CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRUCTING 'DAS ANDERE DEUTSCHLAND': ROMANTIC IRONY AND MICHAEL KLEEBERG'S *EIN GARTEN IM NORDEN*

The three novels which I have discussed in the three previous chapters have all demonstrated the ability of the fantastic to transcend fixed political categories and to break through the parameters of established discourse. This relative freedom from ideological restrictions means that writers can explore highly sensitive political territory, without necessarily being confined by the established terms of reference or accepting the pre-existing limits of debate. In discussing *Ein Garten im Norden*, I shall examine the ways in which Michael Kleeberg employs the fantastic as he engages with the extremely contentious and polarised debates surrounding German identity in the post-war and post-Wende periods. I shall ask to what extent Kleeberg transcends the parameters of these debates and to what extent he remains entrapped within dominant discourse.

First published in 1998, *Ein Garten im Norden* is ambitious in its scope, covering the period of German history from before the First World War to the post-Wende 1990s, and focusing on vexed questions of German identity. The novel takes the form of a 'Rahmenerzählung' set in contemporary Germany, which encloses a second level of narrative set mainly during the Weimar Republic. The novel therefore deploys two narrative levels and evokes two historical periods with some fleeting moments going even further back in time. The first level is narrated

by a first person narrator, Albert Klein, who is returning to Germany after more than a decade living and working in Amsterdam and Paris. Having originally left his home country in 1983 as a result of an unhappy love affair with Bea, a woman who continues to exercise a considerable emotional influence over him, Klein resolves in 1995 to resettle in the now reunified Germany. This decision is precipitated largely by the suicide of his French ex-wife Pauline, and the realisation 'daß außer ihr mich nichts und niemand mehr in Frankreich hielt und halten wollte'.[1] On his way to his father's sixtieth birthday celebrations in Hamburg, he takes a detour to Prague, in order to complete some business transactions. While there, he visits the synagogue, and has an eerie experience in which he imagines that his own name appears among the thousands of names engraved on the memorial to Jewish victims of the holocaust. This impression, despite his ensuing realisation that the engraved name in question is Abraham and not Albert Klein, is nonetheless heightened by a strange encounter with an old woman, who appears to recognise Klein and associate him with the name on the wall. Thoroughly unnerved, he leaves the synagogue and wanders aimlessly before finally finding himself outside an antiquarian bookshop. Here events take an even more mysterious turn. The bookseller appears to be expecting Klein, and presents him with a book of blank pages, which he is told, he should fill 'mit Ihrer Liebe' (*GN*, p.46). The book has certain unexpected and uncanny properties, which the bookseller explains to Klein: 'Sie werden schreiben in diesem Buch. Und was

[1] Michael Kleeberg, *Ein Garten im Norden* (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998) p.10. All further references to this work will appear in the text as *GN*.

immer Sie schreiben, wird in dem Moment, da Sie das Buch beendet haben, Wirklichkeit geworden sein' (*GN*, p.46).

What Albert chooses to write in this book forms the second level of the 'Rahmenerzählung', in which he narrates the story of a wealthy and ambitious, but philanthropic banker, who rises from obscurity to head the most prestigious bank in Germany. The story of this man, named Albert Klein like his creator, takes place in the period between 1914 and the Second World War, with some material, such as a reinvention of Richard Wagner, reaching back even further in time. The narrative promises to offer the vision of an alternative trajectory of German history, in which international political co-operation together with the development of intellectual and cultural diversity would be set against the rigidity of militarism and the insularity of aggressive nationalism, although, as it turns out, this utopia is never realised or even evoked in writing. This earlier Albert Klein, builder of the beautiful 'Garten im Norden' in Berlin and centre of a liberal intellectual élite, aspires to create a world in which the horrors of fascism are rejected and the enlightened forces of liberal democracy prevail, a world for which the garden stands as emblem. In this alternative world, well-known figures with dubious political sympathies, such as Heidegger and Wagner, are transformed into campaigners for democratic change, and the most prominent thinkers and artists from around the globe gather in the garden paradise to engage in lively debate. In the end the utopia fails with the advent of fascism, and Klein, revealed as a Jew, flees to Prague to join his lover Charlotte and disappears. Yet true to the promises of the Antiquar, who throughout the novel appears unexpectedly to his former

customer, breaks into his narrative and attacks his choice of characters and events, the story written by the later Klein in his book does become a reality, if not a utopia. He discovers that his father was born in Prague and was the son of the Jewish banker, who consequently is Klein's own grandfather. Through a series of complicated twists, involving dubious business transactions in reunified Germany and the subsequent murder of Albert's cousin Rudolph, the present-day Klein and his father become the owners of the very same plot of land used earlier in the century for the idyllic garden. The novel ends with a sense of optimism, albeit circumscribed, and the hope for a new beginning for Germany, in which 'alles bleibt noch zu tun' (*GN*, p.586), and in which the banker's utopian vision, represented emblematically by the garden, can be recreated 'mitten in Berlin, mitten in Deutschland' (*GN*, p.586).

The Critical Reception of *Ein Garten im Norden*

Press reviews of *Ein Garten im Norden* offer a useful insight into the political sensitivities which shape the novel's reception, and which are important in responding to Kleeberg's choice of fictional territory. The novel's exploration of German history throughout the twentieth century inevitably leads to the much disputed question of the relationship between the Nazi past and the construction of a coherent German identity. The ambivalent portrayal of post-Wende Germany, and the protagonist's difficulty in readjusting to its mores, similarly raise awkward questions about the nature of national identity after reunification and the social

values which it encompasses.[2] These highly contentious areas of debate which are raised in the novel ensure that critics in the German press hold up the utopian vision of its author for very intense scrutiny.

Nor is this the only burden which Kleeberg has to bear. Following the high profile *Literaturstreit* of the early 1990s, the future and social role of the German novel itself became contentious and politically loaded areas of debate. Right-wing literary critics tended to attack the 'Gesinnungsliteratur' of the post-war period, embodied in their eyes by Christa Wolf, and demanded a greater concentration on narrative and the 'purely' aesthetic aspects of art, with more left-wing critics seeking to uphold the reputations of writers such as Wolf and Grass and defend their conception of the writer as a moral and social conscience. These various sensitivities and focal points of debate are reflected in the reception of *Ein Garten im Norden.*

Engaging with concerns about the perceived crisis in the contemporary German novel, many critics responded positively to what they see as Kleeberg's narrative drive and his simple and direct use of language. Wilfried Schoeller credits Kleeberg not only with the vision of an alternative Germany, but also with the attempt to reinvent the novel on a more epic scale, in which the genre's function as entertainment is allied to a grandiose conception of literary merit. Kleeberg, implies Schoeller, is to some extent rescuing the German novel from the clutches of the post-war era:

> Das Chamäleon Roman, das sich unter jeder Erwartung verwandelt, ist in den neunziger Jahren wieder zu einem Riesenunternehmen gewünscht worden. Im Umlauf sind kapitale Hoffnungen: auf das

[2] For my discussion of some of these questions, see Chapter One.

> Vereinigungsepos, die erzählerische Summe nach dem Ende der Nachkriegsepoche, die Berliner Großstadt-Epopöe, das Format ausladende Unterhaltung. An all das, durchaus mit dem Anspruch, Geschichtsschreibung der anderen Art, ein literarisches Spiegelkabinett und einen Schmöker zu liefern, hat sich Michael Kleeberg gewagt.[3]

Schoeller sees *Ein Garten im Norden* as a counterweight to what he considers the undesirable excesses of avant-garde and postmodernist fiction, in which theoretical games replace narrative engagement and social realism gives way to literary deconstruction. Kleeberg's novel is 'eine Gegenform zum dekonstruierenden Postmodernismus: Er besteht auf Einsicht und Lehre, auf der Synthesekraft des Erzählens, wendet sich gegen dessen Überführung ins theoretische Modell'.[4] Thomas Kraft echoes this assessment of the novel in his review, arguing that 'Michael Kleeberg zählt zu den Vertretern eines literarischen Realismus'.[5] In praising the readability, 'Vitalität und Leichtigkeit' of the novel, he ascribes to Kleeberg an almost programmatic statement on the role of literature, in which the perceived esotericism of the avant-garde is rejected in favour of a new German brand of accessible fiction: '[Kleeberg verabscheut] eine deutsche Literatur und Sprache, die dem bedeutungsvollen Raunen und avantgardistischen Stammeln verpflichtet ist und „einer sinnstiftenden und verständlichen Synthese" im Weg steht'.[6]

Many critics respond to what thay see as the novel's readability and emphasis on narrative drive, contrasting these qualities with their conception of post-war German literature as overly complex, weighty and essentially

[3] Wilfried F. Schoeller, 'Deutschland, ein Wunschbild' in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 7 October 1998.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Thomas Kraft, 'Planetarische Archive' in *Rheinischer Merkur*, 2 October 1998.
[6] Ibid.

unappealing to the average reader. As with Brussig's *Helden wie wir*, they associate strong and clearly defined narrative with non-German literary traditions, and more particularly with contemporary American writing. Hörisch suggests that Kleeberg is reacting to a widely heard call among critics for German literature to follow the American model and to dismantle the supposed barrier between high and low literary art:

> In den letzten zehn Jahren haben viele Literaturkritiker und –theoretiker nach dem an amerikanischer Erzählkunst orientierten, spannenden, realistischen, fabulierlustigen und erfahrungs-gesättigten Roman verlangt, der sich von der Unterscheidung zwischen E- und U-Kultur nicht einschüchtern lässt.[7]

Krause agrees that there is something un-German in the novel, suggesting that the lightness of touch and simplicity of style which he ascribes to *Ein Garten im Norden* are only possible as a result of Kleeberg having lived for many years in France and away from the presumably pernicious influence of the German literary establishment: 'Solche Verbindung von kulturkritischer Komplexität und leserfreundlicher Sprache kann natürlich nur von einem Außenseiter des deutschen Literaturbetriebs kommen'.[8] This is echoed by Ingo Arend, who states that Kleeberg writes 'mit bewundernswert undeutscher Leichtigkeit, Esprit und elegantem Tempo'.[9]

In describing Kleeberg in terms of a conventional literary realist, who takes as his canvas the broad sweep of history and lays before the reader the social and political movements which shaped it, critics tend to gloss over the work's very explicit and glaring departures from reality. In a novel where Heidegger is a

[7] Jochen Hörisch, 'Es werde Wirklichkeit' in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 3 September 1998.
[8] Tilman Krause, 'Eine Insel der Seligen, mitten in Berlin' in *Die Welt*, 22 August 1998.
[9] Ingo Arend, 'Offener Garten' in *Freitag*, 26 February 1999.

committed social democrat, Lassalle is transplanted from his real historical period to another and an antiquarian bookseller makes eerie reappearances in unexpected places, it would be inaccurate to suggest that Kleeberg is engaged merely in faithfully reproducing a slice of German society on the page. However, as with the response to Hilbig's *»Ich«*, reviewers generally do not deal with the purpose and effect of these fantastical aspects, and tend not to engage with the complex narrative structures which the fantastic produces. Thomas Kraft's perception of Kleeberg as a representative of old-fashioned realism, and the assessment of his novel as 'konventionell erzählt'[10] leaves little room to examine the ways in which Kleeberg both uses and subverts literary conventions. Concerning the interweaving narrative levels and deliberate departures from reality, he comments simply that the novel 'wird von […] einem flexiblen Erzählrahmen sicher getragen'.[11] The vast majority of responses similarly either entirely ignore the obvious historical alterations and the intrusive role of the Antiquar, or dismiss them as peripheral areas of little interest. Hans-Rainer John is merely irritated by the transformation of figures such as Heidegger and Wagner, and is baffled by the function of such techniques: 'Warum aber führt er uns so oft in die Irre? […] Darüber kann man sicher geteilter Meinung sein, aber ist die wunschhafte Umdichtung historischer Tatbestände wirklich ein legitimes Mittel der Auseinandersetzung?'.[12] Arend, while briefly acknowledging the recurring presence of the Prague bookseller, and the associated intrusions upon the narrative, nonetheless sees the device as little

[10] Kraft, 'Planetarische Archive'.
[11] Ibid.
[12] John, Hans-Rainer, 'Symbol, Utopie und Wirklichkeit' in *Berliner LeseZeichen*, 5:1999.

more than a minor source of comedy, giving the novel 'eine postmoderne Gewitztheit'.[13]

One notable exception to this tendency is Wolfram Schütte, who engages directly with the dualistic structures of Kleeberg's narrative, and attempts to explain how they might influence the reader's response to the utopian vision of Klein and his garden paradise. He argues that the interweaving of narrative levels and the complex relationship between reality and fiction enable an ironic dialogue to take place within the text, in which the clash between authorial imagination and historical fact is explored. These questions of literary freedom are not, he suggests, posed implicitly within the text, but are explicitly debated by the narrator Klein and his mentor the Antiquar. While Klein asserts his right to tell the story in whichever form and using whatever material he chooses, the bookseller acts as an exponent of Lukács, haranguing Klein for his failure to engage with socio-political fact and for his distortion of historical reality:

> Kleeberg zieht damit seinem Doppelroman kontinuierlich noch eine dritte Ebene ein: die der ironischen, dialogischen Reflexion über Grenzen und Möglichkeiten dichterischer Phantasie im Umgang mit der empirischen Realität und Realgeschichte. Der Antiquar sieht sich als lukacsianischer Sachwalter der Realität.[14]

Schütte suggests that this ironic dialogue demonstrates the fundamental absurdity of any attempt to re-write history or to suggest an alternative utopian German tradition: 'Man sieht aus diesen (verzweifelt paradoxen, gleichwohl gewitzten) *Um*schreibungen Kleebergs und Kleins, *wie* wider-wirklich, also absurd das Wünschen nach einem anderen Deutschland sein müßte, um dem wirklichen in

[13] Arend, 'Offener Garten'.
[14] Wolfram Schütte, 'Der Traum vom »anderen« Deutschland' in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 August 1998.

den Arm fallen zu können'.[15] It is particularly this area of textual irony and its effect on the narrative construction of a utopia which I wish to explore in greater detail later in this chapter.

The area of interest which dominates the reception of *Ein Garten im Norden* is the exact nature and ideological implications of the utopia which is being presented in the novel. As with *»Ich«*, critics are less interested in literary subtleties and the dualistic structures of the text, and are more concerned with locating the author within the framework of contemporary debates. The wide historical scope of Kleeberg's novel, which incorporates highly sensitive issues to do with German identity and contemporary history, understandably leads critics to question Kleeberg's own political allegiances and his ideological intent. Is the suggestion of an alternative German tradition, embodied in the banker Albert Klein, a reactionary failure to deal adequately with the horrors of National Socialism, or a timely assertion of German cultural richness above and beyond the post-war preoccupation with 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'? Does the construction of an alternative historical trajectory for Germany form a coherent political vision or a confused ideological jumble? The answers to these questions are clearly dependent on the political positions occupied by the critics themselves, and by their responses to terms and concepts which are heavily loaded within the context of public debate.

