

CAROSSA'S "EIN TAG IM SPÄTSOMMER 1947":
HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR

by Robert L. Kahn

In times of total disintegration, such as befell Germany after the last war, contemporary literature frequently finds a new function. Art can no longer afford to play, to observe for the sake of observing; art must act. There are two paths which it can follow. The first examines the void left by smoldering institutions and crumbling dogma. It discloses the burning problems that rise from this ruinous phase and it creates an immediate attitude, a practical belief, to sustain those spared from destruction by presenting solutions of a general political and social nature. The other road is perhaps more tenuous, more intricate, less spectacular. It is the pathway which the individual must travel. It gains access to and explores the hidden corners of the threatened conscience and the dimmed consciousness; it bridges the holocaust between the stark present and the protecting past, and in the process it views this catastrophe *sub specie aeternitatis*. But no matter which of these courses the artist follows, he shoulders a grave responsibility. No longer can he wonder *in abstracto*, "What is the purpose, the meaning of life?" but he must ask, "What is the purpose, the meaning of *this* life, of *this* suffering, of *this* chaos?" And he must find an answer, a faith for the living, or not only is he lost and his generation, but what is more, the future.

Hans Carossa, who died in 1956, followed the second of these paths. To him the endangered life and exposed individual, the stricken world and questioned heritage were well-known problems. Once before, the experience of war had shaken him to the roots of his existence. He had found himself during those years and was reconciled with the universe: "Wo Kräfte rasen / In wudem Hasse, / Quillt lautre Heilkraft / Aus gutem Tod" ("Geheimnisse"). Later, during the postwar period, he offered courage and hope through his "Lebenserinnerungen," the novels describing his childhood and youth.

In one of his latest books, *Ungleiche Welten* (Insel, 1951), consisting

Editor's Note: Mr. Kahn is Professor of German and Chairman of the Department of Germanics at Rice University.

of his "Lebensbericht" for the years 1933-45 and a short story, Carossa refers to the opening passage of the chapter "Der Gang durch die Stadt" in *Der Arzt Gion* (1931) which, he said, well expresses his sentiment after the First World War:

The years of reconstruction after a terrible catastrophe are the good years of growth for all peoples. To be sure, only a few mature minds recognize the advantages of defeat, but they are the ones that really matter. While others lose themselves in pleasure, in complaints, in curses and hate, or dictate their program to humanity, these few quietly prepare the future. They have already gone through the experience of destruction and can face the present with equanimity. In fact, the raging storms leave them refreshed; they feel a new responsibility, as if they were the last of mankind and had to return Life like a broken urn in as perfect a shape as possible to God. They have abjured imposing words: Soul, Love, God, Liberty, Heroism, these are terms which they prefer not to use . . . (*Ungleiche Welten*, p. 8).¹

In the novella, "Ein Tag im Spätsommer 1947," inspired by the Second World War, Carossa has spoken again about the crisis of defeat. Like *Der Arzt Gion*, it bears the description "Erzählung." Professor Hofacker's remarks on the legendary characteristics of that work (*Monatshefte*, XLIV [1952], 85ff.) are also valid for our story, although here there is no internal evidence to guide us. In a sense, all of Carossa's works that are written in diary form are legendary in character, for by definition the primary meaning of legend is the tracing of the life history of a pious person. But even those of his works which do not make use of the subjective approach—the narrator is only a literary device—are set in a sacred universe, breathe the spiritual and religious attitude of their creator, and are symbolic to a marked degree. The characters that are introduced, although they have a life of their own, are seen against a broader background and thus become types of a larger humanity. To quote Hofacker, "Im geschichtlichen Augenblick wurzelnd sind seine Lebensdarstellungen durch die dichterische Erinnerung so verinnerlicht, daß sie als gemeingültige, überzeitliche Legenden gelten können." Carossa himself likes to refer to legend in his writing. It is mentioned in a dream which will be quoted later, and the term also occurs in a description of three refugees reminiscent of the Holy Family (p. 293).

