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Foolish humor in the German Democratic Republic: Hermann Kant’s "Der Aufenthalt", Irmtraud Morgner’s "Amanda. Ein Hexenroman", and Volker Braun’s "Hinze-Kunze-Roman"

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Rice University, 1988

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FOOLISH HUMOR IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC:
HERMANN KANT'S DER AUFENTHALT, IRMTRAUD MORGNER'S AMANDA.
EIN HEXENROMAN, AND VOLKER BRAUN'S HINZE-KUNZE-ROMAN

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

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May, 1988
ABSTRACT:


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The literature of the German Democratic Republic is not always a serious realm where problems of German fascism, East-West relations, and Marxist class struggle are treated in the sober manner of socialist realism. Currently, the character of the fool appears in various guises adding humor and depth to the literary analysis of these problems.

Hermann Kant's Der Aufenthalt examines problems through the eyes of a picaresque fool. Humor is produced by various means. In Irmtraud Morgner's Amanda, the satiric Eulenspiegel uses similar techniques to criticize and to encourage change through laughter. Volker Braun's Hinze-Kunze-Roman explores the relationship of leader and led through the humor of a fool-like modern comedy team.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Here in the USA, there is a popular joke which suggests that the world's shortest book consists of a listing of German humorists. The stereotype of the serious, humorless German is so strong that the mere idea of a German humorist has become an oxymoronic opposition which is itself a source of humor. To be sure, the humorless German is only a stereotype, and it is not difficult to find actual examples of German humor. One thinks immediately of the popular German Fasching or carnival tradition, with its suspension of normal rules of decorum and its unabashed praise of folly. On the other hand, there is also a more literary tradition residing especially in satire, such as found in the writings of Kurt Tucholsky or the cartoons of Wilhelm Busch, for example.

The German Democratic Republic, or GDR, if thought about at all in the USA, is perceived as a rather vague East Germany--the grey land behind the wall--and an especially humorless realm. Joachim Jaeger quotes the probably typical reaction of an acquaintance: "Humor und Satire in der DDR? -- Oh, ich dachte, es sei verboten!" (5). Humor is not forbidden in the GDR. But as Theodor Langenbruch says,

it is understandable that many people in the western world are prepared to see in every work
of art created in a socialist country a typical example of Socialist Realism. A typical example of Socialist Realism might be a painting or a statue of this kind: the muscular figure of a worker, lifting a red banner into the wind, his posture expressing revolutionary verve, his clenched fist showing determination, and the optimistic look on his face indicating his unshakeable belief in the final victory of the communist cause (3).

This familiar caricature, however, does not monopolize the stage of contemporary GDR literature. In fact, this heroic protagonist is often replaced with a quite different character: the fool. While the protagonist will most likely be a worker, since the GDR is by definition a socialist state of workers and farmers (Verfassung 1.1), his muscles may be atrophied from soft living, his posture may be similar to that of one who has just slipped on a banana peel, and the clenched fist may be one which failed to catch a banner blown by the wind—to transform Langenbruch's caricature. In a land where the communist cause has already been victorious against the imperialist system insofar as establishing a socialist state, the hero's look of optimism may be applied to less revolutionary hopes of perfecting the existing socialist society into true communism or to the goal of making the world free from the danger of war.

To call this literary character from outside socialist realism a fool is not to trivialize his or her function or individual importance as a character. The fool is a source of humor. He or she is a center around which humor re-
olves, whether it is directed by or at the fool. Fools are funny, and people enjoy being entertained by them. But fools also have a different way of looking at things—it is this abnormality that makes them fools—and their new, even if perverted, viewpoints can provide a test of the validity of ideas held by another character or by the reader.

The character of the fool has been a popular figure in German literature for centuries, and the use of fools in contemporary GDR literature ties that literature to a long tradition of humor in Germany. Already by the beginning of the thirteenth century, for example, the innocent, naive character of the young Parzifal provided an entertaining example of foolish humor. The ignorant and thus foolish peasant has been a popular object of humor since the rise of cities (or indeed, since the rise of non-peasant classes), and is still encountered in jokes, if not in literature. The supposedly foolish character of Til Eulenspiegel, who exposes the even greater foolishness of those around him, has survived in literature from the codification of his adventures in a Volksbuch at the beginning of the sixteenth century on into the present. He has, in fact, become a sort of traditional German legend. He has even given his name to a satirically humorous periodical in the GDR.

The international heyday of the literary fool was the sixteenth century, during which Sebastian Brant provided
his famous German typology of over a hundred varieties of fool in *Das Narrenschiff*. Brant and his imitators come immediately to mind because the humorous characters they deal with are plainly called fools or "Narren". There is, however, a large number of other fools who serve the same humorous literary functions as a "Narr", but who are not immediately recognizable through fool's motley or other convenient labeling.

The picaresque "Schelm" or "rogue" of the baroque is one such manifestation of the fool found in German literature. He or she shares a general foolishness—a perverted perception—with the Narr, and is a similar source of humor, but may be distinguished by the especially grotesque nature of the humor, and by the picaro's ultimate arrival at a more serious intellectual condition. In this century, even Thomas Mann and Günter Grass have been seen to have written about picaresque fools (Diederichs).

The importance of fools has continued in more than the celebration of Fasching. From Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* (Luckens) through the works of Friedrich Dürrenmatt (Gottwald) or Peter Handke, the fool appears again and again in modern literature, performing various functions and providing greater or lesser degrees of humor. In the German Democratic Republic, too, the fool is present in literature. The fool is present in a variety of forms (whether he or she is actually called a fool or not) and
wields humor as the weapon against the human foibles which constitute perhaps the greatest threat to socialist society. Three recent novels, Hermann Kant's Der Aufenthalt, Irmtraud Morgner's Amanda. Ein Hexenroman, and Volker Braun's Hinze-Kunze-Roman provide examples of current humor in GDR literature. Der Aufenthalt's main character resembles the baroque picaro. Amanda's humor centers around a character who resembles Til Eulenspiegel. The Hinze-Kunze-Roman uses a more modern team of fools. These novels, with their different fools, all share humor in their approaches to examining very serious problems.
2. HERMANN KANT'S DER AUFENTHALT: THE PICARESQUE FOOL.

Hermann Kant has been considered exceptional for introducing humor into the literature of the German Democratic Republic (Humble 23; Krenzlin 1986, 929). His first full novel, Die Aula, which appeared in book form in 1965, was a huge success, due partly, no doubt, to its humor. 553,400 copies were sold through 1976, according to the book's original publisher (Krenzlin 1979, 253), not counting an earlier version serialized in Forum. The figure may include, however, copies sold in the West, where the book has also been very warmly received. By 1980, Kant himself claims that 800,000 copies were sold in the GDR alone (Hügemann-Ledwohn 117). That would amount to well over four copies for each hundred GDR citizens. His reputation established with Die Aula, Kant has remained an important figure in East German letters. He is today the president of the Writer's Union of the German Democratic Republic, a significant position. Kant's latest novel is Der Aufenthalt, which is less popular than Die Aula, but which was still printed in 350,000 copies in its first two years (Hügemann-Ledwohn 117) and which has also been made into a film (Beyer 1983). Der Aufenthalt was originally published in 1977, and so qualifies as a contemporary novel, even if a new generation of writers is again changing the texture of GDR literature.
2.1 The Picaro

Der Aufenthalt deals with the career of the eighteen-year-old Mark Niebuhr from his being drafted into the German army in December 1944 until in 1946, older and much wiser, he is released from prison in Poland. Niebuhr has been likened to a picaresque fool. Marcel Reich-Ranicki says:


Although the picaresque novel is mostly a seventeenth-century phenomenon, the picaresque tradition has continued into the present. In fact, the idea of there being picaresque novels in today's German Democratic Republic is not new, despite the obvious violation of socialist realism's demand for a positive hero. Ulf-Heiner Marckwort points to Erwin Strittmatter's Der Wundertäter, Günter Kunert's Im Namen der Hütte, Manfred Bieler's Bonifaz oder Der Matrose in der Flasche, Fritz Rudolf Fries's Der Weg nach Oobliadooh and Imtraud Morgner's Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura as examples of the East German picaresque (1).
There doesn't seem to be a satisfactory definition of a picaresque fool. Dieter Arendt says, "vielleicht gehört es zur Definition des Schelms, dass er sich jeder Definition entzieht" (111). The picaresque fool, rogue, or picaro is usually defined tautologically as the protagonist of a picaresque novel. The first picaresque novel was the anonymous Spanish La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, published in 1554. As for Germany, it seems safe to say that Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's Abenteuerlicher Simplicius Simplicissimus of 1669 constitutes the "Inbe- griff des deutschen Schelmenromans" (Diederichs 10). The best approach is probably to define the picaresque as that having a great family resemblance to these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary examples.

Bruno Schleussner refers to the picaro as a sympathetic outsider, freak, swindler or good-for-nothing who enters into an unequal combat with society (vii). It is perhaps too harsh to call Kant's Mark Niebuhr a freak or good-for-nothing in the usual sense, but the milder synonym "outsider" certainly applies. The term used within Der Aufenthalt is "Exzentriker". A thoroughly sympathetic character, Mark, like the earlier picaro, swindles or otherwisecombats the societies within the prisons where he finds himself, in order to stay alive. Mark, like Simplicius, is an outsider precisely because of his foolish naivete. Like Simplicius, if unlike Lazarillo, the swin-
dles are not motivated by ill-will, but more because of foolish ignorance.

Kant's Der Aufenthalt is a first-person narrative related entirely from the perspective of the protagonist, not simply as a narration of events as perceived, but including past memories, mental footnotes, evaluations, and the like. The background is one of war, death, winter, hunger and great human suffering. These are all common characteristics of the picaresque novel. The picaresque novel consists of isolated adventures encountered while the picaro wanders from place to place. While Mark Niebuhr's wanderings are for the most part confined within prison walls, he does have adventures, and they are related as independent events, mixed with reminiscences which disrupt an otherwise chronological narration.

One seemingly essential characteristic of the picaresque novel is social criticism or satire. Marckwort starts from the premise (taken from Arendt) that as a medium of social satire, "der Schelm ein Produkt der bürgerschen Gesellschaft sei" (15), inasmuch as the picaro is a caricature or self-parody of society. But he goes on to add that

der Schelm als personifizierte Selbstkritik des Bürgerstums neben den liberalen und selbstkritischen Funktionen zweifellos noch andere, nämlich dem bürgersch-ebablierten Normensystem zweckdienlichere Funktionen getragen haben muss, denn wir können uns kaum vorstellen, dass . . .
der anmassende Ernst bürgerlicher Ideologie und Herrschaft auf Dauer den picaresken Sticheleien zusehen könnte. Kein Normen- oder Herrschaftssystem toleriert eine permanente Selbstkritik oder gar Verhöhnung seiner konstitutiven Werte, es sei denn, dass der Kritisierende die substanzielle Identität des (kritisierenden schelmischen) Subjekts mit der des (von ihm kritisierten gesellschaftlichen) Objekts akzeptierte, will heißen die grundsätzliche Harmonisierbarkeit und Funktionabilität des gesellschaftlichen Status quo anerkannte (15).

The picaresque novel is critical, whether of bourgeois society or of unperfected socialist society, but it must remain on the whole inoffensive. It must have a purpose beyond criticism for its own sake. The criticisms of the society must go along with criticisms of the picaro. The picaro must be seen as failing in some aspect viewed as absolutely essential to society. Above all, in the picaresque novel, criticism must be made palatable through humor. Without mentioning the picaresque, Hans Kaufmann, in his review of Der Aufenthalt, listed elements of Kant's writing that could, except for the flashbacks, just as well be applied to Grimmelehausen's: "die relativ selbständige Episode, die Anekdoten, die Rückrinnerung, das humoristische oder satirische Porträt, die ausladende, metaphernreiche Rede" (138).

Perhaps the primary characteristic of the picaresque novel is humor. It was humor that made sixteenth- and seventeenth-century picaresque novels so popular, and Kant has used the same sort of humor to achieve the same result
of popular reception. In fact, in many picaresque novels, satire seems often more a vehicle for humor than does humor a vehicle for social comment. Picaresque novels usually have some sort of moral, but it appears often to be rather randomly tacked on at the end. In the case of Der Aufenthalt, however, humor is an integral part of the narration. It always serves a didactic function. There is no tacking-on of a moral. Humor strips away bit by bit the inhuman hardness that prevents one from reaching the socialist goal of humane sensitivity, until that is finally seen as the moral which was present throughout the book from the beginning.

2.2 Humor as the Violation of Expectations

Like most picaresque novels, Der Aufenthalt begins with the narrator's family, though here little detail is given. As the eighteen-year-old Mark Niebuhr leaves for war, his thoughts are of his mother. "Meine Mutter ist nicht mit zum Bahnhof gegangen," is the first sentence of Der Aufenthalt (7). One might expect a young man to think of his mother as he leaves her to go into the army, perhaps never to return. But Mark's thoughts are not those of a painful emotional parting. Mother and son don't even discuss the reason for her absence. The significance of the mother's absence is that it goes against Mark's expectations. His
mother had accompanied his father and brother to the
station in the past, on the occasion of their leaving for
war, and Mark had expected to be similarly accompanied.

The idea of unfulfilled expectations is made clearer:
"Ich habe immer reifen Mais zu meinem Abschied gesehen,
wohl weil der Mais gerade reifte, als mein Bruder ein-
gezogen wurde, und ich bin auf Sennelager in Westfalen
gefasst gewesen" (7). Ripening corn is an image Mark
associates with going to war, and he feels disturbed, not
because he is going to war, but because he sees snow rather
than the corn he expects. One might expect an inductee to
pay attention to landscapes that have defined his previous
life, inasmuch as they define a life that is being left
behind, possibly forever. But Mark is not lamenting the
loss of his home landscape; he is lamenting its presence in
the wrong, unexpected, form.

