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The Historical Novel
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Philosophy of History

Three German Contributions:
Alexis, Fontane, Döblin

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CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Notes on the Text	x
Part One	i
1 Beginnings	i
2 The Historical Novel Described	8
3 Historical Novel or Historical Novelle?	35
4 Georg Lukács and the Historical Novel — A Bond Honoured?	56
Part Two	71
Preface	71
1 The Historical Novel and its 'Wider Sweep' — A Study of Willibald Alexis: <i>Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht</i> (1852) and <i>Isegrim</i> (1854)	73
2 The Historical Novel and the Historical Report — A Study of Theodor Fontane: <i>Vor dem Sturm</i> (1878)	101
3 The Historical Novel, the Masses and the Leader — A Study of Alfred Döblin: <i>November 1918: Eine deutsche Revolution</i> (1939-50)	127
4 Conclusions	150
Bibliography	157
Index	171

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PREFACE

I

Tolstoy is no admirer of Hegel. Hegel is no admirer of Scott. Hegel, writes Tolstoy in a letter of his later years, has 'what all Germans have — a confusion of expression, of which they are themselves unaware, and which they naively mistake for profundity'.¹ Conversely, Hegel writes that Scott is a shallow mind, a 'seichter Kopf'.² A Scott novel, he argues, is itself a cause of confusion in that its painstaking narration of incidentals, its '*Ausmalerei im Detail mit den kleinen Zügen der Zeit*', blurs over the main issues and interest.³

Now, given that Hegel is arguably the dominant philosopher of history of Tolstoy's lifetime, and given that Scott is undoubtedly the dominant historical novelist of Hegel's lifetime, it might seem that the title of this book is less than promising. It might seem that to study the historical novel as philosophy of history is to bring together chalk and cheese. The overall aim of the present book is to demonstrate that this is not the case.

II

The first half of this study offers original descriptions of the historical novel and historical Novelle. The originality of these descriptions is twofold.

First, they are not definitions but *descriptions* — broad, empiric surveys of the family resemblances of the two genres. In the former description, for example, the reader must be prepared to range widely, beyond the confines of German and even of European literature.

This range ensures that the descriptions offered are more comprehensive than any offered hitherto: the descriptions owe less to previous work in the field than to the critical method proposed by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism*.⁴

¹ Lev Nikolaevič Tolstoj, *Polnoe Sobranie Sočinenij*, edited by V. G. Čertkov, 90 vols (Moscow, 1935–58), LXIX (1954), p. 96 (2 May 1896).

² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Volume XI, *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt on Main, 1970), p. 566.

³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Volume XII, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt on Main, 1970), p. 554.

⁴ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), pp. 3–29.

Second, each of the descriptions is conducted in terms of philosophy of history. 'Philosophy of history', however, is to be understood here, in the first instance, not as substantive philosophy of history — that philosophy of history, practised by such as Herder and Hegel, which attempts to find an overall plot or pattern in the past — but as analytical philosophy of history — that philosophy of history, practised especially by British and American philosophers, which inquires into the nature of historical writing.

In describing the two genres, therefore, this study asks of them one paramount question: 'To what type of historical writing, to what type of story about the past, do these genres respectively incline?'. This question can be re-formulated as three subsidiary questions: first, 'In each of these types of story, what plots and locations, characters and casts, motifs and themes habitually recur?'; further, 'To what historical time-scales and events, to what historical causation and agency is each type of story conducive?'; and finally, 'What do the two types of story themselves explicitly say about the forms which historical writing takes and should take?'. In each of these areas, the study of historical novel and historical Novelle is a study in contrast.

To say that the book asks these questions is also to say that it does not ask one other question: the question as to the historical truth of historical fiction — the question as to the epistemology of the historical novel and the historical Novelle — is a question beyond the ambit of the present study.

The questions with which the study is concerned reveal also the philosophers of history who have most influenced its concerns. The study owes rather less to substantive philosophers of history such as Herder and Hegel than to two writers within the Anglo-Saxon tradition of analytical philosophy of history who have concerned themselves with the similarity between writing history and writing a novel. These two writers are Michael Oakeshott⁵ and Arthur C. Danto.⁶

Inclined though the study is towards analytical philosophy of history, however, it is not heedless of substantive philosophy of history. Nor should it be. For a genre which tends to this and not that type of story about the past will also tend to this and not that overall vision of the past. And in this area also, historical novel and historical Novelle form an instructive contrast.

It is therefore in terms primarily of analytical but also of substantive philosophy of history that historical novels and historical Novellen are here described, examined and evaluated.

In order further to point up the originality of these terms, this first half of the book is concluded by a brief chapter on the best-known critical work in the field — *Der historische Roman* by Georg Lukács. It is shown that the work is not conducted in the above terms and is indeed problematic in its own terms.

The task of the second half of the book is to demonstrate that these original terms are also useful.

⁵ Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933).

⁶ Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge, 1965).

The second half, accordingly, studies three German contributions to the genre and studies them in terms of the first half. These terms ensure, first, that the studies are themselves original, but, second, that the works studied can emerge as *contributions* — contributions to the development of the genre both in Germany and at large.

The works here appraised as contributions are *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (1852) and *Isegrimm* (1854) by Willibald Alexis, *Vor dem Sturm* (1878) by Theodor Fontane and *November 1918: Eine deutsche Revolution* (1939–50) by Alfred Döblin.

In each case it is shown that the novel in question is a member of the family of historical novels as previously described; that the family resemblances it reveals constitute an apt way of characterizing and adjudging it; that it develops one or more family traits in an outstanding way, this being its contribution to the family; and that the presence of such traits reveals a sustained interest in the issues of philosophy of history.

The interest may be explicit, expressed in some of the many philosophical introductions, excursus and codas which historical novels contain. Or it may be implicit, expressed through the medium of characters, or in the mere choice and distribution of details recorded. Or — most often — it may be expressed in both these ways. Whatever the manner of its expression, however, it will be an important part of speech in the novel's syntax of ideas.

For — and this is the ultimate burden of the present study — the relationship between the historical novel and the philosophy of history is not like that between chalk and cheese: it is rather like that between bread and leaven.

III

In what follows, every effort has been made to avoid the 'confusion of expression' censured by Tolstoy. On this score, however, the reader is asked to bear the following in mind. The study is concerned with history in both senses of the word: it is concerned both with *res gestae* and with *historia rerum gestarum*. To avoid confusion of expression, therefore, it uses the word 'history' only in the strict sense of *historia rerum gestarum*. When it refers to *res gestae*, it uses the term 'the past'. This strict usage extends also to the adjectives 'past' and 'historical'.

IV

Historical novels frequently rescue for history the unsung figures of the past. It is only fitting, therefore, that the preface to this study acknowledge its own unsung heroine — its typist, Karin Benson.

Historical novels also, however, awaken one's awareness for the longer term. Among the longer-term debts which this preface would like equally to acknowledge are those to the professors in whose departments the thesis was first conceived and later concluded — to Professor Dr Max Nänny of Freiburg i. Ue., now of Zürich, and to Professor Dr Raimund Borgmeier of Gießen.

Of longer term still, however, are my debts to the knowledge and encouragement of several members, past and present, of the Cambridge German Department. I

should like especially to mention Professor L. W. Forster, Dr Elisabeth Stopp, and Dr E. F. Timms. Of the last-named in particular there is more in the following pages than such an unassuming man would readily own.

I have, however, one further debt, which considerably exceeds those above. Throughout my research, it has been my great and undeserved privilege to have been supervised by Professor J. P. Stern. His aphoristic disposition has been the source of frequent disorientation, bemusement, stimulus and insight. As has been well said: 'Im Aphorismus ist der Gedanke nicht zu Hause, sondern auf dem Sprung'.⁷ Happily for German Studies, however, Professor Stern is always 'at home' for the young researcher. Those whose good fortune it has been to receive his teaching at Barton Road, Cambridge, will acknowledge also the important part played there by Mrs Sheila Stern.

Finally, those whose good fortune it has been to work with any of the above will readily separate their wheat from my tares.

R.P.B.H.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

The date which follows the title of a work is the date of its first known publication in book form. Where an historical novel has been published in several volumes over a number of years that fact is also recorded: thus *November 1918: Eine deutsche Revolution* (1939-50) is a work not of that gestation but of that gradual publication.

In all passages quoted any *italicization* is that of the original author.

In passages quoted from the German the orthography has been modernized. This extends also to the titles of novels and periodicals: thus *Der Wärwolf* appears here as *Der Werwolf* and *Der Freimüthige* as *Der Freimütige*.

⁷ Helmut Arntzen, *Kurzer Prozeß: Aphorismen und Fabeln* (Munich, 1966), p. 7.

PART ONE

The Historical Novel as Philosophy of History

Thus, with our taste to guide us, we shall venture beyond the particular book in search of qualities that group books together; we shall give them names and thus frame a rule that brings order into our perceptions. We shall gain a further and a rarer pleasure from that discrimination.

Virginia Woolf

1

BEGINNINGS

I

Who wrote the first Historical Novel? The orthodox, and perhaps on the whole the sufficient, answer to this is, Xenophon.

George Saintsbury¹

Sir Walter Scott not only invented the historical novel, but he enlarged the scope and revolutionized the study of history itself.

G. M. Trevelyan²

This comparative study of the historical novel will begin at the later date, not with Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (c. 370 B.C.) but with Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814). In initially beginning, however, with the above divergent beginnings, it states both an opening problem and an underlying theme. The theme is that 'there is no history,

¹ George Saintsbury, 'The Historical Novel', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 70 (May-October 1894), 256-64 and 321-30 (p. 256).

² G. M. Trevelyan, 'Sir Walter Scott', in *Sir Walter Scott: 1771-1832*, edited by Allan Frazer (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 27-34 (p. 27).

only histories': historical beginnings, for example, are a conditional 'Once upon a time', not an unconditional 'In the beginning'.³ The problem, therefore, is to justify the present beginning. Why begin with Scott?

To study a developing genre is to study an historical unit; and an historical unit, Michael Oakeshott argues, should be chosen 'because its beginning is marked by an apparent break in the continuity of what went before, and because, having once been established, it could maintain a continuous existence'.⁴ For the beginning of a genre, therefore, three things are required: that a work establish the genre, that it do so by breaking with what was written before, and that once the break and the establishment have been made the genre develop continuously. Each of these requirements is met by *Waverley*.

For *Waverley* established itself in no uncertain way. Its publication, recalls Carlyle, was 'an event memorable in the annals of British Literature; in the annals of British Bookselling thrice and four times memorable'.⁵ Its first edition sold out in five weeks and it went through eight editions in seven years.⁶ So *Waverley* was followed by the *Waverley Novels* (1814–31) and they, writes Coleridge, gave Scott 'European, yea plusquam-European popularity'.⁷ Now, the importance here of these events is that they created generic awareness. When Hauff and Balzac write their historical novels, *Lichtenstein* (1826) and *Les Chouans* (1829), they do not acknowledge a debt to Xenophon: both, however, acknowledge Scott and Cooper. Nor is it anachronistic to call these works 'historical novels'. The term appears in a review of 1826,⁸ and the term 'der historische Roman' is current in Germany by the following year. 'Walter Scott', writes an early appreciator, Wolfgang Menzel, in 1827, 'hat unleugbar das Verdienst, den historischen Roman als eine eigentümliche poetische Gattung begründet zu haben'.⁹ So whether or not there were historical novels before Scott, it was he who finally established the genre. That is one reason for here adopting his own 'Once upon a time', for describing the genre as he did — 'a style "Which I was born to introduce — / Refined it first and show'd its use"'.¹⁰

Moreover, the refining and showing create a continuity: *Waverley* begat the *Waverley Novels* begat Cooper begat Hauff begat . . . And the lineage does not end there. In the historical novel, writes a leading comparatist, 'l'initiative vient nettement d'un seul écrivain: pendant longtemps, tous ceux qui ont suivi Walter Scott l'ont imité plus ou moins librement, mais n'ont imité que lui'.¹¹ Thus for a

³ Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford, 1975), p. 105.

⁴ Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 121.

⁵ Thomas Carlyle, 'Sir Walter Scott', *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 7 vols (London, 1888), VI, 21–80 (p. 55).

⁶ Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900* (Chicago and London, 1957), pp. 263 and 383.

⁷ S. T. Coleridge, 'Marginalia', in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, edited by John O. Hayden (London, 1970), pp. 178–84 (p. 183).

⁸ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 20 (July, 1826), p. 52/1.

⁹ Wolfgang Menzel, 'Walter Scott und sein Jahrhundert', in *Romantheorie und Romankritik in Deutschland*, edited by Hartmut Steinecke, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1976), II, 52–61 (p. 52).

¹⁰ *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott from the Original Manuscript in Abbotsford*, edited by David Douglas, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1890), I, 273.

¹¹ Paul van Tieghem, 'Deux exemples de la formation de genres nouveaux dans le roman du XIX^e siècle', *Hélicon*, 1939, Tome II, Fasc. 2–3, 183–91 (p. 184).

period and country of particular importance to this study — nineteenth-century Germany — he has been named, beside Goethe and Zola, as one of the three most influential novelists altogether.¹² The German lineage includes Alexis, Hauff, Tieck, Gutzkow and Fontane's *Vor dem Sturm* (1878). By beginning a comparative study with Scott, therefore, one will not be chasing wild geese: one will be following a skein.

The prime argument for this beginning, however, is that the continuity is matched by a discontinuity. It is exemplified by Scott's apologia for writing *Waverley*, for writing in 1814 on the Highland Rising of 1745:

There is no European nation, which, within the course of half a century, or little more, has undergone so complete a change as this kingdom of Scotland. . . . and, like those who drift down the stream of a deep and smooth river, we are not aware of the progress we have made until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have been drifted.¹³

This passage may be said to mark a change because it is itself about change. One of the achievements of Romanticism, argues R. G. Collingwood, was to doubt 'the conception of human nature as something uniform and unchanging'.¹⁴ The doubt was voiced through an imaginative sympathy for the past and this Sir Herbert Butterfield calls 'almost a new dimension added to our thinking — there is such a remarkable lack of it in the Renaissance and even in much of the eighteenth century'.¹⁵ Moreover, both mention Scott in this regard. Indeed, Croce claims that 'no one can write a sound history of historical writing in the Nineteenth Century without giving generous credit to Walter Scott'.¹⁶ Dame C. V. Wedgwood, for example, writes: 'It was just this imaginative effort which the Romantics forced upon — or bequeathed to — historical scholarship. The foremost figure in this development was Sir Walter Scott'.¹⁷ To begin with Scott, therefore, is to begin with a writer who marks a discontinuity in histories of history, and this is a further answer to the Xenophon problem: for if there were historical novels before Scott they were novels with a different historical sense, belonging to a different historical unit, and deserving a different name.

Now, this 'imaginative effort' marks off the historical novel not only from earlier novels about the past but also from the novel at large. The novel at large is noted for a 'background of particularized time and place';¹⁸ the historical novel, however, sets time and place in the past and in a past acknowledged different from the present. Because the past is different, the imaginative effort is required. But because the past is past, the imagining will bring with it knowledge which, in that past, was long in the future. The major result is indicated by the full title of Scott's novel: *Waverley; or,*

¹² Hartmut Eggert, in *Romantheorie: Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, edited by Eberhard Lämmert (Cologne, 1975), p. 1.

¹³ Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (London, 1973), p. 476 (Chapter 72).

¹⁴ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1956), p. 86.

¹⁵ Sir Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 17.

¹⁶ Benedetto Croce, 'Walter Scott', *The Dial*, 75 (1923), 325–31 (p. 328).

¹⁷ Dame C. V. Wedgwood, *Truth and Opinion* (London, 1960), p. 27.

¹⁸ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 22.

'Tis Sixty Years Since. The historical novel, this means, is potentially two things — past experience and later knowledge: past experience for the characters, later knowledge for their author and reader. This duality, however, is a paradox. On the one hand, the historical novelist is akin to what A. C. Danto, a recent philosopher of history, has called the 'Ideal Chronicler':¹⁹ he ostensibly portrays what happened as it actually happened. Hence from *Waverley* through Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (1827) to Andersch's *Winterspelt* (1974), the historical novelist repeatedly lays claim to 'intelligent eye-witnesses',²⁰ to an 'anonymous chronicler',²¹ to a 'dem Verfasser als äußerst zuverlässig bekannten Person'.²² On the other hand, he may also include in his description of what happened insights unavailable to those who witnessed the happenings — insights resulting from later information. Fontane's *Vor dem Sturm* is just one historical novel to contain such information in its very title. And yet, as Danto writes:

We could only witness the Past 'as it actually happened' if we could somehow forget just the sort of information which may have motivated us to make temporal journeys in reverse.²³

Three arguments of these first chapters are that this paradoxical duality is a duality not so available to the social novel; that in the historical novel it creates several tensions between knowledge then and knowledge now; and that to begin with Scott is therefore to begin also with what genre theory requires — with a form whose family resemblances distinguish it from the other families of other forms.

'But there is another difference in the woof of a *Waverley Novel* from the cobweb of a modern one, which depends on Scott's larger view of human life'.²⁴ Whether or not Ruskin's judgement now appears valid, it was common currency in the nineteenth century. The range of *Waverley* — from Southern England to highland Scotland, from hearth-side to battlefield, from village hovel to prince's chamber — was often contrasted with the narrowness of Fielding or of the German 'Individual-roman'.²⁵ Moreover, the judgement was shared by historians. Carlyle too noted the 'wider sweep'²⁶ of *Waverley*, and as early as 1828 Macaulay made this famous pronouncement:

Sir Walter Scott . . . has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than their's . . . a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated.²⁷

¹⁹ A. C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 149.

²⁰ Scott, p. 477 (Chapter 72).

²¹ Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun (London, 1956), passim.

²² Alfred Andersch, *Winterspelt* (Zurich, 1976), Dedication.

²³ Danto, p. 159.

²⁴ John Ruskin, 'Fiction Fair and Foul', *Works*, 39 vols (London, 1904), XXXIV, 265–397 (p. 284).

²⁵ Steinecke, I, 35.

²⁶ Carlyle, p. 55.

²⁷ Lord Macaulay, 'History', *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols (London, 1860), I, 232–78 (p. 278).

There is, therefore, a further reason for beginning with Scott: in a history of history, he marks not one discontinuity but two. As Dame C. V. Wedgwood has written, 'Historical knowledge is in debt to the romantic writers, not so much for what they themselves did (though some of them made considerable advances in the study of the past), as for the deeper and wider scope that they gave to historical inquiry'.²⁸

These discontinuities, however, not only establish the historical unit: they also imply how it might rewardingly be approached. Since the historical novel can be so placed in a history of history, this study will approach it through philosophy of history.

II

In fact, the approach has already begun. A major concept in history is that of time, and one of its roles, Heidegger has shown, is to do what Scott above does: to differentiate between past and present or between one past and another. The differentiation helps one to date an event, to detect an anachronism, to verify a source. Heidegger claims therefore: 'Erst wo sich überhaupt diese qualitative Andersheit vergangener Zeiten einer Gegenwart ins Bewußtsein drängt, ist der historische Sinn erwacht'.²⁹ And as a problem of history he cites the problem which led to the duality of the historical novel: 'Es gilt die Zeit zu überwinden, über die zeitliche Kluft sich von der Gegenwart in die Vergangenheit einzuleben'.³⁰ Now, this is not to say that the historical novel is history: but it is to say that a study of this generic feature of the historical novel will approach what historical potential the genre may have. These opening chapters, therefore, have a twofold function. To begin a generic study with Scott is also to probe A. J. P. Taylor's outrageous beginning: 'True history began with Sir Walter Scott: he felt himself backwards into time'.³¹

In what follows, consequently, historical time will be the major term — and all the more so because the term is also apposite to the second feature of the historical novel, its range. 'Eine nicht minder wesentliche Rolle spielt der Zeitbegriff in der zweiten Hauptaufgabe der historischen Methode: bei der Herausstellung des Zusammenhangs der zuvor im einzelnen festgestellten Tatsachen'.³² In history, Heidegger seems to mean, dating event E is never an end in itself: the dating becomes meaningful only insofar as E is shown to connect — or not connect — with other events dated. A desertion in 1745 means little: but if the deserter has a Whig father and yet deserts to the Stuart cause, if his way leads him from lowland life to highland life, to Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Battle of Prestonpans, English captivity and final reconciliation with England, then — given verification — the desertion is historically significant. So it has been well said that a 'characteristic feature of

²⁸ Wedgwood, p. 20.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Der Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft', *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, 161 (1916), 173–88 (p. 184).