"Ein Tag" is dedicated to Carossa's old friend Ernst Bertram who has given an appreciative account of the author's poetic symbolism in "Lichtgeheimnis" (*Das Innere Reich*, Jan., 1937) and addresses him as "Der Wächter an der Überfahrt" on his sixtieth birthday (*Das Inselfschiff*, Christmas, 1938). Carossa's well-known loyalty to his friends, his unstinting effort in their behalf (e.g., his attempts to save the poet Alfred Mombert), was not only a credo of his personal life, but also the unspoken law guiding his works.

The only title in Carossa's writings which resembles that of our story is

his *Tag in Terracina* (1942), which later became part of the *Aufzeichnungen aus Italien* (1946). It is simply a short sketch of a day's travel in Italy by the author. Just as Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal seem to have felt that one day could be the synthesis of all days and of all life, Carossa interprets the day in this manner, "Ein Weilchen, dann . . . / Lüftest du dich in den Tag, der deine Seele vollendet" ("An einen Schmetterling").² A description of the moment that will and must last forever is found frequently in his lyrics. Each minute is fixed, as it were, in his memory, full of meaning and yet sorrow at the passing of time, "So jung wirst du nun immer in mir leben!" ("Begegnung"), or "Ein Wunsch umhaucht mich, diesen Erdenblick / Dir, o Geliebte, / Mit allen seinen Schauern hinzusegenen" ("Ausblick"). The same is true of his prose writings which are concerned with the passing of time and stem from the desire to hold it back, to fuse it with the present. A day, therefore, to Carossa is pregnant with life and death. It is symbolic of man's existence on this earth, seventy years or one day; it must be hoarded, preserved, exhausted. The day in our title likewise is full of significance: a typical day and yet special, transfixed, to be remembered.

"Late Summer" is equally meaningful. Carossa likes the lingering effect produced by compound words; they are found on every page. The seasons too are symbolic of man's passing; Indian Summer is the late blooming of life, and it is used in this sense in the story (Carossa was born in 1878). The muted colors of late summer convey peace and hope. But there is another association: one is reminded of Adalbert Stifter's novel *Der Nachsommer*, and indeed the similarity between Stifter and Carossa is striking. Carossa mentions Stifter only in passing, in *Führung und Geleit* (1933), where he remarks on the latter's *Abdias* (p. 39). Both authors are deeply religious with their roots in the Catholic church; both found peace and resignation there. The quiet life, the little things symbolize to both of them a larger framework; nature, the countryside, the garden, the forest are their milieu. Life is spiritualized, the world is wonder, man must be humble and strong. The conflicts, the tensions, the tragic aspects of life are subdued, and the unceasing struggle within is barred from sight. Both Stifter's and Carossa's characters are passive rather than active, are followers rather than leaders, servants rather than masters. And yet Carossa is more in touch with reality than Stifter. His Dr. Gion, Angermann (*Geheimnisse des reifen Lebens*, 1936), or Dr. Kassian of our story are more self-reliant than Heinrich, the hero of *Der Nachsommer*; they can be humorous and they play a part in the history and society of their country.

It is well known what the year 1947 meant to Germany: the weary refugees still looking for shelter; the cities in ruins; the long lines of people waiting for food and work; the camps of displaced persons and of political prisoners; in short, a people dazed by defeat and destruction, with the

average citizen lost in bitterness, a prey to political factions, disgruntled, dispirited, bereaved, and without hope. The work of reconstruction had hardly begun. Such is the setting of our story, typical of the situation in Germany after the war, crystallized in one day of the late summer of 1947.

This novella, like all of Carossa's writings, is highly personalized. The few characters presented are old friends. Dr. Kassian, the former actor, teacher, and now mythologist and historian, is the older brother-in-spirit of Dr. Gion, of Angermann. His wife, Martina, is the sister-in-spirit of Cordula (*Geheimnisse des reifen Lebens*), Priska has features of Cynthia (*Der Arzt Gion*), Heidi is related to Simone (*Geheimnisse des reifen Lebens*), and Peter to Toni (*Der Arzt Gion*). Most of the other persons have been met before, although they were not as alive, or as active.

