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China and Germany: A Study of Images and Influences
of China in German Literature.

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A NOTE ON NAMES

The transcription of Chinese names in European languages is entirely inconsistent. One finds the poet Li-tai-pe variously referred to as Li Tai-Po, Li-Po, Li Bo; and Lao-tse as Lau tse, Laotse, Lao Tzu and Lau dsi. Whilst such variations in the transcribed form have to be retained in the titles of particular works and in quotations, in the body of the text all Chinese names have been standardised, for example Li-tai-pe and Lao-tse. The similarity between the variety of the transcribed forms of Chinese names is usually sufficient for the reader to be able to identify the personality referred to. Where this is not the case, a note is added to indicate the standardised transcribed form.

A further peculiarity of Chinese names is that of the use of an author's name as the title of his work. For example, Tschuang-tse's (Ds Chuang Dsi) writings are often referred to as the Tschuang-tse; similarly, Me-ti and Lieh-tse (Liä Dsi) refer to both the author and the work, the Me-ti and the Lieh-tse. Whilst this may appear stylistically strange to the English reader, it does not present any problem of understanding.

Since a familiarity with the names of Chinese dynasties cannot be assumed on the part of the reader, a detailed chronological table of these dynasties is included on page v.

TABLE OF DYNASTIES

Shang	ca. 1523 BC - ca. 1028 BC
Chou	ca. 1027 BC - 256 BC
Ch'in	221 BC - 207 BC
Han (Western)	202 BC - 9 AD
Hsin	9 - 23
Han (Eastern)	25 - 220
Three Kingdoms	220 - 265
Tsin	265 - 420
Former Sung	420 - 479
Southern Ch'i	479 - 502
Southern Liang	502 - 557
Southern Ch'ên	557 - 589
Wei	386 - 556
Northern Ch'i	550 - 577
Northern Chou	557 - 581
Later Liang	555 - 587
Sui	590 - 618
T'ang	618 - 906
Five Dynasties	907 - 960
Northern Sung	960 - 1126
Hsi-hsia	990 - 1227
Southern Sung	1127 - 1279
Chin	1115 - 1234
Yüan (Mongol)	1260 - 1368
Ming	1368 - 1644
Ch'ing (Manchu)	1644 - 1912
Republic	1912 -

INTRODUCTION

Whilst the theme of the influence of one culture upon another has always been regarded as a legitimate subject of literary study, that of the image of one culture reflected within the literature of another culture has not. M-F. Guyard appears to have been the first critic to draw attention to the significance of this aspect of comparative literature.¹ However, his claim that this constituted a serious aspect of literary research was not widely accepted. Critics, most notably R. Wellek, dismissed the subject as trivial:

One cannot be convinced by recent attempts ... to widen the scope of comparative literature in order to include a study of national illusions, of fixed ideas which nations have of each other. 2

Wellek considered such a widening of the scope of comparative literature as 'dissolving literary scholarship into social psychology and cultural history'. These remarks, made in 1958, reflect the then fashionable New Criticism. The conviction that literary study should be divorced from all reality that exists beyond the bounds of the literature studied has been superseded in more recent times by a wider view of the function of literary criticism. With this has emerged a greater readiness to regard such comparative themes as a valuable contribution to literary research.³

The themes of images and influences are in fact complementary aspects of the same area of study, since it is through influences that an image

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1. See M-F. Guyard, 'L'étranger tel qu'on le voit' in La Littérature Comparée, sixth edition (Paris, 1969), pp.110-119.
 2. R. Wellek, Concepts of Criticism (New Haven, 1963), pp.284-285.
 3. See E. Deyserinck, 'Zum Problem der "images" und "mirages" und ihrer Untersuchung im Rahmen der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft', Arcadia, 1 (1966), 107-120; P. Boerner, 'Das Bild vom anderen Lande als Gegenstand literarischer Forschung', Die Sprache im technischen Zeitalter, 56 (1975), 313-321.

emerges. A negative image is the result of negative influence on either an individual author or a particular culture.

The study of the image of another culture and the influence of that culture is a parallel to the study of the reception, within any one culture, of older traditions of that same culture. The latter is regarded as a valid subject of literary research, therefore the same must be true of the former.

The particular theme of Oriental influences in German literature has received little critical attention.¹ Studies have been made of the image and influences of India and Indian thought in German literature,² but China has been neglected almost entirely. There are exceptions: Hermann Hesse, the most obvious example of the assimilation of Chinese thought, has been the subject of two detailed studies. Adrian Hsia's Hermann Hesse und China³ considers the whole of Hesse's life and work, and documents the latter's interest in Chinese literature and philosophy, whilst Ursula Chi's Die Weisheit Chinas und 'Das Glasperlenspiel'⁴ demonstrates the application of Chinese thought in Hesse's writings. The existence of these two studies precludes Hesse from the present work, since it is not now possible to make any further contribution to this aspect of the problem. However, these two studies do not consider other authors, and do not place Hesse in the wider context of Sino-German literary relations. The present study does not, therefore, duplicate anything contained within these works but, rather, indicates that Hesse

1. See, for example, H. Hammitzsch, 'Ostasien und die deutsche Literatur', in Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß, edited by W. Stammer, reprinted second edition (Berlin, 1967), III, 599-612.
2. J. Forst, 'Indien und die deutsche Literatur 1900 bis 1923' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of New York, 1934); V. Ganeshan, Das Indienbild deutscher Dichter um 1900 (Bonn, 1975).
3. A. Hsia, Hermann Hesse und China (Frankfurt am Main, 1974).
4. U. Chi, Die Weisheit Chinas und 'Das Glasperlenspiel' (Frankfurt am Main, 1976).

is not the exceptional figure that these isolated enquiries would appear to make him.

Apart from these two works on Hesse, one can refer only to Rose's introductory article¹ and investigations of individual authors,² and to Chuan Chen's Die chinesische schöne Literatur im deutschen Schrifttum of 1933.³ The latter is a study of translations of Chinese literature. It does not discuss works that are based upon Chinese motifs and only briefly examines German works that are adapted from Chinese originals. M. Davidson's uncompleted bibliography is of only limited value and contains many inaccuracies.⁴ More recently, Brecht has been the subject of a number of investigations that fall within the scope of the present thesis, as indicated in my discussion of his work. The fact that a single study has appeared dealing with Brecht's adaptation of twelve Chinese poems⁵ serves to indicate the neglect that earlier adaptors of Chinese poetry have suffered.⁶

The present study is intended to make a contribution to the investigation of the image of China by examining the role of Chinese themes in German literature. In doing so, it attempts to document the frequency of such themes and to explain their popularity, whilst also considering the influence of China, and Chinese literature and thought on German authors.

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1. E. Rose, 'China in der deutschen Literatur', Wirkendes Wort, 5 (1954-55), 347-356.
 2. These are listed in the bibliography and referred to at appropriate points in my discussion.
 3. Chuan Chen, Die chinesische schöne Literatur im deutschen Schrifttum (Kiel, 1933).
 4. M. Davidson, A List of Published Translations from the Chinese into English, French and German, vol 1 (Ann Arbor, 1952), no more published.
 5. A. Tatlow, Brechts chinesische Gedichte (Frankfurt am Main, 1973).
 6. Since the preparation of this thesis, the forthcoming publication of three works dealing with themes of Oriental-Western literary relations has been announced: I. Schuster, China und Japan in der deutschen Literatur, 1890-1925 (Francke, Bern and Munich); A. Tatlow, The Mask of Evil: Brecht's Response to the Poetry, Theatre and Thought of China and Japan: A Comparative and Critical Evaluation (Lang, Bern); Yun-Yeop Song, Bertolt Brecht und die chinesische Philosophie (Bouvier, Bonn).

The main part of this study deals with twentieth-century German literature written before the end of 1945, the latest work being Brecht's Der kaukasische Kreidekreis. It is felt that 1945 is a significant point at which to halt the present study since post-war German literature, whilst possessing such obvious examples of Chinese influences as Hermann Kasack's Die Stadt hinter dem Strom of 1947, would require a separate approach. In order, however, to give an historical perspective to the literature of the twentieth century and to highlight the peculiarities of the modern response to China, a chapter is included surveying the historical development of the image of China in German literature and thought from earliest times to the end of the nineteenth century. Whilst a number of brief individual studies of various aspects of the historical image of China do exist, no single work covers the overall development. It is felt, therefore, that this chapter constitutes a necessary part of the present investigation.

It is the intention of this study to isolate the features of the German literary response to China by examining works that use Chinese originals as a source, works that are adapted from or styled on Chinese sources, works set in China, works of a literary nature that discuss China, and works that, in the broadest sense, exhibit Chinese influences. The authors examined are not intended to be an exhaustive catalogue but, rather, representative of the various aspects discussed. Thus, in each case, the more popular authors are dealt with in detail, whilst works by other authors are included to demonstrate the popularity of such themes.

The present work is not intended as a sinological study and does not attempt to criticise the accuracy of the work of sinologists. The majority of the texts discussed are free adaptations or imaginative creations. Where the accuracy of works is discussed, it is their

accuracy to the source used by any particular author. However, where obvious discrepancies arise between a source used by a German author and a more accurate European translation of the original, this is pointed out. The discussion is not intended as a philological investigation of the works in question, but as a general literary enquiry into the use of certain themes and motifs. Nevertheless, the frequent distortion of original works presented in free German form does require comment, which is validated by reference to the work of recognised sinologists.

Since a certain section of the discussion turns around the influence of Taoism, and since this philosophy is, by its very nature, elusive, obscure and barely distinguishable from other forms of religious mysticism and philosophical Idealism, an excursus is added which uses philosophical or pseudo-philosophical discussions and free adaptations of Taoist writings to support the thesis of the popularity and influence of Taoism in the twentieth century. Again, this is not intended as a sinological investigation, but as an attempt to ascertain the significance that Taoist thought gained during the period studied.

The themes of influence and image merge within the various works discussed. These influences range from the poetic, through the religio-philosophical to the overtly political. No strict division between these various images and influences is attempted except where they fall into one clear category. The conclusion does, however, attempt to distinguish between these three categories, which often co-exist in the work of individual authors.

Much of the literature discussed is of a trivial nature and belongs to the often neglected area of popular literature. Discussion of such works is necessary, since they constitute a large part of the material by which images and influences are communicated within cultural groups.

Whilst one may be critical of the quality of these works, the literary critic must not ignore the existence of such literature which can help to qualify the cultural climate in which more valuable objects of literary interest are produced.

Since it cannot be expected that the reader is familiar with the works that are discussed, it is often necessary to give a brief indication of the contents of these works in order to illustrate certain aspects of style and tone which typify the author's attitude towards China. Similarly, though the present author does not wish to burden his reader with facts on Chinese history and philosophy, certain details are indispensable for an understanding of particular works, and are included accordingly.

CHAPTER I : HISTORICAL IMAGES OF CHINA

Western conceptions of China and Chinese culture have undergone many changes during the course of time. These changes were in part due to the increasing amount of information about China that entered Europe, but of greater significance for this process of transformation was the variety of intellectual responses to, and interpretations of the same body of factual accounts. As the cultural and intellectual climate changed, so too did the prevailing attitude towards China.

The recognition of China as a geographical and cultural reality of any importance was a gradual process in the West. This was due not least to China's attitude towards the alien. Confident of her own cultural superiority, she shunned all contact with foreign powers, and dismissed everything outside her own cultural tradition as barbaric and degenerate. The very title adopted, 'The Middle Kingdom', confirms this Sino-centric world-view, an attitude which is symbolised in the Great Wall. Nor was this cultural superiority a vain boast; it manifested itself in the manner in which China was able to resist the incursion of foreign influence. Invasions and periods of domination by foreign dynasties did not undermine the native cultural traditions; foreigners were absorbed and forced to conform to the existing social and political patterns. The continuation of this process over more than two millennia consolidated the social and political structure and created the vast cultural edifice known as China. Only in the present century did the erosion of the traditional China begin.

The first links between China and Europe can be traced back to Roman times.¹ Although the Romans themselves had no contact with the Chinese Empire, reports were transmitted to the Mediterranean via the

1. Further information on the cultural links between China and Europe in earlier times can be found in H. Nissen, Der Verkehr zwischen China und dem römischen Reich (Bonn, 1893) and F. Hirth, Chinesische Studien (Leipzig, 1890), pp.1-24.

trade routes of the Near East of a great culture on the eastern fringes of Asia. No more precise knowledge of this culture is evident, apart from the fact that the Chinese were known to be the producers of the highly-valued silk goods which found their way to Europe. Thus the region became known as Serica and her people seres, 'the silk people'. The trade routes were the sole link with China for centuries to come, though gradually some knowledge of the internal structure of the Empire was gained, as the alternative name Sinae, derived from the title of the Ch'in (Ts'in) Dynasty of the third century B.C., would indicate.

These imprecise reports continued into the European Middle Ages.¹ In the Boethius commentary by Notker der Deutsche, one finds China named as the source of silk products. Other mentions, usually only single word references, can be found in the German Lucidarius, in Rudolf von Ems' Weltchronik and in Wolfram's Parzival and Willehalm. China is linked together with other fabled cultures, which are described by the medieval authors with a mixture of wonder and amazement, doubting the veracity of the reports they had heard.

However, the unrest within Asia which followed the foundation of the Mongol Empire was to bring closer links between Europe and China. In 1241 Mongol hordes appeared on the German borders. Pope Innocent IV, eager to avert this threat to Christendom, despatched emissaries to the court of the Great Khan in an attempt to effect an alliance with him, and thereby create a unified front against Islam. The Italian Franciscan monk, Giovanni de Plano Caprini, published a brief travel report on his return from his ambassadorial mission. This contained facts on geographical, historical and ethnological aspects of the Mongol Empire.²

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1. A general survey can be found in H. Yule, Cathay and the way thither: Being a collection of mediaeval notices of China, 2 vols (London, 1866). More detailed information is available with reference to German literature in E.H. von Tscharnier, China in der deutschen Dichtung bis zur Klassik (Munich, 1939).
 2. See F. Risch, Johann de Plano Caprini. Geschichte der Mongolen und Reiseberichte (Leipzig, 1930).

Similar information was made available in the travel diaries of a second Franciscan, Wilhelm von Rubruk,¹ after he had journeyed to the Mongol court with letters from the Pope and Louis IX of France.

It was the journey and subsequent travel diaries of Marco Polo which provided the first detailed descriptions of China. His De regionibus orientalibus libri of 1298 was translated into most European languages and very widely read.² But it was treated by many as a source of amusement rather than a factual account because of the often wildly-imaginative inventions added by translators to accounts that were given little credence by most commentators.³

The dominant theme of Polo's work is the splendour and size of the Chinese cities and, above all, the material prosperity of China, with little space dedicated to the arts, literature or philosophy. An image is created of a vast, powerful and rich Empire of civilised customs and rigid morals. His reports were not taken seriously and seemed to orthodox minds to be heretical in their eulogies of a non-Christian culture. His account was felt to be so incredible and his use of hyperbole so free that il Milione, as he came to be known, was asked on his deathbed to recant and expunge all the exaggeration from his account.

The German translation of Polo's work, which appeared in 1477, did not inspire any serious enquiry into the truth of these reports. Polo's writings did, however, prompt others to compose fictional travel diaries, which is what his book was taken by many to be. Sir John Mandeville⁴ found great popularity among European readers with a number

1. See F. Risch, Wilhelm von Rubruk. Reise zu den Mongolen 1253-1255 (Leipzig, 1934).

2. See Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages, edited by A.P. Newton (London, 1926).

3. See Der mitteldeutsche Marco Polo, edited by E.H. von Tscharnier (Berlin, 1935).

4. See J.W. Bennett, The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville (New York, 1954).

of stories written between 1357 and 1371. Some eleven editions of these tales appeared in Germany up to 1600, whereas Polo's work was limited to two (1477, 1481).

Mandeville does not even attempt to create a mood of authenticity in his stories; they are, as one critic has observed, 'ein wunderseliger Mischmasch',¹ bizarre accounts of fictional peoples and their customs, which are intended to stretch the reader's credulity.

Factual accounts had continued to reach Europe via religious missions to the Mongol Empire but, as the latter declined and was superceded by the native Ming Dynasty in 1368, the religious tolerance exercised by the Mongols was replaced by a more orthodox attitude, and the church lost access to China.

It was left to the traders to rediscover China. After the Portuguese landed in China in 1515, East-West trade was revitalised, and brought with it a renewed interest in the Orient. The history of trade links is of significance, since the imported goods were the main measure in Europe of the state and nature of Chinese culture.² The importation of vast quantities of silk, porcelain and lacquer work confirmed the reports of a sumptuous and prosperous China. The establishment of trading colonies within China led to the re-establishment of missions, mainly by the Jesuit order, which was to provide the first genuine spiritual link between China and Europe.

Although the very presence of the missions in China implied the assumed superiority of the Europeans, particularly that, through revelation, they had been blessed with the only true religion, the Jesuits approached their task of conversion with understanding and respect for the native

1. F. Babinger, 'Orient und deutsche Literatur' in Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß, edited by W. Stammler (Berlin, 1967), III, 573.
2. See A. Reichwein, China and Europe, translated by J.C. Powell (London, 1925), pp.16-18, for details on the nature and volume of trade.

cultural traditions. Thus they made thorough studies of the religious, philosophical and literary traditions before they embarked upon their work of conversion.

The first important figure among these missionaries was Matteo Ricci, who arrived in China in 1582 and was granted permission to found a mission.¹ From this time a stream of letters, books and pamphlets flowed into Europe, containing details on the inner structure and philosophical traditions of China. These writings were to have a profound influence upon the thinkers of the Enlightenment. China was rediscovered, now not simply as a mighty and prosperous Empire but as the seat of learning, the China of Confucius and the Confucian tradition.

The first important work to appear in Europe was De christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab societate Jesu, a compilation made by Nicholas Trigault from the journals of Ricci, which appeared in Augsburg in 1615 and was followed two years later by a German translation.² Ricci spoke with high admiration of the Chinese, praising their natural morality and wisdom:

Of all the pagan sects known to Europe, I know of no other people who fell into fewer errors in the early ages of their antiquity than did the Chinese. From the very beginning of their history it is recorded in their writings that they recognised and worshipped one supreme being whom they called the King of Heaven ... One can confidently hope that in the mercy of God, many of the ancient Chinese found salvation in the natural law ... 3

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1. Further information on this subject can be found in H. Bernard, Le Père Matthieu Ricci et la Société Chinoise de son temps (1552-1610), 2 vols (Tientsin, 1937), and Sagesse Chinoise et Philosophie Chrétienne (Tientsin, 1935), also A.H. Rowbotham, Missionary and Mandarin. The Jesuits at the Court of China (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1942).
 2. Anon., Historia von der Einfuehrung der Christlichen Religion in dass grosse Königreich China ... Sambt wol gegründten bericht von beschaffenheit dess Landts und Volcks, auch dasselbigen gesatzten Sitten, und gewonhaitten (Augsburg, 1617). An English translation of this can be found in L.J. Gallagher, China in the sixteenth Century (New York, 1953), this being a later edition of The China that was (Milwaukee, 1942).
 3. L.J. Gallagher, China in the sixteenth Century, p.93.

From these and subsequent reports in the seventeenth century the European gained an impression of a monolithic Confucian state ruled by a benevolent despot with guidance from the Confucian classics, and administered by myriad officials.

The missionaries' reports were intentionally biased; they hoped to create the impression that the Chinese were ripe for conversion, since this would ensure continuing support for the Jesuits' undertaking. They portrayed the Chinese as ethically equal to the European, and stressed the development and significance of a natural religion in China. This stress was given in order to lend weight to the Jesuits' argument that it would be easier to convert these people if they were allowed to retain certain ritualistic practices, most notably ancestor-worship, which did not seem incompatible with Christian dogma. The debate within the Catholic Church led to the 'Rites Issue' and resulted in the Pope's rejection of this less than orthodox approach.

Of greater significance than the Catholic Church's internal doctrinal disputes is the impression that the Jesuits' writings made on contemporary philosophers. The descriptions of a natural religion appealed to the deists and offered a valuable weapon in their attack upon the belief in revealed religion. In an age that was troubled by doctrinal disputes and religious wars, many were eager to accept this proof of a natural ethic that demonstrated the superfluity of all religion that had no bearing on man's practical needs. The Chinese were seen to have achieved a high ethical state without the benefit of religious dogma, doctrine and prescription. Similarly, the image of a benevolent despot interested political philosophers, as did the idea of rule by a class of 'philosophers', which is what Western commentators took the Confucian scholars and mandarins to be.

Many other similar works followed the publication of Ricci's journals.

A long history of China, containing much information on her philosophical tradition and political structure, was published by the Jesuit Martin Martini in 1658.¹ This work and Anton Kircher's China monumentis illustrata² of 1667 were widely read in Europe. Translations of the Chinese classics also became available to European readers. The first of these, Sapientia Sinica³ published in 1662, was a translation of the Confucian Ta hsüeh (Great Learning) and Lun Yü (Analects) prepared by Prosper Intorcetta and Ignatius da Costa. Intorcetta later published other translations, together with a biography of Confucius, in his Sinarum scientia politicomoralis of 1673.⁴ Although these works were published in China, they were widely circulated in Europe and, together with Confucius Sinarum philosophus⁵ of 1687, contained the most reliable information available on China to the contemporary reader.

The effect that these writings and translations had in Europe can best be seen in the interpretation that Leibniz⁶ placed upon them. He had read China monumentis illustrata and Confucius Sinarum philosophus, and was able to accumulate further information on Confucius and Confucian

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1. M. Martini, Sinicae Historiae (Munich, 1658).
 2. A. Kircher, China monumentis illustrata (Amsterdam, 1667). This work was later republished, Berlin, 1672.
 3. P. Intorcetta and I. da Costa, Sapientia Sinica (Kiam Si, 1662).
 4. P. Intorcetta, Sinarum scientia politicomoralis (Kiam Si, 1673).
 5. P. Intorcetta, C. Herdtrich, F. Rougemont and P. Couplet, Confucius Sinarum philosophus sive Scientia Sinensis latine exposita (Paris, 1687). This work also appeared in an abbreviated French translation, La Morale de Confucius, Philosophe de la Chine (Paris, 1688).
 6. For further information see G. Runze, 'Leibniz' Gedanke einer natürlichen Interessengemeinschaft zwischen China und Deutschland', Deutsche Rundschau, 201 (1924), 33-38; O. Franke, 'Leibniz und China', Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 82 (1928), 155-178; F.R. Merkel, Leibniz und die Chinamission (Leipzig, 1920); D.F. Lach, The Preface to Leibniz's 'Novissima Sinica' (Honolulu, 1957); O. Franke, 'Der geschichtliche Konfuzius', Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 79 (1925), 163-191; D.F. Lach, 'China and the Era of the Enlightenment', The Journal of Modern History, 14 (1942), 209-223; F.R. Merkel, 'China und das Abendland im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert', Sinica, 7 (1932), 129-135; A.H. Rowbotham, 'The Impact of Confucius on Seventeenth-Century Europe', Far Eastern Quarterly, 4 (1945), 224-242.

philosophy with the help of the Jesuit Père Grimaldi, whom he met in Rome in 1689. Leibniz later published a collection of reports from Jesuit missionaries under the title of Novissima Sinica¹ in 1697. In a long preface Leibniz praised the Confucian system as clear proof of the natural moral superiority of the Chinese over the European:

Derart wahrlich scheint mir der Zustand unserer Verhältnisse zu sein, bei dem die Sittenverderbnis ins Ungeheure anwächst, daß man es fast für notwendig halten sollte, daß Missionare der Chinesen zu uns gesandt werden, die uns Zweck und Anwendung der natürlichen Theologie lehren, ebenso wie wir solche zu ihnen schicken, die sie in der offenbarten Theologie unterrichten. Ich glaube deshalb, wenn ein Weiser zum Richter nicht über die Schönheit von Göttinnen, sondern über die Vorzüglichkeit der Völker gewählt würde, er den goldnen Apfel den Chinesen reichen würde ... 2

Leibniz felt that the West surpassed the East in the theoretical and philosophical sciences (natural science and logic), but found the Chinese superior in practical philosophy and political morality. So great was his enthusiasm to learn more about the Chinese that, on the foundation of the Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaft, he pressed for a programme of cultural exchanges with China and a closer study of Chinese practical philosophy.

Others showed a similar interest in China. A.H. Francke made preliminary studies of China with the intention of later organising the despatch of Protestant missionaries to China. In preparation for this he founded the Collegii orientalis theologici in Halle in 1707. Nothing came of this plan, but it is itself indicative of the interest in China that Leibniz and others had stimulated within Germany.

Christian Wolff's attempt to introduce Chinese philosophy to Germany was more problematic. In his rectorial address delivered in the University of Halle on 12 July 1721, he attempted to demonstrate the

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1. Novissima Sinica historiam nostri temporis illustrata, edited by G.W. Leibniz (Hannover, 1697).
 2. Quoted from O. Franke, 'Leibniz und China', Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 82 (1928), 155-178 (p.165).

superiority of natural reason over religious speculation, using the Chinese as his example. The address, entitled De Sapientia Sinsensium Oratio,¹ showed that the moral doctrine of Confucius was not in conflict with Christian morality. Much of the information for the lecture was culled from a newer translation of the Confucian classics prepared by F. Noël.² Whilst translations of Confucius were acceptable, such philosophical, and to many minds atheistic eulogies of the Chinese were not. Wolff was immediately expelled from his university position and ordered to leave the town within twenty-four hours.

However, this incident did not diminish the scholarly interest in China. Wolff's pupil, G.B. Bülfinger, published his Specimen doctrinae veterum Sinarum moralis et politicae in 1724,³ whilst J. B. Mencken's Historia philosophiae Sinensis appeared in 1727.⁴ Both these works contained views that were not dissimilar to those expressed by Wolff.⁵

The image projected by all these works is that of a vast and powerful Empire at the head of which sat the sage, the cultivated patriarch, whose reign was a perfect example of Reason; of a people unified by a common code of morality, living at peace with each other. The practical, social-minded Confucius became a touchstone for the Rationalists, since he prized moral tradition over religious speculation. Confucianism was regarded as a system of social ethics, a corps of ideas

1. This is often referred to as Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica, which is the title of the printed text, (Frankfurt am Main, 1726).
2. F. Noël, 6 libri classici sinensis (Prague, 1711).
3. G.B. Bülfinger, Specimen doctrinae veterum Sinarum moralis et politicae (Frankfurt am Main, 1742).
4. J.B. Mencken, Historia philosophiae Sinensis (Brunswick, 1727).
5. One can also cite Z. Grapius, De Theologia Sinensium (Rostock, 1708); L. Stenzler, De Philosophia Sinensium (Greifswald, 1739); J. Reimann, Historia philosophiae Sinensis (Brunswick, 1741); J.F. Buddei, De superstitioso mortuorum apud Sinenses cultu (Halle, 1701); H.F. Eggers, Commentatio philosophica de sapienti justitiam administrandi ratione Sinensibus usitata (Jena, 1743); G.S. Bayer, Museum Sinicum, in quo Sinicae Linguae et Literaturae ratio explicatur (Petersburg, 1730).

applicable to the mundane needs of mankind, and as such vastly superior to European religious dogma.

Yet, whilst scholars and philosophers praised China and endeavoured to discover more about her rational philosophy, the popular image of China, as recorded in imaginative literature of the day, had not advanced greatly. Baroque authors transported their picaresque heroes to China, as Grimmelshausen did in the continuation of Simplicissimus, but this is simply the name of one of many exotic regions, and the creation of pure fantasy. Even works which are set in China, such as Christoph Hagedorn's Aeyquan, oder der große Mogol of 1670,¹ use Chinese history simply as an exotic backcloth to a story that is Western in theme. The title of the novel is taken from the office of I Kuan (Head Mandarin); the historical background is the Chinese-Manchu war and the events leading to the foundation of the Manchu Dynasty in 1644, but the author does not attempt to convey any impression of Chinese culture. His figures are those of the courtly Baroque novel, as are his themes of bravery, love and valiant conquests. Similarly, E.W. Happel's Der asiatische Onogambo² has as its central character a Chinese, the first Manchu Emperor Xunchius (Shun-chih), but again the work is a typically Western love story. The author even allows his hero to be converted to Christianity by the Jesuit mission, in order to make him a figure more fit for the reader's sympathy and admiration. Rudolf Gasser's novel Aussforderung³ takes Happel's theme

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1. C.W. Hagedorn, Aeyquan, oder der große Mogol, das ist, Chinesische und Indische Stahts- Kriegs- und Liebes-Geschicht... (Amsterdam, 1670).
 2. E.W. Happel, Der asiatische Onogambo. Darin der jetzt-regierende ... sinesische Käyser Xunchius als ein umschweifender Ritter vorgestellt... (Hamburg, 1673).
 3. R. Gasser, Aussforderung ... an alle Atheisten, Machievellisten, gefährliche Romanen und falsch politische Welt-Kinder zu einem Zwey-Kampf, auf dem Plan kurtzweiliger Dichtung, mit dem Schwerdt der sonderbaren Beweißthumen: Also ein Gedicht, mit Wahrheit besprengte Historia von Phlologo einem Portugiesischen Cavalieren, und Carabella einer Käyserin von China (Frankfurt am Main, 1686-88).

one stage further and postulates the possibility of converting the whole of the Chinese Empire to Christianity, thereby making it into an earthly paradise, by the union of Christian faith and Chinese practical reason. Whilst these works show some knowledge of Jesuit activities in China and use details borrowed from their writings, they make no serious attempt to understand the Chinese and regard China simply as an extension of Europe, as, for example, does Lohenstein's Großmüthiger Feld-Herr Arminius oder Hermann.¹

Whilst scholarly informed opinion regarded China as the finest expression of the attainments which natural reason and religion could achieve when free of religious dogma and doctrine, to the popular mind China was still the home of the heathen. For the Baroque novelist, China remained an exotic sphere which allowed him free reign for imaginative invention. The novelists showed no regard for China's philosophical traditions or her cultural attainments.

When the optimistic mood of the Enlightenment dwindled, so too did the enthusiastic study of China and Confucian philosophy. But interest in China was not entirely lost, though serious, scholarly enquiry now gave way to a more artistic, aesthetic appreciation of Chinese culture.² The influx of Chinese goods prompted many to see in them the material proof of a superior culture. These goods created a vision of opulence, elegance and gracious living which European society aspired towards and hoped to attain by copying them. In interior décor, architecture and even garden design, Chinese influence abounded. By surrounding themselves with chinoiserie the Europeans hoped to discover the secret of the harmonious

1. D. Caspar von Lohenstein, Großmüthiger Feld-Herr Arminius oder Hermann (Leipzig, 1689-90).
2. The Rococo period is dealt with in detail in A. Reichwein, China and Europe, pp. 25-72; H. Honour, Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay (London, 1961); and A. Brüning, 'Der Einfluß Chinas und Japans auf die europäische Kunst', Velhagens und Klassings Monatshefte, 15 (1900), 281-296.

world which the Chinese inhabited, at one with their natural surroundings. But what for the Chinese was a natural product of centuries of cultural development can only be seen as artificial within European culture.

Goethe¹ spoke out against this adulation of China and the artificiality of the Chinese vogue in his Triumph der Empfindsamkeit² of 1777. But his criticism of this stylised mode did not imply a complete rejection of China on his part. His diaries and letters record his personal interest in Chinese literature, particularly her poetry. An entry of 1813 states: 'Besonders habe ich China und was dazu gehört fleißig durchstudiert',³ whilst a letter to C. von Knebel in 1817 praises a Chinese drama as 'ein höchst merkwürdiges und verdienstvolles Werk'.⁴ In the year 1827 Goethe appears to have read a great deal of Chinese literature, particularly poetry, an interest which found expression in his own work, for example the Elpenor fragment,⁵ which is adapted from a Chinese original,⁶ and his Chinesisch-deutsche Tages- und Jahreszeiten,⁷ which were, in part, adaptations of English translations of Chinese poems and, in part, poems composed by Goethe in the style of the Chinese.⁸ These

1. For further information on Goethe and China see E. Jenisch, 'Goethe und der ferne Osten', Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift, 1 (1923), 309-338; R. Wilhelm 'Goethe und die chinesische Kultur', Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochschulstifts, 6 (1927), 301-316; O. Franke, 'Goethe und China', Forschungen und Fortschritte, 8 (1932), 105-106; E.A. Blackall, 'Goethe and the Chinese Novel', in The Discontinuous Tradition, edited by P.F. Ganz (Oxford, 1971), pp.29-53; C. Wagner-Dittmar, 'Goethe und die chinesische Literatur', in Studien zu Goethes Alterswerken, edited by E. Trunz (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), pp.122-228; W. Bauer, 'Goethe und China: Verständnis und Mißverständnis', in Goethe und die Tradition, edited by H. Reiss (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), pp.177-197.
2. J.W. von Goethe, Werke (Weimar, 1887-1912), I, vii, 1-73.
3. Goethe, Werke, IV, xxiv, 28.
4. Goethe, Werke, IV, xxviii, 272.
5. Goethe, Werke, I, xi, 1-46.
6. This is an adaptation of a play contained within J.B. Du Halde's Déscription de la Chine, 4 vols (Paris, 1735). This play was widely known in Europe in Voltaire's adaptation, L'Orphelin de la Chine, tragédie (London, 1756).
7. Goethe, Werke, I, iv, 110-115.
8. Certain poems are adapted from P.P. Thoms' Chinese Courtship in Verse (London, 1824).

poems reflect Goethe's view of the Chinese, a view he expressed more succinctly in a conversation with Eckermann:

Die Menschen denken, handeln und empfinden fast ebenso wie wir, ... nur daß bei ihnen alles klarer, reinlicher und sittlicher zugeht. Es ist bei ihnen alles verständig, bürgerlich, ohne große Leidenschaft und poetischen Schwung und hat dadurch viele Ähnlichkeit mit Hermann und Dorothea, so wie mit den englischen Romanen des Richardson. Es unterscheidet sich aber wieder dadurch, daß bei ihnen die äußere Natur neben den menschlichen Figuren immer mitlebt. Die Goldfische in den Teichen hört man immer plätschern, die Vögel auf den Zweigen singen immer fort, der Tag ist immer heiter und sonnig, die Nacht immer klar; vom Mond ist viel die Rede, allein es verändert die Landschaft nicht, sein Schein ist so helle gedacht wie der Tag selber. 1

It has also been noted that Goethe's personality shows natural affinities with the Chinese spirit.² Goethe was able to free himself of the popular misconceptions surrounding China, and form a personal opinion of the Chinese.

Schiller shared Goethe's interest in China. This resulted in his adaptation of the quasi-oriental Turandot material into a play,³ which he based upon Gozzi's version of 1762.⁴ Schiller later made an adaptation of a Chinese novel, Haoh-Kiöhs Tschuen,⁵ which he had first read in a version translated from the English by his acquaintance C.G. Murr.⁶ A tribute to Confucius is also to be found in Schiller's 'Spruch des Konfuzius', a three-stanza poem which praises Confucian attachment to tradition as the key to the proper regulation of human life:

Dreifach ist der Schritt der Zeit:
Zögernd kommt die Zukunft hergezogen,
Pfeilschnell ist das Jetzt entflohen,
Ewig still steht die Vergangenheit. 7

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1. J.P. Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe (Wiesbaden, 1955), p.210.
 2. See R. Wilhelm, 'Goethe und Laotse', Europäische Revue, 4 (1928), 1-12.
 3. F. von Schiller, Werke (Weimar, 1954), XIV, 1-46.
 4. See H.H. Rusack, Gozzi in Germany (New York, 1930).
 5. Schiller, Werke, XVI, 361-363.
 6. C.G. Murr, Haoh Kiöhs angenehme Geschichte (Nürnberg, 1766).
 7. Schiller, Werke, I, 229.

Schiller is, however, along with Goethe a notable exception among his contemporaries.¹

As philosophical views changed, so too did the interpretation of China. It was Herder who re-assessed the significance of Chinese culture and created an image which influenced German opinion in ensuing decades.² Herder dismissed the Chinese, since they did not conform to the ideas he had developed upon the history of mankind. In the third part of his Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit he presents a detailed account of the growth of China, her internal social structure, her language and beliefs, in which he finds little to praise, except her non-hereditary nobility, 'Adeltum des Verdienstes'. He points to the popular conception of China which had existed in Europe:

Jedermann kennet die vortheilhaften Gemälde der Sinesischen Staatsverfassung, die ... nicht nur von speculativen Philosophen sondern von Staatsmännern sogar, beinah als politische Ideale bewundert wurden. 3

Herder's own opinions diverge from this view, since he feels that the Chinese show 'so wenig Geschmack an wahren Naturverhältniss, so wenig Gefühl von innerer Schönheit und Würde.' He sees the social code and customs as a hollow artifice, 'leere Ceremonien treten an die Stelle der herzlichen Wirklichkeit.' Herder attributes the cause of this fossilisation to the most prominent of the Chinese philosophers, Confucius, whom he admires, yet whose philosophy, 'dies mechanische Triebwerk der Sittenlehre den freien Fortgang des Geistes auf immer hemmte.'⁴

1. For further information, see E. Selden, China in German Poetry 1773-1833 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1942); U. Aurich, China im Spiegel der deutschen Literatur des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1935).

2. This period is discussed by E. Rose, 'Die Romantik und China', Geistige Arbeit, 5 (1938), 5-8; 'China und die Spätromantik', Deutsche Kultur im Leben der Völker. Mitteilungen der Akademie zur wissenschaftlichen Erforschung und zur Pflege des Deutschtums, 15 (1940), 236-249.

3. J.G. Herder, Sämtliche Werke (Berlin, 1877-1913), XIV, 6.

4. Herder, Werke, XIV, 15.

For Herder, China signifies the negation of progress. The China of sumptuous silk has now become for the European the dormant cocoon of inhibited development:

... eine balsamirte Mumie, mit Hieroglyphen bemahlt
und mit Seide umwunden; ihr innerer Kreislauf ist
wie das Leben der schlafenden Winterthiere. 1

Some years later, Herder found it necessary to modify this criticism, since the concept of a rigid, static China did not accord with his general theories on the development of mankind. In his Adrastea we find a discussion of the Jesuits' attempts to convert the whole of the Chinese Empire. Within this discussion one can trace Herder's growing appreciation of the teachings of Confucius. This is later confirmed in Herder's translation, made from a Latin source, of the Doctrine of the Golden Mean, which was published under the title of Das Buch der Mitte.² This later revision of his ideas on China had little effect upon his readers and it was his earlier humorous condemnation of China that was to set the tone for others' opinions on China.

August Wilhelm Schlegel, in his Vienna lectures on dramatic art and literature delivered in 1808, tersely dismissed the Chinese theatre:

Die Chinesen ... haben ihr stehendes Nationaltheater;
vermuthlich in jeder Hinsicht stehend: ich zweifle nicht,
daß sie in der Feststellung willkürlicher Regeln und
der feinen Beobachtung unbedeutender Conventionen die
correctesten Europäer weit hinter sich lassen. 3

Voltaire's translation of a Chinese play is mockingly characterised:

Die Chinesen werden als die tugendhaftesten und
weisesten aller Menschen vorgestellt, und fließen
über von philosophischen Sittensprüchen. 4

In his Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt of 1810, Görres describes Chinese religion as mechanistic and formalistic. Friedrich Schlegel's views reflect a similar opinion, though his conclusions are little more

1. Herder, Werke, XIV, 13.

2. Herder, Werke, XXIV, 5-22.

3. A.W. Schlegel, Vorlesungen über die dramatischen Künste und Literatur, 2 vols (Bonn and Leipzig, 1923), I, 19.

4. A.W. Schlegel, Vorlesungen, II, 72.

than a re-statement of theories set forth by Windischmann in Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte,¹ a Catholic counterpart to Herder's Ideen. Windischmann describes Chinese culture as a formalised system lacking any essential, animating spirit. He argues, in keeping with the degeneration theory, that the Chinese must have experienced revelation, but that the knowledge gained thereby had faded in the course of history. Schlegel repeats this judgement in his third lecture on the philosophy of history, which concludes:

... unter den großen Völkern der ersten Urzeit, welche der alten Quelle der heiligen Überlieferung in dem Worte des Anfangs, am nächsten, oder doch sehr nahe gestanden, nehmen die Chinesen eine ausgezeichnete Stelle ein, und viele Beweise für diesen ursprünglich hohen Stand, und merkwürdige Spuren der ursprünglich allgemeinen und ewigen Wahrheit, werden als einzelne Züge in ihrer ältesten Geschichte, als ein Erbteil alter Gedanken in den klassischen Urkunden ihrer Vorzeit gefunden. Aber frühe schon hat die Wissenschaft bei ihnen eine ganz falsche Richtung, zum Teil selbst die Sprache auch eine solche, oder wenigstens einen sehr künstlich verschränkten Charakter angenommen. Von einer Stufe der politischen Abgötterei zur andern immer tiefer herabsinkend, haben sie endlich auch äußerlich einen fremden Götzdienst angenommen ... 2

Schelling's lectures on 'Philosophie der Mythologie' also contain rather negative conclusions about the Chinese, since their existence does not conform to the pattern displayed by other peoples in the development of mythology. Schelling declares them 'ein absolut unmythologisches Volk' and, since mythology is a vital step in all people's development, he cannot accept them as a genuine people (Volk) but dismisses them as 'eine bloße Menschheit'.³ His lectures also discuss wider aspects of Chinese culture. The Chinese are ruled, he maintains, by the patriarchal principle, which is still visible 'durch das jetzt herabgesunkene,

1. C.J.F. Windischmann, Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte (Bonn, 1827-32).

2. F. Schlegel, Kritische Ausgabe (Munich, Paderborn, Vienna, 1971), IX, 80.

3. F.W. Schelling, Werke, fünfter Ergänzungsband (Munich, 1943), pp.387ff.

kleinliche, pedantische und zum geistlosen Formalismus gewordene Leben der Nation'.¹ He defines China as a petrified, mummified state, an anomaly which refuses to fit the theoretical systems of human development constructed by the philosophers and^{is} therefore, of only minor interest. The only novel aspect of Schelling's discussion is the space dedicated to the philosophy of Lao-tse, which he regards as important in the growth of Chinese culture, although he disputes that there is any wider significance in the philosophy. Predictably, Schelling's concluding remarks on the Chinese are similar to those made by Herder and Friedrich Schlegel:

Das chinesische Bewußtseyn ist nicht mehr der vorgeschichtliche Zustand selbst, sondern ein todter Abdruck, gleichsam eine Mumie desselben. 2

This view of China was retained throughout the nineteenth century,³ due in part to the influence of the opinions expressed by Romantic writers and in part to the widely-accepted Hegelian theory of history.

Hegel made a detailed study of China in preparation for his course of lectures on the philosophy of history delivered in 1822. The reasoning with which Hegel approached the problem differed from that of Herder. The latter explained the Chinese state on an ethnological basis, the former on an historical one. But whilst their methods differed, their conclusions did not differ to any great extent. Indeed, it is surprising to find that Hegel should have dedicated so much time to a discussion of China since he excludes her from the process which he understands as history:

Früh schon sehen wir China zu dem Zustande heranwachsen, in dem es sich heute befindet; denn da der Gegensatz von objektivem Sinn und subjektiver Daranbewegung noch fehlt, so ist jede Veränderlichkeit ausgeschlossen, und das Statarische, das ewig wieder erscheint, ersetzt das, was wir das Geschichtliche nennen würden. 4

1. Schelling, P.397.

2. Schelling, p.423.

3. This period is discussed in detail by E. Rose in his article 'China as a symbol of Reaction in Germany, 1830-1880', Comparative Literature, 3, (1951), 57-76; and M.G. Mason, Western Concepts of China and the Chinese (New York, 1939).

4. Hegel, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig, 1923), IX, 11, 275.

Hegel identifies the cause of this rupture in Chinese development as a forfeiting of individual freedom to a patriarchal and bureaucratic system:

Die Individualität scheint überhaupt für unmündig erklärt zu sein ... Wir können hier nicht von einer Verfassung sprechen; es sind keine selbständigen Individuen, Stände, Klassen vorhanden, die selbst ihre Interessen zu beschützen hätten, sondern alles wird von oben befohlen, von obenher geleitet und beaufsichtigt. 1

Chinese morality and the ethical code, so admired by the Enlightenment thinkers, appear to Hegel as a rigid system of abstract reasoning. Hegel can see no distinction between 'das Moralische' and 'das Rechtliche'.² The loss of individual freedom had arrested the development towards absolute freedom which, for Hegel, was synonymous with the processes and meaning of history. Hegel recognises a negation of free spirit in all aspects of Chinese culture - her religion, which had replaced spirituality by abstract principles; her art, which was 'geistlos' and lacked any understanding of the aesthetic; and her state structure, which had created slaves to a system of abstract reasoning held together by restrictive prohibitions rather than mutual love. To Hegel's mind the Chinese lived within a system of self-created and self-perpetuating despotism.

As both Rose and Mason have demonstrated, the views put forward by Hegel were accepted by the majority of his contemporaries. One finds them in the writings of Eduard Gans³ and the historical theories of Karl von Rotteck.⁴ The latter, like Hegel, excludes China from the historical process and likens their development to the natural history of animal

1. Hegel, p.298.

2. Hegel, p.299.

3. E. Gans, Vermischte Schriften (Berlin, 1834), II, 180.

4. K. von Rotteck, Allgemeine Geschichte (Berlin, 1834), I, 206-207.

species. This prejudiced and unflattering interpretation of the Chinese was to become the image inherited and projected by other historians, philosophers, art critics and even sinologists of the day.¹

These views were so widely held that they passed into the popular literature of the nineteenth century. China was used to symbolise a reactionary, autocratic police state in which human freedom and dignity were abused. China came to be employed within this literature as a metaphor for the Prussian state in order to avoid the vigilant eye of the censors.

Heine was the first such popular author to make frequent use of the Chinese metaphor as a political weapon in his attacks upon the conservatism of the Prussian state. One finds this in Lutezia, where Heine refers to the 'Bambustheorie', the violent suppression of political dissent.² The most famous example is Heine's poem 'Der Kaiser von China', a satire upon the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who is depicted as a helpless inebriate attended by his faithful 'Hofweltweiser Confusius' (sic), this being a reference to Schelling, whom the King had appointed Professor at Berlin University in 1841. The King is mocked as an agent of reaction, who has had the Grand Pagoda (Cologne Cathedral) completed in order to restore the prestige of the state, whereby he hoped to counteract the spirit of revolution that is abroad in the kingdom:

Die große Pagode, Symbol und Hort
des Glaubens, ist fertig geworden;
Die letzten Juden taufen sich dort
Und kriegen den Drachenorden.

Es schwindet der Geist der Revolution
Und es rufen die edelsten Mantschu:
Wir wollen keine Konstitution,
Wir wollen den Stock, den Kantschu! 3

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1. Rose refers to F.C. Schlosser, Universalhistorische Übersicht der Geschichte der alten Welt und ihrer Kulturen (Frankfurt am Main, 1826); J.E. Erdmann, Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie (Berlin, 1878); P.F. Stühr, Allgemeine Geschichte der Religionsformen der heidnischen Völker (Berlin, 1836); T.F. Vischer, Asthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen (Reutlingen and Leipzig, 1848); K. Rosenkrantz, Handbuch einer allgemeinen Geschichte der Poesie (Halle, 1832); C.L. Michelet, Das System der Philosophie als exacte Wissenschaft (Berlin, 1879).
 2. H. Heine, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig, 1912), IX, 328.
 3. Heine, Werke, II, 145-146.

In other places Heine mocks the Chinese as primitive and superstitious, as for example in Französische Zustände,¹ though here no comparison with the Germans is implied. His most witty characterisation of the Chinese is to be found in Die Romantische Schule,² where he speaks of China as 'ein Raritätenkabinett', a living museum and a distortion of both the human and natural world:

Die Natur mit ihren grellen, verschnörkelten
Erscheinungen, abenteuerlichen Riesenblumen,
Zwergbäumen, verschnitzelten Bergen, barock
wollüstigen Früchten, aberwitzig geputzten
Vögeln, ist dort eine eben so fabelhafte Karrikatur
wie der Mensch mit seinem spitzigen Zopfkopf ...
seinem altklugen Wesen und kindisch einsilbiger
Sprache.

This description is obviously based upon pictorial representations of China and the stock figure of the Chinese sage. Heine's quite literal interpretation of Chinese art brings him to the mockingly absurd conclusion:

Es gibt dort weder Schatten noch Perspektive. Auf
den buntscheckigen Häusern heben sich, über einander
gestapelt, eine Menge Dächer, die wie aufgespannte
Regenschirme aussehen, und woran lauter metallne
Glöckchen hängen, so daß sogar der Wind, wenn er
vorbeistreift, durch ein närrisches Geklingel sich
lächerlich machen muß.

This description is a prelude to the résumé of a Chinese fairy-tale about a princess who squanders her fortune acquiring vast quantities of silk, which she takes pleasure in tearing up.³ Heine uses the tale not to confirm the absurdity of the Chinese he so mercilessly lampoons, but to attack the Romantic poet Brentano. The princess, 'die personifizierte Kaprixe', is likened to Brentano's muse. The musicality of Brentano's verse, which is usually felt to dominate the content, obviously sounds to Heine like the deranged rending of silk. The later incarceration of the

1. Heine, Werke, VI, 199-200.

2. Heine, Werke, VII, 113ff.

3. This is in fact a genuine Chinese fairy-tale. The only possible source for Heine's knowledge of it would be P.P. Thoms, Chinese Courtship in Verse (London, 1824), or a second-hand report of this.

demented princess is likened by Heine to Brentano's ascetic withdrawal into pious Catholicism.

For Heine, China is a land of antiques, populated by retarded hunchbacks, an Empire ruled by the hand of the despot with tyrannical severity. Heine equates this caricature of China with the worst excesses of Prussian state authority, and offers it as a warning against the dangerous effects of conservatism. It is clear from Heine's comments that the Enlightenment view of high moral development and an exemplary political state has been reversed into one of a legalist regime, of political and social suppression and of unnatural moral and physical development.

The Rococo enthusiasm for Chinese objets d'art, which were considered the product of high cultural attainment and spiritual harmony, had now turned into revulsion against what was felt to be a grotesque, disproportionate, artificial and mannered art. There is clearly discernible in nineteenth-century views of China an assumption of the West's monopoly of sound aesthetic, moral and philosophical judgement.

Rose has traced this stock image of China in the imaginative literature of the nineteenth century. This prevailing attitude can be illustrated by considering in more detail the examples to which he refers.

Hoffmann von Fallersleben attacks Prussian militarism in the following manner in what purports to be a Chinese song:

Chinesisches Loblied

Stehende Heere müssen wir haben,
Stehende Heer' im himmlischen Reich.
Wär es nicht wahrlich ein Jammer und Schande,
Wenn wir nicht hätten manchmal Parade,
Wenn wir nicht hörten den Zapfenstreich? 1

In 'Herbstlied eines Chinesen', also of 1841, he refers to the suppression of the people's democratic aspirations:

1. Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Ausgewählte Werke (Leipzig, (n.d.)), II, 139.

Wir sind nicht reif!
 Das ist das Lied, das sie gesungen haben
 Jahrhundertlang uns armen Waisenknaben,
 Womit sie uns immer noch beschwichten
 Des Volkes Hoffen immer vernichten,
 Den Sinn des Bessern immer betören
 Und unsere Zukunft immer zerstören. 1

Other, similar examples of the Chinese metaphor can be found in Adolf Glassbrenner's Verbotene Lieder; H. Margraff's 'Shinsu in der Registratur des Marrionettentheaters in Peking' and 'Eine chinesische Kindertragödie'; the anonymous Chinesische Zustände; and Gutzkow's Maha Guru.² In all of these China is depicted as a reactionary, undemocratic, absolutist state in which the individual is suppressed and lacks political freedom.

The German stage combined this political metaphor with comic buffoonery,³ though this is not a peculiarly nineteenth-century phenomenon. The popularity of Chinese drama on the European stage during the eighteenth century, particularly adaptations of the classical Chinese Orphan of the House of Chao, left its mark on comic opera of the period, and on Viennese popular comedy.⁴ Treatments of Chinese tragedies with their high moral tone gradually degenerated into comic extravaganza. This clearly demonstrates the gradual move from Enlightenment enthusiasm for China, through the fanciful dreamings of the Rococo period, to the ludicrous mocking and political satire of the nineteenth century.

1. von Fallersleben, II, 145.
2. A. Glassbrenner, Verbotene Lieder (Bern, 1844), pp.23, 90, 98; H. Margraff, Bücher und Menschen (Bunzlau, 1837); Anon., Chinesische Zustände, Leben und Treiben in China, mit humoristisch-satyrischen Rückblicken auf deutsche Verhältnisse von A.P. (Grimma, 1847); C. Gutzkow, Maha Guru, Geschichte eines Gottes (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1833).
3. Rose cites: U. von Destouche, Staberl als Chinese (unpublished, performed 1853); G. Niedermayer, Staberl in China oder der Sohn des Himmels (Regensburg, 1877); H. Herzenskron, 'Hoang-Puff' in Dramatische Kleinigkeiten (Vienna, 1826), I, 63-103; L. Angely, 'Prinz Tu-Ta-Tu' in Neuestes komisches Theater (Hamburg, 1836), I, 255-307.
4. Further information can be found in M. Dietrich, 'The Far East - Its Reflection in and Influence on the European Theatre', translated by B. Russell, Theatre Research, 4/5 (1962-63), 170-194; H.W. Wells, 'Chinese Drama in English', Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, 13 (1964), 13-27.

One can also point to the appearance of Chinese figures in serious works by better-known representatives of nineteenth-century German literature. Annette von Droste-Hülshoff shows a note of veneration for the exotic and poetic Chinese, as in the poem 'Der Teetisch':

Von der rosenfarbnen Rolle
Liest er seine Zauberreime,
Verse, zart wie Seidenwolle,
Süß wie Jungfernhonigseime;
'Ting, tang, tong' - das steigt und sinket,
Welch Gesäusel, welches Zischen!
Wie ein irres Hündlein hinket
noch ein deutsches Wort dazwischen. 1

This comparison between the poetic Chinese and the prosaic German is indicative of a newly-emerging attitude. China is here no longer seen as a political reality or as a store-house of characters for buffoon humour, but as a poetic realm. It is possible that Droste-Hülshoff had read the recently published translation of the Schi-King prepared by Rückert,² or perhaps some of Goethe's 'Chinese' verses.

However, Droste-Hülshoff would seem to be an exception among her contemporaries who continued, in fiction, to portray the Chinese negatively. One finds an example of this in Stifter's Waldsteig, where a silk screen decorated with Chinese figures stands as a symbol for the immaturity and artificiality of the central character. When he renounces his past follies the screen disappears from the story:

Wie ist nun Herr Tiberius anders geworden!
Alle seidenen Chinesen sind dahin, die Elenhäute
auf Betten und Lagerstätten sind dahin ... 3

The symbolism is similar to that employed by Raabe in his Schüdderump, where the life of the young woman is compared to a Chinese shadow play:

1. A. von Droste-Hülshoff, Werke (Munich, 1925), I, 1, 163-166.
2. F. Rückert, Schi-King. Chinesisches Liederbuch (Altona, 1833).
3. A. Stifter, Werke (Prague, 1911), IV, 74.



Das ist ein Schattenspiel, aber ein etwas chinesisches
 ... Das trippelt und tänzelt und ziert sich wie die
 Figuren auf einem Rokokodamenfächer. 1

Again the symbolism is intended to portray artificiality and affectation.

To these examples can be added the more problematic figure of the Chinaman in Fontane's Effi Briest.² This ghostly figure is associated with the exotic and the forbidden.³ The popular prejudice felt against the Chinese can also be seen in the local people's objection to his being buried in hallowed ground. Clearly the function within the work owes some validity to the average reader's image of China at this time.

Possibly the only exception to the predominantly negative, dismissive and mocking attitude to China and Chinese culture is to be found in Paul Heyse's verse novellas adapted from Chinese themes.⁴ The first of these, Die Brüder⁵ of 1851, is a reworking of a number of motifs taken from Rückert's translation of the Schi-King.⁶ The poems concerned are 'Landräumung', 'Die unzufriedene Königsbraut Swen-Kiang', 'Swen-Kong und Swen-Kiang', 'Die Königin Swen-Kiang ist um ihre beiden Söhne besorgt', 'Ausgang der Liebesbethörung', 'Verwilderte Zucht' and 'Zweideutige Schönheit'.⁷

With the exception of the first poem, these songs form a single

1. W. Raabe, Sämtliche Werke (Berlin (n.d.)), second series, II, 15.
2. T. Fontane, Sämtliche Werke (Munich, 1959), VII, 169-247.
3. An extremely detailed discussion of this figure can be found in C.G. Avery, 'The Chinese Wall: Fontane's psychograph of Effi Briest' in Views and Reviews of Modern German Literature. Festschrift for Adolf D. Klarmann, edited by K.S. Weimar (Munich, 1974), pp.18-38.
4. For further information see E. Rose, 'Chinesische Motive beim jungen Heyse', The Germanic Review, 12 (1937), 165-176; and K. Fischöder, 'Paul Heyse's Novellen in Versen' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Munich, 1923).
5. P. Heyse, Gesammelte Werke (Berlin, 1877), II, 39-53.
6. See F. Rückert, Gesammelte Poetische Werke (Frankfurt am Main, 1868), VI, 109-380.
7. Rückert, Gesammelte Poetische Werke, VI, 148-155.

episode with the Book of Songs and are not, as Rose suggests, fragments which Heyse combined to form a narrative unit. The six songs tell of the consequences of the father's usurpation of his son's bride, the hate and jealousy which follows and the tragic outcome to the affair. The story is strongly Confucian. It is a tale of nemesis: the king transgresses against the moral code and is punished by a higher power.

Rückert's translation retains the grave, sombre tone of the folk-song. It is a story of sexual jealousy, moral decline and dynastic disaster. The directness of tone, narrative clarity, natural imagery and frequent refrains are familiar elements of the Western folk tradition as well as the Chinese. Heyse creates a typical nineteenth-century melodramatic and grotesque episode from this. This is also true of the second novella, König und Priester,¹ which, as Rose has demonstrated, is an adaptation of a chapter from the Chinese novel San Kuo (History of the Three Kingdoms).²

The existence of these two adaptations, which cannot be considered to be of any high literary merit, is indicative of the attempt to understand Chinese literature and culture, not simply by comparison to the West, but as an independent tradition. It is clear that Rückert's translation was instrumental in drawing the attention of German authors to Chinese poetry, and that it was via the medium of literature that a newer response to China became evident in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century.

It is significant that Heyse used a French source in the second of his novellas. As a result of the generally negative image of China, sinological studies had not been developed in Germany. What interest there was, usually gave rise to studies which attempted to demonstrate the

1. Heyse, Gesammelte Werke, II, 147-165. This novella first appeared in 1857 with the title König und Magier.
2. Rose cites San-Koué-Tchy. Histoire des Trois Royaumes, translated by T. Pavie, 2 vols (Paris, 1845, 1851) as Heyse's source.

derivation of Chinese culture and institutions from a degenerated form of Western classical models.

The view that China did not conform to the normal pattern of human historical development excluded it from serious Western study, and this view was used in the political sphere as an excuse for intervention in Chinese affairs.¹ Such intervention was intended to force Western conformity on the Chinese and make China into an extension of the West.

It is against this background of the changing image of China that the reception of Chinese culture in the twentieth century is to be viewed. The process of metamorphosis continued. It began with the associations of a fabled culture and precious silk goods, and through the centuries changed into the image of a dormant cocoon and fossilised cultural development. The twentieth century carried this process one stage further.

1. See W. Franke, China und das Abendland (Göttingen, 1962) for a discussion of Western political attitudes towards China.

EXCURSUS : TAOISM

The discovery of Taoism is probably the most important feature of the modern German intellectual response to China. It was a philosophy which had previously been ignored by Western authors and thinkers because of the lack of information available on it, and because of the early Western adulation of Confucianism. When the Enlightenment enthusiasm for Confucianism receded, so too did all popular interest in Chinese philosophy. However, Confucianism continued to be regarded as the only Chinese philosophical system. Thus, the German Romantics never discovered Taoism, although their cosmological and poetic creeds found confirmation in Indian religio-philosophical doctrines¹ of a similar nature to those of Taoism.

Taoism is recorded in three written forms, the Tao-te-king,² a slim volume of eighty-one aphorisms, the Lieh-tse and the Tschuang-tse, two collections of parables, anecdotes and epigrams which duplicate each other in many respects.

Considering the brevity of the philosophy's major work, the Tao-te-king (Book of the Way and its Virtue), and its extremely esoteric nature, the interpretation of which is the subject of much sinological debate, its enthusiastic reception in the present century is rather surprising.

Its central tenets, in so far as they are distinguishable, are those of philosophical Idealism, and bear a certain resemblance to Platonism. In religious terms it is a mystical creed which has many similarities with its European counterparts.

The first popular interest in Taoism can be found within the theosophical movement, whose teachings borrowed freely from various religious traditions in a manner symptomatic of an age in which the dogma of institutionalised religion gave way to a desire for more personal

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1. P. Slepcevic, Der Buddhismus in der deutschen Literatur (Vienna, 1920).
 2. For a lucid introduction to Taoism see C.D. Lau, Lao Tzu, Tao te ching (Harmondsworth, 1970).

experience of religion.

The establishment of newer religious creeds in an age dominated by materialism and positivism was a reaction to the erosion of traditional religious belief by science. Christian religion had lost its absolute validity and been shown to be the product of myth. However, the inability of the scientific method to explain all features of the material world satisfactorily, particularly the relationship of body and spirit or spirit and material, led people towards esoteric, occult creeds. As at the time of Romanticism, many became fascinated with phenomena which proved exceptions to the regulated world of scientific reality and pointed to a higher reality than that of the mechanistic conceptions of materialism. Many were drawn to irrational beliefs, which required no scientific proof and were testaments of a personal faith.

As R. Pascal has pointed out,¹ at the beginning of the twentieth century Germany was full of prophets and saviours eager to offer substitute religions. Many turned to Taoism as a source of religious inspiration; the Tao-te-king was to become a bridge between Germany and China.

The many translations and adaptations of Taoist works which appeared were not intended to be the product of philological or philosophical rigour; they were, rather, statements of faith for a generation who had tired of Western moralising, logic, rationality and metaphysics. They sought an inwardness, an escape from the technological age, and a withdrawal from the world of externality into one of spirituality, a world which was the product of intuition and self-recognition. They found within the Tao-te-king an alternative world which, whilst never historically realised, was, theoretically at least, in man's power to attain by following

1. R. Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism (London, 1973), pp.161-197. Pascal fails to indicate the significance of Taoism within this religious revival.

the simple prescripts of Taoism, which were seen as the laws of the cosmos working through mankind.

The philosophy of Taoism, with its stress on the transcendent, struck a harmonious note in the minds of a generation which was itself returning towards an idealist view of reality. A newer belief in the numinous nature of all life and a spiritual essence from which all things stemmed was seen to be confirmed in the writings of the ancient Chinese sage.

Not least the theory of wu-wei, of non-contention or inactivity, was seen by many as the right course in a world which had been brought to the threshold of self-destruction by a creed of progress, development and technology. The loss of individuality experienced by the first generation of urbanised society was redressed by the discovery of a new creed of self-realisation. Yet, unlike the Romantic doctrine or Nietzschean creed of self-dependence, it was not a philosophy of unrestrained egoism. Taoism called for the complete negation of the self, as the product of personal desire and the contingent aspects of personality, in search of the essence of supra-individuality. It did not argue with outmoded religious or difficult philosophical concepts. Through a brief collection of aphorisms it exhorted the individual to recognise the spiritual essence of life and, by abandoning the self to the greater reality of the universe, to regenerate mankind.

It was to some a newer form of the Enlightenment belief in a godless religion, though without any moral stress. It can be linked with pacifism, with cultural pessimism, and with a Rousseauesque call to return to natural anarchy. For some it was a brand of pantheism, for others a variation on Buddhism, whilst others considered it a modified form of the Christian mystical creed, but, whatever its particular appeal, it was, in general terms, the non-doctrinaire, non-dogmatic, personal philosophy of self-regeneration which attracted spiritually disoriented German minds.

The first example of the inclusion of Chinese material within this

spreading interest in esoteric religious and philosophical traditions can be found in Franz Hartmann's Theosophie in China.¹ Prior to this, Taoist writings had been available, but only in small numbers. There were versions of the Tao-te-king by R. von Plänckner, V. von Strauß and F.W. Noak,² indicative in themselves of a gradually emerging interest in Taoist thought which had previously been dismissed as lacking even sinological interest. Lieh-tse, too, had been translated into German for the first time by E. Faber.³ These were intended as accurate translations of the original, despite such obvious remnants of older theories, such as the 'Jehova hypothesis'.⁴ Hartmann simply used the text as a basis for the propagation of his own religio-philosophical creed.

His work consists of a number of aphorisms, which he claims to have translated but which are in fact adaptations of von Strauß, to which he adds brief commentaries. Hartmann argues that Taoism is wholly consistent with Christian religious dogma. He recognises, as previous French commentators had done, the presence of the Israelite God in aphorism fourteen, and finds many parallels between the sayings of Lao-tse and the Christian creed as recorded in the Gospels. Hartmann equates Tao with Christ and his teachings: 'Tao-Menschen sind diejenigen, in welchen Tao (Christus) lebt und zum Bewußtsein gekommen ist.'⁵ This synthesis

1. F. Hartmann, Theosophie in China. Betrachtungen über das Tao-Teh-King (Leipzig, 1897). This was republished in 1900 under the same title and also appeared as Tao-Teh-King. Der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Licht, Bibliothek esoterischer Schriften, 9 (Leipzig, 1898).
2. R. von Plänckner, Lao-Tse. Tao-Te-King. Der Weg zur Tugend (Leipzig, 1870); V. von Strauß, Lao-Tse's Tao-Te-King (Leipzig, 1870); F.W. Noak, Taotekking von Laotsee (Berlin, 1888).
3. E. Faber, Der Naturalismus bei den alten Chinesen ... oder die sämtlichen Werke des Philosophen Licius (Elberfeld, 1877).
4. Religious philosophers of the nineteenth century regarded Taoism as a degenerate form of Christianity in keeping with the theory of all religions as the product of initial revelation. This was supported by an apparent reference to Jehova in the Tao-te-king. Such speculation has since been shown to be erroneous.
5. Hartmann, Theosophie in China, p.21.

of Chinese and Christian thought is further supported by frequent references to Jakob Boehme and Meister Eckhart. It is a form of syncretism which tries to support a failing religious belief by seeking confirmation of personally and intuitively held views in the writings of other cultures and historical periods. For Hartmann, the Tao-te-king is little more than a parallel text to the Bible, the product of religious revelation of the true God to disparate peoples.

It is notable that in Hartmann's work there is still no attempt to appreciate Taoism as an independent philosophy. He regards it rather as an assurance of the validity of his interpretation of Christian doctrine. Just as in the seventeenth century the missionaries had tried to demonstrate the compatibility of Confucianism and Christian teachings, so now Taoism was seen simply as a modified form of religious revelation. Yet the application of Taoism rather than Confucianism in this is indicative of the change in religious views. Religion had now become a question of personal experience and in this Lao-tse surpassed Confucius, the latter appearing too pedantic and overtly rational for a generation which was seeking spiritual solace and was sated with rational thought. This receptivity to Lao-tse's thought and antipathy towards Confucianism is noted by Chamberlain in his Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts:

Confucius ist eine Art Jules Simon: ein edeldenkender, phantasieloser Ethiker, Politiker und Pedant. Ohne Vergleich interessanter ist sein Antipode Lao-tze ... Ist Confucius ein Jules Simon ... so ist Lao-tze ein Jean Jacques Rousseau. Werft von Euch Euer vieles Wissen und Eure Gelehrsamkeit und dem Volk wird es hundertmal besser gehen; werft von Euch Eure Wohltuerei und Euer Moralisieren, und das Volk wird wie ehemals kindliche Liebe und Menschengüte bewahren; werft von Euch Eure künstlichen Lebenseinrichtungen und entsagt dem Heißhunger und Reichtum, so wird es keine Diebe und Verbrecher mehr geben. Das ist die Grundstimmung; wie man sieht, eine rein moralische, nicht eine philosophische ... Es ist schwer die Stimmung - denn ich kann sie anders nicht nennen - kurz und bündig zusammenzufassen, eben weil sie eine Stimmung, nicht ein konstruktiver Gedanke ist. Man

muß diese interessanten Schriften selber lesen und zwar so, daß man nach und nach, durch geduldige Hingabe die spröde Form überwindet und in das Herz dieser um ihr armes Vaterland trauernden Weisen eindringt. Metaphysik wird man nicht finden, überhaupt keine 'Philosophie', nicht einmal Materialismus in seiner einfachen Form, doch eine praktisch-moralische Einsicht in die Natur des Menschen, die so tief ist, wie die von Confucius flach. 1

This appreciation of Lao-tse shows a clear development away from the traditional Western view, stemming from the Jesuit missionaries, who ignored the pure, recorded form of Taoism and equated all Taoist thought with the superstitions of the popular Chinese religious tradition. For this reason, commentators had previously made no distinction between the philosophical basis of Taoism and the pseudo-religious creed that had been constructed upon this.

The first newer translations and adaptations of the Tao-te-king began to appear shortly after the turn of the century. Few of them were translated from the original but were, like Alexander Ular's version of 1903,² 'der Urschrift nachgedacht'. Many of the German editions were adapted from older French or German versions of the Tao-te-king. This prompted criticism from academic quarters because of the inaccuracy of both the source and the resultant German versions.³ The German authors of these adaptations of the Taoist canon felt that sinologists had failed to capture the true meaning of the Tao-te-king, which could only be rendered through a personal and intuitive grasp of the content, not through philological accuracy.

Even the version prepared by the Tübingen theologian Julius Grill, whilst claiming some academic objectivity, is consciously adapted to

1. H.S. Chamberlain, Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Munich, 1899), pp.743-744. The middle section is a quotation from the Tao-te-king, cf. R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.59.
2. A. Ular, Die Bahn und der rechte Weg, der Urschrift nachgedacht (Leipzig, 1903), and several subsequent editions. The work first appeared in French, Le livre de la voie et de la ligne-droite (Paris, 1903).
3. O. Franke, 'Die religionswissenschaftliche Literatur über China seit 1900', Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, 13 (1910), 129.

stress the work's 'modernity' and its similarity with contemporary philosophical trends, which have broken with the Western rationalist tradition:

Das Wesen der Individualität, das Recht der persönlichen Freiheit und die Verantwortlichkeit des Einzelnen, die Gültigkeit der Grundsätze der Gerechtigkeit und der Humanität für die äußere wie für die innere Politik, das Vollkommenheitsideal des naturhaft werdenden sittlichen Willens mit dem Seligkeitsideal des eben hierin begründeten ewigen Lebens ist von modernen Denkern nie schärfer erfaßt worden, als von Lao tsze. Bald werden wir an einen Emerson erinnert, bald an Leo Tolstoi, bald an die 'Wendung der Philosophie zur Religion' bei Rudolf Eucken, bald an die Friedensapostel unserer Tage ... bald an Hilty, wenn er ... zur Überzeugung gelangt, daß der Glaube an ein ewiges Leben, an das Fortleben der geistigen Persönlichkeit, auch wenn die körperliche Hülle fällt, für unser des Materialismus überdrüssiges Geschlecht die rechte Hilfe sei. 1

Martin Buber also discovered Chinese philosophy during his early studies of mysticism. His interest led to the publication of a translation of the Tschuang-tse,² which he had adapted from an English source.³ The work is in two parts, the first being the translation and the second an introductory essay on Taoism which he had prepared for members of the Donnerstagsgesellschaft⁴ in Berlin, which numbered among its members Moritz Heimann, Oskar Loerke, Hermann Kasack, Albert Ehrenstein, Emil Orlik, Ernst Weiß and Klabund.

Buber's translation closely follows that of Giles, though in later editions of 1918 and 1951 he made certain changes to conform to his modified religious views. The accompanying essay, though it lacks the clarity of Giles' introduction, gives some indication of Buber's understanding of Taoism. Buber divides philosophical enquiry into three main categories:

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1. J. Grill, Lao Tszes Buch vom höchsten Wesen und vom höchsten Gut (Tübingen, 1910), p.XI.
 2. M. Buber, Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-Tse (Leipzig, 1910). All references are to this edition.
 3. H.A. Giles, Chuang Tzu. Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer (London, 1889).
 4. See M. Buber, Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-Tse (Zurich, 1951), p.5.

'Wissenschaft', which deals with all aspects of being, 'Gesetz', which deals with the ethical realm, and 'die Lehre', which is autotelic. Western thought, he argues, has lost contact with the third of these categories with a resultant conflict between the first two. This conflict can only be resolved by embracing the mystical doctrine:

Sie steht jenseits von Sein und Sollen, von Kunde und Gebot; sie weiß nur eins zu sagen: das Notwendige das verwirklicht wird im wahrhaften Leben. Das Notwendige ist keineswegs ein Sein und der Kunde zugänglich; es wird nicht vorgefunden, weder auf Erden noch im Himmel, sondern besessen und gelebt. 1

Buber is attempting to explain that Tao is to be regarded as having no physical existence, yet is the source for all existence; it is non-being, but is the cause of being; it is neither a physical nor an ethical law, but gives rise to all such laws. It does not have a moral content since, when realised, concepts of morality disappear. Buber does not regard it as a religion (this being a degenerate, utilitarian category derived from it) since it does not require belief or moral norms. He considers it a state of pure being, or becoming; and it forms the basis of his creed of transfiguration:

Es gibt zwei Arten von Leben. Das eine ist das bloße Hinleben, die Abnutzung bis zum Verlöschen; das andere ist die ewige Wandlung und deren Einheit im Geiste. Wer in seinem Leben sich nicht verzehren läßt, sondern sich unablässig erneut und gerade dadurch, in der Wandlung und durch sie, sein Selbst behauptet - das ja nicht ein starres Sein, sondern eben Weg, Tao ist - der gewinnt die ewige Wandlung und Selbstbehauptung. 2

Buber turned to Chinese mysticism to confirm a mystical religious belief which he felt had been suppressed within Judaism, but which he was later to discover in the form of Hasidism.

The reception of Buber's work can be judged from Moritz Heimann's

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1. Buber, Tschuang-Tse, p.84.
 2. Buber, Tschuang-Tse, p.103.

review.¹ He refers to the spiritual consolation gained from the personal experience of dependence upon the Tao. He speaks of a world-view which is neither theocentric nor anthropocentric, but 'tao-centric', a vision which repairs the rational fragmentation of existence. Eccentric though such views may be, Heimann does highlight the difficulties of communicating a philosophy which takes as its central tenet a return to a state of pre-conceptual being. The very medium of communication is the disruptive element in the relationship between man and his natural, pristine state. This conception of natural anarchy Heimann explains by reference to Mechthild von Magdeburg and what is known as the theology of negative transcendence: 'Du solst minnen daz niht, du solst vliehen daz iht'.² Others were later to make similar comparisons with medieval religious philosophy.

These early translations and adaptations created an interest in Taoism which was later to be sustained by the publication of Richard Wilhelm's versions of the Taoist classics. His editions of Lao-tse and Lieh-tse in 1911 and Tschuang-tse in 1912 broadened the readership of Taoist literature and, for the first time, offered a reliable German translation of the originals to the German reading public.³ It was, however, not the accuracy which attracted the readers but the mystical antidote to materialism to be found within these Taoist writings. Wilhelm's translations were repeatedly republished and supplemented by longer discursive works on Chinese philosophy.

One can see the effect of these works on a popular, but subsequently forgotten thinker of the age, Carl Dallago. His first article on

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1. M. Heimann, 'Tao' in Prosaische Schriften, 3 vols (Berlin, 1918), III, 99-105. This first appeared as 'Anmerkungen zu Bubers "Tschuang-Tse"', Die neue Rundschau, 22 (1911), 712-716.
 2. Heimann, 'Tao', p.100.
 3. R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE. Tao te King. Das Buch des Alten vom Sinn und Leben (Jena, 1911); Liä Dsi. Das wahre Buch vom quellenden Urgrund (Jena, 1911); Dschuang Dsi. Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland (Jena, 1912).

the subject, 'Die Seele des Fernen Ostens',¹ was a review of a translation of Percival Lowell's work.² Dallago takes issue with Lowell for the latter's criticism of the Chinese as a retarded people whose development has been halted by their failure to develop a scientific method. Though Dallago's only knowledge of China at this time was, as he admits, gained from a reading of Buber's translation of Tschuang-tse and certain excerpts from Lao-tse sent to him in correspondence, he finds within these sufficient evidence to support a belief in a philosophical creed which was far superior to Western science. Within the Taoist writings he recognises a fraternal voice from across the centuries and one that contradicts Lowell's view of the Chinese as an impersonal people ruled by the oppressive moral doctrines of Confucianism.

Dallago's interpretation is somewhat idiosyncratic. He understands Taoism as a cult of the self, a Nietzschean creed of self-sufficiency which he presents in declamatory style in his adaptation of the twentieth aphorism:

Verstand ist Vernichtung des Lebens.
 Gegensatz im Entschluß - wie wichtig;
 Gegensatz im Tun - wie mächtig!
 Handeln wie allewelt! ... Verstandesgeborene Pflicht!
 Nein! Sündlicher Irrsinn!
 Allewelt wird leicht fortgeschwemmt von oberflächlicher
 Freude: Ein Feiertag, eine Frühlingsnacht ...
 Ich hingegen, tief ankernd am Grund des Gefühlsstroms,
 Bin heiter und still in der Freude gleichwie das Kind.
 Ich lebe und webe fort und fort ...
 Allewelt wünscht das Allzu (sic);
 Ich hingegen erschne das Nichts,
 Ich bin linkisch im Leben, entrate des Zwecksinns! ...
 Allewelt weiß;
 Ich hingegen habe wirre Gedanken;
 Allewelt hat Gemeinschaftstrieb;
 Ich hingegen liebe Einsame (sic) Höhe;
 Ich walle wie die Woge, ruhelos wankend ...
 Allewelt hat Erfahrung;
 Ich hingegen bin einfältig, ein Tor! ...
 Ich bin anders als allewelt:
 Doch Ich bin Ich! 3

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1. C. Dallago, 'Die Seele des Fernen Ostens', Der Brenner, 1 (1911), 567-577, 599-610, 631-642.
 2. P. Lowell, The Soul of the Far East (Boston, 1888).
 3. Dallago, 'Die Seele des Fernen Ostens', 632.

In Tschuang-tse, Dallago recognises this same principle of ruthless egoism.¹ His interpretation of Taoism is in fact a perversion of the sense of the original which stresses extinction of personal desire and the suppression of the individual self in order to release the essence of life.

Dallago's continued interest in Taoism, stimulated by these first readings, found expression in the essay 'Laotse und ich',² in which, in more moderate tone, he discusses the main points of Lao-tse's philosophy, particularly the theory of inactivity:

Er erkennt zuletzt das große Eine, Ewig-Unerkannte
im Dasein und in sich als das einzig Herrschende an
... Es nimmt eben allem Tun den Charakter eines Tuns:
es entfernt von ihm das Zweckliche ... Unser Tun wird
so ein Mit-uns-tun-lassen - das Tun ein Nichttun -
ein Tun, das unsrem Wachstum und unserer Ausbreitung
nicht mehr dawider strebt durch zweckliches Handeln. 3

From this time, Taoist thought was to dominate Dallago's writings. This can be seen in his collection of essays 'Der Unwissende',⁴ which visualises the possibility of the regeneration of the whole of mankind through adherence to Taoist precepts, and in the pacifist essay 'Politik',⁵ which cites Lao-tse as the first and greatest apostle of peace. This interest in Taoism culminated in Dallago's own, very free adaptation of the Tao-te-king, which was prepared for Der Brenner.⁶ This translation, which was adapted from Ular, Hartmann and Wilhelm, is typical of the many poetic re-workings of the text to be found in Germany in the first decades

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1. Dallago, 'Die Seele des Fernen Ostens', 633.
 2. C. Dallago, 'Laotse und ich', Der Brenner, 2 (1911), 161-174, 197-201.
 3. Dallago, 'Laotse und ich', 168-169.
 4. C. Dallago, 'Der Unwissende', Der Brenner, 3 (1913), 469-474, 517-525, 561-571, 609-616, 657-664, 705-715, 753-761; Der Brenner, 4 (1914), 1-10, 49-62, 97-108, 197-208, 245-257.
 5. C. Dallago, 'Politik', Der Brenner, 3 (1913), 172-186.
 6. C. Dallago, 'Der Anschluß an das Gesetz oder Der große Anschluß. Versuch einer Wiedergabe des Taoteking', Der Brenner, 5 (1915), 62-129.

of the present century. Dallago attempts to grasp the meaning of the original through intuition, rather than through logical analysis of the text:

Denkkraft ist die Fähigkeit, das Stoffliche des
Vorwurfs zu durchdringen ... im vorliegenden
Fall war ich häufig auf mein Gefühl angewiesen,
um bei der Deutung zweifelhafter Stellen das
Richtige herauszufinden. 1

Other translators worked in a similar manner, with varying degrees of success. J. Kohler, for example, who adapted his translation from an English source,² rendered the work in verse:

O dunkles, unbeschreiblich tiefes Wesen!
Die Dinge sind in Dir, sind stets gewesen:
Der Dinge Geist schließt Du im Innern ein,
Der Dinge Wahrheit nicht den bloßen Schein. 3

Whereas Kohler tried to find some acceptable poetic form for the Tao-te-king, with little regard to its meaning, others continued to try to establish the presence of an embryonic Christian theology within it. J. Hesse⁴ made a comparison of aphorisms, taken from Grill's translation, with excerpts from the Bible, in order to demonstrate his thesis of a common theological system in Taoism and Christianity.

As early as 1912, commentators like R. Stübe recognised the growing fascination with the writings of Lao-tse, a fascination that was prompted not least by the ambiguities of the texts.⁵ He likens the interest in Taoism to the influence that Buddhism had exercised over the Germans a few decades earlier, and regards Taoism as an important element in the revival of mysticism in Germany.