Critics writing from what appears to be a broadly left-liberal position express a certain degree of discomfiture with the project of constructing an alternative German tradition. Eberhard Falcke, writing for *Die Zeit*, characterises

[15] Ibid.

Ein Garten im Norden as 'ein Versuch, an jene oftzitierten Traditionen eines „anderen, besseren Deutschland" anzuknüpfen, die von den Nazis einst unterbrochen oder zerstört wurden'.[16] While not necessarily condemning the attempt to find 'ein paar brauchbare Steine, mit denen man weiterbauen kann' in the 'Trümmerhaufen der deutschen Geschichte',[17] he does voice concern about what he sees as an overly nostalgic vision of a German past which fails either to take account of the overwhelming problems of twentieth century history, or to engage satisfactorily with the socio-political questions of the present. He attacks Kleeberg for allying himself with 'manch andere Gründerzeitagenten der „Berliner Republik"' in disparaging or ignoring the post-war Federal Republic and the establishment of democracy after National Socialism, and views this lacuna as evidence of a regressive tendency in the novel. He suggests that the decision not to focus on the real course of history makes any clear-sighted assessment of Germany's future impossible. Put together, this amounts to a stinging criticism both of Kleeberg's project in principle and of its execution:

> War da nicht noch was ? Die BRD vielleicht? Von diesem Gebilde jedoch wollen Kleeberg und sein Albert gar nichts wissen. Wie manch andere Gründerzeitagenten der „Berliner Republik" empfindet er sie offenkundig als bloßes historisches Übergangslager und auch ansonsten ziemlich indiskutabel. Womit Kleeberg dann doch auch selbst heftig abhebt in ein ideologisch stark getünchtes Wolkenkuckucksheim, so dekorativ und hohl wie eine Stadtschloßfassade. Denn mit der Feier seines humanistischen Phantasiebürgertums und der unverhohlenen Verachtung für die bundesrepublikanischen Verhältnisse begeht er genau den Fehler, den er an anderer Stelle als typisch deutsche Kleingeisterei brandmarkt: Er verwirft nämlich die Gegenwart (und jüngste Vergangenheit) – die ja immer ein wenig schäbig erscheinen -, um

[16] Eberhard Falcke, 'Die Verbesserung der Geschichte' in *Die Zeit*, 29 October 1998.
[17] Ibid.

> sich visionär nach hinten und vorn in die Tiefen der Zeit zu flüchten.[18]

These objections are echoed more mildly elsewhere. Jochen Hörisch argues that Kleeberg's utopian vision, while acknowledging the failure of Klein's project, offers no insight into Hitler's eventual rise to power, or the reasons for National Socialism's popular appeal. The novel's lack of engagement with these fundamental questions produces, Hörisch suggests, a confusing blindspot at the very centre of the narrative:

> Das Projekt scheitert. […] Warum – das wird nicht recht ersichtlich. Wenn so viele kluge, reiche, mächtige und gute Leute, wie sie in Kleins Garten versammelt sind, das (linksliberale) Rechte anstreben, so bleibt auch dem durchaus suggestiv geschriebenen Roman die Antwort auf die Rätselfrage versagt, warum allzu viele kluge Köpfe (wie Heidegger) und dumpfe Schädel die Nazis gewollt haben.[19]

Kleeberg's decision to focus on a fictional alternative to German history rather than the unpleasant facts of the case does not, in the view of Hermann Wallmann, constitute a critical or radical re-visioning of German identity, but rather results in a retreat to 'ein a-typisches Reservat' within an essentially conservative but '»gut gemeinter« Thesenroman'.[20] Ingo Arend, while praising the style and ambitious scope of *Ein Garten im Norden*, nonetheless admits that Kleeberg, in his unorthodox use of history and his creation of 'das andere Deutschland', is entering upon very dangerous and contentious territory: 'Ließe ihn jemand in der Debatte

[18] Ibid.
[19] Hörisch, 'Es werde Wirklichkeit'.
[20] Hermann Wallmann, 'Die Erfindung Deutschlands' in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 August 1998.

um das Berliner Holocaust-Mahnmal fallen – seine Exkommunikation aus dem Erinnerungsdiskurs wäre ihm sicher'.[21]

Other critics, contributing to publications with a more right-wing bias, voice little or no concern about the principle of constructing an alternative German tradition, and tend to show little engagement with the potentially problematic ideological implications of such a project. Tilman Krause, writing for *Die Welt*, praises Kleeberg's attempt to construct 'das andere Deutschland' and to search out the 'good' Germany which has been overlooked as a result of National Socialism.[22] Criticisms of the novel concentrate on what these reviewers see as the specific incoherence and vagueness of the utopian vision which Kleeberg evokes. Jürgen Kaube, reviewing *Ein Garten im Norden* for the *FAZ*, takes issue with Kleeberg's particular portrayal of German identity. Rather than seeking out and exploring a mainstream political or cultural tradition which is recognisably German, Kaube argues, Kleeberg constructs a utopia which exists on the margins of German society and is set apart from any truly collective understanding of national identity: 'Das Typische in Deutschland ist distanzierungspflichtig. Umgekehrt führt das dazu, daß die „guten Deutschen" bevorzugt als kleine, widerständige Zirkel dargestellt werden'.[23] He is irritated to discover nothing which he can identify as particularly German within Klein's garden paradise and his personal political vision. The 'other Germany' seems, in Kaube's view, to be characterised by a denial of all existing German political and social traditions, and to occupy a position on the sidelines of national culture. He accuses Kleeberg of

[21] Arend, 'Offener Garten'.
[22] Krause, 'Eine Insel der Seligen, mitten in Berlin'.
[23] Jürgen Kaube, 'Abfahrt durch die Mitte' in *FAZ*, 19 October 1998.

resorting to cliché, rather than confidently asserting a positive sense of identity. All that remains, suggests Kaube, are the culturally unspecific and superficial trappings of a supposedly more sophisticated way of life. In his view, Kleeberg's utopia consists of little more than crude lifestyle aspirations lifted from the pages of an upmarket Sunday supplement:

> Das andere Deutschland entstammt einem Versandhauskatalog für edle Stoffe und Furniere. Damit nicht nur das Mobiliar das Bewußtsein bestimmt, nimmt Kleeberg einige ideengeschichtliche Umbesetzungen vor. […] Doch seine Sehnsucht nach einem intellektuell-humanen Zentrum der Nation, in dem sich Kosmopoliten im Cutaway über die Leichtigkeit als Sinn des Lebens austauschen, entbehrt aller Spezifik. So etwas Wunderschönes mag man sich auch für Schweden oder Guatemala wünschen.[24]

All in all, Kleeberg's 'other Germany' is dismissed as 'eine ebenso flott gezeichnete wie anspruchslose Wunschlandkarte'.[25] This attack is echoed by Doris Neujahr, writing for *Junge Freiheit*,[26] who argues that the novel creates an anodyne and muddled vision of Germany which evades all cultural specificity. She too accuses Kleeberg of drifting into crass cliché, and of replacing a coherent conception of national identity and tradition with vague and confused allusions to democratic values and international co-operation. Like Kaube, she suggests that German tradition has been robbed of its complexity and richness and has instead been reduced to a meaningless series of elegant interiors and immaculately manicured lawns. Kleeberg does little, they both imply, to construct a confident and coherent sense of national identity for the future.

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Doris Neujahr, 'Kulturnation zum Kuscheln' in *Junge Freiheit*, 11 June 1999.

‘Das andere Deutschland’ and the New Right

These various and diverging responses to Kleeberg’s novel clearly reveal an already heightened sensitivity to the concept of national tradition and ‘das andere Deutschland’. Whereas some critics raise ideological objections to the very principle of constructing an alternative and fictionalised tradition, others are broadly in favour of such a project, limiting their criticisms to what they see as a lack of political and cultural fervour. The critical debate around Kleeberg’s novel, which seems to fall into broadly opposing political camps, can be located within a wider and controversial discussion of German post-war and post-Wende identity. Seen within this contextual framework, the nature of the particular sensitivities at play in the novel’s reception can be understood more clearly.

In the years following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, a general public discussion began as to the viability, desirability and precise characteristics of a putative new national identity. Collective memories of the Third Reich with its ideology of aggressive nationalism, along with the fracturing of the German state into East and West had made a sense of national identity in the post-war period highly problematic. Reunification appeared to some to offer the opportunity to move beyond the parameters of the post-war era, and to set a new cultural agenda for Germany’s future. This change of focus was marked on the one hand by the *Literaturstreit*, with its condemnation of post-war ‘Gesinnungsliteratur’. More overtly, it emerged within the political discourse of the New Right.[27]

[27] For an account of the development of the New Right in Germany, see Jan-Werner Müller, *Another Country. German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity* (New Haven and

Developing parties of the New Right, such as the Republikaner, were faced with a very considerable problem. While seeking to disassociate themselves from the influence of the Third Reich, they continued to attract unwelcome comparisons with National Socialist ideology, or at least with the fascist tendencies of its intellectual precursor, the Conservative Revolution. On the one hand, they wished to establish a new sense of confidence in German tradition and culture, while on the other, they were confronted by the brutal facts of contemporary German history. In order to gain mainstream political respectability, they had first to overcome the painful dominance of the recent past in the collective national consciousness. The intellectual backbone for this attempted shift of perspective is provided by the various 'Publizisten, Philosophen, Schriftsteller und Journalisten', who 'machen aus der Neuen Rechten mehr als eine rein politische Bewegung'[28] and who contribute to a range of New Right journals and publications. *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*[29] offers a useful collection of essays written by representatives of this group in response to issues raised by Strauß' highly controversial essay 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', originally published in 1993.[30] Interestingly, Tilman Krause, who reviewed Kleeberg's novel for *Die Welt*, also appears as a contributor to *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*. The volume sheds

London: Yale University Press, 2000) pp.199-225. For a discussion of the New Right with particular reference to their cultural and philosophical background, see Roger Woods, *Nation ohne Selbstbewußtsein. Von der Konservativen Revolution zur Neuen Rechten* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001) pp.173-198.

[28] Woods, *Nation ohne Selbstbewußtsein. Von der Konservativen Revolution zur Neuen Rechten*, p.175.

[29] *Die Selbstbewußte Nation. 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' und weitere Beiträge zu einer deutschen Debatte*, ed. Heimo Schwilk, and Ulrich Schacht (Berlin: Ullstein, 1994).

[30] Botho Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' in *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, ed. Heimo Schwilk and Ulrich Schacht (Berlin: Ullstein, 1995) pp.19-40.

light on the New Right's conception of history and tradition, as well as revealing their strategies for putting the Nazi past into historical perspective.

A key aspect of their position concerns what they characterise as a pernicious strain of self-loathing which has come to define German national identity. In his much disputed essay, Strauß condemns the lack of confidence in German tradition and history which has led to moral and social decay. This decay can, according to Strauß, be directly attributed to the loss of traditional and nationalistic values, which have been suppressed in the postwar era of German 'Selbsthaß'.[31] Since Germany has been trained to regard these values with suspicion or open contempt, moral and social decline becomes the logical and inevitable result:

> Die Hypokrisie der öffentlichen Moral, die jederzeit tolerierte [wo nicht betrieb]: die Verhöhnung des Eros, die Verhöhnung des Soldaten, die Verhöhnung von Kirche, Tradition und Autorität, sie darf sich nicht wundern, wenn die Worte in der Not kein Gewicht mehr haben.[32]

Young people in Germany are no longer imbued with a sense of nationhood, but rather with national self-hatred which is constantly strengthened by the spectre of National Socialism:

> Nach Dezennien der kulturellen Gesamtveranstaltung Jugendlichkeit findet man nun vor eine ziemlich aufgezehrte Substanz von Jugend, die letzte Progenitur der Nachkriegszeit, deren Überlieferungs- und Stimmungsgeschichte eine der Negationen und des Vaterhasses ist, […]'[33]

This 'Vaterhass' has not emerged naturally, but has, argues Strauß, been institutionalised and deliberately disseminated by the left-dominated 'deutsche

[31] Ibid, p.23.
[32] Ibid, p.22.
[33] Ibid, p.26.

Nachkriegs-Intelligenz', which, 'Von ihrem Ursprung (in Hitler) an hat sich […] darauf versteift, daß man sich nur der Schlechtigkeit der herrschenden Verhältnisse bewußt sein kann'.[34] Traditional values have, in his eyes, been replaced with cultural bankruptcy. Instead of tradition, authority and the Church, Germany relies for its self-esteem on empty and relentless consumerism: 'Der einzige Feind, gegen den man nicht kämpfen kann und dessen Bedrohung die Kräfte nicht anspornt: Volksreichtum'.[35] Strauß also views the artistic and cultural spheres as blighted by the 'Gewaltherrschaft und […] Totalitarismus'[36] of vacuous media, which rely on americanised and empty formulae to transmit their increasingly meaningless message:

> Die meisten Überzeugungsträger, die sich heute vernehmen lassen, scheinen ihren Nächsten überhaupt nur als den grell ausgeleuchteten Nachbarn in einer gemeinsamen Talkshow zu kennen.[37]

As Strauß argues, the domination of the media and journalistic information has replaced literature as the cultural voice of the nation.

Since, in Strauß's view, Germany has lost sight of its strongest values and has lost touch with a sense of national tradition and historical continuity, it no longer has the will to defend itself and its culture against attack. There is, he suggests, an automatic condemnation of national feeling both at home and abroad:

> Daß jemand in Tadschikistan es als politischen Auftrag begreift, seine Sprache zu erhalten, wie wir unsere Gewässer, das verstehen wir nicht mehr. Daß ein Volk sein Sittengesetz gegen andere behaupten will und dafür bereit ist, Blutopfer zu bringen, das

[34] Ibid, pp.22-23.
[35] Ibid, p.20.
[36] Ibid, p.31.
[37] Ibid, p.24.

> verstehen wir nicht mehr und halten es in unserer liberal-libertären Selbstbezogenheit für falsch und verwerflich.[38]

He sees this enforced denial of the German 'Sittengesetz' as an unstable and contradictory deception, which he predicts will inevitably lead to conflict 'between the traditional values that are ultimately not to be denied and the superficialities of the present'.[39] Economic success will form no defence against the deeper and more substantial power of the past:

> Es ziehen aber Konflikte herauf, die sich nicht mehr ökonomisch befrieden lassen […] Es ist gleichgültig, wie wir es bewerten, es wird schwer zu bekämpfen sein: daß die alten Dinge nicht einfach überlebt und tot sind, daß der Mensch, der Einzelne wie der Volkszugehörige, nicht einfach nur von heute ist. Zwischen den Kräften des Hergebrachten und denen des ständigen Fortbringens, Abservierens und Auslöschens wird es Krieg geben.[40]

Only by a return to traditional values and a rejection of their more recent replacements can the violent 'Ausbruch gegen den Sinnenbetrug'[41] be avoided.

