

**QUOTATION AND LITERARY ECHO AS
STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLES IN
GABRIELE WOHMANN'S
*FRÜHHERBST IN BADENWEILER***

WALTER H. SOKEL
University of Virginia

Gabriele Wohmann's novel, *Frühherbst in Badenweiler*, (*Early Autumn in Badenweiler*) (1978), is unusually interesting for at least three reasons. First, it is one of the most delightfully ironic depictions of the so-called New Inwardness (*Neue Innerlichkeit*) of recent German literary and intellectual life. Second, it reaches back in a most striking and successful manner to a long-past period of modernist literature to which the term Alexandrian (or, in Gottfried Benn's version, «Ptolemaic») applies. Nourished by encyclopaedic erudition, this literature thrived on a pessimistic conviction that one belonged to the terminal phase of Western civilization, and utilized quotations, allusions, and cultural-historical references to fashion its ironic vision of modern man. Third, with the montage technique inherited from these «classics of modernism,» Gabriele Wohmann sketches the contemporary artist-intellectual's dilemma in the German Federal Republic of the seventies.

New Inwardness is usually seen as a decided reaction against the socially engaged literature of the sixties and early seventies. If so, Gabriele Wohmann had been its representative all along, long before the cliché was heard of. However, not until her great novel, *Schönes Gehege* (1975), did New Inwardness become programmatic and problematic in her work. The protagonist of *Schönes Gehege*, the writer Plath, protests the socialization and commercialization of the artist, and resists his submission to the media. In the following novel, *Frühherbst in Badenweiler*, Gabriele

Wohmann begins where she left off in *Schönes Gehege*. In this novel she presents New Inwardness in all its aspects, and at the same time satirizes and transcends it.

Badenweiler, a magically idyllic spa situated near the Swiss border between Black Forest and Rhine, caters to those elderly who can afford to be served. Finding himself on the threshold of the male «climacteric,» the composer Hubert Frey chooses Badenweiler as a refuge from contemporary life and its insistence on perpetual youth. He feels in need of a «vacation» from its dynamism. In the patinaed haute bourgeois Park Hotel, time appears to have stopped somewhere in the nineteenth century. Here he hopes to find peace and comfort. «That everything here is so historical seems to me to be another important ingredient of the Badenweiler atmosphere. It makes me feel that I am not superfluous» (173).¹ At the same time, to be sure, he notes with some relief that «the policy of preserving the past which guides the decor of the rooms does not include the sanitary locales» (187).

In him New Inwardness appears as a New Conservatism, which looks back with nostalgia to the period of post-Napoleonic restauration in Central Europe usually referred to as *Biedermeier*. Frey has rediscovered the greatness of Schubert and also confesses with newly-won daring his treasonous defection from progressive modernity to which his enthusiasm for the Badenweiler spa orchestra and its sweet-sentimental potpourris from ancient operettas testifies. He is in the process of acquiring a good conscience for favoring Kitsch, provided, of course, that it is Kitsch of very long ago.

Anton Chekhov and, Hubert erroneously believes, Conrad Aiken died in the Park Hotel, and in fact these «memorial-worthy deaths» had recommended the hotel to him as particularly congenial. But his snobbish wish to be properly connected with the past receives a bad jolt. He has to let himself be advised by a true connoisseur that a proper snob would never have chosen the parvenu Park Hotel. Anyone in the know would certainly have taken up residence in the authentically ancient and far better-renowned Hotel Roman Baths. We note, already at this point, that Wohmann achieves her satirical effects by correcting false information by which the values which have made her protagonist look for such information in the first place are unmasked as false. Hubert Frey's snobbish opposition to the democratic levelling typical of the contemporary world proves to be based upon judgments that are

mistaken even within their own framework. Culture as consoling self-flattery turns out to be literally misinformed.

