COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GERMANIC STUDIES
VOL. II. NO. II.

TYPES OF WELTSCHMERZ IN GERMAN POETRY

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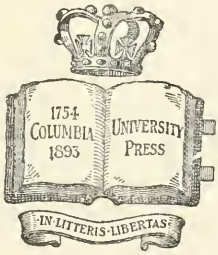

New York
THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, AGENTS
LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.
1905

Printed from type September, 1905

THE MASON PRESS
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

NOTE

The author of this essay has attempted to make, as he himself phrases it, "a modest contribution to the natural history of Weltschmerz." What goes by that name is no doubt somewhat elusive; one can not easily delimit and characterize it with scientific accuracy. Nevertheless the word corresponds to a fairly definite range of psychical reactions which are of great interest in modern poetry, especially German poetry. The phenomenon is worth studying in detail. In undertaking a study of it Mr. Braun thought, and I readily concurred in the opinion, that he would do best not to essay an exhaustive history, but to select certain conspicuously interesting types and proceed by the method of close analysis, characterization and comparison. I consider his work a valuable contribution to literary scholarship.

CALVIN THOMAS.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, June, 1905

PREFACE

The work which is presented in the following pages is intended to be a modest contribution to the natural history of Weltschmerz.

The writer has endeavored first of all to define carefully the distinction between pessimism and Weltschmerz; then to classify the latter, both as to its origin and its forms of expression, and to indicate briefly its relation to mental pathology and to contemporary social and political conditions. The three poets selected for discussion, were chosen because they represent distinct types, under which probably all other poets of Weltschmerz may be classified, or to which they will at least be found analogous; and to the extent to which such is the case, the treatise may be regarded as exhaustive. In the case of each author treated, the development of the peculiar phase of Weltschmerz characteristic of him has been traced, and analyzed with reference to its various modes of expression. Hölderlin is the idealist, Lenau exhibits the profoundly pathetic side of Weltschmerz, while Heine is its satirist. They have been considered in this order, because they represent three progressive stages of Weltschmerz viewed as a psychological process: Hölderlin naïve, Lenau self-conscious, Heine endeavoring to conceal his melancholy beneath the disguise of self-irony.

It is a pleasure to tender my grateful acknowledgments to my former Professors, Calvin Thomas and William H. Carpenter of Columbia University, and Camillo von Klenze and Starr Willard Cutting of the University of Chicago, under whose stimulating direction and never-failing assistance my graduate studies were carried on.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of the following study is to examine closely certain German authors of modern times, whose lives and writings exemplify in an unusually striking degree that peculiar phase of lyric feeling which has characterized German literature, often in a more or less epidemic form, since the days of "Werther," and to which, at an early period in the nineteenth century, was assigned the significant name "Weltschmerz."

With this side of the poet under investigation, there must of necessity be an enquiry, not only into his writings, his expressed feelings, but also his physical and mental constitution on the one hand, and into his theory of existence in general on the other. Psychology and philosophy then are the two adjacent fields into which it may become necessary to pursue the subject in hand, and for this reason it is only fair to call attention to the difficulties which surround the student of literature in discussing philosophical ideas or psychological phenomena. Intrepid indeed would it be for him to attempt a final judgment in these bearings of his subject, where wise men have differed and doctors have disagreed.

Although sometimes loosely used as synonyms, it is necessary to note that there is a well-defined distinction between Weltschmerz and pessimism. Weltschmerz may be defined as the poetic expression of an abnormal sensitiveness of the feelings to the moral and physical evils and misery of existence—a condition which may or may not be based upon a reasoned conviction that the sum of human misery is greater than the sum of human happiness. It is usually characterized also by a certain lack of will-energy, a sort of sentimental yielding to these painful emotions. It is therefore entirely a matter of "Gemüt." Pessi-

mism, on the other hand, purports to be a theory of existence, the result of deliberate philosophic argument and investigation, by which its votaries have reached the dispassionate conclusion that there is no real good or pleasure in the world that is not clearly outweighed by evil or pain, and that therefore self-destruction, or at least final annihilation is the consummation devoutly to be wished.

James Sully, in his elaborate treatise on Pessimism,[1] divides it, however, into reasoned and unreasoned Pessimism, including Weltschmerz under the latter head. This is entirely compatible with the definition of Weltschmerz which has been attempted above. But it is interesting to note the attitude of the pessimistic school of philosophy toward this unreasoned pessimism. It emphatically disclaims any interest in or connection with it, and describes all those who are afflicted with the malady as execrable fellows—to quote Hartmann—: "Klageweiber männlichen und weiblichen Geschlechts, welche am meisten zur Discreditierung des Pessimismus beigetragen haben, die sich in ewigem Lamento ergehen, und entweder unaufhörlich in Thränen schwimmen, oder bitter wie Wermut und Essig, sich selbst und andern das Dasein noch mehr vergällen; eine jämmerliche Situation des Stimmungspessimismus, der sie nicht leben und nicht sterben lässt."[2] And yet Hartmann himself does not hesitate to admit that this very condition of individual Weltschmerz, or "Zerrissenheit," is a necessary and inevitable stage in the progress of the mind toward that clarified universal Weltschmerz which is based upon theoretical insight, namely pessimism in its most logical sense. This being granted, we shall not be far astray in assuming that it is also the stage to which the philosophic pessimist will sometimes revert, when a strong sense of his own individuality asserts itself.

If we attempt a classification of Weltschmerz with regard to its essence, or, better perhaps, with regard to its origin, we shall find that the various types may be classed under one of two

[1] "Pessimism, a History and a Criticism," London, 1877.

[2] Ed. von Hartmann: "Zur Geschichte und Begründung des Pessimismus," Leipzig, Hermann Haacke, p. 187.

heads: either as cosmic or as egoistic. The representatives of cosmic Weltschmerz are those poets whose first concern is not their personal fate, their own unhappiness, it may be, but who see first and foremost the sad fate of humanity and regard their own misfortunes merely as a part of the common destiny. The representatives of the second type are those introspective natures who are first and chiefly aware of their own misery and finally come to regard it as representative of universal evil. The former proceed from the general to the particular, the latter from the particular to the general. But that these types must necessarily be entirely distinct in all cases, as Marchand[1] asserts, seems open to serious doubt. It is inconceivable that a poet into whose personal experience no shadows have fallen should take the woes of humanity very deeply to heart; nor again could we imagine that one who has brooded over the unhappy condition of mankind in general should never give expression to a note of personal sorrow. It is in the complexity of motives in one and the same subject that the difficulty lies in making rigid and sharp distinctions. In some cases Weltschmerz may arise from honest conviction or genuine despair, in others it may be something entirely artificial, merely a cloak to cover personal defects. Sometimes it may even be due to a desire to pose as a martyr, and sometimes nothing more than an attempt to ape the prevailing fashion. To these types Wilhelm Scherer adds "Müssiggänger, welche sich die Zeit mit übler Laune vertreiben, missvergnügte Lyriker, deren Gedichte nicht mehr gelesen werden, und Spatzenköpfe, welche den Pessimismus für besonderen Tiefsinn halten und um jeden Preis tiefsinnig erscheinen wollen."[2]

But it is with Weltschmerz in its outward manifestations as it finds expression in the poet's writings, that we shall be chiefly concerned in the following pages. And here the subdivisions, if we attempt to classify, must be almost as numerous as the representatives themselves. In Hölderlin we have the ardent Hellenic idealist; Lenau gives expression to all the pathos of

[1] "Les Poètes Lyriques de l'Autriche," Paris, 1886, p. 293.

[2] "Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens in Deutschland und Oesterreich," Berlin, 1874, p. 413.

Weltschmerz, Heine is its satirist, the misanthrope, while in Raabe we even have a pessimistic humorist.

This brief list needs scarcely be supplemented by other names of poets of melancholy, such as Reinhold Lenz, Heinrich von Kleist, Robert Southey, Byron, Leopardi, in order to command our attention by reason of the tragic fate which ended the lives of nearly all of these men, the most frequent and the most terrible being that of insanity. It is of course a matter of common knowledge that chronic melancholy or the persistent brooding over personal misfortune is an almost inevitable preliminary to mental derangement. And when this melancholy takes root in the finely organized mind of genius, it is only to be expected that the result will be even more disastrous than in the case of the ordinary mind. Lombroso holds the opinion that if men of genius are not all more or less insane, that is, if the "spheres of influence" of genius and insanity do not actually overlap, they are at least contiguous at many points, so that the transition from the former to the latter is extremely easy and even natural. But genius in itself is not an abnormal mental condition. It does not even consist of an extraordinary memory, vivid imagination, quickness of judgment, or of a combination of all of these. Kant defines genius as the talent of invention. Originality and productiveness are the fundamental elements of genius. And it is an almost instinctive force which urges the author on in his creative work. In the main his activity is due less to free will than to this inner compulsion.

> "Ich halte diesen Drang vergebens auf,
> Der Tag und Nacht in meinem Busen wechselt.
> Wenn ich nicht sinnen oder dichten soll,
> So ist das Leben mir kein Leben mehr,"

says Goethe's Tasso.[1] If this impulse of genius is embodied in a strong physical organism, as for example in the case of Shakespeare and Goethe, there need be no detriment to physical health; otherwise, and especially if there is an inherited tendency to disease, there is almost sure to be a physical collapse. Specialists in the subject have pointed out that violent passions are even more potent in producing mental disease than mere

[1] Act 5, Sc. 2.

intellectual over-exertion. And these are certainly characteristic in a very high degree of the mind of genius. It has often been remarked that it is the *corona spinosa* of genius to feel all pain more intensely than do other men. Schopenhauer says "der, in welchem der Genius lebt, leidet am meisten." It is only going a step further then, when Hamerling writes to his friend Möser: "Schliesslich ist es doch nur der Kranke, der sich das Leid der ganzen Welt zu Herzen nimmt."

Radestock, in his study "Genie und Wahnsinn," mentions and elaborates among others the following points of resemblance between the mind of genius and the insane mind: an abnormal activity of the imagination, very rapid succession of ideas, extreme concentration of thought upon a single subject or idea, and lastly, what would seem the cardinal point, a weakness of will-energy, the lack of that force which alone can serve to bring under control all these other unruly elements and give balance to what must otherwise be an extremely one-sided mechanism. Here again the exception may be taken to prove the rule. It is not too much, I think, to assert that Goethe could never have become so uniquely great, not even through the splendid versatility of his genius, but for that incomparable self-control, which he made the watchword of his life. And in the case of the poet of Weltschmerz the presence or absence of this quality may even decide whether he shall rise superior to his beclouded condition or perish in the gloom. The conclusion at which Radestock arrives is that genius, as the expression of the most intense mental activity, occupies the middle ground, as it were, between the normal healthy state on the one hand, and the abnormal, pathological state on the other, and has without doubt many points of contact with mental disease; and that although the elements which genius has in common with insanity may not be strong enough in themselves to induce the transition from the former to the latter state, yet when other aggravating causes are added, such as physical disease, violent emotions or passions, overwork, the pressure or distress of outward circumstances, the highly gifted individual is much more liable to cross the line of demarkation between the two mental states than is the average mind, which is more

remote from that line. If this can be asserted of genius in general, it must be even more particularly and widely applicable in reference to a combination of genius and Weltschmerz. We shall find pathetic examples in the first two types selected for examination.

Having thus introduced the subject in its most general bearings and aspects, it remains for us to review briefly its historical background.

Weltschmerz is essentially a symptom of a period of conflict, of transition. The powerful reaction which marks the eighteenth century—a reaction against all traditional intellectual authority, and a struggle for the emancipation of the individual, of research, of inspiration and of genius—reached its high-water mark in Germany in the seventies. But with the unrestrained outbursts of the champions of Storm and Stress the problem was by no means solved; there remained the basic conflict between the idea of personal liberty and the strait-jacket of Frederician absolutism, the conflict between the dynastic and the national idea of the state. Should the individual yield a blind, unreasoned submission to the state as to a divinely instituted arbitrary authority, good or bad, or was the state to be regarded as the conscious and voluntary coöperation of its subjects for the general good? It was, moreover, a time not only of open and active revolt, as represented by the spirit of Klinger, but also of great emotional stirrings, and sentimental yearnings of such passive natures as Hölty. Rousseau's plea for a simplified and more natural life had exerted a mighty influence. And what has a most important bearing upon the relation between these intellectual currents and Weltschmerz—these minds were lacking in the discipline implied in our modern scientific training. Scientific exactness of thinking had not become an integral part of education. Hence the difference between the pessimism of Ibsen and the romantic Weltschmerz of these uncritical minds.

In accounting for the tremendous effect produced by his "Werther," Goethe compares his work to the bit of fuse which explodes the mine, and says that the shock of the explosion was so great because the young generation of the day had already

undermined itself, and its members now burst forth individually with their exaggerated demands, unsatisfied passions and imaginary sufferings.[1] And in estimating the influences which had prepared the way for this mental disposition, Goethe emphasizes the influence of English literature. Young's "Night Thoughts," Gray's "Elegy," Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," even "Hamlet" and his monologues haunted all minds. "Everyone knew the principal passages by heart, and everyone believed he had a right to be just as melancholy as the Prince of Denmark, even though he had seen no ghost and had no royal father to avenge." Finally Ossian had provided an eminently suitable setting,—under the darkly lowering sky the endless gray heath, peopled with the shadowy forms of departed heroes and withered maidens. To quote the substance of Goethe's criticism:[2] Amid such influences and surroundings, occupied with fads and studies of this sort, lacking all incentive from without to any important activity and confronted by the sole prospect of having to drag out a humdrum existence, men began to reflect with a sort of sullen exultation upon the possibility of departing this life at will, and to find in this thought a scant amelioration of the ills and tedium of the times. This disposition was so general that "Werther" itself exerted a powerful influence, because it everywhere struck a responsive chord and publicly and tangibly exhibited the true inwardness of a morbid youthful illusion.[3]

Nor did the dawning nineteenth century bring relief. No other period of Prussian history, says Heinrich von Treitschke,[4] is wrapped in so deep a gloom as the first decade of the reign of Frederick William III. It was a time rich in hidden intellectual forces, and yet it bore the stamp of that uninspired philistinism which is so abundantly evidenced by the barren

[1] "Goethes Werke," Weimar ed. Vol. 28, p. 227 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 216 f.

[3] In view of Goethe's own words, then, the caution of a recent critic (Felix Melchior in *Litt. Forsch.* XXVII Heft, Berlin, 1903) against applying the term Weltschmerz to "Werther," would seem to miss the mark entirely. Werther is a type, just as truly as is Faust, though in a smaller way, and the malady which he typifies has its ultimate origin in the development of public life,—the very condition which this critic insists upon as a mark of Weltschmerz in the proper application of the term.

[4] "Historische und politische Aufsätze," Leipzig, 1897. Vol. 4.

commonplace character of its architecture and art. Genius there was, indeed, but never were its opportunities for public usefulness more limited. It was as though the greatness of the days of the second Frederick lay like a paralyzing weight upon this generation. And this oppressing sense of impotence was followed, after the Napoleonic Wars, by the bitterness of disappointment, all the more keenly felt by reason of this first reawakening of the national consciousness. Great had been the expectations, enormous the sacrifice; exceedingly small was the gain to the individual.[1] And the resultant dissonance was the same as that to which Alfred de Musset gave expression in the words: "The malady of the present century is due to two causes; the people who have passed through 1793 and 1814 bear in their hearts two wounds. All that was is no more; all that will be is not yet. Do not hope to find elsewhere the secret of our ills."[2]

This then in briefest outline is the transition from the century of individualism and autocracy to the nineteenth century of democracy. Small wonder that the struggle claimed its victims in those individuals who, unable to find a firm basis of conviction and principle, vacillated constantly between instinctive adherence to old traditions, and unreasoned inclination to the new order of things.

[1] As early as 1797 Hölderlin's Hyperion laments: "Mein Geschäft auf Erden ist aus. Ich bin voll Willens an die Arbeit gegangen, habe geblutet darüber, und die Welt um keinen Pfennig reicher gemacht." ("Hölderlin's gesammelte Dichtungen, herausgegeben von B. Litzmann," Stuttgart, Cotta, undated. Vol. II, p. 68.) Several decades later Heine writes: "Ich kann mich über die Siege meiner liebsten Ueberzeugungen nicht recht freuen, da sie mir gar zu viel gekostet haben. Dasselbe mag bei manchem ehrlichen Manne der Fall sein, und es trägt viel bei zu der grossen düsteren Verstimmung der Gegenwart." (Brief vom 21 April, 1851, an Gustav Kolb; Werke, Karpeles ed. Vol. IX, p. 378.)

[2] "Confession d'un enfant du siècle." Œuvres compl. Paris, 1888 (Charpentier). Vol. VIII, p. 24.

CHAPTER II

Hölderlin

A case such as that of Hölderlin, subject as he was from the time of his boyhood to melancholy, and ending in hopeless insanity, at once suggests the question of heredity. Little or nothing is known concerning his remote ancestors. His great-grandfather had been administrator of a convent at Grossbottwar, and died of dropsy of the chest at the age of forty-seven. His grandfather had held a similar position as "Klosterhofmeister und geistlicher Verwalter" at Lauffen, to which his son, the poet's father, succeeded. An apoplectic stroke ended his life at the early age of thirty-six. In regard to Hölderlin's maternal ancestors, our information is even more scant, though we know that both his grandmother and his mother lived to a ripe old age. From the poet's references to them we judge them to have been entirely normal types of intelligent, lovable women, gifted with a great deal of good practical sense. The only striking thing is the premature death of Hölderlin's great-grandfather and father. But in view of the nature of their stations in life, in which they may fairly be supposed to have led more than ordinarily sober and well-ordered lives, there seems to be no ground whatever for assuming that Hölderlin's Weltschmerz owed its inception in any degree to hereditary tendencies, notwithstanding Hermann Fischer's opinion to the contrary.[1] There is no sufficient reason to assume "erbliche Belastung," and there are other sufficient causes without merely guessing at such a possibility.

But while there are no sufficient historical grounds for the supposition that he brought the germ of his subsequent mental disease with him in his birth, we cannot fail to observe, even in

[1] *Anz. f. d. Alt.*, vol. 22, p. 212-218.

the child, certain natural traits, which, being allowed to develop unchecked, must of necessity hasten and intensify the gloom which hung over his life. To his deep thoughtfulness was added an abnormal sensitiveness to all external influences. Like the delicate anemone, he recoiled and withdrew within himself when touched by the rougher material things of life.[1] He himself poetically describes his absentmindedness when a boy, and calls himself "ein Träumer"; and a dreamer he remained all his life. It seems to have been this which first brought him into discord with the world:

> Oft sollt' ich stracks in meine Schule wandern,
> Doch ehe sich der Träumer es versah,
> So hatt' er in den Garten sich verirrt,
> Und sass behaglich unter den Oliven,
> Und baute Flotten, schifft' ins hohe Meer.
> . . . . . .
> Dies kostete mich tausend kleine Leiden,
> Verzeihlich war es immer, wenn mich oft
> Die Klügeren, mit herzlichem Gelächter
> Aus meiner seligen Ekstase schreckten,
> Doch unaussprechlich wehe that es mir.[2]

If ever a boy needed a strong fatherly hand to guide him, to teach him self-reliance and practical sense, it was this dreamy, tender-spirited child.[3] The love and sympathy which his mother bestowed upon him was not calculated to fit him for the rugged experiences of life, and while probably natural and pardonable, it was nevertheless extremely unfortunate that the boy was unconsciously encouraged to be and to remain a "Muttersöhnchen." But even with his peculiar trend of disposition, the result might not have been an unhappy one, had the course of his life not brought him more than an ordinary share of misfortune. This overtook him early in life, for when but two

[1] In a letter to his mother he writes: "Freilich ist's mir auch angeboren, dass ich alles schwerer zu Herzen nehme." ("Friedrich Hölderlins Leben, in Briefen von und an Hölderlin, von Carl C. T. Litzmann," Berlin, 1890, p. 27. Hereafter quoted as "Briefe.").

[2] "Hölderlins gesammelte Dichtungen, herausgegeben von B. Litzmann," Stuttgart, Cotta (hereafter quoted as "Werke"). Vol. II, p. 9.

