

## GOETHE AND PRESENT-DAY GERMAN WRITERS

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THE adoption of the German Constitution, in 1919, by the constitutional assembly convoked at Weimar was a gesture denoting that that meeting in Weimar should be a symbol, that the new Germany should attempt to establish contact with the glorious past of Germany, with the world of Wieland, Herder, Schiller, Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte and Schelling, and above all Goethe. In a celebration of the centennial of Goethe's death it has seemed worthwhile to examine in a limited field whether this symbolical meeting of the constitutional assembly in Weimar was a mere gesture, or whether the spirit of Weimar, the spirit of Goethe, is actually a potent force in the Germany of today. I have chosen to investigate what rôle Goethe is playing in the thought of present-day German writers. And I am not thinking in the first place, or at least not exclusively, of Goethe merely as the literary artist in the narrower sense, but of the greater Goethe, the literary artist, the thinker, the prophet, the sage, the man whose greatest work of art may have been his own life.

What does this Goethe, who belongs to the twentieth century in a higher degree than he does to the eighteenth and nineteenth, signify to the vital personalities in present-day German literature?

I realize how imponderable are influences and spiritual kinships, such as I speak of; but we have a great wealth of reasoned expression on our subject by the leading German writers of today. In the main I am not quoting from opinions called forth by the present Centennial, since these might be considered conventional and of no inner significance.

I shall limit myself to a consideration of a half-dozen of the outstanding authors, whose fame has spread beyond the boundaries of Germany. All are well known in America through translations. They represent movements in German literature as diverse as possible. In this very diversity lies much of the significance of the Goethean appeal.

These writers are Hugo von Hofmannsthal (the only one of the group no longer living), Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Jakob

Wassermann, Ricarda Huch, Gerhart Hauptmann. Most of these writers have eagerly accepted publishers' offers to write introductions to Goethe's works;<sup>1</sup> the one who has not done so, Ricarda Huch, has written a complete work on Goethe's thought.

When we speak of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, we think instinctively first of the friend of Stefan George and Rainer Maria Rilke, of the movement opposed to the crass materialism of German naturalistic literature, of the insistence on "art for art's sake," of a thin volume of exquisite poems, and of a play, *Der Tor und der Tod*, which have been accused by some critics as expressing the decadence of an over-ripe culture. Only in the last decade have we begun to realize the significance of Hofmannsthal's prose, the prose of a great interpreter of poetry and life. Most important are those passages devoted to the interpretation of Goethe.

Two of the works of Goethe which have always been most inaccessible to the ordinary cultivated reader are *Torquato Tasso* and the *Westöstliche Divan*. In *Unterhaltung über den "Tasso" von Goethe*<sup>2</sup> Hofmannsthal pictures the reaction of four members of the Viennese aristocracy to *Tasso* and particularly to the key figure of the Princess, whose truth they question. One of those present later sends to the others an anonymous typewritten characterization of the Princess and of the environment from which she grew. Why anonymous and typewritten? Because the portrayal is too chaste, the subject of the portrayal too fragile and sacred to be made the theme of a later reopened discussion. Hofmannsthal's re-creation of *Tasso*, but particularly of the Princess, is to my mind easily the most discerning introduction to an understanding of the Princess that has ever been written. I have called the Princess the key-figure of the play. In Hofmannsthal's re-creation the reaction toward Tasso's deed, when he embraces the Princess, now appears as an organic Goethean reaction. Tasso's action is called "monstrous" in the play. Critics have seen in this a sign of Goethe's servility toward court etiquette; Hofmannsthal recognized it as "monstrous," because Tasso does violence to the reverence due the personality of the Princess as the human being she is—a truly Goethean conception.

At the same time it is significant to note the inner kinship be-

<sup>1</sup>The most important is the Ullstein edition of Goethe's works in twenty volumes, Berlin 1923. Referred to in the following notes as *Ullstein*.

<sup>2</sup>*Gesammelte Werke. Erste Reihe. Bd. II, 251 ff.*

tween such a figure as the Princess and Hofmannsthal, both of them products of an aristocratic culture, almost hyper-culture, on the one hand the rarefied atmosphere surrounding a princess of a royal house, on the other hand the rarefied atmosphere of the Viennese world of aestheticism.

