism with regard to Grabbe's dramas. In view of the inconsistency and diffuseness of the plays the validity of the term in this context appears highly questionable.

The study contains two "Forschungsberichte". The first treats previous discussions of Grabbe's realism, the second earlier comment on the dramatist's view of history.

## Introduction

The realistic quality of Grabbe's dramas has come to be recognised, during some one hundred years of critical attention, as one of the outstanding features of his art. At a time when a considerable volume of research provides detailed insight into many aspects of the poet's work, Grabbe is still remembered primarily for his untimely naturalistic effects and his contribution to the early realism ("Frührealismus") of the German "Vormärz". He is often cited, alongside his contemporary Büchner, as the major representative of this trend in the genre of the drama, and this conception has become so well-established internationally that "realism" is commonly singled out in the general works of reference and histories of literature as the hallmark of Grabbe's dramatic oeuvre.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to establish precisely when the concept of realism was first applied to Grabbe's work: while no mention of it is to be found in the early critiques collected by Alfred Bergmann under the title Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik,<sup>2</sup> Julian Schmidt, a leading literary theoretician of German realism, speaks, in the third volume of his Geschichte der deutschen Literatur seit Lessings Tod, of Grabbe's "exzentrischer Naturalismus",<sup>3</sup> and later, in 1878, the naturalist Heinrich Hart praises the poet

1 Thus, for example, Meyers Lexikon (Mannheim, 1974) identifies Grabbe as a "bedeutender Vorläufer" of "literarischer Realismus" and Der große Brockhaus (Wiesbaden, 1954) describes his work as "realistisch-pessimistisch"; Chambers Encyclopaedia (London, 1967) sees him as a "precursor of realism". Cassell's Encyclopaedia of Literature (edited by S. H. Steinberg, London, 1953) points to his "bold prose realism", The Oxford Companion to German Literature (edited by H. and M. Garland, Oxford, 1976) to his contribution to "realistic drama". According to the Lexikon der Weltliteratur (edited by G. von Wilpert, Stuttgart, 1975) Grabbe is "neben Büchner bedeutendster deutscher Anreger des realistischen Dramas im 19. Jahrhundert", while the Dictionnaire des Littératures (edited by P. van Tieghem, Paris, 1968) alludes to his "réalisme saisissant". Many histories of German literature include Grabbe under the heading "Realism" in some form.

2 Six volumes (Detmold, 1958-66).

3 Leipzig, 1853. Quoted here in its fourth edition (Leipzig, 1858), volume 3, p. 47.

for his "realistische-naturalistische Dramatik".<sup>4</sup> Since the very beginnings of serious critical preoccupation with Grabbe commentators have persistently applied the term "realism", in the vast majority of cases with a minimum of scrutiny, to the poet's works, and scarcely a study has appeared in our own century which does not employ it in some form or with some qualification. It has become a watchword of Grabbe criticism.<sup>5</sup>

4 In his essay "Neue Welt", paraphrased by Erich Ruprecht in Literarische Manifeste des Naturalismus 1880-1892 (Stuttgart, 1962). The terms "realism" and "naturalism" have often been regarded, particularly in earlier usage, as virtually interchangeable. While naturalism is strictly speaking a more modern and sophisticated development of realism, established by the application of scientific methods to the art of literary composition by French writers in the 1860s, the mimetic basis of both trends is the same: "What the Realists and Naturalists have in common is the fundamental belief that art is in essence a mimetic, objective representation of outer reality" (L. Furst and P. Skrine, Naturalism, London, 1971, p. 8). John Dixon Hunt notes that "in France the terms realism and naturalism represented different approaches and creative methods, but with their importation into England the distinction was blurred and became less useful" (The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination, London, 1968, p. 211). In its German usage the distinction is obscured further by the association of what is generally called "poetischer", "bürgerlicher" or "Idealrealismus" - a very special form of realism - with the earlier stages of the phenomenon. We are referring at this stage to "the whole realist/naturalist phenomenon" (Damian Grant, Realism, London, 1970, p. 32).

5 The following representative examples may serve as a general indication of the manner in which the term has been manipulated and modified throughout the history of Grabbe scholarship. Arthur Ploch (Grabbes Stelle in der deutschen Literatur, Leipzig, 1905) sees Grabbe's dramas as an attempt to introduce "eine realistische Richtung in der Literatur"; a few years later Otto Nieten (Chr. D. Grabbe: Sein Leben und seine Werke, Dortmund, 1908) praises him for the foundation of "das realistische historische Drama" and goes on to qualify the term with a variety of - quite vague - adjectives: "kühner", "köstlicher", "ungeschminkter", "kecker", "derber", and "gesunder, kräftiger Realismus". Ferdinand Josef Schneider (Chr. D. Grabbe: Persönlichkeit und Werk, München, 1934) makes no advances in the question of realism and continues Nieten's tradition with phrases like "volkstümlicher-derber Realismus", recognising, however, the primacy of "Geschichtsrealismus". Heinz Germann ("Grabbes Geschichtsauffassung", Diss. Berlin, 1941) recognises "eine immer stärker werdende Entwicklung zum Realismus", and Fritz Martini ("Grabbes niederdeutsches Drama", Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 30 (1942)) underlines the significance of Grabbe's "geschichtlicher Realismus" and "historisch-dramatischer Realismus". Benno von Wiese (Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel, Hamburg, 1948) points to "empirischer Realismus", while Hans-Werner Nieschmidt (Chr. D. Grabbe: Zwei Studien, Detmold, 1951) sees Grabbe's everlasting achievement in his "Gestaltung eines neuen frührealistischen Geschichtsdramas". Max Geisenheyner (Kulturgeschichte des Theaters, Berlin, 1951) goes further and claims Grabbe as "der erste ausgesprochene Realist in des Wortes tiefster Bedeutung". Friedrich Sengle (Das deutsche Geschichtsdrama, Stuttgart, 1952) refers to his "historisch-realistisches Drama", Bruno Markwardt (Geschichte der deutschen Poetik, Berlin, 1959) to his "Frührealismus", and Walter Weiss (Enttäuschter Pantheismus, Dornbirn, 1962) to his "eigentümlicher Realismus". Max Spalter (Brecht's Tradition, Baltimore, 1967) sees Grabbe's

The label "realism" has, then, in a variety of contexts and with a multitude of qualifications, frequently been affixed to Grabbe's work during the last one hundred years. Not only major works of reference, but also studies of specifically literary interest by commentators of considerable repute have applied the term, without regard for consistency or accuracy, to the dramas which concern us here. This apparently indiscriminate use of a concept, in itself vague,<sup>6</sup> has done little to illuminate the poet's work and, unfortunately, much to cloud the issue with which the present study is concerned: the presence and significance of realistic elements in Grabbe's dramas. The definition of realism remains as confused in relation to Grabbe's work (the justification for the present study derives largely from this fact) as it does in literary usage as a whole. What, in fact, are we to understand by realism? This is a question which has been at the centre of a long and, particularly in recent years, intense debate.

1. The concept of literary realism: the "realism debate" and its implications for the present study

The contemporary discussion of the problem of literary realism, a subject which by now fills an almost unmanageable volume of literature, leads on directly from the efforts of early and mid-nineteenth-century

realism as an "illustrative realism". Ernst Alker (Die deutsche Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert, Stuttgart, 1969) labels him "der Frührealisten einer", Wolfgang Hegele (Grabbes Dramenform, München, 1970) admires his "unmittelbare und realistische Darstellung" of history, Manfred Schneider (Destruktion und utopische Gemeinschaft, München, 1973) speaks generally of "der Grabbesche Realismus" and Hans-Werner Nieschmidt (Deutung und Dokumentation, Detmold, 1973) identifies a "realistischer Weltentwurf" in the plays. Recently Lothar Ehrlich ("Leben und Werke C. D. Grabbes", Weimarer Beiträge, 23 (1977)) views realism as Grabbe's ultimate aim: "In der Schaffung eines realistischen deutschen Nationaldramas sah Grabbe sein Hauptziel."

<sup>6</sup> Grant speaks of the "chronic instability" of the term and notes its "uncontrollable tendency to attract another qualifying word, or words, to provide some kind of semantic support" (p.1). Grant lists thirty of the more common qualifying words.

writers to grasp a phenomenon which was clearly destined to become a major new force in literary art. Throughout Europe the literature of the age was beginning to display a tendency away from the classical aesthetic standard with its pronounced abstraction, idealism and predilection for the imitation of ancient literary models, away from the primacy of the imagination as upheld by the romantics, towards a more comprehensive grasp of empirical reality and an increasingly authentic portrayal of contemporary conditions. The term realism itself, René Wellek informs us,<sup>7</sup> appeared in France in a strictly literary context as early as 1826,<sup>8</sup> and by 1857 had established itself, with the aid of the novelist Champfleury, who published a series of essays under the title "Le Réalisme", and Edmond Duranty, who edited a short-lived periodical of the same name in 1856-7, as an accepted title for a particular mode of writing. In England the critic George Henry Lewes applied the term, in 1858, to "Recent German Fiction",<sup>9</sup> while in Germany itself Hermann Hettner, by 1850, felt able to point to Goethe's realism.<sup>10</sup> The following decades witnessed the consolidation of the position of the term throughout Europe as the designation of a particular literary movement.

In Germany the programmatic foundations for the development of this modern trend in art were laid in mid-century chiefly by the theoretical efforts of Julian Schmidt, who, between 1848-61, was jointly responsible with co-editor Gustav Freytag for the pioneering literary-political

7 In his article "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship", Neophilologus 45 (1961), 1-20.

8 In the Mercure francais du XIXe siècle: "Cette doctrine littéraire qui gagne tous les jours du terrain et qui conduirait à une fidèle imitation non pas des chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art mais des originaux que nous offre la nature, pourrait fort bien s'appeler le réalisme: ce serait suivant quelques apparences, la littérature dominante du XIXe siècle, la littérature du vrai. "Quoted from Elbert B. O. Bergerhoff, "Réalisme and Kindred Words: their Use as Terms of Literary Criticism in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", PMLA, 53 (1938), p. 839.

9 "Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction", Westminster Review, 70 (1858), 488-518.

10 In Die romantische Schule in ihrem Zusammenhang mit Goethe und Schiller (Braunschweig, 1850).

periodical Die Grenzboten.<sup>11</sup> The significance of this journal, particularly of Schmidt's contributions, in terms of the emergence of realism in Germany has in recent years gained increasing recognition and has come to overshadow even the theories of Otto Ludwig, whose aphoristic fragments, published posthumously, were long held to offer the key to an understanding of the objectives of German realism. The journal Preußische Jahrbücher, founded in 1858 and edited by Rudolf Haym, was also of considerable influence, and after the departure of Schmidt from Die Grenzboten in 1861 became the leading forum for contemporary literary debate. Like its forerunner it combined discussion of current literary-aesthetic themes with a marked right-wing Prussian "kleindeutscher" liberalism. Of lesser significance in the present context, though by no means to be overlooked, are two further journals; the Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung, edited by Hermann Marggraf (1848-64) and later by Rudolf von Gottschall (1865-88, himself an early Grabbe critic), both of whom occupied themselves with the discussion of literary realism; and the critiques of Robert Prutz in Deutsches Museum (1851-67) which proved, however, less influential.<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Theodor Vischer (Ästhetik, 1846-57) and Hermann Hettner (literary theoretician and correspondent of Gottfried Keller) are two other notable aestheticians who would merit inclusion in any extended consideration of the growth and interpretation of realism in nineteenth-century Germany. By 1867, at any rate, when a revised edition of Schmidt's literary history appeared, its author was firmly able to identify realism as the dominant current in the contemporary world of letters. From Schmidt's day on the debate has continued almost unhalting.

Since its beginnings the realism discussion has benefitted in many

11 For a detailed account of the theoretical bases of German realism see Helmuth Widhammer, Die Literaturtheorie des deutschen Realismus 1848-60 (Stuttgart, 1977).

12 Prutz' Deutsches Museum in its relevance to realist theory is the subject of a recent study by Ulf Eisele, Realismus und Ideologie: Zur Kritik der literarischen Theorie nach 1848 am Beispiel des Deutschen Museums (Stuttgart, 1976).



ways: the advance in methods of literary research and scholarship, combined with experience gained in the establishment of other literary concepts, has permitted a more profound grasp of the implications of the movement in question. Comparative enquiry has been able to set German realism alongside its European counterparts and place it in an international framework, whereby its characteristic qualities have become clearer, if no more appreciated in comparison with French and Russian realism.<sup>13</sup> Historical distance has permitted a more precise perspective and has allowed us to differentiate realism in its German manifestation from the later "consistent realism" of the naturalist period, a distinction which does not apply to the same degree to other European literatures. And historical research has provided commentators with a careful and reliable documentation of the sociopolitical background of the rise of realism in Europe during the 1800's.

The essential questions of the debate have, however, remained the same to this day. The capacity of a work of literature as a subjective and autonomous creation to reflect and interpret an objective empirical world which in itself is inimical to poeticisation is an eternal aesthetic problem which was first raised by Plato and Aristotle in their discussions of mimesis. The constant features of the discussion of the relationship between art and reality - for this is the problem which lies beneath any consideration of realism - are readily discernible: what is reality? Can an "external reality" be defined? Is not reality in part a historically determined variable? If so, then surely any concept of realism - "that

<sup>13</sup> Comparative criticism has long pointed disparagingly to the "anti-contemporaneous trend" of nineteenth-century German realism (Henry H. Remak, "The German Reception of French Realism", PMLA, 69 (1954), p. 412). This negative view, which was established by Herbert Cysarz (Von Schiller zu Nietzsche, Halle, 1928) and propagated by Erich Auerbach in his influential study Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur (Bern, 1946), has only recently been effectively combatted. Clemens Heselerhaus ("Das Realismusproblem", in Hüter der Sprache: Perspektiven der deutschen Literatur, edited by K. Rüdinger, München, 1959) and Fritz Martini in his Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus (Stuttgart, 1962) are among the critics who have tried to pinpoint and to do justice to the unique qualities of realism in its German manifestation.

effort, that willed tendency of art to approximate reality"<sup>14</sup> - is essentially fluctuating and must be redefined in relation to any number of different historical "realities"? Is not a literary work of art, with its dependence on words and symbols to create its own kind of reality, inherently incapable of acting as a mirror to a given external reality? Does the very essence of literary art - narration by an author - not entail an individualistic, if not to say subjectivistic view of the world? Are words, themselves charged with overtone and personal associations, able to create a faithful reproduction of the world which will be received by the reader in the spirit in which it was intended by the author? There are many barriers between reality and its incarnation in literary form, and these arise not least from the very nature of literary communication, which, in its process of relations between reality - author, author - text, text - reader, reader - reality, involves a number of variables. An examination of the relations between art and reality necessarily raises aesthetic, epistemological and perspectivistic questions. Ultimately it leads to an inescapable awareness of relativity, to a knowledge of "the inevitably subjective and therefore indeterminate status of reality".<sup>15</sup>

Despite a multitude of problems and an apparently infinite variety of possible critical approaches, the discussion of realism may be divided into two intricately connected and ultimately indivisible parts. In current literary usage the term denotes either a) a universal literary technique or style which is evident at many junctures in literary history and appears as a timeless feature of world literature,<sup>16</sup> or b) a specific period, the second half of the nineteenth century (in Germany somewhere between 1830-80), which witnessed the rise of such a style to the level of a dominant

14 Harry Levin, The Gates of Horn (New York, 1963), p. 3.

15 Grant, p. 7.

16 For a condensed history of realism in world literature from Plato to the "nouveau roman" of the 1960s and 70s see Stephan Kohl, Realismus: Theorie und Geschichte (München, 1977).

movement and saw it develop into an established aesthetic norm. It is to the second of these alternatives, realism as a "Periodenbegriff" rather than as a "Stilmerkmal", that the overwhelming proportion of critical literature has been devoted. Literary historians seem more concerned with the establishment of a valid and precise period concept than with the elucidation of a literary style in its timeless dimensions, a preoccupation which is in keeping with the current German interest in "Begriffsbestimmung" and the delineation of movements. Since, however, the international nineteenth-century realism phenomenon represents to a large extent the culmination of all those elements which are regarded as common to "realistic literature" of former ages, and arises from the development of a timeless mode of writing into a sophisticated and theoretically founded literary trend at a specific point in history, the two aspects of the problem are very closely related.

It is with realism as a perennial feature of literary production and its concomitant stylistic and technical innovations with which we are concerned here; our use of the term does not apply in any strict sense to the peculiarly German form of "Poetic Realism", with its insistence on "Verklärung" and "Idealrealität" and its search for positive values. The vast quantity of literature on the realism of the nineteenth century is of limited relevance to our discussion for two basic reasons. Chronologically the lifetime of the poet who is the subject of this study does not coincide with the realist movement proper in Germany: Grabbe died in 1836 at a time when realism had not yet developed into a clearly defined aesthetic but was still in its infancy. Despite early impulses (isolated instances of the new realistic literature are often seen, for example, in the work of Droste-Hülshoff, Grillparzer, Büchner and Immermann) realism was to flourish on both its theoretical and creative levels only after the abortive revolution of 1848 and emerged only here, in the middle of the century, as a major force in literature, gradually detaching itself from the prevailing currents of the Restoration Period - late romanticism,

Biedermeier and Junges Deutschland - to form a trend of its own. In the pre-revolutionary days of "Epigonentum" Grabbe was not exposed to the literary currents which were in the air some ten years later. From a purely historical point of view, then, our poet, although he inevitably shares many of the preconditions - social, political, intellectual and scientific - of developing literary realism, is excluded from the mainstream of its development. Much of the content of the major studies of German realism simply fails to apply to the situation as it stood in the "Vormärz".

The primary reason for the exclusion of our poet from the majority of critical considerations of the period is, however, to be sought in his choice of genre: Grabbe regarded himself as a dramatist and, unless various abortive attempts at the novel and his co-operation with Edward Hartenfells in the composition of a *Novelle* be taken into account, never attempted prose fiction.<sup>17</sup> By virtue of this fact he is divorced from the growth of realism in Germany, which was to develop in the epic forms of the novel and *Novelle*. All studies of German realism to date deal exclusively with epic genres and, while frequently acknowledging the innovations of Grabbe and Büchner, omit to explore the possibilities of a realism concept derived from the field of the drama or even to enquire into the feasibility of realistic drama. Bearing in mind the virtual disappearance of outstanding theatre in Germany between the advent of realism, which coincided approximately with the end of Grillparzer's creative career, and the arrival of naturalism (Hebbel is the notable exception), and in view of the overwhelming predominance of prose forms, such a bias in favour of the novel and *Novelle* is understandable. Whilst realism enters such genres in the mid-nineteenth century and develops to some extent chronologically

<sup>17</sup> Karl Ziegler, in his early biography of Grabbe (Grabbes Leben und Charakter, Hamburg, 1855), speaks of a novel, Ranuder, whose opening Grabbe read to him in 1834. Further plans for novels are mentioned by the poet in letters to his publisher G. F. Kettembeil during the summer of 1827 and later to Immermann (12 April 1834). The *Novelle*, Grupello, is included by Bergmann in the fourth volume of his historical-critical edition. The extent of Grabbe's involvement is by no means clear, although it seems to have been minimal.

and systematically, the realistic drama (or more precisely perhaps, the drama with marked realistic elements) appears and develops only sporadically, lacking any discernible causality and never attaining the status of a predominant genre or style. Whilst German naturalism manifests itself principally on the stage, German realism restricts itself almost exclusively to the epic.

For this reason the long history of the German realism discussion from Julian Schmidt (1867) to Ulf Eisele (1976), interesting though it is for the light it throws on the possible interpretations both of German realism and on the relationship between literature and reality in general, is of very limited value for our study of Grabbe's realism.<sup>18</sup> Only where it deals with the fundamental questions of realism - e. g. the ability of literature to assimilate the paraphernalia of the external world; the content of realistic literature; the historical situation of early realism - is current research of interest for our study. Where this research turns its attentions to perspectives and structures which are peculiar to epic forms, and many recent studies view this as the only valid approach to the problem,<sup>19</sup> it loses its relevance for dramatic art. Cross-reference between the realism debate in prose, then, and our considerations concerning the

18 In his Literatur des Realismus (Stuttgart, 1977), a brief but most useful introduction to the problems of realism, Hugo Aust recognises the generalising trend of much recent research: "Die Realismusforschung ist eine kontinuierliche Reflexion auf Möglichkeiten, Grenzen und Widersprüchlichkeiten einer ausdrücklich auf die Wirklichkeit bezogenen Literatur" (p. 22), thereby implying almost inadvertently that a great deal of this scholarship indulges in excessive abstraction. That some modern studies of realism have, in their attempt to fix a firm and acceptable concept, almost lost sight of the texts which must of necessity form the crux of any literary research is a conclusion which might well be drawn from a perusal of recent "Forschungsberichte" and compilations. Aust's book offers a reliable guide to the present state of research and provides useful bibliographical information. Kohl's study is a more detailed, fully documented survey of the field.

19 For example Richard Brinkmann's highly influential Wirklichkeit und Illusion: Studien über Gehalt und Grenzen des Begriffs Realismus für die erzählende Dichtung des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Tübingen, 1957, second edition 1966); Hubert Ohl, Bild und Wirklichkeit: Studien zur Romankunst Raabes und Fontanes (Heidelberg, 1968).

drama will of necessity be restricted. Of the vast wealth of research reviewed (and rejected) by Brinkmann in the introduction to his Wirklichkeit und Illusion, and this list includes the most notable attempts at an acceptable definition of realism over the last hundred years, including Schmidt (1867), Bieber (1928),<sup>20</sup> Nußberger (1928/29),<sup>21</sup> Martini (1935),<sup>22</sup> Auerbach (1946) and Lukacs (1951),<sup>23</sup> only a tiny proportion may be related to the drama. The same applies, regrettably, to Brinkmann's valuable compilation Begriffsbestimmung des literarischen Realismus, which brings together major extracts and articles from the post-war years and testifies more than any other work to the confusion which still prevails in academic circles over the precise definition of literary realism.<sup>24</sup>

The fundamental attributes of realistic literature are, however, largely consistent despite the genre problem, and they may be outlined here. Wellek's (by his own admission somewhat uncomplicated) definition provides a useful starting point for a brief consideration of the main points of the issue. He, largely adopting the criteria of the original nineteenth-century French concept of realism, defines it as "the objective representation of contemporary social reality", immediately raising issues

20 Hugo Bieber, Der Kampf um die Tradition: Die deutsche Dichtung im europäischen Geistesleben 1830-1880 (Stuttgart, 1928).

21 Max Nußberger, "Poetischer Realismus", in Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte, edited by P. Merker and W. Stammer, volume 3 (Berlin, 1928/29).

22 Fritz Martini, "Das Problem des Realismus im 19. Jahrhundert und die Dichtung Wilhelm Raabes", Dichtung und Volkstum, 36 (1935). Martini's early individual studies of German realism are compiled and reworked in his Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus.

23 Georg Lukacs, Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1951, written 1935-50).

24 Darmstadt, 1969. This anthology contains, among others, the important essays by Heselhaus ("Realismusproblem", 1959) and Wolfgang Preisendanz ("Voraussetzungen des poetischen Realismus in der deutschen Erzählkunst des 19. Jahrhunderts", 1963).

vital to the discussion.<sup>25</sup> Initially he recognises realism as direct representation, i. e. it is designed to present or reflect something outside itself, an external reality, a world apart from the realm of art. Basing his observations on the mainstream of European development, Wellek identifies this external reality as essentially social in nature, implying that reality has come to be conceived from a point of view which accords with the modern interest in sociological study. In this emphasis on the social aspect of realistic art - man as determined by his social environment - Wellek is supported by the vast majority of literary historians. Further, he maintains, the nature of this representation is to be objective. The poet is to view the social reality he presents from a detached viewpoint, avoiding direct comment and acting as a mirror, faithful and non-distorting, rather than as a creative narrator. He portrays and interprets reality "as it is" and offers this reality as valid. In the genre of the novel such objectivity results in the virtual disappearance of the author. Finally, Wellek suggests, the realist is concerned with issues which are contemporary: he is to interest himself in matters which are relevant to his own day and age. The major features of the greater proportion of realism concepts - imitative representation, objectivity and sociological interest - are already covered by Wellek's definition.

Realism can, of course, comprise of little more than two elements:

- 1) the reality which is to be presented - the content of the art, and
- 2) the means of presentation of that reality - the art of the content.<sup>26</sup>

Realism might be concisely defined, then, in a somewhat aphoristic formulation, as the "realistic presentation of a realistic reality". On the

<sup>25</sup> Wellek, p. 10. Duranty, writing in 1856/7, succinctly formulates the early "Selbstverständnis" of realism thus: "realism commits itself to an exact, complete, and sincere reproduction of the social milieu of the contemporary world ... this reproduction should therefore be as simple as possible so that anyone may understand it". Quoted from Grant, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Kohl makes the same distinction in his general summary of the requirements of realism: "Welche äußere Realität in die Dichtung aufgenommen wird und auf welche Art dies geschieht: Beides ist gleichermaßen untersucht zu werden" (p. 198).

thematic aspect general agreement has been reached. The reality of realism - particularly in the epistemologically naive conception of mid-nineteenth-century authors, and this is what concerns us here - is an empirical, materialistic reality, the causal reality of a natural world which is readily perceptible to the senses, intelligible to the human mind and universally recognisable by individual and collective alike as the reality of the world at large. This reality is the only truth. It is an undistorted, non-illusory, objective reality and is, in itself, of significance to the artist, determining the construction of the work of art. It does not merely provide a background for subjective fantasy or the starting point for romantic flights of imagination. It is non-esoteric and demonstrates a strict logic and necessity. Where it is socially conceived it operates in accordance with the laws of human interaction. It is, in opposition to idealistic aesthetic conceptions, a purely immanent and finite reality: the limits of human experience are the limits of reality. It is a world of probability in which only that which might take place in the outside world may be described in the work of art. Sociologically it is a mixed reality: avoiding the aristocratic tendencies of classical art, realism, apart from frequently treating social themes, upsets the conventions of traditional art by concentrating (in modern times) on the middle classes or even (throughout the history of literature) on the lower classes. It mixes social groups, raising lesser individuals, once regarded as suitable only for comic treatment, to serious, often tragic levels. It is truly democratic. It is capable, particularly in its later manifestations, of precise sociological observation, tracing social change and evolution. Often it is decidedly critical and reformist in nature.

Realism is the representation, reflection and observation of "everyday events". It treats these in a serious manner without contrivance, obvious aestheticism or excessive poeticisation. It is the faithful record of the happenings of a visible world and avoids forced artfulness or rigid stylisation. It strives, somewhat naively, to construct an artistic reality which corresponds directly with the reality of the "world outside". It deals



with human beings in a psychological as well as in a sociological dimension, benefitting increasingly from modern advances in the science of the mind and attributing considerable importance to the processes of individual thought. This attention to accurate psychological interpretation results in a depth of characterisation and penetration uncommon in classical art, which generally concerns itself with universal and symbolic abstractions. To the realist verisimilitude is as vital in the motivation of character as it is in other spheres. It contributes much to the overall totality of the realistic work of art which, in opposition to contrived exclusiveness and calculated restriction, seeks to grasp the world comprehensively in an open, flexible manner, avoiding the impression of selectivity and professing to provide a reflection of life as it is. It seeks to provide insight into the general truths of existence through the portrayal of particular cases (the concept of the "type" is very important to realism), at the same time placing these within a historical framework - reality is historical. Vital to the impression of realism is an accurate attention to detail which is designed to fill the work of art with the recognisable paraphernalia of the external world, e. g. details of location, setting, décor, time. Art moves, in every respect, closer to life. As regards its language, realism tends towards a closer approximation of natural speech than is apparent in other literary styles.

As a fundamental mode of writing realism stands in opposition to classicism and represents a characteristic tendency in literature. The antithesis classical - realistic / idealistic - naturalistic / ancient - modern is vital to the discussion since literary realism understands and justifies itself as a reaction against previous or predominant forms.<sup>27</sup> In particular it is to be viewed as an angry expropriation of the fancy, dreams and extreme subjectivism of romanticism, a movement which the early realists

<sup>27</sup> Kohl regards this as the very crux of the realist phenomenon: "Eindeutig läßt sich Realismus nur als oppositionelles Verhältnis zur herrschenden Kunstkonvention bestimmen, das durch eine relativ größere Wirklichkeitsnähe manifest wird" (p. 202).

most viciously attacked. At all points in the history of literature it differs both in its ethos and its aesthetic from elevated forms, rejecting poetic embellishment, grand idealisation, marked poeticism and strict stylistic norms. As regards its dissolution of the rigid separation of the tragic and the comic, its tendency to mix "high" and "low" themes,<sup>28</sup> its disregard for the distinction of social groups, its avoidance of highly classical subjects and its tendency to prosaic earthiness, it represents a direct antipode to established conventions. Realism, indeed, implies a philosophy far removed from that traditionally associated with courtly absolutism and classical-idealism, and not only in its nineteenth-century form appears as a reaction against classical standards. In its German manifestation it lies somewhere between romantic-subjective capriciousness or speculative idealism on the one hand, and anti-poetic, scientifically based, deterministic naturalism on the other.<sup>29</sup>

28: Auerbach sees the disregard for the classical "Stiltrennungsregel" as a major historical feature of realism and traces it back to the Bible.

29 That these features are universally held to constitute the thematic basis of the realist aesthetic may be seen from the following, representative quotations, drawn from both general and specifically literary works: "... the term realism may be loosely applied to any writing that seeks to portray life as it is (or, in histories and historical novels, as it is believed to have been), without embellishment or idealisation" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, London, 1967).

"... die Wiedergabe einer gegebenen Tatsächlichkeit in ihren empirisch faßbaren Grenzen" (Brockhaus Enzyklopädie, Wiesbaden, 1968).

"Die getreue, vollständige und wertfreie Abschilderung einer gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit, die in der individuellen und allgemeinen Erfahrung zugänglich ist" (Aust, p. 22).

"Die literarische Darstellung einer äußeren (objektiven) oder inneren (subjektiven) Erfahrungswirklichkeit, die der empirischen Erfahrungswirklichkeit analog erscheint (Martini, "Realismus", in Reallexikon, edited by P. Merker and W. Stammeler, third edition Berlin 1977, volume 3, p. 343-4).

"Programm objektiver, unpersönlicher Beobachtung und Abbildung zeitgenössischer Wirklichkeit, oppositionell zu "idealistischer" Thematik und Sprache und zu einem klassizistisch-romantisch ästhetischen Illusionismus des Schönen, Erhabenen und Poetischen" (Martini, "Realismus", p. 359).

"Das Realistische in den Dichtungen des Realismus besteht nicht allein darin, daß die Realität der Zeit, vorwiegend die gesellschaftliche Realität, in ihnen zur Darstellung kommt, sondern das Realistische besteht noch mehr darin, daß die Kunstmittel und Kunstformen nun ihres formelhaften Charakters entkleidet werden und aus der natürlichen Sprechlage, aus der Anschauung der Natur, aus der Wirklichkeit der damaligen Gesellschaft neugeboren und wiedergeschaffen werden" (Heselhaus, "Realismusproblem", 1959, p. 363).

"... die ernsthafte Behandlung der alltäglichen Wirklichkeit, das Aufsteigen breiterer und sozial tiefstehender Menschengruppen zu Gegenständen problema-

Whilst agreement has been reached that these elements are, generally speaking, central to the content of realistic literature in all its forms, differences of opinion are to be encountered in the contemporary discussion of nineteenth-century prose fiction. The bone of contention is whether realism is to be sought in, and any definitive conception of realism based on, the purely thematic content of a given work (i. e. simply in the extent to which a work of art reflects the external world) or whether it might not be more appropriately sought in the techniques literature uses to assimilate the external world and the structural difficulties which arise from such "objective" aims. It is to the credit of Brinkmann to have combatted any excessively narrow or simplistic conception which holds that literature can act purely as a mirror; in his study Wirklichkeit und Illusion he, pointing to the dual nature of realism ("Es handelt sich beim Realismus-Problem um die Frage der "objektiven" Wirklichkeit und der Möglichkeit ihrer "Objektivierung" in der Dichtung"),<sup>30</sup> comes down heavily in favour of a structuralist approach. Since the content of realistic literature is infinitely variable, Brinkmann suggests, only its forms are of positive value in any definition of the movement:

Das Materialobjekt des Begriffs Realismus (immer im Sinne von der Dichtung des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts) sind die Strukturformen der Dichtung, d. h. die Formen, in denen die Dichtung die Wirklichkeit der "dargestellten" Welt eben als ihre, der Dichtung eigene Wirklichkeit aufbaut. Alles Übrige hat ausschließlich im Zusammenhang mit diesen Formen und im Blick von ihnen einen Aussagewert für einen Realismusbegriff, der die Dichtung meint. Auch zu einem dichtungsgeschichtlichen Epochenbegriff, der nicht nur eine Übertragung aus anderen Bereichen sein soll, kann man auf gar keine andere Weise kommen.<sup>31</sup>

tisch-existentieller Deutung einerseits - die Einbettung der beliebig alltäglichen Personen und Ereignisse in den Gesamtverlauf der zeitgenössischen Geschichte, der geschichtlich bewegte Hintergrund andererseits" (Auerbach, p.458)

"Inhaltlich ist unübersehbar die neue Öffnung der realistischen Kunst gegenüber der zeitgenössischen alltäglichen Wirklichkeit, die mit Exaktheit in ihrer Wirkung auf den Menschen "aktualistisch" reproduziert wird. Gerade Mittelstand und untere Schichten der Gesellschaft werden dabei zu legitimen Vorwürfen des Kunstwerks: Beschränkungen in der Wahl des Sujets - wie etwa im Klassizismus - werden nicht mehr toleriert" (Kohl, p. 79).

<sup>30</sup> Brinkmann, pp. 58-9.

<sup>31</sup> p. 79.

The reactions provoked by this study, which is itself by no means free from one-sidedness, have done much to advance the realism debate. They do not, however, concern us further here: Brinkmann's work is quoted merely in order to provide an indication of the recent direction of the discussion in relation to prose fiction. The problems of defining the reality of a realistic work of literature do not apply to the same degree to the historical drama (the genre at the centre of this study), where the subject-matter is, as it were, prescribed. The formal and perspectivistic problems of the epic forms may not, furthermore, be transferred directly to the drama.

The drama, as has been noted, did not undergo the same rapid development towards a firmly established realism as did the epic genres during the nineteenth century, but continued to be composed in a variety of styles. Our discussion of realistic elements in Grabbe's dramas must therefore be conducted without reference to a marked tradition and, in a sense, take place in a vacuum. There are no consistently realistic dramatists with whom comparison might be made. Significantly, while a wealth of literature is available which concerns itself with the rise of the realistic/naturalistic drama in France and the growth of naturalist theatre in Germany, no extensive studies are to be found which deal with the early stimuli to emerging realism provided by important if isolated elements in the work of Grabbe and Büchner in Germany.<sup>32</sup> Our notion of realism with regard to Grabbe's work must, in view of the dramatist's separation from the mainstream of development, be conceived not merely in relation to the realism of the mid-century prose forms, despite an obvious chronological proximity, but also in relation to the naturalism of the end of the century, since this is where the line of drama continues after a breathing space of several decades.<sup>33</sup> It

<sup>32</sup> Klaus Ziegler's article "Stiltypen des Dramas im 19. Jahrhundert", in Formkräfte der deutschen Dichtung vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart, edited by H. Steffen (Göttingen, 1963), which examines the polarity of idealism and realism in the drama, remains an isolated enquiry into the subject.

<sup>33</sup> In her discussion of the literary forerunners of naturalism Ursula Münchow writes: "Die Errungenschaften der Dramatik des Vormärz wurden sogar erst durch die Bemühungen des Naturalismus wirksam" (Deutscher Naturalismus,

was no accident that Grabbe and Büchner were rediscovered by the naturalists.

Historically, of course, Grabbe shares many of the preconditions which were vital to the unfolding of the realist movement. The political awakening of Europe had come about as a result of the profound effects of the Napoleonic wars and the ensuing restabilisation of power on the continent. The belligerence of the French emperor had occasioned in his European neighbours a pronounced change in political thinking from apathy and indifference to united and aggressive action. The advances in the sciences, the sudden acceleration in technological development and rapid industrialisation (in Germany less sudden than elsewhere) changed the face of Europe. Capitalism flourished, the age of large-scale commerce was dawning, urban expansion commenced. The foundation of the new sociology (Comte; Proudhon; Saint-Simon) encouraged thinkers to view man in relation to his social environment, while developments in psychology (Herbart) deepened the understanding of the processes of the human mind. At the same time historicism was on the rise and the nineteenth-century preoccupation with history was being born out of the new attempts, undertaken particularly in Germany, to establish it as a precise science and a field of study based on accurate researches. In the sphere of philosophy, materialism was developing alongside systematic atheism. The bourgeoisie was gradually expanding and gaining in influence. All these developments were well under way by the time of Grabbe's death in 1836, and even if the playwright was to die before the full effects of such evolutionary processes could be felt, he was very much part of a transitional period which was witnessing the birth of the modern world. The consequences of such all-pervasive upheaval for the literary world were, naturally, considerable:

Der Wirklichkeitsbezug der realistischen Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert findet seine historische Prägnanz auf dem Hintergrund der naturwissenschaftlichen (Exaktheit, Kausalität, experimentelle Methode), philosophischen (Materialismus) und sozialen (Organisationsprobleme) Strömungen der Zeit: die Exaktheitsmethode

Berlin, 1968, p. 144). Hauptmann's Florian Geyer (1896) provides, as the only naturalistic historical drama of any standing, an interesting point of comparison with Grabbe's work.

begünstigt eine dem Detail zugewandte Wirklichkeitsdarstellung; das Kausalitätsprinzip zwingt zu einer strengen Motivation von Handlungsverlauf und Personenverhalten; die experimentelle Methode fördert die literarische Beobachterhaltung; die atheistische Anthropologie wirkt auf das künstlerische Menschenbild, und die Probleme der gesellschaftlichen Organisation bestimmen Funktion, Wirklichkeitsbild und Konfiguration realistischer Werke.<sup>34</sup>

What, then, of realism and the drama? Just as elements of realism are to be noted in epic forms well before the rise of the realistic movement in the nineteenth century (e. g. in the picaresque novel of the seventeenth century, in the "new novel" of the eighteenth, in the "pragmatischer Roman" of Wieland) so too does the history of European drama exhibit, at various points, marked features which have come to be associated with realism and were undoubtedly of importance for the unfolding of naturalist theatre in the late nineteenth century. Early European vernacular theatre, particularly in its comic forms, was by its very nature removed from the grand tradition of humanist and neo-classical drama as it developed in the sixteenth century. Here, in farces, interludes, facetiae and fabliaux, common people (generally deigned suitable only for comic treatment) were portrayed in their everyday life in native dramatic modes which were unsophisticated in construction. In Germany, secular drama was well-established in the comic playlets of the "Meistersänger", and the "Fastnachtspiele" of Hans Sachs, with their gruff humour and fairy-tale atmosphere, were a vital mode of theatrical art which remained independent of courtly influence. The Jesuit school drama, performed according to the regulations laid down in the Ratio atque institutio studiorum (1577), although in its initial stages rigidly orthodox, later began to absorb elements of the outside world and became considerably more colourful. In the Elizabethan theatre, in the drama of the Spanish Golden Age (particularly in de Vega's early models for domestic drama); in the seventeenth century in the popular dramas of Hardy and Scudéry in France and in Germany in Gryphius' Herr Peter Squentz (ca 1648) concessions were made to the taste of the populace and contemporary issues were treated.

A vital step in the direction of realism was taken by the consolidation in the eighteenth century of the domestic tragedy, which treated contemporary middle-class life in a serious manner. Under the influence of Lillo (London Merchant, 1731) and Diderot (Le fils naturel, 1757 and Le père de famille, 1758) this genre was introduced into Germany by Lessing and was to initiate an entire tradition in German literature. Indirectly it paved the way for the comic-melodramatic "dramas" of Kotzebue and Iffland which, despite a lack of literary quality, gave an added impetus to the development of realism through their portrayal of middle-class life, strong theatrical quality and dependence on prose speech. Further, the domestic drama was to form the basis of the social-psychological problem plays of Ibsen. A strong element of social criticism and a marked reaction against all things classical had been introduced in Germany in the 1770's through the efforts of the explosive "Sturm und Drang", and the social dramas of J. M. R. Lenz in particular are central both from the point of view of theme and form to any consideration of the rise of dramatic realism. Meanwhile in France the "well-made plays" of Scribe emphasised the need for an intricate and carefully conceived plot (if little else), while the romantic drama was continuing to combat the stale conventions of classicism which had insisted on a strict segregation of the tragic and the comic. The romantic drama, furthermore, brought with it the introduction of realistic stage techniques in performance. By the 1830's, then, there was considerable potential for the unfolding of a realistic form of theatre.

The vagueness of the expression "realistic theatre" makes it necessary for us to precede our examination of Grabbe's plays with a few general considerations on the nature of this dramatic style. The lack of detailed research into this question has frequently been noted,<sup>35</sup> and Wellek, in the absence of pertinent enquiries, feels able to comment:

<sup>35</sup> For example by Martini in the "Nachwort" to the third edition of his Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus (Stuttgart, 1974).

on stage realism often meant no more than the avoidance of certain improbabilities, of old stage conventions, the chance meeting, the listening at<sub>36</sub> doors, the too obviously contrived contrasts of older drama,

reducing dramatic realism to the simple removal of the more glaring technical devices of traditional theatre. Whilst the technical aspect is undoubtedly vital in any consideration of the subject - the obvious contrivances and highly theatrical conventions of classical theatre (secret letters, mistaken identities and sudden discoveries might be added to the list) are clearly an obstacle to a mode of writing which purports to approximate reasonably closely to real life - realism in drama is to be sought on a deeper level and appears not wholly divorced from its epic manifestations. Like its counterpart it aims at an objective (that is to say the intentions of the playwright are not to appear excessively patent) representation of events which, unlike those of conventional drama, are drawn largely from everyday life, avoiding the rarefied social strata of aristocratic drama (this consideration naturally does not apply to historical drama) and generally taking place in middle or lower-class locales. It, too, shows a propensity for social themes, often portraying class conflict and social determinism or change with a critical zest and a reformist zeal. Like the realistic epic it views man as a social rather than as an isolated being. Its themes are often contemporary, and the issues which were once deemed suitable only for satirical and comic treatment - the real issues of everyday life - are now regarded seriously and portrayed without poetic embellishment or blatant aestheticism. In its grasp of a given theme it avoids abstraction and exclusiveness and aims at comprehensiveness and totality, at the same time attaching great importance to psychological verisimilitude and sociological observation. Its characterisation is to be convincing, and, in its attempt to imitate the world outside the theatre, it fills the stage (and text) with detail and makes much of the empirical side of life. In stage setting itself, - décor,



location, properties, costume - it strives to create as accurate an illusion as is reasonably possible. As regards dramatic form it moves away from the highly stylised norms and rigid structures of "Aristotelian theatre" and aims at a high degree of "openness" and flexibility - in its desire to capture real life it cannot tolerate the strait-jacket of dramatic tradition. In speech, too, it hopes to imitate natural conditions. It aims, in fact, at untheatricality.<sup>37</sup>

Just as realistic drama stands in opposition to classical forms, so too does its vision of the world resist the idealism which is associated with the latter. Influenced largely by developments in modern knowledge, it posits a materialistic pragmatism and negates all speculative conceptions of man's position in the universe and of his relationship to the divine. Philosophical realism goes hand in hand with aesthetic realism. Man expects nothing beyond this world and is content within the limits of perceptible reality.<sup>38</sup> Realism is basic and down-to-earth, marked by a pronounced secularity, and it views the world as inescapably historical in nature. The individual is but a tiny part of an infinite and amorphous whole. All religious dimensions have been removed.<sup>39</sup> Man is conceived as an individual

37 John Gassner, writing of later realism in the theatre, notes that even in its early forms realistic drama opposes "art": "Mimesis, fortified after 1875 by a thoroughly realistic technique and attuned to modern sensitivity, whether mechanistic, skeptical, reformist, or revolutionary, became the dominant principle. The aim was to make dramatic art as untheatrical as possible" (Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, New York, 1965, p. 4).

38 Ronald Gaskell in Drama and Reality: the European Theatre since Ibsen (London, 1972) emphasises the same connection between philosophical and aesthetic realism. Discussing the term "naturalism", which in this context denotes the same as realism in our sense, Gaskell writes: "When we use the word of dramatic form, we mean that the action, characters and speech of a play ... remind us of everyday life. When we use the same term of a writer's outlook, we mean the belief that man, like the world he lives in, can be fully explained and understood in natural (as opposed to supernatural or spiritual) terms" (p. 12). Realism is not merely a mode of drama, but a conception of the world: "Central to the naturalistic vision is the belief that nature, the material world in which we change and die, is the real world and that there is no other" (p. 24).

39 Alfred Schwarz in his article "The Old Drama and the New: The Emerging of Modern Realism", Symposium, 20 (1966) asserts that "it /realism/ had as its supposition a sense of historical and social change and an essentially secular view of the world. The way was cleared towards a specifically modern realistic drama when the premises of a religious or morality tradition no longer dictated the type of action and the conception of what was tragic in the human situation" (p. 345).

(ultimately meaningless) component of a vast world, and he is presented in relation to a reality which is causal and mechanical, social and historical. The monologic stature of the classical hero, acting autonomously within a confined environment, has disappeared. Motivation has become more plausible and naturalistic. The reality of the work of art, which now strives to incorporate more of the world, has become aligned with the new scientific reality: the "doctrine classique" has died.<sup>40</sup>

Grabbe, with his predilection for historical drama, is divorced from the mainstream of development in realistic theatre, which was, as has already been mentioned, to be predominantly social.<sup>41</sup> In the realm of historical drama, furthermore, whose links with ancient and neo-classical forms are particularly strong, not all of the general conditions of realism can apply. Apart from its inability to treat contemporary and purely social themes, historical drama must, to a greater or lesser extent depending on its material, treat of personages of high station. Its realism is aimed not at the reproduction of a contemporary reality, but at the recreation of the colour and atmosphere, the conditions of a past age, and a major

<sup>40</sup> These observations on the nature of realistic drama coincide largely with the results of Ziegler's valuable article "Stiltypen". Ziegler's main criteria for the identification of realism in the drama are i) the rejection of the "weltanschauliche Ideengläubigkeit des klassischen Dramas", i. e. the "Auffassung der Wirklichkeit als Inbegriff reiner Tatsächlichkeit, deren eigengesetzlicher Kausalmechanismus sich gegenüber allen Sinn- und Wertgültigkeiten völlig indifferent oder sogar schroff feindlich verhält." (p.149). The result of this new thinking is "Subjektivismus, Skeptizismus oder gar Nihilismus." ii) a faithful mimetic reproduction of reality ("Wirklichkeitstreue der Darstellung"); iii) naturalistic dialogue: the transition from verse to prose, the use of dialect and sociolect, syntactical irregularities, vulgarities; iv) detail of setting, empirical fullness; v) the significance of milieu and a new causal determinism; vi) increased attention to the psychological motivation of characters; vii) a reduction of individualism in favour of "die Masse", expanded casts; viii) open dramatic form. The sum total of such elements is the essence of realistic drama: "das immer stärker empfundene und sich vordrängende Übergewicht des empirisch Tatsächlichen gegenüber dem ideell Gültigen" (p. 155).

<sup>41</sup> Heinz Kindermann in his Theatergeschichte Europas, volume 7, "Realismus" (Salzburg, 1965) differentiates between two types of dramatic realism in the early nineteenth century, whereby Grabbe clearly belongs to the second category: "So entwickelt sich dieses realistische Theater in zwei verschiedenen Aspekt-Dimensionen: als bürgerlicher Realismus auf der einen Seite und als Monumental-Realismus auf der anderen. Beide sind erfüllt vom neuen Wirklichkeitsdrang und vom neuen Psychologismus. Im bürgerlichen Realismus dominieren die soziologischen Züge, im monumentalen die historischen" (p. 13).

criterion in assessing the realism of such historical drama must consequently be the degree to which it succeeds in unearthing the currents and motivating principles of a selected epoch. The realistic-historical drama is concerned with the processes of history and the relationship between man and the real forces of his age. It strives for totality, a comprehensive grasp of multifarious historical forces, and attempts to place a historical period on the stage in its breadth and diversity, whereby the presence of the "masses" appears particularly vital. It attempts to understand the past and, without reducing it to a formula, to underline the causality of events. Above all it stands in opposition to the dramatic histories of classical idealism: the realist is interested in history as a paradigm of man's destiny and as the field of human interaction, not as the testing ground for ideals. History is reality and reality is historical. The artist is not concerned with the past as a screen onto which universal (quite unhistorical) and timeless issues are projected regardless of the historical value of the epoch selected. Nor is he concerned with history for its religious, nationalistic or educative value. History has become a neutral, finite, secularised, anti-mythological realm in which man acts on a restricted level. The poet's concept of history - the way in which he looks at the past, assesses and presents it - is of central importance in a discussion of realism. The author's intentions, his very reasons for turning to history for his themes, play a considerable role. Otherwise realistic historical drama employs those techniques associated with realistic theatre in its social form: objectivity; psychology; sociology; empiricism; flexible form; prosaic, naturalistic dialogue; immanent, materialistic philosophy; anti-poetic treatment.

These are the criteria which are commonly employed in a consideration of the realistic quality of historical drama. With their aid it is possible to discern, as does Friedrich Sengle, a fragmented line of development towards an increase in realistic elements at certain points in the history

of the genre:<sup>42</sup> in Götz von Berlichingen (1773) and Egmont (1787); in Wallenstein (1799) and Wilhelm Tell (1804); in Kleist's Die Hermannsschlacht (1808); in various elements of the dramas of Werner and von Arnim (particularly in the historical comedies); in Grillparzer and Immermann (Alexis, 1832 and Andreas Hofer, 1833); in Büchner's radical anti-idealism and mass-scenes; in Hebbel's realistic psychology and historical determinism; and in Otto Ludwig. While the problem of realism is by no means central to Sengle's study, he ascribes great importance to the role of realistic elements in the development of a truly historical drama in nineteenth-century Germany and, although he omits to offer a definition of the term as he applies it, implies considerations very similar to our own. The degree of seriousness and philosophical detachment with which the writer views his material - a genuine interest in history as a neutral force rather than as the embodiment of an ideal - is regarded as fundamental. Thus the playwright's intentions are of primary significance, whereby any calculated preconceptions, be they religious, ethical, moral, nationalistic, philosophical or whatever, impair the degree of realism achieved. Sengle notes further the importance of the artist's "Geschichtsauffassung", and underlines the correlation between philosophical and aesthetic realism. The autonomy of the historical background, freed from a merely decorative or symbolic function, as a vital and determining force; depth of historical vision; the reduction of individualism and the portrayal of broad and detailed historical environments are other relevant features. The concern with things historical (not purely anthropological) rather than with things through the veil of history, is the prime condition of realistic historical drama.<sup>43</sup> The main criterion in our discussion of Grabbe's realism will be

<sup>42</sup> Sengle, Geschichtsdrama, reprinted as Das historische Drama in Deutschland (Stuttgart, 1969).

<sup>43</sup> In his study "Das deutsche Drama der Neuzeit", in Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß, edited by W. Stammer, second edition (Berlin, 1960), Klaus Ziegler is guided by essentially the same criteria in his use of the term realism with regard to modern German historical drama. He examines the contrast between the poles idealism and realism in some depth.

the way in which and the extent to which his dramas strive to assimilate the phenomena of the real historical world.

## 2. Previous studies of Grabbe's realism

The earliest study which professes to concern itself with Grabbe's realism, Friedrich Wilhelm Kaufmann's article "Die realistische Tendenz in Grabbes Dramen", dates from 1931.<sup>44</sup> Its title is, however, misleading in as far as the problem of realism is not central to the discussion, which is primarily concerned with the poet's "Weltanschauung" and its development as manifested in his dramatic heroes. Kaufmann identifies developments in literary history rather too closely with those in philosophical thought, but is undoubtedly correct in pointing to a vital connection between realism as an outlook on the world and as a literary trend. The major shortcoming of Kaufmann's discussion of Grabbe's realism, is, however, his naive insistence on the spiritual make-up of characters as the mainspring - and virtually the only source - of realistic art.

Initially he distinguishes between three modes of tragedy. The first, the classical, derives from the conflict between individual freedom and empirical necessity: an immoderate assertion of the former results in tragic collision: "Ihre Tragik ist Tragik aus Mangel an idealer Begrenzung."<sup>45</sup> Romantic tragedy, on the other hand, arises from the restrictions imposed on infinite human longing and striving by the limitations of the material world: "Sie ist wesentlich Tragik der empirischen Begrenztheit des Individuums".<sup>46</sup> Grabbe's tragedy is, however, of a third - by implication realistic - kind. It is the tragedy of the individual who actively oversteps

<sup>44</sup> In Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, 12 (1931). This essay was reworked and translated into English for inclusion as a chapter of Kaufmann's German Dramatists of the 19th Century (New York, 1940, reprinted 1972).

<sup>45</sup> Kaufmann, "Die realistische Tendenz", p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> p. 5.

his worldly limitations and ignores the restrictions imposed upon him by empirical reality:

Grabbe's Tragik wandelt sich mit der Anerkennung der empirischen Willensbestimmung aus der romantischen Tragik der empirischen Begrenztheit zu einer Tragik der Nichtbegrenzung oder der Nichtanpassung an die empirischen Gegebenheiten.<sup>47</sup>

Each of Grabbe's heroes falls into this trap. The noun "realism" in its common sense of "practice of regarding things in their true nature and dealing with them as they are, ... practical views and policy"<sup>48</sup> is thus transferred direct to the terminology of literary scholarship. It is, Kaufmann maintains, the degree of "objectivity" in the hero's view of the world which determines the realistic quality of literature: any excess of subjectivity (a propensity towards egotism) results in the polar opposite of realism - in idealism. Empirical factors are regarded here as vital to realism only in as far as they, as obstacles of the real world, demand the hero's attention and respect. Realism is, then, to be sought largely in the protagonist's "Weltanschauung" - a character with a realistic outlook on life ("realistische Einstellung"), that is, with an awareness of his "Gebundenheit an die zeitlichen Bedingungen",<sup>49</sup> produces realistic art. Kaufmann identifies this as a prime "realistische Tendenz" which arises from both a "weltanschauliche" and a "literarhistorische Stellung". This is clearly a gross oversimplification of the problem of realism.

Grabbe is aware that reality is stronger than ideality, and those works in which the hero accepts this truth, Kaufmann argues, demonstrate a marked realistic tendency.<sup>50</sup> The reduction in the hero's self-assertion

47 Kaufmann, "Die realistische Tendenz", p. 5

48 Concise Oxford Dictionary

49 Kaufmann, "Die realistische Tendenz", pp. 18-19.

50 "Daraus ergibt sich, daß nicht das idealistische Wollen, sondern das realisierbare Wollen, d. h. die Zielsetzung unter Berücksichtigung der Wirklichkeitsbedingungen den höheren Wert für Grabbe bedeutet" (p. 35). Thus, in Marius und Sulla Marius represents the subjective principle while Sulla, the cold, calculating "Realpolitiker", is completely objective. The development towards realism in Kaufmann's sense is seen in the dual heroes of this drama.

and the increase in the historical potential of the "Volk" in the later dramas (a premise which is, in itself, debatable) results in a more optimistic turn in Grabbe's thought. This subsidence of pessimism is itself equated with an increase in realism.<sup>51</sup> "Die egoistische Überhebung des Individuums über die Realität"<sup>52</sup> which was seen in the earlier dramas assumes, from Napoleon on, a more concrete form in the collision of "Held" and "Volk"; the realist in Grabbe gains the upper hand. Kaufmann postulates that the development in philosophy from the subjective-idealistic to the objective-positivistic finds a direct parallel in Grabbe's attitude to the hero and reality. Ultimately, Kaufmann concludes, Grabbe is not to be regarded as either a realist or as an idealist: his works combine elements of the two:

Die Eigentümlichkeit Grabbes ist es, daß er weder einseitig vom Individuum, also mit idealistischer Einstellung, noch einseitig vom Volke aus, also positivistisch, angesehen werden darf.<sup>53</sup>

The poet is both romantic and realist, torn between objectivity and subjectivity.<sup>54</sup>

Kaufmann's survey confuses the issue of Grabbe's realism by transferring the vacillation between the extremes of objectivity and subjectivity, which is often seen as a central feature of Grabbe's personality, directly to his dramatic characters and making this the fundamental problem of realistic literature. Such an approach, which is interested only in characterisation and equates realism as a practical attitude and a mode of behaviour with realism as an artistic credo, is clearly misleading.

Kaufmann is justly criticised on account of his confused approach and failure to establish a meaningful "Fragezusammenhang" by Heinrich Leippe in his essay "Das Problem der Wirklichkeit bei Chr. D. Grabbe".<sup>55</sup> It is not enough, Leippe suggests, to indicate general realistic tendencies in Grabbe's

51 p. 43.

52 p. 18.

53 p. 39.

54 p. 5.

55 In Vom Geist der Dichtung: Gedächtnisschrift für R. Petsch, edited by F. Martini (Hamburg, 1949).

dramas; rather a definite "Wirklichkeitsverständnis" should be sought. The poet's conception of reality should be unearthed and examined in its relationship to his creative work. It is, however, clear from Leippe's remarks that he hopes to derive such a conception from the most diverse sources:

Grabbes Bestimmungen des Wirklichen, wie sie aus seinen Schriften und Briefen als Geschichtsdeutung, Zeitdiagnosen, Prophezeiungen, als Stellung zur Frau, Verhältnis zu Gesellschaft und Moral, Reagieren auf politisches Geschehen usw. in Erscheinung treten, und wie sie in seinen Dramen sich in Charaktergestaltung, Handlungsführung, dramatischem Vorgang, Orts- und Zeitbehandlung zu einer neuen Wirklichkeitsstruktur im ästhetischen Raum zusammenschließen, durchlaufen die verschiedensten Bereiche und stellen ihre Sicht von den unterschiedlichsten Standpunkten aus an.<sup>56</sup>

Leippe's view of Grabbe's reality is drawn from biographical, social, political, intellectual and personal conditions as revealed in the poet's letters and reviews. Nowhere is there any direct reference to the dramas themselves. Further, Leippe assumes a direct correlation between Grabbe's sense of contemporary reality ("Erlebnis") and the reality of his works ("Dichtung"), an approach which must nowadays be regarded as highly suspect. Neither reality, Leippe suggests, is consistent or readily definable.<sup>57</sup> Although he locates realism in Grabbe's characterisation and treatment of space and time, Leippe is evidently more concerned with the sense and structure of reality in the works than he is with the problem of realism as such:

Es sind nicht beliebige "realistische" Momente bei Grabbe zusammenzutragen, sondern es gilt, eine ausgezeichnete Wirklichkeitsbeziehung aufzufinden, in der Grabbes Wirklichkeitshaltung, insofern sie für die Ganzheit seiner schöpferischen Individualität und deren gültigsten Ausdruck: Weltbild und Stil, bestimmend ist, gegriffen werden kann.<sup>58</sup>

Inevitably the solution to this problem is to be found in Grabbe's treatment of history.<sup>59</sup> Grabbe's reality is historical, and an examination

<sup>56</sup> Leippe, p. 273.

<sup>57</sup> Reality is "als eindeutiges Bild bei Grabbe scheinbar nie zu packen" (p. 271).

<sup>58</sup> p. 275.

<sup>59</sup> "Eine solche ausgezeichnete Wirklichkeitsbeziehung liegt in Grabbes Stellung zur Geschichte vor" (p. 276).



of the poet's view of history is thus able to illuminate his view of reality as a whole. Leippe proceeds to consider Grabbe's concept of history from the point of view of the "Geist der Geschichte". This is the "zentrale Bedeutung" of Grabbe's work.<sup>60</sup> Grabbe, in his treatment of historical material, acts both as artist and historian, striking a balance between aestheticism and facticity, and he attempts, in his desire to decipher the spirit of history, to uncover the laws of reality. The most severe test of the poet's ability to achieve this aim is presented by the material of the Napoleon-drama, which is chronologically close enough to the poet's contemporary reality to secure an insoluble bond between past and present. The poet, as many of his utterances confirm, regarded this experiment as a success: the balance between fact and interpretation is found. Historical instinct - the ability to discern contemporary political currents - is the key, Grabbe believes, to a comprehensive grasp of reality. Thus his treatment of the Napoleon theme represents an attempt to come to terms with the past, the present and the future at one and the same time. Political insight makes all three possible. Realism in Leippe's sense, then, is synonymous with the presentation of a conception of reality, and reality itself has become purely political. Realism is to be sought in the relationship between a poet's view of the world and the reality presented in the literary work: aesthetic criteria are cast aside.

Leippe's inconclusive and confusing essay suffers, perhaps, from an even greater diversity of "Frageansätze" than the article by Kaufmann which he criticises so harshly. This is, in view of the approach adopted, hardly surprising: any attempt to construct a "view of reality" based on biographical-psychological evidence drawn from Grabbe's letters is doomed to failure by the poet's ambivalent and complex personality and his desire to project a false image of himself to his correspondents. Although Leippe states his intention to define Grabbe's reality with the aid of evidence

<sup>60</sup> p. 275.

"aus den Lebenszeugnissen und dem konkreten Text"<sup>61</sup> he does not, in fact, refer to one single work and contents himself with speculations founded on quotations from Grabbe's correspondence, essays and reviews. His attempt to establish a unified level of reality within the poet's conception of history suffers greatly from a lack of textual support, and his concern with "Wirklichkeitsverständnis" leads him away from the problem of realism as such. Leippe's contribution to our field of interest is, therefore, minimal.

The only full-length, systematic studies of Grabbe's realism come to us from the German Democratic Republic and are consequently heavily ideological in approach. The first of these, by Erich Kühne, places Grabbe and Büchner against the background of the process of the democratisation of political thought in Germany from Möser to Börne and seeks to determine the progressiveness of their dramatic art through an analysis of political and social themes.<sup>62</sup> In so doing it follows purely Marxist principles of literary interpretation and adheres to a rigid socialist concept of realism. The Marxist, in determining the degree of realism attained by an author, asks: "in welchem Maße bestimmen die materialistischen und dialektischen Erkenntnisse der Gesellschaftsentwicklung die ästhetische Theorie?"<sup>63</sup> Realism is conceived purely as a reflection of social history, but one, inevitably, which interprets history in a strictly Marxist sense and therefore adds a utopian aspect to historical fact.<sup>64</sup> Grabbe, according to Kühne,

61 p. 275.

62 Erich Kühne, "Über die Anthropologie Grabbes und Büchners und den Realismus ihres Geschichtsdrames: Zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte des Verhältnisses von Volksbewegung und Einzelpersönlichkeit in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts" (Habil. Berlin, 1951).

63 Kühne, p. 209.

64 Marxist scholars, in their discussions of the literary phenomenon "realism", are invariably concerned to trace early evidence of the emergence of socialist realism. The latter, regarded by Marxist commentators as the only valid form of art, combines a veristic reproduction of reality with a preconceived political dimension: "Der sozialistische Realismus ... fordert vom Künstler wahrheitsgetreue, historisch konkrete Darstellung der Wirklichkeit in ihrer revolutionären Entwicklung." Quoted from H. J. Schmitt and G. Stramm, Sozialistische Realismuskonzeptionen (Frankfurt, 1974), p. 390.

was never able, due to his unfortunate historical situation, to recognise the true political potential of the "Volk".<sup>65</sup> Moreover he was "unparteilich" and guilty of "Formalismus" and even "Ästhetizismus".<sup>66</sup> As a "bürgerlicher Desperado" he was "durchaus nicht von plebejischen Sympathien bestimmt".<sup>67</sup> Yet he does, even in his early dramas, partly meet the major requirement of realism - the portrayal of class conflict as the motivating power behind historical development - betraying a measure of insight into historical materialism.<sup>68</sup> The fundamental tenets of the Marxist realism concept which Grabbe fulfils are outlined by Kühne thus:

Durch die quantitative Breite und annähernde Vollständigkeit in der Darstellung aller Gesellschaftsschichten durch eine Reihe verschiedenartiger Charaktere und Typen ist es Grabbe möglich, die ökonomisch-politische Struktur der dargestellten Epoche in ihrer ideologischen Spiegelung darzustellen, die Schwäche und Schranken der plebejischen Massen aus der Unentwickeltheit der ökonomischen Verhältnisse, die Robustizität und den Zynismus der feudalen Politik aus dem Besitz sämtlicher gesellschaftlicher, ökonomischer wie politischer, Machtpositionen anzudeuten. Hinter der dargestellten Ideologie und Gesellschaft der römischen Epoche der beginnenden Diktatur wird die Metternich-epoche mit ihrer Vorbereitung des Bonapartismus transparent.<sup>69</sup>

Breadth and depth in the portrayal of social classes through differentiated characters and representative types; the reflection of political-economic structures; the tracing of the inadequacy of the masses and the (temporary) domination of the aristocracy back to material circumstances; allusion to contemporary conditions through historical themes. These, combined with an accurate recreation of the spirit of the past, are, in Kühne's view, vital

65 Other Marxist critics are more complimentary to the "Volk" in Grabbe's dramas.

66 Kühne, p. 98. "Parteilichkeit" - partisanship - is vital to the socialist view of realism as conceived by Lenin and is outlined in his "Parteiorganisation und Parteiliteratur" (1905). Proletarian sympathies must always be in evidence.

67 Kühne is the only socialist critic to deny Grabbe any plebeian leanings.

68 "Die historische Bedeutung und der realistische Fortschritt der Römerdramen Grabbes ... bestehen ... darin, daß es ihm gelingt, wenigstens in Ansätzen die realen gesellschaftlichen Inhalte darzustellen" (Kühne, p. 67).

69 p. 68.

to realism. With time such considerations become so important to Grabbe that he learns to derive tragic conflict from concrete social causes.<sup>70</sup> Hannibal, consequently, represents a "Musterbeispiel" of early realism, since the downfall of its hero is explicable in purely socio-political terms,<sup>71</sup> while Napoleon, despite its "naturalistische Akribie" and "naturalistisch-pointillistische Darstellung" of the masses relies on chance (along with fate the most "un-Marxist" of factors) to crush its protagonist.<sup>72</sup> But even though Grabbe does attribute an active role to middle and lower-class figures (an essential technique of realism in the socialist conception) he fails to grasp the monumental power of the proletariat. His realism is impaired by

ein Ausweichen und Nichtgestalten der gesellschaftsumgestaltenden Aktivität der Volksmassen, der plebejischen Ideologie und der Entwicklungsmöglichkeit des Bewußtseins in den revolutionären Klassenkämpfen.<sup>73</sup>

In the final analysis his historical situation, with its lack of a politically conscious proletariat, prevents him from recognising the power of the lower classes. Ultimately "die Fundierung der realistischen Literaturtheorie und -praxis durch den proletarischen Klassengedanken ist für Grabbe nicht möglich".<sup>74</sup>

Grabbe's work lacks, according to Kühne, two further vital elements of literary realism: "Typik" and "Perspektive". By the first he understands the ability of the work of art to place its specific theme within a general historical perspective, suggesting the future and the universal through the

<sup>70</sup> "Der Realismus Grabbes ist in seinen letzten Dramen bereits so bedeutend, daß er den dramatischen Konflikt und die ideologischen Probleme seiner Charaktere nicht mehr in vitalistischen Verhüllungen zeichnet, sondern in ihrem Zusammenhang mit den konkreten, gesellschaftlich-politischen Ursachen aufzudecken imstande ist" (p. 91).

<sup>71</sup> p. 160.

<sup>72</sup> p. 165.

<sup>73</sup> p. 165.

<sup>74</sup> p. 231. Grabbe's work thus suffers as a result of the retarded state of historical development in nineteenth-century Germany which Lukacs uses, in Deutsche Realisten, to explain the backwardness and lack of social criticism of the "Poetic Realism" phenomenon.

present and the particular.<sup>75</sup> He develops the second into the notion of "perspektivische Verschiebung", the technique of imposing the knowledge of later historical development onto the material treated while at the same time indicating the necessity of such developments in the work of art.<sup>76</sup> Both these are "Grundforderungen des Realismus".

The inadequacy of Marxist dogma in the elucidation of early literary realism is evident: it is in danger of demanding from creative art mere historical documentation. At the same time it does not require that a writer reproduce reality directly, but rather demands the portrayal of a pre-conceived, utopian, revolutionary "reality". The justification for the presentation of such a reality is not its actual existence, but its inevitable development in accordance with Marxist truths.<sup>77</sup> The insistence on a grasp of historical materialism with its concomitant sociological, political and economic insight, the emphasis on plebeian sympathies and on the recognition of the eventual triumph of the proletariat as conditions of realism degrades literature to the level of pure ideology or even propaganda. When applied to pre-Marxian authors it results in an often overambitious search for evidence of emerging historical materialism and frequently in embarrassed apologia. The restriction of realism to one political doctrine, to one social class, merely to content rather than to form or language, deprives the term of any general validity as a literary label, and the insistence on revolutionary fervour as the hallmark of great art is clearly a

<sup>75</sup> Kohl defines the socialist concept of "Typik" thus: "Methodisch wird die Zukunft in der Gegenwart durch die zentrale Kategorie des Typischen gestaltet. Als "typisch" werden dabei nicht das Durchschnittliche, am häufigsten Vertretene bewertet, sondern jene Charaktere und Tendenzen, die in der Gegenwart die Zukunft am deutlichsten vorwegnehmen" (p. 150).

<sup>76</sup> Kühne defines it as "die dialektische Darstellung der geschichtlichen Weiterentwicklung in der Zuständlichkeit der wiedergegebenen historischen Phase" (p. 176).

<sup>77</sup> Reality is based simply on "die wissenschaftliche Einsicht in die gesetzmäßig verlaufenden Prozesse des Übergangs vom Kapitalismus zum Kommunismus" (Zur Theorie des sozialistischen Realismus, Berlin, 1974, p. 114).

suspect aesthetic criterion.<sup>78</sup>

Precisely the same standards are, however, applied in a later socialist study of Grabbe's realism, with very similar results. Hans-Dieter Schaefer operates with an equally narrow concept of realism, restricting his enquiry to "die Frage des Realismus ... in seinem gesellschaftlichen Gehalt", and sees Grabbe "auf halbem Wege" to a truly realistic art.<sup>79</sup> Schaefer's starting point is the same as Kühne's and locates realism purely in the extent of social vision. Such vision is, in Schaefer's view, fundamental to dramatic art:

Die Gattungsgesetzmäßigkeiten der dramatischen Dichtung erfordern ... über die Selbstdarstellung des Dichters hinaus eine künstlerische Widerspiegelung gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse, deren Widersprüche sich im dramatischen Konflikt konzentrieren.<sup>80</sup>

This premise itself is highly contentious. After the subjective confusion of the early works, which lack firm social themes, Grabbe takes recourse to history: here he is able to present the vital "Dialektik zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft",<sup>81</sup> later arriving on the very threshold of realism - "eine materialistische, die wahren /!!!/ Antriebe historischen Geschehens aufdeckenden Geschichtsauffassung".<sup>82</sup> Here Grabbe manages to find some perspective, but, since his age denies him a proletariat on which he might pin his hopes, he is unable to adopt a truly revolutionary stance. Ultimately he lacks "die sicher begründete historische Perspektive".<sup>83</sup>

Again realism is viewed almost as a political conviction, so much so,

78 Great art is, in the Marxist definition, revolutionary since it recognises and reacts against the contradiction inherent in the capitalist system. Realism is the only valid form of art because it alone attempts the accurate (but partisan) portrayal of the mechanisms of social development, thus reflecting the objective historical basis on which all art is conceived.

79 Hans-Dieter Schaefer, "Chr. D. Grabbe: Die Herausbildung seiner Weltanschauung und sein Beitrag zur Entwicklung des realistischen Dramas" (Diss. Berlin, 1965), p. 67.

80 p. 27.

81 p. 44.

82 p. 54.

83 p. 220.

in fact, that Schaefer on one occasion, when contrasting it with its opposite, labels that opposite "reaktionär".<sup>84</sup> By definition realism is anti-capitalistic, and Grabbe's merit lies to a great extent in his antipathy towards this economic system: "Sein Verdienst um realistische Gesellschaftsdarstellung liegt hier in der kritischen, illusionslosen Darstellung wesentlicher Züge des Kapitalismus".<sup>85</sup> Here political and aesthetic considerations are totally confused, and accurate (in Marxist terms) political interpretation is of such importance in realistic art that the critic feels justified in correcting any deviations from approved "party line". Schaefer thus criticises Grabbe for his false and distorted glorification of the absolutist Barbarossa, chides the poet for his misinterpretation of the true historical implications of the Hannibal theme (namely the victory of "des immerhin noch von republikanischer Tugend erfüllten Rom über das zerfallende Karthago"),<sup>86</sup> regrets that the feudal nature of ancient Germanic society prevents the exploration of social issues in Die Hermannsschlacht, and praises the dramatist for his astute and untimely appraisal of Napoleon.<sup>87</sup> He laments Grabbe's choice of material in Herzog Theodor von Gothland since the selection of this theme prevents the poet from seeing the great Marxist truths and from exploring the objective social themes he would really have liked to explore - as if choice of theme were not evidence of an author's intentions!<sup>88</sup> Had Grabbe been born later, Schaefer implies, he would have been a convinced socialist and his art truly realistic. As it was he was

<sup>84</sup> Napoleon is realistic, but Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa, since it displays an idealistic tendency and glorifies monarchist despotism, is reactionary. (p. 112).

<sup>85</sup> pp. 142-3.

<sup>86</sup> p. 200.

<sup>87</sup> "Grabbe ist nicht dem Irrtum der bürgerlichen Geschichtswissenschaft verfallen" (p. 166).

<sup>88</sup> "Grabbe will zu entscheidenden Erkenntnissen vom Wesen des Weltlaufs gelangen, doch Stoff und Fabel bieten nicht die genügenden Voraussetzungen zu einer Erkenntnis objektiv-gesellschaftlicher Gesetze. Ein "Sieg des Realismus" im Sinne Engels ist nicht möglich, weil der Dichter mit dem von ihmersonnenen Stoff verfahren kann, wie er will" (p. 27).

hampered by the political and social backwardness of his contemporary Germany - "die Urmöglichkeit, in der deutschen Gegenwart Stoffe zu entdecken, die dramatische Zuspitzung als Ausdruck eines bestimmten zu revolutionärer Lösung drängenden Klassengegensatzes ermöglicht hätten."<sup>89</sup>

The Marxist view of Grabbe's realism has numerous shortcomings. It is concerned exclusively with the socio-political content of the works and measures both realism and literary quality in terms of the degree of historical materialism displayed. Its attentions in any analysis are firmly centred on the "Volk" in its political role with a particular view to anti-capitalist, revolutionary consciousness.<sup>90</sup> It discards aesthetic standards altogether - Schaefer, for example, is able to rank Aschenbrödel above Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung because of its social implications.<sup>91</sup> In the case of Grabbe, the Marxist search for such ideological issues leads to a complete disregard of the early non-historical dramas and their contribution to emerging realism; their lack of "soziale Thematik" simply disqualifies them from serious consideration. Further, Marxism demands of a work of literature direct relevance to the writer's contemporary situation - something which is not easy to find in Grabbe. It ignores, in its one-sidedness, those features which are commonly held vital to realism in any form: objectivity (plebeian "Parteilichkeit" involves prejudice); anti-illusory "Weltanschauung" (the socialist conception of realism demands a utopian perspective); an attention to empirical detail; naturalism in

89 pp. 27-8.

90 According to Schaefer realism demands "ein lebendiges Bild des Volkes in seiner Macht und Vielschichtigkeit" (p. 155). Fritz Böttger, another socialist commentator, does not attempt to hide the fact that he regards Grabbe's "tiefschürfende Kenntnis der plebejischen Schichten und die Einwirkung demokratisch-revolutionärer Tendenzen als die wesentlichsten Quellen seines Realismus" (Grabbe: Glanz und Elend eines Dichters, Berlin, 1963, p. 27).

91 In Aschenbrödel, according to Schaefer, Grabbe "arbeitet die materiellen Antriebe als die entscheidenden Faktoren beim Handeln der Menschen des Adels und des Bürgertums heraus" (p. 64). Grabbe is here "auf einer höheren Stufe". Schaefer arrives at the ridiculous conclusion: "Kettembeil wußte, warum er das Werk ablehnte - es war einfach zu gesellschaftskritisch, zu realistisch!" (p. 64).



dialogue; verisimilitude in psychology of characterisation. And since, in its Marxist sense at least, realism involves the recognition of the ultimately inevitable triumph of the proletariat and an awareness of future harmony, it negates pessimism and demands a hopeful, highly idealistic attitude to historical development. On this point socialist critics have always struggled with regard to Grabbe.<sup>92</sup> While both Kühne and Schaefer are undoubtedly correct in identifying a materialistic view of history as the prime source of Grabbe's realism and in stressing his desire to expose socio-political mechanisms, their demand for a distinctly progressive political element is clearly incompatible with the term "realism" in an aesthetic sense.

### 3. The aims and method of the present study

The studies of Grabbe's realism surveyed above all suffer from a marked limitation of approach: Kaufmann's existential-metaphysical stance, Leippe's search for a definitive view of reality, Kühne's and Schaefer's doctrinaire preoccupation with dialectical materialism all concentrate on individual features of the problem without striving towards any degree of comprehensiveness.<sup>93</sup> They all disregard the possibility that the realistic quality of a work of literature may derive not merely from one central feature, but from a variety of sources, the sum total of which creates a realistic impression. It is partly as a correction, but largely as an expansion of these previous views that the present study is conceived. It aims to contribute to the discussion of the problem of realism in Grabbe's

<sup>92</sup> The concept of realism outlined above is applied by all Marxist Grabbe critics (for a list see chapter two). Most recently Ehrlich ("Leben und Werke") has echoed the conclusions surveyed here: "Grabbes Werke sind konsequente Versuche einer realistischen Darstellung von Widersprüchen seiner Epoche. Oft sind diese Ansätze zur realistischen Widerspiegelung der Realität nicht voll bewältigt, oft bleiben sie in der Erkenntnis der sozialen Zusammenhänge der Geschichtsprozesse auf halbem Wege stehen" (p. 91).

