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JOHN WINKELMAN

THE POETIC STYLE
ERICH KÄSTNER

new series no. 17

University of Nebraska Studies

may 1957

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of Erich Kästner**

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The Poetic Style of Erich Kästner

The existing studies of the poetry of Erich Kästner deal almost exclusively with aspects of its content, whether in an ideational or a concrete sense, and have at best only peripheral reference to the esthetic realization of this content. That is, these studies consider the poems primarily in their function as means of communication or even as unwitting autobiography, and in effect ignore the poems in order to "penetrate" to that which they communicate or reveal.

Yet the relation of external and internal in any esthetic object is just the reverse: one would have to penetrate past that which the poems communicate or reveal, as being external to them, to the poems as independent esthetic objects. For the sole distinguishing characteristic of poems and all other successful esthetic creations is that they ultimately communicate themselves purely and exist as values entirely aside from the potentiality of possessing some function. Hence abstract art is not only manifested in fairly clear examples but must be considered to be omnipresent as the invisible ultimate component of the most concrete or representational art, and just so the dance may be considered to exist in abstraction from the dancers as the configuration of their movements, whereas no nonesthetic means of communication embodies a corresponding abstraction which would be of absolutely independent value. The poem *an sich*, like every other esthetic object so abstracted, is perceived to exist as a dance of forces. The style of the poet is the specific, personally determined character or coloration which this interplay of forces has in his poems: whether the relation is one of similarity or dissimilarity, attraction or repulsion, whether it is simple or complex, whether the movement is slack or tense, slow or quick, as well as many other qualitative and quantitative aspects which together constitute the characteristic quality of the

inner rhythm. It is the purpose of the present study to arrive by stylistic analysis, not at a complete description, but at a definition of the character of this interplay in the case of Kästner's poems.

Such a study owes to the earlier studies mentioned above a dual debt: first, the process of abstraction is a long one in the case of Kästner's poems, which, far from being functionless, communicate an unusual wealth of meaning and concrete reference (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) which, until organized and understood, may overwhelm the observer and conceal the poem *an sich*, just as the representational painting conceals the abstract painting within it in proportion to the wealth and interest of its concrete content; secondly, the very multiplicity of content which such studies reveal is a chief factor in the style: numerous terms are here in esthetic relation, the poems are not simple but complex systems.

Two statements by Kästner himself help lead us to that central point from which the character of his style is not only apparent but comprehensible. In an article in the *Neue Zeitung*, he gives this characteristic description of his art as a social satirist:

The common saying that it is hard not to write satire should not blind one to the fact that the contrary, namely the writing of satires, is not exactly easy either. The hardest thing about it will ever remain calculating the effect. . . . [The satirist's] method consists in the exaggerated presentation of negative facts by the help of more or less artistic means in the service of a more or less extra-artistic purpose. . . . The satiric writer is, as mentioned before, a kind of artist only in the means he uses. . . . He holds up to men a mirror, generally a distorting mirror, in order to force them to insight through contemplation of the image. . . . Regarded from the standpoint of its purpose, satire is an arm, not of literature, but of pedagogy.¹

The following, taken from the preface of his *Lyrische Hausapotheke*, is typical of his statements concerning his work as a lyric poet:

[This book is] a reference work devoted to the care of the average inner life. . . . For what [medicine] shall one take who is tormented by the desolate lonesomeness of his furnished room or the damp, cold, foggy-gray autumn evenings? To what prescriptions shall he resort whom the avenging angel of jealousy has seized by the throat? With what shall one gargle who is weary of life? What use are warm compresses to him whose marriage is collapsing? . . .

¹ "Eine kleine Sonntagspredigt: Vom Sinn und Wesen der Satire," *Neue Zeitung*, August 1947. This and all other translations from the German are by the writer.

To alleviate lonesomeness, disillusionment, and the remaining ills of the heart, he needs other medicines. Some of them are: humor, anger, indifference, irony, contemplation, and exaggeration. They are antitoxins. . . . The present volume is dedicated to the therapy of private life. . . . It does good to allow another person to formulate one's own grief. . . . Formulation, generalization, antithesis, parody, and the remaining variations of standards of measurement and degrees of feeling are all proven curative methods. . . . Catharsis is older than its discoverer and more useful than its interpreters.²

Such statements occur elsewhere in Kästner. He wrote similarly of his poetry *qua* lyrical in the "Prosaische Zwischenbemerkung" of *Lärm im Spiegel*, which came in 1928, at a time when his poems were still far toward the satirical end of the spectrum through which his work was to pass. He wrote in a similar vein of his poetry *qua* satirical in the preface of *Bei Durchsicht meiner Bücher* (1946) and in the article "Über Erich Kästner" (1949),³ although by this time his production as a whole had evolved in a recognizably lyrical direction.

Two facts stand out from these quotations. Their style is not simple but compound; in one and the same context Kästner, evidently a self-conscious and intellectual as distinct from a naive poet, can combine a forthright, hearty tone of down-to-earth reasonableness with sensitively lyrical notes, and references to furnished rooms and other contemporary *misère*, which would be on an immediate plane, with frigidly scientific references to "standards of measurement" and learned allusions to Aristotle and the perennial dispute concerning the meaning of the Aristotelian catharsis. The second fact is that

² *Doktor Erich Kästners lyrische Hausapotheke* (Atrium Verlag, Zürich, 1936), pp. 5 ff. Kästner's volumes of poems, together with the abbreviations by which they will be referred to, are as follows:

Herz auf Taille (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1927), referred to as HaT.

Lärm im Spiegel (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1928), referred to as LiS.

Ein Mann gibt Auskunft (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1930), referred to as MgA.

Gesang zwischen den Stühlen (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1932), referred to as GzS.

Doktor Erich Kästners lyrische Hausapotheke, referred to as LH.

Bei Durchsicht meiner Bücher (Atrium Verlag, Zürich, 1946).

Der tägliche Kram (Atrium Verlag, Zürich, 1948). A collection of *Chansons* and prose.

Kurz und bündig (Oltener Bücherfreunde, Olten, Switzerland, 1948). A collection of epigrams. Expanded and republished under the same title in 1950 by Atrium Verlag, Zürich.

Die kleine Freiheit (Atrium Verlag, Zürich, 1952). A collection of *Chansons* and prose.

³ *Deutsche Rundschau*, LXXV (April 1949), 356 f.

Kästner can refer to his total opus at any given point either as lyrical or as satirical, and that his account is much the same whichever point of view he takes. There is only the difference between the pedagogue and the doctor.

The unity on which Kästner insists is that of purpose and hence that of method. For if it is the purpose of his lyric poetry to effect a catharsis in the reader, then his lyric poetry too is satirical. Whether acting as satirist or as lyric poet, Kästner represents himself as one who more or less cold-bloodedly "calculates the effect" of whatever he writes: not the lyrical effect but the cathartic. In either capacity he can use humor, anger, and the other devices which he names.

If we were to accept Kästner's discussion as exhaustive, the result would be disastrous. For as he represents matters, the relation of form to content in his work would seem to be only a question of efficacy with respect to some ulterior end and thus in the last analysis fortuitous. And from this one would be led to infer that the whole alleged lyric element must be spurious. But Kästner's purported revelations, while truthful so far as they go, are fortunately very one-sided. These public statements about his work are themselves part of that work, not independent and disinterested commentary. He talks, very appropriately, only about his sociological ends and his methods in pursuing these. What qualities his poems may have when objectively considered as esthetic creations, a totally distinct question, is a matter which he does not discuss and concerning which no inference may legitimately be drawn from his own statements.

Nevertheless, after this restriction has been made, the above quotations may serve as a convenient starting point in an esthetic analysis insofar as, both by their content and by their own style, they imply the presence of a satirical and a lyrical strand which in some way are combined in a synthesis. It is only necessary, supplementing but not in any way contradicting Kästner's own remarks, to emphasize that lyric poetry, while it may be made to serve a satirical *purpose*, remains in essence distinct from satire. Hence two intrinsically discrete essences are present in the poems under discussion and are held together in a state of tension.

To study the lyrical aspect and the satirical aspect in their relation to each other is to take the only point of view from which Kästner's style—his artistic individuality—may be comprehended as a unified whole which is something more than a tantalizingly entertaining congeries of esthetically heterogeneous elements. For the most essential fact about Kästner's style is its wit, in the sense of that force which unites elements normally foreign to each other. One immediately senses a sparkling, lively tension, not an inert coexistence,

of contrary elements. His style may most accurately be compared with a rope which consists of two main strands, each in turn divided into lesser strands and those into smaller and smaller fibers, all, however, twisted together and pulling in the same direction; by opposing each other they hold together and co-operate.

It is necessary that this study of Kästner's style use terms parallel to and exclusive of each other. The term "lyrical" may refer to either content or form and so is appropriate in a formal analysis. "Social satire," "satirical," or "critical" on the other hand refer only to content. The contrast between a lyrical style and a style of social criticism must therefore be expressed in terms of the antithetical pair "lyrical" and "rhetorical." For any social satirist aspires to influence concretely the attitudes and actions of a lay audience; and rhetoric as here understood is the sum total of the techniques by which he can hope to do this. What Kästner attempts, then, is a synthesis of the lyrical and the rhetorical.

A combination of factors helps explain why Kästner should attempt such a synthesis. The objective situation in the depression-ridden Weimar Republic as it tottered on the brink of collapse must, as it seemed to him, either be intentionally overlooked or render temporarily obsolete the traditional lyrical subject matter or at least the traditional lyric attitude to subject matter. Kästner emphasizes this factor with brilliant wit in his programmatic "*Prosaische Zwischenbemerkung*," which again, incidentally, illustrates in its style the typical tug of war of contrasting tones and levels of discourse:

Although I compose verses myself, many lyric poets are even more distasteful to me than are all tenors. . . . It is hardly believable but nevertheless it is true: the majority of present-day lyric poets still sing of "their heart's true love" and "the little flower upon the mead," and claim in this connection to have been kissed squarely on the mouth by the muse. They should save that and tell it to children. . . . Pardon my irritation. It has the advantage of being justified. For those lyric poets with their loosely-curled, flowing brains bring all lyric poetry into disrepute. They are to blame for the erroneous opinion of the public that the reading of poetry is at present an unsuitable occupation. Those lyric poets are all that is unsuitable.⁴

Kästner's point here is of course not that the lyric poet should out of cheap expediency select timely subject matter but rather that to select sociologically neutral topics in an age of crisis would be immature and irresponsible. Kästner accordingly takes as his virtually

⁴ *Lärm im Spiegel*, pp. 49 f.

exclusive subject matter innumerable facets of the contemporary (pre-Hitler) social, political, economic, and moral crisis and presents the case against modern society not as a dilettante but as one versed in sociological analysis.⁵ This could only be accomplished in a critical spirit, and social satire is the inevitable result. But social satire so arrived at must be a mutation of the lyrical. Even the subject matter in fact betrays the lyrical point of departure. In spite of the strictures quoted above, Kästner makes common use of love and nature as subjects—but with a difference. Love is always treated in close reference to the social frame; love poems like “Sachliche Romanze,” “Repetition des Gefühls,” “Ein Mann gibt Auskunft,” “Junger Mann, 5 Uhr Morgens,” and the rest presuppose and express a mood of frustration, dejection, impotence, and anguish which is no other than the mood of the social crisis. Like his “Ballade vom Herrn Steinherz,” which Kästner calls an “Episode aus dem Privatleben der Wirtschaftskrise,” his love poems are episodes from the private life of the social crisis. The poem “Junger Mann, 5 Uhr Morgens” may serve as an example:

Wenn ich dich früh verlasse,
tret ich aus deinem Haus
still auf die kahle, blasse,
öde Strasse hinaus.

In dem Geäst sind Spatzen
zänkisch beim ersten Lied.
Drunter hocken zwei Katzen,
hölzern vor Appetit.

Wirst du noch lange weinen?
Oder ob du schon schläfst?
Wenn du doch endlich einen
bessern Menschen träfst.

In dem Laden, beim Bäcker,
wird der Kuchen zu Stein.
Wütend erwacht ein Wecker,
brüllt und schläft wieder ein.

Noch ist die grosse Pause
zwischen der Nacht und dem Tag
Und ich geh nach Hause,
weil ich mich nicht mag.

⁵ By this writer: *Social Criticism in the Early Works of Erich Kästner*, University of Missouri Studies, XXV, 4 (Columbia, Missouri, 1953).

Noch brennt hinter deinen
Fenstern etwas Licht.
Wirst du noch lange weinen?
Bald wird die Sonne scheinen.
Aber sie scheint noch nicht.⁶

In this poem Kästner expresses lyrically the bleakest moment in this furtive love-affair: the lover, disgusted with himself, breaks with his mistress and steals from her furnished room into the chilly desolation of the pre-dawn street. Here on the street (which is in Kästner a frequent image for transition without reference to arrival) all is immersed in the colorless half-light of an existentially felt nothingness: things lose their qualities, all is *kahl*, *blass*, and *öde*. The young man faintly feels a sense of the future, but that future too, when it arrives, will be as eerily unreal as the present moment, which is nothing at all, a vacuum, a *Pause*. He feels powerless to shape that which is to come; his mood is caught up in the cake which turns to stone, the pointless alarm clock which awakens, rings urgently, and then goes back to sleep. What will come is not happily heralded by larks but preshadowed by sparrows which peevishly and tunelessly chirp in a harsh chorus, hungrily watched by cats.