[3] It is a reminiscence of Hölderlin's boyhood which finds expression in the words of Hyperion: "Ich war aufgewachsen, wie eine Rebe ohne Stab, und die wilden Ranken breiteten richtungslos über dem Boden sich aus." Werke, Vol. II, p. 72.

years of age his father died. His widowed mother now lived for a few years in complete retirement with her two children—the poet's sister Henrietta having been born just a few weeks after his father's demise. But it was not long before death again entered the household and robbed it of Hölderlin's aunt, his deceased father's sister, who was herself a widow and the faithful companion of the poet's mother. When the latter found herself again alone with her two little ones, whose care was weighing heavily upon her, she consented to become the wife of her late husband's friend, Kammerrat Gock, and accompanied him to his home in the little town of Nürtingen on the Neckar. But this re-established marital happiness was to be of brief duration, for in 1779 her second husband died, and the mother was now left with four little children to care and provide for.

The frequency with which death visited the family during his childhood and youth, familiarized him at an early age with scenes of sorrow and grief. No doubt he was too young when his father died to comprehend the calamity that had come upon the household, but it was not many months before he knew the meaning of his mother's tears, not only for his father, but also for his sister, who died in her infancy. Referring to his father's death, he writes in one of his early poems, "Einst und Jetzt":[1]

> Einst schlugst du mir so ruhig, empörtes Herz!
> . . . . . .
> Einst in des Vaters Schoosse, des liebenden
> Geliebten Vaters,—aber der Würger kam,
> Wir weinten, flehten, doch der Würger
> Schnellte den Pfeil, und es sank die Stütze.

At his tenderest and most impressionable age, the boy was thus made sadly aware of the fleetingness of human life and the pains of bereavement. We cannot wonder then at finding these impressions reflected in his most juvenile poetic attempts. His poem "Das menschliche Leben," written at the age of fifteen, begins:

> Menschen, Menschen! was ist euer Leben,

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 86.

Eure Welt, die thränenvolle Welt!
Dieser Schauplatz, kann er Freude geben
Wo sich Trauern nicht dazu gesellt?[1]

But a time of still greater unhappiness was in store for him when he left his home at the age of fourteen to enter the convent school at Denkendorf, where he began his preparation for a theological course. A more direct antithesis to all that his body and soul yearned for and needed for their proper development could scarcely have been devised than that which existed in the chilling atmosphere and rigorous discipline of the monastery. He had not even an incentive to endure hardships for the sake of what lay beyond, for it was merely in passive submission to his mother's wish that he had decided to enter holy orders. And now, clad in a sombre monkish gown, deprived of all freedom of thought or movement and forced into companionship with twenty-five or thirty fellows of his own age, who nearly all misunderstood him, Hölderlin felt himself wretched indeed. "Wär' ich doch ewig ferne von diesen Mauern des Elends!" he writes in a poem at Maulbronn in 1787.[2] There was for him but one way of escape. It was to isolate himself as much as possible from the world of harsh reality about him, to be alone, and there in his solitude to construct for himself an ideal world of fancy, a poetic dreamland. This mental habit not only remained with him as he grew into manhood, it may be said to have been through life one of his most distinguishing characteristics. It would be impossible to make room here for all the passages in his poems and letters of this period, which reflect his love of solitude and his habit of retreating into a world of his own imagining. His letters to his friend Nast almost invariably contain some expression of his heart-ache. "Bilfinger ist wohl mein Freund, aber es geht ihm zu glücklich, als dass er sich nach mir umsehen möchte. Du wirst mich schon verstehen—er ist immer lustig, ich hänge immer den Kopf."[3] Another letter begins: "Wieder eine Stunde wegphantasiert!—dass es doch so schlechte Menschen giebt, unter meinen Cameraden so elende Kerls—

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 36.
[2] "Auf einer Heide geschrieben," Werke, Vol. I, p. 44.
[3] Briefe, p. 27.

wann mich die Freundschaft nicht zuweilen wieder gut machte, so hätt' ich mich manchmal schon lieber an jeden andern Ort gewünscht, als unter Menschengesellschaft.—Wann ich nur auch einmal etwas recht Lustiges schreiben könnte! Nur Gedult! 's wird kommen—hoff' ich, oder—oder hab' ich dann nicht genug getragen? Erfuhr ich nicht schon als Bube, was den Mann seufzen machen würde? und als Jüngling, geht's da besser?—Du lieber Gott! bin ich's denn allein? jeder andre glücklicher als ich? Und was hab' ich dann gethan?"[1] There is a world of pathos in this helpless cry of pain, with its suggestion of retributive fate. A poem of 1788, "Die Stille," written at Maulbronn, epitomizes almost everything that we have thus far noted as to Hölderlin's nature. He goes back in fancy to the days of his childhood, describing his lonely rambles, from which he would return in the moonlight, unmindful of his lateness for the evening meal, at which he would hastily eat of that which the others had left:

Schlich mich, wenn ich satt gegessen,
Weg von meinem lustigen Geschwisterpaar.

O! in meines kleinen Stübchens Stille
War mir dann so über alles wohl,
Wie im Tempel war mir's in der Nächte Hülle,
Wann so einsam von dem Turm die Glocke scholl.

Als ich weggerissen von den Meinen
Aus dem lieben elterlichen Haus
Unter Fremden irrte, wo ich nimmer weinen
Durfte, in das bunte Weltgewirr hinaus,

O wie pflegtest du den armen Jungen,
Teure, so mit Mutterzärtlichkeit,
Wann er sich im Weltgewirre müd gerungen,
In der lieben, wehmutsvollen Einsamkeit.[2]

This love of solitude is carried to the extreme in his contemplation of a hermit's life. In a letter to Nast he says: "Heute ging ich so vor mich hin, da fiel mir ein, ich wolle nach vollendeten Universitäts Jahren Einsiedler werden—und der Gedanke

[1] Briefe, p. 29.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 53 f.

gefiel mir so wohl, eine ganze Stunde, glaub' ich, war ich in meiner Fantasie Einsiedler."[1] And although he never became a hermit, this is the final disposition which he makes of himself in his "Hyperion."

These habits of thought and feeling, formed in boyhood, could lead to only one result. He became less and less qualified to comprehend and to grapple with the practical problems and difficulties of life, and entered young manhood and the struggle for existence at a tremendous disadvantage.

Another trait of his character which served to intensify his subsequent disappointments, was the strong ambition which early filled his soul. He aspired to high achievements in his chosen field of art. In a letter to Louise Nast, written probably about the beginning of 1790, he makes the confession: "Der unüberwindliche Trübsinn in mir ist wohl nicht ganz, doch meist—unbefriedigter Ehrgeiz."[2] The mere lad of seventeen had scarcely learned to admire Klopstock, when he speaks of his own "kämpfendes Streben nach Klopstocksgrösse," and exclaims: "Hinan den herrlichen Ehrenpfad! Hinan! im glühenden kühnen Traum, sie zu erreichen!"[3] It is remarkable to note how this fancy of a dream-life becomes fixed in Hölderlin's mind and reappears in almost every poem. Closely allied to this idea is that of a "glückliche Trunkenheit," and expressions like "wie ein Göttertraum das Alter schwand," "liebetrunken," "Wie ein Traum entfliehen Ewigkeiten," "siegestrunken," "süsse, kühne Trunkenheit," "trunken dämmert die Seele mir," can be found on almost every page of his shorter poems. Hyperion expresses himself on one occasion in the words: "O ein Gott ist der Mensch, wenn er träumt, ein Bettler, wenn er nachdenkt, und wenn die Begeisterung hin ist, steht er da, wie ein missrathener Sohn, den der Vater aus dem Hause stiess, und betrachtet die ärmlichen Pfennige, die ihm das Mitleid auf den Weg gab,"[4] which further illustrates the extravagant idealism by which he allowed himself to be carried away, and the etherial and thoroughly unpractical trend of his

[1] Briefe, p. 36.
[2] Briefe, p. 120.
[3] "Mein Vorsatz," Werke, Vol. I, p. 44.
[4] Werke, Vol. II, p. 69.

mind. The flights of fancy of which Hölderlin is capable are well illustrated by another passage in "Hyperion." Referring to Hyperion's conversation with Alabanda, he says: "Ich war hingerissen von unendlichen Hoffnungen, Götterkräfte trugen wie ein Wölkchen mich fort."[1] These facts have a direct bearing upon Hölderlin's Weltschmerz, inasmuch as it was just this unequal and unsuccessful struggle of the idealist with the stern realities of life that brought about the catastrophe which wrought his ruin.

And just as his ideals are vague and abstract, so too are the expressions of his Weltschmerz. It needs no concrete idea to arouse his enthusiasm to its highest pitch. Thus Hyperion exclaims: "Der Gott in uns, dem die Unendlichkeit zur Bahn sich öffnet, soll stehen und harren, bis der Wurm ihm aus dem Wege geht? Nein! nein! man frägt nicht, ob ihr wollt! ihr wollt ja nie—ihr Knechte und Barbaren! Euch will man auch nicht bessern, denn es ist umsonst! Man will nur dafür sorgen, dass ihr dem Siegeslauf der Menschheit aus dem Wege geht!"[2] It is in the form of lofty generalities such as these, and seldom with reference to practical details, that Hölderlin's longings find expression.

Entirely consistent with this idealism is the nature of his love, ardent, but etherial, "übersinnlich." This is reflected also in his lyrics, which are statuesque and beautiful, but lacking in passion and sensuous charm. Hölderlin's earliest love-affair, that with Louise Nast, is important for his Weltschmerz only in its bearing upon the development of his general character. This influence was a twofold one: in the first place his sweetheart was herself inclined to a sort of visionary mysticism, and therefore had an unwholesome influence upon the youth, who had already been carried too far in that direction. She too was a lover of solitude and wrote her letters to him in the stillness of the night, when all others were asleep. There can be no doubt that she had at least some share in determining his mental activity, especially his reading. In one of his earliest letters to her he writes: "Weil Du den Don Carlos liest, will

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 90.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 86.

ich ihn auch lesen."[1] It was during this time too that that he became so ardent an admirer of Schubart and Ossian. "Da leg' ich meinen Ossian weg und komme zu Dir," he writes in 1788 to his friend Nast. "Ich habe meine Seele geweidet an den Helden des Barden, habe mit ihm getrauert, wann er trauert über sterbende Mädchen."[2] There is not a sensuous note in all Hölderlin's poems or letters to Louise. Typical are the lines which he addresses to her on his departure from Maulbronn:

Lass sie drohen, die Stürme, die Leiden,
Lass trennen—der Trennung Jahre
Sie trennen uns nicht!
Sie trennen uns nicht!
Denn mein bist du! Und über das Grab hinaus
Soll sie dauren, die unzertrennbare Liebe.

O! wenn's einst da ist
Das grosse selige Jenseits,
Wo die Krone dem leidenden Pilger,
Die Palme dem Sieger blinkt,
Dann Freundin—lohnet auch Freundschaft—
Auch Freundschaft der Ewige.[3]

The second bearing which his relations to Louise have upon his Weltschmerz lies in the fact that his love ended in disappointment. This is true not only of this particular episode, not only of all his love-affairs, but it may even be said that disappointment was the fate to which he found himself doomed in all his aspirations. And in the persistency with which this evil angel pursued his footsteps through life may be found one of the chief causes of the early collapse of his faculties. What David Müller[4] and Hermann Fischer[5] have said in their essays in regard to this point—that Hölderlin did not become insane because his life was a succession of unsatisfactory situations and painful disappointments, but because he had not the strength to work himself out of these situations into more favorable ones—states only half the case. True, a stronger

[1] Briefe, p. 49.
[2] Briefe, p. 50.
[3] Werke, Vol. I, p. 74.
[4] "Friedrich Hölderlin, Eine Studie," *Preuss. Jahrb.*, 1866, p. 548-568.
[5] *Anz. f. d. Altertum*, Vol. 22, p. 212-218.

mental organization might have overcome these or even greater difficulties; Schiller, Herder, Fichte are examples; but not all of Hölderlin's failures and disappointments were the result of his weakness, and so while it is right to state that a stronger and more robust nature would have conquered in the fight, it is also fair to say that Hölderlin would have had a good chance of winning, had fortune been more kind. For this reason these external influences must be reckoned with as an important cause of his Weltschmerz and subsequently of his insanity.

This suggests an interesting point of comparison—if I may be permitted to anticipate somewhat—with Lenau, the second type selected. Hölderlin earnestly pursued happiness and contentment, but it eluded him at every step. Lenau on the contrary reached a point in his Weltschmerz where he refused to see anything in life but pain, wilfully thrusting from him even such happiness as came within his reach.

We may postpone any detailed reference to Hölderlin's relations with Susette Gontard, which were vastly more important in their influence upon the poet's character and Weltschmerz, until we come to the discussion of his "Hyperion," of which Susette, under the pseudonym of Diotima, forms one of the central figures.

To speak of all the disappointments which fell to Hölderlin's lot would practically require the writing of his biography from the time of his graduation from Tübingen to his return from Bordeaux, almost the entire period of his sane manhood. Unsuccessful in his first position as a tutor, and unable, after having abandoned this, to provide even a meagre living for himself with his pen, his migration to Frankfort to the house of the merchant Gontard at last gave him a hope of better things, but a hope which soon proved vain. Following close upon these disappointments was his failure to carry out a project which he had long cherished, of establishing a literary journal; then came his dismissal from a situation which he had just entered upon in Switzerland. On his return he wrote to Schiller for help and advice, and his failure to receive a reply grieved him deeply. We can only surmise that it was a cruel

disappointment, finally, which caused his sudden departure from Bordeaux, and brought him back a mental wreck to his mother's home. Even as early as 1788 Hölderlin complains bitterly in the poem "Der Lorbeer," in which he eulogizes the poets Klopstock and Young and expresses his own ambition to aspire to their greatness:

> Schon so manche Früchte schöner Keime
> Logen grausam mir ins Angesicht.[1]

As the years passed, this feeling of disappointment and disillusion became more and more intense and bitter. A stanza from one of his more mature poems (1795) "An die Natur," will serve to illustrate the sentiment which pervades almost all his writings:

> Tot ist nun, die mich erzog und stillte,
> Tot ist nun die jugendliche Welt,
> Diese Brust, die einst ein Himmel füllte,
> Tot und dürftig wie ein Stoppelfeld;
> Ach es singt der Frühling meinen Sorgen
> Noch, wie einst, ein freundlich tröstend Lied,
> Aber hin ist meines Lebens Morgen,
> Meines Herzens Frühling ist verblüht.[2]

In close causal connection with Hölderlin's Weltschmerz is his belief that his life is ruled by an inexorable fate whose plaything he is. "Wenn hinfort mich das Schicksal ergreift, und von einem Abgrund in den andern mich wirft, und alle Kräfte in mir ertränkt und alle Gedanken," Hyperion exclaims.[3] He goes even further, and conceives the idea of a sacrifice to Fate. Thus he makes Alabanda say near the close of "Hyperion:" "Ach! weil kein Glück ist ohne Opfer, nimm als Opfer mich, o Schicksal an, und lass die Liebenden in ihrer Freude."[4] Wilhelm Scherer calls attention to Gervinus' remark that new intellectual tendencies which call for unaccustomed and unusual mental effort often prove disastrous to single individuals, and says: "Hölderlin war also ein Opfer der Erneuerung des deutschen Lebens—seltsam, wie der Gedanke des Opfers als

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 75.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 146.
[3] Werke, Vol. II, p. 107.
[4] Werke, Vol. II, p. 188.

ein hoher und herrlicher ihn in allen seinen Gedichten viel beschäftigt hat."[1] But the poet does not apply this fatalism only to himself, to the individual; he widens its influence to humanity in general. "Wir sprechen von unserm Herzen, unsern Planen, als wären sie unser," says Hyperion, "und es ist doch eine fremde Gewalt, die uns herumwirft und ins Grab legt, wie es ihr gefällt, und von der wir nicht wissen, von wannen sie kommt, noch wohin sie geht:"[2] Perhaps nowhere better than in Hyperion's "Schicksalslied" does he give poetic expression to this thought. Omitting the first stanza it reads thus:

Schicksallos wie der schlafende
Säugling atmen die Himmlischen;
Keusch bewahrt
In bescheidener Knospe,
Blühet ewig
Ihnen der Geist,
Und die seligen Augen
Blicken in stiller
Ewiger Klarheit.

Doch uns ist gegeben,
Auf keiner Stätte zu ruhn,
Es schwinden, es fallen
Die leidenden Menschen
Blindlings von einer
Stunde zur andern,
Wie Wasser von Klippe
Zu Klippe geworfen,
Jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab.[3]

The fundamental difference between Hölderlin's "Anschauung" and Goethe's is at once apparent when we recall the "Lied der Parzen" from "Iphigenie." Hölderlin does not bring the blessed Genii into any relation with mortals, but merely contrasts their free and blissful existence, emphasizing their immunity from Fate, to which suffering humanity is subject. But this humanity is represented by Hölderlin characteristically as helpless, passive—"schwinden," "fallen," "blindlings von einer Stunde zur andern." Whereas the opening lines of Goethe's

[1] "Vorträge und Aufsätze," 1874, Fried. Hölderlin, p. 354.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 96.
[3] Werke, Vol. II, p. 189.

"Parzen" strike the keynote of *conflict* between the gods and men:

Es fürchte die Götter
Das Menschengeschlecht!
Sie halten die Herrschaft
In ewigen Händen
Und können sie brauchen
Wie's ihnen gefällt.
Der fürchte sie doppelt,
Den je sie erheben!

And those who come to grief at the hands of the gods, are not weak passive creatures, but heaven-scaling Titans. This points to the antipodal difference between the characters of these two poets, and explains in part why Goethe did not succumb to the sickly sentimentalism of which he rid himself in "Werther." The difference between yielding and striving resulted in the difference between an acute case of Weltschmerz in the one and a healthy physical and intellectual manhood in the other.

Thus far it has been almost entirely the personal aspect of Hölderlin's Weltschmerz and its causes that has come under our notice. And since he was a lyric poet, it is perhaps natural that the sorrows which concerned him personally should find most frequent expression in his verse. But notwithstanding the fact that this personal element is very prominent in Hölderlin's writings, Scherer's judgment is correct when he states: "Die Grundstimmung war eine tiefe Verbitterung gegen die Versunkenheit des Vaterlands."[1] The reason is not far to seek, especially when we consider the impossible demands of the poet's extravagant idealism. The conditions in Germany which had called forth the terrible arraignment of petty despotism, crushing militarism, and political rottenness generally, in the works of Lenz, Klinger and Schubart, had not abated. Schubart was one of Hölderlin's earliest favorites, so that the latter was doubtless in this way imbued with sentiments which could only grow stronger under the influence of his more mature observations and experiences. Even in his eighteenth year, in a poem "An die Demut,"[2] he gives expression in strong

[1] Cf. op. cit., p. 352.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 51.

terms to his patriotic feelings, in which his disgust with his faint-hearted, servile compatriots and his defiance of "Fürstenlaune" and "Despotenblut" are plainly evident. So too in "Männerjubel," 1788:

> Es glimmt in uns ein Funke der Göttlichen!
> Und diesen Funken soll aus der Männerbrust
> Der Hölle Macht uns nicht entreissen!
> Hört es, Despotengerichte, hört es![1]

Perhaps nowhere outside of his own Württemberg could he have been more unfavorably situated in this respect. Under Karl Eugen (1744-1793) the country sank into a deplorable condition. Regardless of the rights of individuals and communities alike, he sought in the early part of his reign to replenish his depleted purse by the most shameless measures, in order that he might surround himself with luxury and indulge his autocratic proclivities. Among his most reprehensible violations of constitutional rights, were his bartering of privileges and offices and the selling of troops. These things Hölderlin attacks in one of his youthful poems "Die Ehrsucht" (1788):

> Um wie Könige zu prahlen, schänden
> Kleine Wütriche ihr armes Land;
> Und um feile Ordensbänder wenden
> Räte sich das Ruder aus der Hand.[2]

Another act of gross injustice which this petty tyrant perpetrated, and which Hölderlin must have felt very painfully, was the incarceration of the poet's countryman Schubart from 1777 to 1787 in the Hohenasperg. But not only from within came tyrannous oppression. Following upon the coalition against France after the Revolution, Württemberg became the scene of bloody conflicts and the ravages of war. Under the régime of Friedrich Eugen (1795-97) the French gained such a foothold in Württemberg that the country had to pay a contribution of four million gulden to get rid of them. These were the conditions under which Hölderlin grew up into young manhood. But deeper than in the mere existence of these conditions themselves lay the cause of the poet's most abject humiliation and grief. It was the stoic indifference, the servile submission

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 50.
[2] Werke, Vol. I. p. 49.

with which he charged his compatriots, that called forth his bitterest invectives upon their insensible heads. His own words will serve best to show the intensity of his feelings. In 1788 he writes, in the poem "Am Tage der Freundschaftsfeier:"

> Da sah er (der Schwärmer) all die Schande
> Der weichlichen Teutonssöhne,
> Und fluchte dem verderblichen Ausland
> Und fluchte den verdorbenen Affen des Auslands,
> Und weinte blutige Thränen,
> Dass er vielleicht noch lange
> Verweilen müsse unter diesem Geschlecht.[1]

Ten years later he treats the Germans to the following ignominious comparison:

> Spottet ja nicht des Kinds, wenn es mit Peitsch' und Sporn
> Auf dem Rosse von Holz, mutig und gross sich dünkt.
> Denn, ihr Deutschen, auch ihr seid
> Thatenarm und gedankenvoll.[2]

With his friend Sinclair, who was sent as a delegate, he attended the congress at Rastatt in November, 1798, and here he made observations which no doubt resulted in the bitter characterization of his nation in the closing letters of Hyperion. This convention, whose chief object was the compensation of those German princes who had been dispossessed by the cessions to France on the left bank of the Rhine, afforded a spectacle so humiliating that it would have bowed down in shame a spirit even less proud and sensitive than Hölderlin's. The French emissaries conducted themselves like lords of Germany, while the German princes vied with each other in acts of servility and submission to the arrogant Frenchmen. And it was the apathy of the average German, as Hölderlin conceived it, toward these and other national indignities, that caused him to put such bitter words of contumely into the mouth of Hyperion: "Barbaren von Alters her, durch Fleiss und Wissenschaft und selbst durch Religion barbarischer geworden, tief unfähig jedes göttlichen Gefühls—beleidigend für jede gut geartete Seele, dumpf und harmonielos, wie die Scherben eines weggeworfenen Gefässes—das, mein Bellarmin! waren meine

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 66.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 165.

