

LYRIC
THE POETRY OF JOHANN CHRISTIAN GUNTHER AS A PARADIGM OF
THE TRANSITION FROM BAROQUE TO ENLIGHTENMENT.

by

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PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. Where information is derived from other sources, this is indicated in notes. The dissertation, including notes but excluding the bibliography, does not exceed the maximum permitted length.

All primary quotations of Günther's work are taken from the complete edition by Wilhelm Krämer (Leipzig, 1930-37, reprinted 1964). All references use the abbreviated form of : Kr., Volume, Page, Line. For biographical details, Krämer's Das Leben des Schlesischen Dichters Johann Christian Günther edited by Reiner Bölhoff, (Stuttgart, 1980) serves as the main source, unless otherwise stated.

In submitting this dissertation I have reason to thank a number of people and institutions, in particular the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. The time I was permitted to spend there under the auspices of the Dr. Günther Findel-Stiftung formed the basis of my source study. In this context I would like particularly to thank Frau Dr. Solf and Herrn C. Hogrefe for their academic and bibliographical help and support. My methodology and general argumentation too benefitted from contact with like-minded scholars.

My grateful thanks are due to my supervisor Dr. Aylett whose faith in my ability helped me through the more difficult stretches of this dissertation. It is rare indeed for a supervisor to strike such a perfect balance between giving support and yet letting go.

On both a personal and an academic note, my thanks are due to my 'Pflegetern', Irmgard and Peter Fuhrhans who both awakened and sustained my love of all things German, as well as making Kiel my natural home since the death of my parents in 1984. Finally my thanks are due to my husband John, whose love and support expressed itself in ways too various to name.

This dissertation seeks to do two things: firstly to examine Günther's poetry in the context of his age; and, secondly, to use a study of his verse as a key to illuminate the intellectual and literary life of the transitional period in which he wrote. This dual approach, which combines closely textual with contextual analysis, seeks to challenge simplistic assessments of Günther, whether as an early precursor of the Sturm und Drang, or as an unswerving upholder of the Silesian tradition.

The contextual study offers a new perspective on the literary transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, firstly by focussing on imagery in the lyric poetry of this time, which, it is agreed, cannot adequately be characterised by the concept of Barocke Bildlichkeit. The focus then shifts to an analysis of wider issues in literary debate in the early decades of the eighteenth century. It is argued that Günther's poetic legacy was neglected by his literary successors both because his solutions to the dilemmas of the transition were not seen as radical enough and because he did not belong to any of the opinion forming literary societies of these early decades.

The textual study focusses on the relationship of Günther's poetry both to the form and to the content of the past century's literary tradition. The ambivalent tension we find in Günther, who pays lip service to the pillars of the literary tradition and continues to use its forms while at the same time perceiving its inward hollowness, becomes evident in his satire and parodies of occasional verse. This tension, it is contended, is paradigmatic of the transitional period itself. This tension also permeates the content of Günther's poetry and his use of tropes. A chapter on Günther's use of the figure of Job shows how he subverts the traditional connotations of this biblical figure for his own purposes of establishing a new poetic ideal of Redlichkeit or literary sincerity.

Günther's poetry may be seen as paradigmatic of the transitional period in which he was writing because his concerns were those of his age; what however sets him apart from his contemporaries is his poetic isolation. Günther sought to forge a way forward in relation to the Silesian tradition, just as his contemporaries were seeking to break free of its century long stranglehold. Günther claimed Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau as his poetic idols, yet his concept of Redlichkeit could not be further from their elaborate ornamentation. Whilst attempting to remain true to these models, Günther often unconsciously undermines them and in so doing, often strikes out on a much more unusual path than his peers.

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Notes on typing

Certain irregularities in the typing of this thesis were entirely beyond my control, of which the most significant were:

i) the absense of the German character (β), which has thus been replaced by (ss).

ii) a similar absense of single quotation marks which have been replaced by an apostrophe (')

INTRODUCTION

Amongst the portraits to appear in Leonhard Meister's: Charakteristik deutscher Dichter (1787) was a posthumous engraving of the young Johann Christian Günther. It depicts a round-faced young man in an allongue wig, with thin lips and a large nose. In its lack of individuality and obvious artistic neutrality, it could represent any young, or even middle-aged man at the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. At best it could be based on a description of the poet by his father recorded by Steinbach in his biography of 1738. at worst it is pure stylised invention. This impersonal portrait, itself a copy of a French original produced in Paris between 1740 and 1760 1 is somehow symptomatic of the reception accorded Günther by his contemporaries and, sadly, by many more critics since. This reception too has largely rested on a few cliched statements about the poet from such unreliable, subjective sources as Goethe's, Dichtung und Wahrheit 2, or again, from the poet's father. Even today, studies based closely on the individual poems in the context of his age have rarity value, (as will become clear when we examine the

1 This portrait is to be found in the Cabinet des Estampes of the Bibliothec National de Paris listed as: N2 (57.B.1909).

2 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Aus meinem Leben; Dichtung und Wahrheit (München. 1985).

secondary literature on this poet).

The period spanned by Günther's brief life (1695–1723) is generally seen by scholars as a barren stretch between the grandeur of the Baroque and the first critical debates of the early Enlightenment. This, however, is an essentially unproductive way of looking at a transitional period. The years from 1700–1730 should not be regarded as a barren literary landscape but rather as a meadow lying fallow for the rich Enlightenment harvest to come. Not bare earth but poetic soil full of germinating seeds and the cut back growth of a previous summer. A period, thus, not of stagnation, but rather of intense theoretical debate and the search for a new way forward 3. The tenor of these years is to be felt in such works as the seven volume Neukirch Anthology 4 and in the fierce debates and exchanges between the Silesians and their 'up and coming' literary rivals in Hamburg, Leipzig and Lower Saxony. It is

3 The richness and variety of this transitional period is only gradually being recognised by scholars. In his Deutsche Lyrik der frühen Neuzeit (Vol 5/II, Tübingen 1991) Hans-Georg Kemper sets out to amend this picture, concentrating on the relationship between the poetry and literary theory of the early seventeenth century (Canitz, Gottsched, Brockes, Haller) and developments in the New Science and key concepts of the early Enlightenment such as Vernunft and Offenbarung. Very little attention, however, is paid to Günther's contribution to this process.

4 Benjamin Neukirch, Herr von Hoffmannswaldau und anderer Deutsche auserlesene Gedichte (Leipzig, 1695–1727) Although generally known as the 'Neukirch' anthology, Neukirch was editor only of the first four volumes, the later parts were edited by Christian Hölmann and Gottlieb Stolle respectively.

in this context, then, that we must see Günther, not, as so often, as a forerunner of the Sturm und Drang or even of the young Goethe, but as a product of his age and of a specific literary tradition whose codes and conventions he officially adhered to but unconsciously went beyond.

This critical tradition has its roots in the development centred on Opitz in the early decades of the seventeenth century towards a literature in the German language. It takes as its point of departure (leaving aside, for simplicity's sake, the very considerable achievements of Weckherlin which pre-date these developments by several years) Opitz' poetological 'best seller' of 1624, Das Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey 5, a text which is so frequently taken to signal the beginning of the 'Baroque' 6 The influence of this text can be followed through virtually a whole century of poetic theory and practice. Opitz' introduction had the advantage of being short, a fact which both broadened its impact and left it open to varied interpretation. Opitz became central to the seventeenth century literary canon; even writers who stretched his 'classicistic' rules almost beyond recognition did so with a polite nod at his literary

5 All discussion of, and quotations from, this work will refer to the edition by George Schulz-Behrend in the Gesammelte Werke published in Stuttgart in 1978.

6 This fraught periodisation will be examined in greater detail later in this introduction.

precepts. Others, among them many of the great Silesians, took Opitz as their literary guide and created a German literary tradition in his image. Even Gottsched writing in the 1730s and 40s still takes Opitz as his starting point while rejecting the wider 'excesses' of the movement he inspired.

Günther was born on the 8th of April 1695, the only son of Johann Günther, a doctor in the small town of Striegau in Lower Silesia. A chance meeting allowed Johann Christian to attend the Lutheran Gymnasium in the nearby town of Schweidnitz, the site of one of the few protestant churches in Habsburg controlled re-catholicised Silesia.⁷ It was here, under the guidance of the school's rector Johann Christian Leubscher, that, along with the basis of a traditional humanist education, he first developed his deep love of poetry. During the years at the Gnadenschule, (1710-1715) Günther wrote numerous occasional poems and his only drama, a satirical work on a classical theme, Die von Theodosia bereute Eifersucht which was performed by the pupils on the 24th of September 1715, the year he left Schweidnitz to go on to university in Wittenberg to study medicine. Günther's love of poetry and his literary ambitions, however, rapidly gained precedence over his

⁷ This church: Zur Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit was a Friedenskirche built in 1657/8, barely a decade after the Westphalian peace treaty. It is a Fachwerkbau, built of wood and wattle without a tower in line with the counter-reformatory regulations.

medical studies. In a moment of hubris, the 21 year old poet submitted a selection of his work to the philosophical faculty and was honoured with the by then virtually meaningless title of poet laureate, thereby incurring hefty debts and the lasting displeasure of his father. His stay in Wittenberg, probably for these reasons, was brief, and by the summer of 1716 he had moved on to Leipzig whose rector, Johann Burchard Mencke, a lawyer, poet, and professor of history, was to have a considerable influence on his poetic development. In the emphatically literary atmosphere of Leipzig and under the influence of Mencke and his disciples in the Deutsch-Übende poetische Gesellschaft, Günther began consciously to avoid the ornate late Silesian manner in favour of the playful, worldly anacreontism favoured in Leipzig. It was also with Mencke's encouragement that Günther wrote one of his best known poems, the Heldengedicht to Prince Eugen of Savoy, Auf den zwischen ihro kayserl. Majestät und der Pforte An. 1718 geschlossenen Frieden (Kr.IV,p.129-43) which was to make his name but not, as he had hoped, his fortune. When the Prince Elector August the Second of Saxony made known his search for a colleague and successor for the ageing court poet Johann von Besser, Mencke did not hesitate to nominate his protege, Günther. When this plan too ended in failure, the poet returned home to Striegau to plead for a reconciliation with his father. However, unfavourable

public opinion and Günther's own retaliation at his detractors and the Lutheran orthodoxy turned his father against him and the poet began his long wanderings through Silesia in search of a place to stay and of a patron. It is understandable then that such a large proportion of Günther's poetic output should consist of Gelegenheitsgedichte and begging letters in metrical form. Johann Christian's last real attempt to establish a stable and socially accepted life for himself is to be seen in his acceptance of a modest medical practice in the border town of Kreuzberg. These plans were not, however, to come to fruition since Pastor Littmann, the father of his fiancée Johanna Barbara, demanded the poet's reconciliation with his father and the completion of his medical studies before he would give his consent for the marriage. After another unsuccessful journey home, the impetus behind this last attempt to find some basic stability seems to have vanished and the poet resumed his travels, on foot, through Silesia and into Saxony which were to end in Jena where Günther put his name down for his final medical examinations but fell ill in February 1723 and died on March the 15th, three weeks before his twenty-eighth birthday. The cause of death was never entirely clarified and gave rise to much speculation, but it is probable that it was tuberculosis.

It is dangerous from a critical standpoint to place too much weight on the details of Günther's life; a danger to

which generations of scholars have succumbed. Its apparently melodramatic qualities indeed also singled it out for dramatisation and treatment in numerous novels (a subject which has, indeed, in itself formed the basis of doctoral theses).

The present analysis of Günther does not claim to present a comprehensive picture of the poet but rather to select areas of his literary production which may be seen to paradigmatic both of his lyric voice and of the transitional period into which he was born. An attempt to consider the full range of his lyric output in the confines of a dissertation would lead to excessive generalisation and probably also to neglect of the literary milieu which is, arguably, central to a fuller understanding of the poet.

This biographical sketch is not, therefore, to be understood as a programme for the chapters to come but rather as a point of reference in a thesis which concentrates on thematic and rhetorical details of Günther's work within the context of the German speaking literary tradition at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Through specific examples analysed in detail, an attempt will be made to suggest both the wider spectrum of Günther's work and the poetological problems faced by writers of his generation. The approach adopted is largely textual; it does, however, take account of the progress in

such fields as rhetorical and poetological research of recent decades. At the same time, the intention is to avoid imposing on this transitional period, on this 'late Silesian' poet, overtly modern critical theory. If one is to understand the developments of the years 1690-1730, one must apply a historical approach which does justice to the individuality and specific problems of the period without trying to view it simply as a 'degeneration' of the Baroque, or Günther as nature's failed attempt to produce Goethe, as one of the many opinions current in nineteenth century scholarship claimed.

The 'Baroque' has long proved a stumbling block and point of intense theoretical debate for scholars but in recent years they have united in defining it as a term to be understood:

" ... im Sinne eines Hilfsbegriffes der Forschung zur Bezeichnung einer historischen Epoche. " 8

Some go even further and question the meaningfulness of historical periodisation per se:

" Ich gebe diese Beispiele, um zu zeigen, wie unsinnig jeder Streit um Epochenbezeichnung ist. Sie geben nichts her für die konkrete Bestimmung eines Kunstwerks, seiner historischen Herkunft und Zielrichtung, sondern sind nützlich lediglich als rasche Verständigungsmittel, als äusserliche Marken historischer Einordnungen." 9

The attempts to define a Baroque style concluded by merely

8 Gerhart Hoffmeister, Deutsche und Europäische Barockliteratur, (Stuttgart, 1987), p.7.

9 Wilhelm Emrich, Deutsche Literatur der Barockzeit, (1981, Königstein) p.18.

affirming the diversity of this epoch as:

" ... a cluster of related styles " 10

The problem we are faced with is one of terminology. If we do entirely without terms of periodisation and concentrate on each text in isolation, we are rapidly confronted with an unintelligible chaos of pure phenomena, which defies any logical classification. On the other hand it is often to distort a text to force it to comply to pre-determined categories. The wider and more general the term, the less concrete and definite its meaning. The term 'Baroque' is often little more than a blanket definition uniting works as disparate as Böhme's mystical writings and Grimmelshausen's Simplicissimus, religious movements as separate as Jesuit Catholicism and Lutheran Orthodoxy. The period it is claimed to encompass, moreover, is said to span the years from 1580-1680, 1600-1702 or 1624-1723, depending on how you interpret it. At the same time, we are not necessarily brought any further forward by accepting Schöne's description of the Baroque as an:

" Ubereinkunftsbezeichnung ..., die auf einigermaßen ungenaue Weise das 17. Jahrhundert meint." 11

This approach, if we are to take it literally would reduce the 'Baroque' to a historical phenomenon, encapsulated in

10 Frank J. Warnke, Versions of Baroque: European Literature in the seventeenth century (New Haven, London, 1961).

11 A. Schöne, as quoted in Gerhart Hoffmeister, Deutsche und Europäische Barockliteratur (Stuttgart, 1981) p.18.

the years 1600–1700. So while the concept 'Baroque' attempts to envelop a diversity of phenomena in a blanket term, the equation of it with the 'seventeenth century' would reduce this 'cluster of styles' to a historical concept. But literary movements do not necessarily conform to such divisions. However we describe this period, we are confronted with further problems in describing its end. If we use the term 'seventeenth century', then we must see it as followed by the 'eighteenth century' which encompasses writers as diverse as Schnabel, Goethe and even the early Romantics, whereas if we talk, again not unproblematically, of the 'Enlightenment', then we must, by implication, attach a given meaning to the 'Baroque'.

The problem, in short, is that the terminology we are generally forced to use is too wide. But without such categories, how can one trace literary developments and stylistic changes over a longer period other than in exhaustive, chaotic detail? The solution is to use either no terminology whatsoever and to let the facts speak for themselves, or to narrow the given terms down so as to make them useful tools. Thus the term Baroque will here be narrowed down to a single facet, namely the tradition of German language Kunstpoesie in imitation of Opitz and traced from 1624 until the conclusion of the debates concerning its future in the 1730s. Such a delimitation provides us with manageable historical and terminological

boundaries- in other words with tentative working guidelines.

Any such use of terminology has, however, to be able to cope with the subtleties of a specifically transitional period. Attempts to locate Günther in terms of 'Baroque' or 'Enlightenment' can often obscure the individual characteristics of given texts. Literary terminology, when used at all, is thus used with extreme caution. It is the characteristic of a transitional period to be searching, even groping for a way forward. Even the fairly wide parameters which are here given to this transitional period of 1680-1740 must be flexible enough to admit, for instance, the survival of that specifically 'Baroque' manifestation, the German Gelegenheitsgedicht well beyond the middle of the eighteenth century.

At the risk of introducing a proliferation of detail, the method observed in this thesis is to argue from a largely factual and textual basis, using blanket terms only when strictly necessary and even then according them a specific rather than a general meaning.

This dissertation will first outline Günther's particular literary heritage before going on to examine his paradoxical, twofold reaction to it; that is, of affirming it outwardly while inwardly, and possibly unconsciously, deconstructing it in the poetry itself.

The first chapter will comprise a survey of the major secondary literature on Günther.

The second will go on to examine the question of imagery in seventeenth century poetry and poetics. The term Barocke Bildlichkeit is frequently used to describe a wide range of descriptive approaches in the seventeenth century from allegory and emblematics to the decorative, but supposedly mimetic imagery of the later decades. In every century poets have striven to give their work a visual dimension, but only in the reception of the Baroque does this single feature gain such importance. It is therefore essential to know what specifically is meant by 'Baroque' imagery. What structures characterise it? What specific and diverse manifestations are concealed by this term? In what way, indeed, does this imagery differ from that of the eighteenth century and why?

The third in turn will concentrate on the treatment of a specific content or topos, namely the Old Testament figure of Job, with respect to its rhetorical and personal significance for Günther as well as its wider relevance in the religious framework and philosophical debate of the age (chiefly Leibniz).

The fourth will then turn from the poetic content of

Günther's writings in the light of the literary tradition to their form. This will be examined with reference to his epithalamia, a type particularly favoured by the poet. His mastery and occasional abuse of this occasional form will be viewed against the background of contemporary critical debates on the role of the occasional poem to be found in Canitz and Neukirch.

The fifth chapter will look firstly in more detail at Günther's position, both theoretical and practical, in the context of the literary debate of the first three decades of the eighteenth century. It will turn secondly to an analysis of Günther's reception by his contemporaries and his posthumous centrality in the discussion of the future of Silesian poetry and to an analysis of the poet's literary influence, or indeed, lack of influence on the literature of the decades to come.

The sixth and last chapter, finally, will draw the above strands of argument together and provide a conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

FORSCHUNGSBERICHT

Before proceeding to an analysis of the concept of Barocke Bildlichkeit and its implications for Günther's own imagery and metaphor, we would do well to examine the results of recent research on the poet. The past ten years have seen a marked revival of interest in the poetry of Johann Christian Günther. This is surely a product of the re-awakened interest in the seventeenth century as such. This interest encompasses a wide range of articles on specific aspects or sections of Günther's work as well as four doctoral dissertations which have appeared in book form. This brief summary of recent research on Günther cannot claim to be exhaustive. It centres on the scholarship of the last ten years, making reference to older works only in specific instances where the point of view they maintain or the theme they cover has been overlooked by more recent research. This survey has had to be fairly selective, especially as regards articles in periodicals and it concentrates on the material most likely to give a rounded picture of Günther scholarship rather than examining every single contribution to have appeared in these years which would have been both time consuming and would have detracted from the overall cohesion of this

survey.

The scholarly basis for this revived interest was undoubtedly provided by Reiner Bölhoff's magnum opus of Günther bibliography, a three volume work comprising a Kommentierte Bibliographie, a Schriftenverzeichnis, and a Rezeptions- und Forschungsgeschichte respectively, published from 1980-83¹. Of these, the bibliography and register of texts and their variants are invaluable for either a closely textual or more widely contextual study. The bibliography does not limit itself to providing a survey of mainstream Günther research, but records every mention of the poet or discussion of his work from the time of his first publications.

The textual validity of the standard Günther edition has long been a cause for concern amongst scholars. Krämer's edition of 1930-37 (reprinted 1964), the only complete and widely accessible edition of the poet's work, suffers from the largely unmotivated standardisation of the spelling and arbitrary division of poems of the same date into separate volumes depending on their categorisation as Gelegenheits- or Erlebnisdichtung. Most importantly, Krämer's edition, although granting wide access to the majority of Günther's texts, sadly lacks a historical-critical appendix which would enhance its use for critical purposes. In the absence

¹ In the series Literatur und Leben (Neue Folge) Vol 19/1, 19/2, 19/3, published in Cologne and Vienna.

of a modern, historical-critical edition (which is presently under commission) Bölhoff's register of texts, their variants and sources, represents a major step forward in the scholarly evaluation of Günther's work. In addition to this vast bibliography, Bölhoff should also be mentioned in the context of Krämer's other major contribution to Günther scholarship; his biography, Das Leben des schlesischen Dichters Johann Christian Günther, which is still the only modern biography in existence.² Bölhoff's devotion to the Güntherian cause and love of scholarly exactitude caused him to search out, work over and publish Krämer's textual and scholarly appendices, thus establishing this once dubious work (Osterkamp describes it a '... biographie romancé') as a reliable source of biographic and contextual detail.³

The number of monographs or full length studies devoted to Günther since Litzmann, Kopp, Enders and Hoffmann re-

2 There are however two "biographies" of Günther written in the years immediately after his death; Steinbach's partisan and polemical: Johann Christian Günthers des berühmten schlesischen Dichters Leben und Schrifften of 1738 and the apocryphal: Johann Christian Günthers/ aus Schlesien/ curieuse und merckwürdige/ Lebens- und Reise-/ Beschreibung of 1732 which was long believed to be a genuine account of Günther's life by the poet himself.

3 This archive material indeed makes Krämer's work irreplaceable as many records, both biographical and literary were destroyed or lost in the Second World War. However the major criticism to be levelled at this biography and one which dates it is the fact that it equates poetry with life. Günther's lyric opus is naively taken as a reliable source for the events Krämer narrates in his biography.

awakened interest in the poet in the 1880s has always been limited. This remains true for the new revival in interest of the past ten years. As already mentioned, four dissertations in book form have appeared in these years: Linda Hoff-Purviance's, Johann Christian Günther: The German Ovid ? 4 Helga Bütler-Schön's, Dichtungsverständnis und Selbstdarstellung bei Johann Christian Günther 5, Ursula Regener's, Stumme Lieder ? 6 and Leopold Federmair's, Die Leidenschaften der Seele Johann Christian Günthers. 7

Linda Hoff-Purviance's dissertation, Johann Christian Günther: The German Ovid ? which appeared on microfilm in 1980 is unusual in being a full length study of one single aspect of Günther's work, his literary and personal indebtedness to the poet Ovid. As such, this is a twofold study, concentrating firstly on Günther's reliance on Ovid as a role model in his Latin Vitae Curriculum or other such works of stylised biography; direct parallels are drawn as between Günther's relationship to his father and Ovid's to the authority figure of the emperor Augustus. Secondly she

4 Ann Arbor Microfilms, (in printed form) 1980.

5 Studien zur Germanistik, Anglistik und Komparatistik. 99 (Bonn, 1981).

6 Ursula Regener. Stumme Lieder? Zur Motiv- und Gattungsgeschichtliche Situierung von Johann Christian Günthers Verliebten Gedichten, (Berlin, 1989).

7 (Stuttgart, 1989).

examines the literary influence Ovid exercised on Günther, as witnessed in his 'elegiac epistles' (p.181) or on his use of metre, the 'limping' elegiac couplet' (p.177).

In a thesis completed as late as 1980, Hoff Purviance shows little awareness of such major developments in German studies as found in Barner, Segebrecht or Dyck. The scope of this thesis and not only its subject matter is a limited one, taking as its underlying precepts the often simplistic 'life as art' argumentation of such American scholars as R.M. Browning 8 or G. Gillespie 9

The central two of the aforementioned quartet of theses are clearly the products of the rhetoric-based research of the past two decades, encapsulated in such epochal works as Wilfried Barner's, Barockrhetorik 10 Joachim Dyck's, Ticht-Kunst 11 and Wulf Segebrecht's, Das Gelegenheitsgedicht 12.

8 Robert Marcellus Browning German Baroque Poetry 1618-1723 (University Park ^{and} London, 1971).

9 Gerald Gillespie Suffering in Günther's poetry in the German Quarterly 16, (1968) pp.23-38.

At the same time, this absence of cross-fertilisation is continued in the absence of any mention of Hoff-Purviance's dissertation in recent works of Günther scholarship. While the assiduous Bölhoff refers to it in the Nachträge to Volume 2 of his bibliography (1982, p.18/ 979), both Federmair and Regener refer only to Hoff-Purviance's brief ten-page article in the 1982 Text und Kritik volume.

10 Barockrhetorik: Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen Grundlagen Tübingen(1970).

11 Ticht-Kunst: Deutsche Barockpoetik und rhetorische Tradition (= Ars Poetica 1.) (Bad Homburg, 1966).

Bütler-Schön, who makes Günther's satires, his Klagelieder and occasional poetry the focus of her study, was the first scholar to make a decisive break with earlier biographical criticism: the unquestioning belief we find in Krämer, and to a lesser extent still in Dahlke 13, that Günther's poetry may be regarded as an accurate reflection of his life. Instead Bütler-Schon enumerates and analyses the rhetorical and poetological assumptions which underlie Günther's work and perception of his role as a poet. In accordance with the rhetorical slant of her analysis, she argues that Krämer's use of the category Gelegenheitsdichtung fails to account for the 'occasional' nature of a large number of supposedly personal poems. She argues, moreover, that Günther's dissatisfaction with the genre as such led him to transform conventional occasional poems into satirical attacks on the mores of contemporary society. At the same time, Bütler-Schön's argument in her sub- chapter on satire and lampoon (pp.95-120) that Günther's motivation in writing satire was a purely aesthetic one, is not wholly convincing. As sound and scholarly as Bütler-Schön's approach may on the whole be, certain of her arguments have a categorical undertone not

12 Das Gelegenheitsgedicht Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Poetik der deutschen Lyrik, (Stuttgart, 1977).

13 Hans Dahlke, Johann Christian Günther: Seine dichterische Entwicklung (Neue Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, Vol. 10, Berlin, 1960).

in keeping with what is ultimately personal opinion,
however well argued:

" Die Gelegenheitsdichtung als Medium dichterischen Sprechens überhaupt und als die spezifische Weise in der der Dichter den Menschen und der Welt dient, wird bei Günther nie in Frage gestellt. " (p.51)

In rejecting a personal interpretation of Günther's poetry, Bütler-Schön also turns away from the traditional subject matter of biographical criticism: the love poetry. Even the seemingly most confessional of Günther's poetry, his laments (Klagelieder) are reinterpreted from the perspective of rhetorical role play and the poet's literary debt to such sources as the Bible, Leibnizean theodicy and certain of the theories of physicotheology (although the argument for this influence strikes one as rather tenuous). Amidst the broad range and exact contextual detail of her study, Bütler-Schön is unwilling to define Günther's position clearly in epochal terms. While clearly showing his allegiance to the poetic theory of the seventeenth century, she still argues for a new, more modern side of Günther which goes beyond these poetic strictures. However what this new aspect consists in never becomes entirely clear- perhaps because this would destabilise the balance of Bütler-Schön's own argumentation.

Ursula Regener too, in her recent book, the published form of her 1988 Münster dissertation, has chosen to define the area of her work very much according to the expectations of recent rhetorical research. Interestingly

she takes as the focus of her work the Verliebte Gedichte, the traditional hobby-horse of biographical scholars, and has directed upon them the results of recent rhetorical and genre research. The structure of Regener's book is clear and to the point; opening with a brief cameo of Günther's reception by his peers, focussing on the fascinating, Gespräche ... aus dem Reich der Todten, before going on to examine his use of structure and genre (using the example of the Abschiedsgedichte) followed by an analysis of the motifs he commonly uses. The theme of the title, Stumme Lieder (leere Zeilen) becomes the focus of the penultimate chapter which contains in nuce the interpretative and methodological precepts of the thesis as a whole, demonstrating the self-reflexive nature of Günther's immanente Poetik on the basis of four utterly diverse poetic examples.

The principle underlying this strict, indeed formalistic structure is praiseworthy in itself- aiming to avoid the analysis of textual fragments on the one hand and, on the other, being 'submerged' in the course of individual analysis under a mass of related, contextual matter. At the same time, this is a self-conscious and inorganic study; the subject matter chosen was selected for the paradigmatic nature of its rhetorical and structural basis rather than for its underlying theme of love. While understanding Regener's wish to avoid the objection that she has adopted

a biographical standpoint, the genre-based and rhetorical approach can only go so far in illuminating what are, after all, Liebesgedichte. In her attempts both to examine Günther's poems in terms of motif and genre, and to analyse whole poems rather than fragments, Regener (and this is a serious drawback of her systematic method which resembles structural algebra rather than a means of interpreting poetry) ties herself in irresoluble methodological knots:

" Da diese Reime in zum Teil sehr langen Dichtungen oft nur Einsprengsel sind, trotzdem aber an der Kritik einer kontextignorierenden Einzelpersdeutung unbedingt festgehalten wird, sollen die Interpretationen nicht nur unter der Leitfrage des Kapitels stehen. " (p.74)

The exigencies of her commitment to wholeness thus threaten to cancel out the demands of Motivforschung.

Regener sees Günther as belonging firmly to the 'Baroque' tradition; a view one can but echo, however certain comments in the Schlussbetrachtungen might cause one to doubt her understanding of the inner nature of this epoch:

" ... Nun offenbart die normative Poetik des Barock ein so idealtypisches literarisches Verständnis, dass sich der Einzeltext in den meisten Fällen davon nur unterscheiden und individualisieren kann. Dass der Konflikt mit der Gattungsnorm gleichsam eingeplant ist, zeigen allein die Forschungen zur barocken Literatur, die sich der Interpretation verschrieben haben..." 14

This statement (with its implicit claim that the only true reading is a text-immanent one) raises the question whether

14 Regener, Ch.VI, Schlussbetrachtungen p.180-1.

the relationship of the seventeenth century literary text to contemporary poetology was generally as radical as Regener claims. It was surely intrinsic to the poetological treatise, written for the benefit of the many Nebenstundenpoeten, that the precepts and examples it contained should be adopted and put into practice with only minimal modifications. As we shall see, it was not until the 1720s or 30s that the form, topoi or genre put forward by these treatises were seriously put into question. While the claim that theoretical works might safely be ignored § 10 may be true in relation to Günther (and even this is the case for only a fraction of his total output) it cannot be asserted for the majority of his contemporaries who adhered fairly strictly to the formal and generic demands of the poetologies. This interpretation of the nature of the seventeenth century poetology is thus both unhistorical, because it sees in the seventeenth century principles which were only to emerge in the early decades of the following century, and inaccurate in exaggerating flexibility of the generally accepted boundaries of imitatio of that time.

It is ironic, given Regener's problematic relationship to the 'intuitive' school of Günther criticism, that she should conclude her work by acknowledging and affirming one of the most deep seated of scholarly clichés concerning the poet:

" Die tragischen Signaturen der Zerrissenheit und des Gebrochenen, die der Persönlichkeit Günthers immer wieder zugeschrieben werden, finden zumindest im besprochenen Teil seiner Liebeslyrik ein textuales Pendant. "

Might this perhaps suggest that the use of rhetoric and a sophisticated methodology do not solve all the interpretative problems raised by Günther's multi-faceted poetry ?

Leopold Federmair's, Die Leidenschaften der Seele Johann Christian Günthers is a deeply frustrating work; the product of nine years of research which spreads over 539 pages, it is a literary hybrid; neither a dissertation nor the work of belletristic the author obviously intended to write. Federmair's study is exceedingly wide ranging, covering everything from Günther's use of lyric cycles to insightful analyses of individual poems. Unfortunately, however much sound scholarship it includes, this is obscured by Federmair's pretentious and bombastic style:

" Durchlesen, über Günther hinaus, zu Goethe, zu Lenau, Kafka... Ihn von seinem historischen Ort entfernen, in meine Richtung. In die Distanz, die ich damit öffne, soll eine geheime Fülle strömen. Oder einfach: den Sinn entfesseln, die Sinne entfesseln. Tödten. Auferstehung. Dabei nehme ich den Zufall zuhilfe." (p.4)

It is not until his conclusion that Federmair explains the 'logic' behind the seeming chaos of his approach:

" Ich werde mich auch hüten, Günther nun doch in eine Ordnung zu bringen, nachdem meine Anstrengungen dahin gegangen sind, ihn herauszulösen, also seinen Kampf gegen die Ordnung zu übersetzen." (p.536)

This overriding aim becomes all the more paradoxical in view of Federmair's profound knowledge not only of the

deeper structures of Günther's work but of the historical and literary context in which he wrote. Federmair's reading is hence not merely unhistorical but consciously and wilfully so, written against the grain of contemporary scholarly practice. It is hence very difficult to evaluate such a thesis within the parameters demanded by academic convention itself.

Alongside these full-length studies on Günther, the past 10 years have seen the publication of two collections of articles devoted to his work; the Text und Kritik volume of 1982 15 and the proceedings of a colloquium held in the Eichendorff- Institut of Ratingen-Hösel in 1987 16. Both contain bibliographic studies by Bölhoff, the former a selective bibliography, and the latter a survey of recent criticism which serves to update Bölhoff's earlier work. The inclusion of bibliographic surveys (which are a standard feature of: Text und Kritik volumes) is a common feature of recent research on the poet. Alongside Bölhoff's major work and his bibliographic updatings, there are two further articles, Ernst Osterkamp's, Perspektiven der

15 Text und Kritik, general editor; Ludwig Arnold. Heft 74/75 Göttingen, 1982).

16 Hans-Georg Pott, Editor, Johann Christian Günther (mit einem Beitrag zu Lohensteins "Agrippina"). Schriften des Eichendorff Instituts an der Universität Düsseldorf (Paderborn, 1987).

Güntherforschung of 1985 17 and Marvin S. Schindler's, Johann Christian Günther: The search for a critical focus 18 which sketch out the main trends in Günther scholarship. Osterkamp and Schindler are both particularly concerned to mark out the main line of recent research and lament a plurality of approach which, they feel, has dissipated the strength of Günther scholarship. Is it not however utopian and ultimately counterproductive to posit a state of perfect harmony among any group of critics? The articles contained in both of these collections are, in fact, representative of the range and diversity of recent scholarship. The subject matter of the early volume ranges from socio-economic to critically biographical studies 19 while the latter volume is unusual in including a brief study of Günther's only drama 20.

We have already touched on the overall trend in Günther scholarship away from the 'biographical' interpretation of his work. Bölhoff evidently sees his role more as that of a

17 in: Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur 1. Sonderheft (Forschungsberichte) Ed. W. Frühwald, (Tübingen, 1985) pp. 129-159.

18 Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, deutsche Sprache und Literatur Vol. 78, No.1 (Spring, 1986) pp.69-80.

19 Reiner Bölhoff, Zum Problem der Günther-Biographie in Text und Kritik pp. 113-17.

20 Ingeborg Villinger, Rhetorik als Verhängnis: Johann Christian Günthers Drama in Johann Christian Günther ... edited by Hans-Georg Pott, pp.53-67.

scholarly trail blazer in the Güntherian terrain than as a writer of monographs or dense academic articles. It is in this light that we must see the Excursen included in the third volume of his bibliography or indeed his article, Zum Problem der Günther-Biographie 21 in the Text und Kritik volume. In the space of five pages, Bölhoff aims to do no more than point out the main problems of Günther's biography which were hitherto unclear before pointing out a major stumbling block in Günther criticism: the lack of agreement about Günther's own poetic and personal identity, before concluding, rather pessimistically, that to research into the poet's biography means entering a labyrinth and so that the only way forward is to acknowledge this very subjectivity and diversity of opinion. In other words, Bölhoff both recognises and can articulate the problem, but is unable to suggest a plausible solution. Elsewhere 22 he

21 The tendency Bölhoff notes in this article among scholars to apply contradictory, but equally categorical labels to the poet has long been a bugbear of Günther research. While Browning, for instance, writing in 1971 (German Baroque Poetry, University Park, London 1971, p.192) describes Günther as a "genius":

"... it shows that Günther like so many geniuses, experienced his life as a quotation."

Hans Kuhn, conversely, writing four years later (Was ist anthologienwürdig? Beobachtungen am Beispiel Johann Christian Günthers in: Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik Series A, Vol. 2,2 p.279) describes him as a poeta minor:

"Es ist für Günther, wie für viele andere poetae minores bezeichnend, dass..."

22 In the third volume of his Bibliography and in the article: Zur neueren Günther-Forschung in the collection edited by Pott, p.103.

posits the study of Günther's rhetorical role play coupled with sound socio-economic background studies as a possible way forward:

" Eine perspektivistisch und begrifflich angemessene Interpretation der Dichtungen bleibt nach wie vor Aufgabe einer zugleich historisch-kritischen und anteilnehmende Günther-Forschung. Es widerspricht dabei dem rhetorischen Ansatz nicht, zunehmend auch sozialgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen und Wechselwirkungen zu berücksichtigen..."

In this same, Text und Kritik volume (pp.85-109)

Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg goes some way towards providing this desideratum in his article, Die Armut des Poeten: Zur Berufsproblematik des Dichters im frühen 18. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von Johann Christian Günther.

Ungern-Sternberg makes Günther's own numerous utterances on the social role of the poet the starting point of his study before going on to examine in more detail the socio-economic position of the writer in the early eighteenth century. Günther's situation is seen to be paradigmatic, although Ungern-Sternberg admits that there were exceptions of poets who lived well such as the popular and financially successful Corvinus, Henrici or Hunold.

Ungern-Sternberg sees the decline in literary patronage in the early eighteenth century as the key to Günther's poverty. It is thus not surprising that the incident upon which he focusses this study should be the poet's unsuccessful application to become court poet at Dresden which he takes as paradigmatic of the literary life of that time:

" ... eine literarische Öffentlichkeit gab es zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts noch kaum... Andererseits konnte der zur Zeit der Frühaufklärung stattfindende Zerfall der mäzenatischen Institutionen und des Patronagesystems... nicht durch den Buchhandel und seine Honorarmöglichkeiten kompensiert werden. " (p.88)

A not insignificant danger of socio-economic studies of this sort is that in examining the situation of an individual poet, it is difficult to strike a balance between facts which belong in a social history and the individual circumstances of the poet in question. Within the context of this twenty page article, Ungern-Sternberg has solved this dilemma remarkably well, taking Günther as a paradigm and analysing statements drawn from his verse within the context of the literary life of that time. 23

In contrast to this socio-economic and critically biographical scholarship, we find a strand of entirely conceptual and linguistic research which concentrates exclusively on the texts themselves. Curiously, two of the main articles making use of this approach concentrate on a similar theme: Christel Zimmermann's, Es mag die Heucheley die neue Welt verstellen: Überlegungen zum Wahrheitsbegriff

23 This study, furthermore, compares very favourably with a later article by Hans-Georg Pott: Apollo, ein Patient: Sozialgeschichtliche Anmerkungen zu Johann Christian Günther which, while it adopts the same overall line as Ungern-Sternberg, that Günther's dilemma stemmed from being caught between courtly and "bourgeois" literary life largely repeats Ungern-Sternberg's findings, even to the point of using identical examples.

bei Johann Christian Günther of 1981 24 and Jörg-Ulrich Fechner's, Witz und Wahrheit an einem literaturhistorischen Wendepunkt: Johann Christian Günthers Lobgedicht auf Ernst Rudolf von Nickisch und Roseneck 25 published three years later.

Notwithstanding the similarity of the themes explored and the overall focus on the concepts and language in Günther's poetry rather than its content, the approaches chosen by Zimmermann and Fechner respectively could not be more different. Zimmermann draws her material from a wide range of the love poetry, Fechner centres on a single occasional poem. Zimmermann, despite her overall concern with language and the concept of truth, uses biography to link her diverse examples, Fechner scarcely touches on aspects of Günther's life at all. Both authors adhere to many of the premises of recent seventeenth century research in their use of rhetorical and poetological tools; both also acknowledge the problem of situating Günther in terms of epoch and at least begin by leaving this question open, but while Zimmermann chooses to replace the concept of an Epochengrenze with an Epochenschwelle (p.482), Fechner is concerned to pin down the actual year of the transition from Baroque to Enlightenment in Günther's work.

24 Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie Vol. 100, 4 (1981) pp.481-503.

25 Chloe 1984, Barocker Lust-Spiegel, Festschrift für Blake Lee Spahr, Edited by M. Bircher, (Amsterdam, 1984).

Zimmermann's methodological approach to the question of truth in Günther's poetry is both odd and seemingly self-contradictory:

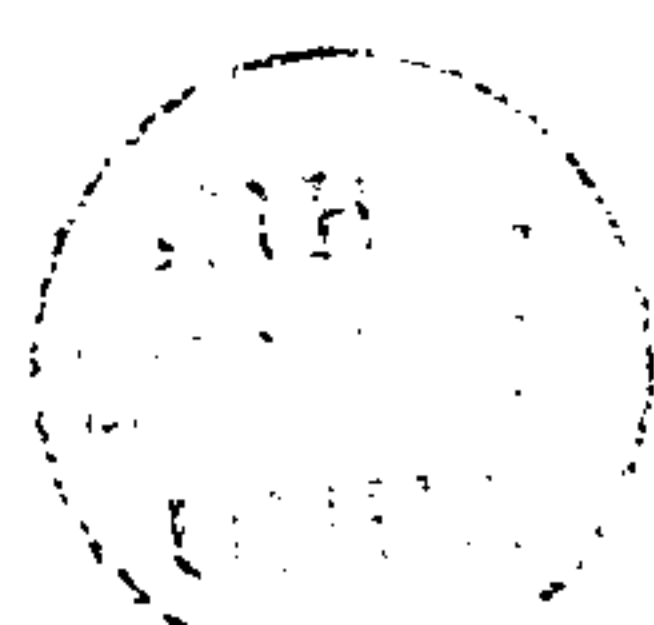
" Wenngleich hier Dichtung selbst zugrundegelegt wird... ist doch zu berücksichtigen, dass ... der Komplexitätsgrad der poetischen Reflexion wesentlich vom Modus des dichterischen Sprechens abhängt ... eine solche Reflexion annehmen hiesse in diesem Fall erwarten, dass das Wahrheitsproblem nicht primär in einer blossen Thematisierung verankert ist ... Diesbezüglich ist Günthers Dichtung wenig ergiebig. " (p.482-3)

It is characteristic of Zimmermann's argument as a whole that she should set up such an impressive methodological structure and then herself remove the foundations from this house of cards. The theory she posits is an interesting and often convincing one; that the immediacy of feeling and experience in Günther's love poetry can be equated with the new empiricist approach of the early Enlightenment:

" Beide, Mensch und Natur, haben sich aus ihrer begrifflichen Fixierung befreit und erscheinen in einem neuen Licht von Dinglichkeit. ... Damit bricht bei Günther eine Erkenntnis durch, die explizit erst in der Poetik der Schweizer gewonnen wird ... Er schafft damit der Emanzipation der Objektwelt, wie sie die Philosophie der Neuzeit bestimmt, Raum in der Poetik." (p.497)

One should, however, be aware at this juncture that Zimmermann has explicitly selected the Liebesgedichte, which are generally acknowledged to be the most subjective and progressive of Günther's works, as the basis for her argument. The more overtly rhetorical occasional poems are merely mentioned in passing.