Like "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," written fifteen years earlier under the shadow of a different "geistige Situation," it is a love poem, even if negative, and is thereby lyrical. But, again like Eliot's poem, it is sociological and critical as well. For only in the light of reference to a social world beyond the lyrical framework is either poem completely intelligible. It is the world beyond, which has lost all sense of direction, that both motivates Kästner's young man and lends to the poem a more impressive meaning. What social situation is implied by the poem is seen clearly in a prose passage in which Kästner reverses the emphasis, making the sociological more prominent than the lyrical. Here his young character Fabian, in the novel of the same name, describes the situation of his generation:

I drift, and I am again waiting, as we did during the war, when we knew: Now we will be drafted. Do you remember? We wrote compositions and dictation exercises, we seemed to be studying, and it was indifferent whether we did it or not. For we were destined for the war. Were we not sitting as if under a great glass dome, from out of which, slowly but incessantly, the air was being pumped? We began to thrash about, but we were not thrashing about out of exuberance, but only because we weren't getting

⁶ *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen*, p. 80.

any air. . . . The immediate future had resolved to process me into blood sausage. What was I to do while waiting? Read books? Improve my character? Earn money? I was sitting in a great waiting room, and it was called Europe. In one week the train will leave. That I knew. But where it was bound, and what was to become of me, no one knew. And now we are again sitting in that waiting room, and again it is called Europe! And again we do not know what will happen. We live tentatively, the crisis is endless!⁷

Likewise "Besagter Lenz ist da," "Meyer IX. im Schnee," "Mis-anthropologie," "Selbstmord im Familienbad," and many others are mutated nature poems written from the point of view of the captive of the big city and the captive of the crisis. In general, Kästner's subject matter is either purely sociological, as in "Kurt Schmidt, statt einer Ballade," in which case it is treated lyrically, or, as in the above-mentioned instances, it is lyrical and is treated in a sociological way. In no event could the subject matter be irrelevant to the *Gegenwartigskrise* of which he wrote at length in his *Fabian*.⁸

A second factor leading to this synthesis is to be found in the personal sphere. From Kästner's earliest childhood, elements analogous to lyricism and social criticism dominated his emotional experience and presented an irritating contrast. By nature he was a dreamy, lyrically inclined lad who could lie on his back by the hour under a clothesline, musing on the fantastic movements of the clothes in the wind:

Ich sass im Gras. Die Mutter ging nach Hause
Die Wäsche wogte wie ein weisses Zelt.
Dann kam die Mutter mit Kaffee und Geld.
Ich kaufte Kuchen, für die Mittagspause
in dieser fast geheimnisvollen Welt.

Die Hemden zuckten hin und her,
als wollten sie herab und mit uns essen.
Die Sonne schien. Die Strümpfe hingen schwer.
O, ich erinnere mich an alles sehr
genau und will es nie vergessen.⁹

An important factor analogous to and no doubt very largely responsible for the lyrical aspect of his nature is the warm love borne him by the mother whom he adored and for whose sacrifices he was so

⁷ *Fabian: Die Geschichte eines Moralisten* (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1931), pp. 79 f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-49 and *passim*.

⁹ *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen*, pp. 46 f.

grateful. Fond references to her occur over and over again in his works¹⁰ and have about them openly a warmth that Kästner usually suppresses; his most lyrical poems in a personal sense are precisely those like "Junggesellen sind auf Reisen," "Begegnung mit einem Trockenplatz," "Stiller Besuch," etc. which allude to his mother.

But readers of his first collections rarely saw Kästner in this soft light. Rather they made the acquaintance of a most bitter and venomous, if witty, writer who presented a vivid and appalling portrait of his time in his poems and his novel *Fabian* and became quickly famous for such incendiary invective as his "Knigge für Unbemittelte":

Ans deutsche Volk, von Ulm bis Kiel:
Ihr esst zu oft! Ihr esst zuviel!
Ans deutsche Volk, von Thorn bis Trier:
Ihr seid zu faul! Zu faul seid Ihr!
Und wenn sie euch den Lohn entzögen!
Und wenn der Schlaf verboten wär!
Und wenn sie euch so sehr belögen,
dass sich des Reiches Balken bögen!
Seid höflich und sagt Dankesehr.
Die Hände an die Hosennaht!
Stellt Kinder her! Die Nacht dem Staat!
Euch liegt der Rohrstock tief im Blut.
Die Augen rechts! Euch geht's zu gut.
Ihr sollt nicht denken, wenn ihr sprecht!
Gehirn ist nichts für kleine Leute.
Den Millionären geht es schlecht.
Ein neuer Krieg käm ihnen recht.
So macht den Ärmsten doch die Freude!
Ihr seid zu frech und zu begabt!
Seid taktvoll, wenn ihr Hunger habt!
Rasiert euch besser! Werdet zart!
Ihr seid kein Volk von Lebensart.
Und wenn sie euch noch tiefer stiessen
und würfen Steine hinterher!
Und wenn sie euch verhaften liessen
und würden nach euch Scheibe-schiessen!
Sterbt höflich und sagt Dankesehr.¹¹

¹⁰ E.g., *Der tägliche Kram*, pp. 17 ff., 83, 86 f., 146 ff., etc.

¹¹ *Herz auf Taille*, pp. 100 f.

The antilyrical influence responsible for this radical shift is again to be found on the personal plane but at the same time transcends it. The love and warmth at home found a rude contrast in the world beyond as it impinged first on the home and then on young Kästner personally. He was from the beginning involved as a victim in the social evils he alludes to and had ample opportunity to be aware of the generalized social crisis. In childhood he felt the pinch of poverty and experienced in his own family the consequences of that decline of the old middle classes which forms the background of much of the substance of his social criticism. His father, who before the birth of his son and only child had been an independent harness-maker, had descended to proletarian status when he became a skilled worker in a luggage factory. His mother, exactly like the fictional mother in his *Emil und die Detektive*, was forced to eke out the family income as a hairdresser, and thus she too illustrated in miniature the embattled position of the small independent entrepreneur; the mother in *Fabian*, also an autobiographical echo, illustrates the same thing. Drafted into the first World War at the age of eighteen, Kästner saw at first hand the evils of war and militarism and took away with him as a grim keepsake a permanently damaged heart. His entire education, including his work leading in 1925 to the Ph.D. degree, was gained at the cost of continual hardship by reason of his financial struggle. Everywhere in this postwar world Kästner could observe poverty, unemployment, instability, the decline of the old middle classes, the decay of morality, and a host of other social evils and injustices, all culminating in the menacing rise of totalitarian movements and finally the twin-pronged threat of Communism and Nazism.

There were, then, in the formative environment of this sensitive urban individual two disparate elements: outer reality under the aspect of social evil, and love as the inner reality. Significantly, the two worlds of experience are contrasted in the opening poem of his earliest collection.

Dann holte man uns zum Militär,
 Bloss so als Kanonenfutter.
 In der Schule wurden die Bänke leer,
 Zu Hause weinte die Mutter.¹²

One type of experience affected Kästner as deeply as the other. It was but natural that he should seek a mode of expression that would do justice to both: an invective that would at the same time be lyrical,

¹² *Herz auf Taille*, p. 6. Likewise in *Fabian*, *Emil und die Detektive*, etc.

a lyrism that would at the same time be *Zeitkritik*. Thus to create the positive relation of paradox where there had been only negative relation was for him a personal as well as a stylistic problem. The naked clash of subjective and objective reality must be reduced to esthetic order in his style and thus be reconciled in his life.

A third factor in the development of Kästner's style was his vocational experience as a leading journalist. Of great importance is the fact that, far from fleeing from the outside world to a private inner retreat, he took his position at the point where privacy does not exist; where that outside world and precisely its evils and crises are perpetually in focus; where detailed and substantiated knowledge, not vague feeling, must be clearly, vividly, and economically communicated to the widest of all possible audiences. Equally important is the fact that all of this was *contrary to his inclination*. His attitude in those critical and, for him, formative years between World War I and Hitler was exactly the attitude he took years later when, standing in the wreckage of Germany after World War II, he was offered an editorship on the American-licensed *Neue Zeitung*:

I remembered those student years that I had spent on an editor's chair and at the end of which I had sworn a sacred oath never to do it again. For one must be a born abrader of office furniture or he suffers like a dog. [I was an individualist to whom the lock-step of routine was anathema, but the chief demanded only one thing:] Punctuality! He was adamant like a lover who reproaches his blue-eyed blonde with only one thing: that she is not a brunette with hazel eyes! It was no pleasure. Not for me. Nor for him. But at least he had one faint consolation: he was right!

So I thought of my prehistoric office stool epoch, when a year ago worthy-appearing men offered me the editorship of the [*Neue Zeitung*] Supplement. And I thought of something else. That for twelve years I had been waiting for the day when they would say to me: "There! Now you may write again." The material for two novels and three plays lay ready in the drawers of my brain. Cut to shape and with all the trimmings. The day had arrived. I could retire to the country. Between mallows and carnations. Even if I had emerged from the "glorious times" right plucked and singed. I still had paper and pencils and, above all, my head! My love, what else doth thy heart require? Now, if I wanted, I could—stuffed with publishers' advances—stroll through the woods, thoughtfully chew blades of grass, admire the romantic blue yonder, at night write poetry till the pencil glowed, and then in the morning sleep as long as I wanted. What did I do instead? The worthy-looking gentlemen looked at me inquiringly and I like a fool said, "Yes." Whoever, if he has read this far, thinks to himself, "Good Lord, is he ever conceited!" has not understood me rightly. I have told this story for a different reason. I wanted to

show that my inclination was to write books and let the rest of the world go by. And that I did the exact opposite. . . .

Why do I knock myself out instead of folding my delicate hands behind my back and strolling "in the forest, all, all alone" [ironically quoted from Goethe]? Because it is necessary that someone do the daily stint. . . . Who now stands to one side, instead of laying hold, clearly has stronger nerves than I. Who now thinks of his Collected Works instead of the daily job may adjust matters with his conscience. Who now builds castles in the air, instead of clearing rubble, needs to be laid over Fate's knee.

And this applies not only to writers.¹³

Nevertheless Kästner was remarkably successful in his career as a journalist. In 1923, at the early age of twenty-four, while still working toward his Ph.D. degree, he was already an editor of the magazines *Die grosse Welt* and *Das Leben*, and he remained continuously active as a journalist from that time forward. From 1924 to 1927 he was drama critic for the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung*, later continuing with that newspaper as Berlin theater correspondent—this continuous contact with the theater being incidentally an important influence, for all his works have a style bordering on the dramatic. From 1926 until the beginning of the Hitler dictatorship he contributed poetry and prose to *Die Weltbühne*, at that time a liberal magazine devoted to public affairs. During the same period, Kästner published articles in such democratic and liberal newspapers and periodicals as the *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Vossische Zeitung*, *Montag-Morgen*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Prager Tagblatt*, *Tagebuch*, etc. In 1926 and 1927 he was *kulturpolitischer Redakteur* of the *Leipziger Tageblatt* and the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung*. From 1927 until the seizure of power by Hitler—he was of course among the writers honored by having their books burned, and was the only one to be a spectator at the event—he was Berlin correspondent for the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung* and the *Prager Tagblatt*. He is therefore by profession a journalist.

During his Leipzig period, he also engaged in publicity work for the newspapers with which he was associated and took a lively professional interest in purely technical questions pertaining to advertising methods, as we see from a technical article by him in a trade journal.¹⁴ His interest in this profession is further shown by the fact that he made three of his characters advertising men: Jakob Fabian and Zacharias in the novel *Fabian*, and Fritz Hagedorn, the chief

¹³ From the title essay of *Der tägliche Kram*; the essay first appeared in July of 1946 in *Pinguin*, a magazine for young people which Kästner founded and published in 1945.

¹⁴ "Eigenwerbung der Zeitung," *Die Reklame*, March 1928, pp. 166 f.

character in the novel *Drei Männer im Schnee*, who is represented as having written a doctoral dissertation on advertising psychology. Both journalism and advertising taught Kästner to write for an audience and for effect, not for himself alone as a form of self-expression. In short, in our use of the word, he learned to write rhetorically.

But here again Kästner's presentation of his own case is only partial and does not do him justice. One must go deeper to find the complete and more interesting truth. Kästner does not in fact neglect poetry for journalism or divorce the two at all. He synthesizes them. As a poet, he is a kind of commentator on the current scene. Asked after World War II why, unlike other writers and intellectuals opposed to the National Socialist regime, he had not emigrated, he returned this reply, which indirectly illustrates how completely he equates his literary work with the work of the journalist:

It is an author's duty and normal desire to learn how the people to which he belongs bears its fate in difficult times. To choose just such a time to emigrate is justified only by a clear and present danger to his life. Otherwise it is his professional duty to run any risk that will enable him to be an eyewitness and one day deliver written testimony.¹⁵

A final factor which must be briefly noted is the character of Kästner's reading and other *Bildungserlebnisse*. Access to this factor is limited to what can be seen or inferred from his published writings, and of this only a sample can be given to illustrate the presence, from the start, of a clear pattern of acceptance and rejection explainable by the biographical and other factors already mentioned. The integrity of this pattern would suggest that his *Bildungserlebnisse* have importance as an organizing or catalytic rather than as a truly formative influence. Kästner's acceptance or rejection is always based on a sociological rather than an esthetic scale of values. He alludes favorably to writers, literary and otherwise, in proportion to the sense of social responsibility which their works reveal; from other standpoints these writers may range from great to mediocre. Literary direction as such is of no influence as a criterion.

The most outstanding example illustrating Kästner's principle of acceptance is Lessing. Although little given to unreserved eulogy, he twice makes an exception in favor of this author. Several pages and part of the plot of *Fabian*, as well as the poem "Lessing," are devoted to the praise of this pugnacious and selfless apostle of tolerance who in *Emilia Galotti* so boldly held up the mirror to tyrants.

¹⁵ *Der tägliche Kram*, p. 22.