In *Frühherbst in Badenweiler*, New Inwardness turns out to be a new version of the old topos of the Non-Political German. Again and again Hubert Frey's meditations refer the wary reader back to Thomas Mann's *Meditations of a Non-Political Man* (1918). Frey notes with gratification that the patrons of the Park Hotel «keep out of all politics» (223), even if it comes from the right. They are too refined to chime in with the popular conservative clamor for extreme measures against terrorism. They nobly ignore the «hideous song» of politics altogether. Yet, at the same time, he identifies himself in his Badenweiler «hideout» with the President of the Employers' Association of the Federal Republic whom leftist terrorists have kidnapped, a fact which ironically points out the conservative bias of «non-political man.» Frey renounces allegiance to the «democratic duty to communicate» which he sees as «the new super-ego» of the Federal Republic. He finds that socially engaged art does not meet anyone's need, since the so-called «disadvantaged» whom it is supposed to serve find socially significant art meaningless and greatly prefer «escapist» Kitsch to it. They simply fail to see the social message as applicable to them. Frey wishes to rid himself of his own «asinine guilt feeling» vis-à-vis the «*common man*» and «*the worker*» (both terms are italicized in the text). Against «atheistic chic» he sides with «transcendence» (105), and he signs a letter with «your society-, state-, and theater-weary Hubert Frey» (192).

Hubert Frey's true enemy is not the left *per se*. His real foe is that power which forms our contemporary consciousness—the media industry. Creativeness, formerly the preserve of solitary genius absorbed in itself, has become the prized merchandise of the media. Even the «way into inwardness» (86) itself has been occupied by «the culture business.» Our composer has decided to renounce a creativeness thus prostituted and to keep himself out of the public relations circuit on which talent is sold to the public. Savoring his secluded view of the forest from his room, he sees the Park Hotel as a vestibule leading to his «imminent breakdown.» Waiting for its coming, he might perhaps amuse himself writing a book about Schubert, or one about the effects of rain on human beings. He tries to become a «quietist in the land.» He wants to dive under, to submerge himself in the nerve-calming anonymity of a new version of Romantic *Waldeinsamkeit*.

Very intent on preserving his youthful appearance, despite his contempt of the modern cult of youth, Hubert Frey assures himself that «as a phaenotype,» he would be preserving «something slightly indefinable.» The term «phaenotype» («Phänotyp») is taken from one of Gottfried Benn's longer narratives, entitled «Roman des Phänotyp» (1944), which Benn published in his volume *Der Ptolemäer* (1947). It thus immediately establishes a link to Alexandrian literature. In Germany it was above all Gottfried Benn who, as the title of his collection *Der Ptolemäer* proclaims, raised Alexandrianism to the creative principle of modern writing. In Alexandrian literature, encyclopaedic learning serves as the building material of literature. The creative act does not lie in the synchronizing vision of widely disparate realms of knowledge. Allusions, parodies, combinations, and variations of the scattered fragments of the cultural heritage of modern man create an art befitting an age oppressed by its sense of lateness and decline. Such a «Ptolemaic art» had gone out of fashion after Benn. Confronted with the problems left by the horrible Nazi past, preoccupied with the East/West division plaguing the present, and shocked by the excesses of vulgarity spawned by the «economic miracle,» the literature of West Germany had to pursue very different paths. In such a context Gabriele Wohmann's novel constitutes a new beginning re-orienting and re-connecting West German literature with forgotten achievements of the not-so-distant past. *Frühherbst in Badenweiler* is a work of narrative literature in which the means of Alexandrianism—quotation, literary allusion, explicit and implicit literary echo—are fundamental means of ironic characterization.

Alexandrian literature, with its linguistic collage and cultural-historical montage, has not been merely a passing phase of literary history. It is closely linked to tendencies of our own time which reach far beyond *belles-lettres*. In his *Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom shows how literature always defines itself by self-assertion against preceding literature. Literature serves literature as a frame of reference and inspiration. Bloom's theory seems so very persuasive today because it corresponds to a view which, shaped by linguistics, structuralism, and analytic philosophy, sees man primarily not as an individual, but as a recipient, transmitter, and communicator of collectively formed material. Equivalent expressions of this view in *belles lettres* are, among many others, the novels of Samuel Beckett and Thomas Pynchon, and the plays of Peter Handke and Harold Pinter. However, this view is not as new

as it is held to be today. It was precisely the Alexandrianism of the by now «classical modernism» of the first half of our century, which served as its godparent. The same T. S. Eliot who in his *Waste Land* created a masterpiece of Alexandrian literature emphasized in his criticism the enormous importance which «tradition» holds for «the individual talent,» and defended this view energetically against two opponents from opposite sides—the Kantian-Romantic doctrine of original genius on the one hand, and the doctrine of mimetic realism, on the other.