Mark Niebuhr is marked immediately as a rather pecu-
liar young man, because his odd expectations don't match
those the reader has for him. One would expect a man
leaving for war to have thoughts more central to war it-
self. One would expect Mark's parting from his mother to
be somehow related to the likelihood that the parting would
be permanent. If Mark's train trip is so much like his
brother's that Mark expects the same seasonal landscape,
why does he not expect also to meet the same ultimate fate
as his brother? Mark Niebuhr does not approach war in the
way a reader would expect. A reader expects the landscape of war to be one of ruined cities and decaying bodies, not ripening corn. Mark Niebuhr is perceived as different, naive, and as rather foolish.

Mark does not think of war's horrors, as one would expect from antifascist socialism. Nor does he think of the glory of battle or the winning of a cause, as one would expect of a fascist. Instead, his thoughts are closer to those of the average person whom one might actually meet in life: his thoughts are of his family and of his home. The difference is only in the way family and home are perceived. The dichotomy between Mark's view of the situation and the reader's view produces humor. The humor is not the sort to produce much laughter, but it inspires the sympathy one has for someone made into a fool. Mark is seen as deeply human, and yet as more naive than the reader. The reader's own superior knowledge is brought to bear on the problem of leaving for war, and on the landscapes of war. Thus, Kant has achieved his purpose of illustrating some of the horrors of war in a way which stimulates the reader's own consideration of the problem in a pleasant, good-humored way that makes the reader want to continue reading.

The humorous disruption of expectations continues throughout Der Aufenthalt. Mark is first called an excentric by an unidentified soldier after he breaks his arm in prison (222). It's likely that his neck will be
broken, but an arm is unexpected. The real humor, however, lies in the unexpected way the arm has been broken. Mark has fallen from the roof of a car where he was sunbathing (221). The idea of a prisoner sunbathing is already rather ludicrous, but for one to break an arm while sunbathing is silly, to say the least. This is a rare instance of humor not being directly related to a didactic function. However, the breaking of the arm results in giving Mark the heavy cast which will be the weapon that keeps him alive in a cell filled with violent Nazi war criminals. The humor also distances Mark from the driver of the car so that when asked if his Polish captors broke his arm he can answer "nee, gegipst," without giving question or answer a second thought (241). Mark is eccentric precisely inasmuch as he doesn’t do things or see things in the way anyone would normally expect.

As a final example of the humorous violation of expectations, an unknown philanthropist throws Mark and his colleagues a stale and somewhat hard loaf of bread from a passing train (65). The bread was intended, no doubt, to assist those in hunger. The loaf, however, hits Mark on the head, giving him a concussion. The unexpected result of the action is humorous in more than a slapstick way, especially when Mark goes into a discourse on the physics of three-pound loaves and the speed of a moving train. Likewise, there is humorous irony in the fact that the
concussion results in Mark's hospitalization, whereby his frostbitten feet are finally attended to, and he meets the Russian doctor who begins teaching Mark to think.

2.3 Humor as the Joining of Incompatibles

Niebuhr's only real contact with war as a soldier is presented as a sort of comedy of errors, from his departure in the train until his capture under a bed. His "training" in Kolberg is effected by the bitter comedian Leimhut, the "Unmensch" out only to save his own skin and see that his troops always have the "Haare in der Nase sauber links-gescheitelt," in the name of order (8). But Leimhut's humorous speeches are set in a background of cruel actions or circumstances. Again, there is an opposition between landscape and action, between expectation and reality, as Niebuhr finds himself on a bathing beach, but in the middle of winter and for the purpose of military drill. The training experience is summarized in a pun, another form of humorous contrast. Leimhut says, "ich bin nicht das Übel, ich bin das Übliche" (9), stressing for the reader that as regards war, das Übliche just might itself be the ultimate source of das Übel.

The camp in Gnesen provides an apparently gay captain whose great concern in life is that the soldiers have properly fitting underwear. The foolish Niebuhr isn't sure
of the captain's motives, but whether they spring simply
from a good heart or from sexual desire, the interest in
underwear forms another sharp contrast with the business of
war. The contrast is at once humorous and instructive.
War is hell, but not because of uncomfortable underwear or
the advances of possibly gay officers.

Kant uses Mark's foolishness to comment on the nature
of the war in Poland. The fool can't believe Gnesen is
Germany because it doesn't look like home (9). The comment
is foolish and humorous because very little of Germany
looks like Mark's own village--there is no reason for
Gnesen to look like home, either. But Mark has also
thereby made the statement that Gnesen is not Germany. The
statement is traitorous, but made palatable or excusable by
his foolishness. The reader thus gets the message without
the sort of pedantic didacticism that would discourage him
or her from reading further. Mark is also temporarily
excused for not acting on his observation because his
foolishness provides a reason for not seeing the obvious
consequences of the area not being part of Germany.

Mark's greatest action during the war is his sucessful
destruction of a tank (11). This is done in a sort of
fantasy where Mark is not a soldier, but is simply imagin-
ing himself to be one--as he had imagined himself to be an
Indian or the editor of the Texas Herald. While he is
playing games, a man has died, and he himself is wounded.
The episode is not humorous—the men who jump from the tank don't at all resemble the post-explosion blackened characters of cartoons—but the episode is so quickly suppressed beneath Mark's silly dreams of Texas that it is as if it had never happened. The incompatible daydream is humorous, and it distances Mark and the reader from a violent act.

Mark is eventually taken prisoner by Polish farmers. Having stolen food in a farmhouse, he is surprised there and reacts by hiding under the bed (12). There, under the bed, he laments that his life is not proceeding in accordance with expected rules. Soldiers are supposed to be heroic and not to hide under beds. There are no rules at all governing a soldier's own surrender; he has to think for himself. Unable to think for himself, a fool projects a wild, disconnected conglomerate of ideas, dreams, and memories. The reader thus learns here of another of Mark's military exploits: the shooting of a military cook.

Mark is obviously quite affected by the killing of the cook. He is still disoriented from the violation of his expectations. He has had to forego the rule of yelling "halt, oder ich schiesse!" and has shot a man without giving warning in order to prevent being shot himself (15). The shock comes not so much from having killed a man as from the victim having been a cook. A cook is a character from real life, not from a western or from the war that is so incomprehensible to Mark. Mark daydreams about white
cooks' uniforms and fears himself now an enemy of all cooks. The feelings are those of regret at having killed a man, and fear of being haunted by the killing, not to mention the fear of being killed himself. Yet Kant presents the scene with such grotesque humor that the reader can scarcely see the situation seriously. Mark is lying under a bed, fantasizing about an army of cooks, until he is interrupted in his fantasies by the questions of his Polish captor.

Mark's reaction to being discovered, his fear of his enemy, is indicated in the statement, "Kein Mann sieht gern einen Mann unter seinem Bett." (13). His spot under the bed is reminiscent of the hiding place of an illicit lover. Mark is clearly innocent of cuckolding anyone. But the humorous inappropriateness of this image of Mark is immediately shattered in the next sentence: "Kein Mann sieht gern einen Mann mit Flinte auf seiner Schwelle." For Mark is guilty. Mark is guilty of an armed invasion. He is not a lover, he is a murderer. The two sentences are constructed precisely parallel. The contrast of the second sentence with the humorous sentence preceding is strengthened, and the humor of the first sentence thus emphasizes the seriousness of the second.

The character or a fool is humorous per se because it contrasts elements of wisdom with elements of stupidity. In the case of the picaro, the contrast is evident mostly
within the fool himself. Fools are often popular because their lack of intelligence contrasts with the intelligence of those around him. Thus others seem more intelligent than usual because of the contrast.

Once he has been captured, Mark's foolish innocence stands him in good stead. Like the friendly fool Parzifal, who gives everyone he meets his greeting as was recommended by his mother, and who is therefore assisted in some way by nearly everyone he meets, Mark is always as well received as circumstances would allow. Mark is thought to be an actor and doesn't disillusion his captors, since the mistake (Mark still seems too foolish for it to be a picaresque swindle) results in better care of his frostbitten feet (21).

Bernd Schick says, based on Mark's professional training and on his obvious ability to get by, that "dieser Mark Niebuhr ist also keineswegs naiv, wie in einigen Rezensionen behauptet... Dieser Mark Niebuhr ist also keineswegs ein unbeschriebenes Blatt" (124). True, Mark's naivete is not that of some sort of idiot or Kaspar Hauser with no mental store of experiences to draw on. His naivete comes from his inability to use his knowledge—his inability to see things properly. He remains a foolish excentric. Like Parzifal, Mark is ultimately a fool not because he doesn't have access to the right answers, but because he doesn't ask the right questions. As Schick
says, Mark's is a "Prozess des Umlernens" (117) and a carnival inversion of the world order is needed before Mark begins to sees things as he should. "Niebuhr is ... a modern Parzifal figure," says J. H. Reid (421). "Part of his guilt is the failure to ask questions, to enquire after the reality behind German propaganda ... , to ask why something is happening." In this sense Mark is naive despite, or even because of, his experience in Nazi Germany.

Mark is rarely guilty of foolish stupidity. His intelligence is unquestionable, and his knowledge exceptional for a worker scarcely eighteen. A printer by profession, Mark is unusually well-read. He is able to think, but is foolish because he doesn't use the ability. When, for example, he is forced to spend a night in a barn, he picks a narrow wooden manger as his bed. In his sleep he gradually sinks beneath the feed, and has no room to move in order to try to get out. In fact, he would have suffocated under the feed, had there not been "einer, der noch aufzustehen bereit war eines anderen wegen sich zu kümmern" (24).

Mark's stupidity is not so much funny as it is dangerous, but it is transformed into humor through the nickname "Jesuskind" which is thereafter given to Mark. Unlike the original Christchild who was born in a manger to save mankind from death, Mark is raised out of a manger and saved from death by a man. The contrastive humor makes the episode more memorable than other dangerous moments in Mark's
life, and draws attention to the unknown person who saved Mark. It is not a specific individual, but an example of what mankind should be: one ready to bother about his fellow man.

Some examples of Mark's ignorance contrast with his known intelligence in a humorous way. For example, he claims not to have known that the Poles celebrate Christmas (158). Such knowledge seems so basic that any well-read eighteen-year-old German printer would surely know it, and it is amusing that Mark claims ignorance. The statement is hard to believe, but can be accepted as a grotesque exaggeration of just the sort of closed-minded blind foolishness that typifies Mark. From the beginning Mark is consistently portrayed as the sort of fool whose entire worldview is based on passive absorption of the prejudices transmitted through film. His view is without any basis in independent observation or consideration. Mark's first reaction to being accused of murder, for example, is that it should be apparent that he could have been no murderer, because "Mörder sahen wie der Schauspieler Rudolf Fernau aus" (191).

Der Aufenthalt is also replete with more or less isolated jokes. They always seem, however, to have a didactic function and to contribute to the transformation of Mark's worldview. We are told, for example, about one prank of Mark's brother:
Meinem Bruder durfte auch keiner dumm kommen; er klatschte einem dann mit beiden Handflächen gleichzeitig gegen die Ohren; das sollte ungesund sein, hatte er gelesen, und es hat ihn dann auch tatsächlich mal einer für längere Zeit krankgeschlagen (41).

This perverted entertainment at the expense of another's health foreshadows the "Schinkenkloppen" of the unrepentant Nazis, whereby

ein erwachsener Mann einem anderen erwachsenen Mann die Augen zufühlt, und ein dritter erwachsener Mann drischt dem zweiten mit aller Kraft auf den Hintern, und der muss dann raten, wer von all den anwesenden erwachsenen Männern der Drescher gewesen ist (255).

In neither of these cruel games is Mark a participant. The fool can point out greater foolishness. Mark finds the slapstick Nazi pastime "bodenlos dumm," and considers himself much better, or at least more "manierlich," than his brother. Nevertheless, the common type of humor shared in these two incidents illustrates the close parallel between the Nazi way of thinking and that within Mark's own family background. If the parallel were not clear enough already, Kant has Mark refer again to the incident with his brother just before Mark's explanation of the game "Schinkenkloppen." Mark remembers his father saying, "da ist es mit Hände-an-die-Ohren-Klatschen nicht getan; da musst du einem auch glatt das Ohr abreissen können" (254).

A story somewhat more inclined to make one smile, but
less connected to the plot or transformation of Mark, is Mark's reverie concerning the crippled veterans. "Die Helden taugten selbst zum Schulhausmeister kaum; die grossen, schweren Fahnen dort werden mit zwei Händen aufgezogen" (44). Such is the usual nature of Mark's thoughts from the beginning to the end of Der Aufenthalt. But only at the end does he seem to realize the significance of the evidence that has been before him all along—in this case the irony of a flag-waving war hero who can no longer raise a flag. Raising a flag becomes incompatible with being the crippled soldier for whom flags are generally raised.

A rare example of a humorous one-liner is Onkel Jonnie's "ich wäre mehr für Geselligkeit, wenn da nicht andere Leute zu gehörten" (265). Mark uses humor as a personal buffer against his Nazi cellmates, and as a way of expressing his dislike for them. The joke, however, again goes beyond the particular application and applies to Mark himself. If he has removed himself as an individual from the community of fascists, he has still to view himself as a human being within a larger, less egocentric community of other human beings.

2.4 Picaresque Swindle

Mark Niebuhr is not all innocence, as already demonstrated by his having killed two men. The traditional picaresque
quickly learns from the world around him how to swindle and cheat. Yet the swindle remains a form of humor, or perhaps satire, as the picaro uses his own appearance of innocence to con others. For Mark, confined to prison with few but fellow prisoners to swindle, Mark has less opportunity to show what evil he can reflect than do most picaros.

