

The Poetics of the *Künstlerinroman* and the Aesthetics of the Sublime

EVY VARSAMOPOULOU



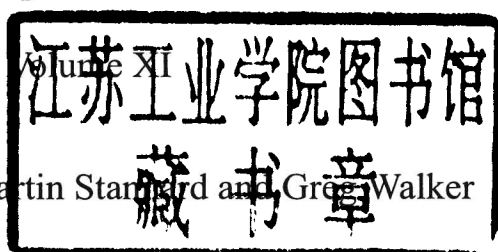
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Studies in European Cultural Transition

General Editors: Martin Stangor and Greg Walker



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General Editors' Preface

The European dimension of research in the humanities has come into sharp focus over recent years, producing scholarship which ranges across disciplines and national boundaries. Until now there has been no major channel for such work. This series aims to provide one, and to unite the fields of cultural studies and traditional scholarship. It will publish the most exciting new writing in areas such as European history and literature, art history, archaeology, language and translation studies, political, cultural and gay studies, music, psychology, sociology and philosophy. The emphasis will be explicitly European and interdisciplinary, concentrating attention on the relativity of cultural perspectives, with a particular interest in issues of cultural transition.

Martin Stannard
Greg Walker

University of Leicester

Foreword

This book was originally written at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory of the University of Wales in Cardiff, where I was a doctoral student, and subsequently revised while working at Anglia Polytechnic University. The State Scholarship Foundation of Greece made it possible for me to spend the necessary years reading, writing and thinking about this project by approving my research proposal and by their generous financial support. The Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory offered a stimulating forum for discussion and debate of contemporary theory, literature and philosophy through its reading groups, its academic staff and post-graduate students. I am particularly indebted to my supervisor, Dr Jane Moore, who bore patiently with my early explorations and allowed me to develop freely the directions into which the literature took me. Professor Diane Elam and Dr Steven Vine were enthusiastic supporters and readers of some or all of this work and also helped by running reading groups and seminars for the discussion of Kant and other philosophers' work on aesthetics and the sublime. Professor Chris Norris generously helped by reading through the second chapter and advising me to expand on certain points. I would like to thank Professor Patricia Waugh for her constructive criticism of the book in its early form as a doctoral thesis and her support for its publication. The series editors, Professor Martin Stannard and Dr Greg Walker of the University of Leicester, have shown unflagging interest and patience during the three years it took for this manuscript to enter the world of published books. I am particularly grateful to Maria Varsamopoulou and Adam Woodruff, who read through the entire manuscript with care, and for their friendship, support and faith in my work that sustained me. This book is dedicated to my family who helped me live through and overcome the greatest difficulties in completing this book and for their unreserved faith, support, encouragement and spirit of endurance.

Introduction

The *Genre* of Genre Criticism of the *Künstlerinroman*

The underlying premise of this book is that the *Künstlerinroman* or (female) artist novel, is a genre that merits and demands a separate study of its own. The second premise is that studies that limit the range of artist novels studied reveal as much about the concerns and defining features of the genre without losing sight of the specificity of each novel. Therefore this study will not satisfy desires for encyclopaedic overviews, generalisations or over-arching comparisons. It is, in fact, a study of one kind or sub-category of *Künstlerinroman*: literary in focus and Romantic in mode. However, in order for such a study to be introduced, in the first place, the *Künstlerinroman* has to become recognizable as a genre. How can we recognize a genre? In terms of principles, genre theories range from the classical prescriptive notion of pure types to the Bakhtinian acceptance of the multiplicity of discourses defining the novel itself.¹ My own position could be best described as siding with the Bakhtinian end of the spectrum. While I by no means consider it necessary to specify generic affiliations or theorize genre at every approach to a literary text, to systematically avoid the question of genre, when it may be especially significant for the historical, interpretive and theoretical reception of a particular work of literature, seems equally biased. To refuse to name or to describe a text's participation in a genre is to refuse to a certain degree our (scholarly) response to a text. It also serves to obscure the socio-historical network of literature, and even to render more difficult our understanding of the meanings of critical terms like Romanticism, modernism and postmodernism, by not approaching them through specific examples of literary (novelistic) production.