Using the methods of Alexandrian literature, Gabriele Wohmann's novel makes «the anxiety of influence» its subject. Like Brecht, Wohmann uses quotation and literary allusion as a means of social-cultural critique. She challenges the reader to transcend the posture she portrays. The author ironically undermines the fashionable identification of the individual with Literature by showing its problematical basis. I shall try to substantiate these comments by two examples—one a quotation, the other a literary allusion.

A quotation from one of Goethe's letters to Charlotte von Stein, written on a journey through the Harz Mountains, plays an important structural role in *Frühherbst in Badenweiler*.

I have at last arrived *in a region as uninteresting as a soul when it experiences the highest state of well-being.* (110)

«Ich bin nun endlich angelangt IN EINER GEGEND, SO UNINTERESSANT WIE EINE SEELE, WENN SIE SICH AM WOHLSTEN BEFINDET,...

As Hubert admits later on, he has not quoted accurately (Goethe does not write «Wie eine Seele» but «Als eine Seele») and, without admitting it, Hubert has also changed and condensed Goethe's text. What shall first occupy us, however, is Hubert's purpose in quoting this passage.

Ostensibly the passage from Goethe's letter expresses the significance Badenweiler holds for Hubert. He identifies with that period in Goethe's life when the poet had begun to reject the Storm and Stress of his youth and was about to enter his «classical period.» Goethe himself, in this letter, anticipates the quietistic ideal of the subsequent *Biedermeier* restoration which was to follow the defeat of the much broader and more far-reaching «Storm and Stress» of the French Revolution and Napoleon.

Hubert Frey's «Frühherbst» echoes Adalbert Stifter's *Nachsommer*—an «early autumn» patterned on the *Biedermeier* classicist's *Indian Summer*—and Stifter's *Nachsommer* in turn conceived of itself as the late echo of Goethe's classical moment. From the woods of Goethe's Harz Mountains, where his classicist quietism found its first voice, to Hubert Frey's Black Forest, which begins at his Park Hotel, the road leads through that «German Forest», which through Romanticism and *Biedermeier*—Tieck's *Waldeinsamkeit*, the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm, the poems of Eichendorff, the «Hochwald» of Adalbert Stifter—has entered the landscape of the German and European mind. Since Goethe's «Harzreise,» the woods of Germany have become a favorite *locus amoenus* of German Inwardness; they have served as its refuge from the ever-more pressing demands of a rapidly changing world.

The woods begin conveniently right in front of Frey's window in that Park Hotel where he experiences that «highest state of well-being» which Goethe compares to the «uninteresting» landscape where he has «at last arrived.» Hubert praises the woods in a projected letter to his sister Cilli as a sheltering retreat from the «questionable *Interessantheiten*» of contemporary life that threaten to tear him apart with their incessant demands. He wishes to confide to Cilli to whom subtly incestuous bonds seem to tie him, and whom he calls «a little bit *my* Charlotte» (175f.), what the forest has come to mean to them both. The forest, he tells her, is more congenial to them than the sea. In former years, to be sure, the sea had been their «common element.» «Lately,» however, the forest has «taken on» this role (162). «The sea,» he writes, «is too rebellious for me, too interesting, you understand? Strictly secretive like the forest, yes, but not domestic» (186). He equates «the interesting» with the rebellious and extends praise of «the uninteresting,» authorized by Goethe, to include «boredom,» anathema to all modern, dynamic, and progressive sensibilities. Praise of boredom amounts to a provocative rejection of the spirit of revolt of the sixties which Hubert wishes to put as far behind him as Goethe, during his infatuation with Charlotte von Stein, wished to leave his Storm and Stress behind him. The avowed preference for the «uninteresting» woods over the «undomestic» and «rebellious» sea makes clear that it is not Romanticism *per se* to which Hubert wishes to return, but to its subdued and «domesticated» afterglow, the smugly provincial *Biedermeier*. Hubert's recently kindled passion for Schubert, which has displac-

