



ATTITUDE TO WAR AND DEFEAT  
IN THE LATER WORKS OF ERNST WIECHERT.

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

by

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## PREFACE

All quotes from Wiechert's works are taken, where possible, from the edition of Sämtliche Werke in ten volumes (München: Kurt Desch Verlag, 1957), and all references have been incorporated in the text. Underlined words are my own emphases unless otherwise indicated.

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## SUMMARY

I This thesis investigates the interaction between the nature-civilization antithesis in the thought of Ernst Wiechert (1887-1950) and the attitude to war and defeat reflected in his later work (1938-1950), and suggests certain dangers confronting the writer in times of political crisis.

II Wiechert's antagonism to National Socialism was based on ethical rather than political principles. When Nazism had defined itself as a system it was clear that Wiechert was too problematical to fit readily into the simple Nazi pattern. However, his attacks on the regime after 1933 revealed little contact with reality. His imprisonment in 1938, of which he later made a great deal, was the result of an impulsive act on his part. His main concern after his release was with the problem of justice which he regarded as an unattainable ideal. While ascribing the cause of Nazism to the decadence of western culture, he was inconsistent in that he continued to assert culture's positive influence. He avoided drawing the logical conclusions for his own

attitude of optimism in progress by explaining Nazism as an unavoidable, diabolic visitation which did not altogether exclude the possibility of a change of heart.

Individuality was basic to Wiechert's thought and he regarded Nazism and World War II as depersonalizing forces. With perception he noticed the same inhumane tendency in the Prussian education system, which produced a slavish masochism and did not equip those leaving school to face the holocaust of war.

III The problem of God's justice was raised for Wiechert by his war experiences and his contact with death. He saw war in terms of death's hostility; wholesale slaughter is the antithesis of a 'natural' existence. Wiechert denied God's goodness but not His existence; nevertheless, henceforth man became the centre of Wiechert's ethic.

IV Three answers are presented by Wiechert to the problem of theodicy:

- A. Glorification of motherhood which preserves the eternal values.
- B. Emphasis on man as the standard of ethical action, in so far as his foundations are in nature.
- C. Wiechert points to the certainty of nature in a warring world.

This positive attitude after 1938 belies the author's

inner struggles.

V. The writer has two duties: he must instruct and console, for he is the preserver of 'natural' values. In accordance with this attitude, Wiechert's works are moral treatises; his characters are mouthpieces of his ideas and are therefore stereotyped. Wiechert failed to realize that literature cannot be both escapist and didactic. Yet he claimed the role of mentor of his people after 1945, concerning himself with the problem of guilt; with the American failure to denazify Germany; and with the opportunism of Germans after the war.

VI But he failed to live up to expectations. His highly personal outlook was 'unpolitical' since he recommended withdrawal in time of political strife and treated reality in a dangerous manner, fostering an uncritical attitude to political forms.

VII The unreal, subjective, didactic and tendentious elements in his thought are reflected in his style.

VIII Wiechert was intellectually isolated from his age and lacked the universality and spontaneity of the truly great.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.





## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Scope of Thesis

Ernst Wiechert was born in 1887 and grew up at a time when all thinking men were becoming increasingly anxious about the future of western civilization. German writers prior to World War I were all affected, directly or indirectly, by Nietzsche's demand for the "Umwertung aller Werte," and each in his own way tried to save a culture in which he believed implicitly. For most of them, however, the experiences of 1914-18 swept away the final vestiges of an optimistic belief in progress which had determined the intellectual currents at the turn of the century. The statement made by the theologian Karl Barth in May, 1945, applied equally to the state of affairs in 1918: "Der Mensch ist nicht gut. [Die Wahrheit dieses Satzes] ... sollte heute keines besonderen Beweises bedürfen." <sup>1</sup>

Wiechert did not share this latter experience of nihilistic despair as his contemporaries did after 1918.

Although the war shattered the intellectual tradition of western culture, and although he continued to be sceptical of and even hostile to firm creeds and secure beliefs, he was intellectually so isolated from his age that he was only peripherally affected by contemporary movements. Thus at a time when all evidence seemed to point in the opposite direction he continued to assert his faith in man's ability to progress at least in a limited way. The central theme in Wiechert's work is war; but he does not allow its brutality to set the tone of his writing. The later work after his release from Buchenwald in 1938 until his death in Switzerland in 1950, is undoubtedly dominated by his attitude to war and defeat. But behind this attitude it is possible to detect another theme which determines his understanding of these - a deep feeling for nature, tantamount to a mystical communion with it and an equally instinctive aversion to western civilization.

Wiechert's attitude to war and defeat between 1938 and 1950 is unusual because he claims the right to speak for an age in which he is intellectually almost entirely isolated. The Nazi regime, the Second World War and Germany's annihilation in 1945 are decisive experiences for Wiechert, because they affect the security of his

refuge in nature and are in turn influenced by this refuge.

In this thesis I shall indicate this interaction between Wiechert's concept of nature and his analysis of the fateful years between 1933 and 1945, by investigating the whole range of associations which war and totalitarianism conjure up for him: the formation of an unprincipled and uncritical 'Massenseele'; the hostile image of a vindictive God with its Nietzschean overtones; the decadence of western civilization which makes a totalitarian system possible and provides the machines of war; the figure of death wreaking terrible vengeance on man; hatred; violence and brutality. On the other hand, when Wiechert speaks of the antidote in nature, we are to understand the 'immortal' values: altruism paradoxically nourished by solitude; faith in a pantheistic deity; the deep well-springs of life and the ceaseless round of creativity, love and spiritual renewal. These are the contrasts drawn in nearly every one of Wiechert's works, fictional and non-fictional.

Wiechert is not a deep thinker and our treatment of his attitude to war and defeat will be thematic rather than chronological. Little is gained by a thorough chronological analysis of each work written

between 1938 and 1950 since basic ideas tend to be repeated almost unchanged in successive works. I have avoided presenting all but the essential biographical data, partly because the standard works on Wiechert have covered this aspect more successfully than they have dealt with his attitude to war and defeat; partly because my research on the details of Wiechert's life has not added to my understanding of his work; partly also because Wiechert was a very voluble writer who did not hesitate to say what he thought and publish what he said, so that we have a very clear picture of the man from his own statements.

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest certain dangers confronting the writer in times of political and social crisis - the danger of dealing with reality in an improbable, misleading or even dangerous way. I have referred frequently to works written before 1938 only in order to draw a contrast and to indicate how earlier themes are revised during and after the Second World War. After establishing the dominant theme in Wiechert's work as the struggle against western civilization, I shall proceed to analyse his understanding of National Socialism and World War II as features of western culture. Chapter III deals with the problem of God's justice in a chaotic world and suggests that

Wiechert's theological views are determined by the initial experience of nature and modified by the close contact with death on the battlefield. In Chapter IV, Wiechert's understanding of nature as the only answer to an evil political system, to death and destruction is more explicitly treated. Chapters V and VI are concerned with his attitude to defeat, his role in post-war Germany as self-appointed mentor of his people and his ultimate resignation from post-war struggle and retirement. Finally, by way of summary, I will indicate how Wiechert's self-conscious style reflects his attitudes.

B. The Struggle against Civilization

Wohin gehen wir?  
Immer nach Hause.

Wiechert wrote these words of Novalis in a copy of his Totenmesse (1943); <sup>2</sup> in so doing he summarized the spiritual foundations of his own life as well as the theme of his artistic pursuit. Throughout a most turbulent era, covering roughly the fifty years from 1900 to 1950, Wiechert found solace, refuge, inspiration and renewed zeal in the Masurian landscape of East Prussia. He is entirely conditioned by this environment; any attempt to come to an understanding of the problems treated in his works - his approach to the technological, civilized world of the West, his preoccupation with

death, his assessment of the failures of Christianity, his abhorrence of war and the regimes which cause it, as well as his didactic approach to art - can only be made if one refers constantly to the source which he claimed as his spiritual home. His strength as well as his most obvious weaknesses are intimately related to the countryside of East Prussia, and each work is a variation on that mystical theme: the return to the idyll. With the possible exception of Der Exote (1932), which in many ways is unique in the body of his work, the destinies of all of his protagonists are unfolded against the background of the same East Prussian countryside, or in opposition to it.

Wiechert grew up in the vast forests of Masuria, surrounded by the grandeur of a country which, unlike the more populous parts of Germany, is lonely, austere and oppressive. Man is dwarfed by his surroundings and yet dependent on them in the constant struggle with the unyielding earth for a living. This dependence suggests an understanding of nature as a mystical, almost supernatural force governing man's destiny.

Wiechert is quite explicit about this influence on his life and work. In an autobiographical sketch, Heimat und Herkunft (1932), he refers to himself as "ganz und gar ein Kind der Wälder." (X.713) Much later he still

confesses: "Ich begann mit dem Wald und der Bibel, und damit werde ich wohl auch aufhören." (Selbstporträt, 1946, X.723)

At the same time nature serves as the artistic motif par excellence for Wiechert. He seems unable to visualize himself as a creative artist apart from the experience of the magical quality of the forest. In an important chapter in his autobiography, Jahre und Zeiten (1945/46), he analyses himself as a writer and tries to define his own place in the literary world of his time:

Ich komme aus keiner "Schule", und ich gehöre keiner Richtung an. Aber ich komme aus einer großen Landschaft, die vieles an mir gebildet hat, und aus jener Einsamkeit, in der ein Mensch noch wachsen und werden kann. (IX.739)

Nature, as Wiechert understands it, is not simply a milieu, a background to his work providing an effective setting for the action of his novels, nor is it a mere artistic motif which could be claimed as his distinguishing feature. The forest is the most active protagonist in his work, moulding the characters after its own fashion, reflecting in them its own glory, providing for them an object of adulation as well as a source of livelihood and, above all, serving as the only proper place of refuge from the suffering and cruelty of the world. Later, as we shall see in Chapter IV(C), it becomes the source of inspiration for new life;

man leaves the closed community of the forest for the scattered community of the 'civilized' world outside.

Further, the true nature of man is revealed by comparison with the forest. For Pope the proper study of mankind was man; for Wiechert it is the forest. Thus his characters stand or fall when measured by it:

Denn fast alle leben sie vor dem Hintergrund  
der großen Wälder, und am Gesetz der Wälder  
werden Wert und Erfüllung ihres Lebens gemessen.  
Nur wer vor ihnen besteht, darf als ein Wesen  
gelten, das auf dem richtigen Wege ist. 3

The forest symbolizes the whole of nature. For man to sever the natural bond which exists between himself and nature is unpardonable, for in so doing he sins against a part of himself, loses his spiritual roots and ends in despair.

Clearly the forest is seen as possessing certain supernatural and even divine attributes; Wiechert often uses the language of religion to clarify the significance of the forest. His conviction of the insignificance of the individual in comparison with the power of nature leads him to see nature as independent of man, a type of sinless state working only for good. But nature also plays a more explicitly divine role: it is the habitat of God and reveals the very essence of God. Creature and Creator are one. Hence flight to the forest is a return to meaning and reality. It is there that man comes



closest to God and it is there that God reveals Himself most directly to man. Thus the forest is sacred. In Der Wald (1920), Wiechert describes the forest in terms of a cathedral (I.475). For Wera, Henner Wittich is a "Hoherpriester" (I.521). In Die Legende vom letzten Wald (1923/24), Wiechert refers to the "Domesheiligtum der Stämme," (VII.93) and the destruction of the forest is seen as the shedding of God's blood (VII.102).

Wiechert's whole life was spent in doubt; he challenged nearly all traditionally held views, but he never doubted the certainty and permanence of the earth. Man may die but the earth remains: "Wir bringen unsre Jahre zu wie ein Geschwätz," says Henner in Der Wald, "der Mensch vergeht, der Wald vergeht. Aber der Acker bleibt, die Erde, Gott!" (I.617) This later becomes the theme of a novel which Wiechert regarded as his most representative, Das einfache Leben (1938), written immediately after his release from Buchenwald concentration camp. His most common figure is the peasant behind his plough whose life is enclosed within an eternal cycle: ploughing, seedtime and harvest are an obvious guarantee of eternity. There is also the fisherman on the Masurian lakes, living apart from mankind in close communion with nature - and in one of his last works, Die Jeromin-Kinder, the charcoal-burner, whose life is

lived apart from civilization on the edge of the forest.

Wiechert's childhood intimacy with nature was reinforced by his contact with a world which, for him, was totally 'other'. His contact with the decadence of Wilhelmianism, which he shared with the Expressionists, and his later experiences of the brutality and senselessness of total war in the trenches on the Galician front and the region of the Somme in 1914-18 convinced him that civilization in the West was a distortion of true life. If nature was entirely good, then civilization was wholly evil; in the forest man lived within a fragment of eternity, in the city he grasped at the ephemeral in the vain hope that he might transform it into the eternal. 'Sein' and nature opposed 'Schein' and civilization. Wiechert recognized that he himself had been 'tainted' by the values of the world outside, that he had lost his childlike innocence, and he understood this process as a banishment from the Garden of Eden. This became the theme of his first autobiographical work, Wälder und Menschen (1935). His Paradise had become a Paradise Lost (IX.85). He regrets the "Verlust der heiligen Unbefangenheit, mit der wir auf Menschen und Dinge geblickt hatten." (IX.93) Later, in Jahre und Zeiten, he expresses his disgust at the analytical, probing atmosphere of the University, most apparent in

the systematic arrangement of plants far removed from the natural beauty of the forest. He recognizes this once more as,

die Entzauberung einer kindlichen Welt, und aller Wissenschaft mag wohl der Fluch oder die Größe innewohnen, daß sie das Magische zerbricht, um die kühlen Formen der Ratio zu gewinnen. (IX.346)

This conflict between "das Magische" and "die Ratio" remains a basic conflict in Wiechert's thought; it is not simply the involuntary reaction of a sensitive child to an alien environment. All Wiechert's antitheses can be traced to this basic irreconcilable opposition of 'natural' and 'civilized' existence.<sup>4</sup> His life in the forest is contrasted with a mere semblance of existence in the city; the silence of the forest is opposed to the noise and bustle of the streets; unrestricted spaces are reduced to the narrowness of ugly façades; the sense of growth in animal and plant life is frozen into immobility by the "Versteinerung" of all living things; the reality of natural form is defeated by the abstraction of study.

As Workman has pointed out, Wiechert's first two novels

are quite simply the product of his spiritual disinheritance, the violent transplantation of this sensitive child of nature into the urban society of pre-war Germany. In each of them the outcome is the same: bankruptcy of the soul, resulting eventually in flight from a life which is unendurable.<sup>5</sup>

Wiechert's work, therefore, is the result of a deep longing, "an act of mourning for the disappearance of the idyll in contemporary life." <sup>6</sup> In a poem which he sets at the head of a Novelle, Heinrich der Städtegründer (1925), Wiechert regards the earth as violated by man, its sanctuary desecrated, and he finds comfort in earth, forest, field and plough as "des verlorren Sohnes Paradies." (VII.423) Refuge, then, not only for his protagonists, but also for Wiechert himself, is to be discovered in a spiritual union with the forest. Nature purifies, the city besmirches, and Wiechert returns home from school in the city four times a year, "daß ich viermal im Jahr mich reinwaschen konnte von dem Schmutz, mit dem das Leben mich nicht verschonte." (Wälder und Menschen, IX.103) Wiechert's whole work may be seen as an attempt to recapture the lost innocence of youth, the theme particularly of his second novel, Die blauen Schwingen (1917). Peace and security in life are only to be found in flight from the false attractions of civilization to the ordered life of honest labour close to the soil.

The world of "Ratio" is therefore one which has sold its soul to the devil and killed God. The church bells ring in the cities,

aber ihr Gott ist tot. Sie haben ihn begraben unter Steinhäufen und Eisenstangen, tief unter der Erde, lebendig begraben... Statt seiner aber haben sie ein Götzenbild aufgerichtet, um das sie tanzen und für das sie morden..  
(Der Totenwolf, 1922, II.117)

Wiechert regards the city, symbol of urban society and western civilization, with distrust and pity. Yet he displays a chronic inability to understand city-life or the person who knows no other background than the city.

The full force of Wiechert's attack on urban society is directed at its tendency to strip man of his individuality. In Holm (Die Flucht, 1913/14), the conflict of allegiances proves baffling to the point of despair. Having accustomed himself to the city after a fashion, his return to nature proves a revelation of reality, and the hard-won balance between nature and civilization is upset. Holm experiences a revulsion at the superciliousness and depersonalization in the city around him. He discusses the problem with his friend, Barth:

Sie glauben's nicht, aber es quält mich schon, wenn die Menschen mich ansehen, kühl, mustern, abschätzend wie eine Sache... Ich hasse das alles, Menschen, Straßen, Beschäftigung, Licht und Lärm! Es quält mich wie ein körperlicher Schmerz. Was ist denn das, dieses ganze großartige Leben hier? Falsch und hohl, lärmend, breitspurig, brutal und häßlich. Gehen Sie eine Stunde durch die Straßen! Wie viele Kinder sehen Sie, in deren Zügen nicht schon Niedrigkeit und Frechheit stehen? Wie

viele Frauen ohne Dummheit, ohne Eitelkeitsblödsinn, ohne Neid, ohne lüsterne Sinnlichkeit? Wie viele Männer ohne Staatsstempel im Gesicht, ohne Gewinnsucht, ohne Rüpelmanieren, ohne brutale Gier nach Genuß? Häuser, Schaufenster, Gespräche, Vergnügungen, alles häßlich, aufgedonnert, alles so maßlos, roh und niedrig, daß man sich beschmutzt fühlt von jedem Blick, dem man begegnet! (Die Flucht, I.79-80)

Man has estranged himself from the natural surroundings intended for him by God. "He has created an atomized society without natural cohesion and without the possibility of organic social growth." <sup>7</sup>

He has killed God in the city, but he has also destroyed his own peculiar being. The spectre of death has invaded all aspects of civilization. Thomas von Orla in Das einfache Leben sits in the train opposite a man with a monocle, "das wie vor einem Totenauge schimmerte"; his fellow-passengers sit like "tote Fische"; some leave and others enter, "verhärmete, verdorbene, verwüstete." (IV.368) Thomas closes his eyes. He is like one "in einem Totensaal." (IV.369) This is what he must escape, for if he remains he will lose the last tattered shreds of his individuality and self-respect.

City-dwellers who return to nature for a short while are uneasy; the forest points an accusing finger at them because they have sacrificed its eternal values to greed and materialism. Thus Hermann Giesecking, the "Staatsminister" in Der silberne Wagen (1928), on his

return to his childhood environment in the forest, discovers to his dismay that he is unable to place that distance between himself and the past that he so urgently requires for peace of mind. Similarly in Jeromin-Kinder II (1946), when a plebiscite is held in the village Sowirog, many former inhabitants who return from the city to cast their vote are conscious of the mystical, vivifying influence exercised over them by the surroundings from which they have so long separated themselves. They walk across the fields and along the lake as though they had lost something (V.646).

The failure of the city-dwellers is their loss of that innocent state which finds its most perfect expression in the unity of man with the creatures of the forest, in the complete identification with nature. To compare man with animals is for Wiechert not an expression of man's insignificance and degradation as it is in his contemporary Kafka. On the contrary, it is an expression of the highest approbation, when he writes of the ferryman Jürgen Dorskocil: "Seine Füße sind mit Lappen umwickelt, und er geht aus der Stube wie ein schweres, lautloses Tier." (Die Magd des Jürgen Dorskocil, 1930/31, IV.11-12) Those who are like the simplest creatures do not think in terms of abstraction or rationalize their experiences; they act from the unassailable knowledge of

instinct and that instinctive sense never betrays their confidence because man in his most primitive state is closest to God: "Ja, wir waren Gottes, als wir waren wie die Tiere," writes Wiechert in Der siebente Tag (1928) (VII.465). He has given literary expression to this conviction in two Novellen. Wander, in Der Wolf und sein Bruder (1927), speaks the language of the animals and birds (VII.167, 171) and identifies himself with them (VII.173). At the other end of the scale stands the community, ignorant and superstitious. More significantly in Das Kind und die Wölfe (1928), a child - and children are closest to the animal state because of their naiveté - is lost in the forest and cared for by wolves. The child's identification with their nature is almost immediate; when rediscovered it has lost all power of speech and when one of the wolves is shot it too dies. In a book review (Tierbücher, 1932), Wiechert writes: "Ich habe von Menschen ... manches Böse erfahren, aber niemals von Tieren" (X.807); man must realize that an animal is not a plaything nor even a source of nourishment, but a "Teil des göttlichen Wesens." (X.808) Hence the loss of innocence is occasionally paralleled by Wiechert with the loss of self-identification with the animal: "Wo ist der Einklang geblieben mit Wald und Tier in jenen so traurigen Tagen?" he asks when speaking of



his banishment from his natural Paradise (Wälder und Menschen, IX.101-102).

Wiechert reserves his most forceful attack for the inventions of the 'civilized' world, more especially for those which shatter the silence of the forest. For him noise is synonymous with violence and brutality and is opposed to all that nature represents: "Laut und leise. Das sind die Pole der Zeit." (Laut und leise, no date, X.610) The baroness' 'modern' son from the city relieves the oppressive silence of the forest with a "quäkenden Grammophon" (Die Majorin, 1933, IV.296). He is decadent and superficial; every night he and his fiancée become intoxicated. It is not surprising that Michael, Wiechert's 'hero' in this novel, shoots at the young man's car which has intruded upon his privacy (IV.300-301). The noise of a gramophone in Der Wald is symbolical of the violence which follows a political argument (I.436). Modern inventions oppose the natural order, symbols of man's hybris. Thus Wiechert refers to the aeroplane as an invention, "das gegen die natürliche Ordnung der Welt war, eine Gewalttat der Menschheit, und ich habe niemals in meinem Leben ein Flugzeug bestiegen." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.440-41) <sup>8</sup> Later, in the same volume, he describes aeroplanes as "Hunderte der großen, mattglänzenden Todesvögel." (IX.708)

In contrast to these symbols of decadence and noise Wiechert turns the attention of the reader to the silence and solitude of the forest. Silence describes the very essence of the forest and therefore of 'natural' man, and "schweigend" and "still" are the most common epithets applied by Wiechert to the forest. Holm stands in fear "vor dem totenhaften Schweigen" (Die Flucht, I.181); Wiechert refers to the "feierliche Stille" and "der Zauber fremdartigen Schweigens" of the forest in Die blauen Schwingen (I.285). In the evening, the last whisperings of the wood die away "in frommem Schweigen." (Der Wald, I.556) "Ein finster brütendes Schweigen" blankets the village (Der Totenwolf, II.53); ".. ein eisiges Schweigen stand im Wald." (Der Wolf und sein Bruder, VII.176) Andreas leaves to enter "das Schweigen der großen Wälder." (Der Knecht Gottes Andreas Nyland I, 1925/26, II.289) These examples are taken at random from Wiechert's early work. There can be no doubt that he considered himself a child of a 'silent' forest: "Ich bin ein Kind der Wälder, das heißt, ich bin ein Kind des Dunklen, Schweigenden .." (Vom nahen Gott, 1929, X.822) Clamour drowns the voice of God; therefore silence is holy: "Nur die Stille ist heilig." (Die blauen Schwingen, I.410) Wiechert is always suspicious of noise because he has been brought up to respect and revere silence not

only for its own sake, but also because the absence of silence makes communion with God impossible (Wälder und Menschen, IX.108-109).

As long as Wiechert is convinced of the value of solitude and silence he is secure in himself; love of silence is intimately bound up with an ardent individualistic attitude toward life, and a desire to flee from reality to a dream world which the 'Massenseele' of the world outside cannot penetrate. This is the problem with which the critic of Wiechert is faced: on the one hand Wiechert is primarily interested only in treating the individual in an Eastern environment; on the other, his qualitative analysis of western culture is coloured by his very susceptibility to this environment. It is hardly surprising that Wiechert was to cross swords with the Nazis and flee from a world of brutality, hatred and violence to a more secure world of his own.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FAILURE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

#### A. National Socialism as a Feature of Western Culture

The first mention of National Socialism in Wiechert's works is an incidental reference in a short story of 1929 significantly entitled Lebenslauf eines Toren (VII.501-502). The story deals with an unusual individual who, after leaving school, tries his hand at all manner of questionable occupations and political forms, and finally dies a horrible death, self-induced through experiments with cholera bacilli. It would be a gross exaggeration to claim that in this work Wiechert has pointed to the failures of National Socialism; he was not to place the full emphasis on his attack of the system until after its defeat in 1945. But in a modest way the story betrays an approach to the problem which is at least indicative of Wiechert's later position: his resistance to Nazism is based on ethical rather than rational principles.

It would be unjust to insinuate thereby that Wiechert's well-known record of resistance is impugnable.

Whatever his motives and methods, the fact remains that Wiechert suffered with heroism where others were prepared to sacrifice personal ideals to political expediency. The analysis of these motives and methods, however, cannot be avoided, if one wishes to make a balanced judgment of the literary expression of his convictions at this time. In Lebenslauf eines Toren one can detect a certain uneasiness about the new system, but it is clear that, as yet, Wiechert simply includes it in his appraisal of political manifestations after 1918. In the story Karl, searching for a radical change in social structure, uses National Socialism as a stepping-stone.

It must be understood from the very outset that Wiechert's abhorrence for Nazism is not primarily the abhorrence for a totalitarian ideology per se. It is the result of an ethical judgment made after witnessing the horrors of Nazi rule: brutality, hatred, oppression, persecution and ignorance.

Wiechert had always been deeply suspicious of organizations, political or otherwise. The 'natural' man has no room in his heart for an appreciation of impersonal political expressions such as 'Staat' or 'Vaterland'. In Jahre und Zeiten, Wiechert confesses that he does not understand these concepts: "Es ist dann

auch früh gekommen, daß die großen Begriffe des Volkes oder des Vaterlandes mir immer etwas am Rande geblieben sind." (IX.755) Nor does he recognize this as a failure on his part. Words like 'Vaterland,' 'Staat' and 'Volk' lack meaningful content, and are therefore to be despised, or at least disregarded. He loves his own 'Heimat' and 'Wald' but these are words pregnant with meaning. "Ja, der Staat, ..." he muses in Jeromin-Kinder II, "was ist der Staat für solche kleinen Dörfer? Ist er etwas wie 'der Wald'? Aber der Wald besteht aus Bäumen, die man sehen und fühlen kann." (V.886-87) Wiechert has a deep love for 'Germany' with its cultural and spiritual values; his suspicion is of the political state as nationalistic and militaristic. Thus his aversion is less political than personal, for he always pours out his scorn upon inhumanity and depersonalization, whatever the political manifestation. Jons Jeromin experiences difficulty in continuing to study during the inflation due to lack of money. The state is responsible for this: "Der Staat hat kein Gewissen, weißt du," says Stilling to Korsanke. "Alle anonymen Mächte, hinter denen nicht ein einzelner Mensch steht, haben kein Gewissen." (Jeromin-Kinder II, V.537) It is difficult to see how Wiechert himself avoids employing concepts when he voices his disapproval in statements such as these.

The failure of Freiherr Ägidius in Der Vater (1933), is due to his false idealism both in refusing to allow his son to think as an individual and in asserting that the only fit subjects of reflection for a Prussian officer are embraced by the words 'Kaiser' and 'Vaterland'. When his son, Freiherr Erasmus, is posted missing during the war, he reads his diary, in which Erasmus writes that he knows it is far sweeter, "in der Liebe eines einzigen Menschen zu ruhn als in der Liebe Gottes oder des Vaterlandes." (VII.671) Freiherr Ägidius experiences a belated but genuine change of heart.

It is particularly in times of warfare that the individual recognizes the hollow ring of these concepts. Jons Jeromin reflects on the attitude of the soldier in World War I:

Noch nicht zwei Jahre vergangen, und das Vaterland war ihnen schon eine leere Hülse, ohne Samen oder Frucht. Es war nicht allein ihre Schuld, es mußte auch Schuld des Vaterlandes sein. Sie hatten versäumt, einen Begriff mit Leben zu erfüllen. Sie hatten ihn mit Worten und Gesetzen erfüllt, und im Feuer des Krieges und der Not waren Worte und Begriffe ausgetrocknet und verbrannt. Nur das eigene kleine Leben war geblieben ... (V.445-46)

Under such conditions, Wiechert holds, it is not unethical or unpatriotic to betray the Fatherland, especially when it makes demands which one cannot meet with a clear conscience. In the face of the threat of the villagers being forced to do military service under the

Nazis, Herr von Balk asks Jons to falsify the medical certificates. The only concept of 'Vaterland' that Wiechert will allow at this date is one which exists in the heart (V.850). Michael in Hirtennovelle (1934), is prepared to die for anything, even a lamb, but not for the 'Vaterland'. During the war a lamb is missed from his flock. The young shepherd is overtaken by the enemy as he rescues the lamb; he refuses to yield it and is killed. Wiechert does his own literary exegesis so that the significance of the action may not escape the reader:

Es sei nicht das Vaterland gewesen, ... für das dieser junge und adlige Mensch gefallen sei, nicht der Kaiser und nicht ein Thron oder Altar dieser Erde. Sondern er sei für das Lamm des armen Mannes gefallen ... Und in diesem Lamm des armen Mannes seien nun allerdings alle Vaterländer und Kronen dieser Erde beschlossen, denn keinem Hirten dieser Welt könne Größeres beschieden sein als der Tod für das Ärmste seiner Herde." (VI.550)

The susceptibility of the German people to Nazi propaganda is a similar failure. As in the First World War 'Kaiser' and 'Vaterland' were terms with almost religious content, so now Nazism too, like all similar political forms, has set itself up as an object of man's adulation. In the important speech, Rede an die deutsche Jugend, delivered in the Münchener Schauspielhaus on 11 November, 1945, Wiechert censures the Germans who made of Hitler a new divinity; they looked up to him,

dem neuen Messias und seinen Propheten. Und viele von ihnen erschraaken wohl vor dem Ungeformten oder



Mißratenen des Erdenlehmes, den ein neuer Gott zu neuen Krügen bestimmt haben sollte, um den neuen Wein in sie zu gießen. (X.387-88)

In Der weiße Büffel (1937), a thinly-disguised attack on totalitarianism, Vasudeva refuses to bow his knee before the golden image of the king for, "in meiner Heimat knien wir vor den Göttern, und anders kann ich es auch in der Fremde nicht halten." (VI.599)

Although this was a point of view diametrically opposed to the tenets of National Socialism, it was not originally intended as a specific attack on the system. For the time being Wiechert was content to incorporate Nazism in his criticism of the whole of western phenomena. It is ironic - and reflects on an inherent weakness in his thinking - that for a short while during the early and middle 'thirties, the adherents of the new Nazi movement claimed Wiechert as a representative of the best of 'Blut und Boden' tendencies, and at first sight, Wiechert appears to have had an affinity with the new regime.

In Der Wald and more particularly Der Totenwolf, he had espoused causes which seemed akin to later Nazi theories. Both novels criticise post-war conditions in Republican Germany, although all of Wiechert's young contemporaries did so during the early years of the Weimar Republic. However, Wiechert also demonstrated a

fervent hope for the rehabilitation of Germany's military strength, and in terms reminiscent of racial supremacy theories. In Totenwolf, Erikson the schoolmaster speaks of a future age, "in denen eine Gemeinde der Edlen den Wotansglauben wieder aufrichten und das Germanentum zur Herrschaft der Welt führen würde." (II.93) Only an express recantation of statements of this sort with which both novels abound would have been able to indicate that Wiechert was moved by somewhat different aims. Both Wald and Totenwolf were published in a receptive market, the swastika featured prominently on the cover design. Furthermore, the tone of both books was violent to an extreme, advocating bellicosity as the means of achieving a renewal in Germany.

On a far less superficial level, moreover, Totenwolf represented the spirit of Nazi ideology: that strange attempt at a fusion of the realism of a political platform with an appeal to an irrational sentimentality. In Wiechert it was the product of the forest-city antithesis, for which he had as yet no positive answer. Thus despite the realistic descriptions, as a solution to the problems of post-war Germany, the novel was even more visionary and idealistic than Der Wald. Wiechert was clearly too problematical to fit readily in the simple Nazi pattern, but the possibility seemed to present itself of using his

work for the new cause and, perhaps, of converting him completely.

Nazi critics were by no means entirely in agreement about the advisability of cultivating Wiechert for their own ends. In a doctoral thesis published in 1934, Hans Cramer wrote concerning Totenwolf:

Das, was heute Adolf Hitler als ein politisches Programm verwirklicht, die Erneuerung des deutschen Volkes in seiner ganzen Haltung und Gebärde von der Seele her, das stellte vor einem Jahrzehnt Wiechert vor seinem Helden als Lebensaufgabe auf. <sup>1</sup>

Cramer sees Wiechert as a forerunner of National Socialism, a prophet whom one would do well to encourage. But not all Nazi critics saw in him a kindred spirit, and this difference in attitude can only be explained by the fact that as an ideology, National Socialism only became more definite in its intentions after 30 June, 1934. Until that time, and to some extent even after, the movement was capable of pursuing a variety of courses.

An even superficial glance at the early membership of the NSDAP reveals the variety of conflicting views it represented and embraced. In the early 'twenties it is impossible and until the mid-'thirties extremely difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between the National Socialist movement and the Konservative Revolution of which Mohler speaks. <sup>2</sup> Many of the later differences of

opinion between these two movements may be explained by the fact that the Konservative Revolution was primarily an intellectual movement which never reached practical expression; the National Socialist movement, on the other hand, found its raison d'être only as a political party and its intellectual presuppositions were, at best, tenuous. But initially, at any rate, before the NSDAP had clearly defined its theories, it tended to draw on views shared by other groups such as the Konservative Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

It is characteristic that many of the differences of opinion which led to division were, in the case of the Konservative Revolution, due not to an ideological clash, but to National Socialist methods or to a personal mistrust of Hitler and his subordinates, "eine Ablehnung also, die mehr dem Instinkt als sachlicher Überlegenheit entspricht." <sup>4</sup> The early Wiechert belongs to the Konservative Revolution, particularly at the time when Totenwolf was written, and his growing objection to National Socialism was due simply to his ethical aversion for the system which became more pronounced as Nazi theories crystallized. In any case, as Wiechert continued to publish and the NSDAP to develop its doctrines, the objections to his sentimentality and passivity grew in number and force. It soon became obvious that Wiechert the dreamer,

the individualist, viewed Germany from a totally different perspective to that of the protagonists of a Third Reich, even though his language at one time bore certain similarities.

It was in Das Spiel vom deutschen Bettelmann (1932), first produced in Leipzig as a radio play on the eve of the Nazi 'Machtergreifung', that Wiechert clarified his attitude toward a 'new' Germany. The play was written at the invitation of the Central German network which intended to broadcast it on New Year's Eve as a "Rückschau auf das damals verflossene Jahr." (Zum Spiel vom deutschen Bettelmann, no date, X.741) Instead Wiechert undertook to interpret the fate of the German people during the previous decade in the light of the suffering Job. The spirit of the play is very different from the arrogance of those who believed in a 'Großdeutsches Reich' of a thousand years. In it he consciously depicts the servility and degradation of the German people under 'condemnation', "das Volk des Kreuzes, voller Pein." (X.9) In the prologue the external glory of Job is contrasted with the voice of the choir as it chants a warning of writing on the wall. It is at the end of the prologue that one is confronted by two poignant facts. In the first place, the coming retribution, already suggested by the choir, is punishment for Job's

arrogance in supposing his strength invincible. Thus he refuses to heed all warning, and the tolling of the bell already portends his destruction; he reaches the heights of hybris when he interprets the bell as ringing to his honour. <sup>5</sup> In the second place, this very hybris of Job is closely linked through a similarity of idea with the present and future fate of Germany, which has failed to see the writing on the wall. Thus Job's speech of defiance is followed by "Marschmusik, die leiser wird und in die Melodie übergeht: 'O Deutschland, hoch in Ehren ..'" (X.14) The last warning is delivered in person by the figure of death, the intimate companion of all who fight in war. He comes not to claim his terror-struck victim as in von Hofmannsthal's drama Jedermann; he comes to cripple and warn him. The prologue ends as an auctioneer sells German culture to the highest bidder:

Vier Groschen für Kronen, Städte und Land!  
Vier Groschen für Luther, Goethe und Kant! (X.22)

Contemporary Germany has sold its cultural birthright for a mess of political pottage, and retribution, according to Wiechert, must inevitably follow.

It is interesting to observe in this play the beginnings of an approach to political issues in quasi-religious, apocalyptic terms, which was later to dominate Wiechert's analysis of Nazism as inexplicable, diabolical:

Job's suffering, unlike that of his Old Testament model, is not a test of faith but punishment for his arrogance. Nor does Wiechert's Job lead any independent existence of his own. He serves as an embodiment of an idea Wiechert expressed a year later in a short discussion on the task of the artist, Der Dichter und die Zeit (1933), which reflects the same tendency to prophetic utterance:

Es wird die Zeit kommen, in der das deutsche Volk müde sein wird, sich von dem zu nähren, was die Händler der Revolution als Brot verkaufen, und in der es nach dem verlangen wird, was seine Seele allein sättigen kann. (X.890)

It was also in 1932 that Wiechert clarified his attitude to Judaism, this time in a short story, Die Gebärde, in which the inhuman treatment of Eli Kaback by former classmates leads to his ultimate suicide. The story appears to be based on an expression of Wiechert's views published a year before in a book review of Shmarya Levin's Kindheit im Exil, in which Wiechert had written:

Ja, was wissen wir alle, Philosemiten und Antisemiten, eigentlich vom jüdischen Volke der Gegenwart? Vom Volk im Exil? Wir kennen einen Abschnitt aus seiner 'Assimilationserscheinung'. Wir kennen Juden als Schüler, Kaufleute, Ärzte, Politiker, Schauspieler. Das heißt, wir kennen eine Erscheinungsform des abendländisch 'gefilterten' Judentums, und es genügt uns, leichtfertig genug unsere Theorien von Art, Rasse und 'Mentalität' darauf zu errichten. <sup>6</sup>

Wiechert's abhorrence for Antisemitism is based on his respect for the dignity of the individual, whatever his

colour, creed or race. The finest embodiment of these convictions is in the figure of Dr. Lawrenz, the Jewish physician in Die Jeromin-Kinder II, who spends his whole life in the self-giving service of humanity. If ever Wiechert believed in the perfectibility of man he gave expression to his belief in this doctor. When Lawrenz is maltreated by the Nazis, he experiences the humiliation and disregard of all self-respect as the greatest disgrace. The deprivation of all dignity is the ultimate sin which the Nazis commit, "daß sie unter ihre Absätze treten, wozu wir Tausende von Jahren gebraucht haben." (V.868)

Hitherto the political authorities had not antagonized Wiechert. Die Magd des Jürgen Doskocil had helped to assuage any doubts they may have entertained regarding his orthodoxy, since it seemed to represent their 'Blut und Boden' theories. Der Dichter und die Jugend, an address delivered to the University students of Munich on 6 July, 1933, caused the first noticeable change in attitude. Wiechert himself said later that he realized, "daß ich aus einem Umworbenen nun ein Beobachteter geworden war." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.649) By now he was regarded as one of Germany's representative authors. His novel Jedermann (1929/30), the second volume of a trilogy never completed, had been awarded



the Schünemann Prize; Die Magd des Jürgen Doskocil had earned him the "Volkspreis der Wilhelm-Raabe Stiftung," "wegen seines hohen Bekenntnisses zu Arbeit und Treue, seiner menschlichen Reinheit, seiner dichterischen Kraft und künstlerischen Vollendung." <sup>7</sup> Wiechert felt secure enough in his newly-won fame to issue a word of warning to the youth of Germany. The Nazi dictatorship was firmly ensconced by April 1933, and it was only eight days after this speech that the NSDAP was declared to be the only legally constituted political party in Germany (July 14, 1933). The time had come for a writer of authority who had the respect of the youth to warn against the power offered them.

Yet Wiechert's admonition at the end of the address lacks fire, is verbose and idealistic:

Seid demütig, meine Freunde, nicht vor den Menschen aber vor Gott, denn wem die Macht verliehen wird, hat nicht nur zu beugen sondern auch aufzurichten, was gebeugt wurde, und Dankbarkeit gehört zu den Dingen, die keinem Wandel der Zeiten unterworfen sein dürfen.  
(X.366-67)

Once again his approach is entirely ethical: there is little contact with the realities of the contemporary scene. Understandably, however, the reaction to the lecture was unfavourable; according to Stirk, it was quoted in only a few newspapers and periodicals, and a limited edition was published by an insignificant firm

in Mainz three years later.<sup>8</sup> As yet, however, the disagreements had not issued in an open clash, although after 1934, Wiechert was under secret observation by the Gestapo.

The 1933 address had been comparatively mild. Wiechert was more outspoken in the address Der Dichter und seine Zeit, delivered in the Auditorium Maximum at the University of Munich on 16 April, 1935. Although once again the Nazis were never explicitly mentioned, it was not difficult to discover the points of reference. Once again, Wiechert adopted the role of prophet in fortelling the inevitable decline of Nazism: the philosophy it represents is evil, nor can transient political manifestos outlast a whole tradition of German culture:

Sie wissen nicht, daß die Geschichte eines Volkes schon die ewigen Züge trägt, an denen subalterne Hände nichts mehr ändern können. Sie wissen nicht, daß der Strom jahrtausendalten Blutes nicht mit Phrasen in ein anderes Bett zu lenken ist. Sie wissen nicht, wie still das wirklich Heroische über die Erde geht .. (X.378)

Ten years later Wiechert was not as certain that a thousand years' history and an innate sense of right and wrong had resisted Nazism, although in Jahre und Zeiten he established the principle that all totalitarian systems must of necessity fail for lack of adequate ethical foundations: "Alle Systeme, die auf eine einzelne Person oder einen kleinen Kreis ausgerichtet sind, einen

obersten Kriegsherrn, sind gefährdet, weil sie eines sittlichen Unterbaues ermangeln." (IX.479)

This ethical foundation is all-important for Wiechert, for without it, he believes, no resistance is possible. The Nazis are guilty of the same failure which Wiechert had pointed out in Das Spiel vom deutschen Bettelmann: the unforgivable sin of hybris. They lack "Ehrfurcht" - a virtue which Wiechert had praised as one born of a close communion with nature. These men are possessed of the arrogance of a Dr. Faust (X.375): "Aber es ist uns nicht gegeben alle Gründe zu durchfliegen, sondern von der Natur befohlen, vor einigen dieser Gründe haltzumachen und betend vor ihnen zu verweilen." (X.375)

It is not a far cry from this statement to the later conclusion Wiechert drew in 1945 that the success of Nazism was made possible only through a deficiency in western civilization as such. Even here, however, Wiechert speaks of eternal values which demand pious respect, and he falls foul of an age which seeks to strike deep at the roots of such values. The Nazi ethic is a "Boxerethos" (X.379), but the natural virtues of awe and humility are unassailable. Therefore the sum total of Wiechert's admonition at this time of crisis is hardly different from that in his address of 1933; in fact he asserts that the injunction is once more the same: the Nazis

lack modesty and piety, therefore it is the task of the youth to demonstrate these virtues, with the added proviso that humility should not be confused with fear and cowardice (X.380). There is no doubt in his own mind that the consciences of the youth remain unbesmirched and that only the fear of retribution stands between them and perfect freedom.

The reaction of the audience to this exhortation to moral integrity was not entirely unexpected. A few had the courage to applaud Wiechert as he left the rostrum but their faint applause was drowned out by cat-calls, and the Rector of the University took the opportunity of barring Wiechert from further contact with the University. Immediately after his speech he received the Nazi 'Redeverbot'; he had clearly drawn the unfavourable attention of the Propaganda Ministry upon himself. <sup>9</sup> The speech was, however, clandestinely circulated in MS form, wrapped in wax paper, hidden in a loaf of bread and smuggled across the border. It was published in France by Henri Lichtenberger in his Le Troisième Reich, and in Moscow in Das Wort, a German periodical published by Brecht, Feuchtwanger and Bredel. Finally it found its way to Chile where it was published in 1943. It thus shared the same fate as F. G. Jünger's poem Klatschmohn and works of Bergengruen, Brecht,

Kästner and Reinhold Schneider, which were also circulated secretly in mimeographed form.<sup>10</sup>

Wiechert always strove for a new order, even during this period, and he always considered his work as a necessary condition for the future. But as his two addresses in 1933 and 1935 show, he had no more practical plan for renewal beyond his somewhat naive confidence in the essential goodness of man. One possible exception to this failure is Der weiße Büffel (1937), which was not published until 1946. Unlike Ernst Jünger's Auf den Marmorklippen which was published in Nazi Germany, Wiechert hardly concealed the anti-Nazi tendencies of his Novelle. But he read excerpts to various literary circles during the winter of 1937/38, lectures which were so frequently interrupted by hecklers from the Propaganda Ministry that at length Wiechert was moved to write to Goebbels: "Ich bin überzeugt, daß der einfachste Hütjunge aus meiner Heimat mehr Takt und Kultur gezeigt haben würde als die Beamten der höchsten Kulturbehörde des Dritten Reiches."<sup>11</sup> There can be no doubt that these lectures were partly responsible for Wiechert's imprisonment a few months later.

The Novelle is couched in an allegorical form, rare in the body of his work which tends largely to avoid historical or legendary material. In this case,

of course, the motivation sprang from the peculiar circumstances, and it was clearly directed at the deification of the state, the National Socialist claim of supremacy over all other claims, and the abuse of justice. The *Novelle* shows an awareness of the limitations of ideological claims which suppress the normal course of justice, and it ends with the death of the chief protagonist. We shall see later in this chapter how the work develops Wiechert's concept of justice, but it may be observed here that he believes true justice is only attainable through an attitude of heart, through a passive witness to personal ideals, and not by meeting violence in like measure. By attempting to achieve his ends by force, Vasudeva ultimately comes to realize that he is as guilty as the despot he is attempting to overthrow, "daß, wer in der Macht sei, auch neben der Sünde sei." (VI.572) In the eventual confrontation with the king, Vasudeva explains: "Die Macht sättigt nicht." (VI.606) Justice eventually triumphs despite the death of the struggling individual, an indication that the events of the previous years have not, as yet, combined to disillusion Wiechert about a complete conversion to justice on the part of the Nazis.

The events of the next year are well-known, and Wiechert himself has made a great deal of his act of

resistance in 1938. Although it would be unjust to attempt to diminish the nobility of his stand, the majority of critics have failed to observe the embarrassing fact that his incarceration was due in some measure to a misapprehension on his part.

The figure of Martin Niemöller is an important one in the history of resistance to the Nazis. From the very beginning he acted as the guiding spirit of the German Confessional Church established in 1934 in protest against the Nazi-infiltrated 'Faith Movement of German Christians'. Niemöller soon aroused the ire of the regime and was arrested on July 1, 1937. Although acquitted on all charges on March 2, 1938, he was immediately seized by the Gestapo as he left the courtroom, placed in 'protective custody' and sent to a concentration camp without further trial. He exercised a remarkable moral influence both in Germany and across the border. But his opposition had never been based on particularly rational principles. Wiechert's support of Niemöller and his protest at his arrest is partly explained on these grounds. He confesses in Der Totenwald (1939) that he had never known him personally, although he must have heard a great deal about him. The same work reveals the startling fact that Wiechert was not in the least concerned with the nature of the judgment

which was responsible for the pastor's arrest, as we shall see. It was an impulse which led him to withdraw his support from the so-called voluntary Winter Relief Scheme and to inform his local district party office that henceforth his normal contribution would be directed to the welfare of Niemöller's family. Moreover, as Totenwald shows, Wiechert's defence of Niemöller was based on the conviction that his own person would not be harmed,

daß man nicht wagen würde, sich seiner Person mit den üblichen Mitteln der Gewalt und Gesetzlosigkeit zu bemächtigen, weil man das Aufsehen scheuen werde, das solch eine Tat bei allen rechtlich Denkenden erzeugen mußte. (IX.203)

It is clear that the few occasions on which Wiechert felt he had compromised with the regime had left him with a growing feeling of shame and insecurity (IX. 203-204), which finally found release in an heroic attempt to appease his conscience. Wiechert is emphatic in his disavowal of those who seek to clear their conscience by gaining a martyr's crown (IX.204). He misjudged the National Socialists in assuming that his success and fame as writer made him immune from their vengeance and he paid bitterly for his mistake.

Throughout Totenwald, the most prominent feature is the writer's repeated emphasis on his 'humility'. He acts throughout as though countless invisible and



critical eyes were fastened upon him, "als seien die Augen aller seiner Leser auf ihn gerichtet, und er nickte ihnen beruhigend zu." (IX.216) Max Frisch has pointed out that this self-consciousness "vermindert die Gültigkeit dieses Berichtes."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Wiechert chooses to tell his story in the third person, which has allowed him to build up his own martyrdom in a most obvious manner. Therese Pol is one of the few who have had the courage to take umbrage at what she describes as Wiechert's "rather irritating exhibitionism."<sup>13</sup> In the midst of the threat of the total destruction of his security, Wiechert derives comfort from the knowledge that millions are associating themselves with his lot. The reverence we owe him for his courageous stand is not diminished by the fact that the highly-charged tone of his monologue leads one to suspect that Totenwald is his own Song of Songs and not:

den Toten zum Gedächtnis,  
den Lebenden zur Schande,  
den Kommenden zur Mahnung,

as he claims in a postscript (IX.329). As Carol Petersen has pointed out, the repeated emphasis that earthly joy and a heavenly crown are only attainable through humility could lead the truly humble to regard Wiechert's own attitude with suspicion as mere play-acting, undertaken ever more consciously with the passing of time.<sup>14</sup>

After his protest Wiechert's house was searched and his correspondence and diary confiscated. He was arrested, "wegen betont staatsfeindlicher Gesinnung und Erregung öffentlicher Unruhe gegen Partei und Staat." <sup>15</sup> He remained in custody for two months in the Gestapo prison in Munich, and was then sentenced to an indefinite period of imprisonment at the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. After a week's travel he was finally imprisoned at Buchenwald near Weimar where he remained until August of that year. <sup>16</sup> His release appears to have been due to the intervention of influential friends as well as the embarrassment his imprisonment must have caused the Nazis. He was immediately taken to Goebbels who warned him in no uncertain terms:

Wir wissen, daß Ihr Einfluß auf die Jugend groß und gefährlich ist. Sollten Sie noch ein einziges Wort gegen unseren Staat sprechen oder schreiben, so werden Sie noch einmal ins Lager kommen, und zwar auf Lebenszeit und mit dem Ziel Ihrer physischen Vernichtung. <sup>17</sup>

Soon after he was 'invited' to attend a literary convention at Weimar and he thought it wise to obey, although the meetings disgusted him: "Ich war nur ein Plakat," he writes later in Jahre und Zeiten, "das man aushängen konnte, damit jedermann sehe, wie großmütig das Dritte Reich war." (IX.685) Until the end of the war Wiechert remained under observation by the Gestapo. He was forbidden to emigrate and to publish; his

publisher was not allowed to mention him in the 'Verlagsprospekten' and booksellers could not display his works. His letters were read and his telephone tapped.<sup>18</sup> At this stage in his career he was forced to undertake a careful scrutiny of his view of the world. The experiences of the past five years had been an outer crisis which was now matched by an inner one.