Das, was er schrieb, war manchmal Dichtung,
 doch um zu dichten schrieb er nie.
 Es gab kein Ziel. Er fand die Richtung.
 Er war ein Mann und kein Genie.

Er lebte in der Zeit der Zöpfe,
 und er trug selber seinen Zopf.
 Doch kamen seitdem viele Köpfe
 und niemals wieder so ein Kopf.

Er war ein Mann, wie keiner wieder,
 obwohl er keinen Säbel schwang.
 Er schlug den Feind mit Worten nieder,
 und keinen gab's, den er nicht zwang.

Er stand allein und kämpfte ehrlich
 und schlug der Zeit die Fenster ein.
 Nichts auf der Welt macht so gefährlich,
 als tapfer und allein zu sein.¹⁶

Kästner twice alludes to Schiller, and in this connection honors at least the idealistic motives behind his *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* which, although not precisely in Kästner's sense, seeks to yoke together the esthetic and the rhetorical. Likewise, he honors Schopenhauer for his idealistic motives in espousing a project of moral improvement of society based on the ethical application of Brahman thought—a reference to either the section on ethics in *The World as Will and Idea* or *The Two Main Problems of Ethics*. He pays his respects, in a poem of the same title, to E. T. A. Hoffmann as the author of *Des Vetters Eckfenster*, the short story whose moral it is that the artist should transcend the bounds of his private world and base his work on meticulous and sympathetic observation of the world of real people. In this respect Hoffmann may be credited with having influenced the content of Kästner's work, and in point of style the influence is even more noticeable: in such poems as "Gefährliches Lokal," "Die unverstandene Frau," "Der Traum vom Gesichtertausch," and many others we find again that same incongruous combination of the weird and the commonplace which was so characteristic of Hoffmann. Kästner mentions his admiration for several Expressionistic artists whose works reveal a strong sense of social responsibility and whom he is known to have studied as early as 1919 while still a student at the Gymnasium: Dix, Kokoschka, Kandinsky, Marc, Fein-

¹⁶ *Lyrische Hausapotheke*, p. 192.

inger and others—here again a strong influence emanating from an essentially dramatic style and a style moreover which fused, now in a sense much closer to Kästner's, the lyrical and the rhetorical. Correspondence with Kästner has established that mere coincidence is responsible for the rather striking similarities between his *Lyrische Hausapotheke* and *The Poetry Cure: A Pocket Medicine Chest of Verse*, edited by Robert Haven Schauffler (New York, 1925); Kästner had not read this book nor known of its existence.

In contrast, Kästner looks with disfavor upon authors, regardless of their rank otherwise, whose work is not the product of social consciousness but is based on introspective processes. Quoting verbatim from the opening paragraph of Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, Kästner in *Fabian* derides this "solitary revolution, in Holland, [in a tidy house] with tulip beds in front," thus by implication rejecting the whole *cogito* system as irrelevant because private. It is for him a sufficient refutation of this neat *a priori* system to have Fabian raise his eyes from Descartes, look out the window, and see as an incongruous symbol "the busses which, like elephants on roller skates, drove along the Kaiserallee." In spite of his great personal admiration for Goethe, it cannot be said that any influence on his own production emanates from that source. Repeatedly, and with a modesty and reticence that are by no means ironical or feigned but on the contrary are very characteristic of him personally, he describes his intentions in terms completely foreign to the Goethean tradition of the "great confession": "Contrary to my own inclination, I regularly refrained from any publication which would have been merely a revelation of personal moods and insights." "That someone expresses what moves and oppresses him—and others with him—is useful." Goethean lines, as "ich ging im Walde so für mich hin," are always quoted in a context suggesting derogation; again and again Goethe's lines, echoed in Kästner's poems, serve as the butts of parody, as in "Kennst du das Land, wo die Kanonen blühen?" So do lines from Romantic poets such as Joseph Viktor von Scheffel ("Es ist im Leben hässlich eingerichtet,/ dass nach den Fragen Fragezeichen stehn.") Heine is the borderline exception that proves the rule. His romantic poems are the subject of parody, as in "Der Handstand auf der Loreley," but lines from his critical poems are echoed without the implication of rejection, as for example in the poem "Der Mensch ist gut."

Der Mensch ist gut! Wenn er noch besser wäre,
Wär er zu gut für die bescheidne Welt.
Auch die Moral hat ihr Gesetz der Schwere:
Der schlechte Kerl kommt hoch—der Gute fällt.

Evidently of extremely great influence in crystalizing Kästner's thought were various writings of H. G. Wells. Kästner's first reference to Wells comes relatively late, in March of 1930, but expressly implies an earlier acquaintance with writings by this author, including probably one or all of the following: *Tono Bungay*, *The Salvaging of Civilisation*, and *An Outline of History*. In an article published in a technical journal of advertising,¹⁷ Kästner summarizes and quotes at length from Wells' *The World of William Clissold*, which had recently appeared in German translation, and praises its leading message. Wells, himself a professional propagandist in World War I, had proposed in this novel, as in the other books cited above, that the methods of advertising and propaganda, as the truly scientific and effective modern forms of rhetoric, should be emancipated from their sordid commercial application and be used in the promotion of social reform; the Christian Church, as Wells is fond of repeating, stands as a monument to what even primitive methods of promotion were able to accomplish and as an intimation of what modern promotional methods could, indeed must, do for idealistic causes. The growth of the masses, Wells implies, has so enlarged the problem of communication as to make all earlier forms of rhetoric incommensurate and obsolete. This idea appealed so strongly to Kästner, himself a journalist and advertising man, that he included it again in *Fabian*. Advertising, one of his characters there maintains, should no longer be devoted solely to "increasing the consumption of soap and chewing gum"—a variation on several similar phrases to be found in Wells.

Wells entertained a similar opinion of art: it cannot be autonomous; it must have a function definable in sociological terms. This thought, implicit in his own literary work, is explicitly stated in his correspondence with Henry James.¹⁸ The suggestion that art does not exist simply for esthetic purposes but also for pedagogical ones was of course typical also of the eighteenth century, Kästner's area of scholastic specialization.¹⁹

Kästner's stylistic problem was now, as a result of all these factors, defined in the most drastic form it could take. He would attempt to bring together in a synthesis on the one hand a lyric style and on the other not merely that style of rhetoric which had some literary sanction but rather that offshoot of rhetoric which, freed of any esthetic control, had evolved into the raucous modern giant of commercial and political publicity and promotion. The solution of this problem could

¹⁷ "Reklame und Weltrevolution," *Gebrauchsgraphik*, VII (March 1930), 52-57.

¹⁸ As quoted in Geoffrey West, *H. G. Wells* (New York, 1930), pp. 192 f.

¹⁹ Kästner completed in 1925 a doctoral dissertation entitled *Die Erwiderungen auf Friedrichs des Grossen Schrift: "De la littérature allemande."*

only be a style vibrant with the enormous tensions which it would have to contain.

The function of the novel *Fabian*, considered as an allegorical statement of Kästner's intentions, is in part to hint at and justify a synthesis of this nature. Here two characters, representing partial views of Kästner himself, are confronted with the spectacle of a depraved society rushing toward total moral and material collapse. Stephan Labude wishes to reform this society by reorganizing it; and the story tends to support his view by underlining the dislocations and absurdities of the political situation as such. Jakob Fabian on the other hand believes moral reform to be the necessary precondition for the salvation of society; his view too is justified, for the story vividly emphasizes the moral depravity of society. Fabian is the apolitical, the passive, the esthetic, the antirationalistic man; Labude is the opposite. Both characters prove to be inadequate, and so by implication do the limited points of view which they represent. But both are partially right; a synthesis of the two is thus the solution which one must infer. Interpreted in stylistic terms and referred to Kästner as a poet, this would again signify a synthesis of the rhetorical and the lyrical.

In this synthesis of two elements which are after all so distinct by nature as to retain their separate identities no matter how artfully they are combined, which of the two must be considered as dominant and therefore be taken as the point of departure in analysis?

From an external point of view, the satirical-rhetorical aspect clearly is dominant and defines the form which the other can take. To say that it does so is of course simply to draw an obvious inference from Kästner's own remarks quoted earlier. It is equally obvious that in the nature of this interaction no other relationship would have been possible. For the lyrical aspect in itself would tend to put the poet at the center, whereas the satirical-rhetorical aspect in itself has the opposite tendency; it puts society at the center. Since the poet cannot include society, but society can include the poet, the dominance of the satirical-rhetorical element in any hypothetical fusion follows. The role of the poet must then be defined in terms of his non-emergence. The unity is destroyed if he becomes lyrical in his own right or person; it is preserved if he claims to act as the expressive function of the multiple personality, the public. And this is precisely Kästner's reasoning, as he indirectly reveals in his "Prosaische Zwischenbemerkung"; for he expressly asks his readers to consider him among "those lyric poets who have the feelings of natural men and by proxy express these feelings (and views and wishes)."²⁰

²⁰ *Lärm im Spiegel*, p. 52.

From the internal point of view, the situation is reversed, and the lyrical aspect is the more important. For even without the evidence which the poems present, it is clear that Kästner must be innately a lyric poet rather than a satirist. The satirist as such would have no motive for introducing a lyrical component into his work, even if he could do so, whereas the lyric poet could and in this case does have an incentive to attempt such a synthesis. The essential point to be emphasized here is that the satirical-rhetorical component, once present, must necessarily become dominant and dictate the objective character of the poems and therefore our approach to them. Nevertheless the fact that Kästner is a lyric poet by nature and a rhetorician by necessity, and its corollary, that his poems represent mutations of a lyrical substratum, while they do not provide the beginning point for a stylistic analysis, are of course vitally necessary to an appreciation of his poetry.

Concentrating therefore on the rhetorical aspect alone, we note as the most salient fact that the poems borrow their basic pattern from the newspaper item and the advertisement, which would accord with the above-mentioned influence of Wells. The volumes themselves do not have titles of a gentle, traditional sort, such as *Frühe Gedichte* or the like, but are called rather *Herz auf Taille*, *Lärm im Spiegel*, *Ein Mann gibt Auskunft*, *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen*, and *Doktor Erich Kästners lyrische Hausapotheke*. Here, as generally in Kästner, we have that turbulence in style already noticed. They are indeed titles suggesting a lyrical content (*Herz*) but at the same time advertise the volumes in a loud, brassy manner like that of the banner headline (*auf Taille*). Like advertisements, the volumes furthermore utilize eye-catching and story-telling illustration in the form of the vignettes by Erich Ohser and Rudolf Grossmann—although in a total view this is a very minor function of these often sensitive and subtle vignettes.

The same is true of the titles of the individual poems; although their tone evolves from the very loud and brassy to the somewhat more restrained, they always retain something of the style of the newspaper headline or the chief caption of the display advertisement: "Wer hat noch nicht? Wer will noch mal?", "Nachtgesang des Kammervirtuosen," "Präludium auf Zimmer 28," "Monolog in der Badewanne," "Elegie mit Ei," "Selbstmord im Familienbad," and others. Here, as in so many things, Kästner learned much from the Expressionists; but his titles are much bolder than theirs or even those of his fellow neo-objectivists such as Bert Brecht. The peculiar tensions in the titles such as that between *Elegie* and *mit Ei*, or between the ironical and the real meaning, or between the titles and the poems

are distinctively his own. The origination of titles, ordinarily a rather minor concern of poets or no concern at all, here is magnified into a major part of the art. No means is spared to make the titles rhetorically effective: witty incongruity, brassy sensationalism, bold paradox, off-color suggestion, tantalizing enigma. Everywhere we see in detail the influence of the newspaper headline and the advertising caption, as for example in the use of the present tense in such titles as "Junggesellen sind auf Reisen," "Eine Mutter zieht Bilanz," "Ein Fräulein beklagt sich bitter," "Ein Hund hält Reden," and similar instances.

Passing to the poems themselves, we see that each of them is organized in the reverse order of climax. The first stanza, like the first paragraph of a newspaper article or the first part of the text of an advertisement, immediately capitalizes on the interest or curiosity aroused by the "headline" and plunges the reader without delay *in medias res*. All of Kästner's openings are remarkably economical, compressed, vivid, and rapid; they often enhance this effect by strong shock. The first poem of the first collection, *Herz auf Taille*, illustrates this:

Wir haben die Frauen zu Bett gebracht,
Als die Männer in Frankreich standen.
Wir hatten uns das viel schöner gedacht.
Wir waren nur Konfirmanden.

Dann holte man uns zum Militär,
Bloss so als Kanonenfutter.
In der Schule wurden die Bänke leer,
Zu Hause weinte die Mutter.

Dann gab es ein bisschen Revolution
Und schneite Kartoffelflocken;
Dann kamen die Frauen, wie früher schon,
Und dann kamen die Gonokokken.

Inzwischen verlor der Alte sein Geld,
Da wurden wir Nachtstudenten.
Bei Tag waren wir bureau-angestellt
Und rechneten mit Prozenten.

Dann hätte sie fast ein Kind gehabt,
Ob von dir, ob von mir—was weiss ich!
Das hat ihr ein Freund von uns ausgeschabt.
Und nächstens werden wir Dreissig.

Wir haben sogar ein Examen gemacht
 Und das Meiste schon wieder vergessen.
 Jetzt sind wir allein bei Tag und bei Nacht
 Und haben nichts Rechtes zu fressen!

Wir haben der Welt in die Schnauze geguckt,
 Anstatt mit Puppen zu spielen.
 Wir haben der Welt auf die Weste gespuckt,
 Soweit wir vor Ypern nicht fielen.

Man hat unsern Körper und hat unsern Geist
 Ein wenig zu wenig gekräftigt.
 Man hat uns zu lange, zu früh und zumeist
 In der Weltgeschichte beschäftigt!