Zimmermann is conscious of the potential weaknesses and dangers of her argument; she qualifies her suggestion that



Günther might at times point forward to Goethe (a real old chestnut of Günther criticism) or Lessing almost immediately:

" Signalisiert diese lapidäre Feststellung, dass ... sich schon Lessings Trennung von Malerei und Poesie andeutet ? Auch dass hiesse entschieden zu weit gehen. " (p.502)

The difficulty with Zimmermann's position is that it is only upheld by one small section of Günther's work; the love poetry; a section, moreover, which is itself still open to a traditionalist interpretation (as we shall see when we examine Trautwein's analysis of the composition of Günther's love poems) Zimmermann, in claiming that Günther breaks free of the seventeenth century and points forward to Bodmer, Lessing and even Goethe, not only bases her argument on a slim and selective body of evidence, but flies in the face of much recent criticism. She is herself, moreover, it seems aware of the problematic nature of what she is attempting and, in maintaining the line she adopts, constantly shoots herself in the theoretical and methodological foot.

Fechner's approach to this same theme, Witz und Wahrheit is a far more concise and textual one, which nonetheless draws similar conclusions to Zimmermann. Fechner singles out a paradigmatic Gelegenheitsgedicht, Auf die den 15. August Anno 1721 in Schlesien glücklich geschehene Wiederkunft des Herrn Ernst Rudolf von Nickisch und Roseneck for close textual and linguistic analysis. His

explicit intention is to avoid producing another generalised statement on the nature of Günther's verse not supported by textual evidence. Instead he chooses as the subject of his analysis a text which has been used to prove both the traditionalist and the progressive standpoints of Günther criticism and seeks instead to make this text itself an objective point of departure. The structure of his argumentation is very taut, even rigid; at no point does Fechner allow himself to use biography or contextual detail as mere padding (which is very much a feature of Zimmermann's analysis), however this makes his style wooden and almost mechanical; the structural bones show through the flesh of the text. The conclusion which Fechner eventually reaches, formulated as an appeal to future Günther scholars, is abrupt and indeed quite simplistic:

" Es wird die Aufgabe zukünftiger Günther-Forschung sein müssen, die Bezüge seiner Texte zu den Vorstellungen hier des Barock (Fortuna, Constantia u.s.w.), da der Aufklärung (Witz, Wahrheit u.s.w) einlässlich zu untersuchen, um den Zeitpunkt näher zu bestimmen, von dem ab der Verfasser Johann Christian Günther zu seiner reifsten Schaffensphase gelangt und diesen seinen eigenen und zukunftsweisenden Ton erzielt. " (p.407-08)

An analytic approach which takes the lexical analysis of single key words (such as Witz and Wahrheit) as indications of the poet's gradually changing world view under the influence of the intellectual developments of this time is surely entirely legitimate. It is, however, to make a mockery of this method to claim that the highly complex transition from Baroque to Enlightenment can be pinpointed

linguistically and the whole development plotted in the close analysis of texts spanning a couple of years.

As we have already seen, a favourite topic of analysis for the biographical school of Günther criticism has always been provided by the love poetry. In the last few years critical attention has tended to turn instead towards the occasional poems. Wolfgang Trautwein's article of 1987²⁶, however, breaks new ground by applying to the love poetry the insights gained from rhetorical research in general and the study of Günther's occasional poetry in particular. Trautwein still feels the need to distance himself from the traditional biographical perspective taken on this body of work and establish the autonomy of the text:

" Ob die historische Person Günthers das Dargestellte tatsächlich so erlebt hat, interessiert nicht, sondern das, was das Gedicht selbst als eine den Text übersteigende Wirklichkeit setzt." (p.169)

Taking the quotation mentioned in the title, Von Innen zwar ein Paradies, von Aussen Unruh Zanck und Plagen as his starting point, Trautwein analyses the composition of the love poetry in which Günther's basic adherence to the principles of an instrumental rhetoric are softened by the model of interaction between the 'outer' and 'inner' reality provided by the Erlebnisgedicht. Günther's dilemma,

²⁶ Von Innen zwar ein Paradies, von Aussen Unruh, Zanck und Plagen: Zur Komposition von Johann Christian Günthers Liebesgedichten in Daphnis Heft 1-2, (1987) pp.167-218.

according to Trautwein, was that his actual lived experience was not contained by, indeed ran counter to the rhetoric, the formelhaftes Sprechen of traditional poetry:

" Auch die materiell und sozial prekäre Position des Dichters lässt sich mit den Mitteln der Poesie nicht bewältigen. Die instrumentelle Rhetorik, die Günther in seinen Gedichten entwickelt hat, um sich im Leben zu behaupten, stösst an ihre Grenzen. " (p.199)

Trautwein clearly recognises where the demands of tradition no longer suit Günther's needs, but refuses to view the poet as a radical literary innovator:

" Von einer Überwindung der Rhetorik kann bei Günther noch nicht die Rede sein. Nur auf dem Gipfelpunkt der späten Leonorenyrik bilden die Bereiche der äusseren und innerseelischen Erfahrung ... eigene Ordnungsstrukturen aus. " (p.199)

This process is described in purely structural terms; at no point does Trautwein attempt to explain why language and rhetorical structures which had proved sufficient for Günther's poetic predecessors should no longer be so for Günther himself; why should he have privileged the exigencies of his own lived reality over a rhetorical tradition to which he outwardly adhered. Eventually Trautwein merely points vaguely beyond the confines of his lengthy but tightly written article to the 'antirhetorical' developments which occurred as a result of the Enlightenment and closes laconically and somewhat inconclusively with the words:

" Dies erklärt auch, weshalb Günther in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts ohne Nachfolge blieb. " (p.218)

Looking over the range of recent essays and articles on

Günther there is no real pattern to be discerned in the choice of subject matter, but rather a great variety both in the themes dealt with and the methodological approaches adopted. Some subjects have, however, been largely neglected by scholarship.

There have been no attempts to deal specifically with Günther's relationship to the philosophy of his age since Stamm's contribution on this subject in 1948²⁷, although Bütler-Schön touches upon this topic in her thesis.²⁸ Günther's only drama has been almost entirely neglected.

Günther's religious poetry has generally been accorded a rather patchy reception: the majority of critics have shown an interest in the Klagelieder rather than the mainstream religious verse composed for occasions in the church year or for personal devotion.²⁹ Dahlke (1960) and Browning (1971) interpret Günther's return to 'conventional' religious poetry from the spiritual tormentedness of his laments respectively as a: " Rückfall zum lutherischen

²⁷ Israel Stamm, Günther and Leibniz-Wolff in The Germanic review 23, (1948) pp.30-9.

²⁸ Bütler-Schön, pp.174-207.

²⁹ An in depth examination of as major an aspect of Günther's work as the religious poetry would exceed the scope of this dissertation. Instead the Klagelieder as a more compact and cyclical part of the oeuvre have been singled out for examination as being paradigmatic of Günther's problematic relationship to the traditions and demands of orthodox Lutheranism.

Gnadenrost" 30 or as what: " ...can best be described as a conversion " 31

This gap in Günther scholarship has at least been partially filled by an article written jointly by Ulrich Konrad and Matthias Pape, Johann Christian Günther in der Tradition der evangelischen Kirchenliteratur 32 This article places Günther within the religious context of his age, refuting Dahlke with the entirely plausible statement: " Wenn Günther nicht in die Theologie des 17. Jahrhunderts zurückfällt, dann deswegen weil er sich in seinen geistlichen Liedern nie über die Theologie des 17. Jahrhunderts hinweggesetzt hat. " (p.522)

Furthermore an examination of these themes proves not only that Günther's religious verse is to be seen within the tradition of the Lutheran hymnal, but also that Günther and his early publishers in fact suggested hymn melodies to which his poetry could be sung, but examine in some depth the relationship of Günther's religious verse to the forms current at the time and explore the delicate balance in his work between orthodox Lutheranism and pietistic influences.

Another article dealing with at least one aspect of

30 Hans Dahlke, Johann Christian Günther. Seine Dichterische Entwicklung (Berlin, 1960) p.170.

31 Browning p. 327

32 Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie Vol. 100,4, (1981), pp.504-527 It is indicative, in fact, of the neglect of this aspect of Günther's work that this article, originally a seminar paper for the Oberseminar on the poet at the university of Bonn under Benno Von Wiese should provide such a major, indeed invaluable contribution to this subject.

Günther's religious verse, its imagery, is Ernst Osterkamp's article, Das Kreuz des Poeten: Zur Leidensmetaphorik bei Johann Christian Günther 33. In the body of the article, Osterkamp goes beyond the limited range suggested by his title to touch upon issues central not only to Günther's religious verse but to his lyric output as a whole. The poet's use of specifically Christian imagery, the example given is that of bearing one's cross, is seen as part of a process of secularisation which invests the metaphor of the passion with a specifically personal content. The suffering individual (or more precisely, poet) takes the place of Christ. Osterkamp convincingly links this process to philosophical developments in the early eighteenth century; suffering which was a meaningful part of Christian belief becomes a painful, if necessary, part of Leibnizean theodicy:

" Unter den Voraussetzungen der Erlösungsgeschichte liess sich aus dem Leiden der Trost gewinnen, es diene dem eigenen Seelenheil; unter den Bedingungen der Theodizee, aber, ist es allenfalls das harte Opfer des einzelnen für das Heil des Weltganzen. " (p.291)

Notwithstanding the high quality and terse argumentation to be found in both of these articles, the fact still

33 In the past ten years, Osterkamp has made a major contribution to Günther scholarship writing (as we see here) on Günther's religious poetry, on his erotic verse: (the article: Scherz und Tugend in Text und Kritik (1982) pp.42-60) as well as providing the survey of recent Günther research: Perspektiven der Günther-Forschung in Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur (1985).

remains that Günther's religious poetry forms one of the most undeservedly neglected sections of his lyric opus.

The two articles we will now look at to close this brief summary of research on Günther are unique in examining Günther's erotic verse and his only drama respectively. The first of these, Ernst Osterkamp's, Scherz und Tugend of 1982, 34 examines Günther's erotic and love poetry within the context of the style and content of the Neukirch anthology and in the light of its reception from 1695-1730. The basic premiss underlying Osterkamp's argumentation is that the transformation which occurs in Günther's erotic poetry from galantes Scherzen to protestations of eternal faithfulness holds a literary mirror to the changes in bourgeois consciousness in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Osterkamp supports his theory with an analysis of the increase in poetic adherence to the principle of mimesis. Whereas the erotic phantasies of the Galanten, which take place in the locus amoenus of classical mythology or the bucolic idyll, were at first generally accepted as pure phantasy, by the early eighteenth century, moralising critics were more likely to see such phantasies as indicative of the poet's own lifestyle. Neither Günther, Osterkamp argues, nor his contemporaries were able in the long run to stand up to such criticisms and so toned down their phantasies in line

34 In Text und Kritik 74/75 (1982) pp.42-60.

with the moral exigencies of a new literary code:

" An tugendhaftem Ehestand und alltäglicher Berufspraxis geht die Welt des erotischen Scherzens endgültig zuschanden." (p.57)

Osterkamp's article provides an important contribution not only to our understanding of the sociological and poetological background of Günther's erotic poetry, but also forms the most cogent analysis of the spirit of the Neukirch anthology of recent years.

Osterkamp provides conclusive proof for much of his argumentation, but occasionally slips into making hypothetical deductions from the facts available:

" Das Liebesgedicht als Ausdruck einer vernunftgezähmten Sinnlichkeit nimmt damit die prekäre mittlere Ebene zwischen Belehrung und Verderbnis ein und erfüllt sich auf ihr als vergnügliches Spiel. Den Frauen kommt dabei die Rolle eines poetischen Spielmaterials, aber auch die des Idealpublikums zu. " (p.46)

This argument sets out from the well known Horatian concept " Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae " and derives from this a justification of erotic verse as an entertaining art form, particularly suited to a less well educated female readership. One could, however, equally well argue that although women were often the addressees and the seemingly intended readership of these poems, the pervading eroticism and voyeurism is expressive of homosocial desire; of a mode of communication between men which implicitly excludes women. Women are the objects of the poem's discourse, not autonomous speaking subjects in their own right. They are spoken for (if their voices are

heard at all) they do not themselves speak and should thus be seen to form not the target, but an incidental readership.

Günther's only drama, written for performance by pupils of the Schweidnitz Gymnasium when he was only 19, has been almost entirely neglected by scholars. In her article, Rhetorik als Verhängnis in the collection edited by Pott 35, Ingeborg Villinger only partially makes good this neglect, examining Die von Theodosio bereute Eifersucht, a work in need of the most basic historical and literary analyses in the light of the theories of Foucault and Luhmann and in relation to another article in this collection, unrelated to Günther: Friedrich A. Kittler's, Rhetorik der Macht und Macht der Rhetorik: Lohensteins Agrippina. Instead of providing a much needed historical analysis of this text, perhaps situating it within the context of the protestant school drama, Villinger has made it the subject of an abstract intellectual game:

" Ausgehen möchte ich von der Voraussetzung, dass Rhetorik Sprache am Modell von Überfall begreift, und alles Reden daher unmittelbar und ohne Umweg bereits ein Handeln ist. " (p.53)

A model has thus been adopted which, however useful it may be as an esoteric tool for discovering hidden meanings, fails to address the most basic, and hitherto unexamined aspects of the text from an historical and contextual

35 Hans Georg Pott, (ed.) Johann Christian Günther. (München 1987) pp.53-67.

viewpoint.

What is most striking about the whole spectrum of Günther criticism is the way that Günther's work is consistently interpreted from a pre determined critical standpoint. As such, the biographical school of criticism may in some ways be more honest than the rhetorical approach; at least it takes the text as its starting point, albeit only to use it as a key to decipher the poet's life, which in turn is used to interpret the text in a huge exercise in critical self-referentiality. The main failing of the rhetorical approach is that, although it provides ample contextual background for the interpretation of the poems, the use of tools such as rhetoric often serves to obscure the individuality of the text by describing the ways in which it conforms to a pre-determined pattern. What is needed, in fact, is an approach which both takes account of recent progress in what might be called 'contextual' research without ever entirely losing hold of the text itself as the primary object of literary investigation. This thesis sets out to do just that.

Chapter 2

THE CONCEPT OF 'BAROCKE BILDLICHKEIT'

(i) The nature and use of imagery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

One of the most resilient clichés of seventeenth century scholarship can be summed up in the concept of Barocke Bildlichkeit. This phrase is assumed, without being submitted to close critical examination, to designate a characteristic facet of seventeenth century poetry, namely its tendency to produce a proliferation of images, to express its own particular perspective in a visual form. A major criticism of this assumption and one which, it is true, has been partially conceded by scholars in recent years, is that neither the fact of such predominate use of imagery, nor the topoi it most commonly employs, can be seen as unique to this century.

It lies in the nature of poetic diction that imagery should acquire both an illustrative and a rhetorical function. Poetry, although related to both theology and philosophy (and this again is a favourite idea of the seventeenth century from Opitz onwards) is not simply a

verborgene Theologie 1 or even merely the sweetened pill of an ultimately didactic purpose, but a form in its own right. The imagery, metaphor and allegory used in the poetic form go beyond their illustrative or didactic function and develop a life of their own. It is this, as much as any underlying distinction between the abstract 'truth' of philosophical discourse and its illustrative popularisation that lends poetic imagery its independent, if dualistic, character, caught between the empirical res of the outer world which it both illustrates and interprets and the verba, the vehicle of interpretation and self-perpetuating language-for-its-own-sake.

Imagery then, the putting into words of visual stimuli or illustration of abstract thought, is an intrinsic feature of the poetic form as such, and so cannot be limited to any one period. Unless it is divested of its absolute status and compared with the literary practice of other periods, Barocke Bildlichkeit cannot be more than a superficial generalisation which says little about the specific nature of seventeenth century imagery.

A major difference between the literary practice of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lies in their respective acceptance or rejection of a theory of the

1 Martin Opitz, Buch von der Teutschen Poeterey Chapter 2. See also: Rolf Bachem, Dichtung als verborgene Theologie (Bonn, 1956).

literary telos. The poetological works of the seventeenth century place their emphasis on the practice rather than the theory of literature. Writing was largely seen as a technical and imitative challenge, the precepts underlying it having been adopted almost wholesale from Renaissance Latin sources. The stress was laid less on why one should use a given form or employ a particular topos than on how to do so. German literature of the seventeenth century relied heavily on a traditional canon, and therefore on the largely unquestioning imitation of the ancients or 'good' modern authors in all things from the overall structure, down to individual Redeschmuck or imagery. It is little wonder then, given this lack of theoretical aims, that the imagery of seventeenth century poets should have developed as it did, away from the relative classicism of Opitz, to the poetic 'obscurity' of Lohenstein, Birken or Hofmannswaldau. True to its rhetorical basis, seventeenth century imagery is effective in its aims.² It does not

2 Imagery was seen both as a source of pleasure for the audience and, by implication, the bringer of renown for the poet:

" Wie ein königlich Palast mit vielen Säulen/ Bildern und dergleichen gezieret ist/ also machet auch die Malerey und Bilderey ein Gedicht prächtig, ansehnlich und beliebt. " (G.P. Harsdörffer: Der poetische Trichter Part 3, (1653) p.108, (Reprographischer Nachdruck, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), (Darmstadt, 1969)).

Poetry itself was commonly viewed as a means of social improvement as Erdmann Uhse was, to take one example among many, to comment in 1705:

" (Sie) ... machet uns bey andern Leuten offtmals überaus beliebt. "

(Uhse: Der Wohl-informierte Poet (Leipzig, 1705), p.7).

primarily attempt to describe an object, but to heighten the reader's emotional and psychological awareness of its significance or, as in the case of allegory, its hidden meaning. Its aim is thus appellative rather than mimetic, and its structure could be learnt through the step by step method of the school poetology.

In contrast, the Enlightenment theoreticians took as their starting point one simple principle: that of mimesis. The aim of poetry, in all its guises, was to be true to nature ³. Leaving aside for the moment the fundamental question of how one can distil a concept of 'nature' from

³ The purely decorative function of literary metaphor to be found in such works as Siegmund von Birken's: Teutsche Rede=Bind und Ticht=Kunst (1679) was anathema to the Early Enlightenment critics for its main criterion was the sound and effect rather than the meaning of metaphor:

" Eine schöne Verse-Zier/ sind sonderlich die Epitheta oder Beisatzwörter ... Diese ... klingen in Versen zweimal schon/ wann sie Zwider=Worte oder Composita sind/ und aus zweien zusammen gesetzt werden= der gelblich= grünlich Frosch ... Noch schöner aber klingen sie/ Wann zwei Antitheta (Gegenwörter) schicklich zusammentreffen= der dreigeente Gott/ das Eisen=Weiche Herz. " (p.75)

The evident nonsense of such linguistic couplings came in for radical criticism especially in the transitional period at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Bodmer, for instance, speaking of Lohenstein, expressed his criticism as follows:

" Kan wohl etwas anders als der blosse Zufall diese ungleichen Begriffe zusammen verkuppelt haben ? Denn an was vor einem schwachen und schier unsichtbaren Faden hängt die Ähnlichkeit zwischen diesen Bildern und denen Sachen, zu deren Erklärung sie dienen sollen ? ... Man werffe diese ungereimten Bilder nur heraus, so wird man es bald in diesen Redensarten Tag werden sehen. "

(Kritische Betrachtungen über die poetischen Gemälde der Dichter (1741, Frankfurt am Main, 1971) p.112).

its social encasement, we can see how such an idea could instantly transform the use of poetic imagery. The elaborate metaphor of such canonical poets as Lohenstein was eschewed and poetry at once divested of its appellative structure and far-fetched imagery. This rhetorical superstructure, seen from the perspective of mimesis, was revealed as the Emperor's new clothes; as a linguistic playfulness which had no place in the new, didactic atmosphere of Enlightenment poetics.

The overall ideal of poetry, based on 'good taste' and mimesis with its strong concepts of suitable subject matter and form was implemented in the early decades of the eighteenth century by two successive generations of theoreticians; the court poets Besser and König, and the young Gottsched. A focus of theoretical attack was indeed the imagery and ornatus of the previous century:

" Die teutsche Dicht-Kunst war veracht,
Sie suchte sich zu bunt zu kleiden;
Bey Hof sah sie sich verlacht,
Denn der kann keinen Schulschmuck leiden, " 4

Such opposition to what had hitherto been the poetic norm did not of course have an immediate effect. Ornate language and imagery, as we will see in a later chapter, could not be dropped overnight, but these reforms did put into question the basic presuppositions underlying this

4 Johann Ulrich König: Introduction to Von Bessers: Ausgewählte Gedichte (Leipzig, 1732).

self-perpetuating poetic diction. The language and form of seventeenth century poetry can be seen almost as a cumulative process. Taking Opitz as their starting point and a handful of canonical authors as their models, the poetry of this century, once it had established its poetic conventions, continued in this same tradition seldom questioning its own underlying aims. It is not surprising then that the move to examine these very aims which we find in the early eighteenth century, rather than a continued reliance on set forms, should bring about a radical re-orientation and change of course.

If we are to continue to attach any meaning to the term, Barocke Bildlichkeit, we must first become aware of its implications: that it suggests an emphasis on form and image rather than content, indeed implying a predominance in the Baroque of image over content. It implies also that 'Barocke' Bildlichkeit is a kind of imagery bound to a specific epoch, in other words lacking a universal application. In accepting this term we are, finally, accepting the categorical distinction drawn in the eighteenth century to differentiate itself from the preceding century and all it stood for. A term which, by implication, does not admit of a linguistic continuity between these two, contingent epochs. The tacit assent to this term, moreover, implies assent to a theory of literary development according to abrupt epochal developments,

whereas a close study of individual poems shows that the very critics of Baroque imagery were still caught in its hold. Indeed that 'Baroque' imagery, if we choose to retain this term, survived well into the eighteenth century.

(ii) Imagery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: changes and developments in its theory, practice and the underlying 'Weltanschauung'

Before we go on to examine the inner nature of seventeenth century use of imagery and to explore the fundamental difference in Weltanschauung between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it implies, it would be helpful to compare and contrast selected theoretical statements on the use and objectives of imagery from both of these centuries. Let us take as our starting point Opitz' theories on poetics, and trace the development of the theory of imagery through to the writings of Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger around 1740. This later date is a suitable cut-off point inasmuch as it marks the end of the debate surrounding the canonical authors of the previous century. Up to this point the language and imagery of such poets as Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau, as the instigators of a verderbter Geschmack, had been the subject of a concerted attack by the Zürich and Leipzig critics. After this date, critical attention turned away from the

'pernicious' influence of the seventeenth century which was now deemed to have been overcome, and towards the development of a style and language suited to the critics' own time.

The poetological and rhetorical textbooks of the seventeenth, and even early eighteenth centuries saw the question of imagery in an eminently pragmatic light. Imagery fell under the subsection of poetic ornatus, and was dealt with almost as an algebraic equation, the theme, or inventio providing a set subject matter or selection of motifs which had to be elaborated according to the overall rules of the aptum. Poetry was thus seen as a social skill to be learnt in school or, failing that, through reference to a poetological handbook.

The origins of a German theory of poetic imagery, of course, derive from Martin Opitz', Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey and in particular from the sixth chapter, Von der Zubereitung und Ziehr der Wörter. In this we find both the roots of the later supposed abuse of metaphor and of the Early Enlightenment classicistic rediscovery of Opitz as an exemplary writer.

Opitz' approach to metaphor and imagery can be viewed as a largely classical and rhetorical one, drawn from the Greek and Latin canon and the most influential foreign writers of the previous century: Ronsard and Scaliger. His comments on poetic imagery are contained within the

framework of the third stage of rhetorical practice, of elocutio and within the subsection of ornatus, or Redeschmuck 5. Discussion of imagery should therefore be seen within this context, as an integral part of the overall rhetorical structure. In line with assumptions of the time regarding the inner nature of the lyric form, the outward ornatus of poetry was accorded more attention than that of prose writing since the aim of the lyric form, in accordance with the Horatian dictum, was not merely to convey meaning, but to delight the reader 6. It was self-evident for Opitz that the poet should derive the verba of his lyric opus from the res which had entered his consciousness. The next issue was one of genre: that is of which poetic form could fulfil the claims of the selected res. His rules on literary ornatus, rooted as they are in this same occidental tradition, pave the way for the century's love of compound nouns and adjectives:

" Neue Wörter/ . . . zue

5 The systematic section of Opitz' work deals, as from Chapter 5 with the conception and realisation of the lyrical work: Chapter 5: Von der zugehör der Deutschen Poesie/ und erstlich von der inventio oder erfindung und dispositio oder abteilung der Dinge Chapter 6: Von der zubereitung und ziehr der worte: corresponding the first three principles of rhetorical composition: inventio, dispositio and elocutio.

6 Deriving of course from Horace' ubiquitous words in his: De arte poetica: "Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae" so beloved of literary theoreticians throughout the centuries.

entdecken/ ist poeten nicht allein erlaubt/ sondern macht auch den getichten/ wenn es mässig geschieht/ eine sonderliche anmüthigkeit. Als wenn ich die nacht oder die music eine arbeitstrosterinn/ eine kummerwenderinn/ ... die Bellona mit einem dreyfachen worte kriegs-blut-dürstig/ und so fortan nenne." 7

(However even this degree of licence is delimited by the injunction: "... wenn es mässig geschieht"). In this same chapter he warns against the "filling out" of lines with numerous adjectives:

" Letztlich haben wir ... auch zu mercken/ das wir nicht vier oder funff epitheta zu einem worte setzen/ wie die Italiener thun ... " 8

Practices merely deemed possible in moderation in Opitz' compact theory of poetic language were to be taken up and positively encouraged by later poets and, as Marckwardt puts it:

" Buchner beginnt bereits etwa ein Jahrzehnt nach Opitz' Poetik ernsthaft zu bauen, während Opitz durchweg nur ausnutzte und teils ausschrieb, bestenfalls auswählte. " 9

Harsdörffer in his, Poetischer Trichter addressed this group directly:

" ... Welche aber nur deutsch allein verstehen/ und dieser Sache keinen Vorgeschmack haben/ mögen gleich so wol mit etwas mehr Mühe/ darzu mitgelangen. " 10

Opitz' was a short, seminal work; these later treatises

7 Martin Opitz: Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 2.I: Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey (Stuttgart, 1978), p.374.

8 *ibid*, p.381.

9 Bruno Marckwardt, Geschichte der deutschen Poetik. (Berlin, 1937) p.57.

10 Vorrede to Book I. of the Poetischer Trichter.

were longer and more practically oriented, even offering a set of rules and examples for any poetic occasion to be applied quite literally. There is thus a major difference between Opitz' pioneering German poetology and the works it influenced. The Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey was essentially a work for the initiated, for kindred spirits already well versed in the theory and practice of classical and renaissance poetics, but keen to apply this knowledge to a German sphere. Opitz' is a consciously humanist work, aware of its place in a tradition which traces its theoretical genealogy back through Vida and Scaliger to Horace and Aristotle. 11

Many of these later works, on the other hand, were written instead as virtual textbooks on poetics for a wider audience including school pupils and university students and such members of the reading public as might not even necessarily have a sound grasp of Latin. As such they are based less on a deeper understanding of the principles underlying poetic composition in a historical context than on a superficial grasp of the basic rules and an ability to imitate the examples provided in the text.

Opitz' treatise, although it was to usher in the widespread composition of poetry in German, was still

11 As Opitz states explicitly in the: Vorrede to the first chapter of the Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey. Martin Opitz. Gesammelte Werke Vol. 2, I (Stuttgart, 1978) p.343.

written for an intellectual élite with a sound basis in classical scholarship. As such it was essentially a reactionary work, and it did not claim to be anything else. By contrast these later treatises, which were written for schools, were aimed at a wider and probably less educated audience. The emphasis in these later works is thus less on the deep understanding of the underlying principles than on the superficial imitation of a set of rules.

In attempting to trace the development of a theory of imagery through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, it must be borne in mind that certain central points, in keeping with the overall rhetorical structure, remain the same throughout this period. Taken in isolation, and stripped of their contemporary examples, many seventeenth century statements on poetics are remarkable for their apparent classicity. The definitions, moreover, of specific forms and figures frequently remain constant, even using similar wording throughout. Harsdörffer's definition of the simile, for instance:

" Schliesslich ist nicht vonnöthen/ dass die Gleichnis in allen Sachen eintreffe/ und ist genug dass sie in etlichen/ oder nur gar in einem Stücke/ in welchem sie nemlich zu der Erklärung oder Beweis angeführet worden/ eintreffe "

is mirrored closely by a statement by Breitinger ninety years later:

" ... inmassen eben nicht erfordert wird, dass die Dinge, die in Vergleich kommen, in allen oder den meisten

besonderen Stücken mit einander übereinstimmen. " 12

The major change, however, to occur in this later epoch was the move away from the Regelpoetik. Breitinger's comments on the use of the simile should be seen in the framework of an analytical treatise regarding the simile as a form, whereas Harsdörffer was writing a handbook for would-be poets, filled with step by step instructions and useful examples. Poetry, in this earlier work, is seen not so much as an art form but as a craft; and Harsdörffer is concerned to demystify those aspects of poetic creation which might prove daunting:

" Hieraus erkennet man etlichermassen den Poeten ... dann nicht das geringste Meisterstück hierinnen verborgen ... Noch deutlicher: dem Wörtlein Feld kan/ nach allen Monaten/ ein besonders Beywort/ ja vielmehr als eines beygefüget werden: Das neulich=graue Feld im Märze od. Lentzemonat, Das neugepflügte Feld im April= oder Ostermonat ... " 13

Breitinger, however, adopts an altogether higher view of poetry and sees nature as the poet's true model:

" Ich betrachte den Dichter als einen Schöpfer; ... und da die Wohlredenheit nichts anders als eine blosser Nachahmung der Natur ist, so muss der Dichter auch hierin ihrem grossen Exempel folgen ... " 14

His compatriot, Bodmer, in his, Kritische Betrachtungen über die poetischen Gemälde der Dichter then completes this

12 Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, Poetischer Trichter Part III, p.61, Johann Jacob Breitinger: Critische Abhandlung von der Natur, den Absichten und dem Gebrauche der Gleichnisse p.11.

13 Der Poetische Trichter, Part I, p.106-07.

14 Johann Jakob Breitinger: Critische Abhandlung von ...der Natur der Gleichnisse (Zürich, 1740) p.310.

move away from this earlier practice of poetry by example to advise:

" ... dass man niemals schreibe, als wenn man einen Affekt empfindet, und wenn man nichts mehr empfindet, die Feder niederlege. " 15

A major distinction between both the theory and practice of the poetry of these two epochs lies in their respective attitudes to allegory and the emblem. The seventeenth century assumes a basic submission of imagery to set allegorical meaning, as we see again in Harsdörffer:

" Ferner kommet dess Bildes Beschaffenheit in Betrachtung ... und muss dieses nicht ungefähr nach des Mahlers und Poeten Beliebung/ sondern dem Inhalt und der Deutung gmäss gestaltet seyn ... " 16

Throughout the seventeenth century, poetological treatises make specific reference to the expectations and methods of the allegorical mode and often, indeed, devote a chapter to the Emblem. In the works of the following century, the emphasis is rather on metaphor and simile and on reducing the previous profusion of images to a more moderate level.

Allegory, like the simile in Breitinger's theory, was seen as a pleasing and artful way of conveying meaning. In the chapter, Kurze Einleitung zu den poetischen Gedichten of A.C. Rotth's, Vollständige Deutsche Poesie (1688) the reader found useful suggestions specifically on the

15 Bodmer, Critische Betrachtungen über die Poetischen Gemählde der Dichter (Zürich, 1741) p.340.

16 Harsdörffer, Poetischer Trichter Part III, p.106.

construction of personification allegory:

" Alle Sachen alle Affekten alle Laster/ ja auch alle Verrichtungen kan der Poet unter dem Habit der Person vorstellen/ wenn er nur seine Nahmen und Verrichtungen kan aussinnen/ damit er ihre Person belegt. " 17

The campaign against allegory, on the other hand, is already to be found in Bodmer's, Kritische Betrachtungen über die poetischen Gemälde der Dichter (1741). Bodmer sees allegory as an inferior form of argumentation:

" Die allegorische Schreibart ist nicht für die tiefsinnigen Geister erfunden, welche abstracte gedenken können, sondern für die Leute, die gewohnt sind mit der Einbildung zu arbeiten. " 18

In other words, allegory is a form which by implication deprives the reader of ~~the~~ right to think for his or her self. The second objection raised against allegory as a form is that it has no independent powers of persuasion but derives its force from the underlying meaning it is trying to convey:

" Die allegorische Einkleidung kan dem Lehrsätze, der darunter verhüllt ist, keine Kraft geben, noch etwas von seiner Wahrheit benehmen. " 19

This move against seventeenth century imagery which occurred in the early decades of the following century is, significantly, couched in Enlightenment metaphors of light and darkness. The basic difference in attitude was that the

17 Albrecht Christian Rotth, Vollständige Deutsche Poesie (Leipzig, 1688), p.30.

18 Bodmer, Critische Betrachtungen, p.605.

19 *ibid.*, p.605.

theorists of the seventeenth century encouraged an imagery which was anmütig (Opitz, Neumark) zierlich, prächtig, ansehnlich (Harsdörffer) often based on conscious contrasts or antitheses which served a conscious aesthetic and rhetorical purpose. As Von Birken comments:

" Eine kurzweilige Rede ist es/ wann man widrige Sachen auch widrig miteinander vergleicht. "

This decorative imagery was utterly rejected by Early Enlightenment writers who saw its artifice as merely obscure and irrational; as Schwulst, as we see in a comparatively early attack from Morhof:

" Die schwülstigen Composita, Epitheta und Periphrases werden getadelt. " 20

These criticisms reach their climax, and simultaneously their objective in the critical writings of Gottsched who sums up his objections to ornate imagery as follows:

" Nichts aber ist bey der verblühten Schreibart mehr zu vermeyden, als die Dunkelheit. Gewisse Leute verstecken sich in ihren Metaphoren so tief, dass sie endlich selbst nicht wissen, was sie sagen wollen. Man sieht alle ihre Gedanken nur durch einen dicken Staub oder Nebel. " 21

Bodmer makes the precious imagery of Hofmannswaldau and his followers the object of his attack, imagining the by now repellant source of inspiration of these authors:

20 Daniel Georg Morhof, Unterricht von der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie (Lübeck, Frankfurt, 1700, originally 1682), p.588.

21 Joh. Chr. Gottsched, Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst (1. Allgemeiner Teil, 1742) (Berlin, 1973) p.342.

" ... vielleicht an einem absonderlich erhabenen Orte ein schönes Monstrum mit Haaren von Seiden, Augen von Sternen, Nase von Helfenbein, Lippen von Corallen, Halss von Alabaster. " 22

Such criticisms could only be uttered with such passion once the struggle against this ornate poetic diction had itself been crowned with success. Twenty years previously when Günther was writing, dissatisfaction with current modes of poetic expression was growing, but a breakthrough into new forms had not yet come about. Günther was thus writing in a literary no-mans land in which the poets of the previous century, although under attack by a number of critics, still retained their position of respect, neither had the way forward beyond Lohenstein and Hoffmannswaldau become at all clear. Günther's use of style and poetic imagery is as such to be seen as an expression of the dilemma of these transitional years. His style and imagery, as we shall duly see in more detail, were overtly traditional with a slight touch of irony, while his content looked to the future. An attempt has here been made to sketch out the poles, the parameters between which this poet must be viewed.

Any interpretation of seventeenth century imagery must take as its starting point the centrality of an allegorical world view. This predominantly allegorical perspective has the effect on the practice of imagery of giving precedence

22 Bodmer, Kritische Betrachtungen p.40.

to the intrinsic meaning or theme of the subject described, over the image or thing in itself. This use of allegory moreover presupposes a belief in an absolute or transcendental significance which lies beyond the literal or everyday meaning of an image or action. As such it favours the established meaning of a tradition and canon over the empirically deducible one imposed by the critical observer. The meaning invested in the world by biblical exegesis or allegory whose origins were seen as absolute and divine was thus long preferred to an empirical world view based merely on 'superficial' empirical observation. Authority, whether ecclesiastical or literary, triumphs over the hermeneutic rights of the individual. Inasmuch as we, from our critical modern perspective, assume a priority of object over meaning- that a ship is only a ship, a skull only a skull and not inherent bearers of allegorical meaning- we can equally recognise the arbitrariness of the imposition of meaning. We, in other words, no longer draw any other than a cultural distinction between the rhetorical allegory; the Wortallegorie or signa ex placito whose meaning is not inherent in its being but is imposed upon it by the whim of an author, and the hermeneutic allegory, the signa ex congruo whose meaning is seen as 'natural' or divinely inspired. For us, inasmuch as we ourselves have been able to escape from this hermeneutic authority, there are just things and actions an sich and

all interpretation is arbitrary. Thus the objective world does not acquire meaning from within, but rather meaning is imposed upon it from without, and this in such a way that any object may mean anything the allegorist pleases it to mean.

In examining the imagery of the seventeenth century, then, we must acknowledge this contemporary belief in the world as a book which conceals behind its literal meaning a second, transcendental one which it is the reader's task to uncover. This fundamental assumption has, of course an immediate effect on literary practice. We do not even have to look at the allegorical sonnets of Gryphius or Fleming to pinpoint the complex interweaving of allegory and simile; it suffices to look at a couplet from Opitz'

Vielquet:

" Als wie ein schwaches Schiff, das wo der Wind hin steht
Den blinden Wellen nach mit vollem Segel geht."

This couplet, outwardly a simile: "Als wie ein...", derives its meaning from a long standing allegorical topos (which we will duly be examining in greater detail) of the ship of life. The aspect the poet has chosen to emphasise is man's weakness when confronted by his fate. The poet has, however, built another allegorical suggestion into the couplet. In extending the visual frame of reference, Opitz has also introduced a plurality of meaning: " Den Blinden Wellen nach...". Fate itself has no obvious direction; the ship is subject to the fortuity of the wind: " ... wo der

Wind hin steht", but even the waves are described as 'blind' and unable to determine their course. It is worth noting here that the adjective 'blind' has no logical relationship to the noun it describes, but rather points beyond itself to the secondary, allegorical meaning.

This emphasis on the all-important allegorical meaning of a text, allied to the aims of rhetorical persuasio allocated the pictorial realm, as a self-sufficient aspect of poetic composition, in comparison a subordinate role. The visual in Baroque poetry is almost always a means to an allegorical or rhetorical end, rather than an end in itself. Its aim is either to point beyond its literal meaning, beyond itself to a higher (transcendent) purpose. or to persuade the reader of the case or point of view the author has intended. In this way, we are faced in seventeenth century poetry with the paradox of a pictorial sphere which is elaborate and emphatic, but in a certain sense also inwardly hollow. The use of metaphor thus serves to conceal rather than highlight the material reality of the object described, to point beyond itself to its transcendent meaning. The ornatus thus has the effect of concealing the object described, of pointing beyond its concrete reality to a higher, and therefore abstract purpose.

(iii) Emblem and allegory in the transitional Period

This allegorical way of thought is displayed in nuce in the form of the emblem. This mixture of the pictorial and the poetic reached the height of its popularity in the seventeenth century and can serve us as an example of both the attractions and the inherent problems of the allegorical mode as a whole. The emblem, like allegory as a whole builds upon a concept of a secondary, hidden meaning behind the facade of the material world, as Henckel and Schöne put it:

" Die Vorstellung, dass die Welt in all ihren Erscheinungen von verdeckten und also entdeckungsfähigen Sinnbezügen, heimlichen Verweisungen, verborgenen Bedeutungen durchzogen sei, ist unabdingbare Voraussetzung der Emblemantik. " 23

The emblematic form should indeed be considered a subdivision of the allegorical mode as such. For while allegory has the whole of the material world from which to select its subject matter, and yet settles time and again on the same objects, the same images, in the emblem this choice has already been made by its more limited pictorial range. Even more than in allegory, we are guided by the author: he has chosen the pictura and it is he who invests it with meaning. Yet however arbitrary this choice may seem, the emblem claims to present the truth, described by

23 Arthur Henckel, Albrecht Schöne, Emblemata - Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI, and XVII. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart, 1967) Einleitung XV.

Schöne as its: "... potentielle Faktizität" 24. The knowledge it hopes to impart (and the emblem may justly be seen as a didactic form) is generally derived from an accepted source such as the Bible or classical literature. The author has a certain leeway in the interpretation he places on an image, indeed the same pictura may be give a range of interpretations by writers of different generations or convictions, but the acceptance of the emblem as a form implies an acceptance of the fixed system of meaning which underlies it.

The emblem was, of course, also to have a major influence on the poetry of the seventeenth century. The categories it worked by were also accepted by contemporary writers and poets; indeed it was not uncommon for a well known poet to contribute a lyric subscriptio to an existing pictura. The tripartite structure of the emblem- the statement of theme, description and interpretation- could also be satisfied by certain poetic forms such as the sonnet. On a more mundane plane, the emblem could provide inspiration and a convenient structure for occasional poetry.