<sup>93</sup> Other studies which touch upon the question of Grabbe's realism in passing, as many do, will be treated in the course of the discussion.

dramas by examining those aspects of his works which are commonly cited in this context. As has already been noted, virtually all critical discussions of the poet's work employ the term in some form or another, and it is a striking feature of Grabbe scholarship that the label "realism" is applied indiscriminately, almost automatically to the dramas, with little concern for its appropriateness. While areas of "realism" are invariably mentioned by the majority of commentators, they are never explored. A full-length discussion of those aspects most frequently regarded as central to Grabbe's so-called realism, of their development, their relationship to one another and their significance within the tradition of the genre, will be able to examine the justification and correctness of the use of such a term and offer a more precise view of its implications. At the same time it will be able, by combining a consideration of thematic, formal and linguistic elements, to provide a more detailed and comprehensive insight into the realistic quality of Grabbe's works than has been possible in existing studies.

The fact that realism is not applied here as a rigid concept (like all literary labels it is largely fluid) does not preclude an advance in an awareness of its implications. With the exception of Claude David all commentators on nineteenth-century German literature have accepted the general validity of the term despite its conceptual unclarity.<sup>94</sup> While Walter Höllerer disputes the usefulness of such an imprecise and all-embracing term with regard to Grabbe,<sup>95</sup> there is no escaping the fact that the basic, if general, polarity realism - idealism is essential to the development of literature and rests on a firmly established conception of two characteristic tendencies in art. Where literature divorces itself from abstract ideality and consciously strives towards the assimilation of an ever increasing number of elements of concrete reality, postulating

94 Claude David, Zwischen Romantik und Symbolismus (Gütersloh, 1966).

95 "Grabbes Wahrheit ist nicht mit dem Schlagwort Realismus zu fassen ... Die Entgegensetzung Drama des Idealismus / Drama des Realismus ist schematisierend" (Zwischen Klassik und Moderne, Stuttgart, 1958, p. 397).

that intelligible reality and truth are identical, the description "realistic" is valid and has considerable suggestive power.<sup>96</sup>

The areas in which realism is generally identified in the dramas, then, form the basis of this discussion.<sup>97</sup> Thus our examination inevitably attaches primary importance to Grabbe's view of history, which unquestionably accounts for a significant part of the realistic effect of the dramas in question. The nature of Grabbe's historical world is a central issue in our discussion, all the more so since it remains, despite continued critical attention, the subject of considerable dispute. The extended examination of this aspect in the present study - the fundamental importance of the topic justifies detailed treatment - is intended both as a stage in the realism discussion and as a contribution to an area of interest which continues to occupy Grabbe commentators. Basic issues in any analysis of the dramas, e. g. the nature and function of the heroic figure, the significance of the "masses", the "Geist der Geschichte", cannot be overlooked and must inevitably be resolved before any valid judgement can be reached. As vital

96 The concept of realism is not as empty as Höllerer suggests. Its pertinence with regard to Grabbe has been defended most recently by M. Schneider: "Es läßt sich ... dort, wo die Wirklichkeit (geradezu als materialistisch-seelenlose Realität) mit solcher Macht in die Welt eines Kunstwerkes eindringt und gleichzeitig formkonstruierend wirkt, dem definitiven Angebot des Begriffs Realismus ... kaum ausweichen" (p. 230). Höllerer's rejection of the concept of realism with regard to Grabbe rests on a further misconception - his assertion "Die Entdeckung Grabbes und Büchners zur Zeit des Expressionismus weist auf Sprach- und Gestaltungsschichten, die nicht poetisch-realistisches Gepräge tragen" (p. 397) is based on an error. The rediscovery of Grabbe and Büchner began not at the time of expressionism, but during the period of naturalism, the culmination of the nineteenth-century trend towards realism. Hauptmann championed both as forerunners of naturalistic dramaturgy, and Grabbe's significance was recognised further by other important theoreticians of German naturalism: Karl Bleibtreu (Revolution der Literatur, 1886) and Julius Hillebrandt (Naturalismus Schlechtweg, 1878). Heinrich Hart has already been mentioned.

97 Several of these areas are sketched out by Giuliano Baioni in his article "Nichilismo e Realismo nel Dramma Storico di Christian Dietrich Grabbe", Atti dell' Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 119 (1960/61). Baioni's essay deals only briefly with the question of realism and is intended primarily as an introduction to the poet's life and works and to the general problems of Grabbe research. In the closing pages of his essay, though, Baioni points to the poet's historical vision, with its materialistic trends and anti-individualistic tendencies, and to the technical presentation of this vision, as prime sources of Grabbe's realism. He identifies the use of prose and open dramatic form as further important aspects of the issue.

components of the poet's historical vision they are directly related to our line of enquiry. Any consideration of Grabbe's concept of history in terms of the poet's realism must, however, be preceded by an examination of the early non-historical dramas in their role as preparatory exercises for the major works. Here the foundations are laid for the radical outlook underlying the historical tragedies, and these early efforts represent the dramatist's struggle with the idealistic bases of his literary heritage. Only a discussion of all the poet's works will be able to underline any development in the writer's oeuvre and identify any intensification of realistic technique. Having focused upon the history plays as Grabbe's major means of expression and the prime manifestation of his realism it will then be necessary to examine various elements of the plays in an attempt to locate further aspects of his realism.

Social realism, understood here as the technique of presenting socially differentiated figures on the stage in large numbers and with a view to social mechanisms, must be considered as part and parcel of Grabbe's "realistic" treatment of history. The dramatist's apparent concern with class conflict and his desire to portray the "Volk" in an active rather than purely decorative function has aroused much attention. Marxist commentators in particular, as has already been noted, have made this aspect of the plays the central issue of their realism discussion. More general agreement has been reached on the fundamental significance of verisimilitude in characterisation as a vital factor which contributes to realistic effect. Psychological realism - the approach to the question of character portrayal and the extent of sophistication and individualisation sought and achieved by the playwright - is an element which is universally held to play a major role in the realistic quality of literature, and as such merits detailed treatment in our context. Further, empirical realism, the writer's attention to detail and concern with the paraphernalia of the external world, deserves attention as an aspect of drama which is able to reinforce veristic effect; it, too, has often been cited both as a significant component of Grabbe's dramatic oeuvre and as a characteristic of

emerging realistic theatre.

The use of language in the works and their dramatic form as the vehicle of Grabbe's art will similarly require consideration. Both of these have frequently attracted - as elements which reputedly account for much of Grabbe's modernity and realism - the approving interest of scholars and are to be discussed here in terms of their relevance to the problem of realism in Grabbe's plays. Praise of the poet's naturalistic prose dialogue and open dramatic form are regularly encountered in criticism. The concluding section of the study, finally, will seek to assess the appropriateness of the ubiquitous term "realism" with regard to Grabbe's work and, by placing his oeuvre within a broader historical perspective and contrasting it with the dominant traditions and conventions of German historical drama, attempt to underline the unique nature of his plays. Such a method will be able to provide a more balanced assessment of Grabbe's realism than has hitherto been offered and should, by avoiding the dangers of an unnecessarily restrictive approach, shed additional light on an area of the playwright's work which has long been recognised as central to his originality, modernity and importance.

#### 4. Grabbe on realism and idealism

In our consideration of the realism of Grabbe's dramas we can expect little help from the poet himself; here, as elsewhere, Grabbe avoids theoretical debate and rarely indulges in any discussion of the principles of art. Where he does express himself on aesthetic matters his utterances generally show a distinct polemical and aphoristic quality and seldom betray any sign of calculated or profound reasoning. As will be seen, Grabbe even avoids in his reviews and letters any extended consideration of the historical drama, the genre which occupied him for the greater part of his brief creative life. Any statements of opinion which have come down to us in various forms on the polarity of literary idealism and realism are often contradictory and should be regarded with suspicion.

In the first version of his Cinderella-comedy Aschenbrödel (1829), Grabbe provides the following account of the principle of aesthetic idealism as the antithesis of naturalism:

... ist es denn der Künste höchste Stufe,  
Wenn sie nur die Natur nachahmen? Soll  
Sich die Natur nicht in der Kunst verklären  
Und, wie im Meer der heiße Himmel kühler  
Und schöner widerglänzt, nicht in dem Werk  
Des Künstlers sich im Ernst der Scherz und in  
Dem Scherz der Ernst sich spiegeln? Was im Leben  
Verworren liegt und ohne Einklang; soll  
Es nicht die Kunst zur Harmonie vereinen?  
... Die Poesie  
Soll Himmel sein des Lebens ...  
So finde man in dem Gedichte Leid  
Und Wonne heiter wieder. (WB 2, 289)<sup>98</sup>

In view of the extreme and all-pervasive anti-aestheticism of many of Grabbe's own works, such a call for "Verklärung" and "Harmonie" seems strange.<sup>99</sup> It is, however, echoed in an isolated statement in a letter to Grabbe's second publisher, C. G. Schreiner, dated 27th November 1835: "Die Aufgabe der Dichtkunst ist, den Geist rein zu waschen, Himmel, Erde und Unendlichkeit anzudeuten, und fest in sich zu bleiben." This notion of the work of art with a spiritual and transcendental dimension is clearly opposed to any form of materialistic naturalism and suggests artistic principles which appear incompatible with Grabbe's own.

Grabbe would not be himself, however, if he did not provide us else-

<sup>98</sup> Quotations from primary sources are drawn from Christian Dietrich Grabbe: Werke und Briefe: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe in sechs Bänden, edited by Alfred Bergmann (Emsdetten, 1960-73). References to this edition are henceforth given in parentheses in the text as WB. The Arabic numeral before the comma refers to the volume number, that after the comma to the page. The sources of quotations from Grabbe's letters, taken from the same edition, are provided in the footnotes.

<sup>99</sup> That Grabbe's cynical materialism is diametrically opposed to classical aesthetic standards was frequently pointed out by contemporary critics, who regarded this as a major failing. The following reaction is typical: having chastised the poet for "die grelle Naturform seiner Gedanken, der Schrei des Hasses gegen Welt und Menschen in denselben, die schonungslose Zernichtung aller Schönheit in seinen Hervorbringungen" one critic, Wilhelm Lüdemann, continues: "Es ist nicht wahr, daß die Kunst die Natur nachahmen soll, sie soll sie übertreffen, sie gereinigt von allen Schlacken concreter Zufälligkeit darstellen. Die Lehre Goethes ist die unsere, und in der Überzeugung von ihrer Wahrheit mußten wir Grabbe, dem jene ideale Reproduktion der Natur nie gelingen konnte, den Dichternamen versagen" (Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik, volume 4, p. 151-52).

where with statements to the opposite effect. Without ever engaging in a detailed discussion of the problem of realism he frequently, in essays, letters and reviews, attaches considerable import to the mimetic function of drama and its ability to deal with issues of the real world. On one occasion, while defending himself against Tieck's criticism of the excessive cynicism of Gothland, he draws on the old metaphor of literature as a mirror:

Poesie ist (auch nach Shakspeare) der Spiegel  
der Natur. Man bittet daher zu bedenken, daß ein  
Spiegel auch die ärgerlichste Erscheinung  
wiedergibt, ohne sich zu beflecken. (WB 1, 4)<sup>100</sup>

And he adheres to the same notions of objectivity and reflection in his essay "Über die Shakspearomanie" (1827), praising Shakespeare for his "poetisch ausgedehnte Objektivität" and his ability to unite "hohe Romantik neben großer Natürlichkeit" (WB 4, 30-31). He criticises the English playwright for the many incredulities of his tragedies, for occasionally implausible motivation, for poor characterisation, bombast, false pathos and historical inaccuracies. Grabbe demands "reine und keine geschminkte Natur" (WB 4, 110) and, on the whole, finds this in Shakespeare. Above all, he states in his article "Etwas über den Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe" (1830, a vehement attack on Goethe), he is opposed to the false poeticisation of reality, and he offers the following contrast between the artistic methods of Goethe and those of Shakespeare:

Gesetzt, daß Shakspeare jetzt lebte und einen Robespierre schriebe, Goethe das Gleiche versuchte - wer würde da wählen zwischen der Schilderung des empörten Meeres, wahr, roh und prächtig, wie Shakspeare sie oft (leider auch nicht immer!) gibt, oder zwischen der Darstellung eines Glases Champagner, wohlschmeckend, aber gekünstelt zubereitet, lieblich und nett, wie Goethe z. B. im Egmont uns den Trank reicht? (WB 4, 105)

Grabbe has no time for sweetened versions of reality made palatable for human consumption. In the same article he stresses that the theatre is

<sup>100</sup> This statement exhibits great similarity to the famous words of Stendhal which stand at the beginning of French realism: "un roman est un mir oir qui se promène sur une grande route. Tantôt il reflète à vos yeux l'azur des cieux, tantôt la fange des boursiers de la route" (in Le Rouge et Le Noir, Romans et Nouvelles, Paris, 1952, volume 1, p. 557).

concerned essentially with the "Darstellung der realen Welt" and, pointing out that excessive abstraction is not conducive to effective dramatic representation, maintains that "poetische Gebilde nicht bloß Gedanken seyn, sondern auch Form und Körper haben wollen". He attaches considerable significance to human experience, suggesting that the poet should attempt "die Welt, das Leben und den Menschen aus Erfahrung und Geschichte kennen zu lernen" (WB 4, 110) and frequently praises the qualities "Objektivität" and "Wahrheit".

While he is deeply hostile to superficial realism as manifested in much shallow contemporary drama,<sup>101</sup> Grabbe does seem concerned with the relationship between literature and reality. The balance of his utterances seems to indicate a preference for a generally naturalistic rather an idealistic art. One should be cautious, however, in ascribing too much importance to such statements, for, to confound the issue further, the poet refutes elsewhere, in typically flamboyant style, the notion of objectivity, the very cornerstone of realistic representation:

Schiller hält sich selbst, besonders in dem Briefwechsel, für subjectiv, Goethe leugnet seine Objectivität nicht, viele Belletristen schwören auf Schillers Sub- und Goethes Objectivität, und die ganze Sache ist ein Traum, ein Streit um philosophische Worte, die so oft ein Wesen bezeichnen wollen, das nicht existiert. Man zeige mir von den Homeriden bis zu Goethe, von Alexander dem Großen bis Napoleon einen Menschen, der nicht subjectiv gedichtet oder gehandelt hätte. Jeder Mensch hat seinen eigenen Schnabel, und dem geht er nach. Schiller und Goethe so gut wie ich. (WB 4, 107)

Such words should warn us against attempting to construct from Grabbe's scattered aphorisms anything resembling an aesthetic credo: statements can be found in his letters to support almost any point of view. What the above-mentioned references do, however, confirm is that the poet was at least conscious of the problem of the relationship between the work of art and empirical reality, and gave consideration to such aspects of literary

<sup>101</sup> In his article for the "Abend-Zeitung" of 28 April 1828 Grabbe writes: "Shakspeares angeblich so trefflicher Grundsatz, daß die Bühne ein bloßer Spiegel des Jahrhunderts seyn sollte, wird jetzt von den schlechtesten Dichtern und Schauspielern am besten befolgt; keine Handlung, keine Seele, keine Eigenthümlichkeit, sondern nichts als Worte, - keine Sprache, sondern Diction" (WB 4, 79).



production as verisimilitude and objectivity. Ultimately, in view of the confusion of utterances on this and many other subjects, it is evident that in any discussion of Grabbe's work the critic can rely only upon the texts themselves as a legitimate source of insight.

## I. Philosophical Realism: Experience as Reality

### (The Early Dramas)

Die Wirklichkeit, und wäre sie  
Die glücklichste, ist rauh!

(Herzog Theodor von Gothland, IV/3)

Grabbe's early non-historical dramas, the tragedies Herzog Theodor von Gothland (begun during the poet's schooldays, completed in Berlin in 1822, published in 1827) and Don Juan und Faust (written 1827-8, published 1829) and the comedy Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung (written 1822, published 1827) bear the unmistakable marks of angry iconoclasm and calculated, if exaggerated, literary provocation. In the violent imagery, obscenities and massed atrocities of Gothland, in the biting social satire, indeed, in the very choice of material in Don Juan und Faust, in which Grabbe hoped to rival both Mozart and Goethe,<sup>1</sup> in the satirical tirades against all that his contemporaries held sacred in Scherz, Grabbe's burning desire to shock his audience into a critical examination of established and (in his view) decaying conventions is evident. Grabbe was, as all biographical surveys agree, a man very much at odds with himself and the world of his age, an individual of many complexes who was unable to feel at ease in the stifling atmosphere of a Restoration Germany (even worse - of a narrow-minded, provincial Detmold) with its repression, bureaucracy, censorship and false sense of security. The contrast between the mediocrity of this humdrum Beidermeier world and the heroism and glory of the Napoleonic era, which had been brought to an end during Grabbe's adolescence and was evidently well known to him both from the reports of contemporaries and through his insatiable passion for reading historical works, could hardly have been

<sup>1</sup> "Mozarts Don Juan und Goethes Faust - welche Kunstwerke! Und wie kühn, nach diesen Meistern in beiden Stoffen wieder aufzutreten." Letter to Kettembeil, 16 January 1829.

greater. It left the young poet with a sense of loss and deprivation which remained with him throughout his short lifetime and turned him, even at an early age, into an incurable malcontent. As an outsider in all senses of the word - and Grabbe was destined on account of his curious character, values and ideals to remain a solitary individual - the aspiring dramatic poet, his sense of isolation nourished by feelings of social inferiority and deep-seated insecurity, was to reject everything his environment and tradition had to offer and to adopt an extremely aggressive attitude to all prevalent bourgeois tastes. The image of the lone, eccentric genius ("Originalgenie") at loggerheads with the world was one which Grabbe was careful to cultivate, and it was, indeed, in this cultural sphere that he found most to stimulate his aggression and provide fodder for his vehement attacks on the state of contemporary German society.<sup>2</sup>

Grabbe's reaction to the offer of his former student companion G. F. Kettembeil to publish his early works in April 1827 was one of delight and, with the prospect of escape from the drudgery of his legal duties in sight, one of the utmost relief. Ambitious plans for hectic activity and prolific output develop alongside a passion for fame and repute. Grabbe craves the attention of the literary world, and the most direct means of achieving his aim is, he believes, to jar and startle his audience into some kind of response which will reveal to them the banality of the "sich selbst verhätschelnden und vergötternden Schriftsteller"<sup>3</sup> and, hopefully, facilitate insight into the depth and originality of his own genius. His

<sup>2</sup> Grabbe describes himself in a model review as "ein äußerst gewaltiger, vielseitiger Genius, und dabei von einer Selbständigkeit und Eigenthümlichkeit, wie sie schwerlich in neueren Zeiten gefunden werden" (letter to Kettembeil, 3 August 1827). The image of the remote, rational genius - "ich Un-Sentimentaler und Nie-Liebender" (16 May 1827) - was one which particularly appealed to him. For psychological-biographical interpretations of Grabbe's work see the many studies of Bergmann. All early critiques make much of the poet's unhappy life; e. g. Carl Anton Piper, "Beiträge zum Studium Grabbes", Forschungen zur neueren Literaturgeschichte, 8 (1898); Nieten, Leben und Werke; F. J. Schneider, Persönlichkeit und Werk. Marxist studies, understandably, emphasise the consequences of his humble background.

exchange of letters with Kettembeil, spanning a period of some seven years, demonstrates his constant concern for the "marketability" of his products and, particularly in the early stages, with the provocative quality of his works. He sees the efforts of contemporary authors as mere "Eseleien",<sup>4</sup> appreciated only by "Kritikaster" and "Ignoranten",<sup>5</sup> and hopes, by employing "Pfiffigkeit",<sup>6</sup> to produce "großen Eclat"<sup>7</sup> and "Schlageffect",<sup>8</sup> thus winning himself an army of "Anhänger und Klaffer".<sup>9</sup> The reading public is essentially stupid ("Die Menge ist eine Bestie - darum imponiert")<sup>10</sup> and Grabbe intends to dupe the world, for which he feels only contempt, with his "Tollheiten":<sup>11</sup> "ich hätte gern noch einmal die Welt zum Narren".<sup>12</sup> The book market is viewed as a battlefield, the audience as an enemy to be outwitted ("Wir sind im Kampf mit dem Publico getreten")<sup>13</sup> and assaulted strategically; Grabbe plans his campaign like a general, composing model reviews and advising his publisher friend on the surest way to achieve impact. He likens Tieck's letter, appended to the published version of Gothland, to a piece of artillery: "ein Instrument, ... eine gegen den Feind gerichtete Kanone".<sup>14</sup> He intends to take the theatre public by storm and to revolutionise its literary taste, leading it away from its customary diet of shallow domestic dramas, fate tragedies, moralistic pageant plays,

4 Letter to Kettembeil, 4 May 1827

5 1 June 1827

6 25 June 1827.

7 12 July 1827

8 25 June 1827

9 12 August 1827

10 23 September 1827

11 28 November 1827

12 1 June 1827

13 2 December 1827

14 12 August 1827

translations of foreign playlets of love and intrigue and trite operettas back to the vital issues of great art. This he regards as a messianic vocation, and the praise of the critic Johann Baptiste Rousseau, who, in a review, had hailed Grabbe as a potential "dramatischer Messias Deutschlands", strengthened his conviction.<sup>15</sup> Raupach (who dominated the stages of Germany for decades) is to be driven out: Grabbe writes to Kettembeil: "Wir, der eventuelle 'Messias der deutschen Bühne' (Rousseaus Worte) wollen die Paviane (selbst Mr. Raupach) als schändliche Heiden verjagen".<sup>16</sup> There can be no doubt that Grabbe has himself in mind when he prompts the baron in Scherz to lament the death of true art in Germany and pray for its resurrection:

O stände doch endlich ein gewaltiger Genius auf, der mit göttlicher Stärke von Haupt zu Fuß gepanzert, sich des deutschen Parnasses annähme und das Gesindel in die Sümpfe zurücktriebe, aus welchen es hervorgekrochen ist! (WB 1, 227-8)

To a large degree, then, the violent extremism and antagonism of Grabbe's early works represents calculated polemic and is designed to stand out against the saccharine romanticism ("Verlieberei")<sup>18</sup> of popular contemporary authors. Many of Grabbe's excesses and extravagances, evident above all in Gothland, are attributable to his desire for sensationalism and must be understood at least partly in the context of his wish to establish himself as the "enfant terrible" of German letters.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik, volume 1, p. 47.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Kettembeil, 20 January 1828

<sup>17</sup> Grabbe uses the same image in another attack on the state of the contemporary literary scene: "Die Zeit und ihre Trompeter, die Poeten, haben jetzt etwas Krampfhaftes an sich. Niemand benutzt sein Talent recht. Bruchstücke von einzelnen Bruchstückmenschen sind da, aber keiner, der sie im Drama oder Epos zusammenfaßt. Wahrscheinlich kommt aber doch einmal der Messias, der diesen Jammer im Spiegel der Kunst verklärt" (10 February 1832).

<sup>18</sup> 1 June 1827

<sup>19</sup> One early critic who recognised the polemical quality of Grabbe's works was Karl Gutzkow: "Der unglückliche Dichter repräsentierte eine klassische Reaktion gegen die Literatur der Restaurationsperiode." (Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik, volume 5, p. 20)

Grabbe's defiant rejection of tradition serves, however, more than a purely commercial function and is not merely to be seen as part of a skilful publicity campaign. Grabbe aims in his early works to combat not only the literary taste, but also the philosophical currents of his age, which he, as a stormy cynic, views as complacent and misguided, no longer in tune with the reality of the times. In the three dramas in question Grabbe is concerned to dispute the strong tradition of German idealism and to develop and outline his own position in philosophical terms. Two of these plays, the tragedies, are heavily metaphysical in tone and as such stand alone in the poet's oeuvre. The third, Scherz, is a comedy which, for all its humour, does not shy away from weightier considerations and, indeed, relies on the interplay between the light-hearted and the serious for much of its effect. Together these dramas establish a basis for the overriding interest of Grabbe's maturity, the historical drama, and are concerned with the eradication of a conceited, illusory view of the world which, the poet holds, blinds us to the cruelty of reality. These are dramas of disillusionment, practical examples of the collapse of idealism in the face of reality. In their cynical undermining of positive values they clear the stage, as it were, for the presentation of radically hopeless vision of the historical world which forms the very basis of Grabbe's realism.

1. Herzog Theodor von Gothland

Noch niemand ging mit Idealen für  
Der Menschheit Wohl ins Leben, der  
Es nicht als Bösewicht,  
Als ausgemachter Menschenfeind  
verlassen hätte.

(Gothland IV/1)

Gothland is in essence a drama of gargantuan destruction in which man is, quite simply, degraded to the level of beast. Its theme, predominantly metaphysical, is the total annihilation of an individual and his faith in life and the world along with all else he holds dear, his values, his

family, friends and fatherland. The play consequently abounds with the action, imagery and rhetoric of violent destruction and upheaval, presenting murders, deaths and battles "en masse", a fact which prompted Tieck, the first critic of the drama, to comment that it "im Entsetzlichen, Grausamen und Zynischen sich gefällt".<sup>20</sup> The hero, the Swedish nobleman Theodor von Gothland, progresses along a well-defined path from good to evil, carefully documenting his progress as he does so in a series of lengthy analytical speeches. The primarily monologic quality of the drama, coupled with the notorious inadequacy of motivation and improbability of incident,<sup>21</sup> reinforces the impression that we are dealing here with a work of primarily programmatic, demonstrative interest. The poet appears considerably more concerned with the metaphysical implications of his plot than he does with the actual mechanics of the drama, a fact which contributes to the cumbersome form of the play. In concept the drama is divided into two strictly differentiated moral spheres, the good (represented by King Olaf, Old Gothland, Skiold and Cäcilia) and the evil (Berdoa, Arboga), between which the hero vacillates before committing himself irrevocably to the latter. The simplistic segregation of all figures into one of these two spheres and the somewhat crude principle of contrast employed throughout the work provides it with an almost didactic tone and leaves the reader in no doubt as to the poet's intentions. Reality, by definition evil, Grabbe suggests, is stronger than ideality, the only realm in which good can exist uncontaminated.

Theodor von Gothland is commonly regarded in Grabbe criticism as the

<sup>20</sup> WB 1, 3. Tieck was not the only one to note the extreme violence of the work: a multitude of similar reactions is to be found in Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik, volumes 1 and 2. Grabbe, aware of the excesses of the work, insists that the abundance of such elements serves a calculated effect, namely sensationalism "- der berechnete und verwegenste oder doch tollste dramatische Unsinn, den es gibt" (letter to M. L. Petri, 18 November 1826). See also the letters of 21 September 1822 (to Tieck) and 4 May 1827 (to Kettembeil).

<sup>21</sup> Tieck, to whom Grabbe submitted the original manuscript for approval, speaks in his reply of the "Unwahrscheinlichkeit der Fabel" and the "Unmöglichkeit der Motive" (WB 1, 5). Early critics took great delight in echoing this view.

idealist whose harmonious world view is dashed on the rocks of reality.<sup>22</sup> But this is only partly true. Gothland's attitudes at the outset of the action should be examined carefully: while he greets us in I/2 with a eulogy on the bonds of friendship which make his life blissfully content - he speaks of the "holder Genius" which watches over his life and sings the praises of "der Freundschaft Banden" which, he informs us in a significant simile, are "ewig wie der Geist" (WB 1, 23) - his faith in good is swiftly revealed to be at best precarious. News of his brother's death rapidly drives him to a despair which convinces him of all-pervasive "Vergänglichkeit" and changes his reception of surrounding nature; that which had previously been a source of comfort and warmth has become a symbol of decay:

Sieh, es ist Herbst, und an  
der Gelbsucht krankt die sterbende Natur (WB 1, 24)

Gothland's faith in the benign forces which he had previously assumed to govern his life is all too easily brought into doubt, and it is only after some hesitation that he is able to overcome his instinctive urge to blame this blow of fate on God ("Auch der Himmel mordet! WB 1, 25) - hardly the reaction of a convinced Christian. Religious conviction provides little consolation for him in a world which, as the result of a brother's death, has become absurd, meaningless and empty ("Wüste, Wüste ist die Welt" WB 1, 28). Happiness has become a sin, never to be enjoyed again, and at this stage only the words of his wife Cäcilia, who reminds him of the possibility of immortality (and thus a reunion with the murdered Manfred in the after-life) through "Tugend" dissuades him from complete despair. Gothland's spiritual position at the outset does not, in fact, correspond with the

<sup>22</sup> For example by A. W. Hornsey who, in Idea and Reality in the Dramas of Chr. D. Grabbe (London, 1966), entitles his chapter on Gothland "The disillusioned idealist". Roy C. Cowen (Christian Dietrich Grabbe, New York, 1972) speaks of the "disillusionment of Gothland, the idealist". Helga-Maleen Gerresheim discerns in the drama a "Bruch zwischen einer geglaubten Idealwelt und einer als schrecklich erfahrenen Wirklichkeit" ("Chr. D. Grabbe", in Deutsche Dichter des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, edited by Benno von Wiese, Berlin, 1969, p. 176.) These three views stand for many.



simple "christliche Ergebung" for which Rolf praises him (WB 1, 28),<sup>23</sup> and his notion of a God whose prerogative it is to torment his subjects because he has created them demonstrates a somewhat unconventional concept of a harsh, callous and impersonal God who stands outside his creation.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the hero, in his vision of the ideal world which he has been inhabiting, makes no mention of higher values, of moral or ethical standards, of religious conviction. Instead his reality is arcadian, filled with a sense of contentment which rests above all on family unity and brotherly love.<sup>25</sup> This is a domestic bliss which is extended to embrace all spheres of life, and at the opening of the play it is essentially untested. Gothland's later memories of his past happiness are very much coloured by an image of a childlike, naive, patriarchal existence, represented by "das väterliche Haus", "der Mutterschoß", "das Kindheitsland", "Friedensglück" (WB 1, 133-5). His idyllic world is escapist, one into which the at times harsh demands of reality cannot penetrate; it is a sheltered, utopian existence far removed from the trials and tribulations of the real world. If reality is so cruel, Gothland suggests, he would rather be without it:

Laß mich allein, o laß mich träumen!  
Das Träumen ist ja süßer als das Leben! (WB 1, 30)

It is not the world of the grand, lofty, speculative idealist which is destroyed in Gothland, then, but rather that of a utopian, unworldly optimist whose faith in the inherent goodness of the universe has never been questioned. What ideals the hero does have - and initially he has

23 F. J. Schneider views Gothland as "ein frommer und gottergebener Christ" (Persönlichkeit und Werk, p. 82).

24 Gott schuf mein Herz, - dafür hat er das Recht,  
Es zu zerreißen, wann es ihm beliebt" (WB 1, 25)

25 Brotherly love is raised by the hero almost to the level of a religion. In times of need solace is to be sought not in prayer, but in fraternal companionship:

Nichts steht auf Erden fest;  
Der Mensch lehnt sich auf seine Türme,  
Und seine Türme stürzen krachend ein -  
Doch wer am Busen seines Bruders liegt,  
Der fand die heilige Stätte auf, an der  
Er sicher ruhet im Gewühl des Lebens! (WB 1, 33)

many - are those of a naive believer in the harmony of the world; not those of a profound thinker, but those of a man as yet unaware of the pressures life can bring to bear upon the individual.

Gothland, already vulnerable on account of his untried attitude to life, is rendered all the more susceptible to the forces of evil by a tragic flaw: preference for one brother (Manfred) to the other. It is this failing, coupled with the hero's natural violence and impetuosity, which permits Berdoa, the very incarnation of evil, to realise his schemes with such astonishing ease. As early as Gothland's second speech we learn of his excessive affection for his warrior brother at the expense of Friedrich, the homely chancellor ("Dich Manfred! liebe ich vor allem!" WB 1, 23). The notion of fratricide within his own family proves a tempting thought for the hero, and the idea of avenging one (preferred) brother against the other clearly holds a bizarre appeal for him. Berdoa is well aware of Theodor's susceptibility on this front, exploits it to the full, and later torments the hero with the bare truth of the matter:<sup>26</sup>

mit großer  
Bestürzung, aber mit noch größrer Freude  
Vernahmest du, daß er erschlagen sei:  
Die Rache für den toten Bruder  
War dir ein schmeichelnder, verlockender  
Gedanke! (WB 1, 184)

In Berdoa Gothland finds himself confronted with the principle of satanism.<sup>27</sup> The leader of the Finns serves as a magnet which pulls the hero away from the pole of good (Cäcilia) towards that of overwhelming nihilism. Berdoa serves in this programmatic drama to destroy the hero's spiritual world and, on a larger scale, to expose man's pretensions to civilisation, religion, love, virtue, in short to all values, as a mere sham. One by one he shatters Gothland's (and, by implication, our) illusions concerning the harmony of the universe and reduces the world to its

<sup>26</sup> Grabbe defends himself against Tieck's charges of implausible motivation by citing this scene (V/3) as vital to a full understanding of the development of the plot. (WB 1, 5)

<sup>27</sup> R. C. Cowen, "Satan and the Satanic in Grabbe's Dramas", Germanic Review, 39 (1964), 120-36.

foundations of materialistic, atheistic bestiality. His anti-idealism, based upon the evidence of perceptible reality, proves too persuasive a philosophy for the hero to ignore.

Grabbe attempts in the drama to give Berdoa at least the semblance of logical motivation. He seems to have turned to evil himself only out of bitter disillusionment and justifies his vicious passion for wickedness with two claims of personal injustice suffered in the past. The first incident for which he seeks revenge is a flogging previously inflicted upon him by Gothland; as retribution for this personal humiliation he intends to torment and ultimately destroy Theodor and his house - "sein Weib, sein Kind, sein Vater, seine Brüder" (WB 1, 19). His second motive is more general: having once been taken captive by Italian pirates he was cast into chains as a slave and maltreated. Above all, he claims, it was his "Menschlichkeit" which was violated by brutal and unnatural acts of torture, and he blames the inhumanity of his European captors for his own conversion to satanism. It is particularly significant in the context of disillusioned idealism that Berdoa sets himself up as a humanitarian whose instinctive faith in the good of man was destroyed by harsh treatment at the hands of others:

Ich bat, ich schrie, ich wimmerte  
Um Menschlichkeit! Umsonst! Ich wand mich vor  
Dem Abschaum unseres Geschlechtes im Staube, rief:  
Erbarmet euch! ich bin ein Mensch! "Du wärest  
Ein Mensch?" (hohnlachten sich mich an) "du bist nur  
Ein Neger!" (WB 1, 37)

This, Berdoa claims, was the moment which completed his transition from man to beast:

- Wäre ich ein Teufel,  
So hätte diese Stunde mich dazu gemacht! -  
Die Weißen haben mich für keinen Menschen  
Erkannt, sie haben mich behandelt, wie  
Ein wildes Tier; wohlan, so sei's denn so!  
Ich will 'ne Bestie sein! die Schuld  
Auf ihre Häupter, wenn ich sie nun auch  
Nach meiner Bestienart behandle! - - - (WB 1, 38)

These, then, are the grounds for Berdoa's "Europäerhaß", and it lends force to Grabbe's message in the drama that the individual who takes it upon himself to lead Gothland to despair and finally to complete in-

difference towards life has himself undergone a very similar process of disillusionment. Very rapidly Berdoa becomes Theodor's mentor in nihilism; more than this, he becomes, as he himself recognises, Gothland's fate, being wholly responsible for the chain of events he has set in motion ("Ich bin sein Schicksal und sein Gott!" WB 1, 28). The hero is entirely at his mercy, and Berdoa misses no opportunity to expose some aspect of man's existence as idle pretence and vain self-deception, providing the necessary stimulus to Gothland's growing cynicism and ridiculing all human values. At one point (in IV/1), when the hero seems to have succumbed to the philosophy of despair, Berdoa, in his role of Mephistopheles, increases Gothland's suffering and confusion by himself adopting a Christian position and reasserting traditional values.

In the hero's son Gustav the negro finds a young, dreaming romantic whose idealistic notion of love is an easy target for his own, more earthly conception of love as mere sexual fulfilment ("Aufs Kindermachen läuft's hinaus!" WB 1, 115), a theory which he then helps Gustav to put into practice with the help of the camp whore Milchen. At the moment of the hero's greatest doubt (IV/1) he continues to scorn the idea of religion ("Der Mensch glaubt, was er hofft, glaubt, was er fürchtet!" WB 1, 135) and immortality ("Der Mensch verdient ja kaum dieses Erdenleben / Und für ein ewiges sollt er gemacht sein?" WB 1, 125), and to Gustav he expounds the "Religion der Hölle", disputing the existence of virtue and doubting the distinction between good and evil. He discards absolutes ("Was für den einen böse ist, das ist für / Den anderen gut" WB 1, 144) and rejects the value of greatness, emphasising the role of "Zufall" before finally mocking idealism as a whole:

Die Liebe ist versteckter Eigennutz,  
Großmut ist spekulierende Heuchelei,  
Mitleid ist schwächliche Empfindsamkeit,  
Und wenn auch jemand wirklich Gutes tut,  
So tut ers weil das Gute leichter als  
Das Böse ist.

(WB 1, 144)

In Berdoa's eyes, man has no qualities, and his religion of hell, which, he claims, "paßt für diese Erde", is gradually adopted by the hero as he

wavers in doubt and uncertainty, finally becoming aware of his crime and its consequences. Gothland's extremism and his obsession with absolutes at whatever cost (for example of justice: "Gerechtigkeit, stürzt auch der Weltbau ein!" WB 1, 54), coupled with his inability to compromise, inevitably lead him from complete faith to total despair. From III/1 on, where the magnitude of his crime is brought home to him, he sinks ever deeper into cynicism. Initially he recognises four agents which played a part in his deception: Rolf, Berdoa, chance, and heaven, and these, he claims, have led him to the turning point in his life. Having once been subjected to the forces of evil, he will now continue in the same vein:

Das Verzeihen ist an Mir!  
Die Mächte meines Lebens haben sich  
Herabgewürdigt, mich auf böse Wege zu  
Verlocken - Ich gehorche ihrem Willen  
Und wandle darauf fort! Hier stehe ich  
An meiner Sonnenwende! -

(WB 1, 78)

The cruelty of fate has convinced Theodor of the frailty of man and a world in which virtue is converted into its polar opposite by a whim of chance. He himself, he maintains at the beginning of a long series of monologues, was "edel", set store by "Gerechtigkeit" and friendship, and was led to destruction not despite, but rather because of these qualities. Reality, as he has come to realise, is in essence hostile. Moving on to consider the possibility of a God, he concludes that such cannot exist and that creation is the work of "allmächtiger Wahnsinn", subjected to the blind power of "das ungeheure Schicksal" (WB 1, 82). But fate as a neutral agent cannot be so cruel - "Allmächtige Bosheit also ist es, die / Den Weltkreis lenkt und ihn zerstört!" (WB 1, 82). Despair is the only true religion, suffering contradicts Christianity, nature has suddenly become diseased and repulsive.<sup>28</sup> The values which were once so dear to him - "Liebe", "Hoffnung", "Ruhm", "Ehre", "Unsterblichkeit", "Seligkeit", "Tugend", "Glück", "Freundschaft" - have disappeared, the possibility of contentment, both in this life and the next, has been

<sup>28</sup> The sun is "jene schwärende, giftgeschwollene, aufgebrochene, eiternde Pestbeule" (WB 1, 85).

removed.<sup>29</sup> All that is left is the consolation of bloody revenge on the negro and the possibility of achieving unlimited superficial greatness with all the trappings of worldly power. Otherwise, apart from bare life, which he defines as "Ein Kriechen auf dem Schlamme, eine Kette von Qualen" (WB 1, 121), nothing remains.

Gothland, in his misery, has come round to a world view which is devastatingly materialistic and non-illusory. At the end of human life there is only death, which levels all things and reduces them to pure physical matter:

Ewig ist nur der Staub. -  
Weltkörper gehen unter und der Mensch  
Wär unvergänglich? O des Wahnwitzes! (WB 1, 128)

Time, as a neutral force, is the regulating factor in life and precludes the existence of God, who has no place in Gothland's new system

Ich glaube  
Die Allmacht und Allgegenwart der Zeit!  
Die Zeit erschafft, vollendet und zerstört  
Die Welt und alles, was darin ist;  
Doch einen Gott, der höher als die Zeit  
Steht, glaub ich nicht; ein solcher kann nicht, darf  
Nicht, soll nicht sein und ist nicht! (WB 1, 129)

The hero has come face to face with "das Nichts". Existence has neither purpose nor meaning but is one long torment. Gothland's transformation results in a complete indifference towards himself, his fate and the world. He dies a total cynic: "Nichts frag ich nach Leben oder Tod / ... Auch an die Hölle kann man sich gewöhnen" (WB 1, 204).

The view of the world which emerges from all this destruction is one of pragmatic pessimism: in face of reality the values conceived by man's intellect cannot survive unscathed. Nobility, morality, spiritual freedom, positive standards of all forms are exposed in this heavy-handed, scarcely concealed diatribe as sheer vanity. Naive, misplaced idealism is revealed as a product of homely and untested complacency which collapses all too easily, love and faith are turned inside out ("große Liebe, großer Haß").<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> He tells Berdoa: "die zeitliche / Und ewge Wohlfahrt hast du mir / Vernichtet (WB 1, 197).

<sup>30</sup> This idea is taken up again in Don Juan und Faust (WB 1, 464; 1, 485)

Such is the force of the cynicism conveyed by the drama that any remnants of hope which are left over at the end appear laughable:<sup>31</sup> Cäcilia, a true Christian, remains loyal to her principles to the last while watching the foundations of her world crumble beneath her. Although even her father, Skiold, wavers in doubt, she, shortly before her death, reiterates her positive "Weltanschauung" and refuses to submit to the apparently overwhelming pressure of a hostile world:

Hoffnung  
Ist ja die einzige Seligkeit des Lebens! Denn  
Von allem Großen und Erhabenen,  
Von Gott, Unsterblichkeit und Tugend, weiß  
Der Mensch nicht, daß es ist, - er hat  
Es nie gesehen, er hat es nie erlebt -  
Er kann nur hoffen, daß es da ist;  
Dum laß uns hoffen in  
Des Lebens Finsternissen, laß  
Uns hoffen in den Wüsteneien! (WB 1, 157)

In view of the full-scale destruction which encircles her and eventually engulfs the serenity of her world, such hope rings absurd and smacks of grand self-deception. It is precisely this blind, almost stubborn trust in the order of the universe that Grabbe is attacking in his Gothland; as he wrote in a model review of the work: "... mit Ernst und Spott scheint er /der Autor/ alles Sittliche und Ideale zertrümmert zu haben".<sup>32</sup> The all-pervasive destruction of illusions in the drama flatly contradicts Grabbe's claim to Tieck that despair was not to be the dominant impression of the work: "Der Zynismus wollte nach Tendenz des Verfassers sich in diesem Trauerspiele in keiner Art als das Höchste und Letzte geben" (WB 1, 4).<sup>33</sup>

31 Tieck recognised very early that the exaggerated despair of the play is ultimately self-destructive and borders on the grotesque. (WB 1, 3)

32 Letter to Kettembeil, 28 December 1827.

33 Another contemporary critic of the drama, Theodor Mundt, defined the play as "Poesie der Verzweiflung" and saw base cynicism as "das letzte Resultat" (Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik, volume 1, p. 65). This reaction was typical: J. B. Rousseau, one of Grabbe's greatest admirers, wrote of "Atheismus in der grellsten Bedeutung des Wortes" (volume 1, p. 65). Heine commented: "alle seine Vorzüge sind verdunkelt durch eine Geschmacklosigkeit, einen Zynismus und eine Ausgelassenheit, die das Tollste und Abscheulichste überbieten, was je ein Gehirn zu Tage gefördert" (volume 5, p. 157). Among modern commentators von Wiese's view is typical: he sees the play as "das erste Drama des völligen Nihilismus" (Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 462). Also August Closs, Medusa's Mirror (London, 1957), p. 157.

With these words Grabbe was clearly trying to appease an influential man whose orthodox Christian conservatism was totally alien to him. In his critique of the drama Tieck had defended "die Wahrheit unsers Seins, das Echte, Göttliche" which "liegt in einer unsichtbaren Region, die ich so wenig mit meinen Händen aufbauen als zerstören kann" (WB 1, 4), and pointed to the "unpoetischer Materialismus" of the play as the cause of his ambivalent reaction to it: "Ihr Werk hat mich angezogen, sehr interessiert, abgestoßen, erschreckt und meine große Teilnahme für den Autor gewonnen" (WB 1, 5). It is ideals like those of Tieck that Grabbe seeks to undermine and ridicule in the drama, exposing them as absurd and incompatible with reality. The mixed reaction of Tieck, one of interest, attraction and fascination despite repulsion, was, furthermore, precisely that which Grabbe, as a literary provocateur, had hoped to arouse.

## 2. Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung

"nichts in Literatur und Leben  
bleibt unversehrt"<sup>34</sup>

Grabbe remarks in the foreword to the published version of this drama, which appeared in the Dramatische Dichtungen of 1827: "Findet der Leser nicht, daß diesem Lustspiel eine entschiedene Weltansicht zu Grunde liegt, so verdient es keinen Beifall." This, along with other statements to the same effect, namely that the comedy arose "aus den nämlichen Grundansichten" as Gothland<sup>35</sup> and is designed to provoke "lautes Lachen ... doch im Grunde nur ein Lachen der Verzweiflung"<sup>36</sup> has provided a challenge to modern interpreters who, not content with Karl Holl's early designation of the drama as "Literatur- und Zeitsatire", have engaged themselves in an unending

<sup>34</sup> Letter to Kettenbeil, 28 December 1827.

<sup>35</sup> 1 June 1827

<sup>36</sup> 28 December 1827



search for the "tiefere Bedeutung" promised by the title.<sup>37</sup>

The metaphysical implications of the drama, which really contains only a few lines exclusively devoted to any universal underlying significance are, however, easily overstressed. It is chiefly the oft-quoted words of the devil on the world as

ein mittelmäßiges Lustspiel, welches ein unbärtiger, gelb-  
schnabeliger Engel, der in der ordentlichen, dem Menschen  
unbegreiflichen Welt lebt, und wenn ich nicht irre, noch in  
Prima sitzt, während seiner Schulferien zusammengeschnürt  
hat (WB 1, 241-2)

and the provocative title, which itself seems to have been conceived only later as an additional stimulus to reflection, which have led critics to see the drama as a cryptic, detailed and cynical indictment of man and the world.<sup>38</sup> To view the devil's isolated words on the duality of worlds as evidence of "die Rudimentärform eines transzendentalen Welterlebnisses, das parodistisch an den Christentum anlingt"<sup>39</sup> is clearly exaggerated in any interpretation of a drama as alogical and absurd as this.<sup>40</sup> Any predominantly metaphysical interpretation which takes the work extremely seriously inevitably disregards the fact that the bulk of the text is devoted to the evocation of the three comic moods mentioned in the title, to attacks on man's pretensions to culture and civilisation, and in

37 Karl Holl, Geschichte des deutschen Lustspiels (Leipzig, 1923), p. 220

38 The play, in a still unpublished form, is referred to by the poet, even five years after its completion, as "Scherz und Ironie" (letter to Kettenbeil, 4 May 1827).

39 Gerhard Kaiser, "Grabbes Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung als Komödie der Verzweiflung", Der Deutschunterricht, 5 (1959), 5-14, p. 8. Kaiser is guilty generally of an overinsistence on metaphysical precepts with regard to this play. In his search for elements of "Verzweiflung" he is led to overstate the serious intent of the drama: "Das Prinzip des Lustspiels ist ... radikalisiert bis zur Grenze des Umschlags in einen tragischen Pessimismus, indem die komische Disproportionalität auf die Grundlagen der Existenz überhaupt übergreift. Unter dem scheinbar selbstsicheren Behagen, mit dem der Dichter sich aus dem Überbau der geistigen Welt in die Nestwärme kreatürlicher Daseinsversicherungen und in das niedere Genre der Fraß- und Sauflust zurückzieht, verbergen sich Lebensangst und Verzweiflung, die noch unter der Decke des handgreiflich Gegenwärtigen einen Abgrund spüren" (p. 13).

40 Martin Esslin in The Theatre of the Absurd (London, 1968), with particular reference to Scherz, includes Grabbe among "the group of poètes maudits who have influenced the Theatre of the Absurd" (p. 329).

particular to literary satire. Whilst the scope of Grabbe's satire extends well beyond the literary sphere, one should not be tempted by the poet's misleading suggestions to attempt to establish a rigid philosophical standpoint from among the scattered allusions to more serious issues.<sup>41</sup> The work is fundamentally a comedy and, for all its iconoclasm and anti-idealism, fails to arouse "ein Lachen der Verzweiflung".

The world presented by Grabbe in Scherz is clearly one which defies all logic and causality.<sup>42</sup> It is a world in which the devil, temporarily installed on earth during spring-cleaning in hell, meddles in love affairs, trades brides, orders the gratuitous murder of thirteen tailor's apprentices and plans the disruption of wedding arrangements before finally being captured by a drunken schoolmaster who uses condoms as bait. It is a world in which rustic simplicity contrasts with the pseudo-sophistication of the nobility,<sup>43</sup> where the devil is readily accepted into a baron's home, a young oaf is proclaimed a genius and the noblest of souls sheathed in the most hideous exterior. The loose plot, in which events are "absichtlich so lose aneinander gestellt",<sup>44</sup> and scanty characterisation allow a variety of motifs to be explored and pave the way for the many satirical tirades which

<sup>41</sup> von Wiese, in his essay "Grabbes Lustspiel Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung als Vorform des absurden Theaters", in Von Lessing bis Grabbe (Düsseldorf, 1968), writes: "Symbolisch stellvertretend für Menschheit überhaupt war dieses Lustspiel gewiß nicht gemeint" (p. 293). Karl S. Guthke (Geschichte und Poetik der deutschen Tragikomödie, Göttingen, 1961) likewise objects to the search for "eine zugrunde liegende pessimistische mythologisch-kosmologische Grundvorstellung" in the comedy (p. 197).

<sup>42</sup> F. J. Schneider (Persönlichkeit und Werk) and more recently von Wiese (many publications) and Hans Mayer ("Grabbe und die tiefere Bedeutung", Akzente, 12 (1965)) make much of the motif of the "verkehrte Welt".

<sup>43</sup> For Diethelm Brüggemann this dualism of social groups in the comedy represents the crux of the drama. The positive qualities of the naive village world (presented through the device of comic caricature) expose the decadence and failings of the sham aristocracy (portrayed with comic distortion), which is the prime target of Grabbe's "Zivilisationsverachtung". The drama is essentially social in nature. ("Grabbe: Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung", in Die deutsche Komödie, edited by Walter Hinck, Düsseldorf, 1977). Like Kaiser's, Brüggemann's interpretation suffers from one-sidedness and the desire to reduce the diversity of themes to one dominating thread. Wilhelm Steffens also sees the work as "Gesellschafts-satire", as a "kritische Betrachtung eines biedermeierlichen Restaurations-Bestiariums" (Chr. D. Grabbe, Velber, 1966, p. 42).

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Tieck, 16 December 1822.

have no direct bearing on the developing action.

The satire and irony are not restricted to any figure in particular; the schoolmaster, the baron, Rattengift, Mollfels and Liddy all contribute to the polemic against contemporary literature and society.<sup>45</sup> Virtually all institutions are scurrilously ridiculed: education, press, clergy; politics, philosophy, science, theology, intellectualism, art. In this sense the outspoken criticism is predominantly cultural in nature. It is left to the devil, who has the unquestionable advantage of omniscience, to touch upon the deeper aspects of Grabbe's message and to expose the "Scheinhaftigkeit der Welt"<sup>46</sup> which remains after the multi-layered revelations of man's vanity and ineptitude have taken place. This he does in a series of exchanges; in II/1, with Werntal, he mocks those qualities commonly held desirable in the human being, especially in the female: intelligence, innocence, feeling and imagination; and, more significantly, in II/2, with the poet Rattengift, he goes on to discuss the nature of heaven and hell. Here, more cultural satire is combined with matter of apparently greater import, as the devil demonstrates that the after-life is as confused and "verkehrt" as the worldly "reality" presented to us in the preceding scenes. "Einen Mörder lachen wir so lange aus, bis er selber mitlacht, daß er sich die Mühe nahm, einen Menschen umzubringen" (WB 1, 242). Human conceptions of good and evil, of positive and negative values, are reversed; the roles of poets and great literary heroes have been drastically altered:

Shakspeare schreibt Erläuterungen zu Franz Horn, Dante hat den Ernst Schulze zum Fenster hinausgeschmissen, Horaz hat die Maria Stuart geheiratet, Schiller seufzt über den Freiherrn von Auffenberg. (WB 1, 245)

<sup>45</sup> M. Schneider regards the debasement of genuine values in Grabbe's contemporary society, "die Aushöhlung der höheren Wertbegriffe zu Konventionsformeln" (p. 39), as the prime target of the dramatist's satire. Only two figures, Mollfels and the baron, are exempted from the poet's scorn and represent the positive qualities of a "Lebensphilosophie" which is sadly lacking in Restoration Germany. In this way Schneider views the essence of the work as an attack on an inferior, anti-heroic society, of which the miserable "Trivillliteratur" which Grabbe so eagerly satirises is a superficial but representative manifestation.

<sup>46</sup> von Wiese ("Scherz"), p. 296; Kaiser, p. 7.

This hell, which is the "ironische Partie" of the mediocre world-comedy, "dem Primaner ... besser geraten als der Himmel, welches der bloß heitere Teil desselben sein soll" (WB 1, 242) is not far distant from the major cities of Europe, and, the devil insists, may be reached with ease. Traditional concepts of heaven and hell are inverted, any serious hope of meaningful transcendence is revealed as misguided, man's aspirations to lasting achievement are ridiculed. The universe has no consistent laws.

It is surely not exaggerated to conclude that the insanity Grabbe perceives in the literary world extends, by implication, to many spheres of life. Beyond its assault on Restoration culture Scherz represents a (humourous) undermining of man's faith in himself and the environment he has created, an exposure of his pretensions to any form of perfection or idealism. The devil exposes man as an inept creature and the world as the haven of empty, meaningless values which are as short-lived as man himself. Whilst it is not necessary to deduce "tragischer Pessimismus", "Nihilismus" or "Verzweiflung" from this aspect of the drama (the overall effect of the play is far too grotesque and comic to allow such an impression to pre-dominate), the cynicism beneath the surface is highly significant in our context. Like Gothland the comedy is concerned with the eradication of man's vain and conceited faith in ideals which are fabricated in the imagination and collapse in the face of reality. False notions of literary quality symbolise misguided values as a whole. Not only is the immediate world chaos, but the realm of eternity appears to be equally senseless; man has no hope of fulfilment. The poet's intentions in this "teufelhaftes Lustspiel" are clear: he satirises man's claims to civilisation and promotes an anti-illusory view of the world which recognises human limitations and, instead of asking us to take ourselves seriously, enables us to laugh at our own incompetence. While decidedly lighter in tone than Gothland, the polemical quality of this drama remains the same. The provocative effrontery and abrasive cynicism which are so characteristic of Grabbe's art, particularly in its early stages, have been transferred from the sphere of the grand tragedy to that of the absurd comedy.

### 3. Don Juan und Faust

Kraft und Dauer wohnen  
Nur in Begrenzungen

(Don Juan und Faust, III/2)

Don Juan und Faust is very much a drama of ideas. Its characters, despite Grabbe's insistence on the excellence and depth of their portrayal,<sup>47</sup> represent philosophical principles and confront each other like lines of argument in a debate rather than full-blooded human beings. In this play, "dessen Idee sich in der Gegenüberstellung des Strebens nach dem Sinnlichen und Übersinnlichen in den beiden Charakteren des Don Juan und Faust begründet",<sup>48</sup> the heroes represent the "Extreme der Menschheit",<sup>49</sup> embodying two radically opposed attitudes to life and the world. Through their common quest for the love of the heroine, Donna Anna, the dual heroes are brought together in a conflict and opposed not only to each other and to the heroine, but also to the bourgeois world which she, along with Don Gusman and Don Octavio, and on a purely satirical level Rubio and Negro, represents. We are faced in the drama, then, with three different spheres, each with its own ethos and scale of values, which come into collision, and the highly antithetical construction of the work enables the poet to unfold his ideas in a clear, paradigmatic fashion. The marked programmatic quality of the drama (it is, like Gothland, heavily monologic and demonstrative in concept) links it with the two plays previously discussed and brings to a conclusion the series of dramas in which the poet strives to establish the bases for his further development as an artist. Grabbe himself points to the common denominator of these early dramas and indicates that he views his stormy beginnings as an important part in the process of development and as a necessary preparation for his interest in historical drama:

<sup>47</sup> Model review in the letter to Kettembeil of 16 January 1829.

<sup>48</sup> WB 4, 114

<sup>49</sup> Letter to Kettembeil 16 January 1829

Auf Mittensommer hoffe ich die Tragödie "Don Juan und Faust" in 5 Acten zu vollenden; Sie ist der Schlußstein meines bisherigen Ideenkreises ... Dann binde ich mich an die Geschichte.<sup>50</sup>

In an earlier letter to his publisher he again stresses the terminal position of the tragedy in his career and refers directly to the turbulent, rebellious atmosphere which unites his first works: "Er vereint all mein bisheriges Streben und bildet das Ende der Katastrophe".<sup>51</sup> Don Juan und Faust heralds the end of Grabbe's dispute with the ideals and values of his classical heritage, marks the termination of his angry assault on speculative thought and signals the beginnings of his devotion to history, a realm in which he elects to disregard the metaphysical issues which occupy him in his non-historical dramas.

The tragedy is concerned above all else with the collapse of ideals, and, in keeping with the long and distinguished legend, Faust appears as the lofty idealist whose insatiable intellectual curiosity leads him to frustration with this world and the desire to seek eternal truth in realms beyond. He lacks the attractiveness of his Goethean counterpart and, as Grabbe comments,<sup>52</sup> retains only the heavily intellectual aspect of his predecessors, subjecting even the emotions of love, when they seize him, to rational and critical scrutiny. He is, however, led to the ultimate disillusionment and sees his Faustian essence destroyed.

We meet Faust in a long monologue clearly modelled on Goethe. In it he voices his disillusionment with the ways of art and science and claims to have attained the utmost in terms of conventional learning. Since religion, too, has failed him in his search for knowledge, he has turned to black magic in order that he might seek his goal in hell. Now he conjures up the devil to aid him, for:

Gibt es einen Pfad zum Himmel  
So führt er durch die Hölle, mindestens  
Für mich -

(WB 1, 434)

<sup>50</sup> Letter to Gubitz, 7 March 1828

<sup>51</sup> Letter to Kettenbeil, 5 February 1828

<sup>52</sup> 16 January 1829

Faust's demands are of the most extreme nature. Having failed to find contentment through books he now commands the devil to reveal to him the "tiefste Pulse der Natur" (WB 1, 438), wishes to taste the greatest extremes of experience, hopes indeed to come face to face with God. Of the devil he asks:

daß du mit deinen mächtgen Flügeln  
Mich von des Wissens Grenzen zu dem Reich  
Des Glaubens, von dem Anfang zu dem Ende,  
Hinüber suchst zu tragen, - daß du Welt und Menschen  
Ihr Dasein, ihren Zweck mir hilfst enträtseln, - (WB 1, 439)

In order to realise his ambition Faust is prepared to take any risk, even to leave the realm of humanity altogether, and he enters the pact with the devil on the understanding that he is to be shown only how happiness might be attained in theory, renouncing the practice. Faust's passion for the key to the universe knows no bounds and results in maniacal titanism. His exaggerated notion of man's capacities leads him to imagine that it should be possible for a mortal, particularly one of his stature, to force an entry into the heavens and take his rightful place beside God:

So klein der Mensch ist, größer ist er als  
Die Welt, - er ist unendlich stark genug,  
Um nicht zu hoffen, daß er Teufel bändge,  
Zu hoffen, daß er einst Gott auf dem Thron  
Zur Seit sich stelle, wär es auch im Kampfe! (WB 1, 478)

He is obsessed with his own power (the word "zertrümmern" is forever on his lips) and holds man and the world in contempt: he is infatuated with his own individualism and, to the end, never abandons the hope that he might one day prove himself the equal of the gods (WB 1, 506).

Faust is, however, as Grabbe demonstrates, totally misguided. He overestimates human capacities, fails to recognise the nature of the universe and has desperately faulty ideals. In his determination to seek truth and happiness beyond this world and his refusal to content himself with the values of other men, Faust, spurred on by his overinflated ego, blinds himself to the real truth of human existence.<sup>53</sup> The devil warns him quite

53 - Selig die, die schwach  
Genug sind, um vom Schein geblendet, Schein  
Für Licht zu halten'...  
- Doch lieber will ich unter Qualen bluten,  
Als glücklich sein aus Dummheit! (WB 1, 431)

early of the gross self-deception in which he is indulging: peace is to be sought not on a cosmic scale, but within the limitations imposed by reality:

Glück ist die Bescheidenheit  
Mit der der Wurm nicht weiter strebt zu kriechen,  
Als seine Kraft ihn trägt. (WB 1, 440)

Far from wishing to transcend his immediate surroundings in order to content himself, Faust should concentrate on the rich diversity offered by his real environment. The devil is not alone in offering Faust such advice: Don Juan also recognises the basic dichotomy of Faust's existence, calling him a

Renommisten der Melancholie  
Der nach der Hölle seufzt, weil er die Himmel nicht kennt.  
(WB 1, 424)

This quietistic, almost Biedermeier philosophy of contentment within certain limits, clearly unacceptable to Faust, stands also at the centre of the brief scene IV/2, whose function it is to expose in a light-hearted manner the shortcomings of the hero's striving for the superhuman. The gnomes of Montblanc satirise Faust's ideals and, in song, warn him:

O selig, wer im engen Kreis,  
Umringt von seines Feldraums Hecken,  
Zu leben, zu genießen weiß,  
Er spielt mit aller Welt Verstecken,  
Er blickt nicht sehnd nach den Fernen,  
Der ganze Himmel engt sich für ihn ein,  
Der Horizont mit seinen Sternen,  
Ist im Bezirke seiner Äcker sein. (WB 1, 493)

Faust is unable to accept any restriction of man's capabilities and is forced to an arrogant, egocentric defiance and an extreme aggressiveness which is visible even in his suit of Donna Anna. He will either possess or destroy her (WB 1, 494), refusing to tolerate any opposition to his goals. Faust has, evidently, lost touch with reality. The immediate, since it cannot lead him to the final truth, is meaningless for him, and provides only the starting point for his journey - "Wozu Mensch / Wenn du nach Übermenschlichem nicht strebst?" (WB 1, 485). He is not concerned with reality per se, and ultimately pays the price for his exaggerated self-assertion. Ironically, he, the lofty idealist, falls prey to the most basic of human



emotions, love, and sacrifices all in order to woo the woman who finds him repulsive. His grand ideals, his threats to conquer the heavens, his passion for truth come to nothing when confronted with the physical beauty of a mere human being. Unrequited love for Donna Anna - Faust's sorcery and satanic character make him the object of pure contempt for her - leads the hero directly to his destruction. He has at last found the way to happiness, has lost forever the opportunity of attaining it, and comes to recognise that the world does, after all, hold a meaning:

- Was ist die Welt? - Viel ist - viel war  
Sie wert - Man kann drin lieben! (WB 1, 498)

He is now filled with the deepest regret, realising that he has been stimulating himself artificially to the desire for unworldly pleasures (WB 1, 454) and acknowledging his own guilt in destroying his happiness (WB 1, 506). Love has taught him that one does not have to leave the present in order to find eternity:

Gibt es Zukunft, Ewigkeiten,  
So ists die Gegenwart, in welcher man  
Sie findet. (WB 1, 478)

Faust's misconceived ideals are dashed on the rocks of reality, and although when he offers himself to the devil in accordance with the pact he does so swearing everlasting defiance, the frailty of his values has been exposed and it is clear that he is guilty of a faulty assessment of reality.

Don Juan represents the opposing principle in the drama - "Wozu übermenschlich, / Wenn du ein Mensch bleibst?" (WB 1, 485). While Faust longs to transcend his environment in order to determine truth ("Die Wahrheit ist der Kern" WB 1, 497), Don Juan finds satisfaction through the enjoyment of the attractions this world has to offer ("Ich aber lobe mir die Wirklichkeit" WB 1, 497). For Faust only the end result - the accomplishment of his aim - is important,<sup>54</sup> while for the Don it is in the process of accomplishing that the main attraction lies.<sup>55</sup> The two are apparent poles - the extremes

54 "ein Endziel muß ich haben" (WB 1, 434).

55 jedes Ziel  
Ist Tod - Wohl dem, der weig strebt, ja Heil,  
Heil ihm, der ewig hungern könnte! (WB 1, 419)

of humanity. It is, however, significant that even Don Juan, with his insatiable appetite for members of the opposite sex, is not able to affirm the reality of the world whole-heartedly. Ultimately his hedonism and love of danger are born out of precisely the same disillusionment which characterises Faust:<sup>56</sup>

nur Abwechslung gibt dem Leben Reiz  
Und läßt uns seine Unerträglichkeit  
Vergessen! (WB 1, 425-6)

He is filled with the same contempt for the common man, for the monotony of everyday existence, for the stultifying mores of bourgeois society as his adversary, a fact which leads the devil to conclude that in essence the two heroes are motivated by very similar considerations.<sup>57</sup> The ceaseless quest for physical gratification represents for Juan an escape from the emptiness of human existence. In order to distract himself from despair over the inherent absurdity of the world he has chosen the opposite course to Faust: rather than seek to transcend reality in order to comprehend it, he elects to adorn reality with the glitter of uninterrupted pleasure. In this sense he is more of a realist than his rival. His is a philosophy of "Vergnügen", and he suggests that the entire world is based on a policy of personal, egocentric fulfilment:

- Warum betet  
Der Priester? Warum quält sich der Geschäftsmann?  
Weswegen schlägt der König seine Schlachten,  
Den Blitz und Donner der Zertrümmerung  
Und Tosen überbietend? Weil sie endlich  
Vergnügt sein wollen. (WB 1, 472)

For Don Juan enjoyment of the world is more important than comprehension

<sup>56</sup> Don Juan is not merely "der ungebrochene, nur sinnlich fühlende und in der Fülle des Augenblicks verschwenderisch lebende Mensch" which von Wiese sees in him (Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 467).

<sup>57</sup> Ich weiß, ihr strebt nach  
Demselben Ziel und karrt doch auf zwei Wagen! (WB 1, 513)

The similarities between the two heroes, which detract from the dramatic conflict of the work, are emphasised by Peter Michelsen in his article "Verführer und Übermensch: Zu Grabbes Don Juan und Faust", Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft, 1965, pp. 82-102.

of its secret laws,<sup>58</sup> and to indulge in the pursuit of sensual pleasures is to gloss over the deep uncertainties which govern life. Like Faust he asserts his individuality at the expense of all else; indeed, for Don Juan, as to an extent for his rival, the assertion of his ego becomes a form of ideal, a statement of his existence amidst the mediocrity of life. In recognising the restrictive influence of worldly limitations and seeking to alleviate the monotony of life through the attainment of tangible rather than abstract goals, Don Juan is undoubtedly a pragmatist. It is, however, evident that in his gross overestimation of his own worth and his epicurean negation of moral values he places a great strain on his environment, disrupting society with his asocial behaviour. The extent of his passion for excitement and danger leads him to an excessively individualistic view of the world and culminates in murder; thus Juan, too, is guilty of neglecting the demands of reality and experiences the tragedy of exaggerated self-assertion. Just as Faust's "Unendlichkeitshunger" is not conducive to a tolerable existence in the real world, so too is Don Juan's hedonism incompatible with the constraints on individualism necessary to the survival of society. And Don Juan, like Faust, refuses to the bitter end to sacrifice his ideal, preferring to perish in hell rather than renounce his identity:

Was  
Ich bin, das bleib ich! Bin ich Don Juan,  
So bin ich nichts, werd ich ein anderer!  
Weit eher Don Juan im Abgrundsschwefel  
Als Heiliger im Paradieseslichte!

(WB 1, 513)

The foundations of his existence - his positive attitude to life - are destroyed, his ideal values denied.

The world which bears the brunt of the heroes' titanic activity is that of bourgeois (one might well infer Biedermeier) morality. Don Gusman, Don Octavio and Donna Anna embody those principles which the heroes despise and against which they rebel. The catchwords of this circle are above all "Ehre" and "Tugend", virtues which raise man above sinful temptation to

58 Die Erde ist so allerliebste, daß mir  
Vor lauter Lust und Wonne Zeit fehlt, um  
An den zu denken, der sie schuf.

(WB 1, 472)

great heights where he is uncontaminated by evil ("Ehre wandelt den eignen Pfad" WB 1, 423). It is an ethos in which Donna Anna is thoroughly indoctrinated (WB 1, 496), choosing to die as a sacrifice of virtue (WB 1, 498). The conventions of the social world, as criticised by Don Juan, are stale, rigid, decorative and superficial. Don Juan describes Don Octavio as a typical representative of his class:

- lebt mäßig, gibt nicht Anstoß, tanzt gut, reitet  
Erträglich, spricht französisch, kann mit Anstand  
Im Kreise der Gesellschaft sich bewegen,  
Und schreibt vielleicht sogar auch orthographisch. (WB 1, 418-19)

It is a society which thrives on "Konnexion" and even corruption (the Rubio - Negro satire). But, as Anna and her father demonstrate, it is also a circle with strong, if restrictive, ideals. Octavio dies in order to preserve his honour, Gusman in the attempt to avenge him. Anna remains true to her conception of honour, loyalty and virtue to the last, and dies with her strength of conviction intact.

These are ideals, practicable within the limitations of reality, which initially appear to have real force. The virtuous Don Gusman has the pleasure of being reunited with his family in heaven (1, 512-13) and returns to earth as an animated statue to confront Don Juan. While the dual heroes perish and are condemned to hell on account of their distorted and exaggerated values, Gusman's circle secures eternity in the after-life through its adherence to solid Christian ideals. Idealism on a modest scale, it seems, is possible: yet it is by no means, Grabbe implies, desirable. There can be no doubt that the social criticism of Don Juan and Leporello is Grabbe's own, and his personal admiration for the non-conventionality of his heroes, particularly for Don Juan, is scarcely to be overlooked. Ideals, Grabbe suggests with the cynicism which is so characteristic of these early dramas, are tenable only if they do not imply excessive individuality: the only ideals which can prevail are, by implication, almost worthless. Contentment appears attainable only within the narrow confines of a rigidly structured moral system which is based on an ethic which demands the suppression of creative individualism. It is a system to which Grabbe is most emphatically opposed. On a significant scale

idealism cannot survive: the pressure of the real world reduces everything to a basic level. In this drama, too, inflated idealism proves unable to maintain itself in face of the demands of practical experience.

Gothland, Don Juan und Faust and Scherz represent a first, experimental phase in Grabbe's development as a dramatist.<sup>59</sup> In this series of plays we find the poet in rebellious mood, anxious to attract attention to himself through the sensational quality of his work and at the same time concerned to refute the heritage of classical idealism, still a force in the 1820s, whose continuation had been secured, if only on an inferior level, by a number of epigones.

In these works Grabbe takes strong exception to a world view which has its basis not in experience or empirical reality, but rather in the formative and (the poet implies) distortive power of man's intellect. The notion of transcendence through morality, spiritual freedom or exertion of the supreme will, and the conception of universal harmony which posits man's ability to attain balance and perfection, to improve himself through moral education, are exposed as illusions. The world of experience inhabited by Gothland and Faust contradicts idealised notions of man's relationship to the divine and brings them down to an immediate level, leaving them with only the conclusions drawn from their tragic situation. Here Grabbe "secularises" drama, removing it from its cosmic setting and adherence to the idea, and aligns it with perceptible reality, a reality which is seldom kind and often cruel. He reduces the world to its visible foundations, refusing to allow abstraction to overshadow pragmatic experience and postulating a negative reality which contradicts all values. There is, as Gothland and Faust learn, and as the satanic figures of these dramas (Berdoa, the black night, the devil) preach, no absolute truth

<sup>59</sup> The fragment Marius und Sulla, although it belongs chronologically to this group of dramas (1823; prose notes added and modifications made in 1827), has more in common with the history plays and will be discussed in that context.

beyond the limits of experience. Reality itself is truth, and any attempt to disguise it with higher values is, Grabbe demonstrates, misguided. The early dramas are very much concerned with the process of "Entlarvung". Human pretensions to nobility, knowledge, civilisation and culture are deflated, and bestiality emerges as the basic human instinct. Berdoa's "Religion der Hölle", which posits a materialistic and atheistic world of confused values, seems an appropriate credo in face of the levelling power of negative reality. Suffering proves more forceful than speculation, which encourages illusions.

Here, then, the foundations of Grabbe's historical world are laid: idealism has made way for a "philosophical realism" which no longer seeks to evade sensitive issues but acknowledges the pressures of reality. The world of immanence is to provide the realm in which history unfolds. In terms of Grabbe's realism the early plays are of great significance in as far as they prepare the stage for the later dramas by combatting speculative conceptions of reality: the poet has, as it were, emptied the world before embarking upon the attempt to fill it with historical matter. In his anti-illusory approach to such matters Grabbe anticipates (with his contemporary Büchner) conceptions of the world which, on account of their fundamental materialism, cynicism and refusal to succumb to the comforting charm of metaphysical speculation, were later to form the basis for the development of a consistently realistic literary art. If one accepts that an anti-idealistic "Weltbild" is of central importance to realism - and this is, as has been seen, a thesis which is generally held - the three early non-historical dramas represent Grabbe's first, tentative step in a new direction.

## II. History

- Der Mensch erklärt das Gute sich hinein,  
Wenn er die Weltgeschichte liest, weil er  
Zu feig ist, ihre grause Wahrheit kühn  
Sich selber zu gestehn!

(Gothland, III/1)

### 1. Introductory

#### i. A concept of history?

Grabbe's passionate interest in history is well-documented: from his adolescence he was a voracious reader of books on the subject and, according to a letter to Clostermeier (the director of the State Archive in Detmold and the father of Grabbe's later wife), the study of history was, along with that of geography, the major preoccupation of his youth. In the same letter he tells his correspondent:

Geschichte im Allgemeinen und die der größeren Staaten betreffend,  
ist wohl seit meinem 17en Jahre keine Woche bis zur gegenwärtigen  
vergangen, wo ich nicht in verschiedenen Sprachen wenigstens drei  
bis vier Bände guter Schriften darüber studirt habe,

a claim which is substantiated by the detailed research conducted by Bergmann into Grabbe's use of the Detmold public library.<sup>2</sup> Of the 1071 works (many comprising more than one volume) borrowed by Grabbe between 1824-34, 413 were historical, as compared with 266 works of world literature (the vast majority German) and 124 devoted to law. Despite a significant reduction in the number of his loans after 1830-31, Grabbe remained by far the most

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 27 August 1826. Eight years later, in a letter to Wolfgang Menzel, Grabbe claims: "Ich kann in geschichtlichen Sachen ... Jedem die Stirn bieten" (15 November 1834).

<sup>2</sup> A. Bergmann, Grabbe als Benutzer der öffentlichen Bibliothek in Detmold (Detmold, 1965).

prodigious borrower in Detmold over this ten year period. Fired no doubt partly by his desire to become an archivist,<sup>3</sup> Grabbe immersed himself even as a schoolboy in "bloß antiquarischen, historischen und politischen Studien", developing a marked historical consciousness and a fascination for the grand figures and events of history. Both his early biographers, Eduard Duller and Karl Ziegler, testify to the young Grabbe's obsession with the glory of history, and Karl Immermann, for some time the poet's patron, speaks of his exceptional ability to recreate the past vividly in his own mind.<sup>4</sup> The extent to which major events from the past were alive in Grabbe's consciousness is indicated further by his penchant for providing the dates of his letters with reminders of historical anniversaries. "Heute ist Napoleons Krönungstag, und der Tag von Austerlitz";<sup>5</sup> "Glück und Heil der Frau Archivrätin am Jahrestag vor der Erstürmung der Bastille".<sup>6</sup> Widely read and undoubtedly knowledgeable on the subject, Grabbe claims on one occasion: "daß ich eigentlich meiner Natur und äußeren Lage nach zum Historiker bestimmt war",<sup>7</sup> ranking the historical

3 Despite his training as a lawyer, Grabbe insists to Clostermeier: "ich ... habe ... stets an der Jurisprudenz nur die historisch-theoretische Seite geliebt" (letter of 27 August 1826) and clearly hoped to join Clostermeier in the Detmold "Archivamt". In this ambition he was actively supported by Clostermeier, who recommended to Prince Leopold that Grabbe be named and trained as his successor (letter of 2 September 1826). Clostermeier was much grieved by the denial of this request (7 November 1826).

4 Eduard Duller, Grabbes Leben (Düsseldorf, 1838).  
Karl Ziegler, Grabbes Leben und Charakter (Hamburg, 1855).  
Karl Immermann: "Der Geist der Geschichte selbst ist ihm erschienen und hat ihm manches Wort zugeflüstert" (Memorabilien). Immermann refers elsewhere to history as "die Hauptnahrung seines Geistes" and writes: "Er hatte auf dem Felde, welches seinem Geiste vorzugsweise angewiesen war, auf dem Felde der geschichtlichen Beobachtungen, einen großen und weiten Gesichtskreis" (Taschenbuch dramatischer Originalien, edited by Dr. Franck, Leipzig, 1838, p. XXIII).

5 Letter to Kettembeil of 2 December 1827.

6 Letter to Louise Clostermeier of 13 July 1831. See also the letters to Immermann of 12 April 1834 (Battle of Montenotte) and 10 February 1835 (Mary Stuart's death).

7 Letter to Friedrich Steinmann of 16 December 1829.



instinct within him even higher than the poetic impulse. This interest in history, which was ultimately to lead Grabbe to devote himself almost exclusively to the historical drama after 1829 (the revision of Aschenbrödel and the composition of the comic opera libretto Der Cid for his musician friend Burgmüller, both in 1835, are the only non-historical exercises after this date), remained with him throughout his life, inspiring both the extensive researching of sources for his later dramas and, on a more general level, the scattered thoughts on historical and contemporary themes which are to be found in many of his letters, particularly in the exchange with C. G. Schreiner during 1835-6.

Grabbe was indeed, it seems, blessed with a "historical mind". From his works, letters and reviews, as from the reports of his contemporaries,<sup>8</sup> emerges the image of a man gripped by the splendour of the past and filled with visions of historical greatness, infatuated with the stuff of history and attracted above all to its titanic individuals. It is hardly surprising in view of Grabbe's enthusiasm for the past and his hostility towards the present that his devotion to history has frequently been interpreted in terms of a deep compensation complex. The magnificence of the past was to serve as a release from the stifling mediocrity of contemporary Germany.<sup>9</sup>

To what extent, though, is one justified in speaking of a "concept of history" with regard to Grabbe's dramas? It is necessary to decide in the first instance whether the dramatist is interested in the past for its strictly historical value, i. e. in the workings of history per se, or whether he merely exploits it as a warehouse of suitable poetic themes.