Malcolm Humble notes that "in the first half of the novel Mark's role is almost totally passive" (30). Generally, Mark has to do little or nothing to effect his swindle. "His fantasies help him to survive, his quick witted ability to rhyme helps him out of difficult situations and he is variously taken for an actor [21], a circus artiste [226-228] and even a poet [403-407]" (Reid 421). The appearances as actor and circus artiste are purely accidental. The Poles are simply working under their own false impressions, and there is humor in their reaching such strange conclusions. In the case of the poet, Mark does more than not try to correct a beneficial mistake. He quotes the poet Fleming and convinces the Poles that they are his own compositions. It is interesting that in this situation is is really Mark who appears foolish through this swindle.

The greatest swindle, and the one having the most effect on the outside world, is Mark's assisting in the sabotage of sewing machines being transported east as war reparations (51-55). The prisoners are able to prevent the
Tante Annas of the Ukraine from receiving workable sewing machines. Although they still have to deliver machines from Germany, they feel they have swindled the Russians by making them inoperable. While the conversations in this episode about what Hans-Georg Werner calls "arische" sewing machines (148) are amusing, and Mark is able to demonstrate his wit in manipulating, if not swindling, Brünjesus, the episode takes a serious turn. The character Gessner makes clear the impropriety of the sabotage, and although he is unable to make Mark understand why, he at least does not become the butt of a new series of Mark's jokes.

It is in the cell with the Nazi war criminals that the cruel side of the picaro comes out. If the picaro's swindle is a reflection of the society around him, this comes as no surprise. Once again, Mark is taken for an SS officer because of his coat. Although to his advantage in the immediate environment, this is not a mistake Mark wants made.


The identity swindle here again takes place without any encouragement by Mark. This time, however, he isn't taken
for anything humorous. This time, Mark makes a denial, but it isn't believed. It is clear that nothing Mark could say would be believed—he isn't dealing with good-hearted Poles, he is dealing with Nazi war criminals who consider him one of themselves. The change from the previous ridiculous situations to one more of black irony makes clear the differences in the two societies Mark has encountered.

Humor had been a defense for Mark. His cloak of naivete had mostly protected him from the ill-will of others, but now he has to resort to his wits, and to force. Mark attacks Hauptmann Schulzki with the cast on his broken arm (270). The Gärtner's hand he crushes behind a cot (292). A picaro often takes brutal revenge against the one who cruelly teaches him the ways of the world, and that seems to be happening here, but with even less humor than normal.

2.5 Humor as Exaggeration ad absurdum

The most common form of humor in Der Aufenthalt has to be that of exaggeration and repetition ad absurdum. A serious enough event will be retold by Mark over and over, perhaps with slight variations of wording, and put into different contexts until the original event can no longer be taken seriously. Perhaps this is Mark's way of con-
sidering an event, of taking it apart and viewing it in all possible shapes of reconstruction.

A very concrete form of Kantian exaggeration is the episode of the crossword puzzle fad (81-97). What begins as a simple reconstruction of a crossword puzzle turns into the single thing giving meaning to the lives of an entire society of prisoners. The puzzle is circulated more and more widely. It is followed by more and more puzzles. Puzzles are written in more and more different media and there come to be more authors. Excitement mounts together with the humor of the fanaticism, until finally the situation explodes into murder.

When Mark is first accused of being a war criminal there is a humorous element. "Dann gab es auf einmal diese Frau" (120). The woman who accuses him appears out of nowhere but suddenly has an exaggerated interest in him. Her hate is picked up by the crowd with passion mounting to ever higher levels, costing Mark at least a tooth. Mark is paraded within a circle of guards with children running ahead to announce him. The carnival scene is humorous despite the danger to Mark and the mass public odium exhibited. The humor of the presentation prevents any need for Kant to have Mark make a confrontation. Mark may remain passive and worry only about preserving his skin. The reader sees the whole picture rather than only Mark's pain.
Repetitions of stereotypes result in humor. Mark's reflections are stereotypical of his way of thinking, and he is humorous—foolish—inasmuch as his thoughts can be predicted. Any new event is going to bring a connection with his childhood. The funniest events in the cell with the war criminals are those in which the stereotyped world view of the Nazi is again exhibited. For example, there is the series of stories "mein schönstes Erlebnis" which concerns such things as one's fiancée being proven Aryan (265-268). The war criminals' plans for life in peacetime are shown to preserve their role as criminals in the scheme to rent out typewriters which are for blackmail purposes attached to teletype machines (365).

Repetition or exaggeration often results in humor. It demonstrates indirectly the foolishness of wearing blinders and seeing things the same way every time. But rather than exaggeration ad absurdum there is often a seemingly unintentional repetition ad nauseam. For example, there are the lines "unterdessen sei der Deine" and "Bleib der Deine, ich bleib Meiner" (264). The two phrases summarize Mark's original guilt by association with the Nazi cause and his later excessive individualism, but they are repeated so often that they lose their force and become merely silly, the battle cries of a fool.
2.6 The Grotesque

Perhaps the most notable form of humor in Der Aufenthalt, if it can be called humor at all, is the grotesque—a twisting of normal events, a violation of usual expectations, such that they become utterly absurd. Kant begins with a situation that may be humorous or at least ironic, but he allows "durch die Steigerung bis zur Groteske in fast allen Szenen eine ernstere Haltung aufkommen" (Melchert 891). As a normal event may be exaggerated to the point of humor, a humorous event may be exaggerated to the point of a new seriousness.

Viele der Geschichten haben etwas Komisches; es kommt aus der Abnormalität der Lebenslagen Mark Niebuhrs und der häufigen Unangemessenheit seiner Reaktionen auf sie. Die Komik reizt aber kaum einmal zum Lachen; das Erregernde hat meist irgendwo einen lebensbedrohlichen Aspekt und wird in jedem Falle sehr bald ins Groteske überdreht. Die Mehrzahl der Geschichten steigern sich schliesslich ins fast Ungeheuerliche; sie helfen dem Leser, sich in die politisch-menschlichen Abgründe hineinzuzwängen, die das Barbarentum der Nazis aufgerissen hat, und hindern ihn daran, sich um die hanebüchenen Möglichkeiten des Lebens . . . geistig herumzumogeln (Werner 144).

Nearly everything, for example, about Mark's Nazi cellmates is grotesque from "das Bizarre des täglichen Entkotungsrituals des Generalmajors Netzdorf" (Silberman 159). to their almost drowning Mark in the toilet (Kant 1985, 288). But as Malcolm Humble, points out, "Kant is careful
to individualize these figures and not to endow them with a demonic aura, so that the sheer banality of their attitudes emerges, whatever the scale of their activities" (31). The Nazis are individuals, indeed, each one an excentric like Mark, and not just members of a machine that fell apart with the end of the war. There is not a uniform Nazi personality, but all are united by a common bestiality that grows and snowballs to consume not only themselves but all with whom they come into contact (Compare Silberman 159). The grotesque makes it easier for the reader, at least, to see fascism not as a disembodied essence of evil per se, but as a perversion of world-view. It is a perverted view which is reached from refusal to see, or even from a picaro's foolish inability to see. As common reality is transformed through humor into the grotesque, so too can a person be transformed through bestiality into the demonic.

A example of the grotesque beyond the Nazis' cell is Mark's being taken from his cell to assist in the production of the sauerkraut soup which is his daily meal. He is locked in a room with a bag of salt which he is to distribute over loads of cabbage which are then dumped on him from above (129-136). Mark can barely trample down the cabbage fast enough to keep from being buried alive, while his guard calls from outside for him to sing his national anthem while he marches. The event is thus still tied to German faschism.
The "Kotzerei" of the prisoners when they are poisoned is certainly grotesque (388-391). Mark explains the mass vomiting in a steady crescendo of ebullience which matches the event described. The suddenness of the break in the scene as Mark leaves the cell to clean up after an assassination keeps the focus on the grotesque rather than on the double murder that is the more important element. The grotesque of the vomiting provides a background, or a sort of lens through which the murders are seen, too, as grotesque. It is not a simple matter of Poles killing Poles, as Mark's cellmates would have it. Mark for the first time sees there is a relationship between himself and the Poles beyond that of captor and captive, and between Poles and Germany as a whole. Mark had already begun to shed his motley and ask questions, but through the grotesque series of events beginning with the poisoned soup, Mark first goes beyond his countrymen for analysis of the incomprehensible outside world. "Von da an hat Niebuhr lieber den Polen gefragt" (401).

When Mark Niebuhr is taken on a tour of the ruins of Warsaw, he is asked to play a charade. The conversation between Mark and the Polish lieutenant seems to deal mostly with Mark's childhood, a superficially remote talk about family. According to Malcolm Humble,

The situation, already grotesque, is given a further dimension when the lieutenant asks Mark
to imagine that he had been a member of a detachment ordered to take and shoot hostages. The charade thus takes on a new meaning, which is at once ironised by the implication that Mark could easily have found himself in such a group (30).

The grotesqueness of the situation serves to stifle any humor. It is easy to see that when Mark speaks of Onkel Jonnie he is referring to the socialist element of his upbringing and is not just telling stories. Esperanto is not just a hobby and source of family discussion; it represents hope of nations communicating. This talk is not just a humorous contrast to the razed city around Mark. The charade of pretending to be a Pole is not of an entirely different nature for Mark than pretending to be a German ordered to shoot Polish hostages. If the conversation is grotesque, it serves a function beyond humor.


The narrator himself speaks specifically about the grotesque in one of Der Aufenthalt's more grotesque scenes. In the office of the prison doctor where he is waiting to
have his broken arm attended to, Mark is treated to a
striptease by one of several bored women also waiting to
see the doctor.

Das Spiel: Handbewegung und winzigste aller
Hüftbewegungen, zwei Takte Ballett heraus aus dem
Rock.—Es müssen die gleichen abgeschnittenen
Männerunterhosen sein, aber das kann gar nicht
sein; wo ist die Groteske geblieben?
Die Groteske ist geblieben, aber ich bin
nicht geblieben; ich sehe die Groteske nicht.
Ich sehe alles, was zu ihr gehört, aber ich sehe
sie nicht (230).

The woman's clothes are grotesque, consisting mostly of
rags and men's clothing, and the situation is grotesque.
But the grotesque allows Mark to see more than he normally
would. He sees past the clothing to find an attractive
woman. More importantly, he looks beyond the difference in
nationality to see a human being. Likewise, the woman's
perception of Mark changes. When she is told he's a war
criminal, she becomes physically ill (232).

The grotesque seems to be a perversion of reality
through its exaggeration or inversion, which makes reality
impossible to accept or to sugar-coat with humor. But it
also allows one to see through the contorted elements to a
deeper reality beneath.

2.7 Absence of humor

Humor is so pervasive in Der Aufenthalt that its
absence becomes significant. Mark learns that there are appropriate and inappropriate times and places for making jokes, and different (or no) jokes for different people. One must know "wessen Witze gut sind und wessen Witze keine sind" (208). Mark regrets not having noticed the humor of one of his guards, but continues:

Der Posten war dankbar, und auf dem Heimweg erfuhr ich, wie wenig meine Gefährten das mochten.
Soviel hornige Ellenbogen brauche ich für all mein weiteres Leben nicht mehr, um Herr zu werden über unangebrachten Humor (209).

It is not appropriate for a member of an invading army to make fun of a patriotic tradition relating to defense from invading armies.

Kant's humor, however, is not simply restrained by considerations of appropriateness or inappropriateness. It is restrained for dramatic effect. The episodes without some sort of humor are so rare that the reader notices them immediately as being unusual. To look unsuccessfully for some attempted joke emphasizes the seriousness of an episode. The burial of the child while Mark is working on the railroad is a good example (60-64). Mark, who seems to be able to make a joke out of just about everything, finds
himself at a loss. He is not able to turn the grave into a mine or the digging into a search for oil or a geyser, even before he knows that it’s actually a grave which is being dug. The best he can do is to think of the graveyard at home, which is equally as serious. The result of this anomalous serious episode is to provide one of the most touchingly human scenes of the book. Eventually Mark will appreciate such humanity.

The pivotal scene of Der Aufenthalt, the walk through Warsaw (309-324), is without humor. The lieutenant speaks of it as a "lustige Scharade" (309) and as the "Tag eines Spiels" (323), but there is nothing humorous or playful about it. "Die Scharade ist ein grausames Spiel und durchaus nicht lustig" (Melchert 889). Instead, the scene has the suspense of a deadly tightrope walk. There is nothing to distance the reader, or Mark, from the seriousness of the surroundings or the significance of the conversation. The elements of the grotesque provide a frame for seeing the serious reality.

Nancy Lauckner has noted that

Kant employs the techniques of realism and humor, but the latter occurs very seldom with the holocaust theme. When it is used in this connection, it tends to be a satirical, even bitter humor directed against the war criminals rather than the Jewish victims. Little distance is achieved by this humor because of its bitterness and scarcity (148).
Lauckner explains that the three Jews of Der Aufenthalt—the Russian doctor, the prisoner Herzog, and the deceased Jadwiga Sierp—are all treated seriously, and that all play pivotal roles in the transformation of Mark. The doctor is the first to get Mark to question his ideas and consider what it means to be German. She opens his mind, and also his heart. Herzog is less significant to Mark’s transformation, but his influence helps effect Mark’s acquittal. Jadwiga, though long dead, is the first person Mark tries to see as another human being.

2.8 Summary

Hermann Kant’s Der Aufenthalt has elements which place it in the family of picaresque novels, above all, elements of humor. As Wolfgang Emmerich says,

Eigentlich hätte der Schelm, der Pikaro in der DDR-Literatur gar nicht auftauchen dürfen, ist er doch ein "abnormer" Held, ein unernster Verneiner und Zerstörer, dem nichts heilig ist (also auch gewiss der 'reale' Sozialismus nicht) (166).