This struggle is reflected in Das einfache Leben, begun a few weeks after his release from Buchenwald, and regarded by the author as his most representative work. It was published through an oversight (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.690) shortly before the outbreak of the war. In it, as we shall see in chapter IV(C), Wiechert sought to escape from an oppressive existence by retiring to an Utopian life on an island. Later, in reference to this creative period as distinct from his 'zeitpolitisches' work, he wrote that he realized during the war,

daß es für unsereinen nur eines gibt, um den Untergang zu bestehen: die Arbeit. Das heißt die Flucht in eine andere Welt oder die Verwandlung dieser zerfallenden Welt in eine der Wahrheit und der letzten Gerechtigkeit. (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.697)

Flight and transformation are a summary of his artistic aims at this time as both a form of escape for himself and the offer of a chimerical existence to others, a Nirvana which leads to passivity and brooding.

Despite the Nazi proscription, Wiechert continued to write during the war, convinced that his work would be a necessary pre-requisite to reconstruction after Germany's defeat which he regarded as inevitable. Der Totenwald was written, the first volume of Die Jeromin-Kinder, a radio-play, Die Totenmesse (1943), and two volumes of Märchen (1944/45). All these works reflect the extent to which the regime affected his thinking and drove him further away from the path of reality at a time when clarity and precision of thought were most necessary.

The problem of human justice is uppermost in his mind at this time, but in accordance with his artistic aims of flight and transformation he tends to avoid the problem altogether. Wiechert, as we have seen, was unconcerned with the nature of the judgment which condemned Niemöller. The crux of his objection is that the Nazis did not keep their word and sent Niemöller to concentration camp. Thus an injury has been done to the state because a legal judgment has been reversed without cause: "Hier waren Recht und Gesetz gebrochen, Menschlichkeit und Dankespflicht, Anstand und Sitte." (IX.205) Quite remarkably, Wiechert does not question the justice of Niemöller's initial arrest. He sees it as peripheral whether the pastor had actually abused the freedom of

his pulpit or not:

Und gleichviel, ob der Unglückliche die Kanzel mißbraucht hatte oder nicht: hier wollte man weder strafen noch bessern noch sühnen. Hier wollte man nur vernichten, wie der Mörder seinen Zeugen vernichtet. (IX.205)

One would expect a balanced judgment on the facts of the case, since the whole affair was ultimately responsible for Wiechert's own imprisonment. His obvious unwillingness to make any such assessment shows that his protest was an act of impulse. Niemöller had said nothing that required 'punishing' or 'improving' or 'atoning', as even a cursory glance at his career and his sermons shows.

Wiechert shows a similar disregard in his own case, never questioning the legality of his suffering. It is for him a matter of appeasing a troubled conscience which leads him to nocturnal visions of Niemöller. Wiechert's resistance to the Nazis is the highly individualistic affair we have come to expect of him; the 'justice' of it is peripheral because 'justice' is an abstraction. There are just actions but Niemöller's arrest is not one of them. Nor is Wiechert's decision influenced by a hope that it may be exemplary: "Keinem Menschen würde geholfen werden, aber dem Gesetz würde geholfen werden." (IX.206) In what manner Wiechert would aid the law he does not clarify.

The final event which decides his mind for him is Hitler's statement after the occupation of Austria, "Recht muß Recht sein, auch für Deutsche!" (IX.207) He quotes the phrase in his letter to the branch of the NSDAP in his district and complains of the "nebelhaften und demagogischen Begriff aller Deutschen" (IX.207) contained in Hitler's statement.

The theme of justice was taken up once more in Jeromin-Kinder I. The struggle between justice and injustice, a struggle which Wiechert had recognized as the touchstone of success or failure in his speech Der Dichter und seine Zeit (X.379), is represented in the figure of Jons who leaves his forest home in order to conquer the world. This is his response to the challenge of the prophetic promise in Isaiah which his father reads to him: "Und das Recht wird in der Wüste wohnen und Gerechtigkeit auf dem Acker hausen." (V.26) But the question of justice is never really answered. Jons' education, his later experiences in World War I and his contact with Jumbo, a medical student, lead him to the realization that justice lies beyond human possibilities. The old schoolmaster Stilling is aware of this fact at the beginning of Jons' career:

Daß das Weltgericht über dem Menschengerecht wie das Jenseits über dem Diesseits stand, als eine Tröstung also oder Verheißung, und daß die Gerechtigkeit also ein Traum war wie das Reich

Gottes, nie zu erfüllen auf dieser Erde, aber mit Opfern zu bezahlen, als könnte sie erfüllt werden. (V.76)

On the one hand, Wiechert's conviction of the necessity for justice has hardly been shaken; on the other, it has mellowed from pure idealism to a recognition that as an ideal it is unattainable. Justice is a signpost pointing out new possibilities which are to be striven for. But a limit must be set to this striving, for unless it is directed into more modest channels, despair is inevitable. The mere desire for justice suffices; man has thereby made himself part of eternity:

[Jons] brauchte nicht die Welt zu bewegen, ... aber wenn er nur einmal den Gedanken als einen schönen Gedanken fühlte, daß Gerechtigkeit auf dem Acker sein müsse, dann hatte er sich schon angeschlossen an die Ewigkeit. (V.77)

Even Jakob, Jons' father, who originally inspired him to seek justice, later qualifies his admonitions as he speaks to Jons:

Siehst du, was wir damals lasen: "Und das Recht wird in der Wüste wohnen, und Gerechtigkeit auf dem Acker hausen." Ich wollte, daß einer von euch dafür auszieht. Nicht daß er es gewinnen würde. Das kann kein einzelner Mensch. Aber daß er dafür kämpfen würde, mit anderen zusammen. Daß er ein Streiter werden würde und vielleicht die Welt bewegen. Das wollte ich. (V.85)

More and more qualifications are added to the original idea until, at the end of the first volume and the

beginning of the second, Jons' goal has altered beyond recognition. The early question of justice is never renewed, and Jons is content to settle in Sowirog as an accomplished but humble village doctor.

Wiechert broaches the problem of justice once more after the war in a Novelle, Der Richter (1946), which deals with a judge who attempts to continue his duties in an upright fashion in spite of the National Socialist regime. His moment of real challenge comes when he discovers his son Christean is guilty of the murder of an antagonist to the Nazis. His son's action not only goes unpunished but even meets with the approval of the authorities. The magistrate is moved to lay down his office. Wiechert's intention is to show the incompatibility of impartial judicial decisions with the travesty of justice under totalitarianism. This Novelle is certainly the most practical expression of his views on justice. The taking of human life is murder in his eyes, even though commanded or approved by the state. Murder demands condemnation by the law and atonement by the guilty party. Where this right is no longer self-evident, justice has ceased to exist. As soon as Christean becomes aware of this, he has already disassociated himself from the ideological hatred which he has hitherto so firmly supported.



For justice is an eternal, inviolable principle to which even the state is subject and therefore not lightly to be set aside. Although it is temporarily disregarded and an immoral act thereby turned into a political 'virtue', the immutable law demands satisfaction. Wiechert had already hinted at this eternal validity of the law in Der weiße Büffel: Merduk, the king, despite a change of heart, refuses to allow his laws to be broken and Vasudeva must die. The antithesis between Nazi 'justice' and this eternal law is well depicted in Der Richter. Christean realizes that blood is sacred and violation of the normal course of life an offence against the natural order. Although prepared to confess he finds only sympathy. Finally his father takes him to the one seat of judgment which is inescapable: that of the parents of the dead boy. The central theme of the story is that by atoning for his guilt, Christean has declared his allegiance to justice against Nazism. The judge himself is aware that he holds office only by virtue of the judgments he must pronounce and where the course of justice is impeded, a judge becomes a mere puppet and his judgments a travesty. He therefore resigns with the words:

Wo ein Richter sein soll, ... muß ein Recht sein.  
Und wo ein Recht sein soll, muß gerichtet werden.  
Wo aber nicht gerichtet wird, ist auch kein Raum  
weder für ein Recht, noch für einen Richter.  
(VII.762)

Unfortunately, the *Novelle* leaves unanswered the question how justice shall be achieved. The magistrate lays down his office in protest against the abuse of the law and his son repents of his action, but the situation is too stylized to allow the inference that this change of heart may be achieved by all alike. Wiechert was never to discuss the question of human justice in this context again.

It was in a flood of works after 1945 that he took up the question of the nature and more particularly the causes of the Nazi phenomenon seriously, but the most penetrating treatment was in his journalistic and autobiographical works. Nazism provides the background for much of Jeromin-Kinder II, it is true, as Missa sine nomine (1950) is played out in the early post-World War II period, but Nazism and the historical events are only incidental to the plot, which is almost conceivable apart from the contemporary scene.

Lydia Baer has pointed out,<sup>19</sup> that Wiechert failed to complete a trilogy of novels twice in his creative life. Die kleine Passion was written in 1928/29, and Jedermann in 1929/30, but the third volume planned never came to fruition. Jeromin-Kinder I (1940/41) and Die Furchen der Armen (later entitled

Jeromin-Kinder II, 1946) suffered a similar fate. Wiechert was unable to express the contemporary scene after Buchenwald. In the two volumes of Die Jeromin-Kinder, he tried to describe an ideal individual confronted with all the setbacks and evil influences of the modern world. Once more he evoked the fairy-tale atmosphere of his homeland, once more his hero was brought through the trenches of the First World War, and this time even beyond that to the beginning of the Nazi era, but he was unable to bring himself to immerse his hero in the nihilism of the world around him. In a postscript to Jeromin-Kinder II, Wiechert explains why he leaves the third volume to history. Literature has no right, "über dieses Grauen den Schimmer der Verklärung zu legen." (V.978) Missa sine nomine does not take up where Jeromin-Kinder II left off since it omits the Second World War altogether. <sup>20</sup> Wiechert was never to give literary expression to World War II.

Jeromin-Kinder II gives no explanation of Nazism, nor can it be expected of Wiechert in a creative work. We saw in chapter I that his interest lies in a contrast between the village as eternal, embracing values which will outlast the ephemeral, and civilization as decadent. In this novel the contrast between the village Sowirog and the upstart regime is quite usual. From time

to time there are hints of National Socialism but only in its effect upon the village and in reference to the village's powers of resistance to this foreign infiltration. Similarly, when war breaks out in Jeromin-Kinder I, Jumbo and Jons discuss it only in terms of its influence upon the individual. The events leading to the outbreak of hostilities are only superficially mentioned and then with a trace of irony (V.347). When Jons later joins the army at the end of his studies, the war is for him simply another subjective experience, and it is difficult to understand why he enlists.

Wiechert attempts to explain the circumstances attending the rise of Nazism as a failure of western civilization and culture in his non-literary works after 1945. He reserves his first shaft for those writers and artists who were prepared to reflect the regime and support it. In 1935, in Der Dichter und seine Zeit, he had attacked National Socialist literary criticism, "wo nicht gefragt wird, ob ein Gedicht, ein Roman, ein Drama vor dem Forum der Kunst bestehe, sondern ob es vor dem Forum der politischen Meinung bestehe." (X.376) He excoriates the writers, including Hans Fallada, for their indifference to moral considerations (X.376). The task of art is not political but ethical, and therefore educational in a different sense. The real poet ensures,

"daß vor den Menschen aufgerichtet werde, was in der Welt verdunkelt und oft verschwunden ist: die Wahrheit, das Recht, die Freiheit, die Güte, die Liebe .." (X.377)

A decade later, in his famous speech Rede an die deutsche Jugend, he renews his attack on the writers who were "Knechte ihrer Zeit," (X.382) "die Zeit der Zauberer, die einen Schleier über das Seiende warfen. Eine große Zeit für alle, die die Herzen anzurühren vermochten." (X.382) As we shall see in chapter VI, this was ironically Wiechert's own outstanding feature after the war, for he was no less a "Zauberer," who cast a veil of dreams over existing reality.

Nor are the Nazi writers and critics alone responsible for the ease with which the German people succumbed to totalitarianism, Wiechert asserts: their attitudes are symptomatic of the failure of western culture. World War I destroyed any vestiges of faith he may have retained in a decadent civilization. His later recognition that this war was only the final stage of a long development confirms the premonition of a boy who has lost his Paradise, viz. that this western world is in a state of decline. Ebeling recognized this when he wrote: "Im Erlebnis des Weltkrieges vollendet sich des Dichters Kulturpessimismus zu letzter konsequenter Ablehnung alles kulturellen Seins." 21

The artists that represent this culture are guilty of what Carl von Ossietzky defined as "Kultur-bolschewismus," <sup>22</sup> a literary current which Wiechert understood as the reactionary expression of a fin de siècle epoch:

Es war eine verfallende Epoche, und sie waren ihre Geschichtsschreiber. Sie machten keine Geschichte, sie schrieben sie nur auf. Sie hatten fast alles, was man dazu braucht: einen kühlen, scharfen Intellekt, ein kaltes Auge, die Fähigkeit der Analyse, das sezierende Messer, die sichere Hand. (IX.743)

Es gab nicht viel Scham bei ihnen. Die Wahrheit mußte für sie auch hinter dem Schleier der Scham hervorgeholt werden. Auch hinter Tränen. Sie waren nicht sentimental. Sie hatten nicht, was man "Herz" nennt. Ein Messer hat kein Herz. (IX.744)

The weakness lies not only in their analysis of reality but also in their failure to synthesize. This inability to present an alternative to the reality they criticized is compared with the ploughing of a piece of land which is then left bare until finally thistles are sown: "Die Gewalt kam, das Brutale, das Rohe, der totale Staat kam, Hitler kam." (IX.745) A negative, destructive approach to art, Wiechert believes, corresponds to a nihilistic philosophy of life.

Furthermore, he believes that at a time when the challenge was greatest, the majority of writers failed utterly to meet it. This was due to their inability to draw a clear-cut distinction between the vocations of

"Dichter" and "Schriftsteller" (IX.623). The "Schriftsteller" has unfortunately replaced the "Dichter" as the representative of culture, but he has only managed to do so by intellectualizing the subjects normally treated by the "Dichter" in empirical fashion. The distinction is one of head and heart. Wiechert is confident that "Dichter und Denker" could not have become mouthpieces of evil, and he is equally certain that "Schriftsteller and Literaten" were of necessity bound to support Nazism:

Der reine Geist führt immer zur Mitleidlosigkeit, ja zur Erbarmungslosigkeit.... Als die deutsche Literatur in das Zeitalter der "Bewegung" einging, war sie längst ohne Wurzeln und ohne Boden, und sie rankte sich um die blutigen Säulenstümpfe der "neuen Zeit" ebenso willig, wie die klassische Dichtung sich um die edlen Säulen der Antike gerankt hatte. (IX.624)

Towards the end of Jahre und Zeiten, Wiechert is quite definite in his opinion that this contrast between "Dichter" and "Schriftsteller" can be reduced to the distinction between "die Ratio" and "das Magische." <sup>23</sup>

In a sense, of course, Wiechert's analysis contains some grains of truth, though much will depend upon one's definition of these apparently contradictory vocations. The "Schriftsteller" does seek to reflect the spirit of his age, whereas the purely creative, more subjective writer seeks to give his work the stamp of eternal, archetypal validity. At the same time, however, Wiechert

seems to make a somewhat arbitrary distinction between the two vocations. He gives no concrete examples and only in the most general fashion does he observe that the ideals of the "Dichter" are based on the silent twilight of true culture, while those of the "Schriftsteller" are determined by the hard light of civilization (IX.623, 773). Furthermore, his own contribution to the study of his time lies more obviously in his "schriftstellerisches" work than in his creative writing. He himself, of course, defines the terms not according to the genre but according to the author and his method of approach. It is his own faith in himself as the only real "Dichter" that leads him after the war to consider his task as mentor of the German people.

There can be no doubt that Wiechert connects National Socialism with the failure of the west. This is the only answer he can find to the question why the culture of centuries was incapable of preventing a large-scale regression into barbarism (IX.621-22). That the masters of language and philosophical thought should succumb to deception, falsehood and clichés is beyond his understanding. It is the absolute antithesis of everything he believes the writer stands for. If artists are "die Bewahrer der Menschheit," (IX.621) how can they



approve of what is inhuman? If they are "die Verkünder der Liebe," (IX.621) how can they glorify brutality?

Aus allem diesem scheint eines ohne Zweifel hervorzugehen: daß der Geist an sich, oder der Geist des Abendlandes, oder doch der des deutschen Volkes nicht ausgereicht hat, die sittliche Natur vor Schaden, ja vor Verderben zu bewahren. (IX.621)

Wiechert makes much of the cultural ignorance of the representatives of the regime. In Totenwald, he refers to the "Reich der Halbbildung, der Gewalt und der Lüge." (IX.208) The outstanding feature of the officers of the Gestapo, who come to search his house before his arrest, is their "Unbildung" and "Plumpheit." (IX.209) In Buchenwald, Wiechert experiences his most serious difficulty in accomodating himself to the fact that the Nazi henchmen belong to the same nation which produced Goethe, which suffered in the Thirty Years' War and in World War I. What is so remarkable is that the nation is divided into two parts, separated only by a political dogma (IX.268). So too it is ironic that Buchenwald should be situated so closely to Goethe's Weimar, the centre of German culture (IX.277).<sup>24</sup>

In the first place, then, the ease with which National Socialism entered Germany is due to the failure of Germany itself in subscribing so readily to western, and therefore decadent values. Wiechert ridicules the pseudo-culture of the Nazis; he is amused at the naive

attempt of one philologist to prove an etymological relationship between "Gote - gut - Gott." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.559) We saw earlier in chapter I(B) that the 'natural' man is individualistic and, by virtue of his close communion with nature, pious and reflective and therefore silent. The exponents of "Halbbildung" reveal their divorce from nature and allegiance to civilization in their brashness and noisiness. In Jeromin-Kinder II, the first Nazi we meet is in Gina Jeromin's city bar. As distinct from those who speak quietly and modestly, this man "verlangte mit lauter und scharfer Stimme einen Cocktail." (V.720) <sup>25</sup> This lack of humility immediately arouses the suspicion of the village which is unused to brazen behaviour: "Auch sind diese junge Burschen ihnen etwas zu sicher und zu laut, und die Leute von Sowirog sind beides nicht." (V.823)

In Rede an die deutsche Jugend there is a passage in which Wiechert is nonplussed by the fact that the combined forces of a cultural and spiritual inheritance were incapable of resisting the crass ignorance and superficiality of Nazi 'culture'. In a very general fashion he outlines the spirit of German culture and contrasts it with the willing enslavement to alien values:

Wir waren kein Volk von Analphabeten. Die Geschichte unseres Geistes war eine stolze Geschichte, und sie war ehrenvoll eingeschrieben in die Bücher der Menschheit. Nicht nur unser Wissen, sondern auch unsere Urteilskraft, unsere Fähigkeit, zwischen Sein und Schein zu unterscheiden. Und auch die Geschichte unserer Seele schien uns eine ehrenvolle Geschichte zu sein. "Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut". Das war aus unseren Reihen ausgegangen, und die Menschheit hatte es aufgenommen als ein Evangelium, das für alle Völker zu gelten hätte. Die Humanitas, das Amor Dei, Schonung und Toleranz, sie schienen bei uns nicht weniger zu Hause zu sein als in anderen Ländern. (X.385-86)

Wiechert has as yet no answer to this baffled realization. His only conclusion is that intellectual superiority and mental acumen are not proof against totalitarianism. If the Germans succumb to symbols of hatred, brutality and ignorance, there can be no guarantee that all values, no matter how noble, will not suffer a similar fate. Clearly Wiechert's question is a search for security. He believes in progress, or at least in the natural ability of man to represent tolerance, humility and humanitarian principles. But now for some inexplicable reason, this natural ability seems to have been frustrated.

He seeks the roots for this frustration of man's noble purpose by delving deeper into the cultural heritage of his nation. The essay, Über Kunst und Künstler (1945), an undelivered speech, is one of the most significant pieces he wrote after the war. In it he feels obliged to write in response to a dream. He feels countless people are appealing to him for an

authoritative statement. The sub-title of the 'speech' is: "Die Gegenwart und die Zukunft der deutschen Kultur," (X.413) and the task which he shares with his readers: "Die Rettung des deutschen Wesens." (X.413)

Wiechert begins his monologue by considering the historical character of German culture:

Es hat seinen unsterblichen Niederschlag durch lange Jahrhunderte gefunden, in der Musik, der Dichtung, der bildenden Kunst, der Philosophie, der Wissenschaft ... Es hat an der Güte, der Weisheit, der Duldung, der Humanitas und über allem und mit allen an der Liebe geformt. (X.413-14)

This has been achieved without the help of the state and in many cases in spite of it. There is nothing novel in Wiechert's analysis: he had said much the same in Rede an die deutsche Jugend (X.385-86), as we noted above. But now he extends his investigation to include not only German culture but the whole of western civilization. The decline of culture which marked the rise of Nazism, is in his opinion the result of a struggle between the culture he has just defined and the technological advances of a modern age (X.414-15). This attack on civilization becomes the crux of his argument in Grablegung oder Auferstehung? written about 1946. Wiechert denies that the Nazi era is explicable only in terms of economic and political conditions in Germany after 1918. The weakness of such an argument, he claims,

lies in the implication that the removal of economic distress will bring about a 'brave new world' (X.928). The explanation of Nazism must be sought rather,

aus dem, was schon an den Wurzeln genagt hat, während die Krone noch zu blühen und Frucht zu tragen schien ... Aus der Krankheit einer Kultur, die langsam zu sterben begann, während wir im Rausch der Zivilisation lebten, der Technik, der Spezialwissenschaften, und der Meinung waren, dies eben sei die Kultur. Daß wir aus dem Magischen herausgetreten waren in die armseligen und hochmütigen Bezirke der Aufklärung. Daß wir die Natur beherrschen wollten und vergessen hatten, daß wir selbst nur ein Teil von ihr waren. (X.929)

It is worth noting that these technological advances are actually envisaged as containing within themselves the causes of decay in the west; they are not merely symbols of an inner decline. The splitting of the atom is more than a sign of decay; it demonstrates man's misguided will to make himself equal with God:

Es gibt einen geraden Weg vom Apfel Evas bis zu jener Bombe, die auf Hiroshima fiel, und das "sicut Deus" war niemals eine Verheißung, sondern eine tödliche Warnung, die der Menschengeist überhört hat, wie er alle Warnungen überhört hat. (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.705)

Wiechert regards the chasm that separates this age from previous ages as a "violent rupture in historical continuity threatening the survival of humanitas," as Puknat points out. <sup>26</sup> Modern man's preoccupation with economics and politics suggests a displacement of his earlier concern for nature. In Jeromin-Kinder II, Jons tells his crippled brother Christean that the new age

as such has given rise to Nazism: "Die Wissenschaft hat das meiste dazu getan, daß es nun so gekommen ist."

(V.852) In Über Kunst und Künstler, Wiechert seeks to answer the question of reconstruction after the war. He believes reconstruction is impossible if it is assumed that once denazification is achieved, the source of complaint is removed. For Nazism is not simply the product of the accumulated history of twelve years, it is the logical outcome of a century of development. Those who assume that hatred, lust for power, denunciation, revenge and complete mercilessness are the fruits of only twelve years and therefore of National Socialist ideology,

haben den drohenden und gespenstischen Gang der letzten hundert Jahre nicht gehört. Sie haben übersehen, daß die zwölf Jahre nur den letzten Stoß an die Wände des Gefäßes bedeutet haben, das mit Kristallen der Entartung gefüllt war, und der Stoß ließ die Kristalle aneinanderschießen, so daß das Unsichtbare plötzlich sichtbar wurde.  
(X.416-17)

It is clear that Wiechert has modified his earlier views. His explanation of the Nazi phenomenon is no longer simply in terms of the twelve years 1933-45, or even 1918-45. Although he traces Nazism back to a failure of the west, the beginnings of technological advance, he does not indicate the exact correlation between the apparent cause and its effect; he never enlarges on the

connection drawn between the totalitarian system and its scientific pre-condition, and he reduces the dichotomy of modern man and his culture to the exaggeration of both the rational ("Geist") and non-rational ("das Magische") at the expense of both. Nature is conceived in some way as producing and sustaining humility, love, temperance, trust and faith. A similar connection is arbitrarily drawn between "Ratio" and pride, distrust, hatred, intolerance and brutality, but the point of contact between cause and effect is never clear. Wiechert argues in an inverse fashion that since the Nazis embody certain demonstrable vices, and since these vices are alien to his experience of nature, therefore it is to be concluded that Nazism and World War II are the logical development of civilization. Conversely, a return to nature, as he defines it, must also ensure the removal of all the ills connected with the system and effect a magical cure. From this point of view the purpose of Wiechert's post-war analyses may be seen as the attempt to re-educate man to the supremacy of intuition over intellectualism.

On the one hand, then, Wiechert seems to believe implicitly in Goethe's enlightened maxim: "Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut," and interprets German culture in its musical, artistic and literary history as an

expression of this principle. On the other hand lies the conflicting evidence that German culture has not sufficed to prevent the rise of Nazism and the spread of scientific advance which depersonalizes man. Wiechert can only discuss this conflict at the expense of his whole system of thought. If Nazism is to be explained purely in terms of human guilt, viz. in terms of man's ever-present tendency to deny eternal values and of his preference for power at any cost, Wiechert's whole artistic career and his aim as artist stands jeopardized. He seems therefore almost consciously to avoid the obvious conclusion reached by Bernt von Heiseler, for example, when he has Pastor Georg Degener say in Versöhnung:

Jeder von uns, wenn er sein Leben betrachtet, kann darin den Punkt finden, von dem ein Teil der großen Zerstörung ausgegangen ist. Laßt das Wort von der Schuld kein undeutliches, allgemeines bleiben, sucht und findet die Schuld, wo sie wirklich ist: in uns! Tausend kleine, trübe Quellen sind zusammengefloßen zu dem breiten, stinkenden Strom, der jetzt alles verschüttet. Erlaubt euch nicht, meine Lieben, auf den oder jenen mit dem Finger hinzuzeigen, auf einen Mächtigen und mit schwerer Verantwortung Beladenen, und auch nur in der Stille eures Herzens zu sagen: der ist der Schuldige. Denn es ist nicht wahr. Wir sind es alle. 27

Wiechert, however, is not prepared to lay the cause of Nazi success at the feet of the German individual. He escapes the conflict in his position by regarding Nazism as an apocalyptic visitation, unavoidable, diabolic and, above all, inexplicable.



This is an attitude which we have come to regard as typical of Wiechert. The analysis of Nazism not in its political, but in its ethical expression, and the unrealistic nature of this approach leads him to the resigned view that ultimately totalitarianism defies all attempts at analysis. He had already hinted in Rede an die deutsche Jugend, the first public expression of his convictions after the end of the war and the first occasion on which he had no need to fear reprisals, that this would be his ultimate conclusion. At that time he was unable to fit the Nazi phenomenon into his understanding of the German nation and found it necessary to explain the apparent paradox by referring to it almost in terms of the influence exercised by an evil magician.

For Nazism affected every sphere of life and every individual; it was not limited to a ferocious few with a lust for power (X.384). Any explanation in purely political terms is doomed to failure because it avoids the kernel of the problem. Nazism was not merely a "politische Form" nor a "System der Philosophie" (X.384) nor a sect. It sought a completely new way of life with itself as idol. The most recent experiences of millions of Germans are therefore unique and inexplicable, and their submission was not merely to a "Programm" but to

"Symbole" (X.384).

Wiechert thus seeks to escape the dilemma into which his arguments have led him by explaining Nazism as the evil hand of fate, irrespective of guilt. His analysis adopts semi-religious tones. There were many, he asserts, who possessed prophetic insight and were not misled into sacrificing their personal ethical standards:

Sie erkannten, daß nichts Zufall und Versäumnis und Verschuldung war, sondern daß das große gerechte Schicksal seine Hand aufgehoben hatte, um ein Volk zu stürzen, damit es in der Erkenntnis seiner Sünde einen neuen Anfang setze. (X.396)

The sin of the German nation lies not in the individual German lives, which made Nazism possible, but in their susceptibility to political ideologies and in the hybris of the people as a whole. Almost imperceptibly Wiechert has returned to his basic contention made as early as 1932 in Das Spiel vom deutschen Bettelmann, and reiterated in the exhortation to humility in Der Dichter und seine Zeit. The reasons for a supernatural visitation may be inexplicable, but the possibility of a change of heart is not altogether excluded.

Although Wiechert was never to deny the possibility of ethical rehabilitation, he did suggest that his vague analysis of Nazism and World War II in terms of "Schicksal" was somewhat radical. In Grablegung oder Auferstehung?, Nazism is interpreted as a judgment

on the German people:

Wir gehen nicht unter, weil die Dämonen des dritten Reiches uns in den Abgrund gezogen haben, sondern sie haben uns in den Abgrund ziehen können, weil wir schon damals reif zum Untergang waren. (X.941)

Although Wiechert does not enlarge on this statement and although his post-war literary output is entirely dedicated not to a thorough-going analysis of Nazism, but to its purposeful defeat, it is clear that he is ultimately interested only in the excoriation of the west.

Perhaps the most convincing explanation of the twelve years that have gone before is given in Über Kunst und Künstler. Without denying the causal relationship between technological advance and the Nazi era, he makes the interesting observation that Nazism was the victory of all that is primitive and bestial in man over centuries of cultural inheritance. This statement is inconsistent with his previous attitude which still allows the 'natural' virtues of man, and it is difficult to reconcile this new position so akin to despair with the hope for moral rejuvenation which infuses the bulk of all his work at this time:

Aber eines wußten wir nicht: daß tief im Urgrund unseres Volkes, tief unter Christenheit, Schönheit, Weisheit und Humanitas der Dschungel lag, der unberührte und seit der Steinzeit unveränderte, und daß in diesem Dschungel die Bestie lag, halb

wachend, halb träumend, ungezähmt, ungebändigt, unberührt von zehntausend Jahren der Mühe, der Hingabe, der Liebe. Wir wußten viel von der Menschlichkeit, aber wenig vom Menschen. (X.415)

The element of apocalyptic bewilderment observed in Rede an die deutsche Jugend is still present, but the attempt to shrug off personal responsibility is no longer as definite. In this respect Wiechert reflects the thesis of Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus, in speaking of a hidden "Bestie," a diabolus absconditus, to explain the calamitous relapse of Germany into primitivism.

The paradox in this analysis allows of no easy solution. Even in the pamphlet, Vom Wolf und vom Lamm (1946), a reply to criticisms of his admonitions to the American Occupational Forces in The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus (1945, originally written in English), Wiechert regrets his presumptuous attack on American culture, "indes doch aus unserer gerühmten jahrtausendealten Kultur die Bestie aufgestanden war und die Welt verwüstet hatte." (X.658) The interesting suggestion is made in Jahre und Zeiten that while the Nazi dictatorship may be inexplicable just in this sense that it precipitated man to the depths of wickedness and malevolence, it was not simply a German phenomenon:

Es war wohl nicht so, daß der Wahnsinn aus der Wolke herniederfuhr und ein einziges Volk ergriff und nur dieses. Es war wohl so, daß er umging auf der ganzen Welt, mit den lautlosen, nackten Füßen

der Dämonen, und daß er ausbrach bei dem bereitwilligsten und gefährdesten der Völker, ehe die anderen vor eine Entscheidung gestellt wurden. (IX.628)

This analysis of totalitarianism as the apocalypse is Wiechert's final contribution to the study of the Nazi system. But the paradox in his argument remains. The individual is still capable of true and honest behaviour; it is only a matter of choice. Therefore the individual cannot be held responsible for the Nazi assumption of power nor for its expression in the war, except in so far as he allowed himself to sacrifice his natural ideals. Human guilt, as defined by von Heiseler, is a priori excluded from Wiechert's discussion, and the rise of Nazism is arbitrarily equated with the failure of the west to return to its primitive, 'natural' existence. The fact that differences of opinion can be transformed into torture-chambers of body and spirit is due to the heavy hand of a pitiless fate. That this hand fell on the German people can only be explained as the proper result of its cultural and spiritual arrogance, its subservience to the state and its eagerness to forget the admonitions of the Enlightenment. From this point of view, Nazism appears to have been an unfortunate and regrettable accident.

On the other hand, the Nazi phenomenon is not entirely undeserved. Wiechert does regard it as a

judgment on the German people for its arrogance, and he does refer to the dark streams of ignorance and barbarism which lie behind the German cultural façade. There appears to be a contradiction here between his exhortation to return to the tenets of classical culture: nobility, love, truth and justice, and his contention that if these principles are entirely annihilated a diabolic visitation may descend on man at any given time without warning.

The antithesis is never solved by Wiechert; on the whole, it resolves itself only in his creative work (Jeromin-Kinder II and Missa sine nomine), and then only to a reductio ad absurdum, viz. the banal Wiechertian categories of nature and civilization. The description of Nazi attitudes is more important to Wiechert than an investigation into its background, because it allows him to make an ethical judgment and does not seduce him into the attractions of rational by-paths. Secondly, since the Nazis display such obvious vices, ethical reactions to Nazism as an ideology can be elicited in terms of a simplified Either/Or position. Complications within individual Nazis or non-Nazis may be comfortably avoided in the novel. The totalitarian system demands affirmation or denial; there are no shades of grey. Those who support it are thoroughly evil, whatever their motives; those who

oppose it entirely good:

Man mußte sich beugen oder ihm [dem System] entgegenwerfen. Es gab kein Ausweichen, kein sich Verhüllen. Es forderte die Entscheidung. Es forderte das Ja oder Nein, und nichts darüber. (X.384)

Therefore there is no conclusive answer to the problem of Nazism. Had Wiechert avoided the trite in depicting the brutality and brashness of the Nazis and tried to express his understanding of the system as an apocalypse, as Mann did in his Doktor Faustus, our quarrel with him on historical grounds might have been effectively weakened. It was unrealistic of him to include all Nazis within a generalisation. By his insistence that the attention of the artist ought to be turned toward the re-education of the German people, he confined himself to a somewhat naive interpretation of Nazism in his creative writing and sought rather to depict a dream world, an idealised situation, the intention of which was to stimulate the reader to imitate its ways. Thus the discussion of Nazism is a means rather than an end; as an expression of human degradation it serves merely as a useful contrast to the exhortation to perfection.

B. War and the Victory of the 'Massenmensch'

We have had occasion earlier to refer to Wiechert's life-long abhorrence for mass movements. 28 Nature develops and nourishes individualism; man must separate himself from the confusion and restlessness of modern life and seek loneliness in communion with forest and plough. Vox populi vox Dei is a motto against which Wiechert's whole being rebels. Only in complete silence and solitude, in the unconditional surrender of self to nature, can the individual develop as an organic whole and resist the encroachments of the 'Massenseele' of the world outside.

Life in the city stifles and besmirches because the individual is no longer regarded as worthwhile and differences in people are levelled out until only the ignorant mass remains. Into this sociological generalization, Wiechert pours ethical value. The mob is to be despised because it can never demonstrate the ethical values of nobility, honesty and love. Above all, the mass is not discriminating and is therefore susceptible to slogans and shibboleths. The mass is fanatical and obsessed. The apparent ease with which the German nation flung itself into the Second World War is in no small way to be attributed to the susceptibility of the



'Massenseele' (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.694-95). Caught up in the influence of the many, the individual can no longer think in terms of the Wiechertian ethic, but views the world in the misleading light of technical advance; the content of mass thinking becomes quantitative instead of qualitative: "Man dachte in Kanonen, Tanks und Geschwadern, und die leere Quantität beherrschte den Geist der Massen." (IX.695)

Therefore Wiechert's main contention against war is the way it depersonalizes man. Johannes Karsten in Jedermann is repelled by the cold degradation of the medical examination in the recruiting office. Perhaps there will be a change, he thinks, but

er weiß schon jetzt, daß der Krieg eine Angelegenheit der Masse ist, die eine Unterordnung verlangt, ein Sichaufgeben, Sichhingeben an ein Feuer, das nicht aus dem Einzelnen brennen kann, sondern nur aus dem Vielen. Die eine Uniform verlangt, und Uniform bedeutet Gleichheit. (III.313)

War and its consequences are for Wiechert primarily not a matter of politics, nor is he concerned to vindicate war or vilify it from any political standpoint. War is an ethical concern which is to be condemned because it makes out of man something lower than a beast of prey. Schattenhuber, speaking of his concentration camp experiences in Okay oder die Unsterblichen (1945), expresses his gratitude at the fact that he can once more wear ordinary clothes and be a "Mensch":

Fünf Jahre lang war ich das nicht, ein Tier war ich ... mit einer eingebrannten Marke, und wenn ich es recht bedenke, nicht einmal das. Sie haben viel gesündigt, die da oben, ... viel, viel. Aber dies war die größte Sünde, größer noch als alle Marter und Pein, daß sie aus Menschen Tiere gemacht haben. (X.255)

War is both an offence against man's dignity and against his individuality. The title of Jedermann is significant and is explained by the sub-title, "Die Geschichte eines Namenlosen". Johannes Karsten sees it as his duty in the trenches of the First World War to frustrate the inroads of a decadent inhumanity upon the individual: " 'Man muß das Gesicht aus der Uniform retten', dachte er. 'Das ist die erste Aufgabe ..' " (III.327) Jons Jeromin's divided existence during the same war is essentially the same as Karsten's. He does his duty, but contrary to his expectations and hopes is unable to throw himself unreservedly into the immediate task of fighting (V.442), and the burning enthusiasm which he had expected remains absent. For Jons, war is simply another useful experience on the road to maturity; it assumes importance only in the light of the individual's progress on life's road.

It is sometimes difficult to follow Wiechert's motives in treating the war and in bringing his protagonists into contact with it. They all manage to lead a divided existence, which separates their emotions and desires from the actual battlefield, and their reaction

to war is predictable on the basis of the strength of their conviction that war is a moloch working for the destruction of their individuality. Yet Wiechert's favourites never doubt this belief and at every other stage on the path to maturity demonstrate their hatred of brutality and inhumanity and their love for tender-heartedness and solitude. Individuality is a pre-supposition for Wiechert, and his characters stand or fall on their ability or inability to preserve their souls untainted in the face of opposition from the 'Massenseele' and the allurements offered by it to the unwary. War is peripheral in this experience; it has no validity beyond serving as a testing-ground, and the individual either succumbs to or resists its temptation to forget himself and to seek security in anonymity.

Long before the establishment of the National Socialist movement, Wiechert had had the opportunity of assessing mob instinct and clarifying his attitude to its indiscrimination and naiveté. His own experiences during World War I had convinced him that the mechanics of battle were peripheral to the changes wrought within the soldier himself, viz. the annihilation of individuality. Wiechert's experience is reflected by Johannes Karsten in Jedermann:

Wer den Krieg beschreiben will und von Blut und Trommelfeuer erzählt, ist ein Tor... Der Krieg, kleiner Klaus, das ist, daß unser Herz leer ist. Verstehst du das? Daß wir keine Mutter mehr haben und kein Zuhause, keinen Namen und kein Gesicht. (III.421)

Sixteen years later, at the end of the Second World War, Wiechert's conviction is still essentially the same:

Das Einzelleben versinkt wie das Einzelwesen, Massen werden zusammengefügt und zusammengeschiedet und gehorchen nicht mehr den Richtlinien ihrer Individuen, sondern einem übergeordneten, kalten und nur berechnenden Befehl, der sie lenkt und verschiebt und sie in das Leiden oder den Tod werfen kann, wenn es ihm nötig erscheint. (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.510)

For Jons Jeromin war is to be despised because it is something abstract, "ein Sammelbegriff, der über dem Ganzen schwebte .." (V.491).

Although Wiechert holds that the individual is guilty in war because he resigns all claims on independence to the demands of the mob, the attempt to explain Nazism as a successful appeal to the lowest instincts of the mass is not seriously made until after 1945. It is true that Wiechert's antipathy to National Socialism or, more accurately, to individual National Socialists, manifests itself much earlier on the basis of his natural aversion to noise, superficiality and vulgarity, all of which are vices more broadly applicable to western civilization per se. Any abhorrence for Nazism prior to 1945 lies primarily in

the unethical by-products of the regime, and it was just this natural objection to brutality which was responsible for his unfortunate imprisonment in Buchenwald. For Wiechert at this time, oppression and persecution are concomitant with the victory of the 'Massenmensch' over the individual. Freedom is an intrinsic part of the natural order of individuality, and love, pity and true humanity can be expected only of the individual. On the other hand, where there is hatred, bestiality and de-personalization, there the individual is crushed and mob violence rules. But the concrete attempt at an explanation of Nazism in terms of its inhumanity was not seriously made until the movement had finally been crushed.

In Rede an die deutsche Jugend, Wiechert describes Hitler as the embodiment of all that opposes the natural cultured existence. Hitler represents inhumanity, "besessen nur von dem düsteren Haß der Knechte gegen die Herren, des Emporkömmlings gegen den Adel der Tradition, besessen auch von dem Haß des Primitiven gegen eine alte Rasse." (X.394) He is not silent like the individual reared in nature, but is "ein Marktschreier ohne Scham und Maß." (X.395) He destroys justice, tolerance, love and the freedom of the human personality (X.395). For him humanity is "Stoff," "Objekt und Material." (X.395) The fact that human beings can be treated as material is

a source of bewilderment to Wiechert. In Jahre und Zeiten he expresses his failure to understand, "daß doch für jeden, der 'Macht' hat, die Menschen sich in etwas Minderwertiges verwandeln..." (IX.470)

Clearly Wiechert's objection to Nazism and the war is that they are responsible for man's loss of dignity. Johannes Karsten had seen it as his duty to rescue the individual from the uniformity which threatened to engulf him. Much later, in 1946, Wiechert describes this uniformity in terms of a mask, worn by all National Socialists alike. Christean in Der Richter has the expressionless face of such a mask and it seems strangely incongruous with his youthful features (VII.750).

But the mask not only reveals uniformity; it is also the means by which sheer brutality may be hidden behind an unfeeling, impassive exterior, for callousness is, after all, a vice shared by all Nazis. In Missa sine nomine, Amadeus peering down into the eyes of a captured Nazi is shocked by "die kalte Leere dieser Augen, weil eben sie das im wahrsten Sinne Unmenschliche war." (VI.171) The bestiality in the concentration camp is the limit of human degradation. In Jeromin-Kinder II, Johannes' refusal to forgive after his experience in the 'Lager' is not due to the scars received and the physical suffering undergone:

Es ist, daß sie uns in den Schmutz getreten haben, mit den Stiefelabsätzen. Daß sie uns nackt ausgezogen haben und in den Schmutz getreten, wie man eine Maulwurfsgrille in den Schmutz tritt. Und daß sie dazu gelacht haben.. (V.909) 29

It is a relief to Wiechert when he meets an intelligent, kind man at Buchenwald in whose presence he need no longer wear a mask and where he can retain some of his individuality (Totenwald, IX.318).

But he rarely advances beyond the bare description of Nazi vices and the methods they employ to degrade the human personality. None of the novels is vitally concerned with the problem, and the protagonist is depicted as a helpless, suffering plaything in the hands of a hostile force which he cannot fully understand. The process of healing occurs only after the dehumanization and the corresponding disillusionment of the individual is over. None of the characters has the strength to oppose this demonic extinction of his identity except by escaping from reality into a world of his own creation. Nazi propaganda is set in motion and the individual is powerless to resist it.

In Jahre und Zeiten Wiechert explains this ready subjection to the crowd by pointing to the 1918 Revolution. His objection to the Revolution is based on emotional premises, as we have come to expect. He despises the drunkenness of the sailors and "die

primitiven Instinkte einer ungezügelter Masse," (IX.502) for which he has always cherished the profoundest distrust, a distrust not unmixed with the cultural snobbery of the ancien régime (IX.509). Mass instinct means the negation of all cultural values and it therefore provides the main source for Wiechert's hatred of Nazism and the war. Wiechert rarely makes political statements and his objection to any political manifesto or organization is never based on an objective analysis. The popular understanding of the collapse of 1918 as a 'Dolchstoß' is not found in his works; nor, on the other hand did he regard it as a necessary prerequisite for a new Germany as the Konservative Revolution did.<sup>30</sup> Wiechert does not object to the Weimar Republic because he regards it as a last stand of Wilhelmianism, but because he believes it to be the result of a mass movement.

He is by no means alone in his assessment of the depersonalizing forces at work during the Nazi era. Albrecht Goes is similarly concerned with inhumanity and the way it is to be overcome. Wiechert is not involved in the inhuman situation itself; he seeks rather to elevate himself above it, to disregard it, or deny its validity or reality and scorn to assess it. Goes, on the other hand, is basically concerned with the situation as



he finds it. He does not seek to point to a realm where brutality may be comfortably forgotten and the spiritual wounds healed, but to answer the question: how may the human element be preserved within a basically inhuman situation? How can intolerable circumstances be made tolerable? Goes, of course, views his literary task sub specie aeternitatis, and implicit in that view is a recognition of the problem of despair. Wiechert is not prepared to recognize the necessity for inhumanity and since, in his view, man is possessed of the ability to progress ethically, he devotes his work to an ex-coriation of such barbarity.

Therefore while both writers share their assessment of callousness as expressing a disregard for man's individuality, Goes' treatment is ultimately more convincing from a literary point of view, as he is at liberty to place his protagonists into situations of real conflict. Leutnant Ernst, the pastor in civilian life, who has been ordered to carry out the execution of a man condemned to death for desertion in Unruhige Nacht, is a representative of a type not found in Wiechert. Conflict is foreign to his treatment of National Socialism and his work suffers as a result. He is concerned to show true humanity, but he divorces it from reality and places his heroes in idyllic surroundings where they may find

the strength to resist inhumanity inwardly, to build up a defence mechanism against it, to retain a vestige of individuality, whatever the surroundings. We shall see in chapter IV(C) how nature is regarded as a healing force.

C. The Prussian Education System

Nowhere does Wiechert show more critical acumen in his search for the spiritual roots of Nazism and the Second World War than in his perceptive analysis of the weaknesses of the Prussian education system with its strict hierarchical divisions and its inhumanity. Both biographical works, Wälder und Menschen and Jahre und Zeiten, as well as many of his prose works, reveal the experiences of one who has spent a lifetime in the classroom as student and teacher. As early as 1922 in Totenwolf, he had painted a tendentious picture of village education as exemplified in the brutal schoolmaster Mroczek (II.64 ff.), and this unsympathetic treatment of primary and secondary education was to continue throughout his literary career until Jeromin-Kinder I.

The main source of his objection is the inhumanity of the education. Backward students are ridiculed by teachers; no opportunity is given for the unrestricted development of natural impulses; the smallest mis-

demeanours are met with the most blatant cruelty; initiative and enterprise are condemned; the emphasis is upon rote learning; no direction is given to the student's life; and the gulf between 'Neigung' and 'Pflicht' continues to widen. The teachers during the latter years of the Empire and the early years of the Republic must bear much of the blame for the later success of Nazism. In The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, Wiechert writes: "Wir waren mit dem Korporalstock erzogen worden, jahrhundertlang, und die Brutalität der Nazis hatte dieses Werk vollendet."  
(X.653)

Wiechert finds many similarities between the educational system as practised in his day and the later totalitarian system. In Jahre und Zeiten he satirizes the inbred conviction of superiority held by every teacher who impressed on his students the importance of servility, while he in turn cowered before the authority of the state. It was this combination of sadism and masochism which Erich Fromm noted as typical of National Socialism.<sup>31</sup> Wiechert sees the ready acceptance of Nazism as in part due to the inculcation of subserviency and pusillanimity under the German educational system:

Wer sein ganzes Leben lang ein Zuchtmeister gewesen war, und nichts als dieses, wie sollte der nicht berauscht sein von den großen Zuchtmeistern, die ein ganzes Volk auf die Bänke der Unterordnung und des sklavischen Gehorsams preßten? (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.536)

Teachers considered themselves primarily as servants of the state and continued to do so after the National Socialist assumption of power. This is the thesis of Samuel and Hinton Thomas, viz. that lines of development can be traced "from the educational situation after 1870 through the Republic to the Nazi State." <sup>32</sup>

Wiechert despises these cringing devotees of Prussian rigidity who leap at the opportunity of wielding a rod of authority over their subordinates, and his hatred of both world wars and of the Nazi system is partly accounted for by his hatred of those teachers from the elementary schools who later held positions of military importance and compensated for their inferiority in peacetime by acting in a most inhuman fashion during war. In Jahre und Zeiten he describes his commanding officer during World War I, a 'Volksschullehrer' who was the model for Hasenbein in Jedermann. Cultured men are forced to obey every whim of a village teacher (IX.463). He pours contempt on the system of strict subordination according to rank, age and experience which produces nothing but a hierarchy of slavish, masochistic souls. This strict subserviency is no different in the schools.

The young teacher trainees are bluntly informed of the " 'ungeheure Kluft' zwischen einem Mitglied des Seminars und einem fest angestellten Mitglied des Kollegiums." (IX.426) Man is treated as an object under this system, not evaluated according to his character and natural abilities. Both on the battlefield and in the school-room the state acts without regarding human qualities. The first task of the private and the teacher trainee is to realize that he is a subordinate. Soldiers have the added disadvantage of being dominated by those who are their inferiors. Many teachers in the German schools after the First World War were mediocre in ability nor was there any trace of humane concern in them, Wiechert asserts; their instruction was inhuman, dry and formal. Therefore it is not surprising that it was these "Nichtskönner und Nichtstuer," (IX.529) who later so avidly supported the new totalitarian movement.

But learning is as little proof against Nazism as ignorance. The latter makes the individual susceptible to tendentious propaganda; intellectuality leads him to regard all things from the angle of cold analysis which destroys individuality. Wiechert's main objection to intellectual equipment as a yardstick by which a man can be judged lies in his recognition that one need not be human in order to acquire intellectuality or to

exercise it. University education in the modern world is for him one of the signs of decadence in western civilization (IX.414). A charlatan or an arch-criminal can become a doctor or a pedagogue or even a 'Seelsorger'; "er hat nur zu wissen und nicht zu sein." (IX.414) The state allows all to serve it and thus it fosters the extreme form of totalitarianism, "mit der es zwanzig Jahre später Menschen und Menschlichkeit erwürgen wird." (IX.414) The news of the German occupation of France gives him the opportunity of voicing his disgust and hatred for "preussische Pflicht," (IX.701) which leads even those who have the ability to distinguish clearly between what is right and wrong to obey orders blindly.