Of even greater importance than the *Unterhaltung über den "Tasso"* is Hofmannsthal's six-page introduction to *Der Westöstliche Divan*.<sup>3</sup> I believe that if I were forced to choose between preserving the mountain of commentary which has piled up around the *Divan* and these six pages by Hofmannsthal, I should choose Hofmannsthal.

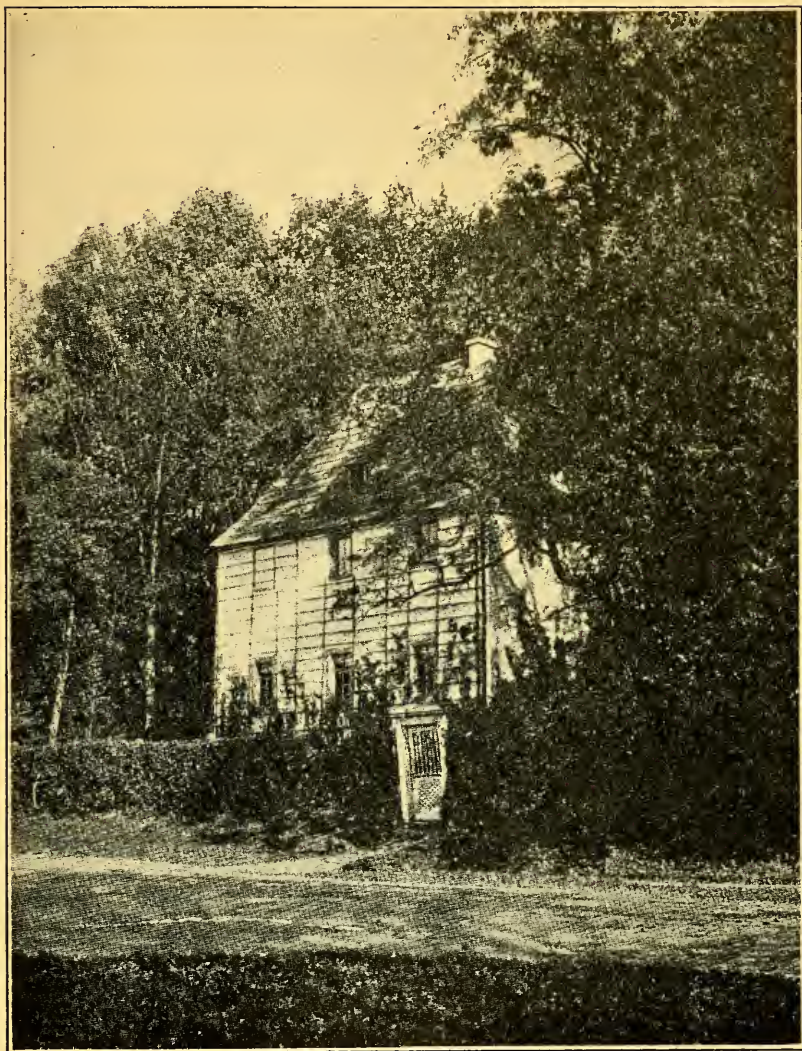
He characterizes briefly the prejudice against the *Westöstliche Divan*, namely, that Goethe, aging and with cooling emotions, whimsically turns his back on his own world and seeks a strange world, at the same time draping over himself the oriental costume like a mask; thus arose this book in which everything is strange and bizarre, even the title.

With this conventional conception Hofmannsthal takes issue; there is no masking in the *Divan*; on the contrary, unmasking, without reserve. But it is one thing, if a youth passionately bares his heart, it is another when a mature man (here Goethe), living and loving, discloses himself completely to those, who are capable of comprehending him.

Why do not more readers comprehend Goethe in the *Divan*? Because "this book is completely spirit" and this means that it will not be widely understood. It "is a Bible," says Hofmannsthal, one of those books, which are unfathomable, because they partake of the true essence of being. But to share this inner existence there is necessary an exalted inner condition. In our age, however, nothing is rarer than this exaltation of spirit, or even the desire for this exaltation. The misunderstanding concerning the *Divan*, the prejudice against it, will yield in time, because that which is excellent may bide its time; it remains ever alive in itself. The *Westöstliche Divan* is of all of Goethe's works closest to the heart of life. In all the vast amount of Goethe criticism we do not find any appreciation of the mature poet Goethe as we do in these pages of Hofmannsthal.

As in the case of Tasso's Princess and Hofmannsthal, we may

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Bd. III, 24 ff. Also in Ullstein, IV.