It should be possible to discover some features that all *Künstlerinromane* have in common with the earliest examples of the genre. Its differences from various other genres, as well as the generic influences intrinsic to the *Künstler/Künstlerinroman* tradition, cannot be grasped without an (at least) rudimentary understanding of its genealogy from within an important event in European literary history: Early German Romanticism. For this reason, I find it worthwhile to reach back into literary history to the *Künstlerroman* or (male) artist novel –

¹ I am referring to the survey of pro- and anti-genre theories in Ralph Cohen's 'Do Postmodern Genres Exist?', ed. Marjorie Perloff, *Postmodern Genres* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988). For a discussion of heteroglossia and the incorporation of rhetorical and artistic genres defining novelistic discourse, see Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' (1935–1936), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

preceding the (first) *Künstlerinroman* by seven years – its break from the *Bildungsroman* and its significance as a Romantic genre. If women's artist-novels have always been set up by critics as, at best, participators in a genre inaugurated and perfected by male writers, then unlike many famous *Künstlerromane*, they were also not placed in the delusory category of exclusive genre membership. As the vicissitudes of literary fate would have it, the postmodern understanding of the flexible, historically mutable and always 'impure' category of genre, has cast its vote in favour of such 'participation without membership'.²

Künstlerroman is the name given to a kind of German novel which made its appearance in 1798 with Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* [*Franz Sternbald's Wanderings*].³ The beginnings of the *Künstlerroman* are intimately related to Goethe's *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* [*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*] (1795), out of which grew the attention to the conflicts between an individual with artistic pretensions and modern society. However, the *Künstlerroman* almost immediately established an antipodal relationship to *Wilhelm Meister* by virtue of its Romanticism, which rejected the priorities and principles informing the *Bildungsroman* form. A comparison was drawn from the very beginning between Tieck's and Goethe's novels. The distinctive trait

2 Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', *Diacritics* 7.1 (1980), p. 63. I am in agreement with Derrida's 'hypothesis' that: 'Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging' (Derrida, 'Law', p. 65). Derrida takes issue with Gérard Genette's essay 'Genres, "Types", Modes', *Poétique* 32 (1977): 299–421. His disagreement stems from certain unquestioned presuppositions of Genette's 'distinction between nature and history' and 'its implications with regard to mode and to the distinction between mode and genre' (Derrida, 'Law', p. 62). Derrida argues for not only the inoperativeness, but also the irrelevance of Genette's model when reading a liminal 'text', such as Maurice Blanchot's *La Folie du Jour* (1973). However, as I remarked earlier, if some texts elude all genres, this does not also mean that 'genre' is inoperative in all literary texts since not all are 'liminal'.

3 Tieck's *Künstlerroman* is specifically a *Malerroman* because it has a painter protagonist. The trend of *Malerromane* set by Tieck is probably influenced by the re-introduction of the figure of the artist as an individual worthy of study, in addition to art and aesthetics. Theodore Ziolkowski, in *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), attributes the proliferation of *Malerromane* to the impact of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797) [*Heartfelt Outpourings of an Art-loving Friar*], which filled a gap in the new enthusiasm for art and artists of Early German Romanticism. In this work, Wackenroder 'elevated anecdote to a privileged status by attributing spiritual value to the life of the artist, who is able to create great works only because he has lived a good life' (339). Tieck had planned *Franz Sternbald* together with Wackenroder, but had to write it himself after Wackenroder's untimely death. Ziolkowski also cites Wilhelm Heinse's *Ardinghello* (1787), an epistolary *Künstlerroman* which predates Tieck's but differs in its emphasis; art in Heinse's novel is only one of the pleasures in the pursuit of hedonism, whereas in Tieck's it vies with religion as an all-consuming involvement which effects a virtuous transformation of the individual (Ziolkowski, p. 339).

