

W

WÄCHTERLIED → TAGELIED

WAGENBÜHNE

Type of stage used in the late M.A. for the performance of religious plays. The scenery was mounted on a wagon in front of the audience. By using a succession of wagons for different scenes it was possible to perform the play simultaneously before different audiences.

WAHLSPRUCH → DEVISE

WAISE

A non-rhyming line surrounded by rhyming ones, esp. by rhyming couplets.

WALTHERSTROPHE

Variation of the →NIBELUNGENSTROPHE used in the epic poem recounting the adventures of Walther and Hildegund from the 13th century. The →ANVERS of the fourth →LANGZEILE has six feet instead of four.

WÄLZER

Colloquial term for a very large and thick book. →FOLIANT.

WANDERBÜHNE (strolling players)

Travelling theatre group.

WASCHZETTEL (publisher's blurb)

Article containing information about a text and its author prepared by the publisher. →KLAPPENTEXT.

WECHSELGESANG

Alternating dialogue between two people in the form of a song. They may each sing a line or stanza in turn.

WEIBLICHER REIM (feminine rhyme)

Rhyme which ends on an unstressed or short syllable. →REIM.

WEIHNACHTSSPIEL (nativity play) = Krippenspiel

Med. religious play; dramatic representation of Christ's birth performed at Christmas. →DREIKÖNIGSSPIEL, →GEISTLICHES DRAMA.

WEIMARER KLASSIK → KLASSIK

WEIMARER REPUBLIK (Weimar Republic)

Proclaimed on the 9th Nov. 1918 by the Social Democrat leader Philipp Scheidemann, Germany's first parliamentary democracy was named after the city of Weimar, where the Constituent Assembly took place on 6th Feb. 1919. The Weimar Republic was politically polarized from the outset and resented both by the

conservative nationalists and by socialists. The legend (originating in the German Supreme Command) that the civilian government had 'stabbed the army in the back' by agreeing to the armistice, and the signing of the draconian peace terms of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 by the new Republic's Social Democrat leaders, gave wide currency to the belief that the Weimar Republic in particular, and the institution of parliamentary democracy in general, represented the betrayal of German national aspirations. The socialist opposition, on the other hand, resented the Republic for its neglect of thoroughgoing economic and social reforms.

By the mid 1920s the utopian socialist works of activist expressionists such as Toller and Hiller had lost much of their appeal, and in the relatively stable middle years of the Weimar Republic (after the currency reform in the wake of the inflation of autumn 1923 until the onset of the Great Depression in October 1929) more sober expectations and more realistic styles prevailed (→NEUE SACHLICHKEIT). The middle years of the Weimar Republic saw the concentration of wealth, power and influence in even fewer hands. Not only Marxist writers such as Brecht (1898-1956), but also liberal supporters of the Weimar Republic such as Heinrich Mann (1871-1950), Thomas Mann (1875-1955) and Döblin (1878-1957) were critical of social inequalities and the persistence of the authoritarian spirit of Wilhelmine Germany in the bureaucracy, the legal system and in schools and universities. Writers in sympathy with National Socialism denounced the whole range of pro-Republican as well as socialist writers as part of an international liberal, Marxist and Jewish conspiracy and as rootless *Asphaltliteraten* concentrated in the big cities, especially in the capital, Berlin. With the onset of the world depression in October 1929, massive unemployment created further political polarization. The Nazi Party's electoral support increased nine-fold in September 1930. While writers who supported the National Socialists diverted attention from the economic origins of the rapidly deepening social inequalities by proclaiming an organic 'unity' of the German people based on 'Race, Blood and Soil' (→BLUBO), Brecht developed a didactic theatre (→LEHRSTÜCK) following from his studies of Marx. It was designed to make the audience and players consider the origins of economic and social antagonisms in the capitalist system and to encourage revolutionary solidarity amongst the working classes. The failure of the various anti-Nazi forces in the Weimar Republic to form a common front facilitated Hitler's rise to power. Most major writers fled Germany soon after he became Chancellor on 30th Jan. 1933. (→EXILLITERATUR).