Wiechert sees one further cause for the acceptance of Nazism amongst the teachers in the fact that they were largely anti-democratic and bewailed the loss of the former Empire. Samuel and Hinton Thomas have shown to what extent the textbooks of the between war period were calculated to instil in the German student a sense of nationalism and a respect for the power politics of the imperial era as well as a hatred for those who were regarded as responsible for Germany's capitulation in 1918 and of the Treaty of Versailles itself. <sup>33</sup>

Wiechert, writing in 1931, observes the coming catastrophe at the school in Berlin where he is a master.

The staff's support of Nazism comes,

nicht vielleicht so sehr aus einer gläubigen Anhängerschaft als vielmehr aus einem tiefen Haß gegen die Republik. Denn diese Republik, von der sie doch Amt und Gehalt erhielten, war ihnen nicht nur eine Zerstörererin des Glanzes, den sie immer noch um das alte "Reich" erblickten, sondern auch eine Helferin zu den Ideen des "Fortschrittes", und jeder Fortschritt war ihnen ein Verbrechen an dem Geist der Autorität, besonders wenn er die Schule betraf. (IX.613)

We have already seen how Wiechert noted these masochistic tendencies elsewhere amongst the intellectuals.

His final criticism directed against the educational system of his day is one made by other educators and writers of the time: the education offered between the wars as well as during the latter years of the nineteenth century did not give its pupils the strength to cope with the spiritual demands made on them in war. This censure of education as remote from everyday life is seen in works such as Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, Heinrich Mann's Professor Unrat, and Ernst Glaeser's Jahrgang 1902. It is clear that Wiechert's criticism is simply another aspect of the raison d'être of all his work, viz. his continuous battle against all forms of inhumanity in western civilization. But the accusation of remoteness from life was one which every thoughtful educationist supported without reservation. Jons Jeromin, still at school during the opening years of the 1914-18 War, realizes that there is no longer a

connection, "zwischen der Welt, die nach Tat, Ruhm und Abenteuer verlangte, und derjenigen, die über Tat, Ruhm und Abenteuer mit der Weisheit des Alters dozierte." (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.370) In the face of war apparently indestructible principles suddenly appear valueless (V.371), and Wiechert's characters inevitably discover that their education has not equipped them to face the holocaust of war (V.446).

Naturally, Wiechert's own experiences in the classroom led him to take his profession seriously, but his theory of education rarely finds expression. It will be shown in chapter V how he conceives the task of the educator as intimately bound up with art, but in general it may be stated here that he believes education is not a matter of theories but of practice: the practice of humanity with a sense of true dedication not to the state but to the individual and to God. Art, as we shall see, imposes on him an ethical responsibility, and he is at every point conscious of an audience to be educated to a new attitude and a new life. But art has not only a didactic task; Wiechert firmly believes that education itself is no science, "sondern eine hohe Kunst und vielleicht die höchste von allen Künsten, weil sie um Menschenherzen geht." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.375).

Whatever Wiechert's weaknesses, he reveals deep



insight in his assessment of the educational failures of the Republic. He was astute enough to hint that the spirit of Prussian education, as he knew it, with its sadistic and masochistic tendencies, was spiritually akin to Nazism, and that far from educating German youth to an understanding of Germany's failures, it taught them to be domineering towards their inferiors and to cringe before the higher authorities. But there is a potential ground of weakness here. As a result of the weaknesses of the primary and secondary school system between the two world wars, the younger generation was convinced that its training was inadequate to meet the demands of an unstable economic and political existence, and its dry formality led youth to seek satisfaction wherever they could find it. Wiechert was justified in pointing to the fact that meaningless formulae divorced from reality were not sufficient to appease the desires of those who were struggling to keep body and soul together and were therefore willing to grasp at whatever relief was offered them even at the expense of personal liberty. But as Samuel and Hinton Thomas have pointed out: "Irrationalism was the soil on which nationalism flourished,"<sup>34</sup> a charge to which Wiechert continually leaves himself open. Education cannot be divorced from the society which determines it, and he never realized that Nazism and the

demonic forces of the Second World War could not have been prevented without a complete reorganization of that society. To separate education from life as it really is, means to impress upon the pupil unattainable ideals, and it is clear that education remote from life helped to swell the misguided nationalism which made Nazism possible and which ultimately led to World War II.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PROBLEM OF THEODICY

One of the most familiar cries in the history of literature, particularly in time of suffering, is the desperate question of God's ways with man: why do the wicked prosper? Hebrew literature of the Old Testament sought a solution to this problem in times of crisis. "Why dost thou stand afar off, O Lord?" cries the Psalmist. "Why dost thou hide thyself in times of trouble?" (Ps. 10:1) The wicked murder the innocent and exploit them, but God appears to have forgotten them and withdrawn His protective hand. Similarly, Job challenges God to infuse meaning into his world. <sup>1</sup>

It is not our concern here to enter into a theological or philosophical discussion on the problem of pain. But it is also a literary problem for which writers have suggested quite specifically literary answers, as distinct from theological ones; in the words of a contemporary critic, "the answer is generally given in terms of attitude, rather than of logic." <sup>2</sup> Job's

answer is not a logical one; in fact, he is expressly warned against argument with God (Job 40: 1, 2), and he loses himself in wonder at the magnificence of God's creation and in the realization of his own insignificance. Similarly, the Psalmist rescues his faith in the eschatological recognition that God is still in control whatever experience may seem to observe to the contrary (Ps. 10:16). Archibald MacLeish, in the contemporary drama J.B. returns to man, whose sufferings are justified not by God's will but by Job's acceptance of that will, and he shows that it is God who requires man's forgiveness. The German baroque poet of the seventeenth century concludes that Lady Fortune, independent of normal causality, is responsible for the fact that events do not develop organically out of one another and that man's misfortunes are due to a spiteful, impersonal force - sic res humanas fragilis fortuna gubernat, as the Lutheran humanist Melanchthon had stated nearly a hundred years earlier. Heaven is the only haven from the buffetings of Fortune. <sup>3</sup>

These answers are all very different, but they are essentially literary ones. That is, the answers are not to be judged according to any one set of theological beliefs; all have validity independent of each other according to their level of poetic expression, and they

are to be judged on the effectiveness of that expression in relation to the thesis of the individual writer. Thus the solution of the Psalmist or of Job can only be understood from the presuppositions of the Hebrew mind, viz. that God acts for man and that man does not always understand such action. <sup>4</sup> Therefore the literary answer may not appear to vindicate God's justice or his mercy, "but it has projected a mood in the light of which life seems more interesting, more significant, and more tolerable." <sup>5</sup> The religious sensibility has been distilled into a literary mood not entirely in conflict with the

• Aristotelian *καθάρσις*.

In our analysis of Wiechert's approach to this old problem, we shall, therefore, be primarily concerned not with his theological orthodoxy, as Heinrich Fries was in his unperceptive study, <sup>6</sup> but with his literary consistency. Wiechert is by no means alone in searching for new solutions to Job's ancient question. On the whole it is true to say that this age is no longer satisfied with the enlightened thesis that this is the best of all possible worlds, and that misery within man and outside him may be reduced to an arbitrary distinction in the terms of Leibniz between physical evils that cause pain and suffering, and moral evil, which is sin. Reason for many today can no longer be regarded as the ordering

principle of the world and of history after the experiences this age has undergone. The search for meaning continues in literature today, as it has always done, with the difference that modern writing reflects not the solution to the problem of despair, but its depiction in terms of the unintelligibility of the world, as for example in the works of Kafka and Borchert. To these writers history seems to have shattered the view that man's goodness is ever increasing; their work expresses rather the conviction that man's capacity for good is rather suspect.

Wiechert does not entirely share this position, and the problem of evil becomes all the greater for him because he is unable to subscribe to the belief that man can be entirely governed by the intangible, essentially hostile opponents which Grenzmann has posited.<sup>7</sup> He believes there must be some purpose in suffering and evil, and his work represents the search for meaning, rather than the solution - or rejection - of the problem of suffering. As Grenzmann has written: "Von der Erfahrung des Bösen ist vielleicht kein Dichter unserer deutschen Gegenwart so angefaßt wie er."<sup>8</sup> No contemporary author uses the name of God as frequently as Wiechert, but then nor do we find in modern literature any examples of accusation and recrimination against God as violent as

Wiechert's.

The problem of evil is so important to him because of his experiences in war. His self-immersion in pantheism was not able to form a barrier strong enough to withstand the pressures of evil and suffering which war brought to bear on him. Consequently he was unable to conquer the horror of his experiences during the First World War, and his later suffering in Buchenwald and in World War II were only to confirm him in his doubts.

The problem of responsibility for suffering and the question of God's justice runs like a thread through all of Wiechert's religious views from 1922 to 1950. His works contain a "negative theodicy," as Chick has put it, "with persistent reference to circumstantial evidence in human experience that God's world is far from perfect."<sup>9</sup> Wiechert does not deny God's reality, neither do his characters. He does not question God's existence but His goodness.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, his work is not without its theological foundations. Even as a child he was thoroughly at home in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. It is the awesome side of God which impresses him, and when he says that in East Prussia man still thinks in Biblical terms, he is telling us that God is vindictive, ominous, inexorable; never does he see God as loving, redeeming or blessing man.

Wiechert's answer to the problem of theodicy is not a solution but an escape, as we shall see. But let us first turn to his concept of the figure of death which raises the matter of God's justice for him. We will then show how Wiechert deals with God and to what extent the problem of theodicy modifies his attitude to war.

A. The Figure of Death

In all his works death is a major theme and this is certainly eminently appropriate to one whose work reflects the sombre atmosphere of the East Prussian landscape. In practice he attests as convincingly as any writer the validity of Thomas Mann's words at the grave of Friedrich Huch that the writer is on intimate terms with death:

[Dichter] .. pflegen mit dem Tode auf vertrautem Fuße zu stehen; denn wer so recht der Vertraute des Lebens ist, der ist auch derjenige des Todes... Es würde schwerlich gedichtet werden auf Erden ohne den Tod. Wo wäre der Dichter, der nicht täglich seiner gedächte - in Grauen und in Sehnsucht? Denn die Seele des Dichters ist Sehnsucht, und die letzte, die tiefste Sehnsucht ist die nach Erlösung. <sup>11</sup>

In Wälder und Menschen there is a significant passage in which Wiechert observes that his artistic pursuits are intimately bound up with the figure of death:

Kein Zweifel, ... daß mir hier, auf eine kindliche und unbewußte Weise gelang, mich durch die Hingabe



an ein Kunstwerk über das Zerstörende der Todes-  
erscheinung hinwegzuretten, ja, aus ihr eine  
freudige Tröstlichkeit zu gewinnen. (IX.28) <sup>12</sup>

The theme of death is frequently keynoted in the titles of Wiechert's works, and its use in compound expressions is legion. In Totenmesse alone there are nine such compounds apart from the title - "Totenzeit", "Totenkleid", "Totensaal", "Totenwein", "Totenkind", "Totenbrod", "Totenfinder", "Totenhemd", "Totenmal". While many of these terms frequently recur, others such as "Totenland" and "Totenfluß" are also to be found (c.f. Jeromin-Kinder II, V.532, 559). Death itself is described in various terms: "Es ist das ewige Schweigen," he writes in Das ewige Antlitz (no date, circa 1935) (X.685) and in Gesichter des Todes (no date, circa 1935) (X.721). In Jeromin-Kinder I it is "der Räuber der Dörfer, der Schlächter der Jugend wie des Alters, der Erbfeind aller Mütter dieser Erde." (V.448) This tendency to personify death is continued until the concept is widened and defined as an angel of the Apocalypse holding a red sickle (Rede an die deutsche Jugend, X.400). Soldiers are regarded as the friends of death. <sup>13</sup>

Only rarely does Wiechert attempt to come to an understanding of the real nature of death and its purpose. This becomes the topic of an after-dinner conversation in Die Flucht, and Wiechert's own con-

viction at that time (1913) is expressed by Frau Professor Koske: "Der Tod ist Wunschlosigkeit." (I.14) Death signifies nothingness, a fitting conclusion to a meaningless, hollow life lived in despair. Death is not even the attaining of peace, merely the release from an oppressive existence. It is negative; there is no satisfaction in death, and so Holm's eventual suicide never solves his problem. Only much later can Wiechert write in Das ewige Antlitz: "Schlaf ist Entspannung aber Tod ist Lösung, Ablösung, Vollendung." (X.686) Death is the necessary fulfilment of life, natural, undeniable and unavoidable. The dead are regarded with a special awe, very much like admiration for those who have accomplished a difficult task. Life is impoverished if it leaves its fulfilment in death out of the picture. Death is therefore an admonition to the living. This is the theme of a funeral speech delivered by the old village schoolmaster Stilling in Jeromin-Kinder I: "Wenn der Tod zuschlage, treffe er nicht nur den Toten, sondern viele. Den einen erschlage er, aber die anderen zeichne er." (V.283)

Death has no ultimate transcendental significance for Wiechert, and he never justifies it in terms of an eschatological reality. Death is not a transition to a higher supernatural state. "Its presence can transform

living man to the extent that it sharpens his perception of the truth and fortifies his ability to deal with reality; but that is as far as it goes." <sup>14</sup> Life beyond death is an eternal darkness. Wiechert says of Thomas von Orla - and by his own testimony Das einfache Leben is his most representative work:

Er würde niemals bitten, daß man seine Uhr noch einmal aufziehe, im Jenseits etwa. Er wußte, daß auch die Sternbahnen nicht noch einmal aufgezogen wurden. Er wollte sich unterordnen und gehorsam sein. Er wollte sich nicht empören, und der Glaube war die Empörung. (IV.669)

Eternity lies for Wiechert in the ceaseless order of things, in the continuity of nature and in the process of generations. This provides a source of comfort in the face of death. The fulfilment of life is in the 'Dies-seits' not in the 'Jenseits'.

Wiechert frequently depicts death as a relentless, sinister force. He often personifies it as the Grim Reaper or the boatman who ferries the dead. The accent, however, is usually on the hostility of death. Its nearness on the battlefield intensifies this idea of death's hostility and deepens Wiechert's preoccupation with it. War is seen almost solely in terms of the lurking, silent foe, gazing coldly at its prey and playing with human lives as a cat might with a bird. To go to war means to go and observe the arch-enemy at

work. Jons Jeromin decides to study medicine in order to become a "Todbezwinger" and a "Todbesieger" (c.f. V.488). War is to be condemned because it ruthlessly destroys the sanctity of life. This is the theme of Der brennende Dornbusch (1931). Life has been prematurely cut off and this must be atoned for. In battle it is not death itself which the soldier fears,

sondern das Wilde, Achtlose, fast Spielerische seiner Gebärde, ... der Fußtritt einer blinden Macht... Die seelenlose, schmutzige Sicherheit eines Schmiedehammers, der in adlige Gesichter schlug. (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.457)

Death is a wicked demonic figure which attacks the soldier without rhyme or reason, like a wolf descending on a flock of sheep and disappearing with its victim as quickly as it has come (V.446).

Jons Jeromin's answer to the question about the nature of death is more pessimistic than at any earlier stage in Wiechert's career. Jons brands death as a "billiges Los, das über sie geworfen wurde, als ob man um Körner würfele oder um bunte Kieselsteine." (V.477) It is mere fate, governed by no logical or natural laws, unpredictable and fearful. War produces an abnormal and wanton function of death. Jons comes to realize this long before he actually enlists:

Es war nicht der Sinn des Lebens, daß Menschen erschlagen wurden, weil einige von ihnen es wollten. Es war auch nicht der Sinn des Todes.



Sein Sinn lag darin, daß er erschien, wenn die volle Scheibe im Gipfel stand und die dunkle schmale Sichel sich leise um ihren Glanz zu legen begann. Er war ein Vollender und kein Vernichter. Er war ein einfacher Schnitter mit einer einfachen Sense, und erst der Mensch hatte ihn verzehnfacht und vertausendfacht. Er war ein Knecht geworden, und wie ein Knecht kannte er kein Maß. (V.427)

Death has lost its meaning when it is engineered by man, because it has been violated. Furthermore, man has a right to die as he was born - alone! (V.428) Death is not the affair of a mass and has no right to assume the function of destruction en masse. Where is the majesty of death when it has become more commonplace than life?

The manner in which death arbitrarily supersedes life is the theme of a speech entitled Gedächtnis der Toten, which Wieschert delivered on May 17, 1947, to commemorate Dachau. He takes as his 'text' Eccl. 4:1, 2:

"Da lobte ich die Toten, die schon gestorben waren." Ein Wort voller Bitterkeit. Dieses allerdings ist wahr, daß jeder Tod durch Gewalt uns mit Schrecken und dann mit Bitterkeit oder Haß erfüllen will. Denn ein solcher Tod zerbricht den stillen Gang der Natur, auf den wir kindlich vertrauen. Er löst den Faden nicht, wenn es Zeit ist, wenn die Frucht gereift ist, wenn der Becher überfließen will. Er nimmt die Unvollendeten, die Planenden, die Hoffenden. Er schlägt das unfertige Werk aus ihrer Hand, und über jeden der Toten bricht der unvollendete Bau seines Lebens in Trümmern zusammen. (X.426)

Therefore war not only violates the normal function of death but also the sanctity of life lived in harmony with nature. Thomas von Orla is unable to kill

during the war, because even the enemy is after all, "ein Stück Leben, mit Atem gefüllt." (IV.486) In war Jons Jeromin find the implicit conflict with his 'natural' upbringing the hardest to bear, "die Zerstörung aller festen und geheiligten Bilder, die er aus seinem Walde mitgebracht hatte." (V.457) The contrast between death and destruction in war and the continual, ever-recurring, life-giving activities of the ploughman, sower and reaper, who provide food and whose work is an expression of confidence in the fruitfulness of the soil and of loyalty to the earth, is one of Wiechert's finest contributions to the world of literature. Sometimes, as in the poem Am Abend zu beten (1945), this contrast is united in the one symbol of the reaper who is at once the source of the continuation of life, and the 'Grim Reaper' who is the dominant figure in war, and who in this poem is also the ploughman ploughing over the soil of man's schemes and over the weeds of his deceit, in preparation for new life (X.462-63).

But Wiechert seldom anticipates new life in his treatment of death. As early as 1925 in Heinrich der Städtegründer he had seen the wholesale slaughter in war as the antithesis of a 'natural' existence. The soldiers find themselves alienated from nature: "Sonne und Sterne sind ihnen fremd, der Wald, die Blume, das

Gras. Nimm einen von ihnen, ... gib ihm eine Scholle, einen Pflug, ein Haus, und der Mord wird ihnen fremd." (VII.430) Die Flucht ins Ewige (1927) has a similar theme. The eternal cycle of life, represented by the plough and furrow, is interrupted by war, which turns the land into a waste and the habitation of God into a torture-chamber of death. Death gazes coldly at the seedless earth (VII.183). The discovery of an old, rusty plough, uncovered by an explosion in the midst of battle, proves a shattering experience for Michael Anders and he deserts. In Hirtennovelle, Wiechert presents a subtle relationship in symbolic form between the silence of the individual living within the all-embracing solitude of the forest, and the silence of death in nature. Such a death is 'natural', while that which occurs in war is unnecessary, inexplicable and out of harmony with 'natural' existence.

For death in war is tantamount to murder, and to kill another, to cut off life before it has reached its zenith, is to estrange oneself from nature. Nature has no redemptive or healing power for one who has broken the law of the sanctity of life (Tobias, 1933). Therefore the soldier who is no less a murderer is also alien to nature. Johannes in Jedermann finds that his military existence has severed that important contact with the

soil (III.438-39). In Der Hauptmann von Kapernaum (1928/29) the soldier is described,

als etwas Fremdes und Böses in der nun lautlosen Stille des Hügels, als etwas Bekleidetes und Gerüstetes, eine Empörung gegen das stille Wachsen der fruchttragenden Erde und Gottes schweigendes Wachen über seinem Werk. (VII.216)

Finally, in Jeromin-Kinder I, there is a passage in which the contrast between battlefield and cornfield is described symbolically by the use of agricultural terms to describe both the desolation of war and its antithesis to life in harmony with the soil. He sees,

eine leere Erde, auf der alle menschliche Spur erloschen war, ein verwüstetes Feld, über das ein eiserner Hagel gefallen war. Blaue und graue Flecken darüber hingestreut, wie von vergessenen Garben. (V.457-58)

Despite the substantiality of Wiechert's figure of death and the manner in which he infuses into it almost human characteristics, his depiction is more in baroque terms than in Gothic. The ascetic warning memento mori directed at the individual of the later Middle Ages, who sought release from an oppressive existence supervised at all points by the Church, by following worldly delights, is very much modified in Wiechert's work. He is painfully aware of death, but he seeks to escape its influence. Death does not drive him to seek solace in the Christian faith. Instead, he is



led by virtue of his own essentially subjective, irrational and emotional experience to question the wisdom of a providence which appears to be vindictive to man.

B. The Struggle for Faith

It was not solely his fascination with the figure of death, heightened by two world wars, which shattered Wiechert's belief in God. In fact, it is possible to trace a gradual development in his struggle for religious faith which runs parallel to his progressive estrangement from nature early in life. We noted in chapter I<sup>15</sup> to what extent he thought of nature as a living, active protagonist in his own life and work, and to what extent he continually described the Masurian forest and countryside in supernatural terms. Man approaches God most intimately in the forest and the nature of God is most clearly revealed to him who is in communion with forest and field.

Thus Wiechert's loss of innocence and the taint of his contact with urban civilization is paralleled by the loss of theological naiveté. The gradual disillusionment he experiences with maturity is, in his eyes, regrettable, and much of his work expresses the attempt to recapture the simplicity of a childhood world. The experience of

war and defeat only intensifies the struggle for faith. He is unable to reject the basic theological pre-suppositions which meant so much to him in his youth without at the same time rejecting his whole understanding of nature as the only salvation of mankind, for Creator and creature are one. Nor can he accept the Christian orthodoxy of his time which seems to oppose so much that he holds sacred. Other ideals provide no attraction for him. His ethical sensitivity rebels against hammer and sickle or swastika. As a result he finds himself in a dilemma: the old has been lost; the new is unworthy of his attention.

This process of gradual disillusionment begins very early in his youth. His initial experience of God is one of entire security in the protective hand of the forest, akin to mysticism. In Vom nahen Gott he sketches his understanding of God at this time (1929):

Wenn ich Gott sehe, wie Kinder ihn sehen, so  
sitzt er auf den Hügeln über dem Wipfelmeer,  
eine Weidenflöte in seinen weißen Händen, und  
das Tier des Waldes steht lauschend hinter dem  
Geäst und gedenkt des Gartens Eden, wo dieselbe  
Flöte klang. (X.822)

With his transference to city-life it soon dawns on Wiechert that there are many petty authorities making claim upon man's allegiance, some of them evil, and that frequently it is the evil that triumphs, a recognition which contradicts his experience in the forest.

The collapse of Germany in the First World War and the conditions which follow it lead Wiechert to develop a strong hatred for all existing authority. The blessings of a sheltered childhood have proved to be a curse, and the theological equipment with which to order these unforeseen experiences is lacking.

Fink has observed that particularly the soldiers returning from the war were most earnestly engaged in the struggle with God.<sup>16</sup> Each of the three major novels which follow the First World War, Der Wald, Der Totenwolf, and Der Knecht Gottes Andreas Nyland I & II, posit an alternative solution to the Christian God. Each novel is in its way a religious experiment. But in each God is delineated as inexorable, cruel and responsible for evil in a badly created world; the protagonist invariably creates for himself a diabolus absconditus in lieu of God, with whom he struggles, only to succumb to the demonic power he so desperately seeks to worship and to know. In Wald the forest itself has been deified. The green god in which Henner Wittich believes is the primordial force of nature and its ethic is loneliness, freedom and unbending will. Henner is frustrated in his desperate attempts at contact with his deity. The silence of the green god implies hostility, but Henner knows no other God. His ultimate act of heroic defiance in burn-

ing the forest to prevent the sanctuary of his green god from being defiled does not solve his own pantheistic problems, and his flight to a new forest only anticipates new struggles.

Wolf Wiedensahl's deity in Totenwolf is equally demonic. Once more Wiechert evokes the atmosphere of the forest as the source of true religion. Despite occasionally realistic descriptions, as a plan of solution to Germany's post-war problems, the novel is even more fantastic and visionary than Wald. The religious ethic proposed is no more than a denial of the Christian ethic. All the evils of post-war Germany are understood as the result of Christian teaching and preaching. Wolf dies before he has had a proper chance to exercise his self-appointed vocation as leader of the opposition to Christianity, and all his acts of violence fail to achieve the desired effect. This failure is ultimately due to trying to meet a negation with a negation, and it shows the author's recognition that, for the time being at least, no solution was possible. Wolf's deity, as nebulous as he is, drives him into insanity and destruction.

Andreas Nyland (1925/26), like no other work of this period, witnesses to the mental torment of the writer. Much in the novel is exaggerated; the evil

opposing Andreas is unbelievably satanic and as a protagonist he is insignificant alongside the diabolic figures of Bulck and his son Potor.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless Andreas Nyland demonstrates an affinity with Wiechert's own inner struggles which contradicts his explicit statement to the contrary - in Zum Knecht Gottes Andreas Nyland (X.737). Wiechert's God remains distant, hidden, unattainable, enigmatic, and Andreas approaches him with the ambivalent feelings of terror and defiance, love and hatred. Like Wiechert he does not question God's omnipotence; he doubts His goodness. God's silence and obscurity only seem to confirm that He is guilty of the suffering of the world.

Andreas' approach to God does not include the possibility of a solution to the problem of the nature of God, because all his seeking is ultimately directed back at himself. He seeks the solution in masochistic suffering: "Ich will Christi Nachfolger werden," he insists. "Christi Nachfolger sein heißt aber leiden." (II.273) He is unsuccessful, however, because he suffers not to relieve the pain of others but to win for himself the martyr's crown. Wiechert's search for the meaning of existence undergoes no real advance in this novel. He has no real understanding of individual guilt; evil is a matter of circumstance, obeying its own laws of logic.

Significantly in the second part of the novel, Andreas sees the fruitlessness of his activity and he isolates himself as a hermit.

In the next six years Wiechert's work shows a complication in the problem of God's justice. He introduces a dualism: Welarun, the god of pantheism, protector of nature and patron of beauty, is opposed by Jehovah, the vengeful God of war and suffering at whose feet the blame for all evil must be laid. Johannes Karsten suffers because of the cunning devices of this alien God very much like Jons Jeromin a decade later. Jehovah has his agents on earth - Johannes' father, Dr. Mohldenke, the schoolteacher. Once more the chief protagonists in the works of this period assume the role of martyr, not suffering in consequence of their own inadequacies, but enduring unnecessary torture in order to appease an evil deity. Wiechert conceives of God as a sub-human being without whose interference in human affairs evil would disappear. The Christian ethic has been denied and a one-sided selection of the attributes of the Old Testament God is made to serve Wiechert's own baffled confrontation with the evil in the world about him.

The force of his accusations against God is intensified in the narratives dealing with World War I. The pointless bloodshed is not man's responsibility; the

guilt for such senselessness is attributed unequivocally to a force alien to man. The soldier is exposed like none other to the whims of the deity. In Die Häßliche (1930), God is likened to a monarch who indulges his senility by blinding a soldier, "wie alternde Könige ihre jungen Söhne blenden lassen, weil sie ein Vorwurf ihres Irrtums sind." (VII.369) God plays a cat and mouse game with the soldier (Jedermann, III.448; c.f. Die Majorin (1933), IV.216).

Elsewhere religious symbolism is ironically employed to describe the war. La Ferme Morte (1933) is constructed around the motif of crucifixion, which is a symbol not of propitiation or glory, but of needless suffering imposed on man by a vindictive God. The theological student, Bardeleben, cannot detect any meaning in the horror of war (VII.624). The cross is a Moloch which consumes men (VII.625). In Die Flucht ins Ewige, the cross is described as a "Gebärde des Fluches." (VII.207) The war, as it were, crucifies the mothers, who always stand closest to the soldiers in Wiechert's works (Jedermann, III.432-33).

The God who is responsible for war is sadistic and unmerciful. As Chick has observed, "both his silence and activity are dreadful." <sup>18</sup> Wiechert is unable to reconcile the naive religious faith of his childhood with the

recognition of evil which his contact with civilization and the war bring. But like the characters in Das heilige Jahr, a collection of Novellen written between 1931 and 1936, he fails to recognize that his creed has been proved untenable by the state of the world about him. No works of this period demonstrate the victory over doubt quite as these Novellen do. But the solution presented is essentially a literary one, and the despair in later works during and after the Second World War make it clear that here Wiechert is seeking a refuge from his doubts by projecting his own unfulfilled desires on to the actions of his protagonists. Significantly, their actions lack intellectual motivation. They act from a deeply rooted sense of moral right innate in them through their contact with nature, even when opposed by those closest to them, as in Regina Amstetten (1931). Thus in Veronika (1931), the word "Hamulaima" (the original title of the Novelle before its incorporation in the collection) proves such a source of comfort and inspiration to a soldier at the front because it conjures up overtones and memories which help him to forget the brutal activity in which he is engaged. These Novellen present no practical solution to the problem of theodicy; rather, Wiechert returns once more to nature and the forest.



Wiechert's temporary solution, then, is to identify his religious struggle with the initial dualism of nature and civilization. We shall treat nature as a refuge from doubt more fully in chapter IV. Here it may be noted that the logical result is the treatment of religious doubts as simply another aspect of civilization, frequently described as the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or the banishment from the childhood paradise. In Jeromin-Kinder II, Jons concludes that his spiritual insecurity is due to knowledge. If God banishes man from the paradise of his youth, it is because he thinks too much. Man must therefore seek to return to the simplicity of faith enjoyed by the simple people (V.876-77).

Wiechert is so intent on disregarding Christianity's answers to the problem of theodicy because he identifies traditional Christianity with the despised forces of "Ratio". In Totenwolf he tended to attribute to the failure of Christianity all the evils of society in post-World War I Germany. After the Second World War this criticism of the Church becomes all the more harsh. Christianity is made partly responsible for the depravity of western civilization. It is the glibness of orthodoxy which disturbs him. Jons contrasts sitting at the feet of Christ with the cold study of theological facts at

the University. The "Ratio" of the west has taken the place of natural, untrammelled experience as the basis of faith. Christianity has dug its own grave in its alliance with "Geist" (V.245). Jons objects to the facile arguments of his pastor during catechetical instruction, because sorrow and doubt are placed at an infinite remove from life (V.247). Agricola, the pastor at Sowirog, sees the weakness of Christianity in the Word, in the Logos which together with Theos is sufficient to form Theology (V.148). Or, as Herr von Balk puts it: "Die Hand ist mehr als der Mund." (V.184)

Wiechert's identification of Christianity with western culture, which leads him to reject traditional systems, makes it easier to understand the course of his literary career after 1936. The problem of theodicy is temporarily deferred with the completion of Das heilige Jahr. His style is calm and deliberate. The excesses of Totenwolf have been denied. But events after 1936 once more shattered his hard-won sense of security. The close contact with Nazi brutality in Buchenwald, the devastation of war and its aftermath meant the wholesale destruction of all spiritual values. This was a common experience amongst Wiechert's contemporaries, including Thomas Mann who gave expression to Germany's spiritual collapse in Doktor Faustus. But unlike Mann, Wiechert's

treatment of the God-Devil intervention in history is simply another form of his one-sided interest in the decadence of modern civilization, and his analysis is not concerned with what is generally applicable but limits itself to the individual reaction. Mann recognizes the dualism in man; Wiechert fights it. The fusion of opposites which is in Mann's whole work allows him to show the poignancy of Germany's madness at the very depths of despair. This innate sense of tragedy is entirely absent in Wiechert's puny skirmish with God, since he denies man's personal guilt and develops an image of God who is not only a scapegoat, bearing the responsibility of man's guilt, but also Himself personally responsible for all evil and is most frequently presented as indifferent to the suffering of man or even as calculatingly hostile.

As early as 1937 Wiechert poses the problem of certainty in a chaotic world in Vom Trost der Welt. God, like the fragilis Fortuna of the seventeenth century, acts without consistency or predictability. Life is a constant struggle with this all-powerful adversary in which the individual becomes "ein Spielball aller Elemente." (X.908) In the same year he discusses a baroque poem, Eine Mauer um uns baue. The world is cold and hostile, and he can detect no security outside his own powers. During this period the full scale of his

attack on evil is directed against God. It is still true that God is hidden. But the active hostility of God and His responsibility for the creation of an evil universe, found in embryonic form in Totenwolf and Andreas Nyland, is developed fully until it becomes a dominant theme after 1938. Not only is Wiechert's preoccupation with evil more intense after 1938; the emphasis changes quite noticeably. In the early narratives, the characters who embodied evil were grotesque caricatures. In the narrative and autobiographical works of the later period, while the individual villain occasionally still occurs,<sup>19</sup> evil has assumed more and more the aspect of an elemental force in the universe which descends without logic or warning upon the individual. The question of guilt is not raised; evil comes from without man not from within and consequently the responsibility is not his.

Thus 1938-45 were years in which Wiechert was forced once more to review his whole artistic career and the ethical bases on which it was grounded. Much of the language he uses is familiar from earlier works, but his conclusions are so much the more radical, that it is difficult to see the "geradlinige Weiterführung der Schaffensstufe," of which Frey speaks.<sup>20</sup> There is little mature development here. There is rather an atmosphere of bitter frustration and hopelessness.

Wiechert is forced to recognize that his temporary 'solution' to the problem of theodicy is untenable.

His confidence in divine order and justice is further shaken at Buchenwald. His feeling of despair is accentuated by the radical contact with evil in the concentration camp, but the remarkable fact is that he is not led to total religious disillusionment. <sup>21</sup> He continually fights the logical conclusion to which his interpretation of the nature of God tends, viz. agnosticism. His empirical observations lead him to conclude that either God is powerless to prevent evil or unwilling to interfere. His preference for the latter alternative, coupled with his refusal to rule out the image of God altogether, issues in a pathetic demonstration of blasphemy against God, most keenly portrayed in the figure of the pastor, Agricola, in Jeromin-Kinder I. This paradoxical understanding of God explains the confusion in Wiechert's theological speculation. On the one hand, the popular concept of God as a beneficent, all-loving Father is rejected as a hoax. On the other, transcendence of some kind is not denied; Wiechert is simply unable to give definitions. Thus, when he says in Totenwald, "Gott war gestorben," (IX.275) it is clear that this apparent confession of atheism arises from entirely different motives than Nietzsche's cry,

as Fries has shown. <sup>22</sup> Nietzsche was speaking of the self-satisfaction of a class which had dethroned God and made his rejection seem a necessary corollary. In Wiechert's case, however, the Christian understanding of God per se is attacked; their God is dead: "Wenn Gottes Erbarmen geringer war als menschliches Erbarmen, dann war dies alles ein Trugbild, auf einen Kinderhimmel gemalt, und wo der Kinderhimmel zerbrach, zerbrach auch das Trugbild." (IX.275)

There is a direct link between Wiechert's rejection of traditional images of God and the brutality he experiences at Buchenwald. The horrors of the camp lead him to realize, "wie durch das Bild Gottes ein Sprung hindurchlief, der nicht mehr heilen würde." (IX.262) Death is the ultimate law in the concentration camp, an absolute to which even God is subject. Only two alternatives are possible when religion is put to the test: either the defeat of faith, or the recognition of the inability of human beings to live up to its demands. Wiechert chooses the former alternative. God has permitted such conditions to arise. He has delivered His children over to the destruction of man instead of vindicating them. Since the reason for such an action is unclear and the ways of the Lord in general past finding out, unconditional surrender is impossible, and God in

His conventionally accepted form must be pronounced dead. There is no real search for God here except, perhaps, in the sense of a negative epistemology - a search for knowledge of God in order to attack Him.

The attempt to strip God of His divine characteristics is undertaken in Das einfache Leben. Thomas von Orla, who has returned from the war with his faith shattered, isolates himself to seek clarity on the nature of God and His ways with men. Neither Wiechert nor von Orla doubt the reality of the divine. On the contrary, von Orla initiates a scientific investigation of the true nature of God (sic!). He ignores the problem of moral goodness and evil and rejects teleological theories:

Zwecke trübten das Licht und verwirrten die Linien. Auch so stand hinter allem noch immer das letzte Gesicht, aber es trug weder menschliche noch göttliche Züge. Es besaß weder Raum noch Zeit noch gar eine sittliche Verklärung. (IV.669)

Von Orla ends with little that can comfort or console Wiechert in his struggle. God is equated with blind, natural necessity, and His providential care is rejected. He seems to withdraw Himself and become ever more unapproachable (IV.577). He is stern, unyielding, inexorable,

eisig wie ein erzenes Götterbild oder so glühend wie ein Moloch, (IV.578) ein stummer Gott, eisig vor Gleichgültigkeit, wie ein furchtbarer Lehrer vor hilflosen, weinenden Kindern. (IV.618)

If God lets von Orla's wife die it is no mistake on His part: "Es gibt nur das Gesetz, und das Gesetz ist blind." (IV.593) Von Orla cannot believe in a divine love which contradicts incontrovertible facts. The conclusion drawn is identical to that in Totenwald: God is dead. "Mein alter Gott ist gestorben, und der neue ist noch nicht auf den Thron gestiegen." (IV.619)

Nevertheless, he finally succeeds in fashioning a God which meets with his own approval. God is "ein Größeres," "ein Unerkennbares," "das Ganze," (IV.712-13) but must remain nameless. Jons Jeromin later comes to a similar realization: "Es gab eine Größe, die sich aller Namengebung widersetzte und entzog." (V.470) This deity displays no personal qualities. Wiechert has divested him of any moral attributes, and his and von Orla's ethic of love bestowed on one's neighbour is not derived from any theological presuppositions. The result of years of inner struggle is the recognition that, after all, God is inscrutable.

The logical line of development is taken in Jeromin+ Kinder I. In the attempt to harmonize dogmas with the facts of existence, Wiechert has succeeded in stripping God of all reality. Therefore it is not surprising that Jons Jeromin is educated to leave God out of his calculations. Jons never denies His existence; God has



simply been wrongly interpreted. Agricola teaches Jons to identify Creator with His creation. Here Wiechert's pantheistic views come to their full expression:

"Ist er denn nicht wirklich, Herr Pfarrer?"  
"Nein, Jons, er ist nicht. Er war nicht und wird niemals sein. Nicht so, wie es geschrieben steht. Anders vielleicht. Siehst du, das alles" - er wies mit der Hand einmal über das ganze Himmelzelt -, "das ist er vielleicht. Das und daß wir hier sitzen und über ihn reden. Keiner kann es begreifen, aber es ist da und hat seine Ordnung und seine Gesetze. Aber es ist nicht zweierlei, er und das alles. Er steht nicht dahinter und lenkt es mit seiner Hand. Es ist einerlei, ein und dasselbe."  
(V.232-33)

The outlines of the deity have faded for Wiechert. It is therefore hardly surprising that Agricola complains that God is wrapped in obscurity (V.110). The melancholy notes of Friedrich Jeromin's flute are a complaint directed into the void: "Die menschliche Klage, die sich zu Gott aufhob und zu den Sternen und immer wieder niederfiel, weil niemand ihr Antwort gab, ja, weil niemand sie hörte." (V.176) God is a deus absconditus, unconcerned with the affairs of men. Step by step Wiechert reveals God's injustice. Jons' family is divided into good and bad for no apparent reason. One of his brothers is crippled. Every confrontation with reality strengthens Jons in his conviction that the world is governed without rhyme or reason - distinctions of class, undeserved sickness, torturous conflicts in matters of faith, senseless destruction in war which is

no respecter of persons, brutality, hatred, lust for power, bitterness - is the providential care and justice of God to be deduced from this? "Komm her, du Kindermörder," Agricola screams at God, "und zeige deine blutigen Hände!" (V.218)

Thus the question of man's guilt is once more forgotten. Even the quiet schoolmaster, Stilling, can only find God to blame for those who have died from war, plague and violence:

"Was mag er sich denken dabei?" frage ich mich. Denkt er nur, daß es unsre Schuld ist? Aber Seuchen zum Beispiel sind ja gar nicht unsre Schuld. Oder denkt er, daß die Erde nun bald reif sein wird für seine Gnade? (V.450)

Wiechert cannot raise the problem of man's guilt until he has solved the problem of God's - and to this he has no philosophical answer. There is little that is unique in Jeromin-Kinder I. All the religious themes have been struck in Wald, Totenwolf and Andreas Nyland. But Jeromin-Kinder I is far more radical than earlier works. The image of God is debased beyond recognition to something less than human until the protagonists involuntarily patronize the God they so urgently seek to contact. Thus Herr Stilling and Jons reflect on a so-called wondrous creation and wonder whether they could not have done better (V.449). Jons comes to realize that it is better to be a doctor and conquer death than be a

pastor and accept it as a visitation from God (V.488), for God exercises His might through human hands; He is dependent on man (V.493). Herr von Balk advises Jons to respect those who dream of justice, the great dreamers of mankind: "Sie erinnern uns daran, daß der liebe Gott sich am siebenten Tage etwas geirrt hat und daß uns aufgetragen ist, seine Schreibfehler ein bißchen auszuradieren." (V.517)

This becomes the theme of Totenmesse (1943), a poignant witness to Wiechert's shattered faith. The play, unsatisfactory as it is, presents the basic conflict which is uppermost in Wiechert's mind. On the one hand, the harrowing months spent in Buchenwald are still with him, and like many of his contemporaries, he is unable to recognize in the war the bountiful hand of a merciful Lord. On the other, he possesses an immutable belief in man's goodness. Consequently, he is forced to attempt to reconcile his understanding of God and man. The problem is complicated as Wiechert cannot even now expel God from his system entirely. Instead he divests Him of all His merciful qualities, and we are left with a pathetic figure, weak and helpless, dependent on man's strength of character and good-will.

Totenmesse depicts a God, powerless to put an end to the destruction of a war he has started. The angels,

His Son, the Virgin Mary and mankind in turn address their accusations to Him in endless variations. If there is any salvation from terror it is in man, not in God. In fact, man's role in the play amounts to a reversal of traditional positions. "Die Mutter" in scene viii almost adopts a divine role, and "Gottvater" cringes before her accusations against Him. His creation is out of joint and she tells Him how to put it right. This confusion of ideas accounts for the unsatisfactory end to the play. God has been depicted as powerless to prevent evil; now he lacks the knowledge and wisdom necessary to re-create the world. The Creator is instructed by man, who is, however, presented as the image of God (X.180).

Wiechert's use of the concept "Ebenbild" is unusual, particularly in view of the Faustian associations it conjures up. In Goethe, Faust's conscious drive toward truth, his attempt to understand the nature of God and man, is derived from his belief that he is the "Ebenbild" of God.<sup>23</sup> Part of his greatness lies in the fact that his striving does not diminish God's majesty and it is not undertaken at His expense. Faust is aware that to seek identification with divine creativity would necessarily involve him in the sin of hubris. Although he continues to speak of himself as the "Ebenbild der Gottheit," he realizes:

Den Göttern gleich' ich nicht! Zu tief ist es  
geföhlt!  
Dem Wurm gleich' ich, der den Staub  
durchwöhlt ... 24

The reality of God's influential presence is heightened by Faust's recognition of his own nature.

By contrast, Wiechert debases God's significance, for his understanding of "Ebenbild" is determined by the attitude to God. Faust's recognition that he is both "Wurm" and, paradoxically, the image of God is a direct result of his awareness of the sin of hybris. But Wiechert shows no such recognition as we have observed, and in Totenmesse the problem of action is hardly raised. The framework of Wiechert's philosophy in contrast to Goethe's leaves no room for heroes, only petty protagonists, as chapter V(B) will show. For Wiechert recognizes only God's impotence. The lack of clarity about the distinctive roles of God and man, coupled with conflicting definitions about God's nature, makes real drama impossible.

Three statements about God may be selected at random from the play to illustrate this literary inconsistency:

- (1) In scene i, God's helplessness is shown in the face of the accusations of heavenly and earthly beings:

Bin ich denn nicht Gott und bin nun so allein,  
daß niemand mir hilft in meiner Pein? (X.151)

- (2) Scene iv presents God as the preserver of the universe in whose hands all power is vested:

Es knüpft sich und löst sich, wie Gott es gewollt.  
(X.161)

- (3) Yet God is fallible; He treats man like an animal and so Himself is prone to sin (scene viii):

Auch Gott kann irren, auch Gott hat gefehlt,  
als er am Ölberg sich mit Angst gequält.  
Dürfen die Menschen nicht achten als  
verlorenes Wild,  
haben sie doch geschaffen nach unsrem Ebenbild;  
und wenn das Bild nicht fleckenlos,  
so sind wir selbst der Sünde bloß.  
Haben gerichtet und nicht gefragt,  
ob nicht der Gerichtete den Richter verklagt.  
(X.178)

This pattern of conflicting statements is never resolved in the play, for even man is active in Totenmesse only in his ability to rebuke God. Significantly, too, the immediate background to all discussion in the play is the figure of death at rampage in war.

The only hint of a literary answer is found in scene iii, which we shall investigate more closely in the next chapter. However, it may be noted here that this scene seems to establish a philosophy of love as a temporary answer to the problem of theodicy raised in time of war. But the conflict of ideas is implicit even here. God's love is denied, yet it is suggested that if man is the image of God, it is because of his capacity to love.

The ending of the senseless destruction of war in scene viii is entirely unmotivated. It apparently ceases in spite of, not because of God's intervention. It is clear that Wiechert is content to dispense with God as active mover and is intent on solving the problem of theodicy without Him. If Totennesse is unsatisfactory as a dramatic unit, it is simply because "Gottvater", who is the central literary protagonist, is incidental to the philosophical thesis.

Soon after the war, in Abschied von der Zeit, probably written in 1946, Wiechert makes a programmatic statement in which he finally confesses that he cannot solve the problem in metaphysical terms. Reconciliation between the image of an all-loving Father and the atrocities of war is impossible: "Ich hatte das längst aufgegeben, diese Mühe des Versöhnens, diese fruchtlose Arbeit schwerer Gedanken." (X.670) Yet Jeromin-Kinder II, written in the same year still shows the crisis of faith in Jons' education to maturity. The religious struggles are less intense than in the first volume of the novel, and the loss of interest is easily explained by Wiechert's failing interest in the problem of evil and his renewed vigour in the cause of nature. Nevertheless the old conflict is still recognizable. On the one hand, there is Jons' friend Tobias, a "Liebender," (V.809) the

pastor who in the security of his faith is the very antithesis of Agricola. He is unable to interpret evil from any but a Christian viewpoint - God may use even the Nazis as a rod to chastise His people (V.945). Even disillusionment at his ministry in a dirty, unresponsive town is unable to affect his eagerness. He does not doubt God, he doubts himself (V.736). On the other hand, there is Jons who admires his friend's childlike faith while he cannot share it. He broods over the question of God's responsibility for evil when a Jewish friend is driven to suicide (V.874 ff.). His reflections on National Socialism are significant because they are Wiechert's own. Immutable laws are suddenly toppled and the powers of evil hold sway: "Für Jons war es viel mehr als eine Entartung der Zeit. Für ihn war es eine Entartung der Ewigkeit. Ein tödlicher Stoß mitten in das Herz der Macht, die ihn von der Meilerhütte an geleitet hatte." (V.838)

Wiechert's final confession is to a pantheistic God, free of all dogmatic definitions. This had been Thomas von Orla's conclusion in Das einfache Leben. Since 1938 Wiechert had analysed all the traditional concepts of God and found them wanting. In Jahre und Zeiten, he rejects them once and for all. God is not limited to one particular confession or creed, nor is He the unique



prerogative of Christianity: "Gott ist alles, und die Konfessionen sind nur ein Teil. Auch das Christentum ist nur ein Teil. Wer behauptet, die einzige Wahrheit zu besitzen, ist weit von der Wahrheit entfernt." (IX.768)

Finally, in Missa sine nomine, Wiechert's attitude to evil has become fatalistic; it is woven into creation as an integral part of God's plan for the world. God even wills that Amadeus should suffer physical violence at the hands of the Nazis. Somehow the wounds compensate for the violent death of one of their number (VI.248 f.).

As Chick observes, "the process of equalization supposedly reflects the laws of nature, which must be accepted as inevitable."<sup>25</sup> The optimism of Doskocil is lacking in Missa. Wiechert no longer believes that evil can be entirely eradicated by man's positive action. It may be frustrated for a time, but will always threaten to return. Missa is therefore dominated by the ageing Wiechert's resignation. In speaking of Totenmesse above, we noted that he is unable to expel God from his system because of childhood associations. Nowhere does this nostalgic regret force itself on our attention more than in Missa. Wiechert's sentimental attachment to the dream world of his youth makes it impossible to deny God. Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression of the later works is of a growing sense of despair, and it may well

be that at the end of his life he employs the figure of God as a means to provide solace and make the intolerable tolerable by disguising reality and protecting himself from it, in accordance with Nietzsche's definition of Apollonian art. <sup>26</sup>

Therefore Missa is no longer concerned with the question of God's existence or His justice. God is simply present like the 'liebe Gott' in the fairy-tale. As Wittkopp says to Amadeus: "Ich lese die Bibel noch so, wie sie am Anfang war, verstehen Sie mich? Wie ein großes Märchen, in dem jede Seite wunderbar ist." (VI.362) Wiechert has returned to the point from which he set out and it is one of his limitations that he was never to progress beyond the influences of his youth. <sup>27</sup> God is not verifiable; He exists beyond empirical proof and does not intervene in the affairs of men. Man is now the decisive mover, for God is as indifferent as the officials in Kafka's Das Schloß who hear the telephones ringing and only answer them for the sake of diversion. God is nameless; He is described in Missa as "Raum": "Der Raum hatte nicht achtgehabt und nicht teilgenommen an dem, was geschehen war. Jahrelang geschehen, Tag und Nacht. Die Schreie hatten ihn nicht erreicht, die Flüche nicht, die Gebete nicht." (VI.10) But what Bert Brecht says in Hauspostille is no longer true of Wiechert:

Lobet von Herzen das schlechte Gedächtnis des  
Himmels!

Und daß er nicht

Weiß euren Nam' noch Gesicht.

Niemand weiß, daß ihr noch da seid.

Lobet die Kälte, die Finsternis und das Verdorben!  
Schauet hinan:

Es kommet nicht auf euch an 28

Und ihr könnt unbesorgt sterben.

