Werner Hoffmeister

Critical Realism in Germany and America: Fontane and Howells

"The Germans have as distinctly excelled in the modern novella as they have fallen short in the novel. Or, if I may not quite say this, I will make bold to say that I can think of many German novelle [sic] that I should like to read again, but scarcely one German novel."[1] Despite the somewhat personal wording, this opinion is quite typical of the general lack of attention paid to the late nineteenth-century German novel by American writers and critics of that time. The statement was made by William Dean Howells who for decades was considered the "dean" of American literature and who was, more than any of his literary contemporaries in America, an influential authority on German literature. As a young man, Howells had learned German in his native Ohio in order to be able to read Heinrich Heine, his first great literary love, in the original language; he then translated Heine's poetry and imitated his style in his own poems. In his essay on Heine, he says the German poet had effected in him a decisive liberation from worn-out literary conventions:

> My literary liberation began with almost the earliest word from him; for if he had chained me to himself, he freed me from all other bondage. I had been at infinite pains to literarify myself . . . I had supposed that the expression of literature must be different from the expression of life; that it must be an attitude, a pose, with something of state or at least of formality in it. But Heine at once showed me that this ideal of literature was false; that the life of literature was from the springs of the best common speech, and that the nearer it could be made to conform, in voice, look, and gait, to graceful, easy, picturesque and humorous or impassioned talk, the better it was.[2]

After his love affair with Heine, Howells read extensively in the German classics and romantics (especially Goethe and Schiller, but also Herder, Jean Paul, the Schlegel brothers, Lenau, and others), and throughout his long life he closely followed literary and cultural events in Germany.[3] On about ten different trips to Europe, he travelled in Wilhelminian Germany, as a high-brow tourist, as it were, and in his old age he wrote an autobiographically

inspired travelogue, *Hither and Thither in Germany*, a delightful account of Wilhelminian manners and mores, with a Heinean touch of irony and satire.

Despite the fact that Howells was extraordinarily well-read in German literature and open toward all things German, he did not devote any of his innumerable critical essays to any contemporary German writer. The founder of the realistic social novel in America developed his concept of the novel and shaped his aesthetic expectations through reading the great prose writers of England, France, and Russia, especially Jane Austen, G. Eliot, Zola, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. Whatever was exciting, stimulating and new to Howells, for literary and general cultural reasons, came from Europe's metropoles, not from Braunschweig, Linz, Zürich or even Berlin.

In Berlin, however, there was a German writer who could have aroused Howells' interest had he known him. It was Theodor Fontane who in the late seventies started publishing a series of penetrating social novels which were just as much a novelty in Germany as Howells' critical portrayal of Boston and New York society was for the American literary scene. Despite the fact that both authors' ideas about a new kind of social novel with a contemporary, basically urban subject matter and their way of writing were in profound agreement, Howells evidently did not take notice of his German contemporary. This seems surprising in view of the fact that Howells held a prominent position as a mediator in American literary life, from the seventies through the nineties, first as assistant editor, then as editor of Boston's *Atlantic Monthly*, and finally as a renowned contributor to the New York based *Harper's Magazine*.

Interestingly enough, however, Fontane, who was an anglophile all his life and exceptionally well-read in English and American literature, did take cognizance of Howells. We learned this a few years ago when his notes on American literature became known after having gone unnoticed for seventy years. Among these notes is a short essay, probably intended as a review, on Howells' early novel, *A Foregone Conclusion* (1875), which appeared in German translation in 1876 in Berlin.[4] Fontane's essay on this novel is noteworthy for two reasons: for his choice of this particular novel by a then obscure American writer, and for the criteria he uses in evaluating it.