The story contains two plots. The one in the foreground, the more plastic and quickened of the two, rests firmly on the "autobiographical" plot, the background. There is thus an extremely artful and well-balanced composition: a descriptive opening (nature, the home), comparable to the introduction; a swelling and full crescendo of voices in the middle (the city, the forest), comparable to the action at its peak; and a dwindling off at the end (the home, nature), comparable to the epilogue. All motion is measured, no jarring note is struck, the calmness pervading this work is overpowering.

The first plot can be described in a few words. Dr. Kassian and his wife live in the country. Their son is missing in the war and their daughter studying at a university. Their only companion is the young servant Heidi who lost her parents and an arm in the war. One noon in the city Kassian meets his old friend Sutor who was a colonel during the war and is now a wood-carver. They go to his home, where Sutor's wife Paula serves them a simple lunch while continuing to give a violin lesson to a boy, a refugee from Hungary. Sutor walks part of the way with Kassian to look for wood. On leaving the city they are overtaken by Priska, a teacher from the Sudetenland and tenant in Sutor's house. She tells them the tragic story of a young woman who drowned in the river half an hour ago. While approaching the forest they meet two young boys whose home was near Breslau and whose parents died in a refugee camp. They had been in the care of nuns until four unmarried sisters on a farm nearby asked them to live there. Because of rumors that the government of an eastern country was looking for the children of its nationals, the boys are now in hiding. The group decides to rest near a pond in the woods. After a while they are joined by a refugee family which has lost its home in Bohemia. The son, a musician, has not regained full control of his senses after being struck by a guard. They relate their experiences, stating that they are inmates of a D.P. camp in the vicinity. Priska gains new courage from the simplicity of the musician and the kindness of the two boys to the family. The four sisters

arrive with the joyous news that they have just received the adoption papers for the boys who can now leave their hiding place. The sisters order wickerwork from the mother of the musician in exchange for food and the whole company is invited to a Sunday meal at their home.

The second plot is more intricate. It is the story of Dr. Kassian and his wife Martina. They have survived the war rather well. He is now doing research and she is helping those in need. They have not exactly grown apart, but their lives have lost significance for each other. Kassian sees the age only through the prism of the past, while Martina has become more and more practical, losing herself in the tasks of the day and taking the greatest interest in her daughter's studies of science. Yet from time to time she falls into a trance, symptomatic of a nervous disorder which perturbs her husband not a little. Kassian discovers in the forest that it was Martina who had helped the four sisters to obtain custody of the boys. She is called the "Frau vom guten Rat" by all the neighborhood. He returns home and tells her of his experiences. A post card arrives informing the couple that their son is safe in a Russian prison camp and that he will return soon. The same day a package is delivered from overseas: they open it and discover all the luxuries that have been unobtainable for years as a gift of a stranger Kassian once had encouraged. They and Heidi partake of the food, and Heidi promptly falls asleep. Suddenly they are disturbed by noises from the kitchen. They disregard them, and Martina reads the latest letter from her daughter, who has decided to give up the sciences and study classical languages. Again they hear the noises and upon investigation find an amateur thief who has injured himself while climbing over the fence. He is helped by Martina who for the first time is able to fight off a dangerous lapse of consciousness. Kassian and Martina look with courage to the future. It is two o'clock the next morning when they hear the thief Saturno repair the fence, and the story ends.

In the story are many ominous signals and they serve to establish the mood. The weather is one of these. It has not rained in months, "No dew lay on the grass, and morning after morning the sky was of the same unchanging blue. Sensitive persons noticed something sinister there" (p. 255). Nature, too, is unkind: all vegetation stops growing. The old beech tree in Martina's garden is sick, and the apples are small and tasteless. A farmer informs the wanderers that the bees are dying from the changing hot and cold winds, and they find a swarm of dead bees floating in the pond. Thieves and robbers keep the countryside in a state of perpetual unrest.