Die Alten behaupten, es würde nun Zeit
 Für uns zum Säen und Ernten.
 Noch einen Moment. Bald sind wir bereit.
 Noch einen Moment. Bald ist es so weit!
 Dann zeigen wir euch, was wir lernten!

The title, "Jahrgang 1899" (borrowed from the brilliant Tucholsky, who through his own style of poetry and through occasional personal contact exerted a considerable influence, especially on Kästner's earlier poems), had apprised the reader that this was to be the story of a lost generation; the first stanza now compresses the situation of this generation into vivid scenes: the war, the destruction of moral standards, the decline of the home and the family, disillusionment, the rebellious dissatisfaction of youth. The first stanza is the whole poem in miniature. The rest of the poem exists in order to develop the given motifs. With reference to the major thesis of this study, we should in passing note the dual nature of this poem. Insofar as it *concerns* an objective situation in society, it communicates by means of vigorous rhetoric a content full to bursting with *Zeithkritik*. But insofar as this content is put into the collective mouth (*wir*) of a whole generation and expressed in this violent tone of resentment, bitterness, angry recklessness, frustration, hard-boiled disillusionment, and lingering childlike idealism not too far from tears, it is lyrical expression "by proxy." The stylistic device of compression, in which Kästner is unsurpassed, functions rhetorically to lend striking power to the critical content and esthetically to create the artistic counterpart of the pent-up state of the lost generation.

In lieu of compression and shock, or supplementing them, we find numerous other devices to challenge or "buttonhole" the reader, some of which may be mentioned in order to illustrate the care and resource-

fulness with which Kästner fashions his openings. One such device, found at the beginnings of poems as well as elsewhere, is the use of those witty piquancies for which he is well known:

Da liegt man nun, so nackt, wie man nur kann,
hat Seife in den Augen, welche stört,
und merkt, aufs Haar genau: Man ist ein Mann.
Mit allem, was dazugehört.
(“Monolog in der Badewanne,” HaT 98)

Another such rhetorical device is the direct question or the suggestion of a question:

Kennst du das Land, wo die Kanonen blühen?
Du kennst es nicht? Du wirst es kennenlernen!
(“Kennst du das Land, wo die Kanonen blühen?” HaT 40)

Der Rektor trat, zum Abendbrot,
bekümmert in den Saal.
(“Primaner in Uniform,” MgA 45)

Similarly, a paradoxical opening line may suggest a question:

Wenn sich Leute, die sich lieben, hassen . . .
(“Familiäre Stanzen,” MgA 25)

Das ist mein Zimmer und ist doch nicht meines.
(“Hotelsolo für eine Männerstimme,” LH 15)

Sometimes Kästner adopts for the same purpose the practice, which had been familiar to the Expressionists, of placing an arresting image at the very beginning. The tone of his images is, to be sure, quite different from that of the typical Expressionistic image:

Nun wirft der Herbst die Blätter auf den Markt.
(“Herr im Herbst,” HaT 33)

Der Frühling giesst den Regen durch ein Sieb.
Die Veilchen stehen Hand in Hand und flennen.
(“Der Geizhals geht im Regen,” MgA 68)

Der Regen regnet sich nicht satt.
Es regnet hoffnungslosen Zwirn.
(“Rezitation bei Regenwetter,” GzS 40)

Die bunten Asten winken durch die Gitter.
 Die Gärten schminken sich. Das Jahr ist alt.
 ("Elegie nach allen Seiten," GzS 51)

Nun gibt der Herbst dem Wind die Sporen.
 Die bunten Laubgardinen wehn.
 Die Strassen ähneln Korridoren,
 in denen Türen offenstehn.
 ("Herbst auf der ganzen Linie," LH 194)

The opening lines very characteristically give the essence of a narrative situation:

Eines Tages war sie wieder da . . .
 ("Repetition des Gefühls," LiS 60)

Hence, the openings generally define the time or the place or both, so that we very often find in this position adverbs of time or place: *Eines Tages . . . , Jeden Sonntag . . . , Der Rektor trat, zum Abendbrot . . . , Am 12. Juli des Jahres 2003 . . . , Weihnachten vergangenen Jahres/ (17 Uhr präzise) war es . . . , Er sass in der grossen Stadt Berlin/ an einem kleinen Tisch . . . , Auf den Schlachtfeldern von Verdun . . . , Immer, wenn im Deutschen Reiche/ der ersehnte Abend naht. . . .*

Such a list of devices which serve rhetorically to underline or exploit the openings can be only illustrative. One also finds with great frequency the imperative and the hortatory subjunctive, direct address and other conversational effect, exclamations, striking aphorisms, and variations or combinations of these. Grammatically, Kästner's cultivation of openings takes the form of a decided preference for inverted word order, by virtue of which the initial sentence, like the entire poem, begins with its own most pregnant, important, or striking element. Typically, the subject appears first only if it is that element, as in "Jahrgang 1899"; otherwise it is replaced by some part of the predicate, as in "Umzug der Klubsessel" (LiS 27) or various examples noticed above. It may be remarked in this connection that this grammatical control is but one example of Kästner's expert control of the medium; such expert control, although not qualitatively in the nature of a distinctive trait, in its cumulative effect plays its important part in the identification of his style.

Not only the poem as a whole and its first stanza but each of the other stanzas will be seen to embody such devices to create initial impact, so that the reader is propelled along by a series of impulses. As a rule, each stanza is the development of its own first line. This jerky

movement of the poems may be observed in any example taken at random.

These stylistic features, although external in nature, are nevertheless important because decisive in the recognition of Kästner's style. All of them are descended from or represent variations on the journalistic style and are therefore rhetorical, not lyrical, in nature. Their presence to such a prominent extent in a lyrical context creates one of those peculiar tensions by which one recognizes Kästner's poems as indubitably his. What shape the lyrical element itself can take within the field of force of such a tension—the only really interesting question—will be discussed later, after the rhetorical framework has been further defined.

It is inevitable, in view of the basically journalistic pattern of these poems, that in them the narrative and descriptive elements are very strong, so much so that, externally regarded, almost all of the poems can be classified as narrative or descriptive. Thus, on the surface, "Kurt Schmidt, statt einer Ballade" (MgA 5) or "Repetition des Gefühls" (LiS 60) are narrative poems and "Nächtliches Rezept für Städter" (MgA 80) or "Elegie nach allen Seiten" (GzS 51) descriptive. One may indeed reduce these two types to one, namely, the narrative, for even the descriptive poems retain a dynamically evolving point of view.

It is further a result of the satirical-rhetorical function of the poems that they stress the element of *communication*. Kästner's above-mentioned posture of personal non-emergence gives him the possibility of great flexibility here. Among them the poems exemplify every conceivable mode of communication.

The form which the poems most frequently take is the *overheard monologue* with its variation, the *inner monologue*, as found for example in stanza ten of "Kurt Schmidt, statt einer Ballade." We find the overheard monologue again and again, as in "Eine Frau spricht im Schlaf" (MgA 52), "Gedanken beim Überfahrenwerden" (MgA 42), "Rezitation bei Regenwetter" (GzS 40), and very many others. Several poems use the word "Monolog" in their titles, e.g., "Monolog des Blinden" (LiS 80). Such poems as "Elegie nach allen Seiten" (GzS 51) may be included here, since the speaker, *man* (the indefinite pronoun, "one"), is a generalized subject whose utterances may be considered to be overheard. A variation of the monologue form is represented by those poems which give one part only of an *overheard dialogue*, as for example "In der Seitenstrasse" (MgA 62). Both parts of the dialogue may also appear, in which case the affinity of this style of poem with the drama is especially clear: "Belauschte Allegorie" (MgA 70), "Das ohnmächtige Zwiegespräch" (GzS 103).

The poems may also represent a *direct communication* from Kästner to a concretely visualized personage, ordinarily the reader, or to a class of persons; here belong such poems as "Knigge für Unbemitelte" (HaT 100), "Kennst du das Land, wo die Kanonen blühen?" (HaT 40), "Und wo bleibt das Positive, Herr Kästner?" (MgA 106), and "Marschliedchen" (GzS 97). In poems falling within this category, the lyrical element recedes or vanishes; it reappears, however, when the speaker is less starkly Kästner alone and more a generalized subject such as *man* in which Kästner includes himself. This is seen in "Monolog mit verteilten Rollen" (MgA 16), or in "Traurigkeit, die jeder kennt" (GzS 64), which fairly bristles with *man*.

In variations of such direct communication, fictitious personages may address the reader (e.g., "Stimmen aus dem Massengrab," HaT 109), or the poet may address real or fictitious personages (e.g., "Dem Revolutionär Jesus zum Geburtstag," MgA 92). The *diary* form ("Tagebuch eines Herzkranken," LH 46) and especially the *letter* form (e.g., "Saldo mortale," MgA 75) likewise occur. Every poem is accounted for in terms of these directions and modes of communication or by some combination thereof. This fact again must be traced to the rhetorical aspect of the poems; it would not at all follow from the lyrical aspect.

It is in keeping with the character of the poems as communication that in content and expression they meet the public at large on a common ground of shared experience and shared idiom. Here again, Kästner the rhetorician, for whom immediacy of contact is essential, sets the limits within which Kästner the lyricist must work. His language is derived from and conforms to normal prose usage, ranging from the very dry (as, "Der Mann, von dem im weiteren Verlauf/ die Rede ist, hiess Schmidt [Kurt Schm., komplett]") to the whimsy of colloquial speech and slang:

Um diese Zeit war Schmidt noch gut verpackt.
 Er träumte nachts manchmal von fernen Ländern.
 Um diese Zeit hielt Schmidt noch halbwegs Takt.
 Und dachte: Morgen kann sich alles ändern.

With his matchless ear for colloquial speech, Kästner is able, with that virtuosity and appearance of effortless ease which is so typical of him and so necessary to him from the rhetorical viewpoint, to take as his linguistic material entire colloquial idioms and fit them into his poems with violence neither to the idioms nor to the verses:

Ich bin doch nicht dumm, doch ich komm nicht vom Flecke.

Ich lebe, aber man merkt es nicht sehr.

Ich lebe auf einer Nebenstrecke.

Das ist nicht nur traurig. Es fällt auch schwer.

("Ein Buchhalter schreibt seiner Mutter," MgA 84)

Kästner's virtuosity is here shown, for example, by the fact that he can find idiomatic phrases which will adapt to a verse form containing several anapaestic feet and thus rhythmically enhance the expression of dejection and despair, in spite of the normal inclination of German speech to follow an iambic stress pattern. The concluding phrase, in normal colloquial use a completely colorless and worn-out metaphor, here regains its original freshness and pregnancy by the heavy stress falling on its rhyme-word *schwer*, coming at the end of the long line.

In choice of vocabulary, Kästner avoids rare words or words that would be at all unusual in a prose or colloquial context, as well as any words with an already existent aura of lyrical associations. His matter-of-fact and brittle vocabulary includes such aggressively "unpoetical" words as *subkutan*, *porös*, *präzise*, *naiv*, *inklusive*, *speziell*, *Orthodiagramm*, *versicherungsrechtlich* (one is surprised again and again to see that such words scan and fit into verse forms), *finanziell*, *inhalieren*, *interviewen*, and the like. As these examples illustrate, he leans to words of foreign derivation, which convey only an idea and not a residual metaphor, and to words untouched by archaism or any romantic nationalistic associations. His words as such are carriers of meaning, not of sentiment, and in this function their impact must not be muffled by any fog of poetical ambiguity. His words are in the nature of scientific vocabulary; they have one meaning only; their denotation and connotation are one and the same. All of this has partly a political intention, for the style of a polemic literature directed against the Hitler movement and similar trends could not be other than anti-romantic. In any case, the style of vocabulary is dictated by rhetorical considerations.

The verse structure also reveals the dominance of the rhetorical attitude. It is extremely regular and predictable, falling into a few simple external patterns. Were the verse structure musical in intention, we could not find such regularity. Characteristically, such forms as the sonnet are absent altogether and would be unthinkable. Most of the poems are in quatrains rhyming *abab*, some rhyme *abba*, a few *xaxa*, and one *aaaa*. Of the rest, most are in five-line stanzas rhyming *abaab*. These categories together account for 85 per cent of the poems in HaT, 81 per cent of those in LiS, 84 per cent of those in MgA, 73 per

cent of those in GzS, and 69 per cent of the new poems in LH; one notes therefore a slight tendency to increased variety in the last two volumes but no tendency at all to free forms. All of the remaining poems fall into various ready-made schemes: seven are in rhyming couplets, one example of *terza rima* occurs, and the balance is made up of poems in variously rhyming five-, six-, seven-, and eight-line stanzas. Although Kästner very frequently adopts the device of shifting the rhyme-scheme or changing the length of the stanza at the end of the poems, this cannot compensate for the monotony and lack of interest attaching to the outer form as such. The outer form, then, is again rhetorically motivated and a negative factor so far as lyric expression is concerned; the latter is, so to speak, driven underground and manifests itself rather in the "inner form," which will be taken up later.

The rhyme too is not lyrical, i.e., musical, in nature, but rhetorical. Ordinarily it is correct and pure, but Kästner is not overly careful in this respect. In *Herz auf Taille* numerous dubious rhymes occur, partly reflecting Kästner's Saxon background: *Spasse-Nase*, *Gewölbedasselbe*, *böse-Grösse*, *böse-Blösse*, *schweigen-streiken*, etc. In later volumes he still rhymes, e.g., *er-Meer*, *kannten-abhanden*, *Schritte-Visite*, *einmal-Schicksal*, *Choralgesang-Restaurant*, *Tisch-Plüsich*, *fürhier*, etc. Where the rhyme is not simply decorative and structural, it functions as do the rhymes of epigrams, i.e., with didactic or satirical effect; and for all these purposes it is adequate.