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point here to the kinship between this mature work and the mature personality of Hofmannsthal.

In 1929 there was published after Hofmannsthal's death the second edition of his *Buch der Freunde*,<sup>4</sup> a collection of aphorisms chosen from the world's literature or original with Hofmannsthal. There is scarcely a page without some mention of Goethe. I conclude with several aphorisms of Hofmannsthal: "Goethe kann als Grundlage der Bildung eine ganze Kultur ersetzen."<sup>5</sup> (As the basis of education Goethe may take the place of the whole cultural structure) ; or:

"Wir haben keine neuere Literatur. Wir haben Goethe und Ansätze."<sup>6</sup> (We have no modern literature. We have Goethe and mere beginnings.)

or:

"Von Goethes Sprüchen in Prosa geht heute vielleicht mehr Lehrkraft aus als von sämtlichen deutschen Universitäten."<sup>7</sup> (It may be that Goethe's prose maxims exert a greater educational influence today than do all the German universities.)

or finally:

"Goethe ist nicht der Quell von diesem und jenem in unserer neueren Literatur, sondern er ist ein Bergmassiv und das Quellgebiet von all und jedem in ihr."<sup>8</sup> (Goethe is not the source of this or that in our newer literature; but he is a mighty mountain and is the well-spring of all newer literature.)

I turn now to a writer who is as far removed as can be from the Viennese aesthete, Hofmannsthal, to the Swabian Hermann Hesse. He is known in America through translations of his novels *Demian* and more recently the *Steppenwolf*. Although Hesse wrote idyllic novels in the earlier part of his life, he has always striven to create novels which reflect a significant Weltanschauung. Such a competent critic as Oskar Walzel has mentioned his early novel *Peter Camenzind* in the same breath with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Keller's *Grüne Heinrich*. In his later novels after the World War he has turned against his earlier works as merely idyllic. His reverence for personality as in *Der Steppenwolf* and in his newest

<sup>4</sup>Inselverlag, Leipzig.

<sup>5</sup>P. 75.

<sup>6</sup>P. 75.

<sup>7</sup>P. 87.

<sup>8</sup>P. 93.

novel, *Narziss und Goldmund*, his passionate interest in the development of individuals and mankind, and his ability to reflect in these novels his Weltanschauung may be called almost Goethean.

How will such a writer react to the phenomenon Goethe? Among other things, Hesse has written the introduction to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.<sup>9</sup> Hesse demands the same kind of criticism for *Wilhelm Meister* which is accorded *Faust*. No one thinks today of measuring *Faust* with the yard-stick of the conventional drama. In like manner *Wilhelm Meister* must not be judged by the conventional rules of the novel, because it is far more than the conventional novel. It transcends it in breadth of compass and in the mature greatness of its humanity. No novel has ever set itself such a gigantic goal as Goethe did in the *Wilhelm Meister*.

For the person who is capable, imaginatively and emotionally, of putting himself in Wilhelm Meister's place, of loving with him, of erring with him, of sharing his faith in humanity, of cherishing a thankful spirit, and reverence and justice, for him this novel is no longer a book, but a world of beauty and hope, a document of noble humanity and a pledge of the value and continuity of spiritual culture.

Hesse has always deprecated the modern mechanical conception of life and its mechanized pursuit. Man must have some kind of religion. In the *Wilhelm Meister*, Hesse believes, a religion is to be found for all those, who are no longer able to profess an inherited creed, and who nevertheless cannot endure the anxious solitude of a soul without faith. In *Wilhelm Meister* no god is set up: no god is overturned. Neither Hellenism nor Christianity are demanded, but solely faith in the dignity of man, and in his beautiful destiny, which is: to practise love and to be active.

The modern world, says Hesse, has paid more attention to the descent of man than to his destiny. It has dethroned humanity. But every blossoming period of culture must be founded on the recognition of human dignity, on an ideal conception of human nature. Signs are not lacking that Goethe is being looked to more and more as a source of strength and comfort. And, concludes Hesse, Goethe must not be allowed to signify the farewell greeting of a sunken epoch, but the invitation to an epoch which is to come.

May I draw an interesting parallel? Just as Hesse points out

<sup>9</sup>*Ullstein*, XI.

that men are finding strength and comfort in Goethe, so the great Italian writer, Benedetto Croce, tells us that the outbreak of the World War made him despair of the preservation of European culture. In his despair he turned to Goethe and re-read Goethe. The fruit of this activity was his excellent book on Goethe.

