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Literary Criticism and Peter Handke:
A Philosophy of Textual Experience

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Section One: Introduction to Discourse Formation

1.a. The Role of Criticism in the Development of Peter Handke

In his book *Peter Handke und die deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur*, Manfred Durzak wrote that Peter Handke's early works such as *Die Hornisse* and *Der Hausierer* are not understandable without an external critique supplied by the author himself.¹ Durzak turned his observation into a judgment based on specific expectations, exhorting that Handke's early stage was ineffective both towards the present development of Handke as a writer and the establishment of a program for Modern German Literature. As will be seen, Handke's early novels were unintelligible because a literary program had already been established and Handke had to yet to conform the prescribed rules. In the nascent stage of his writing career, like that of many authors, Handke juxtaposed elements known to established criticism with those unknown and experimental, making Handke's initial works no more or less important than those by which he became known later in his career. Other later works were simply more 'critisizable' because they fit established patterns. How then, were these patterns established?

Norbert Honsza commented in his book *Interpretation zu Peter Handke: Zwischen Experiment und Tradition*, that with the writing of *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, Peter Handke left the Avant Garde style of his early works and returned to traditional reader habits.² Criticism has agreed that after *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*,³ Handke closed the chapter on experimental novels and language study—the practice Durzak mentioned as not worthy of mentioning-- while he opened himself to

¹ Manfred Durzak, *Peter Handke und die Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Kohlhammer, 1982), 32.

² Norbert Honsza, "Interpretation zu Peter Handke: Zwischen Experiment und Tradition," Norbert Honza, ed., *Randbemerkungen zu Handkes Prosa*, (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), 32.

³ Peter Handke, *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).

what Honsza called *Beschreibungsliteratur*, a style that he formerly loathed.⁴ This second phase of Handke's literary career is well documented as that in which the author settles down into his own *Manier*, a style in which his characters have a sense of misapprehension of reality—a narration written, however, using traditional techniques manipulated for his own means. Aurel Schmidt wrote, "Peter Handke ist ein Schriftsteller, der seinen eigenen, unverwechselbaren Still hat. Das hebt ihn heraus, und vielleicht ist das der Grund. Handkes Literatur ist präzise und frei von Zufälligkeiten."⁵ The unknown element in Handke's early texts slowly became defined through criticism, creating a second phase in which textual, linguistic and stylistic patterns were sought by critics in his works, verifying a pre-established comparison model created by contemporary needs, ensuring the present text was more or less Handke-esque.

In the 1980's and early 1990's, Handke's prose can be said to have changed yet again, focusing not on the character's inability to know with certainty, but centralizing a narration around an "I," a character—presumably modeled after Handke himself—who intentionally manipulates his relationship with reality. Honsza called this new style something that many authors have sought but never found: "the ability to use language reflection as self-reflection."⁶ Handke's "I" focused on participating in the language of active understanding – instead of the real world of that which is understood—in order to be able to structure [v.] the process of knowing instead of reacting to an already formed structure [n.].

Durzak, in a separate yet similar critique of Handke's works, called this more recent stage of Handke's literature, "der Narzißmus, der alles in ein Ritual der Ichbezogenheit verwandelt und das Ich, gleichsam aus allen Fesseln entlassen und in einer Vakuumkammer der Innerlichkeit frischwebend und ferngerückt, in eine privatistisch Mythologie einhüllt, der der einstige Drang gegen alle Begriffe und Normen,

⁴ Honsza, "Interpretation zu Peter Handke," 34.

⁵ Aurel Schmidt, "Zeichen und Funktion: Über Peter Handke und seinen neuen Roman," Michael Scharang, ed., *Über Peter Handke*, (Frankfurt am/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 109.

gegen Psychologie und Kausalität nun in einem selbstzeugten System von Bedeutungsaura erliegt.”⁷ The main difference between Durzak’s critique of Handke’s early and contemporary works is that of time: in both cases, Durzak criticized Handke for being too self-reflective, too centered on the “I.” This “I” changed only from the author himself to the central character, which makes the text more-or-less criticizable, though the line between the author and the character is intentionally blurred. As my own interpretation will demonstrate, criticism has an aversion to texts that are not applicable to established categories—those of psychology, logic, science, music, and all the sub-categories within—leaving little room for anything but disdain for intentionally self-exposing literature. Criticism’s role has been to apply established categories to texts, what I will call ‘genre,’ mapping the relationships within to those already established structures, e.g. the criminal novel, short story, romance, mystery, etc. As one will see, intentional, momentary glimpses into a text with an organizational technique whose goal is an individual experience leaves criticism in a precarious place: how does one categorize a text that has a singular application?

Another critic, Ingeborg Hoesterey, wrote in her essay *Autofiction: Peter Handke’s Trilogy of Try-Outs*, that “in recent years the conventional difference between fiction and nonfiction has tended to be blurred in Peter Handke’s texts, with the fictional elements appearing merely as strands of indeterminate genre.”⁸ The descriptiveness of the “I” has had the effect of placing the texts neither in autobiography nor in fiction, yet somehow encompassing and excluding both. As we will see, this third stage of Handke’s career, labeled simply ‘after the first two,’ asks the following question, ‘can a text be viewed as belonging to no category?’ Or, would criticism simply follow its prescribed

⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷ Durzak, *Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart*, (Stuttgart: Verlag Kohlhammer, 1979), 467.

⁸ Ingeborg Hoesterey, “Autofiction: Peter Handke’s Trilogy of Try-Outs,” *Contemporary Austrian Writers and Autobiography: The Fiction of the I*, Nicholas J. Meyerhofer, ed., (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1999), 47.

ideals and create a new genre through which new mysteries can be unfolded through established patterns?

Criticism, as applied to a specific discourse—in this case discourse means ‘text’—has a singular goal of applying one element or interpretation to a text around which all other elements should fall in line. In Handke’s case, singular elements have been found under, but are not limited to, the following headings: Linguistic, Self-reflective, Counter-culture, Austrian, German-speaking, Psychological, Psychological (abnormal), Handke (the author), New Subjectivity, Auto-fiction, Post-modern, etc. Each of these filters has slowly, over the course of his career, created an author obligated to write through established patterns.

Where would literary criticism be if texts that apply criticism within were viewed as texts that applied criticism within instead of needing an external center or legend that must be used to gain a ‘true’ understanding? If a text were intentionally self-reflective, in both the act of writing and the act of reading, could criticism define it? Would a thesis such as this be needed to understand a text that does not lend itself to categorized understanding?

There is, as one might imagine with an author whose career spans into five decades and beyond, much more definition available than those few quotes mentioned above might suggest. In order to focus my argument, however, I have noted that categories such as ‘immature,’ ‘mature’ and ‘most recent’ appear whenever the idea of ‘coherency’ is mentioned, or when one of Handke’s texts is compared with another from a different time period. These three stages: beginning, middle and— ‘end’ would not be a representative description because the author is still alive— ‘third’ stage of Handke career are more or less agreed upon as reflective of changes that have occurred in Handke’s works. Gerhard Pfister created a timeline similar to my own, though he added an even more recent category of criticism, after 1990.⁹ In writing this thesis, however, I

⁹ Gerhard Pfister, *Handke’s Mitspieler*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), 59.

hope that this contemporary stage has not become established as definitive, and my critique will allow a new interpretation to unfold. The second goal of this thesis is to outline the previously mentioned stages of Handke's career, noting the discrepancies in Handke's style as well as the repercussion these differences have had on criticism directed towards the author and his texts.

Contrary to most critical theses, however, the aforementioned abbreviated outline of Handke criticism has been removed from the category 'necessity' for a master's paper, a category that proposes to display one's knowledge of the author and his relationship to his contemporaries. Rather, as will later become clear, this thesis begins with an outline of Handke-criticism in an attempt to expose the pre-conceived notion of 'Handke,' a critically defined discourse, a category that has itself entertained a large role in forming and reforming Handke's main literary shifts through an alignment or intentional mal-alignment with these categories. The term 'Handke' has evolved, or revolved its meaning over the past several decades through two means. First there is a reaction, both by the author and his critics, to various critiques of Handke's literary production. The second influence on Handke's self-definition is the author's *participation* in his texts and awareness of his changing identity.

As I write, --in other words, as I produce one semi-autobiographical, semi-Handke based text meant to replace or add to other works of the same nature-- I am presently aware that this text itself will become part of that very discourse it critiques called *On Handke*. This notion saddened me at first, allowing a reaction to occur, a reaction against the concept of being known as one of the previously mentioned scholars who find, or apply categories—whichever the reader's preference— to the text from those pre-existing in the critical mind, whomever it happens to be. For some reason, critics want to be outside of texts, elevated, set apart with an invigorating perspective, pivoting an author's idea into a meta-realm all its own. Jacques Derrida wrote around the same time Handke was starting his literary career: "An external perspective requires the

position of an ‘other,’ a ‘center’ both uninfluenced though determining the interaction of the elements within.”¹⁰ Having already established a relationship to Handke’s works as well as to his critics, I can personally say that I could not give an external critique. ‘External’ would be impossible given the involvement one needs to write a thorough polemic. External would mean uninfluenced or unparticipating in the dialogue the previously mentioned criticism criticizes. Polemics can be neither. As the critic, then, I will attempt to use a well-worn tactical notion: bring down the opposition through infiltration of its ranks. In 1968, at an assembly of then-famous-now-defunct *Gruppe 47*, Handke also entered an unfavorable ideological realm as he criticized the group for the very structures on which it was founded. There, he accepted his first –and subsequently last– invitation to an ideal out of which his own style followed. One account of this event can be found in Handke’s essay, *Zur Tagung der Gruppe 47 in USA*, as Handke became the critic of the group from within.¹¹ I, too, will accept this invitation to join the rank and file of the literary critic, having assimilated both criticism and textual analysis of this discourse *On Handke*. As a critic, however, I will not saturate the reader with an ideal perspective such as a hypothetical compilation of ‘Abnormal Psychological Interpretations of Handke’s *Wünschloses Unglück*,’ or ‘Semiotics in Austrian Literature: Handke’s linguistic role in changing a language.’ Both possible critiques are based on pre-established categories, functions of interpretation and a cultural will focused on locating elements within a text to match, or not match, the critique.

As with all literary figures who produce a text worthy of criticism, the idea of ‘Handke,’ not withholding the author himself as part of this idea, has been gradually rendered dependant upon external criticism and linguistic theory. My critique will not continue this pattern. One such category required by criticism is that a text have an author though which the text must be interpreted. Criticism has to have an author to define.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences,” *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 278.

From this dependant notion one has as a critic, the question arises: can these two be separated, the idea of the author, created through a discourse between the text and criticism, and the author himself? The line between the author's name and the written text has slowly been interwoven. In his essay '*What is an author?*,' Michel Foucault explained that an author's name characterizes a certain mode of discourse by organizing a discourse: "Such a name serves a classificatory function and permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from others."¹² However, as the author gains an audience, the once foreign elements added under the guise of 'criticism' slowly begin to be reflected in the texts, repeatedly referring to the same singular meanings forming the categories mentioned above. As his career blossomed, Handke began to reflect those already-mentioned ideals associated with his name, becoming more 'criticizable.'

If Handke's own premise is true, that literature is but an expression of normalized mental events and texts are of the same syntax and literary function arranged in the mind,¹³ the author becomes less important than the language used within the text. Why does criticism need the author when the words are already written on the page? In this critique, Handke, the author, will be another category, an ideal interpretation that will hopefully become simply an element of understanding—rather than a means of understanding a text.

If we turn to Handke career, one sees that he first stage, 1966-1974, was one of relative obscurity: Handke's texts fit few if any known categories critics used to classify novels, dramas and poems. From 1974-1980, Handke and his critics had a symbiotic relationship: patterns had been established out of which he would write a text and criticism would categorize it. In his third stage, interpreted in this critique through the

¹¹ Peter Handke, "Zur Tagung der Gruppe 47," *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 29-34.

¹² Michel Foucault, "What is an author?," *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed., (New York: Random House: 1984), 107.

¹³ Peter Handke, "Die Literatur ist Romantisch," *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 41.

text *Versuch über den geglückten Tag* (1994),¹⁴ Handke attempted to become the critic in the text through naming and redefining his own normalized literary habits, style and thought process as a part of the writing—and subsequently linking his texts to a multitude of other discourses-- creating a meta-conversation within, a self-referential critique that I presume frees it from external definition and meaning. As with this thesis, the self-referential nature of *Versuch* . . . provides a region of difference within the text, an internal place of tension between the subject and the world that was previously relegated to external categories of normalized experience and criticism. However, for a text to be read as a text—rather than an application of contemporary genre—criticism and the patterns of critical understanding need to be understood. How does criticism as we know it—that process of reading texts through culturally mandated filters—react when a text no longer needs a critic? What would occur if criticism required a reader, a person to experience the text?

This alternative to criticism will be an intentional attempt at mimicking; a structuralizing of understanding used by Handke himself. I am aware, however, that random ideas will color and shape the content, as well as the experience of the reader. Some would remark on the lack of objectivity: agreement with the author at the outset would be no more a critique than a reutterance of what has been said. However, in following Handke's own self-reflective structure, I will demonstrate a self-naming criticism that allows the text to define itself while providing insight into a definition that critics, such as myself, might explore.

As applied to the idea of discourse, my critique is possible only because the subject, "Peter Handke," his texts and his critics, will be viewed as a collection of varying relationships under one discourse. That discourse has already been named, *On Handke*. The name 'Handke' will be interpreted not as an identity, but as a function, a name of an interplay of meaning, a name for the addition and subtraction of signification. In the same

¹⁴ Peter Handke's *Versuch über den geglückten Tag* will be examined at length in the last section of this

article, Foucault wrote, “An author’s name indicates that there has been established among [texts] a certain homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization.”¹⁵ We see the difficulty arises when a classificatory function stagnates the author or the text, making the critique *necessary* to the interpretation and to the text itself. The act of writing is the act of signifying, or creating names for the interplay of various thoughts and their structures. To define the act is not possible, relativizing the author in any critique of a text. The concept of an author changes as the elements of the text change, as various readers participate in the text. In this process of signification, criticism has had its own role in naming a discourse, connecting the author and all that is under his name with one category. As with defining a text under one particular element, i.e. *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung* is often interpreted as an abnormal psychological case study, the author is often criticized through certain stagnating categories allowing no varying interpretations.¹⁶ Criticism has necessitated the singular interpretation of many changing elements—of both text and author—within specific categories. The task of this critique is to verify a hypothesis relative to discourse formation as seen in Handke’s literary career. I will not justify or negate a particular ‘view’ on the value of his work. All interpretations are valid as ‘experiences,’ yet not as ‘definitions’ of a text.

