

Manifestations of Wilhelm Busch's Aesthetics in *Eduards Traum*

by

Angelika Morris
B.Sc., University of Ottawa, 1981

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

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Abstract

Whether considering Wilhelm Busch's famous picture-stories of poetic realism, or his prose works with their satiric grotesque and surrealistic elements, Busch's aesthetic views and practices straddle the divide between earlier and contemporaneous forms of art (folk tales, Classicism, Romanticism, Realism) and those akin to late nineteenth and early twentieth century German *Moderne*. In this thesis, Busch's aesthetic views on art and literature are gleaned from a variety of his writings including his mature prose piece *Eduards Traum* (1891). This study argues that Busch's aesthetics in this piece anticipated a number of developments associated with the German *Moderne*, such as complex narrative techniques, distorted states of time and space, ambiguity, fragmentation, and surrealistic modes of expression.

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Dedication

Books written in the German language were a rare commodity in German-Canadian immigrant households – few were carried with the many families that arrived in Canada after the Second World War. This work, a labour of love, is dedicated to these Canadian families and their descendants, and to the families of all Canadian language groups who struggle to impart their native tongue to the next generations. Rhythm and rhyme imparted in the childhood years may be the answer to keeping any language viable. The role that parents, grandparents and older siblings play with respect to helping their native language stay alive and flourish is herewith honoured.

List of Abbreviations

Wilhelm Busch

*Wilhelm Busch. Die Bildergeschichten:
Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*
(Volumes 1-3) *BG I-III*

Eduards Traum *ET*

Mitteilungen der Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft *MBG*

Otto Nöldeke

Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres *EH*

Introduction

This thesis examines Wilhelm Busch's aesthetic views on literature and art as gleaned from biographical sources as well as a selection of his fictional writings. Included is an interpretation of his *Eduards Traum* (*Eduard's Dream*) (ET) through the prism of his mature aesthetic. The work's publication date, 1891, places it at the start of a significant point in the development of German literature, the German *Moderne*.

Wilhelm Busch is one of the most widely recognized names among speakers of the German language. This author and artist is best known for his innovative genre, the picture-story, described by Walter Arndt as “duets for word and sketch” (2).¹ While exact sales figures cannot be established, Busch's *Max und Moritz* (*Max and Moritz*) (1865) was immensely popular.² However, Busch's non-illustrated books of poetry were less well-received (Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 14-15) and his only fictional prose pieces, *Eduards Traum* and *Der Schmetterling* (*The Butterfly*) (1895),³ had virtually no critical reception at the time of their publication. In 1902, Busch himself commented on the lack of popularity of his prose works in comparison to his illustrated works: “Im Verhältniß zu ... [den Bildergeschichten] haben *Kritik des Herzens*, *Eduards Traum* und der *Schmetterling* nur bei Wenigen Beifall gefunden” (In comparison to [the picture-stories,]

¹ Wolfgang Preisendanz, an eminent literary scholar, also considered Busch's *Bildergeschichten* (picture-stories) to be unique: “‘einmal und nicht wieder’ (‘once and not again’)” (quoted in Galway 213).

² The sales figures of Busch's *Max und Moritz* cannot be ascertained, in part due to its vast number of reprints and high sales volumes, especially after the copyrights on Busch's works expired in 1959. It was estimated that by 1910 over 500,000 copies of *Max und Moritz* had been printed. In 1907 it had reached its 54th edition, according to the most comprehensive work on the picture-stories, *Wilhelm Busch. Die Bildergeschichten: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe* (*Wilhelm Busch: The Picture-Stories Historical-Critical Complete Edition*) (BG I 1339).

³ Walter Arndt translated most of *Der Schmetterling* (*The Butterfly*) into English and summarized the sections not included in the translation (190-200).

Critique of the Heart,⁴ *Eduard's Dream* and the *Butterfly* found acclaim with only few [readers]) (quoted in Haffmans 265).⁵ Not much has changed in the intervening years and in his book *Wilhelm Busch* (1979),⁶ Dieter P. Lotze points out the continued relevance of Busch's prose works for today's readers:

There are few critical studies of either ... [prose works], which is all the more surprising since these two tales in many ways represent Busch's most modern writings.... Both works are important in their portrayal of Busch's society. Yet their significance as a voice for our time is perhaps even greater. That today's readers still react like Edward's [sic] listeners who prefer not to hear "things that are rather painful to the ear of a refined century" confirms Busch's judgment of his audience and attests to the timelessness of his insights. (154-155)

In my opinion, these works received little attention, not only because Busch was breaking with his customary genre of the verse and picture-story, but also because these pieces were complicated to understand. Even an educated reader would find it difficult to unravel the narrative riddles of these works. *Eduards Traum*, for example, includes a wide range of topics and fields of study, such as Literature, Art, Religion, Science, Evolution, Mathematics, Astronomy, Philosophy, Logic, and Economics. The interpretation of Busch's prose requires a sustained effort and an open mind on the part of the reader. Journalist and author Edith Braun enjoins readers of *Eduards Traum* and *Der Schmetterling* to use their imagination when attempting an interpretation:

In seinen Werken—besonders in EDUARDS TRAUM und im SCHMETTERLING—bedient sich Busch dieser Bildersprache mit einer

⁴ Busch's first poetry collection *Kritik des Herzens* (*Critique of the Heart*) (1874) became popular during the twentieth century. In 1960, Hans Ferdinand Schulz compiled a list of the 114 most popular German books of 1950-1958. Eleven works by Wilhelm Busch were represented, including *Kritik des Herzens* (*Critique of the Heart*) (Liebl 26). It ranked fourth on Schulz's list. Busch's prose works were, however, not represented.

⁵ All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. The German original appears first, the English translation thereafter in parentheses, followed by the reference to the original work. I have quoted few works written in English; the main ones are by Walter Arndt, John Willett, Carol Galway, Dieter P. Lotze, and Walter Sokel.

⁶ To date this is the only book on Busch written in English. The other lengthy work written in English available to me is Carol Galway's unpublished dissertation "Wilhelm Busch: Cryptic Enigma" (2001).

überschäumenden Fantasie. Wer sie entschlüsseln will, darf sich nicht scheuen, seiner Fantasie ebenfalls freien Lauf zu lassen.

(In his works—especially in EDUARDS DREAM and in THE BUTTERFLY—Busch makes use of this imagery with an overflowing imagination. Whoever wishes to find its key must likewise not shy away from giving their imagination free reign.) (74)

Eduards Traum is of particular interest for the scholarship of German literature in that it was Busch's first fictional prose piece and that it represented a permanent break from picture-stories. At this time in his life, Busch was financially secure and could pursue his art freely without the constraints set by publishers or the need to please readers.⁷ Many Busch scholars seem to agree with Wolfgang Kayser and Alfred Liede that this work “steht … völlig allein da” (stands … completely alone) (Liede 354) in German literature of the time (Pape 76; Ueding, *Klassiker* 150). According to Joseph Kraus⁸, *Eduards Traum* and *Der Schmetterling* were “stylistic … rarities” (130) and unlike any of the works written by Busch’s “contemporaries, the great story-tellers such as Theodor Fontane, Wilhelm Raabe and Gottfried Keller whom Busch admired” (130). The suggestion that *Eduards Traum* is an anomaly provides the impetus to look more closely at this work and at Busch's aesthetic views as they are manifest in this short prose piece. Significantly, it was written at the start of an era known for the simultaneous development of diverse literary styles—the German *Moderne*.⁹

⁷ Gert Ueding comments on Busch having been financially dependent on his works and that Busch harboured no false illusions when he compared his “Werklein” (little works) to the “Ferklein” (little piggies), which the farmer sent off to market. Busch claimed that “guter Humor und guter Vertrieb gehören zusammen” (good humour and good marketing belong together) (*Wilhelm Busch* 403).

⁸ I only quote from one work by Joseph Kraus, *Wilhelm Busch in Selbstbildnissen und Bilddokumenten* (1970).

⁹ An overview and explanation of the various artistic developments associated with the period known as the German *Moderne* appears in a separate section: Definition of the German *Moderne*.

In this thesis, I explore Busch's views on art and literature apparent in a selection of his letters¹⁰ and other written materials, including a collection of aphorisms and articles on Busch found in the book *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres* (*Wilhelm Busch: Earnest and Humorous* [Fare]) (1938). Moreover, I examine and interpret *Eduards Traum* through the principle of Busch's aesthetics with particular emphasis on the complexity of the narrative structure and its ambiguity; the themes of space, time and fragmentation in the dream episodes; and discussions on the grotesque, surreal, dissonant and paradoxical elements in *Eduards Traum*. I identify Busch's ideas on the poet, the work of art, and the reader, and I also discuss Busch's views on classical art, on forms of extreme realism as well as his aesthetic proximity to ideas found in exaggerated forms of expression in the twentieth-century *Moderne*.

Literature Review

As with most topics relating to Wilhelm Busch, even a literature review is not without contradictions and problems. At first glance, there appears to have been a great number of works devoted to Busch and his oeuvre. Looking at the bibliographies compiled by Walter Pape, in his *Wilhelm Busch* (1977), or the vast list of works (18 annotated pages) found in the massive three-volume historical-critical edition on Busch's picture-stories *Wilhelm Busch. Die Bildergeschichten: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe* (*The Picture Stories: Historical Critical Complete Edition*) (2002),¹¹ one may have the impression that there are many critical studies available to the researcher.

¹⁰ The collection of letters appears in two large volumes: *Wilhelm Busch. Sämtliche Briefe: Kommentierte Ausgabe in zwei Bänden*. The two volumes are abbreviated as *Briefe I* and *Briefe II*, followed by the number sign (#), followed by the actual number assigned to the letter in the collection. If the number sign is missing, this then refers to a page number, for example in the appendix or afterword by the editor.

¹¹ Initiated by the *Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft*, and edited by Hans Ries together with Ingrid Haberland, this massive work took eleven years to complete. It is based on Busch's picture-stories, although limited information on *Eduards Traum* may be found.

That, however, is not the case since many of the works are about Busch himself rather than his works, or they are difficult to locate and access.¹²

During Busch's lifetime, critical studies were almost non-existent and did not reflect the popularity Busch's works enjoyed. Carol Galway suggests that the lack of scholarly works on Busch may be traced to the difficulty of categorizing Busch's works (9).¹³ Galway specifically praises the objectivity of works by Gert Ueding and Gottfried Willems (9), each of whom has contributed to the understanding of Busch's aesthetics in their works.

The first major work on Busch appeared in 1878 (thirteen years after the publication of *Max und Moritz*), a generally favourable article "Wilhelm Busch" by the writer Paul Lindau in the newspaper *Nord und Süd (North and South)*, of which he was the editor. This was followed up by an unfavourable critique by Friedrich T. Vischer, whose views and literary works were influenced by the classical traditions and norms still prevalent at that time. Vischer called Busch's work "'grob und gründlich ekelhaft' [coarse and thoroughly disgusting]" (quoted in Galway 2), yet in an earlier discussion on Busch's caricatural works in his essay "Über neuere deutsche Karikatur. Die Fliegenden Blätter" (On newer German Caricature: The Flying Pages)¹⁴ he gave a more favourable view and compared his works to those by the Swiss caricaturist Rodolphe Töpffer (1799-1846)

¹² For example, a work that was difficult to locate was Waltraut Liebl's unpublished dissertation from the University of Innsbruck. In addition, some works on Busch are "uncritical" (this was noted by C. Galway [8]).

¹³ Heidemarie Kesselmann noted: "[Busch's] extraordinary heterogenous oeuvre, however, ... does not lend itself to the formal systematization that is necessary for the writing of literary histories" (Trans. Galway, quoted in Galway 9).

¹⁴ Busch had his start as an illustrator of satiric verses in Caspar Braun's publication *Fliegende Blätter (Flying Pages)* and went on to write the captions and verses to his illustrations. In 1865, Braun and Schneider published his *Max und Moritz* after having been turned down by his publisher of the *Bilderpossen (Picture Farce)* (1864) (BG I 254-327) Heinrich Richter, the son of the painter Ludwig Richter (1803-1884), whose idyllic style Busch emulated with his early fairy tale illustrations (a number of these are depicted in Otto Nöldeke's book *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres (Wilhelm Busch: Earnest and Humourous [Fare])*).

(quoted in Galway 183). Brief articles or opinion pieces occasionally appeared in newspapers and often included misinformation.¹⁵ This was also the problem with the first book-length work on Busch *Über Wilhelm Busch und seine Bedeutung (On Wilhelm Busch and his Meaning)* (1886) written by the young artist Eduard Daelen. While Busch was embarrassed by the extreme accolades of this admirer, the book also included errors, including the assumption that Busch publicly endorsed Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* ("culture struggle").¹⁶ After Johannes Proelss of the *Frankfurter Zeitung (Frankfurter Newspaper)* sought to rectify inaccuracies in Daelen's book, Busch himself felt compelled to respond with what was his first autobiography *Was mich betrifft (As For Myself)* (1886)¹⁷ in the same newspaper. The next substantial work that I found was a book published in 1910, *Wilhelm Busch der Poet: Seine Motive und seine Quellen (Wilhelm Busch the Poet: his Motifs and his Sources)*, by Otto Felix Volkman, which is an excellent analysis on the subject of Busch's sources. Volkman finds that some of Busch's sources originate in fables, myths and fairy tales, thereby connecting Busch to the German Romantic movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which was known for its affinity with the fairy tale genre. Otto Nöldeke's book *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres (Wilhelm Busch: Earnest and Humorous [Fare])* (1938) includes biographical

¹⁵ One such article, "Wilhelm Busch. The Funniest of Germany's Funny Men," appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on 26 June 1892, which mentioned his numerous children (Busch had no children)—a small mistake, but many of these can generally be found in newspaper articles on Busch. This article intersperses information on the style of Busch's caricatures (their simplicity), which is quite valid. It is an informal article interspersed with humour.

¹⁶ The "culture struggle" instituted by Bismarck was, in large part, aimed at the socialist movement (*Sozialistengesetze* [Laws against Socialists]) and the Roman Catholic Church (*Jesuitengesetze* [Jesuit Laws']).

¹⁷ Busch's autobiography is translated in the anthology by Walter Arndt (201-207) who states: "'As for Myself,' titled 'Personally' ... [was Busch's] response to some errors in a fine biographical analysis by Johannes Proelss, the *Frankfurter's* literary feature editor. This profile had itself been motivated by an embarrassingly fulsome pamphlet extolling ... [Busch] by the Düsseldorf painter, Eduard Daelen" (Arndt 214).

information and various primary works by Busch, as well as secondary literature (older articles).

Miscellaneous topics are addressed in the following works: Josef Ehrlich's book entitled *Wilhelm Busch der Pessimist: Sein Verhältnis zu Arthur Schopenhauer* (*Wilhelm Busch the Pessimist: His Relationship to Arthur Schopenhauer*) (1962), which is one of a number of works on themes related to Schopenhauer; Peter Marxer's dissertation *Wilhelm Busch als Dichter* (*Wilhelm Busch as Poet*) (1967) is a thorough work and includes an interpretation of Busch's prose *Der Schmetterling*; a dissertation by Joseph Kraus "Ausdrucksmittel der Satire bei Wilhelm Busch" (Methods of Expression in the Satire of Wilhelm Busch) (1968) (Galway 11). While his thesis is not available to me, his ideas are in his *Wilhelm Busch in Selbstbildnissen und Bilddokumenten* (1970). Friedrich Bohne, the editor of *Wilhelm Busch. Sämtliche Briefe: Kommentierte Ausgabe in zwei Bänden* (*Wilhelm Busch Complete Collection of Letters: Annotated Edition in Two Volumes*) (1968), in the "Afterword" to this important collection of letters, historically contextualizes Busch's life and works. He hints that Busch was an artist out of step with his time (Bohne 332).

In Dieter P. Lotze's article "Böll's Busch: Der Nobelpreisträger und der Humorist" (Böll's Busch: the Nobel Prize Winner and the Humorist) (1984) Lotze defends Busch's brand of humour against Böll's strong criticism of Busch's use of *Schadenfreude* (pleasure derived from observing other people's misfortunes); *Das Wilhelm Busch Bilder- und Lesebuch* (*The Wilhelm Busch Picture- and Reading Book*) (1981) edited by Gerd Haffmans is valuable for its combination of primary works by Busch and secondary literature, such as essays and quotations by well-known artists, writers and scientists.

Waltraut Liebl's dissertation "Bild und Sprache: Modelle der Wirkungsästhetik bei Wilhelm Busch" (Picture and Language: Models of the Aesthetic Effect of Wilhelm Busch) (1990) includes the unusual topic of Busch's modified works as they are used in advertising. It is thoroughly researched and includes verses and illustrations used by industry and the world of politics. As Liebl observes, Busch's works continue to be popular, which allows them to be parodied in advertising and continue to be relevant in a very modern sense.

Another work of note is Walter Arndt's anthology, *The Genius of Wilhelm Busch*. It includes an informative introduction and numerous English translations of Busch's works, including parts of Busch's only other fictional prose work *Der Schmetterling (The Butterfly)*, which was published as a *Seitenstück* (counterpart) to *Eduards Traum* in 1895. *Eduards Traum* had itself been described as a counterpart to Busch's first book of poetry *Kritik des Herzens (Critique of the Heart)* (1874). Arndt describes *Eduards Traum* as a "picaresque and surrealist prose fantasy, ... 5,000 copies [of which had been published in 1891] ... in conjunction with a new edition of *Kritik des Herzens*" (214).

In recent years, *Eduard's Traum* has received increasing attention, including a scholarly work by Gottfried Willems, *Abschied vom Wahren-Schönen-Guten. Wilhelm Busch und die Anfänge der ästhetischen Moderne (Departing from Truth-Beauty-Goodness. Wilhelm Busch and the Beginnings of the Aesthetic Moderne)* (1998). This book's findings support some of the statements made in Hans Neyer, Hans Ries, Eckhard Siepmann's *Pessimist mit Schmetterling: Wilhelm Busch—Maler, Zeichner, Dichter, Denker (Pessimist with Butterfly: Wilhelm Busch—Painter, Draftsman, Poet, Thinker)*

(2007), a volume based on a museum exhibit in 2007. Some of the essays therein are based in part on Willems' book.

Considering the unrivalled popularity of Busch's mixed-media works, the neglect of Busch's prose work is remarkable in that so few researchers are curious about what this creative artist and author was trying to convey, and why and how he may have delivered his next genre after having turned from the picture-stories. There is fruitful ground for further investigation, as scholars have only just begun to reveal what lies behind Busch's mature prose.

Aside from the works mentioned above, the following works are either complete articles, or include chapters or passages on *Eduards Traum*: Fritz Novotny's *Wilhelm Busch als Zeichner und Maler (Wilhelm Busch as Graphic Artist and Painter)* (1949); Wolfgang Kayser's *Das Groteske: seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* (1958),¹⁸ translated by Ullrich Weisstein as *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (1963); Alfred Liede's *Dichtung als Spiel: Studien zur Unsinnspoesie an den Grenzen der Sprache (Poetry as a Game: Studies on Nonsense Poetry on the Borders of Language)* (1963); an essay by Loring R. Taylor "The Ambiguous Legacy of Wilhelm Busch" (1972) that includes a translation of a part of *Eduards Traum* "but stops short of an analysis" (Galway 13); Peter Marxer's "Nachwort" (Afterword) to *Wilhelm Busch: Gedichte und Prosa (Wilhelm Busch: Poetry and Prose)* (n.d.); a chapter devoted to Busch's prose works in Dieter P. Lotze's book *Wilhelm Busch* (1979);¹⁹ parts of Gert Ueding's books, *Wilhelm Busch: Das 19. Jahrhundert en miniature (Wilhelm Busch: The Nineteenth Century in Miniature)* (1977) and a chapter in his *Die anderen Klassiker: Literarische Porträts aus*

¹⁸ I only quote from this work by Wolfgang Kayser, not from the translation by Weisstein.

¹⁹ To my knowledge it is the only book on Busch written in English.

zwei Jahrhunderten (The Other Classicists: Literary Portraits from Two Centuries) (1986); Karsten Imm's article “Wilhelm Busch: *Eduards Traum*: Ein Feuerwerk der Phantasie” (Wilhelm Busch: Eduards Dream: a Firework of the Imagination) (1990). Carol Galway's dissertation *Wilhelm Busch: Cryptic Enigma* (2001) is by far the most extensive work on *Eduards Traum* that I have discovered, whether in English or in German. It is a well-researched dissertation that encompasses the whole spectrum of Busch's life and works, examining his picture-stories as well as his autobiographies and prose works *Eduards Traum* and *Der Schmetterling*. Galway interprets *Eduards Traum* with a view to understanding the “social criticism” of Busch's picture-stories (iv). She includes facsimiles of manuscript pages, as well as a number of illustrations. Busch's illustrations, such as his “*Finale furioso*” (1865) (depicted in Willett 49 and *BG I* 426), have caught scholars' attention. Dieter P. Lotze mentions stylistic elements, such as those associated with Expressionism (*Wilhelm Busch* 74) and the aesthetic proximity to works by Kafka (14). Radio programs have aired to discuss museum exhibits; discussions usually centre around Busch's varied style and his mature visual art, and alongside *Eduards Traum* is often mentioned as a hidden literary jewel of modernity (App no pag.). Therefore, I define and discuss some of the terminology and concepts I use in this thesis that are associated with the *Moderne*.

Definition of the German Moderne

The following section explains the German *Moderne* with reference to the evolution of the diverse literary streams that co-existed at the turn of the twentieth century (Naturalism, Impressionism and Expressionism). In the context of this thesis, the expression “modern” will be used as defined by Walter Sokel in his *Writer in Extremis*:

“the term ‘modern’ will not be used as synonymous with recent, but as designating certain qualities in recent art and literature which the public has found baffling, obscure, radically divergent from the familiar European traditions of art and literature” (7). The terms “*Moderne*,” “modernity,” and “Modernism” will be used as they apply to the trends in *Kunst* (all arts, including visual art, literature, and music) during the twentieth century, which evolved from developments during the nineteenth century. Walter Sokel’s definition of the *Moderne* also applies to the discussions in this thesis. According to Anton Kaes:

The German *Moderne* refers to the artistic developments taking place in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century, which were part of the diverse artistic trends occurring throughout Europe. However, while in other countries they were spread over a longer period of time and appeared successively, these trends seemed to lag behind in Germany and then develop almost simultaneously. This is an era informed by opposing aesthetics: on the one hand it tended to an “aesthetically autonomous, avant-garde elitist urban literature, [and on the other a] deliberately anti-modern … popular literature of the hearth and home” (Trans. of Kaes 311).

The result of this diverse artistic climate was the emergence of a multitude of forms. Whether traditional or avantgarde forms, both could be regarded as making strong, but opposing, aesthetic statements.

The German *Moderne* had its start during the 1880s and can be considered to have evolved from innovative literary movements and counter-movements.²⁰ First, the period

²⁰The various developments I mention below overlap to a certain extent. It must be understood that the “Isms” to which I refer are not meant to be portrayed as historically “clear-cut” divisions, or even as known to exist by the individual artists whose works may be placed in these categories by scholars. The artists may, at times, not agree with their inclusion in one movement or another (For example, the writer Gottfried Benn, “in 1955 … queried many of the assumptions underlying [the] definition [of Expressionism and was dismayed] … that his work was being presented as Expressionist” [Willett 7]. It is far from my intention, in this thesis, to try to give artists and “writers ‘a common stamp which they never in fact possessed,’ [a comment made by] … Kurt Wolff, who from 1912 on was the principal publisher of the writers and artists we now think of constituting German Expressionism” [Willett 7]). Giving art of a similar era, type and nature a name, however, gives a framework which helps scholars familiar with these terms to discuss certain similarities seen in the arts and to distinguish between these types in a broader sense. Individual artists’ works, however, are best interpreted taking into account their individuality, not just as being dependent on or restricted to guidelines or manifestoes to which an artist may or may not subscribe at the

from 1880 to 1895 saw the “naturalistische Literaturrevolution” (revolution of naturalistic literature) (Emrich 111). The young author Arno Holz contemplated how to describe this direction in literature, which sought to approximate nature as much as possible. Holz devised the following formula: “Kunst = Natur – x” (art = nature – x) (van Rinsum and van Rinsum 309). “X” is the unknown that denotes the limitations imposed on the artist by the available materials, tools, and his or her own ability. In other words, “x” is the “Lücke” (gap or difference) that exists between nature and its artistic representation. According to Holz, the object of Naturalism was to minimize this gap: “Die Kunst hat die Tendenz, wieder Natur zu sein” (Art has the tendency to be nature again) (309). In other words, Holz sought to portray nature as “getreu” (faithful[ly]) as possible (307) and his experimentations with style led him to develop his “Sekundenstil” (style [measured in] seconds) (van Rinsum and van Rinsum 323).

The French author Emile Zola strongly influenced the development of Naturalism in Germany (Cowen 106). Zola’s ideas on art, nature and their relationship to truth are elucidated in Roy C. Cowen’s essay “Naturalismus” (Naturalism), which states:

Nach Zola ist das Endziel der naturalistischen Dichtung die “komplette Wahrheit.” Darin unterscheidet sich der Naturalismus am deutlichsten von anderen Arten des Realismus. Einfach zu behaupten, der Naturalismus setze die Wahrheit über die Schönheit, reicht als Wesensbestimmung nicht aus, liegt doch diese Implikation gewissermaßen den meisten Bekenntnissen zum Realismus wenigstens andeutungsweise zugrunde, wenn es sich auch—wie bei den “Poetischen Realisten”—um eine gleichsam “gestellte Wirklichkeit” handelt ... Bei Zola ging es jedoch um eine vollständige, rein quantitative Wahrheit. In dem Maße also, in dem man von Qualitäten, d.h. von einer Rangordnung der Dinge, spricht, weicht man vom streng naturalistischen Kunstdideal ab ... die expressionistische Dichtung strebte nach “Intensität,” brachte also Typen und Abstraktionen ohne alle individuellen, für das Typologische überflüssigen Details.

time of creating his or her work. In this manner, one may identify distinct contributions to art that may be notable for their innovation in comparison to an artist’s contemporaries.

(According to Zola the goal of naturalistic poetry is the ‘complete truth.’ This is what differentiates Naturalism most clearly from other forms of Realism. To state that Naturalism ranks truth above beauty does not sufficiently define its nature since this is the implication underlying or hinted at in most forms of Realism, ...—as [also] with the “Poetic Realists”—even when they deal with a “staged reality.” However, Zola [aimed for] the complete, purely quantitative truth. To the extent that one speaks of qualities, which are given a ranking order one strays from the strictly naturalistic ideal of art ... [E]xpressionistic poetry strove for “intensity” [and] thus brought [with it] types and abstractions without all the individual details superfluous to the [concept of the] typological). (Cowen 108-109)

Zola’s and Holz’s thoughts on Naturalism were much the same. Both sought an art that strove for a close depiction of nature, which Zola, at least, equated with “truth.”

Naturalism was followed by the “impressionistische Strömung etwa von 1895 bis 1912” (impressionistic stream [dated] from approximately 1895-1912) (Emrich 111). From 1890 onward, a “counter movement against Naturalism” developed that may best be described as the “Lyrik” (poetry) of Stefan George, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Rainer Maria Rilke (111). From approximately 1910 to 1924, the counter-movement against both Naturalism and Impressionism resulted in another “Ism,” which was given the name Expressionism (111). German Expressionism encompassed all forms of art and was, for the most part, a movement of the younger generation (Sokel 2), which resulted in individualistic at times “intense” (2) styles and “abstractions” (Cowen 109).

Between 1924 and 1933, the counter-movement to Expressionism in Germany produced the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) movement, which promoted a neutral, sober, realistic type of literature that Sokel describes as “the attempt to present a ‘de-emphasized’ objective reality, i.e., the dispassionate understanding of the external ‘world’” (161).