We turn now to the greatest living German novelist, Thomas Mann. The winner of the Nobel prize for literature, the author of the *Buddenbrooks*, of the *Magic Mountain*, concerning whom Joseph Wood Krutch wrote that he begins where Galsworthy leaves off, needs no further introduction. Thomas Mann consciously represents the middle-class viewpoint, though without the political and social connotation which we usually attach to the word bourgeois. What is the attitude of this most bourgeois of present-day German writers to Goethe?

In a significant utterance concerning his conception of the nature of a middle-class society he characterizes it as including world-citizenship, world-equilibrium, world-conscience and consciousness, and above all the idea of humanity. And whom does this most bourgeois of writers quote as his authority? Goethe. This passage is contained in his address on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the founding of his native city of Lübeck.<sup>10</sup>

His collected essays and shorter articles are prefaced by a quotation from Goethe.<sup>11</sup> In an introduction to the *Wahlverwandtschaften*, Mann pays tribute to the ideal technique of this novel to express a highly ideal content.<sup>12</sup> Mann's attitude toward Goethe might be shown by scores of similar bits of evidence. But in addition he has given us most direct testimony in his long essay (140 pages) on "Goethe und Tolstoi."<sup>13</sup> The significance of this Goethe-Tolstoi essay for our knowledge of Mann's reaction to Goethe is patent. Mann is especially interested in the essentially Goethean synthesis of the natural scientific interpretation of phenomena and the humanistic approach. Schiller's conception of humanity was at bottom hostile to Goethe's biological insight into the nature of evolution. But this is the striking characteristic of Goethe: his biological in-

<sup>10</sup>*Lübeck als geistige Lebensform*. Otto Quitzow, Lübeck, 1926. P. 53.

<sup>11</sup>*Rede und Antwort*. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen und kleine Aufsätze*. S. Fischer, Berlin, 1922.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. A. Eloesser: *Thomas Mann*. S. Fischer, Berlin, 1925.

<sup>13</sup>In *Bemühungen*. *Neue Folge der Gesammelten Abhandlungen und kleinen Aufsätze*. S. Fischer, Berlin, 1925.

terest is not separated from his human interest, the interest in the human being and his beauty, and in art; in the last analysis all manifestations of the faculties of investigation, knowledge, and ability, appear as gradations of the one great concern of Goethe, the interest in the human being.<sup>14</sup>

No one of present-day German writers shows in a higher degree this preoccupation with the point of view of the natural sciences and medicine than does Thomas Mann, as may be seen especially in *Magic Mountain*. Therefore, Mann's reaction in this related characteristic of Goethe is particularly significant, but even more so is the fact that for Mann as for Goethe, the end of all this is the glory of man.

Mann sums up his artistic creed: "Art... is only one humanistic discipline among others; all of them, philosophy, jurisprudence, medicine, law (he quotes the opening words of *Faust*), as also the natural sciences and technology, are only gradations and varieties of one and the same high and interesting concern, which we can never conceive of as sufficiently complex—it is man; and the human form is the epitome of all: it is, to speak with Goethe "the non plus ultra of all human knowledge and action," it is the "Alpha and Omega of all things known to us."<sup>15</sup>

I must let these few references suffice, but they are merely suggestive of Thomas Mann's sympathetic understanding of Goethe; they give but a faint idea of how, page for page, Thomas Mann grapples with the problems which confront mankind today and which will confront it tomorrow. And he does so in the words and in the spirit of Goethe, as he comprehends him.

Mann is not blindly optimistic. In concluding his essay on "Goethe und Tolstoi" he says: "But we know well, that no one can decide, which of the two exalted types has been called to contribute the most to the best-loved image of perfect humanity."

For us there is no doubt in which direction Mann's hopes point.

It was stated at the beginning of this paper that the half-dozen writers treated in this paper should represent the greatest possible diversity. I turn now to Jakob Wassermann, who is perhaps the most widely read novelist in Germany after Thomas Mann. Like Mann he has furnished America with a "best-seller." He is best-

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 113.



known in America through the translations of *Christian Wahn-schaffe* (*The World's Illusion*), *Das Gänsemännchen* (*The Goose Man*), *Ulrike Woytich* (*Gold*), though this does not exhaust the list of translations of his works.