Clearly, Mark Niebuhr is not such an abnormal, unserious destroyer. He is perhaps excentric, but not really abnormal. His humor is his only defense against a world much larger than himself, and if he is not always serious when he should be, he is closer to the ideal by the end of his imprisonment. If he is a destroyer, it is with hammer and
chisel for a constructive purpose. If Mark Niebuhr doesn't move steadily forward, as demanded of a socialist realist hero, he nevertheless does move forward. And if he isn't entirely positive, his negative aspects are backgounded through the use of humor, and are seen as flaws that can be overcome. Like the seventeenth-century picaro, Mark is eventually transformed. In Mark's case, he is transformed into a sensitive human being ripe for socialism.

The process of Mark's transformation is not linear, but dialectical, as indicated by Bertolt Brecht's "So bildet sich der Mensch," the motto of Der Aufenthalt. One learns through the experiencing of contraries. Humor is a medium of demonstrating the process. Humor arises from the violation of expectations, and shows life to not be unswervingly linear. Humor shows the dichotomy between the fool's view and that of the reader. The reader is challenged to think. Since humor often tries to join the incompatible and irreconcilable, the hero and the reader must learn to choose the best of two alternatives, or to form their proper synthesis.

The destructive, swindling side of the picaro, too, illustrates the contrast between good and evil, points out the precise nature of the social problems to be overcome, and is thus more than just slapstick humor. Humorous exaggeration and repetition dissolve linear thinking and acceptance of stereotypes, facilitating new ways of seeing
things. Similarly, the grotesque twists normal perceptions, encouraging one to look beyond perceptions previously considered normal to see what, if any, truth lies behind them.

Above all, humor is entertaining. It is the bait that lures the reader further and further into the book. It also serves structural functions, such as trivializing unimportant elements, or ridiculing wrong ideas. Humor can distance the reader from lessons too sharp to be received immediately. Humor can draw the reader closer with its human warmth. Humor can, by its conspicuous absence, emphasize the seriousness of an episode related. Humor is a tool to be used by a skillful author to express his message.
3. Irmtraud Morgner's *Amanda. Ein Hexenroman: The Eulenspiegel*

While Hermann Kant's *Der Aufenthalt* can be viewed as an almost anachronistic representative of "das Fortschreiben der sozialistischen Bildungsbücher der 60er Jahre" (Stephan 129), Irmtraud Morgner's *Amanda. Ein Hexenroman*, first published in 1983, is both more recent and more topical than *Der Aufenthalt*. Only seven years younger than Kant, Morgner has also experienced wartime Germany, been educated as a Germanist in the GDR, and worked as a journalist, yet the themes and approaches of her writings are quite different from those of Kant. While Kant writes about the past and its influence on the present, Morgner is much more oriented towards the future, and finds herself thus more in the mainstream of important GDR authors of this last decade. Her theme is not World War II, but the danger of atomic destruction of the world in a new world war. Furthermore, Morgner is also a representative of a very strong feminist movement in East German literature. In fact, though not an appellation she likes, she has been called "die Feministin der DDR" (Rudolph 172). Finally, Morgner is concerned with environmental problems. But common to both Kant and Morgner--beyond the sheer mass of their books--is the frequent use of foolish humor.

*Amanda. Ein Hexenroman* is the second and most recent
part of Irmtraud Morgner's proposed Salman trilogy, which centers on the life of the character Laura Salman. The first of the series is Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura, which first appeared nine years earlier, in 1974. The third part is still in progress. Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz has already been referred to above as a picaresque novel (7), a classification the baroque-sounding title already hints at. The third volume will supposedly deal with a "Hanswurst," the carnival fool of the type found in sixteenth-century Fastnacht plays (Johnson 61). The type of fool chosen by Morgner for Amanda is the Eulenspiegel.

3.1 The Eulenspiegel

Til Eulenspiegel is the protagonist of several anonymous books that appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The best-known version is Ein kurtzweilig lesen von Dyl Ulenspiegel geboren uss dem land zu Brunsswick, printed in 1515. All versions consist of very short episodes relating the journey of Eulenspiegel through the world. Eulenspiegel is a Volksbuch, an anonymous collection of older stories or legends, which have also continued to be related and embellished since the earliest printed versions. Irmtraud Morgner has claimed to have a close relationship to early modern German Volksbücher (Rudolph
160). The original Til Eulenspiegel was a trickster. He held himself out as a fool, whether he actually was one or not, and when people tried to take advantage of his foolishness he was always able to come out on top and make those around him look more foolish.

Eulenspiegel's humor is mostly satirical, and it relies in large part on sharp-tongued verbal trickery. Words tend to have multiple meanings, as is the case even with the protagonist's name: Eulen are owls, the birds of Athena and symbol of wisdom. The Spiegel is a mirror, so one would expect a reflection of wisdom. But in the slang of the time, Eulenspiegel would have translated approximately as Wipe-ass. Such is the nature of Eulenspiegel's humor. Til Eulenspiegel delights in turning things upside-down, in creating chaos out of order. He is a destructive fool, but the structures he razes are those which foster inhumanity. They are the structures, for example, of class distinction. Thus, although another abnormal wrecker, the Eulenspiegel fits into the socialist viewpoint because his goals coincide with those of socialism.

For Morgner, the Eulenspiegel approach is directed primarily at traditional or historical sexual role models which she seeks to wreck. This is a goal quite compatible with the socialist state (Verfassung 20.2), and the one thing Morgner sees as an absolutely essential first step towards achieving world peace. Morgner says Amanda is "ein
Buch mit viel Humor und Ironie. Und sowohl die Aussagen als auch die Dementis, das sind ja nicht meine Dementis, sondern das sind ja Rollendementis" (D. Berger 30). The fool is not presented in any light-minded way which would provide a negative role model for the reader. Instead, the fool serves to expose the foolishness of other, truly negative role models and to discourage the reader from following or reinforcing them.

In Amanda, the character Laura is depicted as an Eulenspiegel. Her life is divided, by Morgner's presentation of it, into short adventures like those of Til Eulenspiegel. Even her baptism was similar to that in the Volksbuch: "Nun wird das Nürrische mit deutlichem Hinweis auf Eulenspiegel der Hauptfigur gleichsam in die Wiege gelegt. Lauras fünffache Taufe übertrumpft die dreifache des Eulenspiegel" (E. Kaufmann 1984b, 1529). The nature of the Eulenspiegel is one which does not easily tolerate oppression. Four-year-old Laura's locking her grandmother in the garden house is a definite Eulenspiegel sort of act: "eine Stunde ohne Obrigkeit—das war eine Tracht Prügel wert" (Morgner 1984, 27). The pear tree she climbs during her freedom appears later in another Eulenspiegel act, when Laura becomes Die Salman on account of her misbehavior at school (72-73). Laura is at least once specifically spoken of as "eulenspiegelhaft" (491).

What is especially telling about the Eulenspiegel,
though, is not the rebellious stand against an imposed order. Of Konrad Tenner, it is said that "seine Liebe war vom eulenspiegelhaften Wesen Lauras genährt worden" (119). The Eulenspiegel nature must thus have a positive power. It is probably (as indicated by its modern etymology) related to the owls that appear occasionally in Amanda, especially in relation to the positive figures of Amanda's androgynous faction of witches (340) and of Beatriz with her physical resemblance to an owl. It is certain that in Morgner's mythology the ravens are inferior intruders upon a primeval owl-form (239).

Amanda is not an easy novel to approach. Christel Berger has written that "es liest sich nicht immer einfach, man muss auch Geduld mitbringen" (160), and Peter Gugisch admits to having great difficulties with the novel, wondering whether Morgner missed "den schmalen Weg zwischen Grösse und Banalität," or whether it is his fault, "dass grosse Spannung und grosse Langeweile [ihn] durch das Buch begleitet haben" (180). The problem lies not so much in the Eulenspiegel character's effectiveness in turning things upside-down as in Morgner's ability to dissolve reality into a montage of inverted mythological, fantastic, and mundane images. It is not a character but the book Amanda which is the real owl's mirror through which Morgner shows us the world. As Eva Kaufmann put it, "den Roman regiert das epische Prinzip; Verallgemeinerung ergibt sich
nicht aus dem einen oder den wenigen Fällen, sondern aus der Fülle des Materials" (1984b, 1524).

Whenever the commonplace is disturbed—whenever expectations of the usual daily linear progression of life are violated—there is at least the potential for humor. On the other hand, there is an even greater potential for distress, fear, and anger. The humor of a banana peel depends very much on who is slipping on it. Morgner is advocating the abolition of sex roles and traditions that affect everyone, male or female. She is rewriting the mythology which underlies our culture and reflects our social reality, and she is attempting to overturn some five thousand years of written history. The reader could very well feel his or her personal values attacked, or become alienated simply because of the chaotic appearance of a world without the usual rules. The need to ensure that the violated expectations of a reader result in humor rather than fear and anger should be obvious.

Yet for Irmtraud Morgner, humor is more than a medium for sugar-coating specific ideas otherwise hard to swallow. The Motto to \underline{Amanda} is a quote from E. T. A. Hoffmann's \underline{Seltsame Leiden eines Theaterdirektors}: "Das Lachen ist nur der Schmerzenslaut der Sehnsucht nach der Heimat, die im Innern sich regt" (Morgner 1984, 4). Humor is somehow a part of the procedure itself. Morgner goes so far as to say, "die Selbstbehauptung ist eine schwierige Sache in
diesen Zeiten, für mich undenkbar ohne Humor" (Franchini 15).

3.2 The Humor of Unexpected Images

Irmtraud Morgner's *Amanda* does not rely as heavily as *Der Aufenthalt* on the violation of expectations to produce humor. Morgner does do her best to disrupt any expectations or prejudices one might have, and does produce some humor in this way. But while a comedian would try to build up expectations in the tradition of the shaggy dog story—and only then suddenly produce the completely unexpected punch line—Morgner never allows the suspense to mount in that way. The reader is not really allowed to expect anything, because the world presented is simply too fantastic. It is up to the reader to interpret the fantastic chaos in a humorous manner.

*Amanda* begins with a "Griechisches Vorspiel" reminiscent of the "Prelude in the Theater" or the "Prologue in Heaven" of Goethe's *Faust*, and yet having little concrete in common with either. This "Griechisches Vorspiel" serves to introduce the characters Beatriz (from the earlier *Trobadora Beatriz*, but now a siren instead of a troubador) and Arke. It sets the stage through mysterious mists and magical-mythological images for a modern Berlin which is rather more fantastic than that seen by the average person.
Morgner presents a disorienting ethereal image with a main character just awakened from the dead and equally disoriented. But the calm of the resurrected Beatriz indicates that the strange scenes are not intended to be terrifying, but rather playful. They are to be interpreted with a liberal dose of humor.

Morgner's fantasy puts a great demand on the reader, and it is not surprising that a critic could come away from Amanda with mixed impressions, as did Peter Gugisch. But by making such demand, Morgner causes the reader to engage his or her mind in sorting out images into humorous combinations. Sigfried Streller put it thus:

Ob es den Schriftstellern, die sich dieser phantastischen Mittel bedienen, bewusst wird oder nicht, mit ihrer Verwendung wird das Bild der Wirklichkeit im Brechtschen Sinne verfremdet, wird provoziert, das Gewohnte nicht einfach hinzunehmen, sondern kritisch zu überprüfen. Es wird damit zum Nachdenken angeregt, gesucht Veränderungen, zumindest im Bewusstsein, zu erreichen (690).

Morgner goes beyond the Brechtian alienation effect. She is not just afraid of a reader's interest in the plot obscuring the message carried by the novel. She is not so much interested in stimulating thought just to focus it on her didactic message of androgyny and peace. She is attempting to change our entire way of thinking—our thought processes. She is trying to teach humor itself, as a way to think and to help us accept the destruction of an old
social system which has always been restrictive and has now become dangerous.

Morgner certainly does not just present a jumbled montage of images and expect her reader to laugh. Humor is always ultimately dependent on the recipient, but Morgner gives plenty of signs that humor is intended. **Amanda** begins:

Naturally there is not all the dead.

Even the present-day world situation leaves many dead undisturbed.

I could not find rest under the earth.

Since 1973 it has been lifted in moved material.

I moved around and around and finally out (7).

The novel starts in medias res, as if giving the answer to a question already asked, and so the unexpected alienation has begun. The first paragraph expresses a variation on the expression "to turn over in one's grave," which is an image containing some humor of its own. The real humor, however, arises when it becomes clear that this conceit is meant to be taken seriously: the world-situation is so bad that dead people are turning over in their graves. Morgner adds the pun on "bewegt"—again, corpses are moved both figuratively and literally. The humor is elevated to the truly risible when the corpses not only turn over in their graves, but do so at a spin one can picture as being ever faster and faster. One may supply the further humorous
element, that it is precisely by means of this spinning that Beatriz is driven out of her grave and through the ether. The reader may transform Beatriz into a human screw or drill that bores its way out of the grave, if that's what the reader finds humorous.

_Amanda_ is a book surprisingly filled with sight-gags, considering its limitations within the print medium. As the reader must see for him or herself the image of the boring Beatriz, there are countless similar instances. When Laura is seen to jump from a Berlin window, there are 211 witnesses who see her fall, only to stop in mid-air and fly away (454). The scene is given in great detail as to which people (and how many) are occupied at the time in particular pursuits. The account is funny, but the image of Laura, if one can see it, is far funnier. Funniest, of course, is the look on the faces of the observers. It becomes easy to see what Morgner means by a "woodcut-like form" when she speaks of Renaissance literature (Rudolph 160). One has to visualize the scenes she describes to receive their full impact.