that seems to set the two genres apart in the late eighteenth century is the central character, which in the *Künstlerroman* must be an artist (or aspiring artist) of some sort. An individual character is the focus of each kind of novel. The *Künstlerroman* was the narrative account of the formation, development, education, psychology of an artist, as a *special* type of individual.⁴ However, this was not all. The theorist, critic and writer of German Romanticism Friedrich Schlegel had hailed Tieck's novel as 'the first novel [roman] since Cervantès that is Romantic and in this well above *Meister*'.⁵ The final break which established the *Künstlerroman* as a specifically Romantic genre came with Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802). This was composed in emulation of Tieck's *Franz Sternbald* and also as an 'anti-Meister' answer to Goethe's *Bildungsroman*. Whereas Goethe's hero is the son of a merchant who dreams of a career in the theatre but ends up as a surgeon, Novalis's is the son of a craftsman (artisan), who dreams of 'the blue flower'. This generational turning point reflects the change from a certain medieval notion of the artist as skilled craftman only, to the Longinian or modern (Romantic) ideas of the work of art as defined by something beyond teachable skills. The infinite, or the resting place of eternity beyond death, are among the references of the blue flower, which became an enduring symbol in German Romanticism.⁶ As a Romantic novel, it spurns representationalism and opts for romance, allegory and fairy tale, interspersing prose with poems and songs while being an amalgamation of philosophy, religion, history, science, alchemy and, indeed, all present and past forms of knowledge, whether 'philosophic', 'artistic' or 'scientific'. The great poet who will save humanity from its present course of destruction by an *aesthetic* activity; Romanticizing the world and revealing the truth in and through art, will do so necessarily by this *mélange* of all things into one. In Schelling's terms, art is the most important of the modes of human knowledge production because the aesthetic intelligence *recreates the world*. Novalis's Heinrich has therefore no small mission and he himself, through its accomplishment after the long period of 'waiting' as active learning and apprenticeship to art and the world, will have gained a lofty, even otherworldly position *vis-à-vis* earthly existence. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis embeds so much philosophical reflection and scientific

4 All other character formation novels could be termed *Bildungsromane* (novels of formation), *Erziehungsromane* (novels of education), or *Entwicklungsromane* (novels of development), depending on their emphasis on different aspects and processes in personal development.

5 Friedrich Schlegel, cited in J.F. Angelloz, *Le Romantisme Allemand* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), p. 13. Translations from the French or German quoted will be my own. Schlegel came to write his own *Malerroman*, *Lucinde* (1799), which has both a man and a woman painter as protagonists. Strictly speaking, this could be considered the first *Künstler(in)roman*, which Madame de Staël would definitely have heard about, if not read. In Schlegel's novel 'art is still the manifestation of religion, but it is now the secularized religion of love' (Ziolkowski, p. 344).

6 Maurice Cranston, *The Romantic Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 36.

observation that its ambition seems to outstrip even Schelling's expectations for the work of art.⁷

In a nutshell, we have the artist as an individual who resists being socialized as a 'useful' or 'productive' socio-economic contributor who merely 'fits into' his community; he seeks another world and finds it, not in religion, but in art, which he pursues with religious devotion. Hence the attraction to what is otherworldly: fairies, magic, infinity, spirituality, the sublime. In this 'otherworldly place' (of art) *within* the world, the *Künstlerroman* stages its social critique.

This belief that the creative artist is a special type of individual in society is specifically a Romantic notion, circulating in particular socio-historical communities: first in Germany, then in the rest of Europe and its then colonies. That the education and formation of an artist was deemed a special case, and that he was no longer considered, as before, a simple artisan or craftsman owed much to the revival of an exalted status of the man of genius as an artist. Genius as a notion carried along with it mystical, metaphysical beliefs for centuries, at least since the Romans, but it became newly enhanced with the quasi- (or pseudo-) scientific prejudices of evolutionary and nascent psychological theories, philosophies of the sublime and modern perceptions of society.⁸

On the other hand, that the writer chooses to write about a writer (or any other artist) is also indicative of the growing self-consciousness of the novelist as literary artist of the most prominent modern literary form (the novel or *Roman/roman*). Linda Hutcheon discusses this in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*:

The origins of the self-reflecting structure that governs many modern novels might well lie in that parodic intent basic to the genre as it began in *Don Quixote*, an intent to unmask dead conventions by challenging, by mirroring. The self-consciousness of Cervantes' text has been handed down, through the likes of Sterne and Diderot, to the Romantic artist-hero of the *Künstlerroman*.⁹

It is true that the *Künstlerroman* with a writer or poet protagonist discloses a critical awareness of the *métier* of literary art, blurring the boundaries between

7 See, for instance, F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), translated by Peter Heath (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1997). That Novalis's thought in *Heinrich* reflects his own careful study and pondered response to the philosophy of his day – especially Kant, Fichte and Schelling – has been investigated and demonstrated through scholarly work. For a survey of the history of the reception of Novalis's *Heinrich*, including published and unpublished studies, see Dennis F. Mahoney, *The Critical Fortunes of a Romantic Novel: Novalis's Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994).