1. Dallago, 'Der Anschluß', 64-65.
2. P. Carus, Lao-tsze's Tao-Teh-King (Chicago, 1898).
3. J. Kohler, Des Morgenlandes größte Weisheit. Laotse. Taoteking (Berlin and Leipzig, 1908), p.37. Kohler was professor of law at Berlin university.
4. J. Hesse, Lao-tsze. Ein vorchristlicher Wahrheitszeuge (Basel, 1914).
5. R. Stübe, Lao-tse. Seine Persönlichkeit und seine Lehre (Tübingen, 1912), p.5.

Stübe interprets Taoism, however, as a social code rather than as a religious philosophy. He conceives of the Tao as a metaphysical principle which unifies the plurality of the world, and from which is derived a social and ethical code. Unlike Hartmann, von Strauß, Hesse and many other commentators, he is at pains to distinguish between this impersonal and amoral principle and the Christian conception of the Godhead. The social interpretation which Stübe gives differs from many others which usually stress simply the ascetic, mystical and quietistic aspects of Taoism. A similar interpretation can be found in Max Adler's essay 'Der himmlische Riese'.¹

The war halted publication of other translations and adaptations but it also increased the receptivity to Taoist pacifism and quietism. Ernst Barlach took solace from his readings of Taoist philosophy. He wrote to his brother Karl in 1919:

Ich denke wie Du ziemlich pessimistisch. Ob wir auf dem tiefsten Niveau sind? Ich weiß von dem alten Chinesen Dschuang-Dsi, daß das alles schon durch die Gedanken der Chinesen vor viel tausend Jahren gegangen ist. Jene haben's durchgehalten, und wir werden's ja auch ... 2

Barlach's friend, Friedrich Schult, who had introduced Barlach to Wilhelm's translations, speaks of their readings of them: 'Es war in den Hungersjahren 1917/18, als ich unverhofft an das älteste chinesische Schriftgut geriet ... Es war, nachdem Europa sich trotz aller schulmäßigen Philosophie zerfleischte, ein großes Wunder'.³

In the post-war years Taoism was to become one of the sources from which the Germans sought an antidote to the prevailing mood of despair which engulfed the nation. Taoism was seen by some as a sound basis

1. M. Adler, 'Der himmlische Riese', Die weißen Blätter, 2 (1915), 685-688.
2. E. Barlach, Briefe, 2 vols (Munich, 1968-69), I, 538-539, see also I, 594-595.
3. I am grateful to F. Schult for this information.

for moral regeneration. One can point, for example, to the youth movement, which included Taoist thought in its programme of education. Tschuang-tse was widely read and a specially abbreviated edition of Buber's translation was published,¹ prompted by an essay by Ahlborn,² one of the leaders of the Freideutsche Jugend.

This interest had developed during the war, as can be seen, for example, in L. Binder's essay, 'Das Gesetz', which was published in the youth movement periodical Die Tat.³ The essay refers to a cosmic law, or an impersonal, amoral force. Whilst no specific mention is made of the Tao, it is quite clear that this is the source of Binder's belief in this cosmic principle:

Die Welt wird vom Gesetz regiert. Wir wissen es.
Das Gesetz ist ewig und unveränderlich ... Es geht
seinen Weg ... und wirkt ohne Ansehn der Person.
Ihm kann nichts an die Seite gestellt, mit ihm
nichts verglichen werden. 4

Binder's interpretation of the Taoist creed is strongly pessimistic and is obviously coloured by contemporary political events. This law has no ethical basis, though it does place great stress, by implication, upon the individual's personal morality and sense of responsibility by removing the idea of a benevolent Godhead directing human affairs. The essay indicates the anti-rational feeling that was beginning to predominate in intellectual circles, a feeling for the need to dispense with traditional systems of religious belief, since such beliefs were not compatible with the state of the world.

A continuing interest can be traced in subsequent issues of the

1. M. Buber, Das Reich regieren, Flugblätter an die deutsche Jugend, 30 (Jena, 1919).
2. K. Ahlborn, 'Tao-Lehre in den Reden und Gleichnissen des Tschuangtse', Freideutsche Jugend, 4 (1918), 20.
3. L. Binder, 'Das Gesetz', Die Tat, 7 (1915-16), 890-891.
4. Binder, 'Das Gesetz', 890.

periodical. Rudolf von Delius' essay 'Chinesische Philosophie'¹ points to the hope of moral regeneration through Taoist asceticism and contemplation of the inner-self. This same creed of passivity as the key to cosmic and political harmony can also be found in an essay by A. Benecke.²

However, this enthusiasm for Taoist philosophy and Oriental thought in general was not without its critics. After the publication of excerpts from Buber's Tschuang-Tse in the August issue of Die Freideutsche Jugend, W. Stapel, a conservative member of the group, mocked such obvious spiritual disorientation:

Just look at the Freideutsche leaders and their intellectual leap-frogging from Dostoevsky to Chuang-tse, Count Keyserling, Spengler, Buddha ... and whichever literary Jew happens to be fashionable at the moment. Of their own substance they have little or nothing. 3

As a direct result of the inner disputes which arose from this criticism, Gustav Wyneken left the youth movement and concentrated his efforts on the Freie Schulgemeinde, but he did not abandon his interest in Chinese philosophy, which he introduced into the curriculum of the school. He later edited a translation of the Tao-te-king made by a collaborator at the school, F. Fiedler.⁴

Central to the doctrine of Taoism is, to Wyneken's mind, the 'Lehre vom Übermenschen', a superman in the Asian sense, not the European. The difference between the two is the essential distinction between the Oriental and Occidental spirit:

1. R. von Delius, 'Chinesische Philosophie', Die Tat, 8 (1916-17), 442-452.
2. A. Benecke, 'Der Welt- und Reichsgedanke des Laotse und die deutsche Staatsidee', Die Tat, 8 (1916-17), 205-214.
3. Quoted from W.Z. Laqueur, Young Germany (London, 1962), p.121. The original appeared in Deutsches Volkstum, 2 (1920).
4. F. Fiedler, Des Laotse TAO TE KING, edited by G. Wyneken (Hannover, 1922). This is an adaptation of von Strauß.

Uns heißt Mensch sein, Kämpfer sein, und Übermensch
Held sein, Jenen ist der Heilige der tatlos
tuende (sic), der nicht kämpfende. Das ist der
Gegensatz von Asien und Europa. Asien ist wie
die große Eizelle, Europa wie das kleine, aber
bewegliche und aktive Spermatazoon. 1

Wyneken feels that for the Westerner the world is a creation of individual consciousness, whilst the Chinese have retained a knowledge of a common, unifying, all-pervasive mystical force. Since they had not developed a scientific method, which imposes rationally-derived categories upon the natural world, the Chinese had not destroyed their intuitive knowledge of their position within the cosmos and the identification of human and natural life. Wyneken represents the problems of the idealist faced with a materialist tradition in a manner which is reminiscent of the conflict of Rationalism and Romanticism.

Wyneken attempts to distinguish between Taoism and Western, medieval mysticism. He feels that Tao is not to be equated with an Absolute, 'von dem man nur in Negationen reden kann',² yet this seems to be contradicted by the translation:

Das Gut, sagbar, ist nicht ewiges Gut. Der Name,
nennbar, ist nicht ewiger Name. Das Namenlose
ist des Himmels und der Erde Wurzel. 3

From this it can only be deduced that the principle must have negative qualities attributed to it in order to remove it from the limitations of the specific. Wyneken places Taoism within the classical Idealist tradition, using the concept 'Gut' to render Tao, in keeping with the Platonic 'Agathon', the all-inclusive Idea. Wyneken is wrong in attempting to make this parallel. The Tao is conceived by Lao-tse as being beyond categorisation and is therefore necessarily referred to in negative formulations. It is the cause of all attributes, consequently

1. Fiedler, p.94.

2. Fiedler, p.97.

3. Fiedler, p.5.

no single attribute can be applied to it, since such application omits reference to other attributes. It is the cause of all things but is not itself any one of these and must, therefore, be referred to as nothing.

Although Wyneken's withdrawal from the Freideutsche Jugend had resulted from his efforts to introduce such ideas into the movement, his departure did not reduce the enthusiasm for Chinese thought. One finds H. Knittermeyer's essay 'Vom Sinn des Menschen',¹ a mystic's reply to Western rationalism, and F. Spunda's 'Der magische Dichter',² a poetic application of the Taoist creed, in other volumes of Die Tat.

Spunda's 'magic poet' is to eclipse the Expressionist:

Der Expressionist schrie alles aus und alles war
Gott. Der magische Dichter ist erfüllt von ihm,
er braucht nicht mehr zu rufen, und er verschweigt
sein Geheimnis. 3

Spunda's concern is the use of language, a medium, he feels, which detracts from the poet's attempt to communicate his message and to experience the world in its original pre-conceptual state:

Der Expressionist weiß sich als Vorstufe zum
Übermenschen, der magische Künstler ahnt sich
als Vorstufe zum Heiligen ... Nur der Dämon,
der ihn zu schaffen zwingt, reißt ihn vom Pfad
seiner Heiligkeit zurück. 4

Spunda's problems in communicating the ineffable reduce him from the magic to the Expressionist. He can only ever be an approximation of his ideal since the true artist must suppress his own personality and become a medium for the suprasensual: he must silence himself by silencing his senses, 'denn seine wesentliche Kunst besteht darin, durch Schweigen zu sprechen',⁵ which is not the easiest of poetic creeds.

1. H. Knittermeyer, 'Vom Sinn des Menschen', Die Tat, 13 (1922), 729-738, 922-931.
2. F. Spunda, 'Der magische Dichter', Die Tat, 13 (1922), 772-776. Spunda published a collection of essays on this same theme, Der magische Dichter (Leipzig, 1923).
3. Spunda, p.773.
4. Spunda, p.773.
5. Spunda, p.775.

Chinese influence can also be traced in other educational programmes of the time. On his return to Germany, Hermann Graf Keyserling¹ founded his extremely influential Schule der Weisheit in Darmstadt, with the ambitious aim of providing a moral re-education for the German people. Keyserling's own philosophy, and indeed his pedagogic zeal, was loosely founded on Confucian principles, as he indicated in his first address to the school:

Wer nicht strebend sich bemüht, dem helfe ich nicht
voran; wer nicht nach dem Ausdruck ringt, dem
eröffne ich ihn nicht. Wenn ich eine Ecke zeige,
und er kann es nicht auf die andern drei übertragen,
so wiederhole ich nicht. 2

Although the basis of his philosophy is Confucian, the content of Keyserling's programmatic philosophy also shows Taoist elements, as can be seen in the essay 'Die indische und chinesische Weisheit', which refers to Lao-tse's quietistic principle, 'Wirken ohne zu streiten',³ as the key to the right ordering of human affairs. The presence of large numbers of Chinese philosophical works in the school's library gives some further indication of its popularity, and application within the movement.⁴

Keyserling himself seems to have had an ambivalent attitude towards Taoism. In his Reisetagebuch he speaks firstly of a personal affinity with Lao-tse⁵ but later rejects his passivity since, though it reflects the processes of nature, it lacks the European recognition of 'oberhalb der Natur ein Reich der Freiheit'⁶ and is, therefore, not applicable in the Western world.

1. See below pp.265-269.

2. H. Keyserling, 'Die Schule der Weisheit', Der Weg zur Vollendung, 1 (1920), 4. This is a quotation from Confucius, cf. R. Wilhelm, Kungfutse. Gespräche. Lun Yü (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.83.

3. H. Keyserling, 'Die indische und chinesische Weisheit', Der Weg zur Vollendung, 1 (1920), 49-54 (p.52).

4. Die Bücherei der Schule der Weisheit, edited by S. Bischoff (Darmstadt, 1928).

5. H. Keyserling, Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1921), II, 452.

6. Keyserling, Reisetagebuch, II, 458.

The School of Wisdom introduced all kinds of Chinese material and fused elements of Taoism and Confucianism with other philosophical creeds, of Western origin, into a political, moral and religious programme of re-education. One finds the I King (Book of Changes) introduced to the school through P. Feldkeller's essay 'Weisheit als Beharrung im Wandel',¹ prompted by Richard Wilhelm's lectures delivered at the school at the Autumn conference in October 1921.²

Feldkeller contrasts the Chinese feeling of cosmic harmony and stability with the Western mechanistic and fragmented rational construct. Though he appreciates Chinese mysticism, he feels that the solution to Western ills lies in the fusion of Chinese quietism and spirituality with Western dynamism, in a manner which suggests, formally at least, the Taoist doctrine of 'actionless activity':

So bedürfen wir der höheren Einheit von östlicher Kontemplation und westlicher Aktivität: der Weisheit ohne Passivität, der Aktivität ohne Betriebsamkeit. 3

Keyserling too was fascinated by the I King, which he describes as the 'Schlüssel zu aller praktischen Lebensweisheit'.⁴ He refers to the Chinese understanding of the inherent laws of change, the link between cosmic order and human destiny and the interconnectedness of all things:

... wo das Gesetz des Zusammenhanges von Makro- und Mikrokosmos, des zeitlos Gültigen mit dem praktischen Problem des Augenblicks in der Erscheinung notwendiger Wandlung erkannt wird, beginnt die Weisheit. 5

1. P. Feldkeller, 'Weisheit als Beharrung im Wandel', Der Weg zur Vollendung, 3 (1922), 30-37.
2. These lectures were entitled 'Die Wandlungen im Menschen' and 'Die Wandlungen in der Natur'. They dealt with the I King, a translation of which Wilhelm was later to publish, I Ging. Das Buch der Wandlungen, 3 vols (Jena, 1924). This was the first German translation of the work.
3. Feldkeller, p.37.
4. H. Keyserling, 'Weltanschauung und Lebensgestaltung' in Der Leuchter (Darmstadt, 1924), pp.16-30 (p.18).
5. Keyserling, 'Weltanschauung und Lebensgestaltung', p.30.

However, despite his obvious interest in Chinese mysticism, Keyserling's practical inclinations and his extreme conservatism attracted him more to the figure of Confucius, whose cultural mission he felt he was emulating in Germany.¹ Keyserling disapproved of Lao-tse's asceticism, which, he felt, was born out of a failure to recognise the essential freedom of the human spirit. Passivity was, for Keyserling, only acceptable as a temporary expedient.²

The limited understanding of Chinese philosophy which Keyserling possessed can be seen in a comparison of two talks given before the School of Wisdom in 1927. Richard Wilhelm, a frequent guest-speaker, discussed the theme 'Der Mensch als Maß und Mitte'.³ Wilhelm took the Protagorean dictum to exemplify the Western aberration, an error which the Chinese had not fallen into, since they viewed everything from a cosmic perspective. Keyserling spoke on a similar theme, 'Der Mensch aus kosmischer Schau', but reached a diametrically opposed conclusion:

... die angemessene Stellung des Menschen besteht doch nicht in der Entrücktheit ... sondern in der des Maßes und der Mitte der Welt. Und die kann er tatsächlich für sich einnehmen. Darauf beruht seine Größe, seine Würde. Der gesamte Kosmos kann im Einigen seinen Mittelpunkt finden und von diesem her beherrscht werden. 4

It was shortly after this that Wilhelm ceased his collaboration with the school, and gradually the Chinese influence declined as the main emphasis moved to a politically more pragmatic philosophy.

Other evidence of the earlier interest in China within the school

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1. See H. Keyserling, 'Bücherschau', Der Weg zur Vollendung, 12 (1926), 28. This is a discussion of R. Wilhelm, Kung-Tse. Leben und Werk (Stuttgart, 1925).
 2. See H. Keyserling, 'Der letzte Sinn der Freiheit', in Der Leuchter (Darmstadt, 1926), pp.21-32.
 3. The text of this can be found in Der Mensch und das Sein (Jena, 1931), pp.29-41.
 4. H. Keyserling, 'Der Mensch aus kosmischer Schau', Der Weg zur Vollendung, 14 (1927), 36-45 (p.41).

can be found in the writings of R. von Delius,¹ whose whole work bears the stamp of Chinese mysticism; and of E. Rousselle,² who left the group in 1924 to go to Peking to study Chinese philosophy at first hand.

Taoism appeared in Germany in political forms too, for example Carl Leyst's Neusozialismus,³ which bears the sub-title 'Präludium aus dem Geist des großen Laotse'. This collection of aphorisms, of which six are adapted from Wilhelm, has very little to do with Taoism apart from certain echoes of the original in the contrast of intellect and intuition.

Many other adaptations of Lao-tse's work appeared in Germany at this time, each attempting to find some novel aspect in the work. K.M. Heckel⁴ combined proverbs and biblical quotations to render the meaning. H. Federmann supplemented the text with an account of Lao-tse's life and a discussion of the doctrine of wu-wei, which he equates with the Lutheran 'Geist der Gnade, der erst da anfangen kann zu wirken, wo der Mensch aufhört zu tun'.⁵ This typifies the attempt to reconcile Taoism and Christianity by employing concepts that have no validity in the thought of the original. Federmann does, however, exemplify a twentieth-century response to Chinese philosophy in his preference for the Taoist creed of altruism over the austerity of Confucius, 'der etwas selbstgerechte, pharisäerhafte Geist'.⁶ This same comparison of the two schools of

1. See R. von Delius, Weltwende (Darmstadt, 1919), pp.26-29; Religion und Wissenschaft (Darmstadt, 1919), pp.24-31; Urgesetze des Lebens (Darmstadt, 1922), passim; Genuß der Welt (Darmstadt, 1926), pp.55-60; Streifzüge (Stuttgart und Heilbronn, 1920), pp.72-80; Das ewige China. Von den Symbolen der Seele (Dresden, 1926).
2. See E. Rousselle, Mysterium und Wandlung. Der Weg zur Vollendung in den Weltreligionen (Darmstadt, 1922). Rousselle was later to make a translation of the Tao-te-king, Lau-Dse. Führung und Kraft aus der Ewigkeit. Dau-Dö-King (Frankfurt am Main, 1950).
3. C. Leyst, Neusozialismus (Berlin, 1919).
4. K.M. Heckel, Laotse (Munich, 1921).
5. H. Federmann, Laotse. Tao Teh King. Vom Geist und seiner Tugend (Munich, 1920), p.95. Federmann made the translation from Carus.
6. Federmann, p.98.

Chinese thought can be found in H. Haas's study;¹ and his preference for the mystical quietism of Lao-tse in his adaptation of the Tao-te-king.²

Other authors made comparisons with Western religious traditions and philosophies, as in S. Maync's Laotse und Jesus,³ or O. Ewald's Von Laotse bis Tolstoi.⁴ Maync's work is a demonstration of the universality of the Christian doctrine; Ewald's adaptation is, in contrast, the product of the loss of such faith. Ewald indeed may be considered an exemplary figure for the early twentieth century with regard to religious convictions. He speaks of the nihilistic abyss of atheism and materialism, which drove him back to religious contemplation:

Der Materialismus war in Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung, in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, in Theorie und Praxis, so übermächtig geworden, daß die Gegenströmung nicht ausbleiben konnte. 5

The empirical sciences and rationalism had reduced the world to a mathematical calculation: 'God' and 'soul' had become rational constructs which lacked the vitality of experienced religion.

Ewald also typifies the syncretic trend of the twentieth century. He recognises a single religion which had manifested itself through the teachings of Zoroaster, Lao-tse, Buddha and Christ. Ewald senses within all these the same religious impulse present in the Tao, an impulse that has been suppressed by Western progress:

Wie erklärt es sich, daß wir im Abendlande heute an der Bedeutung unserer Kultur und Zivilisation irre werden? Weil sie nicht das Menschliche in uns gesteigert haben, sondern mehr und mehr ins Materielle geraten sind; weil das Innen hinter dem Äußeren, der Geist hinter der Technik, das Gemüt hinter der Maschine zurückgeblieben ist; weil wir uns von der heiligen Urheimat entfernt, weil wir Tao verloren haben. 6

1. H. Haas, Das Spruchgut K'ung-tszes und Lao-tszes in gedanklicher Zusammenordnung (Leipzig, 1920).

2. H. Haas, Weisheitsworte des Lao-tsze (Leipzig, 1920).

3. S. Maync, Laotse und Jesus (Berlin, 1922).

4. O. Ewald, Von Laotse bis Tolstoi (Berlin and Leipzig, 1922).

5. Ewald, p.7.

6. Ewald, p.69.

The attempt to synthesise world-religions is paralleled by the rediscovery of older Western traditions. Otto Folberth attempts to identify Taoism with medieval German mysticism,¹ though less successfully than others had done. Similarities between the writings of Lao-tse and Meister Eckhart are, for Folberth, 'ein Beweis zeitloser und also urhafter Bedingtheit der Mystik im Menschen'.² This thesis is now readily accepted, though most would see the existence of these parallel phenomena not as the product of some divinity, as Folberth does, but rather as a need of the human psyche expressed in symbolic form, as Jung does. Folberth uses the parallels to demonstrate the unity of all creation, despite the accidentals of race and historical conditions. The main points of comparison concern the ineffable nature of God and the insistence on inactivity. It must be noted, however, that the Taoist text refers only to a cosmic principle, an impersonal life-force, whereas the German refers to a personalised Godhead (the visionary experience of that which is grasped by the intellect as God). Similarly, Meister Eckhart stresses belief over good works, whereas Taoism means by inactivity the avoidance of all action that is not in harmony with the cosmic law.

Eduard Erkes³ shows a similar syncretic trend in his discussion of Lao-tse, in which he equates the Chinese Tao with the Buddhist Nirvana and the Christian concept of the Kingdom of God. Erkes devotes most of his work to a discussion of the paradoxical actionless activity. He describes false activity as that by which man attempts to establish himself as a separate reality in the world, and tries to impose his will upon it. This activity to some purpose is contrasted to meaningful activity, which he considers an expression of the essence, Tao. Erkes recognises a symptom of the Western spiritual crisis, which he attributes to this

1. O. Folberth, Meister Eckehart und Laotse. Ein Vergleich zweier Mystiker (Mainz, 1925).

2. Folberth, p.87.

3. E. Erkes, Laotse (Munich, 1928).

false activity, in the rapid rise and decline of modern artists and thinkers. Their first works, he maintains, are the products of a strong inner impulse, freely expressed, after which they begin to reflect upon activity, considering the work's reception, not its expression, and, thereby, destroy their own artistic nature. In consequence their work becomes externalisation rather than internalisation.

Like many others, Erkes attributes the causes of this modern demise to the pernicious influence of materialism and the spread of technology:

Der Gedanke droht von der Technik, die Seele von der Maschine, das Innere vom Äußeren unterjocht und unterdrückt zu werden. Der schöpferische Impuls verflacht und entartet zu schaler Betriebsamkeit und Vielgeschäftigkeit. 1

Erkes prescribes Lao-tse as the saviour for Western man, though he warns against the widespread, superficial and modish interest in Taoism within Germany. It must be added that he gives precisely the impression of being one of these fugitives from the reality of Western life. Taoism, says Erkes, is the religion of the new age; a religion which reveals the futility of the life Western man lives at present, a life that is condoned by his religious traditions which stress the active, dynamic aspects of his being, rather than his passive, contemplative qualities.

The German cult of Taoism led to the foundation of a journal, Tao, by Werner Zimmermann, with the aim of propagating Taoist philosophy. Zimmermann had earlier translated a book by Henri Borel on Lao-tse.² It is not a strict translation but rather a poetic development of Borel's ideas into what the translator terms 'eine erlösende und schönheitsgesättigte Fantasie'.³ Zimmermann interprets Taoism as a doctrine of pure, unrestrained

1. Erkes, p.46.

2. H. Borel, Wu-Wei. Eine Auslegung der Lehren Laotse's, translated by W. Zimmermann (Bern, 1924). This is translated from the second volume of De chineesche Filosofie toegelicht voor niet-sinologen, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1897-98).

3. Borel, Wu-Wei, p.vi.

egoism, a cult of the self that frees the individual from the traditional obsession with religious creeds and dogma. Man, he maintains, has always been a slave to his own religious superstitions; Taoism points to a release from the bondage of this self-imposed slavery, which sounds rather like Kant's definition of the state of enlightenment.

Zimmermann develops a revolutionary religious creed that is nominally Taoist, but by his own admission is also derived from Nietzsche and Max Stirner. He conceives of the ideal figure as the one who bears within him his own divine mission and a quality of selfhood that is subject to no other law than personal desire, free from moral prescripts and proscriptions; he follows the intuitive laws of his own personality and finds divine fulfilment.

Many of Zimmermann's ideas are at variance with themselves. This stress upon activity and the unleashing of personal desire seems to be contradicted by more abstract passages in Borel's work. He describes the central concept as unconditioned reality, without beginning or end, which lies beyond human comprehension and must, therefore, be referred to negatively, 'Wu- nichts - das ist Tao.'¹ The doctrine of wu-wei is described as the suppression of the external self, personal desire, in order to allow the cosmic principle, the world-soul to work through the individual:

Die Befreiung von weltlicher Geschäftigkeit, von
Begierden, von Sehnsüchten nach all dem Unwirklichen
des Lebens. 2

From this is developed a Romantic aesthetic creed. Poetry, it is maintained, is the purest language of the soul, personal and universal. In the past Golden Age poetry was man's natural form of expression; in modern times a false sense of individuality has destroyed this natural harmony:

1. Borel, Wu-Wei, p.5.

2. Borel, Wu-Wei, p.9.

Alles war schön, weil alle einfach waren und ehrlich arbeiteten. In jenen Tagen war es so natürlich für alle Dinge, schön zu sein, wie sie heute häßlich sind. 1

The Tao is also seen as expressing itself through the force of love:

'Liebe ist nichts als der Rythmus von Tao',² though it would be difficult to find a justification for such a statement in the Taoist classics.

The system that Zimmermann develops is much like the Romantics' conception of a cosmological order animated by a spirit which manifests itself through poetry and love.

Zimmermann further developed his ideas in his journal, Tao. Monatsblätter für Verinnerlichung und Selbstgestaltung, which began publication in 1924. The aim of the periodical was to teach the harmonious development of mind and body through the application of Zimmermann's own philosophical system. Early issues contain frequent excerpts from Wilhelm's translations of the Taoists, which form the basis of Zimmermann's religious doctrine. He interprets Lao-tse's writings as an anticipation of Spinoza's monistic pantheism and Rousseau's teachings. It is from a comparison of Lao-tse and Rousseau that Zimmermann develops his own asocial creed. He maintains that culture and society are perversions of the natural order and that both Lao-tse and Rousseau preach a return to a state of pre-social harmony. That this is correct does not, however, justify the application of their names to Zimmermann's own theories of what this anarchic natural state would be like.

Zimmermann's aim is to destroy the taboos associated with sex and religion which have been imposed upon modern man by the social order and the arbiters of social mores. He envisages a return to a state in which mind and body, man and natural environment mirror each other as complementary aspects of a harmonious totality:

1. Borel, Wu-Wei, p.30.

2. Borel, Wu-Wei, p.35.

Leidenschaft, körperlicher Rausch; sie sind
rein und schön und erlösend - doch nur, wenn sie
als Ausdruck aus der Ganzheit des Wesens fließen. 1

Zimmermann's theories are self-justifying : it is acceptable to be
licentious providing that one does not consider oneself licentious.

Free love, nudism, natural birth methods and diets, callisthenics
and free self-expression through mime and dance are the central themes of
the journal. The origins of the theory of natural expression and
development may be found in Lao-tse, but the application of the theories
is peculiarly modern in form. Although the journal continued until 1930,
the association with Taoism ceased after 1926 and the title was changed
from Tao to Tau.

Other popular periodicals of the day also included some Taoist
material, which gives some indication of how widely Taoist thought was
being read. W. Wauer, a regular contributor to Der Sturm, made a trans-
lation of aphorisms from the Tao-te-king which was published under the
title Das Buch vom Ur.² Excerpts from this were published in Der Sturm
in 1924. The author claims to have translated them from the original but
they are in fact reworkings of existing translations, although it is
impossible to establish which source he used because of the distorted form
in which Wauer presents them. They are adapted as interpretations of the
original text. For example, the first of Wauer's collection reads:

Wesenheit und Wesenheit sind unterschiedlich
Namen wechseln
Namenlos ist die Wesenheit des All
Name ist das Wesen der Unterschiedlichkeiten
Wesenheit erkennt der Denkende
Namen erfährt der Wißbegierige

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1. Tao, 3 (1924), 15.
 2. W. Wauer, Das Buch vom Ur (Berlin, 1922).
 3. W. Wauer, 'Tao-Te-King', Der Sturm, 15 (1924), 33-36. Wauer's
selection is numbered 1,2,23,25,52,53,62,63,64,67. His number 23
is in fact 24.

Wesenheit und Name sind zwiespältig
 Und eins
 Verbunden unergründlich
 Getrennt zweifach dunkel
 Des Geistes Tor. 1

The similarities with Expressionist ideas can be seen in the distinction between empirical, surface reality, the categories deduced from this, and an essence that transcends this reality. Yet line five seems to be an unintentional rationalisation. Wauer uses the concept 'Denken', whereas this would be better replaced by 'Schauen', with its visionary overtones. Wauer distinguishes between knowledge and reflective thought; the Taoist distinction is between analytical thought and intuitive knowledge.

Other aphorisms are reduced to a minimal form, in keeping with the lyrical style of the day. A comparison between Wauer and his possible source, Wilhelm, demonstrates this radical reduction of syntax and the predominantly substantival style:

Urwesenheit	Es gibt ein Ding, das ist unterschiedslos vollendet.
Ureins Urall	Bevor der Himmel und die Erde waren, ist
Uranfang Ursprung	es schon da,
Urstand Urwandel	so still, so einsam.
Ursein Urwirken	Allein steht es und ändert sich nicht.
Urahnung Urahn	Im Kreis läuft es und gefährdet sich nicht.
	Man kann es nennen die Mutter der Welt.
Was nenne ich Ur	Ich weiß nicht seinen Namen.
	Ich bezeichne es als SINN.
Nenn ichs erhaben	Mühsam einen Namen ihm gebend, nenne ich
Erhoben ins Größte	es: groß.
Erhoben ins Fernste	Groß, das heißt immer bewegt.
Erhoben ins Nächste	Immer bewegt, das heißt ferne.
Erhoben in mich	Ferne, das heißt zurückkehrend.
	So ist der SINN groß, der Himmel groß, die
Urwesenheit wölbte Himmel	Erde groß,
und Erde	und auch der Mensch ist groß.
Schuf Weltbau und Ordnung	Vier Große gibt es im Raume,
	und der Mensch ist auch darunter.
Viermal hob sich das Erhabene	Der Mensch richtet sich nach der Erde.
über sich	Die Erde richtet sich nach dem Himmel.
Der Mensch ist Erde von Erde	Der Himmel richtet sich nach dem SINN.
Erde ist Sein aus Sein	Der SINN richtet sich nach sich selber. 3
Sein ist Allwesenheit	
Allwesenheit UR. 2	

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1. Wauer, 'Tao-Te-King', 33, cf. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.41.
 2. Wauer, 'Tao-Te-King', 34.
 3. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.65.

Although Wauer renders something of the original meaning in his adaptation, he also misinterprets it, particularly by his reference to 'Ordnung'. This is a contradiction of the Taoist belief in primeval chaos, from which order emerged as the world degenerated; structured order is considered to be a result of Reason's domination, and involves the loss of a paradisaal state.

Wauer's study of Taoism also coloured his own writings.¹ He was a religious sceptic, sceptical, that is, not of the reality of religious experience, but of the validity of Western institutionalised forms of religion. He considers all Western religions to be the product of a feeling of immaturity, insecurity and ignorance, and as an attempt to create an ordered pattern out of the bewildering confusion of the world. Wauer regards all such religions as attempts to rationalise the cosmos and integrate man into a world from which he feels alienated; they create a false sense of belonging and inauthentic existence. Rational considerations of religious questions, he feels, have no validity since Reason itself is insufficient to deal with these problems of being. His argumentation follows that of Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason, but Wauer, unlike Kant, does not complete his world picture by employing the postulates of practical reason; in its place he relies upon simple belief, which he terms 'Wissense r s a t z'. At the centre of his speculative philosophical system he places the 'Ur' (derived from his Taoist studies), which is the spirit that permeates the cosmos. But his religious creed remains peculiarly Western, particularly in its conception of an anthropocentric cosmos and man as the pinnacle of creation. Further, Wauer's understanding of man's relations to the 'Ur' is more reminiscent of Leibniz's theory of monads than

1. W. Wauer, 'Über die Möglichkeit einer neuen Religion', Der Sturm, 14 (1923), 123-128, 140-144.

Taoism:

Jeder Mensch ist eine Welt in sich, ein Sonnensystem,
ein winziges kosmisches Gebilde. 1

This variety of interpretations of Taoism, and its popularity
among the younger generation, was criticised by E. Wolfram:

Man sieht wie bequem es der deutschen Jugend von
deutschen Gelehrten gemacht wird: Sie hat die Wahl,
ob sie sich Laotse als verschrullt oder einfältig,
als Soziologen oder Philosophen, als mystischen
Intuitionenahner, als Ästheten oder spöttischen
Lebensbejaher ... vorstellen will. Außerdem ist
er der größte Weise des chinesischen Altertums. 2

Wolfram valued Lao-tse's wisdom, but disliked its application. He
considered Lao-tse a prophet of cultural unity and irrational nationalism:

Das Volk soll in möglichster Blutes- und
Bewußtseinseinheit leben; in dem Gefühl des
Zueinandergehörens von Mensch zu Mensch, dem
Gefühl der Einheit als Volksseele. 3

The suppression of the self is, to Wolfram's mind, not a religious
posture, but a subordination of the self to the national good:

Das Volk sollte die Bluteseinheit seiner Stämme
pflegen, tief vertraut und verwachsen mit dem
elementarischen Leben der Scholle ... verbleiben
zu können. 4

This view of Lao-tse as a prophet of the philosophy of 'Blut und Boden'
is one of the more idiosyncratic responses that the Tao-te-king provoked
in Germany.

The fashionable interest in Taoism was not without other critics.
Objections were often of a political or cultural nature, but there were
less serious detractors; for example, Kurt Schwitters mocked the
antithetical, aphoristic style of the Tao-te-king, and its claims to
profundity, in his poem 'Banalitäten aus dem Chinesischen', as can be

1. Wauer, 'Über die Möglichkeit einer neuen Religion', 126.
2. E. Wolfram, 'Laotse in Deutschland', Die Drei. Monatsschrift für Anthroposophie und Dreigliederung, 1 (1922), 1092-1102 (p.1097).
3. Wolfram, 'Laotse', 1099.
4. Wolfram, 'Laotse', 1099-1100.

seen in the following excerpt:

... Das Ende ist der Anfang jedes Endes.
 Der Anfang ist das Ende jeden Anfangs ...
 Dumme ist klug.
 Kluge bleibt dumm. 1

The works discussed above are only a selection of the total number of translations and adaptations to be published in Germany. Earlier editions were reprinted together with a number of newer translations.² The interest also permeated the numerous journals and periodicals of the day, where excerpts and discussions of the Tao-te-king and other Taoist works can be found.³

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1. Quoted from Lyrik des expressionistischen Jahrzehnts (Munich, 1962), p.191.
 2. W. Salenstein, Dschuang Dsi. Gleichnisse (Zurich, 1920); R. Seligmann, Das Buch vom göttlichen Gesetz (Berlin, 1923); E. Hahn, Wollen ohne Wahl. Die Grundweisheit des Tao te king in freier Umschöpfung (Rudolfstadt, 1924); J.G. Weiß, Tao-Te-King (Leipzig, 1927); C Böttger, Tao und Teh. Jenseits und Diesseits. Die Sinnsprüche des Laotse (Pfullingen in Württemberg, 1927); P. Mühsam, Tao. Der Sinn des Lebens, Bücher der weißen Fahne, 72 (Pfullingen in Württemberg, 1931); R. Brasch, Tao Te King. Das Buch vom rechten Weg und Sinn (Vienna, 1932); E. Schröder, Die Bahn des Alls und der Weg des Lebens (Munich, 1934); H. Stadelmann, Die Biologie des Laotse (Berlin, 1936); Anon., Die bisher unbekannte Lebensgeschichte des chinesischen Weisen und sein Wirken, aufgenommen durch besondere Begabung eines dazu Berufenen (Munich, 1935); C. Dallago, Laotse. Zwölf Sprüche (Berlin, 1925); C. Dallago, Laotse. Der Anschluß an das Gesetz oder der große Anschluß (Innsbruck, 1921); V. von Strauß, Taoteking (Leipzig, 1924).
 3. H. Hesse, 'Eine chinesische Geschichte', März, 6 (1912), 200; O. Hinnerk, 'Vom Wege', Saturn, 2 (1912), 174; Lieh-tse, 'Utopia', Die Aktion, 3 (1913), 1163-1164; Lao-tse, 'Warnung vor der Stärke', Die Aktion, 5 (1915), 167; R. Seligmann, 'Einsamkeit und Gemeinsamkeit', Die weißen Blätter, 3 i (1916), 221-231; W. Colman, 'Laotse und die Geistesnot unserer Zeit', Die Lese, 11 (1919), 358; O. Hinnerk, 'Vom Wege', Saturn, 5 (1919-20), 457-458; Klabund, 'Auswahl aus den Sprüchen des Laotse', Vivos Voco, (October 1919), 53; L. Marcuse, 'Dschuang Dsi: Das Lied des Narren', Die junge Kunst, 1 (1919), 6; Lao-tse, 'Warnung vor dem Krieg', 'Die Waffen nieder', Der Friede, 2 (1918-19), 260; E. Wellesz, 'Chinesische Weisheit über Staat und Musik', Der Friede, 3 (1919), 159-161; H. Federmann, 'Aus den Sprüchen des Laotse', Kritische Rundschau, 7/8 (1919-20), 74-78; Anon., 'Chinesische Spruchweisheit', Ringendes Deutschland, 2 (1923), 21; A. Bonus, 'Chinesische Weise', Der Kunstwart, 38 (1925), 78-81; A. Lindt, 'Expressionismus des alten Chinas und des neuen Deutschlands', Zentralblatt des Zofingervereins, 66 (1925), 58; Anon., 'Zu dieser Regierung von Laotse', Die Weltbühne, 21 (1925), 379; E. von Csala, 'Urweisheit in Laotse's Taoteking', Magische Blätter, 7 (1926), 170; R. Wilhelm, 'Laotse', Deutscher Bote, 32 (1926), 548-554; R. Seligmann, 'Laotse und Buddha', Sozialistische Monatshefte, 64/65 (1927), 458-462.

Undoubtedly it was Richard Wilhelm's many works on Chinese philosophy and culture¹ which were the most widely-read. His translations of Taoist works were directly responsible for the many free adaptations, the majority of which were based upon his German versions. He shows a certain mystical inclination in his treatment of Chinese philosophy and this trait dominated others' readings of his translations.²

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1. R. Wilhelm, Chinesische Lebensweisheit (Darmstadt, 1922), written for the Schule der Weisheit; Laotse und der Taoismus (Stuttgart, 1925); Kung-tse. Leben und Werk (Stuttgart, 1925); Chinesische Blätter für Wissenschaft und Kunst, edited by R. Wilhelm, vol 1 (Darmstadt, 1925), no more published. Die Seele Chinas (Berlin, 1925); Geschichte der chinesischen Kultur (Munich, 1928); Werden und Wandel des chinesischen Kulturkreises (Potsdam and Zurich, 1927); Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte (Munich, 1931); Chinesische Philosophie (Breslau, 1929). Der Mensch und das Sein (Jena, 1931); 'Die Bedeutung des morgenländischen Geistes für die abendländische Erneuerung', Deutsche Rundschau, 54 (1928), 125-132; 'Licht aus dem Osten', Genius, 3 (1921), 286-291; 'Einzelschicksal und kosmische Entwicklung', in Der Leuchter (Darmstadt, 1925), pp.36-54; 'Kosmische Fügung', in Der Leuchter (Darmstadt, 1926), pp.75-92; 'Gegensatz und Gemeinschaft', in Chinesisch-Deutscher Almanach (Frankfurt am Main, 1930), pp.113-129.
 2. For a detailed account of Wilhelm's life and work see Richard Wilhelm. Der geistige Mittler zwischen China und Europa, edited by S. Wilhelm (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1956).

CHAPTER II : THE POETIC REDISCOVERY

Although the popular image of China at the end of the nineteenth century was that of a regressive culture, and a people who lacked morality and were bereft of reason, the trading links which had been established between Europe and the Orient effected a change in this stereotyped image. The influx of goods from the Orient included examples of art work,¹ which aroused the interest of many critics and collectors. The most important event in this development was Commander Perry's entry into Japan in 1853, which led to an influx of orientalia into Europe. Later, in 1860 after the storming of the Summer Palace and the subsequent looting, and the establishment of the Prussian trade treaty of 1861, a considerable amount of Chinese art work and ceramics found its way to Europe.

The major impression that this made upon the European art world can be seen in the London World Exhibition of 1862 and the Paris World Exhibition of 1867, which displayed a large selection of Oriental paintings and prints. This led to the adoption of certain artistic techniques by European Impressionists. The strongly atmospheric style and suggestive techniques of Chinese and Japanese art appealed to a school of painters who were moving away from the dominant realism of Western art.

A fascination with Chinese and Japanese art work gradually developed and was reflected in a semi-serious, poetic vision of the Orient. The image became modified as factual reports of the contemporary political and social state of the Orient gave way to a lyrical picture derived from her art. The politically static state, previously dismissed as an aberration, now became a poetic refuge.

1. For further information see L.P. Roberts, 'The Orient and Western Art' in The Asian Legacy and American Life, edited by A.E. Christy (New York, 1945), pp.78-85; A. Brünig, 'Der Einfluß Chinas und Japans auf die europäische Kunst', Velhagens und Klasings Monatshefte, 15 (1900), 281-296; R. Graul, Ostasiatische Kunst und ihr Einfluß auf Europa (Leipzig, 1906).

A newer interest in the Orient first emerged in France¹ and can be seen in Pierre Loti's Madame Chrysanthème and Japoneries d'automne, which became popular throughout Europe. In England, Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado of 1885 and Sidney Jones's Geisha of 1896 reflect a similar popularity of Oriental themes. Puccini's Madam Butterfly of 1904 represents the continuation of the operatic use of such Oriental motifs, and can be directly linked with the later Turandot vogue which spread throughout Europe.² Lafcadio Hearn's books were extremely popular in Germany at this time,³ as was Percival Lowell's Soul of the Far East.⁴ Hugo von Hofmannsthal⁵ became attracted to the Orient through Hearn's work and wrote a foreword to the German translation of Kokoro.

Although Hofmannsthal's interest was primarily in Japanese culture, he also introduced certain Chinese elements into his work. One can refer to the inclusion of Taoist ideas in his Turm plays, and to his interest

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1. See W.L. Schwartz, The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in Modern French Literature (Paris, 1927).
 2. See below, Chapter IV.
 3. L. Hearn, Lotos. Blicke in das unbekannte Japan (Frankfurt am Main, 1907); Kokoro (Frankfurt am Main, 1907); Kyushu. Träume und Studien aus dem neuen Japan (Frankfurt am Main, 1908); Kwaidan. Seltsame Geschichten und Studien aus dem neuen Japan (Frankfurt am Main, 1908); Das Japanbuch (Frankfurt am Main, 1911); Japan (Frankfurt am Main, 1912), all translated by B. Franzos.
 4. P. Lowell, The Soul of the Far East (Boston, 1888); Die Seele des Fernen Ostens, translated by B. Franzos (Jena, 1911).
 5. For further information on Oriental influence on Hofmannsthal see E. Ernst, 'Hugo von Hofmannsthal und der "Begriff Asien"', Wirkendes Wort, 16 (1966), 266-273; E. Ernst, 'Das Karma-Thema und der "Turm"-Stoff bei Hugo von Hofmannsthal', Wirkendes Wort, 21 (1971), 14-21; F. Mistry, 'Hugo von Hofmannsthal: A Study of his Relations to East Asia and its Significance for his Development', (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1971); F. Mistry, 'Hofmannsthal's Oriental Library', Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 71 (1972), 177-197; F. Mistry, 'Towards Buddhahood: Some Remarks on the Sigismund Figure in Hofmannsthal's "Turm" Plays', The Modern Language Review, 69 (1974), 337-347; F. Mistry, 'Hofmannsthal's Response to China in his unpublished "Über chinesische Gedichte"', German Life and Letters, NS 26 (1972-73), 306-314; E. Ritter, 'Die chinesische Quelle von Hofmannsthals Dramolett "Der weiße Fächer"', Arcadia, 3 (1968), 299-305.

in Chinese verse. His library contained many works concerned with Chinese subjects, though the expression of such interests in his own writing is overshadowed by Japanese influence.

Evidence of Hofmannsthal's use of Chinese material can be seen in Der weiße Fächer¹ of 1897, which was based upon a German translation² adapted from an English version³ of a story from the Chinese Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan. His interest in Chinese art can also be seen in Die grüne Flöte,⁴ which was based upon scenes depicted in a series of Chinese prints. His study of Taoism, which dates from this time, is reflected in his Reden in Skandinavien:

Was war das für eine Zeit, in welcher so angstvoll diese Frage gestellt werden mußte nach dem Letzten, das bleibt, nach dem Blutig-Ernsten, nach dem sittlichen Fundament der Wirklichkeit? – mit anderen Worten: die Frage nach dem Sein gegenüber dem Werden; denn um das geht es, daß in einer Welt, in welcher alles in ein Werden gefaßt wird, der Dichter nach dem Sein fragen muß, nach der Bahn, dem Gesetz, dem Bleibenden, dem, was die heiligen Bücher der Chinesen mit dem Worte Tao bezeichnen. 5

A general discussion of the significant differences between Asia and Europe can also be found in Die Idee Europa.⁶

The literary image of China that Hofmannsthal's work projects can best be seen in the poem 'Der Kaiser von China spricht'⁷ of 1897-98. This is a lyrical portrait of the Son of Heaven and a poetic picture of the patriarchal Chinese state, in which the Emperor is the embodiment of the divinity. This static figure, around whom the world turns, is seen in a state of morose isolation. The poem has been interpreted as

1. H. von Hofmannsthal, Gedichte. Lyrische Dramen (Frankfurt am Main, 1963), pp.221-255.
2. E. Grisebach, Die treulose Witwe (Vienna, 1873).
3. S. Birch, 'The Impatient Widow', Asiatic Journal, 2 (1843), 97-121.
4. H. von Hofmannsthal, Dramen (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), III, 243-250.
5. H. von Hofmannsthal, Prosa (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), III, 356.
6. Hofmannsthal, Prosa, III, 369-383.
7. Hofmannsthal, Gedichte. Lyrische Dramen, pp.32-33.

a statement of the Taoist creed,¹ but there is little evidence to support such a reading of the poem. The Emperor is the physical head of state, not some abstract cosmic principle. The poem is a lyricised vision of the benign ruler, and is typical of the poetic reaction to China that replaced the political image towards the end of the nineteenth century. This newer image was founded upon impressions of China which Europeans gained from Chinese literature, art and philosophy, rather than from factual accounts.

There are other indications of an emerging interest in Taoism towards the end of the nineteenth century. Alfred Mombert wrote to Richard Dehmel of his attachment to Taoism:

Ich wünsche Dir Tao. Das ist das, was man sich nicht selber wünschen kann. Wer es wünscht, der erhält es nicht. 'Man will zuviel, um das Eine zu wollen. Man will auch weise sein und gut, und das ist das Ärgste.' So sprach unser alter Dichter-College Lao-Tse. 2

However, attempts such as that by F.K. Benndorf³ to interpret Mombert's poetry as an expression of Taoist thought fail to convince. Mombert was obviously familiar with Plänckner's translation of the Tao-te-king,⁴ as can be seen from other letters,⁵ but his interest was primarily in Indian philosophy, and in reply to Buber's enquiries about Oriental mysticism he refers only to Buddhist works.⁶

The enthusiasm for Chinese art, literature and philosophy stands in stark contrast to the popular image of China at the end of the nineteenth century. The static features of Chinese culture which had provoked strong criticism from nineteenth-century thinkers were viewed by the poets of the early twentieth century as the essence of poetic harmony, which the West had forfeited to a creed of material progress.

1. Mistry, 'Hofmannsthal's Response to China', 306.

2. A. Mombert, Briefe an Richard und Ida Dehmel (Wiesbaden, 1956), p.287.

3. F.K. Benndorf, Der Aeon-Mythos von Mombert (Dresden, 1917), pp.49-54.

4. R. von Plänckner, Tao-te-king (Leipzig, 1870).

5. A. Mombert, Briefe 1893-1942 (Heidelberg and Darmstadt, 1961), pp.1

6. Mombert, Briefe 1893-1942, p.23.

a) Chinese Poetry

Against this background of a general interest in things Oriental, German poets discovered European translations of Chinese poetry. It was Judith Gautier's Le Livre de Jade¹ which became the primary mediator between China and the West. This work was not the product of the fashionable occupation with Oriental material, but rather the result of fortuitous circumstances. The Gautier household had acquired the services of a Chinaman, Tin Tun-ling, who had been found in the streets of Paris by Théophile Gautier. Judith Gautier acquired an interest in Chinese literature through Tin Tun-ling, and later composed her translations in collaboration with him. Although a German translation of the collection was made,² it was the French version which exercised the greater influence on German poets. Paul Ernst speaks of the interest it provoked among the young poets of his generation:

Von diesem Buch hatte ich gehört. Es war selten, aber ich hatte nicht eher geruht, bis ich es bekam ... Ich nahm aus dem Buch heraus, was ich damals aus ihm verstehen konnte; und das war eine Bestätigung meines Dranges, einen Eindruck darzustellen. 3

The popularity of Gautier's translations also led to the discovery of other, earlier, French translations, particularly those by the Marquis d'Hervey Saint Denys.⁴

The effect of the French translations can be found in Dehmel's poetry. He was obviously familiar with Chinese poetry as early as 1893, as can be seen from his own verse. In the collection Aber die Liebe of

1. J. Gautier, Le Livre de Jade (Paris, 1867).
2. J. Gautier, Chinesische Lieder aus dem Livre de Jade, translated by G. Böhm (Munich, 1873).
3. P. Ernst, Jünglingsjahre (Munich, 1931), p.318. See also P. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, edited by K.A. Kutzbach (Gütersloh, 1959), p.408.
4. Marquis d'Hervey Saint Denys, Poésies de l'époque des Thang (Paris, 1862).

that year one finds the poems 'Chinesisches Trinklied', 'Der dritte im Bunde' and 'Frühlingsrausch',¹ which are adaptations of Li-tai-pe poems, as the author indicates, whilst 'Mein Trinklied' and 'Zechers Nachtfeier',² are free adaptations of the same bibulous style. These motifs recur in 'Ferne Laute' and 'Notturmo',³ which, whilst not as close as the others to the style of the French, also use this motif of the solitary poet. In the later collection, Weib und Welt, of 1896 one finds other poems using Chinese motifs, and poems adapted from existing translations. 'Unterwegs', for example, is quite clearly adapted from a translation, as a comparison shows:

Unterwegs

Vor meinem Lager liegt der helle
Mondschein auf der Diele.
Mir war, als fiele
auf die Schwelle
das Frühlicht schon;
mein Auge zweifelt noch.

Und ich hebe mein Haupt und sehe,
sehe den fremden Mond
in seiner Höhe
glänzen. Und ich senke,
senke mein Haupt und denke
an meine Heimat. 4

The translation by d'Hervey Saint Denys would appear to have served as Dehmel's source:

Pensée dans une nuit tranquille

Devant mon lit, la lune jette une clarté très-vive;
Je doute un moment et ce n'est point la gelée blanche
qui brille sur le sol,
Je lève la tête, je contemple la lune brillante;
Je laisse la tête et je pense à mon pays. 5

Dehmel chose mainly Li-tai-pe poems for his adaptations, as did others of his generation. H. Fritz attributes Li-tai-pe's popularity to his

1. R. Dehmel, Gesammelte Werke, 3 vols (Berlin, 1920), I, 213-216.

2. Dehmel, I, 216-219.

3. Dehmel, I, 237-241.

4. Dehmel, II, 98.

5. d'Hervey Saint Denys, p.44.

vaguely Expressionist tone:

Das 'Trinklied' umreißt ein weiteres Modell expressiver Disposition, das der (sic) Trinkers. Besonders die Umdichtungen des chinesischen Lyrikers Li-Tai-Po sind in diesem Zusammenhang von Bedeutung, da in ihnen durchgängig im Medium des Rauschhaften eine dionysische Überhöhung und eine ekstatische seelische Verfassung sichtbar werden. 1

This view is further confirmed by J. Bab:

Er fand in Li-Tai-Po eine dem Villon verwandte Natur: einen grenzenlos Kühnen, einsam Schweifenden, aber dabei eine an sozialer Kultur und zartem Naturgefühl unendlich reichere Seele. 2

Dehmel's poems should not, however, be regarded simply as translations of the French versions. A comparison between the opening stanza of Dehmel's 'Chinesisches Trinklied' and his French source will indicate the degree to which he has adapted the material from which he worked. The French version begins as follows:

Le maître de céans a du vin, mais ne le versez pas encore;
Attendez que je vous aie chanté la chanson du chagrin.
Quand le chagrin vient, si je cesse de chanter ou de rire,
Personne, dans ce monde, ne connaîtra les sentiments de mon coeur.³

Dehmel expands this in the following manner:

Der Herr Wirt hier - Kinder, der Wirt hat Wein!
Aber laßt noch, stille noch, schenkt nicht ein:
ich muß euch mein Lied vom Kummer erst singen!
Wenn der Kummer kommt, wenn die Saiten klagen,
wenn die graue Stunde beginnt zu schlagen,
wo mein Mund sein Lied und sein Lachen vergißt,
dann weiß keiner, wie mir ums Herz dann ist,
dann wollen wir die Kannen schwingen -
die Stunde der Verzweiflung naht. 4

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1. H. Fritz, Literarischer Jugendstil und Expressionismus (Stuttgart, 1969), p.149.
 2. J. Bab, Richard Dehmel (Leipzig, 1926), pp.127-128.
 3. d'Hervey Saint Denys, p.70.
 4. Dehmel, I, 213-214.

Similarly, Dehmel's 'Frühlingsrausch', of which the second stanza reads as follows:

Morgens erwach ich sehr bewußt;
 ein Vogel zwitschert zwischen blühenden Reben.
 Ich frage ihn in welcher Zeit wir leben.
 Er sagt mir: in der Zeit der blühenden Reben!
 das ist die Zeit, in der die Frühlingsluft
 die Vögel zwitschern lehrt und leben, leben! 1

is a versified form of the French prose translation:

A mon réveil je jette les yeux devant moi;
 Un oiseau chante au milieu des fleurs;
 Je lui demande à quelle époque de l'année nous sommes,
 Il me répond à l'époque où le souffle du printemps
 fait chanter l'oiseau. 2

Dehmel makes the form more conventionally poetic by the introduction of rhyme, but also intensifies the theme by the vitalism of the last line.

As a wider interest in Chinese verse grew in Germany, Dehmel's enthusiasm waned. It appears that the novelty of Li-tai-pe poems had, for Dehmel at least, only a limited appeal, as can be seen from a letter of 1906:

Gedichte nach Li-tai-pe kenne ich schon mehrere
 Dutzend und trage kein Verlangen nach mehr; wer
 aus diesem alten Chinesen keinen neuen Menschen zu
 gestalten vermag, was allein durch die Rhythmik
 eigenster Gefühlskraft möglich ist, der sollte sich
 nicht an ihm vergreifen. 3

There is no evidence of any lasting influence on Dehmel's verse, apart from these borrowings of certain motifs, such as those of the drunken poet who flees reality into a vision of eternity, and the melancholy of human isolation in a transient world.

It was this popularity of the French translations among the Berlin circle of poets which prompted Reinhard Piper⁴ to publish a German

1. Dehmel, I, 216.

2. d'Hervey Saint Denys, p.33.

3. R. Dehmel, Ausgewählte Briefe 1902-1920 (Berlin, 1923), p.116.

4. R. Piper, Mein Leben als Verleger (Munich, 1964), p.142.

equivalent of the Livre de Jade. This had been suggested to Piper by Arno Holz, with whom he associated between 1894 and 1898. However, it was not until seven years later, when he had founded his own publishing company, that the plan was realised. He asked Hans Heilmann, a member of the Berlin circle, to prepare a collection of German translations for publication. Heilmann was also suggested to Piper by Holz as the possible author of such a project. Heilmann was neither a sinologist nor a poet, but a literary and theatre critic and newspaper editor. He was considered among the Berlin poets to be a connoisseur of Chinese art and literature, and was, presumably, the source of their own knowledge of Chinese verse.

Piper decided to publish the translations because of the popularity of Chinese verse among his circle of friends, and the personal feeling of an affinity between the prevailing mood of the age and the spirit of Chinese verse, particularly that of Li-tai-pe. Piper refers to the 'Weltschmerz' experienced by his generation, which he describes as 'ergriffen von der Vergänglichkeit und dem Leiden der Welt'.¹ In the Chinese verse he sensed this same feeling of transience and the morose bitterness of man in cosmic isolation. Though this may be considered an inaccurate typification of Li-tai-pe's poetry, which uses such themes simply as a framework for a poetic flight into drunken reverie and oblivion, and a belief in a permanence of a higher order than that of everyday reality, it is an accurate reflection of the German attitude to his verse.

Heilmann's translation appeared as the first volume of a series of Oriental verse translations entitled Die Fruchtschale.² Its value as a translation may be questioned but its lasting success is beyond all doubt. As Piper later observed, 'diese deutsche Prosaübersetzung ist dann der

1. Piper, pp.263-264.

2. H. Heilmann, Chinesische Lyrik vom zwölften Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis zur Gegenwart (Munich and Leipzig, 1905).

Ausgangspunkt für die meisten späteren Nachdichtungen chinesischer Lyrik geworden'.¹ Julius Bab confirms this view: '... so kann man behaupten, daß jeder deutsche Lyriker, unter den Kleinen wie unter den Großen sich seither an der Verarbeitung der unvergleichlichen hier gebotenen Halbfabrikate versucht hat'.²

For Bab, the appeal of this poetry for his contemporaries lay in the mystical element beneath the surface of apparently naturalistic, natural descriptions, the evocation of a mood of reverence, and a feeling for a suprasensual element in nature which Western man had long since lost. Bab finds the empathy with, and unstrained appreciation of man's natural environment immediate and striking:

Diese alten Chinesendichter haben eine immanente Symbolik im Naturalismus, eine Fähigkeit ganz und gar ins Sinnliche hineinzutauchen und plötzlich die ganze Natur als eine Chiffre geistiger Verknüpftheiten herauszuheben, - eine Kunst, mit der sie den innersten Bedürfnissen unserer Generation nahe sind. 3

Heilmann's translations are, at best, literal translations from other European languages.⁴ They represent a culmination of the interest that stemmed from the introduction of the French translations. The work also contains greater detail on cultural background and individual poems than did the popular French translations. Heilmann's long introduction was intended as a corrective to the misconceptions which dominated Western

1. Piper, p.142.

2. J. Bab, 'Ost-östlicher Diwan', Die neue Rundschau, 22 (1911), 1172-73 (p.1172).

3. Bab, p.1172.

4. Heilmann's sources were: J. Gautier, Le Livre de Jade (Paris, 1867); Marquis d'Hervey Saint Denys, Poésies de l'époque des Thang (Paris, 1862); A. Pfizmaier, 'Der chinesische Dichter Pe-Lo-Thien' and 'Die elegische Dichtung der Chinesen', Denkschriften der Akademie der Wissenschaften (Vienna), 36 (1888), 1-80, 211-282; A. Pfizmaier, Das Li Sao und die neun Gesänge (Vienna, 1852); C. de Harlez, La Poésie chinoise (Brussels, 1892); H. Imbault-Huart, La poésie chinoise du 14-19 siècle (Paris, 1886).

views of China. In it he expresses the view that all judgements on China have been made by implicit comparison with Western tradition and standards; a new relativism must be introduced in the effort, 'Menschen und Dinge nach ihrem autochthonen Geist und Kulturwert verstehen zu wollen'.¹ He is, however, still a child of his age. Whilst he praises the cultural independence of the Middle Kingdom and the homogeneous nature of her culture, he believes that her isolationism has led to 'geistige Inzucht' and sterility, which is the stock nineteenth-century response to China. This is an odd argument, since his collection contains, in the main, poems of the eighth-century T'ang Dynasty, which makes such statements upon the present state of China and her cultural demise seem out of place.

Similarly, his assessment of the Chinese personality seems less than complimentary, and is a reflection of European prejudices:

Heroismus, Aufopferung, kühnes Drauflosgehen
kennt er nicht, aber Verstellung, Intrige, List,
die krummen Wege sind ihm geläufig. 2

Much of Heilmann's introduction is inaccurate and shows an incomplete understanding of Chinese literature. Thus, to say that the very idea of Chinese poetry is incongruous, in view of their 'unideale nüchterne Denkweise',³ is clearly developed from the belief that Confucianism is the sole representative of Chinese thought, and ignores the obvious 'lyricism' of Taoist writings and the strongly occult flavour of much Chinese prose. Also, to ascribe the importance of Chinese verse, paradoxically, to Confucius, who stressed it as the 'Grundlage aller Geistesbildung',⁴ is an exaggeration, since Confucius referred only to the study of the Schi-King (Book of Songs), a study which was intended to consolidate cultural

1. Heilmann, p.vi.

2. Heilmann, p.ix

3. Heilmann, p.xi.

4. Heilmann, p.xv.

practices by reference to past social mores. Heilmann reduces Chinese verse to an almost bureaucratic exercise, as if verse-making were some civil service qualification. He gives the impression of poetry and literature as an extremely impersonal activity. This misunderstanding stems from a confusion between the literary civil service examinations, which placed sections of the classics before the candidates for interpretation, and the candidates' personal literary activities, which were divorced from their professional roles.

Heilmann's observations are novel rather than profound. He hardly approaches the inner complexities of Chinese verse, apart from his references to certain parallelisms, often of an antithetical nature:

Am Berg die Sonne rasch 'gen Westen untergeht,
Am See der Mond langsam 'gen Osten aufsteigt. 1

Most of the introduction is dedicated to a long biographical account of Li-tai-pe, and the various legends spun around him. It is from such sources that the later cult of Li-tai-pe, the poète maudit, spread in Germany. Whereas later admirers saw him as the personification of the poetic spirit in a world of alien reality, and thus the embodiment of the lyrical poet, Heilmann attributes typically German facets to his personality:

Aber man darf in seinen Tollheiten und Ausschweifungen
nicht bloß die natürliche Befriedigung zügelloser
Triebe erblicken: ein faustischer Drang, eine tiefe
Melancholie, die im Taumel und im Wein Vergessenheit
sucht, liegen ihnen zugrunde. 2

Heilmann also makes the now familiar comparison with the second of China's greatest poets, Tu-fu. He stresses the greater social concern which is found in Tu-fu's poetry, the sympathy and the collective expression of suffering. He finds Tu-fu's verse more reflective and less spontaneous. In assessing the work of the two poets he concludes:

1. Heilmann, p.xxviii.

2. Heilmann, p.xxxviii.

Er [Tu-fu] ist der bessere Mensch, aber Li-Tai-Pe,
 der genialische Übermensch, ist der größere Dichter,
 das stärkere Temperament, der reichere Geist. 1

Li-tai-pe is the transcendentalist, for whom reality begins when life ends. He views human suffering as the product of the realisation of personal futility. For Tu-fu suffering is imposed by external agents; it is a state of life that has its roots in social conditions, not in metaphysical speculation. Both ^{exhibit} forms of revolt, the first in an almost existential, absurdist sense, the other the more 'socialist', though such an epithet may not really be applied, since any conception of change or of reform was completely alien to Tu-fu.

That Arno Holz was influenced by French translations of Chinese poetry, which appear to have been the prime formative influence upon the development of his revolutionary theory of lyric as set out in Phantasus, is disputed, most violently by Holz himself.

The development of his newer lyrical style led to a break with the poet Paul Ernst, who appears to have anticipated Holz's newer verse in his Polymeter. Holz accused Ernst of plagiarising his ideas. Ernst accused Holz of developing his newer lyrical style from the French translations of Chinese verse, as he had for his Polymeter. The dispute remains unresolved, though it seems most likely that they both derived inspiration from the French translations of Chinese verse.

In an essay written as early as 1896, Ernst² recorded his debt to these French translations. Holz and Ernst had been close friends from the beginning of the 1880s and lived together in 1895-96, when they argued as to the authorship of the newer lyrical style. Ernst states in a later reflection on this affair that they were both influenced by Gautier's translations:

1. Heilmann, p.xlv.

2. P. Ernst, 'Ostasiatische Lyrik', Der sozialistische Akademiker, 2 (1896), 485-488.

Seine Gedichte erschienen nachher gesammelt in zwei Bändchen unter dem Titel 'Phantasus'. Der Titel meines Bandes 'Polymeter' ... Ein sehr merkwürdiges Buch wurde mir bei dieser Arbeit sehr wichtig, es hat auch auf Holz eingewirkt: das 'Livre de Jade' von Judith Gautier. 1

Ernst later recorded his own debt, and Holz's, in an unpublished essay,

'Mein Verhältnis zu Arno Holz':

Danach bekam ich zufällig die Prosaübersetzung eines Gedichts von Li-tai-pe in die Hand, und durch die Übersetzung wurde mir die Sache klar. Ich zitiere das kleine Stück:

Au milieu du petit lac artificiel
s'élève un pavillon de porcelaine verte et blanche
on y arrive par un pont de jade qui se voûte
comme le dos d'un tigre.

Dans ce pavillon quelques amis
vêtus de robes claires boivent ensemble
des tasses de vin tiède.

Ils causent gaiement ou tracent
des vers en repoussant leurs chapeaux en
arrière, en relevant un peu leurs manches,

Et, dans le lac où le petit pont renversé
semble un croissant de jade, quelques amis
vêtus de robes claires boivent, la tête en bas,
dans un pavillon de porcelaine.

Man nehme den letzten Satz weg, und es wird ein reizendes kleines Prosastückchen bleiben; aber mit dem letzten Satz hat diese Prosa eine starke lyrische Wirkung. Es gibt Vorstellungen, die sofort mit großer Kraft aufgenommen werden und dadurch das Gefühl - das natürlich für sie passen muß - mit dem sie assoziiert sind, beim Leser hervorrufen. Solche Vorstellungen sind zum Beispiel: das Sichspiegeln eines Gegenstandes im Wasser; dunkles Netzwerk auf hellem Hintergrund (Balken eines brennenden Hauses, Zweige eines entlaubten Baumes vor dem Mond); die dunkle Umschattung von etwas Hellem, in dem sich ein bestimmter Gegenstand abhebt (z.B. ein Mann in einer Fensterhöhle gegen den Himmel gesehen) die Wirkung dieser und einer ganzen Menge herrlicher Vorstellungen, erkläre ich mir so, daß sie sich erstens auf ganz einfache, fast mathematische Formen zurückführen lassen und dadurch leichter aufgenommen werden; zweitens daß sie jenseits unseres Bewußtseins liegen, aber uns doch bekannte Erscheinungen unseres Körpers symbolisieren; so träumt man z.B. von einem brennenden Haus mit dunklem Balkenwerk bei Augenreizträumen, und das Balkenwerk symbolisiert die sich kreuzenden Ausgänge der Sehnerven im Augeninnern.

Nachdem ich so weit gekommen war, fiel mir ein, daß überall die Menschen auf dieselben Symbole gekommen sind, etwa: Schlange für Seele; Fluß oder Feuer für Bewußtsein, Leben; offenbar muß diesen Symbolen eine zeugende Kraft innewohnen, und sie können das erzeugen, was ich lyrische Kraft nennen. 1

The essay cannot be dated accurately; it would seem to have been written some time after the dispute. The references to the universal subconscious show the influence of Jung and do not appear to have been developed independently. They express a belief in the poetic utterance as a manifestation of this universal spirit; a statement of the relationship between man and reality which transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

That Chinese verse was influential in forming Ernst's poetic theories is then clear, and can be seen in a poem from his Polymeter of 1898:

Über eine kleine Brücke, die gebogen ist,
Reitet ein ernsthafter junger Leutnant
Mit einem breiten, roten Kragen.

Und im stillen Wasser unten,
Zwischen den schwimmenden Blättern einer Seerose,
Spiegelt sich der ruhige Himmel
Und eine kleine Brücke, die gebogen ist,
Und ein Leutnant auf seinem Pferd,
Mit einem breiten, roten Kragen. 2

This clearly exemplifies the features mentioned in the essay. Ernst freely admits his poem is derived from the Chinese. Holz, however, maintained that he was influenced neither directly by the French translations, nor indirectly by Ernst's use of techniques and motifs derived from the French source. How then does one explain the similarity between the poem quoted above, and the following poem from Holz's Phantasus?

1. P. Ernst, 'Mein Verhältnis zu Arno Holz'. This essay is to be found with the Arno Holz material, 'Auseinandersetzung mit Paul Ernst', in the archives of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin). The poem quoted is from Gautier, pp.179-180.
2. P. Ernst, Polymeter (Berlin, 1898), p.15.

Im Thiergarten, auf einer Bank, sitz ich und rauche;
und freue mich über die schöne Vormittagssonne.

Vor mir, glitzernd, der Kanal:
den Himmel spiegelnd, beide Ufer leise schaukelnd.
Ueber die Brücke, langsam Schritt, reitet ein Leutnant.

Unter ihm,
zwischen den dunklen, schwimmenden Kastanienkronen,
pfropfenzieherartig ins Wasser gedreht,
- den Kragen siegellackrot -
sein Spiegelbild.

Ein Kukuluk
ruft. 1

Holz insisted, in a letter of 26 October 1898 to the critic Franz Servaes, that he had developed his theories from his native genius:

Die Daten, die Ernst Ihnen gab, stimmen sämtlich nicht!
Jean Paul mit seinen 'Polymetern' (!), die ich nebenbei
noch heute nicht kenne, hat überhaupt nicht 'gewirkt'.
Auch auf Ernst nicht! Der 'erfand' sie erst - zu
Zwecken, die durchsichtig liegen - nach unsrer Scheidung
... Ferner: das 'Livre de Jade' (im Original der
komplizirteste Reim- und Strophenbau, in der Übersetzung
Prosa!) lernte ich kennen, erst nachdem der 'Phantasmus'
gedruckt vorlag. 2

Servaes, however, remained convinced of the influence of Chinese verse translations, as he stated in his article on Impressionist lyric poetry and the school centred around Holz:

Von Bedeutung war ... die chinesische Lyrik, wie
sie Judith Walter [Gautier] in ihrem 'Livre de Jade'
gesammelt hat, insbesondere Li-Tai-Pe. Hier wirkten
namentlich die große Simplicität des Vortrages, die
Natürlichkeit der Beobachtung und Empfindung und die
künstlerische Feinheit der Gesinnung. 3

Not only is Holz's assertion of ignorance of Chinese translations contradicted by Ernst, but also by the circumstances of Holz's association with Dehmel and Hans Heilmann in 1894.⁴ It was, after all, Holz who suggested

1. A. Holz, Phantasmus (Stuttgart, 1968), p.24. This is a facsimile edition of the 1898-1899 Phantasmus.
2. A. Holz, Briefe, edited by A. Holz and M. Wagner (Munich, 1948), p.123.
3. F. Servaes, 'Impressionistische Lyrik', Die Zeit, 5 (1898-99), 54-56 (p.55).
4. See Holz, Briefe, p.95.

Heilmann to Piper as the possible author of the projected translations of Chinese verse in German. It is quite certain, as Piper records, that Holz was familiar with d'Hervey Saint Denys' translation in June 1898:

Ich traf ihn bei der Lektüre einer französischen Übersetzung chinesischer Lyrik. Das Buch war 1862 in Paris erschienen und führte den Titel 'Poésies de l'époque des Thang (VIIe-IXe siècle de notre ère), traduites du Chinois pour la première fois par le marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys'. Es enthielt vor allem Gedichte von Litaïpe und Thufu. Holz war davon begeistert und erklärte in seinem Überschwang, dagegen sei das Goethsche 'Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh' geradezu ein Bombast. 1

That motifs were borrowed from French translations seems obvious. However, it seems more likely that they were adopted from Gautier rather than from d'Hervey Saint Denys. One can compare some of these motifs to be found in the first hundred poems of the Phantasus of 1898 and 1899 with the French translations in order to demonstrate the similarity. For example:

Auf einem vergoldeten Blumenschiff
mit Ebenholzmasten und Purpursegeln
schwimmen wir ins offene Meer.

Hinter uns,
zwischen Wasserrosen,
schauelt der Mond.

Tausend bunte Papierlaternen schillern an seidnen Fäden

In runden Schalen kreist der Wein.

Die Lauten klingen.

Aus fernem Süd
taucht blühend eine Insel ...

Die Insel - der Vergessenheit! 2

can be linked to certain sections of poems from Gautier:

Mon bateau est d'ébène; ma flute de jade
est percée de trous d'or. 3

Sous la claire lune d'automne, l'eau agitée
secoue ma barque

Solitaire je vogue sur le lac du Sud, et
je cueille des lotus blancs. 4

1. Piper, p.142.

2. Holz, Phantasus, p.31. (Orthography as in the original.)

3. Gautier, p.183.

4. Gautier, p.39.

... quelques amis, vêtus de robes claires,
boivent ensemble des tasses de vin tiède. 1

... peut-être oublierons-nous, que nous
sommes à l'hiver de notre âge. 2

Clearly we are dealing with more than a simple translation from the French.

Holz has, however, borrowed certain motifs: that of the boat on the lake; the circle of friends; oblivion either through inebriation, or through inner contemplation; and withdrawal from the world. Several other poems show similarities with the Chinese translations, but in extended form.

For example, if one abbreviates a poem:

Ich liege noch im Bett ...
durchs Fenster,
das ganze Stübchen füllend,
Schneelicht.
Ich lese ...
Ich lasse das Buch sinken.
Die Augen schliessen sich mir,
Ich liege wieder da, den Kopf in den Kissen - - 3

one is left with a skeleton that is similar to the d'Hervey Saint Denys translation, 'Pensée dans une nuit tranquille', quoted earlier.

Even the amusing poem, 'Lachend in die Siegesallee', may have a Chinese counterpart in Gautier's 'Au bord de la rivière',

Des jeunes filles se sont approchées de la
rivière; elles s'enfoncent dans les touffes de nénuphar.
On ne les voit pas, mais on les entend rire, et le vent
se parfume en traversant leurs vêtements.
Un jeune homme à cheval passe au bord
de la rivière, tout près des jeunes filles.
L'une d'elles a senti son coeur battre, et
son visage a changé de couleur.
Mais les touffes de nénuphars l'enveloppent. 4

Holz's poem is Westernised: the girls are schoolgirls, the man becomes a group of military gentlemen, but the same sexual suppression is present, although a little more explicitly in the German than in the Chinese.

1. Gautier, p.179.

2. Gautier, p.186.

3. Holz, Phantasus, p.8. (Orthography as in the original.)

4. Gautier, pp.35-36.

Similarly, the following poem:

Die Sonne sank.
 Ich wartete. Wie lange ...
 Unsichtbar,
 wie ersticktes Weinen,
 klang unter den Weiden der Fluss.
 Durchs Dunkel neben mir, taste ich nach den roten Blumen.
 Sie sind welk.
 Du hast mich vergessen! 1

could be said to be a variation on the French:

Le vent d'automne
 Le rude vent d'automne se lève; les
 nuages blancs volent devant lui.
 Des arbre secoués, les feuilles jaunies
 tombent sur l'eau.
 Et voici que déjà les oies sauvages repassent.
 Les lotus n'ont plus que des graines, la
 rose a perdu son parfum ...
 Oh! Je veux voir la femme que j'aime
 passionnément, celle que je ne peux pas
 oublier! ...
 ... l'eau bruissante comme de la soie,
 se ride et clapote sous le vent. 2

In later versions of the Phantagus Holz included a translation of a Li-tai-pe poem,³ although in this later, expanded form there is little evidence of the simplicity and directness of expression that first attracted him to Chinese poetry.

There can be no conclusive proof that Holz derived his ideas from the Chinese translations. One can, however, see many similarities between the French translations of Chinese poetry and Holz's verse. The motif of the solitary drinker, oblivion through intoxication as well as the motif of the intrusive voice or call which both breaks and intensifies the poet's feeling of isolation are found in the Chinese and in Holz's poems. The

1. Holz, Phantagus, p.66. (Orthography as in the original.)

2. Gautier, pp.27-28.

3. A. Holz, Werke (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin-Spandau, 1961-62), II, 247-252; cf. d'Hervey Saint Denys, pp.32-33.

reflected image in the river, which is found in several of the Chinese poems, occurs both in the poems mentioned above and in 'Durch die Friedrichstrasse'.¹

The greatest similarities are to be found in the simplicity of style and the use of direct statements. Taken individually these statements are natural observations, juxtaposed they become expressions of lyrical feeling. The technique is suggestive rather than explicit; the mood is hinted at not through externalisation of thought, but by a sequence of natural images which combine to reflect the lyrical expression. Holz reduces the syntax of the French translations to elliptical phrases. This suggests a copying of Chinese style which is not present in the French translations. In some Holz reduces the poems to a minimal form by using a nominal style in order to approach an ideogrammatic form:

Draussen die Düne
 Einsam das Haus,
 eintönig,
 ans Fenster,
 der Regen.

 Hinter mir,
 tictac,
 eine Uhr,
 meine Stirn
 gegen die Scheibe.

 Nichts.

 Alles vorbei.

 Grau der Himmel,
 grau die See
 und grau
 das Herz. 2

Holz reflects in his newer lyrical style a simplicity that, if not derived from the French verse translations, certainly has significant similarities with them.

The rediscovery of China at the turn of the century was primarily through the mediation of poetry. It was a poetry that was untainted by the materialism of the West. Often sombre and melancholic, the Chinese

1. Holz, Phantasus, p.7. (Orthography as in the original.)

2. Holz, Phantasus, p.49.

poets articulated feelings that were of universal validity. They were confirmations of the poetic spirit and, it seems, contributed to the development from a materialist, naturalist creed to a more poetic view of reality in the case of Arno Holz.

This first interest in Chinese poetry, particularly that of Li-tai-pe, is a pointer to the image of China that was to be projected within German literature in the twentieth century. It became a poetic refuge from the age of modernity and technology, a timeless sphere, and an alternative world to that of the West.

b) Otto Julius Bierbaum 'Das schöne Mädchen von Pao'

Bierbaum also reflects the contemporary interest in China, though in a less serious form. He obviously had had a genuine interest in China and had studied Chinese for a short time at Berlin University under Professor Arendt. His studies, however, were curtailed when the death of his father in 1887 forced him to abandon his plans of joining the German consular service in China and made him turn to journalism and literature to earn a living.

Bierbaum's novel, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao,¹ may have had only limited appeal,² yet in 1922, when Chinese literature was enjoying great popularity in Germany, it was in its twelfth edition, which would seem to indicate a certain success among the German reading public. It first appeared in 1899, and is typical in style and treatment of content of the Jugendstil literature of the day. One finds, besides the novel, other examples of Bierbaum's interest in China, most notably an adaptation of a popular Chinese poem:

Chinesisches Lied

(Nach dem Originale des Li-t'ai-po aus den T'ang-Liedern, 8. Jahrh. n. Chr.)

Hell liegt der Mondenschein (sic) vor meinem Bette,
 Als ob die Erde weiß mit Reif bedeckt sich hätte.
 Ich hebe mein Haupt empor: der Mond strahlt hell und rein,
 Mein Haupt ich senke und denke
 Ans alte Heimatsdörfchen mein. 3

It is unlikely that Bierbaum had acquired sufficient competence in Chinese during his brief period of study at the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen to be able to read eighth-century poetry, and it is more likely that he adapted it from the French. The poem obviously appealed to Bierbaum, because one later finds a slightly altered version in Der neubestellte Irrgarten der Liebe of 1905:

1. O.J. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao (Berlin and Leipzig, 1899).

2. E. Rose, 'The Beauty from Pao', Germanic Review, 32 (1957), 5-18.

3. O.J. Bierbaum, 'Chinesisches Lied', Die Gesellschaft, 6 (1890), 258.

Mond in der Kammer

Hell liegt der Mondschein vor meinem Bette,
 Als wenn die Erde weiß mit Schnee bedeckt sich hätte.
 Ich hebe mein Haupt empor: der Mond steht klar und rein.
 Mein Haupt ich senke
 Und dein gedenke
 Ich, Dorf, du kleine Heimat mein. 1

The poems show a sensitive appreciation of, and empathy with the Chinese poet and his poem, whereas Bierbaum's next excursion into Chinese literature, in his novel, was embarked upon with less reverence. Indeed, the novel is intended as a humorous work and, although Bierbaum adapted it from a Chinese original of high moral import, he used this material for comic effect.

Bierbaum informs us² that he first encountered the story in a two-page version translated by Professor Arendt. This seems unlikely, unless these were preparatory notes made by Arendt and discussed with his students, since the published version is considerably longer, and appears in two forms.³ These are translations of certain parts of the historical novel Tung-chou-lie-kuo (History of the Princes of the Eastern Chou Dynasty). This novel deals with the fate of the Emperor Yu-Wang (782-771 B.C.), a cruel despot, who is punished by heaven for his callousness and debauchery. It is typical of the Chinese fairy-tale, in that the punishment enters through human form. The will of heaven is transmitted through supernatural occurrences. This happens when an elderly palace servant gives birth to a child under mysterious circumstances. Clearly this is the work of the gods, and the Emperor, fearing that his punishment will come from this source, has the child cast out of the palace. The similarity of the theme with that of The Orphan of Chao, the play which had been so popular in the eighteenth century, is obvious.

The young child is found by a farmer, Sze-ta, who names her Pao-sze,

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1. O.J. Bierbaum, Der neubestellte Irrgarten der Liebe (Leipzig, 1905), p.141.
 2. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.ix.
 3. C. Arendt, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao (Yokohama, 1875); 'Das schöne Mädchen von Pao', Mittheilungen der deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens (November, 1876), 1-34.

after himself and the village in which he lives. In his care the child grows to maturity, becoming a woman of ravishing beauty. That revenge will follow the treatment meted out to her earlier by the Emperor Yu, is predictable. She is bought from the farmer by a court nobleman and is presented to the Emperor as a gift of appeasement. Thus, she finds her way back to the place of her origin, and the scene is set for her revenge, though in this she is a passive agent of higher forces.

