

**A STUDY THROUGH TRANSLATION OF WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER'S
PARADIES DER FALSCHEN VÖGEL**

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PARADIES DER FALSCHEN VÖGEL

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Wolfgang Hildesheimer's Paradies der falschen Vögel, published in 1953, has often been dismissed as too "feuilletonistisch", merely a "heitere Satire auf den Kulturbetrieb" (Hanenberg 29). However Hildesheimer's only "Roman" as such contains all of the themes which dominate his later work. An examination of these themes can contribute appreciably to an understanding of Hildesheimer's development as a writer; the seeds of Hildesheimer's absurdist world view, his rejection of conventional narrative in favour of "absurde Prosa" and his eventual abandonment of literature entirely, can all be traced back to this novel.

There are three major themes which were present in Hildesheimer's work from the beginning and eventually came to dominate his world view entirely: first, the motif of the "Fälscher" and the relativity of all artistic values and judgements; second, the notion that "truth", like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder - it is whatever people believe it to be; third, the motif of the melancholy "Außenseiter" who succumbs to resignation and eventually withdraws from the world entirely.

The motif of fakery and deception plays a central role in Paradies der falschen Vögel. In an interview on Südwestfunk in 1990, Hildesheimer said of his only novel:

Es ist natürlich die Welt des Scheins, und die Scheinbarkeit hat bei mir immer eine ganz große Rolle gespielt. Es handelt sich ja bei mir fast ausschließlich um Fälscher oder Hochstapler. (qtd. in GW I, 524)

This theme plays a prominent role in Hildesheimer's, Lieblose Legenden (1950-62). In "Bildnis eines Dichters", for example, the reader meets the literary critic Alphons Schwerdt, who has succeeded in silencing several poets with his withering criticism. Having robbed himself of victims, he resorts to writing a volume of poetry under the name Sylvan Hardemuth in order, as Alphons Schwerdt, to shower it with critical disdain. Though his ruse is at first a success, the poet Hardemuth eventually becomes more popular with the public than the critic Schwerdt, who consequently abandons his own identity and "becomes" Hardemuth. The secret is not discovered until after his death, whereupon:

sich Hardemuth...als mit Schwerdt identisch entpuppte und daraufhin bei der Öffentlichkeit, die sich peinlich betrogen fühlte, in posthume und endgültige Ungnade fiel. (GW I, 39)

Here Hildesheimer displays the cynical irony which characterizes much of his later work; image triumphs over substance; the public becomes the willing victim of a deception only to turn against the imposter once the truth has been

revealed. The same poems which received the acclamation of the public become worthless merely because "Hardemuth" turns out not to have been who the public thought he was. The irony is that the poems really were shoddy, intentionally so, but the public perversely refused to show "good taste" and rejected Schwerdt's criticism of them. The theme of the relativity of artistic judgements is addressed in other "lieblose Legenden", and the leitmotif of Paradies der falschen Vögel becomes: does a work of art possess any intrinsic value, or does it merely have received value lent to it by common consensus?

The "hero" of PV is the narrator's "Onkel Robert", "ein genialer Fälscher, ein Fälscher von Gottes Gnaden" whose forgery of the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre has never been detected. (GW I, 179) Yet Robert does not view his activities as immoral; forgery, according to him, "sei nur durch ängstliche Sammler und ergeizige Museumsdirektoren in Verruf geraten. Diese hätten die öffentliche Meinung vergiftet und die Augen des Publikums zu weit geöffnet." (193) Indeed, he prides himself on the creative aspect of his work:

Niemand wisse um den echten schöpferischen Vorgang,
welcher mit der Ausübung dieser Tätigkeit verbunden sei,
niemand ahne etwas von der ungeheuren Schwierigkeit,
sich ganz in den Schöpfer des Vorbildes zu versetzen,
welche Vorbedingung diesen Akt erst möglich mache.
(193)

Just as Schwerdt impersonates a poet who never existed, Robert's masterstroke is the creation of an artist who never existed, whose works are

conveniently "discovered" in a remote mountain monastery. Ayax Mazyrka is given a title, "der Prozegovinische Rembrandt", and his "birthplace" as well as his "deathbed" in the monastery where he ostensibly spent the last years of his life are billed as tourist attractions. Robert has taken forgery one step further: Mazyrka's supposed paintings are no forgeries at all, since Mazyrka never existed in the first place; for all intents and purposes Robert **is** Mazyrka. At one point Anton Velhagen asks Uncle Robert the "naive" question "weshalb denn der Umstand, daß die Bilder anstatt seines Namens den eines von ihm erfundenen Künstlers trügen, der einige Jahrhunderte zuvor gelebt haben sollte, den Wert so beträchtlich erhöhe." (217) If this question is "naive", then that is because it assumes that works of art have value in and of themselves; Uncle Robert, however, has grasped a larger truth, as his answer reveals:

"Der Nimbus des Alten", sagte er, "trägt heute mehr zu dem Wert eines Kunstgegenstandes bei als die künstlerische Qualität. Ein lebender Maler ist nichts; wenn er stirbt, horcht man schon auf, aber einem alten Meister stehen alle Türen offen. Und ich bin ein alter Meister."
(217)

Robert is no real villain, he simply prefers the life of the rich and successful forger to that of the starving artist whose work only becomes valuable posthumously. Robert is merely exploiting the crass commercialism of the art world, that "Kult des Originals, der Einmaligkeit" (Puknus 29), which values image over substance; by duping the entire art world into believing in the

existence of Mazyrka, Robert sets the whole notion of artistic value in question while profiting personally from his activity.

In any case, authenticity is only a relative term, as the narrator observes sardonically:

Was ist ein echtes Bild? Ein echtes Bild ist ein Bild, welches von einem oder mehreren Experten als echt erklärt ist. (241)

This is thrown into relief in the passage in which Anton, upon finding that Robert has cynically taken advantage of his disappearance and presumed death to begin producing forged "Velhagens", attempts to sell some of his own sketches to a gallery as genuine Velhagens. However these are rejected as "äußerst geschickte Nachahmungen der Manier des unseligen Künstlers Anton Velhagen...jedoch keineswegs Originale." (242) In the end even Anton is convinced by the art expert's explanations:

Die Suche nach der Wahrheit hat ihn so weit geführt, daß er den Schein als Wahrheit nimmt, weil das Wahrscheinliche gegen ihn spricht: das Wahrscheinliche ist wahr, selbst wenn es nicht der Realität entspricht. (Jehle 37)

This episode is reminiscent of "Aus meinem Tagebuch," where the narrator, after having discovered what seems to be a Rubens underneath a still life painting in his possession, takes the painting to the art expert Friedensohn for appraisal, who promptly declares the painting to be of the Rubens school.

Later however, when the narrator tries to clean off the remains of the still life, a 20th century Bavarian landscape painting becomes visible underneath. He complains to Friedensohn, who replies:

...ich habe Ihnen mit meinem Urteil einen Wertgegenstand in die Hand gegeben, welchen zu bewahren in Ihrem eigenen Interesse gelegen hätte. Anstatt dessen haben Sie auf eigene Faust geforscht, indem Sie die Pigmentschicht heruntergewaschen haben. Und nun beklagen Sie sich bei mir darüber, daß unter ihr, an Stelle von nackter Leinwand, eine Gebirgslandschaft erschienen ist. Seien Sie mir nicht böse, lieber Freund, aber das ist wirklich nicht meine Schuld. (GW I, 121-2)

Friedensohn, like Onkel Robert, does not want the public's eyes opened too wide, for that would deprive him of his livelihood. For Friedensohn, it is a matter of indifference whether the painting is authentic or not - his word makes it authentic. It is the belief that it is a Rubens, the "Nimbus des Alten," that lends it value, not the "künstlerische Qualität." similarly, in Paradies der falschen Vögel "Authentizität und Echtheit bestehen nur solange, bis sie als Nichtauthentizität und Fälschung erkannt worden sind." (Dücker 51)

The second major theme in Hildesheimer's work which finds its expression in Paradies der falschen Vögel is contained in the narrator's ironic boast:

Nicht ohne einen gewissen Stolz kann ich... behaupten, daß ich früher als manch anderer zu der Einsicht gelangt

bin, daß die Wahrheit verschiedene Aspekte hat und ihre Erkenntnis im Auge des einzelnen liegt. (GW I, 170)

For Hildesheimer truth, like authenticity, is only a relative term; it is a matter of indifference what the "real" truth is, for truth can be whatever people believe it to be. All of the characters in Paradies der falschen Vögel are living a lie - this is even true of Velhagen, who in the end welcomes the loss of his identity - ; the "Fälscher" and "Hochstapler" such as Robert, Lydia, Phillip and Bühl, carefully tend the elaborately constructed fiction of their existence. In this respect there is a close parallel between "Das Ende einer Welt" and Paradies der falschen Vögel; both the Marchesa Montetrasto and Tante Lydia live in artificial worlds of their own creation. The Marchesa, "eine geborene Waterman aus Little Gidding, Ohio" (GW I, 90), has an artificial island constructed, where she devotes her life to "der Erhaltung des Altbewährten und der Erweckung des Vergessenen oder, wie sie es auszudrücken beliebte, der Pflege des Echten und Bleibenden." (90) Tante Lydia, on the other hand, creates an entire family tree complete with a fake graveyard full of imaginary ancestors commemorated by fake heirlooms. Both the Marchesa and Tante Lydia "treten nur in Verbindung mit ihren Kulturgegenständen hervor, diese erst vermitteln ihrem Besitzer Existenzberechtigung und Reputation in der Gesellschaft." (Dücker 44)

Hildesheimer is satirizing those culture snobs who value art and culture as a status symbol rather than for what it is; they do not truly belong to the

world of the artist, merely to that of the "Kulturträger", more precisely that of the "Kultur-Geschäftsträger". (Puknus 29) Convinced that tradition can be acquired by accumulating such objects as Liselotte von der Pfalz's handkerchief or the renowned "Prager Misthaufen", Tante Lydia fills her mansion with antiques and objets d'art which are of dubious authenticity or even outright fabrications, but this is unimportant, as the primary purpose of these objects is to consolidate her reputation in high society.

In this light, Robert's activities take on a new character; is he not merely giving his customers what they want? If they value appearance over substance, then that is what he delivers:

Man **will**, gerade wenn man den Kult des "Echten" betreibt, angenehm und reizvoll getäuscht sein, gilt der Drang doch weniger dem wirklich Echten als seinem status-erhöhenden Anschein. Der Fälscher beliefert die gewissen "Kreise" also just und bis zur letzten Konsequenz mit dem, was sie eigentlich und "in Wahrheit" brauchen. (Puknus 30)

In fact, none of Robert's customers ever do complain; his scheme only goes awry when Philipp Roskoll turns up in the guise of "Mr. Lionel Pratt" to blackmail him. He has in his possession the original sketch of Lady Viola Pratt by Holbein, whose existence Robert had never suspected - understandably, since it was manufactured by Robert's nephew and erstwhile protégé, Anton.

In the end, it makes no difference whether Mazyrka existed or not, for he will exist as long as people believe in him; the illusion is all that counts.

Beyond the irony and satire there emerges a note of resignation and despair:

Damit bin ich am Ende meiner Aufzeichnungen angelangt... und ich hoffe, sie werden auch dem Leser Vergnügen bereiten, denn mehr verlange ich nicht. Sie sollen, wie ich schon anfangs sagte, keinen Staub aufwirbeln; es ist auch, letzten endes, gleichgültig, ob Ajax Mazyrka existiert hat oder nicht, und es ist müßig, tote Tatsachen aufdecken zu wollen, um sie nachträglich mit dem Lichte der Wahrheit zu beleuchten; man lasse sie getrost schlummern. Denn für die Tausende, die sein Werk bewundern...ist die Existenz Ajax Mazyrkas nicht auszulöschen, denn sie gehört zum Bestand ihrer Erfahrungen und Erlebnisse. (GW I, 257)

Throughout the novel, the narrator's attitude is one of ironic resignation; far from wanting to change the "vorhandene Mißstände" (157) with his revelations, his only wish is to withdraw from the world and live out his days in modest anonymity.

Indeed, the theme of resignation and withdrawal from the world is a thread that runs throughout Hildesheimer's work; typically the narrator, usually a thinly-disguised alter ego of the author, plays "die Rolle des melancholischen Außenseiters, der die Gesellschaft flüchtet oder in die Isolation getrieben wird, auf Handlungen dann verzichtet und den Standpunkt des Betrachters einnimmt." (Blamberger 1985, 74) In the "lieblose Legenden" the Ich-Erzähler is often allowed to escape - the narrator in "Das Ende einer Welt" manages to swim away from San Amerigo just before it sinks into the sea, in "Warum ich

mich in eine Nachtigall verwandelt habe" Adrian escapes society by abandoning his human form altogether, while in "Die Suche nach der Wahrheit" Andreas rides off into the desert, never to be heard from again. In Paradies der falschen Vögel however the narrator is forced to flee; Velhagen is driven from Procegovina and robbed of his identity; yet after having helped Roskoll dispose of Onkel Robert, he makes no attempt to regain his old identity; resigned to his fate, he praises instead the virtues of anonymity:

...ich rate allen denen, welche durch irgendeinen Zufall...Anonymität gewonnen haben, diese als einen kostbaren Besitz zu hüten. (GW I, 243)

By the end of the novel neither Velhagen nor Roskoll have much hope for the future:

Wir werden...vielleicht von alten Zeiten sprechen, da wir beide den neuen mit wenig Spannung entgegensehen. (258)

In "Ich finde mich zurecht", as in the last of the "Lieblose Legenden", "Schläferung", flight is no longer possible; in the former the narrator shuts out society by remaining in bed, while in the latter he literally retreats into a guitar: "Ich werde heute nacht in der Gitarre schlafen." (140)

In his later work Hildesheimer's world view becomes increasingly pessimistic and melancholy; the satire gives way to absurdism, despair and finally the abandonment of writing entirely. After Paradies der falschen Vögel, Hildesheimer never again attempts the novel form, turning instead to radio

plays and the theatre. In 1960 he delivers his "Rede über das absurde Theater"; in contrast to Camus, who believed that literature of the absurd could act as a spur to collective action, Hildesheimer's conception of the absurd is a desolate and melancholy one:

Das absurde Theater ist eine Parabel über die Fremdheit des Menschen in der Welt. Sein Spiel dient daher der Verfremdung. Es ist ihre letzte und radikale Konsequenz. (GW VII 26)

Vergebliche Aufzeichnungen (1962) is a turning point in Hildesheimer's work; it marks his return to graphic art and is the first example of the stream-of-consciousness, monologue-type prose which is continued in Tynset (1965), Zeiten in Cornwall (1971) and Masante (1973): What Hildesheimer achieved with Tynset is stated programmatically in his Frankfurter Vorlesungen (1967).

Here Hildesheimer rejects the traditional narrative entirely:

Mit Euch bin ich der Meinung, daß der Roman, indem er Ausschnitte aus einer fiktiven Realität beleuchtet, die Realität nicht wiedergibt und daß er heute die maximale Anzahl ihrer Konstellationen erreicht hat. (GW VII, 51)

Instead, he calls for what he terms "absurde Prosa" as the only possible response to the "Vernunftwidrigkeit" of the world:

Absurde Prosa weist auf das Schweigen der Welt hin, indem sie die Tragikomik der Ersatzantworten beschreibt; indem sie jene anprangert, die sich als Stellvertreter der Welt sehen und Ersatzantworten erteilen, und indem sie jene verspottet, die sich nach den Ersatzantworten richten. (54)

Having exhausted this form, Hildesheimer returns to the biography, writing the serious and well-received Mozart (1977) and the fictitious Marbot (1981), the invented biography of an English nobleman. After Mitteilungen an Max (1983), his contribution to the Festschrift für Max Frisch, Hildesheimer announces his intention to retire from writing entirely in order to return to graphic art; indeed, Hildesheimer always considered himself more of an artist than a writer. In Mitteilungen an Max there is a clear note of resignation, yet a trace of the ironic humour so much a part of his earlier work still shines through: "Ich wäre gern ein anderer geworden...Nicht übel wäre es auch, gar nicht erst geboren zu sein, aber das kommt immer seltener vor..." (GW I, 415)

From this point onwards Hildesheimer devotes himself largely to his art, publishing two volumes of collages, Endlich allein (1984) and In Erwartung der Nacht (1986); his writing is confined mostly to essays deploring the destruction of the environment. By this time he has begun to despair of humanity; in the essay "Klage und Anklage" (1984) he warns:

Die Apokalypse droht, und zwar um zu strafen. Sie wird, wenn sie kommt, auch die Gerechten vernichten, aber diese dürfen wenigstens ihr gutes Gewissen bis zum Ende hüten. (GW VII, 717)

In other essays Hildesheimer rails against "die zynische Hartnäckigkeit dieser Umweltmörder" (742), and "die allgemeine Verdrängungsepidemie" (718) which trivializes the extent of the environmental catastrophe facing us all. Yet

Hildesheimer has little hope that this disaster can be averted; In his 1986 essay "Hat die Hoffnung noch eine Zukunft?" Hildesheimer answers his own question with "ein kategorisches und vernichtendes NEIN." (739)

Like his positive characters, Hildesheimer is an "Aussteiger" (Jehle 43); four years after the publication of Paradies der falschen Vögel he retires to the tiny village of Poschiavo in the Swiss canton Graubünden, remaining there until his death in 1991. His work is not only a considerable literary achievement, but also chronicles his spiritual journey through life; for Hildesheimer writing was "überhaupt kein Beruf...sondern lebensfüllende Selbstdokumentation und immer wiederkehrender Ausdrucks- und Darstellungszwang, also eigentlich Beschäftigungstherapie." (GW I, 506) In his work, as in his life, Hildesheimer struggled constantly with the dubiousness of society's "Ersatzantworten" to existential questions, the grotesque absurdity of life and the difficulty of distinguishing appearance from reality:

Hildesheimers Figuren entdecken angebliche, sogenannte Wahrheit der Welt als Fälschung und Täuschung - sie sind ständig im Übergang zum Untergang, im Begriffe des Verzichtens und Aufgebens. Sie sind Stellvertreter des Autors in einer gestellten Situation... Auf die Desillusion des Daseins erwidert die Desillusion der artistischen Reproduktion des Daseins. Die Kunst wiederholt das Leben. Man kann vor Kunst und Leben, in der Kunst vor dem Leben und im Leben vor der Kunst resignieren. (Koebner 204)

Hildesheimer's succinct definition of the absurd in the Frankfurter Vorlesungen can be used to summarize the dilemma inherent in all his creative work: "Der Mensch fragt, die Welt schweigt." (GW VII, 50)

FOOL'S PARADISE

The painter Ayax Mazyrka, known as the "Procegovinian Rembrandt", one of the most important phenomena in the history of art, never existed. His works are forgeries, and the story of his life is a fiction.