8 I am indebted to Christine Battersby's historical research into the concept of the genius in *Gender and Genius* (London: The Women's Press, 1994).

9 Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 18.

fiction and criticism, as the novelist becomes critic of his/her own creative process or product. It is equally true though that the other half of the *Künstlerroman*'s genealogy comes from the aesthetic discourse on the sublime, one which remains as important as the 'self-reflecting structure' in many women's *Künstlerinromane* in the twentieth century. The writer's novel becomes the space for personal confessions and psychological introspection, social critique and cultural analysis, linguistic playfulness and narrative experimentation, or theoretical digressions about art and creativity. A *Künstlerinroman* may incorporate one or more of these discourses. Depending again on the specific preoccupations of the novel, it would take the shape of different genres; most often, it may have more elements of the *Bildungsroman*, if the interest lies in providing a kind of profile of the artist's early growth, development and background. Alternatively, this might not be the main feature, and the novel may focus on a specific period of the artist's life, or the conditions of possibility (or impossibility) for creative activity. The novel may or may not be autobiographical, whether or not it is shaped as a *Bildungsroman* of an aspiring writer, and despite the persistence of many critics to read them as 'portraits of the author'.

As a next step, I will briefly consider the main examples of how literary criticism in English has construed the genre study of the *Künstler(in)roman*, what my departures from this approach are and, finally, what the historical and philosophical significance of studying *Künstlerinromane* as participants in the Romantic *Künstlerinroman* genre can be. The last issue will be a concern running throughout this study as well as the special focus of the first chapter and the conclusion. From the many *Künstlerinromane* that have developed, I will be concentrating on a specific kind: that which has an aspiring female writer (of poetry or prose) as its protagonist, and which has been written by a female author. The condition of female authorship is required by the task of recognizing and appreciating women's neglected contribution to both the genre of the artist novel and the discourse of the sublime. Roberta Seret has called these novels *Künstlerromane*, to differentiate them from the related 'artist novels'; the former, Seret argues, emphasize 'the formation of the artist', while in the latter 'the protagonist is already a formed artist'.¹⁰ However, as the terms translate into each other, I would avoid the proliferation of names, which tends towards infinite, restrictive subdivisions of genre. Certainly, what Seret describes as *Künstlerroman* does remain more faithful to the first German examples of the genre.

Seret's study purports to be a general overview of the *Künstlerroman*, whatever the specific art of the (male) protagonist. Seret states that 'observation of major characteristics becomes more important than establishing qualifying criteria for inclusion or exclusion', and that the final distinction of a *Künstlerroman* from other

10 Roberta Seret, *Voyage into Creativity: The Modern Künstlerroman* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), p. 5.

'overlapping' genres is a matter of 'the author's emphasis and ultimate purpose', without recognizing these as being actual criteria for 'inclusion or exclusion'.¹¹ However, this is the use they are put to in her study. My main disagreement with this is that Seret actually defines the *Künstlerroman* as a more or less autobiographical *Bildungsroman*.¹² Her understanding of the genre is prompted by a purely thematic reading (which again leads to statements of 'archetypal' *Künstlerromane*) of the protagonists' voyages, actual or metaphorical, in their development as an artist. The voyage motif is obviously one shared with the *Bildungsroman*. However, this reading literally cannot escape the confines of a character study, which focuses on the relation of the individual to society and not to the specific art. Although Seret recognizes the difficulties of generic distinctions, she does not stop to consider their potential interrelations. Thus, she excludes a number of famous *Künstlerromane*, such as Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, because of the significance of the historical or philosophical dimensions, which are judged to distract from the developmental plot.

Künstlerinromane by women, however, began with Madame de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), where the protagonist is already a recognized poet when she first appears in the narrative – though we are later given a retrospective narrative of her artistic prehistory. The first chapter of this book will show how *Corinne ou l'Italie* exemplifies the same trajectory as the one briefly outlined in Tieck's and Novalis's *Künstlerromane*, insofar as it moves towards the pursuit of art and the sublime and away from social conformism and integration.

Madame de Staël started visiting 'Germany' in 1789, and in 1804 August Wilhelm Schlegel, who had close and first-hand knowledge of Novalis's work (both having been part of the Jena group), joined her household. Though Madame de Staël could not read German by the time of her writing *Corinne ou l'Italie*, she had long begun studying German literature, art and philosophy. In *De l'Allemagne* [*Of Germany*] 1810–1813), Madame de Staël expresses great admiration for the work of both Tieck and Novalis. In her commentary, there are specific references to both *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, admiration for the depiction of the artist, the peculiarly aesthetic perception of the universe and the prominence of infinity and the sublime.¹³

A distinguishing quality of the *Künstlerinromane* in this study is their adherence to Romantic discourse over and against narrative realism. Artist novels which do not include a discourse on or of the sublime often tend to remain at the level of the representation of what is known, seen, experienced in the mundane world of harsh realities without much interest in any varieties of 'otherness' with

11 Seret, *Voyage into Creativity*, p. 5.

12 Seret, *Voyage into Creativity*, pp. 5, 6, 12.

13 See *De l'Allemagne*, eds. La Comtesse Jean de Pange and Simone Balayé, Book III, Chapter 28 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1959), pp. 267–270 (on Tieck); and Book V, Chapter 9 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1960), pp. 160–167 (on Novalis).

respect to the representable. That kind of artist narrative may be serious, introspective, ironic or parodic; however, it refers only partially to the Romantic *Künstler(in)roman*.

In H.D.'s *Palimpsest* (1926), the modernist *Künstlerinroman* I explore in the third chapter, only the first of three narratives has an aspiring female writer as a protagonist, but all three novellas have an interest in some kind of writing, and are intrinsically interdependent intertexts. While all the examples of *Künstlerinromane* here depict at some point and for some length the struggling subjectivity of the aspiring female writer, their ties to Romantic precursors are reinforced by the metafictional discourse on or of the sublime, especially as it relates to writing. Therefore, Hélène Cixous' confessional poetic/philosophical essay 'La venue à l'écriture' ['The Coming to Writing'] is also read as a *Künstlerin* narrative which communicates, in a highly condensed form, the same *Künstlerin* problematic as the kind found in the metafictional discourse of the novels. 'La venue à l'écriture' introduces the reading of Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* [*The Quest for Christa T.*] in chapter four, but is just as relevant to the reading of Marguerite Duras' *L'Amant* in the fifth and final chapter, and indeed to *Palimpsest*.

The close intertextual reading of Madame de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* with Kant's writings on the sublime in the first chapter aims to illustrate the importance of this aesthetic discourse for the *Künstlerinroman*. After considering the influence of Kant, I turn my attention in this chapter to the impact of *Corinne* on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic *Künstlerinroman* in blank verse, *Aurora Leigh*. As a manifesto for both female authorship and the significance of aesthetics in modern society, *Corinne* thus occasioned an equally ambitious response; the two texts establish the *Künstlerinroman* in European literary history.

The theoretical theses on the sublime developed in the second chapter arise from and are implicated in the discussion of each novel's metafictional discourse. The theoretical intervention is meant to augur and synopsise the aesthetic discourse in the main studies of the next three chapters. Each of the three *Künstlerinromane* in what can be seen as the second part of the book exemplifies a relation to subjectivity, eros and death in terms of the theses on the sublime outlined in Chapter Two. Different theoretical texts are read alongside each *Künstlerinroman* in order to highlight distinct aspects of these theses. At the same time, the readings of the *Künstlerinromane* also investigate classic *topoi* of the artist novel, such as formative influences for the protagonist and narrative and motifs.

The novels' participation in the *Künstlerinroman* genre and their metafictional discourse on the literary sublime have gone, partly or wholly, unrecognized and unread. But the question is not merely to add to them this other generic name, as if to increase their status. The question rather is whether anything new, different or worthwhile emerges in the process of reading them in this manner; namely, from the angle of a *Künstlerin* problematic, which always entails a double and different reading from the purely thematic one. A double reading, or a reading that attends to

the metafictional dimension, fully allows the intra/intertextual dialogue – which is as much part of the novel as its fictional narrative – to take place. This manner of reading the *Künstlerinroman* genre has allowed the recognition of a very important and neglected contribution to the aesthetic discourse of the sublime. This, in turn, is what called for a special consideration of some of the problems of the (mainly Kantian) aesthetic discourse on the sublime, and the perhaps novel possibilities awaiting other understandings of the sublime, as they were suggested to me by the *Künstlerinromane*.

The reading of *Künstlerinromane* of this kind simultaneously supports, and is supported by, the argument that female subjectivity does not fit perfectly into the Freudian and Lacanian trajectory which perpetuates a male-biased paradigm. My argument on the subsequent pitfalls of uncritical psychoanalytic readings in relation to the sublime in women's texts is especially prominent in the final chapter, where I read *L'Amant*. Female theorists not adhering to these male traditions of thought have managed, with varying degrees of success or acknowledgement, to develop their own theories of subjectivity, the sublime and creativity.

According to Judith Gardiner, the theoretical models of women's identity – which she defines as fluid 'process' as opposed to the male stable 'product' – differ from the ones proposed by prominent male theorists of identity (Eric Erikson, Heinz Lichtenstein) because female experience is seen to differ on every count.¹⁴ Many of Gardiner's insights – for instance, on empathic, relational identity and the primordial importance of the mother – overlap with the ones expressed in *Palimpsest*, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, and *L'Amant*; however, they are often more complex and ambiguous than what Gardiner suggests. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland have found that 'apparent incongruities embedded in female plots' are usefully explained by 'feminist theories of gender difference', such as those of 'Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Jean Baker Miller, Jane Flax and Carol Gilligan'.¹⁵ These theorists focus on the mother-infant bond and pre-Oedipal relations in their approach to the construction of gender identity. However, I would not agree with their dismissal of Freudian theory as completely reducing psychology to anatomy, nor, especially, would I concede to their view of the *Künstlerroman* as merely 'a pattern of spiritual development in male heroes [...] virtually unavailable to the young woman in the nineteenth-century novel'.¹⁶ This kind of feminist reading can dangerously 'overgenderize'

14 See Judith Kegan Gardiner, 'On Female Identity and Writing by Women', *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (1981): 347–361.

15 See the editors' introduction to a collection of essays on women's *Bildungsromane*, *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, eds. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 9. As their primary focus is not the artist novel *per se*, the editors also admit to the great expanse of novels read as *Bildungsromane* in their book, mainly because of the genre's 'usefulness as a conceptual tool' (14).

16 Seret, *Voyage into Creativity*, p. 28.

genres to the explicit disadvantage of women's *Künstlerinromane* in order to make the feminist point about women's limited choices in (nineteenth-century) society.

Both feminist theorists and literary writers inevitably work from a position on the fringes of the male academic, artistic and professional communities: both within and outside them. This means that although their thinking inherits the age-old dominant structures and poetics, their differing positions are not irretrievable, nor ultimately defined by a male-oriented canon.

The writer-character on whom the artist-narrative hinges provides a fable of creative subjectivity; creative because it has been, and is shown to be, perpetually, self-consciously and retrospectively a fictional creation. The autobiographical elements, whichever and however many they may be, will be of lesser interest or importance in themselves for this literary critical project. The issue in this study of the *Künstlerinroman* is not uniquely the forms taken by female subjectivity when it is represented, although these kind of questions are also addressed. Neither is this a quest for the Romantic or modernist artist heroine. Such a quest structures certain genre studies of the *Künstlerroman*, such as Maurice Beebe's *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts*,¹⁷ and Linda Huf's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*.¹⁸

Although other studies are in circulation, the *Künstler(in)roman* is not a fashionable critical object. Notwithstanding rare exceptions, it rarely attracts much interest in book-length studies. A short review of Beebe's and Huf's books, which form a kind of couple (his is male-oriented, hers is female-centred), is useful in this introduction because they illustrate the mode of literary criticism I am deliberately not performing. Beebe builds his study on the archetypal 'three themes' in the *Künstlerroman*; Huf builds hers on the 'three images' of the *Künstlerinroman*. I will point out what seem to me the shortcomings of this approach, although this is not to deny their interest or usefulness as literary histories. I will then again make clear how the model that I am proposing differs and what its advantages might be.