R.A.

WEINERLICHES LUSTSPIEL (sentimental comedy) = comédie larmoyante, = empfindsames Lustspiel, = rührendes Lustspiel

The German *Weinerliche Lustspiel* has similarities with the sentimental comedies of Richard Steele (1672-1729). It was influenced by the French *comédie larmoyante* going back to La Chaussée (1692-1754) and sought to appeal not only to reason and common sense but to the emotions. In contrast to satirical comedy, it set out to praise man's positive qualities: virtue, unselfishness, compassion, loyalty, generosity. The professed aim of the *Weinerliche Lustspiel* was to move the audience to floods of tears (hence the name) instead of provoking unsympathetic laughter. As the precursor of the →BÜRGERLICHE TRAUERSPIEL in Germany it was still a comedy of types. Gottsched (1700-1766) objected to its classification as comedy, suggesting the term →TRAGIKOMÖDIE. The main exponent in Germany was Gellert with three plays *Die Betschwester* (1745), *Das Loos in der Lotterie* (1746) and *Die zärtlichen Schwestern* (1747) and a discourse *Pro comedia commovente* (1751). In the plays of

Krüger (1723-1750) and Weisse (1726-1804) satire was often intermingled. The tradition was then trivialized in the popular sentimental →RÜHRSTÜCK (Iffland 1759-1814, Kotzebue 1761-1819) and attacked by Schiller (1759-1805), Goethe (1749-1832) and Tieck (1773-1853). There are elements of the *Weinerliche Lustspiel* in Lessing's *Miß Sara Sampson* (1755) and *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767).
→LUSTSPIEL.

S.H.

WEISE →TON

WELTANSCHAUUNG (philosophy of life)

A basic and personal notion of the essence and purpose of the world and of human life which governs a person's decisions and actions, in contrast to a systematic philosophical or scientific concept.

WELTCHRONIK

Popular med. chronicle about the origin and history of the world according to the Bible.

WELTGEIST

The prevailing spirit of the times, of an age or of a period.

WELTGERICHTSSPIEL

Form of med. →BIBLISCHES DRAMA; principal themes are man's damnation and the wrath of God.

WELTSCHMERZ

The term first appeared in Jean Paul's *Selina oder Über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (1827), but the roots of the malaise and its first symptoms surfaced at the end of the 18th century. The symptoms are moral and emotional torpor, vague discontent, and scepticism, all of which lack any specific objective cause. Its basis is generally atheism and despair at the predominance of evil in the world. The first poet to be associated with *Weltschmerz* was Byron (1788-1824) who made it an almost fashionable pose in Europe. It became a feature of post-Napoleonic European literature.

This 'mal du siècle' affected the Italian, Leopardi (1798-1837), and the Frenchman, Musset (1810-1857), as well as German writers such as Lenau (1802-1850), Grabbe (1801-1836) and Büchner (1813-1837). All fit Kierkegaard's (1813-1855) description of the artist as one who fashions his 'deep torment into beautiful music', a credo which views pain and suffering as the only means to sharpen the artist's apprehension of beauty in the world. In this respect *Weltschmerz* found a positive literary expression and was far more profound than a mere pose or transitory intellectual fashion.

C.B.

WELTTHEATER (theatrum mundi)

The image of a theatre in which humanity acts out its part before God's eyes is a traditional element in Western writing. Based on concepts derived from pagan antiquity and early Christianity, it reached its full moral philosophical development in the 12th century. At that time the idea of the world as a stage became associated with the notion of the 'heroes of virtue' who joined God in contemplating mankind's

performance. Expressing an emphatically theocentric outlook, the *Welttheater* was an appropriate allegory for the existential preoccupations of the 17th century. It represented its sense of the transitory and illusory nature of the earthly life and so became a popular figure of speech in baroque literature (→BAROCK). While it was a common motif in other genres as well, the world theatre metaphor in the context of the then prevailing tendency to see microcosmic correspondences of the macrocosm in all phenomena contributed to the prominence of the drama. Especially the frequently used device of a play within a play (→SPIEL IM SPIEL) is in this connection significant as a reflection on the ontological aspects of theatre. The dramatic treatment of the view of the world as a stage culminated in 17th century Spain, whence in the early modern era several German *Welttheater* plays derived their inspiration.