³⁰ Heidegger, p. 184.

³¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *Essays in English History* (London, 1976), p. 13.

³² Heidegger, p. 186.

historical time is the combination of meaning and temporality',³³ and the historical potential of the historical novel may be further clarified by Danto, who portrays the writing of history as the creation of 'temporal structures'. For these

are, of course, *ad hoc* in some degree. The identical event may indeed be a constituent in any number of different temporal structures: E may be collected with any number of otherwise disjointed collections of events into distinct temporal wholes. Thus our description of E may accordingly vary as we group it with different collections of events into different temporal structures.³⁴

And this is just what *Waverley* does with its own E, the Highland Rising. It collects it with the otherwise disjointed to produce a different description of it. The result, wrote Trevelyan in 1937, is that '*Waverley* is still the best history-book we have on the '45, considered as a social phenomenon in its particular time and place'.³⁵ In describing the historical novel and its historical potential, therefore, these chapters will concentrate also upon temporal structures. For in history, as elsewhere, significance is relatedness, and the historical novel may be historically significant because of the more, or the other, it relates.

To talk of *ad hoc* temporal structures, moreover, is to clarify why one begins with Scott. For a study of the historical novel is itself a temporal structure and its description of Scott is therefore determined by the grouping it intends. Now this study intends to compare; to compare examples of a genre; and to compare them as philosophy of history. Therefore, Scott becomes 'the first historical novelist'. Beginning with Scott is not necessarily more valid than beginning with Xenophon: but it is more valid for this particular narrative intention.

Though *ad hoc*, however, temporal structures are not inconsequential. There are those, for example, who locate *Waverley* only in a larger temporal structure, that of the novel. The novel in general, they might argue, 'belongs to an epoch of history'.³⁶ *Waverley* is not the only novel set in 1745: another is *The History of Tom Jones* (1749). But one consequence is the denial of any difference between novel and historical novel: a notable practitioner, Döblin, and a notable critic, Lukács, insist that there is here 'kein prinzipieller Unterschied',³⁷ that the historical novel 'bildet keinerlei eigenes Genre oder Untergenre'.³⁸ Against such argument this study has already produced counter-argument. Given the divergence of argument, however, it must and will do more. It will contest Döblin and Lukács by a description of historical novels, a description moving from Scott, through Cooper and Manzoni, to Tolstoy, Fontane, Faulkner, Lampedusa, and Andersch. And it will do this because of the loss involved in leaving it undone. Döblin's conclusion reads: 'Der historische Roman ist erstens Roman und zweitens keine Historie'.³⁹ These first

chapters, however, hope to demonstrate almost the reverse: that the historical novel is an especial kind of novel and precisely therefore a considerable contributor to history.

³³ Nathan Rothenstreich, *Between Past and Present* (Port Washington, 1973), p. xviii.

³⁴ Danto, p. 167.

³⁵ Trevelyan, p. 31.

³⁶ Frank Kermode, 'Novel, History and Type', *Novel*, 1 (1967-68), 231-38 (p. 238).

³⁷ Alfred Döblin, 'Der historische Roman und wir', *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelbänden*, edited by Walter Muschg and Heinz Graber, 15 vols (Olten and Freiburg i. Br., 1960-72), VIII, *Aufsätze zur Literatur*, 163-86 (p. 170).

³⁸ Georg Lukács, *Werke*, Volume VI, *Probleme des Realismus III* (Neuwied, 1965), p. 153.

³⁹ Döblin, p. 169.

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL DESCRIBED

I

'During the last century and a half', wrote Stephen Toulmin, the philosopher of science, in 1964, 'speculations about the temporal development of the natural world have begun to mature, so adding a further dimension to our conceptions — the dimension of time'.¹ Similar speculations, the first chapter argued, have accompanied the work of historians, and the historical novel has been the genre which, over just the same period, has best reflected and reflected upon them. It is, therefore, in terms of time that the historical novel will here be described — in terms, first, of its 'temporal structure' and, second, of its 'feeling backwards' into the past.

II

'We think of the past', writes Frank Kermode, 'in very different time-scales, according to what we are doing'.² Time for the geologist is not time for the archaeologist is not time for the historical novelist. But what is time for the historical novelist, and how does it affect his temporal structure?

Now, the social novel, writes Ian Watt, employs 'a much more minutely discriminated time-scale than had previously been employed in narrative'.³ The historical novel turns that discrimination upon a past period, and a first effect is that the period is often portrayed not as a unified age but as two or more co-existent ages. This is exemplified by *Waverley* itself. For Scott interprets the '45 not only as Stuart against Hannover, Catholic against Protestant, but as backward highland culture against advancing lowland civilization. The hero, Edward Waverley, is made to experience both the advancing and the backward, and it is the resulting awareness of their unhappy co-existence which gives Scott his major themes — themes which have ever since been the stuff of the historical novel. The first is that the advanced culture is rarely so advanced as to understand the backwardness in its midst or on its frontier:

So little was the condition of the Highlands known at that late period, that the character and appearance of their population, while thus sallying forth as military adventurers, conveyed to the south-country Lowlanders as much surprise as if an invasion of African Negroes, or Esquimaux Indians, had issued forth from the northern mountains of their own native country.⁴

A consequent theme is that the advanced and the backward may be equally backward: comparing highland and lowland captains, Edward remarks that they "have some points not much unlike so far as national prejudice is concerned".⁵ And this call for tolerance points to a further theme, that it can be the backward who are more advanced: when the uprising is quashed, the highland captain faces a humiliating execution, the result of a law which, he suggests, "is one of the blessings, Edward, with which your free country has accommodated poor old Scotland — her own jurisprudence, as I have heard, was much milder. But I suppose", he adds, "one day or other — when there are no longer any wild Highlanders to benefit by its tender mercies — they will blot it from their records, as levelling them with a nation of cannibals".⁶ Cultural conflict, cultural tolerance and cultural humility — these, then, are the novel's themes, but they are also its inner form. For in portraying cultural conflict as 'time conflict' — as conflict between two regions, one of which is more backward than the other — Scott is according the past just that cultural discernment which its peoples were once refused. In Scott, the past too is a foreign tribe, and its differences receive due deference.

Such 'time conflicts' are a major topos in the early historical novels, and they are so in part because Scott's theme was soon acknowledged and adopted. Willibald Alexis, for example, an early German reviewer, translator and imitator of Scott, wrote of the *Waverley Novels*:

So ward zur selben Zeit auf derselben Insel eine Zeitschrift wie der *Spectator* geschrieben und mit allgemeinem Entzücken gelesen, während das Faustrecht galt, feindliche Stämme in Blutrache sich vernichteten und abergläubische Gebräuche aus dem grauen Heidentume gang und gäbe waren.⁷

These words were written in 1823, and within two years both Zschokke's *Der Freihof von Aarau* (1824) and Alexis's own *Die Geächteten* (1825) were drawing on the theme in question. In Zschokke's work, for example, set in fifteenth-century Switzerland, the conflict is between the civilized but decadent towns of the Swiss valleys and the culturally backward, but morally more upright men of the mountains. Of Gangolf Trüllerey, the representative of the latter, is said: "Er fügt sich nicht in die Gewohnheiten unseres Jahrhunderts; er gehört in die alten Zeiten seines Turmes".⁸ In America, Fenimore Cooper was ascribing to a similar time conflict

⁴ Walter Scott, *Waverley* (London, 1973), p. 323 (Chapter 44).

⁵ Scott, p. 379 (Chapter 56).

⁶ Scott, p. 459 (Chapter 69).

⁷ Willibald Alexis, 'The Romances of Walter Scott', *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, XXII (1823), 1-75 (p. 15).

⁸ Heinrich Zschokkes *sämtliche Novellen*, Mertens'sche Ausgabe, 12 vols (Oerlikon, n.d.), X, 82 (Chapter 12).

¹ Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time, The Ancestry of Science* (London, 1965), p. 17.

² Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford, 1968), p. 63.

³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 23.

the antagonism between European settlers and indigenous Indians, and by 1829 Balzac's *Les Chouans* could draw both on Scott and on Cooper: the Chouans are royalist insurgents in the Brittany of 1799, and Balzac explains their insurgence as the act of 'hommes à demi sauvages', of men comparable to Mohicans, men living in modern France but living amid 'd'immenses forêts primordiales'. Balzac's concern, so he writes in the 1829 introduction, is for 'l'amélioration physique et morale de la Bretagne'.⁹ As so often, however, the stated concern of an introduction is belied by the more complex allegiances of the subsequent narrative: Balzac arrives, with Scott, at an understanding sympathy for a rebellion — a point where they are soon joined by Pushkin, whose historical novel *The Captain's Daughter* (1836) also visits a 'forsaken hole at the other end of the world'¹⁰ and also develops sympathy, if not for a rebellion, then at least for its leader, Pugachev.

It would be wrong, however, to portray even these early historical novels as mere encores of a theme by Scott. Tieck's *Der Aufruhr in den Cevennen* (1826) is one interesting case in point. Replace Scott's Edward by Tieck's Edmund, replace the Highlands of 1745 by the Cevennes of 1703, replace the Highlanders by the Camisards, replace the English troops by the troops of the French king — and you would seem to have Tieck's novel all cut and dried. The Camisards, however, are a Protestant sect; the king's troops are sent to convert them to Catholicism; and Tieck's theme is not so much cultural tolerance as religious tolerance — the belief, familiar in German Romantic theology, 'daß viele Wege zum Herrn führen'.¹¹

And it would be equally wrong to suggest that 'time conflict' is a theme which we owe solely to Scott. We owe it as much to the interaction of two features of our genre which have already been stated above: its 'wider sweep' and its 'much more minutely discriminated time-scale'. For when this minute discrimination is applied to the wider sweep, when a broader area of the past is submitted to a discriminating study, then a major theme will be the dissimilarities, the incongruities which such a study reveals. A similar width and similar themes are found in the history of the period, in, for example, the resonant inaugural lecture which Schiller delivered at Jena in 1789.¹² So prevalent did the theme become, indeed, that Reinhart Koselleck, an historian of history, has given it its own designation: the 'Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen'.¹³ This phrase — or its more humble equivalent, 'time-conflict' — is a helpful category for the analysis of many historical novels. For given that the theme of time conflict does not derive solely from Scott, it is not surprising to find it in many more historical novels than were directly influenced by Scott.

Consider, for example, Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, published in 1958. The work portrays the difficulties met by Garibaldi's Risorgimento when, in 1860, it comes to

conquer Sicily. And the difficulties arise because of the 'well-known time lag of a century'¹⁴ in Sicily's intellectual life. Sicily is compared to a "centenarian being dragged in a bath-chair round the Great Exhibition in London, understanding nothing and caring about nothing, whether it's the steel factories of Sheffield or the cotton spinneries of Manchester, and thinking of nothing but drowsing off again on beslobbered pillows with a pot under the bed".¹⁵ Or consider Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, published in the same year. The title refers to the disintegration of Nigerian life in the 1890s, and the disintegration is due to the advent of British missionaries and British administrators. Once again, there is a cultural conflict: the British Commissioner judges 'in ignorance', ruling "just as it is done in my own country under a great queen".¹⁶ Once again, there is a call for cultural tolerance: "The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others".¹⁷ And once again, one sees the long-standing peculiarity in their temporal structure from which such historical novels draw their strength. They are not simply 'of this time, of that place': they are of these times and of those places.

III

Es gibt also (man kann es eigentlich und kühn sagen) im Universum zu einer Zeit unzählbar viele Zeiten; die Zeit, die wir uns als das Maß aller denken, ist bloß ein *Verhältnismaß unserer Gedanken*.¹⁸

Herder vies with Hegel for the title 'spiritual father of the historical novel'. The above passage from the *Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1799) substantiates his claim, and all the more so since he is here speaking not only of human times, but of the times of trees, streams, and animals.

For Nature and her slow processes are a second prevalent feature in the temporal structure of historical novels. Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823), for example, is subtitled 'The Sources of the Susquehanna', and in title and sub-title the novel's temporal conflict is stated. On the one hand are the New England settlers with their watch-words "time is money" or "time and tide wait for no man",¹⁹ watch-words in the name of which they plunder the forests, the rivers and the skies. In Max Weber's *Die protestantische Ethik* (1904-06), the people, the place and even the language recur, and Weber's theme also is similar: that these watch-words express an ethic which can quite overrun its own intentions and its own good. For on the other hand, beautifully evoked by Cooper, stand the verdant foot-hills of the Alleghenies with their quite different time-rhythms. As he sees the forests mutilated, the most reflective of the settlers, Judge Temple, implores: "I earnestly beg

⁹ Honoré de Balzac, *Les Chouans* (Saint-Amand, 1973), pp. 23 and 39 (Chapter 1); p. 504.

¹⁰ Alexander Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter*, in *The Queen of Spades and Other Stories*, translated by Rosemary Edmonds (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 191 (Chapter 1).

¹¹ Ludwig Tieck's *Schriften*, Volume XXVI, *Novellen* (Berlin, 1854), p. 322.

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Gerhard Fricke, Herbert Göpfert and Hubert Stubenrauch, 6 vols (Munich, 1958), IV, 749-67 (pp. 754-58).

¹³ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Geschichte, Historie', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart, 1972-), II, 593-717 (p. 595).

¹⁴ Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun (London, 1963), p. 146 (Chapter 4).

¹⁵ Lampedusa, p. 145 (Chapter 4).

¹⁶ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London, 1958), pp. 158 and 175 (Chapters 20 and 23).

¹⁷ Achebe, p. 127 (Chapter 15).

¹⁸ Herders *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Bernhard Suphan, 33 vols (Berlin, 1877-1913), XXI, 59.

¹⁹ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers* (New York, 1964), pp. 152 and 273 (Chapters 14 and 26).

you will remember, that they are the growth of centuries, and when once gone, none living will see their loss remedied".²⁰ But to squander is the way of the settlers, and it is a mark of the work's unity that this squandering is bodied forth in the structure: in brief, swiftly-succeeding chapters,²¹ the rape of the centuries-old forest is followed by the cavalier slaughter of migrating birds and the wanton seining of the seasonal rivers. So it's greed against need — a conflict personified in the repeated skirmishes between the entrepreneur extraordinary, Sheriff Richard Jones, and the ageing trapper Leatherstocking, a "plain, unlearned man"²² whose motto is, "Use, but don't waste".²³ One benefit of genre criticism is that in portraying the usual, it can more readily uncover the unusual, the original, can point, for example, to the early and remarkable renewal which the historical novel here experiences. In 1764, Buffon first described Nature as not static but evolving, as 'un ouvrier sans cesse actif';²⁴ in 1775, Kant contributed to the broadening of history by first calling for a history of Nature, 'die wohl nach und nach von Meinungen zu Einsichten fortrücken könnte';²⁵ and in 1823, Cooper further widens the wider sweep of his genre by including Nature in its temporal structure and portraying a time conflict between the works of Nature and those of Man.

In subsequent historical novels, the times of Man and of Nature stand not so much in conflict as in contrast. This is especially true in historical novels of war, for which Erckmann-Chatrian's *Histoire d'un conscrit de 1813* (1864), Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major* (1880) and Conrad's *The Rover* (1923) — three novels of the Napoleonic Wars — may serve as representatives. Erckmann-Chatrian offers the following characteristic tableau of an abandoned battle-field, this time of the field at Großgörschen after Napoleon's victory in 1813:

Des nuages traversaient le ciel, et la lune regardait le village abandonné, les canons renversés et les tas de morts, comme elle regarde, depuis le commencement du monde, l'eau qui coule, l'herbe qui pousse et les feuilles qui tombent en automne. Les hommes ne sont rien auprès des choses éternelles; ceux qui vont mourir le comprennent mieux que les autres.²⁶

This contrast of the short-term concerns of man with the more lasting, even eternal, patterns of Nature is echoed on the final page of Conrad's novel, which, having portrayed throughout the turbulence in the Mediterranean area in 1805, now describes how 'the blue level of the Mediterranean, the charmer and deceiver of audacious men, kept the secret of its fascination — hugged to its calm breast the victims of all the wars, calamities and tempests of its history, under the marvellous purity of the sunset sky'.²⁷ And in that same year, 1805, there is a military review on

²⁰ Cooper, p. 218 (Chapter 20).

²¹ Cooper, Chapters 20, 22 and 23.

²² Cooper, p. 128 (Chapter 12).

²³ Cooper, p. 237 (Chapter 22).

²⁴ Koselleck, p. 681.

²⁵ Koselleck, p. 681.

²⁶ Erckmann-Chatrian, *Histoire d'un conscrit de 1813* (Paris, n.d.), p. 192 (Chapter 14).

²⁷ Joseph Conrad, *The Rover* (London, 1965), p. 286 (Chapter 16).

the Wessex downs, from which Hardy looks not back, but forward, juxtaposing the downs with many corners of many foreign fields:

They still spread their grassy surface to the sun as on that beautiful morning not, historically speaking, so very long ago; but the King and his fifteen thousand armed men ... how entirely have they all passed and gone! — lying scattered about the world as military and other dust, some at Talavera, Albuera, Salamanca, Vittoria, Toulouse, and Waterloo; some in home churchyards; and a few small handfuls in royal vaults.²⁸

Now, between these passages and the corresponding passages in Cooper, there is one clear difference: Cooper's evolving Nature, against which man loomed ever larger, is here supplanted by Nature the wellnigh changeless, beside which man seems so very small. In acknowledging a difference, however, one should not overlook a similarity. With Erckmann-Chatrian, Hardy, Conrad and many other historical novelists Cooper shares a puzzlement, often a dismay, at the time-scales in which modern man orders his life. The historical novelist's concern for the longer time-spans of Nature is just one of his admonitory responses to the social conditions which both assisted at the birth and later ensured the livelihood of his genre — conditions which Oldbuck, the protagonist of Scott's third historical novel, *The Antiquary* (1816), describes as 'these giddy-paced times'.²⁹

Time, writes Herder, is a 'Verhältnismaß unserer Gedanken';³⁰ time, writes A. N. Whitehead, is 'an arbitrary postulate of thought';³¹ and time, concurs a recent popularizer, is 'not a simple sensation but depends on processes of mental organization uniting thought and action'.³² Historical novels urge us to change our 'Verhältnismaß', our 'arbitrary postulate', our 'mental organization', by showing us how harmful the wrong postulate, the wrong organization can be.

IV

The attention of the historical novel to the long time-spans of Nature recalls also, however, an important — and topical — argument in philosophy of history: that history will vary according to the types of duration to which its historian is sensitive. 'If an historian', argues R. G. Collingwood, 'had no means of apprehending events that occupied more than an hour, he could describe the burning down of a house but not the building of a house; the assassination of Caesar but not his conquest of Gaul; the rejection of a picture by the hanging committee of the Royal Academy but not the painting of it; the performance of a symphony but not its composition'.³³ Clearly, therefore, to vary the duration perceived is to vary the material recorded. There is, however, a second variant, obscured by a flaw in Collingwood's formulation. In history, events are not given but designated. 'One historical event', Michael

²⁸ Thomas Hardy, *The Trumpet-Major* (London, 1974), p. 126 (Chapter 12).