The following quotations from contemporaries at the turn of the twentieth century are remarkable for the diversity of opinions on what constitutes the *Moderne*. Gotthart Wunberg, in his book *Die literarische Moderne: Dokumente zum Selbstverständnis der Literatur um die Jahrhundertwende* (*The Literary Modern: Documents of Self-Image of Literature at the Turn of the Century*), quotes a twenty-year-old Hugo von Hoffmannsthal: “Man treibt Anatomie des Seelenlebens oder man träumt” (One pursues the anatomic study of one’s [inner] life/soul, or one dreams) (Wunberg, “Nachwort” 248). Eugen Wolff stated, “Die Dichtung hatte, wo sie modern sein wollte, auf der Höhe der Zeit zu sein; was so viel hiess wie: den wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen, insbesondere den naturwissenschaftlichen, den sozialen Bedürfnissen zu entsprechen.” (Literature had to be up at the leading edge, where it wanted to purport to be modern [and] … it was to meet the requirements of [current] scientific knowledge, especially of the natural sciences, [and] to correspond to the social needs) (Wolff quoted in Wunberg, Nachwort 249). Many positions on the *Moderne* are voiced and that is one of its attributes. It was a time of “Verwirrung” (confusion), a word that is used by Kasimir Edschmid several times in his essay “Über den dichterischen Expressionismus” (About [On the Meaning of] Poetic Expressionism) (556).

My Argument

In this thesis, I argue that Wilhelm Busch’s views on art and literature may be gleaned from his letters and other written materials, and applied to an interpretation of his *Eduards Traum*. The latter highlights the mature Busch’s aesthetic views. I will show that, while Busch’s contemporaries tended to portray grand historical scenes and large-scale portraits, Busch purposely steered away from this trend. I will argue that Busch’s

aesthetic philosophy was influenced by his desire to make “sichtbar” (visible) (*Briefe II* #1259) realities that may otherwise not be perceived. Applying himself diligently to overcome artistic obstacles, Busch would find ways to express himself in extremes of brevity and simplicity. This was his method to be more authentic and honest in his artistic creations (visual and literary) than the adornments and aggrandizements of flattery in which “Schein” (appearance) was the norm. I propose that the use of genre or everyday themes was part of the authenticity Busch desired in his work. It was an important means by which it was possible to portray the reality and “Sein” (being). In Busch’s view, the imagination was one of the most important elements in the creation of works of visual art and fiction.

I further argue that in *Eduards Traum*, the complexity of its narrative structure, its ambiguity, the distortions of space and time and the fragmentation in the dream episodes are indications of Busch’s aesthetic proximity to the German *Moderne*. The grotesque, surreal, dissonant and paradoxical elements in *Eduards Traum* point to aesthetic views that place Busch at the threshold of an aesthetic akin to those found in the twentieth century, rather than the classical norms prevalent during the nineteenth century, or the poetic realism with which Busch’s works are generally equated. I propose that Busch sought an aesthetic renewal at the time of writing *Eduards Traum* to find his authentic voice after his picture-story genre no longer seemed to convey the imaginative truths and hidden realities of this world.

My examination of Wilhelm Busch’s views will demonstrate that, especially during the mature phase of Busch’s artistic and literary career (during the 1890s), his

views and methods included ideas and elements that, in retrospect, we more readily associate with views and practices of the early twentieth century.

Thesis Outline

This study is divided into three parts: first, an overview of Busch's reception (Chapter 1: Busch's Reception); second, an examination of Busch's own statements about art and literature (Chapter 2: Busch's Statements on Art and Literature); third, an interpretation of *Eduards Traum* as viewed through aesthetics and literature (Chapter 3: *Eduards Traum: an Interpretation*).

In Chapter 1, I lay the groundwork to understand Busch's varied reception and to give the historical context of Busch and his works. This overview explores Busch's image as a successful author of *Trivialliteratur* (light fiction),²¹ his picture-story-image, which was mostly ignored by critics during his lifetime but which eventually reached legendary status. First, I discuss Busch's reception during his lifetime. I show that his picture-stories in particular enjoyed great public acclaim but that his works were met with a silent resistance on the part of the literary establishment. Busch's reception after his death (in 1908) indicates a better understanding of Busch and his works in light of the new information available through the publication of his letters and personal artefacts. In recent years, scholars have come to recognize that Busch's prose works may have been misjudged as insignificant. Instead, a small number of scholars have started to discuss Busch's prose works as anticipating twentieth-century aesthetics. Third, I examine Busch's wider international reception as well as the role his works still play as an inspiration for artists and authors throughout the world.

²¹ *Trivialliteratur* is a specific literary term and may also be translated as “trivial literature.”

Chapter 2 involved scrutinizing many of the annotated letters available to researchers in the two-volume work *Wilhelm Busch. Sämtliche Briefe: Kommentierte Ausgabe in zwei Bänden* (1968) and extracting from these sources pertinent information with regard to Busch's own views on art and literature as he communicated these to others. Further sources included one of his three autobiographies, *Von mir über mich (From Me About Me)* (1894) and newspaper articles and verbal comments by Busch found throughout *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres*. Chapter 2 of this thesis is arranged under four headings: The Artist and his Sources; The Creative Process; the Text and its Themes; and Busch as Critic. While Chapter 1 documents the opinions of others on Busch's aesthetics, here I give Busch his own voice. I examine Busch's letters and personal communications to glean his aesthetic views in the pursuit of "truth" and "freedom" for writers and artists to pursue their art as they see fit. I show that Busch's views were influenced both by earlier traditions such as works by Renaissance artists and by Goethe, Schiller and contemporary works such as those of Gottfried Keller.

In Chapter 3, I interpret *Eduards Traum* by means of a close reading of selected passages which I relate to aesthetics, art and literature. The chapter is divided into five subheadings: The Narrative Structure: Ambiguity and Polyvalence; The Dream Episodes; The Dream-Dot-Reality: Altered States of Time and Space; "Surreal" and "Grotesque" Elements; "*Schein* and *Sein* as Raison d'être. I discover that Busch was adamantly opposed to overly realistic portrayals popular during his time (Naturalism) and favoured literature and art that left "open spaces" for readers to fill their imagination. Busch's aesthetic views appear to be poised on the threshold of the German *Moderne*.

My thesis differs from other secondary works in several respects. First, scholars, including Loring Taylor and Alfred Liede, cite large passages of *Eduards Traum* but fail to analyze them in any depth. Galway mentions that Taylor translates part of *Eduards Traum* but does not interpret the work. I also noticed that Alfred Liede (350-354) quotes large passages of *Eduards Traum* and lets these passages speak for themselves. He gives a reason for doing so with regard to a passage interpreted as a religious allegory: “Busch ist kein Sprachskeptiker, deshalb müssen wir uns mit diesem Exkurs begnügen” (Busch is not a skeptic of the language; therefore we must be satisfied with this excerpt) (353).

Second, my thesis differs from Lotze’s and Liede’s work in that I do not seek to compare passages in *Eduards Traum* to events in Busch’s personal life. For example, although the following is only one of several strands in Lotze’s work, I have found that he makes comparisons to Busch’s personal life in interpretations of *Eduards Traum*, as in this statement: “Yet, Busch found less than the ‘complete world’ at the Düsseldorf Academy. Eduard’s next sentence reflects that disappointment: ‘Es war aber nur Stückwerk’ (But it was only fragmentary)” (*Wilhelm Busch* 134). Alfred Liede also makes such comparisons: “Man ahnt, daß dieses Grauen der Urgrund seines ganzen Werks, aller seiner harmlos heiteren Bildergeschichten sein muß. In ‘Eduards Traum’ rettet er [(Busch)] sich aus dem Abgrund in eine mystische Vision” (One senses that this horror must be at the core of all of his works, all of his harmless humorous picture-stories. In ‘Eduards Dream’ [Busch] saves himself from the abyss into a mystical vision)²² (353).

My own thesis is one of few works written in English on Wilhelm Busch and one of the few to include *Eduards Traum* in any kind of substantial discussion. Unlike

²² I do not entirely agree with this particular statement by Liede, whose interpretation of *Eduards Traum* is discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis (*Eduards Traum: an Interpretation*).

Galway, who uses *Eduards Traum* to interpret the picture-stories to gain an understanding of Busch's critique of society, I first set out to discover Busch's views on art and literature by examining a selection of his biographic materials and follow this with an interpretation of *Eduards Traum*. The aim of the interpretation is to gain insight into Busch's aesthetic views as manifested in *Eduards Traum*.

CHAPTER 1: Wilhelm Busch's Reception

In this chapter on Busch's reception I try to elucidate some of the historical, artistic and personal interrelationships to contextualize Busch's varied reception. This overview explores Busch's image as a successful mixed-media author of comedic *Trivialliteratur* (light fiction) that inspired authors and artists alike. It evolves to include the newer images of a serious visual artist and author of prose, whose mature prose work *Eduards Traum* is compared to surrealistic works of the twentieth century by respected scholars. My analysis of Busch's reception is ordered chronologically in three sections: first, Busch's reception during his lifetime, which was marked by popularity as well as a collective silence on the part of the literary establishment; second, the reception after Busch's death (1908), which elucidates an understanding of Busch and his works in light of the new information available through the publication of his letters; third, Busch's wider international reception as well as the role his works still play as an inspiration for artists and authors throughout the world.

1.1 Busch's Reception During His Lifetime

Wilhelm Busch's early reception by literary critics can be characterized as a collective silence. The critics' indifference stood in stark contrast to the public's enthusiasm for Busch's works, particularly for his picture-story, *Max und Moritz* (1865). Soon after its publication, this work became one of the most widely read works in nineteenth-century Germany. Its immense popularity, rivalled only by the Bible, was thrown into relief by Eckhard Siepmann (in 2007): "Jesus [und] Max und Moritz ... sind

die Helden der meistgelesenen Bücher des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland” (Jesus [and] Max and Moritz … are the heroes of the most widely read books of the 19th century in Germany) (“Vorspeise” 10). Yet with few exceptions, those who ventured to comment on Busch’s works did so in brief newspaper articles and opinion pieces, thereby diminishing any significance their mention of Busch’s works might have had to the more educated elite. Among literary critics, silence about Busch’s works was the norm. It effectively communicated that Busch was not a serious writer, but primarily a visual artist. Conversely, art critics considered Busch primarily a writer (Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 14). Thus his multidisciplinary excellence was not recognized by those who were considered to have the expertise to determine a work’s artistic, literary, and academic merit.

In 1878, Busch’s friend Paul Lindau, then a well-known author, broke the silence. Lindau was the publisher of the periodical *Nord und Süd*, which he used as a forum to publish scholarly literature on Busch’s works. At the close of his analysis, Lindau confirmed that Busch was one of the most original and popular humorists of the time (Lindau, “Wilhelm Busch” 25). His analysis “enthält die … erste ausführliche Betrachtung zum Thema Wilhelm Busch” (contains the … first extensive look at the topic Wilhelm Busch) (*MBG* 9) and is still considered to be one of the best on the subject.²³ Lindau was frustrated at not being able to find any biographical material on Busch in the current reference works²⁴ even though Busch was highly popular and becoming internationally known.²⁵ While Busch’s works attracted international attention, he was

²³ According to the most current (2007) publication of *BG III* (1476).

²⁴ He mentions that there was barely any information about Busch in the “zugänglichen Nachschlagebüchern … (die damals kaum Notiz von ihm nahmen)” (Lindau, “Erinnerungen” 30).

²⁵ *Der Heilige Antonius von Padua* (1870) (*BG II* 68-139) was available in English, French and Italian by 1872 (*Briefe I* #149, 92) and his *Fromme Helene* (May 1872) (*BG II* 224-339) was published in English by November 1872 by a teacher of Dutch origin at the “Edinburgh Academy,” Mynheer van Laun, who used

still being marginalized by publishers both abroad and at home. His name did not appear on the English translation of *Fromme Helene* (1872) (*BG II* 224-339)²⁶ and he was obliged to personally send the most basic “curriculum vitae” to a German publisher of periodicals (Lindau), whose profession must have given him access to the latest resources. For Lindau, it must have been shocking that he was obliged to ask for information from Busch himself (Lindau, “Erinnerungen” 30). Busch’s correspondence reveals that he was pleased with Lindau’s thoroughness in the treatment of his works, playfully calling Lindau’s analysis an “unverdient liebenswürdige Vivisection des Karnickels” (unmeritedly kind dissection of the rabbit²⁷) (*Briefe I* #405). Busch further remarked: “Ich durfte ja nicht hoffen, daß Sie so viel Gründlichkeit daran verschwenden würden, sonst hätte ich Ihnen ausführlichere Notizen geliefert” (I couldn’t hope that you would be so thorough, otherwise I would have delivered more detailed notes) (#405). It seems that Busch anticipated only minimal attention, even from a critic who was also a friend. Thus, equipped with less information than Busch could have made available, Lindau criticized Busch’s *Der Heilige Antonius von Padua* (1870) (*BG II* 68-139) and claimed that it made use of certain controversial “heikle Dinge” (tricky matters) and “married stories” (Lindau, quoted from notes in margin of *Briefe I* #405). These seem to refer to sexual overtones perceived by Lindau, and these in relation to a religious man. In Lindau’s opinion, they did nothing to increase the works’ humour, but did serve to

the pseudonym John MacLush for his English translation, and who, as Busch proposed, was to undertake the Dutch translation (*Briefe I* #151).

²⁶ Busch mentioned to Bassermann that the publisher from Edinburgh (William P. Nimmo) neglected to identify him (Busch) as the original author of *Fromme Helene* (*Briefe I* # 147 and # 148).

²⁷ The German grammar indicates that the word “unmerited” modifies the word “kind.” In this slightly humorous manner, Busch lets Lindau know that his analysis was appreciated; Busch is not being sarcastic. In matters regarding the evaluation of his own works, Busch tended towards moderation and was easily embarrassed by overzealous admirers who, on several occasions, likened his works to artists he himself revered.

decrease the number of Busch's admirers (quoted from notes in *Briefe I* #405). Lindau's stance would alter in later years.²⁸ His assessment of Busch's oeuvre was, nonetheless, favourable.

After more than twenty years of relative silence since the publication of the German literary phenomenon *Max und Moritz*, the critics were themselves criticized for their lack of attention to Busch by Eduard Daelen, a young artist and admirer of Busch. Daelen's book, *Über Wilhelm Busch und seine Bedeutung* (About Wilhelm Busch and his Work) (1886), offered a lengthy interpretation of Busch's significance for German literature and art. Unfortunately, his inflated praises were not well-received when he stated that Busch was "deserving of a place next to Dante, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Goethe" (Daelen 6, trans. Galway 33). This seemed embarrassing to Busch, although Galway suggests he may also have welcomed some of the accolades (Galway 32).²⁹ However, Daelen had other motives for writing this book. His hidden agenda could best be described as coinciding with the aims of Bismarck's culture struggle waged against the Roman Catholic Church. Almost one hundred years later, Dieter P. Lotze would remark that "the politicizing of his [Busch's] works has not stopped with Daelen's book" (*Wilhelm Busch* 153).³⁰

Unfortunately, Daelen's book and the press review it received (by Johannes Proelss in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*; Pape 10) were not without inaccuracies. These included personal misinformation on his relationship with members of a prominent

²⁸ In 1917, Lindau's revised article of 1878 clarified that he had backed away from his originally "philisterhaften Betrachtung" ("philistine view") (quoted from margin in *Briefe I* #405).

²⁹ Galway studied the correspondence between the various parties (Daelen, Busch, Bassermann, Proelss).

³⁰ Busch took exception to the use of his works for political reasons. Nonetheless, after his death, "National Socialist propaganda misused his social satire for anti-Semitic and antireligious purposes.... At the same time, Communist critics have consistently praised Busch's satiric view of bourgeois society but deplored his unwillingness to take a political stand" (Lotze, *Wilhelm Busch* 153).

banker's family in Frankfurt, where Busch's brother was a tutor and Busch occasionally resided and had a studio. Proelss also suggested that Busch used an inordinate amount of material from *Don Quixote* and other older works and that he had profited greatly from his *Max und Moritz*. The latter was far from true since Busch was paid a one-time sum of 1000 Gulden, and relinquished all rights to the publisher Braun und Schneider (Galway 33). Busch promptly wrote a personal response *Was mich betrifft (Personally)*³¹ to correct the misconceptions. It first appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on October 10, 1886 (two later versions from 1893/94 were both called *Von mir über mich*; Pape 11). The need for a biographical correction must have been especially disconcerting for Busch in light of his negative view of most biographies, which he claimed more often than not "lied and were boring and indiscreet" (*Briefe I* #637). In a reply to an interviewer regarding information in the press, Busch is said to have responded ironically: "Ich habe das beste Vertrauen, daß alles nicht richtig [ist]" (I trust that not everything [is] correct) (EH 141). Indeed, not everything *was* correct. The long-awaited serious discussions of Busch's works were abandoned because his personal life became the focus instead.

Busch's letters to Daelen point out mistakes and misinformation. Busch had never, for example, spoken with the literary critic Friedrich Theodor Vischer (an author and critic trained in the classical tradition: an "Ästhetiker") (*Briefe I* #649 including margin notes, *Briefe I* #651). Busch had also "not been aware that ... Vischer had accused him of having a ... 'pornographic touch'" (Galway 32).³² Had Daelen examined the topic of

³¹ Walter Arndt's translation is called *Personally* (201-207).

³² This thesis has limited space to include all the criticisms. Carol Galway gives an excellent account of the lukewarm reception of Daelen's work by critics and Busch's own criticisms of the work. She also studied the correspondence from Busch's publisher Bassermann housed at the Wilhelm-Busch-Museum. Bassermann had sent Daelen his own copy of Daelen's book marked with mistakes and inaccuracies in case a second edition was planned (31-36).

humour, “wann und warum man lacht” (when and why one laughs), as Busch had suggested to Daelen (letter to Hermann Levi, *Briefe I* #642), then Busch’s contemporaries might instead have had the rare pleasure of reading about the stylistic intricacies and merits of his works, which might have sparked a true literary debate.

The readers of Busch’s works came from all walks of life. The popularity of Busch’s works is especially evident in the many letters and articles written in 1902 (*EH* 181-224) on the occasion of his 70th birthday, when Busch received national and international attention for his lifetime of literary and artistic achievements. Letters and telegrams of congratulation started arriving before his birthday, including one sent by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who praised Busch’s works for their “humour, which will live on unforgettably for the German people” (*Briefe II, Anhang* 4, 318). Statistics compiled by members of Busch’s household consist of a list of the names and origins of more than 1025 congratulatory good wishes and gifts.³³

Newspapers and magazines arrived from many parts of the world (*EH* 222, 225). Special editions of newspapers and magazines in honour of Busch’s birthday were planned such as a Wilhelm-Busch-Number by the magazine *Jugend*, principal platform for authors of the emerging *Moderne*. These authors asked the esteemed “Meister” (master/expert) for a small literary contribution for the special planned edition and he complied (*Briefe I* #691). Congratulations also arrived from larger newspapers and

³³ One admirer honoured Busch and his works in a most unusual way: “Den weitesten Weg hatte eine Sendung aus Togo zurückgelegt, von wo ein schwarzer Kolonialbruder sein eigenes Konterfei und das seiner Zwillinge ‘Max und Moritz’ nach Mechtershausen schickte” (A shipment from Togo had traveled the furthest, from which a black colonial brother sent his own likeness and that of his twins ‘Max and Moritz’ to Mechtershausen) (*EH* 225).

Kunstverleger, artists' clubs and literary organizations throughout Germany. These included "der Künstlerverein Weimar, die Berliner Presse, der Düsseldorfer 'Malkasten,' ... der Journalistenverein Hannover" (*EH* 225), as well as individual artists. Franz von Lenbach, whose portrait of Busch graced the special edition of *Jugend* (*EH* 204) and F. A. Kaulbach were both friends of Busch from the "Jung-München" club. In addition, many famous authors sent their compliments and good wishes such as Gerhart Hauptmann (*EH* 225), Detlev von Liliencron, and Wilhelm Raabe (*EH* 205). These comments show the high esteem in which Busch was held by his colleagues, who commented on his "heartfelt humour" (Raabe, quoted in *EH* 205). In an earlier comment, years before, however, Raabe had not been very complimentary of Busch's works (Galway 2). It shows Busch's varied reception, and that individuals' opinions varied over time. Raabe's opinion had become more complimentary of Busch's works.

As to the contemporary critical reception of Busch's prose works, I was able to find only indirect references. In a letter to Dr. Arthur Kutscher (Frank Wedekind's future biographer), Busch complains about the poor reception *Eduards Traum* had received, and gives a plausible explanation:

Daß meine prosaischen Sachen kein größeres Publikum finden würden, war ja vorauszusehen. Bild und Vers prägen sich leichter ein. Und überhaupt, wer vom zuerst eingeschlagenen Wege zur Seite biegt, der darf sich in der Regel nicht wundern, wenn nur wenige ihm folgen mögen.

(That my prosaic things [(pieces)] would not find a larger audience could be foreseen. Picture and verse are more easily imprinted. And anyway, whoever strays from the path once taken, should not be surprised that only few will wish to follow him.) (letter of 27 February 1907, *Briefe II* #1573)

This letter can be seen as a summary of the reception his works received not only during his lifetime but also thereafter. His "picture and verse" genre, thanks to its visual power,

became and remained popular as opposed to his “prosaic things.” While the classically trained Theodor Visher gave negative critiques of Busch’s picture-stories, he can be credited with being one of only a few persons to examine Busch’s works critically during his lifetime. Neglected by some, Busch and his works were celebrated by others including his colleagues in Munich (among these the famous portrait artist Franz Lenbach), and a group of young authors and artists of the emerging *Moderne* who acknowledged Busch as their esteemed “Meister” (*Briefe I* #691).

1.2 Reception After Busch’s Death

Soon after Busch’s death, the publication of some of his letters shed light on his life and spurred a small number of scholars to write about him and his works. His vast unknown oeuvre was the topic of much discussion (in particular, the diverse visual art that was displayed for the first time). As noted in the introduction, at least eleven works by Busch (picture-stories, such as *Fromme Helene (Pious Helene)* (*BG II* 224-339) and *Balduin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter (Balduin Bählamm the Thwarted Poet)* (1883) (*BG III* 420-497)³⁴ were bestsellers in the 1950s. His controversial poetry collection *Kritik des Herzens (Critique of the Heart)* grew in popularity to fourth place among the top 114 books sold in Germany during that decade. Busch’s prose works, however, did not make the list (Liebl 26). Busch’s prose works are still little known today.

Immediately after Busch’s death (1908) condolences arrived *en masse* (*EH* 248). For the first time, just four months after his death, Busch’s oil paintings and sketches were exhibited throughout Germany. These estate sale exhibits counted works in the

³⁴ This title was translated by Walter Arndt as *Clement Dove, the Poet Thwarted* (143-174).

hundreds, which must have astonished the public, who had no idea of Busch's prolific art production.³⁵ The bibliography in the *BG* lists many exhibits over the years.³⁶

Many of his works were in the style of the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance artists, but the collection also included paintings from Busch's mature artistic phase that are considered to be headed in the direction of abstract art (Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 376). The Expressionist artist Paul Klee discovered in Busch "einen Geistesverwandten" ("an intellectual kin") (Neyer et al. 6) and called Busch the "erste Futurist" (first futurist) (Klee, quoted in Informationsdienst Ruhr n.p.). Klee seemed to be one of the first artists to try to give a name to Busch's style of visual art, which was difficult to classify. He also discovered that Busch had carefully studied the works of Frans Hals (Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 374). Busch's paintings of the 1890s are unusual in the context of German art of the era. Hans Ries discusses this in his essay "Der avantgardistische Maler" and concludes that Busch's paintings pre-figure an abstraction not witnessed in European art until Kandinsky's innovative use of "Formen und Farben" (forms and colours) in 1910/11 (Ries 138).

In 2007, a museum exhibit at the Wilhelm Busch Museum in Hanover (*Pessimist mit Schmetterling: Wilhelm Busch—Maler, Zeichner, Dichter, Denker*) displayed examples from all phases of Busch's visual art. The drawings from the 1890s, with their

³⁵ Busch's friend Pixis had mentioned in the 70th-birthday article that Busch had given up his serious painting after leaving Munich (*EH* 208). Instead, art specialists estimate his artworks numbered in the thousands (Heuss, quoted in Haffmans 299)—Otto Nöldeke claimed that Busch had painted and destroyed many other works.

³⁶ The earliest exhibits, for which Fritz Ostini wrote the introductions for the catalogues, included the following: Munich in April and June 1908 (*BG III* 1478); Berlin, October 1908 was billed as the third sale of Busch's artworks (1458); Leipzig (1475), Dresden (1468, 1475), Hamburg and Vienna were in 1909 (1468); Frankfurt in 1910 (1468). The years 2007-2008 saw many Busch exhibits throughout Germany to celebrate Busch's 175th birthday and 100 years since his death: Hanover's Wilhelm-Busch-Museum held the exhibits *Soviel Busch wie nie* and *Wilhelm Busch. Avantgardist aus Wiedensahl* in 2007, which featured an exhibit of Busch's work *Eduards Traum*. The accompanying catalogue is entitled *Pessimist mit Schmetterling. Wilhelm Busch—Maler, Zeichner, Dichter, Denker* (Neyer et al.)

“Miniatuurformat” (miniature format), stand out for their “kraftvoll geballten Stil von ausdrucks voller Vehemenz” (powerfully concentrated style of expressive vehemence) (Neyer et al. 6). The exhibit included themes from Busch’s prose work *Eduards Traum*. It displayed imaginary scenes from this work in a visual format and depicted exaggerated forms and surrealistic elements in a farmer’s field. The sense of Busch’s unusual aesthetic in *Eduards Traum* comes to the fore with exhibits such as these; strangely, they combined the rural setting of a tilled acreage with numbers and letters. A perusal of articles on the exhibit in the local papers and those that had been posted in the museum³⁷ showed that the writers of the articles were astonished at the surreal atmosphere that Busch’s works (in the form of visual displays) could evoke. In 2007, Busch was not equated with this kind of aesthetic.

Almost a century earlier, the unusual aesthetic of Busch’s fictional prose works had caught the attention of the author Hermann Löns. As editor of a regional newspaper near Wiedensahl, Busch’s hometown, Löns wrote Busch’s obituary, which appeared on 10 January 1908 in the *Schaumburg-Lippischen Landeszeitung* (Schaumburg-Lippischen Regional Newspaper) in Bückeburg. Löns lamented the fact that, while Busch’s humourous picture-stories with their “unforgettable” characters were celebrated, few people knew or appreciated his lyrical works and his “grotesken Prosawerke” (grotesque prose works) (quoted in EH 263). Löns called Busch’s *Eduards Traum* and *Der Schmetterling* his “besten, reifsten und tiefsten Werke” (best, most mature and deepest works) (263). Furthermore, Löns stated that one of the problems facing Busch was that he was seen as a “lustiger alter Herr” (amusing old gentleman) (263). Löns thought that Busch’s prose works had been overlooked, in part, because of this image but also because

³⁷ A number of articles on Busch and his works were kept in albums in the exhibit.

the German readership had been too preoccupied with the foreign works by “Zola, Tolstoi, Ibsen” and others (263). Löns was probably not aware that Busch had also been absorbed in the works by foreign authors, such as Zola (Busch had read *Paris* in 1898 [Briefe II #1190, #1200]), Ibsen, and Strindberg. On 3 January 1889, Busch refers to two dramas and a novel by his “nordischen Nachbarn” (Nordic neighbours) (Briefe II #1654).³⁸

Many articles were written by critics and former colleagues, among them Arthur Kutscher (1908). Kutscher, to whom Busch’s letter regarding *Eduards Traum* had been addressed (see above; Briefe II # 1573), summarized his views on Busch and his writing:³⁹

Busch zeigt das Einzelne, Besondere, Individuelle, in seiner Winzigkeit und Lächerlichkeit ... Das ist der Sinn der vielen Mißgeschicke, die Busch uns vorführt. Sie sind im Grunde nichts Äußeres und Einzelnes, sie stehen auf dem Boden der Überwindung und Beherrschung und Befreiung des Lebens, d. h. des Humors. Kleine Seelen schauern vor diesem Humor; er trifft sie hart. Sie sehen nicht die Versöhnung, die allerdings nicht an der Oberfläche liegt.

(Busch shows the singular, particular, individual [thing], in its minuteness and absurdity.... That is the sense of the many misfortunes, which Busch shows us. They are basically not external or single; they stand on the ground of an overcoming and controlling and liberation of life, i.e., [they are] of humour. Small souls shudder before his [kind of] humour; it hits them hard. They do not see the reconciliation, which does not lie at the surface. (Kutscher, quoted in Kraus 170)

Kutscher noted Busch’s complex reasons for his brand of humour, which may seem dark to the uninitiated. Years later, Friedrich Bohne, the editor of the collection of Busch’s

³⁸ The editor’s note suggests that these works may have been Strindberg’s drama *Der Vater* (The Father) (1887) and his novel *Die Inselbauern* (The Island Farmers) (1888), and Ibsen’s *Die Frau vom Meere* (The Woman from the Sea) (1888) (Briefe II 289).