The novel deals on the surface, like the so-called international novels of Howells' friend Henry James, with the cultural and social contrast between Americans and Europeans: the collision between that proverbial nineteenth-century American innocence and integrity with European ambivalence and enigma. The former is embodied in Florida, a seventeen-year old girl of the New England commercial upper class, the latter is represented by an Italian priest, Don Ippolito. He falls in love with her, and a chain of misunderstandings, miscalculations and human blunders—all related to the different cultural backgrounds of the two—lead to tragic consequences for the European protagonist. What must have attracted Fontane in this novel is a theme which forms a pattern in his own novels: the wilful rejection of convention by someone who has been deeply grounded in a well-defined social milieu. Like many of Fontane's protagonists, Don Ippolito longs for a human happiness outside and beyond his station preordained by his family and makes himself an outsider of his caste. As in Fontane's social novels, it is a "fore-

gone conclusion" that such an attempt at leaving convention behind is futile. But while Fontane usually grants his lovers from different social spheres a temporary, tentative, and precarious idyl of happiness *(Irrungen Wirrungen, Stine),* Howells makes no attempt at bringing the two worlds together. Fundamentally, his novel is about the grand illusion of a radical break with convention, about the solipsistic notion in Don Ippolito's mind to escape with a very different person to an altogether different world. Like several of Fontane's characters, especially young members of the aristocracy, who want to run away from family pressures, economic emergencies, and an outmoded code of manners and morals, Don Ippolito wants to go to America to start a new life as an engineer in a progressive, technologically advanced country. He is very skilled in inventing and building all sorts of little machines and apparatuses, and he hopes for lucrative patents in the New World. In Fontane's novels we encounter the flight-to-America motif, e.g., in Leo von Poggenpuhl, a charming, happy-go-lucky lieutenant in the Prussian army who hails from an impoverished family of generals but who is constantly broke and thus looks for a way out of his dilemma: The alternatives are either marrying a rich merchant's daughter or going to the New World. We encounter the motif also in another young aristocrat-officer, von Rybinski, who has quit the army to become an actor; his problem is his liaison (or as his family looks upon it, mésalliance) with a girl who does not belong to his own class; he hopes that in America nobody will bother about class differences.

Don Ippolito's emotional and intellectual disposition makes him a modern man, but background and tradition have imposed the role of priest on him and turned his life into a lie. The faithless priest with his erotic and intellectual hunger for life represents the extreme case of a split existence: Inherited norms and codes are existentially no longer credible and acceptable. But escape and total metamorphosis, Howells seems to tell us, are not possible. The authorial judgment implied in the plot structure as well as the title of the novel, *A Foregone Conclusion,* express a realist's view of life: that, given a certain set of cultural and social determinants, the course of human events is predictable. This element of culturally and socially determined predictability, as part of the novelistic deep structure, is the most significant characteristic that the works of Howells and Fontane have in common. Such authorial judgment is of course ambiguous; it does not necessarily imply an affirmation of existing social conventions and barriers.

In his review of Howells' novel, Fontane (in spite of some minor objections) calls it "a masterpiece, perfectly constructed, with characters distinctly and consistently developed, with first-rate depiction of locale and atmosphere, and with brilliant observations and commentaries. A triumph of truth and integrity."[5] To my knowledge, this appraisal represents the very beginning of the reception of American realism in Germany. In historical retrospective, it is a curious event: A German author who up to this point had not yet published a single novel but would, within the next decade, turn into a major novelist, discovers, all on his own and simply by virtue of his wide reading interests, an American author who was just then in the beginning stages of his career as a novelist and would later become the "dean of American letters," the founding father of realism. No literary school or pub-

licity helped bring about this recognition; it is explainable only in terms of affinity.

Fontane's appraisal of Howells' novel contains some basic aesthetic criteria which are quite often implied also in his other reviews of contemporary (esp. English, French, and German) novels of the seventies and eighties. They are criteria which can also be found in Howells' critical essays and reviews, at times in surprisingly similar wording.

Fontane calls the novel a "triumph of truth." The concept of "truth," "Wahrheit der Darstellung" or, as Howells sometimes puts it, "the faithful portrayal of life," is central to both authors' notion of what a novel should be. Both Howells and Fontane use it repeatedly and emphatically in their critical essays, and it usually and principally implies two criteria: first, plausibility and credibility of motivation and action on the part of the characters, and secondly, the adequate specification of social and cultural actualities, i.e., the expectation that a novel's action be sufficiently grounded in a specific socio-historical context. These are two qualities which today, of course, would not be particularly noteworthy, but in nineteenth-century Germany and America, they were new expectations indeed. Neither the American tradition of the "romance" (right up to Hawthorne and Melville) nor the overwhelmingly dominant novel genre in nineteenth-century Germany, that of the *Bildungsroman* or *Entwicklungsroman*, had exhibited these two qualities.