Tröster."[1] In another letter Hyperion explains their incapacity for finer feeling and appreciation when he writes: "Neide die Leidensfreien nicht, die Götzen von Holz, denen nichts mangelt, weil ihre Seele so arm ist, die nichts fragen nach Regen und Sonnenschein, weil sie nichts haben, was der Pflege bedürfte. Ja, ja, es ist recht sehr leicht, glücklich, ruhig zu sein mit seichtem Herzen und eingeschränktem Geiste."[2] Their work he characterizes as "Stümperarbeit," and their virtues as brilliant evils and nothing more. There is nothing sacred, he claims, that has not been desecrated by this nation. But it is chiefly his own experience which he recites, when, in speaking of the sad plight of German poets, of those who still love the beautiful, he says: "Es ist auch herzzerreissend, wenn man eure Dichter, eure Künstler sieht—die Guten, sie leben in der Welt, wie Fremdlinge im eigenen Hause."[3] Still more extravagantly does the poet caricature his own people when he writes: "Wenn doch einmal diesen Gottverlassnen einer sagte, dass bei ihnen nur so unvollkommen alles ist, weil sie nichts Reines unverdorben, nichts Heiliges unbetastet lassen mit den plumpen Händen—dass bei ihnen eigentlich das Leben schaal und sorgenschwer ist, weil sie den Genius verschmähen—und darum fürchten sie auch den Tod so sehr, und leiden um des Austernlebens willen alle Schmach, weil Höhres sie nicht kennen, als ihr Machwerk, das sie sich gestoppelt."[4]

But we should get an extremely unjust and one-sided idea of Hölderlin's attitude toward his country from these quotations alone. The point which they illustrate is his growing estrangement from his own people, which in the very nature of the case must have had an important bearing upon his Weltschmerz. But his feelings in regard to Germany and the Germans were not all contempt. In many of his poems there is the true patriotic ring. It is true, we can nowhere find any clear political program, neither could we expect one from a poet who was so absorbed in his own feelings, and whose ideals soared so high above the sphere of practical politics. In this too Höld-

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 198.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 97.
[3] Werke, Vol. II, p. 200.
[4] Werke, Vol. II, p. 200 f.

erlin was the product of previous influences. With all their clamor for political upheavals, the "Stürmer und Dränger" never arrived at any serious or practical plan of action. Notwithstanding all this, the word Vaterland was always an inspiration to Hölderlin, and it is especially gratifying to note that the calumny which he heaps upon the devoted heads of the Germans is not his last word on the subject. Nor did he ever lose sight of his lofty ideal of liberty for his degraded fatherland or cease to hope for its realization. In this strain he concludes the "Hymne an die Freiheit" (1790) with a splendid outburst of patriotic enthusiasm:

> Dann am süssen, heisserrung'nen Ziele,
> Wenn der Ernte grosser Tag beginnt,
> Wenn verödet die Tyrannenstühle,
> Die Tyrannenknechte Moder sind,
> Wenn im Heldenbunde meiner Brüder
> Deutsches Blut und deutsche Liebe glüht,
> Dann, O Himmelstochter! sing ich wieder,
> Singe sterbend dir das letzte Lied.[1]

What a remarkable change is noticeable in the tone which the poet assumes toward his country in the lines "Gesang des Deutschen," written in 1799, probably after the completion of his "Hyperion":

> O heilig Herz der Völker, O Vaterland!
> Allduldend gleich der schweigenden Muttererd'
> Und allverkannt, wenn schon aus deiner
> Tiefe die Fremden ihr Bestes haben.
>
> Du Land des hohen, ernsteren Genius!
> Du Land der Liebe! bin ich der Deine schon,
> Oft zürnt' ich weinend, dass du immer
> Blöde die eigene Seele leugnest.[2]

How much the reproach has been softened, and with what tender regard he strives to mollify his former bitterness! To this change in his feelings, his sojourn in strange places and the attendant discouragements and disappointments seem to have contributed not a little, for in the poem "Rückkehr in die

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 105.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 196.

Heimat," written in 1800, the contempt of "Hyperion" has been replaced by compassion. He sees himself and his country linked together in the sacred companionship of suffering, consequently it can no longer be the object of his scorn.

> Wie lange ist's, O wie lange! des Kindes Ruh'
> Ist hin, und hin ist Jugend, und Lieb' und Glück,
> Doch du, mein Vaterland! du heilig
> Duldendes! siehe, du bist geblieben.[1]

But the fact remains, nevertheless, that Hölderlin from his early youth felt himself a stranger in his own land and among his own people. Some of the causes of this circumstance have already been discussed. The fact itself is important because it establishes the connection between his Weltschmerz and his most noteworthy characteristic as a poet, namely, his Hellenism. No other German poet has allowed himself to be so completely dominated by the Greek idea as did Hölderlin. And in his case it may properly be called a symptom of his Weltschmerz, for it marks his flight from the world of stern reality into an imaginary world of Greek ideals. An imaginary Greek world, because in spite of his Hellenic enthusiasm he entertained some of the most un-Hellenic ideas and feelings.

That the poet should take refuge in Greek antiquity is not surprising, when we consider the conditions which prevailed at that time in the field of learning. It was not many decades since the study of Latin and Roman institutions had been forced to yield preëminence of position in Germany to the study of Greek. Furthermore, his own Suabia had come to be recognized as a leader in the study of Greek antiquity, and in his contemporaries Schiller, Hegel, Schelling, who were all countrymen and acquaintances of his, he found worthy competitors in this branch of learning. His fondness for the language and literature of Greece goes back to his early school days, especially at Denkendorf and Maulbronn. On leaving the latter school, he had the reputation among his fellow-students of being an excellent Hellenist, according to the report of Schwab, his biographer. It was while there that Hölderlin as a boy

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 214.

of seventeen first made use of the Alcaic measure in which he subsequently wrote so many of his poems.

A full discussion of the technic of Hölderlin's poems would have so remote a connection with the main topic under consideration that its introduction here would be entirely out of place. It will suffice, therefore, merely to indicate along broad lines the extent to which the Greek idea took and held possession of the poet.

Out of his 168 shorter poems, 126, exactly three-fourths, are written in the unrhymed Greek measures.[1] Those forms which are native are confined almost entirely to his juvenile and youthful compositions, and after 1797 he only once employs the rhymed stanza, namely, in the poem "An Landauer."[2] As a boy of sixteen, he wrote verses in the Alcaic and Asclepiadeian measures,[3] and soon acquired a considerable mastery over them. At seventeen he composed in the latter form his poem "An meine Freundinnen:"

> In der Stille der Nacht denket an euch mein Lied,
> Wo mein ewiger Gram jeglichen Stundenschlag,
> Welcher näher mich bringt dem
> Trauten Grabe, mit Dank begrüsst.[4]

While not exhibiting the finish of expression and musical qualities of his more mature Alcaic lyrics, still it is not bad poetry for a boy of seventeen, and the reader feels what the boy was not slow to learn, that the stately movement of the Greek stanzas lends an added dignity to the expression of sorrow, which was to constitute so large a part of his poetic activity. As already stated, the Alcaic measure was of all the Greek verse-forms Hölderlin's favorite, and the one most frequently and successfully employed by him. He is very fond of introducing Germanic alliteration into these unrhymed stanzas, as the following example will illustrate:

> Und wo sind Dichter, denen der Gott es gab,
> Wie unsern Alten, freundlich und fromm zu sein,

[1] Werke, Vol. I.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 234.
[3] "An die Nachtigall," "An meinen Bilfinger," Werke, Vol. I, p. 42f.
[4] Werke, Vol. I, p. 43.

Wo Weise, wie die unsern sind, die
Kalten und Kühnen, die unbestechbarn?[1]

The Asclepiadeian stanza he employs much less frequently, the Sapphic only once, and that with indifferent success. It was the ode, dithyramb and hymn, the serious lyric, which Hölderlin selected as the models for his poetic fashion. In this purpose he was not alone, for his friend Neuffer writes to him in 1793, with an enthusiasm which in the intensity of expression common at the time, seems almost like an inspiration: "Die höhere Ode und der Hymnus, zwei in unsern Tagen, und vielleicht in allen Zeitaltern am meisten vernachlässigte Musen! in ihre Arme wollen wir uns werfen, von ihren Küssen beseelt uns aufraffen. Welche Aussichten! Dein Hymnus an die Kühnheit mag Dir zum Motto dienen! Mir gehe die Hoffnung voran."[2]

But it was in the form much more than in the contents of his poems, that Hölderlin carried out the Greek idea. Most of his lyrics are occasional poems, or have abstract subjects, as for example, "An die Stille," "An die Ehre," "An den Genius der Kühnheit," and so on. Only here and there does he take a classic subject or introduce classic references. The truth of the matter is, that with all his fervid enthusiasm for Hellenic ideals, and with all his Greek cult, Hölderlin was not the genuine Hellenist he thought himself to be. This is due to the fact that his turning to Greece was in its final analysis attributable rather to selfish than to altruistic motives. He wanted to get away from the deplorable realities about him, the things which hurt his tender soul, and so he constructed for himself this idealized world of ancient and modern Greece, and peopled it with his own creations.

In Hölderlin's "Hyperion," we have the first poetic work in German which takes modern Greece as its locality and a modern Hellene as its hero. Hölderlin calls it "ein Roman," but it would be rather inaccurately described by the usual translation of that term. It is not only the poetic climax of his Hellenism, but also the most complete expression of his Welt-

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 197.
[2] Briefe, p. 160.

schmerz in its various phases. It must naturally be both, for the poet and the hero are one. He speaks of it as "mein Werkchen, in dem ich lebe und webe."[1] Its subject is the emancipation of Greece. What little action is narrated may be very briefly indicated. Russia is at war with Turkey and calls upon Hellas to liberate itself. The hero and his friend Alabanda are at the head of a band of volunteers, fighting the Turks. After several minor successes Hyperion lays siege to the Spartan fortress of Misitra. But at its capitulation, he is undeceived concerning the Hellenic patriots; they ravage and plunder so fiercely that he turns from them with repugnance and both he and Alabanda abandon the cause of liberty which they had championed. To his bride Hyperion had promised a redeemed Greece—a lament is all that he can bring her. She dies, Hyperion comes to Germany where his aesthetic Greek soul is severely jarred by the sordidness, apathy and insensibility of these "barbarians." Returning to the Isthmus, he becomes a hermit and writes his letters to Bellarmin, no less "thatenarm und gedankenvoll" himself than his unfortunate countrymen whom he so characterizes.[2]

"Hyperion," though written in prose, is scarcely anything more than a long drawn out lyric poem, so thoroughly is action subordinated to reflection, and so beautiful and rhythmic is the dignified flow of its periods. But having said that the locality is Greece and its hero is supposed to be a modern Greek, that in its scenic descriptions Hölderlin produces some wonderfully natural effects, and that the language shows the imitation of Greek turns of expression—Homeric epithets and similes—having said this, we have mentioned practically all the Greek characteristics of the composition. And there is much in it that is entirely un-Hellenic. To begin with, the form in which "Hyperion" is cast, that of letters, written not even during the progress of the events narrated, but after they are all a thing of the past, is not at all a Greek idea. Moreover Weltschmerz, which constitutes the "Grundstimmung" of all Hölderlin's writings, and which is most plainly and persistently expressed

[1] Briefe, p. 162.
[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 22.

in "Hyperion," is not Hellenic. Not that we should have to look in vain for pessimistic utterances from the classical poets of Greece—for does not Sophocles make the deliberate statement: "Not to be born is the most reasonable, but having seen the light, the next best thing is to go to the place whence we came as soon as possible."[1] Nevertheless, this sort of sentiment cannot be regarded as representing the spirit of the ancient Greeks, which was distinctly optimistic. They were happy in their worship of beauty in art and in nature, and above all, happy in their creativeness. The question suggests itself here, whether a poet can ever be a genuine pessimist, since he has within him the everlasting impulse to create. And to create is to hope. Hyperion himself says: "Es lebte nichts, wenn es nicht hoffte."[2] But we have already distinguished between pessimism as a system of philosophy, and Weltschmerz as a poetic mood.[3] It is certainly un-Hellenic that Hölderlin allows Hyperion with his alleged Greek nature to sink into contemplative inactivity.

In the poem "Der Lorbeer," 1789, he exclaims:

> Soll ewiges Trauern mich umwittern,
> Ewig mich töten die bange Sehnsucht?[4]

which gives expression to the fact that in his Weltschmerz there was a very large admixture of "Sehnsucht," an entirely un-Hellenic feeling. Nor is there to be found in his entire make-up the slightest trace of Greek irony, which would have enabled him to overcome much of the bitterness of his life, and which might indeed have averted its final catastrophe.

Undeniably Grecian is Hölderlin's idea that the beautiful is also the good. Long years he sought for this combined ideal. In Diotima, the muse of his "Hyperion," whose prototype was Susette Gontard, he has found it—and now he feels that he is in a new world. To his friend Neuffer, from whom he has no secrets, he writes: "Ich konnte wohl sonst glauben, ich wisse, was schön und gut sei, aber seit ich's sehe, möcht' ich lachen über all mein Wissen. Lieblichkeit und Hoheit, und Ruh und

[1] Œdipus Coloneus," 1225 seq.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 81.
[3] Cf. Introduction, p. 1 f.
[4] Werke, Vol. I, p. 89.

Leben, und Geist und Gemüt und Gestalt ist Ein seeliges Eins in diesem Wesen."[1] And six or eight months later: "Mein Schönheitsinn ist nun vor Störung sicher. Er orientiert sich ewig an diesem Madonnenkopfe. . . . Sie ist schön wie Engel! Ein zartes, geistiges, himmlisch reizendes Gesicht! Ach ich könnte ein Jahrtausend lang mich und alles vergessen bei ihr—Majestät und Zärtlichkeit, und Fröhlichkeit und Ernst—und Leben und Geist, alles ist in und an ihr zu einem göttlichen Ganzen vereint."[2] It would be difficult to conceive of a more complete and sublime eulogy of any object of affection than the words just quoted, and yet they do not conceal their author's etherial quality of thought, his "Uebersinnlichkeit." Even his boyish love-affairs seem to have been largely of this character, and were in all likelihood due to the necessity which he felt of bestowing his affection somewhere, rather than to irresistible forces proceeding from the objects of his regard.

Lack of self-restraint, so often characteristic of the poet of Weltschmerz, was not Hölderlin's greatest fault. And yet if his intense devotion to Susette remained undebased by sensual desires, as we know it did, this was not solely due to the practice of heroic self-restraint, but must be attributed in part to the fact that that side of his nature was entirely subordinate to his higher ideals; and these were always a stronger passion with Hölderlin than his love. So that Diotima's judgment of Hyperion is correct when she says: "O es ist so ganz natürlich, dass Du nimmer lieben willst, weil Deine grössern Wünsche verschmachten."[3] This consideration at once compels a comparison with Lenau, which must be deferred, however, until the succeeding chapter. Undoubtedly this year and a half at Frankfurt was the happiest period of his whole life. It brought him a serenity of mind which he had never before known. Ardent was the response called forth by his devotion, but its influence was wholesome—it was soothing to his sensitive nerves. And because it was altogether more a sublime than an earthly passion, he indulged himself in it with a con-

[1] Briefe, p. 382 f.
[2] Briefe, p. 403-405.
[3] Werke, Vol. II, p. 175.

science void of offence. Doubtless he correctly describes the influence of his relations with Diotima upon his life when he writes: "Ich sage Dir, lieber Neuffer! ich bin auf dem Wege, ein recht guter Knabe zu werden. . . . mein Herz ist voll Lust, und wenn das heilige Schicksal mir mein glücklich Leben erhält, so hoff' ich künftig mehr zu thun als bisher."[1] But the happy life was not to continue long. Rudely the cup was dashed from his lips, and the poet's pain intensified by one more disappointment—the bitterest of all he had experienced. It filled him with thoughts of revenge, which he was powerless to execute. There can be no question that if his love for Susette had been of a less etherial order, less a thing of the soul, he would have felt much less bitterly her husband's violent interference.

But returning to the poem "Hyperion," for as such we may regard it, we find in it the most complete expression of the attitude which the poet, in his Weltschmerz, assumed toward nature. Nature is his constant companion, mother, comforter in sorrow, in his brighter moments his deity. This nature-worship, which speedily develops into a more or less consistent pantheism, Hölderlin expresses in Hyperion's second letter, in the following creed: "Eines zu sein mit allem, was lebt, in seliger Selbstvergessenheit wiederzukehren ins All der Natur, das ist der Gipfel der Gedanken und Freuden, das ist die heilige Bergeshöhe, der Ort der ewigen Ruhe."[2] And so nature is to Hölderlin always intensely real and personal. The sea is youthful, full of exuberant joy; the mountain-tops are hopeful and serene; with shouts of joy the stream hurls itself like a giant down into the forests. Here and there his personification of nature becomes even more striking: "O das Morgenlicht und ich, wir gingen uns entgegen, wie versöhnte Freunde."[3] Still more intense is this feeling of personal intimacy, when he exclaims: "O selige Natur! ich weiss nicht, wie mir geschiehet, wenn ich mein Auge erhebe von deiner Schöne, aber alle Lust des Himmels ist in den Thränen, die ich weine vor dir, der Geliebte vor der Geliebten."[4] It is important for purposes of

[1] Briefe, p. 404.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 68.
[3] Werke, Vol. II, p. 100.
[4] Werke, Vol. II, p. 68.

comparison, to note that notwithstanding his intense Weltschmerz, in his treatment of nature Hölderlin does not select only its gloomy or terrible aspects. Light and shade alternate in his descriptions, and only here and there is the background entirely unrelieved. The thunderstorm is to him a dispenser of divine energies among forest and field, even the seasons of decline and decay are not left without sunshine: "auf der stummen entblätterten Landschaft, wo der Himmel schöner als je, mit Wolken und Sonnenschein um die herbstlich schlafenden Bäume spielte."[1] One passage in "Hyperion" bears so striking a resemblance, however, to Lenau's characteristic nature-pictures, that it shall be given in full—although even here, when the gloom of his sorrow and disappointment was steadily deepening, he does not fail to derive comfort from the warm sunshine, a thought for which we should probably look in vain, had Lenau painted the picture: "Ich sass mit Alabanda auf einem Hügel der Gegend, in lieblich wärmender Sonn', und um uns spielte der Wind mit abgefallenem Laube. Das Land war stumm; nur hie und da ertönte im Wald ein stürzender Baum, vom Landmann gefällt, und neben uns murmelte der vergängliche Regenbach hinab ins ruhige Meer."[2]

In spite of his deep and persistent Weltschmerz, Hölderlin rarely gives expression to a longing for death. This forms so prominent a feature in the thought of other types of Weltschmerz, for instance of Lenau and of Leopardi, that its absence here cannot fail to be noticed. It is true that in his dramatic poem "Der Tod des Empedokles," which symbolizes the closing of his account with the world, Hölderlin causes his hero to return voluntarily to nature by plunging into the fiery crater of Mount Etna. But Empedokles does this to atone for past sin, not merely to rid himself of the pain of living; and thus, even as a poetic idea, it impresses us very differently from the continual yearning for death which pervades the writings of the two poets just mentioned. Leopardi declared that it were best never to see the light, but denounced suicide as a cowardly act of selfishness; and yet at the approach of an epi-

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 85.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 181.

demic of cholera, he clung so tenaciously to life that he urged a hurried departure from Naples, regardless of the hardships of such a journey in his feeble condition, and took refuge in a little villa near Vesuvius. Hölderlin's Weltschmerz was absolutely sincere.