The rhyme is used to enhance the opposition of contrasting thoughts:

Die Büros sind keine Puppenstuben.
Die Fabriken sind kein Nadelwald.
Und auch die modernsten Kohlengruben
sind kein idealer Aufenthalt.
("Goldne Jugendzeit," MgA 102)

It ridicules, as for example by burlesque double rhyme:

Erst neulich machte auf der Loreley
hoch überm Rhein ein Turner einen Handstand!
Von allen Dampfern tönte Angstgeschrei,
als er kopfüber oben auf der Wand stand.
("Der Handstand auf der Loreley," GzS 20)

It may be used to lend a note of epigrammatic finality:

Diese Menschheit ist nichts weiter als
eine Hautkrankheit des Erdenballs
("Misanthropologie," MgA 60)

Rhetorical also is the strongly didactic character of the poems. Kästner calls himself a "schoolmaster" and obviously takes as his model in this respect his compatriot Lessing; he might also say of himself: "Das, was er schrieb, war manchmal Dichtung,/ doch um zu dichten schrieb er nie." His treatment of images is typical of his didacticism. He presents his images as a literal schoolmaster might present illustrative pedagogical materials, sometimes very emphatically so, even in poems of a very lyrical spirit:

Man nehme irgendeinen Autobus.
Es kann nicht schaden, einmal umzusteigen.
Wohin, ist gleich. Das wird sich dann schon zeigen.
Doch man beachte, dass es Nacht sein muss.

In einer Gegend, die man niemals sah
(das ist entscheidend für dergleichen Fälle),
verlasse man den Autobus und stelle
sich in die Finsternis. Und warte da.

Man nehme allem, was zu sehn ist, Mass.
Den Toren, Giebeln, Bäumen und Balkonen,
den Häusern und den Menschen, die drin wohnen.
Und glaube nicht, man täte es zum Spass.

Dann gehe man durch Strassen. Kreuz und quer.
Und folge keinem vorgefassten Ziele.
Es gibt so viele Strassen, ach so viele!
Und hinter jeder Biegung sind es mehr.

Man nehme sich bei dem Spaziergang Zeit.
Er dient gewissermassen höhern Zwecken.
Er soll das, was vergessen wurde, wecken.
Nach zirka einer Stunde ist's soweit.

Dann wird es sein, als liefe man ein Jahr
durch diese Strassen, die kein Ende nehmen.
Und man beginnt, sich seiner selbst zu schämen
und seines Herzens, das verfettet war.

Nun weiss man wieder, was man wissen muss,
 statt dass man in Zufriedenheit erblindet:
 dass man sich in der Minderheit befindet!
 Dann nehme man den letzten Autobus,
 bevor er in der Dunkelheit verschwindet . . .
 ("Nächtliches Rezept für Städter," MgA 80)

His images are not meant to be taken as true in a mystical or myth-making sense, as one might normally expect, and would find, for example, in Rilke. Kästner's images are primarily pedagogical fictions. Thus when he writes: "Dem Globus lief das Blut aus den Arterien" ("Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf," MgA 38), the comparison is primarily a vivid way of saying that the world was in a state as critical as that of a wounded man from whom the blood was pouring. Having fulfilled its illustrative function, the image of the bleeding world is dropped immediately, before it can take root as myth. Most of his figures are in the first instance not conceived as precisely poetic images but are rather abstractions put concretely: "Die Spezies Mensch ging aus dem Leime/ und mit ihr Haus und Staat und Welt" ("Und wo bleibt das Positive, Herr Kästner?" MgA 106), "Die Tage regnen in die Pfützen,/ und jede Pfütze wird ein Jahr" ("Das Riesenspielzeug," GzS 34), etc. Hence the device of personification is very frequent: "Der Koffer gähnt. Auch mir ist müd zumute" ("Hotelsolo für eine Männerstimme," LH 15), "Die Zeit liegt im Sterben. Bald wird sie begraben" ("Und wo bleibt das Positive"), "Die Sonne scheint. Sie gibt sich grosse Mühe./ Man merkt die Absicht, und man friert" ("Elegie nach allen Seiten," GzS 51), etc.

These didactic images are sometimes extended into entire allegories; thus "Das Eisenbahngleichnis" (GzS 73) pursues the allegory of life as a train with unknown destination. Here indeed Kästner dwells upon the image but with such a clearly allegorical intention that the image is still prevented from becoming quasi-real in the sense referred to above. "Belauschte Allegorie" (MgA 70) makes similar use of the image of society as a pyramid; other poems which are in their entirety extended allegories are "Stimmen aus dem Massengrab" (HaT 109), "Verdun, viele Jahre später" (GzS 91), "Hunger ist heilbar" (GzS 28), "Das letzte Kapitel" (MgA 108), etc.

As a political and social satirist, and as a lyrical satirist, Kästner "holds up to men a mirror, generally a distorting mirror. . . ." His poems, as satire, conjure up scenes from the modern life of man with a certain shade of grotesqueness or caricature; that is why they can be accompanied by illustrations. One recalls in this connection the

illustrated verses of the great humorist Wilhelm Busch, and indeed Kästner's style is partly based on this predecessor. The similarity is fairly striking in this early poem of Kästner's:

Jeden Sonntag hat man Kummer
und beträchtlichen Verdruss,
weil man an die Montagsnummer
seiner Zeitung denken muss.

Denn am Sonntag sind bestimmt
zwanzig Morde losgewesen!
Wer sich Zeit zum Lesen nimmt,
muss das montags alles lesen.

Eifersucht und Niedertracht
schweigen fast die ganze Woche
Aber Sonntag früh bis nacht
machen sie direkt Epoche. (etc.)

("Kleine Sonntagspredigt," LiS 78)

Most of the stanzas in this poem could appear as captions for caricatures in the Busch manner, except that the style of such illustrations would have to be leaner and their spirit grimmer; even the rhymes are reminiscent of Busch's style. Often one finds poems by Busch in a style quite similar to Kästner's, for example:

Die Liebe war nicht geringe.
Sie wurden ordentlich blass;
Sie sagten sich tausend Dinge
Und wussten noch immer was.

Sie mussten sich lange quälen,
Doch schliesslich kam's dazu,
Dass sie sich konnten vermählen.
Jetzt haben die Seelen Ruh.

Bei eines Strumpfes Bereitung
Sitzt sie im Morgenhabit;
Er liest in der Kölnischen Zeitung
Und teilt ihr das Nötige mit.²¹

But what principally distinguishes Kästner from Busch, over and beyond many points of detail, is that which in Kästner goes beyond didacticism and humor and becomes more pronounced from volume to volume. The author of "Nächtliches Rezept für Städter" is far more than a "schoolmaster"; he is a sensitive lyric poet with a large and deep perspective.

²¹ *Sämtliche Werke* (ed. Otto Nöldeke), 1943, p. 257.

It is in part a result of Kästner's didactic intention that he so successfully cultivated, aided in this by his journalistic training, the art of compression into epigrams and epigrammatic formulas. Even in *Herz auf Taille* we may note this art, if only in embryonic form:

Die Welt ist rund. Denn dazu ist sie da.
Ein Vorn und Hinten gibt es nicht.
Und wer die Welt von hinten sah,
Der sah ihr ins Gesicht!
(*"Die Welt ist rund,"* HaT 23)

However, any examples to be found there are crude and diffuse in comparison to the tightly disciplined later passages: "Der Mensch war auch bloss eine Art Gemüse,/ das sich und dadurch andere ernährt" ("Kurt Schmidt, statt einer Ballade" MgA 5), "Wer nicht zur Welt kommt, hat nicht viel verloren . . . Ich kam zur Welt und lebe trotzdem weiter" ("Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf," MgA 38), "Man muss nicht leben, wenn man es nicht darf" ("Saldo mortale," MgA 75), "Vom Nichtstun wird nicht nur der Beutel leer" ("Fauler Zauber," MgA 89), "gescheit und trotzdem tapfer zu sein" ("Und wo bleibt das Positive, Herr Kästner?" MgA 106), and innumerable others. In *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen* and especially in *Lyrische Hausapotheke* the style reaches a maximum possible degree of leanness and compression in such epigrams and *Sprüche* as:

Es gibt nichts Gutes,
ausser: man tut es!
(*"Moral"* [complete], LH 31)

Finally, in *Kurz und bündig* (1948) Kästner devoted a volume entirely to epigrams, without, however, surpassing the perfection of his pre-war examples in this genre.

The style of his epigrammatic formulations alone would be a rich subject for detailed analysis, embracing as it does many subsidiary techniques of compression so characteristic of Kästner's style, such as the pun ("Nun wirft der Herbst die Blätter auf den Markt"; "Die Zeit ist schwarz, ich mach euch nichts weis"), compactly expressed images which upon reflection grow richer in allusion ("Das Jahr vergeht in Monatsraten"), the pregnant and surprising word ("Nur: die Fliege hat sechs Beine/ und der Mensch hat höchstens zwei"; "Anfangs war sie unaufhörlich heiter"; "und mit einer mittleren Lawine/ deckte es die blöde Bande zu"), the reversed cliché ("Jung und froh sein, sind verschiedne Dinge"), the sad bon mot ("Das geht

auf keinen Fall so weiter,/ wenn das so weiter geht"), the suggestive paradox ("Wer zu verstehn beginnt, versteht nichts mehr"), etc., as well as modifications of syntax. However, for the present purpose it is enough to point to the epigrammatic and therefore didactic character of the style without analyzing this feature further, except to note that such formulations are heavy with lyrical as well as didactic meaning.

Kästner's didactic intention has a bearing also on his use of figurative colloquialisms. Their crowning advantage from his point of view is their intellectualistic nature, which alone allows their figures to be paradoxical and even impossible. The images of colloquial speech, like Kästner's images in general, are more a sort of picture-writing for the mind (and heart) than a literally visual evocation of scenes, and it is in this way that he uses them:

Ich setze mich sehr gern zwischen Stühle.
Ich säge an dem Ast, auf dem wir sitzen.
("Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf," MgA 38)
Es ist, um förmlich aus der Haut zu fahren.
Die grosse Schwierigkeit ist nur: Wohin?
("Prima Wetter," MgA 27)

Kästner delights in the creation of such images, which are related to literal images somewhat as, in mathematics, imaginary numbers are related to real:

Man kann sich selber manchmal gar nicht leiden
und möchte sich vor Wut den Rücken drehn.
..
Man hängt sich meterlang zum Hals heraus.
("Elegie, ohne grosse Worte," LiS 18)
Wer nicht zur Welt kommt, hat nicht viel verloren.
Er sitzt im All auf einem Baum und lacht.
("Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf")
Wo man hinschaut, wird den Augen schlecht.
("Selbstmord im Familienbad," MgA 66)

This of course helps give that ludicrous effect for which Kästner is perhaps too well known, but the purpose is serious, and the result, in the sense of his hybrid genre, poetical. We have here an invasion of the lyrical by the rhetorical. Such a style of imagery, by transcending the possible, enables him to exaggerate the *Angst* of his age to the point of catharsis.

Also connected with Kästner's didacticism is his cultivation of precision in the expression of meaning, so marked a feature of his style. This has been indirectly touched on in the above discussion of his vocabulary and his epigrammatic formulations. It may also be observed in many other connections. For example, his puns, like "die Zeit ist schwarz, ich mach euch nichts weis," by giving two simultaneous meanings, stand at the point of intersection of the latter; so do all his paradoxes, ironies, or other dualisms—in short, his whole style, consisting as it does of a complex system of tensions in which each element is modified and controlled by another: thus in the example just quoted a lyrical first half by a rhetorical second half, the divergent halves being held together in this case by the two words involved in the pun.

Kästner often attains the desired precision by making fine distinctions between near synonyms, so that his meaning is again, as it were, narrowly fenced in:

Ich will nicht reden, wie die Dinge liegen.
 Ich will dir zeigen, wie die Sache steht.
 ("Brief an meinen Sohn," GzS 10)

Die Wälder schweigen. Doch sie sind nicht stumm.
 ("Die Wälder schweigen," LH 45)

Er steht dazwischen und daneben.
 Er ist nicht gross. Er ist nicht klein.
 Was nun beginnt, nennt man das Leben.
 Und morgen früh tritt er hinein.
 ("Zur Fotografie eines Konfirmanden," LH 17)

Here again Kästner's style matured so rapidly that one might imagine decades, not single years, to have elapsed between the volumes; only in the first two do we ever find his striving for precision unable to transcend fumbling and strained preciosity:

Bin ich, um fein zu sein, nicht fein genug?
 Mein Herz ist nicht besonders rein.
 Woran es liegt? Man wird so schwer draus klug.
 Ich bin, um fein zu sein, vielleicht zu fein?
 ("Das Lied vom feinen Mann," LiS 53)

All of Kästner's dualisms, including that tension of the lyrical and the rhetorical which is our primary concern, have a deeper underlying meaning which makes their use profoundly right for the period in

which they were conceived and for the whole modern age, so that didacticism and poetry merge at this point. All of these tensions help express the age of transition in which he was conscious of living. "We are standing," says his character Stephan Labude, "at one of those rare historical turning points at which a new Weltanschauung must be constituted. All else is useless." And at another point in *Fabian* he has his character Malmy, the economist, say: "To claim to solve the crisis of this age by economic means, without a prior renewal of the spirit, is quackery!" One of Jakob Fabian's similar speeches has already been quoted, as has the poem, "Junger Mann, 5 Uhr morgens." Kästner is filled with the awareness of his age as one of tension between the dying old and the unborn new, an age of momentous turbulence. That his style conveys this is its higher didacticism.