I have pointed out on another occasion<sup>16</sup> how Wassermann anticipated the social and spiritual program of Expressionism, and how, without belonging to the narrow literary school of those styling themselves Expressionists, he has been the only one who has approached the goal of the Expressionists in his novels. Today, when the school is dead, his novels still exhibit those Expressionistic features, which showed and still show a promise of life.

We have seen the intimacy of the spiritual association of Thomas Mann with Goethe. What shall we discover in the almost diametrically opposed Jakob Wassermann? We find a depth of understanding that yields in no way to that of Thomas Mann. While Mann's understanding of Goethe is primarily concerned with ideas and the great personality of Goethe, Wassermann, on the one hand, does homage to the marvelous narrative technique of the literary artist Goethe, on the other, to the colossus Goethe in his significance for the thought of the world.

As to Wassermann's homage to the narrative artistry of Goethe, he has written a treatise on the art of narration, "Die Kunst der Erzählung,"<sup>17</sup> which seems to me one of the most competent treatments of this difficult subject. In the conversation between the young and the old writer, the experienced writer reads from *Wilhelm Meister* the story of the conflagration as a model of how one may fuse the picturing of a situation with the epic flow of action. He points out how a poet like Goethe will tell such an occurrence to better effect in ten lines than a naturalist like Zola in fifty pages. In the case of the naturalist, detail presses on detail. The flood of details destroys the picture and deluges the imagination.

May I remind you that Wassermann is opposed to the technique and to the Weltanschauung of the naturalists and impressionists, that he has, in his technique and in his Weltanschauung that which is vital in Expressionism. In his criticism as in that of the writers we have already treated, we see the meaning of

<sup>16</sup>"A Key to Jakob Wassermann." *Germanic Review*, III, 46 ff.

<sup>17</sup>*Imaginäre Brücken. Studien und Aufsätze.* Kurt Wolff, München, 1921. p. 151 ff.

Anatole France's definition of real criticism as "the reaction of sensitive souls in the presence of masterpieces."

In his introduction to the *Wahlverwandschaften*<sup>18</sup> he reaffirms the high opinion he has expressed in connection with *Wilhelm Meister*. He says: "All these (excellent) effects, judging them from the technical standpoint of the novelist, are founded on an admirable simplicity and economy of means. All that we are accustomed to call detail, the descriptive word, the characterization of voices, of mien, of looks, all that appears in our modern works in such confusing fullness and over-fullness and darkens the vision, even where there *is* vision, all this (in the case of *Wahlverwandschaften*) is limited to that which is irreducibly necessary."

In a discussion of Goethe's *Novelle*, Wassermann draws a diagram of various kinds of narrative art. He makes Goethe's narrative art the focus. The naturalistic novel he locates somewhere on the periphery as the lowest form.<sup>19</sup>

Before leaving the discussion of Wassermann's high critical estimate of Goethe's art, I should like to draw attention to his opinion of Goethe's success in delineating Otilie in the *Wahlverwandschaften*. She has, says Wassermann, scarcely an equal in the field of modern literature; in classical literature only an Antigone or an Iphigenia is of comparable perfection.<sup>20</sup>

We turn now to Wassermann's attitude toward the personality of Goethe. It sounds directly like an echo of Goethe, when the young writer in "Die Kunst der Erzählung" concludes with the words: "We shall cast out only the one who negates (or denies). Let us learn to have piety and reverence."

And in his well-known "Rede über Humanität"<sup>21</sup> his theme is the Goethean: Humanity is the flower of human existence. The whole second half of his address is a consideration, an interpretation of Goethe's "Humanus" in his fragment, *Die Geheimnisse*.

Wassermann has recently summed up the premises of a genuine Goethe celebration.<sup>22</sup> To celebrate such a universal figure, he says, would mean that we could make ourselves mutually understood in his language, which is universal. It would mean that we

<sup>18</sup>*Ullstein*, X, 257.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>21</sup>In *Lebensdienst*. Grethlein, Leipzig-Zürich, 1928, p. 383 ff.

<sup>22</sup>*Die literarische Welt*, VII, Nr. 38, p. 2 (Sept. 18, 1931).



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By Alexander Trippel

recognize reason and humanity as categories of life. It would assume that we have served this overpowering personality or that we desire to serve it. It would mean divine service in a world which does not want a god and pretends not to need one. Perhaps the most fitting service would be silence. Goethe can wait several centuries for proper appreciation. He is not in haste.