In critiquing the discourse *On Handke*, this thesis will attempt to outline the development of a theory of cyclical discourse development appearing in Handke’s works and apply that theory to the three previously mentioned discourses: 1) Handke’s early writings defined as a reaction against post-war German literature, 2) Handke’s relationship to his critics through establishing textual patterns, and finally, 3) I will look at Handke’s relationship to his own discourse formation and the process of renaming his own writing experience, initiating the cycle again. This critique will hopefully allow a

analysis, pages 70-77.

¹⁵ Foucault, “What is an Author?,” “ 107.

redefinition of Handke's own writing style while providing a new role for a yet-to-be-defined criticism, that of textual experience instead of textual definition.

In 1966, at a conference at Johns Hopkins University, Jacques Derrida presented the previously mentioned paper *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* that dealt with self-apparent linguistical signs. He said that language reduces the idea of a center, or defining principal to that of a function since there are no absolute identities to which the mind can refer regardless of the elements in question. The function becomes a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play. The center, or guiding principal is never outside the system of varying differences called discourse”¹⁷ The interaction of the multiple elements at any given time cannot be governed, caused or manipulated by anything other than the interaction of the various elements. Derrida called this the ‘structurality of structure’ in which the interplay of various terms is that which can be called an identity, rather than there being a law which governs the interaction.¹⁸ Otherwise, as has been done for centuries, a governing or creating principal would be extracted or applied and reduced to the idea of an *origin*. What can be understood from Derrida's notion is that an origin, or center, cannot logically exist as separate from the discourse, but is a part of it, an element defined under the name that was at one time taken to stand for the entire function. To understand a stagnant structure is not to interpret it through a single idea but to understand the dynamic structurality of its elements.

From this structurality arises a circular idea of self-referential term development that, when applied to criticism, is that through which a critic reads a text. For example, as I enter this established clique of critical analysis, an already existing system of structures, those relationships that compose the term ‘*Jameson*’ become a part of the

¹⁶ For an in-depth, abnormal-psychological approach to Handke's and other texts, see Tilmann Moser's *Romane als Krankengeschichten Über Handke, Meckel, und Martin*, (Frankfurt am/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).

¹⁷ Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play,” 280.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

discourse '*On Handke*.' Yet, as a critic, I am supposed to read a text through specific filters, centers or origins that are sought in the text and around which the text is thought to revolve, meander, and eventually return. As this occurs in criticism, however, these centers then 'stand in' for the text itself and are compared with other ideas from other authors, create a genre, or meta-discourse of elements that belonged at one time to texts themselves. This critique will not attempt to impose pre-formed ideas onto a text as if the author intended them to be there. I will reflect my criticism on criticism itself, and observe its effect on the development of an author, Peter Handke. In so doing, criticism will hopefully become self-reflexive, allowing the reader to experience the relationships among terms within a text, this text and Handke's texts as related to each other not to an external ideal. As I expound upon a developmental cycle of Handke *contra* criticism, my thesis will hopefully show that an author's literary style has become subject to pre-established ideals, forcing the author to write for the critic rather than for himself.

To be a critic, however, one cannot be external to the topic at hand because of the saturation required to say something valuable, otherwise called 'repeating that which as already been said about a name already known.' Criticism defines a text by its [a text's] proximity to established ideals, and if the critic is not informed, the critic is not able to add new additions to the discourse. This critique will be an element of the discourse *On Handke*, not a center around which the discourse must revolve. This critique will also be an element of the discourse *On Criticism*, allowing criticism to reform itself through its elements, not through necessary ideals.

1.b. The Dynamics of Discourse Development

To situate my critique between criticism as an example of a self-defining genre and Peter Handke as a specific example of discourse development dependant on outside centers, I will explain the three parts of the process of discourse formation, beginning

with the first, Naming. After outlining this developmental process of discourse formation in later sections, I will conclude with an example of a mode of writing wholly independent of external definition and a form of criticism not intent on applying necessary ideals to arbitrary elements.

The first phase of discourse development, Naming, has two sub-sections: Initial and Revisited Naming. An initial name of a relationship occurs at the inception of language, the act of creating a relationship in the mind. The initial name of a thing, previously known in platonic circles as its ‘metaphysical identity,’ occurs in relation to its negation. Initially, the concept named ‘ball’ needs be thought in relation to ‘not ball.’ In this initial event, two variable concepts are brought together through perception and a specific relationship becomes associated with a name. (The explanation of the means of development of specific sounds, representations and symbols used for each concept will be left for linguists, or another genre, assuming that the inception of signs has more to do with physical ability of the object of the concept [subject] than any actual relationship of a signifier with the signified).

From this initial stage of identity, further comparisons are made between various identities forming many diverse links within a nominal field. The interplay of these relationships is called *discourse*. Various discourses have themselves names, or identities encompassing each definition under a discourse with the same distinction as the initial identity: ‘Discourse A, not Discourse A.’ Foucault wrote the following of an author’s name, “An author’s name is an equivalent of a descriptions. When one says ‘Aristotle’ one employs a word that is equivalent to one, or a series of definite descriptions, such as ‘the author of the *Analytics*,’ or ‘the founder of ontology, and so forth.’”¹⁹ Specific patterns of thought, to name but a few, are recreated whenever the name ‘Aristotle’ is mentioned. When one name is related to another, an active relationship is implied as the definition of the name. The definition changes then, when the term is used in a different

¹⁹ Foucault, “What is an Author?”, 105.

setting, under different circumstances. The set of possible meanings, $f(n)$ is the discourse in question.

In the phase of Initial Naming, two previously unnamed ideas are related. As one can deduce, there is little to be said for the initial phase except in cognitive development theory, so I will explain briefly what is meant and leave this phase for behaviorists to critique that which can only be inferred from Revisited Naming, which will be explained in the next paragraph. When two unknown concepts are linked, the relationship can be said to be random, which means no known comparison to other terms is available. An Infant can be said to relate two unknown ideas, or create identities as its mind allows arbitrary associations and concepts to form unfamiliar associations. Yet, as soon as a neonate begins to actively manipulate and understand communication, both verbal and non-verbal, it assimilates the discourse of its community and all the perceptual patterns found under the community's discourse, entering the stage of Revisited Naming.

This initial stage will then be left here, though for no better reason than, to this writer, Initial Naming has little to add to the present study of the focus of this critique, *On Handke*. This discourse is specific to Revisited Naming, a pattern of assimilating and relating elements that either change or have been changed over time. What can be taken from Initial Naming is that a behaviorist's observations will be part of an established pattern of naming relationships. Therefore, a 'coo' or a 'scream,' will be little more than the sound 'coo' and 'scream' for the infant, yet an established connection of meaning will be revisited by a trained listener, stimulating that behaviorist's brain to infer 'hunger,' 'fear' or 'uncomfortable.'

We can now move to the second and more relevant part of the Naming stage: Revisited Naming, which is characterized predominantly by the relation of a known discourse to an unknown discourse. By 'known' one understands 'named,' and a name has aforementioned been defined as a comparison. A discourse, or group of elements under a classificatory function, can be understood as a function containing many 'to each

other' related elements. As relationships form, all elements (n) under the discourse 'f' become related to each other, represented in this text by the sign: $f(n)$.

In Revisited Naming, elements of a known discourse, $f(n)$, are related to an unknown discourse. Various links are attempted between the many elements under each discourse. For the subject, or active namer, a term is only knowable in relation to another term. $f(x)$.²⁰ "Ball" is meaningless without the concept "not ball." As we will see, it is in this phase that most, if not all of Peter Handke's literature falls, and most, if not all human experience falls. Revisited Naming can itself be divided into two subcategories: Reaction and Participation. To give some forewarning, 'reaction' will be a term used to describe Handke's early works, pre-1974, exemplified by *Die Hornisse*²¹ and *Der Hausierer*.²² 'Participation' will be used to describe Handke's later attempts, exemplified by *Versuch über den gegückten Tag*. The central stage of Handke's career, that which is neither a reactive naming nor participative, is known as defined. To be defined, a discourse has been normalized through established ideals one must use to interpret a discourse. Handke's texts between 1974-1980 became defined as criticism established patterns in his writing style. This stage, the third and final stage after Initial and Revisited naming, called Production, will be discussed in Part Three of this critique.²³

As a name is developed in the Reaction Stage, it is important to note that established patterns of thought are applied to a new situation. To the subject, reaction to a new name is characterized in several ways, one of which is fear: an individual may panic at the thought of new stimulus. Anger is another reaction in which the individual has little desire to form new relationships and rebels, forcing established patterns of naming onto a new relationship in an attempt to remold a foreign discourse into that

²⁰ For the purposes of this analysis, the symbol 'f' will arbitrarily be used to represent *all* discourses because the use of (' ', nothing, nameless, no name) would not be understood. Note: as mentioned on page 11 (Derrida 278), the identity of the discourse is relative to its elements, not to its name, which is itself part of the structurality.

²¹ Peter Handke, *Die Hornisse*, (Reinbek, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976).

²² Peter Handke, *Der Hausierer*, (Frankfurt /Main: Suhrkamp, 1967).

which is known. Humor and indifference are other signs reaction: the individual does not give the new relationship validity, perpetuating disbelief and ignoring new elements. As this occurs, the subject withdraws into known concepts and perceptual patterns, blocking out new or alternative ideas.

In works such as *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*²⁴ and also *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung*,²⁵ Handke used some event, an *unerhörte Begebenheit* to create a situation not yet known to the protagonist. The former goalie Josef Bloch, the main character of *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, experienced several events such as being fired from a new job, divorce and committing murder, all of which created a new discourse in which none of his old conceptual relationships applied. In *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung*, Keuschung, the protagonist, has a dream that he commits murder, changing his perception of his place in relation to everything else. These characters react against this sudden 'Bewußtseins- Sturz,'²⁶ as Honsza called it, and have difficulty when previous patterns of naming do not seem to apply to their new understanding.

One symptom of the reaction stage of Revisited Naming is the belief that the established discourse has trapped the subject, or, the subject believes the new discourse has locked the subject out. This denial of access to the new discourse has a claustrophobic effect, or the subject relates the new experience to a previous notion of enslavement, manifesting itself in demands and questions like, 'why not?' or 'should be' when these questions have little relevance in an uncharted discourse.

To provide the reader with a comparison, the same naming pattern occurs in Handke's later work *Versuch über den geglückten Tag*: a perceptual function, or discourse, is forced upon an established form of understanding and new relationships are created. However, through the knowledge of the process of discourse interaction, or the naming of the experience itself, the character allows the development of, and

²³ See Part Three, pages 46-65.

²⁴ Peter Handke, *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp), 1970.

²⁵ Peter Handke, *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung*, (Frankfurt/Main 1975).

participation in the definition of the relationship between the stagnant and active perceptual modes. A character's 'reactive naming' becomes a sign for Handke and those reading his texts that a new relationship is forming—as opposed to a sign that some established ideas has been missed, should be feared or distrusted. Instead of an uncontrolled reaction or ideological argument based on Derrida's non-active centers, Handke's character fully participates in the naming of this new relationship. In *Versuch...*, writing becomes the ability to name new relationships, both within and without of the text, enabling the author, reader and critic to participate in a discourse that has previously been excluded by idealized understanding.

The act of participation in the naming a relationship enables a freedom not yet known to the person experiencing habitual normative definition entrenched by reaction after reaction to previously unknown yet feared discourses. Though this renaming is not freedom in the sense that I, Handke or any subject can use volition to create a relationship at will (This type of relationship forming can only happen in the case of Initial Naming, though this is by no means free. Volition is defined as an arbitrary connection devoid of meaning), one has 'freedom' in the sense of awareness of established discourse patterns and participating in the formation of specific new patterns. In this view, the subject, Handke (h), can be seen as a function with perpetually changing elements [$f(h) f(n)$], instead of a static definition in which one element stands in for the entire structure. Old patterns can never be eradicated, they can however, be reordered and reapplied. Handke said in an interview with Gamper concerning his initial entrance onto the literary scene, "Whenever one writes something out of oneself, there is a necessary stand one must take against cultural norms; one must make a name against that which is believed, and then

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

overcome that belief.”²⁷ This initial phase can also be seen in Handke’s written texts through the main character’s reaction to his environment.

How are these discourses to be situated, the textual and the actual? Are they both textual? Both actual? Or is one experiential and one textual? Through this critique, both aspects of Handke can be seen as discourse, his person and his text, both real yet still both elements to be understood in arbitrary fashion. Naming is involved in the process of experience and the process of creating a text, not in defining the text for all time.

After Initial and Revisited Naming (sub-divided into Reaction and Participation), the second phase of term development occurs as that of Production. It is in this phase that a discourse begins to take on structure and form while the various elements of the discourse, or the relationships between elements, become established. The phase of Production is also that of critique. When a critic interprets a text, various elements, relationships and names are related to one another. These elements can be both within the text and from external critical centers. From this perspective, a system of structure is formed as the basis for understanding the text: various elements stand in for a text, they become filters and values through which one reads and interprets. A critic has his own perspective, or function that adds the to entire discourse of the text. As the various relationships within the text are named, the text begins to be defined by that structure. As Foucault mentioned, Aristotle has been named ‘Father of *Analytics*,’ yet this name represents only one element with the discourse ‘Aristotle,’ and has very little to do with the text *Analytics*. This one element author, however, dominates any theory through which we interpret his texts.

In certain discourses, single elements of the discourse stand in for the entire function itself. In the early nineteen eighties and nineties, an author’s sexuality was an element that colored the entire reading of specific text. As a structure is demarcated through criticism, relationships within the discourse become accepted and even sought

²⁷ Peter Handke, *Aber ich Lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen: Peter Handke im Gespräch mit Herbert*

out, creating 'meaning' that is believed to be inherent in the text instead of externally given. Currently, gay literature is written specifically to fit that critical category. Meaning is no longer, if it ever was, based on the relationships between the elements within the discourse or the texts. The established patterns of thought and interpretation become more than patterns, they progress into necessary events believed by the critic, and eventually the author, to be independent of one single relationship within the discourse, existing as entities outside of the discourse with meaning in-and-of themselves. As noted, this derridaian center of a discourse, is that by which the play of the elements are governed. The center hinders the interaction of the elements within a discourse because it is believed to be immutable, meaning distinct *from*, and the cause *of* the interactions of relationships. There is no longer a function between the elements of a discourse outside of the specific interpretation. It is believed that, if the ideal interoperation is known, the relationships themselves can be known.