This episode illustrates well Morgner's view of humor's function. Of all the witnesses to Laura's fall, only a few would admit that it happened. Based on the fact that there was no body on the pavement as expected, the observers denied their own senses concerning the jump. The (masculine) logic of cause and expected effect was stronger
than the reality of the situation. Logic can prevail over one's own senses. It is the removal of such accepted rules of thought that Morgner seeks, and a humorous acceptance of what goes beyond these rules—an acceptance of what is regarded as fantasy—that is needed. Furthermore, the numerous interpretations of the event by those who did admit to having seen the fall are humorous, fanciful, and show more creative approaches to a problem.

3.3 The Humor of Contrasts

Irmtraud Morgner does not join incompatible opposites into humorous, oxymoronic combinations in the fashion of Hermann Kant. True, there are some superficially similar examples. Beatriz, for instance, is a siren. A siren, for Morgner, has the appearance of some sort of cross between a woman and a snow owl (8). Beatriz is essentially a woman with feathers (425). While the visual image of the mind's eye is at first humorous, the idea is quickly accepted. The Morgner siren becomes as reasonable, certainly, as a centaur, and centaurs are less humorous animals than giraffes which really exist. The original humor eases the transition to acceptance of what could be otherwise perceived as a revolting perversion of reality.

An interesting example of contrast is Laura's first production of Faust I. When she first sees the play
performed, it is delivered in a heavy Bavarian accent (101). This could be seen as a source of humor, especially since Laura thereafter believes that all stage speech is supposed to resemble this Bavarian dialect. But as any Bavarian would see immediately, why shouldn't it? The laughter exposes our prejudices and forces us to reexamine them without feeling pressured.

Since puns fall under the category of humorous contrast, there are many examples of contrast in Amanda. One of these is presented at the time of Beatriz's discovery of her new incarnation: "Ich sah an mir herab: gefedert. Oder gefiedert?" (8). Neither choice is especially superior per se; certainly she is gefiedert—'feathered'. But perhaps also gefedert—'moultting', or even equipped with some psychic shock absorber, as could be yet another semantic interpretation. The pun is purely humorous rather than instructive. In the case of the "hexistischen Unterwelt-unterwelt" (436), the word "Unterwelt" is duplicated in the two meanings of mythological "underworld" and political "underground." The resultant pun is again humorous, but does not relate or contrast the two meanings in any deeper sense.

The use of puns and other such word games is important mostly in terms of preserving the ability to speak at all in such a confused, threatening world. Eva Kaufmann said, "Ein eulenspiegelhafter Grundgestus trägt dazu bei, dass
eigener Schmerz und Zorn nicht zur Sprachlosigkeit führen" (1984b, 1520). To view the environment, even the speech environment, as humorous, is to maintain the power of persuasion, the ability to speak out for equality and peace. Where there is humor there is hope. The voice of the siren, in Morgner's mythology, is supposed to drown out all martial music (11), but the siren Beatriz has her tongue cut out before she can learn to sing with it (163). One must speak, and in speaking give encouragement and encourage laughter: "as in Troubadour Beatriz Morgner still looks to laughter as a means of achieving sovereignty over adversity and adversaries" (Johnson 46-47). Even the maimed Beatriz refuses to give up and sings on paper.

Morgner tends to present images not of unlikes combined, but of likes separated. The central theme of Amanda is the splitting of Laura Salman into the two halves Laura and Amanda. Likewise, Konrad Tenner shares his being with Kolbuk's court jester Kuonrat. The social roles prescribed for an individual are cages within which one is confined and prevented from being creative. People are not free to be their complete selves—to express both the characteristics we label feminine and those we label masculine. Morgner said in an interview, "ich glaube, das Genie von Goethe besteht unter anderem darin, dass er ein androgyner Charakter ist. Und dass er sowohl ein Mann als auch eine Frau ist, also ein vollständiger Mensch. Das Geschlecht
spielt eigentlich kaum eine Rolle" (D. Berger 33).

Humor is not produced in any consistent way by the fragmentation of characters. Humor is more a cement to bond disparate elements together, or at least hint at the connections between them. Morgner is interested in exploring different aspects of the single individual.

Sind die Aussagen über eine Person überhaupt erschöpflich? Also das wäre doch eine scholastische Vorstellung, dass man einem Gegenstande absolut deckungsgleich sich nähern könnte durch Worte. Man kann immer nur Nähерungen geben, also konzentrische Kreise um einen Gegenstand, aber der Gegenstand selber kann mit Worten nicht gefasst werden. Er kann umschrieben werden (D. Berger 29–30).

This method of description is manifested, too, in the montage contraction of Amanda generally. Besides split people there are duplicates: the Oberteufel Kolbuk is a negative image and therefore a likeness of the Oberengel Zacharias. There are combinations: Goethe's Pandora legend is tied to the Greek Prometheus story. Greek and Christian mythology are both revised and then superimposed over each other. Goethe shares his throne with Hoffmann. Laura Salman is related to Salman and Morold (the latter also a character, in fact, in Troubadora Beatriz) and the divided Laura Salman recalls Solomon, the great divider.
3.4 Satiric Parody

If the characteristic medium of the picaro was swindle, that of the Eulenspiegel is satire. The most memorable medium of Amanda's satire is parody. It would not be inaccurate, although perhaps also not very enlightening, to claim that Amanda is a parody of modern society. To be more specific, Amanda is a parody of what Morgner sees as the halving of human potential. The culprit behind this halving, of course, is social tradition, history, religion, mythology— in short, the patriarchy.

While elements and effects of patriarchy are satirized throughout, the masculine hierarchy is most sharply and humorously attacked through its parody on the Blocksberg. The Blocksberg is the stronghold of the devilish forces, the place where the missing halves of humans are more or less held captive. The train station is named "Vernunfttempel" or temple of reason (365). Reason, the masculine system of thought, demands the full exploitation of all resources. Thus, the halved women (the halved men appear as ravens) are put to work in a brothel. The landscape is that of a battlefield, or at least of a highly-guarded border between hostile powers. The powers in this case are those of God and Satan.

Within this parody which is made in a very humorous fashion in Amanda, there is an example of a different kind
of humor—black humor. While laughter is generally a sign of hope, there is also in literature a type which occurs "wenn man 'trotzdem' lacht" (Lorenz 29). In an especially Faustian scene, the only chapter written as drama, the Oberteufel and the Oberengel bet on which of them Laura will marry. But first other business is conducted in a cease-fire environment between the two hosts. Kolbuk, the Oberteufel, suggests that they cease the strife between them, only to be answered with laughter from the Oberengel Zacharias.

KOLBUK: Schwarzer Humor.
ZACHARIAS: Vernunft hat bisher immer noch gesiegt.

Morgner has parodied the masculine reason which she sees as responsible for war, showing it on the border of the Blocksgberg, an extraterrestrial Berlin wall. The part of the scene cited is not humorous unless in a black way. If one laughs, it is bitterly. But here the particular need for laughter, and hence for the fool who produces it, is illustrated. The fool is the hero in the fight against excessive reason as the masculine logic. The type of laughter does not seem to be critical. The laughter at black humor may simply be the most difficult. Morgner distinguishes, for example, the ritual laughter of the
witches from the joyous laughter of the Oberteufel and his ravens (330), but the two types of laughter are harmonious. It is presumably harder for the witches to laugh, but their difficult ritual laughter is the one with the power to destroy the world’s bugbears. Ritual laughter enables the joyous laughter that comes when fear is gone.

Morgner does not parody only the male world per se. Some of her most humorous descriptions are those of Isabel, Morgner’s representative of Western feminism. Isabel is as militant as the men she fights against. She has appropriated masculine tactics—masculine logic—and is every bit as dangerous as men. Her terrorist organization is the Hexistische Unterweltunterweltorganisation, known by the humorous acronym HUU.

The one thing most often parodied is Western news reporting, perhaps because it’s such an easy target for ridicule, while at the same time being so powerful. In fact, the news media seem to be viewed collectively as the supreme power in the male hierarchy. Dr. Fakal says, "Kolbuk und Zacharias haben über Satan und Herrn Gott gute Verbindungen zu den Westmedien. Damit müssen wir rechnen und fertig werden, Genossen" (356). If the media are not greater than Satan and Herr Gott, they at least all have access to one another.

Two of the most humorous scenes are the videotapes of Walpurgisnacht auf dem Blockberg in Dur (320-333) and in
Moll (403–415). On videotape, they are complete films with credits and licenses. There is exaggerated description of camera angles, and the musical soundtracks are described. The atmosphere is set through scenic descriptions and the keying up of excitement by the carnival master of ceremonies in his guise as newscaster. It is an excellent mirroring of what broadcasters call "color". There is historical background and propaganda concerning feats of engineering and provision of efficient services (followed by typical TV technical problems in transmission [322]). The scenes presented are absurd—for example, a marching band of witches.

The broadcaster as news reporter is shown as creator of spectacle, saying:

danken Sie Kolbuk, dass Sie daheim bleiben durften, vom Bildschirm haben Sie einen viel besseren Überblick, er gewährt Ihnen eine viel höhere Erlebnisqualität, er garantiert Ihnen eine gemütliche Walpurgisnacht--und die Objektivität der Berichterstattung versteht sich wie immer sowieso von selbst (327).

The reporter, in this so-typical broadcaster's self-advertisement, claims to present something better (but thus necessarily other) than reality. While the reporter is literally convulsed with laughter (333), his purpose is to make the scene comic to an audience probably (and in Laura's case definitely) less inclined toward laughter.

The same scene "in Moll" takes a different viewpoint.
The Vernunfttempel station has been renamed Dummheittempel (405), but the parades and carnival ceremonies are the same ones, simply described differently. The supposed audience is now one of female martyrs and slaves subject to archangels (404), but the scene is still of the witches' celebration, and the style is still that of Fasching coverage or an American parade or sportscast. In the end, the scene is turned into the carnival-like political campaign it really is.

Western television, specifically ZDF, is parodied also in the ninety-eighth chapter (344-346). A documentary film by the correspondent Schwill is described in great detail:


In this scene, as in the above sample from it, there is nothing especially humorous said, unless perhaps the comparison made between anonymous books and anonymous people. Yet there is humor in the scene as a whole because it is a parody. It is an exact replica of the style of actual documentary films, and so shows the inherent absurdity of their construction. It continues, too, to show the
usual attitude of Western journalism towards the East: "Kennen diese Menschen das Buch? Ich möchte sie nicht fragen, um sie nicht zu gefährden" (345). Thus, the usual paternalistic attitude of the press, with its loathness to engage in actual investigative reporting (concerning East or West), is made through parody a subject of ridicule.

The creation of news as entertainment was noted in the example of the Walpurgisnacht films, but Morgner also parodies the creation or exaggeration of news into political happening. In the instance of Laura's jump and flight from the building mentioned above (48), the incident was not overlooked by the Western press. ZDF-2 reports on the strange disappearance of a woman, calling the event the "Berliner Fenstersturz" (451-453). This case is likened by ZDF-2 to past occurrences of falls from windows, and Laura's Berliner Fenstersturz is ultimately related to the Prager Frühling, with Laura made into a political martyr. Amnesty International concludes that the fall never took place, but that the story was engineered to hide the arrest of Laura (453).

For an author who seems to genuinely love the GDR (Rudolf 169), and who seriously fears nuclear war, such attacks from the West need to be answered with laughter. It is no wonder that Wesselin—Morgner's man of the future—opposes all but GDR television (Morgner 1984, 344), or that when given three wishes, Laura's second wish is for
"Tilgung der politischen Verleumdungen des ZDF aus den Köpfen der DDR-Bevölkerung" (441).

3.5 Foolish Actions

These are "närrische Zeiten im Ernst," says Laura Salman (17). The times, according to Morgner, are definitely serious, with the survival of the world itself hanging in the balance (Franchini 18). The term "foolish times" is ambiguous. The times are foolish inasmuch as they are seriously dangerous. There seems to be little wisdom at work in the world. But these are also times when fools are needed, since it is the fool who is the combatant of seriousness. These are times when fools are required to disrupt the order which is leading towards destruction.

In Morgner's mythology, order is the patriarchal hierarchy based on the example of the divine being who, out of boredom, tore himself into two halves—God and Devil—which have fought against each other ever since. Order is the specialization of human beings into sexually-determined roles. Order is the logical system by means of which we define our reality. It is ultimately what we perceive as reality itself. However, there are potential realities to which we are blind. Some people do see beyond the existing order, but these are generally persecuted as witches or heretics:
In Ordnung ist das Mögliche von heute und morgen denkbar.
Unmögliches, das heisst, das Mögliche von Übermorgen, wird ordentlich als Unordnung empfunden und ist nur auf Bergen denkbar.
Deshalb heissen diese Berge Zauberge.
Und die Besucher solcher Berge werden heute und morgen als Ketzer und Hexen bezeichnet und Übermorgen als Weise (93).

Time ultimately vindicates the position of the person who can see beyond the short-sighted order of today and tomorrow.

The witch shares "Unsinn"—the acting against today's masculine order—in common with the fool. The same Unsinn-kollegium gives licenses for either "närrische oder heksische Aktionen" (255). Vilma, the representative of the fool, is the only adult in Amanda ultimately left undivided, thanks to her having swallowed her second self. She admits that, in matters such as flying on brooms, her faction is dependent on the witches (256). She nonetheless specifically rejects the witches' approach in favor of the foolish approach (255).

"Im Mittelalter ist der Narr der rechtlose Träger der objektiv abstrakten Wahrheit," says the film delivered to Laura by Pater Maccotino (413). Although it comes from a propaganda film, the statement seems to agree with the medieval function of the fool. This objective, abstract truth contrasts with the other truths of the world, which are all truths based on rights. For example, "die feudale
Wahrheit ist das Recht, den Bauern zu unterdrücken, seine Sklavenarbeit zu verachten, in den Krieg zu ziehen, auf den Feldern der Bauern zu jagen" (413). The ultimate message of the film is that fools are not needed. Carnival, the season of the fool, has diminished from three months to twenty-four hours of Walpurgisnacht because today's lack of oppression has removed the need for foolishness as a pressure relief valve. Of course Morgner's position is different from that of the film's maker, Archangel Zacharias, who represents "right", the patriarchic truth fools contradict. Fools are really needed more than ever.