²⁹ Walter Scott, *The Antiquary* (London, 1907), p. 48 (Chapter 5).

³⁰ Herder, XXI, 59.

³¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 59.

³² G. J. Whitrow, *The Nature of Time* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 36.

³³ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford, 1945), p. 25.

Oakeshott reminds one, 'is distinguished from another by the flimsiest partition; there is nothing solid or absolute in their character. The historian is constantly to be found joining and separating them'.³⁴ The assassination of Caesar, it follows, is not necessarily the event of an hour. To say that it is, is not only to designate an historical event: it is also to interpret the event so designated. In history, duration, event, and interpretation are inseparable. It should be worth inquiring, therefore, into the durations portrayed by historical novels. It should be worth asking to what durations, and therefore to what events, and therefore to what interpretation of events, the historical novelist is sensitive.

Substantial evidence on this issue is supplied by *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). For in choosing as his subject the French Revolution, Dickens is choosing an historical event often interpreted as unpredictable and unprepared. One of his aims in making the choice, however, is to question this interpretation:

It was too much the way of Monseigneur under his reverses as a refugee, and it was much too much the way of native British orthodoxy, to talk of this terrible Revolution as if it were the only harvest ever known under the skies that had not been sown — as if nothing had ever been done, or omitted to be done, that had led to it.³⁵

And in his questioning, Dickens employs two devices common in historical novels. First, he re-designates the event as an event of long duration: the story, and a story within it, span almost half a century. Second, he uses that duration to portray a long chain of causation, to portray, in the words of his hero's final speech, "'the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth'".³⁶ Social unrest, for example, is evoked by metaphors of insistent increase: a mill grinding, a sea rising, a woman knitting.³⁷ Dickensian anaphoras convey the prolonged suffering: 'Hunger . . . Hunger . . . Hunger', 'poor . . . poor . . . poor', 'tax . . . tax . . . tax'.³⁸ And above all the plot, Dickens's picture of the Revolution, features the vengeance wrought by the revolutionary Mme Defarge, vengeance for a wrong done to her family by the aristocracy, and done long years before. Indeed, it is a mark of the work's cohesion that in Mme Defarge the author's theme — the need to be aware of long durations — becomes his character's creed:

'But my dear!' repeated madame, nodding firmly; 'but my dear! You are faint of heart tonight, my dear!'
'Well, then,' said Defarge, as if a thought were wrung out of his breast, 'it is a long time.'
'It is a long time,' repeated his wife; 'and when is it not a long time? Vengeance and retribution require a long time; it is the rule.'
'It does not take a long time to strike a man with lightning,' said Defarge.
'How long,' demanded madame, composesly, 'does it take to make and store the lightning? Tell me.'³⁹

The passage is not only a catechism on revolution. It is a litany on the historical novelist's interpretation of events. In more senses than one, it can take a long time to appreciate an historical novel.

For Dickens's novel merely turns to good account what is perhaps the best known characteristic of the family of historical novels: their tendency to go to great lengths, to well and truly set their stall out. The genre has a notorious liking for the coda, the epilogue, the sequel, the trilogy, the tetralogy and the cycle — a liking which unites authors as various as Cooper, Achebe and J. G. Farrell; Tolstoy, Galdós and Sholokhov; Alexis, Freytag and H. Mann. To jib at the bulk of such writings is to miss one of their major points. The point is made by even those historical novels whose concern, seemingly, is not for years but for days. Th. Mann's *Lotte in Weimar* (1939), for instance, portrays the re-encounter, in 1816, between Charlotte Kestner and a lover of her youth, Goethe; it takes place almost solely on one morning and one evening; so many are the digressions and day-dreams, however, that it can still evoke both Goethe's life hitherto and the 'Sich-kreuzen und -gatten der Sippen durch die Jahrhunderte'⁴⁰ which led to the birth of a poet. Or Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March* (1948) may be — to return to Collingwood's example — about the assassination of Caesar; the earliest events it designates as relevant to that assassination, however, take place some thirty years before. The point, then, is that the historical explanations provided by the temporal structure of the historical novel are explanations which tend to be based on long-term processes and developments. This is one major difference between causality in the historical novel and causality in such prior historical genres as the historical drama and the ballad. The difference might be well expressed by an aphorism of Carlyle: 'When the oak-tree is felled, the whole forest echoes with it: but a hundred acorns are planted silently by some unnoticed breeze'.⁴¹

In order to instil in their readers this sense for the long-term, historical novels draw heavily also on one further family trait; on an apparent torpor and inactivity which conceal slow but sedulous movement. The pace of *Waverley* itself is compared to that of a humble post-chaise,⁴² and of subsequent historical novels Fontane's *Vor dem Sturm* is the epitome, in that its very title is a reference to that action which is preceded by inaction. Even more than the novel at large, the historical novel contrives to 'sing us into historical reality, into process and growth'.⁴³ One merit of the genre, therefore, can be summarized in the words of Collingwood:

That history is a process in which *tout casse, tout lasse, tout passe*, is doubtless true; but it is also a process in which the things that are thus destroyed are brought into existence. Only it is easier to see their destruction than to see their construction, because it does not take so long.⁴⁴

³⁴ Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 122.

³⁵ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, edited by George Woodcock (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 267 (Book 2, Chapter 24).

³⁶ Dickens, p. 404 (Book 3, Chapter 15).

³⁷ Dickens, pp. 61, 242 and 66 (Book 1, Chapter 5; Book 2, Chapter 21 and Book 1, Chapter 5).

³⁸ Dickens, pp. 61 and 144 (Book 1, Chapter 5 and Book 2, Chapter 8).

³⁹ Dickens, p. 207 (Book 2, Chapter 16).

⁴⁰ Th. Mann, *Lotte in Weimar* (Frankfurt on Main, 1959), p. 217 (Chapter 7).

⁴¹ Thomas Carlyle, 'On History', *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, 30 vols, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays II* (London, 1899), pp. 83–95 (p. 86).

⁴² Scott, p. 89 (Chapter 5).

⁴³ Jan Miel, 'Temporal Form in the Novel', *Modern Language Notes*, 84, no. 6 (December 1969), 916–30 (p. 930).

⁴⁴ Collingwood, p. 27.

V

In *War and Peace*, however, Tolstoy not only stresses that the past is a process, a 'continuous motion',⁴⁵ but also states a corollary. If, he argues, the past is a continuous motion, then it follows that any historical unit, short or long, is a simplification; and it follows from this that one should criticize not only the short unit by studying the forgotten long units within which it stands, but also the long unit by studying the forgotten short units which likewise stand within it.⁴⁶ This insight, like much of Tolstoy's philosophy of history, emerges naturally from the temporal structure of historical novels.

One way of demonstrating this is by reference to A. N. Whitehead, who compares time to the 'nest of boxes of a Chinese toy':⁴⁷ 'every duration', he explains, 'is part of other durations; and every duration has other durations which are parts of it'.⁴⁸ Consider in this light *The Captain's Daughter* (1836) by Pushkin. Its overall duration is that of the rebellion of Pugachev against Catherine II in 1773. As its title would suggest, however, it concentrates not only on this outer box, but on a box within that box, on the suffering which the rebellion causes to two families. This in fact gives Pushkin one of his major themes — 'Heaven send that we may never see such another senseless and merciless rebellion à la russe'⁴⁹ — and *Waverley* itself, Hauff's *Lichtenstein* (1826) and Erckmann-Chatrian's *Histoire d'un conscrit de 1813* are three of the many historical novels comparable in title, structure and theme. In another type of historical novel, however, the outer box is all but excluded in favour of the inner. Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major*, for example, takes place during the Napoleonic Wars, but takes place exclusively in Wessex. The only links between this inner box and the outer are the comings and goings of fighting men and a further important topos in the historical novel: the report. Here too the structure is in service of a theme, of perhaps the commonest of all themes in our genre: that written history has often a questionable concept of human greatness, that it is a stream 'within whose banks the littlest things are great',⁵⁰ whereas the characters of the historical novelist are 'full of importance to the country at large, and ramifying throughout the unwritten history of England'.⁵¹ And if one looks further in the nest of temporal boxes, one finds another type of historical novel and another connected theme. Both are exemplified again by *Vor dem Sturm*. This too is a novel of the Napoleonic Wars, but in concentrating on its inner box, the Mark Brandenburg in 1812–13, it concentrates especially on several inner boxes within that inner box: it makes copious use of book, paratactic chapter and section to evoke the different tempers of the Prussian people in different parts of their society and of their countryside. Here is how Fontane described this theme to his publisher:

Es war mir nicht um Konflikte zu tun, sondern um Schilderung davon, wie das große Fühlen, das damals geboren wurde, die verschiedenartigsten Menschen vorfand und wie es auf sie wirkte.⁵²

Similar themes and structures are to be found in *The Antiquary*, in *A Tale of Two Cities* and in the later works of Willibald Alexis. So if one now returns to Tolstoy's opening reflection and to the grand, poly-chambered catacomb of a novel to which it corresponds, one must conclude that Tolstoy's originality lies not in his conceiving this kind of structure, nor in his reflecting on it, but in his doing both with sovereign thoroughness. The historical novel's habitual playing off of the inner box with the outer, the part with the whole, becomes here not only a correction of the whole in the light of its parts, but a contrasting of the scattered parts men live with the wholes men later retrodict. The importance of Tolstoy for our present argument, therefore, is that *War and Peace* — here, as elsewhere — is the summation, the reflective intensification of our genre. Our genre has a tendency to the Chinese box. It was justly the historical novel which led two German novelists, Gutzkow and Fontane, to coin new terms: the 'Roman des Nebeneinander'⁵³ and the 'Vielleitsroman'.⁵⁴

And the importance of this for our secondary argument is, once again, that a generic feature points to historical potential. The Chinese box of the historical novel issues to historians a reminder issued also by philosophers of history: that, in the words of Collingwood, 'a movement of a certain determinate kind is made up of movements not of that kind'.⁵⁵

But why does history need this particularizing reminder? Does not a famous dictum assert that 'while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts'?⁵⁶

Certainly. Yet in conveying the particular the historian must use concepts, and in concepts the particular is classified. The phrase 'the rebellion of Pugachev' is thus a generalization. Further, the phrase 'the rebellion of Pugachev' is a generalization of a second kind. It involves people and activities in the Russian Steppe of 1773. It does not, however, involve all the people in the Steppe; nor does it involve all the activities in the Steppe; nor even does it involve all the activities of even those people whom it does involve. Like all historical events designated, like — to return to Danto's phrase — all 'temporal structures', it imposes continuity on the discontinuous. 'Historical facts, then, are', as Oakeshott writes, 'limited generalizations constructed by means of the more or less arbitrary principle of historical continuity'.⁵⁷ Or, as Hegel himself wrote with greater vividness in the very heyday of the historical novel:

⁴⁵ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, translated by Rosemary Edmonds, 2 vols (Harmondsworth, 1957), p. 974 (III, 3, i).

⁴⁶ Tolstoy, p. 975 (III, 3, i).

⁴⁷ Whitehead, p. 61.

⁴⁸ Whitehead, p. 59.

⁴⁹ Pushkin, p. 292 (Chapter 13).

⁵⁰ Hardy, p. 128 (Chapter 13).

⁵¹ Hardy, p. 47 (Chapter 2).

⁵² Theodor Fontane, Letter to Wilhelm Hertz, 17 June 1866, in *Fontanes Briefe*, edited by Gotthard Erler, 2 vols (Berlin and Weimar, 1968), I, 330–32 (p. 331).

⁵³ Karl Gutzkow, 'Anregungen. Vom deutschen Parnaß. III', *Unterhaltungen am häuslichen Herd*, II (1854), pp. 286–88.

⁵⁴ Theodor Fontane, Letter to Paul Heyse, 9 December 1878, in *Fontanes Briefe*, edited by Gotthard Erler, I, 463–66 (p. 464).

⁵⁵ Collingwood, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, IX.

⁵⁷ Oakeshott, p. 160.

Es ist eine Schlacht geliefert, ein großer Sieg erfochten, eine Stadt vergebens belagert worden usw. — Schlacht, großer Sieg, Belagerung, — alles dies sind allgemeine Vorstellungen, die ein weitläufiges individuelles Ganzes in eine einfache Bestimmung für die Vorstellung zusammenziehen.⁵⁸

There is, therefore, ample scope for the historical novel, with its 'much more minutely discriminated time-scale', to point out that history is generalizing, is excluding. Indeed, the very examples Hegel employs — battles and sieges — are two types of historical generalization at which the historical novel has repeatedly looked more closely, from Scott and Zschokke through Stendhal and Tolstoy to Andersch, and from Pushkin through Döblin to Farrell. This is not to censure history for generalizing, for excluding: all history is an account of the past and could not be an account of the past unless it excluded some of the past. Nor is it to say that the historical novel excludes less. It is with time as with fleas: big events have small events going on inside 'em, and small events have smaller events and so *ad infinitum*. In such a situation, every inclusion is also an exclusion, every temporal structure, however minutely discriminated, remains a generalization. It is, however, to point out one task of history which the historical novel is well able to fulfil: looking behind concepts, fleshing out generalizations, replacing the kind of generalization characteristic of narrative history with the more discriminating kind of generalization characteristic of the historical novel.

The way it fulfils this task is epitomized in *War and Peace* when, before the battle of Borodino, Clausewitz, philosopher and historian of war, rides over the terrain with a friend. "The war must be extended over a wider area", remarks one of them. "That is a conviction which I cannot advocate too highly". But the Chinese box of the historical novel has already acquainted the reader with what that 'wider area' contains, and to push the point home Tolstoy allows the remark to be overheard:

'Oh yes, spread the war!' said Prince Andrei with an angry snort, when they had ridden by. 'In that "wider area" I had a father and a son and a sister at Bald Hills. He doesn't care about that.'⁵⁹

VI

The historical novel, then, is often the sceptical cavesdropper on the grand strategist. This is reflected in another of its salient family characteristics: its aversion to literature's previous attempts to impose a temporal structure on the past, in particular, its aversion to the epic. The epic's kind of history, writes Tolstoy, 'is meaningless for our epoch'.⁶⁰ Historical novels, however, are often called epics, and Tolstoy himself once likened *War and Peace* to the *Iliad*.⁶¹ There is something to be

learned by following his line of thought and comparing these two kinds of temporal structure.

The epic, according to Hegel, treats its subject as follows:

Der Gegenstand als Gegenstand in seinen Verhältnissen und Begebenheiten, in der Breite der Umstände und deren Entwicklung, der Gegenstand in seinem ganzen Dasein soll zum Bewußtsein kommen.⁶²

For the similarity between the epic and the historical novel, therefore, two reasons have already been given: the Chinese box of the historical novel portrays a 'Gegenstand in seinen Verhältnissen und Begebenheiten'; the long duration of the historical novel portrays 'Umstände und deren Entwicklung'. There is, however, a third similarity, on which this chapter has only touched: the 'wider sweep' of our genre means that it too is concerned for the 'Breite der Umstände'. This generic feature and its habitual consequences are displayed by perhaps the finest of all historical novels, Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (1827). As its title might suggest, the novel conforms to what Northrop Frye has called the 'mythos of comedy': two lovers are held apart by a barrier, and only a twist in the plot can remove this barrier and allow the lovers to unite.⁶³ In Manzoni, however, the lovers, Renzo and Lucia, are held apart not by one barrier but by many, not only by the covetousness of a nobleman in their North Italian village, but by legal conniving, Church intrigue, hunger riots in Milan, war with Spain, and the great Italian plague of 1630. As the two of them stumble over barrier after barrier, they become among the first to learn two laws of our genre: that the troubles of the smallest village may be symptomatic of far wider troubles; and that the most distant events can be, perhaps should be, so designated as to show that even the smallest should take note of them. Here is Manzoni's designation of the Italian plague:

At length new and more general, graver, extremier disasters involved even them, even the lowest of them, according to the world's scale — just as a vast, sweeping, wandering hurricane, which uproots and strips trees, unroofs houses, untops spires, tears down walls and scatters rubbish everywhere, even stirs up the bits of straw hidden in the grass and searches out of corners the light dry leaves that a gentler wind had borne there, and whirls them off on its headlong course of destruction.⁶⁴

Many are the characters in historical novels who, like Sicilian Angelica in *The Leopard*, cannot imagine that 'a speech by Cavour might in time, through thousands of minute links influence her own life and change it'.⁶⁵ And many are those like Anne Garland in *The Trumpet-Major*, who, when her lover sails off to Trafalgar, finds that 'her interests had grandly developed from the limits of Overcombe and the town life hard by, to an extensiveness truly European'.⁶⁶ They, and we who read

⁵⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 'Erster Entwurf der Einleitung: Die Behandlungsarten der Geschichte', *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Volume XII, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt on Main, 1970), 543–56 (p. 552).

⁵⁹ Tolstoy, p. 920 (III, 2, xxv).

⁶⁰ Tolstoy, p. 897 (III, 2, xix).

⁶¹ R. F. Christian, *Tolstoy's War and Peace: A Study* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 117–21.

⁶² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, edited by Rüdiger Bubner, 3 vols (Stuttgart, 1971), III, 109.

⁶³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 163–86.

⁶⁴ Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun (London, 1956), p. 376 (Chapter 27).

⁶⁵ Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, p. 117 (Chapter 4).

⁶⁶ Hardy, p. 296 (Chapter 35).

their stories, are forced to realize what Whitehead calls the 'extension' of nature: 'Every event extends over other events, and every event is extended over by other events'.⁶⁷ In the temporal structure of the historical novel, time is as broad as it is long.

This breadth contributes further to the historical novel's historical potential: history too is interested in breadth because it is interested in interconnectedness. Historians insist, writes W. B. Gallie, 'on the "interconnectedness of events" and on the need of synoptic mastery of a period or epoch if one is to contribute genuinely to the interpretation of even a minor corner or facet of it'.⁶⁸ Of course, there is a problem here. In experience, connections end nowhere. The job of the historian, therefore, is to draw a circle in which they may happily seem to end. The achievement of the historical novelist is to have given this circle a considerable radius, even when his interest does indeed centre on 'a minor corner or facet', on some point near the circumference.

So why should the epic's kind of history be, or seem, 'meaningless for our epoch'? The reason, surely, is that its temporal structure, despite its radius, does not include so many people, and that the few people it does include therefore assume far-reaching powers. Tolstoy speaks of epic poems as poems 'in which the heroes furnish the whole interest of the story'.⁶⁹ From *Waverley* onwards, however, the large, often the very large, cast of the historical novel has located interest elsewhere. From the Porteous Riot in Scott's *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818), through the refugee scenes in Zschokke's *Der Freihof von Aarau*, the hunger riots in Manzoni's *The Betrothed* and the revolution scenes in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* right up to the mass psychology in Broch's *Der Tod des Vergil* (1949), the genre has studied as much the group as the individual. This interest in the many is a further reason for the historical novel's frequent bulk. Ortega y Gasset has written that the age of the masses is the age of the massive,⁷⁰ and many an historical novel bears him out.