E.Kr.

WENDEPUNKT (turning-point)

1. In drama the *Wendepunkt* is the moment of peripeteia (→PERIPETIE) or reversal in the hero's fortunes. In tragedy the *Wendepunkt* introduces the destruction or fall of the hero; in comedy the hero's good fortune.

2. In the theory of the →NOVELLE, the term is usually said to have been first introduced in 1829 by Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), but the term had earlier been used by August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) who wrote in 1803/04 that "the *Novelle* requires definite turning-points, by means of which the major blocks of the story are made evident". Tieck maintained that the *Novelle* will always have that extraordinary and striking turning point which distinguishes it from every other narrative form and defines it as "this twist in the story, this point from which it takes unexpectedly a completely different direction". Many theorists of the *Novelle* after Tieck retained the idea that the *Wendepunkt* was an essential characteristic of the *Novelle*, but this is no longer generally accepted. However, because the *Novelle* in its concentration and succinctness has affinities with the drama, the presence of a recognizable *Wendepunkt* is common to many *Novellen*.

E.W.H.

WERKIMMANENT (intrinsic)

The term has become known in the phrase *werkimmanente Interpretation* (→INTERPRETATION). This was the German variety of →NEW CRITICISM and became the predominant method of post-war literary scholarship in the German-speaking countries. Its main exponents were Wolfgang Kayser and Emil Staiger. The aim of *werkimmanente Interpretation* was to analyse, explain and evaluate a text in aesthetic terms, i.e. to establish whether or not a given text can justifiably be regarded as a work of art and if so, why. It therefore concentrated on questions of the aesthetic relevance and value of a work to the present-day reader and on a very close analysis of the text. This method has encountered two main criticisms: (a) that it is ahistorical and (b) that it regards the work in isolation. The uncritical and unreflected repetition of these criticisms and the claim of some exponents of this method that *werkimmanente Interpretation* was the only legitimate way of studying literature contributed to bringing it into disrepute with present-day literary scholarship. The critics however are guilty of attacking the method for doing exactly what it explicitly sets out to do: namely to establish the aesthetic relevance for the present-day reader of a text written in an earlier period. It is also incorrect to claim that *werkimmanente Interpretation* completely disregards all extrinsic aspects of a work. On the contrary,

all extrinsic aspects (such as the genesis of the work, its sources, the author's biography etc.) were studied for the purpose of providing valuable clues and guidelines, but they were not admitted as proof or evidence. Proof or evidence in this method could come only from the work itself and from nowhere else. The concentration on close textual study and on questions of aesthetics, which are central to any study of literature, should ensure that this method still retains a central place within →LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT, although not to the exclusion of other methods.

A.O.

WERTUNG

Evaluation, in art as anywhere else, depends on the criteria applied to whatever is evaluated. In literary criticism, no lasting consensus about these criteria has ever been reached. Hence, the problem of *Wertung* - what constitutes a work of literature, and how we determine the relative quality of a given work - has never been solved. Answers that have been given have only been valid for homogeneous groups of people, the main bases of such homogeneity being the period in which they lived, the social status and the religious or political convictions they shared. Most contemporary scholars agree that the criteria for evaluating a work of literature depend so much on the historical situations of readers that no generally valid criteria will ever exist. But although, in theory, it seems impossible to overcome this relativism, the agreement among 'educated Germans' about the value of individual literary works of the past has not fluctuated as drastically as the absence of a theoretical basis for objective evaluations would suggest. Apparently the system of basic values, of which such value judgements are symptomatic, has gone unquestioned for a long time. During the 1960s and 1970s however, scholars became increasingly aware of the unsolved problem, and much was written about it. This indicates that the basic values of society are no longer taken for granted. The discussion of the problem of *Wertung* is indeed symptomatic of the more general uncertainty about our philosophical, religious, political and social values which all influence our taste. In this situation, scholars avoid explicit value judgements on works of literature. Implicitly however such judgements are constantly made: whoever compiles an anthology, edits a text, offers a course or does research on specific works, has already decided that in one way or another the works selected are worth the effort.