<sup>8</sup> Many of these are collected by A. Bergmann under the title: Grabbe in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen (Stuttgart, 1968).

<sup>9</sup> Bergmann writes: "Dichtung ist für Grabbe die in der Phantasie befriedigte Sehnsucht nach einer idealeren Welt gewesen, erträumter Ersatz für das, was eine arme Wirklichkeit ihm versagte" ("Grabbes Persönlichkeit", in Was ist mir näher als das Vaterland?, edited by Heinz Kindermann, Berlin, 1939, pp. 12-38). This view is echoed by many commentators, for example Hermann, p. 17; F. J. Schneider (Persönlichkeit und Werk), p. 297.

Further it is important to ascertain whether Grabbe is concerned with particular periods for their purely dramatic and spectacular quality, with little regard for the historical process overall, or whether he views each of the epochs selected for dramatisation as a link in a chain of progression or, indeed, as a symbol of the course of history as a whole. Do his dramas deal exclusively with the men and movements which stand at their centre, or do they point beyond the confines of their specific subject-matter to themes of universal import? Is there any consistency behind the six dramas in question? Critical opinion on such matters varies considerably. A distinguished early critic, Richard M. Meyer, felt justified in speaking of a clearly defined "Geschichtsphilosophie" in Grabbe's works,<sup>10</sup> and he is supported in his emphasis on the profundity of Grabbe's view of history by a much more recent commentator, H.-D. Schaefer, who regards the poet as the most penetrating historical thinker of his age, a man who

sowohl in seinen brieflichen und theoretischen Äußerungen als auch vor allem in seinen großen Geschichtsdramen nicht nur Ranke, sondern auch die anderen deutschen Historiker seiner Zeit an Tiefe der Einsicht in<sup>11</sup> das Wesen der geschichtlichen Prozesse bedeutend überragt.

Somewhat more cautiously, though still with a view to the interpretative element of Grabbe's historical dramas, F. J. Schneider and von Wiese refer to the poet as a "Geschichtsdeuter".<sup>12</sup> Ernst Diekmann analyses Grabbe's "Geschichtsauffassung" in the most abstract terms.<sup>13</sup> Eleonora Gerda Claus, Günther Jahn, Waltraut Link, Fritz Siefert and H.-W. Nieschmidt all take for granted the poet's interest in the general mechanisms of history and devote considerable attention to the topic in their

10 Richard M. Meyer in Die Nation, 19 (1901-2), p. 167.

11 Schaefer, p. 3.

12 F. J. Schneider, Persönlichkeit und Werk. Benno von Wiese, Die deutsche Tragödie.

13 Ernst Diekmann, Chr. D. Grabbe: Der Wesensgehalt seiner Dichtung (Detmold, 1936).

studies.<sup>14</sup> Heinz Germann, on the other hand, warns us at the very outset of his thesis, the only examination exclusively devoted to this question, that

es keinesfalls möglich ist, von einer in sich geschlossenen, einheitlich durchdachten und völlig selbständigen Geschichtsauffassung, <sup>15</sup> wemöglich sogar einer Geschichtsphilosophie Grabbes zu sprechen,

a view which accords with Josef Bayer's much earlier designation of Grabbe's view of history as "dilettantisch".<sup>16</sup> These latter views are undoubtedly much nearer the truth. Grabbe did not evolve, nor even attempt to evolve, a unified philosophy of history. What justification do we have, then, for assuming his dramas to convey a specific idea of history?

Unlike Hebbel, Grabbe did not document his creative processes in a series of essays, prefaces, diary entries or letters. We have, in fact, very few authenticated statements on the subject of his aims and intentions as an artist, and those utterances which have come down to us are often vague or even contradictory. Nor are Grabbe's letters or reviews wholly reliable as a source of insight into the workings of the poet's mind; far from offering us any valid or useful information, they are marked by immature polemic and are distressingly image-conscious in character. It seems, in fact, that abstract theorising on a large scale, indeed, any capacity for the logical and extended formulation of thought on a given subject, was quite alien to Grabbe, whose only serious attempt at sustained literary argument, the invective essay "Über die Shakspeareomanie" (1827), itself bears witness to his uneasiness with theoretical

<sup>14</sup> E. G. Claus, "Geschichte und Schicksal in den Dramen Chr. D. Grabbes" (Diss. Frankfurt, 1943).  
G. Jahn, "Übermensch, Mensch und Zeit in den Dramen Chr. D. Grabbes" (Diss. Göttingen, 1951).  
W. Link, "Das Verhältnis von Mensch und Schicksal in Chr. D. Grabbes Dramen" (Diss. Heidelberg, 1945).  
F. Siefert, "Chr. D. Grabbes Geschichtsdramen" (Diss. Frankfurt, 1957).  
H.-W. Nieschmidt, "Chr. D. Grabbes Tragödie Hannibal: Eine Dramenanalyse" (Diss. Mainz, 1950).

<sup>15</sup> Germann, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> J. Bayer, "Vom historischen Drama", in Deutsche Dichtung IV, edited by K. E. Franzos (Stuttgart, 1888).

debate, betrays his tendency towards provocativeness and shows a penchant for the brief, unfounded and deliberately controversial statement. His awkwardness with metaphysical themes in general is further demonstrated by the drama Don Juan und Faust. We are restricted for the most part in any discussion of Grabbe's aims, then, to the evidence of the works themselves, and only the dramas will provide the key to the much discussed yet highly elusive "Geist der Geschichte". There can be little doubt that Grabbe approached the composition of his dramas without a specific aim or conviction on mind; indeed, one is inevitably left with the impression that any view of the historical process which does emerge from his plays developed as a result of his creative work and was not preconceived. It is fundamental to Grabbe's realism that the poet's attitudes are implied rather than stated, and for this reason the consistent and logical development of specific ideas in the plays is often obscured by other factors.

Inevitably, however, the poet who turns to history for his subject-matter becomes involved in a certain amount of interpretation. Absolute objectivity is impossible in art as it is in historical research, and the creative process itself, which entails above all an element of selection, by definition necessitates the adoption of certain attitudes, however disguised. It seems probable that any writer who devotes himself almost exclusively to historical themes has more than a passing interest in history and does not merely regard the past as a convenient store of characters and events. Unless the poet turns to history with an ulterior motive and intends to exploit his sources regardless of their historical import, as Grabbe certainly did not, he will inevitably be forced to present some kind of view of the material with which he is dealing, and it is to be expected that his attitude, if not to the historical process as a whole, then at least to the epoch selected for treatment, will emerge from his portrayal of past events. The concentration on certain figures, deeds, conflicts, motives or themes will inevitably colour the reader's reception of the poet's historical portrait, and unless the artist chooses to

reproduce a given episode in photographic detail and chronicle style, merely relating facts and assiduously avoiding all areas of dispute and doubt (the possibility of such a feat is in itself highly questionable), he will eventually be required to select a point of view of his own. It is neither possible nor desirable that a historical drama can profess to be a wholly authentic and unprejudiced reproduction of "historical fact". Such a task would be complicated still further by the poet's dependence on his sources, themselves coloured by the stance of their author. Presentation, then, involves interpretation. And it is the extent of this interpretation which concerns us here. For while it is readily established that the poet who approaches history is, or becomes, concerned with an assessment of his material, the depth of interpretation and the sophistication of ideas may vary considerably from one poet to another. Not every dramatist approaches his sources with the philosophical preconceptions of a Schiller or a Hebbel, the religious fervour of a Werner, the pedagogic designs of a Raupach or the political motives of a Gutzkow. It would be unreasonable to expect a highly developed or logically consistent concept of history from each and every historical playwright; nor would it be wise to expect a marked progression of ideas and attitudes from one drama to the next in the case of a writer who composed a series of such plays. For it is evident that a poet who tackles historical themes without the aid of a dialectic as sophisticated as Hegel's will at times have to grope his way through the dark and will lack ready-made solutions to the problems with which he is constantly confronted. In the case of such "unphilosophical" writers, and, as will be seen, Grabbe might well be included among their number, especial caution must be exercised. For here it is almost certain that vague, confused or even blatantly contradictory findings will result from a detailed study, and the temptation to harmonise such conflicting ideas by means of excessive generalisation, narrow lines of thought or distorted interpretation must be resisted. It is the aim of this chapter to ascertain whether one can, in fact, speak of a concept of history with regard to

Grabbe, to determine the nature of any such concept, and to assess its contribution to Grabbe's realism.

ii. Previous comment on Grabbe's view of history

The most marked divergence in views on Grabbe's attitude to history is to be encountered, hardly surprisingly, in the work of those critics who have subjected the dramatist to the extremes of ideological dogma, namely in the studies of the many Germans writing between 1933-45 who were committed to the tenets of national socialism and more recently of those, particularly in the German Democratic Republic, who employ Marxist principles of literary criticism. Several of the studies from these schools of thought are significant in the present context.

Germann's thesis on Grabbe's concept of history, which appeared during the Second World War, stresses all those qualities which are essential to the good German - "Stammesgehörigkeit", "Volkheit", etc. - and points to the playwright's overwhelming interest in the "Führergestalt", who demonstrates a "heroischer Wille zum Kampf". Initially such heroes, acting without regard for their natural limitations, perish in isolation; only when hero and masses join together to form a "völkisch-staatliche Gemeinschaft" does a positive note enter Grabbe's work. A mutual dependence between leader and led - "völkische Bindung" - is seen as central to the poet's view of political harmony, and Germann underlines Rainer Schlößer's view of Grabbe as "der einzige völkische Visionär seiner Zeit".<sup>17</sup> "Volk", inevitably, is the essence of the utopian state, which must be guided by the "Führerprinzip". In the final analysis Grabbe is, according to Germann, neither an optimist nor a pessimist where historical progress is concerned; he recognises the law of "ewiges Werden" and concedes that history is ultimately unfathomable. Where a degree of despair is evident it is

<sup>17</sup> Rainer Schlößer in the introduction to Was ist mir näher als das Vaterland?

alleviated by the retention of a heroic ideal, producing a "germanisch-heroischer Pessimismus". Similar views are to be found in the fourth chapter of Diekmann's study.<sup>18</sup> Here again the "Staatsidee" is seen as the guiding principle of Grabbe's historical drama, embodying ethical and metaphysical values ("der Erde höchstes"). "Das Völkische" is the essence of human existence, and, combined with the state ideal, produces the perfect nation which represents "Irdisch-Absolutes". The political union of leader and masses in the "Realisierung der Staatsidee" assumes almost mystical connotations. The higher purpose of history is the development of the perfect "völkischer Staat", an aim which will be achieved despite all obstacles. Diekmann's somewhat tortuous abstractions result in the conclusion:

Alles Menschheitsgeschehen ist - trotz dem Widerstand des wertabgewandten Daseins - nationale völkische Geschichte und sein Sinn die Wirklichwerdung des Staatlichen im Rahmen der ontisch gegebenen Einheit des Volkhaften.<sup>19</sup>

The tenets of national-socialist philosophy are applied by others in studies of lesser significance for our immediate purpose. F. J. Schneider, in an article entitled "Grabbe als Geschichtsdramatiker", stresses the poet's ideas on "Rassenkunde" and German unity, betraying his leanings at the end of what is an otherwise balanced account with the conclusion:

"Unsere Gegenwart aber schätzt an ihm das heroische Pathos und die ras-senbewußte Gesinnung des Deutschen".<sup>20</sup> Fritz Martini in "Grabbes nieder-deutsches Drama" states categorically that his aim is to elucidate Grab-be's work "aus seinem stammestümlich-landschaftlichen, rassisch-biologi-schen Wachstumsgrunde",<sup>21</sup> and reiterates many of the ideals expressed in earlier national-socialist literature. In Martini's view history assumes

18 Dieckmann, Chr. D. Grabbe: Der Wesensgehalt seiner Dichtung.

19 p. 207.

20 In Zeitschrift für deutsche Geisteswissenschaft, 1 (1939), 539-50, p. 550.

21 In Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 30 (1942), 87-106, p. 88.

for Grabbe the proportions of myth - "Grabbes Ziel, den 'wahren Geist der Geschichte' zu fassen, drängte zu einer mythischen, zeitlosen Sicht", a specifically low German attitude.<sup>22</sup> Grabbe exhibits "ein bluthaft-stammestümlich gebundenes Geschichtsgefühl"<sup>23</sup> and is well aware of the ethnological motivation behind world events. The struggle between hero and opposing forces in Grabbean drama is symbolic of the eternal German struggle, and the poet is led ultimately to view history "als Erkenntnis des völkisch Dauernden, als Ruf zu völkisch-politischem Denken".<sup>24</sup> Martini makes much of the apparent parallels between the plays and Grabbe's contemporary Germany, and attributes the fragmentary and desultory nature of much of his work (even indeed the duality of formal principles - the classical/closed and the modern/open) to the "rassische Zweispältigkeit seiner Anlage" which combines nordic and Westphalian elements.<sup>25</sup> E. G. Claus, a year later, is likewise concerned with the magical concept of the "Volk" and states her intentions thus:

Außerdem will diese Arbeit ihr Teil dazu beitragen, klar zu machen, warum gerade unsere Zeit eine Grabbe-Renaissance erfährt, indem sie Grabbes dichterisches Vorahnen der künftigen Entwicklung aufzeigt, in der die Menschheit in ihrem weitesten organischen Gefüge, dem Volk, wieder am großen Einzelnen sich ausrichtet: am großen Einzelnen, der stellvertretend ihr Schicksal, es erleidend wie gestaltend, an sich selber erlebt.<sup>26</sup>

Emphasising the parallels between Grabbe's work and Hegelian philosophy of history, particularly with regard to the heroic individual, Claus sees Grabbe's interest in "Macht", the "Reich", the "Führer" as the mainspring of the dramas. The poet demonstrates a marked "Glauben an die Berufung des deutschen Volkes".<sup>27</sup> History has inexorable laws to which all individuals

22 p. 157. Further: "Niederdeutscher Art entspricht ein stark geschichtlich ausgerichtetes Weltverständnis" (p. 157).

23 p. 161.

24 p. 158.

25 p. 171.

26 Claus, p. III.

27 p. 61.



are subjected, it is "irrationale Schicksalhaftigkeit".<sup>28</sup> Claus' conclusion that individuals perish for the common good, which they recognise as such, is, as will be seen, far removed from our own.<sup>29</sup>

Rudi Bock, too, in the conclusion to his detailed study of Grabbe's treatment of his sources, pays lip-service to the fundamentals of national-socialist philosophy, stressing Grabbe's patriotism, racial awareness and desire for national unity.<sup>30</sup> He accepts the parallels between Grabbe and Hegel, proposed by Adele de Soye<sup>31</sup> and adopted by F. J. Schneider and E. G. Claus, and reiterates the leading principle of Grabbe criticism of the 1930s and 40s: the works as the expression of "das hohe Ethos der schicksalhaften Verbundenheit von Führer und Gefolgschaft". The entire conclusion to this study is, in fact, conceived in accordance with party dogma. The most glaring examples of interpretative distortion and political propaganda are, however, to be found in the various prefaces to Heinz Kindermann's popular wartime edition of Grabbe's last three plays, Was ist mir näher als das Vaterland?, particularly in Heinrich Hollo's foreword "Grabbes Werk oder die Geburt der Dichtung aus der Volkheit".<sup>32</sup> Nationalism; heroism; racial purity; the call for strong leadership; history as the progression of "Führer" and "Volk" towards total harmony, an unhaltable march towards the evolution of the ideal nation-state based not merely on political strength, but on the unity provided by "Blut und Boden": these are the main themes of Grabbe's historical dramas as identified by the critics of national-socialist Germany.<sup>33</sup> They all see Grabbe

28 p. 60.

29 "... seine Helden müssen wohl persönlich resignieren, aber sie erkennen doch noch das Wirken des Guten im Kosmos an" (p. 175).

30 R. Bock, "Das Verhältnis von Dichtung und Datentreue in den historischen Dramen Grabbes" (Diss. Greifswald, 1940).

31 A. de Soye, "Historisches Drama und Umwelt: Grabbes Historien-dramen im Lichte der Hegelschen Geschichtsphilosophie" (Diss. Vienna, 1933).

32 pp. 39-52 of the volume.

33 For a brief discussion of Grabbe's reception in national-socialist Germany: Dietmar Goltschnigg, "Zur Ideologisierung der Literaturwissenschaft - am Beispiel Grabbes", Wirkendes Wort, 28 (1978), 232-42.

as a forerunner of national-socialist principles.<sup>34</sup>

While the discussions of the 1930s and 40s place their emphasis on the dominant role of the strong individual (the "Führer" mystique) and his relationship to the "Volk" as a timeless ethnic group, Marxist critiques concentrate their attentions on the masses in the dramas as a social-political entity, and search for evidence of emerging historical materialism. Of the long tradition of Marxist Grabbe criticism, which was initiated by Franz Mehring's essay of 1901,<sup>35</sup> the two studies mentioned in our introduction, those by Schaefer and Kühne, are of particular significance. For Schaefer the crux of Grabbe's drama is to be found in the "Dialekt zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft",<sup>36</sup> fully developed only in those works which interpret history along the correct (Marxist) lines. Whilst Grabbe is half way to recognising the significance of the proletariat and the motivating force of class conflict in history, he is prevented from committing himself whole-heartedly to the philosophy of dialectical materialism by his own unfortunate historical situation, which made it impossible for him to visualise the true implications of an organised working class. Grabbe's faith in the power of the lower classes produces, according to Schaefer, an optimism which is tempered by the retention of certain bourgeois Restoration ideals. The dramatist is not able to subscribe fully to a progressive view of history as simple sociological causation but combines materialism with remnants of outdated idealism, confusing individualistic and collectivistic historical forces. For the

34 "Ein ganzes Jahrhundert wurde dem Dichter nicht gerecht, es fand keine innere Einstellung zu Grabbe, der doch so innig mit Volk und Land, Blut und Boden verwurzelt war. Das national-sozialistische Deutschland betrachtet Grabbe nicht nur als ein Kind seiner Zeit, sondern sieht ihn im deutschen Blutstrom hervorragen und dessen Besonderheiten in gesteigertem Maße in sich tragen" (Alfred Meyer in the "Geleitwort" to Jahrbuch der Grabbe-Gesellschaft, Detmold, 1939).

35 "Christian Dietrich Grabbe" in Gesammelte Werke, volume 10 (Berlin, 1961).

36 Schaefer, pp. 43-44.

Marxist, who has the unquestionable advantage of believing that he has solved the mysteries of historical development, the issue is quite clear-cut: his faith in historical materialism allows him to judge most precisely the level of insight achieved by the poet and consequently to gauge the degree of realism attained.

While Schaefer remains convinced, despite considerable evidence to the contrary, of Grabbe's democratic-plebeian attitude to political history, Kühne, writing earlier, views him as a disillusioned liberal. According to Kühne Grabbe's political optimism had been dampened by the cynicism which prevailed in German democratic circles after the failure of Stein's social reforms; even in Marius und Sulla he reveals himself as an apologist for the "Herrentribun" (an aristocratic-elitist stance) and falls prey to "anthropologischer Pessimismus", an attitude clearly incompatible with any awareness of socio-economic progression. Grabbe's view of history is, according to Kühne, dominated by this pessimism. Taking the opposite view to Schaefer, he sees Grabbe as an exponent of "Cäsarismus", convinced of the innate political ineptitude and stupidity of the common people;<sup>37</sup> he does, however, discern at least some evidence of the modern "konkret-soziale Begründung des tragisch-dramatischen Konflikts".<sup>38</sup> In Kühne's view, Grabbe's concept of history is progressive and reactionary at one and the same time, and he places the poet alongside Nietzsche as a firm upholder of the "superman principle", almost Machiavellian in his amorality:

Gemessen und gewertet werden von Grabbe und Nietzsche im  
Geschichtsgeschehen nicht die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung;  
diese wird als Entwicklungsprozeß der Klassen und Nationen

<sup>37</sup> Kühne is alone among Marxist critics in his designation of Grabbe as the representative of "die Ideologie der konvertierten Intelligenz, ihren anthropologischen Pessimismus, ihre Elitetheorie, ihren "Welt-schmerz", die Bewunderung des "großen Mannes", d. h. also die Ideologie der kapitalistischen und verbürgerlicht-feudalen Oberschichten" (p. 236).

<sup>38</sup> Kühne, p. 92.

geleugnet. Gewertet und gerichtet wird formal der Erfolg und die Energie des geschichtlichen Handelns des einzelnen, losgelöst von jedem Inhalt.<sup>39</sup>

Here Schaefer's view of Grabbe as the profound socio-historical thinker with insight into the perpetual class struggle is completely refuted. The poet's inability to recognise the vital forces of history deprives him, Kühne maintains, of hope, and proves highly detrimental to his realism, which, in Marxist theory, depends largely on the accurate identification of contemporary political currents, their reflection in artistic form and a resultant utopian perspective. Kühne accuses Grabbe of "einer nihilistischen Verneinung jedes Fortschritts in der Geschichte, aller schöpferischen Fähigkeiten des Volkes",<sup>40</sup> attitudes which are anathema to socialist literary criticism. He stands, however, quite alone among Marxist critics in his denial of Grabbe's belief in meaningful historical progress through the agency of the masses. More typically, Ursula Münchow sees the masses as "die entscheidende politische Macht" and thus underlines Schaefer's notion of historical optimism in Grabbe.<sup>41</sup> Like the majority of Marxist commentators - Mehring, Paul Reimann,<sup>42</sup> Böttger, Hans Mayer and Ehrlich<sup>43</sup> - Münchow traces Grabbe's plebeian-democratic leanings back to his social inferiority complex and his dissatisfaction with the "Stickluft der Metternichschen Reaktion".

Reimann likewise defends Grabbe against all charges of "einer extrem individualistischen Auffassung" of history or of heroic idealism and stresses his insight into the mechanics of historical development.<sup>44</sup> He supports

39 p. 97.

40 p. 230.

41 Ursula Münchow, "Die Jakobinermützen überdauern: Zur Aktualität des Werkes von Chr. D. Grabbe", Neues Deutschland (Organ des Zentralkomitees der S.E.D.), Berlin, 8 January 1967, p. 8.

42 Paul Reimann, Hauptströmungen der deutschen Literatur 1750-1848 (Berlin, 1956).

43 L. Ehrlich, "Leben und Werke".

44 Reimann, p. 669.

Schaefer's conclusion (reached also by Ehrlich) that Grabbe was only partly able to grasp the motivating forces of history as correctly identified later by Marx and Engels but was, by the same token, one of the first poets of his age to do so. Wilhelm Steffens, writing from a similar political perspective, sees Grabbe's lack of democratic idealism as his major failing and the greatest obstacle to the development of a critical realism:

Grabbes Weltsicht, in seinen letzten Werken nicht mehr nur aus Eigenem genährt, sondern am Geschichtslauf kontrolliert,<sup>45</sup> mündet in den subjektiven Pessimismus des Anfangs.

The standard Marxist views are collected and reiterated in the East German Erläuterungen zur deutschen Literatur: (Vormärz 1830-48).<sup>46</sup> With the sole exception of Kühne, then, socialist critics are concerned to underline Grabbe's disenchantment with his own times, his awareness of the material forces which govern history and his faith in the eventual triumph of the masses. The general mood of Grabbe's concept of history is held to be one of hope. Böttger, typically, sees Grabbe's later works as an affirmation of the

Vernunft, die in der Geschichte waltet und den menschlichen Fortschritt bewirkt. Die Pseudophilosophie seiner Jugend von dem boshaften Weltdämon, der die Menschen narrt, war längst ad acta gelegt. Ernsthaftes historische Studien und der Anschluß an die Geschichtsschreibung der Aufklärung<sup>47</sup> hatten ihn zu einem wesentlichen progressiven Weltbild geführt.

This conclusion will be seen to stand poles apart from our own.

Among the large volume of "bourgeois" Grabbe criticism much space is devoted to the poet's attitude of history. Generally speaking the history of this topic in research has been marked above all by the rejection (most notably by von Wiese) of the earlier assumption of Grabbe's indebtedness to Hegel, which had been introduced early and supported by F. J. Schneider in his influential monograph of 1934 and subsequently

<sup>45</sup> Steffens, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Berlin, 1972, edited by the "Kollektiv für Literaturgeschichte".

<sup>47</sup> Böttger, p. 321.

adopted by other commentators (Bock; Claus). Von Wiese it was, too, who, in his article "Die historischen Dramen Grabbes"<sup>48</sup> and various other publications, dealt the final blow to the tendency to view Grabbe's works against the background of Schillerean classical-idealism rather than as a corpus in its own right. The popular view of Grabbe's concept of history, reduced to its essentials, discerns a development from the out-and-out despair of the early works (Marius und Sulla, Kaiser Heinrich VI), in which man is subject to hostile natural forces (biological decay, chance) through a stage at which concrete historical forces play their role (Napoleon, Hannibal), to the optimism of Die Hermannsschlacht, where leader and led come together to form a utopian community of considerable historical potency. The fundamental elements of Grabbe's attitude to history as recognised by the majority of critics are admirably outlined by von Wiese in the excellent chapters of his history of German tragedy. The views of those commentators who have contributed most to our topic may be briefly outlined.

Valuable work was done quite early by Heinrich Allekotte in his thesis "Chr. D. Grabbes Römertragödien".<sup>49</sup> Allekotte rejects any Hegelian influence in Grabbe's works, missing any sign of "Vernunft" in the poet's portrayal of history.<sup>50</sup> He recognises as the "Grundmotif" of the historical dramas "daß das Große stürze, ewig aber das Kleine andauere" - the fate of the great individual is tragic.<sup>51</sup> While acknowledging the absence of any

48 In Die Welt als Geschichte, 7 (1941), 267-94. This article, which deals primarily with the Hohenstaufen dramas, is expanded to embrace all the poet's work in von Wiese's Die deutsche Tragödie (first published Hamburg, 1948). Much of the material of the three chapters devoted to Grabbe in this study first appeared in the introduction to von Wiese's selected edition of Grabbe's works, Chr. D. Grabbe: Auswahl in 2 Bänden (Stuttgart, 1943). The critic's views on the dramatist's view of history are compressed into the essay "Die Deutung der Geschichte durch den Dramatiker Grabbe" in Von Lessing bis Grabbe, originally a lecture delivered to the Grabbe-Gesellschaft in Detmold in October 1964.

49 Diss. Münster, 1920.

50 "Ein deutlicher Einfluß der Hegelschen Geschichtsphilosophie auf Grabbe ist ... schwerlich nachzuweisen" (p. 7).

51 p. 11.

strict metaphysical idea in the plays, undoubtedly with justification, Allekotte overemphasises Grabbe's adherence to his sources, seeing here the influence of Tieck's views on the historical drama.<sup>52</sup> Further he equates Grabbe's "Geist" or "Idee der Geschichte" with the idea posited by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his essay "Über die Aufgaben des Geschichtsschreibers", an idea not to be superimposed onto the historical process from without, but rather to be deduced and extracted from within and based on available evidence. This vital historical idea is to be combined, alleges Allekotte, with Schlegel's demand for the vivid and lively recreation of a historical epoch on stage ("history in the making"). The poet's lack of interest in the psychological processes of historical figures is seen as a parallel to both Humboldt and Hegel; Grabbe prefers to unearth the larger determinants of the historical process. It is likewise to Allekotte's credit to have emphasised the vast influence exerted on the hero by his environment:

Hierin besteht ... der große Vorzug der Grabbeschen Dramaturgie, daß sie die größeren welthistorischen Persönlichkeiten nicht einzeln aus sich heraus so erklärt und handeln läßt, sondern auch all den Verhältnissen nachspürt, die den Helden tragen, auch die Beweggründe aufdeckt, die von außen, aus der Umgebung auf den Hörer einwirken.<sup>53</sup>

He criticises Grabbe, in fact, for his overinsistence on objective elements at the expense of human interest. While Allekotte's short chapter on "Grabbe und die Geschichte"<sup>54</sup> does not penetrate to the essence of the poet's thought, it does raise interesting points and parallels and recognises at least the most striking manifestations of Grabbe's aims. For F. W. Kaufmann the interest of Grabbe's historical dramas lies purely in the "Weltanschauungen" of the heroes who stand at their centre, and

behandeln an den politischen Heroen der Weltgeschichte deren Gebundenheit an die zeitlichen Bedingungen und variieren an ihnen das Thema der tragischen Verknennung der realen Wirkungs-

<sup>52</sup> This view is taken up by Sengle in Das historische Drama in Deutschland.

<sup>53</sup> Allekotte, p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> pp. 6-23. of his study.

möglichkeiten.<sup>55</sup>

Kaufmann is concerned with the dramas as the expression of metaphysical ideas rather than as strictly historical art, and has little to say about the poet's view of history per se. Ernst Busch, setting Grabbe against the background of the secularisation of drama in the early nineteenth century, sees the poet engaged in the search for "historische Objektivität", the prime source of his realism.<sup>56</sup> He recognises the process of "de-mythologisation" which, having taken place in the early dramas, removes any transcendental framework from the history plays:

Der metaphysische Oberbau, der die beiden Jugenddramen kennzeichnete, ist abgedeckt. Die natürlichen Gegebenheiten des Lebens und die realen Vorgänge des geschichtlichen Lebens treten ganz in den Vordergrund.<sup>57</sup>

Despite his knowledge of impermanence and chance, the Grabbean hero is, according to Busch, able to dictate the course of history: the fatalism of the non-historical dramas has given way here to a fuller understanding of the forces of history ("Die Realität der Geschichte wird zur Schicksalsmacht erklärt"),<sup>58</sup> and the most striking feature of historical development is, Busch maintains, to be found in the interplay between leader ("Genie") and masses. In this relationship the great is often hampered by the mediocre and insignificant. The essence of Grabbe's view of history is, Busch concludes, the vital role of chance:

Es gibt zwar einen kausalen Zusammenhang innerhalb des geschichtlichen Geschehens, innerhalb der Kräfte, die zusammenkommen und zusammenstoßen, aber die Ursache, daß gewisse Kräfte zusammenkommen und dann einen kausalen Zusammenhang bilden, bleibt unauffindbar. Sie ist schlechthin der Zufall.<sup>59</sup>

Benno von Wiese, writing in the same year, continues the campaign against any comparison between Grabbe and Schillerean idealism, stressing

55 F. W. Kaufmann, "Die realistische Tendenz", pp. 18-19.

56 Ernst Busch, "Geschichte und Tragik in Grabbes Dramen", Dichtung und Volkstum, 41 (1941), 440-59, p. 443.

57 p. 449.

58 p. 452.

59 p. 458.



Grabbe's emphasis on "das unberechenbare Auf und Ab des Geschichtsvorganges";<sup>60</sup> far from acting as a bridge to a transcendental realm, history is the record of pure human "Vergänglichkeit und Tod", a rolling, neutral process which reaches brief highlights in the achievements of great individuals, the "Kronzeugen des tiefsten Wesens der Geschichte", who stand in opposition to the forces of their age.<sup>61</sup> In the realm of reality man is trapped on two levels - not only is he limited to this world (since he has no possibility of transcendence), but he is further limited within this world by a multitude of determining forces. Despite Grabbe's awareness of the levelling power of history, which erodes human greatness, he nevertheless manages, according to von Wiese, to maintain faith in the indestructibility of the outstanding individual: "Im Kerne bleibt die Substanz des großen Individuums unzerstörbar".<sup>62</sup> Only this conviction of the value of human greatness - "eine romantische Prophetie" amidst Grabbe's otherwise decidedly anti-illusory thought - saves the dramatist from complete despair. History is, for Grabbe, essentially tragic, but nevertheless, as the stage of greatness, retains a magical appeal:

Aber sosehr auch Grabbe von der Geschichte angezogen wird, sosehr er sie von der Größe aus verklärt, ihrem tiefsten Wesen nach ist sie für ihn tragisch. Sie wird zu dem irdischen Schauplatz, auf dem der Dichter das von Vergänglichkeit, Schmerz, Einsamkeit und Tod bedrohte Menschenlos, aber auch allen Glanz, alle Wildheit, alle ursprüngliche Kraft und Schönheit der Menschenseele am unmittelbarsten erfährt.<sup>63</sup>

Jahn likewise discerns both idealistic and materialistic elements in Grabbe's works and chooses to approach the poet's view of history via his treatment of time. For Jahn Grabbe is concerned not to recreate a precise historical epoch, but rather to concentrate on the timeless aspects of history, obscuring any development or continuity behind events.<sup>64</sup> The

60 B. von Wiese, "Die historischen Dramen Grabbes", p. 269.

61 p. 272.

62 p. 291.

63 B. von Wiese, "Die Deutung der Geschichte durch den Dramatiker Grabbe", p. 318.

64 Jahn, p. 84.

result is a static time ("ruhende Zeit") which has no meaning beyond itself - the moment is autonomous - and it is in these "Geschehnisse des Geschichtsablaufs, die zeitlose Züge tragen" that the poet is primarily interested.<sup>65</sup> History is the "ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen" - its sense is senselessness - and the teleological view, with its primacy of reason, is rejected. Jahn denies any sense of development in Grabbe's view of history; indeed, even the great individual is incapable of introducing any meaning or logic into its chaotic progression. Man is, in fact, hardly instrumental in the historical process, instead time, as "neutrales, naturhaftes Zeitigen", motivates events independently "von unten": "Nicht der Mensch, sondern die Zeit 'handelt' im Drama Grabbes".<sup>66</sup> Only Hermann, Jahn concludes, with his reduced craving for power and his affirmation of the value of the moment without an unrealistic view to the future, is able to effect some change, and thus the despair of Grabbe's view of history is somewhat alleviated.

Nieschmidt confirms von Wiese's view of history in Grabbe as "überpersönliche, schicksalhafte Macht, die unerbittlich ihrem ewigen Gange folgt".<sup>67</sup> The individual can succeed only if he is supported by the "Volk", and yet only the great individual is blessed with the necessary insight to act in a meaningful way. Nieschmidt sees the playwright in search of the eternal patterns of history which may be detected in any epoch: "Geschichte ist für Grabbe von 'aufwühlender Gegenwärtigkeit' (Martini). Ihr tiefer 'Sinn', ihr 'Geist', ihre 'Bedeutung', um deren Enträtselung der Dramatiker ringt, sind zeitlos, sind beispielhaft für die Schicksale ganzer Völker und heldischer Einzelmenschen in allen Zeitaltern der Geschichte".<sup>68</sup> Considerable attention is devoted to Grabbe by Sengle in his Das historische Drama in Deutschland. He sees the great individual in

65 p. 85.

66 p. 129.

67 H.-W. Nieschmidt, "Hannibal", p. 137.

68 p. 139.

Grabbe's works as the sole motivating force behind history,<sup>69</sup> ultimately destroyed not by any specific historical development, but by the role of blind chance. History is "ein bloßer Kampf physischer Kräfte",<sup>70</sup> "ein undurchdringliches naturhaftes Geschehen",<sup>71</sup> in essence a quite meaningless process which is imbued with significance (and interest) only by the deeds of its heroic individuals:

Ihre Tat und ihr Opfer erhebt die Geschichte über den bloß naturhaften Ablauf, durch sie dringt noch in die vom Nichts umlauerte Welt des Allzumenschlichen, des Gemeinen, ein göttlicher Lichtstrahl.<sup>72</sup>

A realistic-materialistic view of the processes of history is correspondingly marked by a duality of principles. Leonard MacGlashan likewise sees the poet torn between the two poles of individualism and collectivism in his view of historical causation and, placing Grabbe alongside Büchner, discerns a "Bemühen um die historische Wahrheit".<sup>73</sup> For Grabbe history itself is the overwhelming interest, so much so, in fact, that the poet exhausts himself in "historische Faktizität";<sup>74</sup> for Büchner, on the other hand, the position of man within the historical process is the prime concern. The essential difference between Grabbe and Büchner is that between the predominantly historical and the fundamentally anthropological. Franz Koch, referring to Grabbe's words at the end of Marius und Sulla on the inescapable necessity of historical events, infers:

Geschichte wird ... von einem organischen Blickpunkt aus, das Schicksal eines Volkes als eine Lebensganzheit gesehen, deren

69 Sengle, Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 160: "Der Träger der geschichtlichen Bewegung ist ausschließlich der große Mann".

70 p. 162.

71 p. 163.

72 p. 173.

73 L. MacGlashan, "Sinn und Form des realistischen Dramas bei Georg Büchner" (Diss. Münster, 1955), p. 10. The author notes the paradox: "Grabbe war zwischen der Verehrung für das große, zeitprägende Individuum und der Einsicht in dessen Ohnmacht gegenüber der Zeit hin- und hergerissen" (p. 11).

74 p. 14.

Wachstum so naturgesetzlich verläuft, daß alle politischen Handlungen dieses Volkes nur die Außenseite dieses Innenvorgangs sind,<sup>75</sup>

placing the poet firmly within the context of the development of an organological concept of history as developed by Möser, Herder and Ranke. He sees Grabbe's historical world subjected to a timeless, natural pattern and, like the majority of commentators, identifies a development from the pure heroic individualism of the earlier plays to the more positive "Volkstumserlebnis" of Die Hermannsschlacht.

In the assessment of Siefert Grabbe is asking himself "ob Geschichte im eigentlichen Sinne überhaupt möglich ist".<sup>76</sup> Man appears to make history and yet, at the same time, his level of attainment is highly restricted. History can only be motivated by human action: "Sicher ist nur dies: Geschichte scheint nur dort möglich, wo der Mensch irgendwelche Ziele durch Handeln verwirklicht".<sup>77</sup> Basically, however, "geschichtliches Dasein stellt sich unter diesem Aspekt als vergänglich-verlorenes Dasein heraus". Irrational forces govern human destiny, and Siefert, too, recognises a paradox in Grabbe's historical thought:

Einerseits macht sich ein geschichtsfeindlicher Unterstrom im Napoleon bemerkbar. Geschichtliches Werden und Vergehen wird in Beziehung gebracht mit dem zweck- und sinnlos verlaufenden Geschehen der Naturwelt. Andererseits entnehmen wir dem deprimierenden Auf und Ab der Geschichte doch immer wieder großartige Zeugnisse menschlicher Willens- und Tatgröße.<sup>78</sup>

The utopian unity of the outstanding leader and the "Volk" (as in Die Hermannsschlacht) makes "Geschichte als positives Geschehen".<sup>79</sup> Martini,<sup>80</sup>

75 F. Koch, Idee und Wirklichkeit (Düsseldorf, 1956), volume 2, p. 9.

76 Siefert, p. 92.

77 p. 92.

78 p. 101.

79 p. 138.

80 F. Martini, "Grabbe: Napoleon oder die hundert Tage", in Das deutsche Drama vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart, edited by Benno von Wiese (Düsseldorf, 1960), volume 2.

like Höllerer,<sup>81</sup> sees history in Grabbe's works as meaningless, as a carousel - "die ironische Tragikomödie des Sinnlosen, des resultatlosen Kreislaufes"<sup>82</sup> - ruled by chance, "abrupter Wechsel widerspruchsvoller Augenblicke, die keine ideelle Kontinuität verbindet".<sup>83</sup> Grabbe admires greatness, but is forced to concede that it is "eine vergängliche Illusion ... ein vergehendes Objekt der Geschichte im Narrenspiel ihrer Komödie".<sup>84</sup> Martini views history in the dramas as an eternal to and fro, Grabbe's pessimism as all-pervasive:

Grabbes Pessimismus umfaßt den ganzen Geschichtsverlauf und den in ihm sich darstellenden Weltzustand. Er scheint dem sinnleeren Kreislauf der Wiederkehr preisgegeben zu sein, der kein Ziel, nur das Auf und Ab in einer nicht abreißenden Reihung in der Zeit kennt.<sup>85</sup>

Even the unmistakable glorification of the great hero cannot detract from the despair of Grabbe's view of history and Martini, too, discerns a "merkwürdige Paradoxie" in Grabbean historical drama: "die geschichtliche Welt negiert den titanischen Menschen der Tat, dessen sie aber als 'lebendige' Geschichte bedarf".<sup>86</sup>

Dietmar Schmidt, in his thesis on the tragic in Grabbe's dramas, also discovers an essential paradox and finds Grabbe engaged in the search for a last value in an empty world:

Durch die heroische Haltung des "Trotzdem", des Aushaltens der Vergänglichkeit und des immanenten Kreislaufs alles Seins, hofft Grabbe verzweifelt noch einen letzten Sinn menschlicher Existenz zu wahren.<sup>87</sup>

Transience, chance, fate, decay, immanence, hopelessness are the qualities

81 Höllerer, Zwischen Klassik und Moderne.

82 Martini, "Napoleon", p. 44.

83 p. 46.

84 p. 52.

85 p. 61.

86 p. 62.

87 D. Schmidt, "Die Problematik des Tragischen in den historischen Dramen Grabbes" (Diss. Würzburg, 1965), p. 93a.

of Grabbe's historical world, which is, Schmidt concludes, synonymous with his view of reality as a whole. M. Schneider, in his recent study, traces the two themes of heroism and social integration in Grabbe's dramas and supports the conventional conclusion that Grabbe moves towards recognition of the potency of the well-ordered community.<sup>88</sup> At the same time he attributes to the battle scene a utopian dimension in which social differences disappear and the forces of destruction become constructive: the world of war is a positive alternative to the chaos and confusion of everyday mediocrity. Grabbe's peculiar form of idealism is restricted to a social plane.

The fundamental and recurrent themes and problems of Grabbe's concept of history as identified by commentators through the years (the above is only a selection, but embraces the most representative and influential views) emerge clearly from this survey of relevant studies. At the centre of the debate stands the vital question of historical motivation, in particular of the validity of the outstanding individual in world-historical terms. Titular heroes of vast proportions and unlimited individualism are the most striking element of Grabbean drama. Despite, however, extensive critical discussion of the role of the superhuman leader in the works, opinion is still very much divided on the nature and relevance of these protagonists. Their motivating considerations, aims, achievement and downfall will require examination in the present study in an attempt to establish more precisely the dramatist's attitude to the value of the "world-historical individual" in general terms. Does the individual, in Grabbe's conception, completely dictate historical development or is he held to represent but one component in the complex mechanisms of the historical process? Does he act quite autonomously, or is his behaviour determined by external factors? This problem - the relationship between the hero and his historical environment - remains a further basic issue in

88 M. Schneider, Destruktion und utopische Gemeinschaft.

Grabbe scholarship and will require consideration here. The character and function of the "masses", a most celebrated element of Grabbe's dramas, likewise continues to prove a matter of some disagreement and confusion among commentators. The presence and role of broad collective forces in these dramas is, furthermore, frequently cited as a, if not the, major source of Grabbe's realism.

Whilst the deep-seated pessimism of Grabbe's view of history is called into doubt by only a handful of commentators whose ideological convictions demand that they deny any genuine nihilism in the poet they are trying to recruit for their cause, the nature and development of the dramatist's negative vision of the world remains a matter of some confusion. It will be the purpose of this chapter to contribute to this discussion, while considering the significance of the historical dramas in terms of Grabbe's realism, by challenging the view that there is in fact any discernible trend towards a more positive appraisal of historical progression in the final drama, Die Hermannsschlacht. This apparent development away from the despair of the early dramas towards the hope of the Arminius-drama, a fundamental assumption of Grabbe research,<sup>89</sup> will require discussion, as will the frequently mentioned dualism of materialistic pessimism and idealistic optimism which has come to be recognised, particularly by more recent critics, as the prime cause of the unfortunate imbalance which marks even the most successful of Grabbe's works.

<sup>89</sup> The only forceful repudiation of the common view is to be found in Alberto Martino's recent "Forschungsbericht". The critic states, although without giving reasons: "In Grabbes dichterischem Schaffen gibt es keinen Fortschritt vom Nichts zur Ordnung, ... auch nicht von der Isolierung und Vereinsamung zur Gemeinschaft ... sondern nur ein kreisförmiges besessenes Sich-Wiederholen ein und desselben Themas, der von den metaphysischen bis zu den historischen Dramen immer gleichen Vision: von der Vergänglichkeit und Sinnlosigkeit des natürlichen wie des menschlichen und geschichtlichen Kosmos" ("Christian Dietrich Grabbe", in Zur Literatur der Restaurations-epoche 1815-48, edited by Jost Hermand and Manfred Windfuhr, Stuttgart, 1970).

## 2. Historical Motivation

Drama - the action and interaction of figures and their dialogue on stage - is able to reproduce the course of history in only a most limited fashion. Forced by the restrictions imposed by the stage to reduce the complex mechanisms of the historical process to a number of basic symbols, drama views history as human history and, by definition, presents the past in direct relation to the words and deeds of men. In essence opposed to any form of extended abstraction, it can treat only concrete forces and leaves little room for philosophical speculation. Its brief time span further narrows its scope and necessitates the removal of any extraneous material in the interest of compression. In order to avoid diffusion historical drama concentrates its energies into vital points of interest which provide the necessary guides for the unfolding of the plot, and it is aided in its attempts at concentricity (a major consideration in older dramatic forms) by the overwhelmingly monagonistic quality of much earlier theatre. Until well into the nineteenth century, indeed, historical drama retained an essentially monologic structure and continued the ancient tradition of the heroic ethic, expending the greater part of its efforts on an individual or a small group of central figures.<sup>90</sup> Just as history itself was for long dominated, in the popular consciousness, by the deeds of great individuals, so too was the central feature of mainstream historical drama invariably the outstanding hero. The position of the historical hero in Grabbean drama is a major problem.

Despite confused critical opinion on Grabbe's view of history, one fact can hardly be overlooked: the key importance of the great historical

<sup>90</sup> The development from the monologic-heroic drama towards theatre of a broader sociological basis is clearly a major modern trend. For the history of the emergence of the masses as a significant component in drama see Hannelore Schlaffer, Dramenform und Klassenstruktur: Eine Analyse der dramatis persona "Volk" (Stuttgart, 1972).



personnage. Whilst it is not immediately necessary to ascribe Grabbe's interest in the great men of the past to an "Übermenschenideal",<sup>91</sup> or to view the poet's preoccupation with greatness as the only valid approach to an understanding of his art,<sup>92</sup> his preoccupation with characters of gigantic stature (anticipated in the early dramas in the overinflated figures of Gothland, Berdoa, Don Juan and Faust) clearly indicates that they had, in his view, considerable relevance within the historical process, be that relevance positive or negative. Certainly it is impossible to ignore the central role of Barbarossa, Heinrich VI, Napoleon, Hannibal and Hermann within their respective dramas, and the relationship between the titanic man of action and history, his effectiveness within the historical process, emerges as the most basic question of Grabbe's historical drama.

#### i. The hero

Alexander (sterbend): Begrabt mich königlichst!

Ein Perser: Verlaß Dich drauf.

Alexander: Doch meine rechte Hand hängt Ihr aus dem Sarge, weiß, nackt, wie sie ist! Sie hat die ganze Welt erfaßt, und nichts ist ihr geblieben.

(Alexander der Große fragment, WB 4, 342)

Without exception the Grabbean historical hero is at once a political and a military figure desperate to exert his will and identity on a world to which he is fundamentally opposed and which, somehow, attempts to resist his pressure. Among the outstanding attributes of the hero are a demonic will to succeed, an insatiable passion for striving which knows no bounds and often loses touch with reality, supreme political power and a deter-

<sup>91</sup> For example: Siefert; Roger Nicholls, The Dramas of Chr. D. Grabbe (The Hague, 1969); Sengle, Das historische Drama in Deutschland.

<sup>92</sup> Jahn: "Thema und Mittelpunkt des Grabbeschen Dramas ist der Übermensch. Seine Deutung ist zugleich Deutung des ganzen Dramas" (p. 47).

mined single-mindedness which forces all subsidiary considerations aside and reduces the hero to a figure with a single obsession. The obsessive nature of the protagonist's ambition is intensified further by the poet's refusal to treat personal issues in the dramas and his portrayal of the heroes almost exclusively in their political capacity and historical function. The hero's striving - his dynamic and insuppressible urge to action - transcends that of the ordinary mortal and places him in a realm far beyond conventional morality where he can no longer be judged by normal standards. The Grabbean hero is an amoral being, as is demonstrated by his frequent acts of sadism and brutality and his complete disregard for the human consequences of his deeds.<sup>93</sup> He acts with a view to the finite world and does not concern himself with questions of faith or eternity. These men are irreligious, and either pay mere lip-service to the conventions of the Church (Barbarossa), ignore such issues completely (Napoleon) or appear as outright blasphemers (Heinrich VI) who raise their personal sense of mission and their own glorification to the level of a substitute religion (Heinrich VI and Napoleon both use religious analogies and liken themselves to Christ).

Fundamentally aware of the frailty of human existence and the eternal law of impermanence - Barbarossa alone appears untroubled by any knowledge of inevitable change and decay - the Grabbean hero attempts to assert himself in this world with no concern for the next. Trapped in a realm of pure immanence, with no possibility of transcendence, he strives to dominate his immediate environment and, as a "Tatmensch", refuses to allow moralistic considerations to hamper his self-imposed calling. Only Heinrich der Löwe, who mellows with age and becomes the sole Grabbean hero expressly to negate the value of striving, undergoes something resembling a religious conversion and grows to accept the necessity of faith. Having witnessed the futility of his life's work (the perennial struggle between Welf and

<sup>93</sup> For example Sulla's execution of the old woman; Heinrich der Löwe's destruction of Bardewick; Heinrich VI's sacrifice of Tusculum.

Waibling has been resolved through intermarriage) he, at the age of eighty, claims to recognise the impossibility of human achievement without divine guidance:

Wie auch der Mensch drauflosstürmt - Nie erreicht er  
Das Ziel, führt Gott es ihm nicht zu (WB 2, 192)

and, unlike his counterparts, is able to look forward to the grave. His welcome, peaceful death is unique in the historical dramas and appears as a comment on the validity of his mature philosophy. The remaining heroes meet deaths commensurate with their lifestyles: Marius dies of natural causes, lost in memories of his glorious youth; Barbarossa drowns on the crusade, an end which stands like a question mark over his entire career; Heinrich VI, most dramatically, falls prey to a stroke at the peak of his glory; Hannibal suffers a self-imposed death in complete ignominy. For all these men death provides no release but represents complete annihilation, a negation of all values, efforts and achievements. Heinrich VI's sudden and violent end shows most clearly that death, for the titanic hero, is the gateway only to the void:

Was schlug? Wer klopft? - Das ist mein Herz nicht -  
Der Tod! - Der Hund! ...  
So unerwartet, schmähhlich hinzusterben -  
O wär ich lieber nimmermehr geboren! (WB 2, 238)

Hannibal, on the other hand, greets death with resignation, though no less cynically. He can conceive of no other world and sees man trapped within a material realm from which he, as physical matter, cannot be removed:

"Ja, aus der Welt werden wir nicht fallen. Wir sind einmal  
darin." (WB 3, 153)

For him, as for all Grabbe's heroes, death represents a great unknown ("Schwarzer Pilot, wer bist du?" WB 3, 153). Transcendence, Hannibal maintains, is unlikely.

The hero has, then, only this world. And in this world he elects to act, as a complete egocentric, regardless of others and of the consequences of his actions. His sole aim is to make his presence felt. Just as the hero places himself beyond morality, so too does the poet decline to pass

judgement on him. The Grabbean hero acts in a wholly amoral world. Internal comment on the morality of characters' actions is largely absent from these plays - figures do not question each other's morality but accept its absence as a necessity in the harsh political world. Moral issues do not arise as significant themes in any of the dramas. Nor is there any question of supreme and objective moral standards exacting just and inevitable retribution from characters as a consequence of their complete disregard for the requirements and restrictions of the social world. The essence of Grabbean historical drama is the acquisition and maintenance of pure political power, a force which overrides petty scruples. As is demonstrated most clearly in the two Hohenstaufen dramas, the end, as long as it is meaningful in itself, justifies the means, however cruel.<sup>94</sup> Higher values - moral, ethical or religious - have no place in Grabbe's historical world, the hero is not interpreted as a private, but rather as a historical being, and for this reason more than any other it is inappropriate to conceive his downfall in terms of hybris and nemesis.<sup>95</sup>

The spiritual make-up of the outstanding individual is fundamentally realistic and practical: the great leader is a man of action, and his experience of the political world leaves him cynical, materialistic, atheistic and wholly self-centred. Absolute "Diesseitigkeit" prevails, and the process of secularisation of drama which was seen at work in the early plays - its removal from any transcendental framework - culminates in the absolute secularity of the history plays. The metaphysical problems with which Grabbe had struggled in Gothland and Don Juan und Faust do not reappear in these later dramas. The world left over after the wholesale

94      Barbarossa:      Unser Wert / Ist unser Recht!      (WB 2, 26)  
         Heinrich VI:                      das, was ihr Gewissen nennt, was in  
                              Dem guten Stuttgart jeden Bürger ziert,  
                              Ist auf Waiblingens Thronenhöhen  
                              Nur schwäbische Spießbürgerei!      (WB 2, 129)

95 This has been the tendency above all in the case of Heinrich VI; for example Jahn, p. 43.

disillusionment of the non-historical tragedies is an empty world which can be imbued with meaning only by ceaseless striving on a historical plane.

### Motivation

For the most part these heroes are motivated by purely egocentric considerations and, with little concern for their fellow man, pursue their aims with a view to nothing but personal glorification and the amassment of power. Thus Marius, six times consul of Rome, longs to return from exile not in order to improve the situation within his native city, but in order to wreak revenge on the supporters of Sulla who enforced his banishment in the first place. Despite his claim to represent the interests of the common man against the plutocratic rule of the optimates,<sup>96</sup> we are made well aware of Marius' peculiar love-hate relationship with Rome, expressed in a particularly violent image,<sup>97</sup> and are told quite specifically by the poet in a prose note to IV/1 that foremost among his motives in recapturing the city is that of revenge:<sup>98</sup>

Erinnerung und das damit verbundene heftigste Rachegefühl  
sind überhaupt in seinem höheren Alter vorherrschende  
Kennzeichen seines Gemütes gewesen (WB 1, 401)

Altruistic motives are quite foreign to him, and the climax of his entire career arrives not with any political achievement but with his sadistic

96 Verkündet weit und breit im Land, ich sei  
Erschienen, um die Unterdrückten zu  
Erheben und die Hohen in den Staub zu  
Zu treten. (WB 1, 364)

Ha,  
97 Da saß ich, und ein wütend Heimweh quoll  
In meinem Herzen auf: bald wünscht ich Rom  
Mit meinen heißen Tränen zu entzünden,  
Bald wünscht ich sehnsuchtsvoll es in den Arm  
Zu fassen und in der Umarmung, dicht  
An meiner Brust, es zu zerdrücken! (WB 1, 363)

98 M. Schneider stresses Marius' insistence on a social-political mission (see note 96 above) and sees the essence of this character's motivation in "eine politische Absicht". This view is quite clearly contradicted by the poet himself in the prose notes to IV/1 (WB 1, 401).

delight at the discovery of Merula's suicide before the pillar of Jupiter:

Diese Stunde scheint ihm die glücklichste und größte seines  
Lebens zu sein. Er fühlt seine Brust zu enge, um sie ganz zu  
genießen. (WB 1, 389)

The prospect of a seventh consulate is the major incentive behind his campaign. Friedrich Barbarossa likewise claims a definite political motive for a career which is again concerned only with his personal advancement. While he tells Pope Alexander during their conference in Venice:

Ich kämpfte für der Völker Freiheit  
Und Priesterherrschaft sucht ich zu vertilgen, (WB 2, 67)

describing himself to the Lion as "Vorfechter von Europa", attempting "die Annäherung der Kirche" and involved in the "Kampf um Geistesfreiheit" (II/2), it is clear that he is, above all, striving for the complete Hohenstaufen domination of Europe and the glorification of his dynasty. Since the Holy Roman crown rests on his head, he intends to enjoy its benefits unimpeded by opposition. A united Germany can defy the world:

Die Nachbarn zittern alle dann vor uns -  
Und ruhig kann ich dann vom Thronitz schau'n,  
Und bin doch Schiedsrichter der Welt! -  
Das ist  
Der Sinn der römischen Kaiserkrone der Germanen! (WB 2, 59)

Far from concerning himself with the currents of his epoch or attempting to effect a change in the spiritual climate of his time, he is primarily at pains to enhance "Deutschlands Ruhm, die Ehre des Kaisers" (WB 2, 40) and, as the Lion recognises, will never rest as long as means remain of increasing dynastic prestige.<sup>99</sup>

99

Grundlos dämmert es

In seinem Auge, nie wird es gesättigt! (WB 2, 16)

F. J. Schneider's interpretation of this figure, which posits a strong Hegelian influence in the drama, overlooks the egocentric motivation of the hero and leads to the unfounded conclusion: "Das individuelle Streben und Handeln der heroischen Persönlichkeit ist gleichzeitig nur als Auswirkung einer transzendenten Notwendigkeit gedacht, wodurch die tragischen Konflikte auf fast mythische Weise geschürzt werden. Barbarossa hat, wie das ganze Hohenstaufengeschlecht, eine gleichsam metaphysische Mission zu erfüllen, deren er sich aber nicht klar bewußt ist" (Persönlichkeit und Werk, 215). There is no reasonable basis for such assumptions. Schneider gives uncritical credence to Barbarossa's designation of himself as the destroyer of "Priesterherrschaft" (p. 217), a vocation which he believes

In this Barbarossa very much resembles Napoleon, who likewise claims to be motivated by political necessity and fervent patriotism but is essentially a glory-seeker like his predecessors. "O mein Land, mein Land! - Man sage was man will, ich habe es stets geliebt!" (WB 2, 350) he cries, but does not attempt to disguise his deep contempt for the people ("die Canaille") and allows his complete egotism to shine through in a series of speeches strongly marked by the frequent (almost obsessive) use of the first person form.<sup>100</sup> Although Napoleon professes to see himself as the agent of the "Weltgeist" and the tamer of the destructive forces of revolution, drawn into battle out of sheer necessity, closer examination underlines the deep self-interest which drives him on.<sup>101</sup> In principle opposed to the modern tendencies towards liberalism and democracy, the emperor fights to uphold his almost tyrannical grip on France and Europe and seeks to maintain a position of absolute power. His belligerence is fed both by vanity and a love of battle. Hortense assesses Napoleon's

is born "aus metaphysischen Urgründen", and sets the Kaiser up as an unknowing "Vertreter kommender Jahrhunderte". D. Schmidt has already corrected this view: "Die Helden Grabbes sind keine Vertreter 'irgendwie' aus transzendtem Dunkel an sie verwiesener Ideen, sondern sind ausgesetzt einem immanenten geschichtsgebundenen Geschick, der durch das Gesetz der Zeitlichkeit bestimmten Wirklichkeit ihres Daseins" (p. 123). Nor is there any question of a blind, determining, external fate ("eherne Sternennotwendigkeit") which von Wiese stresses so much with regard to the Hohenstaufen dramas (Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 486). Such forces enter Grabbe's work only as rhetorical figures and never determine the action. Grabbe's heroes act of their own free will with a view only to real historical conditions. History has, in Grabbe's conception, no transcendental dimension.

100 Hätt ich den treuesten meiner Freunde nach Paris geschickt, mein Reich zu verwalten, er hätte nicht so gut für mein Interesse gesorgt, als die Bourbons! - O meine Gardegrenadiere, wandelnde Festungswälle mir in der offenen Schlacht, und alle, alle, die ihr Bajonette für mich aufpflanzet, Säbel für mich schwanget, bald sonn ich mich wieder in eurem Waffenglanze, und das Gleichgewicht Europas fliegt bebend aus den Angeln! (WB 2, 352)

101 Basing his assessment on a single line spoken by the hero himself - a dangerous procedure, particularly in this drama - Siefert views Napoleon as the tamer of revolutionary forces, the enemy of the guillotine, and concludes: "schließlich müssen wir den Helden als entscheidenden Gegenspieler Jouvés betrachten" (p. 105). This is clearly a misinterpretation, both of the hero's motives and of the conflict in which he is locked. Napoleon has no adversary in the drama, least of all Jouve!

motives correctly when she counters his defence of war as "das Feld der Ehre" with the correction: "Feld der Eitelkeit" and his insistence "Groß und klein ist gegen mich und ich muß kämpfen" with what is undoubtedly an appropriate interpretation: "Du mußt - ja, weil du willst" (WB 1, 395). For Napoleon warfare is the very essence of his existence, and the sound of cannons is music to his ears: "Ha! meine Schlachtendonner wieder ... In mir wird's still ..." (WB 2, 420).<sup>102</sup> The emperor fights, as one of the Prussian riflemen recognises, only for his own gratification:

Ja, Napoleon ist auch groß, ist riesengroß, - aber er ist es  
nur für sich, und ist darum der Feind des übrigen Menschen-  
geschlechtes. (WB 2, 412).

He cares little for France, or indeed, for the world.

Heinrich VI, on the other hand, does not attempt to disguise the selfishness of his motives. The ultimate realist, his sole concern is with the political might of his dynasty. Compared with this vital mission the welfare of the world is of only secondary importance, and Heinrich, characteristically, compares his calling with that of Christ:

groß ist unsres Hauses Zweck,  
Ist groß genug die Welt ihm aufzuopfern,  
Um ihn nur selbst erfüllt zu sehn - Gott ließ  
Ja seinen Sohn zum Heil der Sünder, welche  
Bis jetzt dieselben Sünder sind geblieben,  
Hinschlachten. (WB 2, 128)

Until the last Heinrich's thirst for political supremacy remains unsated, his aspirations transcend the frontiers of this world and he longs, like Faust, to storm the heavens and wrest a place for himself in celestial spheres. As a complete cynic who has revounced all human ties, the only means he has of giving his existence a meaning is the incessant craving for power, a fact which makes his premature death doubly crushing. For

<sup>102</sup> Napoleon's fellow officers comment on the emperor's reaction to the commencement of the battle:

Cambronne: Wer wollte sich nicht freuen, der ihn jetzt sieht? - Welche Ruhe, welche stillglänzende Blicke!

Bertrand: Ja, nun ists mit ihm als stiegen heitere Sommerhimmel in seiner Brust auf, und erfüllten sie mit Wonne und Klarheit. Still und lächelnd wie jetzt, sah ich ihn in jeder Schlacht, selbst bei Leipzig. (WB 2, 420)



Heinrich, even more than for his father, who retained a basic faith in the value of human relationships and adhered to a rigid system of courtly ideals, the world is held together only by power and the future of that power through the extension of his line. Whilst he knows worldly power to be fleeting, he allows his attractions to dictate his life.

Sulla and Hannibal appear to combine self-interest with genuine concern for those other than themselves. Sulla, characterised largely in the extensive prose notes provided by the poet as an indication of the eventual course of the drama, is cast in the mould of Heinrich VI. The poet emphasises his shrewd political insight and his cold detachment from his social environment -

Sullas Herz ist ein rauhes und scharfes, aber ungetrübtes Eisen.  
Darum spiegelt sich die Wirklichkeit deutlich darin ab ... Er  
tritt nun gleichsam aus der Mitwelt heraus und stellt sich davor  
wie der bessernde Kritiker vor das Gemälde. Sein Entschluß ist<sup>103</sup>  
klar und vollendet. (WB 1, 393)

As an astute politician Sulla is resolved to restore Rome to its former stability and to rid it of its anarchic elements. In this far he acts out of true political conviction with a sense of mission:

Schonungslos will er die Zeit von ihren Auswüchsen zu reinigen  
versuchen. Mit Schrecken will er sie niederwerfen, um dann  
desto sicherer das Bessere wieder aufrichten zu können<sup>104</sup>  
(WB 1, 393)

103 And: "Er fühlt sich berufen, das Mögliche zu tun." (WB 1, 403)

104 M. Schneider attempts to deny the Sulla figure any altruistic consciousness and attributes his actions to purely megalomaniac impulses ("Sulla ... nützt lediglich das politische Argument als Vehikel seines selbstgefälligen Heroismus", p. 68). Both this view and Schneider's assertion that Sulla has little "pragmatischen Bezug zur geschichtlichen Realität" (p. 67) - a conviction that is shared by Siefert (p. 31) - are incompatible with Grabbe's statements in the prose notes of WB 1, 393. The contradictory presentation of character in this early drama makes it impossible to reduce these figures to a single dominant and consistent thread, to interpret them simply and exclusively as examples of "monumental" and "social" heroism. Grabbe's disregard for plausible and sophisticated characterisation (see Chapter III) frequently results in confusing and fluctuating psychological motivation which prevents an effective division of the figures into the categories "politically aware" and "purely egocentric". Witness, for example, Schneider's difficulty with the Heinrich der Löwe figure (pp. 79-80).

On the other hand, however, he is filled with a typically Grabbean thirst for might and longs to become "Herr der Welt".<sup>105</sup> The struggle with Marius is a personal duel, and the victor will gain the ultimate reward - absolute power over Rome. Sulla's desire to rule is obsessive:

Die Welt steht feil auf Romas Markte  
Sub hasta wird von Feldherrn darauf geboten,  
Der Marius hat sie schon angefaßt,  
Doch meine Schwerkraft läßt ihn sie nicht heben.  
Ich aber schleudre ihn bis in den Abgrund  
und schwelge einsam in der Riesenbeute. (WB 1, 391)<sup>106</sup>

Hannibal's motivation is considerably less egocentric. At all times he is fully conscious of the plight of Carthage and acts in what he considers the best interests of his native city. He issues warnings that his countrymen will be destroyed unless adequate support is assured him in his siege of Rome; on realisation of the hopelessness of his Italian expedition after Hasdrubal's death he swiftly returns home to defend the city against the enemy under the Scipio brothers and fights with his small army of mercenaries against overwhelming odds. On hearing of the downfall of Carthage from Turnu in Bithynia he is clearly grief-stricken. His protract-

<sup>105</sup> Schaefer overlooks Sulla's megalomaniac tendencies and sees him merely as a political realist. Jahn, in keeping with his central thesis, views Sulla as a "gebrochene Figur" whose urge for power is a form of escapism: "Macht bedeutet für Sulla also nicht ein Mittel zum Ausleben triebhafter Machtgelüste und viel weniger noch ein Instrument zur Durchsetzung objektiver politischer Ziele, sondern allein Mittel zur Erlösung des nothaften Ich durch Unterwerfung der äußeren Welt" (p. 32). He attributes Sulla's resignation to two causes: 1) the failure of worldly power to overcome his "Gebrochenheit", 2) an expression of utter "Ichbezogenheit" and his "Entwertung der Wirklichkeit" (p. 35). Jahn interprets all Grabbe's heroes as essentially "gebrochene Menschen" whose "Machtwille" is not "Ausfluß elementarer Überfülle, sondern Hunger, der, nie gesättigt, die Macht in sich hineinreißt, um innere Leere und Oede auszufüllen" (pp. 52-3), and he regards their craving for power as the search for satisfaction. Only Hermann overcomes this manic urge - Napoleon and Hannibal represent partial stages on the way.

<sup>106</sup> And, in the first version of the fragment:

- 's ist doch schön, ein Feldherr sein--  
Man fühlt  
Die Welt, die eigne Kraft, - ein jedes Plätzchen  
Ist wichtig, - jegliche Minute kostbar, -  
Und unsre Seele spiegelt sich im Tun  
Von Tausenden! - - O unermeßne Sehnsucht,  
Als Herrscher Roms vom Kapitol herab  
Den Erdkreis zu regieren! Wie ein Baum  
Erwächst du im Gemüt! (WB 1, 311)

ted campaign in Italy - we are told that it has lasted seventeen years - appears, however, to have been continued quite unjustifiably out of pure self-satisfaction.<sup>107</sup> The war against the Roman state, for Hannibal the very epitome of glory, military efficiency, grandeur and heroism, has passed beyond the scope of a political struggle and become a private contest. It has become a matter of pride and principle to Hannibal to prove himself the equal of a civilisation which he deeply admires and with which he feels a great spiritual affinity. His melancholic parting speech on the shores of Italy (III/6) smacks of personal grief rather than of political frustration, couched in imagery normally associated with interpersonal love.<sup>108</sup> Yet despite such considerations there is no doubt that Hannibal's concern for Carthage is sincere and that his drawn-out campaign abroad stems not merely from self-indulgence, but from a deep-rooted belief that military aggression is the finest form of self-preservation, a philosophy which is borne out by the course of the drama and exemplified by the sudden regeneration of the Carthaginians under the reformed Gisgon in the final act.

Of all Grabbe's heroes Hermann alone - Die Hermannsschlacht is in many respects a special case - can claim wholly selfless motives in his leadership of his people. The only leader in the later works to enjoy the virtually undivided support of his countrymen, he, out of love for his fatherland, is prepared to accept the limitations imposed on him by his fellows and reduces his will to action accordingly. Patriot and freedom-

<sup>107</sup> One cannot maintain, as does Siefert, "daß Hannibal keineswegs aus egoistischen Gründen den Kampf gegen Rom geführt hatte" (p. 125).

<sup>108</sup> Italia! Herrliche, um die ich siebzehn Jahr warb, die ich geschmückt mit eignem und mit Consulblut, so muß ich Dich verlassen? Nichts bleibt mir von Dir, die ich mitreißen möchte Übers Meer? ... - Ha, diese Gräser entreiß ich Dir und berge sie an meinem Herzen; mein jahrelanges Mißgeschick entschuldige bei mir selbst einen Augenblick der Empfindung!  
(WB 3, 121)

fighter par excellence, his sole concern is to free the German territory from the Roman oppressor. Contempt for Rome and resentment at the tyranny to which the Germanic peoples have been subjected combine with deepest national pride to produce a leader of grim determination and outstanding personal qualities. His authority is resented by some but questioned by none. Despite his harshness and authoritarianism as a leader of his people he does not see himself as the only rightful general of the campaign, but naturally assumes responsibility for the heroic venture as the most powerful prince of the north. Such is his longing for unity that he would, were circumstances willing, settle for a lesser position: "Marbod, kämst du nur, ich begnügte mich gern mit der zweiten Stelle." (WB 3, 337) - a sentiment unthinkable of other Grabbean heroes. For Hermann, and in this he is truly unique, patriotic considerations take full precedence over the personal. The urge of the titanic individual to unlimited power is here considerably reduced and the awareness of the suprapersonal mission becomes the overriding force behind the hero's actions.

### Achievement

Just as the motivation of these heroes differs, so too does the extent of their achievement. Absolute domination of their sphere is the ultimate aim in each case, and in this some leaders are more successful than others. In the earlier plays in particular, the hero manages to overcome all obstacles and impose his will upon his environment. Thus Sulla does, indeed, become "Herr der Welt" and Rome capitulates to his irresistible strength. He has attained a position of absolute power:

Der Erdball liegt wie ein  
Gekrümmter Sklave unter seinem Fuß. (WB 1, 408)

Neither Marius, his son, nor Telesinus has been able to halt his march on the city, and he is proclaimed "dictator perpetuus". When he retires, he does so apparently undefeated. The "Staufer" emperors likewise succeed in subjecting the world to the force of their personalities. Barbarossa is

defeated at Legnano, but nevertheless realises his ultimate aim. Not only does he crush Heinrich der Löwe in the "Weserschlacht" to recreate stability in the north of his empire, but he also redresses the balance in his struggle with the Pope by peaceful means - strategic intermarriage. The damage suffered at Legnano (the Milanese were seen as the bastion of the Roman Church) is compensated by the isolation of Pope Alexander through Prince Heinrich's impending marriage to Constance of Sicily, and pressure on the papal position is maintained. His objectives achieved, Barbarossa is able to claim: "Mein Erdgeschäft ist aus" (WB 2, 105); he has become "Schiedsrichter der Welt" (WB 2, 59). His son Heinrich also enjoys the experience of seeing his worldly ambitions realised one by one. Having successfully exploited the fortunate capture of Richard the Lionheart he concludes peace with the Welfs shortly before the Lion's death and suppresses the Norman rebellion by liberating the besieged fortress of Rocca Di Arce. He has, apparently, every reason to feel invincible:

Der Usurpator Tancred tot,  
In meiner Macht die Schurken alle, die  
Ihn unterstützten - Nirgends Widerstand!  
- Wie auch die Scylla, die Charybdis heulten,  
Die Wächterhunde von Sizilien,  
Nichts half es, kein Verteidiger sprang  
Hervor, mich abzuwehren. Mein  
Das Reich, das täglich aus der eignen Asche  
Mit immer größerer Schönheit sich erneut,  
Der echte Phönix von Europa! Mein  
Das Gold des Königs Richard, schwer genug,  
Noch andre Stückchen Erde aufzuwiegen (WB 2, 225)

He, too, is master of the world.

Napoleon and Hannibal, however, are much less fortunate in their attempts to stamp their individuality on their epoch. The French emperor is able, thanks to popular support, to march on Paris unchallenged and rapidly reasserts his authority, dismissing all notions of a liberal constitution with his despotic decrees on the Champs de Mars. France is well and truly in his grasp, and all attempts at resistance - on the part of the liberals Fouché and Carnot or the revolutionary Jouve - come to nothing. He swiftly assembles an army and sets about the continuation of the aggressive foreign policy which had been the hallmark of his previous

reign. And it is here that Napoleon founders - having subjected France to his tyrannical will without any great difficulty he is unable to assert himself on his European neighbours, and his achievement remains limited. Hannibal is less successful and fails even to gain the support of his own countrymen. The blatant and malicious hostility of the triumvirate of Melkir, Hanno and Gisgon, who profess their support while all the time undermining the hero's position, combines with the indifference of the citizens to make Hannibal's situation quite impossible. Without the full support of those at home - they provide him only with a multi-racial group of mercenaries - Hannibal's campaign abroad is clearly doomed. Even after a last desperate defence of the city against the Scipios he is rejected and only when it is too late do the materialistic traders of Carthage under the reformed Gisgon recognise the validity of the hero's policies and undergo a regeneration. At this stage the sole course open to them is one of heroic self-sacrifice. Hannibal's tragedy is very much that of greatness misunderstood. Hermann - again the exception - achieves his immediate goal, the expulsion of the Roman invaders, and restores peace to the German territories. His personal ambition to attack and destroy Rome is, however, thwarted.

### Downfall

Without exception, however, the Grabbean historical hero, for all his achievement, undergoes a process of disillusionment or meets a tragic end. The causes of the hero's downfall vary: Marius, Barbarossa and Heinrich VI all have their career terminated by the most natural of causes, death. In the case of Marius this comes as the result of simple biological decay and he dies of old age. The "Staufer", however, are cut down prematurely by dramatic quirks of chance. Barbarossa falls prey to a fateful accident and drowns while crossing a river on his horse during the crusade. His son, at the moment of his greatest glory, surveying the world he has

conquered from the peaks of Etna, dies of a stroke. All three of these heroes serve as examples of the terrifying force of inevitable and all-pervasive impermanence, a power which represents the most basic rule of life and plays havoc with the designs of man.<sup>109</sup> Having enjoyed careers of outstanding success and pushed the bounds of human achievement to almost unparalleled limits, these men are confronted with inescapable transience and brought to recognition of the essential futility of human striving. Impermanence is, indeed, a fundamental theme of these early dramas, and Marius and Heinrich VI are well aware of its implications. Marius, the romantic fatalist, aware that he is about to be displaced by the younger and more powerful Sulla, views himself as a victim of the unfeeling universe, a mere caprice ("Grille") in the mind of an impersonal heaven.<sup>110</sup> He knows that time has passed him by ("die Zeit ist meine Krankheit") and that death is imminent. Unlike Marius, Heinrich VI, the complete political being, refuses to permit thoughts of fateful decay to hamper his desire for action. Yet he is no less aware of the inexorable laws of impermanence. On the death of Heinrich der Löwe he offers the Lion's son the somewhat dubious consolation: "Tod ist der Menschheit all-gemeines Los" (WB 2, 200) and greets the old Sicilian woman's prophecy of his early death indifferently with the words: "So trifft mich denn das Los des Irdischen" (WB 2, 232). Heinrich, the empty soul who can give his life meaning only through incessant striving, brushes such thoughts aside in the interest of grand ambition:

Ein Tor, Constanze, dessen Tatkraft  
Durch den Gedanken an den Tod gelähmt wird, (WB 2, 130)

<sup>109</sup> The Hohenstaufen emperors die as the result of pure chance which questions the value of their manic striving. There is no question of a form of tragedy which arises from the conflict between excessive individual aspiration and the limitations imposed on human achievement, an interpretation which Kaufmann suggests (pp. 19-20). Pope Alexander's words to Barbarossa ("Doch du gingst her vor deiner Zeit ...") seem to support such implications; in these dramas, however, the heroes' will is not opposed by the pressures of his age. Both Friedrich and Heinrich realise their aims.

<sup>110</sup>

Ich bin eine, /Grille/  
Die er, wie sehr ich auch mich sträube, im  
Begriff ist zu vergessen! (WB 1, 396)

and, paradoxically, continues to attempt to imbue his life with meaning by the amassment of power which he knows to be essentially fleeting. Barbarossa, more romantic and less practical in outlook than his son, does not seem to trouble himself with such thoughts and yet stands as an eloquent symbol of transience. His belief in the omnipotence of the human spirit is revealed as an empty illusion, and his heroic gesture at the end of the drama: "Und sterben selbst! Im Kreuzzug ist's Gewinnen!" (WB 2, 105) appears ironic in the light of his meaningless and unheroic death as described in Graf Acerra in Kaiser Heinrich VI.<sup>111</sup> There is no gain attached to such an end, instead his death plunges the empire into a period of renewed crisis with which his son must cope.

Sulla, like his adversary Marius, recognises the inevitability of eternal change and is influenced by this knowledge in his dramatic decision to renounce his power at the moment of greatest triumph. It is impossible to assume that Sulla regards his work as complete and has faith in the ability of the citizens of Rome to govern themselves efficiently upon his retirement.<sup>112</sup> Having witnessed the disturbing inefficacy of the people in political terms, their fickleness, cowardice, greed and brutality, he is unable to believe in their regeneration and we are expressly told by the poet that he has serious doubts regarding the future:

Sulla deutet an, in welcher Art er die römische Verfassung wieder in guten Stand setzen werde, verbeht sich aber nicht, daß es sehr zweifelhaft sei, ob bei der allgemeinen Versunkenheit der Menge seine Anordnungen lange bestehen würden.