There is a further sense, however, in which the historical novel is a genre of the many: several of its characteristic themes have a democratic tendency. Unlike the epic, for example, it portrays the relationship between the leader and the led as increasingly problematic. This development could be traced from Scott through Pushkin and Erckmann-Chatrian to Tolstoy and beyond, but a pithy statement of the genre's customary attitude is found in a recent historical novel, Golding's *The Spire* (1964). This compelling work, which recounts the construction of the spire to Salisbury Cathedral in the mid-fourteenth century, contains two contrasting leader figures — Jocelin, Dean of the Cathedral, who had the original vision of the spire, and Roger Mason, a master builder, who is to turn the vision into reality. When Roger decides not to build further upwards but to dig downwards, to investigate whether the reality of the cathedral's foundations is capable of sustaining such a vision, the following exchange ensues between the two men:

'This excavation was quite unnecessary.'
'I'm digging the hole because of my workmen.'
'Your army? I thought you were their general!'
'Sometimes the army does the leading.'
'That's a poor sort of general, Roger.'⁷¹

In this exchange, it is Roger who represents the genre's customary attitude. He knows that to lead is to be dependent on those one is ostensibly leading. In an equally customary process, however, Jocelin is gradually educated into this attitude. This educational process, which can be traced throughout the novel,⁷² is reflected in a strand of imagery in which Jocelin is portrayed first as architect of a ship, then as 'a passenger in a ship', and finally as 'part of the crew'.⁷³ His education is in line with one further theme, salient both in *The Spire* and in the genre at large — a scepticism towards tales of individual heroism and in particular towards that extrapolation from tales of individual heroism, the Great Man approach to writing history. In the richly-peopled temporal structures of historical novels, Great Men are habitually demoted into crew members. Or, as Thackeray puts it at the beginning of *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.* (1852), in a precept which captures nicely this particular difference between the historical novel and the epic: 'In a word, I would have History familiar rather than heroic'.⁷⁴

After all, therefore, there is something to be learned from Carlyle's remark that Scott 'was among the first to perceive that the day of Metrical Chivalry Romances was declining'.⁷⁵ And there is something further to be learned from Balzac when, in the preface to that broadest of all literary canvases, the *Comédie humaine*, he admits an indebtedness to the modern troubadour, 'ce trouveur moderne', Scott.⁷⁶

VII

Philosophers of history often hobnob with fishermen. They know that the past, like the sea, has many shoals and that what the historian catches in it will depend both on where he casts his net and on what kind of net he casts. This chapter has described the kind of net which the historical novelist flings out: it is long, broad, and often intricately meshed. Now, however, the chapter can consider his fishing-grounds and the effect they too have on his catch.

If the historical novelist wishes to portray a time conflict, to portray a past period not as a unified age but as two ages, then he must set his novel in a place where that conflict, that disunity, is apparent. This is one reason why a major topos in the

⁷¹ William Golding, *The Spire* (London, 1964), pp. 38–39 (Chapter 2).

⁷² Richard Humphrey, 'Der historische Roman und die Kathedrale: Zwei Weltbücher. Zu William Goldings *The Spire*', in *Der historische Roman*, edited by Raimund Borgmeier and Bernhard Reitz, 2 vols (Heidelberg, 1984), II, 117–133.

⁷³ Golding, pp. 10, 143 and 153 (Chapters 1, 8 and 8).

⁷⁴ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.*, edited by John Sutherland and Michael Greenfield (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 46.

⁷⁵ Thomas Carlyle, 'Sir Walter Scott', *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 7 vols (London, 1888), VI, 21–80 (p. 55).

⁷⁶ *Oeuvres Complètes de Honoré de Balzac*, 24 vols (Paris, 1869–92), I, 4.

⁶⁷ Whitehead, pp. 58 and 59.

⁶⁸ W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London, 1964), p. 53.

⁶⁹ Tolstoy, p. 897 (III, 2, xix).

⁷⁰ José Ortega y Gasset, *Der Aufstand der Massen*, translated by Helene Weyl (Hamburg, 1956), p. 13.

historical novel is the out-of-the-way location — Scott's highlands, Cooper's frontier, Balzac's Brittany, Pushkin's Steppe, Lampedusa's Sicily, Achebe's Umuofia. The historical novel has long been making the point made by modern sociology: 'Nicht alle sind im selben Jetzt da. ... Abgelegene Orte wirken hier besonders lehrreich, denn sie zeigen kulturelles Grundwasser, das anderswo nur tiefer liegt'.⁷⁷

Once the novelist has found this far-flung spot, his novel must find it too. A familiar figure in the genre, therefore, is the traveller. He is often a military expeditioner, as in Scott, Balzac, Pushkin, and Lampedusa. Or he may be a settler or a missionary as in Cooper, Achebe, and J. G. Farrell. A further alternative is the Rip van Winkle figure, like Jean Peyrol, the protagonist in Conrad's *The Rover*, who returns to southern France after some fifty years at sea and finds himself 'a stranger to his native country',⁷⁸ which has meanwhile gone through the French Revolution. His return journey is paralleled in *Lotte in Weimar*, where Charlotte Kestner returns to the ageing and changing Goethe, and all these journeys play on the analogy between the historian and the geographer — 'The effect of historical reading', asserts Macaulay, 'is analogous, in many respects, to that produced by foreign travel'⁷⁹ — an analogy exploited especially by Raabe's *Stopfkuchen* (1891), in which the historical tale not only involves a journey from South Africa to Germany but is written by the narrator on the journey back.

A journey, and again often a military journey, is an important component too for those historical novelists such as Manzoni, Tolstoy, Fontane, and Hardy who portray the extension of nature. One need not espouse any school of literary sociology to remark how apposite this travelling is to an age of social mobility and colonialism.

This journey, however, would be of little avail were it not to establish intimate contact between the two regions, the two ages, in question. Many historical novels, therefore, number a go-between in their cast. Frequently, he is a deserter or ostensible deserter — Scott's Waverley, Hauff's Georg von Sturmfeder, Pushkin's Griniov, Lampedusa's Tancredi or Andersch's Major Dincklage (who in *Winterspelt* (1974), a story of the Ardennes offensive of 1944, plans the surrender of his German battalion to the Americans). A variant, however, is the secret agent — often the double agent — who stalks the pages of our genre, now as Hauff's Pfeifer von Hardt, now as Balzac's *galope-chopine*, now in Thackeray, Fontane, Meyer, H. Mann, and Conrad. These figures, moreover, are also agents in something larger: historians are often likened to detectives, and the secret agent is a literary correlative of the historical novelist's historical enterprise.

Travellers, missionaries, turn-coats, and spies influence the thematic catch of our genre in four further ways. First, their various missions often involve them unawares in military activity, so that the civilian astray on the battlefield becomes a

familiar topos. The best early example of this is the experience of Fabrice at Waterloo in Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839); a good recent example is the experience of George Fleury, whose colonial journey in 1857 leaves him in the thick of the Indian Mutiny in J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973). One way of characterizing the thematic potential of such incidents is to remark that this is one of several areas in which the historical novel has influenced the war novel.

Second, such figures can plausibly be led, and lead us, to the local leader. This is how we meet tribal chieftains: Scott's Vich Ian Vohr, Cooper's Chingachgook, Pushkin's Pugachev. It is also how we meet military commanders: Hauff's Ulrich von Württemberg, Meyer's Planta, Conrad's Nelson. These meetings do not mitigate the genre's attitude to the Great Man: it is often in these very meetings that the Great Man is diminished into the man.

Further, the dual allegiance of these characters means not only that the theme of loyalty is writ large in our genre, but that the characters enact the historical adjudicating of their authors. In *Les Chouans*, for example, the go-between is a courtesan, Mlle de Verneuil. She is sent from Paris to Brittany to ensnare the leader of the Chouans, but instead she falls in love with him. She too, therefore, must weigh up the merits of the two causes — a task she shares with Sturmfeder and Griniov, with Cooper's Oliver, Meyer's Lukretia and Achebe's Nwoye, not to mention Edward Waverley himself, whose very name is a play on the wavering of an adjudicator.

Finally, having their feet in two ages, these characters assist the historical novelist in one other favourite theme: the theme of *plus ça change*. ... This theme is typified by Jean Peyrol, who, returning to France from the South Seas, finds that stories of the Revolution resemble 'the tale of an intelligent islander on the other side of the world talking of bloody rites and amazing hopes of some religion unknown to the rest of mankind'.⁸⁰ There is a similar import in Chingachgook's accusation that rum is the white man's tomahawk,⁸¹ but it is in historical novels of revolution that the theme comes most to the fore, notably in the circular structure of *Les dieux ont soif* (1912) by Anatole France, in the very title of Theodor Plievier's *Der Kaiser ging, die Generäle blieben* (1932), a novel of the German Revolution of 1918, and in the *The Leopard* where Tancredi, the playboy revolutionary, remarks with knowing cynicism, "'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change. D'you understand?'"⁸²

Now, this chapter is not arguing that any one historical novel contains all of these features: nor that any one of these features is in all historical novels. The model this chapter has in mind is rather Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances: 'Some of them have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and others again the same way of walking; and these likenesses overlap'.⁸³ Nevertheless, it is remarkable how many of these likenesses overlap and how often. Reconsider, for instance, *A Tale of Two Cities*.

⁷⁷ Ernst Bloch, 'Ungleichzeitigkeit und Pflicht zu ihrer Dialektik', *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1962), pp. 104–60 (pp. 104 and 107–08).

⁷⁸ Conrad, p. 2 (Chapter 1).

⁷⁹ Lord Macaulay, 'History', *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols (London, 1860), I, 276.

⁸⁰ Conrad, p. 94 (Chapter 7).

⁸¹ Cooper, p. 177 (Chapter 16).

⁸² Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, p. 28 (Chapter 1).

⁸³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford, 1964), p. 17.

The very title names the two places — London and Paris — which are to be connected and compared. The second chapter begins the first of several journeys connecting them, and introduces us also to the first go-between, Mr Lorry. The object of his journey is to retrieve Dr Manette, a Rip van Winkle figure who has been for long years imprisoned in the Bastille, and on the return journey — as we later hear — the characters meet Darnay himself, a further go-between, who is 'in the habit of passing and re-passing between France and England',⁸⁴ so much so that he is mistaken for a spy. He is in fact a man of dual allegiance, an enlightened French aristocrat 'bound to a system that is frightful to me'.⁸⁵ And so on.

The reader will justly object that this is not an adequate summary, still less an adequate interpretation, of *A Tale of Two Cities*. It does, however, demonstrate two points: that this chapter has begun to construct a clothes-horse of concepts on which the garment of an interpretation can be hung; and that this clothes-horse is adequate for many more historical novels than the — albeit many — epigones of *Waverley*.

Further, these concepts complement the concept of temporal structure. If one now recalls the notions of long duration, Chinese box and temporal extension, one can write another summary of *A Tale of Two Cities*, a summary which takes in the novel's further journeys into the French provinces, its journeys into the past, and its love-affair:

With some violence to ordinary usage, we may speak of innumerable Frenchmen as engaged in French-revolutionizing during an interval of time in the neighbourhood of 1789. The makeshift project verb 'is French-revolutionizing' is not, of course, true of every individual in France during that interval, and it is true of some individuals not in France. Nor, of those of whom it is true, were each of them at every moment during that interval French-revolutionizing. So not everything which went on in France is within the range marked out by our project-word: the project was exhibited then discontinuously over French soil and eighteenth-century time.⁸⁶

This is not a critic's summary of how Dickens has approached the French Revolution: it is Danto's summary of how the Revolution might well be approached by an historian. The similarity, however, is striking and it concludes this study of the historical novel as temporal structure by reminding one of three findings of the study: that terms such as 'the French Revolution' are generalizations, 'project-words', for things which went on discontinuously over certain geographical areas during certain periods of the past; that *A Tale of Two Cities* is characteristic of historical novels in that it attempts to chart such a period and such an area; and that it is characteristic of the genre also in that it attempts such charting in terms of a time conflict, a temporal extension, a long duration, and the Chinese box of time, using the several literary figures which such structures involve.

⁸⁴ Dickens, p. 95 (Book 2, Chapter 3).

⁸⁵ Dickens, p. 154 (Book 2, Chapter 9).

⁸⁶ Danto, p. 166.

VIII

One and the same unit of time, whether a now, a minute, an hour, or a year, differs qualitatively or intrinsically according to the process in time of which it forms a part.⁸⁷

The words come from W. von Leyden's fine essay on 'History and the Concept of Relative Time'. They not only summarize the argument so far but anticipate the argument to come. For as this chapter now turns to the second of the historical novel's principal features — its feeling backwards into time — the relativity of time remains a major issue. The relativity arises now, however, when one and the same unit of time is located not in different temporal structures but at different temporal removes.

The first remove at which the historical novel views its past is the nil remove. It paradoxically presents 'what actually happened' as it is actually happening, often even telling its story in the historical present. The principal problem in this and its principal effect are nicely illustrated in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941), a novel about the production of an historical pageant in an English village. When this cavalcade of English history is drawing to its close, Miss La Trobe, the author and producer, chooses to douche her audience with 'present-time reality'. Her audience is understandably hostile:

But what could she know about ourselves? The Elizabethans, yes; the Victorians, perhaps; but ourselves; sitting here on a June day in 1939 — it was ridiculous.⁸⁸

A picture of the present cannot have the same 'completeness' as a picture of the past — but this is just what Miss La Trobe has to say. She evokes the present by means of mirrors which reflect her audience but reflect it only in parts. And when the audience finally leaves, the loudspeakers drone out words which are a leit-motif both of this novel and of our genre: "'Dispersed are we . . . Dispersed are we . . . Dispersed are we"'.⁸⁹

For this dispersedness, this unawareness, of the present is a recurrent theme in our genre, which has one device well able to convey it: the Chinese box. While the reader may survey from above all that is simultaneously happening in all the various boxes, the inhabitant of an inner box is often quite ignorant of what is happening in the box next door, let alone in the outer box itself: 'As the reader is aware', writes Manzoni at one stage of *The Betrothed*, 'it was a story which no one knew in its entirety'.⁹⁰ And this is a further historical value of the genre. It is a reminder that events which now seem simultaneous were not in fact, in any simple sense, simultaneous at all: the only events which are simply simultaneous are those perceived at the same time by the same perceiver. The genre has long known what the relativists now tell us: 'There is not one universal time, except by an elaborate construction; there are only local times, each of which may be taken to be the time within one biography'.⁹¹

⁸⁷ W. von Leyden, 'History and the Concept of Relative Time', *History and Theory*, 2, no. 3 (1963), 263–85 (p. 282).

⁸⁸ Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (London, 1978), p. 130.

⁸⁹ Woolf, pp. 142–44.

⁹⁰ Manzoni, p. 330 (Chapter 24).

⁹¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London, 1921), p. 128.

The historical novel, however, is not only past experience but also subsequent knowledge. It views the past, therefore, not only at the nil remove but also at the remove of later insight. The thematic potential of this is illustrated again by *The Spire*, Golding's story of how Dean Jocelin fulfils a vision and a vow by building the lofty spire of Salisbury Cathedral. For while we know that the spire was successfully completed and still stands, Jocelin can only have faith that his enterprise will have this successful outcome. His life, therefore, becomes a struggle against doubt, and in order to strengthen himself in this struggle he does what several heroes of historical novels do: he evolves a philosophy of risk, of acting in ignorance of the outcome. To the master builder, whom he has chided for being 'a man for a very little dare',⁹² he says:

'I understand you, my son. It's the little dare all over again. Shall I tell you where we've come? Think of the mayfly that lives for no more than one day. That raven over there may have some knowledge of yesterday and the day before. The raven knows what the sunrise is like. Perhaps he knows there'll be another day. But the mayfly doesn't. There's never a mayfly who knows what it's like to be one! And that's where we've come! . . . We're mayfly. We can't tell what it'll be like up there from foot to foot; but we must live from the morning to the evening every minute with a new thing.'⁹³

This passage is further evidence of the affinity between Golding and Kierkegaard. Jocelin too experiences life as a leap into the unknown. He too comes to realize that life can only be lived forwards and understood backwards.

This contrast between past experience and subsequent knowledge, between the local times men live and the broader temporal structures men later retrodict, is the basis also of our genre's most famous contribution to the philosophy of history — the philosophical excursus in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and their exposition in *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953) by Sir Isaiah Berlin. Tolstoy draws the philosophical conclusion from our genre of the Chinese box: 'A man who plays a part in an historic event never understands its import'.⁹⁴ He adds this conclusion to our genre's assault on the Great Man approach to writing history: the general too is lost in the Chinese box; he too 'is always in the midst of a series of shifting events and so he can never at any point deliberate on the whole import of what is going on'.⁹⁵ And above all Tolstoy derives from the conclusion a theory of free will and determinism. 'There are', he argues, 'two sides to the life of every man'.⁹⁶ On the one side is the dispersed life he lives, the life at nil remove, a life in which he has the consciousness of freedom.⁹⁷ On the other hand is the life the historian sees, a life which seems the more determined the more the historian is removed from it.⁹⁸ On the one hand, therefore, the message of this dispersed, poly-chambered novel has been beautifully caught by Golding himself in an aphorism from his essay on Tolstoy: 'Life is like

nothing, because it is everything'.⁹⁹ On the other hand, however, the novel is saying that this same life is like something, like as many somethings as there are historians and posterities to make them.

It might assist an understanding of Tolstoy to refer to one of the signal misunderstandings of him — that of Sir Karl Popper in *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957). By 'historicism' Popper means predictive determinism, the belief that man can 'predict the future course of human history',¹⁰⁰ and of such determinism he roundly accuses Tolstoy. To do so, however, is to confuse two forms of determinism: the predictive and the retrodictive. Of predictive determinism, *War and Peace* is itself the repeated rebuttal. Again and again the novel insists that 'in war the most deeply deliberated plans mean nothing';¹⁰¹ that those plans which do seem to work out are just seeming proofs of the foresight and genius of military commanders, 'cunningly devised' by subsequent historians 'to fit the accomplished facts';¹⁰² and that, in reality, these commanders and everyone else are 'all the involuntary tools of history, working out a process concealed from them but intelligible to us'.¹⁰³ It is of these processes intelligible to us, of retrodictive determinism, that *War and Peace* is the pre-eminent exposition.

And in developing this theme that life can only be lived forwards and understood backwards, *War and Peace*, like every historical novel, has one further innate asset: 'twas then sixty years since, 'tis now a good many more years since. The historical novel accumulates removes, accumulates posterities, just by holding its place on the library shelf. Try re-reading *Waverley* now that the Scots are considering devolution.

IX

'"This is but time, my good friend, but I would have you prepare for eternity"''.¹⁰⁴ The words of Fenimore Cooper's divine, echoed as they are in historical novels by many a priest, believer or astronomer, remind us that there is one further remove at which our genre has habitually viewed the past — the furthest remove of all, the eternal.

Examples of such priest-figures are Jocelin in *The Spire*, the Prince in *The Leopard* and Magister Noah Buchsius, the stoic Christian protagonist of *Das Odfeld* (1889), one of Raabe's novels of the Seven Years War. Prominent though these figures are, however, it is Manzoni's *The Betrothed* which suggests most insistently that life be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. Manzoni's plot, as has been shown, conforms to the mythos of comedy: two lovers, Renzo and Lucia, are held apart by barriers, and only a twist in the plot can remove these barriers and allow the lovers to unite. Renzo and Lucia, however, are Christians; the first barrier they encounter is the

⁹² Golding, p. 84 (Chapter 4).

⁹³ Golding, pp. 116–17 (Chapter 6).

⁹⁴ Tolstoy, p. 1116 (IV, 1, iv).

⁹⁵ Tolstoy, p. 979 (III, 3, ii).

⁹⁶ Tolstoy, p. 718 (III, 1, i).

⁹⁷ Tolstoy, p. 1427 (Epilogue, II, 8).

⁹⁸ Tolstoy, p. 1434 (Epilogue, II, 9).

⁹⁹ William Golding, 'Tolstoy's Mountain', *The Hot Gates* (London, 1970), pp. 121–25 (p. 123).

¹⁰⁰ Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, second edition (London, 1960), pp. v and 148.