It is possible to trace a loosening of the allegorical or emblematic structure in literary works through the course of the seventeenth century. This development can be illustrated by a simple comparison of the number of poems

24 Henckel/ Schöne. Introduction. XV.

whose form and imagery is demonstrably derived from emblems in the work of Gryphius or Weckherlin with that of Günther or Brockes eighty years later. While several of Gryphius' sonnets closely follow the tripartite structure of the inscriptio, often conveyed by the title, pictura in the description of the poem's subject and the subscriptio, an interpretation of the same, there is only one poem by Günther; his, Als er der Phyllis einen Ring mit einem Totenkopf überreichte (Kr. I. p.261) which at all corresponds to this pattern.

A significant difference between mid-century poets and their early eighteenth century counterparts lies precisely in the intensity of their allegorical reference. Whereas Gryphius' use of emblem and allegory in his poetry is an accurate reflection of his religious beliefs, of his Weltanschauung, Günther uses the emblem or fragments of allegory as the poem's outward trappings: as an ornatus which serves only to counterpoint his epigrammatic conclusions. Günther thus employs these allegorical images as decoration; Gryphius to state his central theme.

Far more common to the lyric poetry of these later writers is a looser form, referring only in passing to allegory or emblem. Allegorical references are no longer explicitly spelled out, but are merely nodded at; their literary role has become a lighter and more playful one. Both Günther and Brockes still ultimately adhere to an

allegorical interpretation of the world and assume the same of their reading public.

This overall loosening of allegorical reference has two main causes. Firstly, the rapid literary developments of the seventeenth century meant that the many literary rules and precepts invoked by Opitz and his followers had, by the end of the century, been so internalised that the images and allegories which would once have been described at length, had become commonplace and are merely hinted at by later writers. Knowledge of allegorical and emblematic tropes could be taken for granted, and veiled or abbreviated references alone could conjure up the meaning and context of the image. Secondly, by the beginning of the eighteenth century allegory was increasingly threatened by an empirical mode of thought. Allegory was, however, so deeply rooted in the popular consciousness that it did not immediately cede to this threat, and there was a time when these two contradictory systems existed side by side. It was not therefore uncommon for poets to believe one thing from empirical observation and yet write another, remaining true to the letter, if not to the spirit of an allegorical world view.

(iv) New philosophical influences and their effect on
imagery

By the end of the seventeenth century, German writers and thinkers were moving away from this allegorical world view under the influence of English empiricism. The implications of this new way of thought were to threaten the very basis of allegory by challenging the transcendent meaning it imposed upon the material world, and hence also, indirectly, the Christian belief and Weltanschauung which was its guarantor. The perception of this threat was such as to prevent empiricism's immediate acceptance in a German context. Instead this new empiricism was mediated by the ideas of Leibniz and of physicotheology. In his conception of the physical world expressed in the Acta Eruditorum and in letters, Leibniz viewed God or the divine creator from an ultimately mechanistic standpoint. The course and fate of the monad is pre determined and only intelligible to God. The order of the world is seen as absolute: while it is accessible to empirical examination, its transcendent meaning lies beyond human understanding. In this regard, Leibniz' philosophical explication of this absolute world order differs from literary allegory which points beyond the mundane, literal plane to its transcendent meaning. Physicotheology shares this view of God as the 'divine watchmaker' and likewise favours the mechanistic order of

the whole over the allegorical interpretation of individual phenomena or concepts but continues to point beyond the empirical reality of the world to its hidden, transcendent meaning.

The ideas of physicotheology had a radical effect on the poetic diction and imagery of the time ²⁵; an influence exemplified by B.H. Brockes' mammoth project, Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott. Retaining and indeed building on the ever popular world as book topos, Brockes hoped to 'transliterate' the divine language of the Buch der Natur with an exactitude and love of detail learnt from the English empiricists. His religious belief, although unorthodox, is still clearly built upon the existence of an omnipotent creator who could maintain a system of such intricacy.

The intrinsic difference between the allegorical world view and that of physicotheology lies in the fact that while allegory sees the significance of objects only as pointers to a higher, transcendent meaning, physicotheology

²⁵ The comparative rapidity of the diffusion of these ideas within the German context might appear strange given the time-lag which affected many other literary developments. Boileau's poetics, for instance, began to have an impact in Germany some thirty years after their publication. The reason for the rapidity of the German reception of physicotheology probably lies in the contemporary recognition of its significance in checking the implicitly agnostic reasoning of early Enlightenment philosophy.

sees them as essential, integral parts of the divine plan here on earth. In the allegorical view, things are important for their divine significance; in physicotheology, the individual thing or idea is important, not in itself, but as a small but integral part of a greater whole. The significance of the material world is perceived in both cases as an absolute and external thing, ordained by some higher power.

The meaning invested in the material world forms part of a larger ideology which is accepted unconditionally. Even if the interpretation placed upon given things or ideas is original and subjective, it still forms part of an overall scheme of meaning. Things have meaning as part of a transcendent order, and it is the task of the poet or theologian to discover the meaning, whether allegorical or physicotheological, concealed in the object in itself, or implied by its place in the divine order. Meaning, and thus its outward trappings of imagery and metaphor, is still seen as absolute and divinely ordained. It is this, as much as anything, which sets the poetry of this period apart from that of the later century.

This development from an allegorical to a largely empiricist world view also implies a major change in reader expectations. This becomes clear if we compare the attitude of the two poets perhaps most representative of this change, Gryphius and Goethe. While the poetic imagery of

Andreas Gryphius relies for its impact on 'insider' knowledge of allegory and exegesis; on an educated (Lutheran) audience, firmly grounded in scripture, who would be able to read the signs, Goethe in his definition of allegory and symbol, and even more so in literary practice, assumes an audience like himself; enlightened and individualistic in their orientation. Gryphius calls upon the common knowledge of a Christian tradition; Goethe, by implication, on Kant's: Sapere Aude ! and the right of the individual (that is: the educated and enlightened individual) to create new worlds and new meanings for himself.

How then does this seventeenth century theory of imagery work in practice and what are its underlying structures? In what way can its practical application be said to differ, if at all, from the imagery of the early decades of the following century?

In the following, an attempt will be made to characterise the practical application of this imagery with particular reference to two paradigmatic topoi: that of the sea and ships and of winter, as employed by a selection of poets of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The motif of winter belongs to an ancient tradition of the depiction of the seasons; in its form and usage, this

allegorical trope had not changed greatly since Lucretius. 26 Winter, throughout this epoch, is seldom depicted in isolation. It is a motif which lives through antithetical contrast with the attributes of the other seasons; it is the scorching heat of summer, the blossoming of the spring which grant winter its harsh nature. Winter is always either depicted within the context of the other seasons, or, even if it is depicted on its own, mention is made of summer or spring to counterpoint the more inhospitable season.

In his poem, Auf die nunmehr angekommene kalte Winterzeit, as the title suggests, Johann Rist adheres to this pattern, viewing winter as an active process and the seasons as conscious participants:

" Der Winter hat sich angefangen,
Der Schnee bedeckt das ganze Land,
Der Sommer ist hinweg gegangen,
Der Wald hat sich in Reif verwandt. " 27

This pattern is in fact closely mirrored by Albrecht von Haller almost a century later in the depiction of winter from his, Alpen:

26 Lucretius, De Rerum Natura Book V, l.745 ff:
" ... tandem Bruma nieves adfert pigrumque rigorem reddit:
Hiemps sequitur crepitans hanc dentibus algu ..."
(At length shortest day brings the snow and restores the numbing frost; after it comes winter its teeth chattering with cold ...).

27 Dichtungen von Johann Rist Ed. K. Goedeke,
(Leipzig, 1885) p.190.

" Hat sich nun die müde Welt sich in den Frost begraben,
Der Berge Thäler Eis, die Spitzen Schnee bedeckt,
Ruht das erschöpfte Feld nun aus für neue Gaben, ..." 28

and Brockes too introduces his description of winter by describing the process of transformation:

" Den Wiesen war bereits der grüne Schmuck geraubt ... " 29

Winter in the poems of this age is most frequently presented in the guise of personification allegory: as the active subject of description, as we have already seen in the examples from Rist and Haller. In other poets, winter acquires an even more human face; J.W. Simler indeed depicts him as a glutton:

" Der Winter, als des Jahres Bauch,
Verzehrt, was wir erworben
Mit saurer Arbeit zum Gebrauch,
Wann jezt die Saat erstorben. " 30

and another unexpected and pleasing image of this season is provided by Elias Mafor:

" Die Wälder sind bemüht, die Blätter auszuziehen. " 31

A certain restlessness characterises much of the depiction of this quietest time of the year; the imagery is dominated by change and action and the poet's gaze seldom rests on an

28 Albrecht von Haller, Die Alpen (Ed. 1. Hirzel, Frauenfeld, 1882) p.31, l.251-53.

29 Barthold Heinrich Brockes, Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott Vol I, p.294.

30 J. W. Simler Das ander Wintergesang in Wir vergehn wie Rauch... Vol. I, p.524-28.

31 Elias Mafor: Auf des Winters Ankunft in Wir vergehn wie Rauch Vol.I, p.79.

object long enough to describe it at peace. The physical world seems driven by the same disquiet and striving as humankind, all of nature is in a state of becoming rather than being. The focus is on the succession from one season to another, on the eternal circle of human life. Even when the poet lets his eye rest for a moment, the next lines resume the forward drive, the characteristic motion of the poem, as we see in this example from Simon Dach:

" Jetzt schlaffen berg und felder
Mit reiff und schnee verdeckt,
Auch haben sich die wälder
In ihr weiss kleid versteckt; " 32

Man and nature are equally affected by this eternal succession of the seasons, which was indeed a favourite motif for poetry in the seventeenth century, and for this reason, as we have seen, a season could never be portrayed in isolation. At the same time, the imagery of motion imposed upon the depiction of the seasons is an essentially human one; and it is this again the frequent use of personification allegory and the unrest which dominates the resulting imagery.

The second of these motifs, that of the sea journey belongs to a metaphorical tradition which has its roots in antiquity and the New Testament but which acquires elaborate allegorical significance in the Middle Ages. Its main features are outlined by K. Berger as follows:

32 Simon Dach, Gedichte, Ed. Hermann Osterley, (Tübingen, 1876) p.480.

" Gehen wir auf die mittelalterliche Fassung der Allegorie zurück ... so haben wir das Meer als Meer des Lebens, das Schiff als Schiff des Heils oder als Schiff der Kirche zu verstehen, worin etwa die Kardinaltugenden als Segel, Seil, Ruder, Steuer, und der heilige Geist als der Mast genannt werden. " 33

As we have seen, it is in the nature of allegory that the same image should be open to a variety of meanings or interpretations; so it was, in a sense, inevitable that this religious allegory should by the seventeenth century co-exist with a secular contrafactum: the ship of love.

Weckherlins's sonnet, Sie ist die gröste Reichthumb of 1619 takes the attributes listed by Berger in connection with the sacred allegory, and invests them with an entirely secular meaning:

" Das prächtigste kriegsschiff, dem ie das meer ward kund,
Hat keinen mast so hoch, als hoch ist mein begehren;
Kein änker halb so starck und beissend in den grund,
Als meine lieb und treu, die unauffhörlich wehren. " 34

Here the emphasis is on the ship itself, rather than the sea voyage, which literally becomes the allegorical vessel for the poet's promises of faithfulness.

Later in the century, the range of interpretation of this topos is extended to include a baser, more directly sensual reading greatly at odds with the transcendent

33 K. Berger: Barock und Aufklärung im geistlichen Lied, (Marburg, 1951) p.52. Berger also claims the hymn: Uns kommt ein Schiff gefahren, as the first example of this topos in this form in Germany.

34 Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, Gedichte, Ed. Hermann Fischer, (Tübingen, 1894) p.464.

original.

" Lass Schiff und Mast in deinen Hafen schleichen
Und deine Hand selbst meinen Leitstern sein.
Du sollt alsbald die eingeladne Gaben
Nebst voller Fracht statt der Belohnung haben. " 35

Both the sacred and secular versions of this motif were common currency in the poetic language of the seventeenth century and could thus be referred to in passing or used as a form of metaphorical shorthand. The poet could assume this widespread recognition of certain topoi and build instead on nuances of style or interpretation.

This topos survives as a theme with variations well into the eighteenth century and certainly the three transitional poets, Günther, Brockes and Haller made extensive use of it 36. Haller in his, Über den Ursprung des Übels, for instance, with a sensitive instinct for tactile contrasts, uses it as an allegory of the passions

35 Anon, Komm braune Nacht in Herr von Hoffmannswaldau und anderer Deutschen auserlesene Gedichte. Vol. I, (Leipzig, 1695) p.352.

In fact, these religious overtones such as the Leitstern are almost certainly used consciously. This form of parody was one much used by Hofmannswaldau himself as when he describes a woman's body as an 'altar' upon which he must 'sacrifice'.

36 Poets writing later in the century, however, seem to have felt less of an affinity with this topos which indeed implicitly poses a threat to the Enlightenment belief in man's faculty of reason and ability to shape his own life. Nor should it surprise us that in the romantic era the image of the shipwreck should again number among the favourite motifs.

(a moralistic reading of the secular version of this allegory which sees love as a tossing sea)

" Umsonst hält die Vernunft das schwache Steuer an,
Der Lüste wilde See spielt mit dem leichten Kahn,
Bis der auf seichem Sand und jener an den Klippen
Ein Untreu Ufer deckt mit trocknenden Gerippen. " 37

Günther gives this topos a characteristically self-referential twist. It is not the sea, the external circumstances of life, which pose a threat to the poet; the danger comes rather from within:

" Indem ich wie ein Schiff mir selbst gefährlich bin
So wirft ein Steuermann, weil Mast und Ancker springet
Und Salz und Schaum bereits durch tausend Spalten dringet
Compass und Hofnung hin. " 38

The various interpretations of this motif focus on specific facets of the image: the dangers of the sea crossing, the frailness of the vessel, the appearance of the ship itself, the arrival in the port of destination or possibly even the foundering of the ship. The choice of one of these aspects against another naturally facilitates a given reading or rhetorical stance. Such favourite motifs provided a poetic exercise, testing the poet's skill not at invention, but rather in dispositio, in the artful variation and elaboration of a set theme or image in which, in the eyes of seventeenth century scholars and poets, the true skill of the poet was to be found. The motif of the ship of life moreover succinctly sum up the general Weltanschauung of

37 1.93-96.

38 Kr.II. p.129.

the epoch of its greatest popularity for it reflects the perception of the age of man as a frail bark upon the sea, at the mercy of fate or the divine will.

These images, in the specificity of their form, derive their being from the demands of genus, stylistic level, the expected readership and the inventiveness of the individual poet. The time in which they were written may also have some effect on their diction and imagery, as we shall see in comparing two similar images in poems by Friedrich von Spee and B.H. Brockes respectively. The motif they have in common is the unusual image of the spear, a military weapon, in connection with natural phenomena. The example from Von Spee is obviously influenced by the horrors of the thirty years war in describing a vine as follows:

" Der Rebenstock voll Trauben Schwer
An Pfählern lieblich scheint
Als gleich ein wohlgewaffnet Heer,
An Spiessen angeleinet. " 39

The other, by Brockes, must be seen within the overall descriptive and didactic context of his, Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott:

" Bald gleicht der kleine Schnee/ mit Hagel untermengt,
Wann ihn der wilde Nord mit strengem Blasen drengt,
Und Strich=weis' auf uns treibt/ geschärften langen
Spiessen,
Die Wolken scheinen uns mit Pfeilen zu beschiessen/
Doch ist es wirklich nur ein Schein/

39 Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld: Lob Gottes aus Beschreibung der fröhlichen Sommerzeit in Wir vergehn wie Rauch Vol. 1, p.122.

Indem sie uns nicht schäd= nicht tödtlich seyn. " 40

The first example would doubtless have been termed by critics in the early eighteenth century a dark or obscure metaphor. The actual connection between bunches of grapes tied to a post and soldiers leaning on their spears is far fetched at the very least, and one feels the poet's consciousness was influenced indeed by scenes of war. In this same poem, for instance he describes:

" Die Pfirsich bleich wie falber Tod ..."

again a likely case of transference, for it is not only improbable, but contrary to nature to describe nourishing fruit in this way.

Brockes' extended metaphor, on the other hand, is a quite plausible one, having its roots in colloquial expressions, the German language commonly making reference to peitschen in relation to rain or to a beissender Wind. The metaphors of spears and arrows aptly describe the sensation of cold, driving rain. The only criticism, however, one might make of Brockes is of his long-windedness and excessive self consciousness. Brockes, and in this he is similar to Günther, never merely looks, but simultaneously observes and comments on his own gaze. The metaphors employed have no final or absolute status, but can always be altered, criticised or even dismantled, as in

40 B.H. Brockes, Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott, Vol. 1, p.296.

fact happens here:

" Doch ist es würrklich nur ein Schein/
Indem sie uns nicht schäd= nicht tödlich seyn. "

(v) Günther's lyric poetry as a paradigm of allegorical/
metaphorical transition

Where then would Johann Christian Günther be situated on this sliding scale of 'allegorical' to 'realistic' imagery? With some qualifications we would be justified in still seeing his work within the tradition of seventeenth century allegory, as a kindred spirit to Gryphius, albeit a rather subversive one. His work is marked by the paradox of a subjectivity which, although rhetorical in its form, is modern in its content and search for adequate expression of the problems of the self, coupled with a conception of the material world which is essentially allegorical.

In his use of imagery and metaphor, Günther generally abides by the allegorical structures common to his age. His mastery of this form, however, made it possible for him to put it to a highly persuasive, personal use. Günther's imagery is repetitive, even obsessive. The obsessiveness would appear to derive directly from the hopelessness of his own psychological plight. In an attempt to communicate his views and personal suffering, Günther draws repeatedly on favourite allegorical images taken largely from the natural world.

Nature is seldom depicted for its own sake, but is seen,

as it were, through the prism of allegory. The emotions which underpin this imagery are essentially inward and personal and this natural imagery is the mirror of the poet's soul rather than of the external world represented on a literal level. Its repetition and intensity is the product of inner scrutiny and a wish to communicate and persuade rather than of a gaze, such as we find in Brockes and Haller, directed outward into the material world. As such, description of the natural world is almost inevitably coupled with a second allegorical level. This trend is encapsulated in the poet's love of compound words which contain both a material and an abstract element: Hofnungsbaum (Kr.I,p.189,l.4) Kummermeer (Kr.I,p.250) Hofnungsrosen (Kr.I,p.114,l.12) A tendency which, as Benjamin points out, has its roots in the Baroque:

" ... dass dem Abstraktum, wenn es schon unvermeidlich scheint, ganz ungemein oft das Konkretum dergestalt beigegeben ist, dass neue Worte zustandekommen. " 41

Günther was, of course, well versed in the allegorical and emblematic commonplaces of his age and, in his early love poetry to Leonore, is concerned to show his mastery of this form:

" So wenig eine junge Rebe
 Des Ulmbaums Hilfe missen kan,
 So wenig ficht der Neid mich an,
 Das meine Brust dir Abschied gebe.
 Mein treues Herz ist ein Magnet

41 Walter Benjamin, Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels (Frankfurt am Main, 1982) p.176.

Das nur nach einem Pole steht ..." 42

By his second cycle of love poems to Leonore (1719), he articulates his intentions in an obviously emblematic form:

" Ein grünes Feld
Dient meinem Schilde
Zum Wappenbilde,
Bey dem ein Palmenbaum zwey Ancker halt
Beständig soll die Lösung bleiben, ... " 43

A form which conveys both pictura and hints at a subscriptio which assures Leonore of the poet's faithfulness. His technical command of this form finally culminates in the undisputedly emblematic, Als er der Phyllis einen Ring mit einem Todtenkopf überreichte.

What, however, is unusual in Günther's use of imagery is the intensely material nature of his allegory. The abstract ideas he expresses draw their power and life from the realm of nature; the primary image is of such strength that it infuses the secondary, allegorical meaning with a tangible, material element:

" Mir stand der Hofnungsbaum in allem Wetter grün
Jezt will ihm deine Qual so Stamm als Ast verhauen. "44

The natural world can also be called upon to witness the poet's suffering or, in the absence of a human interlocutor, becomes the poet's addressee:

" Erinnert euch mit mir, ihr Blumen, Bäum und Schatten,

42 Kr.I, p.25, l.1-6.

43 Kr.I, p.189, l.27-31.

44 Kr.I, p.100, l.35-6.

Der oft mit Flavia gehaltenen Abendlust. " 45

Perhaps the most powerful and memorable imagery to be found in Günther is that which expresses his spiritual and material suffering. Here the poet, while largely retaining an ornate allegorical form, breaks clear of clichéd diction and achieves a persuasive and even violent expression of suffering:

" Du wurdest ja mit Angst zur Angst gebohren,
Die dir ein blutig Morgenroth
Schon in der Mutter Schoos gedroht ... " 46

This imagery is at its most violent and unrelenting when the poet turns his eye, (as Gryphius had in his, An sich selbst) towards his mortal, suffering body:

" Die Geister sind verraucht, die Nerven leer und Trocken,
Die Luft will in der Brust, das Blut in Adern stocken,
Das Auge thränt und zieht die scharfen Strahlen ein;
Das Ohr klingt fort und für und läuthet mir zu Grabe,
Und da ich überall viel Todeszeichen habe,
So zagt dabey mein Herz in ungemeiner Pein. " 47

The parts of his body are viewed in isolation and become conscious, independent agents, capable even of symbolic action:

" Das Ohr klingt fort und für und läuthet mir zu Grabe "

The use of allegory or allegorical personification in Günther does not always imply a complete acceptance of fixed meanings: his allegorical personifications, his

45 Kr. I, p. 192, l. 1-2.

46 Kr. II, p. 67, l. 7-9.

47 Kr. II, p. 220, l. 49-54.

spiritualisation of the material world often break free of the bonds of logical thought. The ear in the above example defies its listening nature and, like a bell, tolls the poet to his grave. In the following example, taken from Günther's powerful Fragment:

" Wie ? Ist die Allmacht nicht so starck,
Mich schwachen Wurm zu todten ?
So mag ihr Bliz vor Scham erröthen , " 48

for instance, the divine lightning is given the all too human ability to blush, thus removing it from its original sphere of allegory. The poet's use of allegory is thus not so much descriptive as rhetorical and polemical. Günther sees allegory as a powerful tool in his overriding aim of rhetorical persuasio. Allegory is no longer merely an accepted code of meaning, but a mode of expression which can either be taken and used at face value, or subverted to become a vehicle of personal expression.

The changes Günther wrought in conventional allegory and metaphor are subtle and can often pass undetected. They are frequently found in poems otherwise traditional in diction and form and make use of accepted, even commonplace images. A prime example of this subtle manipulation is to be found in, Der ohne Mitleiden Leidende in einem Traume vorgestellt (Kr.II, p.165-66) which takes the outward form of medieval dream allegory as the vehicle for a personal message. The focus of the poem is an unnamed, persecuted

48 Kr.II, p.116, l.37-40.

female figure who is tortured by the very real and indeed physical presence of several allegorical personifications:

" Der Hunger frass in Fleisch und Beine,
Die Lügen sogen Marck und Blut,
Die Laster warfen Pfeil und Steine, " 49

The depiction of these torments is succeeded by a "wide angle shot" of the immediate surroundings:

" Die Gegend von dem Trauerspiele
Wies in der Näh ein lustig Feld ... " 50

The poet then turns to the hard hearted onlookers who calmly witness the woman's murder and cursory burial by the allegorical vices before the poet is woken by the revelation of this allegory's hidden meaning:

" So schickt man deine Jugend fort. " 51

The allegory is thus a highly personal one; its imagery is distilled from the poet's actual sufferings and the Weibsbild is a personification not only of youth as such but also of the poet's own youth.

Günther was very much aware of the way in which allegory, commonplaces and, even more so, proverbs could serve as a socially stabilising force which could be used to portray his own suffering as the just punishment for an immoral life. that poetic diction and the stylistic register were more important than its personal nature or

49 Kr. II, p. 165, l. 21-23.

50 Ibid. l. 31-32.

51 Ibid. l. 50.

content. This emphasis on the outward form or general applicability of poetry he counters with his insistence on a personal ethos of Redlichkeit, (a theme which recurs throughout his opus) and in his ability to modify allegory for his own purposes.

The violence and anger of many of his poems culminates in the bitter disillusionment of his satires. His, Als er sich über den Eigensinn der heutigen Welt beklagte, 52 for instance, makes use of proverbs which are often used to justify overtly self seeking behaviour, to reveal instead the hypocrisy and malevolence of society at large. This list of proverbs, imposing as it does an almost random imagery on an already raucous poem reveals another characteristic of Günther's imagery as a whole: its overtly social, human emphasis. A favourite source of his imagery is the simple actions of everyday life:

" Ein Hofnarr lebt ja besser
Und lacht mit fettem Messer
Wenn unsre kluge Hand nur Rüben schälen muss. " 53

This imagery is not infrequently derived from the poet's own plight. In his, Schreiben an seine Magdalis, physical and allegorical circumstances combine to plague him:

" Das Joch der Einsamkeit schlägt meinen Leib darnieder,
Dem Nacht und Finsternüss die müde Seite schleust,
Die ungewohnte Streu fühlt selbst den Schmerz der
Glieder,

52 Kr. II, p. 130.

53 Kr. II, p. 131, l. 48-50.

Die ein Verborgnes Weh von ihrem Lager reisst. " 54
 Such is the imagery employed in this stanza that the suffering subject seems to have become a part of his surroundings, and the physical objects around him his comforters or tormentors. The abstract Einsamkeit has become a physical Joch weighing down on the poet and the straw, itself the cause of his bodily suffering, feels with him this pain. The distinction between actual physical sensation and the world of abstract conflicts has been removed; and the poet lives in a world of malevolent but very real personification allegory.

It is perhaps in his sensual or even openly erotic poetry where Günther most decisively breaks away from the bonds of tradition, creating an imagery which involves all the senses. One of his most evocative images is thus to be found in a poem dedicated, An seine Schöne, describing a kiss in terms of natural phenomena:

" So wie uns oft nach warmen Regen
 Ein grünlicher Geruch erquickt,
 So geil, so kräftig und so süsse
 Erfahr ich den Geruch der Küsse,
 Die, wenn sich deine Zunge rückt,
 Herz, Nieren, Marck und Bein bewegen. " 55

In this extended simile, the poet evokes not a visual image but rather a sensual experience involving taste, touch and smell. This natural imagery gives the experience a curious

54 Kr.I, p.91, l.9-12.

55 Kr.I, p.45, l.7-12.

power and innocence. The intense, and very direct eroticism:

" Die, wenn sich deine Zunge rückt,
Herz, Nieren, Marck und Bein bewegen. "

is in no way tainted with the lewdness of Hofmannswaldau or Neukirch. Günther celebrates this sensuality as a phenomenon as natural as summer rain and in no way to be condemned by any social prudery.⁵⁶ Such close observation of nature is, however, rare in Günther's work. Nature is seen rather as another rhetorical tool than as a poetic subject in its own right.

The theme most characteristic of Günther is that of Redlichkeit which should be seen as a moral principle rather than as a literary standpoint. Imagery, rhetoric and content are all subjugated to this principle which clears a way for poetic honesty rather than itself providing any radically new subject matter. In supporting the principle of Redlichkeit and truth to oneself in the face of what he saw as a society riddled with mistrust and hypocrisy. Günther desired to be accepted by this society but on his own terms, in this way he frequently uses the language and

⁵⁶ Günther had certainly not rejected the eroticism of Hofmannswaldau out of hand as another passage of this same poem testifies:

" Mich deucht, es geht auf deinem Munde
Der nechste Weg in Amors Reich. " (1.19-20)
The imagery here, true to its galant source, is both suggestive and frivolous.

imagery of the society he satirises for his own ironic purposes.

(vi) Conclusion

Unlike his near contemporaries, Brockes and Haller, Günther lacks a deep affinity with the material world around him, hence the near absence of any natural description. The physical sphere is viewed as a transcendent signifier, described in terms of ironical allegory. The focus of Günther's interest is rather the machinations of the human heart and the problem of the individual in society. Imagery is subordinated to content, natural description to the rhetoric of allegorical persuasio. The images used are the tropes of allegory, the picturae of emblem books. Nature is portrayed at second hand, if at all. The recurrent images are the traditional ones such as the ship, and the death's head, although they are often given an unexpected turn. The traditional topoi spring to new life as Günther shows the tired ambivalence of their accepted meanings. Although Günther accepts the method of allegory, he does not perpetuate its message but subverts it by means of irony and exaggeration. Precisely by drawing on the accepted tropes and transforming them in this way, Günther reveals their hidden and rather sinister inner life as tools, as it

were, of ideological repression.

To sum up, the major transformation which occurs in the eighteenth century in the theory and practice of imagery, intimately connected as it is with the authorial Weltanschauung, comes about as much through the perception of the arbitrariness of meaning as the replacement of an allegorical by an empirical world view. Allegory is eventually replaced by the symbol as used by Goethe. This allegorical imagery and poetic diction which, having its roots in biblical exegesis, claimed to be universal, is transformed in the course of a century to produce a literature whose chief value is its own subjectivity.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITIONAL FORM, POPULAR TROPES: THE EXAMPLE OF GUNTHER'S HIQB-NACHAHMUNG.

I: Introduction: originality and imitation in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the importance of traditional topoi and tropes

The literature and oratory of the seventeenth century were dominated by traditions and conventions transmitted through the many didactic works of the period such as rhetorical and poetological handbooks. To look for originality in this epoch is to force an ahistorical perspective on an age dominated more by conscious imitation and skilful variation than by innovation. A dominant feature of this imitative culture was the importance it placed on a set content expressed through a set form or, put more simply, on tropes and topoi. The relation of form to content (as we shall also see in the following chapter) was frequently viewed as a binary, one to one, relationship which could be laid out according to the interdependent concepts of topic and rhetoric.

In the popular Poetiken of the day, a given subject, for

instance the death of a mayor (to quote an example from Erdmann Uhse's, Der Wohl=informierte Poet 1), would be sketched out first within the context of the form to be used and would then be followed by suggestions for suitable tropes or figures of comparison, the proposed framework finally being filled out with possible allegorical ornamentation to give the poem its final polish. Nothing was thus left to chance and the possibilities either for innovation or for the use of 'inappropriate' material reduced to a minimum.

Many poems of this period derive their inspiration from multiple sources with a resulting lack of structural or topical unity. It was in the nature of seventeenth century Collectanea or Poetische Schatzkammern that almost any combination of topoi was possible; biblical figures stood alongside pagan, historical alongside allegorical quotations. As we have already seen with reference to the imagery of the Baroque, by the end of the century, few topoi derived straight from their source. It is therefore virtually impossible to say whether a given figure derives directly from a primary text (whether the Bible or

1 Erdmann Uhse, Der Wohl=informierte Poet Worinnen die Poetischen Kunst=Griffe ... angeführet werden Leipzig, Friedrich Groschuff, 1705. In answer to the question: "Wie kan ich denn etwas mittelbar erfinden?" (p.112) lists the possible loci concluding with the Locus Exemplorum: "Bey der Beerdigung Herrn Bürgermeister Falckners zu Leipzig An.1703. ward der Leipzigsche Moses und Atlas durchgeführt".

Classical mythology) or from another, secondary, source. It is, by the same token, inevitable that any stock figure of literary tradition should, in the course of its multiple reception and transmission have developed away from this primary source. One of the attractions, indeed, of thematic research resides in the fact that any popular motif must invariably be shaped by the exigencies of the culture for which it is written. The reception of a given figure such, for instance as the biblical Job or mythological Diana is shaped by a multitude of factors such as the intended readership or purpose of the text they illustrate. The very choice of one figure against another is by its very nature a partisan one, determined by personal, social, even political considerations. Equally, the reception of a given figure may be pre-determined by social consensus leaving little leeway for a personal interpretation. The expectations of tradition were such, (and this is especially true for the seventeenth century), that the accepted meaning or implications of certain figures often went unchallenged. The tropes, topoi and exemplary figures of this literature can also be seen to form its ideological backbone. To re-interpret the meaning of these accepted forms would threaten the belief in authority and continuity which underlies this Weltanschauung as a whole. It is therefore significant that Günther's radical reinterpretation of the figure of Job should have appeared

at a time of cultural transition when socially accepted ideas and values were in a state of flux.

The use of certain set figures, as we will see when we turn to the example of Job, also had its more mundane side; the exigencies of the high style demanded a certain display of examples and ornamentation, with the result that the poet would frequently draw on a repertoire of tropes suited to a given occasion. For instance poems addressed to friends invariable made reference to David and Jonathan, lovers were compared to the great historical examples; Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura. This tradition, (as Forster has shown so clearly in, The Icy Fire 2), had by the seventeenth century become so rigid that these once potent examples had latterly become mere fragments to be inserted almost at random into the text.

In his early writings and occasional poetry Günther proved his mastery of both traditional content and form but as time went on he ceased to be as rigidly bound by literary convention and began to experiment and play with the set form. This development can be traced in various aspects of his poetry; in his occasional verse he consciously undermines the expected formal structure and motifs and his autobiographical poetry is dominated by increasingly obsessive and innovative use of recurring

2 Leonard Forster, The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism. (Cambridge, 1969).

figures, images and allegorical associations.

In terms of its content and use of examples we should be aware of two major influences on this lyric oeuvre: the personal and the social. Günther has frequently been described as the first German Erlebnisdichter and his poetic diction, his intense self preoccupation, was indeed ahead of its time. Conversely we should not neglect the social and rhetorical aspects of his writing; much of his poetry was written for commission and even in his most intimate poetry, Günther can never entirely forget the effect he is having on his readership.

II: The Old Testament book of Job through the mirror of theological and literary reception

It is in the light of these dual demands then that we will now single out for closer examination a Leitmotif and central model of Günther's work: the Old Testament figure of Job. Günther's relationship to this figure may in fact be seen as paradigmatic of his relationship to literary convention as a whole. The tradition surrounding Job was a long one and his popularity as a figure both ^{of} drama and lyric poetry remained constant throughout the centuries. More importantly, as we will presently see, he also figures as a key example in Luther's writings, a vital element in Günther's cultural background. Günther's reception of Job

is thus to be seen both within a century long tradition and an intimately personal context. The intention of this chapter is in fact to show how closely intertwined, indeed inextricable these two aspects are and how the most intimate utterances and associations can also be the most rhetorical.

In the course of his brief life Günther experienced much adversity; adversity moreover which was rendered all the greater by his own over-sensitive reaction to it. In an attempt to come to terms with his misfortune and the disapprobation he stood in, for instance with the Lutheran clergy, the poet had recourse to two of the great sufferers of world literature, to the Ovid of the Tristia and the letters Ex Ponto, and the Old Testament figure of Job. It is Günther's relationship to this latter motif, Job, which will be examined here both in terms of its personal significance for the poet and the specific ways he manipulated it as a rhetorical and theological weapon against the overtly hostile society of his day. Before, however we proceed to examine this motif as used by Günther, it would be helpful to outline some of the main trends in the literary reception of Job in order to highlight what was unique in Günther's Hiob-Nachahmung.

In analysing the literary reception of a given motif, one should not begin with the assumption that one is dealing with the varying transformations of a stable

entity. Indeed with reference to the book of Job, there is a case for tracing the individual interpretations back to an instability inherent in the biblical text itself.

Scholars ³ now almost unanimously hold the view that the book of Job was written by at least two different hands and consists of an earlier narrative section which forms a sort of Rahmenerzählung, and the later dialogues between Job and his friends. In the narrative section, (Ch.1,2, 38-42) Job is first deprived of all he held dear- children, servants wealth and cattle- but accepts this divine punishment without complaint, regaining everything he lost twice over in the final chapter. The Job of the dialogues (Chapters 3-38) curses God and the day of his birth for the evil that has befallen him, a righteous man. This in turn brings accusations of blasphemy upon him from his supposed friends.

In the unreconcilable approaches of this piecemeal text, themselves stemming from different authors, we can see the origins of the dualistic treatment of Job in the literary reception of this text. The patient Job of the narrative section corresponds to the medieval interpretation of Job as a paragon of patience, whereas the rebellious figure of the dialogues corresponds to the post- Lutheran perception,

³ This research is summarised in Franz Hesse's, Hiob, Zürcher Bibelkommentare, (Zürich, 1978), pp.8-9 and N.C. Habel's, The book of Job: A commentary (London, 1985) pp.38-42.

whereby even the most pious man can be tempted to rage against God.

The Moralia of Gregory the Great, coupled with the inclusion of texts from Job into the requiem mass, constitute the main sources for the medieval reception of Job. For early Christian exegetes such as Pope Gregory, it was theologically unacceptable that Yahweh should be seen to torment one of his creations without reason. His vengefulness was hence interpreted as the didactic testing of a pious soul. To comply with this, Job passed from being a blasphemous though believing rebel to an example of the Christian virtue of patience. This reading was facilitated by emphasising certain aspects of the biblical text at the expense of others. In his exegetical commentary, Pope Gregory analysed the narrative sections in their entirety, whereas the potentially subversive dialogues between Job and his friends had an entirely new emphasis placed upon them.

This 'tailored' version of the book of Job deriving from Pope Gregory's exegesis was to dominate the medieval literary interpretation of this motif. Job was held up as an exemplum of the virtue of patientia, of Christian steadfastness in the face of suffering. In Hartmann Von Aue's Der arme Heinrich, to quote a prominent example, the Ritter Heinrich, like his biblical counterpart, suddenly stricken with an incurable illness, probably the plague, is

compared unfavourably to the patient Job who accepted his tribulations uncomplainingly. This seemingly one sided reading of Job as the patient sufferer who, in the face of overwhelming adversity, says:

" Der Herr hat's gegeben, der Herr hat's genommen; der Name des Herrn sei gelobt " (Job, 1.21)

was to persist well beyond the reformation into the dramas of Hans Sachs (1547), Johan Narhamer (1546), the tract, Der geplagte aber gedultige Hiob (1659) and even into the eighteenth century in the guise of Anna Rupertina Fuch's dramatisation, Job of 1714. These dramas should not, however, be seen as literary interpretations of the textual complexities of the book of Job. Job has by this stage become a stock didactic figure; the righteous men punished, the patient sufferer who praises God from the depths of his torment. Indeed such was Job's pre-reformation status that he was often referred to as Sanctus Iob and seen as an Old Testament prefiguration of Christ.

The major change which Luther wrought to this traditional view of Job was precisely that he recognised Job's blasphemy and rebellion:

" Wenn aus Anfechtungen die Schwäche entsteht, dann hebt des Teufels Freude an. So brach selbst Hiob, der doch zuerst so geduldig war, schliesslich mit gebrochenen Mut in den Ruf aus (Hiob 19,11) Gott zürnt und hat all seine Barmherzigkeit abgelegt" 4

4 Luther deutsch: die Werke Luthers in neuer Auswahl für die Gegenwart edited by K.A. Land. (Göttingen, 1974), Vol. IX, p.86.

Job's sin, indeed lies at the crux of Lutheran theology for, in Luther's words:

" An ihnen (Abraham and Job) zeigt Gott ganz besonders, dass die Ursache der Verzweiflung nicht die Menge der Sünden ist, sondern der Unverstand des Herzen, welches in der Gewissensnot nach guten Werken sucht, um sie den Sünden entgegenhalten zu können." 5

Job is thus judged not by the standards of the Old Testament, whereby righteousness was a question of proving that one had kept the commandments, but by a key category of Lutheran dogma whereby a man cannot pronounce himself righteous, nor are his works a measure of his virtue. As Günther Datz puts it:

" Der Christ ist nicht GERECHT sondern GERECHTFERTIGT, seine Gerechtigkeit ist nicht seine eigene, sondern die Jesu Christi." 6

Only through faith and the intervention of divine grace can man achieve salvation.

Luther's scattered writings on Job thus open up new interpretative possibilities. His rebellion and blasphemy, although ultimately condemned as the temptation of the devil, is acknowledged. Hiob is no longer seen solely as a paragon of patience. Günther, as we shall presently see in greater detail, writing two centuries later but within an orthodox Lutheran tradition, was to take up this negative image of Job the rebel and endow it with a subjective

5 Luther Deutsch Vol.I.p.414.

6 Günther Datz, Die Gestalt Hiobs in der kirchlichen Exegese und dem " Armen Heinrich " Hartmann von Aues (Göppingen, 1973), p.181.

meaning and positive connotations.

In the seventeenth century, interest in the motif of Job declined somewhat. In the main he seems to have become merely a stock figure of religious tracts and especially of Epicidea which were built around an explicitly Christian interpretation of Job's utterance, " Ich weiss, dass mein Erlöser lebet" 7 In short, the seventeenth century would appear to have produced nothing comparable to the depth or intensity of Günther's personal identification with the figure of Job. 8

III: The Book of Job and Leibniz' Theodicy

Günther's attempt to come to terms with his personal and poetic dilemma and suffering was not of course to rely exclusively on biblical inspiration. The late seventeenth- and early eighteenth centuries were a period of considerable debate precisely about the question of human suffering in the world, which was to culminate in the publication of Leibniz' Theodicee in 1710. The appearance of this work also signaled the movement of the issue of theodicy away from an exclusively religious sphere into the

7 Job, 19.25.

8 Hofmannswaldau for instance was to write a work of this title, but this remains within the tradition of Biblical paraphrase and has no personal or theological significance beyond this context.

wider spectrum of the Enlightenment dialogue between philosophy and theology culminating in the concept of Vernunftreligion. It becomes apparent from certain of Günther's poems that he had either read the Theodicee himself, or assimilated its key ideas from some other source. This is particularly apparent in his, Den Unwillen eines redlichen und getreuen Vaters suchte ... zu besänftigen ein gehorsamer Sohn with its reference to the prästabile Harmonie:

" Man erforsche die Geseze, die der Bauherr schöner Welt
Ehmals zwischen Geist und Cörper ewig gleich und fest
gestellt.

...

Wer die Wissenschaft der Grösse und der Kräfte nicht
versteht,
Kan den Leib unmöglich kennen, der wie Wasseruhren geht." 9

and to the necessity of evil in the world:

" Freylich sah Gott auch vorher, was vor Schmerzen, Last
und Bürden,
Elend, Sünden, Wuntsch und Flehn in die Reiche kommen
würden,
Freylich sah er dieses alles und erwog zugleich dabey,
Dass der Mangel in den Theilen zu dem ganzen nöthig sey " 10

However these snippets of Leibnizean philosophy are only one side of Günther's thought, merely one poetic possibility. By the time these arguments had been incorporated into Günther's writings, they have become fragments which point to a Weltanschauung inherently more optimistic than the poet's own. What is more characteristic

9 Kr.II.p.202.1.123-4/ 126-7.

10 Kr.II.1.365-368.

of the poet, is the description of a long struggle with adversity which is suddenly transformed as the poet's state of mind or outward circumstances reveal a glimmer of hope and optimism towards the end of the poem. This pattern, so reminiscent of the inner struggle portrayed in the book of Job, is also to be found in several other of his Klagelieder. In other words, Job, not Leibniz, (as we shall presently see in more detail), has the deeper effect on the poet.