ed his former love for Bach, is perfectly consistent with this newly acquired cultural nostalgia. That he saves his special love for the linden tree of «Am Brunnen vor dem Tore,» places Hubert in a straight line of succession from Thomas Mann's Castorp, who had indulged his fancy for this particular Schubert Lied when his lengthening stay on the Magic Mountain began to degenerate into a fatuous idleness and pointless self-indulgence. Unlike Hans Castorp, Hubert Frey is not a «burgher gone astray.» He is an ex-bohemian seeking to save himself by trying to re-enter the lost paradise of the bourgeois era which the technological revolution and its accompanying cultural-moral changes seem to have irrevocably closed to shipwrecks of modernity like himself.

The sphere of the «interesting» from which Hubert Frey seeks to save himself is, on the one hand, the cult of sexuality in which he no longer cares to (or perhaps is no longer able to) participate, and, on the other hand, the contemporary culture market with its «groupings, memberships, and conferences» (170). The category of «the interesting,» which had its roots in Romanticism, has degenerated into the media event, the scoop of the showmen. The interesting has become the latest, *le dernier cri* and *le dernier coup*, which makes thousands talk of nothing else for a few weeks. Walter Benjamin, in his essay on «The Storyteller,» has shown through the example of the oldest of the media, the newspaper, that the life center of the modern age has become the production of items of «interest.» The way of life produced by the modern newspaper has been, of course, infinitely accelerated and expanded by the rise of the younger media, radio and television, since Benjamin's diagnosis was made. Constantly driven to outdo the newest sensation by a still newer and even more sensational one, the life-style fostered by the media leads, according to Walter Benjamin, to the destruction of any feeling of continuity. As Gabriele Wohmann's novel shows, the cult of the interesting imposes upon the individual artist the frightening task of surpassing himself continuously, not in the direction of further development, but, on the contrary, toward a constant negating and displacement of his established image by a new one. The old image has outlived its newsworthiness and consequently has to give way to an image that will catch the public by surprise. The modern artist is forced to live in constant dread of being thrown into the dustbin of history, if he cannot come up with an entirely new style and persona each time he offers himself to public judgment. Above all the prospect of being

forgotten or considered «*passé*» and «old fashioned,» past the ability to arouse excitement, horrifies him. His younger colleagues (in Frey's case his own students) constantly threaten to displace him because their still untested and unlabelled youth promises a reservoir of novelty and potential excitement which the media are eager to exploit. The young must have an indisputable edge over the established artist whose image is already fixed and who is, therefore, with every passing moment, losing in interest and marketability. He can hope to maintain interest in himself only through constant self-reversals.

The servility of art to the media poses a special problem to the artist as he enters his middle years—a stage of life which Hubert Frey has now attained. Apparently out of protest against a perceived societal evil, he escapes into the «uninteresting region,» Badenweiler, spa for the aging, which is ignored by all those to whom the future belongs. Hubert Frey's espousal of the uninteresting as a superior value appears non-conformist and «courageous» in the face of the tyrannical cult of novelty which the media have fostered. His retreat seems a gesture of authentic cultural protest, a sincere act of rejection of degraded social values. The dust jacket of the novel seems to encourage such an interpretation:

The total situation was to blame,
the situation of the artist, which
had simply ceased to inspire ease.

But by examining further the themes of Goethe and the interesting, we shall see that this is not quite the case.

First of all, Frey does not quote accurately, nor is he certain of the quoted date. Thus his act of quoting Goethe's quietistic classicism, by which the cult of the interesting is to be displaced, emerges in a somewhat ironic light. The irony is deepened when Hubert pictures to himself the delight of writing an essay about historical simultaneity, investigating, for example, what Franz Schubert had been doing on that day, September 6, 1780, when Goethe wrote to Charlotte von Stein. However, as the reader knows, or can easily ascertain in any encyclopedia, Schubert had not yet been born. The target of irony is thus historicism itself, insofar as it represents a luxuriating in cultural nostalgia as a self-indulgent and defensive reaction to the perverted «*littérature*

engagée» of the sixties. Hubert Frey's justly negative response to the horror underneath the glitter of the media-dominated age is not nourished by true values nor even by correct knowledge. It is only a pretense of historical culture, which posits the past sentimentally as the *ersatz* life for an un-lived present and its unsolved problems.