Fools are the supporters of witches, and act as a sort of catalyst. Laura achieves success in one of her experiments with potions while working a "Narrenschicht" in Vilma's kitchen (165-171). The creative power of the fool, or more precisely, of the fool's foolishness, is noted by Laura after her success:

"Dank nährischen Beistands", fragte Vilma lauernd.
"Wenn der Ernst bitter wird, kommt er dem Gelächter am nächsten", antwortete Laura und bot Vilma in Anerkennung ihrer Verdienste um die Herstellung schöpferischen Leichtsinns das schwesterliche "Du" an (171).

Creativity is the realm of the whole person, such as the androgynous Goethe, or of the fool, who, like Vilma, has remained whole by having one half swallow the other.

Leichtsinns is apparently one form of Unsinn. Another
is Wahnsinn. Wahnsinn is a complete withdrawal from the patriarchal system of "Sinn". Wahn-sinn is called the eighth sense, and "dieser achte Sinn ist ein Witterungs- und Konterorgan für Bössartigkeiten aller Spielarten" (306). Insanity is one form of defense against the masculine order, but it is not productive like foolishness. Foolishness produces the laughter Morgner sees as an offensive weapon (E. Kaufmann 1984a, 1513).

The subtitle of Amanda indicates a "Hexenroman," or novel about witches. Witches are unquestionably positive beings in Morgner's mythology. However, beyond a few instances of witches flying in and out of the narrative, all witches are generally kept imprisoned in the Blockberg while the story deals with Laura or Beatriz. Amanda herself, Laura's other half and witch part, scarcely appears at all. It is not clear why Amanda is given billing as opposed to Laura. Perhaps since the witch is the wise woman of the day after tomorrow, it will be made evident the day after tomorrow, or in the final volume of the trilogy. In any case, Amanda deals more with fools—the helpers of witches, and their colleagues in Unsinn. The element that distinguishes fools from witches is magic, or more precisely, the nature of their magic.

Fools operate with natural means. In fact, in English a "natural" is another type of fool. In Amanda, "das Nährische bildet zum Hexischen . . . eine unumgängliche
Ergänzung, als es ohne Zauber, auf 'natürliche' Weise funktionierte, die jedermann zugänglich ist," says Eva Kaufmann (1984b, 1530). Vilma's preference for "natural means" (Morgner 1984, 187) is not simply a rejection of male science, but also of witches' methods. The results of fools' and witches' methods seem to be the same. Both are practical applications of the theory of Unsinn (287). The natural approach does include alchemy, which, especially as opposed to male science, has magical characteristics. The difference between the methods of fools and witches seems to be that fools don't divide themselves, thus saving much pain, and "die Mitglieder der hexischen Fraktion [müssen] Aufwand treiben" besides (285). Inasmuch as the witches have banished their disturbing halves, they are divided and incomplete. Vilma, indeed, seems more "together" than the witches. Witches are the ones who can see today the truths of the future and who are needed optimists, but fools may be better at seeing what to do today. If the right steps are not taken today, there may be no future. Vilma, indeed, seems more "together" than the witches. Witches are the ones who can see today the truths of the future, and who are needed optimists, but fools may be better at seeing what to do today. If the right steps are not taken today, there may be no future.
3.6 SUMMARY

Irmtraud Morgner's *Amanda. Ein Hexenroman* is a rather surprising book. Jürgen Engler asks:


He concludes, however, that *Amanda*, taken as a whole, is actually an exemplary manifestation of socialist concerns. Irmtraud Morgner herself has said,

Feminismus halte ich mit Marx für vollkommen vereinbar. Wie der alte Marx schon gesagt hat: Der gesellschaftliche Fortschritt lässt sich exakt messen an der gesellschaftlichen Stellung der Frau. Das heisst also nicht, dass die sozial benachteiligte Stellung der Frau ein Nebenwiderspruch ist, sondern was Wichtiges, auch ein Zeichen für etwas anderes, Ganzgesellschaftliches (Franchini 90).

Even if Morgner shows us no socialist-realist hero in the traditional sense, *Amanda*, for all its fantastic elements—if comprehended as a whole—demonstrates precisely the optimistic struggle toward a future where all men and woman are united and equal in communism. Every woman is a worker of at least two shifts, striving within a patriarchy where no one wears capitalist top hats, but which neverthe-
less exemplifies class struggle. "Ich würde sagen," says Morgner, "das, was ich schreibe, das ist Sozialistischer Realismus; denn ich bin ein Sozialist. Und: das Phantastische ist kein Gegensatz zum Realismus, sondern es ist eine Art des Realismus" (Rudolph 163). Morgner may have a peculiar definition of socialist realism, but in terms of heroic members of a class looking forward and struggling towards communism, Amanda may be closer to socialist realism than Der Aufenthalt with its more traditional, less fantastic images.

The hero in Morgner's struggle is armed with humor. It is humor which allows the necessary optimism to keep up the battle. Humor keeps fear from paralyzing the socialist hero, today's witch or heretic. The fool is a less elevated character, but essential in producing laughter. The fool most appropriate for the task is the Eulenspiegel, for he or she satirizes social structure as a whole, and traditionally attacks higher classes.

Within Amanda, humor supports the fantasy of Morgner's presentation. What we see to be the normal structures and order of the world are changed. Humor arises from the break with what is expected and normal, but even more, humor removes the threatening aspect of abnormality. Morgner produces humor through skewed images or images seen from different viewpoints. This twisting of reality is playful and positive, and thus different from the grotesque seen,
for example, in Der Aufenthalt. If Morgner inverts our usual reality, it is, as she says, "die Menschenkultur vom Kopf auf die Füße zu stellen" (E. Kaufmann 1984a, 1497). Humor keeps the change from being threatening, and the process is seen as corrective rather than as simply destructive.

Morgner uses contrasts to produce humor, and thereby also to illustrate that there is more than one way to look at a given reality. She makes large use of puns. Morgner is able to portray, through words, images of the world. The portrayal as image removes the object from predetermined logical orderings. The humorous environment encourages the reader to play with the images to construct a new ordering. The reader is expected to participate. As Morgner says, "Literatur sollte eigentlich immer höhere Anforderungen stellen, als die Leser es erwarten" (D. Berger 31). The reader is stimulated to think.

Through Eulenspiegel-like parody, Morgner shows the absurdity of the daily world around us. What we accept as necessary reality is shown, through the humor of satire, to be no less peculiar than flying witches. Of course, some elements of the mundane patriarchy are more destructive than others, and these are satirized more often. Parody is the ideal way of showing the weaknesses of our preconceived notions. According to Morgner, "es muss uns gelingen, aus den bewährten alten Gleisen—und zwar nicht nur Denk-
gleisen--der Tradition, wo es immer Kriege gegeben hat, herauszukommen" (D. Berger 37). Our usual world is no less peculiar than one of witches, but, for Morgner, much more frightening.

The fool is the natural producer of humor and of laughter. Irmtraud Morgner has herself summarized the function of the fool in a dangerous world:

4. VOLKER BRAUN'S HINZE-KUNZE-ROMAN: THE COMEDY TEAM

"Volker Braun gehört zu der ersten Generation in der DDR, die 'unbelastet von Problemen der Schuld und des Sich-Wandeln-Müssens oder irgendwelcher Heimkehr' ist," says Jay Rosellini (10), quoting Günther Deicke (18). Born in 1939, just ten years before the foundation of the German Democratic Republic, Volker Braun has considered himself a speaker for a younger generation (Franke 260). Indeed, at least among East German writers of international repute, Braun still seems to be a member of the younger generation. Hermann Kant places the average age of all members of the Writers' Union at about fifty (Högemann-Ledwohn 119).

Braun is a comparatively prolific writer, best known for his poetry and drama, though no stranger to prose. The novel Hinze-Kunze-Roman was first published in 1985, but had already been completed in 1981 (Cosentino 96). The Hinze-Kunze novel follows Berichte von Hinze und Kunze, a collection of variously published "Geschichten von Hinze und Kunze." A dramatic Hinze und Kunze from 1973 is a slight reworking and renaming of a Hans Faust from the sixties (Rosellini 29). All are about different Hinzes and different Kunzes. As Dieter Schlenstedt says in his "Ein Leser an den Autor":

Geht es eine Weile so weiter, wird ein 'Führer durch die Hinze-und-Kunze-Welt' nütig werden,
damit man sich zurechtfindet und nicht aus
Versehen etwa den Hinze oder den Kunze aus dem
Stück mit dem Hinze oder dem Kunze etwa aus dem
Roman verwechselt, was Dir vielleicht nicht
angenehm wäre--sie sind dieselben nicht
(Schlenstedt 207-208).

Despite all the different Hinzes and Kunzes, and despite
their being demeaned through their names into every Tom,
Dick and Harry, they always maintain the relationship of
worker and supervisor, of Herr and Knecht. And all the
works deal with the hierarchical structure or pyramid of
leaders and led (Cosenino 95-96).

In the Hinze-Kunze-Roman, Kunze is a government offi-
cial and Hinze is his chauffeur. The novel is frequently
compared with Diderot's Jacques le fataliste et son maître
(e.g., Heukenkamp 831; H. Kaufmann 1986b, 835), which is
referred to repeatedly in Braun's novel (e.g. 37, 183).
The two novels have in common an apparently aimless jour-
ney, erotic adventures, and a master who is dependent on
his servant's advice. The theme lends itself well to a
Marxist message, as can be seen in Brecht's Herr Puntila
und sein Knecht Matti, or even with Diderot himself.
However, there are obvious problems with exploring a
master-servant relationship within the context of the
German Democratic Republic. How can there be masters and
servants in a socialist state? To be sure, Hinze-Kunze-
Roman is a humorous book, and Braun uses humor to reassure
us that the relationship described is grossly exaggerated.
Nevertheless, there is still a division within the real-existierenden sozialistischen Staat between the leaders and the masses. The nature of this relationship is one of the problems that Volker Braun explores.

The chauffeur Hinze has some of the characteristics of a medieval fool. He is something of a court jester for the ruler Kunze. Ursula Heukenkamp has compared Hinze’s actions to those of a clown (833). Like a fool, Hinze cannot give intelligent answers when called on to do so, yet in the wise fool tradition, his random speech contains the greatest wisdom of the court. However, Kunze is in his satyriasis as foolishly funny as Hinze. The two of them together constitute a modern comedy team, producing much of the humor in the Hinze-Kunze-Roman, and inspiring additional humor.

4.1 Hinze, the Wise Fool

The character Hinze is in many respects that of a simpleton or fool. The best example is perhaps Hinze’s reaction to the choices he is faced with in selecting a meal from a factory canteen where he has lunch (41-47). Faced with four main dishes to choose from, each with its own accompanying fruit, Hinze takes one of each and eats until he becomes ill. He is not able to make such a momentous decision. His ultimate solution is that of a stereo-
typical natural. There is some humor in his vacillation between one dish and another, and his eventually going back for what he missed. The greatest humor of the whole incident, however, is not produced through this foolish action alone, but with the help of others, namely, through the commentaries of the author, of the servers, and of Kunze.

There are other examples of Hinze's foolishness. He can't drive without being given a direction. His last word in the novel is the question "wohin" (195). Hinze is utterly passive and a natural follower who can be convinced of anything. He even allows himself to be talked out of his wife (55) and his child (175).

Always in the train of Kunze, Hinze is made to seem simpler than he is. "Hinze, der Hund, sprang ihm wedelnd entgegen," is a picturesque description of Hinze's usual demeanor (31). In fact, when Hinze is twice thrown out of his home by Lisa, the image of a dog slinking out of a house with its tail between its legs fits well. Lisa also notes "so wat Unheimliches, wat Viehisches. . . . Een Esel. Ick liebe einen Esel. Ick hält ihm fest, ick kralle mir in sein mageret Fell. Aab er stellt die Ohren auf und lauscht auf die Stimme von oben" (176). She compares him with the ass—gentle, stupid, and frequent symbol of the fool.

Hinze is often portrayed as a more or less unintentional entertainer. However, at least once he seems to be intentionally funny. In his first encounter with the
policeman, we find him doing a handstand (112). He walks on his hands like a performing fool, and makes the policeman look foolish when the latter orders him to stand up. He is, after all, already vertical even if upside-down.

On the whole, Hinze is more a speaker of wisdom than a mere entertainer of a ruling Kunze. "Er wird mehrfach 'Spezialist' genannt als einer, der genaue Kenntnisse hat, wo Kunze nur oberflächlich Bescheid weiß" (Heukenkamp 833). In the tradition of the court fool, Hinze speaks the truth of an idiot savant. He is for the most part silent. When Kunze asks advice, Hinze responds in short phrases, either refusing to answer, or repeating slogans and catchwords or the latest newspaper report. However, when the conversation is not in response to a question put by Kunze, Hinze's answers can be quite complex and insightful:


These three introductory sentences are typical of Hinze's philosophical approach to problems he hasn't been asked to solve. This is not the language one expects from a chauffeur who eats four lunches because he can't choose
between them. Clearly Hinze knows more than he generally pretends. Kunze values Hinze's wisdom enough to ask him regularly for his opinions. In fact, Kunze pleads with Hinze for input: "Hilf mir regieren, Mensch!" (26). Even when Hinze does no more than repeat set phrases, they generally touch the heart of matters discussed in some sense, even if not that expected. The question of whether the authors and slogans quoted by Hinze have any real meaning to him is open. Braun seems above all to be asking the reader about the meaning of words.