In the preface to his book, Beebe openly states that a survey study of this genre will reveal 'something about the *nature* of the artist in general',¹⁹ and therefore, will also be 'a study of the artistic temperament, the creative process, and the relationship of the artist to society'.²⁰ Indeed, it becomes clear in his preface, but also in the 'Introduction', that he gives credence to a metaphysical category of the artist as a certain type of human being, set apart from the mundane lot by virtue of a creative, semi-divine *essence*. In his own words: 'there are ways in which artists, regardless of the art they practice, differ from nonartists, and in depicting these

17 Beebe, Maurice, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts* (New York: New York University Press, 1964).

18 Huf, Linda, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1985).

19 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, my italics, p. v.

20 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. v.

ways the novelist is a valid spokesman for all creative men'.²¹ Furthermore, it is a category with its own subdivisions depending on the particular medium the artist character employs. Again, each medium implies, and is the outcome of, a different personality type: 'the painter, for example, is likely to be more gregarious than the poet, and the ability to observe life clearly is obviously less important for the musician than for the painter or the writer'.²² These differences, however, are then dismissed as a mere play of surfaces since, as far as the *Künstlerroman* is concerned, they are nothing more than fictional moulds into which the author pours his own self. For Beebe, the *Künstlerroman* must always ultimately be 'a self-portrait of his creator'²³ and hence, the fictional artist is quintessentially a literary man; or, to be precise, a novelist. Not only Beebe's arguments but also, and this is of more interest, his very vocabulary echo romanticized masculine Romantic theories of creativity. There is an emphatic choice of masculine nouns and pronouns in his generalizations about characters and authors, which combine with statements such as these to produce an overall uneasy effect: 'In fact, actual production is not a requirement for the artist-hero, for some of the characters I discuss are only potential artists, and a few are not identified as artists at all, though they are obviously surrogates for their authors'.²⁴ Obviously, the scope widens considerably by this declaration, while the criteria for making such recognitions suggest a questionable form of literary eugenics.²⁵ In coarse terms, genre recognition could become a kind of 'spot the author' game: if you can spot him/her, then it is a *Künstlerroman*. Or, perhaps it is an autobiography? It is more than understandable then how *Künstler(in)romane* soon disappeared into autobiography studies. Read as autobiography, they at least escaped the stigma of personality stereotyping.

If these are the more serious theoretical shortcomings of Beebe's study, the thematic readings of the novels contain their own pitfalls. Beebe recognizes three major themes that characterize all artist novels: 'the concept of the artist as a divided self, the equation of art with experience, and the conflicting ideal of detachment'.²⁶ Indeed, for Beebe, the three themes 'function together to form an

21 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. vi.

22 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. v.

23 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. v.

24 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. v.

25 What Beebe's statement also recalls is a Romantic male appropriation of birth as a metaphor for creative production. The fertile imagination of the male author, origin of his genius, lends itself to his artistic character: a surrogate for his author who may or may not produce art but is always capable. His artistic character traits attest to this potential, which, in any case, is proven by the existence of the book by the author on whom he has been moulded. It is of lesser importance to discover what is specific to the literary genre, than to find out more characteristics of the author as *überartist*. This kind of criticism encouraged readings of *Künstler(in)romane* as products of an author cult.

26 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. vi.

archetype of the artist novel'.²⁷ He defines the nature of the genre by them and even finds 'they assume the dimension of myths that may express universal truths'.²⁸ In other words, the split is caused because the protagonist is both 'special' (the artist dimension) and 'ordinary' (the man): one side will prevail, albeit uncomfortably, and so he will either see active social/worldly involvement as vital or as counter-productive to literary or other artistic practice.

The structural claim to an overall pattern justifying an archetypal artist narrative further produces the archetypal individual artist portrait, which is none other than James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. As Joyce's book is the definitive version of the artist novel and most perfect portrait of the universal artist type of man in Beebe's view, he allocates to him the fourth and final chapter of the second part of his study on four masters of the *Künstlerroman* (Honoré de Balzac, Henry James and Marcel Proust being the other three). Any mention (let alone study) of artist novels contemporaneous with or after Joyce is deemed redundant: 'Portraits of the artist after Joyce seem to follow the tradition already established without changing it in any important way'.²⁹ Although it is an untenable proposition and, furthermore, based on confusion between *Künstlerroman*, *Bildungsroman* and autobiography which does not do justice to literary historical formations, it seems inevitable to me that Beebe would reach this conclusion. Having established his own limits to the genre and then his preferences in what he considered the quintessential themes and personality type of the artist/author, all of markedly male-oriented norms, he traces the trajectory of the rise and fall of an artist cult beginning with Goethe and culminating in Joyce.