The city, where Kassian studies, has a desolate appearance. When he walks home with Sutor, he notices that the monuments in the park have not been cleaned. The large bed of flowers in the center of the promenade has been replaced by potato plants and the lawns are worn and neglected.

The home of the Sutors, once the pride of the city, looks dilapidated: "Grass and nettles grew at one of its corners which had been damaged by artillery fire so that the red of the uncovered brick front looked like a deep wound" (p. 271). The electricity is not functioning; it is shut off during the drought. On the way to the country they pass over a bridge that had been blown up during the war: ". . . the granite cliffs that now lay bare supported the fresh ruins of destroyed buildings, the shattered fragments of columns and gables; among these there was a small white marble plaque without inscription but adorned with the relief of the cup on which rests the wafer" (pp. 274-5). In the forest they pass a spot, "where helmets and rifle parts were piled up; mixed with these were the shells of hand grenades filled not with powder but with old foliage and spruce-cones. Wherever the metal showed, it was rusty . . ." (p. 287).

All this serves to highlight the danger besetting the human mind. As children, Kassian and Martina, without thinking about it, had been conscious of a secret center within themselves. Later, however, they had lost their fountainhead of peace "and now they had to discover it daily anew" (p. 261). But Kassian has withdrawn into a world of myths and Martina pays tribute to the outer world of science and need. Both are one-sided and isolated, each leaving the other behind. For Kassian this is not as dangerous as for Martina who is at the point of losing herself completely; more and more she has become "ein Mensch des nüchternen, hilfreichen Handelns" (p. 262). Her nervous disorder is indicative of her precarious existence. Her devotion to her idol, Madame Curie, is almost religious. Nevertheless, she is deeply perturbed by the connection between science and war, particularly in view of developments in atomic research.

Heidi, the fourteen-year-old servant, is similarly threatened. On the last day of the war an exploding grenade had killed her parents and necessitated the amputation of her left arm. She is a pious Catholic and attends all processions and has even built a little altar in her room. People treat her with kindness; but "since that day of misfortune she has hardly grown; her face that once had promised beauty appeared as if frozen by that terrible experience" (p. 258). At times she is moody, at others extremely gay. When she is in bad humor, she curses and swears violently; when she is merry, she is exuberant and loves to tickle her mistress. "She seemed to suffer little from the heat and drought about which everyone complained so loudly; there was always an air of coolness about her" (p. 259).

Priska, the teacher from the Sudetenland, is equally unbalanced. She wears a mannish costume, reminiscent of Sibylle of *Geheimnisse des reifen Lebens*, and appears to be continually rushing somewhere. She must have suffered immensely; Sutor states that she "has had some terrible experiences on her escape, about which she never talks, and if she does, then

only by implication" (p. 272). Despite her apparent aggressiveness, her face has a "somewhat helpless expression" (p. 277). When Kassian meets her on the stairs of Sutor's home, she explains that her name is actually Priscilla, and "if you have been in Rome, you may have visited my namesake in the catacombs" (p. 272). Upon Sutor's question regarding her health she replies gaily, "O, I am fine; I shall get a job in the school at Herzogenfels. I have an appointment there today" (p. 272). But when she overtakes the friends on the road, she is terribly upset by the death of the woman who fell from the bridge and exclaims bitterly: "O, nobody, nobody, can help another person in this world" (p. 275).

Peter is the elder of the two orphaned boys. While his younger brother Giselbert seems spoiled and weak, he is helpful and mature for his age: "He seemed the better disposed of the two; about his dark wise eyes there was a look of quiet cheerfulness . . . which, however, remained as if frozen by possibly dreaded memories of his childhood. Next to him Giselbert looked somewhat foolish. The latter's face appeared small compared to his large head; the glazed grey eyes were rather far apart, and his glance shifted always in perplexity and supplication" (pp. 285-6). The refugee family from Bohemia is lost. The son has not yet recovered from his injuries. He lives in a separate world of music and cannot be brought back to reality: "He must be treated with consideration, the doctor said so," his mother states. The parents, having lost their roots, live for the boy and with the past. The mother weeps and talks only of her home and her memories; the father is convinced that the great powers will restore him to his former position. The thief, too, is insecure. He is not at all deserving of his blood-curdling name Saturno. He steals to please his girl friend and is in general lost in the world of adventure.