As this stagnancy of meaning appears in the form of critique, an author's work begins to become 'distinct,' to be measured and weighed through the same patterns within the discourse until the name of the author takes on the opinion of the critical discourse and not the textual relationships. During the Production Stage, an author and his critics become fixed on one or more specific 'centers,'--i.e. style of writing, content, genre, sexuality, etc., —and react to any new ideas or elements added to the text by interpreting new elements through established thought patterns. As the author writes, he begins to form relationships within the text that seem to both fit under the name he has been given and the name he has assumed for himself. In this Production stage of term development, a term no longer is defined in relation to other terms; its meaning is related to itself. That is to say, an author is said to be 'post-modern' if elements of post-modernism are found within his text. The difficulty I see in this definition is the following: the critic had to be steeped in a specific view, i.e., have read many text already

classified as ‘post-modern,’ to discern such elements, overlooking any and all other possible relationships within the text. The centers ‘Post-modern,’ ‘Psychological,’ ‘feminist’ or ‘Western’ become filters through which one reads a text, and eventually through which an author writes a text, minimizing any freedom in the creation or experiential process of art.

To relate this outline of discourse development to Peter Handke, after I discuss the development of his early ‘reactionary’ works, the second part of my critique will concentrate on criticism of Handke in the 1970’s and 1980’s as a centralized view of his textual creations formed, providing a new understanding the discourse I have called *on Handke*. This will be explained as Handke’s relationship to his critics and his texts become known through the Production Stage. Knowledge attainment can be seen in the ‘normalizing’ of Handke’s texts, or the establishment of set patterns of interpretation and critique, subsequently halting any freedom an author has in writing.

The third section of nominal term formation—after Naming and Production-- is called Retirement and Recycling. Gradually, a term or discourse that has become stagnant by following established patterns has no understandable, or named, link with the discourses around it. Discourses, texts, people, names-- all of which are notions change-- continually rearrange their relationships while the above mentioned discourse becomes entirely self-referential, which is also to say ‘meaningless.’ When a self-referential discourse is introduced to another discourse, two possible outcomes result: the first is one of reaction and the second of continuing stasis. To become an inert discourse, this fundamentalist pattern of re-relating to oneself has already been established and few, if any, relationships to outside elements are tolerated. There is no understanding of new terms, new discourses are ‘overlooked’—to use a sensual metaphor—or assimilated into the established pattern of relation, and the discourse continues unaffected. This self-definition continues as the established pattern becomes self-referential and meaningless.

The second possibility is that of revisiting and participating in the process meaning formation. This can only happen if a discourse is retired. As Peter Handke became established within German, Austrian and global literary circles—ideal perspectives applied to him-- he began to be read in specific ways. Slowly, one can see that he also began to write to fit the genre established for him. The Retirement stage comes as one allows these self-referential critiques to become part of the discourse again, to actively make the governing principal an meaningless element within the discourse instead of a defining element from without. We will see, this process occurred as Handke attempted to revitalize a stagnant writing style. To retire a discourse, one needs to participate instead of react to the any elements of experience. Handke's third stage is an engaging of a new, unknown discourse after the discourse *On Handke* has been retired and the set patterns of style and content become mere elements within instead of governing ideas imposed from the outside.

Before this retirement can occur in any literary figure, however, the static critical definition process must become itself an element of a function of textual interaction instead of applying necessary categories from outside onto a text. This Retirement can only occur if criticism itself changes, if the relationships within a text are viewed as more valuable than their application to an established interpretation. Otherwise, categorization will continue unabated, halting any freedom an author might have had. Understanding a text as it continually reforms relationships can only occur if one participates in its naming instead of reacting, using previously established forms of understanding. New relationships form when established discourses become elements defined by their relationship instead of external definitions. We will see examples of this participation, both Handke's *Versuch über den gegückten Tag*, and in my self-reflective criticism of criticism, leading to final stage of discourse development, Recycling. But first let us look at the development that led to Handke's redefinition of himself through texts, quotes and criticism of the discourse I have dubious named *On Handke*.

Section Two: Initial Discourse Formation applied to ‘Peter Handke’

2.a. Peter Handke’s Revisited Naming

Handke’s entrance in the German-language textual discourse was based on several unpopular texts and one notable event: his oral reaction to *Gruppe 47* (Group 47). In this section I will discuss the critical themes extracted from these initial texts, their reception, definition and effect on the rest of Handke’s career. In addition I will apply Handke’s early development to my theory of discourse formation providing room and even necessitating the need for indefinable elements Handke adds to his texts and subsequently to the program of contemporary literary critique.

“Ist Engagement eine willkürliche Haltung oder ein unwillkürlicher Zustand?”²⁸ This question opens Handke’s the article, *Die Literatur ist Romantisch*, through which the author criticized the popular understanding of the term ‘engagement’ as defined by one’s action in society, inciting repetition in banal literature. According to Handke, the common understanding of the term engagement is that every action must be directed toward external events to influence the form of society, through which one makes oneself more of what the society is believed or desired to be. Handke’s argument was based on a change Peter Weiss enacted through a new use of the term, redirecting the meaning of ‘engagement’ aimed at external societal forms that become internalized by a person who reforms themselves to an internal, universal, socialistic, totalitarian society.²⁹

Handke, after he outlined the previous usage of this term, continued with a different interpretation of value and meaning *not* externally focused. Internal value structures had been previously thought to be intentional if the meanings of words were constant. Weiss used the word “sich engagiert,” applying an active, self-reflexive “sich”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

as a type of freedom from uniform definition.³⁰ Handke assumed, however, that the participants listening to the presentation at the annual Group 47 Tagung understood a not-free, passive circumstance of ‘being bound’ to reality, not an active ‘engaging reality.’ Handke went on to write that if this, or any other term is viewed as a meaning-full circumstance, that an author is “engaged” to reality and not actively ‘engaging,’ the term becomes meaningless. A term loses meaning as it is expanded to encompass every type of engagement without specificity.³¹ The term ‘engagement’ was understood under a universal meaning, as an event already occurring in which people participate. One *is* engaged to specific structures that define how one engages at all times. Through this article written early in his career, Handke advocated a singular use of this term, of all terms so that the word ‘engagement’ not be supplemented by universal meaning, not be equated with a noun, reducing the term, reducing language to a dichotomy of ‘is’ or ‘is not.’

Now for an answer Handke’s initial question concerning the state of ‘engagement:’ while a word is in use, its arbitrary meaning will be relative to its free and active relationship to societal circumstances with intent to change those circumstances. In the form of a logical pattern of function formation in which ‘f’ is the function of a discourse and ‘n’ are the elements, the function

$f(x):(x; \text{possible relationships})$

can have many theoretical possibilities for cultural specific employment, yet will possess no meaning outside of that specific employment. During usage, terms become specific, are employed by the user in an intentional way, giving the subject freedom to choose the specific employment from the function, or enslaving the subject to past forms, mirroring the categories ‘Participation’ and ‘Reaction,’ for those following my critique. Subjects who participate in discourse formation are active in their language ability, allowing new

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

relationships to form within a discourse. Those who react are passive, falling back on established patterns of thought and language employment, subjecting themselves to cultural definitions.

One might ask, “Was Handke simply replacing one system with another stagnant idea as he criticized, creating a new system all his own?” Perhaps, but this is precisely the role of Revisited Naming: Handke’s system is not yet criticized, therefore not yet established, and not yet known. Handke’s early works can be seen as the function $f(?)$, with very few related elements. The purpose of critiquing his first texts written between 1966-1974, the stage Durzak called uninterpretable without the author’s external voice, is to outline the unknown structurality surrounding the initial stage of Handke’s career that criticism tried unsuccessfully to define.

From his linguistical entry into literature, these first few years of Handke’s literary career were a part of a final stage in the life of another ideal popularized by the media attention given to Group 47. Handke’s initial prose was an instantiation of a theory to replace that of Group 47. He had, however, not yet derived an application for that theory. This replacement, $[f(?)]$, that was introduced in his writings was no less ideal, no less a discursive than the established patterns of his predecessors. However, instead of applying a pre-established system in his writings, one that could be easily criticized, Handke’s initial stage was a systematizing of a system of writing, his initial texts were a redefinition of the rules of New Realism—thus the need for interpretation—onto which the previous elements of interpretation did not map. He took established ideals and made them elements within a discourse, thus relativizing their meaning.

All established literary genre arises from a critical ideal delimiting how literature is to be written and read. Specific ideas or themes become nominalized by criticism, establishing a relationship between author and reader—either lay or critical-- eventually providing categories for texts to be read by the intended audience so they understand what is taking place in the text. However, categories also begin to influence the text

before anything is written. Authors begin to mold texts to display necessary categories, to have specific elements that texts are *supposed* required of a genre.

In the 1960's, Handke believed the term 'Literature,' like all terms in the final phase in the life of discourse, had become a rendition of forms ingrained into linguistical habits, appealing to the lowest common denominator: the public desire. Texts were written because they reflected established ideals, making public interest a force of media and/or cultural powers created to make texts profitable. One could be sure that if specific elements were present in a work, the writing belonged to an established, marketable category. Though Handke's works were not that of a seasoned author, his was a desire to change established thinking by rearranging the elements in a genre, making designated categories themselves arbitrary actions of a specific will, adding new, removing unwanted elements. His first two novels, *Die Hornisse*, and, *Der Hausierer*, did not have critical acclaim for this reason: there was little or no frame of reference through which the public or critics could view the works.

From Handke's view, genre should not affect the contents of a work— the contents of a text should be allowed to create new genre. In the same critique mentioned previously, Durzak wrote about Handke's initial works, "Denn diese frühe Schreibphase wird von egrifflichen Modellvorstellungen und theoretischen Rastern bestimmt, die vorgeben, jeden Text zur Einlösung eines vorher abgegebenen theoretischen Versprechens zu machen."³² Handke's own active style of writing had not yet become the much criticized works of the present; there was no established criticism, no elements that were 'Handke-esque.' However, one structurality could be abstracted from Handke's early works: sich engagieren. There was no definition; Handke's early writing was a mapping of engaged possibilities, not an entry in an established category.

In all forms of discourse formation, writing included, one of the elements of the initial stage of Revisited Naming is maintaining a relationship with previous discourses

³² Durzak, *Peter Handke und die deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur*, 33.

by either accepting or rejecting its structural form. If one wants to change the patterns that have been established, the subject must accept the ingrained thought as *a* valid interpretation instead of *the* necessary interpretation. To outright reject the established ideals would be to fall back on relational habits, reacting and indoctrinating patterns. To reject an ideal would be to give it negative value, but value none-the-less. To participate in the established discourse, one must allow the elements to be self-reflective and self-defining; elements must become dependent on their own internal relationships instead of dependant on some external source of meaning. The act of relativizing elements appears to create a whole new discourse, one that has not yet been experienced, as was the case with Handke's initial works. New, however, is used simply because something is old, not because there is anything better in the reformed discourse. Each, the old and the new, are valid alternatives.

The use of past habits in new situations is required in modern literature, in all literature because other possibilities are not yet available to the subject. The author, as well as the critic, is not able to predict the future. In writing this critique, I must fulfill specific expectations, 'leaving no critical stone unturned.' The form of a critique suits the goals of textual understanding *per* years and years of application, not because of the inherent truth of the genre. However, other forms of interpretation could be possible; they simply have not become available because criticism is thought to be the only way to meet specific goals. What if the critic makes the goals of criticism self-reflexive, or meaningless? If I were to criticize to criticism using the same patterns of the discourse itself, I relativize the entire process making the genre meaningless. The same would happen if I compare 'ball' to 'ball.' There would be no comparison rendering the statement void of meaning. If criticism is arbitrary, I can rearrange the elements and form a seemingly 'new discourse.' Again, the notion 'new' is possible only because something is 'old,' not because there is anything inherently valuable in the rearranged

discourse. We will see this process of devaluation attempted in third phase of the discourse *On Handke*.

Note: A Discourse is a structurality defined by its elements rather than its name. Handke began his career by rearranging elements of an established literary discourse rendering the ideals specific and dependant upon usage rather than a genre. In his book *The Structurality of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn wrote that “the tradition-bound Normal Science,” used as a term to describe a universally understood discourse, “is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like.”³³ Therefore, the scientific community continually defines the questions to be asked and answered, and assuming they are both asked and answered, all will be known. Kuhn observed the fact that if the elements are arranged in constant patterns, the same questions need to be posited. However, elements of a discourse are changing, they are not constant. “As long as they [scientists] maintain a commitment to the arbitrary, the very nature of normal science ensures that novelty shall not be suppressed for long.”³⁴ New questions need to be asked as the elements change and the previous organizational ideal no longer applies. Each discourse can be redefined on a perpetual basis if it can be related to its elements and not to an externally established meaning.

Handke’s first novel, *Die Hornisse* (1966) received the following criticism from Piontek, “Das, was er konformistisch einen Roman nennt, ist eine Masse von kurzen Beschreibungen, die er nach einem ausgeklügelten System derart angeordnet hat, daß der Eindruck einer durchgehenden Bewegung entsteht, der Anschein einer Fabel. In Wirklichkeit jedoch rührt sich nichts, der Autor tritt auf der Stelle, nach den ersten fünfzig Seiten ist er mit seinem Latein am ende, redet—im genauen Sinn des Wortes—drum herum.”³⁵ Handke used the form of a novel--an established genre recognized by critics and audiences alike-- as *practice* for his descriptive describing. The varying

³³ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structurality of Scientific Revolutions*, (1962; 3rd ed., Chicago: University Press, 1998), 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

elements that once formed the genre ‘novel,’ used by many 20th Century authors, were extracted and reinserted, dependent upon the will of the writer. Kuhn employed an element similar to ‘will’ that can be called the discourse structure and arranging ability of the scientist, relative to his time, his culture and system of beliefs that is not a universal or timeless perspective in which one view is ‘correct’ and the other is ‘false.’ Kuhn called it an ‘arbitrary’ element.³⁶ The structurality of the written discourse, either a record of scientific discovery or a literary text, should be examined as well as the ideals abstracted from the discourse itself. The structurality is the function of relationship forming: the [f(?)] is that arbitrary element responsible for varying views on the same subject because varying relationships are emphasized rather than one, universal interpretation. A text is a structurality defined by these elemental relationships, and to return to this function, one must make relative the established definitions.