Numerous passages might be quoted to show that Hölderlin's mind was intensely introspective. This is true also of Lenau, even to a greater extent, and may be taken as generally characteristic of poets of this type. The fact that this introspection is an inevitable symptom in many mental derangements, hypochondria, melancholia and others, indicates a not very remote relation of Weltschmerz to insanity. In Hölderlin's poems there are not a few premonitions of the sad fate which awaited him. One illustration from the poem "An die Hoffnung," 1801, may suffice:

> Wo bist du? wenig lebt' ich, doch atmet kalt
> Mein Abend schon. Und stille, den Schatten gleich,
> Bin ich schon hier; und schon gesanglos
> Schlummert das schau'rende Herz im Busen.[1]

It is impossible to read these lines without feeling something of the cold chill of the heart that Hölderlin felt was already upon him, and which he expresses in a manner so intensely realistic and yet so beautiful.

Having thus attempted a review of the growth of Hölderlin's Weltschmerz and of its chief characteristics, it merely remains to conclude the chapter with a brief résumé. We have then in Friedrich Hölderlin a youth peculiarly predisposed to feel himself isolated from and repelled by the world, growing up without a strong fatherly hand to guide, giving himself over more and more to solitude and so becoming continually less able to cope with untoward circumstances and conditions. Growing into manhood, he was unfortunate in all his love-affairs and as though doomed to unceasing disappointments. Early in life he devoted himself to the study of antiquity, making Greece his hobby, and thus creating for himself an ideal world which existed only in his imagination, and taking refuge in it from the buffetings of the world about him. He was

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 253.

a man of a deeply philosophical trend of mind, and while not often speaking of it, felt very keenly the humiliating condition of Germany, although his patriotic enthusiasm found its artistic expression not with reference to Germany but to Greece. As a poet, finally, his intimacy with nature was such that nature-worship and pantheism became his religion.

In reviewing the whole range of Hölderlin's writings, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that in him we have a type of Weltschmerz in the broadest sense of the term; we might almost term it Byronism, with the sensual element eliminated. He shows the hypersensitiveness of Werther, fanatical enthusiasm for a vague ideal of liberty, vehement opposition to existing social and political conditions; there is, in fact, a breadth in his Weltschmerz, which makes the sorrows of Werther seem very highly specialized in comparison. Bearing in mind the distinction made between the two classes, we must designate Hölderlin's Weltschmerz as cosmic rather than egoistic; the egoistic element is there, but it is outweighed by the cosmic and finds its poetic expression not so frequently nor so intensely with reference to the poet himself, as with reference to mankind at large.

CHAPTER III

Lenau

If Hölderlin's Weltschmerz has been fittingly characterized as idealistic, Lenau's on the other hand may appropriately be termed the naturalistic type. He is par excellence the "Pathetiker" of Weltschmerz.

Without presuming even to attempt a final solution of a problem of pathology concerning which specialists have failed to agree, there seems to be sufficient circumstantial as well as direct evidence to warrant the assumption that Lenau's case presents an instance of hereditary taint. Notwithstanding the fact that Dr. Karl Weiler[1] discredits the idea of "erbliche Belastung" and calls heredity "den vielgerittenen Verlegenheitsgaul," the conclusion forces itself upon us that if the theory has any scientific value whatsoever, no more plausible instance of it could be found than the one under consideration. The poet's great-grandfather and grandfather had been officers in the Austrian army, the latter with some considerable distinction. Of his five children, only Franz, the poet's father, survived. The complete lack of anything like a systematic education, and the nomadic life of the army did not fail to produce the most disastrous results in the wild and dissolute character of the young man. Even before the birth of the poet, his father had broken his marriage vows and his wife's heart by his abominable dissipations and drunkenness. Lenau was but five years old when his father, not yet thirty-five, died of a disease which he is believed to have contracted as a result of these sensual and senseless excesses. To the poet he bequeathed something of his own pathological sensuality, instability of thought and action, lack of will-energy, and the tears of a heart-

[1] *Euphorion*, 1899, p. 791.

broken mother, a sufficient guarantee, surely, of a poet of melancholy. Even though we cannot avoid the reflection that the loss of such a father was a blessing in disguise, the fact remains that Lenau during his childhood and youth needed paternal guidance and training even more than did Hölderlin. He became the idol of his mother, who in her blind devotion did not hesitate to show him the utmost partiality in all things. This important fact alone must account to a large extent for that presumptuous pride, which led him to expect perhaps more than his just share from life and from the world.

Lenau's aimlessness and instability were so extreme that they may properly be counted a pathological trait. It is best illustrated by his university career. In 1819 he went to Vienna to commence his studies. Beginning with Philosophy, he soon transferred his interests to Law, first Hungarian, then German; finding the study of Law entirely unsuited to his tastes, he now declared his intention of pursuing once more a philosophical course, with a view to an eventual professorship. But this plan was frustrated by his grandmother, the upshot of it all being that Lenau allowed himself to be persuaded to take up the study of agriculture at Altenburg. But a few months sufficed to bring him back to Vienna. Here his legal studies, which he had resumed and almost completed, were interrupted by a severe affection of the throat which developed into laryngitis and from which he never quite recovered. This too, according to Dr. Sadger,[1] marks the neurasthenic, and often constitutes a hereditary taint. Lenau thereupon shifted once more and entered upon a medical course, this time not absolutely without predilection. He did himself no small credit in his medical examinations, but the death of his grandmother, just before his intended graduation, provided a sufficient excuse for him to discontinue the work, which was never again resumed or brought to a conclusion. But not only in matters of such relative importance did Lenau exhibit this vacillation. There was a spirit of restlessness in him which made it impossible for him to remain long in the same place. Of this condition no one was more fully aware than he himself. In one of

[1] "Nicolaus Lenau," *Neue Fr. Pr.*, Nr. 11166-7

his letters he writes: "Gestern hat jemand berechnet, wieviel Poststunden ich in zwei Monaten gefahren bin, und es ergab sich die kolossale Summe von 644, die ich im Eilwagen unter beständiger Gemütsbewegung gefahren bin."[1] That this habit of almost incessant travel tended to aggravate his nervous condition is a fair supposition, notwithstanding the fact that Dr. Karl Weiler[2] skeptically asks "what about commercial travellers?" Lenau himself complains frequently of the distressing effect of such journeys: "Ein heftiger Kopfschmerz und grosse Müdigkeit waren die Folgen der von Linz an unausgesetzten Reise im Eilwagen bei schlechtem Wetter und abmüdenden Gedanken an meine Zukunft."[3] Many similar statements might be quoted from his letters to show that it was not merely the ordinary process of traveling, though that at best must have been trying enough, but the breathless haste of his journeys, combined with mental anxiety, which usually characterized them, that made them so detrimental to his health.

It is as interesting as it is significant to note in this connection the fact that while on a journey to Munich, just a short time before the light of his intellect failed, Lenau wrote the following lines, the last but one of all his poems:

's ist eitel nichts, wohin mein Aug' ich hefte!
Das Leben ist ein vielbesagtes Wandern,
Ein wüstes Jagen ist's von dem zum andern,
Und unterwegs verlieren wir die Kräfte.

Doch trägt uns eine Macht von Stund zu Stund,
Wie's Krüglein, das am Brunnenstein zersprang,
Und dessen Inhalt sickert auf den Grund,
So weit es ging, den ganzen Weg entlang,—
Nun ist es leer. Wer mag daraus noch trinken?
Und zu den andern Scherben muss es sinken.[4]

Hölderlin also uses the striking figure contained in the last line, not however as here to picture the worthlessness of human

[1] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 212.
[2] Cf. *Euphorion*, 1899, p. 795.
[3] Anton Schurz: "Lenau's Leben," Cotta, 1855 (hereafter quoted as "Schurz"), Vol. II, p. 199.
[4] "Lenaus Werke," ed Max Koch, in Kürschner's DNL. (hereafter quoted as "Werke"), Vol. I, p. 525f.

life in general, but to stigmatize the Germans, whom Hyperion describes as "dumpf und harmonielos, wie die Scherben eines weggeworfenen Gefässes."[1]

That Lenau was a neurasthenic seems to be the consensus of opinion, at least of those medical authorities who have given their views of the case to the public.[2] This fact also has an important bearing upon our discussion, since it will help to show a materially different origin for Lenau's Weltschmerz and Hölderlin's.

Much more frequent than in the case of the latter are the ominous forebodings of impending disaster which characterize Lenau's poems and correspondence. In a letter to his friend Karl Mayer he writes: "Mich regiert eine Art Gravitation nach dem Unglücke. Schwab hat einmal von einem Wahnsinnigen sehr geistreich gesprochen. . . . Ein Analogon von solchem Dämon (des Wahnsinns) glaub' ich auch in mir zu beherbergen."[3] He is continually engaged in a gruesome self-diagnosis: "Dann ist mir zuweilen, als hielte der Teufel seine Jagd in dem Nervenwalde meines Unterleibes: ich höre ein deutliches Hundegebell daselbst und ein dumpfes Halloh des Schwarzen. Ohne Scherz; es ist oft zum Verzweifeln."[4] This process of self-diagnosis may be due in part to his medical studies, but much more, we think, to his morbid imagination, which led him, on more than one occasion, to play the madman in so realistic a manner that strangers were frightened out of their wits and even his friends became alarmed, lest it might be earnest and not jest which they were witnessing.

Lenau was not without a certain sense of humor, grim humor though it was, and here and there in his letters there is an admixture of levity with the all-pervading melancholy. An example may be quoted from a letter to Kerner in Weinsberg, dated 1832: "Heute bin ich wieder bei Reinbecks auf ein grosses Spargelessen. Spargel wie Kirchthürme werden da gefressen. Ich allein verschlinge 50-60 solcher Kirchthürme

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 22.

[2] Cf. among others Sadger, Weiler. *Infra*, p. 88.

[3] "Nicolaus Lenau's Briefe an einen Freund," Stuttgart, 1853, p. 68 f.

[4] "Nicolaus Lenau's sämmtliche Werke," herausgegeben von G. Emil Barthel, Leipzig, Reclam, p. CI.

und komme mir dabei vor, wie eine Parodie unserer politisch-prosaischen, durchaus unheiligen Zeit, die auch schon das Maul aufsperrt, um alles Heilige, und namentlich die guten gläubigen Kirchthürme wie Spargelstangen zu verschlingen." The letter concludes with the signature: "Ich umarme Dich, bis Dir die Rippen krachen. Dein Niembsch."[1] Not infrequently this humor was at his own expense, especially when describing an unpleasant condition or situation, as for example in a letter to Sophie Löwenthal in the year 1844: "Jetzt lebe ich hier in Saus und Braus,—d. h. es saust und braust mir der Kopf von einem leidigen Schnupfen."[2] Again, on finding himself on one occasion very unwell and uncomfortable in Stuttgart, he writes as follows: "Beständiges Unwohlsein, Kopfschmerz, Schlaflosigkeit, Mattigkeit, schlechte Verdauung, Rhabarber, Druckfehler, und Aerger über den trägen Fortschlich meiner Geschäfte, das waren die Freuden meiner letzten Woche. Emilie will es nicht gelten lassen, dass die Stuttgarter Luft nichts als die Ausdünstung des Teufels sei.—Ich schnappe nach Luft, wie ein Spatz unter der Luftpumpe.—In vielen der hiesigen Strassen riecht es am Ende auch lenzhaft, nämlich pestilenzhaft, und die guten Stuttgarter merken das gar nicht; 'süss duftet die Heimat.'"[3] In his fondness for bringing together the incongruous, for introducing the element of surprise, and in the fact that his humor is almost always of the impatient, disgruntled, cynical type, Lenau reminds us not a little of Heine in his "Reisebilder" and some other prose works. Hölderlin, on the other hand, may be said to have been utterly devoid of humor.

Lack of self-control, perhaps the most characteristic trait among men of genius, was even more pronounced in Lenau than in Hölderlin. This shows itself in the extreme irregularity of his habits of life. For instance, it was his custom to work long past the midnight hour, and then take his rest until nearly noon. He could never get his coffee quite strong enough to suit him, although it was prepared almost in the

[1] Schurz, Vol. I, p. 169.
[2] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 144.
[3] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 152f.

form of a concentrated tincture and he drank large quantities of it. He smoked to excess, and the strongest cigars at that; in short, he seems to have been entirely without regard for his physical condition. Or was it perverseness which prompted him to prefer close confinement in his room to the long walks which he ought to have taken for his health? Even his recreation, which consisted chiefly in playing the violin, brought him no nervous relaxation, for it is said that he would often play himself into a state of extreme nervous excitement.

All these considerations corroborate the opinion of those who knew him best, that his Weltschmerz, and eventually his insanity, had its origin in a pathological condition. Indeed this was the poet's own view of the case. In a letter to his brother-in-law, Anton Schurz, dated 1834, he says: "Aber, lieber Bruder, die Hypochondrie schlägt bei mir immer tiefere Wurzel. Es hilft alles nichts. Der gewisse innere Riss wird immer tiefer und weiter. Es hilft alles nichts. Ich weiss, es liegt im Körper; aber—aber—"[1] In its origin then, Lenau's Weltschmerz differs altogether from that of Hölderlin, who exhibits no such symptoms of neurasthenia.

Lenau's nervous condition was seriously aggravated at an early date by the outcome of his unfortunate relations with the object of his first love, Bertha, who became his mistress when he was still a mere boy. His grief on finding her faithless was doubtless as genuine as his conduct with her had been reprehensible, for he cherished for many long years the memory of his painful disappointment. The general statement, "Lenau war stets verlobt, fand aber stets in sich selbst einen Widerstand und unerklärliche Angst, wenn die Verbindung endgiltig gemacht werden sollte,"[2] is inaccurate and misleading, inasmuch as it fails to take into proper account the causes, mediate and immediate, of his hesitation to marry. Lenau was only once "verlobt," and it was the stroke of facial paralysis[3] which announced the beginning of the end, rather than any "un-

[1] Schurz, Vol. I, p. 275.

[2] Ricarda Huch: "Romantische Lebensläufe." *Neue d. Rundschau*, Feb. 1902, p. 126.

[3] Sept. 29, 1844. Cf. Schurz, Vol. II, p. 223.

erklärliche Angst," that convinced him of the inexpediency of that important step.

Beyond a doubt his long drawn out and abject devotion to the wife of his friend Max Löwenthal proved the most important single factor in his life. It was during the year 1834, after his return from America, that Lenau made the acquaintance of the Löwenthal family in Vienna.[1] Sophie, who was the sister of his old comrade Fritz Kleyle, so attracted the poet that he remained in the city for a number of weeks instead of going at once to Stuttgart, as he had planned and promised. What at first seemed an ideal friendship, increased in intensity until it became, at least on Lenau's part, the very glow of passion. We have already alluded to the poet's premature erotic instinct, an impulse which he doubtless inherited from his sensual parents. In his numerous letters and notes to Sophie, he has left us a remarkable record of the intensity of his passion. Not even excepting Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein, there are no love-letters in the German language to equal these in literary or artistic merit; and never has any other German poet addressed himself with more ardent devotion to a woman. A characteristic difference between Hölderlin and Lenau here becomes evident: the former, even in his relations with Diotima, supersensual; the latter the very incarnation of sensuality. Lenau was fully conscious of the tremendous struggle with overpowering passion, and once confessed to his clerical friend Martensen that only through the unassailable chastity of his lady-love had his conscience remained void of offence. Almost any of his innumerable protestations of love taken at random would seem like the most extravagant attempt to give utterance to the inexpressible: "Gottes starke Hand drückt mich so fest an Dich, dass ich seufzen muss und ringen mit erdrückender Wonne, und meine Seele keinen Atem mehr hat, wenn sie nicht Deine Liebe saugen kann. Ach Sophie! ach, liebe, liebe, liebe Sophie!"[2] "Ich bete Dich an, Du bist mein Liebstes und Höchstes."[3]

[1] L. A. Frankl: "Lenau und Sophie Löwenthal," Stuttgart, 1891 (hereafter quoted as "Frankl") p. 189, incorrectly states the date as 1838. Possibly it is a misprint.

[2] Frankl, p. 155.

[3] Frankl, p. 151.

"Am sechsten Juni reis' ich ab, nichts darf mich halten. Mir brennt Leib und Seele nach Dir. Du! O Sophie! Hätt' ich Dich da! Das Verlangen schmerzt, O Gott!"[1] Instead of experiencing the soothing influences of a Diotima, Lenau's fate was to be engaged for ten long years in a hot conflict between principle and passion, a conflict which kept his naturally oversensitive nerves continually on the rack. He himself expresses the detrimental effect of this situation: "So treibt mich die Liebe von einer Raserei zur andern, von der zügellosesten Freude zu verzweifeltem Unmut. Warum? Weil ich am Ziel der höchsten, so heiss ersehnten Wonne immer wieder umkehren muss, weil die Sehnsucht nie gestillt wird, wird sie irr und wild und verkehrt sich in Verzweiflung,—das ist die Geschichte meines Herzens."[2] It would seem from the tone of many of his letters that there was much deliberate and successful effort on the part of Sophie to keep Lenau's feelings toward her always in a state of the highest nervous tension. So cleverly did she manage this that even her caprices put him only the more hopelessly at her mercy. One day he writes: "Mit grosser Ungeduld erwartete ich gestern die Post, und sie brachte mir auch einen Brief von Dir, aber einen, der mich kränkt."[3] For a day or two he is rebellious and writes: "Ich bin verstimmt, missmutig. Warum störst Du mein Herz in seinen schönen Gedanken von innigem Zusammenleben auch in der Ferne?"[4] But only a few days later he is again at her feet: "Ich habe Dir heute wieder geschrieben, um Dich auch zum Schreiben zu treiben. Ich sehne mich nach Deinen Briefen. Du bist nicht sehr eifrig, Du bist es wohl nie gewesen. Und kommt endlich einmal ein Brief, so hat er meist seinen Haken—O liebe Sophie! wie lieb' ich Dich!"[5] Her attitude on several occasions leaves room for no other inference than that she was extremely jealous of his affections. When in 1839 a mutual regard sprang up between Lenau and the singer Karoline Unger, a regard which held out to him the hope of a fuller and

[1] Frankl, p. 164.
[2] Frankl, p. 102.
[3] Frankl, p. 149.
[4] Frankl, p. 150.
[5] Frankl, p. 150.

happier existence, we may surmise the nature of Sophie's interference from the following reply to her: "Sie haben mir mit Ihren paar Zeilen das Herz zerschmettert,—Karoline liebt mich und will mein werden. Sie sieht's als ihre Sendung an, mein Leben zu versöhnen und zu beglücken.—Es ist an Ihnen Menschlichkeit zu üben an meinem zerrissenen Herzen.—Verstosse ich sie, so mache ich sie elend und mich zugleich.—Entziehen Sie mir Ihr Herz, so geben Sie mir den Tod; sind Sie unglücklich, so will ich sterben. Der Knoten ist geschürzt. Ich wollte, ich wäre schon tot!"[1] Not only was this proposed match broken off, but when some five years later Lenau made the acquaintance of and became engaged to a charming young girl, Marie Behrends, and all the poet's friends rejoiced with him at the prospect of a happy marriage, a "Musterehe," as he fondly called it, Sophie wrote him the cruel words: "Eines von uns muss wahnsinnig werden."[2] Only a few months were needed to decide which of them it should be.