The contributors to *Die Selbstbewußte Nation* take up Strauß' polemic and concur that an obsessive preoccupation with the crimes of National Socialism has had a disastrous effect on German identity and national confidence. An imposed and exaggerated sense of national shame has, they argue, led to the 'Selbsthaß der Deutschen', an unparalleled collective feeling of self-loathing in which any expression of national feeling or symbol of German national identity has become taboo:

> Die neudeutsche Identität besteht in der Negation ihrer selbst und kann so universal vorbildlich sein für die kosmopolitische

[38] Ibid, p.21.
[39] Stuart Parkes, *Understanding Contemporary Germany* (London: Routledge, 1997) p.198.
[40] Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', pp.21-22.
[41] Ibid, p.30.

> Überwindung jedes Nationalismus – denn so weit wie diese nicht mehr deutschen Deutschen ist ja bisher kaum ein andres Volk.[42]

The acceptance of guilt as the only respectable expression of German identity is portrayed in part either as a scheme by the victorious allies permanently to subjugate and weaken Germany,[43] or as a strategy used by the left to ensure the unassailable status of liberal democracy.[44] Since an effective 'gesellschaftliches Sprech- und Denkverbot'[45] was in operation, and the universities and the media were in the grip of a left-liberal 'Verschwörung',[46] the German people were, they argue, prevented in the postwar era from questioning both the often reprehensible behaviour of the Allies and the legitimacy of the postwar system of government in the Federal Republic. This portrayal of the deliberate subjugation of German national feeling is embellished by suggestions that the Nazi crimes were by no means unique. The process of 'Schuldminderung durch Schuldnachweis bei anderen Völkern'[47] tries to demonstrate that other nations have a similar burden of historical guilt which they have failed fully to recognise. Events in Bosnia[48] or the bombing of Dresden by the Allies[49] are used by the New Right to present the crimes of National Socialism not as characteristic of Germany, but as 'ein geläufiges Intermezzo im nunmal blutigen Drama der Weltgeschichte'.[50] The view

[42] Reinhart Maurer, 'Schuld und Wohlstand. Über die westlich-deutsche Generallinie' in *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, pp.70-84, p.74.
[43] Klaus Rainer Röhl, 'Morgenthau und Antifa. Über den Selbsthaß der Deutschen' in *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, pp.85-100, pp.93-94.
[44] Roland Bubik, 'Herrschaft und Medien. Über den Kampf gegen die linke Meinungsdominanz' in *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, pp.182-194, p.185.
[45] Röhl, 'Morgenthau und Antifa. Über den Selbsthaß der Deutschen' p.94.
[46] Ibid, pp.96-97.
[47] Thomas Assheuer, and Hans Sarkowicz, *Rechtsradikale in Deutschland. Die alte und die neue Rechte* (Munich: Beck,1992) p.188.
[48] Maurer, 'Schuld und Wohlstand. Über die westlich-deutsche Generallinie', p.76.
[49] Röhl, 'Morgenthau und Antifa. Über den Selbsthaß der Deutschen', p.94.
[50] Assheuer and Sarkowicz, *Rechtsradikale in Deutschland. Die alte und die neue Rechte*, p.189.

of the Nazi era as the culmination of German tradition is rejected with the assertion that 'Hitler ist kein Charakter-Symbol der Deutschen, und Auschwitz ist nicht der logische End-Ort deutscher Geschichte'.[51] The 'real' Germany lies elsewhere, separate from the aberrations and mistakes of the recent past. This central concept of 'das andere Deutschland' provides a link with an alternative German tradition which expresses 'all that is good in Germany and all that was largely suppressed in the course of history'.[52] The Third Reich is therefore to be seen as a regrettable but essentially transitory diversion from the true path of German history, a path of which Germans should be proud rather than ashamed. Reunification is seen as an opportunity to return to 'das andere Deutschland' by abandoning the German obsession with the recent past and rejecting the hegemony of the postwar left. If this opportunity is overlooked, these essays suggest, Germany will be nothing more than a cultural void with 'ein Wohlstands- und Konsumpatriotismus'[53] replacing any meaningful feeling of national identity. Only by constructing in the popular imagination an alternative Germany, in which fascism no longer looms large, can the problem of national 'Selbsthaß' be resolved, and a collective confidence in Germany's cultural tradition be established. As Woods has pointed out, these New Right intellectuals have encountered difficulties when defining the characteristics of this other tradition.[54] Richard Evans makes the same point, arguing that the New Right tend to rely more

[51] Schacht, Ulrich, 'Stigma und Sorge. Über deutsche Identität nach Auschwitz' in *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, pp.57-68, p.68.
[52] Parkes, *Understanding Contemporary Germany*, p.171.
[53] Maurer, 'Schuld und Wohlstand. Über die westlich-deutsche Generallinie', p.81.
[54] Woods, *Nation ohne Selbstbewußtsein. Von der Konservativen Revolution zur Neuen Rechten*, pp.173-198.

on a polemical 'Feind' mentality than on any concrete description of German nationhood:

> It is hard to escape the conclusion that the authors [of *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*] are caught here in a series of paradoxes from which they are unable in the end to find any way out […] none of them seems prepared to say what German national culture actually is. This is characteristic of the book as a whole, which is far more concerned to attack the left than it is to put forward any positive arguments or policies which might define the right.[55]

Seen in the context of these debates, the ideological resonances of *Ein Garten im Norden* become somewhat clearer. The concepts emanating from the New Right of national self-hatred and their suggestion of 'das andere Deutschland' as a possible source of salvation form a starting point for reviewers attempting to assess Kleeberg's political intent. The novel's utopian vision of a Germany in which fascism has no place echoes uncomfortably in the ears of those opposed to the programme of the New Right. On the other hand, those broadly in favour of 'das andere Deutschland' in principle find much to criticise in the exact nature of the tradition which Kleeberg is invoking, and in what they see as his ambivalent attitude to nationalist fervour. Taking these highly tuned sensitivities into account, therefore, to what extent does Kleeberg engage with the ideological implications of constructing 'das andere Deutschland' and how does he negotiate the difficulties inherent in such a project? Is it possible to situate the novel clearly in terms of its ideological position or does Kleeberg attempt to transcend political categories?

[55] Richard Evans, 'Rebirth of the German Right?' in *Rereading German History 1800-1996* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) pp.225-233, pp.232-233.

Vaterhaß and Vaterliebe

To a great extent, *Ein Garten im Norden* does appear to engage directly and explicitly with the much disputed issues of 'Vaterhaß' and 'das andere Deutschland' raised by the New Right. This engagement goes beyond simply the nature of the novel's plot with its revisioning of contemporary history. Rather, it seems to underpin the text's thematic content and to form a deliberate point of departure for the reader. This is certainly not to say that Kleeberg is echoing the arguments of the New Right or attempting to lend them literary support, but there is strong evidence to suggest that he is using the debates surrounding German identity and contemporary history as a key frame of reference for his novel.

In reading the opening chapters of *Ein Garten im Norden*, it quickly becomes apparent that the novel exhibits a preoccupation with nationhood and the problematic nature of German identity. When the later Albert Klein returns to Germany after many years living elsewhere, he does not view reintegration into his homeland with anything like joyful anticipation. At best, he is uncertain about his sense of belonging and what the future holds, and at worst appears to exhibit strong symptoms of what the New Right identify as 'Vaterhaß', an overwhelming feeling of disgust towards his own country. This partly manifests itself throughout the post-Wende sections of the novel as an opposition between two conceptions of national identity. On the one hand is the contract between an individual and the state, in which he or she is formally granted citizenship and becomes legally identified as German. On the other is the more nebulous idea of Heimat, consisting of a powerful sense of belonging to a particular culture, based on a strong

emotional attachment. For Klein, these two parallel sources of a stable identity have become dislocated from one another. His identity as a citizen of contemporary Germany is no longer supported by the deeper associations of Heimat. As a result, an unresolvable contradiction develops between his established legal status as German, and his growing personal sense of alienation from the national culture within which he grew up. In moving back to Germany, therefore, he does not feel that he is coming home, but rather that he is confronting a significant faultline within his own psyche. This opposition is made explicit early on in the novel. In leaving France, Klein is going 'nach Hause in die Fremde' (*GN*, p.9), abandoning an adopted country which feels like home, in favour of his homeland which seems foreign: '[ich] kehrte aus einer Wahlheimat, die mich als Fremden ausspie, in eine Fremde zurück, die ich mir als meine Heimat einfach nicht mehr vorstellen konnte' (*GN*, p.10). German citizenship has fundamentally negative connotations for Klein, and is an inescapable burden which he must accept as an unfortunate fact of life. However alienated he may feel from his own country and even if he chooses to live abroad, he remains psychologically trapped within the fixed boundaries of nationhood. When he settles in France and marries Pauline, he explains that 'ich [hätte] die deutsche Staatsbürgerschaft aufgeben und Franzose werden können'. His decision to retain German citizenship is testimony not to his patriotism, but to a realisation that 'Boche je suis, boche je reste' (*GN*, p.83). Using this pejorative word, Klein emphasises his dislocation from national identity, while realising at the same time that individual transformation is impossible.

Some of the reasons for Klein's problematic relationship with his homeland soon emerge. As he drives through Germany, Klein discusses at some length his observations and criticisms of German society and culture, drawing attention to various unwelcome changes which have taken place in his absence. As Klein crosses the border and makes his way through Germany, he soon encounters evidence of bland homogeneity, crass commercialism, an overwhelming preoccupation with luxury consumer goods and an incomprehensible vocabulary, all of which act as indications of cultural bankruptcy:

> Ich sagte mir immer wieder: Du wirst in einem Land leben müssen, wo alle verstehen können, was du sagst, aber du verstehst ihre Wörter nicht mehr: Lebensversicherung, Karriereplan, Bausparvertrag, Emissionsschutz, Anti-AKW-Bewegung, Feuchtbiotop, Shareholder Value, Spontiszene, Freizeitwert. Du wirst im Standort Deutschland hocken, dänische Butter, holländische Tomaten und spanische Erdbeeren essen müssen, die Geschäfte schlagen dir um sechs die Türe vor der Nase zu, die Filme sind alle synchronisiert, und ohnehin gibt es nur amerikanische. (*GN*, pp.12-13)

The symbolic expression of this cultural void is to be found in 'die Armeen großer, glänzender Mercedes-, BMW- und Audi-Limousinen' (*GN*, p.13), which broadcast a smug message of economic success. The scope of national ambition does not encompass any profound philosophical vision or ethical framework. Instead, in a country 'für Autos gebaut' (*GN*, p.16), the measure of greatness is limited to the efficient construction of high quality roads. As Klein ironically observes: 'Das nationale Budget eines Landes wie Belgien kann nicht so hoch sein wie die Ausgaben, die hier zum Ausbau der Straßen, zu ihrer Beschilderung, zur Wahl ihres Materials oder ihrer Bordsteine, Bürgersteine und Ampeln verwendet werden' (*GN*, pp.16-17). The same spirit of relentless consumerism and cultural

vacuity seems to dominate many of the people with whom Klein comes into contact. His uncle Ernst, a retired manager for Opel, conducts a series of affairs with his secretaries, while his wife is confined to an obesity clinic. Proud of his ability to assimilate into modern life, he demonstrates his familiarity with the latest computer games, and defends, in terms of technical objectivity, the scientific progress which was made possible by Nazi research (*GN*, pp.137-139). When Albert meets up with some of his old friends in Hamburg for dinner, he becomes entirely disillusioned with their emphasis on material success and career advancement. Helmut, whom Albert first got to know as a young poet, has abandoned his literary ambitions, and submerged himself in his suburban home, pursuing a legal career during the week and practising golf at the weekend. Like Rudolph he has entirely rejected his earlier convictions apparently without compunction, and has become a 'Rechthaber […], der all seine Volten als den alleinseligmachenden Weg rechtfertigen mußte' (*GN*, p.384). The meal ends in intense irritation for Albert, as the bill is calculated for each individual in excruciating detail. Many of these criticisms seem almost to echo Strauß's vitriolic assault upon the ideology of 'Volksreichtum',[56] or Maurer's attack on 'Wohlstands- und Konsumpatriotismus'.[57] In focusing his attack on the banality of consumer culture and the empty trappings of economic success, however, Klein is entering upon ambiguous political territory. He seems to be both reasserting the critique of contemporary German society made by the New Right, while himself exemplifying the phenomenon of 'Vaterhaß', which they find so repugnant. At the

[56] Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', p.20.
[57] Maurer, 'Schuld und Wohlstand. Über die westlich-deutsche Generallinie', p.81.

same time, Klein's outbursts concerning consumer capitalism equally invoke voices on the left, who see social fragmentation as the unwelcome result of overbearing market forces. Despite the clear engagement with contemporary political debates, therefore, it is extremely difficult to discern the exact character either of Klein's ideological position or of Kleeberg's political intent. This ambiguity is further heightened by the portrayal of the former GDR.

Since Klein first crosses the border at Saarbrücken, his first impressions are of the West rather than the former East Germany. This initial re-encounter with West Germany serves to underline Klein's dissatisfaction with the dominant culture of reunified Germany, which he denigrates as a mere expansion of the Western socio-economic model. In his view, the 'neue Bundesländer' in the new Germany are permitted to contribute little to the cultural mainstream other than a new market for gleaming vehicles and immaculate stretches of tarmac. As Klein begins to reestablish contact with family and old friends, the dominant ideology of cultural vacuity and empty consumerism seems to have overtaken even those closest to him. Many of these people have abandoned their previous creative and intellectual interests in order to accumulate wealth and to conform to conventional lifestyle expectations. Some of the most startling transformations have occurred among those from the former GDR. A prime example of this is Albert's cousin Rudolph. The metamorphosis of Rudolph from a lively and easygoing jazz musician in the GDR into a cynical money maker, expresses all that Klein finds most repellent about contemporary German society and its colonisation of the East. In the early days of their friendship before the Wende, when Albert was

living in Paris, he remembers his cousin as a warm and entirely likeable figure. Having received a travel permit out of the GDR, in order to visit his ill grandmother, Rudolph takes the opportunity to cross the French border and see Paris for himself. He is full of excitement and wonder for the beautiful sights around him, eagerly drinking up the atmosphere and expressing pleasure at each new experience:

> Er ging durch die lauten lichtertrunkenen Straßen mit dem Blick des überwältigten Touristen, den Kopf ein wenig angehoben, die Augen in Höhe der dritten Etage gerichtet, um nicht von der Flut der Details ertränkt zu werden. Er hatte mir lange und fest die Hand geschüttelt, als er bei uns eintraf und mir dabei in die Augen gesehen – man ist derlei nicht gewöhnt, und ich hatte, ich weiß nicht warum, ein schlechtes Gewissen oder empfand eine Art von Scham: wie ungeschickt und verschüchtert er zurückzuckte, als Pauline ihn, anstatt shakehands zu machen, links und rechts auf die Wange küßte. (*GN*, p.49)

The whole picture is one of an innocent abroad, full of childlike simplicity, naïvely enjoying new and sophisticated pleasures. Unlike the urbane Westerners, who avoid direct eye contact and suavely exchange cosmopolitan greetings, Rudolph's behaviour is artless and straightforward. He is fascinated by 'der joviale Professionalismus der Kellner', astounded by the dazzling array of seafood dishes and full of impatience to have his first experience of the pinball machine (*GN*, pp.50-51). Neither can this be interpreted negatively as merely the effects of cultural ignorance. In his own area of music, Rudolph is extremely knowledgeable. On their way to a famous Parisian jazz club, Albert attempts to explain the complexities of the musician they are about to hear: 'ich erklärte Rudolph, daß Murrays Stücke zunächst schwer zu hören seien, sich aber als meisterhaft entpuppten, wenn man sich nur in ihre Logik zu versetzen verstünde' (*GN*, p.51).