I would like to make this fact clear at the outset. For it is both the foundation as well as the motive of my chronicle. However I do not expect the reader to believe me, and if this fact is mentioned here for the first time in black and white, it is merely because it is of considerable importance to the events which I - despite prospective disbelief - believe I must relate, and not because I am determined to expose, or even want to improve, the present deplorable state of affairs. Nothing could be further from my mind than to create a stir. I am neither an obsessively determined Michael Kolhaas nor an indecisive Prince Hamlet, but rather am and remain someone who is easily able to come to terms with given circumstances, and who doesn't search for their causes.

Besides, Mazyrka's masterpieces are by no means the only forgeries hanging in European and American galleries. These are rife with with forgeries - one here and one there, placed by deft hands - but that doesn't bother anybody, for it doesn't fall into the area of so-called everyday life. Now it is true that there have been many other matters in the last few years which

have taken up the public's interest to an increasing extent and which - who would deny it? - are of more importance to the immediate future of Humanity than forged paintings. I will refrain from enumerating these matters, for I have never devoted much attention to them.

Only this shift in interest can explain for example the fact that many an old master of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era, whose paintings belong to the most beautiful holdings of many museums, has smuggled himself into art history. The existence of one such master, actually hitherto unknown, should by no means be sought in the Middle Ages, but instead in the present, and indeed in my immediate family; this master made it his business to enrich these holdings, though not - this too I make clear from the outset - out of higher, but rather out of self-serving motives. Some of his most beautiful works also decorated the house of my aunt Lydia, the house for whose inhabitants time seemed to stand still while the decades slipped by outside. Aunt Lydia, however, suspected nothing of the origin of these paintings, and she won't find out now, either, for she is dead.

Certain members of my family have prophesied that I would drive Aunt Lydia to an early grave. This prediction, I have now been able to determine with satisfaction, did not come true. I found out today that she died peacefully in her

sleep a short while ago, having reached the age of seventy-nine. One could say, then, that her death was not too unexpected, and by no means premature. I was not present at her deathbed. With that I will probably silence the malicious gossip of those who would like to have blamed me personally for her timely demise.

Today it is in any case no longer very clear to me which of my actions such sinister prognostications were based upon, and since the harbingers of the same - as well as those who would vouch for the truth of my story, with the exception of one - have long since receded from my memory, indeed, since most of them have probably died themselves in the meantime, this could at this point hardly be ascertained, even if it were in my own interest. In any case, I was - despite all accounts to the contrary - not my aunt's willful adversary, though she never managed, despite constant though clumsy attempts, to impose her own views on me, let alone make me grow into her personal world. And from this, as will be seen later, I became more and more alienated.

I am writing this on a misty October day, the sort of day the waning year so often offers those whose senses are acute: a chain of memories is awakened by the view of trees stripped of leaves, of bare fields robbed of the last potato, even by a scent wafting over from the meadow. And into this day

now blows the letter with the death notice, as if a crow had brought it in its beak. It is already over a year old and has reached me by a rather circuitous route; it is, by the way, not addressed to me personally, for since I officially fell victim to a border incident many years ago, I live under an assumed name which is surely unknown to the author of the letter - none other than the poet and aphorist Hans Hamilkar Bühl, who also plays a certain role in this account, though not a particularly laudable one.

The addressee - unknown to me, incidentally - is here informed of my aunt's decease in moving words couched in artistic simplicity; and all at once the period of my childhood spent with Aunt Lydia comes back to me. Long-forgotten images and scenes take shape before me, move and merge into other scenes, an intoxicating film, without end and full of strange entanglements, so that it will end today if I don't decide to cut it off sooner.

Aunt Lydia's country house appears as the first image. Built at the fin de siècle's culmination, it looked something like a gothic rest home, sinister in outward appearance yet friendly in its effect. It was surrounded by lush parkland, with poplars, plane trees and whortleberry, in whose midst even the bastard style of this unconventional edifice achieved a certain stolid dignity. In the park there was also, beside several petrified scenes from Greek mythology and a pavilion which invited - depending on the taste and character of those

who lingered here - either quiet contemplation or a bit of hanky-panky, a small private cemetery with the graves of several - as it turns out, legendary - ancestors, and it can be judged almost as symbolic that even then the strange marble plaque with the inscription

DE MORTUIS NIHIL NISI BENE¹

which adorned the gate to the graves had broken in two. **De mortuis nihil** could still be read on it.

"I really must have that plaque restored", said Aunt Lydia one evening to her brother, Uncle Robert, who, resident in the Principality of Procegovina, spent a few weeks with us now and then.

"It's not half bad in its present state", he said, "Not half bad", he repeated thoughtfully, and I noticed on his face the hint of an enigmatic grin which indicated even to me, then five years old, that not everything here was as it seemed.

I know virtually nothing of the fate of my parents, and I must assume that the matter was intentionally shrouded in darkness for some reason or other. In any case my name is - or rather was until the aforementioned border incident - Anton Velhagen, a name which ought to mean something to lovers of modern art. According to Aunt Lydia's explanation my mother was her cousin,

¹"Of the dead say nothing if not good"

and I have no reason and incidentally no inclination to doubt this. The theory which I indulge in today, since my leisure time allows it - namely that I was a foundling - is devoid of any foundation, nor does it stand up to closer scrutiny: it is most improbable that Aunt Lydia of all people would have taken one in, for she was neither by predisposition nor by interest suited to the rearing of children. On the contrary: I have seldom met a person who displayed such pedagogical incompetence as she did, which is also why our relationship to each other can be seen as one great misunderstanding, for which, however, neither of us was actually to blame.

Aunt Lydia always behaved with a mild composure which, although perhaps originally a pose, had become part of her nature and gave her, outwardly at least, her distinctive character. She knew how to surround her life with an aura of graceful tradition and promenaded through the decades carefree and hardly ageing, as if on a carpet. She had incidentally been very beautiful in her youth, like almost all ladies of her generation, strangely enough, as could be seen from the several dozen daguerrotypes exhibited wherever a free horizontal offered itself. The fact that it did not bother her to be reminded of herself every waking minute of her life is an important factor in the enumeration of her qualities.

She spent the greater part of the year travelling. I may only imagine that she went snipe hunting in Scotland every February as this would have fitted well into her yearly program, and since I also seem to remember having seen the corresponding clothing in her wardrobe. But I am well aware that one's imagination can often play tricks precisely in these matters. In any case, as the spring season set in she could be found in Paris, from whence she would then travel to St. Ignaz, Baden-Baden, Wildbad or some other spa, for even then people who knew how to live the good life were always in need of a cure too. At this time the idea of staging festivals was still in its infancy, but my aunt took with her whatever impressions of the kind there were, lest topics of discussion freeze up over the winter months.

At the end of September she would come home, rather exhausted, in order to rest up until the next spring. Then she usually brought me all manner of souvenirs, such as stuffed mountain birds, cuckoo flutes, colourful views of health resorts painted on pieces of wood, or interieurs squeezed into matchboxes, pencil-holders shaped like gondolas, bookends shaped like crocodiles, and other things shaped like still other things, people, monsters or animals. In the process she usually forgot what she had brought me the previous year, and so it happened that various different sized models of the same object alone filled entire bookshelves and my room looked not unlike a spacious shooting gallery. There was for example an entire regiment of carved

wooden bears on which GREETINGS FROM BERN was burned. For that existed even then, and will always exist. Cultural trends of entire generations may fade away, but the Bernese Bear will remain to the end.

It is possible that Aunt Lydia, by presenting me with these useless objects, merely felt she had to transfer her own passion for collecting to a childish level. For she was a collector par excellence. With her it was historical objects: from the Rococco-vintage false beauty spot to snuff boxes to heavy furniture, indeed to entire sets of furniture. There may be various explanations for the origin of such a mania. With Aunt Lydia it may perhaps have been founded in part in uneasiness about her own sketchy family tree, which she now sought to replace with accumulated tradition.

She brought smaller display pieces back in her suitcase; larger ornaments and pieces of furniture arrived during the later weeks of Autumn, and the unpacking and arrangement of these items always involved a kind of ceremony, during which my aunt expounded to those present in well-studied speeches the function and significance of the objects, and indeed not only to the guests, but also the - for the most part completely indifferent - packers and porters, who paid dearly for the traditional bottle of beer by listening to these explanations. There then followed entire evenings of pushing period furniture back and forth, during which the male guests were expected to lend a hand as well. For this they divested themselves of their jackets and vests, and some

even put warehouse coats on over their tuxedo shirts which they had brought along in anticipation of what was to come. Such operations often turned into a sort of parlour game. Mind you, those friends who found this work too arduous and whose interest in that sort of thing was limited didn't come before December, for they might be certain that by that time the yearly contingent had arrived and been positioned, and one didn't have to work to earn one's keep for the weekend.

From the activities described here one might easily have concluded that Aunt Lydia's social sensitivity was stunted at the expense of such peculiarities. This was, however, not the case, although her contribution to the alleviation of poverty remained limited to such occasions on which her own social needs were satisfied; and in itself there is really nothing objectionable about the principle: help others by helping yourself.

Accordingly, she gave two charity banquets annually, to which numerous, sometimes quite peculiar guests were invited, and which were - in the best sense of the word - feudal occasions. The cause varied with the necessity of the moment; it was taken from whatever happened to be the current crisis: once it was tubercular railwaymen, on another occasion people amused themselves for the sake of Chinese children, and when no absolute necessity along these lines presented itself, then it was a permanent institution like the S.P.C.A. or the Travellers' Aid Society. The money came in through

prize draws and other kinds of raffles, which are curious in that they always bring in profits merely by objets d'art, vases and the like, changing hands. I am convinced, by the way, that on these occasions the proceeds reached the charities in accordance with the rules, for I know that the testimonials of thanks which inevitably followed meant a great deal to Aunt Lydia. She safeguarded these in a large parchment folder, which was kept locked in a safe, as though it were necessary to produce such documents on some day of final reckoning.

I incurred my first serious reprimand when I blew my nose with the handkerchief formerly belonging to Liselotte von der Pfalz. My aunt preserved this piece of linen in a display case containing various such utensils. This was no malicious act. I had, while out for a walk in the snow, contracted a cold whose first symptoms appeared one afternoon in the form of violent sneezing, just as I was on my way to the dining room. In passing, I opened the display case and took out this piece of history - for me nothing but a handkerchief - and blew my nose in it. Who can imagine my aunt's horror - if not I myself - when I took the handkerchief from my pocket after dinner, in unsuspecting innocence of this sacrilege, and blew my nose in it once more! She suddenly gave a loud groan, snatched the handkerchief out of my hands, and went, as she cried out dramatically, "to wash it out with her own hands", something incidentally of which I considered her incapable. One of our guests, none other than

Bruhlmuth, the art historian and Mazyrka expert - long since deceased - took me aside and explained to me in dry and for me barely comprehensible language the nature of my offence, detailing the personality of the artless maiden from the Palatinate, the simplicity of her thinking and the purity of her convictions. It was for him undoubtedly a welcome occasion to wax eloquent, although one would think that I, as I stood before him - an awkward lad in a sailor suit - could hardly have represented an adequate audience. Nor did the punishing looks of the others concern me, and contrition simply would not come. Liselotte von der Pfalz was dead, would sneeze no more, and therefore did not require a handkerchief. That is how I saw the matter, though today I regard this kind of piety with more tolerance.

I was equally blameless of my next offence, though it was more serious in its repercussions; mind you, I succeeded in concealing its traces myself before it could be discovered.

In the foyer of our house there stood on a marble pedestal a porcelain bowl under a cheese cover. This bowl contained a small pile of a substance which I can only describe as ashes. It was, however, the Prague Dung Heap.

I will need to digress a bit here. With the reader's permission, I will be historical for a moment.

On the 23rd of March in the year 1618 the Imperial envoys, the Counts Martinitz and Slavata, along with their secretary, Fabricius, were thrown out of the window of Prague Castle into the moat, and so served as the immediate cause of the Thirty Years' War. Down below, the three landed on a dung heap and escaped not only with a whole skin but alive as well. This historic heap had been handed down through many families, had been auctioned and sold, until my aunt acquired it at an auction of such objects. In accordance with the laws of chemistry, it had in the course of time decreased in volume, and what one saw here under the cover was nothing but a pitiful remnant which would not even have saved a bird.

The custom of putting dung heaps in front of political conference buildings has in the course of centuries gone more and more out of style, which is why there are doubtless many who lament the loss of this relic and would like to call me to account for it. To them I must say unequivocally: *mea culpa!*

Although the story of this heap is devoid of the heroism which is generally an intrinsic part of historical accounts for young people, I insisted with childish stubbornness upon hearing it over and over, always requiring that the wording remain unchanged. I liked hearing it best from Franziska, the Unforgotten One, at that time still my nanny, later so much more (I will come back to her). Though she may otherwise have possessed little historical knowledge, she had mastered the story of the dung heap.

One afternoon, then, seized with childish curiosity, I lifted the cheese cover and poked around in the little pile of ashes. Not that I really hoped to discover a trace of that historic event in this pitiful remnant; no, I merely wanted to examine the matter at close range, just as adults for example scrutinize the room where Goethe died, although they know that the "Prince among Poets" no longer walks about inside. What makes one shiver on such occasions is the reverence for the past history of all matter.

A light breeze - and the Prague Dung Heap, which had saved the lives of two Bohemian nobles and a Bohemian secretary, which, while continually decreasing in material substance, had been handed down, sold and auctioned off from generation to generation, no longer existed. It lay rather as dust on the ground.

I stood there petrified a moment, helpless. Then a thought occurred to me. With a presence of mind that still amazes me in retrospect, I ran to the fireplace and filled the little porcelain bowl with coal ashes. They weren't quite the same shade as the disintegrated dung heap, but it was better than no dung heap at all.

Nobody has ever noticed the change. Whenever Aunt Lydia looked as though she were about to show the crown of her collection to newly-acquired followers of this sort of cult I kept out of the way, as I was afraid that any gesture, however unobtrusive, might betray me. I recall one occasion,

however - I was then a few years older - when I had the audacity to question the authenticity of the heap in the presence of several guests. A desiccated lady from some earlier epoch - it must have been Fräulein von Perch - commented on this seemingly impertinent remark with the silly expression: "Child's talk!"

But I had the devil in me: at this time my predilection for immediately translating such figurative sayings into concrete reality was already manifesting itself, a habit which later led to many a misunderstanding. "But I **am** a child" I replied. I no longer recall what happened afterwards. I think that the old lady must have fallen silent, embarrassed: she was probably not up to this precocious laconicism. And it is probably such behaviour on my part - I presume - upon which the sinister prognostications which I mentioned earlier were based.

In truth, the last winter before Philipp Roskol became my private tutor was a winter of discontent for my aunt; but even in retrospect I consider myself blameless. I was merely the product of an education in the process of failure. Being surrounded by a jumble of mute witnesses to world history and an ever-growing body of mostly older adults who moved about among them was apt to force even the simplest child off the natural path of development, and I was no simple child.

There was for example the incident with the dog, a repulsive bulldog with a grotesque face that looked as if God had created it in a fit of rage. I no longer remember its owners: they were further removed from my field of vision than the animal. In the face of this watery-eyed cur I would crawl behind the legs of the nearest person, who would then, whoever it was, assure me in the way adults do that the dog was good natured; it would leave me alone as long as I left it alone. I left it alone. As if I would have dared do anything to the dog! In the course of a few days I really did lose my fear, too, and just as I had lost it altogether the dog bit me painfully on the leg.

I cried out in pain, but also in triumph. My fear had been justified, and I had thus come one step closer to acquiring the right to question the judgement of adults. From then on I made use of this right whenever I chose.

While doing so - I feel bound to admit - I didn't always employ entirely fair means. As I stubbornly refused to go to bed one night, since - as I insisted - there were snails in my bed, I was almost punished, until my bed - upon my urging - was examined. It was full of large and small snails. I stood triumphantly beside it and tried to assume a look of patient suffering. I had been right. The fact that I had collected the snails with painstaking thoroughness and put them in my bed myself did not, to my sense of justice, change the fact of their presence. And that I had this once tried to attract

everyone's attention to myself will not be held against me by any reader who understands the psyche of a child.

I was no ordinary child. But on the other hand, the adults surrounding me were no ordinary adults, and even today the fact that they were never able to count on my inferiority still fills me with a certain satisfaction.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude from the preceding that I had an unhappy childhood. It was unusual: an experience I would not like to have missed, and which came in useful to me in a good many situations later in life. On the other hand, the aforementioned situations are a result of precisely this strange childhood of mine, so that I would be closer to the truth if I said that my outlook as an adult has turned out in accordance with my childhood and upbringing; but in this I am no different from most other people.

I remember many happy hours, especially during the quiet months when my aunt was away travelling. The afternoon sun is shining through the gothic windows. As though from afar a muted duet comes out of the kitchen in sentimental vibrato; it is my good Franziska and the cook; they are singing earthy folk ballads. I can see myself running through the lower set of rooms, trundling a hoop from one room to the next, through the lanes between the furniture, which grew narrower every year, and from there through the wide-open French doors outside. Or I am prowling through the park, armed with an air rifle or bow and arrow, and shoot here at an Apollo, there at an Artemis.