The Emperor is overcome with wild passion for the young girl, and installs her in his palace as first concubine. Later he banishes his wife, and her son, the rightful heir to the throne, and elevates Pao-sze to Empress, and her son to Imperial successor. But, having achieved such high position, Pao-sze becomes sullen and morose. Unable to find any distraction that will amuse her, the Emperor summons the wisest men of the Empire. They advise him to light the beacon fires which are used to warn of invasions by the Western barbarians. This is done, and, when the nobles of the Empire rally to the palace to defend their Emperor, they are told of the ruse and dismissed. At this Pao-sze laughs out heartily three times; the spell that seemed upon her is broken. Yet the Emperor has, thereby, unwittingly sealed his own fate and that of the Empire.

The father of the deposed Empress, eager for revenge for the insult to his family, summons the Western barbarians, whom he pays to attack the capital. When they invade and storm the palace, the beacon fires are lit, but the nobles, who assume this to be another trick, disregard the warning. Thus the capital is taken, the Emperor and his son are murdered, and Pao-sze is taken as concubine by the leader of the barbarians. When the Imperial army later retakes the city, Pao-sze commits suicide to avoid capture and punishment. Although the previously banished son assumes the throne, he cannot avert the decline of his Empire as marauding barbarians sweep across the land.

The original is, as can be seen from the résumé, a highly moral tale, a story of human transgression and nemesis. Chuan Chen speaks of it as a tragedy:

Dem Thema liegt eine tiefe Tragik zugrunde: die Tragik des heroischen und doch vergeblichen Ringens des menschlichen Willens, der menschlichen Seele gegen die Gottheit, gegen das scheinbar blinde Schicksal. 1

Such an analysis seems to be based upon considerations of Greek tragedy rather than the story in question. The original novel is not a tragedy but a morality tale. The Emperor is dissolute, immoral, tyrannical, cruel and treacherous. He is conscious of the wrongs which he commits and is warned by his counsellors, and oracles of the inevitable result of such wickedness. Such a character lacks our sympathy, therefore the tale is neither tragedy nor pathos, but the demonstration of the inexorable course of divine retribution. Chen equates 'die Gottheit' with 'das scheinbar blinde Schicksal', which is surely a contradiction in terms. The story is not a fate tragedy; there is a clear causal link between immorality and punishment. Behind human affairs and activities stands a regulating divinity which works through man. It is true that the Emperor falls under the spell of Pao-sze but this is not the source of some unwilled guilt, rather the punishment for previous crimes.

The novel warns of the punishment for transgressions against the divine law, as exemplified in the Confucian code, and demonstrates how excess and immorality in the Emperor will lead to a collapse of the social structure. How Chen can see heroic qualities in the Emperor is unclear. Similarly, the inference that there is no freedom of volition is quite wrong. It is precisely the lack of moral restraint, and limitless, selfish passion which leads to the downfall of both Emperor and state. Even if one invokes Freud and sees the Emperor as the product of libidinous urges

1. Chuan Chen, Die chinesische schöne Literatur im deutschen Schrifttum (Kiel, 1933), p.22.

from below the level of consciousness and beyond personal volition, which could never have been the intention of the Chinese narrator, one would find it difficult to term the novel tragic.

Bierbaum altered his source considerably. Chuan Chen wrongly assumes that Bierbaum was attempting to copy and expand his source, which Chen finds unsuccessful since, 'es fehlte ihm die geistige Innerlichkeit'.¹ This is an obvious misunderstanding of the author's work, as is the judgement that 'Otto Julius Bierbaum ist es nicht gelungen, aus diesem Stoff ein großes Werk zu schaffen.'² This application of the intentional fallacy makes Chen's concluding comments on the novel sound rather ridiculous:

Er zeigt uns, wie ein Deutscher, der niemals in China gewesen ist und nur sehr wenig vom Chinesentum weiß, sich dieses Land in seiner Phantasie vorzustellen versucht ... Bierbaum hat das Thema verflacht; er hat den tragischen Grundzug aufgelöst in humorvolle Episoden; er hat aus einem tiefersten Problem eine ästhetizistische Angelegenheit gemacht. Auch in der Form spiegelt sich keineswegs chinesisches Wesen, sondern vielmehr europäischer Impressionismus. Bierbaum gibt nicht China, sondern chinesische Puppen in der Sphäre eines 'Irrgartens der Liebe'. 3

Rose has subsequently taken up the last remark and shown similarities between the novel and Der neubestellte Irrgarten der Liebe.⁴

Bierbaum would have been delighted to hear Chen's castigation of his work. That his novel is funny at the expense of the Chinese may fill a Chinese with indignation, but it was precisely Bierbaum's intention. The fact that one could, in literary form, mock the Chinese in this way rests on the prevailing attitude among the reading public. China is projected as a land of Emperors, princesses, eunuchs, quaint customs, and bizarre superstitions and religions. It is a region which gives the author a licence for comic invention and exotic exaggeration, as well as

1. Chuan Chen, p.22.

2. Chuan Chen, p.22.

3. Chuan Chen, pp.21-22.

4. Rose, 'The Beauty from Pao', p.12.

erotic titillation.

Bierbaum consciously distorted his source material, not out of ignorance, but out of poetic inventiveness:

Die Geschichte des schönen Mädchens von Pao ist in einem Werk jener Gattung ... überliefert, die die Chinesen 'wilde Geschichte' nennen. Sie verstehen darunter eine Art historischer Romane, bei denen das eigentlich Geschichtliche indessen mehr im Vordergrunde steht, als wir es bei den Werken der verwandten Gattung in unserer Litteratur (sic) gewöhnt sind ... Ich habe mich nun ... fleißig und fröhlich bemüht, die wilde Geschichte noch ein bischen (sic) wilder zu machen, als sie schon war. 1

From the very first page, the book is a riot of fantasy, behind which only the rough outline of the original story remains.

The novel opens with a dedication to the Dowager Empress, Tsze-hi, who clearly had an awesome reputation in Europe:

An den erhabenen, dick mit Perlen
besäten, fußhoch von Edelsteinen be-
deckten, an allen Ecken ausgiebig mit
Gold beschlagenen
Stufen
des
unbeschreiblich prächtigen
Thrones
der
Kaiserin-Tante
von China
Majestät ...
p.p.p.
unter konvulsivischem Zittern seines
ganzen schäbigen Leibes, mit bebenden
Lippen, ehrfürchtig gesträubten Haaren
und bedrückt von dem schmerzlichen Ge-
fühle des Bedauerns, keinen Schweiß
zu haben, mit dem er wedeln könnte,
niedergelegt
von dem jammervollsten aller
rotborstigen Barbaren, dem zwar streb-
samen, aber leider noch recht
mangelhaften
Baccalaureo der schönen Künste
Bi-bao-mo
...

1. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, pp.ix-x.

annoch Inhaber keines Mützenknopfes
und keiner Rangklasse angehörig, aber
ersterbend in der berauschenden Hoff-
nung, mit nächster Post nach Ankunft
dieses Geschichtswerkes in China den
Drachenorden mit Lotoslaub unter Er-
lassung der Sporteln zu erhalten. 1

The form of the dedication would seem to imply a parody of the style adopted by Holz in his Phantasia, particularly in its use of the central axis. The dedication sets the tone of the novel. Bierbaum mocks the formal politeness and obsequiousness associated with the stilted social mores of the Chinese. Similarly, the court of the last Manchu Emperor is ridiculed in this address to the Dowager Empress. The work can be seen, in fact, as a comment upon these last days of the Manchu Dynasty, as it struggled to survive amidst the growing intervention of the Western powers.

The signs of imminent disaster are evident from the opening of the novel. The land is overrun with foreign barbarians; youths wander the streets singing songs of doom:

Es steigt der Mond!
Die Sonne sinkt!
Durch den Bogen von Yen
und den Köcher von Tschü
Droht Untergang,
Droht Untergang,
Oh, oh, oh,
Dem Hause Tschou! 2

The song is a parody of the Confucian Shi-King, the collection of folk-songs, and the oracular I King, as the interpretation by court astrologers confirms. It is explained that 'Yen' and 'Tschü' are materials used for making bows and quivers, thus the lines are to be interpreted as 'es droht Unheil durch Pfeil und Bogen'. The first lines, which are based on the I King in which the moon represents the weak, receptive female force, and the sun the powerful male force, are taken to mean, 'es steigt das Weib!

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1. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, pp.v-vii.
 2. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.3.

es sinkt der Mann! ... von einer Kaiserin droht dem Reiche Unheil'.¹

Bierbaum then returns to his source, but with great changes. In the palace the Emperor is informed that an old palace servant has given birth to a child. It is explained that this has occurred through some magical means. The Emperor orders that the child be killed, since its presence portends evil for the palace. Again the Emperor turns to the oracular book.² Exasperated by the riddles of the I King, the Emperor decides that modern methods are more appropriate, and sets up a police investigation.

An old couple selling bows and quivers are arrested, but later released, and whilst returning to their native village are presented with the young girl, Pao, who is dropped from the beak of a passing bird.

Meanwhile, the Emperor, sensing imminent doom, retires to his bed and expires. His son, with the clearly symbolic name Kung-nie, assumes the throne and styles himself Emperor Yu. This boisterous youth is kept in check by his mother, 'und die Kaiserinnen-Mütter in China sind für die recht jungen chinesischen Kaiser das, was bei uns die Schwiegemütter manchmal für die jungen Ehemänner sein möchten -: die eigentlich Regentinnen'.³ But when she dies the youth is able to indulge his passions. He removes the 'Kultusminister' and replaces him by the 'Serailminister', a post which the candidate accepts, since the alternative is that he become chief eunuch.

The young Emperor's debauched life is described, though with far more humour than in the original, as the recruitment of young women is carried out:

Es dauerte nicht lange, und ein Mädchenschwärmen hub an durch das Reich der Mitte, daß man hätte glauben mögen, es sei unter den jungen Dirnen Chinas mobil gemacht worden. 4

1. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.8.

2. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.20.

3. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, pp.39-40.

4. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.44.

Yet none of these can satisfy him, and it is not until he meets Pao, who enters his chambers whilst he is signing death warrants in a carefree manner, that he finds his ideal.

Bierbaum strikes a semi-serious note with his introduction of a revolutionary secret society bent upon restoring the moral equilibrium of the Empire. 'Die blühenden Talente', as Bierbaum terms them, are styled upon the reformers in Germany. In China, however, they suffer a gruesome fate at the hands of the authorities. Bierbaum takes some relish in describing the lurid details of torture and execution. The rebels are tied to posts, their heads resting on the points of spears until they tire, with fatal consequences.¹ Despite the ironic tone of this description, Bierbaum is obviously using the 'blühenden Talente' to reflect the public reaction to literary artists who criticise the establishment. The fate of these young authors is compared to the promotion of the court poet, whose talent is not tainted by false political doctrines, to 'Reichskanzler'. From this we can see, says the narrator ironically,

daß in jenen Zeiten die Lyrik in China ein erträgliches Gewerbe war, wenn sie in Verbindung mit diplomatischer Begabung stand und eine geschickte Hand in der Wahl des Stoffes verriet. Wo das freilich fehlte, wie bei den blühenden Talenten, winkte Bock und Spießkäfig - das war nun damals so im Lande China. 2

Whilst the punishment differed radically, the fate of the poets who ventured towards too extreme criticism of the state in Germany was not dissimilar, since the laws banning socialism had not yet been repealed.

The novel continues in the manner of the original. The Empress Pao becomes morose, the beacon fires are lit, but the nobles, angered at being so misused, rise in rebellion and join forces with the barbarians of the neighbouring Ti. As the rebels storm the city, Pao is seen dancing

1. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.128.

2. Bierbaum, Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, p.132.

naked on the battlements, a sight that drives the men to frenzy. But she then disappears, the town is razed to the ground, and the Empire is in disarray.

Chen takes exception to this last scene in the novel: 'ein derartiges Schauspiel ist in China absolut undenkbar und unmöglich'.¹ Of course, such scenes were seldom witnessed in Europe, but are an indispensable part of Jugendstil eroticism.

The novel closes on an ironically serious note, as the narrator points the story's moral, warning that immorality will bring destruction. Tradition is to be observed, excess in love is to be avoided and the sage is to be revered. The Emperor, we are told, should take counsel from wise men, not lyrical bohemians.

This has led Rose to assume that Bierbaum was attracted to the story because of its high moral tone:

He rejected the conventional hypocrisy of the double standard and displayed an unabashed hedonistic attitude. Here too, the Chinese seemed to be desirable models, untainted as they were by Christian asceticism. Thus philosophical as well as formal reasons made it quite understandable that Bierbaum read Arendt's rendition of the story of Pao-szê with enthusiasm and decided to offer it in his own version to a wider reading public. 2

This judgement seems to obscure the point that Bierbaum tests traditional hypocrisy in sexual matters not by adapting his theme, but by distorting it and freely adding material which, in its frankness, as Chen points out, is farthest from the original. It is true that the eroticism may have seemed more acceptable to the reading public when presented through oriental figures, but that this would be accepted by the reader at this time as a reflection of Chinese sexual mores remains questionable.

The novel is a humorous composition, whilst not being of any great literary merit. Its dominant tone is that of frivolous irony - morality,

1. Chuan Chen, p.22.

2. Rose, 'The Beauty from Pao', p.11.

either explicit or implicit, seems singularly lacking. Even if one accepts that the novel tests prevailing attitudes, it does not seem to do so as the prime intention of the author, but rather as a secondary feature.

As Rose has pointed out, the style is typically Jugendstil, particularly the many interpolated lyrical passages, with frequent use of erotic plant symbolism, and the sadistic sensuality of the figure Pao.

The very free use of China as a background and of Chinese source material shows the prevailing attitude towards China at this time. It is still regarded as a retarded culture, an exotic and bizarre land of strange customs and social practices. Bierbaum, through free invention based loosely on Chinese material, parodies the Chinese court and society in general. It is the China of the pantomime and musical comedy.

c) Paul Ernst

Of the generation of the 1890s who developed an interest in China, Paul Ernst¹ was one of the few authors for whom this was more than just a passing phase. He retained this interest in all aspects of Chinese culture which, though it is not immediately obvious in his own literary work, is documented in his many essays.

The reason for this lasting interest is that whilst he was carried away by the rush of enthusiasm which greeted the Chinese verse translations, to the extent that he modelled some of his own poetry on them and regarded them as exemplary lyrical creations, he also discovered China as a political reality. His interpretation of this shows a tendency towards idealisation and, whilst it attempts to free itself from the prejudices and clichés of the popular and later fashionable image of, and interest in China, is itself indicative of the changing view of China.

Ernst's first study of Chinese culture brought him into contact with a French work, La Cité chinoise,² written by a former Consul to China, G.E. Simon. This report paints a utopian picture of Chinese society. It describes a self-regulating democracy, a happy peasant people, governed by the spirit of fraternal love. The country is described as a social paradise, where land is owned collectively and industry is organised corporately. Collectivism is the key concept that Ernst derived from Simon's study. The image projected by the French work appealed to the youthful Ernst, and confirmed his socialist views. China appeared to offer the perfect example of the organisation of a socialist state, and was used by Ernst³ to demonstrate the validity of his political views in his

1. See E. Rose, 'Paul Ernst und China', Modern Language Quarterly, 4 (1943), 312-328.

2. G.E. Simon, La Cité chinoise (Paris, 1885). See Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, p.430.

3. P. Ernst, Politische Studien und Kritiken (Berlin, 1938).

early political essays.

Although Ernst's essays coincide with the final collapse of Chinese society, and the era of transition from this so-called socialism of the past into another brand of socialism, he seems to have remained ignorant of the actuality of contemporary China and clung to Simon's vision of an ideal Confucian state. Ernst praises the stability of Chinese culture and political institutions,¹ which he considers to have a permanence which will outlive the intervention of Western powers and, after the decline of the West, point the way to the social and political restructuring of Western society.² This he later repeats in his prognosis of Western decline, Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus of 1918, in which he compares the aberrations of industrialisation to the ideal agrarian, peasant culture of China.³

Even amid the political turmoils of post-revolutionary China, in 1926, Ernst still rigidly maintained this view of an ideal Chinese state and Chinese moral supremacy over the West. His essay 'Chinesische Weisheit' uses the Taoist and Confucian philosophical systems to indicate the continuing stability of the Chinese social structure beneath the political disruption. His conviction is based upon the belief in Chinese collectivism. Germany, he maintains, has lost its ethico-religious ideal, 'die protestantisch-kantische Idee der Pflicht, der Entäußerung der Persönlichkeit unter ein objektives Ziel, die dem preußisch-deutschen Reich zugrunde lag'. This ideal has proved inadequate because 'der Inhalt der Pflicht war geschichtlich-zufällig und nicht religiös ewig'.⁴ In China

1. Ernst, Politische Studien, pp.23-31.

2. Ernst, Politische Studien, pp.105-110.

3. P. Ernst, Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus (Munich, 1918), pp.18-21.

4. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, pp.403-404.

the philosophical tradition has retained validity because of its essential difference from Western philosophy, and it is precisely this difference that creates China's stability. Western philosophical systems, argues Ernst, are based upon the individual, whereas the Chinese begin with a conception of an organic whole, a collective. Furthermore, Western philosophy is preoccupied with theological and epistemological problems, whereas the Chinese take a pragmatic, practical approach, and view the relationship of the individual to the state as the prime postulate of all ethical codes, from which all other laws of behaviour can be deduced. Ernst's views are Confucian in origin, and are as far removed from the historical actuality of contemporary China as was the historical personality himself.

Even as late as 1932 Ernst persisted in his view of the possibility of a Chinese cultural renaissance:

China war bis zur Revolution das letzte Kulturland der Welt ... Seine Gesittung war so groß, ruhte auf so festem Grunde, daß sie unmöglich zugrunde gegangen sein kann. 1

These same views can also be found in Ernst's discussions of Chinese art and literature. In his discussion of Richard Wilhelm's Chinesische Volksmärchen² he compares Chinese and European culture.³ The latter, he maintains, has no continuity since it has passed from people to people, and from race to race with no single group as the transmitting force, whereas China has retained a cultural purity and has been constantly re-generated from within. Western culture has developed erratically through the domination of one group by another; Chinese culture is the manifestation of a collective spirit. The political implications of such views are clear.

Ernst sees the manifestation of this collective spirit in the popular

1. P. Ernst, 'Dichterisches Erlebnis' in Ein Credo (Munich 1935), pp.26-27.
2. R. Wilhelm, Chinesische Volksmärchen (Jena, 1911).
3. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, pp.393-396.

literary tradition, such as the Märchen, and finds some significance in the fact that the translations are not of folk-tales of some past age but contemporary examples of the productive 'Volksgeist'. Such art is the only genuine art, and indicative of the cultural superiority of the Chinese. Ernst takes a Romantic attitude to the folk-tale; he sees it as an expression not of wild imagination but of the human spirit's understanding of man's role in the world. It presents a reality that is at variance with that experienced by the rational mind, but a reality that has an equal validity with that of normal experience. This higher reality has become lost to the Western mind through the domination of rationalism and scepticism, and, even where it is retained in folk traditions, is not understood:

Wo bei uns Überreste früherer poetischer Naturbetrachtung und religiösen Denkens noch im Volk vorhanden sind, da empfinden wir Aberglauben und müssen eben rohe Überbleibsel empfinden, die oft nicht mehr verstanden sind und sicher auf Tiefstand der Bildung deuten; nur bei zurückgebliebenen Teilen des Volkes haben sich solche Glauben erhalten. Die Erzählungen des vorliegenden Buches sind aber mit der höchsten, kultiviertesten Kunst geschrieben; die poetische Gesinnung ist bei den Höchstgebildeten, und zwar nicht in mißverstandenen Bruchstücken, sondern in der schönsten Ausbildung. 1

Ernst recognises in the Chinese folk-tales the corporate expression of a deeply-felt religious belief. The free interplay of the natural and supernatural he considers to be an expression of the firm belief in the realm of spirits, or of the spirit, which has enduring qualities which are lacking in the material world.

A later essay on the Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan affords similar praise to other aspects of Chinese culture. The world portrayed in the collection of novellas demonstrates:

1. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, p.395.

... den Unterschied zwischen Kultur und Barbarei
 ... und ..., weshalb unser Staat und unsere
 Gesellschaft zusammengebrochen sind, weshalb
 heute keine Aussichten auf eine Neugestaltung
 erträglicher Verhältnisse vorhanden scheinen. 1

The barbarism referred to is that of Europe in what Ernst terms the 'post-revolutionary' years, in which a rift has appeared between the individual's consciousness of his social role and his actual role; thus he functions artificially, and aspires to a position beyond that in which he finds himself. In Chinese society no such disparity between the personal self and the social self has arisen. Ernst sees this reflected in the respective literatures. When German literature presents representatives of the various social groups, it always portrays them as exceptional, and thus destroys the collective group identity, and adds to the social unrest. Chinese literature always portrays figures as representative of their social group, and is therefore always a reminder to the individual of his social and 'ideological' role. Ernst ascribes a stabilising influence to Chinese literature, in contrast to the disruptive effect of German literature. Chinese literature reflects a static social world and typical representatives of this society acting in a manner required by the collective, and thus perpetuates the society it reflects. On the basis of this, Ernst predicts that the continuation of Chinese culture, as it exists in such works, is ensured, whilst Europe will reel from one revolution to another. The essay, written in 1919, is pure fantasy. Ernst regards all Chinese literature as a product of Confucianism, and its function as that of consolidating the social structure. The Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan is actually critical in its view of society and of the pretensions and corruption of its 'better' members. Ernst refers to the latter as the embodiment of the Confucian ideal, whereas they are figures who adhere formally to the precepts of Confucianism whilst abusing their social role.

1. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, p.398.

Rose refers to these essays as 'Äußerungen eines intelligenten Kritikers, nicht eines fanatischen Schwärmers'.¹ Whilst it is true that Ernst tried to avoid the superficial admiration that marked the enthusiasm for Chinese literature and philosophy which developed in Germany during the first quarter of the twentieth century, and is critical of it:

Es ist selbstverständlich, daß heute, da chinesisches Denken fast eine Modesache geworden ist, viel Mißverständnis aufkommt. Es ist sehr schwer zu verstehen, denn es setzt voraus, daß man alle europäischen Vorstellungen über diese Dinge, ja, selbst die Art des Denkens in Europa vergißt. Besonders wird mit Laotse viel Unfug getrieben. 2

his own views betray enthusiasm rather than understanding. Ernst, who was impressed by the utopian descriptions contained in Simon's work, developed an idealised view of China. This view is coloured by his own political opinions, which were nominally socialist towards the turn of the century but later anticipated a Germanic cultural renaissance. His attitude towards China is reminiscent of the Romantics' poeticised vision of the European Middle Ages, in which men's social and religious roles coincided. Ernst views China as the realisation of the spirit of Confucian philosophy, whereas this was never historically the case, and contrasts the rigidly hierarchical structure of the Chinese state with the chaotic flexibility of Western society. Cultural and racial purity, a fixed social code and a non-materialist philosophy are the features which Ernst isolates as worthy of emulation. He depicts China as a self-sustaining and self-perpetuating manifestation of the Chinese 'Volksgeist', a stable cultural entity which has developed organically around fixed principles. Ernst prescribes the adoption of a Chinese attitude as a cure to the ills of Western society:

1. Rose, p.319.

2. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, p.405.

Es stehen uns wichtige Berührungen mit dem chinesischen Volk bevor. Wahrscheinlich wird für absehbare Zeit der Inhalt der Weltgeschichte der Kampf unserer Kultur ... mit der Kultur der Chinesen sein. 1

This statement, made in 1911, is true if one takes it to mean that there was to be conflict between culture and Ernst's interpretation of it.

As Rose² and Kutzbach³ have indicated, there are only few examples of Chinese motifs in Ernst's own literary work. The use of techniques derived from Chinese verse translations has been discussed above. Besides these one can also refer to the adaptation of a story from Buber's translations of Chinese folk-tales,⁴ which Ernst reviewed enthusiastically,⁵ and later published as 'König Weisel'.⁶ One also finds an adaptation of a Taoist tale⁷ in Ernst's 'Beim namenlosen Volk'.⁸ Ernst also composed stories using similar themes, as can be found in 'Der Schemen' and 'Die sonderbare Stadt' of 1900.⁹

The image projected within Ernst's literary work is that of the timeless fairy-tale. It shows little similarity with the social and

1. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, p.430.

2. Rose, pp.322-323.

3. Ernst, Gedanken zur Weltliteratur, p.430. (sic).

4. M. Buber, Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten (Frankfurt am Main, 1911).

5. P. Ernst, 'Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten', Literarisches Echo, 14 (1911), 1668-1669.

6. P. Ernst, Das Kaiserbuch (Munich, 1935-36), III, 638-641. Cf. Buber, pp.56-60.

7. Rose, p.323, assumes it to be taken from A. Bernhardi, 'Tau Jüan-ming', Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen, 15 (1912), 113-117, but it seems more likely that Ernst found it in R. Wilhelm's translation of Lao-tse, see R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE. Taoteking (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), pp.154-155. Ernst would have been familiar with the first edition of 1911.

8. P. Ernst, Gedichte und Sprüche (Munich, 1934), pp.44-45.

9. P. Ernst, Die Prinzessin des Ostens und andere Novellen, second edition (Munich, 1918), pp.229-245, 253-263.

political interpretations which are found in his essays. These two features, the philosophical and the poetic, together with a political idealisation, conform to the popular image of China as it developed during the twentieth century among certain authors and thinkers.

CHAPTER III : REVOLT AND RESIGNATION : THE 'CHINESE' NOVEL

Döblin's novel, Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun, represents an important stage in the development of the image of China as reflected in German literature, and is the first longer German work to deal with a serious Chinese theme. The significant change in the view of China can be seen by comparing this novel to Bierbaum's Das schöne Mädchen von Pao, the only earlier modern German novel to deal with China. Whereas Bierbaum simply used the Chinese background, and his Chinese literary source, as a framework for farcical poetic invention, with only slight hints of any social comment, Döblin presents China as a social and political reality in a form which may be considered as a statement of universal validity on the nature of man's relations to the state. Similarly, in his treatment of Taoist philosophy, Döblin demonstrates a significant development from the nineteenth-century view of this and all Chinese philosophy; the novel represents the first literary treatment of this philosophy, which was gaining a growing number of admirers in Germany in the early years of the present century.

The success of Döblin's novel was undoubtedly the main reason for the appearance of Ehrenstein's Räuber und Soldaten and Meckauer's Die Bücher des Kaisers Wutai, which attempt to emulate the mixture of social criticism and religious philosophy. They represent, in part, their author's interest in China but are, more importantly, indicative of the general interest in China which developed in Germany during the 1920s.

These three novels illustrate the difficulties involved in attempting to create a novel set in China. The assimilation of the background detail required to create an illusion of authenticity is prohibitively difficult. The author is constantly in danger of being drawn into pure exoticism, and trivial description which can become an end in itself and obscure his theme. This balance of exotic setting and serious thematic intention is difficult to achieve, not least because of the reader's preconceived ideas on China.

a) Alfred Döblin 'Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun'

The publication of Döblin's 'Chinese' novel¹ in 1915 marked an important step forward in the author's development, both as a literary artist and as an individual. Döblin used literature as a public platform for discussion of attitudes towards life. His novels, which he terms 'eine Art Denken',² represent a testament to the changing religious and philosophical convictions that he held at various stages in his life.³ They are a record of the search for spiritual orientation in a world of chaos and confusion; each novel represents the debate of this problem and a tentative suggestion of some solution. Wang-lun is the first of these attempts to come to terms with life.

Prior to the publication of this, his first major novel, Döblin had been associated with Herwarth Walden and the group of artists and writers who contributed to Der Sturm, in which the earliest examples of Döblin's work are to be found. Though his writing was accepted by the Sturm circle as representative of their artistic creed, Döblin held fundamentally differing views upon the theoretical intentions of art.

Initially he subscribed to those ideas which had introduced Futurism into Germany, a movement which he considered to be a welcome advancement from the subtle play with shades and colours that he found in the work of the contemporary artists of the Impressionist school. However, he was later disappointed to find those people who shared his views regress into a group of aesthetes, whose theories of 'Wortkunst' were irreconcilable with his own attitude towards literature.⁴ The final, irrevocable break

1. A. Döblin, Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun (Berlin, 1915).
2. A. Döblin, 'Epilog', Aufsätze zur Literatur (Olten and Freiburg, 1960), pp.383-399 (p.397).
3. See M. Weyembergh-Boussart's detailed study of this aspect of Döblin, Alfred Döblin. Seine Religiosität in Persönlichkeit und Werk (Bonn, 1970).
4. See A. Döblin, 'Futuristische Worttechnik' and 'Epilog', Aufsätze zur Literatur, pp.9-15, 383-399.

came with the publication of Wang-lun, which Döblin considered the real starting point of his literary career.

Döblin's early work, that which appeared before Wang-lun, is gravely pessimistic and presents the world as an enigma of suffering. The mood of hopelessness and despair which characterises these early writings can best be seen in the collection of stories Die Ermordung einer Butterblume.¹ Döblin presents a vision of life, its senselessness and suffering, the evil inherent in human nature, and the impotence of the individual to command his own actions.

He treated conventional Western religions ironically, as in the essay 'Christentum mit Posaunen',² and firmly rejected the traditional religious conception of an individual God and Creator:

Ihr betet zu einem Gott, ihr Sparsamen, der die
Kraft besessen hätte, glaubt ihr, die ganze
Unermeßlichkeit der Welt zu schaffen, die doch von
Urbeginn war und keines Schöpfers bedurfte. 3

Despite this rejection of dogma and conventional belief, there are indications in his work of a reverence for the forces of nature and the original unity of all things. The single possibility of salvation is seen as the attainment of harmony with one's fellow beings and the natural world, though this is constantly overshadowed by personal suffering and the feeling of alienation from one's fellow-men.

This pessimistic background must be kept in mind when discussing the significance of Wang-lun. From a state of 'seelische Heimatlosigkeit',⁴ where characters lack any anchorage in religion, Döblin struggles to discover some philosophy adequate to satisfy the needs of human existence. The first expression of this search is to be found in Döblin's treatment of

1. A. Döblin, Die Ermordung einer Butterblume und andere Erzählungen (Munich and Leipzig, 1913).
2. A. Döblin, 'Christentum mit Posaunen', Der Sturm, 1, No.6 (1910), 45.
3. A. Döblin, 'Gespräche mit Kalypso', Der Sturm, 1, No.7 (1910), 50.
4. W. Rausch, Darstellung jugendlicher Religiosität in neuerer deutschen Dichtung (Bonn, 1934).

Taoist philosophy.

The novel was written between the summer of 1912 and early 1913 but was not published until 1915. Its appearance evoked a variety of responses. Though modern opinion has secured for it a position as an epoch-making novel,¹ and as a breakthrough in its rejection of traditional themes, forms and styles,² earlier reactions were marked by amazement and fascination. The novelty of its theme, and its stylistic innovations caused a divergence of opinion as to its artistic value:

Man bewunderte und beschimpfte sie als Beispiel einer revolutionären Erzählkunst, die das Schema des bürgerlichen Romans durchbrach. 3

Some found only its style of interest and discussed this to the neglect of the novel's thematic content. K. Korn, who takes the novel to be an example of futuristic and cubist techniques, can see no relevance in the setting, and dismisses it tersely:

Was ist uns China ...? Es ist uns belangloser als nichts, ist die absolute, die bizarrste Transzendenz aller unserer europäischen Erfahrung. 4

He terms the novel 'psychologische Chinoiserie', and its characters European psychological types dressed in Chinese garb.

Other opinions were more penetrating and found within the novel a thematic as well as formal importance. Some recognised a political implication in the events related, which Grass later linked with the German 'Kohlhaas- und Karl Moor-Tradition'.⁵ W. Muschg confirms Döblin's interest in China as a social reality.⁶

1. W. Muschg, 'Alfred Döblin heute', Text und Kritik, 13/14 (1966), 1-4.
2. J. Strelka, 'Döblin', German Quarterly, 33 (1960), 197-209.
3. W. Muschg, 'Zwei Romane Alfred Döblins', Von Trakl zu Brecht (Munich, 1961), pp.198-242 (p.198).
4. K. Korn, 'Via Peking zum Expressionismus', Die Glocke, 2 (1917), 1036-1039 (p.1037).
5. G. Grass, 'Über meinen Lehrer Döblin', Akzente, 14 (1967), 290-309 (p.293).
6. Muschg, 'Zwei Romane Alfred Döblins', p.207.

The religious aspects of the novel were commented upon too, though in terms that show an incomplete understanding of the problems under discussion, or in vague eulogies which avoid a precise definition of the nature of the religious content. A. Behne refers to the novel as 'eine Bekenntnis';¹ A. Lemm speaks of an 'irrationale Innigkeit';² an anonymous reviewer praises it as 'das bedeutendste religiöse Werk, das seit Jahren in Europa veröffentlicht wurde'.³ Yet each fails to explain the religious creed presented in the novel. Their comments reflect the difficulty of defining its religious content. M. Fischer typifies the reaction to this alien religious creed in his criticism of the novel:

Doch eines, was den großen religiösen Dichtungen eignet, fehlt diesem Buch: die Kraft, den Leser selbst unter den Bann religiösen Erlebens zu zwingen ... Die Dichtung Alfred Döblins formt das Religiöse nicht zu zwingender Nötigung, sondern nur zu virtuosem Reichtum bunter Gestaltung. So bleibt sie l'art pour l'art. 4

This same criticism is implicit in Muschg's analysis of the novel, which refers to China as 'religiöse Offenbarung' but also as an exotic escape from the world of reality:

Dieser Roman ist das geniale Gaukelwerk eines Dichters von seltener Phantasie, der die Schicksalsfragen seiner Zeit und seiner eigenen Existenz aufwirft, um sie als herrlich schillernde Seifenblasen entschweben zu lassen... 5

As W. Falk has since demonstrated,⁶ if this were the case, Wang-lun would be of no greater importance than Hofmannsthal's 'Der Kaiser von China spricht', or those works from the turn of the century which indulged in exotic fantasies in the attempt to escape into a 'selbstgeschaffenes

1. A. Behne, 'Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun', Die Aktion, 6 (1916), 631.
2. A. Lemm, 'Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun', Die weißen Blätter, 4 (1917), 82.
3. Anon., 'Alfred Döblin: "Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun"', Zeit-Echo, 3 (1917), 20.
4. M Fischer, 'Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun', März, 10 (1916), 155-156.
5. Muschg, 'Zwei Romane Alfred Döblins', p.209.
6. W. Falk, 'Der erste moderne deutsche Roman von Alfred Döblin', Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 89 (1970), 510-529.

Paradies'.

The misconceptions which surrounded the work did not cease. A.L. Jennings' study¹ approaches the theme from the conventional Christian standpoint and explains characters in terms of Freudian psychology. Jennings does not consider the significance of the Chinese spiritual background. The same can be said of A. Arnold's discussion of the novel,² which offers the thesis that Wang-lun is a German, parodistic counterpart to Marinetti's Mafarka. This is undoubtedly true, as Arnold demonstrates, but fails to recognise the essential significance of Taoism in Döblin's novel.

Earlier commentators failed to penetrate the novel and omitted any discussion of the philosophical background. Too easily confused by the bizarre and exotic, they have not separated the detail that must necessarily accompany a narrative, in order to create a semblance of reality, from the problem that lies at the centre of events related. Those who sensed a religious import to the novel failed to qualify it, and dismissed China as a façade, a carte blanche for poetic invention. In fact the contrary is true, since much of the background is drawn from factual historical, geographical, anthropological and sociological accounts of China and Chinese life.

The inadequacy of these interpretations and criticisms stems from the fact that none of the commentators has examined the sources of Döblin's novel. Neither the general background of the Chinese Empire, nor the philosophy of Taoism, which exercised such an important influence upon Döblin during the creation of the work, is discussed. E. Blass came nearest to defining the novel's theme in his reference to 'die Wirklichkeit

1. A.L. Jennings, 'Döblin's Quest for Spiritual Orientation' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1959).

2. A. Arnold, Die Literatur des Expressionismus (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne and Mainz, 1966), pp.80-106.

und die Geschichte des Nichtwiderstrebens', but produces no evidence to demonstrate the specifically Chinese nature of this philosophy.¹

Commentators have failed to recognise the importance of the Chinese philosophical background, or to see in it anything of unique significance. Where praise is given, it reflects upon the author, the mediator, not the philosophy he is communicating. A lack of regard for the possibility that there is within the work a philosophy and religious posture of a non-European origin, and a misunderstanding of the spiritual content of this philosophy have led to misinterpretations of the work.

The studies made by M. Weyembergh-Boussart² and I. Schuster,³ which document Döblin's indebtedness to China as a source of philosophical inspiration, have since shown the significance of the specifically Chinese aspects of the novel. However, in order to achieve a better understanding of the novel it is necessary to investigate the source material which Döblin drew upon when writing the novel. This can then be incorporated into a new interpretation in the light of Döblin's understanding of China.

When Döblin first planned the novel, it was to deal with the persecution of a group of Chinese gold-panners by Czarist troops on the river Lena,⁴ accounts of which Döblin had read in contemporary press reports. Moved by a mixture of outrage and pity, against the oppressor and for the oppressed, he began to document the suffering of this Chinese minority group and the unfeeling savagery with which they were relentlessly persecuted by the state. It is not known how the scene of the action came to be moved from Siberia to China, or why Döblin chose the example of a religious sect to portray

1. E. Blass, 'Notizen über Alfred Döblins Roman "Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun"', Das junge Deutschland, 1 (1918), 342-344.
2. Weyembergh-Boussart, Alfred Döblin. Seine Religiosität in Persönlichkeit und Werk, pp.41-43, 93-99.
3. I. Schuster, 'Alfred Döblins "Chinesischer Roman"', Wirkendes Wort, 20 (1970), 339-346.
4. This information is provided by P. Lüth, Alfred Döblin. Auswahl aus dem erzählenden Werk (Wiesbaden, 1948), p.31.

his horror at intolerance and persecution. Muschg states simply that it was an interest in China which led to the change of setting.¹ Which aspect of China held a particular interest for Döblin is not recorded. It is possible that the contemporary political upheavals in China, which were widely reported in the West, struck a note of sympathy in the radical young Döblin. The events he relates from the time of the earlier rulers of the Manchu Dynasty had reached their culmination in the revolutionary movement which, in 1912, finally released the Chinese people from the Imperial system, and introduced democratic rule. Political considerations may, therefore, have been the reason for the change of setting, which also expanded the novel's theme from the social, historical and political into the ethical and religious domain.

Whether Döblin had any interest in the philosophies and religions of China prior to embarking on the novel cannot be ascertained. We know from letters written to Martin Buber that Döblin was acquainted with Albert Ehrenstein,² which would indicate one source of his knowledge of China. The letter also reveals that Döblin was primarily concerned with Taoism, since he asks Buber³ for specific information on sects associated with the Taoist creed. A later letter defines the scope of the novel more clearly; it is to deal with the fate of the 'wu-wei Sekte' under the leadership of Wang-lun.⁴ From this it would appear that Döblin was familiar with Taoism before the final shape of the novel had been decided and that his intention was to create a novel around this philosophy and its adherents.

The work opens with a dedication to the Chinese philosopher, Liä Dsi

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1. W. Muschg, 'Nachwort des Herausgebers', Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun (Olten and Freiburg, 1960), p.481.
 2. A. Döblin, Briefe (Olten and Freiburg, 1970), p.57. The letter is dated 18 August 1912.
 3. Buber had translated certain Taoist writings, Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse (Leipzig, 1910).
 4. Döblin, Briefe, p.58. The letter is dated 13 October 1912.

(Lieh-tse), a semi-mythical sage whose writings form one of the canonical books of Taoism. This brief foreword to the narration offers an insight into Döblin's mood at the time of writing. The first words, 'DASS ich nicht vergesse -',¹ suggest a spontaneity and the tone of a personal testament. This is followed by a brief description of the modern world in images of intense force. This world of modernity and technological progress is faced questioningly with the simple, 'wem dient es?', to which an answer is given indirectly by reference to the dominant qualities of man, 'Habgier ... Geilheit ... Roheit', in this world of the machine. Meditating upon this, and the obsession with 'Gewinnen, Erobern', he turns to the words of Lieh-tse:

... ein alter Mann sprach: 'Wir gehen und wissen nicht wohin. Wir bleiben und wissen nicht wo. Wir essen und wissen nicht warum. Das alles ist die starke Lebenskraft von Himmel und Erde: Wer kann da sprechen von Gewinnen, Besitzen?' 2

It is in this spirit that the work is to be read, as a religious act, a gesture of reverence to the sage and an act of sacrifice to his memory: 'Ich will ihm opfern hinter meinem Fenster'. By analogy with Taoist ideas, Döblin terms his work 'dieses ohnmächtige Buch', in recognition of the value of quietism and the Taoist creed of non-contention.

With the introduction the modern Western world is left behind and does not enter the novel again, but it must not be forgotten that this preface condemning the modern world stands as a comment upon the narration. To read the novel as an escape from the contemporary world, as so many commentators do, is clearly wrong. The presence of the modern world in the dedication suggests that the novel is an attempt to find an antidote to the mood of consuming greed, and the senseless activity which Döblin recognises as the sickness of the West.

1. A. Döblin, Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun (Olten and Freiburg, 1960), p.7. (Orthography as in the original.) All further references are to this edition.

2. Wang-lun, p.8.

The words of Lieh-tse are the source of the insight that Döblin has gained and introduce the doctrines of passivity, humility, submission and resignation as the only valid response to the challenge of the world. The novel is an attempt to realise this doctrine, in a fictional form, and test its validity. No indication of a complete answer is given in the foreword; action remains futile and unfathomable, yet, conducted within the prescriptions of heaven and earth, life, it is suggested, can become harmonious and free from the suffering which otherwise plagues existence. The quality of endurance is the prime requirement of Taoist belief in the necessity to adhere to the laws of the universe. Döblin takes this problem and subjects it to an open discussion in his novel.

The narration begins with a description of a religious sect, 'die Wahrhaft Schwachen', whose members seek salvation through the doctrine of passivity. The leader of the sect, Wang-lun, is the son of a poor fisherman. In his early life he had lacked any sense of morality and duty and had become a petty thief and vagabond. His carefree existence ends when he witnesses the brutal execution of a friend, Su-koh, who has been persecuted for his adherence to the Muslim faith. Wang-lun is filled with horror and revulsion at the sight of this persecution by the state authorities. His despair in the face of this suffering explodes into violent anger:

Das Stöhnen des sinnlosen Leidens verwandelte sich
in ein Stöhnen des tastenden, suchenden, sicheren
Hasses. 1

Although he is advised by Ma-noh, a Buddhist monk, to reconcile himself to the evil in the world, he can find no consolation in such teachings. He tries to dominate the world by force of arms, and organises a powerful band of brigands. Gradually, however, Wang-lun begins to turn away from the philosophy of hate and vengeance that has dictated his actions

1. Wang-lun, p.43.

and becomes conscious of a strong force that has taken hold of the common people:

In den niedrigen Leuten schwang der alte Geist des Volkes; mehr als in den Literaten strömte in den Gestrandeten, viel Erfahrenen das tiefe Grundgefühl: 'Die Welt erobern wollen durch Handeln, mißlingt. Die Welt ist von geistiger Art, man soll nicht an ihr rühren. Wer handelt, verliert sie; wer festhält, verliert sie.' 1

These words, from the Tao-te-king, represent the doctrine of passivity that has been embraced by the common people. It is a creed of non-contention and inactivity and an attempt to conform to the will of heaven and the natural laws of existence. Wang-lun becomes a convert to these ideas and convinces others of his group of the effectiveness of this philosophy. The group adopts the title of 'die Wahrhaft Schwachen'; Wang-lun impresses upon them the value of 'negative' qualities and the passive acceptance of one's fate:

Nur eins hilft gegen das Schicksal: nicht widerstreben ... ich scheide mich ab von denen, die im Fieber leben, von denen, die nicht zur Besinnung kommen ... Ich will wunschlos, ohne Schwergewicht, das Kleine und Große tragen, mich abseits wenden, wo man nicht tötet ... ich will arm sein, um nichts zu verlieren ... Nicht handeln; wie das weiße Wasser schwach und folgsam sein; wie das Licht von jedem dünnen Blatt abgleiten. 2

Their faith is simple: adherence to the precepts of non-contention (Nichtwiderstreben) and a quietistic acceptance of life, in harmony with the cosmos. But they are considered heretical by the Confucian authorities who attempt to eradicate them and all such sects which pose a threat to the state. The persecution is suffered without resistance, since the acceptance of fate is regarded as the aim of life and because death brings relief from suffering. Wang-lun, however, seeks protection for his followers by enlisting the help of a secret, subversive organisation,

1. Wang-lun, p.48

1. Wang-lun, pp.79-80.

'die weiße Wasserlilie'. This group is seeking to overthrow the despotic and brutal Manchu Dynasty and reinstate the native Ming line.

During his absence, Wang-lun's group has degenerated under the leadership of Ma-noh and the original beliefs have been replaced by perverse and depraved rituals. Wang-lun dissociates himself from the group, which has now taken the obscene title of 'die gebrochene Melone'.

At this point Döblin introduces the antagonist, the Emperor Khien-lung, who, despite his Imperial power, is a weak and vacillating character. Unable to see any acceptable means of countering the forces which threaten to destroy the Empire, he requests a visit from the Tashi Lama, in the hope that he can offer some alternative to the political ethic of Confucianism, which demands the eradication of all other creeds.

The Lama criticises the Emperor's policy of persecution and advises tranquillity, passivity:

Milde sein, still sein heißt die Hand, die alle Riegel
hebt. Kommen Sie zu mir, alter Mann, finden Sie sich,
bevor Sie sterben. 1

The Emperor's dilemma is a secondary debate of the central issue of the novel, the choice between violence or passivity. The Emperor at first accepts the Lama's advice but, when the latter dies, reverts to a policy of persecution. The traditional order of the state is in decline and the Emperor's action merely accelerates this process.

The renewed violence against his former sect forces Wang-lun to join them again. Under his leadership they again rally the support of the 'Weiße Wasserlilie' and take up the sword of vengeance. The insurrection is finally put down and Wang-lun and his followers violently slaughtered.

Wang-lun's final act of open revolt is a rejection of the principles that he had previously adhered to. He states that it is impossible to attain the ideal they had striven for in the formation of 'die Wahrhaft

1. Wang-lun, p.312.

Schwachen':

Es - ist - uns - nicht - beschieden -, Wahrhaft Schwache
zu sein ... Ein Wahrhaft Schwacher kann nur Selbstmörder
sein. 1

They are now a militant, revolutionary group, whose defence of their
religious convictions promises them salvation. They give up their lives
joyously:

Diese Wahrhaft Schwachen waren die tollkühnsten
Soldaten, die ihrem Drange zu sterben nicht widerstehen
konnten ... Sie düngten den Boden für das heilige Reich. 2

The familiar 'nicht widerstreben', which throughout the novel is synonymous
with passivity and inactivity, 'wu-wei',³ has now become 'nicht widerstehen',
the urge for self-destructive action.

For Wang-lun this is not the final stage in his development. As he
stands in judgement before a captive, he once again recognises the brother-
hood of those who suffer. He now realises that to counter violence with
violence, and to correct evil through evil was an aberration. He sees
that he has become attached to the world, and to his own powerful position
at the head of the military force:

Ich will doch kein Königreich gründen; stoßen,
schlagen könnte ich mich, so vergeßlich bin ich.
Für sie und für mich ist das Wu-wei gestiftet, und
ich will uns untergehen lassen. 4

He reflects upon his past life and demonstrates, by three jumps across a
stream, the course of his development.⁵ This action symbolises his moves
from passionate, destructive activity to the conviction of passivity,
quietism and non-contention, then back to a violent challenge of life,
in open revolt against the Emperor, and now, finally, back to the simple
acceptance of his fate. The doctrine of harmonious existence, free from

1. Wang-lun, pp.402-403.

2. Wang-lun, p.407.

3. Translated literally, this term means 'no action'.

4. Wang-lun, p.460.

5. Wang-lun, p.465.

violent passion and futile activity once again becomes his guiding principle:

Die Menschen müßten denken, wie der Boden denkt,
das Wasser denkt, die Wälder denken: ohne Aufsehen,
langsam, still; alle Veränderungen und Einflüsse
nehmen sie hin, wandeln sich nach ihnen ... In die
Schläge des Schicksals sich finden hieße der reine
Weg. Angeschmiegt an die Ereignisse, Wasser an
Wasser, angeschmiegt an die Flüsse, das Land, die
Luft, immer Bruder und Schwester, Liebe hieße der
reine Weg. 1

Wang-lun is slaughtered together with his followers, but this does not end the novel. As if to indicate the continuation of the discussion and to question the conclusion that Wang-lun reaches, Döblin closes the novel with the words of Hai-tang. She has suffered, in common with all the characters in the novel, and embodies the problem which faces each of them:

Hai-tang blickte weiter in den grünschleppenden
Mondschein. Sie setzte sich auf, schob die
Schaufeln ihrer Hände über das kalte Gesicht:
"Stille sein, nicht widerstreben, kann ich es denn?" 2

The validity of the philosophy of passivity is not questioned by this remark but the possibility of its realisation is. The work turns around these theoretical ethical postulates and the effectiveness of adhering to them in life. The world's seductive power, the human urge for activity, and personal desires continually frustrate the individual's attempts to resign himself to his fate. Man is seen as torn between revolution and quietism; the latter is praised, but the former is stronger.

When one considers the novel's dedication, the significance of the work as a comment upon the contemporary situation becomes clear. Döblin, a radical thinker, and spokesman for the oppressed, found himself torn between the possibilities of revolution or the passive endurance of social injustices which he abhorred. His anger at oppression and intolerance, and indignation at the senseless suffering of humanity is expressed in a

1. Wang-lun, p.471.

2. Wang-lun, p.480.

revolutionary and religious Chinese theme.

From the opening of the novel, it is clear that Döblin does not intend to depict China as a purely exotic realm. The first impressions of China that are given are those of a social reality and of the common people, whose existence is one of toilsome effort. Cruelty, callousness, religious fanaticism and intolerance are the dominant features of man's existence. The Confucian state is used to suggest a ruthless mechanism of suppression; and Confucius is seen as an arch-reactionary, whose doctrines have become formalised into hollow rituals that maintain the status quo and accentuate the social changes that are required to alleviate the suffering of the common people:

Er hat gelehrt den Mund ausspülen, die Haare kämmen,
vor Fürsten buckeln, vieles Gute, vieles Schlechte.
Für uns arme Leute ist er schon lange tot und sagt
kein Wort mehr. 1

The enmity between state and people is not seen as an isolated upsurge of patriotic fervour against a foreign overlord, but rather as a lasting feature of Chinese life.

The China that Döblin depicts is not an aesthete's retreat from the world. It may represent a gesture of disdain towards the modern world of technology but not towards the fundamental problems of existence. Döblin confirms this in his view of the world in which he found himself at the time of writing Wang-lun:

Ich sah, wie die Welt - die Natur, die Gesellschaft -
gleich einem tonnenschweren eisernen Tank über die
Menschen, über den Menschen rollt. Wang-lun, der
Held meines ersten umfänglichen Romans, erfuhr dies.
Er zieht sich, am Leben geblieben, mit einer Anzahl
ebenso Blessierter von dieser gewaltigen
menschenfeindlichen Welt zurück, und ohne sie
anzugreifen, fordert er sie heraus. Sie rollt
dennoch über ihn und seine Freunde. Es ist bewiesen,
in diesem Fall, sie ist stärker. Sonst ist nichts bewiesen. 2

1. Wang-lun, p.391.

2. A. Döblin, 'Epilog', p.387.

The mood of this remark is more pessimistic than the novel. Although there is no indication of a belief in any order in human affairs, there is, in the novel, a recognition of a philosophical attitude which can serve as a guide to human action in the world. This attitude could be termed religious, though it has little in common with Western conceptions of religion. The idea of a personalised Godhead is lacking; heaven has nothing of its Western connotations and is termed 'der alles duldende Himmel',¹ the amoral and impersonal life-force, Tao, which has no power of intervention in the world. The belief is vaguely pantheistic, a creed which Döblin had been attracted to since his early readings of Spinoza,² though here nature is seen as being suffused with an animating spirit which is equated with the impersonal Tao, rather than with God.

That Döblin subscribed to the ideas that he found in Taoism, he confirms in his later remarks on the Tao-te-king: 'neben diesem Buch kann keines sich halten, denn es nimmt sie alle auf'.³ In this same essay, Döblin praises Lao-tse's insight into the enigmatic nature of existence and his belief in quietism and passivity as the key to salvation in the world.

Döblin wrote the novel at a time of personal crisis. He had, as he later put it, previously 'avoided existence'⁴ but was later forced to face the suffering of humanity when he entered medical practice in the poor quarter of Berlin. The novel became a personal testament of faith and, through its central character, an individual example of the suffering of the mass of humanity.⁵ The novel is a meditation upon this suffering and a documentation of a second struggle, the metaphysical striving for a

1. Wang-lun, p.11.

2. Döblin, 'Epilog', p.384.

3. Linke Poot, 'Der rechte Weg', Der deutsche Maskenball (Berlin, 1921), p.105. Linke Poot was a pseudonym frequently used by Döblin in his early publications.

4. A. Döblin, 'Arzt und Dichter', Aufsätze zur Literatur, p.363.

5. Döblin noted that the action of the novel was to represent 'Volk als Person'. See Muschg, 'Nachwort des Herausgebers', Wang-lun, p.500.

clue to a meaningful interpretation of the world. The problem remains unsolved, but indications of a means of achieving a right course of action in the world are present.

The theme of 'Nichtwiderstreben', often referred to in the novel as 'wu-wei', is the ethical principle to which the work is dedicated. This doctrine is based upon a belief in the unitedness of all human life and the existence of a force, both imminent and transcendent, which gives life its meaning, coins the nature of existence and is to be emulated by adherence to the qualities of passivity and quietistic acceptance.

It is the spiritual landscape of China in which Döblin was particularly interested. He spoke later of 'ein seelisches Grunderlebnis oder eine Grundeinstellung'¹ which he found within the Taoist works he studied whilst preparing the novel. Döblin took consolation from these writings which tempered the pessimism of his earliest work and formed a transition between total despair and the confidence he later gained with the finding of a firm religious faith.

The nature of the theme that Döblin set out to deal with posed great problems. It was necessary to gain relevant information upon all aspects of Chinese life in order to create a realistic setting and a convincing picture of China. The assembling of facts on the ethnological, geographical and historical features incorporated in the novel was a slow and laborious process, the more so since Döblin had no real interest in these aspects of China,² but a task which he carried out with great assiduity, as the final product shows. During the writing of the novel Döblin made several visits to the Berlin Völkerkundemuseum, and the copious notes to be found in the Nachlaß³ are a record of the amount of information he collected, much of

1. A. Döblin, 'Der Epiker, sein Stoff und die Kritik', Aufsätze zur Literatur, p.338.

2. Döblin, 'Der Epiker, sein Stoff und die Kritik', p.338.

3. These notes are deposited in the Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach/Neckar.

which was never used in the final version of the novel. Details of flora and fauna, climatic conditions, dress, speech, customs, both religious and social, descriptions of towns, villages, temples and landscapes are among the preparatory material Döblin collected for the novel. We find an attempt to penetrate every aspect of Chinese life and to come to an objective assessment of the Chinese mentality. The success of this undertaking was later confirmed by a sinologist.¹

Much of the novel's action is historically documented. Döblin has adapted the material to his own ends, often combining events that were historically unrelated in order to create a more concentrated account. Döblin culled much of his information from a large and scholarly study compiled by J.J.M. De Groot.² This work is a descriptive account of the policy of persecution adopted by the Emperors of China against foreign religions, endemic outbursts of religious mania and the various sects that existed within China. From De Groot's account we learn that Wang-lun was an influential sectary who led an insurrection against the Emperor in the year 1774.³ Information on Wang-lun is sparse, and the few biographical details given do not conform to the account of his life as found in Döblin. We can assume, therefore, that Döblin invented the events of Wang-lun's childhood.

There is also no specific information on a sect that bears the title of 'die Wahrhaft Schwachen', which seems to have been created by Döblin by synthesising the details provided concerning the many other religious sects of a similar nature from this same historical period.

The doctrine of 'wu-wei' as the central belief of a single sect is found in the description of a group led by Lo-hwai, who preached the

1. Döblin, 'Der Epiker, sein Stoff und die Kritik', p.338.
2. J.J.M. De Groot, Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China (Amsterdam, 1903).
3. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.296 ff.

doctrine of passivity as a means to earthly happiness 'in blissful assimilation with the equally inactive and yet omnipotent course of the world',¹ which is clearly a reference to the Taoist creed. Döblin uses Lo-hwai as the prototype of the sectarian leader. He is referred to by one of Wang-lun's group as 'unser großer Lehrer'² and is the historical personality on which Döblin modelled his character, Wang-lun. The latter is found in De Groot's work not as a religious leader but solely as a political agitator. Döblin has retained this fact but has combined it with the beliefs of the sect headed by Lo-hwai. This can be seen in the description of the faith of the 'wu-wei' sect given by De Groot:

They have no images, no chapels or temples, no prayers.
They seek perfection and bliss exclusively in words
spoken by heaven and earth ... 3

which Döblin renders as:

... wißt ihr, daß wir keine tausend Buddhas ... anbeten
... Unser, unser Buddha blickt uns aus Himmel, Bergen
und Bächen an. 4

The persecution of the Islamic faith is also mentioned in De Groot.⁵ This action resulted in an open revolt in Kansuh, referred to by Döblin, though this occurred some years before the Imperial persecution of the sect led by Wang-lun. Döblin has linked the two events by the figure of Su-koh, who has no historical counterpart. Similarly, the existence of a subversive secret political organisation, which Döblin refers to as 'die weiße Wasserlilie', is documented in this source.⁶ This sect, the 'White Lotus', is the political organisation Döblin uses; he translates the title differently, but also refers to the group by a transcription of the Chinese name 'Pe-lien-kiao', which is the alternative title by which

1. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.185.

2. Wang-lun, p.389.

3. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.185.

4. Wang-lun, p.389.

5. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.269 ff.

6. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.162 ff.

De Groot refers to the political organisation.¹ Döblin has modified the description given by De Groot by excluding any reference to this group's religious beliefs, and by making it an activist, political body who strive to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty. Döblin thereby polarises the attitudes that the two groups represent; on the one hand, there is the possibility of upheaval and revolution, and on the other the expedients of passivity and indifference. Historical facts reveal no such stark delineation between political and religious sects. Döblin has purified and simplified the facts into a contrast between political ideology and a personal ethic of passivity.

The history of the persecution is recorded accurately by Döblin, as is the final confrontation between the Imperial troops and Wang-lun's followers.² The only change is that Döblin replaced the ironic tone of De Groot's description of the 'glorious carnage' with an objective narrative tone.

The Emperor found in Döblin's novel is not an authentic depiction of his historical counterpart. From historical records we know that there were frequent uprisings during his reign, which forced him to take punitive action. The Emperor is depicted as a resolute figure with no trace of the anguish and doubt that plagues Döblin's fictional character. The vacillation and spiritual crisis of Döblin's Emperor is out of character with this rigid, august and stern figure. Döblin is, however, correct in depicting the Taoist sect and the Confucian state, and their representative figures, Wang-lun and the Emperor Khien-lung, as opponents, protagonist and antagonist. Döblin presents the state as a static and inflexible system into which the individual must fit; failure to conform with the Confucian norms poses a threat to the state and is countered with ruthless oppression. The laws against heresy, which emanate from the Emperor, are

1. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.149.

2. De Groot, Sectarianism, p. 298 ff.

the embodiment of the Confucian state principle of fanaticism and intolerance,¹ and represent an attempt to subordinate all people to the unifying doctrine of Confucianism.

Though the Emperor has been modified in order to add a secondary comment on the novel's central theme, certain events in the Emperor's life are historical fact. The meeting with the Tashi Lama, together with much of the descriptive material that surrounds this event, has been taken from a work by C.F. Koeppen,² though with certain significant alterations. Döblin rightly states that Khien-lung requested a visit from the Tashi Lama on three occasions, and that the third request was granted.³ These requests were made in 1777, 1778 and 1779. Döblin has concentrated events in order to lend greater importance to the Lama's visit. The suppression of the Wang-lun sect occurred in 1774, and was the result of an edict that had been issued in 1724. From this we can see that the Lama's visit had no importance in respect of the fate of the Taoist sects. Döblin has developed a minor, insignificant historical event into a secondary theme. The problem faced by the antagonist becomes an echo of the crisis experienced by the central character. Although the Emperor possesses political and military power and determines the fate of the common people, he is not free from the despair and the spiritual anguish that afflicts those he rules. He is also faced with two possible alternatives: action, to which he tends, or tolerance and passivity, which he is loath to accept.

The historical facts have been adapted in this way in order to reveal within the processes of history the ethical problem of 'Nichtwiderstreben'. Certain liberties have been taken with historical events in order to lend a coherence to the action and, more importantly, to introduce this problematic

1. De Groot, Sectarianism, p.149.
2. C.F. Koeppen, Die lamaische Hierarchie und Kirche (Berlin, 1906).
3. Koeppen, p.217. Döblin quotes the Emperor's letter to the Tashi Lama in a modernised form, Wang-lun, p.295. See Koeppen, p.218.

theme on two social levels and, thereby, reveal it as the problem inherent in all human existence.

The ethical problem debated is, as we have seen, developed from Taoist philosophy. Muschg, who feels it unnecessary to investigate the sources of Döblin's inspiration, since this would destroy the attraction of the novel's exoticism, underestimates Döblin's dependence on Taoist thought. He feels that the central theme is only vaguely hinted at, 'Wang-luns Botschaft wird seltsam beiläufig mitgeteilt'.¹ Accordingly, he quotes a single example of Taoist philosophy to document its inclusion in the novel:

Die Welt erobern wollen durch Handeln, mißlingt.
Die Welt ist von geistiger Art, man soll nicht
an ihr rühren. Wer handelt, verliert sie; wer
festhält, verliert sie. 2

This is based upon Lao-tse's words:

Die Welt erobern und behandeln wollen, ich habe
es erlebt, daß das mißlingt. Die Welt ist ein
geistiges Ding, das man nicht behandeln darf.
Wer sie behandelt, verdirbt sie, wer sie festhalten
will, verliert sie. 3

Yet this and the dedication to Lieh-tse⁴ at the opening of the novel are not convincing proof of Döblin's reliance upon a Chinese source. Muschg states:

Das Ja und Nein zur Welt bewegte ... Döblin
leidenschaftlich. Diesen Grundgedanken seines
Romans entnahm er keiner chinesischen Quelle. 5

1. Muschg, 'Nachwort des Herausgebers', Wang-lun, p.488.
2. Wang-lun, p.48
3. R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE. Tao-te-king. Das Buch des Alten vom Sinn und Leben (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.69. Döblin knew this work in the first edition published in Leipzig in 1911.
4. The words of the sage quoted by Döblin in the dedication: 'Wir gehen und wissen nicht wohin. Wir bleiben und wissen nicht wo. Wir essen und wissen nicht warum. Das alles ist die starke Lebenskraft von Himmel und Erde; wer kann da sprechen von Gewinnen, Besitzen?', Wang-lun, p.8, are a quotation from Lieh-tse. See R. Wilhelm, Liä Dsi. Das wahre Buch vom quellenden Urgrund (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.45. Döblin knew this work in the first edition which appeared in Leipzig in 1911.
5. Muschg, 'Nachwort des Herausgebers', Wang-lun, p.484.

Closer examination of the text reveals the error of this judgement. The example quoted above reveals one source of the theme of passivity. The dedication exemplifies another aspect, the impotence of the individual and his dependence upon the natural forces that rule life. Implicit in this quotation is also the need to reject the familiar human attitude to life, that of conquest and gain, since this is a perversion of the natural order and harmony of life.

The calm that the individual gains when he has freed himself from the pursuit of gain is referred to by Döblin in a translation taken from an English version of the Chuang-tse made by H.A. Giles:

Es war einmal ein Mann, der fürchtete sich vor seinem Schatten und haßte seine Fußspuren. Und um beiden zu entgehen, ergriff er die Flucht. Aber je öfter er den Fuß hob, um so häufiger ließ er Spuren zurück. Und so schnell er auch lief, löste sich der Schatten nicht von seinem Körper. Da wählte er, er säume noch zu sehr; begann schneller zu laufen, ohne Rast, bis seine Kraft erschöpft war und er starb. Er hatte nicht gewußt, daß er nur an einem schattigen Ort zu weilen brauchte, um seinen Schatten los zu sein. Daß er sich nur ruhig zu verhalten brauchte, um keine Fußspuren zu hinterlassen. 1

There was once a man who was so afraid of his shadow and so disliked his own footsteps that he determined to run away from them. But the oftener he raised his feet the more footsteps he made, and though he ran very hard his shadow never left him. From this he inferred that he went too slowly, and ran as hard as he could without resting, the consequence being that his strength broke down and he died. He was not aware that by going into the shade he would have got rid of his shadow, and that by keeping still he would have put an end to his footsteps. 2

This humorous parable is a story that is told among the people as a comment upon the sect of 'die Wahrhaft Schwachen'. It reflects the reasons for their adherence to the doctrine of inactivity. The ideal state is that of inconspicuousness, in which one blends into the natural surroundings, free from the urge to violent activity, in complete harmony with the life-

1. Wang-lun, p.13.

2. H.A. Giles, Chuang Tzu. Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic, second reprinted revised edition (London, 1961), p.301.

force, Tao. The shedding of personal ambition and the recognition of the futility of activity bring calm and repose, integration into the course of the world and inner harmony.

Similarly, much of what Wang-lun teaches and believes in is expressed by Döblin in quotations from the work of the philosopher Lieh-tse. In his recognition of the suffering which links all mankind Wang-lun repeats the words of the Taoist sage:

Warum sie der Himmel hasse, wer wisse das? 1

Lau Dan redete mit Guan Yin und sprach:

'Wer weiß den Grund davon

Daß der Himmel einen haßt!'

Damit meint er, daß es sich nicht verlohnt, den Gedanken des Himmels nachzuspüren und Glück und Unglück auszurechnen. 2

And, shortly before leaving his friends on the Nan-ku pass, he reflects upon the nature of human existence in words that are taken directly from a translation of the Chinese:

Ich scheide mich ab von denen, die im Fieber leben,
von denen, die nicht zur Besinnung kommen ... man
kann sie töten, man kann sie am Leben lassen, ihr
Schicksal wird von außen bestimmt. 3

This expresses the belief that the man who strives to form his own fate is acting in contradiction to the laws of the universe, and will only exacerbate his problems. The wise man is, in contrast, acquiescent and embodies his own fate. This conviction is expressed by Wang-lun, in the following manner:

Ich muß den Tod über mich ergehen lassen und das Leben
über mich ergehen lassen und beides unwichtig nehmen,
nicht zögern, nicht hasten. 4

This is an abbreviated but accurate repetition of the words of Lieh-tse:

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1. Wang-lun, p.59.
 2. Liä Dsi, p.129.
 3. Wang-lun, p.80. cf. Liä Dsi, p.153.
 4. Wang-lun, p.80.

Wenn man schon einmal im Leben steht, so muß man es unwichtig nehmen und über sich ergehen lassen, seine Wünsche beobachten und so den Tod erwarten. Kommt dann der Tod heran, so muß man ihn auch unwichtig nehmen und über sich ergehen lassen, beobachten, was erfolgt, und sich so der Auflösung überlassen. Beides muß man unwichtig nehmen, beides über sich ergehen lassen; was braucht es des Zögerns oder der Hast in dieser Spanne Zeit? 1

Life's aim is not to think upon death and life, but to accept, without question, life's trials. To find Tao and to follow its dictates is the only reason that life holds. Once in the possession of the knowledge that Tao imparts, one's action is, in the words of Lieh-tse, 'schmiegsam wie das Wasser', words which Wang-lun emulates in his advice to his followers: 'Nicht handeln: wie das weiße Wasser schwach und folgsam sein'.²

This advice is later repeated when, nearing the end of his life, he returns to his philosophy of passivity:

Die Menschen müßten denken, wie der Boden denkt, das Wasser denkt, die Wälder denken; ohne Aufsehen, langsam, still; alle Veränderungen und Einflüsse nehmen sie hin, wandeln sich nach ihnen. 3

The natural world is seen as a guide to the proper course of action in life; it represents an analogy to human life since they both stem from the same animating principle. This is reflected in the words of Lieh-tse:

Der Lebenskeim ... hat Metamorphosen. Er wandelt sich in Pflanzen und Tiere, je nach den Bedingungen, die er vorfindet. Auch der Mensch erscheint im Lauf dieser Metamorphosen und kehrt wieder in diesen Kreislauf zurück. 4

It is significant that Döblin quotes Lieh-tse more frequently than Lao-tse. Lao-tse's philosophy has a more positive aspect than that of Lieh-tse. Though Lao-tse stresses the 'negative' precepts of inactivity

1. Liä Dsi, p.146.

2. Wang-lun, p.80. cf. Liä Dsi, p.96.

3. Wang-lun, p.471.

4. Liä Dsi, p.37.

and quietism, he envisages a happy outcome to life. Lieh-tse, in contrast, frequently refers to the forces of fate and regards life as a struggle against forces beyond man's control. The pessimistic tone that marks Lieh-tse's writings is more akin to the mood of Döblin's novel than is the praising of the bountiful greatness and perfection of nature to be found in the Tao-te-king.

The theme of fate, the need for humility, the acceptance of life and the longing for salvation are discussed in Döblin's novel in Taoist terms. This does not imply an unquestioning acceptance of the philosophy but an open discussion of the possibility of its realisation; a tragic tension arises between the recognition of the validity of these ethical postulates, the wish to embrace them in life, and the inability to maintain these convictions in the face of the world's challenge.

The historical events and esoteric philosophy are specifically Chinese. The setting is equally reliant upon factual accounts of Chinese life. An amazing, and at times overpowering, amount of detail is incorporated by the author in order to create a realistic image of China. Döblin took much of his information on the popular form of Taoism, this being a mixture of yoga, alchemy, exorcism, geomancy and astrology, from descriptive accounts of Chinese life by the German sinologist, W. Grube.¹ The exhaustive details concerning marriage preliminaries and rites are quoted almost verbatim from this source.² Similarly, details of funerals,³ temple descriptions,⁴ popular beliefs, ceremonies, customs and rites⁵ can all be traced to this source.

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1. W. Grube, Religion und Kultus der Chinesen (Leipzig, 1910); Zur Peking-er Volkskunde (Berlin, 1901).
 2. Wang-lun, p.45 ff. See Grube, Zur Peking-er Volkskunde, pp.11-21.
 3. Wang-lun, pp.21, 45-46. See Grube, Religion und Kultus der Chinesen, p.184 ff.
 4. Wang-lun, p.25 ff. See Grube, Religion und Kultus der Chinesen, pp.121-125.
 5. Wang-lun, pp.110, 130-131, 221. See Grube, Zur Peking-er Volkskunde, pp.81 and 64 ff., and Religion und Kultus der Chinesen, p.150 ff.

Certain events are also adapted from other documentary sources. We find, for example, that the attempt to kill the Emperor by means of sorcery is taken from the historical account of a similar event. The details of the jade effigy and the short biographical note on the woman employed to carry out the crime are given in full by Döblin.¹ The actual historical event has nothing to do with the Emperor Khien-lung, but Döblin has grafted it onto the story. Similarly, the attempt to have the Emperor commit suicide is taken from a popular belief that the spirit of a person who has taken his own life will return and try to persuade others to join him in the after-life. Döblin has eliminated the super natural from the account that he gives and makes it a politically motivated action, but otherwise the details conform to those in the source.²

The vast amount of detail of these various aspects of everyday Chinese life is intended to take effect upon the reader without knowledge of the exact factual basis of the belief or superstition. The impression one gains is of a people who, confronted with a world that they do not understand, explain the phenomena of the world in terms of irrational belief. The mass of superstition is related to the attempt to find peace in the world, to free oneself from suffering and to ensure a place in the paradise of the world to come. Döblin did not intend to give a documentary account of the popular beliefs of China but yet he has, without detracting from the appeal of the novel. The facts are not related to delight the reader by the strange and the bizarre, nor to amuse him. They are related factually, objectively, without comment by the narrator and are a significant statement upon man's attempt to understand the world that surrounds him.

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1. Wang-lun, pp.321-330. See J.J.M. De Groot, The Religious Systems of China (Leyden, 1907), V, 921-924.
 2. Wang-lun, pp.353-359. See De Groot, The Religious Systems of China, V, 714 ff.

Döblin presents in Wang-lun a factual account of life in China during the reign of the Manchu Emperor Khien-lung. There is far less scope for fantasy than Muschg believes.¹ The novel is far more a synthesis of a mass of details taken from descriptive accounts, moulded by the author around the central theme of passivity, also taken from the Chinese, and related to modern Western life by means of the foreword. Though the action transcends Western experience, the specifically Chinese details do contain a theme of universal validity - that of persecution, the suffering inherent in all human life, and a religious and ethical attitude to be adopted.

The author had no interest in the historical reality of China, yet the possibility that contemporary events in China, the emergence of a democracy, had an influence cannot be excluded. China may also be intended as a political metaphor for the Wilhelminian Empire.

This image of China as a reactionary state, in which the static mechanism of the state and the individual's demand for freedom and self-determination are in violent confrontation, is similar to the image that the nineteenth-century writers portrayed, though Döblin gives realistic detail that is lacking in the previous caricatures of China.

A more positive aspect of Wang-lun is the insight into Chinese religions and philosophy which it gives. Hitherto the West had identified all Chinese philosophy with the Confucian code. The interpretation of China had been synonymous with the understanding of Confucianism, despite any discrepancy between the ideal and its practical institutionalised form. Döblin, who admired Confucius, is conscious of the differences between

1. W. Muschg terms the novel 'eine Phantasmagorie' and 'das geniale Gaukelwerk eines Dichters von seltener Phantasie' in 'Zwei Romane Alfred Döblins', p.209.

the individual philosophy and the state that was constructed upon it.¹ He also recognises the importance of a second philosophical system within China, that of Taoism, which he depicts in all its forms. The popular aspects of it are added merely to lend authenticity to the background of the action but the philosophical Taoism, which plays an important part in the destiny of the individuals, has a significance for the author too.

Previously, Döblin had described the individual as a confused web of demonic forces which emanate from below the level of volition, and ultimately destroy him. In Wang-lun the mood is still pessimistic, but there is also the possibility of salvation, which had been lacking in his previous work. This salvation, through passivity, quietism, integration in the natural order and alignment with the cosmic law, is a course of action adopted from the Chinese philosophers.

In a later essay, Das Ich über der Natur,² Döblin's assimilation of Chinese ideas can be seen more clearly. Muschg has recognised this and refers to it as a 'naturwissenschaftlich-taoistisch getonte Schrift',³ in which the conception of 'Ur-ich', 'Ur-Sinn' and 'Ur-Geist' reflects a belief in the cosmic principle, Tao.⁴ For Döblin Taoism was an antidote

1. Döblin was later to publish a selection of the Confucian writings, The Living Thoughts of Confucius (London, 1940) in which he gives a biographical note and underlines certain of the Confucian ideals, for example the connection between human and cosmic order and the dictates of the heavenly law. This work has not been discussed in detail, since Döblin's contribution is simply that of selecting from the Confucian canons in the English translation by James Legge.
2. A. Döblin, Das Ich über der Natur (Berlin, 1927).
3. W. Muschg, 'Alfred Döblin heute', Text und Kritik, 13/14 (1966), 2.
4. This work also gives the first indications of Döblin's interest in Indian religions, which he had first studied during his preparatory work for Wang-lun. This interest is reflected in such later works as Manas (Berlin, 1927); 'Buddho und die Natur', Die neue Rundschau, 32 (1921), 1192-1200; 'Gotamo', Der Piperbote, 1 (1924), 61; 'Von einem Kaufmann und einem Yoghi', Die neue Rundschau, 32 (1921), 761-768.

to the despair of the Western world; it contained a recognition of the essence of reality lacking in Western material, scientific creeds. Döblin is typical of his generation, a generation who sought an alternative to inherited beliefs, and swung between the extremes of revolt and asceticism; Döblin's Wang-lun reflects this crisis:

Dans cette histoire vraie, Döblin découvre toute la problématique de l'Expressionisme: la révolte ou la soumission, le oui au monde ou le refus du monde, enfin ce royaume qui n'est pas de cette terre. Et puis le salut, la pauvreté, la faiblesse, le renoncement à la conquête brutale, la fraternité. 1

The feeling that all Western thought had become bankrupt, and the dissatisfaction with traditional religions led many to seek an answer to the problems of existence in non-western traditions and systems of belief. For a time China provided Döblin with a philosophical refuge from the West and the spiritual guidance that he could not find in institutionalised Western religion.

Taoism's essentially mystical creed conformed with the pantheistic belief that Döblin had developed from Spinoza, and, in its rejection of Reason as the key to the grasping of reality, confirmed Döblin's belief in the limits of the intellect's ability to interpret the reality of the natural world and man's role within it.

Döblin's portrayal of China is a gesture of disdain towards the contemporary Western world. It is not an escape from the crisis of the West but rather a withdrawal into a contemplative study of suffering, and a search for an adequate response to the demands of existence. The novel's theme is a religious and philosophical debate as well as a presentation of a social and political problem. It was the first German imaginative literary work to present a realistic portrayal of Chinese

1. I. and P. Garnier, L'Expressionisme allemand (Paris, 1962), p.104.

social conditions and the inner structure of Chinese society. Though its historical setting is the eighteenth century, its depiction of the state is an accurate picture of life in pre-revolutionary China. More importantly, the novel¹ is indicative of a newly-emerging interest in Taoism, and undoubtedly contributed to its increasing popularity in Germany in the period after the first world-war.²

1. Various excerpts from the novel were later published in journals during the 1920s: A. Döblin, 'Der Überfall auf Chao-Lao-Su', Genius, 3 (1921), 275-278; 'Gespräch im Palast Khien-lungs', Berliner Börsen-Courier, 16.4.1922, pp.5-6; 'Der Kaiser und die Dsungenen. Die Fürstentochter', Das Kunstblatt, 9 (1925), 135-137; 'Ma-Noh', in Die Silbergrüne Dschunke, edited by Hans Leip (Hamburg, 1927), p.6.

2. See above, pp.28-60.

b) Albert Ehrenstein 'Räuber und Soldaten'

The origins of Ehrenstein's interest in China cannot be clearly dated. We know from Döblin's letters that as early as 1912 he shared Martin Buber's interest in Chinese literature and philosophy, and was associated with the Donnerstagsgesellschaft, whose members showed a keen interest in Chinese philosophy. Yet the only evidence of any influence on Ehrenstein's writings is their generally pessimistic tone.

He was critical of Western materialism and turned away from Europe, predicting its decline in 'Das sterbende Europa' and 'Stimme über Barbaropa'.¹ His dissatisfaction and cynicism were expressed in his criticism of traditional religious beliefs in his 'Briefe an Gott',² and in his attacks upon the political parties.

In his Chinese adaptations, the first being verse translations,³ it was the voice of protest and the criticism of social conditions that was to dominate. His novel first appeared with the title Räuber und Soldaten⁴ in 1927 and was later republished under the revised title of Mörder aus Gerechtigkeit together with a number of shorter prose pieces.⁵

It seems that it was the revolutionary theme of the novel that attracted Ehrenstein. Political developments in contemporary China and the attention drawn to them by German communist authors and commentators had made many revise their opinions on China. Ehrenstein presents a theme that is in keeping with this newer view of China as a land of revolutionary activity.

Räuber und Soldaten is based upon the Chinese historical novel

1. A. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, edited by K. Otten (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin-Spandau, 1961), pp.155-159.
2. Gedichte und Prosa, pp.180-229.
3. See below, Chapter IV.
4. A. Ehrenstein, Räuber und Soldaten (Berlin, 1927).
5. A. Ehrenstein, Mörder aus Gerechtigkeit (Berlin, 1931), this is simply a re-arrangement of the chapters of the first edition. For further information on the other prose pieces, see below, Chapter IV.

Shui Hu Chuan,¹ attributed to the fourteenth-century author Shih Nai-an, though some feel he was merely the compiler of the many folk-tales that sprang up around the legendary hero, Sung Chiang. He was a kind of Chinese Robin Hood and a focal point for the creation of heroic legends, which served as a vehicle for the expression of the people's social discontent.

Certain chapters from this novel had appeared in Germany prior to Ehrenstein's adaptation,² but Ehrenstein did not use these as working models. Instead, he employed a Chinese student, Ta Ko An, to make a complete literal translation of the original text which he adapted to his own use. The nature of the original novel is such that a straightforward translation would be unlikely to be successful with European readers. The novel is a collection of brief accounts unified only by the common theme of rebellion. The story deals with a band of 108 men, thirty-six of whom are the main characters and weave in and out of the plot. With its loose, episodic structure and myriad characters, the Chinese novel is unlike any Western prose form.

Ehrenstein's professed intention in adapting this novel was to attempt to influence the German readers' opinions of China and to destroy the false, stylised image that other translations had created in the German imagination.³ Ehrenstein's reference to other novels is misleading, since none had been translated up to this time. The creation of the image is attributable rather to such works as Bierbaum's Das schöne Mädchen von Pao,⁴ which was still widely read, the Turandot theme in the theatre and

1. See All Men are Brothers, translated by P.S. Buck, 2 vols, third revised edition (London, 1957), pp.5-10.
2. M. Kern, Wie Lo Ta unter die Rebellen kam (Leipzig, 1904); H. Rudelsberger, Chinesische Novellen, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1914).
3. See A. Ehrenstein, Räuber und Soldaten (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, 1963), p.185. All further references are to this edition.
4. See above, Chapter II.

Klabund's Kreidekreis.¹ A dislike for such material led Ehrenstein to look elsewhere. He sought the literature of the people and the literature of protest against a corrupt foreign judiciary and administration.