You may indulge [Hubert encourages himself] in a little sourness, a little arrogance, a little Victorianism. After all, you have had sufficient acquaintance with *the realm of the interesting* (181).

Thus he absolves himself from the obligation to be the contemporary of his time. Badenweiler, as Hubert Frey's chosen form of life, embodies not genuine resistance to, but arrogant evasion of the socio-cultural malaise against which he inveighs.

There is a second context in which the Goethe quotation is used as an ironic comment on Hubert's mere escapism from contemporary reality. With the enthusiastic exclamation: «This could truly be by myself!» (176), Hubert feels justified to «perhaps omit Goethe altogether as the author [of the quoted sentence] from his letter to Cilli...» (176). Since Goethe's formulation had anticipated his own feelings so perfectly, there would be nothing wrong, he feels, in making the identification complete. However, he is honest enough to realize that he is not as close to Goethe as he wishes to appear.

The fact that Goethe moved *on horseback*, allowed himself to be involved with *a horse*, raised him in boldness and capacity of experience a hundredfold above Hubert (176).

Hubert realizes that the distance of the quoting intellectual of today from the culture hero of the past is enormous. However, he does not draw the honest and obvious conclusion from his insight. He does not renounce his self-identification with his historical model. In bad faith, «he preferred to remember only those features which [Goethe and he] had in common.» Therefore he is tempted to omit Goethe's name, pretending that Goethe's words are his own. Quotation turns into plagiarism, and the self-deception that underlies Hubert's entire Badenweiler project, degenerates into outright fraud. We encounter in this the same dishonesty which made Hubert welcome the old-fashioned fur-

nishings of his hotel room and at the same time sigh with relief that this cultural nostalgia stopped at the bathroom door. With this tiny, but highly revealing bit of hypocrisy, the text satirizes Frey's historicism as bad faith.

So far we have observed how Gabriele Wohmann uses quotation, a favorite device of Alexandrianism, to let the problematical aspects of her hero's historicism come into view. The function of quotation in her novel is to show that her protagonist's point of view does pose and illuminate a serious and pressing problem—that of the ageing artist in a quickly consuming era which threatens to become historical with respect to itself every few years. However, the attempt to escape from this problem, rather than to meet it, serves as the butt of her irony. Her ironic-satirical intent becomes even more obvious, if we examine the function that literary reference—as distinct from quotation—plays in her novel.

Hubert Frey has selected Badenweiler as his place of refuge because two famous authors, Anton Chekhov and, as he mistakenly assumes, Conrad Aiken had died there. The reference to Conrad Aiken will prove essential to the understanding of Gabriele Wohmann's intentions in the novel.

One of Conrad Aiken's best-known works, the short story, «Silent Snow, Secret Snow,» is told from the perspective of a boy who quite deliberately substitutes an illusion for the reality in which he finds himself. He talks himself into believing that an unending snowfall, perceptible only to himself, begins to separate him gradually from his fellow men and estranges him from reality to the point where he loses all possibility of staying in touch with other human beings. The snow symbolizes not only death or madness, but also the power of the imagination and the exclusiveness of the self as it seeks to distinguish itself from all others. Apart from the protagonist, no one can perceive that inner and unique reality which appears to the self as snow unseen by others. Only the self knows of the secret snowfall.

For the child protagonist of Aiken's story, the snow serves the same function that Badenweiler serves for Hubert Frey. The adjective «silent» in «silent snow» alludes to that withdrawal into silence which the composer Hubert Frey seeks to enter, and the two adjectives «silent» and «secret» point to his desired isolation. It is significant that he wishes to recommend this story especially to his sister Cilli, to whom a secret quasi-incestuous intellectual-spiritual love binds him. Their relationship partakes of a secret which is

theirs alone. This narcissistic passion forms a counterpoint to Hubert's marriage to the chain-smoking, public-relations activist Selma. Selma is characterized by that non-stop communication not atypical of Berliners. While Selma—bursting with energy and breathlessly involved in perpetually engaging causes—represents Hubert's exit gate into the contemporary world, Cilli embodies his romantic yearning for infinity, silent self-communion, fusion with infinity through love or death.