(WB 1, 403)

Sulla resigns, in fact, because he is convinced of the futility of mastery

111 Am Flusse Saleph, hielt das Kreuzheer,  
Die Furt zu suchen - Ungeduldig sprengt  
Der Kaiser in die Flut, sie selbst zu finden -  
Ein falscher Wirbel packt sein Roß - es schäumt  
Und bäumt - Es fliegen Hunderte ihm nach -  
Sie finden nur den Tod - Und Er -  
(Er stockt)

König Heinrich:

Ertrank! (WB 2, 127)

112 This is assumed by Kaufmann ("Die realistische Tendenz", pp. 15-16); Schaefer, p. 101; Rudolf Jancke, "Grabbe und Büchner", Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 15 (1927), 274-86.



of a useless world in which nothing can last. He is aware that the measures he introduces will perish with him and fears becoming, like Marius, a living anachronism. Domination of a transient world is a vain exercise and he chooses to opt out of life in the political limelight for an alternative existence in an idyllic realm far removed from city life. The awareness of inconstancy is a major guiding principle behind Sulla's decision.

The natural forces of decay which crush the hero in the early historical dramas make way in the mature tragedies Napoleon and Hannibal for more objectively conceived concrete historical forces. Now the hero falls prey not merely to overwhelming impermanence through the agency of chance, but becomes subject to human forces. Napoleon is guilty of a major political miscalculation and seriously underrates the solidarity and determination of his European neighbours. Although the emperor attributes his defeat to a number of causes, initially blaming his colleague Grouchy (WB 2, 452) and later "Verräterei, Zufall und Mißgeschick" (WB 2, 457) - anything, in fact, rather than his own faulty judgement, - it is evident that his fall is due ultimately to his refusal to accept that the era of despotic absolutism, belligerent heroism and aggressive nationalism is over and that the liberal powers of Europe will do anything to ensure

daß nicht abermals ein Tyrann, wie Bonaparte es ist,  
von seinen Biwaks aus uns und die Welt wie  
Negersklaven kommandiert. (WB 2, 415)

Napoleon upholds an outdated principle which the world will no longer tolerate. Whilst Grouchy's hesitation undoubtedly contributes to the outcome of the battle, it is in the final analysis the military superiority of the allied forces which prevails.<sup>113</sup> Napoleon's gross overestimation of his own worth blinds him to the reality of his situation: the age of

113 Cf. Kühne, who believes that Grouchy is directly responsible for Napoleon's defeat (p. 178), as does Sengle (Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 161). Sengle's statement: "Grabbes Helden fallen nie durch die geschichtliche Entwicklung, sondern durch ein Schicksal, welches blinde Natur ist" (p. 161) is applicable least of all to Napoleon.

"gewaltige Schlachttaten und Heroen" is over, and the hero has overstepped his limitations. His case parallels that of the gambler in I/1 "... den die Mitspieler aus dem Fenster geworfen haben, weil er betrogen oder zuviel gewonnen hat" (WB 2, 234). Hannibal likewise perishes due to strictly historical forces - as Prusias remarks: "höhere Verhältnisse sind gegen ihn" (WB 3, 149). Shunned by the citizens of Carthage and opposed by the scheming triumvirate, he has no chance of success against the political unity of the Roman state and its well-drilled armies under the Scipios. His defeat is inevitable and explicable in purely rational terms.

Die Hermannsschlacht presents no downfall as such; Arminius is successful in his attempt to expel the Romans from northern Germany and retires from the campaign an apparently happy man. But he does so only at the expense of his heroic ideal - his resignation at the refusal of his countrymen to pursue their cause to its logical end (an assault on Rome itself while its position is vulnerable) is full of bitterness and represents a denial of his guiding principle. In view of the extreme renunciation required by Hermann to suppress his urge to action and to bow to the general will, in the light of his deep frustration, his isolation and his knowledge of the political blindness of his people, his "Ach" must be interpreted as an expression of somewhat deeper disillusionment than has been the tendency in previous criticism. In Die Hermannsschlacht, as will be seen, the ahistorical principle prevails and the value of human striving is undermined. The development towards a positive view of history, discerned by many commentators, must be questioned. Like the heroes of the earlier dramas, Arminius serves as an example of frustrated genius.

#### The value of the hero

The historical hero is the central element in Grabbe's dramas and consequently also in any view of history which is to be inferred from the evidence of his creative work. All six dramas deal with the fate of an individual of monumental proportions, some, indeed, treat more than one

personnage in considerable depth. The aims, motivation, achievements and downfall of these heroes outlined above seem, despite various differences, to have certain common features. What, however, of the significance of these men in historical terms?

It is clear that, in Grabbe's view, the hero is the major motivating force behind the historical process. In each of the dramas he provides the vital impulse which drives history forward (the direction of this movement will require consideration later), and it is his initiative and positive action which form the impetus behind changing events. Without the efforts of the great man, it seems, history is impossible. Whatever his aims and motives, whether they be personal, patriotic or altruistic, whether he is successful or not, it is the designs of the great man that alter the political situation. It has been seen that in the earlier dramas in particular the hero achieves his worldly aims: Sulla, Barbarossa and his son all secure absolute domination of their respective worlds. Napoleon is less successful, Hannibal a complete failure. Hermann is successful on a limited scale. Yet however far the individual manages to assert himself on his environment, his effectiveness in historical terms is ultimately vastly restricted. Carlyle's dictum that "the history of the world is but the biography of great men" is not wholly applicable to Grabbe. While these great men undoubtedly do effect change in historical circumstances, the world will eventually take its toll on them and annul them and their achievement. Greatness cannot survive in an impermanent world. Sulla perhaps more than any other Grabbean hero is aware of the futility of power over a useless world, and relinquishes his might in an act of cynical arrogance:

Er übersieht mit einem Blick die unermeßliche  
Fülle der Macht und Herrlichkeit, die ihn umgibt -  
Da zuckt es durch seinen Geist: "dies alles ist mir  
unnütz, ich bedarf es nicht, das meinige habe ich  
getan, fortan bin ich mir selbst genug" (WB 1, 408)

A rotten world cannot satisfy him and he realises that in the final analysis he has failed to induce any meaningful change. He has temporarily restrained

the chaotic forces of the state, restored a modicum of order to the streets, in short he has returned the city to the conditions which prevailed before the recent disturbances. But he has not been able to alter the essentially turbulent nature of things: in historical terms there has been remarkably little progression since the beginning of the drama. Rome is only held in check by a dictatorship; there will still be disputes among senators, consuls and tribunes. There will still be room for demagogues like Saturninus. And there will always be the innate greed and savagery of the masses which may, given time and the necessary encouragement, burst through again. The republic is in a state of decline and Sulla has postponed the process but by no means averted it.

The same limitations are imposed on the attainment of other heroes. Thus the "Staufer", apparently unhaltable in their acquisition of power, see their achievements perish. Barbarossa's death plunges the empire into a period of renewed crisis; Heinrich VI dies aware that his absence will result in political turmoil which will destroy the unity he has been able to establish:

Empörung

Wird sich erheben, wild und toll wie Rosse,  
Wird Deutschland, wird Neapel, stürmen  
Vor dem unmünd'gen Herrscher - Meine Hand  
Nur konnte die erst jetzt Gebändigten  
Schon zügeln, -

(WB 2, 238)

The individual's achievements last only as long as he himself and, like the individual, are subject to the laws of transience. Napoleon, returning from exile on Elba, finds that attitudes have changed even during this short time and, although he refuses to recognise it, he has been superseded by new ideas. The vast achievements of his rule have been nullified. Hannibal, for all his greatness, is limited by the pressures of the world, and Hermann is forced to sacrifice his heroic ideal in the interest of his people. Greatness is restricted on all fronts.

It is clear, then, that the great individual represents only a relative value within history. He pushes history along, yet only in a temporary and limited fashion. Ultimately his efforts are in vain. Human

striving in an inconstant world is a pointless exercise, a fact which is amplified by Grabbe's choice of the greatest of mortals for his examples. Man is of only limited potential as a historical being. The outstanding historical personage, with his satanic will and ambition and apparently boundless might, is exploited by the poet as the ultimate symbol of human inefficacy. History thus serves as magnification - if the very greatest of men can achieve but little, what hope for mankind? If the Napoleons of the world perish, where is permanence to be sought? The poet's deep pessimism is exemplified by the use of evidence of overwhelming persuasiveness. Whether in the shape of natural forces or by the currents of the epoch, the great man will eventually be crushed by the movement of history. Collapse is inevitable. Grabbe has no illusions concerning the historical capacity of the great man.

The ambiguity of the Grabbean hero figure arises from the playwright's combination of his knowledge of inescapable decay with a deep sympathy for the hero's aims and values. The identification between dramatist and historical figure can hardly be overlooked in the dramas and is substantiated by biographical evidence of Grabbe's infatuation with history, particularly with its titanic individuals.<sup>114</sup> It is also the root of a paradox held by many critics to be the very essence of Grabbean drama and the cause of its dualistic nature: on the one hand the materialistic, anti-illusory, immanent interpretation of a historical process which crushes its greatest children. On the other an ultimate and absolute value, a heroic ideal which retains some meaning despite all-pervasive transience and almost transcends the material world by upholding the significance of greatness in the face of all odds. An element of heroic idealism is thus commonly

114 Immermann: "Sehr genau mit ihr /der Geschichte/ bekannt, streckenweise selbst mit ihren einzelsten Dingen vertraut, lebte und litt er mit den historischen Personen, auf welche sein Blick fallen mochte" (Quoted by Bergmann in Grabbe: Begegnungen mit Zeitgenossen, Weimar, 1930, p. 70).

held to be present in Grabbe's work.<sup>115</sup> One must, however, exercise caution in one's assessment of the extent of identification between the poet and his heroes. The realistic-materialistic instinct in Grabbe appears, in fact, to be considerably stronger than the utopian-idealistic. Grabbe might sympathise deeply with his heroes, he might contrast them in his mind with the pale leaders of his own time and view them with a longing born out of a profound inferiority complex, but he retains at the same time a critical distance from them which enables him to judge them and assess their historical role in a rational, almost clinical manner. Thus even Sulla, to whom the poet refers in a letter as his ideal,<sup>116</sup> is presented as an ambivalent figure, not without his faults. The poet seems almost to abhor his sadism. Hannibal, with whom the poet undoubtedly felt a high degree of spiritual affinity, though presented in an outstandingly good light, is by no means sentimentalised.<sup>117</sup> Napoleon, like the Hohenstaufen emperors, is implicitly criticised by the poet and his failings underlined. All these heroes have a positive value in as far as they raise the world above the level of dull mediocrity, provide highlights in history, indeed even move history. Grabbe respects and admires them. Yet he does not attempt to imbue them with any quality or value which might not reasonably be inferred from the historical evidence, he does not endeavour to extract

115 A view supported by von Wiese, Siefert, Sengle and others (see preceding survey of criticism). Arthur Kutscher (Hebbel und Grabbe, München, 1913, p. 136) speaks simply of a "Heroenkult" in Grabbe's dramas; Germann writes: "Im Grunde ist schließlich Grabbes gesamtes Werk nichts anderes als eine einzige dichterische Verherrlichung des großen Menschen in der Geschichte" (p. 38).

116 "... er soll das Ideal (vergiß nicht, das Ideal, denn sonst wär' es sehr wenig) von mir werden". Letter of 12 July 1827 to Kettembeil.

117 This drama is alleged, no doubt justifiably, to have absorbed a great deal of the cynicism and disillusionment experienced by the poet at the time of its composition. The personal nature of the play is emphasised by the poet's claim that this work moved him more than any other: "... die letzten Szenen des Hannibal ergreifen mich, wie noch nie eins meiner Stücke" (letter to Immermann, 3 February 1835); "ich kann versichern, daß ich den Hannibal immer in Ordre halten muß, damit er nicht bei mir einhaut" (letter to Immermann, 18 January 1835).

from their careers any meaning which is not present. The death of the Grabbean hero is absolutely final. With the end of the hero, be it through resignation, exile or death, comes the termination of his achievement and the obliteration of his historical value. Grabbe's historical world is a world of finality - there is no question of any transcendental values. The poet undoubtedly longs for an era of heroism and magnificent deeds - witness his disenchantment with the impending age of Restoration in Napoleon, his distrust of the mercantile mentality in Hannibal, his implied criticism of the Hermann's fellows in Die Hermannsschlacht - and this fact lends his work at times a romantic tone (particularly marked in Barbarossa) which borders on glorification of the hero in his dynamic activity. Yet Grabbe does not permit his enthusiasm for might and greatness to impair the totality of his cynicism towards the historical process. Far from being an eternal, indestructible value beyond history, the Grabbean hero is a most eloquent symbol of the inescapable, all-pervasive decay within history. Any strain of hero worship in the dramas - and Grabbe's profound veneration is unmistakable - must be seen to exist on a purely immanent level and not as an element which offers the possibility of transcendence.

Viewed in this light, the frequently cited "heroic idealism" of Grabbe's dramas assumes a rather different aspect. It is surely unwise to confuse the poet's emotional response to historical progression, which entails a profound fascination for individuals of superhuman stature and a somewhat immature interest in acts of outstanding heroism, with his purely rational response, which seems most unequivocally to have led him to outright cynicism. Rather than representing some form of positive statement on the course of man's destiny, the Grabbean hero stands, in fact, as the most powerful illustration of a fundamentally negative process which spares no man and invalidates even the most impressive achievement. For this reason it is not possible to regard the great individual in Grabbe's dramas as "eine romantische Prophetie" (von Wiese) or to see the poet

engaged in a desperate search for "einen letzten Sinn menschlicher Existenz" (D. Schmidt): the decline of the almighty hero is portrayed by the poet precisely in order to demonstrate that there is no "letzter Sinn menschlicher Existenz". The paradox of the dramas does not lie in any attempt on Grabbe's part to locate in the hero a final, timeless sense behind history which might survive decay. Rather it arises from his persistent upholding of the principle of heroic action despite the overwhelming conviction that all human effort is ultimately meaningless: "Größe ist im Reich der Phantasie nur ewig" (WB 2, 80).

The idealistic, almost utopian dimension of Grabbe's dramas derives, in fact, not so much from a cult of heroism which exalts the creative individual and raises him to a quasi-divine level. Rather it is to be sought in the elevating effect the hero exerts on his military environment, raising his loyal followers above mundane reality to a sphere of true historical action and directly involving them in events of monumental significance. To restrict one's observations on "heroic idealism" merely to the central figures of the plays - and this has been the tendency in Grabbe scholarship - is to overlook the essence of Grabbe's fascination for episodes of heroic splendour. His admiration does not exhaust itself in adulation of the superhuman individuals after whom the plays are named; rather it extends to embrace the entire military entourage and upholds the validity of the historical principle.



ii. The "masses"

das Volk ist bang  
Und hohl: für Tugend hat es keinen Sinn  
Und auch nicht einmal Kraft genug zum Bösen.

(Marius und Sulla, II/2)

Grabbe is often accorded the honour of having been the first dramatist to place large numbers of common people on the stage as an active element of drama, a fact which places him alongside Büchner as a forerunner of modern dramatic techniques.<sup>118</sup> His mass scenes, especially those of Napoleon, are indeed technically impressive, and have understandably captured the attention of many commentators throughout the history of Grabbe criticism.<sup>119</sup> Most recently socialist critics in particular have expended much energy on this aspect of the dramas in their efforts to rehabilitate the poet after his "mistreatment" in Nazi Germany and to reclaim him as an early practitioner of social-critical/democratic-plebeian literature, an anticipator, in fact, of socialist realism. To this end they have stressed the significance of the crowd scenes above all else. On closer examination, however, it emerges that the much discussed relationship between individual and masses, long held

<sup>118</sup> For example by Walter Lohmeyer, Die Dramaturgie der Massen (Berlin, 1913, p. 194): "Grabbe ist der erste unter den deutschen Dramatikern, der die Darstellung der Massen als eine der wichtigsten Aufgaben des dramatischen Dichters erkannt hat"; Hermann Pongs sees Napoleon as "das erste Massendrama der Weltliteratur" (Das kleine Lexikon der Weltliteratur, Stuttgart, 1967, p. 764); Sengle, speaking of the same work, maintains: "Zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung rückt die Massenszene in den Mittelpunkt des Dramas" (Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 172); also Martino, p. 203.

<sup>119</sup> Even during the earliest stages of serious critical preoccupation with Grabbe particular attention was paid to this subject, for example by Samuel Theilacker, "Volk und Masse in Grabbes Dramen" (Diss. Bern, 1907); Lohmeyer (1913).

to be a, if not the, central theme of the history plays,<sup>120</sup> is hardly as crucial to an understanding of the poet's art as is commonly believed. The question of the extent of interplay between hero and masses, the degree of autonomy of the great individual in relation to his social environment is, nevertheless, of considerable significance with regard to the poet's view of history. Since the individual leader is of only limited capacity in historical terms, the masses, it might be supposed, assume added importance as an agent of the historical process. This assumption is only partly valid.

The very concept of the "masses" in Grabbe's dramas is, in fact, not as clear as is generally assumed. One basic distinction is, however, vital and should be drawn at the outset: that between the civilian mass and the military unit. The citizen "Volk" of Grabbean drama - the Romans of Marius und Sulla, the Parisian people of Napoleon, the market traders of Hannibal - should not under any circumstances be confused with the soldiers (even the common soldiers) of the armies of Barbarossa, Heinrich der Löwe, Heinrich VI, Napoleon or Hermann, and the failure to differentiate between the two spheres has resulted in considerable confusion in some works of criticism.<sup>121</sup> The function of these two entities in the dramas is quite distinct.

120 For example by Busch, p. 455; Koch, p. 12; Weiß, p. 203. Ehrlich sees Grabbe's main concern as "die Erfassung historischer Prozesse unter dem Aspekt des Verhältnisses von Individuum und Volksmassen" ("Zur Tradition des epischen Theaters", Weimarer Beiträge, 24 (1978), p. 153).

121 Lohmeyer fails to differentiate between the various functions of the collective in Grabbe's work and arrives at the conclusion: "Während die Massen im Herzog Theodor von Gothland noch zurücktreten, bestehen die späteren Dramen, besonders Marius und Sulla, Barbarossa und Napoleon fast nur aus Massenszenen" (p. 195). Lohmeyer's failure to distinguish between civilian "Volk" and military forces - any scene which presents a large number of figures is considered a mass scene - leads him to contradictory findings. Ultimately, he concludes, "sind die Massen im ganzen doch nur zur Umrahmung da" (p. 196). Heinrich Pieper, Volk und Masse im Regiebild Grabbes (Danzig, 1939) similarly overlooks the fundamental distinction when he writes of Napoleon: "die große Persönlichkeit stürzt durch die Masse, die das in seiner Eigengesetzlichkeit alles Überdauernde ist" (p. 14). Steffens is equally indiscriminate in his use of the term and identifies even in Barbarossa "einen Realismus, der in Genre- und Massenszenen die volle Wirklichkeit und Wahrheit geben will" (p. 57). Barbarossa has, in fact, only military scenes whose stylising tendencies far transcend realism.

The militia occupies a position far less ambiguous than that of the masses. In Grabbean drama, as in literary tradition as a whole, military forces appear merely as the extension of their leaders' personality and act exclusively according to instructions from above.<sup>122</sup> Having no mind or will of their own, these men blindly follow their master through thick and thin, never questioning their allegiance and obeying orders with unshakeable devotion. Thus the mighty heroes of the dramas in question enjoy the unfailing loyalty of their subordinates, a loyalty which is expressed in words and deeds of extreme subservience. Marius' men literally worship their hero, echoing his words in choral harmony; Sulla's legionaries are prepared to throw themselves at bladed chariot wheels in order to save their general; the "Staufer" see their will reflected in the action of a multitude of devoted followers; Napoleon perhaps above all others benefits from fanatical support in the shape of his "grande armée"; Hannibal finds deep loyalty even among his motley mass of mercenaries; and Hermann, finally, is able to call on the united tribes of Germany in his campaign against the Roman oppressors. Without exception the military leader receives the whole-hearted affirmation of his cause through the support of his fellows. He is able to manipulate his followers at will. The relationship between leader and led is unproblematic, and no tension exists between the two. The harmony produced by this almost mystical union of men on the field of battle, bonded together by the military experience, transcends the social restrictions of the everyday world and forms a sphere in which all men are equal. The battle becomes an elevating experience, a superior sphere far above the banality of the private world. The innate superiority of the military existence over the civilian is the primary quality of the "historical realm" which is juxtaposed with the ahistorical principle, resulting in a telling contrast. This notion of the battleground as a "social melting pot", evident above all in Napoleon, has recently been

122 Gottsched: "Soldaten sind ausführende Werkzeuge eines heroischen Willens" (Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst, Leipzig, 1751, p. 620).

interpreted as a substitute form of idealism, a transcendence on a social rather than a moral or ethical plane.<sup>123</sup> It serves to thoroughly undermine the realistic-materialistic quality of Grabbe's works.

The role of the civilian masses, on the other hand, is quite different, and it is interesting to note initially that the remarkable crowd scenes, of which Grabbe was justly proud<sup>124</sup> and which have become a focal point of critical attention, appear in only three dramas: in Marius und Sulla, particularly in the second version; in Napoleon, where they are developed to their utmost; and in Hannibal, where they are greatly reduced in quantity. In the "Hohenstaufen" and Die Hermannsschlacht they are completely absent - here the masses as a largely independent social group are replaced by soldiers of various armies or are represented by a very small number of speaking figures.

Contrary to the opinion of many critics, Grabbe's view of the political role of the common people undergoes no change in these dramas, which were composed over a period of thirteen years between 1823-36 (although the crowd scenes of Marius und Sulla were only really developed fully during the revisions of 1827). The fundamental attributes of the masses of Grabbe's first historical drama remain unchanged in the later Napoleon and Hannibal. From the very outset the poet's attitude to the value of the masses in historical terms is negative. In Marius und Sulla we see them characterised by inconstancy, mindlessness, gullibility and selfishness.

123 By M. Schneider, who writes: "Grabbe's Drama ... will ... vor dem Hintergrund einer utopischen Vorstellung gesellschaftlicher Erlösung verstanden werden" (p. 396). Schneider sees Grabbe's utopian view of militarism as a restricted form of Schillerean idealism, a perfection within rather than beyond reality: "Dagegen /in contrast to Schiller/ zielt die Grabbe'sche Schlacht nicht auf die Vervollkommenung des Menschen als sittliche Person, sondern als gesellschaftliche, und sie gibt ihm nicht die Würde einer höheren Vervollkommenung, sondern die einer verminderten: Er erlischt in der Schlacht als Individuum und kehrt zurück ins Kollektiv" (p. 394).

124 With regard to Marius und Sulla Grabbe writes of "Volksscenen" individualisiert à la Shakspeare" (letter to Kettembeil, 1 June 1827), and some three years later boasts: "Die Volksscenen in Napoleon werden köstlich, besser als in Sulla" (letter of 2 October 1830).

The people of Rome are governed by a crude revolutionary instinct which knows no goal other than violence for its own sake. The desire for an improved standard of living is expressed in impulsive action and is not held in check by any sense of policy, organisation or purpose. Intent only on the overthrow of the present system of government ("... der Staat wird faul auf der einen Seite, - er soll umgekehrt werden! ..." WB 1, 374), they have no suggestions for an alternative system and bandy around empty slogans - "Einer für Alle, Alle für Einen!" (WB 1, 374). Their complete lack of direction is amply illustrated in an exchange which reveals the paradox of their vague intentions, a paradox which they seem to keep from themselves:

Ein Bürger: Alles soll gleich sein, kein Vorzug an Rang und Geburt!

Ein Zweiter: Wer einen guten Rock trägt, werde gespießt!

Der Erste: Und der Rock werde zum Nutzen der Gemeinen versteigert!

Der Zweite: Wer wird ihn aber kaufen, da ihn niemand tragen darf?

Der Erste: Mit Unterschied, wer bisher einen schlechten Rock besessen hat, erhält zum Ersatz den besseren!

Cajus: Und es soll nicht auf den Zufall ankommen, Nachbarn, - das gelehrte Gepack, die Redner, die Rechtssprecher sollen nicht mehr regieren; Ehre dem Ehre gebührt; wer die stärkste Faust hat, habe auch das stärkste Ansehn!

Sempronius: Und vergeßt nicht - seid großherzig! es trete allgemeine Amnestie ein!

Sextus: Wer etwas dawider hat, werde hingerichtet. (WB 1, 374)

Such emotional extremism makes the unthinking mass easy prey for skilled demagogues like Saturninus, an eloquent anarchist and accomplished manipulator of the moods and passions of the mob. The portrayal of the masses in Marius und Sulla is, in fact, far from flattering to the democratic ideal. The crowds are motivated by a savage instinct for violence and the deepest self-interest. At one moment they welcome Marius as their champion, shortly afterwards they degrade themselves still further in their attempts to appease the victorious Sulla. They are fickle, swayed by the slightest change in circumstances and, with apparent justification, are held in contempt by all who have dealings with them. It is evident that an electorate as politically ineffectual as the people of Rome shown here can have no real aspirations to self-government. Even when, under the guidance of Saturninus in II/3, they do seize power (at a time when only

few legions are present to defend the city), they make way for the return of Marius in II/5 and that of Sulla in V/1. The crowd is a collective imbecile; nothing could be more ironic than Sempronius' statement: "Wir sind wieder was wir waren: ein erhabenes, ein herrliches Volk" (WB 1, 374).

Any attempt to interpret this drama in terms of co-operation between the hero and the masses, in terms of the political awareness of the citizens or their historical role, must fail in face of their irresponsibility, immaturity and lack of purpose. There is, in fact, no point of contact between hero and masses in this drama, for the common people and Sulla, the eventual victor, move on entirely different planes and on no occasion have cause to deal with each other directly. The masses neither aid nor hinder the hero in his mission, and Sulla achieves what he does not because of or in spite of the masses, but quite regardless of them. Nor does Marius come into direct contact with the common people; he deals only with his loyal Marians, and they "kümmern sich weder um Rom, noch um die Welt, sie hängen lediglich an der Persönlichkeit des Marius" (WB 1, 398) - a further testimony to the insoluble bond between the leader and his followers which gives the militia a purpose completely lacking in the civilian sphere. The masses themselves are totally insignificant in historical terms.

The seeds sown in the crowd scenes of Marius und Sulla (II/3 is the only major example; scene II/2 - "Sitzung des Senats" - might be partially considered as such, while the prose notes for II/5 show this, too, to have been intended as a crowd scene) bear fruit in Napoleon, above all in scenes I/1 and III/1. Here the depiction of the sociological currents of post-revolutionary France is undertaken with a certain amount of breadth, and the "masses" are no longer presented as a uniform conglomeration of anonymous types with little personal identity, but are portrayed in their diversity. Their historical function has, however, changed but little. In the fine opening scene under the arcades of the Palais Royal, Grabbe, by spotlighting individual figures apparently at random rather than in any

meaningful sequence, and by employing skilful dramatic devices to provide necessary background information (the peep-show; the "classical table"), is able to combine detailed exposition with the presentation of the common people's attitudes to their situation. But even this long scene, commonly considered the finest of Grabbe's mass scenes, is not exclusively devoted to the "common people" of Paris as a civilian entity: the characters who form the pinion of this collection of brief episodes - Vitry and Chasse-coeur - are themselves ex-guardsmen of Napoleon's "grande armée"; they belong strictly speaking to the military sphere and reappear during the battle scenes in precisely the function we have recognised as peculiar to the militia. They do not identify themselves with the citizens of Paris but regard themselves as an élite, referring to their neighbours as "Lumpenzeug", "das niedrige Gesindel" (WB 2, 329). As veterans of the emperor's army they have a sense of purpose which is alien to the common citizen.

If the imperial guard longs for the rebirth of Napoleon in order to regain its former prestige and vitality, the civilian citizens of Paris are united in their call for a return to the revolutionary principles of which the emperor remains a symbol. Once a powerful body and a strong voice in political affairs, they have been robbed of their identity and are filled with a sense of loss and humiliation. At the very mention of the word "emperor" their curiosity is aroused and they enquire expectantly, even hopefully: "Kaiser, Kaiser, - ist er wieder da?" (WB 2, 327), and set about the barker at the peep-show who dares to scorn Napoleon and uphold the legitimacy of Bourbon rule. The monarchist barker finds no outlet for his royalist sympathies, and his denunciation of Napoleon is greeted with disdain by police and public alike. The revolution is fresh in the minds of these people, they remember it with deep pride and affection as their greatest hour, and the feeling of the "alte Putzhändlerin", who demands that the latest news be read from her table, are shared by all. (WB 2, 332). For the disillusioned citizens of Paris hope exists only in the prospect of a renewal of the popular struggle against an oppressive monarchy. The

republican Duchesne finds an attentive audience for his news of further Bourbon violations of public liberty and appeals to the political consciousness of his fellow citizens, and resentment of the Bourbon administration is intensified further by the news that the émigrés are to be compensated for their losses from public funds. By the beginning of Act III rumours that Napoleon is about to return are widespread, and the excitement of the masses has reacted fever pitch. The people of Paris - the multitude of veterans of the "grand armée", the small traders, the lower-class citizens, the staunch Bonapartists - are united in their longing for a return to imperial rule and ridicule Louis and his administration.

But, like those of Marius und Sulla, the "Volk" of Napoleon's Paris are essentially short-sighted and fickle. While they resent Louis on account of his disregard for their welfare, they offer him at least some sympathy upon his departure from the city ("Volk: Lang lebe der König!"). The superficiality of these feelings and the common man's lack of strong convictions and a sense of direction are, however, exposed by the people's reaction to the news that Louis hopes, in fact, to unite the rest of Europe against the popular cause: "Volk (wütend): Der verfluchte bourbonische Heuchler! Ihm nach - fanget, fesselt ihn!" (WB 2, 377). The tailor, a relentless materialist who longs for the violence of revolution in order to boost his trade, is able to incite the mob to violence merely by staring at the ground and mumbling, and rumours spread rapidly, growing in proportion as they pass through the crowd. The people are highly susceptible to demagoguery. The "Volk" in the drama does not, however, represent anything like a unified entity; the ex-guardsmen cling to memories of their heroic past; the "Vorstädter von St. Antoine", Jouve's bloody mob, are interested only in continued violence; the market women retain a sentimental attachment to the monarchy. The masses of Napoleon (and the term must be applied loosely since it is impossible to isolate the "masses" as a distinct social group) can hardly be called the ideal proletariat in political terms. While



the greater part exhibits something resembling a collective consciousness (witness the reception of the "Putzhändlerin's" speech) the people on the whole are nevertheless portrayed as wavering, gullible, essentially stupid. Their behaviour on the Champs de Mars, where they ecstatically swear in the constitution of an emperor who holds them in utter contempt, shows them to be positively foolish. Yet, for all their failings, the masses of post-revolutionary France are politically more educated than those of Grabbe's Rome and, apart from representing an element of the cultural background, assume a vital significance as an instrument (if only a passive one) in the action of the drama. The crowds presented to us in the first acts make Napoleon's return possible, and his success would have been unthinkable without their support. Not for nothing does Napoleon ask his officer on Elba: "Das Volk?", for however much he despises their mediocrity, he is aware that his cause can only succeed with the approval of the people. And it is primarily because the people withhold their support from the Bourbons that the emperor reaches Paris so easily.<sup>125</sup>

Much the same function is fulfilled by the "masses" of Carthage in Hannibal; the concept remains, however, vague. The closest we have to crowd scenes in this drama are the two brief scenes on the market place (both headed "Großer Marktplatz in Karthago", I/2 and IV/2) which depict

<sup>125</sup> Schaefer completely overestimates the historical potency of the "Volk" in Napoleon by interpreting Vitry's insistence on the ability of the masses to dictate the course of events (Vitry says of the Jesuits: "Wir jagen sie wieder fort") as the poet's own attitude. Although the "Volk" are a force, it is vital that their power be recognised as passive and negative. There is no question here of "das Vertrauen Grabbes in die historische Kraft der Volksmassen" or of a "Bewußtsein der historischen Wirksamkeit des Volkes" (pp. 147-8). M. Schneider is undoubtedly nearer the truth when he writes: "Die massierte Erscheinung und die historische Funktion des Volks, der anonyme Kollektive im Napoleon stehen in einem bemerkenswerten Mißverhältnis. Denn so überfüllt die Bühne bisweilen erscheint, der historische Vorgang, der pragmatische Ablauf der Handlung wird durch Einzelpersonen bestimmt" (p. 270). Napoleon does not seek contact with the "Volk", for which he feels only contempt ("die Canaille"), but relies solely on the allegiance of his "grande armée". Siefert's statement: "Vergeblich sehnt sich Napoleon nach einer neuen, umfassenden Gemeinschaft, nach einem innigen Lebensverhältnis zu seinem Volke" (p. 105) is unfounded.

the mercantile activity of the citizens. Political considerations are again far from the minds of these people, and they are governed completely by cynical materialism. Their avarice, cruelty, and greed are effectively demonstrated in their business transactions, and their purely mercenary mentality allows no room for interest in Hannibal's campaign abroad:

So - -? Wieder Siegsnachrichten, die uns keinen Scheffel Weizen eintragen. Seit die Barkas den Kaufmann aufgegeben, und Soldaten geworden, haben wir den kahlen Nord, statt des üppigen Sudan, Eisen statt Gold, Wandel statt Handel, Rekruten statt Schöpsbraten. (WB 3, 93)

Fickleness is a major trait of their character; having previously cursed Hannibal for his disinterest in economic affairs they later praise him for not introducing compulsory military service and for offering a handsome reward for the capture of the Synedrion: "Ha, er ist Carthagos echter Sohn! Hoch Hannibal und sein erhabener Stamm!" (WB 3, 129). The power of the "Volk", again used passively and negatively rather than actively and positively, contributes to the hero's fate in this drama even more than it did in Napoleon. By showing complete indifference to Hannibal's cause and allowing themselves to be duped by the triumvirate, the market traders of Carthage precipitate the hero's downfall and ultimately the collapse of the entire Phoenician civilisation.

The masses of Grabbean drama, then, exhibit little insight into political affairs and remain essentially unconscious of their historical potential. In all three dramas which present mass scenes we see them as self-centred, apathetic, fickle, gullible and quite subservient. Even where they do exert some influence on the course of events, in Napoleon or Hannibal, they do so in only a passive, disinterested manner. This ignorance of world-historical issues, the tendency to disregard matters of political significance and to retire into a world divorced from the bustle of major activity, is a fundamental feature not only of the masses in Grabbe's drama, but also of the common people who appear, in isolation, in other scenes. Everywhere in the works the common man chooses not to involve himself in affairs of far-reaching significance. Thus in Marius

und Sulla the fisherman of the opening scene shies away from involvement with the exiled Marius and chooses to preserve his facelessness at any cost:

Wir haben ein kleines Dasein, und wenn sie sich um uns bekümmern, so geschieht es, um uns zu unterdrücken; wir können nichts tun als auf die Seite springen, wenn die Großen fallen. (WB 1, 344)

The hero and the small man belong to different worlds and have little contact; where they do come into touch with each other the result is oppression. The much discussed shepherd scene in Kaiser Heinrich VI (V/2) indicates the same apathy on the part of the common man. Aware of the eternal cycle of rise and fall which governs world history, the shepherd prefers to concern himself with the narrow confines of his bucolic realm rather than to trouble himself with major issues. He greets the labourer's speculations on the new emperor with cynicism and indifference, pointing to the contrast between the turbulence and uncertainty of world events and the natural regularity and permanence of the domestic world:

Der Herr: Du, Freund, sieh da die Trümmer des Apollotempels - dort die Befestigungen der Karthager, - da wieder der Römer, - hier einen zerfallenen Trum der Byzantiner wider die Korsaren, - da Wälle und Linien der Sarazenen, - alles zu Stücken. Nur Eines ist geblieben: der Hirt wechselt hier mit Hirten, der, welcher hinaustreibt, hört das Rufen dessen, der hineintreibt, und ein Mann, der nicht schlief, könnte sich doppelten Lohns erfreuen. Die Halme beugen sich unter ihrer Schwere, wie trunken, und breitstirnige Stiere wetzen ihre Hörner im Sande, - Vater Ätna ernährt uns alle, und ob der Normanne oder der Hohenstaufe Sizilien beherrscht, heute abend tanzen unsre Landmädchen doch.

Der Knecht: Der Kaiser ist doch zu erschrecklich.

Der Herr: Wird sterben. - Unsre Saaten wachsen immer wieder - Treib die Schafe aus. (WB 2, 234)

A similar refusal to become involved is evident in the Pächter Lacoste episode of Napoleon. Amidst the raging battle, in which men gleefully sacrifice their lives for the heroic cause and the benefit of their country, the farmer appears, concerned only for his family and his personal welfare. He sees the battle from an unheroic perspective ("Weh, meine Frau und meine Kinder" WB 2, 449), failing to recognise the enormous historical significance of the events he is witnessing ("Wellington: Europas, ja des Erdkreises Schicksal schwebt in dieser Stunde auf dem

Spiel" WB 2, 244). Oblivious to the reality of history, he resembles the gatekeeper of Carthage who reports the battle at Zama in Hannibal ("Warte über einem Haupttor Karthagos", IV/6), and to whom the momentous battle, which will eventually seal the fate of Carthage, represents little more than a spectacle, material for future yarns:

Kind, sieh genau hin, denn heut erblickst Du etwas,  
wovon Du nach hundert Jahren erzählen kannst, und  
zum Glück ist's helles Wetter (WB 3, 134)

The true implications of the fighting elude him completely, and a significant moment in the destiny of Carthage is degraded to the level of the ahistorical. The outcome of Die Hermannsschlacht, with the hero's renunciation, is a similar rejection on the part of the poet of the people's short-sightedness towards historical affairs. Hermann's tribesmen are not interested in matters of far-reaching significance.

Historical insight in Grabbean drama - a quality which is obviously of considerable importance in the poet's view (the ahistorical principle in the plays, as represented by the apathetic "little man", is always unfavourably juxtaposed with the historical) - is reserved solely for the outstanding leader and his entourage. Political understanding is completely alien to the isolated individual and proves a source of confusion to the masses. It is clearly inappropriate in view of such findings to attribute to the masses (or to the isolated commoner) the developing political consciousness with which they are honoured in Marxist criticism. As a civilian social unit the common people exhibit few of the characteristics which socialist commentators like to associate with the emerging proletariat. Quite the reverse: in the dramas they display all the attributes which differentiate the mediocre, stultifying and unheroic from the excellent, elevating and heroic. The common man attains historical awareness and potency not as a member of the civilian "masses", which have unclear goals and little collective consciousness, but as a member of a glorious fighting force which achieves high status through its support of the great individual and becomes involved in the innermost

processes of historical development.

The so-called "masses" of Grabbe's dramas, the citizens of Sulla's Rome, Napoleon's Paris and Hannibal's Carthage, are characterised above all by collective foolishness and inconstancy. Their significance as a fundamental element of the works should by no means be overstressed.<sup>126</sup> Proportionally the scenes devoted to the activities of the "Volk" represent only a tiny fraction of the overall length of the dramas in question: once one removes those scenes given over to the military, - a unit of "common people" which, in its straightforward relationship to the titular hero, fulfils an uncomplicated function - only a handful of true "mass scenes" remain. Of those which do remain the scenes in Marius und Sulla are only partially concerned with the "Volk" and those in Hannibal are so short as to appear insignificant. From a merely quantitative point of view, then, it seems difficult to justify the great degree of attention paid by commentators to the question of the interplay between hero and masses in Grabbe's dramas. The importance of the civilian masses in terms of the motivation of plot is, however, reduced further by qualitative considerations. Even where the collective group does manage to exert an influence on the course of events portrayed it does so in an essentially passive, decidedly negative way, lacking the unity and initiative to behave constructively. It is consequently inappropriate to speak of any genuine relationship between the individual and the masses, and the excessive critical preoccupation with this aspect of the works has led indirectly - as will be seen in connection with Die Hermannsschlacht - to a serious misplacement of emphasis in much previous criticism.

<sup>126</sup> Gerresheim's view of the Napoleon-drama is a typical example of the way in which emphasis is often misplaced in this respect: "Napoleon zerbricht nicht nur an der Doppelgegnerschaft, die ihm in den Bourbonen im Innern des Landes und in der europäischen Koalition auf dem Kriegsschauplatz erwächst, sondern er zerbricht an dem Unwillen eines Volkes, noch einmal mit ihm in die goldene Zeit der Heroen und Schlachttaten zurückzugehen" (p. 246).

iii. Social realism?

The presence of the so-called masses in Grabbe's dramas raises the question of the degree of social realism sought and achieved by the poet. The preceding considerations have attempted to demonstrate that the role of the common people in terms of the frequency of their appearance and with regard to their solidarity and their influence on the hero has often been misjudged; civilian masses are present only in isolated scenes in Grabbe's dramas, and even where they do take to the stage the extent of their interaction with the hero is minimal. Yet, whatever the function of such scenes, there is no escaping the fact that the casts of Grabbe's dramas have been drastically expanded in relation to prevalent dramatic tradition. On occasions his plays fill the stage with unprecedented numbers of "Bürger" and "Volk", and in Marius und Sulla and Napoleon in particular we are presented with seething crowds which are portrayed not merely as an anonymous and voiceless mass, but are characterised by the poet's concentration on selected representative figures.

To what degree, though, does the playwright really strive to provide a detailed portrait of the social conditions of a given age? Is he genuinely concerned to differentiate between social groups and classes, or does he aim only to fill his historical canvas with as many - indistinct - individuals as possible? Socialist commentators have inevitably ascribed much significance to the scope and function of "mass scenes" in the dramas: typically, Schaefer, who, as was noted in our introduction, makes social conflict the fundamental prerequisite of dramatic art, sees Grabbe at pains to provide a penetrating analysis of sociological processes. According to Schaefer, Grabbe's dramas "leben von der Spannung sozialer Gegensätze"<sup>127</sup> and show an "Erfahrung der Differenziertheit der gesellschaft-

<sup>127</sup> Schaefer, p. 87.

lichen Prozesse"<sup>128</sup> and "Genauigkeit der Darstellung der Gesellschaft".<sup>129</sup> In this respect they fulfil, in his estimation, the prime condition of realistic art and display a marked tendency towards social realism. This social realism - an accurate portrayal of individuals differentiated by class, ordered into a sociological structure and shown as the product of class determinism - is an important element of critical realism. Schaefer's view is supported among "bourgeois" critics most notably by Siefert;<sup>130</sup> it is a conception, however, which is emphatically refuted by F. J. Schneider in his early monograph: "von einem eigentlichen sozialen Interesse kann ... gar nicht die Rede sein".<sup>131</sup>

Our discussion of the function of the masses in Grabbe's dramas has established that it is indeed impossible to speak of a unified system of social groups, even in Napoleon. Here, as elsewhere, the common people in the street scenes are portrayed in almost chaotic heterogeneity and lack any true sense of community. While the poet is undoubtedly concerned to offer a comparatively broad social spectrum - he focuses on various strata, from court to militia, from émigrés to small traders, from market women to the suburbanites of St. Antoine - he does not engage in any real depth of differentiation or attempt to characterise and distinguish between

128 p. 170.

129 p. 185.

130 Siefert, p. 89.

131 F. J. Schneider, Persönlichkeit und Werk, p. 19. The Marxist view has recently been called into question by Edward McInnes, who writes of Napoleon: "Grabbe evokes the seething turmoil of this society but he shows no pervading forces at work in it. He implies that its haphazard, volatile energies cannot be reduced to clear patterns of class or ideological conflict and can be represented only in the random collisions of countless individuals as they happen to converge and disperse ... we miss the striking originality of Grabbe's vision if we persist (as many critics have done) in looking for coherent social diagnosis" ("Die Wunderlose Welt der Geschichte": Grabbe and the Development of Historical Drama in the Nineteenth Century", German Life and Letters, 32 (1979), 104-14, p. 107). M. Schneider is another commentator who denies the presence of any purely mimetic crowd scenes in Grabbe's plays. Illustrating his argument with only one example (Marius und Sulla, II/3), he puts forward the view that such scenes are conceived and constructed merely to point to the underlying motifs of the works.

specific sections of society. The figures which briefly enter the foreground in the long opening scene of Napoleon, for example, are not sufficiently individualised to offer anything more than a most skeleton-like outline which provides them with vague and general characteristics. The features common to all these figures, nostalgia for the halcyon days of revolutionary activity, for example, are features which have social implications only in as far as they represent a universal resentment of the monarch's disregard for their welfare. One looks in vain here for any profound social insight, indeed, for any extensive awareness of social issues. Instead we are confronted in this opening scene of Napoleon with a stage which is filled with extraordinary numbers of persons ("Vieles Volk treibt sich durcheinander, darunter Bürger, Offiziere, Marktschreier, Savoyardenknaben und andere" WB 2, 323), the vast majority of whom remain completely anonymous in the background and are able to articulate their reactions only in unison. Such passages of dialogue, often of almost monosyllabic brevity ("Der Lump"; "Ha!"; "Er lebe"; "Hoch Orleans, einst König!" WB 2, 327-35), reveal the "Volk" to be little more than a resonance chamber for the sentiments expressed by the major speakers - a fact which underlines the indecisive and alarmingly mindless character of the masses in Grabbe's dramas. The technique of using the "Volk" as an almost choral background is, furthermore, an established feature of dramatic tradition and can by no means be considered an innovation of Grabbe's.

In I/1 of Napoleon, a scene which, due to its popularity as an example of Grabbe's skill with large numbers of figures, merits especial consideration in this context, the "viele Volk" are reduced to dramatically manageable proportions by the playwright's concentration on a small number of individuals. The figures which carry the greater part of the dialogue in this long scene - Vitry, Chassecoeur and the old officer; the barkers; the émigrés - cannot, however, be regarded as evidence of any desire on the poet's part to achieve simple "historical realism" by spotlighting representative figures which embody prevalent



social trends. These are not mere types, nor are they conceived purely in order to project information about the state of society in Restoration Paris. Although they inevitably have a certain representational value - as examples of the attitudes of the disbanded "grande armée", of the aristocracy - their prime function is to provide exposition, to furnish insight into the historical background, to point to political (not merely social!) currents in post-Napoleonic France. Much of the dialogue of this scene revolves not around contemporary currents and social problems, but points obliquely to the major themes of the drama. A close analysis of the progression of ideas in the dialogue would show that, far from being subordinated to any attempt to build up a veristic reproduction of French society, the controlling intention of this scene is to debate from different angles the necessity, possibility and desirability of Napoleon's return. Such portions of the dialogue (the peep-show owner's dispute with Vitry and Chassecoeur, the episodes with the émigrés and the Advokat Duchesne might be cited as examples) must be understood as the dramatist's chief method of conveying political attitudes, and, through the mouths of the veterans of the imperial army, of introducing the important contrast between the heroic past and the stagnant present. In this sense much of the content of the first scene of the drama is devoted not to a realistic historical portrait, but to the fundamental dualism of the play: the sphere of heroic military activity as opposed to that of anti-historical indifference to affairs of major import. The role of the "Volk" as a mass in this scene is negligible - it is provided with only thirteen short and fragmented lines of dialogue in a scene which, in the historical-critical edition, fills a good fourteen pages of text. There can be no question here of Grabbe fathoming the sociological causation behind historical development in minute detail and with penetrating insight. He is concerned only with the general outline: one might assume that he employs the "Volk" primarily as a mirror of the developing action and as an instrument in the exposition.

The technique of conveying the impression of masses by concentrating on a handful of selected figures had already been employed in Marius und Sulla. Here the characters Cajus and Sextus serve as mouthpieces of a "Volk" whose real purpose is simply to repeat sentiments suggested to them by individual figures. The "Volk" is neither differentiated as a social group, nor does it have a mind, will or aim of its own. It appears merely as a numberless conglomerate of indistinct individuals united only by their disunity. Any attempt on the part of Grabbe to develop the fundamental social conflict of the drama - that between the demands of the plebeians for greater rights and the conservative, aristocratic senators who attempt to maintain tradition and order - into a dominant issue of the play is absent. Nebulous suggestions in the text to the effect that the dual heroes are to be regarded as the representatives of different social orders are not developed by the dramatist. The only distinction attempted in the social structure of the drama, that between plebeians and optimates, is left vague, general and unexplored.

It is indeed impossible to detect in Grabbe's plays any profound preoccupation with social diagnosis. Even in a scene like Napoleon, III/1, where the people are at their most vociferous ("Volk"; "anderes Volk"; "andere Umstehende"; "Volk im Vordergrund"; "Volk im Mittelgrunde", etc.) and create, through their various interjections, the impression of a true crowd scene, they are conceived purely as a faceless mass which, far from displaying any genuine identity, merely reflects events in the manner of a chorus. The poet's class consciousness, his awareness of the social mechanisms behind historical development and his desire to illuminate conflict between various groups of society are hinted at in only a most half-hearted fashion. Social issues in the plays are never allowed to interfere with the dramatist's overriding preoccupation with the theme of heroism and heroic activity. It is always the initiative of the creative individual, supported by his devoted military following, which provides the impulse behind historical progression. Any

areas of social friction which might be viewed as evidence of a "Spannung sozialer Gegensätze" - the tension between the haughty émigrés and the "Volk", or between Jouve's revolutionary mob and the traders in Napoleon; the slave scenes in Hannibal - are strictly subordinated to the poet's fascination with the enormous power of the titanic leader figure.

It is in the dualism of the heroic and the non-heroic, in fact, that any differentiation between groups of characters in Grabbe's dramas is to be seen. Far from being graded according to a defined hierarchy which embraces social units with separate backgrounds, interests and aspirations, the people of his works fall most clearly into two sections. These two spheres, the civilian (apathetic) and military (active), are not segregated by any purely social factors, but simply by a difference in mentality. Membership of the heroic military clique, as will be seen, offers the possibility of complete transcendence of all social barriers and opens the way to an elevated realm. This fundamental distinction is evident in all the plays; it is a contrast which manifests itself in the juxtaposition of Marians and civilians in Marius und Sulla; soldiers and citizens in the Hohenstaufen dramas; "grande armée" and street rabble in Napoleon; mercenaries and merchants in Hannibal.

Class conflict, although alluded to on occasions in these plays, cannot be held to represent the major motive force in Grabbe's work. This honour is reserved for the heroic individual and his entourage. In each of the plays the titular hero pursues his aims without regard for social implications and remains unimpeded by the "masses". In the Hohenstaufen plays social issues are entirely absent: the megalomaniac emperors secure world domination regardless of their social environment. In Marius und Sulla and Napoleon social issues are suggested but not developed: the quantitative presence of common figures on the stage does not stand in any real proportion to their determining influence or to the depth of their portrayal.<sup>132</sup> In Hannibal, the one drama in which social-political

132 Reimann's assertion with regard to Napoleon - "Der wirkliche

factors do have a direct bearing on the plot, the populace of Carthage is presented only most briefly: its influence is reported indirectly rather than shown in concrete action on stage. Once more interest in collective historical forces is not allowed to interfere with the dominant role of the individual.

In view of the poet's apparent disregard for a full and precise delineation of various social classes and of individual characters as the product of social conditions, the conventional Marxist view of the depth of portrayal and the role of the civilian "masses" in these plays must be questioned.<sup>133</sup> Grabbe does not strive to provide a detailed picture of society, nor is he primarily concerned to show the masses in their historical potential. Whilst his dramas show a remarkable breadth of presentation and apparently attribute considerable significance to the potential determining power of broad social classes, this preoccupation is never allowed to enter the foreground. Breadth rather than depth is the essence of Grabbe's portrayal of social processes. Reimann is undoubtedly correct in defending Grabbe against charges of "einer extrem individualistischen Auffassung" of history,<sup>134</sup> yet one exaggerates the dramatist's insight into the sweeping movements of history by regarding the "Volk" as "die entscheidende politische Macht" in his plays.<sup>135</sup> Although one does the dramatist an injustice by degrading the common people to the level of "bloße Staffage", "bloßes 'Menschermaterial' für die Protagonisten", "Dekoration"<sup>136</sup> or mere "Kulisse",<sup>137</sup> there is no denying the fact that

Held des Dramas ist nicht Napoleon, sondern das Pariser Volk" (p. 637) - is not supported by any textual evidence.

133 There is no evidence of "annähernde Vollständigkeit in der Darstellung aller Gesellschaftsschichten" (Kühne, p. 68), of "naturalistische Akribie" in the portrayal of the masses (p. 165). Schaefer's belief that "Grabbe stellt ... das Volk in Struktur und individuellen Zielen höchst differenziert dar" (p. 147) is equally unfounded.

134 Reimann, p. 669.

135 Münchow, p. 8.

136 Mayer, p. 89.

137 Goltschnigg, p. 239.

the "Volk" is, ultimately, no more than "chaotische Masse".<sup>138</sup> The essence of Grabbe's attitude to and portrayal of the masses lies somewhere between the extremes of such views: the common people are presented in a semi-active function and with a modicum of differentiation. They are never permitted to become the dominant theme of his work, and yet they are present, at times merely as a voice in the background (Marius und Sulla), at times exerting a passive influence on events (Napoleon), at times, anonymously and virtually without appearing, unwittingly playing a negative part in the progression of events (Hannibal).

<sup>138</sup> Schlaffer, p. 89.

### 3. The Character of Grabbe's Historical World

Jammer über uns!  
Denn die Geschichte hat die Menschheit nie  
Gebessert!

(Don Juan und Faust, I/3)

#### i. The nature and development of Grabbe's view of the historical process

Grabbe's view of history is profoundly pessimistic: the playwright holds no hope for the future of mankind. Despite a certain inconsistency, confusion and lack of profundity in Grabbe's attitude to historical causation, basic themes and motifs do reappear from one drama to the next and form an overall picture of gloom and despair, an air of hopelessness which remains with the poet, contrary to the opinion of the majority of commentators, to the end. The ambiguous position of Die Hermannschlacht in the dramatist's thought will require further consideration within this section of the present study.

The phenomenon "history" in Grabbe's oeuvre has been entirely removed from its mythical and transcendental framework. It is, as has been noted, a purely immanent reality which offers no escape into a realm of spiritual perfection or moral salvation. Man is trapped within a finite existence and seeks no release from his immediate environment; death, consequently, represents finality. The world, in this purely finite form, is no platform for the unfolding of principles, no arena for the collision of conflicting ethics or standards, no forum for abstract argument. History is not concerned with ideas or ideals, but solely with the physical struggle between peoples. It is the quest for the acquisition, maintenance and expansion of political power over the world, a field of dynamic energy which necessitates conflict in an endless stream of violent confrontations. Its vital forces - destructive and irrepressible -

are embodied for short periods in individuals of outstanding qualities who drive history forward in accordance with their own will before being crushed themselves in an apparently almost Hegelian process of rise and fall.<sup>139</sup> History is a dull, neutral, rolling process which unfolds regardless of any logic of higher purpose. It seems, in the last analysis, to function independently of the designs of man.

The most fundamental feature of the historical process is, in Grabbe's view, impermanence. It is a theme reiterated by the poet in all six historical dramas and a motif which he places in the mouths of virtually all his major figures. Ultimately it is the platitude that "all things must pass", and it appears both as a frequent rhetorical figure and as an active component of the dramas themselves. Its potency is forcefully demonstrated in the outcome of the three earliest historical dramas. Inconstancy - transience - throws the meaning of the world into doubt and negates the value of human striving altogether. Sulla is well aware of the impermanence of all worldly things when he retires to his idyll: contemptuous of the decaying Roman state, he recognises the purely temporary nature of human achievement and no longer cares to exert himself for a useless cause. Marius is a practical example of the inescapable truth that all men, however great, must fall. He is fully conscious of the fact that he is the victim of the passing years, that time has taken its toll on him and is about to discard him. He dies lost in memories of his glorious youth. Mithradates likewise recognises the significance of passing time in historical affairs: "auch die Zeit ist ein gewaltiges Reich" (WB 1, 355).

Barbarossa, in many respects a somewhat naive hero, remains apparently oblivious to the implications and threat of biological decay, pursuing his quest for glory and honour regardless. Yet all around him grasp its significance. Pope Alexander recognises that the unchallenged might of

<sup>139</sup> For parallels between Grabbe and Hegel see section below on "Grabbe and the philosophers".

the Hohenstaufen is a purely fleeting phenomenon:

Das stolze Haus der Hohenstaufen, voll  
Von wilden Kaiserstirnen, wird  
Verschwinden wie der Sturm, der wegfuhr über  
Das Meer, (WB 2, 66)

and Ofterdingen (V/1) and Mathildis (V/3) echo this notion elsewhere. A cruel blow of chance, sudden death by accident, ends a magnificent career at the zenith of its glory, for Friedrich's crusade was progressing well and met with disaster only as a result of his death.<sup>140</sup> Human striving on a grand scale is again exposed as a vain pursuit in face of inevitable destruction. Barbarossa's son Heinrich is quite different: a hardened cynic with little faith in life (... ist denn / Das Leben auch wohl einer Träne wert?" WB 2, 124), he has no illusions concerning man's inefficacy in the face of natural forces, and repeatedly expresses his insight into the power of transience while at the same time refusing to allow this knowledge to impede his will to action. His exaggerated notion of his own importance leads him to ignore all subsidiary considerations in his search for absolute power. His dramatic end represents without doubt Grabbe's most appropriate symbol of human limitation and is effectively contrasted with the resigned, quietistic philosophy of the mature Heinrich der Löwe. But Heinrich VI is not the only character in the drama who voices Grabbe's idea of impermanence. The Norman Tancred is painfully aware of its consequences and states melancholically:

So tröste mich das Eine: Jedem  
Gehts wie dem andern, nichts ist ausgenommen.  
Die Eiche wächst und grünt Jahrhunderte,  
Und sinkt zu Staub, wie jede Blum im Grase, -  
Der Mensch wird alt, die Völker auch, -  
Es modern selbst die Felsen der Gebirge,  
Der Himmelsveste wirds nicht besser gehn, -  
Man merkt's an ihrer grauen Locke, der  
Milchstraße nur zu deutlich. - (WB 2, 220)

Tancred's conviction of inescapable decay is echoed in the same drama

140 Das Kreuzheer war ein ungeheures Schwert  
In des Ertrunkenen Faust, und weithin schwang  
Er über Asien es, daß Saladin  
Erbebend Frieden flehte - Als er fiel  
Lags matt am Boden, und ward leicht zertrümmert. (WB 2, 128)



by the words of the shepherd who knows that every emperor, however great, will die, and that civilisations and cultures will succeed each other in slow succession over the centuries. His native Sicily, having witnessed invasion and domination by various peoples from the Ancient Greeks through to the mediaeval Germans, stands as a testimony to the endless change in history. History is eternal, and meaningless, change. So concerned is the poet with the theme in Kaiser Heinrich VI that he introduces a symbolic figure to comment on it. The spectre of the White Lady, "des Stammes Mutter", who appears as a friendly spirit to announce Heinrich der Löwe's imminent death, reinforces the certainty of decay and amplifies the role of "Vergänglichkeit" in human affairs. She is, as Heinrich remarks, "Nur ewig, um das Ende jedes Anfangs zu schaun" (WB 2, 195), and has grown accustomed to change:

Fast ward ich der Vergänglichkeit,  
Des Glückes wie des Unglücks schon gewohnt -  
Wenn du die Blume pflückst, ist sie gebrochen,  
Wenn du das Glück genießt, ist es verschwunden. (WB 2, 195)

This introduction of a supernatural figure emphasises the philosophical undercurrent of the drama and adds a wider dimension to the action on the stage - the events we see unfolding before us are but a short extract from the eternal cycle of rise and fall, one revolution in the endless cycle which constitutes history.

Even in those dramas which exhibit an apparently more comprehensive grasp of concrete historical forces impermanence, in the form of constant upheaval, remains a major motif. The endless process of change is emphasised throughout Napoleon, which exudes an air of immanence and finality from start to finish. The "Putzhändlerin's" long speech on the revolution (I/1), with its brief documentation of the major figures and events of the past twenty-six years and emphasis on the brevity of of Napoleon's career,<sup>141</sup> touches upon the theme of rapid change - how

<sup>141</sup> "... seitdem hat der Kaiser über der Erde geleuchtet, daß man vor dem Glanze die Hand vor die Augen hielt, und ist doch dahingeschwunden wie ein Irrwisch" (WB 2, 332).

much has happened since 1789! The garden scene (II/1) introduces us to a realm which exists only on the fringe of political life and tries to hide from it, hints at permanence in the idyllic and contrasts the order of Linnaeus' botanic system with the turbulence of political affairs. The spirit of the revolution, however, infiltrates even here, and the gardener's niece, reflecting naively on the past years, is brought face to face with the rapidity of change: "So - 1814 und 1815, das ist der Unterschied! - Es geht wohl mit den Herrschern, wie mit den Blumen, - jedes Jahr neue -" (WB 2, 356). Vitry comments in the following scene: "Das Neue ist heutzutage was Altes" (WB 2, 358) and in such a world even eternity expires within thirty years. Jouve tells his female companion, who is relieved at the termination of the revolution: "Auf das Ende, Madame, folgt stets wieder ein Anfang" (WB 2, 398), placing his faith in the certainty that history often repeats itself without really undergoing any meaningful development. This endless progression from one state of affairs to another - from monarchy to revolution, back to monarchy, on to republic and eventually back to monarchy again - is a major undercurrent of Napoleon. In Hannibal, too, chance and impermanence continue to play a role in the historical world. The hero himself recognises the part "Fortuna" has played in his affairs and, in his attempt to avert the Battle of Zama, cites himself as an exemplary child of fortune for whom the wheel has now turned too far. He tells the younger Scipio:

o     Doch bedenke, wie leicht wechselt die launische Fortuna,  
      wie schnell kann sich alles wenden in diesen zentner-  
      schweren Augenblicken, die über unsre Häupter heraufziehen!  
      - Siehe mich. (WB 3, 133)

On a larger scale, indeed, the fate of Carthage itself becomes a paradigm of the inescapable process of rise and fall. For the younger Scipio, who watches the burning city for twenty-seven days until its flames finally extinguish, the destruction of a civilisation illustrates an eternal truth. His quotation from the Iliad assumes a twofold significance: "Einst wird kommen der Tag, wo die heilige Ilios hinsinkt, Priamos auch, und das Volk des lanzenkundigen Königs". The extinction of Carthage is

at once a symbol of inevitable transience and of the fleeting nature of greatness in a transitory world. Carthage, like Troy, must fall - so, too, by implication, will Scipio's Rome. The Phoenician capital thus becomes a universal symbol.

In the historical world nothing is of duration. Human effort and achievement are purely fleeting, even the apparently most timeless monuments to man's worth, great civilisations, are of only temporary standing. History, indeed, is the record of destruction, be it impersonal (through the agency of natural forces) or wilful. In the process of history the collision of outstanding leaders and their cultures results in destruction on a gigantic scale. In each of Grabbe's historical dramas we see the chaotic energies of human history at work. Romans against Romans in Marius und Sulla, Rome against Carthage in Hannibal and Germans in Die Hermannsschlacht, mediaeval Germany against the Vatican, Sicily and Lombardy in the Hohenstaufen plays. The titanic will of the hero is able to express itself only through sheer belligerence, megalomania can only be requited in acts of Gargantuan violence. Grabbe does not tire of describing or presenting such deeds of merciless destruction: thus we learn of Barbarossa's razing of Milan and of Heinrich VI's sacrifice of Tusculum. We meet the Scipio's on the "Ruinen Numantias, noch glühend und dämpfend" (Hannibal, II/1) and are provided with a graphic description of the fall of Carthage by Turnu. We witness Heinrich der Löwe's revenge on Bardewick, the reprisals of Marius and Sulla in Rome, the rout of the Germans in the Teutoburg Forest. Acts, images and the rhetoric of destruction emerge as a major feature of all Grabbe's works, not merely of the history plays - the theme clearly holds some bizarre attraction for the poet. The ceaseless cycle of development and decay, the endless process of the establishment and collapse of cultures, is the essence of Grabbe's view of history.

What point is there, however, behind all this destruction? Does the process of history, with its gradual replacement of one civilisation with

another, improve the human condition or the state of the world? Apparently not - the immense destruction and waste inherent in history is revealed as fundamentally absurd. The development of history leaves mankind unchanged. Grabbe, violently opposed to any pragmatic, teleological view of the historical process, asks, through his Faust, whether the world's past amounts to anything more than the sum total of its countless isolated events. Has man learned from the errors of his past?

Haben denn die Schlachten,  
Hat der Ruin der Völker nur den Zweck  
Von Märchen, die erfunden zur Belehrung?  
Sind Weltbegebenheiten weniger  
Als Weltgeschichte? Jammer über uns!  
Denn die Geschichte hat die Menschheit nie  
Gebessert!

(WB 1, 434)

There is, Faust suggests, no concept of merit in historical progression - the cycle of eternal change overrides civilisations regardless of their historical value. Rome, for example, once represented the highest pinnacle of man's achievement and apparently had a legitimate claim to permanence. In reality, though, it was but one link in the chain of history:

Roma, Herrscherin  
Der Welt! Weh, dreimal weh ihm, der gleich mir  
Zu dir gekommen, daß du ihn erhebest!  
Die Reiche alle sanken hin vor dir zu Staub! -  
- Warum? weiß Niemand! Denn du warst nicht besser  
Als sie! - Und als dein Schwert nun alles  
Dir errungen, fielst du auch mit allem wieder  
In Nacht und Barbarei - Aus dieser quoll  
Ein neues Blut, ein neues Licht hervor, -  
Umsonst hast du gestritten und gewürgt -

(WB 1, 433-4)

Historical assertion, with its concomitant aggression and destruction, is futile. The entire course of history - its power politics, exploitation, national expansion - is absurd. The younger Scipio, who has relished the sight of the blazing Carthage for some time, sheds tears at the sight of the extinguishing flames,<sup>142</sup> aware of the pointlessness of such massive destruction, and quotes Homer. He understands the cruelty of history and

<sup>142</sup> "Als er aber in der siebenundzwanzigsten Nacht kam, wurde er wehmütig - die Stadt erlosch just, und es fielen ihm mit ihren letzten Funken Tränen aus dem Auge" (WB 3, 152).

yet refuses to halt his career as a military aggressor. Terence, who serves as a commentator on the horrors of war which transform his patrons from aesthetes into cold killers, is disgusted by the scale of death and destruction with which he is confronted, and to him Scipio justifies his continued aggression with the notion that only total war can succeed: "Bester, es ist bei uns Sitte, daß man den Krieg so lang führt, bis der eine Teil ausgerottet oder Sklav geworden" (WB 3, 104). In this exchange between Terence and the Scipios history emerges as a tragicomedy: to Terence's objection that war is too tragic to warrant comic treatment the older Scipio counters: "... was tragisch ist, ist auch lustig, und umgekehrt. Hab ich doch oft in Tragödien gelacht, und bin in Komödien fast gerührt worden" (WB 3, 104).<sup>143</sup>

History is cruel, and the only criterion for domination or even survival is military power. In each of the dramas historical validity is established only by the extent of brute physical force at the disposal of a given leader and by the degree of efficiency and historical awareness demonstrated by his nation. Thus Scipio's Rome overwhelms Carthage and the "Staufer" conquer Sicily: success is equated with might and

<sup>143</sup> The theme of history as tragi-comic theatre is a major under-current of Hannibal. The entire course of events at the court of Prusias in Bithynia, with its grotesque overtones and powerful irony, obscures the dividing line between the tragic and the comic by reducing the tragic fate of the hero to an almost absurd level (Grabbe writes to Karl Ziegler: "Hannibals Ende ist das Kühnste, was ich geschrieben. Tragisch und doch lustig." 22 April 1835). The idyll scene in Cajeta (III/3) fulfils the same function. History is pantomime. No sooner has Hannibal confessed to at last having found some peace and relaxation at the wine festival than a sudden peripeteia takes place. The idyllic setting is rapidly transformed into a stage for great personal tragedy:

Hannibal: Mein Glück wäre vollendet, säh ich des Bruders teures Haupt!

Der Römer: (wirft ihm den Kopf Hasdrubals vor die Füße): Hier ist es!

Alle: Entsetzen!

Hannibal: Gut! Das Schauspiel endet wie es muß! Mit einem Theaterstreich!  
(WB 3, 118)

With these words Hannibal sums up both his present situation and his eventual fate: for it is precisely in this way that the "Schauspiel" does end - with the pseudo-dramatic gesture of Prusias in the final scene. The tragic impact of the drama is intensified by this air of absurdity and cynicism, by the reduction of heroism to farce. Grabbe comments in a letter: "Wie eng hängt das Lustige mit dem Ernsten zusammen" (to Immermann, 3 February 1835).

history is a matter of the survival of the fittest. Whether pure military force is necessarily accompanied by a high degree of historical validity - as regards cultural niveau or political sophistication - is left unexplored. The only certainty is that great forces feed on smaller forces, crushing and exploiting them unscrupulously.

Political might, coupled with the initiative of the great individual, is the major lever in the historical process: history is, in Grabbe's representation, political history. The interminable clash of energies produces change. But, significantly, there is no question in Grabbe's historical dramas of any meaningful historical development. History repeats itself, but never progresses from one state to a higher one: rather it stagnates and rotates in an endless circle. Thus none of Grabbe's dramas portrays a desirable development towards a hidden, improved goal. Marius und Sulla literally turns in a full circle from the rule of Sulla through Marius' reign of terror to Sulla's reconquest of the city. In terms of the political awareness of the masses and the state of the republic there has been no development whatsoever: it is evident that upon the retirement of Sulla the city will return to the turmoil which prevailed when it was first introduced to us in II/2. Progression is entirely absent. Much the same applies to Napoleon. Here the pendulum swings from revolution to restoration and from emperor back to restoration. The process of history encapsulated in Napoleon is indeed one of restoration. At first sight the progression of this drama might seem to illustrate a meaningful movement away from the tyrannical principles of the emperor towards the modern forces of liberty, democracy and liberalism. The supreme egotist Napoleon, who seeks only his own glorification and scorns the notion of constitutional government, is conquered by the idealised figures of Blücher and Wellington. And yet there can be no question here of history working towards higher perfection. Throughout the drama Grabbe provides us with an array of prophecies of the coming age of mediocrity and triviality. Napoleon and Cambronne are particularly aware of the

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impending change for the worse in the political scene, and it is clear that Grabbe himself, who was, of course, able to make such predictions with the benefit of hindsight, is very much in sympathy with them. Napoleon's speech in the final scene (WB 2, 457-8), with its predictions of "ewiger Geistesschlaf", "eine sehr irdene zerbröckliche Zeit", "Halbheit", "Lug", "Tand", is borne out by the subsequent course of events. The dream of the French nation is over and the Bourbon administration will be reinstated. Even the victorious Blücher is unable to commend his army's achievements without qualification, and tells his men:

Wird die Zukunft eurer würdig - Heil dann! -  
Wird sie es nicht; dann tröstet euch damit,  
Daß eure Aufopferung eine bessere verdiente! (WB 2, 459)

The drama ends on a dubious note indeed! A large question mark hangs over the Europe of 1815, and even if it is free of the megalomaniac Napoleon, what will happen next? Could anything possibly rival the excitement, glory, and sense of purpose of the turn of the century? The world of the Second Restoration will be emptier than that of the First. The allies have not induced any meaningful change but have merely maintained the status quo: the wheel has turned a full circle. History has not progressed, it has retrogressed: more precisely, perhaps, it has remained static. The play is quite literally an illustration of the eternally recurring pattern ("ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen") which dominates world events. After the age of heroism mediocrity returns, the ahistorical principle prevails, and the anti-historical in this, as in all Grabbe's dramas, is implicitly criticised as escapist and worthless. The allied victory at Waterloo signals a return to the conditions of Act one, scene one.

The historical outcome of Hannibal - the annihilation of Phoenician civilisation - represents a development which can only be regarded as absurd. In the Hohenstaufen plays, too, any suggestion of meaningful historical development is negated by the collapse of imperial policies as a result of sudden death. The stability secured by Friedrich Barbarossa

is threatened upon his death by numerous hostile forces which his son must master. Heinrich VI likewise perishes immediately after the realisation of his immediate aims. In Die Hermannsschlacht the tribespeople fight quite openly to force a return to previous conditions by expelling their Roman oppressors. This accomplished, they decline to pursue Hermann's goals any further and content themselves with the success already achieved. Any development is equally questionable here: again the ahistorical - the political apathy and historical blindness of the Germans - predominates.

This distinction between the historical and the ahistorical is vital to Grabbe's drama. Depth of historical/political consciousness appears as a major consideration in the dramatist's assessment of individual nations or smaller social groups in world-historical terms, and he emphasises this element to a considerable degree. No doubt largely as a reaction against the political climate of his own age Grabbe felt the need to identify himself with the grand, heroic and dynamic, shunning the mediocre and apathetic. His sympathies lie, as has been noted, very much with the great men of history, and however much he doubts their value objectively, he exalts in his dramas those parties which demonstrate a marked historical awareness at the expense of those which remain blind to affairs of profound and far-reaching significance.

For Grabbe insight, initiative, energy, determination and self-assertion are the attributes essential to the historical being, and those individuals, groups and cultures which lack such qualities are implicitly rejected. The fisherman and his family in Marius und Sulla; the citizens of Bardewick in Kaiser Heinrich VI; the gardener and Pächter Lacoste in Napoleon; the Carthaginians in Hannibal and the Germans of Die Hermannsschlacht all represent the ahistorical principle which Grabbe scorns. They demonstrate a trivial mentality, concerned only with the cosy security of their immediate world, wrapped up in the ideology of the little man, oblivious to the historical events which are taking



place around them. Thus the fisherman resolves to retain his anonymity at all costs by declining to involve himself in the search for the banished Marius. The merchants of Bardewick, like the citizens of Carthage absorbed in a realm of financial well-being and bourgeois complacency, are ignorant of the political threat facing them and hide in a domestic idyll:

Ich leugne nicht, es ist mir erst recht wohl, wenn ich  
Winters so in meiner warmen Stube, schön im Hause gelegen,  
sicher vor aller Gefahr sitze, und dann denke: alles ist  
mein eigen. (WB 2, 162)

The gardener and Lacoste seek to escape from world events in nature, the latter being rudely awoken to the reality of historical action by the intrusion of the Battle of Waterloo into the heart of his domestic sphere. These are individuals who stand apart from the major happenings of history, content to exist in a vacuum. To the men of action - the great heroes and their retinues - they are worthless, the object of pure contempt. Cambronne's farewell to Lacoste, with its bitter allusions to domestic triviality, is full of contempt and bitterness:

Grüßen Sie die Frau und die lieben Kinder, und wenn Sie  
nach zehn Jahren mit denselben wieder zum tausendsten Male  
einen Kuchen essen, oder Ihren Töchtern neue Kleider schenken,  
so freuen Sie sich ja von neuem über Ihre Existenz und Ihr  
Glück - Wir gehen jenen Kanonenmündungen entgegen und be-  
dürfen Ihrer Elendigkeit nicht mehr! (WB 2, 454)

Lacoste is an individual without a historical consciousness: he is concerned only for his personal welfare. A similar indifference towards and ignorance of historical issues is demonstrated earlier in the same drama by the servants at the Brussels hotel in V/1. Blind to the far-reaching consequences which the Battle of Waterloo might have for the destiny of Europe, they, for reasons of pure personal convenience, would prefer the French to win: "Ich sage lieber "Monsieur" als "Myn Her" oder "Ihre Hochedelmögenden"" (WB 2, 432). The citizens of Sulla's Rome who utter banal revolutionary slogans, the Parisians who allow themselves to be incited to violence by malicious gossip, and the Carthaginians to whom imports of luxurious goods from the exotic east are more important

than Hannibal's momentous victory at Cannae all serve as examples of a spiritual niveau far below that of the truly inspired historical being. They represent an attitude of mind which the poet recognises in his own age:

Die Guillotine der Revolution steht still und ihr Beil  
rostet - mit ihm verrostet vielleicht auch manches Große,  
und das Gemeine, in der Sicherheit, daß ihm nicht mehr  
der Kopf abgeschlagen werden kann, erhebt gleich dem Unkraut<sup>144</sup>  
sein Haupt. (WB 4, 93)

Napoleon's prophecy of a forthcoming age of dull mediocrity has been fulfilled. The days of glory, of splendid deeds and acts of heroism are over:

Da stürzen die feindlichen Truppen siegjubelnd heran, wännen  
die Tyrannei vertrieben, den ewigen Frieden erobert, die  
goldne Zeit rückgeführt zu haben - Die Armen! Statt eines  
großen Tyrannen, wie sie mich zu nennen beliebten, werden  
sie bald tausend kleine besitzen, - statt ihnen ewigen Frieden  
zu geben, wird man sie in einen ewigen Geistesschlaf einzu-  
lullen versuchen, - statt der goldenen Zeit, wird eine sehr  
irdene, zerbröckliche kommen, voll Halbheit, albernen Lugs  
und Tandes, - von gewaltigen Schlachttaten und Heroen wird  
man freilich nichts hören, desto mehr aber von diplomatischen  
Assembléen, Konvenienzbesuchen hoher Häupter ... (WB 2, 457-8)

This realm of historical ignorance and political short-sightedness is juxtaposed with that of the heroic, as represented by the titanic individual and his military following. The high degree of identification between leader and led is based largely on the mutual desire to escape from the banality of domestic life and to transcend social restrictions through self-assertion on a historical scale. For the hero this involves a constant assault on opposing nations and an insatiable urge for domination. To his followers it offers a unique opportunity to participate in major historical issues, to taste unparalleled success and to achieve an elitist superiority over the common man. The military experience raises the little man to previously unknown heights and, through his union with the historical personage, allows him access to a sphere which would normally be far beyond his reach:

In des Gefechtes Wut und Graus  
Ist wahre Freiheit und Gleichheit zu Haus!

<sup>144</sup> In "Etwas über den Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe".

Dort darf man jede Pflicht verachten,  
Dort darf sich im Blute röten  
Dort darf der Knecht den König töten,  
Dort hört man nicht aufs Gnadeflehn,  
Denn Siegen ist das Los der Schlachten,  
Oder glorreich untergehn!