It is difficult to imagine a synthesis between the theodicy of Leibniz and the overwhelming laments of the biblical Job; indeed, as Krämer pointed out as early as 1931:

" In den weltanschaulichen und geistlichen Gedichten glaubt man zwei Stimmen aus zwei Welten zu hören, grundverschieden voneinander nicht nur an Umfang, sondern auch an Nachdruck und Innerlichkeit." 11

One could indeed go further and say that Günther's writings, composed as they were in a time of such radical literary and cultural transformation, enunciate their thought not only in two but in a plurality of voices. In his attempts to come to terms with the often adverse reality which surrounded him, Günther had recourse to the biblical laments of Job, the theodicy of Leibniz, to neo-stoicism in the Lipsian tradition and to the conventional Lutheran hymn. Günther was not a philosopher; he did not

11 Krämer, Wilhelm, Johann Christian Günther: Werke Vol.II, Introduction, p.XV.

hope to give his work an overall systematic cohesion. What he did do was to pick up the models at his disposal and use or reject such impulses as suited his personal needs or the demands of rhetorical persuasio. Job is therefore to be seen as one of a range of literary models, of poetic voices, Günther had recourse to; albeit, it can be argued, one of central significance to an understanding of Günther's work.

Before we proceed to an examination of Günther's Hiob-Nachahmung based on the analysis of individual poems, a word about the poet's social situation and its direct effect on his poetry 12.

The Silesia Günther was born into had been under Hapsburg rule since 1526. In the early stages of the reformation, Silesia had rapidly adopted the new faith; 13 a century and a half later in the course of the counter reformation, the Hapsburg rulers were keen to reverse this process, closing churches, forcing Lutherans to attend mass

12 There are, of course, dangers in using Günther's life to in any way explain his poetry; it is indeed only in recent years that critics have attempted anything other than a biographical analysis of the poet. Notwithstanding, some reference to Günther's life and circumstances is needed in the context of the Klagegedichte, firstly because of the explicit and often satirical reference Günther himself makes to his contemporary society and secondly because certain of his actual conflicts, for instance with the Lutheran 'orthodoxy' in Silesia have direct bearing upon the content and rhetorical structure of many of his satires and Klagelieder.

13 see Heinrich Bartsch: Die Geschichte Schlesiens (Würzburg, 1985) pp.96-97.

and also taxing them for the building and maintenance of Catholic churches 14

The seventeenth century is generally acknowledged as a time of growing Lutheran orthodoxy, and the beleaguered Lutheran church in Silesia was no exception to this process, indeed this seemed the natural response to the threat of the counter reformation. This growing rigidity was especially evident with reference to the Pietist movement which was forbidden in Silesia by the Emperor's decree. The Lutheran orthodoxy, afraid that the emergence of Pietism could further weaken their precarious situation, showed themselves perfectly willing, if necessary, to denounce pietists to the Catholics.¹⁵

Günther, the son of a Lutheran doctor, was to go to school in Schweidnitz, the site of one of the two Lutheran Friedenskirchen and, after the Altranstädter Konvention, of 1707, of the Lutheran gymnasium the poet was himself to attend. A central factor in Günther's difficulties and differences with his contemporary society was traced back by the poet himself, and less sympathetically by his critics, to his problematical relationship with his father and the hostile Lutheran orthodoxy in Silesia. The poet's

14 See: H. Eberlein, Schlesische Kirchengeschichte, (Ulm/ Donau 1962), pp.68-96.

15 Günther himself was indeed accused of pietistic leanings. We can read his denial of these accusations in his long epistolary poem to his father: Kr.II.p.200.1.90-97.

'loose' lifestyle, his satires and unwillingness to complete his studies alienated him from this society and ultimately caused the estrangement from his father.¹⁶ As in any conflict, there are two sides to the argument; the poet's own, which is especially to be found in his satires and laments, and that of his father; articulated by his silence in the face of his son's pleas for reconciliation and put into words in his short characterisation of his son in Steinbach's biography (1738), or of Pastor Scharff of Schweidnitz in his Verkehrte Bibel der Gottlosen (1728). It must have been bitter indeed for the clergy and members of the Lutheran church in Silesia, who perceived themselves as upholding the true faith in a time of crisis, to find themselves lampooned as moral hypocrites who bid for rich parishes:

" Man hält nicht Priesterwahl, man hält nur Auction:
Sechshundert! Hundert mehr! Die giebt der Nachbar schon." 17

by an impecunious medical student who had been nurtured in their very midst!

IV. The main textual Parallels between the Book of Job and Günther's Poetry

16 Bütler-Schön has convincingly analysed this estrangement as having its roots in the light of Günther's father's obedience to and his own poetic transformation of the Lutheran Amtsvorstellung. (H.Bütler-Schön: Dichtungsverständnis und Selbstdarstellung bei Johann Christian Günther (Bonn, 1981), pp.181-207).

17 Kr.III.p.115,l.73-4.

An overview of the particular way Günther used the figure of Job; the specific parallels he drew and the contrast in which they stand to the orthodox Lutheran theology of his age, is to be gained by looking at a handful of key poems such as, Als er seinem harten Schicksal nachdachte (Kr.II.p.67), the Fragment (Kr.II.p.116), An Gott (Kr.II.p.119) and Als er durch innerlichen Trost bey der Ungedult gestärket wurde (Kr.II.p.123).

Looking at the first of these, Als er seinem harten Schicksal nachdachte (Kr.II.p.67) which probably dates from 1719, in detail, we can pinpoint a number of Günther's favourite borrowings from Job as well as suggesting the ways in which the poet diverged from the diction and content of this key source. The first stanza in fact could serve as a summary of both Günther's and Job's predicament.

" Wie kanstu doch so viel vergebens klagen
 Und unerhörte Seufzer thun ?
 Ach, las einmahl die Augen ruhn
 Und thu dir selber weh, die Schläge stumm zu tragen.
 Du siehst ja wohl einmahl, verworfnes Menschenkind,
 Dass Glück und Gott nicht mehr der Unschuld Freunde sind" 18

Günther fashions himself on Job in portraying himself as a just man punished. He mirrors Job's statement:

" Gott hat mich übergeben dem Ungerechten und hat mich in die Hände der Gottlosen kommen lassen. " (Job,16.11)

the just man is given over to the judgement of the unjust.

Like Job he calls upon the almighty for justice but his

18 Kr.II.p.67,1.1-6.

pleas are not answered (1.1-2), or, in Job's words:

" Ich schreie zu dir, aber du antwortest mir nicht; ich stehe da, aber du achtest nicht auf mich." 19

Günther's reaction, here, as elsewhere, is to impose upon himself a stoical approach (1.3-4). The conclusion he draws from God's silence:

" Dass Glück und Gott nicht mehr der Unschuld Freunde sind" is also anticipated in the book of Job, where indeed it forms the crux of the text, for Job knows his own innocence whereas his friends conclude that God could not punish him without cause. Job struggles with the only possible explanation of his situation; that God can abandon the righteous man; his friends assume his insistence on his innocence can only stem from self deception, hypocrisy or downright lying.

In the second stanza, Günther borrows another major motif from Job in cursing the day of his birth, and wishing never to have been born, to have died in the womb:

" Ach, wäre dort dein Geist im ersten Bad erstickt,
So würd er jezt nicht erst durch Thränen hingerückt."
(1.11-12)

or, as it is phrased in the book of Job:

" Warum bin ich nicht gestorben bei meiner Geburt ? Warum bin ich nicht umgekommen, als ich aus dem Mutterleib kam ? ... Dann läge ich da und wäre still, dann schlief ich und hätte Ruhe. " (Job, 3.11-13)

This wish never to have been born complies with the Judaic injunction against suicide. Günther too, following

19 Job, 30.20.

Christian teaching in this matter, can only wish for non-existence, not death. This wish is thus the most powerful expression of despair available to Christian and Jew alike, for it amounts to a rejection of the ultimate divine gift, that of life itself. In this way, Job's curse may be seen both as tantamount to suicide and as the strongest possible challenge to God the creator. Its intention is to elicit any response from God, even if it be the death of the suppliant. For both Günther and Job, death has in any case lost its threat and seems a welcome respite from suffering. In each case too, this rebellion appears to be the only possible approach for the mere mortal to the Godhead.

Linked to this wish never to have been born is the appeal to the almighty that, should they be unknowingly guilty, God should strike them down in his might rather than allow a sinner, who deserves such a severe punishment, to remain alive. This idea is examined by Günther in general terms in the fourth stanza of this poem:

" Bin ich allein zum Argernüss erschafen,
Und steckt mein Wesen voller Schuld ?
Wie hat der Himmel noch Gedult,
Und warum säumt sein Zorn, mich plötzlich hinzurafen,
Nachdem die Erd an mir ein solch Geschöpfe nährt,
Das ihm zur Schande lebt und sonder Nuzen zehrt ?"

and at considerable length by Job in the light of the demands made on a righteous man in his oath of purity in Chapter 31.

The conclusion which Günther draws from God's failure to cut short his life is that the almighty must ultimately be

convinced of his innocence:

" Jedoch ich weis, er kennt mein treu Gemüthe
Und sieht des Herzens Neigung an,
Die keinem Schlimm begegnen kan," (1.25-27)

and he, like Job, is convinced that a direct confrontation would prove this:

" Gott möge mich wiegen auf rechter Waage, so wird er erkennen meine Unschuld. " (Job, 31.6)

Both the book of Job and Günther's poetry have a strong social dimension. It is not merely some abstract principle of righteousness which is under discussion here, but individual acts of justice and charity within a concrete social context. This becomes especially clear in the context of the book of Job, for in Old Testament theology prosperity is taken as a sign of God's favour whereas suffering and poverty point to some hidden sin which has incurred God's wrath. Moral issues can thus be 'read' from the social situation of the individual. This idea survives, as Günther himself is quick to point out, in the society of eighteenth century Silesia. His low social status is taken as a sign of his guilt, or at least of a culpable inability to become properly integrated in society. Both Günther and Job as sufferers and virtual social outcasts, are themselves recipients of charity, but both feel the need to prove that, if the tables were turned, they would naturally be generous to their tormentors. Thus Günther speaks of his 'treu Gemüthe' and his 'Herzens Neigung',

" Die keinem Schlimm begegnen kan,

Obgleich sein ärgster Feind ihm in die Hand gerieth " (1.27-28)

and Job emphasises his difference from his callous friends:

" Auch ich könnte wohl reden wie ihr, wärt ihr an meiner Stelle. ... Ich würde euch stärken mit dem Munde und mit meinen Lippen trösten." (Job,16.4-5)

Up to this point in the poem, it has been possible to suggest direct parallels with the book of Job, but Günther was not engaged in writing a paraphrase and so his writing naturally diverges from the biblical model in its diction and content. An important difference, for instance, is to be found in the attitude to the divine. Whereas Job without exception calls upon Yahweh, the monotheistic deity, Günther 'subdivides' the almighty into His allegorical properties which are indeed seen as distinct from the Godhead.

" So bistu denn auch da nicht mehr zu finden.
Dir, dir Erbarmung, ruf ich zu " (1.31-32)

His addressee, not God but the allegorical personification of divine mercy (Erbarmung), is hence shown to be as subject to the whims of the divine as is the poet himself:

" Ach, hat dich irgend auch der Himmel, der mich plagt,
Nur mir zur letzten Qual aus seiner Schoos gejagt ? " (1.35-6)

and it is this absent, personified Erbarmung which is ultimately summoned as a witness of his immoderate suffering.

The intense rebellion of the sufferer against the injustice of his punishment, must, if it is not to end in an atheistic rejection of God, conclude either in the

almighty's eventual response to the challenges of the sufferer, as we find in the book of Job, or in the subject's submission to an unjust divine order as found in many of Günther's poems. In the poem in question, Als er seinem harten Schicksal nachdachte, we find a conclusion without a conclusion. The poet is unable to make sense of his own predicament and, turning his back on his suffering and falling silent in the face of this insoluble puzzle, leaves the account of his torment reverberating without any response expected.

" Und mag's doch seyn. Ich will es nicht mehr rühren,
Nachdem mich auch kein Freund mehr klagt.
Der Schall, so alles wieder sagt,
Mag, was mich quält und drückt, in Wald und Wüste führen.
Ich zieh vielleicht bald nach, um bey so langer Pein
Nicht mehr ein Argernüss der tummen Welt zu seyn."
(1.43-48)

Having suggested the main ways in which Günther uses the motif of Job in a particular poem, we will now proceed to a more detailed and methodical examination of his Hiob-Nachahmung under three main headings:

- a) The personal significance of the figure of Job for the poet.
- b) Günther's rhetorical use of the figure of Job.
- c) The problems of this personal view of Job in an orthodox Lutheran context.

(a) The personal significance of Job for Günther

Perhaps the most striking feature of Günther's Klagelieder is the brooding intensity of their diction. As in the last stanza of Als er seinem harten Schicksal nachdachte, the ultimate aim of his poetic lament is to obtain a response, any response, from his God and his readers. Especially in his laments, Günther's poetry is dialogic; his attempts to make sense of his existence take the form of an intense questioning addressed to God, to his readers', and his own conscience. The only real answer he receives, however, is from himself, for the reader cannot reply and God's response can only be suggested in the grace, the divine peace which overcomes the poet at the end of certain of his laments.²⁰

Günther's suffering is accompanied by a feeling of intense isolation and it is this, perhaps, more than anything which brings him spiritually close to Job. His pleas for assistance have gone unanswered by those dearest to him: his divine and his earthly father. His friends, even his patrons had gradually lost patience with him. In a bitter challenge as much to contemporary society as to the Godhead, Günther styles himself a Jobean figure, unjustly punished and falsely rejected by those closest to him. Hence in his relationship to the figure of Job, rhetorical

20. This transformation, as we shall presently see in more detail, is to be found in Kr.II.p.124/ p.117.

and personal motives are inextricably intertwined. He makes Job his comforter in his deep despair, his close identification producing catharsis on a personal plane and, he hoped, inducing a response from his addressees.

It is important for our understanding of the personal significance of the figure of Job, to remember that its use was confined to specific periods of his (short) creative life. It first emerges after 1718 and is most frequent in the years 1719–20 at a time of ill health and despondency following his failure to obtain a position at the Dresden court and the serious breach with his father.²¹ We should not, however, overlook the startling diversity of range and tone in Günther's work for at the same time as these works of despair and rebellion, he also produced such deeply pious poems as Die grossmüthige Gelassenheit (Kr.II.p.114) which maintain a patient, even stoical stance of unshakable faith in the face of misfortune.

Günther's practical problems are easily summarised, having their main root in his ambiguous relationship to the society he lived in. The poet had lived estranged from his father since his first year at university. As far as one can tell (and here one has to rely rather more than one would like on the unreliable source of the poet's own writings) his father, a strict Lutheran, rejected his son

21. W. Krämer, Johann Christian Günther pp.145–153.

when reports reached him of his neglect of his studies in favour of poetry and a generally loose lifestyle. This rejection in turn entangled the young poet in a vicious circle, deprived of his father's financial support, he had more than ever to fall back on occasional poetry to earn his living and, as the paternal rejection became known, the less likely it was that Günther could ever fully regain social acceptability in the narrow and judgemental world of Lutheran Silesia. The dilemma he faced was thus primarily a social one with strong theological overtones. His rejection by his father he interpreted as an indication of his greater rejection by God and his attempts at self justification are therefore addressed to both his divine and his earthly father, often using practically identical lines of argumentation towards both.

We can pinpoint these thematic similarities by comparing two poems. Nach dem Beichte an seinen Vater (Kr.II.p.108) and An Gott (Kr.II.p.119) The first of these represents one of Günther's many attempts at reconciliation with his father, the second is a plea to God to have mercy on him. In both, Günther depicts himself as a penitent supplicant, as a rejected child who cannot understand the severity of his punishment. In both cases, too, paternal authority, his father's and God's, is granted ultimate power of acceptance or rejection of the supplicant. The child/supplicant's attempt to reason with the figure of authority is similar

in each:

" Die Strafe dient zur Besserung,
Ja, wenn wir sie gebrauchen können;
Allein, wer gar zu Boden liegt
Und nirgends Rath noch Hülfe kriegt,
Der ist den Krancken beyzuzehlen, " 22

" Die Strafe bessert sonst die Sünder;
Dies ist mehr Grausamkeit als Zucht.
Versuch einmahl und geh gelinder,
Vielleicht gewinnt es eher Frucht; " 23

But both God and his father remain silent, and Günther must, like Job recognise the truth:

" Ja, ich weiss sehr gut, dass es so ist und dass ein Mensch nicht recht behalten kann gegen Gott." 24

The aspect of his suffering which seems most to have puzzled Günther was its apparent injustice. Even in his most repentant poems, there is a strong note of satire for he, like Job, cannot comprehend how the innocent should be punished while hypocrites and blasphemers continue to flourish. While Job merely states this fact bitterly. Günther's criticisms are more obviously directed at identifiable figures. Even the most repentant, religiously based poem can easily become a lampoon. For if Schiller in, Über naive und sentimentale Dichtkunst was to say of satire:

" In der Satire wird die Wirklichkeit als Mangel dem Ideal

22 Kr.II.p.109.1.33-37.

23 Kr.II.p.119.1.25-28.

24 Job,9.2

als der höchsten Realität gegenübergestellt". 25
Günther's satire was essentially more complex. He recognises only too clearly the ways in which the reality of life in the Lutheran communities of Silesia fell short of a divine ideal. At the same time he was intensely aware of his own personal guilt, but could only confess to God, while condemning the society which he was, and yet did not consider himself, a part of. This makes the juxtaposition of an attitude of abject contrition towards God and equally intense satire, indeed lampoon, of his contemporaries in poems such as, Letzte Gedancken possible.

In examining Günther's use of the motif of Job, it is virtually impossible to avoid a certain overlap between personal and rhetorical aspects. For many years critics emphasised the poet's role as the first Erlebnisdichter, but even his most autobiographical works take the form of consciously rhetorical self-stylisation. While there can be no doubt about the poet's actual suffering- his poverty, ill health and social rejection- or of the real pain and unhappiness he felt at what he saw as unearned punishment, there can be equally no doubt of his conscious manipulation of this suffering.

This intertwining of the personal with the rhetorical is exemplified in his, Lobgedichte auf plen. cum tit. Herrn

25 Friedrich Schiller, Über naive und sentimentale Dichtkunst in Schillers Sämtliche Werke Vol.12, (Stuttgart, 1862), p.171.

von Löwenstäh (Kr.IV.p.212) An autobiographical account of the poet's suffering forms the central section of this eulogy and undisguised plea for money. In it, the poet openly compares his plight to Job's:

" Ich weis nicht mehr wohin und lerne bey dem Schmachten
Gesundheit, Ehre, Kiel und Wissenschaft verachten.
Wie kan es anders seyn ? Wo Hunger die Gedult,
Wo Schmach die Kräfte schlägt, da hat der Geist nicht
Schuld,
Wenn endlich Fleisch und Blut bey Hiobs schweren Plagen
Mit Hiobs Raserey den tauben Himmel schlagen."
(1.55-60)

But whereas Job knows only one source, God, who can save or condemn him, Günther looks to a rich patron to provide at least provisional (material) relief from his suffering. Job is seen both as a real kindred spirit in adversity and as a topos of unwarranted suffering. On the whole, the biblical Job suffers unconsciously (despite exclaiming at one point: " Ach dass meine Reden aufgeschrieben würden ! Ach dass sie aufgezeichnet würden als Inschrift."), but in taking Job as his model, Günther both portrays his own suffering as exemplary and at the same time distances himself from its immediacy, he suffers at second hand.

This combination of the intensely personal with the overtly rhetorical is perhaps most clearly to be seen in his Fragment (Kr.II.p.116) which consists of two recitatives framed by three shorter arias. The traditional form provides a strange vessel for an existential conflict of such intensity. It opens with a barrage of questions, hurled at an absent addressee (the reader, or God ?)

signalling the poet's despair:

" Was fang ich an, wo soll ich hin ?
Wo ist mein Trost, wer ist mein Retter? "
(1.1-2)

which, taken together, sound like the summary of a rhetorical Suchformel. The poet then emphasises his absolute isolation, like Job he has been abandoned by society and God alike:

" Kein Mensch, kein Himmel keine Götter
Erfreun den unvergnügten Sinn. "
(1.3-4)

Almost in passing, he curses the fact that he was born at all: " O dass ich doch gebohren bin ! " (1.5)

The level of bitterness and stark realism make the poet's interpretation of Job's curse perhaps the most disturbing feature of his work and it is stated with even more intensity in his great poem of inner crisis, Als er durch innerlichen Trost bey der Ungedult gestärket wurde:

" O dass doch nicht mein Zeug aus Rabenfleisch entsprossen,
O dass doch dort kein Fluch des Vaters Lust verboth,
O wär doch seine Kraft auf kaltes Tuch geflossen !
O dass doch nicht das Ey, in dem mein Bildnüss hing,
Durch Fäulung oder Brand der Mutter Schoos entgieng,
Bevor mein armer Geist dies Angsthaus eingenommen !
Jetzt läg ich in der Ruh bey denen die nicht sind, " 26

Here he mirrors the detail and intensity of Job's curse:

" Warum hast du mich aus meiner Mutter Leib kommen lassen?
Ach dass ich umgekommen wäre und mich nie ein Auge gesehen hätte ! So wäre ich wie die, die nie gewesen sind, vom Mutterleib weg zum Grabe gebracht." (Job, 10.18-19),

but amplifies it in wishing his father had onanated rather

26 Kr.II, p.123, l.52-58.

than impregnate his mother (1.53) or, using the drastic imagery of rot and fire (Fäulung oder Brand), that he had been miscarried as an embryo. Such images go beyond a wish for non-existence towards a kind of metaphoric masochism.

Returning to the Recitat, Günther first calls upon God, then queries or even negates the very categories of his questioning:

" Ach Gott, mein Gott, erbarme dich !
Was Gott? Was mein? Und was erbarmen ? "
(1.8-9)

While Job is aware of the iniquity of the just man punished, Günther rhetorically heightens his argument in depicting himself as the most miserable, indeed the only sufferer in perhaps the best known lines of his entire literary oeuvre:

" Die Schickung peitscht mit ausgestreckten Armen,
Und über mich
Und über mich allein
Kommt weder Thau noch Sonnenschein, "
(1.10-13)

The poet receives no response, heaping blasphemy upon blasphemy until at last, like Job, he challenges the almighty to save him or cast him down eternally:

" Ihr Flüche ruft den Donnerwettern
Und zündet Gottes Eifer an !
Flieht, flieht und reizt die starken Keile,
Damit ihr Schlag mein Elend heile,
Damit sie dies mein Haupt zerschmettern,
Das doch nicht eher ruhen kann. "
(1.31-36)

Like Job, he characterises himself as that most lowly creature, the worm:

" Wie ? Ist die Allmacht nicht so starck,
Mich schwachen Wurm zu tödten ? "

(1.37-38)

(Job, indeed saw himself as stemming from a genealogy of worms: " Das Grab nenne ich meinen Vater und die Würmer meine Mutter und Schwester.")

His despair is such that he can view suicide as the only solution to his sufferings when he is suddenly and unexpectedly overcome by the power of divine grace:

" So breche Stein und Bley
Den Kerker meiner Not entzwey !
Wer widerräth mir dieses Glücke ?
O freundliche Gelassenheit,
Bist du es ? Ja !
Du kommst zu rechter Zeit; "

(1.43-48)

This effects a transformation characteristic of Günther's Klagelieder ; the raging blasphemy with which the poem opens, suddenly gives way to the calm stoicism of the final aria:

" O ruhige Seele, behalt dir das Glücke,
Und fiel auch so Himmel als Erden in Stücke,
So bleib in dir selber und sieh es mit an. "

(1.63-65)

This Fragment along with, Als er durch innerlichen Trost bey der Ungedult gestärcket wurde, number among the at once most personal and most rhetorical of Günther's work. The most personal, although in no way directly autobiographical, for in his attempts to express the extremity of his suffering, Günther transcends the purely personal towards a wider, allegorical perspective. The most rhetorical, because their very intensity derives from the

emotive topoi used. Indeed Tasso's words in Goethe's play are highly apt:

" Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt
Gab mir ein Gott zu sagen, wie ich leide. " 27

In his greatest torment, Dame Rhetoric gives Günther some of his finest lines.

Such eloquence in the face of suffering can, of course, be counter productive. A near contemporary debate in the German literary world had arisen from precisely this question. Its object was Johann Von Bessers epicidium on the death of his wife written in 1700, which was praised by its admirers for its convincing depiction of intense personal grief: its detractors on the other hand made the point (that Schiller was to repeat in a more famous context 28) that an intense emotion such as grief, is crippling and blocks rather than releases the flow of eloquence. By this token, a convincing depiction of the extremes of emotion is only possible when the wound itself has begun to heal and one has, in a sense, distanced oneself from the immediacy of the pain. Günther's Klagelieder should be seen in the light of this debate. Their intensely personal nature and

27 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Torquato Tasso. Act V. 1.3432-3, (München, 1985).

28 See: Schiller, Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen in Schillers Sämtliche Werke (Stuttgart, 1862), p.351

" Rührung kann man also nur dann über eigenes Unglück empfinden, wenn der Schmerz über dasselbe gemässigt genug ist, um der Lust Raum zu lassen, die etwa ein mitleidender Zuschauer dabei empfindet."

immediacy of their expression should make us more, rather than less aware of the rhetorical techniques employed. In this way the sudden transformation from blasphemy to complete acceptance of the divine will should not, or not only, be seen as symbolic of an inner development, of a 'conversion' (Browning) or 'relapse' into Baroque Christianity (Dahlke) but, as Bütler-Schön has suggested, as a rhetorical device deriving from the structure of the Consolatione 29. Read in this way, the extreme suffering and blasphemy expressed in the early parts of these poems, derive their intensity from the structural awareness of the coming transformation. The poet can afford to be blasphemous as he knows that the extremity of his rebellion will be entirely retracted and refuted in the latter part of the poem.

In this section in which we set out to discuss Günther's specifically personal relationship to Job, we have already played over into certain aspects of his rhetorical use of this motif. We will now turn to the social and rhetorical reasons for Günther's choice of Job as his comforter.

(b) Günther's rhetorical use of the motif of Job

In choosing this Old Testament figure as a kindred

29 Bütler-Schön, p.220,
" In fast allen Gedichten findet nun nach dem Muster der zweiteiligen Consolationes ein Affektumschlag statt. "

spirit in his suffering, Günther was at once conjuring with a known literary entity, the Job of traditional drama and seventeenth century epicidea, and with the reader's expectations which were associated with it. The two most significant features of his interpretation are, firstly, his acknowledgement, indeed praise of Job as a rebel against divine authority and, secondly, his own (intrinsically unlutheran) claim to be a righteous man. At the most basic level, of course, Job takes his place in the poet's work alongside a wide selection of mythological, allegorical and biblical characters which were de rigeur in the poetry of the time. However the real reasons for his adoption of this figure, as indicated by its axiomatic position in many of his most important and problematic poems, lie much deeper.

In using the figure of Job to highlight his own suffering, Günther was consciously using the overwhelmingly positive popular view of Job, the just man punished, to gain sympathy for himself, a virtual social outcast. In using this biblical figure and modifying it subtly, Günther could, as it were, turn his detractors' rhetorical weapons against them. In the book of Job, he found a range of ready arguments and *topoi* to use against his critics; arguments, furthermore, to which they were sure to respond.

Conversely this 'defense mechanism' has its social roots. Günther did not select the book of Job as a literary

model because he saw it as an adequate retort to his detractors, but rather his misery made him identify with Job, the scapegoat, in the first place. The exigencies of life on the one hand and of rhetorical persuasio on the other can hence be seen to be closely bound up with one another.

The rhetorical use Günther made of both the figure and thought of Job is exemplified in the lyric expression of his attempted reconciliation with his father, Den Unwillen eines redlichen und getreuen Vaters suchte durch diese Vorstellungen bey dem Abschied aus seinem Vaterlande zu besänftigen ein gehorsamer Sohn. This lengthy poem (416 lines) consists largely of the poet's attempt at reconciliation through self-justification with his father. Its opening is already reminiscent of the book of Job:

" Und wie lange soll ich noch, dich, mein Vater, selbst zu
sprechen,
 Mit vergeblichem Bemühen Hofnung, Glück und Kräfte
schwächen ? " 30

His father is, in a sense, a deus absconditus, the absent authority figure, who will not even grant his son a hearing. The structure of Günther's pleading follows out of this, often mirroring Job's address to the Godhead:

" Steckt mir Bosheit in der Seele, brennt mir Rachgier in
der Brust
 Oder hat mein freches Spotten an des Feindes Schaden
Lust.
 Ja, verführt die Heuchelei mein entschuldigtes Gewissen,
 Dich allhier um neue Gunst blos aus Eigennuz zu küssen.

30 Kr.II.p.197/1.1-2.

O so werden meine Glieder mit des Hiobs Qual geplagt " 31
This passage, which structurally resembles Job's oath of purity, insisting on his innocence while demanding punishment if he should be lying, in its repeated use of the conditional followed by the supposed consequence ("Steckt mir ... Oder hat ... O so werden ... "), and indeed makes specific reference to its source (l.19), is similarly intended to convince his (earthly) father of his innocence. In his own, personalised, oath of purity. Günther attempts to prove the benevolence of his inner nature, the harmlessness of his satires and the unselfishness of his motivation for seeking reconciliation with his father. This oath is thus an attempt, as in Job, to clear the ground for a possible dialogue between two such unequal partners, and as such occupies a key rhetorical place at the beginning of this long epistolary poem.

Of course, given the poet's financial dependence on others, the question as to the integrity of his character was not a merely theoretical one, as his father and his patrons must surely have known. Günther's last attempt at a reconciliation with his father was primarily prompted by a practical consideration; the condition imposed by Phyllis' father that Johann Christian should complete his medical studies and obtain his father's blessing before he could

31 Kr.II.p.197,l.15-19.

marry his daughter. Patrons too were hardly likely to give money to a degenerate spendthrift, but rather to someone who could prove himself a diligent poet and successful student. Günther was well aware of the practical need for social acceptance, and hence for the need to persuade his patrons and father of his good intentions and the purity of his heart. The popular view of the 'dissolute' poet threatened to destroy any chances he had of becoming re-integrated into the society of his day, as the poet himself recognised:

" Da schreyt die Heucheley den Gönnern in die Ohren,
Ich als verworfenes Kind sey wirklich schon verlohren
Und folglich keiner Gunst noch Hülfe weiter werth. " 32

In this light, Günther's almost obsessive use of the topos of Redlichkeit can be seen to stem as much from practical considerations as from a personal need for self-justification. The figure of Job as interpreted by Günther also serves this end, for in comparing himself to this Old Testament figure, Günther is implying that his readers, like Job's friends, do not recognise the injustice of his suffering. As Habel points out rather irreverently:

" Yet the audience knows both what Job does not know and the fact that Job does not know. Job was framed. " 33

Günther does not have the advantage of this omniscient audience, he alone is convinced of his righteousness and

32 An Gott um Hülfe, Kr.II.p.69.1.28-30.

33 N.C. Habel. The Book of Job: A Commentary, (London, 1985) p.53.

must set out to prove this to his contemporaries and it is thus as a figure of rhetorical persuasio that Job is most useful to the poet. Intertextual references to this figure which may be seen as a means to a rhetorical end, are thus to be found in the poem to his father discussed above and in the, Lobgedicht auf plen cum tit Herrn von Löwenstãth which is analysed in the previous section.

Günther's Klagelieder are never static compositions but instead describe an intense inner progression or transformation. In their structure and content they vary widely, but one may generally speak of three main types.

i) A depiction of the poet's unjust suffering ending with an almost blasphemous challenge to God, Als er seinem

harten Schicksal nachdachte, (Kr.II.p.67) An Gott
(Kr.II.p.119)

ii) A bitter challenge to God and description of his suffering which is suddenly transformed by the experience of divine grace, giving way to stoic resolve, Als er durch
innerlichen Trost . . ., (Kr.II.p.123), Fragment,

(Kr.II.p.116)

iii) An attitude of overall stoicism which enables the poet to interpret his suffering as divine testing, Der sich
selbst tröstende und befriedigende Redliche. (Kr.II.p.76).

Die Zuversicht des Geistes zu Gott, (Kr.II.p.135), of which this last category is by far the most common.

There is evidently a point beyond which even Günther is

not prepared to go; his most blasphemous poems eventually give way to total acceptance of the divine will and only a very few end in an attitude of blasphemy and rebellion. Günther merely pushes back the boundaries of possible Christian rebellion but this challenge cannot finally be sustained.

In its close adherence to the argumentation of Job and its sustained challenge to the divine, the first of the Klagelieder, An Gott (Kr.II.p.119) deserves closer examination. It opens by addressing the almighty directly, indeed with considerable familiarity:

" Nun, lieber Gott, du bleibst ja lange,
Ich weiss nicht was ich denken soll. " (1.1-2)

God is the sole addressee of the poem which is effectively an attempt by the poet to make sense of what he sees as divine punishment. Günther argues his case from a series of paradoxes and antitheses which extend from the overall concept to details of phraseology:

" Der Zweifel macht der Hofnung bange, " (1.3)

" Es ist mit allem nichts gethan " (1.8)

Important to Günther's understanding of his plight is that he suffers in isolation; he can see only his own suffering and claims to receive no sympathy from others:

" Ach, soll denn ich, nur ich allein
Ein Greuel meines Schöpfers sein ? " (1.5-6)

" Ja, wem ich ehmahls Guts erzeigt,
Der sieht und hört mein Weh und schweigt. " (1.17-18)

Not only human individuals or the Godhead become Günther's

persecutors; even their associated allegorical personifications conspire against him:

" Mich jagt die Misgunst hin und her
Und macht mir noch die Armuth schwer. " (1.11-12)

Stanza by stanza, Günther lists his potential comforters in suffering, but none can save him from divine wrath; neither his own efforts (Stanza II), nor his friends (III) or even his own talents (IV) are able to save him. What makes this experience the more bitter for Günther, as for his biblical model, is that the wicked are meanwhile seen to prosper. Thus his own sufferings are counterpointed by the good fortune of the wicked:

" Indem man aller Orten sieht,
Wie hoch der Thoren Glücke blüht. "
(1.23-4)

There is evidently no reward for righteousness. Another point of criticism, is that harsh punishment may not necessarily redeem the sinner. Indeed the poet even implies that this may instead be the origin of his own waywardness:

" Ein scharfer Streich und langer Grimm
Macht oft die besten Herzen schlimm. "
(1.29-30)

A judgement, surely, which could be levelled against a human adversary, but which implies a certain hubris when applied to God.

The sixth stanza, it could be claimed, typifies the progression of thought in Günther's self-justificatory Klagelieder as a whole:

" Gefall ich mir in Bossheitslastern
Und bin ich eines Menschen Feind,
So soll mein Haupt die Hölle pflastern,

Auch eh dein grosser Tag erscheint.
Du kennst mein Herz, das sonder List,
Obgleich nicht ohne Schwachheit ist. "
(1.31-6)

The 'oath of purity' structure (if I have done x, then y should befall me) we have observed elsewhere. Its theological and rhetorical purpose is of course to show conclusively the injustice of the punishment imposed. The 'forfeit' to be rendered, should the poet be lying is described in terms of a violent and excessive metaphor (1.33) The second part of the stanza then effectively goes on to subvert the first, (1.35-36) for if God already knows the poet's heart, then the above oath is in any case superfluous (as indeed, strictly speaking, was that of the Old-Testament Job). The oath of purity is thus not written for the omniscient Godhead, but to persuade a potentially hostile readership. Characteristic too of Günther's argumentation is his differentiated view of his own sins, a theme further developed later in this same poem. For all his satire of the weaknesses of others', Günther tends to adopt a rather sympathetic view of his own failings. His 'revenge' is, for instance, described as " Langmuth, Wohlthun und Geduld " (1.38), and he always has an explanation of his shortcomings to hand:

" Geburth, Exempel, Noth und Jugend
Sind Ursach, dass ich fehlen muss.
Wer geht wohl stets den Weg der Tugend ? "
(1.43-5)

The theological implications of these relativist and altogether human arguments will be discussed in the section

to follow. It suffices for now to say that these lines are either a sign of the poet's overweening hubris or, more likely, that Günther's chief concern is not the divine, but his contemporary addressees.

In the seventh stanza, Günther affirms his faith and doubts it again almost in the same breath:

" Mein Glaube steht im härtesten Wetter
Und denckt: Es ist verdiente Schuld.
Ach, aber bey so vieler Schmach
Läst endlich auch die Hoffnung nach."
(1.39-42)

Like Job, with time, the weight of his misfortune overwhelms him and, from accepting everything uncomplainingly, his spirit rebels against the unearned punishment. This is the point of departure for Job's curse as it is for Günther's challenge of the almighty in the final stanza:

" Was wiltu mit dem Schatten zancken ?
Beweis an Stärkern deine Macht !
Wer wird dir in der Hölle dancken ?
Ach, hastu dies noch nicht bedacht ?
Du kommst mit Donner, Bliz und Sturm.
Wer ist der grosse Feind ? Ein Wurm. "
(1.49-54)

Günther, like Job in Chapter 9, fully recognises the futility and inherent inequality of a debate with God. He addresses the Godhead, however, not as a superior being, but as a human adversary with mortal lapses of memory and judgement:

" Ach, hastu dies noch nicht bedacht ? "
(1.52)

His diction here, as in his opening address:

" Nun, lieber Gott, du bleibst ja lange " (1.1)

is casual, not to say colloquial, and the overall tone is one of sarcastic irony. It is a tone indeed which would be better suited to satire than to a work supposedly addressed to God, as becomes apparent if compared with a Busslied from a contemporary hymnal, or with a religious piece produced as a commission by Günther himself. An examination of this poem An Gott thus shows a work divided against itself in diction and rhetoric; or rather a work which claims to address one audience (God) with an eye for another (contemporary society).

A metaphor which recurs in the book of Job is that of the trial:

" Denn er ist nicht ein Mensch wie ich, dem ich antworten könnte, dass wir miteinander vor Gericht gingen. Dass es doch zwischen uns einen Schiedsmann gäbe, der seine Hand auf uns beide legte ! " (Job, 9.32-3)

Job challenges God to appear, as in a trial, to justify his tormenting of a righteous man. When God does appear, (from a thunderstorm) he condemns Job's hubris but, unexpectedly, upholds his overall righteousness. Günther's challenge, for all its similarity to Job's, is not answered, and one is left with the feeling of observing a show-trial. All the elements bar one are present: the defendant (Günther), the witnesses and the public (the poet's contemporaries and his readership as a whole), even the poet's eventual 'prison' (there are two references to hell). Only the judge is missing. Or is he really ? Do Günther's contemporaries not double as witnesses and judge, who were in real life

unwilling or unable to accept the poet's version of his own life ?

(c) The theological difficulties raised by Günther's view of Job

The relationship between the Old Testament book of Job and Christian readings of this text has always been a rather uneasy one. The major tenets of New Testament theology have lain between the Christian reader and a straightforward interpretation of this work. Its portrayal of Yahweh, for instance, corresponds to the Old Testament God of wrath and it was unacceptable to early exegetes that God should wilfully punish his creatures. So Job's punishment became a test of his faith and, as Günther Datz points out:

" Aus dem Gerechten, der sich berechtigtermassen auflehnt, würde der Heilige, dessen Gerechtigkeit gerade darin bestund, dass er sich nicht auflehnt hat. " 34

Within this context, Luther's interpretation of Job was itself unusual in acknowledging Job's rebellion against God. His is a differentiated view of Job which notes his initial patience but also his curse:

" Denn eher dass Hiob in Todes-angst kömmt/ lobet er Gott über dem Raub seiner Güter/ und Tod seiner Kinder. Aber da ihm der Tod unter Augen gehet/ und Gott sich entseucht/ geben seine Worte Anzeigung/ was für Gedancken ein Mensch

34 Günther Datz, Die Gestalt Hiobs in der kirchlichen Exegese, (Göppingen, 1974), p.177.

habe (er sey wie heylig er wolle) wider Gott ..." 35

The issue, for Luther, of the book of Job was not whether he continued in his patience, for Luther reads the text accurately and recognises Job's rebellion, but the question of righteousness. This issue is, of course, central to Luther's theology and his writings on Job and, as he continues to explain in his introduction to Job:

" Wir sollen uns durchaus und in allem missfallen, und so mit Hiob alle unsere Werke fürchten (Vgl. Hiob, 9.28) Denn wer an sich Gefallen findet, kann nicht in der Furcht Gottes stehen und ohne Anmassung sein. "

Luther thus interprets the Old Testament figure of Job from his own theological standpoint which has its basis in a new concept of redemption. Job challenges the almighty to appear to judge his case; he has reviewed his actions and, within the context of his religion, can find no fault in them. He is, as he repeatedly states, a just man. Günther on the other hand, coming from as orthodox a Lutheran context as the beleaguered church in Silesia, should, one would feel, submit himself to Luther's concept of justification through grace alone. It is all the more surprising then that, in his emphatic self-justification, he should be closer to the biblical Job. To quote Dahlke :

35 D. Martin Luther, Biblia-das ist: die gantze Heilige Schrift, (Wittenberg 1703), Vorrede über das Buch Hiob.

" Es lag etwas blasphemisches darin, wenn Günther Hiob als positives Vorbild im Leid erwähnte, um ein Recht auf Klage von ihm abzuleiten." 36

Whereas Job's concept of righteousness lay in fulfilling the laws of his religion, Günther's is far more inward, better described as Redlichkeit. It is through this belief in his own intrinsic honesty and sincerity that he can stand up to the traditional Lutheran morality and proclaim himself a 'just' man. It is true that Günther does not always assert this belief, often bewailing his guilt and sin in the manner of orthodox Lutheran penitential hymns. One should not, however, regard this as Dahlke does as a "Rückfall auf den lutherischen Gnadentrost" 37 but rather view Günther's highly inward concept of Redlichkeit as unusual for the religious and literary milieu in which he was writing. It is unreasonable, given the variety of influences to which he was subject, from Old Testament theology to Leibnizean philosophy, for us to expect that his writing should be internally consistent.