The foregoing illustrations are ample to show what sort of influence Sophie exerted over the poet's entire nature, and therefore upon his Weltschmerz. Whereas in their hopeless loves, Hölderlin and to an even greater extent Goethe, struggled through to the point of renunciation, Lenau constantly retrogrades, and allows his baser sensual instincts more and more to control him. He promises to subdue his wild outbursts a little.[3] and when he fails he tries to explain,[4] to apologize.[5] If with Hölderlin love was to a predominating degree a thing of the soul, it was with Lenau in an equal measure a matter of nerves, and as such, under these conditions, it could not but contribute largely to his physical, mental and moral disruption. With Hölderlin it was the rude interruption from without of his quiet and happy intercourse with Susette, which embittered his soul. With Lenau it was the feverish, tumultuous nature of the love itself, that deepened his melancholy.

[1] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 7.

[2] Cf. Lenau's Sämmtl. Werke, herausg. von G. Emil Bartel, Leipzig, ohne Jahr. Introd., p. clxv.

[3] Frankl, p. 32.

[4] Frankl, p. 14.

[5] Frankl, p. 30.

The charge of affectation in their Weltschmerz would be an entirely baseless one, both in the case of Hölderlin and Lenau. But this difference is readily discovered in the impressions made upon us by their writings, namely that Hölderlin's Weltschmerz is absolutely naïve and unconscious, while that of Lenau is at all times self-conscious and self-centered. Mention has already been made, in speaking of Lenau's pathological traits,[1] of his confirmed habit of self-diagnosis. This he applied not only to his physical condition but to his mental experiences as well. No one knew so well as he how deeply the roots of melancholy had penetrated his being. "Ich bin ein Melancholiker" he once wrote to Sophie, "der Kompass meiner Seele zittert immer wieder zurück nach dem Schmerze des Lebens."[2] Innumerable illustrations of this fact might be found in his lyrics, all of which would repeat with variations the theme of the stanza:

> Du geleitest mich durch's Leben
> Sinnende Melancholie!
> Mag mein Stern sich strebend heben,
> Mag er sinken,—weichest nie![3]

The definite purpose with which the poet seeks out and strives to keep intact his painful impressions is frankly stated in one of his diary memoranda, as follows: "So gibt es eine Höhe des Kummers, auf welcher angelangt wir einer einzelnen Empfindung nicht nachspringen, sondern sie laufen lassen, weil wir den Blick für das schmerzliche Ganze nicht verlieren, sondern eine gewisse kummervolle Sammlung behalten wollen, die bei aller scheinbaren Aussenheiterkeit recht gut fortbestehen kann."[4] Hölderlin, as we have noted,[5] not infrequently pictures himself as a sacrifice to the cause of liberty and fatherland, to the new era that is to come:

> Umsonst zu sterben, lieb' ich nicht; doch
> Lieb' ich zu fallen am Opferhügel
> Für's Vaterland, zu bluten des Herzens Blut,
> Für's Vaterland . . . .[6]

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 38.
[2] Frankl, p. 15.
[3] Werke, I, p. 89.
[4] Frankl, p. 114.
[5] Cf. *supra*, p. 18.
[6] Hölderlins Werke, Vol. 1, p. 195.

Lenau, on the other hand, is anxious to sacrifice himself to his muse. "Künstlerische Ausbildung ist mein höchster Lebenszweck; alle Kräfte meines Geistes, meines Gemütes betracht' ich als Mittel dazu. Erinnerst Du Dich des Gedichtes von Chamisso,[1] wo der Maler einen Jüngling ans Kreuz nagelt, um ein Bild vom Todesschmerze zu haben? Ich will mich selber ans Kreuz schlagen, wenn's nur ein gutes Gedicht gibt."[2] And again: "Vielleicht ist die Eigenschaft meiner Poesie, dass sie ein Selbstopfer ist, das Beste daran."[3] The specific instances just cited, together with the inevitable impressions gathered from the reading of his lyrics, make it impossible to avoid the conclusion that we are dealing here with a *virtuoso* of Weltschmerz; that Lenau was not only conscious at all times of the depth of his sorrow, but that he was also fully aware of its picturesqueness and its poetic possibilities. It is true that this self-consciousness brings him dangerously near the bounds of insincerity, but it must also be granted that he never oversteps those bounds.

Regarded as a psychological process, Lenau's Weltschmerz therefore stands midway between that of Hölderlin and Heine. It is more self-centred than Hölderlin's and while the poet is able to diagnose the disease which holds him firmly in its grasp, he lacks those means by which he might free himself from it. Heine goes still further, for having become conscious of his melancholy, he mercilessly applies the lash of self-irony, and in it finds the antidote for his Weltschmerz.

Fichte, says Erich Schmidt, calls egoism the spirit of the eighteenth century, by which he means the revelling, the complete absorption, in the personal. This will naturally find its favorite occupation in sentimental self-contemplation, which becomes a sort of fashionable epidemic. It is this fashion which Goethe wished to depict in "Werther," and therefore Werther's hopeless love is not wholly responsible for his suicide. "Werther untergräbt sein Dasein durch Selbstbetrachtung," is Goethe's own explanation of the case.[4] And it is in

[1] "Das Kruzifix, Eine Künstlerlegende," 1820.
[2] Schurz, Vol. I, p. 158f.
[3] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 6.
[4] Cf. Breitinger: "Studien und Wandertage;" Frauenfeld, Huber, 1870.

this light only that Werther's malady deserves in any comprehensive sense the term Weltschmerz. Here, then, Lenau and Werther stand on common ground. Other traits common to most poets of Weltschmerz might here be enumerated as characteristic of both, such as extreme fickleness of purpose, supersensitiveness, lack of definite vocation, and the like; all of which goes to show that while for artistic purposes Goethe required a dramatic cause, or rather occasion, for Werther's suicide, he nevertheless fully understood all the symptoms of the prevailing disease with which his sentimental hero was afflicted.

While the personal elements in Lenau's Weltschmerz are much more intense in their expression than with Hölderlin, its altruistic side is proportionately weaker. So far as we may judge from his lyrics, very little of Lenau's Weltschmerz was inspired by patriotic considerations. There is opposition, it is true, to the existing order, but that opposition is directed almost solely against that which annoyed and inconvenienced him personally, for example, against the stupid as well as rigorous Austrian censorship. Against this bugbear he never ceases to storm in verse and letters, and to it must be attributed in a large measure his literary alienation from the land of his adoption. That we must look to his lyrics rather than to his longer epic writings, in order to discover the poet's deepest interests, is nowhere more clearly evidenced than in the following reference to his "Savonarola," in a letter to Emilie Reinbeck during the progress of the work: "Savonarola wirkte zumeist als Prediger, darum muss ich in meinem Gedicht ihn vielfach predigen und dogmatisieren lassen, welches in vierfüssigen doppeltgereimten Iamben sehr schwierig ist. Doch es freut mich, Dinge poetisch durchzusetzen, an deren poetischer Darstellbarkeit wohl die meisten Menschen verzweifeln. Auch gereicht es mir zu besonderem Vergnügen, mit diesem Gedicht gegen den herrschenden Geschmack unseres Tages in Opposition zu treten."[1] The inference lies very near at hand that his opposition to the prevailing taste was after all a secondary consideration, and that the poet's first concern was to win glory

[1] Schlossar: "Nicolaus Lenaus Briefe an Emilie von Reinbeck," Stuttgart, 1896 (hereafter quoted as "Schlossar"), p. 98.

by accomplishing something which others would abandon as an impossibility. While recognizing the fact that Lenau's "Faust" and "Don Juan" are largely autobiographical, it is, I think, obvious that an entirely adequate impression of his Weltschmerz may be gained from his letters and lyrics alone, in which the poet's sincerest feelings need not be subordinated for a moment to artistic purposes or demands. And nowhere, either in lyrics or letters, do we find such spontaneous outbursts of patriotic sentiment as greet us in Hölderlin's poems:

Glückselig Suevien, meine Mutter![1]

This could not be otherwise; for was he (Lenau) not an Hungarian by birth, an Austrian by adoption, and in his professional affiliations a German? Had his interests not been divided between Vienna and Stuttgart, and had he not been possessed with an apparently uncontrollable restlessness which drove him from place to place, his patriotic enthusiasm would naturally have turned to Austria, and the poetic expression of his home sentiments would not have been confined, perhaps, to the one occasion when he had put the broad Atlantic between himself and his kin. That his brother-in-law Schurz should wish to represent him as a dyed-in-the-wool Austrian is only natural.[2] However this may be, the poet does not hesitate to state in a letter to Emilie Reinbeck: "Ein Hund in Schwaben hat mehr Achtung für mich als ein Polizeipräsident in Oesterreich."[3] And although he professes to have become hardened to the pestering interference of the authorities, as a matter of fact it was a constant source of unhappiness to him. "So aber war mein Leben seit meinem letzten Briefe ein beständiger Aerger. Die verfluchten Vexationen der hiesigen Censurbehörde haben selbst jetzt noch immer kein Ende finden können."[4] Speaking of his hatred for the censorship law, he says: "Und doch gebührt mein Hass noch immer viel weniger dem Gesetze selbst, als denjenigen legalisierten Bestien, die das Gesetz auf eine so niederträchtige Art handhaben;—und unsre Censoren stellen im Gegensatze der pflanzen- und fleischfressenden Tiere

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 260.
[2] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 193.
[3] Schlossar, p. 109.
[4] Schlossar, p. 111.

die Klasse der geistfressenden Tiere dar, eine abscheuliche, monströse Klasse!"[1] Roustan expresses the opinion that with Lenau patriotism occupied a secondary place.[2] He had too many "native lands" to become attached to any one of them.

There is something of a counterpart to Hölderlin's Hellenism and championship of Greek liberty in Lenau's espousal of the Polish cause. But here again the personal element is strongly in evidence. A chance acquaintance, which afterward became an intimate friendship, with Polish fugitives, seems to have been the immediate occasion of his Polenlieder, so that his enthusiasm for Polish liberty must be regarded as incidental rather than spontaneous. Needless to say that with a Greek cult such as Hölderlin's Lenau had no patience whatever. "Dass die Poesie den profanen Schmutz wieder abwaschen müsse, den ihr Goethe durch 50 Jahre mit klassischer Hand gründlich einzureiben bemüht war; dass die Freiheitsgedanken, wie sie jetzt gesungen werden, nichts seien als konventioneller Trödel,—davon haben nur wenige eine Ahnung."[3]

All these considerations tend to convince us that Lenau's Weltschmerz is after all of a much narrower and more personal type than Hölderlin's. Again and again he runs through the gamut of his own painful emotions and experiences, diagnosing and dissecting each one, and always with the same gloomy result. Consequently his Weltschmerz loses in breadth what through the depth of the poet's introspection it gains in intensity.

One of the most striking and, unless classed among his numerous other pathological traits, one of the most puzzling of Lenau's characteristics is the perverseness of his nature. His intimate friends were wont to explain it, or rather to leave it unexplained by calling it his "Husarenlaune" when the poet would give vent to an apparently unprovoked and unreasonable burst of anger, and on seeing the consternation of those present, would just as suddenly throw himself into a fit of laughter quite as inexplicable as his rage. He takes delight

[1] Schlossar, p. 112 f.
[2] "Lenau et son Temps," Paris, 1898, p. 351.
[3] Schlossar, p. 103.

in things which in the ordinarily constructed mind would produce just the reverse feeling. Speaking once of a particularly ill-favored person of his acquaintance he says: "Eine so gewaltige Hässlichkeit bleibt ewig neu und kann sich nie abnützen. Es ist was Frisches darin, ich sehe sie gerne."[1] And in not a few of his poems we see a certain predilection for the gruesome, the horrible. So in the remarkable figure employed in "Faust:"

> Die Träume, ungelehr'ge Bestien, schleichen
> Noch immer nach des Wahns verscharrten Leichen.[2]

This perverseness of disposition is in a large measure accounted for by the fact that Lenau was eternally at war with himself. Speaking in the most general way, Hölderlin's Weltschmerz had its origin in his conflict with the outer world, Lenau's on the other hand must be attributed mainly to the unceasing conflict or "Zwiespalt" within his breast. In his childhood a devout Roman Catholic, he shows in his "Faust" (1833-36) a mind filled with scepticism and pantheistic ideas; "Savonarola" (1837) marks his return to and glorification of the Christian faith; while in the "Albigenser" (1838-42) the poet again champions complete emancipation of thought and belief. Only a few months elapsed between the writing of the two poems "Wanderung im Gebirge" (1830), in which the most orthodox faith in a personal God is expressed, and "Die Zweifler" (1831). The only consistent feature of his poems is their profound melancholy. But Lenau's inner struggle of soul did not consist merely in his vacillating between religious faith and doubt; it was the conflict of instinct with reason. This is evident in his relations with Sophie Löwenthal. He knows that their love is an unequal one[3] and chides her for her coldness,[4] warning her not to humiliate him, not even in jest;[5] he knows too that his alternating moods of exaltation and dejection resulting from the intensity of his unsatisfied love are de-

[1] Schlossar, p. 154.
[2] Werke, Vol. II, p. 183.
[3] Frankl, p. 99.
[4] Frankl, p. 90.
[5] Frankl, p. 90.

stroying him.[1] "Oefter hat sich der Gedanke bei mir angemeldet: Entschlage dich dieser Abhängigkeit und gestatte diesem Weibe keinen so mächtigen Einfluss auf deine Stimmungen. Kein Mensch auf Erden soll dich so beherrschen. Doch bald stiess ich diesen Gedanken wieder zurück als einen Verräter an meiner Liebe, und ich bot mein reizbares Herz wieder gerne dar Deinen zärtlichen Misshandlungen.—O geliebtes Herz! missbrauche Deine Gewalt nicht! Ich bitte Dich, liebe Sophie!"[2] And yet, in spite of it all, he is unable to free himself from the thrall of passion: "Wie wird doch all mein Trotz und Stolz so gar zu nichte, wenn die Furcht in mir erwacht, dass Du mich weniger liebest";[3] and all this from the same pen that once wrote: "das Wort Gnade hat ein Schuft erfunden."[4]

But just as helpless as this defiant pride proved before his all-consuming love for Sophie, so strongly did it assert itself in all his other relations with men and things. A hasty word from one of his best friends could so deeply offend his spirit that, according to his own admission, all subsequent apologies were futile.[5] For Lenau, then, such an attitude of hero-worship as that assumed by Hölderlin towards Schiller, would have been an utter impossibility. We have already seen the extent to which he was over-awed (?) by Goethe's views when they were at variance with their own.[6] On another occasion he writes: "Was Goethe über Ruysdael faselt, kannte ich bereits."[7] Toward his critics his bearing was that of haughty indifference: "Mag auch das Talent dieser Menchen, mich zu insultieren, gross sein, mein Talent, sie zu verachten, ist auf alle Fälle grösser."[8] When his Frühlingsalmanach of 1835 had been received with disfavor by the critics, he professed to be concerned only for his publisher: "Ich meinerseits habe auf Liebe und Dank nie gezählt bei meinen Bestrebungen."[9]

[1] Frankl, p. 192.
[2] Frankl, p. 173.
[3] Frankl, p. 103.
[4] Schlossar, p. 55.
[5] Cf. Schlossar, p. 93 f.
[6] Cf. *supra*, p. 48.
[7] Schlossar, p. 46.
[8] Schlossar, p. 85.
[9] Schlossar, p. 83.

"Die (Recensenten) wissen den Teufel von Poesie."[1] Whether this real or assumed nonchalance would have stood the test of literary disappointments such as Hölderlin's, it is needless to speculate.

Hölderlin eagerly sought after happiness and contentment, but fortune eluded him at every turn. Lenau on the contrary thrust it from him with true ascetic spirit.

The mere thought of submitting to the ordinary process of negotiations and recommendations for a vacant professorship of Esthetics in Vienna is so repulsive to his pride, that the whole matter is at once allowed to drop, notwithstanding that he has been preparing for the place by diligent philosophical studies.[2] The asceticism with which he regarded life in general is expressed in a letter to Emilie Reinbeck, 1843, in which he says: "Wer die Welt gestalten helfen will, muss darauf verzichten, sie zu geniessen."[3] But more often this resignation becomes a defiant challenge: "Ich habe dem Leben gegenüber nun einmal meine Stellung genommen, es soll mich nicht hinunterkriegen. Dass mein Widerstand nicht der eines ruhigen Weisen ist, sondern viel Trotziges an sich hat, das liegt in meinen Temperament."[4]

Another characteristic difference between Lenau's Weltschmerz and Hölderlin's lies in the fact that the writings of the latter do not exhibit that absolute and abject despair which marks Lenau's lyrics. Typical for both poets are the lines addressed by each to a rose:

Ewig trägt im Mutterschosse,
Süsse Königin der Flur,
Dich und mich die stille, grosse,
Allbelebende Natur.

Röschen unser Schmuck veraltet,
Sturm entblättert dich und mich,
Doch der ew'ge Keim entfaltet
Bald zu neuer Blüte sich![5]

[1] Schurz, Vol. I, p. 176.
[2] Cf. Schlossar, p. 173.
[3] Schlossar, p. 184.
[4] Schlossar, p. 87.
[5] Hölderlin, "An eine Rose," Werke, Vol. I, p. 142.

Unmistàkable as is the melancholy strain of these vèrses, they are not without a hopeful afterthought, in which the poet turns from self-contemplation to a view of a larger destiny. Not so in Lenau's poem, "Welke Rosen":

In einem Buche blätternd, fand
Ich eine Rose welk, zerdrückt,
Und weiss auch nicht mehr, wessen Hand
Sie einst für mich gepflückt.

Ach mehr und mehr im Abendhauch
Verweht Erinn'rung; bald zerstiebt
Mein Erdenlos; dann weiss ich auch
Nicht mehr, wer mich geliebt.[1]

The intensely personal note of the last stanza is in marked contrast with the corresponding stanza of Hölderlin's poem just quoted. Further evidence that Lenau's Weltschmerz was constitutional, while Hölderlin's was the result of experience, lies in this very fact, that nowhere do the writings of the former exhibit that stage of buoyant expectation, youthful enthusiasm, or hopeful striving, which we find in some of the earlier poems of the latter. In Hölderlin's ode "An die Hoffnung," he apostrophizes hope as "Holde! gütig Geschäftige!"

Die du das Haus der Trauernden nicht verschmähst.[2]

Lenau, in his poem of the same title, tells us he has done with hope:

All dein Wort ist Windesfächeln;
Hoffnung! dann nur trau' ich dir,
Weisest du mit Trosteslächeln
Mir des Todes Nachtrevier.[3]

Even his Faust gives himself over almost from the outset to abject despair.

Logically consequent upon this state of mind is the poet's oft-repeated longing for death. The persistency of this thought may be best illustrated by a few quotations from poems and letters, arranged chronologically:

1831. Mir wird oft so schwer, als ob ich einen Todten in mir herumtrüge.[4]

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 389.
[2] Hölderlins Werke, Vol. I, p. 253.
[3] Werke, Vol. I, p. 99.
[4] Schurz, Vol. I, p. 132.

1833. Und mir verging die Jugend traurig,
Des Frühlings Wonne blieb versäumt,
Der Herbst durchweht mich trennungsschaurig,
Mein Herz dem Tod entgegenträumt.[1]

1837. Heute dachte ich öfter an den Tod, nicht mit bitterem Trotz und störrischem Verlangen, sondern mit freundlichem Appetit.[2]

1837. Soll ich Dir alles sagen? Wisse, dass ich wirklich daran dachte, mir den Tod zu geben.[3]

1838. Der Gedanke des Todes wird mir immer freundlicher, und ich verschwende mein Leben gerne.[4]

1838. Durchs Fenster kommt ein dürres Blatt
Vom Wind hereingetrieben;
Dies leichte offne Brieflein hat
Der Tod an mich geschrieben.[5]

1840. Oft will mich's gemahnen, als hätte ich auf Erden nichts mehr zu thun, und ich wünschte dann, Gervinus möchte recht haben, indem er, wie Georg mir erzählte, mir einen baldigen Zusammenbruch und Tod prophezeite.