¹⁰¹ Tolstoy, p. 749 (III, 1, ix).

¹⁰² Tolstoy, p. 896 (III, 2, xix).

¹⁰³ Tolstoy, p. 810 (III, 2, i).

¹⁰⁴ Cooper, p. 129 (Chapter 12).

covetousness of an irreligious nobleman; and the twist in the plot which removes this barrier is the conversion to Christianity of another nobleman, the notorious, all-powerful Unnamed. The story consequently contains much Christian counselling, and in its light the dispersed present gains a rich after-glow. "Time is His, and He has promised us so much of it!"¹⁰⁵ says the splendid friar, Fra Cristoforo. Therefore, he later adds, "You can be quite sure that the day will come when you will find that you are glad of what is happening now".¹⁰⁶ Such statements are not a contravention of our realistic genre. As J. P. Stern has shown, realism is not necessarily incompatible with a religious view of the world.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, perhaps the best commentary on *The Betrothed* would be Sir Herbert Butterfield's essay, 'God in History'. There are, Butterfield here contends, three levels at which we can view experience: the biographical level, the historical level, and the providential level — and all of these views can be held concurrently:

Because they are taken at different levels they can all be true at the same time, just as you could have three different shapes of the same piece of wood if you took three different cross-sections.¹⁰⁸

This is what happens in many historical novels and happens *par excellence* in Manzoni. In *The Betrothed*, the literary comedy of lovers united co-exists with the sovereign Comedy of a world held in God's hand.

Sir Herbert Butterfield has written elsewhere: 'It would seem that the decline of religion gives undue power to history in the shaping of men's minds — undue power to historical oversimplifications'.¹⁰⁹ The historical novel, however, is literature's standing committee on historical over-simplification, and among the committee members the priest-figure is often prominent.

X

Given that an historical novel portrays one and the same past at different removes; given also that it portrays that past by means of a temporal structure; given third that it shows that the past it portrays was itself partly determined by the temporal structures men then imposed on it, it is not surprising that the historical novel also contains one element in which all these interests are combined: the report.

Reports are often the very tissue of our genre. It is here that the historical novelist is most indebted to the grand ancestral forms of fiction. Often he will reach into fiction's proverbial old oak chest in the attic and pull out ancient documents on which to base his novel. The result can be a continuation of the first-person memoir novel, as in *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.*; it can be a third-person novel with the

familiar author-editor, as in *The Betrothed* or *The Captain's Daughter*; it can be a combination of the two, as in Golding's *Rites of Passage* (1980), a novel about an English ship's company bound for Australia during the Napoleonic Wars; or it can be an epistolary novel, as in Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*. Even those historical novels which are not wholly based on such documents can none the less draw on these traditions by including reports, oral or written, within their narratives. Proclamations, messages, anecdotes, memoranda, journals, letters, newspaper cuttings — our genre frequently includes all these, and, with almost equal frequency, it mixes the authentic report with the inauthentic. Two opposing effects of this mixing have been noted: either the fictional surrounding gives even the authentic report an aura of fictionality; or the authentic report allows even its fictional surrounding to masquerade as fact. Peter Demetz considers the first effect unintended,¹¹⁰ and F. W. Bateson has named the second the novel's 'original sin'. 'The reader', he complains, 'is never certain whether he is looking at painted grapes or real grapes'.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, historical novelists have been giving us our grapes like this for a century and a half now, and it is perhaps worth considering whether there is not, after all, a good reason for their doing so.

A first clue comes from a first type of report to which historical novelists allot an important role in their plots: the rumour. Two comic historical novels, Scott's *The Antiquary* (1816) and Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major*, both rely on a false rumour of a Napoleonic invasion; and the lives of Waverley, Renzo and Griniov are all endangered by false rumour or false conjecture, which these early historical novelists alternately describe as 'open-mouthed fame', as the workings of an 'idle jade', as 'tumultuous confabulations' and as a 'sea-wave'.¹¹² This is not an unintentional blurring of fiction and fact, but a study of the fictive element which inheres in all oral tradition: 'Words are one thing on the tongue', writes Manzoni, 'and another in the ear'.¹¹³

Much the same occurs when the historical novelist includes the unmediated account of an eye-witness or participant. 'Men always lie when reporting deeds of battle',¹¹⁴ asserts Tolstoy bluntly, and *War and Peace* makes ample use of a ploy already developed by its predecessors — to narrate an event, and then to narrate how that event is quite differently narrated by a participant in it. Young Rostov, for example, describes one of his military flops

exactly as men who have taken part in battles always do describe them — that is, as they would like them to have been, as they have heard them described by others, and as sounds well, but not in the least as they really had been.¹¹⁵

It is not far from here to the portrayal of propaganda in H. Mann's *Die Jugend des Königs Henri Quatre* (1935) or in Lampedusa's *The Leopard*. Historical novels — like

¹⁰⁵ Manzoni, p. 79 (Chapter 7).

¹⁰⁶ Manzoni, p. 109 (Chapter 8).

¹⁰⁷ J. P. Stern, *On Realism* (London, 1973), p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Sir Herbert Butterfield, 'God in History', in *Steps to Christian Understanding*, edited by R. J. W. Bevan (London, 1958), pp. 105–21 (pp. 107–08).

¹⁰⁹ Sir Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past: The Study of the History of Historical Scholarship* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 30.

¹¹⁰ Peter Demetz, *Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane* (Frankfurt on Main, 1973), p. 17.

¹¹¹ F. W. Bateson, *Essays in Critical Dissent* (London, 1972), p. 248.

¹¹² Scott, *Waverley*, p. 434 (Chapter 65); Scott, *The Antiquary*, p. 344 (Chapter 38); Manzoni, p. 106 (Chapter 8); Pushkin, p. 294 (Chapter 14).

¹¹³ Manzoni, p. 534 (Chapter 38).

¹¹⁴ Tolstoy, p. 766 (III, 1, xii).

¹¹⁵ Tolstoy, p. 279 (I, 3, vii).

the war novels of this century, which here also owe much to them — provide copious substantiation of the old adages that all warfare is based on deception and that in wartime the first casualty is truth.

From this position it is not far either, however, to Fontane's *Vor dem Sturm*, which contains not only rumours and eye-witness accounts but written eye-witness accounts — of the battles of Plaa and Borodino — which are read and discussed in a literary circle. This literary setting suggests a theme which had long been present in German aesthetics, which was soon to enter Anglo-Saxon philosophy of history, and which is one overall theme of this study: that writing history and writing fiction, far from being easily divided and distinguished, are cognate activities.

The implications of this — the contributions of the historical novel to the debates on historical fact and historical truth — would be the subject of another study. Suffice it now to return to the theme of the report and to recall a passage from Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history. There have long been, Hegel there remarks, historians of contemporary affairs, writers of annals, memoirs and anecdotes — but never so many as now:

In neuerer Zeit haben sich alle Verhältnisse geändert. Unsere Bildung ist wesentlich auffassend und verwandelt sogleich alle Begebenheiten für die Vorstellung in Berichte.¹¹⁶

This is the age in and for which historical novels are written, an age in which, as Scott writes in *Waverley*, 'every mechanic at his six-penny club may nightly learn from twenty contradictory channels the yesterday's news of the capital'.¹¹⁷ Histories are by nature reports, and one further value of our genre is to be both a report on these reports and, often, a report on reporting too.

XI

Not only do historical novels study reports, they also study the reporters. This, indeed, is our final topos: many an historical novel numbers among its cast one or more historians — be they amateur or professional, bard or epic poet, school-teacher, art historian, military historian, philologist, annalist, geologist or whatever — and as a rule of thumb, the more recent the historical novel, the more numerous, prominent, varied and perplexed these historians become. It is important to consider what they are there for.

Much can be learned from the prosy grandpa of them all, the eponymous Oldbuck in *The Antiquary*. His mind, like his study, is a 'mare magnum of miscellaneous trumpery'.¹¹⁸ He shares with Dr Riemer, Goethe's annalist in *Lotte in Weimar*, the capacity to tell one more and more about less and less. He has a 'pettifogging intimacy with dates',¹¹⁹ rather like the modern historian whom

Tolstoy lampoons as 'a deaf man answering questions no one has put to him'.¹²⁰ And, like Ritter Doktor Fortunatus Sprecher in *Jürg Jenatsch*, he is dry, so dry. In short, the inadequacies of these historians are the historical novel's apologia — something especially true of Achebe's District Commissioner, who, in the acid final sentences of *Things Fall Apart*, decides to include in his own book on Nigeria a piece on Okonkwo, to whom Achebe has just devoted his novel:

One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.¹²¹

Historical novels contain several District Commissioners: the novels tell the stories which the Commissioners miss out.

Indeed, the wrong-minded historian in the historical novel is as common a figure as the baffled detective in the *nouveau roman* — and for the same reason: he points up the hermeneutic problem. With its ambiguous clues, its dislike of closure, its irrelevant details and its non-sequentiality, the *nouveau roman* insists on the pluralism of its text. Now the historical novel does not often insist on the pluralism of its own text, but it does frequently insist that the text of the past has just such a pluralism. The closely-wrought epitome of such historical novels is William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), a work in which two Harvard students, Quentin Compson and his friend Shreve, attempt to retrace the story of the Southern Sutpen family, from 1833 onwards. In a text which is among the richest and densest in the genre, however, they find themselves confronted with what Faulkner evocatively describes as 'the long unamaze'¹²² — the task of unravelling from 'a few old mouth-to-mouth tales', tales replete with demurrers, caveats and conjectures, a truth which often seems 'impervious to time and inexplicable'.¹²³ Their quest is paralleled in *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*, a work which Brecht likewise began in the 1930s, but which was published only posthumously in 1957: here the protagonist is a young historian who sets out to write a biography of Caesar only to find himself confronted not only with conflicting reports but also with the 'unedited' memoirs of Caesar's scribe Rarus, an opus which has the welter of detail and thinginess which the conscientious historian must often sift through. In his lecture 'Novel and Narrative', Frank Kermode has argued that none of the novelties of the *nouveau roman* were beyond the scope of the long narrative of the past: 'What we are learning about narrative may be, in a sense, new, but narrative was always potentially what we have now learned to think it, in so far as our thinking is right'.¹²⁴ This is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for our genre also. The historian in the historical novel, a character as old as *Waverley* itself, has long implied what Faulkner and Brecht now

¹²⁰ Tolstoy, p. 1404 (Epilogue, II, 1).

¹²¹ Achebe, p. 187 (Chapter 25).

¹²² William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 6.

¹²³ Faulkner, p. 83.

¹²⁴ Frank Kermode, *Novel and Narrative*, The Twenty-fourth W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture (Glasgow, 1972), p. 6.

underscore: that the temporal structures we impose on the past are *ad hoc*. In this way too, our genre has long been disturbing our truce with the historical world.

And this leads this chapter to one final point. Just as there is a parallel between writing a novel and writing history, so there is a parallel between hermeneutics and philosophy of history. In reading these long, broad, poly-chambered novels, in remembering their sub-plots while following their plots, in fitting together their Chinese boxes, in sensing their symbolic threads, in selecting which information to store and which to discard, we are engaged in something akin to historical activity. As we make our interpretations of historical novels, so we make ourselves more sensitive historians.

XII

The reader may be unhappy that this chapter ends there. The chapter has offered, admittedly, a description, an inductive survey of the genre, a survey which has followed Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances. It has not, however, offered a definition, a pithy, piquant answer to the question, 'What is an historical novel?'. It is perhaps necessary to justify, therefore, why it has offered the one thing and not the other.

First, the approach via family resemblances avoids a well-known impasse of genre theory. One cannot define a genre without studying members of that genre, but one cannot know that these are members of the genre until one has defined what the genre is. This chapter, however, chose *Waverley* as its 'Once upon a time' and thereafter proceeded not according to previous definitions of the genre but according to family resemblances. Tolstoy, for example, remarked that *War and Peace* was not a novel and still less an historical chronicle,¹²⁵ from which one may assume that he did not think it to be an historical novel either; S. B. Chandler has written that *The Betrothed* 'far surpasses the facile label of "historical novel"';¹²⁶ and John Bayley has claimed that *The Captain's Daughter* is 'no more a historical novel than is *War and Peace*'.¹²⁷ This chapter, however, has tried to turn the phrase 'historical novel' into something more than a 'facile label', and in so doing has hoped to demonstrate that all three of the above novels, and many more, are members of one and the same family. It has done this in the belief that the procedure can be maieutic — that it can shed new light on the ancestors because of their progeny and new light on the progeny because of their ancestors.

Second, the family metaphor rightly suggests both a far-flung web of family relations and a web which is still on the increase. This chapter is aware that it has portrayed neither all the relatives nor some of the recent additions to the family. Unlike a definition, however, a description cannot be invalidated either by further discoveries about the family or by further developments within the family. To

return to *The Blue Book* and to a formulation of Wittgenstein: a description of a game of chess is not incomplete just because someone invents a game which includes further pieces.¹²⁸

Above all, however, the family metaphor does justice to two phenomena peculiar to our genre: its intermarriage with the social novel and its gradual acceptance of the resultant offspring. This intermarriage, as hinted above, was brought about by Balzac, and its consequence must not be shirked: some of the family resemblances studied above in the family of the historical novel are now found also in the family of the social novel. Consider, by way of example, Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. This is a novel published in 1911 about Russian revolutionaries living in the Switzerland of 1911. Nevertheless, it contains journeys between Russia and Switzerland; the principal journeyer is a secret-agent; and the title itself introduces the eye motif, which lays great stress on the hermeneutic problem. Is the novel therefore an historical novel? The question is rendered more complex by the second phenomenon of gradual acceptance. As Conrad himself writes in the 1920 preface to *Under Western Eyes* (1911), such a social novel can, through the mere passing of the years, become accepted as 'already a sort of historical novel dealing with the past'.¹²⁹ One genre shades into another, and it is a defect in generic definition that it cannot make allowance for such shading, rather than a defect in our generic description that it does. As Wittgenstein remarked, the light from a reading lamp may have no sharp boundary, but it is not for that in any way defective.¹³⁰ Likewise, all good generic theory is fuzzy at the edges. 'Elegance is *not* what we are trying for'.¹³¹

The historical novel and the social novel are like two families, but like two families joined by intermarriage at a ceremony officiated over by Balzac. The result of this is that between *one particular* historical novel and *one particular* social novel there may perhaps be — for the Balzac reason or the Conrad reason — no difference whatsoever. Between the historical novel and the social novel, however, between the two families, the difference remains that in the family of the historical novel the topoi studied above recur with a frequency and with a density with which they do not recur in the social novel, or anywhere else.

So it is not the intention of this chapter to replace one definition of the historical novel by another. The trouble with previous definitions of the historical novel is not that they are necessarily bad definitions, but that they are definitions. The shortest appropriate answer to the question, 'What is an historical novel?' is that an historical novel is a novel which so resembles the above family of historical novels that it makes sense to describe it in those terms rather than in others.

But if that is not pithy or piquant enough, then it could perhaps be remembered that each of the above topoi has a connection with time. In particular, it has a connection with historical time in one or other of the two senses of that term stated by Heidegger. In history, however, as these opening chapters have tried to show, time is not a peripheral but a central issue. This is particularly true in modern

¹²⁵ Christian, p. 112.

¹²⁶ S. B. Chandler, *Alessandro Manzoni: The Story of a Spiritual Quest*, The Writers of Italy, 2 (Edinburgh, 1974), p. 128.

¹²⁷ John Bayley, *Tolstoy and the Novel* (London, 1966), p. 67.

¹²⁸ Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, pp. 19 and 77.

¹²⁹ Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes* (Harmondsworth, 1957), p. 7.

¹³⁰ Wittgenstein, p. 27.

¹³¹ Wittgenstein, p. 19.

philosophy of history. 'Putting it briefly', von Leyden has written, 'one might say that the characteristics of time have come to be looked upon as historical and those of history as temporal'.¹³² If, therefore, one wishes to study what the historical novel has to say about the past or about history — about *res gestae* or about *historia rerum gestarum* or about both — then one might do worse than study the above topoi.

And if it is a brief description of the historical novel that one wants, then one might do worse than recall the words of the medieval chronicler which so appropriately open perhaps the greatest of all historical novels, Manzoni's *The Betrothed*. The words describe our genre while defining something else: 'L'Historia si può veramente deffinire una guerra illustre contro il Tempo — History may be verilie defined as a mightie war against Time'. After all, what the historical novel offers its reader is time, and time again.

¹³² von Leyden, in *History and Theory*, 2, no. 3 (1963), 284.

3

HISTORICAL NOVEL OR HISTORICAL NOVELLE?

I

Seit Sir Walter auf dem Dudelsack historische Romane vorspielte, zwitschern auch die Deutschen diese Melodien, und die Mode will, daß auch die Novellen historisch-romantisch sein sollen. So muß nun in dem engen Raum einer solchen Novelle auch ein Stück der Welthistorie oder der Chronik aufgespielt werden.

Hauff's words of 1827¹ may be chronologically misleading: the 'historische Novelle' was a dictionary term by 1791² and Kleist's historical Novellen were first published in 1810. Nevertheless, Hauff, whose *Lichtenstein* (1826) is commonly termed Germany's first historical novel, does point to the principal quandary of the related genre and thus prompts the principal questions of this chapter. How much world-history can be squeezed into the historical Novelle? Is it not, as history and as philosophy of history, necessarily different from the historical novel? And can one not, therefore, learn much about the family of historical novels by studying this contrasting though related family of historical Novellen?

Now, the question of world-history and the historical Novelle is not just one of square pegs and round holes. For if the Novelle is defined — as it is in a dictionary of 1801 — as a 'kleinere Geschichtsdichtung'³ or — as it is in Goethe's renowned phrase of 1827 — as 'eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit',⁴ then every Novelle is, potentially, history of a kind. History, however, is a world of ideas about the past. Its criterion of explanation and truth is the coherence, the integration of that world.⁵ So if the historical Novelle portrays an event which has both occurred in the past and is yet untoward or unprecedented, then it must place the historian's coherent world in jeopardy. The Novelle has thus been well termed 'an hermeneutic gamble', a 'shock confrontation with marginal events'.⁶ A first justification of this chapter, therefore,

¹ A. Böttiger, 'Wilhelm Müller und Wilhelm Hauff', *Stuttgarter Morgenblatt*, 6 and 7 December 1827, in *Theorie und Kritik der deutschen Novelle von Wieland bis Musil*, edited by Karl Konrad Polheim, Deutsche Texte, 13 (Tübingen, 1970), pp. 58–60 (p. 60).

² Christian Friedrich Schwan, *Nouveau Dictionnaire de la Langue Française et Allemande* (Mannheim, 1791), in Polheim, pp. 2–3 (p. 3).

³ Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke* (Braunschweig, 1801), in Polheim, p. 27.

⁴ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, edited by H. H. Houben (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 177–78 (p. 178) (29 January 1827).

⁵ Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 113.

⁶ Martin Swales, *The German Novelle* (Princeton, 1977), p. 28.

is that the historical *Novelle* poses in challenging form questions of historical narrative and explanation.

A second justification, however, is that Hauff sniffed well the literary wind. For the *Novelle* achieved, it can be argued, an 'overwhelming dominance of the literary scene in Germany from the 1820s on'.⁷ Moreover, whilst in the *Novelle*, as Roy Pascal has written, 'German writers, including Romantics, could achieve masterpieces; in the novel there is failure after failure'.⁸ And as *Novelle* so historical *Novelle*. To ignore it would be to ignore much, and much good, in German historical fiction. The genre was practised, and notably practised, by Kleist, Gutzkow, Heyse and Storm, by Raabe, Keller, Meyer and Fontane.