For God is there. He is no longer the God of the early novels and of Jeromin-Kinder I in whom there is awful majesty, nor is He the helpless, pathetic figure of Totenmesse. This God is silent, exercising His judgment on the world, but also inspiring new life in man and providing a source of comfort:

The goal of spiritual harmony is reached in the end by the arbitrary silencing of dissonances which hitherto have defied removal. Wiechert has fled this field of battle just as he has taken flight from the intellect and Western civilization. 29

The problem of theodicy therefore resolves itself once more into the old antitheses of "Ratio" with which traditional Christianity is identified, and nature in which Wiechert's final concept of God is embraced. He looks beyond traditional systems for his answers and finds a temporary solution by renewing his objection to reality and fleeing once more to the haven of rest offered by nature. The experience of war and defeat lead him to deny Christian premises and with them their ethical conclusions. Rather than identify himself with

the existential philosophy of the absurd - a position to which he is logically led - he erects an entirely new system of ethics on his own premises. For Wiechert's interest is essentially ethical, and the answer to the problem of theodicy is for him not literary but practical. We can reserve our judgment of the practical solution for chapter VI. The question now arises: wherein lies the power of nature and to what extent is its healing and transforming function important in the study of Wiechert's attitude to war and defeat?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INSPIRATION OF NATURE

The forces of war and the arbitrary activity of death in war, which combine to destroy Wiechert's faith in the infinite wisdom and justice of God, cannot shatter his confidence in man's ability to create a new and better world. The more debased his concept of God, the more exalted does his estimation of humanity become. One can detect three answers proposed by Wiechert as solutions to the problem of theodicy: a mystical glorification of motherhood as a sustaining life-force, opposing hatred and destruction with love and restoration; an emphasis on man as the standard and object of all ethical action in so far as his foundations are in nature; the idea of nature not only as a place of refuge and security from the buffetings of fate, but also as a mystical force, providing the inspiration for renewed battle with the forces of evil. If these answers are treated separately, it is for the sake of convenience; in fact, they comprise three variations on the one theme

of nature which represents Wiechert's only positive answer to war and to all other hated phenomena of western civilization. It is a remarkable fact that the very narrative and dramatic works which deal most poignantly with the overwhelming, apocalyptic side of war and defeat, and seem to postulate a philosophy of despair, also develop this affirmation of life.

Wiechert's confidence in the future of man therefore serves as a substitute for his shattered faith in divine justice, and his anticipation of a future perfect age in the immanent sphere is paralleled by his gradual disillusionment with the transcendental.

A. The Sustaining Life-Forces

The initial problem faced by Wiechert's protagonists after their bitter experiences on the battlefields of death is how they are to come to terms with life. Wiechert believes that the powerful sting of death may be overcome not by a fatalistic acceptance of God's will, but by counteracting God's capriciousness with a life lived in the spirit of self-sacrificing love. If death means destruction of life, then love is the means by which death is conquered, for love is the presupposition for new life. Naturally, therefore, the most frequent symbol of the sustaining life-force is the mother who

gives birth to new life in defiance of the wilfulness of death. The suffering individual returning from the holocaust of war experiences regeneration, a new baptism into life, when he returns to his mother.

It is the never-ceasing miracle of birth that fascinates Wiechert. Woman is the agent of life. In her are contained forces which miraculously overpower death. She has a unique place in the order of creation, of which man has no inkling, for there is in her the divine spark which can create life. This unique activity of woman is heightened and contrasted by man's destructive activity, which finds its basest expression in time of war. Man is arrogant, woman is modest; man destroys creation, woman preserves it; above all, man is egocentric, while the whole nature of a woman is directed beyond herself to the loving service of others. In Totenwolf, Agnete discusses the difference between men and women with her grandson: "Ihr lebt und kämpft für euch, Kind," she says to Wolf, "oder für die Welt oder eine Idee, Sie leben nie für sich, wenn sie etwas wert sind; sie leben und kämpfen für das Kind, das kommende Geschlecht." (II.131) Man achieves nothing by planning and reflecting but the destruction of war; women, however, are the guarantors of eternity:

Der Mann unserer Zeit hat mit Denken und Planen und Tun nichts zustande gebracht als die beiden Kriege, die die Erde zerstört haben, indes in den Kellern unter den Ruinen die Frauen immer noch das Ewige bewahrt haben und die Kinder an das Licht tragen, das ein so zweifelhaftes Licht geworden ist. (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.582) 1

In taking part in the work of creation, woman becomes part of eternity which is of the essence of divinity. She is to be revered, for her work is immortal. In Das Antlitz der Mutter (1948), Wiechert speaks of motherhood as a divine role, "das Allgegenwärtige, das Allgütige, das Allmächtige. Es war alles, was wir später einmal Gott zuschrieben." (X.788) "Sie war wie Gott.." (X.789). In the figure of the mother the quality of mercy is least strained. This is the theme of Wiechert's last Novelle, Die Mutter (1946). Denounced by her son during the National Socialist regime and imprisoned, the mother returns home after her liberation by the Americans. She comes from the realm of death. But her attitude is one of suffering patience when confronted by the 'degradation' which meets her on her return. She preserves the family from moral decay. Her daughters, entertaining American soldiers, hastily remove their lipstick when they hear her coming and push away the glass of spirits.. But their mother is not only the upholder of morality, she is also all-merciful and she forgives her son, although his betrayal nearly cost her her life.



By contrast to woman's life-giving powers, man's greatest achievements are puny. Wars may disturb the face of the earth but they are time-bound because they are essentially destructive, not creative. Johannes Karsten's return to his mother at the Karstenhof on leave from the war is a refuge. He is once more embedded in eternity after his contact with the ephemeral:

Das Gesicht der Toten erlosch, das Gesicht der fremden Länder, der zerbrochenen Wälder, der blutigen Erden. Von dem schweigenden Bilde der dunklen, regungslosen Gestalt schien ein solches Leuchten auszustrahlen, daß alle andere Bilder versanken, daß die Jahre erloschen, die Verzweiflungen, die Entsagungen... "Mutter!" rief Johannes. (Jedermann, III.446)

The symbolic figure of the mother is only another aspect of that eternity which is rooted in the soil. The returning soldier finds his flagging energies renewed when he returns home and engages once more in satisfying toil close to the land. The mother motif in Wiechert's works is related to the re-creating principle of nature. Human motherhood and the earth's productivity both guarantee eternity and combine to provide solace for the soul-sick refugee from battle. Mother and son share in the fruit of the ripened grain before he sets off for war (Jedermann, III.316). In Die Majorin, Fahrenholz and the baroness bind the sheaves together after his rehabilitation, symbolic of the mystical bond between the maternal and nature (IV.352 ff.).

Death is therefore conquered in love.<sup>2</sup> The consummation of the love between man and woman is an introduction into the mystery of the creation of life, and the power of death is overcome when the consummation of love is experienced. This is the theme of scene iii of Totenmesse. The experience of love and its fulfillment makes it possible for man to transcend the limits of human existence:

Wer aus des Leibes Begrenzung heraustritt,  
hattschon die Schatten des Jenseits berührt.  
(X.160)

The lovers in Totenmesse are aware of the mystical correlation between love and death. Love is as much a symbol of death as of life, and in the closest embrace the lover detects the figure of death lurking behind the beating heart of his beloved (X.158). In a significant passage in Jeromin-Kinder I Jons, lying in Margreta's arms, is suddenly confronted by the image of his dead brothers, and he realizes that his fear of death has been conquered by love. At the grave of Michael Jeromin, Herr Stilling indicates that the future is assured because Erdmuthe bears Michael's child and, "wo ein Kind übriggeblieben sei, habe der Tod nicht gesiegt." (V.283) Now Jons becomes aware of the significance of this statement:

Ein unendlicher Friede erfüllte sein Herz, so als  
sei der Tod nun nicht mehr eine dunkle Macht, die

in einer Höhle auf ihn wartete, sondern als habe er seinen Vertrag mit ihm unterschrieben. Er war durch das Tor gegangen, und er fürchtete sich nicht mehr. Er hatte das letzte Geheimnis ange-rührt, und es hatte gesprochen. Von nun an war er aufgenommen in den letzten Grad. Das war es also, weshalb sie den Apfel nicht hatten essen sollen. Weil er ihnen Macht gab über den Tod und sie über alle Drohungen lächeln ließ, die hinter den Wolken oder hinter den Sternen waren ... "Es gibt keinen Tod, Margreta", sagte er. (V.426-27)

Later when his father is killed in the war, he finds comfort and a refuge in Margreta in whom is promise of new life (V.435), just as Johannes Karsten found an escape from death in Sister Agnete's love (Jedermann, III.435).

Thus even war and death reaffirm the principle of life. After a long stay in a military hospital, Jons realizes the war has taught him to recognize that life is, after all, stronger than death and that years of suffering and misery can be forgotten in the urgency of new life (V.495-96). Therefore, he decides to become a doctor, "ein Sieger über den Tod." (V.488) Jons' life as a doctor in Jeromin-Kinder II only becomes meaningful for him in the midst of the hatred and brutality of the Nazi regime. Hanna's love transforms his world. Instead of death, he is confronted by eternity (V.846). He becomes more proficient in his medical duties: "Es mißlang ihm nichts. Es war, als sei er mit Ewigkeit gefüllt." (V.848)

It is perhaps in the treatment of the mother motif that Wiechert is most mystical. His depiction of motherhood as a direct antithesis to the divine Fatherhood of God lacks real clarity. The saintly quality of the mother reflects Wiechert's idealism and his longing to escape to a paradise of forgetfulness and is deeply rooted in a highly personal experience which he is unsuccessful in communicating to the reader. The human outlines are blurred. The mother is most frequently an ethereal being, untarnished by contact with the world, and her conduct is exemplary. All of Wiechert's heroines are likewise uncomplicated, wise beyond their years, tender, modest, maternally protective and tearful.

While he conceives of the maternal principle as an intrinsic part of the love between man and woman, he also infuses into the relationship between mother and son an embarrassing note suggestive of passion. In the highly-charged atmosphere of his treatment of the mother motif, he fails to display the delicacy of treatment that the motif requires. To charge Wiechert with transferred eroticism would be grossly unjust, but it is to his discredit that such an accusation can be seriously entertained, even for a moment. The mystical relationship between mother and son; the blood affinity which binds them ever more closely to one another and brings

man nearest to the deep life-force which is his origin - these are the themes Wiechert seeks to develop as the antithesis to war and death. But in seeking to clarify the nature of this deep psychological bond, he succeeds in creating an atmosphere which is both oppressive and irritating. A representative passage in Jedermann describes Johannes Karsten arriving home on leave from war, and seeking oblivion from battle and the tortuous workings of his mind in the protecting embrace of his mother. The passage is disturbing, not only because it leaves itself open to misinterpretation, but because, as usual, Wiechert overstates his case:

"Mein Kind ...", sagte Frau Gina leise

Und dann blieben sie so, bis die Nacht über sie fiel, ohne ein Wort, ohne eine Bewegung. Es war der Schoß einer Geliebten, in der Johannes' Stirne lag, und der Schoß einer Mutter, es waren die Knie einer Begehrten und die Knie einer Heiligen. Es war die schützende Wärme eines Menschenleibes, der durchdrungen war von aller Süße eines Menschenleibes, von der nährenden Hingabe eines Mutterleibes über die empfangende Demut eines Mädchenleibes bis zur versöhnenden Umarmung eines Heilandleibes. Es war die Vergöttlichung eines Bildes unter dem Tränensturz eines Betenden, die Rückkehr zum Ewigen des Kindes, zur einfachsten und unverlierbarsten Form des Blutzäubers, der löste und band, entsiegelte und beschloß: das Kind, das aus dem Grauen des Lebens wieder einkehrte in den dunklen Frieden des Mutterleibes. (III.446-47)

Nor is the precise relationship between love and death ever clarified, and the veiled, lyrical quality of Totenmesse only obscures the connection. The

atmosphere evoked is mystical and oriental and therefore the play is little more than a soliloquy of the author. In Jeromin-Kinder I, on the other hand, this theme is more subtly executed and therefore a little more convincing. But ultimately Wiechert's whole presentation of the maternal principle as a practical solution to the holocaust of war is unsatisfactory because it reveals his continual tendency to escape from what is intolerable. Certainly Gina Karsten in Jedermann inspires her son and gives him the strength to return to the trenches, but her presence only provides a temporary haven of rest from all he has suffered, and when he leaves her he leaves all security behind him. Only Jons Jeromin is successful in depriving death of its sting by living a meaningful life through work and a woman's love, and it is implied that Hanna's love for him, combined with his intimacy with nature and the eternal values of the village, will bear him safely through the terrible years of Nazi domination and the Second World War. But Jons, unlike his predecessor Johannes Karsten, has no deep mystical bond with his mother.

The theme of love which conquers hatred and death is most convincingly depicted in Missa sine nomine. Whatever its shortcomings in other respects, Missa displays an unprecedented complexity of characterisation and a

subtle development of Amadeus' acceptance of life after his close call with death in concentration camp. The heroine, Barbara, is also more involved than her predecessors - Sister Agnete, Margreta or Hanna in earlier novels. Both she and Amadeus represent opposite sides of the same coin. Both suffer from Nazi brutality, she by choice, he by chance. Both help each other along the difficult path towards rehabilitation and reaffirmation of life. Barbara is unable to deny the mystical force of the young life growing within her. For life is an overwhelming contradiction to the power of death. Therefore, although she gives way to her hatred of Amadeus and succeeds in having him shot, she is unable to leave him die. Amadeus in turn begins to care for her when she is deranged, and by accepting the responsibility for her and her child, he learns to forget the bitterness of the past and look forward to new life (VI.327). The "Unvergänglichkeit des Lebens" (VI.441) is assured for Amadeus - and, however unrealistically, for Wiechert also.

**B. Nature as the Standard of Wiechert's Ethic**

We saw in chapter III that Wiechert rejected all traditional Christian concepts of God and tried to erect a system of belief transcending orthodox confessional

barriers. What is the nature of this new faith and how does it determine Wiechert's attitude to defeat after World War II? In this section we will be chiefly concerned with works written after the Buchenwald experience of 1938, for it is after this period that Wiechert begins to develop an entirely homocentric ethic as the only hope of salvation for mankind. After this period Wiechert is also most influenced by the philosophy of Max Picard with whom he shares his confidence in the power of men of good will, even when scattered and isolated, to build a better world; his conviction that goodness and caritas are essentially human qualities; and his concept of man as a spark of the divine. <sup>3</sup>

Clearly, Wiechert is not entirely representative of the enlightened attitude, prepared to posit an unlimited development towards perfection. His spiritual roots are more akin to the Romantics, Tieck and Novalis, whose religiosity was entirely personal, subjective, emotional and fantastic. Nevertheless, he parts company with the Romanticism of the late eighteenth century on two decisive issues. The idealism of the Romantics was nourished by a historical attitude which saw in the Middle Ages a Golden Age. By contrast, Wiechert shows no historical interest whatever and bases his ethical exhortations on



visions of future possibilities. Secondly, the religious opposition of the Romantics was directed against the cold light of Rationalism which preached a superficial morality, and to which religious faith was little more than a useful appendage. Romanticism helped arouse a new sense of faith as an end in itself. Wiechert, however, opposes barren orthodox formalism very much as the Lutheran pietist movement of the mid-seventeenth century had done. Therefore, while he cannot agree with Leibniz that this is the best of all possible worlds, he does show a belief both in limited progress by select individuals and in the essential goodness of man.

If Jons Jeromin becomes a doctor and not a pastor, it is due to this tempered idealism which is Wiechert's distinguishing feature. Jons as a free individual chooses medicine in order to help mankind simply because the world is not perfect but allows of improvement. Jumbo, the medical student, prophesies the outcome of Jons' search for clarification on the course of action he should take: "Ich denke, daß er Arzt werden wird wie ich, und die Ärzte behaupten nicht, daß dies die beste aller Welten sei." (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.168) Similarly, Herr von Balk is by no means convinced that all's right with the world. On the contrary, he is shocked by the cruelty and senselessness of life. The

present world is as evil as it was ten thousand years ago. History does not change and man remains the same. 'Progress' lies in his increasing ability to veil events in new words, "die gefärbten Bilder einer Zauberalaterne." (V.69)

Wiechert does not look for progress at the historical level, and yet, as F. M. Wassermann correctly points out, "his confidence in the character and honesty of the common man ... [is] one of the mainsprings of his... novels." <sup>4</sup> Wiechert does not seek historical continuity in his analysis of man's ethical behaviour, but describes an ideal situation in which individuals contribute positively to the future of the world within the limits of their abilities and potentialities. In Rede an die deutsche Jugend, he sees the greatest tragedy of Nazism and the Second World War in the fact that the youth of Germany have been frustrated in their striving "nach einer besseren, gerechteren und edleren Welt," and that "die fromme Ehrfurcht vor den Altären der Menschlichkeit, das Ritterliche der Haltung gegen Schwäche, Leidende und Besiegte" has been destroyed (X.391). The idealism of earlier Münchener speeches continues, but it is an ethical idealism and it is limited in force. Severe restrictions are set to the entire progress of mankind, but a great deal may be achieved within individual lives

because man is basically good.<sup>5</sup> But Wiechert is not interested in philosophizing; he is concerned to find a practical answer to the problem of theodicy.

He finds his 'answer' in the belief that while God's love is uncertain, love and hard work are nevertheless the highest of human values when practised in the service of humanity. As Freiherr Erasmus realizes in Der Vater: "Ich weiß nun, daß es süßer ist, in der Liebe eines einzigen Menschen zu ruhn als in der Liebe Gottes oder des Vaterlandes." (VII.671)<sup>6</sup> The ideal of absolute obedience to duty pales before the power of love. As long as man cares for his fellow human-being there is still a vestige of hope for the world - this is the theme of Der Armen Kinder Weihnachten (1946). In 1937 Wiechert poses the problem of the stability of existence in Vom Trost der Welt.<sup>7</sup> He realizes that this is not simply a question which cries out for solution when death is on rampage. On the contrary, the problem becomes all the more pressing when seen in its relationship to life. Here he recognizes that if one seeks certainty and security, they will only be found in oneself: "Daß bei den letzten Entscheidungen Götter und Menschen sich still verhüllen oder sich versagen und nur eines als das Unerschütterliche in uns bliebe: der sittliche Mensch." (X.908) Wiechert's baroque analysis

of life as insecure, his belief that the distinguishing marks of existence are transience and chaos, contrast seventeenth century German literature in that he finds the justification for his existence in the individual's vocation "zum Helfen und Heilen." (Eine Mauer um uns baue, X.696) Transcendental longing is no panacea for temporal ills. The only indestructible element in man is his moral core, and the exercise of morality is the only defence against despair. Whether man, in fact, chooses to practise morality or not is open to him, but he has the ability. If Wiechert revered Goethe, it was because he discovered in him "das Unerschütterliche, der sittliche Mensch. Das Fernsein von Haß und Dogma, das Gehorsamsein der inneren Stimme des Dämons, das aller Schönheit und Güte Weitoffene, ... die reine humanitas, die Gotteskindschaft ohne Namen." (Vom Trost der Welt, X.913-14)

In Rede an die deutsche Jugend, Goethe's statement, "Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut," is described as an "Evangelium" proclaiming "die Humanitas, das Amor Dei, Schonung und Toleranz," (X.386) and Wiechert is amazed at the ease with which these virtues are forgotten and the readiness of the German nation to subject itself to all that is the antithesis of virtuous action. Consequently, any new beginning after the war must be in terms of individual activity:

Laßt uns die Liebe statt des Wortes an den Anfang setzen... Fragt nicht, wo und wie ihr mit der Liebe beginnen sollt. Ihr habt eine Saat zu säen, und das Feld erwartet euch... Der Wald ist abgeschlagen, aber tief aus dem Urgrund des Volkes schießen die neuen Triebe heraus, die Zukunft, die einzige Zukunft, und in eure Hände ist sie gelegt. Einmal werdet ihr Erzieher sein oder Prediger, einmal Ärzte und Richter, und einige von euch werden das tröstende Licht der Kunst aufheben vor den hungrigen Augen. Dann denkt daran, daß keine neue Erde aufblühen wird, ohne daß ihr sie durchtränkt hättet mit eurer Liebe. (X.404-405)

Love must not only be the Alpha; it is also the Omega. Love is "das Unsterbliche," "das Letzte ist immer die Liebe." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.761) The efforts of "der sittliche Mensch" are directed towards the re-establishment of humanitas. Love, expressed not in words but in deeds, alone can conquer evil.

But while the possibility of goodness is inherent in man, he may also choose evil. This is the theme of Die Schwestern, a fairy-tale from Märchen II (1944/45). Love is not a magical gift, but when practised, it can achieve magical results. The three sisters soon realize that the magical quality of the needles lies in their own hearts: "Gutes und Böses liegt immer am Menschenherzen," (VIII.346) but man must make the choice. In the majority of the Märchen, magic only retains its untarnished strength as long as the heart of the recipient remains pure, as in Der gute Schäfer. There is nothing capricious in magic: whatever is achieved is determined

by the heart. Therefore it is not magic which destroys man in the Märchen, but the evil in him: "Was uns ins Verderben schickt, ist immer nur unser eigenes Herz." (Die blaue Blume, Märchen II, VIII.484)

The presentation of an immanent 'Weltanschauung' is paralleled by a gradual lessening of interest in the problem of theodicy. After 1938, with the publication of Das einfache Leben, evil no longer carries the action,<sup>8</sup> and the type of character represented by Mroczek, Kascheike and Zerrgiebel disappears altogether. In the earlier novels none of the heroes, with the possible exception of Doskocil, can counteract the apparitions of evil with which he is confronted. After Doskocil Wiechert gradually develops the idea that man must rely on his own strength and not put his trust in a capricious God. This is the message of Die goldene Stadt (1935):

Traut nicht Baronen und Pfaffen,  
traut nicht auf Kaiser und Gott!  
Nur die eigne Faust kann euch schaffen  
den Weg zum Morgenrot! (X.127)

The miner returning from war, his hopes in a "goldene Stadt" shattered, learns not to trust in dreams but in the modest work of his own hands (X.136-37). When the mine collapses, and he is confronted by his Lord, he can only show him the work of his two hands. God justifies him because of his service to others: his mother, his wife and child, the captain, and his fellow-miner.

Das einfache Leben betrays the growing separation between Wiechert's idea of God and his interest in ethical values. If the novel represents an important stage in the development of a positive ethic, it is at the expense of any theological premises. The novel shows von Orla's growing realization that happiness is based on immanent realities not on transcendental illusions; as Wiechert put it in one of the Märchen, "das Glück ist hier und nicht am Himmel." (Der schwarze Peter, Märchen II, VIII.520) Von Orla is touched to the quick by the verse: "Wir bringen unsere Jahre zu wie ein Geschwätz," (Ps. 90: 6) and he makes it his aim to achieve peace of mind and a joyful heart.

It is the pastor who tells him that he must simply stop living his life "as a tale that is told," but that this may not be achieved by faith. "Arbeiten soll man," this strange pastor tells him, "arbeiten! Verstehen Sie? Nichts als arbeiten!" (IV.379) Belief, faith - these are meaningless words to those who know, "wie Gott uns geschlagen hat." (IV.381) A quiet conscience can only be attained if God is forgotten. When all faith has been destroyed, all that remains is love:

Lieben und sich nicht fürchten, ist das, was übrigbleibt... Das Leben ist ewig aber nicht wir. Der Vorhang fällt, und die Vorstellung ist aus. Wir werden nicht noch einmal gerufen, damit das Stück anders ausgehe. Draußen warten schon die anderen. Auch wir glauben, so rein und glühend wie die anderen, aber nicht, daß eine jenseitige Welt

schmerzenloser sei als diese, sondern daß auf dieser unter allen Schmerzen die Liebe immer tiefer werde, das einzige, was wir dem Gesetz entgegenzusetzen haben... Wir werden es erfüllen, aber in der Erfüllung werden wir etwas aufrichten, was es gar nicht kennt, was unsere Schöpfung allein ist und was wie ein fremder Glanz alle Dinge überstrahlen wird, auch sein steinernes Gesicht: unsere Liebe. (IV.621)

God is the great Illusion and reality lies in the sweat of one's brow (IV.475).

It is important for our thesis to observe that it is the horror of war that raises von Orla's problem of faith for him, and it is in nature that he works out his solution. Das einfache Leben is a flight from one kind of reality to another; an escape from the superficialities of urban life and the all-consuming demands made by society to nature which heals the individual, arms him in the battle against the evil forces of civilization and, in later works, gives him the strength to face the minions of evil and destroy them. We will trace this theme more fully in chapter IV(C). The individual's self-imposed isolation equips him with virtues which only a deep communion with nature can give. If the content of humanitas is love and hard work, its setting is forest and field. Nature takes the place of the deity in all of Wiechert's later works, for nature is the only God he can understand; God is vindictive, nature benevolent; God is capricious, nature predictable.



In chapter II(A) it was observed that Wiechert's idea of justice had mellowed from pure idealism to a recognition that it was, after all, an unattainable ideal. The exalted concept of justice has thus been tempered with experience and it is now defined in terms of the man whose roots are in nature fulfilling his everyday tasks for the benefit of his fellow-man. Jons Jeromin learns that justice is an ideal with very definite limitations, and he learns to be satisfied with the little he can achieve in the way of selfless love. Therefore, the subject and object of Jons' 'religion' is immanent, and the inspiration for all his activity is the village and nature with its guarantee of certainty and permanence. Jons starts life with no theological equipment whatever. He is not guided through life by a "Turmgesellschaft" like Wilhelm Meister, nor does he learn by erring like Faust, because he never makes mistakes. He is educated by preceptors who stand on his life's path at strategic points of doubt and indecision to guide him along. He learns because he is amenable to their arguments and because the die is cast in their favour from the very start, "weil er empfangsbereit vom Vater und vom Walde her ist." <sup>9</sup> After four years' experience in the trenches, Jons realizes that justice is done when man engages in toil, not in an arbitrary

theological definition: "Wenn Gott war, so war er darin, nicht im Sternbild des Perseus oder über Himmel und Hölle, sondern hier, vor den beiden Händen." (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.493)

Agricola learns earlier than Jons that the sum of a man's contribution to the community is bread and consolation, i.e., the modest human values, and to explain such an ethic in theological terms is foolish (V.146). Agricola is unable to reconcile this insight with his faith and loses all security; Jons does not attempt the reconciliation and for him it becomes the presupposition for his life's work. When Herr Stilling expresses doubts about God's goodness,<sup>10</sup> Jons suggests that man must leave God out of consideration: "Es ist einfacher, Herr Stilling, wenn wir den lieben Gott aus dem Spiel lassen und es allein auf unsre Schultern nehmen." (V.451) Jons, unlike his predecessors, is not annihilated by constant brooding over inconsistencies. The 'distortions' of rational thought are overcome by an irrational experience of union with nature, and the problem of evil loses its urgency. Wiechert admits that this is simply a refined form of escapism in Jahre und Zeiten, when he writes that in the midst of war he has come to realize,

daß es für unsereinen nur eines gibt, um den Untergang zu bestehen: die Arbeit. Das heißt

die Flucht in eine andere Welt oder die Verwandlung dieser zerfallenden Welt in eine der Wahrheit und der letzten Gerechtigkeit. (IX.697)

Flight to nature and transformation of reality are an effective summary of Wiechert's artistic aims, both as a form of escape for himself and as offer of a passive existence to others, a Nirvana which leads to inactivity and brooding.

The theme of Jeromin-Kinder is therefore not unlike that of Goldene Stadt: man is not on earth to evolve a philosophy, nor to dream, but to do his duty. Jons agrees with Herr von Balk that "ein ordentlicher Acker mehr ist als eine unordentliche Philosophie." (V.137) One of the clearest statements Wiechert ever makes concerning his tempered idealism is found in this novel. Man must pin his faith not on an illusion but on reality. Life is a term of hard labour and its product is suffering. But the suffering individual must do battle with the forces of evil, hatred, violence, deceit, fear and revenge, regardless of future reward:

Der Kampf gegen sie bringt keine Belohnung, weder im Diesseits noch in einem erträumten Jenseits. Er bringt Einsamkeit und Feindschaft, Leid und Verzicht. Aber er ist alles, was der Mensch aus seinem Leben machen kann. Er ist der Anfang zu einem Tor in eine bessere Zeit... Wer ihn auskämpft, ist kein Soldat Gottes, sondern ein Soldat der Menschheit, des Kreises also, in den er hineingeboren ist. Es wird nicht danach gefragt, ob er sie haßt oder liebt oder verachtet. Er hat sie so wenig gewählt wie seine Eltern, aber er spricht ihre Sprache, er sitzt an ihrem Herd, er

hat zu ihnen zu stehen. Wenn er bitter wird dabei, ist er nicht der rechte Soldat, und auch nicht, wenn er glaubt, daß seine Taten nun in einem Buche verzeichnet werden, über das der Erzengel einen goldenen Griffel hält. (V.187-88)

Clearly Wiechert's intention for Jons is manifested in this statement. <sup>11</sup> Jons must learn not to be misled by a false reliance on justice. For it is an ideal, dreamt of by the ignorant, a Utopia, a paradise (V.189).

In this respect, Wiechert's conclusions show a certain similarity to those of Stephan Andres in Wir sind Utopia, however far apart the two writers are in other respects. Paco Hernandez, lying on his bed in the cell he once occupied as Father Consalves, notices a patch of mildew on the ceiling around which he had once constructed a blueprint for a Utopia, in which a state of perfect harmony would exist. He recollects what a fellow-priest, Father Damiano, had once told him:

Gott geht nicht nach Utopia! Aber auf diese tränenfeuchte Erde kommt er - immer wieder! Denn hier ist unendliche Armut, unendlicher Hunger, unendliches Leid! Gott liebt das ihm ganz Andere... Gott liebt die Welt, weil sie unvollkommen ist. - Wir sind Gottes Utopia, aber eines im Werden. <sup>12</sup>

Andres' conclusions are distilled from a deep Catholic piety; Wiechert's are the product of an equally deep disillusionment. Paco solves the problem of his indecision by self-surrender to the mercy of God in the consciousness of his own guilt. Jons places his trust

in the little he can achieve independently. But despite the vast abyss which separates Andres and Wiechert, both recognize in man the yardstick by which future progress may be measured. There is a potential ground of weakness here which Wiechert does not avoid. The forest is still a Utopia for him, independent of man, and still serves as a safety-valve when the pressures of life become too demanding. Wiechert, therefore, is incapable of recognizing ignorance, brutality and misguided passion in rural life, as Zola did. After his discussion about the pointlessness of striving after the ideal, he is nevertheless able to describe a forest of white beeches as "das Paradies." (V.189) Andres' *Novelle*, by contrast, solves no real problems, nor does it attempt to do so. The answer is a literary one, and ultimately there is nothing Utopian in the 'refreshments' served to all from a machine-gun hidden behind the serving-hatch in the refectory of the monastery. Andres' ethical concern proceeds from his Catholic piety; Wiechert proclaims "den Aufbau einer Humanität weitab von der Religion." 13

From this point of view there is little that is unique in Missa. The great question of God's ways with man is given up once and for all. Man is henceforth the decisive mover. Wittkopp gives up his place at the pulpit and works with his hands. People need food and

clothing, not empty, hollow-sounding words, he says (VI.191-92). Evil, Wiechert admits in this novel, is eternal and is an integral part of creation. It is a temporary aberration from the true path of which the individual is really always conscious. Therefore maturity in a man is judged by the success with which he is able to oppose evil, for evil, strictly speaking, does not belong in the world. Freiherr Amadeus is concerned whether he will be transformed into a new man, for he realizes that, "das Reife nicht bedeutete, die einen zu hassen und die anderen zu lieben, sondern es dahin zu bringen, daß das Böse gleichsam auswanderte aus der Welt, weil es fremd war in der Welt." (VI.145) Conversion of the individual is therefore a true reformation. The tragedy of war is that it cannot be averted or suppressed by military perfectionism, "sondern nur mit der stillen und fast heiligen Kraft der einzelnen, reif und gütig gewordenen Menschenleben." (VI.144) Force only begets force.

It is for this reason that Wiechert's post-war works so eagerly exhort the German nation to start anew, to strike out in an entirely new direction. There is no correlation between denazification and spiritual reconstruction. There must be a genuine change of heart: "Unsere Aufgabe [ist] nicht reparieren, sondern neu-

bauen." (Über Kunst und Künstler, X.417) <sup>14</sup> Anna Lobedanz in Okay oder die Unsterblichen has suffered terribly and lost everything. But she can say: "Alle müssen noch einmal anfangen, ganz arm und ganz demütig. Keiner soll mehr ein Unrecht tun." (X.273) Even during the war, Wiechert had expressed in symbolic terms his belief that a return to pre-war conditions was now impossible. The word "neu" occurs many times in Totenmesse, and it always denotes the dawning of a new age:

Will mit Liebe die Erde neu gestalten  
und um alle Kinder die Hände falten. (X.183)

After the destruction of all physical, mental and spiritual security a new beginning in humility and love alone can guarantee the future. The moral of Die Brüder in Märchen II is that love is stronger than might (VIII.505). The two elder brothers lose their magical gifts - a swift horse and an invincible lance - but the youngest, who has chosen the gift of love, retains it.

Wiechert's exhortations do not contradict what we noted above, viz. that in his later life he became the exponent of a philosophy of tempered idealism. Freiherr Amadeus knows, as does his younger contemporary Jons, that evil can never be entirely eradicated from the world. For in fact there is no unique attitude which can change the course of the world entirely. Wiechert's aim is an honesty in man which will move him to strive for

a new world. Murder and hatred are not innate to man; he is born to love, to bear fruit, to cultivate the soil and live in communion with nature:

Weiß ein Kind vom Töten und Morden nicht ...  
.....  
Ist zu Liebe geboren, zu Acker und Frucht,  
wie der Schoß, der nach seiner Erfüllung sucht.  
Haben die Menschen es erst zum Mörder gemacht  
mit dem Wort, das sie in seine Seele gebracht.  
(Totenmesse, X.174)

It is easy to regard Wiechert's tempered idealism as the final solution to a life of inner struggle. Nevertheless, it might reasonably be asked whether his love-work-suffering motif is more than a pious nursery-tale, a thin veil disguising an inner bankruptcy. The old problems have not been solved; they have been comfortably disregarded and evaded. As Jons says, it is better if God is left out of the picture altogether (V.451). Consequently, when reading Wiechert, one is constantly beset by the suspicion that all is not right in the world and that the author's mystical evocations and forced heartiness betray a deep spiritual unrest. <sup>15</sup>

An explanation of this inner uncertainty may be found in the fact that Wiechert is caught between the Scylla and Charibdis of his philosophical analysis of life. Although the pantheistic figure of Das einfache Leben has little in common with Christian faith, Wiechert is unable to reject the concept of God entirely. On the other hand, in



his refusal to press the rationalist position to its logical conclusion, he fails to develop a utilitarian system of ethics independent of transcendence.<sup>16</sup> This leaves him with nature, and the line of connection between the inspiration of nature and the supposedly resultant ethical activity is never clearly drawn. At best, nature is depicted as a mystical force in whose environment man may work and act virtuously because he is not troubled by the complications of war and all the other phenomena connected with the city. Nature, then, is an escape from God and the world. The unrealistic, pantheistic figure of God (= nature) is fused with Wiechert's humanistic ideals (V.470). The activity of God is confined to man's actions. This frequent reference to God in human terms serves to expose the artificiality of the connection drawn between man's accomplishments and God's inscrutability.

Any contact, therefore, between Wiechert's protagonists and reality, as it is commonly understood, is accidental. They escape from a world they cannot understand to a more meaningful existence of their own creation. Love for one's fellow-man and hard work in his service may be laudable virtues, but they are largely unmotivated in the later works and serve not as a solution to Wiechert's and his heroes' predicament but as an

escape. Moreover, as Herd points out, " 'Die Lehre der Liebe' is ... presented with such sickly sweetness that we can hardly find in it the strength to face the essentially tragic view of life implicit in Wiechert's works." 17

It is remarkable that the experience of National Socialism and the war did not combine to shatter Wiechert's idealism entirely, but it is even more remarkable that he was able to develop a philosophy of life so divorced from the realities of the mid-twentieth century. Rede an die deutsche Jugend offers a solution to this strange paradox. The speech is not so much a tirade, as the bitter confessions of a tired man. Wiechert is baffled when confronted by the fact that the ideals of humanitas - love, mercy and tolerance - have been defeated in the Second World War, for these are the very virtues on which he stakes his existence. He saw them defeated, and yet he was forced to pin his whole faith and hope for renewal on them - or succumb to a nihilistic despair.

### C. The Healing Power of Nature

Wiechert's highly mystical treatment of nature as the source of man's inspiration and as the answer to all the problems of existence is a motif which was never far

absent in his prose-works and he constantly returned to the environment which provided the soil for his whole philosophy of life.

There are two related phases to Wiechert's treatment of nature as a literary motif and we shall investigate them separately.

- (1) In a world where 'civilized' values predominate and man wears the mask of cruelty or indifference; where individualism is crushed; where the figure of death relentlessly stalks its victims, especially in war, Wiechert points to the isolation, solitude and permanence of forest and field.
- (2) In a warring world, the suffering individual flees to nature. The treatment of nature with its power to help and heal undergoes a steady development.

In Jahre und Zeiten, reviewing his past career as a mentor, Wiechert states that part of his task has been to prevent the submersion of the individual in a mass consciousness. The basic core of Nazism, the "Weg der Masse" is, at the same time, the dishonourable path (IX.645), and the war robs man of the last traces of freedom and independence (chapter IIB). Therefore Wiechert recommends withdrawal from the outside world into a world of silence. Silence is not only a cardinal virtue but a sacred duty. <sup>18</sup> Where silence is maintained,

its antithesis - noise - a symbol of the decadence of western civilization, is excluded. Only through silence can man learn fully to appreciate the mystical forces of nature and develop a strong moral sense.

The disreputability of civilization after 1918 contrasted for Wiechert the silence and respectability of nature, and in a spate of works he tried to show the German nation the way out of decline by constantly emphasizing the antithesis between war and nature. Throughout these turbulent years one fundamental note remains unchanged: the unpredictability of life during war and the ills of modern society after it contrast the certainty that may be found in nature. From 1927 to 1950 this contrast continues unabated, and the Second World War adds nothing to the antithesis except that earlier convictions are reaffirmed.

After their experience on the battlefield, all of Wiechert's heroes come to realize that "des Pfluges Ehre größer ist als des Schwertes Ehre." (Der schwarze Peter, Märchen II, VIII.532) Michael Jeromin knows that the earth he tills is more important than emperor or war or power (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.271). When his wife expects a child and her life is threatened by Czawallina's son, he deserts for the same reasons as Michael Anders in Die Flucht ins Ewige: "Das bäuerliche Blut in ihm

verlangte nicht nach Glück oder Genuß, sondern nur nach der Gewähr der Zukunft." (V.273) The future is not guaranteed by war, and the refusal of the military authorities to grant him compassionate leave stamps them as unfeeling and heightens the contrast between their dedication to the forces of destruction and Michael's own hold on life.

Wiechert's contribution to literature has been this ever-recurring contrast between death and destruction in war and the continued life-giving activities of the sower and reaper, who provide food and whose work is an expression of confidence in the fruitfulness of the soil. War interferes with the natural course of events, and to interrupt the cycle of life is tantamount to sacrilege. All of Wiechert's soldier-heroes experience the contact with life in nature as a revelation. The army barracks and battlegrounds of the western front are to Johannes in Jedermann pitiless manifestations in comparison with the fertility of the fields. Consolation emanates from a flower discovered on the battlefield and a guarantee of the indestructibility of the divine: "Hier gab es keine Erschütterung der Harmonie... Unendlichkeit des Trostes ging von der Bläue ihrer Kelche aus, Unzerstörbarkeit des Göttlichen inmitten aller verschlingenden Vernichtung." (III.412) In Hirtennovelle, the war disturbs

the cemetery but is unable to upset the simple cross on Michael's grave. The moral of the story is clear: the life of a shepherd, lived in simplicity and love for nature, is sanctified and is to be estimated far more highly than the destructive forces of war (VI.551).

The contrast between cornfield and battlefield proves difficult for Wiechert's heroes to bear. The earth is meant to bear fruit and to receive the dead in accordance with the eternal laws of nature. Instead, Jons is confronted with

das Bild einer verwüsteten, zerrissenen und ganz und gar ohnmächtigen Erde etwa, auf die der schräge Regen fiel, der die Toten langsam in sie hineinwusch. Keine ernste, fruchtbare Erde, wie er sie kannte, feierlich aufgetan, um feierlich gekleidete Tote zu empfangen, sondern Schmutz, Verwüstung, Gesetzlosigkeit, in der auch die Toten ebenso schmutzig, verwüstet und gesetzlos umherlagen. Die Zerstörung aller festen und geheiligten Bilder, die er aus seinem Walde mitgebracht hatte, die Auflösung alles Hergebrachten, das ihn mit dem Vater und Großvater verband. (V.456-57)

Yet Jons' village, Sowirog, can withstand all the terrors of war. Men and boys are taken, houses, cattle, harvest and seed, but the soil and the forest remain (V.363).

As Jons leaves the village to take up his study of medicine at the end of Jeromin-Kinder I, he catches sight of Kiewitt ploughing the soil as he has always done. Jons reflects on the significance of what he sees: "Der Krieg, der Haß, der Tod sind über die Welt dahingebraust, über das Dorf und seine Menschen, aber sie

haben die Erde nicht mitgenommen, die er gerodet und umgebrochen hat." (V.519) In order that the reader may not miss the significance of Kiewitt's activity, Wiechert explains that it symbolizes "das Erhaltende, Bewahrende und Ewige dieser dunklen Erde." (V.520)

Jeromin-Kinder II comes to similar conclusions, although it is set during Nazism and has the Second World War in mind. The novel constantly stresses the spiritual resources of the village which, by virtue of its close contact with the soil, make it more immune to revolutions and subversion than the city. Political fads are impotent against the long traditions of the villagers, who live in security despite their poverty (V.551). The Nazis are almost entirely unsuccessful in making converts in Sowirog. The lack of understanding or even concern for the shibboleths represented by National Socialism is due to the inability of the villagers, accustomed to thinking in terms of eternity, to take seriously claims which contradict what they instinctively know to be right. It is for this reason that Johannes Gogun is beaten up and imprisoned. Jons says of him that he probably does not even know the meaning of a flag. (V.892) Even Herr von Balk who is aware of the significance of the Nazi uniform and the penalty for disregarding it, does not take it seriously, and when

war is declared, he refuses to join in the merrymaking, for he is certainly a German, but no idiot (V.968). The villagers are suspicious of the Nazis because they recognize in them an alien spirit (V.823).

Even though a loudspeaker and a flagpole are erected in Sowirog, and even though Nazism seems, on the surface, to have conquered, these are novelties; the village will sustain the years (V.835). The novel ends on this note. Tanks enter the village and the Nazis fire at Kiewitt's old horse, the symbol of eternity (V.976), but the village will survive, strengthened by Jons who bears all the responsibility for its well-being on his young shoulders. In his hands he holds a child symbolizing the future life which conquers death.

Perhaps the most original treatment of the death-life theme is to be found in the poem, Am Abend zu beten. Here the contrast between cornfield and battlefield is contained in the one symbol of the reaper who represents not only the immutable, intransient nature of the soil, which provides the means for the continued existence of life, but also the grim figure of death which ploughs over men's plans in preparation for new life.

We now move to the second aspect of Wiechert's treatment of the contrast between war and nature, viz.



the manner in which the individual retreats from the world outside and, in the later works, develops from egotism to altruism.<sup>19</sup> In what way does nature help the individual who has isolated himself from the world and sought to protect himself from the maelstrom of civilization by retreating to the paradise of forest and field? For Wiechert the flight to nature is initially an act of salvation from a chaotic existence: "Die Flucht in den Wald [ist] die Einkehr in die lebendige sinnvolle Wirklichkeit."<sup>20</sup> Protagonists in search of self-perfection and self-knowledge withdraw literally or metaphorically to an island set apart from the world with only occasional contact with other isolated individuals. In this way they come to terms with their own objections to the world and, in the later works, meet hatred with love.

In Flucht, Wiechert's first published work, the conflict between nature and civilization is never resolved and this has the direst consequences for Holm. His dissatisfaction with city-life impels him to flee to the forest, an island of forgetfulness. But civilization has tainted him and he is no longer comforted or satisfied by his daily toil in nature: when a cow calves he sprays himself with eau de cologne (I.168) and he changes his clothes after spreading manure (I.182). Holm discovers

that it is impossible to take the path which leads back to childhood innocence; nor can the temporary delights of civilization still his undefined longings. So Holm commits suicide. Wiechert offers no solution to this inner conflict. Holm seeks a Utopia, but instead of arriving at inner harmony, he falls under the two-edged sword of his own indecision. All the major protagonists in the novels until 1924 share Holm's experience. Die blauen Schwingen (1917) tells the story of Harro Bruckner and his longing for the lost garden of innocence. The novel "is a monument of nostalgic lyricism itself."<sup>21</sup> But Harro must resign himself to the bitter realization that he has achieved nothing, and the novel ends as he continues to search for a Utopia. If there is any development of idea in this novel it is in the figure of Ruhoff. Here, for the first time, is a man for whom isolation means the attainment of an ideal - peace of mind - and for whom it is not simply a synonym for self-imprisonment.

An attempt is made to solve the problem of escapism in Wald and Totenwolf. Although the dominant motif is still one of flight from reality, the retreat is now seen as preparation for new action. The moral of Wald is clear: if the individual cannot preserve his ideals intact in a decaying world, he must flee with the little he can rescue in the hope of preserving the seed of his ideals against their future rehabilitation. Wald makes the

grand gesture of heroic defiance and, unlike Flucht or Die blauen Schwingen, it is suggested, but without real conviction, that Henner's ideals are worth preserving. Wolf Wiedensahl in Totenwolf solves no problems and, like Holm, commits suicide. J. D. Workman has shown that the attempt to provide a positive solution is unsuccessful in both works,

due to the fact that the whole tendency of the solution runs counter to Wiechert's innermost nature. The result is an almost grotesque discrepancy between the fantastically ambitious dreams of his heroes and their pathetic inability to act. 22

In Selbstporträt (1946), Wiechert writes that a marked change in the development towards positive affirmation of life is to be seen in Andreas Nyland: "Erst mit dem 'Knecht Gottes' begann die endgültige Wende zur reinen Humanität." (X.724) Yet it is well-nigh impossible to detect this turning-point in Andreas Nyland. Andreas' one ambition after experiencing the whole gamut of war is to liberate mankind and, like Henner and Wolf, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Certainly there is a new sense of social responsibility in the novel, but Nyland only succeeds in making those suffer whom he is trying to help. The last chapter of Andreas Nyland I, in which he has a vision of new possibilities, betrays a forced pathos which belies Wiechert's own conclusions at this time. Wiechert has,

as yet, only an inkling of the way he should go and is still seeking the answer to his problems in the one corner of the universe which remains unspoiled for him: in nature. Nyland seeks seclusion in the forest, there to nurse his wounds and await further inspiration. After all his struggles he collapses. In Andreas Nyland II, he fails to find what he seeks, either in physical isolation or in himself. He becomes a hermit and a legend.

A marked change in the 'Island motif' is noticeable in Kleine Passion and Jedermann. Both novels express the new conviction that fear may be overcome and security attained by the retaining of one's individuality, - which is only possible in nature. Johannes Karsten grows up in isolation with his mother, who represents a "temporary haven in which he can renew contact with the spiritual values of his childhood, with the soil of his ancestral home and with the blood of the Karsten family." <sup>23</sup> Johannes emerges as a young man, secure in himself, with a desire to do something positive, even if the idea is still undefined. In Jedermann, his great task is to preserve his individuality. The group of young men gathered around Johannes remains self-contained with the power to resist the senselessness of war and is fortified by Johannes who, in turn, is inspired by his mother and his home soil. A music box, the friendship

of a stray dog and the flower blooming on the battlefield are continual reminders of what is permanent and lasting. Johannes survives the war and matured if sobered returns to life: "Er hat das Kriegserlebnis als Baustein seinem weiteren Leben eingefügt." <sup>24</sup> Although the compact group around him is decimated, he looks forward to a future which promises new life. "Korn muß gesät werden," he says (III.515). The war is no more than a horrible interlude; life goes on and although Johannes has still not accomplished anything, he is determined to do so in the knowledge that nature will support and inspire him.

The ferryman in Doskocil lives in the same spirit - close to nature. Like so many of Wiechert's favourites he has the gift of second sight. He is faithful to his work and to those around him, and continues to do his duty whatever the personal cost. "Von neuem werden wir beginnen," Doskocil says when all has been destroyed, "ja, mit dem Acker und mit dem Kind... Der Anfang, das ist das Leben." (IV.107)

Die Majorin marks a milestone in Wiechert's development, for in this novel, for the first time, retreat to nature is presented as a source of the unconscious effort to help others. Without this new realization, Wiechert would hardly have had the strength to withstand Buchenwald five years later. The story is

once again of a young man who returns from a life in close contact with death on the battlefield and seeks to come to terms first with himself and later with others. He is embittered when he returns (IV.195) and wants only to be alone (IV.203). The place of isolation in nature is provided by the baroness who recognizes his problem and eventually helps him along the path to positive affirmation through her love, consideration and self-humiliation. He accompanies her to her house, "was wie eine Insel des Lebens erscheint." (IV.189) Nowhere in this novel is it even hinted that Michael is to work consciously for the benefit of others. His initial problem is to live among people with himself.

Slowly Michael is rehabilitated. At first he isolates himself, a strange hermit, officially acting as huntsman. He stays at his post despite the constant urge to continue on his restless path in search of absolute peace and freedom. The forest acts on him, cooling the fever of war. But his life has, as yet, no goal: "Speise und Dach und Schlaf sind kein Zweck. Sie sind ihm zugefallen, aber er hat nicht verlangt nach ihnen." (IV.226) He is still the soldier who has become a huntsman because he cannot renew the contact with life necessary for being a peasant (IV.228). Nevertheless, the "Helfen, Heilen, Zurückführen," (IV.230) which is the

baroness' object, slowly takes effect. When he finally decides to harvest his father's crop, he has realized that the work of his hands in itself can no longer give him the peace of mind he so urgently seeks: "Man müsse nur da sein für etwas, für ein Pferd zum Beispiel, oder für ein Feld... Für etwas anderes als sich selbst müsse man da sein." (IV.346)

In Hirtennovelle,<sup>25</sup> there is a new stage of development in the nature motif. The forest is no longer simply a force which protects and heals and leads the individual to renew his contact with life almost against his will, as in Majorin. Wiechert resumes and stresses the idea of the individual strengthened by solitude, but adds the character's conscious action on behalf of others. Self-sacrifice is a virtue stressed for the first time. Michael dies for "das Ärmste seiner Herde." (VI.550) He has that modesty and love for his fellow which Wiechert extols as cardinal virtues and which are derived from a quiet lived in simplicity close to the soil. Hirtennovelle therefore gives an indication of the path Wiechert will take through National Socialism and World War II, and the solutions he will offer after the war. Michael's isolation is no longer an end in itself, but a means to making his life useful to others.