The invisible snow of Conrad Aiken's story, like Hubert Frey's retreat to Badenweiler, (which is above all also a «vacation» from Selma) is not simply to be equated with death as cessation of consciousness. It represents rather the consciously savored pleasure of experiencing the approach of death. Aiken's child hero takes a special delight in the ever-faster fading away of the sounds made by the mailman in the morning, because they indicate that the wall of snow around him is growing higher and higher. But when the morning comes when he can no longer hear the mailman's steps, he grieves over this ending of his desire for the end. Now that the snow has cut him off forever from all the sounds and signs of life, he wishes the total isolation he had longed for had not come so soon.

The snow in Aiken's story obviously represents inwardness and the imagination as well as death. It points to what might loosely be called romanticism or «the poetic,» conceived of in popularly romantic terms. In any event, Conrad Aiken, as the author of the story, and his supposed death in Badenweiler signify that complex for Hubert Frey. Within the framework of Wohmann's novel, longing for death, the theme of Aiken's story, is equated with living according to literary models. Both Aiken and Chekhov are thought to have died in Badenweiler. In consequence, Badenweiler had become the desirable and sacred *locus* to which Hubert Frey retired in order to find a soothing and voluptuous surcease from the stresses of life. It thus corresponds to the snow fall in Aiken's story. Withdrawal into the New Inwardness emerges as the latest descendant of that «Sympathie mit dem Tode» which had lured Thomas Mann's «problem child of life,» Hans Castorp, up the Magic Mountain of luxurious disease.

Closely analogous to the «magic mountain» of Thomas Mann's Davos, Hubert Frey's Badenweiler represents not merely the Romantic lure of death, but at the same time its successful overcoming. Snow, as we recall, also plays a vital role in Thomas Mann's *Bildungsroman*. The chapter entitled «Snow» shows both

climax and conquest of that «interest in death and disease» which holds Hans Castorp captive. In *Frühherbst in Badenweiler*, it is a fictive snowfall, which through its author, Conrad Aiken, exercises the same double function of bringing the protagonist's fascination with «sweet easeful death» to a head, while at the same time serving as the catalyst that frees him from it. In Thomas Mann's novel, indebted as it still is to the conventions of literary realism, it is the fiction of an actual snow fall experienced by that hero on a solitary ski trip in the Swiss Alps that functions as the causal circumstance of the ideological peripeteia. In Gabriele Wohmann's novel, which makes literary echo and reference its theme, the same function is assumed by a literary snowfall. With this ironic shift in causation, Wohmann shows herself to be the contemporary of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*. In her fiction, the character's decisive experiences issue from other literature rather than from his own life, as is still the case in Thomas Mann's novel. Life is shown to be shaped by literature.

At the end of the novel, Hubert Frey learns that he had been misinformed in thinking that Conrad Aiken had died in Badenweiler. To be sure, an American writer had indeed died there, but it was not Conrad Aiken; it was Stephen Crane. What had lured Hubert Frey to Badenweiler and kept him there turns out to have been false—an imagined literary echo, not an authentic one.

Of course, Stephen Crane was also an author. Thus his death can be seen as much a literary echo as Conrad Aiken's. However, if we examine the vast and crucial difference between the two writers' treatment of the same subject, the full scope of Gabriele Wohmann's irony becomes apparent.

