SOCIETY & SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN GRIMMELSHAUSEN’S SIMPICISSIMUS TEUTSCH

by

POLLY STEVENS

(Under the Direction of Max Reinhart)

ABSTRACT

The allegorical representation of society in H.J.C. von Grimmelshausen’s Simplicissimus Teutsch (ST, 1669) is the central theme of the paper; an explication of the Ständebaum (tree of estates) emblem – Grimmelshausen’s representation of the social system as it obtained during the Thirty Years’ War – and an analysis of three alternative utopias provide the textual evidence for this study. Following the Introduction, chapter two describes the Ständebaum and clarifies the sociological terms of analysis. Chapters three through five each examines one portion of the hierarchically ordered tree and its respective representation: peasantry, nobility, and soldiery. Chapter six considers three utopian visions in ST as possible social alternatives to the Ständebaum society. The study’s main concern is how Simplicius, in experiencing life at all sociological levels, presents and reflects the author’s social criticism.

INDEX WORDS: Grimmelshausen, Simplicissimus, Ständebaum, society, allegory, utopia, Thirty Years’ War, Baroque Literature
SOCIETY & SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN GRIMMELSHAUSEN’S SIMPLICISSIMUS TEUTSCH

by

POLLY STEVENS

B.A., The University of Michigan, 2003

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2005
SOCIETY & SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN GRIMMELSHAUSEN’S SIMPLICISSIMUS TEUTSCH

by

POLLY STEVENS

Major Professor: Max Reinhart
Committee: Renate Born
           Alexander Sager

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2005
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my family, who always believes in me even when I don’t. Mom, Dad, Lindy, Travis, Bob, and Barbara, you all have the patience of saints. (You know what I’m getting at here.) Thank you all for your support, your wisdom, and for teaching me that life’s most important lessons are the ones learned when you’re a fish out of water.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Max Reinhart for his support and invaluable guidance. I am a better writer because of you. Thank you for caring enough to push me beyond what I ever thought I could accomplish.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................................</th>
<th>v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 THE STÄNDEBAUM AS SOCIOLOGICAL EMBLEM ................................................................</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ROOTS: THE PEASANTRY ...............................................................................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 BRANCHES: THE NOBILITY ..............................................................................................</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 TRUNK: THE SOLDIERY .................................................................................................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLIVIER .........................................................................................................................</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERZBRUDER ..................................................................................................................</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 UTOPIAN ALTERNATIVES TO THE STÄNDEBAUM SOCIETY .......................................</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE JUPITER EPISODE .................................................................................................</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MUMMELSEE EPISODE ............................................................................................</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ANABAPTISTS .........................................................................................................</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED ...................................................................................................................</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the critical problem of society in Grimmelshausen’s 1669 novel Simplicissimus Teutsch (hereafter: ST). Grimmelshausen’s critique is summarized in allegorical form early in book one as a Ständebaum (lit., tree of estates), which comes to the boy Simplicius in a dream. It is Grimmelhausen’s image of the unjust hierarchical social structure that prevailed in seventeenth-century Germany during the period of the Thirty Years’ War. The roots (peasantry), trunk (soldiery), and branches (nobility) are overrun with signs of tyranny, injustice, and brutalization (Negus 21). The Ständebaum epitomizes and influences every facet of Simplicius’ life: his heritage, childhood, entry into the world, wartime experiences, and possible future. Grimmelshausen conducts his criticism in a unique satirical mode, softened through humor and effective allegory. According to Kenneth Negus, “It is readily apparent that in Simplicissimus there are two main kinds of satire: that which ridicules particular conditions and customs in seventeenth-century Germany; and the universal kind that reveals man as the great fool of Creation, and his world as being topsy-turvy” (82). This paper’s explication of societal classes describes the former kind of satire; the discussion of utopian alternatives the latter.

The Ständebaum represents three social classes, or groups: peasantry, nobility, and soldiery, each of which will be treated in a separate chapter, summarizing and reflecting on the footloose Simplicius’ personal experiences as part of that class. The final chapter considers three utopias, which contrast fundamentally with the tree society. The Jupiter, Mummelsee, and Anabaptist episodes represent potential alternative futures for Simplicius.
CHAPTER TWO

THE STÄNDEBAUM AS SOCIOLOGICAL EMBLEM

The placement of the allegorical Ständebaum dream in book one serves two purposes: 1) it alludes to Simplicius’ subsequent encounters after leaving the forest, and 2) it represents the social system of wartime society in seventeenth-century Germany. The image describes the hierarchy from several vantage points to illustrate that in this stratified society there exists little hope of upward mobility. While the Ständebaum allegory is a good general representation of contemporary society, in fact it is a mosaic of images and interpretations from such graphic and literary antecedent sources as Petrarca-Meister, Albrecht Dürer, Julius Wilhelm Zincgref, and Johann Michael Moscherosch (Breuer 817). Grimmelshausen, who did not travel extensively during his lifetime, also borrowed many descriptions for occupations and geographical areas from a widely-read European history from 1589 by the Italian scholar Tommaso Garzoni (La Piazzze Universale).

To properly understand the emblem it is important to consider its chronological placement in the text. Comprising chapters fifteen through eighteen of book one, the Ständebaum is the first image Simplicius sees after the hermit’s death. Since it provides the basis for the novel’s social critique, it must be presented in the initial phase of plot development. Simplicius’ successive adventures deconstruct the tree and map out Grimmelshausen’s rationale for criticism. His portrayal of society is a candid description of life given first by an inexperienced child and then a world-savvy rogue.
Simplicius’ entry into society is preceded by the \textit{Ständebaum} dream, which foreshadows the world he will encounter upon departure from the forest:

\begin{quote}
Jn solchen Gedancken entschlieff ich vor Unmuth and Kälte/ mit einem hungerigen Magen/ da dünckte mich/gleich wie in einem Traum/ als wenn sich alle Bäüm/ die umb meine Wohnung stunden/ gähling veränderten/ und ein gantz ander Ansehen gewönnen/ auff jedem Gipfel sasse ein Cavallier/ und alle Aest wurden an statt der Blätter mit allerhand Kerlen geziert/ von solchen hatten etliche lange Spieß/ andere Mußqueten/ kurtze Gewehr/ Partisanen/ Fähnlein/ auch Trommeln und Pfeiffern. Diß war lustig anzusehen/ weil alles so ordentlich und fein grad-weis sich außeinander theilete; die Wurtzel aber war von ungültigen Leuten/ also Handwerckern/ Taglöhnern/ mehrentheils Bauren und dergleichen/ welche nichts desto weniger dem Baum seine Krafft verliehen/ und wieder von neuem mittheilten/ wann er solche zu Zeiten verlor; ja sie ersetzet den Mangel der abgefallenen Blätter auß den ihrigen/ zu ihrem eigenen noch grösseren Verderben; benebens seufftzeten sie über die jenige/ so auff dem Baum sassen/ und zwar nicht unbillich/ dann der ganzte Last deß Baums lag auff ihnen/ und druckte sie dermassen/ daß ihnen alles Geld auß den Beuteln/ ja hinder sieben Schlossen herfür gieng. (59)
\end{quote}

The tree has two semantic dimensions: a substructure representing each social class through a specific part of the \textit{Ständebaum}, and the entire emblem that describes the relationships between classes. James Stark observes that, “Grimmelshausen’s tree shows the verticality of hierarchy: the parts are composed of social categories presented in descending order. From the top … there are ‘Kavaliere,’ ‘Kerle,’ ‘Handwerker,’ ‘Taglöchner[n],’ and lastly, ‘Bauer’” (Stark 3). The roots,
trunk, and branches reflect a society that, although solidly hierarchical, is in chaos, with each member scrambling for his own survival; despite this chaos the larger structure stays rigidly organized. Nobles remain nobles; peasants remain peasants; soldiers remain soldiers. Each group competes with the others, yet relies upon them for survival.

The branches at the very top of the tree are reserved for the nobility, who look down upon the rest of society. Theirs is a position of power and security. Unlike the other groups on the Ständebaum, the nobility faces no real threat of replacement, as the allegory makes clear: it is protected by a slippery patch that proves impassable to all who attempt the climb. Simplicius describes it as “ein glattes Stück …/ ohne Aest/ mit wunderbarlichen Materialien und seltzamer Saiffen deß Mißgunsts geschmieret/ also daß kein Kerl/ er sey dann noch vom Adel/ weder durch Mannheit/ Geschicklichkeit noch Wissenschaft hinauff steigen konte” (61-62). In a hierarchical society one can be noble only by being born into such a family, and since lineage is not selectable no threat is posed by individuals attempting to traverse this part of the tree. Simplicius offers the minor, deviant, qualification that, “die Junge hatten ihre Vettern hinauff gehoben/ die Alte aber waren zum theil von sich selbst hinauff gestiegen/ entweder auff einer silbernen Läiter/ die man Schmiralia nennet/ oder sonst auff einem Steg/ den ihnen das Glück auß Mangel anderer gelegt hatte” (62). The bribery ladder (“Schmiralia”) betrays the corruption that has often been behind nobility’s privileges: these are the products, not of merit, and indeed not merely of birth, but may ultimately be traceable to the power of money.

Stability also exists in the branches of the Ständebaum because of the system of taxation that is in place:

Sie genossen aber diesen Vortheil/ daß sie ihre Beutel mit demjenigen Speck am besten spicken können/ welchen sie mit einem Messer/ das sie Contribution
nenneten/ auß der Wurtzel schnitten; am thunlichsten und geschicktesten fiele es
ihnen/ wann ein Commissarius daher kam/ und ein Wanne voll Geld über den
Baum abschüttete/ solchen zu erquicken/ daß sie das beste von oben herab
aufffiengen/ und den untersten so viel als nichts zukommen liessen.. (62)

Nobles support themselves by fleecing other members of what little wealth they possess and in
doing so perpetuate the cycle of poverty that ensures the groups below them remain powerless
and destitute.

The trunk of the Ständebaum is comprised of day-workers and soldiers. Grimmelshausen
restricts his description to the soldiery because it represents the majority of individuals in this

group. The strict focus on the common soldier contrasts the trunk of the tree with the root system
and emphasizes the tumultuous relationship between peasants and soldiers. The plight of the
common enlisted man is to suffer “Hunger und Durst/ auch Hitz und Kält/ Arbeit und Armuth/
wie es fällt/ Gewalthat/ Ungerechtigkeit/ Treiben wir Landsknecht allezeit” (60). The soldiery
remains impoverished and threatened; it lacks any form of security. On the battlefield soldiers
must face impending death from the enemy. Out of combat they are pursued by peasants. Their
hostile relationship with both parties keeps their lives in constant jeopardy.

Grimmelshausen makes clear that there is a duality to soldier-life. Exploitation by the
nobility robs them of necessary provisions. But soldiers also have the propensity for cruelty:

dem Fressen und Sauffen/ Hunger und Durst leiden/ huren und buben/ raßlen und
spielen/ schlemmen und demmen/ morden/ und wieder ermordet werden/ todt
schlagen/ und wieder zu todgeschlagen werden/ tribulirn/ und wieder getrillt
werden/ jagen und wieder gejaget werden/ ängstigen/ und wieder geängstiget
werden/ rauben/ und wieder beraubt werden/ plündern/ und wieder geplündert
The pity evoked by topos in the last paragraph is countered with disgust. The world has already turned upside down (“verkehrte Welt”) and the wheel of fortune is constantly spinning, raising the soldiers up only to bring them down again. Everyone exploits everyone, and the entire system exists in chaos.

The peasantry constitutes the root system of the Ständebaum, supplying the population with food and supporting the entire structure. It is the most important part of the tree, yet its members are the least valued in hierarchical, estate-ordered, society. The peasants are crushed by the weight of those above them and taxed to the point of starvation:

[D]ie Wurtzel aber war von ungültigen Leuten/ als Handwerckern/ Taglöhneren/
mehereheils Bauren und dergleichen/ welche nichts desto weniger dem Baum seine Kraft verliehen/ und wieder von neuem mittheilten…benebens seufftzeten sie über die jenige/ so auff dem Baum sassen/ und zwar nicht unbillich/ dann der gantze Last deß Baums lag auff ihnen/ und druckte sie dermassen/ daß ihnen alles Geld auß den Beuteln. (59).

The peasants’ labor is for naught. They are unable to retain the wealth they produce and are unrecognized for the duty they perform. Taxation robs them, while marauding soldiers take what is left. This is the root of the deep hatred between peasant and soldier, one that Simplicius has already experienced at his Knan’s (his father’s) farm. In Grimmelhausen’s subsequent novel of 1670, Der selzame Springinsfeld, a proverb summarizes the conflict. “So bald ein Soldat wird
geboren/ seyn ihm drey Bauern auserkoren/ der erste der ihn ernährt/ der ander der ihm ein schönes Weib beschert/ und der dritt/ der vor ihn zur Höllen fährt” (37). The peasantry is vulnerable since it has no one below it to oppress and is repeatedly victimized with little opportunity for productive revenge. The bitter irony here is that, by working it supports the entire system and supports its own abuse.

We turn now to Simplicius’ experiences at each level of the Ständebaum society. What facets of each group are criticized? How does such scrutiny manifest itself? It is imperative to keep in mind the purpose of the main character. Simplicius is a vehicle – “a ‘figure’ whose purpose is strictly functional” (Schulz-Behrend, x) – for Grimmelshausen’s social analysis and as such articulates the author’s ultimate message. Schulz-Behrend continues:

An individual arouses our interest through the growth of his personality; a figure does so because of the function he assumes in relation to the various elements of the work. Simplicius serves to unify the following theme and components of the novel: (1) a critical, moralizing attitude toward the world; (2) preoccupation with sin and repentance; (3) preoccupation with the inconstancy of the world; and (4) an episodic structure. While functioning to hold these elements together, Simplicius as an individual is not affected by them. Like an actor he slips into a role, soon to lay it aside for another. (x-xi)

The focus therefore will be on these different roles, when and how Simplicius slips into them and when he lays them aside. Remaining cognizant of his function, it becomes easier to understand why Simplicius’ life seems so much bigger than that of the common man.
CHAPTER THREE
ROOTS: THE PEASANTRY

The peasantry supports the well-being and survival of all members of society and is symbolically placed in the root system of the Ständebaum society. Grimmelshausen believes that peasants are in truth the most honorable members of the social hierarchy; by providing sustenance through farming for the entire population, they assume a God-like role. As Renate Brie remarks, “die höchste Ehre hat Gott dem Bauernstand erwiesen, indem Christus seinen heiligen Vater selbst mit einem Landmann verglich” (13). Simplicius’ description in book one of his early life in the Spessart gives a powerful, if childish, illustration of the Vergilian ideal of the blessed farmer (“beatus ille,” from the Georgica).

Simplicius’ initial description of the Spessart contrasts the image of the Ständebaum with Grimmelshausen’s own reality: “Mein Herkommen und Aufferziehung last sich noch wol mit eines Fürsten vergleichen” (18). One must smile at the naiveté with which the simple child recites his Knan’s overblown description. Still, behind the simplicity lies a truth, as Vergil knew: there is a sense in which Simplicius’ life is as noble and wealthy as that of a prince. But Grimmelshausen goes a step further: the peasant’s life is nobler than a prince’s. The Knan’s farm is “ein eigner Pallast/ so wol als ein anderer/ ja so artlich/ dergleichen ein jeder König mit eigenen Händen zu bauen nicht vermag” (18). There exists a dichotomy between the truth presented by society and the author’s personal truth. The nobility of the Ständebaum is not Grimmelhausen’s. For him – as for Vergil – the farming community is the oldest and most honorable class because Adam, the father of all mankind, was himself a farmer (Brie 11). Even
King David began his career as a simple shepherd. Grimmelshausen’s contrast between Simplicius’ reality and that of the rest of society portrays the majority as a deluded group whose values are in complete disarray.

Devalued in estate-order society, the peasantry is repeatedly victimized. Simplicius’ “Bauernlied” establishes the duality of life as a farmer, honorable work, reciprocated with exploitation. Indeed, Grimmelshausen’s peasant becomes for us, who are made to identify most closely with the peasant, the hero’s stock, a kind of Everyman.

DU sehr-verachter Bauren-Stand/ Bist doch der beste in dem Land/ Kein Mann dich gnugsam preisen kan/ Wann er dich nur recht sihet an.
Wie stünd es jetzund umb die Welt/ Hätt Adam nicht gebaut das Feld/ Mit Hacken nährt sich anfangs der/ Von dem die Fürsten kommen her.
Es ist fast alles unter dir/ Ja was die Erd nur bringt herfür/ Worvon ernähret wird das Land/ Geht dir anfänglich durch die Hand.
Der Käiser/ den uns Gott gegeben/ Uns zu beschützen/ muss doch leben Von deiner Hand/ auch der Soldat/ Der dir doch zufügt manchen Schad.
Fleisch zu der Speiβ zeugst auff allein/ Von dir wird auch gebaut der Wein/ Der Pflug der Erden thut so noth/ Daβ sie uns gibt genugsam Brot.
Die Erde wär gantz wild durchauß/ Wann du auff ihr nicht hieltest Hauß/ Gantz traurig auff der Welt es stünd/ Wenn man kein Bauersmann mehr fünd.
Vom bitter-bösen Podagram/ Hört man nicht/ daβ an Bauren kam/ Das doch den Adel bringt in Noth/ Und manchen Reichen gar in Todt.
Peasants exploited by the wealthy must also constantly combat marauding soldiers. Like Christ, they must bear the cross of society’s injustice.

Simplicius’ idealization is interrupted by a group of soldiers who plunder his home, debase his Knan, and rape the women of the farm. His complete ignorance of what is happening allows him to give a simple description, neither dramatized nor exaggerated; but it is fraught with brutal honesty, and its naivete only enhances the horror:

The events in the Spessart anticipate the grim aspect of social Darwinism. Each group exploits the class beneath it and is in turn exploited by the class above it. Individuals at the top of the Ständebaum have the greatest freedom and are most likely to withstand constant conflict. This difference accordingly makes the upper classes “fitter” than the lower ones (Horwich 10). Seen in this light it is reasonable to assume that these lesser individuals will be necessarily eliminated.
over the course of time. Applying this reasoning to the social hierarchy reveals the absurdity of the system: it is built on a paradox: the destruction of the tree’s root system deprives the upper classes of their most basic needs (Horwich 13-14). They aim to exterminate the chief guarantors of the social hierarchy. Those at the bottom of the tree work to support a structure that squeezes “die Seuffzer auß dem Herzten/ die Threnen auß den Augen/ das Blut auß den Nägeln/ und das Marck auß den Beinen” (59).

Simplicius does not attempt to climb the Ständebaum. As the “Jäger von Soest” he steals from peasants but refuses to demean their existence. After reuniting with his Knan and Meuder (mother), Simplicius chooses to become a farmer, despite his birthparents’ social status, and thus does not fall into the self-destructive pattern of climbing. His decision to join the only social group that contributes to society symbolizes Grimmelshausen’s belief about what all men should do. Because this is not the reality, however, the entire Spessart episode reflects a system supported by all, but on the verge of collapse; enjoyed by a select few, but unjust to most.
CHAPTER FOUR
BRANCHES: THE NOBILITY

The nobility receives Grimmeilhausen’s harshest criticism as the most worthless class in the Ständebaum society. In his view, the nobility fails to contribute productively to society and parasitically appropriates for itself whatever is provided by others. Governor Ramsay, for example, perpetuates this cycle. His lavish and gluttonous banquets squander society’s goods, subjecting the non-nobles of Hanau to intense suffering. In his role as court fool Simplicius unmasks the absurdity of this lifestyle and behavior, unveiling the true reality of Ramsay’s existence by persistently questioning him and showing flagrant disrespect. As the nephew of Ramsay he has the opportunity to become a member of this privileged society, which allows him to step behind the scenes, as it were, to view the truth about the nobility.

From birth secluded, and educated exclusively by his Kna, Meuder, and the hermit, Simplicius is in for a shock upon his arrival in Hanau, an episode that marks a critical turning point in his life. He enters Hanau with a certain amount of rote knowledge inculcated by the hermit, but he remains sorely unprepared for the worldly encounters there. Simplicius’ judgment of what he sees is eye-opening, though simplistic, coming as it does from his still adolescent, naïve understanding of the catechetical teachings of the hermit. Regarding the nobility’s voracious eating and wastefulness, for instance, he responds:

Man brachte Gerichter/ deßwegen Vor-Essen genannt/ weil sie gewürzt/ und vor dem Trunck zu geniessen verordnet waren/ damit derselbe desto besser gienge:

Jtem Bey-Essen/ weil sie bei dem Trunck nicht übel schmecken solten/ allerhand

The nobles are piggish insolents who display a complete lack of compassion for the other members of society. Ramsay’s ability to entertain at the expense of hundreds of starving and exploited peasants connects him to Simplicius’ initial description of the Ständebaum. Ramsay steals the lower classes’ wealth “hinder sieben Schlossen” and leaves them starving in the streets (59).

Nobles secure their position through taxation and monopolization of resources. There is no other valid reason for their being at the top of the Ständebaum. The discussion between Simplicius and the secretary makes this clear:

Als wir dergestalt vom Dintenfaß (welches mich allerdings an deß Fortunati Säckel gemahnet) discurirten/ kam mir das Titular-Buch ohngefähr in die Händ/ darinnen fande ich/ meines damaligen Davorhaltens/ mehr Thorheiten/ als mir bißhero noch nie vor Augen kommen; Ich sagte zu Secretario, dieses alles sind ja Adams-Kinder/ und eines Gemächts miteinander/ und zwar nur von Staub und
Aschen! Wo kompt dann ein so grosser Unterscheid her? …/ Der Secretarius
muste meiner lachen/ und nam die Mühe/ mir eines und deß andern Titul/ und alle
Wort insonderheit außzulegen/ ich aber beharrete darauff. (99)
The secretary responds with laughter, for he recognizes in the boy a kind of innocent abroad,
whose questions are as naïve as they are ingenuous. He seeks therefore to divert Simplicius not
because his questioning is out of line, but because he is unable – indeed, no one is – to provide
an adequate answer to the unjust social realities that the boy is just now becoming aware of.
Admitting this openly would prove the boy’s point, of course, and endanger his own position in
Hanau. The secretary hopes his reaction will encourage Simplicius to drop the subject altogether.
Inexperienced in political rhetoric and unable to read its meanings, however, Simplicius presses
him further. The secretary can now only react in anger, since he is annoyed that a simple boy
presumes to see through an unjust façade in which he and his fellow men are complicit.

Simplicius as court fool gains access to a world from which he – and most of
Grimmelhausen’s readers – have been excluded. He is an anomaly. Branded the “fool,” he
understands the reality of life with greater clarity than anyone else in Hanau. His role ironically
reveals that the real fools of Hanau are the nobles who label him:

Gleich wie mich nun jedermann von selbiger Zeit an das Kalb nennete/ also
nennete ich hingegen auch einen jeden mit einem besonderen spöttischen Nach-
Nahmen/ dieselbe fielen mehrentheils der Leut/ und sonderlich meines Herrn
Bedüncken nach gar Sinnreich/ dann ich tauffte jedwedern nachdem seine
Qualitäten erforderten. Summariter davon zu redden/ so schätzte mich männlich
vor einen ohnweisen Thoren/ und ich hielte jeglichen von einen gescheiden Narrn.
Dieser Gebrauch ist meines Erachtens in der Welt noch üblich/ massen ein jeder
mit seiner Witz zu frieden/ und sich einbildet/ er sey der Gescheideste unter allen.

(140)

The fool’s costume is a mask Simplicius wears to deliver the author’s criticism. He is made to don the calf’s suit only when his questioning becomes too uncomfortable for those around him. For Ramsay, putting Simplicius in a fool’s costume is a way of neutralizing him, and it provides an easy excuse for disregarding the criticism. Yet this simultaneously gives Simplicius free rein of topics and manner of presentation. As Anne Leblans argues, Simplicius’ role “allows him to be the only person at the court able to shed social conventions and speak the truth at will” (496). His behavior in Ramsay’s home, Leblans continues, is another paradox. The nobles assert their superiority by making fun of the fool, but are not sharp enough to realize they are being manipulated by him (505). As fool, Simplicius is both insider and outsider, granted access to the inner circle of court life but never allowed legitimacy. Through Simplicius, Grimmelshausen aims to achieve a more fundamental reversal: to show that the peasants are as close to true nobility as the nobles themselves (506).
CHAPTER FIVE

TRUNK: THE SOLDIERY

The soldiery comprises the trunk of the Ständebaum, and Simplicus’ wartime experiences mirror many of those of Grimmelshausen himself, who worked, among other things, as a wagoner, stable boy, musketeer, and dragoon (Wagener 125). As a class, or rather, a group, the soldiery is trapped between the peasantry and nobility and suffers as much harsh punishment as it inflicts on both of those classes; soldiers behave, with few exceptions, in ST with extreme cruelty. Simplicius ends up in the company of two men who represent the extremes of military personalities. Olivier is the embodiment of the evil soldier; Herzbruder is the good soldier.

Just as the system of heavy taxation keeps the peasantry at the bottom of the tree, soldiers are also denied mobility. Heavy restrictions on promotion keep common soldiers in the servitude of noble officers. Unable to traverse the Ständebaum’s slippery patch, two soldiers argue over the value of this convention. Adelhold begins, responding to the sergeant’s vexation:

DJeses verdroβ einen Feldwaibel so sehr/ daß er trefflich anfienge zu schmälen/ aber Adelhold sagte: Weistu nicht/ daß man je und allwegen die Kriegs-Aempter mit Adelichen Personen besetzt hat? als welche hierzu am tauglichsten seyn; graue Bärt schlagen dein Feind nicht/ man könte sonst ein Heerd Böck zu solchem Geschäft dingen. (63)

The sergeant responds:

Zu dem gebührt dem Adel der Vorzug in allwege/ wie solches leg. Honor. dig. de honor. zu sehen. Joannes de Platea will außdrücklich/ daß man in Bestallung der
Aempter dem Adel den Vorzug lassen/ und die Edelleut den Plebijeis schlecht soll vorziehen; ja solches ist in allen Rechten bräuchlich/ und wird in H. Schrifft bestetigt/ dann Beata terra, cujus Rex nobilis est, sagt Syrach cap. 10. welches ein herrlich Zeugnus ist deß Vorzugs/ so dem Adel gebührt/ …/ Uber das hat der Adel mehr Mittel/ ihren Untergehörigen mit Geld/ und den schwachen Compagnien mit Volck zu helfen/ als ein Bauer. (64)

The promotional system is not based on loyal service but wealth and provides no incentive for common soldiers to remain in the army. Such a structure dashes the hope of any soldier striving to rise to the top. Negus observes: “One of the Ständebaum’s salient features is the slippery trunk between commissioned officers and the lower ranks. Of the latter, very few manage to bridge this gap between nobles and the commoners, which is even greater in the military than in civilian life” (83).

The sergeant explains that commoners would be incapable officers because they do not possess the financial means to support troops, yet it is the nobility that is responsible for the misappropriation of wealth. The faults of the system owe to the unwillingness of the nobility to correct them. Up to the end of the argument it seems as if the sergeant might win; but the conflict remains unresolved when Grimmelshausen has Simplicius put an end to it with the comment: “Ich mochte dem alten Esel nicht mehr zuhören,/ sondern gönnete ihm/ was er klagte/ weil er oft die arme Soldaten prügelte wie die Hund” (67). Satiric criticism is directed at both parties, illustrating the weakness in each man’s position and the system as a whole (Negus 84). Resolution will not be achieved without complete overhaul of the Ständebaum’s value system.

The Ständebaum system is fundamentally advantageous to the nobility, which contributes less than its share, rather than rewarding those who make the greater contributions to society.
Soldiers defend nobles and peasants feed them, yet there is no recognition of any of the work being done by either party. This, as the Feldwaibel describes, causes the common soldier’s initial fervor to dwindle:

Welcher Narr wolte dann dienen/ wenn er nicht hoffen darff/ durch sein Wolverhalten befördert/ und also umb seine getreue Dienst belohnt zu werden/
…/ Es heist/ Die Lampe leucht dir fein/ doch must du sie auch laben Mit fett Oliven-Safft/ die Flamm sonst bald verlischt: Getreuer Dienst durch Lohn gemehrt wird/ und erfrischt; Soldaten Dapfferkeit will Unterhaltung haben. (65-66)

Soldiers are never given enough food, adequate shelter, or recognized for their service. Simplicius’ descriptions of military life are dominated by tales of lice infestations and starvation; he himself began life as a soldier a kidnap victim. Simplicius swears loyalty to one side, but quickly changes positions when it becomes more favorable. Provided with no incentive, he too fails to remain steadfast.

Olivier. Simplicius’ experience among the troops introduces him to two dichotomous characters, Olivier and Herzbruder. The two initially belong to the same regiment, but Herzbruder must leave after being framed by Olivier. Olivier represents the ruthless soldier; he routinely tortures and brutalizes his victims with impunity. In one instance, he robs two women and locks them in a cellar with their children. Simplicius expresses his shock at Oliver’s callousness:

In Summa/ ich wuste kein sicher Mittel zu meiner Flucht zu ersinnen/ vornemlich da ich mich in einem wilden Wald befand/ und weder Weg noch Steg wuste; über das wachte mir mein Gewissen auch auff/ und quälte mich/ weil ich die Gutsch

Olivier rationalizes his actions with a bizarre twist of logic, but common enough to the mind of soldiers engaged in brutality: “mein dapfferer Simplici, ich versichere dich/ daß die Rauberey das aller-Adelichste Exercitium ist/ das man dieser Zeit auff der Welt haben kan! Sag mir/ wie viel Königreich und Fürstenthümer sind nicht mit Gewalt erraubt und zu wegen gebracht worden?” (406) His actions, that is, are held up as the most estimable reflection of noble character. Besides – and here Grimmelshausen allows Olivier to betray through his rationalization one of the nasty truths about the provenance of the noble class – royal and aristocratic possessions have always derived from violence. In justifying his own behavior, Olivier paradoxically unmasks a profound social injustice. Like him, the nobility has always robbed the poor, including women and children, leaving them starving and imprisoned in their social class.

**Herzbruder.** In contrast to Olivier, Herzbruder represents the honorable soldier. His reaction during their pilgrimage to Einsidlen (when Simplicius, unlike his devout companion, boils the pilgrimage peas soft before putting them in his shoes), shows he is the consummate soldier and Christian, one deeply committed to being an honorable human being.
Ach daß Gott erbarm/ antwortet er/ was hastu gethan? du hättest sie lieber gar auß den Schuhen gelassen/ wenn du nur dein Gespött darmit treiben wilt/ ich muß sorgen/ daß Gott dich und mich zugleich straffe; halte mir nichts vor unguß Bruder/ wenn ich dir auß brüderlicher Liebe Teutsch herauß sage/ wie mirs umbs Hertz ist/ nemlich diß/ daß ich besorge wofern du dich nit anderst gegen Gott schickest/ es stehe deine Seeligkeit in höchster Gefahr. (450)

Herzbruder is disturbed by Simplicius’ attempt to cheat God and fears for the fate of his soul. He is one of very few characters in the novel – which describes a war in which millions die in ostensible defense of their religious beliefs – who genuinely gives thought to living with an eye to the afterlife.

Despite Herzbruder’s religious devotion he is, like every other soldier in the novel, unappreciated and disrespected. His final scenes illustrate the unscrupulousness of the social system when his loyalty goes unrewarded and he is left penniless and wounded:

Jn dem ich nun so speculierte/ hinckte ein Kerl in die Stub/ an einem Stecken in der Hand/ der hatte einen verbundenen Kopff/ einen Arm in der Schlinge/ und so elende Kleider an/ daß ich ihm kein Heller darumb geben hätte; so bald ihn der Haußknecht sahe/ wolte er ihn außtreiben/ weil er übel stuncke/ und so voll Läus kroche/ daß man die ganzte Schwabenhaid damit besetzen könte; er aber bat/ man wolte ihm doch umb Gottes willen zulassen/ sich nur ein wenig zu wärmen. (439)

Herzbruder’s condition exemplifies the soldiers’ argument on the Ständebaum. Devoted soldiers share the same fate as their disloyal counterparts. There is no incentive to refrain from stealing, raping, or committing treason. The ultimate injustice is manifested in Herzbruder’s death. The noble hero, rather than being revered for his service, is left to die after having his testicles shot
off – an appropriate image of impotence and marginalization – and he leaves the world in a state of pain, misery, and destitution.

The episodes surrounding both Herzbruder and Olivier also show that those who live for immediate gratification prosper. The corrupt system rewards individuals who have no concern for their religious lives and casts off those who do. A religious war fought within the confines of the Ständebaum society is hypocritical. The unavailing attempts of the people on the tree to bring about religious unity are futile since no one makes religion a life priority or cares about the fate of the soul.
CHAPTER SIX

UTOPIAN ALTERNATIVES TO THE STÄNDEBAUM SOCIETY

Grimmelshausen’s social critique would not be complete if he did not offer alternative ideas for the system in place. He does so in three utopian episodes. The Jupiter and Mummelsee episodes make use of fantasy to propose alternatives while the Anabaptist utopia represents a real, that is, historical, group. The three episodes challenge the status quo structure of the Ständebaum and present Simplicius with possible futures. They illustrate what life would be like if society were altered in one of these ways. Simplicius’ reaction to each proposal reflects – within the hermeneutics of Grimmelshausen’s satirical narrative – the strengths and weaknesses of each plan.

The Jupiter episode. A wandering visionary – or is he a madman? or is there a difference? – by the melodramatic name of Jupiter presents Simplicius with the first social alternative. His is a vision of a coming German hero (“Teutscher Held”) who will bring peace, stability, prosperity, and unity to the present chaotic world. This happy condition will not be effected, however, without the sword (Horwich 83). Jupiter explains: “Ich will einen Teutschen Helden erwecken/ der soll alles mit Schärffe deß Schwerds vollenden/ er wird alle verruchte Menschen umbbringen/ und die fromme erhalten und erhöhen” (255). His solution involves a radical overturning of society as it exists and is depicted by the Ständebaum. All citizens would share the same leader and a common religion. Harmony, in other words, would come about through unity, and the result would be lasting, worldwide peace (Horwich 84).
Simplicius rejects Jupiter’s idea: “Ich sagte/ so muß ja ein solcher Held auch Soldaten haben/ und wo man Soldaten braucht/ da ist auch Krieg/ und wo Krieg ist/ da muß der Unschuldig so wol als der Schuldig herhalten!” (255) Jupiter’s plan, Simplicius realizes, does not solve the problems of society and instead re-creates the very problems with their consequences that exist now. According to Horwich, “Grimmelshausen … clearly rejects such a solution, presenting Jupiter as a flea-bitten god who loses all dignity when he is bundled onto a horse by enemy soldiers” (84). His rejection is based not on the reality or fantasy associated with it, but rather the fact that, on balance, it offers no real improvement to the status quo. Although Jupiter’s hero might bring about peace, it would come at the cost of social and intellectual oppression (Meid 120). Horwich concludes that, “the Jupiter episode does not show a utopia disappearing in the face of reality, but rather a utopia that is no utopia at all” (84). The vision is not one of peace but of power (Lefebvre 274). “Jupiter is not the impractical fool nor the wise one, but the dangerous fool who wants to lead the world into the folly of war” (Horwich 84). Simplicius would see no improvement in his life after the coming of the “Teutscher Held,” since Jupiter’s utopia is not an alternative but merely an altered version of reality.

The Mummelsee episode. Grimmelshausen’s second utopian episode occurs after Simplicius is reunited with his Knan and Meuder. He travels to the Mummelsee, a magical lake in the Black Forest that gets its name from the German word mummeln, which means to wrap up or disguise (see article: “Mummeln”). It is “ein verkapptes Wesen…/ also daß nicht jeder seine Art so wol als seine Tieffe ergründen könne/ die doch auch noch nicht erfunden worden ware/ da doch so Hohe Personen sich dessen unterfangen hätten” (487). The Sylphs who inhabit the Mummelsee invite Simplicius into a world of peace and stability, one that could be achieved on earth if a drastic reevaluation of priorities were only to take place.
Simplicius and the Sylph prince engage in their discussion under the water. The environment and the life style of the Sylphs is described in detail; the prince compares them to humans and explains their purpose:

Wir sind keine Geister/ sondern sterbliche Leutlein/ die zwar mit vernünfftigen Seelen begabt/ welche aber sampt den Leibern dahin sterben und vergehen; Gott ist zwar so wunderbar in seinen Wercken/ daß sie keine Creatur außzusprechen vermag/ …/ uns selbsten aber schätzten wir vor das Mittel zwischen euch und allen anderen lebendigen Creaturen der Welt/ sintemal/ ob wir gleich wie ihr vernünfftige Seele haben/ so sterben jedoch dieselbige mit unsern Leibern gleich hinweg/ gleichsam als wie die lebhaffte Geister der unvernünfftigen Thiere in ihrem Todt verschwinden. (496-97)

The Sylphs are mortal, have no soul, and experience no afterlife. The prince explains that he and his subjects are envious of humans for this reason, and he cannot understand why humans do not safeguard their souls:

Wir verwundern uns an euch nichts mehrers/ als daß ihr euch/ da ihr doch zum ewigen seeligen Leben/ und den unendlichen himmlischen Freuden erschaffen/ durch die zeitliche und irdische Wollüste/ die doch so wenig ohne Unlust und Schmerzen/ als die Rosen ohne Dörner sind/ dergestalt betören last/ daß ihr dadurch euer Gerechtigkeit am Himmel verlieret/ euch der fröhlichen Anschauung deß Allerheiligsten Angesichts Gottes beraubt/ und zu den verstossenen Engeln in die ewige Verdammnus stürzet! Ach möchte unser Geschlecht an eurer Stell seyn. (504)
The Sylphs represent what life would be if all people acted like Herzbruder. If they were endowed with a soul, each Sylph would safeguard it and live life to achieve redemption (Horwich 92). The Sylphan alternative for Grimmelshausen would be one in which all men would do the same.

The Sylphs do not attempt to change society externally but work from within and encourage individuals to change their priorities. As a society they understand that personal attitudes and choices are the determinants of how society functions. In contrast to Jupiter they change society from the bottom up, which does not require force or social regulations since individuals police themselves (Horwich 92).

Sylphan reality is a utopia by comparison with human life on earth (Wagener 136). Simplicius’ description reminds the reader of the deplorable state of affairs that actually exists:

Wann ich an dem höchsten anfahen soll/ so mach ich billich den Anfang an den Geistlichen/ …/ gleich wie sie sich allein beifleissen Gott zu dienen/ und auch andere Menschen mehr durch ihr Exempel als ihre Wort zum Reich Gottes zu bringen; Also haben die Weltliche hohe Häupter und Vorsteher allein ihr Absehen auff die liebe Justitiam, welche sie dann ohne Ansehen der Person einem jedwedern/ Arm und Reich/ durch die Banck hinauß schnurgerad ertheilen und widerfahren lassen/ …/ Man weiß von keinem Wucher/ sondern der Wolhätige hilfft dem Dürrtigen auß Christlicher Liebe gantz ohngebetten: Und wenn ein Armer nicht zu bezahlen hat/ ohne mercklichen Schaden und Abgang seiner Nahrung/ so schenckt ihm der Reich die Schuld von freyen Stücken/ …/ jeder weiß und bedenckt/ daß er sterblich ist: Man mercket keinen Neid/ denn es weiß und erkennet je einer den andern vor ein Ebenbild Gottes/ das von seinem
Schöpffer geliebet wird: Keiner erzörnt sich über den andern/ weil sie wissen/ daß Christus vor alle gelitten und gestorben. (507-9)

In Sylphian society each citizen behaves according to highest ideals of law and religion; the ruler is equally enlightened and coordinates rather than dictates the affairs of his subjects. The system also has the advantage of clarity: it is easy to understand, unlike the labyrinthine bureaucracy of seventeenth-century Germany society and government, hence its citizens are the better for it. If such a system were in place all would enjoy serenity and happiness, since competition between the classes has been eliminated, and with it attendant economic and social conflicts. Harmony exists because this society promotes and respects the natural differences. (Horwich 92-93)

The Sylphs present Simplicius with an alternative life that is within his grasp, but he does not seize upon it. He is unable and unwilling to fundamentally change himself even if it means more security. This refusal is reasonable, however, since he has seen the outcome of such a life in Herzbruder. The Mummelsee utopia, while an enlightened, grand idea, would not be realizable in reality, because it requires the complete cooperation from all members of society; and this is impossible. The plan is too noble for society in the real world of the Ständebaum, whose citizens are unwilling to put forth the effort to better themselves in both this life and the next.

The Anabaptists. The Anabaptist episode is the only one of the three that is based on a historical reality rather than a vision. The name Anabaptist was originally applied in scorn to Protestant groups that believed infant baptism contradicted Scripture, and that baptism should only be administered after a person had made the conscious choice to accept Jesus (see article: “Anabaptists”). Anabaptists were prominent in Europe during the sixteenth century and were harshly persecuted under Protestants and Catholics alike. Their principal centers were in
Germany, Switzerland, Moravia, and the Netherlands. The Anabaptist colony described by Simplicius’ is located in the vicinity of the Mummelsee.

The Anabaptists in this episode dwell in a religious sphere between isolation and society, combining the devout religious observation practiced by the hermit with social intercourse; they have struck a balance between serving God and getting along in the world. As Simplicius describes it, their life is a comfortable one characterized by “grosse Schätze und überflüssige Nahrung” (524). This balanced society, on the one hand, avoids the corruption of luxury and makes use of the solitude of the forest to serve God completely; on the other hand, its citizens are allowed to experience the satisfaction of being a part of the world (Horwich 87).

At first it seems that the Anabaptists offer an attractive and pragmatic alternative to the Ständebaum; yet upon further inspection several problems arise. Like Jupiter, Anabaptists aim at a solution from the top down: they change the system to change people in general and leave too little choice to the individual.

Anabaptist society therefore ultimately fails as an alternative, because it does not adequately take human nature into account. Free will yields to necessity – the old doctrine for which Erasmus attacked Luther in one of the seminal controversies of the Reformation. Its otherwise admirable social equality is achieved by stripping the individuality of each member and categorizing him or her according to age, gender, and occupation (Gebauer 231). Labor and goods are distributed evenly, but people’s identities are reduced to their job, or functional role. They work their entire life away, never taking time to enjoy the fruits of their labor (Naumann 84). As Simplicissimus says, “da war eine ein Wäscherin/ die ander eine Bettmacherin/ die dritte Vieh-Magd/ die vierte Schüsselwäscherin/ die fünfte Kellerin/ die sechste hatte das weiß Zeug zu verwalten/ und also auch die übrige alle/ wuste ein jedwedere was sie thun solte” (525). Such cohesion stabilizes their society during wartime but does not permit personal freedom, tolerance, and, eventually, growth. Horwich observes that, “their way of life removes the individual’s personal freedom and ignores the human desire for change. Such a system preserves order but would never allow its members to express their own wants and desires” (88). The Anabaptist utopia thwarts hopes and dreams by assigning its members tasks that determine their entire existence.

Grimmelshausen himself would appear to prefer a mixed form, not fully realized by any of the utopian alternatives – none of them in the final analysis is practicable, therefore “utopian” (u-topia: no place) – of social harmony achieved by reasonable, non-violent means and springing
inevitably from the natural changes and development from within the individual. Ideal society would treat all members equally (egalitarianism) and allows for the free play of individuality. Work would be distributed evenly and people remain constantly aware of their own mortality. They would understand that their purpose on earth must come from a deeply spiritual relationship with God. Simplicius is unable to commit to such actions at this time, both because he himself is too politically and socially and religiously immature, and because the alternatives available are unworkable. Not surprisingly, the three utopian episodes end on a melancholy tone, and he must admit that, while change may be envisioned by individuals and individual groups, society as a whole likely will never put aside the vices that keep it locked into an unjust structure like the Ständebaum.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Each utopia, while flawed, affects Simplicius’ decision to leave the world as it exists in reality and devote himself to a life of hermetic contemplation on a desert island. This is the subject of book six of ST, otherwise known as the Continuatio. The Mummelsee Sylphs exemplify the life that Simplicius should lead (piety, modesty, servitude), and the Anabaptist colony’s regulations provide a partial solution for achieving such an existence (organization, delegation of responsibility, abstention from worldly pleasures). Jupiter’s solution reveals the common goal all the utopias, to unite all people to create lasting peace. All three episodes, however, demonstrate, with baroque certainty, that liberation from the unjust system is not possible because of man’s natural and unimproveable attachment to material possessions and wealth. Escape from the unjust hierarchical social system with its materialistic vices may be accomplished only through the chiliastic act of conversion, both spiritual and social. Secular alternatives fall short of the radical inversion of reality. The means are unnatural, as is the result: a world upside down. This iconoclastic alternative is folly in the eyes of the Ständebaum order – but it is, as Erasmus (one of Grimmelshausen’s great models) so famously demonstrated in his satire of 1534, Laus Stultitiae (The Praise of Folly). Only as a hermit in the wilderness – in imitation of Jesus’ turning away from the press of necessity in his own time – does Simplicius enter a sphere of circumstances that enable him to reflect critically and effectively upon his life and that of mundane society and to offer – unlike the ineffectual utopian alternatives within the first five books of ST – an authentic alternative, however radical, however generally unworkable,
to life under the shade of the Ständebaum. His memoirs – “Die Beschreibung deß Lebens eines seltzamen Vaganten/ genant Melchior Sternfels von Fuchshaim/ wo und welcher gestalt Er nemlich in diese Welt kommen/ was er darinn gesehen/ gelernt/ erfahren und außgestanden/ auch warumb er solche wieder freywillig quittirt. Überauß lustig/ und männlich nutzlich zu lesen” (ST II) – are brought back to mundane society at last by a Dutch sea captain, as a new gospel, as it were, from another world, and become the first written draft for a new social order based on radical Innerlichkeit. Few, doubtless, will follow its precepts. But some, like the Pietists already creating powerful spiritual communities (including not only churches, but orphanages, workshops, schools, and printing presses) that share Grimmelshausen’s essential ideas, in Halle and Quedlinburg and elsewhere. We may trace the course of these ideas from Grimmelshausen to Thomasius to Klopstock and, at last, Goethe, in 1796, who gives them their ultimate expression in the moving spiritual confessions of a “schöne Seele” in the sixth book of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre
WORKS CITED