Wiechert's contact with the brutality of life at Buchenwald and afterwards during the war is reflected in the final stage of his development towards literary maturity with which we are primarily concerned here. It has become commonplace among Wiechert critics to recognize in the period after 1938 a stage of resignation; what Ebeling calls, "die Stufe der letzten Konsequenz seines Weges, der 'entsagenden Vollendung'." <sup>26</sup> Wiechert is continually involved in problems of faith; every confrontation with the realities of the political, technological and sociological developments of his time forces him to re-interpret these realities in the light of the point of development he has hitherto reached. In this final stage he learns to subordinate his inner struggles to a general principle. The natural life, "das einfache Leben" requires self-effacement. One's own doubts and uncertainties are simply part of the general order of things, and on the whole, all things work out for best. Each human being has the potentiality for good and, living in solitude, must have as his one aim the welfare of his neighbour. Of course, nature is still the great catalyst which works upon the individual and transforms him.

The humanitarian aspects of the motif of retreat to nature seem to have reached their culmination: the



individual, battered by alien forces far more powerful in their destructive capacity than the civilization that has given rise to them, retreats to nature to lick his wounds and reflect on his failures. Slowly he is nursed back to health until he has learned of his own accord to aid the sick and suffering and has achieved a greater degree of self-knowledge. In humility he dedicates his whole life to the service of others.

It may well be asked, however, whether the scores of critics who have delighted in recounting this development, have not failed to recognize that this ultimate step in positive thinking at the end of Wiechert's career is a direct result of the bitterness of his experiences with National Socialism and World War II; that this final positive step hides the deep inner uncertainty which we noted in chapter III(B). The old problems have not been solved. God no longer sits in His heaven benevolently regarding a creation well-made. Men of good will are forced to suffer for their ideals, and the ignominy of concentration camp, defeat and abuse comprise the sole fruits of their labours. In some way, then, the product of Wiechert's painstaking development towards affirmation does not accord with his own experiences. The confidence of his assertions belies his own struggle with inconsistencies. Moreover, there

has been a shift of emphasis. In Flucht, Holm's problem was not to live a meaningful life in service of others but to solve for himself the contradiction between the relative attractions of nature and civilization. But in the important works after 1938, Das einfache Leben, Jeromin-Kinder and Missa, none of the protagonists enters nature after an unfortunate contact with civilization or war in order to return to the scene of his suffering, and none of them labours for his fellow-man within the framework of civilization. At no stage does Wiechert suggest that 'natural' values may be realized outside nature. Therefore the original conflict between nature and civilization has itself been re-interpreted and is never resolved, so that the final 'solution' is only a more sophisticated form of the escapism which earlier works betray and which is deeply rooted in Wiechert's personality.

In Jahre und Zeiten Wiechert writes in explanation of the genesis of Das einfache Leben:

Es war ein Traumbuch, in dem ich mich mit Flügeln über diese grauenvolle Erde hinaushob. Mit ihm spülte ich mir von der Seele, was sie beschmutzt, befleckt, erniedrigt, entwürdigt und zu Tode gequält hatte. Mit ihm gingen die Schatten und die Toten fort, nicht in das wesenlose Nichts, sondern in ein beglänzttes Land der Erinnerung und der Verklärung. Mit ihm baute ich noch einmal eine Welt auf, nachdem die irdische mir zusammengebrochen oder schrecklich entstellt worden war. Nicht eine wirkliche, aber eine mögliche, und jede mögliche Welt ist auch eine wahre Welt.  
(IX.688-89)

The popularity of the novel is to be sought, Wiechert continues, not solely in the fact that a land of dreams has been erected, "Die Insel der Seeligen." -

Nicht nur das Asyl, das unverletzliche, unantastbare, in das man sich flüchten konnte aus der Welt der Lautsprecher, der Umzüge, der Denunzianten, des Stacheldrahtes. Sondern daß die Liebe darüber gebreitet war, das aus der Welt Verschwundene und durch einen finsternen Haß Ersetzte. (IX.689)

In a personal meeting with Wiechert, Friedrich Bruns expressed considerable surprise at the fact that Das einfache Leben had appeared so soon after the Buchenwald imprisonment. Wiechert replied: "Ich mußte das tun. Das war meine Rettung." <sup>27</sup> This novel understandably serves Wiechert as an escape from reality. The true visage of man has been distorted by the Nazis who contaminate and defile those in their power. Das einfache Leben is a purgative for the author; in it he escapes from the oppressiveness of a reality which his sensitive soul cannot endure. At times the novel gives an inkling of the inner uncertainty that attended its genesis. The general is not unduly concerned at his granddaughter's tendency to dream. "Es gab Stunden, für die man einen Glauben haben mußte, und wenn der Glaube wankte, blieb nur der Traum." (IV.525)

While Thomas von Orla reflects Wiechert's inner struggles, he is also an ideal projection of the

author's desires at this time. Thus, on the one hand, Wiechert can point to his immediate experiences in 1938 and the necessity to escape from them and find refuge in a world of dreams, but on the other, the protagonists in Das einfache Leben know no such refuge exists. Von Orla seeks a joyful heart. Graf Pernein warns him not to build castles in the air:

Mein lieber Orla, ein frohes Herz haben nur die Leute, die die Augen zumachen und sagen können: "Komm nun, lieber Traum, und hülle mich ein!" Ach, was hat der Mensch alles erfunden, um über das Wachsein hinwegzukommen! Götter und Künste, Kriege und Arbeit, Puppen und Maschinen. Aber es hilft alles nichts. Die Uhr tickt, der Zeiger rückt weiter, und immer näher kommt das Land ohne Traum. (IV.473)

Wiechert, in accordance with his new philosophy of resignation, sees the problem of escape to a dream as a choice between two fallacies. War is as much a means of escape as the attempt to forget it. Only in death is the dream at an end (IV.473). Nevertheless, the dream which issues in resignation and the desire to help others is to be preferred, for this is not escapism, Wiechert asserts. He lets von Orla speak for him:

Viele werden sagen, daß ich mich vor dem Leben und seiner Verantwortung flüchte und daß die Resignation, wie sie es nennen, einem Manne in meinem Alter nicht zustehe. Aber ich glaube nicht, daß derjenige flieht, der arbeitet. (IV.617)

Thomas, like his author, has lived and suffered; this gives him the right, he believes, to leave it all behind

him, to work and seek to bring some semblance of order to his life.

He returns to nature and isolates himself on an island in the attempt to discover values that endure after the insincerity of his social intercourse and the senselessness of city life. He knows that a return to the blissful innocence of childhood is no longer possible; instead he seeks harmony with nature and himself. His quest for peace of mind cannot entirely be divorced from his past life; rather, it includes his war experiences. But what he lacks is the ability to order these past experiences and incorporate them in his 'Weltanschauung'. His isolation is his - and Wiechert's - method of coming to terms with the exigencies of a chaotic world at war. His conclusion is that man's aim can be no more than to do what is right and help a limited number of people within the narrow confines of his life (IV.467).

But what does Thomas actually achieve when all is said and done? To gain some sort of intellectual equilibrium is all very well, but Orla never returns to the city to practise what he has learned, and after all the grand speeches, the high ideals and the heroic struggles, he has learned to be satisfied with very little indeed. He has a strange relationship with a

somewhat precocious girl far younger than himself, but he never marries her. He believes in a future, but it is divorced from reality, represented concretely in the novel by an unimaginative, over-ambitious son, whom he cannot understand. He has exchanged views with an eccentric count, but their discussions are largely fruitless and occasionally even trivial. This is the "einfache Leben" which is to fashion a new world after the war! Thomas believes that his retreat cannot be called an escape because work is not an escape. But despite the claim that a new altruism is reflected in the novel, there is something basically selfish in characters like Thomas von Orla. Therefore, what is objectionable is not that Wiechert succeeds in escaping reality, for this might surely be allowed as a possible literary answer to the problems raised by totalitarianism and, after Buchenwald, as a most human reaction. But while Wiechert indulges his escapist tendencies, he claims them to be the reverse of what they actually are. Consequently his characters hide behind a cloak of humility and love and disguise their real rebellion against God and the world. In Jahre und Zeiten, Wiechert refers to the writing of his Märchen not as a flight from pain, but as the flight of a man who leaves a stronghold to seek food for his loved ones (IX.707).

Unfortunately, Thomas von Orla never returns to his loved ones and the food he finds is meagre nourishment indeed.

Jeromin-Kinder is constructed around the basic contradiction between 'Natur' and 'Geist' in very much the same fashion as Das einfache Leben. It, too, points out the road to a positive, active life, lived in the service of others, and attempts to show how such a position may be won in spite of the debilitating effects of war on the individual. Here the contrast between nature and war is much more forceful than in the earlier novel. In Jeromin-Kinder, the author seems consciously to correct the earlier conclusions of Flucht, and he does so on the basis of his newly-won conviction that the only hope for the world lies in the activity of the individual who is securely rooted in a 'natural' environment. In Flucht, the protagonist returns to the village Sowirok to retreat from the world; Jons Jeromin returns to Sowirog - and the use of this name for the village is not fortuitous - to alleviate suffering, and he makes his decision on the basis of insights gained by contact with war. Isolation for its own sake is now seen as senseless. Rather the individual must develop from being a passive, lonely onlooker into being helpful and self-sufficient.

When one probes beneath the superficial moralism of Jeromin-Kinder, however, one discovers an artificiality which Flucht simply does not betray. The unresolved conflicts of the early novel are infinitely more satisfactory than the forced conclusions of Jeromin-Kinder which, while it does not deal explicitly with the Second World War and only incidentally with Nazism, is nevertheless a personal manifesto, shaped by the author's contact with those events. The ponderous style also reveals Wiechert's perplexity when he encounters insurmountable spiritual and philosophical obstacles. Village, forest, field and plough have long served him as the foundations of his world, but in Jeromin-Kinder the security and permanence of these phenomena are emphasized out of all proportion and it becomes obvious that Wiechert does not intend his hero to be affected adversely by his contact with war or the city. Jons is protected in nature from any insights which may alter the course of his life and the freedom of his development towards helpful service is severely hampered. For he is not responsible for his own development. The course of his life is predetermined - not by a 'Turmgesellschaft' - but no less inexorably by the environment in which he is born. Wiechert never lets him reject any of the values instilled in him, and hence he is able to anticipate



Jons' ultimate conclusions. It is perhaps not unfair to wonder about those poor unfortunates who unlike Jons remain unprotected from the vicissitudes of life.

Unlike Thomas von Orla, Jons' development does not begin in a place infinitely removed from nature. The immutability of the village is driven home from the very beginning. If Jons learns to help mankind, it is only because his roots are in nature. Jeromin-Kinder II begins almost inevitably with a description of the ceaseless round - the village and graveyard - contrasting the transience in the world outside. The events depicted after the First World War only emphasize the village's isolation. It is immaterial that Korsanke swears allegiance to the Republic where previously he vowed to serve the Kaiser (V.524). Politics and the forces of evil may overwhelm the village, but they cannot obliterate it (V.531).

Every time he leaves the village or returns to it from school in the city or from war, Jons sees old Kiewitt with his plough and horses, and they remind him of his debt to nature. Later, after years in the trenches, Jons walks past Kiewitt's house. The plough stands in the black earth and Jons is assured that all remains unchanged and the future guaranteed (V.504-505). In Jeromin-Kinder II, he returns from University and is once more

reminded of the ceaseless, meaningful round of life close to the soil (V.566-67). Jons, therefore, cannot but be part of the eternity which Sowirog represents. His spiritual roots are there and their existence is never questioned nor their influence on his every action threatened. His goal is clear and the problems to be met are not insuperable. Even the signs of the times present no great obstacle. Inflation may take hold of Germany, but seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night are guaranteed (V.549).

One might be justified in asking why Wiechert places his hero in the trenches at all. Jons' military service is almost entirely unmotivated. If he were fighting for some abstract ideal and later reached peace of mind after a period of disillusionment, we could understand it. At least a higher stage of purification - in Wiechert's sense - would have been reached. Instead, however, Wiechert uses his knowledge of war to provide a testing-ground for Jons, and to draw the contrast between the ephemeral and eternal even more starkly. Yet the effectiveness of this contrast is diminished by the fact that Jons is not entirely involved in any experience not embraced by the village, nor is there any conflict within himself. He remains aloof from contemporary world events:

Dahinter aber blieb er selbst, das Unberührte und Unberührbare, das was ihm allein zu eigen war... Es war nicht so, wie er gedacht und gewollt hatte, daß er sein ganzes, ungeteiltes Herz in diesen Abschnitt seines Lebens hineinbringen würde. Er konnte sich nicht verwandeln.  
(Jeromin-Kinder I, V.441)

All the war is able to achieve for Jons is to temper his idealism as it had the author's and convince him that it is better, after all, to settle down to humble activity. Jons' choice of the medical profession is confirmed by his war experiences, but it has already been prepared by the long discussions with Jumbo, the medical student.

Jons and Herr von Balk, like all the 'approved' characters in Jeromin-Kinder, are politically indifferent. The best Jons can do is to save the village and, by falsifying the medical certificates, prevent the Nazis recruiting among the inhabitants. If there is any future for Germany it lies in the village: "Ein Dorf haben wir zu retten," says Herr von Balk, "kein Vaterland! Aber in diesem Dorf liegt vielleicht das Samenkorn zu einem neuen Vaterland... In den Furchen der Armen." (Jeromin-Kinder II, V.850) Jons' work as a doctor is not an escape from reality, Wiechert asserts, for escapism is no longer a way out of the horrors of the inevitable war. "Es würde leicht sein, jetzt fortzugehen, ... auf eine Insel im Stillen Ozean," Jons

tells his brother Christean (V.855), but he dismisses the possibility. The survival of the village depends on the work they can achieve. Yet the escape is still really there. Wiechert places his character in the idyll that was denied him, and Jons is protected from the experiences his author suffered. "Den dritten Band dieses Buches hat die Geschichte geschrieben, mit schweren und grauenvollen Buchstaben," Wiechert writes in a postscript to Jeromin-Kinder, "und es ist keiner Dichtung das Recht gegeben, über dieses Grauen den Schimmer der Verklärung zu legen." (V.978)

The same divorce from reality is revealed in Missa. The novel is about "die Unvergänglichkeit des Lebens," (VI.440, 441) and the recovery of a sense of life after World War II in a situation where any positive attitude would seem impossible. That the work is positive is undeniable, and it is to Wiechert's credit. Behind the bitter struggle of Freiherr Amadeus to face life, lies Wiechert's own battle; consequently the book is more honest than Jeromin-Kinder, and Amadeus more representative than the intolerably smug Jons. The self-pity so patent in Totenwald has disappeared entirely. But Missa claims to be more than the final reflections of an old man in his last work. As we shall see (chapter V), like all his works, the purpose of writing is not only

cathartic, but also didactic. As Ollesch has said, Wiechert's books were read not only as literary works, but "weithin als Lebensrezepte,"<sup>28</sup> and this was certainly his own intention. But to say that Missa deals with post-war recovery is misleading, for the milieu and, more particularly, the spirit of the novel are far removed from contemporary political and economic events.<sup>29</sup> All of Wiechert's utterances in this novel are entirely personal, and the community which forms the background to the work is, like Stifter's, so small and isolated that as a model for action, Missa is impracticable.

The structure of the novel reflects the triviality of Wiechert's interest. Three aristocratic brothers from the east meet in the west after World War II in order together to seek readjustment. The main protagonist, Amadeus, treads the most difficult path after four years' incarceration in a concentration camp. Around him are gathered old friends, like himself governed in their actions and thoughts by that deep contact with nature which an upbringing in the Masurian forests brings. Thus the typical Wiechertian situation is recreated once more, and the background for the whole work is once again the healing power of nature. The inner development of Missa is ponderous. "Das innere

Leben des Werkes bezeugt sich fast allein durch die Aussage von Wiecherts Daseinsdeutung und Lebenslehren, die im Hinblick auf den nahe bevorstehenden Tod das Zeichen der Engültigkeit erhalten." <sup>30</sup> The thesis of the work is the superiority of life over a living death and the idea that the continuation of life must be regarded as a blessing with a purpose, viz. that a further opportunity is given to serve humanity. This thesis is hardly new in Wiechert. In Jeromin-Kinder he had depicted a young man who learnt with the passing of time that high ideals were noble but unattainable, and Jons learned without too much difficulty to be satisfied with the very little required by Wiechert's tempered idealism.

Missa is less idealistic, and Amadeus - and his author - are a great deal more uncertain than Jons. This lack of conviction is no mere literary effect; it is a basic theme of the book. Wiechert no longer raises his voice in a tirade against God and man. Every evil action is to be overcome with love, consideration and forgiveness. Rehabilitation in the life of an individual poisoned by the hatred of twelve years or in the life of a nation governed by fear cannot be achieved by technical, economic and industrial reconstruction, - hence the lack of interest in these post-war phenomena. Reconstruction

touches only the less important side of man, the side of "Ratio". It may alleviate pain and suffering, but it does not remove the cancerous growth which produces them. Reconstruction betrays narrowness of horizons. The disease which has struck Germany and, more particularly, the individual German must be removed by a simultaneous act of re-creation, which is only complete when the individual meets with open arms the responsibilities which crowd in on him. Amadeus' 'convalescence' is aided by the few who understand his complaint - Christoph, the old footman, and Wittkopp, the disillusioned pastor. The sphere of renewing activity is limited in scope and has no repercussions on the outside world. Nevertheless, it is felt that if this process, exemplified in Amadeus, were to be mirrored in every individual German - and American! - a wholly new people would be re-created.

Hitherto we have traced a development in the theme of nature healing the individual and leading him back along the path from death to life. In Missa all previous stages of development are once more recapitulated in the figure of Amadeus. <sup>31</sup> His gradually awakening interest in nature and in the lives of the few who surround him is reflected symbolically in the three Christmas festivals which span the novel. Amadeus returns from

concentration camp filled with hatred, bitterness and suspicion: "So ging es sich also, wenn der Tod einen zwischen den Schultern berührt hatte." (VI.7) His feet hurt in the new shoes given him by the Americans; he eats their bread and smokes their cigarettes, but the injuries done to his emotional and spiritual being are not so easily alleviated. Above all, "er liebte nicht mehr," (VI.9) and this is his greatest complaint. His experiences have shattered him because they are so alien to his former way of life. In a flash-back the three brothers are revealed as highly sensitive, musical, mystically inclined, and influenced by an almost religious bond with nature. They speak, as it were, in a foreign tongue, meaningful only to themselves (VI.19).

Amadeus seeks the solution to his inner fear, like Holm in Flucht, in complete isolation (VI.30). He realizes that his hatred stems not from his background but from something alien to nature: "Das Härte der Natur und der Geschöpfe war gewesen, immer, aber nicht das Böse des Menschen. Es war zu einsam gewesen hier für das Böse." (VI.41) Agidius has very little difficulty in re-establishing himself in nature, but Amadeus realizes that he can only live alone and he brooks no interference with his life of isolation. Against his better judgment he agrees to hold the Christmas



celebrations in the sheep-pen he occupies, but the reconciliatory nature of the festival is entirely lost to him and he is reminded only of the tree in the concentration camp, "in dessen starken, von Lichtern beschienenen Zweigen der kalte Wind die Körper der drei Gehängten leise bewegt hatte." (VI.140) Erasmus and Ägidius do not interfere in his development but, by their loyalty and affection, enable him to discover new meaning in life.

Gradually, isolation has its effect on him. Like Andreas Nyland, Amadeus tries to conquer his fears and uncertainties by helping others in a limited way. Nature soothes him, even if he does not admire it for its own sake. He realizes that maturity means working so that evil may be banished from the world (VI.145). The failures in contemporary society are to be ascribed to fear which comes from the world of "Ratio" (VI.152-53). Amadeus suffers from this fear, as does Barbara, and the path of re-creation can only go through nature. Significantly, his first selfless act is to dig up a piece of ground, for "Felder geben immer Ruhe und Stärke." (VI.157) The change wrought in him by the time the second Christmas after his return is celebrated is not a great one. Of his own free will he has dug up the earth around the cottages of the turf-cutters and planted flowers

(VI.180), the symbols of new life. He has come to realize that he needs the villagers, and that working for them gives him satisfaction. Like Johannes in Jedermann, he has not yet a clear vision of his future task nor of the manner in which it is to be accomplished. After he is shot, a decisive change is wrought in him. He no longer seeks to avenge himself and speaks kindly to Barbara, just as Jürgen in Doskocil refuses to take vengeance when the crowd attacks and injures him. Moreover, Amadeus takes up the 'cello once more, a sure sign that the magical power of music is taking the place of the hatred of a year before.

The recognition of responsibility for others is an essential part of this process of healing, and Amadeus sacrifices his own inner struggles for the sake of Barbara. Her temporary insanity is the result of the evil preying on her mind. Amadeus takes up the challenge and, like Michael in Hirtennovelle, consciously helps her rehabilitation. The long road from hatred and fear to love and mercy is represented both in Barbara and Amadeus. To have pity on another is the highest stage of development possible, and no limitations are set on the individual whose actions are entirely selfless. What Amadeus tells Barbara after her recovery is equally true of his own development:

Vergiß nicht, ... daß nichts mehr Gewalt über dich hat, seitdem du dich erbarmt hast. Nichts und niemand. Wer sich erbarmt hat, hat alles ausgelöscht. Es gibt keine Angst und keine Gefahr mehr für den, der sich erbarmt hat. Niemals!  
(VI.355)

Pity and hatred cannot exist side by side. Barbara saves his life and he saves her sanity. Both have recognized a responsibility outside themselves. When Amadeus adopts her and her child his rehabilitation is complete. Like Jons Jeromin, he renounces his personal needs for the good of others. Erasmus, however, has to suffer because of his selfishness. His marriage to Frau Daisy is a failure, partly because he regards her as a mere tool to serve a predetermined end, partly because of her dedication to the evil forces of civilization.

It is at the third Christmas festival that Amadeus' reconciliation with life is regarded as complete. He has achieved very little, less even than Jons Jeromin, but for Wiechert the greatest possible realization is that one's life is to be lived in humble service. The vastness of the world outside where wars are fought is contrasted with the smallness and insignificance of man's role in nature:

So groß war die Welt hinter dem Moor, so dunkel und voller Gefahr, und so klein war der Raum des Lebens, in dem sie nun geborgen waren. Aber neben der Weite der Welt, wo die großen und heldenhaften Dinge geschahen, und mit ihnen die bösen und noch immer unheilträchtigen, mußte es wohl auch die kleinen Räume geben, die man nun mit dem erfüllte, womit schon die Vorfahren sie erfüllt hatten: mit dem

Tagwerk der kleinen Leute und mit der großen Geduld, die nur die kleinen Leute hatten. (VI.410)

Once again the final conclusion of Missa is disappointing after all the long speeches, the intellectual rationalization of emotional problems and the heroic gestures. Yet this is the sum total of the instruction Wiechert seeks to give to a post-war generation. The flight to an island of dreams which was at the root of Das einfache Leben has been rejected by 1945. Wiechert now recognizes that

kein Mensch unserer Gegenwart und wahrscheinlich einer langen Zukunft berechtigt ist, aus dem Kreis des Leidens herauszutreten, um seine stillen oder lärmenden Spiele zu spielen. Daß es keine Insel geben darf, auf der diejenigen, die wir die Begnadeten nennen (und sie sind doch so weit von der Gnade entfernt), ihre Hütte für sich bauen, auf deren Schwelle sie sitzen, um die goldnen Seifenblasen einer erdichteten Welt hinaufsteigen zu lassen in den Himmel der Schmerzen. (Über Kunst und Künstler, X.423)

Unfortunately, Wiechert is unable to escape from his island in practice. While it is undeniable that the later novels present a new positive, immanent 'Weltanschauung', they also betray the inner unresolved struggles which issue in resignation. In Selbstporträt, Wiechert shows that ultimately there is no solution to the problems of the west: "Ich werde weder Welt noch Abendland verändern," he confesses in this unique statement of resignation, "Sie brausen wie ein fallender

Stern ihrem Ziele zu." (X.725) Consequently, even the admonition to work is only a temporary escape from the inner problems and is an inconsequential solution to the war and to defeat, the far country of a fairy-tale in which all of Wiechert's protagonists live happily ever after as the small community of the "Stillen im Lande," of those who are "guten Willens" (in the poem, Denen, die guten Willens sind, 1945, X.515): "Das Relative nimmt den Schein des Absoluten, das Menschliche den des Göttlichen an, denn 'es' ist immer in uns!" <sup>32</sup> Beneath the surface of the novel lies the old problem of God's dealings with men, and to the Unknown God this mass without a name is dedicated.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DIDACTIC TASK OF ART

Hitherto we have only hinted at the theory of the function of literature which determines Wiechert's approach to his subject-matter and to the wider circle of his readers. However, a clarification of his literary aim sheds some interesting light on the sociological statements made in speeches and essays after 1945, and shows that Wiechert is determined to use his novels, short stories, poems and plays as vehicles of attack on western culture and in support of his ethical programme. His literary career, particularly after the Second World War, is governed entirely by his concept of the aims and duties of the artist. Beauty of style, form, development of plot, imitation of life, involvement and complication in character depiction receive only a passing mention in those essays which are concerned with the role of literature. The key-note of Wiechert's writing is responsibility; he writes not to entertain but to educate.

A. Wiechert's Theories on the Function of Art

One conclusion has become evident from the thematic treatment of Wiechert's work: there is a strong moral tone which even pervades the creative writing and helps to explain the idealism after the 'thirties. The contemporary world-affairs judged in his works are not intended to have any descriptive value in themselves. On the contrary, their treatment is a means of embodying a moral lesson, an exhortation to righteous living and thinking. Or, if his appraisal involves an expression of human degradation, Wiechert employs it as a tool to contrast with it what is noble and worthy.<sup>1</sup> His creative work anticipates a near-perfect world,<sup>2</sup> a system of ethics developed independently of transcendence. The artist's task is the education of man to 'natural' values;<sup>3</sup> he must point out to man his obligation to others. Literature is not an end in itself, but a means; it aims to convey to the reader an understanding of life and he is expected to imitate it. The purpose of writing lies not in the word per se, but the deed which responds to it. The artist has an "Auftrag"; "Ich selbst war nur ein Bote," Wiechert writes, "ein Mittler, der das Bewegende weiterzureichen hatte." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.594) The word which does not become deed is sinful.

Like Goethe, Wiechert would prefer to interpret "Am Anfang war das Wort" as "Am Anfang war die Tat," although the philosophical presuppositions which lead to the conclusion are, in Wiechert's case, more tenuous. "Nein," Agricola concludes in Jeromin-Kinder I, "das Wort war die Sünde, das Wort, das man über die Tat schob und Glauben nannte." (V.148) By the deed which surpasses the word, Agricola and Wiechert mean the active deed which transcends all talk of love and all high-sounding but meaningless phrases. It is the deed with which the proper writer is above all concerned. His task is not to imitate the world; rather the Platonic notion of imitation is transferred from writer to reader: "The poet does not imitate but creates: it is the reader who imitates what the poet creates." <sup>4</sup>

Wiechert's literary theories, then, demand an ethical approach. The artist or writer has a duty to mankind. In Jahre und Zeiten, Wiechert speaks of the "Verpflichtung der Kunst." (IX.605) Art must always educate: each story must have its useful lesson. It is particularly after the Second World War that Wiechert stresses this function of art. Decadent western ideas threaten to crush 'natural' virtues. The challenge has never been so great nor the need for education so patent. The future of Germany depends largely on the influence of



the writer. Men look to him for the solutions to post-war chaos. In Über Kunst und Künstler, Wiechert imagines he hears a multitude of human voices calling to him from a vast distance (X.413). To them this undelivered speech is addressed. His greatest consolation during his imprisonment and the subsequent peril under continual observation is "die Vermächtnisse derer, ... für die alle Kunst nie etwas anderes war als ein Licht für die im Dunkeln Gehenden, ein Trost für die Trostlosen, und die ihr ganzes Sein und Wesen dafür hingaben, 'schwere Stunde sanft zu machen'." (X.422)

The poet's first and most important task in a world threatened by alien forces <sup>5</sup> is the preservation of eternal values. Wiechert sees this as early as 1933 in Der Dichter und die Jugend. The poet is

in einer lauten Welt der letzte und stille Bewahrer der ewigen Dinge... Selten wird es gut sein, ihn nach den zeitlichen Dingen zu fragen, nach den Geheimnissen des Geldes oder des Erfolges, der Karriere oder der Nützlichkeit.  
(X.361)

Or, as he wrote in 1934, art is "die Verwandlung eines zeitlich Wirklichen in ein zeitlos Wahres." (Die Fischer: Einleitung zu dem Bildwerk von W. Fries, X.749) The poet is the mentor of his age and it is his task to present an antidote to the evil propaganda which governs the thoughts and actions of every individual. In a situation of despair the poet offers hope; in an atmosphere where

the ephemeral is misinterpreted he protects what is truly eternal: "Unter allen lauten Worten und Liedern des Tages sucht er nach dem Stillen und Unvergänglichen, nach der Speise für die Hungernden, die satt machen soll, wenn alle Lieder und Worte verbrauch sind." (Der Dichter und seine Zeit, X.371) Instead of reflecting Nazi slogans, the writer treats nature, God or the love of a mother for her children (X.372), and these are values which cannot be disturbed by revolutions.

After 1945 Wiechert develops more forcefully his idea of the artist's function in terms of his ethical responsibility to preserve the pious, immortal, reliable values of love, service, humility and 'nature'. The only answer to war is found in nature and it is the duty of the artist to preserve a 'natural' society - whose aim is the service of others - against the selfish individualism of a hostile world. In Rede an die deutsche Jugend, he eulogizes those who in the political upheavals of the inter-war period "still an den Strömen saßen und von der letzten Gewalt dieser Erde sprachen, von dem Unvergänglichen, von der Liebe." (X.383)

Where previously Wiechert's voice had gone unheeded and he had feared reprisal, the post-war situation was one in which the opportunity offered itself to an authoritative voice to infuse some meaning and hope

into a hopelessly chaotic existence. Wiechert saw his own task after the war in the light of a conviction which the majority of his contemporaries did not share, viz. that while scepticism and despair seem to govern all post-war activity, nevertheless man can begin afresh. In an essay, Mensch und Geschichte, written in 1929, Max Scheler expressed a scepticism which was accurately reflected in the general intellectual atmosphere after 1945:

Wir sind in der ungefähr zehntausendjährigen Geschichte das erste Zeitalter, in dem sich der Mensch völlig und restlos "problematisch" geworden ist; in dem er nicht mehr weiß, was er ist; zugleich aber auch weiß, daß er es nicht weiß. <sup>6</sup>

Grenzmann comments on this statement in Dichtung und Glaube: <sup>7</sup>

Die Erfahrung der Vergeblichkeit alles menschlichen Tuns und Opfern bedrängt die Völker der Welt nun schon seit mehr als dreißig Jahren, es ist ... die ewige Wiederkehr des Anfangens, die Sinnlosigkeit des Duldens, Hungerns und Sterbens. Aber nicht dies führt in die Tiefe der Existenzkrise, sondern die Tatsache, daß unter der Wucht der Ereignisse die geistigen Stützen zerbrechen... Der Pendel schlägt weit aus: auf den Fortschrittsglauben folgt ein radikaler Pessimismus, auf das Bewußtsein bürgerlicher Sekurität das Bangen großer Unsicherheit.

Wiechert refuses to identify himself with the poignant cry of despair reflected in much of German post-war literature. The poet does not brood over present difficulties and imperfections; he points out future

possibilities and resurrects the proved and tested values which are to be striven after in the secure knowledge that they are not unattainable. It is true he recognizes in Über Kunst und Künstler that "zu keiner Zeit der Menschheitsgeschichte sind die Verheißungen jenseits der Sterne so fraglich geworden wie heute," (X.425) - and his words seem to echo Scheler's. Further, it is true that God is for him a deus absconditus, and at no time is his faith in eschatological truths more severely shaken than during and immediately after World War II. But though on occasion he uses the same language as Scheler or Grenzmann, his attitude is vastly different. He refuses to allow the radical pessimism of which Grenzmann speaks to take the place of the firmly rooted belief in man's ability to progress on which this essay on the function of art is based. In fact, it is simply because transcendent values have become a matter of doubt for many that he proposes a reconstruction, the programme of which is provided by the artist. In other words, the belief in future possibilities provides the presupposition for Wiechert's views on the function of literature.

Therefore, the future of Germany <sup>8</sup> depends, in Wiechert's view, on the artist (X.420). He differs from his contemporaries in that his faith in progress is not destroyed. The circumstances of Nazism and the war are

abnormal, but the true poet is not involved in them.  
Now his task is greater than it ever was. In an age of  
"Verstörung" art fulfils the role of pastoral care, for  
it is "den tiefen Quellen des Unvergänglichen und Ewigen  
immer noch am nächsten, ... wie die Religion, weit näher  
als Philosophie oder Politik." (IX.664) Art should not  
reflect the negations of the post-war world; it must  
present positive, 'natural' values: once again the reader  
is all-important. Art, therefore, has no right to any  
independent existence of its own:

Ist denn das Kunstwerk, das Bild, das Buch, die  
Plastik, die Symphonie etwas, das alle Rechte  
hat, und der Aufnehmende jemand, der nur be-  
schränkte Rechte hat? Sind diese Künstler der  
heute beginnenden sogenannten neuen Zeit ...  
sich bewußt, welche ungeheure Aufgabe vor ihnen  
liegt, welche schwere, kaum zu tragende Ver-  
antwortung in ihren Händen liegt?  
(Jahre und Zeiten, IX.750) 9

The artist has no right to project his intellectual  
games on to the medium of his art.

Intimately bound up with Wiechert's understanding  
of the function of the artist as preserver of eternal  
values is his concept of the consoling power of art. The  
distinction between the "Schriftsteller" and the "Dichter"  
lies not in form but in content. <sup>10</sup> The "Schriftsteller"  
constantly tends to reflect reality by a clinical  
analysis of external phenomena; he lacks "die Wärme des  
Herzens," (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.775) and therefore

cannot console in times of suffering. Wiechert concludes:

"Glanz und Elend der Zeit" sind im Schriftsteller beschlossen, aber in der Dichtung sind immer noch Glück und Not des Herzens beschlossen, und wir sollten nicht vergessen, daß in den dunkelsten Jahren der Menschheitsgeschichte, ... die von Leid Geprüften und bis ins letzte Geprüften ihre Tröstung nicht von denen erfahren haben, die den Glanz des Geistes über die Not der Zeit gebreitet haben. (IX.777-78)

In a host of statements Wiechert shows to what extent the aim of his creative work is determined by the needs of his reading audience. The peculiar value of the 'Dichter' lies not in the polish, wit or grace with which truths are presented. The ethical standards and principles extolled by Wiechert are of prime importance, and the form in which they are couched, while not entirely insignificant, is nevertheless secondary. Our estimation of a poet is determined by his avowed aim. Or, as Daiches says of Dryden: "Form and content are separable, and the latter comes first. You decide what you want to say, and then ... decide on how to say it." <sup>11</sup> The poet's aim, says Wiechert, is to lift "die verzweifelten Augen... über dem Chaos der Welt" (Brief an einen jungen Dichter, 1932, X.863);

Nicht mehr messen wir ... der Art und Weise oder der künstlerischen Kraft die größte Wichtigkeit zu, ... sondern wir wollen auch wissen, wie .. [der Dichter] zwischen Himmel und Erde sein Leben eingerichtet hat, wie der Schmerz, die Einsamkeit, der Tod und das Jenseits, wie Bettler und König, Demut und Tapferkeit, Schuld und Sühne ihren Platz in seinem Denken und Sein gefunden haben. (Vom Trost der Welt, X.909)

Wiechert derives comfort from the contemplation of his own literary career in that he has been able to help others. He believes that he has offered his readers not a form of hopelessness or resignation, "sondern eben Trost. Den kleinen Trost der 'kleinen Leute', aber er ist mehr, als die großen Worte der 'heldischen' Bücher." (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.595) Art is in essence akin to religion in its concern with the needs of the individual (IX.751), and Wiechert's denigration of his contemporaries is a consequence of his view that their work is "die Auflösung in bloße Formen." (IX.767) Nor has the expression of ideas, emotions, human fortunes as such any intrinsic value. Art is action of the creative imagination and moral reaction of the artistic object. The writer throws out a challenge to mankind to identify itself with the solutions to a chaotic existence presented in a novel or drama, and to practise what the writer preaches. Secondly, the poet offers consolation to those who suffer from the buffetings of fortune.

For Wiechert, then, art and life - the 'natural' life - are inseparably united to one another. "Man muß etwas sein, um etwas zu schreiben," (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.754) is for Wiechert as necessary a law as Schiller's "Man muß etwas sein, um etwas zu werden." What he reveres in Ricarda Huch is the fact that "Kunst und Leben waren

in ihr zusammengeschlossen, ohne Bruch." (Ricarda Huch zum Gedächtnis, 1947, X.945)

When Wiechert speaks of the unity of art and life, he is not suddenly developing a theory of art in terms of realism, which we have seen runs counter to the whole tenor of his work. For he recognized that there is little in the contemporary scene worthy of artistic reproduction and were such depiction attempted it would certainly not be edifying. Wiechert echoes Johnson's famous phrase: "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing."<sup>12</sup> Johnson, of course, wants to represent human nature accurately as well, and finds himself in a dilemma because he knows that the real world is not at all edifying. Wiechert avoids the contradiction by limiting the function of literature to its didactic value and he is prepared to sacrifice the cause of realism for the sake of consistency. Consequently when he speaks of "Kunst und Leben," he does not refer to life as a politician or economist or historian might view it - nor do we expect that he should. Instead, however, of viewing art as a unique interpretation of reality, he ascribes to it the functions covered largely by theology, and this is more easily debatable. Art and life connote for Wiechert a subjective view of life as a kind of end-product of artistic endeavour. In other



words, it is the life of the artist with which he is concerned, not the product of his creative imagination, and the excellence of the artist is judged by the nobility and dignity and, above all, the humanity of his life.

Regeneration in the contemporary scene is therefore exemplified in the writer himself. It is he who provides the firm foundation on which a future generation shall build. As Carossa puts it in Der Arzt Gion (1932): there is nothing edifying in the politicians who "aufwühlen oder der Menschheit vorschreiben, wie sie sich von nun an zu entwickeln habe"; regeneration is achieved by the "wenige besonnenetätige Geister," who "still die Zukunft vor[bereiten]." <sup>13</sup> Wiechert is essentially in agreement with this position; his conviction is that the poet is indispensable to any nation:

Ein Volk kann seine Könige entthronen und stärker, ja besser werden, aber ein Volk, das seine Dichter entthront ... kann wohl mächtiger und reicher werden, aber es hat seine Erstgeburt verkauft, und in seinem Mark ist der Totenwurm der letzten Tage. (Hat das lyrische Gedicht noch Lebenswert?, 1931, X.833) <sup>14</sup>

The post-war situation intensified the artist's moral obligation, Wiechert asserts in Abschied von der Zeit:

Es war ein wegloses Jahr für die meisten, eine Nacht der Verstörung, in der nur die Ruinen im Mondlicht schimmerten. Die der Städte, die des Reiches und die der Herzen. Und aus dem Dunklen kamen die rufenden und klagenden Stimmen der Verzweiflung. Es war nicht so, daß sie nur nach den Politikern riefen, oder nach den Pfarrern, oder nach den Richtern. Wer sollte ihnen denn

antworten, wenn nicht wir? Wer gab uns die Erlaubnis, uns im Dunkeln zu verbergen und zu verhüllen und zu tun, als hörten wir nicht? War es nicht die letzte Not, die an die Herzen griff, und sind die Künstler berechtigt, sie nicht zu hören? Nein, es kam uns schon zu, aus den unbetreibaren Bezirken herauszutreten, Söhne des Volkes wie sie, Söhne des Leidens wie sie, und zu erproben, ob nicht in unserer Hand ein tieferer Trost läge als in den Händen derer, die ihr Leben lang auf den öffentlichen Plätzen gestanden hatten. (X.672-73)

Even though the artist seeks to escape his obligation and even though his words fall on deaf ears, he cannot avoid his responsibility to those who cry to him for aid. In this passage, Wiechert clearly values the artistic vocation more highly than that of politician, pastor or judge. Furthermore, if the artist has the right to offer consolation, it is only because he identifies himself with the suffering and simplicity of those he is seeking to help.

But Wiechert's programmatic statements on the duties of the writer to the reader are not only an apologia for his own work. He denigrates the writers who do not aim at the preservation of eternal values and whose works do not console. In Jahre und Zeiten, he refers to the "Literaten" as "die erbarmungslosen Photographen und Kinooperateure des Nichts." (IX.607) His attitude to contemporary literature reveals a failure to grasp its full implications. In Grablegung oder Auferstehung? he criticizes almost all the significant

names of twentieth century literature: Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Toller, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Tucholsky, Brecht and O'Neill. All these writers have one thing in common, he claims: their lack of responsibility. Those who turned to them for comfort and advice forgot,

daß alle diese, mit wenigen Ausnahmen vielleicht, die brüchige Kultur der letzten Jahrzehnte verneint hatten, mit Recht verneint, aber daß sie versäumt hatten, hinter dem Nein ihr neues Ja zu sprechen. Daß auch die großen Verneiner des letzten Jahrhunderts, wie Nietzsche und Strindberg, das versäumt hatten, und daß aus ihrer Verneinung nur eine Bejahung der Lehre des Übermenschen geworden war. (X.932)

Only the literature based on the mysticism of the east, in the 'heart,' is worthy of the name because it alone has the crusading spirit.

In a significant paragraph which follows the one quoted above, Wiechert considers Thomas Mann's work in the light of its humanity, its quality of 'heart':

Ich kann die schriftstellerische Leistung Thomas Manns nur bewundern, aber ich habe nie einen Zweifel daran gehabt, daß er ein Deuter des Absteigenden, des Zerbröckelnden, des Tödlichen einer Kultur ist. Die Buddenbrooks waren es, der Zauberberg war es, gepflegte Totentänze, mit großer Kunst gemalt, mit leuchtenden Farben, mit großer Komposition, aber eben Totentänze: etwas, das in das Chthonische zurückwies statt in das Magische, etwas, das mehr aus einem überfeinerten Intellekt geboren war als aus einem [sic!] überquellenden Herzen, eine ziselierte Krone westlicher Zivilisation, ohne einen Hauch der östlichen Unendlichkeit. (X.933)

The distinguishing mark of the artificial quasi-culture of the west is its mockery ("Hohn", X.932) and Wiechert

claims to detect derision in Thomas Mann's work. The path from mockery to hatred, he believes, is a short one and he cites Heinrich Mann as an example of a writer who has trod this dangerous path (X.933-34). <sup>15</sup>

Ultimately, Wiechert is not interested in theories of literature, nor is he capable of forming a judgment of any literary work except on the basis of his own subjective premises. Art is intended to proclaim humanity; its function is to concentrate an eternal atmosphere within the confines of human modes of expression. The aim of literary creativity is not even strictly cathartic, though Wiechert does not deny that his own writing brought with it a purification of his emotions (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.689), without which it would have been impossible to avoid the total annihilation of his 'Weltanschauung'. <sup>16</sup> Literature, then not only instructs, it also consoles both writer and reader and therefore shares with religion the function of the sermon. The author's literary stature is demonstrated not by his fame but by the greatness of his heart. Post-war artists must therefore concern themselves with the pitiful state of those at whom their works of art are directed. "Kunst ist ohne Menschliches nicht zu denken," he writes in an important passage (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.624-25). All of Wiechert's

post-war statements are to be judged by this theory of the function of literature. He aims at educating the nation to an entirely new concept of the purpose of existence, and his claim to speak with the voice of authority is based on the conviction that he stands alone in the task of reconstruction.

B. Exaggerated Characterization as an Expression of Wiechert's Literary Aim

The discomfort experienced by most contemporary readers of Wiechert is largely explained by the serious designs he has upon them. We are not confronted here by fiction with possible moral implications for contemporary society, but by moral treatises, elevated to the level of literature by means of an artificially conceived legendary superstructure. The obligation to instruct and offer consolation is primary and can allow of no side-issues; so that even when Wiechert's 'Weltanschauung' was most seriously threatened and that of his contemporaries undergoing drastic revision, real despair is most unusual in the characters of the later works and, where it does occur, it is almost incidental to the plot and is immediately counter-balanced by a contrasting tendency. Thus in Jeromin-Kinder I, Agricola's struggle with God is resolved by his heroic death in defence of

a child on a Good Friday. In typical fashion Wiechert explains the symbolism of Agricola's death in the funeral address:

Und vielleicht hat keiner von uns so geglaubt wie er, der nicht glauben wollte. Denn er hat seinen Glauben mit dem Tode besiegelt... Nur die Gläubigen machen halt vor einem Kinde. Sie können es die Barmherzigkeit nennen oder das Weltgewissen oder die Liebe, aber es ist Gott. (V.337)

In general, Wiechert's characterization is unrealistic and stereotyped.<sup>17</sup> All the major characters in the later works speak the same language and tend to become mouthpieces for his opinions,<sup>18</sup> thereby acting as the personification of an ideal upon which the reader is expected to model his own behaviour. But ultimately, as we have seen, the content of Wiechert's ethical interest is based on nature. Man becomes guilty of the gravest offence against nature when he no longer regards it as normative for his actions.<sup>19</sup> The figures in Wiechert's work who forget or reject the determining power of nature are frustrated in their attempt to live a normal life and succumb to evil. The protagonists who dare deny the almost sacramental efficacy of nature suffer under Wiechert's heavy hand of judgment. Morality and good order are based on nature. This helps explain the exaggerated black-and-white quality of Wiechert's character depiction. The figures are judged according to their attitude to nature, and the overtones of ignorance

and superstition which are normally found in peasant life and which produce great tragic conflict in Storm's later work are lacking in Wiechert's. He is too sentimental and self-conscious for that. Nor can he place any distance between himself and his work, as Storm does. Wiechert makes his intentions for his characters clear at every stage of their 'development'.

This evident tendency to judge character by a priori concepts revealed in nature explains the lack of character development, i.e. the tendency to depict a character as emotionally stable and ethically mature from the very beginning, seriously limits the realism of portrayal. It is true that some protagonists, especially Jons in Jeromin-Kinder, come to new realizations and, on occasion, even to new convictions, but these new truths are always intellectually conceived, reflecting the author's own struggle with intellectual problems. Such new convictions are, therefore, always in accord with certain established moral traits, well-defined but uncomplicated, from which the character is seldom permitted to deviate.

The course of development taken by the individual in the later works is predetermined. He grows up in intimate fellowship with nature, and only two alternatives accordingly present themselves. He will continue

to judge all his actions and those of the world around him in the light of his early stereotyped contact with nature; according to maxims imparted by other sympathetic individuals - relatives, foresters, peasants, fishermen; and in the light of personal conclusions deduced from natural phenomena. He may go out into the world, temporarily relinquishing the natural protection afforded by forest and field, but he will continue to preserve the innocence of childlike convictions. The world - never well-defined in individual characteristics, but embodied in a general type - may prove a temptation, but the basic 'Weltanschauung' is indestructible, and he will sternly reject the world's amorous advances.

Alternatively, the protagonist may seek to preserve his childhood convictions but, in the attempt, may, for a time, succumb to the seduction of the 'false' values of the civilized world. However, nature reasserts itself, the temptations - occasionally depicted in the form of an 'enlightened' sensual woman - are cast off, and a deeper insight into the inherent 'Gesetzmäßigkeit' of nature as experienced in childhood has been gained.

The immutable 'law' of the forest is ultimately the criterion for all human behaviour. Wiechert's own uncompromising attitude to urban civilization determines the unrealistic, unsympathetic treatment of the city-



bred, and forms an astonishing contrast to the realistic descriptions of the Masurian landscapes. <sup>20</sup> Evil characters are easily recognizable as caricatures. They make light of the 'depths' revealed in the hero; they are superficial, unreliable, pleasure-seeking, irresponsible and antagonistic to 'simplicity'. Above all, they speak a 'civilized' jargon. Stilling, wrongly arrested in Jeromin-Kinder II, is called "alter Freund" (V.606) in a tone of false intimacy, "aber auch das war ein Mißbrauch der Sprache. Sie hatten die Ehrfurcht vor dem ursprünglichen Sinn verloren." (V.609) The pawnbroker to whom Stilling tries to sell his watch stands "hinter dem schmutzigen Ladentisch." (V.604) He lifts the watch "an sein großes behaartes Ohr." (V.604) Frau Daisy's party guests in Missa are described in a similarly tendentious way. A young pilot wears a "Sweater"; his "behaarten Hände verteilten schnell und lautlos die Karten und die Geldscheine"; the smile on his face is "wie das Lächeln einer Maske." (VI.365) The city-people in Gina Jeromin's "Phönix-Bar" "sehen wie Verfolgte oder wie Besessene aus... Entkleidete Besessene, die sich selbst die Kleider herunterreißen." (Jeromin-Kinder II, V.719) Their faces are like those of corpses, bloated, full of hatred and evil passions. Wiechert simplifies the townsman and places him in a category that nothing can shake. His judgment is severe and unjust; all city

people in his works are exaggerated caricatures, bordering at times on the grotesque. 21

Wiechert's characterization allows of no new revelation of previously hidden traits, because character is moulded in childhood through contact with nature or separation from it; thereafter these experiences remain the guiding star according to which all future events are measured. There can be no tragic conflict, nor can any event be described as unusual or novel when judged in the light of the original experience of nature. Wiechert's intention is didactic and the temptation to introduce blocks of material incompatible with the ethical thesis of the novel or drama is strongly resisted. We have seen that for him art and life are inseparable; he cannot even conceive of an art-form which is not an expression of the deepest, most heartfelt experiences of life. Accordingly, the reader is never left in any doubt as to where the author's sympathies lie, nor are the protagonists original enough to speak independently of their author. Wiechert's own statement concerning

Jeromin-Kinder -

Ich selbst habe noch einmal in den Jeromin-Kindern versucht, keine Lehre zu geben oder ein Erbauungsbuch. Sondern das Bild einer Welt aufzustellen, die dem Untergang zutreibt, und in der doch Menschen leben, die ihre Hand in das rollende Rad legen, (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.768) -

is not entirely reliable, for on the one hand, the

didactic intent, which he rejects, is not incompatible with the depiction of a world racing towards destruction and, on the other, such a claim runs counter to the whole tendency of Wiechert's work and is simply contradicted by the facts of the novel concerned. <sup>22</sup>

Jons Jeromin is evidently one of Wiechert's chosen and consequently suffers from loneliness (V.413 f.). But his loneliness does not stem from his being consumed in the hell-fire of life, in Hebbel's sense; on the contrary, it is due to his opposition to the world around him. Jons has no friends at school, possibly because he lacks a sense of humour. But this meets with Wiechert's approval, for life as he and Jons conceive it is a serious matter, and the task of the educator, even if he is only a child, cannot be combined with a light-hearted attitude which may suggest irresponsibility. Wiechert shows his approval of Jons by using a special vocabulary to describe his actions: "Und so feierlich war Jons das Ganze, die Anrede, das Lächeln und das so Gewisse der Worte, daß er nur nickte und dann scheu zu den Booten ging." (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.92) He has "das gütige, karge Lächeln seines Vaters" (V.549); he speaks "leise." (V.569) Wiechert endows him with special gifts of perception and prophetic insight which belong to those whose spiritual roots are in nature. Dr. Lawrenz foresees the Nazi pogroms against

the Jews (V.630). Jons' surgical ability, coupled with his innate modesty, earns him the surprise and envy of professors and students alike (V.625). At his examinations he astounds the professors with his knowledge and graduates summa cum laude. He does not make mistakes, successfully performs unassisted a Caesarean section before the examinations are completed and succumbs to no human failings. "Wir würden alle anders sein," he says to Stilling when he returns home, "wenn dieser Wald nicht wäre." (V.709)

Jons is clearly a victim of Wiechert's intention. The political events attending Jons' medical studies are incidental to his development. He is not overwhelmed by the confusion of the age. His path of duty always lies clearly before him and he has the uncanny ability of distinguishing between 'reality' and illusion. Since it is impossible to view the protagonist's beliefs independently of the author's, <sup>23</sup> Jons is little more real than a marionette. He works, thinks, acts, argues, suffers and loves according to predetermined laws of which he is fully aware. He can immediately and unhesitatingly classify any new political, social or religious phenomenon as either good or bad. Environmental factors do not determine his growth to manhood; in fact, in Jeromin-Kinder II there is no organic growth at all. The ethical principles deter-

mining every action are rigid and unalterable. If 'growth' is allowed, it is viewed only in terms of the widening of the range of experiences encountered by the character. No allowance is made in Jeromin-Kinder for the human element, the 'Allzumenschliche', and this is its greatest weakness. Jons is no character of flesh and blood; he is the embodiment of a type, the personification of an idea, a mouthpiece for goodness, nobility, dignity and love.