Once I even set out with a spade to satisfy my childish thirst for knowledge regarding the way of all flesh, but the grave which I choose for this purpose turns out to be a fake, a fact which gives me food for thought. On rainy days I have Franziska the Good read aloud to me, from Robinson Crusoe or the Decameron for example, one of the several beautiful editions which Aunt Lydia owned.

It was a happy time.

When I was seven years old, Philipp Roskol entered my life, though first and foremost he entered my aunt's. Roskol, a young gentleman of a good family, had originally been intended for the antique trade, and had even been considered a promising newcomer in this field for a time. But over the years he had realized that this quiet career, though it may have required a certain inventiveness, offered his enterprising spirit no real opportunities for development. And so he gave it up, and from then on devoted himself to dealing in objects which he thought held real promise, and whenever they could not be found, he had them manufactured. Since his sense for the laws of ethics was not very well developed at the time, a wide range of activities which normally remain closed to those more heavily laden with scruples soon opened up to him.

"The word "scruple"", he used to say, "sounds like some kind of skin disease", and I must admit that he wasn't so far off.

Roskol was in his mid-twenties when he entered my aunt's salon for the first time. He was preceded by the reputation of being an expert in the field of early Byzantine vase painting and its masters, about which he was said to be able to tell the most amusing anecdotes. This turned out to be true, although his anecdotes were as imaginary as the vases whose origin and painting they concerned were fake. At the time of his first entrance at Aunt Lydia's, he had found it advisable to disappear from the international art trade for a few months, as some obstinate connoisseur, having long refused to be soothed, had declared an early Byzantine vase to be of doubtful origin. Introduced by an old mutual friend - the same one who had also created the aura of the witty expert for him -, he appeared at our door one day and managed in the course of a weekend to sell the few remaining examples of that stoneware of contention to Aunt Lydia.

This was the beginning of a series of transactions carried out on my aunt's part with a blind lack of objectivity. For she had after a few days taken a strong liking to the young man, and so was easy game for him.

The love grew with the years, and with it grew as well the number of questionable elements in my aunt's collection, so that henceforth the aura of illegitimacy spread over it entirely.

Soon Phillip Roskol moved in with us in order to serve as my private tutor. He was to be sure in no way competent for this task, and the reason for this strange decision of my aunt's is certainly not to be sought in her concern for my education, either. It is true that I had been ready to start school for a year, but she would hardly have noticed this fact if a guest had not now and then called her attention to my ignorance of the most elementary things. I myself did not in any way consider it my duty to remind Aunt Lydia of her omission.

I was therefore merely the pretext which served to give Phillip Roskol's stay at our house the stamp of legitimacy. And so I was taught by Phillip, Phillip was loved by my aunt, and he gave in both directions what was his to give, and this seemed to all concerned a welcome solution, though not perhaps in accordance with child psychology.

Though he may have been an ideal lover - that I do not know, of course - an ideal teacher he was not, at least not from a purely pedagogical point of view. His actual knowledge was limited to areas which generally have little to do with the elementary curriculum. Nevertheless: he knew how to express what he taught me in a stimulating manner. His explanations were to be sure rather subjective, and his interpretation of history was often based on what in his opinion ought to have been rather than what actually was; as I already mentioned, however, he was no educator, and one must keep in mind

that my aunt, by hiring him, had made a virtue out of necessity, if I may use the word "virtue" in this context.

And so I became for the first - but not the last - time the victim of love. I knew nothing of this, however, and, as is expected of a child, I gained full confidence in my private tutor. I accepted what he taught me, even though his explanations often exceeded the limits of probability and his theories sometimes seemed whimsical even to me. I can thus claim, not without a certain pride, that I came earlier than most others to the insight that truth has different aspects, and that its recognition is in the eye of the beholder.

Softly and gradually, like leaves in autumn, the scales of ignorance fell from my eyes; my insight into the varied makeup of human relationships began to expand, and was finally crowned by the early loss of my own innocence, a reward as it were for diligence and attentiveness in the school of life.

I often awaken in the middle of the night, when the thick mantle of darkness seems to overwhelm me. Abandoned in this no-man's land of time, powerless to find in my thoughts the right point to which I might link the thread of continuity, I cast out my thoughts for distant, friendly memories.

More often than any other experience, a scene comes back to me then which occupies a particular place in my life, and which I think about over and over - even in the daytime - with much pleasure and a little sentimentality: my seduction by Franziska the Good (though here this adjective is for the first time no longer strictly speaking appropriate) She herself probably never really became aware of having been the instigator: it happened - to put it this way - in the heat of the moment. For she was actually virtuous; even now I remain convinced of this, though I would like to stress that her memory would mean no less to me had this not been so.

I was fifteen years old at the time, and so had "outgrown my children's shoes", some of which incidentally Aunt Lydia, following a custom current at the time, had had bronzed in order to display them as a decoration. Nevertheless, she being loathe to take notice of the process of ageing in her surroundings, the fact that I had for some time no longer required a nanny had escaped her, and so Franziska was still with us in some undetermined capacity.

It was in midsummer. Aunt Lydia was away at a spa somewhere. Phillip was taking a vacation from us and was ostensibly on one of his trips to Africa which were supposed to enable him later on to reenter the art world as an owner of and expert in African native art.

One afternoon in the park it happened that, at Franziska's suggestion, we wandered from the main path. How literally this suggestion was

to be understood I do not know. In any case, we were lying in the soft grass soon afterwards, and after a foreplay of the usual caresses she pulled me to her at the very moment that I, following an impulse, had wanted to reach for her as she lay facing me, rosy-cheeked and seductive. She pressed me tightly to her and asked whether I loved her. I said yes, I did, and at that moment, as if I had been waiting for the word that would trigger that feeling, I began to love her. Our caresses, which in the beginning and up until then had not exceeded the bounds of tenderness, intensified to passion. For one more short moment we switched on our consciousness in order, with coy haste, to prepare ourselves for the mechanics of what was to come next; then our surroundings disappeared, and everything dissolved in pleasure. (It was not at first a success. But, as after all in all areas, this had to be worked for, a task to which we later dedicated ourselves with enthusiasm and abandon, and with which we had no difficulty.)

We got up, shaken from such an unexpected occurrence; for at that time we still lacked that calm sense of humour which later in life helps one over certain moments. And how could it have been any different? The experience was new and undreamt-of: for years we had lived in a sort of partnership, in which each of us had played a role: I, that of innocence and she, that of reason. That had changed in one moment and now, having truly come close to

one another, we suddenly stood in confusion opposite each other like two strangers.

In time, however, we became used to the changed situation; though Franziska was almost twelve years older than I she was neither experienced nor bashful. Her naïvete brought with it a naturalness of feeling which nipped any misunderstanding in the bud.

And now I experienced for the first, perhaps the only time, that which I would like to call love.

I do not wish to be accused of having made frivolous use of that exalted but all too often misused word "love". Nevertheless I use the word consciously and deliberately. For in so doing my standard is the intensity of my own feelings, which even today are almost as strong as they were then; and at the same time the nature of our mutual relationship, which intensified with growing intimacy and consequently became a normal, natural condition.

As I write this down I am well aware that Dante or Petrarch, were they alive today, would rebuke me. Tristan would also have expressed misgivings regarding my views, but even more still will those individuals wrinkle their noses who endeavor to represent these very men as the classic ideals of true lovers. I will admit that Tristan and Isolde are a far cry from me and Franziska, and it would probably be pointless to try to draw a parallel. However

in order to justify a comparison between this tragic affair and my premature adventure, I would like to offer the reader the following for reflection:

For the aforementioned quintessential lovers this was an ideal state; a state, therefore, which in reality did not and could not exist: a longing which might crave fulfillment - I myself cannot judge it, as I am unable to feel it - but which would never be permitted to experience this fulfillment. For Fate had not provided for it.

If I now invited the reader to imagine Dante sitting down to dinner with Beatrice and his two - let us say - adolescent daughters, he would consider me tasteless, but precisely because he would reject the idea of such a scene as absurd. It would desecrate the characters, he would say, and he would be right.

Fate, then, rules out that such couples would ever have become happy together. What they yearned for was remote, like an unknown land. The intensity of their illusion could lead in its realization to nothing but deep disappointment. They must unconsciously have realised this, too: Tristan, in sight of the ship which is bringing Isolde to him, tears the bandages from his wound and expires the moment he hears the voice of his beloved. Had he recovered, his legend would not exist, for the struggle against difficulties before a happy reunion is subject matter for a comedy. That is what a "Barber of Seville" is about. Romeo and Juliet missed each other by only two seconds: a

tragic accident; thanks to which however we have the legend; posterity knows why!

And even that which to this day is still commonly called love - the subject of so many second-rate novels - is nothing more than a temporary state of mind, a state outside the path of normal life; but it has something in common with classical love; in its realization it is doomed to failure, for it sees with other eyes, smells with a different nose, and those in its grip are incapable of judging whether the object is worthy of them.

But I digress: I will only be preaching to the converted in any case - Franziska later married an honest and upright man - I don't know if he really was a tradesman: I always connect the image of an honest, upright man with a tradesman - ; but although I must assume that she brought our mutual experience to her marriage - a thought which strangely enough - or perhaps quite naturally - I dislike dwelling upon - , I would bet that she didn't enjoy it as much with him as with me.

Perhaps it was love that awoke my creative instincts from their latent slumber; but I am more inclined to believe that it was the experience of the female body itself which opened my eyes and my desire to render it artistically which

brought my talent to light: in any case, at this time I began to paint, and indeed my first subject was the female nude.

I had initially asked Franziska to model for me, but she rejected this proposal indignantly, asking what I took her for. I explained, astonished, that that was what all the great artists did, to which she replied that then the great artists were indecent. At that time I still lacked the proper authority to reject these accusations - I have acquired this in the meantime but have seldom made use of it - and confused and somewhat taken aback I walked away and began painting by using my imagination - or, if you will, by memory - since Nature had in a way failed me.

My first figures were rather awkward. I was already too old and had observed too much of reality to make use of that ingenuous fantasy that one can for example admire any time and any place (if one so desires) at exhibitions entitled "Children and Art", for example, or "The Child's Creative Powers". On the other hand, I was not yet sufficiently experienced in the employment of artistic techniques to be described as a young artist. Nevertheless, my paintings, as I see them today, were not without a certain naive freshness, especially when I began after a few weeks to assemble my compositions with two or more figures instead of one, sometimes with an animal as well, to add artistic flair. In this way they then attained a romantic, narrative element and required titles which I tailored to their respective -

arbitrarily achieved - expressions. A painting with two figures, for example, was entitled "Girlfriends" or "Jealousy", depending on their behaviour to one another; one with three figures I called "The Three Graces" or "The Fates" or "Contest Between Hera, Aphrodite and Athena", for since I had not yet mastered the male body I was not yet able to venture a complete "Judgement of Paris". In addition to my as yet insufficiently-developed capacity for self-expression came the fact that I too had tasted from the Tree of Knowledge, and this scene therefore seemed incompatible with my feeling for divine propriety; though it may do for the flighty, frivolous Aphrodite, it was to my mind less seemly for the grave Athena, whose all-seeing eye was capable of penetrating through the night, and it wouldn't do at all for the wife of Zeus to reveal her nakedness to that shepherding prince.

In order to vary the facial features of my female figures I chose models from the paintings in the downstairs rooms, and so it happened that the face of Mazyrka's "Suleika", the painting which my Uncle Robert had given my aunt for her fortieth birthday because the lady depicted here - the favourite wife of Suleiman VIII - bore such a resemblance to Aunt Lydia, crowned the body of a Leda; I obtained the swan from "Brehm's Wildlife". I had no malicious thoughts while creating this composition; I was solely concerned with the artistic rendering of a mythical occurrence.

Gradually, my room lost its shooting gallery character and became a studio. Large pieces of cardboard and plywood cluttered the shelves, Dutch wooden shoes and Bernese bears disappeared from sight, and the cuckoo clocks stopped chiming. Views of dark mountain lakes and palm promenades were irreverently used to test paint or served on the spot as palettes.

Spellbound by the variety of artistic means of expression and moved by the eagerness of the discoverer, I would stay in my room for days, leaving only to perform the most urgent tasks or to visit Franziska in her room.

And so it happened that year that I neglected for the first time to pick up my aunt from the train station in the nearby town when she returned from her annual holiday - this time with Uncle Robert, who hadn't visited us for several years - and she stood one afternoon in my studio, friendly yet with an unmistakable distance in her mien which she had assumed to remind me of my omission. She held a package under her arm, this year's load of souvenirs, which objects I looked forward to less and less each Autumn. I stood up, greeted her guiltily but politely, and pointed with a vague gesture mutely to the paintings. I wasn't quite sure how I should explain to her this development, unexpected even to me.

She looked at the paintings and at first said nothing.

"Painted them myself", I said, modest but not without pride, stood next to her and looked at my paintings, weighing them up, trying as it were to see my work with her eyes.

"Aha!", said my aunt and fell silent again. I had actually expected a word of recognition, but in the face of this unexpected realism this word had probably caught in her throat; she began to go from one painting to the next, studying each one with her lorgnette, as if she didn't trust her own eyes. I watched her as she did so and discovered that the corner of her mouth had turned down. As she came to Leda and the Swan, however, even this stiff expression of self-control gave way to a sustained cry of indignation. She left the room in a kind of hovering gait, the kind I have since seen only on stage, for example like that of the queen after Hamlet accused her of several offences against morality.

Listlessly, and astonished at this strange and to me completely incomprehensible behaviour, I began to unwrap the package she had left behind. First I took out a set of various large cowbells, on which Alpine roses were painted, and then a music box on which a scene of Alpine serenity was likewise depicted. It had, as I gathered from the inscription on the bottom, two melodies: "Auf der Alm, da gibt's koa Sünd" and "Üb immer Treu' und Redlichkeit".²

² "In the Alps There is No Sin"
"Be Faithful and Honest Always"

Poor Aunt Lydia! With the best of intentions she had been dragging these children's trinkets home to me year after year, in fulfillment of her unconscious plan to bring time to a standstill, and her dream of eternal youth had suddenly suffered an abrupt blow: I had unintentionally made use of an all too radical method of demonstrating to her the progression of time.

A few minutes later Uncle Robert entered the room. Aunt Lydia had probably reported my latest misdeeds to him, and, since Philipp was away, complained to him about my progressively worsening moral depravity. But perhaps this was not the case, and I am attributing a certain lack of understanding to Aunt Lydia which does her all too little honour. She was after all a lover of the arts, though in her own peculiar way.

Be that as it may: Uncle Robert insisted on seeing my new activity for himself and, as one might expect, his behaviour while inspecting my works was in stark contrast to that of my aunt.

Already upon entering, a cry of joyful amazement escaped his lips. Then he picked up every single piece, examined it carefully and put it gently back in its place, as if he were dealing with fragile antiquities. He put aside several of the paintings. When he was finished with his inspection, he asked me to let him have the pieces he had selected, pulled out his wallet and removed a bill which meant more money than I had ever seen, let alone held in my hands. He then gave me a few sincere words of encouragement, clapped

me in a comradely way on the shoulder and left. I took the money and put it in my pocket.

My feelings were mixed: "Carry on, my boy! You seem to be on the right track!", my uncle had said, and these words, which then did not yet contain the shabby tone of condescension they have for me today - behind which unkind indolence, which one generally expects to find, in this case probably was not present. these words still hung in the air; they showed that I was being recognized, a circumstance which contributes so much to an artist's creative power. On the other hand, though, there seemed to be something odd going on here too; I couldn't imagine what Uncle Robert proposed to do with these paintings which he had rewarded me for so handsomely.

Confused by the events of the past hour, I sat on my bed, reached mechanically for the new music box and began to turn the crank. Immersed in thoughts of an unfamiliar nature, I sang along with the words as Franziska had once taught me:

Üb immer Treu und Redlichkeit
 Bis an dein kühles Grab
 Und weiche keinen Finger breit
 Von Gottes Wegen ab³

³Be faithful and honest always/Until the day of your death/And diverge not a finger's breadth/ From the path of God.

It was Uncle Robert, then, who gave me the first words of encouragement, with which however he proposed, as it turned out later, to lure me in a direction completely opposed to the one that I was naturally disposed to follow.

Before me lies a pile of notes of this contradictory personality which complete the picture I have of his earlier, adventurous life thanks to his detailed, often almost digressive anecdotes. Since I do not harbour any intention of writing a novel about him, I would like to insert at this point what I know about his past, where it contributes appreciably to the understanding of my own story: the quiet of a day like today seems to me conducive to empathy with this unique figure.

With enigmatic irony, but not without engaging charm, La Gioconda smiles down at the onlooker as if out of a window in the painting-covered wall of the Louvre, sitting in front of a fantastic rocky landscape whose submarine light only deepens the mystery of her appearance: she crosses her hands casually over the broken base of a column. Her picture is considered one of the Western World's most perfect works of art; this smile had provoked many researchers to deep contemplation, many a high school teacher has fallen silent before it and many a person making the Tour has, in the face of this figure, sensed for a moment the spirit of enigmatic secrets wafting over him. In short: this portrait of the Mona Lisa, the third wife of Francesco del Giocondo, a man

whose main interest was for the cattle and leather trades, has left an unforgettable impression on most onlookers, and if I myself cannot quite share this enthusiasm, then it is primarily because I miss the eyelashes - the Florentine fashion of that time demanded that the ladies of the patrician class pluck their lashes and hairline - for a reason, then, that concerns only the subject and not the work. But I am well aware that I am the only one who finds a blemish in this perfection, with the possible exception of the master himself, Leonardo da Vinci, who after three years' toil declared his work to be unfinished and for that reason did not wish to part with it.