(WB 1, 150)

The soldiers of Marius und Sulla, Barbarossa and Heinrich VI demonstrate an unfailing devotion to their leaders and revel in the excitement of war; the suspense and danger of battle bond men together in true companionship.<sup>145</sup> But it is in Napoleon above all that the elevating potential of military activity is placed in telling contrast to the stagnant domesticity of the everyday world. In the very first scene it becomes clear that the ex-guardsmen Vitry and Chassecoeur, who have sampled the glory of the Napoleonic Wars, regard their civilian compatriots with utter contempt. During the battle scenes, furthermore, this sense of comradeship and meaningful self-sacrifice achieves almost mystical proportions. However hard life on the march might be, for the Prussian "freiwillige Jäger", for example, it is infinitely preferable to the monotony of the civilian existence:

So kalt der Regen zu tröpfeln beginnt, so rauh der Wind  
weht, so nahe der korsische Löwe liegt ... - wahrhaftig,  
mir ist's hier wohler um das Herz, als wenn ich in der gut  
geheizten Stube am Teetisch sitze, daselbst Geschwätz ver-  
nehme, was die Sekunde darauf vergessen ist ... (WB 2, 412-3)

Both the allied (Prussian, English, Scottish) and the French forces are instilled with an ethos which places the dynamic and heroic far above the escapist and mediocre. Self-sacrifice in a military cause is a quasi-religious experience, to Bülow the battle appears as the "Jakobsleiter zum Himmel", and even the cowardly Berliner, who was initially terrified at the prospect of fighting, is inspired to the greatest valour by the example and strength of character of his commander, Blücher. The military clique comes in Grabbe's work to represent a

145      Nicht bei Banketten, Hochzeitsfesten, lernst  
          Den Freund du kennen. Wenn uns Blut und Tod  
          Umdunkeln, und uns da der Freund erscheint -  
          So jauchze: Du siehst deines Lebens Stern.      (WB 2, 52)

higher, alternative order: it belongs to the realm of historical consciousness - active involvement in world affairs - which is of sympathy to the poet. Its converse, the realm of complacent indifference, is rejected.

It is the triumph of the anti-historical principle in Grabbe's final drama Die Hermannsschlacht which undermines, even negates, the apparently optimistic outcome of the battle in the Teutoburg Forest. The overwhelming tendency in Grabbe scholarship to view this play as the poet's final, affirmative statement on the relationship between the hero and his "Volk" must, in view of Hermann's people's decision to renounce further action, be questioned.<sup>146</sup> The popular view, which holds that Hermann's concession to his subjects and the resultant harmony between individual and collective produce a union of considerable historical potency, calls for support on a statement of Grabbe's to Immermann which indicates an apparently more positive attitude towards history than had previously been expressed:

Ihre Äußerung, daß Sie von den Menschen so wenig im Ganzen halten, hat mich beschäftigt und frappirt. ... Nein, das Bessere wiegt über: es kämpft in der ganzen Geschichte und hat bis jetzt immer zuletzt gesiegt.<sup>147</sup>

By this stage, it is suggested, Grabbe had matured to a more affirmative view of historical causation, a tendency which Sengle connects with his study of Ranke's writings during the same period.<sup>148</sup> Here the notion of a value scale and of the eventual victory of positive worth in the historical process is suggested. The Germans, by implication, oust the Romans who, even in Augustus' estimation, have passed their zenith. In the battle for German soil the native tribes prove superior - historically

<sup>146</sup> Among those who ascribe to the standard view are Leippe, Jahn, von Wiese, Siefert, Schaefer and M. Schneider.

<sup>147</sup> Letter to Immermann, 18 January 1835.

<sup>148</sup> Sengle, Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 160. M. Schneider similarly makes much of the poet's reading of Ranke in 1835 and stresses the influence of historian's thought on his final work.

they seem more suited to occupy this geographical area.<sup>149</sup>

A consideration of the drama in terms of the dualism of the historical and the ahistorical, the heroic and the non-heroic, however, produces a quite different result. The "Volk" of Die Hermannsschlacht, and indeed their leaders, remain totally unaware of their potential role in world affairs. Hermann's call for unity after the defeat of Varus goes unheeded, his ideal of a "Gemeinschaft" of tribes under common leadership is greeted with suspicion:

Soll denn immer erst eine Not wie die jetzige es bewirken,  
daß wir uns vereinen? Wärs nicht besser, wir täten es von  
selbst, und lebten auch im Frieden unter einem gemeinschaft-  
lichen Oberhaupt? (WB 3, 367)

The princes of the other tribes regard such a suggestion as an attempt on Hermann's part to secure lasting personal power over his neighbours and refuse to discuss the issue further. After the eventual annihilation of the Roman legions Hermann suggests further that the Germans pursue their enemy and solve the Roman problem once and for all by storming Rome itself. This proposal, too, is rejected: having rid themselves of the immediate threat to their welfare, the presence of Roman forces in Germany, the tribal leaders are content to rest: "Die Unternehmung ist zu weit aussehend". Such a retreat from historical action to the realm of idyllic domesticity is, as has been noted, typical of the ahistorical being. The retirement of the Germanic nobles to a feast in Hermann's castle underlines the contrast between the two principles (heroic - unheroic); the common people have no more awareness of political expediency than they had in Marius und Sulla. Only the hero has undergone a change

<sup>149</sup> The suitability of the German tribes to dominate the wet, wooded mountain terrain of North Germany is emphasised by the close affinity between the natives (described by Varus as "Naturmenschen") and their natural surroundings. The Latin oppressors are unable to adjust to the climactic conditions of the area and experience great discomfort. The natural elements - the weather, flooding and dense vegetation - aid the Germanic cause. The close identification between man and nature is reflected in the symbolism of the drama, for example in the frequent association of Germany with the oak tree.

- he confirms the general will of his people, restricts his drive to action and abandons his hopes of crushing Rome. The improved relationship between leader and led is thus only achieved at the expense of the heroic ideal, and the discrepancy between the far-sightedness of the individual and the blindness of the "Volk", a characteristic of the earlier works, remains unchanged. Hermann is, like Grabbe's previous heroes, a man apart, a political thinker among peasants. His situation resembles that of Hannibal, a kindred solitary spirit, and although he clearly meets with a greater measure of success than did his predecessor, his ultimate ideal results in similar frustration.

When considered from this point of view the effect of the Augustus-epilogue to the drama, which is evidently designed to set the action of the play within a world-historical perspective, is strikingly incongruous. The dying emperor confirms our impression of the changing state of the Roman world and warns his successor, Tiberius, of future decline. Augustus emerges from this closing scene as a worldly-wise sceptic who sees through human pretensions; he draws on the well-worn image of man as an actor: "Klatscht in die Hände! Hab ich meine Rolle in allen Verhältnissen nicht gut gespielt? ... Es tritt nur ein Schauspieler ab" (WB 3, 379). That such a notion should be introduced in this final drama is surely not without significance: would such a self-effacing gesture have been unthinkable of previous Grabbean figures? Would even Hermann, most modest of leaders, have been capable of refuting outright the validity of the individual in historical terms? The "Schluß" of Die Hermannsschlacht, indeed, serves to question the validity of individual aspiration which has, in any case, been undermined by the attitude of the "Volk" towards their leader in the main body of the drama. The outstanding individual, even if he has not been reduced to the level of a play actor as Augustus insists, remains, as Hermann demonstrates, little more than an integral (if vital) element in the historical process.

The development of Die Hermannsschlacht is thus at once positive

and negative. On the one hand the "Volk" finally finds a degree of affirmation on the part of the hero, and vice versa. And yet on the other hand the stubbornness and naiveté of the common man is implicitly criticised as historically blind. Augustus warns Tiberius of the future emergence of the "Pöbel" as a political force:

Halte mit dem Volk und dem Pöbel, nicht mit dem Vornehmen  
und Reichen. Pöbel und Volk sind so gut von ihnen belästigt  
als wir Kaiser und bilden unsre sicherste Hülfe. (WB 3, 379)

These words are evidently intended to appear as the conclusion drawn from the action of the play itself, and the drama is to serve as an illustration of the increasing importance of the "Volk" in world-historical terms. Ironically, however, Augustus' insistence that the Germanic tribes will sweep aside all opposition and invade Italy is contradicted by the evidence of the preceding scene. His exclamation to Tiberius and Livia:

Die drei Legionen waren die lebendigen kräftigsten Mauern  
des Reichs gegen das unermessliche Germanien. Es wird nun  
bald seine Völker wie verwüstende Hagelwetter auf unseren  
Süden ausschütten (WB 3, 379)

rings strange in the light of our knowledge that these very people have just elected to retire for refreshment rather than to assert themselves.

The view of history which underlies Grabbe's final play consists, then, of a strange blend of confidence and despondency, and to regard the drama as the ultimate, unequivocal solution to the questions posed in the other plays is surely erroneous. History is made by men, once more on the field of battle. The primitive "Naturmenschen" of Germany are able, in their solidarity, to sweep aside the well-drilled legions of Rome and, as Augustus recognises, have the potential to mould themselves into a world force. The note of pessimism in the play derives from the mental attitude of these tribespeople: lacking all interest in affairs of lasting import they prefer to cling to the (false) security of their peasant existence rather than to expand their horizons. They fight, in effect, to protect an idyll which is threatened by the historical world. Hermann knows that the Romans will one day return. Augustus is convinced that Roman supremacy in North Europe is about to be under-

mined by tenacious Germanic resistance. But such considerations do not occur to the people themselves, who remain oblivious to affairs of universal significance. The "Volk" of Die Hermannsschlacht are affirmed as a social entity: majority opinion prevails, the democratic principle is upheld, the hero renounces his ambitions. In the last analysis, however, the people of the drama represent an order which is foreign to the ideals of the dramatist. The situation is a paradoxical one: the hero, the motivating force behind events, bows to the will of the people, who detach themselves from events. Thus the unity of individual and collective might be said to move history, but, due to the apathy of the people, history is not moved very far. Historical development, absent in all Grabbe's dramas, is absent here, too. A previous situation has been restored. Just as the allied victory at Waterloo signified the end of an age of "Schlachttaten und Heroen", so too does the decision of the German "Volk" to return to their homes in peace secure a future devoid of monumentality. The phenomenon history is pointless; for the Germans life will roll on. The impressive victory over the Romans on German soil - the victors of the natural idyll over sophisticated civilisation - might thus be viewed as a Pyrrhic victory.

The all-pervasive gloom of the early dramas, which offered no hope for man in the historical process (Grabbe's so-called heroic idealism, his sympathy with the great men of the past, was seen to take second place to the persuasive evidence of eternal decay) is only partially alleviated in Grabbe's final play. The bleak view of the processes of history remains constant, individual readiness to sacrifice - however new it may be in this last work - cannot disguise the meaninglessness of events as a whole. Like Napoleon and Hannibal, Hermann sees his principles defeated by the currents of his time. Consequently there can be no question of a significant development in Grabbe's dramas from despair to hope, from a purely negative conception of history to a view which, while acknowledging personal disillusionment, recognises an essentially progressive element in world events. The implications of



Die Hermannsschlacht are not as unequivocally positive as they initially appear. The major tendency of modern Grabbe scholarship, which has emphasised precisely such a development towards unqualified optimism, appears to have falsely stated a problem essential to the poet's work. The nature of Grabbe's historical world is not to be sought exclusively within the context of the relationship between individual and collective - in this sense a progression would be evident in as far as a "civilian" collective rises to a semi-heroic level and comes into direct contact with the hero - <sup>150</sup> rather the field of enquiry should be extended beyond these limits to an examination of the meaning of such a union in general historical terms. The relationship between the individual and the masses, often overemphasised in its relevance to Grabbe's historical vision, has been seen to assume only a relative role in the dramas. Approached in this manner, Die Hermannsschlacht appears to stand far closer to its predecessors than has previously been recognised. It denies any meaningful progression behind events; any sense of development which is to be inferred from the work derives solely from the words of Augustus in the epilogue. His conviction of the rise of Germany to a world power is, however, flatly contradicted by the evidence of the drama proper, and reinforces the impression that the epilogue, rather than being an integrated element of the drama, is tacked on to the end. It is extremely significant that even the hero is forced to project his hopes for a strong Germany far into the future - "Das Andere und Klügere bleibt ohnehin nicht aus, - (für sich) nach Jahrtausenden, wenn wir und unsre Ur-enkel tot sind, ists da" (WB 3, 367). Hermann is fully aware of the reality of his situation, which denies any genuine progress.

<sup>150</sup> M. Schneider's interpretation of Die Hermannsschlacht, which argues the case for a "neue Geschichtsdeutung" on the part of the poet in this last drama, rests on excessive attention to this question (p. 383 ff.) and fails to enquire into the wider historical implications of the play's outcome. At the same time Schneider is forced to concede "die dramatisch nicht adäquat ausgeprägte Gestaltungsabsicht des Dichters" (p. 382).

Grabbe's view of history as circular progression, of movement without development, seen to be the central thesis of the other dramas, is carried into Die Hermannsschlacht. In view of this fact it is difficult to attribute much significance to the isolated statement to Immermann in the letter of 18 January 1835. The notion of value suggested by the use of the word "das Bessere" raises an issue foreign to the works themselves, and the prophecy of the eventual triumph of meaningful development within the historical process is not supported by textual evidence of any substance. History remains, in Grabbe's representation, a fragmented series of isolated incidents or short sequences of events which do not join together to form an overall design. The unhaltable march of history, driven by the historical individual whose influence shapes an epoch only to end upon termination of the hero's usefulness, appears blind to any higher purpose. History is a neutral process without a beginning, middle or end. It has no hidden goal. Each of Grabbe's six historical dramas tells the tale of power, destruction, suffering and decay. Each points to the historical necessity behind events and, in keeping with the poet's intentions, makes much of the inevitable causality, political interplay and cultural climate which act as determining factors in the mechanisms of history. Given the available data, Grabbe suggests in these dramas, history could only progress in one way: the expansionist aims of the "Staufer", for example, were sure to produce internal unrest; conditions in Restoration France were not conducive to a continuation of Bourbon rule, and yet the allies were not prepared to allow the French to reinstate their emperor. In a prose note to II/5 of Marius und Sulla Grabbe expressly points to historical inevitability:

Immer deutlicher leuchtet aus dem Gange des Stückes hervor, daß die römische Welt weder auf der Erde noch in der Religion einen festen Haltpunkt mehr hat, und daß, wenn sie nicht auseinanderfallen soll, nur der Despotismus sie halten kann. Darum mußten Männer wie Marius und Sulla erscheinen und das werden, was sie geworden sind. (WB 1, 388)

There is, then, a strict causality behind events. But a superstructure which provides such events with a purposeful framework is absent. There is an inner logic behind history, but it is restricted to the immediate, immanent unrolling of lines of action which have no meaning beyond themselves.

As an aimless process history is seen as cruel, destructive and impetuous. It corresponds with the reality of the world as seen by Grabbe - hostile, harsh, unfeeling, divorced from the divine. Reality is, in essence, historical: since all is fleeting, all that takes place is rapidly relegated to the past. Grabbe's historical world is all-embracing, there is no escape from its pervasive influence. It envelops human life in its totality.<sup>151</sup> The individual who seeks to hide from the endless change of political life finds it impossible to shut himself off completely. The fisherman and his family (Marius und Sulla, I/1) are forced into flight by the presence of Marius; the awareness of the proximity of the emperor in Kaiser Heinrich VI (V/2) plagues the shepherd boy; the bustle of political life infiltrates into the Jardin des Plantes (Napoleon, II/1); and Hannibal's peace and relaxation at the wine festival in Cajeta are destroyed by the arrival of his brother's head (Hannibal, III/3). The "kleines Dasein" of the common man is not safe from the pressures of the outside world but susceptible to them: even the way of life which exists on the fringe of the historical world is drawn into the field of its energies. The process of eternal change which characterises the world as a whole is emphasised even within these scenes: the gardener's niece indicates the frequent upheaval in French

<sup>151</sup> von Wiese views the rustic idyll in Grabbe's dramas as a timeless realm freed from the laws which govern historical existence: "eine Schicht des Daseins, die alles Geschichtliche überdauert und dem Gesetz der Vergänglichkeit nicht unterworfen ist" (Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 497). H.-W. Nieschmidt, however, argues convincingly in his essay "Die bedrohte Idylle in den Geschichtsdramen Grabbes", in Deutung und Dokumentation: Studien zum Geschichtsdrama Chr. D. Grabbes (Detmold, 1973) that even this apparently independent realm is subject to the violent turbulence of historical events.

political circles and points to a parallel between the eternal, organic growth of nature and the same perennial revolution in "life outside"; the shepherd outlines the drastic process of rise and fall which has been witnessed by his native Sicily. Clearly these four scenes do not present a "geschichtslose Idylle" (von Wiese), but extend the scope of Grabbe's strictly historical world to encompass even those spheres which, in their typical embodiment as the literary topoi Arcadia and Elysium, would normally stand outside the area of political influence and offer a measure of permanence.

## ii. Grabbe and the philosophers

Grabbe's disinclination towards abstract, theoretical thought has been noted; it is reflected in his view of history, a conception which resists tenuous speculation and contents itself with a delineation of the evident and fundamental characteristics of the historical process. The desultory and somewhat superficial view of history which Grabbe communicates in his plays - for all their breadth and emphasis on causality the dramas concentrate on certain basic truths ("vanitas", chance, cyclical progression, etc) - demonstrates that the poet was not concerned to provide his concept of history with any firm philosophical foundation. Grabbe was, it seems, not of a philosophical frame of mind. Indeed, of his voracious reading during the period 1824-34, as reconstructed by Bergmann,<sup>152</sup> only an insignificant proportion appears to have been devoted to works of a philosophical nature. Of the 1071 items withdrawn from the Detmold library a mere 15 centre on philosophy, ranking the subject below theology, travel, the theory of art and geography in terms of the poet's interest as reflected by his borrowings

<sup>152</sup> A. Bergmann, Grabbe als Benutzer der öffentlichen Bibliothek in Detmold.

from this source.<sup>153</sup> Of these fifteen volumes, nine were withdrawn during 1825; in the seven years 1827-33, the period which witnessed the composition of Don Juan und Faust, the Hohenstaufen dramas and Napoleon, not one single philosophical work was borrowed. Grabbe was clearly not, then, especially interested in acquiring a deep knowledge of the history of philosophy. Apart from a few volumes by individual thinkers he borrowed only two introductory handbooks of philosophy and one major historical survey in eleven volumes. The subject appears to have been one of comparative indifference to him. The relationship between Grabbe's view of history and the attitudes of philosophers known or at least readily accessible to him may, however, be briefly examined in an attempt to frame the poet's ideas within some kind of historical perspective. Whilst Grabbe did not undertake a thorough study of these philosophers, a knowledge of the basic tenets of their work might well have been of influence, however slight, in shaping his ideas. In an age of developing historicism, an era which witnessed the rise of history as a precise, almost scientific field of study, it would be surprising if the poet were not exposed, even through general reading, to the currents of contemporary thought. Widely read on history in general, it is likely that Grabbe would have been confronted with differing approaches (at least those of the German tradition) to its universal implications.

That Grabbe was acquainted with the writings of Justus Möser is established by Bergmann's compilation. He borrowed volumes one and two of the Osnabrückische Geschichte (first published in 1768) in August and September, 1824, adding the third and final volume (published 1824)

<sup>153</sup> That Grabbe's library loans provide an accurate reflection of the poet's reading habits during these years is deduced by Bergmann from several facts: 1) Grabbe himself possessed very few books, as is demonstrated both by the paucity of orders placed with the local bookseller and by the absence of a personal library at the poet's death. 2) There was no other public source of books in Detmold at the time. 3) Grabbe did not often borrow books from private sources; where he did, such loans are generally attested in letters.

in January, 1825. In December of the same year he withdrew the Patriotische Phantasien, edited by Möser's daughter, in fourteen parts. Whilst Grabbe demonstrates a marked interest in the common people and considers them in a historical role, his vision of history as a record of the heroism of a number of isolated individuals is far removed from the thesis of the gradual development of the land-owning peasant "Volk" towards civic responsibility which Möser puts forward in the Osnabrückische Geschichte. Möser's concept of "Markgenossenschaft", of the influence of ancient folk traditions in the growth of community government, posits a traditionalism and assumption of gradual ascent in history which is alien to Grabbe's view of fragmented, violent progression. He would, however, have certainly approved of Möser's anti-enlightenment approach to the problems of historical development. The awareness of the blending of rational and irrational forces, the desire to penetrate beyond externals through the close study of historical sources ("aufmerksame und langsame Betrachtung des Originals")<sup>154</sup> and to comprehend history in its totality by means of varying methods of contemplation - the "Totaleindrücke" - produced in Möser a naturalistic interpretation of history and the origins of the state tinged with a certain materialism. Grabbe's Die Hermannsschlacht might well be held to serve as a living example of the emerging state, with its landed peasantry, concept of loyalty and honour and affinity with nature, as postulated by Möser. The emphasis on long established social-patriarchal convention in this final drama is well in tune with Möser's historical conservatism, and Grabbe's vision of the early North German tribes and their social system, whose particular interests were slowly to give way to general militaristic considerations, appears almost as an illustration of a Möser inspired view of the past.

Grabbe's knowledge of Herder, as far as can be ascertained from his borrowings in Detmold, was limited. The Ideen zur Philosophie der Men-

<sup>154</sup> Letter to Nicolai, 5 April 1767.

schengeschichte (published 1784-91) were, it appears, unknown to him in any depth, but he withdrew the Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität in 1832 and in December, 1829 had borrowed a volume entitled Johann Gottfried von Herders Leben edited by H. Doering (published Weimar, 1823). This monograph offers a sixty-page survey (pp. 276-336) of the main features of Herder's thought from which the poet would have been able to glean an outline of the philosopher's attitudes to history. Clearly there are suppositions in Herder's work which would have appalled Grabbe: the notion that man is truly rational and moral, developing towards perfection in the form of a "Humanität" which involves the cultivation of his finer impulses and senses, artistic ability, peacefulness, sociability, freedom and lawfulness, above all of religion, would have struck Grabbe, the materialistic cynic, as absurd. The basis of Herder's conception of history in religious faith would likewise have conflicted with the poet's secularised view, as would the contention that man is essentially good and the universe ultimately wise. The very principle of the Ideen, the study of history as the revelation of "der Gang Gottes in der Natur, die Gedanken, die der Ewige uns in der Reihe seiner Werke tätlich dargelegt hat" would surely have struck Grabbe as misguided. But Herder's organological view of history, which views all Creation as a living organism with a multitude of diverse yet interrelated forms, his emphasis, like Möser's, on the positive role of nature in the historical process, would have found Grabbe sympathetic. Herder's anthropological approach, which attributes great importance to the notion of nationality and recognises various peoples as culturally distinct from each other, posits an ethnological element in causation which Grabbe had stressed in his Hohenstaufen plays (above all in Barbarossa). Herder's idea of historical environment and circumstance - "Was im Reich der Menschheit nach dem Umfange gegebener National-, Zeit- und Ortsumstände geschehen kann, geschieht in ihm wirklich" - would likewise have been echoed by the poet. The philosopher's religious idealism would, however, clearly

have repelled Grabbe.

Any form of idealism, in fact, failed to attract the dramatist. Kant's enlightened optimism, his teleological view of the unfolding of the absolute Idea in history towards a Utopia of rational life, his conception of a natural plan which will develop mankind into complete mind and consequently towards complete freedom, resulting in a universe of absolute reason and harmony, would have puzzled Grabbe as much as Schiller's heavily philosophical approach. While Grabbe would undoubtedly have endorsed Schiller's view that history is essentially cruel and elemental - "der Konflikt der Naturkräfte unter einander selbst und mit der Freiheit des Menschen" -<sup>155</sup> he would have objected to the Kantian principle that history demonstrates progressive reason and denied Schiller's contention that it represents the realisation of a purpose. The triumph of moral reason in history, the emergence of a free and authentically human people, the notion of Nemesis all contradict Grabbe's fundamentally materialistic beliefs. Schiller's conception of the historical individual as the conveyor of freedom, of vital importance in his artistic practice, is alien to Grabbe. Schiller's view of history as man's progress from savagery to modern civilisation, an essential premise of all idealistic philosophy, is itself called into doubt by Grabbe's presentation of man as a beast and his reduction of history to violent transformation on a meaningless level. The concept of freedom, central not merely to Kant and Schiller, but also to their successors Fichte and Schelling, is also entirely lacking in Grabbe.

Grabbe, with his deep suspicion of speculation and abstraction on the scale practised by the idealists, would surely have agreed with Wilhelm von Humboldt,<sup>156</sup> who, in his essay "Über die Aufgabe des Ge-

<sup>155</sup> Schiller, "Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?" (1789).

<sup>156</sup> We have no documentary evidence that Grabbe was acquainted with Wilhelm von Humboldt's essays on history. He did, however, borrow Humboldt's correspondence with Schiller from the Gräfin von Ahlefeldt in 1830.



schichtsschreibers" (1821) had criticised the great German philosophers for having unjustifiably imposed tenuous ideas onto history from without. Humboldt stresses the importance of the "Idea" in history, but emphasises:

Es versteht sich indess freilich von selbst, daß diese Ideen aus der Fülle der Begebenheiten selbst hervorgehen, ... nicht der Geschichte, wie eine fremde Zugabe, geliehen werden müssen, ein Fehler, in welchem die sogenannte philosophische Geschichte leicht verfällt.<sup>157</sup>

The duty of the modern historian is to interpret history according to concrete sources, seeking its "innere Wahrheit" and "innern ursachlichen Zusammenhang" by means of "Phantasie", "Ahndungsvermögen" and "Verknüpfungsgabe". Without indulging in unfounded speculation, Humboldt believes, it should be possible to uncover the totality of history, its laws, which are to be sought in the realm of the Idea. History is dependent on "dunkel geahndeten Kräften, und sichtbar durchwaltet von ewigen, tief in der Brust des Menschen gewurzelten Ideen", it is "ein Unendliches". There must, however, be some reasonable inner thread.<sup>158</sup> Most importantly, Humboldt insists, this central idea is to be induced from within history: since history must show causality, it must have laws. The task of the scholar should thus be to combine the empirical approach of the archivist with the intuitive logic of the philosopher, arriving ultimately at the desired result:

Das Geschäft des Geschichtsschreibers in seiner letzten, aber einfachsten Auflösung ist Darstellung des Strebens einer Idee, Daseyn in der Wirklichkeit zu gewinnen.<sup>159</sup>

This idea, Humboldt expounds in two further essays,<sup>160</sup> manifests itself in various ways: through natural progression ("Zeugung"), the development of nations ("Bildung") and through animal forms of progress ("Trägheit"). Chance, too, plays a role.

<sup>157</sup> W. von Humboldt, Werke in 5 Bänden, edited by A. Flitner and K. Giel (Stuttgart, 1960), volume 1, p. 596.

<sup>158</sup> "Die Weltgeschichte ist nicht ohne Weltregierung verständlich" (p. 600).

<sup>159</sup> p. 605.

<sup>160</sup> "Betrachtungen über die Weltgeschichte" and "Betrachtungen über die bewegenden Ursachen der Weltgeschichte".

This desire to capture the idea of history by means of careful research and cautious inference was clearly shared by Grabbe. Humboldt's wish to present the "Bild des Menschenschicksals in treuer Wahrheit, lebendiger Fülle und reiner Klarheit" corresponds with the breadth and scope attempted by Grabbe in his historical drama, and Humboldt's insistence that the psychology of the great individual is by no means the only key to historical motivation would have found a sympathetic adherent in the dramatist, who places little emphasis on psychological factors in his art. One must doubt, however, that Grabbe's "Idee der Geschichte" equates very closely with Humboldt's central thesis that the historical process betrays a marked inner unity and a clearly defined idea.<sup>161</sup> A point of contact might be found, though, in Humboldt's affirmation of source criticism after Niebuhr's fashion; here the beginnings of a scientific method of historical research, elaborated later by Ranke, can be traced, evidence of the emerging historicism which could hardly have escaped Grabbe who, had, in fact, borrowed Niebuhr's Römische Geschichte on two occasions.<sup>162</sup>

Inevitably, however, the name with which Grabbe is most frequently brought into association in this context is that of Hegel, who delivered his lectures on the philosophy of history at the University of Berlin during Grabbe's stay there as a student of law (1822-3). It is unlikely that Grabbe attended these lectures, indeed, at no time in his life did he seem concerned to acquire a real knowledge of Hegel's thought. He did not withdraw any works by the philosopher from the Detmold library between 1824-34, nor is there any record of his having borrowed them from any other source. He refers to Hegel only once in his letters, demonstrating, significantly, that he was hardly in command of any penetrating insight

<sup>161</sup> "Jede menschliche Individualität ist eine in der Erscheinung wurzelnde Idee" (p. 603).

<sup>162</sup> May 1825 and September 1828.

into his work.<sup>163</sup> But in view of the early nineteenth-century obsession with history in general, and bearing in mind the great impact of Hegel's philosophy in particular, it is unlikely that the poet would have remained oblivious to such widespread ideas. It is rather to be assumed that Hegel's philosophy would, if only in its broadest outline, have been known to Grabbe. Alternatively Grabbe, as a lawyer, might have come across Hegel's Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (1821), of which paragraphs 341-360, "Die Weltgeschichte", present a condensed version of Hegel's philosophy of history as it was later expanded in his Berlin lectures.

In early criticism, indeed, it was a common assumption that the poet's work was a reflection of Hegelian philosophy in much the same way as was that of Julius Mosen later. The pioneering monograph of F. J. Schneider was highly influential in this respect, giving weighty support to claims made by de Soye in her thesis of 1933,<sup>164</sup> and led to the adoption of the idea by other commentators (Bock, Claus). At first sight there would appear to be certain parallels between Grabbe's view of history and Hegel's philosophical conception of the destiny of the world. The manner in which the world-historical individual in Hegel's system unwittingly becomes the agent of a world spirit, acting amorally, single-mindedly and

163 "Hegel hungerte in Jena und ward klug. Er wurde ein Schmeichler des absoluten Monarchismus und sagte, was ist, ist recht. Diesen Tiefsinn, der jede Ohrfeige rechtfertigt, predigte er unter Phrasen - pah" (letter to Schreiner, October 1835).

164 de Soye, in her attempt to align Grabbe's dramas with the precepts of Hegel's philosophy of history, attributes too much philosophical import to Grabbe's "Idee der Geschichte". The dramas, each of which is seen as the embodiment of one central world-historical theme (Marius und Sulla, for example, treats "die Auflehnung ganzer sozialer Schichten gegen die Oligarchie", p. 92) are not "Geschichtsklitterungen" but "geschichtsphilosophische Verlebendigungen" which bear "die untrüglichen Merkmale von Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie" (p. 104). By emphasising the poet's penchant for heroic individuals and great turning points in historical progression, de Soye arrives at the conclusion that Grabbe attempts to interpret history as the manifestation of an "immanent idea" which guides man's destiny from within in a reasonable manner: "Grabbes Dramen ... weisen als konstitutives Merkmal eben jene Philosophie von einer immanenten Idee auf, die Hegel jedem äußeren geschichtlichen Geschehen unterschiebt. Aus diesem Grunde sind seine Dramen geschichtsphilosophische Vorwürfe und in dieser Art einzig dastehend" (p. 216).

quite ruthlessly to effect progress before being mercilessly cast off, is highly reminiscent of Grabbe's heroes, who perish without exception after involvement in some major historical event. That the world-historical individual should, furthermore be an unhappy, obsessive figure who is unable to rest is a close connection between the two concepts. In Grabbe's order of things, just as in Hegel's, the individual, however grand, appears subordinate to the design of the universe (however different this design is construed to be), and Grabbe would certainly have subscribed to Hegel's view that history seems (on the face of it) to proceed without regard for reason, good or ideals. Hegel's conviction that, while history's meaning eludes us, it is nevertheless present was, however, certainly not shared by Grabbe. Further the poet might well have endorsed Hegel's view on the crucial relationship between individual and state. While the state idea in Grabbe does not assume the proportions of "das sittlich Ganze",<sup>165</sup> of perfect objectivity, the march of God in the world - "Der Staat ist die göttliche Idee, wie sie auf Erden vorhanden ist "<sup>166</sup> - it is ascribed considerable importance as an ethical idea. Grabbe is clearly full of admiration for the well-ordered Roman city state in Hannibal and emphasises the necessity of political stability in Marius und Sulla, where the great Roman consciousness appears in danger of being destroyed by internal strife, and in Barbarossa, where the division between the two dynasties threatens imperial welfare. In Hannibal it is precisely the Carthaginian lack of interest in such state necessity which leads to the collapse of a civilisation. In all these dramas the implication appears to be that the organised, rational state is able to secure the individual a certain degree of freedom while integrating him simultaneously into a meaningful whole. The state in Grabbe's dramas is

165 G. W. F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, in Gesammelte Werke (Jubiläumsausgabe in 20 Bänden), edited by H. Glockner, volume 11, p. 70 (Stuttgart, 1961).

166 Hegel, p. 71.

a powerful political unit and a potent historical force.

On closer investigation, however, it becomes clear that such parallels do not run deep. Grabbe's heroes, for all their titanism, isolation and ruthless determination, do not act as tools of a world spirit which destroys them once their mission is accomplished. Behind the annihilation of the Hohenstaufen emperors Friedrich and Heinrich there is no higher purpose: they fall prey to blind chance, and Pope Alexander's claim that Barbarossa has overstepped the limitations of his age ("du gingst her vor deiner Zeit"), thus bringing inevitable destruction upon himself, is not, as has been seen, substantiated by the evidence of the drama. The case of Napoleon, who refers directly to the "Weltgeist", is equally misleading. At the moment of his downfall the emperor, forecasting an impending age of mediocrity, bureaucracy and petty political dealing, sets himself up as a "Geschäftsführer des Weltgeistes" whose ideal will eventually be realised. The Restoration will only endure until:

der Weltgeist ersteht, an die Schleusen rührt, hinter denen  
die Wogen der Revolution und meines Kaisertumes lauern, und  
sie von ihnen aufbrechen läßt, daß die Lücke gefüllt werde,  
welche nach meinem Austritt zurückbleibt. (WB 2, 457-8)

At this point, it seems, Napoleon, a self-confessed fatalist, expresses faith in a suprapersonal world order which exerts an influence on the historical process. He sees himself as the agent of such an order and consequently feels exempt from the restrictions which bind the normal mortal. He stands, in his opinion, outside or above the moral code which governs human conduct, in short, he feels apart from the world. This idea of Napoleon as a chosen agent of destiny remains vague and is left unexplored by the poet. Indeed, the entire notion of Napoleon as the carrier of the world spirit seems to be more a product of the hero's boundless egotism than anything else. Shying away from an examination of his motives (Hortense-scene), he attributes his motivation to a force outside himself rather than to his own character. This sense of a predetermined mission arises out of sheer vanity. Nowhere is there any indication that the hero is acting in the interest of a higher purpose.

Ultimately, of course, the reason which is central to Hegel's conception of history is entirely absent in Grabbe. The poet could never have agreed that "Vernunft die Welt beherrsche, daß es also auch in der Weltgeschichte vernünftig zugegangen sey",<sup>167</sup> nor that "die Welt der Intelligenz und des selbstbewußten Wollens nicht dem Zufall anheimgegeben sey, sondern im Lichte der sich wissenden Idee sich zeigen müsse".<sup>168</sup> There is not the slightest possibility, in Grabbe's view, that the goal of history is absolute freedom,<sup>169</sup> nor that all things, the Idea, Spirit, Reason are in the last analysis directly equatable with God:

Dieses Gute, diese Vernunft in ihrer concretesten Vorstellung ist Gott. Gott regiert die Welt: der Inhalt seiner Regierung, die Vollführung seines Plans ist die Weltgeschichte. Diesen will die Philosophie erfassen.<sup>170</sup>

Hegel's triadic system of abstractly logical development (thesis - anti-thesis - synthesis) was by no means adopted by Grabbe: in the dramas in question violent conflict between two forces never results in synthesis. The poet's view of the implications of change do not coincide with Hegel's conviction that change brings new life: the senseless stagnation which forms the essence of Grabbe's view of history is alien to Hegel's theory of progressive development towards a meaningful goal.

Although Grabbe was, like Hegel, an enemy of pragmatism in historical reflection, did not share the philosopher's scepticism towards historicism (the early stages of historicism), the emerging German trend towards precise and scientific analysis and examination of the very sources on which all historical research is based. Grabbe's own thorough researching of sources for his dramas, his criticism of the historical inaccuracy of the

167 p. 34.

168 p. 36.

169 "Die Weltgeschichte ist der Fortschritt im Bewußtseyn der Freiheit" (p. 46).

170 pp. 67-8.

work of others, his admiration of Niebuhr and his tendency to absorb facts of minute and apparently insignificant historical detail all betray the influence of historicist thought. Further, Grabbe borrowed during the period of the composition of Die Hermannsschlacht a work by Ranke from the Gräfin von Ahlefeldt (end of 1834, beginning of 1835), a work which Bergmann assumes to have been Die römischen Päpste in den letzten vier Jahrhunderten. The influence of Ranke on Grabbe's later thought, to which Sengle and M. Schneider attribute the apparently optimistic turn in the poet's "Weltanschauung",<sup>171</sup> is clearly not to be ruled out. The increasing emphasis on nature as a historical force is highly reminiscent of Herder-Ranke organological thought. Ranke's desire to relate history "wie es eigentlich gewesen" would certainly have appealed to Grabbe, whose concern was always very much with the creation of authentic historical atmosphere. Ranke's combination of eighteenth-century universal history with the essentially romantic doctrine of individualism and organic growth might also have appealed to the poet, as would his developing empiricism. In the last analysis, however, Ranke's pietistic Lutheranism, his concept of humanity inherited from Herder and Goethe and his attempt to fit his empirical historical analyses into a personal, ultimately Christian view of the universe, would have left Grabbe cold. Such a harmonising, politically quietistic view of world events - history as evolution rather than revolution - would have appalled Grabbe, to whom history represented unending turbulence and upheaval of the most violent order, devoid of religious truth. Grabbe's strictly negative view of the historical process is unable to conceive of any progression in world history from degenerated religions and universal revolution (arising from the opposition of spirit and nature) to the organic unity of historical nation and modern state (grown out of the harmony of

<sup>171</sup> Sengle, Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 160; M. Schneider, p. 385 ff.

spirit and nature).<sup>172</sup>

This brief survey of those philosophers with whose ideas Grabbe would most likely have come into contact supports our conclusion that the poet was far removed from any form of grand abstraction. He was, it seems, quite averse to any conception of the world which attempts to grasp history as an overall design with a distinct plan, and would not have approved of the idealists' determination to reduce the complex (for Grabbe ultimately unfathomable) mechanisms of history to a single thread with a clearly marked beginning, middle or end. History is not, in Grabbe's view of things, a spiritual process concerned with the realisation of a specific idea or goal. Nor is the poet apparently at all concerned with "philosophical history" as Hegel conceives it: he does not strive to extract from the processes of history a general meaning which might be deduced from each and every epoch. He is not interested in uncovering vast, sweeping movements in history which unite seemingly diffuse elements of historical development and imbue any progression with a meaning. His attitude to history, as it emerges from all six dramas, is, quite simply, unphilosophical. His letters and reviews, which likewise betray a disinclination towards metaphysical speculation, reinforce the impression of a man essentially apathetic and sceptical towards the "philosophical science". Grabbe is concerned only with the evident and eternal laws of history, with its inescapable facts and truths. He exposes these as cruel, meaningless, illogical. But he does not attempt to bring these facts together in order to harmonise them as a higher truth. This is the major distinction between Grabbe's approach to history and that of the philosophers; it is the reason why it is not possible to speak of a "philosophy of history" with regard to the poet. The very essence of all philosophy of history, - the

<sup>172</sup> Recently H.-W. Nieschmidt has argued against any overinsistence on Ranke's influence on Grabbe, objecting that evidence of the poet's pre-occupation with the historian's work is sparse and inconclusive ("Die Hermannsschlacht", p. 6).



attempt to discover a rational sense behind the apparent chaos of historical events - conflicts with the dramatist's insistence on the ultimate senselessness of the past.

#### 4. Historical Realism

Grabbe's view of history, as far as can be inferred from his dramas and letters, is, then, essentially unphilosophical. Content to point out the basic laws of the historical process - decay, change, destruction, cruelty - he is not concerned to integrate these into any kind of system which might profess to embrace human history as a whole and explain its mysteries. Yet that Grabbe's interests lie in the general historical mechanisms which underlie man's destiny as well as in particular and isolated episodes from the past emerges from the scope of his observations: whilst professedly unravelling the threads of an individual epoch selected for dramatic treatment and pointing to the causation behind a specific chain of events,<sup>173</sup> he is equally concerned to underline the general - if obvious - truths of history which manifest themselves in all ages. His great individuals are at once unique historical phenomena and practical examples of recurring and inescapable laws. Ultimately they are the highest symbol of impermanence. Similarly, other aspects of his dramas - the role of the masses and the militia, the idea of the state, the notion of power - assume a universal significance which transcends that of, for example; mediaeval Germany, Ancient Rome or Napoleonic France. The apparent lack of profundity in Grabbe's historical thought does not detract from its universal relevance.<sup>174</sup>

That Grabbe does not attempt to glean any overall significance or

<sup>173</sup> This should be emphasised in express contradiction of Jahn, who denies any serious attempt to recreate the spirit of past ages in Grabbe's work and views the timeless aspects of history as the poet's main concern: "... es geht Grabbe nicht um Beschwörung und Verdichtung eines bestimmten Milieus, also um historische Treue, sondern um die Darstellung dessen, was, dem Wandel nicht unterworfen, zeitlos überdauert" (p. 84).

<sup>174</sup> The dramas offer no evidence to support Schaefer's contention that Grabbe is the most profound historical thinker of his age (p. 3), nor von Wiese's assertion that he shows "einen prophetischen Blick für weltgeschichtliche Zusammenhänge und Katastrophen" (Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 459).

indestructible hope from the historical process sets him apart from the idealists (both philosophical and literary) and brands him an essentially realistic thinker. Foremost among the anti-idealistic features of the historical dramas is extreme immanence. The transcendental values which had been inseparable from historical thought in the past have completely disappeared and left a world of strict finality. Neither the poet nor any of his characters has a view to anything other than the immediate problems of worldly existence; far from acting as a means of access to a higher, eternal realm of the spirit, history has become little more than inescapable reality within which man is imprisoned. The complete absence of spiritual values in Grabbe's dramas - be they religious, moral or ethical - produces a world of empty activity in which man strives in order to imbue his otherwise pointless existence with some kind of meaning. Significantly, such meaning can be found within immediate reality but not beyond it: not only, then, does Grabbean drama function without reference to a higher realm, it does not even acknowledge the existence of such a realm. Grabbe's historical world is hermetically sealed: "Ja, aus der Welt werden wir nicht fallen. Wir sind einmal darin" (Hannibal). Trapped within this sphere man appears as a strictly historical being whose actions can only be assessed and interpreted in their relation to the demands of an immediate and immanent reality. Amoralism, which frequently emerges as a trait of the historical world, is thus viewed in Grabbean drama from the point of view of political necessity rather than of moral acceptability. There are no absolute standards. Power, not spirit, governs history. And it is with history as a manifestation of man's urge for power, as a political process, and not as a spiritual process, with which Grabbe is concerned. Private issues, intrigue, interpersonal conflict play no role here. History is devoid of ideas and ideals and consequently unfolds as a purely materialistic process: atheistic, neutral, self-perpetuating. Grabbe's view of the past is anti-illusory in as far as it resists the temptation to regard history as the expression of a meaningful force which has a purpose for mankind.

The materialism of Grabbe's historical vision is further apparent in the tendency, discernible particularly in the later dramas, to "de-individualise" history by ascribing increasing significance to those forces which determine the hero and his fate. The reduction in the autonomy of the great individual (it has been seen that while the "Staufer" could act unimpeded by contemporary forces, Napoleon and Hannibal ultimately perish due to the pressures of their environment) corresponds with the essentially modern trend in theatre away from the well-established heroic ethic towards a more comprehensive grasp of socio-historical forces. Thus the outstanding personage is no longer able to decide and instigate a course of events at will, but is bound to consider and contend with a variety of other factors which might oppose him. Far from being the sole mind and will behind events, his position has been relativised and he has become but one integral part of an amorphous whole. By introducing the "masses" as a component of his art Grabbe has extended the conventional dramatic grasp of history's processes and made possible a more comprehensive and objective portrayal of historical episodes. History need no longer appear as the result of the whims of one individual and his entourage but can be presented in a broad, panoramic manner with a legitimate claim to totality. It is this totality for which Grabbe strives in his later dramas.

When the barker at the peep-show in Napoleon explains: "die ganze Welt schauen Sie hier, wie sie rollt und lebt" (WB 2, 325) he hints, in fact, at the very essence of Grabbe's aims as a historical dramatist. No longer are the machinations of small groups of individuals the crux of historical drama, but the recreation of history with its full colour, atmosphere and vitality has become the prime task of the artist. The objective comprehension of true historical forces is to be combined with an attention to detail and background to produce a vision of true historicity. History is to come alive. This reproduction of the spirit of a given age is surely what Grabbe conceived as the "Geist der Geschichte"

when he appended these oft-quoted words to the second version of Marius und Sulla:

Der Dichter ist vorzugsweise verpflichtet, den wahren Geist der Geschichte zu enträtseln. Solange er diesen nicht verletzt, kommt es bei ihm auf eine wörtliche historische Treue nicht an. Der Verfasser von Marius und Sulla hat zwar mehr wie der größte Teil der übrigen historischen Dramatiker sich genau an die Geschichte zu halten gesucht, und dennoch ganze Jahre versetzen müssen.  
(WB 1, 409)

To Grabbe's concept of historical drama the spirit of history is more vital than the word, a notion which the poet amplifies elsewhere with reference to other works.<sup>175</sup> As long as this spirit remains unviolated, strict historical accuracy is not essential. Indeed, Grabbe demonstrates in each of his dramas that strict adherence to factual sources (which he had thoroughly researched in every case) is subordinate to the general impression of a given age by treating these with at times astounding freedom. In every work except Napoleon (whose historical proximity and clearly defined time span of one hundred days inevitably had a restrictive effect) the poet compresses a sequence of events covering a number of years into a much shorter space of time in the interest of concentricity and dramatic compression and, one assumes, in the attempt to underline a unity which he feared might have been lost had he adopted his original data unaltered. Thus he brings Sulla's return to Rome forward by some three years in order to allow him to present a threat to Marius, a modification from which the central conflict derives, and condenses the events of ten years for the purpose of this first historical drama. In Barbarossa the events of twelve years are distilled, in Heinrich VI those of seven. In Hannibal Grabbe demonstrates the utmost audacity by allowing his hero to appear at a Byzantine court which did not

<sup>175</sup> "Beim Barbarossa bitte ich nicht zu vergessen, daß ich eigentlich meiner Natur und äußeren Lage nach zum Historiker bestimmt war, und daß mancher sich irrt, wenn er an Kleinigkeiten häkelt, und nicht merkt, daß ich als Dramatiker nur den Geist hervorziehen durfte" (letter to Steinmann, 16 December 1829). Elsewhere Grabbe stresses the historicity of the Hohenstaufen dramas - "Die Hohenstaufen und deren reine Geschichtlichkeit" (2 March 1828) - calling them "sehr richtige Historia" (5 May 1830). In Heinrich VI above all he believes he has realised his intention to decipher the spirit of history: "wie die Geschichte enträtselt" (letter to Kettembeil, 30 December 1829).

come into existence until five hundred years after Hannibal's death. Quite apart from this extravagance the remaining episodes span a period of eighty years, and the fall of Carthage is (quite unhistorically) linked with the hero's death.<sup>176</sup>

Clearly, then, the poet is not at pains to follow his sources slavishly. He does, however, while allowing himself the greatest freedom in many respects, tend to reproduce certain, often apparently insignificant, incidents from his sources in minute detail, no doubt in order to heighten verisimilitude. In Napoleon in particular he absorbs material from his historical sources verbatim, often dramatising portions of their text.<sup>177</sup> And in other dramas he likes to adopt well-known quotations and characteristics - Sulla's white spots and his appeal to Apollo, Napoleon's stance, Blücher's pipe, Cato's "ceterem censeo" - in Marius und Sulla pointing out their basis in fact in footnotes such as "Ist historisch", "gleichfalls historisch". The assimilation of such attested details from the sources is

<sup>176</sup> These are but a few of Grabbe's many distortions of historical evidence. For a detailed account of the poet's treatment of his sources see Bock. (In the case of Napoleon, Bock's thesis has been superseded by the more exhaustive Quellen des Grabbeschen "Napoleon" by A. Bergmann (Detmold, 1969)). Bock's approach to Grabbe's historical dramas via the poet's handling of his sources yields little in terms of insight into Grabbe's intentions in the plays and demonstrates that protracted comparisons of artistic creations with their factual bases produce only inconclusive and self-evident findings. Bock's chapter "Ursachen für die Lockerung der Datentreue" makes no significant contribution to the discussion of the poet's historical consciousness but contents itself with obvious assumptions, e. g. history is altered in order that it might be fitted into a dramatic framework, to intensify tragic impact, to bring the events portrayed into an effective causal chain, to compress events from many years into vital points of interest, to allow rapid characterisation. Ultimately, Bock concludes, Grabbe modifies his sources primarily in order to highlight a dominant "Idee der Geschichte" which is seen, under the influence of de Soye, as essentially Hegelian. The alteration of the course of history facilitates the emphasis sought by the poet on the Hegelian "Übergangspunkte" which are provided by the clash of world-historical individuals and their cultures.

<sup>177</sup> Scene III/3 in the Tuilleries is a major example of this. In the scene on the Champs de Mars contemporary reports are transcribed with only minor alterations. In Barbarossa the final conference between the hero and Heinrich der Löwe is a dramatisation of Raumer's treatment of the event.

presumably calculated to intensify the historical realism of the dramas in question by giving them a foothold in recognisable fact.<sup>178</sup> In general, however, Grabbe is opposed to the notion that historical drama should provide a substitute for the textbook: "Wozu Dichtkunst, lehrt sie nur auf Umwegen Geschichte?" (4, 127-8). As long as the spirit of history is not violated, great freedom is permissible. But source material should not be plagiarised in order to achieve cheap effect:

Daß ein Dichter die Geschichte frei behandelt, ist ihm erlaubt.  
Er muß nur keine Unkenntniß oder bloße Effectsucherei dabei ver-  
rathen. (WB 4, 188)

Whilst conceding the possibility of considerable modification of data in historical drama, then, Grabbe insists that the poet treat history in a serious and respectful manner.

Grabbe's spirit of history, however far removed it might seem from mere historical facticity, is very much concerned with the accurate comprehension of historical currents in their diversity. History is not merely a warehouse of emotion-charged conflicts: in order to grasp the fundamental mechanisms of historical development the poet must acquire a working knowledge of the period with which he is dealing. It is essential to Grabbe's historical realism in the later dramas that he attempts to expose the currents of an epoch and to uncover the necessity behind events. History is not to be revealed purely as the product of chance; its causation must be carefully traced and presented. In the note to Marius und Sulla already quoted ("Immer deutlicher ...") Grabbe underlines his interest in the concrete necessities of history. The same concern with the public, political and universal lies behind his criticism of the motivation of

<sup>178</sup> On this question: H.-W. Nieschmidt, "Funktion des Zitats in den Geschichtsdramen Chr. D. Grabbes", in Deutung und Dokumentation. Nieschmidt examines Grabbe's frequent use of quotations from various sources, historical and literary, and attempts to discover a general guiding principle behind their inclusion. He arrives at the same conclusion: "Stets unterstreichen und beglaubigen Zitate aus geschichtlichen Quellen den spezifisch historischen Charakter der dramatischen Handlung" (p. 38).

Schiller's Maria Stuart:

... dem Dichter hat's beliebt, nicht die großen Nothwendigkeits- und Weltverhältnisse, welche Elisabeth leiteten, zum Hebel seiner Tragödie zu machen, sondern er hat die Handlung in einen engen Kreis von kleinlicher Intrigue und Eifersucht gebannt. (WB 4, 200)

Schiller is guilty of emphasising the private emotions of his heroines at the expense of the true political conditions, a pitfall which Grabbe is always careful to avoid. He levels much the same charge against Shakespeare's Coriolanus, accusing the poet of a faulty assessment of the social conflicts in ancient Rome:

Nie scheint Shakspeare begriffen zu haben, was zur Zeit Corialans der Kampf der Patricier und Plebejer sagen wollte, wie dieser Kampf aus der äußersten Nothwendigkeit, aus dem innersten Leben sich entwickelte. Eine Lecture Niebuhrs wird das shakspearische Drama in dieser Hinsicht dem Leser unerträglich machen. (WB 4, 43)

Such criticisms emanate from a highly developed historical consciousness; Grabbe makes historical insight and correct interpretation a prerequisite of good historical drama. Historical drama is the realistic portrayal of the past.

This desire to penetrate to the very essence of history lies at the root of Grabbean historical drama, and it increases with the trend in the later works away from the monolithic stature of the "Staufer" Friedrich and Heinrich, who completely dominate their respective dramas, towards the integration of the hero into his environment in Napoleon and Hannibal and finally to the major undermining of the hero as a value per se in Die Hermannsschlacht. It is Grabbe's interest in the chief historical currents which justifies his at times extremely liberal amendment of his sources. As long as such modification enhances the historical image to be projected, Grabbe might have argued, it is legitimate. Thus the altered chronology of Marius und Sulla serves to intensify the crisis in Rome; the distillation of incidents from several imperial conferences into one "Reichstag" scene in Heinrich VI compresses important detail into one central point; the postponement of Hannibal's death until the fall of Carthage heightens the dramatic impact of the final scenes and brings the connection between the



two events, for Grabbe perhaps closely linked, more sharply into the foreground. The poet's concern is always with atmosphere and major historical movement.

The concern with the realistic portrayal of history in its totality leads directly to the breadth and fullness of Grabbe's historical drama. As early as in the Hohenstaufen plays a multitude of conflicts appears: in Barbarossa between Waibling and Welf, emperor and Pope, Germany and Italy. We meet the Milanese, the German soldiers of both factions, Pope Alexander, knights of all nationalities. This penchant for broad treatment undoubtedly reaches its peak in the epic tendencies of Napoleon, where the many social and political currents are revealed to us on both national and international levels through a variety of skilfully arranged scenes. In Paris alone we encounter ex-guardsmen, émigrés, liberals, Bonapartists, aristocrats, traders, market women, the royal guard, revolutionaries. We see the political pressures of post-Revolutionary Europe intensified as they head for the final confrontation on the battlefields of Ligny and Waterloo. In Hannibal we meet the hero locked in a threefold conflict. Such diversity of theme, conflict and social level is of major importance in Grabbe's art. It reinforces our impression that we are dealing here with a type of historical drama which cares little for private issues but concentrates its attention on political conditions.

Such a comprehensive presentation of history based on a thorough investigation and evaluation of sources naturally poses the question of the poet's objectivity. Although Grabbe himself questions the value of such a term,<sup>179</sup> objectivity has often been praised as one of the fundamental characteristics of his art, and one which above all others contributes to his realism.<sup>180</sup> The scope of the later dramas and the poet's attempt to place

179 "Gerade das was am Objectivsten scheint, ist oft das Subjectivste, soll man diese dummen Worte, die sich ineinander verwirren, einmal gebrauchen" (letter to Immermann, 18 January 1835).

180 For example by Nieten, Sein Leben und seine Werke, p. 216; F. J. Schneider, Persönlichkeit und Werk, p. 170; Busch, p. 443; Claus, p. 34; Koch, p. 13; Siefert, p. 86; Sengle, Das historische Drama in Deutschland;

a historical epoch on the stage in all its complexity certainly accords with an essentially objective representation. Grabbe's very stance towards history - his determination to treat it as a phenomenon in itself, devoid of transcendental implications - seems to have been born out of a disenchantment with the subjective indulgences of more speculative writers. Further he avoids in the dramas any obvious moral approval or disapproval of his heroes' actions. The complete removal of any universal spiritual standards from his art clearly facilitates artistic distance from his product and enables him to view from a critical perspective. Such detachment is inevitably a great aid to the realistic portrayal of history. In considering Grabbe's objectivity, however, one fact should not be overlooked. Whilst he undoubtedly regards history as a neutral process without a discernible meaning, his attitude to it is dictated by subjective considerations in as far as he idolises the great men of history and their military clique and takes delight in recounting their magnificent deeds. One cannot, as has already been noted, attribute this glorification of the outstanding individual to any desire to salvage from the chaotic confusion of history any final, eternal value; but such deep sympathy with the aims and ideals of the strong leader, a sympathy which is reflected in the adulation of the Grabbean militia for its generals, undermines and possibly even negates any suggestion of the poet's detachment and "objectivity".

Grabbe's concern with history for its purely historical interest rather than as the embodiment of an abstract principle, as a mystical-religious experience, a forum for nationalist sentiment or an educative platform sets him apart from the dominant tradition of German historical drama. His desire to decipher the spirit of history and present it in an impartial and authentic fashion on stage is revolutionary in his own age and forms a

"Er ist ... der objektivste Geschichtsdichter unter den großen Dramatikern" (p. 163).

bridge between the era of classical idealism on the one hand and that of later materialistic naturalism on the other. The emphasis which Grabbe places on the concrete processes of history, rather than on major movements of world-historical change or on the position of man within such processes, is unique, and his concern with the individuals of history as distinct individuals rather than as representatives of ideas separates him from the mainstream of a development which since the Enlightenment had been essentially moralistic and anti-historical in nature.<sup>181</sup> Lessing, who held, like Schiller after him, that the poet stands far above history and commands over it at will,<sup>182</sup> declares the value of history for the poet to lie in its abundant supply of ready-made, coherent and credible plots and interesting characters: "Die Geschichte ist für die Tragödie nichts, als ein Repertorium von Namen ..."; it is not "die bloßen Fakta, die Umstände der Zeit und des Ortes" which interest the artist, but the outstanding figures of world history:

Nur die Charaktere sind ihm heilig; diese zu verstärken, diese in ihrem besten Lichte zu zeigen<sup>183</sup> ist alles, was er von dem Seinigen dabei hinzutun darf.

Personalities, not facts or events, are the concern of the historical dramatist. Goethe was later to echo this sentiment, regarding it as an honour on the part of the historical figure to be associated with the dramatic hero of a great work of art. Goethe, too, was interested in history for its non-historical value, believing that it should provide

181 Gottsched: "Der Poet wählet sich einen moralischen Lehrsatz, den er seinen Zuschauern auf eine sinnliche Art einprägen will. Dazu ersinnt er sich eine allgemeine Fabel, daraus die Wahrheit seines Satzes erhellet. Hiernächst suchet er in der Historie solche berühmte Leute, denen etwas ähnliches begegnet ist: und von diesen entlehnet er die Namen, für die Personen seiner Fabel; um derselben also ein Ansehen zu geben." "The poet is not to enquire "ob alles in der Historie wirklich so vorgegangen, oder ob alle Nebenpersonen wirklich so, und nicht anders geheißen haben" (Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst, Leipzig, 1751, p. 611).

182 "Der Dichter ist Herr über die Geschichte." 63. Literaturbrief, in G. E. Lessing: Gesammelte Werke, edited by P. Rilla (Berlin/Weimar, 1968), volume 4, p. 296.

183 Hamburgische Dramaturgie, 23. Stück. Also 19, 33, 91. Stück. "Die Tragödie ist keine dialogisierte Geschichte" (24. Stück).

only the backbone of a drama, "den nackten Gegenstand". A close attention to the precise details of history is viewed as essentially inimical to poetic truth: "Wenn man sich des Ausführlichen und Umständlicheren der Geschichte bedienen soll ... wird man immer genötigt, das Besondere des Zustands mit aufzunehmen, man entfernt sich vom rein Menschlichen, und die Poesie kommt ins Gedränge."<sup>184</sup> Here, too, we note a fundamentally moralistic interest in the past: "Für den Dichter ist keine Person historisch, es beliebt ihm seine sittliche Welt darzustellen."<sup>186</sup> Such notions are violently opposed by Grabbe; his indifference towards the morality of history has emerged as a primary characteristic of his "Weltanschauung". Further, his concern with the facts and circumstances of history, precisely those issues scorned by Lessing and Goethe, has been seen to extend well beyond a psychological portrait of its major figures.

The poet whose principles Grabbe would have contested above all is undoubtedly Schiller: Grabbe's attitude to him must be described as at best ambivalent, and the views on Schiller expressed in reviews and letters are often strikingly contradictory. Thus he is highly critical of Schiller's interest in the personal issues of history at the expense of true "Notwendigkeits- und Weltverhältnisse" (the criticism of Maria Stuart), and yet praises him in "Über die Shakspearomanie" for qualities which he claims to hold vital to historical drama: "eine dramatische, concentrische und dabei die Idee der Geschichte wiedergebende Behandlung", "dramatischer Mittelpunkt", "poetisches Endziel" (WB 4, 41).<sup>187</sup> In the same way he stresses

<sup>184</sup> Letter to Schiller, 21 August 1799.

<sup>185</sup> Conversation with Eckermann, 31 January 1827.

<sup>186</sup> Goethe's critique of Manzoni's Il conte di Carmagnola in Goethes Werke (Weimarer Ausgabe), volume 41 (Weimar, 1902), p. 206.

<sup>187</sup> The relationship between the Shakespeare essay and Grabbe's own creative work is problematic and, despite considerable critical attention, remains confusing. How far the artistic principles outlined in this polemical pamphlet find their place in Grabbe's own work is highly debatable, a fact of which the poet himself was fully aware: "Zu meinen Stücken verhält sich derselbe ganz curiös, und sollte den Nichtkenner verwirrt machen" (letter to Kettembeil, 12 July 1827). For a discussion of "Über die Shakspearomanie" see David Heald, "A Dissenting German View of Shakespeare -

further elements which might be held to be fundamental to Schillerean drama: "Einfachheit und Klarheit in Wort, Form und Handlung", "ungestörte Begeisterung", "treue und tiefe Empfindung", "das Ideal", "kräftige Sprache" and "einen guten Versbau" (WB 4, 53-4). It is, however, impossible to accept that Grabbe would have approved of the grand idealism of Maria Stuart or Die Jungfrau von Orleans; he is far more in tune with the material forces of history, with history per se. While Schiller is concerned with history for its relevance to mankind as a whole ("den Menschen und nicht den Menschen"), Grabbe is preoccupied with individuals in their strictly historical function. Historical matter does not for Grabbe represent a backcloth against which moral or ethical issues of timeless and universal value are worked out. Nor does the historical world serve as a ladder to eternal salvation for the spiritually regenerated individual. Grabbe's concern with history is more immediate than that of Schiller, who can write: "Die Geschichte ist überhaupt nur ein Magazin für meine Phantasie, und die Gegenstände müssen sich gefallen lassen, was sie unter meinen Händen werden",<sup>188</sup> and draws a strict dividing line between poetic and historical truth, freeing the tragedian, who seeks only "Rührung" and "Ergötzung", from the restrictions of factual accuracy:

Die Tragödie ist ... poetische Nachahmung einer mitleidswürdigen Handlung, und dadurch wird sie der historischen entgegengesetzt. Das letztere würde sie sein, wenn sie einen historischen Zweck verfolgte, wenn sie darauf ausginge, von geschehenen Dingen und von der Art ihres Geschehens zu unterrichten. In diesem Falle müßte sie sich streng an historische Richtigkeit halten, weil sie einzig nur durch treue Darstellung des wirklich Geschehenen ihre Absicht erreichte. Aber die Tragödie hat einen poetischen Zweck, d. i. sie stellt eine Handlung dar, um zu rühren und durch Rührung zu ergötzen. Behandelt sie also einen gegebenen Stoff nach diesem ihrem Zwecke, so wird sie eben dadurch in der Nachahmung frei; sie erhält Macht, ja Verbindlichkeit, die historische Wahrheit den Gesetzen der Dichtkunst unterzuordnen<sup>189</sup> und den gegebenen Stoff nach ihrem Bedürfnisse zu bearbeiten.

Grabbe does not differentiate this rigidly between the poetic and the

Christian Dietrich Grabbe", German Life and Letters, 24 (1970-71), 67-78.

188 Letter of 10 December 1788.

189 "Über die tragische Kunst", in Schillers Werke (Nationalausgabe), volume 20 (Weimar, 1962), p. 166.

historical, but aims rather at a combination of the two which is to produce a drama both historically accurate and aesthetically sound. He believes he has achieved this aim in Barbarossa, a work which he describes as both "ästhetisch und historisch".<sup>190</sup> He did not share Schiller's irreverence towards the inviolability of history, an attitude which views the past as mere material. Schiller wrote to Goethe:

Überhaupt glaube ich, daß man wohl tun würde, immer nur die allgemeine Situation, die Zeit und die Personen aus der Geschichte zu nehmen und alles übrige poetisch frei zu erfinden, wodurch eine mittlere Gattung von Stoffen entstünde, welche die Vorteile des historischen Dramas mit dem erdichteten vereinigte.<sup>191</sup>

A more apparent concern with realism in the historical drama is to be witnessed in Grillparzer, whose vehement rejection of "fäselnd-mittelalterliche, selbsttäuschend-religiöse, gestaltlos-nebelnde" contemporary creations à la Tieck led him to a personal reevaluation of the tasks facing the historical dramatist. But Grillparzer, too, is wary of attaching too much importance to the autonomy of history in historical drama, doubting the very reliability of historical research<sup>192</sup> and opposing the duties of the historian, who needs only to enumerate events, with those of the playwright, who must provide them with coherence and causality.<sup>193</sup> The quality of art exists quite independently of its historical accuracy, and again history is viewed as a magazine of themes. Above all, Grillparzer asserts,

<sup>190</sup> Letter to Kettenbeil, 26 April 1829. See also the letter of 5 May 1830 on Kaiser Heinrich VI.

<sup>191</sup> Letter of 20 August 1799. To confuse the issue still further, however, Grabbe seems elsewhere to uphold the Schillerean aesthetic principle of beauty at the expense of historical truth. The poet, he claims on one occasion, knows no restrictions: "Er nimmt aus der Welt, die ihm nur Material zu seiner Production ist, das, was ihm geziemend dünkt, blickt dann nicht weiter um sich. Er bittet: nur zu beurtheilen, ob seine Schöpfung an sich schön? nicht aber sie nach den Thaten und Schöpfungen außer ihr zu kritisiren. Ein nach fremden Maaßstaben an einem Kunstwerk richtender Kritikus ist ein verdorbener Tischlergestell" (WB 4, 127-8).

<sup>192</sup> "Übrigens was ist denn Geschichte? Über welchen Charakter ist man denn einig?" (Selbstbiographie in Sämtliche Werke, edited by A. Sauer, volume 16 (Vienna, 1925), p. 167).

<sup>193</sup> "Der Geschichtsschreiber weiß wenig, der Dichter aber muß alles wissen" (p. 167).

the factual basis of historical drama is able to provide art with an element of actuality:

Der Dichter wählt historische Stoffe, weil er darin den Keim zu seinen eigenen Entwicklungen findet, vor allem aber um seinen Ereignissen und Personen eine Konsistenz, einen Schwerpunkt der Realität zu geben.<sup>194</sup>

That Grillparzer strives for a high degree of verisimilitude and authenticity in his major historical dramas does not lead him to a slavish reproduction of fact; he is, however, certainly at pains to provide his works with an aura of historical reality. He is interested in the forces which motivate history, captivated by the allure of the "Vaterland", fascinated by political currents and personal machinations. He exhibits a reverence towards history, but at the same time insists that in the final analysis historical material is subordinate to the aesthetic response sought by the dramatist. The state as the incarnation of an ideal principle shines through his works.

Hebbel is likewise very much concerned with history as the manifestation of a universal idea, opposing empty empiricism with a metaphysical approach to art. For him drama and history stand in a simple "Utilitätsverhältnis"; he is not interested in "die materielle Geschichte, ... dieser buntscheckige ungeheure Wust von zweifelhaften Tatsachen und einseitig oder gar nicht umrissenen Charakterbildern",<sup>195</sup> but in drama as a symbol of man's destiny as a whole. Hebbel regards art as the highest form of "Geschichtsschreibung" and demands that tragedy, since it is concerned with "die großartigsten und bedeutendsten Lebensprozesse", must have a historical basis. The poet is not, however, a mere historian who recreates the atmosphere of a past age. Hebbel's "Atmosphäre der Zeiten" is different and embraces not simple historical detail, but "die entscheidenden historischen Krisen, ... die Auflockerung der religiösen und politischen Formen der Welt". The poet

<sup>194</sup> p. 166.

<sup>195</sup> "Mein Wort über das Drama!" in Sämtliche Werke, edited by R. M. Werner, volume 11 (Berlin, 1903), pp. 5-6.

is to search for the Idea: "Die Geschichte ist für den Dichter ein Vehikel zur Verkörperung seiner Anschauungen und Ideen, nicht aber ist umgekehrt der Dichter der Auferstehungsel der Geschichte".<sup>196</sup> The Grabbean conception of historical drama - we have defined it as the attempt to place the spirit of an epoch on the stage in all its diversity and breadth with a view to concrete historical forces and great personalities, aspiring to a reasonable degree of objectivity - did not impress Hebbel, who strives for precisely that total and philosophical grasp of history with which Grabbe seems unconcerned. Hebbel outlines his ideal thus:

Es ist ein Drama möglich, das den Strom der Geschichte bis in seine geheimnisvollsten Quellen, die positiven Religionen, hinein verfolgt und das, weil es in dialektischer Form alle Konsequenzen der diesen zugrundeliegenden innersten Ideen an den zuerst bewußt oder unbewußt davon ergriffenen Individuen veranschaulicht, ein Symbolum der gesamten historischen und gesellschaftlichen Zustände aufstellt,<sup>197</sup> die sich im Lauf der Jahrhunderte daraus entwickeln mußten.

Hebbel seeks "eine ganz andere Wahrheit", a truth which is not to be attained through the precise and fastidious reproduction of historical fact but which is to be noted at the turning points of history, in those individuals who form its "organische Übergangspunkte". Such men are the most perfect incarnation of the Idea which governs man's destiny: to show them as such, engaged in activity as the product of pure "Notwendigkeit" and to reveal their eternal truth, is the duty of the historical dramatist. Hebbel's criticism of Grabbe's Napoleon figure provides the clearest evidence of the gulf which separates the two outlooks. He sees Grabbe's drama as a game of chess played with tin soldiers and misses any attempt to place the action within a historical perspective which unites past, present and future.<sup>198</sup> Hebbel, who toyed for some twenty-five years with the idea of a Napoleon-drama, came to view the theme, characteristically, as another opportunity to dramatise the interminable conflict between

196 p. 9.

197 p. 20.

198 Tagebücher I. Sämtliche Werke, volume 16, pp. 172-3.



individual and universe:

Napoleon könnte allerdings der Held einer echten Tragödie seyn. Der Dichter müßte ihm all die großen, auf das Heil der Menschheit abzielenden Tendenzen, deren er auf Sct. Helena gedachte, unterlegen und ihn nur den einen Fehler begehen lassen, daß er sich die Kraft zutraut, Alles durch sich selbst, durch seine eigene Person, ohne Mitwirkung, ja Mitwissen, Anderer ausführen zu können. Dieser Fehler wäre ganz in seiner großen Individualität begründet und jedenfalls der Fehler eines Gottes; dennoch aber wäre er ... hinreichend, ihn zu stürzen.<sup>199</sup>

Such a reduction of an enigmatic historical figure to a single dominating thread contrasts violently with Grabbe's many-sided approach, an approach which is clearly unable to provide a profound psychological portrait of the hero but which is able to suggest at least something of the complexity of the emperor.

While Grabbe is far removed from Hebbel's tendency to abstraction and his suspicion of mere empiricism in art, he does not on the other hand go as far as his contemporary Büchner in his emphasis on the mimetic function of drama. The search for the "Geist der Geschichte" which is to be deciphered and presented by the poet on the stage does not reduce the artist to the level of a historian. Grabbe would certainly not have endorsed Büchner's famous words:

Der dramatische Dichter ist in meinen Augen nichts als ein Geschichtsschreiber, steht aber über letzterem dadurch, daß er uns die Geschichte zum zweiten Mal erschafft und uns gleich unmittelbar, statt eine trockene Erzählung zu geben, in das Leben einer Zeit versetzt, uns statt Charakteristiken Charaktere und statt Beschreibungen Gestalten gibt. Seine höchste Aufgabe ist, der Geschichte, wie sie sich wirklich begeben, so nahe als möglich zu kommen.<sup>200</sup>

That the historical drama is to teach the same lessons as the history book is a notion which Grabbe emphatically rejected ("Wozu Dichtkunst, lehrt sie nur auf Umwegen Geschichte?"). Grabbe's position in terms of the nature and function of historical drama lies, then, somewhere between the pre-occupation with political machinations and interesting personalities

199 p. 217.

200 Letter of 28 July 1835. Büchner, Werke und Briefe, edited by F. Bergemann (Wiesbaden, 1958), p. 399.

demonstrated by Grillparzer and the anti-idealistic, largely documentary theatre of Büchner, whose Dantons Tod consists of directly transcribed source material to an even greater extent than does Grabbe's Napoleon.<sup>201</sup> His concept of historical drama cannot reasonably be compared with that of any major exponent of the genre during the first half of the nineteenth century. Even the ideas of Tieck, with whose views on historical drama Grabbe has been associated,<sup>202</sup> do not coincide happily with Grabbe's artistic practice. Whilst Grabbe would certainly have approved of Tieck's demands for epic totality and adherence to a genuine spirit of history, and was possibly guilty of attempting to place an excess of historical matter on stage - a charge which is often levelled against Tieck's theory - the mystical element of historical drama, which Tieck had found foreshadowed in Solger's Beurteilung der Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur, is completely absent in Grabbe. There is no suggestion in Grabbe's work of the Biedermeier propensity to seek the general through the particular, to discover "im großen wie im ganzen das ewige Gesetz", and Tieck's balanced and conservative view of the world would, as was noted with regard to Gothland, have failed to make any impression on Grabbe.

Both the character of Grabbe's view of history and the nature of its presentation represent a break with tradition and point in the direction of the modern age. The dramatist's cynical opposition to anything other than a basic, materialistic assessment of historical fact with a view to the causality of events and the inner necessity behind developments testifies to a genuine desire to grasp the very essence of history. Despite an unmistakable conflict within the poet between an apparently emotional attachment to the grand individuals of the past and a rationally conceived

<sup>201</sup> Grabbe wrote - with his customary exaggeration - of Napoleon: "9/10 ist wörtlich historisch - die dummen Recensenten finden es aber oft nicht" (letter to Kettenbeil, 10 December 1830).

<sup>202</sup> Sengle: "Grabbes Ausgangspunkt ist die von Tieck befürwortete episch-historische Art des Geschichtsdramas" (Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 158).

conviction of the relevance of collective forces, Grabbe's vision of history exhibits a tendency towards a de-individualisation of the past which allows a comprehensive portrayal of historical episodes. His refusal to approach historical material with philosophical preconceptions (the lack of any real connection with the tradition of the philosophy of history has been noted) or to reduce the diverse phenomena of the past to basic principles results in a sweeping presentation of history in its fragmented immediacy. If Grabbe's dramatisations of specific periods fail to attain great depth as a result of his lack of a unified and consistently ordered approach to historical themes, they achieve a degree of breadth which is unparalleled in the tradition of German historical drama. Grabbe's uniqueness in this respect will be underlined further by our brief concluding survey of the major characteristics of the genre as practised by its major exponents in nineteenth-century Germany. The playwright's preoccupation with the totality of history, coupled with a fundamentally negative vision of historical reality which remains constant throughout his oeuvre and anticipates in a radical form the scepticism of the dawning age of materialism, constitutes the very essence of his historical realism.

### III. Psychological Realism: Characterisation

The degree of realism evident in Grabbe's presentation of history has been seen to be considerable and stems largely from his anti-illusory attitude to the question of historical progression. The hopelessly materialistic nature of the poet's historical world and his attempt to portray this world in a broad, panoramic manner result in a form of drama unique in scope and vision and unusual in its insistence on the primacy of the historical over the personal/human-anthropological. The frequently discussed development in Grabbean drama from the out-and-out individualism of the early history plays to the apparent subordination of the heroic figure in the mature tragedies is symptomatic of the poet's increasing awareness of the relative value of the individual in general historical terms, and the corresponding reduction of focus on the protagonist, evident particularly in Napoleon, fortifies the impression of a form of drama in which interest in isolated personages is secondary to a more fundamental grasp of world events. This particular trait of Grabbean drama, coupled with the removal of personal issues and the presentation of figures in an exclusively public role, inevitably raises the question of the depth of characterisation in the works and touches on a problem relevant to our discussion of realism. The conception of dramatic figures is commonly regarded as an indispensable yardstick for the assessment of the realistic quality of drama: to what extent, then, does it underline the realistic effect of a form of theatre as distinctly anti-personal as Grabbe's? Does the highly developed psychological art of Hebbel or Ludwig (for example), so often cited in relation to the realism of their work, find any parallel in Grabbe's historical tragedies?

The central importance of character portrayal in drama cannot, of course, be overlooked - it is as fundamental to the art as the concept of

action itself. Dramatic plot can only be viewed as the presentation and modification of a basic dramatic situation, and this situation itself represents little more than the sum total of the relations in which the figures on stage stand to each other.<sup>1</sup> The presentation of dramatic figures and of the relationships between them must, indeed, since drama consists of the words and actions of individuals on stage, be viewed as the very motor of the dramatic genre, and the two aspects of characterisation - the actual conception of the figures and the techniques employed in their portrayal - form basic categories in any consideration of the art. Both aspects concern us here. The conception of characters (the extent of their portrayal), whether flat or round,<sup>2</sup> static or dynamic, types or individuals, fully explained or enigmatic,<sup>3</sup> psychologically or transpsychologically conceived,<sup>4</sup> whether depicted with breadth, length or depth<sup>5</sup> are important considerations in any assessment of the playwright's handling of his dramatis personae. The conception of characterisation in Grabbe's strictly historical drama will be seen to be distinctly one-sided in terms of scope and "roundness", placing heavy emphasis on the historical function of the figures in question.

If the conception of figures is understood as the anthropological aspect of their presentation, in terms of their completeness as individual entities, the techniques of characterisation embrace the methods by which the dramatist chooses to project the identity of his heroes before his audience. While the nature of a character's conception is seemingly endless and subject to an apparently infinite number of subtle differences in shade and nuance (who is, after all, to decide ultimately the relative depth of

1 "Definiert man Handlung als die Veränderung einer Situation und Situation als die gegebene Relation von Figuren zueinander und zu einem gegenständlichen oder ideellen Kontext, wird die dialektische Bezogenheit der Kategorien von Figur und Handlung evident." Manfred Pfister, Das Drama (München, 1977), p. 220. Robert Petsch (Wesen und Form des Dramas, Halle, 1945, pp. 242 ff.) defines characters simply as "die Träger der Handlung".

2 E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (London, 1927).

3 Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York, 1947).