However, it immediately becomes apparent that he has underestimated his cousin's knowledge. His cosmopolitan self-assurance gives way to the realisation that Rudolph is by far the better-informed. His status as a GDR citizen has not prevented him from seeing the most famous jazz musicians in the world. In answer to Albert's surprised question, 'Du kennst den Namen [Dave Murray]?', Rudolph replies:

> »Ja, ich habe ihn ein paarmal in Warschau gesehen […] Da kommen immer eine ganze Menge Leute zusammen. Für uns ist das jedesmal eine Pilgerfahrt. Zwölf Stunden mit dem Trabbi und dann zelten bei drei Grad. Viermal hab ich Miles Davis gesehn, aber auch Leute wie Braxton, Chico Freeman, die Marsalis-Brüder, Garbarek, oder Bill Evans und Shorter…« (*GN*, p.51)

Albert's assumptions about the parochialism of his cousin's outlook have been overturned, and the breadth of Rudolph's cultural understanding revealed. Even Pauline, who is customarily disparaging about Germans, finds nothing to criticise: 'Jazzer unter Jazzern, schlug er die Brücke zwischen Warschau und dem 9. Pariser Arrondissement. Internationaler als wir alle. Er war der erste Deutsche, an dem Pauline nichts zu kritteln fand' (*GN*, p.52).

This highly positive characterisation of Rudolph continues into the months immediately following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. When Albert and Pauline go to Globau to visit him in 1990, they instantly feel at home. Klein's experience of life with his cousin's family is idyllic, full of the warm sun and shared enjoyment of the countryside and of music. Days are spent in large inclusive groups of family and friends, a way of life which is refreshingly new to Albert and Pauline, and which is symbolised by the collective experience of making music. In

cultural terms, the people of Globau seem to be united and happily singing from the same hymn sheet:

> Am Abend grillten wir draußen in der Laube, Rudolph bespritzte die Schweinenacken über der Holzkohle mit Bier, um das Fleisch saftig zu halten, es wurde gesungen und musiziert; alle machten mit, die Alten genauso wie die Kinder, deutsche Volkslieder, die alle zu meinem Erstaunen auswendig kannten, und englische Standards. Rudolph spielte Saxophon, sein Bruder Akkordeon, Ulrikes Mann zupfte auf der Gitarre, der Schwiegervater improvisierte ein Solo auf der Maultrommel […] (*GN*, pp.63-64)

In this chapter, itself entitled 'Das andere Deutschland', we find a positive picture of German identity which has survived the assaults of history. German folk songs are known off by heart and are sung without embarrassment, and a clear sense of community prevails. Once again, Pauline breaks through her suspicion of German culture. She feels 'endlich adoptiert von einer deutschen Familie' and happily suggests to Albert, 'wenn wir jemals nach Deutschland gehen, um da zu leben, dann hierher' (*GN*, p.64).

However, in Klein's ensuing visits to Rudolph throughout the nineties, it soon becomes clear that social changes are enveloping the former GDR, and that the unique character of Globau and its people are undergoing an unwelcome transformation. Through the changes which have been wrought in the character of Rudolph emerges the betrayal of the former idyll of community. Reunification has not resulted in a benevolent sense of national inclusion, but has instead led to the colonisation of the East by Western consumer culture and the exploitative operations of large corporations. Gone is the friendly face of the East German jazz musician, and in its place has developed the new figure of the slick financier. No longer satisfied with lesser models of car, he has 'ein E-Klasse-Mercedes' to park

outside his brand new bungalow, and is irritated by his wife's desire to hang onto the old 'Trabbi' (*GN*, p.65). Instead of leisurely picnics and music, Rudolph is absorbed in the frequent calls he receives on his mobile phone, and is no longer interested in making his way in jazz. Having resigned himself to the harsh economic realities which demand that 'Man muß sich halt ein bißchen nach der Nachfrage richten' (*GN*, p.69), he has abandoned jazz fusion, and has limited himself to crowd-pleasing New Orleans and Dixieland numbers, which he performs occasionally at parties. Instead of music, he directs his energies towards a series of dubious and legally suspect investment projects, which he began with 'zwei Typen aus dem Westen' (*GN*, p.69) and is expanding with an organisation of venture capitalists based in Switzerland. His latest business deal concerns a four hectare piece of land in central Berlin, which he is attempting to sell to an American software company, despite the fact that the land is thought to be severely polluted. Any attempt made by Klein to question the ethics of any of these projects is met by evasive self-justification on the part of Rudolph and his associates. Rudolph portrays himself as championing the business acumen of East Germans: 'ich wollte ihnen schon beweisen, daß man aus dem Osten kommen und dennoch etwas von Business verstehen kann' (*GN*, p.71). Sternhart, a partner in the Berlin project, insists that they have 'vor allem den menschlichen Aspekt im Auge behalten', arguing that he is motivated by a moral duty to serve the new post-Wende society: 'Ich nenn es eine große Aufgabe. Eine nationale Aufgabe. Herrgott nochmal, auf diese Wiedervereinigung haben wir doch alle 40 Jahre gewartet! Und dann dabeistehen und nicht mithelfen, wenn sie endlich kommt?'

(*GN*, pp.73-74). Paul Scheidig, a representative for the American firm, is similarly self-congratulatory in his language, rebuking Albert: 'bedenken Sie, daß wir es nicht zum Spaß oder aus purer Profitgier tun'. He then enters into a long list of social and economic benefits which he is magnanimously willing to provide. As an investor in the new Germany, he is acting as a benefactor, distributing largesse in the form of jobs, office space and leisure facilities. In short, he concludes, 'wir helfen auch mit, Leben in dieses Viertel zu bringen' (*GN*, p.85). Rudolph's indignation about the colonisation by Western businessman, whom he previously described as 'Schieber! Hyänen! Wie die Spanier bei den Inkas oder die Amerikaner mit den Indianern' (*GN*, p.62), has given way to complete assimilation. For Rudolph and his business partners, national identity has become merely a fig leaf with which to cover a ruthless desire for financial gain.

Rudolph's transformation is reflected by the changes which have taken place in his home town of Globau. As Klein observes in the course of his visit, most of the evidence of local community has gone, and has been replaced by blandly homogenous gleaming car showrooms, high-tech shopping facilities and the inevitably immaculate new roads:

> In fünf Jahren hatte Globau sich in eine typische bundesdeutsche Kleinstadt verwandelt. […] Die Straße verbreitert und asphaltiert, mit Abbiegespuren und Ampeln, zwei Supermärkte, ein Bau- und Heimwerkermarkt, die Viehweiden zu rechter Hand in ein »Gewerbegebiet West« umgewandelt, mit den riesigen Plakaten »Aufschwung Ost« am Straßenrand, ein Honda-Händler, noch größer und mit noch mehr Glas: ein VAG-Händler und, etwas kleiner, dafür schicker und aluminiumsglänzend: ein BMW-Autohaus. Alles strahlte blitzsauber, man konnte in keinem anderen Land sein als in Deutschland. (*GN*, p.55)

Most telling of all, in Klein's cultural lexicon, is the fact that the beauty of the natural world has been disregarded or deliberately suppressed, in favour of the 'Chrom-Nickel-Welt der Bundesrepublik' (*GN*, p.56). The supposed 'Aufschwung Ost' is characterised by the destruction of the 'Viehweiden', and 'keine Spur' remains of 'ein gepflastertes, idyllische Wiesen durchschneidendes Sträßchen mit Schlaglöchern' (*GN*, p.55). Although some of the town's gardens remain, they are 'in der Februarnässe […] nackt und brach' (*GN*, p.56), with no birdsong to remind him of how beautiful it used to be. Whereas Rudolph's garden used to be a 'Zaubergarten' which Klein remembers in loving detail (*GN*, p.57), he now has merely an empty space 'wo einmal ein Garten entstehen sollte: aufgetürmte Erd- und Sandhaufen, gefroren, tauend' (*GN*, p.65). Reunification has not brought a wider and more stable sense of community, but has instead resulted literally in a barren wasteland. As Klein's father argues, the Wende is a business transaction, in which the West provides funds in return for the East's acceptance of the laws of the market: 'Wir tun unser Teil, aber die müssen eben auch das ihre tun und anfangen, ein bißchen Initiative zu entwickeln. Wir stecken da 100 Milliarden rein […]' (*GN*, pp.53-54).

Klein's vitriolic attack on the cultural bankruptcy of German consumerism forms part of an explanation for the demise of a meaningful concept of collective identity. Trapped within a homogenous and bland world of products, contemporary German society is, Klein suggests, incapable of defining itself in any more profound terms than the relentless acquisition of new cars. A further symptom of this cultural poverty which Klein discerns is the absence of any real

collective memory. The domination of consumer society, with its lack of philosophical depth and its sense of impermanence, has lost any profound connection with the past. Klein's 'Vaterhaß', the disgust with his homeland, seems partly to reside in a feeling of being disjointed from his cultural heritage. As he sits outside the Waldstein palace, he contemplates what he sees as Germany's collective memory loss. For Albert, towns such as Amsterdam, Paris and Prague seem to resonate with history and echo with the voices of those who have gone before. This perception stands in stark contrast to his own country, in which he sees only a relentless desire to forget, and to deny any concept of continuity which goes beyond the formation of the Bundesrepublik. Klein regards Germany as a society which has lost its way, and which seeks a cultural identity only through the economic successes of the present:

> Schönheit hat auch mit Erinnerung zu tun, denn es ist der Vergleich, der Schönheit schafft. Und Erinnerung ist Kontinuität. Wie oft hatten sich mir in Amsterdam, in Paris, im Anblick eines Hauses, eines Cafés, einer Straße die Zeiten ineinandergeschoben, Silhouetten aus vier, aus fünf oder sechs Generationen, die dieselben Stufen abschliffen, aus demselben Fenster geschaut hatten, über die nämlichen Straßen geschrieben. Und wir? Ein Loch. Ein Nichts. Und die Stimmen, wir müßten doch endlich vergessen. Was sind 50 Jahre? Viel für ein Volk, das glaubt, es bestehe erst seit 45 Jahren. (*GN*, pp.28-29)

This strategy of limiting national identity to the present heightens Albert's sense of contempt for his country, since 'Wie kann man in ein Land zurückwollen, in dem nur die Gegenwart existierte, in dem man nur die Gegenwart gelebt hatte?' (*GN*, p.31). Neither does Germany's rejection of its own past endear itself to its neighbours. While the new Germany may have constructed a new self-image which denies an earlier tradition, other countries are not so ready to forget:

> Nicht jeder vergißt so schnell wie unsereins und wie wir glauben, daß ein jeder vergessen müsse. Das Exil öffnet die Augen. Vor allem über die Illusion des kurzen Gedächtnisses unserer Nachbarn. Wenn wir wüßten, wie wenig Liebe, Vertrauen, Achtung und Freundschaft unser Wirtschaftswunder, unsere Demokratie, unsere Nationalelf und unsere Autos hervorgerufen haben! (*GN*, p.29)

Seen in this way, Germany can be characterised as a cultural vacuum, bordered by frenetic consumerism on the one hand and the shadow of Nazism on the other. A generation of Germans has thus grown up with the sense of a 'Loch' at the centre of their nation. As Albert bitterly summarises: 'Die Deutschen: ein Teil alte Nazis, ein Teil neue Amerikaner. In der Mitte ein Loch' (*GN*, p.40). The overriding symbol of this cultural no-man's-land, where tradition and history have no place, is the barren plot of ground which Rudolph is trying to sell to an American corporation. This land, identified by the title given to chapter XI as 'Das Loch im Herzen von Deutschland' (*GN*, p.80), represents in the novel the tragic schism which has opened up between Germany's present and its past. Abandoned since the end of the second world war, and trapped between the divided German states, it is a wasteland, in which little grows, and about which little is known. Like Rudolph's untended and desolate garden, it acts for Klein as a powerful embodiment of a barren national culture:

> Aus der festgetretenen, umgegrabenen oder neu aufgeschütteten Erde wucherten Disteln. Es war Brachland, um das sich seit einem halben Jahrhundert kein Mensch mehr gekümmert hatte. Mitten in Deutschland. Mitten in Berlin. Ein Loch. (*GN*, p.81)

Like Germany, it has been robbed of its identity and uprooted from a sense of continuity and tradition. When Albert enquires whether the earlier ownership of the land has been investigated, he is met with blank incomprehension. The idea of

pursuing history beyond the confines of the post-war era is unthinkable. Albert objects, arguing that, 'Hier hat alles eine Vergangenheit. […] Auch wenn alle Fäden durchgeschnitten sind. Auch wenns uns heute egal ist. Auch wenn wir uns nicht erinnern wollen oder können' (*GN*, pp.84-85), but the only response which he receives is Herr Müller's repetition of the commercial transaction which is currently taking place. As far as his information goes, 'war hier nichts als verseuchtes Brachland, auf das niemand Besitzansprüche erhebt' (*GN*, p.85), and he sees no need to research any further into the matter. It is to rescue Germany from this cultural 'Loch' that Albert begins his story of 'das andere Deutschland', a place in which tradition and continuity can be found. To overcome his hatred for his contemporary society, Klein must look to the past and rediscover his great love for his homeland. This love, which overrides his emotional attachment to individuals, expresses all that is most profound and most precious in Klein's search for his own identity:

> Die Sehnsucht nach den Hügeln und Wäldern, nach der Mailandschaft und der Unwille gegen dieses Land, das nicht so war wie andere Länder, mein Weg, mein Zynismus, meine Traurigkeit, meine Neugierde, meine Zerstörungswut, meine Erinnerungen, meine Tränen, meine Suche – war das nicht Liebe? (*GN*, p.45)

In the course of these opening sections of the novel, Kleeberg introduces many of the issues which are raised by the New Right. He portrays an individual who feels contempt for his own country, and locates the reasons for this 'Vaterhaß' partly in the bland and homogenous consumerism which dominates German society, and partly in the absence of a national tradition. When a nation is robbed of its own history, he seems to suggest, nothing remains but a cultural

wasteland, in which German identity withers and dies. If 'Vaterhaß' is to be replaced with 'Vaterliebe', this connection with the past must be restored and a sense of continuity rebuilt. The construction of 'das andere Deutschland', a concept which is central to many of the contributors to *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, offers an opportunity to reclaim Germany from the clutches of both the 'alte Nazis' and the 'neue Amerikaner'. With a national tradition re-established, the 'Loch' at the heart of the nation can be filled, and a new German identity can be born.