Of the other characters only Sutor, his wife Paula, the four peasant sisters, and the farmer have kept their equilibrium. Sutor, a former officer in the army, is now making a living from his boyhood hobby, carving objects out of wood. He has found his old lathe and put it to good use. "The officer had lost weight and looked older, but in no way had his spirit been broken" (p. 269). Paula teaches the violin, and although she says that her pupil Attila has learned all she can offer, the latter adheres to her fondly and with respect. Work, faith, and music are the world of Sutor and Paula, and they are saved through them. The four peasant sisters are secure in their heritage. They believe in the old customs and act from their store of ancient wisdom and optimism. Particularly Vroni, the eldest, is the responsible and guiding spirit. The farmer, too, whom the wanderers meet, despite his complaining manner, does his share to help those uprooted. They are saved by tradition.

What then helps the others to find themselves and to gain hope in their destroyed world? Kassian remembers a vivid dream which gave him tem-

porary courage:

Once in a dream he was looking for a book that he had mislaid somewhere. He hoped to find in it a miraculous solution for the puzzle of his age. Flames hunted him, creeping after him from country to country, until he reached the snowy highlands. There steep cliffs stood in his way, made of pure gold, and he noticed with terror that the gold, too, began to grow tired. On the other side, however, there raged a stormy sea and from it trees arose without leaves but full of dark red buds, some of which started to bloom and looked like blossoms of the buck bean. In the branches of these trees polar bears were sitting with dark human faces. They looked down with grief on a shiny full moon which had fallen from their paws into the ocean. It resembled the face of a young girl and soon her body too appeared. He, the dreamer, reached the drowned girl. He recognized on her throat the porcelain brooch with the red cross of Geneva, and all of a sudden he realized that she was still breathing. In vain did he search for a reviving drug. He remembered, however, an incident mentioned in legends and the Bible: he wet two fingers and stroked her eyelids and lips. Her breathing became stronger and she opened her eyes smilingly. But at that moment he felt himself sinking and wakened with new courage and zeal which, however, decreased towards midday (pp. 259-60).

It can be assumed that the girl in this Jean Paul-esque dream represents Germany.

Martina, too, dreams:

Once it seemed to her as if she lay in the garden clothed in a dress of blue grass which felt like silk. From her left armpit a number of frail and transparent tubes came forth which were lost from view in the branches of the sick tree. Martina saw and felt her blood coursing through the delicate tubes. Nevertheless, she did not feel faint but wakened strengthened and consoled, as if she had been in touch with a group of benevolent spirits (pp. 268-9).

These dreams gave them a degree of strength. But more was needed, a moment of revelation.

Kassian is the first to find this moment in his meeting with the refugees in the forest; Martina finds it that same night; it has already been indicated in what fashion. Martina is also cured by her daughter's renunciation of the sciences. But there is still another experience that frees Kassian. It occurs in the night when he hears the thief; he finally gives up the idea of force, of insisting on his selfish rights:

He walked back and forth between the two rooms, picking up an object here and there. Finally he held in his hand the small brass statue of an unusually slim Roumanian peasant girl, a gift of his friend, the sculptor. He weighed it in his hand; no one would have imagined that it was so heavy. "Fine, that is the only weapon they have left us." He said this in a strange voice, as if he had never read the books of wisdom, as if he had never revered nonviolence as the eternally valid force. Martina sensed his black mood, she realized that he was under the influence of long past emotions and knew that it would not be difficult to free him as long as she herself remained free (pp. 320-1).

She quotes the biblical saying of the Lord coming like a thief in the night,

and Kassian realizing her closeness, puts away the weapon. "He sensed her smile, her beating heart, although he did not look at her. He put the little statue back in its place. The day was made bright by this one word; the pious confidence, which had been his silent companion throughout his life, returned" (p. 321).