Missa sine nomine, in accordance with a tendency already noticeable in Das einfache Leben and interrupted temporarily by the perfectionist ethic of Jeromin-Kinder, attempts a more convincing realism. But Wiechert is unable to discard the thesis of nature versus "Ratio", and renewed discussion on this old theme brings out his concern to educate his reading audience. If anything, the more distinct outlines of character depiction found in some earlier works (Flucht, Der Exote) have become dim and uncertain. It is true that the three major protagonists are not as perfect as was Jons, because their goals are not as clearly defined, but the inevitable conclusion is identical. Significantly, too, the three brothers are described as the "Triptychon," (VI.15-16) in accordance with which they reveal little which would distinguish them from one another as individuals, and suggest that as a group they are intended to represent

a type of personality usually found only in the fairy-tale. The world in which they live pays mere lip-service to the existence of another. They isolate themselves, speak in riddles, yet understand one another perfectly. The tendency to present two basic character types - good and bad - and the failure to depict subtle nuances within individual protagonists, can be led back once more to Wiechert's determination to influence his audience. The war provides no more than an interesting background, another useful step in the education of the individual, whose reaction to this terrible tableaux is once more predetermined by the omniscience of the author. The war does not create its own standards and convert men to them, and the struggle within the individual is never due to his having to make a choice between confusing alternatives.

To summarize: we have seen that for Wiechert the dual role performed by the artist is consolation and instruction. The depiction of a character who comes to grief between the antithetical forces of good and evil, such as Holm in Flucht, is, therefore, impossible in the later work, as it neither consoles nor edifies. In practice this means that the righteous always prosper and the wicked suffer. But Wiechert, unlike Sidney, fails to realize that literature cannot be both escapist in

tendency (consolation) and didactic in intent. If imaginative literature provides us with an escape world in which we can console ourselves for the imperfections of reality, <sup>24</sup> it cannot, at the same time, instruct us as to the manner in which reality is to be confronted. Wiechert does not avoid this dilemma; indeed, it appears as though he is unaware of it. It might not be so serious if he were simply "a moralist in an unmoralistic age," <sup>25</sup> but when this is coupled with the constant tendency to create a situation, in which escape from reality is fostered, we are left with ethical conclusions - themselves suspect - based on tenuous premises. Further, if literature is a form of knowledge, subtly delineated, as we shall suggest, it is implied that the reader's engagement with literature will prove enlightening to himself, making more meaningful and coherent the apparently unconnected events of daily life. Literature may reasonably be expected to draw upon reality and transform it in such a way that new meaning is imparted to it.

But Wiechert attempts to give some coherence to reality from without after misinterpreting its tendencies; his mouthpieces have little to offer us because they are determined not by our world but by his own improbable world. They are directed in and out of

the milieus in which they find themselves, never contravening the basic principles with which Wiechert is concerned. Any tragic conflict, any sense of despair, any conviction of existential guilt is resolved before the work of novel-writing begins. Thus Wiechert falls prey to the danger against which Gregor and Nicholas warned: "The danger to a novelist writing in a society with which he holds a great sense of common feeling is that perception will become muffled by platitude and intention will short-circuit creation." <sup>26</sup>

C. His Role as 'Praeceptor Germaniae'

The voices raised in plaintive self-assertion or grand defiance immediately after the collapse of Nazism in 1945 were all alike voices raised in protest de profundis, from the poignant depths of "des Schlundes Grund," of which Zeitblom speaks at the end of Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus. The Nazi collapse was experienced by many as the final stage in the defection of German culture to alien values, the culmination of what Nietzsche called "the extirpation of the German spirit in favour of the German 'Reich'," <sup>27</sup> except that now there was neither spirit nor 'Reich'. The political, economic and spiritual vacuum in 1945 left a barren field awaiting new developments, a challenge to the German



philosophical imagination once more to identify itself with the Hegelian dialectic which attributes to "werden" a deeper meaning and richer value than to "sein." 28

But chaos reigned on the literary scene. Writers who had flirted with Nazism transferred their creative allegiances and offered their services in the Allied cause. The younger writers only succeeded in reflecting the disintegration of all their values, and were far too keenly involved in the post-war struggle for existence to have the inclination or ability to view contemporary events with any objectivity. Men like Thomas Mann and Ernst Wiechert, representatives of a humane, enlightened culture which no longer existed, claimed the voice of authority after 1945. The 'Reich' had been destroyed, and the German spirit sought to reassert itself.

It is, of course, debatable whether the writer, recognized for his peculiarly poetic qualities or unique interpretation of life, should step out of the realm in which he is qualified and take up cudgels in support of social, political or cultural ideals. That is to say: does the writer, by drawing on the cultural heritage of his nation and times and by wrestling with the problems uppermost in the minds of his contemporaries, transgress the limits of his vocation and abuse what should be the real function of his writing? However we may define the

limits within which a writer may express poetic truths, one thing is certain: the creative writer is not expected to find all the solutions to the problems of his age; what we demand is that in being true to his inner nature and creative impulse, he presents a picture or reflection of life which is both 'true' and 'real', with that element of magical transformation which turns the abstractions of life as a political scientist or philosopher or 'Zivilisationsliterat' might see it into a personal, subjective challenge to the reader or an equally personal, subjective confrontation with the world. The literary product of such a transformation need not itself be absolutely valid, but it must be a clear, decisive interpretation of reality, in which man sees himself in a peculiarly unique way. Consequently, it does not really matter if the writer leaves his attitude open to various strata of critical understanding and interpretation. Few writers have been as variously understood and criticized as Kafka and Mann, but the spontaneous freshness of Kafka and the linguistic dexterity of Mann are hardly invalidated by the variety of critical approaches to their works. If Kafka and Mann, in fact, answer any of the problems with which their contemporaries are most concerned, the answer is hidden, dependent on the conditioned response of the reader and

suggesting to the more nimble-minded various levels of possibility.

From this point of view, Wiechert could hardly be regarded as Praeceptor Germaniae. His critical concern is too limited in scope and his words directed at too small an audience to meet with that universality of recognition which the artist as moral instructor requires. Furthermore, we look in vain for a decisive interpretation of reality in his works; in fact, as we have seen, he is in principle opposed to presenting life as it really is. Wiechert is the creator of the fairy-tale and the natural idyll, and what Laube said of Heine is also true of Wiechert: "It was his peculiar fate that with entirely poetic qualities he found himself in an entirely political society."<sup>29</sup> His aim is to draw a veil over reality in order to make the world appear more tolerable than it actually is. According to Wiechert's understanding of the function of the artist, he is not the "seismograph of his times,"<sup>30</sup> that Hugo von Hofmannsthal would have him be; on the contrary, the writer employs the evil passions of his age as literary motifs only with the intention of presenting an anti-thesis, the reverse of which is to be imitated. Wiechert allows of only one possible and necessary level of understanding in his work in order that he may not be

misinterpreted. The nature-civilization antithesis is so trivial in its concern that by comparison the claim to be the mentor of Germany is almost grotesque. Yet Wiechert takes himself very seriously in his self-appointed role. His post-war themes are narrow and conservative, and the renewed attempts after 1945 to define the precise failures of Germany which end with his abdication from the political scene in 1948/49 reveal the constant struggle with a reality he is never able to master. Nevertheless, his strong conviction that he has an important message for his time leads him in a series of essays and speeches after 1945 to claim the highest authority for the right to act as spiritual leader of his nation.

He does so, in the first place, on the basis of his record of resistance to National Socialism. In The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, he records that he prophesied the end of Nazism and the war. We believed, he states,

daß die Gerechtigkeit kommen würde, die Freiheit, die Wahrheit. Daß die deutsche Erde frei werden würde von den Dämonen wie vom Antichrist, und daß eine neue Erde beginnen würde. Und daß alle Hände und Herzen, die während der bitteren Jahre rein geblieben waren, nun zu dem neuen Werk aufgerufen würden. Und einige glaubten, daß meine Stimme, die für so lange Jahre unterdrückte und erstickte Stimme, bei den Siegern wie bei den Besiegten Gehör finden würde.

Aber die fand kein Gehör... (X.632)

Wiechert's statement betrays his growing impatience with the hic et nunc of the American Occupation. His sights are fixed on a future which he alone can lead. He is finally moved to raise his voice in support of justice and truth in order that he who is a figure of general respect and whose fate at Buchenwald had been made public through the radio broadcasts of New York, London and Moscow, might not be charged with having kept silence in a situation in which "aus Recht Unrecht wurde." (X.637)

But Wiechert does not only claim authority to legislate for Germany because of his spotless record of resistance and the honour with which he is generally regarded. His authority, he asserts, is greater than that of Thomas Mann or Franz Werfel because he remained in Germany:

Und da waren die Stimmen der großen Emigranten, wie die Stimmen Thomas Manns und Franz Werfels, und vielleicht war es nicht ganz recht und billig, nur auf sie zu lauschen. Denn sie hatten das gefährdete Schiff verlassen, sobald der erste Sturmwind die Oberfläche des einst blauen Ozeans bewegt hatte. Sie hatten in Frieden und Sicherheit gelebt, sie waren reich und wohlgenährt geworden, während ihr Volk im Schatten der Galgen und des Stacheldrahtes leben mußte, in Armut und Hunger, in Krieg und Zerstörung. (X.633)

The ease with which Wiechert dismisses the voice of Mann in 1945 hardly does justice to the intellectual suffering Mann underwent during the Hitler regime, suffering which was not diminished by the fact that he lived outside

Germany for most of the duration of the National Socialist regime. <sup>31</sup> If Mann claims any authority to speak to Germany it is on the basis of his 'exile', "diese Zeit der Entwurzelung, der Verstörung und Atembeklemmung, der Heimatlosigkeit." <sup>32</sup> Wiechert is diametrically opposed to this view, not because Mann's political judgment was at times wanton, <sup>33</sup> but because he feels that the émigrés have sacrificed any right to offer their advice to Germany which they abandoned in its greatest need.

Wiechert's primary preoccupation after 1945 in his self-appointed role as guardian and instructor of morality is with the question of guilt. Totenwald is dedicated "den Lebenden zur Schande, den Kommenden zur Mahnung." (IX.329) Wiechert views himself as 'Mahner' because he believes he does not share in the general guilt of the Germans. "Man hatte wie ein Stein im Schmutz zu stehen," he writes in Totenwald. "Der Schmutz würde vergehen, aber der Stein würde immer noch da sein... Des Reiches Schande war nicht seine Schande." (IX.240) Shocked as he is by the brutality of his countrymen, Wiechert is strangely reluctant to speak of collective guilt. <sup>34</sup> Almost naively he inveighs against the Americans who in their denazification processes have been unsuccessful in separating the sheep from the goats. He emphatically denies that all were guilty:

Aber hatten wir dasselbe getan? Wir, die anständigen Bauern, die Pfarrer, die Dichter, die Frauen und Mädchen? Hatten wir nicht die Taten der Nazis und unsrer Soldaten gehaßt? Waren wir nicht freundlich zu den Gefangenen gewesen? u.s.w. (The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, X.640)

Wiechert sees his task as the instruction of his people in recognition of their guilt and as exhortation to purity of heart and nobility of action based on nature. Only the very few can assume this vast responsibility of education because they kept their hearts pure and their hands clean.

How, then, are we to explain those isolated passages which seem to contradict the conclusions arrived at hitherto, viz. that Wiechert distinguishes carefully between those responsible for National Socialism and those who preserved their integrity despite persecution? At one point in Rede an die deutsche Jugend, Wiechert momentarily identifies himself with those who were guilty:

Wir sahen zu. Wir wußten von allem. Wir zitterten vor Empörung und Grauen, aber wir sahen zu. Die Schuld ging durch das sterbende Land und rührte jeden einzelnen von uns an. Jeden einzelnen, außer denen, die auf dem Schafott oder am Galgen oder im Lager den Tod statt der Schuld wählten. (X.399-400)

In Die Wölfe (Märchen I), a significant passage describes Wiechert's attitude to guilt: "Wo Recht gebrochen wird, sind die schuldig, die es brechen, und die schuldig, die es brechen lassen." (VIII.315) "Die Mächtigen plagen die

Machtlosen," (VIII.312) and the individual's reaction to injustice determines the magnitude of man's guilt; in this sense even those most patently 'innocent' are guilty, because they have allowed immutable laws to be transgressed. Paradoxically, then, only some are guilty; there were those who opposed Nazism and suffered for their principles or entered the "innere Emigration" of which Frank Thiess spoke. On the other hand, all were guilty in another sense (Rede an die deutsche Jugend), although only the isolated passage in the Märchen gives any indication of the nature of this general guilt.

The speech makes no real attempt to solve the paradox. Wiechert devotes the second half to suggestions for reconstruction:

Laßt uns zuerst erkennen und dann laßt uns tun.  
Laßt uns erkennen, daß die Schuld groß ist und  
ihre Sühne fordert... Zunächst aber laßt uns einen  
neuen Anfang setzen, einen neuen Grenzstein vor  
einem neuen Feld. (X.401)  
Und wenn wir alle schuldig sind außer den  
Märtyrern, doch war es nicht so, wie viele der  
Sieger glauben: daß ein ganzes Volk ohne Zögern  
seine Hand zum Morden hingegeben hat. Doch wissen  
wir, daß Tausende sich abgewendet haben von den  
Dämonen und daß es langsam Hunderttausende und  
Millionen wurden; ... daß sie nicht wagten, ihre  
Lippen zu öffnen, weil das den Tod bedeutete.  
(X.402) 35

Wiechert believes all are guilty, but not in the sense of the victors' understanding of guilt. However, he never clarifies what he understands by guilt. It remains a nebulous concept with emotional overtones.



Ultimately, Wiechert's concern with guilt dwindles to an uncomplicated, direct appeal to the individual conscience; the well-worn distinction between good and evil which is readily recognizable in man and corresponds to the distinction between nature and civilization. The one is to be preferred and imitated; the other rejected and abhorred. Those governed by evil motives and intentions are guilty; those seeking the good are only responsible in a reduced sense. The ethic is transferred from individual to nation. As Schattengruber says to Gudrun in Okay oder die Unsterblichen:

Unsre Feinde sind die Bösen, Kind, die Lügner,  
die Betrüger, die Hassler und die Totschläger,  
und es kommt nicht darauf an, welche Sprachen  
sie sprechen. Die Zunge hat viele Sprachen, aber  
das Herz hat nur zwei Sprachen, gut oder böse.  
(X.277)

In each country there are good and bad individuals. Wiechert knows that there are many young people who retained a pure heart and untainted hands and that they were no worse than the young people of other nations. The writer's task is, "ein neues Banner vor ihren Augen aufzurichten und sie durch Ruinen und Totenfelder zu führen, vorwärts und immer vorwärts." (The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, X.653) Once again Wiechert's belief in future possibilities dominates and supports his concept of the artist's duty to mankind. 36

Statements made after 1945 on the problem of guilt do not help clarify Wiechert's attitude. On the contrary, they only confuse the issue. In Jahre und Zeiten, he withdraws some of the attacks made on the German people as a whole in Rede an die deutsche Jugend. But he refers bitterly to those who maligned his good intentions and refused to acknowledge their own responsibility. Others wrote him desperate letters,

aber wenige hatten den Mut oder die Fähigkeit zur letzten Wahrheit, weil hinter ihr die Riesenschuld stand, die wir alle trugen. Nicht die 'Kollektivschuld', mit der soviel Mißbrauch getrieben worden ist, aber doch eine viel größere, als selbst die Besten unter uns sie zugeben möchten. (IX.727)

In what way Wiechert distinguishes between "Riesenschuld" and "Kollektivschuld," and what he understands by these terms, he does not say. If anything can be deduced from the context it is that he holds those to be guilty whose attitudes underwent no radical change after 1945.

The American Occupation. -- The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, a source of so much controversy in Germany, was originally intended only for the American officers stationed on German soil (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.729). Wiechert hoped by means of the pamphlet to establish more cordial relations between the Occupational Forces and the German civilian population. The Allies reacted unfavourably to the pamphlet, partly because the Occupation

was being carried out under totally different political presuppositions than those imagined by Wiechert; <sup>37</sup> partly because the pamphlet had soon captured the imagination of many former Nazi supporters who took advantage of Wiechert's criticism of the Americans to further their own ends; partly also because the pamphlet fell into wrong hands and led to the prosecution of a number of individuals according to a law which forbade the dissemination of pamphlets (Jahre und Zeiten, IX. 729). There can be no doubt that Wiechert's original intentions were abused. He had sought reconciliation and had only achieved strife and dissension.

For the pamphlet is misleading. It shows clearly how Wiechert's humanistic views and expectations have been seriously challenged in the months following the war. He is moved to write after long years of enforced silence for the sake of truth and justice (X.636). He believes that the Americans have to meet a greater challenge than a nation has ever had to meet before, and he hails them as deliverers from a twelve year tyranny. In Über Kunst und Künstler, he states that he considers the most important task facing the Americans is that of restoring "den Thron der Gerechtigkeit. Von allen Thronen, die gestürzt wurden, war er der kostbarste Thron, und keiner ist tiefer gestürzt worden als er." (X.419) Wiechert expects too much in the early

months of reconstruction and rehabilitation, and the whole tone of the pamphlet witnesses to his growing impatience as he waits for the initial brutalities of the American forces to subside. His observations lead him to doubt whether justice has taken the place of tyranny. In his Märchen he had indicated what he understood by justice: punish the guilty and reward the innocent - or at least leave the latter in peace. He now feels impelled to attack the Americans, because this concept of justice does not correspond with reality. He is baffled by the fact that a nation upholding justice and truth, sacred principles expressed in the speeches of Lincoln and Jefferson, can behave with such barbarity. The Americans have failed in relieving the hardships of the immediate post-war situation.

The pamphlet reveals Wiechert's confusion when he realizes that his hopes for a new Germany are by no means in accord with the actual state of affairs. He notes the contrast between General Eisenhower's orders to the Occupational Army, "daß die amerikanischen Soldaten in Deutschland durch Erziehung und Beispiel wirken sollten," (X.643) and its actual behaviour: "Ich sah mich nach Erziehung und Beispiel um, aber auch diese konnte ich nicht entdecken." (X.643) Not only has physical necessity been alleviated. American soldiers steal what little food

there is, although they have more than enough for themselves. (X.644)

Finally, Wiechert charges the Americans with failure in the attempt to denazify Germany. If in Rede an die deutsche Jugend he had been unable to suggest exactly how the German nation was to be screened and how the victors were to distinguish between the honest and the opportunists (X.401), he now suggests: "Jeder von uns war bereit, ihnen [the victors] zu helfen, ohne Rache oder Niedrigkeit, weil wir ein sauberes Feld für unseren Pflug und unsere Saat brauchten." (X.645) The impracticability of Wiechert's suggestion becomes all the more obvious when we consider statements like that made in Über Kunst und Künstler, where he proposed that the Allies should not punish all those who were members of the Nazi party. Rather, "ich bin der Meinung, daß sie alle diejenigen erbarmungslos zu treffen habe, die unter dieser Parteinummer ein Parteiherz trugen." (X.418)

Wiechert, then, expected too much of the Americans. Missa sine nomine five years later shows that Wiechert's disillusionment has undergone no radical change. He is still painfully aware of the dichotomy between what is and what ought to be. The American, Lieutenant Kelley, leaves Germany for the USA completely disillusioned; the victors have failed in the task of reconstruction because

they destroy when they should be rebuilding and edifying. The atom bomb is simply another manifestation of American and western decadence:

Sie sitzen vor ihren Lautsprechern oder in ihren Jeeps und wissen alles. Was eine Demokratie ist, oder was Schuld und Sühne ist, oder was Recht und Unrecht ist... Sie haben wenig Zweifel und fast gar keine Probleme. Sie lassen Feuer vom Himmel regnen wie im Alten Testament, und es macht ihnen nichts aus, hundertzwanzigtausend Menschen mit einem kleinen Spielzeug zu vernichten, das sie an einem Fallschirm herunterlassen. (VI.399)

The Americans have no understanding for culture or the nature of the German mind, Wiechert claims in The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus:

Sie wußten nichts ... von unserer Dichtung, nichts von unserer Art zu fühlen, von unserem Lebensstil und von unserer Geschichte, das heißt von der Geschichte unsrer Seele. (X.651) Sie sind Meister der Zivilisation, aber sie wissen nicht viel von Kultur... Sie haben die größten Tanks, die höchsten Wolkenkratzer, die größten Ozeandampfer, die größten Gefängnisse, die besten Kühlschränke. (X.651) Sie lieben Radio, Jazz und Kino, diese primitiven Künste. (X.652)

Almost involuntarily Wiechert looks for his explanation of the American failures in the conflict between "Ratio" and nature which is constantly uppermost in his mind. The victors live in an enlightened, technological age and cannot understand the magical atmosphere which emanates from a cultured home. Wiechert warns the Americans that unless love takes the place of hatred, the victors will drive Germany back to National Socialism or force them to embrace a radical form of Communism.

Six months later, in February 1946, Wiechert felt constrained to publish what is virtually a recantation in Vom Wolf und vom Lamm. His attitude to the Americans has been influenced by the criticisms directed at him. In the months that have elapsed he notes that there has been a notable advance in the provision of material security, and he approves of the benefits that have accrued. He has come to realize that at the back of all their mistakes, the Americans were willing, "eine bessere Erde zu schaffen." (X.658) Wiechert regrets his jibes at American culture. His unpopularity in both camps - victors and vanquished - leads him to make a post-war confession of faith. He states,

daß ich den Frieden will statt des Krieges. Daß ich die Liebe will statt des Hasses. Daß ich nicht darandenke, die Völker gegeneinander zu wägen, und, wenn ich es tun wollte, daß ich nach den Erfahrungen dieses Jahres weiter denn je davon entfernt bin, mein Volk mit dem Lorbeer zu krönen und das andere unter das Kreuz der Schuld zu stellen. (X.661)

The German Failure in Defeat. -- It is ironic that the issues which won for Wiechert the highest regard in some quarters immediately after 1945 also alienated the understanding and support not only of the Americans but also of many of his own people. All the hatred which had mounted up by 1945 he poured out in bitter invective against the opportunists who sought to turn any change in the political situation to their own advantage. The

product of Wiechert's reflection on the sins of his nation was the play Okay oder die Unsterblichen, written in 1945 and first produced in Berne and St Gallen in 1946. The play makes no claim to a more than contemporary validity. Its purpose is openly didactic. The setting is one of reconstruction and local politics, and the characters are pure types, mouthpieces of various points of view held after 1945 - the adaptable charlatan Lobedanz, representative of the worst of western decadence, the ignorant (and slightly tipsy) American Sergeant Macpherson, the upright, incorruptible American MacLure, the unyielding Nazi Helge and the quiet, undemanding "Dulder," former concentration camp inmate Schattenhuber.

Wiechert sees Lobedanz as a political opportunist, employing the same bathetic language as the Nazis in a post-war situation. He is thoroughly unsympathetic, his ideals and plans for the future of Germany couched in the same suspect platitudes that were formerly used by the regime. When the play opens, Lobedanz has just received news of his appointment to the editorship of the "Neue Deutsche Zeitung". Frau Balzereit, representing Wiechert's own 'natural' position in its essentials, begs Lobedanz to use his position to provide "for die kleenen Leute, det die wieder'ne Vertröstijung haam." (X.215) But he intends to write in the grand manner:



"Auch die kleinen Leute kommen heran, Frau Balzereit. Aber in der Hauptsache die Völker, verstehen Sie? Die Versöhnung der Nationen! Die Neuordnung der Welt! Keine Habenichtse mehr!" (X.215)

His son Helge, who despises his political vacillation, challenges him: has he forgotten his Nazi oath? Lobedanz shows by his reply that it is for him not a question of ideals or honour or philosophies of life; on the contrary, it is a question of opportunity: "Realitäten regieren die Welt... Sein Schicksal tragen, macht den Mann, nicht, sich dagegen aufbäumen." (X.216) Helge may be a Nazi, but it is evident that Wiechert prefers his rigid protestations of faith in Hitler to Lobedanz's evasions. It is a strange, not entirely unsuccessful touch in this scene when Helge marches over to the portrait of Abraham Lincoln hanging on the wall and turns it over to reveal Hitler's picture. The pretence exposes Lobedanz for the opportunist he really is. To all intents and purposes the two pictures are one and the same to him or, more accurately, both are irrelevant; indeed, Frau Balzereit refers to them as a "Januskopp." (X.218) Act I, then, shows that Lobedanz is prepared to sacrifice all pride and personal honour for the sake of the political cause most likely to succeed. He is governed not by regard and concern for his fellow-man, but by expediency.

Act II fills out the picture a little more and shows how Lobedanz is prepared to stoop to any means likely to further his own ends. He even denounces former friends to the Americans to consolidate his own position. He represents the so-called "Anti-Nazis," attacked by Wiechert in The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, whose only principle is the survival of the fittest and who betray their countrymen not out of a sense of duty or because they wish to assume the responsibilities of others, but in order to take over their assets:

Sie wollten nicht hinter dem Pfluge hergehen und die neue Saat aussäen, die Disteln ausjäten und das neue Brot für die Hungrigen backen. Aber wenn ihr kleiner Nazi einen Wagen gehabt hatte, wollten sie diesen natürlich haben, weil es der Gerechtigkeit widersprach, daß ein Schwein einen Wagen hatte. Und wenn der kleine Nazi eine Sinekure gehabt hatte, wollten sie natürlich diese Sinekure haben. (X.634-35)

Frau Balzereit expresses the same thought more forcibly when she says to Schattenhuber:

Draußen spielen de sonny boys Ping Pong, und wir heben de Bälle uff... Und die meisten sind mit'n Denunzieren beschäftigt. Wer'n Posten hat, denunziert, damit die andern nich ran kommen; und wer noch keenen hat, denunziert, damit er rankommt. (X.257-58)

Nor was the attitude of these so-called "Anti-Nazis" entirely unambiguous during the regime; Lobedanz represents those who managed to reverse their political allegiance without attracting too much adverse attention. In an important speech, Anna, his wife, summarizes

Wiechert's ideas as she considers the opportunists:

Wie die Mörder seid ihr und habt noch nicht genug von dem Blut und den Tränen, die vergossen worden sind. Ihr wickelt euch in eure großen Worte, wie die andern es euch vorgemacht haben, aber unter den großen Worten tragt ihr dieselben Messer wie die anderen. Du wolltest an deiner neuen Welt bauen, aber ihr baut nur an eurem eigenen babylonischen Turm und ganz oben wollt ihr selbst sitzen und die blutigen Schuhe auf die setzen, die nun ohnmächtig sind. (X.268-69)

Okay oder die Unsterblichen is not, on the whole, a satisfactory vehicle for Wiechert's ideas - despite occasional moments of real passion and succinctly expressed truths - since it relies almost entirely on a dialogue to which the many dramatic effects are incidental. The dialogue tends to drive home a limited number of truths; consequently the characters repeat themselves, dramatic development is slow and, above all, the attitudes of the characters are revealed in their entirety from the very beginning. All are the stock types found in the novels, exaggerations of virtue or caricatures of evil. The latter are inevitably punished (Lobedanz, Helge), and the former rewarded or praised (Schattenhuber, Frau Balzereit, Anna). Some scenes fail to achieve the satire intended and are almost slapstick: in the scene with Sergeant Macpherson, dramatic effects are employed with the intention of revealing Lobedanz's political affiliations as opportunism and humbug. On the wall hangs a picture of Abraham Lincoln

which leads to a ludicrous and naive discussion. The picture reminds Macpherson of "unser barkeeper [sic!] in Los Angeles. Looks like our barkeeper, Mr Doolittle," (X.228) and he is not familiar with the name of Lincoln: "Lincoln? Lincoln? Knew a guy with [sic!] that name, a baseballmann [sic!], kannte einen Lincoln." (X.228) It is the ex-Nazi Lobedanz who then instructs the American in his own history!

The scene is not intended to denigrate the Americans, whose role in this play is either sympathetically treated, as in the case of MacLure, or who are treated as overgrown children with an unquenchable 'Lebenslust' (Macpherson). On the contrary, Wiechert's shafts are directed at the Germans. This becomes clear in the scene when Macpherson, half-drunk, takes down the picture of Lincoln and looks at it, revealing the face of Hitler on the reverse side to the audience and the other characters (X.231). Lobedanz's vain efforts to have the picture replaced on the wall, Frau Balzerit's ingenuous, deliberately ambiguous commentary which only adds to Lobedanz's desperation and fury, and Macpherson's naive incomprehension of the situation he has unwittingly created, combine quite successfully to reveal Lobedanz as an impostor and a rogue.

But in general the play has no independent, archetypal message. The action is limited and insignificant, and the characters are puppets manipulated by the author at will. Wiechert's intention is satire, but he only succeeds in ridiculing the deceptions practised by so many of his contemporaries.

He developed his attack on post-war Germany in more serious writings. It was clear to him that little had changed since the fall of Nazism, except in externals. He had expected the enthronement of goodness, love and justice, and was now bitterly disappointed (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.725) He sees little improvement after the cessation of hostilities. Newspapers continue to attack political and religious opponents by besmirching their characters as before (IX.731). The German nation has become thoroughly corrupt (IX.732-33).

The only attempt at any explanation for the German failure in defeat is made in Grablegung oder Auferstehung? A year has passed since the end of the war and Wiechert is constantly plagued by the question,

ob die neue Erde nun Frucht zu tragen beginnt oder  
ob sie ein wüstes Feld bleiben soll, wo die ver-  
rosteten Pflüge in den verfallenen Furchen stehen  
und die Zugvögel über eine öde Stätte ziehen, wo  
der Wind nur das Gestorbene bewegt. (X.925)

In considering Germany's defeat he realizes that the new birth which so many expected has simply not occurred. He

believes that if there is to be a future dedicated to love and justice, there must be a change of heart; otherwise rebirth can only be an external appearance which belies the real state of things. This change of heart is, however, not forthcoming and Wiechert looks for an explanation.

In the first place, he claims in this review of the previous year, there was no willingness to accept personal responsibility for the twelve year tyranny. Everyone tried to lay the blame elsewhere: "Wir haßten das, was die andern Kollektivschuld nannten, nachdem wir solange teilgenommen hatten an der Kollektivmacht, oder ihrer Sicherheit, oder ihrer Verantwortungslosigkeit."

(X.926) Guilt is explained by the fact that people were prepared to submerge their individual consciences in a collective conscience which is inevitably irresponsible by virtue of its very solidarity. A genuine change of heart is impossible unless each individual is prepared to recognize his own contribution to the terrifying events of the last decade. Guilt is not the deed committed but the attitude:

Überall, wo nach Paragraphen Recht gesprochen wird und nur nach Paragraphen, wird nicht die Seele der Schuld erfaßt sondern nur das Gesicht, die Tat, aber nicht die Gesinnung, das Verbrechen, aber nicht das Böse, der Handschuh, aber nicht die Hand.

(X.927) 38

Furthermore, it is unsatisfactory to lay all blame

on the Nazi system, for when systems fall, truth can arise (X.927-28). Wiechert here betrays his bewilderment that after twelve years, during which men have become the playthings of the forces of evil, an immediate change of heart, admission of guilt and hatred of all that made the lives of so many meaningful, have not accompanied the fall of the system. With the destruction of the "Kollektivmacht," he expects Germany to be infused with a new, vital energy, a resurrection of all the 'natural' virtues suppressed for so long:

Wenn Systeme fallen, kann die Wahrheit wieder aufstehen aus dem Irrtum, eingeengt, zusammengepreßt, verbogen und selbst verwundet, aber doch die Wahrheit, der unzerstörte Urgrund, auf dem die Füße eines Volkes wieder ruhen können, und mit den Füßen das Herz. (X.927-28)

War, identified a priori with evil, is due to man's temporary aberration from the natural inclination to virtue. Logically, therefore, the end of physical evil entails a moral renewal. But the actual situation contradicts the apparently unassailable logic of Wiechert's argument, and he is forced to look elsewhere for an explanation of the German failure in defeat.

Since he is unable to find his argument in the state of affairs about him, he reaches back into history for a plausible explanation of the failures of the first year after the war. He finds it, as for Nazism itself, in the conflict between "das Magische" and "Ratio": 39

Während die östliche Welt trotz allem noch tief in ihrem magischen Grunde beharrte, lärmte das Abendland um die Mitternacht vor dem neuen Tage... Immer noch haben wir nicht erkannt, daß es nicht um Häuser geht, um Kleidung und Lager, um Grenzen und Einkommen. Daß es um die Erde geht, um das Erste und Letzte. Daß die Frage nach Grablegung oder Auferstehung die Frage ist, ob wir das bewahren oder erneuern können, was unsre Kultur ist oder einmal war. (X.930-31)

But Wiechert makes no remedial suggestions. He digresses from his main argument to analyse contemporary literature in its failure to deal adequately with contemporary problems, inveighs against post-war politics and bureaucracy which demonstrate the same lack of concern for the common man as Nazism had done, and concludes bitterly:

Nein, wir sind kein auferstehendes Volk. Unsre Fabriken mögen wieder arbeiten, unsre Kirchen sich füllen, unsre Häuser wieder ein Dach haben, unsre Züge wieder durch das Land rollen, unsre Kinder wieder aufwachsen ohne Angst und Verstörung. Aber es ist ein toter Tag, der sich über uns erhebt. Immer werden diejenigen da sein, die guten Willens und reinen Herzens sind. Die nicht nach dem Ihrigen fragen, die schenken und sich verschwenden. Aber sie werden einsam stehen wie Säende auf einem ungeheuren Feld, Verlorene in der Weite eines endlosen Raumes. (X.939-40)

Wiechert's conclusion as he considers the world about him is one of resignation. He is disgusted at a mentality which can hold the victors responsible for the failure to alleviate post-war necessity. Even if many regard the past twelve years as a reign of terror in which they played a passive role, nevertheless the present



proves that they are not prepared to do proper penance and are not led to a position of genuine humanitarianism and love. Suffering has been accompanied by jealousy, lust and greed instead of preparing the way for love (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.788).

Wiechert only took one more opportunity of clarifying his attitude to German defeat in his non-fictional work, and that was in Abschied von der Zeit, which is rather a personal confession of faith in justice, truth and love than a tirade per se. If in Grablegung oder Auferstehung? he has still been able to regret that the leadership of Germany has not been placed in the hands of the artist (X.937-38),<sup>40</sup> he now takes the opportunity of relinquishing his task as preceptor once and for all. One evening over the radio he hears the last words of the Russian prosecutor's address at the Nürnberg war criminals' trial. It is hardly over when Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its promise of joy and hope is broadcast. Here is a world of contradictions which he cannot reconcile. He takes a weighty decision to leave all the petty discussions of his day. In future it will be his task by means of his art to provide some form of solace for troubled hearts. Too much time has been wasted in seeking the responsibility of the past years instead of searching for a remedy:

Und auch ich hatte mich beteiligt. Auch ich hatte geredet, zur Jugend und zum Alter, zu den Schuldigen und zu den Unschuldigen. Weil ich am Anfang noch gedacht hatte, daß das Wort eine Macht des Herzens sei, die bis an den Kern des Guten rühren könnte; die zum Erkennen, zum Heilen und zur Umkehr führen könnte. (X.671-72)

The speeches delivered and the pamphlets written have been useless; they have only earned him recrimination, and the few who appreciated his words needed no encouragement.

Wiechert never really abandoned his educating role entirely, as we have seen in our appraisal of his novels, but even Missa is less concerned with ideals than was Jeromin-Kinder. By the time of Wiechert's death in 1950 many of the early problems of guilt and responsibility had receded into the background, and philosophy and literature were beginning to flirt with Existentialism. As Germany became more and more the battleground between East and West, writers like Wiechert were forgotten, and the moral and spiritual problems which determine such a large section of Wiechert's subject matter and apart from which the whole body of his work is unthinkable, had been displaced by diplomatic and 'realpolitische' problems, such as rearmament, the Ruhr and the Saar. <sup>41</sup> In chapter VI we will critically assess Wiechert's post-war attitudes and evaluate their relevance and significance for his generation.

## CHAPTER VI

### WIECHERT AND THE POST-WAR PERIOD

#### A. Wiechert and the Unpolitical Attitude

A number of related questions yet remain to be answered. Is Wiechert's declining popularity sufficiently explained by his alienation of both American and German sympathies? Or has this question merely autobiographical significance with no relevance to an appraisal of Wiechert's literary merit? Conversely, we might ask: was it the peculiarity of Wiechert's answers after the war which invited the criticism of his contemporaries, or was this criticism due to a mounting dissatisfaction with his solutions to contemporary problems in the whole of his work, a discontent simply accelerated by the exigencies of the critical post-war period which revealed his answers as remote and improbable?

In fact, an explanation of Wiechert's descent to obscurity in terms of his alienation of American and German sympathies need of itself not invalidate his position as a writer with a uniquely valid contribution

to the thought of his day, not need his literary isolation detract from his appraisal of the contemporary situation. There is no inherent principle in literature which demands a consensus of approval before a writer is deemed to have offered a decisive interpretation of reality. Indeed, by some kind of circular argument it might be possible to suggest that Wiechert was ahead of his age and that the American and German refusal to follow his instructions was due to their shortsightedness, and not to his failure to grasp the intellectual currents of the time. This was, of course, the view Wiechert himself took in the later speeches and non-fictional writings, in which he also derived comfort and further inspiration from the few who devoutly followed his message and proclaimed his gospel. In such a situation, future generations might be expected to proclaim Wiechert as the martyr of his age, the prophet rejected by his people because his message was offensive.

Certainly, Wiechert's external success immediately after the war may be ascribed to his spotless record of resistance, and before the dissemination of The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, he appeared to represent the attitude of the victors in full. Undoubtedly his fame would never have spread so rapidly throughout Germany and beyond it, had it not been for the attitude he had

taken to the regime. His precipitation into the ranks of the dissenters after 1933, the literary censorship exercised by the Nazis on his lectures and publications, his short confinement in Buchenwald, combined to invest him with a martyr's crown, and made of his Bavarian country home a kind of shrine where the desperate and down-trodden hoped to receive comfort and advice. <sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, some critics fell prey to the danger of eulogizing Wiechert's prowess as writer not on the basis of any literary qualifications, but they confused artistic merit with his political attitude. <sup>2</sup>

Post-war circumstances, however, also contributed to make Wiechert a success. Victor Lange <sup>3</sup> noted two factors tending to make for literary conservatism after the war. The first was a spate of new periodicals, largely edited by men who were known before 1945. What was significant about these periodicals was the amount of space devoted to authors who represented the attitude of the victors. One of the features of the literary scene immediately after 1945 was the number of those who had their work published on no more than the strength of their political reputation. Margaret Marshall, reviewing the English translation of Magd des Jürgen Doskocil in 1947, wrote that many assumed the appearance of this book in 1947 implied that it was a recently published work with a

subtly veiled commentary on Nazism. They were mistaken, she wrote:

The novel had nothing to do with recent German history and was ... an early work of Wiechert's ... which was being published here and now on the strength of his present reputation as one of the few German writers in Germany who managed to survive honourably. 4

The second factor noted by Lange which helped to ensure Wiechert's success was the state of the publishing houses between 1945 and 1948. Many of the reputable firms managed to resume their work. But restrictions on paper and ink made publishing difficult. Editions could seldom exceed 5000 and consequently an author's true effectiveness was seriously curtailed, particularly if he were young and his name comparatively unknown. It was not surprising that publishers tended to limit themselves to recognized names, especially if they represented the attitude of the victors. Wiechert fitted into this pattern admirably. He was regarded as representing the best in Germany, he had not emigrated and he had suffered Germany's fate as his own. 5

Wherein, then, lie the deeper causes of the sudden disaffection for Wiechert? As the 'forties advanced, the intellectual spirit in Germany changed markedly. The initial problem of guilt so earnestly debated at all intellectual levels was suspended indefinitely to make way for the seemingly more relevant issues of daily

living. Most were eager to forget Nazism as soon as possible, and by 1948 National Socialism was no longer a contemporary but a historical phenomenon. The American, British and French armies abandoned a more obviously militaristic role and assumed the more subtle policy of observation and supervision. Ironically, Wiechert had owed his success to the rise of Nazism. When the system fell, it was inevitable that interest in his prophecies and exhortations should similarly wane. It was no longer necessary to read Wiechert in order to be regarded as a "good German." <sup>6</sup>

There is, however, a more significant explanation for the increasing number of formerly staunch supporters of Wiechert and his ideas that eventually turned to other writers. By the time the German economic and political system had achieved some measure of stability around 1949, it had become clear that Wiechert was dealing with improbabilities, and one critic felt justified in observing that he had become a "Dichter für Erbauung suchende alte Damen." <sup>7</sup> In chapter V we suggested a theory of literature as a form of knowledge, a unique contribution to the world of thought in terms of an interpretation of reality which, by virtue of its decisiveness is nevertheless able to confront man with the essence of reality. The poet does not simply imitate

in verbal form what he sees in the world about him, as Plato suggested. His task is not representation of empirical phenomena but interpretation of them. He deals with events in order to concentrate the attention of the reader on that which is universal. Such a view of the function of the literary imagination suggests an epistemological function for art, a more illuminating form of knowledge, presented not on the basis of objective data but nevertheless inherently 'true' because it is 'probable'.<sup>8</sup>

But for Wiechert literature is not a new kind of knowledge based on a predetermined social, psychological or even political pattern of familiarity.<sup>9</sup> Rather in his view, literature is a technique of persuasion; not a form of communication delimited by the unity and structure of a novel or drama, or the rhythm and metre of a poem, but an attempt at moral influence made palatable by the external requirements of artistic form. As the post-war years advanced, it became obvious that Wiechert was failing in his obligation to reality and was continuing to depict a world far removed from the necessary "probability" of which Daiches speaks.<sup>10</sup> Wiechert continued to exhort and encourage in a world which had lost its ideals.<sup>11</sup> When all the evidence seemed to point in the opposite direction, Wiechert avowed that man



was a free, responsible being with an innate sense of justice and an unlimited future. The motives of his writing seemed to the younger generation to have been irrelevant to and out of touch with the realities of the post-war struggle for survival.

In general, then, it may be said that Wiechert failed after 1945 to live up to expectations. When the MSS written in secret during the war were uncovered, revelations of a new direction in literature were expected. However, neither fairy-tales nor masses indicative of spiritual uncertainty were able to uncover and define the dark forces which had been at work in the past twelve years; nor could they reconcile Wiechert's contemporaries with the new world about them. Even Missa sine nomine, the novel which culminates a life's work and summarizes all previous attitudes, is set in an antiquated atmosphere and has little contact with the realities of post-war Germany.<sup>12</sup> The only answer given to the most urgent question of the time is a conservative retreat into the past: "In der Welt mochte eine neue Ordnung vor sich gehen, ohne Herrschende und Dienende, aber sie wollten in der alten Ordnung bleiben."  
(VI.129)<sup>13</sup> Freiherr Amadeus' whole struggle to come to terms with life may be ultimately reduced to an attempt to rediscover the old understanding of life. There are

no new goals, no new ethic. The war and defeat have not destroyed the basic principles according to which generations of von Liljecronas have lived. All ideals have been shattered except their own.

Strangely, Wiechert's interference in the political events of his time was inconsistent with his own understanding of the poetic task which he had expressed in 1933 in Der Dichter und die Jugend. Here he had stated that the 'Dichter' deals not with the ephemeral but with the eternal,<sup>14</sup> and his definition seems to deny the whole range of correspondences between the cultural, political and social events of an artist's time, on the one hand, and, on the other, the attempt of the writer in some measure to reflect the predominant spirit of his age. In practice, too, Wiechert's fiction does not demonstrate the product of his reflections on contemporary phenomena expressed in a timeless way, but exhibits a highly personalized, individualistic quality which tends to distort reality and concentrate the attention of the reader in a predetermined mould.

For it is just this highly personal quality which makes Wiechert's outlook 'unpolitical'. We have seen how he repeatedly emphasized that the role of the artist in times of spiritual insecurity is one of consolation. The artist's interference in the political or sociological

issues of his day lies theoretically outside the range of Wiechert's definition. But there is a two-fold danger here: first, the statement that Wiechert emphasizes the individual at the expense of the state becomes a criticism, when it is realized that in his view the individual must withdraw in a time of political conflict and isolate himself from the concerns of society about him. Such withdrawal, were it possible, would be a concession to the charge of improbability - a charge which the later fictional work has simply been unable to refute. The second danger lies in Wiechert's contradictory understanding of the role of the artist. While literary criticism may not agree that the prime task of the writer is consolation - "die Kunst als Tröstung" - there can be no a priori argument for rejecting such a position. But the question may certainly be asked: by what means does the artist provide solace and why does he seek to provide it? There can be no doubt that it is primarily a political situation which creates the spiritual difficulties Wiechert seeks to alleviate. He affixes a motto of Goethe's at the beginning of his Märchen:

Komm! wir wollen dir versprechen  
Rettung aus dem tiefsten Schmerz, (VIII.9)

and the salvation he offers is a flight from the reality of suffering caused by war and the political situation accompanying it. Accordingly, one would expect that, as

Herd has rightly argued, <sup>15</sup> "true solace" should

spring from true understanding, otherwise art will comfort only in the sense that the reader is invited to discard his critical awareness of his situation, and to foster only "ein reines Herz", the remedy for all ills in Wiechert's volumes of Märchen.

Critics in reply to Herd agree on the whole that Wiechert "is indeed incapable of grappling with political actualities," and suggest that "no justice is done to him if he is treated as a political writer and found wanting." <sup>16</sup> Thus Fridsma writes:

It would be wrong to suppose that for Wiechert the state had no importance or that the type of government under which he lived was a matter of indifference to him. His own heroic and inspiring resistance to the Nazi state testifies eloquently to the contrary. <sup>17</sup>

But Fridsma confuses the issue by introducing a new element which has nothing to do with Herd's argument. Wiechert's record of opposition is not assailed by the assertion that he is 'unpolitical'. On the contrary, we have suggested that it was not a political motive which induced him to take his stand against Hitler, but an ethical one. <sup>18</sup> Consequently, the type of government under which he lived - as a purely political form - was immaterial to Wiechert, provided it did not violate the privacy of his ethical sensibility, and Herd has amassed enough evidence to lend weight to a charge against Wiechert of political indifference. <sup>19</sup>

Wiechert in his most mature political confession at the end of his life seeks to transcend national barriers. In Missa, Erasmus arrives at a typical conclusion:

Es war ihnen nicht mehr so wichtig, wer der Sieger und wer der Besiegte war, wer dieser Nation angehörte und wer einer anderen. Weil die Nation derjenigen, die guten Willens waren, keine Grenzen kannte. Weil sie nicht erobern wollten oder herrschen, Macht oder Recht haben wollten, sondern weil sie nur etwas helfen und heilen wollten.  
(VI.294)

The extract is indicative of many similar statements made by Wiechert after 1945 and reflects the confusion of political and ethical terminology.<sup>20</sup> On the surface, the villagers in Jeromin-Kinder II seem to resist a political reality, but their reasons for doing so are based on the Wiechertian conflict between nature and civilization. Their response to National Socialism is conditioned by their author's political indifference.<sup>21</sup> Whatever can be said of Wiechert's all-consuming concern with the ethical response to political phenomena is, however, also true of the post-war speeches and essays in which Wiechert treats the psychological reaction of a sensitive man to an evil age. But what critics have frequently overlooked is that he treats contemporary reality in a dangerous and misleading fashion by dealing with strictly political subjects in strictly ethical terms; and by his insistence on his own role as

Praeceptor Germaniae, he has virtually set himself up to speak with political authority and has consequently invited criticism from those who found his solutions wanting.

At every opportunity Wiechert asserts the claim of heart over politics. In Grablegung oder Auferstehung?, he expresses the hope,

Daß das Begangene, das Gefehlte, das Verschuldete zum Urgrund eines Neuen wird, zu einer neuen Wiedergeburt und einer neuen Taufe. Zu einem neuen Leben, ganz und gar neu, von innen heraus, aus dem Blute heraus. Und nicht, wie viele meinen, zu einer neuen politischen Form, zur Demokratie etwa, oder zu einer neuen künstlerischen Form. (X.929)

Such a statement is contradicted by Wiechert's own futile attempt to provide a new artistic direction after the war. For surely his attack on contemporary writers who, in his view, represent a decadent civilization in their works (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.743-44),<sup>22</sup> and his insistence of the moral responsibility of the writer to his material and audience, can only be understood in the context of his own didactic role as preceptor, an effort directed as much at contemporary writers as at his own audience.