In many ways, therefore, Kleeberg is engaging with both the language and the thematic preoccupations of the intellectual wing of the New Right. The emergence of 'Vaterliebe' from 'Vaterhaß' with the help of 'das andere Deutschland' all signal an engagement with their political discourse, and to a certain extent echo their rhetoric. This is, however, certainly not to say that Kleeberg's novel itself occupies the ideological position held by the New Right. The condemnation of rampant consumerism does after all lend itself equally or more comfortably to the political left, and Kleeberg uses none of the New Right's tactics of historical relativism, which aim to consign the Third Reich to 'ein geläufiges Intermezzo im nunmal blutigen Drama der Weltgeschichte'.[58] Indeed, in Albert's attack on his uncle Ernst (pp.138-139), it is rather his uncle's failure to respond with sufficient respect to the memory of the holocaust which enrages him. Albert's father, who derides 'Gedenkstätte' while reading his copy of *FAZ* (*GN*, p.85), is similarly attacked. This rejection of the position of the New Right is most clearly visible in the narrative role played by the former East Germany. Taken at

[58] Assheuer and Sarkowicz, *Rechtsradikale in Deutschland. Die alte und die neue Rechte*, p.189.

face value, the novel's portrayal of the GDR through the eyes of Klein presents the reader with a recognisable and broadly left-leaning interpretation of reunification. Klein appears to view East Germany with nostalgic longing as the embodiment of social cohesion, vibrant folk culture and inclusive community life. As reunification progresses, he sees these values and social structures fragmenting under the pressure of Western consumerism. The idyll of communal singing and well-tended gardens gives way to cynical business deals and social isolation. With this portrayal of pre- and post-Wende East Germany, Klein is tapping into a well-worn utopian vision of the GDR which could itself clearly be seen as problematic. In her article 'Die Mauer in den Köpfen', Friederike Eigler points to the newly emerging tendency on the part of East Germans to regard the GDR with nostalgic longing. As with many other commentators, she views this as an unhelpful development, which prevents citizens of the former GDR either from coming to terms with their own past or breaking down the 'Spaltung' between themselves and their Western neighbours:

> Zum einen entsteht eine Tendenz zur Nostalgie, zur Beschönigung der Verhältnisse im 'vormundschaftlichen Staat' der DDR, zum anderen wird dadurch eine interne Auseinandersetzung um das Ausmaß der eigenen Verwicklung und Mittäterschaft vermieden.[59]

Karl Heinz Bohrer makes a similar criticism, though with less understanding and sympathy than Eigler, when he attacks East German writers and intellectuals for attempting 'soviel wie möglich von der alten Utopie und dem utopischen Habitus

[59] Friederike Eigler, 'Die Mauer in den Köpfen: Mechanismen der Ausgrenzung und Abwehr am Beispiel der Christa-Wolf-Kontroverse', *German Life and Letters* 46 (1993) pp.71-81, p.78.

individuell und institutionell zu retten'.[60] Whether these criticisms of East Germans are justified or not, Klein, with his invocation of 'Ostalgie', does seem to be offering a rather sanitised version of what was a totalitarian and highly repressive regime.

In terms of its ideological standpoint, therefore, the novel appears to straddle two recognisable but highly problematic interpretations of contemporary German society. On the one hand, Kleeberg seems to be drawing explicitly on the discourse of the New Right. Klein's overwhelming 'Vaterhaß' is presented as the result of a weakened national identity, which has fragmented under the destructive forces of consumer capitalism and the spectre of Nazism. This supposed wreck of national culture can only be salvaged through the reconstruction of 'das andere Deutschland', a more cohesive and innocent society, from which the anomaly of fascism can be expunged. On the other hand, and in contrast to the discourse of the New Right, Kleeberg is drawing on a nostalgic caricature of the GDR, in which close knit communities live in idyllic surroundings free from State oppression. By using 'Das andere Deutschland' as the title to chapter VIII, Kleeberg even seems to be putting forward the GDR as a serious candidate for the utopian reinvention of Germany, a suggestion which none but the most diehard members of the SED could countenance.

What then is Kleeberg's intent in framing his novel around these controversial and polarised debates on German identity and history, a narrative decision which, as I have already shown, tends to provoke a suspicious or negative

[60] Bohrer, Karl-Heinz, 'Kulturschutz DDR?' in *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 44 (1990) pp.1015-1018, p.1015.

reaction in the case of some reviewers? How can we assess the precise position of the novel in relation to these ideologically problematic areas, and what role do the fantastic elements of the novel play in negotiating issues of such high political sensitivity?

Romantic irony and the representation of 'Das andere Deutschland'

Central to the question of Kleeberg's narrative and political intentions is the level of ideological self-consciousness which is exhibited by the novel. The invocation of recognisable fixed political categories within *Ein Garten im Norden* does not merely occur at an implicit level, whereby the reader has to form his or her own connections between the novel's thematic content and the wider context of public debates. Rather, Kleeberg makes these links explicit in a text openly thematising its own ideological references, and incorporating the conflicts raised by the clash of ideological interpretations into the body of the narrative. As Wolfram Schütte implies in his review, the act of interpretation is not simply confined to the relationship between the reader and the text, but is also explicitly acted out within the text itself. This 'dritte Ebene […], die der ironischen, dialogischen Reflexion über Grenzen und Möglichkeiten dichterischer Phastasie',[61] forces the reader into an awareness of the political implications of narrative decisions, and dramatises any resulting dissent. Any attempt to untangle the ideological threads of the novel must therefore take account not only of the narrative representation of 'das andere Deutschland', but must also explore the ways in which this representation is challenged from within the text itself. This internal and ironic dialogue occurs

[61] Schütte, 'Der Traum vom »anderen« Deutschland'.

most obviously through the fantastical role of the bookseller, who appears mysteriously without warning at various points throughout the novel and berates the later Klein for his narratorial choices.

A useful way of understanding the overt intrusion of the 'Antiquar' into the text of *Ein Garten im Norden*, can be found in the idea of romantic irony. Broadly speaking, this constitutes a form of irony whereby the illusion of reality offered in the text is shattered through the intervention of an authorial voice or the voice of a character within the text. By commenting on narrative choices, criticising the way in which the story is being told or suggesting alternative plotlines, this intruding voice draws attention to the construction of the text itself and makes overt and often critical reference to the narrative conventions which are being employed. However, as many critics have commented, any attempt to define the concept of romantic irony presents a number of difficulties. Raymond Immerwahr questions the use of the word 'romantic' as an appropriate term for the form of irony in question,[62] while Lilian Furst points to the widespread critical confusion between romantic irony and other forms of literary irony.[63] Theorists such as Ernst Behler[64] and Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs[65] have written important studies of romantic irony, which offer in-depth analyses of German Romanticism and the conception of irony as put forward by Friedrich Schlegel and his contemporaries. In seeking to understand the notion of romantic irony, therefore, the philosophical and historical

[62] Raymond Immerwahr, 'The Practice of Irony in Early German Romanticism' in *Romantic Irony*, ed. Frederick Garber (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988) pp.82-96, p.82.
[63] Lilian R. Furst, *The Contours of European Romanticism* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1979) p.17.
[64] See Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[65] See Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977).

complexity of the subject matter becomes immediately apparent. The various intricacies of these wideranging contextual and theoretical issues lie outside the scope of my study. However, despite the fierce debate which surrounds any attempt to define romantic irony, there are a number of features upon which critics can broadly agree, and which can provide a useful working definition.

Most critics emphasise that romantic irony, like other forms of irony, is founded upon a duality or dialectical structure within the text. As Lilian Furst points out, the central characteristic of the ironist is the 'dual vision', a mode of communication in which the surface meaning of the text is unsettled:

> Traditionally the ironist has a dual vision, for he sees a latent reality divergent from the masking appearance on the surface. While recognising the incongruities of a situation, he seems to accept things at their face value. But at the same time, by one means or another, he lets his other view shimmer through, so that the reader too becomes aware of the alternative. In the reader's agreeing comprehension of the double meaning there is a tacit communication of the ironic perspective from the narrator to the reader.'[66]

However, unlike the forms of 'stable irony', whereby one surface layer of meaning is dispensed with and is replaced by another more authentic and sincere meaning, romantic irony questions the authenticity of the text itself. Stable irony 'is intended to be reconstructed with meanings different from those on the surface […] is stable and fixed insofar as there is no further demolition of the reconstructed meaning' and 'is finite in application'.[67] Although there is a double layer of meaning within the text, there exists a relationship of intimacy between the creator of the text and the recipient of it, a relationship in which the author, 'though maintaining his

[66] Furst, *The Contours of European Romanticism* p.19.
[67] Ibid, p.21.

aesthetic distance, is secretly in collusion with the reader'.[68] In the case of romantic irony, however, there exists no such comfortable bond. The main focus of the irony is not to enable the reader to unlock the secret but stable meaning of the text. Rather it acts to reflect upon the act of artistic creation itself by overtly dramatising 'the authorial consciousness' and 'the dialectic of self-creation and self-destruction'.[69] In the Romantic period, as Behler suggests, this ironic drama of creativity, examples of which can be seen in the work of Schlegel, Tieck and Heine among many others, echoed a series of fundamental contradictions and ambivalences within the Romantics' conception of the art and the artist:

> More than in any other period of Western literature the ironic attitude appears as the distinctive hallmark of the Romantic generation, deeply affected as they were by the antagonism of heart with intellect, of spontaneity with reflection, of passion with calculation, and enthusiasm with scepticism. It is in this epoch that we encounter individuals who, out of their "dédoublement", engage in infinite reflection.[70]

It is concentration on the process of creating a text that defines a romantic ironist. Unlike other ironists, they do not 'conform to the normal narrative expectations' and 'the actual creative process becomes so essential a part of the work that it often seems to usurp the centre of interest'.[71] As the act of creation begins to take over as the subject of the text, the narrative unity and coherence, which are to be found in many other forms of irony, start to fragment:

> The narrator's stance is that of the self-conscious raconteur, standing alongside his narrative, offering overt comment on his

[68] Ibid.
[69] Frederick Garber, 'Coda: Ironies, Domestic and Cosmopolitan' in *Romantic Irony*, ed. Frederick Garber (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988) pp.358-382, p.358.
[70] Ernst Behler, 'The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism' in *Romantic Irony*, ed. Frederick Garber (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988) pp.43-81, p.43.
[71] Furst, *The Contours of European Romanticism*, p.24.

> work, voicing his views unabashedly in front of his characters, whose fate often appears of lesser importance to him than his own reflections. The romantic ironist, therefore, assumes a prominence in his narrative that is the antithesis of the half-hidden, reticent position associated with the traditional ironist.[72]

Furst comes to the conclusion that this breaking open of the narrative illusion, while possibly positive in intent, is nonetheless a negative development, destroying the relationship between reader and narrator, and leaving the reader in the disorienting role of 'no more than an audience of the creative spectacle at best'.[73]

In his examination of the function of romantic irony, D.C. Muecke takes a more positive view. Rather than seeing romantic irony as a mere collapse into disorder and narrative anarchy, he emphasises its role of transcendence. By acknowledging the contradictions inherent within the work of art, creative artists are able both to recognise and to move beyond the paradox which confronts them. To this end, romantic irony operates by drawing attention to the materiality and mechanical construction of the work, reminding the reader that he or she is dealing with a representation of reality and not with reality itself:

> The sophisticated or self-conscious artist who is aware of the contradictions implicit in the double nature of art will sometimes bring into his work at the imaginative level some aspects of its existence at the 'ordinary world' level as a work that is being composed, and composed to be seen, performed or read. That is to say he will break into the artistic illusion with a reminder to his public […] that what they have before them is only a painting, a play, or a novel and not the reality it purports to be. This sort of thing has been called Romantic Irony.[74]

[72] Ibid, p.26.
[73] Ibid, p.27.
[74] D.C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969) p.164.

The explicit assertion of a duality between reality and representation acknowledges 'the fact that art, like any other attempt to verbalize reality, must always fall short of its aim'.[75] Since the artist attempts to represent the world, he or she is forced into an ambivalent relationship with all the contradictions and paradoxes which the world exhibits. The human subject is condemned to be 'a finite creature in a seemingly infinite and endless world whose fathomless complexities he could never penetrate, whose sheer contradictions he could never reconcile, and whose infinite possibilities he could never realize'.[76] However, using the philosophy of Fichte to reflect on the relationship between the artist and the world, Friedrich Schlegel and other proponents of the Romantic movement were able to some extent to readjust the balance of power. While the artist is irrevocably tied to a world full of paradox and contradiction, he or she can use the power of the imagination to reach beyond the finite and strive towards the infinite. Thus a dualism is created in which the individual both acknowledges his or her material limitations, while at the same time transcending them with the infinite supremacy of the human mind and imagination. It is this dialectic between the materiality of the work of art, limited by the confines of the world and the boundless power of the creative imagination transcending it, which romantic irony expresses:

> we get a composite image of man as infinite and free in imagination and reflection but finite and limited in understanding and action. In other words, we see the real ironizing the ideal, or more precisely, the ineluctable ironies of life ironizing man's compelling need to reach towards perfection (and this can be recognized and expressed with bitter or despairing irony); but conversely, the ideal can

[75] Ibid, p.163.
[76] Ibid, p.191.

> ironize the real, that is, man can express his spirit's independence of the world with disdainful or insouciant irony.[77]

By acknowledging the limitations of the work of art which are inescapable, therefore, the artist is simultaneously asserting his or her freedom from them. In order to transcend the finite materiality of the world, the problematic and dualistic nature of art becomes a central concern of the work itself. The conflicts and paradoxes of artistic creation become assimilated into the work of art, allowing its creator both to take account of them and to move beyond them:

> The impossibility of comprehending the world in its vastness, its complexity, and its dynamic quality is, we see, an impossibility that confronts the work of art. How can a work of art, which of its nature is something that can be finished, and therefore something finite and static, express the infiniteness of life? […]The answer given by the Romantic Ironists was that the work of art should itself acknowledge its limitations, and by doing so with irony it would take on the dynamic quality which life has and which art should therefore express. The first step the artist must take is to recognize that he cannot 'preserve himself against the destructive power of the whole' by retreating into pure subjectivity, for to content oneself with the outpourings of individual inspiration is to lack a sense of the universal. […] Just as one can protect oneself against the overpowering objectivity of the world with irony, by not taking it altogether seriously, so an artist can, indeed should, protect himself against his work. If he did not adopt an ironical attitude towards his work (and his authorship) he would be imprisoned in its finiteness, limited by its limits. *Vis-à-vis* his work the artist is a god – free to create or destroy at his mere pleasure; and this freedom is to be expressed in his work as irony.[78]

Romantic irony, then, is a fundamentally dialectical mode, striving for universality by mediating between creative limitations on the one hand and a suggested transcendence of them on the other. Moving from the Romantic period itself to the post-Wende context of *Ein Garten im Norden*, therefore, how can this ironic and

[77] Ibid, p.192.
[78] Ibid, pp.195-198.

dualistic mode be understood, and what are its implications for the construction of 'das andere Deutschland'?