A major element of a 20th Century novel, called the plot, carries little if any importance to the central goal of *Die Hornisse*. Subplots and varying structures of remembering within the novel—a blind person remembers a book he read before he was blind about a blind person remembering events that lead to his blindness-- complicate the determination of another important element: a main character.³⁷ Setting, otherwise called place and time, is employed in this book, as well as in most of Handke’s prose. This element is employed, however, not as a stagnant description of ‘where’ and ‘when’ but is redefined as a place of meta-reflection of a character’s own mental surroundings. In a 1987 interview with Herbert Gamper, Handke acknowledged the importance he placed on “Ort” in his writing,

Gamper: Der Ort ist aber doch bei Ihnen wichtiger als bei Thomas Bernhard.

Handke: Ja, ich bin ein Orts-Schriftsteller, bin das auch immer gewesen. Für mich sind die Orte ja die Räume, die Begrenzungen, die erst die

³⁵ Heinz Piontek, *Ein symptomatisches Debüt in die Welt der Literatur*, (Hamburg: May, 1966).

³⁶ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4.

³⁷ Doris Runzheimer, *Peter Handkes Wendung zur Geschichte: Eine komponentialanalytische Untersuchung*, (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1987), 37.

Erlebnisse hervorbringt. Mein Ausgangspunkt ist ja nie eine Geschichte oder ein Ereignis, ein Vorfall, sondern immer ein Ort. Ich möchte den Ort nicht beschreiben, sondern erzählen. Das ist meine größte Lust.³⁸

This subtle difference between ‘beschreiben’ and ‘erzählen’ in the previous quote is dependent upon the focus of the work, either internal or external to the writer. In the following quote, J. Jacobs found little difference between the descriptive style used in Handke’s *Die Hornisse* and subsequent novels and the works he castigated for the same faults: “Mit Erstaunen hat die Kritik festgestellt, daß über weite Strecken der Hornissen reine Deskription vorherrscht, obwohl Handke doch gerade gegen die ‘Beschreibungsimpotenz’ der neueren Literatur heftig zu Felde gezogen war.”³⁹ To note the intent behind this new type of literature, one must also note that Handke was not against employing description in writing. That said, description could only be useful if it was directed toward the description process rather than so called ‘real’ objects. Handke’s early employment of description mirrored the previously mentioned definition shift from being ‘engaged’ to ‘engaging oneself.’ In New Realism of Group 47, the object and cultural circumstances had the central focus, making language and the description of human participation in reality static, existing in unchanging categories. Life on the page had become a state encapsulated by an unvarying genre. Handke’s description, however, focused on the possibilities of engaging, on one’s perception of the object, on Derrida’s structurality, rather than an ideal structure based on habitual thought. This internally motivated descriptive style leads one, literarily, back to the text and the author’s initial writing process rather than the interpretation of the text, constituting his ‘erzählen’ rather than ‘beschreiben.’

On the inside of the cover to *Die Hornisse*, Handke called his novel ‘der Versuch, die Entstehung eines Romans zu beschreiben.’⁴⁰ Reality and fiction are intertwined throughout the text in the blind man’s convoluted memory. The narrator could recall

³⁸ Peter Handke, *Aber ich Lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen: Peter Handke im Gespräch mit Herbert Gamber*, (Zürich: Ammann Verlag, 1987), 19.

³⁹ Joachim Jacobs, “Peter Handke,” *Deutsche Literatur seit 1945*, (Stuttgart: 1970), 640.

sections of a book he had read long ago, yet other parts could not be remembered and were supplemented by memories of personal experience blurring all lines of memory of a text about a text within a text. More important than the actual story is the delineation of the various perceptual levels, as Durzak wrote and quoted previously in this critique, providing a map, or a grid, of perception. Any and all unifying principles become themselves elements of the text and difficult to define. The characters are elements of the discourse *Die Hornisse*, not the discourse itself. The genre 'novel' is also an element of the structure, with the previously required 'novel-like' elements added or subtracted to fit under a new literary discourse, *Die Hornisse*.

While Handke's first novel was a redefinition, or re-application of descriptive novels, his second book, *Der Hausierer* (1968) and his *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* (1970), the most widely referenced of his early works, were parodies of the criminal novel, the form of which was familiar to the majority of readers. Handke's random addition and subtraction of key elements of the genre made the established idea of writing a novel to fit for the reader, forcing a text to fit contemporary categories, somewhat trivial.

2.b. Peter Handke *contra* Gruppe 47

In order to define his status among literary figures, Handke juxtaposed his critique with those engaging ideas enumerated by literary circles of 1960 Germany. That gathering was named *Gruppe 47*, a one-time clique of post-war authors who had become an influential voice in literary establishments. Paul Konrad Kurz, a former member of the group, described the founders as a loose conglomeration of authors with social-democratic ideals attempting to transition from World War Two political journalism to

⁴⁰ Handke, *Die Hornisse*, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1966).

descriptive, social-conscious prose through annual meetings in which their works were read aloud for mutual criticism.⁴¹ Soon, however, the entity became a force dominating Post-War literature, commanding attention of the media in areas such as publishing houses, television, radio and cinema. “Seit sich die Gruppe 47, etwa mit dem Ende der 50er Jahre, als eine wichtige Institution der literarischen Öffentlichkeit etabliert hat, gibt es, bis zu ihrem Ende, kritische Fragen und polemische Angriffe. Sie beziehen etwas wie die ‘nationale Repräsentanz’ der West-Deutschen Literatur zu sein.”⁴² Centralized ideals became mandatory elements in literature of and about real things— making the group’s only original organization ‘to have no organization’ contradictory given their imposing influence on post-war European thought.⁴³

To return to Handke’s quote at the opening of Part 2.a., the group’s goal was to be ‘engaged’ in societal issues, real issues, changing the world as they went. The questions they were answering, encompassing post-war reconstruction and Teutonic-identity, changed however, as the goal of being engaged became another genre idealized along side other established writing styles of pre-dominant members such as Hans Werner Richter.⁴⁴ Group 47 had become a discursive giant in the 1950’s and early 1960’s, dominating modern communications with artistic literary, dramatic, cinematic and radio productions. One can see their reactive influence in Kurz’s following quote, “At the beginning, their pure size quieted any dissenters. If two people criticized the group and its ideals, the group attacked with 15 counter theses, silencing the minority view.”⁴⁵

In 1966, however, as the yet unknown Handke entered the scene, many one-time supporters had themselves become outsiders, shunned by the Group because they redefined themselves and their writings, arguing against the glazed-over, social-democratic notion of its founding members. To interpret this event through my own

⁴¹ Paul Konrad Kurz, *On Modern German Literature*, vol. III, (Birmingham: Alabama Press, 1972), 89.

⁴² Akademie der Kunst, *Richter und Dichter: Die Gruppe 47 und die deutsche Nachkriegsliteratur*, (Berlin: Brüder Hartman, 1988), 321.

⁴³ Kurz, *On Modern German Literature*, 90.

⁴⁴ *Richter und Dichter*, 321.

⁴⁵ Kurz, *On Modern German Literature*, 92.

critique, as members of the Group were ostracized for unpopular beliefs, the group itself had reached the Production Stage of discourse formation in which all information was interpreted through specific, necessary, centralized ideas. The livelihood as a group was based on a continuation of set patterns of thought and writing that had become an over-established *Manier*, as Handke called New Realism in his essay *Ich bin ein Bewohner des elfenbeinturms*.⁴⁶ New Realism left no room for change or varying interpretation: one had to have the normalized perspective in order to understand what is, and what is was reality.

Slowly, experimentalists were hoping to define their own literary art without engrained habits. Peter Handke was one such redefiner who at a Tagung of Group 47 in 1966, made a name for himself with a diatribe against picturesque description focused on an external world and universal view. This action against Group 47 allowed others to question a universal interpretation of art, leading to individual textualizations of the world. Once Handke's fame and notoriety spread, steadfast members of the group became known for their reaction to Handke's appearance and youthful status instead of responding to his ideas. Joachim Kaiser referred to him as "ein junger Mann der aussieht wie ein Mädchen."⁴⁷ These red herring assaults did little but reinforce Handke's ideas; the established, post-war literary standards the group had so strongly defeated were themselves directing the group.

One can see that Handke's style was growing out of the shadow of this group as he attempted to define himself; his voice was not valued by contemporary criticism because it was not established. From Handke's career explosion in the early 1970's, his berating of Group 47 seemed from the outside to be a stepping stone for the young idealistic author who made his mark through criticism of the overall purpose and demeanor of the group. "It [Group 47] has a cartel like nature," Martin Walser said in

⁴⁶ Peter Handke, "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms," *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt am/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 19-29.

⁴⁷ Joachim Kaiser, interviewed by Jürgen Schütte, *Dichter und Richter*, 21.

1964, “the once spoken force of democracy is in dire need of a breath of democracy itself.”⁴⁸ Handke was one of the bellows, blowing on the smoldering fire, and his castigation helped extinguish the significance of the Group, leading to a yet to be defined relationship of an author, in this case Handke, to his text.

Handke’s reaction to Group 47’s externally focused literary style was intentional and self-made. The polarization of ‘Handke *contra* Group 47’—a move some critics have called simply an effective publicity gag and not real criticism--⁴⁹ was a way of structuring literature that eventually propelled him to the action of writing, rather than continuing in an established pattern of meaning formation. Contrary to New Realism, literature became a stylistically finished product of an ongoing development of meaning rather than define literature as a complete representation of what ‘is.’ Handke’s prose became a vehicle for Handke’s thoughts, not a palette onto which he painted a world available for everyone. One can see this change from previously mentioned interview with Herbert Gamper, in which Handke explained his own writing ideals, “Also das, was ich mir vorgenommen habe, dann nur am Schreibtisch aufzuschreiben, zu verknüpfen, zu verwirklichen, das genügt überhaupt nicht. Es sind ja immer diese zwei Sachen: Konstruktion—und dann dies vielleicht stupide Hoffnung, daß sich in der Arbeit ein schöner Umweg ergibt, daß ein Ding, das immer bedeutungslos war, in der Erzählung zu einer Art Ziending, oder zu einem Sinnding wird—nur für die Erzählung natürlich.”⁵⁰

Handke’s prose was focused on describing a ‘real’ place; ‘real,’ however, is defined by an active understanding rather than based on the physical world. Durzak’s critique of Handke’s early self-reflective prose was valid, but his negative judgement concerning its relevance is doubtful. Handke’s early texts provided few discursive relationships that Durzak or other critics could elevate to the level of ‘established,’ and therefore could not be related to other known ideals. There was a yet unmapped function,

⁴⁸ Kurz, *On Modern German Literature*, 93.

⁴⁹ Gehard Pfister, *Handke’s Mitspieler*, 60.

⁵⁰ Handke, *Aber ich Lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen*, 27.

f(h), called 'Handke.' As a young author he was attempting to decipher the various perceptual relationships among elements of thought that made him different from his contemporaries. Handke was more interested in how he related to himself and his world than devising a social theory necessitating proper interaction and reflecting on that 'truth' through writing. His literature began as a mapping of various relationships that he perceived, that he experienced, that he related through the text. As Handke mentioned his critiques began and ended with 'the telling' [die Erzählung], devaluing the role of the author as soon as the text was written.

His reaction to Group 47 was an active renaming, and only as a term is related *to something* does it have any meaning. As mentioned in the example of an infant perceiving for the first time, a self-referential name is totally free, unbound by categorical relationships and necessary patterns of thought. However, unrelated names are meaningless. Group 47's influence had become over-powering in many forms of communicative medium, creating meaning defined by the group, influenced by media and accepted by individuals. The culture became the definition for meaning, yet the culture from which New Realism derived its ideals became defined by the ideals themselves, relativizing any meaning created by the group. Handke's active use and questioning of meaning in his texts made ideals once thought to be that around which everything else revolved, random elements of a yet-to-be defined discourse void of meaning.

In addition to his prose works, Handke's early career also parodied the structure of theatre as a genre in need of redefinition. Though this paper does not employ its criticism directly towards drama and its ideals, Handke's *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (1966) is worth mentioning simply because it followed the same form of employing random elements once thought to be necessary under the genre title 'drama.' In so doing, Handke staged the discourse of 'drama' on the stage creating a realm free for the author's arbitrary will. Early in the 20th Century, theatre's primary goal was either pedagogical--

to alienate the audience from the experience through renditions of historical events, fictional, contemporary or futuristic scenes in order to teach. Or, theatre was used to display talent and ability of the creator to represent reality on stage. In Handke's theatre, he was trying to teach, but not in the simplistic brechtian manner. Skill was involved, yet it was not the focus. Theatre was no longer a tool used to influence or emblemize another discourse, a discourse called 'reality.' Handke's parody allowed theatre to become a discourse all its own, a function in which elements could be added or subtracted at will. Plot, setting and character development, central ideas previously thought essential to a good drama, no longer occupied a place of importance having been relegated to plebian status, something that could be removed or added upon the will of the author. Ironically, Handke placed the entire genre of theatre in a representation in order to rearrange its elements. The brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* was no longer necessary for the drama to be pedagogical. As with his critique of the stagnant Group 47, in this experimental theatre, the structurality or the function of the genre remained as the author allowed himself to redefine the internal structure and its elements.

Handke's main argument against Group 47's authors and ideals was that they were literary photographers, not writers. Handke did not want to describe 'that which was,' a truth outside all rational knowledge. Art, especially literature, was to be focused on the possibilities of understanding; language must be used to fulfill that action. Handke believed crafts of facsimile, i.e. photography, existed to perform the duties of description: "Warum plagt man sich mühsam um die sogenannten passenden Worte und schreibt dann doch nur ab, in überkommener Form, als wäre man ein Ersatzwissenschaftler? Da wäre es doch viel einfacher zu fotografieren."⁵¹ To do so was to perpetuate a type of tunnel vision in which one saw only what one was trained to see. Handke believed literature was action, allowing one to participate in reality rather than record it. He wanted to perpetually perceive and therefore understand differently; relaying this process was the

⁵¹Handke, "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms," 32.

goal of literature. Otherwise, literature was a simplified facsimile telling the reader what the reader already knew, reinforcing the dominant ideals.

Handke's early novels, essays and dramatical productions encompassed the initial reaction stage of this Revisited Naming. The genre *On Handke* began, however, not so much with his initial works themselves, but with the experience of Handke's incorporation of the necessary elements of a literary text within the text, creating a place in which each element could be valued only in relation to its use. This allowed Handke to take a stance against the established discourse of his time. Because he formed his critique around previous ideals, Handke's writings were part of a rearranging, not redefining, and his critique formed the basic writing patterns for what would later be called 'Handke.' However, because his initial works were themselves not a propagation of any specific type of established genre, he was free to redefine that which he considered literature. Criticism was not to be lost; the genre would still want to categorize his strange literary habits in terms of past categories.