1842. Ich habe ein wollüstiges Heimweh, in Deinen Armen zu sterben.[7]

1843. Selig sind die Betäubten! noch seliger sind die Toten![8]

1844. In dieses Waldes leisem Rauschen
Ist mir, als hör' ich Kunde wehen,
Dass alles Sterben und Vergehen
Nur heimlichstill vergnügtes Tauschen.[9]

If we should seek for the Leit-motif of Lenau's Weltschmerz, we should unquestionably have to designate it as the *transientness of life*. Thus in the poem "Die Zweifler," he exclaims:

Vergänglichkeit! wie rauschen deine Wellen
Durch's weite Labyrinth des Lebens fort![10]

Ten per cent. of all Lenau's lyrics bear titles which directly express or suggest this thought, as for example, "Vergangenheit," "Vergänglichkeit," "Das tote Glück," "Einst und Jetzt,"

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 82.
[2] Frankl, p. 79.
[3] Frankl, p. 102.
[4] Frankl, p. 127.
[5] Werke, Vol. I, p. 267.
[6] Schlossar, p. 144.
[7] Frankl, p. 169.
[8] Schlossar, p. 188.
[9] Werke, Vol. I, p. 405.
[10] Werke, Vol. I, p. 130.

"Aus!," "Eitel Nichts," "Verlorenes Glück," "Welke Rose," "Vanitas," "Scheiden," "Scheideblick," and the like; while in not less than seventy-one per cent. of his lyrics there are allusions, more or less direct, to this same idea, which shows beyond a doubt how large a component it must have been of the poet's characteristic mood.

If Hölderlin, the idealist, judges the things which are, according to his standard of things as they *ought to be,* Lenau, on the other hand, measures them by the things which *have been.*

> Friedhof der entschlafnen Tage,
> Schweigende Vergangenheit!
> Du begräbst des Herzens Klage,
> Ach, und seine Seligkeit![1]

Nowhere is this mental attitude of the poet toward life in all its forms more clearly defined than in his views of nature. That this is an entirely different one from Hölderlin's goes without saying. Lenau has nothing of that naïve and unsophisticated childlike nature-sense which Hölderlin possessed, and which enabled him to find comfort and consolation in nature as in a mother's embrace. So that while for Hölderlin intercourse with nature afforded the greatest relief from his sorrows, Lenau's Weltschmerz was on the contrary intensified thereby. For him the rose has no fragrance, the sunlight no warmth, springtime no charms, in a word, nature has neither tone nor temper, until such has been assigned to it by the poet himself. And as he is fully aware of the artistic possibilities of the mantle of melancholy "um die wunde Brust geschlungen,"[2] it follows consistently that he should select for poetic treatment only those aspects of nature which might serve to intensify the expression of his grief.

Among the titles of Lenau's lyrics descriptive of nature are "Herbst," "Herbstgefühl" (twice), "Herbstlied," "Ein Herbstabend," "Herbstentschluss," "Herbstklage," and many others of a similar kind, such as "Das dürre Blatt," "In der Wüste," "Frühlings Tod," etc. If we disregard a few quite excep-

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 62.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 102.

tional verses on spring, the statement will hold that Lenau sees in nature only the seasons and phenomena of dissolution and decay. So in "Herbstlied":

> Ja, ja, ihr lauten Raben,
> Hoch in der kühlen Luft,
> 's geht wieder ans Begraben,
> Ihr flattert um die Gruft![1]

"Je mehr man sich an die Natur anschliesst," the poet writes to Sophie Schwab, "je mehr man sich in Betrachtungen ihrer Züge vertieft, desto mehr wird man ergriffen von dem Geiste der Sehnsucht, des schwermütigen Hinsterbens, der durch die Natur auf Erden weht."[2] Characteristic is the setting which the poet gives to the "Waldkapelle":

> Der dunkle Wald umrauscht den Wiesengrund,
> Gar düster liegt der graue Berg dahinter,
> Das dürre Laub, der Windhauch gibt es kund,
> Geschritten kommt allmählig schon der Winter.
>
> Die Sonne ging, umhüllt von Wolken dicht,
> Unfreundlich, ohne Scheideblick von hinnen,
> Und die Natur verstummt, im Dämmerlicht
> Schwermütig ihrem Tode nachzusinnen.[3]

The sunset is represented as a dying of the sun, the leaves fall sobbing from the trees, the clouds are dissolved in tears, the wind is described as a murderer. We see then that Lenau's treatment of nature is essentially different from Hölderlin's. The latter explains man through nature; Lenau explains nature through man. Hölderlin describes love as a heavenly plant,[4] youth as the springtime of the heart,[5] tears as the dew of love;[6] Lenau, on the other hand, characterizes rain as the tears of heaven, for him the woods are glad,[7] the brooklet weeps,[8] the air is idle, the buds and blossoms listen,[9] the forest in its

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 299.
[2] Cf. Farinelli, in *Verhandlungen des 8. deutschen Neuphilologentages*, Hannover. 1898, p. 58.
[3] Werke, Vol. I, p. 137.
[4] Höld. Werke, Vol. I, p. 167.
[5] Höld. Werke, Vol. I, p. 143.
[6] Höld. Werke, Vol. I, p. 140.
[7] Len. Werke, Vol. I, p. 258.
[8] Len. Werke, Vol. I, p. 250.
[9] Len. Werke, Vol. I, p. 260.

autumn foliage is "herbstlich gerötet, so wie ein Kranker, der sich neigt zum Sterben, wenn flüchtig noch sich seine Wangen färben."[1] A remarkable simile, and at the same time characteristic for Lenau in its morbidness is the following:

> Wie auf dem Lager sich der Seelenkranke,
> Wirft sich der Strauch im Winde hin und her.[2]

Hölderlin speaks of a friend's bereavement as "ein schwarzer Sturm";[3] when he had grieved Diotima he compares himself to the cloud passing over the serene face of the moon;[4] gloomy thoughts he designates by the common metaphor "der Schatten eines Wölkchens auf der Stirne."[5] Lenau turns the comparison and says:

> Am Himmelsantlitz wandelt ein Gedanke,
> Die düstre Wolke dort, so bang, so schwer.[6]

Where Hölderlin finds delight in the incorporeal elements of nature, such as light, ether, and ascribes personal qualities and functions to them, Lenau on the contrary always chooses the tangible things and invests them with such mental and moral attributes as are in harmony with his gloomy state of mind. Consequently Lenau's Weltschmerz never remains abstract; indeed, the almost endless variety of concrete pictures in which he gives it expression is nothing short of remarkable, not only in the sympathetic nature-setting which he gives to his lamentations, but also in the striking metaphors which he employs. Of the former, probably no better illustration could be found in all Lenau's poems than his well-known "Schilflieder"[7] and his numerous songs to Autumn. One or two examples of his incomparable use of nature-metaphors in the expression of his Weltschmerz will suffice:

[1] Len. Werke, Vol. I, p. 249.
[2] Len. Werke, Vol. I, p. 147.
[3] Höld. Werke, Vol. I, p. 144.
[4] Höld. Werke, Vol. I, p. 164.
[5] Höld. Werke, Vol. II, p. 117.
[6] Len. Werke, Vol. I, p. 147.
[7] Werke, Vol. I, p. 51 f.

Hab' ich gleich, als ich so sacht
Durch die Stoppeln hingeschritten,
Aller Sensen auch gedacht,
Die ins Leben mir geschnitten.[1]

Auch mir ist Herbst, und leiser
Trag' ich den Berg hinab
Mein Bündel dürre Reiser
Die mir das Leben gab.[2]

Der Mond zieht traurig durch die Sphären,
Denn all die Seinen ruhn im Grab;
Drum wischt er sich die hellen Zähren
Bei Nacht an unsern Blumen ab.[3]

The forceful directness of Lenau's metaphors from nature is aptly shown in the following comparison of two passages, one from Hölderlin's "An die Natur," the other from Lenau's "Herbstklage," in which both poets employ the same poetic fancy to express the same idea.

Tot ist nun, die mich erzog und stillte,
Tot ist nun die jugendliche Welt,
Diese Brust, die einst ein Himmel füllte,
Tot und dürftig wie ein Stoppelfeld.[4]

If we compare the simile in the last line with the corresponding metaphor used by Lenau in the following stanza,—

Wie der Wind zu Herbsteszeit
Mordend hinsaust in den Wäldern,
Weht mir die Vergangenheit
Von des Glückes Stoppelfeldern,[5]

the greater artistic effectiveness of the latter figure will be at once apparent.

The idea that nature is cruel, even murderous, as suggested in the opening lines of the stanza just quoted, seems in the course of time to have become firmly fixed in the poet's mind, for he not only uses it for poetic purposes, but expresses his conviction of the fact on several occasions in his conversations and letters. Tossing some dead leaves with his stick while out

[1] "Der Kranich," Werke, Vol. I, p. 328.
[2] "Herbstlied," Werke, Vol. I, p. 299.
[3] "Mondlied," Werke, Vol. I, p. 310.
[4] Höld. Werke, Vol. I, p. 146.
[5] Werke, Vol. I, p. 299.

walking, he is said to have exclaimed: "Da seht, und dann heisst es, die Natur sei liebevoll und schonend! Nein, sie ist grausam, sie hat kein Mitleid. Die Natur ist erbarmungslos!"[1] It goes without saying that in such a conception of nature the poet could find no amelioration of his Weltschmerz.[2]

In summing up the results of our discussion of Lenau's Weltschmerz, it would involve too much repetition to mention all the points in which it stands, as we have seen, in striking contrast to that of Hölderlin. Suffice it to recall only the most essential features of the comparison: the predominance of hereditary and pathological traits as causative influences in the case of Lenau; the fact that whereas Hölderlin's quarrel was largely with the world, Lenau's was chiefly within himself; the passive and ascetic nature of Lenau's attitude, as compared with the often hopeful striving of Hölderlin; the patriotism of the latter, and the relative indifference of the former; Lenau's strongly developed erotic instinct, which gave to his relations with Sophie such a vastly different influence upon his Weltschmerz from that exerted upon Hölderlin by his relations with Diotima; and finally the marked difference in the attitude of these two poets toward nature.

A careful consideration of all the points involved will lead to no other conclusion than that whereas in Hölderlin the cosmic element predominates, Lenau stands as a type of egoistic Weltschmerz. To quote from our classification attempted in the first chapter, he is one of "those introspective natures who are first and chiefly aware of their own misery, and finally come to regard it as representative of universal evil." Nowhere is this more clearly stated than in the poet's own words: "Es hat etwas Tröstliches für mich, wenn ich in meinem Privatunglück den Familienzug lese, der durch alle Geschlechter der armen Menschen geht. Mein Unglück ist mir mein Liebstes,—und ich betrachte es gerne im verklärenden Lichte eines allgemeinen Verhängnisses."[3]

[1] Schurz, Vol. II, p. 104.

[2] For an exhaustive discussion of Lenau's nature-sense cf. Prof. Camillo von Klenze's excellent monograph on the subject, "The Treatment of Nature in the Works of Nikolaus Lenau," Chicago, University Press, 1902.

[3] Frankl, p. 116.

CHAPTER IV

Heine

Heine was probably the first German writer to use the term Weltschmerz in its present sense. Breitinger in his essay "Neues über den alten Weltschmerz"[1] endeavors to trace the earliest use of the word and finds an instance of it in Julian Schmidt's "Geschichte der Romantik,"[2] 1847. He seems to have entirely overlooked Heine's use of the word in his discussion of Delaroche's painting "Oliver Cromwell before the body of Charles I." (1831).[3] The actual inventor of the compound was no doubt Jean Paul, who wrote (1810): "Diesen Weltschmerz kann er (Gott) sozusagen nur aushalten durch den Anblick der Seligkeit, die nachher vergütet."[4]

But although Heine may have been the first to adapt the word to its present use, and although we have fallen into the habit of thinking of him as the chief representative of German Weltschmerz, it must be admitted that there is much less genuine Weltschmerz to be found in his poems than in those of either Hölderlin or Lenau. The reason for this has already been briefly indicated in the preceding chapter. Hölderlin's Weltschmerz is altogether the most naïve of the three; Lenau's, while it still remains sincere, becomes self-conscious, while Heine has an unfailing antidote for profound feeling in his merciless self-irony. And yet his condition in life was such as would have wrung from the heart of almost any other poet notes of sincerest pathos.

In Lenau's case we noted circumstances which point to a

[1] "Studien und Wandertage," Frauenfeld, Huber, 1884.

[2] Vol. II, p. 265.

[3] "Französische Maler. Gemälde-Ausstellung in Paris, 1831." Heines Sämmtliche Werke, mit Einleitung von E. Elster. Leipzig, Bibliogr. Inst., 1890. (Hereafter quoted as "Werke.") Vol. IV, p. 61.

[4] "Selina, oder über die Unsterblichkeit," II, p. 132.

direct transmission from parent to child of a predisposition to melancholia. In Heine's, on the other hand, the question of heredity has apparently only an indirect bearing upon his Weltschmerz. To what extent was his long and terrible disease of hereditary origin, and in what measure may we ascribe his Weltschmerz to the sufferings which that disease caused him? The first of these questions has been answered as conclusively as seems possible on the basis of all available data, by a doctor of medicine, S. Rahmer, in what is at this time the most recent and most authoritative study that has been published on the subject.[1] Stage by stage he follows the development of the disease, from its earliest indications in the poet's incessant nervous headaches, which he ascribes to neurasthenic causes. He attempts to quote all the passages in Heine's letters which throw light upon his physical condition, and points out that in the second stage of the disease the first symptoms of paralysis made their appearance as early as 1832, and not in 1837 as the biographers have stated. To this was added in 1837 an acute affection of the eyes, which continued to recur from this time on. In addition to the pathological process which led to a complete paralysis of almost the whole body, Rahmer notes other symptoms first mentioned in 1846, which he describes as "bulbär" in their origin, such as difficulty in controlling the muscles of speech, difficulty in chewing and swallowing, the enfeebling of the muscles of the lips, disturbances in the functions of the glottis and larynx, together with abnormal secretion of saliva. He discredits altogether the diagnosis of Heine's disease as consumption of the spinal marrow, to which Klein-Hattingen in his recent book on Hölderlin, Lenau and Heine[2] still adheres, dismisses as scientifically untenable the popular idea that the poet's physical dissolution was the result of his sensual excesses, finally diagnoses the case as "die spinale Form der progressiven Muskelatrophie"[3] and maintains that it was either directly inherited, or at least developed on

[1] "Heinrich Heines Krankheit und Leidensgeschichte." Eine kritische Studie, von S. Rahmer, Dr. Med., Berlin, 1901.

[2] "Das Liebesleben Hölderlin's, Lenaus, Heines." Berlin, 1901.

[3] Rahmer, op. cit. p. 45.

the basis of an inherited disposition.[1] He finds further evidence in support of the latter theory in the fact that the first symptoms of the disease made their appearance in early youth, not many years after puberty, and concludes that, in spite of scant information as to Heine's ancestors, we are safe in assuming a hereditary taint on the father's side.

The poet himself evidently would have us believe as much, for in his Reisebilder he says: "Wie ein Wurm nagte das Elend in meinem Herzen und nagte,—ich habe dieses Elend mit mir zur Welt gebracht. Es lag schon mit mir in der Wiege, und wenn meine Mutter mich wiegte, so wiegte sie es mit, und wenn sie mich in den Schlaf sang, so schlief es mit mir ein, und es erwachte, sobald ich wieder die Augen aufschlug. Als ich grösser wurde, wuchs auch das Elend, und wurde endlich ganz gross und zersprengte mein. . . . Wir wollen von andern Dingen sprechen. . . ."[2]

And yet Heine's disposition was not naturally inclined to hypochondria. In his earlier letters, especially to his intimate friends, there is often more than cheerfulness, sometimes a decided buoyancy if not exuberance of spirits. A typical instance we find in a letter to Moser (1824): "Ich hoffe Dich wohl nächstes Frühjahr wiederzusehen und zu umarmen und zu necken und vergnügt zu sein."[3] Only here and there, but very rarely, does he acknowledge any influence of his physical condition upon his mental labors. To Immermann he writes (1823): "Mein Unwohlsein mag meinen letzten Dichtungen auch etwas Krankhaftes mitgeteilt haben."[4] And to Merkel (1827): "Ach! ich bin heute sehr verdriesslich. Krank und unfähig, gesund aufzufassen."[5] In the main, however, he makes a very brave appearance of cheerfulness, and especially of patience, which seems to grow with the hopelessness of his affliction. To his mother (1851): "Ich befinde mich wieder krankhaft gestimmt, etwas wohler wie früher, vielleicht viel wohler; aber grosse Nervenschmerzen habe ich noch immer,

[1] Rahmer, p. 46.
[2] Werke, Vol. III, p. 194.
[3] Karpeles ed. Werke (2. Aufl.) VIII, p. 441.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 378.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 520.

und leider ziehen sich die Krämpfe jetzt öfter nach oben, was mir den Kopf zuweilen sehr ermüdet. So muss ich nun ruhig aushalten, was der liebe Gott über mich verhängt, und ich trage mein Schicksal mit Geduld. . . . Gottes Wille geschehe!"[1] Again a few weeks later: "Ich habe mit diesem Leben abgeschlossen, und wenn ich so sicher wäre, dass ich im Himmel einst gut aufgenommen werde, so ertrüge ich geduldig meine Existenz."[2] Not only to his mother, whom for years he affectionately kept in ignorance of his deplorable condition, does he write thus, but also to Campe (1852): "Mein Körper leidet grosse Qual, aber meine Seele ist ruhig wie ein Spiegel und hat manchmal auch noch ihre schönen Sonnenaufgänge und Sonnenuntergänge."[3] 1854: "Gottlob, dass ich bei all meinem Leid sehr heiteren Gemütes bin, und die lustigsten Gedanken springen mir durchs Hirn."[4] Much of this sort of thing was no doubt nicely calculated for effect, and yet these and similar passages show that he was not inclined to magnify his physical afflictions either in his own eyes or in the eyes of others. Nor is he absolutely unreconciled to his fate: "Es ist mir nichts geglückt in dieser Welt, aber es hätte mir doch noch schlimmer gehen können."[5]

In his poems, references to his physical sufferings are remarkably infrequent. We look in vain in the "Buch der Lieder," in the "Neue Gedichte," in fact in all his lyrics written before the "Romanzero," not only for any allusion to his illness, but even for any complaint against life which might have been directly occasioned by his physical condition. What is there then in these earlier poems that might fitly be called Weltschmerz? Very little, we shall find.

Their inspiration is to be found almost exclusively in Heine's love-affairs, decent and indecent. Now the pain of disappointed love is the motive and the theme of very many of Hölderlin's and Lenau's lyrics, poems which are heavy with Weltschmerz, while most of Heine's are not. To speak only

[1] Karpeles ed. Werke, IX, p. 371.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 374.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 459 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 513.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 475.

of the poet's most important attachments, of his unrequited love for his cousin Amalie, and his unsuccessful wooing of her sister Therese,—there can be no doubt that these unhappy loves brought years of pain and bitterness into his life, sorrow probably as genuine as any he ever experienced, and yet how little, comparatively, there is in his poetry to convince us of the fact. Nearly all these early lyrics are variations of this love-theme, and yet it is the exception rather than the rule when the poet maintains a sincere note long enough to engender sympathy and carry conviction. Such are his beautiful lyrics "Ich grolle nicht,"[1] "Du hast Diamanten und Perlen."[2]

Let us see how Lenau treats the same theme:

Die dunklen Wolken hingen
Herab so bang und schwer,
Wir beide traurig gingen
Im Garten hin und her.

So heiss und stumm, so trübe,
Und sternlos war die Nacht,
So ganz wie unsre Liebe
Zu Thränen nur gemacht.

Und als ich musste scheiden
Und gute Nacht dir bot,
Wünscht' ich bekümmert beiden
Im Herzen uns den Tod.[3]

We believe implicitly in the poet's almost inexpressible grief, and because we are convinced, we sympathize. And we feel too that the poet's sorrow is so overwhelming and has so filled his soul that it has entirely changed his views of life and of nature, or has at least contributed materially to such a change,—that it has assumed larger proportions and may rightly be called Weltschmerz. Compare with this the first and third stanzas of Heine's "Der arme Peter:"

Der Hans und die Grete tanzen herum,
Und jauchzen vor lauter Freude.
Der Peter steht so still und stumm,

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 72, Nos. 18 and 19.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 123, No. 62.
[3] Lenaus Werke, Vol. I, p. 257 ff.