The prime justification, however, is that suggested at the outset. Several writers considered here — and all of those considered in greater detail — write both historical novels and historical *Novellen* and become rather different writers in each. Consider Fontane. His historical novel, *Vor dem Sturm* (1878), portrays a well-known and recent past. It portrays that past as moulded by many men and institutions. It studies the whys and wherefores of that moulding. And its several strands justify the original sub-title 'Zeit- und Sittenbild aus dem Winter 12 auf 13'.⁹ Not so his historical *Novelle*, *Grete Minde*, written one year later. It portrays one wellnigh forgotten event at an unspecified date in the Reformation. It highlights one 'criminal' character and her near relatives. And its narrative Fontane called 'eine absolute Simplizitätssprache',¹⁰ unsuited to an explicit study of causation. So, as often, to turn from historical novel to historical *Novelle* is to forsake the historical thoroughfare for those mysterious byways, thickets and eots commonly ignored by the traveller. One contention of this chapter, therefore, is that there are two genres, historical novel and historical *Novelle*; that the above works are characteristic of them; that to criticize one in terms of the other is to do disservice to both; and that a study which does not allow¹¹ or does not analyse¹² the generic difference must explain why else, say, Fontane the historian changed so much, so swiftly.

It might be thought that the difference has already been stated: Grete's criminal act is 'eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit' and that's that. But as philosophy of history this is inadequate. Goethe's definition assumes as given an event which, for the historian, can be only an arbitrary excision. 'One historical event', Oakeshott reminds one, 'is distinguished from another by the flimsiest partition; there is nothing solid or absolute in their character. The historian is constantly to be found joining and separating them'.¹³ And just so in historical fiction. If Fontane wrote an

⁷ Swales, p. 5.

⁸ Roy Pascal, *The German Novel: Studies* (Manchester, 1956), p. 32.

⁹ Theodor Fontane, Letter to Ludwig Pietsch, 24 April 1880, in *Fontane-Blätter*, 2 (1969), Heft 1, pp. 42-43 (p. 42).

¹⁰ Theodor Fontane, Letter to Mete Fontane, 24 August 1882, in Theodor Fontane, *Briefe*, edited by Kurt Schreinert and Charlotte Jolles, 4 vols (Berlin, 1968-71), Volume II, *Briefe an die Tochter und an die Schwester*, pp. 45-47 (p. 46).

¹¹ Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore, 1971), p. xviii.

¹² Georg Lukács, *Werke*, Volume VI, *Probleme des Realismus III: Der historische Roman* (Neuwied, 1965), pp. 268-80 and 293-94.

¹³ Oakeshott, p. 122.

historical novel about the years 1812-13, Heyse wrote about the same years, and partly about the same events and themes, a fine historical *Novelle*, *Franz Alzeier: Eine Geschichte aus den Befreiungskriegen* (1863). Comparable is the case of Joseph Süß-Oppenheimer. He is the subject both of Hauff's historical *Novelle* *Jud Süß* (1827) and of *Jud Süß* (1925), an historical novel by Feuchtwanger. So the difference between historical novel and historical *Novelle* is not just a question of the event or events portrayed: it is a question of the interpretation of those events. Danto clarifies the issue:

To ask for the significance of an event, in the *historical* sense of the term, is to ask a question which can be answered only in the context of a *story*. The identical event will have a different significance in accordance with the story in which it is located or, in other words, in accordance with what different sets of *later* events it may be connected.¹⁴

The argument of this chapter is that historical novel and historical *Novelle* are two such differing stories; that their differing conventions favour differing philosophies of history; and that to inquire why a particular author or a particular period prefers one story to the other is to ask a question of importance.

II

The relationship between this chapter and its predecessor, therefore, is primarily a relationship of contrast. Such is the contrast, in fact, that the two chapters employ contrasting methods. Whereas the former chapter had first to ascertain the conventions of the historical novel and then to assess those conventions as philosophy of history, this subsequent chapter can state directly what the conventions of the historical *Novelle* are. They are a concentration on the individual event; a concentration on the untoward event; a narrative style akin to the chronicle; a turning-point within the narrative, as stressed by Tieck;¹⁵ a leit-motif within the narrative — the 'Falke' of Heyse;¹⁶ a major role allotted to Fate or Fortune; a 'Rahmen' or narrator's encasing framework; and, this chapter will add, borrowing a phrase from Frank Kermode, a pronounced 'sense of an ending'.¹⁷ Historical *Novellen*, in other words, are written in accord with — and at times in explicit reference to — the well-known conventions of the *Novelle* at large. To write an historical *Novelle* is so to interpret the past that it is conducive to some or all of these narrative methods.

And it is these narrative methods which give the present chapter its purpose. For not only are many of them at odds with the historical novel: some of them are also, to many philosophers, at odds with history altogether.

¹⁴ A. C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 11.

¹⁵ Ludwig Tieck, 'Vorbericht', *Ludwig Tiecks Schriften* (Berlin, 1829), XI, in Polheim, pp. 74-77 (p. 76).

¹⁶ Paul Heyse, 'Einleitung', *Deutscher Novellenschatz*, edited by Paul Heyse and H. Kurz (Munich, 1871), I, in Polheim, pp. 141-49 (pp. 148-49).

¹⁷ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford, 1967).

III

Novellen portray 'einzelne Geschichten'.¹⁸ On that, writers are united, from Friedrich Schlegel through Goethe to Musil. But since in the continuum of the past no event is strictly isolable, a better description of the historical Novelle is perhaps that of Schleiermacher: 'ein herausgerissenes historisches Ereignis'.¹⁹ Now, without beginnings and endings there would be no stories, so one cannot object to this 'snatching out'. One may object, however, to the use to which it is put.

A familiar use is the study of the 'decisive moment'. This is exemplified by C. F. Meyer in *Die Versuchung des Pescara* (1887). Pescara is the leading Italian general of 1525, whose temptation is to desert his lord, the Austrian emperor, thus changing the fortunes of Italy and decisively altering the balance of power between Austria and Spain. In portraying this moment, Meyer employs three techniques characteristic of the historical Novelle. He telescopes into days the events of months.²⁰ He second simplifies the conflict between tempter and tempted: in a letter to the author and critic, Rodenberg, Meyer acknowledges that Pescara was 'wohl . . . tiefer in die Verschwörung verwickelt'.²¹ And finally he repeatedly emphasizes the moment's momentousness: it is an 'ungeheure Entscheidung'; the 'Weltlage' is in jeopardy; and even the comparison with the temptation of Christ, implicit in the title, is not unstressed in the text.²² Insight into this decisive moment is a legitimate privilege of Meyer the historian, but he oversteps one limit of historical fiction by allowing this same insight to his characters. Pescara's tempter, the Machiavellian Morone, exclaims:

'Mein Pescara, welche Sternstellung über dir und für dich! Die Sache reif und reif du selbst! Eine entscheidende Zeit, ein verzweifelter Ringen, Götter und Titanen, Freiheit sich aufbäumend gegen Zwingherrschaft, die Welt heute noch Bewegung und Fluß, morgen vielleicht zur Lava erstarrend!'²³

And Pescara, while he is overcoming the temptation, makes clear that he too shares this insight. Yet in experience there are two things: moments of decision and decisive moments. Of moments of decision one is aware, often sharply aware, as and when they occur. But of decisive moments one can be sure, if ever, only long after they have happened. Carlyle expressed it sonorously in 1830:

Our clock strikes when there is a change from hour to hour; but no hammer in the Horloge of Time peals through the universe when there is a change from Era to Era. Men understand not what is among their hands.²⁴

¹⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks 1797-1801*, edited by Hans Eichner (London, 1957), no. 1946, in Polheim, p. 8.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'Der Roman und die poetische Form', *Ästhetik*, edited by R. Odebrecht (Berlin and Leipzig, 1931), pp. 275-78, in Polheim, pp. 22-26 (p. 22).

²⁰ Gustav Beckers, *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: Die Versuchung des Pescara*, Dichtung und Wirklichkeit, 28 (Frankfurt on Main and Berlin, 1965), p. 191.

²¹ Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Letter to Julius Rodenberg, 15 June 1888, in *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer und Julius Rodenberg: Ein Briefwechsel*, edited by August Langmesser (Berlin, 1918), pp. 269-70 (p. 269).

²² Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Sämtliche Werke in zwei Bänden*, edited by Erwin Laaths (Munich, 1968), I, 722, 723, and 725.

²³ Meyer, p. 739.

²⁴ Thomas Carlyle, 'On History', *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, 30 vols, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays II* (London, 1899), pp. 83-95 (p. 88).

The trouble with Meyer's Novelle is that his characters do understand what is 'among their hands'. In such confusions of knowledge about the past with knowledge in the past the historical Novelle becomes unhistorical.

The 'einzelne Geschichte' of the historical Novelle, however, can be put to more delicate, more telling use. Far more delicate, for example, is *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* (1855) by Mörike. Mozart is here interpreted as a man of 'außerordentliche Zwischenfälle' and 'kecke Stegreifsprünge',²⁵ as a man who lives the Baroque philosophy of *carpe diem*: "'Allmittelst geht und rennt und saust das Leben hin — Herr Gott!'", he cries, "'Bedenkt man's recht, es möcht' einem der Angstschweiß ausbrechen!'"²⁶ So it is in keeping that on several spurs of the moment he should break off his journey, compose a missing fragment to his opera *Don Giovanni*, and gaily entertain his self-elected host. And since these are the only events portrayed, the work is formally harmonious: just as Mozart conjures his gaiety out of next-to-nothing, so does Mörike, in Hebbel's words, evolve Mozart's world 'out of a grain of mustard seed'.²⁷

More telling than Meyer, on the other hand, is *Die schwarze Galeere* by Raabe. This centres on one breakneck battle and rescue in 1599, on one brief triumph of the Netherlanders during their bitter suppression by Spain. Here the 'einzelne Geschichte' is in service of a different theme: that even a small blow counts if it is struck at the plinth of tyranny. And if one recalls the source from which this account was 'snatched out' — Schiller's history of the revolt of the Netherlands, as continued by Karl Curths²⁸ — then another feature of the genre becomes clear: for every historical Novelle, for every 'herausgerissenes Ereignis', there is any number of other stories in which the same event could have assumed another — perhaps clearer, perhaps quite different — significance. Thus Meyer hints at the frailty of the Holy See and the incipient Reformation; Mörike hints at the imminent end of the Rococo Age. But such 'different sets of later events', in Danto's phrase, are the business not of the historical Novelle but of the historical novel. It is the historical novel which can portray time the sustaining continuum or time the refreshing river. The historical Novelle is a genre not for *chronos* but for *kairos*.

IV

As history, therefore, the historical Novelle is noteworthy for what it excludes. This may seem an unhelpful statement. For all history excludes: all history is an account of the past and could not be an account of the past unless it omitted some of the past. Nevertheless, the Novelle has been characterized by Friedrich Schlegel as 'eine

²⁵ Eduard Mörike, *Sämtliche Werke*, third edition, edited by Herbert G. Göpfert (Munich, 1964), p. 1043.

²⁶ Mörike, p. 1028.

²⁷ E. K. Bennett, *A History of the German Novelle*, revised and continued by H. M. Waidson (Cambridge, 1961), p. 157.

²⁸ Hans Löwe, 'Nachwort', Wilhelm Raabe, *Die schwarze Galeere und andere Erzählungen* (Munich, n.d.), pp. 179-85 (p. 183).

Geschichte . . . , die, streng genommen, nicht zur Geschichte gehört'²⁹ and by A. W. Schlegel as 'eine Geschichte außer der Geschichte'.³⁰ For the historical Novelle too, this chapter argues, these characterizations have much truth.

An extreme example may highlight the general tendency of a genre, and such an example is 'Unverhofftes Wiedersehen' from Hebel's *Schatzkästlein des Rheinischen Hausfreundes* (1811). A young miner in Swedish Falun is buried alive in 1759, on the eve of his wedding. Fifty years on, his body, preserved by chemicals, is brought to the surface. The only villager to recognize him is a wizened woman, his old fiancée, who in all the meantime has remained faithful to him. And here is how Hebel tells that meantime:

Unterdessen wurde die Stadt Lissabon in Portugal durch ein Erdbeben zerstört, und der siebenjährige Krieg ging vorüber, und Kaiser Franz I. starb, und der Jesuitenorden wurde aufgehoben, und Polen geteilt, und die Kaiserin Maria Theresia starb, und der Struensee wurde hingerichtet, Amerika wurde frei, und die vereinigte französische und spanische Macht konnte Gibraltar nicht erobern. Die Türken schlossen den General Stein in der Veteraner Höhle in Ungarn ein, und der Kaiser Joseph starb auch. Der König Gustav von Schweden eroberte russisch Finnland, und die französische Revolution und der lange Krieg fing an, und der Kaiser Leopold II. ging auch ins Grab. Napoleon eroberte Preußen, und die Engländer bombardierten Kopenhagen, und die Ackerleute säeten und schnitten. Der Müller mahlte, und die Schmiede hämmerten, und die Bergleute gruben nach den Metalladern in ihrer unterirdischen Werkstatt. Als aber die Bergleute in Falun im Jahre 1809. . . .³¹

Now, for the historical novelist — for Alexis, Cooper, Hugo, Dickens or Raabe — precisely these 'major historical events' were the attraction. But in passing them over, or passing them by, Hebel is characteristic of the historical Novellist. Raabe's *Das letzte Recht* (1862) takes place during the Spanish War of Succession: it apologizes for scarcely mentioning it.³² Fontane's *Ellernklipp* (1881) takes place during the Seven Years War: it is untouched by it. And even in Grass's *Katz und Maus* (1961), the hero's ability to swim can loom larger than Second World War battles: 'Große Ereignisse bewegten damals die Welt, doch Mahlkes Zeitrechnung hieß: Vor dem Freischwimmen, nach dem Freischwimmen'.³³ The generic cause of this is clear: the Novelle must be 'unerhört' in the once common sense of 'unknown'. And unknown too are the Novelle characters: with the exception of Meyer *passim*, of Büchner's Lenz, Mörike's Mozart and possibly Keller's Hadlaub, there is scarcely any historical Novelle figure of whom the reader has antecedent information. To go from historical novel to historical Novelle is like going from Madame Tussaud's to some provincial portrait gallery. In the historical novel, the forgotten many surround the

remembered few: in the historical Novelle, the forgotten encounter the equally forgotten.

This circumscribes the historical Novelle's contribution to history. For an historical statement, it has been argued, is an answer to an historical question of the type 'What happened then?'. And the answer given depends on the 'varying amounts of antecedent information' which the questioner has about that then.³⁴ The reader of historical fiction is such a questioner and when reading an historical novel — Scott's account of 1745, Cooper's account of American colonization, Tolstoy's account of 1812 — he knows already, or thinks he knows already, what happened, why, how and to whom. The historical novel, therefore, can correct or increment previous historical accounts: in particular, it can correct by incrementing the whom, the how, and the why. And therefore, although, in Trevelyan's words, 'historical fiction is not history', nevertheless 'it springs from history and reacts upon it'.³⁵ Scott especially incremented history with 'everything that is intimate, everything that is passionate, everything also that is of trivial or daily occurrence, all the colour and all the infinite variety of the past'.³⁶ But since with the historical Novelle the 'antecedent information' is almost always nil, it can rarely correct history. It can, however, and often valuably does, add to the 'infinite variety of the past'. Its frequent claim is not 'This is what really happened', but 'This also happened'. It is, as Keller called one of his own historical Novellen, *Der Landvogt von Greifensee* (1878), 'eine ergänzende Erzählung'.³⁷ Even when antecedent information is available, as in *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* or in Lukas Hartmann's more recent *Mozart im Hurenhaus* (1976),³⁸ the historical Novelle still tends to be the surprise local witness to the Historical Assizes.

V

Both this local history and the simple, additive sentences of Hebel recall a further aspect of Novelle theory: the Novelle as chronicle. 'Hier steht der Geschichte die Chronik gegenüber', writes Gutzkow, 'den Sitten des Landes die Sitten eines Orts, den Sitten einer Zeit einzelne Moden, den Stimmungen einer Zeit eine akute Krankheit derselben. . .'.³⁹ Such statements have clear relevance to historical Novellen, and it is hence not surprising that many are indeed subtitled 'Aus einer alten Chronik',⁴⁰ 'Nach einer altmärkischen Chronik',⁴¹ 'Einer Sienesischen Chronik nacherzählt'.⁴² But what is the difference between chronicle and history?

²⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Nachricht von den poetischen Werken des Johannes Boccaccio', *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Volume II, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I*, edited by Hans Eichner (Munich, 1967), pp. 386–96, in Polheim, pp. 9–14 (p. 12).

³⁰ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst III: Geschichte der roman-tischen Literatur*, edited by J. Minor (Heilbronn, 1884), pp. 242–48, in Polheim, pp. 16–21 (p. 21).

³¹ Johann Peter Hebel, *Werke*, edited by Paul Alverdes (Munich, 1960), p. 137.

³² Wilhelm Raabe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 20 vols, Volume IX/1, *Erzählungen*, edited by Karl Hoppe, Hans Oppermann and Hans Plischke (Göttingen, 1962), p. 7.

³³ Günter Grass, *Katz und Maus: Eine Novelle* (Neuwied, 1961), p. 22.

³⁴ Danto, p. 112.

³⁵ G. M. Trevelyan, *Clio, a Muse and Other Essays* (London, 1931), p. 88.

³⁶ Trevelyan, p. 90.

³⁷ *Gottfried Kellers Werke*, edited by Gustav Steiner, 8 vols, Volume V, *Züricher Novellen, Aufsätze* (Basle, 1926), p. 135.

³⁸ Lukas Hartmann, *Mozart im Hurenhaus: Geschichten* (Bern, 1976).

³⁹ Karl Gutzkow, *Vom Baum der Erkenntnis: Denksprüche* (Stuttgart, 1869), pp. 209–11, in Polheim, pp. 94–95 (p. 94).

⁴⁰ Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*.

⁴¹ Theodor Fontane, *Grete Minde*.

⁴² Paul Heyse, *Nino und Maso*.

This is an old bone of contention. A traditional view of the difference is expressed by W. H. Walsh. Chronicle, he argues, is a 'plain narrative', simply a 'description of what happened': history, however, is a 'significant narrative' which uncovers the intelligibility of those happenings.⁴³ It would follow that chronicle is 'a mere skeleton of a history' and that 'the historical ideal is always to get away from the stage of chronicle and attain that of history itself'.⁴⁴ This view is widespread and is found also in literary history. Northrop Frye has written:

History began as chronicle; but the difference between the old chronicler and the modern historian is that to the chronicler the events he recorded were also the *structure* of his history, whereas the historian sees these events as historical phenomena, to be connected within a conceptual framework not only broader but different in shape from them.⁴⁵

One's major objection to this is that no historian ever began with 'what happened', with 'events'. He begins with a system of criteria by which he selects which events are his historical events. Therefore, even in chronicle, recorded events are not the structure, for there is a structure prior to the event's recording. And therefore the difference between chronicle and history is not one of *this* kind, indeed it is not a difference of *kind* at all. A preferable version of the difference is found in Danto:

the difference between a chronicle and a proper piece of history is the difference between a well-supported, in contrast with a poorly supported, narrative. ... it is a wholly quantitative difference between degrees of confirmation or amounts of support.⁴⁶

Now, if this is the difference, then it is most relevant also to the difference between historical Novelle and historical novel. For the Novelle, it is often claimed, contains 'ein Unauflösbares'.⁴⁷ A. W. Schlegel and others could counsel the Novellist: 'nur bei dem Außerordentlichen und Einzigem verweilen, aber auch dieses nicht motivierend zergliedern, sondern es eben positiv hinstellen, und Glauben dafür fordern'.⁴⁸ And so common was this that Grillparzer could distinguish between novel and Novelle as between a study of causes and a portrayal of effects.⁴⁹ The historical Novelle, therefore, would indeed be 'a poorly supported narrative'. And this chapter will argue that a major difference between historical novel and historical Novelle lies in both the amount and type of causation which each contains and allows.