4 Klaus Ziegler, "Das deutsche Drama der Neuzeit".

5 B. Beckermann, Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis (New York, 1970).

characters and to differentiate accurately between, for example, highly developed "types" and briefly outlined "individuals"?),<sup>6</sup> the number of techniques available to the poet is necessarily limited by the possibilities of the stage. Where characterisation is concerned the playwright has fewer possibilities than the epic author and is forced to rely heavily on dialogue to develop his figures. The primary methods of establishing a character's identity and conveying this information to the recipient may be briefly outlined; they form a limited repertoire and are central to any assessment of characterisation.<sup>7</sup>

Essentially there are only two means of providing data at the dramatist's disposal: he can either establish the identity of his characters with the aid of the figures he places on stage ("figurally") or through techniques which function independently of the characters ("authorially"), a less frequently employed approach which includes description in stage-directions, interpretive names, contrast and correspondence in stage presence, etc. Both these methods may be subdivided into a more specific duality of techniques, namely into the explicit and implicit, whereby the former, when employed on a figural level (i. e. explicit-figural), carries the brunt of characterisation in any drama. Figures are characterised by themselves or by each other through speech first and foremost, either in the form of monologue or dialogue. The reliability and accuracy of such

6 Bentley undermines the validity of this basic distinction and suggests the introduction of a further category, that of the "archetype". S. W. Dawson (Drama and the Dramatic, London, 1970, p. 50) views even the most complex "individuals" in drama as elaborate "types". The problematic nature of such distinctions is reflected in a recent piece of Grabbe criticism. R. C. Cowen writes of Marius und Sulla: "Nicht bloß zu Bannerträgern abstrakter Ideen herabgewürdigt, sprechen Grabbes gelungene Nebengestalten nicht wie vorgelesene Plakate, sondern wie Individuen, wenn auch lediglich skizzierte" ("Nachwort" to Grabbes Werke, volume 3, München, 1977, pp. 431-2). The notion of "skizzierte Individuen" demonstrates the danger inherent in such differentiations.

7 The following categories are drawn primarily from Pfister's valuable recent handbook. Pfister's guide to the principles of dramatic art offers a most useful survey of the enormous volume of literature devoted to the genre and presents the fundamental ideas of critics through the ages. Much of the present chapter rests on the premises of Pfister's discussion of "Personal und Figur" (pp. 220-264).

characterisation through and among figures on stage may vary, depending on, for example, which other figures are involved in the dialogue, whether the hero is present, on tactical relations between individuals or groups of individuals, features which are often exploited to great lengths to allow the playwright to establish a complex system or relationships of great dramatic intensity. Implicit-figural modes of characterisation likewise fall into two groups, the verbally articulated and the non-verbal. Thus characterisation may be intensified on a verbal level by quality of voice, dialect, register and on a non-linguistic level by gesture, appearance, behaviour, location, etc., many of which become apparent only during an actual stage performance. This figural level of communication in drama embraces a veritable battery of techniques and devices. The authorial mode, on the other hand, is vastly restricted in dramatic art, and it is precisely this absence of an "author" which deprives the genre of the enormous versatility exhibited by epic forms with regard to characterisation. Its functions, as already indicated, either explicitly, for example through description in stage-directions, or implicitly, e. g. through names which prove characteristic of their bearer.

Given the limitations of drama, with its two major distinguishing features - immediacy (lack of a mediating narrator) and compression (restriction to the two-to-four hour span) - these techniques are self-explanatory and offer the dramatist only a limited degree of freedom. More freedom is, perhaps, afforded the author in the conception of the figures he chooses to present. Here the entire range of possibilities is open to him, from the most abstract personification to the psychologically most complex individual, from the static and fixed protagonist to the irrepressibly dynamic hero. The spectrum appears as vast as the diversity among human beings themselves. However, it is precisely here, with regard to such comparisons between literary (particularly dramatic) characters and their real-life counterparts, that especial care must be observed. The fragmentary nature of theatrical figures has long been

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recognised,<sup>8</sup> and even where we speak of fully-rounded dramatic characters we should do so only on the condition that we realise that ultimately such characters have no existence outside their literary context, exhibit no autonomy, and exhaust themselves in the strictly defined function which they fulfil within a given poetic work.<sup>9</sup> Elaborate comparisons between fictional literary characters and persons from the real world - particularly in the context of realism - are absurd and can lead nowhere. Seen in this light the question of identifying the depth of a given playwright's characterisation appears problematic and possibly even futile. Yet such an assumption would overlook the fact that differences in the conception of character are of considerable significance in any attempt at distinction between literary movements - one need think only of the abstractly universal representative figures of Weimar classicism, of the highly individualised figures of naturalism, of the pale, de-individualised types of expressionist drama. Whilst it may initially appear naive to speak of "realistic characterisation", the pronounced relativity evident in various attempts at character portrayal, the vastly different degrees of complexity, fullness, and comprehensiveness sought and achieved by writers for their various aims justifies some form of comparison on this level and provides a useful means of approach to the question of realism.

What constitutes, though, realistic characterisation? There can be no doubt that a great part of the recipient's impressions of a drama rests on the degree of psychological verisimilitude he detects in the figures before him. The extent of plausibility behind motivation and action largely determines the reception of the play in terms of credibility and "truth-to-

<sup>8</sup> Petsch, p. 245; Käte Hamburger, Die Logik der Dichtung (Stuttgart, 1957). Hamburger supports her argument with the premises of Hugo von Hofmannsthal ("Über Charaktere im Roman und Drama", 1902) and Thomas Mann ("Versuch über das Theater", 1908), the latter of whom speaks of drama as "eine Kunst der Silhouette" and regards "den erzählten Menschen allein als rund, ganz, wirklich und plastisch" (Reden und Aufsätze, volume 1, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1965, p. 79f.).

<sup>9</sup> Arnulf Perger, Grundlagen der Dramaturgie (Graz, 1952, p. 196). J. L. Styan (The Elements of Drama, Cambridge, 1960, p. 3) states quite simply: "a character has no meaning outside its play".



life", and, inevitably, the relationship between figures on stage and the possible bounds of human experience is vital in any assessment of feasibility. The behaviour of dramatic characters must be seen to be reasonable not only in relation to general human practice but also within the framework of a given play, against the background which has already been presented to the audience.<sup>10</sup> This is, of course, realism in its most fundamental form, understood as a relatively close approximation between art and life: it demands that the dramatist proceed with at least a modicum of respect for psychological consistency and do not indulge in fantastic excess. The greater attention the poet pays to the accurate psychological development of his figures, the more "realistic" his art of character portrayal might be held to be,<sup>11</sup> a fact which leads us away from considerations concerning the general credibility of figures to an assessment of the conception of characterisation as a whole. It seems clear that while abstract personification represents the pole furthest removed from authentically anthropological characterisation, pronounced interest in selected figures - individualisation - is largely equatable with realism. Highly developed individuals, detailed and comprehensive personality studies, are the hallmark of realistic drama. Neither the pale personification nor the generalised type can make the same claim to realistic quality.<sup>12</sup> It is not with flat, one-dimensional, simplistic silhouettes that realistic drama is concerned; rather is its conception of figures marked by a degree of roundness, comprehensiveness and depth. It strives to place figures on stage which appear as more than mere poetic-dramatic creations and dispenses with the

<sup>10</sup> George Baker (Dramatic Technique, Boston 1919, reprinted Connecticut, 1970, p. 264) makes the same point: "what happens must be plausible, not only in that it accords with known human experience, but with what has been done by the character in preceding portions of the play." Also Petsch, p. 309.

<sup>11</sup> Styan (pp. 167-8) equates "realistic characterisation" with "human psychology".

<sup>12</sup> The significance of deep psychological interest is stressed by William Archer in Play-Making (Boston, 1912, reprinted New York 1960). Baker (p. 237) makes it a prerequisite of "plays making any claim to realism".

tendency of earlier drama along classical lines towards generalisation and idealisation, so succinctly formulated by Schiller in his "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie" (1803):

sie /die tragischen Personen/ sind keine wirklichen Wesen, die bloß der Gewalt des Moments gehorchen und bloß ein Individuum darstellen, sondern ideale Personen und Repräsentanten ihrer Gattung, die das Tiefe der Menschheit aussprechen.

The interest in dramatic characters in realism moves away from the domination of the idea and the ideal towards an emphasis on the unique case, the human being under real social and historical conditions. The realistic drama concentrates its energies on the presentation of people rather than principles:

Im Gegensatz /zu einer idealistischen Dramaturgie/ steht das realistische und naturalistische Drama, das seine Figuren gerade als mehrdimensionale Individuen und nicht<sup>13</sup> als ideale Repräsentanten des Menschlichen konzipiert ...

It is a fundamental requirement of realistic drama (as it is of realistic literature in all its forms) that at least its central figures display a depth which lifts them above the level of types and stamps them with an unmistakably individual identity.<sup>14</sup> The progression in the realism of historical drama from Goethe to Hauptmann is closely connected with the development of sophisticated conceptions of characterisation despite a simultaneous trend towards the de-individualisation of the genre. It is similarly bound up with the sustained attempt to capture, through the close

<sup>13</sup> Pfister, p. 249. Volker Klotz in Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama, (München, 1960, p. 63) regards the classical figure largely as "die Personifikation einer Eigenschaft" and quotes Leo Spitzer, who detects in idealistic drama "die Abrückung vom Persönlichen zum Prinzipiellen" which "kann nicht besser zum Ausdruck kommen als durch die Personifikation der Abstrakta, die an die Stelle der Person tritt". Otto Mann (Poetik der Tragödie, Bern, 1958) concludes likewise that the realistic drama is not concerned with "das menschlich ideal Allgemeine" but rather with "die besondere, die gleichsam private Eigenart, der Mensch mit seiner Besonderheit" (pp. 108-9). Unlike the classical drama it does not avoid "den Unterschied von Individuum zu Individuum" (pp. 109-10).

<sup>14</sup> Mann, pp. 108-9: "Sieht man eine mögliche Mitte der dichterischen Darstellung im Streben nach der Illusion der Wirklichkeit in ihrer faktischen Erscheinung, so wäre hierfür der Mensch am realsten, wenn man ihn mit seiner Besonderheit einfinge. Dies wäre der realistische Stil."

study (though not the slavish reproduction) of available historical sources, a precise and authentic image of the individual and his environment.

Although realism of characterisation has frequently been praised as a positive quality of Grabbe's dramas,<sup>15</sup> closer consideration of this question and its development throughout Grabbe's career as a dramatist casts doubt on the depth of his portrayal of figures and, indeed, on his very conception of characterisation.

In the early tragedies Gothland and Don Juan und Faust the peculiarly programmatic quality which divides the works into two distinct spheres - in Gothland into the polarity of good and evil, in Don Juan und Faust of the sensual and the spiritual - is reflected as clearly in the method of character presentation as it is in the dramatic form. As noted in relation to Grabbe's assault on the tenets of classical idealism, the central figures of these non-historical plays function largely as mouthpieces of particular ideas, sacrificing individual personality in the interest of the articulation of the programmes with which the dramatist is concerned. At the root of the characterisation of figures like Gothland, Berdoa, Faust and Don Juan lies not an attempt at individualisation, but rather a concern with a complex form of personification. Grabbe is at pains to debate principles first and foremost, and his figures naturally fall in with the overall plan of the dramas in question. Even the protagonists are conceived fundamentally as the vehicle of ideas rather than as full-blooded individuals. Gothland and Berdoa represent to a great extent, in fact, literary archetypes and might be considered members of historical traditions with little more than their inherited qualities to show for themselves: thus Gothland would have his place in the long line of fratricidal heroes stretching back to antiquity, Berdoa his among the treacherous

<sup>15</sup> For example by Ploch, p. 164; Jahn, p. 97; Cowen ("Nachwort"), p. 432; Hermann Boeschenstein, German Literature of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1969), p. 25. Also Ziegler, "Stiltypen", p. 153.

instigators to violent crime.<sup>16</sup>

Both the conception and the presentation of figures in this first drama appear rather primitive: over and above their strictly demonstrative function as the personification of metaphysical principles the heroes exhibit little complexity or colour but exhaust themselves in a single particular characteristic. Thus Berdoa remains true to the course he sets himself in the first scene; Gothland, once indoctrinated in the ways of evil, rushes along his new-found path with only the minimum of wavering. Here any sophistication of psychological or inter-personal conflict is absent. Principles confront each other unbendingly, and this one-dimensional conception is especially marked in the peripheral figures, each of which embodies a single idea: Old Gothland (disillusioned fatherhood); Cäcilia (faith despite all obstacles); King Olaf (the State); Arboga (cynical opportunism). The protagonists appear merely as more elaborate illustrations of such principles, but have at least a suggestion of biographical background. Berdoa, for example, establishes in the opening scene his own situation, revealing his past and motivating considerations (racial, religious and personal) as Grabbe attempts to imbue him with some life and make him rather more than a personified idea. But he remains a static figure. Gothland, too, although he undergoes an obvious development from innocence to guilt and utter indifference, never shifts far from the nihilistic thesis which he adopts and which he is clearly designed to represent. Like his antagonist he exhibits only traits which are central to his leading idea.

The structure of the characters of Gothland, and indeed of Don Juan und Faust, depends heavily, then, on the ideas which we have identified as essential to the intention of the dramas. Personal conflict is absent in both cases, there is no real action or interaction, no movement of

<sup>16</sup> Early critics were diligent in tracing the possible literary forebears of this highly derivative tragedy. See, for example, Otto Nieter, "Don Juan und Faust und Gothland: Eine Studie über Chr. D. Grabbe", Studien zur vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte, 9 (1909).

position between characters, but merely an exchange of irreconcilable viewpoints. Exposition of character is therefore effected extremely simply and is executed in a great number of lengthy speeches, either in the form of monologue or of dialogue which must really be considered self-commentary in as far as it is addressed beyond the partner to the audience. Gothland in particular documents his development in a series of long monologues which commence virtually as soon as he appears (WB 1, 22-3) and grow in proportion as the play progresses (e. g. WB 1, 32-4; 1, 62; 1, 79-80). His position is consolidated in exchanges with Berdoa (WB 1, 124-31; 1, 183-85), who is in turn provided with lengthy monologues and soliloquies (e. g. WB 1, 110-11). In Don Juan und Faust much the same techniques are employed; almost all the characterisation takes place on an explicit-figural level, more precisely through self-commentary in monologue or dialogue. Again soliloquy is a favoured means of exposing character, although here each of the heroes is provided with a "foil" (the black knight, Leporello) who acts as an aid to the characterisation of the hero in much the same way as the "confidant" of classical drama, allowing the protagonist to express his true sentiments and map out his intentions. As was the case in Grabbe's first drama, the figures collide as ideas rather than as personalities, and there is a constant defining and redefining of moral and metaphysical positions between particular characters: Don Juan - Faust (WB 1, 484); Don Juan - Don Gusman (WB 1, 471-73); Faust - Donna Anna (WB 1, 496-98); Faust - black knight (WB 1, 453-57). The absence of real conflict between the two protagonists - equally evident in the form of the drama - is quite apparent in their conception as abstractions. In both dramas one misses entirely any complexity of motivation, confusion of aims, intrigue or psychological interest. Instead the issues at hand are crystal clear and the figures move in straight lines, at first (in the opening acts) establishing the metaphysical premises of the drama and later, especially in Gothland as the reflection of the opening acts progresses towards the frenzied action of the concluding scenes, acting as motors which drive the plot to its conclusion.

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By whichever criteria one judges the conception of character in Gothland and Don Juan und Faust - by depth, roundness, dimensionality - the dramatis personae emerge as pale concepts rather than as complex dramatic figures involved in intense conflict, and they lack the individuality one might associate with realistic drama. Although expansive individualism is a basic feature of such figures it is exaggerated to such an extent that it renders the heroes colourless and reduces them to a single idea. In terms of psychological interest these dramas have little to offer. The techniques of characterisation, too, the heavy reliance on monologue and soliloquy, the absence of information communicated by one figure concerning another, the lack of implicit devices, betray the poet's inexperience with, or possibly disinterest in, the sophisticated motivation of character.

As soon as Grabbe turns to history for his themes, however, his treatment of character undergoes something of a transformation: he now finds himself forced to grasp the individual not as a private but as a political-historical entity, and is consequently required to integrate him into some form of background and environment. The extent of this integration, though, varies considerably, and it would be erroneous to assume that the poet's interest in historical personages automatically results in a more profound concern with individualisation. The tendency towards gigantic individualism remains as marked, at least in the early history plays, as it was in Gothland and Don Juan und Faust; but this is by no means equatable with depth of characterisation. The pronounced one-dimensionality remains, albeit now projected against a political background.

The initial steps towards Grabbe's conception of the historical hero are to be seen in Marius und Sulla, where Marius himself displays many features typical of the poet's later characterisation of leading personages. Sulla likewise, though portrayed chiefly in the prose notes of the second version, betrays Grabbe's aims and methods as a historical dramatist,

and the poet leaves us in little doubt as to what were to become Sulla's most significant features. Elsewhere we have described the nature of Grabbe's early dramas as monologic,<sup>17</sup> and indeed, in this drama, too, the titular heroes tower above their companions and apparently move on a different plane. Each of them is provided with a fanatical following and has little contact with the world at large, but chiefly with its political currents. These are isolated figures, and perhaps for this reason are required to characterise themselves in monologues or soliloquies (a technique fundamental to the previous dramas), laying bare their motivation in expository scenes. Marius, for example, reveals details of his past in his exchanges with his colleagues in I/1 and II/1 where he outlines the reasons for his heinous expulsion from Rome. But he is also characterised, as is Sulla, by other parties, e. g. by the fisherman and the lictor in the opening scene, by his entourage, and, naturally, by Sulla himself.

While Marius' egoistic motives emerge most clearly despite his altruistic claims, Sulla's appear less precisely defined, a fact which is due to Grabbe's confusion of motives rather than to any particular psychological complexity.<sup>18</sup> Sulla's final gesture, his renunciation of power at the height of his glory, comes about unexpectedly and cannot really be explained by the information provided us. In this far his motivation seems inadequate and his characterisation lacking in clarity and conviction. We again miss any complexity in the leading figures of the drama, and, unless the inconsistency of the Sulla figure be taken into account, the dramatis personae are quite flat and straightforward, pursuing aims along a linear course towards the conclusion of their particular line of action. Personal conflict is absent in as far as the heroes never confront each other directly nor are faced with any real crises (the scanty Cinna - Sertorius subplot occurs too late in Marius' career to have a profound effect).

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter II, "History".

<sup>18</sup> Witness the confusion among Grabbe scholars over Sulla's motivation and objectives.

Indeed, any close personal contact is absent - both heroes exist strictly speaking in a vacuum into which even Marius' son, his Marians, and Sulla's wife Metella are not allowed to penetrate. They both appear as political beings dictated by realpolitical circumstances (in this drama not very complex), and here the genesis of Grabbe's purely "historical" characterisation is to be seen, in Sulla even more so than in Marius, who is provided with at least the suggestion of a personal existence.

Ultimately the fundamental aim of Grabbe's presentation of figures here is to develop two gigantic characters to whom everything else in the drama is subordinated.<sup>19</sup> The main figures are to be super-imposed onto a functional background of supplementary characters; yet, Grabbe hopes, even the least significant of "Nebenfiguren" is to be endowed with some colour and life in order to arouse the audience's interest. He informs us in the prose notes of III/3 how he intends to proceed with the scene involving the annihilation of the Marians:

Einzelne Marianer auf den Posten oder an Wachtfeuern. Durch rasche und scharfe Individualisierung mehrerer von ihnen erregen sie des Zuschauers näheres Interesse. Die Lebensweise und Denkungsart dieser verhärteten Kriegesbande tritt nahe vor die Augen. (WB 1, 398)

Individual soldiers, present effectively for only one scene, are to be "sketched in" so that the battle-scene which follows gains interest, a technique which Grabbe employs in all the subsequent plays. Other subsidiary figures of Marius und Sulla, too, in as far as they are developed in the fragment, are presented with somewhat more sophistication than they were in the previous dramas. Although they remain essentially functional, (functionalism is a characteristic of all dramatic "Nebenfiguren")<sup>20</sup> they provide at the same time a vague social background in the Rome scenes

19 "Allen /dramatischen Personen/ scharfe Züge zu geben, ist leicht, aber es verwirrt, ist unnatürlich und unkünstlerisch. Es müssen auch Unterlagen da sein, worauf die Hauptpersonen stehen." Letter to Immermann,, 17 December 1834.

20 Petsch, p. 280 ff.



against which the action unfolds. Thus individual members of the senate and the populace are broadly outlined in basic features, and figures like Octavius, Marcus Antonius, Saturninus have at least the suggestion of individuality. This sketched projection of a variety of minor characters which form a distinct historical and cultural environment is a trait of Grabbean art which is developed further in the major historical dramas.

Psychological sophistication which might have given the characters any depth is absent in Marius und Sulla; both heroes pursue their defined aims - Marius that of revenge, Sulla that of political restoration - with a view only to historical circumstances. Effectively their behaviour is determined only by the actions of each other, since at this early stage Grabbe seems to make little attempt to demonstrate the concrete influence of broader forces on the historical individual.

An attempt at a more profound grasp of the heroic individual and his environment is to be witnessed in Grabbe's first completed history play, Barbarossa, and its sequel Heinrich VI. The enormous stature of these two titular figures, whose meteoric careers lead them to complete world domination, has its foundations in a conventionality of dramatic technique which is not to be encountered elsewhere in the poet's oeuvre. Not least among the conventional aspects of the dramas is the desire on the part of the playwright to project living persons before us on the stage, an aim which is achieved through careful exposition, an unprecedented measure of contact between individual and hostile parties and, last but not least, great frequency of the hero's presence upon stage. Barbarossa in particular dominates his drama through his physical presence, appearing and playing the major role in eight of the play's twelve scenes (his son appears in six of fifteen scenes).

The fullness of Grabbe's Barbarossa figure derives no doubt largely from the fact that he is a man presented in a private as well as a political dimension. In his personal conflict with Heinrich der Löwe, his relationship with his wife and his participation in the cultural and courtly life

of his age he gains a roundness uncommon in Grabbe's dramas. Apart from fulfilling a purely historical function as Holy Roman Emperor, he appears as noble friend, devoted husband, sponsor of the arts, organiser of courtly tournaments and passionate upholder of the mediaeval heroic ideal. At the same time he is integrated into a political situation in which he is forced to contend with a threefold conflict involving Lombardy, the Pope and his former ally, the Lion. In a series of scenes his political philosophy is outlined and he emerges as a product of his age - in I/2 on the Roncaline Fields, in II/2 at the news of the Lion's withdrawal and in III/1 with Pope Alexander. Thus a balance is achieved in the drama between the public and the private aspects of the hero's existence, a feature which, while inevitably contributing to a more profound grasp of the individual as a human being of great diversity, leads away from the strictly historical atmosphere for which Grabbe's dramas are noted and results at times in a markedly romanticised idealism which does not always rise above the level of sentimentality. It is perhaps a logical consequence that the most highly developed of Grabbe's figures should appear in the least "historical" of his dramas.

Both the hero and his chief adversary in the drama, Heinrich der Löwe, are characterised initially by a detailed exposition scene which presents forces opposed to the imperial cause, a technique which is repeated in Kaiser Heinrich VI. In both dramas discussion of the leading figures, by their enemies (in the opening scene in each case) and loyal troops (Barbarossa I/2, Heinrich VI I/1) prepares the stage for the entry of the hero and provides a character sketch against which we are able to measure our initial impressions. Discussion of the hero by members of the military clique, themselves briefly individualised to provide dramatic interest (Rudolph and Ulrich; Landolph and Wilhelm in Barbarossa; von Schwarzenneck, Ruprecht and Wolfgang in Heinrich VI) is introduced in the Hohenstaufen plays as a significant means of characterisation and thus foreshadows a technique which is exploited more fully in Napoleon, political discussion

of the hero's aims by his supporters and opponents. At the same time the chief figures of the drama are provided with a historical background in the form of a small but rounded entourage against which they frequently appear - Barbarossa with his nobles and soldiers, Heinrich der Löwe likewise; Heinrich VI and Tancred with their courts, etc. The introduction of quite highly developed "lower ranks" in these two dramas (in Marius und Sulla only civilian forces had been outlined, and one wonders what would have become of the Marians in III/3) goes a long way towards establishing the grossly idealised military ethic of Grabbean drama - the elevation of the militia to a higher sphere - which ultimately has such a detrimental effect on the poet's realism. The absence of a civilian sphere (Bardewick in Heinrich VI is an exception) results in a reduction of scope in the Hohenstaufen dramas but simultaneously leads to a marked increase in concentration which permits greater depth of characterisation.

Barbarossa, with its fewer scenes and characters and lack of elements which provide comment but fail to motivate the plot, is more conventional than its sequel and, by virtue of its compression,<sup>21</sup> achieves a higher degree of individualisation. Kaiser Heinrich VI, on the other hand, is a more intensely political play and dispenses with much of the mediaeval atmosphere of its predecessor, clearly aiming at greater breadth. Correspondingly its hero is reduced to a more simplistic level and appears primarily as a political machine, a man very much after the model of Sulla.<sup>22</sup> Absent during the entire second act and for much of the fourth (a testimony to Grabbe's desire to develop other strands of action and intensify the historical situation) he appears merely as emperor and never as a human being;

21 See the chapter on dramatic form.

22 Siefert argues the opposite: "Heinrich ist ... eine mit realistisch-psychologischen Mitteln gezeichnete Persönlichkeit. Dank der Herausarbeitung psychologischer Einzelzüge gewinnt der Held als dramatische Figur eine erstaunliche Lebendigkeit, einen schärferen persönlichen Umriß als die konstruierten bzw. pathetisch manifestierten Wunschidealen Sulla oder Barbarossa" (p. 68).

we encounter him at length only in his strictly public function, for example in III/1 (Reichsversammlung in Hagenau) and V/1 (attending to imperial business in Palermo). The abundance of figures and scenes in this second Hohenstaufen drama means that we do not gain as vivid an impression of the characters as we did in Barbarossa. Instead we are generally provided with only summary information about figures, which again fall into specific groups - imperial court; the Lion's entourage; Saracens; Normans; Richard and Blondel - and fill in the historical canvas without emerging as developed individuals. The removal of any personal conflict in the drama points forward to Napoleon.

The techniques of characterisation in these two dramas are largely, if not exclusively, explicit-figural. The participants in the action characterise themselves in dialogue and soliloquy and less frequently in monologue (Heinrich der Löwe is the only figure to rely heavily on monologue as a means of exposure); characterisation of figures by each other ("Fremdkommentar") plays a secondary role. Much of the verbosity of these dramas undoubtedly derives from the poet's attempt to create an authentic courtly atmosphere surrounding noble personages, and the consequences of this are to be seen particularly in Barbarossa, where characterisation is frequently carried out on the most bombastic and superficially emotional of linguistic levels.<sup>23</sup>

Especially notable in the Hohenstaufen plays are the poet's efforts to sketch in all his dramatis personae and to provide each of them with at least a form of identity, from the gigantic hero right down to the common soldier. Grabbe's ability to rapidly outline figures which appear only very briefly is demonstrated particularly clearly in scenes like Barbarossa I/2 (soldiers) and IV/2 (Saxon nobles); Heinrich VI II/1 (Austrian tavern) and II/4 (the mayor and councillor of Bardewick), and prefigures an important

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Barbarossa III/2 (the emperor's return to Beatrice), arguably the weakest scene of the drama. Much the same criticism might be levelled at the often oversentimentalised meetings of the emperor and Heinrich der Löwe.

aspect of the vast Napoleon, where a multitude of characters appear before us as the sweeping action unfolds.

With forty-five named figures, well in excess of two hundred individual appearances, and countless extras, Napoleon would clearly pose grave problems for the casting director bold enough to undertake such a project. The list of dramatis personae, compiled by the editor of the historical-critical edition, is at times almost comical in its huge range:

Die Kaisergardisten. Infanterie- und Kavallerieregimenter der Linie. Milhauds Kürassierdivisionen. Schwere und reitende Artillerie. Die Granitkolonne von Marengo. Das Korps des Grafen Lobau. Nationalgarden. Polnische Lanzenreiter. Adjutanten. Kuriere. Ordonnanzen. Schreiber. Piqueurs. (WB 2, 321)

Within the enormous scope of this drama, which comprises twenty-five scenes and shifts location approximately half-way through from Paris to the battlefields of Belgium, the titular hero occupies a most curious position. Napoleon, in fact, appears in only seven of the twenty-five scenes and is seen by the audience only three times before the battle-drama begins.<sup>24</sup> The fact that the French emperor nevertheless dominates the drama from start to finish seems, in the light of such considerations, paradoxical. Yet, before the commencement of hostilities in IV/4 virtually every scene is largely concerned to present not only the reactions of various parties to the rapidly developing situation, but also a picture of the hero. Even before Napoleon's first entrance in I/4 we are provided with a comprehensive image of him by groups and individuals in Paris whose attitudes diverge greatly - Vitry and Chassecoeur, the barker at the peep-show, King Louis, the Herzogin von Angouleme, Herzog von Berry - and are confronted with a situation in which all the characters seem to be coming to terms with the inevitability of his return. By the time he appears before us on Elba we are informed of the historical background to the present situation and have heard conflicting views.

That a detailed psychological portrait of the hero can, however, hardly

<sup>24</sup> Note the reduction in the frequency of the hero's presence - Barbarossa 66 % of the action, Heinrich VI 40 %, Napoleon 28 %. Napoleon is present for little more than one quarter of the action.

emerge from a drama of this nature in which the hero is so drastically relativised is self-evident. Napoleon is not a rounded figure but rather a historical figurehead who voices certain ideas (often with little continuity or consistency)<sup>25</sup> which are presumably intended as an aid to the interpretation of the figure: witness, for example, the profusion of isolated thoughts expressed in I/4. Clearly it was not Grabbe's intention to create anything resembling a character drama - instead we are faced with a historical drama of panoramic dimensions in which the titular hero occupies an integral position. Napoleon is a sketched figure of little profundity, and the brief episodes in which he does appear provide us with only a minimum of insight into the workings of his mind, as it were a catalogue of traits which remain undeveloped.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps it was on account of this skeleton-like characterisation that Hebbel referred to Grabbe's emperor as "ein Unteroffizier",<sup>27</sup> and it is undoubtedly this lack of detailed information concerning the hero's personality which is responsible for the ultimately unsatisfying ambivalence of motives in the drama. Is Napoleon the extreme egotist (WB 2, 349) or a true patriot (WB 2, 350)? Does he fight out of political necessity (WB 2, 399; 2, 423), sheer vanity (WB 2, 395), or simply because he enjoys waging war (WB 2, 420)? Does he really see himself as an agent of the Weltgeist (WB 2, 458) and intend to temper his urge to despotic rule (WB 2, 450) after this final battle? Answers to such questions may be inferred from the evidence of the text,<sup>28</sup> and Hortense's appraisal of the hero's motives in IV/2 is undoubtedly correct; yet the division of opinion among commentators on this

25 Siefert, quite unjustifiably, sees Napoleon as the most profound of Grabbe's figures: "In solcher Menschlichkeit, ja Allzumenschlichkeit, gewinnt Napoleon als historische Persönlichkeit eine Lebendigkeit, wie sie bisher an keiner Geschichtsgestalt Grabbes festzustellen war" (p. 99).

26 I/4 - conceit, egocentricity, arrogance; III/3 - decisiveness, political realism, efficiency, despotism, vanity; IV/2 - emotion, political foresight; IV/6 - calmness under pressure; V/5, 6, 7 - qualities of leadership, strategical flair, etc.

27 Hebbel, Tagebücher, edited by R. M. Werner (Berlin, 1903), volume 1, pp. 172-3.

28 See the section on motivation.

figure testifies to the unclarity and inconsistency of Grabbe's motivation and underlines the fragmentary nature of this character. The hero is so scantily outlined, in fact, that it is difficult for us to identify with him and his fate, a fact which contributes to the removal of all tragic impact from the play.

Hebbel's sarcastic criticism of the characters of Grabbe's dramas as "bleierne Soldaten in grotesken Formen"<sup>29</sup> is not entirely misplaced. Given the vast number of characters which appear in the final acts of Napoleon, individualisation would have presented a practically insurmountable problem. The leading figures of the battle drama are inevitably gross simplifications and little more than representatives of the European powers which Napoleon must face: even Blücher, Gneisenau and Wellington appear as pale, cut-out figures designed ultimately to illustrate a new European consciousness which refuses to yield to French tyranny, and they are provided with individuality only by a few broad strokes, e. g. Blücher's fervent patriotism and comradeship.<sup>30</sup> The final ten scenes of the drama are occupied completely with hectic action and leave little room for intensive character study: only a few figures are developed in any detail, and these often appear more colourful than the officers surrounding Napoleon, Wellington and Blücher. The Berliner, his Feldwebel and the "freiwillige Jäger", for example, are characterised in some depth and provide important comment.

More comprehensive presentation of character is to be witnessed, however, in the first three acts of the drama where the situation in Paris prior to the emperor's return is portrayed. Here a considerable number of figures is developed - none of them to complete individuality, but several to a notable degree. The royal court and its followers; Vitry, Chassecoeur and the old officer; Duchesne; the gardener and his daughter; Fouché and

29 Hebbel, Tagebücher, volume 4, p. 190.

30 Wellington, Gneisenau and Blücher are representative rather than individualised figures. They are not true adversaries of the hero, as Sengle assumes; there is no question that Blücher may be considered "das einzige mögliche Gegengewicht gegen Napoleon" (Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 162).

Carnot; Jouve - these are all outlined in vivid scenes and play a vital role in the creation of the specific historical atmosphere for which Grabbe strives. Although they, too, are in the final analysis subordinated to the overall design of the drama - the depiction of historical currents and developments at the expense of any intensely human interest - and exhaust themselves in a stream of political and historical observation and comment, they are nevertheless imbued with a certain amount of life which is largely missing in the figures of the battle scenes. Much of the effect of the opening acts of the drama is produced by the skilful exposition of the political climate, and this is achieved by means of careful manipulation of characters, many of which appear only once in the drama, and their relationships with each other.

With its lengthy and complex exposition of historical circumstances (most of the first two acts is devoted to illustration since the plot only really commences in I/4 and "disappears" until II/4, where news of Napoleon's approach reaches the court), Napoleon is able to rely heavily on "Fremd-kommentar" as a means of characterisation. The hero, his aims and motivation are discussed by virtually all the other figures in the opening acts and a detailed system of relationships and political affiliations is uncovered well before the hero appears. But only the hero benefits from characterisation of this type: for the most part the characters establish their own identity - in as far as they have one - on an explicit-figural level through their dialogue or by their actions. Soliloquy and monologue are kept to a minimum (only Napoleon indulges in occasional solo speeches), and our impressions of the figures are established predominantly through their verbal exchanges with each other.

Compression and concentration upon limited issues was seen in Barbarossa to allow, perhaps even demand, a fullness of characterisation. If Heinrich VI demonstrates a loosening of firm structures and a tendency towards greater flexibility, Napoleon represents the logical conclusion of such a development and virtually dispenses with any detail of characterisation, placing its emphasis on breadth instead of depth and diversity rather



than strict unity. The absence of personal issues and genuine conflict between individuals leads to a further diffusion of elements. The historical basis of this drama results in a conflict with a minimum of human involvement; even the hero is unable to view his fate as tragic.

Although Hannibal retains the flexible open form of Napoleon, it does not exhibit the same trend towards totality and is able to combine a great variety of independent scenes with a high degree of compression. A major cause of this concentration is the reintroduction of the hero very much as the focal point of the action, which he dominates by his mere physical presence - Hannibal is involved in approximately fifty percent of the action of the drama. The central position of the leading figure seems, in fact, to be a necessary consequence of the reduction of the scope of the play and helps to provide the work with a marked unity.

Despite the fact that Hannibal is only half as long as Napoleon, this new compression enables the poet to present a far more comprehensive portrait of the protagonist than was previously the case. Similarly, the distillation of historical currents and conflicts in the work serves to push the hero further into the foreground, and the intensely personal note of the drama entails an emphasis on characterisation absent in the preceding play. Thus, while Hannibal is still very much integrated into a political-historical context and has his place, like all the other characters, in a rapid succession of brief, episodic scenes, he gains an individuality which is denied Napoleon and appears before us a comparatively round figure. Only briefly sketched in the expository scenes, which are primarily designed to outline the various forces which oppose the hero's cause (I/2 Carthage; I/3 the triumvirate; I/4 Rome), Hannibal develops fully as a character during the third act, where he is present for seven consecutive scenes. Here he emerges not merely as a political figurehead, but as an individual provided with a notable private and emotional dimension. During the wine-festival scene (III/3) where he is presented with Hasdrubal's severed head, in his farewell to Italy (III/5) and on his departure by ship (III/7) he

reveals himself to be a man of feeling, and his bonds with Turnu and Brasidas point to a level of humanity uncommon in Grabbe's gigantic heroes. His deep emotional identification with his cause becomes further evident in the final scene where he learns of the fall of Carthage from Turnu. Both in terms of depth of emotion and personal ties Hannibal emerges as a far more full-blooded figure than his predecessors.

He remains, though, the only figure of any complexity in the drama. Those who surround him - and Turnu, Brasidas, the triumvirate, the Scipios and Prusias might be considered the most significant supplementary characters - are inevitably reduced to their fundamentals and are essentially one-dimensional. Interpersonal conflict of the type which is so prevalent in classical drama is absent here as it is in all Grabbe's works, and the basic pattern of hero versus historical forces as embodied in specific figures is retained. Thus the Scipios, who appear in four scenes, demonstrate little individuality beyond their purely dramatic function as the representatives of Rome, and in this they resemble a string of other characters which have little room for development in a drama of this kind, with its short scenes, rapidly unfolding plot, diversity of time and location and condensation of a considerable amount of action into a performance of comparatively short duration. The market traders of Carthage - and this is an interesting point of comparison with the vaster Napoleon - are little more than personifications, lacking any extensive presentation, denied any opportunity to project a vivid image of themselves and, significantly, remaining nameless. The so-called masses of this drama (one wonders, in fact, with what justification one uses the term) are very different in conception from those of Napoleon and fulfil only a limited function.

Hannibal stands alone, then, as an individual in this drama. Like all Grabbean figures he is characterised predominantly through explicit-figural means, relying on his own words to establish his identity, and particularly here, it seems, individualisation is executed to a large extent through linguistic style. Hannibal's laconic prose, his silences, his curt, impatient

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interruptions and questions and his bitter suppression of his true feelings provide much insight into his character. His reaction to Brasidas' words on departing from Italy is an outstanding example of self-characterisation "malgré lui":

Brasidas: Dieses Kapua hat eine herrliche Bucht.

Hannibal: Die Schiffe riechen noch stark nach Pech und Teer.

Brasidas: Die blauen Berge in der Ferne -

Hannibal (für sich): Was spricht er von meinen zorngeschwollenen Adern?

Brasidas: - man möchte tausend Augen haben, um sich satt zu sehen an ihnen, in diesen klaren Wellen, an jenen duftatmenden Tälern.

Hannibal: Hätte man gar kein Auge gehabt, brauchte man das alles nicht zu vergessen.

Brasidas (halblaut): Jene Rebengehänge, über ihnen das Traubengehäng der ewigen Sterne nach und nach aufquellend - Es ist, als ob -

Hannibal: Es Abend würde. - Steuermann, das Steuer rechts - siehst Du nicht jenen Felsvorsprung? (WB 3, 123)

Grabbe makes use of both verbal and non-verbal techniques to outline the personality of his hero: thus Hannibal's suppressed emotion (III/7), his speechlessness (stage direction: "Er will etwas sagen, und kann es nicht" WB 3, 152), his many asides (see, for example, V/1, where Hannibal uses "Fürsichsprechen" four times in eight pieces of dialogue), his dry, deflatingly cynical humour (WB 3, 101 in the exchange with the messenger) all contribute to the characterisation of the protagonist on a level beyond mere explicit statement.

The unfortunate and serious weakness of Die Hermannsschlacht, which make this final drama by far the poorest of Grabbe's works and arguably one of the least inspired treatments of the Arminius theme in the German language, extend beyond the conception of the subject-matter and the form to the characterisation. Any attempt to rescue the reputation of this vastly inferior work, which lacks any dramatic interest and exhausts itself in the simple narration of a battle infused with a degree of local colour, must collapse in the face of the banality of the linear series of scenes which relies entirely on an epilogue to indicate the historical significance of the plot and to lift the whole above the level of superficial "Heimatkunst". Attempts to discover some true value in this play were originally prompted by commentators eager to preserve a literary glorification of the Teutoburg Forest and, in more general terms, a documentation of a great moment in German history; yet, to this day, exaggerated claims continue to be made

for the play by those who seem concerned to inflate, even to distort Grabbe's merits as a dramatist in their desire to secure for the poet a permanent place in the history of serious German drama.<sup>31</sup> That Grabbe has indeed come to occupy such a place seems by now to be sufficiently clear: that this reputation does not rest on Die Hermannsschlacht should be equally apparent and is undoubtedly for the best.

There is little characterisation to speak of in this work: the hero, the idealised leader, the very personification of patriotism, selflessness and heroism, is a pale figure who fulfils his political role competently and finally sees his ultimate goal thwarted. He has no personality and appears purely as the motivating power behind the German victory over the Romans. Where any detail of presentation does emerge it does so only on a political-historical level in order to elucidate the situation: even the monologues and soliloquies delivered by Hermann do not touch upon personal issues but are related specifically to the suprapersonal theme of the drama. The fragmentary nature of Hermann's character - he is only ever heard giving orders or passing comment on the Roman tyranny - deprives the drama of any real concentration on a single central point and removes all human interest from the chain of events portrayed. The scene Eingang 4, for example, in which Hermann is reunited with his wife, provides a good illustration of the highly impersonal tone of the drama: contact between the two figures is restricted to an exclusively matter-of-fact level and their meeting represents nothing more than an exchange of information and an elucidation of motives. The long exposition (the seven-part Eingang), which accounts for one third of the entire drama, likewise fails to provide any fullness of characterisation and contents itself with summary information about the

<sup>31</sup> Nieschmidt, for example, overstates the quality of the work by exaggerating the value of the epilogue in Rome, which he regards as "Grabbe's letzte Meisterszene". "Der durchweg negativen Beurteilung von Grabbe's Hermannsschlacht in der bisherigen Forschung wird allerdings im Hinblick auf die Bedeutung und den literarischen Rang der Rom-Szene widersprochen." ("Grabbe's letztes Geschichtsdrama und die erste Gesamtdarstellung seines Lebens", in Die Hermannsschlacht, Faksimile der Erstausgabe, Detmold, 1978, p. 16.)

figures involved - Varus, Thusnelda, Segest, etc. The battle-action itself, two thirds of the work, offers little insight into the characters before us. Die Hermannsschlacht is a true battle-drama and virtually exhausts itself in this aspect of its conception.

The figures surrounding the hero are equally shallow. Varus is clearly conceived as the representative of the ancient Roman ideal in face of general decline and impossible odds. Thusnelda, grossly overidealised, belongs to the tradition of pale and romanticised Grabbean heroines stretching back to Cäcilia, Donna Anna, Beatrice, Agnes and Alitta (Metella might have developed in the same mould had Marius und Sulla been completed). The many supplementary figures - Germanic tribesmen and Roman militia - remain faceless. Even less than in Napoleon is there any psychological interest in the play, which unfolds with the greatest simplicity and directness, lacking any "Problematik" in plot or characterisation. The only hint of conflict between characters, the somewhat forced quarrel between Hermann and the slighted Ingomar, is allowed to evaporate without resolving itself.

The Germanic tribesmen and Roman legionaries of the drama, the majority of them nameless, are never allowed any individuality but are characterised en masse. The poet has no interest in individualisation and is apparently primarily concerned to underline general features, traits which distinguish the natives from the invaders, and to indicate national-ethnic tendencies. Thus the opening scene presents characteristics which Grabbe regards as vital to the peoples in question - Germanic honour and closeness to nature, Roman discipline and outdated code of conduct - without attempting a more precise definition of the specific persons involved. The trial scene (Eingang 3) fulfils the same function and casts further light on the contrast between the conflicting ethics of the two races. Nowhere are figures developed per se, and the disturbing lack of interest in this final drama is undoubtedly partly due to the inadequacy of characterisation and the poet's failure to place even one rounded figure before us on stage. Here, as elsewhere in Grabbe's dramas, characterisation seems subordinated to other considerations.

We have been primarily concerned in the preceding discussion to determine the degree of importance attached by Grabbe to depth and comprehensiveness of character portrayal. The conception of character was recognised at the beginning of this chapter as an important aspect of literary realism, a premise which is a commonplace in literary criticism and a fundamental element in our examination of the subject. Individualisation, particularity, psychology, verisimilitude - such concepts seem basic to any consideration of the realism of character not merely in drama, but in literary art as a whole.

It has emerged from our survey of Grabbe's plays that the dramatist demonstrates a minimum of interest in the sophisticated portrayal of dramatic figures. Far from attempting to grasp characters in a deep and comprehensive psychological dimension he seems prepared to renounce altogether consistent, elaborate development even of his protagonists, and is ready to place fragmentary figures at the very hub of the dramatic action. Only in isolated cases (Barbarossa, Hannibal) does he attempt to provide anything resembling a rounded image of the hero. For the most part he contents himself with the broad outline, the sketch, one might almost say the silhouette. Figures like Sulla, Heinrich VI, Napoleon and Hermann exhibit little complexity or colour, but exhaust themselves in a few basic features which appear vital to Grabbe's purpose. In terms of realism they might be held to be wholly inadequate and to illustrate a marked disregard for human factors, interpersonal relationships, credibility of motivation and the development of pronounced individual identity. The profound spiritual conflict confronting Wallenstein, the psychological battle between Herodes and Marianne, the existential crisis of Danton and the political dilemma facing Ottokar are all entirely absent in Grabbe's titular heroes, who frantically pursue their objectives and engage in interminable action in the most uncomplicated fashion.

Simplicity (where the figures are not impaired by inconsistency of

motivation), one-dimensionality, and transparency are the distinctive qualities of the Grabbean hero. The recurring pattern of the dramas might be expressed thus: the protagonist, whose motives are established at the outset of the action, strives to realise his goals in a systematic manner, allowing himself to be hampered only by concrete political factors (Barbarossa's defeat at Legnano, Heinrich VI's defence of Sicily, Hannibal's forced return from Italy). The hero's urge to achievement is irrepressible and continues unabated until its eventual termination by death or defeat. No other considerations are allowed to interfere, a fact which brands Grabbe's works very much "action dramas". Conflict within the hero is generally absent.

This recognition of the importance of "concrete political factors" provides, in fact, the key to the question of the treatment of character in the plays. Conflict takes place here, as has often been noted, not on a personal, but on a purely historical level. The Grabbean individual is never confronted with a true "Gegenspieler" in the classical sense; rather he stands in opposition to anonymous historical forces which manifest themselves on stage in selected representative figures. To take just one example: in Hannibal the Scipios do little more than "represent Rome", the triumvirate the degeneracy of Carthaginian politics, the market traders the apathy and materialism of the Phoenician citizens. Nowhere is there any extended political debate, any interplay or modification of objectives as a result of an exchange of viewpoints. The hero remains true to his guiding idea and persists unflinchingly in his manic quest for power.

The Grabbean historical hero is reduced to a single idea. But this is not the classical idea of universal humanity; nor is it the metaphysical idea which was seen to play a central role in Grabbe's earlier protagonists. It is a historical idea, one which governs the behaviour of the great individual and, furthermore, pervades every aspect of the dramas from Marius und Sulla to Die Hermannsschlacht. In this sense Grabbe's figures are abstractions in much the same way as Goethe's Iphigenie, although the nature

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and purpose of their abstraction is very differently conceived. Far from being designed as the representatives of general moral or ethical principles, valid for mankind as a whole, the characters which interest us here have a highly particular quality which derives from their historical uniqueness. They are presented as exclusively historical figures within a specific historical context, and their relevance is restricted to this level; at most they might be considered paradigms of the historically active individual of any age. This distillation of the leading figure to a fundamental idea which permits little flexibility is the direct cause of the superficial character portrayal which is to be encountered everywhere in the dramas. The leader is deprived of all human attributes and projected before us in a strictly historical dimension. It is ultimately the poet's concern with the processes of history at the expense of all else which leads to the absence of sophisticated depiction of individual character in the works. Thus the dramatist's obvious interest in unique and particular personages, which might have been expected to result in a high degree of individualisation, has rather as its consequence a skeleton-like outlining of figures since it concentrates its energies on exclusively historical-political factors. We are confronted with a series of one-sided megalomaniacs who lack complexity even in a historical sense on account of the straightforwardness of their aims and motivation. The interest of Grabbe's dramas does not by any means lie in his manipulation of character.

Beyond their narrow conception as diluted historical beings, Grabbe's protagonists are deprived of any depth of characterisation by a second major factor. The poet's concern with the historical, which reduces the hero to a pale outline, also leads to a widening of scope which relegates the individual to a relative position and crams the stage with an enormous number of subsidiary figures. The broad base of these history plays, which strives to encompass sweeping developments, inevitably works against detailed individualisation and results in a large quantity of sketched figures. The cast lists of the dramas by other authors mentioned above, for example,



indicate a basically different overall dramatic conception. Herodes und Mariamne, Dantons Tod, König Ottokars Glück und Ende all operate with a limited number of figures. The entire Wallenstein trilogy, including the expository Wallensteins Lager, itself conceived to present historical background, unfolds with a smaller number of figures than appears merely in the opening scene of Grabbe's Napoleon. The characterisation of these dramas benefits from a limitation of range and relies on a degree of compression to facilitate intense individualisation.

The effect of Grabbe's penchant for enormous casts has unavoidable consequences for his presentation of characters. Figures are frequently designed to reinforce the historical atmosphere and disappear from the stage after a single brief appearance. Attention is drawn away from the protagonist towards a grasp of wider implications, and while supplementary figures (often soldiers) are sometimes provided with distinctive features and a hint of personality, these are unable to combat the impression of an essentially "characterless" form of drama. It would be to do Grabbe an injustice to overlook the impressive outlining of minor figures like Wilhelm and Landolph in Barbarossa, the Austrian folk in Heinrich VI, and the Parisians in Napoleon. And yet everywhere such attempts at characterisation remain only foundations which have little scope for development within the confines of Grabbe's dramatic conception.

Ultimately we search in vain for any realism of character in Grabbe's dramas and are led to the conclusion that this is a consideration which was of only secondary importance to the poet. Although Grabbe on occasions indulges in his customary self-congratulation when discussing the depth of his portrayal of figures,<sup>32</sup> it appears evident that in the final analysis the nature of his drama is not conducive to the development of character along the lines commonly associated with realism. Within the framework of the new dramatic mode ("streng historisch") individualisation, psychological sophistication and consistency of motive occupy only a subordinate position.

<sup>32</sup> For example WB 4, 90; 4, 89; the letters to Kettembeil of 1 September 1827; 16 January 1829; 3 June 1829; 11 January 1835.

#### IV. Grabbe's Dramatic Language: Pathos and Verisimilitude

The transition from verse to prose in Grabbe's dramas has frequently been interpreted as a major aspect of the dramatist's alleged realism.<sup>1</sup> In the process of the development of the playwright's language between 1822 (Gothland) and 1836 (Die Hermannsschlacht) three stages are generally discerned; each of these is characterised by various affinities with literary trends of which Grabbe is commonly viewed either as a successor or as a precursor. Thus the early non-historical tragedies are seen to betray the influence of the exclamatory "Kraftsprache" of the "Sturm und Drang" and of the pseudo-classical preoccupation with rhetoric and pathos which was typical of the age of "Epigonentum"; the central dramas (Marius und Sulla and the Hohenstaufen plays), with their combination of passages of verse and prose, are viewed as typical products of the age of transition, the "Restaurationszeit", and find parallels in the work of Tieck and Immermann. The mature plays, finally, with their exclusive reliance on prose, are held to anticipate the modern age, pointing forward, with their compressed diction and avoidance of pathos, to the age of naturalism. A gradual and natural development is discerned which leads the poet away from his adherence to tradition towards the experiment and innovation which culminates in a new language shorn of bombast and stylisation. The overall development of Grabbe's language is seen as an advance towards realism.<sup>2</sup>

The emergence of prose as the vehicle of dramatic art is indeed closely

1 Nieten, Sein Leben und seine Werke; F. J. Schneider, Persönlichkeit und Werk; von Wiese; Jahn; August Langen, "Deutsche Sprachgeschichte vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart", in Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß, edited by W. ~~Merker~~ (Berlin, 1957), volume 1.

2 For example by Koch: "Von Napoleon an ist Grabbes Sprache ganz unpathetisch, sachlich lakonisch" (p. 12); also by Spalter: "From Napoleon on, language as well as form will serve to give his dramas a strikingly modern tone and make him, along with Büchner, an anticipator of twentieth century realistic drama" (p. 50).

connected with the growth of realistic theatre, and is commonly cited as one of the prime conditions of developing realism. Thus it is present in the tradition of folk comedy, in the "Sturm und Drang" (Götz, Schiller's early works, Lenz), in the "bürgerliches Trauerspiel" from Lessing to Hebbel, in the so-called "Frührealisten" Büchner and Immermann - all repeatedly quoted as stations in the progression towards consistent realism - and becomes, despite insistent opposition on the part of Goethe, Grillparzer and Hegel during the Restoration period, the major mode of expression during the later stages of the nineteenth century. Grabbe's vacillation between the two forms is undoubtedly symptomatic of his historical situation. Indeed, on closer examination the indecision and uncertainty of his attitude towards the appropriateness of the use of prose in drama becomes all the more apparent. The progression away from the laboured iambs of Gothland towards the laconic prose of Hannibal was by no means the steady and conscious process it is often held to be; the banishment of verse from tragedy was not, as will be seen, a deliberate measure designed to intensify realistic effect. The aim of this chapter is to ascertain the fundamental characteristics of Grabbe's dramatic language, to shed light on his gradual abolition of verse from tragedy, and to trace the development of his prose in terms of its realistic quality.

Gothland is composed throughout in a verse form consisting predominantly of iambs, although the regularity of the blank verse is often violated by uneven numbers of syllables and feet. The variable length of the lines and the sudden changes in rhythm and metre produce a hybrid style which often reads more like prose and relies heavily on poetic devices (inversion, anaphora) to maintain a stylised quality. The balance of the verse is destroyed by an abundance of poetic flaws: enjambment is often forced, lines end on prepositions, conjunctions or pronouns, the stress falls on insignificant words and caesurae are frequently misplaced. Where rhyme occurs (chiefly at the end of each scene) it invariably does so at the

expense of convincing expression and produces an incongruous effect.

Grabbe's verse suffers from the extremism which marks the drama as a whole. That the poet was aware of this is made clear by his remarks in a letter to Kettembeil some five years after the completion of the work:

Gothland geht in Extremen aller Art, bis in den Vers; (den Vers hätte ich leicht verbessern können, aber theils ist er berechneter, theils gehört er zum Gothland wie das Fell zur Hyäne)<sup>3</sup>

Grabbe claims, then, that the mongrel nature of the verse in the play was calculated and deliberate, and that the excesses of the language were designed to match the excesses of the work as a whole. Iconoclastic intentions emerge once more as a vital part of Grabbe's motivation as an artist: discontentment with the sickly-smooth iambs of the despised "sich verhätschelnde und vergötternde Schriftsteller" of contemporary Germany does much to provoke his aggressive temperament. In his preface to the drama, written in the same year, Grabbe speaks of

ein konsequent befolgter Plan ..., der jene Extreme nicht nur bedingt, sondern hier und da auch rechtfertigt, und bis in Kleinigkeiten, selbst in das Versmaß hineinwirkt, (in welchem letzteren jedoch den heutigen in Wasserbächen dahinfließenden Jamben oft zuviel trotz geboten ist.) (WB 1, 1-2)<sup>4</sup>

This angry reaction against the "süßlich sentimental" drama of popular taste explains many of the extravagances of Gothland, both thematic and linguistic: the obscenities, the violence and gigantism of metaphor and imagery, the satanic exclamations and sadistic phraseology, the hyperbole. Yet it is clear that despite such motives the poet is not in comfortable control of the verse medium. Whilst the scope of expression manipulated by Grabbe is considerable, ranging from tender lyricism to violent exclamation, only on rare occasions does the verse assume a truly poetic quality. Generally it is marred by the extravagance which is so typical

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 1 September 1827.

<sup>4</sup> A typical contemporary reaction to Grabbe's verse: "Ausdruck und Styl sind vernachlässigt, überspannt und ungleich; seine Verse, wenn solche willkürlich abgetheilte, von Hiatus und widernatürlichen Elisionen wimmelnde Zeilen noch Verse genannt werden können, rauh, holpericht und übelklingend. Sie widerstreben der Zunge und beleidigen das Ohr." (W. Neumann, Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik, volume 3, p. 65.)

of its creator. At one extreme it descends to a depth of banality where imagery, rhyme and metre combine to create a ridiculous impression:

Bin ich 'ne Katz,  
So krallet hier sich meine Eisentatz,  
Womit ich dir den Kopf abkratz! (WB 1, 19)

At the opposite extreme it tends towards an empty rhetoricism supported by trite imagery and artificial pathos:

(mit dem höchsten Schmerzgefühl)  
-- Ich bin ein Haufe von zusammen-  
Gesperrten Tigern, die einander  
Auffressen! --  
- O wie glücklich ist ein Vieh!  
Es weint nicht, es bereut nicht, und ist  
Es einmal tot, so lebt es auch nicht mehr!  
O wäre ich ein Vieh! (WB 1, 131)

The language of Gothland, in keeping with its content, is characterised above all by an explosive quality reminiscent of the "Sturm und Drang". Loud and frenzied exclamations in short, abrupt sentences carry the action through its extensive plot and wealth of incident. Rapid exchanges of dialogue, orders and the diction of panic create the sense of urgency required to reinforce the hectic progression of events which represents the hero's downfall. Such compressed dialogue contrasts with the more static and contemplative language of reflection employed particularly by Gothland in his long analytical monologues. Throughout the drama the language is marked by the grand imagery of destruction and despair. A vast catalogue of beast images, designed to reflect the animal in man, expresses the violence, baseness and predatory instinct of the human race.<sup>5</sup> The evil Berdoa transfers such metaphors to his exotic background and increases the horror of the drama by frequent allusion to the distasteful natural phenomena of Africa. The imagery of disease and death underlines the sordidness of the world as seen through the eyes of the hero and his adversary. "Pest, Tod und Rache", "Tod und Verwesung" are frequent motifs. The hero amplifies

<sup>5</sup> For beast imagery in Grabbe: W. W. Reich, "Bestiality in the Dramas of C. D. Grabbe" (Diss. Connecticut, 1970). For a catalogue of Grabbe's images: Karl Wittman, "Die Vergleiche in den Dramen Grabbes" (Diss. Gießen, 1924).

the magnitude of his personal tragedy by elevating his suffering to a cosmic plane which mirrors his fate. Personal injustice becomes a symbol of universal destruction, individual tragedy an indictment of existence itself:

O, dann brauset racheknirschend auf,  
Ihr Höllentpforten! Werde schwarz vor Zorn  
Du sonnenhelle Ätherwölbung! Satan  
Bäum riesig dich empor vom Feuerpfuhl,  
Und wirf die Sternenkuppel aus den Angeln!  
Brecht los ihr Stürme, deckt die Gräber auf,  
Worin der Mord sein blutig Werk verscharrt hat!  
Das Weltgericht ist um Jahrtausende  
Gezeitigt und es kommt mit Blitzzesschwingen,  
Denn "Brudermord" sein Stichwort ist verbhollen! (WB 1, 33)

This penchant for frenzied exclamation, pathos and cosmic gigantism in word and thought alongside the diction of sadism, brutality, despair and bestiality (Berdoa's forte) lends the work its distinctive tone which, through its exaggeration of the horrific, frequently borders on the grotesque. It is a diction employed by all figures alike - in this mythical drama no differentiation is attempted on a linguistic level.<sup>6</sup>

An antidote to the embellishment and ornamentation of this pseudo-poetic level is provided by another extreme in the language of the drama, that of the utmost obscenity. It is used in particular by Berdoa in his temptation of Gothland's son Gustav with the seductive charms of the camp whore Milchen. Exchanges such as that between Berdoa and Irnak at the end of III/1 (suppressed in the original published version) form the starkest possible contrast to the otherwise serious business of the drama. Such coarseness becomes, in a diluted form, a typical characteristic of the military scenes in Grabbe's later works.

Gothland, apparently conceived as a "Weltanschauungsdrama" in the classical mould, explodes both the language and the form of its models. Just as the tectonic form can no longer accommodate the extreme length and detail of plot, so too is the standard verse form of German classical drama, the iambic pentameter, unable to encompass and regulate the dynamic excesses of Grabbe's language. Passages of perfect blank verse are rare. Where the

<sup>6</sup> Ploch comments: "Selbst Berdoa spricht ... als habe er ein humanistisches Gymnasium besucht" (p. 112).

principles of precise and regular versification are observed, the language appears forced and unnatural. Only where the rigour of such restraints is ignored and metrical patterns dissolved is the diction able to convey Grabbe's message. Thus, while one can hardly speak of realism in the language of Gothland, the tendency towards prose, commonly regarded as the vehicle of realism, and the dominant medium of Grabbe's major dramas, is clearly present within the verse itself. The patterns of natural speech evidently take precedence over prosodic considerations, the laws of the spoken sentence dictate the composition of the line, and the emphasis on rhythm results in a fragmented metrical sequence. Even at this early stage a dissolution of the verse form in favour of prose, or as a result of prosaic characteristics, is evident.

Scherz is firmly rooted in the tradition of popular folk comedy and as such is composed throughout in prose. Characters of both social spheres in question, the nobility of the Baron's castle and the inhabitants of the village, employ a diction which is essentially earthy and naturalistic although necessarily charged with comic effect. Word play, false pathos and exaggerated imagery might be counted among those devices which contribute to the comedy on a linguistic level, and these are employed primarily by characters affiliated to the higher social stratum: the schoolmaster, Rattengift and Mollfells. Here a suggestion of differentiation through the medium of language is discernible - the dissolute teacher, the enamoured Wernthal, the third-rate poet, the peasant Tobies all speak a language typical of their station which characterises them instantly as stock figures of the comic tradition. A later attempt at comedy, Aschenbrödel (extant in two versions, 1829 and 1835) likewise relies on prose for its comic effect and makes much use of Isaak's Jewish-German dialect as a means of achieving humour. Here, though, prose dialogue is juxtaposed with passages in verse, no doubt in order to intensify the fairy-tale atmosphere of the drama. Verse is employed only by elevated characters: by the heroine Olympia, on occasions by the king and his courtiers, and by members of the

fantastic fairy realm. While both these comedies demonstrate Grabbe's ease with the prose medium, they otherwise contribute little to a discussion of his developing technique as the creator of historical prose tragedies.

Nor does the short Nannette und Maria, an idyll which turns into a demonic love "tragedy", employing all the trappings of the well-made pseudo-tragic playlet, merit specific attention in this context. The prose of the opening scene makes way for fragmented and irregular verse once the love plot commences, and the iambs of the drama suffer from much the same extremes which marked Gothland. Despite a multitude of beast images which symbolise the satanic aspect of the love between Nannette and Leonardo, the language of the drama is marked above all by its forced sentimentality, pathos and absurd use of euphemisms and petrarchisms and precious phraseology. The empty sentiments of the drama are thus conveyed in a quasi-poetic style which frequently verges on the ridiculous. With Nannette und Maria, the poorest of Grabbe's works - one wonders whether the poet did not produce such a distressingly trite drama as a cynical comment on the public taste of his day - his dramatic language sinks to new depths.

Like Gothland conceived as a poetic drama in the classical tradition and treading the paths of two well-established legends, Don Juan und Faust is, with the exception of two brief passages, composed throughout in the iambic verse form. The tighter and more regular verse, in harmony with the tone of the drama, is laden with heroic declamation, absurdly grand metaphor and simile and exaggerated rhetoric which reflects the superhuman level of action. The "Himmelsstürmer" Faust, a dull personality in comparison with his Spanish adversary, never rises above the level of highly stylised language - he is, as it were, hyperbole incarnate. Although Grabbe employs in this drama less of the violent and base language which was seen to be integral to Gothland, the same tendency towards colossal imagery and the diction of destruction is readily identifiable. "Zer-" prefixed verbs, the symbolism and imagery of ruins and ruin, expressions of supreme will, energy and power, and the utmost self-assertion on a cosmic scale give the



aggressive and defiant language, particularly of Faust, an air of artificiality and forced grandeur. Don Juan, at least, with his passion and wit, does relieve much of the intensity of Faust's language and combines earnestness with Latin humour, satire and irony. He and his unscrupulous servant Leporello provide the comic relief which is so vital in a drama of this kind, and the latter in particular, the cowardly, materialistic philistine, uses a diction which is often naturalistic in its humour and thus contrasts starkly with the metaphysical weight of the exchanges between Faust and the black knight.

The prose dialogue serves in both cases a comic and satirical effect. Leporello's deceitful wooing of Lisette in I/1 affords humour through its juxtaposition of the servant's confessions of love for Donna Anna's maid and his asides to Don Juan which completely deflate the credibility of his motives. At the same time Leporello, and through him the poet, satirises the trite ritual of conventional courtship techniques. At the opening of scene II/2 prose dialogue is likewise used in the comical exchange between Signor Rubio, the drunken and corrupt director of police, and Signor Negro. Here, too, prose is preferred as a means of achieving humour through the looser and less restrictive medium of natural conversation.

Apart from its comical and satirical potential the prose of the drama fulfils no obvious function. As a means of social differentiation it is again used only inconsistently - Don Juan, Leporello, Negro and Rubio all use both verse and prose. The absence of any "masses" from the drama automatically precludes the development of prose as an instrument in the realistic presentation of the lower classes, and the rarefied atmosphere of this grand tragedy - fantastic, speculative, highly metaphysical - remains worlds apart from the immediacy and essential immanence of the major historical dramas.

The two versions of the fragment Marius und Sulla are of particular significance in any evaluation of Grabbe's dramatic language. The availa-

bility of both texts allows a comparison of the first three acts and sheds light on the poet's developing technique. Fragment B assumes added importance as Grabbe's first attempt at prose in tragedy and allows insight into the dramatist's technique of transcribing verse into prose.

The original version of the drama (fragment A), consisting of three acts entirely in verse, shows some advance in Grabbe's manipulation of iambs. Once more composed chiefly, though by no means exclusively, in pentameters, the verse still suffers from irregular metre and quantity of feet, faulty enjambment and occasionally forced stress on insignificant words or syllables. Generally, however, the metre is more carefully controlled than that of the previous tragedies. More striking is the marked reduction in the extravagances and excesses which are so characteristic of Gothland and Nannette und Maria. Much of the hyperbole, bombast, false pathos and rhetoricism of the earlier dramas has been removed, and the imagery is more restrained, heightening the impression of prose created by long passages whose rhythm is more akin to the patterns of natural speech than to those of strict prosodic discipline. .

Where the existing verses of fragment A have been taken over in B they remain largely unmodified in the expanded second version. Scenes I/1, I/3, I/5, II/1, III/1 and III/2 all contain lengthy verse passages which have been transferred unaltered from one version to the other. In I/2 Grabbe has transferred an entire scene, adding only one word in order to improve the metre of the penultimate line. Where the poet does retain material from the original version, then, he is rarely concerned to adapt it in any significant way. Only on isolated occasions does he recast the original verse into the prose which appears sporadically in seven of the eight completed scenes in fragment B, a fact which suggests that Grabbe was by no means concerned to intensify the realism of his drama, even of the crowd scenes, by the insertion or expansion of prose dialogue. Grabbe's actual motives for the alternation of verse and prose and the logic behind such a procedure seem confused, for the frequent switch from one medium to the

other is not to be explained by a concern with sociological differentiation, as one might have expected. While the fisherman scene (I/1), composed specifically for the second version, is written throughout in prose, such consistency is lacking elsewhere in the drama. Thus the heroes Marius and Sulla, the tribune Saturninus and a number of lesser figures use both modes, switching even during the course of one scene. In I/1 Marius transfers from sober prose to ecstatic verse upon the arrival of his son; in I/2 Sulla reverts to prose in order to relate the contents of Metellus' letter; more strikingly Saturninus and even the "Volk" switch from verse to prose during the senate scene (II/2). Many characters move freely between one means of expression and the other, and although the prose form is clearly dominant in scenes featuring the lower classes of the Roman state (the tribunes, the citizens), its apparently random usage prevents any assumption of its being used as social differentiation pure and simple. Above all, it seems, prose is favoured at moments in the action which provide comment and exposition: in I/1 the fisherman prologue and the exchange between the exiled Marius and his fellows provide expository information and reflect on themes which figure later in the play. In I/3 the three prose passages, spoken by a messenger, Sulla and Kaphis respectively, contribute little to the developing action but fulfil a commentary function, and in I/4 Sulla and Hortensius reflect in prose on the course of the battle against Mithradates. But even this technique is not used consistently by the poet - while Cinna and Sertorius close scene II/1 with prose commentary, they open it with a similar dialogue composed in verse.

The alternation of verse and prose provides Grabbe with a convenient means of contrast and intensification of dramatic effect. While prose is often employed at points of little tension in the drama (commentary, exposition) and figures largely as the vehicle of background information (fisherman scene, Marius on the ruins of Carthage), the sudden transition from prose to verse in the middle of a scene gives the action an added impetus and, through the juxtaposition of the differing styles, increased impact. Such transitions often represent a switch from reflection to dynamic action;

upon the arrival of the younger Marius in I/1 with the news of Cinna's revolt, the sober, self-pitying prose of Marius and his companions is abandoned for passionate verse which signifies a surge in the action. In I/4 Sulla's contemplations (prose) are interrupted by Hortensius' news of a sudden reversal in the progress of the battle (in verse); in II/3 the long prose opening which depicts the dealings of the tribunes Saturninus and Flavius with the "Volk", predominantly an exchange of words and ideas, is terminated by the entrance of Crassus the father with troops, and verse is resumed to symbolise the explosion into action. One cannot, however, maintain, as Waselowsky does,<sup>7</sup> that verse is consistently used at moments of excitement or tension, or at points which directly motivate the plot. Exceptions are easily found here: in II/4 the violence of the "Volk" at the close of the scene is introduced in prose, and in I/4 warriors use prose at the height of the battle. The contrasting quality of the verse and prose is used further as a means of characterisation: in I/3 and I/5 Sulla's transition from one medium to the other demonstrates his calmness and detached attitude; in II/2 further contrast is afforded by the fact that the crowds express their bold revolutionary intentions in verse but readopt prose for their cowardly flight.

Grabbe's introduction of prose into Marius und Sulla does not, then, represent a consistent or sophisticated advance in terms of realism. As a means of social distinction prose is employed only sporadically, and social groups move freely between both media of expression. But the verse of

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Waselowsky, "Der Übergang vom Vers zur Prosa in den Dramen Chr. D. Grabbes" (Diss. Marburg, 1956). Waselowsky examines the development of Grabbe's language and views the transition from verse to prose against a historical background. He simplifies and overschematises the issue, however, by seeking to explain Grabbe's use of prose by reducing it to a few basic functions - social differentiation, the vehicle of exposition, etc. Although he discerns various levels of prose diction in the plays and does not attempt to subsume the language of the later works under the heading "realistic", Waselowsky does not place sufficient emphasis on the playwright's hesitation, even reluctance, to abandon verse in tragedy. Napoleon (see below), Hannibal and the fragments all testify to Grabbe's vacillation between the two forms. Waselowsky consequently sees the transition from verse to prose as a smoother, more inevitable process than it evidently was.

Marius und Sulla has, as a result of the reduction in pseudo-poetic embellishment, itself moved nearer to prose and on occasions is barely distinguishable from natural speech. The fact that the poet was able to transcribe verse passages from fragment A directly into prose for inclusion in B testifies to the prosaic quality of much of the original verse. The two versions of Kaphis' speech at the end of I/3 illustrate this process:

- (A) Sullas Geist  
Ist mir zu fremd, von dem Gewöhnlichen  
Zu sehr verschieden, als daß ich ihm traute!  
Er fühlt nicht so wie wir, und niemand weiß,  
Obs ihm nicht einmal einfällt, uns  
Wie Fliegen zu betrachten, die der Knabe  
Gleichgültig ausrupft, weil  
Er ihren Jammer nicht versteht! - Es ist  
Am besten, sich aus solcher Näh so früh  
Als möglich wegzustehlen, und  
Mein jüngsterbautes Landhaus bei Korinth  
Winkt lieblich mir mit seinen Schattengängen. (WB 1, 311)
- (B) Sullas Wesen ist zu fremd, vom Gewöhnlichen zu  
verschieden, als daß ich ihm trauen möchte.  
Er fühlt nicht wie wir, und niemand weiß, ob es  
es ihm nicht einmal einfallen kann, uns wie  
Spinnen und Fliegen zu betrachten, welche der  
Knabe gleichgültig und mitleidslos zerrupft,  
weil er ihr Jammern nicht versteht. Mir scheint  
das beste, sich so leise und so früh als möglich  
aus solcher Nähe wegzustehlen, und mein erst jüngst  
erworbenes Landhaus bei Korinth winkt mir mit  
seinen schattigen Baumgängen nur zu lockend. (WB 1, 350-51)

Only the most minor changes have been made to the original verse, itself hybrid on account of its free metre and heavy dependence on enjambment, and only one poetic device (inversion in the last line) removed before transcription into prose.

Grabbe's verse is, however, still capable of a highly poetic and pathetic quality. Marius' long monologue in III/2 (taken over from A virtually unaltered), and his emotional exchange with the Marians in II/2 (modified and much expanded) show a degree of elevation and stylisation which sets this group of figures, with its close identification between leader and led, apart from all others. Within Grabbe's prose, too, there is considerable variation: the persuasive eloquence of the skilled demagogue Saturninus (particularly in II/3) contrasts with the pseudo-revolutionary exclamations of the "Volk" in brief paratactical phrases. Here the laconic

style of Napoleon and Hannibal is prefigured. On the other hand, however, Grabbe's prose can assume rhetorical and poetic overtones:

Unermeßliche Trümmer der eingeäscherten Stadt  
am Boden, und noch weit unermeßlichere Ruinen eines  
gigantischen zerschellten Glücks in meiner Brust, -  
hingestürzte Helden gleich Monumenten auf hinge-  
stürzten Reichen! (WB 1, 346)

While the second version of Marius und Sulla clearly indicates that Grabbe was at this stage unwilling to reject verse as the primary medium of tragedy (and the verse composed specifically for fragment B belongs to the most polished and carefully controlled language of the drama, e. g. II/2), we note at the same time an obscuration of the stylistic levels which generally differentiate the two modes of expression. The rigidity of iambic metre is on occasions loosened to such an extent that it resembles natural speech, while conversely certain prose passages are charged with pathos, rhetoric and imagery which approach the stylisation commonly associated with verse. The dissolution of the strict division between the two forms is an important step towards the banishment of verse from tragedy. Similarly the use of prose in crowd scenes, and the laconic nature of much of that prose, anticipates the language of the mature tragedies in which prose makes a vital contribution to the overall realistic effect.

The first Hohenstaufen drama, Barbarossa, is concerned largely with the glorification of the greatest of mediaeval German emperors. A strong romantic influence is readily discernible, not least of all in the language, and consequently in comparison with Marius und Sulla the drama represents a retrograde step in Grabbe's development. Here any suggestion of an increasing laconism is completely absent. Hyperbole and rhetoricism become, for Grabbe, synonymous with the poetic, and, as was the case with Don Juan und Faust, the dialogue of the drama emerges not so much as a means of communication as one of extreme stylisation. Verse predominates in such a drama as a matter of course. The hero, his friend-turned-adversary Heinrich der Löwe and the leading knights of the emperor's court express themselves in a diction heavily adorned with the ornamentation of legendary mediaeval



Säue zu Haus!

(WB 2, 13)

Colloquialisms, mild curses, comic turns of phrase, prosaic ideas characterise the speech of the military in a fashion reminiscent of Shakespeare's camp scenes, which clearly influenced Grabbe in his decision to use comical-realistic dialogue in such situations. There is, however, no question in this drama of prose becoming the sole medium of the lower classes: while it is used here, and again after the Lion's long monologue in the same scene (the principle of contrast between the prosaic and the poetic, the basic and the elevated is seen at work here: the Lion's monologue is "framed" between two prose passages), it is abandoned directly afterwards when Landolph and Wilhelm use verse in noble company. At this stage Grabbe is clearly not concerned to develop the prose medium as a major element of realism.

Kaiser Heinrich der Sechste shows a marked progression in the move towards the more compressed language of the later dramas ("hat keinen Fehler, keinen Schaum" wrote Grabbe to Kettembeil).<sup>9</sup> Here we note a significant reduction in the ornamental and rhetorical quality of the verse. Heinrich VI, a very different man from his father, cares little for the knightly ethos of virtue, love and honour. He is aggressive, cold, politically clear-sighted and unemotional, and his speech, shorn of much of the pathos of Barbarossa's diction, is less romantic and stylised, more immediate, in short more realistic than that of his predecessor. While grand imagery is frequently retained in the speeches of the hero, only on one occasion, shortly before his death, does he wax lyrical:

- Ist es doch, als lagerten  
Sich alle Götter des Olympus dicht um mich:  
Poseidon da, mit blaugelocktem Haupte,  
Dort Arethusa, furchtsam fliehend, - hier  
Im Berg die Donnerhammer der Cyclopen, -  
Da Hyblas Biene, fröhlich summend  
Und ungestört vom Hammerschlag -, und dort  
Das Tal von Enna, voll der süßen Frucht  
Des Hesperiden - Ja, Prosperina,  
Ich kanns mir denken, daß du frohe Jungfrau  
Zur ewig finstern Göttin bist geworden -

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Kettembeil, 8 April 1830.



Wie kannst du solchen Frühlingstals vergessen,  
Wenn Pluto dich daraus zum Acheron  
Geraubt!

(WB 2, 236)

revealing himself at the same time to be a veritable store of mythological references; for the most part, however, he is detached and taciturn, and on frequent occasions his verse approximates to the rhythms of natural speech:

Weil

Das Schiff die See durchschneidet, sprützt sie auf  
Und zischt, - du, weil du einmal Unglück träumst,  
Glaubst, daß sie seufze - Aber laß das Unheil  
Wahr sein, - es komme - Um so kühner tret  
Ich ihm entgegen - Der Waiblinger kennt  
Kein anderes Unglück in der Welt, als das  
In eigner Brust, - und das auch weiß er mit  
Dem Druck der Hand zu schwichtigen - Sicher  
Ist er vor winzigen Tränen -

(WB 2, 124)

The poetic element in the drama is afforded not by the hero, but chiefly by the ageing and mellowed Lion (II/3), by Tancred and by the idealised young bridal couple Agnes and Prince Heinrich.