It has likely long been an open secret, however, that this famous painting in the Louvre in Paris is a fake, which nonetheless is the original's equal in every respect. None other than Phillip Roskol, in whose company I last saw it, and who has no particular reason to be kindly disposed to its creator, was then of the opinion that it surpassed it in the freshness of the flesh tones, which in the original, as far as he could recall, were fading. But that may perhaps be going too far. Let objectivity prevail! The admiration for a great master can easily cause one to fail to appreciate true and eternal values.

I do not know whether the reader has guessed that this master was my Uncle Robert. In any case: it was he. Uncle Robert was a brilliant forger, a

forger by God's grace, and the Gioconda was - though it is hard to believe - his first work.

Robert Guiscard - for that was his name, though not by birth - and his sister Lydia were the children of ordinary folk. The father had been a simple but upright and status-conscious art restorer, a master in his field. Aunt Lydia's prestigious family tree and the cemetery which was planned as its proof, so to speak, were accordingly nothing but a fiction, tended with much love, though often in questionable taste: the parents had had no outer glamour whatever, and whether they were poor enough to have possessed that shine from within⁴ - to use the metaphor of a great poet - I could not say.

At any rate, these siblings had decided early on to rectify Fate, which seemed to have been unkind to them. And while Lydia devoted herself with enthusiasm and skill to creating the appropriate living conditions, Robert began to provide for the necessary means, the tools for which were furnished by his enormous artistic talent.

As can be gathered from the preceding, it was never Robert's intention to apply his talent in a truly creative manner. He had never felt what

⁴"Denn Armut ist ein großer Glanz aus Innen" - Rainer Maria Rilke. In J.B. Leishman's translation: "For poverty's a great shine from within".

has been called the ethical obligation to art. An immoral man? He would not have denied it. However, any idealism being foreign to him, he was anything but a revolutionary, and he was even less inclined to become a so-called academic painter, one of those nine-days' wonders who, when their time is up, are at best names in an old catalogue - indeed, he harboured a slight aversion to such men.

Most artists want to become famous, but a forger's career is over as soon as he loses his anonymity. Robert had in any case the advantage over other artists that he did not shy anonymity. For him, the acquisition of wealth was the driving force to which any artistic as well as moral objection would have to give way. In his own way, then, he was an upright, purposeful man.

First however it was necessary to acquire the tools of the trade. From his earliest youth onwards he had been an attentive apprentice of his father's, whom he soon surprised with his inventiveness at art restoration. The father accordingly decided to send him to the academy.

And so we find the young Robert Guiscard among the thousands of art students who stream into the museums every morning to make themselves comfortable in front of a masterpiece. For the requirements for the Rome Prize, which he too aspired to, though not, as I have already emphasized, from motives of academic ambition, included even then the forgery - though here one calls it the copying - of a classic work. Robert was assigned the Mona

Lisa, much to his displeasure, for - as he once so fittingly expressed it - he would have much preferred a juicy Rubens tenderloin to the sublime visage of the Gioconda.

Robert, possessed by a veritable - at that time still honest - mania for thoroughness, bought an old picture painted on wood from a junk dealer, removed the pigment with gasoline and the patience of an angel down to the glue, which he undercoated in yellowish-white in order to apply the colours at this point, after a meticulous study of Leonardo's style.

At first the sfumato gave him difficulties, but he overcame this problem by waiting, as Leonardo himself had done, for the hour of early dusk, when the contrasts are softest. He stuck to his model in other ways as well: it was for him a matter of course to apply the varnish with his finger, to prime the blue tones with green. The act of reproduction became for him an artistic experience, and only with this in mind can it be understood how, as after long untiring labour he applied the final layer of varnish, carefully prepared for his purposes, Robert stood before a second Leonardo. He had taken three months for this masterpiece.

"Yes, well, genius is diligence", he used to say whenever he spoke of his first great work, but he presumably did not take this statement any more seriously than did the Prince among Poets who coined it.

As I have already indicated, during this phase of his work Robert had not at first harboured the intention of exchanging his work with the original, but one day, while visiting the Louvre shortly before the submission date to compare his work with the original before handing it in, he was seized by that diabolical inspiration which was to characterize all his later work. With truly amazing dexterity he exchanged the original with the copy behind the back of the attendant and left the museum with the priceless art treasure under his arm, a spring in his step, fully aware of having taken the first step in a great career, got on the tram and rode to his shabby hotel on Montmartre, the proverbial modest dwelling of the artist.

Uncle Robert was fond of recounting - quite often and in considerable detail - the miserable existence he led there. Like so many who have gotten ahead in life and made something of themselves, he reveled in memories of his beginnings, which he liked to portray as "not entirely without their charming moments", only to wake up in the agreeable present, in that affluence achieved with exceptional ability and ("you understand") "not entirely without connections". Especially after an ample dinner, while warming a glass of cognac between his hands, he enjoyed dwelling on the impoverished lifestyle and spartan meals of his earlier days.

"Just imagine", he would say, leaning back with relish, "There I am sitting in a tiny room, the walls covered with old newspapers, barely a stick of

furniture, like a set from "La Bohème", only even more decrepit; in front of me, on a table I'd made of orange crates, my supper: bread and herring, always herring, that most wretched of all fish, which doesn't even have its own face, which only seems to exist in a different form: rollmops, kippers, bloater - typical name! - all of it herring!" As I have already mentioned, he liked to wander off the subject, but I must say it was always amusing to listen to him.

He didn't have to eat herring for long, however. First Uncle Robert won the Rome Prize, for the selection committee was satisfied with his achievements, but especially with this Mona Lisa, seemingly prepared to appear old, which aroused not only a stir, but also that benevolent astonishment with which one meets an overzealous yet highly gifted student, who out of enjoyment of the work has made things hard for himself.

But Uncle Robert, meanwhile, went not to Rome but to London, to pursue a prearranged amorous adventure, as he once hinted to me with a wink. He was not only a brilliant forger, but also knew how to live the good life.

In London, the Rome Prize ran out after a few weeks of hectic idleness, so that he saw himself forced, earlier than expected, to fall back upon his artistic skill. A happy chance led him to Hampton Court, that elegant palace which is full of Hans Holbein the Younger's sketches of all the prominent members of Henry VIII's numerous royal household. At the sight of this abundance he was seized by the justified feeling that one lady-in-waiting more

or less wouldn't matter, and so he decided to invent another, whom he named Lady Viola Pratt, and whose portrait he sketched, after detailed study, exactly in Holbein's style with pencil and silver-tipped pen on hand-made paper, which he then treated so long with wax, a hot iron and other tricks that the sheet practically was a Holbein. An expert promptly declared that this newly-found sketch from a private collection was genuine, and Robert succeeded in selling the work for a price that ensured him several months of completely carefree existence.

And so he decided to travel to Egypt, the dream of everyone who hasn't been there. At that time this meant a sea voyage of about a week.

But what is generally true of creative people was also the case with him as a recreator: the Muse will not be lulled to sleep. Even during the crossing his fingers began to itch and he painted, giving in to a prurient whim, a small Rubens nude. It was no masterpiece. But, after all, not all of Ruben's works are masterpieces.

In Cairo the season had just gotten underway, and during the season one could sell almost anything. And hardly was the picture dry before he had made the acquaintance of a seventy-five year old eastern potentate - short of breath and monstrosly corpulent - in the Shephard's Hotel, where he was staying, who he confidently expected would show an interest in this candid painting. The potentate - it was the Maharajah of Sakuntalaya - bought the

painting for a good price; he could afford it, for he belonged to that dynasty whose male issue even today receive their weight - usually considerable - along with that of their favourite wives annually in jewels from their subjects.

His friend, the Nabob of Rapundsharladshal, who had seen this painting, likewise ordered a nude, in which however Robert now abandoned the classical pretext in order to emphasize the desired-for naturalistic effects. For this he demanded an even higher sum than for the Rubens. But this buyer, too, could afford to pay such a price. The male issue of his family sell their bathwater to the members of their sect for platinum bars, I believe. In short, after Robert had painted several pictures for the high society that met every year on the Nile - at this point dispensing with artistic transcendence entirely - he realized that this spiritual climate was not suitable for the realisation of his higher ambitions, and he left the country.

He went first to Constantinople, produced there a tiny 12th century icon, which he sold to the Turkish National Museum; a short visit to Athens followed, which is to be regarded merely as an educational sojourn; for since Robert was not well-versed in the reproduction of antiquities, his ambition had to remain unsatisfied. Then he boarded the Orient Express, in order to return to more Westerly regions.

In the first decade of the century, the Orient Express was still incomparably more romantic than today, when chrome and leather have replaced the red plush and wood inlay ornamentation - usually depicting Chateau Chillon or Naumburg Cathedral - and its departure and arrival times can more or less be read from the timetable. The passengers were for the most part swarthy carpet and hashish dealers from Saloniki or Smyrna who dozed quietly, chewing sunflower seeds with a weary mien, and occasionally spitting the shells on the floor despite warnings to the contrary; as well, to add a bit of spice, so to speak, there would be a beautiful lady spy here and there with dark glasses and a long ivory cigarette holder; their sort, as everyone knows, use the Orient Express even today going back and forth between the places of their secretive work. In short, even then the entire train seemed to be full of passengers invented specifically for this means of transport who, having arrived at their destination, disappeared mysteriously; for one will never set eyes on them in the West save for at train stations where they are on the way back to their southeastern homelands.

And now follows the adventure which was in a certain way to determine Uncle Robert's life as well as my own.

Within an hour after the train's departure Uncle Robert sat in the dining car eating dinner - roast mutton, roasted in mutton fat - opposite one of the aforementioned spies, an especially pretty specimen, as he said it (he often expressed himself frivolously). He asked her if she was going far. He couldn't think of anything better either, but the world was larger back then, and so there was still a certain justification for such questions.

"Not very far", said the young lady.

"You must surely be a spy", continued Uncle Robert.

"Quite right", replied the lady.

"In whose service are you at the moment?"

"For the moment I work for Procegovina."

"Do they pay well?"

"No. In fact the Prozegovinian government currently owes me several months' back pay."

"Why don't you go over to another country then?"

"One has to start off modestly. I look at Procegovina as a springboard. Who knows, perhaps I can even work for a Great Power in the next war."

"Now that would really be something."

"You know, every spy dreams of working for two opposing Great Powers in a war. But not everyone can manage it."

"Oh well", said my Uncle Robert sighing, "We human beings all aim too high. We set our goals too high, instead of simply being content with our lot."

"You're quite a philosopher, aren't you", said the young lady, and took off her dark glasses so that Robert was suddenly looking into a pair of eyes which even he, who was not inclined to exuberance, described as "divine".

"Well yes", he said, confused by her divine beauty and a bit idiotic, "one thinks about all sorts of things." Then he composed himself and asked: "Don't you ever think about things?"

"Me?" She looked at him with the aforementioned eyes. "No. What for?"

"Oh, I was just wondering. Don't you ever think about the future?"

"No. My career keeps me too busy. It takes up all my time. It's not a bad career. Consider this: what opportunities are open to a woman today? Perhaps in a few years Emancipation will have gained ground. But we haven't come that far yet. Tell me, are you a diplomat?"

"I wish I were. But I'd rather disappoint you now than later, when you want to steal documents from me. I'm not. - Are you Procegovinian?"

"No. I was born in Mährisch-Ostrau. My father was an Imperial Austro-Hungarian Hussar Brigade General, my mother was a Jewess from Omsk."

"For a spy you're awfully open!"

"One gets farthest that way. Then, you see, the diplomats never believe one is a spy. Surely you don't believe me, either!"

"I? No, not in the least."

"You see! And I don't believe that you aren't a diplomat, either."

"Fine! Let us drink to our mutual distrust."

They did so. When the bottle was empty, Robert ordered a second, and since in the meantime the staff of the dining car had begun to put the chairs on the tables in order to sweep the floor, they took the bottle into Robert's compartment. When this bottle was likewise empty, Liane - as he was now permitted to call her - remembered that she had a pocket flask of cognac in her compartment, and so they went to her compartment at the end of the next wagon. By the time they had emptied this flask as well, their friendship had already progressed far beyond the limits which normally expected after a few hours' acquaintance, and the necessary conditions for a pleasant night had been created.

As Robert did not want the romance of the situation spoiled by the sight of articles of clothing neatly hung up, he went back to his compartment to

change, and returned to Liane shortly thereafter wearing pyjamas. He had taken along his wallet, an act which bears witness to the disillusioned prudence typical of him. But he was not familiar with spies' practices, and didn't want to seem miserly should Liane demand compensation - a situation, mind you, which he did not expect and by no means hoped for.

The night with Liane was harmonious and not marred by any misunderstanding whatever. The wallet had not proven necessary. Early in the morning - it was still dark - he took his leave from Liane's compartment in order to rest for a few hours. But he only got as far as the end of the end of the car, which had in the meantime become the end of the train. His car had been uncoupled, or rather: the two cars to Píloty, the Procegovinian capital, had been uncoupled from the train which he had wanted to take to Paris and in which everything he owned, including all his painting supplies and his passport, was on its way to Paris as well. Robert thus found himself on the Procegovinian branch line of the Orient Express in pyjamas.

He went back and knocked on Liane's door. She opened the door for him. He went inside and informed her that he was back and would be remaining for the time being.

Liane lay in bed smoking a cigarette. "How strange", she said, "you men are! We promise you nothing and yet you always try straight away to lay claim to us."

"But surely you don't mean to say", said Robert, sitting down on her bed, "that women don't ever do the same!"

"Well, I don't! I didn't go running after you!"

"Do you think I'm running after you?"

"Well yes, so to speak." Liane smiled contentedly and looked at her nails.

"Aren't you at all glad", asked Robert, "that I've come back?"

"Oh, I like you", said Liane, "it's just that I wanted to get a bit of sleep."

"Yes, well I would have liked to do the same", sighed Robert, "But I don't have a compartment anymore. That is, I have a compartment, but it's no longer on this train."

"How did that happen?"

"It was uncoupled from this train and is on its way to Paris. We on the other hand are on our way to Piloty, where I never intended to go. Now you are as it were all I have left in the world, apart from my pyjamas and wallet, that is."

"How is it that you have your wallet with you?"

"I always carry it with me, even in pyjamas. A habit of mine which my father had as well, incidentally." Liane seemed satisfied with this answer; she allowed him, this time in sisterly friendship, to slip under the covers with

her. For it had suddenly become colder in the compartment. Moreover, the train slowed and finally came to a stop. The locomotive let out one last sigh; then there was complete silence. Presently, they heard heavy footsteps in the corridor. Someone knocked at the door. Liane stuck her head under the covers and Robert called out: "Come in!"

Two dark men in coal-blackened coveralls - the engineer and the stoker, as Robert deduced immediately - and the conductor came in, filling the compartment. Robert greeted them with as much friendliness as was possible given his surprise: he regretted, he said, that he could neither offer them a seat nor a drink. But surely the gentlemen didn't have time in any case. After all, the train must be driven!

That was exactly why they had come, said the conductor. The locomotive had broken down.

"I'm sorry", replied Robert, "but I don't understand why you've come to me. I have no experience whatever in the repairing of locomotives, though I can of course have a look at the damage, if you insist."

"That won't be necessary", said the engineer. "We can repair the damage ourselves. But it will cost six hundred and fifty Zrinyi."

"But that's not my responsibility either", said Robert. "I would advise you to turn to the railroad administration - or whatever it's called."

The conductor, however, who - not without justification - presumed that Robert misunderstood the situation intentionally, explained that they wanted six hundred and fifty Zrinyi from him, Robert, at once - otherwise the train would stay here. Of course - and this went for the lady under the covers as well - the gentleman was free to while away the time here, but he should realize that the next train wouldn't come until Thursday, and today was Monday; besides which, it was cold outside. The area - here the conductor pulled the curtain away from the window and pointed in the darkness - was not a friendly one: they were in a rugged mountainous area of Blavazia inhabited mainly by Moslem herdsmen who didn't care much for strangers. Moreover, the nearest town was Vlastopol, two hundred kilometres away. On the other hand, if the gentleman decided to lay six hundred and fifty Zrinyi on the compartment's folding table, the matter would be settled, the train would drive on, it would be warm in the compartment again, and the lady under the covers could breathe again.

How had they arrived at that particular sum, Robert wanted to know.

Two hundred, said the conductor with disarming openness, were for him, two hundred for the engineer, and two hundred and fifty for the stoker. He laid claim to the extra fifty since the whole thing had been his idea. As he said this, the stoker stood beside him silently, smiling with modest pride; he looked like the sort who from then on would be able to produce at will similar delightful ideas.

Robert offered the men five hundred Zrinyi. While he was open to such bold ideas, he was realistic enough to reject excessive demands as unreasonable. The matter, in his opinion, was worth five hundred Zrinyi, no more.

However the conductor insisted on the six hundred and fifty Zrinyi; after all - he said - all three of them had wives and children.

"Aren't there any other passengers on the train?", asked Robert, "who are contributing to this enterprise ?"

"Certainly!", said the conductor, "in the first wagon there is just one other man; a businessman from Frankfurt am Main. He has already paid, but it wasn't easy."

"How much did you charge him?"

"Four hundred Zrinyi. He is alone", said the conductor, pointing with regretful mien at that part of the bedcovers under which Liane lay.

According to that calculation, thought Robert, I've actually gotten a discount; on the other hand, Liane has cost me something after all, though not intentionally. He paid the 650 Zrinyi, at that time a considerable sum. The three men left the compartment, the engineer promising to drive twice as fast from then on.

However hardly had they left and Liane crawled from under the covers hot and bothered when a thought struck Robert like a bolt of lightning.

He called the stoker back; Liane drew a deep breath and slipped under the covers again.

"You will understand", said Robert to the stoker, "that it would be embarrassing for me to arrive at the main station in Piloty in pyjamas. Even in Procegovina that can't be common practise. Therefore I propose to you the following: I put on your boiler suit and take over your post in the locomotive. I ought to be able to learn your job; who knows, perhaps it will come in useful one day. You on the other hand will put on my pyjamas and stay here."