Günther is rarely prepared to wholly acknowledge his sin and guilt. He is ever aware of the relativity of sin and of belonging to a society dominated by double standards. This in turn makes his relation to God and to his contemporaries both ambiguous and problematic. The poet seldom fully gives

36 Hans Dahlke, Johann Christian Günther: seine dichterische Entwicklung, (Berlin, 1960), p.163.

37 Hans Dahlke, p.155.

himself up to divine justice. At no point can he entirely forget his detractors who will come to read his poem as a confession and who would thus be confirmed in their own (negative) opinion of him. Many acknowledgements of his guilt and sin are almost immediately retracted and often transformed into self-justification or social satire. This is the case, for instance, in the first poem we looked at in detail, Als er seinem harten Schicksal nachdachte. The poet questions why a man so sinful as the punishment accorded him would suggest should not be wiped from the face of the earth, but then immediately undermines the very possibility with an affirmation of his own virtue:

" Jedoch ich weis, er kennt mein treu Gemüthe " (1.25)

Far from trembling at the prospect of the day of judgement, he has complete and overweening confidence in his own salvation:

" So deutlich und so wahr ich jezt mich selbst empfinde,
So fest versprech ich mir Vergebung jeder Sünde,
Und so gewis du bist, so starck ist mein Vertraun." 38

He trusts in his own works, or an improvement in his external circumstances, to enable him to regain the path of virtue:

" Wie wenig, liebster Gott, bedürft ich, mich zu retten,
Wenn Argwohn, List und Wahn an mir kein Greuel hätten
Und Glimpf und Billigkeit bey einem Richter wär ! " 39

This refusal to shape the content of his poetry to Lutheran

38 Kr.II.p.70,1.61-3.

39 Ibid, 1.19-21.

tenets must, one suspects, have been a conscious one. In his more 'orthodox' writings, Günther is quite able to provide a versified summary of Lutheran thought:

" Der Glaube würket durch die Wercke,
Allein die Wercke helfen nichts:
Mein Glaube kommt von deiner Stärcke,
Du bist der Vater alles Lichts,
Du wirst mich auch bey finstern Zeiten
Zur Tugend leiten;
Sprich nur ein Wort, ach so geschichts " 40

In general, though, Günther was so aware of the double standards present in his society, that he could not abandon either this poetic self-justification or its counterpart, namely satirical attacks on the hypocrisy of the complacent Lutheran clergy.

This rhetoric of self-justification ultimately proved counter-productive. Through his insistence on a morality of Redlichkeit accompanied by continuing attacks on the double standards of a conventional social morality which decried the offender by name, Günther destroyed every chance of acceptance by this same society. The bitterness and personal grievance which lay behind the skilful rhetoric was too apparent. However genuine his wish for a new society, Günther was unable to disguise his personal motives with the result that his satires and even his laments have more than a hint of the lampoon.

Günther's literary use of the book of Job can be seen as a logical extension in the tradition of theological

40 Kr.II.p.72,1.22-28.

interpretation. While pre-reformation exegetes, medieval writers and even the playwrights of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries clung to an image of Job as a paragon of patience by concentrating on the figure of the narrative section, Luther introduced a new hermeneutic possibility in acknowledging Job the rebel through considering the text as a whole. This rebellion was seen by Luther and his successors as a sign of man's weakness worthy of condemnation. Günther, however, in his search for adequate expression of his alienation from contemporary society and the religious orthodoxy of his day, adopted Job as a positive role model in his distress. In doing this, Günther must surely have been aware of the social and theological futility of the hermeneutic liberties he was taking, allied as they were to an insistence on his own righteousness at odds, again, with Lutheran orthodoxy. Thus Günther's Klagelieder could not hope to persuade the contemporary audience they were written for, and had to wait almost a century for the power of their expression to be fully recognised.

Conclusion

In his treatment of the figure of Job, Günther extended and transformed not only the traditional view of this figure by using it for his own personal and rhetorical

purposes, but also the whole previous framework of biblical reference. Whereas seventeenth century writers had concentrated on paraphrasing the book of Job or on using him as a stock figure of consolation, for instance in epicidea, Günther adopted Job as his comforter in his sufferings and struggle with contemporary society. An important aspect of this self-modelling on a biblical figure, which has not hitherto been recognised is that whereas Job represents an archetype of suffering humanity, Günther sets out to portray himself as a suffering artist.

Whereas Job's sufferings stem ultimately from the initial wager between God and Satan, Günther's plight is a result of his zealous adherence to a concept of poetic Redlichkeit above the exigencies of day to day life. Günther is throughout a highly self-conscious artist; his use and transformation of literary role models such as Job should thus be seen chiefly in terms of their persuasive potential on a hostile public. His self-stylisation is a justified one inasmuch as there really was no place for the 'freelance' writer at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This transitional period was characterised by the phenomenon of writing as a social rather than a personal skill; poetry was seen as the product of Nebenstunden, not as an end in itself and the professional poet was ridiculed as a Bettelpoet. Günther's refusal to conform to these categories was thus the deep cause of his suffering

and he was entirely aware of the financial and social exigencies of his time, as becomes clear from a poem to his friend Haas:

" Man fragt nur: Bringt sie Geld? Nicht viel. So las sie
bleiben
Und nimm die Brodtkunst vor.
Kein klug, kein sinnreich Wort, kein netter Dichterfleiss
Noch angenehmer Scherz wird, wenig ausgenommen,
In Umgang, Kirch und Tisch auf Mund und Zunge kommen. " 41

Günther was in the paradoxical position of being regarded by many as a social outcast, while himself seeing this very society as corrupt and hypocritical, worthy of satire and certainly in need of moral regeneration. This paradox also explains the curious interweaving of standpoints and motifs we find in his laments. In the same poem Günther can turn from lamenting his personal sin and guilt to bitterly satirising contemporary society and even style himself as a moral teacher, as a crier in the wilderness called by God to chastise his generation.⁴²

Such apparent inconsistencies have made a scholarly overview of the Klagelieder a difficult task indeed. Critics have tried in vain to define a unifying concept for this disparate body of Günther's work. Viewed from an intertextual standpoint, it is ultimately futile to look for unity precisely in these Klagelieder. Their conceptual basis itself is too complex for this to be possible.

41 Kr.III.p.115,l.88-92.

42 This is especially the case in his: Buszgedancken über den Zustand der Welt, Kr.II.p.103-5.

deriving as it does from sources as diverse as orthodox Lutheranism, Leibnizean theodicy and the Old Testament book of Job. Even confining ourselves to this last text, one immediately perceives an inherent instability of form, content and interpretation. The book of Job is not itself a stable text, composed as it is of two sections almost certainly written at different times and from radically different standpoints. This textual ambiguity is further complicated by the many layers of interpretation which have accrued to the text over the centuries, from the medieval portrayal of Job's patience, to Günther's own conscious imitation of his rebellion. This diversity of content and approach suited Günther's personal and poetic needs and, moreover, provides the rich literary and theological background to these laments. It is this very instability which lends these poems their inward, rhetorical power and yet ultimately caused them to fail in their social aim: the reintegration of the poet into contemporary life. The book of Job thus represents a two-edged sword; in theological terms a very problematical work (as becomes obvious from the complexity of Luther's utterances on this book) but the perfect mirror of the paradoxes facing Günther himself. These texts, Günther's poetry and his own life were finally too complex to fit easily into the social context of eighteenth century Lutheran Silesia. For all their success as a rhetorised expression of intense inner suffering and

paradox, the Klagelieder failed in what must have been their primary aim: to convince the Günther's contemporaries of his innocence and righteousness.

CHAPTER 4.

JOHANN CHRISTIAN GUNTHER AND THE FORM OF THE TRADITION: THE EXAMPLE OF HIS EPITHALAMIA

(1) The origin and characteristics of the German epithalamium.

Among the many occasional poems which Johann Christian Günther wrote, both in his own name and on commission, for the most common social events of birth, marriage and death, the gaining of academic honours and professional promotion, a central position is held by his forty nine ¹ epithalamia ². They form the largest single group among the occasional poetry, which in any case makes up the majority of his oeuvre, they accurately chart the poet's problematic relationship to the literary demands and rule bound poetics of his age.

The Epithalamium is illustrative of a poetry seen primarily as a social, non individualistic and celebratory

¹ This number includes the six Krämer includes in the Angezweifelte Gedichte in Volume 6.

² The term: 'Epithalamium' is used here as equivalent to the German: 'Hochzeitgedicht' and no attempt is made to differentiate between pro- and epithalamia. Epithalamium is taken here to designate those poems (Hochzeitgedichte) written to celebrate a marriage and congratulate the individuals concerned, often read or recited at the marriage feast itself which in the period in question would often be subsequently collected and printed as an Einzeldruck.

form. Its raison d'etre is externally imposed and its rules are governed by considerations of form and rhetoric rather than of individual inspiration. As Bornemann comments:

" In Epithalamien wird nicht irgendein bestimmtes Fest besungen, sondern die Hochzeit an sich, die frei von zeitbedingten und subjektiven Komponenten dargeboten wird." 3

The German epithalamium, itself a successor of neo-Latin occasional poetry common among the educated classes 4, reached the height of its popularity and the widest social range of recipients in the late seventeenth century. By the time Günther was writing in this form, occasional poetry was already under considerable attack from poets and scholars; attacks, moreover, which in decades to come were to prove fatal to its survival as a literary genre.

The epithalamium is, of course, an ancient form which has undoubtedly existed for as long as humankind has marked the great transitions of human^{life} in a ceremonial form. The earliest surviving examples of this genre are to be found in Sappho's fragments and in the epithalamic interludes from Aristophanes. Many of its main motifs, too, have

3 Ulrich Bornemann, Anlehnung und Abgrenzung- Untersuchungen zur Rezeption der niederländischen Literatur in der deutschen Dichtungsreform des 17. Jahrhunderts, (Assen/ Amsterdam, 1976), Ch. 4: Die Gelegenheitsdichtung am Beispiel der Hochzeitsdichtung, pp.148-197.

4 This tradition is especially to be seen in Gryphius' poems on the weddings of former fellow students such as the Hochzeit=Scherz, or the epithalamium: Auf Herren Georg Fehlaus Hochzeit, (in Andreas Gryphius, Gesamtausgabe Ed. Marian Szyrocki, Vol 3. Vermischte Gedichte, (Tübingen, 1984) pp.153-56/ 156-57.

acquired the character of ! topoi being passed on through the whole history of the form. The most common of these are, as we shall see in more detail later, the address to Hymen the god of marriage 5, the comparison of the wife to ivy or to a vine twining around her husband, the tree 6, the beginning of the wedding night marked by the appearance of Hesperus (or Vesper) the evening star 7, the description of Venus, that most suitable of wedding guests and her court 8 and the Fescenniae, the crude encouragement to consummate the marriage. The form of these poems also dates back to antiquity: the frequent disputatio having its roots in Catullus' " Debate on marriage versus virginity" in Carmen 62. The marriage customs described in seventeenth or eighteenth-century German Hochzeitsgedichte, the Heimführung and indeed the singing of the epithalamium outside the bridal chamber also hold true for ancient Rome

5 Sappho, Fragments, Catullus, Carmen 61 takes as its chorus an address to Hymen:

" ... Hymenaeae Hymen,
O Hymen Hymenaeae. "

6 For this vine and tree metaphor see: Catullus, Carmen 61, l.102-105:

" lenta sed velut adsitas
vitis implicat arbores
implicabitum in tuum
complexum. "

7 Sappho, Fragments, Catullus, Carmen 62, l.1-2 :
" Vesper adest: iuvenes, consurgite: Vesper Olympo
expectata diu vix tandem lumina tollit. "

8 Claudian, Epithalamium for Honoricus and Maria l.99-144.

as much as for early modern Germany.

By the end of the seventeenth century, epithalamia, like other forms of occasional poetry, had been assigned a clearly defined social role. The demands of social status and the need for public display here far outweighed any more personal considerations. The bride and groom were celebrated as members of a wider social order and as befitted their class status; their own individual personalities as such were of little interest. In reading these poems from our modern perspective then, we should not see this genre as an unchanging entity, but remain conscious of the gradations between these poems depending on such factors as the social status of the addressee (many more liberties could be taken in a work for a chemist from Goldberg than in an allegorical eulogy for the high nobility) and of the status of the poet compared with that of the addressee, whether the poem was written for the wedding of a friend or as a commission (in which case the poet might not know the couple at all).

By this time also we can discuss occasional poetry in terms of its 'mass production' 9. From the limited exchange

9 This mass production, moreover, as Segebrecht has argued, is the main reason that a genre which had existed for hundreds, even thousands of years, was literally 'done to death' in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries: " Die Reimflut allein bereits führt ... das Ende der Poesie herbei, nicht etwa ihre mangelnde Qualität. " (p.241)

By the end of the seventeenth century, poets were engaging in acts of rhetorical contortion to produce works which stood out against a mass of similar examples.

of neo-Latin greetings and congratulations between fellow members of a scholarly elite and the nobility, the sending of occasional poetry had spread throughout all social classes (as witnessed, for instance, by Günther's poems for merchants and other members of the non-academic Stadtbürgertum). 10

Neither is it uncommon to find two or more occasional poems written for the same event in the collected works of a poet: such poems, written on commission, generally returned to their 'native stable' on the compilation of a Gesamtausgabe. As we shall see, the chief pressure on a writer of occasional poetry was one of inspiration or rather of rhetorical inventio. An epithalamium (or indeed any other occasional poem) was expected to fulfil certain requirements which restricted the poet's formal and imaginative scope. The sources of inspiration, as we shall

10 Indeed, as Segebrecht argues, (W. Segebrecht, Das Gelegenheitsgedicht, Tübingen, 1977, p.238) this very proliferation led to the ultimate downfall of the occasional poem. Latterly the actual content of the individual poem came to matter less than the number of poems received so this 'currency' lost its value and was eventually spurned by poets and the reading public alike. As the demand for occasional poetry grew, so too did the strain of production on the authors and the well off and socially significant, the scholars, merchants and the nobility most often called upon to produce such verses, would pass on their duties to be written by skilful but impecunious students or Miethpoeten (such, in fact, as Günther). This in turn led to the establishment of two stratae of poets, the despised Miethpoeten for whom poetry was a profession, albeit a badly paid one, and others for whom it was merely the pastime of their leisure hours (Nebenstunden) which was socially acceptable, indeed the expected pursuit of the educated man.

see in our examination of the poetological basis of the epithalamium, were assigned fixed parameters and it became increasingly difficult to say anything new or ingenious. The development of the occasional poem is, by its very nature, a cumulative process; however there comes a point (and it might be argued that by the time Günther was writing, this had long since been reached) when nothing new can be said; the lifeblood has been drained out of the form and it must either be completely revised, or done away with. It might also be said (and as this chapter will argue) that poets of Günther's generation were caught in a cleft stick in relation to this genre; while wholly perceiving its limitations, they were socially and financially dependent on its continuation. In this way, they could neither afford to stop writing occasional verse (as a contemporary, G.B. Hancke did, 11) nor could they inwardly support its perpetuation.

(2) Form and content: some observations on the role and structure of the 'traditional' Epithalamium.

The form and indeed the content of the epithalamium had, by the latter half of the seventeenth century become as fixed and formulaic in theory as in practice. The chief consideration in the composition of an epithalamium and

11 See: W. Segebrecht, Das Gelegenheitsgedicht, p.252.

this, as we have seen is related to its 'mass distribution', was one of theme and inspiration. These questions were dealt with in the poetological reference works of the time 12 with direct reference to the principles of rhetorical inventio which provided the underlying structure for much poetry. In their most basic form, these were equated with the Suchformeln of the rhetorical textbook: Quis ? Quid ? Ubi ? Quibus auxiliis ? Cur? Quomodo ? Quando ? and often applied directly to the composition of the epithalamium as we see in an example from Albrecht Christian Rotth:

" i) Wer hat Hochzeit gehabt ?
ii) Was ist geschehen ?
iii) Wo ist solches geschehen ? " 13

which, at their most simplistic, elicit the response to the first question:

" Nur zu erzehlen:
(i) dass oben benanntes Paar zu Dresden Hochzeit machet
(ii) lobe ich solches Unterfangen/ und
(iii) wünsche ich Glück darzu. " 14

12 In the following reference will be made to five main poetological works: Siegmund von Birken, Teutsche Rede-Bind und Dichtkunst Nürnberg, 1679, Albrecht Christian Rotth: Vollständige Deutsche Poesie (Leipzig, 1688), Magnus Daniel Omeis, Gründliche Anleitung zur Teutschen accuraten Reim- und Ticht-kunst, (Altdorf, 1704), Johann Samuel Wahl, Poetischer Wegweiser, (Jena, 1709), Johann Georg Neukirch, Anfangs-Gründe zur reinen teutschen Poesie, (Halle, 1724), and will from now on be cited by their author's name and their date of publication alone.

13 Rotth, p.44.

14 Ibid, p.45.

This brief formulation contains the essence of epithalamic poetry (as well as suggesting its typical, tripartite structure): the fact of the marriage, congratulations on the event, rounded off by a wish—usually for marital happiness and numerous offspring. These brief rhetorical 'signposts' are, however, as Rotth goes on to demonstrate, usually only the starting point of inventio: the bare skeleton of the poem should now be filled out:

" Will ich aber die Erzählung poetisch machen ... "

and, again with reference to these initial questions, Rotth first centres on the groom as a focus of inspiration:

" ... dass ich den Herrn Bräutigam nach seinem Fleisse/
guten Qualitäten und Ruhm beschreibe, seine itzige
Liebes=Beschaffenheit darstelle " 15

Rotth then continues through the list of initial questions, of rhetorical loci, suggesting how each of these could be elaborated.

Such practical, step by step guides to writing epithalamia are to be found in many treatises throughout this epoch; a fact, again, which reflects the growing demand for all types of occasional poetry. The theory and terminology which implicitly underpins this practical guide may be found in a brief work, Der poetische Wegweiser written by J.S. Wahll twenty years later. The locus of the

15 Rotth, p.46.

earlier work is here described as a thema but the two terms, are used by these authors virtually identically, so that Wahll's theory reveals, as it were, the inner workings of Rotth's practical examples. The straightforward response to the first question, for instance:

" Was ist geschehen ? Resp: Sie haben Hochzeit gehalten ", would be defined by Wahll as a thema simplex while the poetical elaboration of this same subject matter falls under the category of thema conjunctum. In Wahll's argument, heavily studded with practical examples, we come across many a commonplace of marriage poetry:

" Thema conjunctum ist eine völlige proposition oder problema: Wenn ich zum Exempel frage: ... Ist wohl der Herbst die beste Zeit zu freyen oder nicht ? Von diesem muss man nun partem affirmantem oder negantem erwehlen/ und durch gehörige argumenta in einem carmine ausführen. "16

Here we also encounter the first reference to a central trope of the epithalamium: the seasons which, along with years, months and days of the week were a popular source of inventio. In the folk traditions of many nations it is a common assumption that the celebration of marriage is also a celebration of order and continuity, the circle of the seasons and of human life as a whole. It is not therefore surprising that the literary celebration of marriage should integrate humankind into that order, the natural circle of nature. Marriage, or more specifically the bride's transition from girl to wife, was seen in terms of spring

16 Wahll, p.81.

progressing to summer with hopes of a bountiful harvest (the next generation) to come. The marriage ceremony, even when conducted in the colder and more inhospitable months of the year is always seen in terms of spring and summer; hence, as we shall see, the extensive play on such themes as, " Der in den Frühling verwandelten Herbst ", 17 " Der Frühling im Herbst in dem Garthen der Liebe " 18 or " Der Sommer im Winter " 19 In contrast (and this topic provides a counter example in a number of epithalamia) the marriage between an old man and a young girl or vice versa was seen as unnatural and against the order of the universe and was as such held up as an object of aversion.

The epithalamium, although written for a mixed audience may legitimately be seen as a predominantly male form and as complying to the expectations of homosocial 20 discourse. This is especially the case as regards Gryphius' epithalamia on the weddings of fellow students. The poet adopts the role of the only remaining bachelor of the group, recalling the pleasures of all-male student life and

17 Rotth, p.81.

18 Kr.5, p.24.

19 Wahll, p.102.

20 By which, to use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's term, is meant a bond between two persons of the same gender (in this case, male) for the promotion of their gender and social interests which, by implication excludes the other gender (women) or reduces it to an object of trade and discussion. This concept is expounded at length in her: Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire (New York, 1985).

pranks and lamenting the fact that a woman (who is often seen in satirical and overtly misogynistic terms) should have stolen the groom away from his male friends. Another favourite theme in this genre, and one which Günther was later to adopt, is that of the conjugal mis-match, or of the nag or the bad wife who fails in her major duties of keeping house, of satisfying her husband's every need and, most importantly, in providing (legitimate) heirs. This theme, of course, generally serves to counterpoint the womanly perfection of the addressee's bride, however the sting is present and, significantly, the figure of the bad or hapless husband is rare.

Bearing in mind the practical, social and financial considerations which often lay behind marriages in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially the fact that marriages were frequently arranged, it is not surprising that these mundane concerns should be reflected in contemporary epithalamia.

The epithalamium as such captures many of the tensions which run through seventeenth-century literature, riven as it is by the seemingly contradictory influences of its classical, heathen origins which are employed to celebrate the Christian sacrament of marriage. This tension manifests itself in the coexistence, even in the same poem, of biblical and classical imagery, of the celebration of a Christian ceremony contrasting with the fescennine ribaldry

surrounding the consummation of the marriage.

Segebrecht, in his discussion of the role of the wish in marriage poetry, seeks to explain this co-existence in historical terms:

" Mit dem gewünschten >immergrünenden Fröling im eh-bette< und den erhofften >wolartigen Eh=Pflanzen< spricht Omeis die beiden Wünsche an, die am Ende eines Hochzeitgedichtes am häufigsten geäußert werden. Beide Wünsche sind frei von Tabus, die sich erst später einstellen zu einer Zeit, in der die Ehe sich vom Schauplatz der Öffentlichkeit ins private Separee zurückzieht. " 21

Indeed it is the last of the poetologists we are considering, Johann Georg Neukirch, writing in 1724, a year after Günther's death, who most categorically takes offense at the overtly sexual side of the epithalamium:

" Unverschämte und ärgerliche Sau=Zoten in diese Gedichten einfließen lassen, sonderlich in die sogenannten Braut=Suppen, stehet einem christlichen Poeten nicht wohl an." 22

In this, Neukirch forms part of a movement to clē^anse poetry of its galant excess and of an overall move (which we will be looking at in more detail with reference to Günther) to draw a clearer distinction between mythological and Biblical influences in poetry as a whole.

The correspondence between theory and practice is very close indeed; for not only the tropes, but also the

21 Segebrecht, Das Gelegenheitsgedicht. p.154.

22 J.G. Neukirch, 1724, p.402, Although it has to be admitted that Neukirch seems to have held a rather low opinion of marriage as a whole:

" Der Ehestand führt ohnedem mehr Galle als Honigseim mit sich; deswegen ist unverwehrt, solchen angenehm und beliebt vorzubilden. "

dispositio were often taken wholesale from such treatises. Neither is this close relationship at all surprising, the numerous poetological works of the epoch quoted a host of examples from contemporary poetry as illustrations of specific points and the poets of the time would in turn copy directly from these compendia. In the course of time, occasional poetry could not fail to become an intensely self-referential form. The circle of cross fertilisation between theory and practice became claustrophobic and incestuous: little room remained for such individuality and inventiveness as we still find in Gryphius. Latterly there was little enjoyment to be derived for the poet from this form; these poems were the product of Pflicht (which should be translated here not so much as 'duty', but as 'social obligation'). It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that poets came to rebel against the strictures of this form as such, and to set down their reasons for doing so, although Opitz, writing a century earlier had in fact already noted the dangers of the abuse of the occasional genre. As a result, poets were writing in a hot-house atmosphere in which convention demanded epithalamia, while the force of tradition and this self-same convention bound the writers hands, causing his writing to be increasingly clichéd and repetitive.

Before moves (described at length by Segebrecht) had been made to do away with occasional verse, the only way

forward was for it to turn in on itself. As writers became increasingly aware of the futility of writing for the usual collection of some twenty epithalamia for a society wedding, they began to play with and comment on the form itself. This self-conscious, indeed parodic, use of this form reaches its peak in Günther, but is already to be observed in a number of his contemporaries, and notably in the work of his Leipzig mentor, Johann Burchard Mencke.

In the collection of Mencke's, Scherzhafte Gedichte published in 1713 under his poetic pseudonym, Philander von der Linde, we find a group of 29 epithalamia which serve as a representative sample of his use of this form. Unlike his protege Günther, Mencke shows a particular affinity for the poetic disputatio, that most rhetorical and playful of forms. Significantly, the themes he chooses to discuss fall entirely within the bounds of convention, Welches die beste Zeit zu heyrathen ? Bey der H. und L. Hochzeit, 1697 23, Ob es schade sey, dass man sich verheyrathe ? An der Junker und Schadischen Hochzeit, 1697 24 but his treatment of these themes is entirely self-conscious. In the first example, which one would have expected to be treated in the manner of the 'Frühling im Herbste' theme we touched upon earlier: Mencke instead debunks all superstitions

23 Philander von der Lindes Scherzhafte Gedichte, (Leipzig, 1713) p.78

24 Ibid, p. 71

concerning the time of year a wedding takes place as whimsy, merely serving the cause of poetic inventio, however he is himself unable to escape these same demands entirely and reverts to an entirely conventional closing formulation:

" Nein, dieses alles lehrt ein falscher Aberglauben.
Er hat zur rechten Zeit ein frommes Kind erwehlt,
Das so, wie er annoch der Jahre Frühling zehlt,
Und das kein rauher Herbst ihm mächtig ist zu rauben. "
(p.81)

The poet can see the shortcomings of the required form, but by continuing to use it himself, is caught in a double-bind and must ultimately comply with its prescriptive demands.

This same self-referentiality, a consciousness that it has 'all already been done' is even more apparent in Mencke's series of epithalamia on the 'cupid in disguise trope'. 25

In an epithalamium of 1701 bearing the title, Cupido eine Trödel-Frau 26. Mencke makes his reflections on the popularity of this trope the introduction to his own

25 This trope, of cupid who disguises himself to win over the heart of the hitherto impervious beloved was ubiquitous by the time Mencke wrote on this theme in the late 1690's. This motif is also popular in the visual arts, we find Venus' mischievous son dominating works from Van Veen's: Amorum Emblemata, (Antwerp, 1608) although here cupid, while adopting a wide variety of roles is naked, not disguised to the popular series of putti in disguise produced by the Wegely porcelain company in Berlin in the 1750s. Indeed among these figures we find one: Putto als Marktenderin, which bears a certain similarity to cupid as described by Mencke.

26 Scherzhafte Gedichte, p.115.

version of this theme:

" Was nimmt Cupido nicht vor seltne Masquen an ?
Bald ist er ein Student, und bald ein Handels=Mann:
Bald ackert er das Feld: bald wird er gar zum Ritter
Und bald verstellt er sich in einen Hochzeit=Bitter. "

Such a list thus serves as a kind of exculpation to one's addressee and audience for venturing into such well-trodden poetical pastures. By citing the most common motifs, the poet tries to underline the ingenuity of his own version.

In^{an} other of Mencke's epithalamia, we find a possible source of Günther's exaggerated use of the modesty topos, namely in his, Entschuldigung, warum er kein Hochzeit=Carmen zu schicken capable sey of 1699 and another entitled, Noch eine Entschuldigung bey der E. und R. Hochzeit, A. 1699, Sept 19. While it is true that this modesty topos was a standard feature of occasional poetry, Mencke (and even more so Günther, as we shall see) are unusual in making it the main theme of a number of their poems. In both the examples quoted, Mencke opens with a traditional formulation of the topos: the poet would dearly love to write the expected poem, but he does not feel up to the task and his muse is indisposed:

" Inzwischen ist es wahr, es fordert meine Pflicht:
Dieweil dein Sinn nunmehr aufs Freyen ist gericht
So solltest du von mir ein Hochzeit=Carmen haben;
Doch meine Poesie liegt leider ietzt begraben;
Die Vena trocknet mir auf meinen Reisen ein:
Die Reime wollen mir nicht mehr gehorsam seyn. " 27

27 Philander von der Linde, Scherzhafte Gedichte, (Leipzig, 1713), p.87: Entschuldigung warum er kein Hochzeit=Carmen zu schreiben capable sey.

or, from our other example:

" Ich wollte deinen Ehestand
Und das nunmehr erneute Band
Gern nach Gebühr besingen;
Allein da sträubet sich mein Kiel,
Und wenn ich gleich was dichten will
So will mir nichts gelingen. " 28

However this initial procrastination, this pretended modesty, is the sign of a more fundamental dissatisfaction with occasional poetry. Paradoxically, the formal expectations of this genre required that such implicit criticism be woven into the actual substance of the poem itself, as a kind of rhetorical game. It is often difficult to tell where the playful and self-conscious transformation of a motif gives way to, or co-exists with, serious criticism of the form itself:

" Ja seh ich deine Braut nach der Benennung an,
So find ich zwar so viel als ich verlangen kan
...
Allein diss scheint mir in etwas zu gemein,
Und lass ich mich nicht gern in blosse Nahmen ein. " 29

and, turning to another old chestnut of the epithalamic form:

" Solt ich den Hochzeit=Tag, solt ich die Woche wissen,
Die Verse würden mir von sich selber fliessen,
Jedoch du schreibest mir kein einzig Wort davon
Was hätt ich ausser dem nur von invention ? " 30

In our second example, Mencke indulges in what was to be a

28 Ibid, Noch eine Entschuldigung, p.89.

29 Ibid, p.87.

30 Ibid, Entschuldigung, p.88.

favourite game of Günther's, of writing about writing and his lack of inspiration to fill the space:

" Zwey Seiten sind schon meist erfüllt,
Wofern es noch was grosses gilt,
So füll ich einen Bogen

Ein Wuntsch, der recht von Hertzen geht,
Soll, kömmt er gleich ein wenig spät,
Den leeren Raum erfüllen. " 31

Such musings on the form of the epithalamium, as we shall also see in Günther, are located in a half-way house between theory and practice and point to the disintegration of the genre itself. The form remains as an outer casing, but its content has been played out and is replaced by a parody of its former self; by the satire of a genre which has outlived its usefulness.

In both the subject matter and the execution of his epithalamia, Mencke remains firmly in the tradition of galante Dichtung, little influenced by the serious criticism of occasional verse as it was being articulated by Neukirch, among others, by 1700. Mencke's criticism of this genre, for all its satire and parody, remains encased in the form of the epithalamium itself. His willingness to include in his anthology of 1713 (a work which Günther must have known intimately 32) poems written some fifteen years

31 Ibid, p.91-2.

32 Günther in fact made very few direct comments on the literary life of his time and almost none to direct texts. He was, as will become apparent, interested in the principles and even the morality of the poetic form, but we find in Günther no discussion of specific texts such as are

earlier, taking little or no account of contemporary critical debate or development, shows how much Mencke, that supposed reformer of Günther's style, was himself still indebted to and ultimately unable to overthrow the conventions of the previous century.

(3) Günther's relationship to the epithalamic form.

Bearing in mind the overwhelming weight of convention embodied in the work of his mentor, it should not surprise us now, as we go on to consider Günther's epithalamia, that the younger poet too should have found it difficult to break away from so prescriptive a form. Neither should we, as Segebrecht has pointed out, 33 overlook the pressure exerted by audience expectation.

It is not enough to base an analysis of Günther solely on a few of his most inward, unconventional and self-conscious works for these are atypical of his opus as a whole. This consists in the main of occasional verse, indeed often of repetitive and conventional examples of this form. Günther was, to a large extent, writing to

found in the Moralische Wochenschriften, or the prose correspondence of Gottsched, Bodmer or Breitinger.

33 W. Segebrecht, Das Gelegenheitsgedicht, Section II Chapter V, Zur Produktion und Distribution von Casualcarmina, pp.225, Section III, Chapter I: Die Massenhaftigkeit der Casuallyrik als Ausgangspunkt von Kontroversen, pp.225-30.

satisfy public demand and majority taste: a majority for whom, as we have seen, the epithalamium had a set form, beginning with a playful and ingenious theme, continuing with a eulogy of the couple and ending with a wish resonant with sexual innuendo. As we can see from his numerous 'conventional' epithalamia, Günther was a master of this genre, of its form, tropes and diction. At first glance, indeed there seems to be little or no difference between Günther's occasional poetry and that of hundreds of his contemporaries who produced occasional verse for similar social events. Perhaps the main reason much of Günther's occasional poetry has been singled out for critical attention (and until recently it was always seen as the 'poor relation' of his non-occasional verse) is that it is to be found in an anthology under his name, in other words, as the work of a canonical poet. A full appreciation of its meaning and context would necessitate viewing it in the framework of the Einzeldruck, as one poem amongst many, for, as Drees remarks:

" Nicht die einzigartige Leistung, sondern erst das Typische macht den Weg frei für die Einsicht in den Gebrauchscharakter dieser poetischen Texte. " 34

An attempt has been made in this section precisely to view Günther's epithalamia in their context: unfortunately the

34 Jan Drees, Die soziale Funktion der Gelegenheitsdichtung: Studien zur deutschsprachigen Gelegenheitsdichtung in Stockholm zwischen 1613 und 1719, (Stockholm, 1986), p.7.

absence of such epithalamic Einzeldrücke as include works by Günther, which would undoubtedly have formed the basis of a fascinating study, has caused us ^{to rely} instead on contemporary anthologies and collections in an attempt to delimit Günther's achievement in a genre noted for its lack of individuality, its intrinsic adherence to convention.

In the light of this general overview, the following section seeks to consider Günther's epithalamia from four main points of view:

- i) Günther's 'conventional' epithalamia.
- ii) The inner balance lost: the modesty topos as a subversive force.
- iii) The 'alternative' epithalamium as a vehicle for literary comment.
- iv) Formal disintegration or rhetorical game ? The example of the disjointed Hülse/ Lührin poem.

i) The 'conventional' epithalamium

Our first consideration here, before we go on to analyse individual poems, is a terminological one. It might seem a risky enterprise indeed to try to separate Günther's epithalamia into neat categories, for even his most seemingly conventional works have a tendency to subversiveness and self-referentiality akin to that found in Mencke. The term: 'conventional' epithalamium is taken here to designate such poems as conform to the formal

expectations laid out in Rotth, Von Birken, Wahl and others and which can also make reference, however obliquely, to the favourite topoi of classical marriage poetry such as Venus' court, the appearance of the evening star and of Cupid as matchmaker.

The epithalamium is, of course, an overtly social and public form, although its subject matter touches on the most intimate and private aspects of personal relations. The tension it expresses mirrors that of the wedding itself. The ceremony represents the religious union of two individuals in the eye of society; it also represents the couple's entry into the full life of the community, the maintenance of a social order and a willingness to uphold and, by implication, to further the life of that social group. On the other hand, the consummation of the marriage is, from our own, modern, point of view an entirely private and intimate matter. 35 In the epithalamium of this period, however, the public and private aspects flow together imperceptibly; together representing the essence, at once social and personal, of a marriage. The poems we will be considering are fairly unusual in recognising the intimacy of its subject matter; this recognition causes a rift between the social and private aspects of the wedding and

35 An interesting discussion of the often complex relationship between public and private aspects of weddings is to be found in Hans Peter Duerr's Nacktheit und Scham: Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess, (Frankfurt am Main, 1988) p.327 ff.

so makes the sexual sphere the subject of voyeuristic titillation.

An important influence on the structure and content of the epithalamium, which we have hitherto overlooked, is the status of the addressee. In this section we will be looking at three of Günther's more conventional epithalamia, one for a noble marriage, Auf die Hochreichgräfliche gedoppelte Zierotinische Alliance 36; another again possibly for a noble wedding (but written for the brother of the groom); and the third for a bourgeois wedding.

In the first of these, an iambic poem of moderate length (112 lines) written for the Zierotin wedding (Günther uses the French word alliance with its political overtones) the poet adopts a consciously servile tone and introduces his epithalamium by means of the ubiquitous modesty topos:

" Verzeihe, grosses Paar, wenn dieses schlechte Blat
Mit keinen Gratien zuvor gebühlet hat ... " (1.1-2)

In the actual body of the poem, he makes use of natural or emblematic metaphors which describe the magnificence of the ruler; these again serve to emphasise the difference in status between poet and addressee:

" Mein werther Bräutigam, die Sonne braucht kein Licht
Und also sein Verdienst auch meine Fackel nicht;
Doch wie der Schatten pflegt den Körper zu begleiten,
So ist die Ehre stets der Tugend Kammermagd. "
(1.15-18)

As is so often the case in occasional poetry, the three

36 Kr.V, pp.6-9.

main sections, (enumerated as we have seen in Rotth and Wahll) are cunningly signposted. The title states the external occasion (the wedding), and in the fourth line, Günther refers specifically to the resultant 'obligation' to write a suitable epithalamium:

" Ich weis wohl, du verdienst das allerschönste Lied; "
(1.4)

The following section also makes oblique reference to its purpose of praising the couple:

" Und weil die Wahrheit auch den Göttern selbst behagt
So wird mein Lob auch nicht mit seiner Demuth streiten. "
(1.19-20)

The closing section, introduced by a series of imperatives:

" Wohlan, vortrefflichs Paar, vermehle Blut und Muth "
(1.85)

leads into a whole series of wishes:

" Der Himmel hauche stets in deine Liebesglut ... " (1.86)

These imperatives bear the traditional features (wishes for future happiness) of this third and final section which, accompanied by the reverberations of the opening modesty topos, is named explicitly in the final couplet:

" So schallet dies nur noch aus meinen heisern Flöthen:
Ich wünsche, dass bey euch kein Wuntsch mehr sey
vonnöthen."
(1.111-2)

As the occasion of this noble wedding requires, the genus sublime is maintained throughout; the metaphors and comparisons are drawn from pagan mythology and the Bible, woven together into an allegorical framework. This mythological setting, with its consciously utopian features is well suited to this genus. The outward circumstances, the reality of this wedding, that it is, for instance,

taking place in winter, are only hinted at, couched in idyllic, mythological terms:

" Es läst der rauhe Nord noch wenig Rosen blühn,
Apollo selbst den hängt die Leyer zum Camin.

...

Das Glücke cröne dich mit angenehmen Zeiten;
Geh, erndte deine Lust auch in dem Winter ein. "

(1.7-8/ 1)

and, as is usual in epithalamia, no attempt is made to describe the actual ceremony or festivities surrounding the wedding (it is in any case improbable that the poet was there in person) Instead the poet transposes us, his readers along with his addressees, the noble couple, into an idyllic landscape (a strange hybrid of utopian and biblical features):

" Euch quell auf jeden Tritt ein Brunnen in der Höh,
Der Milch und Honig giebt; auf eurer Liebessee
Sey immer Perlenfang, und landet mit Vergnügen,
Wo Glückesinseln seyn ..."

(1.99-102)

It is as though the poet could not conceive of a landscape worthy of such a high born pair, and so, to rise to the occasion, transcends the actual event entirely. Neither the wedding itself nor the historical description of the couple's noble lineage (another integral feature of such epithalamia) are described in definite, concrete terms. Allegorical generalisations and allusions instead dominate the poem:

" Wer kennt nicht dieses Haus, das Bild der alten Zeit,
Wo Klugheit Klugheit heisst, wo Treu und Redligkeit
Des grösten Kaysers Herz zu grosser Huld geneiget. "

(1.49-51)

Such consistent use of allegory and metaphor, although

common in the epithalamic form as a whole, is rare in Günther's work. More usual for him is a mixed style which combines allegorical features with satire and fescennine humour. The emphasis on myth and allegory to be found in the Zierotin poem should therefore be seen as the poet's concession to the stylistic level demanded by his noble addressees. Günther evidently felt more at ease when able to mix the genus sublime with the genus medium 37 or write altogether in the latter and thus to establish a looser, more playful relationship with his addressee.

This is particularly evident in the second poem we will be looking at which bears the unwieldy title in the Krämer edition:

" So fängt mein Bräutigam sein Neujahr glücklich an
 Und hebt an seine Braut das Kleinod der von Seher
 Wofern des Bruders Wuntsch die Freude mehren kan,
 So steigt ihr Wachsthum stets wie jezt das Weltlicht
 höher. " 38

and was probably written for a fellow student in Leipzig, to be sent to his brother on the occasion of his wedding. Its form and use of tropes are conventional, but well worked through. Within the context of the time it may be considered a successful epithalamium.

This poem opens with what will become the chief source

37 This preference is highlighted by the furore over the Nachbar Hans episode in the 'Eugenode' (Auf den zwischen ihro kayserlichen Majestät und der Pforte An. 1718 geschloszen Frieden, Kr.IV.p.129) which, despite Günther's quotation of his classical source, was much criticised as representing a lapse from the genus sublime.

38 Kr.VI. p.65-67.

of inventio, with a common trope which Günther used extensively:

" Herr Bruder sieh nicht scheel, wenn dies mein Lorbeerblat
Den Blick der schönen Braut dir kurtze Zeit entrücket. "
(1.1-2)

which establishes both a sphere of intimacy between the 'brothers' 39 and is suggestive of an interrupted (sexual) intimacy between the couple addressed which will now be played out on paper in the imaginings of the brother/ poet.

The basis of this relationship, of necessity an imaginary and artificial one which Günther invents between the brothers, is homosocial. The (nominal) poet and his addressee are of the same class, indeed of the same family:

" Du hast mit mir Geburth und Stand und Bluth gemein,
Drum muss dein Wohlergehn mein Selbstvergnügen sein. "
(1.5-6)

They are, of course both men, of the same family and class, Günther portrays them as empathising with each other in all aspects of life. The tone is light and jovial with decided erotic implications: the bond between the 'brothers' enables the writer of the poem to share (in his imagination) the pleasures of the groom. However, in establishing this sphere of brotherly intimacy, this seemingly exclusive space:

" Gesteh mir im Vertraun, es hört uns niemand zu:
Erquickt die Schönheit nicht den Schauplatz deiner Ruh. "
(1.21-2)

Günther's eye is on the reader who, by implication, also

39 We should not of course always take this term literally; close friends or even fellow students were frequently addressed as 'Bruder'.

communication is but a rhetorical trick. The brother of the poem is not his own; the intimate brotherly relationship a figment of Günther's imagination and the bride, that focus of male lasciviousness, a complete stranger to him. Within this context, this is a successful epithalamium and fulfils audience expectations. Specific references are subtly blended into the overall structure. In the course of the poem we discover the place (Liegnitz) and time (New Year) of the wedding, the surname (Von Seher) and christian name (der kleine Bär= Ursula) of the bride, the relationship and, by implication the reason for the geographical separation between the two brothers which caused this epithalamium to be written.