Ein Garten im Norden **and Irony**

Throughout the novel, there is an all-pervasive level of irony which unsettles and undercuts any straightforward ideological interpretations of the text. The 'dritte Ebene' identified by Schütte is not confined to the appearances of the Antiquar, but is also evident in a slightly more disguised form throughout the novel, including those sections which concern the later Klein and his experience of contemporary Germany. As I have already argued, in choosing the title 'Das andere Deutschland' (*GN*, p.54) for a chapter which offers an uncritical and glowing portrait of community life in the GDR, Kleeberg is drawing on an easily recognisable feeling of nostalgia or 'Ostalgie', in which the former East Germany is looked back on from the perspective of the post-Wende Bundesrepublik as the embodiment of a better society. However, since Kleeberg makes such an explicit link between the nostalgic vision of 'das andere Deutschland' and the GDR, it becomes difficult to accept Klein's wistful portrayal entirely at face value. By using a familiar political category to define the position being adopted by Klein the narrator, Kleeberg is relativising Klein's voice and is placing it within the context of wider debate and dissent. In this way, the reader is forced to respond to Klein's perceptions in a critical and analytical way rather than simply through empathetic acceptance. The ideological and emotional power of Klein's rhetoric is therefore undermined by the overt textual signals, which point to his appropriation

of an already well established and even clichéd discourse. Seen in this way, the portrait of community life in East Germany can be understood through a narrative framework which is dualistic and ironic. The utopian nostalgic vision is constructed, but is at the same time problematised through an overt acknowledgement of its political implications.

Taking the ironic structure of the text into account, therefore, it is difficult to accept Klein's dreamy picture at face value. The images which he uses to describe the lost utopia of the GDR past seem to be chosen precisely to echo a well-worn and problematic idyll, rather than to create a politically untainted vision. The ubiquitous East German car, the Trabant, is transformed into a symbolic embodiment of family and community cohesion. When Rudolph talks of his regular pilgrimage to the Warsaw jazz festival, he remembers convivial twelve hour road trips 'mit dem Trabbi' (*GN*, p.51), and when Klein and Pauline go to stay with him in Globau, the Trabbis are once more pressed into service, in order to accommodate yet another high-spirited group of pleasure seekers. (*GN*, p.64). By the end of the day, normally restrained Pauline has thown off her inhibitions, and is playing barefoot with a throng of laughing children, who love her, leading her to the conclusion that 'wenn wir jemals nach Deutschland gehen, um da zu leben, dann hierher' (*GN*, p.64). The Trabbi makes another appearance as a utopian symbol when Klein returns to Globau in 1995. Whilst Rudolph has transformed himself into a cynical businessman, wielding mobile phones and shady contracts, his wife has remained true to the sense of an East German Heimat. When Klein arrives at the new bungalow, purchased thanks to Rudolph's

business deals, he is confronted by a visual clash of the old world and the new: 'Vor der Doppelgarage stand ein E-Klasse-Mercedes und Helgas alter Trabbi, mit dem wir vor fünf Jahren schon nach Pillnitz gefahren waren' (*GN*, p.65). Helga's car embodies continuity and nostalgia, evoking memories of happier times and family excursions, while the Mercedes represents the new order of consumer aspiration. Just as the Mercedes and the 'Handy' point to the intrusion of consumer technology and social fragmentation, so the Trabant epitomises those previously powerful family and community values which have been abandoned in post-Wende society.

Similarly heavy symbolism occurs in the chapter entitled 'Das andere Deutschland'. The repeated and resolute emphasis on natural images to represent the former flourishing of GDR culture confronts the reader with a utopian and harmonious past. As Klein describes in effusive detail the variety, colour and profusion of plants which could once be seen throughout Globau, a picture of the GDR emerges through this 'Zaubergarten' (*GN*, p.57) which is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden itself:

> Vorne wucherten Flieder, Goldregen und Jasmin über die Pforte. […] Die schmalen, plattenbelegten Wege, gesäumt von Rosensträuchern. Die drei Kirschbäume, der Apfelbaum, an dem eine Holzleiter lehnte. Der Gemüsegarten mit den erntereifen Kartoffeln, den leuchtenden Tomaten […] Am Zaun entlang die Himbeeren. Die schattige Laube vor dem Geräteschuppen, wo man uns Kaffee und Kuchen servierte, selbstgebackene Obsttorte und Streuselkuchen, Kaffee für eine ganze Kompanie, und Orangensaft für die Kinder (*GN*, p.57)

The pointed allusion to Rudolph's barren garden at his new house (*GN*, p.65) leaves the reader in little doubt as to the ideological significance of this literal

decay. To make the political point even more overt, Klein observes regretfully that the 'romantisch' 'Ernst-Thälmann-Park' has been renamed 'Willy-Brandt-Park' and has been adapted to Western tastes, with 'Ladenpassagen und natürlich zwanzigmal mehr Autos, Geschäfte und Zigarettenautomaten als damals' (*GN*, p.56). Klein is clearly not afraid of adopting binary oppositions in his characterisation of contemporary German society and of the GDR past. While the former East Germany offered a natural paradise, apparently free of ideological contamination, the Western social model can provide only barren and crass consumerism. The GDR was a wholesome and idyllic place in which to grow up, complete with safe roads, family outings and romantic 'geheime Treffpunkte für Liebesverabredungen' (*GN*, p.55), whereas the West is represented by supermarkets and environmental destruction.

By using images which are so pointedly and repetitively emblematic of utopia and its betrayal, Kleeberg is building a double layer of meaning based on narrative irony. At one level of meaning, the references to joyful simplicity among the flowers and Trabbis convey a message of nostalgic longing for a lost society. At another level, however, the very exaggerated insistence on these somewhat hackneyed images seems to call for a degree of circumspection on the part of the reader. Not only does Kleeberg present a utopian portrayal of the GDR, but he also, through his reference to 'das andere Deutschland' and the extravagant symbolism of his images, explicitly defines these passages as an attempt to invoke a utopia. As a result, the self-reflexivity of the text takes away the act of interpretation from the reader, and makes the narrative's political intent overt.

Since the ideological subtext is unmasked by the text itself in this overt way, it becomes impossible to avoid a confrontation with the problematic political implications which are revealed. The self-consciousness of the text encourages a similar self-awareness on the part of the reader. By means of this dual perspective, sentimentality and nostalgia are not intuitively inferred from the text and emotionally internalised by the reader, but are rather revealed to be political constructs. This use of narrative irony, which both constructs a utopian vision and deconstructs it at the same time, makes any attempt to position the novel in terms of its political affiliation a great deal more difficult. In order to understand the ideological implications of the text, the reader is required to interpret not one but two narrative levels. These levels do not coexist in mutual harmony, but are rather in constant dispute with one another, as the supposed narrative truths of the text are challenged and destabilised by an undercurrent of irony.

Romantic Irony and the Utopian Garden

Building on this layer of narrative irony which is present in the text, it is through a similar method of romantic irony that the fantastical role of the Antiquar can be understood. By interrupting and intruding upon the narrative flow of Albert's story, the bookseller draws attention to the workings of the text and breaks the illusion which Albert is attempting to build. Any sense of completion or organic unity, which is suggested by Klein's utopian vision, is broken open and subjected to unforgiving scrutiny, changing fundamentally the relationship between the reader and the text. As Albert narrates the story of Klein the banker and his

miraculous garden, the Antiquar makes numerous intrusions into the text, criticising his protégé's wanton manipulation of history and drawing attention to the problematic ideological implications of his narrative focus. The story does not simply progress unchallenged under the sovereign control of its narrator Albert, but is instead interrupted and contested by the alternately mocking or angry voice of the bookseller. As a result, the story loses the status of a coherent and organic whole, becoming rather a narrative battleground, in which rival political and philosophical interpretations fight for predominance. In the course of this conflict, the ideological subtext of Albert's utopian vision is dragged out of the shadows and is made the main focus of debate. Instead of allowing the political implications of the story to work on the reader at a covert or inferential level, the disputes between Albert and the Antiquar force the reader to engage with these issues in an explicit and deliberately overt way. Just as the glowing picture of the former GDR is problematised by an ironic double perspective, so irony pervades and unsettles the alternative utopian vision of Germany embodied by the 'Garten im Norden'. The internal coherence of the text is therefore broken open in order to emphasise and to dramatise possible areas of ideological conflict.

The Antiquar's first intrusion occurs quite near the beginning of Albert's story. Albert begins his account of the earlier Klein's 'anderes Deutschland' with an extended and lavish description of the banker's park, giving a strong indication of the kind of cosmopolitan and enlightened society which it might represent. As with the portrayal of the GDR, which uses flourishing gardens and natural beauty to suggest the rejection of a bankrupt consumer culture, so the 'Garten im Norden'

forms a living emblem for an alternative historical trajectory, in which democratic principles replace cultural insularity and aggressive nationalism. The garden provides a utopian environment, where politicians, artists and intellectuals can meet and transcend the ideological barriers which divide them in the world outside. The 'Garten im Norden', like the GDR, is described in terms of a refuge from cultural as well as literal ugliness. Albert uses the language of the fairytale to convey clearly its utopian status. Just as Globau offers 'geheime Treffpunkte für Liebesverabredungen' (*GN*, p.55), so Klein's park is given added emotional resonance by its fairytale overtones of secretive beauty and romance:

> »Einst gab es, mitten in der Reichshauptstadt, einen seltsamen Park. Er war von hohen Mauern umgeben, über die im Frühjahr der Duft von Geißblatt, Flieder und Harz wehte, und Liebespaare verabredeten sich unter der Laterne im Schatten der Kastanien…« (*GN*, p.87)

As the journalist and novelist, Joseph Roth, is shown around the garden by Klein's adopted father, Johannes, he is enchanted and moved by the beauty which he sees. Roth, a prominent literary figure of Austro-Hungarian origin, who in his later work often expresses mournful longing for the past, is transported back to his childhood by the delicate fragrances of the plants and trees. Despite the fact that he grew up outside Germany, the garden acts upon him as an evocative embodiment of childhood innocence, and he recalls 'langvergangene Bilder' 'voller Nostalgie und Sehnsucht' (*GN*, p.87). In the course of his tour, two harmoniously co-existing aspects of the garden become apparent: the assertion of a global rather than national outlook and the simultaneous invocation of a strong sense of Heimat. On the one hand, it embodies a cosmopolitan environment, in which prominent people

from around the world congregate and discuss a range of current issues. As Johannes points out, the purpose of Klein's garden is not simply to attract 'Politiker, Künstler, Musiker, Wissenschaftler', but also to form a focal point for the 'Viele Ausländer' who are visiting Germany from neighbouring or far-flung regions of the world. Johannes emphasises that it is this international character of the park which is 'das Wichtigste für den Herrn Direktor' (*GN*, p.90). When Roth meets Jean-Marie Rivière, a French participant in Klein's 'Zirkel um die Welt' scholarship fund programme, he too asserts the cosmopolitan philosophy of the banker's various projects. (*GN*, pp.111-116) The park, with its English, Japanese and French gardens, seems to transcend national and even continental borders and cross-cultural misunderstanding. Within the walls of the garden, the political and military disputes which reign in the world outside are banished, and the rallying symbols of nationhood are replaced by the universal message of natural beauty:

> Exterritorial! Das war es! Der Garten war exterritorial. Es wehten keine Fahnen hier, es marschierte kein preußisches Militär durch die Alleen, es gab keine Trikolore, keinen Union Jack, keine Sterne und Streifen, weder Schwarz-Rot-Gold noch Schwarz-Weiß-Rot, auch keinen Doppeladler, nur das Rosa der Azaleen, das Blaßblau der Stiefmütterchen, das Alabasterweiß der Magnolienblüten. Es gab keine Marschmusik, sondern das Gezwitscher der Vögel' (*GN*, p.109).

However, alongside this preoccupation with casting off the blinkers of nationalism and parochialism the emotional draw of 'Heimat' remains a strong influence. Among the examples of gardens from around the world, there is an area dedicated to the Schwarzwald region of Germany, which acts as a powerful symbol for the German spirit and imagination. As Roth takes the 'Schwarzwaldpfad' through the trees he is entranced not by the cosmopolitan

flavour of the park, but by overwhelming nostalgic memories of his own childhood: 'Schwere Augenlider, so sehr riefen die Töne, Gerüche und Anblicke Erinnerungen herauf, Bilder aus der Kindheit und Jugend, ein Echo unschuldiger Tage, als alles möglich, alles richtig gewesen war' (*GN*, p.95). What Roth understands as the exterritoriality of the park is therefore accompanied by an equally important sense of belonging, expressed through childhood reminiscence and the longing for lost innocence. For Klein, who grew up in the Schwarzwald, this part of the garden is even more significant. While he embraces diverse cultures and traditions, he nonetheless retains a strong emotional sense of his own regional identity. As Johannes explains, the Schwarzwald section of the garden, including the artificial hill, has been created using soil and stone which have been transported from the region itself. Klein made these elaborate arrangements from a sense of 'Nostalgie' in order to recreate a part of his 'Kinderheimat' and to remind him of his days as a young boy, running through the trees on his way to and from school (*GN*, p.93). It is to this part of the park that Klein comes to remember his early life:

> Und die Rosen und Birnbäume, das war Zuhause, und der licht- und schattendurchflutete Schwarzwald mit seinen Tannen und Fichten und den sonnengesättigten moosigen Felsen, das mochte Heimat und Nostalgie heißen für den Eigentümer. (*GN*, p.109).

In the idyll of the 'Garten im Norden', these two guiding forces of cosmopolitanism and Heimat are not in conflict with each other, but rather are mutually enriching and complementary. The emotional power of Klein's 'Zuhause' blends harmoniously with the patchwork of global cultures, landscapes and political affiliations contained within the international atmosphere of the

garden. In a phrase which is used throughout the novel to characterise utopian vision, Roth describes the park as based on two principles: 'Schönheit und Ratio' (*GN*, p.101). It is not merely the beauty of the project which is important, but also the sense of balance and proportion. The power of the utopia relies not on one dominant philosophy or identity which gains predominance over all others, but rather involves a harmonious union between a number of different perspectives and personal allegiances. The garden, which relies on the finely tuned relationship between 'ausgleichende und schaffende menschliche Hand' and the power of the natural world, symbolises this 'perfekt ausbalanciert' (*GN*, p.95) fusion. At the centre of the harmonious whole is Klein, whose transcendent vision has enabled the project to become reality. He refuses to accept the 'Grenzen' which limit human experience and strives towards 'das Absolute' (*GN*, p.107). Like the garden itself, he embodies the harmonious fusion of parallel forces. As Johannes comments, he is at once a man with a poetic sensibility and a man of action:

> Wissen Sie, er muß ja exakt denken und sprechen. Und um seine Träume wahrzumachen, hat er poetisch von seinen Träumen sprechen müssen, aber zugleich auch exakt. Poetisch und exakt. Damit solche Leute wie ich, aber auch ganz andere, zunächst sehen können, was seine Vision ist, und dann ihm helfen, sie zu verwirklichen. (*GN*, p.108)

In order to achieve the realisation of his dreams and bring together individuals with diverging personal agendas, Klein, like the garden, must unite apparently contradictory forces and create a harmonious whole.