Both Americans had authored stories which had snow as their theme—which explains Hubert Frey's confusing Aiken with Crane. In Wohmann's text, the title of Crane's story is given as «Schneesturm.» The real title in the English original is «Men in the Storm.» Even though Crane's plot also centers around a snow storm, content and intent of the two snow tales greatly diverge. Stephen Crane's story deals with real snow and is a bitter indictment of social conditions. The plot is laid in New York City in a snow storm during the depression of the eighteen eighties. It shows the miseries of the unemployed who, shivering in the snow storm, are reduced to waiting in line for a plate of warm soup which will be doled out to them by the asylum. The raging snow storm does not symbolize anything; it merely underlines the grim exposure to the

elements to which an inadequate social system abandons its wretched victims. A far cry indeed from Conrad Aiken's tale in which snow symbolizes an inwardness reaching out beyond the body's imprisonment in empirical reality. Conrad Aiken's snow is precisely not the mimetic portrait of real-life weather that Crane's snow so decidedly is. Aiken's «snow» is the symbol of the attempt to transcend the reality with which human beings as creatures of nature and society have to deal. In terms of form, the difference between Crane and Aiken is that between naturalism and symbolism. In terms of authorial intention, it is the difference between socio-critical engagement and the illumination of a psychic proclivity for death. At the end of Wohmann's novel, the literary echo of Romanticism and symbolism—Conrad Aiken—literally turns out to be the wrong echo. The error is corrected, again literally, by a reference to the literature of realism and social criticism. The twist in the plot of *Frühherbst in Badenweiler* amounts to a value statement about literature. The literature of realism and social awareness proves to be literally «correct,» i.e., it is based on the factually correct information. The romantic-symbolist literature of inwardness and subjectivity, on the other hand, proves to be literally «inappropriate» to Hubert Frey's circumstances. Thereby a judgment is made about Hubert Frey's retreat into the New Inwardness of Badenweiler. What had enticed him to Badenweiler has been a mistake. The sequence of the narrated events leads from the error of inwardness to the correctness of social awareness, and this in turn, leads to Hubert Frey's final encounter with a part of physical reality which will drive him out of his room in the Park Hotel and back into the everyday reality which he had tried to flee.

A mouse invades Hubert's cosy hotel room and sends him back to an active and creative involvement in life. Confronting the intolerable intrusion into his privacy that the mouse represents, Hubert has to make a decision for the first time in the story. His decision is to move out without further ado, to cut short his «vacation» from life (a literary echo of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities?*) and return to his job as a university teacher, and to his work as a composer.

The correction of Hubert Frey's literary-historical error prefigures the concluding encounter with reality in its most basic form. The displacement of the «enormous» symbolist by the «appropriate» realist points ahead to the switch from a life according to literary models to a life of action in empirical-social reality.

«Make your decision!» Hubert Frey exhorts himself during the decisive confrontation with the mouse, which will put an abrupt end to his nostalgically stylized retreat.

The exit is open, after all....The spring of Hubert's mousetrap was released. Start doing something with your—so dreadfully brief—life! (266)

Frey's self-exhortation to a «vie engagée» is followed appropriately by his adoption of a new perspective on his life. He forces himself to view himself from outside, with detachment, instead of savoring his reactions to his life inwardly. He examines the two actors in the drama—the mouse and himself—from an objective point of view.

Which of them was more helpless, looked at from an over-all perspective, the mouse or Hubert? Surely not Hubert, who besides had been allotted a much more generous time span for reflecting (266).

With this passage the text ends. Seen from this ending, Badenweiler, and with it the New Inwardness, turns out to have been no more than a passing breakdown, a mouse trap that had luckily been left unsprung.

In Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, the overcoming of German inwardness is accomplished by nothing short of a World War. It takes nothing less than that cataclysmic event to drive Hans Castorp down from his retreat. In Gabriele Wohmann's *Badenweiler*, a mouse suffices to bring about a comparable result. Thus the literary echo «Magic Mountain» that underlies *Badenweiler* is ironized as well. The mountain has become a hotel room and World War I has become a mouse. Ironization of literary echo, decisive device for the structure of the novel, functions thematically as the cure for that modish and passing relapse into German Inwardness which early autumn in *Badenweiler* symbolizes.

NOTES

1. All quotations and references are my translations from the text: Gabriele Wohmann, *Frühherbst in Badenweiler*. Roman. Darmstadt and Neuwied, Luchterhand Verlag, 1978. The numbers in parentheses refer to the pages in this text.