Heidi is liberated in a dream that same night. She dreams of her mother who had been angry at her and had called her "a slovenly little girl for running around with only one arm" (p. 332). Afterwards her mother had gone with her into the city, to the Church of the Holy Ghost which had suddenly changed into a department store; and one could buy everything there exactly as before the war. Her mother had counted her money fearing that it was not enough, but a gentleman in a blue dress coat had addressed them with "Ladies" and led them right away into the section called "Arms and Legs." "They had a tremendous selection and not at all expensive; for one mark ninety-nine one could have bought a marvelous arm with no charge for attaching it to the body" (p. 333). She feels now as strong as if she really had two arms and hands; she laughs and puts her dream to the test by embracing her mistress, at first timidly, then more strongly. Finally she cannot help herself, she has to tickle her, just a little, but immediately she is sorry for it. Heidi, too, is cured.

Priska is saved by the sight of Sutor's generosity to the young musician and the boys' gift to the musician's parents in the forest; the musician's simple joy touches her greatly; there is also the beginning of a romance between the two. She decides to help him by exchanging her man's boots for his lady's shoes. And Kassian believes that this action will frighten away the ghosts of the past. When she leaves she has found new courage and hope, and promises to look up the "Woman of Good Counsel" once she feels she has developed sufficiently.

The young musician regains consciousness for a short time when the group watches a beetle leave its chrysalis and fly away. He follows the event with great attentiveness and evinces apparent signs of recovery. "A faint red colored his pale cheeks; he was now completely conscious, touched the chin of his mother and spoke softly to her in a consoling voice" (p. 302). Kassian is convinced that he will be cured soon. His parents, too, will find their place in their new homeland, for Vroni offers them money, flour, butter, and honey in exchange for the baskets which Frau Stohal weaves. This will not be the last trade between the country women and the refugees. Finally, the thief Saturno will become a useful member of society, for his act of violence was a failure and he realizes that he is not of the caliber to carry out thefts. His repairing the fence that he broke is not only symbolic for him but of the story as a whole.

Thus, Carossa advances several solutions for the problems besetting his countrymen: work, service, humor, faith, hope, and a liberation from

things past.

The first of these, work, saves Sutor and his wife Paula, and also has its effect upon Kassian and Martina, the four peasant sisters, and the farmer. Work will help Priska and the parents of the musician, and it seems that the younger generation, the two boys, Heidi, and Saturno will be cured by honest labor.

The second, service, has also been noted: the more secure characters help their weaker brothers and sisters. Even Sutor is assisted by a lumberman, and Martina and Kassian by each other. Peter and Giselbert help the refugees; their act of service consists in the gift of a few mushrooms and at first the disconsolate refugee woman does not comprehend: "In a moment, however, tears appeared in her eyes; she seized the hands of the two unwilling little boys and pulled them towards her as if they were her own" (p. 308). Even the farmer aids the homeless by allowing them to use his well. When Kassian receives the parcel from overseas, it is the reward for his service to an unknown friend. The latter writes that where he lives (South America) there is much genuine good-fellowship: "Each one tries to get ahead of the other, but no one allows the other to go under" (p. 320). The story concludes with an act of service on the part of Saturno.

Humor, too, is a curative, A few glimpses of it were noticed in Heidi, the two boys, and Saturno. Kassian and Martina defend themselves against the severity of the times by means of their humor: "They may have sensed that genuine humor derives from a strength which does not permit the approach of the insanity that had already attacked all classes of society" (p. 261). Laughter will frighten away the ghosts of the past.

Religious faith saves Heidi, the four peasant sisters, and indeed all the other characters in the story. Sutor almost gets into an argument with Priska over religion, but Kassian has to agree with the latter: not an outward but inward faith is required, living faith that is not derived from the past and from meaningless ritual. God is not mentioned in the story, but He is always there. The church is only incidental, as for instance in Priska's tragic story of the death of the woman, but it too is presented symbolically in the cup and holy wafer near the water's edge.