Liane popped out from under the covers and shouted indignantly that she had no absolutely no intention of...

"That's not what I mean", said Robert, "He stays in the next compartment. We'll tip the conductor: he'll lock him in. "What do you think, my friend", he asked the stoker. "I'll give you another hundred Zrinyi."

"Two hundred!", said the stoker. Then a grin spread across his stoker's face; "Or for a hundred I'll stay here with the lady."

A cry of fear escaped Liane. "No", said Robert firmly. "You'll go to the compartment next door and you'll not get one piaster more than one hundred Zrinyi."

"A hundred and fifty", begged the stoker. "I have wives and children."

"Wives?"

"I'm a Moslem!"

"There, you see! And you wanted to stay with the lady. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! If your wives only knew!"

But Robert gave him the hundred and fifty Zrinyi after all. He had a soft heart and had understanding for the aspirations of the lower classes.

Blackened and bleary-eyed, Robert arrived late that morning at the main station in Píloty, a city which up until then had been no more to him than a black dot on a map of the Balkan peninsula. The only person he knew here was Liane, who, her dear little spy's heart having grown fond of him, took him immediately to her apartment on Szygmunt Musztar Avenue 133 to feed him a Szaszlik Szeszgógü. This is Procegovina's National Dish - though today the Blavazians claim it as their National Dish - and consists of finely minced mutton, soy beans, red peppers, Turkish honey, black pepper, mustard, onions and garlic spiced with coriander and pimento seeds and cloves.

Robert immediately decided to enlighten her as to his field of activity, and between mouthfuls of National Dish he told her the truth, pouring her some wine - old spicy 1899 Thessalian Hock - with which to toast a their potential cooperation.

"I would like to make you an offer", he began, "which you should consider carefully. As I have already indicated, I see no real future for a spy's career. Who knows how much longer there will be wars!"

"In the first place there will always be wars", prophesied Liane, "second, even without wars states will have to steal each others' secrets."

"I don't see why. But listen! I'm an art dealer and possess pictures of considerable value. You have, because of your work, good connections which you could use to help me sell the pictures, perhaps even to the state. Then we could both live wonderfully and peacefully from the proceeds, perhaps in a villa outside town."

"Strange", said Liane, shaking her head. One wouldn't think from looking at you that you had such bourgeois ideals. I for one would never have thought you too were one of those people who always want to put one back on the right track. Now comes the part about the "poor lost creature".

"No, it doesn't. Let me finish. I don't claim by any means that my track is the right one. Let's just say: it depends how one looks at it."

"What do you mean? If I understand you correctly, you want to make an art dealer's wife of me eventually, admit it. There could hardly be anything more respectable than that!"

"I wouldn't say that; there are more respectable things. Besides which I neglected to mention that I have to manufacture the paintings first."

"I see! You're a painter. Well that's not the same at all."

"I'm no artist. I'm a forger. But a great, an inspired forger, not one of those run of the mill forgers who take on and memorise a period in art history. Do you know, for example, who painted the Mona Lisa in the Louvre in Paris?"

"I haven't a clue."

"I see", said Robert disappointed. "You're not familiar with art history. You probably would have believed me, too, if I'd said that it was Leonardo da Vinci."

"Yes. Was it?"

"No, it wasn't. But let's leave that for the moment. I won't be able to impress you this way. Instead you could introduce me to the director of the Procegovinian National Gallery one of these days. Surely he is one of your friends as well."

Liane was indignant and asked what kind of girl he thought she was.

"I don't mean it that way", said Robert. "I mean on an official basis."

"Yes, I do know him officially. In fact he's the Minister of Culture himself. His name is Sergey Srob. He writes poems and composes as well, incidentally."

"A versatile man, I see. Yes, I'd be pleased to make his acquaintance. You'll see, we'll get along famously. I don't think I've misjudged

this country. But I'd like to wait a bit. First, I have to have a painting ready. I wonder if I should try a Rembrandt for a change?"

"I don't know. If you think so -: I know nothing of these things."

Forgery, Uncle Robert used to say, had only fallen into disrepute because of apprehensive collectors and ambitious museum directors. They had poisoned public opinion and opened the public's eyes unnecessarily wide. Nobody understood the true creative process associated with the performance of this activity, nobody could guess the immense difficulty of achieving that complete empathy with the creator of the original, without which precondition the act itself would be impossible. It was with such words that he used to introduce his account of the exiting weeks in Liane's apartment during which he forged his first and only Rembrandt.

Although this pompous rationalisation should be taken with a grain - indeed I would say an entire pinch - of salt, nevertheless, upon seeing the result - "The Portrait of Cornelius Rademaker" - one can barely contain a cry of admiration: this bold stroke was a success. Rembrandt's power and depth, the intimacy of his observation, everything which marks this master as the blessed Prince among all the painters who ever lived, has been imparted to the forger:

here before us sits an ageing man, whose fate and essence reveals itself poignantly before the eyes of the viewer.

(I insert here a brief interjection which may perhaps be of interest to experts, while at the same time I hope it will not be taken advantage of by any prospective forgers: Robert tried at first to paint his portrait alla prima on a sand-coloured undercoating, but was forced to abandon this attempt as unsuccessful, then painting his picture in ochre and umber on a warm grey undercoat. Neither did he forget to give his Mijnheer Rademaker a bangle in order to exploit to the fullest the light-dark contrast between the Naples yellow so beloved of Rembrandt and the transparently varnished depths. Even in his most serious work Uncle Robert was a connoisseur.)

Since he used very resinous paints, following Rembrandt's technique precisely, the pigment dried well through in a short time, the process being speeded by Procegovina's exceedingly favourable climate. Hardly had the varnish lost its wet shine and begun to crack, having been applied prematurely, when Uncle Robert asked for an audience with the Minister of Culture, Monsieur Sergey Srob, which was soon granted. He took the Rembrandt with him and, after an hour and a half-long exchange of pleasantries during which many a cup of Turkish coffee was sipped, offered to sell it to the Minister for the Procegovinian National Gallery. Regrettable circumstances, he said, made

it necessary for him to part with this pièce de résistance of his - incidentally quite extensive - collection.

The Minister of Culture pushed up his glasses. He then examined the painting back and front with a magnifying glass, tapped it like a patient and observed that it was very probably from the master's middle period.

"Friedländer", said Robert, "contends 1639, Dessauer on the other hand claims 1641."

"Neither is far from the truth!", said His Excellency. "I take it for an early 1640."

"That's what Honigstedt contends", said Robert.

"There can be no doubt", said the Minister, confirmed by Honigstedt's opinion. "This stroke, this brushwork! It is the brushstroke of 1640. - Tell me, Mr..."

"Guiscard, Excellency, Robert Guiscard."

"A famous name. Are you...?"

"The Norman Duke was one of my ancestors, Excellency."

"I see! Tell me, Mr. Guiscard, how did this painting come into your possession?"

"My father left it to me. His father acquired it from a private Dutch collection. That was in 1867 - after the earthquake."

"I see! Well, I cannot deny that I would like to have this work for our National Gallery. We have only one Dutch work, a Rubens, and - between us - it isn't genuine."

"In that case it hardly belongs in the Procegovinian National Gallery."

"You're right. It doesn't actually belong there. But you see, besides myself nobody knows, and I don't have the heart to inform the government, let alone the public. And without my hand in the matter, nobody will find out, since I am the only expert in the country who can be considered infallible. Believe me, I would like to replace this Rubens with your Rembrandt. But Mr. Guiscard: our treasury is empty; it is almost always empty. We are as poor in cash reserves as we are rich in tradition and venerable culture. We are a poor country, you see."

"In that case", said Robert, "I will give this Rembrandt to the State, Excellency!"

Monsieur Srob looked at him, astonished, and was at first at a loss for words. Then he found the following: "Your generosity, Mr. Guiscard, does your Norman ancestry honour, it embarrasses me. You are truly a benefactor of the principality, and will be honoured accordingly. I will report this to the Prime Minister; he will, without doubt, pass it on to His Royal Highness immediately. You can be certain of a medal as well as public honours and a

parade of our schoolchildren. And I will of course see to it that your name is mentioned in the next edition of textbooks, and at the elementary level at that."

"That step, Excellency", said Robert, "would in my opinion be premature. I will hide the truth from you no longer: if I deserve any honours at all, then not as the donor of this painting, but as its manufacturer. I would keep this fact from the elementary level since, strictly speaking, it doesn't provide a very good example."

"How am I to understand that, Mr. Guiscard?"

Excellency! The judgement which you just gave of my work is without doubt that of an expert. It testifies to your great knowledge of the subject. For no mortal - and that includes even you, Excellency! - can tell that this painting is not by the immortal master himself, but by me, who has recreated it in his very spirit."

"But that is an outrageous fraud!", shouted the minister indignantly.

Robert remained quite calm. "Exactly, Excellency, it is a fraud. But wait with your condemnation until I have presented my justification. It is a fraud which could be of great benefit to your principality. Your treasury is, as you say, empty. But imagine: I could fill your gallery with art treasures which in the course of time would interest foreign museums and private collectors. Not only that: I could give you a great classical painter, a national artist. - But first of all his existence would have to be substantiated historically."

"But what do you have in mind, Mr. Guiscard?", asked the Minister, already considerably calmer. He had understood immediately.

"I have the following in mind, Excellency: First, the superb painting of an unknown master is found, in poor condition, of course. Then a second follows. - The name of the unknown is uncovered with the help of a knowledgeable historian, whom we would have to choose carefully, mind you. Now the trail is followed to the place of discovery, preferably one of those orthodox monasteries in the south of your country, and - what do you know! - a series of paintings by the unknown master are found, painted hundreds of years ago in complete secret and seclusion from the world. And then come, first the American collectors, and then immediately the Europeans, indignant that all the art is going to America, and thus Procegovina comes into money."

"And you as well."

"Excellency, you can hardly expect me to sacrifice my energies selflessly to the State without reaping some kind of benefit. A genuine national artist, by the way, would not have done so either."

"Of course. You're quite right." Then the Minister deliberated for a while, paced back and forth once, remained standing before Robert and said, not without admiration in his voice: "Mr. Guiscard, you seem to have many arts at your disposal, not the least of which is the art of persuasion."

"That is slight", said Robert modestly, "compared to the art of my brush."

"You are truly a devil of a fellow." The Minister smiled.

Robert bowed. "Only a humble servant of the Principality of Procegovina. That is, if you so wish."

Only twenty-four hours after this discussion Robert was summoned to an audience with His Royal Highness, Prince Jaroslavl V, and admitted immediately upon arriving. His Royal Highness, already informed down to the last detail, received him with jovial graciousness. With a charming mischievousness which only seemed to emphasize his advanced age, he raised his index finger threateningly and said: "You are a rogue, Guiscard!"

Robert bowed deeply and then said: "Certainly, Your Highness. One could look at it that way. However I beg Your Highness to consider that I have only the well-being of His land in view, whose prosperity would be served by the carrying out of my plan."

"You may be assured of Our grace", said the Father of the Country. "But if you really do have the good of our country in mind, do not forget to immortalize through your art the deeds of our National Hero, Szygmunt Muszta. A National Artist owes that much to a National Hero."

"I will inform myself down to the last detail about the life of the National Hero, Your Highness."

"Szygmunt Muszta freed our land in the 13th century with a handful of trusty followers from the Blavazians, the Rumanians, the Voyvodens, the Magyars and the Volhynians."

"All at the same time, your Highness?"

"In succession."

"I will do my best to portray it faithfully, Your Highness."

"You may continue with your work", said the Father of the Country genially and indicated with a gesture that he was dismissed. He then added a bit more quietly: "But Guiscard: be careful!"

"Caution, Your Highness", said Robert, "is in my own interest as well." And with a deep bow he left the audience chamber, stepping backwards.

The Procegovinian National Artist was to be called Ajax Mazyrka; his biographer on the other hand was named Wilhelm Bruhlmut. Upon Robert's urgent advice a German art historian was engaged. For they are not only the most expert but also the most reliable. And reliability was here necessary for two reasons: first, simply as the attribute on the basis of which one might

expect that Mazyrka's identity would not be revealed to outsiders, and second as a halo: the reputation which the German expert - rightly - enjoys guarantees the quality and above all the importance of the subject matter being dealt with. And Bruhlmutth did in fact fulfill the requirements put to him to the complete satisfaction of the small circle of initiates into the secret. His work Ayax Mazyrka and the Procegovinian Early Baroque (4 vol.s. Leipzig: Tröpte und Sassenreuther, 1912) is not only the standard work on this artistic phenomenon, but must also be regarded by those who know Mazyrka's true identity as a work of astonishing scholarly imagination: it will one day delight above all those readers - unfortunately they are few in number today - who read even a scholarly work for the artistry of the portrayal, rather than the importance of that being portrayed.

It would be going too far here if I were to quote from this extensive work: however in order to outline Mazyrka's personality for those readers for whom the name is merely a term in art history, I will reproduce the short section dealing with this master in Riedelmayer's Golden Handbook of Art (9th ed., 1913). Here it says:

Mazyrka (also Masurka, often incorrectly Masirka),
 Ayax, prominent Procegovinian painter of the early 17th
 century, known as the "Procegovinian Rembrandt". Born
 1579 (?), the son of poor but devout peasants in

Pyromyszl near Vlastopol in Southern Procegovina. Little has been verified about his early youth. (One must be wary of distorted accounts which endeavour to paint an all too romantic picture of the Master's childhood). In 1594 the young Ajax makes the acquaintance of El Greco who, on the way from Crete to Spain, is staying in Procegovina. He discovers the youth's great talent in several drawings scratched on the wall of his parents' farmhouse with a stone, explains to him the use of the drawing pencil and gives him some elementary instruction in painting. A few years later, still under El Greco's influence, he produces the paintings: "Saul Drives the Galileans from his Palace" (1597, Procegovinian National Gallery, Piloty), and "Joseph and the Wife of Potiphar" (private collection). M. later frees himself from El Greco's influence, and his style gains directness and density. In the years 1617-1628 he produces the densest of his paintings: "Szygmunt Muszta Calls for a Campaign Against the Rumanians and Tartars" (1617, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin), "Szygmunt Muszta Before Adrianople" (1619, National Gallery, London), "Szygmunt Muszta Rides Against the

Voywodens" (1620, Louvre, Paris), "Surprised Lovers" (1624, Uffizi, Florence) and "Szygmunt Muszta on his Deathbed" (1628, Utah State Gallery, Salt Lake City). In 1629 M. is called to Constantinople as Harem Artist at the court of Suleiman IX, where he produces the portraits "Suleika" (1631, private collection) and "Zamira" (1633, private collection). However, he leaves after only six years, as he feels inhibited in the long run by the harem atmosphere. He returns to his native Procegovinian homeland, where he lives in the orthodox monastery of Ludhomir until his death, devoting himself to his calling with untiring creativity. Here in 1649, surrounded by a throng of orthodox monks and nuns, he closes his eyes forever. The late works produced here: "Europa and the Steer" (1646, Municipal Gallery, Munich, California), "Leda and the Swan" (1647, Imperial Palace, St. Petersburg) and "Satyr and the Ephebes" (1646, Homer S. Walther Foundation, Ischia, Alabama), can perhaps be described as his most mature works.

Mazyrka's works were long assumed to be lost and

were not discovered until 1909-1913 in the orthodox mountain monastery of Ludhomir (see also under **Byzantinism** and **Step Construction**), where they presumably had been kept since the Procegovinian Wars of Liberation and since forgotten.

Literature: Wilhelm S. Bruhlmut: Ayax Mazyrka and the Procegovinian Early Baroque, Timothy Bothamsworth: A Concise Guide to the Last Paintings of Ayax Mazyrka, Deszö Poliakowsky: Zu strzomay Ayaxu Mazurkagu valorrzsy?, Giselher Föhrwald: The Genius from the Mountain Monastery - A Mazyrka Novel.

(Föhrwald is a widely-read German documentary writer, Poliakowsky, a Procegovinian student of Bruhlmut. I have never discovered who is hiding behind the name Bothamsworth, though: probably Bruhlmut himself, however.)

Robert was given a spacious house on the Boulevard de la Liberté Procegovinique, a carriage and pair and a generous monthly salary which provided him and Liane, who had given up her spying for the time being, with a lifestyle which satisfied his - substantial - requirements. Nobody learned of his activity besides the Prince, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Finance and the art historian Bruhlmut. In the eyes of the public

he was regarded simply as an art expert and collector, which is also why his lifestyle did not seem at all unusual. For everyone who has something to do with art is rich, except for the artists.

However, wealth and security are two different things. Uncle Robert did not neglect to put aside many a Zrinyi for a rainy day, which he sent his sister Lydia for the purpose of grounding a family tree and stylish home; this was intended to serve as a sanctuary in case he saw himself forced to leave Procegovina suddenly and was no longer young enough to build up a new existence in the adventurous manner described previously. He proposed as well to spend the autumn of his life in modest seclusion.

I - having grown up in this home - represented in a way one of Robert's savings; in this way, then, one can understand Robert's satisfaction when he saw on that afternoon in early autumn that I was probably suited to continue the work he had built up. After all, neither he nor I, who at this point was unaware of his intentions, could foresee the turn events were to take.

When I was seventeen years old, Philipp and I left my Aunt Lydia's house, which I have never seen since. At the time we left it resembled a museum directed by a bold yet whimsical hand; and in fact Aunt Lydia had

some time before begun to show anonymous and curious spectators of all classes and nations through the house once a month. She charged no entrance fee, for she regarded this activity as a contribution to the public's education, which was to be booked on the credit side of the - aforementioned - final reckoning.