In Fontane's critical writings, the idea of truth stands in opposition to any kind of romantic stylization and idealization. It opposes any excess of sentiment, emotion, and dramatic manipulation; at the same time, however, it is also opposed to the extreme position of naturalism which would indulge in the detailed depiction of human misery. In 1853 already, Fontane says: "Realism is the reflection *[Widerspiegelung]* of all real life, it aims at truth. It precludes anything that is false, forced, nebulous, and worn-out—four characteristics with which we believe to have described an entire literary era." His criticism is directed against the German classic-romantic spirit, not so much against the legitimate literary products of that period, but against the romantic affectations of epigones who in the second half of the century were still trying to "preserve," as it were, the classical and romantic heritage.[6]

In 1875 (coincidentally the year in which *A Foregone Conclusion* was published), Fontane wrote a review of a German historical novel (Gustav Freytag's *Die Ahnen)* in which he states his expectations of a new contemporary novel. He rejects three kinds of traditional novels, the "dramatic," the "romantic," and the "historical" type. He now associates the concept of aesthetic truth, previously a somewhat global term, with a specific type of novel, the *Zeitroman*.[7] The point that Fontane makes is that the *Zeitroman*, reflecting contemporary life and society, is *the* primary, legitimate form of the novel in the late nineteenth century, and he predicts that the "modern novel" will essentially meet the criteria of the *Zeitroman*. This constitutes Fontane's basic decision or indeed rebellion against the German tradition of the novel; it is a break with idealism and historicism, but above all, it is a break with the tradition of the *Bildungsroman, Entwicklungsroman,* and *Künstlerroman* and their dominant themes of individual self-perfection, the

high-strung search for identity of self. As Thomas Mann pointedly says in his essay on Fontane (1910), it was "a renouncement of dreamy musicality, of ardent metaphysical yearnings, and of vague profundities."[8] Viewed from a broad historical perspective, Fontane thus becomes the antipode not only of Goethe and his *Wilhelm Meister* but also of late-comers such as Hermann Hesse with all their searching Demians and Steppenwolves.

Just as Fontane's novels of contemporary society represent a delayed manifestation of European prose realism in Germany,[9] so do Howells' works of the 1880s and 1890s establish a late American connection with the realistic prose literature of England, France, and Russia.[10] Fontane sets his *Zeitroman* against the historicizing and romanticizing novels of Gustav Freytag, Felix Dahn and Victor Scheffel on the one hand, and against the narrative introversion of the *Bildungsroman* and *Entwicklungsroman* on the other. In a similar way, Howells' works are written out of opposition to the various forms of the prose romance, patterned after Scott,[11] Cooper, or Hawthorne,[12] and moreover they are written against the popular historical novels of the time such as Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* and Edward Bulwer's *The Last Days of Pompeii.*

As with Fontane, Howells' view of a new, realistic American novel is centered on the notions of the truthful and the credible. In his great polemic and programmatic essay *Criticism and Fiction* (1891) the words "truth," "truthfulness," "verity," "fidelity," and "probability" are the most frequently and emphatically used terms to define his idea of realism. He says: "It remained for realism to assert fidelity to experience and probability of motive," and: "Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material."[13] Howells shares with Fontane the antipathy against grand emotions, dramatic and suspenseful plots, implausible heroism, excessive passions and a high-strung, metaphorical literary language. It sounds like an echo of Fontane's demand that fiction should be an "undistorted reflection" of contemporary life (1886),[14] when Howells admonishes his American fellow writers and critics: "Let fiction cease to lie about life; let it portray men and women as they are, actuated by the motives and the passions in the measure we all know; let it leave off painting dolls and working them by springs and wires."[15]

It is significant that both Howells and Fontane, before embarking on novel writing, published a number of travelogues. Fontane wrote his multivolume work *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* (1862 ff.) as well as semi-autobiographical travel accounts on England and Scotland; Howells wrote his books *Venetian Life* (1866) and *Italian Journeys* (1867) before he wrote his first novel. In writing these travelogues, both writers developed their narrative and descriptive skills, practiced their powers of observation with regard to people, customs, and social conditions, sharpened their sense of history, and developed an urbane, detached, analytical and at the same time humorous narrative style and attitude. In retrospect, Howells says about his literary career: "I was a traveler long before I was a noveler, and I had mounted somewhat timidly to the threshold of fiction from the high-roads and by-roads where I had studied manners and men."[16] Fontane's literary career could well be characterized in the same way.

In the study of "manners and men" both Howells and Fontane are vitally

indebted to the tradition of the novel of manners as it had evolved especially in England, from Jane Austen to Thackeray and George Eliot.

What are manners in a literary context? Lionel Trilling has given a succinct and useful definition:

> What I understand by manners . . . is a culture's hum and buzz of implication. I mean the whole evanescent context in which its explicit statements are made. It is that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unutterable expressions of value. . . . They make the part of a culture which is not art, or religion, or morals, or politics, and yet it relates to all these highly formulated departments of culture. It is modified by them; it modifies them; it is generated by them; it generates them. In this part of culture assumption rules, which is often so much stronger than reason.[17]

Howells' as well as Fontane's novels are set in societies with distinct class structures and with relatively homogeneous upper classes. Human relations and the social life of these upper classes are regulated by certain sets of manners, by conventions, rituals, traditions, customs, prejudices, in short: assumptions. The external events in these novels tend to revolve around social gatherings, tea parties, dinners, festivities, picnics.[18] The infraction of good manners, tact, and good taste are often considered equal to violations of the moral code since "manners" and "morals" are almost inseparable qualities for so-called "good society." The economic and social status is rather precisely reflected in the street address. In Fontane's Berlin novels it is significant social information to read that someone lives on Großgörschenstraße, with a window looking out on a cemetery and a candy factory; or on Keithstraße, near Kurfürstendamm, in the center of things; or in a villa on Köpenickerstraße, with an estate right on the Spree River. Likewise, it makes some difference whether in Howells' Boston you have a "little house on Clover Street," live at "old-fashioned Bellingham Place," or have a substantial house built on Beacon Street, "on the water side." In his essay, *Criticism and Fiction*, Howells suggests that the modern novel should strive "to verify the externals of life, to portray faithfully the outside of men and things."[19] The externals, which are carefully registered in Fontane's and Howells' novels, include the way people dress, the furniture they have in their parlors and dining rooms, the type of carriage they use to go to social events. In these novels, the characters are first of all social and sociable beings; property, appearance, and social graces define them as members of a social class before the reader becomes familiar with them as individuals with specific problems and conflicts.[20]

In both authors, one of the most revealing indicators for a character's position in the social structure is his manner of speech in dialogue. On the one hand, a figure's direct speech always helps to individualize him, on the other hand it is always bound up with and indicative of social milieu. Through the manner of speech, the reader receives more or less subtle signals about a character's background, education, profession, and economic status. The moderate use of colloquialisms, dialect, and professional jargon further adds to grounding a character in a specific social context. Today, of course, we take it for granted that a character's speech defines him socially, but historically this was a very new concern for Howells and Fontane, and

one finds it repeatedly expressed in their essays. Needless to say, the conscious effort to use speech, in the sense of "parole," as a signifier for social content, has had far-reaching consequences right up to Kurt Vonnegut and Günter Grass.

The social groups that Fontane prefers to present critically in his novels are the old landed gentry of the Brandenburg province which is rapidly losing its economic and political power due to the industrial revolution; further, the military and civil service aristocracy, and the economically well-endowed bourgeoisie (endowed either with old or new money). The petty bourgeoisie is an important element in some novels where the theme of mésalliance is dominant. Here and there, we encounter an artist, an engineer or a professor—usually outsiders to the established groups. The Wilhelminian society that Fontane exhibits is static, conservative, class-structured, with hardly a progressive or liberating force visible. And it is precisely the static nature of this society that Fontane subjects to scrutiny and from which he develops his themes dealing with the human consequences of petrified conventions, social prejudice, male double-standard, and a worn-out honor code.

Howells, in his Boston and New York novels, especially *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), portrays an American class society which has evolved on account of the industrial revolution and which has consolidated itself after the Civil War. Coming to Boston from the egalitarian Midwest, Howells discovers after the Civil War the social tensions between the old Boston patrician families, the nouveau riche bourgeoisie, and an economically insecure but educated group of journalists, artists, and writers. In his Boston novels, the interplay and conflicts of these social groups are rendered primarily with the literary strategies of the novel of manners. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes,* the spectrum of social forces is considerably expanded, into a kind of panoramic novel (Fontane would have used the term *Vielheitsroman* 'novel of multiplicity'); here the problems of the working class, the slums and labor conflicts are integrated into the total picture of the big city. The established powers are opposed by a counterforce, embodied in Berthold Lindau, a German socialist and participant in the 1848 Revolution. In a similar fashion, Fontane, in his novel *Der Stechlin,* makes a Protestant minister the mouthpiece of a socialist vision of the future.

In spite of all the historically and politically conditioned differences between the social structures of America and those of the Wilhelminian Empire during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the literary images of these structures as evoked by Howells and Fontane are surprisingly similar. In Howells' presentation of America's "Gilded Age" as well as in Fontane's analysis of the newly founded *Reich* there is a pervasive conflict between an old and a new social order, between a dying aristocratic or, in Howells' case, patrician upper class on the one hand, and the new forces of the bourgeoisie which are in tune with industrialization, commercialization, and urbanization on the other hand. The social matrix from which both authors draw their fictional personnel presents a similar parallel. What the aristocrats, the Stechlins, Poggenpuhls, Rienäckers, and Halderns represent in Fontane, is represented in Howells by the old Bostonians, the Coreys,

Athertons, Bellinghams, and Hallecks. The well-to-do and aggressive German merchants, the Treibels, Gundermanns, and Van der Straatens are of the same cut as their American counterparts, especially the king of paints, Silas Lapham, the self-made man with the unshakable faith in the perfect industrial product and the dream of total market control, and the German-American speculator Dryfoos who has acquired his dubious business practices by imitating those of Standard Oil Company.

The economic changes in post-Civil War America and in the newly founded German nation made the aristocratic or patrician leisure class a doomed social group. "We are no longer in charge," the old General von Poggenpuhl says with clairvoyance and resignation.[21] Similarly, old Bromfield Corey, who comes from a family in which "Middlesexes have married Essexes and produced Suffolks for two hundred and fifty years," tells his son: "We represent a faded tradition," for "money is the romance, the poetry of our age." Bromfield Corey's rather ineffective life is summed up by the narrator in these words: "Corey had kept saying charming things, and he had not done much else." And, since Corey had once dabbled in painting portraits: "It was absurd to paint portraits for pay, and ridiculous to paint them for nothing, so he did not paint them at all."[22] One cannot help feeling that both General Poggenpuhl and Bromfield Corey, with or without moist spots in their respiratory systems, would have been splendid company for some of the inhabitants of Sanatorium Berghof in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*.

By and large, both Fontane and Howells show the representatives of the old social caste in an ambiguous light. They leave no doubt that this caste has finished playing its historical role. Yet both authors are also aesthetically attracted by the qualities of character and intellect that distinguish these people. These qualities make them literarily extremely productive and interesting. The aesthetic fascination with a decaying social class was soon to take hold of that German author who was most strongly influenced by Theodor Fontane: Thomas Mann. The "clash between people in trade and the descendants of people in trade,"[23] as an American critic put it, was going to be continued in Mann's early works—the clash between the Buddenbrooks and the Hagenströms, between the Eckhofs and the Klöterjahns.