Und ist so blass wie Kreide.
. . . . . .
Der Peter spricht leise vor sich her
Und schauet betrübet auf beide:
"Ach! wenn ich nicht zu vernünftig wär',
Ich thät' mir was zu leide."[1]

It is scarcely necessary to cite further examples of this mannerism of Heine's, for so it early became, such as his "Erbsensuppe,"[2] "Ich wollte, er schösse mich tot,"[3] "Doktor, sind Sie des Teufels;"[4] "Madame, ich liebe Sie!"[5] and many other glaring instances of the "Sturzbad," in order to show how the poet himself deliberately attempted, and usually with success, to destroy the traces of his grief. This process of self-irony, which plays such havoc with all sincere feeling and therefore with his Weltschmerz, becomes so fixed a habit that we are almost incapable, finally, of taking the poet seriously. He makes a significant confession in this regard in a letter to Moser (1823): "Aber es geht mir oft so, ich kann meine eigenen Schmerzen nicht erzählen, ohne dass die Sache komisch wird."[6] How thoroughly this mental attitude had become second nature with Heine, may be inferred from a statement which he makes to Friederike Roberts (1825): "Das Ungeheuerste, das Ensetzlichste, das Schaudervollste, wenn es nicht unpoetisch werden soll, kann man auch nur in dem buntscheckigen Gewande des Lächerlichen darstellen, gleichsam versöhnend—darum hat auch Shakespeare das Grässlichste im "Lear" durch den Narren sagen lassen, darum hat auch Goethe zu dem furchtbarsten Stoffe, zum "Faust," die Puppenspielform gewählt, darum hat auch der noch grössere Poet (der Urpoet, sagt Friederike), nämlich Unser-Herrgott, allen Schreckensszenen dieses Lebens eine gute Dosis Spasshaftigkeit beigemischt."[7]

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 37.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 11.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 97.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 177.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 197.
[6] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 408.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 468.

In not a few of his lyrics Heine gives us a truly Lenauesque nature-setting, as for instance in "Der scheidende Sommer:"

> Das gelbe Laub erzittert,
> Es fallen die Blätter herab;
> Ach, alles, was hold und lieblich
> Verwelkt und sinkt ins Grab.[1]

This is one of the comparatively few instances in Heine's lyrics in which he maintains a dignified seriousness throughout the entire poem. It is worth noting, too, because it touches a note as infrequent in Heine as it is persistent in Lenau—the fleeting nature of all things lovely and desirable.[2] This is one of the characteristic differences between the two poets,—Heine's eye is on the present and the future, much more than on the past; Lenau is ever mourning the happiness that is past and gone. Logically then, thoughts of and yearnings for death are much more frequent with Lenau than with Heine.[3]

Reverting to the point under consideration: even in those love-lyrics in which Heine does not wilfully destroy the first serious impression by the jingling of his harlequin's cap, as he himself styles it,[4] he does not succeed,—with the few exceptions just referred to,—in convincing us very deeply of the reality of his feelings. They are either trivially or extravagantly stated. Sometimes this sense of triviality is caused by the poet's excessive fondness for all sorts of diminutive expressions, giving an artificial effect, an effect of "Tändelei" to his verses. For example:

> Du siehst mich an wehmütiglich,
> Und schüttelst das blonde Köpfchen,
> Aus deinen Augen schleichen sich
> Die Perlenthränentröpfchen.[5]

Sometimes this effect is produced by a distinct though unin-

[1] Karpeles ed. Werke, Vol. II, p. 31.

[2] A few other examples of this same coloring in Heine's lyrics are to be found in the "Neuer Frühling," Nos. 40, 41 and 43.

[3] Werke, Vol. II, p. 89, No. 55, "O Gott, wie hässlich bitter ist das Sterben!" etc.

[4] Engel: "Heine's Memoiren," p. 133.

[5] Werke, Vol. I, p. 87.

tended anti-climax. Nowhere has Heine struck a more truly elegiac note than in the stanza:

> Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht,
> Das Leben ist der schwüle Tag.
> Es dunkelt schon, mich schläfert,
> Der Tag hat mich müde gemacht.[1]

There is the most profound Weltschmerz in that. But in the second stanza there is relatively little:

> Ueber mein Bett erhebt sich ein Baum,
> Drin singt die junge Nachtigall;
> Sie singt von lauter Liebe,
> Ich hör' es sogar im Traum.

Lenau's lyrics have shown that much Weltschmerz may grow out of unsatisfied love; Heine's demonstrate that mere love-sickness is not Weltschmerz. The fact is that Heine frequently destroys what would have been a certain impression of Weltschmerz by forcing upon us the immediate cause of his distemper,—it may be a real injury, or merely a passing annoyance. What a strange mixture of acrimonious, sarcastic protest and Weltschmerz elements we find in the poem "Ruhelechzend"[2] of which a few stanzas will serve to illustrate. Again he strikes a full minor chord:

> Las bluten deine Wunden, lass
> Die Thränen fliessen unaufhaltsam;
> Geheime Wollust schwelgt im Schmerz,
> Und Weinen ist ein süsser Balsam.

This in practice rather than in theory is what we observe in Lenau,—his melancholy satisfaction in nursing his grief,—and we have promise of a poem of genuine Weltschmerz. Even through the second and third stanzas this feeling is not destroyed, although the terms "Schelm" and "Tölpel" gently arouse our suspicion:

> Des Tages Lärm verhallt, es steigt
> Die Nacht herab mit langen Flöhren.
> In ihrem Schosse wird kein Schelm,
> Kein Tölpel deine Ruhe stören.

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 134.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 102.

But the very next stanza brings the transition from the sublime to the ridiculous:

Hier bist du sicher vor Musik,
Vor des Pianofortes Folter,
Und vor der grossen Oper Pracht
Und schrecklichem Bravourgepolter.
. . . . . .
O Grab, du bist das Paradies
Für pöbelscheue, zarte Ohren—
Der Tod ist gut, doch besser wär's,
Die Mutter hätt' uns nie geboren.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that the specific cause which the poet confides to us of his "wounds, tears and pains" is ridiculously unimportant as compared with the conclusion which he draws in the last two lines.

Evidently then, he does not wish us to take him seriously, nor could we, if he did. Thus in their very attitude toward the ills and vexations of life, there appears a most essential difference between Lenau and Heine. Auerbach aptly remarks: "Spott und Satire verkleinern, Zorn und Hass vergrössern das Object."[1] And Lenau knew no satire; where Heine scoffed and ridiculed, he hated and scorned, with a hatred that only contributed to his own undoing. With Heine the satire's the thing, whether of himself or of others, and to this he willingly sacrifices the lofty sentiments of which he is capable. Indeed he frequently introduces these for no other purpose than to make the laugh or grimace all the more striking. And with reference to his love affair with Amalie, while the question as to the reality and depth of his feelings may be left entirely out of discussion, this much may be safely asserted, that in comparatively few poems do those feelings find expression in the form of Weltschmerz. Now there is something essentially vague about Weltschmerz; it is an atmosphere, a "Stimmung" more or less indefinable, rather than the statement in lyric form of certain definite grievances with their particular and definite causes. And that is exactly what we find in Lenau, even in his love-songs. His love-sorrow is blended with his many other heart-aches, with his disappointments and

[1] "Nicolaus Lenau. Erinnerung und Betrachtung." Wien, 1876.

regrets, with his yearning for death. He sings of his pain rather than of its immediate causes, and the result is an atmosphere of Weltschmerz.

Turning to Heine's later poems, especially to the "Romanzero," we find that atmosphere much more perceptible. But even here the poet is for the most part specific, and his method concrete. So for instance in "Der Dichter Firdusi"[1] in which he tells a story to illustrate his belief that merit is appreciated and rewarded only after the death of the one who should have reaped the reward. So also in "Weltlauf,"[2] the first stanza of which suggests a poetic rendering of Matth. 13:12, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath,"—to which the poet adds a stanza of caustic ironical comment:

Wenn du aber gar nichts hast,
Ach, so lasse dich begraben—
Denn ein Recht zum Leben, Lump,
Haben nur, die etwas haben.

And again, the poem "Lumpentum"[3] presents an ironical eulogy of flattery. His failure to realize the hopes of his youth is made the subject of "Verlorne Wünsche"[4] which maintains throughout a strain of seriousness quite unusual for Heine, and concludes:

Goldne Wünsche! Seifenblasen!
Sie zerrinnen wie mein Leben—
Ach ich liege jetzt am Boden,
Kann mich nimmermehr erheben.

Und Ade! sie sind zerronnen,
Goldne Wünsche, süsses Hoffen!
Ach, zu tötlich war der Faustschlag,
Der mich just ins Herz getroffen.

A number of these lyrics from the Romanzero show very strikingly Heine's objective treatment of his poems of complaint. Such selections as "Sie erlischt,"[5] in which he com-

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 367f.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 415.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 48.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 42 f.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 428.

pares his soul to the last flicker of a lamp in the darkened theater, or "Frau Sorge,"[1] which gives us the personification of care, represented as a nurse watching by his bedside, bring his objective method into marked contrast with Hölderlin's subjective Weltschmerz. The same may be said of his autobiography in miniature, "Rückschau,"[2] which catalogues the poet's experiences, pleasant and adverse, with evident sincerity though of course with a liberal admixture of witty irony. Needless to say there is no real Weltschmerz discoverable in such a pot pourri as the following:

> Die Glieder sind mir rheumatisch gelähmt,
> Und meine Seele ist tief beschämt.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ich ward getränkt mit Bitternissen,
> Und grausam von den Wanzen gebissen, etc.

It would scarcely be profitable to attempt to estimate the causes and development of this self-irony, which plays so important a part in Heine's poetry. Its possibility lay no doubt in his native mother-wit, with its genial perception of the incongruous, combined, it must be admitted, with a relatively low order of self-respect. Its first incentive he may have found in his unrequited love for Amalie. Had it been like that of Hölderlin for Diotima, or Lenau for Sophie, reciprocated though unsatisfied, we could not easily imagine the ironical tone which pervades most of his love-songs. And so he uses it as a veil for his chagrin, preferring to laugh and have the world laugh with him, rather than to weep alone. But the incident in Heine's life which probably more than any other experience fostered this habit of making himself the butt of his witty irony was his outward renunciation of Judaism. Little need be said concerning this, since the details are so well known. He himself confesses that the step was taken from the lowest motives, for which he justly hated and despised himself. To Moser he writes (1825): "Ich weiss nicht, was ich sagen soll, Cohen versichert mich, Gans predige das Christentum und suche die Kinder Israels zu be-

[1] Werke, Vol. I, p. 424.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 416.

kehren. Thut er dieses aus Ueberzeugung, so ist er ein Narr; thut er es aus Gleissnerei, so ist er ein Lump. Ich werde zwar nicht aufhören, Gans zu lieben; dennoch gestehe ich, weit lieber wär's mir gewesen, wenn ich statt obiger Nachricht erfahren hätte, Gans habe silberne Löffel gestohlen. . . . Es wäre mir sehr leid, wenn mein eigenes Getauftsein Dir in einem günstigen Lichte erscheinen könnte. Ich versichere Dich, wenn die Gesetze das Stehlen silberner Löffel erlaubt hätten, so würde ich mich nicht getauft haben."[1] But in addition to the loss of self-respect came his disappointment and chagrin at the non-success of his move, since he realized that it was not even bringing him the material gain for which he had hoped. Instead, he felt himself an object of contempt among Christians and Jews alike. "Ich bin jetzt bei Christ und Jude verhasst. Ich bereue sehr, dass ich mich getauft hab'; ich sehe gar nicht ein, dass es mir seitdem besser gegangen sei; im Gegenteil, ich habe seitdem nichts als Unglück."[2] He is so unhappy in consequence of this step that he earnestly desires to leave Germany. "Es ist aber ganz bestimmt, dass es mich sehnlichst drängt, dem deutschen Vaterlande Valet zu sagen. Minder die Lust des Wanderns als die Qual persönlicher Verhältnisse (z. B. der nie abzuwaschende Jude) treibt mich von hinnen."[3]

In his tragedy "Almansor," written during the years 1820 and 1821,[4] his deep-rooted antipathy to Christianity finds strong expression through Almansor, although the countervailing arguments are eloquently stated by the heroine. Prophetic of the poet's own later experience is the representation of the hero, who is beguiled by his love for Zuleima into vowing allegiance to the Christian faith, only to find that the sacrifice has failed to win for him the object for which it was made. In the character of Almansor, more than anywhere else, Heine's "Liebesschmerz" and "Judenschmerz" have combined to produce in him an inner dissonance which expresses itself in lyric lines of real Weltschmerz:

[1] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 473.
[2] Cf. Heine's letter to Moser, Jan. 9, 1826, in Karpeles' Autob. p. 191.
[3] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 491.
[4] Cf. Werke, Einleitung, Vol. II, p. 241.

Ich bin recht müd
Und krank, und kranker noch als krank, denn ach,
Die allerschlimmste Krankheit ist das Leben;
Und heilen kann sie nur der Tod . . . . .[1]

But here too, as in "Ratcliff," such passages are exceptional. In the main these tragedies are nothing more than vehicles for the poet's stormy protest, much of it after the Storm and Stress pattern;[2] and mere protest, however acrimonious, cannot be called Weltschmerz.

Certain it is that during these early years numerous disappointments other than those of love contributed to produce in the poet a gloomy state of mind. A reflection of the unhappiness which he had experienced during his residence in Hamburg is found in many passages in his correspondence which express his repugnance for the city and its people. To Immanuel Wohlwill (1823): "Es freut mich, dass es Dir in den Armen der aimablen Hammonia zu behagen beginnt; mir ist diese Schöne zuwider. Mich täuscht nicht der goldgestickte Rock, ich weiss, sie trägt ein schmutziges Hemd auf dem gelben Leibe, und mit den schmelzenden Liebesseufzern 'Rindfleisch[3] Banko!' sinkt sie an die Brust des Meistbietenden. . . . Vielleicht thue ich aber der guten Stadt Hamburg unrecht; die Stimmung, die mich beherrschte, als ich dort einige Zeit lebte, war nicht dazu geeignet, mich zu einem unbefangenen Beurteiler zu machen; mein inneres Leben war brütendes Versinken in den düsteren, nur von phantastischen Lichtern durchblitzten Schacht der Traumwelt, mein äusseres Leben war toll, wüst, cynisch, abstossend; mit einem Worte, ich machte es zum schneidenden Gegensatz meines inneren Lebens, damit mich dieses nicht durch sein Uebergewicht zerstöre."[3] To Moser (1823): "Hamburg? sollte ich dort noch so viele Freuden finden können, als ich schon Schmerzen dort empfand? Dieses ist freilich unmöglich—"[4] "Hamburg!!! mein Elysium und Tartarus zu gleicher Zeit! Ort, den ich detestiere und am meisten liebe, wo mich die abscheulichsten Gefühle martern und

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 293.
[2] Cf. Almansor's speech, Werke, Vol. II, p. 288 f.
[3] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 363.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 384.

wo ich mich dennoch hinwünsche."[1] Another letter to Moser is dated: "Verdammtes Hamburg, den 14. Dezember, 1825."[2] The following year he writes, in a letter to Immermann: "Ich verliess Göttingen, suchte in Hamburg ein Unterkommen, fand aber nichts als Feinde, Verklatschung und Aerger."[3] And to Varnhagen von Ense (1828): "Nach Hamburg werde ich nie in diesem Leben zurückkehren; es sind mir Dinge von der äussersten Bitterkeit dort passiert, sie wären auch nicht zu ertragen gewesen, ohne den Umstand, dass nur ich sie weiss."[4] To his mother's insistent pleading he replies (1833): "Aber ich will, wenn Du es durchaus verlangst, diesen Sommer auf acht Tage nach Hamburg kommen, nach dem schändlichen Neste, wo ich meinen Feinden den Triumph gönnen soll, mich wiederzusehen und mit Beleidigungen überhäufen zu können."[5]

His several endeavors to establish himself on a firm material footing in life had failed,—he had sought for a place in a Berlin high school, then entertained the idea of practising law in Hamburg, then aspired to a professorship in Munich, but without success. But more than by all these reverses, more even than by the circumstances and consequences of his Hebrew parentage, was the poet wrought up by the family strife over the payment of his pension, which followed upon the death of his uncle in December, 1844, and which lasted for several years. From the very beginning he had had much intermittent annoyance through his dealings with his sporadically generous uncle Salomon Heine. As early as 1823 Heine writes to Moser: "Auch weiss ich, dass mein Oheim, der sich hier so gemein zeigt, zu andern Zeiten die Generosität selbst ist; aber es ist doch in mir der Vorsatz aufgekommen, alles anzuwenden, um mich so bald als möglich von der Güte meines Oheims loszureissen. Jetzt habe ich ihn freilich noch nötig, und wie knickerig auch die Unterstützung ist, die er mir zufliessen lässt, so kann ich dieselbe nicht entbehren."[6] And again in the same year: "Es ist fatal, dass bei mir der ganze Mensch durch das Budget

[1] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 391.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 472.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 503.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 540.
[5] *Ibid.*, IX, p. 25.
[6] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 392.

regiert wird. Auf meine Grundsätze hat Geldmangel oder Ueberfluss nicht den mindesten Einfluss, aber desto mehr auf meine Handlungen. Ja, grosser Moser, der H. Heine ist sehr klein."[1] And when, after his uncle's demise, the heirs of the latter threatened to cut off the poet's pension, he writes to Campe[2] and to Detmold,[3] in a frenzy of wrath and excitement, and shows what he is really capable of under pressure of circumstances. Perhaps it is only fair to suppose that his long years of suffering, both from his physical condition and from the unscrupulous attacks of his enemies, had had a corroding effect upon his moral sensibilities. In his request to Campe to act as mediator in the disagreeable affair he says: "Sie können alle Schuld des Missverständnisses auf mich schieben, die Grossmut der Familie hervorstreichen, kurz, mich sacrificiren." And all this to be submitted to the public in print! "Ich gestehe Ihnen heute offen, ich habe gar keine Eitelkeit in der Weise andrer Menschen, mir liegt am Ende gar nichts an der Meinung des Publikums; mir ist nur eins wichtig, die Befriedigung meines inneren Willens, die Selbstachtung meiner Seele." But how he was able to preserve his self-respect, and at the same time be willing to employ any and all means to attain his end, perhaps no one less unscrupulous than he could comprehend. He intimates that he has decided upon threats and public intimidation as being probably more effective than a servile attitude, which, he allows us to infer, he would be quite willing to take if advisable. "Das Beste muss hier die Presse thun zur Intimidation, und die ersten Kotwürfe auf Karl Heine und namentlich auf Adolf Halle werden schon wirken. Die Leute sind an Dreck nicht gewöhnt, während ich ganze Mistkarren vertragen kann, ja diese, wie auf Blumenbeeten, nur mein Gedeihen zeitigen."[4]

It is quite evident that this long drawn out quarrel aroused all that was mean and vindictive, all that was immoral in the man, and that the nervous excitement thereby induced had a most baneful effect upon his entire nature, physical as well as

[1] Karpeles ed. VIII, p. 396.
[2] *Ibid.*, IX, p. 308 ff.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 316.
[4] Letter to Detmold, Jan. 9, 1845, Werke (Karpeles ed.), Vol. IX, p. 310.

mental. In a number of poems he has given expression to his anger and has masterfully cursed his adversaries, for example, "Es gab den Dolch in deine Hand,"[1] "Sie küssten mich mit ihren falschen Lippen,"[2] and several following ones. But here, too, his fancy is altogether too busy with the suitable characterization of his enemies and the invention of adequate tortures for them, to leave room for even a suggestion of the Weltschmerz which we might expect to result from such painful emotions.