From the opening page of my own analysis, one could, if one were so inclined, notice Handke's texts were to be valued as a distant second to the thought and critique birthed from his works: how were Handke's texts interpreted? How have the texts and the author been defined? Handke, too, began his career as one of the engagers, one of a group of 'critics.' Without Handke's intentional separation from the fixed literature of New Realism, there would be no discourse *On Handke*, no naming of difference or separation of meaning. Naturally, he would perpetuate the ideas of his forefathers, whose goal was to participate in the already established precepts of reality through literary mimicking. He diverged from the realistic interpretation of reality, however, because of his notion of "participation" in a constantly changing discourse, $[f(h)=\text{Handke}, f(?)=\text{reality}, f(h)f(?)=\text{experience}]$, required continuous redefinition of the mental relationships through literature instead of requiring literature to copy already established ideals, thus perpetuating unverifiable truths.

As can be seen from the example of Handke and Group 47, initiation of one discourse requires the retirement of another. The retirement stage of discourse development will be discussed in a later section, but for now, retired can be defined as ‘a pattern of thought valuable only in relation to itself and no longer meaningful compared with other usages.’⁵² Retirement does not mean, however, unused. Handke overused and relativized the necessary elements of New Realism in his early texts, allowing the ideals to become as meaningless as the reality they defined.

The period in Handke’s life between 1966-1973 was situated between the established literary genres of previous generations, assimilated and reacted against by a young author and the emerging patterns of his own personal discourse. One cannot say why, or give reason or justification for Handke’s reaction toward what he called unrealistic portrayals of life through literature, though a simple yet thought provoking answer would be that he just interpreted the world differently. This word *different* is replaced by Kuhn with the term ‘arbitrary.’⁵³ Or, one could say Handke saw the possibility that the world *could* be interpreted individually, could be given meaning in an intentional, mental relationship formation and that universal, normal views of reality were not necessarily valid. To abstract from this notion: a world described is a world unlived. If one participates in creating relationships, the language one uses should be singular, describing how things are *perceived* not how things *are*. Kuhn called the varying opinions among scientists a simple difference in perspective that emerges and develops perspectival interpretations of reality. To situate a ‘Normal’ science, or a single, universal perspective as encompassing and dictating how one should interpret all reality is to allow one element from within the text to govern all the other elements. As Kuhn stated, “For many years I took them [normal scientific axioms] to be about the nature of knowledge, and I still suppose that, appropriately recast, they have something important to tell us. Yet my attempts to apply them, even *grosso modo*, to the actual

⁵² Part III, 45.

situations in which knowledge is gained, accepted, and assimilated have made them seem extraordinarily problematic.”⁵⁴ Single interpretations require re-interpretations if the elements contradict the established theory. Revisited Naming is the already mentioned stage of revaluation.

As we will see in the next section, the grids and patterns Handke developed in *Die Hornisse* and *Der Hausierer*, as well as in other short stories, radio programs and dramatic production have been abstracted from the text and expressed by theorists and critics, giving the reader a frame of reference or ‘knowledge’ of the inner workings of a Handke text ‘in general.’ After specific internal patterns were established, their influence slowly became understood as the foundation for the discourse *On Handke*. Handke’s writing then began to show signs and patterns of an established genre, of new individualized literature—or, critics began searching for signs of already established discourses reflecting culturally accepted ideals. One must note that even if a discourse is rejected it is still accepted, at least in ontological recognition, since the value was placed higher than those discourses not even acknowledged. To devalue a discourse is not to reject but to recognize its elemental relationships as the provisional meaning. The following section will outline the nominal relationship within *On Handke*—the author, his texts and his critics-- all of which defined the direction the young writer would take in his relationship formations within his texts. By ‘nominal’ I mean ‘named.’ By ‘named’ I mean ‘an established relationship.’ By ‘established relationship’ I mean ‘unchanging, fundamental genre.’

⁵³ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

Section Three: The Production Phase applied to ‘Peter Handke’

3.a. Production: Criticism’s Role in Discourse Definition

From the outline of discourse development given in Part I, the initial stage of Revisited Naming in the literaterary discourses can be understood as the value given to the relationship an author’s text has to those ideals held by the dominant views of the time. In Handke’s case, this was represented by his reaction to the New Realism of Group 47. Again, a name is placed on the relationship between two elements rather than an ideal or independent comparison. As was already mentioned, Handke’s critique of New Realism was more theory than practice in his early literary works—his prose enacted questions dealing with the validity of universal perspectives as opposed to creating an all-encompassing genre himself. The name we have investigated was “Handke *contra* Group 47,” giving us an initial relationship. We may now look at the Production stage of discourse development, an outline of which will approach the following questions: Did this initial relationship come to dominate Handke criticism? How does a discourse that did not want to become defined, become defined? What role does criticism play in that definition?

A discourse reaches the Production stage when the subject reacts to new and old stimulus by repeating known ideas. Religion reaches the Production stage of discourse development when Dogma is established: rituals become based on, and made to reinforce ideal beliefs. In Literature, I refer to the Production stage as that of an established genre: texts become written to conform to culturally accepted categories. Each subsequent discourse creates some ideal forcing the element outside the discourse, defining how the internal relationships develop, maintain popularity and in Group 47’s case, falls from favor.

In New Realism, the repeated ideal was to make one's description as close as possible to an ideal reality in order to allow people to reflect on the text and therefore change their lives. Handke relativized this 'true reality' copied through literature, creating a discourse of yet to be defined terms based not on external truths but on internal relationships. For prose to capture Handke's internal idea, he attempted to describe perception, not the perceived world. Why? Because Handke believed that as perception develops, one's understanding of that which is perceived changes, allowing reality to be perpetually new. Only gradually did Handke's internally focused prose grow into its own recognition, disassociating itself from the initial comparison with past ideals. Only gradually does any new discourse become accepted, not as an alternative to an established discourse, but as a discourse able to stand on the active relationships within its own internal structure. This can be seen in criticism's shift from 'Handke *contra* Group 47' to 'Handke *contra* Handke' as they abstracted elements that appeared to 'Handke-like.' Through criticism, ideals will be abstracted from a text, creating known relationships within.

As a critic, then, how does one critique a discourse that is different from the establishment, a discourse that defies external definition? Any attempt at criticism seems to lead one to a signification based on norms, placing the text in a genre. This occurs because criticism itself is in the Production stage of discourse development: established elements from within criticism are compared with the text to formulate a knowledge base for the critic, the reader and the author. By 1974, Handke had established a name in literary circles based on his symbolic novels and the association to his reaction to Group 47. For his ideas to become distributed, to become known, Handke would need various critical views to establish understandable patterns within his texts not dependant upon, as Durzak wrote, the author's own interpretation. Those intermingled relationships between Handke, his critics and his texts form the discourse I have called *On Handke*.

But what does it mean to be a discourse? The establishment of an internal structure is the focus of the second stage of discourse establishment: Production. In the previous section called Revisited Naming, we defined the first stage as the result of an encounter with a new idea. The subject, a discourse with specific habits of understanding, either reacts against specific elements, causing the subject to fall back into established patterns of understanding, or the subject participates in the development of new relationships between the old and the new: one engages oneself in reality. The Production stage occurs as one reacts to the arbitrary formation of mental concepts and association, repeating patterns and engraining reference points, eventually forcing the subject into habitual thought. This activity can be seen in the following functional relationship.

The function ' $f(n)$ ' is the action of relating all elements, represented here as (n) . Production occurs when several relational patterns of the function $[f(n)]$ become named and therefore known. This eventually leads specific elements to stand in for the discourse itself. Group 47 had achieved the level of production, propagating ideals without conscious effort. Established patterns create a safe, known structure within which comfortably reigns. Subjects within this stage will protect the established boundary in a reactionary manner if new thought patterns are introduced. Handke introduced foreign concepts into the established discourse called New Realism. Without repetition and dissemination of his not-yet-established beliefs, which later became the foundation on which this paper is based, Handke would have remained unknown. His new ideas would have been his ideas: unshared, uncriticised, and personal. However, as will happen with persistent media exposure and engaged criticism, patterns began to develop, associations are made by critics and the author becomes 'known.' Ideas abstracted from Handke's texts slowly became reference points. Knowledge of his texts, or actively made associations between two or more conceptual things brought this author

out of an experimental group and into an established discourse, or into several discourses. Critics began to establish relationships generating texts based *On Handke*.

A discourse then, as defined in the introduction and reapplied here, is the arbitrary function of relating elements. Revisited Naming relates present with past elements. The stage of Production is that of an established, intentional relationship relating present with past elements. The function, $f(\text{Handke})$, will always carry with it certain meaning because specific interpretations such as “reactionary,” “linguistic,” “Austrian,” etc., are habitual thoughts through which one should read Handke’s entire collection of texts. This stage can be viewed from two sides: as a critic or as the author. The actual texts the author has written are themselves merely an element of this contemporary discourse. I use ‘contemporary’ for in no other time have texts been so heavily weighted by the multiplicity of necessary elements required for artistic integrity. These requirements, however, have turned texts into reproductions of cultural ideals, rather than displaying artistic freedom. Handke, the author, views his own texts as an activity of engaging reality. Given that the definition of a discourse changes depending on the elements, Handke also plays the role of the critic in his providing his own definition: he applies a externally given narrative to his texts that is and is not representative of a text. A critic incorporates his own elements and ideas that eventually shape the author to react for or against a given genre. If a critic, even Handke, says a text such as *Das Gewicht der Welt*, means (n), the meaning in all subsequent experiences of the text could be influenced for all who read it, eliminating freedom of interpretation.

In this critique of the discourse *On Handke*, the focus has been on the relationship of criticism to the development of discourse. The initial criticism in this paper is directed more towards criticism itself than to any specific Handke work. The reason? Handke is an author who intentionally did not want to be defined by contemporary categorization, yet he has been boxed, packaged and shipped to all readers along with a ‘critical companion’ purporting to unveil the correct reading. It appears that an attempt to be

active in reality through literature is counter-productive: criticism continually emphasizes one or two elements from a text and forces those elements to 'represent' that which the author intended. To focus solely on one element, give it meaning and have it stand in for the entire discourse, forces the function of the elements to be subject to that interpretation instead of the interplay of the elements. Eventually, criticism requires the author to write a text as the critic would read it, as the text should properly fit into societal categories instead of emphasizing the elements already within the text. Future texts will not be about the changing perceptions within the author, within a changing structurality, but about criticism.

The Production Stage of discourse development begins when a literary *modus operandi* becomes established for any given author, at any given time for any given text. Critics begin to ask specific, leading questions, defining patterns to be introduced to the writing. Commonalties are sought among a set of texts written by various authors. Some such questions are, 'what elements are present in a specific work?', 'How is this work related to previous works by the same author?' and 'How is this text related to other texts of the same pattern?' The purpose of criticism has been to establish general limits from which one can deduce the relation a text has to these peripheral, external boundaries. For an author making a name for himself, his text has to reach the Production Stage in which the general boundaries are called genre. Subsequently, written texts become not so much written as the author would be free to write, but as the author reacts to, or conforms with external boundaries set by criticism, confining him to either accept or reject these ideals instead of engaging the text itself. As Handke would say, the author would be *engaged* to reality instead of *engaging* reality.

One of the results of criticism is that ideas applied to a text become accepted as 'true,' or as existing within the text instead of as an attachment, an appendix added to by a critic trained in a particular type of mental association, i.e. a psychologist will think with a psychological vocabulary which will influence his interpretation of any text.

When applied to a text, these patterns of association can become so engrained that the critic abstracts elements, many of which ‘stand in’ for the text itself. Even one element can be abstracted from the text and become a derridaian ‘center’ around which the entire text is thought to revolve. As I delve into the role of criticism in Handke’s self-definition and newly-forming textual orientation, I will delimit the dominant patterns and ideal centers critics have applied to Handke’s texts that have developed into the structure versed readers associate with being more-or-less ‘Handke-esque.’

3.b. The Production Phase: Establishing Patterns *On Handke*

Beginning with Handke’s first experimental novels, one of the earliest, if not the first ‘center’ associated with Handke’s prose came from the author, “Literatur ist für mich lange Zeit das Mittel gewesen, über mich selber, wenn nicht klar, so doch klarer zu werden.”⁵⁵ Here Handke becomes the critic of his own work, no longer the author of a self-referential text, deriving patterns he interwove within the text as he played the author role. Since that time, all major critics of Handke’s works describe this style as personally illustrative as he delves into his own perception, adding excerpts of his own life to all his texts. However, Handke’s works cannot be categorized as the conventional ‘autobiographical’ text simply because the style in which the author wrote was a self-reflective thought processes applied to fictional characters within the text. From this generalization, any written text can be said to come from the author’s thoughts and be autobiographical.

Nicholas Meyerhofer, in the introduction to a collection of essays titled *Contemporary Austrian Writers and Autobiography: The Fiction of the I*, wrote that Handke expanded the genre of autobiographical fiction established by the Austrian author, Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989), “...to include personae other than himself. Yet

the reader soon understands that they [the characters] are little more than self-extensions of the author, that is, metaphoric personages who mirror his own problems and semantic qualities.”⁵⁶ This characterization, however, is not so much relegated to an interpretation of Handke’s specifically autobiographic books such as *Wünschloses Ünglück* (1972), which recounts Handke’s memories of his mother after her suicide, or *Das Gewicht der Welt* (1978), written in the form of daily journal entries. This interpretation has been applied to Handke’s entire corpus, defining all of Handke’s works as somehow related to Handke’s self. Handke wanted to understand his thoughts and writing was the tool to himself. He wanted his readers to know that in writing, he was questioning vicariously through his characters the various perceptual habits he developed over the years.

Criticism of Handke’s texts became criticism of personal thoughts.

From this externally established characterization of the intent of Handke’s writings, criticism of Handke’s work helped blend two previously established discourses, creating the genre of ‘auto-fiction.’ In building new relationships, Handke helped create a new genre from which to work. This new category was not specific to Handke alone; many developing writers of the 1960-1970’s German-speaking Europe applied self-reflective ideas to all texts. Interpretations of *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung* are prime examples of the critical reader, informed of this particular definition, adding the relationship the author ‘Handke’ has to the text as the filter through which one should interpret the main character’s psychotic episodes. Most, if not all critics apply established, generic psychological patterns to this text resulting in a criticism focused more on interpretation than on book themselves. In Tilmann Moser’s *Romane als Krankengeschichten*, Handke’s *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung* is interpreted as a psychological portrait of a man coming to grips with a distorted perception.⁵⁷ Moser

⁵⁵ Handke, “Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms,” 19.

⁵⁶ Nicholas J. Meyerhofer, Introduction, *Contemporary Austrian Writers and Autobiography: The Fiction of the I*, (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1999), 3.

⁵⁷ Tilmann Moser, *Romane als Krankengeschichten Über Handke, Meckel, und Martin*, (Frankfurt am/Main: Suhrkamp), 1985.

categorizes the entire book as participating in the realm of psychological disorders, insinuating that all of Handke's works portray an "I" who has some psychological irregularity, "a borderline patient always on the border between consciousness, feeling and experience."⁵⁸ Moser designates Handke's characters as having some mental illness, going so far as to characterize Handke's recounting of his mother's life in, *Wünschloses Unglück* as a sign of clinical depression.⁵⁹ Through this psychological center, all Handke texts would acquire a Gestalt diagnosis, an application of clinical psychology to Handke's writing in order to gain a proper understanding.

There is also the Semantic Center, a perch from which one can dissect all of Handke's works. As mentioned in the previous section, language is active and meaning cannot translate from one usage to another. Each time a word is used, it has new meaning. If it were otherwise, the function, or name, would define the elements instead of the elements defining the situation. In theory, words are intended to have a singular usage. Criticism, however, even in its attempt to communicate this singular usage, has abstracted an initial meaning from Handke's texts and made it valid for all subsequent application. The desire to be active, the initial intent to engage reality through writing has become thwarted as any subsequent critique makes the initial meaning valid for each subsequent reading. An example of which can be seen in the following quote, "Mit diesem Roman erhielten wir einen 'neuen' Handke: keine Experimente, keine Sprachstudie; stattdessen ein 'positiver' Held mit einer Schuldhaften Existenz. Handkes Widerwillen gegen die Beschreibungsliteratur ist verschwunden. Somit ist die Barrikade der Wittgensteinschen Manier gebrochen, der Sprach-formalismus verschwunden."⁶⁰

This seemingly new idea of active meaning is also made stagnant by Michael Linstead as he revisits a quote in which Handke cites Wittgenstein as saying, "Die Bedeutung eines

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ Honza, "Randbemerkungen zu Handkes Prosa," 33.

Wortes ist sein Gebrauch.”⁶¹ As one can see from the citation in this text, this quote no longer refers to Wittgenstein, nor Handke and his initial use though his essay, “Die Literature is Romantisch.”⁶² Criticism has taken over and the interpretation of Handke’s justification for using this quote can no longer be singular to a specific text, but *must* encompass his entire corpus. As we will see, even Handke’s goal of writing as action has become defined as one is required to interpret all works through the same semantic filter necessitated by criticism. Regardless of the text, Handke will be interpreted through this quote and other specific diagnoses. Contemporary criticism centralizes individual ideals, normalizes structures and requires specific thought; most of which is dictated through cultural ideals. Psychology and semiotics are simply “signs of the times.”

This critique, on the other hand, is an interpretation of a nominal system that provides a means for criticism to understand the text in relation to a constantly changing experience. Handke has provided a means for this critique because of his emphasis on active writing. How is it that an author becomes defined by the means through which he breaks definition? Ironically, the Production Stage in which a discourse becomes ‘known’ is at the core of Handke’s own criticism of the establishment of externally focused literature of Group 47. The function of relationship formation in New Realism became a pre-existing set of elements, allowing little or no freedom of association on the part of the subject, author or reader and their arbitrary mental associations. In productive discourses, terms always mean a singular interpretation, ‘n’ instead of a set of relationships, (n), regardless of other possible means of interpretation. The thinker is then enslaved to invariably relate elements of a discourse in the established patterns.

To re-interpret the psychological interpretation of Handke’s works, one can see that Handke places seemingly ‘normal’ people—‘normal,’ must be seen as another discourse already in the Production stage-- in what is thought to be abnormal situations.

⁶¹ Michael Linstead, *Outer World and Inner World: Socialization and Emancipation in the works of Peter Handke, 1964-1981*, (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 202.

The once pivotal *unerhörte Begebenheit* of a well-written novel becomes an expected event as the author experiments with “normal” thoughts in an abnormal situation. Handke’s text, *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung*, engages various patterns of perceptual discourse development: the subject f(n), with its previously established pattern of thought, is placed in a situation in which the function is no longer valid, therefore changing the entire process of relationship-forming. That which the character encounters is then recreated in the mind of the main character, or author, re-fabricating the already arbitrary associations in any number of possible situations. The arbitrary experience becomes new for the author, the character and the reader if left undefined by criticism. The experience becomes rote if categorized.

During the Production stage, two noticeable effects occur when singular interpretations of meaning are added to a text. First, an element of the author’s work becomes omniscient within the text, governing each relationship, creating a stagnant meaning unrelated to the text itself. Second, those readers not versed in the concurrent criticism will be said to not experience the ‘true’ nature of the text. Those versed in the established criticism will read Handke believing they know that he incorporates his own psychological nuances through linguistic and semantic paradoxes into the text; they will know he does not write the within normal genre of the “Criminal Novel,” the “Autobiography,” “Novel” or “Drama.” What criticism defines him in other terms such as, “Austrian Literature,” “Auto-fiction,” “Linguist” or even create a new genre for Handke and others through which they can be christened “New Subjectivity.” In this use, to *know* means the reader is *required* to interpret his works through these pre-established associations. From this requirement, it can be said that Handke disdains psychological interpretations, though not just this center, but all pre-established literary dogma because they require a stagnant reading in which one fulfills one’s expectations or what one has been *taught* to see. Literary criticism creates the dichotomy of Initial

⁶² Handke, “Die Literatur ist Romantisch,” *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt/Main:

Naming in which a discourse “is” or “is not” of a certain category. As a writer, one reaches the Production stage of writing when the author writes as the critical reader reads: to fit, or react against the genre established for the author. There is no in-between, no variation of meaning, ideas or relationships within the text.

Handke wrote that psychological interpretations separate the “I,” or the hero, from the author, when they are always one and the same because texts are a flowing from the mind of the writer. A text is an author’s intentional self-unfolding, a self-repeating into words; both always without external filters of required thought.”⁶³ As soon as a text becomes unwilled and is written to fit the established category, the meaning conveyed is a stagnant recopying of an established, singular ideal. To interpret an intentional singular text through unintentional universal categories, as modern criticism attempts, immobilizes the meaning within. As can be seen from the previous section, Handke initiated his career with an intentional critique of an established form of literary production made popular through disseminated singular ideas. He replaced these inactive concepts with those that were individual to him and their relative use in the text. Those realistic ideas of Group 47 were at one time called *new* just as Handke was placed in a group called *New Subjectivity*. As Handke became more read, widely distributed and extensively interpreted, patterns were established out of which readers read him, out of which he began to write himself. As with Moser’s psychological interpretation, many ‘centers’ developed until a structure formed and required patterns of reading developed that also influenced how this author wrote his texts.

Even from my re-interpretation of the established psychological interpretation, one can see that a Handke-like character actively participates in his understanding of his understanding, not in his understanding of Reality. This reinterpretation of an interpretation leads directly into an example of the first of two types of stagnant textual criticism found in the Production Stage: the existence of omniscient elements and natural

Suhrkamp, 1972), 37.

interpretation. Gerhard Pfister wrote that critical interpretations have been inserted into Handke's works as if they were there from the outset to 'stand in' for the entire text.⁶⁴ This 'standing in' can be seen in relation to his novel *Der Chinese des Schmerzens* (1979). Pfister recounted a conflict that occurred in the early 1980's from the various interpretations of this book: "The [literary] struggle in the 1980's had to deal with Handke's book, as with Handke's early works and the "political absenteeism" and a "new inner focus," as the private sphere was placed before the political. Slowly the text itself lost all importance in the discussion of textual focus as the critics fought over the exegesis of their own critical texts as related to this issue."⁶⁵

What Pfister recounted is a common trait in the Production stage of discourse development: an issue of importance, a simple relational pattern made by the critic and inserted into the text is used to manipulate the interpretation of the entire text to satisfy external goals. Derrida wrote that as this centralization occurs, the structure of the text becomes founded on that one element instead of on the various relationships within, instead of the *structurality* of the discourse itself.⁶⁶ As the text becomes permeated by one interpretation, all sight of other relationships within becomes filtered through the specific function, removing the reader, the critic or the author from the text. Thereafter, critics interpret texts on a meta-level, a level in which critically established ideas are themselves the focus of the text, creating an imaginary, meta-discourse through which authors criticize an intentional meaning rather than the text itself, most of which has been lost under a sea of post-operative argumentation. Pfister's answer to this event, as well as Handke's, is to base any opinion on the analysis of specific texts on the structurality of relationships within instead of the intentional structure imposed *a posteriori*.

After his style and ideals were outlined, Handke's texts were no longer needed, just the critical arguments. This action left the text out of any critical discussion, as can

⁶³Herbert Gamper, Introduction, *Aber ich lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen*, 9.

⁶⁴Pfister, *Handkes Mitspieler*, 57.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 58.

be seen in the conflict of 1980's in which singular ideals were made to support political arguments based not on Handke's texts, but on political arguments. Once patterns are set, a name is established and elements numbered and labeled as a "finite set," the function can be related to other functions without any relation to the original elements. The argument becomes fixed, both uninfluenced and unchanging. Through a normalized, critical approach to Handke's career, his texts can be seen through a natural formula, a "succession of centers" as Derrida called it, conforming to the history of ontological values.⁶⁷ Sometime after 1963, criticism valued the idea that Handke shifted from his early formalistic period focused on his influence on the role of literature to one focused on the realm of life, the private-sphere of self-redefinition. Pfister noted that the following debate continues to fuel critical fires: Are there actual changes in Handke's works from period to period or is there simply a continual theme of change running through his corpus?⁶⁸ If there was a change, how was criticism involved? My contention is that the process of development proceeded, but was made stagnant by required categorization. Criticism has taken desired elements that support a specific claim and amplified the meaning, forcing the text to be interpreted through the specific element, or change from one element to another, and Handke either reacted against the belief or accepted the elements as 'true.'

After omniscience, the second effect of critical centralization is the exclusivity it brings to experience, both of the text and of reality. Singular meaning breeds occlusive interpretations giving rise to a required view of reality. Singular interpretations of reality give rise to 'natural' interpretations of texts. By 'natural' I refer to the belief that lasting meaning is implicit in the text, or pre-existing, instead of imposed by the author and the reader. Either way, as an interpretation becomes more ingrained, critics *must* explain texts and perception as designated by rules of interpretation, in an abstract form of a pre-

⁶⁶ Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play," 278.

⁶⁷ Pfister, *Handkes Mitspieler*, 62.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 57-71.

established 'Genre of Sense,' turning all relationships into meaningful beings instead of permitting fluctuant understanding. This occurred as Group 47 established requirements for its texts to be considered part of 'New Realism.' Through criticism, this stagnancy also came to Handke in his very fight against it: Handke became a stagnant discourse defined by those critics who wrote *On Handke*.

Slowly, Kuhn's arbitrary or individual element lost importance as a genre established itself that delimited the functional range of elemental interaction a text must employ for it to be worthy of the name 'Handke.' This delimitation provided a way for the critic to read a text and a framework in which the author wrote to fit the discourse. Russell Brown elaborated in his book *Names in Modern German Literature*, that Handke's literary style has developed from his early works of absorbing the real world in consciousness, or in texts, so that his protagonists became disoriented, inarticulate and often violent.⁶⁹ The internal goals of self-understanding became an externally focused *Manier* of proselytizing correct literature so that by the time Handke wrote his *Der Chinesen des Schmerzens*, his "New" Subjectivity had become an established discourse with patterns through which he thought, wrote, and was critiqued. The once-free Author became subject to the rules he and his critics slowly set for texts that could be considered "Handke-like." As he became a practiced and versed author, Handke trusted himself to know movements and patterns of writing prose, drama, even a bit a poetry, stating that "the rules he had created or accepted and boxed himself in as a youth had been internalized."⁷⁰

Writing, as well as criticism, had become an application of established patterns to meaningless symbols. For example, an initial psychological interpretation will result in various textual analyses that will in some way reject or assimilate a psychological view of Handke's works. There is only 'either/or.' Other cultural ideals are established in the text by which critics believe Handke wrote his works, creating the stagnant web

⁶⁹ Russell E. Brown, *Names in Modern German Literature*, (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1999), 24.

On Handke, rather than an active text/experience based discourse between Handke, criticism and his texts. Once established, these textual traits became *sought* rather than *found* in the writings. Subsequently, the author wrote to fit the genre through which he was interpreted, creating an ideal function that manipulated the future of created texts. Any freedoms of association become normalized and enslaved as the text is written to fit certain expectations.

In another text, Durzak reiterated his own criticism of Handke's works with the following quote: "Die späteren Arbeiten Handkes sind dem gegenüber von deinem monomanischen narzißmus erfüllt, der alles in ein Ritual der Ichbezogenheit verwandelt und das Ich, gleichsam aus allen Fesseln entlassen und in einer Vakuumkammer der Innerlichkeit frischwebend und ferngerückt, in eine privatistisch Mythologie einhüllt, der der einstige Drang gegen alle Begriffe und Normen, gegen Psychologie und Kausalität nun in einem selbstzeugten System von Bedeutungsaura erliegt."⁷¹ We can see that Handke's language became another focal point, another means to categorize an author who did not appear to want to be categorized.

Note: As soon as criticism has delimited elements existing in the author's texts, the discourse has reached the Production stage of discourse development. During the Production stage, if the author has any role, it is as a critic, like those many other bloodhounds sniffing out any sign of justification for that which they seek. Genre takes the place of 'author' because texts can be produced according delimited boundaries. The function of their understanding, the arbitrary element called 'author' living in a specific time period, becomes important simply because it is an element valued by criticism.

To return to the article, *What is an author?*, Foucault wrote that contemporary writing continues to characterize itself through two approaches: the critical and

⁷⁰Handke, *Aber ich Lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen*, 128.

⁷¹ Durzak, Manfred, *Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart: Entwicklungsvoraussetzungen und Tendenzen*, (Stuttgart, Verlag Kohlhammer, 1979), 467.

religious.⁷² Writing is religious in that a text is believed to have a sacred character that needs be brought out through interpretation.⁷³ Religiosity in texts is the desire to search for something more than the written word. Genre is the categorization of the sacred once that ‘something’ is encountered.

By Foucault’s argument, the second approach to a text, the critical, has claim as an aesthetic character. The text is believed to maintain inherent value and have a claim on meaning past the death or absence of the author, or past the event of it being written in order to fulfill ideological claims, allowing the author to be somehow represented by the text.⁷⁴ Western Tradition believes the author maintains a certain unity in writing, an organizing principle that can in some way be understood through interpretation. In the Production Stage of discourse development, all ownership of a text hides behind the establishment of this organizing principle, the dominant elements that make up the author or the style in question. Various individual elements stand in for the author, depending upon the critic and his internalized elements, leading the critic from the element to the establishment of the ‘unity.’ As mentioned in the previous section, an author’s name is equivalent to a description. The descriptive quality in a name arises, however, only when the discourse has been formed and the author categorized by external ideals. To use Foucault’s example, the sacredness of reading Aristotle’s text comes in its categorization: in which category should one place him? Which of his ideas are relevant? Which lines deal with metaphysics? Which words? As soon as this process begins, the text itself becomes secondary to the criticism and its categories. A text becomes known by its reading, by the criticism rather than the writing.

⁷² Foucault, “What is an Author?”, 104.

⁷³ “Sacred Character” is by no means a holy, or sacramental element of a text. ‘Sacred,’ by my interpretation, follows that as one reads the text with a certain understanding of what *should* be there, or of how one *ought to* read. From this reading one will naturally make relationships within the text that are coherent with one’s understanding of reality. This could mean a religious character or a secular character devoid of meaning: both of these readings will have designated outcomes as long as they are held to strictly.

⁷⁴ Foucault, “What is an Author,” 105.

From an established, critical view, there is no difficulty in the application of a text to something rather than reading and simply understanding specific relationships within the text. The elements of criticism, i.e. psychological, epistemological, ontological, literary and scientific scrutiny become categories out of which all texts are then read and valued. In Production, reality is predefined through intentional questions further necessitating that the text match the defined reality because if it does not, a critic will interpret the discourse outside the categories—thus enclosing the text even further-- and react to the text as ‘not worthy’ of a specific genre. The function or name becomes pre-established, *a priori* as Foucault called it, and the author’s name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set, the sacred, elements that indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture.⁷⁵ To read the text as it is means to devalue one’s own importance, one’s own ideals brought to experience. This self-devaluation has been far too great a leap for contemporary criticism, for contemporary culture. Yet in the next section I will offer a means of devaluation in order to return to the text. To do this, however, I must focus on the ideals of criticism as they stand today.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

Section Four: Retirement of a Literary Discourse applied to ‘Peter Handke’

4.a. 1980-Present: Peter Handke Revisited

Through this critique, the attention to criticism and how it has related to the development of Peter Handke as an established discourse has been building until this point: if an element within a text becomes that which defines the text, how does one recreate an element of the ideal? In a sacred approach to a text—an approach Kuhn criticized in his critique of ‘Normal Science’-- an author or idea is *produced* through criticism of the various interpretations of the elemental nature of similar texts, re-enforcing an established genre and its patterns of thought. Criticism has become the center around which literature is manipulated. Through this view, we know Handke less through his texts than through the various views *On Handke*. However, if criticism is turned on itself, as I am attempting, its objectivity, its rigor, its validity becomes self-reflective and cannot be related to its intended discourse, literature. Criticism becomes void of meaning, becomes an element with that stagnant relationship. This meaninglessness, however, allows for new associations to develop within criticism, associations that will be sought in the following section.

Through some of his texts written after 1980, Handke enacted this Retirement stage of discourse development, making the various elements once deemed “Handke-like” dependent upon their use and not their metaphysical relationship to the author. The purpose: to continue to redefine his changing relationships with reality through his texts. Certain critics will, however, continue to see that which they seek because the search for that which they already know they will find is so pervasive. Criticism will continue to relate texts to specific patterns established for the author. Foucault wrote that one cannot simply say the author has disappeared, though not because he is important to the analysis

of a text. The author is still vital to interpretation because, through criticism, he has been idealized. The text becomes an aesthetic remnant behind the categorized patterns.⁷⁶ The idea of an author will remain a 'center' within the discourse of criticism as applied to literature because he is important to criticism, not to the text. As with the genre 'mystery novel,' 'New Subjectivity' or even 'Drama,' each artistic text has a specific set of characters that must be delimited in order to be properly understood. The idea 'author' has been essential to the formation of the specific set, that is, until now. In this revisited view, the author becomes a critic as soon as the text is written, just like everyone else: he is no longer the author who wrote the text but a new set of elements, [f(?)], and his external interpretation will color the interpretation of each subsequent reader. This coloring occurred by Handke's interpretation of his own texts, mentioned by Durzak, thus creating definition, a reality to which Handke was required adhere.

This pre-established set of elements was that against which Handke reacted, both at the beginning and redefinition period of his career. The period mentioned in the previous section, Handke as the 'Established Function,' was based on an author writing from predetermined guidelines of centralized criticism. One can notice that after an element is established, all subsequent texts become viewed as either aligned or mal-aligned with these mandatory readings. Foucault's 'sacred' becomes represented by Moser's 'psychology,' Durzak's 'apolitical perspectivalism' and Lindstead's 'Semiotics' because these are the elements sought in the text representative of their relevance to cultural norms. A critic of Austrian literature would see Handke as a representative of all that would be 'Austrian' — or a negation of all that could be Austrian, depending upon the critic's established views. How does one move then, from an established discourse to something undefined? Movement occurs through the retirement of established ideals.

Each of the centers abstracted from Handke's texts are valid if that which is sought is established as an *a priori* function out of which one interprets the elements

⁷⁶ Foucault, *What is an Author?*, 120.

within a text. Criticism is essential to this process because it delimits the genre, or normal writing style and a text's relative proximity to that genre. The function of how a discourse and its elements *should* relate to one another, [f(Handke)], is established before the elements are related. The text is then applied to the function and elemental relationships are forced into place. As in Handke's *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung*, schizophrenia is an established psychological diagnosis, symptoms of which are seen in the main character Gregor Keuschung. From Handke's interpretation as a critic after having written the book, we see that the arbitrary element, or the author during the attempt of writing, did not want a Gestalt diagnosis. Handke's was an interpretation of the character's interpretation: he wanted readers to experience the character experiencing, his mental connections and misapprehensions. He wanted the reader to vicariously experience what the author experiences as he writes. Experience the randomness of the arbitrary element. Handke did not want an interpretation of *meaning*, centralizing one relationship, abstracting one element to fit an *a priori* category of psychological interpretation. In the interview with Herbert Gamper, Handke said he was not writing a psychological novel. A novel does not lend itself to psychological interpretations unless one believes before hand that one should interpret a text as such. Handke called this categorization "...a modern form of blaspheme. Like the tower of Babel was blaspheme against God and his ultimate knowledge and will, Handke thinks that precategorizing human thought in a scientific system is not a valuable part of criticism."⁷⁷ Handke does not question the meaning found through psychological investigation, but its all-encompassing emphasis.

Previously in the same interview, Handke explained the arbitrariness of experience through an everyday example. Handke recalled a time when he was in the market place of Venice and saw the bodies standing and moving; there appeared to be so many bodies. Then he realized, or it realized itself in him, that there was so much empty

⁷⁷ Peter Handke, *Aber ich Lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen*, 133.

space between the people. So he started with the perception of the emptiness and from the emptiness sprang the people.⁷⁸ If one were required to view the world in specific patterns, there would be no variation in thought, no chance to see ‘in between.’

Literature has become ‘interpretation focused’ instead of text based. If, however, the reading of a text were based on the text itself and the experience of the internal relationship of the elements within, where does this leave criticism?

We have noted that after the first stage of Initial Naming, criticism is essential to any Revisited Name. Criticism answers the question: how *does* an element relate to other elements? However, as is the state of contemporary readings, classification and textual comparison, texts eventually become a structure of specific elements, not an engaged participation. Criticism today tells the author how elements *should* relate in textual discourse, restricting any freedom the author has to create random, personal associations. How does one go from a sacred reading to one that is random, relating arbitrary elements? How does one rebuild or redefine change based not on categorized shifts but on meaningless happenings? Handke’s answer is to incorporate criticism into the text, forcing the predominant idea to become an element of a changing discourse instead of an external ‘center’ around which the text must revolve. This process can be seen in his book *Versuch über den gegückten Tag* (1994), which will be critiqued in the second half of this section.

As one settles into the Production Stage of discourse formation, the process of discourse development can take one of two courses: reaction or participation. As mentioned in the section on Revisited Naming, if the subject reacts to a new idea, the reaction is based on established patterns of thought or action, reaffirming habitual beliefs. Further, if a subject automatically uses established patterns of thought and writing, the author is reacting by reaffirming established patterns. In the Reaction Stage, the function of the relationships dictates how the elements should interact, instead of how they are

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

interacting. However, if one participates in the reformation of established beliefs, the once held ‘ideals’ become elements again, ‘relating’ the newly forming discourse. In Participation, the elements within a discourse govern the meaning of a discourse. If criticism is a part of the discourse, a part of the text, its value helps create the meaning without necessary definition. If criticism is external, it necessitates interpretation.

Those individuals who choose to retire an established discourse because their thought and actions have become dictated by the function, relegate the very element that had become an *origin* for all other elemental association, to elemental status itself. In his participation with Group 47, Handke accomplished this by relegating seemingly necessary elements of realism, i.e. the novel and theatre, to arbitrary status. Elements once thought to be *necessary* lose their dominance as the structure reforms, allowing relationships to be themselves a part of the structurality of the discourse. As this occurs in the life of any discourse, the elements and their interaction dictate the function,

[f(n)(n; all possible relationships)],

instead of a single element dictating to the elements their necessary interactions. If the elements change, the meaning of the discourse changes. In Participation, answering the question, ‘what is this text doing?’ in singular action and experience is paramount to answering the question ‘what does this text mean?’ Established criticism defines the meaning before the action of the text is experienced.

As can be seen in Handke’s recollection of this pre-1980 works, his writing style had become habitual, created out of set patterns established over time—even though those patterns were themselves based on continual recreation. The various elements within his texts followed preestablished patterns creating a genre of “Handke-esque” texts, an establishment to which critics such as Durzak and Moser could turn and say, “yes, this is Handke,” instead of looking to the text for help. If one reaches the Production stage of discourse development, in order to retire the necessary interpretation and participate in its renaming, the subject must desire the change. If so, the question

becomes: ‘how does one recreate an arbitrary element out of an established, produced discourse?’ Handke attempted this at the beginning of his career, and we have seen that the very act of allowing new relationships to form became itself defined through the established patterns of criticism.

Note: If an author’s relationship to his reality through writing is continually changing, yet criticism relegates that changing relationship to an established genre, the author will eventually succumb to the patterns of criticism, either through accepting or rejecting their categories. For an author, this process is futile. Regardless of how one participates, if criticism remains constant, continues to apply established ideals to the text, the author will continue with the same structure of writing and interpretation. Without change in the value placed in criticism, all literary discourses will remain stranded in the Production stage of its own development. Contemporary categorization needs to become self-reflexive, therefore meaningless, in order to participate in an active literary style. Otherwise, texts will continue to be written for the lowest common denominator: contemporary normality.

The change in critical emphasis is one purpose of this critique: if literature is to be critiqued, the critic should place the emphasis on the relationships within the text, not on externally established ideals. However, before I explain this idea of ‘arbitrary criticism,’ I would like to re-critique Handke’s own attempt to participate in the redefinition of the productive discourse *On Handke*. This process will allow a text to be what it is, a randomly associated discourse, rather than what criticism wants it to be, a meaningful contribution to the New Subjective genre. The process of this critique will be explained the closing section.

4.b. Recycling: Participating in *Versuch über den geglückten Tag*

In his elongated essay, *Versuch über den geglückten Tag*,⁷⁹ Handke can be seen in a different light—to use another visual metaphor, or understood through the same critical patterns. The critic has the chance to experience the random elements of a questioning text, though tendencies will be to search rather than experience, to define rather than unfold. Redefinition is a difficult volitional process of participation in the unknown. Reaction is a passive process of accepting normalized values.

In critiquing Handke's *Versuch über den geglückten Tag*, any and all use of comparison to previously established discourse would be contrary to that which has been previously argued: even in rejecting the established discourse I would be intentionally reinforcing ideals by which others will define 'Handke-esque' elements, removing the reader from the experience of the text. The purpose of the Participation stage of Revisited Naming is that one is free to experience the text as one's own elementalized discourse, one's own relative way of structuralizing elements-- in my case f(Jameson)-- is allowed to relate to new ideas within the text. In reading this text, psychological evaluations become secondary, become third, fourth, even irrelevant to the notion of answering the question, *Was ist ein geglückter Tag?* For another critic, another reader, the purpose might be something even more esoteric, more individual. The participation part of this interpretation is that we do not have to agree except in the text.

Handke's text is a continuation of a question asked of a culture, a time and a place: *What is a successful day?* From my interpretation, *Versuch...* became the enactment of criticism itself, or criticism has become *Vergegenwärtigt*, made present along with writing instead of a separate genre through which the author, the casual reader and the critic can understand the text: text and criticism are interwoven throughout the writing. The already mentioned question is proposed in various forms, as well as

answered through the various filters of a modernist, a man of antiquity and even a monotheist view of 'success.' The modernist would pose the question of a successful life, the classical man would desire a successful moment in which all reality is present, and the monotheist would inquire as to eternity, forsaking the 'now' for that to come. Even the timing of the question is scrutinized, as well as its understood meaning to various groups, giving post-textual critics little to do but follow along.⁸⁰ The text forces the reader to question the very question itself: does 'geglückt' mean 'successful,' as I have been using it, or just 'happy?' as someone else might. Does it mean 'without problems' or simply 'beautiful?' Is this 'geglückt' individual or for all people? The text questions 'Tag,' or 'day,' as it is defined by sublunary revolutions. Here the reader can see, if the reader so chooses, that the definition is for the reader to abstract, to experience, to participate. The criticism in the text provides options for the reader to ponder, though others are acceptable and even recommended. The text provides the criticism and development of a relationship with experience; words are not stagnant events that occur and are revisited in the same manner with each subsequent reading. In this text, language is an active event with singular meaning. To be in the Participation stage of discourse development is not to question meaning, but its permanency. If words have fixed meaning outside of time, outside of their incorporation in a discourse, meaning is approximated for each sentence according to context devaluing each individual use. If however, words are considered the action of ideas, their referents become specific, referring directly to mental concepts that have no universal meaning outside of communication and are themselves created in use. The relationship of the elements within the text and the reader's mind define their value rather than an ideal, universal meaning existing outside of communication. Each textual experience has a chance to be individual.

⁷⁹ Peter Handke, *Versuch über den geglückten Tag*, (Frankfurt am/Main: Suhrkamp, 1994).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

In reading the book, *Versuch über den gegelückten Tag*, contemporary criticism would ask the question, “Did Handke succeed in answering the question? Was his logic in order? Did Handke take into account all possibilities before publishing his endeavor? Does this theme appear in other places in his writings? Is there already an established Genre of ‘success seekers?’ Banal, yes, but criticism cannot operate without categories. As one can gather from the title, an answer to the question is not necessary, but the attempt, the action of participation in the question is the answer itself. There is not a formula that Handke follows or does not follow: experiencing the elements of the very attempt, of life itself, defines the success or failure of answering the question the text proposes. To elaborate, let us take examples from the book itself.

Page twenty-two to twenty-seven is a response to the question, “how does one experience the day as one *should* experience it?” Here the term should [sollen] is replaced with being [sein], removing necessity from experience thus changing the question to a statement: One should experience the day as it *is*, not as one believes it *should* be experienced. There is no perfect day, eternity or moment in experience: there is experience. To necessitate anything is to miss the act of the day and its changing elements. Even interpretation cannot be necessitated. Examples of past functional beliefs are also given: ‘the day was good [or bad],’ or ‘the day was created by God.’ These concepts place necessity on reality, just as criticism places necessity on a discourse, on the subject’s participation of what *is*. The narrator comes to the conclusion that experience is contingent, which allows the character to experience what is and reflect afterward with the following phrases: “the day and I *were*,” and “on the successful day it *happened*.”⁸¹ Neutral events are recounted instead of judged, though the narrator had to fight through the reaction process in order to participate in the day, as can be seen in the following passage:

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

“Er ging hinaus in den Schuppen, um Holz zu machen für ein Kaminfeuer, das ihm eher als in die Nacht in solch einen Tag paßte. Mitten im Durchsägen des dicken und zähen Stamms geriet das Werkzeug ins Stocken, und als er, aus dem Rhythmus gebracht, gewaltsam daran ruckelte, klemmte es vollends, er konnte die Säge nur, unverrichteter Dinge, herausziehen—es war mehr ein “Reißen”—und woanders neu ansetzen. Der Vorgang wiederholte sich: Verklemmen des Blatts am harten Kernholz, Geschiebe, und Gerüttel, bis es beinahe nicht einmal ein Zurück gab..., und dann die Wucht mit der das mehr zerfledderte als geschnittene Scheit dem Möchtegernhelden des Tags auf den Fuß stürzte, und dann, als das Feuer nach dem ersten Aufflammen mitsamt dem nur noch vor sich hinzischenden Holz unanfachbar zusammenfiel, das Verfluchen des heiligen Tags, mit eben der Ausdrücken, für die schon einst der ländliche Großvater dorfberühmt gewesen war, Maulhalten, ihr Vögel, Sonne, verschwinde.”⁸²

The character, a writer, then remembers later in the evening as he wrote, the times in which he was not *with* the day, when he was expecting something to happen that did not occur [a smooth cutting saw], and lost all participation when the elements of the discourse—of experience—did not conform with his desired function. In this text, writing can be viewed as the act of turning mental thoughts into physically existing events. There is no natural style, no genre of how one *should* write, read or participate in a text. During those times the character writes, he remembers times in which he did not experience the day as it was, but was lost in tirades like that quoted above. Tantrums, or reactions, are the character reinforcing established patterns of thought, the character stuck in the Production phase of discourse development. The discourse’s name is that all-encompassing word: Experience. Writing becomes, for the character, a means to manipulate his future understanding, to be able to understand when he was not with the day, allowing him to re-value decisions and participate in reality rather than force it to fit an established function.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 43-44.

If one reads the text—as opposed to writing-- its meaning changes with each subsequent interpretation simply because the elements of the discourse change. If I, the critic, read the text, I will bring with me an entirely different discourse than each subsequent or previous reader-- including myself. If Handke, the author, re-experiences the text, he will bring a new discourse to the text, allowing a new set of elements to color the text, changing or reinforcing his interpretation. If, however, the author or any other critic requires a particular interpretation, thought becomes enslaved to that relational function rather than to the elements of the discourse.

Examples of a successful day are used, but are themselves nothing more than participation in a day. There are no necessary elements, no genre of 'perfect-day' and a list of elements that need to be included to be considered 'geglückt.' Moral implication is absent, as well as political association. However, this is neither positive nor negative: they are absent. Any mention of such—as in the previous sentence or in the debate mentioned by Pfister—is a reflection of the expectation of the critic, not the value of the text or its author. In *Versuch...*, criticism is an element of the text by means of its own relativity, which allows one to participate in reality, not as a definition of the success or failure of the attempt. In my critique, criticism is not applied within the text as judgment or categorization of function of *Versuch...*, but as a means of participation in the text, in experience. Post-textual criticism such as this thesis is meant to be different each time. The initial phase, Revisited Naming, occurs as I first read the text and form mental associations with a newly forming discourse. The Production Stage of this discourse development is omitted as I participate in the elements of the discourse, of the text, of the various changing relationships each time the text is read. This is not to say that as I read, various patterns are not formed between random elements in the text, to be brought out and expounded upon. However, one participates in the experience of the text if those externally imposed relationships do not define the text or become emphasized to point of

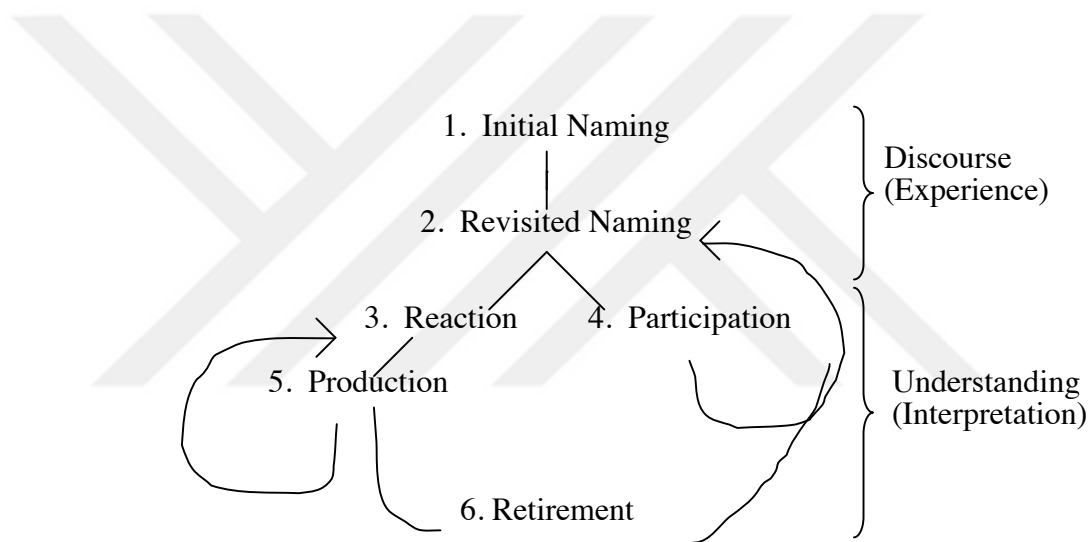
becoming 'ideals' by which the discourse is defined. The arbitrary element of active association can be preserved through all singular critical exposition.



Section Five: Participation- Redefining Criticism and the Textual Experience

5.a. Writing *On Handke* 70

We have seen that as a discourse develops, relationships progress through various stages. The possible patterns can be seen through the following flow chart:



From this chart and what has been written in this paper, one can see that as soon as a discourse begins the Reaction Stage (3), patterns are engrained that remove the subject from the intended discourse, from experience itself, whose elements are in a constant state of rearrangement. As Pfister stated, contemporary criticism has removed the reader from the text, from experiencing the relationships within. Criticism of Handke has created a meta-text, a discourse I have called *On Handke*, which is caught in a cycle of Reaction and Production (3→5), constantly re-enforcing that which criticism has called 'sacred.' The text, discourse or experiences have been removed from the discussion having already been defined.

The stage of Revisited Naming (2) is the constantly changing discourse itself, and Participation (4) is the choice the subject makes to experience the text, the discourse or reality and continually reevaluate the relationships within. Participation (4) in the elements of Revisited Naming allows the subject to be active in understanding the changing elements that fix the limits of the text by making provisions for the constantly changing elements of the reader. As was mentioned in the introduction, a name is a comparison between two elements, and if those elements change, the name and its meaning will also change. If one remains in Production (5), in forcing dynamic elements to remain in stagnant relationships, the subject has removed itself from the discourse at hand --whether it be a text, a play, a game, a song, a meal— forcing engagement to the elements it seeks, yet not engaging anything at all.

We can see through the exposition in this thesis that Peter Handke followed this cycle throughout his career. His initial involvement with Group 47 was that of naming the stagnant elements (6) of a discourse in the Production stage (5), allowing New Realism to become a meaningless element in a young man's newly forming discourse (2). As he provided interpretations to his own texts and as critics began to establish patterns through which readers 'know' Handke, the elements of the individual texts began to reflect the criticism, entering Handke into a Production stage of recognizable ideas (5). This Production, though based on an active relationship with the written word, was doomed to functional definition because of the state of contemporary criticism, which is itself defined by the genre it seeks to impose on various authors. In naming the essential patterns of modern criticism, I have hopefully allowed the text, no matter the author, to become a place where experience is valued over the culturally induced categories of interpretation. The reader has learned, hopefully, that this critic's emphasis is not on any specific interpretation of Handke, but of the experience of the text, not just experience of Handke, but of literary works in general.

The goal, then, of this Renamed Criticism has been two-fold: to allow a text to be interpreted as such, to be experienced as a discourse with a collection of elements, arranged specifically yet interpreted individually. Yet, to experience a text, to learn to read, to learn to remove any necessary, habitual, 'true' interpretation, I have had to revisit that which has been defined through criticism of Peter Handke, to take the sacred, those elements from the Production stage of *On Handke* and make them random elements of a yet to be named, though sure-to-change discourse. The goal in any future criticism becomes to gradually omit the Production Stage, that place in which definition is predetermined and texts are created to fit the mold rather than the experience.

Criticism, that place of experiencing texts, will allow a discourse such as *Versuch über den geglückten Tag* to be elemental, to be a discourse of arbitrary circumstances void of necessary interpretations. If a text is psychological per my interpretation, will it be during each subsequent reading? It will if the critic remains in the same established discourse. For those who continue to want to write texts that fit specific genre and critics who desire to define a text before it is written there are matching games made specifically following forms: round peg- round hole. For those willing to participate in an art of creating associations in order to understand a changing dynamism, write away. We critics will be there to associate.

One of the interesting elements of a criticism of participation is a lack of genre. Handke does not need to write as a 'New Subjectivist' to be considered Handke. Handke does not need to write as Handke to be considered 'Handke.' The author is not a required element of the interpretation. As soon as the text is produced, the author becomes a critic along with the rest of us. His interpretation will change with each subsequent reading. Like Klinkowitz and Knowlton wrote, "Rather than fret about the moral implication of the inability of connecting with reality, Handke prefers to locate literature within the process of constructing fully provisional meanings. It is not a change from the signified object to the signifier. Handke changes from the signified object to the relationships and

interplay between the signifiers. Less emphasis is placed on the finished work than on the process of creation and recreation. An eagerness for depth is replaced by a fascination with the surface; texts are therefore ‘writerly’ than ‘readerly.’”⁸³ The critical focus in this critique is on a ‘tendency,’ an established writing habit rather than any specific text, on the author rather than the discourse. In the criticism of a specific work—in this case it was *Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*—Klinkowitz and Knowlton added an external element to the text, that of the author. This is not to say the author should not be added to the discourse. It should be noted, however, that the text is a random set of specific elements, and the author, however, is not one of them. To define the text by an external element would be to require the reader to read the text through the eyes of the author instead of their own, or through the eyes of the critic who interprets the interpretation of the author, instead of creating relationships individual to their experience of the text. Criticism that removes the reader from the text at hand does not allow freedom of interpretation by the reader or by the writer.

Criticism is that which provides the critic, the author, and those that experience the text means to evaluate their participation in the text. As with Handke’s writer/woodcutter—the man who missed the experience of the day because he was frustrated by events he did not expect—critical expectations force elements of text into patterns that are not indigenous to the text itself, frustrating varying interpretations. As Kuhn said of the normalized path science has taken through the past century, “the arbitrariness has been itself covered by the ideal.”⁸⁴ This habitual thought need no longer be the case.

Criticism is a neutral tool, that which can be used to better understand the relationships within a text. This tool, however, has been used to create necessary patterns, to establish and control the movements of literature, thus valuing genre over the

⁸³ Jerome Klinkowitz and Jameson Knowlton, *Peter Handke and the Postmodern Transformation: the Goalie’s Journey Home*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 3-4.

⁸⁴ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 17.

experience of naming an arbitrary association of elements: the text. Criticism has succeeded in taking texts and creating discourses wholly unrelated to the texts themselves. One is no longer allowed to experience a text, to experience the relationships within without having to enforce or negate categories. Through this paper I have retraced the path of discourse formation of a specific author, Peter Handke, naming the events that slowly engrain the author's patterns of thought, patterns of experience of the reader and patterns of necessity created by the critic. As we have seen, this author, the one who has been known to react to any necessary patterns placed on him, has become, through criticism, himself enslaved to the reaction itself.

In naming these reactive discourses, both *On Handke* and *On Criticism*, I have allowed all required elements to be trivialized, to become arbitrary elements of the experience. Handke, the author, can experience the text as he creates it, rather than how he has been expected to render it. Criticism, that discourse that has continually searched for established patterns of thought forcing the author to write and the reader to read as culture defines, can become a tool of literature again, an element whose goal is to uncover provisional meaning, rather than create it. Criticism can be that which allows a text to be defined by its elements rather than by an artificial interpretation. Finally, criticism can allow the one who experiences—be it a text, a film, a play, a song, a walk, a meal, a cigarette in the gutter⁸⁵—to experience the changing elements of their participation with the discourse rather than the necessary interpretation of a single element removed from the experience and made to cover the randomness within. This critique is not central to a specific interpretation of Handke or of criticism. It is central to one's experience of this critique and will hopefully allow one to experience the elements of a text, creating one's own function as a new discourse is experienced, f(enter discourse here), freely revisiting each dynamic structurality, naming the relationships within the contingent while allowing freedom in each subsequent 'new' experience.

⁸⁵ Handke, *Versuch über den gegückten Tag*, 72-73.

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