It is after these few chapters, which serve primarily to introduce the figure of Klein and his utopian garden, that the Antiquar makes his first unexpected interruption. As the later Albert Klein sits in a traffic jam on the way to Hamburg

and argues with his father about his future, the bookseller from Prague mysteriously appears in the back seat of the car, and begins to challenge certain narrative decisions which Albert has made. Firstly, he attacks the choice of a banker as the protagonist, lambasting Albert for focusing his attention exclusively on the upper echelons of the capitalist hierarchy: 'dafür habe ich es [das Buch] Ihnen nicht gegeben, daß Sie darin von banalen Kapitalisten schreiben! Fällt Ihnen denn nichts Wichtigeres ein als ein Millionär?' (*GN*, p.128). In the Antiquar's eyes, the supposed democratic and egalitarian principles of the utopian garden are unavoidably punctured by the overtly capitalist and élitist profession of the central character. Albert sees his narrative as an attempt to deal with his 'Heimweh' for a lost Germany and to banish his 'Horror vor dem Extrem, vor der Stunde Null, vor der respektlospräpotenten Revolution des Völlig-Neuen' in post-Wende German society. In writing his story, he is harking back to the comforting and warm 'Herbstlicht der konservativen und ewigen Metropole' (*GN*, p.129), where there is a sense of harmonious continuity between the present and the past. For Albert, his protagonist is 'ein großer Visionär' (*GN*, p.130), who offers an alternative to the tyranny of the present, and who can provide a meaningful link to past values which have, in his view, been carelessly tossed aside. For the Antiquar, on the other hand, the story of Klein and his garden represents nothing more than a bourgeois, reactionary construction of history based on sentimentality and 'Eskapismus' (*GN*, p.131), in which socio-economic movements are neglected in favour of the cult of the great individual:

> Und da entblöden Sie sich nicht […] als säßen Sie mitten im 19. Jahrhundert und als könne man das noch, von einem Herrn zu

> erzählen oder von Individuen, die glauben, sie hielten ihr Schicksal in der Hand, sie seien Repräsentanten – oder vielleicht glauben SIE das ja, anstatt von den Strukturen, von den Bewegungen zu sprechen […] Ich weiß nur, daß Geschichte Sozialgeschichte ist, Herrschaftsgeschichte, und daß Sie mit Sentiment, Schicksal und der unerschütterlichen Identität großer Männer sowohl historisch wie auch logisch und literarisch auf einen bösen Schiffbruch zusteuern. (*GN*, pp.130-132).

Seen in this light, Albert's 'Geschichtsbild ist reaktionär' (*GN*, p.131) and Klein's projects of the garden and the 'Zirkel um die Welt' merely an ineffectual 'Zeitvertreib', whereby an exploitative capitalist can salve a bad social conscience (*GN*, p.130). The bookseller accuses Albert of a crude attempt to manipulate the past for his own sentimental ends, and deny the horrors of twentieth century German history, by creating the morally unimpeachable and clichéd figure of 'ein guter Deutscher' (EG, p.131). Albert responds by defining the Antiquar's own position as a hackneyed reprise of Marxist discourse. He parodies the bookseller's arguments, suggesting that the Antiquar values a crude version of literature based on socialist realism:

> Sie wissen nicht, was Sie wollen […] Einmal soll ich über den glühenden Kern meiner Liebe schreiben, oder wie Sie sich ausdrücken, aber dann darf es sich nicht um Menschen handeln, sondern um Strukturen, um Körper, um Zeichen, und wenn es historisch wird, muß ich beginnen mit: Die ausgebeutete Klasse Deutschlands entwickelte kollektiv ein Bewußtsein ihrer revolutionären Identität, die zugleich die nationale war, oder umgekehrt, oder wie dachten Sie sich das? (*GN*, p.131)

This political dispute over the ideological implications and narrative priorities of Albert's story is accompanied by a parallel struggle for ownership of the text itself. The Antiquar, who gave Albert the book in the first place, asserts his right to interfere in the construction of the narrative, arguing that, 'Wenn die

Dinge so fehlzulaufen drohen, dann bin ich gezwungen einzugreifen' (*GN*, p.130). He does not accept that the narrator should hold sovereign power over the text or should be allowed to make unchallenged decisions about the progression of the story. In his view, no individual should be granted the sovereign right to manipulate fictional or historical events without consultation: 'Kein Historiker und noch weniger die historische Person besitzen Geschichte, sowenig wie der Autor ein Thema, einen Stoff besitzt' (*GN*, p.132). Albert, on the other hand, is outraged by this interference, and insists that his authorial power is absolute. He forbids the bookseller to intrude on his role as narrator, and asserts his freedom to control history within his own text:

> Was aus meinem Kopf auf mein Papier kommt, ist eben doch allein und ausschließlich meine Sache. Meine Geschichten gehören mir. Und nicht jeder hat jede Geschichte zu erzählen. Insofern ist es, egal woraufs hinausläuft, zunächst das meine. Und ich verbiete Ihnen ganz einfach, sich da hineinzumischen. Ja, und warum nicht ein anderes Deutschland, wenn es das ist, woran ich mich erinnern will, wenn ich will, daß es existiert habe? (*GN*, p.132)

Temporarily silenced, the Antiquar disappears, warning Albert that his project cannot possibly succeed.

These disputes over ideology and narrative authority have a powerful effect on the reader's relationship with Albert's alternative vision of Germany. Throughout the account of Klein and his utopian garden, the virtues of balance and harmony are shown to be paramount. While the world outside may be riven with conflict and loud with dissenting voices, within the boundaries of Klein's park concord and symmetry hold sway. The opposing ideological forces which do battle elsewhere are here brought into a fusion of 'Schönheit und Ratio'. As Roth makes

his way round the garden, he is overwhelmed by the sense of completion and wholeness. Nowhere is there a jarring note or an element of discord. The reader is presented with the picture of an organic whole, to which nothing needs to be added and nothing taken away. The ideological implications of such a utopia are left unexplored, or at most are implicit within the text. With the appearance of the Antiquar, however, the unity and balance of this portrayal is blown apart. Whereas in Albert's story, peace and harmony reign, in the discussions between the bookseller and his protégé, there is nothing but angry disputation and unresolved differences. In the Antiquar's vigorous assaults upon Albert's work, the narrative becomes an ideological battlefield. The utopian vision is thrown off balance as every aspect is challenged and held up for scrutiny. No longer is the text, like the garden, an organic whole, but is rather a problematic construct, involving questionable political undercurrents and a dubious manipulation of historical context. In turn, the arguments of the Antiquar are subjected to the same examination by Albert himself. Possible ideological implications which may lie hidden in the text are uncovered and attacked, and rival interpretations of the text examined in unforgiving and analytical detail. As a final blow to the harmony of the utopian vision, even the authority of the narrator himself and his right to construct the text are under threat. As a result of this process, the reader is left not with a coherent narrative whole, but rather with a set of fragmented textual messages which cannot be reconciled. In a similar way to the representation of the GDR, Kleeberg therefore constructs his contemporary 'Rahmenerzählung' and his utopian re-shaping of Weimar Germany around a system of dual perspectives. Not

only are there two principal narrative levels in terms of time, involving the post-Wende world of the later Klein, and the earlier alternative world of the utopian garden, but there are also multiple levels of meaning in the interpretation of the utopia itself. Like the portayal of the GDR, the utopia is lovingly constructed, only to be deconstructed almost immediately with equal enthusiasm. However, with the fantastical role of the mysterious Antiquar, the technique of double vision is made even more explicit. The challenge to the utopia is not only conveyed through an ironic system of over-elaborate and romanticised images, but is itself dramatised overtly within the text. The figure of the Antiquar prises open the lid of the narrative mechanics, forcing the reader to confront the text's complex ideological, linguistic and stylistic workings.

Since this fragmentation of the utopia and its meaning is a central feature of *Ein Garten im Norden*, it is important to understand what function the technique might have for the novel as a whole. Why does Kleeberg choose to frame his novel round a system of formal and ideological conflicts and what is their function in terms of Kleeberg's engagement with the polarised debates surrounding 'das andere Deutschland' and the construction of contemporary German identity?

Romantic Irony and the Failure of the Text

As I have already argued, Kleeberg appears to engage with and respond to two opposing and highly problematic interpretations of German history. On the one hand, he gives a eulogistic portrait of the former GDR, a questionable view of the régime, which is then undermined through the use of verbal irony. On the other

hand, he invokes the notion of 'das andere Deutschland' favoured by supporters of the New Right, which sees National Socialism as a regrettable but essentially marginal deviation from the true course of German history and posits an alternative historical trajectory. This concept provides a vision of Germany untainted by the ignominy of the past and free to celebrate its traditions and identity without political inhibition. It is this invocation of an alternative trajectory which forms the main focus for Kleeberg's deployment of romantic irony.

Central to Kleeberg's depiction of the utopian 'other' Germany embodied by Klein the banker and his garden is the inescapable fact that it ends in failure. However vividly the novel may conjure up a set of appealing moral and political values with which to combat the rise of fascism, there is no final attempt entirely to replace the real course of German history with an alternative and more palatable trajectory. While the end of the novel gives some hope for the post-Wende period, within the Weimar setting there is little cause for optimism. Lassalle's attempts at political opposition end in imprisonment in Dachau, Klein flees to Prague and, it is presumed, eventually dies in a concentration camp, Lukas Graubündner, the original curator of Klein's progressive project, 'die Planetarischen Archive', becomes a fervent supporter of Hitler, and the garden itself is taken over by the Nazi authorities. *Ein Garten im Norden* does not, therefore, only constuct a utopian fable, as many reviewers seem to suggest, but also fundamentally challenges its validity and acknowledges its failure. In so doing, Kleeberg engages with and explores the idea of 'das andere Deutschland', while distancing himself from the problematic ideological implications associated with the discourse of the

New Right. It is in this open acknowledgement of failure, both of the utopia itself and of the writer's attempt at historical reinvention, that romantic irony, in the form of the Antiquar's interference, has a central role to play. By systematically breaking the fictional illusion and exposing the narrative machinery of the text, Kleeberg is able to take an imaginative leap outside the known parameters of history, while incorporating into his novel the material paradoxes and limitations which are inevitably attached to any such attempt. The text is thus structured around a series of contradictions, in which the modern day Albert Klein, with his utopian story of a better Germany, overtly confronts the impossibility of his own fictional invention. This dual vision of creative freedom and limitation provided by romantic irony then acts as a form of defence mechanism against the discourse of the New Right, which seeks to give National Socialism a diminished importance on the margins of German history.

Throughout *Ein Garten im Norden*, the Antiquar forces his protegé to confront the unavoidable failure of his fictional endeavour. As the later Klein continues his narrative into the mid 1930s, his attempts to uphold his personal fictional reinvention of the past in the face of historical truths become increasingly difficult. His narrative is forced into more and more overt denials of reality, as it desperately negotiates its relationship with historical events, and Klein slides further into a ludicrously anachronistic account of political developments. Finding himself unable utterly to expunge all traces of Nazism from his text, Klein chaotically clutches at any narrative straws which offer a means of escape from the impending tragedy. These include a possible 'Tag X' (*GN*, p.476), a day of

oppositional action on which fascism will be decisively overthrown with the help of his protagonist's personal and business contacts in Germany and around the world. In increasing agitation, Klein even has his protagonist suggest the arrangement of a sudden and mysterious accident which might befall the unnamed leader of the Nazis. In an emergency meeting with his radical friends Lassalle and Heidegger, Klein the banker turns from his previous incarnation as one 'der immer nur ans Reden denkt' (*GN*, p.479), and proposes that they invite Hitler, still not named in the text, to visit the garden and then organise 'Ein Unfall auf der Hin- oder Rückfahrt'. In the midst of these discussions of revolutionary plots, the Antiquar intervenes, forcing the story to break off and protesting vigorously about the outrageous liberties being taken with reality. While his protégé continues to chatter agitatedly about narrative schemes for maintaining 'das andere Deutschland' (*GN*, p.480), the bookseller relentlessly confronts him with the unavoidable progression of history. Klein's assertion 'daß wir die Demokratie retten müssen, wenn wir auch Kleins Œuvre retten wollen!' (*GN*, p.479) finds an unsympathetic audience in the Antiquar, who characterises him simply as 'ein Lügner' (*GN*, p.480) and emphasises the futility of any attempt to write Hitler out of history. Klein's refusal to speak or write Hitler's name, which proceeds from the conviction that 'In einigen Wochen gibt es ihn nicht mehr' (*GN*, p.481), is an unsustainable absurdity, which the Antiquar is not prepared to tolerate. Indeed, by ending in plans to murder Hitler, he argues, Klein's utopia has already failed (*GN*, p.481). As the Antiquar forces Klein to specify his narrative framework of times and dates, it becomes clear that no amount of authorial readjustment can offset the

approaching disaster. When brought face to face with historical fact, Klein cannot deny the enormity of historical events. Slowly, he succumbs to the pressure exerted by the bookseller and drags his story back within the parameters of reality, acknowledging that Nazi leaders are unmoved by the banker's requests for negotiation, and that the efforts of Lassalle and Heidegger end in political failure. Urged on by the relentless promptings of the Antiquar, Klein the narrator abandons his previous plans. When asked at the end of chapter XLVII, 'Welches Datum schreiben wir?', he accepts defeat and uses the name of Hitler: 'Wir schreiben den 30. Januar 1933. Die Bank von Pleißen & Klein hat Konkurs angemeldet. Der Reichspräsident hat Adolf Hitler zum Kanzler einer neuen Koalitionsregierung ernannt' (*GN*, p.482).