In order to construct a more conventional novel around his source material, Ehrenstein selected episodes dealing with the fate of Wu Sung and reduced the seventy chapters of the original to ten. He also attempted to introduce a theme not present in the original by grafting onto the novel a chapter taken from a second Chinese source in order to unify his material. This second source was the translation of a novella which Ehrenstein found in an academic journal.²

This story, which constitutes Ehrenstein's first chapter, deals with the fate of 'Magister Jao' and his family. The father is an upright, scholarly state official who, through others' neglect of his talent, becomes impoverished. The man of worth is ignored by an uncaring, selfish, insensitive world. Though Jao warns his family of the vicissitudes of fortune, he is himself unable to withstand them; desolate, desperate at the unredeeming callousness of the world, and unable to relieve his family's suffering, he seeks an escape through suicide.

At this point Ehrenstein's fragmentary source breaks off, and this is the end of Ehrenstein's first chapter. He combines this fragmentary tale with the main body of the novel by the introduction of one single paragraph:

Im Laufe der Zeit erhielt der Magister Jao von seiner einzigen Frau zwei seiner Ansicht nach ungeratene Söhne: Wu Ta und Wu Sung. Diese merkten früh, daß ihr Vater von den Sternen und Wissenschaften weder reichlich noch überhaupt leben konnte, hielten nichts

1. See below, Chapter IV.

2. 'Ein Bruchstück chinesischen Meisterlebens' in 'Sprüche und Erzählungen aus dem chinesischen Hausschatz', translated by F. Gützlaff, edited by K. Neumann, Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 16 (1862), 628-650 (pp.643-650).

vom Schrifttum, verachteten alle bebrillte, über jeden Stein der Wirklichkeit stolpernde Gelehrsamkeit und liefen noch jung aus dem Hungerhaus - gingen auf und davon, um nicht auch zu verhungern oder sich totzuarbeiten. Sie waren wohl kleine Faulpelze, aber keine Tunichtgute, sondern im Herzen brave Kinder: jeder von ihnen wäre sofort mit irgendwelchen Reichtümern, wenn er sie erworben hätte, heimgekehrt - nicht nur, um den Eltern zu zeigen, was er zustande gebracht. 1

This is a deviation from the source which has at this point:

Hier müssen wir noch bemerken, dass der Magister Jao von seiner einzigen Frau keinen Sohn erhalten, wohl aber hatte sie ihm eine Tochter geboren, welche den Namen Munglan erhalten. 2

This change is significant, and important for an understanding of the complete novel. In the fragmentary source for chapter one, the old man has only one child, a daughter, who, whilst decorous and poetically talented, can do nothing to alleviate her parents' suffering. By inventing Jao's two prodigal sons, Ehrenstein is able to present an alternative reaction to the world from that of the father's fatalism. The sons' indifference to the family fate is, of course, to be considered immoral and a contradiction of the code of filial piety, but it is an attitude which is forced upon them by the state of society. The world is in disorder; men of merit and ethical principles are neglected, abused and driven to suicide, whilst the ruling classes live in sumptuous, careless comfort. It is a world which lacks compassion and kindness, a world in which the unscrupulous flourish and the noble and weak suffer.

The fate of the parents and daughter is contrasted to that of the sons. The second chapter, which is set in summer, reflects, in the cycle of the seasons, the differing fortunes of the members of the family. The younger son, Wu Sung, is a boisterous and hedonistic youth

1. Räuber und Soldaten, p.5.

2. Gützlaff, p.643. (Orthography as in the original.)

who has achieved fame and been given an Imperial appointment. Links with the previous chapter are established by the comparisons of fortune and by means of dreams, in which Wu Sung is confronted with the privations of his family. Unfortunately, the ethical tone of the novel is not sustained beyond this point. There is little in the work to reinforce the theme of social injustice and revolution. The major part of the novel deals with the sexual exploits of the second son's wife, Goldlotos. These incidents are narrated in a prurient and tediously ironic manner.¹

Only towards the end of the novel does Ehrenstein attempt to re-introduce his social theme. Wu Sung is wrongly accused of complicity in a crime and forced to flee from injustice; his good fortune has been eclipsed. Wu Sung meets his sister, who is now employed in a 'Tee- und Freudenhaus'. Her songs are heavy with social criticism:

Neue kleine Vögel zwitschern, ihre Hälsen sehnen
die Eltern zurück;
Alte Mutter ist mager, doch die Jungen sehr dick.
Kleider und Essen erringen, fällt uns Menschen zu
schwer im Leben.
Oh, hätten wir es so warm wie die fetten
Mandarin-enten, die sich immer so gut betten. 2

Wu Sung murders the mandarin Chêng in order to free his sister and is outlawed for a second time. He then murders Goldlotos in order to avenge his brother's murder at her hands and is forced to flee society and join the brigands of the water meadow.

These unjustly persecuted bandits and exiles do not inspire great admiration in the reader. They are psychopathic killers rather than social outcasts or products of an unjust, corrupt society. The novel further degenerates at this point as the style changes from realistic narration into dreams and allegory.

Wu Sung relives his former experiences and sees himself persecuted

1. Räuber und Soldaten, p.78.

2. Räuber und Soldaten, p.109.

by unseen foes and banished from life. He boards a symbolic boat and crosses from the social world, of morality, to the asocial world of the brigands.

In order to retain some unity of theme, Ehrenstein introduces a Taoist monk with whom Wu Sung debates the problems of existence. The monk advises tranquillity, suppression of passion, and quietistic acceptance as the adequate response to life's challenge. Wu Sung is angered at such passivity and, characteristically, butchers the monk, who, symbolically, comes back to life as a representation of the eternal, indestructible spirit of passivity.

Ehrenstein has obviously tried to introduce a thematic problem similar to that contained in Döblin's novel, though far less skilfully. In this novel, the debate is merely an appendix to the main action of the story, which is marked by a lack of reflective thought and a surfeit of violent or sexual activity.

Wu Sung finally adopts the dress of a Buddhist monk, which symbolises a rejection of his past life, but the duality of violent passion and peaceful calm continues to exist within him. This is stated in the closing passage, in which Wu Sung reflects upon the words of Po-chü-i:

Ich suche den Mann der Arbeit, der heimkehrt zu
des Altertums Sitte, fähig, den Herrscher zu zwingen,
abzuschaffen das Gold; ich suche den gewaltigen
Mann, festhaltend des Reiches Töpferscheibe, die
allen spendet das Geld der Arbeit: die Rundtafel aus
Ton. 1

This call to conscience and to socially acceptable and responsible action is felt by Wu Sung to be the true course in life, but one from which he is excluded by the injustice of the world; and one which his own powerful personality, which seeks activity and tries to forge its own fate, strives against.

1. Räuber und Soldaten, p.184.

He is doomed to become the homeless, asocial wanderer:

Windzerfetzt warf er sich unter das Wetterdach der
leeren Bauernschenke, schrie: 'Wein! Wein!' Und
trank, trank, bis er seine Einsamkeit übersang:
Abend ist, die müden Vögel
Stillt der Wald.
Über ihnen die Wolken
Kehren heim an die Berge.
Unten unter den Menschen bin ich allein,
Der Wanderer des langen Weges 'Nie zurück!' 1

Ehrenstein tries, with little success, to impose a thematic unity on the epic narration of the original. In this he seems to have borrowed from Döblin, but the latter is a talented literary artist whereas Ehrenstein is a mere epigone. The novel is unevenly constructed, episodic and often obscures its theme with trivial details. It is in many ways a Baroque novel, with a picaresque theme of the inconstancy of fate and the rule of Fortuna over men's lives. The world is one of violence and injustice, where each must turn to opportunism or passivity to reach some goal. The style too, with its obtrusive, often ironic, but more frequently tedious narrator resembles that of the Baroque novel.

Ehrenstein claims to have introduced an ethical problem into the original heroic epic, but the greater part of the novel deals with the trivial domestic problems of the second brother, Wu Ta, and his wife's illicit relations. Thus, the protest against corrupt officialdom and the search for justice in a world perverted by immorality is barely seen. The incidents centred around Goldlotos have little to do with this main theme and appear to be added for erotic titillation. Furthermore, the central character, Wu Sung, is without any sympathetic qualities. His action is that of the obsessive psychopath rather than that of a morally outraged protester. He is not the Kohlhaas figure that Ehrenstein claims him to be.

1. Räuber und Soldaten, p.184.

The author has endeavoured, 'unter Beibehaltung des charakteristisch Chinesischen: des folkloristisch, sittengeschichtlich wichtigen Details, ein zusammenhängendes, für Europäer lesenswertes Kunststück zu gestalten'.¹ One must question the success of this undertaking. Similarly, the claim that he counterbalanced the violence and sexuality with a philosophical, problematic theme remains doubtful. The only evidence of the development of this theme is to be found in the final chapter, where Wu Sung is set in a world of meaningless strife and futile struggle against malign forces. In this depiction of a world as a manifestation of evil, Ehrenstein tries to introduce the theme of Döblin's novel, that of challenging one's fate or accepting it fatalistically:

Hinter den mondot phosphoreszierenden
Irrlichtern des Menschensumpfes ringt der Geist
mit dem gefangenen Menschenfleisch, über den
Blutfarben des allzu irdischen, allzu rohen
Piratenlebens spannt sich, türmt sich ein fast
versöhnlicher Regenbogen bis in den Himmel. 2

This would be a fitting description of Döblin's novel, but it is a far too sophisticated analysis of a novel in which the characters appear lacking in spirit, and are nothing more than complexes of behaviouristic urges and libidinous passions. Transcendental values are not suggested in the novel. Religious questions never arise and even where such moral problems as honour in the world enter, they are never derived from a metaphysical basis or religious considerations, but are a simple statement of the Confucian code.

Although the novel is poorly structured and thematically weak, it was successful, as witnessed by its second publication under a revised title. Its popularity also led to a dramatised version for radio, which

1. Räuber und Soldaten, p.186.

2. Räuber und Soldaten, p.187.

was broadcast on 8 June 1932.¹ In this form the violent excesses of the novel were reduced, but the play lacked any lasting dramatic quality:

Eine wilde, blutvolle Geschichte ... Schicksalsfrömmigkeit oder auch nur menschliche Anteilnahme gibt es höchstens als klischeehafte Redefloskel ... Daß man tödliche Intrigen spinnt, geschieht in jener 'Gesellschaft' aus derselben gelangweilten Neugier heraus, aus der man sie auch weitertratscht. 2

Though both the novel and the play are of inferior quality, they are indicative of the changing image of China in the German imagination. The novel coincided with the growing interest in revolutionary China, whose fate was looked upon as predicative for the political development of the whole world, as it stood on the brink of the traditional past and the move into an unsure future.

The novel's only contribution to a better understanding of China and Chinese literature was that it prompted the first translation of the novel into German by a competent sinologist,³ following the success of Ehrenstein's work.

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1. See E.K. Fischer, Das Hörspiel (Stuttgart, 1964), p.301; H. Schwitzke, Reclams Hörspielführer (Stuttgart, 1969), pp.170-172, and Das Hörspiel (Cologne and Berlin, 1963), pp.89, 175-176. The text of the play has since been published, A. Ehrenstein, 'Mörder aus Gerechtigkeit', Rundfunk und Fernsehen, 7 (1959), 203-222.
 2. Schwitzke, Das Hörspiel, p.175.
 3. Die Räuber vom Liang-Shan Moor, translated by F. Kuhn (Leipzig, 1934). The erotic adventures of Goldlotos, which form a separate novella in Chinese, Chin P'ing Mei (The Golden Lotus), were also translated. See Djin Ping Meh, translated by A. and O. Kibat, 2 vols (Gotha, 1928-33); King Ping Meh, translated by F. Kuhn (Leipzig, 1930).

c) Walter Meckauer 'Die Bücher des Kaisers Wutai'

Meckauer's novel¹ is representative of the lively interest in China which developed during the 1920s in Germany. It is, like Döblin's novel, a debate of ethical attitudes but also a literary presentation of the political reality of contemporary China as it slipped into anarchy during the feuds and civil wars that flared up after the abdication of the Manchu Emperor. The author had some personal knowledge of this background, as he had lived in Peking during the years of revolution, 1910-11.

There can be no doubt as to the public success of the novel, which was awarded the Jugendpreis deutscher Erzähler in 1927 and later translated into English.² Loerke, in an afterword to the first edition, attempts to explain the appeal of the novel. Loerke regards Meckauer's turning to China not as an escape from the world of reality, but as a reaction to the lack of public interest in authors other than those who had established their reputations before the first world war. But the novel is not to be read merely as exoticism, or as a rejection of the Western world:

[Meckauer] malt das Reich der Mitte nicht als Allegorie zu Angriff und Abwehr, sondern als Märchenstätte zu anschaulicher Erkenntnis ... Ein solches Reich hat in jeder Wirklichkeit ... Wesen und Gültigkeit, aber es öffnet sich für niemand als Ziel einer Flucht aus kalter Umwelt, es öffnet sich keinem Zorn als Trost für bittere Erfahrung. 3

The novel is a moral debate but, unlike Döblin's novel, its problems are concerned primarily with Chinese society and are not easily understood without some knowledge of the historical and cultural background.

The title of the novel is symbolic. The Emperor Wu Ti (Han Wu Ti or Hsiao Wu) ruled China from 140-87 B.C. and was responsible for the foundation of the Confucian state. He recognised that the most able members of his

1. W. Meckauer, Die Bücher des Kaisers Wutai (Berlin, 1928).
2. W. Meckauer, The Books of Emperor Wu Ti, translated by J.J.S. Garner (London, 1928).
3. Wutai, p.6.

court were of Confucian training and consequently sponsored their teachings and raised Confucianism to the status of a state religion. He later established official specialists of the Wu King (Five Classics), the Confucian canonical books, and founded an academy in which prospective government candidates received a Confucian education.

The title, therefore, symbolises the Confucian basis of ancient China and her native cultural tradition. The novel involves the search for these ancient books and the spirit of the genuine cultural basis of China, which have become lost as a result of Western influence. However, this endeavour is frequently neglected by the main character, who slips into selfishness and cupidity. As the individual loses sight of the true course, the whole Empire begins to collapse and is torn apart by inner feuds and rebellion. The traditional China, which is now only contained in the elusive books, is contrasted with the China of the Taiping rebellion.

The fate of China is exemplified through a single family. The protagonist, Schuji, is a prosperous merchant who has achieved earthly success, and dreams of immortalisation by founding a powerful clan. His pride and ambition are mixed with humility and a recognition of the eternal values recorded in the Imperial books, which he strives to rediscover. But the two endeavours conflict; he is faced with the problem of how to achieve earthly greatness without offending against the ethical code of the Confucian books and without losing sight of his own spiritual being. The finding of the books becomes a symbol for an earthly striving that transcends personal desire, and is equated with the perfect life. Like all ideals it is not realisable; the striving is more important than the truth that is sought.

Sound though this central ethical problem may be, it is marred in this work by an overindulgence in exoticism and a plethora of detail which obscures the central issue and detracts from the book's literary value.

Schuji's early life is centred upon the achievement of earthly honour.

With the help of geomancers, clairvoyants and magicians he establishes his reputation. The references to the use of superstition and primitive religious ritual are intended to indicate China's divergence from the proper way; her people lose sight of the Confucian principles and administer their lives according to primitive religious ritual and superstition. China's decline is reflected in the rise and fall of Schuji's family.

Schuji's eldest son attains high Imperial office through his demonstration of profound wisdom. The boy's spirituality and religiosity suggest a possible means of cultural regeneration through a rejection of the utilitarian creeds that are beginning to infiltrate China from the West. But the complacent optimism engendered in the family by the boy's success is shattered when it is discovered that the daughter has taken as her lover a member of a seditious sectarian group, the 'Dreifaltigkeitsbund'.¹ Thus, the family, the microcosm of the state, is contaminated and bears within it the seeds of its own destruction.

From this time, the inner fragmentation of the state is accelerated. One of Schuji's sons joins the dissident anti-Manchu movement. Father and son are set in opposition to each other as the embodiments of traditional China and the modern China of impatient political discontent. But the father is not without guilt in China's decline. The father believes in the absolute validity of Confucianism, both as a personal ethic and as a state doctrine, but, with the rest of his generation, has allowed it to degenerate into hollow ritual. Only the discovery of the Imperial books can halt the inner decline and re-animate the spirit of the system, which has now become a state machine and an excuse for passivity and conservative acceptance. Its original spirit of mutual love and the personal recognition of absolute moral laws, which formed a society which was regulated by

1. Wutai, p.198. This is a reference to the Triad rebels who were linked with the crypto-Christian Taiping movement. For further information on the Taiping rebellion and the various sects involved see R. Pelissier, The Awakening China, translated by M. Kieffer (New York, 1970), pp.88-121.

individual morality and did not require legal proscriptions, has perished. In this the symbolic overtones of the title are again recognisable. The Emperor Wu Ti had replaced legalist philosophy, with its Machiavellian, suppressive political dogma, by Confucianism. The latter has now degenerated into a form of neo-legalism and the state has become a brutal system of legal suppression, against which the people are beginning to rebel.

The father's belief in moderation and passivity will not allow him to raise arms against the rebels. His belief in the traditional way will not countenance compromise in any form, even though this insistence must necessarily imply his own destruction by the sources of Modernism and Westernism:

Aber er gelobte sich das Mittelmaß zu halten und
seinen Weg weise und ohne Erregung bis ans endliche
Ziel fortzusetzen, was auch immer kommen möchte. 1

This same debate is later conducted between two of Schuji's sons, though in a manner that smacks of Meckauer's sophistry rather than being lucid argument. The confrontation of the brothers is symptomatic of the state of China. The conservative brother would seek to eradicate the rebels, were it not for the demands of Confucian moderation. In reply, the rebel questions this moderation:

So nennst du Mäßigung Nutzen, o, ihr Nützlichen!
Ist nicht Nutzen der Fluch aller Ehrgeizigen? Ist
nicht Zweck die Verdammnis aller Gerechten? Ist
nicht Sinn das Unheil, das die Greuel aller Vorfahren
adelt? 2

The rebel believes in a mystical process of regeneration through the spirit:

Alles Lebende ist ein Verwelken, und alles Welkende
wird ein neuer Sinn für das Kommende. Und das Kommende
schreitet in die Gehege des Engen zertrümmert die
Zäune und Gesetze und verwandelt das Heilige zum
Nutzlosen und das Nutzlose zum Sinn der Geschichte. 3

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1. Wutai, p.218.
 2. Wutai, p.229
 3. Wutai, p.231.

The revolutionary brother's mystical doctrine is an amalgam of basic Christianity and Taoism, which constituted the faith of the Taiping rebels. To the conservative brother this belief in 'Nutzlosigkeit' is contradicted by its utilitarian application to disrupt and destroy the traditions of centuries; it is the 'Eigennutz des Gesetzlosen'. The conservative brother murders the revolutionary and then commits suicide. These acts symbolise the self-destruction of China as the forces of conservatism and revolution struggle for domination.

It is at this point that the father recalls his initial desire to rediscover the books of the Emperor, Wu Ti. He sets out on a pilgrimage through the Empire and witnesses China's self-mutilation. The narrator uses Schuji's journeying through the Empire to give a wider picture of China, though this is, to a great extent, poeticised. There are long descriptions of autumnal scenes of bucolic harmony. The aboriginal Mao tribes are portrayed as a contented, though politically abused people. Meckauer falsifies the historical reality by linking the Taiping rebels with these peasant people. Hungsuitsuen (Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, the Taiping rebel leader) is portrayed as the defender and saviour of this persecuted minority, whereas in reality the rebels, whilst initially finding support among the peasants because of their anti-Manchu activities, lived off the common people by scavenging and intimidation. Schuji sees only the destruction caused by Imperial forces, and the injustice meted out to a social minority group and aspiring political reformers. Thus, Meckauer projects a reconciliation between Schuji, the spirit of Confucian China, the peasant stock and the political reformers. But this possible means of regeneration and reform is frustrated by Imperial intolerance.

Angered by the continued disruption of the state by these rebellious forces, the Emperor employs drachonian measures to eradicate the Mao tribes, among whom the rebels find support.

Against this background the old man's peregrinations continue. The Emperor further counters the support that the scholarly classes give the rebels, by excluding certain classes of people from official education:

Gelehrsamkeit ... dient dem Edlen und Tugendhaften
in des Menschen Herz. Bleibt einem Friedlichen
bei seinem täglichen Wandel noch Zeit und Kraft,
so soll er zu seinem Handwerk das Gute erlernen.
Denk zum Vergleich an einen Hügel, o Schüler, der
vollendet ist bis auf einen Korb Erde - sobald
man dabei stillsteht, so bedeutet es für mich
einen Stillstand. Denk zum Vergleich an einen
ebenen Grund, o Schüler, wo erst ein Korb Erde
abgeworfen ist - solange man damit fortfährt, so
ist es für mich ein Fortschritt. 1

For the Emperor, progress means raising the privileged to positions of power within the state.

Schuji is disorientated by the continuing collapse of China and is tempted by a Mephistophelian spirit of negation to abandon his search. He feels that he is possessed by the 'Geist des Irrtums' and is driven to the verge of suicide. In a dream sequence he is regaled by spirits that reproach him for his shortcomings:

Selbstbeherrschung nennst du die Stumpfheit deines
langen Lebens, das unnütz wie das Leben des Papageien
ist, der ein Jahrtausend lang die Worte der Weisen
nachplappert. 2

Unable to see a way out of the conflicting creeds of modern China, he stands alone:

Ich bin dem Neuen ein Feind, aber ich liebe das Ewig-
Unveraltete in den Schriften der Vergangenheit, das
das Kommende ist. Darum verdächtigen mich die Vor-
nehmen, daß ich ein Neuerer sei, und die Geringen
schmähen mich wie meine Söhne, daß ich meinen niederen
Stand verraten habe und dem alten Gesetz der Herrschaft
anhänge. Nichts mehr steht fest. Nur ich stehe! 3

His search ends when he discovers the Imperial books, the yellowed scrolls

1. Wutai, p.267. This is a quotation from Confucius, cf. R. Wilhelm, Kungfutse (Cologne and Düsseldorf, 1972), p.102, though its use is contradictory to the spirit of the original.
2. Wutai, p.273.
3. Wutai, p.274.

of the Emperor, Wu Ti. However, when he grasps them they crumble into dust in his hands, forming two characters on his palm, which Schuji interprets as: 'Ich bin gestorben, und ich möchte leben'. 1

The dust represents the dead system of Confucianism, which he and his generation had tried so desperately to retain. He now realises that the hollow form is not the meaning of the system. Its true meaning is to be found in the spirit that animates it, a spirit which, contrary to Confucian belief, the narrator interprets mystically:

... und es kam ihm die Erkenntnis, daß nicht der
Staub der Schriften unter der dunklen Erde, sondern
der windgeschwellte Staub der Blumen im Garten der
hellen Erde den Keim des Ewigen trägt. 2

This represents the eternal, inward spirit of China, which transcends historical change and is an expression of a cosmic, not temporal order.

This recognition lives on through Schuji, on whom immortality is bestowed. He wanders the kingdom, unrecognised and unheeded, whilst his fellow men succumb to their violent, selfish passions and destroy each other. Schuji is raised to a symbol of the eternal, inner China of profound spirituality, across the surface of which the ripples of revolution and historical change move. This spirituality is a recognition of the unity of all creation, a cosmic harmony that resides in all things but is continually ignored by men who seek self-realisation in temporal existence and heroic deeds.

Meckauer offers the thesis that China will retain its essentially different, mystical nature, a recognition that he offers the German reader as a solution to all political ills. It is free in its treatment of Chinese history and projects the Taiping rebels as the force of renewal,

1. Wutai, p.280.

2. Wutai, p.281.

the spirit of social reform and spiritual regeneration. In this there seems to be a suggestion of a link between China and Europe, since the Taiping rebels represent a mixing of the basis of Christian teaching with native Taoist philosophy. The amalgam of Christianity, Taoism and Confucianism seems to be the suggested solution to the chaotic and revolutionary nature of China and the world.

The work does not communicate its message very well. Without details of the various social changes that form the background to the work, and of the nature of the conflict between tradition and reform, the statement of the problem becomes lost behind an overdetailed and tedious depiction of religious customs, superstitions and ceremonials. The heavy symbolism also appears too obtrusive to the reader. Similarly, excessive use of dreams and portents, which have a validity within the symbolic mode of the novel but which are also part of the statement of a people who have abandoned the true way and slipped into the errors of primitive religious superstitions, have a conflicting role. They are on the one hand part of the fictionalised account of the degenerate nature of the Chinese, and on the other hand are symbolic additions. Although the novel has no lasting literary value, it represents the contemporary interest in Chinese philosophy and the political fate of China.

CHAPTER IV : KLABUND : THE VISION OF CHINA

Although Klabund¹ was an extremely popular and successful author during his lifetime, his work has received little critical attention. His affinity with others of his generation has been noted,² an affinity that is recognisable in his loss of confidence in the Western spiritual world. Klabund turned to the Orient, whose poetry reflected his melancholy and whose philosophy provided an ethical and religious creed which had retained its validity whilst Western thought had, for Klabund's generation, become bankrupt and outmoded. Klabund's popularity among his contemporaries was founded upon his role as transmitter of the ancient wisdom and culture of China.³ When the fashionable interest in China subsided and was replaced by a renaissance of Germanic cultural pride and a belief in the need for spiritual regeneration from within the native cultural tradition, such alien influences as Klabund exhibited were despised and his work was proscribed.

Klabund's contact with Chinese literature and thought is important since his work not only reflects the popular image of China among his generation but was also one of the creators of this image. His study of China was sustained over a longer period than was the case with the majority of his contemporaries, yet the reasons for his interest in China were essentially the same. China is the vaguest of concepts; it is a realm of escape, and a negation of the problems that faced the Western world. Klabund distorts his source material and embellishes it with fanciful imaginings. He creates an idiosyncratic philosophy composed of random and heterogeneous elements which he culled from unreliable sinological studies; this philosophy is an inconsequential mysticism that stems from

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1. This was the pseudonym adopted by Alfred Henschke.
 2. A. Soergel and C. Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit (Düsseldorf, 1963), II, 453.
 3. This is confirmed by H. Friedemann and O. Mann, Deutsche Literatur im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert (Heidelberg, 1961), II, 39 : Ein Lieddichter ... war ... Klabund, der allerdings durch seine Nachdichtungen aus dem Chinesischen bekannter geworden ist als durch seine eigenen Gedichtbände.

a neurotic inability to accept reality and transforms it into a vision of providence and salvation.

Klabund's literary career began in his student days with passionate lyrical verses which were violent in their rejection of the hypocrisy of the age and treated sexual themes with such frankness that the author found himself in conflict with the censors.¹ The mood of this early lyric is best seen in the collection Morgenrot! Klabund! Die Tage dämmern,² an apostrophisation of the spirit of renewal. These vigorous but unbalanced outbursts of impatient discontent were suffused with a spirit of vitalism and Nietzschean arrogance and disdain for the trivial, mundane activities of the bourgeois. This style was halted by the outbreak of war, which Klabund welcomed with a number of bellicose works intended to instill the spirit of patriotism in his countrymen.³ Klabund later regretted this aberration, when he recognised the senseless carnage of war and was converted to the pacifists' cause. Eager to give voice to his new creed, he published an open letter to the Kaiser,⁴ in which he documented the sorrow, suffering and anguish of his generation. The criticism of the Kaiser implicit in the letter brought a charge of lèse majesté against Klabund, who was forced to flee Germany and seek refuge in Switzerland.

The experience of war seems to have been the decisive influence in Klabund's rejection of the West. He turned to the timeless sphere of Asia,

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1. Details of this can be found in J. Tatzel, 'Klabund' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Vienna, 1953), and H. Grothe, Klabund. Leben und Werk eines Dichters (Berlin, 1933).
 2. Klabund, Morgenrot! Klabund! Die Tage dämmern! (Berlin, 1912).
 3. Klabund, Klabunds Soldatenlieder (Dachau, 1914), also a cycle of one-act plays entitled Kleines Kaliber, unpublished, which was performed in the Munich Kammerspiele and ran for a year. For further details see J. Tatzel, 'Klabund'.
 4. See Klabund, 'Bußpredigt', Die weißen Blätter, 5 (1918), 106.

where he sought out the sages and poets,¹ from whose wisdom he endeavoured to recreate a world that had been shattered by despair and disillusion. Klabund could not find a material answer to his problems and those of the contemporary world. He generated an idealistic philosophy in which the issues of temporal existence were replaced by a cosmic vision. The political content of this creed visualised social reform by adherence to a mystical principle. Hence, although Taoism and Confucianism are intermingled in his work, the former is more in evidence, and the latter is given a religious interpretation that is lacking in the original.

a) The Prose Work

The first use of China in Klabund's prose work is the essay Der Dichter und der Kaiser.² Although the sub-title reads ein chinesisches Märchen, the story is not based on a Chinese original, but is an account of the events surrounding Klabund's open letter to the Kaiser. It is an example of China as a metaphor for specifically German affairs, a technique that was frequently used in the nineteenth century to satirise political conditions and avoid censorship. Wilhelminian Germany is likened to the T'ang Dynasty. Such political comparisons were to be used later by Brecht in a fuller and more complex form in such works as Turandot and Der Tui-Roman, in which the Imperial structure with its vast bureaucracy and hierarchy was satirised by a comparison with pre-revolutionary China. When compared with the use of the Chinese metaphor in the nineteenth century and Brecht's later application of it as an alienation technique, Klabund's satire appears superficial and its alienation too transparent. Memories of the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1912 probably prompted the comparison between China and Germany. China is clearly still regarded

1. Klabund, Mohammed (Berlin, 1917); Das Sinngedicht des persischen Zeltmachers (Munich, 1917).

2. Klabund, 'Der Dichter und der Kaiser', Das junge Deutschland, 1 (1918), 79.

as the reactionary state which can be used poetically to represent intolerance and absolute, despotic rule.

Revolt against outmoded and reactionary government is symbolised by the removal of the pigtail. This act is a gesture of defiance against the Zopfsystem :

Es lebte im alten China zur Zeit der Thangdynastie, welche in große und gefährliche Kriege gegen ihre Nachbarn verwickelt war, ein junger Dichter namens Hen-Tsch-Ke, der wagte es eines Tages, sich den Zopf abzuschneiden und also durch die Straßen von Peking zu spazieren. 1

The story ends on a melancholic note with the exiled poet bemoaning the fate which will overtake the Emperor, who has ignored his fateful warnings.

Klabund returned to the Imperial theme in Der letzte Kaiser,² which, as the title suggests, deals with the end of dynastic rule, and the transition from monarchy to democracy. Written in 1923, it is a somewhat belated and poeticised version of the events surrounding the abdication of the boy Emperor and the struggle for political power in the newly-established democratic China. Historical facts such as the puppet nature of the incumbent Emperor, the influence of the Dowager Empress, the infiltration of foreign political ideologies and the general turmoil of a nation that was caught between the forces of a seemingly timeless tradition and the irresistible influx of Westernism, are mixed with fanciful speculation on the sensitive inner life of the Emperor, a political pawn in the world of brutal reality. The piece is sentimental and naïve; it is an ode to the passing of the Imperial ideal. Klabund visualises China as a poetic and aesthetic realm, in which life is harmoniously regulated according to a cosmic order. He portrays the destruction of this ideal

1. Klabund, 'Der Dichter und der Kaiser', 79.

2. Klabund, Der letzte Kaiser (Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1923). Quoted here from Klabund. Der himmlische Vagant, edited by M. Kesting (Cologne, 1968), pp.261-273. All further references to this edition are in the form of Vagant and page number. This work is not to be confused with Klabund, Der himmlische Vagant (Munich, 1919).

by alien political dogma.

Klabund's Emperor is a political anachronism; the last vestiges of Imperial power rest with the scheming Dowager Empress. The boy's temperament is that of the decadent German aesthete. Irremediably bored, he feels tedium at the grey lifelessness of the world and yearns for erotic pursuits.¹ The tale is full of portents of doom, symbols abound: he gives away his ring, the symbol of his office, to a girl whom he meets quite fortuitously; he witnesses a performance of 'Der letzte Kaiser der Mingdynastie', which presages his own fate; he buys a kite, 'den heiligen gelben Drachen', divine symbol of the Manchu Dynasty, but loses it as it drifts back to its ethereal home, severing contact between God and the world. Eager to solve the riddle of existence, he consults a seer, who advises him:

Der Große opfere sich um ein Kleines, der Kleine
um ein Großes auf. Das Opfer ist der Sinn des
Lebens und der Sinn des Todes. 2

This philosophy of self-sacrifice indicates the boy's role within the declining monarchy: he must die to allow China to survive.

The naïveté that Klabund's figure demonstrates when he is confronted with the political reformers' demands for 'Menschenrechte: Die Freiheit, die Demokratie, das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker', is rather exaggerated:

Der Kaiser buchstabierte vor sich hin: ... 'Men-schen-rechte ... was bedeutet denn das? China ist doch ein Kaiserreich seit Jahrtausenden. Der Kaiser ist der Sohn des Himmels, der Mittler zwischen den

1. Vagant, p.263. Certain incidents are borrowed from accounts of court life, in which it is reported that many of the princes often dressed as common beggars and sought vicarious pleasures in Peking. See J.O.P. Bland and E. Backhouse, China under the Empress Dowager (London, 1910). Klabund was probably familiar with this work in the German translation, China unter der Kaiserin Witwe. Die Lebens- und Zeitgeschichte der Kaiserin Tzu Hsi (Berlin, 1912).

2. Vagant, p.267.

Menschen und Schang-ti, dem Geist des Himmels.
 Wie wollen sie mit den Göttern verkehren, wenn
 sie keinen Kaiser mehr haben?' 1

The Emperor is caught between the rebels, who strive to release China from the Imperial system, and the Dowager Empress, who is struggling to retain her power over the Imperial house and the Empire. The Emperor's response to this problem is to commit the final act of selflessness, suicide, by which he hopes to avert the violent confrontation between the forces of modernism and conservatism. No clear outcome is given by Klabund other than in the closing lines, which juxtapose two events:

Auf dem Bahnhof lief der sibirische Expresß ein.
 Um diese Stunde stürmten die Rebellen den Palast. 2

This seems to suggest the usurpation of power by communist forces.

The story is a blend of fact and fiction, documented historical detail and romantic embellishment. One can isolate the historical facts from which Klabund has worked. The figure of the Dowager Empress, Tsze-hsi, the implacable force of reaction within the declining Ch'ing Dynasty, is in keeping with her historical counterpart. The young Emperor of Klabund's story can be identified with the Emperor Kwang-sü, who, as Klabund rightly indicates, was Emperor in name alone, since the real political power was held by the Dowager Empress. However, the Emperor's death was not the heroic and romantic act of self-sacrifice portrayed by Klabund; Kwang-sü died of natural causes on November 14 1908. Klabund also omits to mention that the Dowager Empress died on the following day and that, since Kwang-sü had died without issue, his nephew, P'u-i, was nominated as his successor. The figure we find in Klabund's work is, therefore, not the last but the penultimate Emperor.

1. Vagant, p.268.

2. Vagant, p.273.

It is also wrong to portray Kwang-sü as an unworldly dreamer. He made serious efforts to accommodate the political wishes of the democratic movement but was frustrated by the Dowager Empress's intervention. The role of external political influences, particularly Russian, and the infiltration of Western ideas is rightly assessed by Klabund.

In the figure of the Emperor, Klabund develops the theme of the disparity between a personal and individual fate and an impersonal, political role. The Emperor's natural innocence resides in his unquestioning acceptance of a divinely ordained social hierarchy, and his particular role within it. The emergence of political opinions which seek to overthrow this social structure is representative of a loss of human innocence and the Imperial ideal, as people strive to determine their own fate with no consideration of the religious basis of the state.

Bithell sums this up in the following manner:

A fragile recreation of the willow-pattern conception of China and at the same time a deeply suggestive symbolization of its effacement by Bolshevist ideas from the barbaric West, the dissipation of the delicate webs of dream by alien and brute thought. 1

This mixture of history and fairy-tale illustrates Klabund's response to the political reality of China. The traditional political and social structure is depicted, in an idealistic way, as a theocentric society; no hint is given of injustices, inequality, abuse, oppression. This paradise is threatened by individualism, which enters from the West, and the call for self-determination. The belief in the harmony of social and religious forces within traditional Chinese society is a modern counterpart to the Romantic attachment to the ideal of the Middle Ages. Whereas the Romantics looked to a lost age within their own culture, Klabund and his contemporaries recognised in China a political, religious and social

1. J. Bithell, Modern German Literature, third edition (London, 1959), p.248. See also p.363: 'This dainty chinoiserie is recent history yet märchenhaft with its willow-pattern scenery ... And - the dragon snatching the fairy - there is at the end the blatant blast of Communism in the raw raving of a common soldier guarding the filigree palace.'

development that stood in stark contrast to the fragmentation of the West through the proliferation of political, social and religious creeds. This ideal was just as unreal as the Romantics' picture of medieval Europe. The inner collapse of China seemed, precisely because it was due to Western influence, to confirm Spengler's thesis of Western cultural decline. The processes that had caused this Western disintegration could be seen repeated in concentrated form in China.

Klabund was not the only author to treat the events surrounding the decline of the Ch'ing Dynasty. Irene Forbes-Mosse's Märchen, 'Der kleine chinesische Prinz spricht zu seinem Hündchen',¹ is a sentimental portrayal of the Dowager Empress's treatment of the boy Emperor:

Komm, Wu, krieche in meine Jacke, lege deine platte
Nase fest an meinen Hals, da wo mein Herz schlägt ...
Die Gärten sind ummauert, aber der Palast ist sehr
groß, Wu, wir können lange durch Gemächer gehen, in
denen wir noch nie gewesen. Aber irgendwo träfen
wir die alte böse Frau mit dem Gesicht wie gesprungener
Lack, die mich herbringen ließ. 2

The story is intended to evoke an emotional response and distorts historical fact to this end. The same factual error, the confusion of the last Emperor with his uncle, is also to be found. It is a piece of chinoiserie, a poeticised account of contemporary political events in China, and shows the readiness of author and reader to accept an image of China that accords with the romantic imagination rather than with political reality. This is all the more strange in the case of this story since it was published in März, a journal that contained accurate reports of contemporary history and included many pieces on the troubles in China, including the Emperor's abdication.

The same historical situation forms the background for Ehrenstein's

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1. I. Forbes-Mosse, 'Der kleine chinesische Prinz spricht zu seinem Hündchen', März, 7 (1913), 97-98.
 2. I. Forbes-Mosse, p.97.

Tai-gin,¹ which first appeared in 1912 in the collection Selbstmord eines Katers:

Es war einmal eine Kaiserin in China ... Dieweil ihr grausamer Gatte gestorben, ihr Sohn Tai-gin, der einzige männliche Sprosse des einem raschen Absterben verfallenen Geschlechts, noch k[l]ein und sein Zopf noch unentwickelt war, führte sie an seiner Statt die Regierung. 2

This story is to be found in two forms;³ in the first it is an independent story and in the second it appears as an interpolated dream in a longer piece. In this second form it is an allegory of the central character's own existence, the 'Offenbarung seines Seins und Wesens'.⁴ The Emperor's incarceration is equated with the young man's yearning for sexual experience which is frustrated by the repressive domestic atmosphere and the sexual taboos of society.

In Ehrenstein's Freudian account of the Emperor's life, the boy is kept from the world, raised by eunuchs and ordered 'Gemächer, in denen sich Männer und Mädchen ... oder ... Frauen allein befänden, alsoogleich mit geschlossenen Augen zu verlassen'.⁵ He is to be kept chaste until he marries, but revolts against this treatment and takes a lover. When she is murdered and he is forced to submit to an Imperial arranged marriage, he is disgusted by the prospect and pines to death:

Ihn schauderte vor einer Wiederholung des Spiels mit der Ertrunkenen, ... ein Grauen und Ekel faßte das Kaiserliche in ihm ... Und eine unendliche Sehnsucht nach den Pupurgebirgen ergriff ihn und nahm ihn hinweg im zwanzigsten Jahre seines Lebens. 6

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1. A. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, edited by K. Otten (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin-Spandau, 1961), pp.310-323.
 2. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, p.310.
 3. See Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, p.499.
 4. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, p.318.
 5. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, p.311.
 6. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, p.317.

Ehrenstein does not examine the political events in the declining years of the Manchu Dynasty. He uses China to symbolise a society which, by the perversion of natural urges, has sown the seeds of its own destruction. The social and sexual mores of the Imperial court are intended to represent the European perversion of sexual attitudes.

The inner life of the Manchu court was also exposed in what purported to be a biography of the Chief Eunuch, 'eine der besten Sittenschilderungen, die wir vom chinesischen Hofleben der niedergehenden Mandschudynastie besitzen'.¹ Hermann Graf Keyserling also gave an account of these events in his popular Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen which was published on his return from his Oriental travels.²

Clearly, there was immense interest in China's political fate; the story of the boy Emperor touched the hearts of many Europeans. These fictional accounts of court life, however, show more interest in an imaginative interpretation of the events and a fascination with the fabled China of the fairy-tale rather than the hard facts of history. There is an obvious inclination towards idealism in these fictional accounts; the traditional China is seen as an alternative to that of the modern Western world.

Klabund did not treat contemporary Chinese events in any other of his prose works, but he did use the same blend of religion, philosophy and abstract political theory implicit in the works discussed above in other stories based upon Chinese sources. For example, Die zwei Reiche³ is a portrayal of the degeneration of mankind. It opens with a description of a Golden Age, in which man lives in blissful harmony

1. Liang Yen, 'Li-Lien-Ying. Biographie des Obereunuchen Li-Lien-Ying unter der Regentenschaft der Kaiserin-Witwe Tzu-Hsi', März, 7 (1913), 589-600, 631-639, 667-675, 703-711, 735-742 (p.589).
2. H. Keyserling, Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen, fifth edition (Darmstadt, 1921), II, 502.
3. Klabund, 'Die zwei Reiche', Das junge Deutschland, 3 (1920), 145-147.

with the will of heaven. In this utopian world, a strict code of social and family relations based upon reciprocity prevails. Within this patriarchal state the will of heaven is mediated to the people through the prince and the sage. People live in pious humility, without pride or hubris, conscious of their temporal and spiritual roles in a universe guided by a benign deity.

Klabund's story has no historical setting, but there is mention of a modern age in which people turn away from the revered customs, fall into depravity and dislocate the divinely pre-ordained harmony of the world. Their corporate identity is lost, their activity is now dictated by self-interest, greed and acquisitiveness. With the loss of divine prescripts, the world sinks into absurdity:

So sprachen sie und sprachen Ungedachtes. Sie sprachen nur, um zu sprechen, und dachten nur, um zu denken. Und also ward die Einheit von Gedanke und Handlung zerrissen in seine böse Zweiheit. 1

This piece is not a translation, as has been assumed,² nor is the problem dealt with a specifically Chinese one. Such ideas of a past Golden Age are, of course, common to all cultures. Klabund is portraying a process of degeneration that he considers common to all peoples. Although the story does not have a Chinese original, it is based upon a 'Chinese' source, namely Windischmann's discussion of Chinese history.³ In this work one finds the following description of the earliest stage of Chinese culture:

Früher aber war das Leben zu einfach, beschäftigt und ernst, um sich in Reflexionen zu verbreiten, welche Zeit kosten. Wenig Städte, gemeinschaftliche Erziehung der Kinder, öffentliches Eigentum der Güter, Reichthum ohne Privatbesitz (sic) und somit

1. Klabund, 'Die zwei Reiche', p.146.

2. Die goldene Bombe. Expressionistische Märchendichtungen und Grotesken, edited by H. Geerken (Darmstadt, 1970), p.392.

3. C.J.H. Windischmann, Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte (Bonn, 1827).

vielfache Beschäftigung des Lebens - dies alles war nicht geeignet zu feinerer Bildung; aber die Tüchtigkeit der Herzen und der Scharfblick (sic) des Geistes auf das Wesentliche wurde bewahrt. Selten waren Palläste (sic); nur bei feierlichen Gebräuchen bediente man sich goldgewirkter Seidenstoffe; nichts Raffiniertes war in Musik und Tanz; aber die Aermsten hatten Wohnung, Nahrung ohne Lebensgefahr und ohne Niederträchtigkeit und die Reichsten lebten von der Arbeit. Der Sohn war der erste Diener seines Vaters, die Frau die geliebte Freundin ihres Mannes, die Brüder liebten, die Verwandten suchten, die Nachbarn unterstützten (sic) sich; Wittwen (sic), Weisen (sic) und Greise wurden aus öffentlichem Schatz (sic) ernährt; Ansehen, Alter und Tugend wurden geehrt und das Vergnügen entzog der Pflicht nichts; auch des Fürsten Hofstaat war ohne Aufwand, seine Pferde ganz gewöhnlich und Glanz und Reichthum ohne Tugend würde in dieser Zeit entbehrt haben. 1

This description conforms to that given by Klabund. Similarly,

Windischmann's explanation of the degenerative process:

... durch schlechte Fürsten und durch die Verwirrungen des Feudalismus [wurden] die Geister noch mehr als vorher getheilt, die Meinungen vervielfältigt und verwickelt (sic) und durch Luxus und Hang zur Neuerung den gewöhnlichsten Talenten Raum gegeben ..., durch Paradoxieen zu glänzen. Der falsche Schimmer der Systeme, der Geschmack (sic) am Wunderbaren, die Frivolität und die Raffinerien der Bildung zogen eine Menge kriechender Nachbeter immer mehr ab von der rechten Bahn ... Die alten erhabenen Principien wurden problematisch; die Sitte hatte ihre Autorität verloren und als Confucius geboren wurde, war die Wahrheit verfinstert und schimmerte nur in einzelnen Stralen (sic) durch. 2

is developed by Klabund in fictional form. Klabund's conclusion, however, deviates from his source. Windischmann rightly attributes to Confucius the attempt to restore order in the Empire by the compilation of canonical works as a record of the ancient principles by which society had been organised and harmonised. Klabund, in contrast, develops the figures of the prince and the sage, and makes them into the propagators of a creed that is nominally Taoist. Klabund's doctrine of 'I-hi-wei oder die Lehre vom heiligen Dreiklang' can be traced to Windischmann's interpretation of M. A. Rémusat's translation of certain

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1. Windischmann, p.59. (Orthography as in the original).
 2. Windischmann, pp.60-61. (Orthography as in the original).

sections of the Tao-te-king.¹ Klabund was later to develop this theme in a cycle of poems.²

Although Klabund's stories are independent creations around Chinese motifs, original Chinese fairy-tales were published in translation, and proved extremely popular in Germany. Ehrenstein followed this fashion and included a Chinese novella, Die vier Frauen des treuen Liang, and a collection of Chinese Sonderbare Geschichten³ in the revised edition of Räuber und Soldaten.⁴ These stories are in a strikingly different style to the novel; there is none of the tone of revolutionary violence of the novel in these fairy-tales. In the afterword to the first edition of the Chinese novel, Ehrenstein was harshly critical of the Chinese literature available in Germany:

Was wir gewöhnlich in den chinesischen Romanen, die bis zu uns dringen, kennenlernen, sind: kleinfüßige Prinzessinen, blaustrümpfige Turandots, die in der Lyrik brillieren, ehe der gleichfalls lyrisch bewanderte, aber auch körperkräftige Mandarin sie endlich schnappt. Dieser befreit gewöhnlich ein kaiserliches Heer (unter der Führung des Vaters seiner Liebsten) aus der Zernierung und bekommt zum Lohn dafür seine lyrische Korrespondentin; zum Lohn aber seiner kindlichen Pietät heiratet der glückliche und jugendliche Bigamist gleichzeitig ein Bäslein, mit dem ihn sein Vater, ohne

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1. Windischmann, pp.402-406, attempts to interpret certain sections of M.A. Rémusat, Mémoires sur la vie et les opinions de Lao-tseu (Paris, 1832), pp.40-42. Rémusat finds the characters I, Hi, Wei of aphorism 14 of the Tao-te-king untranslatable and incomprehensible. Windischmann explains these characters not by their meaning but by their phonological values, and sees them as an expression of the name Jaweh. He gives a few, unclear notes to support this. It is in keeping with his interpretation of Lao-tse as the embodiment of divine spirit which appeared in several incarnations. Windischmann's work, which is a general history of philosophical thought and cultural development, is not a sinological study in the strict academic sense and is extremely unreliable. It reflects the low level of interest of German scholars in Chinese philosophy and culture in the nineteenth century.
 2. Klabund, Dreiklang (Berlin, 1919). See below, pp.232-235.
 3. A. Ehrenstein, Mörder aus Gerechtigkeit (Berlin, 1931), pp.251-357, 359-394.
 4. See above, pp.134-142.

ihn zu fragen, nur weil sie die Tochter eines armen Jugendfreundes ist, verlobt hatte. Solche Doppelhochzeit ist der Wunschtraum jedes chinesischen Roman-Literaten, der zu diesem Zweck in den Schulen der Weisheit von der Pike auf büffelt. Die sentimentale Tripelallianz wird natürlich unter der Patronanz des Drachenkaisers geschlossen und der Leser meist mit der Aussicht entlassen, daß sich das glückliche Trifolium bis ans Lebensende wacker andichten wird. 1

Hespeke of his 'Abneigung gegen den penetranten Zuckerguß derartiger Süßspeise', but he must later have overcome this aversion since Die vier Frauen des treuen Liang is, with the addition of two more wives, exactly the story he refers to above. Ehrenstein's version is not translated from the Chinese but is an adaptation of an older German translation, Das Blumenblatt,² made by H. Kurz.

The story has little to commend it. Liang is consumed with love for Jaosien; his tormented soul speaks in sentimental clichés:

Ist es die Göttin des Mondes ... oder ist es ein Engel,
der im Himmel wohnt? Ich fürchte sehr, sie raubt den
Menschen die Seele und entflieht dann wieder. 3

His love prevails, despite his family's wishes that he marry another woman. He is able to combine filial piety with personal inclination by marrying both women. Such a story is precisely the kind of chinoiserie that Ehrenstein had reacted against and sought to counter with the publication of his 'revolutionary' novel. It seems that Ehrenstein, taking note of the fashionable interest in China, recognised the possibility of financial reward in adapting and publishing these stories, despite the fact that they contradicted his own literary creed and his view of China as a political realm rather than an exotic escape from the problems of existence.

The collection of Sonderbare Geschichten is taken from a number of sources. The majority of the stories are from the Chinese Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan

1. A. Ehrenstein, Räuber und Soldaten (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, 1963), p.185.
2. H. Kurz, Das Blumenblatt (St Gallen, 1836).
3. Ehrenstein, Mörder aus Gerechtigkeit, p.262.

(Strange Stories of Old and Modern Times), a collection of fairy-tales and folk-tales that became very popular in Germany. The individual stories are adapted from various existing European translations. 'Die blutige Rache des Blumenmädchens' is an adaptation of A. Boettger's Wang Keaou Lwan Pih Nöen Chang Han,¹ which had been adapted from an English translation² and was first published in 1847. Ehrenstein gives Arthur Waley as the source for 'Sung Yü: Der Wüstling', 'Po Hsing Tschien: Der verliebte Student' and 'Bohnenbrei'. This is not the case; they are taken from an earlier anonymous German translation of A. Rémusat's French edition of Chinese tales.³ The other stories in Ehrenstein's collection are taken from Pu Sung Ling's Liao-chai chi yi (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio), which he knew in the translation made by H.A. Giles. The three stories, 'Der Mondhase holt die Füchsin', 'Studium in der Unterwelt' and 'Die gute Nase' are all quite literal translations from the English.⁴

The stories are a mixture of supernatural tales and humorous anecdotes. 'Sung Yü: Der Wüstling' tells of intrigue at court. Sung Yü's opponent tries to discredit him by accusing him of lascivious behaviour. When questioned by the Emperor, Sung Yü explains that he has resisted the charms of the most beautiful women of Ch'u whereas Feng Tu, his rival, is married to an ugly woman who has borne him five children. Sung Yü concludes:

Wenn jemand auf der Erde um Gnade bitten darf,
möcht ich Euer Majestät nahelegen, vielleicht zu

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1. A. Boettger, Wang Keaou Lwan Pih Nöen Chang Han oder Die blutige Rache einer jungen Frau (Leipzig, 1847).
 2. Sloth, [R. Thom], Wang Keaou Lwan Pih Nöen Chang Han or The Lasting Resentment of Miss Keaou Lwan Wang (Canton, 1839).
 3. M.A. Rémusat, Chinesische Erzählungen (Leipzig, 1827).
 4. Cf. H.A. Giles, 'A Supernatural Wife', 'The Man Who was Thrown Down a Well', 'Smelling Essays' in Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio, fourth revised edition (Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, 1926), pp.364-366, 224-229, 347-348.

erwägen, wer von uns beiden der Verführer, wer
von uns zweien ein Wüstling ist. 1

Equally amusing is the satire upon official advancement, 'Die gute Nase', in which a priest's prognostications of success in the Imperial examinations reveal a discrepancy between true scholarship and public recognition of the candidate's qualities. Others of the collection are of a trivial, exotic nature. 'Po Hsing Tschien: Der verliebte Student', for example, is a variation on the theme of the prodigal son, though with details of the youth's depravity which one seldom finds in literature of quality.

The majority of the tales deal with supernatural themes such as that of 'Der Mondhase holt die Füchsin'. The spirit of a fox returns to aid a past benefactor and transports him from the sphere of earthly toil into an ethereal realm. These stories reflect the interest in Chinese fairytales which had developed after the publication of Martin Buber's Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten in 1911. Buber's stories, which are all adapted from Giles, were extremely popular in Germany and were republished in 1922 when there was considerable interest in Chinese literature in Germany. An anonymous reviewer explains the appeal of these stories:

Sie erzählen fast durchweg von der Liebe zwischen Geistern und Menschen. Aber die Art, wie sie davon erzählen, hat nichts gemein mit den Gespenstergeschichten des Abendlandes. Kein Grauen, keine Unheimlichkeit; der Liebesverkehr der Geister wird in einer köstlich unbefangenen Weise wie etwas Natürliches und Selbstverständliches geschildert ... es geht ein tiefes Gefühl der Einheit alles Seins durch die Erzählungen ... Die entzückende Naivität ... die schlichte, kristallklare Darstellung der Wesen und ihrer seltsamen Beziehungen zueinander setzen diese Geschichten neben die schönsten Novellen der Welt. 2

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1. M. Buber, Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten (Frankfurt am Main, 1911).
 2. Anon., 'Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten', Die Aktion, 2 (1912), 566.

Hermann Hesse read the tales with equal enthusiasm:

Es sind volkstümliche Spukgeschichten, die ganz wie ihre europäischen Schwestern von Geistern Verstorbener und Dämonen, von Träumen und Visionen handeln. Nur ist die Welt des Tages und des Menschentums zu der Welt der Nacht und des Dämonischen nicht in einen scharfen Gegensatz gestellt. 1

It should be noted, however, that the occult features referred to by both commentators serve a different function in the original Liao-chai chi yi. These stories are a form of social criticism. It is usually thought that the supernatural occurrences related in these tales are a simple alienation device used to veil the criticism in a folk-tale form. They are a mixture of wild and often grotesque romanticism and bitter social criticism. The German translations do not retain this element of social critique, since it cannot be transferred from Chinese to German social life, and are simply bizarre, exotic, fantastic and frequently erotic tales. The German translations were read as the products of the romantic imagination, a mythical, magical strain of thought that had disappeared from German literature. The original Chinese collection contains a foreword by Pu Sung Ling in which he denounces the corruption of the age and points to the faults of society; the German translations omit this social qualification and are, therefore, read differently.

Prior to the appearance of Buber's translations very few examples of Chinese prose had been available in German. One can refer only to E. Grisebach's² adaptations and G. Gast's³ translations. The success of Buber's collection, however, prompted others to prepare translations, for

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1. H. Hesse, 'Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten', Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 25 March 1912, p.15. See also H. Hesse, 'Chinesische Geistergeschichten', März, 7 (1913), 179-182.
 2. E. Grisebach, Die treulose Witwe (Vienna, 1873); Die treulose Witwe (Stuttgart, 1877); Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan. Neue und alte Novellen der chinesischen 1001 Nacht (Stuttgart, 1880); Chinesische Novellen (Leipzig, 1884).
 3. G. Gast, Chinesische Novellen (Leipzig, 1901); Märchen-Bilder aus dem Reich der Mitte (Leipzig, 1901); So war es! Chinesische Märchen und Geschichten für jung und alt (Leipzig, 1902).

example Leo Greiner's selection from the Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan, Chinesische Abende,¹ which was adapted from Grisebach, and P. Kühnel's Chinesische Novellen,² which were translated from French editions of Chinese tales prepared by T. Pavie and the Marquis d'Hervey Saint Denys.³ The first genuine translations to appear in German were H. Rudelsberger's Chinesische Novellen,⁴ although they are not novellas but passages taken from two historical novels, San Kuo Tschü (History of the Three Kingdoms) and Shui Hu Chuan (The Water Meadow). Besides these there was also Chang Wu's 105 interessante chinesische Erzählungen of 1915.⁵ The war halted publication of any others but after 1918 numerous editions of translations appeared.⁶

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1. L. Greiner, Chinesische Abende (Berlin, 1913).
 2. P. Kühnel, Chinesische Novellen (Munich, 1914).
 3. T. Pavie, Choix de Contes et Nouvelles traduits du Chinois (Paris, 1839); Marquis d'Hervey Saint Denys, Trois Nouvelles Chinoises (Paris, 1885).
 4. H. Rudelsberger, Chinesische Novellen, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1914). Later republished (Vienna, 1924).
 5. Chang Wu, 105 interessante chinesische Erzählungen. Weisheit und Tugend in Scherz und Ernst (Berlin, 1915).
 6. P. Hansmann, Die Zauberflöte. Sammlung von erotischen Novellen, Märchen und Liedern der asiatischen Literatur (Berlin, 1918); A. Semerau, Die Perlen der Chinesen (Berlin, 1919), later republished in 1929; R. Wilhelm, Chinesische Volksmärchen (Jena, 1919); W. Strozda, Der Ölhändler und die Blumenkönigin (Munich, 1920), Die gelben Orangen der Prinzessin Dschau (Munich, 1922); C. Strasser, Exotische Erzählungen (Leipzig, 1921); W. Schidtbonn, Garten der Erde. Märchen aus allen Zonen (Vienna, 1922); E. Grisebach, Die treulose Witwe (Munich, 1921), Die ewige Rache des Fräulein Wang-kiau-luan (Munich, 1920); E. Wuttke-Biller, Ju-Kiao-Li. Ein chinesischer Familien-Roman (Leipzig, 1922), this is a translation of A. Rémusat, Ju-kiao-li ou les deux cousines (Paris, 1826); B. Balazs, Der Mantel der Träume. Chinesische Novellen (Munich, 1922); C. du Bois-Raymond, Dschung-Kuei. Bezwingen der Teufel (Potsdam, 1923); R. Walter, Der Kuß des Esels Wu. Seltsame Geschichten aus China (Hamburg, 1924); E. Schmitt, Seltsame Geschichten aus dem Liao Chai (Berlin, 1924); H. Rudelsberger, Novellen aus dem Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan (Munich, 1924); S. Foerster-Streffleur, Was Li-Pao-Ting erzählt (Vienna, 1924); J.G. Faber, Die letzte Liebe des Kaisers Hüan Dsung (Dresden and Leipzig, 1926); E. Oehler-Heimerdinger, Chinesenbuben. Geschichten und Märchen aus China (Stuttgart, 1926); F. Kuhn, Chinesische Meisternovellen (Leipzig, 1926), Eisherz und Edeljaspis (Leipzig, 1927); O. and A. Kibat, Djin Ping Meh, 2 vols (Gotha, 1928-33).

It is difficult to appreciate these folk-tales as serious Western literature, as they are far removed from the world of Western reality, and even their romanticism transcends that which we are familiar with from the Western tradition. They are in the main escapist literature, which transports the reader to a world of imagination that is the negation of the problems of earthly existence. The majority of the stories are from the Kin-Ku-Ki-Kuan, the collection of folk-tales. These stories create an image of an idealised, poetic and elegant China.

In imaginative German literature this image is reflected in works such as J.F. Schütz's Briefe an die Prinzessin Wu,¹ an epistolary novella which is loosely based upon the figures of the poet Li-tai-pe and Princess Turandot. A free treatment of motifs borrowed from the Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio can also be found in Hans Henny Jahn's 'Polarstern und Tigerin'.² It is a tale of frustrated love which finds fulfilment through magical means. The two lovers are separated by parental opposition. The young girl pines to death but her spirit seeks reunion with her former lover in the form of a tigress. She devours him and then gives birth to his spirit in the form of a tiger. They are then reunited in animal form. The interaction of the human and animal realms through the mediation of the spirit is typical of the collection on which Jahn's story is based. P. Adler's 'Der Berg des U-Tao-Tse',³ also uses Chinese motifs in a Taoist fairy-tale in which dream and reality freely interflow. The story is more imaginative than Klabund's use of Taoist thought in his prose writings, which are little more than paraphrases of philosophical sources.

Klabund's later prose work shows an increasing interest in Oriental mysticism that was typical of his generation in the early post-war years.

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1. J.F. Schütz, Briefe an die Prinzessin Wu (Vienna, 1921).
 2. H.H. Jahn, 'Polarstern und Tigerin', in Die silbergrüne Dschunke, edited by H. Leip (Hamburg, 1927), pp.28-32.
 3. P. Adler, 'Der Berg des U-Tao-Tse' in Elohim (Dresden, 1914), pp.37-57.

Klabund's interest intensified in 1918 and is recorded in letters dating from this time. His copying of Taoist style in these letters makes his explanations of the appeal of Taoism difficult to comprehend. One can cite, for example, the following observation on the nature of Taoist thought: 'Die Vernunft beweist. Aber das Herz läßt sich von ihr nicht weisen, wenn der Weise eine Waise geworden ist, spricht (nicht so aber in ähnlichem Sinne) der Tao'.¹ This same letter does, however, reveal the spiritual solace that Klabund derived from his study of Taoism:

Wäre ich nicht ein Jünger des Tao (der einzig
Philosophie, die dem Menschen dieser Zeit etwas
zu sagen hätte: denn es ist eine lebendige
Philosophie, eine Philosophie, die gelebt werden
muß und nach der gestorben werden muß), ich wäre
längst verzweifelt. Wüßte ich nicht, daß die
Seele Stern und Sonne ist, nicht daß sie bloß
Objekte der Augen sind, wüßte ich nicht daß die
Einzelseele so gut unsterblich wie die Gesamtseele
(der 'Urtao'), so hätte ich mir längst eine Kugel
in den Kopf gejagt.

Such ideas are, of course, not exclusively Chinese; one finds similar convictions recorded in the writings of medieval mystics and German Romantic authors.

The appeal of Taoist thought can be seen more clearly in Klabund's adaptations of Taoist writings. It was a philosophy that he considered to be of universal significance. One may question its significance but its universality seems to be confirmed by the fact that all mystical systems of belief contain identical ideas and conceptions. Thus, as noted, the medieval European mystics and the Chinese, Lao-tse, have much in common. The Chinese philosophers, however, are far more cryptic in the formulation of their ideas. This difficulty to understanding is exaggerated when the works are translated into European languages, in which a literal translation of the original destroys the meaning completely.

1. Klabund, Briefe an einen Freund, edited by E. Heinrich (Cologne and Berlin, 1963), p.134. This letter is dated 29 November 1918.

Klabund did not translate his works directly from the Chinese, since he did not speak or read the language, but adapted his collections of aphorisms from existing European translations. Klabund attempted to comprehend the meaning of the original, by intuition rather than by any rational process, and then tried to formulate the 'supra-lingual' element in his own terse, epigrammatic form. He also endeavoured to create a mystical relationship between the linguistic elements of his epigrams by the repetition of common elements in various words which have little more than a chance phonemic or orthographical similarity. Klabund undertook his adaptations not as a philological exercise but as an enthusiastic statement of belief in the Taoist creed.

Klabund's first translation was a selection of twenty-eight aphorisms from the Tao-te-king.¹ Klabund outlines his intention in a brief afterword to the collection. These translations are offered as spiritual guidance to the disoriented Westerner. Klabund feels that, though there may be local influences that explain the origins of Taoist thought, it reflects one pole of the duality of human nature. It is, to Klabund's mind, to the detriment of the West that it has developed one type of thought to which the geographical area has lent its name:

... so scheint mir der Trennungsstrich zwischen östlichem und westlichem Menschen quer durch die Seele der Menschheit zu gehn ... Das östliche Denken, wie Laotse es denkt, ist ein mythisches, ein magisches Denken, ein Denken an sich: das westliche Denken ist ein rationalistisches, empiristisches Denken, ein Denken um sich, ein Denken zum Zweck. 2

He offers the collection as a corrective to the modern mind, the Western mind. Taoism is to be a way back to self-knowledge and, through such knowledge, to an understanding of the true nature of the world and one's

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1. Klabund, Laotse, Sprüche, Mensch, werde wesentlich! (Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1921). No sources are given for this adaptation but it seems strongly influenced by Windischmann and Rémusat.
 2. Klabund, Laotse, pp.30-31.

role within it:

Zu werden wie er, zu sein wie er: ruft er uns zu;
denn wir sind müde des funktionellen, des mechanischen,
des rationellen Da-seins und Dort-denkens. Der
Relativismen des Wissens und der Wissenschaft. Der
unfruchtbaren Dialektik. Des geistigen Krieges aller
gegen alle. Die Sehnsucht nach einem wahren Frieden
der Seele, dem absoluten Sinn in sich und an sich ist
deine tiefste Sehnsucht, Mensch! Drum: werde
wesentlich! 1

This is a typical Expressionist exhortation to rediscover the essential self, to revitalise the inner, spiritual life, to discard the superficial modes of Western thought and to penetrate the essence of being and feel harmony with the spirit that suffuses the cosmos. Klabund's call to abandon rational empiricism and return to mystical intuition is typical of a generation who had turned away from materialist thought and sought religious experience.

It is difficult to make an assessment of Klabund's adaptations. The originals are ambiguous and one might say that Klabund is best at retaining these ambiguities. Whether Klabund genuinely understood the meaning of the aphorisms he translated remains open to question. The accuracy of Klabund's version can be tested by making a comparison with a translation prepared by a sinologist. Klabund translates aphorism fifty-six in the following way:

Wer vom Sinn durchsonnt ist redet nicht/ wer
redet ist nicht vom Sinn durchsonnt/ ersterer ist
unzugänglich und unabhörmlich/ er ist geheim
verbunden mit dem Sinn/ ihn binden nicht Nähe
und Nächste/ ihn binden nicht Ferne und Fernste/
ihn bindet nicht Gewinn/ ihn bindet nicht Verlust/
ihn bindet nicht Ehre/ ihn bindet nicht Un-Ehre/
darum ist er der Ehrlichste und Ehrenwerteste auf
Erden. 2

Richard Wilhelm translates this aphorism as follows:

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1. Klabund, Laotse, p.31
 2. Klabund, Laotse, p.26. (Punctuation as in the original.)

Der Wissende redet nicht.
 Der Redende weiß nicht.
 Man muß seinen Mund schließen
 und seine Pforten zumachen,
 seinen Scharfsinn abstumpfen,
 seine wirren Gedanken auflösen,
 sein Licht mäßigen,
 sein Irdisches gemeinsam machen.
 Das heißt verborgene Gemeinsamkeit (mit dem SINN),
 Wer die hat, den kann man nicht beeinflussen durch Liebe
 und kann ihn nicht beeinflussen durch Kälte.
 Man kann ihn nicht beeinflussen durch Gewinn.
 und kann ihn nicht beeinflussen durch Schaden.
 Man kann ihn nicht beeinflussen durch Herrlichkeit
 und kann ihn nicht beeinflussen durch Niedrigkeit.
 Darum ist er der Herrlichste auf Erden. 1

Klabund has reduced the original and attempted to make the construction more pointed. However, he does not explain how, for example, the neglect of honour can bestow honour, or what 'Sinn' connotes. Wilhelm, in contrast, has extensive notes in which he discusses the meaning of the paradoxical terminology, the antithetical structure and the central concept, 'Sinn'. The lack of supporting material in Klabund's collection is its main failing. Klabund's version reads like a linguistic game. This is better seen in the following excerpt in which elements of a word are repeated in varying combinations:

Laßt fahren eure fahrlässige Weisheit/ eure
 erklügelte Klugheit/ es wird dem Volke hundertmal
 wohler sein/ laßt fahren eure lässige Liebe/ eure
 Pflicht die sich zu nichts ver-pflichtet/ und das
 Volk wird wieder sein Herz finden/ was kann eure
 erkünstelte Kunst? 2

This does prompt the reader to reconsider the meaning of certain concepts and recognise the construction of compound words, but it does not clarify the meaning of the aphorism. Klabund's adaptation is marked by stylistic refinement and a kind of baroque mannerism in its conscious manipulation of language and use of anaphora, parallelisms and antitheses. But the

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1. R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE. Tao te king (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.99. This translation, which was first published in 1911, was available to Klabund but he appears not to have referred to it.
 2. Klabund, Laotse, p.5.

collection has no more than stylistic quality; Klabund emerges as a mannered stylist rather than a purveyor of profound ideas.

The basic precepts of Taoism are present in the collection. One finds the insistence upon the qualities of passivity, weakness, quietism, self-control, self-negation and the need to respond to the life-force as a passive agent rather than to attempt to determine one's own fate. The collection is given a political tone by its stress on pacifism and its vision of a self-regulating patriarchal society in harmony with the cosmic spirit. It should be noted too that there is no mention of a personalised Godhead. This is replaced by the conception of an impersonal life-force or abstract spiritual principle, to which are ascribed the passive qualities that are to be emulated in human life. It is an ethical creed in embryonic form, but one which has few answers to the problems of existence in an advanced industrialised society such as that of Germany between the wars, in which the proliferation of political, philosophical and religious creeds was a major cause of disunity.

The second of the Taoist books that Klabund adapted was the Wang Siang,¹ which is far simpler in style than the Tao-te-king and far easier to understand. This work existed in a French translation,² which Klabund used as his source. The quality of the original is far inferior to that of the Tao-te-king and had, consequently, received far less attention than the Taoist canon. As the subtitle, Das Buch der irdischen Mühe und des himmlischen Lohnes, indicates, the work deals with the demands of the exemplary life and its divine reward.

The original is ascribed to Wang Siang, a Taoist teacher of the Sung Dynasty (960-1279). The conception of life as a difficult trial and as a preparation for eternity shows the influence of Buddhist thought and popular

1. Klabund, Das Buch der irdischen Mühe und des himmlischen Lohnes von Wang Siang (Hannover, 1921).

2. M.A. Rémusat, Le livre des récompenses et des peines (Paris, 1816).

Taoism rather than the pure Taoism of Lao-tse. Similarly, the theory of a spirit world that co-exists with the human world is derived from popular Taoist thought.

The first part of the work prescribes the proper way of life. In essence, this differs little from the prescripts of the Christian ethic, and is far more precise in the formulation of its moral code than the

Tao-te-king:

Man lebt sinn-gemäß, wenn man nicht steigt den krummen Pfad:
Wenn man sich nicht blenden läßt vom bösen Licht...

Wenn das Herz mitleidet mit allen lebenden Wesen...

Man sei voll Zärtlichkeit für die Waisen.
Voll Wehmut für die Witwen...

Man tue wohl, ohne Lohn zu erwarten.
Man tue wohl: bedenken- und schrankenlos.
Also wird man geehrt sein von aller Welt, beschützt vom
himmlischen
Sinn, begleitet von Seeligkeit und Reichtum. 1

This is consistent with the Christian ethic, as recorded in the New Testament, of good as an end in itself. However, the Chinese work also includes considerations of the effects of evil on human life:

Die Geister im Hause des Menschen hausend, auf
seinem Haupt hauptsächlich, führen genaustens Buch
über seine Fehlritte, und sie schneiden von seinem
Lebensfaden ab: es seien hundert Tage oder zwölf Jahre. 2

It is unclear whether this is intended to be a literal belief or whether it is a symbolic mode of expression and a metaphor for the human conscience. In either case, it is clear that such conceptions of punishment and reward, expiation and salvation are a degeneration of pure, philosophical Taoism into popular religion. The sins for which man will be punished are enumerated:

Offen den Tugendhaften spielen, aber im geheimen aufsässig
sein seinen Fürsten und den Eltern, den Ältern ...
Streit in die Häuser bringen, schwerhörig sein im Überfluß
gegen Bitten ...

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1. Klabund, Wang Siang, pp.6-8.
 2. Klabund, Wang Siang, p.6.

Den Sturz herbeiführen derer, die man umblüht und
hochgeehrt sieht,
Und Armut derer, die reich sind.
Böses Verlangen haben, die Augen werfen auf die Frau
des Andern. 1

It is difficult to understand why Klabund should have chosen to prepare a German edition of this work, since there is nothing that is profoundly new or inspiring in this collection. It may be of Taoist origin but it bears greater similarity to the Christian ethic than to the amorality of Lao-tse's teachings. It seems to represent, to Klabund, a bridge between Taoism and Christianity in the transformation of the abstract principles of the Tao-te-king into a strict ethical code. This recognition of Taoism's affinities with other religious traditions was later developed by Klabund into an idiosyncratic syncretism which found expression in a cycle of poems published under the title Dreiklang.²

Klabund's adaptations of these Taoist works are typical of a generation that turned to sources outside the scope of Western philosophy and religious tradition to find spiritual solace and a confirmation of man's spiritual being. Translations of Taoist books were available in numerous editions in Germany at this time.³ Some were translations prepared by sinologists but the majority were the work of less well-qualified authors. These freer adaptations were intended as testaments of personal faith in a religious philosophy that met the authors' spiritual needs. Klabund's adaptations of the Tao-te-king must be considered inferior to many of these adaptations since he neither retains the meaning of the original, nor offers an interpretation of it, but turns it into a poetic exercise and mannered verse. The Wang Siang has little more than exotic appeal and is superstition rather than religious philosophy.

1. Klabund, Wang Siang, pp.9, 12, 13.

2. See below, pp.232-235.

3. See Excursus, pp.28-60.

b) 'Der Kreidekreis' and China on the German Stage

Klabund's greatest success, both as an author and as a self-styled mediator between China and Germany, was his version of Der Kreidekreis.¹ This free adaptation of the classical Chinese drama dominated the German stage in 1925. It had its joint première on 3 January of that year in Frankfurt, Hannover, Hamburg, Nürnberg, Lübeck and Brunswick, and moved, later the same year, to Berlin where it was enthusiastically received.² An operatic adaptation³ was successfully produced in Vienna in October 1933. Interest in the play spread throughout Europe, and productions followed in many countries.⁴

Klabund's drama was not the first successful German production of a 'Chinese' play, but was, rather, the culmination of the Oriental vogue that had developed in the German theatre. In such plays there is a mixture of factual details of Chinese customs, manners and theatrical techniques, combined with fanciful creations of a specifically Western origin.

The first of these plays was Karl Vollmoeller's Turandot,⁵ which had a successful season in Germany in 1911. This work was a slightly adapted version of the play written by Gozzi and later retreated by Schiller. In each case it has little to do with China, as the original is a story taken from the Persian Tales of a Thousand and One Nights. The action is

1. Klabund, Der Kreidekreis (Berlin, 1925). More easily accessible in Klabund, Der himmlische Vagant (Cologne, 1968), pp.462-528.
2. See St., 'Die kommenden Premieren', Die Bühne, No.16 (1925), 7.
3. A. Zemlinsky, Operntext zu Klabunds Kreidekreis (Vienna, 1933).
4. Tatzel, 'Klabund', p.302, refers to a number of European translations, but does not give bibliographical details. I can confirm only the following, The Circle of Chalk, translated by James Laver (London, 1929), and De krijt-kring, translated by Eduard Vetterman (Amsterdam, 1927).
5. K.G. Vollmoeller, Turandot. Chinesisches Märchenspiel (Bern, 1911). Since I have been unable to obtain a copy of the original German text, I have based my discussion of the work on the English translation, K.G. Vollmoeller, Turandot, translated by Jethro Bithell (London, 1913).

transferred to Peking, a few Chinese names are added and it becomes, for Vollmoeller, 'ein chinesisches Märchenspiel'. The combination of the Persian of the original, the Italian of Gozzi's version and the Chinese figures is used by Vollmoeller to create humorous effect. Thus many of the court servants are buffoon figures from the commedia dell'arte, who have fled their native land due to petty crimes or domestic problems and sought refuge in the court of the Emperor of China. They are clearly out of sympathy with their new setting and are continually complaining at the ridiculous ceremonials that they have to organise and the rituals they must participate in.

The play is the tale of the recalcitrant blue-stockings Princess Turandot, who refuses the advances of all her suitors, submitting them to the challenge of three riddles which, when they fail, as they all do, leads to their execution, their heads being displayed on the city battlements to discourage any other suitors. Vollmoeller has coarsened his original and made the tragic grotesqueness into black comedy. For example, the arranging of the heads on the parapets slips into humour as the servants discuss the pattern of heads, selecting the right arrangement and matching them according to hair shade and facial shapes.

The play's appeal lies in its fairy-tale unreality. Vollmoeller handles his material well, takes every opportunity to ridicule his characters and draw out any obscene innuendo. But the play loses impetus after the solution of the riddles by the young prince, after which it drags on to its inevitable conclusion. Its success was due not only to its dramatic or comic qualities but to Reinhardt's extravagantly exotic staging of the play in the Deutsches Theater in Berlin in 1911. A contemporary critic's review confirms the impression of a predominantly visual, aesthetic spectacle:

Dekorationen, Kostüme und Requisiten waren ein schwereloses Wunderwerk voll exotischer Lockkraft ... In tausend Nuancen schillern und glitzern Gewänder aus den erlesensten Stoffen. Zu chinesischen Herrenmenschen kontrastieren japanische Sklaven mit gelben Gesichtern und zopflosen Köpfen. Fabelhafte Wesen, Drachen, Fratzen und Arabesken schlingen sich prunkvoll und kunstvoll, dräuend und erheiternd, durch schwarze, stumpfroter und violetter Vorhänge ...: eine Phantasmagorie von bezaubernd fremdartigem Geschmack... 1

The German success led to an English production² in London in January 1913. This was followed by the production in London in March of the same year of Hazelton and Benrimo's The Yellow Jacket,³ which was produced in Germany by Reinhardt⁴ in the following year, translated into German⁵ and widely read.

The Yellow Jacket purports to be a translation from the Chinese. It is not; it is an imaginative, dramatic portrayal of a fairy-tale China. The content of the play can be summarised briefly: Wu Sun Yin, the powerful Mandarin, wishes to promote his second wife and has arranged for a farmer to kill his first wife. The farmer takes pity upon her and kills a substitute. Wu Hoo Git, the son of the first wife, and rightful heir to his father's throne, is brought up in the care of the farmer and, having reached manhood, sets out into the world to seek his fortune and redress the wrongs done to him and his mother. After peregrinations in the company of a peripatetic philosopher, he reaches inner maturity, returns to dethrone his rival and assumes the yellow jacket of supreme authority.

Although the play is not a translation of the Chinese original, the theme of the orphan who avenges his family does have similarities with the

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1. H. Kindermann, Theatergeschichte Europas (Salzburg, 1968), VIII, 482-3.
 2. The Times, 20 January 1913, p.4.
 3. G. Hazelton and J.H. Benrimo, The Yellow Jacket, (London, 1912).
 4. Kindermann, VIII, p.748.
 5. G. Hazelton and J.H. Benrimo, Die Gelbe Jacke, translated by F.G. Washburn Freund (Berlin, 1913).

Yüan play The Orphan of Chao, which had become widely known in Europe in the eighteenth century in Voltaire's translation.

Of greater importance than the content of the play is the introduction of Chinese stage and dramatic techniques. There is no attempt at realism in the play; the content is fairy-tale, but with a strong moral basis. People move between this world and the next in full view of the audience and watch the action from a gallery. There is also a chorus which acts as commentator, describes the action and the imaginary changes of scene and introduces and characterises the actors. The property men and assistants appear on stage and are included in the cast-list. Props as such are little used, and unrealistic. There is, for example, a rod for a willow-tree, a cloth for a boat, and men mime the riding of horses, and snowstorms. The actors appear in stylised dress, and wear stylised make-up. The whole is a visual and musical spectacle, in many ways an attempt to recreate the Chinese stage in Europe. The plot, however, is developed to suit contemporary taste. The popularity of The Orphan of Chao in the eighteenth century was due to the portrayal of the high moral tone of the Chinese, and their strict ethical code; the twentieth-century play develops the romantic and adventurous scenes from the original.

In 1923 the play was revived in an operatic version, which had been adapted from the English by Victor Léon, and set to music by Franz Lehár. It was performed under the original title, Die gelbe Jacke,¹ and was later retitled Das Land des Lächelns in 1929. The operatic vogue was continued by F. Busoni. He had written the musical accompaniment for Vollmoeller's play in 1911 and later reworked the adaptation for his own version, which was premièred in Zurich in May 1917, and published together with other

1. V. Léon, Die gelbe Jacke. Operette in 3 Akten (Vienna, 1923).

commedia dell'arte pieces.¹

German playwrights also began to compose pseudo-Chinese dramas. Hans von Gumpenberg was the first of these authors. He had written Der Pinsel Ying's² in 1914, but was not able to stage the play until January 1917 when it was premièred in the Weimar Hoftheater.

The play's theme has a mixed pedigree. It first appeared in the form of a short poem, 'Der Pinsel Ming's', in a collection of translations of Greek and Chinese poems published by the German poet Adolf Ellissen.³ In fact it is not a translation, nor does it have a Chinese original, but was composed independently by Ellissen.⁴ This poem later appeared in an extended epic version written by Hans Hopfen.⁵ Von Gumpenberg was familiar with both existing versions but preferred the shorter one and adapted it in dramatic form.