The success of reconstruction, then, depends ultimately on the artist and must take place within the boundaries of the cultural rather than political sphere. Yet if one thing was entirely clear after the war, it was

that culture had not been able to prevent a regression into barbarity - an idea with which Wiechert himself paradoxically agreed while yet asserting the relevance of his own cultural endeavour after 1945. What Karl Barth wrote in 1945 in Switzerland about the necessary presuppositions for 'Neuaufbau' after the war was recognized by most:

Es handelt sich, wohlgemerkt, nicht darum, die alten Kapellen und Tempel zur Pflege der Philosophie, der Literatur, der Kunst und der Religion zu restaurieren und ihnen einige neue an die Seite zu stellen. Das wird und das mag ja auch geschehen. Es gehört aber auch zu den Irrtümern der Vergangenheit, daß wir meinten, die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Geist in Form solcher sonntäglicher Kulturarbeit, solcher Tempel- und Kapellenbauten vollziehen zu können, während er doch gerade da verborgen ist und herrscht, wo wir gewöhnlich - sagen wir es ruhig: wo wir wirklich leben: in der Politik also und in der Wirtschaft, in der sozialen und technischen Gestaltung.

Barth continues with more explicit reference to the inability of culture to create a new and better world:

Das Schiller- und das Goethehaus [können] mit allen ihren weihevollen Erinnerungen doch nicht verhindern, daß in ihrer nächsten Nähe ein Buchenwald möglich und wirklich wird, ... auch Philosophie und Literatur, auch Kunst und Religion, wie wir sie erlebt haben, [können] selber zu Dirnen des Ungeistes werden. 23

This is an attitude with which Wiechert could simply not agree; accordingly his claim to highest authority after the war demonstrated a remote contact with reality.

A more serious criticism remains to be made. In his article on Wiechert's 'unpolitical' outlook, Herd quotes a Swiss critic:

Und nun wird bei Wiechert geherzelt auf Teufel komm raus; sein Heilmittel für die Fährnisse unserer Zeit ist ganz einfach eine Injektion in die Tränendrüsen. Und er merkt gar nicht, wie nah er damit im Grunde dem dem Brutalen so benachbarten falschen Romantizismus der Nazis steht, trotz Buchenwalde. 24

Part of the tragedy of the years 1933-45 lay in the appeal of National Socialism to a characteristic of the German writer of the time; his willingness deliberately to turn his back on reality, represented so clearly in the work of the early Stephan George or of Hermann Hesse. In 1947 Heinrich Fischer made the penetrating suggestion that the urgent task facing German literature was "to find the way back to reality; the way out of nebulous mysticism." 25

In just this respect Wiechert failed, but what is more serious is that his attack on the writers of his generation can be equally and justifiably applied to his own career. In Rede an die deutsche Jugend, he poured scorn on those who were "Knechte ihrer Zeit," --- "die Zeit der Zauberer, die einen Schleier über das Seiende warfen. Eine große Zeit für alle, die die Herzen anzurühren vermochten." (X.382) The writers of this period, Wiechert claims, made Nazi tyranny possible.



Yet by fostering an unpolitical, highly personal attitude, Wiechert logically makes himself as guilty as those to whom he believes himself opposed:

His own work, in inducing in the reader an "unpolitical" attitude such as Thomas Mann long since renounced, holds within it the dangerous possibility of creating a state of mind in Germany in which any new tyranny would thrive. 26

The outstanding feature of Wiechert's post-war work is its lack of political direction. It was a political situation which led him to stress individual ethical activity, but political problems could not be solved by simply disregarding them. He was fearless in his antagonism to Nazism, but his remoteness from society and his political apathy paradoxically provided for him and for others similarly inclined the sole means of resistance to a philosophy which had partly arisen from their own sorts of beliefs.

It is important to realize that Wiechert's unpolitical attitude is largely determined by the nature-civilization antithesis, which we noted in chapter I as the dominant theme in his works. Wiechert's irrationalism was nourished by his natural disaffection for the claims of the intellect, and the more he tended to explain contemporary political phenomena as the capitulation of modern man to "Ratio," so much the more did he stress its

inevitable contradiction in the 'natural' world of his native East Prussia. The result was that by 1945, when an authoritative statement was most urgently required of him, he was further than ever removed from the reality of the situation. It is impossible to detect any distinct difference in Wiechert's criticisms of the Empire, the Third Reich and the democracies of either Weimar or Bonn. At every point he was disappointed by external changes of government not reinforced by internal changes of heart.<sup>27</sup> The tirades uttered against National Socialism differ little in quality from his attack on American jazz, his disgust at the splitting of the atom or his analysis of the failures of the American occupation.

Despite his avowed allegiance to the victors, his continual pleas in the broadest of ethical terms implied a quietistic attitude which could seem to apply as equally to the work of reconstruction as to the political force that made it necessary. Wiechert, therefore, refuses to take any political system seriously, and by his insistence on the claims of the individual conscience, he "tends to foster a spirit of uncritical submission to any tyranny."<sup>28</sup> The unintellectual themes of Jeromin-Kinder and Missa provide ground on which irrationalism and political indifference flourish, and the importance of the intellect for a properly integrated society is dismissed without further ado, so that the relevance of

these novels may be brought into question. Further, as Röpke has said:

A man [who] throws himself too impulsively on nature's breast, ... forgets that civilization implies liberation from nature. He runs into the risk of falling victim to the state of mind which the eminent French philosopher ... describes as "mysticisme naturiste". One short step further, and he is in the realm of the primitive, the brutal, the uncivilized. From forest to jungle is no great distance. 29

In Jahre und Zeiten, Wiechert makes his reply to those of the west who object to his inclination toward the east with its melancholy and brooding. Here he makes a distinction between his own understanding of "das Magische" and that represented by the Nazis:

Nicht das Magische etwa, auf das sich später die Propheten des Nationalsozialismus beriefen, der sogenannte sechste Sinn oder ein anderer Schwindel, mit dem sie ihre Unfähigkeit des Denkens und Erkennens verbrämten, sondern die östliche Erde eben, die aus dem großen Ring noch nicht herausgetreten war, der den Schöpfer wie das Geschöpf umschließt. Die Erde, ... in der die Ratio ein Spiel von Kindern ist und in die heute noch die Religionen der Primitiven hineinragen, ihre Zauber, ihre kultischen Bräuche, ihre Magie. (IX.561-62)

But what else does this convey than an attitude in which Nazism would bear abundant fruit, for what else was Nazism but an absolute denial of that which Wiechert belittles as "Ratio"?

Naturally it would be unjust to suggest that he is to be identified with Nazism; the great difference still lies in the ethical evaluation. But Wiechert

leaves himself open to criticism in that he readily admits the dangers of his literary method and then refuses to draw the obvious conclusions:

In allem diesem war Gefahr, das wußte ich wohl. Die Gefahr der Verführung, der Verlockung in das Unbestimmte, in die Rätselwelt des Herzens. Die Gefahr, daß die so Geleiteten oder Verführten nicht gute Soldaten wurden, nicht gute Beamte, nicht gehorsame Staatsbürger. Ja, daß ihnen das Leben zwischen den Händen zerrann und sie nichts gewannen als einen Traum, einen Schleier der Maja und die Erkenntnis, daß nichts auf der Welt sei als das eigene Herz. Aber war nicht schon diese Erkenntnis die Stufe zu einer höheren Welt? Wenn nichts ist als das eigene Herz, wird es uns dann nicht treiben, dieses Herz zur letzten Vollkommenheit zu führen, die uns möglich ist? Zur letzten Weisheit und zur letzten Liebe?

Und es war auch die Gefahr, vom Objektiven zum Subjektiven zu führen. Allen Gesetzen zu mißtrauen und auf nichts so sehr zu lauschen wie auf die mahnende oder rufende Stimme tief in der eigenen Brust. Aber wenn der einzelne oder das Volk auf diese Stimme gelauscht hätte, statt auf die der Lautsprecher, würden wir nicht vielem entgangen sein, das uns in diesen Jahren mit Blut und Schande bedeckt hat?  
(Jahre und Zeiten, IX.644-45)

Wiechert here admirably sums up for us our two points of criticism: by refusing to come to terms with reality he nourishes political irresponsibility, and his constant emphasis on the essential nobility of the individual, whose natural reaction to political tyranny is said to be one of aversion, does not fit the facts of the case. Most interesting, however, are the implicit suggestions Wiechert makes in this revealing passage. In accordance with his philosophy of tempered idealism he supposes

that an advanced stage of perfection can be reached by the individual, but that this is only possible when the individual is removed from the arena of political responsibility. It may well be asked: is this a relevant answer to the danger of political or civic non-involvement? Or has Wiechert in his usual fashion deviated from the initial intellectual question by emphasizing the ethical responsibility of the individual? The removal of any objective social or political criteria according to which a system may be judged suggests an attitude of unconcern which leaves the way open for despotism.

B. Isolation from Reality

Wiechert summarized his post-war ideas most effectively in the two volumes of Märchen, begun in the winter of 1944 and completed in June 1945. Unlike the vast majority of his works, the Märchen capture the reader's attention by the variety of the motifs and allegories employed and by the dexterity with which the fairy-tale form is handled. His style and language are admirably suited to the writing of Märchen. Nevertheless, if the purpose of writing provides a guide to the understanding of the fairy-tales, some serious criticisms can be made.

Wiechert views them as his most significant con-

tribution to the work of reconstruction. At the end of The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, he writes:

In den dunkelsten Jahren des Krieges, der Einsamkeit und der Verfolgung habe ich einen Band Märchen für die armen Kinder aller armen Völker geschrieben. Das war mein Anteil an dem neuen Acker einer neuen Erde, weil die Menschen sagen, daß ich ein Dichter sei. (X.656)

To a former student he writes that what is significant about the Märchen is "was über allen Kummer und alle Krankheit hinweghebt, eine Insel unendlichen Glückes und Friedens." <sup>30</sup> He frequently refers to his fairy-tales as providing a means of refuge from a difficult existence. He regards them as a serious contribution to post-war reconstruction (Rede an die deutsche Jugend, X.407-408), because they represent the simplicity of his world-view which refuses to complicate the principles of love, truth and justice. Consequently, what is most noticeable is the discrepancy between what is and what he believes ought to be. This in itself only becomes a criticism when it is realized that Wiechert claims his Märchen are relevant in the contemporary situation in Germany at the end of its struggle, a claim which an even cursory glance at the Märchen simply does not bear out. On the contrary, once more an uncritical attitude is fostered. The solution to every problem is a pure and loving heart which possesses the magical ability to transform evil into good and injustice into justice. The moral

Wiechert wishes to draw from life as it ought to be is more suited to the naive simplicity of the fairy-tale than to the complication and realism of the novel.

The Märchen, however, despite their variety, lack the spontaneous freshness normally associated with the form,<sup>31</sup> and this is no doubt explained by the serious intention of the author employing an art-form usually intended to entertain. It is true that many fairy-tales have an attached moral, but in Wiechert's Märchen the variety of motif is not matched by a corresponding variety of moral instruction. Wiechert himself is clearly aware of the fact that his tales differ from the traditional sort: "Denn die Welt, wie sie im Märchen aufgerichtet ist, ist nicht die Welt der Wunder und der Zauberer, sondern die der großen und letzten Gerechtigkeit." (VIII.9) There is no absence of magic in these Märchen, but the supernatural only intrudes in the form of the magical reward which follows on good intentions and actions. Only when human love has overcome evil can the supernatural have its effect and grant the reward. For, "Märchen sind Märchen," as the mother says in Der arme und der reiche Bruder, "und wir müssen die Hände rühren, um satt zu werden." (Märchen I, VIII.12) Wiechert is suggesting that magic cannot take the place of love and justice in the human heart; in fact, these

virtues provide their own magic. In Das einfache Leben von Orla summarizes Wiechert's view:

Alle Kinder müssen aufhören, an Märchen zu glauben. An den Ring, den man drehen kann, an das Wort, das die Schlösser öffnet. An den großen Zauberer, der uns anrührt und erlöst. Lieben und sich nicht fürchten, ist das, was übrigbleibt. (IV.621)

The inevitable result, of course, is a strong moralizing tendency,<sup>32</sup> without which Wiechert sees no justification for the fairy-tales. In every story the basic presupposition for sympathetic supernatural aid in order to overcome some insuperable barrier is a pure heart; nor is there any justice without it. Stories like Der alte Zauberer show how Wiechert's solutions are determined by the contemporary situation. Men of good will and a pure heart are imprisoned, and the wicked suppress truth and justice. Yet, it is suggested that the Germans will be converted to humanity in the same way as the old magician is converted: by a simple man's love and purity of heart. The small boy in Der alte Zauberer proves his love by his physical suffering, and he releases the children from the evil spell. The magical ring is lost because true love has no need of magic,

denn ein reines Herz hat größere Zauberkraft als alle Zauberringe dieser Welt... Recht und Barmherzigkeit, ... das ist der wahre Zauber dieser Erde und das wahre Märchen, das immer bleibt. (Märchen II, VIII.644-45)



Similarly, in Das Mutterherz, the owl helps the boy only if he is obedient (Märchen I, VIII.35). The diabolical power of the wolves in Die Königsmühle is conquered by innocence and purity, not by force: "Denn das letzte Böse auf dieser Erde wird nicht durch das Schwert bezwungen, sondern durch das reine Herz." (VIII.107) As the "Moormann" says to Hinkelbein: "Die Demütigen erlösen die Welt." (Der Moormann, Märchen I, VIII.234) Yet the atmosphere of the Märchen is as incredible as the events which are responsible for their genesis are real. They even fail to depict reality in symbolic or allegorical form. The Kinder- und Hausmärchen of the brothers Grimm were at least the last remnants of German mythology and represented the vestiges of a primitive natural religion. None of them gave any indication of the deeper meaning lying behind them, but the connection between fairy-tale and reality, however tenuous it might have appeared on the surface, was never entirely lost. The modern child's inerrant sense of right and wrong may be offended when the uninvited fairy in Dornröschen takes its revenge on an innocent child. But when it is explained that Dornröschen is a symbol of the seed which is planted in autumn and 'sleeps' until woken by the prince (spring), the inner relationships are suddenly revealed and the tale takes its

rightful place alongside the Greek legend of Pluto, Proserpina and the pomegranate seeds.

But it is impossible to detect any similar hidden level of understanding in Wiechert's Märchen, since the range of his interest is limited and because he indicates the precise meaning of the story within the framework of the Märchen themselves. Their intention is not to entertain, as Grimm's tales entertain even when the subtle mythological references are not understood, but to educate, and to reconcile "die Kinder und Völker aller Zeitalter" (VIII.9) to a world barren of love and justice. What they achieve is the extension of the ever-widening gulf between Wiechert's own private world of meaning and the contemporary world about him, and they only succeed in providing for him a means of escape from an intolerable existence. Therefore, while the classical fairy-tale retains a formal contact with reality and, at the same time, emphasizes the aspect of wonder, Wiechert relinquishes all contact with reality and the element of wonder has been restricted and limited by his didactic intention, in that the exercise of the supernatural becomes dependent upon human qualities.

Nevertheless, Wiechert follows the traditional Romantic pattern of the fairy-tale. Unlike Tieck, he does not depict a blind, hostile, elemental force which

lights upon an individual at random and proceeds to annihilate him irrespective of personal guilt. For Tieck saw only confusion in a life governed by a capricious fate which treated the individual like a marionette. Wiechert does not share Tieck's pessimism. Man is master of his own actions in the Märchen and accordingly determines his own fate. But Wiechert shares the Romantic appreciation of the fairy-tale as the most poetic of all literary genres, both because of its essential simplicity and because, allied to the dream-world, it arouses the fantasy. At the same time, Wiechert lacks the naïveté of the Romantics; for Novalis the fairy-tale was "eigentlich wie ein Traumbild - ohne Zusammenhang - Ein Ensemble wunderbarer Dinge und Begebenheiten - z.B. eine musikalische Fantasie - die harmonischen Folgen einer Aolsharfe - die Natur selbst."<sup>33</sup> Wiechert was more concerned to subject fantasy to his didactic concern, and his Märchen accordingly lack the freshness of the Romantics.

The tendency to escape from reality in his works and to take refuge in a world far removed from the everyday struggles of existence becomes most pronounced in his treatment of music. Wiechert is not concerned to throw suspicion on musical talent as symbolizing

corruption or decay, as Thomas Mann sought to do in Tristan and Doktor Faustus. On the contrary, music is capable of expressing more than other artistic mediums.<sup>34</sup> In Wälder und Menschen, Wiechert confesses that his early contact with music led him to believe, "daß die Musik mehr zu sagen vermag als jede andre Kunst." (IX.150) Music magically transforms the world of reality into a paradise and contrasts the superficiality of our existence. In Das einfache Leben, Graf Pernein says that music is the only art-form, "an der nichts verwest oder verfällt" (IV.481); "es sind die einzigen Zeichen, die der Mensch ohne Sünde geschrieben hat." (IV.469)

Thus for Amadeus in Missa, Mozart's music is the eternal, incorruptible part of the world, untainted by evil:

Und mochte auch das Böse geblieben sein und immer bleiben, so war es doch nicht als das Alleinige auf der Erde geblieben, weil immer etwas da war, das sie ihm entgegenstellen konnten, und wenn es auch nichts anderes und vielleicht nicht mehr war als diese vollkommen reine und vollkommen ausgewogene Melodie, die auch unter den Händen eines Gottes nicht schöner hätte entstehen können als unter den Händen jenes Mannes, der sie in jungen Jahren einmal aufgeschrieben hatte. (VI.304-305)

In this post-war period music provides for Wiechert the assurance that his philosophy of tempered idealism is not misplaced.

Music is always pure atmosphere in Wiechert's works, whatever else it may represent as well. He is

incapable of a musical analysis of Beethoven, Mozart or Chopin since such analysis destroys the otherworldly effect of the music and contradicts his very nature. Music, like the contemplation of nature, creates an emotional mood which hides a deep inner uncertainty. <sup>35</sup> Wiechert rarely integrates music in the action of his novels. This tendency to treat music almost entirely as atmosphere is most prominent in Die blauen Schwingen, a novel which, in any case, relies heavily on effect and is constructed around a very thinly developed plot. In no other work does Wiechert so closely associate himself with the Romantic atmosphere of longing, although Jeromin-Kinder indicates that, despite the intellectual complications not found in the early works, music continued throughout his life to represent Romantic 'Stimmung'.

In the early novels music speaks a language all of its own; mystical and obscure it is understood only by the elect, the "Leidgezeichneten," (Totenwolf, II.100) both as a call to arms and as prophecy of a longing never to be fulfilled. The music he has heard and the words of the musician awake in Wolf Wiedensahl the first dark premonition "von der Größe menschengeborenen Leides, das auf dunklen Zukunftswegen seiner wartete." (II.101-102) Similarly in Pan im Dorfe (1929), music is described as

ein Ruf aus den Wäldern, ... von Rätseln umstanden, von Leid, und von dem Unsagbaren, das hinter der Rinde eines Baumes seufzt oder in den Abendhauch einer Blüte, aber nicht in eines Menschen Wort oder Ton oder in seiner Gebärde. (VII.331)

Whenever Wiechert wishes to express a strange, unfathomable depth in a character, one who exerts an inexplicable influence over others, he gives him a musical instrument to play. For music can express what is beyond poetry; it plumbs ultimate depths. Particularly significant for him is the flute. Flautists like Percy in Geschichte eines Knaben, Niels der Schlangentöter, Sylvestris in Pan im Dorfe and Friedrich Jeromin in Jeromin-Kinder I are pursued by death and express their despair in the mournful tones of the flute. <sup>36</sup> People say of Friedrich Jeromin that he is a "Zauberer," (V.174) and shortly before he is murdered he plays his flute:

Aus dem Dunklen kamen die Töne wie die Stimme eines vergehenden Menschen... Eine Stimme, die alles wußte, das Vergangene und das Künftige... Die menschliche Klage, die sich zu Gott aufhob und zu den Sternen und immer wieder niederfiel, weil niemand ihr Antwort gab. (V.175-76)

Friedrich's flute is a manifestation of an incomprehensible sadness, melancholy tones reaching up to God and ending in a question (V.173-74), an expression of the transitory nature of life in general and his in particular.

Music significantly also provides for Wiechert's protagonists an escape from the realities of life. As

he listens to a child prodigy performing on the piano, Jons realizes that music has the power of helping one forget, "daß das Leben eine wenig erfreuliche Sache ist." (V.206) His appreciation of the concert lies in the fact that the child has the ability to 'sympathise' with the great masters, i.e. to suffer with them and reproduce this suffering in musical form. Jons can identify himself with the young pianist because while he cannot answer his problems and undefined longings, he can nevertheless cast enchantment around them. In other words, music becomes a form of escapism; it creates a Nirvana, a world forgetfulness in which the protagonist can for a time ease the burden of reality:

[Das Kind] hatte eine neue Welt auferstehen lassen, eine Welt ohne Hunger und Durst, ohne Gewalt und Tod, und über dieser Welt hatte es seine sanften Sterne aufziehen lassen, die tönende Ordnung fremder Sonnen, die spielenden Brunnen der Vergessenheit, das Lied des Vogels Ohneleid.  
(V.247)

Similarly in Missa, music is described as a magic with the power to transform reality. It is a "Zauber," (VI.24) lifting man above the ephemeral into the eternal. As long as Amadeus broods on the terrifying events of the war and concentration camp he is unable to perform Mozart. Only when he learns to live "außer der Zeit" (VI.414) can he play the Larghetto movement of Mozart's last pianoforte concerto:

Zwischen diesen einfachen Tönen stand die Verheißung, daß der Mensch noch gesegnet war. Nicht als eine religiöse Verheißung, sondern weil ein Mensch diese Töne hatte schreiben können, gerade diese und keine anderen als diese... Daß die Zeit machtlos war vor dem, der zum ersten Mal diese Töne vernommen hatte. (VI.415-16)

Music becomes the symbol of Amadeus' rediscovery of meaning in life.

To summarize: Wiechert's use of the fairy-tale form and his treatment of music effectively indicate to what extent he was prepared, particularly after the experience of war and defeat, to isolate himself from the concerns of reality, create an atmosphere of passivity and engender a false sense of security. For Thomas Mann music came to symbolize the demonic passions which seemed to him to govern Germany for a time, and Faustus' fictitious compositions at least indicate a situation not far removed from reality; certainly the point of reference is clear. Wiechert, by contrast, could do justice only to a world of his own creation, not to the situation as it really was, and since he appeared to be writing in an intellectual vacuum, could not satisfy a nation which sought some explanation for the years that had gone before and some practical direction for those to come.



C. Wiechert's Attitude of Resignation and His Retirement

Wiechert ultimately withdrew entirely from the concerns of his day by taking a step which incurred the bitterest attacks on his person and finally put an end to his interference in the political sphere. By leaving Germany in April 1947, and by taking up permanent residence for the three remaining years of his life at the Rütihof in Switzerland, he was once more able to return to that deep communion with nature which had been interrupted by fourteen years of political controversy. The three years that followed are marked by an attitude of resignation and entire unconcern for the events of the day. Wiechert has finally succeeded in asserting his indifference to political and social issues. The contrast between the thought of the masses and that of the individual, in his view, isolates the latter, whose ethical views are eventually regarded as reactionary. The resultant feeling of isolation is evident in Wiechert's work of this period. Time and again he has been moved to assert his right to live his life as he wants to, now in terms of the individuality of his artistic mission against the "Literaten"; now the individuality of his concept of culture and the role of nature in a world of

"Ratio" and "westliche Zivilisation"; now the individuality of his thought against the current philosophies of nihilism or Existentialism. Wiechert's emigration to Switzerland is no sudden unmotivated action; on the contrary, it is explained by the growing conviction that he stands entirely alone.

In Jahre und Zeiten, Wiechert explained his reasons for emigrating. In the first place, he claimed, he owed allegiance to the fatherland of humanity and not to that of the politically orientated citizen: "Ich hatte die Gesetze niemals anerkannt, die einen Menschen unlöslich an sein Vaterland binden, weil ich solange im Vaterland der Menschlichkeit und nicht in dem des Staatsbürgers gelebt hatte." (IX.786) Similarly, in reply to a young man's anxious letter, he wrote:

Ich danke Ihnen, auch wenn es mich betrübt. Es war früher nicht Sitte, den "Geist" an sein Geburtsstand zu binden. Es war auch nicht Sitte, Vorwürfe zu erheben in Dingen, die jeder mit seinem Gewissen abmachen muß. 37

Riemschneider was suggesting, not without justification, that Wiechert was only taking into account those who opposed his message and that he ought to have felt some responsibility towards those he had been seeking to influence for so long and seemed to have forsaken; that apparently his emigration was a flight from responsibility.

A second reason for his emigration, Wiechert explained, lay in the failure of the German nation after the war. In a final statement before leaving Germany, he was reported as saying to a Swedish journalist:

Should Hitler return, sixty to eighty per cent of the people would receive him joyfully. There is no hope for this people, it is rotten to the core, it knows only greed, hate, and envy. Never again shall I address the Germans, not even the German youth. My only comfort is in the letters I get from former pupils of my teaching days in East Prussia, who now live in Palestine, Hungary, England, Mexico, and the United States. Here in Germany I find nothing but one vast anarchy of souls. 38

Wiechert clearly saw that his time of struggle was past. He was afraid to return to the state of confusing uncertainty and despair which had obtained before 1932 and to which he once more felt himself exposed. For creative work he needed absolute isolation. In this vein he wrote to Riemschneider:

Ich bin gegangen, weil die Atmosphäre des Bösen mich nicht atmen und nicht schreiben ließ. Und ich glaube immer noch, daß alles, was ich zu tun habe, dieses ist: noch zu schreiben, was mir zu schreiben vorschwebt. 39

Wiechert had lost all desire to fight for his ideals and wanted merely to return to that blissful state of innocence in close communion with nature which had inspired his whole work. In this period he frequently refers to his desire to spend the last years of his life in peace. Thus he concluded in his letter to Riemschneider:

Es ist eine Illusion zu denken, man könnte etwas dadurch tun, daß man "da" sei. Ich habe 14 Jahre keinen ruhigen Schlaf mehr, u. ich wollte noch ein paar Jahre Frieden haben. Das mögen Sie billigen oder nicht billigen. Ich habe in Amerika, Holland u. Wien mehr für Deutschland getan als alle Politiker zusammen. Aber es verhindert die deutschen Zeitungen nicht, mich bei jeder Gelegenheit zu beschimpfen. Sie haben es unter den Nazis getan u. tun es heute genauso. Und dessen bin ich müde geworden. 40

The same bitter tone can be detected in a poem written on leaving Germany:

Nur will ich Frieden, nichts als Frieden,  
und sei es auch bei trockenem Brot.  
(Deutschland, X.476)

In Jahre und Zeiten, he confesses that all he sought was a few years of peace, and he significantly explains this as a return to the time, "als das Tier und die Pflanze mir brüderlich gewesen waren" (IX.790); "die letzte Sehnsucht nach dem großen Schweigen und der großen Einsamkeit." (IX.791)

The only explanation for Wiechert's attitude of resignation after the war lies in his experiences of the previous decade. The continual threats to his inner security; the rigours of concentration camp which weakened an already fragile constitution; the attacks directed at him by his own countrymen; and his own struggle to retain the idea of God combined to enfeeble his resources. Occasional passages in the later works betray his lack of faith in his artistic talent - despite

the grandiose public claims. In Jahre und Zeiten he writes: "Wir fangen immer nur an, wir sind immer nur in der heiligen Frühe, und das Beste, was wir tun oder schreiben können, ist immer eine unvollendete Symphonie in Moll." (IX.335) His tragedy was that he continued both to deal with improbabilities and, at the same time, to assert his competence to solve the difficulties of the post-war years. Had he taken his Abschied von der Zeit three years earlier, he might have been spared the ignominy of the abuse ultimately directed at him.

The trip to Switzerland was, therefore, a final confession that the struggles of the previous fourteen years had been pointless. Wiechert had developed his concept of his duty as preceptor over a long period, but the divorce from reality was clear to all but himself. The necessary rejection of his ideals caused his final bitter disillusionment, and he escaped by abandoning himself to the political indifference which was, in any case, natural to him.

## CHAPTER VII

### STYLE AS A REFLECTION OF ATTITUDES

The unrealistic attitudes to war and defeat, which constitute the philosophical and theological theses determining the fictional and non-fictional work, are realized in Wiechert's style. To understand his writing in terms of nineteenth century concepts of realism is to misunderstand it, for his work is determined largely by the neo-Romantic rejection of realism.<sup>1</sup> The external world of reality is significant only when it has been transformed by the author or the protagonist in terms of their own private world of meaning. Wiechert does not present political or social issues for their own sake; on the contrary, external events are coloured by and evaluated according to their subjective relevance to the predetermined course of the protagonist's life.<sup>2</sup> Although more objective treatment does occur in Wiechert's work, it is generally limited to the beginning and end of any given work, and one can never be entirely sure that this apparent objectivity is, in itself, not

simply a product of the inner reflection of the individual. Wiechert continually confines reality and delimits it over against his private world of meaning, - "Verwandlung der Außenwelt zur Innenwelt." 3

For Wiechert's constant tendency is to exaggerate the importance of every trivial event and to suggest a deep inner change in a character which far outweighs the apparent significance of the event, so that the motivating incident under reflection becomes mere illustrative detail. Particularly in the later works, external plot and character development is meagre in comparison with the detailed presentation of the individual's psychological 'Vorgänge', so that the works with which we are primarily concerned reveal more and more Wiechert's inclination to soliloquy. Events are viewed in terms of their ethical value for the individual, and the greater section of the later works is devoted to an analysis of the hero's inner preparation for active service on behalf of mankind. Wiechert's characters take hold of reality only through their senses, never through their reason, and every reflection on the external world is carefully evaluated.

Through set stylistic formulae, Wiechert is able to show the relevance of a situation for the protagonist and, at the same time, exert a considerable influence on

the reader: "Mir ist sogar, als ob du .."; "Und mir ist, als müsten .." (Die blauen Schwingen, I.387); "Es war ihm, als .." (Wald, I.450). This construction is frequently employed to indicate a kind of dreamlike mysticism. Jons lies in bed in a room built exactly like his old room at home; he imagines he hears the breathing of his brothers and sisters: "Es war ihm, als hörte er .." (Jeromin-Kinder II, V.579). The use of the subjunctive after "als" weakens the realistic force of the sentence which frequently precedes it. Thus in Jeromin-Kinder I, when we read: "Aber wenn sie aufstanden, .." we naturally expect an uncomplicated objective description; instead, Wiechert continues: " .. sahen sie doch aus, als könnten ..." (V.12) and we are forced to reject reality and concentrate our attention on his inner world.

In no other contemporary writer do we find such constant use of the subjunctive mood or of indefinite verbal constructions:

Jons hatte nicht aufgehört, beim Hirten Piontek zu sitzen oder auf der Insel, aber es war nun anders als früher. Er wußte, daß er dies nun zurücklassen mußte, aber es war ihm nicht mehr die einzige Welt, die es gab, seit sein Vater mit ihm gesprochen hatte. Ja, manchmal war es ihm, als lasse er sie nur für eine Weile zurück, um nachher mit der "Gerechtigkeit" für sie wiederzukommen. Wie es sein würde, wußte er nicht, aber wenn sein Vater daran glaubte, würde es eben sein.  
(Jeromin-Kinder I, V.89)

This type of paragraph representative of almost any page of Wiechert's work, reflects his preoccupation with



trivialities. The world of reality introduced in the opening sentence is soon discarded. By means of phrases like "er wußte" or "er glaubte," the reader's attention is gradually focussed upon the thoughts of the individual, and in the final stage, by using clauses like "es war ihm, als ..," the world of reality has been left far behind.

Another stylistic mannerism peculiar to Wiechert is his frequent use of the historic present to create a mystical unreal atmosphere, <sup>4</sup> by which a factual statement or depiction is 'verinnerlicht', the reader is deprived of the right to interpret the passage according to his own understanding of it, is forced to submit to the author's designs on him and see in the depiction what he is supposed to see. Examples of this sharp transition from the imperfect tense - the normal descriptive tense - to the historic present or vice versa are legion. Often the transition occurs between chapters (c.f. Das einfache Leben, IV.430, 490, 599, 680; Missa, VI.166). At other times the transition is sharper and occurs without preparation between paragraphs (Majorin, IV.184; Hirtennovelle, VI.536; Das einfache Leben, IV.433, 434, 435, 501, 600, 684; Jeromin-Kinder I, V.186, 188; Jeromin-Kinder II, V.635, 754). Elsewhere, Wiechert achieves a similar effect by temporarily replacing the

imperfect with the subjunctive (Hirtennovelle, VI.547; Missa, VI.172), or with the perfect, and thence to the historic present (Hirtennovelle, VI.519-20). When the historic present is employed, Wiechert's interference in the action is most immediately felt. The present tense throws a veil of mystery over the work and the author is able to direct and control the reader's reaction to the depiction of a given situation.

Wiechert is rarely able to achieve an unaffected prose style, and then - with the exception of the unusual Der Exote - only in landscape descriptions. The deep communion with nature rings true.<sup>5</sup> Here the use of the subjunctive mood and of other stylistic mannerisms is almost entirely avoided. Thus one need only compare the description of a sunset in Wald (I.555-57), in which Wiechert evokes a suffused, languid atmosphere of mysticism with overtones of liturgical festivity and inner devotion, with the more realistically conceived depiction of life amidst a natural environment in Jeromin-Kinder II (V.581-91), in order to realize that Wiechert was capable of a surprising variety.

It is nevertheless true that the descriptions of nature, no matter how genuine, are employed with a definite purpose in mind, viz. "to lend authority and the sanction of reality to an idealised picture of the

nobility of the simple life," as Herd has said of Das einfache Leben.<sup>6</sup> The opening chapter of Jeromin-Kinder I is paradigmatic in this respect.<sup>7</sup> The realism of the opening pages of the novel is hardly diminished by the highly personal appraisal of the town by the village women. Apart from the absence of historical background, no hint is given of the self-conscious tone which is a feature of Wiechert's prose style. This realistic description of the women on their way back to Sowirog, sustained as it is at some length, has the effect of lending a measure of authority to Wiechert's didactic intent on the reader which now follows. The sudden change from the realistically personal: "Und dann gingen sie endlich... Sie schoben die Kopftücher zurück .." (V.9-10) to the impersonal reflective: "Leicht ging es sich nun... Ohne Glanz war das Leben, mit schmerzdem Rücken ging man durch die Tage .." (V.10), is not immediately obvious because Wiechert's reflection is still overshadowed by the apparent spontaneity dominating the opening of the novel. To the experienced reader, however, the change to the impersonal is a warning of the designs Wiechert has on him. The characters no longer speak or act as individual entities; Wiechert superimposes his personality on theirs and speaks for them.

Wiechert's intervention here is intended to ennoble the concept of poverty by clothing it in a

heightened language, and also to present the author's own personal outlook on life without avowedly departing from the technique of realism. 8

Wiechert, like Stifter, proclaimed the message of the "sanfte Gesetz" and the "einfache Leben"; yet it is a strange element in both that the simpler, more trivial and static the theories of existence became, the more dynamic and complex a style became necessary to express them. 9 With Wiechert complication of style serves almost as an apologia for the simplicity of views expressed. An effective contrast is supplied by a comparison of his style with that of Kafka. Kafka is never superficial, but his style reveals a deceptive simplicity which lends credibility and authority to the unusual depth of his psychological analyses. Wiechert, on the other hand, seeks to gain assent and plausibility for his simple world-view by employing a style only superficially simple, but which is, in fact, forced and deliberately euphuistic, using realistic techniques to give the appearance of authenticity to an essentially subjective view of life. 10 Paradoxically, then, Wiechert's use of language has the deceptive quality of simplicity, where in reality it is quite remarkably complicated, and at the same time, this language is used to describe an attitude which is oversimplified. 11 In other words, the contrast between the simplicity of the ideal striven for and the

unnecessary complexity of language and style partly explains the failure of the author to make any kind of realistic impact on the reader.

Wiechert's style is a prosaic lyricism, uncertain, indefinite, imparting an inner attitude which deprecates reality and fosters the illusion. He exploits the musical overtones of words and uses phrases which add little or nothing to the meaning of a sentence. A haze of uncertainty is cast over the so-called 'simple' events which become distorted; the result is no longer an archetypal image but the musical depiction of a 'Weltgefühl'. We notice, then, the reversal of accepted novelistic technique. The power of the word does not add to the description of an event by heightening its inherent meaning; on the contrary, it obscures it.

Accordingly, we find a frequent use of indecisive words: "die fernen Wälder," -- or even simply "die Wälder" as a concept, - "die unendlichen Wipfel," "der große Atem der Landschaft." Just in those passages where Wiechert seeks to describe the nature of simplicity, he becomes most unintelligible. <sup>12</sup> "Vielleicht wartet es ganz leise in ihm, daß hier in dem Einfachen der nächtlichen Landschaft etwas geschehen könnte, etwas ebenso Einfaches, damit das Menschliche sich dem Natürlichen verbinde." (Majorin, IV.293) <sup>13</sup> The emotive character

of words like "leise," combined with the abstraction of the adjectival nouns "dem Einfachen," "das Menschliche," "dem Natürlichen," conceals reality behind an upsurge of sentiment. As Ollesch has said: "[Wiechert] ... will die großen Geheimnisse durch eine geheimnisvolle Ausdrucksweise verständlich machen und erreicht damit das Gegenteil: Er macht alles unsäglich kompliziert auf seinem Wege zur Einfachheit." <sup>14</sup>

The use of Biblical terminology and concepts further serves Wiechert in enhancing his ideas. Thus he often seeks the support of the reader for the most trivial observations by varnishing them with a thin veneer of Biblical allusion, or by employing quotes directly from the Bible taken out of context and applied to an unrelated situation. It is true that Wiechert's childhood was dominated by his contact with the Old Testament, and that this early acquaintance with the Bible determined much of his later literary effort is undeniable. <sup>15</sup> The paradox according to which Wiechert employs the Bible most prolifically at a time when he most violently rejects even the more basic traditional theological views may perhaps be resolved when it is realized that the Bible is for him primarily a source of style. <sup>16</sup> He uses only that which may be made to serve his purpose - the awful majesty of God, the exhortation

to love and justice. That is, he does not prefer those passages which provide a revelation of transcendental realities to mankind, but those which, on the surface, seem to confirm a priori convictions on an immanent plane. Thus Jons Jeromin is motivated in his search for justice by the words of Isaiah 32:16 - "Und das Recht wird in der Wüste wohnen und Gerechtigkeit auf dem Acker hausen," (V.26) and the motto for Jeromin-Kinder I is taken from Job 37:22 - "Um Gott her ist schrecklicher Glanz." (V.7) Jons finds the latter text confirmed in his war experiences and comes to the conclusion that it is better to leave God out of the picture entirely. But in direct contrast to Job, who becomes dimly aware that his sufferings are explicable only in terms of the majesty of God, Jons' realization of God's inexorability leads him to see the Isaiah text as a personal challenge to bring justice to the downtrodden. Although he does not achieve just this, Wiechert leaves us with a sense not of Jons' failure, but of his very evident success on another level of activity. Yet the Isaiah text cannot be fully understood apart from the Old Testament concept of divine justice - with which Wiechert's understanding is not remotely connected. Isaiah is certainly not conveying the idea that justice is an abstraction or that it can be achieved by man, even in a limited way. 17

Wiechert, therefore, deals with Biblical allusions in a misleading and contrived fashion, and he only uses the Bible because it gives the stamp of eternal validity to the purely immanent ideas expressed.

Wiechert's whole style of writing is at times quite remarkably reminiscent of Biblical language. Thus it is possible to detect a parallelismus membrorum in many passages, reminiscent of Hebrew poetry, and paragraphs may be metrically divided in which one idea corresponds in meaning and approximate length with the other:

Wir sinken nieder in ohnmächtiger Erschöpfung,  
des Kampfes müde ... /  
du aber nimmst die sinkende Fahne und schreitest  
einsam und verlassen in die Welt hinaus, // ...  
Ich habe dich gehaßt ... /  
nun hasse ich dich nicht mehr ... //  
Schwer und bitter wird dein Leben sein, /  
ohne Freude und ohne Liebe ... //  
zu Stein wird dein Antlitz werden /  
und zu Stein dein Herz ... //  
Über den Häuptern der Menschen wirst du leben und  
zu den Füßen Gottes, /  
und kein Stuhl ist dir bereitet zwischen ihnen ... //  
Ich bin ein Mensch wie du, /  
aber ich bin eine Schwester des Waldes. //  
Der Kuß des grünen Gottes hat mich gestreift, /  
und ich weiß, wohin das graue Männlein winkt. //  
(Wald, I.618) 18

Notice, too, as in Hebrew poetry, the almost complete absence in this passage of subordinate clauses.

Another tendency to use language which expects a conditioned response is reflected in the attempt to give speeches a distinctly Biblical flavour, both by employing the New Testament parable form - with or without attached



interpretation - and by imitating the simplicity of Hebrew syntactical structure. Thus Jakob Jeromin uses the language, if not the thought of Matt.13:18-23:

Die meisten von uns ... bleiben wie Fallholz, das der Sturm und Schnee von den Bäumen brachen. Sie liegen, wo sie gefallen sind, und werden wieder zu Erde. Die Armen haben keine Flügel. Und einige sind wie der Rauch, der aus dem Meiler steigt. Die Menschen sehen ihnen nach, aber der Wind verweht sie. Aber einige sind wie das Holz, das dort unter der Erde glüht. Sie werden Kohle, und sie bewegen die Welt. (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.16-17)

The use of indefinite constructions and Biblical allusions combines to lend the novels the appearance of universal significance and demands the reader's tacit agreement. The situation is somewhat analogous to the lecture of an eminent person who commands attention, "not so much because of what he says, but because of the position he holds." 19

Wiechert achieves his didactic influence by a disturbing rhetorical mode of expression which may be regarded as his distinguishing stylistic feature. Most striking is the inclination to divide a sentence into main and subordinate clauses where one clause would serve the purpose admirably and where the emphasis is placed on the subordinate clause. This tendency is found, above all, in Majorin: "Es ist gut, die Hand an den kühlen Kolbenhals zu legen .." (IV.225); "es ist nicht gut, daß die Majorin auf ihrem Hof bleibt .." (IV.267); "es ist

nicht wahr, daß .." (IV.267); "es würde gut sein, die schmerzende Stirn auf das Holz zu legen .." (IV.283); "es mag sein, .." (IV.286, 288); "und da es still bleibt, .. ist es möglich, daß etwas geschehen ist .." (IV.288); "es ist möglich, daß ... Aber es ist auch möglich, daß .." (IV.289); "es kann sein, .." (IV.314); "es ist wahr, .." (IV.314). Similarly in Jeromin-Kinder I: "Es war gut, daß .." (V.129); "es ist gut .." (V.130); "man konnte meinen, daß .." (V.174); "aber es war möglich, daß .." (V.188); "es war nun nicht mehr so, daß .." (V.205) etc. The actual information is imparted in the subordinate clause, but the situation is coloured by the suggestive introduction in the main clause:

Dabei wird das Geschehen einerseits wieder aus der Realität herausgehoben, vom Geist objektiviert und distanziert - andererseits gibt der einleitende Hauptsatz zugleich ein Urteil über den Inhalt des Nebensatzes ab. 20

The relegation of the dominant idea to the subordinate clause makes it strangely remote from the event, equivalent to the remoteness of idea in the main clause.

Every aspect of reality is treated with phrases which detract from the inherent energy generated by a sentence. Wiechert makes his judgment on the action; he carefully selects his attitude and presents his material in such a way that the reader has no alternative but to follow along with him. Miss Kerkhoff rightly refers to

"der dozierende Ton," <sup>21</sup> and it is true that the tendency to rhetoric is a mark of the instructor who seeks to improve the world. Wiechert combines this tendentious mode of expression with a preference for the uncertain, demonstrated in a frequent use of "wohl," "vielleicht," "doch," "doch wohl," "sicherlich," which is unparalleled in German literature. Various possibilities of interpretation seem to be implied and at first sight the reader is left with an unclear impression; but on closer examination it is discovered that the author is exercising a subtle influence. <sup>22</sup> Wiechert seeks agreement or assumes it. Examples of this rhetorical mode of expression are legion: "Es ist wohl lange her, daß .." (Majorin, IV.189); "aber dann muß er es wohl glauben .." (IV.206); "aber da ist die Majorin wohl zu schnell gewesen .." (IV.215); "es ist ja nun wohl nicht leicht .." (IV.247); "er muß das nun wohl zugeben .." (Das einfache Leben, IV.499); "es war wohl so, daß .." (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.127); "und es war wohl so, daß .." (Missa, VI.113); "sicherlich ist sie zu schnell gewesen, .." (Majorin, IV.215); "er muß nun wohl doch .." (Das einfache Leben, IV.498); "aber mit uns ist es nun doch wohl so, daß .." (Missa, VI.155); "und nun haben sie ja doch nur uns drei." (VI.124); "vielleicht geht die Majorin langsam, weil .. Oder weil ... Oder vielleicht auch weil .." (Majorin, IV.355).

At other times, in sentences divided into main and subordinate clauses, he combines the insignificant main clause with such particles in order to strengthen it; in fact he only succeeds in making the clause more obscure: "Vielleicht war es nicht gut, .." (Majorin, IV.184); "aber doch ist es gut, .." (IV.226); "es sei vielleicht gut, .." (IV.241); "es ist wohl wahr, daß .." (IV.267); "aber das ... ist wohl nicht gut gewesen, .." (IV.283); "aber es ist wohl noch nicht gut .." (IV.292); "so ist es doch wohl nicht wahr gewesen .." (IV.338); "es war doch nicht so, daß .." (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.53); "aber wenn ..., sahen sie doch aus, als könnten .." (V.12); "dabei blieb es und mußte wohl so bleiben, aber es war doch .." (V.153); "so also ging es zu, und so war es wahrscheinlich immer zugegangen .." (V.205). Wiechert uses language subjectively when he places himself in the foreground of his writing, providing an interpretation of the action, a commentary on the events, or an explanation wherever he deems it necessary. By entering as an unseen but active protagonist in his work, he attempts to govern and control the reaction of the reader to events presented. Accordingly, normal conversation between individual characters is rare, because they address not only each other but also the reader, and act as though they were aware of a larger listening audience. Their every sentence is a weighty homily and a conversation a

sermon revealing new truths or a consolidation of old ones (c.f. Jeromin-Kinder II, V.852-56).

A further stylistic weakness is reflected in Wiechert's constant use of pretentious similes, metaphors and analogies, which seek to impart to the prose an artificial elegance. Frequently the author presses every ounce of meaning from a metaphor. In Missa, Amadeus is visited by the authorities:

Er sah sie an, während sie sprachen, und er hörte auch zu. Aber er fühlte doch, daß sie "am andern Ufer" waren. Er konnte ihre Stimme noch vernehmen, aber zwischen ihnen und ihm war der Strom. Er wußte nicht genau, ob es der Strom der Zeit war, oder wie man ihn nennen sollte. Aber er war da, eine dunkle, geheimnisvoll ziehende Flut, und er sah weder eine Brücke noch eine Furt. (VI.147)

By means of these lengthy metaphors the reader's attention is distracted and he finds his way back to the real issue only with difficulty. A constantly recurring mannerism is Wiechert's habit of comparing two situations which are in essence and quality so entirely unrelated that comparison seems contrived or even unfair. At one point in the narrative of Jeromin-Kinder II, Jons' objectives and duties as doctor are contrasted with those of the musical prodigy he had once heard as a student, now grown to be a young man. For Wiechert the world of music interpreted by the young performer is alien; the concert is not a creative, spontaneous act, and therefore the pianist has no right to smile as he plays Mozart. For

the doctor does not smile as he lays his scalpel aside after performing an operation (V.688). After the piano recital, autograph hunters crowd the dressing-room. Jons disapproves: "In der kleinen Klinik schrieb man nur Namen unter kleine Rezepte und manchmal unter einen Totenschein." (V.689) By making these comparisons, Wiechert seeks to heighten the nobility, modesty and dedication of Jons and his calling.

At other times similes are employed the force of which is immediately confined and limited. In Jeromin-Kinder I, Wiechert often adopts a monologue tone in the present tense in order to make some observation on the action or to summarize the development of his hero. In the process of maturing, Jons comes to realize that man's duty is to conquer the demonic forces of hatred, force and brutality, falsehood, sacrifice, fear and revenge. This battle brings with it no reward, but:

Wer ihn auskämpft, ist wie Moses, nur daß er nicht auf einem Berge steht, sondern am Fuße eines der tausend Hügel, die sich vor dem Berge erstrecken. Wer ihn auskämpft ist kein Soldat Gottes, sondern ein Soldat der Menschheit. (V.187)

Here Jons, by implication, is compared to Moses, but the force of the simile is almost entirely lost in a succession of qualifications, so that the reader is left with an impression of the nobility of Jons. In fact, Moses suffers by the comparison; Jons' work is so much

the more difficult and consequential.

Almost all of Wiechert's stylistic peculiarities occur in close conjunction with one another. Where any one feature on its own might achieve an illusory, unrealistic atmosphere, and a tendentious, suggestive appraisal of everyday events, when all stylistic mannerisms are combined, the effect is devastating. A passage in Missa provides an admirable example of such combination (VI.362-64).

This passage is part of a lengthy conversation, in which the pastor, Wittkopp, adopts a sermonic, conciliatory tone to describe to Amadeus his attitude to the Church. The copula "und" indicates a reflective passage. <sup>23</sup> In delineating an argument, Wiechert commonly begins with a dogmatic assumption, in reality a conclusion anticipated from that which follows: "Kinder gehören nicht in eine Kirche." He now feels obliged to maintain the force of the dominant statement, which is to be regarded as unassailable. Invariably he proceeds to consolidate the assertion by drawing a contrast on the basis of the key-word in the original thought - "Kinder": "Und ich bin nun doch wohl ein Kind des Glaubens [unassailable], während die meisten Herren des Glaubens sind .." In this minor premise which also presents an antithesis, Wiechert appeals to the reader for support and approval ("nun doch wohl").

The contrast between the speaker and those who differ from him is intensified by a gradation of concepts within the antithesis - "während die meisten Herren des Glaubens sind, und der Bischof wohl am allermeisten." This 'Steigerung' is strengthened once more by "wohl" which artificially maintains the high level of the initial dogmatic assertion .

The argument proceeds to a conclusion, but the antithesis is continued and developed further to ensure that the speaker and those representing opposing views may be as far removed from one another as possible. The contrast is drawn in a sudden group of short, spasmodic utterances, many without a governing verb but with the subordinating force of relative clauses. Each of these 'sentences' receives its impetus from a key-word or key-idea in the preceding sentence, without necessarily proceeding in a logical succession. At the same time, however, the issue under discussion is suddenly confused in that Wiechert alters the significance of the concepts with which he has been operating hitherto. He discards the comparison of the speaker with a child and churchgoers with lords, and now compares the latter with children, - a simile from which every ounce of meaning is extracted. Consequently, in one sentence the initial antithesis has been transferred without warning to a



contrast between "Kinder" and "Kinder"! The simile continues at some considerable length. The confusion is now complete; the emphasis on the contrast has been gradually lessened and attention diverted to a concept of the loss of faith.