In such an early poem as "Die Zeit fährt Auto" (HaT 67), this sense of the age is expressed by antitheses nakedly separated by caesuras:

Die Städte wachsen. Und die Kurse steigen.
Wenn jemand Geld hat, hat er auch Kredit.
Die Konten reden. Die Bilanzen schweigen.
Die Menschen sperren aus. Die Menschen streiken.
Der Globus dreht sich. Und wir drehn uns mit.

Die Zeit fährt Auto. Doch kein Mensch kann lenken.
Das Leben fliegt wie ein Gehöft vorbei.
Minister sprechen oft vom Steuersenken.
Wer weiss, ob sie im Ernste daran denken?
Der Globus dreht sich und geht nicht entzwei.

Die Käufer kaufen. Und die Händler werben.
Das Geld kursiert, als sei das seine Pflicht.
Fabriken wachsen. Und Fabriken sterben.
Was gestern war, geht heute schon in Scherben.
Der Globus dreht sich. Doch man sieht es nicht.

This, like much in Kästner's earlier style, is not unlike Bert Brecht. When he finds his own style, into which an elegiac lyric note is assimilated, the result is this entirely different and immeasurably superior treatment of the same theme:

Die bunten A stern winken durch die Gitter.
Die Gärten schminken sich. Das Jahr ist alt.
Der Herbst stimmt nur die Optimisten bitter.
Normale Menschen lässt er kalt.

Die Blätter an den Bäumen kann man zählen.
An manchen Zweigen schaukeln nur noch drei.
Der Wind wird kommen und auch diese stehlen.
Er stiehlt und findet nichts dabei.

Ein blinder Mann verkauft verwelkte Rosen.
Er kann nicht sehen, wie verwelkt sie sind.
Auf einer Bank, umringt von Arbeitslosen,
sitzt singend ein vergnügtes Kind.

Im Pflaster zittern Pfützen aus der Frühe.
Das Himmelblau ist wieder repariert.
Die Sonne scheint. Sie gibt sich grosse Mühe.
Man merkt die Absicht, und man friert.

Ein alter Mann, welcher vorüberwandelt,
spricht mit sich selber wie ein Wiederkäuer.
Es klingt, als ob er mit dem Tod verhandelt.
Wahrscheinlich ist der Sarg zu teuer.

Die Blätter flattern wie die Schmetterlinge.
Die Strasse glüht und leuchtet und verfällt.
Der Herbst beschert uns den Verfall der Dinge
und dieses Mal auch den Verfall der Welt.

Das ist ein Jahr, da möchte alles sterben!
Die Welt verliert das Laub und den Verstand.
Der Winter und die Dummheit sind die Erben.
Und was sich Hoffnung nannte, wird verbrannt.

Vom andern Strassenufer wehen Lieder.
Das ist die Heilsarmee. Man singt zu sechst.
Die Blätter wachsen eines Tages wieder.
Doch ob auch die Vernunft von neuem wächst?
(“Elegie nach allen Seiten,” GzS 51)

Kästner calls himself a rationalist. One may reserve judgment on that but must agree, in the light of the foregoing, that his product may with intentional one-sidedness be called rationalistic, hence didactic, and hence, in our sense of the word, rhetorical. He presents through the body of his poetry a portrait of the time, with strong emphasis on its dislocations, evils, and ominous trends, and appeals from this portrait to common sense and reason. As he says in his poetic letter to his imaginary son:

Ich will nicht reden, wie die Dinge liegen.
Ich will dir zeigen, wie die Sache steht.
Denn die Vernunft muss ganz von selber siegen.
Ich will dein Vater sein und kein Prophet.

His strictures run the gamut from minor foibles such as women's fashions (e.g., "Der Busen marschieret," MgA 18, and "Sogenannte Klassefrauen," MgA 48) to such grave evils as militarism. The only denominator over which the evils he satirizes are equal is reason; for him evil is unreason. In point of definition, degree of harm or suffering caused is irrelevant.

As a rationalist, Kästner must see evil as absurdity and treat it in any case as comic. Even in "Marschliedchen" (GzS 97), rhetorically one of his finest poems, he still uses such comic devices as the pun, irony, and sarcasm, and knows no other argument against murderous nationalism and militarism than their absurdity. As distinct from wit, the entire comic element in Kästner's works—an element so pronounced as to be for many an opaque barrier to a just appreciation of his work as poetry—is a byproduct of his rationalism.

All of these factors account for and make necessary—even from the esthetic viewpoint—the above-mentioned simplicity and rigidity of the outward form, which we must now characterize further. We find almost no enjambement between lines and none at all between stanzas. The basic and almost inviolable structural unit is grammatical rather than musical, so that the line is at least a grammatically complete clause or other sentence unit and is usually a complete sentence; often two terse sentences share the line. This extreme hardness and this complete adherence to normal prose syntax, both very important in the recognition of Kästner's style, can be illustrated by any stanza, e.g.:

Wir sitzen alle im gleichen Zug
und reisen quer durch die Zeit.
Wir sehen hinaus. Wir sahen genug.
Wir fahren alle im gleichen Zug.
Und keiner weiss, wie weit.
(*"Das Eisenbahngleichnis," GzS 73*)

As in the fourth and fifth lines of this stanza, Kästner often punctuates with a period where a comma would have sufficed; he is intent on emphasizing the discreteness of thought units.

Finally, the typical instability of point of view already commented on in various connections can be partly accounted for also in terms of

the inherent necessities of a satiric style, and so this too must be included in a discussion of the rhetorical aspects of Kästner's work. He maintains in his poems a balance between illusionism and anti-illusionism, as do also Heine, Jean Paul, Cervantes, Laurence Sterne, Rabelais, and indeed all satiric authors; even the animals in fables must regularly emphasize their allegorical and unreal character by speaking. So too the flickering point of view is in the nature of a continual reference to the author, Kästner, who thus remains visible at varying distances as the "doctor," the "schoolmaster," the illusion-puncturing *eirón* of Greek comic tradition, the detached though distressed rationalist observing his mad epoch with a sardonic smile, the representative of the common man raising for all the voice of protest, the enraged prophet of the Apocalypse.

The devices whereby Kästner in his satiric or didactic capacity invades his own work are many and range from the subtle to the obvious; all of them contribute greatly to the external characteristics of his style. Very obviously does he violate the frame of his work in the "Prosaische Zwischenbemerkung" of *Lärm im Spiegel* and in the prefaces and titles of *Doktor Erich Kästners lyrische Hausapotheke* and *Bei Durchsicht meiner Bücher*. Only a little less spectacular is it when he introduces himself by name into the poems "Trottoircafés bei Nacht" (HaT 65), "Elegie mit Ei" (HaT 107), "Ein Hund hält Reden" (LiS 58), and "Und wo bleibt das Positive, Herr Kästner?" (MgA 106), as well as in the novel *Emil und die Detektive*. Several poems programmatically state Kästner's didactic purposes or methods and so have obvious reference to him as the manipulator of effects: "Zeitgenossen, haufenweise" (LiS 16), "Ankündigung einer Chansonette" (MgA 54), "Und wo bleibt das Positive, Herr Kästner?" (MgA 106), "Brief an meinen Sohn" (GzS 10), "Das ohnmächtige Zwiegespräch" (GzS 103), and "Lessing" (LH 192). Kästner appears on the scene personally in all the volumes through some fourteen autobiographical poems, beginning with "Jahrgang 1899" (HaT 6). Still external and obvious is the device of ironic footnotes following many of the poems in the first four volumes and subtitles following some of the titles, and only a little less so are the Heinesque endings and interruptions so frequently found, as for example at the end of "Der Traum vom Gesichtertausch" (GzS 56) and lines 11-12 of "Der Handstand auf der Loreley" (GzS 20).

But even aside from these obvious devices, Kästner finds innumerable other ways to control the degree of illusion which do not involve its total suspension. He constantly appears in his poems as the implied commentator, causing the reader also to distance himself momentarily from the poem as illusion; an example of this is the re-

frain of "Misstrauensvotum" (MgA 13). Similarly, Kästner as commentator appears in several disguises as well as *in propria persona* in "Maskenball im Hochgebirge" (MgA 32), the title of which is thus cleverly ambiguous. All of the didactic techniques already mentioned tend to control the degree of illusion; for example, one cannot attain perfect illusion through impossible figures like "man möchte sich vor Wut den Rücken drehn" or didactic figures such as that on which "Das Eisenbahngleichnis" is built. In addition, the all-pervading irony and the constant display of wit will have a similar effect; one example is the witty rhymes, which imply and call to mind the witty author:

Eben war die Landschaft noch so stumm.
Und der Wiesenteppich war so samten.
Und schon trampeln diese gottverdammten
Menschen wie in Sauerkraut herum.
("Misanthropologie," MgA 60)

Other more or less subtle devices are conversational effect, inclusion of the author in collective pronouns such as *man*, and the innumerable gross or slight incongruities in diction, level of discourse, etc.

To compensate for all these illusion-breaking devices, Kästner employs an equally great and equally characteristic arsenal of devices having the opposite effect, namely, to preserve illusion; and what is really the identifying mark of his poems in this regard is neither their intellectualism nor their vividness but the art with which each of these factors is raised to the *n*th degree and is brought to bear upon the other. Every poem is at the equilibrium point of the two tensions. Thus the impossibility of figures like "man möchte sich vor Wut den Rücken drehn" is matched by their vividness.

All of these rhetorical factors are of interest, but they do not in themselves have any positive esthetic value, although the mode of their interaction (as illustrated just now by the polarity of abstractness and vividness) may become esthetic. They interest us here as factors legitimately and necessarily conditioning, although only in a negative sense controlling, Kästner's style of lyric expression. The awareness of the rhetorical factors enables us in turn to approach the poems with appropriate expectations and some perspective.

As a consequence of such factors as immediacy and style of vocabulary, for example, Kästner's lyric expression must remain within the bounds of "light" verse. By this is here meant a style, exemplified by Heine, in which the words are symbols for things and not a magic

evocation of the things themselves. For example, Heine's line "Du bist wie eine Blume" does not and is not intended to evoke a flower in a quasi-physical sense, as Rilke's line "manchmal geschieht es in tiefer Nacht" by its musical contrasts of light and dark vowels, stop consonants and liquids evokes the moonlit night. In "light" verse, when used as a lyrical medium, the poetry is "beyond" the poem, is expressed by it but not in it. The whole apparatus of vowelizing, alliteration, assonance, etc., insofar as these are musical devices designed to make the poetry internal to the poem, falls to one side as unsuitable. They remain only as devices assisting in the expression of sense; thus Kästner outrageously but appropriately and wittily alliterates "9 Stunden stand Schmidt schwitzend im Betrieb." The result is, as the name implies, a verse of light texture and great transparency. To reproach it for not having heavy texture and density is inappropriate.

Just as Heine's poem "Du bist wie eine Blume" is in the nature of a symbol having as its referent an unwritten poem which is external to the verses themselves, so too such poems as "Nächtliches Rezept für Städter," quoted earlier, demand of their reader a creative act of the imagination which will be guided by the poem but will in the last analysis be independent. On the surface, as mentioned before, all these poems are narrative or narrative-descriptive. The lyrical value latent in them is produced in the reader by contemplation of that which is narrated or described. The poem suggests what that lyrical value is but does not musically assimilate it into the lines. In the poem just mentioned, for example, the reader must by an act of imagination plunge himself into the physical desolateness of the vast city at night; the narrative stanzas help him do this:

Dann gehe man durch Strassen. Kreuz und quer.
 Und folge keinem vorgefassten Ziele.
 Es gibt so viele Strassen, ach so viele!
 Und hinter jeder Biegung sind es mehr.

Under the weight of this scene, the reader will assimilate into himself the infinite sense of an existentially conceived loneliness to which he has been oblivious, the sense of countless similar human destinies shrouded from each other as by the night; he becomes aware of the obligation that this implies and ashamed of his failure to meet it. At this point, with a characteristic shift of point of view from external to internal, a stanza helps the reader to this lyrical insight:

Dann wird es sein, als liefe man ein Jahr
 durch diese Strassen, die kein Ende nehmen.

Und man beginnt, sich seiner selbst zu schämen
und seines Herzens, das verfettet war.

Thus the poem does not embody didacticism and lyricism as unrelated "elements" but achieves a perfect fusion of the two, since the reader must assimilate the moral lesson in a lyrical manner.

A similar structure will be observed in other poems as well. In "Kurt Schmidt, statt einer Ballade" (MgA 5), it is the tenth stanza which makes the parallel shift from external to internal and suggests the lyrical value of the poem:

Der Mann, von dem im weiteren Verlauf
die Rede ist, hiess Schmidt (Kurt Schm., komplett).
Er stand, nur sonntags nicht, früh 6 Uhr auf
und ging allabendlich Punkt 8 zu Bett.

10 Stunden lag er stumm und ohne Blick.
4 Stunden brauchte er für Fahrt und Essen.
9 Stunden stand er in der Glasfabrik.
1 Stündchen blieb für höhere Interessen.

Nur sonn- und feiertags schlief er sich satt.
Danach rasierte er sich, bis es brannte.
Dann tanzte er. In Sälen vor der Stadt.
Und fremde Fräuleins wurden rasch Bekannte.

Am Montag fing die nächste Strophe an.
Und war doch immerzu dasselbe Lied!
Ein Jahr starb ab. Ein andres Jahr begann.
Und was auch kam, nie kam ein Unterschied.

Um diese Zeit war Schmidt noch gut verpackt.
Er träumte nachts manchmal von fernen Ländern.
Um diese Zeit hielt Schmidt noch halbwegs Takt.
Und dachte: Morgen kann sich alles ändern.

Da schnitt er sich den Daumen von der Hand.
Ein Frl. Brandt gebar ihm einen Sohn.
Das Kind ging ein. Trotz Pflege auf dem Land.
(Schmidt hatte 40 Mark als Wochenlohn.)