Take *Michael Kohlhaas* (1810) for example. The example may seem strange, for Kohlhaas's story is precisely a long concatenation of events. He is swindled of two horses and in his revenge and the law's avenging of that revenge, the horses are

⁴³ W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, third (revised) edition (London, 1967), pp. 32-33.

⁴⁴ Walsh, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 15.

⁴⁶ Danto, pp. 123-24.

⁴⁷ Tieck, 'Vorbericht', in Polheim, pp. 74-77 (p. 76).

⁴⁸ A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst III: Geschichte der romantischen Literatur*, in Polheim, pp. 16-21 (p. 19).

⁴⁹ Franz Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Peter Frank and Karl Pörnbacher, 4 vols (Munich, 1963-64), III, 291-92 (p. 292).

transformed from a personal into a regional, a national, and then an international issue, becoming finally an 'Angelegenheit gesamten heiligen römischen Reichs'.⁵⁰ The story does indeed reveal, in Hebbel's fine description, 'die gräßliche Tiefe des Lebens in der Fläche'.⁵¹ Nevertheless, this concatenation has weaknesses, weaknesses characteristic of historical Novellen. First, the narrative is purely sequential, allowing no explanatory flashback. Second, it frequently uses the device 'es traf sich, daß', which again foreshortens explanation. And third, the Kleistian sentence has been well described as one 'in dem die konsekutiven und finalen, weniger die kausalen, Verbindungen vorherrschen':⁵² event E-2 follows event E-1. not because E-1 causes E-2, but because E-2 is the sufficient condition for E-1. Now, Danto has written that:

We cannot readily assimilate the concept of cause to the concept of necessary and sufficient conditions unless we are prepared to say that causes may succeed effects. So it is difficult to suppose that E-2 *makes* E-1 happen. But at the very least it permits a *description* of E-1 under which E-1 could not have been witnessed.⁵³

And that is the case for Kohlhaas. When he bred his horses, he could not know he would be swindled. When he was swindled, he could not know the law would not support him. When the law did not support him, he could not know this would lead to his wife's death. But each of these subsequent events permits, even compels, a different description of those horses. So the major cause in this Novelle is the lack of predictable causation: Kleist indeed praises Kohlhaas for 'ein richtiges, mit der gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt schon bekanntes Gefühl'.⁵⁴

Because of this eventful narrative, Eberhard Lämmert has compared Kleist to Scott, claiming that 'Das Verhältnis zur Geschichte liegt beim Geschehensroman am offensten zutage'.⁵⁵ It is worth juxtaposing, however, *Michael Kohlhaas* (1810) and Scott's *Waverley* (1814). Both, after all, portray an uprising quelled. But if Scott tells his readers beforehand the family, the economic and the political motives of the insurgents, and after five chapters apologizes for 'plaguing them so long', insisting that 'my plan requires that I should explain the motives on which its action proceeded',⁵⁶ Kleist does almost none of this. And the sub-titles tell why. 'Tis Sixty Years Since' justly evokes the historian's meantime, his hindsight, to which 'Aus einer alten Chronik' lays no claim. For as Goethe said, 'Eine Chronik schreibt nur derjenige, dem die Gegenwart wichtig ist'.⁵⁷ And always our understanding of the

⁵⁰ Heinrich von Kleist, *Gesamtausgabe*, 6 vols, Volume IV, *Erzählungen*, edited by Helmut Sembdner (Munich, 1964), p. 78.

⁵¹ Friedrich Hebbel, 'Über Theodor Körner und Heinrich von Kleist', in *Heinrich von Kleists Nachruhm: Eine Wirkungsgeschichte in Dokumenten*, edited by Helmut Sembdner (Bremen, 1967), pp. 640-41 (p. 641).

⁵² Hans Joachim Kreutzer, *Die dichterische Entwicklung Heinrichs von Kleist: Untersuchungen zu seinen Briefen und zu Chronologie und Aufbau seiner Werke*, Philologische Studien und Quellen, 41 (Berlin, 1968), p. 252.

⁵³ Danto, p. 155.

⁵⁴ Kleist, IV, 11.

⁵⁵ Eberhard Lämmert, *Bauformen des Erzählens* (Stuttgart, 1955), p. 40.

⁵⁶ Walter Scott, *Waverley*; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since (London, 1973), p. 89 (Chapter 5).

⁵⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, edited by Ernst Beutler, Artemis-Ausgabe, 24 vols (Zürich, 1950-54), IX, 530.

present and the past is limited by our ignorance of the future and the meantime. Thus if history is 'a study of causes',⁵⁸ then the historical novel can claim to be historical, but the historical Novelle can scarcely do so.

Because of its loose concatenation, the Novelle is often compared to another historical genre: the ballad. For the ballad too, in Herder's famed description, is a thing of 'Sprünge und Würfe'.⁵⁹ So it is not surprising that authors like Meyer and Fontane wrote both historical Novellen and ballads. In 'Ein Stück Autokritik' (1882), indeed, Fontane laments that his historical Novellen are so 'balladesk',⁶⁰ and in his historical novel allows his characters to question the ballad's 'sprungweise Vorgehen'.⁶¹ His literary self-awareness clarifies further our distinction: to compare historical Novelle to historical novel is often like comparing 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' (1854) to Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Reason Why* (1953).

VI

This is why the historical Novelle, for author, reader and character, is a 'hermeneutic gamble'. For in the abeyance or apparent absence of familiar causes, other causal explanations must be found. Pescara's situation is explained by a contemporary, Guicciardin, as 'eine jener verdammt feinen Zwickmühlen, wie sie der Zufall oder ein Besserer in der Weltgeschichte anlegt'.⁶² And if to contingency and divine will one adds Fate, then the three most common causes in historical Novellen are named. But it is here that philosophy of history and historical Novelle offer each other the greatest challenge. For is any of these causes a genuinely historical cause?

An historical Novelle of divine will is Raabe's *Das letzte Recht* (1862). This 'final justice' befalls the official executioner of a German township, Rothenburg. Having so exploited the letter of the law as to gain great wealth and the town's finest house, he is finally buried alive as that house collapses on him. The townsfolk interpret this as God's judgement and Raabe himself concludes: 'Zu merken ist, daß alle Menschen und alle Sachen in dieser Welt einen Augenblick haben, in welchem ihnen das letzte Recht gegeben wird'.⁶³ Comparable is Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's *Die Judenbuche* (1842): Friedrich Mergel murders a Jew, escapes detection, spends long years of retribution in Turkish slavery, and finally returns home to hang himself from the tree beneath which he committed his crime. The tree, meanwhile, has been inscribed with the words: 'Wenn du dich diesem Orte nahest, so wird es dir ergehen, wie du mir getan hast'.⁶⁴ With such histories, however, the philosophers make short

⁵⁸ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 87.

⁵⁹ *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Bernhard Suphan, 33 vols (Berlin, 1877-1913), V, 197 and 185-86.

⁶⁰ Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Edgar Groß, Kurt Schreinert and Charlotte Jolles (Munich, 1959-), Volume XXI/1, *Literarische Essays und Studien: Erster Teil*, edited by Kurt Schreinert (1963), p. 496.

⁶¹ Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke*, Volume I, *Vor dem Sturm*, edited by Edgar Groß (1959), p. 344 (Chapter 43 or III, 7).

⁶² Meyer, I, 702-03.

⁶³ Raabe, p. 58.

⁶⁴ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Clemens Heselhaus, second edition (Munich, 1955), p. 936.

shrift. For if God caused anything in the past, then he caused everything, and if he caused everything, then he is the rational explanation for no one thing. "God in history", Oakeshott concludes,

is, then, a contradiction, a meaningless phrase. . . . Where in history he is taken to be a cause, nothing has been said, and nothing remains to be said.⁶⁵

And for contingency the philosophers can say equally little. Contingency or chance is, however, for many historians, including Marxists, a valid historical cause. Its chief advocate, J. B. Bury, even claims in his programmatic piece 'Cleopatra's Nose' that 'the course of history seems . . . to be marked at every stage by contingencies, some of greater, some of smaller import'.⁶⁶ But it must be pointed out that a past caused by chance is not a past without cause: not simply because chance is the cause, but because chance itself is defined, in Bury's own words, as 'the valuable collision of two or more independent chains of causes'.⁶⁷ Therefore chance, like divine will, is an historical cause within which other causes are subsumed or suppressed. And therefore an historical Novelle which invokes either cause can be accused of such suppression. Witness *Die Judenbuche*. For it is sub-titled, and justly subtitled, 'Ein Sittengemälde aus dem gebirgigen Westfalen'. And in her portrayal of the sullen, stubborn, avaricious, but deeply Catholic Münsterländer, the authoress offers for Friedrich's crime and return ample explanation, explanation to which, however, divine retribution is preferred. The philosopher, moreover, would go further. For if the historian's aim is coherence, is integration, is 'a smooth narrative in which every event falls as it were into its natural place and belongs to an intelligible whole',⁶⁸ then any contingency, any collision, any 'es traf sich, daß' will be a jolt. And history, which is man's attempt rationally to account for change, contains jolts only when its preparatory groundwork is inadequate. Oakeshott summarizes:

The notion of the accidental is contradictory of the whole character of the historical world. . . . History knows nothing of the fortuitous or the unexpected; in history there is nothing extraordinary, because there is nothing ordinary.⁶⁹

And so much, it would seem, for the historical Novelle, for its 'unerhörte Begebenheit', its 'hermeneutic gamble' and all. But no. For historical fiction is always two things — history and experience: history for its author, experience for his characters. Hence what to the author-historian should have been an explicable occurrence, is to the character-eye-witness a genuine contingency. Now, contingency is defined by W. B. Gallie as something recalcitrant to explanation, something which 'gets under our intellectual defences'.⁷⁰ Therefore, he argues:

⁶⁵ Oakeshott, p. 127.

⁶⁶ J. B. Bury, *Selected Essays* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 66.

⁶⁷ Bury, p. 61.

⁶⁸ Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, p. 34.

⁶⁹ Oakeshott, pp. 139-40.

⁷⁰ W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London, 1964), p. 30.

The unforeseeable disaster, the extreme of contingency, has the effect of at first creating a complete discontinuity, a kind of logical void: there is a loss of old bearings, old values, old continuities and predictabilities in conduct.⁷¹

Moreover, he correctly remarks, contingencies are more acceptable in some stories than in others. And since, as is well known, the *Novelle* is dominated by the 'Laune des Zufalls',⁷² since contingency is the 'Regent in der *Novelle*',⁷³ his words are most apposite here. Indeed, it is often through its contingencies that the historical *Novelle* sheds most light on past bearings and past values.

A fine example of this is *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (1810). For the earthquake casts hero and heroine into just such a 'logical void'. At the outset they are both awaiting execution for the crime of fornication. But when fortuitously freed by the earthquake and among the survivors, they are warmly accepted back into the community which was about to reject them:

Wenn sie sich mit so vieler Vertraulichkeit und Güte behandelt sahen, so wußten sie nicht, was sie von der Vergangenheit denken sollten, vom Richtplatze, von dem Gefängnisse, und der Glocke; und ob sie bloß davon geträumt hätten? (IV, 137)

And in the valley outside Santiago where the refugees gather, old values and old conduct are indeed abandoned:

in der Tat schien . . . der menschliche Geist selbst, wie eine schöne Blume, aufzugehen. Auf den Feldern, so weit das Auge reichte, sah man Menschen von allen Ständen durcheinander liegen, Fürsten und Bettler, Matronen und Bäuerinnen, Staatsbeamte und Tagelöhner, Klosterherren und Klosterfrauen: einander bemitleiden, sich wechselseitig Hilfe reichen, von dem, was sie zur Erhaltung ihres Lebens gerettet haben mochten, freudig mitteilen, als ob das allgemeine Unglück alles, was ihm entronnen war, zu einer Familie gemacht hätte. (IV, 138)

This new Paradise is lost, however, in the hermeneutic gamble. The lovers interpret the earthquake as 'eine Wohltat, wie der Himmel noch keine über sie verhängt hatte' (IV, 138): but the priests read it as divine wrath, wrath which can be assuaged only by the swift and brutal massacre of the lovers themselves. This plot is repeated, but with a positive conclusion, in *Die Marquise von O.* (1810). Here the heroine's unexpected pregnancy and her protestations of innocence lead first to family outrage but then to family outrage at its being outraged. Two cries of her mother characterize their change from old bearings and old conduct. She too finds her daughter's protestations a 'logical void', 'ein Märchen von der Umwälzung der Weltordnung' (IV, 111): some months later, however, she declares, "'Ich biete der ganzen Welt Trotz; ich will keine andere Ehre mehr, als deine Schande'" (IV, 123). So in each story Kleist uses a contingency both to portray and to question past values. And in each he portrays men contending with that old conundrum: how can one intellectually accept contingencies when contingencies are by definition intellectually unacceptable?

⁷¹ Gallie, p. 40.

⁷² Karl Gutzkow, *Vom Baum der Erkenntnis: Denksprüche*, in Polheim, p. 94.

⁷³ Benno von Wiese, *Novelle*, Sammlung Metzler, 27 (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 9.

To this conundrum historical *Novellen* offer one last solution, and both heroines grasp it: both describe what happens as their 'Schicksal' (IV, 114 and 143). But this term, though frequent in historical *Novellen*, deserves only summary treatment here. For when used as an historical cause, 'Schicksal' is no more or less historical than divine will. And when used in such expressions as "'Überlassen Sie uns unserm Schicksale!'" (IV, 143), it is merely a colourful synonym for the course of events. Because when any historical fact first becomes an historical fact, by entering an historical story, it becomes necessary. Therefore every historical fact is necessary, and therefore, *pace* C. F. Meyer, no one fact can be more 'schicksalhaft' than any other, for between the importance of necessities one cannot distinguish. It follows also that to describe any historical fact as 'Schicksal' is tautological. 'Words like "fatal", "destined", "doom"', writes Danto deflatingly, merely 'dramatize what is an essential fact about the historical organization of the Past'.⁷⁴

So the historical *Novelle* not only foreshortens causation: the causation it does allow is often unhistorical. And to talk of historical events which have no inner causes is to invoke one final challenge: that of Collingwood. For his philosophy of history distinguishes between the 'outside' and the 'inside' of events: between, say, Caesar's crossing the Rubicon and his intention in crossing it. Collingwood continues:

The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other. He is investigating not mere events (where by a mere event I mean one which has only an outside and no inside) but actions, and an action is the unity of the outside and inside of an event.⁷⁵

It follows that all history is, first, 'the history of thought' and second 'the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind'.⁷⁶ Now, for historical novels this is a fine justification; for they can and do re-enact the Highlanders' thoughts before the '45, or Kutuzov's night anxieties on the retreat from Moscow. But by this same criterion, earthquakes and unwitting pregnancies are not history at all. Nor is the portrayal of Friedrich Mergel in *Die Judenbuche*: E. K. Bennett rightly finds no re-enactment of Friedrich's thought, 'no account of the process of remorse which goes on within him and drives him to suicide'.⁷⁷ Furthermore, historical *Novellen* frequently portray actions as if they were events, by likening them to Nature — as does Keller, when he begins *Ursula* (1878), his tale of the Swiss Reformation, with the words: 'Wenn die Religionen sich wenden, so ist es, wie wenn die Berge sich auftun'.⁷⁸ Yet one cannot claim that the historical novel records actions and distortions of a 'Wiedertäuferin' in love with one of Zwingli's soldiers. Moreover, if the Santiago lovers call the earthquake divine favour, if the marchioness calls her pregnancy fate, if the burghers of Rothenburg cry "'Gottes Gericht! Gottes

⁷⁴ Danto, p. 168.

⁷⁵ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), p. 213.

⁷⁶ Collingwood, p. 215.

⁷⁷ Bennett, p. 133.

⁷⁸ Keller, p. 326.

Gericht!'", if finally in Keller's *Hadlaub* (1878), the tale of the Minnesang poet, life is compared successively to a 'Heerzug', a 'Flut', to 'Fortuna' and 'Orkus',⁷⁹ then these are re-enactments of past thought, are re-enactments of the medieval world picture, are valid history. Thus at those very moments when it is least historical, the historical Novelle can be historical *also*, by re-enacting the unhistorical thought of the past. Such can be, but rarely is, the fusion of form and content in this genre.

But the dialogue between genre and philosopher is not over. For Collingwood is surely wrong to say that history records only actions. If it did, it could not fully tell the story of Pompeii or of Bangladesh. Of course, there is Pliny's letter about Vesuvius and no doubt there are accounts of the Bangladesh floods. But these are reactions to past events: they do not transform those events into actions. And this objection is of importance here because in historical Novellen natural disasters come thick and fast. There is one earthquake. There are three medieval plagues — in Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne* (1842), Stifter's *Granit* (1849) and Storm's *Ein Fest auf Haderslevhuus* (1885). And there are countless deaths, unexpected and unpremeditated. So one merit of the genre is to suggest a narrowness in the philosopher's concept of history. A preferable concept is that of W. H. Walsh. History's main concern, he too argues, 'is with human experiences and actions': nevertheless, 'history records not merely what human beings did and suffered, but also a considerable number of *natural events* in the past — earthquakes, floods, droughts and the like', although 'its interest in these events is strictly subsidiary'.⁸⁰

'Strictly subsidiary'. The words underscore two major themes of this chapter. First, that the historical Novelle, when it is history, is mostly marginal history. Second, that this marginality is often due to a concern less for historical causes than for their effects.

VII

Immer wird sie die Verschiedenheit der Motive und Anlässe abschwächen, um auf Kosten der *causae* die *effectus* monumental, nämlich vorbildlich und nachahmungswürdig, hinzustellen...⁸¹

The words are Nietzsche's. They describe not the historical Novelle but 'monumental history'. The affinity, however, is not accidental, for the two are akin, and the second section of *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (1874) is the best commentary yet written on the historical Novelle.

Monumental history, writes Nietzsche, seeks 'Vorbilder, Lehrer, Tröster' (I, 219). And from such figures it requires only 'das Monogramm ihres eigensten Wesens, ein Werk, eine Tat, eine seltene Erleuchtung, eine Schöpfung' (I, 221). For the affinity, therefore, three reasons have already been given. The historical Novelle also often seeks exemplary figures: witness Pescara and Meyer in general. It too can

⁷⁹ Keller, pp. 26, 63, 88 and 96.

⁸⁰ Walsh, p. 31.

⁸¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, edited by Karl Schlechta (Munich, 1966), I, 222.

be content with one deed: witness *Die schwarze Galeere*. And if it contains Heyse's 'Falke' or leit-motif, then it has precisely a 'Monogramm': witness Gotthelf's black spider or the black galley itself, a leit-motif in both its frequent recurrence and its embodiment of Raabe's theme — the stealthy search for freedom through the night of oppression.