Simultaneously there is a considerable increase in the volume of prose, which is no longer confined to the lower ranks of the militia, but is now extended to include persons from the civilian sphere (the citizens of Bardewick, the Austrian folk, the shepherd and his boy). The exploitation of prose as a basic means of sociological differentiation is now developed with some consistency: the lower types who converse among themselves in prose dialogue do not always adopt verse in elevated company, as was the case in the previous dramas. Thus the Hauptmann von Schwarzeneck, who expresses himself in coarse, gruff prose to his soldiers in I/2, retains the prose form in conversation with Diephold in IV/2; likewise the Austrian countryfolk of II/1 continue to speak in prose even in their exchange with Richard Coeur de Lion, as do the Austrian soldiers during their dealings with Blondel in the following scene. On these occasions the two forms coexist in direct exchange: in III/2, for example, Heinrich der Löwe speaks verse while his men respond in prose. Only on one occasion does a character from the "realm of prose" adopt the elevated form in socially superior company: in II/3 Christoph, described in the stage directions as a member

of the "niedersächsisches Volk", switches from prose to verse in conversation with counts and princes. Generally, however, the two media are kept separate in their differential function, a significant development in Grabbe's technique.

Comical elements are again characteristic of the military scenes (I/1, IV/2), and in the Austrian tavern scene, furthermore, some attempt is made to combine gruff folk humour with the reproduction of the impression of regional dialect (the repeated use of "halter", the nouns "Nannerl" and "Mädel"). The dialogue between Rudlieb and Hagener in the Bardewick scene (II/4) presents a serious conversation on a prosaic level, at the same time providing background characterisation. Despite the absence of significant mass scenes in Kaiser Heinrich VI, then, the drama exhibits an increasing dependence on prose dialogue as the distinctive medium of those social groups not directly affiliated to the imperial court. This fact, coupled with the extensive reduction of bombast and hyperbole as a means of stylisation, sets the drama apart from its predecessor and points forward to the exclusive use of prose in the final dramas.

With Napoleon the transition to prose drama is complete, the non-poetic form being used consistently throughout for all social groups from Bourbon court to Parisian mob. The process which was to lead Grabbe to the exclusive use of prose in tragedy - we noted the dissolution of the rigidity of the iambs, the proximity of much of his verse to prose, the increasing dependence on prose as the medium of the common people - results in the attempt to compose a serious historical drama, perhaps the most elevated of genres, in what was originally the least elevated of styles. And yet it would be erroneous to assume that Napoleon represents the culmination of any natural and unhaltable development from verse to prose in Grabbe's oeuvre between 1822-30; it seems, in fact, that even at this stage Grabbe did not regard the prose form as the only appropriate linguistic mode for his art. A letter to his publisher dated 30 December 1829, some months after the conception of the idea for a Napoleon-

drama,<sup>10</sup> speaks of the playwright's intention to offer a poetic transfiguration of his contemporary age and cites a brief extract from what was later to become scene II/5:

Im Napoleon muß alles Moderne einmal im Glanz der Poesie  
erscheinen, vom Pulverwagen bis zur Stadt Paris mit ihrem  
Lärm und Dunklen Schrecken. Carnot und Fouché sich Nachts  
auf dem Greveplatz und hören das Rieseln des da vergossenen  
Blutes. Und

"Des stolzen Oestreichs  
Traurende Blume neigt gewiß nach Elba hin  
Ihr thränenschweres Haupt."<sup>11</sup>

Whether Grabbe had composed these lines expressly for inclusion in his letter to Kettembeil or whether he was actually quoting from a partially completed manuscript is not clear. Ultimately, perhaps, it does not matter. What is significant is the fact that upon the commencement of his intensive work on his material Grabbe had by no means discounted the employment of verse as an appropriate means of expression even for characters from the non-aristocratic reaches of the drama. The notion that the modern world is to appear "im Glanze der Poesie" betrays a close affinity with the poet's intentions in the highly conventional Barbarossa, in which he hoped to show mediaeval Germany in "die blendenden Farben der Poesie". At this stage, it seems, even the trappings of modern warfare ("Pulverwagen") and the turmoil of post-revolutionary Paris were to be conveyed in verse. Indeed, the stylistic characteristics of the verse fragment quoted by Grabbe in his letter to Kettembeil show the language envisaged by the poet at this point to be elevated and extremely conventional: the use of the inverted genitive, the trite metaphor and personification ("traurende Blume"), the hackneyed attributive "thränenschwer", the use of the archaic form "Haupt" and the inversion of the object phrase all demonstrate that the playwright had not progressed far in his use of verse and was still capable of producing stylised and bombastic formulations.

<sup>10</sup> The poet's intention to compose a work on this theme is first mentioned in a letter to Steinmann of 2 August 1829.

<sup>11</sup> Apart from these lines no other preliminary sketches for Napoleon are known to us. Only the printer's manuscript has been preserved (Grabbe-Archiv, Detmold).

Due to a broken arm, work on Napoleon continued only sporadically over the following months. But it is not until July 1830 that Grabbe informs his publisher of his final resolve to use prose throughout the drama, and he justifies his decision with three reasons:

All mein Geist, jede meiner Ansichten, muß soviel als möglich hinein. Darum, so weh' es mir tut, schreibe ich ihn in - Prosa, aber wie ich hoffe, in lutherisch kräftig biblischer, wie z. B. die Räuber. Ich kann die Artillerie-Trains, die congrevischen Raketen pp nicht in Verse zwingen, ohne sie lächerlich zu machen ...<sup>12</sup> Napoleon bewegt sich zu nah in unserer prosaischen ... Zeit.

Prose is conceived 1) as the appropriate vehicle of the poet's ideas, 2) as the only apt means of presenting the paraphernalia of modern battle (a consideration which seems to have occurred to Grabbe comparatively late), 3) as the only suitable medium of expression in the modern age. Significantly, however, the dramatist is able to commit himself to prose only with some reluctance ("so weh' es mir tut"), and even then aims to achieve not a simply naturalistic diction, but the highly-charged language so much favoured by the "Sturm und Drang".<sup>13</sup> Such considerations should warn us against viewing Grabbe's adoption of the prose medium in Napoleon as an instinctive and automatic choice, or, indeed, as a measure designed to produce realistic effect.

The realistic function of Grabbe's language in Napoleon should not by any means be overstressed: we are not dealing here with a diction designed to capture the essence of human speech in the most naturalistic manner possible. Despite an increased tendency towards verisimilitude, Grabbe is still concerned to maintain a certain degree of stylisation and linguistic segregation between characters. While Waselowsky discerns only

12 Letter of 14 July 1830. In the same letter Grabbe tells his correspondent that he is at present working on the last scene of the drama, but subsequent letters reveal him to be working on earlier scenes. Not until 25 February 1831 does he send his publisher the last pages of his manuscript.

13 Grabbe writes to Kettembeil: "Die Prosa in Napoleon soll schön schmettern" (letter of 4 August 1830).

three divisions between linguistically differentiated groups (court and aristocracy; Paris street scenes; battle and camp scenes),<sup>14</sup> in order to do justice to the complexity of the language structures of the drama it is necessary to subdivide these categories. The court speaks with a colour and eloquence alien to the aristocracy, represented by the émigrés Hauterive and Villeneuve in I/1 and by Madame de Serré and friends in I/2. In the Paris street scenes several planes are identifiable: thus Vitry, Chassecoeur and the old officer express themselves in a diction which, with its pathos and heroic elevation, seems worlds apart from the prosaic "Volk", police and side-show owners. Duchesne's eloquence and persuasive biblical tone contrast with the barely articulate mumblings of the "Savoyardenknabe". Jouve and his "Vorstädter von St. Antoine", with their expressions of cynicism, hatred and violence, belong to an entirely different class from the "Schneidermeister". And in the camp and battle scenes the level of the language shifts constantly between the humour and gaiety of the Berliner, the patriotic fervour of the Prussian "freiwillige Jäger", the idealised Blücher and the urgency of Napoleon and his officers. The three basic social groups outlined by Waselowsky (the masses must be differentiated from the military in this, as in all Grabbe's dramas) control therefore, more than three stylistic planes.

Linguistic naturalism (here understood as the attempt to reproduce unstylised, convincing diction)<sup>15</sup> does feature heavily, particularly in the crowd scenes I/1, II/2 and III/1, where rapid exchanges of dialogue create an impression of great immediacy. The peep show owner advertises his exhibition:

Sieh da, Zuschauer! - Willkommen! - Erlaubnis, daß  
ich erst die Gläser abwische - So - Treten Sie vor -

<sup>14</sup> Waselowsky, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Grabbe's language has little in common with the linguistic techniques of the age of naturalism itself, as admirably outlined by R. Hamann and J. Herward in Naturalismus (Berlin, 1959). Only in isolated parts of Hannibal, with their fragmented sentences, pauses, silences, inarticulate mumblings, does Grabbe approach anything resembling a phonographic reproduction of the habits of human speech.

Da schauen Sie die große Schlacht an der Moskwa -  
Hier Bonaparte. (WB 2, 325)

The disjointed, hyphenated style reproduces the pace and rhythm of natural speech and combines these with an attention to detail (the wiping of the lenses) which is hardly relevant to the underlying idea but vital to the realism of the passage. On this, the most basic of linguistic levels in the drama, there is little attempt at stylisation. Vitry and Chassecoeur, on the other hand, are able to switch from this fundamental niveau to pathos and poetic ornamentation:

La la! Den einen trägt, den andern ersäuft die Woge  
des Geschicks. Das Herz nur frisch, es ist die Fischblase,  
und hebt uns, wenn wir wollen, bis wir krepieren, sei es  
so oder so. (WB 2, 328)

In conversation with the old officer, Vitry and Chassecoeur have at their disposal a stock of images and metaphors which sets them apart from the common people. Their elitist position within society (as ex-guardsmen they feel themselves to be considerably superior to the rabble) is reinforced by their manipulation of rhetoric and pathos. Chassecoeur notices a fellow redundant soldier:

Am abgetragenen, faserigen Überrock, den er so zornig  
schüttelt, an den alten Militärkamaschen, mit denen er  
auftritt, als ging es über Leichen, und dem blutdunkelnden  
Auge erkennt man ihn mitten in dem Heften des vornehmen und  
niedrigen Gesindels, eines so schlecht als das andere. Tod  
und Hölle, der ist von anderem Stahl als die neuen könig-  
lichen Haustruppen, vor denen jetzt Sieger von Marengo das  
Gewehr präsentieren müssen. Der lief nicht weg, als sie weg-  
liefen - Geschmiedet ist er in den Batteriefeuern von Auster-  
litz oder Borodino! (WB 2, 329)

Language serves here as a means of distinction between militia and masses. The aristocracy is likewise differentiated by its use of a linguistic style alien to the "Volk". The émigrés Hauterive and Villeneuve speak in expressions of gentlemanly gallantry ("bei meinem Degen", "bei meinem Wappen"); Madame de Serré in short, ecstatic phrases; Louis and his courtiers in somewhat more pompous, precious and antiquated sentences:

Se. Königliche Hoheit erholen sich von den Wunden, welche  
Ihnen der Schmerz über die Nachricht des Todes Ihres treuen  
Dieners Bussy geschlagen hat, in der eben aufblühenden Natur  
auf einer Jagd im Forst von Fontainebleu. (WB 2, 347-8)

The pathos of Vitry and friends is resumed above all in the final two acts where, driven to the extreme, it destroys any realistic effect and assumes a utopian quality. This is the language of heroism and patriotism which stands out against the humour of certain scenes and the dialogue of urgency in others. All parties, - Blücher and Napoleon, Prussians, English and French, privates and officers - are filled with a joy of battle and bloodshed which unites all men, removes all social barriers and turns war into the most exhilarating and cathartic of experiences. Again metaphor, simile, imagery, rhetoric and plain bombast serve to capture the emotions of war. Blücher commands his comrades:

Ha, wie das blitzt - Es tut einem wohl wie ein warmer  
Sonnenstrahl am kalten Wintertag. --  
Seht ihr jene vorausgelaufenen Franzosenhunde?  
Wetterleuchtet unter ihnen mit euren Säbeln  
und jagt sie zurück wie der Habicht die jungen  
Hühner. (WB 2, 409)

Patriotic songs (Körner's "Wilde verwegene Jagd"; "Clan Douglas") underline the idealised comradeship of the military experience. It is a realm in which the restrictions of life in society are cast aside, emotions are given free rein. In war all men are brothers: the major of the "freiwillige Jäger" in an emotional speech expresses the essence of such an experience in ecstatically pathetic phrases:

Kinder, noch einmal wechselseitig die Hand -  
Männerfreundschaft in der Lust wie in dem Kampf -  
Es gibt nichts Höheres - Da - da - Ihr verbeißt  
Tränen - Laßt sie rinnen - sie fließen edlen  
Abschiedsgefühlen, - wer sich deren schämt, wer  
die nicht besitzt, hat sie aus der Brust verbannt,  
weil er sich davor fürchtet. (WB 2, 412)

Such exaggerated poignancy and rhetoric clearly detracts from the realistic effect created by the masterly crowd and court scenes of the first three acts. And deliberately so, for the poet is evidently concerned here to create two different spheres, the mediocre and the heroic, reflected in the prosaic and the poetic styles, for the purposes of contrast and comment. As the outcome of the drama reminds us, although the heroic ideals of men like Napoleon might be crushed by the "Überzahl der Schwachen und Elenden", the exceptional, great and heroic retains a value which explodes the

limitations of a mundane reality and remains infinitely preferable to monotony of everyday existence. Elevated diction represents an elevated mentality and underlines the opposition of the heroic and the unheroic.

The emperor Napoleon, the symbol of the truly heroic in the drama, himself employs various levels of speech ranging from the highly pathetic and verbosely metaphorical in a moment of great expectation -

Amphitrite, gewaltige, blauäugige Jungfrau, - schon lange läßt du mich umsonst um dich buhlen, - ich soll dir schmeicheln, und ich möchte doch lieber als Mann mit Waffen dich den Händen der Krämer entringen, die dich, O Göttin, mit der Elle messen und zur Sklavin machen wollen, - aber ich weiß, du liebst ihn doch, den Sohn der Revolution, - einst vergaßest du deine Launen und trugst ihn mit sicheren Armen von den Pyramiden nach dem kleinen Glockenturm von Fréjus, - morgen trägst du mich von Elba noch einmal dahin. - Amphitrite, schlummre süß. (WB 2, 354)

- to the painfully concise and laconic in the hour of defeat:

Wir müssen hier mitten durch das Feld zurück, - die Chaussee ist zerfahren und überdem von den Preußen erstürmt -- Der Abend wird kalt - Meinen Mantel und mein Pferd. (WB 2, 457)

This tendency towards the laconic was noted in the language of emperor Heinrich VI and it is developed in Napoleon before reaching full fruition in the distinctive compression of dialogue in Hannibal. In Napoleon the protagonist himself employs such a style at moments of urgency and decisive action (III/3 - "Wo Cambronne?") and, naturally, during the battle scenes. Jouve (in III/1 and IV/1) also favours concision for his biting comments and cynical asides. The stylistic gradations of Napoleon indicate that Grabbe's dramatic language still represents more than a means of simple communication between individuals and is aimed in part at heroic stylisation. The incongruous effect of the use of euphuistic and magniloquent language in the final two acts impairs any pretensions the drama might otherwise have had to realistic dialogue and demonstrates the irresistible attraction exerted on Grabbe by the grand diction of heroism.

Having begun to compose his projected Kosciuszko drama in prose (it remained a fragment of which only a scenario and two scenes exist), Grabbe, in his indecision, originally returned to the verse medium for Hannibal.



Three versions of the play are known to us; of the first, however, only part of one scene ("Vor Rom. Hannibal mit Truppen"), published in the journal Phönix in January 1835, has come down to us. Like the second, far more extensively preserved version, this scene shows a mixture of verse and prose. In the second version, however, Grabbe seems to have tired of verse at an early stage, for the greater proportion of the text, and all of it after the sixth scene, is in prose. This change in policy was due to the influence of Immermann, to whom Grabbe had submitted scenes from the original version for approval. Grabbe was himself aware that the verse of his drama was hardly verse at all, as he confessed to Immermann on 17 December 1834:

Ich habe mit Bewußtseyn, mit Vorsatz ihn so geschrieben wie er da ist, aber durchaus ohne Affectation. Soll man ewig die alten Hosen tragen? Schiller hat's auch geahnt: cfr. seinen Jambus im Tell mit dem in Don Carlos und in Maria Stuart. Der Gedanke macht den Vers, nicht der Vers den Gedanken.

Immermann had no illusions about the imperfections of the verse of the play,<sup>16</sup> and suggested that Grabbe should recast it into prose. The latter, who seems not to have been entirely happy with the language of the work, received this suggestion with great enthusiasm. Grabbe was apparently as uncertain here as at any point in his wavering between the two media of verse and prose, and required only a positive external impetus before being prepared to recast an entire work from one form into the other. He began to rework the drama on the very same day:

Sie haben durchweg recht pto. des Verses im Hannibal, er ist ein Zwitter, ich zerschlage ihn, wie neue rauhe Chausseesteine, und verwandle ihn in Prosa. Mein Kopf bekommt dadurch noch freieren Spielraum, überall seh' ich das Stück besser, moderirter und doch kräftiger werden, und - das ist der Grund - acht' ich einmal die Versmaaß-Autorität nicht, so kann ich ja am besten und bequemsten, den Rhythmus, welchen ich bezwecke, in Prosa ausdrücken. Auch spür' ich, daß es eine alberne Furcht vor dem grauen Alterthum war, in dem das Stück spielt.

<sup>16</sup> Immermann wrote of the verse of the drama that it was "gar kein Vers, nicht einmal rythmisierte Prosa" (Memorabilien, volume 2, p. 19).

<sup>17</sup> Letter of 18 December 1834. Eduard Duller speaks in his biography of Grabbe's plans for a new type of prose rhythm: "Er trug sich damals /autumn 1834/ viel mit Ideen, die dramatische Sprache durch Einführung eines

By the beginning of February 1835 the recomposition was complete, presumably in the form which now constitutes the central version. Alterations, mainly of a minor nature, were made during February and March, and Grabbe gratefully accepted several of Immermann's ideas for improvement. On Immermann's advice, for example, the drama was divided into the five headed parts in which we now know it. By May the final version was complete and in the hands of Schreiner, Grabbe's new publisher.

The ease with which the verse of the first and second versions was recast almost unchanged into the prose of the final product testifies to the essentially hybrid nature of much of Grabbe's original language. As had been the case with the redrafting of Marius und Sulla, only minor alterations to vocabulary and syntax were necessary in order to transform the irregular verse (no longer even vaguely iambic in metre) into the prose which approximates to the patterns of natural speech (e. g. the opening scene; "Vor Rom" scene) more closely than the language of any of the other plays. Grabbe aims at, and achieves, a concision of style in Hannibal which would have been thought impossible of the author of Gothland, is surprising even after Napoleon (which, for all its terse exchanges and often pithy dialogue, retained an elevated linguistic level for the purposes of differentiation), but was foreshadowed briefly in the "Polnische Judenschenke" scene of the short Kosciuszko fragment (1831).

This concise diction is employed by various characters in many situations. In the Roman senate scene it is used to convey the restlessness of the senators under pressure (I/4, particularly WB 3, 96 line 27 ff.). In II/2 ("Kapua. Saal in Hannibals Wohnung") it appears almost as a prose variation on stichomythia, the hero rapidly interrupting Brasidas' report with short, cynical phrases. It reaches its peak, perhaps, in his monosyllabic responses to Turnus's report of the destruction of Carthage in V/4. Here the

lebendigen Rythmus, statt des starren toten Metrums auf ein - nach seiner Ansicht ursprünglich vorhandenes, doch allmählich verwischtes - Gesetz zurückzuleiten; später kam er davon wieder ab und substituierte durchgängig dem Metrum jene unnachahmliche Lapidarprosa, die seinen marmornen Charakteren bis ins Herz eingehauen scheint" (p. 64).

hero's grief, despair and sympathy are masterfully communicated through the suspense and excitement created by Turnu's lengthy narration and Hannibal's urgent questions:

Weiter! - Die Römer? - Ihr? - Die Scipionen ermatteten?  
- Hölle! - Ich atme wieder! - Die sind tot? - Ah! (WB 3, 151)

A laconic, paratactical style, produced with the aid of such devices as syncope, apacope, aposiopesis, aphasis and ellipsis; supplemented by anacoluthon, frequent interruption and pregnant silence (during Turnu's report Hannibal "will etwas sagen und kann es nicht"), and marked by a distinctly nominal style, omitting verbs to convey a sense of taciturn suffering, is now employed on many levels within the drama. From the traders of the market -

Ein Karthager: Das Pfund Sago?  
Marktweib: Fünf Silberlinge.  
Der Karthager: Drei -  
Marktweib: Nehmts, weil Ihr es seid.  
Der Karthager: Kennst Du mich?  
Marktweib: I nu - Ihr seid - ja Ihr - (zu einer Nachbarin)  
Trägst heut Seide? Das bedeutet?  
Ein Kaufherr (zu einem Sklavenhändler): Dieser Neger?  
Erster Sklavenhändler: Viertausend Drachmen.  
Kaufherr: Hoffentlich Eunuch? (WB 3, 92)

- to the scheming triumvirate of Hanno, Melkir and Gisgon (I/3) and the Scipios (II/1, particularly WB 3, 106 line 36 ff.). Concision of expression has now completely replaced ornamented rhetoric and hyperbole, the favoured devices of the early dramas. Only on one occasion does Grabbe have recourse to lyricism or pathos. The hero, at a moment of great pain, bids an emotional farewell to Italy, his "seelische Heimat", referring to the land of his enemies as a bride wooed in vain.<sup>18</sup> This is the only truly elevated moment of the entire drama. Elsewhere the ultimate compression of language is striking, both as a means of communication and as the expression of the hero's personal suffering. The tragedy of the heroic situation is no longer expressed in bombast, grand imagery, violent exclamation or extreme self-pity, but is now conveyed through terse, abrupt comment. On his departure from Italy Hannibal is clearly tormented by Brasidas' praise of the

<sup>18</sup> Quoted on p. 112 of the present study.

natural beauty of the land which the hero longed to conquer. Through acrid comment and the attempt to conceal his emotional turmoil the hero reveals his true feelings:

Brasidas: Dieses Kapua hat eine herrliche Bucht.  
Hannibal: Die Schiffe riechen noch stark nach Pech und Teer.  
Brasidas: Die blauen Berge in der Ferne -  
Hannibal: (für sich) Was spricht er von meinen zorngeschwellenen Adern?  
Brasidas: - man möchte tausend Augen haben, um sich satt zu sehen an ihnen, in diesen klaren Wellen, an jenen duftatmenden Tälern.  
Hannibal: Hätte man gar kein Auge gehabt, brauchte man das alles nicht zu vergessen.  
Brasidas: (halblaut) Jene Rebenhänge, über ihnen das Traubengehäng der ewigen Sterne nach und nach aufquellend - Es ist, als ob -  
Hannibal: Es Abend würde - Steuermann, das Steuer rechts - siehst Du nicht jenen Felsvorsprung? (WB 3, 123)

The diction of pomp, ceremony and artificiality, the linguistic level employed by the puppet king Prusias in the final act, has in this drama become the object and vehicle of satire, the chief means of contrast between the genuinely heroic and the pseudo-majesty of a ridiculous and insignificant court:

Prusias: Ruf und führe den Hannibal bis an den Rand des Purpurteppichs vor dem Estrade meines Throns.  
(zu den Höflingen)  
Erstaunt nicht - Merkt euch vielmehr, ich habe mich von allen Seiten her unterrichtet, und gefunden, daß Hannibal zwar keine erlauchte, aber doch eine edle Person ist, der in Betracht seiner Taten als Krieger und der langen Reihe seiner Vorfahren auch erlaucht wäre, wären die letzteren nicht Kaufleute gewesen. Darum darf er kommen grad bis an des Teppichs goldfranzigen Rand. (WB 3, 145)

In the mouth of Prusias false pathos (his absurd final gesture) has become a means of irony, skilfully set off against the resigned, simple tones of Hannibal's death:

- Nun, Römer, entzieht sich euch ein verbannter, greisender Mann, vor dem ihr gebt, bis sein letzter Atem dahin -  
(er trinkt den Rest des Giftes)  
Gift zu eurer Gesundheit! - Ei, wirkt es noch nicht bei mir? Das währt lange! - Ha, da - es kommt - Schwarzer Pilot, wer bist Du? (WB 3, 153)

In Hannibal Grabbe is clearly searching for an original and personal dramatic language. The excesses of the early dramas and the linguistic diversity of Napoleon have been abandoned in an attempt to find a uniform style with which to convey the tragedy of the hero and his civilisation.

Grabbe demonstrates in this play his ability to create tragic effect with greater facility in compressed prose than in the popular medium of grand tragedy, blank verse. Here the dramatist has discovered the linguistic style which suits him best. The suggestions in Marius und Sulla and Heinrich VI of an increasing concentration of speech are developed almost into a "geballter Sprachstil". Imitating the habits of natural speech, the poet achieves a considerable degree of naturalism, despite the fact that his consistent laconism itself ultimately represents a means of stylisation.

The language of this work is often praised as one of Grabbe's most significant contribution to realism in the drama. Yet it should be stressed that the transposition of verse into prose during the composition of Hannibal (not even his own idea) was not undertaken specifically as a means of heightening realistic effect. As Grabbe's correspondence with Immermann clearly shows, the verse of Hannibal was dissolved chiefly on account of its hybrid nature. The dramatist regarded the abandonment of verse as an opportunity to achieve greater power of expression through the removal of the many excesses of the dramatic language ("moderirter und doch kräftiger"). The liberation from the fetters of tradition (Grabbe speaks in a letter to Immermann of "die verselnden Ketten")<sup>19</sup> allowed the poet to shear his language of all dross and achieve a compression of style: "Auch wird mir nun leicht manches Pompöse in einzelnen Redensarten, durch den Vers herbeigeschleppt, auszulassen".<sup>20</sup> He welcomed the greater freedom offered by the exclusion of metrical rigidity, itself adopted, he confesses, out of "eine alberne Furcht vor dem Alterthum", and nowhere mentions verisimilitude as a desired effect. The use of verse and prose, then, seems originally to have represented to Grabbe the most convenient means of distinction between the ancient and the modern, as is amplified by his statements regarding Napoleon. Only after considerable hesitation, however - and this should be emphasised - did Grabbe succumb to a development which seems in

<sup>19</sup> Letter of 8 January 1835.

<sup>20</sup> Letter of 18 December 1834.

many ways to have been only inevitable.

From the multitude of manuscript fragments of Die Hermannsschlacht compiled by Bergmann in his historical-critical edition, it is evident that the poet had committed himself to the prose form from the very outset. Grabbe himself described the work as a "Genre- und Bataillenstück", and as such its language falls into two categories: the comically flavoured naturalistic style of the genre scenes depicting Hermann's peasant countrymen, reminiscent of the camp scenes of the early dramas, with word play (the Germans confuse Latin terms), gruff humour and a certain degree of sentimentality aimed at the glorification of the "noble savage"; and the necessarily exclamatory and imperative style of the lengthy battle scenes which constitute two-thirds of the drama, filled with orders, frenzied action and the din of battle. On both these levels the diction is predominantly natural, but the tendency towards the laconic, seen, for example, in Eingang 5:

Varus (geht durch die Reihen): Dein Schwert.

Legionär: Hier.

Varus: Die Klinge hat Rost.

Legionär: Eingefressenes Blut. Weiß nicht mehr, aus welchem Gefecht.  
Es ist nicht abzuwaschen.

Varus: Zeig mir die Brust. Sie atmet schwer. - Viele Wunden. Doch das Hemd ist grob und schlecht.

Legionär: Es ward mir so geliefert. (WB 3, 334-5)

is on occasions taken to an extreme which destroys any realistic effect and creates an absurd impression. Scenes Eingang 6 and Dritter Tag 2 both suffer from overcompression which is hardly able to convey the idea of conversation. Grabbe has moved from the extreme of turgidity to that of taciturnity.

If the lesser individuals of the drama employ a language marked by the comical, simple and naturalistic, the hero stands apart from his fellows through his use of a diction which is frequently characterised by the pathos, rhetoric and imagery encountered in the early dramas. The technique of differentiation between characters through linguistic levelling seen in Napoleon (and anticipated to an extent by Marius and his men) is readopted here in order to underline the hero's idealistic and selfless

intentions:

Deutschland, verlaß mich nicht mit deinen Fluren,  
Bergen, Tälern und Männern! ... - Du mit ewigem Grün  
prangender Rhein, du donnernde Donau, du, meine Weser,  
und du leuchtende Elbe, die ihr alle in so vielen  
Schlachten uns zur Seite wart, helfende, blitzende  
unendliche Schwerter, - ihr solltet speichelleckend  
fluten unter dem Brückengekett des Römers? Nein,  
wir sind dankbar, und werden euch erlösen. (WB 3, 336-7)

The hero, his wife and to a lesser degree Varus, who likewise maintains an elevation and idealism foreign to his subordinates, stand in contrast to their prosaic countrymen. The linguistic uniformity of Hannibal, in this respect the most accomplished of Grabbe's dramas, is thus absent from Die Hermannsschlacht, which strives for an element of idealisation on both an elevated (Hermann) and a fundamental plane (German peasants), and combines naturalism of diction with sentimentalised idealisation to produce a frequently incongruous effect.

The development from verse to prose in Grabbe's dramas was an extremely hesitant process. Although the awkwardness of the iambs of Gothland (1822) and Nannette und Maria (1823) suggested the playwright's discomfort with the verse medium and exhibited a distinct tendency towards the patterns of prose, Grabbe apparently strove to resist the temptations of prose drama, repeatedly returning to verse for later works. After the comedy Scherz (1822) Grabbe introduced prose into tragedy for the first time in Marius und Sulla (1823) but retained verse for Don Juan und Faust (1828) and the two Hohenstaufen dramas (1829 and 1830). Here, perhaps, the very material dictated the choice of the poetic-elevated medium, and the metre is considerably tightened. Even in the case of Napoleon (1830) and Hannibal (1835), though, prose was adopted only after some consideration, in the latter case at a very late stage. With Die Hermannsschlacht (1836) the poet appears to have been in no doubt. It is, however, important to note that the various fragments of dramatic projects dating from as late as 1835 fortify our impression of Grabbe's indecision. While the tiny fragments of the comedies Eulenspiegel and Der Student tritt ins Philistertum are in prose, Grabbe's

Christus fragments are composed in verse and the five short surviving fragments of Alexander der Große show a mixture of the two forms.<sup>21</sup> Here, it seems, Grabbe had discounted the possibility that his employment of verse in tragedy might have been born out of the "alberne Furcht vor dem Alterthum" which bound him in the original version of Hannibal; he is prepared, even after the difficulties experienced with his latest work, to resume the elevated form. In this context the five Alexander fragments, which show in compressed form several of the typical features of Grabbe's dramatic language, are particularly significant. Fragment (1) shows the extremely laconic and elliptical verse which had been prefigured in parts of Heinrich VI;<sup>22</sup> (2) the forced, stilted metre and rhyme which was noted in Barbarossa;<sup>23</sup> (2) and (3) trite metaphor;<sup>24</sup> (3) the grand metaphor drawn from the cosmos which is to be seen in the early plays;<sup>25</sup> and (5) concise, terse prose.<sup>26</sup> Not even after Hannibal, then, had Grabbe completely convinced himself of the desirability of the consistent use of prose in the drama and continued to compose bombastic, pathos-laden verse until a year before his death.

The imperfections of Grabbe's verse dramas have been noted; the iambs are deficient both as metrical sequence and as the vehicle of exaggerated imagery, bombast, pathos and hyperbole. The result is linguistic extremism

21 These fragments are included in volume 4 of the historical-critical edition under the heading "kleinere dramatische Fragmente".

22 Alexander: Phalangen haltet! Hier der Hellespont!  
Jenseits der Perser unermeßnes Reich! (WB 4, 341)

23 Thais: Held, je mehr das Blut dich schmückt,  
So mehr bin ich - du Gott! - beglückt!  
Alexander: O Thais, Thais, Kön'ge sinken,  
Wo Deine Augen ihnen winken! (WB 4, 341)

24 Thais: Augen, brecht auf: des Lichtes Thore!  
Alexander:(sieht in ihre Augen): Die himmlischen, die seel'gen  
Meteore! (WB 4, 341)

25 Alexander: Wenn ich Dich liebe, Thais, glaub' ich,  
Es ist die Welt mit all' den brennenden  
Gestirnen! (WB 4, 342)

26 Quoted on p. 102 of the present study.



of various forms - in Gothland of violence, bestiality and despair, in Don Juan und Faust of individualism and self-assertion, in Barbarossa of romantic glorification. With the introduction of prose in the final three dramas, Grabbe achieves a degree of moderation and evolves a dramatic language which is his own. This prose starts out as a means of contrast, comic effect and natural colour (and vaguely, but not consistently, as the vehicle of the lower classes) and is then consolidated into the sole medium of the major tragedies. At its most impressive it is highly concentrated, pithy and terse, conveying tragic effect without the trappings of grand rhetoric. As the medium of the common people it is at its most effective in the masterly opening scenes of Napoleon, but as a technique of realism it is extended, as lifelike, credible diction, to all spheres of the major dramas, for the most part convincingly reproducing the habits of natural speech. Here, indeed, language emerges as the main vehicle of realism. In Napoleon the subtly graded prose is able to typify several social groups with little trace of stylisation. Dialect (Heinrich VI, Napoleon), coarse expressions and mild curses heighten the naturalistic effect.

Yet Grabbe is rarely concerned to maintain a consistent or exclusively realistic level. In all his dramas he retains an element of pathos (even as "poetic prose") as a means of contrast and differentiation, not necessarily between sociologically defined groups, but between groups characterised by their ideal stature. We noted especially in Napoleon and Die Hermannsschlacht the manner in which characters from the heroic plane articulate their lofty sentiments in a diction far removed from the prosaic language of the common "Volk".<sup>27</sup> Stylisation by means of elevated diction fulfils a calculated differential function in Grabbe's art and points to a fundamental theme of his work: the conflict between the mediocre and the heroic and the

<sup>27</sup> Immermann also recognised the rhetorical pathos in Grabbe's prose: "Die Personen sprechen zuweilen so schwülstig untereinander, daß man bei aller Bewunderung ... über diese geschraubten Phrasen lächeln muß. Aber hätte der Dichter gemeinere und natürlichere Worte gewählt, so wären ihm diese der Realität mit Riesenkräften abgerungenen Gestalten unter den Händen zu Realismen erstarrt" (Deutsche Dramaturgie, volume 3, p. 247).

poet's rejection of the former. Language thus underlines the utopian element of Grabbe's oeuvre and in so doing necessarily destroys any consistent realism of diction. Whilst the poet is clearly concerned with realism on basic levels of the later tragedies, he is equally concerned to preserve an alternative, highly stylised means of expression and resists consistent naturalism, a fact which roots him firmly in the hesitant struggle between tradition and change characteristic of much Restoration literature. Just as the juxtaposition of realism and utopianism in theme causes a peculiar imbalance in Grabbe's dramas, so too does the corresponding mixture of linguistic levels create an alarming conflict of styles.

## V. The Form of Grabbe's Dramas

Clearly it is not possible to speak of a "realistic dramatic form"; form is an abstract with no tangible relationship with reality and cannot, unlike language, be measured against an instantly recognisable norm from everyday life. The growth of realism in drama during the nineteenth century, a hesitant process, did not manifest itself in one standard formal convention, but is to be traced in works of considerable structural diversity. A basic development in dramatic form, one which corresponds approximately with the emergence of realistic theatre, is, however, clearly recognisable in German literature of the period. Reduced to its essentials, this development betrays an openness and flexibility, a marked dissolution of the rigidity of classical forms which increases in proportion to the degree of extraneous material absorbed by drama. The more sensitive theatre becomes to the laws of the real rather than of the ideal, the more it strives to assimilate the trappings of the objective world ("Dingwelt") in its breadth and complexity, the more it leans away from the universal and spiritual towards the empirical and sociological, the looser and broader it must then become in order to encompass the scope of its new subject matter. The structure of the classical drama as observed by Calderon, Corneille and Racine and the mature Goethe and Schiller, with its symmetry, balance and linear progression of scenes, was clearly a major obstacle to the presentation of a reality which was, in the eyes of the nineteenth century, becoming increasingly fragmented, materialistic and historical, a world no longer explicable by abstract principles but only by inescapable material causality.

The new desire to fill drama with the experience of everyday life and the empirical matter of the external world, to transform the stage from a rarefied symbolic plane into the showplace of reality, was to gain force during the course of the century as literature progressed towards naturalism, the culmination and logical conclusion of the mimetic tendencies

in nineteenth-century literature. It was reinforced by the decline of the idealistic eighteenth-century world view and the emergence of a metaphysics which viewed reality as fragmented and cruel, a philosophy which was ultimately reflected in the artistic forms of the period. With the eradication of idealistic thought came the gradual dissolution of classical forms.<sup>1</sup> Elements of the new form had, however, been present for some time and had entered Germany in the 1770s as a result of the Shakespeare cult of the "Sturm und Drang". Here, in Götz von Berlichingen and Lenz' social dramas Die Soldaten and Der Hofmeister, are to be found the seeds of what Brecht was later to describe as the "non-Aristotelian" strain of drama, a development which he traced from Lenz to Grabbe and Büchner and which he claimed as his own heritage.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental formal elements of the "modern" dramaturgy of such writers are readily discernible: a loose structure based on the juxtaposition of independent, episodic scenes; the abandonment of strictly linear plot; extreme freedom with the three unities; little or no regard for the social station of figures; the dissolution of the grand verse of classical tragedy; the predominance of the external forces - historical, social, biological - which govern man's destiny; a degree of internal commentary; an increased attention to the paraphernalia of the "objective" everyday world; a drastic expansion in breadth and scope beyond the compression and limitation of highly symbolic classical art. The new concern with realism necessitated a new assessment of the possibilities

1 Klaus Ziegler, who views the tendency towards open form drama as a fundamental characteristic of realism, writes of the "Auflockerung oder gar Auflösung der Wirklichkeit in chronologisch und kausal, logisch oder emotional nur locker miteinander verbundene, also betont individuelle und in ihrer Individualität oft schroff gegensätzliche Teilausschnitte und Einzelperspektiven. Damit geht es in der Form des realistischen Dramas erneut um eine grundlegende Subjektivierung und Relativierung aller weltanschaulichen Glaubens- und Vernunftgehalte - um eine rätselhafte, ja, nicht selten schroff widerspruchsvolle Vielgestaltigkeit des menschlich individuellen oder kollektiven oder sogar allen welthaften Daseins überhaupt, die niemals in einer rational eindeutigen Weltanschauung oder Kunstform aufgehoben werden kann!" ("Stiltypen", p. 155).

2 See below, note 20.

of dramatic form; the result of such a development was the predominance of the atectonic form during the age of naturalism.<sup>3</sup>

At the outset of the nineteenth century in Germany the two major dramatic structural principles, which Klotz has defined as the "open" and the "closed",<sup>4</sup> coexisted and developed along their own lines, the newer form in only a hesitant, at first sporadic manner. And they remain the dominant forms of modern theatre, so much so that John Gassner feels able to generalise: "Die spezifischen Wesenszüge des modernen Dramas können am bequemsten unter den Kategorien des realistischen und des antirealistischen Theaters betrachtet werden",<sup>5</sup> and Klaus Ziegler, in his study of the history of modern German drama, divides, though somewhat more cautiously, its later manifestations into three main categories, contrasting the "tektonisch-idealisierend" with the "tektonisch-realistisch" and the "atektonisch-realistisch", of which the latter is applied to dramatists, among them Grabbe, of the non-Aristotelian mould:

die "realistische" Formtendenz ... wird einmal im wesenhaft tektonischen Sinn einer hochgradigen Konzentration und zum anderen im wesenhaft atektonischen Sinn einer hochgradigen Auflockerung von Raum, Zeit und Personenbestand abgewandelt -

3 Kohl writes of the form of naturalist drama: "Die Literatur tendierte dazu, sich von all jenen Formkonventionen freizumachen, die die dargestellte Realität ästhetisch ordneten, und strebte nach Möglichkeiten, Wirklichkeit als Panorama oder vollständig erfaßten Wirklichkeitsausschnitt wiederzugeben, ohne auf "sinnvollen" Darstellungsbeginn oder -abschluß zu achten. Augenfällig ist hier beispielsweise der Verzicht des naturalistischen Theaters auf den traditionellen Dramenaufbau mit sorgfältig konstruierter Peripetie zugunsten einer detaillierten sprachmimischen Momentaufnahme, die dokumentarisch zu erfassen es keiner besonderen dichterischen Intuition mehr bedürfen sollte. In diesem - zumindest theoretisch - radikalen Anspruch, die Beschreibung der Wirklichkeit keinerlei Formgesetzen mehr zu unterwerfen, liegt die eigentliche ästhetische Revolution des Naturalismus" (p. 127). John Osborne also notes: "From the time of the Naturalists onwards the open form ceases to represent an undercurrent in German dramatic writing, and gradually becomes the dominant form" ("Naturalism and the Dramaturgy of the Open Drama", German Life and Letters, 23 (1969/70), 119-28, p. 120).

4 Klotz adopts the terms from Heinrich Wölfflin's Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe (München, 1915). They had already been transferred to the drama by Oskar Walzel.

5 John Gassner, "Formen des modernen Dramas", in Episches Theater, edited by Reinhold Grimm (Köln/Berlin, 1966), p. 398. Eric Bentley in his study of modern drama, The Playwright as Thinker (New York, 1945), makes the same distinction.

dort mehr im Sinn eines Vorrangs der verdeckten oder inneren Handlung sowie des abstrakt reflektorischen, thesenhaft ideologischen Elements und hier mehr im Sinn eines Vorrangs der äußeren Handlung sowie des stimmungsmäßig-atmosphärischen Elements.

The development of the atectonic dramatic form, which undoubtedly entered Germany via Shakespeare, does not concern us here.<sup>7</sup> But it is interesting and significant to note that the potential scope, freedom and emphasis on background elements permitted by the atectonic form obviously offered immense possibilities to the historical drama. These clearly appealed to Grabbe and were to play a vital part in his portrayal of history, allowing a breadth of historical detail unknown in classical treatments of material in which history often represented little more than a backcloth for timeless moral and ethical issues and where the objects of the actual historical world had a primarily symbolic value. Historical realism - here understood as the attempt to place a given epoch on the stage in all its diversity and complexity with a marked concentration on socio-political forces and a degree of objectivity (Grabbe's "Enträtselung der Geschichte") - naturally benefits from the epic tendencies inherent in the open form. In this respect the atectonic form becomes the appropriate vehicle of increasing dramatic realism and one with especial significance for the dramatist who is concerned in his works to embrace as much historical material as possible. Strict causality of plot, motivated in logically arranged, interdependent scenes, compression, concentration only on those elements vital to the crux of the drama are cast aside by the modern form as it contrives to reproduce an empirical, not a spiritual totality of heterogeneous rather than homogenous elements. History as a chaotic,

6 Klaus Ziegler, "Das deutsche Drama der Neuzeit", in Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß, volume 2, p. 970.

7 Marianne Kesting, in "Zur Struktur des modernen Dramas" (in Epi-sches Theater), traces the development of epic/atectonic tendencies in theatre back to the choric-ceremonial origins of drama itself, from Thespis and Aeschylus to the mystery plays, Calderon's Auto Sacramental, Hans Sachs and the Jesuit plays, before Shakespeare. On modern anti-Aristotelian theatre: John Osborne, "Anti-Aristotelian Theatre from Lenz to Wedekind", in The German Theatre, edited by Ronald Hayman (London, 1975).

elemental force is thus captured and reflected as a rolling, fragmented process in a dramatic form well-suited to a more immediate and objective - in short more realistic - presentation of historical material.

Grabbe's mature dramas are noted above all, perhaps, for their impressive assimilation of multifarious historical matter and their recreation of the manifold currents of a given period. That such considerations are essentially incompatible with the poet's overwhelming interest in the heroic individual has already been recognised as a prime cause of the undeniable imbalance and incongruity of Grabbean drama. This duality poses, too, an almost insurmountable problem with regard to dramatic form. The extreme concentricity which inevitably arises from the poet's penchant for the dominant monagonist clearly conflicts with his objective portrayal of vital and concrete forces. Grabbe's increasing concern with collective historical currents, however, naturally necessitates the development of new techniques, and these have frequently been mentioned in connection with the realistic quality of his dramas.<sup>8</sup> Whilst it would certainly be inappropriate to conceive of a simply "realistic form" it nevertheless seems clear that an intensification of the verism and actuality of dramatic art leads to the evolvement of appropriate alternative forms.

The development of Grabbe's dramatic form stands at the centre of this chapter. The structure of his plays - the techniques of exposition, the progression of plot, the major formal principles, the problems of tension and conflict - requires, within the context of the dramatist's realism, consideration with a view to its ability to accommodate the poet's changing conception of the aims of historical drama. Particular attention, therefore, is to be paid to the emergence of those elements which dissolve rigidity of construction and facilitate the assimilation of material which has no direct

<sup>8</sup> Among those commentators who equate the new open form of Grabbe's dramas directly with his realism are Siefert (pp. 78-9), Ziegler ("Stil-typen", p. 155) and Spalter. The latter notes that Grabbe "employs this /episodic/ structure as an element of illustrative realism. Episodic development allows him to pinpoint whatever social and historical forces control the action of the play and, by implication, human action in general" (p. 41). Also p. 50.

bearing on the action but provides historical colour, comment, demonstration or interpretation. Especial consideration is due to the arrangement and function of the scenes and their contribution to the progression of plot. By tracing any increase in the number of scenes which fulfil the purpose of providing breadth and openness, and by paying attention to the intensification of the episodic structure of the dramas, it will be possible to observe the way in which the poet's growing preoccupation with "historical realism" is reflected in his changing dramatic forms.

Gothland, whilst its monstrous length clearly explodes the stringent requirements of classical drama, exhibits features typical of conventional dramaturgy which disappear in Grabbe's later plays. In this pseudo-historical drama the mythical war between the Swedes and Finns serves only a superficial and limited function, initially explaining the otherwise implausible arrival of Berdoa on Swedish soil and later providing a supra-personal dimension to the action which magnifies the hero's crimes (by enabling him to vent his wrath against his own fatherland) and elevates his personal suffering to a universal plane. Despite a multitude of incredible effects (unknown letters, disguises, chance meetings) and an abundant supply of devices borrowed from popular fate tragedy (lightning, comets, thunderbolts), the plot of the drama is motivated by the oldest of techniques: intrigue. The treacherous antagonist Berdoa is able, by exploiting Gothland's preference for his younger brother Manfred, to convince the hero that the latter has been murdered by another brother, Friedrich. Playing into Berdoa's hands, Gothland avenges the alleged fratricide. From here on the course is set and, as Berdoa's plans reach fruition with astounding ease, the drama progresses from intrigue to intrigue and from crime to crime. The tragic fate of the hero transcends his own person, engulfs his family, friends and fatherland and results in a major indictment of existence itself. The frequent changes of location and the wealth of incident, the frenzied pace, variety of dialogue and overdependence on lengthy monologue make for a drama of wide and sometimes confusing scope which moves



towards its conclusion only hesitantly. At all times, however, the action stems from the initiative of the two major figures who stand in bitter conflict, and in this respect the essentially metaphysical drama is moulded around the conventional opposition of protagonist and antagonist. Many criticisms might be - and have been - levelled at Grabbe's first attempt at drama: it is inordinately long and, as regards individual acts and scenes, unbalanced. Act three, scene one is longer than any other entire act. The play as a whole relies too heavily on the simple contrast of opposites (Gothland - Berdoa; good - evil; Swede - Finn; European - African) and lacks formal subtlety and finesse. Its constant turbulence of plot seems absurd and grows tedious.

The first three acts progress rapidly through the opening stages of development. I/1 provides the exposition, Berdoa's deception begins in I/2 and bears fruit in II/2 where the hero murders his brother; in III/1 Gothland recognises his error when he learns the truth (the peripeteia). In this long scene much takes place - Gothland becomes King of Finland and destroys the Swedish fleet, giving the Finns a temporary victory. The final two acts, however, reduce the tempo by developing the Cäcilia-Skiold line of action and introducing the hero's plot to exterminate the Finnish army. The inevitable dénouement, the death of Gothland, is long retarded and arrives only after considerable grotesque effect. Some of Grabbe's devices are incongruous and border on the comical (Gothland luring the Swedish fleet to its destruction; the 'Schwarzwildnegerjagd'). The drama is undoubtedly heavy-handed in construction and shows an immature poet unwilling to discard motifs or themes in the interest of conciseness. The sheer extravagance of the drama violates the vaguely Aristotelian nature of its conception: while the conventional progression from exposition through development and climax to dénouement is roughly discernible behind the profusion of events, the unities of time and action are observed and there is a clear attempt to evoke catharsis, the drama is, in the last analysis, barely organised and impresses through isolated scenes rather

than through its overall effect.

Don Juan und Faust is a more carefully controlled and, unlike its predecessor, an eminently stageworthy drama. The four acts are better balanced and none of the eleven scenes strikingly outweighs its neighbours; indeed, the division of the action into these four acts appears on this occasion to coincide naturally with the structure of the plot and each scene closes at a point vital to the sustaining of tension. Thus Act I provides the exposition and ends with Don Juan's accumulation of information necessary to his suit of Donna Anna. This act, in Juan's epigrammatic exchanges with Leporello in scene one and Faust's extensive monologue in scene two, also establishes the programmatic bases of the drama and outlines the two opposing principles embodied by the dual heroes. Act II develops the plot (the direct conflict over Donna Anna is initiated by Faust's reaction to her portrait in II/1), encompasses Faust's abduction of the heroine to Montblanc - a bridge to the third act which retards the plot for a time - and ends on Don Gusman's challenge to Don Juan. The outcome of the ensuing duel provides the tension between Acts two and three. Act III opens with Juan's victory in the duel and then changes the location from Rome to Montblanc. More ideology is expounded before III/3 provides the long awaited confrontation between the heroes and closes with Faust's suggestion that he might kill his captive. In the final act the climax is retarded further by the continuation of the Juan-Gusman plot in scene one and by the insertion of a brief encounter between Faust and the gnomes of Montblanc in the second scene, again of purely programmatic interest. In the next scene the climax arrives when Faust murders Donna Anna, and his decision to report her death to Don Juan leads over to the final scene and its dénouement.

The plot, then, progresses in a logical and straightforward manner, interrupted only by scenes designed to convey the metaphysical implications of the drama or to provide satire. It exploits a principle of contrast which is to be noted not merely in the arrangement of scenes, but also

in the very essentials of the play. Apart from the tendency to alternate scenes showing the two antagonists (II/1 and 2; III/1 and 2), Grabbe also places members of the two opposing groups on stage successively within individual scenes (II/1 and IV/4), thus achieving maximum effect through juxtaposition. In this way he is able to underline the thematic contrasts of the drama - between Faust's 'Unendlichkeitshunger' and Juan's 'Lebenslust', between the German's gravity in his dealings with his companion, the black knight, and Juan's flippant and frivolous relationship with the clownish Leporello, a source of much comic relief and satire in the drama. But if contrast is a strength of this play, it is also its major weakness. The fact that the titular heroes represent such (apparently) irreconcilable and diametrically opposed principles and undergo no development deprives the play of dramatic interest and leads to a deep rift in the unity of action. The result of such a drastic opposition is an unfortunate duality of plot which keeps the heroes apart rather than bringing them together. Both Don Juan and Faust have their own lines of action which run parallel and converge on only three occasions; in II/2 at the wedding-ball, in III/3 on the slopes of Montblanc (really only an exchange of ideological slogans) and in IV/4 at the conclusion. There is, then, no real interplay between the two and they remain heroes without a dramatic conflict, rotating almost independently around a central point, Donna Anna. Antagonism in the strict sense of the word is absent, and the pair become little more than representatives of ideas with demonstrative rather than dramatic status.

Grabbe's early non-historical tragedies are marked by structural flaws which ultimately detract from their dramatic (and tragic) quality.<sup>9</sup> A somewhat primitive technique of contrast which juxtaposes crude opposites and a marked monologic tendency are their main formal features, and both dramas lack the strict logic and exclusiveness of well-organised classical tragedy. In many ways, however, these plays betray their Aristotelian heritage: in

<sup>9</sup> Since we are concerned here with the development of Grabbe's later form as manifested in his historical tragedies, the comedy Scherz and the minor dramas do not interest us in this context.

development of plot, in milieu, in the personages, in their exploitation of traditional motifs. Only in Marius und Sulla do we note a development towards the technique of Grabbe's later dramas. The second version of this fragment, with its exhaustive prose outlines, offers a useful insight into the poet's method of composition, and his intentions regarding the progression and motivation of the action are clearly set down.<sup>10</sup>

The absence of direct conflict noted in Don Juan und Faust reemerges as a striking feature of Grabbe's first historical drama. It leads one to the conclusion that the poet is in this drama concerned not so much with the antagonism between his titular heroes (Marius dies before Sulla's return to Rome and thus no confrontation is possible) as with the political situation within the city itself. The action of the play falls into two (unequal)

10 Marius und Sulla gains added significance for Wolfgang Hegele as the earliest practical illustration of the precepts outlined by Grabbe in the essay "Über die Shakspearomanie", stemming from the same year, 1827. His examination, the only recent full-length study of Grabbe's form, superseding the now outdated "Formprobleme bei Grabbe" by Hans Neuhoof (Diss. Bonn, 1932), selects four quotations from Grabbe's "theoretical writings" to establish what Hegele describes as "etwas wie eine theoretische Grundlegung der zukünftigen Form des Grabbeschen Geschichtsdramas" (p. 173). The essential qualities of this new form are a) "eine dramatische, konzentrische und dabei die Idee der Geschichte wiedergebende Behandlung" with "dramatischer Mittelpunkt" and "konzentrische Idee"; b) "möglichste Einfachheit und Klarheit in Wort, Form und Handlung" c) the ability to decipher "den wahren Geist der Geschichte" d) the emphasis on the unhaltable necessity behind historical development. Throughout his valuable study Hegele seeks these elements in Grabbe's dramas, arriving ultimately at the conclusion that, despite flaws in other areas, Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa represents the finest realisation of Grabbe's ideal form. Grabbe's three major artistic aims - to present historical epochs on stage by embracing as much material as possible; to present great individuals in their historical function; to interpret history - are not easily reconcilable and often lead to diffusion and dissolution of structural unity. Only Barbarossa achieves the balance, harmony and tightness of construction which, according to Hegele, Grabbe sought throughout his career. One must, however, question Hegele's assertion that Barbarossa is concerned to place a historical epoch on stage in comprehensive breadth. Quite the opposite seems to be the case: structural unity is achieved here as a result of almost exclusive concentration on individual figures. Further, Hegele's insistence on the precepts of "Über die Shakspearomanie", which he himself recognises as heated, pointed polemic rather than as a considered treatise, leads him to an overemphasis on "Geschlossenheit" ("Der Konzeption nach sollte das Grabbesche Drama in seiner Art geschlossen sein", p. 255). The elements which produce the openness of Grabbean drama are seen essentially as obstacles to unity and not assessed as components of a new technique. Our own approach takes the opposite view, namely that Napoleon is a much closer reflection of Grabbe's true aims as a historical dramatist than Barbarossa, which, far from representing a new form of "Geschichtsdrama", adheres very closely to prevalent conventions.

parts which portray the fate of Rome under its respective leaders, and it progresses in a series of movements which place Marius and Sulla alternately in the foreground.

The opening scene provides expository information with the exiled Marius on the ruins of Carthage. His spirit of resignation is overcome, and the plot begins, upon the arrival of his son with the news that preparations have been made for a return to Rome. Marius sets out and reappears only in the next act. The closing four scenes of this first act switch the location to Boetia where Sulla is to do battle with Mithradates; they show the preparations, the battle and the peace settlement respectively. Sulla is now free to return to Rome. Act two is devoted entirely to the situation in Rome before and during Marius' reign of terror. Seven brief, loosely arranged scenes are placed side by side in an attempt to reproduce the atmosphere of the city in an almost kaleidoscopic manner. Scenes two and three, impressive crowd scenes, contribute little to the plot but fulfil a purely demonstrative function, depicting the chaos within the city. Prose sketches for uncompleted scenes show an intended spotlighting effect on the part of the poet: in rapid succession we witness the Roman senate, violence on the streets, the revenge of Marius, the suicide of Merula and the flight of Sulla's wife, Metella. In this act Grabbe's technique of outlining a historical situation by throwing short, isolated events on to the stage with only minimal external connection is seen at its most effective. Tension is maintained between Acts two and three by a 'flashback' to Sulla in III/1 - his wife Metella reappears here and thus forms a bridge between the two acts. Sulla is advancing on Rome. Meanwhile, Marius is in a state of decline, and the next four scenes (III/2 - IV/1) show his downfall. In III/2 news of Sulla's approach takes him aback and brings home to him the precariousness of his situation; his final urge to action is hampered by the massacre of his Marians (who had been characterised in another 'demonstration scene', III/3) in III/4. He dies, a broken man, in IV/1. For the remainder of the drama Sulla claims our attention. In IV/2 he defeats the younger Marius and

goes on to meet Telesinus and his Samnites. IV/4 is another scene which serves only a descriptive function - this time of the Samnites. At the end of Act IV the outcome of this battle is still unclear, but the tension is resolved in V/1 where Sulla recaptures the city. The final scene provides an unexpected (and unmotivated) climax with the hero's resignation.

The action swings, then, from one hero to the other, the plight of Rome being the central point around which the plot revolves. A marked duality in structure is not, however, to be overlooked: the heroes are isolated from one another and claim our attention individually, but never collectively. Although Grabbe is clearly interested in the characters he has created in Marius and Sulla, the close attention paid to the creation of a historical reality through selected points of crystallisation testifies to a more general concern with the "Geist der Geschichte" inherent in the declining Roman state. The epic tendencies of Napoleon are foreshadowed here in scenes which stand apart from the developing action and provide intensification of the historical background: the crowd scenes II/3 and II/5; the senate scene II/2; scenes which characterise groups previously unencountered on the stage (III/3, IV/4); and scenes, or parts thereof, which offer little more than commentary and interpretation of the action (the fisherman prologue; Kaphis; much of Saturninus' dialogue). Noteworthy above all is the independent nature of juxtaposed scenes (the "selbständige Handlungsteile" of modern drama), particularly in the second act, which fail to unravel a developing plot as is the case in compressed classical drama: just over half of the twenty-three scenes (this increase in the number of scenes is itself due to the poet's desire to place a historical epoch on stage) directly move the action forward.

The basic tension of the drama is maintained by the uncertainty of Marius' success in reconquering Rome and the doubts as to his course of action upon arrival there during the second and third acts; also by the certainty that Sulla will return and challenge his position (or that of his followers) in the final two acts. After the struggle is over, only

Sulla's character is able to sustain the action and bring the drama to a conclusion:

Der Anlage zufolge wird es in dem Ringen zwischen Marius und Sulla, endlich aber in dem gewaltigeren Charakter des letzteren seinen Kulminationspunkt finden.

An analysis of the structure of the play demonstrates, however, that the "Ringen zwischen Marius und Sulla; is the focal point of our attention only in a limited sense.- in view of the diffusion of elements, it can hardly be claimed to be the "konzentrische Idee" of the drama.

Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa exhibits a tightening of structural elements.

The duality of plot is now removed (despite a double conflict facing the hero) and the drama is carefully organised towards a specific point of culmination in the fifth act (the 'Weserschlacht'). A subsequent reduction in the intensity of the historical background is noticeable, a fact which is doubtless largely attributable to the fact that the interest of the play centres on the portrayal of the somewhat romanticised struggle between Barbarossa and Heinrich der Löwe.

The two scenes of Act one provide a dual exposition and establish the starting points of the action; they introduce the oppressed Milanese and the imperial camp respectively. The second scene also shows the Lion deliberating over the possibility of deserting his emperor, and thus both conflicts which confront Barbarossa (the first with Lombardy, the second with Heinrich's Saxons) are introduced in the first act. The opening two scenes of Act two belong together: Heinrich has reached his decision to withdraw his support from Barbarossa's cause and he reports his intentions to the emperor in the vital scene II/2. In this scene the plot effectively begins when Friedrich becomes aware of the double threat facing him. He must first engage the Lombards, which he does in the following scene, but knows that upon the resolution of the Italian campaign he will have to face Heinrich in battle to decide Germany's fate. The tragic conflict of the

drama is thus postponed (but not forgotten) until the final act; this scene leads over to both IV/2 (Heinrich's reappearance) and to V/1 (the battle). Act two ends with Barbarossa's defeat at Legnano and his decision to attempt a reconciliation with the Pope. Tension between the second and the third acts is afforded by the uncertainty concerning this meeting and by the prospect of the eventual confrontation with Heinrich der Löwe. III/1 - the conference with Pope Alexander - resolves the Italian conflict, paves the way for the battle with Saxony and commits Barbarossa to a crusade upon the settlement of his domestic troubles, a theme which links this scene with the finale of the drama. The first movement of the drama, then, the Italian campaign, is over.

III/2, virtually the central scene of the play, provides an interlude (Barbarossa's return to Beatrice), divides the drama in half and acts as a retarding moment. It has no bearing on the plot and contributes only to the glorified mediaeval atmosphere sought by the poet. Nor do the two scenes of the fourth act have anything more than a purely demonstrative function, - here, however, of a more significant nature -, and they too serve to slow the action down and to prepare the stage for the final battle. Contrast is an important feature here: the splendour of Barbarossa's "Lustlager bei Mainz" (with poetry, jousting and song) is juxtaposed with the sombreness of Heinrich's camp in the Harz. In IV/1 the Lion is formally banished, in IV/2 his men swear their allegiance and vow to smash the emperor. Apart from its characterisation of the opposing forces and its depiction of historical background, this act creates tension towards the final act. Act V opens with Barbarossa's victory in the "Weserschlacht" and presents in the second scene the departure of the defeated Lion for England. The finale V/3 shows the victorious emperor, soon to embark upon the crusade, and introduces Constanze, the bride whom Prince Heinrich was instructed to woo in III/1, a bridge between the two halves of the drama (III/1 - V/3) and an important link with the following drama.

The unity of Barbarossa lies in its skilful conjunction of the two



different conflicts which the emperor must overcome. The joint source of the two lines of development - scene II/2 - occurs at a stage by which the impending conflict between emperor and duke has been well developed and outlined for the reader. During the following scenes, which terminate the Italian plot, the chief antagonism is never lost sight of. A subtle interweaving of themes and motifs lends the drama an impressive harmony and compression, and a series of bridges (Hegele's "Klammergriffe") weld the two halves of the drama neatly together. Thus, the unity of the drama is not impaired by the fact that the Heinrich conflict is developed early and then suspended during the Legnano scenes; at all times suggestion and cross-reference remind us of its presence.

In terms of Grabbe's developing 'open form' Barbarossa, with its absence of the major mass scenes of Marius und Sulla, its conciseness and well-defined concentricity, seems to represent a reversion to the techniques of conventional dramaturgy. The drama exhibits a "Geschlossenheit" otherwise unparalleled in Grabbe's oeuvre. Yet this is not to say that the innovatory elements of Marius und Sulla - demonstrative scenes, interpretative elements, crowd scenes - are completely absent. Several of the scenes, in fact, do not motivate the plot but furnish background colour (parts of I/1 and I/2; all of III/2, IV/1 and IV/2). Many figures interpret the action at various points - Ofterdingen and Alexander in particular have an almost exclusively commentary function. One element does, however, detract significantly from the objective, historical colour of the play: a major question to be asked with regard to this drama is - to what extent is Barbarossa a character drama centred on a tragic conflict? How far does it realise the poet's aim to decipher the spirit of history? In the last analysis, perhaps, it must be conceded, despite the objections of many critics (among them Hegele), that the fully developed interpersonal conflict between emperor and vassal forces all other considerations of the drama - the depiction of historical reality, the reproduction of a mediæval atmosphere and the political currents of the epoch - into the back-

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ground. Compression and unity would thus appear to have been achieved at the expense of the historical scope we value so highly in Grabbe's major plays. Of all the historical dramas, Barbarossa is the one which most closely resembles traditional forms.

The concentric unity of Kaiser Heinrich der Sechste, although clearly reinforced by the monologic status of the isolated hero, is threatened not by a double, but by a triple conflict. As was the case with Barbarossa, the two-scene first act outlines the bases on which the drama will build. We meet first the Norman leaders who will prove to be Heinrich's chief antagonists (in I/1) and then (I/2) the emperor himself. This second scene provides much information; we learn of Heinrich's character and situation and watch as he is confronted with one crisis after another. His father's corpse is brought back from the Holy Land (thus bringing the Barbarossa-drama to its formal conclusion) and Heinrich learns subsequently of the three forces which are to occupy him for the remainder of the drama: the uprisings all over Sicily; the voyage of Richard Lionheart, wanted for contempt; and the approach of Heinrich der Löwe, en route for Germany from England. The drama proceeds along a simple course of development and resolution of plot. The second act, from which the hero is entirely absent, falls into two parts, II/1 and 2 dealing with the arrest and captivity of Richard in Austria, and scenes 3 to 5 depicting the return of the Lion and his destruction of Bardewick. After this dual development these lines of action are both terminated in the following act. The long central scene III/1 ("Reichsversammlung in Hagenau") presents (among other things) Heinrich's treatment of Richard, who is freed, and offers, through the initiative of Agnes, the possibility of reconciliation with Heinrich der Löwe. This peace is concluded in III/2 shortly before the death of the Lion. The emperor is now free to return to Naples and the act ends, like the previous one, on a note of suspense.

With the opening of Act IV the fundamental level of conflict (Heinrich against Sicily) is brought to the fore again, and the tension created by

the Norman plans in I/1 is finally resolved: a bridge effect from I/1 - IV/1, postponing the chief line of action without obscuring it, is employed as it was in the preceding drama. Act four is concerned primarily with the Tancred plot: in IV/1, a scene with predominantly demonstrative function, he and his Normans discuss their string of victories and dispute their further course of action. IV/2, again a demonstrative scene, depicts the plight of Heinrich's men within the besieged fortress of Rocca D'Arce, and IV/3 shows their relief by German forces and the emperor's final victory over Norman opposition. By the end of Act IV all tensions have been removed. The final act opens with Heinrich, victorious, in Palermo, a scene which occasions no forward development but brings together the strands and offers insight into Heinrich's character. It is followed by a scene with exclusively commentary and interpretative function (shepherd scene). The final scene of the drama brings the unexpected climax as the emperor is smitten down at the height of his grandeur; motifs and augurs in the previous two scenes (the prophecy of the old Sicilian woman; the words of the shepherd) are here fulfilled, giving the apparently random juxtaposition of the last three scenes an inner justification and logic. The dramatic structure of Kaiser Heinrich der Sechste relies, then, on an uncomplicated system of movements as three conflicts are exposed, developed and terminated in succession. The chief conflict is at first postponed but then resolved by the end of Act IV, leaving the final act free to present its dramatic climax which arrives quite independently of the four preceding acts. Unmotivated, but anticipated by a chain of motifs (the underlying theme of transience), the shocking final scene stands quite alone at the end of the drama.

Here the strict logic of classical drama has been brushed aside in the poet's attempt to portray the currents of a historical era. Scenes are often arranged in direct contrast without any apparent connection (especially in the second and final acts), and several scenes appear to have gained absolute independence from the dominating plot line (II/2,

V/2). The concern with historical detail and colour (since Heinrich, even in his absence, represents the "spirit of the age", breadth is lacking here) leads many scenes to assume a partially, if not exclusively demonstrative role - II/1 and II/2 with the Austrian peasants and Blondel's song; the Saxons awaiting Heinrich der Löwe in II/1; the characterisation of the citizens of Bardewick in II/4; the conditions at Rocca D'Arce in IV/2. None of these portions of the text has a strictly motivating function, and all are designed to capture the historical reality of the Middle Ages. The increasing attention paid to such 'externals' testifies to Grabbe's growing concern with historical realism. Commentary sections have also been expanded in this drama, with a marked increase in the frequency of elements with an interpretative function: Tancred, Heinrich der Löwe, the hero himself, the old Sicilian woman all offer analytic comment, and the shepherd scene V/2 is the first extended, fully commentary scene in Grabbe's work. If, as Hegele complains, such subsidiary elements are further removed from and more independent of the dominant plot than they were in Barbarossa, leading to a reduction of "Geschlossenheit",<sup>12</sup> then it must be added that precisely here are to be found those features which later characterise the form of Napoleon. Here nearly all scenes motivate the action and provide background detail at one and the same time, and these supplementary passages of characterisation (Austrian tavern, East Frisian coast, Bardewick) contribute much to the "openness" of a work which, with three conflicts, locations in three countries, a profusion of figures and a wealth of incident, relies heavily on its central figure to provide unity.

Napoleon is generally regarded as the finest (but again by no means completely successful) example of Grabbe's experimental form. The plot of this drama is strikingly simple and involves the hero in only one direct conflict: that against the allied powers of Europe at Ligny and Waterloo. To isolate the major line of plot from its surrounding elements, is, how-

<sup>12</sup> Hegele, p. 208.

ever, to do an injustice to the complexity of Grabbe's vision of the Hundred Days - and it is with the Hundred Days of the subtitle, and not merely with the hero Napoleon, that the poet is here concerned. For the greater part of this drama the emperor is absent. He appears briefly in the first act, is missing from the second, appears once in the third, twice in the fourth and is present in the last three scenes of the fifth act. The remainder of the drama - most of the first three acts - is primarily concerned with the situation in Paris and the differing attitudes of various social groups firstly to the rumours, and later to the confirmed news of the emperor's return.

The action progresses in three movements which envelop Act I, Acts II and III, and Acts IV and V respectively.<sup>13</sup> Act one, scenes one to three provide exposition and introduce the many social forces of post-revolutionary France. I/1, a long and particularly effective conglomeration of brief episodes, presents the masses; I/2 the aristocratic followers of the Bourbon Court and I/3 the court itself. These three scenes are purely demonstrative and form a detailed picture of French society: the many conflicts and tensions beneath the surface must be overcome by the emperor if he is to recover his former power. Although Napoleon is not on stage for the initial scenes of the drama, he looms large on the horizon: in each of the three scenes he is explicitly mentioned and the possibility (and desirability) of his reemergence intimated. It comes therefore as no surprise when the following scene (I/4) switches the location to Elba and introduces the exiled hero. His decision to return to France sets the plot proper in motion and concludes the first movement of the drama. The hero disappears from view until III/3.

Meanwhile Act two intensifies our image of Paris in turmoil and again, through the juxtaposition of contrasting scenes, shows us the developing

<sup>13</sup> A division suggested by Nieschmidt in "Die innere Strukturierung der späten Geschichtsdramen Chr. D. Grabbes" (Zwei Studien) and confirmed by Martini ("Napoleon").

crisis from all sides (the principle of contrast was particularly marked in I/1 - I/3). II/1 - the garden scene - offers interpretation and commentary, II/2 returns us to the seething masses under the arcades of the Palais Royal (rumours are circulating - "Auf Elba rührt sich's allmählich"), II/3, a "sketch-scene", suggests the horror felt by the aristocracy at the notion of renewed Napoleonic rule, and II/4 takes us once more inside Louis' court. Suddenly the plot takes a leap forward when it is announced that the emperor has landed at Toulon, and the following five scenes outline the differing reactions to this event inside Paris. In II/5 a subsidiary plot involving Fouché and Carnot is hatched but never followed through. III/1 and 2 show the expectant masses and Jouve's revolutionaries. In III/3 Napoleon reappears and all is apparently as it was. Tension is again relieved at the end of this third act - the emperor has regained his position unchallenged. After the ceremony on the Champs de Mars (IV/1) and the farewell to Hortense (IV/2) - both scenes with commentary function - the stage is prepared for the battle scenes which are to bring the drama to its conclusion.

With IV/4 the scene changes from France to Belgium and the "Schlachten-drama" begins. The point of the much criticised division between the two halves of the drama has been reached. After scenes characterising the Prussian (IV/4 and 5) and French armies, Napoleon commences the hostilities in IV/6 and gains a quick victory over the Prussians at Ligny. The interlude V/1 presents Wellington at a Brussels ball and the arrival of news of Napoleon's proximity. The remainder of the fifth act, distributed among the English, Prussian and French armies, depicts the course of the Battle of Waterloo on a grand scale and leads through the turning point, the arrival of Prussian reinforcements in V/5, to Napoleon's final defeat and flight in V/7.

Both major parts of the drama - the Paris scenes and the battle - are tightly and skilfully integrated within themselves. The first two acts in particular are a masterly example of Grabbe's facility with the technique

of independently arranged scenes which rely on contrast, time and motif-structure for their inner logic. Contrast is, indeed, as Kaprolat shows in his study, the basis not only for the juxtaposition of individual scenes, but also constitutes the major formal principle at work within the scenes themselves, placing figures side by side and in succession in order to illuminate attitudes and events from all angles.<sup>14</sup> The lapse of time serves to tighten the structure of these acts: I/1 - 3 all take place on the same day, I/4 is directly introduced in the previous scene by Louis ("Vielleicht startet er eben jetzt ..."); II/1 and 2 belong together, as do II/3, 4 and 5 (reports of Napoleon's landing): the three scenes of Act III also take place on the same day. Above all the opening scenes are held together by the unity of intention - the portrayal of the historical situation in 1815 France - and the impressive linking of motifs and perspectives lends this kaleidoscopic unravelling of social forces a strong connecting thread. The ten battle scenes clearly tax the resources of the stage to the maximum and consequently form an unfortunate corollary to the eminently stageworthy Parisian action. Nevertheless, Grabbe succeeds here in conveying the impression of war by concentrating his attention on certain crucial points in the battle in order to plot the course of events and by surrounding these with episodes and comment which colour and interpret the action while imbuing it with dramatic interest (the Berliner; the "freiwillige Jäger"; the sharpshooter Fritz; Ephraim the Jew). In this way the progress of the battle is clearly presented despite the multitude of figures on stage.

But what of the relationship between these two halves? For all their individual brilliance and obvious thematic link - the Battle of Waterloo is the natural outcome of Napoleon's return to France - such a deep rift in the structure of the play, which suddenly switches from internal to external affairs and initiates a true conflict only half way through the

<sup>14</sup> Richard Kaprolat, Chr. D. Grabbes Drama Napoleon oder die hundert Tage: Eine Interpretation (Dortmund, 1939).

fourth act must, even in a drama of this unclassical mould, be accounted a weakness. The duality of Grabbe's aims here - socio-historical demonstration in the first half and military glorification and pure warfare in the second - cannot be ignored.

In Napoleon demonstrative, commentary and interpretative scenes are exploited to the full; in fact, only very few scenes in the first four acts directly drive the action forward. The mass scenes obviously fulfil a fundamentally demonstrative function, and episodes devoted to other spheres of society also achieve this aim: I/2 and I/3, II/3 and II/4. Such scenes provide the characterisation necessary to Grabbe's comprehensive picture of France and stand, as it were, adjacent to the plot. Other significant episodes offer commentary upon the action from within (a major technique of Grabbe's later plays): entire scenes (II/1 and IV/1) or large portions of scenes (II/3 with the Duchess of Angonleme and Choisy); Jouve in III/2; Hortense in IV/2; the military in IV/4 and IV/5). Again the subtle linking of motifs gives these independent, apparently random scenes a common ground and betrays behind the various episodes a strict principle of selection and organisation. There is, then, a high degree of "Geschlossenheit" even in this seemingly most open of dramatic structures.<sup>15</sup> The countless figures (over one hundred speaking roles), locations (in three different countries) and themes are effectively welded together, however, only within their appropriate half of the drama. The duality of the whole remains the major structural flaw: there is no strict development of conflict between Acts I-II and Act IV.

Hannibal achieves a compression unparalleled in Grabbe's later work - it is only half the length of Napoleon yet has more scenes and deals with

<sup>15</sup> Even this drama disproves von Wiese's assertion that Grabbe's is a form of drama "die eigentlich nirgendwo anfängt und nirgendwo aufhört" (Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 470), an assumption which is repeated by Siefert (p. 79) and Nicholls: "A drama of this kind has no necessary beginning, middle and end" (p. 259). Hornsey's sweeping generalisation - "in an attempt to convey the impression of the 'formlessness' of reality, Grabbe wrote formless plays" (p. 59) - is a misleading simplification.



a more complex system of conflicts. Unity arises, as it does in the Hohenstaufen plays, from the fact that the hero is very much the focal point of the action from start to finish, a feature which is made possible by the poet's (quite unhistorical) linking of Hannibal's death with the fall of Carthage. It is further reinforced by the reduction of space devoted to the depiction of historical background.

As in Barbarossa and Heinrich VI the first act provides, in five scenes, the exposition, and introduces the various levels of conflict which are then to be developed separately throughout the following acts. These scenes are placed alongside one another regardless of their location and create a contrasting effect. The first three, in Carthage, introduce Hannibal's friends (I/1) and those forces which oppose him at home - the passive resistance and indifference of the mercenary Carthaginian people (I/2) and the scheming triumvirate of Melkir, Hanno and Gisgon. These three initiate an intrigue against the hero which is rare in Grabbe's historical dramas. I/4 then takes us to a meeting of the senate in Rome, where the decision is made to attack Carthage during Hannibal's absence, the Scipio brothers being entrusted with the leadership, and in I/5 we finally meet the hero vainly besieging Rome itself. In this first act the bridges are provided to later points in the development of the plot: the market-traders will reappear in IV/2; the triumvirate in IV/1; the Scipios will be shown in the following scene (II/1) but will then retire until IV/4. Meanwhile the opening scenes of Act two hatch the principal cycles of development: after their destruction of Numantia (II/1), the Scipios are able to make their way to Carthage where they will eventually be joined by Hannibal. In II/2 the foundations for the immediate action are laid when Hannibal decides to move his forces to meet his brother Hasdrubal in Northern Italy. Act three deals with the hero's fortunes on that journey - In III/1 and 2 he outwits Fabius Maximus to escape from confinement in a valley near Casilinum. After a moment's relaxation in III/3 his plans are forcibly altered by the arrival of his brother's severed head, and he orders

the return to Capua. After a brief stay (III/4-5) he departs from Italy for Carthage (in III/8), bringing the first major movement of the drama to a close.