Leaving aside now this main source of inventio, the sensual empathy of the brothers, Günther's use of other common epithalamic tropes is similarly subtle and ingenious. In the second half of the poem, he takes up that overworked source of inspiration, the time of year 40 and invests it with new vigour by matching it stylistically to the main subject:

40 The motif of the season is here, as in so many epithalamia, linked to the wish in the final section that a wedding in one season should imply a birth in another nine months on. This marriage at new year for instance suggests to the poet the hope of offspring the following autumn:
" ... So weis ich, dass mein Kiel
Durch dies Prophetenwort die Ammen nicht betriegt:
So bald der nechste Herbst im Walde Dohnen stellt
Und Bacchus um den Wein sein jährlich Trinckfest hält " .
(1.67-70)

" Die Zeit schlägt glücklich ein; denn da der Christtag
 Und Kindern Lust gebiehet, bekommst du auch die Bürde,
 In welcher viel Confect die Augen Lüstern macht.
 Was Wunder, wenn auch mir die Zunge wässrig würde. "
 (1.41-4)

continuing the oral sensuality and alliteration of the opening stanza:

" Und Lippen, die dir jezt so sanft und Saftig schmecken. "
 (1.7) as well, of course, as the voyeurism of homosocial desire which characterises the poem as a whole.

Marriage is seen both as deriving from and as being itself a source of cosmic order: this again is a common topos of the epithalamium. The potentially chaotic and destructive force of unfettered sexuality has been channeled into the paths of a permissible, socially acceptable drive towards procreation 41:

" Hier schwärzt kein Schlangenbalg der Unschuld
 Myrthenstamm
 Und hier betriegt kein Staub verdorbner Sodomsfrüchte
 Dein gutgetrofnes Los durch geile Schaugerichte. "
 (1.38-40)

The theme of the brother's sexual imaginings extends into

41 This theme, which serves to confirm the socially stabilising aspect of marriage is a common trope of the epithalamium. Günther's use of it, both here, and especially in his poem on the marriage of Georg Wilhelm von Schweinichen and Helena Elisabeth von Seydliz (Kr.V, p.16) bears a strong resemblance to certain motifs in Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein. This latter poem opens with that central seventeenth century concept of ordo:

" Dasz noch die ganze Welt in ihren Angeln geht,
 Das Meer die Gränzen hält, die Erde feste steht ...
 Dies alles ist mit Recht der Liebe zuzuschreiben. "
 (1.1-2, 10)

before the poet broadens his focus to examine the overwhelming power of love in history and in the realm of nature (tellingly he even chooses to cite Lohenstein's great lovers, Arminius and Thusnelda).

the last two stanzas of the poem. Having fulfilled the usual epithalamic criteria of celebrating the marriage in words and praising the couple (in this case especially the bride), Günther sends them away into the bridal chamber, but even here they are not alone for they are accompanied (l.65) by the poet's wish and the reader's curiosity.

These final stanzas make explicit reference to the standard tropes of the classical epithalamium:

" Der Brautgott schliesse nun die dunckle Kammer auf
Und liefre deiner Braut die längst erhoffte Beute,
Der Abend flügelt schon dem Hesperus den Lauf
Damit sein rother Glanz mit deinen Flammen streite. "
(l.57-60)

In this indiscriminate mixing of reality and allegory, the bridal pair share a crepuscular world with Hymen and Hesperus. The couple are removed from the real world of Liegnitz and Leipzig and their sexual union instead takes place in a veiled and imaginary allegorical space. 42

As we have seen, the focus of this poem rests on the relationship and empathy between the two brothers; the bride serves merely as the object of their discourse. The way she is described is, in fact, typical of many epithalamia of the time and deserves to be looked at in greater detail.

The function of the bride in this lighthearted and

42 Oblique reference is also made to another favourite trope of marriage poetry; to lovemaking as a battle: a motif developed at length in Günther's translation of the neo-Latin Hochzeitsscherz by Johannes Secundus (Kr.I.p.313-318).

playful epithalamium is a largely decorative one. She is first mentioned in the second line:

" Herr Bruder sieh nicht scheel, wenn dies mein Lorbeerblatt
Den Blick der schönen Braut dir kurze Zeit entrücket. "

and is described in conventional and non-specific terms as: 'schön '. Her name (Von Seher) also links her to the power of sight:

" Den Blick der schönen Braut ... " (1.2)

" ... ein Blick
Der holden Seherin ... " (1.23-4)

and the poem itself is dominated by images of light and darkness. The bride is specifically seen as a decorative, depersonalised object in the fourth line:

" Weil so ein würdig Kind dein Hochzeitbette schmücket "

Günther is dealing here in generalisations rather than attempting to characterise individuals. The next mention of the bride occurs in an entirely lighthearted vein: her name (Ursula) is taken as a source of inspiration; she becomes a playful little bear:

" Erlaubstu mir den Scherz, so las den kleinen Bär
Mit dem du spielen solst, dich um den Nacken fassen. "
(1.49-50)

In other words she is not a human being at all. This depersonalisation, so typical of this genre, is applied equally to men and women, (although of course the majority of these poems were written by men and feature men as their speaking subjects) It is not therefore surprising that women should then be reduced to the level of mere decoration, to a rhetorical plaything used merely as a

structural element in the overall poetic conception. Another example which conveys the spirit, if not the letter, of the classical epithalamium bears the title, Bey der den 25. Octobr. 1718 in Leipzig geschlosznen Winckler-Kistnerischen Mariage überlieferten ihre Gratulation einige gute Freunde 43. The introductory section of this poem closely follows the themes of the classical model. It begins, (rather than, as was usual by this time, ending) by sending the couple away to bed:

" Nur fort vergnügtes Paar, und las dich nichts verstören "
while setting up the pretense of (eavesdropping) musicians and friends who play and sing (as was still customary in the renaissance) outside the bridal chamber itself:

" Wir sitzen unterdes mit fest verschwornen Zungen
Und sehen und spielen euch ein kurzes Lied dazu ."
(1.9-10)

After this opening section, full of classical references:

" Umarmt euch wie der Wein, der Ulm und Pfahl umschlingt,
(1.5)

the poem changes its tone and continues in a humorous and mildly satiric vein more typical of late modern epithalamia. The theme of this second part is a favourite one of the age and consists of an ironic, moralising discourse on the right and wrong reasons for marrying. This poem is typical of the way in which Günther interweaves classical and modern motifs in his epithalamia; grafting a modern content on to his 'classical'

43 Kr.VI.p.53-55.

introduction.

In his marriage poems, Günther largely avoided the form of the rhetorical disputatio favoured by many of his contemporaries and certainly by his mentor, Johann Burchard Mencke. There are, however, three exceptions which do make use of this form and should be mentioned here: the Cantata auf die doppelt Asmannische Verbindung of 1721 (Kr. IV, p.250), the disputatio between truth, fortune and love for the marriage of Gottlieb Schäl and Johanna Christina Kirchhoff of 1722 (Kr. IV, p.345) and an epithalamium debating one of the stock topics of this genre, Den in der Handelschaft der Liebe entstandenen ... Streit, ob die Wittwen oder die Jungfern die beste Wahre zum Heiraten seyn (Kr. VI, p.248-55) from the angezweifelte Gedichte.

The first of these on the Asmann wedding takes the form of an allegorical dialogue in which the widow, who here bears the arcadian name of Euphrosyne, is wooed by Daphnis, their case being further discussed and eventually resolved by the allegorical figures of faith, hope and charity (spes, fides, c̄aritas). In its use of the cantata form and the high allegorical style, this work bears a strong resemblance to Von Bessers allegorical cantatas and ballets celebrating royal and noble weddings and as such can be seen within the 'high' tradition of wedding poetry.

The disputatio between truth, fortune and love, written to celebrate the Schäl-Kirchhoff wedding provides us with

another example of a mixed form. The actual dispute, classical and allegorical in its form, in which the personifications of Wahrheit, Glück and Liebe come to Thetis (daughter of Coelus and Terra, whose oracle was famous throughout the ancient world) to decide which of the three is the most powerful, leads— by means of beauty's conclusive evidence, (a portrait of the bride, Johanna Kirchhof, which wins her case) into a satirical section (1.96–144) more in keeping with the taste of the age.

The third disputatio, from the angezweifelte Gedichte, is written in a humorous vein. The outward form of the court case or legal discussion of the issues involved is set not in an allegorical, but in a contemporary court and the issues at stake are financial rather than spiritual or ideological— the debate as to whether it is better to marry a widow or a virgin takes its urgency from the 'glut' in the market:

" Die Liebe. so den Zanck vor ihr Commercium
 Mehr als zu schädlich hielt, die sprach ...
 Geht demnach ungesäumt, geht holet Advocaten
 Und last nach Wechselrecht euch allen beiden rathen."
 (1.43–4/ 53–4)

Whether or not this poem is by Günther (and many of his conventional epithalamia are stylistically indistinguishable from those of his contemporaries), the treatment of this debate is typical for its age rather than of the classical disputatio we find in the likes of

Catullus. 44

Our last example under this heading is a late work, addressed to the bride (once again in the name of a brother) at a (presumably) bourgeois union, Auf die Knörr und Merckleinische Hochzeit. Although this poem in no way conforms to the expectations of the 'classical' epithalamium, it can equally be claimed as a 'conventional' example of the form in following the rules of inventio we find in the poetological treatises of the time.

In its outward form, this poem does in fact diverge quite radically from the convention. The modesty topos, which also delays the task of finding suitable subject matter, takes up the first fifth of the poem. The sources of inventio Günther chooses are both conventional and self consciously signposted:

" Indess bewundern wir von ungefehr zwo Sachen,
Woraus, vergnügte Braut, der Liebe Klugheit scheint;
Die erste, merck es, ist im Winter Hochzeit machen
Die andre, dass dein Herz es mit Juristen meint. "
(1.21-24)

This first motif of the seasons is ubiquitous and in this case, it leads Günther into one of his favourite tropes: by which he conjures up a cosy and romantic, not to say sentimental, scene for his female addressee.

44 Seen from one particular standpoint, such tropes as we find here could be interpreted as a sign of a growing capitalistic consciousness amongst the Silesian Mittelstand. This is especially underlined by a use of poetic metaphor which leans on a terminology of profit and loss, of stocks and shares, rather than the images of barter which still predominate in such poems.

" Wie aber läst sichs nicht so schön im Winter scherzen,
Wenn draussen Frost und Schnee und Eis und Wind regiert
Und doch das liebe Paar vertraut- und edler Herzen
Beym schimmernden Camin die süssen Lippen rührt. "

The second source of inspiration, signposted like the first, is just as common. The profession or occupation of the groom .like the couple's names were seen as a rich source of puns or suggestive jokes 45. In this case the play on the groom's profession is elaborated by a contrasting list of professionals the bride could have married such as pastor or doctor, all of which are portrayed as having severe drawbacks in comparison with the lawyer she has chosen. The final third of the poem consists entirely of lame jokes surrounding the groom's profession,

45 This form of inventio was in fact so common that many poetological treatises included model epithalamia on the weddings of pastors, doctors or lawyers. Hints on writing for the wedding of a lawyer are, for instance to be found at length in A. C. Rotth, p.46, Section III: Einen Rechts=Gelehrten.

The use of names too was encouraged by contemporary theorists: to again quote Rotth:

" Nach der zehenden Regel kan ich entweder den Zu= oder Vornahmen allein oder beyde zusammen nehmen/ oder auch wohl die Ambts oder Ehren= Nahmen dazu thun/ und sehen ob ich etwas anders kan heraus bringen/ so sich zu gegenwärtigen Handel schickt. "

By Gottsched's day, tastes in such puns and jokes had changed completely and he makes these the object of his attack:

" ... Es sind die Anspielungen auf Nahmen, wo ich so reden darf; dabei sie einen besonderen Witz zu bezeigen vermeynten ... Wer nun in allen dergleichen Kindereyen Schönheiten zu sehen meynet, dem kann man seinen Geschmack wohl lassen: aber wer etwas Wahres oder Gründliches dem scheinbaren vorziehen will und kan, der wird besser thun wenn er alle diese Klapperwerke sorgfältig vermeidet."

J.C. Gottsched: Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst (Leipzig, 1751), (Nachdruck, Darmstadt, 1962).

all of which have suggestive or overtly sexual overtones. A potential pregnancy arising from this union, for instance, is described as follows:

" Vielleicht erscheint forthin ein Auszug aus den Glossen,
Die er zum Corpore von deiner Liebe macht,
Das recht canonisch ist, weil nichts darin geflossen,
Als nur, was Tugend, Treu und Zucht hinein gebracht. "
(1.81-4) 46

Of the three epithalamia discussed here, this is perhaps the least 'classical' and most self-conscious in its form and use of motifs. It is characteristic of its age and of public taste in this genre, although subversive elements, such as the extended use of the modesty topos, permeate its form and lead us from these conventional epithalamia, into others, whose unity of form is threatened by subversive themes, extraneous to the subject of the poems themselves.

ii) The inner balance lost: The modesty topos as a

46^The epithalamium provided poets with a rich source of crude jokes which invariably centred on the bride's virginity or her forthcoming pregnancy. In this poem, for instance, the bride's virginity forms the unspoken third source of inventio,

_____? This provides a suitably lascivious and suggestive topos which has dominated this form since Catullus' Carmen 62. Catullus compares it to a flower which has been plucked:

" multi illum pueri, multae optavere puellae:

idem cum tenui carptus deflorit ungui " (1.42-3)

and it is often depicted in even more violent terms, defloration being seen as the "murder" of virginity or, as in this example, as a phoenix which will rise out of the ashes and bring new life:

" O las ihn freudig gehn, er kan ein Phoenix werden

Der, wird er gleich entseelt, doch stets was junges
heckt. "

potentially subversive force

In selecting the modesty topos as the initial focus of our discussion of the formal dissolution of the epithalamium, we must be aware that this particular topos is, in Günther's work, intimately related to other central concerns such as his own life and suffering and his views on poetry. In focussing on the modesty topos, we must realise that this deferral of the expected subject matter not infrequently leads Günther to themes closer to his own heart. As such, the modesty topos should not be seen in isolation, but as an interim stage in the formal disintegration of the genre as a whole and thus as closely linked to the subject matter of the sections which follow.

Just as in his 'conventional' epithalamia, the poet had to find an opening cue to put forward his poetic inventio, similarly in the 'deferred' opening, characterised by the modesty topos, the poet frequently puts forward a reason for not immediately dealing with the expected subject matter. The reasons Günther gives are so stylised that they frequently become a trope in themselves.

Such a trope is to be found in Günther's metaphor of the unwilling 'Poetenpferd' (a poor relation of the Olympian Pegasus) which he almost certainly borrowed from Mencke:

" Ja der geliebte Pegasus
Der macht mir noch viel mehr Verdruss;

Er hinckt auf allen vieren ... " 47

Günther's use of this metaphor is similarly light-hearted and ironic:

" Du weist es, mein Poetenpferd
Ist stätig wild und unberitten
Und drabt mir mit so geschwinden Schritten
Als wie ein Gaul, der Eisen fährt. " 48

Another excuse Günther frequently puts forward (surely with an eye for the sympathy and on the purse of his addressees) is the inclemency of the weather which makes the writing of poetry impossible:

" Mein Phoebus nimmt zwar wohl sein stummes Instrument,
Er will die Saythen ziehn; es bleibt auch bey dem Wollen:
Der blaue Finger starrt, die Luft von Norden brennt
Und macht ihn ungeschickt, weil Hand und Glied
geschwollen. " 49

or, from an example we have already looked at:

" Es läst der rauhe Nord noch wenig Rosen blühn,
Apollo selbstn hängt sein Leyer zum Camin. " 50

In the occasional poetry of Günther's contemporaries, the modesty topos generally serves the triple function of flattering its audience (the poet often prostrating himself before noble addressees), of excusing in advance the inadequacy of the poetic offering, and of leading into the main subject of the poem, albeit by a rather circuitous route. This conventional use of the modesty topos is, not

47 J. B. Mencke: Noch eine Entschuldigung.

48 Von Wirthschaft keuscher Liebe Kr.VI, p.17.

49 Kr.VI, p.23, l.13-16.

50 Kr.V, p.6, l.7-8.

surprisingly, to be found in one of the most traditional of Günther's epithalamia, Auf die Hochreichgräfliche gedoppelte Zierotinische Alliance 51:

" Verzeihe, grosses Paar, wenn dieses schlechte Blat
Mit keinen Gratien zuvor gebühlet hat
Da es ein Opfer will in deinen Tempel bringen-
Ich weiss wohl, du verdienst das allerschönste Lied:
Weil aber mein Parnass nur Winterblumen zieht,
So muss ich, was ich kan, nicht was ich schuldig singen."

The apology is quite unnecessary in this case as the poet maintains the high, allegorical style throughout the poem. His use of the topos is instead a gesture to the noble couple and leads directly into one of the main sources of inventio running through the poem.

In the 'conventional' epithalamium, the modesty topos is nothing more than a fashionable rhetorical trick, merely an alternative form of introduction. This usage is also to be observed in certain of Günther's works. In his epithalamium on the Longolius-Kranz wedding of 1717 (Kr.VI, p.17) written for the brother of the bride, Günther displays his full parodic gifts, taking on the role of the clodhopping, untalented poetaster:

" Jedoch es geh, so gut es kan,
Die Reime fliessen von sich selber
Und kommen mir schon leichter an,
Als deine beste Kuh die Kälber. "
(1.11-14)

However, this modesty topos, or rather the apparent admission of a complete lack of inspiration, gives way abruptly to the actual subject of the poem, again

51 Kr.V.p.6-9.

ironically introduced:

" Die Liebe winckt und lehrte mich,
Dich als ein Landgut zu betrachten "
(1.21-22)

which is then developed in the course of the remaining seven stanzas. Another example of this topos being used as an introduction is to be found in the epithalamium, Auf die Knörr- und Merckleinische Hochzeit, already analysed, which was also written on commission. Here the topos is linked to an insistence common in Günther on the underlying sincerity of his verse:

" Wir liessen voller Lust den Ernst der Rechte liegen
Und dachten dir ein Lied von netter Kunst zu weihn.
Der Vorsatz war schon gut, nur fehlt es an Vermögen;
...
Es kommt auch eben nicht bey deinem Hochzeitkranze
Auf ein gedrechelt Blat und Künstlich spielen an. "
(1. 7-9/ 13-14)

The principle subject of the poem, if it follows on from an extended modesty topos, is consciously signposted:

" Indess bewundern wir von ungefehr zwo Sachen,
Woraus, vergnügte Braut, der Liebe Klugheit scheint, "
(1.21-2)

After the apparent vagueness of the modesty topos, the entry of the main subject is stated boldly and worked emphatically through the course of the epithalamium. Günther did not, however, always abide by this formulaic use of this modesty, or rather 'deferral' topos 52, but began to make use of it in a new and subversive manner (a

52 The term " deferral topos " is used here to designate both the conventional modesty topos and other devices such as a pretended lack of inspiration, reasons which prevent the poet coming in person which wilfully defer or delay the "main " subject of the epithalamium.

is itself often a playful topos of occasional verse) that, however plain and simple this poetry may be, it is sincere. This also forms the point of departure for the subsequent satire on the wrong reasons for writing poetry:

" Er kömmt auf Gernesehn und nicht wie mancher Schwarm
Den Geiz und Hunger treibt, ein fettes Maul zu holen;
Man weis wohl, wie es geht, die Supp ist oft kaum warm,
So schmiert schon der Poet die Gurgel und die Sohlen. "
(1.11-14)

Nothing, surely, could be further removed in tone or style from the allegorical debates of Cupid and his mother Venus. At the same time, the satire which forms the introduction to this poem itself provides a springboard for Günther's list of counter-examples:

" Mein Phoebus, wie gesagt kömmt viererley zu thun ... "
(1.21)

which sum up his views on the ideal epithalamium and make up the text of this actual poem.

Another way Günther uses the modesty topos or deferral of the principle subject, though intimately linked to his use of satire, is in the introduction of a 'personal' element. This can form part of otherwise conventional poems such, for instance, as the Von Seher poem which is built on the invented relationship between poet and addressee or the Erhardt-Kraus epithalamium of 1722 (Kr.VI.p.192-94) which interrupts what would seem to be the major subject to introduce the poet:

" Gewis, ich liesse dir bey deinem Selbstvergnügen
Nunmehr das schönste Lied zur Lust entgegen fliegen
...
Die Kunst der Poesie will aufgeräumte Sinnen
Und einen Mund, woraus nur Milch und Honig rinnen,

Mich aber nimmt anjezt der Ernst der Themis ein. " 53

This use of personal or biographical elements can be either a mere stylistic device or pose. However the assumption of a persona, as in this case, as elsewhere, can also take the form of a complete self-revelation. The introduction of the personal into an otherwise rhetorical poem frequently shifts the focus from the couple to the poet himself and seriously threatens the balance both of content and of form.

The epithalamium for the Gettwert-Hornigin union (Kr.IV, p.300-04) opens with what appears to be a conventional modesty, or rather 'deferral' topos:

" Dein Fest, mein Bräutigam ist guter Lieder Werth,
Du hast sie auch mit Recht von meiner Pflicht begehrt,
Ich aber dürfte dir bald mit Recht versagen.
Mit Recht ? Wieso ? Gedult, ich muss den Neid erst
fragen "
(1.1-4)

this opens not into the expected main subject, but into the poet's laments about the attacks on his verse by his contemporaries:

" Ich schreibe was ich will, so wird der Schmähsucht toll
Und wünscht mir insgemein mehr Sorgen auf den Nacken
Als Holl- und Engelland muss heuer Stockfisch packen
Man liest mehr als steht und als ich selbst gemeint "
(1.6-9)

The poet defends himself against any possible attack by launching a defensive strike against a society he sees as innately hostile. This attack bears no relation at all to the event in hand, the wedding of Tobias Gettwert and

53 Kr.VI, p.192, 1.15-16/ 19-21.

Susanna Hornigin. Günther instead takes this public poem as an excuse to satirise contemporary society, and as we will soon see in more detail, makes this epithalamium a forum to air both his personal grudges against society and his literary standpoint in relation to satire.

This attitude is perhaps even more marked in another epithalamium, Auf die Klug und Liebische Verbindung A. 1719 den 20 Febr. (Kr.IV.p.177-78) which centres on the poet's sufferings, especially on the hard-heartedness and malice of contemporary society:

" Ob gleich der schwere Kiel den angesetzten Händen
Nicht recht gehorchen will, aus Furcht, dass Hass und
Neid
Der mich zum Ziele macht, die schlechte Schuldigkeit
So wie auch meinen Ruhm durch Peitsch und Ruthen jage "

(1.4-7)

The tone of the poem is more akin to Günther's Hiob-Nachahmung than the joyous celebration of a wedding. The poet appears as a harbinger of doom, half wishing his own fate on the newly married couple:

" Ich zweifle nicht daran, es werd auch dies dein Band
Der Leute Mährlein seyn ... "

(1.13-14)

while assuring them that his own poem does not fall into this same malicious category:

" Du wirst, mein Bräutigam, aus allen Worten sehn,
Dass meine Musen sich vor keiner Galle blehn. "

(1.37-8)

This subject, of social malice and hypocrisy, especially as it affects the poet, and his resulting satirical reaction to this threat dominate several of his marriage poems, leaving the primary subject of the poem, as in the example

discussed, merely a peripheral role in the last few lines.

Such satiric or personal appropriation of the epithalamium represents the undermining of both its form and its content. The poet, or so it would seem, cannot bring himself to write about the subject in hand and so writes about something much nearer to his heart; himself, the society he despises or, indeed, as we shall see in the following section, poetry itself.

(iii) The 'alternative' epithalamium as a vehicle for Günther's literary views.

The undermining or subversion of both form and content as witnessed in Günther's epithalamia can be seen as continuing the deferral topos we discussed in the previous section. The subject of poetry itself, of the moral basis for literary production, of Redlichkeit, is central to Günther's work as a whole. As such, discussion of issues to do with the essence of the poetic form are not, of course, confined to the epithalamium, but are discussed throughout the lyric opus.

In concentrating here on poetry which takes itself as its theme and subject matter, we must be aware of the shifting emphasis Günther brought to bear on this topic. His self-conscious discussion of poetry ranges from his use of intense self-referentiality within the framework of the modesty topos discussed earlier, to the fundamental

questioning of the role of occasional poetry as such.

When examining Günther's utterances on literary topics, we should be careful to differentiate between what are genuinely his own views, and standpoints put forward in the persona of another. Günther used parody both as a means of varying a tired form and as an ironic forum in which to put forward entirely serious criticisms of contemporary poetry. This use of parody, as we shall see in greater depth with reference to the Hülse/Lührin poem, is itself a sign of the incipient disintegration of the occasional form. The 'serious' poet increasingly found it closed and uninspiring and looked for innovative ways to revive both form and content. This is one source of Günther's use of parody since, by adopting the role of the ungifted poetaster, he could both amuse his audience, well acquainted with the often inferior products of 'mass produced' poetry, and use this role to put forward specific criticisms of this genre in an ironic way.

In the works written to commission in which Günther indulges in conscious role play, poetic composition (a standard view of this epoch) is described as a 'leisure pursuit' (Nebenstundenpoesie) which is not to be taken too seriously:

" Mein Buch, mein Contoir ist freylich kein Parnass,
Der Phoebus lockt mich oft, doch ists mir allzeit Spass
Und was die Dinte giebt, das sind nur schwarze Flecke. " 54

54 Kr.IV. p.204.

In a work written for a lawyer or law student, he assures his reader that he has now given up this pastime for more serious pursuits:

" Ich habe dann und wann bey sonst verlornen Zeit
Der deutschen Poesie wohl auch mein Pfund geweiht,
Allein nur obenhin und sonder grosses Kräncken,
Den ganzen Musenkram dem Bogen anzuhengen,
Jezt ist kein Werck vor mich, nachden Asträens Art
Mir mit Calliopen die Buhlschaft ganz verdammt. " 55

Such statements should, however, be treated with caution and seen for what they are; as fragments of role-play which often fit uncomfortably into an altogether more serious context, a context in fact which emphasises the deep and vital need for the maintenance of an intense poetic honesty.

A central focus of Günther's view of literature is the insistence on poetic honesty ~~which~~ which recurs throughout his opus. This sentiment underlies the poet's repeated emphasis that his poetry is 'poor but honest', in fact representing an extension of the poet's self. It is this inner honesty, rather than any great stylistic reforms which Günther sees as central to his poetry:

" Hochwerther Bräutigam, dies schlechtgesetzte Lied,
Das seine Würdigkeit von deinem Amte zieht,
Kan freylich keinen Geist durch sein Confect vergnügen;
Wem Gold und Weihrauch fehlt, der opfert Salz und Mehl " 56

The poet is, moreover, well aware of the moral ambiguity of

55 Kr.

56 Kr.

writing eulogistic occasional poetry with little or no thought of its purpose or effect:

" Du siehst, vergnügtes Paar, das Blat ist ziemlich voll,
Bevor ich selber weiss, womit ich dienen soll.
Ists mit galanter Kunst, so werd ich nichts erzwingen,
Ists mit der Redlichkeit, so will ich besser singen.
Du bist es allerdings, geprisene Redlichkeit
Die einzig und allein den Worten Kraft verleiht. " 57

This high view of Redlichkeit, indeed Günther's intimate poetic relationship with its personification (Gepriesene Redlichkeit) inexorably brings his ideals into conflict with the ethos underlying the day to day production of occasional verse which was often produced according to a formula. This in turn occasions the paradox of an underlying poetic ideology at odds with the form and outward intention of the occasional poem itself. This internal conflict must inevitably lead to the realisation that the underlying demands are themselves irreconcilable and as such herald the end of occasional poetry as a mass phenomenon. However, before Günther 'dismantles' the epithalamium in the Hülse/ Lührin poem he tries first to articulate and to solve this paradox.

These criticisms, however, situated as they are within an actual occasional poem, are riven by internal contradiction. In this regard Günther may be described as an inherently ambiguous poet, alternating almost at random between his own views and literary role-playing in the

57 Kr. VI, p. 203, l.37-42.

course of a single poem. Apparently serious statements become ambiguous through the irony-laden context in which we find them. Conclusions about Günther's 'real' views on contemporary literature or poetics must all too often be based on surmise, so fine is the dividing line between ironic role playing and a serious statement of intent.

Günther's doubts about the occasional genre are frequently expressed in the introductions to his epithalamia, encased in the deferral topoi which we have already considered. Not infrequently he teases the addressee and indeed his readership as a whole by suggesting possible themes for this poem, only to reject them again:

" Nun könnt ich wie du schreibst, der Feder Kraft verleihn
Und, da dir Lieb und Brunst erlaubte Freyheit weihn,
Das feurige Papier mit angenehmen Grillen
Und mit der Zärtlichkeit des netten Naso füllen.

...

Allein ein andermahl; die Welt ist jetzt zu toll
Und flucht dem Dichter oft den kahlen Tittel voll. " 58

The essentially mechanistic composition of occasional verse suddenly comes into conflict with Günther's ethical conception of poetry. He lets his readership know that he is well aware of the demands of this form, the risqué jokes and sexual innuendo interwoven with classical reference, but consciously turns against this tradition, for reasons which are both his own, that poetry should be about truth.

58 Kr. IV, p.146, l.89-92/ 97-8.

and derived from social considerations, from his awareness that, whatever he wrote, he could not satisfy all of his readership.

The actual writing of occasional poetry was no longer a straightforward matter, the poet could alter the subject matter to his own taste or even choose not to write at all. In this way, we see around this time a twofold development and transformation of the occasional poem. On the one hand, the formal developments have attained a self-conscious and self-reflexive life of their own, or become fragments of poetic diction to be fitted almost mechanistically into the appropriate context. On the other hand, there is a movement away from these conventions, a subversion and general loosening of the form such as we find in a number of Günther's works.

Quite early on, Günther came to realise the severe limitations of the occasional form ⁵⁹. In a work intended

⁵⁹ Quite apart from his own objections to the occasional form, Günther also ¹⁹¹⁶ homage to certain contemporary strands of criticism of occasional poetry. In his epithalamium on the Tramp-Gerlach marriage, for instance he makes specific reference to the "christian" line of criticism favoured by a number of his contemporaries such as Scheibel:

" Nun fodert zwar dies Fest ein Lied von meiner Pflicht,
Allein, vergnügtes Paar, verzeih, ich dichte nicht
Und mag vom Helicon der abgeschmackten Heiden
Kein sündlich Lorbeerblatt zu euren Myrthen schneiden. "
(Kr.VI, p.209, l.57-60)

Although this motif of the dichotomy of pagan mythology and biblical allegory recurs throughout Günther's work, it will not be examined here in depth, firstly because to do so would detract from the main argument and secondly because the poet's actual statements against pagan

for the Räderisch-Kaniz wedding dating from 1714 when the poet was nineteen, he already lists the drawbacks of popular topoi, underlining the difficulties of doing anything new with this genre:

" Der Wille wäre gut, was aber schreib ich wohl ?
Die Venusmyrthen sind ein aufgewärmer Kohl,
Dem, wenn er fertig ist, oft Salz und Würze fehlen. " 60

He also takes a stance against the outright copying of famous authors:

" Soll Caniz und sein Buch hier exerpiert stehn ?
Soll ich dem Gryphius in seine Wälder gehn
Und als ein Blumendieb den Lohenstein bestehlen ? "
(1.18-20)

He seems to arrive at a decisive conclusion:

" Nein, andrer Thorheit macht mich in dem Stücke klug,
So theuer mag ich mir die Schande nicht erkaufen, "
(1.24-25)

However these seemingly categorical statements are relativised by the fact that they come at the beginning of Günther's large epithalamic output. Either they form, as is quite possible, part of a topos or game, or Günther, despite his inner realisation of the limitations of this form, was driven by social and financial pressures and continued to produce occasional verse.

mythology in 'Christian' poetry are themselves so manifestly contradicted by his frequent and conscious combination of pagan and Christian motifs throughout his work. A survey of discussion of the relationship between these motifs is to be found in the chapter: Der Sieg Davids über Apoll in Dyck's Athen und Jerusalem: Die Tradition der argumentativen Verknüpfung von Bibel und Poesie im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert, (München 1977), which in fact opens with another quotation from Günther on this theme.

60 Kr.V, p.46, l.15-17.

(iv) Formal disintegration or rhetorical game ? The example of the disjointed Hülse-Lührin poem.

In the epithalamium, Auf die glückliche Verbindung Herrn Zacharias Hülse's, Schoppen und Apothekers in Goldberg, mit der sitt- ehr- und tugendhaften Jungfer Anna Christina Lührin, so A. 1721 den 22. Octobr. geschah (Kr.VI.p.131-36), the most fragmented of the forty nine Günther wrote, the poet brings together many of the criticisms scattered throughout the works already discussed. The comparatively low social standing of the groom as well as the jocular persona Günther adopts in this poem naturally point to a satirical work in the genus humile, but do not prepare us for the virtual dismantling of the epithalamic genre which we find.

This mixture of alternating prose and metrical passages, in which Günther parodies the untalented poetaster, trying to put together an epithalamium against his will and under pressure of time, represents a half way house between theory and poetic practice. In the way it sandwiches fragments of poetry between chunks of prose elucidating the underlying rules of the epithalamic form, it bears a close resemblance to the poetological treatises already discussed. However its aim is not to provide a guide to writing occasional verse, but rather to show the

difficulties involved in persevering with a genre which has become poetically untenable. The poetic fragments, rather than providing examples to be copied, parody generic tropes and demonstrate their underlying emptiness.

The poem begins normally enough with the usual reference to the concept of Pflicht, but soon the 'poet's' inspiration dries up, the poem breaks off and he runs through in his mind possible sources of inspiration, in desperation searching through that most literary of scrapbooks, the Poetenkasten, but to no avail.

In the poetic fragment which follows, it is Günther's own voice we hear, raging against the restrictions and demands placed on the poet by an ultimately hypocritical society, and proclaiming his own manifesto of literary rebellion:

" Pack ein pack ein, du tumme Welt !
Ich schreibe wie es mir gefällt. "
(1.46-7)

The comic persona sighs with relief at having written a few more lines, and meanwhile Günther voices his scruples about the demands underlying the occasional genre:

" Befürchtete ich keinen Eckel, den schon so ofters aufgewärmten Kohl in einer neuen Fricassee a la mode dem zärtlichen Geschmack der galanten Welt vorzusetzen, so sollte es mir leichte seyn, aus den verliebten Delicatessen des Anacreon, des Ovidii, Petrarcae, Johannis Secundi, des Marino und unsers ihm nachfolgenden Landmannes, des Herrn von Hofmannswaldau eine Brautsuppe zuzurichten ... "
(1.54- 60)

The loci or Suchformeln of rhetorical textbooks are the next object of his satiric attack: the time of year, phases of the moon or the names of the couple to be married.

Paradoxically some of the examples he lists are his own favourites in his conventional epithalamia, such as the praise of winter in the manner of Tibullus.

This satirical middle section, which forms the core of his argument, is most ingenious in its construction. Its form mimics the layout of the epithalamium chapter of a poetological textbook as interpreted by the untalented Vetter, the nominal writer of this poem. The intermission of this fictitious cousin adds an additional level of consciousness to what is already an intensely self-reflexive poem. Günther is writing an epithalamium about a poet trying to write a poem which takes as its main subject its own composition and, as its hidden model, the form of a poetological discourse. These various levels of artifice, Günther's conscious distancing of himself from the act of creation, serve as much as what he actually says about the genre to cast doubt on the future of the occasional form.

It is worth noting too that it is specifically the first stage of rhetorical composition, the process of inventio, which forms both the focus of numerous poetological treatises on the Gelegenheitsgedicht and the target of Günther's satirical attacks. Occasional poetry must, by its very nature, focus on a given event or occasion, whether a marriage, a baptism or a funeral. What therefore sets it apart from any other form of rhetoricised poetry is the fact of this occasion and the need to find apt subject

matter which will celebrate the specific event within a generic frame of meaning. This demand for a 'specific universality' made occasional poetry increasingly formulaic and reduced the underlying inventio to a set of rules which both encouraged the 'mass production' of this form and, increasingly, the kind of satirical attack we find in Günther. The play (for Günther is indeed indulging in a rhetorical game) with the expectations of the form typifies the final stage of development within this genre before the balance would finally tip against occasional poetry.

The target Günther chooses for his satiric attack is not so much the form and implicit expectations, but more concretely, the content and tropes of the epithalamium. The method he uses, as in the Mäntler-Menzel poem of 1718, is to suggest a series of possible subjects, only to reject them again or to list more possible themes in the prose section than would be required in the most elaborate work, and then to choose the poorest of these for the parodic fragments. This superfluity of potential topics and the implication of their interchangeability simply serves to demonstrate the fundamental hollowness and dearth of meaning of this form as a whole. This systematic exposure of the inherent excesses and absurdity of the occasional poem is underlined by the parodic insertion of the aforementioned poetic fragments.

Günther's use of parody can be seen most clearly in the

following poetic fragment, preceded by its prose introduction:

" Wollte ich noch etwas Bessres suchen, so fände ich gewis an dem lieben Christinchen und ihrer wohlgestalten Person tausend Gelegenheit, dem Herrn Bräutigam durch das Lob der Schönheit das Maul noch wässriger zu machen ...
Christinchen, eile zu
Und suche Bett und Ruh,
Die Liebe bricht herfür
Und hüpfet und wallt in dir
Nach Art der jungen Hühnchen,
Christinchen ! " 61,

The language and metaphor he uses throughout this epithalamium is crude and down to earth, which also has the effect of belittling or dragging down the level of any more elevated inventio. The abuses of the poetaster (a common phenomenon, of course, at this time of poetic mass production) become especially clear in the verse interludes. In this case the use of execrable, imperfect rhymes: herfür/ dir/, / Hühnchen/ Christinchen, and the grotesque comparison of love to a little chicken, complete the parody.

61 Kr.VI,p.133,l.70-80.

The description of the bride, her beauty, her talents and their effect on the bridegroom was, of course, a standard source of inventio and is recommended in these or similar terms in numerous poetological introductions;

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Günther's attitude to such Scherzreden was of a dualistic nature, on the one hand he condemns overt crudity (as we see in this Mäntler-Menzel epithalamium), in line in with the puritanical poetologies of the early eighteenth century , on the other he recognises their popularity amongst readers and so still includes them in the many of his poems.

It is characteristic of this epoch of literary transition that, despite the serious criticisms he here levels against occasional verse, Günther should continue to write in this genre, returning to the conventions of the mainstream epithalamium at the end of this fragmentary, even 'deconstructionist' poem. The final thirty lines conform to the demands of the traditional third section of the epithalamium, the wish:

" Aber was braucht es viel Kopfbrechens ? Die einfältigen Wüntsche sind die besten ... "

(1.163-4)

and the closing poetic fragment would not be out of place in any of Günther's more conventional marriage poems.

Günther sees all of the drawbacks of the occasional form and makes them the object of his satirical parody. Like many poets of his generation, however, he cannot decide to abandon this genre entirely. His virtual dismantling of this form and its tired conventions takes place within the framework provided by the genre itself. His serious criticisms, whatever cumulative effect they may have had on his literary successors, did not push Günther into any entirely new form of creation. His 'deconstruction' of the epithalamium in the above example remains a rhetorical game with a readership which, like the poet, know all the rules of the form. In the end the occasion triumphs. The poet cannot entirely throw over the demands associated with the event or his audience and so he draws back from finally rejecting occasional poetry and writes a conclusion in the

expected style.

(4) Günther's relationship to occasional poetry in the context of his age.

In his increasingly satirical attacks on occasional verse, Günther did not stand alone. Rather, his epithalamia should be seen as part of a general trend against this form already to be observed in works by Canitz and Neukirch at the turn of the century. This move against occasional poetry was to continue throughout the entire first half of the eighteenth century. 62 It is not until 1767 that it was generally asserted:

" Die Gelegenheitsgedichte sind bey uns so sehr in Verachtung gekommen, dass unsere Dichter vom ersten Range sich selten und ungern zu derselben herabsetzen. " 63

Of course, even after the occasional poem had been thus downgraded in artistic terms, becoming the preserve of Trivialliteratur rather than high art, it continued to serve a concrete social function, as for instance the

62 The discussions surrounding the future of the occasional poem are summarised in Wulf Segebrecht's definitive study: Das Gelegenheitsgedicht, however Segebrecht largely skims over the period between the phase of the occasional poem's greatest popularity and the literary debates which finally led to its decline. It is in this gray area, covered by a mere 19 pages of Segebrecht's lengthy study, that the satire and criticisms of Günther and his contemporaries fall.

63 Johann Jakob Dusch, Briefe zur Bildung des Geschmacks 1767, III. Part, p.121, as quoted in Segebrecht, p.281.

occasional poems of the young Goethe show.

As shown by closer analysis of epithalamia by both Günther and Mencke, the occasional poem had become an increasingly problematic form. Its thematic and formal demands often became the subject of parody and its underlying premises were put into question. In the works of these two authors, the form became increasingly self-reflexive and conventional subject matter was subverted by the discussion of poetry itself. In the wake of the serious questioning of the occasional form, (which, as Segebrecht has shown, began around 1727 and which originated in the debate occasioned by a controversial review of Juncker's poems which appeared in the seventh part of the Neukirchsche Anthologie), it became increasingly unfashionable to publish occasional poetry. Although occasional poetry continued to be written, the public demand which occasioned its production initially surviving this criticism by poets, it was no longer seen as a suitable form of poetic expression but rather as externally inspired, second rate poetry. This in turn led to the suppression, if not of this poetic form in itself, at least of the more obvious manifestations of its 'occasionality' as the time and details of the event for which it was written.