A similar pattern obtains in the succeeding paragraphs, with the same rhetorical particles ("doch," "ja auch"), the same confusing antitheses, the same tendency to attach sentences to previous key-words, and the same exaggeration of metaphor:

Sie verstehen, daß der liebe Gott mir für eine Weile den Talar ausgezogen hat, und das macht es ihnen leichter, wenn ich mit ihnen spreche. Die anderen haben ihn nicht ausgezogen, und manche haben sogar zwei übereinander gezogen. (VI.363)

Amadeus' reaction to the speech is manifestly

Wiechert's own:

Amadeus hörte ihm zu, und auch ihm war es, als gehe der große Frieden aus seinem Gesicht in ihn über. Der Friede dessen, der noch einmal anfängt, ganz von vorn anfängt. Wie Kinder [sic!], denen ein Kartenhaus zusammengefallen ist. "Wenn ich bei Ihnen sitze", sagte er, "ist mir so, als sei alles recht, was ich in diesen Jahren getan habe". (VI.363-64)

Reality has been entirely discarded after the introductory "Amadeus hörte ihm zu." The reader is thrust involuntarily by means of "ihm war es, als .." into Amadeus' private world and Wiechert's soliloquy about it. Amadeus' fears are not allayed in an ordinary way; he experiences a "große Frieden," and in a series of ex-

planatory phrases, still within a subjunctive context, the reader is made to realize that the author confirms this striving for peace: "Wenn ich bei Ihnen sitze, .. ist mir so, als sei .." The apparent simplicity of style is belied by unnecessary repetitions. If the reflective, contrived and unnecessary elements in this passage were entirely eliminated, a more realistic core would be retained and the length of the passage reduced to almost half of its original length: "Amadeus hörte ihm zu. Der Friede dessen, der noch einmal ganz von vorn anfängt, ging in ihn über. 'Wenn ich bei Ihnen sitze', sagte er, 'ist mir alles recht, was ich in diesen Jahren getan habe'." The simile has been entirely omitted since it adds nothing essential to the thought of the passage.

Ultimately, what is objectionable in Wiechert is his attempt to lend authenticity to an essentially incredible world, conjured up by him:

Unechtheit ist etwas anderes als Unehrlichkeit oder Heuchelei. Das Unechte ist nicht etwa erlogen oder absichtlich verstellt. Es handelt sich hier überhaupt nicht um den Willen zur Täuschung. Das Unechte unterscheidet sich von diesen anderen und einfacheren Erscheinungen dadurch, daß das Verhalten nicht als solches gewollt wird - gewollt wird es vielmehr als ein echtes - sondern sich ungewollt und meistens auch unbemerkt einstellt. 24

Wiechert's obvious success in depicting what he considers to be the negative decadent aspects of civilization, when contrasted with his subjective interference in the action

of his works, might lead one to observe that in his attempt to give credence to the ideal of the simple life, he has failed, because he alienates the sympathy of the reader just where he seeks to attract it, and because he is ironically most successful in depicting a civilization he loathes.

Had Wiechert been more realistically inclined, more human and more tolerant, had he sought to educate his audience less, he might have maintained the dignity of his calling.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

At the end of his life, Wiechert reiterated the principles which had determined his whole artistic career. In his last poem, he spoke once more about his desire to live in nature far removed from the practical concerns of everyday living:

Ich will nur wie ein Baum noch leben,  
der still mit seiner Erde spricht,  
und meine letzten Blüten streben,  
daß sie ein Kind zum Kranze bricht.  
(Die letzte Frucht, X.533)

Wiechert discovers the solution to the question of despair in nature, and he never really shakes off his early inclination to escape from unpleasant situations into a more perfect world of his own creation. The nature-civilization antithesis remains basic to all his work. While it is true that much of his creative writing is an act of longing for a return to the state of innocence he felt he lost when he went to Königsberg in 1898, and while much of his work which paints such a sharply contrasted picture between "das Magische" and "die Ratio"

may be reduced to a basic conflict within Wiechert himself, the fact remains that he demonstrates an unshakable conviction in the ability of the forest, the village and the plough to create a new, almost perfect being. The world of dreams is for Wiechert by far the healthiest of all possible worlds, a belief which is proof against the threat of the annihilation of all faith in the goodness of man. But the threat is there, and when his faith in the efficacy of divine intervention is shattered in both wars, nature becomes once more the only bulwark against utter despair.

We have suggested from time to time that Wiechert's tempered idealism is an unusual element in twentieth century literature and it is for this reason that he must be considered as isolated. Until 1922 with the publication of Totenwolf he might have been associated with the Konservative Revolution, but as his ethical system, based on nature, developed it became clear that he was to diverge from his contemporaries in many respects. For example, the concept of man so indispensable to the belief in progress, viz. that man is basically disposed to good and is only prevented by untoward circumstances - war, economic rehabilitation, civilization - was impossible for the Konservative Revolution. For Wiechert, only the individual was of significance according to an

attitude which was not affected by the experiences of two world wars.

What is remarkable in Wiechert's writing is that war led him to question a whole culture and to raise the major problems of the twentieth century, yet he refused to draw the consequences for his own thought. "Die Begriffe haben sich ihm verwirrt .. - die alten Begriffe," Hugo Fischer wrote of the soldier of the First World War, and it is equally true of Wiechert.<sup>1</sup> Wiechert questioned the "Begriffe" which he called "Ratio," but he was not aware that his own thought continued to be largely determined by an attitude to progress which lay historically at the basis of "Ratio." This inconsistency in his thinking makes it impossible to take his answers seriously because he continually avoided the conclusions to which his appraisal of civilization led him. The first half of the twentieth century lived in resignation or in nihilistic despair; Wiechert lived in hope.

The most serious criticism that we have had to make is that Wiechert raised all the intellectual problems of his day but proceeded to discuss or answer them in an unintellectual way which was misleading or even dangerous. Political manifestations which are regarded as evil require political answers, but the post-war works consistently demonstrate Wiechert's refusal to align him-

self with a reality which he regarded as unproductive, unelevating and unworthy of his artistic attention. Consequently, when dealing with controversial political topics, he interpreted them in a dangerously misleading fashion, pointing away from the larger view of the good society to the narrow theme of the good life. As an individual, his opposition to National Socialism was exemplary, but at best he could only influence individuals whose ethical attitudes matched his. He could not form public opinion as he tried to do because he refused in his 'political' writings to operate with political terminology and because the way of life he advocated was too exclusive.<sup>2</sup> Further, in advocating moral rejuvenation through cultural means, he contradicted his own analysis of the failure of Nazism, which he explained by the fact that an advanced culture was inherently incapable of preventing the regression of a nation into bestiality and inhumanity. In other words, he dismissed culture as a means of rejuvenation, and then proceeded to recommend it as a necessary means.

It is impossible to rank Wiechert amongst the social critics of his day because he contented himself with partial insights into certain contemporary problems and failed to cope in a significant manner with social issues. In viewing social problems raised by war and

defeat from the vantage point of provincial life, Wiechert withdrew to a refuge within nature. Consequently, the precise relationship between the security of nature and the implications of urbanization was never drawn. None of the protagonists after Flucht return to the city which so profoundly disturbs them and Holm in Flucht never solves the dilemma. By 1860 the city had become an integral part of German life and had its own unique pattern of living. Yet over half a century later, Wiechert felt justified in refusing to take urban life seriously, and recommended as a panacea for all ills rural life in a region which is politically no longer part of Germany and certainly does not show the 'natural' virtues Wiechert claimed for it.

Wiechert shared the tradition of the twentieth century in that he was concerned with the character of spiritual life at the turn of the century. But like Friedrich Griesse, Karl Heinrich Waggerl, Ludwig Tügel, Karl Benno von Mechow and Paul Alverdes, he drew as much on the world of the nineteenth century as on that of the twentieth. Soergel has rightly pointed out that the treatment of peasant life was by no means a German peculiarity,<sup>3</sup> but it was a nineteenth century phenomenon which can be traced back partly to the Romantics who saw in the peasantry the backbone of



'Volkskultur,' partly to the economic theories of the Enlightenment which recognized the importance of primary produce for national prosperity. <sup>4</sup> The pessimistic treatment of life in nature as it really was in the nineteenth century remained ineffectual: "Erst auf dem Umweg über die Bauernkritik des Naturalismus entwickelte sich ein Bild des wahren Bauerntums, mit harten, egoistischen, geizigen, atavistischen und böartigen Zügen," <sup>5</sup> particularly in the work of writers like Ludwig Thoma, Hermann Stehr und Hermann Löns with whom Wiechert had little in common. More than any other writer he sentimentalized the peasant life. What Lange wrote of Jakob Wassermann applies equally to Wiechert:

As his characters are charged, even overcharged, with pseudo-religious powers of compassion, so the external elements of his falsely contemporary world become exorbitant and sensational. On the surface [his] ... novels appear to be documents of present-day conflicts; but his social thinking was essentially sentimental and private. <sup>6</sup>

The persistent emphasis on the so-called simple pattern of provincial life is difficult to accept in Wiechert, simply because, as Lange suggests:

this concept of the natural life is fundamentally a vision of salvation which is to be substituted for the destroyed forms of the bourgeois order, and ... the contemporary writer merely seizes, either voluntarily or under the compulsion of fascist thinking, upon a chimerical device. <sup>7</sup>

Wiechert failed to make a sufficient impact on the post-war generation because he misunderstood the problems

connected with war and its aftermath. All ideals were shattered by the events of 1939-45 and to resurrect a philosophy of life which had not been able to prevent what it now sought to alleviate was not realistic.

In any case, in his own work between 1938 and 1950, Wiechert gave ample proof of the spiritual uncertainty which the war had caused in him. At times of crisis he was inclined to turn to the resources of a hypothetical natural life, and to a generation without ideals, ties, home, and economic, political and spiritual security he offered no more than a Nirvana. The turning-point in his career was undoubtedly his short imprisonment in Buchenwald in 1938. His sensitive nature could not endure what he experienced there so that he attempted to compensate for a loss in spiritual security by idealistically affirming his love for mankind and nature. In this he provided an interesting contrast to other inmates of concentration camps whose experiences were the cause of a new realistic attitude to life after their release. Thus Luise Rinser could write in her Gefängnistagebuch that her imprisonment brought about "das Aufbrechen einer ganz neuen realistischen Liebe zum Menschen wie er ist, nicht wie er sein sollte oder wie ich ihn sehen wollte." <sup>8</sup>

Wiechert, like Hermann Hesse, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann and Ricarda Huch, was only peripherally affected by the popular literary movements of his time. "Ich habe mich ... von keiner der 'Stil-epochen' mitreißen lassen," he wrote in Jahre und Zeiten (IX.741), "weder vom Naturalismus, noch vom Expressionismus, noch von den folgenden problematischen Stilen. Es war zuviel Fremdes in ihnen, meiner Natur Fremdes." It is true that Wiechert shared his fascination for the themes of modern society - the city, social evils, industry, mass organization - with both Naturalism and Expressionism, and like the Expressionists he tended to exaggerate his attitude to civilization beyond the realities of the actual situation. Typically Expressionist, too, was his "Sehnsucht nach dem antwortlosen Gott."<sup>9</sup> But any similarity with contemporary literary movements ends here: there is very little of ecstatic utterance in Wiechert's later work; such Expressionist traits are limited to the earlier novels. In fact, as we have seen, the calm, untroubled style in the later works belies the struggle with inconsistencies which runs below the surface. Wiechert's prose style is exaggerated not in its violence but in its restraint. Nor does he share the Expressionist conviction that new

values must be discovered and proclaimed. He returns rather to the established values of forest and field, already found in the work of Gotthelf and Raabe.

It was Wiechert's tragedy that his experiences with National Socialism, World War II and the defeat of Germany made it impossible for him to give direction to his countrymen at a time when a word of authority was most urgently required. His stand against Nazism was praiseworthy and won him much respect, but his misinterpretation of post-war tendencies virtually put an end to the effectiveness of his career, and the task of reconstruction had to be left to those who were better qualified for it. He stood apart from his age because he was unable to impose his didactic intent upon the actual realm of common experience. His novels, with their sentimental treatment of love for mankind, failed to evoke the desired response and only succeeded in alienating the sympathy of the reader. Most literary works evoke an ethical response in the loosest sense of the term, i.e. either in terms of intellectual agreement or disagreement, or as a practical or emotional approval or disapproval on more stringently Christian, utilitarian or pragmatic premises. Wiechert refused to allow his audience latitude in interpretation and accordingly his work lacks the spontaneity and universality of the truly great.

NOTES

List of Abbreviations

AUMLA	=	Journal of the Australasian Universities' Modern Language Association
BA	=	Books Abroad
DU	=	Der Deutschunterricht
GLL(NS)	=	German Life and Letters (New Series)
GR	=	Germanic Review
GQ	=	German Quarterly
MDU	=	Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht
MLJ	=	Modern Language Journal
MLQ	=	Modern Language Quarterly

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Karl Barth, "Die geistigen Voraussetzungen für den Neuaufbau in der Nachkriegszeit," Eine Schweizer Stimme: 1938-1945 (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, A.G., 1945), p. 431.
2. The copy is in the possession of Friedrich Bruns; c.f. "Ernst Wiechert," MDU, XXXIX, No. 6 (1947), p. 355.
3. Carol Petersen, Ernst Wiechert: Mensch der Stille (Dichter der Gegenwart, No. 1; Hamburg: Hansischer Gildenverlag, 1947), p.23.

4. C.f. Hans Ebeling, Ernst Wiechert: Das Werk des Dichters (Wiesbaden: Limes-Verlag, 1947), pp. 19-20.
5. J. D. Workman, "Ernst Wiechert's Escapism," MDU, XXXV, No. 1 (1943), p. 25.
6. H. M. Waidson, The Modern German Novel: A Mid-Twentieth Century Survey (London: O.U.P., 1959), p. 47.
7. B. J. Fridsma Sr., "Social and Cultural Criticism in the Works of Ernst Wiechert" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1956), p. 45.
8. Wiechert's only flight was in 1949 when he travelled to the USA on a lecture tour. He describes the flight with certain misgivings about its ethics in Wunderbare Reise nach Kalifornien (c.f. X.733).

## II. THE FAILURE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

1. Hans Cramer, Das zeitgenössische Romanwerk Ernst Wiecherts (Greven i. Westf., 1934), p. 24, quoted by Fridsma, p. 173.
2. Armin Mohler, Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland, 1918-32: Grundriß ihrer Weltanschauungen (Stuttgart, 1950).
3. Ibid., p. 8.
4. Ibid., p. 67.

5. There is a contrast here to Hofmannsthal's Jedermann who, immediately he hears the bell, exclaims:

Was ist das für ein Glockenläuten!  
Mich dünkt, es kann nichts Guts bedeuten.  
Der Schall ist laut und todesbang,  
Schafft mir im Herzen Qual und Drang.  
Was läuten Glocken zu dieser Zeit?

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Jedermann (Gesammelte Werke; 1945-58: Dramen III, Frankfurt a/M: S. Fischer, 1957), p. 45.

6. Die Literatur, XXXIV, (1931-32), p. 173.
7. Die Literatur, XXXV, p. 58.
8. S. D. Stirk, "An Introduction to Ernst Wiechert," Manitoba Arts Review (Winter 1947), p. 6.
9. Himmler was said to have been in the audience of the 1935 address; c.f. Jahre und Zeiten, IX.656.
10. C.f. Günther Weisenborn (ed.), Der lautlose Aufstand: Bericht über die Widerstandsbewegung des deutschen Volkes 1933-1945 (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1953), p. 218.
11. Quoted by Günther Speicher, "Ernst Wiecherts Heimgang in die große Stille," Hamburger Allgemeine, August 25, 1950, p. 5.
12. Max Frisch, "Stimmen eines anderen Deutschland? Zu den Zeugnissen von Wiechert und Bergengruen," Neue Schweizer Rundschau, IX (January 1946), p. 539.

13. Therese Pol, Good German: A Review of Forest of the Dead, New Republic (New York), July 14, 1947, p. 29.
14. Carol Petersen, "Ernst Wiechert," Christliche Dichter der Gegenwart, ed. Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann (Heidelberg: Wolfgang Rothe, 1955), p. 328. Miss Petersen writes in reference to Wiechert's conscious Imitatio Christi: "Wer einmal mit dem alternden Wiechert eine Mahlzeit eingenommen hat, erinnert sich ihrer wie an ein Abendmahl!" Ibid.
15. Quoted by Ebeling, p. 40.
16. Wiechert was thus in Buchenwald for nearly four months (May 6, 1938 to August 30, 1938). Many critics are not acquainted with the facts. Thus Alfred Werner, "Epitaph for Ernst Wiechert: The Tragedy of the Good German," Commentary, XII (1951), p. 164, speaks of Wiechert's incarceration in Buchenwald for two months. He refers to Wiechert as "weak, tubercular, and nearing fifty," whereas in actual fact Wiechert was suffering from a heart complaint and was well over fifty. G. Hough, Review of Missa sine nomine, The Listener (London), November 12, 1953, p. 827, speaks of the few years Wiechert spent at Buchenwald! Wiechert's absence went almost entirely unnoticed in Germany. I have been able to discover only one contemporary reference; Jochen Klepper writes in his



diary on June 1, 1938: "Ernst Wiechert im Zusammenhange mit der Niemöller-Sache im Konzentrationslager." Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel: Aus den Tagebüchern der Jahre 1932-1942 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1955), p. 606.

17. Quoted by Ebeling, p. 41.
18. These and other details may be found in Jahre und Zeiten, IX.686-87.
19. Lydia Baer, "Raabe's and Wiechert's Novel Trilogies," MDU, XLVI, No. 1 (1954), p. 17.
20. Against this Miss Baer, *ibid.*, pp. 23-24, considers that in Missa Wiechert was able, after all, to write the third volume of his trilogy.
21. Ebeling, p. 26.
22. Carl von Ossietzky, Weltbühne, quoted by K. S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1954), p. 459, defines "Kulturbolschewismus" as

when Klemperer takes tempi different from Furtwängler, when a painter uses a color for a sunset not seen in Lower Pomerania, when one favors birth control, when you build a house with a flat roof, when you admire Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein, when you follow the democracy of the brothers Mann and when you enjoy the music of Hindemith and Kurt Weill - all that is "cultural Bolshevism."

It is not difficult to see Wiechert's role as artist in opposition to all these trends.

23. "Es wird immer einer der entscheidenden Unterschiede sein, daß der Schriftsteller ein Sohn seiner Zeit und also ein Diener der Ratio, der Dichter aber ein Sohn der Zeitlosigkeit und also ein Dichter des Magischen sein wird." (IX.773)
24. C.f. E. Kogon, Der SS-Staat: Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager (Berlin: Tempelhof, 1947), p. 58.
25. One need not have read a great deal of Wiechert to recognize the extent to which even a word like "Cocktail" conjures up for him all manner of decadent associations.
26. S. B. Puknat, "Max Picard and Ernst Wiechert," MDU, XLII, No. 8 (December 1950), p. 374.
27. Bernt von Heiseler, Versöhnung (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1953), p. 759.
28. Pp. 13 and 19 above.
29. Filth was fostered by the Nazis to break the morale of concentration camp inmates. Its object was the regression of the prisoners to a state of childlike dependence in which they would become helpless instruments in their masters' hands. Wiechert states in Totenwald that filth degrades man's innermost being and is one of the most terrible expressions of violence (IX.215). Szalet comments along the same lines: "It was an infernal atmosphere. We felt abandoned, ashamed, and degraded." Leon Szalet,

- Experiment E (New York, 1945), p. 63, quoted by Hilde O. Bluhm, "How did they survive? Mechanisms of Defense in Nazi Concentration Camps," American Journal of Psychotherapy, II, No. 1 (January 1948), p. 16.
30. C.f. Franz Schauwecker, Aufbruch der Nation (Berlin, 1929), quoted by Mohler, p. 49: "Wir mußten den Krieg verlieren, um die Nation zu gewinnen."
31. Erich Fromm, The Fear of Freedom (6th impression; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), pp. 191 ff.
32. R. H. Samuel and R. Hinton Thomas, Education and Society in Modern Germany ("International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction"; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), p. 16. The indirect influence of the schoolmasters on their charges in Nazi Germany cannot be overemphasized. It was not only that through them impressionable children were educated to regard the state as superior to the individual with an unlimited right to curb the individual's liberty if and when it pleases, but according to Samuel and Hinton Thomas, "it has been estimated that nearly 30 per cent of the political leaders of Nazi Germany came from the teaching profession." p. 67.
33. Ibid., p. 13 and chapter V passim.
34. Ibid., p. 21.

III. THE PROBLEM OF THEODICY

1. Job 10:3. It is also a very real problem for Milton, once the invincible champion of the Commonwealth, now blind, subject to the scorn of his enemies, witnessing the wreck of all that he had set his faith and his hopes on. The tawdry splendour of the Restoration cannot compensate for him the loss of liberty. The conflict between God's justice and Milton's own disappointment becomes the theme of Samson Agonistes; c.f. esp. ll. 667-704.
2. David Daiches, "Theodicy, Poetry and Tradition," Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, ed. S. R. Hopper ("Harper Torchbooks"; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 74.
3. I am indebted for this material to Leonard Forster's inaugural address, The Temper of Seventeenth Century German Literature: An Inaugural Lecture delivered at University College, London, 7 February 1951 (London: A. K. Lewis & Co. Ltd., 1951).
4. So MacLeish's J.B. may be baffling as a theological exposition, but as a dramatic unit it is convincing because its literary thesis is consistently carried out. To view MacLeish solely as an iconoclast, i.e. as a writer intent solely on overthrowing Christian orthodoxy, would be to fail to do him justice.

5. Daiches, "Theodicy," p. 76. The aim of this penetrating essay is to show, "that the interplay between religious and esthetic impulses has always been fruitful in literature and that an appreciation of it is independent of the reader's creed or philosophical system." (p. 79)
6. Heinrich Fries, Ernst Wiechert: Eine theologische Besinnung ("Kleine Pilgerbücherei," Heft 1; Speyer: Pilger-Verlag, 1949).
7. Wilhelm Grenzmann, "Der religiöse Roman im Schrifttum der Gegenwart," DU, III, Heft 3 (1951), p. 67.
8. Wilhelm Grenzmann, Dichtung und Glaube: Probleme und Gestalten der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur (4th ed. rev.; Frankfurt a/M: Athenäum, 1960), p. 97.
9. Edson M. Chick, "Ernst Wiechert and the Problem of Evil," MDU, XLVI, No. 4 (1954), p. 181.
10. Gunther M. Bonnin, "Wiechert and Christian Humanism," BA, XXIV, No. 3 (1950), p. 250, for example, sees in Wiechert the proof that the "concepts of Germanism and Christianity might not be mutually exclusive."
11. Thomas Mann, Bei Friedrich Huchs Bestattung, (Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Bänden; Frankfurt a/M: S. Fischer, 1960), X.412.
12. C.f. Jahre und Zeiten, IX.399:  
Tote und Verschollene gehen nicht fort, wenn wir

sie einmal mit ganzer Kraft in unser erinnerndes Herz genommen haben, und in Wahrheit habe ich ja auch mein ganzes Leben aus diesem Quell geschöpft. Leben und Bücher, bis auf den heutigen Tag.

13. While the death motif is deeply rooted in Wiechert's personal experience, his treatment of it is not always convincing. Sometimes the symbolism is extreme and grotesque, and at other times he cannot avoid a forced pathos which borders on the ludicrous, as for example in the odd picture of the dead placed end to end around the equator, two deep, fifty times!  
(Jeromin-Kinder I, V.450)
14. John R. Frey, "The 'Grim Reaper' in the Works of Ernst Wiechert," MDU, XLII, No. 5 (1950), p. 204.
15. Pp. 8 f. above.
16. Reinhard Fink, "Das Weltbild Ernst Wiecherts," Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde, XLIX(1935), p. 615.  
Wiechert himself pointed out the close relationship between World War I and his own religious bankruptcy in a preface Zum 'Knecht Gottes Andreas Nyland' (1926):
- Ich war im Zorn von Gott gegangen. Schon im Wald hatte ich die Faust an seine Tür geschlagen, weil der Soldat, durch das Chaotische das wahre Antlitz der Welt erblickend, von ihr hatte sagen müssen.  
"Und siehe, es war nicht gut." (X.735)
17. That Wiechert at this time has little real understanding of the true nature of evil is shown by E. W. Herd,

"'Von Gott hat man nie Ferien': Ernst Wiechert and the Crisis of Faith," AUMLA, No. 5 (October 1956), p. 48, who draws attention to the unearthly figures representing the forces of evil in the early works, the Zerrgiebels in Die kleine Passion, Kascheike in Andreas Nyland, and MacLean in Die Magd des Jürgen Doskocil.

18. Chick, "Problem of Evil," p. 185.
19. Even Chuchollek in Jeromin-Kinder I is no exception to Wiechert's understanding of evil. At first sight, Chuchollek retains many of the characteristics of the caricatures in earlier novels, and he is even described as "die Macht des Bösen," (V.125) but it is to be remembered that the section dealing with Chuchollek is a revision of a Novelle of the same name (1932) which certainly belongs to the earlier period. Nor can this one exception invalidate the general conclusion, viz. that the more grotesque figures have disappeared and those that remain symbolize a more elemental evil.
20. J. R. Frey, "Ernst Wiecherts Werk seit 1945," GQ, XXII, No. 1 (1949), p. 38.
21. This against the otherwise excellent conclusions of Chick, "Problem of Evil," p. 187.
22. Fries, p. 50.

23. Goethe Faust 516, 614.
24. Ibid. 652-53.
25. Chick, "Problem of Evil," pp. 190-91.
26. Thus Herd, "Crisis of Faith," p. 48.
27. Petersen, "Wiechert," p. 322.
28. Bert Brecht, "Großer Dankchoral," Hauspostille  
(Gedichte I, 1918-1929; Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp,  
1960), p. 75.
29. Chick, "Problem of Evil," p. 191; so also Grenzmann,  
Dichtung, p. 108.

#### IV. THE INSPIRATION OF NATURE

1. C.f. Das Antlitz der Mutter: "Alles am Gesicht des Mannes ist Gegenwart, Plan, Absicht, Ziel und Gewinn. Alles am Gesicht der Mutter ist Zukunft. Nicht ihre Zukunft, sondern die des Kindes." (X.790)
2. Thus Frey, "Grim Reaper," p. 209. Many of Wiechert's protagonists experience love between man and woman as a refuge from reality, but this experience is meaningful only when the relationship is fruitful. It is the child which guarantees life, not the mere physical act of reproduction. Hence morality only becomes an issue when the characters view a relationship as an end in itself. Sister Agnete in Jedermann is depicted sympathetically only because she seeks a



child by Johannes in order to rescue him from death on the battlefield, for new life defies death and a child would give Johannes an unshakeable hold on life. Gudrun Brockhusen, on the other hand, abuses her maternal instincts by subordinating them to the satisfaction of an animal lust, and Jons coldly rejects her seductive advances (Jeromin-Kinder I, V.256-58).

3. C.f. Puknat, "Picard,".
4. F. M. Wassermann, Review of Totenwald, BA, XXII (1947), p. 298. In this sense Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 98, can speak of the "Unbegreiflichkeit der Weltunvollkommenheit" for Wiechert.
5. C.f. a representative post-war statement on the nature of man made by Kogon, pp. 7-8:

Ich ... mißtraue der menschlichen Natur, die, wie die Geschichte und jedes Ehrlichen eigene Erfahrung lehrt, zum Bösen geneigt ist. Vor allem der Weg der Hybris, einmal betreten, birgt zwingende Konsequenzen in sich, an seinem Ende erwarten uns haufenweise die Laster, die wir heute, an anderen, noch heftig verabscheuen, denen wir uns aber morgen schon, verblendet und stolz, in die Arme werfen.
6. C.f. p. 23 above.
7. C.f. p. 115 above.
8. Ebeling, p. 79.
9. F. Bruns, "Ernst Wiechert: Das Werk," Ernst Wiechert: Der Mensch und sein Werk, Eine Anthologie, Gerhard Kamin et al. (München: Kurt Desch, 1951), p. 152.

10. P. 122 above.
11. The passage betrays a serious stylistic weakness, viz. Wiechert's constant tendency to anticipate the final conclusions to which his protagonist is being led. Wiechert consciously disassociates his hero from the conclusions: "Nicht, daß Jons dies alles erkannt hätte." (V.188)
12. Stefan Andres, Wir sind Utopia (München: R. Piper & Co., 1958 (1951)), pp. 43-44; c.f. my article, "Island in a Sea of Chaos: Christian Writers in Germany since 1945," Crux (Melbourne), LXIV, No. 5 (1961), pp. 7-8.
13. Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 105.
14. C.f. the statement made by Karl Barth, quoted by H. Fischer, "German Writers of Today," Horizon, XV, No. 85 (1947), p. 5:

Germany is a great Prisoner-of-War camp - the Germans are prisoners both in their own country and abroad. But Germany has one advantage today over all other countries. There is nothing left for Germany but to begin at the beginning.

C.f. also Grablegung oder Auferstehung?, X.931.

Even Thomas von Orla, unlike his son, sees no future which is built on the foundations of the immediate past: "Er wollte von neuem anfangen, und das unterschied ihn von vielen." (Das einfache Leben, IV.370)
15. Bernard Rang, "Die Wandlungen des Epischen,"

Deutsche Literatur im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, ed.

Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann (Heidelberg:

Wolfgang Rothe Verlag, 1954), p. 193.

16. Herd, "Crisis of Faith," pp. 51-52.
17. Ibid., p. 53.
18. C.f. pp. 18-19 above.
19. For the sake of convenience, I shall adopt in its broad outline the schematization of M. R. Jetter, The 'Island Motif' in the Prose Works of Ernst Wiechert (Vancouver: Continental Book Centre, 1957). Miss Jetter distinguishes six distinct periods in the development of the theme of the isolated individual finding the inspiration of his mission to the world in nature. At the same time, however, I cannot entirely agree with her conclusions, because I consider that the development of a positive ethic after Buchenwald is a more refined form of the escapism so bluntly depicted in the early novels. Moreover, the contrast between war and nature, death and life, undergoes no real development from 1927-1950, and for this reason I have dealt with this particular group of ideas under a separate heading. Nevertheless, Miss Jetter's study usefully traces a genuine development in the theme of the relationship between nature and the individual. My treatment of the

earlier work must be necessarily sketchy since many of the variations on the nature-civilization anti-thesis concern us only in so far as they clarify the process of development in the later work and provide a proper basis for comparison.

20. Bruns, "Ernst Wiechert," MDU, p. 360.
21. L. Baer, "Ernst Wiechert's 'Die blauen Schwingen'," MLQ, X, No. 2 (1949), p. 202.
22. Workman, p. 26.
23. Ibid., p. 29; c.f. p. 137 above. The island to which Johannes frequently repairs is more than an island in the sea. "Es ist eine Insel im Leben, im Sein." (III.80)
24. Bruns, "Ernst Wiechert," MDU, p. 369.
25. Der weiße Büffel arrives at similar conclusions.
26. Ebeling, p. 46.
27. Bruns, "Ernst Wiechert: Das Werk," Anthologie, 1951, p. 140.
28. H. Ollesch, Ernst Wiechert ("Dichtung und Deutung, Heft 3"; 3rd ed.; Wuppertal-Barmen: Emil Müller, 1960), p. 95. H. Ollesch, Ernst Wiechert: 'Missa sine nomine': Eine Deutung (Wuppertal-Barmen: Emil Müller, 1951), p. 1, points out the popularity of the work, which went through five editions within two months of its appearance.

29. Thus D. Coverlid, "Ernst Wiechert's 'Missa sine Nomine'," Studies in Language and Literature presented to Augustin Lodewyckx, ed. Heinz Wiemann (Melbourne, 1951), p. 41; Hough, p. 827.
30. Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 107.
31. Thus Jetter, p. 81.
32. Ollesch, Wiechert, p. 103.

#### V. THE DIDACTIC TASK OF ART

1. C.f. p. 71 above.
2. C.f. p. 134 above.
3. C.f. the important statement in Jahre und Zeiten (IX.375), where Wiechert defines education not as a science, "sondern eine hohe Kunst und vielleicht die höchste von allen Künsten, weil sie um Menschenherzen geht." C.f. p. 88 above. Wiechert is suggesting that the intimate relationship between art and education consists in the fact that both are vitally concerned in the same way with the well-being of mankind; c.f. p. 212 below.
4. D. Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature (4th impression; London: Longmans, 1961 (1956)), p. 59, emphasis his.
5. Wiechert, of course, uses the wider term 'Dichter'.
6. Max Scheler, Philosophische Weltanschauung (Bonn, 1929), p. 15, emphasis his.

7. Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 12.
8. In this essay Wiechert equates the future of Germany with the future of German culture. "Kultur" and "Wesen" are used interchangeably throughout. The "Rettung des deutschen Wesens" (X.417) poses the same problem and finds the same solution as "Der Kampf ... um Gerechtigkeit" (X.419) and "die Sorge um die Kultur." (X.420)
9. The same passage is found in Grablegung oder Auferstehung?, X.936.
10. C.f. pp. 54-56, above.
11. Daiches, Critical Approaches, p. 79.
12. Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare, 1768, Works in Twelve Volumes with an Essay on his Life and Genius by Arthur Murphy (London: T. Longman et al., 1796), II.86.
13. Hans Carossa, Der Arzt Gion, Gesammelte Werke (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1949), II.487.
14. This thought is reiterated in Von den treuen Begleitern, 1937, X.895.
15. Schalom Ben-Chorin, "Begegnung am Starnberger See," Reinhold Schneider et al., Bekennnis zu Ernst Wiechert: Ein Gedenkbuch zum 60. Geburtstag des Dichters (München: Kurt Desch, 1947), p. 40, reports a discussion with Wiechert on contemporary literary trends:

Von seinen Büchern kamen wir auf zeitgenössische Romane zu sprechen. Ich erwähnte Thomas Mann und Kolbenheyer, der ihm aber ganz fremd und ungenießbar war. Hingegen rühmte er freimütig den streng geachteten Jakob Wassermann.

Wiechert's regard for Wassermann does not surprise us. Like Wiechert, Wassermann had enjoyed a literary fame which ranked him alongside the Mann brothers. Like him, too, he based his novels on the environment in which he had been born, in his case not the Masurian forests, but the Franconian countryside around Fürth near Nürnberg. Wassermann's loss of popularity after 1945 was not due to a lack of descriptive talent, but to his failure to come to grips with reality. His themes, like Wiechert's, were too divorced from the exigencies of the post-war situation to secure his future success as a writer; c.f. p. 313 below.

16. C.f. his statement on Wald and Totenwolf (Jahre und Zeiten, IX.482-83), in which Wiechert holds that while these novels were untrue to his inner nature, nevertheless by them he was able to overcome the oppressiveness of the First World War, the evil of which weighed heavily on him. From allied statements it is clear that Wiechert sees art as a means of achieving a certain balance in life, and a means of placing distance between himself and the subject of his artistic aim.

17. Enrique Sordo, "Las Novelas de Ernst Wiechert: O una psicología de postguerra," Cuadernos de Literatura, IV, Nos. 10-12 (July-December 1948), pp. 252-53, speaks of the thin aura of unreality surrounding the figures with obvious approval. Sordo's 'appraisal' of Wiechert is representative of that form of criticism which has made no attempt to come to a proper understanding of Wiechert's work. I am indebted to Mr. R. Livingstone of Monash, who kindly translated this article.
18. Thus Waidson, p. 48; Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 100.
19. C.f. Petersen, Mensch, p. 23.
20. Thus E. W. Herd, "Realism in the Work of Ernst Wiechert," Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the AUMLA, Brisbane, 17th to 23rd August, 1955, p. 19.
21. Only once does Wiechert make an exception to this rule; in Die kleine Passion, Margret, the maid, says to Gina Karsten: "Die aus der Stadt, Gina, die sind eben anders. Das machen die vielen Fenster und die Steine. Aber auch da gibt es ja Gute." (III.18-19)
22. Even critics sympathetic to Wiechert agree in describing Jeromin-Kinder as an 'Erziehung-Roman'. C.f. Bruns, "Ernst Wiechert: Das Werk," Anthologie, 1951, pp. 148-49, who places Jeromin-Kinder alongside Parzival, Simplizissimus, Wilhelm Meister, Der



31. In 1945 Walter von Molo published an open letter to Thomas Mann imploring him to return to the Germany he had so ignominiously left and to set himself up as leader of the new intellectual movement; c.f. Heinrich Fischer, "German Writers," pp. 8-11. Mann refused von Molo's invitation:

Ich vergesse nicht, daß Sie später viel Schlimmeres durchgemacht haben, dem ich entging; aber das haben Sie nicht gekannt: das Herzasthma des Exils, die Entwurzelung, die nervösen Schrecken der Heimatlosigkeit...  
(Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland zurückgehe, Werke, XII.955)

Mann is evidently not simply seeking to justify the "Ausbürgerung" which was such an obvious sin in the eyes of the Faculty of Philosophy at Bonn in 1937; c.f. esp. Briefwechsel mit Bonn, Werke, XII.785. He was in fact saying that the more difficult step to be taken against Nazism was taken by those who emigrated; in so doing they isolated themselves from the life-stream of German culture which they alone truly represented.

32. Thomas Mann, Das Ende, Werke, XII.944; c.f. Viktor Mann, Wir waren fünf: Bildnis der Familie Mann (Constance: Südverlag, 1949), p. 543: "Thomas, der deutsch-Seßhafteste von uns im Exil! ... Heimweh, wie Unglück und Schuld der Heimat würden ihn verdüstern für lange Zeit, auch wenn wir alle das Böse überleben sollten."

33. Thus Coghlan, p. 21.
34. Thus Pol, p. 30; c.f. Frisch, p. 540: "Eine kollektive Schuld des deutschen Volkes, darauf kommt Wiechert überhaupt nicht zu sprechen." In a passage in Totenwald describing Nazi atrocities committed against Jews, Wiechert suggests that the guilt of the Jews as a nation may be greater than that of other nations! (IX.275-76) The passage has been omitted in the English translation, Forest of the Dead.
35. Wiechert here rightly rejects the identification between Nazism and Germany which the National Socialists had claimed in their propaganda, and on the basis of which the denazification processes were initiated in 1945.
36. The statement stands in interesting contrast to one made by Thomas Mann, Werke, XII, 951.
37. Thus Hans Meyerhoff, "Gedanken zur deutschen Situation," Bekenntnis zu Ernst Wiechert, p. 51.
38. C.f. the distinction between "Parteinummer" and "Parteiherz," p. 237 above.
39. C.f. p. 61 above.
40. In Über Kunst und Künstler, Wiechert wrote, "daß die Sorge um die Kultur allen denen zu übertragen ist, die den größten Teil von ihr schaffen, und nicht

denen, die sie betrachten und genießen." (X.420)

Above all, therefore, the task of reconstruction of German culture is to be entrusted to the hands of the artist. C.f. p. 204 above and chap.V, n.8.

41. Thus Pinson, p. 552.

## VI. WIECHERT AND THE POST-WAR PERIOD

1. Lydia Baer, "A Study of Ernst Wiechert with Special Reference to Jens Peter Jacobsen and Rilke," MLQ, V (1944), p. 470, refers to Wiechert's "martyr's nimbus"; similarly Petersen, "Wiechert," p. 327: "Ein zarter Heiligenschein begann sich um seine Gestalt zu legen, und es kann nicht verhehlt werden, daß er an diesem selber mitgewoben hat."
2. The typical approach is represented admirably by Meyerhoff, p. 50, who came to Wiechert from the USA in the summer of 1945 with an official request to write a report on the state of political and intellectual renewal since the collapse of Nazism. Meyerhoff dismisses Wiechert's literary merit in a few words as self-understood.
3. V. Lange, "Notes on the German Literary Scene, 1946-1948," MLJ, XXXIII, No. 1 (1949), pp. 3, 4.
4. Margaret Marshall, "Notes by the Way," Review of The Girl and the Ferryman, Nation (New York), May 10,

1947, p. 548.

5. H. E. Holthusen, "Die Überwindung des Nullpunkts: Aspekte der deutschen Literatur seit 1945," Der unbehauste Mensch: Motive und Probleme der modernen Literatur (München: R. Piper & Co., 1952), p. 143, relates how unpopular those men were who emigrated from Germany before or during the war and expected on their return to assume literary leadership.
6. Werner significantly entitles his essay on Wiechert "Epitaph for Ernst Wiechert: The Tragedy of the Good German."
7. Petersen, "Wiechert," p. 330.
8. Daiches, Critical Approaches, pp. 37-38, rightly distinguishes between the paradoxical notions of "probable impossibility," which may reflect a more profound reality than an "improbable possibility":

On this view a literary work becomes in the last analysis a form of knowledge, a unique way of presenting a kind of insight into a phase of the human situation which cannot be expressed or communicated in any other way.
9. C.f. *ibid.*, p. 76.
10. Pol, p. 30, quotes the liberal, anti-Communist Munich periodical Der Ruf. In response to the vague programme offered by Wiechert as a solution, a scathing article appeared. In this "first and last tribute of German youth to their poet," they declared

that he was "not entitled to speak in our name," and begged him to return to the ivory tower from which he had so unfortunately emerged, before any real harm could be done.

11. Petersen, "Wiechert," p. 330, writes:

Und Erbauung ist es, was wesentlich heute noch seinem Werk entnommen werden kann, zu wenig freilich für eine Zeit, welche die dem totalen Staat und Krieg nachfolgende totale Entidealisierung der Werte zu tragen hat.

12. C.f. p. 189 above and chap.IV, n.29.

13. Petersen, "Wiechert," pp. 331-32: "Wiechert bekennt sich zuletzt in einer restaurativen Rückkehr zu patriarchalischen Ordnungsformen, wie sie uns der seines Bodens beraubte und verwiesene Freiherr Amadeus melancholisch vorlebt."

14. C.f. p. 201 above.

15. E. W. Herd, "The 'Unpolitical' Outlook of Ernst Wiechert," GLL(NS), VII (1953-54), p. 266.

16. W. Berger, "The 'Unpolitical' Outlook of Ernst Wiechert: A Reply," GLL(NS), VIII (1955), p. 142.

17. Fridsma, p. 91.

18. In this Berger, pp. 142-43, is quite correct; c.f. Edouard Roditi, BA, XX (1946), p. 444, who in a review of Rede an die deutsche Jugend writes: "Its tone is more moral than political."

19. Herd, "Unpolitical Outlook," esp. p. 270.

20. Fridsma, p. 92, rightly stresses that the villagers of Sowirog in Jeromin-Kinder "resist because of an ethical impulse" and "it is just this point which Wiechert wishes to bring into relief, for he considers Sowirog's moral stamina a far more valuable asset than any amount of so-called 'political outlook'." But it is difficult to see how this invalidates Herd's contention that Wiechert "tends "to mislead his readers into a passive 'unpolitical' outlook, which would accept any political or social organization as something amoral and beyond the powers of judgment of the ordinary individual."  
"Unpolitical Outlook," p. 268.
21. C.f. p. 187 above.
22. C.f. pp. 54 ff. above.
23. Barth, "Die geistigen Voraussetzungen," p. 418, emphasis his.
24. P. Schmid, "Wiecherts Literaturgeschichte," Die Weltwoche (December 17, 1948), quoted by Herd, "Unpolitical Outlook," p. 270. Twice Wiechert himself quotes his critics who charge him with seeking fame in the "Eränen der Ladenmädchen." (Selbstporträt, X.724; Jahre und Zeiten, IX.595) In neither case does he explicitly refute the charge. In Selbstporträt he suggests that, in spite of the critics, Hirtennovelle,

- Der Vater, Der weiße Büffel, parts of Das einfache Leben, Die Jeromin-Kinder and Märchen will remain with more than merely contemporary validity. In Jahre und Zeiten, he replies with the equivocal statement that it is not said, "daß die Tränen der Ladenmädchen geringer seien als die der Verwöhnten, die Ruhm oder Millionen besitzen." (IX.596)
25. Heinrich Fischer, "German Writers," p. 5.
  26. Herd, "Unpolitical Outlook," p. 267.
  27. Fridsma, p. 226.
  28. Herd, "Unpolitical Outlook," p. 268.
  29. Wilhelm Röpke, The German Question, trans. from the 2nd German ed. by E. W. Dickes (London: Allen & Unwin, 1946), p. 112.
  30. Gerhard Kamin, "Ernst Wiechert: Der Weg des Menschen und Dichters," Anthologie, 1951, p. 29.
  31. Thus also Paul Nestlbichler, Review of Märchen, BA, XXIII (1949), p. 396.
  32. Thus Ebeling, p. 191.
  33. Novalis, "Das allgemeine Bouillon (1798/99)," Schriften, ed. Paul Kluckhohn, Vol. III: Fragmente und Studien IX (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, [1929] ), p. 253, emphasis his.
  34. For a full discussion on the role played by music in Wiechert's works, c.f. H.-M. Plesske, "Der Zauber-

- klang des Jenseits: Ernst Wiechert und die Musik," Musica, VIII, Heft 10 (October 1954), pp. 425-27.
35. He significantly avoids treating the music of Bach, possibly because Bach, like none other, was capable of wedding emotion and intellect, and presupposed a depth of faith and security Wiechert does not possess.
36. Plesske, p. 427.
37. Letter to Ernst-Günther Riemschneider, 27 October 1949. I am indebted to Miss D. Coverlid of Melbourne for the loan of the Riemschneider-Wiechert correspondence.
38. Quoted by Werner. p. 165. I have been unable to trace the original statement; it does not appear in the Sämtliche Werke.
39. Riemschneider-Wiechert correspondence. In a private conversation, Wiechert confessed to a friend that the decision to leave Germany had been most painfully taken, but he stated that Missa would never have been written had he not isolated himself entirely: Otto Rödgers, "Letzter Besuch bei Ernst Wiechert," Anthologie, 1951, p. 275.
40. Riemschneider-Wiechert correspondence.



VII. STYLE AS A REFLECTION OF ATTITUDES

1. Thus Herd, "Realism," p. 19.
2. For a penetrating study of Wiechert's essentially subjective approach, see, Emmy L. Kerkhoff, "Die Darstellung seelischer Vorgänge in Ernst Wiecherts Majorin," Neophilologus, XXIX (1944), pp. 172-80.
3. Oskar Jancke, "Ernst Wiecherts Sprache der Einfachheit," Die Literatur, XXXIX (1937), p. 396.
4. Ibid.
5. Thus also Johannes Pfeiffer, Wege zur Erzählkunst: Über den Umgang mit dichterischer Prosa (4th ed.; Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig, 1958), p. 130.
6. Herd, "Realism," p. 19.
7. I am indebted to Herd, *ibid.*, p. 20, for the analysis of this chapter from Jeromin-Kinder I.
8. Ibid. C.f. Missa, VI.422, where a subtle transition from the personal to the impersonal mode of expression occurs: "Und als sie sich wieder langsam zerstreuten, ... erinnerten sie sich ... Und es war ihnen, als ... Ja, so saß es sich also vor einer Schwelle ..."
9. C.f. Heller, p. 152.
10. Thus also Herd, "Realism," p. 20; against this Ebeling, p. 113; similarly Else Löns, "Ernst

Wiechert, der Dichter des einfachen Lebens," DU, IV, No. 6 (1952), p. 106: "Wiecherts Sprache ist einfach: sie duldet nichts gefühlmäßig Verschwommenes, sie macht alle Gefühlsschichten klar in einer Art, die an Lessings logisches Schema der 'Division subordinierter Inhalte' erinnert."

11. Das einfache Leben might perhaps be more accurately described as 'Das vereinfachte Leben'!
12. Thus also Kerkhöff, p. 180: "Das Einfache wird so stark beredet, daß es kompliziert wird."
13. The use of the present tense in this passage incidentally reveals its reflective tendency.
14. Ollesch, Deutung, p. 6.
15. C.f. p. 95 above.
16. Thus also Grenzmann, Dichtung, pp. 100 f.
17. On the contrary, righteousness in Isaiah (חֲסִדִּים) is respect for God's law which brings peace (שָׁלוֹם = well-being, prosperity) as its natural reward. C.f. E. J. Kissane, The Book of Isaiah (Dublin, 1960), I.354. Isaiah 32 is usually interpreted as a description of the conditions which will prevail in the Zion of the future, and the ideal conditions postulated then refer to the transformation of mankind in the Messianic age. Wiechert endows Jons with these Messianic qualities; like Christ his task is to move the world (V.18).

18. C.f. Ebeling, p. 112 for a further example; c.f. also Jeromin-Kinder I, V.14.
19. Gregor and Nicholas, p. 252.
20. Kerkhoff, p. 176.
21. Ibid., p. 177; c.f. Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 100.
22. C.f. Kerkhoff, p. 177; Jancke, p. 396.
23. Grenzmann, Dichtung, p. 100:

Der Hang zum Meditieren zeigt sich in der Umkehr oder andersartigen Wendung von schon Gesagtem, in Zustimmung und Entgegensetzung. Das Weiterdenken von Satz zu Satz und deren Verknüpfung durch die Kopula "und" ist eines seiner bezeichnenden Stilmittel.

C.f. Jancke, p. 397.

24. Otto Friedrich Bollnow, "Wahrhaftigkeit," Die Sammlung (May-June 1947), p. 242, quoted by Pfeiffer, p. 124. Pfeiffer rightly complains of the "Mangel an Echtheit" in Wiechert's work.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

1. Hugo Fischer, "Der deutsche Infanterist von 1917," Widerstand (January 1934), pp. 6-11, quoted by Mohler, p. 48.
2. Thus Roditi, pp. 444-45; c.f. Seán O'Faoláin, Review of The Simple Life, Listener (London, January 20 1955), p. 123:

Wiechert lived in a very private world of his own. When he wrote he intersected the public world's circle only slightly. Indeed he barely crosses

its circumference. Poor man! The public world  
swallowed up his gentle soul in Buchenwald.  
He survived it - and went back at once into his  
private cave, like Thomas von Orla ..

3. Albert Soergel and Curt Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter  
der Zeit (Düsseldorf: August Bagel, 1963), II.762.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. V. Lange, Modern German Literature: 1870-1940 (New  
York: Cornell University Press, 1945), p. 74.
7. Ibid., pp. 116-17.
8. Luise Rinser, Gefängnistagebuch (3rd ed.;  
Frankfurt a/M: Fischer, 1963), pp. 6-7.
9. Fritz Martini, "Der Expressionismus," Deutsche  
Literatur im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Strukturen  
und Gestalten, Vol. I: Strukturen, ed. Hermann  
Friedmann and Otto Mann (4th ed.; Heidelberg:  
Wolfgang Rothe, 1961), p. 261.

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