The whole story is, of course, one of hope. All the characters will eventually find themselves and reach safety. The promise of hope is uttered by Priska who rushes back to Kassian and tells him that she has found herself and again trusts life. "If I am correct in thinking so, the older children will be entrusted to my care. Not more than three hours ago I was afraid of them; now I am more confident. I will not deceive them by a false brightening of the darkness of the world; nevertheless, they shall look forward with joy to every hour of their lives, even their last one" (p. 312).

Liberation from things past is the keynote of Kassian's and Martina's experiences. It is apparent in the wanderers' walk through the forest, when

they pass the rusty guns, relics of a time of which no one likes to speak any more. " 'Our soldiers have left this behind,' said Peter and walked on" (pp. 287-8). The memories of the refugee couple are still too strong. That is the reason why they cannot take root in their new country. However, they too will rid themselves of these memories. The symbolic act in the giving up of old traditions is staged by Kassian and Martina. When they hear the noises in the kitchen, they are prepared to put on their old actor's robes to make an impressive entrance and frighten away the thieves. But a cloud of silvery moths scatters from the threadbare costumes. They give up the attempt at masquerading and decide to face whatever there is naturally.

The story contains a warning against science and its threat to humanity. Martina's conversion and her daughter's change of studies are a fair indication of Carossa's attitude. The daughter writes about a lecture she had attended given by a young instructor who said Goethe had indeed not been a fool when he stated it was the misfortune of modern physics that its experiments were staged outside or apart from man. "The young speaker, who resembled a minister, said he knew, of course, that these words were frequently mocked and attacked today. But in the final analysis, the separation from man is the separation from God" (pp. 323-4). Martina, towards the end of the story, stops in front of the picture of Madame Curie and asks:

Shall our world be destroyed before man has made peace with himself? Will your pupils rise above the world? . . . Will [the destruction of the world] be the result of your healing rays? The unholy books, why are they not banned from our memories? High up in the north you [the Curies] once delivered an address; it was full of anxiety about the possible consequences of the new discovery; O in your patient hearts there dwelled the faith in reason and harmony. Now there lies a shadow on the children of the earth . . . (pp. 333-4).

The end of the story is optimistic. Nature has undergone a change: the old beech tree will be well, rain will finally fall. Kassian and Martina talk about their life and their past joys: "They recalled the two wars which they had gone through. The wars meant more to them than simply a misfortune, since under the impression of the terrible events the two of them had become like one. They had been saddened with millions of others, they had suffered, gone hungry, and yet they had not lacked anything, for it was as if spirits were about them which secretly caused the increase of the loaves of bread" (pp. 338-9). Life is good, the wounds of war will heal.

The story, then, is a conscious attempt on the part of Carossa to help and to heal. This goal has always been foremost in his mind. All his books testify to his humanity and his desire to bring comfort to a troubled world. But perhaps this emphasis in human values detracts in our story, for one notices that the tendentiousness at times overshadows the poetic impulse. Yet the years after the war were grave and dangerous for Germany, and every author of stature had to take a position, either to transcend the period

or to be engulfed by it.

Old age draws from a vast store of experience. It delights in using terse language and symbols that mean much to the writer but little to the reader who is not acquainted with his work. The story also suffers because of this. It is highly stylized, "maniriert," and at times almost incomprehensible and awkward. Carossa has always been inclined to moralize and philosophize, but his sententious sayings in this story lack the personal and refreshing elements that are appreciated in the earlier works. He owes a dubious debt to Goethe's *Wanderjahre*.

All this, however, is more than compensated for by his humane outlook. All life, every individual possesses a value for itself and through this for others. Perhaps the solution that Carossa advances for the problem facing Germany and the world in today's crisis is too simple; perhaps there is no simple solution. But there can be no doubt that reconstruction in the larger sense must begin at home, with the individual.

NOTES

1. All translations are by the author of this essay.
2. *Gesammelte Werke* (Insel: n.p., 1949), p. 12.