It is in this context that we should see what was, significantly, the only epithalamium included in Albrecht

Von Haller's, Versuch Schweizerische Gedichte 64, Ueber eine Hochzeit of 1731. Haller's ambivalent relationship to this genre already becomes clear from the introduction to this poem in which he assures his audience that he only included it in the anthology on the advice of others:

" Ein Kenner, dessen Einsicht ich mehr als der meinigen zutraue, hat mich bewogen, dieses verworfene Gedicht wieder hervor zu holen. "

Its satirical tone evidently has its origin in the same fundamental dissatisfaction with this form as Günther's, but the specific criticisms brought forward aim not at the individual tropes of the epithalamium, but at the low quality and popular nature of its production, demanding an end to this abuse of poetry:

" Entweicht ihr unberufne Dichter,
Singt auf den Bänken Bauren vor !
Ist vor euch Lärmer denn kein Richter ?
Sorgt niemand für ein kennend Ohr ?
Die Gasse schnarrt vor feilen Leiern,
Ganz Teutschland quillt mit nüchtern Schreiern
Auch Frösche sind nicht so gemein. " 65

In attacking the current low standard of poetry: "... euch Lärmer" and attempting to exclude the bulk of occasional verse from the category of 'true' poetry (1.1-2) and to introduce a tighter scheme of aesthetic judgement. (1.3-4). Haller anticipates many of the criticisms of the next thirty years (summarised in Segebrecht) which were

64 Albrecht von Haller, Gedichte, Ed. L. Hirzel, (Frauenfeld, 1882).

65 Albrecht Von Haller: Versuch schweizerischer Gedichte, (Zürich, 1731) p.98, 1.1-7.

eventually to topple the occasional poem.

In the type of argument he brings forward, Haller could be said to be more advanced in his critical perception than Günther (bearing in mind of course the intensification of debate on these matters in the eight years since the earlier poet's death). While Günther despairs at the limitations of the form and its restrictive tropes, Haller already numbers ^{himself} amongst those who are searching for a way of overcoming occasional poetry as such. Günther was still ultimately concerned to find a way forward for the occasional form which drew on its traditions while the following generation of poets, among them Haller, gradually abandoned the form altogether.

Günther can thus, despite the acuteness of his critical vision, be seen to characterise the literary dilemmas of his generation, rather than looking forward to their solutions. The attempts at reform of the style and conventions of the previous century initiated by the Hofpoeten, König and Besser, as well indeed as such poets as Günther's mentor, Mencke, had proved a literary dead end. By reforming the accepted style in imitation of French neo-classical circles around Boileau without fundamentally questioning the premises underlying this style, these poetic reformers retained the form but not the stylistic grace or eloquence of their literary predecessors; what was left was an empty shell which retained the by now moribund

tropes of the earlier style, deprived of the air of a more decorative pleasing poetic diction. By the 1720s and 30s the need for a more radical transformation was becoming apparent. The foundations for this transformation were laid by Gottsched and his Swiss critics in the 1740 who reformed poetry under the influence of enlightenment poetics. The rebirth of German poetry itself took a further decade.

It is debateable whether the way forward found by Gottsched and Enlightenment critics was the only one possible, but the literary historian must start from the basis of what actually happened, not what might have happened. Perhaps German poetry did need to be furnished with an aesthetic and didactic infrastructure based on the precepts of Enlightenment philosophy. The misfortune of Günther's generation, as much in terms of their literary influence as of their own literary production, was to be caught between two definite epochs, each with a strong concept of the purpose of literature. Günther and his contemporaries were searching for a way forward largely within the framework of the previous century. They asked questions, but this questioning was overruled (and eventually forced them into the margins of literary history) by a set of fairly arbitrary answers which were imposed from above by the vocal and well organised groups around Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger.

A comparison of Günther's epithalamium on the Hülse-

Lührin wedding with Haller's, Über eine Hochzeit, shows clearly who was the more talented and original poet. Günther's style is much freer and uninhibited, more colloquial and his relationship to the form, which he virtually deconstructs, more exuberant and far more original than anything to be found in the fifty years following his death. However it is Haller who encapsulates the literary way forward in his altogether more cautious and diffident poem. Perhaps the main reason for Günther's comparative neglect lies not in his actual poetry but in the blinkered view of his contemporary readership. His direct contemporaries were blinkered by moral scruples and his direct successors by the need to overcome the forms, such as the epithalamium, which he used. Neither group was able to take Günther for what he was: for the most inventive and original of the group of reforming poets who maintained the seventeenth century tradition into the first three decades of the following century.

CHAPTER 5.

JOHANN CHRISTIAN GÜNTHER IN HIS LITERARY CONTEXT

(1) Günther in the context of contemporary literary debate and production

In 1695, the year of Günther's birth, Silesia was the acknowledged centre of German literary life. Its writers and poets could look back on a 75 year old poetic tradition which traced its genealogy from Martin Opitz through Gryphius to the 'late' Silesians, Daniel Casper von Lohenstein and Christian Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau. By 1695, however, Lohenstein had been dead for twelve and Hofmannswaldau for sixteen years. Although they were still quoted as the great authorities of an accomplished style, opposition to the Silesian poetic tradition was growing and the next decades were to bring about a radical revision in the fields of poetics and literature as a whole. Günther, as will presently become clear, grew up in an epoch of heated literary discussion, a discussion he was himself both to partake in and whose subject he was to become, following his early death in 1723.

The Baroque, as recent research has shown, ¹ cannot be

¹ This debate is examined in more detail in pages 14-17 of the introduction.

described as a unified style, but encompasses diverse, indeed often contradictory and opposing styles. Hence by the time the ornate, precious style of Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein had come to full fruition, counter trends were already emerging² for instance in the writings of Boileau's German following. The diversity of this epoch is summed up in Szyrocki's statement:

" In den letzten beiden Jahrzehnten des Jahrhunderts kommen Schriftsteller zu Wort, die entweder zu den Epigonen zählen, oder schon Vorboten der Frühaufklärung sind. " ³

It would be an exaggeration to say that the Baroque had by this point reached a state of crisis, but individual poets and theoreticians were looking for new ways of writing and certain critics were already expressing their dissatisfaction with a tradition they perceived as anachronistic.

As we will see, and this is surely a major criterion in determining the unity of any group, the poets of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw themselves as belonging to a tradition of Kunstpoesie which stretched back over almost a century to Martin Opitz. The poetological precepts, which were passed down in the most common forewords to anthologies and Poetiken, varied very

² A thorough analysis of these developments is to be found in Manfred Windfuhr's: Barocke Bildlichkeit und ihre Kritiker: Stilhaltungen in der deutschen Literatur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts, (Stuttgart, 1966).

³ M. Szyrocki, Zur Differenzierung des Barockbegriffs in: Der literarische Barockbegriff, (Darmstadt, 1975), p.523.

little from Opitz' brief Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey to the Breslauer Anleitung a century later. In this we see an indisputable poetic tradition, a Baroque tradition in nuce if one so will.

This period of transition, which can be roughly traced from 1690-1740, from the first major criticisms of the Silesian tradition to the eventual triumph of the opposing Enlightenment camps of Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger, will be discussed under three main headings;

- (i) The literary context around the turn of the century.
- (ii) A survey of the main criticisms of the Silesian tradition in the period from 1700-1734.
- (iii) The search for a 'new' tradition in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

Certain practical difficulties confront us in any attempt to trace the literary history of the first two decades of the eighteenth century. To begin with, this period has been largely ignored by mainstream criticism, so there is a general lack of a bibliographical or critical apparatus to underpin a more specific study. This overall lack of critical interest in the period means that few primary texts or poetological treatises have been reprinted. It is moreover difficult to follow the actual course these literary developments took because of the absence of a main literary or publishing centre in Germany.

This lack of a centre both encouraged the geographically fragmented nature of this literary discussion, which often took the form of a feud between Silesian and Lower Saxon or Hamburg-based writers, and hindered communication between literary centres. One of the reasons it is so difficult to summarise the literary developments of these years chronologically, is that the speed of communication was so unpredictable: the Silesian reception of a collection of poems published in Hamburg could take months or years depending on circumstances.

(i) The literary sphere around the turn of the century

By the end of the seventeenth century, German Literature had reached a crossroads. It was riven by conflicting movements and trends from within the German speaking territory and abroad. These conflicts became particularly apparent in the poetry of these years as the elaborate, accumulative diction of Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein, influenced by the Italian mannerist Marino, was gradually challenged by the poesie galante of the Hôtel de Rambouillet circle and the neo-classicism of Boileau. The tensions and interweaving of the Silesian poetic tradition and the literary reforms of Christian Weise (1642-1708) among others are exemplified in Benjamin Neukirch's anthology, Herr von Hofmannswaldau und anderer

Deutsche auserlesene Gedichte published in Leipzig by Thomas Fritsche from 1695 onwards. This anthology shows a general move away from specifically religious poetry and towards the secular, and playfully erotic Galante Dichtung which was currently popular in court and fashionable town circles. The first couple of volumes are centred around the hitherto unpublished Galante Lyrik of Hofmannswaldau and supplemented by works by a number of later poets such as Otto Christoph Eltester (1666-1738), Erdmann Neumeister (1671-1756) and Benjamin Neukirch (1665-1729) himself, who emulated Hoffmannswaldau's style with the modifications of Weise's poetic and rhetorical reforms. This anthology, which appeared from 1695-1727 in seven volumes under at least three different editors, as we shall see, typifies the literary developments of the years of its publication. In 1709 for instance the sixth volume edited by the poetically conservative Gottlieb Stolle (1673-1744) becomes the vehicle for Neukirch's own literary volte-face. In his epithalamium, Auf die Linck- und Regiussische Vermählung, he publicly breaks free of the late Silesian tradition of Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein and proclaims the need for a radical transformation of German literary practice . In 1727 this same anthology, now under the editorship of G.F. Juncker, and containing only one poem by its namesake, Hofmannswaldau, becomes the figurehead of Early Enlightenment poetry under the tutelage of J.U. Von König

in Leipzig.

By the 1720s at the very latest it was becoming obvious, even to the editors of this anthology, that slavish imitation of Hofmannswaldau's manner had proved a literary dead end. This becomes particularly evident if we compare one of Hofmannswaldau's best known poems, Albanie gebrauchte deine Zeit ... 4 with a parody, or weak imitation of this same poem written some thirty years later by an anonymous poet, An Blandinchen. 5 The overall form has been retained but the underlying, deeper meaning, the carpe diem theme, has been all but forgotten. This later poet has kept the number of strophes, the number of lines and the rhetorical structure but there even the external similarity ceases, as he has chopped two feet off every line, thus failing to retain Hofmannswaldau's metrical balance. Precisely what has been lost in this rather flat satire or imitation becomes evident if we compare their respective first strophes.

Hofmannswaldau's poem opens with a vocative of warning or command:

" Albanie/ gebrauchte deine Zeit ",

the consequence which is found in the following line:

4 Herrn von Hoffmannswaldau und anderer Deutsche auserlesene Gedichte, Edited by Benjamin Neukirch, (Leipzig, 1695), Vol.1. pp.70-71.

5 Ibid: Vol.5, Edited by Christian Hölmann, (Leipzig, 1705) pp.90-91.

" Und lass den liebes-lusten freyen Zügel " The third line in turn introduces the reasoning to underpin this argument and the fourth refers back to the command of the second:

" Wenn uns der Schnee der Jahre hat beschneyt/
So schmeckt kein Kuss/ der Liebe wahre Siegel/ "

and after this suggestion of the 'winter' of old age, the poet purposely refers his addressee back to the privilege of youth:

" Im grünen May grünt nur der bunte Klee ".

The conjunctions at the beginning of the three central lines especially bring out the rhetorical structure of this verse: 'Und', 'Wenn', ^{and} 'So' and already point to the overall argument of the poem. How much looser is the structure of the later poem, An Blandinchen ! To begin with, the name of its addressee, Blandinchen (which could just as well refer to a neuter animal or, perhaps to the swan of the first line, as to the poet's beloved) has none of the grace of 'Albanie' a fault which is intensified by the double rhyming at the end of each verse : "Citrinchen/
Blandinchen". The structure of the poem has no obvious aim but is merely decorative and the poet in his search for an apt description of his beloved runs through an entire aviary 'Schwan' (1.1) 'Nachtigall' (1.3) 'Lerche' (V.2 1.1). This is coupled with rather heavy 'pure, rhymes " Schwan/ kan, Schall/ Nachtigall, Citrinchen/ Blandinchen". In its use of compound words, this parody borrows from Hofmannswaldau's original, hence the sensuous 'Wollust-

thau' becomes the derivative 'Zucker-Thau' (to rhyme with 'Venus-au' and 'Herzens-au' respectively). In general this later version can be said to be merely a derivative domestication of what is still a rhetorically and poetically very powerful poem. Its linguistic simplifications have been effected at the expense of the fullness of tone and grace of its model, but no new tone or subject matter has yet been found to excuse these linguistic innovations.

In their search for a new way forward, the generation preceding Günther's looked to the poetry of Friedrich Rudolf von Canitz (1654-1699) for inspiration. Canitz' clear and rational tone, which had its roots in Boileau's neo-classicism, was immediately praised and emulated by his contemporaries and helped to introduce a less ornate imagery and a tauter structure along French lines into German poetry. 6

The literary reception of Canitz' poetry was delayed by its largely private nature; it was in fact only published in 1700. The very fact of this posthumous publication (in

6 The court poets, Besser and König and the influential anthologist, Benjamin Neukirch numbered amongst Canitz' most ardent supporters although he was still cited as part of the moderate, reforming canon as late as the 1730s or 40s, hence Gottsched in his Vorrede zu auserlesenen Gedichte von Benjamin Neukirch of 1744 could still claim that:

" ... das güldene Alter unserer Poesie musste in denen Zeiten, da Besser und Canitz, Neukirch, Günther und Pietsch gelebet und geschrieben haben, gesucht und festgehalten werden. " (p.240).

1700, one year after the poet's death) is in itself a sign of a radically different attitude to poetry. Canitz, a geheimer Staatsrath was, like Neukirch, Omeis and so many others of his generation a Nebenstundenpoet.⁷ What, however, makes him unusual is his decision to keep his poetry private. He declined either to publish his work during his lifetime or to write the then ubiquitous occasional poetry which indeed rapidly became the butt of his satire. Canitz was one of the first to consciously turn against occasional poetry and his lyric opus is dominated by satires in the manner of Boileau rather than the more usual Gelegenheitsdichtung. Although his claim to literary fame rests on one slim volume of poetry, Canitz nonetheless exerted a considerable influence on literary developments throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century.

(ii) The main criticisms of the Silesian tradition: 1700-1734

This year, 1700, was in many ways a turning point for German poetry. Whereas it had hitherto been the canonical norm to quote Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau as the great authorities and to emulate their precious, ornate style,

⁷ See: Rudolf Ludwig, Freiherr von Canitz: Gedichte Ed. Jürgen Stenzel, (Tübingen, 1982) Neuer Vorbericht by J.U. König, p.54.

(Browning describes them as : "... sacred cows" 8,) from now on criticism of the high Baroque style, if not of these authority figures themselves, becomes a common feature of poetry and literary treatises followed by a gradual rejection of occasional poetry as an institution. These trends find expression in a cluster of literary satires, written around the turn of the century; a form of criticism which has its roots both in Boileau, and in Sacer's well known, Reime dich oder ich fresse dich 9. Christian Wernicke's, An unsere teutsche Poeten from his Überschriften Oder EPIGRAMMATA of 1697, for instance, attacks the practice which had become widespread within the Petrarchist tradition favoured by Hoffmannswaldau, of describing living women in terms of cold jewel metaphors. Günther's future mentor, Johann Burkhard Mencke (1674-1732), on the other hand, criticises the bombastic praise heaped on the addressee of an occasional poem, but summing this up in the following, equally ornate form:

" Denn frey heraus gesagt; Was ist das eitle Dichten?
 Ein theurer Cram voll Nichts, ein Laubwerk ohne Früchten,
 Ein Werck, so uns die Natur uns nur zur Strafe giebt," 10

Canitz' satire on poetry and Neukirch's epithalamium both dating from the year 1700 share the dual focus of a

8 R.M. Browning, German Baroque Poetry 1618-1723, (Pennsylvania, 1971), p.183.

9 (Northausen, 1679)

10 Wieder die unmässigen Lobes-Erhebungen der Poeten. 1.12-14.

plaidoyer against poetic excesses and occasional poetry. Neukirch especially emphasises the social pressures on the poet, fearing his poetic reforms may have deprived him of an audience:

" Mein Reim klingt vielen schon sehr matt und ohne Krafft,
Warum ? Ich tränck' ihn nicht in Muscateller-saft;

...
Wie öfters muss ich doch der abgeschmackten Sachen,
Wenn ich zurüke seh', noch bey mir selber lachen;
Gleichwohl gefielen sie, und nahmen durch den Schein,
Wie schlecht er immer war, viel hundert Leser ein." 11

In his third satire, Von der Poesie, Canitz criticises the poetasters of his age who have given poetry a bad name with the exaggerated praise of the recipients of their occasional verse; they have sold out their ideals for payment. The poetry he attacks as meaningless is once again Gelegenheitsdichtung.

Comments of this sort are *typical* of the low regard poetry was held in at this time; as a social necessity which had to find some spurious moral justification. The poetry of this epoch did not, on the whole, deal with serious moral subject-matter, but was seen instead as a pursuit of Nebenstunden, as a purely decorative art form.

With the stylistic reforms of Canitz, Mencke and Neukirch, the abundance and rhetorical grandeur of the late Silesian style was pruned from German Kunstpoesie without any immediate change in the underlying subjects it

11 Auf die Linck- und Regiussische Vermählung: 1.10-11, 24-27.

discussed, with the result that the writings of the so-called Hofpoeten seem empty, bare and, as Mencke said of poetry as a whole: " ... ein Laubwerk ohne Früchten ". The poetry of this transition may thus truly be seen as poetry in crisis; neither possessing the linguistic or decorative charms of the 'high Baroque' nor the sense of moral and didactic purpose of the Enlightenment.

The criticisms voiced against the literary tradition of the previous century as voiced in the years 1690-1730 can be examined from three points of view, namely, geographical, stylistic and moral.

The following analysis will take as its basis the poetic theory of the time as contained in the major Poetiken and introductions to collections of poetry from 1688 to 1734. This selection does not claim to be comprehensive (to have examined this poetological background in any greater detail would have gone beyond the scope of this dissertation) but is selective, concentrating on the texts most frequently cited or which seem to have been most widely available. A central feature of these works is the debate about the future of German poetry. By the end of the century, a certain mistrust of the Silesian tradition as represented by Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein had grown up and critics began to look to other parts of Germany for their inspiration.

This trend can be seen clearly by comparing the literary canon recommended in treatises throughout this period. Such canons are intrinsically conservative; they are catalogues of the accepted tradition and as such can indicate, even through quite minimal changes, the literary developments of the age. The introduction to the first volume of Neukirch's anthology (1695), Daniel Georg Morhof's, Unterricht von der deutschen Sprache und Poesie (1700) and Daniel Magnus Omeis', Gründliche Anleitung zur Teutschen accuraten Reim- und Dicht-kunst (1704) are, as one would expect united in their Silesian-based poetic canon, centring on Opitz, Gryphius, Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau. Omeis, for whom one can claim a certain geographical impartiality as he was born in Nürnberg and died in Altdorf, even goes as far as to describe the Silesians:

" ... als denen unsere Poesie / wie im Anfang/ also auch im Fortgang und nochwährendem Lauf der dritten Zeit/ einen sonderbaren Preis und unsterblichen Dank schuldig bleibt. " 12

However, of the three, he is the most prophetic, already fearing the forthcoming Silesian fall from grace:

" Gott verhüte/ dass es nicht mit ihr ... heissen möge:
 Man siehet ja/ nach allerhöchstem Steigen/
 Die Sonne selbst zum Niedergang sich neigen. " 13

The main criticisms against the poetry of the previous century were directed against its excesses: the stylistic Schwulst which was seen as a particular failing of the

12 Omeis, p.56.

13 Ibid, p.57.

later Silesians, the Vielschreiberei of the Gelegenheitsdichter and the moral excesses of the; " Geilheit unzüchtiger Gemüter" 14. We have already looked at some of these stylistic criticisms in the satires of Mencke, Neukirch and Von Canitz; these were given poetological substance in the poetic reference works of the following two decades. References to Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau become rarer and instead Besser, König, Von Canitz and Neukirch enter the poetic canon. By 1722, Günther's mentor, Johann Burchard Mencke in the introduction to his Galante Gedichte feels obliged to apologise for any Silesian traces in his poetry:

" Ich muss auch dem ecklen Leser berichten, dass ich mich anfangs allzusehr in die Hofmannswaldauische Gleichnisse verliebet, ... und daher ... auch mancher Schlesischer Reim mit unterlaufen ".

The Silesians, as we will see in more detail when we examine the reception of Günther's work, saw such criticisms as a threat to their national honour and were quick to retaliate in books and periodicals. The influential Breslauer Anleitung of 1725, for instance, sums up recent poetic developments outside Silesia quite differently:

" Allein, wenn ich die Wahrheit sagen soll, so sind wir von unserer Vollkommenheit abgesunken. Opitz, Flemming und Gryphius hatten zwar einige Fehler; sie haben doch ganz anders geschrieben als die meisten fast jetzo schreiben. Sie hatten schöne Gedancken, aber auch dabey heroische

14 Johann Georg Neukirch, Anfangs-Gründe zur reinen Teutschen Poesie itziger Zeit (Halle, 1724), p.18.

Worte und wussten insonderheit das Herze zu rühren. Da man hingegen ietzunder nur schöne Wörter allein, oder gute Gedancken in schlechten Worten, ordentlich keinen von beyden vorbringt. " 15

In other words, the reforms of the Hofpoeten had simplified the language but thereby deprived it of either beauty or expressiveness. The Hofpoeten, needless to say, saw this process quite differently. In the introduction to a posthumous edition of Johann Besser's writings, his successor in Dresden, Johann Ulrich König, sums up his achievements and, with these, the past twenty years of literary life from his own perspective:

" Die teutsche Dicht-kunst war veracht,
Sie suchte sich zu bunt zu kleiden,
Bey Hofe sah sie sich verlacht,
Denn der kan keinen Schulschmuck leiden.

...

Doch der Geschmack nebst der Natur
Fieng an, sie edler auszuzieren,
Und sicher auf der Alten Spur
Nach Hofe wieder hin zu führen;
Wo sie, befreyt von Schminck und Tand
Durch Bessers Schreib-Art Beyfall fand." 16

15 Anleitung zur Poesie/ darinnen ihr Ursprung/ Wachsthum/ Beschaffenheit und rechter Gebrauch untersucht und gezeigt wird, (Breslau, 1725), p.89.

16 Johann Ulrich König (Editor) Des Herrn von Besser Schrifften (Leipzig, 1732) Über das Kupfer-Bild vor dem I. Theile der Besserischen Schrifften. These lines also point to a major ideological change underlying these aesthetic categories, namely the rise of the political as against the scholarly approach which was introduced by Christian Weise in such works as... This development, indicated in this poem by the lines:

" Bey Hofe sah sie sich verlacht,
Denn der kan keinen Schulschmuck leiden."

whereby the court becomes the primary aesthetic instance, assuming this mantle from the world of scholarship, is discussed at length in Wilhelm Kühlmann's: Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat (Tübingen, 1982).

However, despite the confidence of these lines, even König had to admit that the Silesian manner still retained a certain popularity as he complained in 1727:

" Dennoch können wir nicht verneinen, dass der größte Hauffe bey uns dem Joche des übelen Geschmacks noch immer freywillig unterworffen bleibe." 17

By the beginning of the Eighteenth Century there was a definite move against the sexual innuendo and sensual excess in the poetry of the late Silesians, against the playful delectare of the end of the century and towards a more serious minded docere at the beginning of the next one. Hand in hand with this moral criticism came an implicitly social one which was directed against the institution of occasional poetry, or rather it took exception to the degradation of a poetry which was seen primarily in terms of a financial transaction.

In the early volumes of the Neukirch anthology there was a distinct move against the predominance of religious poetry of earlier in the seventeenth century and towards a risqué, mondaine and often openly erotic subject matter. This anthology, which was on open sale and discussed in the most respectable publications, can thus be said to reflect the galant taste of its aristocratic and educated

17 Johann Ulrich König, Untersuchung von dem guten Geschmack in der Dicht= und Rede=Kunst (leipzig, 1727) p.239.

readership. Ernst Osterkamp 18 has pointed out the distinction the reading public made between the playful fictions of this Galante Lyrik and the moral criteria it applied to the reality of contemporary life. So long as such works as Hofmannswaldau's Schoss der Geliebten are accepted as a mere fiction, they can be innocently enjoyed by an open minded (presumably male) reading public, however if the overall social climate changes, as it did in the early eighteenth century and takes these fictions as fact, a clampdown and censorship of these licentious works must inevitably set in.

This clampdown is, for instance, already to be seen in the fact that Neukirch, in the foreword to the second and slightly revised version of the first volume of his anthology, blamed the most daring inclusions of the first edition on the printer. 19

By 1713, Christian Friedrich Hunold had already bridged the gap between playful fictions and adherence to the

18 Ernst Osterkamp, Scherz und Tugend, in Text und Kritik: Johann Christian Günther, 1982, pp.42-55.

19 Similar excuses are to be found in the 1730 edition of Günther's own poetry in which the editor apologises for the inclusion of morally dubious works in the preceding edition as follows:

"... so habe nur hiermit einen ieden versichern wollen, dass vornehmlich die mir so kurz hierzu abgemessene Zeit daran Schuld gewesen."

As a rule, the more risqué of Günther's poems, or those expressive of extreme religious doubt or despair were gradually eliminated from succeeding editions of his work following a largely unacknowledged policy of editorial censorship.

concept of mimesis, and in his, Academische Nebenstunden judges poetic words as deeds:

" Sie sind cynici, die allen Wohlstand verachten/ und die Wollust öffentlich treiben. " 20

In the compilation of anthologies considerably more attention is paid to the moral tone of the work. Weichmann says explicitly of his Poesie der Niedersachsen:

" Garstige, oder auch solche Dinge, dadurch einige ernsthaftte und zärtliche Ohren könnten beleidiget werden dürfen sich auf diesen Sammel-Platz nicht wagen." 21

In his, Anfangs-Gründen zur reinen teutschen Poesie, Johann Georg Neukirch pleads for a voluntary censorship:

" Unverschämte und ärgerliche Sau-Zoten in diese Gedichte einfließen lassen ... stehet einem christlichen Poeten nicht wohl an." 22

The avoidance of morally dubious texts gains in significance as poetry begins to assume a didactic function, as a transmitter of the values of the early Enlightenment. It is no wonder then that the potentially corrupting influence of Galante Dichtung should be avoided by teachers of the young. Both Gottlieb Stolle's, Anleitung zur Historie der Gelahrtheit, (Jena, 1724) and Gottfried Ephraim Scheibel's, Die Unerkannten Sünden der Poeten,

20 Christian Friedrich Hunold, Academische Nebenstunden allerhand neuer Gedichte nebst einer Einleitung zur vernünftigen Poesie, (Halle/Leipzig, 1713) Vorrede.

21 Friedrich Weichmann, Poesie der Niedersachsen (Hamburg, 1721 ff.) (Kraus Reprint, München, 1980).

22 Johann Georg Neukirch, Anfangs-Gründen zur reinen deutschen Poesie (Halle, 1724), p.18.

(Leipzig, 1734) are united in their rejection of Neukirch's anthology for use in the classroom. Even a brief glance at Scheibel's tract against poetry shows how radical the move against the eroticism of the late seventeenth century had been. The easy-going Weltgewandtheit of Hofmannswaldau has ceded its place to a narrow-minded religiosity:

" ... Hurerey ist eine einfache Sünde, Ehebruch aber eine zweifache. Und gewiss manches Ehe-Weib, ist durch die Liebkosung eines Poeten zu einer Bathseba worden." 23

(Neither is it merely poetic writings which come under Scheibel's attack, but the whole 'poetic' way of life in chapters which bear the headings Von der Atheisterey der Poeten, Vom Müssiggang der Poeten, Von der Poeten Betteley.) Such sentiments as:

" Hier ist nur von denjenigen Poeten die Rede, die nichts anderes gelernt als Verse machen, und in dem gemeinen Leben sich nicht nähren wollen ..." 24

are not exactly conducive to that development of the later Eighteenth Century, the professional writer.

(iii) The search for a 'new' tradition in the early decades of the eighteenth century

A fear common to the majority of poets and critics of

23 Gottfried Ephraim Scheibel. Die unerkannten Sünden der Poeten welche man sowohl in ihren Schriften als in ihrem Leben wahrnimmt (Leipzig, 1734), (Kraus Reprint, München, 1981) p.157.

24 Ibid p.191.

the early eighteenth century from König to Gottsched. Bodmer and Breitinger was that German poetry had somehow lost its way after Opitz' reforms and that in order to go forward, it was necessary to revive this lost tradition. This view is, as we have seen, succinctly expressed in König's introduction to Besser's Schriften:

" Sie war nur auf den Schein Bedacht,
Und was den Opitz gross gemacht,
Begunnt ihr falscher Witz zu meiden."

This trend is also reflected in the literary canons of the 1720s and 30s which tended to see Opitz as the great progenitor of the German poetic tradition, a varying constellation of Gryphius, Fleming and Dach as his more or less worthy successors, and Canitz as the reviver of a moderate style who paved the way for such poets as Neukirch, Brockes and Pietsch. Around 1720 it becomes unusual to find a laudatory mention of Lohenstein or Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau except in Silesian publications such as the Breslauer Anleitung or in Günther's own work.

One solution to the search for a tradition was thus to have recourse to Opitz; another was to look to foreign models. As early as the 1690s, Von Canitz was writing satires in the manner of Boileau; a practice which was to be almost universally copied by German poets in the following decades. This interest in French developments coincided with a move against the Italian influence of Marino, which had exercised such a strong hold over

Hofmannswaldau, and whose Bethlehemitischer Kinder-Mord was still to appear in a translation by Brockes in 1715. 25

This recourse to the literary reforms of a century earlier is particularly marked in the early writings of those great literary rivals of the 1740s, Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger. The literary standpoints of these two opposing groups were not as far apart as often imagined; a point made by Wiegmann in his Geschichte der Poetik:

" Der Gegensatz zwischen Gottsched und den Schweizern ist nicht so gross, wie es in der Fehde ihrer Anhänger signalisiert werden könnte." 26

This is especially true of the 1720s and 30s when they were united in the struggle against a common enemy; the late Silesian style. In their quest for a new tradition furthermore, both, like so many contemporaries, had recourse to the one 'untainted' literary model: Martin Opitz. Hence Gottsched, in his Gedächtnisrede auf Martin Opitzen von Boberfeld of 1739, mirrors J.U. König in writing:

" Auf dankbares Germanien! verwirf die ungeschickten Nachfolger dieses grossen Meisters, die dir durch ihr ausschweifendes Wesen, durch ihre regellose Einbildungskraft, durch ihren geilen Witz und ungesalzenen Scherz mehr Schande gemacht, als jener dir Ehre erworben

25 Bartold Heinrich Brockes, Verteutschter Bethlehemitischer Kinder-Mord des Ritters Marino, (Hamburg, 1715).

26 Hermann Wiegmann, Geschichte der Poetik: Ein Abriss (Stuttgart, 1977), p.60.

hatte." 27

The one major development in this statement, and this again was adopted by Bodmer and Breitinger, was the evident rise in national consciousness. While Gottsched is willing to draw on foreign models, and recommends:

" ... das Lesen der alten Lateiner und der neueren Franzosen." 28

The realisation shared by Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger was precisely that, through the writings of Hofmannswaldau and Lohenstein, Germany had lost the literary status it had once possessed under Opitz. Hence for Bodmer, writing in 1741, a major criterium is outside opinion :

" Wie schimpflich würde es uns seyn, wenn die benachbarten Nationen gegen Süden und Westen sollten innen werden, dass diese verderbte Hofmannswaldauische Geschmack noch heutzutage unter uns eine so starke Anzahl Nachfolger und Bewunderer hat. " 29

In their critical writings, Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger are not merely concerned with their poetic heritage, but with current trends and developments in German literary life and, most importantly, with the literary future. Recent developments in poetry and poetics are described in partisan terms: hence Gottsched claims

27 Johann Christoph Gottsched, in Ausgewählte Werke, Ed. P.M. Mitchell, Vol. 9, I, (Berlin, 1976), p.189.

28 Johann Christoph Gottsched. Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst in Ausgewählte Werke Edited by Joachim Birke, (Berlin, 1973), Vol. 6, I, p.349.

29 Johann Jacob Bodmer, Kritische Betrachtungen über die poetischen Gemälde der Dichter, Reprographischer Nachdruck, (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), p.358.

Neukirch unequivocally for his theories :

" ... ich weis nur einen einzigen, Neukirch der bey Zeiten umgekehrt und wieder der Vernunft und Natur nachzugehen angefangen. " 30

The literary disputes of the first three decades of the eighteenth century are described by this camp in terms of Gottschedian conquests.

Another tenet held by both the Swiss and Leipzig reformers is their re-evaluation of the intrinsic worth of poetry. This is succinctly expressed in Bodmer's condemnation of the low esteem in which poetry was currently held:

" Unsere deutsche Poeten haben von der Würde ihrer Kunst keine höhere Gedancken, als dass sie solche in ihren öffentlichen Schriften als eine brotlose Kunst ausgeben, und für ein blosses Nebenwerk halten." 31

Instead they affirm poetic expression as a value in itself and transform it into a didactic means of communicating philosophical precepts. Both, furthermore, adhere to an essentially rhetorical framework, both see imitation of nature as the first poetic imperative but here the similarities end. Whereas Gottsched preaches a return to an absolute minimum of rhetorical ornatus and insists above all on the perspicuitas, the clarity of poetic diction, the Swiss emphasis falls on the inventio which, they believe, must be renewed in a way true to nature but which avoids

30 Gottsched, Versuch, p.159.

31 J. J. Bodmer, Kritische Betrachtungen, p.23.

the pitfalls of the late seventeenth century. It is often difficult to follow the twists and turns of this long drawn out literary discussion which was largely conducted in the form of letters, pamphlets and articles in periodicals. It would have been counter-productive, in describing the context of Günther's work, to have gone into too great detail about these exchanges and so the description has here been restricted to what is strictly relevant to Günther.

(2) Günther in the mirror of contemporary reception

The literary developments sketched above were to have a major effect on the reception of Günther's work in the early Eighteenth Century. Günther's work was reviewed and reprinted throughout the Century but he was never to become one of its central figures. His literary tone simply did not fit comfortably into the categories of the time.

Contemporary opinion about Günther can be reduced to two clichés already to be found in early reviews of his work. The first of these makes its way into the first edition of his poetry published a year after his death and states :

" Hiermit Gedichte eines Poeten ... der, wenn er länger gelebt, so gar den allergrössten Dichter Deutschlands den

Preis würde strittig gemacht haben. " 32

This recurs almost word for word in a passage quoted by Steinbach in 1738 from Jöcher's, Gelehrtenlexicon:

" ... so würde Herr Günther ohnfehlbar einer der grössten Poeten worden seyn, welche Deutschland erzeuget, wenn er zur gehörigen Reiffe gekommen, etwas gesetzter worden und in nützlichen Wissenschaften weiter gegangen wäre." 33

These judgements are essentially moralistic in character, but claim a certain objectivity. While it is true that Günther did only live to be twenty seven, one suspects that the main reason critics chose to describe his work as rough and unfinished was because they could not make him conform to their view of literature.

The second judgement most frequently passed on Günther is a moralistic one, best summarised in the Beyträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache of 1736:

" Die Unordnung seiner Lebensart, und der schlechte Umgang mit den lasterhaften Leuten leuchten aus so vielen hundert Stellen seiner Gedichte hervor; die ohne Anstoss der Schamhaftigkeit und Zucht nicht gelesen werden können." 34

The main criticism held against Günther then, is that he is immoral, indeed dangerous to read. This can even lead to editorial censorship of his work such as we find in the 1742 Nachlese:

32 Sammlung von Johann Christian Günthers aus Schlesien ... Deutschen und Lateinischen Gedichten (Frankfurt/ Leipzig, 1724).

33 Steinbach, p.135.

34 These remarks are to be found in a review of the first complete edition of Günther's work in the 14th volume of the Beyträge (Leipzig, 1736) p.186.

" Ich habe dem Nachteil der Tugend und Verletzung der Ehrbarkeit, keinen unflätigen oder ehrenrühigen Einfällen, den Zugang versperret oder eine Stelle verstatet." 35

Such opinions, as we have discussed before, tie in with a heightened emphasis on the didactic nature of poetry (we should bear in mind, however, that many of these comments are drawn from specifically educational works such as poetic reference works for schools.) Scheibel's school based canon is hence fairly typical:

" Ich habe meinen Schülern ausser Opitzen, Canitzen, Brockes Gedichten, die Sammlungen Hunolds ... keinen anderen deutschen Poeten erlaubt. Günthern kan ich einen jungen Menschen unmöglich in die Hände geben, bis die darinnen befindlichen geilen und leichtfertigen Gedichte werden ausgeladen seyn. " 36

Günther's status as a major poet was never seriously questioned but the doubts about the morality and themes of his work were such as to exclude him from the mainstream poetic canon of the first half of the century.

Two analyses of Günther's work deserve to be excluded from the aforementioned category: Cronegk's long poem, Günthers Schatten in his Einsamkeiten of 1758 37 and a passage which Steinbach quotes in his biography 38.

35 35 Nachlese zu Johann Christian Günthers von Striegau aus Schlesien Gedichten (Breslau, 1742) Vorrede.

36 G.E. Scheibel, Die unerkannten Sünden der Poeten p.66.

37 Johann Friedrich von Cronegk, Einsamkeiten. (Zürich, 1758) p.135.

38 Siebrand (=Steinbach) Carl Ehrenfried, Johann Christian Günthers des berühmten schlesischen Dichters ... Leben und Schriften (Schlesien, 1738) p.137.

Cronegk's original view of Günther is very much in keeping with his age:

" Stolz warf ich mich zum Richter verflossener Zeiten auf,
Mir schien ein Günther klein;
Mir schien sein niedrig Lied nur fehlerhaft zu sein."

but then the utterances of Günther's ghost temper his opinion:

" Seyd mir an Redlichkeit, doch nicht an Fehlern gleich;
Ihr richtet über mich; die Nachwelt richtet euch."

his judgement has thus been relativised by the perspective of generations still to come and he is enabled to examine Günther in his historical context and has the earlier poet exclaim:

" O tadle mich nicht mehr! Du kannst nicht Günther werden.
...
Dass dich nicht gleicher Trieb in gleiche Noth gebracht
Ist Auferziehung Schuld, Zeit und der Vorsicht Macht
Nicht eigenes Verdienst."

The analysis contained in Steinbach's Leben is especially perceptive of the inner nature of Günther's poetry and appreciates the liberties he sometimes takes with language:

" Sein Ausdruck ist geputzt, nicht kindisch, hoch, nicht Schwühl
Geht oft von Regeln ab, und fehlt doch nicht ihr Ziel."

It furthermore recognises the confessional nature of his verse:

" Benimmt er Gram und Qual, so ihm sein Schicksal droht
So trägt der Leser selbst die Hälfte seiner Noth."

as well as his achievement in making suffering an adequate and natural subject for poetry:

" Das macht, er weiss den Schmerz natürlich vorzutragen,
Und wie er ihn empfindt, so pflegt er auch zu klagen."

Looking beyond this early criticism, Justus Riegel's, Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften gives us an enlightening, wider perspective on Günther. Published in 1774, it looks back on the early century with hindsight and a view of literature shaped by the experience of the Enlightenment, Empfindsamkeit and Sturm und Drang and claims:

" Caniz und Günther- beyde würden mehr gewesen seyn, als sie waren, der erste mit Günther's Genie und der letzte mit Canizens Weltkenntnis und poetischen Sitten." 39

Because of this ability to see Günther from a wider perspective, Riegel can also begin to sum up his achievement in a literary-historical context:

" Sie beyde (Canitz und Günther) nebst Opitzen und ein Paar andern Dichtern dürften wohl bey der Nachwelt eine Periode unserer Dichtkunst von beynahe hundert Jahren charakterisieren. Denn die Morhofs, Pietsche, Richey, und ohne Zweifel auch die Brockse, Besser und Könige wird man nächstens vergessen."

This clear-sightedness was not always granted to Günther's contemporaries. Günther was fairly well known as a poet, so both his life and art attracted comment and criticism, often of a very biased nature. Over and above this, Günther provided a perfect tool in the debate about the future of literature, and his longer lived contemporaries were to manipulate his image and reputation in retrospect to suit their own ideas.

39 Riegel, (Wien, 1774) p,167.

(3) Günther as the focus of literary polemic.

In 1735 the first complete edition of Günther's works was published in Breslau and Leipzig. This edition was unwittingly to stir up a conflict which was to continue for four years. The publication of the collection was celebrated by two reviews; one in Scharff's, Gelehrte Neuigkeiten Schlesiens in June 1735 and another in the Beyträge zur critischen Historie der deutsche Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft of Leipzig. These reviews, especially the latter which was believed to be by Gottsched, provoked a strong response from the Silesians. This took the form of an attack on Gottsched's supporters which appeared in Steinbach's biography of Günther. This early biography of Günther attempts to redress some of the frequent critical attacks and in doing so mirrors Günther's view of his own critical reception:

" ... mit einem Worte; Günther taugt nichts, denn er war ein armer Kerl; so urtheilet ihr lieben Herren." 40

He attempts to create a more positive basis for the interpretation of Günther's poetry through prompting a more thorough understanding of his life and in doing so provides us with a useful overview of contemporary reception of his

40 Steinbach, Vorrede.

work.

This Silesian retaliation in turn brought about a defence of the Critische Beyträge review by an anonymous supporter of Gottsched in the form of a Schreiben an Herrn Doctor Steinbach 41, which is undated but refers specifically to Steinbach's work, and the bizarre, Gespräche zwischen Johann Christian Günther ... In dem Reiche der Todten/ Und einem ungenannten In dem Reiche der Lebendigen 42 which also adopts a critical stance to the biography. Hence a legitimate discussion of this edition developed within the course of four years into a much wider polemical debate about the future of German poetry using Günther as the vehicle for two diametrically opposed arguments and even personal attacks.