Wassermann's dictum that a true Goethe celebration would be a kind of divine service brings us to our next writer, Ricarda Huch, who has formulated a modern Weltanschauung and a modern religion based on a Goethean interpretation of Christianity. (I may remind you also that Hermann Hesse had found in *Wilhelm Meister* a satisfying religion for the modern man.)

Ricarda Huch is the greatest living woman writer of Germany; she is one of the three or four greatest woman writers Germany has produced. She is the leading neo-romantic novelist, one of the leading writers of historical fiction, the author of two of the best books on German romanticism. Of recent years she has written widely on philosophical and religious themes. She was awarded the Goethe prize for literature last year. Several of her historical novels have been translated into English.

The ever-recurring theme of Ricarda Huch's novels, however depressing they may be in a way, is "O Leben, O Schönheit," "Oh Life, oh Beauty." They are a conscious echoing of Goethe's beautiful testimony toward the end of *Faust*:

Ihr glücklichen Augen,  
Was je ihr gesehen,  
Es sei, wie es wolle,  
Es war doch so schön.

In 1922 after the European debacle at the end of the World War Ricarda Huch published the enormously important book, *Entpersönlichung (Depersonalization)*.<sup>23</sup> This is the book to which I referred a moment ago when I said that Ricarda Huch has formulated a modern Weltanschauung and a modern religion based on a Goethean interpretation of Christianity. The book has a motto by Gottfried Keller: "When the personal figures have departed from a religion, then its temples fall in ruins, and the rest is silence."

What is *Entpersönlichung*? It is crass materialism. It is the

<sup>23</sup>Inselverlag, Leipzig.

deification of matter. It is the setting up of a lawful universe, with laws derived from matter and superimposed on the spirit. It is the denial of God, the denial of the creative imagination, of the "exact" imagination, as Goethe called it, which includes reason, but is greater than it. Just as Oswald Spengler fears the "Untergang des Abendlandes," Ricarda Huch sees as an actuality an "Entpersönlichung" des Abendlandes.

It would lead us too far afield to survey the wealth of this book in detail. But I shall draw attention to a few of the leading Goethean ideas. Chapter II deals with "The Past as Death." Only that is dead which is finished and is not in the process of becoming. Chapter III treats of the nature of evil. Goethe is quoted: "Denn ich bin ein Mensch gewesen, und das heisst ein Kämpfer sein." To be a fighter is to develop in the common struggle of mankind. To be evil is to grow rigid through non-participation in the struggle of developing mankind. Throughout we hear Goethe's creed of activity. I remind you of the first words of the *Homunculus*: "I exist, therefore I must act." Chapter IV is entitled: "Religion as the Striving of Sinful Man for Personal Perfection" and again Goethe is quoted: "Perfection is the measure of heaven, to strive for perfection, the measure of man." Extremely interesting is Ricarda Huch's antithesis of "Deism" and "das Dämonische," the "daemonic." It goes without saying that the detailed interpretation of "das Dämonische" is based entirely on Goethe's utterances.

Ricarda Huch divides the history of the German Protestant church into two stages, up to the time of Goethe, and the time since Goethe.

She declares that Goethe had already opposed the modern materialistic *Weltanschauung* as it took form in the French Revolution.

Later in the book she relates what a deep impression it had made on her when she discovered that Goethe had divined the same things which she is undertaking to express. She takes the Protestants to task for calling Goethe a pagan; he is the true Christian. (One recalls that Goethe himself said on one occasion that he was the last Christian.) She points out that Goethe's "Urphänomene" are identical with the mysteries of Christianity.

Each of the concluding chapters begins with or contains quotations from Goethe. Just as Christians in the past have taken their texts from the Bible, the Christian Ricarda Huch takes her texts

from the Christian Goethe as an interpreter of the Bible for the modern world. Goethe would have been surprised at some of the theological implications which Ricarda Huch finds in his work, but upon the whole, she holds closely to his central ideas.

I do not know how well I have succeeded in making you comprehend Ricarda Huch's religious views, but I have no doubt that you have realized what Goethe means to this greatest of present-day woman writers.

Our sixth and last poet, Gerhart Hauptmann, is again differentiated as widely as possible from the first five. He is a dramatist, a naturalist, a Socialist in origin, motivated by social sympathy. He is recognized today as the greatest living dramatist; like Thomas Mann he is a winner of the Nobel prize. His works are read in all civilized languages.