The problems of literary aesthetics and the history of a genre are not resolved, however, either by Derrida's dismissal of genre as outmoded and constricting or by selecting a single work, 'consider[ing] it as particularly "pure" [...] elevating it to the level of type' and then 'say[ing] that the "type" is realized there, the genre in its plenitude, and its history attained its ideal accomplishment'.³⁰ The 'definition' of a genre is only an abstraction which crucially depends on the history of its concrete realization in literary examples, no single one of which can ever reach generic 'perfection' or 'plenitude' since generic developments have no goal as such.³¹

A more important inaccuracy, however, is the distortion of Beebe's study

27 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. 6.

28 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. 6. Each of Beebe's themes incorporates a number of conflicts by implication, and the knot of unresolved (or unresolvable) tensions that result from this combination of opposing forces in all three thematic categories provides the dynamic impetus that structures the *Künstlerroman* narrative.

29 Beebe, *Ivory Towers*, p. vi.

30 Karl Viëtor, 'L'histoire des genres littéraires', [1931], trans. from the German by Jean-Pierre Morel, in *Poétique* 32 (1977): 490–506, pp. 499–501.

31 This has to be particularly true of novelistic genres as, we must recall, prose fiction ('romance') was never subject to the problematic history of classical scholarship (which often showed exaggerated adherence to the ancient treatises on poetry).

because of the grave omission of all but four or five women writers' artist-novels. *Corinne* is mentioned only to be denigrated as a 'guide book'. In fact, the differences produced by the female position, even within the same tri-partite thematics of the Divided Self, the Sacred Fount and the Ivory Tower, would necessitate considerable re-adjustments of the basic conflicts of the artist's inner world and its relation to external pressures and symbolic structures.

Linda Huf's work on artist-novels by North American women writers undertakes such a study within Beebe's own parameters. It even goes as far as to echo his belief that women's artist protagonists, 'as self-portraits of their creators, are invariably surrogate authors'.³² Huf's study would suggest that a reversal is sufficient to validate these 'truths' so that they may apply to female characters. She too finds an archetypal personality in women's portrayal of artists; one that is the direct opposite of Beebe's: 'the artist heroine tends to be stalwart, spirited, and fearless (or, to have traditionally "masculine" attributes) [...] artist heroines by women are athletic in build, skilled in sports, unshrinking in fights, able in mathematics, plucky in love, and daring in their sexual adventures'.³³ The first problem with this description is that it tends to overgeneralize the specificity of a female type of artist character in order to object to and expose the male bias which belies the 'objectivity' of Beebe's literary criticism. Rejecting male stereotypes of the artist is a laudable enough project; presenting merely the reverse of a dominant stereotype, however, may be considered problematic if not reactionary.

There is also another question arising from Huf's study. Is this really, as Huf claims, a representative psychological portrait of Anglo-American artist heroines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? After all, the specific male 'artistic temperament' Huf targets is only the type Beebe prefers, fashioned upon his personal favourite, Joyce's Stephen Daedalus. Huf's consideration of women artists is even more limited than Beebe's, which made reference to European examples as well, since it purports to be a general study of American female artist novels by women. More glaringly questionable is her total omission of H.D.'s artist novels: *Her*, *Palimpsest* and *The Gift*.³⁴

Beyond the selective nature of Huf's study of women's artist novels, what detracts most from its actual merit as both literary criticism and feminist revision is that it is ultimately dependent on the same theoretical framework as Beebe's. Since she is uncritical of his categories, her main concern is to 'fill' them with universal truths of her own, which could apply to the main conflicts, character traits and plot of the *Bildungsroman* type of artist narrative. To this extent, she achieves her ends,

32 Huf, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*, p. 1.

33 Huf, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*, p. 4.

34 Could this omission possibly be because H.D. emigrated to Britain? Considering the trend of writers living in (self-imposed) exile, especially in early twentieth-century Europe, many studies which restrict themselves to national geographic boundaries may seriously compromise their conclusions.