I expect that parting from Philipp was rather more difficult for my aunt than parting from me; but since, owing to the lack of a pupil, there was no longer any excuse for her to keep him, she had no other choice than with a composed mien to let him go. She had, as I found out later from Philipp, originally considered adopting another child, however he had let her know in no uncertain terms that he had no intention of playing the role of private tutor a second time, and so she abandoned the idea. It seems to me that it was not so much boredom with his teaching position - which was agreeable and, so it seemed, in some strange way satisfying - which caused him to give up his secure and comfortable existence, but rather the fact that he wanted to be free of Aunt Lydia, whose charms were beginning to fade. Philipp had probably never led her to believe seriously that he was bound to her by real love, for he was not capable of feigning a feeling - his talent in the area of deception was restricted to more concrete things - , and he now took the opportunity to end his relationship with her once and for all.

So that is how the hour of parting from Aunt Lydia had arrived, and I must say that she bore it with a composure which does her honour. She too must in the meantime have come to the conclusion that this relationship - several aspects of which, after all, she had up to that point disregarded with blind carelessness - was no longer compatible with the dignity of an ageing lady (although she was to lose this insight again later).

Although I lacked at the time the proper understanding of the tragedy of such a situation - how could I have had it? - I became conscious in a certain helpless way of sympathy for her, which I suppressed, however: after all, we had never allowed feelings to one another to arise, and now, when it was too late, I no longer wanted to let her know that I had understanding for her situation. This would only have shamed her, for in her eyes I was still a child. Moreover, she would perhaps have become aware of a certain omission which it was now too late to rectify, and I didn't want to burden her conscience with that. And she did after all have her collections, for which she probably showed a fondness which, though not passionate, was unwavering nonetheless.

As a parting gift she gave me a valuable ring - probably an old heirloom, though certainly not from our own family - which, she said, was

supposed to bring me luck. It didn't actually bring me any, but the proceeds from its sale did later help me over several weeks' financial crisis.

My destination was Procegovina: Philipp on the other hand proposed to go to Paris, in order after a ten year interruption to pick up the threads of the art trade again. Beforehand however he was supposed to assist me with my travel preparations, see to my Procegovinian residence visa, the four additional travel visas as well as travellers' cheques and train ticket, and put me on the right train; all tasks which he carried out with the thoroughness and conscientiousness strangely characteristic of him. Nor did he neglect to give me several pieces of advice on the way to the train station which were supposed to come in useful to me on this my first trip:

"Always speak willingly with your fellow passengers, answer their questions in full and go into as much detail as possible. Only this can prevent any further questions. When they begin to recount examples from past experience, outdo them with your own and try to eclipse them. Then you'll be left in peace for a while; but when you try to go to sleep, then the conductor usually comes and wakes you up.

Your passport is in order, you have the necessary visas. In addition, you have nothing with you that would be dutiable. You therefore have a clear conscience, at least as far as your trip is concerned. Nevertheless you will find

that a feeling of guilt will come over you in the face of the various border and customs officials. This is innate in you and in us all, and it is futile to try and fight against it. In the face of the world of officialdom we all feel guilty, and - alas! - many of us are at that.

Therefore never meddle when one of your fellow passengers comes into conflict with such officials. That could only be to your disadvantage. Instead be happy when you yourself remain unmolested."

With that we had arrived at the train station. My train was already at the platform. We immediately found an empty compartment, and Phillip helped me settle in. While doing so he continued his lecture:

"Now our ways will part. Who knows if we'll ever see each other again! I do not want to instill in you a fear of life, nor would I consider you to be in any more danger than other people your age; on the contrary; I may even expect that, thanks to my preparation, you will perhaps be surprised by fewer things than would those who have enjoyed an education based on traditional principles. Notify me however should you ever need my help. You will find a card with my address in your large suitcase, in fact I put it in a book. The book is by Rabelais and is my parting gift for you. I would advise you to begin reading as soon as the train leaves. If you pass off the adventures described in it to your fellow passengers as your own, they will all be struck speechless."

Philipp fell silent, and I realised that he really was moved. In order to shorten the pause of suppressed embarrassment which followed, I decided to say or ask something, and looked helplessly out the window. My gaze fell on several posters, the kind put up oddly enough at train stations, which, decorated with depictions of various landscapes, invited one to visit the German Rhine, the climatic health resort of St. Ignaz or to go on a Northern or Mediterranean cruise - was this kind of advertising, I asked Philipp, intended for the sort of people who, on the way to the train station still undecided, left their decision to the effect of such posters?

"No", said Philipp, and one could tell from the expression on his face that the absence of a connection between his remarks and my question offended him not in the least, indeed was even welcome to him; "No, they are intended rather for those who, having just returned from a successful trip, have henceforth gained a taste for travel and in such a condition are particularly impressionable."

For that was how Philipp Roskol was. He always invented, extempore, a particularly plausible and simple explanation of a circumstance nobody ever thinks about. This was without doubt an achievement in him which is to be judged as positive, for it expresses the search for a kind of simplified truth: that is shown simply by the fact that he is, after all, the only one of the persons described here who emerged reformed from the events of that time.

My train was a long-distance express, that is a train consisting of two or three cars which at any one time are coupled onto those trains which - seemingly by chance, however in reality following an order which is irrevocable and to travellers incomprehensible - are driving a part of the distance to be covered.

At first my main interest was the official activity at the borders. But even this interest waned as I noticed that this process repeated itself each time with painstaking exactness: The dark blue civilian who looks in one's wallet, the man in uniform who, having received a negative answer to the question, whether one had anything to declare, tries to punish one mildly by rummaging in one's suitcase, turns everything upside down with the movements of a gently playing cat, the third man, who stamps the passports, not without having compared them beforehand with a long list he carries with him.

Then the train stands still for a long time, but an occasional jolt - several locomotives being tried on, none of which seems to fit properly - discourages one from attempting to get off; when one tries anyway, one usually finds the cars sealed shut. One is locked in.

The train sets off, but immediately comes back again. Did this locomotive not fit either? But that wasn't it: it is standing on another track; it has come back to pick up a few more cars which have been left here by mistake. Eszchedehétely-Prosk can be read on one of them. Regional traffic, then. With growing suspense one watches how outside an embryonic

locomotive pulls a few cars much too large for it onto a track and then pushes them in reverse order back onto the previous track, all in complete silence. One attempts to discover some method in this shunting system. But that belongs to the field of railroad metaphysics.

The train finally leaves, but it doesn't go far. After a few kilometers, but in a new country, it stops. And the same people appear again, as punctual as in a mystery play, the only difference being that they have different faces and speak a different language. The dark blue civilian, who would like to relieve one of one's cash, the gentleman in lower ranking uniform, who rummages in one's suitcase for objects one is not allowed to bring into the new country, which are by no means identical with the objects one was not allowed to take out of the previous country - for the interests of the various countries seem even in such petty matters to work against each other in a pointedly spiteful manner -, and finally the third man, who stamps the passports.

This one however gives me food for thought: for he too compares our passports with a long list in book form; and I would like to know whether the contents of this list correspond with that of the previous country; one would tend to assume that, while one government is glad to rid itself of an undesirable person and allows him only too gladly to leave the country, the government of the neighboring country is unwilling to admit this very person: and so this unfortunate wanders forever back and forth in the narrow strip of no man's land

between the borders. This idea may perhaps be fantastic, but the uninitiated cannot help but picture an image of this sort. To this day I have no insight into this mysterious subject.

But the reader will smile at this description as that of a belated chronicler. For at that time the function of the Border Physician, who enters the compartment during the journey through the strip of no man's land, requires the traveller to show him his tongue and thereupon subjects him to a superficial examination with the stethoscope, was not yet known - not to mention the increasing cases of blood and urine testing at particularly sensitive borders. And as is well known, an X-ray examination is routinely carried out today at the borders of the more progressive countries. However, the rumour that the traveller - on prophylactic as well as security grounds - ostensibly has his stomach pumped at the border of the destination country, has so far proven to be false - although the United States, having its own rarefied standards of hygiene, has apparently long been making efforts to enact just such a law. As I write this, matters may already have progressed to that point.

For the first twenty-four hours I shared my compartment with a currant dealer from Szcitegoye. He protested anew at every border against any suspicion of smuggling, and indeed so vehemently - employing the whole

repertoire of mimic gestures, turning his pants pockets inside out and throwing his briefcase out the window - , that I soon became convinced that he did not have a clear conscience, which suspicion was promptly confirmed when at the third border several men in uniform entered the compartment, slit open the seat cushion under him, took out a gold bar and arrested the currant dealer.

However I found out later from the conductor that the owner of the gold, who very wisely had sat in another compartment, had already been arrested at the previous border because of contraband which **my** neighbor had hidden under **his** seat. The latter had then turned in the former so that he would at least have to atone for his own crime and not another's, which is entirely understandable. Such occurrences were common in these regions. In any case I immediately sat on the seat which had been slit open, so that at the next border gold wasn't discovered under me as well.

The train sets off. Darkness falls. Soon I can see through the window, through which I would like to study the scenic character of the country we are passing through, nothing but the dim reflection of the compartment. I fall asleep, and the ticket-controller comes and wakes me up simply to confirm what I already knew, namely that I am sitting on board the right train.

"Píloty!", he says, looks earnestly at my ticket and nods.

"Píloty!" I also say earnestly, nod likewise and bury my head behind my coat to try sleeping again.

But when a short time afterwards I poke my head out from under my coat there is a gentleman sitting in my old seat, who had been lying in wait for the moment when I would awaken so that he could speak to me.

It is too late. He asks if I am travelling far.

"That", I say, thinking about Philipp's exhortation to detail, "depends on whether or not you want to count the distance from my point of departure. If you do, then I can indeed say that I am on a long journey. On the other hand it is no longer very long from here to Piloty. I'm going to Piloty."

"I'm going there too", said the gentleman. "I am Procegovinian. Do you know Procegovina?"

"I answer in the negative, and search quickly for a reason why I do not yet know Procegovina.

"A beautiful country", says the gentleman before I have found one. "An interesting country as well. Full of tradition. One could say that it occupies a leading position among the cultured nations of Europe. Have you ever read anything by Serban Vasztzhinu?"

I answer in the negative.

"Not yet? You must read him! He has been translated into thirty-one civilized languages, nine other languages and Swiss German. Our National Poet. One of the greatest poets of all time. He is known as the Procegovinian

Shakespeare. He wrote a poem over 12 000 lines long about Szygmunt Muszta. You know who Szugmunt Muszta was!!"

I answer in the negative.

"No? Our National Hero! One of the greatest national heroes of all time. He lived during the 13th century and fought against the entire Turkish Army with a handful of trusty followers. Through his cunning, the whole army drowned in the Kretinitza. Then he turned northwards against the Voywodens and Volhynians. They were all killed in..."

My thoughts wander. When they come back some time later, the gentleman is telling me about Erko Sodomkin, the real inventor of the printing press, the bold Procegovinian seafarer Samovan Potnak, the real discoverer of the Malay Archipelago. As well, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Boethius were both actually Procegovinian. And so the impression gradually forms in me that the whole of European Culture was based on Procegovina's achievements, for which however our unthankful continent has never been properly grateful.

"And do you know who invented gunpowder?"

I answer in the negative.

"You probably think Bertold Schwarz invented it! Go on, say Berthold Schwarz!"

"Berthold Schwarz", I say, complying with his request.

"Wrong!", thunders the gentleman, "Znom! Milutin Znom invented gunpowder! Znom was Procegovinian. Born in Vlastopol. And have you ever seen the magnificent paintings of our National Artist Ayax Mazyrka?"

"Yes", I say truthfully, "My aunt owns two genuine Mazyrkas."

"One of the greatest painters of all time!", shouts the gentleman, as if my aunt did not possess a single Mazyrka. "And do you know who..."

I have, and had even then, no real understanding of this sort of national pride - who could have been expected to teach it to me? - , and so, after only a few hours of the Procegovinian's expositions I began to get bored. This is why, bearing in mind Philipp's warnings, I didn't lift a finger when at the next border - the last - several men in uniform slit open the seat cushion under him, removed a quantity of hashish and arrested my travelling companion. It's true I knew he was innocent, but I wanted to cover the rest of the journey alone, if possible. So he was led away - under furious protest, as one can imagine.

His last words were directed at me and contained the hope that I would die childless and be dragged away by Satan.

Upon arrival in Píloty, I was met at the train station by my uncle's factotum - a man of the sort usually termed "an original" - whose name I understood to be "Smyrrk". Later I found out that that really was his name;

though whether it was his Christian or Family name I never found out, since he himself didn't know.

My uncle, said Smyrrk, was at an important meeting at the Ministry of Culture and was therefore unable to meet me himself. Smyrrk smiled broadly - which was discernable in that his pipe, which protruded somewhere out of his bearded face, shifted a bit to the side - , threw my suitcase over his head and shoulder and led me away.

The train station at Píloty showed no trace of a national style. It too dated from the time when the architectural features of train stations were never regional but instead only indicated the period.

As I went through the hall beside Smyrrk, I noticed here as well the travel posters:

"Off to the German Rhine!"

"Come to the Beautiful Blue Danube!"

"Visit Spitzbergen, the Land of the Midnight Sun!"

But I decided to stay here for the time being.

The Principality of Procegovina has been gone from the map of Europe for more than twenty years now, and apart from a handful of nationalistic ex-

Procegovinians there are no longer very many today who labour under the illusion that this state will ever rise again. It is true that the government-in-exile, which was formed during the last World War in London, exists to this day and meets once every year, but nobody is quite sure what it governs and so one can't help assuming that it is a still-born child. But far be it from me to discourage the stalwart. Why should I do that? Let he among us who knows how the map will look after the next World War throw the first stone at the valiant Procegovinians.

Since I do not dare to presume that the reader, in the face of the continuously changing geographical and political conditions on the Balkan peninsula, is familiar with this part of Europe, I would like to afford him a brief glimpse inside the Principality of Procegovina. Although it is the country in which I spent one of the happiest periods of my life, I will try to let objectivity prevail. It is only all too easy to indulge in nostalgia precisely when one must convey the facts: for the further away the past is - and who isn't aware of this? - the more attractive it becomes.

Procegovina was located at one of those corners of the Balkans where five countries meet, at the point where Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Blavazia, Greece and Albania converge. Their borders were natural, although this circumstance, as is usually the case with natural borders, was the subject of continual squabbles. The Blava forks at the beginning of its course to the

Danube into two smaller rivers, the Kretinitza in the East and the Pletinitza in the West, which, before they unite again into a broad stream in the North, form a Mesopotamian island 892 square kilometers in area. This was Procegovina. Now it was always the goal of the radical Procegovinian nationalists (called Sczlúczists, after their leader, Colonel Sczlúcz) to annex a strip of land - in my opinion arbitrarily defined - east of the Kretinitza whose inhabitants, so they maintained, were by virtue of their ancestry and the shape of their skulls Procegovinian. The neighboring state concerned, Blavazia, did not share this opinion, and now and then there ensued an exchange of heated telegrams which had as their object this river, a raging torrent the Blavazians called it, a rivulet in the view of the Procegovinian nationalists.

And in the Southeast, where the Kretinitza forms a wide sandy basin, the border was in fact always fluctuating by a few kilometers, troops, sometimes Procegovinian, sometimes Blavazian, respectively conquering a piece of land on one or the other side of the river. Now every true state needs a small trouble spot in order to remind its inhabitants of its political alertness, and so the motto: **The Kretinitza, Procegovina's river, not Procegovina's border!** was indeed on everyones lips at the time.

The Blavazians meanwhile had their own agitators in the Principality whose task it was to extend the Eastern influence to the West. They for their part coined the motto: **The Pletinitza, Procegovina's river, not**

Procegovina's border! This state of affairs may seem confusing to many readers, but, as I have already said, at that time even political demonstrations were merely an integral element of the lively political scene.

I would not like to acquire the reputation of being a rhapsodist of my second home - there are already enough of those, for example Vasztózhínu ("Szugmunt Musztar" Book XXIV, 172-886) - , but I must truthfully say that I have never seen a more varied picture merged in an area of less than a thousand square kilometers as here. From the battlements of the Prince's castle near Píloty - which was rebuilt in the late Romantic style of the 19th century after the earthquake of 1841 - almost the whole country unfolds before one's eyes.

The fork of the Blava in the South is hidden from view by a savagely romantic rocky mountain range, on whose steep southern slopes orthodox monasteries alternate with dripstone caves, in which now and then a piece of bent iron or a block of granite was found by a monk or shepherd, which then made its way to the Procegovinian National Museum as an historic or even prehistoric find. It was above all the dripstone deposits, however, which formed the source of a not inconsiderable export business, for Procegovinian dripstone

is not only known as a geological prize, but is also carved into all sorts of objects - from cameos to flower vases.

West of the mountains the land has a subalpine character: green, hilly alpine meadows lined with streams and bushes, in amongst them here and there a strip of nature preserve, lead down to the river basin and aforementioned trouble spot. In the North as well the mountains drop off gently to a lowland plain, upon which lies Vlastopol (St. Blasienburg), Procegovina's other city.

Vlastopol did not, it is true, match the Capital in importance, but it was nevertheless a city of some significance, with a Prokuratur, a financial jurisdiction, a stock exchange, an Administrative District, the Magistrate of the Autonomous City, the seat of the General Committee of the Estates of the Realm - I hope the reader knows what that is - , a rural folk theater, a canning factory, a manufacturing plant for semi-finished aluminum products and for carpets (Vlastopol carpets!), several consulates, a German pharmacy, the seat of the Procegovinian Gymnastic Association "Volkopokóyu" and the Procegovinian National University. Mind you, this last never had international standing, and even then I couldn't help thinking that a student body was needed merely in order to help organise spontaneous demonstrations when the political situation demanded it.

In addition, the area around Vlastopol was renowned for its climate, which was why most of the foreign diplomats had their summer residences here, which they occupied more often than not during Winter as well, for in fact their presence in the Capital was seldom required.

Further to the north, towards Píloty, level, even puszta spread out into the distance, interspersed with peasant farms, herds of buffalo, wells and everything else that belongs on a puszta. The capital Píloty itself lay in the middle of hilly pasture land on which sheep and cattle grazed peacefully in the immediate vicinity of the built-up area. A network of paths led between the hills, on whose edge wild paprika turned green and juniper berries turned blue.