"The novel of manners," James Tuttleton, an expert on this genre, says, "is primarily concerned with social conventions as they impinge upon character."[24] The basic intent of both Howells and Fontane is to show how people become captives of milieu, class, and convention. The conflict between an individual's right to personal fulfilment and happiness on the one hand, and the opposing social norms and mechanisms of adjustment on the other, is most intensely demonstrated in their novels of marriage and divorce, *Effi Briest* (1895) and *A Modern Instance* (1882). Howells' novel is a characteristically American contribution to the theme of the marriage crisis that becomes virulent in the second half of the nineteenth century. Here the crisis does not become manifest in adultery, as it does in Fontane's *Effi Briest*, and also in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, but Howells unfolds a very gradual process of disruption and alienation, a process of growing incompatibility, distrust, and resentment between husband and wife, Bartley and Marcia Hubbard. It is impressive how Howells works

out his story of the destruction of their marriage without having to resort to episodes of erotic intrigue and adventure, as in the case of Flaubert and Fontane, and without introducing passion and romance as in Tolstoy. The crisis grows out of the characters and the way social forces impinge on their relationship. As in Fontane's, Flaubert's, and Tolstoy's novels, the husband is the less sympathetically conceived character, but he is not a member of an established class of professionals or civil servants; rather, Howells chose to make him an upstart, a social climber who is intent on making a career as a journalist without regard to moral principles. Yet Bartley is not really a villain, but rather "the modern substitute for a villain" (as Delmar Cooke put it),[25] a man of only mediocre moral qualities, an opportunist whose main asset is his "smartness," as Howells emphasizes, a smartness that he uses to attain social, professional, economic success. While Fontane's *Effi Briest* is set in a social class that is devoted to upholding the *status quo* with which Effi finally gets bored and disgusted, *A Modern Instance* is set in a specifically American milieu in which the combination of smartness, ambition, and a completed college education promises and usually brings about success. Unlike Fontane's story, Howells' story is truly a "modern instance" because here the marriage is directly affected by a social climate, the mentality of competition and success in a socially dynamic, urban industrial society.

In spite of these differences with regard to social milieu and characters, there is a significant common element: In either case the marriage breaks up because the male partner submits himself uncritically to the demands of his career, accepts the pseudo-values of male preoccupations too easily, and in the process loses his wife's love. Instetten gives in to the dictates of a rigid code of honor: He kills his wife's lover in a duel and rejects his wife, *although* he would rather not do either. Bartley obeys the unwritten laws of unscrupulous journalism eager for success. In both novels the wives are imaginative, passionate women whose activities are restricted to domestic and social functions. Both live desolate lives, Marcia Hubbard in her "little house on Clover Street," Effi Briest in a spooky civil servant's residence in the Pommeranian provinces.

The *Zeitroman*, the novel of contemporary society that Fontane and Howells produced in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was a late offspring of European realism. What had been established in France and England much earlier in the century, could evidently not develop in the United States until after the Civil War, and in Germany not until after the national unification and the attainment of economic power. It may be that Georg Lukács is right when he says about Fontane's critical social analyses that they were written as a response to the provocations and contradictions of an oppressive capitalist society in Prussian style.[26]

Neither Fontane's nor Howells' analyses of contemporary urban society contain any outright attack on the system; there is relatively little hard-core satire in them, and they do not expound political or economic programs. While these should not necessarily be considered deficiencies, some of us may find the well-tempered realism of these novels a bit tame, a bit too Victorian and entertaining. However, we should not forget that this controlled critical realism was only a beginning, in Germany as well as in the United

States. It laid the foundation for coming events. Not only Thomas Mann, but also his less conservative brother Heinrich profited from Fontane's work. In America, Howells' realism lived on more radically and aggressively in the works of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, John Dos Passos and Theodore Dreiser.

Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

Notes

1. William Dean Howells, *Literature and Life* (New York and London, 1902), pp. 114-15.

2. Howells, "Heine," *My Literary Passions: Criticism and Fiction* (New York and London, 1895), pp. 128-29.

3. See William W. Betts, Jr., "The Relations of William Dean Howells to German Life and Letters," *Anglo-German and American-German Crosscurrents*, ed. Philip A. Shelley (Chapel Hill, 1957), I, 189-239.

4. Theodor Fontane, *Aufzeichnungen zur Literatur. Ungedrucktes und Unbekanntes*, ed. Hans-Heinrich Reuter (Berlin and Weimar, 1969), 152-54.

5. Ibid., p. 154. Throughout this article, translations of quotations from Fontane's works are my own.

6. "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848," *Sämtliche Werke. Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, ed. Walter Keitel and Jürgen Kolbe (Munich, 1969), I, 242. Fontane uses here the word *Widerspiegelung* 'reflection,' the same word that, almost a century later, thanks to Georg Lukács, was to become the most loaded and most controversial term in sociological, and especially Marxist, literary theory. But it is a long way from Fontane's measured and moderate social realism to twentieth century socialist realism.

7. Ibid., p. 319. Despite its apparent simplicity the word *Zeitroman* is hard to translate. The all-too-obvious word "period novel" does not suffice, and I cannot help but suggest the somewhat lengthy term "novel of contemporary society."

8. Thomas Mann, "Der alte Fontane," *Adel des Geistes* (Stockholm, 1959), p. 488. My translation.

9. See Hans-Heinrich Reuter, "Die Geschichte einer Verspätung," *Fontane* (Munich, 1968), I, 27-49; Peter Demetz, *Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane* (Munich, 1964), pp. 115-53; Walter Müller-Seidel, *Theodor Fontane: Soziale Romankunst in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1975), pp. 19-24.

10. In a retrospective account of his literary life Howells says: "We studied from the French masters, the continental masters, to imitate nature, and gave American fiction the bent which it still keeps wherever it is vital" (*Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays*, ed. Clara M. Kirk and Rudolf Kirk [New York, 1959], p. 370).

11. Howells objected to the melodramatic and historicizing elements in Walter Scott's fiction and felt that he had "built pasteboard castles" (*Criticism and Fiction*, p. 90). Interestingly, Fontane's original admiration for Scott changed to a critical assessment when he himself began writing novels. In his unpublished diaries (Fontane-Archiv, Potsdam) he speaks of Scott's "superficialities" and "sloppiness" (1877).

12. To be sure, Howells admired Hawthorne and felt he was a legitimate and significant representative of the romance, but he deplored a certain lack of social and historical context: Hawthorne's romances "were so far from time and place" (*My Literary Passions*, p. 139).

13. *Criticism and Fiction*, pp. 15 and 38.

14. *Sämtliche Werke. Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, I, 568.

15. *Criticism and Fiction*, p. 51.

16. Ibid., p. 384.

17. Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," *The Liberal Imagination* (Garden City, N.Y., 1954), p. 201.

18. See Peter Demetz' superb analysis of the ingredients that go into "the novel of good society" (*Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane*, pp. 115-53).

19. *Criticism and Fiction*, p. 19.

20. For a discussion of the dialectics of individualization and typification in Fontane's fic-

tional characters, see Dietrich Sommer, "Probleme der Typisierung im Spätwerk Theodor Fontanes," *Fontanes Realismus*, ed. Hans-Erich Teitge and Joachim Schobeß (Berlin, 1972), pp. 105-19; also, Walter Müller-Seidel, *Theodor Fontane: Soziale Romankunst in Deutschland*, pp. 15-17.

21. Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke. Romane, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Walter Keitel (Munich, 1963), IV, 514.

22. Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (Bloomington and London, 1971), pp. 173, 102, 64.

23. Arthur Hobson Quinn, *American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey* (New York and London, 1936), p. 274.

24. James W. Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* (New York, 1972), p. 12.

25. Delmar Cooke, *William Dean Howells: A Critical Study* (New York, 1922), p. 242.

26. George Lukács, "Der alte Fontane," *Deutsche Literatur in zwei Jahrhunderten* (Neuwied and Berlin, 1964), pp. 452-67.