There is no great humor in Hinze's foolishness. The contrast between his sharp and foolish sides is cause for some amusement, but the substance of the matters spoken about usually brings a greater seriousness that overwhelms the humor. The influence of Kunze determines which sort of pronunciation Hinze will make. It is also the influence of Kunze that usually determines the degree to which Hinze is humorous.

Hinze lacks the immunity of a real fool. He presumably speaks his mind with Kunze, but is so easily influenced by his boss that it is hard to imagine any great difference in opinion that Hinze might wish to express. "Hinze und Kunze sind oft unterschiedlicher Meinung, verfolgen aber keine einander entgegengesetzten gesellschaftlichen Ziele" (H. Kaufmann 1986b, 836). Hinze is even convinced by Kunze that his wife Lisa is not his at all but "ein fremder
Mensch" (Braun 54), whom he should give to Kunze. Lisa has little sympathy for Hinze's foolishness, however much she might love him. "Mit solche Dinge scherzt man nich. Hinaus" (65).

Lisa can forgive Hinze his foolish willingness to be exploited by Kunze. She can forgive his ass nature and eventually the personal affront to her. She rejects Hinze for the last time when she sees that there is no human being left in him. The ass has taken over completely. The ass's ears, back and voice are no longer the only characteristics shared. Hinze is an animal. The ultimate problem is not whether Hinze acts in the interest of society, or with disinterest in society. The ultimate test is his humanity. "Det is keen Mensch, sein Kindeken vakoofen!" (191).

4.2 Kunze the Clown

Kunze is, for the most part, not a very humorous figure either. Therefore, anything that breaks the normal seriousness of his demeanor is funny. He is the man who determines which direction the car takes. He determines which direction the state takes. He is used to being in control, and so when he loses control the contrast with our (and especially his) expectations produces humor.

Kunze is extremely self-important. He has been prop-
erly called an egoist (Heukenkamp 831). He wears the mask of egalitarianism, but is surprised when Lisa doesn't honor her elevated position as he does his: "diese Vermengung hatte er nicht erwartet. Diese Gleichgültigkeit gegen ihre Stellung!" (Braun 163). Kunze seems taken aback by Hinze's having driven someone to the Volkskammer, someone thus towards the top of the pyramid (142).

Braun seems to be putting himself in the fool's role of seeing behind social facades. He is searching for the truth behind the slogans such as the often-cited "gesellschaftliches Interesse." Frau Messerle complains about Autor B, that "er will uns nackt sehen" (149). Indeed, Kunze is several times shown naked, but he wears his self-important disguise even into the bedroom and sauna, in the form of a "bedeutender Bauch" (12, 91). The facade is not easily penetrated, unless it be through humor.

Kunze is patronizing towards his driver, as he is to the women he helps elevate socially. For Kunze, Hinze is "das Volk" (45), in a patronizing sense, even though they are close friends, and Hinze is obviously bright and actually comes from a higher social background than Kunze (36). When Kunze turns to Hinze for advice or information, it seems often to be a probing of folk-opinion as conveyed through the news media to Hinze, rather than an interest in the opinion of an intelligent individual. On the whole, Kunze is probably a positive character, and he does make
some positive changes in society. Nevertheless, he retains certain prejudices and a pompous nature that make him the ideal candidate for humorous assault.

Kunze, having lost his composure when Lisa first rejected Hinze, "verzog das Gesicht wie ein Clown, um nicht zu jubeln" (66). When Kunze hides behind a clown’s face, it makes him more human. In fact, it makes him human enough for Lisa to trust. He becomes a bit of a clown. Later, when in the "Schottendusche," he loses complete control and must even laugh himself:

der brutale Druck fledderte ihn, beutelte ihn, liess ihn hilflos tanzen. Das war gemein, das war herrlich, unmenschlich. Ein Lachen sammelte sich kitzelnd in seiner Brust, schlabberte heraus, der Widerstand in den Fingerspitzen brach; er warf sich, noch empört, herum und liess sich niederknütteln (128).

The image of the sober government official flung about like a top is humorous. The loss of control, whether of mere physical equilibrium or of accustomed sexually dominant position, releases Kunze from his mask, strips him naked and allows him to laugh himself.

Kunze’s illness is quite literally a loss of control. It is the closest thing Kunze has individually to a humorous side. It is significant that Kunze’s hospitalization was motivated by a speech in which Kunze made humorous the serious phrases by which his society is ordered. Humor arises from giving familiar phrases an unexpected, in
Kunze's case sexual, meaning. It comes from disrupting the usual order. "Wir müssen mehr erreichen miteinander ... Die ständig wachsenden Bedürfnisse befriedigen ... der Klassenfeind schläft nicht bei" (20). The usual sense of the phrases has been perverted into something unexpected. The disruption is humorous, but also forces an examination of the phrases themselves. They become not just filler for a politician's speech or something to be painted on a building—they become phrases with meaning. In the erotic context, "Proletarier, vereinigt euch!" (120) takes on a meaning other than that given it by Marx. But in a socialist state without chains of capitalism to be cast off, wherein does the validity of the phrase lie? The humor forces a reexamination of the principles controlling daily life.

The humor of subverted meanings is evident in Kunze's visit to the capitalist prostitute in Hamburg (88-93). Kunze views the Reeperbahn from a semiofficial perspective. It is a study tour to see how life functions in the decadent West. The prostitute is "eine arme Frau aus Afrika, die er zu unterstützen hatte" (91), and Kunze convinces himself he is acting with the best motives of brotherhood and caring, improving understanding between peoples. But the fifty marks Kunze pays gets him little more than entrance to a room. Each step of the relationship costs him an extra ten or twenty. Finally, "er schloss die
Augen, entblöste sein kräftiges Gebiss, presste seine weiche, weibenhafte Hand auf das schwarze Gesicht und ging wütend vor" (92). The fine images Kunze has created of himself shatter and he becomes a "schäumendes, röchelndes, das Nord-Süd-Gefälle brutal nutzendes Schwein" (92).

The humor of Kunze's account of his actions, and the humor of the prostitute's greedy violation of Kunze's expectations, invite the reader to look behind the scenes. Kunze's words are recognized as empty and demonstrative of the lack of any true feeling. The prostitute is seen to be as exploitive as exploited. The reader is encouraged to look beyond the words to the underlying truths. Kunze reports to Hinze "es ist schon so, wie die Klassiker schreiben. Der Kapitalismus—... das nackte Geldgeschäft" (92). But six pages later Kunze is with an East German woman who loves big cars and prostitutes herself for a telephone. The title of "socialism" has not cured the problem.

Kunze functions as a serious straight man because his seriousness provides the greatest contrast to any silly position into which he may be put. He contrasts with the wise fool Hinze, and through the contrast with Hinze's foolishness on the one hand and with his wisdom on the other, the greatest humor is produced.
4.3 The Comedy Team

The comedy team is perhaps the modern equivalent of the sixteenth-century fool. The team usually consists of two people, the comedian and a stooge. The roles may or may not reverse. Usually the stooge will at least occasionally turn the tables for greater humorous effect. Often both characters are equally humorous. One of the two may be the butt of the other's jokes, but more often than not the stooge simply feeds lines that enable the comedian to aim his wit elsewhere. The critical element is that there are always at least two people involved in creating the humor. Each adds something so that humor builds in a snowball effect.

An early example of a comedy team is found in Andreas Gryphius's Horribiliicribirifax and Daradiridatumtarides. Either of the two named characters is humorous alone, but together the humorous elements are repeated and exaggerated so that even if they don't appear together on stage, the one is funnier simply because the other exists for comparison.

The best-known comedy teams come from this century: Amos and Andy, Abbott and Costello, and Laurel and Hardy (Dick und Doof), for example, as well as native German teams such as Hüberle und Pfleber. The team may be larger than two, as in the case of the Marx Brothers, al-
though even in their case there are rarely more than two producing humor together at any given instant. There are many possibilities—many more than with a single fool, since the humor is based on the interplay between at least two individuals. The individuals may not even be human, as in the case of Charlie McCarthy. In fact, both may be strictly narrative figures such as Pat and Mike or Hinze and Kunze.

Volker Braun’s Hinze and Kunze together form a team which produces humor. Hinze’s foolishness is cause for some smiles, and Kunze’s illness certainly has elements of the absurd, but it is the interaction between the two men, and between them and others, that accounts for the greatest humor. Hinze and Kunze form a comedy team.

In appearance Hinze and Kunze resemble Laurel and Hardy. Like Stanley Laurel, Hinze is "der magere Fahrer" (7). Like Oliver Hardy, Kunze is "ein kurzer stämmiger Mann" (7), "voll im Fleisch. Er war einen ganzen Kopf kleiner als seine Begleiter" (11). Hinze and Kunze each have very definite personality differences that also set them apart from one another. Hinze has already been described as a sort of wise fool, easily led and influenced. Kunze, on the other hand, is a born leader, able to take command of a situation even if he doesn’t understand the details as well as Hinze. He has great powers of persuasion. Kunze’s great weakness for women
provides a flaw to turn him into a butt of jokes also, and it gives him a sort of trademark, something necessary for a good comic.

The essential characteristic of Hinze and Kunze is that they function together. They share the "gesellschaftliche Interesse" which is mentioned on average more than once every ten pages in the Hinze-Kunze-Roman. They form a "Zwei-Mann-Betrieb" (116), a single team. "Wie schon der Name sagt: wir sind eine Einheit," says Kunze (166). Through this unity comedy arises. The humor produced illustrates the creative productivity which results from such cooperative effort. Kunze's girl-watching, for example, is not so humorous in respect to Kunze alone. The greater humor comes from his having taught his chauffeur the art of following female pedestrians with the limousine to the degree that it has become almost entirely automatic for the driver (8).

The "author," a character who makes appearances now and then in his own book, explains the relationship of Hinze and Kunze from his point of view:

Sie waren wieder beisammen, was mir am liebsten ist: so habe ich sie unter Kontrolle. Denn die Figuren, allzu einzeln betrachtet, könnten leicht abweichen von der Linie des Erzählens; der eine macht sich unnütze Gedanken, wenn er sich unbeschäftigt überlassen ist, der andre geht womöglich verloren in der Masse. Die Gemeinsamkeit, das Figurenensemble, die Menschen-gemeinschaft sozusagen sichert das runde Bild, das in den Rahmen passt (10-11).
Only together are the two productive, but only together are they under control.

Hinze's adventure with the cafeteria selections mentioned above is funnier with the addition of Kunze as stooge. In dialogue of one line per person, Hinze explains what he had for lunch (44-47). The humor increases with each new dish added to the list of what Hinze ate. Kunze provides a new audience for an old story, and gives the proper amazed reactions. Kunze also provides a new viewpoint--he knows Hinze will be sick. The conversation eventually builds tension as Hinze begins more and more to feel the effects of his overeating. On the other hand, Kunze is envious because, since he was working, he had no lunch at all. There is some personal tension from this, even though Kunze ends up with some exotic fruit. Hinze's illness ultimately has bad effects for Kunze, too, since it makes Hinze drive faster than would normally be comfortable for Kunze.

The simplest interaction between two people can create humor which would be impossible with just one participant. When we first meet Hinze and Kunze, Kunze approaches the car where Hinze is waiting:

der Fahrer warf sich rücklings über die Lehne, um die Tür aufzudrücken, aber der Stämmige kam ihm behende zuvor und riss selber den Schlag auf, der Magere grinste und zog, oder der Chef zog, oder der Magere eh der Chef zufassen konnte die Tür ins Schloss und machte das Bein lang, und der
Wagen flog über die Kreuzung, gleichgültig wo, und der eine fuhr und der andere sagte wohin, und wir kennen sie schon (7).

The fight over who will open and then who will close the door is classic slapstick, and possible only with two people. The humorous incident shows the relationship between the two individuals—their willingness to help each other, Kunze's attempts at egalitarianism, and Hinze's tendency towards servility to the degree allowed by a socialist state. (Hinze at least doesn't leave the car to open the door.) Together with the additional job and personality description "der eine fuhr und der andere sagte wohin," Hinze and Kunze are completely described. Later repetition of the door motif, "Kunze öffnet..." (Hinze zufassen konnte) den Schlag" (41), increases its humorous effect.

At the birth of Lisa's daughter, Hinze and Kunze go to visit them in the hospital after having wandered through sand. They leave a sandy trail behind them through the clinic. One pictures the sand running from Hinze's fist as described in the paragraph preceding the clinic visit. The threatening nurse is pacified when Kunze tells her "man sei eben aus den arabischen Emiraten eingeflogen, denn man habe vorgezogen, unter den sauberen Bedingungen Preussens das Neue gebären zu lassen." Kunze's usual quick thinking "beruhigte sie, erstolzte sie sogar. Sie geleiteten die
Scheichs an Lisas Bett" (173). Even though Kunze speaks and Hinze says nothing, it is the sort of line that can only be plausible when there is a witness.

Hinze and Kunze form a unity (166). They are referred to as Hinzeundkunze (144). For both Lisa and Lieselotte they are interchangeable as individuals. Yet they are still individuals. They live in a strange symbiosis where "Kunzes Erfolge waren nicht denkbar ohne Hinze, Hinzes Erfolge nicht ohne Kunze" (158). Without Kunze, Hinze is without direction. Without Hinze, Kunze is without purpose. In the relationship, each individual's needs are met, and each defines himself in terms of the other. There can be no leader without someone to be led, no guidance without a guide. The comedy team is a model of "das gesellschaftliche Interesse"—each member can say the same words, but they sound different in each mouth and each time. The contrast can produce humor. The unity is not uniform. Two can even think "an dasselbe, aber es stellt sich vielleicht heraus, dass es etwas anderes ist" (158).