It is scarcely necessary to theorize as to what would have been the attitude and conduct of a sensitive Hölderlin or a proud-spirited Lenau in a similar position. Lenau is too proud to protest, preferring to suffer. Heine is too vain to appear as a sufferer, so he meets adversity, not in a spirit of admirable courage, but in a spirit of bravado. In giving lyric utterance to his resentment, Heine is conscious that the world is looking on, and so he indulges, even in the expression of his Weltschmerz, in a vain ostentation which stands in marked contrast to Lenau's dignified pride. He is quite right when he says in a letter to his friend Moser: "Ich bin nicht gross genug, um Erniedrigung zu tragen."[3]

As an illustration of the vain display which he makes of his sadness, his poem "Der Traurige" may be quoted in part:

> Allen thut es weh in Herzen,
> Die den bleichen Knaben sehn,
> Dem die Leiden, dem die Schmerzen
> Auf's Gesicht geschrieben stehn.[4]

A similar impression is made by the concluding numbers of the Intermezzo, "Die alten, bösen Lieder."[5] And here again the comparison,—even if merely as to size,—of a coffin with the "Heidelberger Fass" is most incongruous, to say the least, and tends very effectually to destroy the serious sentiment which the poem, with less definite exaggerations, might have

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 104.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 105.
[3] Cf. Karpeles' Autob. p. 164.
[4] Werke, Vol. I, p. 35.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 92.

conveyed. Similarly overdone is his poetic preface to the "Rabbi" sent to his friend Moser:[1]

Brich aus in lauten Klagen
Du düstres Märtyrerlied,
Das ich so lang getragen
Im flammenstillen Gemüt!

Es dringt in alle Ohren,
Und durch die Ohren ins Herz;
Ich habe gewaltig beschworen
Den tausendjährigen Schmerz.

Es weinen dir Grossen und Kleinen,
Sogar die kalten Herrn,
Die Frauen und Blumen weinen,
Es weinen am Himmel die Stern.

It is not necessary, even if it were to the point, to adduce further evidence of Heine's vanity as expressed in his prose writings, or in poems such as the much-quoted

Nennt man die besten Namen,
So wird auch der meine genannt.[2]

It cannot be denied that this element of vanity, of showiness, only serves to emphasize our impression of the unreality of much of Heine's Weltschmerz.

With the reference to this element of ostentation in Heine's Weltschmerz there is suggested at once the question of the Byronic pose, and of Byron's influence in general upon the German poet. On the general relationship between the two poets much has been written,[3] so that we may confine ourselves here to the consideration of certain points of resemblance in their Weltschmerz.

Julian Schmidt names Byron as the constellation which ruled the heavens during the period from the Napoleonic wars to the "Völkerfrühling," 1848, as the meteor upon which at that time the eyes of all Europe were fixed. Certainly the English poet could not have wished for a more auspicious introduction and

[1] Werke, Vol. II, p. 164.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 102.

[3] One of the most exhaustive monographs on the subject is that of Felix Melchior (Cf. bibliography, *infra* p. 90), to whom I am indebted for several of the parallels suggested.

endorsation in Germany, if he had needed such, than that which was given him by Goethe himself, whose subsequent tribute in his Euphorion in the second part of "Faust" is one of Byron's most splendid memorials. The enthusiasm which Lord Byron aroused in Germany is attested by Goethe: "Im Jahre 1816, also einige Jahre nach dem Erscheinen des ersten Gesanges des 'Childe Harold,' trat englische Poesie und Literatur vor allen andern in den Vordergrund. Lord Byrons Gedichte, je mehr man sich mit den Eigenheiten dieses ausserordentlichen Geistes bekannt machte, gewannen immer grössere Teilnahme, so dass Männer und Frauen, Mägdlein und Junggesellen fast aller Deutschheit und Nationalität zu vergessen schienen."[1]

It is important to note that this first period of unrestrained Byron enthusiasm coincides with the formative and impressionable years of Heine's youth. In his first book of poems, published in 1821, he included translations from Byron, in reviewing which Immermann pointed out[2] that while Heine's poems showed a superficial resemblance to those of Byron, the temperament of the former was far removed from the sinister scorn of the English lord, that it was in fact much more cheerful and enamored of life.[3] There is plenty of evidence, however, to show that it was exceedingly gratifying to the young Heine to have his name associated with that of Byron; and although he had no enthusiasm for Byron's philhellenism, he was pleased to write, June 25, 1824, on hearing of the Englishman's death: "Der Todesfall Byrons hat mich übrigens sehr bewegt. Es war der einzige Mensch, mit dem ich mich verwandt fühlte, und wir mögen uns wohl in manchen Dingen geglichen haben; scherze nur darüber, soviel Du willst. Ich las ihn selten seit einigen Jahren; man geht lieber um mit Menschen, deren Charakter von dem unsrigen verschieden ist. Ich bin aber mit Byron immer behaglich umgegangen, wie mit einem völlig gleichen Spiesskameraden. Mit Shakespeare kann ich gar nicht behaglich umgehen, ich

[1] Weimar Ausg. I Abt. Bd. 36, p. 128.

[2] In the *Rheinisch-westfälischer Anzeiger*, May 31, 1822, No. 23.

[3] Cf. Strodtmann, "H. Heines Leben und Werke," 3. ed., Hamburg, 1884. Vol. I, p. 200.

fühle nur zu sehr, dass ich nicht seinesgleichen bin, er ist der allgewaltige Minister, und ich bin ein blosser Hofrat, und es ist mir, als ob er mich jeden Augenblick absetzen könnte."[1] Significant is the allusion in this same letter to a proposition which the writer seems to have made to his friend in a previous one: " . . . ich darf Dir Dein Versprechen in Hinsicht des 'Morgenblattes' durchaus nicht erlassen. Robert besorgt gern den Aufsatz. Byron ist jetzt tot, und ein Wort über ihn ist jetzt passend. Vergiss es nicht; Du thust mir einen sehr grossen Gefallen."[2] We shall probably not be far astray in assuming that the "Gefallen" was to have been the advertising of Heine as the natural successor of Byron in European literature. Three months later he once more urges the request: "Auch fände ich es noch immer angemessen, ja jetzt mehr als je, dass Du Dich über Byron und Komp. vernehmen liessest."[3]

But it was not long before Heine, with an increasing sense of literary independence, reinforced no doubt by the reaction of public opinion against Byron, and influenced also by his friend Immermann's judgment in particular,[4] was no longer willing to be considered a disciple of the English master. Several unmistakable references betoken this change of heart, for example, the following from his "Nordsee" III (1826): "Wahrlich in diesem Augenblicke fühle ich sehr lebhaft, dass ich kein Nachbeter, oder, besser gesagt, Nachfrevler, Byrons bin, mein Blut ist nicht so spleenisch schwarz, meine Bitterkeit kömmt nur aus den Galläpfeln meiner Dinte, und wenn Gift in mir ist, so ist es doch nur Gegengift, Gegengift wider jene Schlangen, die im Schutte der alten Dome und Burgen so bedrohlich lauern."[5] Byron, instead of being regarded as "kindred spirit" and "cousin," is now characterized as a ruthless de-

[1] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 434.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 433.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 441.

[4] In discussing the first volume of Heine's "Reisebilder," Immermann had said: "Man hat Heinen beim Beginn seiner dichterischen Laufbahn mit Byron vergleichen wollen. Diese Vergleichung scheint nicht zu passen. Der Brite bringt mit ungeheuren Mitteln nur mässige poetische Effekte hervor, während Heine eine Anlage zeigt, sich künstlerisch zu begrenzen und den Stoff gänzlich in die Form zu absorbieren." (*Jahrbücher f. wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 1827, No. 97, p. 767.)

[5] Werke, III, p. 116.

stroyer of venerable forms, injuring the most sacred flowers of life with his melodious poison, or as a mad harlequin who thrusts the steel into his heart, in order that he may teasingly bespatter ladies and gentlemen with the black spurting blood. In remarkable contrast with his former views, he now writes: "Von allen grossen Schriftstellern ist Byron just derjenige, dessen Lektüre mich am unleidigsten berührt."

Perhaps the most interesting passage in this connection, because so thoroughly characteristic of the Byronic pose in Heine, occurs in the "Bäder von Lucca": "Lieber Leser, gehörst du vielleicht zu jenen frommen Vögeln, die da einstimmen in das Lied von Byronischer Zerrissenheit, das mir schon seit zehn Jahren in allen Weisen vorgepfiffen und vorgezwitschert worden . . . ? Ach, teurer Leser, wenn du über jene Zerrissenheit klagen willst, so beklage lieber, dass die Welt selbst mitten entzwei gerissen ist. Denn da das Herz des Dichters der Mittelpunkt der Welt ist, so musste es wohl in jetziger Zeit jämmerlich zerrissen werden. Wer von seinem Herzen rühmt, es sei ganz geblieben, der gesteht nur, dass er ein prosaisches, weitabgelegenes Winkelherz hat. Durch das meinige ging aber der grosse Weltriss, und eben deswegen weiss ich, dass die grossen Götter mich vor vielen andern hoch begnadigt und des Dichtermärtyrtums würdig geachtet haben."[1] Here while vociferously disclaiming all kinship or sympathy with Byron, he pays him the flattering compliment of imitation. Probably nowhere in Byron could we find a more pompous display of egoism under the guise of Weltschmerz.

Byron's Weltschmerz, like Heine's, had its first provocation in a purely personal experience. "To a Lady"[2] and "Remembrance"[3] both give expression in passionate terms to the poet's disappointed love for Mary Chaworth, the parallel in Heine's case being his infatuation for his cousin Amalie. The necessity for defending himself against a public opinion actively hos-

[1] Werke, Vol. III, p. 304.

[2] Byron's Works, Coleridge ed., London and New York, 1898. Vol. I, p. 189 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

tile to his earliest poems,[1] largely diverted Byron from this first painful theme, so that from this time on until he left England, he is almost incessantly engaged in a bitter warfare against the injustice of critics and of society. To this second period Heine's development also shows a general resemblance. Thus far both poets exhibit a purely egoistic type of Weltschmerz. But with his separation from his wife in 1816, and his final departure from England, that of Byron enters upon a third period and becomes cosmic. Ostracized by English society, his relations with it finally severed, he disdains to defend himself further against its criticism, and espouses the cause of unhappy humanity. No longer his own personal woes, but rather those of the nations of the earth are nearest his heart:

> What are our woes and sufferance? . . .
> . . . . . Ye!
> Whose agonies are evils of a day—
> A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.[2]

And in contemplating the ruins of the Palatine Hill:

> . . . . . Upon such a shrine
> What are our petty griefs? Let me not number mine.[3]

Here we have the essential difference between these two types of Weltschmerz. Heine does not, like Byron, make this transition from the personal to the universal stage. Instead of becoming cosmic in his Weltschmerz, he remains for ever egoistic.

Numerous quotations might he adduced from the writings of both poets, which would seem to indicate that Heine had borrowed many of his ideas and even some forms of expression from Byron. Except in the case of the most literal correspondence, this is generally a very unsafe deduction. Such passages as a rule prove nothing more than a similarity, possibly quite independent, in the trend of their pessimistic

[1] Cf. the poems "To a Knot of Ungenerous Critics," "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and others.

[2] Coleridge ed., Vol. II, p. 388 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 406.

thought. Compare for example Byron's lines in the poem "And wilt thou weep when I am low?"

> Oh lady! blessèd be that tear—
> It falls for one who cannot weep;
> Such precious drops are doubly dear
> To those whose eyes no tear may steep,[1]

with Heine's stanza:

> Seit ich sie verloren hab',
> Schafft' ich auch das Weinen ab;
> Fast vor Weh das Herz mir bricht,
> Aber weinen kann ich nicht.[2]

Or again, "Childe Harold," IV, 136:

> From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
> Have I not seen what human things could do?
> From the loud roar of foaming calumny
> To the small whisper of the as paltry few—
> And subtler venom of the reptile crew,[3]

with the first lines of Heine's ninth sonnet:

> Ich möchte weinen, doch ich kann es nicht;
> Ich möcht' mich rüstig in die Höhe heben,
> Doch kann ich's nicht; am Boden muss ich kleben,
> Umkrächzt, umzischt von eklem Wurmgezücht,[4]

a thought which in one of his letters (1823) he paraphrases thus: "Der Gedanke an Dich, liebe Schwester, muss mich zuweilen aufrecht halten, wenn die grosse Masse mit ihrem dummen Hass und ihrer ekelhaften Liebe mich niederdrückt."[5]

There can be no doubt that Heine for a time studied diligently to imitate this fashionable model, pose, irony and all. So diligently perhaps, that he himself was sometimes unable to distinglish between imitation and reality. So at least it would appear from No. 44 of "Die Heimkehr:"

> Ach Gott! im Scherz und unbewusst
> Sprach ich, was ich gefühlet:
> Ich hab mit dem Tod in der eignen Brust
> Den sterbenden Fechter gespielet.[6]

[1] Coleridge ed., Vol. I, p. 266 f.
[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 78.
[3] Coleridge ed., Vol. II, p. 429.
[4] Werke, Vol. I, p. 61.
[5] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 411.
[6] Werke, I, p. 117.

In summing up our impressions of the two poets we shall scarcely escape the feeling that while Byron is pleased to display his troubles and his heart-aches before the curious gaze of the world, they are at least in the main real troubles and sincere heart-aches, whereas Heine, on the other hand, does a large business in Weltschmerz on a very small capital.

Nor is Heine the man more convincing as to his sincerity than Heine the poet. No more striking instance of this fact could perhaps be found than his letter to Laube on hearing the news of Immermann's death.[1] "Gestern Abend erfuhr ich durch das *Journal des Debats* ganz zufällig den Tod von Immermann. Ich habe die ganze Nacht durch geweint. Welch ein Unglück! . . . Welch einen grossen Dichter haben wir Deutschen verloren, ohne ihn jemals recht gekannt zu haben! Wir, ich meine Deutschland, die alte Rabenmutter! Und nicht nur ein grosser Dichter war er, sondern auch brav und ehrlich, und deshalb liebte ich ihn. Ich liege ganz darnieder vor Kummer." But scarcely has he turned the page with a short intervening paragraph, when he continues: "Ich bin, sonderbar genug, sehr guter Laune," and concludes the letter with some small talk. Now if he was sincere, as we may assume he was, in the asseveration of his grief at the death of his friend, then either that grief must have been anything but profound, or we have the clearest sort of evidence of the poet's incapacity for serious feeling of more than momentary duration. It is safe to assert that Heine never set himself a high artistic task, and remained true to his purpose until the task was accomplished. In other words, Heine betrays a lack of will-energy along artistic lines, which in the case of Hölderlin and Lenau was more evident in their attitude toward the practical things of life.

But the fact that Heine never created a monumental literary work of enduring worth is not attributable solely to a fickleness of artistic purpose or lack of will-energy. We find its explanation rather in the poet's own statement: "Die Poesie ist am Ende doch nur eine schöne Nebensache."[2] and to

[1] Werke, Karpeles ed. Vol. IX, p. 162 f.
[2] Letter to Immermann, Werke (Karpeles ed.), Vol. VIII, p. 354.

this principle, consciously or unconsciously, Heine steadily adhered. Certain it is that he took a much lower view of his art than did Hölderlin or Lenau. Hence we find him ever ready to degrade his muse by making it the vehicle for immoral thoughts and abominable calumnies.[1]

The question of Heine's patriotism has always been a much-debated one, and must doubtless remain so. But whatever opinion we may hold in regard to his real attitude and feelings toward the land of his birth, this we shall have to admit, that there are exceedingly few traces of Weltschmerz arising from this source. Genuine feeling is expressed in the two-stanza poem "Ich hatte einst ein schönes Vaterland"[2] and also in "Lebensfahrt,"[3] although this latter poem illustrates a characteristic of so many of his writings, namely that he himself is their central figure. It is the sublime egoism which characterizes Heine and all his works. No wonder, then, that one of his few "Freiheitslieder" refers to his own personal liberty.[4] For the failings of his countrymen he is ever ready with scathing satire,[5] he grieves over his separation from them only when he thinks of his mother;[6] and in regard to the future of Germany he is for the most part sceptical.[7] In a word, Heine's lyric utterances in regard to his fatherland are of so mixed a character, that altogether aside from the question of the sincerity of his feeling toward the land of his birth, certainly none but the blindest partisan would be able to discover more than a negligible quantity of Weltschmerz directly attributable to this influence.

Heine's conscience is at best a doubtful quantity. Where Byron with a sincere sense and acknowledgment of his guilt writes:

[1] Cf. his vulgar prognostication of Germany's future, Kaput XXVI of the "Wintermärchen," Werke, Vol. II, p. 488 ff.

[2] Werke, Vol. I, p. 263.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 308.

[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 301, "Adam der erste."

[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 316, "Zur Beruhigung."

[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 320, "Nachtgedanken."

[7] Cf. *supra*, note 1.

"My injuries came down on those who loved me—
On those whom I best loved: . . . . . .
But my embrace was fatal."[1]

Heine sees it in quite another light: "War ich doch selber jetzt das lebende Gesetz der Moral und der Quell alles Rechtes und aller Befugnis; die anrüchigsten Magdalenen wurden purifiziert durch die läuternde und sühnende Macht meiner Liebesflammen,"[2] a moral aberration which he attributes to an imperfect interpretation of the difficult philosophy of Hegel. If further evidence were necessary to show the perversity of Heine's moral sense, the following paragraph from a letter to Varnhagen would suffice, in its way perhaps as remarkable a contribution to the theory of ethics as has ever been penned: "In Deutschland ist man noch nicht so weit, zu begreifen, dass ein Mann, der das Edelste durch Wort und That befördern will, sich oft einige kleine Lumpigkeiten, sei es aus Spass oder aus Vorteil, zu schulden kommen lassen darf, wenn er nur durch diese Lumpigkeiten (d. h. Handlungen, die im Grunde ignobel sind,) der grossen Idee seines Lebens nichts schadet, ja dass diese Lumpigkeiten oft sogar lobenswert sind, wenn sie uns in den Stand setzen, der grossen Idee unsres Lebens desto würdiger zu dienen."[3] Scarcely less remarkable is the poet's confession to his friend Moser that he has a rubber soul: "Ich kann Dir das nicht oft genug wiederholen, damit Du mich nicht misst nach dem Massstabe Deiner eigenen grossen Seele. Die meinige ist Gummi elastic, zieht sich oft ins Unendliche und verschrumpft oft ins Winzige. Aber eine Seele habe ich doch. I am positive, I have a soul, so gut wie Sterne. Das genüge Dir. Liebe mich um der wunderlichen Sorte Gefühls willen, die sich bei mir ausspricht in Thorheit und Weisheit, in Güte und Schlechtigkeit. Liebe mich, weil es Dir nun mal so einfällt, nicht, weil Du mich der Liebe wert hältst. . . . Ich hatte einen Polen zum Freund, für den ich mich bis zu Tod besoffen hätte, oder, besser gesagt, für den ich mich hätte totschlagen lassen, und für den ich mich noch totschlagen liesse, und der Kerl taugte für keinen Pfennig,

[1] "Manfred," Coleridge ed., IV, p. 101.
[2] Werke VI, p. 48.
[3] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 541.

und war venerisch, und hatte die schlechtesten Grundsätze—aber er hatte einen Kehllaut, mit welchem er auf so wunderliche Weise das Wort 'Was?' sprechen konnte, dass ich in diesem Augenblick weinen und lachen muss, wenn ich daran denke."[1]

Taking him all in all then, Heine is not a serious personality, a fact which we need to keep constantly in mind in judging almost any and every side of his nature.

As a matter of fact, Heine's Weltschmerz, like his whole personality, is of so complex and contradictory a nature, that it would be a hopeless undertaking to attempt to weigh each contributing factor and estimate exactly the amount of its influence. All the elements which have been briefly noted in the foregoing pages, and probably many minor ones which have not been mentioned, combined to produce in him that "Zerrissenheit" which finds such frequent expression in his writings. But it must be remembered that this "Zerrissenheit" does not always express itself as Weltschmerz. In Heine it often appears simply as pugnacity; and where wit, satire, self-irony or even base calumny succeeds in covering up all traces of the poet's pathos we are no longer justified on sentimental or sympathetic grounds in taking it for granted. In looking for pathos in Heine's verse we shall not have to look in vain, it is true, but we shall find much less than his popular reputation as a poet of Weltschmerz would lead us to expect; and we frequently gain the impression that his disposition and his personal experiences are after all largely the excuse for rather than the occasion of his Weltschmerz.

Plümacher maintains: "Der Weltschmerz ist entweder die absolute Passivität, und die Klage seine einzige Aeusserung, oder aber er verpufft seine Kräfte in rein subjectivistischen, eudämonischen Anstrengungen."[2]—a characterization which certainly holds good in the case of Lenau and Hölderlin respectively. Hölderlin, although in a visionary, idealistic way, remains, even in his Weltschmerz, altruistic and constructive. Lenau is passive, while Heine is solely egoistic and destructive.

[1] Karpeles ed. Werke, VIII, p. 399.
[2] Plümacher: "Der Pessimismus." Heidelberg, 1888, p. 103.

CHAPTER V

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