The absurdity of any attempt to deny the real course of history is similarly demonstrated by the comic meeting between the later Klein and Martin Luther. This fantastical event, engineered by the Antiquar, arises out of another argument between the bookseller and his protégé. Irritated once again by Klein's cavalier and arrogant attitude towards German history and towards his recasting of Wagner as a left-wing radical in particular, the Antiquar challenges him to give a coherent explanation for Germany's problems: 'Na schön, mein lieber Herr Weltverbesserer, der die Dinge besser weiß und die Lösungen kennt, was ist denn falschgelaufen in der deutschen Geschichte?' (*GN*, p,374). Klein responds with a number of suggestions, one of which concerns Luther, whom he describes as 'ein in seinem Tabularasa-Reinheitsfanatismus typischer Deutscher […], der die Leute nicht in ihrer friedlichen Heuchelei belassen konnte' (*GN*, p.374). As a result of

this analysis of the origins of the German personality, the Antiquar makes a bet with his pupil, in which he challenges Klein to put aside his bourgeois preoccupation with romantic love and the destinies of individuals and to grasp the opportunity to alter the course of German history:

> Wollen wir wetten? […] Selbst wenn Sie der Geschichte entscheidende Stöße geben könnten, würden Sies nicht tun, wenn ich Ihnen zur gleichen Zeit Ihr barfüßiges Nymphchen vor die Nase halte. (*GN*, p.375)

Having thrown down the gauntlet in this way, the Antiquar then indulges in an unexpected act of time travel, and transports Klein back to the sixteenth century, in order to enable Klein to confront Luther himself. Klein is remarkably undaunted by this turn of events, merely reassuring himself that Luther can understand his German, and attempting, 'ihm verständlich zu machen, daß ich aus der Zukunft komme' (*GN*, p.377). He then sets about the difficult task of convincing him that damaging consequences for the German nation will result from his actions:

> Ich erkläre ihm, daß sein Eintreten für die Obrigkeit, so legitim es angesichts der Greueltaten der Bauern momentan auch scheinen mag […], weitreichende negative Konsequenzen haben wird. Es macht die Bauern 300 Jahre lang rechtlos, es nimmt den Deutschen ein für allemal die Zivilcourage, die Kraft zur Revolution, zur Selbstbestimmung, genauso wie sein Reformationswerk nicht nur Gutes gebracht habe, sondern letztendlich die deutsche Innerlichkeit, die Apolitisierung und die Zerstückelung und Schwächung des Reiches bewirkt habe. (*GN*, p.378)

As with Klein's attempts to change the narrative of twentieth century history, this opportunity to reinvent the past also fails, a casualty, as predicted by the Antiquar, of Klein's greater preoccupation with conventional love stories. Distracted by the unexpected appearance of a sixteenth century Bea, Klein misses his appointment with Luther, and the Reformation proceeds unimpeded. This failure on the part of

Klein does not, however, serve merely to underline his personal weakness, but rather to demonstrate the inherent absurdity of any attempt to rewrite history or to deny the past. Just as his desperate endeavour to expunge all traces of Hitler from German history ends in defeat, so Klein's belief that he can save his country from what he sees as the negative consequences of the Reformation can only result in failure. Any attempt to deny or to disregard history is as absurd and futile an enterprise as time travel itself.

This simultaneous construction and undermining of 'das andere Deutschland' does not only have implications for the utopia itself, but also for its literary creator. By dramatising the conflicts and setbacks which Klein the narrator suffers, the use of romantic irony also acknowledges the material restraints which limit the freedom of the artist. The interventions of the Antiquar therefore serve not only to reassert the power of history over the narrative, but also over the narrator. No matter how much the later Klein asserts his ownership of his text and defends his right to determine its content, he is increasingly forced to confront the immovable boundaries which confine him.

As I have already mentioned, on the Antiquar's first intervention, Klein is confident of his supremacy as creator of the fictional text, asserting that, 'Was aus meinem Kopf auf mein Papier kommt, ist eben doch allein und ausschließlich meine Sache' (*GN*, p.132). When the bookseller protests about the transformation of Heidegger into a left-wing radical, Klein is unapologetic. The real Heidegger, with his Nazi sympathies and intellectual compromises, is not someone whom Klein is prepared to accommodate in his text: 'So jemanden lösche ich aus. So

jemand wird ersetzt in meiner Geschichte' (*GN*, p.181). However, as the end of the story approaches, Klein's narratorial supremacy starts to fragment. Having submitted to the Antiquar's demands that Hitler should not be removed from the historical context of the story, Klein's relationship with his own text becomes increasingly unstable. As history, in the shape of the Reichstag fire and the proclamation of a state of emergency, begins to exercise its irresistable power, Klein finds that he is no longer able to govern the course of events in his fictional creation. His power as an artist is on the wane, and he can only look on in horror as his carefully laid plans collapse in disarray. Most significantly, his protagonist is revealed as a Jew, a development contrary to Klein's own wishes and intentions. His project of creating an alternative vision of Germany, from which the ugliness of fascism has been banished, is being destroyed:

> Ich wollte eine schöne Geschichte erzählen, gegen das Vergessen, für die Kontinuität, eine Geschichte von mir, so wie ich gerne wäre, ein Idealbild… […] Ich wollte mir eine andere Geschichte erzählen, eine bessere, ein schönere […] Sie können wohl nicht verstehen, daß mancher von uns gerne etwas anderes wäre als das Kind und der Enkel der Mörder! (*GN*, pp.490-491)

Browbeaten by the Antiquar's relentless critique, Klein slowly succumbs to the force of his arguments, and accepts a revised version of his protagonist's origins. Despite his desire to turn the 'atypisch[es] Reservat' and the 'Anachronismus' (*GN*, p.303) of the utopian garden into the historical victor, he finds himself beset by insurmountable obstacles, and is unable to maintain his sovereign power over the text. The influence of the bookseller starts to take over, and Klein is left a broken figure. In the chapter appropriately entitled 'Der Bankerott des Erzählers', he acknowledges this defeat to himself:

> Ich sah gar nichts mehr. Sah nur, daß die Worte, die ich auf der Fahrt von Berlin nach Hamburg begonnen hatte, hintereinanderzusetzen, gedankenlos, planlos zunächst, dieser Schmerz, diese formlose Trauer, die plötzlich eine Geschichte geworden war, die Erzählung von Menschen, anderen Menschen, einer anderen Zeit, einer anderen Vergangenheit, sah plötzlich, daß all das mir unter der Hand aus dem Ruder gelaufen war, daß es über mich hinwegging wie eine Welle. Die Elemente, die ich mit Gewalt oder mit Mutwillen oder mit Hoffnung versucht hatte, aus ihrer Bahn zu drängen, sprangen einfach wieder zurück. (*GN*, pp.513-514)

Klein's early confidence, characterised by the bookseller as 'Hybris' towards the superior force of history (*GN*, p.515), is shattered by the realisation that, 'In einem einzigen Buch, in einer einzigen Geschichte, schreibt man die Geschichte nicht um' (*GN*, p.515). The power of fictional creation gives way to the more substantial reality of history, a force which 'hört nie auf' (*GN*, p.515). With Klein revealed as a Jew, the direction of the narrative has been inescapably bound into an historical sequence of Nazi persecution and genocide. Klein's plan to transcend these facts has ended in defeat, 'die Bankerotterklärung meiner Geschichte' (*GN*, p.515). Having lost his battle with history, Klein allows the Antiquar to co-narrate the final sections of his book.

Through his use of romantic irony Kleeberg creates a dualistic narrative structure. On the one hand, he uses the story of Klein's garden paradise to suggest an alternative trajectory for German history, from which the horrors of Nazism could be expunged. On the other hand, he uses the interventions of the Antiquar to challenge the ideological implications of Klein's utopia, and to acknowledge the material limits of the narrator and his text. The novel therefore offers a vivid portrait of 'das andere Deutschand', while at the same time undermining it and

signalling its inevitable failure to overcome the power of history. By problematising the utopia in this way, Kleeberg is overtly negotiating the highly sensitive political debates which surround any attempt to reassess Germany's past. Through the use of romantic irony, he is able both to engage with and distinguish himself from the political agenda of the New Right, which seeks through the concept of 'das andere Deutschland' to relativise and marginalise the position of National Socialism in German history. Kleeberg's ironic double vision of utopia and its failure, of an imaginative leap outside the boundaries of reality and its inevitable failure, enables the novel to invoke the concept of an alternative Germany, while at the same time accommodating those elements which make any revisioning of the past so fraught with ideological difficulty. Through romantic irony, therefore, Kleeberg both uses the creative freedom offered by 'das andere Deutschland' to envisage a Germany liberated from the burdens of the past, while acknowledging the inescapable shadow which National Socialism casts over German culture and society. What then can be said to emerge from this complex dual narrative of utopia and its failure? If, as Muecke argues, romantic irony is essentially a mode which enables the artist to transcend material restraints by incorporating them into the work, how can we interpret this act of transcendence in terms of contemporary political debate? When romantic irony has done its work in acknowledging the limits of the narrative's fictional scope, what conclusions remain to be drawn about the novel's position on the highly vexed question of German identity?

Was bleibt?

As critical responses to *Ein Garten im Norden* demonstrate, Kleeberg's novel has tended to be read along pre-existing lines of political allegiance. While those writing from a broadly left-liberal perspective seem ill at ease with any project to rewrite contemporary German history, fearing possible revisionist and nationalistic intentions, those critics with a right-wing bias tend broadly to praise the concept of constructing 'das andere Deutschland', but raise objections to the particular character of German identity which Kleeberg suggests. To this extent, the novel appears to be read largely as a straightforward utopian fable, leading to a reassertion of polarised political responses. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, the use of romantic irony, which explicitly acknowledges the material failure of the utopia, is largely overlooked.

When the full extent of the novel's irony is explored, the ideological meaning of the text becomes somewhat more difficult to decipher. Layers of romantic and other modes of irony make any attempt to locate a clear political position in contemporary debate very difficult. Yet however unsatisfactory this may be for those seeking intellectual enlightenment on the central question of German national identity and however politically dangerous or even irresponsible it may be to dabble in such sensitive and contentious areas, this refusal to declare any political allegiance does appear to be part of a deliberate narrative plan. Indeed, it is precisely the polarised political debates which seek variously to eulogise the former GDR or to construct an idealised Germany free of National Socialism which Kleeberg appears anxious to transcend. By overtly naming and

accommodating these fiercely contested positions within his novel, Kleeberg seems to be using romantic irony as a means of moving beyond them. As Muecke and other theorists have shown in their studies, romantic irony enables the artist to mediate between the complexities and contradictions of the material world and the freedom of the creative imagination. While any attempt to reflect on German identity and history is inevitably heavily laden with political significance, the deployment of irony can offer a means of negotiating polarised debates and a chance to move beyond them.

What remains as a result of this all-pervasive use of irony is therefore precisely the desire to rescue German identity from the deeply entrenched discourses which bind it, and to assert the search for identity as a legitimate endeavour. By making such explicit reference to opposing political discourses, Kleeberg is seeking to create a space in which national identity can be explored beyond the politically suspect framework of the New Right and beyond the regressive influence of 'Ostalgie'. In this sense, what remains at the close of the novel is not a coherent answer to the question of identity, but rather an assertion of the question itself. While any individual definition of nationhood may be dubious, Kleeberg seems to be suggesting, the desire for identity and the need to explore it beyond the opposing camps of 'alte Nazis' and 'neue Amerikaner' (*GN*, p.40) are not themselves inherently suspect.

Seen in this way, the novel can be understood as a dramatisation of the struggle to locate German identity, which simultaneously takes account of the political difficulties which beset any such attempt. Yet despite the ideological

clashes around which the novel is structured, and the explicit ackowledgement of narrative failure, the concept of an alternative Germany remains a source of hope. As the arguments between the Antiquar and Klein demonstrate, the utopian vision conjured up in Klein's narrative is highly problematic and his distortions of history controversial. But while the utopia is ultimately defeated, the much disputed text remains in existence and seems to offer some hope for the future. While Klein mourns his loss of narrative control, admits to his 'Hybris' and suggests silence as the only possible response when faced with the horrors of the holocaust (*GN*, p.516), the Antiquar reminds him of the text's existence. Just as history cannot be denied, so the text which Klein has written cannot be completely extinguished. Though imperfect, fragmentary and disputed, the text has gained its own place in the world, and the last remnants of 'das andere Deutschland' can still be glimpsed. When Klein despairingly concludes, 'was bleibt da zu tun? Schweigen. Die Feder niederlegen. Schlafen. Das Wort abgeben. Oder besser: Gar kein Wort mehr. Nur noch Stille' (*GN*, p.516), the Antiquar refuses to let him give up:

> Habe ich Sie noch immer nicht überzeugt? Eine Geschichte, die einmal angefangen hat, kann man nicht einfach auslöschen. Gewiß, Sie werfen das Buch weg, Sie zerreißen es – und dann? Glauben Sie, daß damit alles aufhört? Glauben Sie, daß die Welt stehenbleibt? Ist es vielleicht das, was Sie wirklich wollen, daß die Welt stehenbleibt? (*GN*, p.516)

Despite his continuing objections that the story is 'nicht objektiv', 'reaktionär' and 'bürgerlich' (*GN*, p.517), the Antiquar acknowledges his own interest in pursuing it to the end. He disputes Klein's assertion that his narrative cannot survive the historical reality of Nazism, 'ein großes Loch' in which 'fällt alles rein und wird vergessen…' (*GN*, p.518), and will not allow Klein to leave the story unfinished.

Therefore, although Klein's constant refrain of 'Schönheit und Maß' has been torn apart, and the harmonious coherence of the utopia broken by history and ideological dispute, the existence of the text itself remains as a flawed monument to the struggle for identity. The Antiquar's final refusal to allow the 'lose Enden' (*GN*, p.556) of the story to be satisfactorily tied up, despite Klein's protests, can also be seen as a message of hope. While explicitly refusing to comply with narrative conventions and disrupting any remaining hope Klein may have had for a coherent fictional whole, the Antiquar nonetheless provides a link between the failures of the past and hope for the future. By denying the story a definitive conclusion, he is allowing the vestiges of 'das andere Deutschland' to survive:

> Wir wissen doch beide, wo alle Geschichten enden, wenn man sie nur stur bis zum Schluß erzählt […] Und was heißt das schließlich auch? In eine Geschichte verhängt sich die nächste, und zu einem wirklichen Schluß kommen wir doch nie. […] Darf denn gar nichts offenbleiben für Sie? Das Leben ist nun mal keine Gleichung, die stimmig aufgehen muß. (*GN*, p.556)

By leaving the conclusion of the narrative open-ended, therefore, the fragments of the utopia, however damaged, can continue to have relevance for the 'Zukunftsbewältigung' (*GN*, p.579) to come.

Conclusion

In the course of *Ein Garten im Norden*, Kleeberg explores the fiercely contested territory of German national identity and the burden of historical guilt incurred by National Socialism. In doing so, he invokes a number of highly controversial ideological positions. On the one hand, he constructs a eulogy to the social cohesion of the former GDR, a bucolic paradise liberated from the cultural

bankruptcy of empty consumerism. On the other hand, he invokes the concepts of 'Vaterhaß' and 'das andere Deutschland', much favoured by the New Right, and suggests an alternative trajectory of German history from which National Socialism has been expunged. However, through the use of irony, and most particularly romantic irony, Kleeberg refuses to capitulate to either of these positions. Rather, by overtly engaging with these problematic discourses and dramatising them in the form of political disputes between his narrator and the Antiquar, he attempts to transcend them. Through acknowledging the inescapable pressure of powerful rival interpretations of German identity and German history and assimilating them into his novel, he seeks to move beyond them and to reclaim the search for identity as a legitimate act. By incorporating into his text the material contradictions and paradoxes which restrict him, Kleeberg uses the dual vision of romantic irony both to negotiate with and to step outside the parameters of pre-existing debate and established discourse.