Ellissen's ballad is a satire upon poetic fame. The poet Sche-Gung, saddened by his lack of public acclaim, retreats from the world and seeks refuge in a cave. Here he is given a magic brush which bestows poetic excellence upon its holder. The brush is given with the qualification that it may only be retained for ten years. By the time the brush is

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1. F. Busoni, La nuova commedia dell'arte (Leipzig, 1917). Busoni's interest in China is also recorded in his pantomime Das Wandbild of 1918, which was a reworking of Buber's Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten. It is a Hoffmanesque fairy-tale with clear aspirations to Romanticism. The central character is a student by the name of Novalis. Further details can be found in H.H. Stuckenschmidt, Ferruccio Busoni, translated by S. Morris (London, 1970), pp.144-5. The text of the pantomime appeared in Die Weißen Blätter, 5 (1918), 29-36.
 2. H. von Gumpenberg, Der Pinsel Ying's (Munich, 1914).
 3. A. Ellissen, Thee- und Asphodelosblüten (Göttingen, 1840).
 4. This was first pointed out in an anonymous article, 'A. Ellissen, "Der Pinsel Ming's". Eine deutsch-chinesische Satire', Die Lese, 1 (1917), 58. Further details can be found in E. Rose, 'Das Schicksal einer angeblich chinesischen Ballade', Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 32 (1933), 392-6.
 5. H. Hopfen, Der Pinsel Ming's. Eine chinesische Geschichte (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1868).

reclaimed, Sche-Gung has achieved literary fame. The loss of the brush and his poetic talent is a matter of indifference to him since he has already achieved an unassailable reputation.

From this raw material von Gumpenberg hoped to create 'eine phantastisch-satirische Literaturkomödie',¹ which would deal with the role of the poet in society, 'das Leben und Treiben des Pseudopoeten: des frivolen Praktikus und des feierlich ehrgeizigen Spießers und Dilettanten'. The author stresses that in his version the spirit of success, 'Ming', is replaced by the spirit of pure chance, 'Ying'. The theme is now not that of the poet who outlives his inspiration, but the subjective and unsound nature of literary-critical judgement.

Undertaking a brief study of Chinese conditions, von Gumpenberg found he was able to incorporate details of the official Chinese literary examinations and 'die alte Sitte der pomphaften Literatur-Konkurrenz und Ernennung des Preisgekrönten zum Nationalpoeten', which he recognised as a formalised but parallel process to the canonisation of German poets by a select group of literary critics. Von Gumpenberg had no interest in China or Chinese literature; he simply used the details of these institutionalised procedures to satirise what he regarded as the cultural fossilisation of Wilhelminian Germany.

China becomes a metaphor for Germany, and is used to represent artificiality, stylisation and affectation. The culture and arts of both lands are seen as the product of a small group of self-styled arbiters of good taste. The snobbery, pomposity and reverence that surrounds men of letters and their acolytes is, for von Gumpenberg, symptomatic of the pretentiousness that has replaced sound common-sense in a degenerate society.

Von Gumpenberg has improved his source by restricting the action to

1. H. von Gumpenberg, Lebenserinnerungen (Berlin, 1929), pp.401-2.

a single day and by introducing a secondary theme. The poet is now the infatuated admirer of the Imperial Princess, whom he hopes to win by seducing her with his verse; the author has obviously borrowed from the Turandot theme in this.

The hero, Tschu-Fu, receives the magic brush from Ying, 'des Zufalls Dämon'; the brush may be used once and will afford him poetic fame. Tschu-Fu wins the Imperial poetry competition, and the hand of the Princess. The latter, however, is not prepared to accept Tschu-Fu without further proof of his poetic skill. He is now in despair since, reliant upon his native talent, he cannot hope to write a second poem of equal quality.

In an effort to find some inspiration, he begins to jot down a few things he sees around him:

Da=0's Altar ... die schwarze Wolke ... nie mehr ...
Der Wind ... der Pinsel ... nichts ... 0 Schein und Sein ... 1

and then collapses in exhaustion. Here he is found by the two 'Literaturrichter', who take the opportunity to have a private preview of Tschu-Fu's poem. The judges are impressed by the fragment and ask him to complete it, which he does by a similar method of composition as before, but confident that he now realises the true nature of poetry:

Zusammenhang ist überall, nur darf
Man ihn nicht wissen wollen, wenn man dichtet,
Sonst bleibt man allzu leicht und dringt nicht ein
In jene Tiefen, wo Götter auch
Das W i d e r s p r e c h e n d s t e zur Harmonie
Verknüpfen. 2

It is clear that the object of von Gumpenberg's satire is the innovatory Expressionist poetry of the day, particularly the associative verse with its mosaic of heterogeneous and autotelic images, which claimed to reveal the essence of reality by the juxtaposition of these images. The final version of Tschu-Fu's poem confirms this:

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1. H. von Gumpenberg, Der Pinsel Ying's, p.96.
 2. Der Pinsel Ying's, p.116.

Da=0's Altar - eine schwarze Wolke - nie mehr!
 Der Wind - Der Pinsel - nichts - 0, Schein und Sein ...
 Erlösung! ... eine Handvoll weißer Sand ... -
 Der Zwischenraum - ein rotes Käferlein!
 Der Bettler hinkt - die Kinder freut das Stroh -
 Die Schönheit kommt erst später ... Dank Da=0! 1

Tschu-Fu admits that the meaning of the poem is not entirely clear to him, but, since the poet is the agent of divine powers, this does not concern him. His gift is intuitive and transcends his comprehension; it is the role of the critic to render his work comprehensible to the world, and to reveal the profundity of the poetic utterance.

This attack upon modern poetry, and the specious claims made for it by artists and critics, was not without an element of truth. Poetry was becoming dominated by a host of idiosyncratic, mystical poetic theories and an intense subjectivity, with a resultant loss of rational evaluative criteria. Von Gumpenberg mocks these mystical, irrational views of art and life that arose within Expressionism. It seems unlikely that he was making any reference to the popularity of Chinese verse in Germany, since in 1914, when the play was written, the vogue was only just beginning to emerge. One can, however, see mocking references to the interest in occult and exotic religious traditions in von Gumpenberg's 'Da=0', with its obvious Taoist overtones.

The play projects a fairy-tale image of China as a metaphor for Germany. Each has a cultural life that has sunk to the level of self-parody. Poetry and the pretensions surrounding it become the measure of

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1. Der Pinsel Ying's, p.119. One can see a slight resemblance to Alfred Lichtenstein's 'Die Dämmerung':

Ein dicker Junge spielt mit einem Teich.
 Der Wind hat sich in einem Baum gefangen.
 Der Himmel sieht verbummelt aus und bleich,
 als wäre ihm die Schminke ausgegangen
 Auf lange Krücken schief herabgebückt
 und schwatzend kriechen auf dem Feld zwei Lahme.
 Ein blonder Dichter wird vielleicht verrückt.
 Ein Pferdchen stolpert über eine Dame.
 An einem Fenster klebt ein fatter Mann.
 Ein Jüngling will ein weiches Weib besuchen.
 Ein grauer Clown zieht sich die Stiefel an.
 Ein Kinderwagen schreit und Hunde fluchen.

Quoted from Lyrik des expressionistischen Jahrzehnts (Munich, 1962), p.92.

the absurdity of intellectual and cultural life. Art has been debased by its institutionalisation into a hollow ritual, and aesthetic judgement has given way to pretentious nonsense. Reverence for poetic talent has produced an artificial class of literati whose function is to convince the public of their nation's high cultural attainment. Genuine appreciation of poetry has disappeared and been replaced by the prescriptive judgement of an elite body of literary critics.

With the increasing interest in China after the war, other pseudo-Chinese plays were produced on the German stage, for example Julius Berstl's Der lasterhafte Herr Tschu,¹ which was first performed at the Lessing-Theater in Berlin in 1921, with Elisabeth Bergner in the role of the seductive concubine.² It is clear from certain characters, particularly the lascivious judge Tschu and his wife Yü-Pei, and the courtroom scenes, that Berstl was familiar with the Chalk Circle, probably in da Fonseca's translation.³

Berstl's play was extremely popular, as the author points out in his biography. He attributes its success to its problematic, 'Überzeitliches Thema', which, as indicated below, is a variation on the Kleistian theme of appearance and reality. It may, however, seem sounder to explain its appeal as humorous exoticism, since the handling of the serious theme in this tragi-comedy lacks any dramatic merit.

Tschu, the corrupt judge, departs this life and finds himself at the gates of hell, where the guardians refuse him entry because his life was so debauched that even the fires of hell cannot purify him. His spirit is despatched back to the world but, since his body has already been

1. J. Berstl, Der lasterhafte Herr Tschu (Leipzig, 1922).

2. J. Berstl, Odyssee eines Theatermannes (Berlin, 1963), p.81. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), p.602, gives the date of the première as 1922, but this is contradicted by Berstl, Der lasterhafte Herr Tschu, p.4.

3. See below, pp.190-191.

cremated, has to take up residence in the recently expired 'Namensvetter, ... der Flickschneider Tschu'. Spiritually he is the old Tschu, but physically he is the poor tailor Tschu; it is from this that the tragic and comic aspects of the play are derived. Tschu passes through life unrecognised by his former wife, mistress and colleagues and learns how he had previously been deceived by the world.

In his newer form he is unable to survive, since he no longer enjoys the benefits of his former high office and cannot abuse its power. His second life stands in contrast to the first. He turns to crime to support himself, which results in his arrest and subsequent trial in his own court by his former colleagues. He is sentenced to death and, having expiated the crimes of his first life in his second incarnation, goes happily to the grave.

Tschu's crime in life had been to pervert the truth by allowing himself to be bribed; his punishment is to pass through life again and witness the truth. He experiences the duplicity of his fellow men, the instability of human relationships and, above all, the deceptiveness of appearances. The play's theme is Kleistian, but it stresses the moral problem rather than its metaphysical or ontological basis. This theme is summed up in Tschu's final lament:

Dies ist das Leben! Was ich vormals zu erleben
wähnte war teuflischer Traum! 1

There are also social overtones in the comparison of the two roles adopted in life by the same individual; the judge, powerful and influential, lives in a different world from the poor, abused tailor. But any social comment is tempered by the religious concept of the self as a spiritual entity that transcends the accidentals of social, geographical and historical situation.

This problematic theme of the distinction of inner being and outward appearance is overshadowed in the play by the comic situations derived from it. Similarly, the exotic setting and the detailed portrayals of weddings, funerals and religious rituals, and the erotic figure of the concubine, Yin-Ying, detract from the serious content and create a bizarre world of pantomime figures. Many of the details of the strange practices portrayed are authentic, but too liberal use of such details turns the play into a succession of scenes from Chinese life, rather than a well-structured drama.

Other dramatists made no such claims to a high intellectual content in their treatment of Chinese themes. Friedrich Freska's Li Tai Po¹ of 1923 is a romanticised characterisation of the poet Li-tai-pe, set within Freska's poetic vision of China, which is typified by a stylised Chinese landscape:

blühende Kirsch- und Pfirsichblüten ... ein
mondbeschienener See ... Berge, perlenmutterfarben
und blau ... über den tiefblauen Himmel treibt
ein silberner Mond Wolken vor sich. 2

The play describes how the itinerant poet Li-tai-pe solves the riddle of existence for the Viceroy Kuan Si. The action is interspersed with lyrical interpolations taken from Li-tai-pe's poetry:

Ein Lager fand ich für die Nacht,
Am fremden Bett hock ich hier
Und denk der Heimat.
Ein Mondfleck liegt wie ein weißer Schnee
vor mir, wie auf dem Kinderbett
Im Mutterhaus. 3

This exemplifies the way in which inaccurate translation can reduce the reflective poet to a sentimental dreamer.

The whole play reads like a parody of the stylised image of China

1. F. Freska, Li Tai Po. Ein dramatisches Gedicht (Munich, 1923).
2. F. Freska, p.6.
3. F. Freska, p.33.

that emerged in Germany: one finds the poet sage, the noble, yet cruel ruler, bands of brigands and a mystical philosophy of resignation.

The continuing appeal of such dramas can further be seen in Hellmuth Unger's Der verliebte Beifu,¹ which was premièred on 10 October 1924 in the Mainz Stadttheater. It was harshly reviewed, not for its ludicrous portrayal of China and Chinese life, but for its lack of control of comic technique.²

The play has an extremely complicated plot involving a young girl, Wanglei, who is sold by her father in order to pay a debt. Since she is bought by the servant, Beifu, with money that belonged in part to his master, Li Pai, she contests the former's ownership. The case is brought before the judge, Tsangli, who is the young girl's lover. He cannot disprove ownership by the two men but makes judgement in a way which will protect her chastity. Li Pai and Beifu must choose either her body or her soul, but neither may violate the other's property. The hedonist, Beifu, chooses her body, the intellectual scholar, Li Pai, chooses her soul. This arrangement proves unsatisfactory for Beifu, since, as he complains, 'wenn ich's anfangs, ist immer irgendwie Seele dabei'.³ The problem is solved when Beifu is arrested as a bankrupt. This allows the judge, Tsangli, to grant the girl a divorce, which also divorces her from Li Pai, and leaves her free for himself.

The first litigation scene is quite clearly based upon the motif of the chalk circle. In this play the contested prize is the young girl, who is divided between the two men, each according to his needs.

The most distinctive features of the play, besides the humour which is derived not only from the plot but by a host of comic inventions purporting

1. H. Unger, Der verliebte Beifu (Leipzig, 1924).

2. H.W. Eppelsheimer, 'Der verliebte Beifu', Die schöne Literatur, 25 (1924), 443.

3. H. Unger, Beifu, p.75.

to be typical of Chinese life, are the stylised speech and liberal use of proverbs by all characters. A few examples may suffice to illustrate this:

Was der Mensch weiß ist nichts im Vergleich zu dem, was er nicht weiß!
sagt Tse Hieou, und der wahrhaft Weise lernt von jedermann...
Wenn du mit dem ersten Versuch kein Glück hast, versuche es zweimal...
Viel Höflichkeit beleidigt niemand...
Je härter der Baum, desto zäher der Wurm...
Nur wer sich selbst bezähmt, ist stark...
Wer stumm und taub ist, ist der wahrhaft Weise. 1

These were the 'Chinese' plays to have been staged in Germany before Klabund's adaptation of Der Kreidekreis was performed. Klabund shows far greater skill in his treatment of a Chinese theme and introduces into his play an ethical and metaphysical perspective that is in keeping with his Chinese material and yet comprehensible to a German audience. His play was not intended to be simply another piece of dramatic exoticism but was to be a revelation of Chinese spirituality.

Although Klabund's adaptation of Der Kreidekreis was the play's first staging, it was not its first appearance in Germany. Wolheim da Fonseca had made an earlier translation,² which appears to have been widely read in Germany and finds echoes in many of the plays discussed above. Da Fonseca's version was, however, never performed in Germany. Klabund knew of the existence of this translation when he was asked to write a version of the play,³ but did not use this source, which he considered to be of inferior quality, and turned instead to a French translation made by the sinologist, Stanislas Julien.⁴ His preference for working from French sources can be explained by the fact that they gave him greater flexibility in matters of style. It is surprising, however, that he did not realise

1. H. Unger, Beifu, pp.15, 16, 17, 19.

2. Hoei-lan-ki. Der Kreidekreis, translated by Wolheim da Fonseca (Leipzig, 1876).

3. Klabund, 'Wie der Kreidekreis entstand', Blätter der württembergischen Volksbühne, 9 (1927-28), 7. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.602 assumes that Johannes von Guenther had suggested Der Kreidekreis, but this does not appear to be the case.

4. Hoei-Lan-Ki ou L'histoire du cercle de craie, translated by Stanislas Julien (London, 1832).

the greatest shortcoming of da Fonseca's play, namely that, though its author claimed to have translated it from the original Chinese, it was in fact a rather weak verse translation of Julien's French version. Apart from the versification and certain errors in translation, the only difference between the two versions is that da Fonseca bowdlerised certain parts of the play that he felt might offend German readers' sensibilities. This is a significant point since it demonstrates the prevailing nineteenth-century attitude towards China. Da Fonseca refers to the Chinese as an uncouth people who lack the refinements of Western civilisation:

Was dem deutschen Leser in dem nachfolgenden Schauspiel besonders auffallen wird, ist die Eigentümlichkeit gewisser sozialer Verhältnisse und in China unanstößiger Ausdrücke, die der Übersetzer möglichst so wiederzugeben versucht hat, daß sie weder unsern Geschmack beleidigen, noch den Sinn der Rede entstellen. 1

In the twentieth century it was precisely these uninhibited features of Chinese life which audiences and readers found so attractive. The concubines, mistresses and prostitutes that abound in the plays and fairytales conjured up a vision of enlightened sexual mores free from puritanical restraints.²

The general interest in the play following Klabund's successful stage version prompted the German sinologist Alfred Forke to publish an accurate

1. da Fonseca, Der Kreidekreis, p.3.

2. This view is confirmed by K. Kraus's essay, 'Die chinesische Mauer', Die Fackel, No. 285-286 (27 July 1909), where he compares Chinese and European sexual attitudes:

Die Chinesen werden durch unsere Finsternisse schreiten und den Weg zum Leben nicht verfehlen. Ihre unterirdischen Gänge sind ein Paradies neben den Katakomben, die unsere Liebe sich gemauert hat, seitdem man ihr das Licht nahm. Als die christliche Nacht hereinbrach und die Menschheit auf Zehen zu der Liebe schleichen mußte, da begann sie sich dessen zu schämen, was sie tat ... Die große chinesische Mauer der abendländischen Moral schützte das Geschlecht vor jenen, die eindringen wollen, und jene, die eindringen wollen, vor dem Geschlecht...

Quoted here from Die chinesische Mauer (Munich, 1970), p.15. See also K. Figdor, 'Chinesische Liebe', März, 3 (1909), 130-134.

German translation of the Chinese original.¹ In these various forms Der Kreidekreis was to become the most widely-known Chinese play in Germany.

Historically the play belongs to a collection of a hundred plays which Yüan-chu hsüan composed during the Yüan Dynasty (1259-1368). Its original title is Pao tai-tschì tschì-kan hui-lan tchi tsa-chi, which can be translated literally as 'the story of the chalk circle, which the governor Pao cleverly employed to discover the truth'. Within the original collection it belongs to a number of forensic dramas² dedicated to the judge and governor Pao, an historical, but subsequently mythologised, figure of the Sung Dynasty. Its theme in the original is the apotheosis of maternal love, a central Confucian tenet.³

Very little was known about Chinese drama in the West at this time. Not only was there a lack of information on the contents of Chinese plays but also on the highly stylised formal aspects of Chinese theatre. Chinese drama⁴ differs from its Western counterpart in the following important ways. It does not rely upon dramatic novelty; the play is always the presentation of some anecdote or folk story already known to the audience. There is no attempt to create an illusion of reality. The plays lack characterisation, and deal with types rather than individualised personalities. Consequently, there is no psychological motivation, and no development of plot or character. Events are not presented, emotions not demonstrated but rather represented by an elaborate code of symbolic gestures. Speech is not in normal prose but a kind of recitative with the addition of interpolated lyrical passages which are sung. In view

1. Hui-lan ki. Der Kreidekreis, translated by Alfred Forke (Leipzig, 1926).
2. Classical Chinese dramatic themes are of four types: historical, erotic, Taoist and forensic. A forensic drama is one which deals with a crime. Such dramas often culminate in a court-room scene.
3. See Forke, pp.3-12.
4. For a detailed study see A.C. Scott, The Classical Theatre of China (London, 1957).

of the scarcity of material on this subject, it is unlikely that Klabund was familiar with these aspects of Chinese drama, apart from the few notes on the subject in the introduction to Julien's translation. Hans Rudelsberger had published a brief article on Chinese theatre,¹ in which he had criticised the apparent lack of German interest in Chinese literature. Apart from one, frequently inaccurate, book on the subject,² he can refer only to da Fonseca's version of Der Kreidekreis of 1876 as a representative text available in German. Rudelsberger's own contribution to a better understanding of the Chinese theatre is, however, minimal. His report is essayistic and gives brief impressions of performances of Chinese plays. He seems to have been struck only by the informality of these performances, and the audiences' enthusiasm for theatrical pieces that he finds unsophisticated. He stresses the minimal level of vraisemblance in Chinese drama and repeatedly refers to the primitive level of performance, and the vivid imagination that the Chinese must possess if they can piece together the fragmented action into a coherent story.

Klabund seems to have experienced no difficulty in adapting a Chinese play for the German stage. In fact it would have been possible to present an unadapted version, since there is sufficient dialogue and action to sustain a performance without reliance upon the techniques of mime, symbolic gestures and interpolated songs that would have been used in a Chinese performance.

A Chinese flavour was added to Klabund's play not by use of theatrical techniques but by extravagant sets, as can be seen from reports of the first production:

1. H. Rudelsberger, 'Schauspiele und Schauspieler im heutigen China', Bühne und Welt, 3 (1910-11), 487-500.

2. R. von Gottschall, Theater und Drama der Chinesen (Breslau, 1877).

Die Bühne ist bunt von hellen zarten Farben, goldgelben Hintergründen, langen Streifen mit chinesischen Schriftzeichen.

This predominantly visual, aesthetic appeal was, however, not regarded as exoticism for its own sake but as a step away from the traditional mimetic form of theatre, and as a new departure in theatrical techniques:

Gerade das Exotische des Vorwurfs, das Lyrische und das Tragisch-Märchenhafte lagen Reinhardt und seinem Ausgreifen ins Antiillusionistische sehr nahe, so daß auch diese Kreidekreis-Inszenierung Vorbildwirkung erhielt. 1

But whilst Reinhardt used the play to introduce non-realistic, exotic devices, Klabund adapted the play to conform with traditional dramatic style and disregarded aspects of the play that conformed to certain dramatic features that the Expressionist dramatists had introduced in the German theatre, particularly the reduction of individual characters to representative types:

Es ist ... in seiner Originalfassung eine ziemlich lederne, hölzerne Angelegenheit, dramaturgisch äußerst ungeschickt eingerichtet ... Charaktere sind, mit Ausnahme der Haitang keine vorhanden. Es sind bloße Typen: der gerechte Richter, der ungerechte Richter, der gutmütige Mandarin, der liederliche Student. 2

Klabund fails to realise the advantage of this non-realistic technique. The reduction of characters to types and the replacement of individual psychological motivation by representative characters broadens the theme of the play from the purely personal to the social. The action is thus not motivated by psychological factors but by social circumstances. Each character represents a social role; the whole play becomes an analysis of the interaction of these social roles and a criticism of the society in which the play takes place.

Klabund attempts to create a more sophisticated play by his various

1. H. Kindermann, VIII, 612.

2. Klabund, 'Wie der Kreidekreis entstand', p.7.

additions and modifications, which he sums up in the following manner:

Es galt, Charaktere zu schaffen, die Handlung neu zu knüpfen, die Szenen zu beleben, das nur im letzten Akt angeschlagene Motiv des Kreidekreises zu vertiefen; aus ihm ein anschauliches und anschauliches Gleichnis zu schaffen. Es galt, ein chinesisches Märchenspiel zu ersinnen. Keine strenge Chinoiserie. Es sollte sein, wie wenn jemand von China träumt. 1

He develops the anecdotal original into a complex dramatic structure and adds religio-philosophical speculation around the symbol of the circle by the introduction of ideas derived from Taoism. The original is constructed around the Confucian ethic which Klabund consolidates by direct reference to Confucian works. But, more importantly, Klabund introduces a religious mysticism that is lacking in the original; the moral parable is transformed into a religious parable.

Later commentators have been critical of Klabund's adaptation.

Pronko points out its formal deficiencies:

The Chalk Circle, made by the Viennese poet and sinologist Klabund in 1924 ... exhibits few of the peculiarities of a Chinese production and is quite westernised in its use of decor and prose speech. Nor does Klabund point out any symbolic gestures. 2

Others have criticised the play's content, dismissing it as a banal product of the romantic imagination:

Characteristic of Klabund's Kreidekreis are three sets of commonplaces: the German intelligentsia's stock responses to China; the clichés of contemporary liberal thought; and those of Romantic sentiment. 3

Camille Poupeye is critical of both aspects of the play:

La réalisation demeura aussi distante d'une représentation originale qu'une comédie musicale américaine reste loin d'une oeuvre wagnérienne ... on chercherait vainement, dans ces productions

1. Klabund, 'Wie der Kreidekreis entstand', p.7.
2. L.C. Pronko, Theater East and West (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p.56. It should be noted that Klabund was a German sinophile, not a Viennese sinologist.
3. E.F.C. Ludowyk, '"The Chalk Circle": A legend in four cultures', Comparative Literature Proceedings, 1 (1959), 249-256 (p.253).

défigurées en vue d'embellissement, le moindre caractère propre à la source d'inspiration authentique...

Le Cercle de Craie, que le poète allemand Klabund adapta et modernisa pour la scène allemande fut ... le plus grand succès de la saison 1924-25 ... Pourtant l'adaptateur avait étrangement altéré le caractère de l'oeuvre, à la fois naïf et rude, par l'introduction d'un prince, agissant comme juge et qui n'aurait été autre que le père de l'enfant. 1

Such criticisms may be justified but they centre mainly on the distortion of the original and add little to our understanding of the reasons for the success of Klabund's play throughout Europe.

The German sinologist Alfred Forke, though critical of the liberties that Klabund has taken with the text, welcomes the play as a serious treatment of a Chinese theme:

Die Fabel des chinesischen Stückes ist in den Grundzügen beibehalten, und es finden sich auch viele Anklänge an den chinesischen Text.

Klabunds "Kreidekreis" gibt sich den Anschein eines ernsten Dramas, wie es das Original ist ... Die Fabel ist echt chinesisch. Der Dichter weiß vieles über China, und die meisten Zusätze sind in chinesischem Geiste ... Indes eine treue Schilderung chinesischer Verhältnisse erhalten wir trotzdem nicht, denn der Verfasser erlaubt sich bewußt oder unbewußt zu viele Freiheiten. 2

The main deviations from an authentic Chinese setting and mentality are listed by Forke as follows: false transcription of some Chinese words; invention of personal names and geographically non-existent places; the wrong order of the five Confucian virtues; invention of fictitious deities and religious castes; and a far too democratically-minded Prince.

Chuan Chen criticises the loss of Chinese mentality:

Ein jeder, der etwas tiefer in die Wesenseigenart chinesischer Lebenshaltung eingedrungen ist, wird

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1. C. Poupeye, Le théâtre chinois, (Paris and Brussels, n.d.), p.51 and p.98.
 2. Forke, pp.7-8.

erkennen, daß die Menschen in Klabunds Drama durchaus nicht chinesischer Mentalität entsprechen. 1

but does not say how the play distorts the spirit of the original. Despite these reservations, Chen considers it the best dramatic adaptation of a Chinese play to have been produced by a German author:

Im Vergleich zu den dramatischen Nachdichtungen von Goethe, Schiller und Gumpenberg wird Klabunds Bearbeitung bisher der chinesischen Lebensweise und Denkart noch am meisten gerecht. Die Geschichte des deutschen Dramas weist bis auf den heutigen Tag noch keine besser gelungene Nachdichtung eines chinesischen Dramas auf. 2

He singles out the lyrical passages of Klabund's play as the work's most impressive quality. These are in fact not included in the original play but are added by Klabund from his translations of Chinese poems.

Others have criticised Klabund's distortion of the picture of feudal, pre-revolutionary China, which 'in ihrer zeitgebundenen, aber wahren Aussage die verrottete Moral der herrschenden Klasse jener Zeit anklagt'.³ Johannes von Guenther, who adapted the play some years later, takes specific exception to 'die Durchsetzung des Stückes mit politischen Gedanken', and the 'Idee eines edelkommunistisch inspirierten Wahlkaisertums'.⁴ It is interesting to compare these later criticisms with contemporary receptions of the play, which demonstrate an almost unanimous, uncritical enthusiasm for Klabund's work. Many regarded the play as a dramatised fairy-tale; D.J. Landau, for example, speaks of it as:

Ein Märchen ..., das im tiefsten Grunde vom Chinesischen nicht viel mehr als den Rahmen und das Kolorit hat, in der seelischen Physiognomie der handelnden Personen und im Gedanklichen der Verse stark europäisiert ist. 5

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1. Chuan Chen, Die chinesische schöne Literatur im deutschen Schrifttum (Kiel, 1933), p.55.
 2. Chuan Chen, p.56. To this it must be added that Schiller's and von Gumpenberg's plays are not adaptations of original Chinese plays, and that Goethe's play is a fragment.
 3. Der Kreidekreis, translated by A. Forke, edited and adapted by A.E. Klein (Leipzig, 1959), p.74.
 4. Der Kreidekreis, translated and adapted by Johannes von Guenther (Stuttgart, 1953), p.93. This was first published in Berlin in 1941.
 5. D.J. Landau and G.G. Michels, '"Der Kreidekreis" von Klabund', Blätter der württembergischen Volksbühne, 9 (1927-28), 4-6 (p.6).

H.H. Michels confirms this view, but also stresses the use of mime and minimum props and the epic device of self-introduction, an attempt to retain the most primitive level of performance, as key features of the play's appeal. These techniques are, however, not employed as alienation devices, as Brecht used them, but in order to create an empathy between characters and audience, 'ein starkes Miterleben und Mitgehen des Publikums'.¹

In these contemporary reviews there is no mention of any political content in the play. It is the transcendence of the social and political sphere into the world of pure spirit and poetic feeling, sustained by the songs and lyrical interpolations, and the abandoning of reality in search of an exotic, romantic realm that appealed to audiences and critics:

Gerade die lyrischen Stellen des Werkes vermitteln
uns jenen echten Hauch edelster Kultur des Geistes
und der Seele, der die Sehnsucht des durch schlimmes
Zeitgeschehen gehetzten Europäers nach dem Osten
erklärlich macht. 2

This shows the readiness of the German audiences to suspend all knowledge of China as a political reality by projecting into it a dream of their own creation; China becomes a timeless sphere where the troubles of the West are submerged beneath a vision of stability and harmony.

The later criticism that Klabund has distorted his material is contradicted by E. Grosse, who claims some knowledge of the Chinese theatre. He discusses the need to adapt the stylised methods of performance in order to render the play suitable for Western production but does not feel that Klabund has diminished the value of the original by his adaptation. He considers the German author's version an improvement on the original:

1. D.J. Landau and H.H. Michels, p.4.
2. D.J. Landau and H.H. Michels, p.5.

Er hat es nicht verstümmelt ... sondern im Gegenteile vervollkommenet und veredelt. Er hat die poetischen Keime, die in ihm lagen, entwickelt und zur Blüte gebracht ... Dabei ist der eigenartige chinesische Charakter des Dramas so gut gewahrt worden, daß mancher Zug für ein europäisches Publikum vielleicht einer Erläuterung bedarf. 1

His qualification as to the possible inaccessibility of certain problems in the play is unfounded. He refers specifically to the Confucian code of filial piety, which demands obedience from the child regardless of the parents' attitude towards the child. It is precisely on these points that Klabund expands his source, in an almost pedantic manner, and explains such aspects of the Chinese social code.

However, such problems of ethical import did not concern the majority of contemporary critics:

Der Kreidekreis ist ein reizendes chinesisches Volksmärchen, aufgebaut aus Elementen, die zu jedem Märchen gehören und sein Wesen ausmachen: die Liebe siegt über alle Hindernisse, schon auf Erden ist Gerechtigkeit zu haben, und wer aushält in Demut und Reinheit, dem wird die Palme. 2

To most minds it was a poetic dream and an evocation of the lyrical soul of China:

Klabund hat diesen poetischen Stoff zu einem lyrischen Spiel verarbeitet, das in Gestaltung und Sprache den ganzen Zauber der östlichen Märchenwelt erschließt. Nicht leere Worte tönen ans Ohr, empfundene Wahrheiten reden in klingender Sprache zu uns. ... Wir sind im Kreidekreis weitab von aller Wirklichkeit - in der weiten Welt des Märchenreiches. 3

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1. E. Grosse, 'Das chinesische Theater und Klabunds "Kreidekreis"', Blätter des Leipziger Schauspielhauses, 1 (1926), 1-4, (p.4).
 2. H.L., 'Der Kreidekreis"', Die Bühne, No.46 (1925), 6.
 3. St., 'Die kommenden Premieren', Die Bühne, No.16 (1925), 7. Similar sentiments can be found in other reviews of the time. See, for example, B. Diebold, 'Der Kreidekreis', Die Literatur, (1924-25), 358; Anon., '"Der Kreidekreis"', Die Bühne, No.43 (1925), 8; W. Vesper, '"Der Kreidekreis"', Die schöne Literatur, (1925), 89; A. Polgar, '"Der Kreidekreis"', Die Weltbühne, 27 October 1925, p.5; B. Diebold, 'Klabunds "Kreidekreis"', Frankfurter Zeitung, 5 January 1925, p.12; E. Delpy, '"Der Kreidekreis"', Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten, 14 September 1925, p.3; F. Salten, '"Der Kreidekreis"', Neue Freie Presse (Vienna), 18 October 1925, p.12; A. Kerr, '"Der Kreidekreis"', Berliner Tageblatt, 21 October 1925, p.16; M. Jacobs, '"Der Kreidekreis"', Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 21 October 1925, p.3.

There emerges from these reviews an aestheticised and poeticised vision of China as the cradle of poetry and mystical religiosity. The rational aspects of the final Solomonic judgement¹ give way to mystical divination through the magical, symbolic circle. It is interesting to compare the rationalism of the original with the lyricised mysticism of Klabund's version, since in this the divergence of Western opinions concerning China through the last three centuries becomes clear.

Stanislas Julien's translation of the original opens with a prologue spoken by the central character, Haï-tang. She has been forced to become the concubine of the Mandarin, Ma, in order to help her impoverished mother. Her brother, Tchang-lin, objects to her course of action since it will bring disgrace upon the family and prejudice his professional prospects.

The main action of the play concerns the murder of the Mandarin, Ma, by his first wife, Yü-pei, and her lover, Tchao. Haï-tang is falsely accused of this by Yü-pei, who also claims Haï-tang's son as her own, since he is Ma's heir and she can, thereby, take possession of his estate. Haï-tang is brought to trial before the corrupt and debauched judge, Sou-chun, who has been liberally bribed by Yü-pei. She is found guilty and is transported to the capital where judgement is to be passed. En route she meets her brother and the two are reconciled. The final scene involves the second hearing of the case before the governor, Pao, who is to give the final judgement. Since questioning and torture will not force Haï-tang to admit her guilt and renounce her claim to the child, the judge employs the chalk circle to elicit the truth. Haï-tang's innocence is revealed through her maternal love, and her refusal to subject the child to force in order to claim her right.

1. See I Kings 3, 16-28.

The judge sums up the moral demonstrated by the chalk circle:

Quoique le sens de la loi soit difficile à saisir,
il est possible de pénétrer les sentiments du coeur
humain. Un ancien a dit ces mots mémorables :
'Quel homme pourrait cacher ce qu'il est, quand vous
avez vu ses actions, examiné le mobile de sa
conduite, et reconnu le but qu'il se propose?'
Voyez la puissance redoutable que renfermait ce
cercle de craie! 1

This application of Confucian wisdom points to the strongly rational, moralising and pedagogical intention of the play. It is a Chinese morality play, constructed around a humanist ethic. Morality is an end in itself, and is a social virtue, not a prerequisite for spiritual salvation. The play's conclusion represents the triumph of justice over corruption and immorality by the application of Confucian wisdom. Its main themes are maternal love and filial piety. Hai-tang is the embodiment of these Confucian ideals. The filial piety is exemplified by her acceptance of her mother's wish that she should become concubine to the Mandarin, Ma, regardless of her own feelings. This is contrasted to her brother's rejection of her action in consideration of his personal ambition. Hai-tang's maternal love is demonstrated in her refusal to harm her child, even though, paradoxically, she knows that this may appear to prove that she is not the mother; this act demonstrates genuine maternal affection. Hai-tang is told that she must prove her claim to the child by seizing it from Yü-peï's grasp. One assumes that the true mother would fight to retain her child. Hai-tang, however, releases her son because maternal love consists not in possessing the child but in sparing it from pain.

Klabund creates a more complex plot around the original, anecdotal

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1. S. Julien, Hoei-Lan-Ki, p.88. The ancient referred to is Confucius. See R. Wilhelm, KUNGFUTSE. Gespräche. Lun Yü (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.44:

Der Meister sprach: "Sieh, was einer wirkt, schau, wovon er bestimmt wird, forsche, wo er Befriedigung findet: wie kann ein Mensch da entwischen? Wie kann ein Mensch da entwischen?"

form, which is more epic than dramatic. Within this revised form Klabund develops a religious theme and an overtly political theme that are not present in the original. The Chinese play contains elements of social criticism, particularly in the figure of the judge, Sou-chun, who represents the corrupt bureaucracy of the Mongol Yüan rule, and is contrasted with the upright governor and judge, Pao, who, in the popular imagination, is associated with native Sung rule. Such complexities of an associative nature could not, of course, be transferred to a German play, since these allusions would lose their significance. Klabund modifies the contrast of native and foreign dynasties into a conflict between an older and younger generation and introduces themes of revolution, social upheaval, injustice and moral regeneration. Apart from these adaptations to the central theme of the play, Klabund also introduces many details in order to broaden the canvas of Chinese life presented within the play and to instil some humour into the earnestness of the original.

Klabund's play opens in a tea-house, or brothel, owned by the eunuch Tong. Haitang (sic) is to be sold into Tong's service by her mother, in order to raise money to bury Haitang's father, who has been driven to suicide by the financial demands made upon him by the powerful Mandarin, Ma. Haitang's brother's objections to her taking up this dubious profession are developed by Klabund into a debate of an ethical problem, based upon the prescripts of the Confucian Li Ki (Book of Rites) and Hiao King (Book of Filial Piety). Haitang defends her action:

Hast du nicht in der Schule auswendig gelernt:
die Pflicht des Sohnes ist es, dafür Sorge zu tragen,
daß winters und sommers die Eltern sich jeder
Bequemlichkeit des Lebens erfreuen. 1

1. Vagant, p.469.

Since he, the son, is failing in his duty, it is incumbent upon her to adopt his role and support their mother. Tschang-Ling (sic) replies by referring to other demands upon the son, which must take priority:

Aber es gibt noch größere Pflichten, die ein Sohn zu erfüllen hat. Sagt nicht das Buch Haiking: der höchste Grad der kindlichen Liebe besteht darin, nach hohen Würden zu trachten und mit dem Ruhm seines Namens die kommenden Jahrhunderte zu erschüttern, wie der Sturm die Bäume erschüttert? 1

This confrontation between the two children, which is not developed in the original play, is used by Klabund to introduce a political and social theme. The conflicting demands made upon the son by the Confucian code do not represent an inconsistency within the moral code (which is considered to be of absolute validity) but reflect the state of society. If the code by which society is regulated cannot be applied consistently, then this reflects the deviation of society from the abstract principles on which it is constructed into a state of chaos where the code ceases to function effectively. The conflict of two rights reflects a chaotic, dislocated society in which the individual stands morally disoriented. Faced with a loss of rational prescripts, Haitang's action is dictated by love, which is to be considered an attribute of the divine and the force from which all moral prescripts derive their validity. This is an obvious misinterpretation of Confucianism; Klabund develops his theme in this way in order to fuse rational morality with a mystical belief in the all-powerful, regenerative force of love.

Installed in her new profession, Haitang's first client is the romantic vagabond, Prince Pao, a figure invented by Klabund. This idealised figure also has a political role; he represents the ruling class and the spirit of true monarchy, but he has abandoned the world

1. Vagant, p.470. The book referred to is the Confucian canonical work The Book of Filial Piety, which is more commonly transcribed as Hiao King. Klabund took details of its contents from Windischmann, p.273.

of the corrupt court, and lives the life of a melancholic, poetic dreamer. The prince engages Haitang in flirtatious conversation, full of delicate eroticism. These two figures, Haitang and Pao, between whom a spiritual affinity exists, represent natural human goodness and the idealism of youth in a world of depravity.

However, this peaceful interlude is shattered, quite literally, when the Mandarin, Ma, makes a stormy entrance through the paper wall of the tea-house. He is representative of the degenerate features of the world: greed, acquisitiveness and cynicism:

Mein Name ist Ma. Ganz einfach Ma. Wenn ich den Namen Ma nenne, so sollte das eigentlich genügen, daß jedermann sich ehrfurchtsvoll vor mir verneige. Denn ich besitze Geld, Geld, viel Geld, sehr viel Geld, so daß ich mir alles kaufen kann, was ich will, und wonach ich Gelüst und Sehnsucht trage. 1

The comparison between the two youthful idealists and this representative of the corrupt older generation is implicit in Ma's own words:

Ich ... bin Ehrendoktor der Universität Peking, obwohl ich das Schriftzeichen für Liebe nicht von dem Schriftzeichen für Geld unterscheiden kann. 2

Needless to say, Haitang becomes the object of Ma's lascivious desire. He is able to buy her from Tong, since Pao cannot outbid him. This represents the temporary triumph of materialism over spirituality. The pathos is heightened, because in Klabund's version of the play Ma had been the indirect cause of Haitang's father's death.

The murder of Ma by his first wife is presented as in the original, but Klabund adds an important qualification to the action by having Ma undergo a spiritual transformation during the course of the play. In the original, Ma is not the Victorian melodramatic figure that Klabund makes him, nor is he linked with Haitang's father's death. There is,

1. Vagant, p.477.

2. Vagant, p.478.

therefore, no resistance on the girl's part when she is taken by Ma as a concubine. Klabund, however, develops the figure, Ma, into the grotesque antithesis of his hero and heroine. The spiritual change that Ma undergoes is meant to indicate the regenerative force of love. Impressed by Haitang, Ma becomes sensitive and reflective:

Seit ich dich kenne, Haitang, hast du mein Herz
verwandelt. Du hast nichts dazu getan, mich zu
überzeugen, dein einfaches Wesen wirkte. 1

As in the original play, Haitang is brought to trial before the debauched and corrupt judge Tschu, convicted of the crime, and loses her child to the first wife, Yü-peï. The trial consists of the same mixture of calumny and perjury as in the original play, but Klabund also uses the scene to introduce a number of comic characters from the common people. Before final judgement can be passed, a deus ex machina arrives in the form of an Imperial messenger who announces the election of a new Emperor and the suspension of all sentences, pending retrial before the 'Son of Heaven'.

Haitang is transported to the capital in the company of her brother, who has been arrested as a revolutionary and is to be tried for treason for his denouncements of tyrannical, despotic and cruel rule. The brother, Tschang-Ling, becomes the representative of violent political activism within the play. Unlike Haitang, he does not withdraw into the self and rely upon quietism and spiritual solace but speaks out against the age and abjures its corruption. He claims membership of the White Lotus² secret society, which, in Klabund's play, becomes synonymous with political extremism:

Der furchtbare Unterschied von arm und reich muß
aufgehoben werden. Weh uns, daß Männer ihre Seele,
Mütter ihre Töchter verkaufen müssen um des nackten,
dürftigen Lebens willen. 3

1. Vagant, p.492.

2. This is the sect that Döblin had used in Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun, termed 'die weiße Wasserlilie'. See above, pp.121-122.

3. Vagant, p.487.

This comparison of reactions to the corrupt world develops into a debate that is similar to the theme of Döblin's novel: the conflict of violent, passionate activity and passive, quietistic resignation. Klabund, however, unlike Döblin, does not leave the problem unresolved, but creates a harmonious, fairy-tale conclusion to the debate. By introducing the figure of the prince, and by replacing the governor, Pao, by this fairy-tale character, Klabund is able to combine the two themes and to resolve the conflict. The elevation of the idealist Pao to Emperor brings the dawn of a new age, and the end of corruption. He declares his reformatory intention:

Der innere Feind ist aber vor allem - ein
bestechliches Beamtentum. Ungetreue Richter,
deren Seele vergeist und verfilzt und deren
Urteil käuflich ist wie Fische am Markt. Ich
will den Unterdrückten meines Volkes helfen, ich
will ihr Bruder, nicht ihr Richter sein. 1

The second trial is held, and the circle employed to discover the true mother. The apparently paradoxical request is put to the contesting parties:

Versucht, den Knaben aus dem Kreis zu ziehen
Zu gleicher Zeit. Die eine packe ihn am linken,
Die andere am rechten Arm. Es ist gewiß,
Die rechte Mutter wird die rechte Kraft besitzen,
Den Knaben aus dem Kreis zu ziehen. 2

Klabund does not attribute the revelation of the truth to perceptive psychology and rationalisation of the individual's action, but to the manifestation of the power of love:

Verborgenes ward durch Liebe offenbar.
Die Dunkelheit ward durch die Liebe klar.
Die Liebe macht die Lügner stumm.
Die Liebe bringt die Hoffart um.
Die Liebe brennt wie Sonn' so sehr,
Die Liebe rast wie Sturm im Meer,
Die Liebe bringt den Tod zu Fall
Und Liebe, Liebe überall! 3

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1. Vagant, p.517.
 2. Vagant, p.523.
 3. Vagant, p.527.

Klabund further surprises us, and surpasses the implausibility of much of the action so far, with the prince's admission that on the night of their first meeting he had clandestinely entered Haitang's bedchamber and consummated their love, whilst she had imagined that this was merely a dream. The young child is, therefore, a product of their union and a symbol of the new age.

Klabund's conclusion represents a resolution of the antitheses of revolution and passivity. The Emperor promises reforms, which removes the necessity of violent revolution. The correction of the social evils thus re-establishes the traditional pattern which had been on the verge of collapse.

As can be seen, Klabund has created a play that is much in keeping with Expressionist drama of the day. Contemporary critics appear to have ignored such similarities and stressed the exotic and romantic features of the play. These are present; the style of the play is predominantly lyrical and, even when not in verse form, the language has an emotive, declamatory quality. This lyricism, however, also contains pointed social criticism in its depiction of a declining social order. These conflicting themes of romantic imagination and social criticism are juxtaposed and resolved in the dream of enlightened, patriarchal monarchy.

Similarities with German drama of the day can be seen in this belief in man's nobler inner qualities; in the stress on spirituality; the criticism of crass materialism; the belief in the brotherhood of man that emerges at the end; spiritual regeneration; Wandlung; the conflict between a decaying, corrupt older order and the emergence of a newer, crypto-socialist order. The language too with its lyricism and hysterical and declamatory blank verse is reminiscent of Expressionist drama.

From the sober form of the original, Klabund has created a fairy-tale with strong political overtones. The nature of the social structure within the play makes its criticism more applicable to nineteenth-century

Europe than to the Weimar Republic or China. Indeed, there are many echoes of Büchner's Der hessische Landbote in the depiction of a corrupt judiciary and ruling class, as well as in Tschang-Ling's tirades against the state.

However, the appeal of the play did not rest upon its political comment. Certainly no critic took the play to be a criticism of German or Chinese conditions. Rather, it was seen as an apolitical fairy-tale with the stock theme of the conflict of good and evil and the triumph of the former over the latter. It was regarded as escapism and as an exotic excursion into a realm of dream.

Within Klabund's play the chalk circle takes on a symbolic function. It is used not simply as a forensic device but to represent cosmic harmony:

Pao: Der Kreis ist das Symbol des Himmelsgewölbes,
 der Kreis ist das Symbol des Ringes, der Gatten
 aneinanderschmiedet, Herzring an Herzring reiht.
 Haitang: Was außerhalb dieses Kreises ist, ist
 das Nichts. Was innerhalb dieses Kreises ist,
 ist das All. Wie verbinden sich Nichts und All?
 Im Kreise, der sich drehend fortbewegt. 1

The circle is a symbol of the unification of opposites, and represents the cosmic principle, which manifests itself through Haitang and Pao. Its attributes are love, justice, truth, hence it is employed in the final scene to reveal these qualities.

The play is in keeping with Klabund's use of Chinese material in his narrative fiction. There too the solution to human ills is seen as a return to a paradisaal, patriarchal state. Such a projection of a utopian feudal order ruled by divine representatives seem oddly out of place in the theatre of the 1920s, yet is one among the many theoretical solutions to human problems offered by artists of the day. In Klabund's case, however, it seems to have been only the exotic trappings of his work that

1. Vagant, pp.475-476.

attracted his contemporaries.

The unreserved enthusiasm for Der Kreidekreis and its massive success in Germany prompted Reinhardt to revive Turandot, which he had staged so successfully in 1911. The new Festspielhaus in Salzburg presented Turandot on the occasion of its re-opening on 15 August 1926.¹ Since the first performances of the play in 1911, the figure of Turandot had received much attention. In addition to the examples mentioned previously, one finds operetta and prose versions by Kralik² and Burggraf.³ Schiller's adaptation of the play had also been rediscovered and published in richly-illustrated editions.⁴ The riddles which form the central action of the play had also caught the imagination.⁵

It is a sign of the times, and of public taste, that in 1926 the Festspiele should open with Turandot. In past years the festival had consisted of plays with religious themes, mystery plays and Apostelspiele, but now turned to aestheticised exoticism, the tone of which can be illustrated by an enthusiastic critic's description of Reinhardt's stage-setting:

Der Vorhang schwebte auf. Nicht ein Vorhang der gewöhnlichen Art freilich ... sondern ein besonderer Turandot-Vorhang bereits, ein riesiges Stück blau-grünen chinesischen Zeugs, unregelmäßig geschnitten und also nicht dazu angetan, die Bühne zu verdecken ... sondern ein Vorhang von symbolischen Graden: wenn ich aufschwebe, ich Signal, ich Wimpel dieses Spiels, dann beginnt 'Turandot'! 6

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1. G. Rühle, pp.716-717.
 2. R. Kralik, Turandot und der Wiener Kaspar. Ein tragikomisches Märchen nach Gozzi, Werthes und Schiller (Vienna, 1925).
 3. W. Burggraf, Prinzessin Turandot. Eine Schaurette nach Carlo Gozzi (Berlin, 1925). The music was composed by G. Pittrich.
 4. F. von Schiller, Turandot. Ein Märchen nach Gozzi (Berlin, 1925); Turandot. Prinzessin von China (Leipzig, 1924).
 5. V. Attens-Heiligenkreutz, Die zahme Turandot. 250 Rätsel (mit Lösung) (Graz, 1926).
 6. H. Braun, Münchener Zeitung, 18 August 1926. Quoted here from G. Rühle, pp.717-720 (p.718).

The accompanying music was a mixture of Chinese and Rococo. The scene opened with 'das Zauberbild von Peking', which was to strike the audience by its sumptuousness and richness, 'ein erlesener Reichtum von Klang und Bild und spielerischem Geist'.

Quite clearly, the earlier success of Klabund's play had led to this staging, as Braun explains:

Wie kommt es doch, das gerade Turandot heute das Thema geworden, das zugleich Opern- und Schauspielbühne befällt, so zwar, daß, wie in Dresden, die Ausstattung Beifall bei offener Szene erntet? Die Antwort liegt schon darin. Wir sind, beschleunigt wohl durch den Erfolg von (sic) Kreidekreis, auf der Reihum-Suche nach schmackhafter Exotik wieder einmal beim Chinesischen angelangt ... Und so hat ... Max Reinhardt dieses modische Bedürfnis nach Exotik in seinem meisterlichen Bühnenspiel überhöht und geadelt ... 1

The undoubted success of Turandot lay in its portrayal of the fairy-tale realm, the timeless realm of the fantastic. But it seems that many felt it inferior to Klabund's play in its evocation of the true spirit of the fairy-tale. Braun makes the comparison:

Das Geheimnis des Märchens ist seine Schlichtheit. Das Walten des Schicksals bis zum Wunderbaren, der Glaube ans Schicksal bis ins Wunder - das ist Märchenwelt. Pracht um ihrer selbst willen, Skepsis und Clownerie ohne Disziplin nehmen diese Stimmung fort; die große Achse des Spiels wird verdeckt, verloren. 2

The Märchen had degenerated into exotic farce.

It was also at this time that Puccini composed his version of Turandot, to which he had been stimulated by the experience of Reinhardt's production. Though he studied both Gozzi's and Schiller's versions, he preferred to recreate the work with a less bloodthirsty, more passive Turandot. The sadistic element is replaced by psychological motivation; the psychopath becomes the avenger of her family. The work was premièred

1. G. Rühle, pp.718-719.

2. G. Rühle, p.720.

in Milan on 25 April 1926.¹ It was hastily translated² and produced in Vienna on 14 October 1926.³

The dominance of the fairy-tale image of China continued in the theatre and is to be found in a play presented by the Hamburger Gruppe, whose interest in China is documented in the publication of Die silbergrüne Dschunke⁴ on the occasion of their annual festival in 1927. The highlight of this 'Chinese' festival was the presentation of a pantomime, Der Gaukler und das Klingelspiel, in the Hamburg Staatsoper on 25 February 1927 in honour of the Consul General, Von Koh Tschén. The text of the pantomime, written by Li-shan-pe (Hans Leip), has not been published, but one can judge the tone of it from a résumé of the plot contained in a book commemorating the festival:

An einem schönen Abend lustwandelt das Volk in der Nähe des Kaisergartens. Ein revolutionärer Gaukler und seine Betteldirne verspotten die Einfältigen und reizen sie auf, eine geheime Tür in der Kaiser-Mauer zu zerbrechen. Da kommt das Mädchen mit dem Klingelspiel herzu, die verkörperte, liebreizende Poesie des Ostens und lenkt aller Herzen auf sich. Ein Gongschlag ertönt, erschrocken zerstreut die Menge. Der Kaiser erscheint, findet das verlorene Klingelspiel. Die kleine Tänzerin, die sich den Fuß verstaucht hat, kommt suchend zurück. Ein verliebtes Spiel beginnt zwischen ihr und dem Kaiser, welches durch den Gaukler und die Betteldirne gestört wird. Schließlich ersticht sich der Gaukler - anscheinend - selber, der Kaiser zieht sich, das silberne Mädchen mit dem Klingelspiel im Arm, in seinen Garten zurück. 5

The Consul's reaction to the pantomime is, unfortunately, not recorded. But that such a piece should be performed not only in the

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1. Further details can be found in R. Specht, Giacomo Puccini, translated by C.A. Phillips (Westport, 1970), pp.223-36.
 2. G. Puccini, Turandot. Lyrisches Drama in drei Akten und fünf Bildern, translated by A. Brüggemann (Leipzig, 1926).
 3. Kindermann, VIII, 284.
 4. Die silbergrüne Dschunke. West-östliche Begegnungen, edited by H. Leip (Hamburg, 1927).
 5. Die silbergrüne Dschunke, p.70.

presence of, but also in honour of the representative of the internationally recognised revolutionary nationalist government of Peking is, to say the least, surprising.

The China projected here is a creation of poetic fantasy; it is a fairy-tale and a timeless, lyrical Empire. The Emperor espouses the spirit of ancient China, the supra-political realm of inwardness, poeticism and spirituality. There is a certain concession to reality in the figures of the revolutionaries, though these are not the heroic figures of the later Communist theatrical projections of the revolutionary struggle, nor the idealistic youth of Klabund's play. They are, in contrast, the dregs of society, political malcontents, opportunists, motivated by the politics of envy and greed. The Imperial ideal is attacked by the prostitute and the common rogue, but their revolutionary activity is countered by the forces of tradition.

Some fifteen years after the abdication of the Manchu Emperor, and at a time when bloody civil war in China had continued unassuaged for a decade, the German stage still persisted with its poetic image of China.

It was the communist playwrights who redressed the balance and, by their dramatised accounts of the current political state of China, brought the image of China into the twentieth century. They replaced the myth of a timeless tradition, quietistic philosophy, and social harmony with an analysis of the class-war in China, and the emergence of a modern state from the cocoon of her past.

Despite the contemporary interest in China, and Klabund's success with a Chinese play, her drama was never really discovered in other than this distorted form. Only one other major play was translated¹ at this time, apart from which the only new sources of information on Chinese

1. V. Hundhausen, Das Westzimmer. Ein chinesisches Singspiel in deutscher Sprache (Peking and Leipzig, 1926).

drama were two collections of popular comedies.¹ None of these was ever performed on the German stage.

There was also no real attempt to make use of Chinese theatrical techniques, which were first employed in the West in Brecht's dramatic theory. Individual producers introduced elements of mime and dance into performances, but these were included to augment the exotic appeal of the plays performed, and not to produce a form of authentic Chinese drama. As with other literary projections of China at this time, the plays were an excuse to indulge in romantic fantasy and comic extravagance.

c) The Lyric

Klabund seems to have first taken an interest in Chinese poetry in 1915. He wrote to a friend that year of his intention to publish certain translations of Chinese verse:

Dumpfe Trommel und beraushtes Gong, chinesische Kriegsgedichte (sie sind mir besser gelungen als Litaipe, sie sind noch freier übertragen und haben oft nur das chinesische Motiv behalten) erscheint nun im Inselverlag. Mit Litaipe bin ich noch nicht einig. Vielleicht mache ich eine große Ausgabe (100 unbekannte Gedichte, direkt aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt mit einem hiesigen Chinakenner). Vielleicht. 2

Nothing came of this second plan, but the first collection, which consisted of free adaptations of existing French and German translations, appeared in the same year. In all, Klabund published three collections of Chinese poems before his premature death in 1928. These were Dumpfe Trommel und beraushtes Gong; Li-tai-pe, Nachdichtungen; and Das Blumenschiff, which were later republished in collected form in Dichtungen aus dem Osten, II

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1. H. Rudelsberger, Altchinesische Liebes-Komödien (Vienna, 1924); Chinesische Schwänke (Vienna, 1920).
 2. Klabund, Briefe an einen Freund, p.100. The letter is dated 17 May 1915.

and Chinesische Gedichte.¹ Individual poems also appeared in a wide number of periodicals between 1915 and 1929.

Klabund was not the first of the popular translators of Chinese verse but was, without question, the most widely-read in his time. He is representative of the fashionable practice of composing free renditions of Oriental verse. Some translations made by professional sinologists existed,² though these were not published in popular form, being found mainly in scholarly journals. They were, however, often used by German poets as sources for their adaptations.

It was the popularity of the collection of French translations of Chinese verse prepared by Judith Gautier that had first caught the attention of German authors and inspired the publication of Heilmann's translations,³ which, in turn, prompted German poets to compose similar adaptations of Chinese poetry.

The number of translations is very large. The popularity of Heilmann's edition of Chinese poems inspired Otto Hauser⁴ to publish his translations of Li-tai-pe poems in 1906, 1908 and 1911. At the same time, one finds essays in journals and periodicals on the subject of Chinese poetry, for example by C. Haußmann⁵ and the sinologist W. Grube.⁶

H. Bethge's first collection of verse translations, Die chinesische Flöte⁷ of 1907, proved to be as successful as Heilmann's earlier prose

1. Klabund, Dumpe Trommel und beraushtes Gong (Leipzig, 1915), Li-tai-pe (Leipzig, 1916), Das Blumenschiff (Berlin, 1922), Dichtungen aus dem Osten, 3 vols (Vienna, 1929), Chinesische Gedichte (Vienna, 1933).

2. A. Forke, Blüthen chinesischer Dichtung (Magdeburg, 1899), and V. von Strauß, Schi-king. Das kanonische Liederbuch der Chinesen (Heidelberg, 1880) are the only German examples.

3. See above, pp. 70-74.

4. O. Hauser, Li-tai-po (Weimar, 1906); Li-tai-po, 2 vols (Berlin, 1911); Die chinesische Dichtung (Berlin, 1908).

5. C. Haußmann, 'Altchinesische Lyrik', März, 1 (1907), 413-24.

6. W. Grube, 'Moderne chinesische Lyrik', Deutsche Rundschau, 5 (1905), 100-5.

7. H. Bethge, Die chinesische Flöte (Leipzig, 1907).

translations had been. Cast in the mould of Impressionist aestheticism, Bethge's poems charmed their readers with their delicately-shaded lyrical dream pictures of China. They are predominantly Li-tai-pe poems, in which the mood of world-weariness dominates, as Bethge states in his accompanying notes:

Was für eine holde lyrische Kunst trat mir entgegen!
 Ich fühlte eine bang verschwebende Zartheit lyrischen
 Klanges, ich blickte in eine von Bildern ganz erfüllte
 Kunst der Worte, die hinableuchtete in die Schwermut
 und in die Rätsel des Seins, ich fühlte ein feines
 lyrisches Entzittern, eine quellende Symbolik, etwas
 Zartes, Duftiges, Mondscheinhaftes, eine blumenhafte
 Grazie der Empfindungen. 1

His view of the Chinese is of a people living in a rococo world of delicacy and elegance. He terms them 'ein lyrisch so subtil empfindendes Volk', whose poetic sensitivity found its culmination in the verse of Li-tai-pe, the semi-divine poet:

In seiner Brust wurzelte die ganze dumpfe Melancholie
 der Welt ... 'Vergänglichkeit' heißt das immer mahnende
 Siegel seines Fühlens ... Er trinkt und greift voll
 Sehnsucht nach den Sternen. Seine Kunst ist irdisch
 und Überirdisch zugleich ... Bei ihm spürt man ein
 mystisches Wehen aus Wolkenfernen, der Schmerz des
 Kosmos webt in ihm. In ihm hämmert das unbegriffene
 Schicksal der Welt. 2

It is the personality of the poet Li-tai-pe that attracts Bethge. In this figure he finds his own convictions on the nature of poetry and the poet best exemplified:

Künstler sind Träume Gottes: lichte und dunkle
 Träume. Sie sind das zauberische Wehen und Verwehen
 des aus dem Jenseits herüberspielenden Geistes, sie
 sind die stärkste, unfäßbarste Offenbarung überirdischen
 Leuchtens, und die letzten rhythmischen Wunder des
 Daseins haben ihren Ursprung in ihrer Lust und ihrer
 Qual. 3

For Bethge, Li-tai-pe represents the complete abandonment of the self to

1. Bethge, p.108.

2. Bethge, p.109.

3. G.A. Mathey, 'In Memoriam Hans Bethge', Aussaat, 2 (1947-8), 188-90 (p.188).

the spirit of poetry. It is not surprising, therefore, that Bethge views Tu-fu less enthusiastically, since the latter is more restrained in his expression of emotion, and is aware of a world of reality, that cannot be transcended by recourse to drink. The two poles of Chinese verse are represented in Bethge, but Tu-fu is too rooted in reality for Bethge's full appreciation: 'sein Herz ist mehr bewegt von den zeitlichen Geschicken der Erde als von den Rätseln des Seins';¹ Bethge is preoccupied by spiritual, not material considerations. His translations represent a flight from reality into an aesthetic realm. The Chinese poems contain a lyrical mood with which Bethge feels empathy and which he attempts to express in German form.

Bethge's poems impressed Gustav Mahler, who, like Bethge, found the echo of his own feelings in these Chinese verses and adapted them into a symphonic form in Das Lied von der Erde of 1908. He took seven poems, and, with slight adaptations, set them to music.²

Bethge was later to make more translations in 1922,³ when a general interest in Chinese verse had developed. These too are mainly Li-tai-pe poems, though the range here is wider, with poems from the Schi-King and more modern poems by Tsu-Ping-Schu.

From this time, the popularity of Chinese verse increased, and further translations and adaptations appeared. Some are independent poems based upon Chinese motifs, such as H. Horvát's 'Gedichte nach dem Chinesischen', of which one example may suffice to demonstrate the use of a Chinese setting:

Der Lenz war süß; mit einem jungen Mädchen
Trank ich im jungen Walde goldnen Wein.

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1. Bethge, p.109.
 2. For full details of this see K. Blaukopf, Gustav Mahler, translated by I. Goodwin (London, 1973), pp.235-7.
 3. H. Bethge, Pfirsichblüten aus China (Berlin, 1922), his earlier collection Die chinesische Flöte had also been republished in 1919.

Der Sommer war ein Fest; im hohen Mittag
Sangen die Käfer auf dem Blumenfelde.

Der Herbst sah uns in laubgeschmückten Kähnen,
Rot säumten Ebereschen unsern Strom.

Der Winter ist die märchenhafte,
Die leise Zeit. Wir dichten dann von Bäumen,
Von rotem Herbst und heller Frühlingshalde,
Von Bienenblumensang und diesem wunderreichen
Schneeflockenvorhang, der sich langsam senkt
Und endlos senkt und ohne Laut ... oh sieh
Des Schweigens weisse Blüten an den Fenstern. 1

It is an idealised vision of the Chinese poet in his natural surroundings; there is an empathy between man and his natural environment in the matching of mood, activity and season. The poem is calm, balanced, idealised and unproblematic in tone, but too expository in style. Chinese poetry does not develop such a theme in this manner, but rather by apparently disjointed statements. There is, in Horvát's poem, too great an effort to explain and point the meaning of the verse, to state rather than to demonstrate. However, it clearly illustrates the attraction of Chinese poetry.

One finds a similar image of the poet Li-tai-pe in M. Wied's poem, which describes the Chinese poet's legendary departure from the world:

Sein Boot glitt schnell, gelb glitt es auf dem blauen
mondüberglänzten See im Duft der Nacht,
ganz steuerlos; geschaukelt von der lauen
und krausen Flut mit seiner leichten Fracht.

Er sah zum Himmel. Goldne Sternenlichte (sic)
flackerten, angefacht vom frischen Wind.
Groß standen, wandlungsvoll wie Traumgesichte,
die hohen Wolken. Seine Augen, blind

vom Glanze, blind von den geschauten Fernen,
getrübt von traubensüßer Trunkenheit,
verschlossen sich ... Und über goldnen Sternen-
und Mondreflexen glitt in Seligkeit

ein dunkles Schicksal, ohne Halt noch Ziel.
Bis er, jäh angeweht von steifer Brise
über die spiegelnd weiße Wolkenwiese
hinunter in den tiefen Himmel fiel. 2

1. H. Horvát, 'Gedichte nach dem Chinesischen', Sturm, 1 (1910), 381.
(Orthography as in the original.)
2. M. Wied, 'Der Tod des Li-tai-po', Der Brenner, 3 (1913), 256.

Legend has it that Li-tai-pe drowned whilst trying to grasp the reflection of the moon; his death is seen as the fulfilment of his romantic longing.

The figure of Li-tai-pe, the poetic dreamer, caught the imagination of German readers. He typified the timeless, mystical poetic essence of China, which German poets attempted to communicate in their many translations and adaptations. The attraction of Chinese poetry can be seen in H. Fredersdorff's¹ and K. Siemers'² poems dedicated to Li-tai-pe, and in E. Reiche's essays on Chinese verse,³ which stress the mystical qualities of Chinese verse.

By the 1920s there were several collections available in Germany. One need only point to O. Wolfgang, Die Porzellanpagoda, with its free renditions of Li-tai-pe; A.R. Meyer and E. Ulitzsch, Das Blumenboot der Nacht; W. Stolzenburg, Östlicher Divan; E. Oehler-Heimerdinger, Das Frauenherz; L. Woitsch, Lieder eines chinesischen Dichters und Trinkers; V. Hundhausen, Chinesische Dichter in deutscher Sprache; M. Fleischer, Der Porzellanpavillon; H. Böhm, Lieder aus China, and A. Ehrenstein, Schi-King, Pe-Lo-Thien, China klagt.⁴ Hans Schiebelhuth also made

1. H. Fredersdorff, 'Nachdichtungen chinesischer Lyrik', Die literarische Gesellschaft, 4 (1918), 252-62.
2. K. Siemers, 'Gesänge um Li Tai Pe', Die Flöte, 2 (1919-20), 190-91; 'Auf der Reise in die Verbannung', Die Flöte, 3 (1920-21), 260.
3. E. Reiche, 'Von chinesischer Lyrik', Phaeton, 1 (1919-20), 40-42, and 'Von chinesischer Lyrik', Frankfurter Zeitung, 23 September 1917, p.12.
4. O. Wolfgang, Die Porzellanpagoda. Nachdichtungen chinesischer Lyrik (Vienna, 1921); A.R. Meyer, 'Po-chü-i: Im Reiten eingeschlafen', Der Einzige, 3 (1921), 114, 'Das Thee-Gedicht des chinesischen Kaisers Khian-lung', Der Einzige, 3 (1921), 74-6; A.R. Meyer and E. Ulitzsch, Das Blumenboot der Nacht (Berlin, 1921); W. Stolzenburg, '"Das Lied des Dichters" von Li-tai-po', Die Weltbühne, 21 (1925), 928, Östlicher Divan. Umdichtungen chinesischer Lyrik (Baden, 1925); E. Oehler-Heimerdinger, Das Frauenherz. Chinesische Lieder aus drei Jahrtausenden (Stuttgart, 1925); L. Woitsch, Lieder eines chinesischen Dichters und Trinkers (Leipzig, 1925), these had appeared earlier as Aus den Gedichten Po-Chü-I's (Peking, 1908); V. Hundhausen, Chinesische Dichter in deutscher Sprache (Peking and Leipzig, 1926); M. Fleischer, Der Porzellanpavillon (Berlin, Vienna and Leipzig, 1927); H. Böhm, Lieder aus China (Munich, 1929); A. Ehrenstein, Schi-King (Vienna, 1922), Pe-Lo-Thien (Berlin, 1923), China klagt (Berlin, 1924); A. Holz, Li-tai-pe. Lied aus dem Phantasia (Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 1921).

adaptations in 1922 for inclusion in the periodical Die Dachstube,¹ but these were not published.

It is surprising that among these collections only those prepared by Woitsch, Hundhausen and Böhm are translations from the original Chinese, whereas the others are merely reworkings of existing translations.

Chinese verse also influenced contemporary poets, though it is impossible to assess the degree of such influence. J. Oven referred to 'die Verwendung asiatischer Motive ..., die bedenklich nach einer Modeliteratur riechen', and the effect upon Hans Schiebelhuth:

... aber schon fühlt man auch bei ihm stark den
Einfluß der Literatur, literarischen modischen
Denkens, schielend nach Asien ... nach allem, was
früher barbarisch hieß. 2

It is not surprising that of the Chinese poets it should be Li-tai-pe³ who found the most positive acceptance in the West at this time. He exemplified all that the Western reader hoped to find in Chinese verse; he is the escapist who disregards the world of transience in search of cosmic permanence and with whom the world of reality dissolves into exuberant abandon. He is the dreamer, the visionary, the poet of cosmic rather than earthly perspective.

The poetic record of his life is one in which he appears in a permanent

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1. H. Schiebelhuth, Gedichte. Übertragungen (Darmstadt and Zurich, 1966), pp.313-56. For further details concerning these poems, see H. Schiebelhuth, Prosa. Briefe. Theaterkritiken (Darmstadt and Zurich, 1967), pp.173 and 317-25.
 2. J. Oven, 'Lyrik', Die schöne Literatur, 24 (1923), 29-30. The author refers to the following collections as containing a strongly asiatic flavour, which he disapproves of: O. Loerke, Die heimliche Stadt (Berlin, 1921); F. Schnack, Der Zauberer, (Leipzig, 1922); H. Schiebelhuth, Wegstern (Weimar, 1921); A. Steffen, Weg-Zehrung (Basle, 1921); K. Heynicke, Die hohe Ebene (Berlin, 1922); E. Blaß, Der offene Strom (Heidelberg, 1922); J. Haringer, Die Kammer (Regensburg, 1921); K. Edschmid, Stehe von Lichtern gestreichelt (Hannover, 1921).
 3. A. Waley, The Poetry and Career of Li Po (London, 1950) is the best study of Li-tai-pe's life and documentation of his work, though its author clearly has little sympathy for the poet's work.

state of inebriation in order to release the divine inspiration with which he was suffused. A man of impulse, of immediate and unrestrained inspiration, he scorned convention both in his life-style and his verse. Highly individualistic, he disregarded the Confucian tradition of literary scholarship, with its stress on high moral and intellectual content in poetry.

His poetry has been regarded as immoral because of its neglect of the suffering of the world in which he lived, but it must also be pointed out that his verse was essentially mystical, or Taoist, and thus ascribed all the suffering and hardship of life to the stupidity of others, and their lack of harmony with the Tao. Since it is in the nature of the Taoist creed not to enter into speculation upon the nature of the life-force, nor to prescribe courses of action, other than in the vague assertion that one must adhere to the way of the Tao, it is understandable that Li-tai-pe should seek to demonstrate it in his own life and verse, through complete dedication to the inner self, as an alternative to the aberrations of others.

But it is not entirely true to accuse him of amorality. There is a note of concern, particularly in the poems dealing with war, which were the first Chinese poems published by Klabund. Furthermore, there is a strong tone of fatalism and resignation in his work, as well as a feeling of estrangement from his fellow-men. His verse consists of suggestions, rather than explicit statements. These poems are considered to be flashes of insight, intuitive graspings of the nature of existence. They have a natural background, which serves not only as a setting, but also as a comment upon the nature of man and the cosmos, and the reciprocal relations between the two. Nature, the animating soul by which he is surrounded, is dominant, but not in a plainly descriptive manner. The poet endeavours to catch the mood of nature and the essence of his natural environment, from which he hopes to find a way to the appreciation of the laws of being

and the universe as a whole. Taoism dominates Li-tai-pe's verse and, since the Tao is unspeakable, it can only be hinted at by the construction of the poem and the tension between the various images presented. Much of this lies in the technique of Chinese verse, which, consisting of single syllables, can achieve much greater conciseness in expression than is possible in European languages. The German poems may, therefore, be vastly inflated versions of the originals, yet at the same time this conciseness and precision of expression is retained to some degree, though it is not in the scope of this thesis to describe the linguistic accuracy of the German versions, but rather the spirit which is projected to the German readers and the points of contact between German authors and Chinese poetry.

Klabund's contribution to the popularisation of Chinese verse among German readers is considerable. He relied on the earlier German versions of the poems but also turned to French sources and less accessible, philologically accurate, though poetically weak translations.¹

Since Klabund's poems are very free reworkings of earlier translations, they are very different from the original Chinese verses. Eduard Horst von Tscharnier² has discussed the problem of translating Chinese poetry; he refers not only to the linguistic and metric difficulties involved in

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1. The sources used by Klabund were: Marquis d' Hervey Saint Denys, Poésies de l'époque des Thang (Paris, 1862); J. Gautier, Le Livre de Jade (Paris, 1867); V. von Strauß, Schi-king (Heidelberg, 1880); A. Forke, Blüthen chinesischer Dichtung (Magdeburg, 1899); O. Hauser, Li-tai-po (Weimar, 1906) and Die chinesische Dichtung (Berlin, 1908); W. Grube, Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur (Leipzig, 1902); A. Pfizmaier, 'Der chinesische Dichter Pe-Lo-Thien' and 'Die elegische Dichtung der Chinesen', Denkschriften der Akademie der Wissenschaften (Vienna), 36 (1888), 1-80, 211-282; A. Pfizmaier, Das Li Sao und die neun Gesänge (Vienna, 1852); C. de Harlez, La Poésie chinoise (Brussels, 1892); H. Heilmann, Chinesische Lyrik (Munich and Leipzig, 1905). See Dumpe Trommel und beraushtes Gong, p.42.
 2. E.H. von Tscharnier, 'Chinesische Gedichte in deutscher Sprache', in Das Problem des Übersetzens, edited by H.J. Störig, Wege der Forschung 8 (Darmstadt, 1963), pp.242-272. The essay first appeared in Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, 18 (1932), 189-209, prompted by the vogue of Chinese poetry.

translating Chinese verse but also to the different spiritual gesture expressed in Chinese poetry. He describes the Chinese mentality with a phrase invented by De Groot,¹ 'Universismus': the laws recognised by the Chinese as dominating the relations of heaven, earth and man. In a discussion of Klabund's adaptation of the Schi-King song 'Klage der Garde',² von Tschärner expresses qualified approval of Klabund's attempt to render the poem in German:

Umso mehr Gedanken und Bilder fügt Klabund selbst bei
- sie sind modern, expressionistisch gedacht und
geschaut und ausgedrückt, aus seiner eigenen zynischen
Zerrissenheit geschöpft. Trotzdem steht Klabunds
Schöpfung mit ihrer tiefsten Wurzel auf chinesischem
Boden, auf dem Grundgedanken des Familiensinns, der
hier Klage erhebt, und seine eigenen Bilder können sich
zum Teil in Stärke und Prägnanz mit den chinesischen
messen. 3

Comparing Klabund's 'Wanderer erwacht in der Herberge'⁴ with the original Li-tai-pe poem he feels that, though Klabund has combined translation and commentary, and created a longer poem, it still exhibits the formal features of Chinese poetry.⁵ Although von Tschärner recognises Klabund's poems as an attempt to render the spirit of the original Chinese, he considers them Expressionist rather than Oriental: 'Gestaltungen seines eigenen zerrissenen, chaotischen, revolutionären Geistes'.⁶ Ingrid Schuster is more positive in her assessment of Klabund's translations. In her comparison of Klabund's 'Ruderlied'⁷ with versions by sinologists and other German poets, she concludes that Klabund's poem is the most

1. J.J.M. De Groot, Universismus (Berlin, 1918).

2. All Klabund's poems are quoted from Vagant, pp.529-589, (p.528).

3. von Tschärner, p.258.

4. Vagant, p.599.

5. von Tschärner, p.262.

6. von Tschärner, pp.271-272.

7. Vagant, pp.532-533.

faithful reproduction of both the symbolic and concrete content of the poem, its tone, its metric pattern and, above all, the mentality that imbues the original.¹

A contemporary critic, Robert Neumann, was, however, less impressed by Klabund's poems and dismissed them as:

Ein Gemenge aus Expressionismus, Schnoddrigkei und Erotik. China kennt er aus dem Antiquitätenladen: Götzen, Dachreiter – stilisierte Verzerrung. So wird ihm der schmale Mond zum "Mondkaninchen" und Li-Tai-Po zu einem deutschen Expressionisten. 2

It is, however, felt by other critics that Klabund's best poetry is that which was taken from Chinese originals, since:

Klabund ... in der chinesischen Kunst das fand, was seinem Wesen am meisten entsprach: Gefühle und Weltstimmungen, geprägt in einfachster durchgeistigster Form. Dieses instinktive Gefühl ist jenem verwandt, das den Dichter zum Volksliede zieht, beide sind eigentlich dasselbe. 3

Klabund's first collection of Chinese poems, Dumpfe Trommel und beraushtes Gong, consists of war poems, which were composed at a time when Germany was being swept by a wave of patriotic enthusiasm. However, these poems have a more solemn and melancholic tone than the bellicose verse which was being produced in Germany in the early war years, though similarities cannot be overlooked. Klabund highlights a peculiarly Chinese attitude in this war verse; to the Chinese, death on the battlefield is equated with eternal death:

... fern von der Heimat sterben ... unbestattet im
Mondlicht verwesen ... die Knochen nicht von frommer
Kinder Hand gesammelt ... kein Ahne sein ...
sterben ... (aber ein Ahne ist unsterblich...). 4

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1. I. Schuster, 'Klabund und die Sinologen', Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 17 January 1971, p.50.
 2. R. Neumann, 'Li-Tai-Po, ein deutscher Dichter', Kasseler Post, 30 August 1928, p.3.
 3. H. Benzmann, 'Klabund als Lyriker', Das junge Deutschland, 3 (1920), 141-45 (p.143).
 4. Dumpfe Trommel, p.43.

A strong tone of resignation, rather than bravado or heroism, dominates in the poems; and they are predominantly fatalistic. Klabund later stated that he documented his attitude towards war in these Chinese poems:

... die als Projektionen aus dem Wort und dem
Geist der großen Chinesen heraus vieles erhalten,
was ich zum Krieg lyrisch zu sagen wüßte. 1

Yet this later statement, when Klabund had become a convinced pacifist, does not give an accurate impression of the poems, which oscillate between open condemnation of the brutality of war and glorification of the spirit of victory, the very antithesis of Klabund's later philosophy. Such poems as 'Krieg in der Wüste Gobi' and 'Nach der Schlacht'² by Li-tai-pe contain, in Klabund's versions, a callous gesture of disdain towards brutality and bloodshed, and praise the traditional masculine virtues of strength, domination and possession:

Nach der Schlacht

Ich dehne mich im edelsteinbestickten Sattel meines Feindes.
Mein braunes Pferd, jetzt sei der Heimat zugewandt!
Die Luft ruht aus in Stille vom Gekrächz der Lanzen.
Vereinzelt Pfeile noch wie Mücken summen.
Der Mond geht kalt und ruhig auf dem blassen Sand.
Von der erstürmten Festung brummen
Die dumpfe Trommel, das berauschte Gong.
In gelber Seide
Seh ich Mädchen tanzen.
Es gab ein großes Fischesterben heut im See.
Das goldne Schwert in meiner Scheide
Ist dunkelrot und klebrig wie Gelee. 3

Klabund creates a vision of destructive human activity by the stress on the lyrical persona and the profusion of colour. The poem is a statement of raw, amoral instincts. The original of this poem contrasts the futility of human activity and instinctual, aggressive passion with the passage of the moon across the sands, a movement of cosmic proportions. Klabund uses the motif of the moon to prompt trite romantic reflection. In the German version, the poet and the lyrical persona are identified; in the original Chinese poem, the poet speaks through an old folk-song and

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1. Klabund, Dragoner und Husaren, (Munich, 1916), p.49.
 2. Vagant, pp.562, 564.
 3. Vagant, p.564.

inverts its mood by the implicit comparison. The folly of the world, and of war, is to be seen as the negation of the life-principle; in Klabund it becomes its affirmation.

Other poems are more critical of war, for example 'Fluch des Krieges'.¹ Though the last lines temper the strong condemnation of war implicit in the first half of the poem, it is strange to find this mixture of condemnation and acceptance of war. This ambivalence is present throughout the whole collection. One finds this also in the translations of Tu-fu poems, for example in the glorification of the victor in a poem such as 'Sieger mit Hund und schwarzer Fahne'.² Tu-fu is more usually remembered for his condemnation of war and Imperial expansionism. He documents the suffering of the populace forced to finance the war and to supply generation after generation of soldiers to meet the Emperor's ambitions. The poems 'Ausmarsch', 'Die junge Soldatenfrau', 'Die Maske'³ and the most famous, 'Der Werber', illustrate this:

Sonne sank. Ich ging zur Ruh -
 Als ein Werber schlich durchs Dorf auf feiger Lauer.
 Äffisch kletterte ein altes Männchen über eines Hauses Mauer.
 Eine alte Frau trat welker Stirne auf den Werber zu.
 Und der Werber schrie ob der entflohenen Beute.
 Und das Weib stand wie ein Stein und wüster Schrei,
 Steil: Hört mich, ob Euch nicht Euer Handwerk reute!
 Ich gebar drei Söhne ... und der Kaiser nahm sie alle drei. 4

As this brief excerpt demonstrates, Tu-fu takes the side of the poor citizens called upon to serve as agents of the Emperor's war. Tu-fu adopts a realistic attitude to war. There is little heroism in his verse, as opposed to Li-tai-pe, whose verse echoes the chauvinism of the early war years in Germany. Li-tai-pe, the heady idealist, dreams of heroic deeds; Tu-fu sees only suffering. The Li-tai-pe poems may express the bellicose

1. Vagant, pp.568-569.

2. Vagant, p.576.

3. Vagant, pp.573, 575, 577-578.

4. Vagant, pp.577-578.

nature of much native German verse produced in the early war-years, yet they are set in a historically and geographically remote region. His poems have the medieval perspective of the chivalric defence of the homeland and culture against the barbarian. Tu-fu has the more sober picture of war; he sees it not as a localised or historically and geographically differentiated affair but as a universal and seemingly perpetual expression of human suffering. Poems by other authors, for example 'Waffenspruch' by Tsüi-tao, openly approve the soldier's ethic, excusing the murder he commits:

Tut alles recht im Zweck, so muß es euch gelingen.
Was nützt es, tagelang im Blute waten?
Es ziele euer Ruhm: den Feind zu zwingen.
Ihr seid keine Mörder. Ihr seid Soldaten. 1

But 'Epitaph auf einen Krieger', attributed to Confucius, questions the value of heroic deeds and the fame won in war:

Es führten viele fest ihr Pferd am Zügel.
Der Ruhm der tausend Schlachten ist verweht.
Was bleibt vom Heldentum? Ein morscher Hügel,
Auf dem das Unkraut rot wie Feuer steht. 2

This contradiction runs through the whole collection; on the one hand the horror and futility of war are condemned, whilst on the other war is seen as heroic and necessary.

Stylistically, Klabund has attempted to create regular forms for the poems which he found in prose originals. His diction and syntax are simple. On occasions he adopts a folk-song style, for example in 'Chinesisches Soldatenlied'; in others he adopts a less structured style, as in 'Klage der Garde'.³

Later collections moved away from the single theme of war, which was in itself chosen probably for its fashionable appeal. The next collection

1. Vagant, p.538.

2. Vagant, p.531.

3. Vagant, pp.530, 529.

is dedicated to the poetry of Li-tai-pe. The theme of war now gives way to a wider sphere of experience and allows Klabund to indulge his poetic abilities to a wider extent.

Li-tai-pe's personality seems to have exercised as great an influence over Klabund as his verse did. He seemed to symbolise the poet par excellence, whose world was somewhere between earthly and ethereal realms. He has traits of the poète maudit, the drunken dreamer, who finds it difficult to come to terms with real life. As Klabund notes, 'als ewig trunkener, ewig heiliger Wanderer wandert er durch die chinesische Welt'.¹

Klabund was not the first to discover Li-tai-pe for the German public, but was, however, the first to try and translate him in a mode that was in keeping with the changing tastes in poetic style. Bethge's verse lacked poetic quality because of its attempt to render the full meaning of the translations he used as his source material. These 'source translations', where made by professional sinologists, avoid the most difficult problems of translation by adding a bulky critical apparatus to the literal translation of the original. Klabund dispenses with additional notes, or often incorporates them into the body of his poem. His interest lies in the aesthetic realm, not the philological. He endeavours to capture the spirit of the original and to recreate it through an intuitive appreciation of what the poet was trying to express.

Thematically, Li-tai-pe's poetry is rather monotone, turning around a small number of motifs. The most frequent of these is that of romantic abandon, the drunken reverie, the fanciful flight from reality into a realm of dreams and imagination. He is the mystic, the poetic dreamer, the link between the immediate and the eternal, the visionary, the magical conjurer of natural scenes of mystic bliss, viewed in nocturnal and autumnal

1. Klabund, Li-tai-pe, p.47.

scenes. Li-tai-pe's verse is that of the cosmologist, the mystic and idealist, who directs the view from the immediate, personal problems to the infinite view of creation, in which he integrates man into a divinely-ordained scheme, of which he tries to show evidence in his verse.

One can quote a typical example of this in the poem 'Im Frühling':

Wenn Leben innerer Träume Widerschein -
 Wozu sich an die blasse Stirne schlagen?
 Berauschen will ich mich an allen Tagen
 Und schlafe trunken vor den Säulen ein.

 Die Wimpern heb ich auf - und bin erwacht.
 Ein Vogel singt in blühenden Geweben.
 Ich frage ihn, in welcher Zeit wir leben.
 Er sagt: da Frühling Vögel singen macht.

 Erschüttert bin ich: wenn ich weinen geh.
 Ich gieß den Becher voll. Die Lippe trinkt.
 Ich singe laut, bis Mond im Blauen blinkt,
 Vergesse Mond und Lied und Li-tai-pe. 1

One is struck by the poem's simplicity, yet in Klabund's version it loses some of its poignancy by the introduction of too regular rhymes, which destroy the effect of spontaneous creation. The formal regularity stresses the artistic formation and the governing of poetic reason rather than powerful emotion, thus blurring the dissonance of feeling that is essentially the mood of the poem.

Klabund creates more poetic translations when working with less regularity, for example in the poem 'Selbstvergessenheit':

Der Strom - floß,
 Der Mond vergoß,
 Der Mond vergaß sein Licht - und ich vergaß
 Mich selbst, als ich so saß
 Beim Weine.
 Die Vögel waren weit,
 Das Leid war weit,
 Und Menschen gab es keine. 2

This is a free rendition of his original, but produced in such a way as to capture the immediacy and spontaneity of creation, by suggesting the process

1. Vagant, p.548.
2. Vagant, pp.550-551.

of rhyming, a process of association, which also reveals the inner processes of the poet's mind as he tries to piece together a picture of his immediate surroundings and his position in the world. The theme is again solace in wine, which brings oblivion and is an escape from people. It is clear that Klabund is aiming at the minimal poetic form, in which sound is the dominant guiding principle, but a principle which does not exclude a reflective content. This combining of free sound association with free association of images leads to an impression of lyrical spontaneity.

The second main theme of Li-tai-pe's poetry is that of nature. It is in the nature lyric that Klabund saw the most significant feature of Chinese verse. He admired the intimacy with which the Chinese poet viewed his natural surroundings; the harmony of individual and cosmos; the fusion of the self with external reality into a totality in which all individualisation is cast off. Klabund demonstrated this in his discussion of Chinese verse in his Literaturgeschichte.¹ He compares a Li-tai-pe poem 'Der Silberreiher':

Im Herbst kreist einsam überm grauen Weiher
Von Schnee bereift ein alter Silberreiher.

Ich stehe einsam an des Weihers Strand,
Die Hand am Blick, und äuge stumm ins Land.

with a poem by the American, Bryant:

An ein Wasserhuhn

Wer deinen Flug von Zon zu Zone führt,
Durch blauer Himmel unwegsame Weiten,
Der wird, so lang und einsam auch mein Weg,
Zum Ziele auch meine Schritte leiten.

The latter, according to Klabund, demonstrates 'Sentiment und Ressentiment, Dualismus und Zerrissenheit', whereas the Chinese equivalent contains 'Ruhe, Friede, die Einheit von Mensch und Landschaft'.

This picture of harmonious creation, man and nature in complementary

1. Klabund, Literaturgeschichte (Vienna, 1929), pp.39-41.

harmony, is perhaps best seen in the poem 'Der Fischer im Frühling':

Die Erde trank den Schnee. Wie erste Pflaumenblüte
durch die Lüfte rudert!

Die Trauerweiden prunken golden.
Falter, die Flügel violett gepudert,
Tauchen samtene Köpfe in Blütendolden.

Wie eine Insel steht der Kahn im Teich. Der Fischer läßt
Sein Netz behutsam in den dünnen Silberspiegel springen.
Der klinkt, zerbrochen. Er gedenkt der Schwalbe fern im Nest;
Bald wird er ihr das Futter bringen. 1

The content is quite accurate, as a comparison with Gautier and Heilmann shows. The strongly visual image reflects a harmonious world and an ideal setting in which man lives a natural life. Klabund has here avoided an impression of artificiality and retained the effect of natural description and evocation of mood.

The attempt to capture the succinctness and terseness of the Chinese through free association is best seen in the poem 'Improvisation', though it must be stated that here Klabund has taken great liberties with the original and developed it into a personalised love-song rather than a commissioned eulogy:

Wolke, Kleid
Und Blume ihr Gesicht.
Wohlgerüche wehn,
Verliebter Frühling!
Wird sie auf dem Berge stehn,
Wage ich den Aufstieg nicht.
Wenn sie sich dem Monde weiht,
Bin ich weit,
Verliebter Frühling ...

With some exaggeration, Klabund terms this 'das vollkommene lyrische Gedicht', containing 'eine Fülle klanglicher Assoziationen (weiht ... weit ...), bildlicher (Wolke - Kleid, Blume - Gesicht), gedanklicher (wird sie auf dem Berge - eigentlich Youchan, einem heiligen Berge - stehn). Eine helle Klarheit. Eine verworrene Dunkelheit.'²

1. Vagant, p.561.

2. Klabund, Literaturgeschichte, p.38.

The other poems in the collection deal with the traditional themes of lyrical poetry: friendship, love, the emotions, nature and religion. They are translated in a manner that shows an attention to form that often creates the effect of too much artistry and sophistication. The use of the sonnet form typifies the formal elegance Klabund tries to achieve, with a loss of poetic feeling.

The attraction of the poems can be explained by these recurrent thematic features. Firstly, the topos of the romantic dreamer, the vagabond poet whom Klabund admired and emulated in his life and poetry. He is a figure who, free from the restraints of society and moral expedients, owed allegiance to nothing but personal whim and inherent poetic genius. Combined with this is the mood of reverence for the natural world, in which is discernible a system of immutable laws governing all life, which is recognised by the poet in times of intoxication, physical or spiritual. The trials and problems of life, apart from the treatment received in the poems of the more realistic Tu-fu, are avoided. Where such mundane problems are present, they provoke passivity, quietism, melancholic acceptance, not the heroism or stoicism of the West. For Klabund, the verse is a testament to his belief in this poetic realm, as an alternative to technology and modernity; a realm in which humanity existed in perfect harmony with the world, where individuality blurred into an image of eternal renewal. The poems in which harshness or discord are felt are few in number, and are dedicated to the theme of war. Condemnation of the war and of the army leaders and Imperial expansionism is mixed with a paradoxically chauvinistic appeal to the young man to defend his Empire and his sanctified culture. In these the voice of Tu-fu is the strongest in terms of social criticism. The presence of this figure, the complementary spirit to the dreamer Li-tai-pe, reflects the schizoid nature of all Klabund's work. Klabund gives the impression of being both an idealist and a realist, an escapist and pragmatist, a poetic dreamer

and creator of utopian exotic realms, as well as a harsh critic of militarism.

On the whole, the poems appear to adhere very closely to the originals and where deviation does occur, and where it is criticised by the sinologist, it is usually in order to create a formal piece which deviates only in philological accuracy and not in artistic or poetic accuracy.

Klabund reflects the desire of the public to recreate a world in which none of the problems that beset modern man, and of particularly modern origin, is present. The poems reflect a quality which, by Klabund's admission, may be specifically Chinese but is also one dominant pole of human spiritual existence.

Within Klabund's own work there is little trace of the Chinese verse that he studied so avidly, yet there is the strong influence of Chinese philosophy. The clearest and most bizarre example of this is the cycle of poems published under the title of Dreiklang.¹ The triadic reference of the title is not coincidental, it recurs within the body of the poems, which are structured around the symbolic number three. Number symbolism is not uncommon in German verse, but in Klabund's work it is developed around a body of thought that is only in part of Western origin. The trinity is one aspect of this, but one which is fused with Taoist and Buddhist thought into Klabund's personal syncretic religio-philosophical creed, which is heavy with occult and esoteric symbolism. The whole work moves in a visionary and philosophical realm that borders on the incomprehensible whilst attempting to create an impression of profundity.

The first and third sections of the third book contain the strongest influence. In these sections we find a body of Taoist thought given idiosyncratic interpretation by Klabund, relying heavily upon the questionable information contained in Windischmann. The first section is written

1. Klabund, Dreiklang (Berlin, 1919).

through the fictive narrator, 'Der Namenlose', a common Taoist formulation, referring to the sage or the perfect man, the ascetic, who has suppressed all individuality and become an embodiment of pure spirit:

Der Mann mit der schwarzen Maske erhebt seine Stimme und schreit.
 Er sei genannt Namenlos und Nirgendwer
 Er hat abgetan seine eigene Tat, zu tun die Tat aller.
 Nicht will er Wirkung seines dunklen Hauptes oder seines
 rädigen Ruhmes.
 Nicht Eigen-Liebe, sondern eigentliche Liebe.
 Er lacht -- lautlos.
 Er liebt -- brautlos.
 Er handelt -- machtlos.
 Er wandelt -- nachtlos. 1

But, more than a mystical invocation of the spirit of the cosmos, the section contains a certain amount of social criticism, almost an incitement to revolution.

Und es sind andere unter euch, spricht der Namenlose,
 denen schwillt Bauch und Geldsack. Ihr Blick ist eine
 Zahl, ihr Wunsch ist eine Zahl; sie reden und träumen
 und schweigen in Zahlen. Sie hängen Nullen an euch, die
 ihr seid eine Eins oder eine Zwei - und siehe, ihr seid
 Millionen. Ihr spaltet Holz und Köpfe für sie, sie kaufen
 und verkaufen euch - aus eurer Trägheit, ihr trägt Tiere,
 ihr Tragtiere - die ihr schleppt ihre Geldsäcke, ihre
 fetten Weiber und ihre weinerlichen Kinder.
 Der, welcher nicht schläft, spricht:
 Wacht auf! 2

This call to spiritual revolution and renewal is based upon Taoist premises of inactivity. One finds, for example, the following:

Gerufen sind, welche langsam erwachten aus den verfaulten
 Särgen ihres lebendigen Begrabenseins - und fühlen nun
 wieder ihre Glieder, ihren Glauben, ihre Fäuste - und die
 Kraft ihrer Schwäche - die Macht ihrer Un-tat. 3

These last lines are clearly Taoist formulations, praising the paradoxical power of weakness. The whole section is a visionary picture of a coming dawn, the arrival of a new age of spirituality, inwardness and self-recognition, which will regenerate mankind, remove all social barriers and

1. Dreiklang, p.81.
2. Dreiklang, p.82.
3. Dreiklang, p.83.

obstacles and create a new bond of brotherhood by which the power of the former leaders, which was abused and led to tyranny, will be swept away through the common effort of the newer generation of pacifists and religious mystics. This is much in keeping with Klabund's very early work in which one finds the vision of the dawn of the new age. But whereas in the former the voice of vitalism rings out, it is now the mystical quietist that calls for inner Wandlung, through the paradoxes of Taoist actionless activity.

The work also presents a garbled form of Klabund's Taoist cosmology. This philosophy turns around the magical symbolic number three, discussed at some length in Windischmann. The traditional Western significance of this as the symbol of the trinity is not overlooked. Christian myth is combined with Buddhism and Taoism:

I-hi-wei:

Dies ist der heilige Name oder der heilige Dreiklang.
Mit I-hi-wei wird Es gerufen.

I-hi-wei:

Dies ist Je-ho-va

I-hi-wei:

Dies ist die heilige Dreieinigkeit: Gottvater, Sohn
und Heiliger Geist.

Drei auch sind der Göttermenschen, der Menschengötter,
der Menschen, welche Gott geworden sind:

Der Inder Buddha

Der Jude Christus

Der Chinese Laotse.

Laotse aber ist der Erste unter ihnen. 1

The concept of the symbolic unifying 'I-hi-wei' is taken from a version of the Tao-te-king:

Auf den du blickst (sic) und siehst ihn nicht, der
wird mit Namen I genannt; auf den du horchst und
hörst ihn nicht, der wird mit Namen Hi genannt; nach
dem du mit Händen greiffst (sic) und erreichst ihn
nicht, wird mit Namen Wei genannt. Diese drei sind
unerforschlich, so sind sie vereint und machen Eins. 2

This reference to the all-pervading spirit is personalised, in a Western manner, into the Godhead and is a travesty of Taoist thought which conceives

1. Dreiklang, p.95.

2. Windischmann, p.403.

of an impersonal cosmic force ruling all life, and excludes all references to a personalised deity. The three symbol is further consolidated by reference to the principle of the Tai-kie:

Das Geheimnis aller Dinge ist das
Tai-kie.
Das Geheimnis aller Dinge ist das
Ja-nein. 1

This is a reference to the principle from which all things emanate, finding substance in the polar opposites of light and dark, a principle underlying all existence. Again this is derived from Windischmann.² In Klabund's cycle the spiritual life-force, 'es', is the fusion of the male principle, 'ich', and the female principle, 'du'. Again, number symbolism is employed to underline this. The first section contains eight stanzas, the second also eight, but the final section twenty-four, to represent that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

After Klabund, the best known populariser of Chinese poetry in Germany was Albert Ehrenstein. He published three editions of Chinese verse, Schi-King, Pe-Lo-Thien and China klagt³ and had prepared a fourth, Das gelbe Lied, which had been printed but was impounded by the Nazis before it could be distributed.⁴

The first of these volumes, Schi-King, is a selection from the Confucian Book of Songs. This work was one of the few examples of Chinese literature to have been translated in the nineteenth century. Its first

1. Dreiklang, p.98.

2. Windischmann, pp.136ff.; 174ff.; 190ff.; 309ff.; 402ff. and 414ff.

3. A. Ehrenstein, Schi-King. Das Liederbuch Chinas, gesammelt von Kung-fu-tse (Vienna, 1922); Pe-Lo-Thien (Berlin, 1923); China klagt, Nachdichtungen revolutionärer chinesischer Lyrik aus 3 Jahrtausenden (Berlin, 1924). O. Basil, 'Die Werke von Albert Ehrenstein', Wort der Zeit, 8 (1962), 11, also refers to Po-chü-i (Berlin, 1924), but this appears to be a bibliographical error stemming from the more usual transcription of the poet's name.

4. See A. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, edited by K. Otten (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin-Spandau, 1961), p.25.

appearance had been in a Latin version¹ and it was from this that the German poet Rückert² had prepared his verse translations. A more accurate German translation of the Schi-King was later published by Viktor von Strauß.³ Von Strauß is extremely critical of the Latin edition:

sie ist voller Fehler und Mißverständnisse, meist nur Umschreibung des ungefähren Sinnes, und nimmt nicht selten erklärende Zusätze in den Text selber auf. 4

It is not surprising, therefore, that Rückert's adaptation of his inaccurate source distorted the meaning of the original even more:

Es blieb wenig vom Original übrig, ja dasselbige ist mitunter gar nicht darin zu erkennen. 5

Since Ehrenstein worked from Rückert, the distortions and inaccuracies are carried into his own adaptations and increased.

Certain sections of the Schi-King had also been included in Heilmann's collection of translations. In this form they had stimulated some interest in Germany for Chinese poetry. One poet and critic, prompted by reading Heilmann, had turned to the older translations of the Schi-King and it is interesting to note the strong impression that they had made on him.⁶ He refers to the clichéd image that Europe has of China, 'diese Kultur ehrwürdig alt, aber fossil' and,

ein absolutistisches Herrscher Geschlecht, das sich hinter chinesischen Mauern abschließt, um dort asiatisch zu leben; darunter verstehen wir indolent, willkürlich und ausschweifend. 7

1. P. Lacharme, Confucii Chi-king sive liber carminum, edited by J. Mohl (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1830). This work had first appeared in Paris in 1733.
2. F. Rückert, Schi-king. Chinesisches Liederbuch (Altona, 1833). This is more easily accessible in F. Rückert, Gesammelte Poetische Werke (Frankfurt am Main, 1868), VI, 109-380.
3. V. von Strauß, Schi-king. Das kanonische Liederbuch der Chinesen (Heidelberg, 1880).
4. Von Strauß, p.6.
5. Von Strauß, p.6.
6. C. Haußmann, 'Altchinesische Lyrik', März, 1 (1907), 413-424.
7. Haußmann, p.413.

This misconception is dispelled by his encounter with Chinese poetry, which reveals to him, 'die unvermutete Solidarität der menschlichen Empfindungen und die Ähnlichkeit ihrer künstlerischen Äußerung im Osten und im Westen'.¹ Yet there is still a strong note of condescension in his assessment of the poetry, and almost surprise at the ability of the Chinese to feel finer emotions.² The essay also contains twelve examples of translations adapted by the author from existing translations.

Rückert had been attracted by this same spirit of 'Weltpoesie', as he states in his lyrical translations:

Daß ihr erkennt: Weltpoesie
Allein ist Weltversöhnung. 3

Rückert is a clear exception among his nineteenth-century contemporaries in his praise of Chinese culture, having found his way through the prejudices of his age to a personal appreciation of the poems:

Denn was in Schauspiel und Roman
Mir kam vom Wesen der Chinesen,
Das sprach mich doch auch gar nicht an,
Ich hab's, aufrichtig, nie gelesen.
Und jetzo seh' ich's um mich walten,
Sich glänzend einen Lenz entfalten,
Mir eine Neuwelt aufgethan
In der urältesten alten. 4

For Rückert the attraction of the poems lay in their lyrical expression of the ethical. Their high moral tone and the skilful combination of the aesthetic and didactic are the features that Rückert praises, though one also notes a delight in the unknown and purely exotic.

Ehrenstein did not have to overcome the prejudices of his age when he approached his task of adaptation. The poems were not published until 1922 and were obviously intended to meet the public demand for more Chinese poetry, though, as indicated above, numerous editions were already available.

1. Haußmann, p.414.
2. Haußmann, p.422.
3. Rückert, p.112.
4. Rückert, p.111.

Ehrenstein's interest in China was not part of the purely passing vogue; he had a lasting interest in China. Ehrenstein shows detailed knowledge of the background of the work, which he terms 'Das chinesische Wunderhorn'. He describes its collection and compilation by Confucius, its destruction by Emperor Tsin-Schi-Hoang-Ti and its later re-compilation from the memory of the people.

It is not the high moral or didactic content that strikes Ehrenstein, but rather its richness in natural imagery, 'die Natur haust darin, Berg und Fluß und Wind und Wiese, Wald und Feld'; but he does not realise that, as in any folk tradition, these natural elements and the natural background act as an allegorical framework or as an abstraction of personal emotions and relationships.

Having chosen Rückert as his starting point, Ehrenstein praises his work as 'eine sprachmeisterliche Leistung'. He considers von Strauß's version philologically sounder (about that there can be no doubt) but Rückert's to be poetically better, though it is translated 'in die Sprache des alten Goethe und der allen Volksliedern zugeneigten Romantiker'. His own adaptations, he says, are intended to rejuvenate the material, re-animate the inherent poetic spirit and revitalise the poems by improving the rhythms:

Ich bemühte mich, den von mir erwählten hundert Gedichten
durch Kürzungen, lebendigen Rythmus, Entfernung
sinnstörender Zutaten, Umbau, in vielen Fällen durch
Neudichtung etwas von der sinnlicheren Unmittelbarkeit
der ersten Schöpfung wiederzugeben. 1

This claim is an exaggeration, and dishonest. Similarly, the statement that he has been helped by a former Mandarin, Pe-Tai, cannot be believed. The differences between Rückert's version and Ehrenstein's adaptations are so minimal that they are hardly sufficient to warrant

1. Ehrenstein, Schi-King, p.142.

Ehrenstein's addition of his name as author.

The majority of Ehrenstein's selection are songs of love, fulfilled or unrequited. Typical is the poem 'Der Blöde', which is titled, 'Der Schüchterne' by Ehrenstein. Rückert's version reads as follows:

Er will nicht sprechen, er will nicht blicken;
Soll Ich (sic) denn winken, soll Ich denn nicken?
Er will mich nicht zuerst begrüßen;
Ich kann ihn doch zuerst nicht küssen.
Und wenn er niemals will beginnen,
Will soll es Fortgang denn gewinnen?
Ich weiß es nicht zu ersinnen. 1

This delightful little song, plaintive in the naïve tone of the love-lorn girl, eager for companionship, but restrained by common custom from too openly demonstrating the force of her affection, and faced with a prospective lover too stupid or too shy to make the first move, is translated by Ehrenstein:

Er will nicht sprechen, er tut nicht blicken;
Soll ich ihm winken, soll ich ihm nicken?
Er will mich nicht zuerst begrüßen;
Ich kann doch nicht zuerst ihn küssen.
Und wenn er niemals will beginnen,
Wie soll es Fortgang denn gewinnen?
Das möchte ich gern ersinnen. 2

Ehrenstein has made only slight alterations, the main addition being the inclusion in the first line of 'er tut nicht', the archaic colloquialism, which gives the poem 'age' and a folk-song flavour. As a rendition of the original, however, it is inaccurate, as can be seen by comparing the above with Waley's translation:

That mad boy
Will not speak to me.
Yes, all because of you
I leave my rice untouched.

That mad boy
Will not eat with me.
Yes, it is all because of you
That I cannot take my rest. 3

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1. Rückert, p.179.
 2. Ehrenstein, Schi-King, p.13.
 3. A. Waley, The Book of Songs (London, n.d.), p.43.

Nor is the boy mad simply because he refuses to recognise or respond to the girl's love. As Waley explains, 'the "madmen" were young men dressed up in black jackets and red skirts who searched in the houses and drove out pestilence'.¹ This is offered as an example of the variation between the original Chinese and the German versions. It is pointless to compare every single poem in this manner. It is more important to examine the thematic range of the verse and to explain the reasons for the appeal of the poetry in Germany, whilst also evaluating Ehrenstein's use of his source.

These songs are songs of youth, of awakening passion, of vigour and vitality, though restrained by an undercurrent of decorum and respectability. In many of the poems, Ehrenstein modifies the imagery of the original poems, which use the juxtaposition of natural description and inner, mental state instead of similes. For example, Rückert retains the original:

Die Wasserlilie wächst am See,
Sie steht in Blüthe.
Um einen schönen Mann ist Weh
Mir im Gemüthe. 2

The parallel is continued as the flower reaches full bloom and wilts, unheeded and unappreciated. Ehrenstein destroys the subtlety of this Chinese technique and typical folk imagery by translating this into explicit imagery:

Ich Wasserlilie weiß am See,
Ich schlanke Blüte!
Um einen wilden Mann ist weh
Mir im Gemüte. 3

The lady's passion is much stronger, longing for domination. In Rückert's poem the inner disquiet is presented in restrained tones:

1. Waley, p.222.
2. Rückert, p.219.
3. Ehrenstein, Schi-King, p.19.

Wohin mich drehn, wohin mich wenden?
 Im Wachen und im Schlafen enden,
 Am Abend und am Morgen,
 Nicht enden diese Sorgen,
 Die Thränen meinem Aug' entsenden.

Ehrenstein heightens the desperation by simplifying the syntax:

Wohin mich drehn, wohin mich wenden?
 Wachen? Schlafen? Leben enden?
 Abend? Morgen? Neue Sorgen!
 Aug kann Tränen nur entsenden.

Other songs have the medieval flavour of the Tagelied, for example, 'Der Schreihals':

Sie sprach: Es kräht der Hahn.
 Er sprach: Er darf noch nicht.
 Sie sprach: Der Tag fängt an.
 Er sprach: 's ist Nacht, mein Licht.

Steh auf, steh auf und schau-
 Schon ist der Himmel grau!
 O weh, ich seh den Frühlingsstern-
 Nein, nein, der Tag ist fern.

O Leid! 's ist Zeit zum Scheiden;
 Entflieh! und triff in Eil
 Die Krähe unsrer Leiden,
 Den Hahn, mit deinem Pfeil. 1

The rude awakening after the night of illicit passion is the theme of the song, which is similar to the German country-courtship song or the European 'albas' or dawn-songs of traditional and folk-poetry.

Against a natural background of harmony, people engage in agricultural work and bucolic pastimes, pursue the daily round and enjoy the pleasures of courtship. The themes are those of the European folk-song, the only difference is that the hidden symbolic background is unusual and goes unrecognised in European translation, unless explanatory notes are added. For example 'Liebesjagd':

Die Hirsche sind geschossen,
 Man hat sie zugedeckt mit frischen Sprossen.
 Die Jungfrau sitzt und leuchtet
 Im Grünen wie ein Stern,
 Ein schönem (sic) Jüngling deuchtet,
 Er hätte sie gern ...

Die Hirsche sind geschossen,
 Man hat sie zugedeckt mit frischen Sprossen.
 Rühr an nicht meinen Schleier,
 Küß ja nicht meinen Mund!
 Und reiz nicht, schöner Freier-
 Zum Bellen meinen Hund. 1

The German song parallels the chase and the seduction; the young man's quarry is represented by the girl. Yet in the original the practice of covering the dead deer with branches or rushes is meant to be a warning to the man who catches his prey but then does not conceal the seduction by marrying her. Thus the German version becomes a song of youthful, vigorous passion and seduction, with the coy girl encouraging the young man, whereas the original is a warning to young people of the dangers of the amorous adventure.

Great discrepancies can be noted between the originals and the German versions, though these are not of course obvious to the casual reader. Ehrenstein has omitted references to plants of mythological, mystical or alchemical importance, and references to customs which he does not understand. The original is in many ways the object, at present, of anthropological and sociological interest rather than of literary study, precisely because of this depiction of life in ancient China. Ehrenstein has tried to retain the poeticality of the original. Strong rhythms, regular rhymes give the songs a folk flavour; the use of German archaisms and popular formulations sustains this. Thematically he needs to change little, since peasant courtship is universal as are the modes of its lyrical expression. The discovery of the Schi-King is in many ways a modern parallel to the discovery of the folk-song by Herder and the Romantics, who found in the poetry of the popular tradition the basic structures of the human soul, the first statement of abstraction by the human mind, and the expression of the process of self-orientation in the

1. Ehrenstein, Schi-King, p.17.

natural world.

Throughout the collection there is the feeling of a natural harmony. There is often a parallel between human mood and external reality, occasionally an antithesis, but most strikingly there is the appreciation of nature which proceeds according to innate laws, a thing of permanence within its multiple variations, against which man is an insubstantial being, often unsure of his progress. Nature's profusion stands behind man's miseries and trials.

But besides these 'natural' verses are songs of warriors and battle, often depicted through the eyes of the wife, lover or parents of the warrior. War is seen as a necessary evil; there is personal grief at the separation, but never open condemnation of war. War is the protection of the superior culture against the barbarians, as can be seen in such poems as 'Die nordischen Barbaren'.¹

There are, however, certain songs which have a political or social-critical comment, and show some dissent against the rule of the princes. Yet, in the main, the songs praise the dynasty and the Imperial overlord, who is seen as the mediator between God and man, unsurpassed in wisdom and the embodiment of the divine will. It is noticeable that these verses do not contain the theme that Ehrenstein's later translations do. They are not chosen to express any empathy between himself and the poems, whereas the next collection of translations that Ehrenstein prepared shows an obvious affinity between his own personality and the poet's.

Ehrenstein was the first German author to popularize the poet Po-chü-i, whose verse he translated and published under the title Pe-Lo-Thien, this being the poet's formal or polite name. One finds in these poems an expression of cynicism and bitter disappointment, of frustration at the state of the world, and a gesture of resignation, which are common themes

1. Ehrenstein, Schi-King, pp.102-103.

in Ehrenstein's own poetry. There is a strong tone of personal identification, not only with the work of the poet but also with his fate. The poet is a constant wanderer, unable to find earthly calm. His morose verse is the work of a sensitive political commentator who is constantly at odds with the world of man and seeks solace in natural surroundings. In grief and despair at man's inhumanity, he is driven to the edge of protest but constantly slips back into self-pity. He is burdened by an unidentified guilt and disturbed by the suffering of man and by his own inability to effect any change in the conditions of man's social existence. The verses are framed within a natural setting, but here too the cycle of the seasons is dominated by the autumnal mood of ennui, and world-weariness. Exiled physically by Imperial ingratitude and spiritually by the remorse of one who would change the world but can find no hold upon it, he pines away in isolation.

Ehrenstein adapted the poems from existing German interlinear prose translations prepared by the sinologist, Adolf Pfizmaier.¹ The accompanying notes indicate the nature of Ehrenstein's appreciation of Po-chü-i. The brief biographical sketch portrays Po-chü-i as the man at odds with the world:

Das Vaterland mißbrauchte ihn fünfundzwanzig Jahre lang als hohen Beamten ... Er schämte sich seiner Stellen, entlief dem Zwang immer wieder in die Berge... Er verlor sich endlich ganz aus der großen Welt, fand dafür sich, ... -da riß ihn der Kaiser aus still-heiterer Einsiedelei in die alte Melancholie des Amtes; er ward agnosziert, aus der wild geliebten Natur in den Kaiserhof verbannt. 2

The paradox of public office, esteem, recognition and personal failure is most striking and reflects the strong Taoist influence, not only on Po-chü-i but also on Ehrenstein. Ehrenstein points out the Taoist ideal of oblivion,

1. A. Pfizmaier, 'Pe-Lo-Thien', ^KDenschriften der Akademie der Wissenschaften (Vienna), 36 (1888), 1-80.
2. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.79.

and the belief in the need to reject the world, in order to seek self-fulfilment in a life beyond the context of social existence, as a form of self-realisation that exists independently of public function and esteem. But Ehrenstein's sketch is poetic rather than factual; Po-chü-i was an able administrator and functioned efficiently as Imperial Officer in the many offices he held, although there were times when he fell into disfavour and suffered banishment.

The dominant tone of the poems, says Ehrenstein, is 'Vergänglichkeit', mixed with social commentary, in which there is 'mehr Herz und Mitleid, tieferes Sozialgefühl, Mitgefühl, Schamgefühl als ein Dutzend Menschheitsdichter'. This results in a withdrawal from the world into personal grief, as in the poem 'Fern':

Meinem Herz fehlt nichts
Und es ist bedrängt.
Meinem Leib fehlt nichts
Und er ist beengt.
Was klimmt in mir und ist verstimmt?
Mich frißt etwas, das in mir sitzt.
Fünf Jahre sah ich dich nicht.
Drei Jahre schriebst du mir nicht.
Das macht mich alt.
Ich umfasse mein Knie
Und sitz und seufze mich tot.
Der Wein ist rot,
Was trink ich ihn nicht?
Rot ist der Wein,
Wenn nicht mit dir -
Mit wem soll ich mich freun. 1

Such verses, with their free rhythms and only occasional use of rhyme, are much more pointed in their melancholy than Ehrenstein's earlier Chinese adaptations. The poems of the Schi-King have regular rhyme patterns, inherited from Rückert, and regular metrical patterns, which are often out of keeping with the morose or melancholic content. The less regular poems of this collection are more effective in their directness and more personal in their informal tone, which is sustained by a freer verse form.

1. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.13.

They have the tone of personal confessions and personal statements, rather than folk-songs, in which the individual is replaced by the representative type.

Po-chü-i's verse is satirical, at the expense of the court and its intriguers, and critical of the extremes of the court, its pomp, luxury, artificiality and stilted social form. This can be seen in such poems as 'Der Fremdling'.¹

Most of the translations in Ehrenstein's collection are poems of political and social criticism. The poet criticised himself too as the man of letters, the administrator, who lives in comfort whilst the common people toil for survival:

Ich blicke umher zwischen den engen
Dorfdurchgängen:
Von zehn Hütten verfallen hier neun.
Bambus und Pistazien sind erfroren,
Erfroren kleiderloses Volk vor tauben Toren.
Der Nordwind schwingt sein scharfes Schwert,
Dünntuch, Hauchseide schützt nicht den Leib.
Magere Dornen, Strohfeuer am Herd -
Die Dorfarmen können nicht erwärmen,
Traurige Nacht erwartet den finsternen Morgen.

Ihr habt die Sorgen, ihr des Unkrauts Plage,
Ich Wintergartens Lust, Gehalt und Freudentage.
In Frost und Mühsal, Hitze, Durst
Verhungert, Arme, ihr auf Ackerhügeln;
In warme Wolle, Taft und Pelz gehüllt,
Lieg, sitze ich, gestillt gefüllt.
In Worten geht mein Leben hin
Und euer Gram wird meine Scham.
Ich frage mich, was für ein Mensch ich bin? 2

This poem shows the change in attitude towards China that emerged towards the end of the 1920s in Germany. The chinoiserie and delicate tracery of the earlier verse projections of China give way here to a presentation of China as a social reality as grim as that of contemporary Europe. China is seen here as a land of social differences, of privilege

1. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, pp.14-15.

2. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.21.

and privation. With these poems Ehrenstein carries the bitterness he felt for Western existence into the previously idealised East. This vital point in Ehrenstein's attitude towards China has been overlooked by most critics. K. Otten is clearly mistaken when he speaks of Ehrenstein's attitude towards China:

Barbaropa gibt er auf und flüchtet in die Literatur
und Philosophie Chinas, in ein Land, das so fern,
dessen Geschichte und Literatur so alt sind, daß sie
schon nicht mehr existieren, daß man sie erfinden,
neu erdichten muß, um darin ein neues Leben zu
beginnen. 1

Similarly, B.Y. Ben-Gavriël speaks of 'ein von ihm erfundenes China'.²

Both these opinions are clearly false. China becomes a reality as oppressive in its social injustice as Europe; Ehrenstein seeks out the problem that some assume he is seeking to escape, and re-articulates it through others' poetry. Only J. Drews points out the 'innere Affinität zur Thematik' that prompted Ehrenstein to adapt these poems of social criticism.³

The other popularizers of Chinese verse had ignored Po-chü-i almost completely. Bethge had adapted only two poems but neither of these was of the nature of Ehrenstein's poems. Klabund, similarly, included only two poems in his collections, although he had worked from the same Pfizmaier source, which was so rich in Po-chü-i poems. Ehrenstein destroys the image of the fairy-tale China of traditional lyricism and harmonious life. For the first time, China as a social reality was presented in verse. Direct, bitter and self-questioning, this poetry undermines the poet's own existence in a world where such suffering can co-exist with the delicacy of his self-indulgent verse.

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1. A. Ehrenstein, Gedichte und Prosa, edited by K. Otten (Darmstadt, 1961), p.25.
 2. A. Ehrenstein, Ausgewählte Aufsätze (Heidelberg and Darmstadt, 1961), p.7.
 3. J. Drews, Die Lyrik Albert Ehrensteins (Munich, 1969), p.161, footnote 1. Drews excludes further discussion of Ehrenstein's Chinese poems on philological grounds.

Though Po-chü-i is moved to revolt, he sighs in impotent revulsion in the face of the suffering. The gesture of disgust is mixed with shame at personal privilege, but the concept of political or social change is never present. The very idea of change or the prospect of improvement by altering the social structure is never countenanced; it appears completely alien. What results from these observations is not revolt, but personal reflection, as we find in the conclusion to the poem 'Ernte':

Welche Verdienste hab ich? Mir mangelt jede Tugend,
Niemals ackerte ich, ich pflegte den Maulbeerbaum nicht,
Mein Beamtengehalt sind dennoch dreihundert Scheffel,
Für die Feste des Jahres schenkt Vergeudung mir Überfluß!
Ich schäme mich, etwas zu essen,
Ich kann die Armen nicht mehr vergessen. 1

Again, the dominant tone is that of measureless sympathy and compassion.

It is the common people who are portrayed in these poems. They are seen as a mass of suffering humanity, as in 'Die Hungernden',² whose fate is compared to that of the princes and ministers, as in 'Gesang and Tanz':

Was reitet im Schnee
Vom Hof an den See?
Hellrote, Purpurne, Fürsten und Aberfürsten.
Reich sind sie, sie wissen nicht Hunger noch Kälte,
Sie dürsten nach Festen,
Sie bauen nur Häuser der Freude,
Ihr Leben ist Lust.
...
Tags donnert Musik, es trinken die Grafen,
Mitternachts darf man nicht schlafen.
Nüchterne anderswo sind. Im Kerker.
Gefangene. Sie sterben vor Frost. 3

For the first time, the common people of China appear in the poetry which had previously dealt only with the aesthetic image of China. The Chinese as an economic being, with physical needs emerges, as in 'Kohlen'.⁴

Yet poor, abused and in physical distress, the people retain a dignity which cannot be destroyed by their privations. Such is the effect of this,

1. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.23.

2. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.24.

3. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.25.

4. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.27.

that Po-chü-i feels the unreality of his own pampered and scholarly existence, which is lived out in the constrained and protected sphere of the scholar's professional activity. This is best seen in the poem 'Das Dorf Tschü-Tsch'in'¹ in which the poet contrasts the customs and lives of the peasants with his own existence. He feels that his pursuit of scholarship and high office has blinded him to the true qualities of life.

Many of the poems in the collection are songs of personal melancholy, suffused with a profound despair. They are testaments to a personal grief that is extended to the natural surroundings in a landscape that is dominated by autumnal hues. These poems have no social perspective; the poet stands isolated in a world of natural phenomena, which he is both part of, yet apart from. There is a feeling of piety towards, and reverence for the natural surroundings, but this never rises to the level of ecstatic mysticism or pantheism. The world, social and physical, is a constant torment, in which nothing is more sure than that it will end; everywhere Po-chü-i sees destruction, pain and suffering. One is reminded of Schopenhauer's reflection that unless pain and suffering are the purpose of existence, then it has entirely failed in its aim. Po-chü-i's world is a purely physical world, emotions exist as responses to suffering, and brief moments of happiness, but there is no reflection upon a divine presence; man is caught in a godless, immoral world. This pessimism is reflected not only in the social construction of the world but also in the natural world:

Wind und Schnee zerbrechen den Waldbaum,
Zermalmen des Abgrunds stolze Fichte zu Brennholz.
Wo ist der Sinn in Fichten zermalmendem Wind,
Warum ein Segen im Heu nährenden Regen?
Im hundert Klafter tief klaffenden Abgrund des Tals
Stirbt die Fichte,
Auf dem Wolkenberg küßt ein kleines Gras rasch der Frühling.
Wir bedauern, wir betrauern den Menschen,
Tränen fallen ins Tuch,
Auf alle engen Mühen des Menschen hagelt Fluch. 2

1. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.31.

2. Ehrenstein, Pe-Lo-Thien, p.61.

Pain, suffering, transience, the ephemeral nature of all things, existence as a constant trial - these are the sentiments of Po-chü-i's poems. China is not an escape for Ehrenstein but rather a confirmation of his own pessimism, cynicism, defeatism and depressive fixation with suffering and the futility of existence.

Unlike Li-tai-pe, the other 'German' Chinese poet, Po-chü-i does not flee the world into the intoxication and riotous inner world of imagination. The violent changes of Li-tai-pe's poetic mood, from ecstatic pleasure to deepest despair, are not to be found in Po-chü-i. The latter's work is monotone in its insistence upon the bitter aspects of life; measureless despair and grief are the dominant themes of his work. One notes also a directness in his work that is lacking in the other Chinese poets. There are no learned allusions, no esoteric images, everything is portrayed in plain, straight-forward language. These poems are not inspired by poetic fantasy or fancy. If Li-tai-pe is the romantic, Po-chü-i is the realist; he tries to document his guilt and despair, and the suffering of humanity. Mood prevails, but it is not the inner mood of emotional vicissitude; it is the personal document of unbridled grief, untrammelled and unrestrained emotion, but not emotionalism.

Ehrenstein dedicated a complete collection to this aspect of Chinese poetry in his China klagt. It is not incidental that Ehrenstein should choose to publish these poems under this title. The political developments within China, which were widely reported in the West, had begun to dispel the image of a mummified culture, and created the image of a dynamic, revolutionary China emerging from the cocoon of her past. Eager to reflect this newer image, Ehrenstein turned his attention to the substrata of Chinese literature, or aspects of traditional literature which had hitherto been neglected, and published a collection dedicated to the revolutionary China, the China of the suppressed masses und hierarchical, despotic rule.

Whereas he had published his collection of Schi-King songs simply as documents of the ancient art of versification in China, and as examples of the universality of the poetic spirit, he now included them in China klagt as historical examples of the dormant spirit of insurgence and revolution. This collection contains only twenty-six poems, of which seventeen had appeared previously, eight in the Schi-King and nine in Pe-Lo-Thien.

In his accompanying notes Ehrenstein describes the system of suppression, and the forces of tradition, which had so long held China in a retarded state. He points to signs of social unrest in the very earliest days of the Empire, as recorded in the Schi-King, which contained:

viele Verse des Unmutes, des Ärgers, der Empörung
über die unfähige Gewaltherrschaft ... eine stetig
zunehmende Unlust und Aversion gegen den Soldaten-
dienst und die Kriegsführerei. 1

However, he finds the expression of this revolutionary spirit suppressed until the ninth century when it emerged in the poetry of Po-chü-i, 'der den Übermut und die Verschwendung der Mandarine und Fürsten geißelte, den Schrei der leidenden und hungernden Massen ausstieß'.²

The collection opens with two anonymous poems of revolutionary fervour. The first proclaims, in declamatory tone, the awakening of the Chinese people from centuries of suppression. It is a statement of China's coming of age, and a call for self-determination as a release from the system of despotic absolutism:

Wir sind nicht reif?
Das ist das Lied, das sie gesungen haben,
Jahrhundertlang uns armen Waisenknaben,
Womit sie uns beschwichten,
Des Volkes Hoffen vernichten,
Des Bessern Sinn betören,
Die Zukunft uns zerstören.
Wir sind nicht reif?

1. Ehrenstein, China klagt, p.6.

2. Ehrenstein, China klagt, p.6.

Reif sind wir immer, reif zum Glück auf Erden
 Wir wollen glücklicher und besser werden.
 Reif sind wir, unser Leid zu klagen,
 Reif sind wir, euch nicht mehr zu tragen,
 Reif sind wir, für die Freiheit alles zu wagen. 1

But it is not a Chinese poem, it is a slightly adapted version of Hoffmann von Fallersleben's 'Herbstlied eines Chinesen'.² These initial poems, which bear the message of modern China's aspirations, are collected together with a selection of songs from the Schi-King, which contain indictments of the princes who live in luxury and rule ineffectually whilst the mass of the people bear the burden of the Empire. Within these there is a metaphysical level to the songs, which show man caught in an immoral universe.

Beside these there are poems from the Po-chü-i collection and two poems by Tu-fu, one of which has subsequently been widely translated and included in many collections:

Der Werber

Die Sonne versank,
 Nachts ging mein Gang,
 Ein Lager zu finden im Ort.
 Einen Schleicher, einen Werber sah ich dort,
 Der bei Nacht
 Männer raubt, Schlachtvieh für die Schlacht.
 Sah ihn ein alter Bauer
 Und floh hastig über die Mauer.
 Aber wie auf einen Sperling ein Sperber
 Stieß des Alten Frau auf den Werber:

"Drei Söhne hatt ich in Kaisers Heer,
 Ich hab nur einen einzigen mehr,
 Der hat mir einen Brief gesandt:
 Tot liegen irgendwo die zwei im Sand.

In unserer Elendshütte lebt kein Mann,
 Ein Knabe nur an der Mutter Brust.
 Sie floh euch nicht, sie hat kein Kleid!
 Ihr Mann,
 Mein Sohn für euch verrecken muß.

Und bin ich alt und schwach,
 Zum Heer lauf ich euch nach,
 Ich koch euch Reis, nahrhafte Speis,
 Verschont nur meinen Mann,
 Den armen siechen Greis,"

1. Ehrenstein, China klagt, p.7.

2. See above, p.23.

Als ich morgens verließ den Ort,
 Großmutter, Mutter und Knaben schleppte fort
 Des Werbers Wut, und Klage erging -
 An einem Ast verlassen hing weiß
 Im Wind ein sonderbares Ding: ein Greis. 1

Ehrenstein has slightly altered the conclusion of the poem to give it greater poignancy: the old man's suicide, committed in order to escape recruitment, is not in the original.² The poem's bitter protest, in plain, clear and lucid language, is perhaps the nearest that the Chinese poets come to outward rebellion, yet for them the very idea of change is inconceivable. The poem is a gesture of utter grief and a questioning of the very basis of existence.

Ehrenstein is the first German poet to transfer his own bitterness, cynicism and pessimism into his translations of Chinese poetry. Beginning with the ancient ballads and songs of the Sch-King, he moves to a personal assessment of China and Chinese verse and seeks out the elements of protest and discontent, dissent and criticism. The old image of a kingdom ruled by divine prescript, and of harmony between man and his natural environment, is rejected. The delicate nature poetry of Li-tai-pe is discarded for the gloomier, more morose verse of Tu-fu and Po-chü-i. In these verses Ehrenstein's own feeling of disgust for life and disdain for civilisation, whether Oriental or Occidental, is discernible. At the outset it was an admiration for cultural tradition that inspired Ehrenstein to translate Chinese verse, in which he attempted to reflect something of the older rituals and social graces that are documented in the Sch-King. But, later, Ehrenstein disregarded these features of Chinese poetry and singled out the theme of protest that runs through Chinese verse. It is poetry of anguish and despair, of questioning and grave pessimism, in which outward

1. Ehrenstein, China klagt, pp.31-32.

2. See Anthology of Chinese Literature, compiled and edited by C. Birch (Harmondsworth, 1967) p.256.

protest becomes a gesture of impotence in the face of a world that crushes man and renders his will ineffectual.

Ehrenstein seeks out those features within the Chinese poetic tradition that match his own personality and conform with his poetic creed. It is not subtlety and delicacy of expression that he looked for in Chinese poetry but, rather, simplicity, directness and immediacy. Unlike most of the Chinese poems that have been translated into German, Ehrenstein's adaptations are not evocations of a spirit of timeless harmony. However, it is the poetry of Li-tai-pe rather than Po-chü-i that dominates the German image of Chinese poetry. Speaking of the similar Chinese poetic vogue that emerged in England during the 1920s, a contemporary critic dismissed the modish interest and the false image of China that these verses created in the reader's mind:

unless these impressions are strengthened by substantial knowledge and thereby transmuted into an appreciation which has a solid foundation, they are liable to dissolve at any moment into thin air. 1

The vogue did indeed pass in Germany without any lasting influence,² as an obsession with exotic cultures gave way to a fixation with the Germanic past.

1. Hsin-Hai Chang, 'The Vogue of Chinese Poetry', Edinburgh Review (July 1922), 99-114 (p.100).
2. One can refer only to the poetry of Hermann Kasack and Oskar Loerke as exhibiting any lasting Chinese influence, though this influence is of only minor significance within their work and consists in the recurrent use of Chinese motifs. See H. Kasack, Das ewige Dasein (Berlin, 1949), pp.11, 56, 90-93. Kasack's interest in China is also documented in the essay 'Das Chinesische in der Kunst' in Mosaiksteine. Beiträge zur Literatur und Kunst (Berlin, 1956), pp.17-53, and in fictional form in the treatment of Taoism in Die Stadt hinter dem Strom (Berlin, 1947). See also M. Boussart-Weyembergh, 'H. Kasack "Morgenlandfahrer". Affinité ou influence', Revue des langues vivantes, 31 (1965), 454-471.
 O. Loerke, Gedichte und Prosa, 2 vols, edited by P. Suhrkamp (Frankfurt am Main, 1958), I, 19, 37, 56, 78, 193, 230, 231, 256, 257, 281, 308, 310, 363, 408. For further evidence of Loerke's interest in China see O. Loerke, Literarische Aufsätze aus der 'Neuen Rundschau' 1909-1941, edited by R. Tgahrt (Heidelberg and Darmstadt, 1967), pp.44-45, 201-222, 277, 360, 369, 394; Tagebücher 1903-1939, edited by H. Kasack (Darmstadt, 1955); Reden und kleinere Aufsätze, edited by H. Kasack (Wiesbaden, 1957), p.153; H. Kasack, Oskar Loerke. Charakterbild eines Dichters (Wiesbaden, 1951), pp.50, 63, 70, 82.

CHAPTER V : CHINA AS A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REALITY

Although the dominant attraction of literary treatments of Chinese themes was that of an apolitical reality, free from the materialism and technology of the West, into which the author or reader might escape from the oppressive state of Europe, there is within the works already discussed the projection of China as a social and political reality. The novels, for example, present China as a fragmenting state in which inner feuds threaten to destroy the traditional social structure. In Döblin's novel, the suffering of a minority is as real as the mystical quietism of Chinese Taoist philosophy; in the novels by Meckauer and Ehrenstein the reality of Chinese life is one of struggle and social injustice, rather than a lyrical dream of the pursuit of a divinely-ordained life. Similarly, in Klabund's 'Chinese' works, a theme of revolution and social injustice is blended with escapist exoticism. In the translations of Chinese poetry too, though Li-tai-pe, the poetic dreamer and mystic, was the most popular Chinese poet to be read in Germany, the themes of social injustice, of suffering humanity and a scale of privation equal to anything that had been witnessed in the West are projected in the harrowing images of Po-chü-i's verse.

In Klabund's work Western influence is seen as a decisive factor in the fragmentation and revolutionary collapse of a state that had traditionally been thought to be static, unchanging and the very antithesis of the Western dynamic urge for progress and development. This changing image of China was reflected in contemporary German literature, for example in the translation of Ku-Hung-Ming's Chinas Verteidigung gegen europäische Ideen,¹ a collection of essays that spoke out against the flood of democratic ideas that was entering China from Europe. Alfons Paquet,

1. Ku-Hung-Ming, Chinas Verteidigung gegen europäische Ideen, edited by A. Paquet (Jena, 1911); see also Ku-Hung-Ming, Der Geist des chinesischen Volkes (Jena, 1916). Both these works were probably translated by Richard Wilhelm with whom Ku-Hung-Ming associated in China.

who had met Ku-Hung-Ming in Shanghai, was instrumental in having this work published in Germany. In his introduction, Paquet, strongly under the influence of the author's conservatism, defends China's inner structure. He gives a picture of Chinese life that contradicts the popular literary chinoiserie:

... diese Menschen sind in einer lebenslangen, fremdartigen, furchtbaren Gefangenschaft. In einer Gefangenschaft ihrer Armut, ihrer absoluten, durch viel Aberglauben und ein paar elementare Lebenserfahrungen gefärbten Unbildung. Sie nehmen eine Stufe der Verdammnis und des Leidens ein, die noch vertieft scheint durch den unendlichen Abstand, der sie von der Höhe des Kaffee und Likör trinkenden, befehlenden Europäers in China trennt. 1

However, such is Paquet's belief in the superiority of China's culture, that he cannot accept his own description as a reflection of the reality of China; this abject state is, he argues, merely a product of an historical situation that has been imposed upon China by external forces. The imposition of a materialist, civilised world upon the Chinese has, he maintains, begun to destroy the Chinese consciousness of their own cultural tradition; civilisation, the product of the West, has begun to replace genuine culture, the product of the East. Behind the dirt, squalor and privation, Paquet senses the highly aesthetic Chinese mind which is characterised by 'Scharfsinn, Formgefühl, Liebe zur Linie und Bewegung und Farbe', and a profound religious belief.²

That this continuing idealisation of China and disregard for her political reality was an attempt to retain a belief in a world of harmony as an alternative to the Western world can be seen in M. Heimann's and Hermann Hesse's reviews of Ku-Hung-Ming's collection of essays.³ Both

1. Chinas Verteidigung, p.iv. See also A. Paquet, 'Chinesische Schriftsteller', März, 5 (1911), 464-472, 508-513.

2. Chinas Verteidigung, p.vi.

3. M. Heimann, 'Ein chinesischer Spiegel', in Prosaische Schriften (Berlin, 1918), I, 85-96; H. Hesse, 'Chinas Verteidigung gegen europäische Ideen', März, 6 (1912), 240.

Heimann and Hesse were convinced sinophiles and admirers of ancient China, which represented a spiritual home to them rather than a political reality. Hesse had, it must be noted, recently returned from a trip to the Far East before he reviewed Ku-Hung-Ming's work, but he had no clear conception of the political state of China. His concern at the decay of traditional Chinese society, which he refers to occasionally in letters and essays,¹ shows a misguided belief that this society had represented the spiritual values he recognised in Chinese philosophy. Both he and Heimann studied Lao-tse, Confucius and the Chinese religious canons, which continued to exist as a source of spiritual solace long after China had ceased to be an imperial Confucian state.

Paquet's writings demonstrate a similar idealisation of China, and show the same confusion between the abstract principles of Chinese philosophy and their inadequate realisation. Paquet's visit to China in 1908 had been undertaken as a form of escape from the confines of Europe. His first impressions of China were published in März in the form of a poem, which described, in Impressionist style, the imperial mausoleum at Mukden.² This vision of the spirit of imperial China is also a symbol of the decline of ancient China. In his longer study of China, Li oder im neuen Osten,³ Paquet shows an interest not in the contemporary state of China but in her mystical philosophy:

... die Lehre vom Tao, den Begriff des 'Weges',
der 'Wahrheit', des altgriechischen 'Logos', wie
ihn der sagenhafte Laotse und sein uns zeitlich
um einige Jahrhunderte näher Apostel Tschuangtse
predigen ... 4

He believes that Western political involvement in China will be beneficial

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1. See A. Hsia, Hermann Hesse und China (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), pp.79-88.
 2. A. Paquet, 'Pe Ling', März, 2 (1908), 465-469 (p.469).
 3. A. Paquet, Li oder im neuen Osten (Frankfurt am Main, 1912).
 4. Paquet, Li oder im neuen Osten, p.310.

to Europeans, since it will lead to a wider understanding of Chinese culture which will, in turn, become a source of inspiration to a Europe that has lost all sense of spiritual orientation:

Die wirtschaftliche Entdeckung Chinas, die sich in unserer Gegenwart vollzieht, ist die Entdeckung einer letzten neuen Welt. Ist sie vollzogen, dann kommt das Wesentliche, dann muß, dann darf unser Sinn mehr auf die geistigen Dinge richten. Dann wird auch das Li, die Ehrerbietung des Menschen vor dem Menschen, des Nächsten vor dem Fernsten, das Gefühl einer letzten Unantastbarkeit und des Maßhaltens zwischen den Völkern, mehr zu Ehren kommen. 1

This view exemplifies the many contradictions inherent in Paquet's attitude towards China: he approves of the economic exploitation of the Chinese, but cherishes those qualities of Chinese life which this exploitation is in the process of destroying. His praise of Confucian principles of social organisation, in which one recognises many similarities with Leibniz's interpretation of Chinese natural religions and morality, and his recognition of the value of Chinese spirituality are at variance with his attitude to Western treatments of China. Paquet's reaction to China is prompted by the feeling of the need for change that hung over Europe, and the desire to escape the moral bankruptcy of the West:

Satt des Materialismus, abgestoßen von dem Gedanken, nur für Zwecke zu schaffen, die ihren Lohn in dieser Zeit dahin haben, religiös im Innersten ... seufzen viele dahin im Joch der Alltäglichkeit ... in der Übersättigung und Fülle ergreift uns ein Wunsch nach Weltflucht. Wir wünschen uns neue Klöster, die es geistigen Menschen erlaubten, sich frei vom Druck des Daseinskampfes dem Beschauen, der Sammlung zu widmen, denn die Masse des zu Denkenden überwältigt uns. 2

Yet he fails to realise that the Western demise is the product of a world that the West is about to impose upon the Chinese. Paquet recognises Germany's contact with China as part of a Germanic divine cultural mission,

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1. Paquet, Li oder im neuen Osten, p.316.
 2. Paquet, Li oder im neuen Osten, p.318.

and speaks of wandering scholars who would assimilate Chinese wisdom and, thus enriched, preach its message to the world in order to attain 'eine Vergeistigung der Erde durch das deutsche Wesen'.¹ This recognition of the spiritual disorientation of the West and a belief in a form of spiritual pan-Germanism seem oddly incompatible.

Paquet's work is both a travelogue and a form of political pamphlet. The author's general concluding observations on the need for a European renewal through the spirit of Confucianism and Chinese mysticism, via the mediation of the Germans, are loosely appended to the main body of the book, which consists of brief sketches of Chinese life. Paquet refers to the mood of unrest that is abroad and the Emperor's abdication as direct results of the pernicious influence of Christian missionaries, who, he states, produced the revolutionary leader Sun-Yat-sen and the leaders of the Taiping rebellion. This gives some indication of Paquet's grasp of the Chinese political situation. To group together the fanatical Taiping sectaries with the political leader is a grave misunderstanding of the role of the Christian missions and the aims of the Republicans.

A more graphic illustration of the decline of China into chaos is to be found in Norbert Jacques' Auf dem chinesischen Fluß.² Although the work was not published in complete form until 1921, it had earlier been available in an abbreviated serialised form in 1914;³ its post-war publication was clearly due to the renewed interest in China that emerged in the 1920s.

Jacques gives a gruesome picture of the savagery of the revolutionary conflict in his descriptions of towns whose gates are adorned with the

1. Paquet, Li oder im neuen Osten, p.318.

2. N. Jacques, Auf dem chinesischen Fluß (Berlin, 1921).

3. N. Jacques, 'Schin Ta', März, 8, i (1914), 161-168; 'In Tschangscha', März, 8, iv (1914), 85-89, 108-112, 132-140, 150-159, 177-182, 202-206.

severed heads of revolutionaries, and streets where 'die Revolutionäre siegend das Hirn und Blut der Mandschu- und Beamtenkinder und Frauen an den Hauswänden aufspritzen ließen'.¹ The author typifies the Chinese as a people to whom brutality, butchery and slaughter do not signify morally outrageous conditions, since they are not attached to earthly life in the way the European is.

Although the book describes the decline of the Confucian system and the destruction of both its physical substance, its temples and shrines, as well as its moral foundation, Jacques has less interest in the contemporary China than in the China of pure exoticism. The brutalities that the author describes are sobering reminders of the real China, but Jacques sees beneath the surface of historical events the essence of a different China. This vision confronts him in a nocturnal meeting with a Chinese woman, which represents the climax of his search for the genuine China:

Es war das fremde Wunder, das sich mir ...
verschloß. Jetzt war es auf einmal greifbar
wie eine Frucht vor mir hingestellt und ging
auf porzellanen goldnen Lilien davon, Mythe
fremdrassiger Körperlichkeit. Wie in einer
Katastrophe war ich zu dir hingestellt worden,
... allein mit dir in dieser Welt: China ...
und schönste Jungfrau des himmlischen Reichs
... Einziger Wunsch zu schauen, zu empfinden ...
dann zu leiden an dem Unlöslichen ihrer Bindung an
das Volk des östlichen Landes ... Wehmutumstrahlend
ein keuscher Ritter zu sein, der den Weg nach dem
Heiligen Land suchte, durchbohrt von der Sehnsucht
ewig unstillbaren Mannestums. 2

This lyricised vision of China is the object of Jacques' search, but an object that emerges only once in the whole work. It is typical of the yearning of the Impressionist traveller to experience the quintessential sublimity of exotic cultures. Yet the dream that hovers before him is inaccessible; it is an eroticised and ennobled Impressionist

1. Jacques, Auf dem chinesischen Fluß, p.11.

2. Jacques, Auf dem chinesischen Fluß, pp.164-166.

portrait of the exotic; but it is art, not reality.

Not all literature of the day projected this idealised image of China. Certain novels, for example Alexander Ular's Die gelbe Flut,¹ presented contemporary Chinese history in a fictional form. In this novel, the author criticises Western involvement in China and the European exploitation of the Chinese. A similar theme is taken up in Erich von Salzmänn's Das revolutionäre China,² though the author's attitude towards the Chinese seems oddly ambivalent. The work is dedicated to 'unseren tapferen Eisenbahnern', who have suffered harassment and death at the hands of the xenophobic Boxers, but the author is conciliatory in his attitude towards the wholesale slaughter of Europeans by the Boxers and their supporters. Much of the information contained in the novel is inaccurate, such as the assumption that what the Chinese people were struggling for was a change from absolutist, autocratic rule to constitutional monarchy. The author's later works are far more accurate in their assessment of the political situation,³ but these are documentary rather than imaginative literature.

The war brought an end to the fashionable interest in travelogues and exotic literature, which gave way to fictional propagandist literature. A 'Chinese' example of this can be found in Robert Walter's Tsingtau unterm Feuer of 1915.⁴ As the title indicates, the work deals with the attack upon German positions in Tsingtau during the first world war and is typical of the jingoistic sabre-rattling of the early war years. The novel

1. A. Ular, Die gelbe Flut. Ein Rassenroman (Frankfurt am Main, 1908).

2. E. von Salzmänn, Das revolutionäre China (Berlin, 1913).

3. E. von Salzmänn, Gelb gegen Weiß (Leipzig, 1925); China siegt (Hamburg, 1929).

4. R. Walter, Tsingtau unterm Feuer (Weimar, 1915). This novel is volume five of the suitably titled Heldenkämpfe 1914-15, which presented semi-fictional accounts of the war on various fronts to the German reading public. Walter did have more genuine literary aspirations and was later, during the modish interest in China, to publish a collection of Chinese fairy-tales under the title Der Kuß des Esels Wu (Hamburg, 1924).

was written as propaganda and lacks any great literary value, but gives a clear impression of the literary projection of the Chinese image.

The author describes the German bravery and tenacity in the defence of Tsingtau, which held an important geopolitical position, since the Japanese wished to take the town in order to gain access to China's natural resources. On the outbreak of war, the Japanese, who were allied to the British, attacked the town as the possession of a declared enemy, since it had been annexed by the Germans in 1898. The Japanese attack was made under the pretext of rescuing the town from the Germans and returning it to the Chinese, who had adopted a stance of neutrality during the whole affair. After a week-long barrage, the Germans capitulated to the Japanese on 7 November 1914. The impression that this incident had made in Germany can be seen in the young Brecht's fragmentary poem 'Der Tsingtau-soldat',¹ with its depiction of the horror of war and the Germans' heroic struggle.

Walter gives a false impression of Sino-German relations. He refers to a friendly alliance between the two peoples, a fact that is contradicted by China's later entry into the war, in March 1917, as a member of the Japanese-American-British alliance. One notes a tone of political and personal condescension in Walter's attitude towards China and the Chinese. The latter are all teutophiles, who welcome German involvement in China and the introduction of German culture, science and technology to the retarded Chinese. The traditional China has ceased to exist; those who strive to retain the Confucian state 'werden an den Eisenwerken, elektrischen Bahnen und Kriegsschiffen sterben'.² Futurism and an enthusiasm for technology have now become, in Walter's novel, the key features of modern Chinese life.

1. Bertolt Brecht, Gesammelte Werke (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), VIII, 11.

2. Walter, Tsingtau unterm Feuer, p.2.

The Germans are depicted as the heroic defenders of Chinese interests:

So lang ein Tropfen Blut noch glüht - noch ein
Faust den Degen zieht - und noch ein Arm die
Büchse spannt - betritt kein Feind dir deinen
Strand! 1

Yet, among themselves, the Germans speak of China in terms of cynical financial exploitation:

Ich wußte, Ostasien würde der neue Mittelpunkt des
Handels werden. Hier baute sich der ungeheure Markt
der Zukunft an. 2

The author does not appear to recognise the conflicting nature of such statements.

Not only does Walter give a distorted picture of China, he also perverts Chinese philosophy to support his theme. Thus, he quotes Lieh-tse to express a belief in the ultimate German victory:

Die Überschwemmungen der Flüsse dauern sieben Tage
und verrinnen, die Sonne geht durch den Mittag und
versinkt ... Der Sieg zu erringen ist wohl schwer,
aber schwerer ist, ihn zu bewahren. Nur wer des
Sieges würdig ist, gibt das Glück des Sieges seinen
Nachkommen. Wer mag aber den Sieg bewahren? Nur der
eine vermag es, dessen Leben aus dem Ursinn gespeist
wird und auch der andere, der seine Stärke als gering
empfindet. Das ist das Geheimnis vom wahren Sieg, es
gibt auch Unterliegende, die Sieger sind. 3

Lieh-tse refers, in the original, to the inconstancy of fate and the decline of all greatness. In this he reflects the Taoist rejection of worldly achievements and the strength of weakness and passivity; through self-victory and a suppression of destructive urges, one achieves a victory over the seductive force of the world. Walter, in contrast, uses Lieh-tse's words to express a Chinese belief in German cultural superiority, which will prevail over the degenerate Japanese.

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1. Walter, Tsingtau unterm Feuer, p.17.
 2. Walter, Tsingtau unterm Feuer, p.16.
 3. Walter, Tsingtau unterm Feuer, p.81, cf. R. Wilhelm, Liä Dsi, Das wahre Buch vom quellenden Urgrund (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.166.

Walter's novel is a distortion of the truth in its depiction of both German and Chinese attitudes to the political situation. There is no reference to the annexation of Tsingtau, which sparked off the Boxer uprising, nor to the brutality with which the Germans had countered the Chinese uprising. The educated Chinese who appear in the novel are sycophantic teutophiles who have abandoned their native cultural traditions and embraced German culture as the foundation of modern civilisation, whilst the Germans are depicted as generous benefactors and the altruistic imperial masters of a retarded people.

The end of the war brought a return to the more traditional picture of China in Germany. The first important representation of this can be found in Hermann Graf Keyserling's Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen,¹ which had been prepared for publication in 1914 but, due to the intervention of war, did not appear until 1919, with immediate and lasting success.

Keyserling may not have been remembered by subsequent critics as a leading thinker of his generation, yet it is accurate to say that he was extremely influential in his own lifetime. He is also very typical of his generation, particularly in respect of the loss of spiritual orientation that prompted his journey. Many expressed a desire to escape Europe at this time. Both Schiebelhuth and Heym, for example, planned to join the German consular service in China,² though their plans were never realised. This frustrated desire to abandon Europe can also be seen in Heym's poem 'Der fliegende Holländer', of 1911, which depicts the symbolic ship of a dead Europe passing the coast of China.³ Exotic literature became a means of spiritual escape for those who could not physically

1. All references are to the fifth edition, H. Keyserling, Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1921).
2. See G. Heym, Dokumente zu seinem Leben, edited by K.L. Schneider and G. Burckhardt (Darmstadt, 1963), p.44; H. Schiebelhuth, Prosa. Briefe. Theaterkritiken (Darmstadt and Zurich, 1967), p.173.
3. G. Heym, Dichtungen und Schriften, edited by K.L. Schneider (Hamburg and Munich, 1964), I, 201.

leave the confines of Europe.

The dilemma that preceded Keyserling's travels is not to be seen as an individual psychological crisis but as a symptom of the age. The journey was prompted by a feeling of stagnation and a need for movement and new experience, which was precipitated by the horror vacui that Western inertia had created in Keyserling's generation.

The journey is a symbolic act of self-discovery; the experience of other cultures stimulates philosophical reflection and speculation:

Mir kam es einzig darauf an, für mich selbst zu erleben und alsdann zu zeigen, wie ein tief genug im Selbst verwurzelter Geist, indem er den Erdenball umkreist, sich eigentlich nur um seine eigene Achse dreht. 1

Through his diary, Keyserling offers personal opinions on the political and social institutions, religions, and cultures that he has experienced. The majority of these are dismissed as culturally regressive, only China is singled out for particular praise.

Although his visit coincided with the transition from monarchy to democracy and the violent confrontations that accompanied this, there is little sign of these events in the work. Political change is anathema to Keyserling, who dismisses such occurrences as the false 'große Zeiten', in a manner reminiscent of Stifter. These events, he maintains, are not of any great significance, and are not indicative of the true Chinese qualities of stability and harmony, but are, rather, a mild crisis of the organism.² Keyserling's prescription for a solution to the revolutionary chaos is 'eine Wiedergeburt ... aus dem Geist des Konfuzianismus'.³

The genuine political and social reality of China represents, for Keyserling, an externalisation of the spirit of Confucianism, which he recognises in every aspect of her culture. Thus, he depicts, in his work,

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1. H. Keyserling, Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen (Leipzig, 1922), p.15.
 2. Reisetagebuch, II, 432.
 3. Reisetagebuch, II, 507.

what he envisages as the animating spirit of China, rather than her physical substance. There are few factual details and few descriptions of external reality in the diary. For Keyserling, the Chinese people consist of Confucian literati, scholars and philosophers. Where the common people do enter the work, it is in pictures of a utopian harmony, where life's mundane activities take on a purposeful meaning:

Jeder Kuli lebt die ewige Wahrheit, die unsere
Größten tauben Ohren gepredigt haben, daß Glück
Sache des inneren Verhaltens ist und von den
äußeren Umständen als solchen nicht abhängt. 1

China's peasant stock are seen living in idyllic bliss, and exemplify, for the author, the qualities of 'Wurzelechtheit ... Bodenbeständigkeit'.² This picture of Chinese life is not based upon empirical observation but on an interpretation of Confucianism which is presented as if it were a faithful representation of contemporary Chinese life.

Keyserling praises the rationality of this natural ethic that is free from religious speculation,³ and refers to it as exemplary: 'das abstrahierte Schema einer gelebten oder zu lebenden Wirklichkeit'.⁴ He regards the Chinese state as an expression of ethical postulates, and identifies 'das Politische' with 'das Ethische'.⁵ This state is, therefore, structured upon an internally recognised order, and the individual's moral sensibility, rather than upon an externally imposed, arbitrary order. In this, Keyserling recognises the greatest contrast between Europe and China, since the former is legalistic, authoritarian and based upon prohibitions:

Uns haben die Grundsätze der Moral immer ein von außen
her Gebotenes bedeutet, sei es, daß Gott sie uns auf-
oktroziert hätte, oder die Obrigkeit, oder eine der
Natur entgegenstehende absolute praktische Vernunft. 6

1. Reisetagebuch, II, 470.

2. Reisetagebuch, II, 488.

3. Reisetagebuch, II, 477.

4. Reisetagebuch, II, 464.

5. Reisetagebuch, II, 465.

6. Reisetagebuch, II, 467.

The Chinese, in contrast, stress natural morality, in the belief that 'bilde der Mensch das Natürliche aus, so ergäbe Moralität sich von selbst'.¹ This unreserved praise of natural morality, which is reminiscent of Leibniz and other philosophers of the Enlightenment period, shows a marked difference from the nineteenth-century view of Chinese culture. Keyserling's belief in moral education as the only sound basis for social harmony was later put into practice in his Schule der Weisheit in Darmstadt on his return to Germany,² where he recommended Confucianism as an exemplary moral code which might be adopted in order to effect a moral regeneration of Europe. Keyserling argues that Europe requires a return to simple moral principles and must reject material progress and the naïve optimism of the 'Fortschrittsgedanke' in order to re-animate life's basic principle. He points to China as the most successful realisation of a non-European social principle and as a reminder of the possibility of an alternative cultural development: Chinas Beispiel [beweist], daß Kultur in einer anderen Dimension als der Fortschritt liegt'.³

By the time Keyserling had returned to Europe, China was in the first throes of revolution, and when the Reisetagebuch appeared in Germany China found itself in a state of civil war, and was the very antithesis of Keyserling's picture of a patriarchal state governed by scholar officials through the means of natural morality. Keyserling's description is of a China that never existed historically; it is a Confucian idealisation that Keyserling created from impressions of a scholar-gentry and intellectual aristocracy with which he had come into contact in Tsingtau through Richard Wilhelm.⁴

1. Reisetagebuch, II, 467.

2. See above, pp.46-49.

3. Reisetagebuch, II, 568.

4. Reisetagebuch, II, 532.

The ideas that Keyserling presented in his work were taken up by others in Germany, for example Gottfried Salomon, who wrote of China as an exemplary political state and referred to the Chinese belief in personal morality as the regulating force in social life:

Der Westen wird im Osten sein Vorbild sehen, denn der Osten besitzt die sozial- und wirtschaftsethischen Fonds, ohne die keine Gemeinschaft Bestand hat. Nach dem Verfall der religiös-ethischen Stützen war die Sozialität und die Ökonomie des Westens unbeherrschbar und untergeordnet, die Gemeinschaft dem Staate untergeordnet, das Soziale durch das Politische beherrscht. 1

Like Keyserling, he stresses the voluntary nature of political stability and contrasts this with the Western imposition of an external structure and the prescription of social behaviour through a mechanism of state, which he regards as features of deficient moral education of the European. The West, he contends, is caught in a repressive web, and is politically, socially and ethically immature. One notes in such remarks a similarity with Hegel's earlier dismissal of the Chinese political and social institutions as products of a retarded spiritual development. Clearly, the image of Chinese culture has undergone a radical change within the space of a century. The object of interest has not changed, but the previous firm belief in the rightness of European development has now turned into grave self-doubt.

This optimistic and idealised image of China continued to appear in popular literature of the day, despite information that was available in newspaper reports concerning the Chinese civil war. Even novels which did purport to deal with the contemporary situation in fictional form continued to create a false impression of both the issues at stake in the upheavals and the way in which the revolution developed. One can cite

1. G. Salomon, 'Westen und Osten', Die Erhebung, 2 (1920), 337-347 (P.340).

Oswald von Sien's Taian. Der große Friede,¹ a fictionalised account of insurgent and revolutionary movements in China. If the reality of the Chinese political situation in the early years of revolution left many Western observers confused, as can be seen from contemporary press reports, this novel would have done little to clarify it.

The novel represents the passing of the idealised China, as described by a European:

Schade, daß China nicht im Mittelalter bleiben konnte.
Hier muß es schön gewesen sein, schöner als bei uns.
Die moderne Welt paßt hier nicht hinein, sie paßt
überhaupt nicht nach China. Allerdings wäre es
zuviel verlangt, wenn man erwarten wollte, daß das
chinesische Volk seinen mittelalterlichen Schlaf
fortsetzen sollte, nur um den Stil nicht zu zerstören. 2

This comment gives a clear indication of European attitudes towards China, and of the reluctance of the Westerner to abandon a belief in the stylised ideal of Chinese life.

The story is set in the historical period 1916-20, and deals with the activities of a secret society, the 'Taian' or 'Great Tranquillity'.³ The novel gives long, involved descriptions of the meetings of Taoist sects, who are not the quietistic, fatalistic pacifists of Döblin's novel, but violent revolutionaries.

Although the Taoists are depicted more realistically than other aspects of Chinese life are, the novel remains a fictional rather than a documentary account of modern China. The work ends on a harmonious note with the installation of a boy Emperor on the Imperial throne. The restoration spirit of the novel's conclusion is an obvious distortion of the historical facts. The attempted restoration of the Ch'ing

1. Oswald Arnold von Sien, Taian. Der große Friede. Ein chinesischer Roman (Frankfurt am Main, 1922).

2. Taian, p.132.

3. Though this religious and political sect is fictional, it shows obvious similarities with the historical Taiping (Great Peace) movement.

Dynasty in July 1917, when the young Emperor P'u-i returned to Peking, lasted for only two weeks.

Gradually, however, the image of China became modified, as travelogues began to report the reality of the political situation. The delicately impressionistic pictures of an exotic culture gave way to reports of the political chaos that had engulfed China. China became newsworthy and authors were despatched to collect information on the civil war. One such, rather reluctant, author was Arthur Holitscher, who was commissioned by the Fischer publishing company to produce a travel-diary that would be more in keeping with the political developments in China. Das unruhige Asien¹ is a picture of a dying culture and a living museum, in which the last remnants of the traditional China are being destroyed by roaming mobs of red insurgents.

Holitscher is critical of the fashionable Western interest in exotic cultures and religions, and terms those who have such an interest: 'Menschen, die suchend rat- und rastlos nach dem rechten Weg fahnden'. For Holitscher, China is the political reality of warring factions, but one also notes a strong attachment to the China of the past, 'ein wunderbares, altes auf ewig versunkenes China',² in the author's report.

In the works discussed above, one recognises the twentieth-century response to China. In this there are clear parallels with the appreciation of China recorded in the writings of the philosophers of the European Enlightenment. Imperial and economic expansionism within China are regarded as part of a preparatory ground work, from which will grow an enduring cultural bond between Germany and China. The purpose of this cultural link is the attainment of spiritual and political regeneration

1. A. Holitscher, Das unruhige Asien (Berlin, 1926).

2. Holitscher, p.265.

within Europe through adherence to Chinese principles. Paquet, for example, had approached China in search of 'Li', the code of social and political harmony:

Ich will in China das Li ... suchen ...
Anstand, Schönheit, Maß, innere Höflichkeit
und Zeremonie. 1

It is significant that both Holitscher, co-founder of the first proletarian theatre in Germany, and Paquet, author of such revolutionary plays as Die Fahnen, do not, at this time, show any great personal interest in China's proletarian revolution. Both authors are critical of the destructive force of revolution and retain a belief in the ideal of Confucian China. Paquet's idealisation of China is founded upon a belief in the educability and perfectability of man. Such ideas were later discarded by Paquet, and by many of his contemporaries, as a belief in man's spiritual capacities gave way to a recognition of the need to improve man's material conditions. The abandoning of these optimistic theories of improvement through the spirit and the adoption of a politically more realistic approach necessarily qualified the German image of China. As Brecht later demonstrated, the belief in Confucianism as an instructive moral code retained some validity, but a validity that could only assert itself when the social, political and material conditions were suitable.

The Chinese political situation became a topic of burning interest in Germany. As political opinions began to polarise more strongly towards the end of the 1920s, one notices a divergence of attitudes towards China. Liberals and communists reacted to Western involvement in China, which they regarded as part of the suppression of peoples by capitalism. The apolitical or Confucian attitude that many past authors and commentators had adopted towards China was now replaced by a politically more militant stance. China became an Oriental counterpart

1. Li oder im neuen Osten, pp.14-15.

to the political conflicts within Europe. It was no longer the exotic China of her poetry, or the mystical China of Taoism, or the Confucian ideal of political stability and harmony that attracted German attention, but the struggle of an oppressed people to attain genuine political maturity. China came to the forefront as a political reality of great significance. Chinese revolutionary pamphlets were published,¹ and Marxist sinologists discovered the economic reality of China, which they used to demonstrate the validity of their political views.²

The politicisation of the image of China can be seen in Otto Fischer's essay China und Deutschland,³ a right-wing response to China's political situation. He speaks of the traditional view of China as a state regulated by personal morality and held in stability 'ohne Gewalt, nur durch die sittliche Kraft und das Beispiel',⁴ and as an intellectual aristocracy ruled by the law of nature and natural reason. Fischer likens China to medieval Europe, and compares the unifying institutionalised religion, Confucianism, to medieval Catholicism.

However, in addition to this idealised vision of China, the essay also contains references to China's moral decline and 'den Mangel an Gemeinsinn, an dem Gefühl der Verpflichtung gegen die Gemeinschaft der Volksgenossen'.⁵ This chaos, he maintains, is part of the transition from imperial rule to democracy, and is a parallel to the political turmoil of Weimar Germany. Such comparisons were later used by Brecht in his 'Chinese' satires of

1. Sun Yat-Sen, Die drei nationalen Grundlehren, translated by Tsan Wan (Berlin, 1927); 30 Jahre Revolution, translated by Tsan Wan (Berlin, 1927); Aufzeichnungen eines chinesischen Revolutionärs, translated by G. Iversen, edited by K.A. Wittfogel (Vienna and Berlin, 1927).
2. Karl August Wittfogel, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Chinas, I (Leipzig, 1926); Das erwachende China (Vienna, 1926); Schanghai-Kanton (Berlin, 1927).
3. O. Fischer, China und Deutschland, *Deutschtum und Ausland*, 12 (Münster, 1927).
4. Fischer, p.2.
5. Fischer, p.14.

the Weimar Republic. Fischer, however, differs from Brecht in these comparisons and prescribes Confucianism as the means by which both China and Germany might regain political stability:

Wir fragen nach den tragenden Kräften und finden
sie in der Harmonie des Menschen mit der Natur,
in der Ehrfurcht vor den geistigen Werten der
Überlieferung, in der gegebenen Ordnung der
Menschheit innerhalb der Bande von Familie, Gemein-
wesen und Staat. 1

Both China and Germany are seen as threatened by the Bolshevik menace, and in need of reform. There is a strong tone of latent National Socialism in Fischer's praise of China's 'organic' order and cultural tradition, which he parallels with Germany of the Romantics and Idealists and 'Germanentum':

Wenn heute der Deutsche die alten chinesischen Gärten durchwandelt ... so fühlt er sich seltsam heimisch wie in den Gärten seiner Kindheit, die aus den Zeiten der Großeltern und Urgroßeltern bis in unsere Tage hinüberwinken ... wenn er im Heim des chinesischen Gelehrten die Anmut ... empfindet ..., wie sollte er sich nicht erinnert fühlen an die schlichten Räume in Weimar und so manchen anderen Orten, in denen die hohen Geister des deutschen Idealismus über die Gegenwart in unendliche Zeiten und Räume sich erhoben, an die sinnigen (sic) Zimmer der alten Bürgerhäuser, Burgen und Stifte, in denen die Generationen des romantischen Deutschland ihre Träume, Gedanken und Forschungen pflegten. 2

Fischer recognises in the contemporary German interest in China an expression of the German need to establish a belief in the continuity of a cultural tradition. The adulation of Confucianism and the respect for China's attainments in the political and social sphere are, to Fischer's mind, expressions of dissatisfaction with German conditions. For Fischer, China is the Oriental equivalent of medieval Germany, and a state in which political or temporal institutions and religious institutions are complementary aspects of a natural order.

It is not surprising that those whose views on the nature of the

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1. Fischer, pp.79-80.
 2. Fischer, p.77.

state and the individual's role within it deviated from Fischer's should come to different conclusions about the significance of contemporary political developments within China. Ernst Thälmann, for example, made the following reference to China in his address to the German communists on May Day 1927:

Im Mittelpunkt der internationalen Ereignisse steht
der gigantische Kampf der werktätigen Bevölkerung
Chinas gegen den Imperialismus und gegen die
imperialistischen Henkersknechte in China selbst ...
Zu Millionen müssen die Arbeiter an diesem ersten
Mai aufmarschieren.
Ihre Losungen müssen sein:
Gegen den imperialistischen Krieg!
Alles zur Unterstützung der chinesischen Revolution!
Keinen Soldaten, kein Gewehr für die Würger Chinas! 1

The reports of the squalid social conditions and appalling working conditions in China, and the increased Western involvement in Chinese affairs during the 1920s, provoked an immense interest in China among European communists. The struggle, for self-determination and against imperial exploitation, that was being fought out in China provoked sympathy among Europeans who recognised in this conflict the basic pattern of the class-war. Previously, European revolutionary interest had centred upon Russia and her post-revolutionary progress, but now this interest faded as political authors and commentators pointed to China as the topical example of Marxist theory. China's rapid development from a predominantly agrarian society to a semi-industrialised society seemed, to communist commentators, to exemplify the laws of social change and their economic basis.

For the communists, China represented the international struggle between an oppressed and exploited proletariat and a capitalist, imperialist aggressor. Thälmann's call for solidarity with the Chinese people was taken up throughout Europe by political groups, who demanded a withdrawal

1. E. Thälmann, Reden und Aufsätze, 2 vols (Berlin, 1955), II, 503-506.

from China by the Western powers, and a cessation of the flow of arms to the various warring factions in China. 'Hands off China' became a political slogan throughout Europe and led to the formation of a number of 'Hands off China Societies'.

Similar sentiments were expressed in literary form in the work of communist authors. The Berlin Communist Youth League, under the chairmanship of Max Vallentin, composed its first Agitspiel in April 1927 and performed the play later the same year at the Hamburg Reichsjugendtag. This play, Alarm-Hamburg-Schanghai, was later published under the title Hände weg von China!, in keeping with the political slogan of the day.¹ After their performance in Hamburg, the Youth League toured Germany with the play which, to judge by the authors' own accounts, was extremely successful and of considerable influence on others' understanding of China's political state.

The play consists of a rapid succession of brief scenes with only a minimum of props and scenic devices, which creates an impression of extemporised spontaneity. Its programmatic sub-title, 'ein Agitationsspiel zur Unterstützung des siegreichen Befreiungskampfes des unterdrückten Chinas', is a pointer to the communist clichés of its language. It attempts, in sketched form, to destroy the prejudices of traditional attitudes towards China and to give an impression of the political and social reality of contemporary China. This is a large undertaking and, whilst the play does summarise, with some humour, traditional European prejudices, the concentrated dramatic form gives a distorted picture of contemporary events in China.

In order to clarify the historical inaccuracies contained in the play,

1. Hände weg von China!, Mit Hammer und Sichel, 7 (Berlin, 1927).

it is necessary to give some indication of the political state of China at the time.¹ In April 1927, when the play was being written, there were three governments in China: the war-lord regime in Peking, the National Government in Hankow, and Chiang Kai-shek's government in Nanking. Chiang Kai-shek had broken away from the National Government (kuomintang) in 1927, though he had previously feigned support for the communist cause. Later, he took Shanghai, in which, since March 1927, a revolutionary municipal administration had been installed, and was welcomed as a communist sympathiser. However, on 12 April 1927 Chiang carried out an anti-communist purge in the city and summarily executed the communist leaders. Shanghai was, thus, later to become a martyrs' shrine to the European communists, but, at the time Hände weg von China! was being performed, the realities of the situation were not clear in Germany.

The play opens in a classroom in Germany, where a teacher is giving elementary instruction in the geography of the Far East:

Wir kommen heute zu China. Das ist hier, wo
die Wilden wohnen mit den langen Zöpfen oder
die sogenannte gelbe Gefahr. Laufen barfuß
'rum, fressen Mais und Reis und vermehren sich
wie die Wanzen, wodurch die enorme Bevölkerungs-
zahl zu erklären ist. 2

The Chinese are described as a recalcitrant, barbaric and perfidious people, whom the Europeans, at great danger to themselves, have attempted to educate and govern. The teacher's political stance is typified by his reference to the infamous 'Hunnenrede' which Kaiser Wilhelm II had delivered to the second voluntary expedition force, which had been sent to China in 1900. This German force was to exact revenge for the murder

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1. For a clear and concise analysis of this period of Chinese history, see H. McAlveay, The Modern History of China (London, 1967); C.P. Fitzgerald, The Birth of Communist China (Harmondsworth, 1964); Republican China, edited by F. Schurmann and O. Schell, China Readings, 2 (Harmondsworth, 1968).
 2. Hände weg von China!, p.3.

of the German ambassador, Freiherr von Ketteler, during the Boxer uprising:

Kommt ihr vor den Feind, so wird derselbe geschlagen!
Pardon wird nicht gegeben! Wer euch in die Hände fällt,
sei euch verfallen. Wie vor tausend Jahren die Hunnen
unter ihrem König Etzel sich einen Namen gemacht, ...
so mag der Name Deutscher in China auf tausend Jahre
durch euch in einer Weise bestätigt werden, daß niemals
wieder ein Chinese es wagt, einen Deutschen auch nur
scheel anzusehen. 1

The speech is an obvious anachronism in a play set in 1927, but serves to show the nature of traditional prejudice. Whilst the fervour of Wilhelminian pan-Germanic aspirations may have since subsided, European attitudes towards the Chinese, the play implies, have remained the same. These traditional European attitudes are countered in the play with a number of political slogans delivered by a coolie:

Hände weg von China!
Alle Macht den Arbeitern und Bauern!
Und die Barbarei - wird nicht mehr lange dauern! 2

Other scenes show the main imperial powers, England, America and Japan, and suggest an alliance between these powers and the war-lords, Wu Pei-fu and Chang Tso-lin. Again, this deviates from historical fact, since, though these two figures might rightly be said to have been the last remnants of the Chinese establishment, they were political opponents. Nevertheless, they did, at various times, act in league with the imperial powers, whilst fighting under the banner of national freedom. The play also suggests that Western involvement in China is so advanced that the whole of the European economy would collapse if the West should lose control of China. In this way, the play suggests to the audience that the perpetuation of the capitalist system in China is also a means of keeping control of the Western economic world. Thus the audience is asked to identify with the Chinese coolies as fellow victims.

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1. Hände weg von China!, p.3. Cf. E. Eyck, Das persönliche Regiment Wilhelm II (Zurich, 1948), p.272.
 2. Hände weg von China!, p.5.

Western influence is also shown in the guise of paternalistic interest in the advancement of the Chinese. The revolutionary workers' demands for control of the means of production are countered by an English priest with glib biblical platitudes, which represents the assumed moral superiority of the West. The church is here shown as a counter-revolutionary force.¹ This reflects, in caricatured form, the changing role of the missionaries in China. They had at first been extremely tolerant, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century they developed into a domineering, prejudiced class, whom the Emperor had raised to the status of the mandarin class as an act of appeasement after the wars with Europe.

The play preaches a message of hope through the introduction of the revolutionary Cantonese army. The commanding officer and political adviser (whose identities are not revealed) reject an English offer of concessions and preach a doctrine of self-reliance and self-determination: 'Wir fegen China rein!'²

The identity of the commander-in-chief of the revolutionary army indicates the confusion that existed in Europe as to the real nature of the political struggle in China. There were many armies in China at this time that claimed to be the vanguard of the revolution. Although the play identifies the counter-revolutionaries, Wu Pei-fu and Chang Tso-lin, the forces of revolution remain anonymous. This applies not simply to the coolies, who are to be seen as the collective heroes, but also to the revolutionary leaders. The reason for this would seem to be more than a dramatic technique employed to avoid a personality cult, or to stress collective effort. It points, in fact, to an embarrassment on the propagandists' part. The military adviser is readily identifiable as

1. A similar statement of this commonly held view can be found in the anonymous article, 'China. Brief an die Aktion', Die Aktion, 16 (1926), 166-167.

2. Hände weg von China!, p.12.

Michael Borodin, but to name him in the play would have been tantamount to an admission of Russian involvement in China, and would have contradicted the call for self-determination. The commander-in-chief can also be identified, and is Chiang Kai-shek. When he began his march north in July 1926 he was welcomed by communist sympathisers, and became identified with the military wing of the revolution. However, his sudden volte-face in Shanghai, where he massacred the communists, indicated that he was not in sympathy with the revolutionaries' cause. By the time this play was being presented to German audiences, Chiang had become, in China, an enemy of the people, but to show this in the play would have been an admission of the fact that China lacked an effective revolutionary army. Thus, the conclusion of the play would have been transformed from a message of hope into a recognition of defeat in Shanghai.

The play is, of course, crudely propagandist. It identifies many of the factions fighting for control of China but, by trying to create a simple dramatic conflict and point an ideological view, it fails to present the vast complexity of the political situation. The authors simply contrast the prejudices of traditional Western opinion with communist clichés in their oversimplified depiction of a revolution that was in reality a bloody chaos. The confusion surrounding these historical events also leads the authors to identify wrongly their own ideological counterparts.

The interest in contemporary Chinese affairs continued in Germany and was sustained by the showing of Russian semi-documentary films, which recorded the progress of the revolution. Friedrich Wolf refers to a 'Shanghai-Film'¹ that was shown in Stuttgart in 1928, in which scenes of the fighting in and around Shanghai were presented to a shocked German

1. F. Wolf, Aufsätze, 2 vols (Berlin and Weimar, 1967-68), I, 107.

audience. This film, Das Dokument von Shanghai,¹ which was shown throughout Germany before it was finally banned by the authorities because of its violence and implicit revolutionary message, marked the final stage of the politicisation of the Chinese image in Germany. The film referred to 400,000,000 Chinese ruled by 300,000 foreigners, and contrasted the luxurious European villa quarter with the hovels of the coolies. It also showed the liberation of Shanghai by the southern army and suggested that rebellious Chinese had been massacred by the Europeans, rather than by Chiang Kai-shek. Erwin Piscator was later to use certain scenes from this film in his later stage productions as incidental background material.²

Russian plays on Chinese revolutionary themes were also presented in Germany at this time. Tret'yakov's Ritschki Kitai, which had first been produced in Moscow in 1926, was translated by Piscator's collaborator Leo Lania³ and received its German première in Frankfurt in 1929. As a contemporary reviewer indicates, there was still considerable confusion in Germany as to what was happening within China:

Wenn nämlich zu Beginn die Lichtbilder einen Leitartikel der Frankfurter Zeitung publizieren, in dem auf die gefährlichen Konsequenzen der Affäre in Wanhhsien hingewiesen ist, so darf nicht vergessen werden, daß eben in dieser Frankfurter Zeitung die Berichte einer Agnes Smedley unmißverständlich die heutige Nankinger Regierung belasten, die doch nicht anderes ist als die Krönung jener revolutionären Bewegung von Wanhhsien. Die Befreiungsfahne von Wanhhsien ist die Fahne der Unterdrücker von Nanking geworden. 4

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1. See S. Kracauer, From Calligari to Hitler (Princetown, 1947), p.193, also K. MacPherson, 'A Document of Shanghai', Close Up, 3 (1928), 66-69.
 2. Piscator also used material from a second 'Chinese' film, Der Sturm über Asien, see Wolf, Aufsätze, II, 27. The film had originally been entitled The Heir to Jenghis Khan. For details see P. Rotha, The film till Now (London, 1949), p.230; S. Kracauer, p.196; and a review by the Berlin correspondent, The Times, January 12, 1929, p.10.
 3. S. Tret'yakov, Brülle China!, translated by L. Lania (Berlin, 1929).
 4. Quoted from G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), p.993.

These newspaper reports referred to the shelling of Wanhsien by British gunboats (from which Tret'yakow developed the theme of his play) and to the later liberation of Wanhsien by Chian Kai-shek. Obviously the producer of the play is trying to create the impression of a united Chinese revolutionary front, whereas in reality, since Chiang's purge of the communists, no such force existed. The reality of the revolution had begun to develop into the myth of revolution, as Tret'yakow's play shows.

This play was based upon an incident that had occurred in September 1926,¹ when two British gunboats had been fired on from Wanhsien whilst trying to salvage two steamers that belonged to a British merchant. The British had replied to the Chinese attack with a systematic bombardment of the town of Wanhsien. The brutality of this retaliation had caused much anti-British feeling in Europe and increased Western concern about China's future.

Tret'yakow altered historical events slightly in order to contrast the conflicting sides and make the single incident representative of wider aspects of Sino-European relations. In Tret'yakow's play² the action develops after the accidental drowning of an American businessman by a Chinese boatman. The Chinese are forced to compensate for the American's death and are threatened with violence if they do not deliver the murderer to the gunboat captain. The Head Mandarin, who represents traditional Chinese passivity, submits to these demands and offers himself for execution as an act of appeasement. However, local outrage at the humiliation of Chinese by Europeans leads to a public demonstration,

1. See The Times, 7 September 1926, p.12. It has been suggested that Tret'yakow based his play upon an earlier incident in 1924 which involved American gunboats, see R. Berg-Pan, 'Mixing Old and New Wisdom: The "Chinese" sources of Brecht's "Kaukasischer Kreidekreis" and other works', German Quarterly, 48 (1975), 204-228. This would seem to be an error, since the American incident bears no resemblance to Tret'yakow's play, which was composed around a topical incident in 1926.
2. This discussion is based on the English translation, S. Tret'yakow, Roar China, translated by F. Polianovsa and B. Nixon (London, 1931).

which is countered by the naval bombardment. The first Chinese to fall is a monk, who has attached to his robes a prayer written on silk, which is said to give its bearer invulnerability. As the monk dies, so too does the ancient China of passivity, religious superstition and fatalism, whilst the mob rises united against the foreign oppressor.

The play was an unqualified success in Germany and, as Reifenberg rightly recognised, 'der Russe Tretjakow hat für die kommende Legende den Anfang gemacht'.¹ The play was also featured by Wsewolod Meyerhold's troop during guest performances in Berlin in 1930.

These plays show the politicisation of the German theatre during the 1920s. Though they deal with Chinese political themes, these themes are treated in a manner that makes them applicable to European conditions too. When the Chinese framework is removed, a universal political structure is revealed. The German playwrights Brecht and Wolf recognised this and composed Chinese theatrical parables, in part to effect an alienation of their message, and in part to disguise the political statement of their plays in order to avoid censorship.

Friedrich Wolf, who, along with Brecht, was the most notable theatrical spokesman for the extreme left in Germany at this time, had followed Chinese political developments with great interest. Prompted by the Russian films, by performances of Tret'yakov's play and by the communist party's programme of anti-imperialist propaganda, Wolf began work on his own 'Chinese' play, Tai Yang erwacht.² When he first planned the play, in 1930, it seems he intended to write a drama that would feature a figure who would be an activist counterpart to the romantic heroine of Klabund's Kreidekreis: 'Das Stück würde heißen Hai Tang erwacht

1. G. Rühle, p.992.

2. F. Wolf, Dramen, 6 vols (Berlin, 1960), III, 95-195.

... irgendeine psychologische Nutenrolle mache ich nicht'.¹ It has been assumed that this was the only source for Wolf's play,² but it should not be forgotten that there is a second Hai Tang in German literature. At the end of Döblin's Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun, the minor figure Hai Tang hovers between passivity and violent insurgence, and restates the main theme of the novel in the concluding lines: 'Stille sein, nicht widerstreben, kann ich es denn?'³ Wolf, in fact, takes up the debate that Döblin had left unresolved. The religious problem is now interpreted in a political manner, and the passive Hai Tang becomes the activist and revolutionary leader. That Wolf was also countering the traditional sentimental, saccharined image of China that existed in the West is also clear, as can be seen from an essay written some years later by the author:

Damals horchten wir auf. Dieses China der Arbeiter und Bauern schien doch ein anderes zu sein als jenes "Tsching-Tschang-Tschau"-China, das wir aus kleinen Nippesfiguren oder kitschigen Imitationen trippelnder Geischas und kopfwackelnder Mandarine kannten. 4

Despite Wolf's obvious confusion between China and Japan, it is clear what the popular image of China had been up to this time. It must be noted that Wolf does also add certain comic-grotesque features that are taken from this stock image of China, particularly in the representatives of the older generation. Yet even these figures serve a political function within the play; they are the forces of reaction, religious superstition and Confucian conservatism, and represent the ossified, fossilised China of the past.

In order to be able to present the modern China of political conflict, Wolf had to undertake a detailed study of conditions within the newly-industrialised cities, and familiarise himself with the structure of

1. F. Wolf, Briefwechsel (Berlin and Weimar, 1968), p.36.

2. Berg-Pan, p.209; G. Rühle, p.1063.

3. Döblin, Wang-lun, p.480.

4. F. Wolf, 'Weshalb schrieb ich "Tai Yang erwacht"?' in Aufsätze, II, 329-333 (p.329).

popular political movements in China. Much of his information was culled from contemporary newspaper reports and political pamphlets which deal with domestic and working conditions in China.¹ Of particular interest to Wolf was Malone's work, which described conditions in the silk filatures of Shanghai and referred to the organisation of trade unions:

I was told that at one time a trade union was organised by a Chinese woman worker. She was soon taken over by the Chinese employers as a sort of welfare worker ... In the opinion of the workers she looked after the employers' interests and not theirs ... Her volte face had rather disheartened the silk workers in Shanghai and discouraged any further attempts at organisation. 2

It is this figure around whom Wolf structures his theme of revolution. The conclusion of Malone's report is modified and Tai Yang again takes up the workers' cause which she had previously betrayed out of opportunism. But in Wolf's play Tai Yang does not represent simply an individual, personalised fate; she is, rather, a representative figure for the activity of the proletariat:

Diese Textilarbeiterin geht einen großen Weg vom dumpfen Triebmenschen, vom glücklichen Tier - sie wird von der kleinen Weberin die Geliebte des Direktors, aber ihrer Klasse entfremdet, europäisiert ... bis sie durch zwei starke Erlebnisse in den Befreiungskampf ihres Volkes hineingerissen wird und "erwacht" ... Das Alte (sic) China hat das "Glück", die Ruhe gesucht, die Ruhe des Einzelnen! Hier zeige ich das junge China, das über das Glück des Einzelnen das Glück aller stellt und sucht. Ob es gelingt, in Hai Tang erwacht das China erwacht zu zeigen? Das muß über die "Rolle" hinweg gelingen. Denn die "Rolle" dieser Hai Tang, das ist das zwischen Opportunismus und revolutionärer Tat hin- und hergezerrte 400 Millionenvolk China. 3

Wolf also intended to adapt this material into the form of a radio-play.

1. His main source was the anonymous translation of C. Malone, Das neue China und seine sozialen Kämpfe (Berlin, 1928). Other sources used were Mao Chi-chun, Chinese Economic Journal, 3 (1928), 819-825, and a report by A. Smedley in Frankfurter Zeitung, 16 January 1930. See Wolf, Dramen, III, 97.
2. C. Malone, New China (London, 1927), p.18.
3. Wolf, Briefwechsel, p.37.

China was already a topical subject of interest in this medium as well as in the theatre and cinema. Otto Zoff's Revolution in China¹ had been broadcast in 1929, whilst in 1932 Ehrenstein's novel Räuber und Soldaten² was adapted into a radio-play. Wolf's play was to be called Das Seidenkleid and was to deal with,

der Weg der chinesischen Seide vom Sammeln der
Coccons über die Fabrikhöhlen von Shanghai mit
ihrem ökonomischen und politischen Riesenkampf,
wie er dort heute ausgetragen wird, bis zum
Presseball Berlin. 3

At the centre of both of Wolf's plays stands Shanghai, which, since Chiang Kai-shek's massacre of the communists there, had become the martyrs' shrine. The inner workings of the town, its economic and social structure, and its class-war became paradigms for the structure of Chinese society, and of all capitalist societies. So contracted was the development from agrarian economy to industrialisation, with all its attendant problems, and so rapid the rise of the revolutionary forces within this newer China, that the communists saw Marx's prognostications on the course of history and social change being realised within their own lifetimes. Here was the living proof not only of the implicit laws of society, but also of the necessary historical development of that society.

In later reminiscences, Wolf refers to the inner political situation of China at the time he wrote Tai Yang erwacht:

Der Großangriff der japanischen Monopolherren und
Militärs [hattel] auf das politisch uneinige,
zerrissene Riesenland eingesetzt. Die große Regierungs-
partei der Kuomintang war völlig korrupt und konspirierte
mit dem angloamerikanischen Monopolkapital; sie führte
einen scheinbar "nationalen Krieg" gegen die Japaner;
die Hauptfront ihres Führers Tschiang Kai-shek aber war
gegen "die Linken" im eigenen Volk gerichtet, gegen die
Kommunisten und die fortschrittlichen Elemente, die eine
Bodenreform für die Millionen Armbauern und gerechte

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1. See Schwitzke, Das Hörspiel (Cologne and Berlin, 1963), p.445.
 2. See above, pp.134-142.
 3. F. Wolf, Briefe (Berlin and Weimar, 1969), p.124.

Löhne für die maßlos ausgebeuteten Kulis und Arbeiter forderten. In diesen Jahren zwischen 1928 bis 1932 fanden in den Bauernprovinzen und auch in den Städten, vor allem in der Millionenstadt Schanghai, zahlreiche Demonstrationen und Aufstände statt, die von dem General Tschiang Kai-shek mit Hilfe amerikanischer Waffen blutig niedergeworfen wurden. 1

Although this was written some twenty years after the events referred to, in order to refresh memories before performances of the play, which had by that time lost its obvious topicality, one notes an ideological interpretation of history that does not accord with an impartial record of the facts. For example, the kuomintang had endorsed the three principles set out by Sun Yat-sen, which were intended to deal with these specific points of land reform and greater distribution of wealth. Wolf certainly recognises the role played by Chiang Kai-shek, but then, after his slaughter of the communists in Shanghai in 1927, few could fail to identify him as the satanic embodiment of anti-communist principles.

Between the writing of the play and its first performance certain changes were made. The most obvious of these changes is that of the name of the central character, from Hai Tang to Tai Yang. It has been suggested² that this was done to give the name symbolic significance. If this were the case, one assumes that Wolf would have indicated this to his audience, since esoteric symbolism is not a usual feature of his style. It seems more likely that Wolf wished to avoid confusion with Klabund's figure, or with the tortured protagonist of Döblin's novel. Other changes have not been recorded, though many were suggested by Piscator in order to suit his style of production.³ These latter changes seem to have been of a thematic as well as a stylistic nature.

The play was premièred in the Wallner-Theater on 15 January 1931.

1. Wolf, Aufsätze, II, 329.

2. Berg-Pan, p.209.

3. See W. Pollatschek, Friedrich Wolf (Berlin, 1963), p.141.

This theatre had had to be specially hired by Piscator who, because of the increasing political pressure on left-wing propagandists and harassment by the police authorities, found that his work was no longer acceptable in the established theatre.

Whatever thematic changes had been made at Piscator's request, the final version of the play still retains the action as outlined by Wolf in his earlier letters. The play opens with a domestic scene at the home of Tai Yang in Shanghai. Within this framework, which is a micro-cosm of Chinese society, the background of civil war and political chaos is sketched. The older members of the family, to whom change is anathema, represent the traditional, Confucian China. The 'Urgroßtante', a mixture of witch and shrewd entrepreneur, is regarded by the common people as a religious medium. She cashes in on religious superstition by selling hallowed ground from the Yu-Chan mountain, and invests in the misery of existence by trading in opium. The chaotic political and social state of China is introduced by references to foxes which dig up the graves on the holy mountain. They are compared to the warring factions that are striving for domination of China and dismembering the traditional social pattern in the process. Within the household, the daughters represent a deviation from the traditional social code. The daughters' criticism of their parents is attributed to the pernicious influence of the West, which is seen as undermining Confucian filial piety. This generation conflict reinforces the impression of social fragmentation that is presented in this opening scene.

The message of revolution is preached by the cousin, Sen, who urges the daughters to rise up against the bosses and resist the exploitation that they suffer. But the people are not yet prepared to take this revolutionary step, since they fear the reprisals that follow any display of left-wing political sympathies. They remind Sen, 'daß letztes

Jahr zweihundert hier um 'nen Kopf kürzer wurden',¹ which is a clear reference to Chiang Kai-shek's anti-revolutionary measures of 1927. In this situation the people must simply accept exploitation.

The youngest daughter, Ma, has been offered improved working conditions by the boss, Tschu Fu, in return for sexual favours, but the older daughter, Tai Yang, refuses to allow her sister Ma to submit to this humiliation and offers herself as a substitute. The younger daughter, however, reluctant to be 'saved', suspects that her sister's altruism is merely a front for personal opportunism. In this way, Wolf depicts the vicious circle of exploitation and the struggle for survival in which the Chinese people are caught.

The traditional China, dominated by forces of conservatism and reaction, is symbolised by an old folk-song, 'Der Mangobaum':

Viele tausend Jahre steht der Mangobaum,
Tausend Affen schliefen in seinem Geäst,
Tausend Vögel bauten drin ihr Nest,
Solange wie das große Reich
Steht der Mangobaum ...

Viele tausend Jahre steht der Mangobaum,
Tausend Menschen lagen in seinem Schatten,
Bauern vom Reisfeld, Karawanen, Soldaten,
Über hundert Geschlechtern
Rauscht der Mangobaum ... 2

The tree symbolises the organic, hierarchical Empire, which shelters the generations as they move along life's journey. The revolutionaries, however, later append a new verse to the song, which indicates a new chapter in Chinese history, when the old order will disintegrate and the body of the state will mutate into a newer, revolutionary structure:

Einmal aber fährt ein Sturm
in den Mangobaum;
Einer der Äste saust nieder, ward zum Speer,

1. Wolf, Dramen, III, 107.

2. Wolf, Dramen, III, 109.

Einer ins Feuer fiel, ward zur Fackel,
 Einer zerschlug, ward der Schaft zum Gewehr,
 Hundert Gewehre, tausend Gewehre, zehntausend Gewehre
 Aus dem uralten Mangobaum ... 1

Western attitudes towards China are presented in caricatured form in the figures of representatives of the Red Cross Mission, who react to the appalling social conditions with platitudes on the value of suffering, and urge the people to greater self-sacrifice.

Against this background is set the fate of Tai Yang, as she moves from passivity to political activism. Her first reaction to the state of the world is to try to adapt to it in an opportunist manner. This she does by submitting to the boss's exploitation and by betraying her fellow-workers. The latter retain a vaguely mystical belief in natural, cyclical change, organic development and the eventual domination of the strong by the weak:

Schöne Tai, wird das immer so sein,
 Huhu?
 Die Erde ist ein großer schwacher Stein:
 Tschu Fu! 2

Having sold herself to the boss, TschuFu, Tai Yang has escaped the privations of her home life and the squalor of her past working conditions, but has also abandoned her family to its own fate.

As the political situation worsens in Shanghai and the threat of revolution increases, the mill owner, Tschu Fu, buys protection from the imperial powers. A Red Cross sign is placed on his factory, so that in times of strikes and disturbances foreign troops can occupy the premises under the pretence of protecting foreign nationals and medical teams.

1. Wolf, Dramen, III, 113.

2. Wolf, Dramen, III, 120. This is a reference to the Taoist belief in change:

Das Allerweichste auf Erden
 überholt das Allerhärteste auf Erden ...
 Daran erkennt man den Wert des Nicht-Handelns.

See R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, Tao te king (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.86, cf. pp.76, 121.

Failure to comply with this foreign wish will result in a withdrawal of foreign investment and a boycott of his goods. Thus it is shown that the mill owner is also a victim of imperial economic expansionism, and is unable to determine his own fate.

As the crisis draws near in Shanghai, Tai Yang returns to the town and dispenses small monetary gifts to her former workmates and family. She refuses to join the revolutionary cause that is gaining increasing support within the town, but, after witnessing the brutal beating of a mill worker, she offers to intercede on the women's part with Tschu Fu, the mill owner. Even though she is angered at Tschu Fu's indifference to her complaints, she is still the opportunist, and places her own interests and safety before the interest of the collective. She therefore agrees to leave the town with Tschu Fu in order to avoid the coming confrontation.

However, their attempts to escape are frustrated and she returns to the town, where she is forced to take a firm stand. A decisive change takes place in her when she helps to trap her former lover, the revolutionary leader, Wan, in order to try and avert the bloody conflict that is looming over the city. At the point of her ultimate betrayal of her own class, a change in political awareness occurs within Tai Yang.

Her assignation with Wan takes the form of ideological instruction, in which Wan relates the role of foreign political powers in China from 1840 to the present day. He lists the political injustices committed against China, and describes the growing revolutionary movement which will drive out the aliens and introduce true democratic rule. Wan speaks of his autodidactic political education:

Dann las ich von den Gleichnissen des Ku Hung-ming, vom 'Opiumkrieg', vom Taipingaufstand, von der Boxerrevolte, Hunderttausende Chinesen hatten für die Freiheit ihres Landes geblutet, seit hundert Jahren ... 1

Strange bedfellows though Ku-Hung-Ming and the Taiping rebels may be, since they represent almost diametrically opposed political philosophies (Wan may have read them, but it seems less likely that Wolf had), they serve to give the audience an impression of a century of growing discontent and increasing revolutionary activity.

Hearing Wan's political speech, Tai Yang realises the magnitude of the struggle, its historical dimensions, and the importance of the role to be played by her generation. However, at the moment of this realisation, Wan is arrested; she has effectively destroyed the uprising. Yet she still does not rise against the suppression. Forced to witness the torture of Wan, she begs him to betray the members of the movement, but seeing his determination not to betray the collective cause, she commits her first act of open resistance and cuts Wan's bonds.

Tai Yang now becomes the key to the success of the uprising. She offers to take pamphlets into the factory, which is central to the revolutionaries' strategy. Then she instigates revolution among her former workmates, leading them out onto the streets in open rebellion, at which point the play ends.

Contemporary critics' reviews of the play indicate that, although the play dealt with a Chinese political problem based upon documented facts, its appeal lay in its veiled comment upon the state of Germany, and the confrontation of right and left that was soon to reach its inevitable climax.

Alfred Kerr highlighted this in his review, when he spoke of the theme not as a specifically Chinese one, but as 'die Furchtbarkeit einer auf der Kippe stehenden Welt'. The figures, despite their exotic garb and Orientally stylised speech, were 'Abbilder von Gewerkschaften, Bauern, Soldaten, Kommunisten Europas'.¹ Reviewers refused to accept the reality of the

1. G. Rühle, pp.1064-1065.

Chinese background as anything more than an alienation device, or camouflage, behind which German characters, and a German situation were visible:

Herr Friedrich Wolf weiß von China nicht mehr als ich;
und das ist leider sehr wenig ... Diese Arbeiter,
Bauern, Soldaten des Fernen Ostens sind mir schon
verdächtig, ... weil sie schon mehr zu Berlin 0 zu
gehören scheinen. 1

Eloesser denies that the play owes anything to the historical facts of the Chinese revolution, and sees the setting simply as a method of presenting an interesting and entertaining statement upon the nature of the class struggle, and an incitement to revolution in Germany. Similarly, Ihering took little note of the Chinese background and theme, and regarded the play as a sociological analysis that transcended national boundaries.²

Although Wolf, as noted, had made a detailed study of aspects of life in the Shanghai mills, and had attempted to grasp the reality of the Chinese political and historical situation, he later admitted that he was conscious of using the play as a metaphor for contemporary Germany. Since the May Day confrontation of 1929, the communists and their sympathisers, among them Wolf and Piscator, had suffered considerable harassment by the police authorities. Wolf had to be circumspect when making any political statements that might offend these guardians of the state. Since the Communist Party was facing increasingly violent attacks, and members' tenacity and faith in the movement had begun to waver, Wolf wrote his play, as he says, not simply as a gesture of solidarity with the Chinese proletariat but also as a warning and encouragement to the split ranks of the German workers:

Sie verstanden, daß das Schicksal der Arbeiter Schanghais
im Grunde gar nicht so verschieden war von dem Schicksal
der Berliner Arbeiter. Während auf der Bühne der
kommunistische chinesische Funktionär Wan von den
Pinkerton-Garden Tschiang Kai-scheks gefoltert wurde,
ahnten die Zuschauer der Berliner Aufführung, was
ihnen selbst von seiten der SS bevorstand. 3

1. G. Rühle, p.1066.

2. G. Rühle, p.1067.

3. Wolf, Aufsätze, II, 332.

In order to underline the play's international validity, as a paradigm of the class struggle, Piscator added a prologue to the play, which formed a link between German conditions and the geographically remote setting of the play. As actors entered the stage, which did not have curtains, they changed into their costumes and made up whilst discussing the play that they were about to perform, comparing it to the domestic political situation. The actors then stepped forward and addressed the audience:

So run the battle-fronts through China to-day. And
the same battle-lines divide Germany - Right or Left
- you must commit yourself! 1

Piscator's contribution to the play, besides this prologue pointing out the topicality of the theme, lay, of course, in the particulars of the production. It seems that he was strongly influenced by the Oriental theatre, though it is difficult to assess the nature of the performance from the text of the play. C.D. Innes refers to Piscator's interest in the Chinese theatre and mentions that in this play there was the use of stylised, geometric make-up, masks, mimed scenes and long sections of dance:

The strength of the production was judged to be the
rhythmic movements of the weaving-women, the mime
of the execution, and the march of the demonstrators
with placards which culminated in a symbolic dance. 2

The choreography was under the direction of Jean Weidt, the 'rote Tänzer', who had made a long study of the Chinese theatre.

Similarly, J. Rühle stresses the scenic devices that reinforce the play's theme:

Der Terror auf den Straßen Schanghais ... ist ...
dokumentierte geschichtliche Wahrheit. So läßt
Piscator in der Pantomime erschießen, köpfen und
erdrosseln. In einer stummen Rolle von grandioser
Eindringlichkeit arbeitet der chinesische Henker
als Symbol der Gerechtigkeit der herrschenden
Klasse in China. Die Tendenz wird ... in der

1. Quoted from C.D. Innes, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre (Cambridge, 1972), p.118. Innes does not give a source for the prologue; it is not included in the published versions of the play.
2. Innes, p.117.

Pantomime gezeigt, im Film und im Plakat, und ständig ist alles auf der Bühne im Fluß: die Demonstrationen marschieren, der Ausschnitt einer Straße in Schanghai blitzt auf, und dies alles soll nur der Rahmen sein für die Spielhandlung. 1

This clearly shows the contribution that Piscator made to the production, particularly the use of techniques derived from the Chinese theatre, which he had probably become familiar with through attending the guest performances of the Meyerhold troop, where non-mimetic theatrical techniques developed from Chinese drama were employed. The visit of a Kibuki theatrical company also stimulated much interest in the Oriental theatre at this time.

It is difficult to describe Piscator's additions, since they are not based upon the text of the play. The executions referred to above do not occur in the play, and are included as comments on the action rather than as part of it. The films employed were those mentioned previously, from which Piscator took the most horrifying scenes of carnage and bloodshed to add a documentary background to the artistic creation. Piscator had previously used clips from these films to accompany stage action of other plays that did not have a Chinese background. For example, the conclusion of Ehm Welk's Gewitter über Gottland of 1927, with its medieval revolutionary theme, was set against a film background showing the street fighting in Shanghai. Similarly, Alfons Paquet's Sturmflut of 1926 had included excerpts from the same film to give an impression of world revolution.²

Wolf's continued interest in China can be seen in a second play dealing with the Chinese revolution, Von New York bis Schanghai,³ which, as the sub-title indicates, was 'eine politische Revue gegen den imperialistischen Krieg'. The choice of a second Chinese theme was clearly

1. J. Rühle, Theater und Revolution (Munich, 1963), p.148.

2. See J. Rühle, p.149 and G. Rühle, p.693.

3. F. Wolf, Hörspiele. Laienspiele. Szenen (Berlin and Weimar, 1965), pp.151-235.

a political expedient, as was the revue form. By 1932, when the play was written and performed, Wolf had had to leave the legitimate theatre because of Nazi threats and intimidation, and could only produce his plays in workers' theatres. Thus, the scale of his plays had to be reduced so as to require fewer actors, and a minimum of props and scenery. Wolf toured Germany with the play, producing it some eighty times before a total audience of 500,000.¹ It was staged for the last time on 25 February 1933, and was Wolf's last dramatic message to fellow Germans before the reign of terror set in.

Again, the Chinese background was taken from documented sources, which it communicated to its audience as a programme of political education. The play's theme was that of imperialism, the suppression of national interests and the exploitation of native communities. But, like Wolf's previous play, it served a dual role, since it was also meant to demonstrate to the audiences the nature of the struggle they were involved in, and the necessity for violent, revolutionary action to counter the threat that loomed over them. China as a political reality and China as a metaphor for German conditions merge in this play. Wolf stresses the need to disguise his message in Oriental form, since he could only receive permission to stage his plays if they did not outwardly, and explicitly, refer to German conditions and did not threaten to cause civil disturbance. Wolf quotes the example of Sun Yat-sen in this use of the dramatic form to disguise a political message and arouse political consciousness:

Von Sun Yat-sen erfahren wir in seiner Erinnerungsschrift "40 Jahre Revolutionär" [30 Jahre Revolution] wie er ganz im Anfang der Bewegung, um 1890, seine illegalen Parolen in die Form kultischer altchinesischer Spiele hüllte und in dieser Form seine Ideen unter großer Gefahr unter das Volk trug. 2

1. See Wolf, Hörspiele, p.153.

2. Wolf, Aufsätze, I, 281.

Only the use of a Chinese setting avoided police prosecution, as Wolf later recalls.¹ Clearly the police had as little understanding of literary and dramatic methods as the nineteenth-century censors did.

The play presents the same background of economic exploitation and imperialist expansionism as the earlier play had done. But whereas, previously, Wolf had depicted only the British, American and Japanese as the imperialist masters, he now introduced a German role. Germany did not, of course, have any concessions in China as these had been forfeited after the first world war, but German industrialists had tried to force a foothold in China, not least because of the worsening economic situation in Europe.

The significance of this development had been brought to the attention of the German communists by a report in the Oberländer Zeitung of 2 February 1932. In this article it was stated that a subsidiary branch of the Singen aluminium works was to be set up in Shanghai.² Machines had been transported from Germany, leaving the German operators unemployed. To the communists, this represented an economic war on two fronts: in Germany a lowering of the standard of living and a weakening of their position, and in China a broadening of the control by foreign capitalism and fascist rule.³

The play, or revue, consists of a sequence of loosely-linked scenes, many of which subdivide into the simultaneous representation of a situation common to all parts of the world. It opens with a call for solidarity and unity among the workers of the world. The contingent factors of race and nationality are pared away to reveal the common figure of the worker. As the coolie enters, he is asked why he is present in the play:

1. Wolf, Hörspiele, p.156.

2. Pollatschek, Friedrich Wolf, p.168.

3. Wolf, Hörspiele, p.153.

mit Chinesenmaske, anfangs sehr ruhig, überlegen:
 Was heißt Chinese? Nimmt Chinesenmaske ab, hält
Negermaske vor. Was heißt Neger? Was heißt Inder?
Nimmt die Maske ab. Ist ja alles nur 'ne ...
 Illusion! ... Man beutet euch nicht aus, weil ihr
 Japaner oder Inder, nicht weil ihr Neger und Chinesen
 - einfach - weil ihr euch weniger wehrt, raubt man
 euch den Lohn. 1

It is explained that the capitalists have moved their industries to China and other Asian locations because of the cheapness of labour in these under-developed countries and because of the recession in Europe. It is also explained that the industrialists hope to escape the political agitation of left-wing workers' groups that have impaired production and restricted profits in recent years in Europe. The industrialists believe that the Oriental workers will be less likely to disrupt production. To this a newspaper reporter replies with a reference to the violent confrontations between the weavers and Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai:

Sie hätten 1927/28 die riesigen Demonstrationen der Weber und Weberinnen hier in Schanghai und Schapei miterleben sollen, Herr Direktor, fünfhundert Tote auf den Straßen, und immer wieder demonstrierten sie, vornweg die Frauen, und immer wieder pfefferte Tschiang Kai-shek mit seinen Maschinengewehren hinein, buchstäblich Ströme von Blut flossen durch die Straßen Schanghais. 2

It is obvious that the Shanghai incidents of 12 April 1927 had become for the German communists a symbol of revolt and repression. But the events that have now become part of popular myth have been cosmetically improved to meet the propagandist's needs. The demonstration that followed Chiang Kai-shek's brutal purge was not led by willing women martyrs as is here suggested. They had been placed at the head of the demonstration, together with children, in an attempt to avert the possibility of Chiang firing into the crowd.

The Chinese workers are caught in a dilemma. They realise that by

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1. Wolf, Hörspiele, p.169.
 2. Wolf, Hörspiele, p.171.

taking work in the foreign factories they are depriving their Western counterparts of jobs, but if they do not take employment they and their families will starve. The author suggests that the only way to break out of this vicious circle of exploitation is to rise in revolt.

Other scenes portray the change from production of consumer goods to arms and gas-masks, under cover of secrecy. These arms and equipment are to be supplied to the Japanese and will be used against the Chinese themselves. This leads to an analysis of the Eastern political situation, in which Japan is shown as the imperial aggressor, China as the coveted jewel of imperial expansionist policy, and Russia as the defender of human rights and Chinese sovereignty. The Chinese coolies of Shanghai are the critical unknown factor in this equation of power politics. From the north Chiang Kai-shek is marching on the town, from the south the rebel army is approaching, and from the air the Japanese imperialists are attacking Shanghai. It is a moment of historical change, a decisive moment in the history of China and the history of the proletarian revolution. Again, the inner political organisation of 'red Shanghai' is exaggerated; in reality the communist party was weak and fragmented and its officials corrupt. The decline of the communist movement in Shanghai was inevitable.

In his play, Wolf depicts covert political activity centring on the communist functionary, Wang. The latter preaches resistance and revolution, and tries to rally his supporters and break their fatalism in order to mould them into an effective fighting force. He impresses upon them the power of strike action, which would lame the production of Japanese arms, which are to be used to subjugate them. But their efforts are countered by the declaration of martial law, under Japanese supervision. The right of assembly is suspended, passive resistance, strikes and sabotage are punishable by death. At this point it is felt necessary to indicate to the audience that these scenes are set in China, not in

Germany: 'dem Lande der Ruhe und Ordnung'.¹ The irony of such remarks was, of course, clear to all.

The play continues with scenes of rural life in China. The peasants are crippled by taxes levied by Chiang Kai-shek; their crops are stolen by foraging troops, and they are on the point of starvation. As in earlier scenes, the parallels between the Chinese and their German counterparts are made by the lowering and raising of masks to reveal German figures behind the Chinese exterior. The suffering of the people is answered by philosophers with calls to quietism and fatalistic acceptance:

Anhänger: Nur das Nichtwiderstreben, nur das Fernbleiben, nur die Gewaltlosigkeit wird den Menschen erlösen ... Genossen entfernt euch von der Straße, seht draußen die erhabene Natur, sie kennt nicht Klassenkampf noch Haß, haltet Einkehr in euch unter dem Wipfelgewölbe der Palmen, sucht euren Frieden mit dem All ... 2

This, the traditional Asiatic passive mentality, is seen as the greatest force of conservatism. It represents a return to the theme of Tai Yang erwacht and Döblin's Wang-lun, in which quietistic acceptance and violent activism are contrasted.

The final scene shows the mobilisation of the work-force in Shanghai.³ Wang, the functionary, is arrested by two Japanese soldiers, but he demonstrates to them that they too are only coolies in uniform and traitors to their own class and, therefore, instruments of their own suppression. The play closes with a call for a general strike to halt the production of arms. The workers are to cease being agents of imperialism and cogs in the wheel of capitalism. On this euphoric note the action ends, an anticipation, rather than a realisation, of an heroic victory.

1. Wolf, Hörspiele, p.181.

2. Wolf, Hörspiele, p.195.

3. Reports are read out by actors to document the action: Osloer Morgenblatt, 20 January 1932; Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung, 4 February 1932, The Times, 30 January 1932. See Wolf, Hörspiele, pp.200, 201, 209.

As has been mentioned, the play is a piece of propaganda not only against the political injustices of the treatment of China by external powers and existing social conditions within China, but also propaganda intended to draw attention to the suppression of workers' organisations in Germany. The capitalists are German, whilst the Japanese represent an authoritarian, brutal regime of suppression. Seen as a comment upon German conditions, the play is a call to halt the progress of right-wing political parties, which are seen as leading Germany towards war.

The state of Germany and China is compared, as political factions fight for political control. The depiction of Chinese conditions, though based upon documented facts, shows a strongly ideological interpretation. When this play was being performed in Germany, the revolutionary days of 1927 had long since passed in Shanghai. The few strikes that had subsequently occurred there had been organised by transport workers, and did not involve the industrial sector. The mass of the workers were unable to afford to strike, since they were still repaying loans that had been made to them on the occasion of the general strike in 1925. Where unrest did break out, it was usually a result of intimidation by communist terrorists and was not supported by the majority of the workers. The German myth of Shanghai communist martyrdom diverged further and further from any historical basis.

Similarly, the stress on Shanghai as the central key to the political control of China had proved to be invalid, and was a remnant of Soviet political strategy. By the end of the 1920s Russian influence was waning in China, not in terms of material supplies to the revolutionaries but in matters of tactics and strategy. It had been thought that a revolution could only be effective through a unification of the peasants and workers, and that the revolution would begin in the towns, the newly-developed centres of industry and production. But this was later

rejected by the Chinese communists as a faulty strategy, and they withdrew from the towns to concentrate their efforts on the rural areas. Thus, whilst in Germany it was still believed that the means of industrial production must first be seized in order to gain political control, the same theory was not applicable to Chinese conditions. When Wolf speaks of the need to activate the industrial work force, he is referring to Germany, not China. The Chinese historical background is used to create a legendary account of revolutionary heroism and tenacity. The communist vision of China was one of a successful class war, which they projected in dramatic form to try to inspire support for their own cause, and to warn against the political evil that was beginning to strangle German democracy.

The image of China as a social and political reality underwent a radical change during the course of the present century, a change that reflects differing political attitudes and sympathies in Germany. At the time of the decline of Wilhelminian Germany, China represented a social escape and a refuge from the political crises of the West. Despite the obvious signs of similar, yet more violent, social upheaval in China, this Empire was regarded as exemplifying the kind of social order and political stability that was required in Germany. The emerging chaos in China was disregarded by a generation of German authors who strove to find within Chinese culture a harmonious social code that integrated man as a social and spiritual being into a world-order that was both material and spiritual. This is the interpretation of the Confucian system, seen as the product of human reason and the rational expression of man's two roles, that is to be found in the writings of German authors during the first quarter of the present century. Confucianism represented a guide to social harmony, in its rule by an intellectual aristocracy, as well as a means of religious salvation. Whilst the attacks upon Western religions had turned its immutable truths into myths, Confucianism was felt to have retained its religious validity, since it made no claim to

be revealed truth, but was regarded as the functioning of the absolute through man's moral being. Within the Confucian system each individual recognised the validity of the social order as it spoke through him, not as it was imposed upon him by the authority of state institutions.

In stark contrast to such interpretations of Confucianism, one finds the communist response to China. To the communist authors and critics, Confucianism was the embodiment of the forces of conservatism, reaction and fatalism. It forced upon the individual a role in a social and economic order which he seemed powerless to resist. The social upheavals of the present century in China represented, for the communists, a realisation of Marxist theories of social change. From this, and Chiang Kai-shek's treachery, arose a myth of communist martyrdom and massive revolutionary vigour waiting to be released in China. As the communists' influence declined in Germany and the hope of revolution receded, these authors continued to preach their political message through the Chinese example. China became a metaphor for Germany and the political confrontations that were being played out in Germany.

One finds within these changing interpretations of China a range of views that accord with their authors' opinions on the state of Germany. The suggested solutions to the political chaos within China are, more accurately, statements upon Western society. China is never regarded entirely as a separate entity, but rather as a parallel to Europe or Germany.

CHAPTER VI : BERTOLT BRECHT : THE CONFUSION OF TERMS

That Brecht was an eclectic author is indisputable. General studies of his use of disparate sources have been made,¹ which document the wide range of his reading and his 'borrowings' from various literary and non-literary traditions. Speaking through the figure of Herr Keuner, Brecht seeks approval of his creative method by a comparison with the ancient Chinese sage Tschuang-tse:

'Heute', beklagte sich Herr K., 'gibt es Unzählige, die sich öffentlich rühmen, ganz allein große Bücher verfassen zu können, und dies wird allgemein gebilligt. Der chinesische Philosoph Dschuang Dsi verfaßte noch im Mannesalter ein Buch von hunderttausend Wörtern, das zu neun Zehnteln aus Zitaten bestand. Solche Bücher können bei uns nicht mehr geschrieben werden, da der Geist fehlt. 2

Brecht's reference is not entirely correct:

Unter meinen Worten sind neun Zehntel Gleichnisreden
... Unter meinen Worten sind sieben Zehntel Zitate
von Worten, die von andern schon früher ausgesprochen sind. 3

but demonstrates the similarity of their techniques. This same source also highlights, on a superficial level, the difficulties in trying to assess the use of Chinese material by Brecht. Tschuang-tse offers the following analogy to exemplify the reasons for his use of parables and quotations:

Gerade wie ein Vater nicht selbst den Freier macht
für seinen Sohn. Denn es ist besser, wenn ein Sohn
von einem andern gelobt wird als von seinem Vater. 4

Similarly, Brecht's Herr Keuner, speaking of style, says:

Er sollte zitierbar sein. Ein Zitat ist unpersönlich.
Was sind die besten Söhne? Jene welche den Vater
vergessen machen! 5

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1. R. Grimm, Bertolt Brecht und die Weltliteratur (Nürnberg, 1961); H. Mayer, Bertolt Brecht und die Tradition (Munich, 1961).
 2. Bertolt Brecht, Gesammelte Werke, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), XII, 379-380. All further references are in the abbreviated form, Werke, XII, 379-380.
 3. R. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.285.
 4. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, p.285.
 5. Werke, XII, 408.

Both express the author's wish to be regarded as a communicator, whose message is more important than his personality. Each parallels the relationship of author and work to that of father and son; but does this necessarily prove Brecht's dependence on the Chinese original? Further, if one accepts that the image is borrowed from the Chinese, of what significance is that for an understanding of Brecht's work? The traditions that Tschuang-tse refers to are not those that Brecht envisages as part of the needed process of reform. Therefore, any similarity is purely formal or stylistic, and of only minor importance.

It has been generally assumed that the frequent use of proverbs in Brecht's work is styled upon the Chinese. V. Klotz spoke of 'die von Brecht gern zitierten altchinesischen Sprüchen'.¹ B.A. Woods has since shown that this is not the case.² Similar assumptions have been made about Brecht's understanding of Chinese philosophy. Brecht, we are assured, 'was ... deeply influenced in various ways by three Chinese philosophers - Confucius (Mencius), Lao-Tzu and Mo-Tzu'.³ In what ways he was influenced is not explained, nor why he should not have been equally attracted to the writings of Tschuang-tse and Lieh-tse. Esslin speaks of Brecht's attachment to a Confucian vision, 'when the chaos had been banished from the world, then there would be friendliness and Confucian courtesy'.⁴ Yen and li are certainly Confucian ideals, but Brecht's view of the world contradicts the Confucian vision of social reform. Indeed, all Brecht's recorded references to Confucius are consistently critical of the

1. V. Klotz, Bertolt Brecht. Versuch über das Werk, third edition (Bad Homburg, 1967), p.124.
2. B.A. Woods, 'The Function of Proverbs in Brecht', Monatshefte, 61 (1969), 49-57; 'Unfamiliar Quotations in Brecht's Plays', Germanic Review, 46 (1971), 26-42.
3. P. Bridgwater, 'Arthur Waley and Brecht', German Life and Letters, NS 17 (1964), 216-232 (p.218).
4. M. Esslin, Brecht. A Choice of Evils (London, 1970), p.220. Cf. pp. 171, 196.

inadequacies of Confucian philosophy because it fails to recognise the material basis of society and thus excludes the possibility of genuine social change.

One finds similarly vague assertions of the influence of Chinese poetry on Brecht's lyrical style, particularly that of his mature period. Mayer states: 'die späteren Gedichte sind ohne das chinesische Vorbild nicht zu denken'.¹ Similarly, Grimm sees 'über seinem späteren lyrischen Werk das Leitbild der chinesischen Dichtung',² whilst Esslin thinks that Waley's translations are significant and that Brecht's 'most successful later verse is clearly modelled on them'.³ This is also maintained by Hildebrand, Böschenstein, Geißler and Müller⁴ in their discussions of Brecht's lyric, though without any supporting evidence.

More recently, the question of Chinese influence has been examined in some detail. Tatlow, Tracy and Berg-Pan have pointed to certain similarities between Brecht and the Chinese philosophers,⁵ whilst Tatlow⁶

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1. Mayer, Brecht und die Tradition, p.103.
 2. Grimm, Brecht und die Weltliteratur, p.63.
 3. Esslin, Brecht. A Choice of Evils, p.101.
 4. A. Hildebrand, 'Bert Brechts Alterslyrik', Merkur, 20 (1966), 952-962 (p.953); B. Böschenstein, 'Die Dunkelheit der deutschen Lyrik des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts', Deutschunterricht, 21 (1969), 51-66 (p.62); R. Geißler, 'Zur Struktur der Lyrik Bertolt Brechts', Wirkendes Wort, 8 (1957-58), 347-352 (p.352); J. Müller, 'Zu einigen späten Spruchgedichten Brechts', Orbis Litterarum, 20 (1965), 66-81 (p.66).
 5. A. Tatlow, 'China oder Chima?', Brecht Heute. Jahrbuch der internationalen Brecht-Gesellschaft, 1 (1972), 27-47; G.L. Tracy, 'Bert Brecht und die chinesische Philosophie', Universitas, 30 (1975), 745-756; R. Berg-Pan, 'Confucius in Modern Europe: On the Image of China in Brecht's work', German Life and Letters, NS 28 (1975), 387-395; R. Berg-Pan, 'Mixing Old and New Wisdom: The "Chinese" sources of Brecht's "Kaukasischer Kreidekreis" and other works', German Quarterly, 48 (1975), 204-228.
 6. A. Tatlow, Brechts chinesische Gedichte (Frankfurt am Main, 1973); 'Stalking the Dragon: Pound, Waley, and Brecht', Comparative Literature, 25 (1973), 193-211; 'Towards an Understanding of Chinese Influence in Brecht', Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift, 44 (1970), 363-387.

has capably demonstrated the limited significance of Chinese poetry for the development of Brecht's lyrical style.

The most obvious use of Chinese material in Brecht's work is to be found in the fragmentary Tui-Roman¹ where he employs the Chinese metaphor to satirise the Weimar Republic, its inefficient rule and the usurpation of power by Hitler. The parallel between the two Empires (the novel, as outlined in the notes, was to open in Imperial Germany before the founding of the Republic) leads to amusing comparisons, and is one of the more successful and genuine alienation devices in Brecht's work. The comparison of the two vast Empires is not, of course, new and had been a familiar device in the nineteenth century. Brecht, however, does not use the technique to avoid too obvious criticism, but to place his explicit criticism in an amusing, aesthetic form.

The comparison between China and Germany can be found earlier, for example in Otto Fischer's pamphlet, China und Deutschland,² and in Klabund's fairy-tales. Brecht's comparison is not with the political reality of contemporary China, but rather with the ancient China of the Confucian era, 500 B.C. Brecht variously refers to the setting of the story as 'Chima' (sic) and 'Das Reich der Mitte', but the parallel between ancient China and Germany of the Weimar Republic is unambiguous.

Brecht adopts the attitude of the Chinese philosopher or historian. For example, the opening of one projected section of the work reads:

Der Kaiser schlief schlecht. Die Zeiten waren vorüber,
von denen bei den Klassikern steht: sie sind glücklich.
Die Regierenden haben nichts zu tun. 3

This is a common situation to the Chinese classical philosophers, who

1. Werke, XII, 587-727.

2. O. Fischer, China und Deutschland (Münster, 1927), pp.72-73.

3. Werke, XII, 595.

lived at a time of social fragmentation, when social and political stability had degenerated into chaos. Each looks back to a former age, and some fabled utopia, which they try to direct the people back to through their teachings. Thus Confucius looks back to the ideal state under the Emperor Chou, Me-ti refers to the Emperor Yu, and the Taoists have the legendary Emperors of antiquity. The ideal of the inactive ruler, who emerges when the whole of the world is in harmony with itself, is of Taoist derivation. One reads, for example, in the Lieh-tse of the ideal ruler:

Er ordnet nichts, und doch ist nichts verwirrt, er
redet nichts, und alles glaubt von selber, er bessert
nichts, und alles geht von selber. 1

The comparison with ancient China continues. The past harmony is lost because there is no unanimity of thought: '... das Entstehen so vieler Gedanken und Redereien im Lande auf gewisse innere Schäden hinwies.'² The parallel is with the proliferation of philosophical schools in China, each of which claimed the correct philosophy for the re-attainment of the former utopian state. In Brecht's work this is equated with liberalism or pluralism, which he points to as a precursory phase to fascism.

The figure of the Emperor is, then, partly borrowed from the figures to be found in the Chinese Classics, for example the Emperor in the Lieh-tse:

Der Herr der gelben Erde saß auf dem Throne fünfzehn
Jahre lang ... Aber er ward bekümmert ...; er ward
betrübt, also daß seine Gefühle sich verwirrten ...
Und so gab er auf seine tausend Gedanken ... 3

This is the Taoist ideal of rule by inactivity and non-intervention, rather than by imposition.

1. R. Wilhelm, Liä Dsi (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.88. Cf. R. Wilhelm, LAOTSE (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.18.
2. Werke, XII, 595.
3. Wilhelm, Liä Dsi, p.47.

Brecht parodies this naïve ideal; his Emperor believes all questioning is a sign of some disorder in the body, personal and politic: "In einem ganz gesunden Körper", pflegte er zu sagen, "entstehen überhaupt keine Gedanken!"¹ The Empire is in disarray, which is the cultural background against which all classical Chinese philosophy is to be viewed. The Chinese philosopher's role is to explain the cause of the political chaos and suggest some means of reform. This is paralleled in Brecht's work where the theme is developed by adapting certain episodes taken from Döblin's Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun. The Emperor summons the Tashi Lama to advise him as to how to rid the Empire of the political chaos.² The Tashi Lama's advice, as recorded in the notes, does not appear to be particularly relevant:

Ein großes Aufatmen geht durch den Sitzungssaal, als der Taschi Lama seinen Grund der Verwirrung bekannt gibt. (Die Unordnung der Wörter!) 3

That Brecht was later to develop this into a major theme of the work is clear from other preparatory notes: 'Die Zerrüttung Chinas kommt daher, daß die Wörter in Unordnung gekommen sind (Konfutse)'.⁴ This problem was then to be solved by the fascists:

Die Tuis unter der Herrschaft des Hu-ih. Teils in der Verbannung, teils im Reich der Mitte. Die Verwirrung der Begriffe ist nunmehr durch den Hu-ih beseitigt. 5

It seems that Brecht was to examine this 'confusion of terms' in order to demonstrate the disparity between such abstract concepts as freedom and the reality to which they are applied: 'Politische Freiheit bei ökonomischer Unfreiheit: Das ist der Grund der Verwirrung'.⁶ This central

1. Werke, XII, 595.

2. Werke, XII, 598-602. Cf. A. Döblin, Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun (Olten and Freiburg, 1960), pp.275-363.

3. Werke, XII, 590.

4. Werke, XII, 612

5. Werke, XII, 594.

6. Werke, XII, 590.

problem of Confucian and all Chinese philosophy is not further expanded here, other than in this Marxist application, but it is much in evidence in Brecht's other work.

The significance of the theory of the confusion of terms within Confucianism can be seen in the Analechts. When asked what must first be undertaken in order to improve the world and create a well-ordered society, Confucius replied: 'Sicherlich die Richtigstellung der Begriffe'.¹ By this he meant that things must be made to accord with the concept attached to them, both in the natural world and in the ethical sphere. When asked about the right principle of government, Confucius replied by suggesting a rectification of terms: 'Der Fürst sei Fürst, der Diener sei Diener; Der Vater sei Vater, der Sohn sei Sohn'.² In the Tui-Roman Brecht parodies this seemingly naïve view and the conservatism that it implies in its vision of a rigidly static society. However, in other references to the Confucian theory Brecht shows a recognition of its validity. In the Tui-Roman it is the 'Tuis' who remove the confusion of terms by introducing an authoritarian regime.

It seems that the 'Tuis' were also modelled on figures to be found within ancient China. The social fragmentation within China brought a proliferation of philosophical schools. Wilhelm describes this situation:

Die staatsmännischen Kreise beschränkten sich auf die Durchführung einer opportunen Realpolitik. Die Grundsätze von der Macht der Moral als Staatspolitik waren in Vergessenheit geraten ... Wie es häufig in solchen Dekadenzeiten zu sein pflegt, war ein gewisser Schimmer intellektueller Regsamkeit über das Ganze gebreitet. 3

Brecht obviously recognised this similarity with the cultural life and

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1. R. Wilhelm, Kungfutse. Gespräche (Düsseldorf and Cologne, 1972), p.131.
 2. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.125.
 3. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.12.

political turmoil of the Weimar Republic. Brecht may also have had Mencius in mind when he invented his 'Tui' caste. One reads in Waley that Mencius saw society divided into two classes:

'Those who are fed' and 'those who produce food'.
The gentlemen, 'those who are fed', apart from their function as rulers, for which they are of course separately paid, have two claims on the community: they set a pattern of domestic morality and act as custodians of the Way of the Former Kings, 'that those who come afterwards may be able to learn it'. 1

This is also the function of Brecht's 'Tuis', who act as the guardians of culture and civilisation and ensure the continuity of tradition, by which they also perpetuate the political injustices inherent within the political system. The Chinese parallel can be further confirmed by reference to Waley's description of Mencius:

His claim to be supported at public expense was therefore threefold: as an old man, as a 'mind-worker' (an intellectual) and as a hsien [Sage Minister] capable of guiding a monarch into the path of True Kingship. 2

Brecht also defines his 'Tuis' as 'Kopfarbeiter (Intellektuellen)',³ and, in Turandot, as the privileged class who rule the state:

Sen: ... Fünfzig Jahre habe ich davon geträumt, selbst zu der großen Bruderschaft zu gehören, die sich der Tuis nennt - nach den Anfangsbuchstaben von Tellekt-Uell-In. Denn nach ihren großen Gedanken geht alles vor sich im Staat, sie leiten die Menschheit. 4

But, apart from this initial comparison of the two Empires and the parallels between the 'Tuis' and the Chinese philosophical schools, Brecht's work has nothing to do with China and uses no Chinese material.

1. A. Waley, Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China (London, 1946), p. 156. Brecht knew this work in the first edition of 1939. He also had his own copy of the translation, Lebensweisheit im alten China, translated by F. Meister-Weidner (Hamburg, 1947).
2. Waley, Three Ways of Thought, p.157.
3. Werke, XII, 675.
4. Werke, V, 2203.

The Chinese background is simply a clever disguising of German history as Germany moved from Imperial rule, through the bunglings of the Weimar Republic into the fascist era.¹ It is an indictment of a brand of liberalism that proclaims political freedom whilst denying economic freedom to the populace. As such, it may also be regarded as a criticism of Confucian philosophy which was based upon similar political theories to those that introduce fascism into Brecht's China.

The 'Tuis' also feature in Brecht's Turandot, which he wrote after seeing a performance of Gozzi's version whilst in Moscow in 1932,² having previously been asked by Carola Neher to write a version of the play for her to star in.³ There is little of the original play retained in Brecht's adaptation; only the use of the riddles to find a husband for the princess Turandot appears to have been borrowed. In Brecht's version, the potential suitors are asked to explain how vast stocks of cotton have disappeared from the market after an exceptionally good harvest. From this an absurd situation develops. The Emperor has bought up all the available stocks of cotton and is holding them in secret warehouses until the market price has been inflated. If the suitor explains the reasons for the shortage of cotton, and the growing unrest in the Empire, he also necessarily incurs the Emperor's displeasure. Meanwhile, the 'Tuis' concoct elaborate arguments that seek to explain the causes of the economic crisis without destroying their master's, the Emperor's, credibility. Brecht adapts the tale of the recalcitrant princess into an analysis of a capitalist society that is supported by liberalism. The play's Chinese setting is of no great importance.

1. For further information on this work as a political critique of the Weimar Republic see Brecht's Tui-Kritik, edited by W.F. Haug (Karlsruhe, 1976).
2. B. Brecht, Tagebücher 1920-1922. Aufzeichnungen 1920-1954, edited by H. Ramthun (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), p.217.
3. Werke, V, 3* (Asterisked pages are found at the end of the volume).

A similarly misleading indication of Brecht's dependence on Chinese models can be found in his fragmentary Me-ti/Buch der Wendungen.¹ Me-ti, it seems, was the Chinese philosopher who most impressed Brecht when he began his study of Chinese philosophy which, we are told,² coincided with his first readings of Marxist theory. That the majority of the ancient Chinese philosophical systems are wholly incompatible with communist theory did not appear to trouble Brecht. The Chinese systems are all based upon a conception of a feudal, aristocratic, hierarchical state and discuss the ordering of affairs within this structure. The Chinese view of change is, therefore, change within a static state and is based upon a reactionary theory of the consolidation of a fixed social structure. The Chinese deal with the formal aspects of the organisation of this state structure, within which the individual will develop his natural role according to his prescribed position. This is the very antithesis of Brecht's political philosophy which has as its prime postulate the determinant relationship between morality and the economic basis of human relations within the social structure. The society that the Chinese envisage is the conservative view of social organisation that Brecht consistently attacks in his writings. However, when one replaces the cultural aspects of the Chinese view of reform by the economic aspects of Brecht's Marxist view of society, there emerges a similarity between the systems. Inherent in both philosophies is a basic humanism, a belief in and appreciation of human goodness, which will flourish when the conditions of the social world are rightly ordered. Nevertheless, the differences between Brecht's view of the required changes in society and the Chinese reverence for tradition make much of Chinese philosophy alien to the German author's political creed.

1. Werke, XII, 415-578.

2. Werke, XII, 1.

Brecht claims that he translated his Me-ti from an English adaptation of the original:

Das Buch der Wendungen ist unter Benutzung einer englischen Übersetzung aus dem Chinesischen von Charles Stephen ins Deutsche übertragen worden. Es gehört nicht zu den klassischen Büchern der chinesischen Antike, wenngleich sein Kern von Mo Di stammt. 1

This is pure invention on Brecht's part. There is no Buch der Wendungen in Chinese, but there is a Buch der Wandlungen (I King, Book of Changes). This work, however, does not exist in an English translation by Charles Stephen, nor does it have any connection with Mehist philosophy. Yet it is the work that Brecht uses as a partial model for his Me-ti, as Esslin has pointed out.² Brecht's work is in part a parody of the Chinese Book of Changes. This can be seen in the differences in the titles of the original work and Brecht's work, which indicate a radically different philosophical attitude. The original Chinese book is an oracular work or book of divination edited by Confucius, and is an example of the irrational religious mysticism that Brecht consistently rejects in his work. The Chinese work is based upon a belief in fate, and links human destiny with cosmic changes. Man is regarded as part of a greater reality, and his fate is seen as fluctuating according to the constellation of cosmic forces. Before undertaking any action, he must consult the oracular book to find the propitious moment. Such views are rejected by Brecht, often by ridiculing a belief in the social processes as comparable to laws of change inherent in natural phenomena, as in Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe.³ The changes that Brecht visualises are of human origin, the propitious moment is that prescribed by political expediency.

1. Werke, XII, 419.

2. M. Esslin, 'Brecht's "Twists and Turns"', Encounter, (August, 1966), 58-62 (p.58).

3. Werke, II, 720.

The Chinese Book of Changes can, therefore, only be regarded as an inverted model for Brecht's work.

That Brecht's work is derived from Me-ti is also only partially true. It is certainly not a translation of the Chinese Me-ti, nor are there any direct quotations from the original. The Chinese work is to be regarded simply as a formal model for the propagation of Brecht's views, which have only occasional similarities with the original.

Brecht was obviously familiar with the historical role of Mehism within the Chinese philosophical tradition, as he notes in the introduction to his Me-ti:

Die Lehre Mo Dis ist nach ihrer fast völligen Verdrängung durch die Konfuzianer im letzten Jahrhundert wieder in den Vordergrund getreten, da einige ihrer Elemente an gewisse westliche philosophische Strömungen erinnerten und fast modern anmuten. 1

This is an accurate assessment of Mehism's standing within the Chinese philosophical tradition. The rediscovery of Me-ti is usually attributed to the vaguely socialist tone of his philosophy, which was adopted by Chinese reformers towards the end of the nineteenth century. However, Me-ti's socialism is hardly similar to Brecht's.

For Brecht, the Chinese work provided a formal model rather than a valid system of political thought. This model is similar to the Confucian Analects: both use aphorisms, anecdotes, epigrams, and invented conversations to communicate a philosophy that is practical, not theoretical. In this, they conform with Brecht's view of philosophy as a 'Verhaltenslehre', rather than abstract thought:

Die Philosophie lehrt richtiges Verhalten. Zu diesem Zweck beschreibt sie erstens menschliches Verhalten und zweitens kritisiert sie es. 2

1. Werke, XII, 419.

2. Werke, XX, 127.

Brecht's Me-ti and the Chinese original both present such a philosophy. They are illustrative of human ethics, rather than being rationally argued ethical philosophies developed from initial logical premises. The basic tenets are evident in both works, but they are demonstrated through comparisons of human action, communicated by the reader's recognition of the point illustrated, rather than being stated explicitly as a basic premise. From the numerous illustrations, the reader must deduce the system that the philosopher suggests. In this way, the presentation of a philosophical system is raised to a literary work, which is the quality of Taoist, Mehist and Confucian writings that most attracted Brecht.

The similarities with Brecht's own philosophy are vague, but one can illustrate certain affinities between him and Me-ti. Presumably Brecht had first become familiar with Mehism through Waley's Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China¹ and, despite the rather critical treatment given it in this work, later obtained a copy of the German translation of the Me-ti.² That Brecht valued certain aspects of the Me-ti can be seen in the, perhaps trivial, observation that it was one of the few works that Brecht took with him during his period of exile.³

One must, however, note that there are many facets of Mehism that are at complete variance with Brecht's philosophy. Me-ti is a theist, and believes in divine intervention in human affairs; he also holds to a primitive belief in demonology and the rule of spirits over men's lives. However, seemingly inconsistently, he excludes all belief in fate or predeterminism and places the regulation of human affairs in men's hands.

1. Waley, Three Ways of Thought, pp.163-185.
2. A. Forke, Mé ti des Sozialethikers und seiner Schüler philosophische Werke, supplementary volume to Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen, 23-25 (1922).
3. Brecht, Arbeitsjournal 1938-1955, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), I, 73.

But, above all, his teachings are aimed at practical state reform and are to be judged by utilitarian standards:

Die Fragen, welche unsern Philosophen am meisten interessieren, sind nicht die nach dem Wesen der Welt und der Natur der Dinge, sondern diejenigen, wie der Mensch als Staatsbürger und als Individuum sein Leben einzurichten hat. 1

In matters of political organisation, Me-ti believed in the principles of the use of the most able, universal brotherhood, mutual love, pacifism and frugality. In matters of personal ethics, he also applies a utilitarian standard:

Er gründet [seine Ethik] nicht auf ein unwandelbares Sittengesetz, einen kategorischen Imperativ, sondern utilitarisch auf Nützlichkeits- und Zweckmäßigkeitserwägungen und fragt daher stets nach den Wirkungen der sittlichen Vorschriften auf die menschliche Gesellschaft und das Staatsleben. 2

However, the claims that Me-ti represents an older form of socialism are dismissed by Forke:

Er will keineswegs die sozialen Klassen beseitigen ... denkt nicht an die Aufhebung oder Beschränkung des Privateigentums und tritt nicht für den Klassenkampf ein. 3

Although Me-ti is not a precursor of a doctrine of equality, he does approach one aspect of Brecht's political doctrine, that of the need for universal love.

Me-ti's work also has a modern formal quality: the author attempts to construct a rational method of argumentation, termed by Forke 'Dialektik', which has a superficial similarity with the Hegelian system, as Forke⁴ and Needham⁵ have pointed out. Thus one reads in Me-ti: 'Wenn man außer den Dingen, die so sind, auch etwas bejaht, das noch

1. Forke, Mê-ti, p.45.

2. Forke, Mê-ti, p.51.

3. Forke, Mê-ti, p.73.

4. Forke, Mê-ti, p.86.

5. J. Needham, Science and Civilisation in China, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1956), I, 199.

nicht so ist, so erklärt sich das aus: Induktion aus den Dingen'.¹

This has a similarity with Brecht's explanation of the dialectic: 'So ist dem Denkenden der Begriff der Knospe schon der Begriff von etwas, was sich bestrebt, nicht das zu sein, was es ist'.² J. Schickel has discussed these similarities between Me-ti and the Hegelian dialectic and demonstrated the differences.³

The Mehist dialectic is in fact wrongly termed, since it is simply an investigation of the problem of logic and language, and a development of the theory of the confusion of terms. In the Me-ti one reads:

Was nun das Verhältnis der allgemeinen Ansicht zur Wirklichkeit anbetrifft, so werden vier Fälle unterschieden: die allgemeine Ansicht stimmt mit der Wirklichkeit überein, oder sie stimmt nicht überein, oder von zwei Sätzen ist der eine nicht genügend motiviert oder er ist falsch. 4

This problem is summed up as follows: 'Die Schwierigkeit des Operierens mit Kategorien wird erklärt durch: Gattung und Art'.⁵ Brecht demonstrates the first part of the problem, that of the relationship of opinion and reality, by examining the sentence, 'Der Regen ist gut',⁶ showing that the statement is inadequate and ambiguous. The second aspect of the problem, that of 'Gattung und Art', is employed by Brecht in the following way, using the sentence 'Holz ist Holz':

Der Satz 'Holz ist Holz' kann sich nützlich machen, aber nur, solange er vorsichtig gebraucht wird. Wenn ich ein Haus aus Holz bestelle, kann ich ihn gegen jeden Baumeister verwerten, der mir ein Haus aus Stein abliefert. Dann sage ich: 'Holz ist Holz, Eisen ist nicht Holz'. Aber das Holz kann aus Holz und sehr schlecht sein, und der Baumeister kann sagen: 'Holz ist Holz'. 7

1. Forke, Mê-ti, p.86.

2. Werke, XII, 493.

3. J. Schickel, 'Dialektik in China', Der Monat, 18 (1966), 81-88.

4. Forke, Mê-ti, p.87.

5. Forke, Mê-ti, p.425.

6. Werke, XII, 434.

7. Werke, XII, 548-549.

This can be said to be an application of the Mehist theory:

Vergleicht man zwei Arten miteinander, so sucht man zu ermitteln, ob sie einander gleich oder verschieden sind. Von Gleichheit und Verschiedenheit gibt es verschiedene Arten: man unterscheidet die Gleichheit des Wesens, der Substanz, der Beziehungen, der Art und ebenso die Ungleichheit unter demselben Gesichtspunkt. 1

Brecht applies this theory to the practical world, and warns against the imprecise use of language. One can point to other examples in Brecht that go beyond the formal, logical problem of the use of language and develop an ideological argument from it. This can be seen in Brecht's discussion of the sentence 'Bauer ist Bauer', in which he examines what Me-ti referred to as the 'Gleichheit und Verschiedenheit der Beziehungen':

Mi-en-leh entdeckte, daß in Su wie überall die Erscheinung 'Der Bauer' in so verschiedener Art vorkam, daß diese Erscheinung zu bestimmten Vorgängen sich ganz entgegengesetzt verhielt. Er bestimmte diese Verschiedenheit, die das verschiedene Verhalten ausmachte, als eine Verschiedenheit des Besitzes. 2

The Mehist theory is here employed to support a Marxist view of the world. It demonstrates the fluidity and impreciseness of terms, in a manner that reflects the Chinese philosophical doctrine of the rectification of terms as a prerequisite for social stability.

Brecht's use of other material from Me-ti is very limited. One can point to similarities in their views; Me-ti, for example, dismisses the belief in fatalism:

Als Yü, T'ang, Wên und Wu die Welt regierten, sagten sie: 'Wir müssen machen, daß die Hungrigen zu essen und die Frierenden Kleidung haben, daß die Erschöpften Ruhe finden und daß Ordnung an Stelle der Verwirrung tritt. Darauf erlangten sie Ruhm und Ansehen in der Welt. Wie kann da von Schicksal die Rede sein? Es war nur ihre eigene Kraft. 3

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1. Forke, Mé-ti, p.88.
 2. Werke, XII, 494.
 3. Forke, Mé-ti, p.389.

Brecht reduces this to the simple: 'Das Schicksal des Menschen ist der Mensch'.¹

But one must avoid making too obvious comparisons between Me-ti and Brecht. Grimm, for example, says: 'Man braucht nur die Überschriften der einzelnen Kapitel zu betrachten ...' and refers to 'Geltendmachung der Gleichmäßigkeit ... also [das] Ideal der Gleichheit'.² This is demonstrably false: within the Mehist system 'Gleichmäßigkeit' does not mean 'Gleichheit', it means a form of totalitarian government, and the introduction of a single state authority and standard that is to be maintained by repressive, punitive means.³ As Forke points out, 'das bedeutet aber nicht Gleichheit der Menschen, sondern ihrer Ansichten'.⁴ Such views may be attributable to Brecht in his middle period, when he believed in the need to subordinate oneself to party authority, rather than a state system, but such views had been modified by the time he wrote his Me-ti.

Only the formal outline of a practical, applicable, pragmatic philosophy is retained by Brecht from the original, as can be seen in the following quotation:

Der Meister Mê-tse sprach: 'Worte, welche zu Handlungen führen können, mag man beständig äußern, aber wenn sie keine Handlungen im Gefolge haben, so muß man nicht ewig davon reden. Wenn man sie so behandelt, als könnten sie zu Taten führen und immer davon spricht, so ist das nutzloses Geschwätz. 5

Brecht advises a similarly pragmatic approach:

Reden über Angelegenheiten, die durch Reden nicht entschieden werden können, muß man sich abgewöhnen. Denken über Probleme, die durch Denken nicht gelöst werden können, muß man sich abgewöhnen, sagte Me-ti. 6

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1. Werke, XII, 432.
 2. Grimm, Brecht und die Weltliteratur, p.23.
 3. Forke, Mê-ti, pp.215-216.
 4. Forke, Mê-ti, p.214, footnote one.
 5. Forke, Mê-ti, p.554.
 6. Werke, XII, 514.

Brecht speaks of Marxist philosophy ('Die große Methode') in a similar manner: 'Sie lehrt Fragen zu stellen, welche das Handeln ermöglichen'.¹

Other than this, and the confirmation of such views as that of universal brotherhood, there is little similarity between Brecht's work and the historical Me-ti. It does seem, however, that Brecht occasionally takes Me-ti as his starting point, whilst reaching differing conclusions. Brecht's 'Schutz und Brandschatzung'² is clearly adapted from Me-ti:

Die heutigen Regierenden ... erschöpfen die Volkskraft und erheben zu hohe Steuern und Abgaben ... Die Großen denken nur daran, ihre Truppen aufzubieten, um damit die Nachbarstaaten anzugreifen. 3

Wenn heutzutage ein großer Staat einen kleinen mit Krieg überzieht, so sind die Bauern die Angegriffenen ... Die Angreifer sind ebenfalls die Bauern. 4

The historical Me-ti uses the illustration to condemn war, not to inspire solidarity among the peasants. Brecht adapts this in anticipation of a modern peasants' revolution, an action that would have been inconceivable to the Chinese philosopher.