4.4 A Ship of Fools

The humor produced through the interaction between two individuals forming a team is likely to draw the outside observer into the joke, too. A society is formed, an entire ship of fools, and the humor takes on the nature of a
dialogue—a dialogue in which even more people can participate. The more people involved, the more likely there is to be a large interchange producing humor. The more interchange there is, the more the humor is likely to escalate.

Kunze's speech which turns political phrases into sexual comments (120) appears to be the work of an isolated stand-up comic. However, the speech is interrupted by parenthetical references to audience reaction. Reactions are described from extra attentiveness given, to shock, to the beginning ripples of laughter. It is seen how the laughter of some facilitates the laughter of others. The real humor comes not from the words themselves, which may or may not be funny to a particular recipient. Indeed, some members of the audience are simply shocked. But the feedback from the audience creates an atmosphere for humor. Given the right atmosphere anything at all can be humorous, including the motto to the Manifest der kommunistischen Partei. Atmosphere is created by the audience, so the entire audience thus has a hand in creating humor.

It is very powerful humor which can draw outsiders into itself. The humor of Hinze and Kunze is so strong that the "author" himself is drawn into the joke. The author's is, for example, yet another point of view of Hinze's experience in the factory canteen. As Kunze contributed new humor to the situation by providing Hinze an
audience and adding the knowledge that Hinze would be ill, so too does the author contribute. The author ties Hinze's inability to decide among dishes to the entire matter of freedom of choice. An act of indecision is exaggerated by the author into a humorous philosophical discourse.

The author's very appearance in the narrative puts the entire story in question, but his exaggeration of humor makes one wonder if any of the story is "true" at all. Hinze's amazing feat of downing four lunches is magnified by Kunze's amazement at the lunch including bananas and mandarine oranges, and at Hinze's carrying the fruit out in his jacket. The author elevates the humor to absurdity when he writes: "Kunze, bass erstaunt, legte die Wassermelone auf den Sitz zurück und fragte ernst: In der Kantine, sagst du, warst du"? (46-47). Suddenly the fruit is exaggerated into a watermelon. Watermelons were not on the menu, it is not said that Hinze bought a watermelon, he could not possibly carry one out in his jacket, and yet suddenly there is a watermelon in the car. The humor reaches a new peak, but at the cost of any semblance to reality.

The humor of the comedy team is a social humor that draws others into it. Humor begets humor. Lisa Hinze, for example, is good natured, but no comedian. Yet in the presence of others who are funny she is also inspired to humor. When Kunze, alone and serious, suggests that Lisa
train for a higher position, she responds humorously in a way that seems out of character for her, but as if she were taking Hinze's role:

KUNZE (bedächtig:) Wie wär es, wenn du dich entwickelst.
LISA (lächelte, streckte die Brüste vor:) Bin ick nich?
KUNZE Wenn du dich qualifizierst?
LISA (griff sich in den Schoss:) Spielte darauf an (74).

Kunze's straight man role seems to encourage others to be comedians. Humorous events are exaggerated by Kunze's mere presence. It is humorous that, thanks to Lisa's "synthetische Wäsche aus unserer Produktion," when

der Abteilungsleiter plötzlich und unbedacht Lisas Pullover hochstreifte, durch die rasche, für sie völlig überraschende Bewegung elektromagnetische Wellen ausgelöst und die elektrischen Felder des Rechners gestört wurden, worauf das ganze Programm zusammenbrach (76).

The humor is, however, magnified by the fact that while all this is happening, the serious Kunze is patiently waiting in a closet.

The humor of the comedy team is of a social nature and contagious. Humor is produced between Hinze and Kunze, but it also reaches out to encompass other characters and even the author. It presumably also affects the reading public. It is the model of a sort of dialogue between comedians and stooges and thus an example (insofar as it is a dialogue)
of the society whose interests are being discussed in the Hinze-Kunze-Roman.

4.5 The Author as Humorist

The author enters Hinze-Kunze-Roman as a character. This, of course, alienates the reader from the plot of the novel, making it clear that the other characters don't really exist, and that the entire novel is the creation of an author. Yet the creation still has power over the creator. The inversion of roles is a source of humor. There is so much reality in the words themselves that the author can carry a photograph of the character Lisa (24). The author doesn't appear randomly, but is brought in by the characters. To a large extent they have power over him, shown in especially concrete instances such as the author's being thrown out by Lisa (193) or in the baby's surprising ability to sleep without the author's assistance (174). The author repeatedly makes it clear that he doesn't control the narrative, or the relationship of Hinze and Kunze, to the extent of knowing the meaning behind it: "Ich begreife es nicht, ich beschreibe es" (7). Yet the author, too, does belong to the world of Hinze and Kunze.

The author is part of the society he describes. He reacts to the conversations of the characters, and often seems to feel himself in competition with them. His in-
trusion is often very subtle as in the case of the fruit's gaining the size of watermelon, without the author ever being mentioned at all. He inserts himself through his power of description, so that the black Tatra becomes "die Hohe Tatra" to be worshipped (98), or "die schwarze Ambulanz" to carry Kunze after his attack (121); the author can have Hinze drive a "praktischen schwarzen Wagen" (192) or a "schwarzen Wohnwagen" (193). As there are multiple ways of looking at an object, the author shades meanings of ideas, too, as they are repeated over and over, and presented in humorous contexts, as in the case of the phrase "gesellschaftliches Interesse."

The author also inserts himself into the described society in more direct ways. The author determines what the reader learns. Beyond the normal selection of what an author decides to write about, this author makes very clear his principle of self-censorship in the interests of society. There are holes left in the text (17). Critics, too, are wrestled with within the text itself (147-149). However, the most frequent motive of the author for entering the narrative seems to be his feeling of being in competition with the characters in the book to see who can come up with the best, most humorous stories.

The first notable intrusion of the author with a story of his own is the account about VEB ROBOTRANS (18-19). Kunze is presumably associated with the scheme to meet a
factory quota through import from abroad, but it is strictly the author who reveals the information. Despite assurances of self-censorship, the story is told, even though it is "undenkbar, sie aufzuschreiben" (18). The author's sole motivation seems to be humor, and perhaps to demonstrate his power to see behind the scenes.

Later the author tells the story of his "schönste Liebesgeschichte" (133-139). It has nothing to do with Hinze or Kunze, but seems to be told strictly from a need to be sociable and one of the boys. The author's wife Anna is introduced to become the book's most positive character, and an example of love is finally provided in a book which speaks of it constantly. But there is no narrative connection between the story and the rest of the novel. The author has only associated himself with the characters.

The author also tries to bring the reader into the society of Hinze and Kunze. "Ich unterstehe dem Leser, dem mächtigsten Wesen," he says (174). Humor is the author's bait to lure the reader into narrative, and laughter is the instrument that breaks the barrier between public and narrative as it does between author and narrative. In the competition with Hinze and Kunze to see who can come up with the funniest story, the author has a clear advantage. The author trumps Kunze's sex speech with one he gives himself in the sauna (151-157). He starts with the expression "jeder Schwanz macht sich welche" (152) and escalates with
sexual puns until any non-sexual sense is totally lost. Hinze and Kunze do not contribute. They are an audience, but it is clear that the audience really intended is the reader.

Ich weiss nicht, ob ich euch helfen kann, begann ich, aber vielleicht kann ich euch auf andere Gedanken bringen. Als Autor, sagte ich mit ausdruckslosem, unbeteiligtem Gesicht, darf ich reden was ich will, ihr müsst es anhören. Ich muss nicht sagen, ob es ein Traum, eine Erfindung, die Wahrheit oder die Zeitung ist; es genügt, dass ich es erzähle, ihr müsst euch selber den Reim darauf machen (152).

The real author Braun is posing questions. He is putting social relationships and political slogans to the test of humor. It is left to the reader to determine which is the correct viewpoint. At the least, Braun expects the reader to join the conversation and try to see socialism other than through a rearview mirror.

4.6 Summary

Volker Braun has written a book containing much humor. Most of the humor is generated from the interaction of the two characters Hinze and Kunze. Hinze is at the same time a foolish character and one of great wisdom. He is funny because of the two contrasting elements. Hinze's foolishness lies in his inability or unwillingness to think or choose for himself. He always relies on his friend Kunze.
Hinze's wisdom comes from his absorption of wise phrases, a sort of catechism of communism.

Kunze is an empty character, but one able to influence others. He has an exaggerated seriousness that makes him humorous if the slightest crack appears in his self-important facade. As one who controls others, he becomes humorous when he loses control over himself, as often happens in his attacks of satyriasis. His seriousness seems to inspire those around him to be humorous.

Hinze and Kunze together form a comedy team. They constitute a small society where each of them defines the other's function. Kunze is above, Hinze below. Hinze is led, Kunze is a leader. Their contrasting views are humorous. Their common approach to the world at large produces humor. While they discuss the interests of society, they form their own society, the interests of which are shown by example.

Hinze and Kunze's humor radiates into the larger society within the book. Their two-man society is shown as part of a larger society, and their dialogue becomes a dialogue with a much larger basis, including the author himself, who enters as a character. The humor arises from the contrasts between Hinze and Kunze and other characters within the novel. The contrasts often develop into competition when the author inserts himself into the story.

Humor functions within the Hinze-Kunze-Roman to draw
the reader into the models of society constituted by Hinze and Kunze, by the two of them plus the other characters of the novel, and by the characters of the novel plus the author. Humor presents new ways of looking at old wisdom. Braun does not try to persuade disbelievers of the value of socialism. Instead, he examines socialist life in the form it has already taken in the German Democratic Republic. He uses humor to question the "Sinn der sozialistischen Revolution, Qualität der sozialistischen Demokratie, Arbeit und Arbeitsteilung, Erotik und individuelle Lebenserfüllung usw.," as one critic has put it (Rönsch 837-838). The reader is shown old problems from new points of view in order to be able to ultimately reaffirm the validity of socialist wisdom and see for him- or herself how socialism functions and can function better in current society.
5. CONCLUSION

Humor is common in the contemporary literature of the German Democratic Republic. Hermann Kant's *Der Aufenthalt*, Ursula Morgner's *Amanda. Ein Hexenroman*, and Volker Braun's *Hinze-Kunze-Roman*, are three novels that present a reasonably representative picture of current literary endeavors in the GDR. GDR literature has not become less serious in its socialist tendentiousness, but the presentation of ideas has become more humorous and more sophisticated than would be possible with the stereotypical heroics of socialist realism.

Humor is an important element of the GDR novel. Humor arises from a break with what is perceived as normal. It can be a violation of expected relationships and logic, or it can be the alteration of results expected to follow from a given event. Humor can be a relating of disparate ideas or a relating of objects not usually connected. Humor can exaggerate perceived truths into the absurd or twist them into the grotesque. Humor is thus a useful tool for questioning the normal, the expected, the logical, and the true.

The fool is the traditional center of German humor. He occurs now in GDR literature in guises not unlike those worn by his sixteenth-century ancestors. The fool is a character who is abnormal or exaggerated to the point of
being humorous, but never to the point of becoming inhuman. The fool is the character who is allowed to question what is seen as truth. The truth may thus be confirmed, or it may be seen that the fool was right and the truth was not absolute after all, or it may turn out that a particular interpretation of truth was off the mark. The fool is a seeker of truth, or a motivator of the reader to find truth. The fool is not an end in him–or herself to be followed in pursuing laughter for its own sake.

The fool as literary protagonist is exemplary only insofar as he or she is able, like Mark Niebuhr, to overcome her or his own foolish lack of wisdom. Mark Niebuhr, like the picaro of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, begins as part of a brutal world of which he has no comprehension. He learns by becoming an active part of the world and then changing himself for the better. Like the earlier picaro, he ultimately arrives at a serious condition. Humor is a device for maintaining reader attention, and for showing the absurdity of the world as it is. With humor, a broad range of possibilities can be explored within a single event. The reader is gently presented with alternatives from which to choose, that he or she might also become a serious part of a society working for the good of all.

The Eulenspiegel's humor is more satirical and sharper than that of a picaro, as he or she exposes the greater
foolishness of those around him. In Morgner's *Amanda*, the
world is upside-down, and the fool's job is to make the
inversion obvious so that the world may be straightened out
again. This fool's humor is directed more comprehensively
at society as a whole than at the parts of society re-
flected in the fool. The fool inspires laughter with his
or her humor, and it is the laughter that liberates one
from the oppressive prejudices with which one is otherwise
burdened. The reader can more easily see new possibili-
ties--new truths that haven't been tried.

Fools are traditionally individuals who are either
critics standing somehow outside of society, or abnormal
deviations pointed to as foolish by a society more healthy
than they are. Volker Braun, however, has shown in the
comedy team of Hinze and Kunze a microcosm of an entire
society. Neither is the individual independent of society,
nor is the society independent of the individual. There is
a constant dialog among all individuals and the society
they form. Because of the interdependent relationship of
individuals and society, even the author is drawn into the
social dialogue. Braun has invented a new fool in the form
of his comedy team, wherein humor is produced through in-
teraction. Humor comes from the contrast of ideas and ex-
amples, and functions to question established truths.

As William Walker concluded in a study of two GDR
novels, "it is clear that both humor and satire can play an
effective role in GDR literature, specifically as devices for criticising bourgeois ideology and for promoting a more humane, compassionate social order" (165). Humor can function in a socialist literature to attack a presocialist bourgeois society or its remnants in the thoughts of an individual. Humor can keep a socialist state from falling into a bourgeois complacency. Humor can show unimaginined alternatives to a society which is still imperfect. Perhaps most important, humor can give the socialist struggle more of the compassionate humanity it seeks as its end.
6. WORKS CITED

6.1 Primary Works


6.2 Secondary Works


Stephan, Alexander. "Von Aufenthalten, Hosenknöpfen und Kindheitsmustern: Das Dritte Reich in der jüngsten