In the North one saw the Kretinitza and Pletinitza join together again to form the Blava. There old forest - aspens and beeches - formed a wooded delta which an 18th century traveller, Heinrich Gottlieb von Susa, had already described as "sheltered and secluded".

The Principality was one of the smallest countries in the world, in area as well as population. This amounted in the census of 1921 to no more than 491 811 souls, human souls that is. Of this number half were peasants and shepherds, the other half importers - I hesitate to employ another expression - , soldiers, professionals, creative artists, a few hundred orthodox monks and nuns and last

but not least, government officials. Although a principality, its form of government was democratic. Today, when nearly every state is a democracy, this no longer astonishes anybody, but in the first decades of the century a constitutional monarchy was definitely unusual and progressive.

Since the Procegovinian Wars of Liberation (1704-1707), in the course of which Procegovina - with the help of Great Britain, who had always stood on the side of the oppressed and interfered unselfishly in quarrels of this nature - succeeded in gaining her independence and freeing herself from the Blavazian yoke; the government had at first alternated between the two royal houses, Krtosczin and Felescu (Philipp always maintained that they sounded like a clothing manufacturer), who fought one another bloodily until the end of the 18th century.

In 1778 the last internal war took place, in the course of which Jaroslavl Krtosczin - later Jaroslavl the First or The Great - succeeded not only in vanquishing the heir of the House of Felescu, but also in wiping out the entire House of Felescu, root and branch; one of the most complete cases of tabularum rasarum in the whole of Balkan history. Since that time the Krtosczins were the uncontested rulers of Procegovina. The last of them was Jaroslavl VI. (The I in Jaroslavl is not the diminutive form, as is so often assumed, but an intrinsic part of the name.) He lived for a time as head of his cabinet in London, where he called himself, following the spirit of the time with a

fine sense of tact, simply Mr. Krtosczin, incidentally winning the hearts of the masses by doing so. Later on he moved into his hunting lodge near Vorderstörzing in the Tyrol, where he lives and hunts, when he isn't playing golf at Lake Geneva with other abdicated sovereigns whose fate was similar to his own. Today he is ninety-seven years old and quite sprightly.

The Prince was also President of the Parliament. This consisted of twenty-eight representatives of all classes who were distributed among no fewer than eleven different parties, whose goals however were more or less the same: Procegovinian independence, the preservation of the monarchy and friendly relations with all right-thinking states, though the meaning of the term "right-thinking" was not interpreted the same way by all factions. Nevertheless: there were hardly any differences of opinion here, especially since the representatives of the Peasants' Party, who would perhaps have withheld their agreement to one point or another, actually seldom understood what went on. For although Procegovinian was the official language of the country, the educated classes spoke only French, which was used in Parliament as well, especially concerning matters which the representatives of the Peasants' Party would likely have disputed. They spoke no French.

Besides the ruling house and its democratic representation by the twenty-eight man-strong parliament, it was the leading aristocratic families who intervened in events, sharing among themselves the ministries and the

diplomatic service. Today the members of these families are scattered all over the world today, with the exception of those driving taxis in Paris using far higher titles.

What there was in the way of culture in the Principality the reader already knows in part from my conversation with the gentleman on the train. He is already familiar with Erko Sodomkin and Serban Vasztzohinu - the Procegovinian Shakespeare. As everyone knows, the world-famous coloratura singer Dohnánitza was Procegovinian as well, as is already evident from her nickname "The Procegovinian Nightingale". The Ministry of Culture was quick to coin such nicknames, for it was always necessary to consolidate the Principality's prestige abroad, and this was done, as it still is today, with music. The Procegovinian National Philharmonic Orchestra was a welcome guest at various festival productions, where under its permanent director, Anatol Szyglycz, it performed its - often rather unique - renditions of classical music, as well as a Procegovinian Rhapsody composed for such purposes by Sergey Srob, the Minister of Culture. During the off-season it played with a reduced number of players at teatime in the Grand Hotel de la Démocracie in Píloty.

However, in the eyes of the world of international culture it was the early baroque painter Ayax Mazyrka who was considered the greatest son of his Procegovinian fatherland. This fact shows the debt of gratitude the Principality owed my uncle Robert Guiscard.

By the time I came to Procegovina, Uncle Robert had already stopped painting his Mazyrkas, whose number - fifteen, among them seven smaller paintings - could hardly be regarded as the complete works of a Master who had not exactly died prematurely; however the secret Mazyrka committee, consisting of my uncle, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Finance and Professor Bruhlmut, had decided to keep this supply limited: in the first place they wanted to make it to appear that war and rebellion had also had their part in destroying monuments of Procegovinian culture - in a way an ideal contribution to the cause of peace -, and secondly every source of historical and historico-cultural finds must after all run dry one day, all the more so this one - the crypt of the orthodox monastery in Ludhomir -, which brought to light the production of an old Master whose existence had been unknown little more than a decade ago.

Meanwhile Uncle Robert continued to live in splendour and undiminished affluence. While his work as Mazyrka's creator and interpreter can actually only from a moral standpoint be described as untenable - for it had been as it were recognised and sponsored by the state; and one cannot damage the reputation of a painter who never existed -, his activities had now become more daring still, in that he had begun once more, though not often

and with no particular number in mind, to forge old masters, which he either lent to the Procegovinian National Gallery, gave to his sister Lydia to decorate her home, kept himself or traded for other paintings which he hung in his house. In this he displayed exquisite taste, and his collection of antique and modern paintings did not contain a single second rate piece, let alone one whose authenticity was doubtful.

And so it happened that, within a few weeks of my arrival, not only did I discover the real Robert Guiscard and the nature and quality of his work, but I also gained - here in the forger's house - a good overview of painting from first hand: this impression confirmed me in my decision to devote my life to art.

I must say that at first Robert's conduct did not seem morally reprehensible to me, for at that time I still lacked the experience necessary to discern what is immoral. (Today I can pride myself on having this experience to an uncommon degree). On the contrary: I was naive enough to ask my uncle one evening just why the value of the paintings was increased so considerably by the fact that they bore, instead of his name, the name of an artist invented by him who was supposed to have lived several centuries ago.

Uncle Robert was sitting in his plush easy-chair holding a glass of cognac in his hand.

"The aura of age", he said, "contributes more today to the value of a work of art than its artistic quality. A living artist is nothing; when he dies

people begin to take notice, but all doors are open to an old master. And I am an old master."

One couldn't argue with that.

"Of course, it wasn't always that way", continued Uncle Robert.

"During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, for example, neither a prince nor any other patron would have dreamt of buying a painting, even of the previous generation, instead of commissioning a contemporary artist to do it. But times have changed, and it is pointless to ignore the change; one does better to adapt oneself to it."

The significance of these words became clear to me immediately, and I used the opportunity to inform Uncle Robert of my unwavering intention: "All the same", I said, "I want to be an artist."

"I thought as much", said Uncle Robert smiling into his glass, "Although I can't deny that I had planned greater things for you. Perhaps you remember the paintings I bought from you when you were still almost a child. I sold them as genuine Millingtons."

"Who was Millington? Did he really exist?"

"Yes. He was a precociously gifted American of the late 19th century. He died at the age of twenty-one and is today one of the most sought-after primitives."

I was now rather dejected after all. "Yes, one would have to be dead."

"You mustn't despair", said Liane, who was sitting at the embroidery frame - she had become quite domestic over the years -; "You're still young, after all."

It was this sort of well-intentioned interruption, irrelevant and always completely out of place, which again and again led me to doubt that she could ever have had any aptitude for spying. And, as always after these interjections, there followed a few seconds of silence while her childish words faded away in the room.

Then Robert said: "In any case, the money for the unintentional Millingtons is at your disposal. You'll be needing it. Your fate is bread and herring."

"I like bread and herring", I said defiantly, in order to prevent Robert from holding forth, as I had so often heard him do, on his favourite theme.

"Just wait a while", he said finishing his cognac, "You may lose your taste for it."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

Introduction

In translating Wolfgang Hildesheimer's Paradies der falschen Vögel, I have been guided by Eugene Nida's definition of translation, the most persuasive and practical I have yet run across:

Translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent, first in meaning and secondly in style. (33)

By "natural" Nida means that "a good translation should not reveal its non-native source." (33)

Paradies der falschen Vögel presents the translator with three main problems: first, Hildesheimer's elevated vocabulary often leads to problems of semantic non-correspondance, secondly, the many metaphors, puns, word games and literary references in the text are often very difficult to reproduce in English, and thirdly, Hildesheimer has a tendency towards extremely long and convoluted sentences. These are difficult to render into English without confusion and ambiguity, yet one cannot simply break them all up into shorter sentences, as the digressive, rambling flavour of the narrative is intrinsic to the style of the text. I have attempted to preserve these constructions as much as possible.

1. Semantic Problems

According to Nida, every translator must face three basic semantic problems: first, that "no word (or semantic unit) ever has exactly the same meaning in two different utterances", second, that "there are no complete synonyms within a language", and third, "that there are no exact correspondences between related words in different languages."⁽⁵⁾ Nida conceives of each semantic unit as having a **range** of potential meanings, being in reality "a cluster of closely related concepts." (17) When one compares semantic units in the source language with their equivalents in the target language, one often finds that the range of potential meanings, though it may overlap, rarely coincides completely. It is therefore essential for the translator to address this problem of semantic (non-) correspondence. Werner Koller, in his Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft, distinguishes five different types of semantic correspondence: (1) one-to-one (2) one-to-many, (3) many-to-one, (4) one-to-zero, and (5) partial correspondence. (159-60)¹

¹ I have made reference throughout the text to a theoretical framework suggested by Wolfram Wilss in his Übersetzungswissenschaft: Probleme und Methoden and refined by Katharina Reiss. Reiss proposes the following classification of translation procedures:

1. Substitution (word-for-word translation)

2. Paraphrase

2(a) literal translation: transposition (syntactical paraphrase) and modulation (semantic paraphrase) are employed only where necessary to adapt diverging structures from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL).

Where there is one-to-one correspondence, argues Koller, translation problems may occur when a word in the SL has many synonymic variants in the TL. Denotatively, ie. factually, there may be one-to-one correspondence, however since the TL equivalents are not of equal value, there exists connotatively only partial correspondence. (161) This is essentially a stylistic problem; the challenge for the translator is to avoid clumsiness while at the same time preserving the nuances of meaning in the text. This was a common problem in Paradies der falschen Vögel, where Hildesheimer chose his words very carefully in order to convey subtle irony. A relatively straightforward example is the following, in which the narrator discusses his relatives' prediction that he would bring his aunt to an early grave:

Es ist mir ohnehin nicht mehr recht begreiflich, auf
welchen meiner Handlungen solch **düsteres Orakel**
beruhte, und da **die Künder desselben** ...
längst...entschwunden ...sind, ließe es sich nunmehr kaum
noch feststellen, selbst wenn mir daran gelegen wäre.
(GW I, 158)

2(b) philological translation: an attempt is made to imitate SL structures as much as possible in the TL; substitution is used with footnotes and/or commentary to give the reader background information necessary to the understanding of the text.

2(c) communicative translation (partial paraphrase): when it is necessary to express not what a semantic unit in the SL says, but rather what it **means**, transposition, modulation and adaptation (pragmatic paraphrase) are used singly or in combination with one another.

2(d) adaptive translation (total paraphrase): when a semantic unit in the SL must be recreated or reconstructed entirely in the TL.
(Reiss 53)

"Düster" can be rendered variously as gloomy, murky, dismal, funereal, lugubrious, sombre, dark, sinister or forbidding. I finally chose sinister, but "sinister oracle" does not quite work in English, as all the definitions of "oracle" tend to imply either divine inspiration or infallibility, while "Orakel" in German is used here meaning "Schicksalsspruch" or "Zukunftsdeutung" (Brockhaus). One must go to the twenty-volume Oxford English Dictionary to find a definition which fits the context: "prognostication, such as those in almanacs". Accordingly, I decided instead upon "sinister prognostications", prognosticate being defined as to "foretell from signs or symptoms". "Die Künder desselben" I rendered as "the harbingers of the same", because of its association with "harbingers of doom".

Sometimes, however, simple substitution did not provide an adequate translation, as in: "in der Blüte der Jahrhundertwende" (159). Translating word-for-word, one is faced with such unacceptably clumsy and unidiomatic alternatives as: "in the blooming/ at the flowering of the turn of the century/the end of the century/the century's end". However literal translation, adapting the original syntactically and semantically to English convention, resulted in the more satisfactory "at the fin de siècle's culmination". "Fin de siècle" corresponds better to "Jahrhundertwende", as it is also used to refer to the end of the 19th century as a historical and cultural era, and "culmination"

seems an acceptable substitute for "blooming" or "flowering", since what is being expressed is that this era has reached its peak.

A similar problem occurred with: "Balladen lapidar volkstümlichen Charakters" (167). Translating word-for-word would lead to a highly unsatisfactory result such as: "ballads of a lapidary popular character". Apart from the clumsiness of such a construction in English "lapidar" does not quite correspond with "lapidary"; both are derived from the Latin "lapidarius", meaning of or relating to stone. However this has taken on a meaning in German of "wuchtig, kraftvoll, kurz und bündig", whereas in English the word has taken on associations with gem cutting and polishing, stone engraving, and applied to style, means: "characteristic of or suitable for monumental inscriptions" (Oxford). "Pithy", meaning "brief, forceful and meaningful", is closer semantically to the German but does not fit well stylistically. Nor does "volkstümlich" quite correspond with "popular", having much wider associations with land and "Volk". Once again semantic paraphrase was used, resulting in the less precise but more idiomatic: "earthy folk ballads."

In the following example, where Uncle Robert forges a Rubens nude, "lapidary" would be even more out of place: "Und kaum war das Bild trocken, lernte er...einen fünfundsiebzigjährigen östlichen Potentaten kennen...von dem er annehmen durfte, daß er für dieses lapidare Bild Interesse zeigen würde." (183) Here "lapidar" is used in the sense of "kurz und bündig": straightforward,

forthright, frank or candid. I finally settled on: "He made the acquaintance of a seventy-five-year-old eastern potentate...who he assumed would be interested in this candid painting."

Koller's second category is one-to-many correspondance, ie. one generic term in the SL has several, more specific, variants in the TL. This problem can usually be dealt with fairly satisfactorily using substitution, though nuances of meaning will inevitably be lost in the process. The German word "Tätigkeit", for example, is a general term encompassing any activity, occupation, work or job ("Handeln, Wirken, Schaffen, Wirksamkeit, Arbeit, Beruf" - Brockhaus), which can only be translated into English by employing more specific terms in keeping with the particular context.

Conversely, when several specific terms in the SL are subsumed under one generic term in the TL, Koller speaks of many-to-one correspondence. Take for example the words "Lasuren" ("durchsichtige Lack- oder Farbschicht") and "Firnis" ("rasch trockende Flüssigkeit, die eine feine, durchsichtige Schicht ergibt und die darunterliegende Fläche...widerstandsfähig ...macht.") (181), both of which can only be rendered in English with "varnish". In this case, the distinction between the two is unimportant to the context.

However, were it necessary to make a distinction, one might do so either by adding adjectival attributes or by means of footnotes (philological translation).

Koller's fourth category is one-to-zero correspondence, where a true gap between the lexical systems of the SL and TL exists. Here either partial or even total paraphrase may be called for.

In some cases, the SL word simply does not exist in TL, and one must draw from the context to determine a suitable paraphrase, as in: "vorhandene Mißstände" (157) - "present deplorable state of affairs", and "die jeweiligen Mißstände" (163) - "the current crisis". More problematic was: "...und da die Kündler desselben...**längst aus meinem Gesichts- und Gedankenkreis... entschwunden...sind...**" (158) which could only be approximated by using modulation (semantic paraphrase): "and since the harbingers of the same **have long since receded from memory**".

Another example of one-to-zero correspondence is: "Ansichten dunkelblauer Gebirgseen und Palmenpromenaden wurden... mit Probeanstrichen übermalt" (175) Due to the absence of any English equivalent for "Probeanstrichen", this must be circumscribed with: "Views of dark mountain lakes and palm promenades were used to test paint."

In the following example, "...kein Sterblicher...kann erkennen, das dieses Bild nicht von dem unsterblichen Meister selbst, sondern von mir ist, der ich es ihm nachempfunden habe, und zwar zutiefst." (196), "nachempfinden" can only be approximated by "recreated", losing subtle nuances of meaning and gaining new, unwanted, associations. In German, "nachempfinden" can mean both "etwas nachfühlen, so empfinden, wie jemand anders etwas in einer bestimmten Situation empfindet", as well as "nach jemand's Vorbild, nach etwas Originalem gestalten" (Brockhaus). "Recreate" seems rather banal in comparison, especially since the noun "recreation" is most often associated with leisure. The same problem occurs with "nachschröpfen"; "der Akt des Nachschöpfens" which for Robert "wurde... zu einem künstlerischen Erlebnis" (181) is translated as "the act of reproduction", while "Nachschöpfer" in the passage: "Aber wie es eben bei schöpferischen Menschen so ist, war es auch bei ihm als Nachschöpfer" (183) is rendered as recreator.

Another example of one-to-zero correspondence can be found in Hildesheimer's ironical reference to the former Austro-Hungarian Empire: his mention of Vlastopol having a "Bezirkshauptmannschaft" as well as being the "Sitz des autonomen Landesausschusses - ich hoffe der Leser weiß, was das ist..."(212) Since neither of these institutions ever existed in the English-speaking world, any translation of them is necessarily an invention; Harrap's

suggests "Administrative District" and either "General Committee of the Estates of the Realm" or "local consultative committee (Alsace)". The former sounds pompously grandiose enough to fit Hildesheimer's ironical style, but as "the seat of the autonomous Committee of the Estates of the Realm" is a bit wordy, I have chosen to leave out the "autonomous". Similarly, "rural folk theatre" is used to paraphrase "Bauerntheater" (212)

One-to-zero correspondence can result when a metaphor or idiomatic expression in the SL is nonexistent in the TL. Take for example the narrator's description of Aunt Lydia: "sie verstand es, ihr Leben mit einer Aura anmutiger Tradition zu umgeben und wandelte unbeschwert und wenig alternd durch die Dekaden, auf einem Teppich sozusagen".(160) I could not find this metaphor in any German or German-English dictionary, and it is quite likely that Hildesheimer made it up himself. He is probably alluding to Aunt Lydia's propensity for insulating herself against reality, invoking the image of a walking on a carpeted floor. I have tried to convey the same image in English: "She knew how to surround her life with an aura of graceful tradition and promenaded through the decades carefree and hardly aging, as if on a carpet."

A similar example is the following, in which Hildesheimer, in typical fashion, employs a metaphor which he then immediately uses literally: "Ich war...den Kinderschuhem entwachsen, deren übrigens Tante Lydia...sich einige hatte galvanisieren lassen, um sie als Zierat aufzustellen". (171) The metaphor

must be preserved, for if one simply used "to grow up" or "emerge from childhood" the sarcasm would be lost entirely. However since English speakers would be unfamiliar with it, the metaphor is put in quotation marks to indicate that it is an idiomatic expression: "I...had "outgrown my children's shoes", some of which incidentally Aunt Lydia had had bronzed in order to display them as a decoration."

The German expression "von Format", is also difficult to translate directly into English: "...sie war eine Sammlerin großen Formates" (161) sounds clumsy when translated as "she was a collector of great distinction" or "...of great stature/calibre". "She was a collector par excellence" seems to express the same idea and is stylistically superior. "Er war...ein Lebemann von Format" (182) presents an additional problem: the English "playboy" implies wealth, while "rake" sounds dated and "man-about-town" is longer and vague besides. "Bon vivant" is a possibility, denoting "one who lives well", but the necessity to add a modifier for "von Format" ruins it stylistically ("bon vivant of stature?") The only solution seems to be to use paraphrase to state explicitly what the original expressed implicitly: "he...knew how to live the good life."

A similar problem occurred with: "der bescheidenen Behausung des Musensohnes" (182), which was paraphrased with "the proverbial modest dwelling of the artist", since the allusion to the Muses will not necessarily be understood by the modern reader, and even if it were, in English the Muses are

more often associated with poetry (see Oxford). "Proverbial" seemed at least to imply literary allusion.

"Wald- und Wiesenfälscher" (192) was also a problem, since the expression "Wald- und Wiesen" does not exist in English; in German it has its origin in poetry, where it was such a common alliteration that "Wald- und Wiesendichter" became a disparaging term for second-rate poets; it eventually became a "bezeichnung von etwas alltäglichem" (Grimm). An English idiomatic expression, "run-of-the-mill forgers", was used instead.

Similarly, "Onkel Robert versäumte nicht, manchen Sparzrinyi zurückzulegen" (201) Hildesheimer plays on the idiomatic expression "einen Spargroschen zurücklegen", which has no exact English equivalent. However the joke can still be rendered - albeit somewhat less elegantly - with "Uncle Robert did not neglect to put away many a spare Zrinyi for a rainy day".

One-to-zero correspondence also resulted from Hildesheimer's propensity for indulging in word games and puns; these were at best difficult, at worst impossible to render into English. Here one can either use philological translation or else total paraphrase (adaptive translation) to try to recreate the word play in the TL.

No satisfactory equivalent could be found for example for the title of the novel, Paradies der falschen Vögel. "Paradiesvogel", bird of paradise,

immediately comes to mind, but also the usage of Vogel meaning "eigenartiger, sonderbarer Mensch". Procegovina is a paradise, a haven, for the "falsche Vögel" in the book; "falsch", meaning phoney or forged, reminds one immediately of the "Fälscher", Robert Guiscard. "Falsch" means as well two-faced, double-dealing and deceitful, traits exhibited at one time or another by all of the characters in the novel, even the narrator, who ends up living under an assumed name. In addition, one is reminded of the expression "der Vogel ist ausgeflogen", meaning "der Gesuchte...hat sich heimlich entfernt", which certainly applies to Uncle Robert, as well as to Roskoll, Buhl, and in the end the narrator himself. One is also reminded of "einen Vogel haben" ("nicht ganz bei Verstand sein, eigenartige Vorstellungen haben"), which applies very much to Aunt Lydia as well as to most of the residents of Procegovina. I chose as a compromise "Fool's Paradise", which, though it loses much of the original, at least captures the idea that the "Paradise" which Uncle Robert has carved out for himself in Procegovina, is ultimately short-lived, just as Principality of Procegovina itself is doomed to eventual destruction.

Another case where no satisfactory solution could be found was the following exchange:

Eine trockene Dame älterer Jahrgänge... kommentierte diese scheinbar vorlaute Bemerkung mit der albernen Ausdruck: "Kindermund!"

Aber mich ritt der Teufel..."Der Mund eines Erwachsenen", entgegnete ich, "würde mich entstellen."(165-6)

Here Hildesheimer is playing on the proverb: "Kindermund tut Wahrheit kund".

"Out of the mouths of babes" would lend itself to the word play, however the old lady does not know that the "Prager Misthaufen" is a fake. The only possibility seems to be the much weaker: ""Child's talk!"... "But I **am** a child!"".

Sometimes, however, a more acceptable result could be found:

when Phillip Roskoll unloads some "ancient Byzantine" pottery whose antiquity is in doubt on Aunt Lydia, Hildesheimer quips: "es gelang ihm...einen kleinen Restbestand von dem Steingut des Anstoßes an Tante Lydia zu verkaufen" (169). Here the expression "Stein des Anstoßes", meaning source of offence, is being referred to. I tried to replicate the pun by alluding to "bone of contention": "he...managed...to sell the few remaining examples of that stoneware of contention to Aunt Lydia".

A similar problem occurred when Uncle Robert is holding forth on his dislike of herring:

"...Hering, immer Hering, dieser jämmerlichste aller Fische, der kein eigenes Gesicht hat, der nur in verwandelter Gestalt zu existieren scheint: Rollmops, Kipper, Bückling - bezeichnender Name! - alles Hering!" (182)

"Bückling" means not only smoked herring, but also "a bow, obeisance", and also sounds like "bucklig", hunch-backed. I settled on "bloater", which, though it loses the word play of the original, calls up distasteful associations of its own.

There were however plays on words which were inevitably lost in translation:

Robert beschloß sogleich, Liane über sein Tätigkeitsfeld nicht länger im unklaren zu lassen, und zwischen zwei Bissen Nationalgericht schenkte er ihr reinen Wein ein - alten würzigen thessalischen Hock 1899 -, um damit eine eventuelle Zusammenarbeit zu begießen (191)

"Jemandem reinen Wein einschenken" means to come clean, to tell someone the truth. Hildesheimer however takes the metaphor and builds on it literally for comic effect, something which was impossible to convey in translation due to the absence of any equivalent expression in English. Unfortunately, I had to settle for: "...he told her the truth, pouring her some wine...with which to toast their potential cooperation"

In one case Hildesheimer's pun was so German that it had to be left out entirely:

Seit den prozegovinischen Befreiungskriegen ..., im Laufe derer es der Prozegovina gelang...sich aus dem blazavischen Joch (kein alpiner Begriff!) - zu befreien. (214)

"Joch" can mean a cattle yoke, metaphorically the "yoke of oppression" ("Joch der Knechtschaft") or a mountain saddleback. (thus: "kein alpiner Begriff!") For this there was no solution and I had no choice but to leave it as:

"in the course of which Procegovina succeeded in freeing herself from the Blazavian yoke".

Hildesheimer is also fond of sprinkling his prose liberally with literal references which an English-speaking reader is unlikely to be familiar with. A good example of this is the following: "ich taue weder zu einem Michael Kohlhaas noch zu einem Prinzen Hamlet" (157). He is referring here to the novella Michael Kohlhaas, by Heinrich von Kleist. Here Hildesheimer's juxtaposition can be made clear by adding adjectival attributes: "I am neither an obsessively determined Michael Kohlhaas nor an indecisive Prince Hamlet". Occasionally, though, a literary reference will be so particularly German that it must be footnoted, as in his ironic allusion on page 180 to the poem "Armut ist ein großer Glanz aus Innen", by Rainer Maria Rilke: "...die Eltern hatten über keinerlei äußeren Glanz verfügt, und ob sie arm genug waren, um den Glanz aus Innern zu haben - um mich der Metapher eines großen Dichters zu bedienen -, weiß ich nicht."

A more difficult example is Liane's retort:

"jetzt kommt auch gleich das mit der verlorenen Kreatur" (192). "Kreatur", like the Latin "creatura" but unlike the English "creature", can mean either creature or creation ("alle Kreatur" = every creature, all creatures, all creation; "eine armselige Kreatur" = a wretched creature) After referring to Brockhaus ("1. Geschöpf 2. Mensch od. Tier als Wesen, das jemand's Mitleid od. Abscheu hervorruft 3. (abwertend) Willenlose, von einem bestimmten Menschen abhängige Person.") and Grimm: ("3. vorzugsweise gilt creatur von Frauen, in gutem wie bösem sinn"), I decided to paraphrase the German with: "Now comes the part about the "poor lost creature"".

Koller's final category is partial correspondance, in which several terms in the TL express some aspect of the SL term, none however being fully equivalent in its range of meaning. A good example of partial correspondance is the German word "Nachwuchs", which can connote variously "offspring; rising, younger, new generation, young people entering, wishing to make a career in, a profession, industry etc., trainees, trainee personnel etc." (Harraps)

When Phillip Roskoll is referred to as "vielversprechender Nachwuchs in diesem Feld" (168) this can be expressed as "a promising newcomer in this field".

In another example, "Zunächst galt es, handwerkliche Grundlagen zu erlernen" (180), the German terms are so broad in scope that any direct translation is doomed to being hopelessly clumsy: too narrow in meaning and yet still not conveying the essence of the original: "handwerklich" is the adjectival attribute of "Handwerk", meaning anything relating to manual work, something done by hand, a craft, handicraft, etc, while "Grundlagen" can mean base, foundation, ground (on which structure, etc., rests), basis (of theory, existence, constitution, discussion, calculation, etc.). The only solution is to reconstruct the original anew in English, at the expense perhaps of exactitude but more satisfying stylistically. "Tools of the trade" is suitably idiomatic and conveys the essence of the original.

Another such word is "Anspruch", which is usually defined as right, title, fair claim to something, claim, demand or pretention. However in the case of "Er hatte ein weiches Herz und Verständnis für die Ansprüche der niedrigeren Schichten." (191), none of these definitions are suitable; "aspirations" seemed to be a more suitable choice.

Similarly, the adjectival nouns "Wesentliches", and "Wesentlichkeit", could only be partly conveyed in English; "wesentlich" means essential, fundamental, substantial, considerable, appreciable or important, while "das Wesentliche" is the essential part, the gist of something.

...möchte ich das, was ich von seiner Vergangenheit weiß, an dieser Stelle, wo es Wesentliches zum Verständnis meiner eigenen Geschichte beiträgt, einfügen. (178)

was paraphrased as:

...I would like to insert at this point what I know about his past, where it contributes appreciably to the understanding of my own story.

while

...es wird..vor allem solche Leser ergötzen - leider gibt es derer heute nur wenige -, welche selbst ein wissenschaftliches Werk um der Darstellungskunst und nicht um der Wesentlichkeit des Dargestellten willen lesen. (198)

became

...it will...delight above all those readers - unfortunately they are few in number today - who read even a scholarly work for the artistry of the portrayal, rather than the importance of that being portrayed.

A problem throughout the text was the German verb "dürfen", which in its subjunctive form, expressing probability, can be translated variously as "must be", "I should say", "may well be", "is very probably", "should be", "ought to be", "will have", "shouldn't be" or "can't be". As in the preceding examples, all the translator can do is approximate as closely as possible the meaning in accordance with the context and try to minimize the loss in nuances of style:

welcher Name manchem Liebhaber moderner Kunst ein Begriff oder gar mehr sein dürfte (160)
a name which ought to mean something to lovers of modern art.

Schon seit langem jedoch dürfte es ein offenes Geheimnis sein (179)

It has likely long been an open secret, however

Der Kultusminister...meinte, es dürfe sich um die mittlere Periode des Meisters handeln. (194)

The Minister of culture...observed that it was very probably from the Master's middle period.

2. Syntactical Problems

Here I will discuss a representative sample of the most problematic examples encountered. These problems resulted most frequently from grammatical structures in German which become clumsy and ambiguous (sometimes to the point of incomprehensibility) when translated into English. The more elegant prepositional constructions, extended modifiers, complex word order and more formal clausal structure of German, together with its three genders and four cases, enable Hildesheimer to construct long and complex sentences which in English, with its less formal structure, often come across as awkward, unclear and labyrinthine. As previously mentioned however, breaking up these sentences would undermine the style of the text to a considerable degree and much of Hildesheimer's subtle irony would be lost in translation. Accordingly I have attempted to preserve these constructions whenever it was practicable, reworking and sometimes entirely restructuring them to resolve

semantic ambiguities and stylistic unwieldiness. A few examples should suffice to illustrate what is meant here:

Nur mit dieser Verschiebung des Interesses ist es zu erklären, daß zum Beispiel auch mancher Meister des spätem Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, dessen Bilder zu dem schönsten Bestand vieler Museen gehören, sich in die Kunstgeschichte eingeschmuggelt hat, der zwar tatsächlich bislang unbekannt war, dessen Existenz aber keineswegs im Mittelalter, sondern in der Gegenwart, und dazu in meinem unmittelbaren Verwandtenkreis zu suchen ist, und der es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht hat, diesen Bestand zu bereichern, wenn auch nicht aus höheren, sondern - auch dies sei hier vorweggenommen - aus eigennützigem Motiven (157-8)

The main problem here is that Hildesheimer has intentionally assembled an elaborate construction of subordinate and relative clauses to stress the narrator's assumed pretentiousness. However were one to translate directly into English, the irony would be lost and the text rendered incomprehensible:

Only with this shift in interest can it be explained that for example also many a master of the late Middle Ages and of the early Modern Era, whose paintings belong to the most beautiful holdings of many museums, has smuggled himself into art history, who was actually hitherto unknown, whose existence however should by no means be sought in the Middle Ages, but rather in the present, and in my immediate family circle at that, and who made it his business to enrich these holdings, though not out of higher but rather - this too I make clear at the outset - out of selfish motives.

Clearly, this passage must be syntactically paraphrased. I have reluctantly divided it into two sentences, as otherwise it is simply too unwieldy, and replaced the relative clauses in some cases with the antecedent itself for clarity's sake. Finally, some of the flavouring particles which Hildesheimer is so fond of using (auch, zwar) have been left out where they do not contribute appreciably to the meaning of the text. The result is still long, but at least readable:

Only this shift in interest can explain for example the fact that many an old master of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era, whose paintings belong to the most beautiful holdings of many museums, has smuggled himself into art history. The presence of one such master, actually hitherto unknown, should by no means be sought in the Middle Ages, but instead in the present, and indeed in my immediate family; this master made it his business to enrich these holdings, though not - this too I make clear from the outset - out of higher, but rather out of self-serving motives.

In other cases it was necessary to change the position of the verbs and condense relative constructions to streamline and clarify the text:

Wie übrigens merkwürdigerweise fast alle Damen ihrer Generation war sie in ihrer Jugend sehr schön gewesen, was aus einigen Dutzend Daguerrotypen hervorging, die dort, wo immer sich eine freie Waagerechte bot, aufgestellt waren. (160-1)

She had incidentally been very beautiful in her youth, like almost all ladies of her generation, strangely enough, as could be seen from the several dozen daguerrotypes exhibited wherever a free horizontal offered itself.

Another problem was the extended modifier construction in German, which could however often be rendered by the progressive form in English. In addition, separating digressions from the main body of the text with dashes or semicolons - as Hildesheimer is prone to do in any case - proved an effective method of making the text more understandable:

Indessen, das Gerücht, nach welchem dem Reisenden an der Grenze des Bestimmungslandes sowohl aus prophylaktischen als auch aus Sicherheitsgründen der Magen ausgepumpt werden soll, hat sich bisher noch nicht bewahrheitet, obgleich die hygienisch auf einsamer Höhe stehenden Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika seit langem ein derartiges Gesetz einzuführen sich bemühen soll. (206)

However, the rumour that the traveller - on prophylactic as well as security grounds - ostensibly has his stomach pumped at the border of the destination country, has so far proven to be false - although the United States, having its own rarefied standards of hygiene, has apparently long been making efforts to enact just such a law.

In general, it was always necessary to compress the original as much as possible, bringing forward verbal constructions and condensing idioms to produce a relatively concise, workable result in English:

So kam es, daß sich mir innerhalb weniger Wochen nach meiner Ankunft nicht nur der wahre Robert Guiscard, sowie Wesen und Qualität seines Werkes enthüllte, sondern ich auch - hier im Hause des Fälschers - eine gute Übersicht der Malerei aus erster Hand gewann: ein Eindruck, welcher in mir den Entschluß, mein Leben der Kunst zu widmen, endgültig Gestalt annehmen ließ. (216)

And so it happened that, within a few weeks of my arrival, not only did I discover the real Robert Guiscard and the nature and quality of his work, but I also gained - here in the forger's house - a good overview of painting from first hand: an impression which confirmed me in my decision to devote my life to art.

By means of the preceding examples I have tried to show how I dealt with the difficulties encountered translating Paradies der falschen Vögel. The very quality which makes the book so enjoyable - Hildesheimer's elevated, digressive narrative style, with its word plays and subtle irony - was at the same time what made it so difficult to translate. However there can be no such thing as a "perfect" translation; the lack of lexical and semantic correspondence between languages means that any translation must necessarily involve the loss, addition and/or distortion of information. I have attempted to keep this interference to a minimum and preserve as much as possible the style and flavour of the original.

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