³⁹ Kraus does not include the source or date of this excerpt by Kutscher. I place it after Busch’s death, since many comments on Busch and his works stem from that time.

letters, described Busch as an “unwilling satirist.”⁴⁰ This statement is from someone who, I would assume, has read all of Busch’s 1,723 letters of the collection and should therefore be given due attention when evaluating the tenor of Busch’s remarks in his letters.

A Busch biography was written by the brothers Nöldeke, Hermann, Adolf and Otto, entitled “Wilhelm Busch—Heiteres und Ernstes aus seiner Lebenswerkstatt” (Wilhelm Busch—Humorous and Earnest [Fare] from his Workshop of Life) (cited in *BG III* 1479) and was included in the *Neues Wilhelm-Busch-Album* (*New Wilhelm Busch Album*) published in 1912 (cited in *BG III* 1479). It was followed by Otto Nöldeke’s book *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres* (*Wilhelm Busch: Earnest and Humorous [Fare]*) (1938). Otto Nöldeke claimed to have faithfully recorded, together with his brother Hermann, many of Busch’s conversations. The conversations published in *EH* (137-163) may have been selected to convey the admiration felt by Busch’s family, but it also seems that a sincere effort was made by Otto Nöldeke to publish these conversations as authentically as possible. They are a valuable record, since Busch destroyed his journals and most of the correspondence he had received from others. It is fortunate that many recipients of Busch’s letters and their heirs thought Busch’s letters memorable enough to keep them. Busch’s way of replying to his correspondents usually enables today’s reader to know approximately what was said in the original letter to Busch. Otto Nöldeke compiled 300 of Busch’s letters in a collection called *Ist mir mein Leben geträumet* (*Has My Life been a Dream*) (1935) (cited in *BG III* 1480).

⁴⁰ Friedrich Bohne, the editor of the largest collection of Busch’s letters described Busch as a “Satiriker wider Willen” (“Nachwort” 332).

In 1968 the *Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft* in Hanover published 1,723 letters (this includes the 300 letters mentioned above) in two large volumes entitled *Wilhelm Busch Sämtliche Briefe: Kommentierte Ausgabe in zwei Bänden* (*Wilhelm Busch Complete Collection of Letters: Annotated Edition in two Volumes*). The significance of this edition was acknowledged by Theodor Heuss, who points out that the letters have furnished much-needed insights on Busch and his works that have helped change negative attitudes:

Es gibt Leute von hohem geistigen Rang, keine pädagogischen Pedanten, die das artistische Können von Busch respektieren, aber ihn oder doch seine Wirkung hassen: ... seine Geschichten seien nur voll von Roheit ... Es kostete einige Mühe, solches Urteil abzuschleifen – der Hinweis auf die Briefe tat dabei gute Dienste. (Haffmans 301)

(There are people of high intellectual ranking, no pedagogical pedants who respect Busch's artistic abilities, but who, nonetheless, hate his effect: ... his stories are only full of brutishness.... It has taken some effort, to minimize such an opinion—the reference to the letters has done its duty well.) (Haffmans 301)

Busch's poetry collection *Kritik des Herzens*,⁴¹ may have been one such work that benefitted from the published letters, considering its increased popularity over the years. Of course, over time Busch's readers' tastes may have evolved so that there was less resistance to this work during the twentieth century than the nineteenth, which, in some cases saw the book locked up by husbands and fathers to safeguard the female family members from its contents (Daelen 90, 92).

An artist associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) movement of the *Moderne*, George Grosz admired Busch's works. He coined the terms “Schnellzeichnen and Blitzdichten” (speed-drawing and lightning poetry) (Haffmans 348), to describe two of Busch's aesthetic attitudes based on brevity, which is one of the

⁴¹ Busch's first poetry collection *Kritik des Herzens* (Critique of the Heart) (1874) was the fourth most popular work during the 1950s (see footnote 4 of this thesis).

topics discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In a letter to Arnold Rönnebeck in 1943,

Grosz wrote:

Sehr gern ... blättere ich im Wilhelm Busch, den ich sehr hoch schätze, der der einzige große Humorist war, den wir hatten ... und schon Vorläufer von ganz anderem (ja, um ein gräßliches Modewort zu gebrauchen: Surrealistischem).... [M]anch ein ... feines Gedicht las ich von ihm—fast wie ein umgekehrter Schiller.

(I very much ... like to flip through [works by] Wilhelm Busch, whom I value very highly, [and] who was the only great humorist we had ... and already forerunner of something completely different (yes, to use a ghastly fashionable word: [of the] surrealistic[kind]).... I read many a ... fine poem by him—almost like a reverse Schiller) (quoted in Haffmans 348).

Grosz made a trenchant observation, when he characterized Busch's poems as opposite to those by Schiller. In Chapter 2, I discuss Busch's views on poetry and that he himself comments on the difference between poems from Schiller's time compared to poems by Busch's contemporaries (the latter are briefer than Schiller's). In another letter, in 1947, Grosz suggests that his own humour is “nahe Mark Twains und Will Buschens” (close to Mark Twain's and Will [sic] Busch's) (quoted in Haffmans 349). This comparison between Busch's works and Grosz's, suggests that Busch's style and humour may have followers in the New Objectivity movement.

An author of the *Moderne*, Alfred Henschke (1890-1928), who was known as Klabund, called Busch a brilliant “Malerdichter” (artist-poet) and considered the Dadaists Busch's descendants, although [their works were] less well shaped, in his opinion (quoted in Haffmans 344). These testimonies to the depth of Busch's work suggest that his style tended towards art and literature known for intense forms by young authors and artists years after Busch's death.

Wolfgang Kayser's work, *Das Groteske: seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung*, was among the first to suggest that Busch's works form part of the aesthetic

change leading to the fin de siècle modernity of the turn of the century: “In den drei Jahren 1891, 1892, 1893 erscheinen die Werke, an denen sich schon alle im 20. Jahrhundert herrschenden Tendenzen ablesen lassen” (In the three years 1891, 1892, 1893 those works appear in which already all prevailing tendencies of the 20th century are anticipated (140). Published in 1891, it is significant that Busch’s *ET* is among these (141). Although other works on the subject of the grotesque had been written previously,⁴² it appears that Kayser rekindled a scholarly dialogue on the grotesque in Busch’s literary works.⁴³ Kayser disagreed strongly with one of Busch’s most adamant critics, Friedrich T. Vischer, who had coined the phrase “die Tücke des Objekts” (the malice of the object) (quoted in Kayser 124-125; quoted in Pape 89). It describes the inherent wilfulness found in inanimate objects that may cause mayhem for the protagonist or even be harmful. It partially describes one of the methods used by Busch. Since Vischer considers the “groteske Karikatur” (grotesque caricature) to have very few ties to the real world (unlike the “freie Phantastik des Humors” [the free fantasy of humour]) (quoted in Kayser, footnote 6, 217), he interprets Busch’s caricatures as having demonic qualities. The raven “Huckebein” is seen as an “Infernalisch Monstrum” (infernal monster) (Vischer, quoted by Kayser 125) whereas Kayser cautions that “Hans Huckebein … kommt schließlich doch aus einem Rabennest und nicht aus der Hölle” (Hans Huckebein … comes from a raven’s nest after all, and not from hell) (125). Busch’s *Eduards Traum* of 1891, on the other hand, like Wedekind’s drama

⁴² To my knowledge, the earliest substantial work on the subject was a dissertation in 1929 by Mally Untermann: “Das Groteske bei Wedekind, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Christian Morgenstern und Wilhelm Busch” (The Grotesque in Wedekind, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Christian Morgenstern[,] and Wilhelm Busch) (cited in *BG III* 1487).

⁴³ Relevant works include works by J. Lieskounig (1984), Karsten Imm (1987; 1994), Gottfried Willems (1998).

Frühlingserwachen (*Springawakening*) of the same year,⁴⁴ are both touted as examples of true grotesques (141), and Kayser calls *ET* “die vollkommenste Groteske, die Busch geschrieben hat” (the most complete grotesque that Busch has written) (129).

Gert Sautermeister is also of the opinion that Busch’s works occasionally tended towards grotesquerie. For instance, when he depicts the “Streit zwischen dem moralischen Über-Ich und der aufsässigen Triebwelt … wird die Satire gelegentlich bis zur grausamen Groteske verschärft” (dispute between the moral super-ego and the rebellious world of impulse … the satire occasionally intensifies to the point of the gruesome grotesque) (quoted in Haffmans 339). The discussion of Busch’s work in relation to the “superego” points to Freud, who was fond of Busch’s works as the following examples demonstrate. In a letter to his colleague C. G. Jung on July 7, 1909, Freud wrote:

Ich sende Ihnen … das Manuskript des ‘Rattenmannes’ … Ich hätte Lust darüber als Motto die schönen Verse von Busch über die Kinderzeichnung seines Maler Klecksels zu setzen: So blickt man klar, wie selten nur,/ Ins innre Walten der Natur.

(I am sending you … the manuscript of the ‘Rat Man’ … I am tempted to set above it as a motto the lovely verses by Busch about the children’s drawing by his painter Klecksel: So one sees clearly, as is only seldom [possible],/ into the inner workings of nature.) (quoted in Haffmans 338)

It seems that it was not uncommon for Freud to discuss verses by Busch in connection to his own insights. The following verse relates the situation whereby a maid accidentally drops and breaks a statue of Venus that she had been handling and viewing with more interest than might be expected. When Freud himself breaks something precious and calmly recites Busch’s verse (he saw the broken object as an “Opferhandlung” [sacrificial action] due to a loved one’s illness at the time): “Ach! Die Venus ist perdü—/

⁴⁴ Kayser mistakenly gives an incorrect date of first publication for Busch’s *ET* and Wedekind’s *Frühlingserwachen*: “1893” (K 141) should read 1891 – the work had previously stated the correct date.

Klickeradoms!—von Medici!” (Oh! The Venus is lost—/ clackity clack!—from Medici (quoted in Haffmans 339). Freud wrote about this occurrence in his “Zur Psychologie des Alltagslebens” (1941) (cited in Haffmans 338). Gert Sautermeister points out Busch’s “psychoanalytischen Rang” (psychoanalytical standing) (quoted in Haffmans 339) that Freud would include these verses and such explanations in his texts.

Busch’s works inspired another person closely associated with current thought and advances, Albert Einstein. Einstein praised Wilhelm Busch: “der Schriftsteller Busch ... ist einer der größten Meister stilistischer Treffsicherheit. Ich denke—außer vielleicht Lichtenberg—hat es keinen Ebenbürtigen in deutscher Sprache gegeben” (the author Busch ... is one of the greatest masters of stylistic precision. I think—aside from possibly Lichtenberg—there has been no equal in the German language) (quoted in Haffmans 350).

In summary, one may point out, as Theodor Heuss did, that Busch’s death opened up insights into his life and works that his contemporaries sorely lacked. Busch’s reception may be described as ambiguous and varied, since individuals could change their opinions over the course of time, as we discovered with the author Wilhelm Raabe (Galway 2), as well as with Busch’s friend Paul Lindau discussed in the previous section. Part of the problem with studying Busch’s works is that the reception is so strongly varied and that the research entails uncertainty and ambiguity, which also causes oversights. For example, I have found at least one literary history work that mentioned only Wilhelm Raabe’s negative opinion of Busch’s works (This would tend to skew the results of work by scholars should only one view be known). It seems that part of the continued appeal of Busch’s works is their multi-disciplinary combination, which results in high approval

ratings of his works among persons who were some of the great thinkers of the last century, such as Einstein and Freud.

1.3 North American Reception

The European population explosion of the nineteenth century brought many European immigrants to North America. They, no doubt, brought with them Wilhelm Busch's works, including his *Max und Moritz* (1865), which the eminent Charles Timothy Brooks translated into English even before the British versions had been published (*BG I* 1341-1342). Busch's works were well-received and became the template and inspiration for the first comic strips and Walt Disney animated cartoons (Neyer, "Böse" 72-74), thereby linking Busch's name to a medium that included movement in pictures, just as Busch conveyed in many of his illustrations (Siepmann, "Moderne Zeiten" 26-30).

The author of children's novels, Maurice Sendak, acknowledged Busch's influence on his works when he accepted the Hans Christian Andersen medal in Bologna, Italy, on 4 April 1970 (*BG I* 1249). Further, in a letter to the Diogenes Verlag (10 June 1973) Sendak wrote, "Fast jedes meiner Bücher zeigt, wie ich von Wilhelm Busch gestohlen habe" (Almost every one of my books shows how I have stolen from Wilhelm Busch) (quoted in *BG I*, 1249; Haffmans 355). Sendak's illustrated children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), made into a film by Warner Bros. in 2009 (*The Globe and Mail* 12 October 2009; Schuker), was inspired by Busch's early picture-story *Krischan mit der Piepe* (*Krishan with the Pipe*) (1864).⁴⁵

Busch's works also influenced the first comic strips ever produced, such as the ones published in Randolph Hearst's American newspapers and some of the best-known

⁴⁵ This was the only work which Busch wrote entirely in *Plattdeutsch* (Low German) (*BG I* 1246-1260).

animations from the Walt Disney Production studios: the earliest animation shorts, such as *Steam Boat Willie* (1928) and *Plane Crazy* (n.d),⁴⁶ and at least one of the later movie-length animations, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) (Girveau 144). Although Busch's influence on Disney artists has previously been acknowledged in literature pertaining to the influence of European masters on Disney creations, the documentation remains incomplete. “Scene 19” (Girveau 144) in Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is unmistakably derived from an illustration accompanying Busch’s poem “Sorglos” (Carefree) (*Hernach* 52) which forms part of the poetry collection *Hernach*. Yet, at a recent exhibit in Montreal in 2007, which prominently displayed the animated scene in question, Busch’s name could not be found among the European artists’ names acknowledged to have inspired this particular scene. Although the exhibit catalogue acknowledges that Busch had an influence on the scene (Girveau 144), it does not specify details of the influence. It is as if the details had been lost over time, since the actual prototype, Busch’s raven illustration, is not mentioned and not included in the illustrations, while other artists’ paintings which barely resemble the scene are included (Girveau 145). A “preliminary study” by one of the Disney artists (Joe Grant) who worked on the “raven on a skull” scene (145) is almost identical to Busch’s “Sorglos” illustration (*Hernach* 52).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The publication by Neyer, Ries and Siepmann, *Wilhelm Busch: Pessimist mit Schmetterling*, includes many references to Hearst’s and rival Pulitzer’s early comic strips in their American publications.

⁴⁷ Busch’s Raven-on-a-skull, which rests on top of a book, is almost identical to a scene in Disney’s film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Girveau 144). This connection, to my knowledge, has not yet been made. My inquiries to the Wilhelm-Busch-Museum staff in June 2007 (shortly after viewing the exhibit *Once Upon a Time, Walt Disney: the Sources of Inspiration for the Disney Studios* at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) were met with surprise; the museum’s art specialist was not aware of any connection of Busch’s works to any of the animated feature films. She was aware of others, such as the influences on the first comic strips (Disney animations) produced in North America, examples of which were shown in the Wilhelm-Busch-Museum exhibit in 2007. On 24 Dec. 2006, the CBC News broadcast of *The Passionate Eye* featured the documentary “Walt Disney: Once Upon a Time” (Doux et al. “Walt Disney” DVD). Its

Chronologically, Busch's raven-and-skull scene belongs to his mature phase, after he wrote *Eduards Traum* but before his prose piece *Der Schmetterling* (1895). As such, this image becomes significant for its visual representation during a time that saw Busch pursue a literary aesthetic that was new to him (his fictional prose), and by all accounts an anomaly with regard to literary works produced in Germany during the 1890s. The reception of the skull-and-raven image by artists at the Walt Disney Studio is not described. It is, however, depicted and honoured in the form of an aesthetic innovation, the animated film version of a fairy tale that has also endured the ages. Busch's international reception shows that we have much to gain by learning more about the aesthetics of Wilhelm Busch since, metaphorically speaking, his quill and ink have not yet become dry. Busch's literary and artistic creations continue to inspire writers and artists, and thereby continue to live on as neglected contributions to modernism.

1.4 Summary

In summary it is evident, as Theodor Heuss noted, that Busch's death opened up insights into his life and works, which his contemporary critics such as Friedrich T. Vischer lacked. The letters changed some critics' opinions of his works so that they were viewed more positively by some. His paintings were exhibited for the first time and the Expressionist Paul Klee called Busch a "Futurist" after having viewed them. Busch's works inspired his readers, including other authors, artists and even twentieth-century scientists to consult his work for creative ideas.

topic was the influence of European masters on the animations by Walt Disney production studios. The "Sorglos" illustration by Busch (*Hernach* 52) was not mentioned, although other examples, less similar to the scene in question, were (Doux et al. DVD).

Part of the problem with studying Busch's works is that the reception is so strongly varied. Busch's prose of the 1890s took his readers by surprise and was little understood. Today, scholars think of it as an anomaly in its time. A comment made by Hermann Löns stands out for its strong opinion. Löns considered Busch's late creations *Eduards Traum* and *Der Schmetterling* to have been more important to the German readership than the works by "Zola, Tolstoi, Ibsen" and others (Löns quoted in EH 263), authors who were deeply influential in German literary history.

CHAPTER 2: Busch's Statements on Art and Literature

The following chapter explores Busch's conceptual foundation for his literary creations. It contains his views on *Kunst*⁴⁸ as he communicated these to others. Busch seldom commented on his own work. Gert Ueding states that:

Buschs Korrespondenz selbst mit Malerkollegen ist meist unergiebig, berührt kaum einmal aesthetische Fragen, und wenn, dann in jener “bummligen” Manier, die seine persönlichen Ansichten ... kaschiert.

(Busch's correspondence, even with his artist colleagues, does not supply much information, barely touches on aesthetic questions, and when [it does], then [it does so] in such a “casual” manner which ... conceals his personal views.)
(*Wilhelm Busch* 379)

Had Busch been more forthcoming, many of the misconceptions about his work and its underlying aesthetics could have been avoided.⁴⁹ Although Busch did not leave any separate documents clearly stating his views on *Kunst*, it is nonetheless possible to glean useful information from his letters, his autobiographies, and from articles and conversations recorded by the Nöldeke brothers, Hermann and Otto. This chapter examines Busch's own comments culled from the limited texts researchers have at their disposal. These texts are often brief and tend to include only fragments on the topic of Busch's views on art and literature. Taken together, however, a larger picture emerges that might otherwise have been missed. For example, in the case of Busch's letters, researchers seldom have access to the other half of the correspondence, since Busch discarded most letters he received (Bohne, Nachwort *Briefe II* 329).⁵⁰ Fortunately, Busch

⁴⁸ The word *Kunst* is used to denote all forms of art.

⁴⁹ The discrepancy between F. T. Vischer's views of Busch's art—based on ideal classical theories—and those voiced by Wolfgang Kayser come to mind. See Chapter 1 (Busch's Reception).

⁵⁰ Some of Busch's correspondents knew of his habit to discard his private correspondence. At least once, he was asked to keep a letter that was important to the sender (“Anhang 4” *Briefe II* 313). In some cases,

often replied by restating his correspondents' queries. In some cases, this allows researchers to piece together written dialogues. This type of information gathering and the partial view it generates may be the only way for researchers to establish Busch's views on any number of topics, including on *Kunst*. Busch's comments are arranged under four headings, which were determined, in part, by the information I was able to glean from the sources available to me. These headings address four aspects especially relevant to works of visual art and literature: The Artist and his Sources, The Creative Process, The Text and its Themes, and Busch as Critic.⁵¹

2.1 The Artist and his Sources

2.1.1 Busch's Aesthetic Views and Attitudes

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, many new styles of art were being developed during the late nineteenth century. At the same time, however, traditional styles of the early nineteenth century were still emulated because many contemporaries considered them to be the pinnacle of artistic and literary production. Busch, too, continued to enjoy the classic poets and said of Schiller (1759-1805) that his "Tell ist ein gewaltiger Stoff, famos zusammengehalten bis zu Ende" (Tell is a strong piece, tremendously held together to the end) (*EH* 149). Such large works were difficult to "hold

Busch replied on the reverse of a letter sent to him (*Briefe II* #1464), such as in his answer to an enquiry regarding Friedrich Theodor Vischer's humorous works in comparison to Busch's own. Busch replied that Vischer's "parodistische Fortsetzung des Göthe'schen Faust ... [war von] einer Art des Humors, die mir nie sympathisch war" ("parodic continuation of Goethe's Faust ... [was of] a type of humour that had never been to my liking") (*Briefe II* # 1464). While this particular letter gives no further aesthetic insight, except to state that Busch himself first drew his pictures and then wrote the verses to his picture-stories, it is from fragments such as these that the researcher can then piece together Busch's views on art and literature as well as his artistic process.

⁵¹ In order of appearance, these headings include information on Busch's sources—his inspirations (since no artist works in a vacuum); how Busch created his works (the process); what Busch considered important (the themes); Busch's critical reception of others' works to reveal Busch's attitude towards various kinds of art. This may help to situate his works in comparison to them.

together to the end” (*EH* 149). Schiller was able to do that well and Busch proclaimed: “An die Klassiker können die Modernen alle nicht heran. Die genügen mir auch immer noch” (The modern artists cannot reach the classical ones. I am still satisfied with them) (*EH* 153). Of Goethe (1749-1832), Busch wrote to Nanda Keßler:

Prosaische Aufsätze aus frühster und spätester Zeit. Dort sprudelt es durch und über einander, hier dehnt sich’s in behaglichster Breite—immer in Fülle—etwas byzantinisch mitunter. Thut nichts! Wer hört nicht gerne zu, wenn Göthe redet, wovon es auch sei.

(Prosaic essays from the earliest and latest times. There it rushes through and over itself, here it widens contentedly—always in fullness—at times byzantine. Doesn’t matter! Who doesn’t like to hear Goethe speak, no matter what it’s about.) (*Briefe II* #1521)

The original classical heights of Goethe and Schiller, however, could no longer be reached by Busch and his contemporaries, since they were historically and aesthetically out of place. One of Busch’s poems from his *Kritik des Herzens* demonstrates Busch’s awareness of the incompatibility that existed between the literary climate of his own era and that at the turn of the nineteenth century during the height of classicism:⁵²

Ja sprach er, Freund, wir leben jetzt
In der Depeschenzeit,
Und Schiller, käm er heut zurück,
Wär auch nicht mehr so breit.

(Well, said he, friend, we now live
In the time of dispatch
And Schiller, were he to return today,
Would no longer be so wide). (8-9)

Busch recognized that he and his contemporaries, especially those living in the cities (Busch lived in Frankfurt for some time), could no longer write in the same way. Their world had changed since Schiller was “Poet.” They now lived in a “fast-paced era” of the

⁵² The complete poem is printed below (see section entitled Brevity).

telegram (*Depeschenzeit*)⁵³ and coupled with this speed was the tendency to a “brevity” of word (“immer kurz” und “nicht mehr so breit”) (always brief and no longer so wide) (*KH* 9).⁵⁴ Poets could still be uplifted, consoled and inspired by the old masters’ works, yet they needed to come to grips with the realities of their own day and embrace new ways and ideas. There were those who favoured the older classical styles and ideals such as Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884), Julius Grosse (1828-1902),⁵⁵ and Paul Heyse (1830-1914),⁵⁶ and those who favoured newer styles such as Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946)⁵⁷ and Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949)⁵⁸ who are discussed in connection to Busch’s aesthetic views below. Busch stayed aware of trends in art and literature by reading publications that were sent to him by peers, publishers and booksellers,⁵⁹ and by reading his own choice of contemporary and older works.

Busch remained open to new ideas, yet he realized that literary history is rife with authors who do not notice great changes taking place in their own time and whose writing remains influenced by attitudes shaped by the creative struggles of a past era. While respectful of his achievements, Busch put Georg Lichtenberg (1742-1799) in that category, since the latter did not waver from his rationalistic ideas and seemed oblivious

⁵³ “Depeschenzeit” is the era of the telegram (*Depesche*) and, therefore, of brief and speedy messages. Busch often complained to his friends that he would rather receive a letter than an impersonal telegram.

⁵⁴ Brevity is further explored as a literary technique employed by Busch in the discussions on the creative process under the subheading 2.2.3 Brevity.

⁵⁵ Julius Grosse (an artist, poet and journalist) became the Secretary of the German Schiller Foundation (*Schillerstiftung*) in 1870.

⁵⁶ Paul Heyse was the first German Nobel Prize winner in literature (1910), known for his novellas of a traditional romantic style thereby opposing the trend to write realistically. He also collaborated on works with Emanuel Geibel (*Spanisches Liederbuch*; 1852). Busch had met these authors (and Julius Grosse) while working in Munich.

⁵⁷ Gerhart Hauptmann was known for his naturalistic dramas and received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1912.

⁵⁸ Nobel Prize winner in literature (1911), Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck was inspired by French symbolists; his works were known for their inclusion of mysticism.

⁵⁹ Issues of *Moderne Illustratoren* (Modern Illustrators) came from R. Piper, Verlagsbuchhändler/München (*Briefe II* #1487 and note in margin of *Briefe II* #1487 233).

to the fresh wind that infused Goethe's poetry (*EH* 151-152). Busch accepted the right of a younger generation to creative freedom, while acknowledging his own and others' limitations in judging their works:

Es geht mir ja auch so, die Neueren sind für mich ein Kuddelmuddel. Was darin bleibend Gutes steckt, kann ich nicht recht beurteilen. Aber das wirklich Wertvolle bleibt doch.

(That's also how it is for me; the newer [artists] are a muddle to me. I cannot quite judge the lasting qualities of [their work]. But, that which is truly valuable remains, nonetheless.) (*EH* 151-52)

Busch also held that artists' *works* were more important than the *persons* who created them: "Mozarts Grab ist unbekannt. So ist's gerade recht. Das Gute und Bedeutende von ihnen ist in ihren Werken da. Das andere Minderwärtige und weniger Lebenswürdige soll verschwinden" (Mozart's grave is unknown. That is just as it should be. What is good and important can be found in their [(the artists')]] works. The less valuable and lifeworthy shall vanish) (*EH* 150).⁶⁰ The underlying thought is that the work itself retains the significant statement for future generations to unlock. Many authors' and artists' works representing many disciplines, eras, and traditions inspired Busch and became the sources for his own work.

2.1.2 Busch's Sources and Influences

Busch's ideas are often connected by his critics to those of Schopenhauer's philosophy. This is only partially correct because his enthusiasm for Schopenhauer waned in later

⁶⁰ I take this statement by Busch seriously and have tried, to the best of my ability, to honour his request, to focus on the works, rather than on his person. Without looking into Busch's biographical materials, however, this important piece of information would not be known. In the absence of a manifesto, which many authors of Busch's era supplied, and due to the profusion of emerging styles at the end of the nineteenth century, I find that knowledge of his aesthetics, as gleaned from his letters, is an important tool to understanding his works. Böll, who had equated Busch's humour with "Häme" ("spitefulness") (quoted in Haffmans 357), may have had a different opinion of Busch's works had he known the criteria by which Busch's works might best be judged.

years (Busch, *Von mir* 19). The following excerpt from a letter to his friend Grete Thomsen, dated 1 October 1904, debunks the myth that Busch's ideas and works were created from an overly “pessimistic” viewpoint in line with that of Schopenhauer's works:

Schopenhauer ... der große, grimme! Du wirst ihn, denk ich, bewundern. Eigentlich hat's ja nicht viel auf sich mit dem besten Peßimismus. An dem Glücklichen gleitet er ab, wie Waßer an der pomadisirten Ente, und der Unglückliche weiß ohne weiteres bescheid.

(Schopenhauer ... the great grim one! You will, I think, admire him. There is actually not much to the best pessimism. It slides off the happy person as it does off a greased duck, and the unhappy one already knows all about it.) (*Briefe II* #1558)

This letter indicates that, while Busch admired Schopenhauer and recommended his works to others, he was not inclined to be as pessimistic as he is often thought to be. In terms of optimism, Busch explained in a letter to Maria Anderson: “Ich bin Pessimist für die Gegenwart, aber Optimist für die Zukunft” (I am a pessimist ... [with regard to] the present, but an optimist for the future) (quoted in Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 248). I think that Busch's creativity was fueled by optimism rather than a pessimistic attitude, as much of the literature purports. While Busch's works may depict many negative scenes and sides of life, this is not the same as creating from a pessimistic spirit or outlook. Busch is merely doing what few artists dared during an era that hid behind superficiality; he depicted the not-so-pretty side of life (albeit with much humour, whether in his private letters or the works meant for publication). By age fifteen, Busch had read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and was puzzled by the contradictions writings such as these posed to his religious teachings (Galway 28; Kraus 159). Busch did not shy away from posing the big philosophical questions, although he realized they did not usually have

definitive answers. Busch's last reading material was known to be a book on Low German etymology, the language of his childhood "paradise" (*Briefe I* #262), as he once called his two native German languages.

According to Busch's autobiography *Von mir über mich*, his earliest sources for his ideas and works came from reading Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, folk tales, Bible stories, and "songbook verses," which he read aloud to his grandmother before the rest of the household was up. After starting up the fire, "she spun" while "the seven, eight year old ... read" (*Von mir* 11). His early impressions of village life included hearing the Low German songs performed by the women who worked at the spinning wheels in the "Spinnstuben" (spinning rooms). These songs were handed down to them from their mothers and grandmothers. Consequently, Busch's artistic ideas were also very much shaped by the females of his village and by the fact that he was "bilingual," fluent both in "High German" and "Low German," his childhood languages, which he called the "languages of my paradise" (*Briefe I* #262). These were the languages in which he could express himself genuinely (*Briefe I* #262). The folk and fairy tales and legends of his North German village became sources for Busch's own fictional work, and in 1863 he spoke about one of his works in progress as a "Bildermärchenzyklus" (illustrated fairy tale cycle)⁶¹ In a letter to Eduard Daelen (January 16, 1886) he wrote: "Sie fragen nach den Quellen meiner Stoffe. Ich weiß wenig darüber zu sagen ... Volkslied, Märchen, Sage sind an einem fast beständigen Dorfbewohner, wie ich, natürlich auch nicht lautlos vorübergegangen." (You ask about the sources of my material. I know little to say about it

⁶¹ From a letter to Otto Bassermann (December 12, 1863) and the accompanying explanatory note in margin of *Briefe I* #33, which explains that the work in question was perhaps related to *Stippstörchen*, which was published in 1880 (29). The full title is *Stippstörchen für Äuglein und Öhrchen* (Small Tales for Little Eyes and Little Ears [Trans. Lotze 12]) (BG III 185-297).

... folk song, fairy tale, legend haven't bypassed a constant village resident like myself soundlessly) (*Briefe I* #641). For Busch, these tales were part of his rural heritage handed down to him through generations of gifted storytellers and which he, in turn, passed on in written form in his *Ut ôler Welt*.⁶² These extraordinary and imaginative tales meant Busch was imbued with a deep-rooted sense of belonging to a larger tradition of the storyteller. He was inspired by these self-reliant rural artists, such as the "Schäfer" (shepherd), who told the "Spukgeschichten" (scary stories) and the quiet, normally "wortkarger Mann" (man of few words) who told "seine vom Mütterlein ererbten Geschichten" (his stories inherited from his mother dear) (*Von mir* 18). Busch must have learnt many tricks of their trade and saw merit in passing down their "old anecdotes" to the next generation of "uninhibited humorists" (*Von mir* 30): "... wirst du auch später gar ein Spaßvogel von Metier, ... komm nur zu uns ..., wir werden dir gern unsere alten Anekdoten erzählen" (should you later on even become a jester, ... just come to us ... we will gladly tell you our old anecdotes) (*Von mir* 30). He was intent on continuing a rural tradition of teaching the next generation how to weave fascinating tales, especially those that incorporated humour. Storytelling or relating a story without referring to a written text is by its nature a malleable and flexible art capable of incorporating variations. Busch's flexible attitude towards different kinds of art and his desire for freedom in creating his art may be attributed, in part, to his having heard and seen these master storytellers at work.

⁶² *Ut ôler Welt* ([Tales] from the Old World) (1910) is a posthumous publication. Busch had tried to have it published soon after collecting these tales as a young man.

2.1.3. Busch's Views on Art and Representation

The importance of imagination in art was one of the topics discussed in Paul Block's interview with Busch in 1902.⁶³ Some of Busch's comments on Gerhart Hauptmann's work *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (1893) (cited in EH 19) and the “moderne Bühne” (modern stage) (EH 191) are relevant in this context. Busch remarked: “Gerade deshalb habe ich ‘Hannele’ so gern, weil man dabei träumen kann” (I especially like ‘Hannele,’ because one can dream along with it) (EH 191-2). The dream was a stimulus for the imagination, and Busch observed an outright “Unterdrückung der Phantasie” (suppression of the imagination) (EH 191) in the more recent developments of contemporary theatrical writing. He admired Hauptmann's work *Hannele* because it gives rein to the imagination. Busch further criticized the extreme realism found in some theatrical works of his time:

Was mir an dem jetzigen Theater nicht gefällt.... [:] das Bemühen, jeden Schmutz und jedes Donnerwetter so natürlich wie möglich zu machen, erscheint mir lächerlich und unschön, weil der Schmutz ja doch nicht schmutzig sein und der Blitz nicht einschlagen darf. Das größte Genie eines Maschinenmeisters und der größte Künstler werden auf der Bühne über ein möglich ausgleichendes Kompromiß doch nicht hinauskommen können. Soll man deswegen unsere liebe Phantasie verachten, ohne die auch der modernste Dichter schließlich nicht geraten kann?

(What I do not like about the contemporary theatre... [is] the endeavour to make every dirt and every thunder as natural as possible, which seems to me laughable and not pretty, because the dirt is not actually allowed to be dirty and the lightning is not allowed to hit. The greatest genius of master machine makers and the greatest of artists would have to come to some form of compromise. Should one neglect one's dear imagination, without which even the most modern poets cannot do?) (quoted by Paul Block in *Berliner Tageblatt* No. 124, 9 March 1902, EH:191-192)

⁶³ The *Berliner Tageblatt* interview is reprinted in Nöldeke's *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres* (184-192).

Busch insisted that the imagination could not be neglected even by the “most modern poets,” many of whom tried to depict harsh realities as naturally as possible. An all-too-realistic depiction of reality on stage would offend societal norms and should be avoided. No one could avoid enlisting the imagination to find a way to present the subject matter in an acceptable form. Extreme realism, for Busch, was not possible in art and, consequently, naturalism was also not a viable option.

Busch’s insight into the impossibility of pure realism on stage was shared by Theodor Fontane (1819-1898), drama critic for the *Vossische Zeitung* and the “writer, who is considered the first master of modern realistic fiction in Germany” (“Theodor Fontane” *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2009). Fontane wrote:

Daß der Realismus, auch der künstlerischste, wenn er aus dem Buch auf die Bretter tritt, doch gewissen Bühnengesetzen unterworfen bleibt und daß Züge lebendigen Lebens, die dem realistischen Roman, auch wenn sie häßlich sind, zur Zierde gereichen, auf der Bühne prosaisch wirken, wenn man ihnen die Locken ihrer Kraft nimmt, oder abstoßend, wenn man ihnen ihre Echtheit beläßt

(That even the most artistic [kind] of realism, when it steps from a book onto the stage, remains subject to certain rules of the theatre, and that life as it is lived, even when it is ugly, suffices as decoration of the realistic novel, but on stage it would seem prosaic when shorn of its [poetic] strength, or even repulsive if it kept its genuineness.) (quoted in Diersch 82)

Fontane maintained that “rules of the theatre” could not allow the type of realism that was possible and even commendable in “novels of realism,” some of which depicted in stark realism “life as it is lived.” Deprived of its poetic power, life thus rendered on stage would seem prosaic. Worse still, a production that presented life in an authentic, “genuine” manner would be “repulsive.” This kind of “Naturalism” was neither to Fontane’s nor to Busch’s taste. Imagination was judged to be indispensable.

Another concept fundamental to Busch's aesthetic thought was the connectedness of all things, which is related to the concept of universality, a traditional marker for poetry and art. Busch discussed the concept of connectedness in relation to "Das Lied an die Sonne" (The Song to the Sun) (*EH* 153) by Saint Francis of Assissi (1181-1226) (Robinson n.p.)⁶⁴ and works by Byron (1788-1824): "Are not the mountains, waves and skies/ Of me and my soul, as I of them a part?" (Byron quoted by Busch in English; *Briefe I* # 264). Busch admired this passage enough to give his German translation in a subsequent letter: "*Sind Berge, Wellen, Lüfte nicht ein Stück/ Von mir? Etc.*" (*Briefe I* # 284). He also discovered an affinity to Herder's work and to older literature from India and commented on the pantheistic tendencies found in these works:

Das Lied an die Sonne⁶⁵ von Franz von Assisi ... interessiert mich im Zusammenhang mit der altindischen Literatur einerseits und ich habe ... ein Buch über Indien gelesen und da die Erzählung von dem sterbenden Braminen, der allen dankt: dem Licht, der Luft, der Erde, der Sonne, Mond und Sternen; wie bei Herder steht: Mutter Erde und Vater der Lufthauch. Es ist das der pantheistische Zug, der durch die ganze Mystik geht, dem auch Byron Ausdruck verleiht in dem Gedicht von den Wolken und Winden, mit denen wir zusammengehören.

(The Lied an die Sonne by Francis of Assisi ... interests me in connection to the ancient Indian literature on the one hand and I have ... read a book on India and therein the story of the dying Brahmin, who thanks everyone: the light, the air, the earth, the sun, moon and stars; as written by Herder: Mother Earth and Father the Breath of Air. That is the pantheistic tendency, which runs through all of Mysticism, to which Byron also gives expression in his poem about the clouds and the winds, with which we all belong.) (quoted in *EH* 153)

Busch appears to connect pantheism with the idea of all beings and things being connected, from which empathy and "sympathy" arise. Assissi's empathy for all beings

⁶⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia: St. Francis of Assissi <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06221a.htm> accessed Feb. 27, 2009.

⁶⁵ The underlined words in the above quotation indicate Busch's own emphasis. The editors of *Briefe I and II* indicate this emphasis with extra spaces between individual letters of these words. Throughout this thesis I will underline these words.

under the “sun,” especially for animals, is well known. Busch’s understanding of pantheism, however, does not necessarily imply that God is found in all things. He saw variations of pantheism in all mystical traditions.

Closely associated with the idea of the connectedness of all things is the “idea of evolution,”⁶⁶ a topic that was in vogue during the nineteenth century and which was incorporated into some of Busch’s picture-stories, such as in *Fipps der Affe* (Fipps the Monkey). Incorporating the newest ideas in science put Busch at the leading edge of his times, which is a marker of the *Moderne*. The word “evolution” is not restricted to its biological sense, but is transferred as an idea to many disciplines. It is an important concept in modern discourse, whether the field is science, business, or literature. Thus, in his musings on Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Busch observed in his works a form of literary evolution and called him an “innovator,” pointing out his “almost modern” style of writing: “Ich meinerseits nahm Herder, den Bahnbrecher, zur Hand.... [W]o es sich um Unsagbares handelt, [ist seine Sprache] fast modern, wortreich, nebelhaft, impreßionistisch” (For my part, I took Herder, the groundbreaker, to hand.... [W]here it concerns the unsayable, [his language is] almost modern, rich in words, foggy, impressionistic) (*Briefe II* #1558). By describing some of Herder’s works as “rich in words,” “foggy,” and “impressionistic” when they dealt with the “unsayable,” Busch drew a parallel between Herder’s work and those of the Impressionists of a much later era. The word “nebelhaft” (foggy) was an indirect reference to artists of the French

⁶⁶ Busch read Charles Darwin’s work and generally agreed with the findings as they were known at that time: “Darwin’s Theorie, [d]ie Entwicklung des Höheren aus dem Niederen ... hat etwas Bedeutungsvolles. Ob das nun so ist, oder nicht—die Ähnlichkeit ist da, und der Nachweis dieser durchgehenden Ähnlichkeit stimmt gut mit dem Gesichtspunkt überein, den mein Schädel nun mal unwiderruflich eingenommen hat (Darwin’s theory, ... the development of higher from lower [forms] ... is of significance. Whether or not it is so—the similarity is there, and the evidence of this similarity throughout [the phyla and fauna] tallies with the point of view which my head has irrevocably taken (Busch *Briefe I* #291).

Impressionist movement. Edouard Manet (1832-1883), for example, painted the Gare Saint-Lazare, which he exhibited as “Le Chemin de Fer” at the Paris Salon of 1874 (Wilson-Bureau).⁶⁷ The painting shows the train station scene with the haziness of the steam obscuring the trains as a viewer of this scene might experience and see the trains that were part of the cityscape and served as symbols of “energy and progress” (Wilson-Bureau). Realists of the time would have painted the same scene with the details of the train intact, as if these were visible to the viewer. Depicting in visual art that which obscures the view may be compared in writing to trying to put into words what Busch called the “unsayable,” something too difficult to put into words or about which the mind cannot have a clear view, as if it were too “foggy.” Busch, as we have seen, recognized that realistic writing has limitations. He saw Herder partially overcome these limitations through “impressionistic” writing. By mentioning that Herder’s “German” was, at other times, still “rather old-fashioned!” (*Briefe II* #1558), Busch acknowledged that aesthetic changes may be slow to develop, that they occur alongside conventional ways of writing (even by the same author), and that it took artists such as Herder and Manet to lead the way. Busch admired the daring creativeness of these innovators, who try to go beyond the *sayable* and reach for the “Unfassbare” (ungraspable or inconceivable), no matter how difficult their artistic or literary journey might be. One might say that Busch’s underlying artistic message was: dare to be original, go beyond the conventional, and seek the “Grenze des Unfaßbaren” (border of the ungraspable).⁶⁸

⁶⁷ From an excerpt of a review written by Juliet Wilson-Bureau of the museum catalogue *Manet, Monet, and the Gare Saint-Lazare* for an exhibit held in Paris and in Washington, D.C. in 1998. <http://yalepress.yale.edu/book.asp?isbn=9780300075106> accessed June 17, 2009.

⁶⁸ Busch quoted in Bohne, “Nachwort” *Briefe II* footnote 11, 330. In his answer to one of Louise Fastenrath’s questions of a questionnaire she sent to well-known personalities of her day, Busch wrote that his favourite occupation was to travel to the “Grenze des Unfassbaren” (“border of the ungraspable”) (330).

Busch was keenly aware that a sense of wonder of the “Geheimnisvolle” (mysterious) was at the “cradle” of art, and that it continued to give life to art. The following words almost shout out Busch’s acute awareness of the mystery of how ideas become art:

Was mich betrifft, sind mir Ideen jene Schattenbilder des Plato, die ... in ewigem Wechsel an uns vorüber gleiten: Berge, Wälder, Könige, Bauern ... irdene Töpfe, und obendrein noch Sie, Madam ... Die Sache intereßirt uns; denn wir stecken aus Herzensgrund dahinter und wissen nicht wie. Darum, Wer dies, lebendig, deutlich aufgefaßt, uns zeigen kann, der trete vor! Shakespeare, Rubens, Hals, Potter und Brouwer; aber hinaus mit den Photographen! Da haben wir's! Ein brauner Krug, mit einem Glanzlicht drauf, ist mir bereits Idee. Geht dann so ein Ding durch ein originelles Menschenhaupt und eine geschickte Hand, so wird, der Teufel weiß, ein Bild daraus.

(As far as I'm concerned, ideas are those shadow pictures of which Plato [spoke], which glide past us in an infinite continuum: mountains, woods, kings, farmers ... earthenware pots, and on top of all this, you, Madam ... The matter interests us, because we are behind it from the bottom of our heart and we don't know how. Therefore, whoever can show this lifelike, exact, come forward! Shakespeare, Rubens, Hals, Potter and Brouwer; but away with the photographers! There we have it! A brown jug with a glint of light in it is already an idea! An original mind and adept hands may transform [an idea], the devil knows how, into a picture.)
(*Briefe I* #261)

Busch likens ideas to the shadow-pictures of Plato⁶⁹ and invokes the names of some of his most revered artists and writers, such as Shakespeare and Rubens, all masters of originality and craftsmanship. How these creative geniuses were able to convey their ideas successfully seemed to be a mystery to Busch. The creative hand may bring light and “life” and form to an idea, be it ever so humble as “a brown jug with a glint of light on its surface (*Briefe I* # 261).

⁶⁹ This passage refers to “Plato’s cave,” the idea that we see only the *shadow* of what truly is; we don’t see the object itself. A person will see shadows on a wall, when something behind the viewer, but in front of the light, moves past to cast the shadow. Although the object is three-dimensional, the shadow is two-dimensional, having lost one of its dimensions by its projection on the wall. Plato, thus, tells us “not to trust our senses ... for they only deliver the shadows of the real world of the realm of ideas” (translated from Siepmann, Eckhard. “Busch und sein Held Eduard an den Grenzen der machinistischen Welt” *Wilhelm Busch: Pessimist mit Schmetterling*”131-32).

Photography, one of the newest mediums at the time, did not, in Busch's view, create art; in fact, it was anathema to him. The photographer could take shortcuts, whereas “[n]ach der alten Methode mußte man sich in den Menschen versenken” (the old method required one to probe to the depths of a person) (*EH* 190). A photograph was not able to portray what was hidden from sight, thus Busch exclaimed: “Hinaus mit den Photographen!” (Away with the photographers! *Briefe I* #261). Busch wished to get beyond the outer shell of a “thing” and delve to its innermost being. His concern was how to get to the “heart” of a matter, and he expressed the problem best when he wrote: “Du siehst die Weste, nicht das Herz” (You see the vest⁷⁰, not the heart; *Schein und Sein* cited in *EH* 226).

Not everyone possesses the ability to render or give voice to the “heart” of a matter. It cannot be acquired as one would acquire a material object. Busch uses a graphic image to show the futility of such an attempt:

hüten soll man sich vor dem Schreiber, wenn er sich abmüht, mit der Kunst durch Worte intim zu werden. Dem Schildbürger ähnlich, lässt er die Sonne in seinen Sack scheinen, bindet ihn zu und trägt Licht in das Rathaus. So ist es denn auch, was Dichtungssachen betrifft.

(One should beware of the writer, when he tries too hard to get intimate with art through his writing. Like the city clerk, he lets the sun shine into his sack; he can then bind it shut and carry it with him to bring that light into [his own dark rooms]. That is also how it is with matters of poetry.) (*Briefe II* #1120)⁷¹

A clever “writer” might think that by letting the “sun shine into his sack, he can then bind it shut and carry it with him to bring that light into [his own dark rooms]” (*Briefe II*

⁷⁰ “Weste” is translated as a vest or waistcoat.

⁷¹ The story of the “Schildbürger” translated and summarised freely from a letter to Maria Anderson: “The Schildbürger once built a city hall, but forgot the windows and so it was rather dark inside. They quickly ran outside to the market square with shovels, pails, sacks to let the sun shine into them, then quickly ran to let it out in the city hall. Very commendable! But I liked the ... city clerk best of all.... He verily caught a sunbeam in the mousetrap. – The name of the architect? I don’t know. Where does the city hall stand? On the most upper vertebra. What is the mousetrap called? Comparison. – Ach ...! Will we ever catch the truth in words? – Never!” (*Briefe I* #264)

#1120). Busch makes the point that one cannot extract the essence of another artist's work and make it one's own. It is not the same as having the gift of poetic light within you, which illuminates your words. Thus it is not possible to be a great poet like Goethe by trying to capture through imitation the intangible energy that goes into the making of great art. To elucidate how rare a gift this intangible energy and creative ability is, Busch employs a metaphor that presents the true artist as a person capable of catching a ghost: "Goethe ist so'n Geisterbanner.... Es muß nicht leicht sein, Geister zu bannen, denn Wenige verstehen's" (Goethe is one who can capture ghosts.... It can't be easy to capture ghosts, for few understand it) (*Briefe I* #263). Goethe's unique ability allowed his work to capture the intangible and thereby to continue to shine, while those who emulated it later must be perceived as fraudulent. Goethe's work could still be enjoyed for its originality and freshness of style since Goethe was, through his poetry, connected to the heart of things—a connection that later artists had lost.

Closely related to the idea of originality is the notion of uniqueness and the ability to create fine structures. About Gottfried Keller (1819-1890), Busch stated that many were not even aware of how "exquisite" his work was:

Ich las eben die ... Novellen von Gottfried Keller. Er ist einer von den 'Reichsunmittelbaren,' die das Recht haben ihre eigenen Münzen zu schlagen, nur fürcht ich, die meisten Leut lassen sein Geld durch die Finger gleiten, ohne zu merken, wie apart das Gepräge ist."

(I just read ... Gottfried Keller's novels. He is one of those people who have the right to mint their own coins, only I fear that most people let his money glide through their fingers without noticing how beautiful it is.) (Letter to Grete Meyer, dated 12 January, 1904; *Briefe II* #1427).

In Keller, Busch saw a contemporary author whose works, like his own, were generally misunderstood and underestimated. Keller, an author of Poetic Realism, created his works

freely, according to his own rules. Busch admired the fine quality, honesty, strength and durability of his works and wrote that Keller “is one of those … who have the rightto mint their own coins” (*Briefe II* #427), i.e., to create unique works of art.

Busch was moved by many Renaissance artists’ works for similar reasons. Speaking about the paintings by Frans Hals he had viewed in Haarlem in November 1873, Busch wrote: “30-40 Figuren in Lebensgröße; kräftig, ungeniert und wahr. Das Herz steht einem fast still, wenn man das alles so ansieht” (30-40 life-sized figures; strong, uninhibited and true. One’s heart almost stands still, when one looks at all of this) (Letter to Johanna Keßler, *Briefe I* #207). Busch was in awe of these natural and truthful renderings of “life-sized figures” that exuded “strength.” This was unpretentious art which could make “one’s heart stand still” (*Briefe I* #207). Experiencing art such as this served to strengthen Busch’s impetus to create with directness, honesty and truthfulness.

Truth was also at the centre of Busch’s thinking. He noted, “Ich sehe die ‘Wahrheit im Gewand der Dichtung’” (I see the truth in the ‘cloak of poetry’) (*Briefe I* #295). This is an allusion to a line from Goethe’s poem “Zueignung” (1787) that depicts the “fortunate one” as receiving “Der Dichtung Schleier aus der Hand der Wahrheit” (The veil of poetry out of the hand of truth) (line 96). For Busch, poetry was a vehicle of “truth” not otherwise graspable. Significantly, it does not simply hand over the bare truth but, like a veil, it both reveals and hides it. It suggests, it imitates, but it does not state what simply cannot be stated. When Louise Fastenrath asked Busch what his favourite occupation was, he wrote, “*Reiselust nach der Grenze des Unfaßbaren*” (the desire to

*journey to the border of the ungraspable) (Briefe II 330).*⁷² I perceive this statement as an expression of Busch's desire to transcend the boundaries of that which is known and knowable, to journey closer to the "truth."

Busch realized that *current* "truths" were subject to change. In the following passage the phrase "eternal laws of nature" is emphasized, to point out that these words are not to be taken literally but with some reservation. Although the *true* "laws of nature" are "eternal," we cannot truly know them as past experience had taught Busch and "Augustin" before him. He states:

Augustin hat recht, wenn er sagt, die Wunder streiten nicht gegen die Naturgesetze, sondern nur gegen die, welche wir kennen. Die "ewigen Naturgesetze" dauern etwa 30 Jahre. Dann kommt eine andere Theorie.

(Augustin is right, when he says, miracles do not quarrel with the laws of nature, but only go against those which we know. The "eternal laws of nature" last approximately 30 years. Then a new theory takes its place.) (EH 155)⁷³

This seems to be a modern insight, but Busch recognizes that it was already expressed centuries earlier by Saint Augustin. Here we see Busch exposing the idea of universal connectedness. In this context, a connection is made between ideas expressed centuries ago and today, which also connect the persons who expressed these ideas and/or theories.

The following quotation is from Busch's correspondence with Nanda Keßler, dated 30 May 1892, regarding his visit to the Munich opera. It demonstrates his flexible attitude with regard to his reception of different types of *Kunst*:

ein Zeichen, daß mir's gefiel. Ich halt es [the production he attended] sogar für hoch und dauerhaft – vom irdischen Thal aus gesehen. Auf dem zweithöchsten

⁷² Quoted in "Nachwort des Herausgebers" footnote 11. In 1892, Fastenrath sent a questionnaire to famous persons of her time, including Fontane. Italics are those of the editor of *Briefe*, which are used in his footnotes.

⁷³ Nöldeke's book *Wilhelm Busch: Ernstes und Heiteres* follows the style used in *Briefe I and II*: wherever Busch emphasized or underlined words in his texts extra spaces are set between individual letters of these words. I shall be underlining these.

Berge freilich herrscht schon Lach- und Scherfreiheit; die höchstbelobten und prätentiösesten Dinge dieser Welt erscheinen als Spielzeug der Jahre, der Jahrhunderte, wenn's gut geht, der Jahrtausende, welches doch schließlich zerbrochen und weggeworfen wird, wie ein Steckenpferd. Vom höchsten Berg aus jedoch sieht dergleichen weder scherhaft noch bewundernswert aus. Das wären denn drei Ansichtspunkte. Der Onkel, in seiner menschlichen Unvollkommenheit, ist bald oben, bald unten. Daher denn die mitunterige Verschiedenheit zwischen seinen Ansichten und denen seiner angebeteten Tante, die beständig in der blumigen Ebene zu wandeln beliebt, wo sich's gar so schön »schwärm̄en« lässt.

(a sign that I enjoyed it. I even consider it [the production he attended] high and durable, as viewed from the earthly valley. On the second highest mountain, of course, the freedom of laughter and wittiness reign. The most highly praised and pretentious things of this world appear as playthings of years, of centuries, if all goes well, of millennia, which [the playthings] will eventually anyway be broken and thrown out, like a hobbyhorse. From the highest mountain, however, the like appears as neither humorous nor admirable. That, then, would be three perspectives. The uncle, with his human fallibility, is sometimes up and sometimes down. Therefore the occasional differences between his opinions and those of his revered aunt, who constantly loves to stay in the flowery plane, where one can so nicely become enthralled.) (*Briefe II* #870)⁷⁴

At the outset, Busch describes the three vantage points from which works of art may be viewed as metaphors, each of which presents the work of art differently. The first is an earthly vantage point with little distance from the object observed. Of this “close-up view” Busch conceded that it might even present the object as “high and long-lasting.” On the second level, situated “on the second-highest mountain,” the somewhat distanced view gives freedom to laugh and joke about the object observed. The third level offers the maximum distance of viewer from the viewed, which makes “the most highly praised and most pretentious things of this world appear as the playthings of the years,” which, may eventually get broken and thrown out, like a “hobbyhorse.” Busch further stated that “from [the vantage point of] the highest of mountains, things appear as neither humorous, nor as admirable.” Thus, one’s perception of a work of art depends on one’s viewpoint

⁷⁴ This is a slightly playful account Busch sends to Nanda Keßler, whose mother was Busch’s good friend and one-time patron of his art. Busch calls himself “uncle” and the letter recipient’s mother is the “aunt.”

and this, as Busch's illustration reveals, is variable; one will see-saw between "up and down," which explains the "occasional differences between *his* opinions and *those* of his ... aunt" whose taste is stolidly fixed on the lowest level, the "flowery region." The "uncle" with his "human fallibility," wavers between the differing "vantage points." In his own playfully ironic way, Busch tries to convey the fact that one's perception and understanding of any object or "truth" depends on the vantage point from which it is viewed; there is no such thing as "the truth" and that all views of it are ultimately valid (Nietzsche called it "Perspectivism").⁷⁵ It appears that Busch did not wish to be fixed in his means of expression and opinions. As he told the "Tante," he was sometimes on one and, at other times on a different "poetic plane." He would, therefore, at different times, appreciate a particular work of art more or less, depending on his current "vantage point."

Coupled with this understanding of "truth" is Busch's open, completely undogmatic attitude towards art. This kind of openness is a modern attitude. As the recipient of other artists' works (and as the creator of his own), Busch affirms the artists' right to freedom of artistic expression, and their right to be independent of prevailing attitudes—their right to embrace or reject older, conventional, or newer artistic forms. In a letter to Maria Anderson, Busch underlined this freedom and variability essential to art:

Ein christlicher Krug! ... Ein heidnisches Glas! Aber richtig gefüllt, zur richtigen Stunde, schmeckt's mir aus beiden. —Prosit! — ... Kunst ist Kunst und s'ist alles ein Teufel (...) Es lebe die Freiheit! — Lieber, alter, herrlicher *van Eick*, ich denk an dich!

(A Christian jug! ... A heathen glass! But properly filled, at the proper hour [(and occasion)], are both to my taste. —Cheers!— ... Art is Art and it's all one devil (...)

⁷⁵ "Perspectivism" is explained by Carol Diethe in the *Historical Dictionary of Nietzscheanism* as follows: "Nietzsche rejected the Cartesian premise of the unified self, which produced such a reassuring image of the subject, and argued instead for the recognition of perspectivism in all claims regarding the absolute certainty of truth (q.v.) which would go beyond such simplification as 'good' and 'evil', pointing out that 'there are no facts, only perspectives'" (176).

Let freedom reign! – Dear, old, wonderful *van Eick*, I think of you!) (*Briefe I* #263)

This statement reveals Busch's openness to all types of artistic works and tastes. Art comes in many forms and Busch, for one, said he enjoyed many kinds of art—different ones at different times—they are all valid. “Art is art and it’s all one devil (...) Let freedom reign!” (*Briefe I* #263).⁷⁶

2.2 *The Creative Process*

2.2.1 *Precision*

In an interview with Paul Block, Busch remarked that Boswell must have understood his “Handwerk” well. By using this particular word, *Handwerk* (craft), Busch evokes a vision of steady, hard work with tools to develop one’s skills. Boswell’s chosen craft was writing biographies. The writer/artist in this vision becomes a master craftsman plying and perfecting his trade.

It is of interest to note that Busch used the words *portrait artist* and *biographer* rather than the less descriptive words *painter* and *writer* to compare two professions. Both portraiture and biography are more precise terms in the disciplines of visual art and literature than painting and writing. Both these genres reveal much about their subjects, and by choosing specific terms, Busch indirectly revealed that small word distinctions are important in writing expressively; by choosing words carefully, a precise and vivid mental image may be gained.

Although one might think that photography would be greeted as a more precise form of visual portraiture than painting, Busch clearly stated that photography, “although

⁷⁶ The painter Jan van Eyck is known to have gone his own direction in art, painting in more detail than his contemporaries, yet to great effect.

a nice invention” (*EH* 190), did not capture the essence of a subject as well as other forms of visual art. A caricature, for example, if it is too detailed, becomes too much like photography. “To be intellectually [challenging], a caricature, must be depicted with ... fewer means” (*EH* 146). Busch further commented on the disadvantages of photography and the advantages of the earlier methods:

das Photographieren. Schnapp! Da hat der Porträtmaler die gnädige Frau sitzen, von der Sonne wunderbar getroffen. Nach der alten Methode mußte man sich in den Menschen versenken, seine Art studieren, Zug für Zug auf die Leinwand bringen. Das ging langsamer—aber es hielt besser.

(photography. Snap! The portrait artist has the madam sitting there, so beautifully lit by the sun. According to the old method one had to become totally absorbed with one’s subject, to study a person’s habits intimately in order to project them stroke by stroke on the canvas. It was slower—but it lasted longer.) (*EH* 190)

Busch did not think of photography as very artful; such a fast method was not conducive to good art. Whether through visual art or word art, Busch preferred the slower, “old method” over the easier and newer one. In his opinion, it was crucial to “become totally absorbed with one’s subject, to study a person’s habits intimately” so that one might reach to his or her core and thereby be able to reveal something of the innermost self, projecting it “stroke by stroke on the canvas” (190). Busch’s negative view of the new technique of photography as a substitute for traditional methods of visual art shows that his ideas are still very much in tune with earlier methods that do not just show the surface of a subject (the appearance that can be put on) but perhaps something of the inner character of a subject. Busch’s desire not to succumb to the methods that his friends used (Lenbach, a famous portraitist, photographed his subjects before painting them), demonstrates, in my opinion, Busch’s fierce independence but not his resistance to change. I think that Busch might have adopted a newer method if it were more effective in portraying authenticity—

the essence within a subject, not just the subject from without. Expediency by way of photography was not his aim. Photography to Busch was merely a means to create an *Abbild* (likeness), but was not the way to create art. I see Busch's autonomy as part of his modernity, instead of his following a trend for the sake of modernity.

Loss of artistic freedom and desire is the underlying thought in Busch's letter to his friend F. A. v. Kaulbach who, in 1886, accepted an academic position as the director of the *Kunstakademie* in Munich. Busch was concerned at the news that his friend had become part of the “akademische Drillmaschine” (that his friend had embraced the “stifling halls of academia”) (*Briefe I* #656). Busch also worried that this appointment would affect his friend's creativity and leave him with little time to pursue his natural talents, these “seeds of art” (*Briefe I* #656). He hoped Kaulbach would continue “to nurture the garden he inherited from Mother Nature, wherein many happily went for a stroll, especially [he, Busch]” (*Briefe I* #656).⁷⁷

2.2.2 Metaphors and the Artistic Process

While Busch may not have commented directly on metaphors, he communicated their importance to writers, nonetheless, as shown below in my discussion on Busch's ideas on the writer Boswell. In a subsequent example, I elucidate the meaning of Busch's metaphor of the pumpkin for the artistic process.

Aber was das Porträtmalen angeht—wissen Sie, wer ein famoser Porträtmaler war?
Nun?

⁷⁷ “Hoffentlich bleibt dir Zeit, Laune und Unbefangenheit genug über zur Bestellung deines von Mutter Natur ererbten Gartens, worin Mancher gar fröhlich spatzieren ging, vor Allem auch ich” (*Briefe I* #656). Busch's spells the word “spatzieren” with a “t.” The image of an old poet's jaunty stroll through parkland nature, and nature partaking of his great achievement is found in Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge*: the “individual flowers” call out “red” alerting all of nature that the poet had finally produced a magnificent work of art (Trans. 20).

Boswell.

Boswell?

Ja. Haben [Sie] noch nie was von ihm gesehen, was? Das ist nicht weiter wunderbar, denn er malte bloß mit Worten.

Busch: (But regarding portraiture—do you know who was an exceptional portrait artist?

Block: Well?

Busch: Boswell.

Block: Boswell? ...

Busch: Yes. [You've] not ever seen something of his? That's not particularly remarkable, for he only painted with words.) (quoted in *EH* 190)⁷⁸

These lines, excerpted from Paul Block's interview with Busch, give an insight into the unusual way Busch communicated with others. We learn two things about the manner in which he used words and/or envisioned their use in the creation of a literary work. First, the surprising twist in Busch's question (and answer to his own question) about who he thought was a fabulous portraitist reveals his love of a suspenseful play with words laden with subtle humour. The person named Boswell turns out to be not a painter but the "fabulous" biographer of Samuel Johnson. Block's answer, "Boswell?" suggests he was expecting to hear Busch mention the name of a *visual* artist, since visual art was the topic of their conversation.

Second, the phrase "he painted only with words" reveals Busch's own understanding of literature as being akin to visual art, its medium and tools being words. Literature can create an image in the reader's mind that can be as powerful as a piece of visual art. This is not just achieved through the use of vivid metaphors, although these are probably the most important literary tools, but by knowing one's subject well and getting factual details. Busch said he admired Boswell because he observed his subject so closely. Busch concluded that Boswell must have followed Samuel Johnson "im gleichen Schritt

⁷⁸ Wilhelm Busch in Paul Block's interview "Beim Einsiedler von Mechtershausen" *Berliner Tageblatt Nr. 124 vom 9. März 190* (cited in *EH* 190). Boswell: James Boswell, biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson.

und Tritt, und hat alles notiert, wie er sich den Rock glatt gestrichen hat, und wie er eine Prise nahm” (step by step and noted everything, how he smoothed his coat and how he snuffed his [tobacco]), recording every detail including “his good and wicked deeds” (*EH* 190). Thus, Busch’s comment on Boswell tells us that Busch considered keen observation and keeping precise records to be prerequisites for an excellent literary portrait. Close observation might rein in any boundless flight of the imagination and thus help the work remain authentic. No doubt authenticity was on Busch’s mind when he explained to Eduard Daelen (September 1885) what mischief uncurbed imagination can do: “[E]in erfindsamer Kopf kann ja einen Kürbis melonisieren, oder aushöhlen und erleuchten, daß er nach was aussieht” (an inventive head can make a melon out of a pumpkin or hollow it out and light it [from within] so that it looks like something) (*Briefe I* #634). These metaphors for the artistic process would suggest that Busch knew very well that someone with much “imagination” can make an ordinary “thing” appear as something grander than it is and “make a melon” out of a “pumpkin” and still create a substance of a more refined form or “hollow it out and light it [from within]” so that it appears to be something that it is not (*Briefe I* #634). Meticulous observation and careful attention to detail will guard against such excesses of the imagination. Thus, the example of the pumpkin may be viewed as a creative metaphor that also reflects Busch’s rural roots as well as the desire for his creations to remain authentic.

2.2.3 Brevity

Kennt der Kerl denn keine Gnade?
 Soll er uns mit seiner Suade,
 Durch sein breites Explizieren,
 Schwadronieren, Disputieren,
 ... stets genieren.

(Does this chap not know any mercy?
 Should he, with his suave way,
 Through his broad explicating,
 swadronating,⁷⁹ disputating,
 ... continuously bother us.) (*KH* untitled 12)

This poem from *Kritik des Herzens* serves to highlight Busch's opinion about the importance of keeping speech (and by extension writing) short and to the point. The humorous and pompous sounding words “Explizieren,/ Schwadronieren, Disputieren” (“explicating,/ swadronating, disputating”) (*KH* 12) are used ironically to take aim at inflated or lengthy speech. The importance of brevity for the generation of poets that came after Schiller (a classicist) features in the following poem from the *Kritik des Herzens* collection:

Der Hausknecht in dem “Weidenbusch”
 Zu Frankfurt an dem Main,
 Der war Poet, doch immer kurz,
 Denn wenig fiel ihm ein.

Ja sprach er, Freund, wir leben jetzt
 In der Depeschenzeit,
 Und Schiller, käm er heut zurück,
 Wär auch nicht mehr so breit.

(The house servant in the “willow bush”
 To Frankfurt on the Main,
 He was a poet, but always brief,
 For he could think of little.

Well, said he, friend, we now live
 In the time of dispatch
 And Schiller, were he to return today,
 Would no longer be so wide.) (8-9)

⁷⁹ I translate “Schwadronieren” as “swadronating,” although this is not a proper English word. The German word means something like “commanding wordiness” and is related to the word “Schwadron” (“swadron”).

In these two poems, we can hear Busch's opinion on emulating classical styles of a bygone era. These aesthetic traditions were still favoured by some artists he met in Munich, such as Julius Grosse (Neyer, "Böse" 34).⁸⁰ Busch was, nevertheless, still fond of Schiller's works and could recite many lengthy passages by heart. However, in Busch's view, narrative lengthiness was no longer an appropriate style for the fast-paced era of "dispatch" with which he and other poets struggled. In keeping with the ideas expressed in the poems, Busch criticized the excessive length of some contemporary works, including Richard Wagner's "die 'Walküre':"

Ich ... war entzückt von dem, was ich hörte, und gelangweilt von dem, was ich sah. Ginge Einer hinein, der taub wäre, dem müßt es vorkommen, wie eine peinlich in die Länge gezogene Parodie der nordischen Göttersage.

(I was delighted with what I heard, but bored with what I saw. If someone who was deaf were to enter [the opera], he might get the impression that it was an embarrassingly long-drawn out parody of the Nordic legend of the gods. (*Briefe I* #426)

When Busch lived in Munich, he made the acquaintance of Wagner⁸¹ (note to *Briefe I* #215) and attended a number of his productions. While Busch was delighted enough to attend some of the performances more than once (*Briefe I* #451 and #462), the length of other works, such as the one mentioned above, disturbed him.

Gert Ueding suggests that Busch's "programmatische Kuerze und gefeilte Schnoddrigkeit ist ja genauso künstlich wie die erhaben pathetische Sprache Zarathustras" (programmed brevity and finely honed snottiness is just as artificial as the loftily emotional language of Zarathustra)⁸² (*Klassiker* 145) crafted by Nietzsche, whose

⁸⁰ Hans Joachim Neyer claims that Busch had Julius Grosse in mind when he created his *Balduin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter* ("Böse" 34).

⁸¹ Busch was invited to tea by his friend Hermann Levi (a future director in Bayreuth) where he first met Wagner and his wife Cosima (note to *Briefe I* #215).

⁸² "Zarathustra" refers to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra: ein Buch für alle und keinen*.

“Meisterdeutsch” (masterful German) Busch had criticized (Bohne “Nachwort” *Briefe II* 332). Busch read critics’ articles and was not happy with their way of writing “in other tongues.”⁸³ The critics’ writings were, in Busch’s view, reminiscent of Nietzsche’s confusing style,⁸⁴ which held no appeal for Busch and was often not understandable to him. Certain things, Busch thought, could not be put into words adequately, neither in texts reminiscent of traditional classical works or lengthy *Gesamtkunstwerke* (all-embracing works of art)⁸⁵ by Richard Wagner. Although Nietzsche is considered the “wesentliche Wegbereiter der ‘Moderne’” (essential pioneer of the ‘Moderne’) (Leiß and Stadler 25) and was known for his brevity (he wrote many aphorisms), he did not appeal to Busch either (*Briefe II* #1209). Busch’s insistence on brevity may stem from his realization that more words did not equate with more truth and that long-winded or confusing phrases served only to cover their emptiness.

In a letter of 10 October 1898, Busch showed himself to be more critical of Nietzsche’s ideas than his style of writing:

Las von dem, was du meinst nur wenig. Daher sag ich, unter Vorbehalt...: Stülpe alles um; zu recht sag unrecht, zu gut sag bös, nenne den Teufel ‘mein Bester!’ und du hast die Moral von der Geschicht.... Das Meisterdeutsch, den hinterrucks wühlenden Tiefsinn, ... könntest du nur bewundern bei höchsteigner Besichtigung. Was aber die “Schnäcke” betrifft, die jetzund von den Papageien in allen Ecken wiederholt werden, so laß sie uns ... lieber nicht mitplappern.

(I read little of what you mean. Therefore, I say, with reservation...: turn everything upside down, to right say wrong, to good [say] bad, call the devil “my dearest!” and you have the moral of the story.... You could only admire ... the masterful German, the hidden ... profundity, ... by examining [the text] yourself.

⁸³ This is probably a biblical reference to the confusion which resulted when God split language into many “tongues” as a punishment for building the tower of Babel .

⁸⁴ I point out that these are my interpretations of Busch’s views; they are not the views of the author of this thesis.

⁸⁵ *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a term coined by Richard Wagner for a work that can include all possible forms of art in one work; this is considered to be an ideal form. Wagner is known for his large operatic productions.

Concerning the [indiscriminate] “chatter” repeated in every corner by the parrots, we would do better … to avoid such chatter.) (*Briefe II* #1209)

Nietzsche’s ideas were contrary to Busch’s own moral compass, which may be why Busch was so critical of his writing. After all, Nietzsche, like Busch, is known for his brevity (both writers authored aphorisms). Busch’s criticism of Wagner and Nietzsche shows that he refused to follow the herd, so to speak, and chose to make up his own mind about a work. He would examine a work himself and not just take someone else’s word on the subject, no matter how popular the contemporary opinion might be. His message was to be independent of the prevailing winds of time and find your own truthful style. For Busch, it seems that brevity was part of his stylistic arsenal and paramount to a truthful and ethical way of writing.

2.2.4 Simplicity

Busch liked simplicity. He wrote, “Die einfachste Bühne ist und bleibt mir die liebste. Ich bin überhaupt sehr fürs Einfache” (The simplest stage is and will always remain my favourite. I am above all for simplicity) (quoted by Block, quoted in *EH* 192). In Busch’s eyes, “simplicity” was an aesthetic virtue, something worth striving for. His visual art depicting rural genre scenes or landscapes were sketched or painted on a small scale. He favoured unadorned frames or no frame at all, often simply a line drawn around an illustration meant to frame the scene, to keep it within bounds, or to let the eye gaze on a scene in the centre of a painting without the clutter of background detail. Busch’s tiny drawings—his “Schnitzeln” (1892/94)—were arranged on one sheet to create a work comprised of several individual drawings (Neyer et al. 157, 252). Some of these are part of Busch’s illustrated poetry collection *Hernach* created at a time when Busch wrote his prose works. Busch’s “Schnitzeln” express in picture form the idea that small-scale *Kunst*

can also be powerful. Each tiny picture is a separate scene connected by its rural theme. Although other artists, caught up in the euphoria of the *Grunderzeit*, tended to portray grand historical scenes and large-scale portraits (Busch's friend Lenbach comes to mind), Busch purposely steered away from this trend. It went against his aesthetic philosophy of simplicity and honesty. Adornments and aggrandizements were "Schein" (appearance), whereas genre painting was reality and "Sein" (being). Aptly, a posthumously published book of Busch's poetry was also named *Schein und Sein* (this may be translated as Appearance and Being/Reality) (1909); it exposes Busch's aesthetic aims of truthfulness, a feature of Busch's aesthetic.

2.3 *The Text and its Themes*

2.3.1 *Pleasure and Horror*

The fairy tales and legends of North Germany are especially rich in depicting mysterious events and fantastical experiences of protagonists who are just as likely to be enchanted princes, witches or devils as they are ordinary folk. For example, Busch mentioned the "warwind"⁸⁶ that carried with it "witches" (*Von mir* 18). In 1910, Otto F. Volkmann had already noted the importance of that mystery (70-71). In a letter to Maria Anderson, Busch recalled that he was simultaneously "ergötzt und entsetzt" (enthralled and upset) by the stories and folktales he had heard in his youth, which was the reason they held such fascination for him (letter dated 24 September 1875, *Briefe I* #312). The experience of simultaneous horror and pleasure is also the topic of a letter Busch wrote to Franz von Lenbach on 23 February 1889. It includes a description of an idyll suddenly shattered by the sounds of the early-morning slaughter of a pig while Busch and the rest

⁸⁶ "warwind" is not capitalized in the text.

of the household were still safely tucked in their beds. “Es war grausam gemüthlich [im Bett].... Man fühlte sich so sauber und warm verpackt, wie eine Pflaume im Auflauf.... Jetzt wird’s [das Schwein] herausgezerrt aus dem lieben, duftenden Stalle.” (It was gruesomely cozy [in bed].... One felt so clean and warmly packaged like a plum in a pudding.... Now it [the pig] is pulled away from its dear scented pig sty) (*Briefe I* #769). The image of the people and the pig safely and warmly cocooned in their respective lodgings (bed or pig sty) is given a parallel in the image of a plum within a pudding, something ready to be eaten, foreshadowing the pig’s destiny. However gruesome the scene here depicted may be, Busch realized it is continuously played out in the harsh reality of life on a farm as the rest of the letter, peppered with uneasy images, reveals. Moreover, the triple parallel images of man, animal and fruit give the reader much food for thought and a way for Busch to remind the reader that man is inextricably connected to nature where for the sake of life, something must die. This need to kill in order to live is by nature cruel and is related to the concept of the “survival of the fittest.”⁸⁷ Busch depicted this phenomenon in some of his drawings of animals competing with other animals (one creature would always be smarter or stronger than another fighting to take a den, a next meal or a life to sustain itself), as also in his drawings of anthropomorphised fruits or vegetables waiting to be prepared and consumed. Indeed, in this vision, all biological life, including man, is connected by (and subject to) the cruelty inherent in nature.

Violent scenes are often depicted in drama and Busch’s attitude towards their inclusion in art can be gleaned from his comments about Grillparzer’s and Hebbel’s

⁸⁷ Although the term “the survival of the fittest” is quoted in Charles Darwin’s “fifth edition of his *Origin of Species*, 1869,” Darwin acknowledged that Herbert Spencer used this term in his *The Principles of Biology* (1864) (Martin no pag.).

differing approaches as dramatists. In the following comment, Busch clearly implies that the dramatic genre, which the classical poets considered to be the highest form of literary art, should not be timid in its treatment of violence. Scenes of violence and/or death have a rightful place in drama and, one may safely assume, in art generally. “Grillparzer ist ein tüchtiger Poet, aber kein Dramatiker, wie z.B. der Hebbel; er ist zu zaghaft, mag keinen Menschen umbringen, wie der es tut” (Grillparzer is a hard-working poet, but not a dramatist, like for example Hebbel; he is too timid, doesn’t want to kill anybody, the way he operates) (quoted in *EH* 152).

As a young artist, Busch was also involved in the theatre and wrote several librettos for stage productions. One of these was performed at the “Münchner Künstlerfasching” (“Munich artist’s ball”) in 1862, the *Märchengspiel* (Fairy tale play) “Hansel und Gretel”⁸⁸ (1861) (*EH* 208) and included a character called “Menschenfresser” (people eater). Busch’s “people eater” was displayed with humour and imagination. In the fairy tale setting, Busch’s “Menschenfresser” character loses some of his fierceness, because it is understood that this genre does not deal with our normal reality. But the idea that the “Hexe” might fry up the little children for him⁸⁹ is, nonetheless, one of those instances of *Ergötzen* and *Entsetzen* (of being simultaneously enthralled and upset) that Busch found so fascinating.

⁸⁸Music by Georg Krempfsetzer (reprinted in *EH* 49-63). *EH* uses the spelling “Hansel” and “Gretel” throughout. Busch used “Hansel” and “Grethel” in the *Märchengspiel* (1862) and in a preliminary drawing (*BG I* 1266-1269). However, Busch’s *Bilderposse* appears as “Hänsel und Gretel” (310) with *Umlaut* for “Hänsel” and no “h” in “Gretel.”

⁸⁹“Hexe:/ Die brat ich dir./ Menschenfresser:/ Die brätst du mir.” (Busch “Hansel und Gretel” in *EH* 55).

2.3.2 Dreams

Dream literature can be traced to different eras and is associated with Romanticism at the turn of the nineteenth century and again with surrealistic literature of the twentieth century. Many of Busch's letters discuss dreams. His thoughts on the subject may be gleaned from his comment on the effect of nightmares because of its partial origin in reality: "Natürlich am meisten anregend unter den Träumen wirkte der Alldruck, weil er zur Hälfte ein richtiger Wahrtraum ist" (Of course, the most stimulating of dreams was the nightmare, because it is a dream based halfway on real truth) (*Briefe II* #1257). However, Busch cloaked any further thoughts on the subject of dreams carefully when he discussed what they might have meant to people long ago, instead of stating what he himself thought:

Während der Mensch träumt, geht sein inneres Ich aus ihm heraus und treibt sich herum. Er hat einen Geist, eine Seele.... Ein aparter Traum kehrt häufig wieder. Er träumt genau sein Bett, seine Kammer.... Außerdem paßirte etwas Sonderbares: die Leute starben. Wo blieben die Seelen? Die Phantasie wußte Bescheid. Einige blieben ... als Hausgeister ... und sonstigen Spukdingern.

(While a person dreams, his inner self goes out of him and wanders about. He has a *Geist*⁹⁰, a soul.... An intricate dream often recurs. He dreams accurately his bed, his room.... Besides that, something unusual happened: people died. Where did the souls go? The imagination took care of that. Some stayed as house ghosts ... and other spooky things.) (*Briefe II* #1259)

Busch here summed up his thoughts on what happens during dreams in connection with what he often called the old "Volksglaube" (folk belief). He does not say that this was his belief because he did not wish to be held to just one opinion on a matter that is not within reach of our understanding. He called this the "ungraspable." However, he

⁹⁰ The word "Geist" can be translated as "mind" or "spirit." In this passage I would prefer to translate the word as "mind," thereby the three concepts traditionally associated with human beings are included in this passage: the mind, the soul, and the body.

believed that there is more than one type of “Ich:” the “inner” self that can travel outside the body and which is the hidden “inner” being of a person, and the visible “outer” form which houses the “inner” self.

Even after laying out a fairly lengthy treatise on what dreams *may* be, Busch immediately questioned what he had written by contemplating whether a “physiologist” might have a more prosaic explanation (stomach problems) than a mythical, poetic one (the wandering soul) (*Briefe II* #259). At the core of the dream, lies the self, which is especially difficult to understand:

Kein Ding sieht so aus, wie es ist. Am wenigsten der Mensch, dieser lederne Sack voller Kniffe und Pfiffe. Und auch abgesehen von den Kapriolen und Masken der Eitelkeit. Immer, wenn man was wissen will, muß man sich auf die zweifelhafte Dienerschaft des Kopfes und der Köpfe verlassen und erfährt nie recht, was passiert ist.

(Nothing looks as it is. Least of all man, this leather sack full of folds and eccentricities, even disregarding the fanciful diversions and masks of vanity. Always, when one wishes to know something, one must rely on, and be dubiously served by the head and the heads, and [one] can never rightly know what has happened.) (Busch, Von mir 9)

“Nothing looks as it is, least of all man, this leather sack full of folds,” is a statement that clarifies Busch’s conviction that nothing can ever be completely clear to the mind. Busch questioned current theories, as was discussed previously. This may explain why he was fond of Maurice Maeterlinck’s work, of which he said that he enjoyed the “doppelsinnige Gered” (double-sensed talk) (*Briefe II* #1307). The opportunity to explore alternate interpretations is what would have appealed to Busch in Maeterlinck’s works. The imagination could be fully engaged with works that included symbolism, for which this author was known.

2.3.3 Busch as Critic

Busch's picture-story *Balduin Bählamm, der verhinderte Dichter* (BG III 420-497)

includes an ironic treatment of what Busch called the “Poetendimension” (poet’s dimension). The hero of this picture-story, a city dweller who visits the countryside to capture his “muse,” is a “thwarted poet” who does not reach his aesthetic ideal:

Im Durchschnitt ist man kummervoll
 Und weiß nicht was man machen soll. —
 Nicht so der Dichter. Kaum mißfällt
 Ihm diese altgebackene Welt,
 So knetet er aus weicher Kleie
 Für sich privatim eine neue
 Und zieht als freier Musensohn
 In die Poetendimension.

(On average one is full of woe
 And what's to be done one does not rightly know. —
 Not so the poet. No sooner
 Does this old-baked world displease him,
 Than he kneads of soft clay
 For himself a private new one
 And as a free son of the muses
 He journeys into the poet's dimension.) (BG III 423-24)⁹¹

This excerpt of *Balduin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter* speaks of a poet’s “private” creative place—a “poet’s dimension” and place of refuge in the mind: “Hier hat er nichts mehr auszustehen” (here he is no longer plagued) (424), where personal freedom reigns to create a “new” world. Busch uses inflated phrases, which help to satirize those poets who wish to create something “schönes” (beautiful) (423) with an “eternally well-nourished

⁹¹ I translate the word “Kleie” as “clay.” D.P. Lotze translates “Kleie” as a “nutritional image of ‘soft bran’” (*Wilhelm Busch* 87). The explanation for “Kleie” given in BG III specifically mentions the word “clay” as the proper translation into English (Footnotes 423). The following is an alternate translation of the same passage of Busch’s *Balduin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter* by Walter Arndt, who avoids a possible misinterpretation by not naming the substance with which the poet creates his works: “For by and large, we spend our days/ In vague discomfort and malaise./ Not so the bard. For hardly palls/ The dreary sight of his four walls,/ When, presto, he has struck and furled/ The moldy backdrop for our world,/ And issues from its gloom and tension/ Into the poet’s fifth dimension.” (143).

muse” (424)⁹² always within reach. They will necessarily be disappointed. Bählamm, after all, is eventually thwarted by the “Verdrießlichkeiten” (woes) (423) of the world and returns empty-handed, not having written one poem. Balduin’s ideal poetry is of the “airy” kind of the “blumige Ebene” (“flowery plain”)⁹³ (*Briefe II* #870), which Busch had criticized in his letter to Keßler, although Busch himself admitted that he sometimes trod among these poetic “flowers.” Noticing that this poetic world is “kneaded” of *soft* “clay,” rather than, perhaps, imagining it as carved of *hard* ebony, emphasizes the ease with which this “flowery” poetry may be formed. It may be moulded and remoulded without too much effort, although even this poetic “plane”⁹⁴ was out of Balduin’s reach. Perhaps the image of “soft clay” means that this poetry is also created with little effort and may not be as long lasting as another kind. That does not, however, negate the concept of the “poet’s dimension” since each poet has his/her own private poetic realm, and what is created in this dimension depends on its creator.

Literary fiction is not fact and Busch communicated this fact (packaged in his metaphoric style of writing) when he criticized Nanda Keßler for trying to read and interpret his poem “Zirrwitt!/Diddellitt!” (Tweetweet!/Diddleydeet)⁹⁵ (*Briefe I* #870) by examining it for its accuracy instead of enjoying it as a fruit of the author’s imagination. The importance of freedom from convention, facts and practical applications in the creation of an imaginative piece of writing is shown by Busch in comments on the poem he wrote and sent to Nanda Keßler for her birthday in 1892:

⁹² The German version reads: “Der ewig wohlgenährten Musen” (*BG III* 424).

⁹³ The “Ebene,” (“plain”) was also associated in Busch’s letter with a poetic level (“plane”) as was discussed on pages 60-62.

⁹⁴ See footnote above, which points out an ambiguity in Busch’s use of the word “Ebene” in relation to a “level” and a geographical “plain.”

⁹⁵ This poem’s title is based on the sound that birds make.

[D]as kleine Gedicht, so was, wie ein gespaßiger Sommermythus, ... womit ich ihr eine flüchtige Aufmerksamkeit zu erweisen gedachte. Denk mal an! Sie nimmt's moralisch, prüft's auf seine Richtigkeit und vertheidigt sich sogar, als ob sie leibhaftig Zephire wär. Und ist doch so ein Gedicht (sonst wär's doch keins!) nur ein munterer Paradiesvogel, der bekanntlich, weil er keine Füß hat, über dem spießbürgerlichen Fußboden in der Luft schwebt, aber sofort herunter fällt, wenn ihn von unten ein 'praktischer Blick' trifft. Sie soll's nur ja keinen conventionellen Leuten zeigen.

(The little poem, sort of like a fun summer myth, ... with which I thought to favour her with a small token. Just imagine! She takes it morally, checks it for its correctness and even defends herself as if she were personally *Zephire* [the fairy]. And is such a poem (otherwise it wouldn't be one!) only a lively bird of paradise, which, because it has no feet, is known to hover in the air over the bourgeois floor, but which immediately falls down, when from below a "practical glance" strikes it. She should dare not show it to any conventional people.) (*Briefe I* #871)

Poetry cannot tolerate being weighed down by practical uses and concerns (praktischer Blick). Any such interpretation or evaluation would cause the poem to lose its ability to soar like the bird of paradise (Paradiesvogel). Displayed in museums without feet, this exotic bird was thought to have none, hence the reference to poetry soaring over the petty-bourgeois ("spießbürgerlichen") ground. Petty looks and moralizing ways would destroy the poetic in poetry.

Busch criticized conventional and stifling attitudes (these were prevalent during his era) that could hinder a poet's pursuit of creativity. Busch used the attribute "munter" (lively, carefree) to describe his "Paradiesvogel" (Bird of Paradise) (*Briefe I* #871) and at the same time cautioned not to show this poem to "conventional people" (*Briefe I* #871). The underlying thought is that *Munterkeit* (liveliness) is a quality of natural persons, who are uninhibited in their ways, not "dressiert" (trained). In Busch's thinking, "conventional" persons, especially city-folk, are more "trained" and less spontaneous than their rural counterparts. This spontaneity and *Munterkeit* is also seen in the behaviour of children and animals, for example, with the children "Max" and "Moritz" and "Plisch"

and “Plum.” While at first the latter pair is quite wild, like their dogs, both the children and their animals are trained and tame in the end. “Liveliness” can, thus, be suppressed. Being trained no longer allows the originality of one’s personality to shine. Busch favoured depiction of forceful original traits with all the hidden qualities to be brought out into the open. He was intent on showing the inner “Sein” (essence), the “heart” as it is, not the outer “Schein” (appearance) or the “vest” that has been put on.

From Busch’s letters, we now know that he was occasionally forced to compromise his artistic integrity. For example, his publisher Otto Bassermann pressured him to create topical satirical works. In a letter to Bassermann, dated 10 December 1872, Busch speaks of the tremendous struggle he had to agree to the label “Zeitbild” (picture of the times) for his *Pater Filucius*, and to the inclusion of a “Deutung” (key) to the work (*Briefe I* # 155). This key explained the allegorical figures that appeared in the work in terms of nineteenth-century German culture and politics. Thus, it deprived his *Pater Filucius* of its universality (a traditional aesthetic requirement of art). Busch claimed that his work dealt with the “past, present, [and] future” (*Briefe I* #157), and that it was not part of the present culture struggle alone, but a universal matter. Busch was critical of tendentiousness in art and literature and was thus indirectly critical of his own work *Pater Filucius*. Its place in history would stay fixed, thereby sacrificing its universality. Busch believed this diminished the work because it became less artful and, perhaps, less viable for future generations.

While Busch was a traditionalist in regard to the requirement of art to remain universal, he considered his drawings to be at the leading edge of his time. Busch’s attitude towards his own works can be seen in two letters from June 1880 addressed to his

publisher who wished to embellish one of Busch's works with an old-fashioned “Renaißancekante” (Renaissance edging) (*Briefe I* #484): “Von dem Versuch, eine echte Renaißanceverzierung zu verwenden bei einer Reihe von modernen Zeichnungen rathe ich ab” (I advise against the attempt to use a genuine [type] of Renaissance embellishment for a set of modern drawings) (*Briefe I* #483). Busch's rejection of the old-fashioned “embellishment” as inappropriate for a “modern drawing” shows that Busch situated his visual art with those of other “modern” (contemporary) artists. His work was not a retrospective to earlier works. By extension, Busch reveals part of his own aesthetic program. He created his works not from the perspective of earlier traditions but from the perspective of his own time. One can safely say that Busch's aesthetic views were not retrospective views; they were contemporary views. From the example above, is possible to state, as Gottfried Willems does, that Busch thought of himself as one of the “Modernen” (modern ones) (216) (in other words, an artist belonging to the start of the “Moderne”)?

Busch's works were, in his own view, “modern” works and Busch created these not from the perspective of earlier traditions, but from the perspective of his own time. Earlier traditions did not fit his times even though he was inspired by earlier traditions. His era required other aesthetic criteria that were no longer based on the formal classical traditions of the indivisibility of “truth, goodness, beauty” (Goethe quoted in Neyer “Böse” 33) that remained the aesthetic norm by which art and literature continued to be measured. I think that Busch was keenly aware of the split that had developed between the increasingly negative realities and the safe, harmonious world that artists were expected by society to uphold in their representations of this world. While adhering to

classical rules was appropriate and novel at the turn of the nineteenth century (as advocated by Lessing, Schiller and Goethe), the strict adherence to such rules became less valid for artists of extreme Realism.

As I have tried to show in this chapter, Busch's aesthetic views were complex and influenced by many traditions and theories. These included the folkloristic (romantic) traditions as well as classical training at the academy in Düsseldorf, the "Antikensaal" (hall of antiquities) (*Briefe II* #903), the more realistic genre of the Renaissance masters during his year of studies in Antwerp, followed by his time in Munich, where he met a number of influential artists (for example, Lenbach, Wagner, Heyse). Busch's early philosophical readings included Kant, and later Schopenhauer (Ehrlich 7), whose "aesthetics ... fascinated ... the French Symbolists ..., who developed them further into the foundations of modernism" (Sokel 25).

Busch was fond of the works by the Symbolist Maeterlinck, which suggests to me that Busch's aesthetic views had something in common with them. While my analysis so far has been based on a selection of biographical materials spaced over a period of time, the next chapter will focus on Busch's views as they manifest themselves in his mature prose piece *Eduards Traum*, which I propose will act as a time capsule, so to speak. I hope that this will honour Busch's wish to gain insights from the interpretation of artists' works rather than from their lives. While Chapter 2 was an approach that stressed looking at Busch's views as his personal theoretical communications, the next chapter is based on Busch's practice to illuminate some of the methods Busch employed and help in the search for clues to the aesthetic views Busch held at the time of writing *Eduards Traum*.

2.4 Summary

One of the most important findings of my thesis is that Busch thought that artists should have total control to create their works as they saw fit. The matters of content, form, the preferred genre, and the medium used, should be decided by the artist. Busch did realize, however, that societal constraints and conventional thinking often limited the artist's freedom.

A sense of the connectedness of all things seemed to be part of Busch's philosophy. Busch was aware of the connection of earlier ideas to newer ones. He appreciated innovative art and literature (Goethe, Herder), and going in a new direction when others were still entrenched in the past. Busch courted originality. Flexibility and openness in one's own art helped an artist to stay current and avoid becoming stale. Copying earlier art forms such as the classical styles was not conducive to truthful renderings that fit Busch's era and was therefore rejected. Nonetheless, earlier styles could still be enjoyed for their authenticity of the time in which they were originally created. Busch aimed for truthful artistic renderings, especially of the kind that endure through the ages, rather than pretentious art of the kind popular during his era.

The importance of keeping a sense of wonder about the world and an abundant use of imagination were important to Busch. With all the scientific knowledge and technological possibilities at hand, this sense of wonder was still seen as a modern necessity which fuelled an artist's inspiration. Imagination ranked higher than a work's overly realistic or naturalistic portrayal. The extreme realism that he observed in contemporary naturalistic productions seemed, as Busch said, "unschön" (not nice). An overly naturalistic work was apt to be like a photograph and was only able to show the

“outer” layer of a “thing,” when it was the “inner” nature and the essence of a “thing,” idea, or person, that were the hallmarks of a superior work.

Busch’s aesthetic was, then, very much a drive to get to the “heart” of a matter and poetically discover the “Sein” behind the “Schein.” This was Busch’s ideal. Imagination could help to find a way to portray that which could not be seen by the physical eyes, but which could be discovered by careful observation and study of one’s subject, what Busch called a “Versenkung,” if that was at all possible. This kind of absorption with one’s subject and its subsequent portrayal required diligence and patience.

Busch’s guiding principles for the production of a work of art were simplicity, brevity, precision, depth, strength of delivery through humour, and vivid metaphor. Importance was placed on the work, rather than the author’s life. Readers (correspondents) were to be actively engaged in the interpretation of the text. This could be achieved by various ways of manipulating the text, such as ambiguity, polyvalence and irony. Such a call on the reader to interpret the text in his or her own way is based on Busch’s “modern” understanding of “truth.” Truth, Busch held, could come from differing viewpoints (Perspectivism). Busch’s texts, works, letters and communications were replete with “empty spaces,” which had the effect of “puzzling” his readers. Busch’s readers had to be active thinkers (a rather modernistic type of reader not requiring well-rounded definitive answers, as in the classical tradition). This was the result of Busch’s aesthetic of incorporating differing points of view into his writing, even in his personal correspondence. As I discovered in this chapter, Busch considered his works to be at the leading edge of his time when, in the 1880s, he called his drawings “modern.” Busch was

well aware that, in order to be truthful, the aesthetics had to be fashioned from criteria based on its own time, not on a by-gone era. That did not preclude that some of the aesthetic values could not overlap. I discovered, for example, that Busch tried to remain true to the ideal of universalism as an aesthetic requirement for true *Kunst* that would endure through the ages. These discoveries about Busch's views on art and literature do not give a complete picture of Busch's complex aesthetic ideas; therefore, the next chapter examines Busch's aesthetic views as they are manifested in his mature work *Eduards Traum*. It will describe the views Busch held during the early 1890s, an era associated with the beginning of the German *Moderne*, which saw rapid change and experimentation in the arts including the development of diverse literary styles.

CHAPTER 3. *Eduards Traum*: an Interpretation

Die Tatsachen haben Bedeutung nur soweit, als durch sie hindurchgreifend, die Hand des Künstlers nach dem faßt, was hinter ihnen steht.

(The facts have meaning only insofar as the artist's hand grasps through them to reach for what is standing behind them.) (Edschmid 546)

Sagst du $2 \times 2 = 4$, so ist das klar, aber leer. Sagst du "Wurst," so ist was drin; aber kann man das Wesen einer Wurst ergründen?!

(If you say $2 \times 2 = 4$, then that is clear, but empty. If you say "sausage," then there is substance within; but can you discover the essence of a sausage?!) (Busch quoted in *EH* 178)

Wilhelm Busch's *Eduards Traum* (1891) is a combination of dream literature and travel literature. The protagonist Eduard, a respectable husband and father, tells of his unusual dream. At midnight, after extinguishing his candle, he shrinks to the size of a dot and finds himself able to fly at will. He first observes himself and then embarks on a journey to many different dreamscapes in search of some goal that is never articulated. The individual dream scenes are linked by the dot's journey, although the dream scenes themselves are not connected in a storyline. Instead, each dream scene is populated with its own entities—animals (a frog concert in the countryside; a former beauty, now a spider in flight through time), people (merchants and material gain; artists and their critics; scientists in the halls of learning; farmers and doctors in rural settings; individuals' loss of motivation in the land of utopia), even mathematical figures and abstract beings.

Most of these diverse encounters have a humorous edge (such as the encounter with anthropomorphized sausages), but are also on serious topics of a great variety, such as the search for a truly good man (the dot's effort fails, as every dream episode shows

that there are failings in all spheres the dot encounters), or a nursemaid taking a baby's sustenance. These dream scenes end with the dot's climb up a mountain, during which he encounters a variety of people, some of which represent different life philosophies. At the end of the road, he comes to an impenetrable castle which represents the fount of life from which the babies emerge to be carried away into the world or as Dieter P. Lotze describes, "the castle of faith [that] cannot be penetrated by intellect" (*Wilhelm Busch* 139). After a narrow escape from devils, Dot-Eduard returns safely to his body to smell the coffee and hear his wife's voice that had occasionally interrupted his troubled dream.

The following interpretation of *Eduards Traum* will attempt to glean further insights into Busch's views on art and literature than was possible from the previous chapter (Busch's Statements on Art and Literature). It will elucidate Busch's mature aesthetic views at the time of writing *Eduards Traum* (1890). This analysis is divided into three sections: first, The Narrative Structure: Ambiguity and Polyvalence; second, The Dream Episodes; third, Busch's Views on the Poet, the Work of Art, and the Reader. These discussions will be based on Busch's aesthetic views as established in the preceding chapter. They will in turn yield further insights into Busch's aesthetic and add to our understanding of its historical significance. In that respect, the publication date of *Eduards Traum*, 1891, becomes relevant to the discussions centering on the perceived modernity of *Eduards Traum* and, by implication, its author's aesthetics. As I point out in the introduction to this thesis, the 1890s are considered to be a turning point in German literature marking the start of the *Moderne*. The literary climate of the *Moderne* was complex and could best be described as a time of "Verwirrung" (confusion) and opposing aesthetics. Thus, my interpretation seeks to find the covert and hidden meanings related to

Busch's aesthetics and views on art and literature. This interpretation seeks to answer the following questions: Why do sophisticated readers of *Eduards Traum*, such as Wolfgang Kayser, Dieter P. Lotze, Alfred Liede, and Karsten Imm consider this work to be modern for its time? Why does it remind them of works by surrealist authors who shattered literary conventions during the early twentieth century (Kayser 130)? This interpretation will identify some startling and strikingly modernist ideas locked in the pages of *Eduards Traum* and thus, it is hoped, contribute to a fair understanding of the mature Busch's aesthetic views and writing.

Busch's ideas on aesthetics become apparent as the layers of this interpretation unfold. They reveal an aesthetic which stands firmly against the prevailing attitudes of a pretentious ("heuchlerisch") (*ET* 70) and hollow aesthetic that imitates an older, traditional one (Classicism), but, at the same time is wary of the newer aesthetic of Naturalism. It also reveals a preference for exaggerated forms of expression.

3.1 The Narrative Structure: Ambiguity and Polyvalence

Eduards Traum consists of clearly separated dream sequences⁹⁶ enclosed in two narrative frames, an outer one (the narrator's voice) (55 and 128) and an inner one (Eduard's telling of his transition to and from his form as a "thinking dot") (55-58 and 121-128). The inner frame encloses the dream sequences (58-121), which make up the largest portion of *ET*. The narrative frames suggest a hermeneutic circularity⁹⁷ and a

⁹⁶ These are usually indicated by triple spaces between each dream sequence. The first publication printed the first letter of each section in red ink. In his "final manuscript," Busch had underlined these letters in red (Carol Galway *Wilhelm Busch: Cryptic Enigma* 89).

⁹⁷ "Hermeneutics" has its origins in the interpretation of the Scriptures, as a method of arriving at the truth that lies within them. In the nineteenth century hermeneutics evolved to apply to the interpretation of any literary text, but mostly treated works of the past (classics) because they were considered to be holders of universal truths akin to the scriptures. The hermeneutic circle was used to explain the concept of how

closed system. Historically, a closed form was favoured by traditional works that possessed a defined beginning, middle, and end. The circularity also suggests that there is wholeness and “truth” to be found in the text, and that all might be *revealed* as in the scriptures. The enclosing frames give the appearance of regularity and unity, certainty and answers. This is seen to be an illusion: the dreamscapes, escapes, and escapades of Eduard’s dream-“dot” experiences are like a never-ending search for something not articulated, except that at one point the reader is told that the “dot” is travelling to other places “der Vollständigkeit wegen” (for the sake of completeness) (95). Could this be an ironic statement? “Completeness” is sought by stringing small episodes together. Carol Galway likens this method to a “surrealistic montage” (89). It is also reminiscent of the tiny individual ink drawings Busch pasted onto a larger sheet to produce his “Schnitzel.” (snippets)⁹⁸ Busch created these drawings at much the same time as he wrote his two prose tales. The same principle applies, whether arranging tiny genre scenes to produce a “whole” work of art, or stringing together a narrative of dream episodes to reveal more of the world. Each episode may be likened to a “kernel” of “truth.” Stringing many “kernels” in a sequence (a number that could be expanded) may be a method Busch used to get as “complete” a picture as possible, which a narrative that has a “real” beginning, middle and end cannot achieve (it is not expandable). The protagonist’s continuing search is reminiscent of the romantic protagonists’ never-ending quest, such as Heinrich von

“Interpretation moves in a circle. In order to understand the word, the sentence must be understood and vice versa” (Makaryk 550).

⁹⁸ Busch worked on these at much the same time as *ET* and *Der Schmetterling*. One of these individual ink drawings for the “Schnitzeln” (“small snippets”) measured approximately 2.5 x 2 cm on a slightly larger background paper of 4.5 cm square, another was 3.75 x 2.5 cm. Many “Schnitzeln” were then arranged on a larger sheet. One of these is found in Busch’s *Hernach* collection, which was also put together during the early 1890s. Both examples, called “Bauernhof,” are shown in their original size in Ries “Avantgardist aus Wiedensahl;” 157, 160)

Ofterdingen's search for the “blaue Blume” (blue flower).⁹⁹ This flower has become a symbol of German Romanticism and is associated with yearning and a continuous search that is always incomplete. Such openness in works by the Romantics prefigured the “modernity” of the 20th century. Busch's *ET*, with its similar “open” form, also points in that direction.

Interpretation of *ET* is not straightforward, although the reader is ironically told that “Die Sache ist aber sehr einfach. Man muß nur noch mehr darüber nachdenken” (The matter is very easy. One just has to think about it some more) (*ET* 58). This authorial voice engages readers and prods them to “think” a little harder about what the story is trying to convey. The task is not an easy one. This work exudes *difficulty* and *complexity*, both hallmarks of modern works. Carol Galway counted a total of “seventy-six different phases in the narrative line” (Galway 97) in this short work of 75 pages.¹⁰⁰ These are the separate parts marked by the fact that one voice changes to the next. The complex to-and-fro of the four main voices in this story (the authorial voice, Eduard telling the story, Eduard's dream persona, Eduard's wife Elise) sometimes confuses the reader as to whose opinion was just stated. There is one exception: Elise's refrain, which comes in simple commands and is also italicized: “*Eduard schnarche nicht so!!*” (*Eduard don't snore so!!*) (*ET* 67, 84).¹⁰¹

The first and last voice of the text (the authorial voice) is anonymous. It speaks in general and, apparently, objective terms: “Manche Menschen haben es … so an sich, daß

⁹⁹ “...die blaue Blume sehne ich mich zu erblicken [I]ch kann nichts anders dichten und denken” (Novalis quoted in Heine “Zweites Buch” *Die Romantische Schule: Späte Lyrik*. Munich: Goldmann. 1964. 84)

¹⁰⁰ The number of pages differs depending on the printed version used.

¹⁰¹ The refrain occurs throughout the dream episodes and the number of exclamation marks differ, sometimes one and sometimes more than one exclamation mark.

sie uns gern ihre Träume erzählen” (Some people are so inclined ... that they like to tell us their dreams) (55), “man mag” (one would like), “man will” (one wants) (128). These sentence fragments all sound authoritative and even *sachlich* (objective) on the surface, since words such as “Manche” (some), “man” (one), “einer” (one), “einem” (one)—(one in several forms) are usually used in impartial general statements. However, although clad as *nüchtern* (impartial) and objective statements, these sentences include judgmental words and statements such as “leider,” “belästigt,” and “wenn einer einem was vordröhnt” (unfortunately, annoy and when someone continues to drone on) (128). These words suggest that the narrator is not as impartial as he seems to be, but that he is actually subjective and not so far removed from the tale as the use of the impersonal third person implies. Aside from feigning objectivity, he includes himself, “uns” (us) and “wir” (we) yet differentiates between groups of people. “Aber ‘Alle Menschen, ausgenommen die Damen,’ spricht der Weise ‘sind mangelhaft!’” (But ‘All people, excluding the ladies,’ says the wise one, ‘have flaws!’) (55). As this excerpt demonstrates, the narrator is diplomatic: he is able to flatter the “ladies” and yet also imperceptibly tarnish them, since the word “mangelhaft” (to have flaws) occurs in the same sentence; no doubt an ironic comment and a “wise” one. As well, he distances himself from the statement he makes by giving the speaker of the sentence a non-specific name, “the wise one.” Since this statement is made by the *authorial* voice it suggests that he is the “wise” one in this story. As was noted above, the voice reappears at the conclusion of the story and thereby has the all-important last word and with it is likely given the “general” authority to speak for “us” and all the “Mitbrüder”¹⁰² mentioned at the beginning of *Eduards Traum*. The authorial

¹⁰² “Mitbrüder” is not easily translated but may be described as “all of us brothers together.”

voice remains nameless and therefore should be distant, yet his familiar tone and the way, at times, he addresses the readers directly is an invitation to closeness.

Busch used the traditional device of letting the authorial voice comment at the close of the story giving the account a well-rounded, firm conclusion. The last word may also be a hint from the “author” disguised behind the “façade of the authorial voice, which may well have been employed as a means for the author (Busch) to distance himself from the words spoken. This is also a nod to traditional forms of writing, the knowledge of which gives Busch the power to use them or negate them as he chooses, being an independent artist.

The authorial voice introduces Eduard (“Auch Freund Eduard … hub an, wie folgt” [Also friend Eduard … started up as follows]) (55), which signals the transition to Eduard’s narration of the dream sequences. Eduard’s narration is a first-person account with a measure of immediacy added through the inclusion of direct speech. What he describes in his opening paragraph has all the hallmarks of an evening ritual, repeated many times in the life of a typical, comfortably happy, bourgeois couple—a respectable 10 o’clock bedtime, a spouse’s kiss and a reminder to follow soon: “Gute Nacht, Eduard! Komm bald nach!” (Good night, Eduard! Follow soon!) (55). This brief scene evokes normalcy and satisfaction to a high degree; yet a crack appears when Eduard, staying up until almost midnight against his spouse’s wish, enjoys the last of his drink and his “Havana”—an image of relaxation—to contemplate “behaglich grübelnd … an den Grenzen des Unfaßbaren” (comfortably brooding … at the edges of the unfathomable) (55). This was Eduard’s normal routine and upon rising to go to bed, he yawned agreeably for he was alone—“denn ich war allein” (55).

After gazing at the “candle light” (56) for a while, then blowing it out, Eduard could still see the light flicker in his mind’s eye before drifting off to sleep. The symbolic meaning of light as a symbol of knowledge and of the Enlightenment period with its tendencies towards rationalism comes to mind: a brief lighting of the way to navigate, shed on the labyrinth of the mind.

Once in bed, Elise’s words, “*Eduard, schnarche nicht so!!*” (*Eduard, don’t snore so!!*) (58) repeated occasionally, pull Eduard out of his inner dream world to the physical world they both share. However, his dream world prevails throughout the long night and the length of time her words hold his attention grow shorter as the night wears on, until he ignores Elise’s words entirely: “*Eduard schnarche nicht so!/ ließ sich die Stimme verlauten./ Wieso? dacht ich und flog wohlgemut weiter*” (*Eduard don’t snore so!/ the voice could be heard to say/ Why? I thought, and contentedly continued my flight*) (101). Eduard would not have the “Ruhe” (peace) (55) he had anticipated on retiring for the night. His was a night of “nightmares” known to be based partly in “truth,” as Busch had pointed out in one of his letters. This may be a hint that the dream episodes in *Eduards Traum* are also to be taken, in part, as “true.”

3.2 The Dream Episodes

3.2.1 The Dream-Dot-Reality: Altered States of Time and Space

At the start of Eduard’s dream-journey, “fate” intervened and his inner self (his spirit and intellect), condensed to the size of a “dot,” was “swirled” out of his body as if by a gust of “wind.” Turning around, Dot-Eduard found himself looking into his “own nostrils” (*ET* 56). Time and space suddenly bore little resemblance to the reality Eduard had known before his dream state. Commenting on *ET*’s dream episodes, Wolfgang

Kayser points out, “Es sind Traumbilder; die Ordnungen, die unsere Realität beherrschen, heben sich auf” (They are dream-pictures; the order of things, which rules our reality, is cancelled out) (130). In a dream, the normal parameters of time and space do not hold and in that setting Busch could safely accommodate his imaginative dream visions. Busch specifically informed his readers that the inherent rules of “time” and “space” for Dot-Eduard were different from those normally experienced by Eduard’s self outside his dream:

Ich war nicht bloß ein Punkt, ich war ein denkender Punkt. Und rührig war ich auch. Nicht nur eins und zwei war ich, sondern ich war dort gewesen und jetzt war ich hier. Meinen Bedarf an Raum und Zeit also macht ich selber, ganz en passant, gewissermaßen als Nebenprodukt.

(I wasn’t just a dot, I was a thinking dot. And I was energetic too. I was not just one, then two; instead, I had been there, and now I was here. I produced my own requirements for space and time quite on the side, as a by-product more or less.) (56)

As a dot, Eduard was capable of producing “time” and “space” at “will,” much like a “by-product,” or so it seemed to Dot-Eduard. He was capable of moving in the manner of “Schwebefliegen, die—witsch Rose, witsch Nelke und weg biste!—an sonnigen Sommertagen von Blume zu Blume huschen.” (A kind of [little] hover-fly, which—swoosh rose, swoosh carnation and away you are!—flits from flower to flower on sunny summer days) (56-57). Busch’s concepts of space and time seem related to the size of objects as seen in physics, and Busch’s keen observation of nature and his knowledge of science come to the fore throughout *ET*: Dot-Eduard’s capabilities for speed and energy remind one of atoms and atomic particles—the smaller a particle, the faster it can move. Indeed, in his dream, Eduard met up with not only “atoms” ready to dance their “verzwickten molekulärischen Touren” (convoluted molecular revolutions) (65), but also

with an older “lady,” an older idea. This was, Eduard explained, “Leibnizens … alte Monade, und ordentlich wieder jung geworden! … umklammert mich mit ihren mageren Valenzen” (Leibnizen’s old *Monade*, and looking rather young again! … she clings onto me with her skinny *Valenzen*)¹⁰³ (65). Both physical and mental speed and agility were part of the dream-dot’s encounter with other “thinking dots.” They all “danced with mosquito-like supple joints … with their dear little ideas [But] even more deft and airier than we, … were the ones only thought, the pure mathematical dots [(points)].... However, they were so very shy that they became smaller and smaller the more one eyed them, and one of them disappeared altogether” (63-64). Addressing his audience conspiratorially as “meine Freunde!” (my friends), Eduard continued with his opinion on the subject of disappearing acts:

Geht’s uns nicht so mit allen Dingen, denen wir gründlich zu Leibe rücken,
daß sie grad dann, wenn wir sie mit dem zärtlichsten Scharfsinn erfassen
möchten, sich heimtückisch zurückziehn in den Schlupfwinkel der
Unbegreiflichkeit, um spurlos zu verschwinden, wie der bezauberte Hase,
den der Jäger nie treffen kann? Ihr nickt; ich auch.

(Is it not so with all things, which we wish to get bodily close to, that just then, when we are about to grasp them with a most sensitive sharp wit, they maliciously retreat into the hiding place of the ungraspable, to disappear without a trace, like the enchanted hare, which always eludes the hunter?
You nod; I do too.) (64)

Busch manages to give a likeness that imitates what is happening to Dot-Eduard in his dream, whereby his intellectual self (the elusive thought) encounters ever-changing dream-pictures; they are difficult to hold onto for any length of time and vanish into thin

¹⁰³ I have not been able to determine the exact significance of the German word “Valenzen.” Busch refers to Leibniz and the “Monade,” which refers to a smallest unit of unity, therefore the tight embrace, which Dot-Eduard fears.

air, just when it seems they are nearest.¹⁰⁴ The conventional sense and structure of time and space is certainly challenged in Busch's *ET*, for how can one imagine time and space as a "Nebenprodukt" (by-product) (*ET* 56), as Dot-Eduard had asked himself at the start of his dream. Only with difficulty! Whether scientific notions or paradox, or notions not yet part of his or our vocabulary, Busch's creative and modern thinking in *ET* was packaged in altered structures and Busch may have been asking his readers to go beyond territory familiar to them and playfully and imaginatively follow his lead with an open mind—to think "outside of the window" (aus dem Fenster hinausdenken) (Busch quoted in *EH* 167) in a game with the absurd, where fantastical time warps were known to be experienced by dreamers. With some justification, Alfred Liede likens Busch's *ET* to a Lewis Carroll tale and states that:

Around 1890, *Eduards Traum* stands completely alone among German poetry.... In contrast, at about that time nonsense poetry in England had found a form that this tale strongly resembles in its outer makeup. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* of 1865 may have been known to Busch. (Trans. 354)¹⁰⁵

Gert Ueding, on the other hand, states that the "Alice-Geschichten" (Alice-stories) were unknown to Busch. He further points out that the protagonists of the picture-story *Max und Moritz* (1865) also experienced "unusual space-time relationships" (Trans. *Klassiker* 149) as Alice had in the "magical land of the white rabbit:"

Weder stimmen noch die üblichen Raum-Zeitverhältnisse, noch sind realistische Genauigkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit die Maßstäbe, an denen das Geschehen sich immer messen ließe, und auch die Verknüpfung der verschiedenen Episoden erscheint eher assoziativ, dem Prinzip der Ähnlichkeit und Wiederholung, nicht dem kohärenten, logischen Fortschreitens gehorchend. Als in sich völlig

¹⁰⁴ Karsten Imm notices that passages which are conspiratorially addressed to "friends" (as the one discussed above) are often the ones that contain aphorisms of "absurd playfulness" (260).

¹⁰⁵ Alfred Liede's observation does not mean that Busch's work is necessarily classified as nonsense-poetry, but that its form resembles that of the Lewis Carroll tale. A comparison of Busch's poetic prose with dream literature from other cultures and periods may be fruitful for further study, but it is not within the scope of this study.

konsequente, ästhetisch wie psychologisch stimmige Utopie wird Busch sein Traumland erst ein viertel Jahrhundert [später] ... verwirklichen.

(Neither do the usual space-time relationships hold, nor are realistic exactness and probability the norms by which the occurrences might always be measurable; and also the connections between the different episodes appear to be more associative [in nature], following the principles of similarity and repetition, rather than of a coherent, logical path.... Busch would go on to realize his [own] dreamland—an aesthetically and psychologically ... consistent Utopia—a quarter of a century later.) (Ueding, *Klassiker* 149)

In writing *Eduards Traum*, Ueding considers Busch to have reached his apex in the genre of dream literature, a genre Busch favoured for the possibility of engaging the imagination, not only of the recipients of a work, but also for the creative possibilities open to the artist (Busch's reaction to Hauptmann's *Hannele* was discussed in connection to engaging the imagination in literature that incorporates the dream). Busch's aesthetics took him away from overly realistic depictions to give the imagination free reign, something that was possible in the genre of dream literature. It could accommodate artists' ideas that might be seen as too provocative to be treated using more conventional and realistic literary forms.

3.2.2 “Surreal” and “Grotesque” Elements

“Dream [v]isions” are a “form widely employed by medieval poets: the narrator falls asleep, ... and dreams the events he is going to relate; often ... the events that he dreams are at least in part an allegory” (Abrams 46). In the writings of the Romantic poets, too, dreams often play a significant role. Busch’s use of the dream, therefore, is not a new phenomenon but the themes and images Busch’s imagination created for his dreams were new, especially in the context of the literature produced in Germany at that time. Peter Marxer likens many dream episodes to a “Zerrspiegel” (distorting mirror):

Die Bilder erscheinen phantastisch gebrochen, die Abläufe phantastisch verkürzt. Man kann von ‘Verfremdung’ der Wirklichkeit sprechen und dabei an die Wurst im Preise von 93 Pfennigen denken, der die 17 Schneidergesellen mit gespreizten Beinen ... und gespreizten Mäulern hinterherlaufen, oder auch an die unglücklichen Leute auf dem Bahndamme.

(The pictures appear fantastically broken, the course of events fantastically shortened. One can speak of “alienation” of reality and thereby think of the 17 journeymen tailors with their spread legs ... and their spread mouths, all running after the sausage in the amount of 93 pennies, or also of the unhappy people on the train embankment.) (“Nachwort” 404)

ET’s dream sequences include themes and images taken from many aspects of life and the universe both concrete and abstract or real and imaginary. These include the thoughts and beings that inhabit our imagination and our dreams. One of these themes (competition in a utopian land) was treated in an unusual manner by Busch and may be considered an example of what Wolfgang Kayser called a ““satirische’ Groteske” (“satiric” grotesque) (203). Kayser’s definition of the grotesque is summarised by Peter Marxer: “Wenn die Definition stimmt, daß das Groteske die ‘verfremdete Welt’ sei, dann treffen wir es in ‘Eduards Traum’ immer wieder an” (If the definition is correct that the grotesque is the ‘estranged world,’ then we continually encounter it in ‘Eduards Traum’ (“Nachwort” 405).

In this dream scene, Dot-Eduard lands upon a futuristic world that has overcome its energy concerns and discussed ideas for scientific advancements well-known even to today’s contemporaries. Upon closer examination, this utopian dream vision, however, soon turns into a dream spectre. *ET’s* dream narrator discusses the situation of no longer being reliant on coal and of harnessing the sun’s energy with the help of glass tubes:

Aber das Wichtigste war, daß man keine Kohlen mehr nötig hatte. Vermittelst sinnreicher Brennglassapparate sammelte man während der guten Jahreszeit nicht bloß so viel Sonnenwärme, als zum Betriebe aller Maschinen, Ofen, Lampen, Töpfe und Wärmflaschen des Landes erforderlich war, sondern auch zu bloßen Belustigungszwecken noch immer was drüber.

(But the most important advancement was realized in the non-reliance on coal. With the help of ... devices made of glass, it was possible, during the good time of year, to collect not only as much warmth from the sun as would be necessary to power all the machines, stoves, lamps, pots and hot water bottles for the whole country, but also for mere entertainment purposes and still have some left over.) (ET 102)

The innovative idea of capturing solar energy in “glass tubes”¹⁰⁶ has become the reality of today. Siepmann, in his essay “Eduard schnarche nicht so!!” (Eduard Don’t Snore So!!), suggests that this image prefigures our contemporary use of solar panels (110), which produce an alternate form of clean energy. In this dream vision, the problem of adequate food supplies was also tackled communally by researchers from all disciplines. Ordinary flour was simply made from sawdust: “Gewöhnliches Mehl, soviel man brauchte, wurde einfach aus Sägespänen gemacht” (Ordinary flour, as much as one needed, was simply made from sawdust) (ET 102).

On the surface this appears a utopian state of affairs but these advances come with the heavy price of the loss of individuality, which was the result of the obligatory removal of the gland required for competition—“Konkurrenzdrüse” (103). Its absence removed both competition and envy, but the dire consequences of advancement through such “geregelten Verhältnisse” and “Eintönigkeit” (regulated states and monotony) (104) was that boredom soon set in—a rather modern dilemma. The loss of heartfelt laughter was another of its side effects: “Zwar hat man Lachklubs ... man lacht [über die] garstigste Trine ..., aber es geht nicht so recht. Es ist ein heisernes, hölzernes, heuchlerisches Lachen” (Indeed, one has laughter clubs ... one laughs [about the] most horrid girl ..., but it does not rightly work. It is a hoarse, wooden, hypocritical laughter) (104).

¹⁰⁶ E. Siepmann points out a number of future developments Busch correctly foresees in *ET* such as the one discussed here, the use of glass tubes to collect the sun’s energy (117).

This whole dream sequence is, no doubt, an example of the grotesque literary form. Is it actually satiric, or humorous, though? It may be humorous to imagine that one could produce flour for human consumption from sawdust or to use names such as the simple “Grete,” “Hans” and “Jochen” in the same context as the important sounding name “Nepomuk” (104). The extremely positive “utopian” states of affairs in this dream sequence are, however, countered by negative visions and loss of what it means to be human. The images are disconcerting and appear to the reader as “grotesque,” since the images are those of an “estranged world,” the definition used by Kayser (quoted in Marxer, “Nachwort” 405). This type of writing was not the norm at the time Busch wrote these dream visions. They are also satiric in nature, satirizing the idea that a utopian state of affairs could ever exist. Busch’s grotesque, in this scene, is certainly based on thinking into the future, spinning the threads of time.

Modern haste and the disconnection from others seem to be part of the concern raised in the following scene that has puzzled Busch’s readers more than any other:

Auf dem Bahndamme standen mehrere Personen. Ein Greis ohne Hoffnung, eine Frau ohne Hut, ein Spieler ohne Geld, zwei Liebende ohne Aussichten und zwei kleine Mädchen mit schlechten Zeugnissen. Als der Zug vorüber war, kam der Bahnwärter und sammelte die Köpfe. Er hatte bereits einen Korb voll in seinem Häuschen stehn.

(Several persons stood on the train embankment. An old man without hope, a woman without a hat, a gambler without money, two lovers without prospects and two little girls with bad report cards. When the train had passed, the station master collected the heads. He already had a basketful sitting in his little house.) (ET 85)

The city-bound train barrelled over the bridge and through the station stop and did not collect the people waiting there (84-85). Unlike the people on the train, they were variously ill-equipped people (without hope, without a hat, without money, without prospects, with bad report cards) (84-85) who were also misplaced, since they were

standing on the “train embankment” (85) and not the platform as would be customary. Their “heads” were subsequently gathered up by the station master and added to his growing collection—a collection, perhaps symbolic of a museum filled with relics or castaways, no longer needed or cherished, and where dust gathers. This episode is often cited for the uneasy feelings it evokes and its surreal nature. It was identified, by Wolfgang Kayser, as “surreal” and “grotesque.” Kayser also maintained that the unfortunate people had committed suicide. I do not think that this is the only interpretation, although it does seem to be a strong statement if it suggests the passing over of persons not equipped for the “modern” fast-paced life. This is an episode which Busch has kept purposely unclear and ambiguous. It gives little information other than the bare observations kept brief and pointed. It gives no satisfactory help to interpret its meaning and it lacks any clear satire or humour.¹⁰⁷

The quick snapshot narrative evokes haste and a cold uncaring feeling. Its uncaring content is reflected in the curt and abrupt form of this episode. It portrays a society which in its fast modern conveyances (train) is unaware of its “Mitbrüder” outside its own cozy compartments. The groups of people (together and happy within their own clique) are disconnected from others, especially from those left on the platform, who do not even get the choice to embark on this furious ride. Everyone is happily indifferent to others’ needs as the train races along at super speeds, each compartment filled with groups of the same type, the same profession or with the same purpose in mind (pickpockets, newly-weds and more).

¹⁰⁷ Although humour/satire does exist, for example when one reads that several groups on the “nachmittäglichen Kurierzug” were heading off to the “convention for pick-pockets:” “Sämtliche noch übrige Coupees waren voll besetzt von einer Kunstgenossenschaft von Taschendieben, die nach dem internationalen Musikfeste wollten” (ET 85).

This episode seems to portray lost individuality, a society with no room for those who underachieve, or have bad luck. The misfits of modern society are by-passed. The world is seen through dark-coloured glasses. Busch was certainly ambiguous in this episode and its grotesque nature seems to approach visions created by later surrealist artists of the 20th century. Wolfgang Kayser claims that these are “surrealistische Bilder, die uns schaudern lassen, weil es eben doch unsere, nur eben völlig entfremdete Welt ist” (surrealistic pictures that make us shudder, since it is, after all, our world, only a completely estranged [one]) (130). Comparing *ET*’s train episode with the train scene Busch depicted years earlier in *Baldwin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter*, the reader notes a marked difference. Although, for Bählamm, the objects outside the train seem to fly past him in quick succession, Bählamm and the occupants of the train still communicate and interact with each other. A mother can still trust a stranger, Bählamm, to tend to her child which, of course, leads to some complications. But, nonetheless, while fleeting pictures and haste of modern life were already part of Busch’s narrative at the time of writing the picture-stories, the nameless faces, and the anonymity that went with them, were not yet part of Busch’s satiric arsenal. At the time of writing *ET* in 1890, however, Busch’s criticism of advancing modernity speaks loud and clear, and must be considered to have affected his style and choice of media, the written word. By deciding on grotesques in written form, rather than in words *and* pictures, Busch may have wanted to pre-empt any ideas that his satire and criticism would be interpreted in too humorous a vein in dream scenes where he may have intended more serious contemplation. That does not, however, preclude humour from his work.

Another example of “satiric grotesque” (Trans. Kayser 203) writing is provided by the following scene:

Madam sind ins Theater gefahren—führt sich das Kindermädchen den Inhalt der Saugflasche zu. Das Mädchen ist fett, der Säugling mager. Der Säugling schreit auch. Allerdings! Die Säuglinge schreien mitunter. Aber ... so rechte Denunzianten, gottlob, das sind sie noch nicht.

(Madam drove to the theater—the children’s maid drinks the contents of the bottle. The girl is fat, the infant skinny. The infant also cries. Certainly! Infants occasionally cry. But... praise God, they are not yet true informants.) (*ET* 88)

It seems quite preposterous to think that a children’s maid would take an infant’s milk when it was “skinny” and the maid was “fat.” Then for Busch to have Dot-Eduard contemplate that “at least babies are not yet quite informants” (88) seems to be a statement that should not even be considered.

Completely puzzling is the following phrase: “krumm gebügeltes Sacktuch;” (crookedly ironed sackcloth) (69). It appears logical but is incongruent and lacks common sense. Ironing should flatten something, not make it “crooked.” Similar, more elaborate, intentionally confusing artistic manoeuvres are found throughout *ET*. Busch likes to provoke a reaction from the reader, to make him or her think in unusual ways, to seek sense and draw conclusions or to point out how little sense there is in this world.

3.2.3 Schein and Sein as Raison d’être

In the following dream episode, the rural theme seems to imply an idyllic setting. This, idyll is, however, just “Schein” (appearance). Busch’s technique of illusions/disillusions belongs, in my opinion, to the tools of later authors of the *Moderne*. Busch often used rural settings in his works and in *Eduards Traum*, Busch created vignettes that combined these with themes related to aesthetics. While some of these

vignettes are more easily interpreted, I chose the following one because it incorporates complex images and thoughts that might easily be missed. The modesty (*Bescheidenheit*)¹⁰⁸ of the rural setting belies the less modest topic, aesthetics, and the reader must, indeed, be equipped with a “Hellhörigkeit” (keen sense of hearing)¹⁰⁹ in order to pick up the subtle or disguised meanings that Busch embedded in the narrative. The destruction and restoration of rural bliss are part of the ironic narrative that cleverly interweaves the farming theme with ideas about aesthetics. This example illustrates Busch’s method of quickly destroying any pretenses of appearance—*Schein*, and bringing the reader back to a level more closely resembling that of reality—*Sein*. Let us consider his “gebildeten Landwirt” (educated farmer) (82). The word combination itself signals a contradiction in terms,¹¹⁰ and this farmer’s education certainly did not serve him well. Instead of attending to his foremost duty as a farmer, he stops on the road and waxes poetical about his beautiful potatoes, “‘Oh, wie schön ist doch die Welt’ ruft er schwärmerisch. ‘Oh, so schön! Aa!’” (“Oh, how beautiful the world is,” he calls out passionately. “Oh, how beautiful! … Aa!”) (82), and as a result does not hear the wagon driving behind him, which costs him his leg in the resultant accident. The longer excerpt cited below gives a sense of Busch’s use of irony as a weapon to combat *Schein*. A doubly “rare” sight was found when none was expected—the gorgeous potatoes as seen by the farmer and the unusual farmer himself as seen by Eduard in his dream:

¹⁰⁸ Busch stated that his art as well as his expectations for his art were of the “modest” kind, unlike the expectations and the grandness attributed to many of his contemporaries’ works of art. In Chapter 2, I discussed Busch’s negative reactions to the grand works by his friends Lenbach and Levi, and the large productions by Richard Wagner.

¹⁰⁹ Busch spoke of this “Hellhörigkeit” in connection to a reader’s ability to enjoy *Eduards Traum* and wrote to his friend Lenbach: “Viel werden’s ihrer nicht sein, denen wie dir in angestammter Hellhörigkeit schon ein leichtes säuseln der Probleme genügend ist, um sich selbst-denkend zu belustigen” (not many possess your kind of sensitive hearing for whom a mere hint of problems suffices to be pleasurable absorbed in independent thought) (*Briefe I* # 813).

¹¹⁰ This would have been seen as a contradiction in terms during Busch’s time, but not necessarily today.

An der Gegend, über der ich schwebte, konnte ich nicht viel Rares finden. Doch auf die Gegend kommt's nicht an; denn wie die Tante zu sagen pflegt: 'Wer nur das richtige Auge hat, kann überall einen 'reizenden Blick' haben.'

So ging's auch dem gebildeten Landwirt ... Er hatte seine Kartoffeln besichtigt. Sie standen prachtvoll. Durch seine transparenten Ohren scheint die verklärende Abendsonne. Er ist glücklich. 'Oh, wie schön ist doch die Welt' ruft er schwärmerisch. 'Oh, so schön! ... A a!' Er hatte den Stellwagen nicht bemerkt, der hinter ihm herfuhr. Dieser fuhr ihm ein Bein ab.

(In the region above which I hovered, I could not find much that was rare. However, it is of no importance for as the aunt tends to say, "Whoever just has the proper eye, can perceive a 'beautiful view' anywhere.") That is also how it was with the educated farmer...He surveyed his potatoes. They stood in all their magnificence. The radiant evening sun shone through his transparent ears. He is happy. "Oh, how beautiful the world is" he called out passionately. Oh, how beautiful! ... Aa!" He had not noticed the wagon that was driving behind him. It severed one of his legs.) (82)

In his dream, Eduard appears to be searching for something "Rares" (rare) but is constantly disillusioned by what he finds. Eduard's "aunt," of course, would say that it did not matter much where one was, that it solely depended on having the "proper eye" to have an "exquisite view." The comments are profoundly ironic and call to mind the "flowery" attitude Busch had criticized in his letter to the "aunt." One might say that as much as he tried, Eduard as the dream-dot could not quite find the "reizenden Blick" advocated by the "aunt." Dot-Eduard does not look upon the "verklärende Abendsonne" (transfigured sun) (82) as others, such as the farmer, might. The dot's view could have been of the "exquisite" kind, but this tiny viewer saw the evening sun in a non-aesthetic manner. He literally and figuratively saw right through the impractical, "transparent" ears of the farmer—not a very poetic picture, but one that afforded a rather peculiar view (in that sense rare, but not beautiful), first of the "evening sun," and subsequently of the accident caused by the farmer sporting the ineffectual ears. Dot-Eduard used the foreign word "transparenten" (transparent), instead of the down-to-earth German word

“durchsichtig” (see-through), the use of which appears inflated and silly in the rural surroundings of this dream episode. It echoes the discrepancy of the word “farmer” used in conjunction with “higher education.” The farmer, unlike Dot-Eduard, was enthralled and sidetracked by the sight of his beautiful crop of potatoes (his *raison d'être*, after all). No doubt, on account of the thinness of his ears, the farmer failed to hear the “wagon,” which caused one of his legs to be severed. Ears are for hearing, not for seeing, or to give others an unobstructed view, so what is the point of their being transparent? This is what I would call a “schiefer Vergleich” an inappropriate comparison, employed to confuse or jolt the reader into thinking. The sharp contrast between the farmer’s view and that of the dot shows the aesthetic discrepancy and difference between the two views. Although both observers were in the same location at the same time, the farmer saw aesthetic beauty, but Dot-Eduard saw only the transparency of the farmer’s ears, not a pretty picture in the mind. The farmer’s exquisite view and aesthetic experience was to last only for a short time because a starkly contrasting reality shattered that view and experience almost instantly in the form of a mechanical intrusion by a passing vehicle. Organic wholesome beauty in the eye of its beholder (the farmer) came to an abrupt end. The aunt’s statement, “auf die Gegend kommt’s nicht an” (it does not depend on the region) but only on the “richtige Auge” (correct eye) does not ring true. The farmer’s inner peace was shattered by the intrusion of a modern machine. Traditional symbols of serenity (evening sun) and fruitfulness (the bountiful potato field) are juxtaposed against a modern symbol of destruction (the vehicle). Busch’s aesthetic battle line, it seems, was located on the farms of the modernizing world at the time he wrote *ET*. Years earlier, in Busch’s *Balduin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter* (BG III 420-497), the intrusions in the countryside

were still much *of* the countryside (the sound of cows; bird droppings on the book), while city life was fraught with distractions of family life in close quarters of the city and the everyday routine of going to work in the office. Although rural and city life were connected by fast-moving trains, the two *were* still separate. In *ET's* narrative, city life was intruding on farm life. This is important in the development of works of the *Moderne* and their concern about the loss of connection with organic life.

Is the rural narrative of *ET* a mechanism by which Busch is trying to “grasp” behind the scene to make visible satirically the discrepancy between what is expected (a practicality and down-to-earth behaviour on the farm) and what occurred (a perception of beauty in the natural world)? Kasimir Edschmid remarked in his essay about the literary modernists:

Die Menschheit aber will nicht wissen, daß unter dem Äußeren erst das Dauernde liegt. Der Geist, der die Dinge hinauftreibt in eine größere Existenz, anders geformt, als die Sinne sie zeigen in dieser begrenzten Welt, ist ihr unbekannt.

(Humanity, however, does not wish to know that under the outermost [layer] only the enduring qualities lie. The spirit that compels things toward a greater existence, which is differently formed than the senses reveal them [to be] in this limited world, is unknown to [humanity].) (552)

While Busch’s examples stay close to the ground and do not soar to the ethereal heights to which Edschmid alludes in the excerpt above, Busch is, nonetheless, trying to show an existence beyond that witnessed in the “begrenzten Welt” (limited world). Busch appears to be finding a way to “grasp through to … that which lies behind … the facts” (Edschmid 552) to give the meaning of this seemingly simple rural scene that ended in disaster for the farmer. But did it end in disaster? The farmer was subsequently at the “tavern,” still sporting his “leg,” which “remained crooked” and in “late fall” his “potatoes” were the “thickest” yet (*ET* 113). In this episode, Busch’s ironic overtones

speak loud and clear: a severed leg healed again, and potatoes were even more beautiful than before. Aside from alluding to the *devil's* tavern, could this episode also harbour the idea of romantic irony satirized? What the poet creates, he can himself destroy, and recreate at will, and let the story and its world continue as before or with modifications.¹¹¹

There is more to glean from *ET*'s themes relating to art. In one of Eduard's dream episodes, the dot flew over an island inhabited by "antique sirens" (105): "ich ... sah ... mehrere antike Sirenen auf ihren Nestern sitzen. Ihre Gesichter waren faltig, ... und Stimme hatten sie auch nicht mehr, sondern schnatterten wie die Gänse" (I ... saw ... several antique sirens sitting on their nests. Their faces were wrinkly ... and they no longer had [their] voices[; instead [they] chattered like geese) (105). The sirens were unable to disguise their true identity. They were "antique" and their "Gesang" (singing) had become no more than "Geschnatter" (gaggling). Not able to get Dot-Eduard's attention with "Händewinken und Augenzwinkern, ... versuchten sie's vermittelst goldener Eier" (handwaving and winking of the eyes, ... they tried by way of golden eggs) (105), but the dot remained steadfast and wouldn't be persuaded, so they threw them, just missing him. Seen from a distance, their "eggs" may have appeared as real gold, but this was fake gold and they were themselves, therefore, not genuine. Also, the "siren's" age belied them; any "eggs" which came from them cannot be "true gold" in

¹¹¹ Theodor Heuss rhetorically asks, in his essay *Wilhelm Busch*, whether Busch might have, after all, been a "verborgener ... Romantiker" (hidden ... romantic) (quoted in Haffmans 298), since he made use of "das Element der romantischen Ironie" (the element of romantic irony) (298). However, Heuss also points out that romantic "Illusion und Verklärung" (illusion and transfiguration) (298) were not part of Busch's aesthetic. Heuss decides that Busch must be an "Antiromantiker" (anti-romantic), although his early work based on fairy tales would say his work evolved from a "romantisches Erbe" (romantic inheritance) (298). Heuss compares Busch's early style of writing (in his collection of folk-tales) to that of the "Brüder Grimm" (Brothers Grimm), and Busch's early, graceful illustrations to works by the artists Ludwig Richter (with whom he was acquainted through Richter's son, one of Busch's early publishers, as was noted in the introduction to this thesis) and Moritz von Schwind (1804-1871). According to Heuss, this was only a transitional phase (298). In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I point out that fairy tales and folk-tales were an important source for Busch's works.

another sense: they cannot be considered fruitful. Translating these metaphors into the sphere of art/literature one might say that these “eggs,” or sources of art, are old and no longer bear fruit; they are passé and inauthentic. “Sirens” may be seen as symbols of classical art; its literature could no longer be reproduced authentically. The “siren’s” exhausted *Schein*-art (the fake classics, produced after their original *Blütezeit* [time of flowering]) is best avoided, and the dot is relieved that he managed to avoid the false-gold missiles. He is not fooled by fool’s “gold” and has avoided becoming encumbered by it, no matter how beautifully it may have shone from a distance. This artist/artistic idea—the “denkender Punkt” (thinking dot) (56)—has managed to stay his own true creative path which he hopes will lead to creating works of “pure” aesthetic “gold.”

3.2.4 Ambiguity, Openness and Imagination

This episode provides an excellent example of Busch’s deliberate ambiguity which invites more than one interpretation. By using symbols that could bear both *aesthetic* and *economic* interpretation,¹¹² he offers room for thought and imagination. But, as Gert Ueding notes, “Busch hat es zu allermeist unterlassen, der Phantasie ‘den rechten Weg zu weisen’” (Busch most of all refrained from pointing the imagination ‘in the right direction’) (Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 364-65). Ueding elaborates:

Darin war Busch seiner Zeit voraus, daß er das Werk als unabgeschlossenen Vorgang betrachtete, den es zwar ‘ehrlich durch und durch’ zu denken gelte (‘so weit meine Fähigkeit dazu ausreicht’), dessen Deutung aber nicht mehr zu seinen Aufgaben gehört.

¹¹² Dieter P. Lotze interprets this episode in a slightly different manner when he states that Busch “uses Homer’s *Odyssey* to show that sirens in the age of capitalism need golden eggs in order to be seductive—but their gold is not even genuine” (*Wilhelm Busch* 136).

(In that respect, Busch was ahead of his time, in that he saw his works as an incomplete process, that is to say, one that is to be “”thoroughly and honestly” thought through (“to the best of my abilities”), the interpretation [of the works] was no longer part of his mandate.) (365)

Significant in this passage is Ueding’s conclusion that Busch no longer felt the need to offer an interpretation of his own works. His works were to be thought through and, thereby “completed” by every individual reader. This openness gave the work a large “playing field”¹¹³ for interpretation. As Ueding explains, “Ungewißheit, Vieldeutigkeit und Offenheit … [können als] die auszeichnenden Merkmale seiner Kunst gesehen werden (Uncertainty, multiplicity of meanings, and openness … [can be] seen as the outstanding characteristics of his art) (Busch 366). Ueding concludes that this places Busch “ahead of his time” (365).

3.3 The Poet, the Work of Art, and the Reader in Eduards Traum

3.3.1. The Poet

While leaving the interpretation of his work to the reader, Busch envisioned a poet who takes his task very seriously as a long, painstaking process of finding his voice and composing an authentic and meaningful work of art. In his *Eduards Traum*, Busch uses the well-known symbol of the journey to render the artist’s search. The dream-dot in his explorations of the world meets various people in search of an unspecified ideal. He observes them, joins some of them, and learns that their path cannot be his. At first, he joins four young wanderers, the “Good Intentions,” named “Willich,” “Wolltich,” “Wennaber” and “Wohlgemut” (I Want, I Would, But If, Good-Humoured) (ET 115).

¹¹³ Ueding states further that the “Offenheit seiner Verse und Prosatexte entsteht durch die Übertragung der visuellen Erfahrungsweise in die Sprache” (“openness of his [Busch’s] verses and prose texts is due to his transference of the visual experiential mode into the language”) (*Wilhelm Busch* 366). It becomes the reader’s role to decide on the completion of the work, and allows for “playfulness” on the part of the reader.

Guided by a “großes Wort” (big word), they are climbing up a mountain but they soon tire and slide back down the mountainside to join the merry carousers in the pub “zum lustigen Hinterfuß” (to the cheerful hindfoot) (115-120). These jovial creatures of comfort abandoned the difficult uphill struggle prematurely because they lacked the staying power to pursue their quest through to the finish. A little later he meets a peddler straining under his load of glassware, which is destroyed by the next little gust of wind and the peddler also slides down to the pub. This trader’s material-life pursuit is as brittle as his glassware. Leaving the world of material concerns behind, Dot-Eduard encounters men concerned with ideas and ideals. Looking into a cave he sees men tied to their seats facing away from the light and only able to see shadows on the wall. Obviously this Platonic image conveys the human condition, the human plight of only being able to see shadows and never the substance. It is not an option for the poet in search of substance. A little later the dot passes a man lashing himself because what life he has seen is meaningless and even stupid: “Das Leben ist ein Esel! Ich prügle ihn durch!” (Life is a donkey! I’m giving it a good lashing!) (121)—not an option for the poet in search of sensible solutions. The next man whom Dot-Eduard encounters is a man sitting in a bare place, staring at one spot. He has lost his hair over too much thinking that made him realize that life is an error: “Das Leben ist ein Irrtum! Ich denke ihn weg!” (Life is an error! I’m thinking it away!) (122). This is not an option for the poet in search of the essence of life. Finally, he passes a hermit sitting in his dilapidated hut, immobile and completely overgrown with moss. In answer to Dot-Eduard’s question of what he is doing, he explains: “Das Leben ist eine Schuld! Ich sitze sie ab!” (Life is guilt! I’m sitting it off [doing time]!) (122). This is not an option for the poet who wants to be active.

As Dot-Eduard continues his climb, he arrives at a mighty castle without windows and with the gate locked. For the first time he is unable to forge through the material before him. The castle is made of “steel.” “Die Freiheit des … Überalldurchkommens … war merklich geschwunden, oder es gab Sachen, die mir sowieso schon zu fest waren” (The freedom of … being able to penetrate any [matter] … had noticeably vanished, or there were things that were too hard for me anyhow) (123). Dot-Eduard cannot enter into this particular space. He asks a woodsman what this might be and learns that it has been there so long that no one has any real knowledge, either of its beginning or of what it is. There is said to be a “secret tunnel” connecting “the castle up here and the pub down below” (123). For the poet, this means that he too cannot access the higher realm, either directly from without or from within via an assumed inner connection.

Rejecting the explanation offered by this “Trottel” (fool), the Dot turns his back on him only to see other negative creatures killing beauty on earth: “little devils” (123) catching and killing butterflies on the meadow surrounding the castle. Suddenly he sees the gate open and streams of “little rosy children” (124) emerge from it. Playing merrily among the flowers they are joined by the little devils and each receives “its little smudge” (124). Meanwhile, storks carefully watch from their nests and select “their little boy or girl” (124) and deliver them into the world. These images serve to indicate that the poet’s vision of receiving the gift of pure beauty is one thing but its realization in this material world is another. Creations of pure beauty are smudged immediately upon contact and will be disseminated through “stories.”

Receiving “keine nähere Auskunft” (no further information) (124), he realizes this path has come to an end but soon discovers another path to the “right,” where pilgrims,

each carrying their pack, call out that he cannot join them: “Armer Fremdling! Du hast kein Herz!” (Poor stranger! You have no heart!) (125). While they reach and enter “ein enges Pförtchen” (a narrow gate) (125),¹¹⁴ he follows on his own and finds it shut fast without even a keyhole visible. Again there is a wall keeping him out but this time it is transparent and yields the view of a “herrliche Tempelstadt, ganz aus Edelsteinen erbaut und durchleuchtet von wunderbarem Lichte, … stieg zum Gipfel des majestätischen Berges empor” (beautiful temple town, entirely built of gemstones and illuminated by a wonderful light, … soared up to the summit of the majestic mountain) (125). Having come so close to reaching the goal of his journey, he finds himself unable to penetrate the wall. He falls to the ground exhausted sounding like a “tönende Schelle” (clanging bell) (126).¹¹⁵ He has no heart and therefore no access to this realm. Had the Dot possessed a heart, the sound might have resounded with greater clarity and purity. Realizing his limitations, the Dot takes stock and calls himself “ein Häufchen, kaum der Rede wert, und doch beleidigt über die … Hartnäckigkeit mancher Dinge, die ihm verquer kamen!” (a little heap, barely worth talking about, and yet offended by the … stubbornness of some things that got in his way!) (126). A poet requires a heart to feel what it means to give and to receive love, or to deny or be denied love. Having a heart means to be human. The Dot,

¹¹⁴ The authors of the *BG* point to a quotation from Goethe’s *Faust I* (lines 63/64) with regard to Busch’s *Balduin Bählamm der verhinderte Dichter*; it may equally apply to the image of the “enges Pförtchen” in *Edwards Traum* (125): “Nein führe mich zur stillen Himmelsenge,/ Wo nur dem Dichter reine Freude blüht” (“No, lead me to the heaven’s narrow [gate],/ the only place where the poet finds true happiness”) (quoted in *BG III* 423).

¹¹⁵ No doubt, the reference to “tönende Schelle” (“clanging bell”) alludes to a passage in the Bible from 1 Corinthians 13. The following quotation is from the Luther Bible of 1912 and is part of “Das Hohelied der Liebe” in 1 Korinther 13,1 (<http://www.bibel-online.net/buch/46.1-korinther/13.html> accessed 10 May 2008): “Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelzungen redete, und hätte die Liebe nicht, so wäre ich ein tönend Erz oder eine klingende Schelle.” (“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”) (*The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version* 1972). The Bible passage continues: “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13)—the poet’s climb up the mountain comes to mind.

however, is “imaginary” as the humorous, ironic phrase “eingebildeter Reiseonkel” (“conceited [and] imaginary travel-uncle”) (126) tells us. The Dot is a construct of the mind and as such is not able to experience the lessons of empathy and non-empathy, sympathy and non-sympathy. Having a heart is all important for a poet—how else can one experience the human condition and portray it with conviction? Words from a poet who has endured and reaches the pinnacle of his endeavours would not sound like a “tönende Schelle” (clanging bell) (126)—he or she would enter the “Himmelsenge” (heaven’s narrow [gate]) (Goethe *Faust I* quoted in *BG III* 423) by virtue of sounds that come from the poet’s heart.

For the Dot, however, all contemplations come to an abrupt end: “einer von den kleinen abscheulichen schwarzen Teufeln von vorhin auf der Wiese” (one of the little ghastly devils from earlier in the meadow) (*ET* 126) casts his “shadow” and is after him with his “butterfly net” (126). He calls Dot-Eduard a “Lump” (rascal). Denying it, the Dot stutters: “Ich b-b-b-bin ja gar nicht so übel!” (I a-a-a-am not quite so bad!) (126). Dot-Eduard escapes into the gaping mouth of a “tree-long” giant who seems familiar to him. Nothing appears to Eduard as it should. He smells coffee and hears a “voice, but sweet and lovely … as she calls, ‘Eduard, get up, the coffee is ready!’ … Who was happier than I? I had my heart back and Elisen hers and Emile his” (127). The poet’s journey finishes where it must end, reunited with the heart.

In my opinion Busch is not necessarily trying to be ironic here, as Wolfgang Kayser suggests of the ending (130). I agree with Dieter P. Lotze’s position that “Eduard’s thoughts upon awakening and [his happiness at] seeing his wife … do not have to be taken as satirizing human kindness but could constitute an affirmation of the whole

person, acknowledging the importance of the heart as well as that of the mind” (*Wilhelm Busch* 140). While I do not agree with Kayser’s opinion about the ending of the tale (130), I do agree with him and Lotze that Busch’s dream-world in *ET* was a depiction of a “world … without a heart, without kindness or love” (Lotze, *Wilhelm Busch* 140). However, I concur with Lotze that Busch “clearly saw the limitations of such a perspective” (140). In my opinion, Busch has characterized a daring aesthetic by pushing the limits without completely going out of bounds; he dares to venture outside of the norms of his times without completely leaving tradition behind by employing the enduring symbol of the heart.

3.3.2 *The Work of Art*

Eduard addresses his listeners personally and, by extension, the readers of *Eduards Traum*, about the significance of a “Kunstwerk” (work of art) (*ET* 90). Eduard’s culinary comparison to art involves a beloved German dish, “Sauerkraut,” a cliché associated with anything German. Use of this particular dish, then, may reflect Eduard’s heritage and, thus, one might assume that his ideas about art will also be influenced by the traditions associated with German schools of art. Just as a culinary dish is rooted in certain traditional recipes, a *Kunstwerk* is based on certain artistic conventions. Yet, these conventions are modified by the vision of an inventive chef or by an inventive artist to result in new methods of bringing forth a “Kunstwerk.” *Sauerkraut*, usually considered a humble dish, lends itself to many variations including elegant and exotic concoctions. Thus, Eduard uses *Sauerkraut* to explain how a work of art may come to be:

Was nun aber das Kunstwerk betrifft, meine Lieben, so meine ich, es sei damit ungefähr so, wie mit dem Sauerkraut. Ein Kunstwerk, möcht ich sagen, müßte gekocht sein am Feuer der Natur, dann hingestellt in den Vorratsschrank der

Erinnerung, dann dreimal aufgewärmt im goldenen Topfe der Phantasie, dann serviert von wohlgeformten Händen, und schließlich müßte es dankbar genossen werden mit gutem Appetit.

(Now with respect to the work of art, my dears, I expect it is approximately thus, as it is with *Sauerkraut*. A work of art, I wish to say, should be cooked by the fire nature provides, then in the larder it be placed, on the provision shelf of memory, then thrice re-heated in the golden pot of fantasy, then served with well-formed hands and finally with thanks it should be enjoyed most heartily.) (90)

Thus, we hear Eduard's own ideas about art, which differ greatly from the aesthetic tastes of his dream-dot (extreme naturalism). The Dot joins other poets in a raucous chorus of “Natur und nur Naturrr!” (Nature and only naturrre!) (90) to praise a “frisch importiertes Stück, wo es grausam natürlich drin zuging” (freshly imported piece, characterized by its gruesomely natural actions) (89). Since Eduard's explanation of art uses the image of a rather humble dish, Sauerkraut, his view also seems to depart from the ideas found on the opposite aesthetic scale of flowery or grandiose pretension.

I propose that Eduard speaks for Busch himself here, since Busch had criticized not only overly naturalistic theatre productions, but also flowery and grandiose works (such as some productions by Wagner [*Briefe I* #426]). Another indication that Eduard may be voicing Busch's own ideas on art stems from the conclusion of the Dot's journey, which ends with his flight back to his bodily self, to Eduard, who represents the whole person—with body, intellect *and* the all-important heart identified as so necessary to the poet, and, by extension, to poetry or any work of art. It seems that for Busch, the production and enjoyment of good food parallels that of good art. Patiently prepared, both are associated with bliss and happiness but also with a knowledge of a type of sacrificial love associated with the time and care taken to produce such a culinary delight and “Kunstwerk” (ET 90). It is little wonder that Busch used a well-known food, Sauerkraut, a

sweet-and-sour pleasure (the dish is prepared with much “sour”, but also a little “sweet”) to convey his ideas about the *Kunstwerk*. Like the dish and the word “Sauerkraut,” art can have a sour or sharp edge. While the picture-stories may have harsh themes that are anything but sweet, it is their form, such as the rhythmic, rhyming qualities, or their humour that overrides the harshness and returns to them their sweetness, metaphorically speaking. *Eduards Traum*, too, makes use of humorous terms that overcome some of the harshness of its themes and its use of dissonant and grotesque forms. Eduard’s remarks on the work of art seem to tell us that nature may sear its images onto the artist’s psyche. These marks make lasting impressions to be stored in the “Vorratsschrank der Erinnerung” (storage cupboard of memory) (90). Whether “tasty” or “nasty” memories, however, the *Sauerkraut* vignette advises that every so often, “dreimal” (three times), in fact, memories should be taken out of storage and warmed up again “im goldenen Topf der Phantasie” (in the golden pot of fantasy) (90). Imagination is given a “golden” image, which coincides with Busch’s idea of its importance, its preciousness, to the work of art (as I discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis). The precious tangible element gold is aligned with the precious abstract element “imagination” to be found in the mind, which is also the keeper of our memories. The artist’s “well-formed hands” (90) thence create a “Kunstwerk” (work of art) that the recipients may then “most heartily enjoy” (90). What if the “Sauerkraut” vignette was considered to be a grotesque and ironic treatment of the subject of art? This point of view also exists, but Busch’s letters and autobiographic reminiscences of the pleasures and sacrifices associated with good food as with good art, in their parallel sentiments, point in the direction of a non-ironic treatment and let the words in the Sauerkraut vignette stand in their non-ironic sense.

3.3.3 The Reader

In his last word to his readers, the authorial voice gives an important message to the readers of *ET*:

Übrigens ist es nicht schlimm mehr, nun die Sache gedruckt ist; denn, man mag sagen was man will, der passendste Stoff, um Schrullen, ... auf das bescheidenste drin einzwickeln und im Notfall zu überreichen, ist der Stoff des Papiers Ein Buch.... Wer es nicht aufweckt, den gähnt es nicht an; wer ihm die Nase nicht grad zwischen die Kiefern steckt, den beißt's auch nicht.

(By the way, it is not so terrible anymore, now that the stuff has been printed; for, you can say what you will, the best material with which to most humbly wrap up quirks ... in order to hand them out, in case of emergency, is the material paper.... A book ... whoever does not awaken it, will not cause it to yawn at him/her; whoever does not just put his nose right between its jaws, it will also not bite him.) (129)

This last word by the narrator is a common way to end a work. However, this message is one that wakes up the reader, so to speak. The reader is given fair warning (albeit much too late) of the contents within: it may “bite” This sage advice is dispensed at the end of *Eduards Traum* and, as I have shown, harbours a rather “modern” aesthetic, which is the manifestation of Busch’s innovative aesthetic of the “surreal” and “grotesque.” Yet, Busch’s views also take in the early traditions, defying these by intention to show the “Schein” behind the “Sein.” Only a master of the rules of rhetoric and classic aesthetic traditions could so ruthlessly and, at the same time, so amiably, reverse, and thereby subvert these traditions to give form to such an aesthetic of ambiguity and the grotesque—Busch’s innovation in prose. Readers of this era were not accustomed to Busch’s aesthetic of his later years. As with “modernist” works, Busch’s *Eduards Traum* was unfamiliar to his readers. D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) remarked:

To read a really new novel will always hurt, to some extent. There will always be resistance. It is the same with new pictures, new music. You may judge of their

reality by the fact that they do arouse a certain resistance, and compel, at length, a certain acquiescence. (quoted in Rodrigues and Garrat 4)

In his *Eduards Traum*, the mature Busch created a work, which “arouse[d] … resistance” (4) perhaps because it was aesthetically more akin to works by writers of the *Moderne* rather than of poetic realism with which nineteenth-century readers were more familiar. Exaggerated and surrealistic modes of writing, such as in the works Wolfgang Kayser classified as “satiric grotesque[s]” (203), were rare during the last decade of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁶ Busch’s raison d’être was, however, not to be different or novel, but simply how to depict the *inner substance*, or “kernels” of “truth” within a *Kunstwerk*. He strived to depict this inner “lively” “Sein” (its substance) behind the outer “trained” “Schein” (appearance) in *Eduards Traum*. In this work, it is as if “die Hand des Künstlers nach dem faßt, was hinter ihnen [den Tatsachen] steht” (the hand of the artist [tries to] reach for that which is behind a given thing), an observation Kasimir Edschmid made in connection to literary modernism (546). Busch seemed to have formulated an aesthetic that was both in the tradition of his time “in the mainstream of Realism” (Lotze, *Wilhelm Busch* 129) and of the modernity of a not-so-distant future, incorporating “narrative techniques that point forward to the twentieth century” (129). This was not only the case for a number of images in Busch’s picture-stories and mature visual art, some of which are “depicted in a graphic style that anticipates” the *Moderne* (74) but, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, also includes his poetic prose work of 1891, *Eduards Traum*.

¹¹⁶ Kayser includes Wedekind’s drama *Frühlingserwachen* and Busch’s prose work *Eduards Traum*. While both are classified as grotesques by Kayser (141), they are written in different genres, and therefore not otherwise related. Wedekind’s biographer Arthur Kutscher had been intrigued by the unusual style of Busch’s prose, which prompted him to write to Busch. The contents of the letter are not known to me, only Busch’s response (*Briefe II* #1573) (see chapter 1).

Conclusion

The world Busch made visible (*sichtbar*)¹¹⁷ in *Eduards Traum* (Eduard's Dream) lands readers squarely outside Busch's earlier, more familiar, body of work, and thus outside the usual frame of reference associated with his works, the picture-story world of poetic realism and Busch's first innovation. These stories were acclaimed by the public, yet at the same time either stirred controversy or were ignored by critics (because they did not fit the template of the literary and fine arts in the classical tradition, neither in its subject matter of the everyday, nor in its humorous and imaginative depiction of calamities, which were oftentimes portrayed in an ironically honest way).

While many of Busch's contemporaries (for example, Friedrich Theodor Vischer) were still wedded to the aesthetic tenets of the “Wahre-Gute-Schöne” (truth-goodness-beauty) and therefore perhaps misunderstood Busch's works, I have shown that Busch neither favoured rigid Classicism (Neyer 36) nor appreciated the prevailing artistic attitude of his time, the grand form with its grand heroes. As his personal letters and my interpretation of his mature prose piece *Eduards Traum* reveal, his aesthetic lead him away from Realism, and rejected extreme forms of Naturalism, which in Busch's view left little room for the imagination. This was essential to Busch's aesthetics. Towards the end of his career, Busch's ideas followed a path that was more akin to art and literature of the early twentieth century, the German *Moderne*.

Busch's experimentation with prose writing took him beyond the use of traditional rhetorical devices. He used his knowledge of these devices, negating them or using them

¹¹⁷ Busch used the term “Sichtbares” in a letter to Grete Meyer of 21 February 1900: “Dein Brief hat mich gefreut. Es ist allerlei ‘Sichtbares’ drin” (“Your letter made me happy. Much is made ‘visible’ within.”) (*Briefe II* #1259, 159).

often within the same work, such as he did in *Eduards Traum*. His goal was to convey the “truth,” one of the cornerstones of the classical arts and also the aim of writers of the early *Moderne* (of modernity), such as the French naturalist Emile Zola, who sought “complete truth” (Cowen 108-109) and whose ideas influenced the Naturalists in Germany. Arno Holz, for example, sought to create art that portrayed nature as “getreu” (faithfully) as was possible (van Rinsum and van Rinsum 307), Holz’s “Sekundenstil” (style [measured in] seconds) comes to mind (323); photography,¹¹⁸ an artistic practice Busch rejected, might be closest to this art’s ideal (310).

As this thesis has attempted to convey, Busch’s ideas and methods differed not only from the classicists, but also from the naturalists, and his experimentations with fictional prose seemed to open a way for him to “reach” (Edschmid 546) for the “truth,” which he and many of his contemporaries sought to portray. While many artists during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were guided by specific manifestoes, Busch did not leave us with such a document. Thus, to a certain extent, this thesis was guided by the underlying question: What would Busch’s manifesto state, had he articulated his thoughts on art and literature in such a document that seemed indispensable to many artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? In this thesis, I come to the conclusion that Busch’s method of both affirming traditional methods and devices, and of negating them through the use of their opposite structures and rhetorical devices within the same work, was a way for him to depict and at the same time unmask the “Schein” (pretence or appearance) he perceived in contemporary art. Busch aimed at “truthfulness,” not by depicting the

¹¹⁸ During the nineteenth century, photography was viewed as the most realistic form of portrayal and was used as an aid in painting, including by the prominent artist Franz von Lenbach, Busch’s close friend, who, no doubt discussed photography and its uses with Busch. Perhaps Busch’s own portrait by Lenbach had been created using photography as a way to shorten the length of time a subject needed to spend in the artist’s studio.

world around him in beautiful and “flowery” terms and rigid classical forms, but in an ambiguous, multilayered, dissonant and fragmented way that might enable the reader to see through the “pretence” to discover a more truthful “Sein” (being or essence). The purpose was to see the “heart,” not the “vest” of the world and its ways.

One might say that Busch’s aims were those of the Naturalists, but his methods of achieving these aims differed. This difference can be seen in Busch’s insistence on the importance of the imagination in the creation of art. It coincided with ideas put forward by Theodor Fontane, which were put into practice by Gerhart Hauptmann (a naturalist whose literature evolved to become less naturalistic [van Rinsum and van Rinsum 323], as in his dream literature [*Hannele*] favoured by Busch [EH 191-192]). Busch’s views can be said to be more in line with artists who turned away from overly naturalistic portrayals, such as Hauptmann. Busch would have agreed with the following statement by Hauptmann on art and nature, but, in my opinion would have put a greater emphasis on the quantitative difference between art and nature. Hauptmann stated, “Der Zweck aller Kunst ist nicht die absolute Nachahmung der Natur, weil diese letztere eine Unmöglichkeit ist. Wäre sie möglich, so fiele sie mit der Natur zusammen, und die Kunst wäre ausgeschaltet” (The aim of all art is not the absolute imitation of nature, because the latter is an impossibility. Were this possible then it [art] would coincide with nature, and art would be eliminated) (van Rinsum and van Rinsum 323). In my opinion this thesis demonstrates that Busch would have distanced himself even more than Hauptmann did from the idea that art tends towards nature by clarifying that art strives to make nature (and truth) visible, something Busch may have tried to accomplish in his fictional prose of the 1890s.

Towards the end of his literary career in his imaginative prose piece *Eduards Traum*, the mature Busch introduced his readers to his second innovation—his “satirische Groteske” (satiric grotesque) (Kayser 203) prose. It stood in a category of its own in Germany at the time of its first publication, just as Busch’s “dual art form,” the picture-story, had been his unique contribution to the arts (Arndt 2) during his early career. Busch’s prose genre was his innovation during his late artistic phase. The distorted and open narrative in *Eduards Traum* reveals how Busch tried to capture the reader’s attention and by extension, his own views of creating prose that will endure for posterity. The author must combine imagination and creativity with an eye for detail. Busch placed importance on an artist’s observational skills, which he found so necessary to create a *Kunstwerk* which had enduring qualities and which was above all “die Wahrheit im Gewand der Dichtung” (the truth in the cloak of poetry) (*Briefe I* #295).

Thus, Busch’s aesthetic views portray “traditional” values of “truth,” while his experimentation with how to achieve that goal took him towards an aesthetic that presaged the twentieth-century *Kunst*. Busch’s search was of the kind which modernist authors pursued, for whom “[D]ie Tatsachen … nur soweit … Bedeutung haben …, als durch sie hindurchgreifend, die Hand des Künstlers nach dem faßt, was hinter ihnen steht” (The facts … have meaning … only insofar as the artist’s hand grasps through them to reach for what is standing behind them) (Edschmid 546). Busch “reached” for the “truths” in his *Eduards Traum* in a way that had not been seen before in Germany. Today his readers can recognize this independently developed aesthetic and explain it more easily than Busch’s contemporary readers could have. During Busch’s lifetime *Eduards*

Traum was an anomaly and an innovation but today's readers are more accustomed to the unusual devices of Busch's rather "modern" aesthetic.

In his essay for the CD-Rom-version of the *Kindlers neues Literaturlexikon* (2000), Wilfried F. Schoeller summarizes the aesthetics inherent in *Eduards Traum*:

Buschs späte Erzählung Eduards Traum gilt als seine "vollkommenste Groteske" (W. Kayser) ... Der Traumwirklichkeit entspricht die paradoxe Erzählweise, die Realität und phantastische Erfindung unvermittelt gegenüberstellt, Dinge verlebendigt und Menschen verdinglicht. Die Aufhebung von Zeit und Raum und der fragmentarische Bilderstil weisen auf die surrealistische Prosa und die absurde Kurzgeschichte voraus.

(Eduard's Traum, a story [written during] Busch's late phase, is considered to be his "most complete grotesque" (W. Kayser).... Its dream reality corresponds to the paradoxical type of narrative, which contrasts reality and fantastical inventions in unexpected confrontations, anthropomorphizing objects and mechanizing people. Time and space cancel each other, and the fragmentary imagery points towards surrealistic prose and the absurd short story.) (n.p.)

The absurd and surrealistic literature of the twentieth century comes to mind— Wolfgang Kayser, in 1958, already mentioned the "surrealistische Züge" (surrealistic tendencies) (141) of *Eduards Traum*, and Dieter P. Lotze, pointed out in 1979 that Busch's works could be seen as straddling the older literature of Goethe and Busch's younger contemporaries (*Wilhelm Busch* 14). I also discovered Busch's affinity for the Classics, a tradition he both embraced and negated, in order to create his works. In addition, I found that Busch's poetic prose work *Eduards Traum* took him toward the aesthetic realm of the *Moderne* as demonstrated in the definition employed by Kasimir Edschmid. As well, the authors of the Wilhelm-Busch-Museum publication *Pessimist mit Schmetterling: Wilhelm Busch—Maler, Zeichner, Dichter, Denker* (*Pessimist with Butterfly: Wilhelm Busch—Painter, Illustrator, Poet, Thinker*) gave insights into Busch's proximity to an aesthetic of the *Moderne* (Neyer et al. 6) (for example, some of Busch's paintings and illustrations

resemble abstract art [Ueding, *Wilhelm Busch* 376]). Busch created a form of poetic prose in *Eduards Traum* that can take the reader by surprise with its fragmented style. It has a “satiric grotesque” (Kayser 203) nature, but also a humorous bent that is often and quickly overturned. We may say that Busch’s aesthetic in *Eduards Traum*, with its unusual dreamscapes and exaggerated style of writing, pre-figures works of the *Moderne*. Clearly, this mode of writing was outside the norm in the late nineteenth century, when *Eduards Traum* was written. While Alfred Liede saw in Busch’s work *Eduards Traum* an expression of Busch’s anguish, I do not think that this is merely an expression of personal anguish; after all, he said that he felt “positively” about the future. Rather, I think that Busch’s intellectual and imaginative capacities had finally come to fruition in publishing a piece that did not need to be vetted by a publisher or need to conform to his reader’s tastes. Busch tried, in his own way, to express what he must have felt was important for his readers to hear at the turn of such a “fine century” (ET 128)—readers tried hard to look the other way.

The main characteristic shared by Busch’s work is the underlying aesthetic of brevity. George Grosz coined the term “Blitzdichten” (lightning poetry) (Haffmans 346) to describe Busch’s succinct aesthetic and speed of word and thought. Could he have also been hinting at his spark of “genius?” No doubt one of Busch’s important achievements is that he has inspired artists, scientists, and modern thinkers of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Erich Kästner, whose literature for adults and children is known for its humour and brevity, called Busch one of his “geistige Großväter” (intellectual grandfathers) (quoted in Haffmans 346).

While the debate about Busch's unconventional aesthetics was barely audible during the twentieth century, it has taken on momentum at the beginning of the twenty-first and has also reached North American scholars' notice. The title of an exhibit held at the *Wilhelm Busch Museum* in Hanover, Germany, in 2007, "Wilhelm Busch—Avantgardist aus Wiedensahl" (Wilhelm Busch—an Avantgarde Artist from Wiedensahl), boldly stated the new direction taken by Busch research. I hope that this thesis, born from my wish to engage in the debate about Busch's perceived modernity, gives an interpretation of *Eduards Traum* and a "counter signature"¹¹⁹ worthy of its multi-disciplinary author.

¹¹⁹ Derek Attridge. *A Return to Form: Literary Criticism and Literary Art*. English Department Guest Lecture. University of Victoria, Victoria B.C. Canada, October 11, 2007; from notes taken during the lecture: The interpreter's "counter signature affirms a work's uniqueness and identity" and lets a work continue to be known and to thrive. The author's original work is the "formally recognizable signature."

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