Die Zeit marschierte wie ein Grenadier.
In gleichem Schritt und Tritt. Und Schmidt lief mit.
Die Zeit verging. Und Schmidt verging mit ihr.
Er merkte eines Tages, dass er litt.

Er merkte, dass er nicht alleine stand.
 Und dass er doch allein stand, bei Gefahren.
 Und auf dem Globus, sah er, lag kein Land,
 in dem die Schmidts nicht in der Mehrzahl waren.

So war's. Er hatte sich bis jetzt geirrt.
 So war's, und es stand fest, dass es so blieb.
 Und er begriff, dass es nie anders wird.
 Und was er hoffte, rann ihm durch ein Sieb.

Der Mensch war auch bloss eine Art Gemüse,
 das sich und dadurch andere ernährt.
 Die Seele sass nicht in der Zirbeldrüse.
 Falls sie vorhanden war, war sie nichts wert.

9 Stunden stand Schmidt schwitzend im Betrieb.
 4 Stunden fuhr und ass er, müd und dumm.
 10 Stunden lag er, ohne Blick und stumm.
 Und in dem Stündchen, das ihm übrigblieb,
 bracht er sich um.

The subject, denied any unique subjective experience in an age of regimentation, is driven finally to see himself as pure object, the distinction between inner and outer view having ceased to exist through malnutrition of the soul as the organ of subjective experience. Stanzas one to nine recreate the bleak situation, stanza ten is its lyrical realization, stanza eleven its tragic fulfillment. But the bleak situation is the state of society; hence lyrical realization and social protest are one.

Narrative vehicle and lyrical communication as evocation, though always distinguishable, need not be so physically distinct as in these examples. In "Vorstadtstrassen" (MgA 50), the two go hand in hand through images which serve both; the lyrical quality, although not assimilated into the lines as music, is assimilated into the descriptive images:

Es riecht nach Fisch, Kartoffeln und Benzin.
 In diesen Strassen dürfte niemand wohnen.
 Ein Fenster schielt durch schräge Jalousien.
 Und welke Blumen blühn auf den Balkonen.

In spite of their sobriety, these images in their discrete succession again reveal Kästner's *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a development, not a negation, of Expressionism, which also, and for similar reasons, adopted

"light" verse as its typical medium. This similarity is again revealed in "Elegie nach allen Seiten," which has also been quoted in full.

What is basically distinctive in Kästner's handling of "light" verse as a lyrical medium—aside from the particular quality of his lyrical note—follows as a consequence of his consistent elimination of his own person in lyrical contexts for reasons already discussed. This consequence is a radical and consistent shifting of the locus of lyricism from poet to reader. Whereas Heine, in the example quoted and generally, is still expressing his own lyric response, even if "lightly," and whereas this is typical and what may usually be expected, in Kästner there is never the implication of privacy. He presents only shared experience and universal lyric response as such.

The specific form of light verse that serves as the basis of Kästner's verse style is the *Chanson*, a quasi-dramatic form which wittily deals with human subject-matter, generally in a more or less satiric vein. All the verses in this genre, as for example those of Frank Wedekind, will be found to resemble Kästner in basic form. For example, many of Erich Mühsam's verses, such as his "Ballade"²² (cf. Kästner's "Ballade vom Defraudanten," HaT 44), are rather strikingly reminiscent of Kästner's. It is the paradoxical assimilation of a tenderly elegiac lyric note into the harsh form of the *Chanson* which sets Kästner apart. Thus his "Eine Animierdame stösst Bescheid" (GzS 76) is a *Chanson*: a satirical dramatic monologue in verse form. But it is at the same time a "fragment of a great confession" spoken in a tone of flat dejection as from the secret heart of a lowly, outwardly calloused *Animierdame* who treasures the objectively slight distinction between herself and a common prostitute. So seen, it is again a lyric poem "by proxy," full of Chaplinesque pathos held at bay by the unsentimental form of the *Chanson*:

Ich sitze nachts auf hohen Hockern,
berufen, Herrn im Silberhaar
moralisch etwas aufzulockern.
Ich bin der Knotenpunkt der Bar.

Sobald die Onkels Schnaps bestellen,
rutsch ich daneben, lad mich ein
und sage nur: "Ich heisse Ellen.
Lasst dicke Männer um mich sein!"

²² In his collection *Wüste, Krater, Wolken* (1914).

Man darf mich haargenau betrachten.
 Mein Oberteil ist schlecht verhüllt.
 Ich habe nur darauf zu achten,
 dass man die Gläser wieder füllt.
 Wer über zwanzig Mark verzehrt,
 der darf mir in die Seiten greifen
 und (falls er solcherlei begehrt)
 mich in die bessere Hälfte kneifen.
 Selbst wenn mich Einer Hure riefte,
 obwohl ich etwas Bessres bin,
 das ist hier Alles inklusive
 und in den Whiskys schon mit drin.
 So sauf ich Schnaps im Kreis der Greise
 und nenne dicke Bäuche Du
 und höre, gegen kleine Preise,
 der wachsenden Verkalkung zu.
 Und manchmal fahr ich dann mit einem
 der Jubelgreise ins Hotel.
 Vergnügen macht es zwar mit keinem.
 Es lohnt sich aber finanziell.
 Falls freilich Einer glauben wollte,
 mir könne Geld im Bett genügen,
 also: Wenn ich die Wahrheit sagen sollte,
 müsst ich lügen!

Especially typical for Kästner's treatment is the final stanza, which is very intimately inward and lyrical, though only tacitly so, and contrasts with the rest, which is predominantly seen from an external point of view.

Without comparing Kästner's style with each and every one of the writers of *Chansons*, which would hardly be practicable here, it can be said that the similarity is greatest in his earliest work and quickly fades thereafter. The present effort at close definition will indirectly help make possible a rigorous separation of his work from that of all other poets both in detail and in spirit, in the same way that his style was distinguished from those of Wilhelm Busch, Bert Brecht, and Heine in the course of the previous discussions.

Kästner's poems presuppose on the part of the reader only the most everyday experience and knowledge; their art as lyric consists in convincingly suggesting a poetical interpretation of seemingly unpoetical experience. For example, any urban reader of "Monolog mit verteilten Rollen" (MgA 16)—and it should incidentally be stressed that all the poems have the urban reader in mind—may be presumed to have

had, as an emotional though perhaps not as a lyrical experience, a more or less repressed sensation of intensified isolation upon seeing his own silhouetted shadow in a patch of light cast from behind him into the gloom of a deserted interior court; the widespread phenomenon of fear of the dark will have lent subconscious overtones to the experience. This poem, by personifying, as it were, the shadow and treating contemplation of it ironically as social contact, elevates it and magnifies it into a monstrous and eerie symbol of isolation, which well accords with the negative character and associations of shadow. In short, the poem elevates a mere psychological association of the most everyday sort into a poetic symbol:

Geht dein Fenster auch zum Hof hinaus?
So ein Hof ist eine trübe Welt.
Wo du hinsiehst, steht ein andres Haus.
Und der Blick ist wie ein Wild umstellt.

Und wie traurig wird das erst zur Nacht!
Alle schlafen schon. Nur du schläfst nicht.
Und der Hof umgibt dich wie ein Schacht.
Und drei Sterne sind das ganze Licht.

Dann geschieht es wohl, dass du erschrickst,
wenn du gegenüber an der Wand,
einen Schatten, der dir winkt, erblickst.
Und du weichst zurück vor seiner Hand.

Doch wenn du zurückgewichen bist,
siehst du, dass auch er ins Dunkle trat.
Bis du merkst, dass es dein Schatten ist;
und du winktest selbst, wenn er es tat!

Und nun lächelst du. Und nickst ihm zu.
Beide Arme streckst du nach ihm aus.
Und er macht es ganz genau wie du.
Und sein Kopf ist grösser als dein Haus.

Einmal bist du hier und einmal dort.
Und dir ist, als wärst du nicht allein.
Und du wagst dich nicht vom Fenster fort.
Denn dann würdest du wieder einsam sein.

Und du freust dich an dem Schattenspiel.
Und du wirst dem anderen fast gut.
Aber endlich wird's dir doch zuviel,
da er immer nur, was du tust, tut.

Keiner sah das nächtliche Duett,
 nur im Hofe der verdorrte Strauch . . .
 Und du gähnst betrübt. Und gehst ins Bett.
 Und der andre drüben auch.

In like manner, all of the poems begin modestly with the experiences of the most ordinary reader and, as lyric poems, induce the reader to find poetry in the very heart of the most prosaic existence.

A distinction must be drawn between such poems as those discussed here, where the "light" verse is a lyrical medium, and others where it is merely part of the rhetorical apparatus; to seek lyrical quality in many of the earliest poems is vain, and indeed in the first two volumes there are poems in which one vainly seeks any quality at all. Only with *Ein Mann gibt Auskunft* does Kästner as a poet quite suddenly come into his own; prior to this volume a poem with the quality of "Sachliche Romanze" (LiS 5) is the exception.

We have described a sense in which the lyricism of Kästner's poems is external to the latter. In another sense, however, the lyric quality is very much internal to the poems. As has already been pointed out, the outer form is altogether rhetorical, so that the beauty and thereby the lyricism is a matter of the inner form, which has a characteristic slow movement in contrast to the light and rapid movement of the outer form. Only the inner form, form as function of meaning, which has already been illustrated in the previous examples, is of structural interest. The contrast may be seen again in "Sachliche Romanze." The outward form of this poem, as indicated by the rhymes, moves trippingly, with a retardation only in the last stanza: *abab, abab, abab, abaab*; but the reading of the compressed melancholy content must be slow and thoughtful throughout, since the reader is asked to linger sympathetically over the situation of two people who confront each other helplessly over an abyss of desolate loneliness. Here inner and outer form in their contrast express the tension of the poem, which tenderly combines humor and sadness in exquisite balance. At the end, with the retardation of the outward movement, the two rhythms meet and blend:

Als sie einander acht Jahre kannten
 (und man darf sagen: sie kannten sich gut),
 kam ihre Liebe plötzlich abhanden.
 Wie andern Leuten ein Stock oder Hut.
 Sie waren traurig, betrugen sich heiter,
 versuchten Küsse, als ob nichts sei,
 und sahen sich an und wussten nicht weiter.
 Da weinte sie schliesslich. Und er stand dabei.

Vom Fenster aus konnte man Schiffen winken.
Er sagte, es wäre schon Viertel nach Vier
und Zeit, irgendwo Kaffee zu trinken.
Nebenan übte ein Mensch Klavier.

Sie gingen ins kleinste Café am Ort
und rührten in ihren Tassen.
Am Abend sassen sie immer noch dort.
Sie sassen allein, und sie sprachen kein Wort
und konnten es einfach nicht fassen.

Also noteworthy here, as always, is the origin of the poem at an inner point of untouchable chastity, from which the most unchaste situations become suitable lyrical material. All the poems remain outwardly cool while inwardly seething; the same is true of *Fabian*, the content of which often borders on the pornographic. Humor or some other form of intellectualism functions as an esthetic control. Hence the outer form, although not lyrical, is not esthetically irrelevant.

Everything found on the rhetorical side has its analogue on the lyrical side. What was spoken of from the point of view of rhetoric as the paradoxical quality of Kästner's imagery is from the esthetic point of view its grotesquerie. In the former perspective the figure "man möchte sich vor Wut den Rücken drehn" was said to be paradoxical; the figure involves a combination which, although surprising, finds its justification on the intellectual ground that it conveys real meaning. The operation can be performed mentally even if not physically. From the esthetic standpoint such a figure is grotesque; its artistic fitness, at first not apparent, becomes so. There is a tension in the figure which corresponds to a tension in its subject. The consistency is found in a common tonality. The total context is esthetically gratifying and therefore truly to be called grotesque in a meliorative sense (rather than merely jarring) if all the parts, though startling at first, are assimilated into a common tonality. In the poem quoted, "Elegie, ohne grosse Worte" (LiS 18), a persistent underlying gesture of frustrated rotation about an axis lends this consistent tonality and makes the poem satisfying as a whole in spite of its imperfections: "man muss sich stets die gleichen Hände waschen . . . und wer Charakter hat, ist schon beschränkt . . . man muss schon gähnen, wenn man an sich denkt . . . man blickt sich an—und hält den Blick nicht aus! . . . siehe oben! . . . jedoch auch solche Tage gehn herum . . . Ja, wer zu klug wird, ist schon wieder dumm." The

syntax picks up the motif by frequently causing a pause approximately halfway through the line; the verse then rotates about this caesura. Again we may say that the form as function of meaning—the inner form—is the lyrical form as distinct from the outer form, which is the rhetorical jacket:

Man kann sich selber manchmal gar nicht leiden
und möchte sich vor Wut den Rücken drehn.
Wer will, ob das berechtigt ist, entscheiden?
Doch wer sich kennt, der wird mich schon verstehn.

Wenn eine Strassenbahn vorüberfegte,
kann es passieren, dass man sich höchst wundert,
warum man sich nicht einfach drunterlegte.
Und solche Fälle gibt es über hundert.

Man muss sich stets die gleichen Hände waschen!
Und wer Charakter hat, ist schon beschränkt!
Womit soll man sich denn noch überraschen?
Man muss schon gähnen, wenn man an sich denkt.

Man hängt sich meterlang zum Hals heraus.
In Worte lässt sich sowas gar nicht kleiden.
Man blickt sich an—und hält den Blick nicht aus!
Und kann sich (siehe oben!) selbst nicht leiden.

Wie gerne wär' man dann dies oder das!
Ein Bild, ein Buch, im Wald ein Meilenstein,
ein Buschwindröschen oder sonst etwas!
Behüt dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein.