It was surprisingly the review in the Beyträge which initially sparked off this literary discussion; surprisingly because of the two, its tone is if anything the more moderate. In the Gelehrten Nachrichten, Scharff attacks Günther's supposed immorality with a feeling of moral indignation characteristic of this time, viewing his poetry as:

41 Schreiben an Herrn Doctor Steinbach in Breslau, bey Gelegenheit seiner wider den Herrn Prof Gottsched in der Lebensbeschreibung von Günther angeführten Beschuldigungen.

42 Gespräche zwischen Johann Christian Günther aus Schlesien In dem Reiche der Todten/ und einem Ungenannten In dem Reiche der Lebendigen: In welchem Beyde des Erstern 1738 zu Breslau gedruckten Lebenslauf beurtheilen (1739.)

" Nur mehrere Merkmale des elenden Zustands, in den durch ausschweifende Leichtsinnigkeit und unordentliches Wesen einer derer besten Köpfe verfallen kann." 43

and advises against the inclusion of a curriculum vitae as it would prejudice the reader against Günther's poetry. The Gottschedian review conversely opens by welcoming this complete edition:

" ... dass man längst Ursache gehabt, sich zu wundern warum doch der Verleger keine bessere Auflage davon ans Licht gestellet hat." 44

It regrets the absence of a curriculum vitae from the 1735 edition:

" Zumal er in allen seinen Umständen mehr bedauert als gehasset oder verabscheuet zu werden würdig gewesen." 45

This review is certainly more comprehensive than that of the Gelehrte Neuigkeiten, going into more detail about poetic technicalities and the nature of Günther's lyrical gifts, but also finding fault with the specific weaknesses of his work. The fact that it criticises the " Unordnung seiner Lebensart " is almost certainly not the main reason for the negative Silesian reaction. The central reason is instead, one suspects, a geographical one arising from wounded local pride. The Gelehrte Neuigkeiten was a 'home grown' periodical published on a monthly basis in

43 Scharff, Gelehrte Neuigkeiten Schlesiens: (Schweidnitz, June 1735).

44 Beyträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache, 14. Stück, (Leipzig, 1736), p.169.

45 Ibid, p.173.

Schweidnitz, whereas the Beyträge zur critischen Historie was the organ of the Deutsche Gesellschaft in Leipzig, hence the Silesian prejudice against it. The real issue underlying their reaction to this was not, one surmises, its treatment of Günther but its diatribe against Silesian over-sensitivity:

" Was ist so unleidlich als Schlesien wenn man an seinen Poeten aussetzt." 46

It was acceptable for a Silesian writer to criticise his fellow countryman, but criticism by an outsider could be interpreted as an attack on Silesian literature as a whole.

It is difficult for the modern reader to comprehend or decipher the complex circumstances which proved such a barrier to a more extensive and detailed contemporary reception of Günther. In terms of his literary reception he had the misfortune to have written in a time of transition. For his contemporaries he was both too progressive, too loose in his style and too advanced in his religious doubts, (as we have seen in the reaction to his writings based on Job) and too retrospective in his reliance on Silesian models and erotic motifs, more suited to the Galante Dichtung of fifteen years earlier. Instead the reception of Günther's work was generally restricted to a few salient points which do not capture the uniqueness of his poetry in its complex but productive relationship to

46 Beyträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache und Beredsamkeit, 14. Stück. (Leipzig. 1736), p.186.

tradition. The poets of the later eighteenth century did not follow on from Günther but felt the need to entirely break free of the seventeenth century of which they felt Günther was a part. This is well expressed by Benz in the question:

" Warum konnte es in ihrer (Günther and Brockes') Nachfolge nicht weitergehen, warum sollte ihre Form und Sprache problematisch geworden sein, wo doch die von ihnen angeschlagenen Themen auch fürderhin die herrschenden der Epoche blieben ? " 47

Günther did not have a great literary following; his poetry continued to be published for most of the century but his innovations were not generally copied. Two exceptions to this rather sweeping statement are to be found in the poetry of two mid century writers: Daniel Stoppe, a fellow Silesian, and Johann Friedrich Freyherr von Cronegk, whose lyrical examination of Günther's achievement, Günthers Schatten we looked at earlier. Stoppe's, Der Parnass im Sättler contains many poems whose subject matter and imagery, the concern with the relevance of poetry and bemoaning of the harshness of his fate, are obviously gleaned from Günther. A stanza from a longer aria serves to show just how close this relationship is:

" Wo bleibt ihr denn? ihr guten Tage!
Ich warte schon so lange Zeit,
Und wo ich euch nicht bald erfrage:
So bleibt nur immer wo ihr seyd!
Wenn Stern und Glück und Hoffnung bricht:
So leb ich mit mir selbst zufrieden

47 Richard Benz: Deutsches Barock- Kultur des 18. Jahrhunderts, (Stuttgart, 1949), p.298.

Denn eurentwegen sterb ich nicht." 48

First of all there is the address to the personified transitoriness of life: "Ihr guten Tage" mildly reminiscent of the opening of, Als er durch innerlichen Trost bey der Ungeduld gestärkt wurde:

" Und wie ihr Tugenden euch sonst noch alle nennet " 49 followed by a rejection of all they stand for since they refuse to conform to his will:

" Und wo ich euch nicht bald erfrage:
So bleibt doch lieber wo ihr seyd! "

which in turns brings about a decision to throw himself on the self-reliance of neo-stoicism, linguistically underpinned by the formulation so reminiscent of Günther:

" Wenn Stern und Glück und Hoffnung bricht "

together show an intense inner and formal reliance on Günther. Such conscious imitation of the Güntherian model was, however, the exception rather than the rule and it was only in the late eighteenth century that critics were to appreciate the uniqueness of Günther's writing.⁵⁰

(4) Günther's perception of his own relationship to contemporary literature

48 Daniel Stoppe, Der Parnass im Sättler, oder Scherz- und Ernsthafte Gedichte, (Frankfurt/Leipzig, 1735), p.210.

49 Kr.II.p.123.1.2.

50 This is evident both from the analysis by Riegel we have already examined and from Goethe's highly influential judgement of Günther as expressed in: Dichtung und Wahrheit.

It is difficult to determine how conscious Günther was of the essential difference between himself and his contemporaries. On the whole the stance he adopts towards them is a very critical one; he is well aware of the base motives underlying much contemporary art: the vanity which induced commissions and the greed which often accompanied the production of occasional poetry, and counters it with his own ideal of artistic Redlichkeit. The modesty topos with which he introduces many of his poems frequently serves to mask the often self confident and self conscious nature of his art. Largely rejecting the poetic modus of his contemporaries which he saw as vain and hypocritical, Günther chose to define himself in terms of his artistic heritage and his highly personal poetic ideals. His relationship to his poetic forebears was one of overwhelming modesty. Opitz was his life-long model whose work he hoped to emulate, not surpass as he states explicitly in a letter to a friend:

" Vielleicht hört mich das Ohr des Vaterlandes nennen.
Wenn seiner Enckel Kind die Deutschen Schwäne zehlt,
Vielleicht wird Opitz mich als seinen Schüler kennen,
Wenn der Elyser Feld uns dermaleinst vermählt." 51

He moreover goes beyond mere acceptance of Opitz as the father of German poetry, as practised by many of his near contemporaries such as Gottsched, to regard himself as a

51 Kr.III, p.32, 1.65-8.

lowly link in a century long chain of Silesian poets:

" Du gehst dem Opiz nach, du witterst Flemmings Spüren "
" Was trägt der alte Gryph vor Nachdruck in Gedancken

...
Und was vor Zärtlichkeit eröffnet uns der Schrancken
In dem es Hofmanns Schritt den Welschen nachgethan
Du schäzest Neukirchs Werth ... " 52

This unquestioning acceptance of Silesian poetry was, by this time, no longer the rule. As we have seen, the Silesians were increasingly under attack for the ornateness of their style and supposed immorality of their subject matter. Following his time in Leipzig under the literary tutelage of Mencke, Günther became more overtly critical of the weaknesses of the Silesian style. Instead, however, of rejecting this literary tradition out of hand, he set about eradicating its stylistic excesses from his own poetic diction. In a poem of congratulation to Johann Gottfried Hahn, an old school friend, he describes this in terms of a poetic healing process:

" Mein Phoebus liegt noch krank, ich hab' ihn in der Kur
Und will ihm nach und nach die schwülstige Natur
Die seine Jugend plagt, aus Blut und Glieder treiben." 53

In a poem welcoming Von Nickisch und Roseneck back to his native Silesia he expounds these reforming intentions in greater detail. He admits that he too once sinned against good taste but concludes:

" Dies that ich, als mein Wiz noch gar zu unreif hiess
Und wie ein siedend Fett den Schaum voran verstieß.

52 Kr.IV.p.96, 1.93,101,103-5.

53 Kr.III p.55 1.137-9.

Jetzt lernt ich nach und nach mich und die Wahrheit kennen
Und lache wenn mich viel noch einen Dichter nennen." 54

In reforming his style, Günther found himself faced with a similar quandary as had confronted Neukirch twenty years earlier; namely that the expectations of the reading public cannot be expected to keep up with literary developments and so the poet must often compromise between what the (commissioning) public wants and what the self-conscious writer can unite with his poetic conscience.

A recurring theme in Günther's work is the degeneracy of the poetry of his own time. He rarely makes mention of his literary contemporaries, although he admires the Silesian, Neukirch, and respects Canitz' poetic moderation. In particular he singles out Gelegenheitsdichtung for criticism, deploring both its popularity and resultant decline in quality. As we have seen in greater detail in earlier chapters, Günther was caught in a cleft stick; in theory he condemned occasional poetry but was forced to go on writing it to earn a living. The fact of this double-bind shows itself in occasional inconsistencies in his reasoning; at one point he addresses fate bitterly:

" Versuche mich durch andere Mittel,
Ich bin nur ein Poet am Tittel.
Den jeder Stümper kaufen kan." 55

elsewhere he insists on his own moral integrity:

54 Kr. IV.p.235.l.121-4.

55 Kr. III, p.92 l.118-120.

" Mein Herz, das fromme Schaaf, nicht vom gemeinen Haufen,
Läst niemals seinen Trieb durch Mammonsblech erkaufen " 56

He regrets the decline in poetic standards in his own time.

Taking Opitz and the earlier Silesian poets as his models,

he is intensely aware of the shoddiness of many

(occasional) poems, lamenting, rather melodramatically:

" Ja wollt auch Naso selbst die Mägden Deutsch verehren,
Ich schwör auf seine Flucht, sie würden ihn nicht hören
Und in die Schencke gehn ... " 57

Elsewhere he complains that the reading public only looks
to the name of the author, not the quality of a poem.

Poetry has in other words been reduced to a commodity,

fulfilling a set social function which excites no interest

beyond that function itself. In short, Günther finds not

only contemporary poetry, but also the mores and social

codes which underlie it, both laughable and despicable. The

particularly bitter nature of Günther's satire testifies to

the despondency he felt when faced with the foibles of his

own time. In a diatribe against his age which typically

finds its forum in an occasional poem, Auf die ...

Doktorwürde ... Herrn Adam Gorns, he suggests new emblems

which could characterise the misguidedness of his age:

" O lächerliche Zeit, dein Bild verdient den Brand !
O nimm vor Sens und Ring zwo Pritschen in die Hand
Sechs Schellen auf den Kopf, den Fuchsschwanz statt die
Flügel,

56 Kr. III, p.160, l.125-6.

57 Kr.III.p.115, l.99-101.

So zeigstu, was du bist, den andern Eulenspiegel. " 58

This overt criticism should, however, be viewed within the context of two important factors: Günther's own precarious social position and his strongly held literary ideals. The satirical works, which often have the nature of a lampoon, should especially be seen against this background. Günther tried repeatedly but in vain to gain a respectable and responsible social position; it is therefore unsurprising that this experience should turn an ultimately self confident young man against this seemingly unjust fate. Many of the satires which unequivocally condemn contemporary poetry and society are in fact fuelled by Günther's awareness of the unjust reception accorded his own work by the indiscriminate taste of the reading public.

For Günther the highest human and literary ideal is Redlichkeit: it is at once his defense against the attacks of his critics and the most original element in his poetic credo. It must be remembered that Günther died young, still in the process of developing his own voice and opinions which often fly in the face of convention. The young poet chafes at the restrictions placed upon his poetry and above all longs for the freedom to write as he please:

" Da muss der müde Gaul, o frässen ihn die Raben,
Vor sechzehn Groschen flugs von hier nach Moscau draben.
Und gleichwohl könt er leicht der Welt zu Dienste stehn,

58 Kr.IV.p.156, l.109-112.

Erlaubt ihn nur der Volck, auf eigener Bahn zu gehn." 59
He has a traditional conception of the virtues and talents
a poet should possess and his view of the poetic vocation
has its roots in Opitz' interpretation of Horace:

" Dichter, sind sie was sie sind, müssen feuerreiche Gaben,
Wiz, Verstand, Gelehrsamkeit, Tugend und Erfahrung haben
Und die Menschen deren Augen die entblöste Warheit
f liehn,
Durch die Weisheit in den Bildern recht mit Lust zum
Guten ziehn " 60

In general though he turns against the limitations of a
strict Regelpoetik which still dominated literary life and
re-evaluates the importance of poetic inspiration, of the
furor poeticus. In a letter to Frau von Bressler, he states
what he sees as necessary for the creation of sincere
poetry:

" Die beste Regel wohl zu dichten,
Ist angebohrener Fleiss und Lust,
Du brauchst dich nur nach ihr zu richten
Und hast den Phoebus in der Brust." 61

His own relationship to poetry was both passionate and
problematical. There is hardly a poem without any mention
of poetry whether practical or allegorical. One of his
favourite subjects (c.f. Kr.II.p.37.l.53-60) is his early
discovery of poetry and its domination of his life. Often
too he speaks of poetry almost as a real person, so
convincing are his allegorical personifications. Poetry

59 Kr.IV.p.156.l.115-18.

60 Kr.II.p.197.l.149-152.

61 Kr.III.p.92,l.121-24.

takes on the allegorical form, within a rhetorical framework, of a beautiful but tyrannical woman:

" Man schreyt mir häufig zu: Verlass die Poesie !
Was kann ich denn davor ? So oft ich ihr entflieh,
So oft erhascht sie mich mit allzeit grössrer Liebe. " 62

The most important factor for Günther was that poetry should be a vehicle for truth and sincerity. He made it at once, as far as the conventions to which he was bound would allow him, into a tool for self justification and a weapon against the hypocrisy he saw around him. As R.M. Browning remarks:

" It is as though he cannot help telling the true story, ill as it may befit the costume he has assumed. The hallmark of Günther's verse, baroque form in conflict with the ethos of sincerity, is already apparent." 63

Günther's view of the telos of poetry, especially of his own poetry of sincerity, was an overtly didactic one in keeping with the early Enlightenment. He considered lyric poetry to be its own most important subject and, as we have seen in relationship to his epithalamia, often subverted the actual subject of a poem through a discourse on poetry itself. He took his own role as a teacher very seriously as we can see from two didactic poems addressed to friends, An Herrn Markard von Riedenhausem J.U.C. Anno 1720 64 or on the departure of Herr Daniel Gottlob von Nickisch und

62 Kr.III. p.109, l.105-7.

63 R.M. Browning, German Baroque Poetry, 1618-1723, (London, University Park, 1971), p.209.

64 Kr.II. p.89.

Roseneck for his native Silesia.65

The first of these is concerned to demonstrate to Riedhausen the poet's commitment to the ideals of the early Enlightenment and the new linguistic precepts it brought with it:

" So folge werther Freund, dem aufgegangnen Lichte,
Bau eifrig auf den Grund, den Wolf und Leibniz legt,
Lis, prüfe, dencke und schreib; was eigner Fleiss nicht
Das, wär es noch so gut, kriegt selten reife Früchte." 66

His advice also has a predominantly practical side to it; like Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger, he recommends imitation of one specific style, the necessity of having a critic as friend or a critical friend and avoiding convoluted language:

" Verdirb dein Urtheil nicht durch vielerley Geschmack,
Hab einen weisen Freund, der scharf erinnern mag.
Schreib wenig aber gut und schreite nicht auf Stelzen. " 67

Both of his friends are also seen as his pupils, he has "re-educated" them according to his firmly-held precepts:

" Du bist, ich rühme mich auch bey der Spötter Hohn,
Von meiner Poesie der erstgebohrne Sohn." 68

" Ich sucht in deiner Brust den Zunder aufzuwecken,
Und sieh, ich sucht es kaum, so brach sein Glanz hervor " 69

He attempts to guide both the taste and reading habits of

65 Kr.IV. p.94.

66 Kr.II.p.89,1.21-24.

67 Kr.II.p.90,1.55-57.

68 Kr.II.p.89,1.7-8.

69 Kr.IV.p.96,1.89-90.

his friends and patrons: in both cases his literary recommendations are traditional: Opitz, Fleming, Gryphius, Canitz and Neukirch. His prognosis of the German literary scene is, here as elsewhere, pessimistic and he begins, significantly, to doubt the literary future of Silesia. He recognises the trends we have already observed in the textbooks of poetics of this time; that Silesia was rapidly ceding its literary influence to Leipzig, Saxony and Hamburg:

" Es ahnt mir Schlesien verliere seine Schwäne,
Ich seh sie, seh ich recht, vorlängst nach Norden fliehn
Und fürchte, wenn ich gleich von Brocksen nicht erwähne,
Es werd uns Amthors Klang mit Schamröth überziehn. " 70

He attempts to arrest this process by calling his friend and patron Nicksch to the defense of their native tradition:

" Erhalt, gelehrter Nicksch, dem werthen Vaterlande
Den von der Vater Kunst uns angeerbten Ruhm, " (1.121-2)

Elsewhere he is more realistic about the finality of this literary process, as for instance in his epithalamium, Bey der den 29. April in Altona vergnügt vollbrachten Dieterich-Ropperischen Heimführung, but this is possibly also linked to the fact that it was written for a non-Silesian audience.

It is difficult to form a unified picture from Günther's diverse utterances on poetics; he is at once closely aware of his place within the Silesian tradition although

70 Kr.IV.p.97,1.117-120.

remaining conscious of outside developments, he describes himself as a lowly follower of Opitz but, as we have seen in greater detail in earlier chapters, may often be seen to subvert the guidelines he laid down. His poetry displays considerable dissatisfaction with the literary and social status quo and Günther may be said, in both his poetry and statements on poetics, to be feeling his way towards a more sincere form of life and art. The foundations of this cleansing process may be seen in his considerable satirical opus; a form greatly favoured by the early eighteenth century which did not, however, see fit to accept Günther's contribution to this genre, seeing it as too personal, too close to the despised lampoon. Certain aspects of Günther's poetics such as his decision to view the events of his own life as an apt subject for poetry can be seen to herald the Enlightenment principal of mimesis, but even here, the fit is not perfect. What Günther is aiming at, a poetry of sincerity which circumvents the hypocrisy of the panegyric, does not tally with the linguistic reforms of, say, the Hofpoeten being caught between the rhetorical mode of the Baroque (which was of course to continue well into the eighteenth century) and a freer type of verse which was only to emerge much later in the century and of which it can have no foreknowledge. As Browning very rightly remarks:

" He is avantgardistic only in respect to the content of his poetry. The tension between baroque form and extremely

personal content is the trademark by which Günther's poetry is immediately recognisable." 71

Günther's verse occupies a quite unique position in the early eighteenth century. While still structurally rooted in the previous century, its content provides a concise critique of the literary blind alleys which had been recognised but not overcome by König, Besser and Canitz. His message was generally rejected by his literary successors who saw in him a morally dubious, if talented, descendant of the Silesian tradition. Günther's fate was truly that of a transitional figure, falling between the two stools of being too free and risqué for his contemporaries and too reactionary for his immediate successors. His historical position, furthermore, meant that his poetry, which subtly broke contemporary conventions, was thus deprived of an objective reading and was instead described in terms of categories which could not ultimately hope to encompass its range and diversity.

71 Browning, p.200.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In order to free Günther from the plethora of critical clichés which have long prevented a true evaluation of both his poetry and his position in a literary context, our emphasis has been placed on several specific areas central to an understanding of Günther's work. The intentions underlying this approach were twofold: firstly, to attempt to situate the poet in the literary and discursive context of his age and, secondly, to concentrate on the poems themselves in order to clarify his complex and often ambivalent position.

The first of these approaches, which is textually based, serves to illustrate his ambivalent and frequently subversive relationship to literary tradition in the form and content of his texts, using the examples of his Epithalamia and the figure of Job respectively. The literary-historical and conceptual approach likewise forms the basis of two chapters which deal in turn with the problematic concept of Barocke Bildlichkeit and Günther's position within his literary context. The second and equally important aim of this dissertation is to provide an analysis of the transitional period itself. Günther is not simply viewed as a poet to be analysed within a given

literary context, but is seen to be paradigmatic of this period as a whole.

Centering a study of so multi-faceted a transition as that from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century on a writer who wrote scarcely anything but poetry may seem limiting, but the poetry of Johann Christian Günther provides a paradigmatic model of the main literary and theological disputes of this epoch. In comparison with his poetic peers too, among whom we can number the court poets such as J.U. König, reformers such as Neukirch, and adherents of the new philosophical and physico-theological modes such as Haller and Brockes respectively, his work is arguably the most wide ranging and representative of this transitional period both in form and content. While König and Neukirch were concerned to 'prune' and rationalise the poetic diction of the late seventeenth century, Günther quite independently transformed his literary inheritance in line with his key concept of Redlichkeit, of poetic honesty and truth to nature. In his repeated preference for certain themes, Günther can be said to be inwardly closer to the young Albrecht von Haller (1708-77) than to his older contemporary, Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680-1747). In his concern for the minute description of nature, Brockes is closer than Günther to the scientific empiricism of the eighteenth century and its concept of mimesis. In the exactitude of his description, he is more advanced than

Günther, who still largely sees the natural world in an allegorical framework. However Brockes' unswerving belief in Leibniz' 'best of all possible worlds', his increasingly obsessive concern with the depiction of the most minute details and his need, concomitant with his adherence to Physico-theology, to present the benevolent creator behind the most insignificant of his creations, leads to an inevitable narrowness of scope and to a certain monotony. His minute descriptions of natural phenomena, novel and fresh when he published the first volume of his, Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott in 1721, lose their impetus and become increasingly self-referential, didactic and repetitive.

Haller, though younger than Günther by some thirteen years shares many of his concerns such as, for instance, the problem of theodicy. Both Haller and Günther took Leibniz' treatise of this name as a source of poetic inspiration, but neither was entirely to accept his rationalistic, optimistic premises and so had to fall back on the promises of orthodox religion (Günther) or end inconclusively as Haller does in his, Über den Ursprung des Übels. This crisis of faith both points the way to the severe intellectual questioning of orthodox religious belief of the Enlightenment and, incidentally, lends an emotional and poetic depth to Günther and Haller which is missing from the writings of a man like Brockes.

A feature of Günther's writing which sets him apart from

his contemporaries is its very self-consciousness. The subject matter, even of his occasional poetry, is often the process of writing itself rather than the theme in hand. Günther's ideas for the reform and cleansing of contemporary poetry are thus to be found in his writing itself rather than in the treatises, letters or articles for the Moralische Wochenschriften favoured by so many of his contemporaries¹. He is also intimately concerned with his personal relationship to the lyric form, to his muse, so much as to see his love of poetry as a destructive and alienating factor in his life.

His relationship to his literary heritage was paradoxical. On the one hand he pays homage to the literary canon of his day: Opitz, Gryphius, Flemming, Canitz and Hofmannswaldau. On the other, he sees that the precepts of this tradition have ultimately led into a literary dead end.

This perception he shares with certain writers of the previous generation around 1700 such as Canitz and Neukirch. It was a perception which gained in impetus throughout the 1720s, finding voice in academic debate and

¹ Günther is an unusual writer inasmuch as his considerable literary ability flowed entirely into the lyric form (his only play was written when he was still at school). Neither do theoretical treatises or everyday letters to friends survive; even his letters were written in lyrical metre. One is, in fact, as surprised by the omissions and gaps in Günther's work as by the depth and intensity displayed in the themes he did examine.

the popularising Moralische Wochenschriften alike. In a sense the real poetological problem of these years was not so much a consciousness of the stylistic shortcomings of the previous century, for these had long been a target for criticism, as the search for a new way forward. This search was finally resolved, or rather it had by the 1740s ceded its place to a whole new range of issues expressed in the literary debates of Gottsched with the Swiss critics Bodmer and Breitinger. By the 1740s also, the purely stylistic reforms of the court poets, König and Besser, seemed increasingly dated. What was required was not so much a superficial linguistic or stylistic reform, as the adequate poetic reception of the Weltanschauung of the early Enlightenment.

In his calls for a poetry of Redlichkeit, Günther can be seen both within the context of what Windfuhr calls the Altdeutsche opposition² and the moral reforms of the Enlightenment theoreticians. Günther perceived the intensely problematic nature of the received tradition as clearly as any of his contemporaries, but was too far outside the mainstream of critical debate to have a lasting effect on the course literature was to take in the early decades of the eighteenth century. A reason for his marginal status, was, once again the circumstances of his

² Manfred Windfuhr, Barocke Bildlichkeit und ihre Kritiker p.351.

life. Günther died young and spent most of his life in Silesia just as it was ceding its literary supremacy to other parts of Germany. He did not play any part in such key institutions as the Deutsche Gesellschaft, nor did he write for the opinion-forming periodicals of these years, the Patriot, the Discourse der Mahler or the Vernünftige Tadlerinnen. His fate, both as a man and a poet, was not determined by his adherence to one group or another. In the early eighteenth century, an epoch so dominated by institutions and societies, he could not, or would not, adapt himself to its social expectations.

His life and poetry, although moved by the issues and ideals of his age, did not belong either externally or by conviction to the 'mainstream' opinion. His way forward was thus an individual and inward one which was only to receive mention in passing by the opinion forming camps of the first half of the century.

It is an established standpoint of Günther criticism that his dilemma derived from being beyond his age. We should however treat this view with a certain caution. Günther differed from his contemporaries not, we argue, because he was moved by radically different issues, but rather because he did not comply with their social and literary expectations. Günther, that admirer of tradition, that upholder of literary canons, himself failed to become a part of any canon, partly because he was born into a time

of radical literary change and partly because, even within this age, he did not belong to the organs which were ultimately to decide the way forward from the 'stagnation' of the early century. Günther's individual genius was thus marginalised by the rapid literary developments of the age into which he was born.

A concept central to our understanding both of Günther and of the epoch to which he belonged is that of Barocke Bildlichkeit. It is important to reveal the conceptual imprecision which often surrounds this term and seek instead to plot the real transformation in the use of imagery from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. While an analysis of such a transformation, here described in terms of the move from the Wirkungspoetik of the seventeenth century, in which the emphasis is on the effect of an image which points beyond itself to a transcendent meaning, to the Nachahmungspoetik of the eighteenth century in which image and message coincide, may imply merely the replacement of one loose theoretical structure by another, an attempt has ^{been} however _^made to illustrate this theory by concrete examples. Once the course of this transformation both in terms of theory and practice is plotted, Günther's use of imagery, highlighted by a comparison with Brockes' and Haller's, is shown to be traditional in its form but deceptively progressive in its content. (In this, Günther's use of imagery is in line with

his overall relationship to traditional form as analysed in chapters 3 and 4.) Unlike Brockes or Haller, Günther has no close or mimetic relationship with the material world. His poetic imagery is allegorical rather than mimetic; one seeks in vain a minute description of natural phenomena such as predominate in Haller's, Alpen or Brockes', Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott 3. Günther's imagery by contrast, is both traditional and, paradoxically, extremely progressive.

In summary, the imagery and natural description to be found in Günther, Brockes and Haller is still very much subordinated to an underlying meaning or intended message. The difference between these three poets, however, is that whereas Haller and Brockes frequently produce an empirical description of the material world, albeit for a higher or didactic purpose, Günther maintains the outward guise of allegory but uses it for a personal or rhetorical purpose. In their use of imagery, Brockes and Haller largely conform to the expectations of early eighteenth century physicotheology and empiricism respectively. Günther, while still adhering to the allegory and rhetoric of the seventeenth century, may in his intense subjectivity and self consciousness, be seen to prepare the way for

3 Nature is instead more frequently summoned by Günther as a witness to his intimate personal experiences:
"Erinnert euch mit mir, ihr Blumen Bäume und Schatten,
Der oft mit Flavia gehaltenen Abendlust "
(Kr.I.p.19.1.1-2)

developments later in the century which would ultimately make possible the symbol as employed by Goethe and his contemporaries. In other words, Günther may be said to renew the allegorical form, the inner meaning of which was increasingly perceived as quite arbitrary, by investing it with personal significance. While Günther's contemporaries moved away from the allegorical tradition towards a new, empiricist perspective, Günther, in keeping with his transitional status, took the path of inner renewal of traditional forms.

Another important aspect which Günther's poetry has in common with his seventeenth century predecessors is its conscious use of tropes and topoi. The example upon which this analysis centres is the old-testament figure of Job who became Günther's model and comforter in his Klagelieder. It is important when speaking of Günther and the literary and cultural tradition he was born into not to view the 'tradition' as a set concept; literary and cultural traditions are not fixed entities but ever changing, ever developing patterns or models. In selecting Job (rather, for instance, than Ovid) as the starting point for our analysis of Günther's relationship to the tradition, we must therefore be aware not only of the central rhetorical and personal significance of this figure for the poet, but also of the historical transformation and

development of this motif in order to understand Günther's version more fully.

Günther's use of the figure of Job should be seen both against the cultural background of the early eighteenth century and of the Lutheran hermeneutic tradition. The early eighteenth century saw a surge of interest in the whole problem of evil, triggered in part by the publication of Leibniz' Theodicée in 1711. Günther's own relationship to this problem is hence shaped both by Leibnizean philosophy, which viewed evil as a necessary part of the total world order, and the Old Testament teachings as found in Job, whereby the biblical source made the deeper and more lasting impression on the poet.⁴

Günther's interpretation of Job may be seen as the furthest point within a hermeneutic tradition stretching back to medieval exegesis. While exegetes such as Pope Gregory base their rather one-sided readings on the patient Job of the narrative section who reacts stoically to his misfortunes saying:

" Der Herr hat's gegeben, der Herr hat's genommen, der Name des Herrn sei gelobt! " ⁵

Luther breaks new ground in acknowledging Job's rebellion,

⁴ This reception of Leibniz': Theodicy, as Krämer already shows in his edition (introduction to Vol.II, p.x-xiii) is generally restricted to lyrical summaries of the principal theories which fail to have the degree of lasting emotional impact of his literary relationship to either Job or Ovid.

⁵ Job, 1.21.

He attributes this to a hubristic and misguided trust in justification through works, rather than through grace alone (thus subsuming Job into a didactic discourse on key Lutheran concepts). Günther in turn takes this Lutheran acknowledgement of Job's rebellion to its limit, casting out its negative implications and adopting Job as a positive role model in his attempt to justify himself before God and society. This interpretation, which is as far removed as possible from the image of the patient Job favoured by the exegetes, proves extremely problematic in a Lutheran context. Job's outrage is justified in view of the Old Testament concept of righteousness based on obedience to the laws. Günther's insistence on his innocence provoked the rage of the Lutheran orthodoxy who regarded this self-justification as hubristic and contrary to Lutheran doctrine. Günther's use of the figure of Job is important on a personal level as a figure of comfort for the poet; in literary terms he functions as a rhetorical weapon against Günther's detractors. The figure of Job, though more common in the Renaissance, had survived into the seventeenth century as a consolatory figure in epicideia and funerary orations. Günther's contemporaries must then surely have recognised the implications of this figure both from the aforementioned sources and from the sermons of Lutheran pastors. The rhetorical usage Günther makes of this Old Testament figure can in fact be seen to build on

this recognition. In styling himself on Job, the suffering innocent, Günther is making a bold statement of his own righteousness, refuting the general opinion that he was a dissolute, spendthrift poet. Through manipulating the figure of Job in this way, Günther is seeking to turn his detractors' weapons against them. What he overlooks however in this rhetorical manipulation are, in fact, the theological problems inherent in his own, overtly Old Testament concept of righteousness. The poet's proclamation of his own righteousness, indeed his use of Job as proof or guarantor, was seen in the Lutheran context of his age as both hubristic and blasphemous. Indeed what we are dealing with here are three different concepts of righteousness; the Old Testament view, whereby righteousness derives from keeping the laws, the Lutheran concept, whereby only the grace of God can bestow grace and righteousness on sinful man, and finally Günther's concept which may be seen as an amalgam of the Old Testament stance and his own key idea of Redlichkeit. The righteousness or sincerity Günther claims for himself is an essentially literary one (even the etymological root of this word: " Wofür man Rede stehen kann ", Grimm, emphasises this) and it was the expression of poetic sincerity; the often satiric tone in many of his poems which was to lead to further conflict with his Lutheran audience.

The figure of Job thus proves a two-edged sword of

undoubted personal significance to the poet; on a theological level it could not but antagonise his detractors, the Lutheran clergy of Silesia and their lay followers.

Günther's relationship to the tradition of Job is highly complex, for to follow the pattern laid down by his Old Testament model, he must ultimately acknowledge the futility of his rebellion and bow down before the Godhead. A major difference between the poet and his model, and one which is linked to Günther's consciously rhetorical self-stylisation throughout his oeuvre, is that whereas Job may be said to represent the sufferings of mankind as a whole, Günther specifically portrays himself as a suffering artist; this indeed is one of the significant new features in Günther's Hiobs-Nachahmung.

The second of the textually based analyses takes as its focus the increasingly problematic nature of traditional forms, illustrated with reference to Günther's epithalamia. By the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, the occasional mode, though outwardly at the height of its popularity, was increasingly under attack from poets and theoreticians. Indeed it was its very popularity which lay at the root of these criticisms. Occasional poetry, a form which had survived from antiquity, was increasingly restricted by the outward circumstances of its production:

by considerations of occasion and social aptum and the tightly defined rules governing its form to be found in the poetologies of the day. The major demand made of occasional verse was that it should say something new, while its very popularity and resultant 'mass production' meant all new sources of inspiration were rapidly exhausted.

Serious debate surrounding the occasional form (its problematic nature had already been noted by Opitz) began with Canitz' criticisms in his third satire, Von der Poesie, escalating with the publication of a controversial review of Junker's poems in the seventh volume of the Neukirch anthology, but not finally resolved until after 1740 (and even after this date, occasional poetry continued to enjoy considerable popularity).

The social and financial context in which Günther lived gave this debate a particular relevance. What other poets saw merely as material for discussion, lay for Günther at the centre of his artistic credo. On the one hand, Günther continually postulates a poetry of Redlichkeit, devoid of all pretence; but on the other financial circumstances forced him to write just the kind of false eulogies he most despised. It is not surprising then that Günther's epithalamia (the type of occasional poem he was most frequently called upon to write) should prove paradigmatic not only of the breadth of his ability, but also of the constant paradox of his work as a whole, which indeed

mirrors the full range of debate of this whole transitional period.

A major factor affecting the level, style and content of Günther's epithalamia was the social status of its addressees. His most conventional marriage poems were written in his own name for rich and illustrious recipients. The difference in status between poet and addressee, the representative quality expected from such poems often allied to the poet's hope of financial reward, effectively bound the poet's hands and resulted in works of a highly conventional form and content. 6 Examples of Günther's more innovative use of the epithalamic form are, significantly, to be found when the poet (or fictive poet) enjoyed a roughly equivalent status to his addressee. This similarity of status enables the poet to play with the form and transform it imaginatively, the addressee becomes the accomplice in the dissolution of an unyielding form and has more enjoyment of its novelty than any explicit need for a representative work. Günther's experimentation in these

6 Bütler-Schön is misleading however when she claims: "Für ein Gelegenheitscarmen bekommt man gewöhnlich etwas, bezahlte Poesie kann aber nicht "echt" sein, also ist Casualpoesie: "unechte Lobhudelei und unverbindliche Unterhaltung"

This qualitative distinction between "real" poetry and occasional poetry as "bought" and therefore inferior poetry was only just being formed at the time Günther was writing in line with contemporary discussion of the occasional form. The clear distinction between occasional and "genuine" poetry which Bütler-Schön claims for Günther's period did not in fact become evident until at least a decade later.

more innovative epithalamia rapidly developed certain common features: the exaggerated use of the modesty or deferral topoi which can extend to fill almost the whole poem or the subversion of the intended theme by one which lay closer to the poet's heart, that of lyric poetry itself. While recognising all of its shortcomings, circumstances and indeed his underlying loyalty to tradition ultimately prevented Günther from abandoning the occasional form.⁷

In the depiction of Günther's position within the literary context of his age, a threefold approach is adopted. This analysis begins with a general approach, sketching the main features of literary life at the turn of the century, then summarising the main criticisms of the Silesian tradition before examining the search for a 'new' tradition and the course adopted by the Hofpoeten and advocates of Enlightenment philosophy respectively. Following on from this general introduction, our focus shifts specifically to contemporary reception of Günther and the place he occupied within the literary tradition, showing also how he became the focus of polemical literary

⁷ Although the seriousness of this questioning should not be overlooked, Bütler-Schön goes too far when she claims:

" Die Gelegenheitsdichtung als Medium dichterischen Sprechens überhaupt...wird bei Günther nie in Frage gestellt. " (p.51)

discussion following his death. After this, the focus shifts again, turning the mirror back on the society which showed so little true understanding of Günther's verse and depicting both his view of his contemporaries and his self-perception within this literary context.

German literature in the opening years of the eighteenth century is marked by a profound dissatisfaction with the literary developments of the previous decades and the search, however vague and tentative, for a new way forward. There was a general perception that German writers had lost their direction, seduced by the purely external charms of Hofmannswaldau, Lohenstein and Marino.

The chosen way forward consisted in looking back (to Opitz) and outside Germany (to the circle around Boileau) for a focus from which to shape the future of German literature. The idols of the late seventeenth century had been toppled, but no clear figure or idea had yet appeared to take their place. In this way, the literary debates of the early eighteenth century were characterised by moves against the Silesians, against mannerism, rather than towards any clear concept of how German literature should develop. Günther was thus in a position to choose his models and in his verse we can discern his preferences. There is understandably a strong similarity in his religious poetry with the hymns of Schmolcke and his Silesian colleagues; in his secular works he is aware of

the Petrarchistic developments of Hofmannswaldau and the Neukirch anthology. Conversely, other potential influences are largely ignored, such as the playful onomatopoeia of the Nürnberg circle or, for instance, any interest in such artful forms as the figured poem. These trends are understandable in view of the poet's domestic circumstances and education. Put simply, Johann Christian Günther is a far less cosmopolitan poet than, say, Brockes or Haller. His travels scarcely took him outside the borders of Silesia, and however aware he was of its parochialism as is expressed in his satires, he was never entirely able to free himself from this same limitation. The classics (and then mainly Latin writers), Lutheran religious lyrics and the Kunstpoesie of such as Opitz, Flemming, Gryphius and Hofmannswaldau must have formed the chief literary influences of his formative years.

The ideas of French classicism permeated the German context in a rather watered-down form, focusing around concepts of 'nature' and 'taste'. These concepts were of course themselves to become central tenets of the Enlightenment, but are here still used in a rather undifferentiated, unfocused way, as becomes apparent in König's praise of Von Besser in 1729:

"... , weil er die Teutsche Sprache durch seine natürliche und Sinnreiche Schreib=Art zuerst wider nach Hofe gebracht, und einer von den Vornehmsten ist , die den guten Geschmack bei uns hergestellt. "

Literary debate in the 1720s and 30s rapidly became the

preserve of two main groups of critics; the group around Gottsched and the Deutsche Gesellschaft in Leipzig and that around Bodmer and Breitinger in Zürich. It was not, however, until the early 1740s that any real breach between these groups became perceptible, for throughout the 1720s and 30s their struggle was a joint one against the 'bad taste' of the Silesians. Indeed Günther was, however innocently (for by this time he had been dead for 15 years), to become a central focus of the polemic between Silesian conservatives and patriots and the more progressive camp headed by Gottsched and his Leipzig followers.

The literary context into which Günther was born was one of great literary transition; in his poetry he generally took the part of tradition against reform; a position which indirectly brought about the rather one sided reception accorded him by his longer lived contemporaries. Reception of this poet is in fact marked by a moralistic damning with faint praise. Neither in Günther's own day, nor in the centuries following his death, was the actual body of his work made the starting point for critical analysis. From the first he was seen stereotypically as the very personification of the dissolute student and his lyric opus was used for polemic purposes.

Günther is a poet of the transition, freeing himself

from the theological and indeed social bonds of orthodox Lutheranism, yet without ever losing his belief; subverting the literary traditions of the seventeenth century for his own purposes, yet still calling himself a disciple of Opitz and Hoffmannswaldau; playing with the ideas of Leibniz and yet still returning to a conventionally Christian Weltanschauung in his Geistliche Oden; postulating the poetics of Redlichkeit yet continuing to write occasional poems. Günther's companions were quick to recognise his talent and to praise the fluidity of his poetic language, but ultimately failed to analyse his poetry in depth. Günther's lack of lasting influence must eventually be put down to the fact that his poetry points in a direction his contemporaries did not want to follow. Günther subverts the tradition, but only because he wants to renew it, not to overthrow it.

Inasmuch as he may be said to prefigure literary developments later in the century, his influence can only have been a subconscious, even chance influence. Günther undoubtedly saw himself in the most conservative of terms, as a humble follower of the great Silesians of the previous century. It was chance which made Günther's heightened subjectivity, his use, for instance, of the figure of Job seem to point beyond his own age to many of the issues of the Sturm und Drang. But it was a fundamental misunderstanding and over-simplification on the part of his

contemporaries which was to exclude him from the mainstream canon of the eighteenth century. Such chance circumstances which have long clouded the critical view of this poet must, however, finally be overcome by the modern reader 8. A new perspective is crucial if we are to gain a true understanding of this characteristic and unusual poet, Johann Christian Günther.

8 We should thus be wary of such undifferentiated statements as are found in Browning (among others) that Günther was not:

" ... between the times, but rather ahead of his time " (p.200) which betray a fundamentally unhistorical perspective- any connection between Günther and the Sturm und Drang or the young Goethe is based on pure chance. Literary history should not be read backwards.

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