H.W.

WIDMUNGSGEDICHT

Poem which appears at the front of a text, and may introduce or comment upon the work, or may be in the form of a dedication.

WIEGENDRUCKE →INKUNABELN

WIEGENLIED (lullaby)

Cradle-song characterized by simple lyrics, and regular rhythms reminiscent of the rocking motion of a cradle.

WIENER VOLKSKOMÖDIE →VOLKSKOMÖDIE

WIRKLICHKEIT

The term used in German both for (1) the 'reality' created in a work of literature and

for (2) the 'reality' of the external world. Both aspects are the subject of current controversy. The 'reality' of the external world includes not only nature and the physical world of man-made objects, but extends to the psychology of the individual and the interactions of individuals in society. The traditional belief that it was possible to have an objective view of external reality was brought into question as a result of the work of Albert Einstein (1879-1955) on the theory of relativity, which drew attention to the impossibility of excluding the observer from the act of observation. In literary criticism this refutation of objectivity in the observation of 'reality' was developed by Richard Brinkmann. The 'reality' of a work of literature is not a reproduction of external 'reality' but is formed by the language and structures of the given work (→MIMESIS): it need not even correspond to external reality, and is not to be judged by any such correspondence (→LITERATUR). In its creation of 'reality' a work of literature remains autonomous, even though it may draw its material from the objects and relationships of external 'reality'. The world of a work of literature is real when it convinces through consistency, and this can be achieved in the →MÄRCHEN, in the utopian novel or in science fiction just as much as in works of literature set in a recognizable milieu or society. →FIKTION.

E.W.H.

WITZ

This word embraces aspects of both English *wit/witticism* and *joke*. From the early 19th century the second meaning became prevalent in German. The structure of a *Witz* (joke) is traditionally based on reason rather than emotions. It is constructed in a linguistically imaginative way, and its form is very important both in written and oral presentation; the joke is seen as one of the basic 'primary forms' of literary communication by Jolles (→EINFACHE FORMEN). There is a build-up towards a →POINTE, producing an unexpected discrepancy between expectation and outcome which causes comic relief. This may be achieved by the creation or recounting of a humorous situation, it may be based on polysemy in language (→WORTSPIEL, pun) or the two may be combined, i.e. there are situational and verbal aspects. Freud has shown in his analysis of jokes (1905) how they are used to evade or destroy sexual and other authoritarian taboos. Situations of extreme repression and censorship give rise to socio-political jokes, these being often the only possible form of protest and survival. (In the German context: jokes in Nazi Germany or the GDR; Jewish jokes.) There are many stereotype jokes, such as those about absent-minded professors or regional characters, such as Graf Bobby (Vienna), Tnnes (Cologne) and *Wessies* and *Ossies* in the wake of the unification process of East and West Germany after 1989.

L.B./M.C.

WITZBLATT (comic, satirical magazine)

Magazine of a humorous and satiric nature, usually illustrated.

WOCHENSCHRIFTEN →**MORALISCHE WOCHENSCHRIFTEN**

WORTHÄUFUNG = Häufung

Stylistic device esp. prevalent during the baroque period: the successive listing of synonymous words which could lead to whole registers of words. →SCHWULST.

WORTSPIEL (pun, play on words)