Jedoch auch solche Tage gehn herum.
Und man fährt fort, sich in die Brust zu werfen.
Der Doktor nickt und sagt: Das sind die Nerven.
Ja, wer zu klug wird, ist schon wieder dumm.

Although Kästner's poems are very unlike those of the Expressionists in tone and otherwise, yet we have had occasion repeatedly to note essential technical similarities; there can be no doubt that Kindermann, for example, is misleading in calling Kästner's *Neue Sachlichkeit* anti-Expressionistic.²³ In this question of the grotesque we find again an important link, insofar as consistency of tonality as the bond

²³ Heinz Kindermann, *Das literarische Antlitz der Gegenwart* (Halle, 1930); and again in "Idealismus und Sachlichkeit in der deutschen Gegenwartsdichtung," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, XXI (1933), 81-101.

joining a series of grotesqueries is a characteristic part of Expressionistic esthetics. Alfred Lichtenstein's "Die Dämmerung" may serve to illustrate the operation of this principle:

Ein dicker Junge spielt mit einem Teich.
Der Wind hat sich in einem Baum gefangen.
Der Himmel sieht verbummelt aus und bleich,
als wäre ihm die Schminke ausgegangen.

Auf lange Krücken schief herabgebückt
und schwatzend kriechen auf dem Feld zwei Lahme.
Ein blonder Dichter wird vielleicht verrückt.
Ein Pferdchen stolpert über eine Dame.

An einem Fenster klebt ein fatter Mann.
Ein Jüngling will ein weiches Weib besuchen.
Ein grauer Clown zieht sich die Stiefel an.
Ein Kinderwagen schreit und Hunde fluchen.

Especially in *Ein Mann gibt Auskunft* and *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen*, where Kästner's lyric nature rebels more and more strongly against his self-imposed restrictions, the contest between the two becomes at times very open. Then each word, each line, each rhyme seems to be grotesquely at war with its neighbor, and we may very clearly see the "strands" of our comparison twisting and writhing against each other. A good illustration of this is "Misanthropologie" (MgA 60), of which the first stanza may suffice as an example. Here *dutzendfach*, *ausgesprochen*, and *paar Meter* are out of keeping with and inhibit the emotive power of *schön*, *grüne Wiese*, and *veilchenblauer Bach*; *schön* quarrels with itself, having a different sense in the two lines in which it occurs:

Schöne Dinge gibt es dutzendfach.
Aber keines ist so schön wie diese:
eine ausgesprochen grüne Wiese
und paar Meter veilchenblauer Bach.

Again in "Gefährliches Lokal" (MgA 96), we find the lyrical and the antilyrical pitted against each other in countless tensions. Beginning with the title, and throughout the poem, the commonplace and the exotic, the flat and the deep, the innocuous and the terrifying—in short, the rationalistic and the lyrical—modify each other. Representing the lyrical urge in the first stanza are *mir träumte*, *Insel unter Palmen*, *Träume*, and *Übersee*; ranged on the opposite side are *neulich*,

Stammcafé and *persönlich kenne ich bloss Warnemünde*; *Stammcafé* rhymes with *Übersee*, and *stünde*, which as subjunctive is associated with the unreal, rhymes with the low-priced popular resort *Warnemünde*. In the second stanza, *ich sass am Fenster*, being on an altogether commonplace, flat, and rationalistic plane, wars with *und versank in Schweigen*, which emphasizes depth (*versank*) and introduces overtones from the irrational subconscious realm "wo die Träume eingemauert sind"; *Linie 56* combats *Urwald*, which in turn is suppressed by *eine Art von* and *aufgestellt*, although supported by *Orang Utans*. The entire poem, which readily yields up many similar examples of this violent tension (black panther as against waiter named Urbanek, etc.) may be quoted here:

Mir träumte neulich, dass mein Stammcafé
auf einer Insel unter Palmen stünde.
Persönlich kenne ich bloss Warnemünde.
Doch Träume reisen gern nach Übersee.
Ich sass am Fenster und versank in Schweigen.
Wo sonst die Linie 56 hält,
war eine Art von Urwald aufgestellt.
Und Orang Utans hingen in den Zweigen.
Sie waren sicher noch nicht lange da.
So leicht verändern sich die Metermasse!
Bevor ich kam, war's noch die Prager Strasse.
Man setzt sich hin, schon ist es Sumatra.
Erst wollte ich den Oberkellner fragen.
Dann dachte ich, es hätte keinen Zweck.
Was soll ein Kellner namens Urbanek,
selbst wenn er wollte, weiter dazu sagen?
Dann ging die Tür. Das war der Doktor Uhl.
Und hinter ihm erschien ein schwarzer Panther.
Der setzte sich, als sei er ein Bekannter,
an meinen Tisch auf einen leeren Stuhl.
Ich fragte ihn betreten, ob er rauche.
Er sah mich an. Und sagte keinen Ton.
Dann kam der Wirt in eigener Person
und kitzelte den seltnen Gast am Bauche.
Der Ober brachte Erbspüree mit Speck.
Er hatte grosse Angst und ging auf Zehen.
Der Panther liess das gute Essen stehen
und frass den Kellner. Armer Urbanek!

Von oben drang der Klang der Billardbälle.
Der schwarze Panther war noch beim Diner.
Ich sass bestürzt in meinem Stammcafé.
Und sah nur Wald. Und keine Haltestelle.

Weil man mich dann zum Telephone rief
(ein Kunde wollte mich geschäftlich sprechen),
war ich genötigt, plötzlich aufzubrechen.
Als ich zurückkam, sah ich, dass ich schlief . . .

Out of this turbulent contest there finally emerges Kästner's later style, which retains the elements of outer form already discussed but becomes much more inward and lyrical in content and tone; such poems as "Die Wälder schweigen" (LH 45) and "Das Altersheim" (LH 62) illustrate the new synthesis, which had indeed been foreshadowed even in his earliest poems, e.g., in *Lärm im Spiegel* by "Sachliche Romanze" and even in *Herz auf Taille* by such a poem as "Abschied in der Vorstadt" (HaT 47).

Das ist ein Pensionat für Greise.
Hier hat man Zeit.
Die Endstation der Lebensreise
ist nicht mehr weit.

Gestern trug man Kinderschuhe.
Heute sitzt man hier vorm Haus.
Morgen fährt man zur ewigen Ruhe
ins Jenseits hinaus.

Ach, so ein Leben ist rasch vergangen,
wie lang es auch sei.
Hat es nicht eben erst angefangen?
Schon ist's vorbei.

Die sich hier zur Ruhe setzten,
wissen vor allem das Eine:
Das ist die letzte Station vor der letzten.
Dazwischen liegt keine.
(*"Das Altersheim"*)

One finds here still—and will always find—such originally rhetorically motivated features as the abrupt opening, the aggressiveness, the rapidly moving narrative element, the allegorical image, the topical stanza-initial lines, the light texture of the verse, the point of view shifting from external to internal, the suppression of the poet's person

in lyrical contexts, the pregnant understatement, the compression, the epigrammatic flourish at the end. But all these are now used as means to lyrical communication. That melancholy tenderness so inextricably part of Kästner's being, which under the pressure of acute social crisis had been submerged, is here released and one feels clearly a far truer contact with the poet. Yet the style, although new, is rooted in what has gone before; only the accent has shifted.

Since the element of the grotesque, of which some subtle nuance is hardly ever absent in Kästner, results ultimately in his case from the inherently grotesque combination of the rhetorical and the lyrical, as has been seen even in such titles as *Herz auf Taille*, it acts conversely as a link between the critical and the lyrical aspects of his poetry and illustrates the principle of unity between them. For the justification of grotesquerie is the hidden harmony between the tension in the figure and the tension in its subject; and since Kästner is always present as an implied subject, the grotesquerie even in an overtly critical poem becomes a lyrical means to the expression of his own tension and beyond that the tension of his (and our) age. Thus the grotesquerie of, e.g., "Marschliedchen" (GzS 97) is critical insofar as it ridicules militaristic and nationalistic persons but lyrical insofar as it simultaneously expresses Kästner's emotion, which in this fine poem is a towering, almost Biblical rage, beautifully adequate to the magnitude of existing and foreseeable evil. This lyrical implication, it will be noticed, is what makes the poem as a whole really adequate; for the rhetorical as such, which is on the surface, cannot rise above the relatively puny devices of the comic, whereas the lyrical *Schrei*, all the more effective for being implied through suppression rather than overt, can and does become commensurate with that evil which was truly "zum Schreien."

Ihr und die Dummheit zieht in Viererreihen
in die Kasernen der Vergangenheit.
Glaubt nicht, dass wir uns wundern, wenn ihr schreit.
Denn was ihr denkt und tut, das ist zum Schreien.

Ihr kommt daher und lasst die Seele kochen.
Die Seele kocht und die Vernunft erfriert.
Ihr liebt das Leben erst, wenn ihr marschiert,
weil dann gesungen wird und nicht gesprochen.

Marschiert vor Prinzen, die erschüttert weinen:
Ihr findet doch nur als Parade statt!
Es heisst ja: Was man nicht im Kopfe hat,
hat man gerechterweise in den Beinen.

Ihr liebt den Hass und wollt die Welt dran messen.
Ihr werft dem Tier im Menschen Futter hin,
damit es wächst, das Tier tief in euch drin!
Das Tier im Menschen soll den Menschen fressen.

Ihr möchtet auf den Trümmern Rüben bauen
und Kirchen und Kasernen wie noch nie.
Ihr seht euch heim zur alten Dynastie
und möchtet Fideikommisbrot kauen.

Ihr wollt die Uhrenzeiger rückwärtsdrehen
und glaubt, das ändere der Zeiten Lauf.
Dreht an der Uhr! Die Zeit hält niemand auf!
Nur eure Uhr wird nicht mehr richtig gehen.

Wie ihr's euch träumt, wird Deutschland nicht erwachen:
Denn ihr seid dumm, und seid nicht auserwählt.
Die Zeit wird kommen, da man sich erzählt:
Mit diesen Leuten war kein Staat zu machen!

The tone of indignation comes from the heart. Kästner is instinctively a patriot, who was even to sacrifice twelve years of his life and risk the gas chamber rather than leave Germany, and by conviction a man of the eighteenth century, for whom only reason divides man from beast;²⁴ that Germany in 1932 was evidently ready to flout reason in favor of hysterical emotionalism was a tragedy which affected him deeply. That sorrow, expressed as indignation, is the lyrical meaning of the poem.

We may conclude this study by quoting Kästner's very fine recent poem "Der Mai," from the collection *Die 13 Monate* (1956), with the hope that the foregoing analyses may help suggest the points of view necessary to the appreciation of this completely mature example of his art, which is still, as the poem illustrates, at its best when dealing with transitions. Above all, the basic analytic structure already emphasized (which, contrary to some recent theory, is just as possible as the synthetic) is here wonderfully exemplified. The poem begins:

Im Galarock des heiteren Verschwenders,
ein Blumenzepter in der schmalen Hand,
fährt nun der Mai, der Mozart des Kalenders,
aus seiner Kutsche grüssend, über Land.

²⁴ The antinomy of reason and power, on which Fabian had commented and to which Kästner had devoted the poem "Das ohnmächtige Zwiegespräch" (GzS 103 ff.), reappears as the theme of Kästner's first serious play, the grimly grotesque "Komödie," *Die Schule der Diktatoren* (Cecilie Dressler Verlag, Berlin, 1956).

The balance of the poem works out the images given in the opening; the metaphor of May as Mozart becomes a complex of allusion to the symphonies and the *Zauberflöte* and to Mozart himself as seen through the elegiac medium of Mörike's *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag*. The image of the flower-scepter is worked out in a vision of a riotously colorful swarm of birds, flowers, and peacock-butterflies and culminates in the magnificent line, "die Zeit versinkt in einer Fliederwelle." The image of May, Phoebus-like, riding his chariot, is pursued and merges with the Mörike allusion. The indirect allusion to Phoebus is reinforced by the line "aus Himmelblau wird langsam Abendgold." The whole poem maintains a balance among these interwoven images and thus, as a web of allusion, becomes the esthetic expression of that other exquisite balance of happiness and pain which is its subject: the year has reached its point of greatest beauty; like the flowers, it is virgin now but is verging into fruition and death; like Mozart, it is gay with overtones of sadness and even horror. We have ultimately a poem expressing with fine restraint a tragic sense of life. But in essence the whole was already anticipated in that first stanza.

Im Galarock des heiteren Verschwenders,
ein Blumenzepter in der schmalen Hand,
fährt nun der Mai, der Mozart des Kalenders,
aus seiner Kutsche grüssend, über Land.

Es überblüht sich, er braucht nur zu winken.
Er winkt! Und rollt durch einen Farbenhain.
Blaumeisen flattern ihm voraus und Finken.
Und Pfauenaugen flügeln hinterdrein.

Die Apfelbäume hinterm Zaun erröten.
Die Birken machen einen grünen Knicks.
Die Drosseln spielen, auf ganz kleinen Flöten,
das Scherzo aus der Symphonie des Glücks.

Die Kutsche rollt durch atmende Pastelle.
Wir ziehn den Hut. Die Kutsche rollt vorbei.
Die Zeit versinkt in einer Fliederwelle.
O, gäb es doch ein Jahr aus lauter Mai!

Melancholie und Freude sind wohl Schwestern.
Und aus den Zweigen fällt verblühter Schnee.
Mit jedem Pulsschlag wird aus Heute Gestern.
Auch Glück kann weh tun. Auch der Mai tut weh.

Er nickt uns zu und ruft: "Ich komm ja wieder!"
Aus Himmelblau wird langsam Abendgold.
Er grüsst die Hügel, und er winkt dem Flieder.
Er lächelt. Lächelt. Und die Kutsche rollt.