In other sections Brecht modifies the views of his historical model. Me-ti, for example, cites the exemplary action of the Prince:

Im Norden dämmte er den Yüan ... um der Bevölkerung von Yen ... zu nützen ... wenn jetzt die Edelen des Reiches aufrichtig den Wohlstand des Reiches wünschen und seine Armut hassen, wenn sie Ordnung erstreben und Zerrüttung nicht wollen, so mögen sie die allumfassende Liebe und den Austausch gegenseitiger Vorteile pflegen. 5

Such action demonstrates the principle that 'Wohlwollen ist Liebe zum Volke, ohne daß man es ausnutzen will'.⁶ Brecht examines this relationship of the ruler and the ruled:

1. Werke, XII, 475.

2. Werke, XII, 423.

3. Forke, Mé-ti, pp.291-292.

4. Forke, Mé-ti, p.544.

5. Forke, Mé-ti, pp.249-252.

6. Forke, Mé-ti, p.442.

Der Fürst von Wei baute einen Damm gegen Überschwemmungen. Einige Geschichtsschreiber rühmen deshalb seine Menschenliebe. Sie übersehen, daß er zu dieser Arbeit viele mit Anwendung von Gewalt anhielt, die von einer Überschwemmung nichts zu fürchten hatten, da sie keine Felder besaßen, und daß er für seinen Damm dauernd große Abgaben forderte ... 1

Brecht here subjects Me-ti's historical record to a modern dialectical analysis, and questions the motivation of an action that, for Me-ti, is an exemplary case of benevolent rule. In the Me-ti such action is referred to as 'die Methode der heiligen Könige', whilst Brecht criticises this by a comparison with the Marxist 'große Methode'. This shows how little of Mehist philosophy retains any validity when regarded from Brecht's ideological point of view.

Brecht's Me-ti also contains references to other Chinese philosophies, though they are also of only limited applicability within Brecht's philosophy. 'Über verschiedene Arten des Philosophierens'², for example, is of Taoist origin:

Der höchste Mensch gebraucht sein Herz wie einen Spiegel. Er geht den Dingen nicht nach und geht ihnen nicht entgegen; er spiegelt sie wider, aber hält sie nicht fest. 3

Brecht rejects this Taoist quietism, not as his Chinese counterpart Me-ti had:

Der Edele spiegelt sich nicht im Wasser, sondern er spiegelt sich im Menschen. Im Wasser trifft nur das Antlitz den Blick - im Menschen spiegelt sich Glück und Mißgeschick. 4

but in a manner that is clearly developed from Me-ti's response to Taoism:

Woher kommt der Zweig, dessen Ursprung sich nicht spiegelt? Was macht der Wind aus über, was der

1. Werke, XII, 459

2. Werke, XII, 421-422.

3. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, p.99. See also pp.79, 282.

4. Forke, Mé-ti, p.277.

Schlamm unter dem Wasser? Das sind Fragen, die da entstehen...Das sind da philosophische Fragen. 1

One can also refer to other discussions of Taoism, for example the pessimistic egoism of Yang-tschu, which Brecht clearly approves of:

Yang-tschu lehrte: Wenn man sagt: der Egoismus ist schlecht, so denkt man an einen Zustand des Staates, in dem er sich schlecht auswirkt. Ich nenne einen solchen Zustand des Staates schlecht. 2

Yang-tschu never formulated his philosophy so explicitly, but it is inherent in such statements as the following:

Wenn erst die Nebenmenschen ihren Nutzen finden, ohne auf ihre gegenseitige Uneigennützigkeit angewiesen zu sein, dann wird der Ruhm der Uneigennützigkeit aufhören. 3

Selflessness is only required so long as the state of the world is such that people cannot survive without help from others. The implication that this is a reflection of the state of the world is present in Yang-tschu's statement, though Brecht, by qualifying the Taoist doctrine, stresses the cause, whereas the original indicates the reaction to it. Brecht was later to develop this theme in dramatic form in Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, possibly prompted by the Me-ti:

Wenn ein tugendhafter Mensch sich selbst liebt, so ist er deswegen noch nicht ein sich selbst liebender Mensch. (Der Sinn dieses Satzes ist, daß Eigenliebe oder Selbsterhaltungstrieb sich mit Tugend sehrwohl vereinigen läßt und noch kein Egoismus ist.) 4

Implicit in this statement is the view that the apparent contradiction of egoism and altruism will only resolve itself when the social structure has been reformed. Brecht's attachment to this view can be seen in his other references to altruism and egoism,⁵ which have also been adapted from the historical Me-ti:

1. Werke, XII, 422.

2. Werke, XII, 469. See also Tatlow 'China oder Chima', p.30.

3. Wilhelm, Liä Dsi, p.155.

4. Forke, Mé-ti, pp.509-510.

5. Werke, XII, 473.

Die Liebe zu den Menschen schließt die eigene Person nicht aus, denn diese ist unter denen, die geliebt werden, und da dies der Fall ist, so erstreckt sich auch die Liebe auf die eigene Person. Die gewöhnlich sogenannte Eigenliebe ist Liebe zu den Menschen. 1

Whilst this may sound more like linguistic sophistry than moral philosophy, it does contain a social-critical point which is similar to Brecht's dialectical view of society and its moral values. Brecht's attack upon traditional virtues, which he regards as features of a world that is materially corrupt, is also expressed in Chinese form:

Es gibt wenige Beschäftigungen, sagte Me-ti, welche die Moral eines Menschen so beschädigen wie die Beschäftigung mit Moral. Ich höre sagen: Man muß wahrheitsliebend sein, man muß seine Versprechen halten, man muß für das Gute kämpfen. Aber die Bäume sagen nicht: Man muß grün sein ... man muß mit den Blättern rauschen, wenn der Wind durchgeht. 2

This belief in a natural morality which will flourish within the individual rather than be imposed upon him is not Mehist but Taoist. One reads in the Tschuang-tse of the destructive effect of morality:

Wer mit Haken und Richtschnur ... die Leute recht machen will, der verkümmert ihre Natur ... Was hat nun die Moral zu schaffen mit ihren Einigungsmitteln ... Was braucht sie einzudrängen in das Gebiet urewiger Naturordnung? Sie bringt die Welt nur in Zweifel ... Was ich gut nenne, hat mit der Moral nichts zu tun, sondern ist einfach Güte des eigenen Geistes. 3

In both Brecht's and Tschuang-tse's work there is an idealistic belief in man's natural morality and goodness that become contaminated by the moral prescripts of society. Within Taoism the attack upon morality is a form of cultural pessimism, whilst Brecht implies a comparison between the existing moral order and a utopian state, in which such terms as goodness and morality will not be required since they will be the rule and not the exception. Brecht views the existing moral values

1. Forke, Mé-ti, p.507.

2. Werke, XII, 504.

3. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, pp.105-107.

by which society is regulated as superfluous to a society in which the material basis of human relations has been properly regulated. Moral prescripts he regards as a means of creating a semblance of order from the chaos of material relations within society, which necessarily forces the individual to disregard those traditional virtues by which he is expected to live. This paradox of chaos and social harmony is later developed in the Flüchtlingsgespräche, which attack the creed of law and order by which fascism retains power.

Brecht's Me-ti also reveals something of the author's attitude towards Confucianism. The criticism is taken in part from the historical Me-ti, which contains a long section of anti-Confucian theory.¹ Within Confucianism the family is regarded as the basic unit of the state. If relations within the family are conducted according to Confucian prescription, then the regulation of the whole kingdom will follow accordingly, since the state is merely an extension of this patriarchal structure. Brecht criticises this view in the following manner: 'Kung sagt, die Kinder sollen ihre Eltern lieben. Aber Liebe kann man nicht befehlen, und warum sollten gerade die Eltern geliebt werden?'² This is not a direct quotation from the Chinese Me-ti, but expresses the spirit of the Mehist, alternative view of the social structure. However, Brecht develops the alternative (einigende Liebe), which does not distinguish between one's own family and other families or between one's own state and other states, into a communist ethic:

Die Mitglieder der kleinsten Einheiten brauchen sich nicht zu lieben; sie müssen nur das gemeinsame Ziel lieben. Die Familien bleiben, aber die kleinsten Einheiten sind voll Bewegung; sie dienen der Verbindung, die Familien dienen der Trennung. 3

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1. Forke, Me-ti, pp.395-412.
 2. Werke, XII, 453-454.
 3. Werke, XII, 454.

This expresses the Mehist belief that to regard the family as the basic unit of society is harmful to the well-being of the whole state, since it forces one to work to the disadvantage of other families.¹ Brecht does not counter this with the Mehist belief in 'einigende Liebe', but by a belief in a common cause and mutual aid. Within Brecht's political system the family can be a harmful institution since it may divide loyalties; for Brecht, the communist cause must not be hindered by a reactionary belief in the need for family unity. In this rejection of the traditional sanctity of the family, therefore, Brecht speaks partly through Me-ti, and partly as a member of the Communist Party. In other criticisms of Confucianism, Brecht deviates completely from his Chinese source:

Kung sagte: Die Familie ist nicht zufällig. Die andern Verbände sind zufällig. Me-ti sagte: Das mag für alte Zeiten gegolten haben. Ist es heute nicht zufällig, welche Frau welchen Mann wählt, um Kinder zu haben? Wenn es nicht zufällig ist, dann nur, weil es Verbände gibt, innerhalb derer die Männer und Frauen sich gesellen. 2

This is unlike the historical Me-ti, since, though the Mehists rejected the precedence of the so-called 'five relations' over mutual love, they did not suggest that the family should cease to exist. Brecht's 'Mehism' is far more radical, as can be seen, for example, in the dramatic treatment of this problem in Der kaukasische Kreidekreis, which criticises the conservatism inherent in the belief in some mystical bond between members of the family.

Although Brecht is critical of these aspects of Confucian teaching, one notes a tone of reverence towards the historical figure, and a sympathy for the sage's reformatory zeal: 'Seine Urteile, längst

1. Forke, Me-ti, pp.253-254.

2. Werke, XII, 453.

vergangene Lebensformen betreffend, wären längst ungerecht geworden, hätte man sie wiederholt, aber seine Haltung war die der Gerechtigkeit.'¹

The criticism is one that might apply to Brecht's attitude to all older philosophies and ethical creeds: whilst they may contain valuable insight into the moral order of the world, they will remain ineffective until the economic order of society has been rectified. Brecht is Marxist, first and foremost, and a dialectical materialist in his views on moral philosophy. Only when the material base of society has been rectified, in keeping with communist theory, can the ideological and moral super-structure be reformed.

There is very little in Brecht's work that suggests any great appreciation of Confucius, other than his recognition of the attractive features of the man's moral personality. This can be seen from Brecht's study of the Analects, in which he read of Confucius' departure from the kingdom when the depravity had become so great that he could not envisage any possible political reform. Confucius' tenacity and his refusal to be compromised is what impressed Brecht, as indicated by Brecht's marking the following section in Waley's translation: 'when right does not prevail in a kingdom, then leave it'.² Brecht recognised his own position as frustrated reformer and implacable social critic reflected in Confucius' fate.

In all of his other discussions of Confucius, Brecht is consistently critical of Confucian teachings. In the essay 'Konfutse', written in 1929 or 1930, Brecht points out the deficiencies of Confucian theory:

Dieser Konfutse war ein Musterknabe. Indem man sein
Beispiel an die Wand zeichnet, kann man ganze

1. Werke, XII, 569-570.

2. A. Waley, Confucius. Analects (London, 1938), p.102.

Geschlechter ... verdammen. Sein Idealbild ist ganz an ein Temperament bestimmter und seltener Art gebunden, und während beinahe alle Taten von Menschen, die groß zu finden die Menschheit sich gestatten kann, von Leuten dieses Temperaments kaum geleistet werden können, sind eine Unmenge von Verbrechen denkbar, die ein Mann begehen könnte, ohne auf die Anerkennung mancher Tugend zu verzichten, die den Konfutsen ausgezeichnet hat ... Diese Selbstausbildung ist mit zu vielem vereinbar, was wir nicht als Tugend loben dürfen, wollen auch wir Musterknaben sein. 1

Although Brecht began writing a play about the young Confucius, the few completed sections do not show any great understanding of Confucianism. In November 1940 Brecht noted in his Arbeitsjournal:

ich lese über das leben des KUNGFUTSE. was das für ein lustiges stück wäre! der zwanzigjährige ist pacht- und steuereintreiber des fürsten. aus seiner einzigen größeren stellung ... wird er verdrängt ... dann zieht er 20-30 jahre herum, einen fürsten zu finden, der ihn reformen machen ließe ... er stirbt überzeugt, daß sein leben ein fehlschlag und durchfall gewesen sei. - man müßte all dies humoristisch behandeln und dazwischen, unvermittelt, seine lehre bringen, soweit sie noch weise erscheint. allein die scene, in der er die geschichte lus verfaßt, sich an die wahrheit haltend, würde das stück verlohnen. 2

Although Brecht's collaborators collected material for the play, it was never completed beyond an initial scene which dealt with the philosopher's childhood. Details of this were taken from Carl Crow's Master Kung. The Story of Confucius.³ The title of the scene, 'Der Ingwertopf', is an allusion to Confucius' partiality to ginger.⁴ More serious use of material from Crow's work can be seen in Brecht's figure, who introduces himself by a reference to his rationalism and pacifism.⁵ Crow points out that, despite his stature, Confucius abhorred violence;⁶ and that

1. Werke, XVIII, 75-76.

2. Arbeitsjournal, I, 197.

3. C. Crow, Master Kung. The Story of Confucius (London, 1937).

4. Werke, VII, 2987. Cf. Crow, Master Kung, p.54.

5. Werke, VII, 2987.

6. Crow, Master Kung, pp.54-55.

he held no belief in spirits. The rest of Brecht's fragmentary play deals with Crow's description of the young Confucius' fascination with the elaborate ceremonials of Chinese life.¹ Brecht attributes to the young boy a far greater understanding of these ceremonials than Crow does. The observation of a strict and rigid pattern of social intercourse is intended to regulate the patriarchal society and bring a return to a stable harmonious state. This is invalid for Brecht, who presents this formal aspect of Chinese life with humour.

Brecht's note on the play, which contains a reference to Confucius as the author of a history of the state of Lu, does, however, indicate the aspect of Confucius' life and teachings that Brecht did find applicable in the modern world. This is better seen in the essay 'Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit', where Brecht speaks of 'Die List, die Wahrheit unter vielen zu verbreiten', and again refers to the composition of the history of Lu:

Zu allen Zeiten wurde zur Verbreitung der Wahrheit, wenn sie unterdrückt und verhüllt wurde, List angewandt. Konfutse fälschte einen alten patriotischen Geschichtskalender. Er veränderte nur gewisse Wörter. Wenn es hieß: 'Der Herrscher von Kun ließ den Philosophen Wan töten, weil er das und das gesagt hatte', setzte Konfutse statt töten 'ermorden'. Hieß es, der Tyrann Soundso sei durch ein Attentat umgekommen, setzte er 'hingerichtet worden'. Dadurch brach Konfutse einer neuen Beurteilung der Geschichte Bahn. 2

This is of significance, since it points to the one theme that Brecht does borrow from Confucian philosophy: the theory of the rectification of terms. As mentioned earlier, the need to make the word accord with the reality was considered to be of prime importance within

1. Crow, Master Kung, p.58.

2. Werke, XVIII, 231.

Confucian philosophy for the regulation of the state and society, and for the reform of both. Brecht alters the emphasis of this theory by pointing to the abuse of language which creates a confusion of terms. He refers to the need to rectify terms in order to remove the ideological overtones that words have taken on within the Nazi system:

Wer in unserer Zeit statt Volk Bevölkerung und statt Boden Landbesitz sagt, unterstützt schon viele Lügen nicht. Er nimmt den Wörtern ihre faule Mystik ... Für das Wort Disziplin sollte man, wo Unterdrückung herrscht, das Wort Gehorsam wählen, weil Disziplin auch ohne Herrscher möglich ist und dadurch etwas Edleres an sich hat als Gehorsam ... Die List des Konfutse ist auch heute noch verwendbar. Konfutse ersetzte ungerechtfertigte Beurteilungen nationaler Vorgänge durch gerechtfertigte. 1

Brecht includes a similar criticism of language, and a call for the rectification of terms, in his Me-ti in the section titled 'Katalog der Begriffe'.² One can also see from an entry in Brecht's Arbeitsjournal that this doctrine of the rectification of terms interested him greatly. He notes in an entry in September 1944:

der konfutse ... mit seiner entlarvung des formalismus, der revolution der begriffe, der etablierung des benehmens aus der zeit des urkommunismus. 3

Clearly Brecht has here revised his view of Confucius, and now sees him as looking back to a time of social equality and a past Golden Age, which he tried to recreate through the Confucian doctrine. This change in interpretation of Confucius can be seen in transition in a note in Brecht's Arbeitsjournal written in January 1941, where he speaks of the moral values of Confucianism and its deficiencies. He explains how Confucius 'das alte benehmen auf der neuen basis reproduzieren möchte',⁴

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1. Werke, XVIII, 231-232.
 2. Werke, XII, 517-518.
 3. Arbeitsjournal, II, 685.
 4. Arbeitsjournal, I, 227.

with the result that 'nur diejenigen seiner vorschritten wirklich beachtet wurden, welche die bestehenden eigentumsverhältnisse konservierten'. This clearly shows the error in Berg-Pan's assessment of Brecht's understanding of Chinese philosophy: 'Ancient Chinese philosophers provided him with the guidelines for the practice of Marxist ideology in daily life'.¹ On the contrary, they demonstrated to Brecht the futility of attempting moral reform before the economic structure of society had been radically changed; and showed him that idealistic philosophies when practised in daily life simply serve to preserve the system of privileges that already exists. Because the Chinese philosophers omitted this vital understanding of the moral order, Brecht could find little in their work that was compatible with his political beliefs.

Brecht's references to Confucius' view of a past paradisaal age can be seen in dramatic form in Mutter Courage, though here with a Taoist interpretation.² The only aspect of Confucian theory that Brecht does use repeatedly is the doctrine of the confusion of terms. In the Tui-Roman, this theory was used to parody the reforms of the Weimar Republic, but in other works, most notably the Keunergeschichten and the Flüchtlingsgespräche, the theory is applied in a more conventional Confucian manner to criticise the injustices and faults of society. In the section 'Das Altertum' of the Keunergeschichten, for example, one finds a modern application of the wisdom of the Confucian Analects. In the Chinese version, Confucius complains about the form of a ceremonial vessel:

Der Meister sprach: 'Eine Eckenschale ohne Ecken: was ist das für eine Eckenschale, was ist das für eine Eckenschale!' Der Meister hielt sich darüber auf, daß

1. Berg-Pan, 'Confucius in Modern Europe', p.387.

2. See below, pp.338-339.

ein Opfergefäß, das früher eckig gewesen war, aber im Lauf der Zeit abgerundet hergestellt zu werden pflegte, noch immer mit der alten Bezeichnung genannt wurde, die dem Wesen nun gar nicht mehr entsprach: ein Gleichnis für die Zustände der damaligen Zeit, die auch nichts mehr mit den Einrichtungen der guten alten Zeit gemein hatten als den bloßen Namen. Diese Begriffsverwirrungen waren nach Kung einer der schlimmsten Übelstände, da ohne adäquate Begriffe der Mensch der Außenwelt hilflos und machtlos gegenübersteht. 1

In Brecht's anecdote, the object is no longer a ceremonial vessel, but a modern artist's representation of a watering-can. Its form is regarded as symptomatic of the degeneracy of the age, which is interpreted by Brecht as one of exploitation. This reads like a parody of the Confucian quotation:

Damals kannten die Menschen wohl nichts mehr auseinander, das Runde erschien nicht mehr rund, das Spitze nicht mehr spitz ... Diejenigen, welche die Form bestimmten, kümmerten sich nicht um den Zweck der Gegenstände ... Es muß damals viele Menschen gegeben haben, welche ausschließlich als Gebrauchsgegenstände betrachtet wurden. 2

The message of the two is, however, the same. The representation and names of objects do not conform, which is indicative of the state of the world.

Brecht's use of the theory of the rectification of terms can be seen more clearly in the Flüchtlingsgespräche, particularly in the discussion of the words 'Führer' and 'Duce', which are seen to be indicative of the confusion of terms, a confusion that has infiltrated every aspect of life:

Die beiden Namen, die Sie erwähnt haben, erinnern mich an das Bier und die Zigarren hier. Ich möchte sie als führende Marken ansehen, das Beste was hier zu haben ist, und ich seh einen glücklichen Umstand darin, daß das Bier kein Bier ist und die Zigarre keine Zigarre ... 3

1. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.79.

2. Werke, XII, 388.

3. Werke, XIV, 1384.

This same theme is also seen in the closing section of the conversations, where a form of hieroglyphics based upon Chinese pictograms is developed by Kalle and Ziffel. Brecht had first considered including these in his Buch der Wendungen, in an expanded form. The attractive feature of such a written form is the clarity which it gives to abstract concepts, and the precise meaning which pictograms portray visually. Brecht cites the following examples: 'friede ist eine frau mit einem dach darüber; heim ist ein schwein unter einem dach; harmonie ist ein mund dicht an reis usw'.¹ Kalle and Ziffel attempt to construct a similarly exact written form that would overcome 'die stupende Ungenauigkeit einiger Wörter' by employing 'eine neuartige Schrift ... nach chinesischem Muster'.²

The aim is to rectify terms by making the essence of the concept coincide with the thing. Thus, for example, the concept 'Mann' should be equated with 'HILFREICH', but not with 'menschlich':

Wir müssen nur die Ungenauigkeit entfernen, die in solchen Sätzen wie 'er ist ihm menschlich nahegetreten' vorherrscht. Man darf damit nicht etwa auch an einen Mordfall denken können. Wir können bestimmen, daß das gleiche Zeichen für Hilfreich gelten soll. Ein schlechter Mensch ist dann so geschrieben ... also ein Mensch ohne Arme. Sie verstehen, der Schreiber muß sich festlegen. Er kann nicht die Schrift dazu benutzen, daß er uns im unklaren läßt. 3

In keeping with Confucian philosophy, the corruption of the age is seen reflected in the distortion of language. Brecht anticipates a state of being where there will be no discrepancy between 'Mann, menschlich, hilfreich'. But Brecht anticipates a correction through material means, whereas Confucius relies on moral education. Brecht differs radically from Confucius and, as mentioned above, regards the Confucian stress on

1. Arbeitsjournal, I, 369.

2. Werke, XIV, 1510.

3. Werke, XIV, 1510-1511.

morality, self-cultivation and the traditional virtues as a means of perpetuating rather than correcting the injustices of the world. Some critics assume that Brecht developed this anti-Confucian attitude as a result of reading Me-ti:

He [Me-ti] founded a philosophical system that was intended to resolve the conflict between individual desire and public welfare, not by changing men - that is what Confucius had wanted to do - but by changing the world. 1

This is an inaccurate summarisation of Mehist philosophy, but is very like Brecht's. Both Confucius and Me-ti saw the moral education of man as the only means of improving the state of the world, and both founded philosophical schools and systems that envisaged a moral regeneration of mankind. Only minimal parts of the Me-ti have any bearing on the material world; Me-ti's prime concern was the establishment of a code of moral prescripts governing social intercourse and relations between men. As such, Mehism differs from Confucianism only by virtue of the priority given to the value of universal love as opposed to the primacy of family relations. The material basis of society is mentioned more frequently in Mehism than in Confucianism, but never in a way that Brecht would consider a valid criticism of society.

Of the Chinese philosophers, only Mencius shows any clear agreement with the material aspects of Brecht's political creed. Mencius believed in a correlation between the material welfare of the individual and his morality. In Waley's discussion of Mencius, one reads the following quotation: 'If beans and millet were as plentiful as fire and water, such a thing as a bad man would not exist'.² This is later qualified in more detail:

'It is only people of the upper classes', said

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1. Berg-Pan, 'Confucius in Modern Europe', p.391.
 2. Waley, Three Ways of Thought, p.119.

Mencius, 'who can maintain fixed principles of right and wrong even if deprived of a settled livelihood. The common people, if deprived of a settled livelihood, lose all fixed principles, and when this happens they become completely licentious and depraved - there is nothing that they will not do.' 1

Despite the belief in the incorruptible moral superiority of the upper classes, which is a conception that is alien to Brecht's thought, the recognition of the relationship between the material situation and morality resembles that presented by Brecht in such plays as Der gute Mensch von Sezuan.

Tracy² also highlights certain similarities between Mencius and Brecht, particularly their belief in a natural human goodness that can be corrupted by harsh circumstances:

Die menschliche Natur neigt zum Guten, wie das Wasser nach unten fließt ... Man kann das Wasser, wenn man hineinschlägt, aufspritzen machen, ... Man kann es durch eine Wasserleitung treiben, daß es auf einen Berg hinaufsteigt; aber ist das etwa die Natur des Wassers? Es ist nur die Folge äußerer Bedingungen. Ähnlich ist die menschliche Natur so beschaffen, daß man sie dazu bringen kann, nicht gut zu sein. 3

There is no mention of Mencius in Brecht's work, and no direct or indirect use of material from Mencius' writings, unless one assumes, as Tracy does, that Polly Peachum's much quoted observation: 'Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral',⁴ is in fact borrowed from Mencius: 'Hunger und Durst sind ... Feinde jeder Moral'.⁵ Woods,⁶ however, feels that Brecht adapted the remark from Me-ti: 'In einem guten Erntejahr ist das Volk tugendhaft und gut, und wenn die Ernte schlecht ist, ist es hartherzig und böse'.⁷

1. Waley, Three Ways of Thought, p.150.

2. Tracy, 'Bert Brecht und die chinesische Philosophie', pp.753-754.

3. Wilhelm, Mong Dsi (Jena, 1916), p.97.

4. Werke, II, 458.

5. Wilhelm, Mong Dsi, p.46.

6. Woods, 'The Function of Proverbs in Brecht', pp.51, 57.

7. Forke, Me-ti, p.177.

Brecht's work also shows the assimilation of certain aspects of Taoist thought. This is seen most clearly in Brecht's criticism of the so-called 'Ordnung' of political states that he considers repressive, and also in his general criticism of 'Tugend' as a means of imposing a suspect order upon a society and thereby suppressing natural human morality. In the Flüchtlingsgespräche, for example, Brecht speaks sceptically of the liberal stress on freedom:

Grad bei den Amerikanern ist ein besonders starkes Gerede von Freiheit. Wie ich schon vorhin gesagt hab: es ist verdächtig. Damit einer von Freiheit redet, muß ihn der Schuh drücken. Von Menschen, die in gutem Schuhwerk herumgehen, werdens selten erleben, daß sie in einem fort davon reden, wie leicht ihre Schuh sind und wie sie passen und nicht drücken und daß sie keine Hühneraugen haben und keine dulden würden. 1

This is modified from the Tschuang-tse:

Wenn man die richtigen Schuhe hat, so vergißt man seine Füße ... Wenn man erst einmal so weit ist, daß man das Richtige trifft und niemals das Richtige verfehlt, dann hat man das Richtige Vergessen dessen, was richtig ist. 2

The Taoist belief reflects a view of natural existence, where the traditional virtues are not praised because they are no longer recognised as virtues. In such a state, freedom is no longer part of human conceptualisation of man's existence, since the term only has meaning when its opposite is present to define it. This undifferentiated natural state is the Taoist ideal of pre-conceptual harmony; Brecht employs this belief to point to the false virtues and suspect values of an ordered state. This criticism of a regulated world as a perversion of human nature is the theme that Brecht employs most frequently from Taoist sources. Brecht recognises the validity of the Taoist view in the contradictions of a proclaimed order and the social chaos that exists within this. This is referred to by Ziffel in the Flüchtlings-

1. Werke, XIV, 1448.

2. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, p.205.

gespräche: 'jeden Tag wird eine neue Tugend gefunden';¹ and later in the same section: 'Wir brauchen eine Welt, in der man mit einem Minimum an Intelligenz, Mut, Vaterlandsliebe, Ehrgefühl, Gerechtigkeitssinn usw. auskommt'.² In the Tao-te-king one finds a similar criticism of order as a perversion of the natural world; virtue is held to be indicative of a degenerate age:

Geht der große SINN zugrunde,
so gibt es Sittlichkeit und Pflicht.
Kommen Klugheit und Wissen auf,
so gibt es die großen Lügen ...
Geraten die Staaten in Verwirrung,
so gibt es die treuen Beamten. 3

Wilhelm's explanation of this Taoist belief clarifies the point that Brecht is making: 'daß, solange alles in Ordnung ist, die genannten Tugenden so allgemein und selbstverständlich sind, daß sie sich nicht hervorheben'.⁴ In the Taoist writings, the utopian state in which man can dispense with knowledge of virtue is a mystical return to pristine innocence; Brecht's utopia is a socialist state:

Sie haben mir zu verstehen gegeben, daß Sie auf der Suche nach einem Land sind, wo ein solcher Zustand herrscht, daß solche anstrengenden Tugenden wie Vaterlandsliebe, Freiheitsdurst, Güte, Selbstlosigkeit so wenig nötig sind wie ein Scheißen auf die Heimat, Knechtseligkeit, Roheit und Egoismus. Ein solcher Zustand ist der Sozialismus. 5

The Taoist utopia is also evoked in the opening scenes of Mutter Courage, where the paradisaical natural state is dismissed by the recruiting officers, the bringers of order, as 'Bosheit' because of the lack of traditional virtues:

Man merkte, hier ist zu lang kein Krieg gewesen.
Wo soll da Moral herkommen, frag ich? Frieden,
das ist nur Schlamperei, erst der Krieg schafft
Ordnung. Die Menschheit schießt ins Kraut im
Frieden ... Jeder frißt, was er will ... Ich bin

1. Werke, XIV, 1496.

2. Werke, XIV, 1497.

3. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.58.

4. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.135.

5. Werke, XIV, 1498.

in Gegenden gekommen, wo kein Krieg war vielleicht
siebzig Jahr, da hatten die Leut überhaupt noch
keine Namen, die kannten sich selber nicht. Nur
wo Krieg ist, gibts ordentliche Listen und
Registraturen. 1

This bears a strong resemblance to the description of the Taoist utopia,
before the bringers of order destroyed it:

Im goldenen Zeitalter, da saßen die Leute umher
und wußten nicht, was tun; sie gingen und wußten
nicht, wohin; sie hatten den Mund voll Essen und
waren glücklich ... Darin bestanden die ganzen
Fähigkeiten der Leute, bis dann die 'Heiligen'
kamen ... um das Benehmen der Welt zu regeln,
ihnen Moraltvorschriften aufhängten und sie darnach
springen ließen ... 2

One reads also in the Tao-te-king:

Das Volk würde ohne Befehle
von selbst ins Gleichgewicht kommen.
Wenn die Gestaltung beginnt,
dann erst gibt es Namen. 3

The ideal state, as in the quotation from Brecht's play, is equated
with 'namenlose Einfalt'.⁴ Mutter Courage herself resists registration,
has no papers, and is part of the original anarchic state.⁵

Of greater importance than these actual borrowings from the Chinese
philosophers is the philosophical stance adopted by Brecht, which bears
a similarity to that of the Chinese and the recorded forms of classical
Chinese philosophy. Philosophy, of course, may mean many things. In
the Western tradition it is primarily logic, with a strongly formal
emphasis. Chinese philosophy, in contrast, is strongly inspirational,
and fragmentary, consisting of aphorisms, parables, epigrams and
anecdotes, from which the reader must re-construct the philosophical
system. The basic premises of these systems are not postulates of
rational enquiry but statements of belief. Thus, the central problems

1. Werke, IV, 1349-1350.
2. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, p.108.
3. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.72.
4. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.77.
5. Werke, IV, 1352.

of Chinese philosophy are few, and concern the relations of man to his fellow man within some state organisation, and, in Taoist thought, man's relations to the cosmos. The resultant philosophy is, therefore, practical, pragmatic and utilitarian; even Taoism, which denies the very value of applicable theories, is itself a practical philosophy of life. Unlike their Western counterparts, the Chinese do not speculate upon man's moral capacity but take it as given and use their philosophy to demonstrate how best to order the world, so that these qualities might flourish. The Chinese philosophers construct a moral code which they feel will best meet man's mundane needs. Although they differ on the particular details by which it is to be realised, the society that they envisage is that of Chinese antiquity.

Although Brecht looks forward to a post-revolutionary society as his ideal state, the method of communicating the social values that this society ought to contain and the deficiencies of the society in which he lives bears a strong resemblance to the works of the Chinese philosophers. But Brecht's literary presentation of his philosophy lacks the quality of the Chinese models he based his works on. The Chinese construct a system in which there are clear categories governing personal morality and behaviour. Brecht's Me-ti, which is fragmentary, does not show the same clarity of thought in its outline of a moral code. Similarly, the Keunergeschichten, which are closest to the Chinese models in formal terms, appear to be a heterogeneous collection of observations on life, rather than a philosophical mosaic with some distinguishable pattern.

Grimm suggests that the Keunergeschichten are based upon the 'Gespräche' in the Me-ti,¹ and sees the similarity 'in ihrer parabolischen, pointiert-antitetischen Sprechweise'. Although the

1. Grimm, Brecht und die Weltliteratur, p.24.

example he quotes¹ to support this does bear a certain similarity to the style of Brecht's stories, it seems more likely that the Keuner-geschichten were modelled upon the Confucian Analects rather than the Me-ti. Other critics see a Taoist influence, and Kesting² quotes the following as evidence of this:

'Wer das Wissen trägt, der darf nicht kämpfen;
noch die Wahrheit sagen; noch einen Dienst erweisen;
noch nicht essen; noch die Ehrungen ausschlagen;
noch kenntlich sein. Wer das Wissen trägt, hat von
allen Tugenden nur eine: daß er das Wissen trägt',
sagte Herr Keuner. 3

This is quite obviously a formulation of the Taoist doctrine; the 'negative' precepts of non-contention, non-involvement and self-oblivion are the ideals of the Taoist sage, Lao-tse. That Brecht valued Taoist wisdom can be seen in the poem 'An die Nachgeborenen', where these same Taoist virtues are praised. There is also a Taoist reticence in Brecht's 'Der Denkende und der falsche Schüler', where Keuner dismisses verbosity that passes for wisdom: 'Der Denkende sagt wenig', which is so reminiscent of the Tao-te-king. Similarly, the urge for self-preservation, a feature of all Brecht's literary characters, is demonstrated in 'Maßnahmen gegen die Gewalt'⁴ in a manner that suggests a Taoist attitude:

Äußerlich wird er zustimmen, aber im Innern sich nicht
demütigen ... So will ich innerlich unbeugsam sein und
äußerlich mich beugen ... Wer innerlich unbeugsam ist,
ist ein Diener des Himmels... Wer äußerlich sich beugt,
ist ein Diener der Menschen ... was alle Menschen tun,
sollte sich wagen, das nicht zu tun? 5

1. Forke, Mé-ti, pp.539-540.

2. M. Kesting, Bertolt Brecht (Hamburg, 1959), p.87.

3. Werke, XII, 376.

4. Werke, XII, 375-376.

5. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, p.61. Similar sentiments are also expressed by Lieh-tse, see Wilhelm, Liä Dsi, p.66.

This is precisely the attitude adopted by Herr Egge in Brecht's story. But this is not to say that Brecht held a belief in Taoist mysticism, or that his own stories are in any way to be interpreted as religious parables. In Brecht's work, the mystical aspects of the original are given a temporal interpretation. 'Himmel' is not to be linked with the divine; it is a political cause, which must not be brought into conflict with personal desire. In other applications of Taoist theory, the Chinese utopian state is equated with Brecht's socialist ideal, and the mystical doctrine is paralleled by the communist 'Lehre'. In the story referred to above, the character must appear to allow himself to be used, whilst steadfastly maintaining a belief in his cause, whereas the Taoist belief asserts that contact with life itself is a destructive process that disintegrates the essential, spiritual self. But the differences in conception of the basic nature of life do not invalidate Brecht's application of Taoist theory as a political expedient. Brecht's theme is the avoidance of false heroism and bravado; the preservation of the physical self is required in order that one may make better use of one's person when circumstances predict a more successful outcome to a policy of confrontation. Reculer pour mieux sauter is Brecht's response to the world's challenge in this story, which can be seen as a political application of the Taoist attitude towards life.

There are also echoes of Tschuang-tse in Brecht's Keunergeschichten. 'Herr K. und die Natur',¹ which refers to the usefulness of trees as indicative of the exploitation that exists in non-socialist states, is modelled on a parable quoted in the Tschuang-tse:

Der Zimmermann Stein wanderte nach Tsi. Als er nach Kü Yüan kam, sah er einen Eichbaum ... Er galt als eine Sehenswürdigkeit in der ganzen Gegend. Der Meister Zimmermann sah sich nicht nach ihm um, sondern ging seines Weges weiter, ohne innezuhalten.

1. Werke, XII, 382.

Sein Geselle aber sah sich satt an ihm; dann lief er zu Meister Stein und sprach: 'Seit ich die Axt in die Hand genommen ... Meister, habe ich noch nie ein so schönes Holz erblickt. Ihr aber fandet es nicht der Mühe wert, es anzusehen ... weshalb?' Jener sprach: '... Es ist ein unnützer Baum. Wolltest du ein Schiff daraus machen, es würde untergehen ... wolltest du Pfeiler daraus machen, sie würden wurmstichig werden. Aus dem Baum läßt sich nichts machen; man kann ihn zu nichts gebrauchen: darum hat er es auf ein so hohes Alter bringen können.' 1

In the original, the parable is used to exemplify the paradoxical usefulness of the useless, and to suggest that ascetic withdrawal from the pernicious influences of a degenerate world is the only way to survive. Brecht uses this example of the suffering of the useful in the world to indicate the mentality that is engendered in man within a capitalist, consumer society, where everything is valued by the degree of its possible exploitation. In Brecht's version, the tree that is of no use, but an end in itself, refers to an inner human dignity that seldom survives in the modern world. That the Chinese parable held a modern truth for Brecht can be seen in his quoting a second version of the Chinese story in Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,² and a further reference to it in Brecht's essays on literature:

Tschuang-tsi zeigt in den 'Leiden der Brauchbarkeit', daß die Unnützesten die Glücklichsten sind. 3

One finds a related theme in the tree symbolism of Brecht's Baal. The advice given to Baal is ambiguous: 'Wenn Sie sich auf was Nützliches werfen würden: Sie kämen auf einen grünen Zweig'.⁴ This predicts the success of the useful, but also implies its ultimate demise. This is only one isolated example of the tree symbolism in the play which was consolidated in later versions into a complex structural pattern.⁵

1. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, pp.67-68.

2. See below, p.350.

3. Werke, XIX, 462.

4. Werke, I, 16.

5. The reference quoted was first included in the second version, 1919.

It cannot be proved that Brecht was familiar with Tschuang-tse when he included this reference in the second version of the play, but there is an obvious affinity between their attitudes towards the useful, and it seems most likely that Brecht later developed the symbolism with Tschuang-tse's parable in mind.

But, despite these similarities with, and borrowings from the Chinese philosophers, the 'philosophy' of the Keunergeschichten, like that of Me-ti, is essentially Brecht's, with only a vague formal similarity to the Chinese models. The influence of the Analects lies in the use of dialogues and anecdotes, which are seemingly insignificant at first sight but contain an underlying general truth on the nature of the world.

The use of Herr K. as an exemplary figure is, as Berg-Pan¹ has indicated, the clearest parallel with the Confucian Analects. This formal similarity might be seen in such formal descriptions of Herr K. as the following: 'Herr Keuner war nicht für Abschiednehmen, nicht für Begrüßen, nicht für Jahrestage, nicht für Feste ...'² One reads similar descriptions of Confucius, which have a formal or stylistic resemblance to this but a different content: 'Die Umstände, bei denen der Meister besondere Vorsicht übte, waren Fasten, Krieg und Krankheit'.³ Other similarities might be seen in the Confucian: 'Das Volk kann man dazu bringen, dem Rechten zu folgen, aber man kann es nicht dazu bringen, es zu verstehen',⁴ which resembles the opening of Brecht's 'Über die Haltung',⁵ whilst 'Gespräche'⁶ might be said to be adapted from the

1. Berg-Pan, 'Confucius in Modern Europe', pp.392-394.

2. Werke, XII, 410.

3. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.84.

4. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.93.

5. Werke, XII, 409.

6. Werke, XII, 385.

following quotation from the Analects:

Der Meister sprach: 'Trifft man einen, mit dem zu reden es sich verlohnte, und redet nicht mit ihm, so hat man einen Menschen verloren. Trifft man einen, mit dem zu reden sich nicht verlohnt, und redet doch mit ihm, so hat man seine Worte verloren. Der Weise verliert weder einen Menschen noch seine Worte. 1

Brecht's prose works give the clearest indication of the use and assimilation of Chinese material. Brecht's plays, in contrast, though many of them are set in China, have little that is specifically Chinese in them. The first of these plays, Die Maßnahme, is simply a statement on the need for party discipline, and, though one could find references in the Me-ti to support this readiness to murder a colleague in order to ensure the victory of one's creed, there is no evidence to suggest that Brecht used the Chinese work as a model. The play may have been based upon reports of the efforts to organise workers' groups in China, which Brecht would have been familiar with through his contact with German communists. Gerhard Eisler,² the brother of Brecht's collaborator Hanns Eisler, had spent some time in China helping to propagate the communist doctrine among Chinese workers. As can be seen from the discussion of Friedrich Wolf's plays,³ China was a popular theme among communist playwrights. Brecht, too, develops his Chinese theme as a metaphor for German conditions. By dramatising a Chinese theme, Brecht is able to present the social and economic relationships of this emergent industrial nation as a paradigm of the complex structure of Western capitalist society. The Chinese society that Brecht portrays is of almost caricatured simplicity in its analysis of the economic forces at play within society. Yet the play points out the main elements

1. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.155.

2. See Esslin, Brecht. A Choice of Evils, p.45.

3. See above, pp.283-302.

of the revolutionary struggle in far clearer ideological terms than, say, Wolf's Tai Yang erwacht, which gives a more romantic, traditionally dramatic, but less disciplined presentation of contemporary Chinese history. This representation of the German political struggle in alienated form is also to be found in Die Ausnahme und die Regel. This play is not of Chinese origin, nor does it deal with a theme that is intended to be recognised as exclusively Chinese. The use of China in such plays is wholly consistent with that of other communist authors. These works represent statements of international solidarity with the Chinese revolutionary cause, whilst also presenting a disguised form of criticism of German society and an incitement to revolution.

Brecht's earlier plays also show their author's interest in China. In Mann ist Mann, for example, one finds scenes that have been adapted from Döblin's Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun. The figure of the priest from the 'Gelbherrenpagode'¹ and his ruse with the tar can be traced to Book I of Döblin's novel.² At the end of Brecht's play one also finds a grotesque adaptation of the theme of Der Kreidekreis. Brecht employs the forensic device of the circle to demonstrate a perverse form of logic and to prove that man is not man. Whether this is also the first application of the Confucian theory of the confusion of terms, rather than an example of the young Brecht's anarchic humour, is not clear.

It has been suggested³ that Brecht's Im Dickicht der Städte was inspired by a pseudo-Chinese play, Mister Wu oder die Rache des Chinesen,⁴

1. Werke, I, 300-305.

2. Döblin, Wang-lun, pp.25-31.

3. H.O. Münsterer, Bert Brecht. Erinnerungen aus den Jahren 1917-1922 (Zurich, 1963), pp.150-151.

4. H.M. Vernon and H. Owen, Mr Wu. An Anglo-Chinese Play. The text of the play has not been published. See the résumé in The Times, 28 November 1913, p.11; and a prose version by L.J. Milne, Mr Wu (London, 1918), adapted from the play.

but it is difficult to see any similarities between the two plays. However, it is clear that Brecht did intend to incorporate Chinese themes in his plays at this time as can be seen from an entry in his diary, where he notes the following plans for dramatic works in December 1921:

Drei Stücke für das große Schauspielhaus: 1. Die geldjagende Menschheit 2. Das kalte Chicago 3. Der Wald. Dazu Material: 1. Das Wu Wei aus 'Wang-lun' und 'Richard III' ... 1

The Taoist theme of submissiveness, non-contention and passivity interested Brecht at this time, as can be seen from his initial conception of Mann ist Mann: 'Einfach die Geschichte eines Mannes, den sie kaputt-machen (aus Notwendigkeit) und das einzige Problem: wie lange er's aus-hält'.² This theme of violent aggression and passive endurance shows obvious similarities with Döblin's novel. The play that Brecht refers to above, which was to incorporate the Taoist theme of wu-wei, does not appear to have been written, but aspects of the problem seem to have been incorporated in Mann ist Mann and are evident in Im Dickicht der Städte in certain oblique references to Taoist thought: 'Ich habe gelesen, daß die schwachen Wasser es mit ganzen Gebirgen aufnehmen'.³

This is obviously based upon the Tao-te-king:

Auf der ganzen Welt gibt es nichts Weicheres und
Schwächeres als das Wasser.
Und doch in der Art, wie es dem Harten zusetzt,
kommt nichts ihm gleich.
Es kann durch nichts verändert werden.
Daß Schwaches das Starke besiegt und Weiches das
Harte besiegt, weiß jedermann auf Erden, aber
niemand vermag danach zu handeln. 4

That Brecht had read the Tao-te-king at this time can be seen in an

1. Brecht, Tagebücher, p.177.

2. Brecht, Tagebücher, pp.38-39.

3. Werke, I, 172.

4. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.121.

entry in his diary made in September 1920,¹ and in the short prose piece 'Die höflichen Chinesen',² of 1925. Although the plays referred to above show only brief inclusions of Taoist material, their overall conception of life as struggle, and the need to resist or submit, seems to have been developed from a Chinese philosophy and vision of life that Brecht had first become familiar with in Döblin's novel. It may also be the case that this Chinese theme of passivity or revolution contributed to the treatment of a similar theme in Brecht's Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe, which Brecht was also working on at this time.³ The central character of this play hovers between the extremes of quietism and violence, but finally renounces the former. The play presents this problem in Western, Christian form, but it may have also been derived from Döblin's novel.

The Taoist recognition of the possibility of success through endurance and the ultimate victory of the weak over the strong impressed Brecht, as can be seen in the later poem dedicated to the memory of the Chinese sage, Lao-tse.⁴ Tatlow⁵ sees this Taoist attitude exemplified in the figure of Schweyk. Brecht's treatment of this philosophy of self-preservation is reminiscent of Lieh-tse,⁶ whose influence can also be seen in the figure of Herr Egge in the Keunergeschichten.

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, like the earlier plays set in China, is only nominally Chinese and presents China in transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy as a paradigm for all capitalist

1. Brecht, Tagebücher, p.67.

2. Werke, XI, 100.

3. Brecht, Tagebücher, p.177.

4. Werke, IX, 660-663.

5. Tatlow, 'China oder Chima', p.34.

6. Wilhelm, Liä Dsi, p.61. See above, pp.341-342.

societies. There is little of specifically Chinese origin in the play. Brecht had considered including the following quotations from the Me-ti in his play:

Der Edle spiegelt sich nicht im Wasser, sondern er
spiegelt sich im Menschen.
Wenn die Lippen fehlen, werden die Zähne kalt.
Generosität schließt sich selber nicht aus.
Damit man nicht sagt: Himmel und Erde sind nicht
gütig und betrachten die Geschöpfe wie Stroh Hunde.
Ein Wunsch, den man wünscht, wenn man in einer
Zwangslage ist, ist kein Wunsch. 1

The final version of the play, however, contains only a single proverb from the Me-ti: 'Der Edle ist eine Glocke, schlägt man sie, so tönt sie, schlägt man sie nicht, so tönt sie nicht'.² This is used ironically by Brecht: The qualities that are developed in Sun are not man's noble aspects but, rather, those ignoble qualities that capitalist society fosters within the individual.

There is no Chinese source for the central character, unless one were to consider it a psychological form of Taoist cosmology. In a perfect world the individual would remain intact, whereas in the modern, corrupt world it is divided. Expressed in Taoist terms: in an ideal state the Tao is retained as a single principle, but in a world that has degenerated from the Way, this principle appears in the complementary Yin and Yang, the forces of light and darkness, good and evil. This is not to suggest that Brecht is preaching Chinese mysticism; as in his other applications of Taoist thought, the ideal state is equated with a world where man retains his essential human dignity and is not exploited because of his usefulness. That Brecht viewed

1. Quoted from Materialien zu Brechts 'Der gute Mensch von Sezuan', edited by W. Hecht, fifth edition (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 89. Cf. Forke, Mé-ti, pp.277, 276, 512, 503.

2. Werke, IV, 1584. Cf. Forke, Mé-ti, p.403.

Taoism in this way can be seen from the following parable quoted by Wang in the play:

'In Sung ist ein Platz namens Dornhain. Dort gedeihen Katalpen, Zypressen und Maulbeerbäume. Die Bäume nun, die ein oder zwei Spannen im Umfang haben, die werden abgehauen von den Leuten, die Stäbe für ihre Hundekäfige wollen. Die drei, vier Fuß im Umfang haben, werden abgehauen von den vornehmen und reichen Familien, die Bretter suchen für ihre Särge. Die mit sieben, acht Fuß Umfang werden abgehauen von denen, die nach Balken suchen für ihre Luxusvillen. So erreichen sie alle nicht ihrer Jahre Zahl, sondern gehen auf halbem Wege zugrunde durch Säge und Axt. Das ist das Leiden der Brauchbarkeit.' 1

This is not a biblical parable as has been assumed² but, as I have indicated elsewhere,³ a quotation from the Tschuang-tse.⁴ In the original, the fate of the tree symbolises the fate of the useful in a world that has lost sight of the Tao. In Brecht's play the fate of the tree represents the degradation that man suffers through his exploitation in a capitalist society. The parallel between Taoism and Brecht's view of the contemporary world can be better seen in the following quotation from the Tao-te-king: 'Ist die Einfalt zerstreut, so gibt es "brauchbare" Menschen'.⁵ Lao-tse here refers to the loss of 'Sinn', which has a religious connotation: the purpose of man's existence is seen as part of a cosmic order that is regulated by the mystical principle, Tao. For Brecht, 'Sinn' is the humanitarian principle on which he bases his philosophy; man may have no divine role within creation, but he must be free to develop his true, natural potential without being perverted by the need to adapt to the ruthless world of capitalist exploitation.

1. Werke, IV, 1563-1564.

2. B. Brecht, Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, edited by M. Mare (London, 1973), p.83.

3. M. Read, 'Brecht, Klabund and the Chalk Circle', Modern Languages, 53 (1972), 28-32 (p.31).

4. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, pp.69-70.

5. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, p.68.

The most famous of Brecht's 'Chinese' plays is, of course, Der kaukasische Kreidekreis, which is loosely based upon the play which Klabund had adapted so successfully for the German stage earlier this century.¹ The play is altered to such a degree that there is little of the original, or of any previous adaptation of the play, retained in Brecht's version other than the forensic device of the chalk circle, which is employed to solve the dispute between the two mothers.² The main characters are present in Brecht's play (the contesting women, the brother, the wise judge) but they are re-arranged to form a completely different dramatic constellation.

However, it seems that Brecht may have used a second Chinese source when he first treated the theme of the chalk circle in the form of 'Der Augsburger Kreidekreis' in 1940. In the Tschuang-tse one reads the following parable:

Habt Ihr noch nicht gehört von der Flucht der Leute von Gia?
 Darunter war einer namens Lin Hui. Der ließ sein Szepter, das tausend Lot Goldes Wert (sic) war, im Stich, nahm einen Säugling auf den Rücken und eilte davon. Jemand sprach zu ihm: 'Warum wirfst du dein goldenes Szepter weg und eilst mit dem Säugling auf dem Rücken davon? Tust du es, weil das Kind dir wertvoll scheint? Aber der Wert des Säuglings ist nur gering. Tust du es um der Bürde willen, die das Szepter dir gemacht? Aber die Bürde, die dieser Säugling dir machen wird, ist noch größer.' Da sprach Lin Hui: 'An das Szepter bindet mich nur Gewinn; an dieses Kind aber himmlische Bande. Was durch Gewinn vereinigt ist, läßt einander im Stich, wenn Bedrängnis, Mißerfolg, Unglück, Leid und Schaden drohen. Was durch himmlische Bande verbunden ist, wird einander recht zu eigen, wenn Bedrängnis, Mißerfolg, Unglück, Leid und Schaden drohen. Ein anderes ist's, einander zu eigen werden, ein anderes, einander verlassen. Der Edle ist für die andern schmacklos wie das Wasser; der Gemeine ist für die andern süß wie Most. Aber des Edlen Schmacklosigkeit führt zur Liebe; des Gemeinen Süßigkeit führt zum Überdruß. Jene, die ohne Grund sich zusammentun, trennen sich auch wieder ohne Grund.' 3

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1. See above, pp.178-213.
 2. See J.M. Ritchie, Brecht: 'Der kaukasische Kreidekreis' (London, 1976), pp.7-18; Berg-Pan, 'Mixing Old and New Wisdom', pp.215-226 (the latter was anticipated in some respects by M. Read, 'Brecht, Klabund and the Chalk Circle'); see also E.F.C. Ludowyck, '"The Chalk Circle": A Legend in Four Cultures', Comparative Literature Proceedings, 1 (1959), 249-256.
 3. Wilhelm, Dschuang Dsi, pp.213-214.

This seems to be the starting point for Brecht's play, though Brecht qualifies the chaotic social background in order to make a political statement. This parable also shows the tie that binds Grusche and the child. The selflessness of Grusche's action, the jeopardy that this places her in, and the tenacity with which she protects the child are demonstrations of the non-material relationship, the 'himmlische Bande' of the Chinese original. As in other applications of Taoist thought in Brecht's work, the religious overtones are secularised: the ties that bind Grusche to the child are an expression of genuine humanity; Grusche is the embodiment of naïve goodness or Taoist 'Einfalt'. The biological mother abandons the child because the relationship between her and the child is not based upon spiritual ties but, as is shown later, upon the hope of financial gain. Just as in the Taoist parable, such bonds are broken in times of adversity.

The conclusion of Brecht's play, which is a reversal of that of the original, may also have been inspired by Chinese thought. The original play proclaims the victory of maternal love over the corruption of the world. The genuine mother's natural instincts are evident in all her actions, by which the judge is able to elicit the truth. In Brecht's play, the biological mother is shown not to be the true mother. The paradox of this truth may be of Confucian origin,¹ since it is an obvious example of the confusion of terms. Confucius stated that the ordering of the social world would be complete when 'Der Vater sei Vater, der Sohn sei Sohn',² by which he implied that the state of the world in which he lived was one in which the abstract concept and the thing did

1. Ritchie, Brecht: 'Der kaukasische Kreidekreis', p.7, sees the play as an examination of rights, 'even the apparently inalienable right of the mother to her own child'; this is interpreted as the application of Taoist belief by Brecht.
2. Wilhelm, Kungfutse, p.125.

not conform. The same is true of the world in which Brecht's play is set, since, by analogy with Confucius, 'Die Mutter ist nicht Mutter', which is symptomatic of a world that is in disarray. Through Azdak, Brecht points out the faults of the world by rectifying the terms. The mother is not the person who has given birth to the child, but the person who exhibits the quality of 'Mütterlichkeit', as H. Witt also indicates.¹ When there is no divergence between the object, the concept, and the abstract essence connoted by the concept, then the world will be in a state of perfect order.

As can be seen from the above discussion, the Chinese setting of many of Brecht's plays is simply an alienating device by which Brecht presents parables of human life that are of universal significance; such plays are independent creations and are not derived from Chinese sources. These plays represent an Oriental counterpart to Brecht's stylised image of America as an economic jungle. The Oriental settings are used to present paradigms of human existence in societies where the underlying economic structure conflicts with the natural expression of human morality. Certain motifs are borrowed from the Chinese philosophers in order to illustrate the degenerate state of society, but none of the plays is derived wholly from any Chinese source.

The influence of Chinese dramatic techniques on Brecht's theatre also seems minimal. Brecht was familiar with the Westernised forms of Chinese theatre such as Klabund's Kreidekreis and the other pseudo-Chinese plays that were popular in Germany during the 1920s, but there is little evidence that he began to develop his revolutionary dramatic theory from such plays, even though they do exhibit certain features of Brecht's epic theatre.

1. H. Witt, 'Der kaukasische Kreidekreis' in Materialien zu Brechts 'Der kaukasische Kreidekreis', edited by W. Hecht (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), 129-135 (P.130).

Brecht was certainly impressed by Mei Lan-Fang's impromptu demonstration of the techniques of Chinese acting, which he witnessed in Moscow in 1935,¹ and was prompted by this to investigate the Chinese theatre, which resulted in the essay 'Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst'.² Clearly this is not the origin of Brecht's idea of an epic theatre, since Brecht had already developed his theories when this essay was written. The Chinese theatre merely offered a confirmation of the dramatic theory he was employing, and suggested certain acting techniques by which this theory could be consolidated in theatrical practice.

Other observations on the Chinese theatre can be found in the essay 'Über das Theater der Chinesen',³ in which Brecht further develops the features of Oriental drama that conform to his own theory of epic theatre. Pronko⁴ has illustrated the similarities between Brecht's theatre and Chinese drama. He lists the main common features as the episodic, narrative style and the presentation of human relations rather than psychological human types.⁵ To this one could add the common use of a narrator; the epic device of self-introduction; and the frequent appearance of interpolated poems and songs. But Pronko does not feel that these features of Brecht's theatre have been derived from Chinese drama. Indeed, it would be difficult to maintain that Brecht could have developed these ideas from the Chinese theatre since, when he first employed his new dramatic theory, he had no knowledge of the Chinese theatre.

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1. See K. Völker, Bertolt Brecht. Eine Biographie (Munich and Vienna, 1975), p.228.
 2. Werke, XVI, 619-631.
 3. Werke, XV, 424-428.
 4. L.C. Pronko, Theater East and West (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp.55-63.
 5. See also Tso Lin, 'The Chinese and Western Theatre: A Study in Contrasting Techniques', Chinese Literature, 8 (1962), 101-111.

Brecht's interest in Chinese culture can also be traced in his poetry, though here too one cannot speak of any significant influence on his own work. He was obviously familiar with Chinese verse during the early 1920s, when Oriental lyric was extremely popular in Germany. Münsterer refers to Brecht's particular liking for the verse of Li-tai-pe,¹ which he read in Otto Hauser's translation.² Brecht would also have known Klabund's translations of Chinese poetry since the two authors associated in Munich in the early 1920s. Berg-Pan sees Brecht's enthusiasm for the dissolute, amoral Chinese poet reflected in the figure of Baal,³ whilst Ritchie considers Li-tai-pe a partial source for the character Azdak.⁴ No conclusive evidence can be found to support these views, but there would appear to be a similarity between the desperate, drunken attempts of Baal to escape from the knowledge of his transience, and the melancholic, inebriate verse of the Chinese poet.

Brecht does not appear to have taken any further interest in Chinese poetry until his exile period. In such poems as 'Die Auswanderung der Dichter'⁵ and 'Besuch bei den verbannten Dichtern'⁶ one finds references to the Chinese poets Li-tai-pe, Tu-fu and Po-chü-i, who had suffered banishment for the untimeliness of their political comment. In the essay 'Das letzte Wort', Brecht compares the three Chinese poets to his own contemporaries who have been forced to leave

1. Münsterer, Bert Brecht, p.149.

2. Which edition of Hauser's translations Brecht had read is not known, possibly Die chinesische Dichtung (Berlin, 1921).

3. Berg-Pan, 'Mixing Old and New Wisdom', p.205.

4. Ritchie, Brecht: 'Der kaukasische Kreidekreis', pp.14-15.

5. Werke, IX, 495.

6. Werke, IX, 663.

their homeland. Brecht admired the Chinese poets because of their implacable criticism of social evils and their refusal to be silenced by the measures taken against them:

Die älteste aller Lyriken, die noch besteht, die chinesische, erfuhr Beachtung von seiten gewisser Fürsten, indem die besseren ihrer Lyriker individuell gezwungen wurden, mitunter die Provinzen zu verlassen, in denen ihre Gedichte zu sehr gefielen. Li T'ai-po war zumindest einmal im Exil, Tu Fu zumindest zweimal, Po Chü-i zumindest dreimal. Man sieht: Die Seßhaftigkeit war nicht das Hauptziel dieser Literatur, noch war diese Kunst lediglich eine Kunst, zu gefallen. 1

Clearly Brecht would wish to be remembered by future generations as a modern equivalent of these three poets whose reputation has outlived that of their opponents, and who have had 'das letzte Wort'. The example of these three figures confirms Brecht's attitude as to the value of passive resistance and the ultimate victory of the weak over their apparently stronger opponents. This response to the world is a further indication of the 'Taoist' gesture of apparent resignation that Brecht advises when open resistance has become futile.

Further evidence of Brecht's interest in Chinese poetry can be found in his adaptation of a number of poems from Waley's translations of the originals. The first of these 'Die Freunde', 'Die große Decke', 'Der Politiker', 'Der Drache des schwarzen Pfuhls', 'Ein Protest im sechsten Jahr des Chien Fu' and 'Bei der Geburt seines Sohnes' were prepared for publication in the emigré periodical Das Wort in Moscow in 1938.² Brecht was later to adapt three more poems³ whilst he was in

1. Werke, XVIII, 219.

2. Werke, IX, 618-621, 684. Cf. A. Waley, A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems (London, 1918), pp.37, 157, 138, 121-122, 97-98. The Poem 'Der Blumenmarkt' was also adapted in this year, Werke, IX, 618. Cf. Waley, A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems, p.126.

3. See Arbeitsjournal, II, 706-708. This also contains alternative versions of the poems 'Resignation' and 'Der Hut, dem Dichter geschenkt von Li Chien'.

America: 'Resignation', 'Der Hut, dem Dichter geschenkt von Li Chien' and 'Des Kanzlers Kiesweg'.¹

Tatlow's excellent study of these Chinese translations² has shown that Brecht, although he had no knowledge of the original poems, succeeded in rendering them more accurately in a European language than Waley had done. Tatlow's study of these poems, their English sources, and the Chinese originals is exhaustive and renders any further investigation of them superfluous. As Tatlow indicates, Brecht felt a great affinity with Po-chü-i, and sought to articulate his own social criticism through the latter's verse. In an accompanying note to the translations, Brecht quotes Po-chü-i's assessment of his own poetry: 'Wenn die Tyrannen und Günstlinge meine Lieder hörten, sahen sie einander an und verzogen die Gesichter',³ which is precisely the effect that Brecht hoped to achieve with his own verse, as he indicates in his poem to the 'chinesischer Theewurzellöwe'.⁴ The formal qualities of Po-chü-i's verse were also those that Brecht employed in his verse: 'Seine Gedichte sind in einfachen Wörtern, jedoch sehr sorgfältig geschrieben'.⁵ The Chinese poet's verse combines the aesthetic and the didactic in precisely the same manner as Brecht hoped to do in his own verse.

Brecht's translations of Waley's versions of the Chinese poems are

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1. Werke, X, 1067-1069. Cf. A. Waley, More Translations from the Chinese (London, 1919), pp.66-67; A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems, pp.157, 131. Two other poems 'Gedanken beim Flug über die große Mauer', and 'Ansprache an einen toten Soldaten des Marschalls Chiang Kai-Shek' were later adapted from Wu An and F. Jensen, China siegt (Vienna, 1949), pp.94-96, 140. See Werke, X, 1069-1071.
 2. A. Tatlow, Brechts chinesische Gedichte (Frankfurt am Main, 1973). See also P. Bridgwater, 'Arthur Waley and Brecht', pp.225-231 and Grimm, Brecht und die Weltliteratur, pp.64-71.
 3. Werke, XIX, 424.
 4. Werke, X, 997.
 5. Werke, XIX, 425.

mainly songs of political protest and documents of human suffering, such as 'Die große Decke', which Brecht later included in Der gute Mensch von Sezuan.¹ These Chinese poems attack militarism, religious superstition² and the existing political institutions. They are marked by a tone of sympathy for the oppressed and abused, but, unlike Brecht's poems, they do not express any belief in the possibility of improving man's material conditions. They are gestures of resignation in the face of suffering in the world.

These poems are typical examples of Chinese lyrical style. Neither these poems, nor any other of Waley's poems, nor any translations of Chinese poems in European languages exhibit those features that Brecht is assumed by many critics to have incorporated in his later verse. The so-called 'Spruchgedichte', epigrammatic, syllogistic or ideogrammatic poems are not styled on Chinese models. One must agree with Tatlow's conclusions on the problem of Chinese influences in Brecht's lyric:

It seems more accurate to say that Brecht was impressed by certain qualities in certain kinds of Chinese poetry, by the tradition of social concern, the conventional style of some poems, as well as by a certain elliptic quality in Chinese verse. 3

Although Tatlow shows that Chinese influence is not to be seen in the minimal form of Brecht's later verse, he fails to indicate the significance of Waley's translations for Brecht's development of 'reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmäßigen Rhythmen'.⁴ Yet this influence is not really Chinese since it involves the use of 'sprung rhythms', which

1. Werke, IV, 1512.

2. For a most lucid interpretation of 'Der Drache des schwarzen Pfuhls', see Tatlow, 'Stalking the Dragon: Pound, Waley, and Brecht'.

3. Tatlow, 'Towards an Understanding of Chinese Influence in Brecht', p.372.

4. See Brecht's essay, Werke, XIX, 395-404.

are features of Waley's translations and are not of Chinese origin.

Apart from the translations referred to above, there appears to be only one poem in Brecht's work that is based upon a Chinese model. This poem, 'Lied der Starenschwärme',¹ is adapted from the Book of Songs. It cannot be ascertained which source Brecht used for this adaptation. The poem is not contained within Waley's version of the Book of Songs, but can be found in Rückert's collection of poems from the Schi-king, which Brecht was obviously familiar with.² In Rückert's version the poem has the title 'Loos der Auswanderer',³ which underlines its symbolism: the migratory birds, who seek refuge and a resting-place but are everywhere repelled, are likened to those who are exiled from the Empire. In Brecht's poem the explicit message of the original is tempered and less direct.

Whilst Brecht's poems do not contain the formal influence of Chinese poetry that many critics have assumed, they do show an interest in Chinese verse and philosophy. The attraction of Chinese poetry was its high didactic content and its simplicity. The aspects of Chinese philosophy that are incorporated in Brecht's verse are those that can be found elsewhere in his work. One finds, for example, a poetic tribute to Lao-tse in Brecht's 'Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking auf dem Wege des Laotse in die Emigration'.⁴ One can see how Brecht came to admire Lao-tse's wisdom in his mature years by comparing this poem to the earlier prose version, 'Die höflichen Chinesen', of 1925. This earlier version of the legendary departure of Lao-tse

1. Werke, IX, 644-645.

2. See R. Grimm, 'Brechts letzte Handbibliothek', Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, NS 10 (1960), 451-453 (p.452). This was a copy of the Altona edition of 1833, see bibliography.

3. F. Rückert, Gesammelte Poetische Werke (Frankfurt am Main, 1868), VI, 285.

4. Werke, IX, 660-663.

from China is typical of Brecht's youthful iconoclasm. Brecht criticises the sage who abandons the Empire when internal conditions deteriorate: 'Vor die Wahl gestellt, die Unvernunft der Leute zu ertragen oder etwas dagegen zu tun, verließ er das Land'.¹ The later version shows far greater respect for the sage.² Brecht's own situation was obviously now much closer to that of the legendary figure; he no longer criticises the sage for departing the political chaos, but sees his reaction to the social decay as the only one possible. The poem also contains the hint of hope that Brecht found within the Tao-te-king, which referred to the eventual victory of the weak and submissive over the strong:

... Daß das weiche Wasser in Bewegung
Mit der Zeit den mächtigen Stein besiegt.
Du verstehst, das Harte unterliegt. 3

Brecht affords praise not only to the communicator of this wisdom but also to the guard who requests the sage's advice. This addition seems to have been adopted from the Me-ti: 'Der edele Mensch zeigt sich ehrbietig und verhält sich abwartend. Wenn er gefragt wird, so antwortet er, und wenn er nicht gefragt wird, so schweigt er'.⁴ Brecht had used this quotation earlier in modified form in the poem 'Zitat': 'Wie soll ich antworten, wenn ich nicht gefragt werde?'.⁵

Elements of Taoism can also be seen in other poems. The closing stanza of 'An die Nachgeborenen' refers to the Taoist ideal of non-contention, passivity and quietism:

Ich wäre gerne auch weise.
In den alten Büchern steht, was weise ist:
Sich aus dem Streit der Welt halten und die kurze Zeit
Ohne Furcht verbringen
Auch ohne Gewalt auskommen

1. Werke, XI, 100.

2. For a general interpretation of this poem, see B. Schulz '"Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking auf dem Wege des Lao Tse in die Emigration"', Wirkendes Wort, 7 (1956-57), 81-86.

3. Werke, IX, 661. Cf. Wilhelm, LAOTSE, pp. 76, 86, 121.

4. Forke, Me-ti, p. 561. Cf. pp. 562, 403.

5. Werke, IX, 601.

Böses mit Gutem vergelten
 Seine Wünsche nicht erfüllen, sondern vergessen
 Gilt für weise.
 Alles das kann ich nicht:
 Wirklich, ich lebe in finsternen Zeiten! 1

This shows the same appreciation of Taoism that is evident in other references to this philosophy in Brecht's work. It is not a philosophy for reforming the world, but a creed to be adhered to when the political and social institutions have been rectified. For Brecht, Taoism signifies a non-religious doctrine of universal brotherhood. It is, however, utopian; it refers to a state of being that existed prior to the development of modern society with its acquisitiveness, utilitarian values, material corruption and system of prohibitions. Brecht's belief in an amoral society similar to that of Taoist conception can also be seen in the poem 'Was nützt die Güte':

Anstatt nur gütig zu sein, bemüht euch
 Einen Zustand zu schaffen, der die Güte
 ermöglicht, und besser:
 Sie überflüssig macht! 2

Brecht's attitude towards China and Chinese culture can be summarised under the headings of the poetic, the political and the philosophical. For Brecht, Chinese verse was represented by the poetry of Po-chü-i, which exemplifies those qualities of social criticism and lucid linguistic form that Brecht attempts to combine in his own lyric. Through translations of Po-chü-i's verse, Brecht articulates his own political views and documents his own despair at the state of the world. No evidence of any other influence is present in Brecht's poetry.

Brecht's political view of China is that of a land of revolutionary change, as in Die Maßnahme. The Chinese setting of his plays is

1. Werke, IX, 723.

2. Werke, IX, 553.

often used to make them dramatic statements upon the international nature of the revolutionary struggle. China does not appear as a separate political reality, but as an abstract example of the social forces at work within capitalism and of the strategies with which these must be countered.

Of greater significance than these two aspects of Brecht's response to China is his understanding of Chinese philosophy. The accepted view that Brecht regarded Confucianism as the only valid system of Chinese philosophy cannot be maintained. One must distinguish between Confucius' attitude and the content of his philosophical teachings. Brecht was certainly attracted to the figure of Confucius, the moral personality, who clung to a belief in the need for reform. He is represented by the figure of 'Der Zweifler'¹ in Brecht's poem of the same title. It is the attitude of constant questioning and self-assessment that attracted Brecht. But Confucian philosophy contained far too many deficiencies in its analysis of the causes of social turmoil for it to be a valid system of thought for Brecht. Confucius stresses that reform will only be achieved through moral education and propagates a philosophy that deals with the ethical values to which man must dedicate himself in order to regenerate society. For Brecht, such a philosophy was reactionary and could only contribute to the reinforcement of the moral and ideological superstructure of existing societies and thereby perpetuate the social injustices that were contained within these societies. Brecht subjects such views of a system of moral values to Taoist criticism in his work and shows that a society that considers itself ordered because of its regard for traditional moral values is, in fact, a perversion of the natural order that would flourish if society were so regulated that these values became superfluous.

1. Werke, IX, 587-588.

This criticism of Confucianism can best be seen in the Tui-Roman, where intellectuals seek to improve the world whilst ignoring its most basic fault. By employing Confucius' own theory of the confusion of terms, Brecht demonstrates the inadequacies of the Confucian system. This theory of the confusion of terms and its corollary of the rectification of terms is the single element of Confucian philosophy that Brecht finds adaptable to his analysis of the world. Brecht uses this theory not only to demonstrate the abuse of language as an ideological tool, but also to suggest a correct way of viewing the world. The confusion of terms in the modern world is, to Brecht's mind, symptomatic of the disarray in which man lives.

Brecht's own philosophy finds confirmation in Mencius and Me-ti rather than in Confucius. Mencius and Me-ti recognised the material basis of morality, and suggested reforms of the economic institutions of the state as well as the moral re-education of man. Taoism, in contrast, is the philosophy that Brecht applies to the utopia that will emerge from the material correction of the world. Its attitude to the degeneracy of society was also one that was adopted by Brecht as a means of survival in a world of violent struggle. This philosophy also taught the qualities of endurance and preached the victory of the weak and non-contentious over the strong, from which Brecht took solace during his years of exile.

The written forms of Chinese philosophy also provided Brecht with a formal model for the literary presentation of his own philosophy. The Confucian Analects, the Me-ti and the parables of the Tschuang-tse were adapted or copied by Brecht in order to give an illustrative form to his creed of reform and revolution.

As can be seen, Brecht is far more discriminating in his appreciation of Chinese philosophy than the majority of his contemporaries were. The exaggerated enthusiasm for Taoism that emerged in Germany

during the 1920s is not reflected in Brecht's work. Clearly his first readings of Lao-tse and Chinese verse were part of the then general interest in Oriental cultures. Brecht, however, viewed such enthusiasm critically and came to a personal, objective assessment of the value of Chinese philosophy.

Similarly, though his dramas have much in common with those of other communist authors who treated the background of the Chinese revolution, Brecht did not only have an interest in the China of revolutionary struggle. He continued to read the Chinese philosophers, whereas the other German authors dismissed all traditional Chinese culture as reactionary and therefore worthless.

Brecht's political views are never influenced by Chinese philosophy, but rather the reverse; elements of Chinese philosophy are adapted in order to suit his ideological purpose. It is for this reason that Brecht's understanding of Chinese philosophy and its influence upon him has been wrongly assessed by many Western critics. The Chinese philosophers often presented him with confirmation of his own views, or, more commonly, offered a novel perspective on, or illustration of ideas that he already held. Thus, whilst Taoism, Confucianism and Mohism differ radically in their original forms, Brecht is able to synthesise elements from each to offer insights into the corrupt order of the world and the way in which it might be corrected.

CONCLUSION

Within the German literary treatments of China and Chinese themes, three distinct images are apparent: the poetic, the religio-philosophical and the political. These images do not exist independently of each other, but are often facets of any one individual author's literary response to China.

The poetic image derived initially from the French translations of Chinese poetry, which introduced the T'ang Dynasty poets, Li-tai-pe and Tu-fu, to European readers and authors. The poets of German Impressionism were strongly attracted to this Oriental verse because of its confirmation of their own poetic creeds. The Chinese poets reflected the German authors' obsession with transience and the insubstantiality of the material world. Through the verse of Li-tai-pe and Tu-fu, German poets re-articulated the sombre mood of their own cultural despair and their feeling of cosmic futility. The most significant influence of the Chinese poets is to be seen in Arno Holz's 'revolutionary' lyric of the Phantasmus cycle. The poignant simplicity and suggestive techniques of Chinese verse were copied and adapted by Holz into examples of his newly-developed poetic creed.

One also finds a delight in the exotic quality of these historically, geographically and culturally remote Chinese figures. This flight into the poetic realms of other cultures is indicative of the malaise of the age and the alienation from Western culture. The discovery of an artistic and literary tradition of non-Western origin forced a re-assessment of the values of European cultural development. Whereas, during the nineteenth century, Chinese culture had been dismissed as degenerate, regressive and primitive, it now came to be valued as a sophisticated example of an alternative cultural development that was based upon spiritual rather than material conceptions of the world. This non-

material interpretation of reality and the artistic representation of this philosophy contributed to the development of non-realistic artistic creeds in Europe as authors abandoned the mimetic principle and countered Naturalism with a rediscovered belief in the primacy of spirit.

The generation of Expressionist poets refashioned the image by treating Li-tai-pe and Tu-fu as precursors of their own dithyrambic and mystical creeds. The melancholic, world-weary Li-tai-pe of Impressionism now became the ecstatic visionary of Expressionist self-realisation; and his drunken reveries were transformed into a creed of intoxicated self-assertion.

In this second generation one also finds a politicisation of the poetic, through the discovery of the poetry of Po-chü-i and the recognition of a strain of social criticism in the work of Li-tai-pe and Tu-fu. Material suffering, privation and social injustices dominate in Ehrenstein's poetic vision of China.

These three poets encompass the popular image of China to be found in the work of German authors. The brief scope of this interest in Chinese verse indicates only a limited understanding of the Chinese poetic tradition. The adaptations and free re-treatments of this Chinese poetry show slight regard for the aesthetic value of the originals, which are distorted in order to make them an expression of the German poet's beliefs.

A second aspect of this poetic image is that of the imaginative literary creation around Chinese themes, which is to be found in the adaptations of Chinese novellas. Within these is recognisable a neo-romantic literary treatment of reality. The themes of these fairy-tales and folk-tales, which deal predominantly with the supernatural, show an idealistic belief in a non-material realm and the primacy of spirit over matter. This use of the Chinese tradition shows a readiness to

attribute idealistic qualities to the Chinese. These Chinese fairy-tales, like Chinese verse, confirmed a belief in the existence of man's spiritual qualities; a belief which the rationalism of Western development had suppressed. The occult features of these Chinese works attracted a broad readership in a society which was seeking to overcome its own materialism, but whose literature had lost this strain of idealist thought.

Within these freer inventions around Chinese or pseudo-Chinese themes one also notes a mocking of this serious interest in China. This can be seen in Bierbaum's Das schöne Mädchen von Pao and in the many dramatic treatments of Chinese themes. These began as pure chinoiserie but later developed into a form that verges on self-parody, as in the later versions of Turandot. Only Klabund's Kreidekreis attempts to combine the exotic escapism of the chinoiserie with a serious Chinese philosophical theme. Other plays simply use China as a realm for imaginative creation, or as a metaphor for German conditions.

The philosophical interest in China, which is combined with the religious aspects of the poetic treatment of Chinese themes, was concerned primarily with Taoism. This previously neglected Chinese philosophical tradition was one of the many mystical, idealistic creeds which Germans adopted in the first quarter of the present century. Often combined with aspects of other religious traditions, it became an alternative religion to the Western institutionalised creeds. Taoism was made to conform to the Expressionist creed of regeneration through the discovery of the essential self. Politically, Taoism was interpreted variously as utopian socialism or cultural collectivism.

Confucianism was similarly treated and, although it is a rational philosophy, it was regarded by many as a form of mysticism and became a substitute religion. For others, Confucianism indicated a form of

self-regeneration which would lead to a Germanic renaissance through the consolidation of past cultural traditions. The moral order of the Confucian view of social reality became an example of an ideal hierarchical social system dominated by a strict code of social mores and governed by an intellectual aristocracy. Through Taoism other forms of renewal were envisaged, some of an asocial, anarchist nature. As German society became politically polarised, the interpretation of the Chinese philosophical traditions became increasingly idiosyncratic and extreme.

The political interpretations of China include those referred to above. But, whilst such interpretations were based upon the reading of the Chinese Confucian and Taoist canons, and had little in common with the then contemporary political reality of China, the political image of China was also based upon current political developments in China. Some authors regarded China as the embodiment of Confucian tenets, and recognised the Chinese social and political structure as an exemplary form based upon natural morality and human recognition of man's ethical role. Whilst such authors regarded the Confucian state as an expression of a transcendent moral order, others criticised Confucianism as the negation of all human freedoms, and regarded this philosophy as a contributory factor to the injustices of human exploitation. For the politically more extreme authors of the left, the Chinese revolution became a paradigm for the processes of Marxist dialectical materialism. China was thus to become a politically exemplary state for two radically different groups. For some, the traditional Confucian state was a divinely ordained organism regulated by human reason, and the perfect example of human freedom and dignity. To others, China exemplified the revolutionary struggle for self-determination. For these latter authors the traditional China exhibited all the ills of a pre-revolutionary state.

These various images appear in modified form in Brecht's work. For Brecht, Chinese poetry is represented by the lyric of Po-chü-i, in whose work bitter social criticism and constant self-questioning were combined with a subtle formal poetic quality, which Brecht recognised as the only valid form of literature. Brecht's response to the philosophical traditions of China is more complex. In Confucianism he could see only a reactionary system of social values that perpetuated the injustices of society. Confucius' moral personality certainly attracted Brecht, but the Confucian code represented part of the ideological superstructure of a pre-revolutionary society, and was, therefore, unacceptable to Brecht. The only aspect of Confucianism that could serve Brecht as a critical tool was the theory of the confusion of terms, which demonstrated the deviation of society from its own abstract values. Similarly, other Chinese philosophies were of only limited applicability for Brecht. Mohism served as a formal model rather than a body of influential thought. Of greater interest to Brecht was the Taoist theory of natural anarchy, which he compared to the degradation of man through the capitalist system of exploitation. For Brecht, Taoism complemented the Confucian view of the world. Confucianism showed how perverted social values were reflected in ethical terms; Taoism demonstrated that, when the social basis of life had been properly regulated, all such terms would disappear. This rather abstract philosophy also shows Brecht's response to the political reality of China, with which he dealt in his plays. These plays are not exclusively Chinese but, like the work of other communist authors, are intended as universal examples of an ideological struggle.

Whilst the twentieth-century literary response to China shows an obvious advancement from the clichéd image that was to be found in German literature at the end of the nineteenth century, it is clear from the above discussion that the re-assessment of Chinese culture depended more

upon the state of Europe than the reality of China. Within the changing image of China, one recognises a constant process of re-evaluation of European culture. Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when Europe was supremely confident of her cultural role, China was dismissed as barbaric. When, however, this self-confidence began to fragment, China took on new meaning and became an example of the possibility of an alternative development from that of the West. As the West sank into a religious, political and spiritual crisis, so China's static nature, her religiosity, spirituality and cultural stability became qualities that the European admired. But this enthusiasm for Chinese culture was short-lived. As cultural values changed in Germany, China again receded into obscurity. The fashionable sinophilia of the 1920s left no enduring image in German literature and thought.

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