The threads of the lines of conflict are resumed in Act four. IV/1 presents the Carthaginian triumvirate who plan to prevent Hannibal from entering the city: he outmanoeuvres them, however, and seizes power. The next three scenes show the action down before the fateful battle with Rome: IV/2 (the marketplace) demonstrates Carthaginian reactions to the hero's return; in IV/3 Hannibal visits his family before departing for Zama; IV/4 takes us inside the Roman camp where preparations for battle are being made. In the following scene the two plots join as Hannibal meets the younger Scipio in an attempt to prevent the hostilities, but this proves futile and IV/6 presents the battle teichoscopically. Hannibal is defeated and flees. The triumvirate has locked the city and now awaits the Roman ambassadors. With IV/7 the last movement of the play commences: spanning six scenes it combines the destruction of Carthage with Hannibal's suicide in Bithynia. In IV/7 Gisgon outwits Melkir and sends him to his death; the ludicrous peace conditions laid down by Rome cause a sudden regeneration in Gisgon who rejects the Roman terms in IV/8 and resolves to lead a last Carthaginian defence. Hannibal meanwhile appears at the court of Prusias to seek asylum in Asia (V/1), where he is accepted. V/2 presents the glorious self-sacrifice of Carthage in fire before we are returned to Bithynia for the conclusion. Prusias betrays the hero to his Roman enemies in V/3, but Hannibal has time to learn of the valiant fall of Carthage from Turnu before committing suicide in V/4.

This play, too, then, progresses in a series of sweeping movements and derives concentricity from the fact that the entire drama progresses towards the resolution in the penultimate act of a series of conflicts which had been introduced in the first act. In this respect the third act - Hannibal's travels in Italy from Capua to Cajeta and back again - represents a retarding element, while the first and fourth acts are closely connected by the bridge effects which link motifs (I/2 - IV/2; I/3 - IV/1;

I/4 - IV/4). Unity derives from the coupling in the final scene of Hannibal's death with details of the fall of Carthage. But the manner in which the scenes fall naturally into groups defies the five act division suggested by Immermann: the break between acts two and three is a forced one (the "Straße in Kapua" scene II/3 is out of place here), and a natural division falls in IV/6 after the battle of Zama while the act itself comprises two further scenes. The three movements of the drama do not, then, coincide with Grabbe's act structure.<sup>16</sup>

The arrangement of scenes is conducted largely along the lines noted in Napoleon. The action switches rapidly from one location to the next, spotlighting various figures and groups; in twenty-eight scenes only one setting (the Carthaginian marketplace) is used more than once. Acts I (Carthage and Rome), II (Numantia and Capua) and V (Carthage and Bithynia) are particularly free with movement, while III (Hannibal's expedition to Northern Italy) and IV (Carthage and its environs) show greater unity. For the most part the brief scenes are juxtaposed to create a montage effect - the five scenes of Act I, Acts II and IV - enabling the poet to unravel all three conflicts and present a degree of historical background at the same time. The central third act is tighter and closely follows a strict development as the hero's fortunes in Italy change. Hannibal appears in seven of these eight scenes, an extremely high ratio in comparison with the remainder of the drama; and this act is the only one in which all scenes interlock to produce a successive development of events. The number of scenes of the drama as a whole devoted to pure demonstration has been considerably reduced, and the majority contribute directly to the motivation of plot. Those episodes concerned with historical detail are few and scarcely developed, and consequently fail to produce anything like the

<sup>16</sup> This should be emphasised in contradiction of Hornsey, who draws the alarming conclusion: "Immermann edited the work, advising Grabbe against including certain episodes which were not strictly relevant and also to divide the play into five acts. As a result Hannibal is formally Grabbe's best play" (p. 105).

depth and complexity of Grabbe's vision of Napoleon's Hundred Days. The market scenes (the closest we have to the Paris street scenes) are the only instances wholly given over to the depiction of popular feeling and the "spirit of the age": other portions of the text which furnish background detail and strive to reveal historical currents are to be found in I/4 (Roman senate), II/1 (ruins of Numantia), II/3 and III/4 (Capua) and IV/7 (the sacrifices to Moloch). Grabbe is clearly not as concerned here with history per se as he was in Napoleon. The extent of commentary and interpretation has likewise been reduced: it is here restricted to brief moments in I/1 (Alitta), II/1 (Terence - the only figure with a purely commentary role), III/3, 6, 7 (Hannibal). Both these factors strengthen the unity of the drama, and the balance achieved by the poet between elements which work towards the portrayal of historical forces ("Geist der Geschichte") and those which build up Grabbe's image of the great historical individual (the two overriding considerations of the works) make Hannibal, from the point of view of formal accomplishment, a fine example of Grabbean theatre.

In Die Hermannsschlacht Grabbe abandons conventional act divisions and simply splits his plot into three major parts. The first, the seven scene "Eingang", provides the exposition to the second, the battle, itself subdivided into three days and nights, and the drama is concluded by a brief "Schluß" which takes place in Rome. The construction of the drama is thus very elementary and corresponds with the extreme directness of plot. The central movement of the play is the dramatisation of a battle - in this sense we are faced with a continuation of the final acts of Napoleon.

The exposition, provided by the seven chiefly demonstrative scenes of the "Eingang", is presented along lines already familiar from the previous two dramas. Scenes are strung together in order to illuminate the situations from all angles. The chief figures and their retinues appear before us in succession as Hermann's plan is gradually revealed. The only true

conflict of the drama, that between the Germans and the Romans, is introduced. Subsidiary lines of tension (Hermann/Segest, outlined in Eingang 6 and Hermann/Ingomar, suggested in I. Tag) are never developed, resulting in increased concentricity but also in an unfortunate reduction in dramatic interest. The opening scenes further provide the historical background to the action and offer an insight into the German milieu in which the battle will take place and whose fate it will decide. The six scenes of the battle convey the major incidents episodically from Hermann's commencement of the hostilities to his victory at the end of the third day. This simple succession of scenes switches location and focus at will (some scenes are further subdivided) and attempts to reproduce the technique of Napoleon. Like the second half of Napoleon it relies entirely on the excitement and unpredictability of battle, with its sudden changes of course and fortune, to maintain tension and interest. Subsidiary elements (the dice game) are inserted in an attempt to relieve the monotony of the protracted battle, a danger which Grabbe clearly recognised but which he was sadly unable to avoid.<sup>17</sup> The central section of the work rarely rises above monotony. The conclusion, a single scene fused onto the end of the drama, then strives to place the preceding action into a world-historical perspective and provides interpretation through the mouth of Augustus. The progression of the drama is strictly linear and devoid of secondary conflicts, and the extreme distillation of events and consequent reduction to one dominating theme, itself dramatically weak, removes any dramatic interest. The linear development of plot does not, however, produce a work in the classical mould. The epic tendencies of Die Hermannsschlacht, its genre scenes (of which the meal scene, Eingang 2, is the clearest example), commentary technique (many figures provide this), its battle action and interpretative conclusion open the work out and deprive it of

17 "Nie schmier' ich wieder ein Genre- und Bataillienstück. Ungeheure Mühe, um Abwechslung und allgemeines Interesse hineinzubringen! Was hab' ich nicht im Hermann an Witzen, Naturschilderungen, Sentimentalitäten p. p. einflücken müssen, um ihm möglichst lesbar zu machen" (letter to Petri, 21 July 1836).

any "Geschlossenheit" it might otherwise have attained.

A clear development in Grabbe's dramatic form from its vaguely Aristotelian beginnings in Gothland and Don Juan und Faust towards the atectonic structure of the final plays is readily discernible. Marius und Sulla anticipates the techniques of the later tragedies, while the two Hohenstaufen plays demonstrate the changing intentions of the poet: Barbarossa still achieves its unity through its emphasis on a central interpersonal conflict and its linking of all the threads of action in one scene. Heinrich VI, on the other hand, intensifies the historical background of the period in question and introduces various elements designed to provide commentary and interpretation, thus dispensing with obvious structural unity and foreshadowing Napoleon and Hannibal. Die Hermannsschlacht, finally, retains those features which are integral to the new form, but, with its somewhat primitive succession of incidents, reminds of a chronicle play and lacks dramatic impact.

The form of the later dramas is evidently best equipped to cope with Grabbe's increasing interest in objective historical forces and his desire to place an epoch on stage in all its breadth. After initial experimentation in Marius und Sulla this aspect of his work reaches its peak in the first acts of Napoleon, while in Hannibal it is still recognisable though not highly developed. It is the form of these later dramas which proves the most appropriate vehicle of Grabbe's historical realism, a means of representation which strives to decipher from the apparent chaos of historical events the underlying "Geist der Geschichte" and to illuminate, as comprehensively as possible, the causality behind such events. The structural principles which enable the poet to achieve his aim as far as he does have been noted: the apparently random juxtaposition of brief, interdependent episodes; the concentration of historical development into a series of crucial moments; the banishment of interpersonal conflict in the private sphere; the insertion of "Milieuschilderung" and elements

whose exclusive function is to provide commentary; the predominance of sweeping movements of action over strict act divisions; the dependence on contrast and time levels to unite seemingly disparate elements. Such features, which have much in common with the tradition of open drama as outlined by Volker Klotz, make this form eminently suited to the presentation of the poet's vision of history and reinforce the realistic aspect of his work: indeed, they provide the very frame for the playwright's realism.

While Hegele is primarily concerned to underline the unity of Grabbe's dramas and to stress those elements which create an impression of strict organisation, an approach which leads him to view Napoleon and Hannibal as less successful than Barbarossa in terms of their form, Klotz contrasts those two basic poles which Ziegler had characterised as "tektonisch-idealisiert" and "atektonisch-realistisch" and, using Grabbe as one of his examples, seeks features which result in the dissolution of classical form. Napoleon and Hannibal are of particular interest in this context and share many common elements with Klotz' other examples, Lenz, Büchner, Wedekind and Brecht. Grabbe's dramas do indeed exhibit "Selbständigkeit der Einzelteile", "Dispersion des Geschehens", "das zentrale Ich" (the monagonist who forms the central pinion of a work), "Zug zur empirischen Totalität", "Kampf des Einzelnen gegen die Welt", "das Ganze in Ausschnitten", "sprunghafte Assoziation", "Vielheit der Orte", "bunte Welt", "empirische Wirklichkeit", "plastische, isolierte Personen", "pluralistische Sprache". Klotz shows convincingly that Grabbe represents a significant link in the development of non-Aristotelian drama, although it should be recognised that not all aspects of his work coincide fully: thus Grabbe's dramas retain without exception the detailed exposition which Klotz denies open drama (pp. 111-12) and lack the elasticity of time which he believes is essential to the new form. Grabbe's treatment of time is clearly subject to the general considerations of historical drama, which demands, by definition, a high degree of chronology.

Nevertheless it is those elements viewed by Klotz as typical of the

open form, several of which we have identified above as central to Grabbe's intentions in the later plays, which contribute most to the ability of works like Napoleon to assimilate vast amounts of historical material. Grabbe himself spoke in relation to this drama, which is undoubtedly the finest illustration of his desire to combine collective and individual historical forces, of "eine dramatisch-epische Revolution".<sup>18</sup> The anti-classical form of Grabbe's mature dramas, with their abandonment of the exclusiveness, symbolic reduction and closely observed linearity of tectonic forms,<sup>19</sup> permits the playwright to place his emphasis on the dramatisation of selected epochs and to show history at work with a great deal of breadth and diversity. The formal elements which allow such a sweeping vision of history contribute much to the acclaimed modernity of Grabbe's major dramas and foreshadow, though obviously without the ideological and didactic implications, the techniques of the epic and documentary theatre of our own century.<sup>20</sup>

18 Letter to Kettembeil, 25 February 1831.

19 Pfister regards as the essence of tectonic construction "einen zielstrebig-linearen, einsträngigen Handlungsablauf, in dem jeder Phase und jedem Detail nur insoweit Bedeutung zukommt, als es dem Handlungsfortschritt dient" (p. 321).

20 Brecht recognised Grabbe as a significant forerunner of the epic theatre: "Die Linie, die zu gewissen Versuchen des epischen Theaters gezogen werden kann, führt aus der elisabethanischen Dramatik über die Lenz, Schiller (Frühwerke), Goethe (Götz und Faust, beide Teile), Grabbe, Büchner. Es ist eine sehr kräftige Linie, leicht verfolgbar" (quoted from unedited manuscript material by Käthe Rülicke-Weiler, Die Dramaturgie Brechts (Berlin, 1966), p. 94). The relationship between Grabbe's drama and Brecht's epic theatre is the subject of an article by Lothar Ehrlich entitled "Zur Tradition des epischen Theaters: Brecht und Grabbe", Weimarer Beiträge, 24 (1974), 148-60. Ehrlich sees the most important link between the two in Grabbe's adoption of Shakespearian formal elements, Shakespeare being the "Ahnherren des epischen Theaters" (p. 154). Grabbe's removal of the individual from the centre of drama, his portrayal of the interplay between individual and collective and his increasing attention to the latter lead to a new conception of dramatic conflict, a new arrangement of plot and a new approach to characterisation, all of which result in a rejection of Aristotelian precepts. Grabbe's attempt to present the "gesellschaftlicher Prozeß" (a major assumption of Marxist Grabbe scholarship) necessitates the development of "eine offene, epische Dramaturgie" (p. 154), though one which lacks dialectic and didactic elements. Ehrlich omits, however, to define the nature of these epic formal principles more precisely and contents himself with remarks on more general affinities between Grabbe and Brecht. Further parallels and differences between Grabbe and Brecht, though mainly with



regard to Brecht's uncompleted adaptation of Grabbe's Hannibal in 1922, are outlined by H.-W. Nieschmidt in the "Jahresgabe" of the Grabbe-Gesellschaft for 1979, which appeared during the final corrections of the present study (Brecht und Grabbe: Rezeption eines dramatischen Erbes, Detmold, 1979).

### Summary, Historical Perspective and Conclusions

Our consideration of various fundamental aspects of Grabbe's dramas - both thematic and formal - has served to underline the disturbing imbalance which characterises the writer's oeuvre and also to question the validity of the concept of realism with regard to the dramas under discussion. For, despite the absence of a precise definition of realistic drama in its nineteenth-century German pre-naturalist phase, it has been possible to isolate and examine specific elements of dramatic art generally associated with emerging realism. The studies of Sengle and Ziegler, which remain highly influential and, in the absence of comparable enquiries, extremely important as discussions of the specific literary historical phenomena which concern us here, were seen to support the bases of our considerations. Their concern with the development of historical drama and the growth of realism and, more importantly, with the relationship between the two, is of particular relevance to our study. The selection of the "aspects of realism" dealt with in the preceding pages was determined partly by their findings, but also by the requirements of realistic literature which were established with reference to more general enquiries and outlined in our introduction. The emphases of our discussion were dictated further by the pressing need to reexamine those areas of Grabbe's dramas persistently labelled "realistic" by commentators who, themselves not concerned with the question of the poet's realism, employ the term in passing with little regard for consistency or accuracy. The result of the uncritical use of the concept has been its reduction to the level of a vague epithet whose convenience far outweighs its preciseness. Closer scrutiny of central areas to which it has been applied, for example of Grabbe's characterisation, exposes the lack of critical discernment with which the term has been utilised throughout the history of Grabbe scholarship.

The tendency to view Grabbe's works as an important stage in the

development of a realistic form of drama is clearly not without some validity. Our survey has identified several features of his art which suggest an inclination towards a means of presentation which might be described as realistic. The establishment of an anti-idealistic, immanent world picture in which materialistic reality is the only truth was seen to be the poet's prime concern in Gothland, Scherz and Don Juan und Faust. These polemical dramas voice angry and cynical opposition to the basically escapist Biedermeier ethos and, with their secular and anti-illusory attitude to the world, clear the way for the deeply pessimistic concept of history which underlies the major plays. In the six historical dramas, composed chiefly between 1827-36, a fundamental realism is to be witnessed both on a philosophical level, i. e. in the retention of the negative metaphysics of the early dramas and their transfer to the sphere of history, and in the means of presentation. The attention to collective forces, political currents, milieu determinism and a greater insight into the heterogeneous workings of history were seen to produce a drama of great scope and breadth which grasps man as a historical being. The sacrosanct "Geist der Geschichte" secures this new type of dramatic canvas a high degree of authenticity, while the desire to dramatise a historical epoch almost "in toto" results in extraordinary comprehensiveness. The verisimilitude of Grabbe's historical world is intensified further by a vague concern with the sociological differentiation of figures and the attempt to recreate, on occasions, naturalistic dialogue with the aid of prose, dialect and sociolect. Conventional dramatic forms are modified in order to accomodate as fully as possible the vast expansion in content and the marked increase in factual detail. The augmentation of empirical elements in Grabbe's dramas serves, in fact, to underline the veristic effect of his art and provides his realism, such as it is, with an additional dimension.

An ever increasing preoccupation with objects of the real world has long been regarded as central to the growth of realism in literature. As

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the writers of the nineteenth century came, gradually and hesitantly, to question the ideological and aesthetic foundations of the tradition which they had inherited, as abstraction made way for concretisation and speculation began to fade in favour of empirical observation, so did drama develop towards an assimilation of a greater amount of matter from the external world.<sup>1</sup> Attention to detail - "Realistik" - is a major feature of emerging realism in the early nineteenth century, and it is one with far-reaching consequences for both the thematic and formal development of German drama.<sup>2</sup> The tendency towards materialistic realism, with its rejection of an ideal framework and its predilection for detailed reproduction, resulted ultimately in a dissolution not only of the metaphysical assumptions of idealism, but also of their concomitant literary forms.<sup>3</sup> The classical drama, which reached its peak at the turn of the century but was continued in spirit by Friedrich Hebbel and others well into the 1860's, relied on a high degree of abstraction and symbolism. In its attempt to project universal issues and its faith in objective, abstract poetic truth it found itself forced to distil the disparate phenomena of the world and to crystallize them into central, representative points. It scorned mere empiricism.<sup>4</sup> The drama of

1 F. Martini ("Realismus, p. 355) speaks of "die generelle Wendung des europäischen 19. Jahrhunderts zur Beobachtung, Analyse und Wertung der Erfahrungswelt, in ihrer Totalität wie in ihren sich verselbständigenden Details ...". M. Schneider sees as vital to realism "die Tendenz ... immer mehr Elemente der empirisch-dinghaften Welt zum Wirklichkeitsaufbau des literarischen Kunstwerks zu benutzen!" (pp. 161-62).

2 H. Aust (p. 25) points out, however, that "Realistik" is not simply equatable with realism but is to be seen in periods and works of the greatest diversity. "Faktentreue" is, though, particularly in the context of the nineteenth-century concept of realism, a significant aspect of the new mode of writing.

3 K. Ziegler ("Das deutsche Drama der Neuzeit", p. 2262) makes much of the "zunehmende Verstofflichung des Geschichtsdramas" and sees that the "Umschlag des Historismus vom "Idealistischen" zum "Empiristischen" das deutsche Geschichtsdrama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts nicht nur in seinen weltanschaulichen Gehalt, sondern auch in seiner künstlerischen Form beeinflusst hat." Also p. 2242.

4 Schiller on the modern poet: "Der Neuere schlägt sich mühselig und ängstlich mit Zufälligkeiten und Nebendingen herum, und über dem Bestreben, der Wirklichkeit recht nahe zu kommen, beladet er sich mit dem Leeren und Unbedeutenden, und darüber läuft er Gefahr, die tiefliegende Wahrheit zu

early realism, on the other hand, while still clearly bound by the limits of selectivity and feasibility, was concerned to achieve verisimilitude through the introduction of precisely those empirical elements which more stringent forms, in search of essence and compression, had excluded.<sup>5</sup>

The ambivalent realistic impression of Grabbe's dramas, evident on several levels, is intensified further by an increasing attention to individual detail which undoubtedly serves what Klotz, in his discussion of open and closed dramatic forms, labels "das Trachten nach empirischer Totalität". Grabbe's concern with minute detail, however, while obviously amplifying the mimetic function of his dramas, is not without its dangers for the artistic quality of his work.

The poet's desire to create the impression of detailed "observation" is nowhere more apparent than in his use of stage-directions, many of which are marked by excessive description. Grabbe's concern to provide historical colour, vast and spectacular numbers of figures on the stage, geographical precision and background detail clearly points to a preoccupation with verisimilitude and does, indeed, extend the scope of his dramas to a considerable degree of fullness. The tendency towards elaborate stage-directions is initiated in Barbarossa, where extensive description prepares the stage for majestic displays of pageantry and mediaeval courtly ritual. Barbarossa's first entry is steeped in an atmosphere of ceremony which characterises the entire drama:

verlieren, worin eigentlich alles Poetische liegt. Er möchte gern einen wirklichen Fall vollkommen nachahmen und bedenkt nicht, daß eine poetische Darstellung mit der Wirklichkeit eben darum, weil sie absolut wahr ist, niemals koinzidieren kann." Letter to Goethe, 4 April 1797. Schiller expounds his ideas on the balance of the real and the ideal in poetry in his letters of 14/15 September 1797, also to Goethe.

5 K. Ziegler: "in diesem /klassischen/ Formtypus geht es weniger darum, das Seiende in der farbig bunten Fülle seiner individuellen Phänomene konkret darzustellen und zu schildern, als vielmehr darum, es auf seine ideellen und universellen Bedeutungs- und Geltungszusammenhänge hin in der Spiegelung des Bewußtseins reflexiv zu erhellen, zu ordnen, zu deuten" ("Das deutsche Drama der Neuzeit", p. 2011). A major characteristic of classical drama is "eine entschiedene Entdinglichung und Entstofflichung". See also Ziegler's "Stiltypen", p. 146.

Großer Zug. - Reichsherolde voraus, vier von ihnen treten um den Reichsschild. Dann mit der Reichsfahne der Pfalzgraf Otto von Wittelsbach. Vor dem Kaiser der König von Böhmen mit dem Szepter, der König von Polen mit dem Schwert. Der Kaiser selbst. Um ihn der Erzherzog von Österreich, der Burggraf Hohenzollern, der Graf von Tirol und viele andere Fürsten und Ritter. Lanzenknechte umschließen den Zug in einem weiten Ringe. (WB 2, 18)

Such scenes certainly lie within the bounds of theatrical possibility and are not uncommon in historical drama of the period. But in Barbarossa two further features of the Grabbean stage-direction become evident. Firstly the presentation of enormous numbers of persons, often entire armies, without any regard for the spatial restrictions of the stage or the time required to mobilise such enormous units of figures ("Das Heer des Kaisers zieht sich ... zurück ... Das mailändisch-lombardische Heer tritt auf" WB 2, 61); and secondly the attempt to provide backcloths of huge geographical scope:

Lustlager des Kaisers und Reichstag bei Mainz. Überall prächtige Zelte und aufgerichtete Schranken für Turniere. Aussicht auf die das Lager einschließenden Ströme, Rhein und Main, mit ihren Rebenhügeln, und in der Ferne die Kuppeln von Mainz usw.  
(WB 2, 77)

Grabbe's interest in the reproduction of specific geographical locations transcends mere detail for its own sake and seems aimed at historical realism in much the same way as is the adoption of the hero's striking visual features from tradition (Blücher's pipe; Napoleon's stance). Like the transcription of material direct from the sources it testifies to the desire to recreate historical episodes as accurately as possible. In themselves such devices do not suffice to produce realism; combined with other techniques they are, however, able to fulfil a supplementary function.

In Barbarossa, as regards its form a conservative dramatic exercise, such digressions into the realm of theatrical impossibility are still infrequent and relatively moderate. But in the second half of Napoleon the two tendencies noted above, unstageable numbers and panoramic scope, are carried to an extreme which disregards the limitations of the stage completely. Entire regiments, artillery batteries, cavalry charges, burning villages are all to be presented before the audience. Grabbe's detailed

reconstruction of the action and the Belgian location can only be followed with great difficulty and is evidently written with the reader rather than the spectator in mind:

Hohlweg vor dem Walde von Soignies. Mitten durch ihn die Straße nach Brüssel. Gebüsch auf beiden Seiten. Diese, sowie die Ufer des Hohlwegs sind von Detachements englischer Linientruppen, englischer Jäger, und hannoverischer Scharfschützen besetzt. Hinter der Schlucht auf den Höhen von Mont Saint Jean, steht das Gros des Wellingtonschen Heeres, - rechts vor ihr das Gehöft la Haye Sainte, etwas weiter hin das Haus la Belle Alliance, und noch entfernter die Meierei Caillou, - links die Dörfer Planchenoit, Papelotte, Frichemont pp. (WB 2, 439)

The dimensions envisaged here can clearly no longer be provided by the conventional stage, a fact which has led many commentators to view Grabbe as a forerunner of cinematographic techniques.<sup>6</sup> The depiction of such carefully differentiated regiments in a location which is conceived with almost cartographic accuracy betrays a strong desire to dramatise the battle action in all its detail, breadth and vividness. Indeed, not only is Grabbe concerned to achieve as faithful a reproduction as possible of the troops involved in the action<sup>7</sup> and the areas in which the plot unfolds: in addition he strives most painstakingly to portray, both through stage-directions and dialogue, the course of the battles in question, their strategic complexity, changes in fortune, noise and excitement. This is a feature particularly of Napoleon and Die Hermannsschlacht: in Marius und Sulla and the Hohenstaufen plays the battle-scenes are far less comprehensive and in Hannibal the combat is removed from the stage altogether. In the presentation of the fighting at Ligny and Waterloo and the extended confrontation in the Teutoburg Forest, though, Grabbe is very much concerned to provide a detailed and accurate impression of historical episodes. To this end he introduces precise commands:

- Die Lücken der Karees gefüllt - in die Karrees Batterien -

<sup>6</sup> For example by von Wiese (Die deutsche Tragödie), p. 472; Siefert, p. 111; Hornsey, p. 78; Nicholls, p. 209; McInnes, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> Grabbe frequently introduces comment on the dress of soldiers, e. g. in Napoleon (WB 2, 409); Hannibal (WB 3, 106); Die Hermannsschlacht (WB 3, 335).

die Reserven näher gerückt - Die vorderste Reihe des Fußvolks  
auf die Kniee - die zweite schießt - Bajonette vorgestreckt -  
die Reiterei fürerst beiseit! (WB 2, 445)

which display the mechanics of warfare while at the same time suggesting, through their elliptic, imperative style, something of the urgency and hectic activity of battle. Rapid exchanges of dialogue crammed with information and instructions are intended to convey the frenzy and stress of the situation:

<u>Ein ankommender Adjutant:</u>	Drouot bittet um Munition -
<u>Napoleon:</u>	Alle Artilleriemunition zu ihm.
<u>Ein anderer Adjutant:</u>	General Drouots Kanonen drohen vor Hitze zu springen, und er wünscht -
<u>Napoleon:</u>	Er schießt bis die Kanonen springen.
<u>Viele Adjutanten:</u>	Ziethen pflanzt in unserem Rücken Geschütze auf.
<u>Napoleon:</u>	Das merk ich - Dort stürzt Friant mit zer-schmetterter Stirn.
<u>Andere Adjutanten:</u>	Von Milhaud und Ney: Blücher treibt starke Kolonnen auf Belle Alliance, und versucht beide Generale von hier abzuschneiden.
<u>Napoleon:</u>	Die Engländer?
<u>Ein Adjutant:</u>	Rücken mehr und mehr vor. - Ney kämpft in wilder Verzweiflung. (WB 2, 453)

Constant comment keeps the reader informed of the progress of events and aims to provide these protracted scenes, which run the risk of monotony or even complete confusion, with tension and interest. In places the text reads like a documentation of a battle rather than a piece of dramatic literature, as Grabbe attempts to recreate the spirit of warfare with naturalistic exactitude.

This is a level of detail which is maintained in Die Hermannsschlacht, where Grabbe strives for a precise depiction of the fighting in the forest areas surrounding Detmold. References to the geographical phenomena of his native region abound, and in this drama, too, the poet is clearly at pains to reconstruct the progress of a battle as accurately and vividly as possible. As the extended battle scenes unfold, the reader (it is difficult to conceive of a spectator of this drama) gains a precise impression of the events taking place in relation to an exact geographical location.

But it is in Die Hermannsschlacht above all that the dangers of excessive attention to detail become apparent. Not only in the battle scenes is the imagination of the recipient confronted with a complexity of detail



which frequently grows tiresome. In the scenes devoted to the characterisation of the Germanic tribesmen (Grabbe called the play a "Genre- und Bataillienstück") "hyperrealism" sinks to the depths of tedium and triviality. The poet concerns himself, presumably in the interest of empirical totality, with matters of the utmost banality. The meal scene, which depicts a Germanic household in true Westphalian style, is a picture of mundane activity. The dice-game between the two Cheruskan peasants likewise:

Zweiter: Wirf!

Erster: Neun! Gut stehen sie!

Zweiter:(wirft): Zehn! Besser sind sie! Bezahle.

Erster: Ich habe keinen Pfennig bei mir. Du bekommst meine Kuh.

Zweiter: Gut.

Erster: Fahren wir fort. Ich setze meine Wiese.

Zweiter: Ich meinen Brink. (Sie würfeln). Die Wiese ist mein.

Erster: Donner und Wetter, jetzt wag ich Haus und Hof!

Zweiter: Auch ich mein Gehöfte. -- Ich habe gewonnen.

Erster: Du betrogst mich vor zwanzig Jahren mit einem Scheffel Mehl.

Es war eine Menge Sand hineingemengt.

Zweiter: Laß diese alte, lügnerische Geschichte. - Hören wir auf mit dem Spiel?  
(WB 3, 358)

Such scenes are frequent in Grabbean drama, particularly in this final play. The feeding of horses, detail of décor, minute description of the paraphernalia of battle are, to name but a few, the subject of considerable attention on the part of the poet and, far from increasing the artistic value of his works, serve only to undermine their aesthetic quality. Grabbe's fascination with the heroism of war, a preoccupation which marks his dramas on an ideological level (see later), results at the same time in the urge to reproduce historical battles with a degree of realism which can no longer be contained by the stage.

The extent of empirical detail in Grabbe's historical dramas, particularly in Napoleon and Die Hermannsschlacht, is striking. Objects of the material world have come to serve more than a purely representative or symbolic function and seem to be introduced in the desire to achieve fullness of presentation. Thus, while episodes may easily be cited which treat empirical objects merely as a device of comment or exposition (e. g. scene III/3 of Napoleon, the emperor's return to the Tuilleries, where Louis' books and wheel-chair and Napoleon's maps symbolise two contrasting philosophies

and ways of life), a multitude of other instances serve only to intensify the comprehensive detail of a form of drama which strives to capture historical reality in all its immediacy.

But in Grabbe's plays these features are able to produce only a most sporadic, disjointed realistic quality. Both in their theme and language the works display basic traits which are clearly not to be harmonised with any claims of an objective, realistic art. Even the most successful of Grabbe's dramas are marred by unmistakable ambivalences and tensions, and the alarming imbalance and disharmony which characterises the plays arises first and foremost from the irreconcilable dualism of interests which occupy the dramatist. Grabbe is torn, in his attempt to place historical epochs on the stage, between a fundamentally individualistic view of the past, which attributes outstanding importance to the dynamic hero, and a collectivistic attitude, which acknowledges the historical potency of larger social or political units. While his reason leads him to a radically cynical view of historical processes which recognises ultimately even the gross inefficacy of the outstanding individual in historical terms, his emotional response, governed no doubt by his hostility towards a mundane, anti-heroic contemporary world, prompts him to raise the titanic leader to a position of the utmost exaltation. The irresistible attraction of men like Napoleon and Hannibal for Grabbe is intensified further by his scepticism towards the historical consciousness of the common people.

The dualism of an objective, realistic grasp of wider historical forces on the one hand and the idealistic deification of the isolated, active genius on the other has profound consequences for Grabbe's work. It produces an incongruity which, in dramas like Heinrich VI and Napoleon, stems from the poet's desire to uphold the value of the individual and to retain him as the focal point of the action and yet, at the same time, to integrate him into a broad and colourful environment. That these two aims cannot easily be combined is apparent in all Grabbe's historical dramas. The note of "hero worship" which results from his fascination with great historical

personnages and above all their circles is highly detrimental to the realistic quality of his work. His titular figures in their splendid might, invincibility, decisiveness and glory, - a vital force in Grabbe's subjective consciousness - transcend the bounds of objective and realistic presentation and become the object of pure adulation.<sup>8</sup> Grabbe's knowledge of inescapable decay, which exploits the greatest of mortals as its most powerful symbol, does not prevent him from glorifying the gigantic individual regardless of the otherwise anti-heroic tendencies of his work.

This glorification extends, as has been noted, beyond the individual to his military following. The elitist ethos of those who actively support the dynamic leader raises them above the real world and places them in a realm where the militaristic concepts of obedience, loyalty and heroism are the only standards. This is a higher reality which transcends everyday, bourgeois life: it is the sphere of the historical principle. The battle scenes, then, which show the leader and his armies engaged in heroic activity, combine a realism of detail and fullness of coverage with a crassly exaggerated notion of heroism. The aim of such scenes is no longer to capture and reproduce a specific historical epoch or to demonstrate how history unfolds: instead episodes are employed as illustrations of Grabbe's personal credo, which scorns the mundane and transfigures the historically engaged. An alternative fantasy world is constructed.<sup>9</sup> Realism is abandoned for idealism, and the recreation of reality gives way to the demonstration of an ideology.

The abandonment of verisimilitude and the weakening of the mimetic function of drama in favour of art as a medium of transfiguration has further consequences which seriously impair Grabbe's realism. On a linguis-

8 M. Schneider: "... die Erfüllungsstunde des Heroischen, durchgesetzt gegen das chaotische Bild einer widerstrebenden destruktiven Wirklichkeit, trägt die Züge des Utopischen" (p. XII).

9 For this reason it is inappropriate to regard Grabbe's theatre as a form of drama which "nichts anderes als Wirklichkeitsausschnitt sein will" (von Wiese, Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 470).

tic level, as was noted earlier, the heroic elite is characterised, even in the prose dramas, by a degree of rhetorical pathos, bombast and turgidity which is far removed from the naturalistic dialogue employed elsewhere in the dramas. Speeches of both leader figures and followers break, in certain situations, with linguistic verisimilitude altogether. On another level the desire for glorification leads to infantile excesses and gross incredulities. Grabbe's obsession with the excitement of battle, the splendour and valour of military forces, the sublimity of the warrior in action, results in episodes which are at times alarming in their immaturity:

(Das Karree öffnet sich und sechzig schwere Geschütze desselben geben Feuer)

Milhaud: Heiliger Name Gottes -- Vorwärts in diese Höllenküche, und werden wir auch darin gebraten -- Kamerad, wo dein rechter Fuß?  
Ein Kürassier: Mein Fuß? - Sakrament, da fliegt er hin, der Deserteur!  
Milhaud: Halte dich am Sattelknopf, wirst du ohnmächtig. - Nur drauf und dran! - (WB 2, 447)

The combination of immanent, materialistic realism, with its attention to detail, and idealism - idealism which embraces only the heroic sphere - is the cause of the unfortunate diffusion which marks Grabbe's drama. The result of a consideration of fundamental areas of Grabbe's work from the point of view of realism is a picture of ambivalence and contradiction which confirms established conceptions of the poet's art and personality. Profound paradox, extremism, puerility and eccentricity are characteristics of the man and his work which cannot be explained away by even the most ideological, benevolent or synthetic of critical approaches. The desultoriness and blatant aesthetic disharmony of the plays, which arises from the multiplicity of interests noted above, remains an insurmountable obstacle to increased general recognition of Grabbe as a playwright of genuine stature. Despite the untiring efforts of commentators with a vested interest in the poet, be it for nationalistic, local-patriotic or political reasons, Grabbe seems destined to remain a figure of academic and historical interest rather than to become an integral part of a living dramatic tradition.

Yet criticism of the numerous shortcomings of Grabbe's works cannot obscure the fact that his dramas represent in many ways a marked break

with tradition and, despite their rootedness in the conventions of their age (seen, for example, both in the choice of material and the method of presentation of the Hohenstaufen plays) anticipate later developments in theatre. A consideration of central tendencies among the major exponents of the historical drama in Germany in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries illuminates the unique nature of Grabbe's drama and facilitates an assessment of his contribution to the genre. Certain theoretical statements of the leading dramatists have already been cited; a brief consideration of the main features of the works themselves enables us to appreciate the historical position of Grabbe's art more fully.

Perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of German historical drama in its earlier stages is the tension between the historical and the aesthetic. Especially to the classical mind these two areas of interest seemed mutually exclusive and could only be harmonised by a strict subordination of the former to the latter: an overemphasis on historical detail, it was believed, could only prove detrimental to the artistic quality of literature. Thus a basic insistence on the primacy of the poetic over the empirical and a subsequent lack of reverence for the sanctity of historical material is to be witnessed in Lessing and is echoed by Goethe, who views a close attention to the precise details of history as essentially inimical to the truth of poetry:

Wenn man sich des Ausführlicheren und Umständlichen der Geschichte bedienen soll ... wird man immer genötigt, das Besondere des Zustands mit aufzunehmen, man entfernt sich vom rein Menschlichen, und die Poesie kommt ins Gedränge.

This is an attitude which is expressed most forcefully by Schiller, the poet and historian.<sup>11</sup> Schiller is convinced that aesthetic effect is to be achieved quite independently of a concern for empirical truth: "es ist

10 Letter to Schiller of 21 August 1799.

11 For further statements on historical drama from Schiller and other poets see earlier, pp. 191-99.

die poetische, nicht die historische Wahrheit, auf welche alle ästhetische Wahrheit sich gründet".<sup>12</sup> The result of such scepticism towards the ability of art to absorb factual matter is the combination of the abstract and universal truth of art with the empirical data of historical sources in a type of drama which, while presenting a specific historical reality, is also able to point well beyond the world of material limitations to a higher sphere of ideal perfection. Even in those works which do not display the marked idealising trend of Maria Stuart and Die Jungfrau von Orleans and demonstrate, as the result of the careful study of sources, a thorough knowledge of political, social and cultural conditions - in Wallenstein and Wilhelm Tell for example - the underlying tension between poetry and history is evident. Thus in Wilhelm Tell Schiller is aware of the pre-dominance of poetic over historical elements: "ich habe ... soviel poetische Operation damit /mit der Darstellung/ vorgenommen, daß sie aus dem historischen heraus und ins poetische eingetreten ist."<sup>13</sup> A similar consciousness of a basic conflict between historical detail and artistic effect is apparent in Grillparzer. He, too, regards factuality as purely incidental to true art.<sup>14</sup>

The rejection of mere empiricism in art and the belief that history is ultimately able to deliver only the backbone of a dramatic plot led many playwrights to search their sources in the first instance not for purely historical themes, for suprapersonal, objective motivating forces, political,

12 "Über das Pathetische", in Schillers Werke, volume 20, p. 218. In his letter to Goethe of 19 July 1799 Schiller speaks of "den poetischen Kampf mit dem historischen Stoff" and dwells on the same theme in the letters to Körner of 28 November 1796 and 26 September 1799. The relationship between poetry and history is examined more closely in "Über die tragische Kunst".

13 Letter to Körner of 9 September 1802.

14 In König Ottokars Glück und Ende Grillparzer believes he has fulfilled "jenes Erfordernis, das eine historische Tragödie allein zulässig macht, daß nämlich historisch oder sagenhaft beglaubigten Begebenheiten imstande wären eine gleiche Gemütswirkung hervorzubringen, als ob sie eigens zu diesem Zwecke erfunden wären" (Selbstbiographie in Sämtliche Werke, volume 16, pp. 168-9).

cultural, religious or whatever, but rather for outstanding characters who could provide the germ of themes of a universal, human nature. Interest was thus focussed not on the actual historical dimension of the material, with all its implications, but primarily on general and timeless issues (often moral or ethical), on the presentation of psychologically complex characters, on private aspects, on the erotic motif, etc. A large proportion of German historical drama between 1770 and 1860 concentrates its attentions on "das rein Menschliche", on the past as the record of personal crises and conflicts which appear almost independent of, or even divorced from, their historical background. In dramas which have no pretensions to embracing a rich and detailed milieu this feature is particularly evident: in Maria Stuart, for example, the central interplay of political and personal interests is soon resolved in favour of the latter as Elisabeth's awareness of pressing state expediency is overshadowed by deep-seated envy, feminine rivalry, and finally hatred. Schiller's three major freely invented amendments to his sources - the Mortimer figure, the fabrication of the meeting of the queens, and the role of Leicester as lover of both heroines - are all calculated to intensify the personal, non-historical conflicts of the work. The restricted courtly milieu, the emphasis on private guilt as the essence of tragedy, and the complete removal of the action from the realm of the historical by Maria's spiritual regeneration in the final act serve to obscure the historical background further. The earlier Don Carlos, too, originally conceived as a domestic tragedy,<sup>15</sup> attaches outstanding significance to personal relationships (Don Carlos - Marquis Posa; Don Carlos - Elisabeth). The problematic friendship of Carlos and Posa provides the play with the atmosphere of a "Charakterdrama", an aspect of the work which Schiller, in his attempt to undermine the frequent critical claims of incoherence of theme in drama, stressed to the detriment of all other elements in his "Briefe über Don Carlos". The tragedy retains, despite its many

<sup>15</sup> In a letter to Dalberg of 7 June 1794 Schiller speaks of the drama as "Ein Familiengemälde in einem fürstlichen Hauße".

transformations between 1783-97, much of the family drama. Kleist's Robert Guiskard and Prinz Friedrich von Homburg similarly develop an interest in timeless, individual problems, and the latter in particular focusses on the psychological development of a central figure in relation to a historically colourless world which seems conceived only to embody an absolute principle, that of subordination.

But even those historical dramas which do attach importance to a grasp of historical atmosphere and motivation are often not free from an emphasis on general human tendencies which exist quite apart from their historical foundations. Götz von Berlichingen, Egmont, Wallenstein and Wilhelm Tell all combine empirical detail and a profound concern with an accurate appraisal of historical currents with more subjective elements: the intensive study of dominating personalities and the portrayal of romantic attachments between freely invented figures in Götz, Egmont and Wallenstein,<sup>16</sup> and the duality of plot in Wilhelm Tell, where the hero's course of action is not originally linked with the political struggle of the allied Swiss cantons and is amalgamated with the common cause only most awkwardly at the end of the play,<sup>17</sup> might be cited as examples. Later Grillparzer was content to offer a searching analysis of an isolated titular hero in König Ottokars Glück und Ende, a work which, for all its historical complexity, retains much of the conventional nemesis tragedy,<sup>18</sup> and even

16 Goethe considered that, as Wallenstein progresses, human interests are pushed into the foreground, "daß alles aufhört politisch zu sein und bloß menschlich wird, ja das Historische selbst ist nur ein leichter Schleier, wodurch das Rainmenschliche durchblickt" (letter to Schiller, 18 March 1799). While he here somewhat underestimates the power of the historical in the drama, the statement is interesting for the light it throws on the polarity of the two areas in the classical conception of literature. Goethe was himself attracted to Egmont primarily by his "menschlich ritterliche Größe" (Dichtung und Wahrheit, 4 Teil, 20 Buch.) and insisted, when challenged with "mein Egmont" (conversation with Eckermann, 31 January 1827).

17 "So z. B. steht der Tell selbst ziemlich für sich in dem Stück, seine Sache ist Privatsache, und bleibt es, bis sie am Schluß mit der öffentlichen Sache zusammengreift" (Schiller in a letter to Iffland of 9 November 1803).

18 Grillparzer, in a diary entry of 1819, defines the essence of the work as "Übermut und sein Fall" (Sämtliche Werke, volume 2/7, p. 241).



Hebbel's plays vacillate between strictly historical-philosophical drama on the one hand and profoundly psychological tragedy, which usually manifests itself in the battle between the sexes, on the other. In Herodes und Mariamne the latter element stands well in the foreground, and the collision of personal principles forces historical interest aside. This tendency is still more apparent in Gyges und sein Ring, and it is likewise present in the more broadly organised Agnes Bernauer and the trilogic Die Nibelungen. It was in the realm of psychological perception rather than elsewhere that Hebbel considered his work realistic.<sup>19</sup> An emphasis on individual issues which relegate all other aspects of drama to a subsidiary level is evident even in a work like Ludwig's Die Makkabäer.

Interest in historical issues is reduced further in historical drama of the classical type by the dramatists' tendency to locate in their material some form of ideal, usually of universal and timeless relevance. In many instances such ideals are historically conditioned and at least partly motivated by the factual circumstances of the episode selected for dramatic treatment. The principle of ideal freedom, for example, is a major characteristic of the genre. It may manifest itself as the struggle for individual liberty in the face of the absolute demands of the state, as in Götz von Berlichingen, where the hero, a veritable mouthpiece of the "Sturm und Drang" ethos, upholds the claims of an independent "Rittertum" and perishes, in a scene of divine exaltation, with the word "Freiheit" on his lips. Like Egmont, who is engaged in a similar conflict, Götz is rejected by a misguided world which will be the poorer for his absence. The hero of Egmont, though, is provided with a miraculous apotheosis and granted a vision of the "Siegesgöttin" who bears the features of Klärchen and promises liberation from tyranny. Don Carlos also deals with the principle of freedom - in the shape of the "Gedankenfreiheit" represented by Posa

19 "Was nun Ihre Bedenken gegen den Realismus des Gyges und der Nibelungen anlangt, so setze ich den Realismus hier und überall in das psychologische Moment, nicht in das kosmische" (letter to S. Engländer of 23 February 1863).

(articulated above all in III/10) - and, along with Egmont, anticipates Goethe's Iphigenie in its plea for "Humanität". The idea of freedom can, however, also be embodied in the struggle of an entire "Volk", frequently with its idyllic, patriarchal social structures and timeless traditionalism, against tyrannical occupying forces. Wilhelm Tell and Kleist's Die Hermannsschlacht are based on such a conflict, as are two later, more realistic works, Immermann's Andreas Hofer and Ludwig's Die Makkabäer. All these plays combine gross glorification of an unspoilt, natural, ingenuous people with the presentation of a noble, highly idealised leader figure. The struggle for freedom, though on a more profoundly motivated level, is central also to Hauptmann's Florian Geyer.

Schiller does not, of course, restrict his interest to political or religious themes but expands the concept of freedom - and in this he is the most pronounced idealist - to embrace moral and spiritual issues. In Maria Stuart and Die Jungfrau von Orleans Schiller develops a hybrid form of historical drama ("eine mittlere Gattung", see p. 195) which recognises the inescapable causal mechanisms of history, subjects man to these mechanisms, and yet allows the suffering which arises from a tragic situation to form a bridge to a realm which transcends immanent reality altogether. The conflict between ideality and reality, between the human-spiritual and the historical-empirical, is nowhere more apparent than in these dramas. The poet recognises the chaotic and elemental forces of the historical world, -

das furchtbar herrliche Schauspiel der alles zerstörenden  
und wieder erschaffenden und wieder zerstörenden Veränderung  
- des bald<sup>20</sup> langsam untergrabenden, bald schnell überfallenden  
Verderbens

but, in accordance with his theory of aesthetics and tragedy, postulates behind the dynamic processes of history "die Gegenwart eines übersinnlichen Prinzips", "der selbsttätige Geist", man as "das Vernunftwesen", materially captive but morally free.<sup>21</sup> The aim of true art is "die Darstellung des

<sup>20</sup> "Über das Erhabene", in Schillers Werke, volume 21, p. 52. Schiller states: "Die Welt als historischer Gegenstand ist nichts als der Konflikt der Naturkräfte untereinander selbst und mit der Freiheit des Menschen", volume 21, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> "Über das Pathetische".

Übersinnlichen", and Schiller attempts to achieve this goal by imbuing reality, i. e. history, with an ideal dimension. His procedure is "das Realistische zu idealisieren."<sup>22</sup> Historical reality has no autonomy.

A further important characteristic of the German historical drama of this period is the preoccupation with the idea of the state. While dramas like Tell, Kleist's Hermannsschlacht and Immermann's Andreas Hofer and Alexis exploit the notion of the "Vaterland" as an ethnological, ahistorical unit, many works centre on the confrontation between an individual and the state as an absolute, suprapersonal political unit whose claims are total. All Goethe's and Schiller's historical plays attribute considerable import to the interplay of the interests of a particular political group and the more general considerations of the state, as represented by an emperor or crowned head, and central tragic conflicts are frequently constructed around this opposition (Götz, Egmont, Wallenstein). The collision of the subjective will of a private being and the overwhelming necessity of political expediency provides the essence of two dramas as dissimilar as Prinz Friedrich von Homburg and Agnes Bernauer: despite vast differences in conception both result in the unqualified subordination of the individual will to the collective interest.

The glorification of Brandenburg-Prussia in Prinz Friedrich ("In Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgs!") and the figure of Herzog Ernst in Hebbel's Agnes Bernauer, who upholds the principle of the state as a last bulwark against anarchy and chaos, both suggest, furthermore, a comparison with the Habsburg dramas of Grillparzer. But the superficial display of patriotism in König Ottokars Glück und Ende ("Habsburg für immer") should not give us cause to associate Grillparzer's work too closely with the eulogistic dramatic exercises which were so prevalent in Austria at the time. Faith in the Habsburgs represents for Grillparzer far more than a national-political conviction: rather the state is equatable with a principle of "Ordnung", it

<sup>22</sup> Letter to Goethe of 5 January 1788.

is a reflection of divine stability on earth, an eternal value beyond chaotic change. Only the deepest confidence in the innate rightfulness of the Austrian royalty allowed Grillparzer, who was materialist enough to recognise history as a disjointed series of events subordinated to the unpredictable tensions of necessity and chance, the result of "eine Verkettung von Leidenschaften und Irrtümern", to retain an idealistic perspective despite his hostility towards speculative philosophical systems. His dread of violent revolution and his predilection for quietistic traditionalism and the preservation of established values<sup>23</sup> led him to view the state as a pillar of strength in turbulent and uncertain times. The two Rudolf figures testify to the poet's belief in the necessity of a permanent order. The inherent nationalistic "Tendenz" of many historical dramas of the period is not, however, to be overlooked, and finds expression not only in Kleist, Grillparzer and Hebbel's Agnes Bernauer,<sup>24</sup> but in a whole stream of "vaterländische Dramen" by lesser dramatists.

A further similarity between Grillparzer and Hebbel may be identified in their common desire to exploit historical drama as a symbol of the historical process as a whole. While Grillparzer's Habsburg dramas undoubtedly exhibit an increasing concern with realistic elements,<sup>25</sup> they appear at the same time to function as chiffres for major world-historical change, a trait which tends to detract from the individuality of the epochs selected and indicates an underlying attempt to expound a philosophy of history. Thus the collision of opposing stages in historical development is embodied in Ottokar and Rudolf in Grillparzer's first Habsburg drama and

23 "Immerwährender Wechsel auf den alten Grundlagen ist das Gesetz alles Daseins"

24 Hebbel wrote to Dingelstedt on 12 December 1851: "Es lag mir seit lange am Herzen, einmal etwas recht Deutsches darzustellen und Unserem alten Reich, todtgeschlagen 1804 und begraben 1848, ein Kreuz aufzurichten."

25 But for Grillparzer's rejection of consistent realism ("das Abklatschen des Wirklichen") and his insistence on the principle of ideal beauty, see W. N. B. Mullan, "Grillparzer and the Realist Tradition", Forum for Modern Language Studies, 13 (1977), 122-35.

in the conflict between Rudolf II and Mathias in Ein Bruderzwist in Habsburg. Both Rudolfs display a profound awareness of the unhaltable historical transition which is taking place around them. This feature of Grillparzer's art is still more apparent in Libussa, a work which, while based on firm sources, is entirely removed from the historical world and takes place in a semi-mythical realm which dispenses with concreteness and detail altogether. The visionary insight into fundamental political, cultural and religious developments articulated by the heroine in the last act demonstrates the abstract philosophical nature of the work most clearly. Such concerns lead in the case of Hebbel to a form of drama which is historical in a special sense. The rejection of historical sources as a store of individual factual detail and the refusal to become trapped in mere empiricism led Hebbel to view popular contemporary trends in historical drama, which were characterised by just such a historicist respect for the past, with complete cynicism:

sogenannte historische Dramen, die sich nach einer der Gegenwart völlig abgestorbenen Vergangenheit umwenden und dem Auferstehungs-Wunder im Thal Josaphat zuvor zu kommen suchen, sind für mich testimonia des gründlichsten Mißverstehens der dramatischen Kunst und ihres Zwecks.<sup>26</sup>

His interest lies rather with "das Wesen des Geschichtsprocesses", and he regards the illumination of stages in the progression towards the present as the artist's prime duty.<sup>27</sup> On a historical level, then, Hebbel's dramas are organised around the permanent alternation of old and new world orders: from the tyrannical heathen world of Herodes to the humanistic individualism of Mariamne; from the rigid Indian traditionalism of Rhodope to the innovatory spirit of Kandaules; from the death throes of Germanic barbarism to the closing announcement of a christian order by Dietrich von Bern in Die Nibelungen. Universal themes of this type inevitably obscure historical

26 Letter to Kühne, 28 January 1847.

27 Hebbel speaks, in the same letter, of his "Lebensaufgabe, den gegenwärtigen Welt-Zustand, wie er ist und ward, darzustellen."

colour: Hebbel is aware that, in Herodes und Mariamne, the juxtaposition of "die untergehende, ihrem Schicksal noch im Erliegen trotzende und krampfhaft zuckende alte Welt" and "die in rührender Hülfslosigkeit aufsteigende, noch marklose und ungestaltete neue"<sup>28</sup> necessitates a treatment which goes "nicht zu tief ins Detail" and "behandelt kein Völker- sondern ein allgemeines Weltgeschick".<sup>29</sup> In Gyges und sein Ring the result is a symbolic, abstract drama which reminds of Grillparzer's Libussa.

These latter two works, both strictly classical in form and conception, represent the most extreme manifestation of a tendency towards abstraction which not only deprives history of any autonomy in art, but banishes it altogether. In this way a "historical drama without history" is created. Less pronounced examples of this direction in the genre are Maria Stuart and Prinz Friedrich von Homburg. Kleist's drama in particular dispenses with any specific detail which might have established an authentic impression of the epoch in question and unfolds its plot in an entirely featureless world in which historical events, although significant as the catalyst of the hero's crisis, are kept well out of sight. Traces of this flight from the concretely historical and the subsequent retreat into the private sphere are evident, too, in Don Carlos and Herodes und Mariamne. The bloodless, highly symbolic quality of plays like Gyges und sein Ring represents the pole furthest removed from realism in the historical drama.

Even in works which display the major tendencies of historical drama noted above, realistic elements, which contribute to the development in dramatic art away from the generalising, "de-historicising" conventions which had prevailed since the Baroque towards the individualisation of epochs undertaken in more modern drama, may be identified. The vastly influential Götz von Berlichingen stands at the beginning of this development and already employs several techniques essential to the growth of

<sup>28</sup> Hebbel's critique of Massinger's Ludovico, in Sämtliche Werke, volume 11, p. 253.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Dingelstedt of 12 June 1852.

realism in the genre. The desire to recreate a past age with a considerable degree of breadth and accuracy<sup>30</sup> is indicated by the large cast,<sup>31</sup> the insertion of "Volksszenen", the attempt to portray a broad spectrum of sixteenth-century society from "Kaiser" to "Knecht", and the detailed depiction of the chaos of the "Bauernkriege". The political motivation of the action (Götz as the representative of an independent "Rittertum" against the centralising policies of the state) and the skilful interplay of personal and political issues (Weislingen; the emperor) reinforce the impression of a drama which displays a genuine concern with historical mechanisms. The language of the drama, a gruff prose which is suitably graded in harmony with the characters and their social standing and is much influenced by Luther and Goethe's major source,<sup>32</sup> intensifies the depth of characterisation which is achieved by a close attention to psychological processes. The impression of immediacy in Götz is heightened further by the bold open form.

The techniques employed in Götz von Berlichingen are apparent in other dramas of the pre-realist period. The historical-political detail of dramas like Egmont, Wallenstein, Kleist's Hermannsschlacht, and later Grillparzer's Habsburg plays demonstrate an increasing respect for the value of the historical as the motor of the plot rather than as mere decoration. The colourful and varied milieu of Wallenstein, Wilhelm Tell and Die Hermannsschlacht anticipates the broad historical canvases of the later, more realistic works Agnes Bernauer, Andreas Hofer, Dantons Tod and ultimately Florian Geyer. Crowd scenes, present in Götz and to a lesser

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30 In Dichtung und Wahrheit (3 Teil, 12 Buch) Goethe remembers his intentions "den Götz von Berlichingen in seiner Zeitumgebung zu dramatisieren" and points specifically to his attempts, after Herder's scathing criticism of the play in its original form, to give the revised version "immer mehr historischen Gehalt" and to remove "das, was daran fabelhaft oder bloß leidenschaftlich war" (3 Teil, 13 Buch).

31 "- potz fischgen was Menschen gehören zu der Aufführung!" wrote Goethe's mother to her son on 11 October 1804.

32 Lebensbeschreibung Herrn Götzens von Berlichingen, edited by Georg Tobias Pistorius, 1731.

extent in Egmont, increase in importance as the development towards realism continues. The intention to present the heroic individual in relation to a determining environment is evident above all in Wallenstein, where Schiller devotes an entire part of his trilogy to the exposition of the circumstances which produce the hero's dilemma ("Sein Lager nur erkläret sein Verbrechen").<sup>33</sup> Similar considerations are stressed in certain dramas of Grillparzer and Hebbel, and this aspect of historical drama points forward to Dantons Tod, a work which, both in thematic conception and technique, represents a landmark in the progression towards the consistent realism of the naturalist period.

While the realism of Hebbel's historical dramas is to be sought primarily on a psychological level,<sup>34</sup> Ludwig attempts in Die Makkabäer to capture a broader historical reality and, with the aid of crowd scenes, to raise the "Volk" to the level of hero. He strives to illuminate his characters as products of a specific age and race:<sup>35</sup> the emphasis on the outstanding individual (Judah), however, and the concentration on the family tragedy (Judah - Leah - Eleazer) detract from the historical dimension of the work. Ludwig's drama is, in fact, less consistently realistic than Immermann's earlier Andreas Hofer, with its depiction of a country folk in its natural milieu, high degree of differentiation between figures, and wide scope (Tirol peasantry, French aristocracy and military, Austrian aristocracy and diplomats). Changes made to the original drama, which appeared under the title Das Trauerspiel in Tirol, - the reduction of fantastic elements, the removal of the Elsi love plot, the introduction of long prose passages and the Metternich scene (Act three) - soften the mythi-

<sup>33</sup> Schiller wrote to Körner on 28 November 1796: "Ich mußte die Handlung wie die Charaktere aus ihrer Zeit, ihrem Lokal und dem ganzen Zusammenhang der Begebenheiten schöpfen."

<sup>34</sup> See David Heald, "Hebbel's Conception of Realism", New German Studies, 1 (1973), 15-27.

<sup>35</sup> "Der Realist motiviert das Schicksal seines Helden durch dessen Schuld, die Schuld durch dessen Charakter und Situation, den Charakter durch Stand, Naturell, Gewohnheit, Zeit, Beruf, historischen Boden usw." Nachlaßschriften Otto Ludwigs, edited by M. Heydrich (Leipzig, 1874), volume 5, p. 525.



cal atmosphere of the first version. Immermann stands, as regards the development of the historical drama, somewhere between the moralistic, chronicle-style historicist exercises of epigones like Raupach and Uechtritz, the mythologising tendencies of the romantics, and the documentary style of Büchner.

Certain aspects of Büchner's Dantons Tod demonstrate a markedly close proximity to the consistent realism which was to be cultivated during the naturalist period. Not least in the radical pessimism of the underlying "Weltanschauung" and the uncompromising view of history, which break completely with the idealistic perspectives evident in all previous examples of the genre, is a new beginning apparent. In the strict adherence to sources, the reverence for historical accuracy regardless of its moral implications, and the desire to objectively recreate history (aims set out in the letters of 5 May and 28 July 1835) the mimetic function of drama is forced to the extreme. A direct connection may be established between Büchner's drama and Hauptmann's Florian Geyer, the work which stands at the end of the development which Götz von Berlichingen began. As the only major illustration of the way in which naturalist principles may be applied to historical drama Hauptmann's play is significant in our context.

The integration of the outstanding individual into a complex historical process in Florian Geyer attracts the reader's attention to the collective forces which are at work within the drama. Although Geyer retains a central position - he is, after all, the very personification of all that is just in the peasants' cause, and his death brings the drama to a close - his significance is relativised by the emphasis on a multitude of other currents. The political, social and religious theme of the play is constantly kept in the foreground by discussion from various points of view. The two conflicting parties - knights and peasants - are carefully and fully outlined, and the "Volk" in particular is presented as an enormous mass in highly realistic detail. The language of the drama (Hauptmann uses a consistent "Lutherdeutsch" characterised by archaic word-forms, exclama-

tory outbursts and vulgarities) serves more than anything else to create a naturalistic effect. The large cast, comprising some seventy-five figures, the extraordinary richness of portrayal and the great length of the drama make for a work of epic dimensions. Yet we do not encounter here mass scenes on the scale of those of Die Weber of Grabbe's Napoleon; rather the feelings of the people are elucidated by the leaders of the revolt or by selected representative figures (e. g. in Act two, Kratzer's Inn). The impression of a chaotic bustle of figures is avoided by the reduction of the multifarious forces of the age to a limited number of characters who appear in certain combinations, and the psychological portrayal of selected figures is preferred to the presentation of anonymous masses. The tight form and the removal of all external action from the stage reinforce the unity of the play.

In true naturalistic style Florian Geyer is marked by an uncompromising pessimism and a hopeless final perspective. Man is viewed entirely as a product of his historical milieu and material situation: social hardship, political oppression and the urge for religious freedom - objective historical factors - are the mainspring of the plot. The value of historical action seems questionable: like Grabbe's heroes Geyer is trapped not in a personal conflict but in the struggle between individual and collective, a battle which, in view of the irresoluteness of the "Volk", he is destined to lose. His ultimate aim - Hauptmann's drama centres on an ethical theme which is foreign to Grabbe's art and reminds of Götz, Egmont and Don Carlos - is thwarted. History has become inescapable fate. It is not guided by an idea or pervaded by any principle. Naturalism of style in Florian Geyer goes hand in hand with a tragically materialistic concept of history.

A comparison of Florian Geyer with Goethe's drama on the same period demonstrates the advance in the dramatist's methods of treating history over the 120 years which separate the "Sturm und Drang" and naturalism. Geyer is subordinated to the forces of the age whereas Götz, for all

Goethe's background detail, remains very much the outstanding individual. Goethe fully develops the personal conflict (Götz - Weislingen) and romantic interest of his play, while Hauptmann concentrates on the historical motifs of his material. Götz von Berlichingen presents the dynamic, eternally active leader figure; the hero of Florian Geyer, on the other hand, hesitates to assert his authority and endangers the historical mission with his resigned attitude. Götz, at the end of Goethe's play, enjoys a "peaceful death" and is transfigured, while Geyer dies in angry defiance, killed by a cowardly shot from a crossbow. The closing perspective of Hauptmann's drama is more negative and apparently leaves little room for a "Versöhnung". The development from the idealism which marks Götz von Berlichingen and most historical dramas between 1770 - 1865 to the outright pessimism of the naturalist period is complete.

The distance which separates Grabbe from the mainstream of the German tradition of historical drama is clear. His uniqueness rests above all on extreme reverence towards the spirit of the past and an insistence on the autonomy of the historical. He refuses to reduce historical material to a minimum of basic and vague features in order to facilitate the presentation of general human, psychological, ideal, ethical or philosophical issues. The tension between the aesthetic and the empirical is not a matter of concern to him; in fact he regards the combination of the two as the major aim of true drama. Except in the Hohenstaufen plays, where he had hoped to fulfil A. W. Schlegel's demands for a truly national historical drama - a project he soon abandoned - and in Die Hermannsschlacht, where he followed a well-established tradition in his attempt to immortalise the North German struggle for freedom, he makes few concessions to contemporary trends in the genre. His most accomplished works, Napoleon and Hannibal, which largely fulfil the expectations raised in the fragmentary Marius und Sulla, represent a new direction in historical drama which is only very vaguely connected with the dominant currents of Restoration German theatre.

In his hostility towards any form of abstraction and his insistence on colour and fullness Grabbe is violently opposed to the classical conception of theatre and develops a form of drama more akin to the emerging realistic trends evident particularly in Immermann and Büchner. Drawing on elements which can be traced back to Götz von Berlichingen he succeeds in evolving a type of dramatic art which, in certain respects, points forward to naturalism. It seems, in fact, that Napoleon, Hannibal and the less fortunate Die Hermannsschlacht, like Dantons Tod, have more in common with Hauptmann's Florian Geyer than any other part of the German tradition. Both in theme and technique parallels are evident: in the tendency to de-heroisation, the epic breadth, the detail of historical milieu and motivation, the language and, although Grabbe's cult of heroism produces a less radically anti-idealistic perspective than is apparent in Dantons Tod, in the scepticism towards history. In his desire to present an enormous amount of action on stage, however, Grabbe goes far beyond Hauptmann's dramatic conception and is forced to undertake an expansion of the tectonic form to which the naturalist dramatist largely adheres. Grabbe's refusal to identify in his material any ethical themes results in a form of drama which dispenses with the ideal issues which lie behind Hauptmann's play and reduces interest to a purely historical level. Whereas the majority of German historical dramas banish the historical in favour of other interests, Grabbe takes the opposite course. His position in the history of the genre in Germany might succinctly be formulated thus: while earlier examples of the genre tend to condense historical matter in order to allow a clearer view of general anthropological themes, Grabbe, in his desire to create a strictly historical drama, is concerned to reduce human interest to a minimum. His "streng historisches Drama" might almost be described as a "nur historisches Drama".

Inevitably, however, one must ask oneself whether the curious uniqueness of Grabbe's historical dramas, which becomes especially apparent as a result of a comparison of the poet's work with dominant conventions, can

simply be reduced to the level of a formula and subsumed under the general heading "realism". Particularly in the light of the findings of the previous chapters, which have revealed the considerable difficulties of any attempt to establish evidence of consistent realism in Grabbe, the wisdom of such a procedure must be questioned. While the temptation to apply the term "realistic" to various aspects of the poet's oeuvre is great and can be succumbed to in some cases with apparent justification, in other cases extreme caution must be exercised. Elements which question any realistic intentions on the part of the poet - for example the glorification of the heroic sphere, which undermines any claim to objectivity - should warn us to employ the concept of realism in relation to Grabbe with only the greatest reservation. And the inconsistency and contradictoriness of even those aspects of his works which are commonly held to contribute most to his "realism" - his use of language, his characterisation, the techniques of social differentiation - would appear to undermine the appropriateness of the term in connection with the dramas under discussion.

Marxist commentators in particular, who reduce the problem of realism to a purely thematic level and concentrate their attentions on the socio-historical implications of the dramas, have tended more than others to obscure the vicissitudes which mark the poet's work. The two existing full-length studies of Grabbe's realism, those of Kühne and Schaefer discussed in our introduction, restrict their concept to a social plane and avoid any consideration of the wider issues covered in the plays. Schaefer's narrow and exclusive definition of "realistische Wirkung" leads to an entirely false emphasis and stresses the relevance of Grabbe's plays for the present day.<sup>36</sup> He views the dramas as "eine künstlerische Widerspiegelung gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse"<sup>37</sup> and, although the extent of

<sup>36</sup> Realism implies, for Schaefer, "die Möglichkeit für den Leser oder Zuschauer, sich zu identifizieren, die modernen Probleme im historischen Drama wiederzufinden, das Dargestellte nicht nur als abseitig vergangenes, sondern als im Bereich der eigenen geschichtlichen Entwicklung liegend aufzufassen: als Gleichnis, als in der Gegenwart noch erkennbare und wirksame Vorgeschichte oder als Perspektive" (pp. 219-20).

<sup>37</sup> Schaefer, p. 27.

Grabbe's desire to dramatise the theme of class-conflict is highly debatable (we noted earlier that he is primarily concerned with individualistic historical forces and demonstrates a derogatorily negative view of the "masses") Schaefer sees the plays as the expression of "Geschichte als Geschichte von Klassenkämpfen"<sup>38</sup> and attributes the imbalance of the works merely to Grabbe's lack of insight into the increasing historical potential of the lower classes, which deprived him of "eine reale und befriedigende Perspektive".<sup>39</sup> The essential divisive factor in Grabbe's dramas - the concern with a broad and realistic (not merely social) portrayal of the past on the one hand, the preponderance for great and heroic individuals on the other - is disregarded.

The preoccupation with the social implications of Grabbe's dramas, shared by all Marxist commentators,<sup>40</sup> results in the desire to identify in the works some form of critical realism similar to that practised by Büchner and Heine. Vital to the Marxist conception of literature is the retention of an optimistic perspective through the location of the world's problems in an exclusively social context. In their search for social criticism in Grabbe's works Marxist scholars have, however, encountered many difficulties. Except for isolated satirical episodes in Don Juan und Faust, parts of Scherz and certain scenes of Napoleon and Hannibal it is not easy to find possible references in Grabbe's plays to his contemporary situation. Although in the portrayal of glorious episodes from the past Grabbe is undoubtedly lamenting the shortcomings of his own age and, in the Hohenstaufen plays and Die Hermannsschlacht, might, arguably, be holding up great epochs of German history as examples to his contemporaries, the social-critical and political allusions of Grabbean drama should not be

38 Schaefer, p. 218.

39 Schaefer, p. 186.

40 Ehrlich, for example, speaks of Grabbe's "Impetus zur kompromißlosen realistischen Gestaltung gesellschaftlicher Widersprüche" ("Zur Tradition des epischen Theaters", p. 151).

overstressed.<sup>41</sup> The poet is not concerned to debate contemporary issues through a thin veil of historicity, past ages are not exploited for their relevance to the problems of Restoration Germany, and although it is possible to read such implications into the works, it is evident that Grabbe was not attempting primarily to comment on his own age through the medium of art. Only extremely distorted interpretation can produce evidence of "Tendenz" in Grabbe's work.<sup>42</sup> One asks oneself, furthermore, whether relevance to contemporary conditions is a vital prerequisite of literature which purports to be realistic. Would drama which offers a veristic image of the past, without a view to such relevance, automatically be unworthy of the title "realistic"?

Socialist critics have, inevitably, been concerned to determine traces of an optimistic perspective in Grabbe's work. On the basis of ideological conviction they, like the national socialists, have attempted to undermine

41 This is a major shortcoming of many ideologically coloured studies of Grabbe, including those by Steffens, Böttger, Ehrlich and Schaefer.

42 See, for example, Horst Denkler's Restauration und Revolution (München, 1973). The author views Grabbe as the "bedeutendsten politischen Dramatiker der Epoche" (p. 234) and the forerunner of modern political drama. The extreme limitation of Denkler's approach leads him to distort the import of each work in his search for political themes. Thus he sees Gothland as a "politische Enthüllungstragödie, die die Schwächen des monarchischen Herrschaftssystems schonungslos bloßlegt" (p. 237) and Don Juan und Faust as the tragedy of two individuals "die angesichts der beengenden Zeitverhältnisse ins Fiktive ausbrechen und zugrunde gehen müssen, weil sie aus der Zeit flüchten, statt sie zu verändern" (p. 240). The Hohenstaufen plays present a call for German unity (the tragedy of Heinrich VI lies in the Reichstag's rejection of the emperor's request for a hereditary crown, a move which was to delay the unification of Germany by centuries), Marius und Sulla the struggle between the plebeians and optimates. Napoleon is "das bedeutendste politische Drama der Epoche" (p. 244), while the final two dramas content themselves with prophecies of future splendour. Denkler's attitude to the dramas treated - he is interested in them "eher um ihrer inhärenten Tendenz als um ihrer selbst willen" (p. 18) and confesses that he is concerned with "einseitig-einsträngige Beobachtung" (p. 19) - precludes any comprehensive grasp of their overall significance and necessarily emphasises a single, often insignificant aspect of a given work. Earlier commentators who insist on direct parallels between Grabbe's dramas and contemporary political situation include F. J. Schneider ("Neuere Grabbe-Literatur", Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 63 (1938), p. 81); Josef Nadler (in his Literaturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes, fourth edition, Berlin, 1938, 3 p. 432); and Otto Nietzen (Sein Leben und seine Werke, p. 220).

the predominantly negative impression of the poet's oeuvre. Consequently they have found themselves forced to distort the implications of the dramas or to place undue emphasis on insignificant themes or motifs. Our discussion has, however, shown that the fundamental cynicism of Grabbe's Weltanschauung and view of history, which provoked much hostile criticism from his contemporaries,<sup>43</sup> remains constant and embraces even Die Hermannsschlacht. The realism of Grabbe's dramas, in as far as it is present at all, must, in fact, be considered a negative realism, a process of negation which lacks any value with which to fill the void created by the destruction of all ideals.<sup>44</sup> Grabbe was himself aware of the overwhelmingly negative aspect of his work. In a model review he offers himself the advice: "dem Verfasser ... ist zu rathen, nicht im Zerstören, sondern im Aufbauen des Edlen seinen Ruhm zu suchen."<sup>45</sup> The search for positive dimensions in Grabbe is doomed to end in frustration.

The preceding chapters have, by avoiding the limitations of previous studies of the problem of realism in Grabbe's historical dramas, sought to offer a more comprehensive view of the subject. It has become clear that many of the aspects of the dramas in which realism is commonly identified display evidence of both realistic and decidedly anti-realistic intentions. The desire to capture historical reality in all its immanence and immediacy goes hand in hand with a utopian fantasy of heroism. Ultimately, therefore, there can be no question of a highly developed or consistent

43 See Bergmann's Grabbes Werke in der zeitgenössischen Kritik.

44 cf. Weiß, p. 225. There seems no need to deny Grabbe's works the label "realistic" merely because they lack a positive dimension, as does Kaiser. Kaiser holds that Grabbe's desire to expose "die letzte Scheinhaftigkeit aller menschlichen Wirklichkeit" (p. 14) precludes genuine realism. M. Schneider, too, questions the basis of Grabbe's realism by viewing the reality presented in the works as "Wahrheitspropaganda, die alle Größe, sei sie gegenwärtig oder vergangen, durch Egoismus, Krämergesinnung, Scheinsucht, durch die Zersplitterung der Gesellschaft gefährdet zeigt" (p. 240). It is inappropriate to judge Grabbe's realism by criteria deduced from the movement generally known as "Poetic Realism", which does indeed retain a positive note and an ultimate harmony. The realistic elements of Grabbe's plays, where they are present, have more in common with a naturalist form of realism, as is suggested by Sengle in his Biedermeierzeit (volume 1, Stuttgart, 1971, p. 261).

45 Letter of 28 December 1827.



realistic dimension in Grabbe's works. The poet's retention of grossly idealistic elements, his reluctance to abandon verse forms, the markedly poetic nature of much of his prose, the extravagances and incredulities of incident, his disregard for credible characterisation and psychological consistency, his dissolution of dramatic form in his last play, all point to a fundamental disinterest in the evolution of a thoroughly realistic mode of drama. Grabbe was not guided by the desire to create a unified or wholly veristic form of theatre.<sup>46</sup> For this reason it is inappropriate and misleading to speak of "ein Versuch zur bloßen Wiederholung der Wirklichkeit", "die Tendenz zu schierer naturalistisch-wirklichkeitsbesessener Illustration" or "die volle Wirklichkeit und Wahrheit" of his dramas.<sup>47</sup> One cannot simply identify a "Wille zum Realismus" as the poet's "wesentliche Absicht"<sup>48</sup> or his ultimate aim.<sup>49</sup> Above all one cannot overlook the ambivalences of his work and arrive at the conclusion: "Die bedeutendste und geschlossenste Leistung Grabbes ist fraglos die Gestaltung eines neuen frührealistischen Geschichtsdramas".<sup>50</sup> The overwhelming tendency in Grabbe criticism to speak of "unverkleidete Wirklichkeit",<sup>51</sup> "historischer Realismus und Naturalismus",<sup>52</sup> "historische Objektivität",<sup>53</sup> "schrackenloser Realismus und Naturalismus",<sup>54</sup> "entzaubernder Realismus",<sup>55</sup> "unmittelbare

46 Hegele sees Grabbe's role as "Wegbereiter eines dingnahen szenischen Realismus" quite simply as his "Hauptbedeutung" (p. 66).

47 Steffens, p. 51; p. 57.

48 Steffens, p. 65.

49 Ehrlich, "Leben und Werke", p. 72.

50 Nieschmidt, Zwei Studien, p. 49.

51 Link, p. 223.

52 Nieten, "Leben und Werke", p. 212.

53 Claus, p. 34.

54 Siefert, p. 129.

55 von Wiese, Die deutsche Tragödie, p. 512.

und realistische Darstellung"<sup>56</sup> is in danger of oversimplifying the problematic nature of Grabbe's dramas and clouding the tensions which undermine the unity of the works. Martini's statement: "Stets soll die volle Wahrheit sichtbar werden; jede Überformung würde solchem Wirklichkeitsernst bereits ein Verhüllen bedeuten"<sup>57</sup> demonstrates the consequences of the uncritical use of the concept of realism as a common denominator of Grabbe's oeuvre.

It should be noted further that, despite an increase in empirical fullness in Grabbe's later plays, there is no natural or regular progression towards an intensification of realism in his work. Although Napoleon marks a clear advance on the Hohenstaufen plays in this respect, Hannibal, the next drama, dispenses with much of the breadth and milieu of its predecessor and condenses its historical basis into a few short scenes. Die Hermannsschlacht, it is true, returns to the detailed depiction of environment, crowd scenes and battle action; yet the pluralism of language, superficiality of psychological motivation and the element of glorification - aspects which do not develop but remain constant throughout Grabbe's creative work - prevent this drama, too, from meeting the requirements of consistent realistic art. The gradual movement towards a more sophisticated realism, postulated by many commentators, must therefore be questioned. Germann's identification of "eine immer stärker werdende Entwicklung zum Realismus"<sup>58</sup> in the works, a view which is echoed by Pieper, F. J. Schneider, von Wiese, Koch, Siefert and Steffens among others, is an unjustifiable simplification of a complex and contradictory aspect of Grabbe's works. The term "realism",

<sup>56</sup> Hegele, p. 217.

<sup>57</sup> Martini, "Grabbes niederdeutsches Drama", p. 169. Sengle, by regarding the essence of Grabbean drama as a simple attempt to reproduce reality, arrives at a similar conclusion: "Grabbes Geschichtsdrama lebt aus einem bauerlichen und niedersächsischen Realismus, der lieber auf die Kunst verzichtet als daß er "konstruiert" und sich von den mit Händen zu greifenden Wahrheiten entfernt" (Das historische Drama in Deutschland, p. 162).

<sup>58</sup> Germann, p. 27-8.

employed as an all-inclusive general concept, is unable to embrace the diversity and disunity of these dramas and runs the risk of hampering a more thorough understanding of Grabbe's aims as a dramatist.

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