But there is a further reason. Monumental history is 'ein Protest gegen den Wechsel der Geschlechter und die Vergänglichkeit'. Its motto reads: 'das, was einmal vermochte, den Begriff "Mensch" weiter auszuspannen und schöner zu erfüllen, das muß auch ewig vorhanden sein, um dies ewig zu vermögen' (I, 221 and 220). Now, to such timeless history also the historical Novelle is well suited, since it cares little for its temporal locus: Raabe is exceptional when, in both *Else von der Tanne* (1865) and *Das letzte Recht*, he shows how the prevailing wretchedness and bloodiness of the world has repercussions in the smallest hamlet.⁸² The genre's normal a-temporality is both better characterized and well exploited by Gutzkow's *Der Sadduzäer von Amsterdam* (1834). For the sadducee, Uriel Acosta, attracts Gutzkow in two ways. First, because he is a 'sadducee', a free-thinking Jewish historian. And as that familiar figure, the historian in historical fiction, his history is itself monumental: religion, he argues, should cast off 'das historische Gewand', should return to such timeless models as Pythagoras, Moses, Socrates or Jesus.⁸³ Second, however, because in a further sense too, Acosta makes monumental history. When his free thought leads to an extorted, humiliating recantation and then to suicide, Uriel becomes himself a model for his nephew, the young Baruch Spinoza:

Baruch sah man oft an seines unglücklichen Oheims endlicher Freistatt. Aus der Erinnerung an diesen teuren Dulder schöpfte er sich die Kraft zu den Leiden, die auch ihm diese von den Menschen verunstaltete Erde zu tragen beschieden hatte.⁸⁴

And as Spinoza, so Gutzkow: during his own religious struggles in the 1830s, he no doubt drew strength from both predecessors. So the historical Novellist may, after all, be concerned for 'sets of later events'. But the later concerns him only insofar as it resembles, or is inspired by, the earlier. And then his apologia is that of Nietzsche: to have postulated a 'Höhenzug der Menschheit durch Jahrtausende hin' (I, 220).

But Nietzsche is too dialectical a thinker, has too strong a Charybdis complex, not to note also the historical demerits of his mode:

so leidet die Vergangenheit selbst *Schaden*: ganze große Teile derselben werden vergessen, verachtet, und fließen fort wie eine graue ununterbrochene Flut, und nur einzelne geschmückte Fakta heben sich als Inseln heraus... (I, 223)

And the historical Novelle too has little world or time, and suffers from it. For it follows that, unlike the historical novel, it rarely fulfils Nietzsche's two other possible functions of history: the antiquarian and the critical.

⁸² Raabe, IX/1, 161–62 and 8.

⁸³ Gutzkows *Werke*, edited by Reinhold Geusel, 4 vols (Berlin, 1910), II, 28.

⁸⁴ Gutzkow, II, 63.

VIII

Yet historical Novellen can contain critical history. The critical historian, in Nietzsche's sense, shows 'wie ungerecht die Existenz irgendeines Dinges, eines Privilegiums, einer Kaste, einer Dynastie zum Beispiel ist, wie sehr dieses Ding den Untergang verdient' (I, 229). And for showing this, the historical Novelle has one device ready at hand: its 'sense of an ending'.

This is exemplified in *Schach von Wuthenow* (1882), Fontane's critical appraisal of Prussian society before the Battle of Jena in 1806. The sense of an ending is created by two characteristic Novelle devices. First, there are several 'Endvoraussagungen'. Second, the plot leaves, in Kermode's terms, little interval between tick and tock anyway.⁸⁵ Schach, a handsome Prussian officer of 1806, is seduced by the intelligent but disfigured Victoire de Carayon. Honour obliges him to marry: vanity and ridicule forbid it. He therefore marries only to commit suicide immediately after. These events, however, actually occurred not in 1806 but in 1815, and in relocating them Fontane reveals his interpretation of the 1806 period: it has, as he wrote in a letter, 'novellistisch angesehen, ihre besonderen Vorzüge'.⁸⁶ For in *Schach von Wuthenow*, short-windedness and a sense of an ending are both form and theme. A major character, Heinrich von Bülow, talks of an "'Episode Preußen'".⁸⁷ He quotes Mirabeau's aphorism that Prussia is a fruit rotten before it has ripened.⁸⁸ And the reason he puts succinctly: "'Der Geist ist heraus, alles ist Dressur und Spielerei'".⁸⁹ This reasoning Fontane supports by a further structural device almost unique in historical Novellen: his text is sub-divided into short-lived episodes, each portraying a brief excitement — a witty conversation, an excursion, a seduction, a soirée, a soldierly prank. One such episode epitomizes the character both of Schach and of Prussian society in 1806; Schach flees to his country-seat but, unable to sleep in his musty, moth-infested room, leaps out of the window into fresh air. Later, he tries to envisage life with Victoire:

dann gehe ich mit Victoire durch den Garten, und aus dem Park auf die Wiese, dieselbe Wiese, die wir vom Schloß aus immer und ewig und immer sehen. . . . Vielleicht sind wir allein; aber vielleicht läuft auch ein kleiner Dreijähriger neben uns her und singt in einem fort: 'Adebar, du Bester, bring mir eine Schwester'. . . . Und endlich sind elf Jahre herum, und wir halten an der 'ersten Station', die die 'stroherne Hochzeit' heißt. Ein sonderbares Wort. Und dann ist auch allmählich die Zeit da, sich malen zu lassen, malen zu lassen für die Galerie. . . . Nein, nein! (p. 358)

In short, he envisages a novel. But if Fontane makes and calls *Schach von Wuthenow* an historical Novelle,⁹⁰ it is because, for a novel, neither his characters nor his 1806

⁸⁵ Kermode, pp. 44–64.

⁸⁶ Theodor Fontane, Letter to Mathilde von Rohr, 11 August 1878, in *Fontanes Briefe*, edited by Gotthard Erler, 2 vols (Berlin and Weimar, 1968), I, 456–57 (p. 456).

⁸⁷ Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke*, Volume II, *Graf Petöfy, Ellenklipp*, *Schach von Wuthenow*, edited by Edgar Groß (1959), p. 281 (Chapter 2).

⁸⁸ Fontane, p. 274 (Chapter 1).

⁸⁹ Fontane, p. 310 (Chapter 6).

⁹⁰ Theodor Fontane, Letter to Friedrich Wilhelm Holtze, 20 March 1879, in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, IV (1960), p. 375.

have enough substance or stamina. Thus this historical Novelle is, as Fontane claimed, a 'Zeitbild'.⁹¹ And a sense of that period's imminent ending is given also by four alternative titles which Fontane offered his publisher: 'Vor Jena', 'Vor dem Niedergang', 'Et dissipati sunt' and 'Gezählt, gewogen und hinweggetan'.⁹²

But there's the rub. Other historical Novellen have used endings for critical history: the abrupt killing of Else von der Tanne strengthens Raabe's critique of witch-hunting; or the sudden suicide of the lovers in *Ein Fest auf Haderslevhuus* justifies Storm's critique of Minne courtship. But if in Fontane critical history amounts to a 'Zeitbild', then our genre is not necessarily as a-temporal as claimed. Nor is Lukács always correct to assert that 'Das wirklich unterscheidende Merkmal der Novelle ist vor allem, daß in ihr keine Totalität der Lebenserscheinungen zu gestalten angestrebt wird'.⁹³ Indeed, an analysis of *Schach von Wuthenow* provokes a questioning of this concept, 'totality'.

Historical totality is by definition unattainable. But if it is unattainable, then it is perhaps unhelpful to say that it is unattained in historical Novellen, for it is not attained in historical novels either. And if it is attained in neither genre, then it is not necessarily more attained in one genre than the other. The concept of totality, in short, is useful for ascertaining what historical fiction excludes: but it cannot judge the eloquence, the informativeness of what it includes. This argument is of importance for historical fiction, which ranges in length from the briefest Novelle to the poly-volumed 'Professorenroman'. But it is indispensable too for any discussion of historical truth. Macaulay put it magnificently in 1828:

No picture, then, and no history, can present us with the whole truth: but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth, produce all the effect of the greatest falsehood. It perpetually happens that one writer tells less truth than another, merely because he tells more truths.⁹⁴

In historical truth and historical totality, therefore, the historical Novelle could vie with the historical novel. In practice, however, it has rarely chosen to do so.

IX

Generic criticism, Raymond Williams has argued, has to do with continuities, but must be sensitive to the 'full range of variables'.⁹⁵ Of this, *Schach von Wuthenow* is a twofold reminder. For it is a 'variable', both among historical Novellen in general

⁹¹ Theodor Fontane, Letter to Mathilde von Rohr, 13 July 1882, in Theodor Fontane, *Briefe*, edited by Kurt Schreinert and Charlotte Jolles, Volume III, *Briefe an Mathilde von Rohr*, p. 206.

⁹² Theodor Fontane, Letter to Wilhelm Friedrich, 2 November 1882, in *Fontane-Blätter*, 3 (1973), Heft 1, pp. 40–41 (p. 40).

⁹³ Lukács, p. 293.

⁹⁴ Lord Macaulay, 'History', *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols (London, 1860), I, 241–42.

⁹⁵ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), p. 184.

and among those Fontane himself wrote. So in asking 'Historical novel or historical Novelle?' this chapter is not implying that either genre imposes an ideology, a philosophy of history. It would be disturbing were an account of a genre about the exceptional in the past not to be itself alert to exceptions in that genre's past.

One exception is *Katz und Maus* (1961), a story of German youth in the Second World War, and a story which Grass provocatively but justly sub-titles 'Eine Novelle'. It has a leit-motif, the 'mouse' itself. This refers to the large Adam's apple of the protagonist, Mahlke, a sign of puberty and a sign he tries to conceal from his schoolmates by wearing various trophies around his neck. These trophies, which range from trinkets found while diving to the Iron Cross won as a young soldier, announce a major theme of the work: the link between puberty, sport, and war. The theme recalls Horváth, and Grass has thus used his leit-motif not for monumental but for critical history. Second, his Novelle contains its 'Begebenheit': from a visitor to the school Mahlke steals an Iron Cross and is expelled. 'Unerhörtes habe sich zugetragen' (p. 69) runs the headmaster's pronouncement. The reference to Goethe is clear, but so is the irony: at a time when Germany is full of unspeakable horrors, what is 'unerhört' is not Mahlke's act but the fact that this piddling act should be called 'unerhört'. And finally, the Novelle has its sense of an ending: the cat (a symbol for the narrator) is after the mouse. Yet Grass asks, 'Gibt es Geschichten, die aufhören können?' (p. 84). And both at the book's end and in subsequent speeches⁹⁶ he is uncertain whether the Mahlke syndrome is dead and gone. So not surprisingly critics are reluctant to call the work a Novelle: von Wiese says 'No', Höllerer says 'Yes', and Pongs calls it a travesty.⁹⁷ But the point, surely, is that the work's form matches its theme: both are an 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit', a new approach to past habits. And if one compares it to a similar effort, Lenz's *Deutschstunde* (1968), where there is much to-do about new ways of seeing but little done about seeing in new ways, the worth of this exceptional historical Novelle becomes clearer.

The genre's greatest exception, however, are Keller's *Züricher Novellen* (1878). They are exceptional for the reasons Keller is frequently exceptional: his Swissness, his preference for Novelle cycles and his didacticism. His Swissness leads Keller to open with a device more common in historical novels: he describes an ancient monument — here the rooftops of Zürich — and remarks that 'thereby hangs a tale' (p. 17). This recalls Nietzsche's antiquarian, who feels more at home in his town the more he knows about that home-town's past.⁹⁸ And antiquarianism is the theme of Keller's first story *Hadlaub*. This praises Rüdiger Manesse and Johannes Hadlaub for collecting and preserving the songs of the Minnesang. The Novelle cycle, however, allows Keller to evoke far greater expanses of time: his five major stories take place in five different centuries. And this past Keller portrays as a process through contradictions: he allows one character to look over and reflect on the Zürich landscape, 'über die weite Landschaft . . . oder vielmehr über die Versammlung von Landschaften, welche ebenso widerspruchsvoll sich aufreihete, wie unser Zürich,

seine Leute und seine Geschichte überhaupt' (p. 22). The contradictions, however, are always finally fruitful: this is conveyed in a leit-motif of intermarriage, intermarriage between 'Stände', religions or classes — a leit-motif which links to the cycle not only *Hadlaub* but also *Das Fähnlein der Sieben Aufrechten* and *Ursula*, which are commonly said to be 'added without any reference to it'.⁹⁹ 'Zeit bringt Rosen' (p. 231), is therefore appropriately the motto of the central story — a concept of time as a beneficent organic process which anticipates the conclusion of *Der grüne Heinrich* (1879).¹⁰⁰ And with this 'Bildungsroman' there is a further similarity: a re-definition of human greatness. The Novellen are told for the benefit of the young Herr Jacques, who hopes to become 'ein Original': to this his didactic god-father and the entire *Züricher Novellen* retort:

'Ei, das kommt nur darauf an, was für eines! Ein gutes Original ist nur, wer Nachahmung verdient! Nachgeahmt zu werden ist aber nur würdig, wer das, was er unternimmt, recht betreibt und immer an seinem Orte etwas Tüchtiges leistet, und wenn dieses auch nichts Unerhörtes und Erzurprüngliches ist!' (p. 16)

The Novelle has been called 'vorzugsweise die schwierigste Form',¹⁰¹ but if one compares this Keller with his contemporary and compatriot C. F. Meyer, one recognizes what varied, even contradictory, ideologies even this most difficult form can yield.

X

In pointing out these 'variables' and varieties, this chapter is revealing a certain affinity with a recent study of the Novelle, that of J. M. Ellis. Like Ellis, this chapter believes that the term 'Novelle' is a 'loose concept, with very blurred edges', a 'convenient gathering together of texts with a loose relation to each other'.¹⁰² Unlike Ellis, however, this chapter also believes that Novellen can be usefully described as a family, a family whose members share a set of family resemblances.¹⁰³ The first justification of this chapter is to have offered a portrait of the family of historical Novellen, a portrait in which the outstanding members, such as Keller and Fontane, can be distinguished from the good family men, such as Raabe or Storm, who can in their turn equally be distinguished from a more questionable figure, such as C. F. Meyer.

The second justification of this chapter is to have filled a gap. Although the question 'Novel or Novelle?' is an old chestnut, the question 'Historical novel or historical Novelle?' is a question previously unasked. The historical Novelle as genre is left unstudied by Klein¹⁰⁴ and von Wiese, by Bennett, Silz,¹⁰⁵ Ellis and

⁹⁹ Bennett, *A History of the German Novelle*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁰ Gottfried Kellers Werke, Volumes I and II, *Der grüne Heinrich*, II, 471–86 (IV, 16).

¹⁰¹ Karl Gutzkow, *Vom Baum der Erkenntnis: Denksprüche*, in Polheim, p. 94.

¹⁰² John M. Ellis, *Narration in the German Novelle: Theory and Interpretation*, Anglica Germanica Series 2 (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 19 and 20.

¹⁰³ Ellis, p. 16, note 1.

¹⁰⁴ Johannes Klein, *Geschichte der deutschen Novelle von Goethe bis zur Gegenwart*, third edition (Wiesbaden, 1956).

¹⁰⁵ Walter Silz, *Realism and Reality: Studies in the German Novelle of Poetic Realism* (Chapel Hill, 1954).

Swales. 'Das Merkwürdigste an einem Loch', Tucholsky once remarked, 'ist der Rand. Er gehört noch zum Etwas, sieht aber beständig in das Nichts . . .'.¹⁰⁶ And on the edge of this gap also, some strange things have been said. Avrom Fleishman has called *Michael Kohlhaas* 'one of the greatest historical novels'.¹⁰⁷ E. K. Bennett has written of the *Züricher Novellen* that 'None of these stories, in spite of their setting in the past, is historical in the sense that it introduces historical events of importance'.¹⁰⁸ But as talk of historical fiction both these statements lack differentiation. And they do so, this chapter would contend, because they ignore what has been one of this chapter's leading arguments: that there are two genres, historical novel and historical Novelle, and that to approach either in terms of the other is to do disservice to both.

It is perhaps important in this context to stress the words 'to both': for the devotee of historical novels, all too easily, can look askance and look awry at the related genre.

At its most questionable, after all, the historical Novelle sees the past as a series of decisive moments. It sees those moments as decided by Great Men. Or it reduces historical causation to forces outside history — to Fortune, Fate or divine will. At its most questionable, in other words, the historical Novelle is the victim of its own narrative methods or 'temporal structure', of its belief that pride of place — in the past and in history — belongs to the short duration. Indeed, in characterizing history of the short duration, R. G. Collingwood has given an unwitting portrait of what such historical Novellen offer:

The shorter our standard time-phase for an historical event, the more our history will consist of destructions, catastrophes, battle, murder and sudden death. But destruction implies the existence of something to destroy; and as this type of history cannot describe how such a thing came into existence, for the process of its coming into existence was a process too long to be conceived as an event by this type of history, its existence must be presupposed as given, ready-made, miraculously established by some force outside history.¹⁰⁹

At its most questionable, therefore, the historical Novelle represents a type of history to which the historical novel is — implicitly and sometimes explicitly — opposed.

So it is all the more important to recognize that, at its best, the historical Novelle exploits a fact essential to both experience and history: that every event whatsoever is, potentially, 'eine unerhörte, sich ereignete Begebenheit'. Not only earthquakes, operas and suicides, but schoolboy fads, poems copied and marriages have each their own uniqueness. As a recent philosopher of history writes, 'Events are rendered non-unique in thought only, by choosing to use them as examples of a type or class'.¹¹⁰ So, on the one hand, the historical Novelle can validly counsel one to seize

the unique moment. It can show the role contingency must play in experience. It can portray just how revealing it may be for men to face the unforeseeable. And it can depict what *also* happened, thus adding to our synchronic picture of the past. On the other hand, it can show how much men try to render events non-unique. It can show into what historical types and classes the past tried to fit them. And it shows what varied events the past and historical Novellisten have categorized as unique. Now, if all events are, potentially, unique, those in historical novels are also: but there a different type of story gives them a different significance. As historical drama and historical novel, so historical Novelle and historical novel: here too it is a question of the oak-tree felled resoundingly and of the hundred acorns silently planted.¹¹¹

To underline the difference finally, to give one final answer to the question 'Historical novel or historical Novelle?', the reader is referred back to *Michael Kohlhaas*, or to Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1891), a fine historical Novelle in all but name. Both Kleist and Melville portray 'a difficult case unprecedented'.¹¹² They portray a contingency, a 'jugglery of circumstances'.¹¹³ They show how in perplexity men compound perplexity: 'The greater the fog the more it imperils the steamer, and speed is put on though at the hazard of running somebody down'.¹¹⁴ And in both works, Fate and divine judgement are grasped at as the only explanations available. Neither author, however, does what an historical novelist would have done. Neither will 'shed lateral light . . . upon what remains mysterious in this matter'.¹¹⁵ Neither will give a full historical context, a before and an afterwards. Neither, therefore, re-interprets and re-values a world already valued and interpreted by historians. For the Novelle, as Friedrich Schlegel wrote in 1801, is

eine noch unbekannte Geschichte, so erzählt, wie man sie in Gesellschaft erzählen würde, eine Geschichte, die an und für sich schon einzeln interessieren können muß, ohne irgend auf den Zusammenhang der Nationen, oder der Zeiten, oder auch die Fortschritte der Menschheit und das Verhältnis zur Bildung derselben zu sehen. Eine Geschichte also, die streng genommen, nicht zur Geschichte gehört. . . .¹¹⁶

Aphoristically put: history and the historical novel are about colligation, the historical Novelle is about isolation. The historical Novelle is always running out of time, in several senses of that phrase.

¹¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, 'On History', *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, 30 vols, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays II* (London, 1899), pp. 83–95 (p. 86).

¹¹² Hermann Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories*, edited by Harold Beaver, second edition (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 381–82.

¹¹³ Melville, p. 380.

¹¹⁴ Melville, p. 391.

¹¹⁵ Melville, p. 385.

¹¹⁶ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Nachricht von den poetischen Werken des Johannes Boccaccio', in Polheim, *Theorie und Kritik der deutschen Novelle von Wieland bis Musil*, p. 10.