Hauptmann has recently spoken over the radio from New York in commemoration of Goethe, and I may assume that my readers are cognizant of the sentiments he expressed there. But it is worth while to point out that these are not merely conventional expressions called forth and colored by a particular occasion, but they have long been "Leitmotifs" in Hauptmann's thinking.

His friends tell us how for many years the *Westöstliche Divan* was his personal breviary. I draw your attention to this striking agreement between the naturalist Hauptmann and the neo-romantic Viennese aesthete Hofmannsthal.

I have been deeply impressed by the surprising agreement of leading European spirits after the World War in quoting Goethe to lead their compatriots out of the wilderness. Just as Anatole France calls to his countrymen, whom he sees standing on the brink of an abyss to "remember the beautiful words of the wise Goethe, to be good Europeans,"<sup>24</sup> so Hauptmann uses Goethean words to encourage the Germans to put the past behind them and face the future courageously. He tells them to forget their "Urväter Hausrat" ("early ancestor's furnishings"). One remembers this expression from the early part of *Faust*.

In an address<sup>25</sup> given before the students of the University of Vienna he expresses the belief that the inner kernel of Germany is sound; but European militarism has done no service in preserving

<sup>24</sup>Cf. my study *Anatole France and Goethe. U. of Wis. Studies in Lang. and Lit.* No. XXII (1925).

<sup>25</sup>Hans von Hülsen: *Gerhart Hauptmann*. Reclam, Leipzig, 1927. P. 173.

this soundness. During the reign of European militarism there has stood quiet and unobserved in that sacred room in Weimar, where Goethe worked and where he died, that dish filled with earth, which we like to look upon as the symbol of the German soul. A few days, perhaps a few hours before his death, Goethe had thoughtfully examined this earth. This mother-earth from which we are come and to which we will return is a symbol of the rebirth of the German spirit.

Hauptmann's biographer, Schlenther, tells us<sup>26</sup> that when Hauptmann made his trip to Greece he experienced Goethe through Greece, and Greece through the poet of the *Iphigenie* and *Nausikaa*. In his book, *Griechischer Frühling*, Hauptmann speaks of Goethe again and again. He realizes that the whole restless activity of the Magus Goethe has but one end: the creation of the human being, divinely endowed but human. For a long time Hauptmann contemplated attempting to complete Goethe's fragment *Nausikaa*.

Hauptmann has written several introductions for Goethe's works. In the general introduction to the Ullstein edition he says that for Germans Goethe "ist der Dichter an sich," he is the poet. Hauptmann only hopes that this introduction will not cast a shadow over the following works of Goethe. It is intended only as a plain open gate for all those to enter (and the qualification is Goethe-an) "who have reverence."

In another introduction to a popular edition, the Knauer edition, he expresses himself essentially as he did recently in his radio speech. The future of man depends not on the masses, but on the individual. Genuine progress of the human race means approach to the humanity of Goethe. The corner stone for human development is Goethe. (I remind you of Hofmannsthal's aphorism that Goethe as the foundation of education may take the place of the whole cultural structure). Hauptmann's position toward the rôle of the individual and humanity is especially interesting in view of his socialist origin and his former theoretical belief in the masses.

I have promised to limit myself to six authors. One is tempted to pass some of the others in review, to draw attention to the statement of the famous Viennese dramatist, Hermann Bahr, the author of the *Concert*, that "when Goethe was seeking, he was always seeking God," or of Ernst Hardt, the author of *Tautris der*

<sup>26</sup>Paul Schlenther: *Gerhart Hauptmann*. S. Fischer, Berlin, 1912. P. 234.

*Narr*, that the *Westöstliche Divan* is the tenth wonder of the world, or the new estimate of *Die natürliche Tochter* as one of the greatest works of Goethe, of the scene of the supposed death of Eugenie as perhaps the most dramatic scene Goethe has ever written, or of the language of *Die natürliche Tochter* as the ultimate in artistic expression in German, and so forth.

But I believe I have told you enough to convince you that the spirit of Goethe and all that it implies as a humanizing force was never more alive than it is today in contemporary German writers, widely different though they may be. Goethe has not become and will never become a god of the market place. But he is and will remain a prophet for those who believe the word of the angels in *Faust*: "Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen."