

Hubert Kennedy

Fore- and Afterwords

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Contents

Introduction	4
Foreword to: <i>Paedophilia: The Radical Case</i> (1982) by Tom O'Carroll	6
Preface to: "Ecco! The new gay literature in Italy" (1983) by Francesco Gnerre	10
Introduction to: <i>Better Angel</i> (1995) by Richard Meeker (i.e., Forman Brown)	12
Nachwort zu: <i>Der Puppenjunge</i> (1999) von John Henry Mackay	15
Preface and Afterword to: <i>The Swimmer</i> (2001) by John Henry Mackay	27
Introduction and Afterword to: <i>Three Novels</i> (2001) by John Henry Mackay	40
Introduction and Afterword to: <i>The Hustler</i> (2002) by John Henry Mackay	60

Introduction

I have written introductions and prefaces for only a few books. Of the seven included here, four were for books by John Henry Mackay. These are, frankly, repetitious. And yet, each has some special items of interest, so that I hope the repetitions may be excused.

Tom O'Carroll's book *Paedophilia: The Radical Case* was published in 1980 in England. In 1982 Sasha Alyson in Boston was planning an American edition. When he read my review (in *The Advocate*) of the original book he asked me to write a foreword for it. I was glad to do so, for I found the book fascinating.

I spent the academic year 1982–1983 in Europe, mostly in Germany, but with visits to Italy, where I became acquainted with the novelist and literary critic Francesco Gnerre in Rome. I persuaded him to let me translate an article by him on the new gay literature in Italy. When it was published in *The Advocate* in May 1983 I wrote a brief preface for it.

When the publisher Sasha Alyson in Boston was looking for an older novel of gay male interest to reprint he asked me for a recommendation. My first choice was *Better Angel* by Richard Meeker. Alyson published it in 1987 with the introduction he asked me to write for it. Both of us believed “Richard Meeker” to be a pseudonym, but were unable to identify the real author. Following publication, Forman Brown, who had had a long and successful musical and theatrical career, came forward and identified himself as the true author of the book. Alyson then reissued it under the author's real name and asked me to revise my introduction for it. I was glad to do so and pleased that I did not have to correct any guesses in it. In fact, I essentially added only an additional paragraph at the beginning.

The new edition of John Henry Mackay's novel *Der Puppenjunge* by the Verlag rosa Winkel (Berlin) in 1999 was the occasion for me to write an afterword for it. But to be honest, I had little to do with it. The editor Wolfram Setz made a compilation from my earlier writings on Mackay to produce a suitable afterword, which he put into German—and put my name on it. So be it. I have included it here.

The final three items in this collection were written for self-publication of my translations of works by Mackay. As I said above, they are (necessarily) repetitious, but I be-

lieve the reader may find something of interest in each—enough, I hope, to want to read the whole books.

Other introductions and prefaces by me are in works that are available on my web site and are not included here.

Hubert Kennedy

Foreword to: *Paedophilia: The Radical Case*, by Tom O'Carroll (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1982), pp. 5–8.

Paedophilia was published in England in October 1980; shortly thereafter Tom O'Carroll was sentenced to two years in prison for 'conspiracy to corrupt the public morals.' Writing the book was not his crime (the charge is explained in Chapter 11), but his doing so angered the judge and was listed as a factor in determining the length of his sentence – one more instance of the chilling power of the State to silence any positive discussion of paedophilia, the sexual love for children. These forces are at work on this side of the Atlantic, too. In Toronto, *The Body Politic*, a gay monthly, was charged with obscenity for publishing an article on man/boy love, while in the United States the FBI has joined forces with local police forces in the harassment of the North American Man/Boy Love Association.

How irrational the opponents of paedophilia can be is shown by the statement of Police Detective Lloyd Martin before a Congressional subcommittee on Sexual Exploitation of Children (1977), 'To me, a crime against a child has no equal. It's worse than homicide,' and by the following exchange with the chairman:

Mr. Conyers: We have some evidence... that sometimes the young people don't want to, because of the relationship they imagined had existed, don't want to testify and don't want to turn in the adult.

Mr. Martin: That is true in some cases.

Mr. Conyers: Have you seen that happen?

Mr. Martin: Yes, sir, and in fact, the child molester or chickenhawk is usually the victim's best friend.

What meaning, indeed, can 'child molester' and 'victim' have in this context? Or consider the remark, before the same subcommittee, of Dr. Judianne Densen-Gerber (whose phrase, 'spiritual murder' is described as 'nonsense' by O'Carroll): 'Even if I had to give up a portion of my First Amendment rights to stop this stuff, then I'd be willing to do it.' The point is, it is not her First Amendment rights that are in question.

If paedophiles face difficulties in getting their views aired, they face even more problems in their personal lives – problems that are similar here and in England, due in part to our common cultural heritage, and in particular to our tradition of British common law. Thus, much of what O’Carroll has to say applies to the situation of paedophiles in North America. In some cases, in fact, it applies more directly here, for he frequently quotes American sources, to apply them in a British context. There are major differences, however, in political awareness and in the types of organization of those pressing for an open discussion of paedophilia.

While the majority of the members of Britain’s Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE), of which O’Carroll was Chairperson, are attracted to adolescent males, the organization represents wider interests, and this is illustrated by O’Carroll himself, whose attraction is to prepubescent boys (and to a lesser extent, girls). The North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which is the organization in the United States and Canada that is most similar to PIE, is mainly concerned, as the name suggests, with cross-generational relationships among males (although females are not excluded from membership), and in practice most adult members appear attracted to adolescent boys, who enjoy equal membership in the organization. NAMBLA, in fact, is most anxious that the views, not only of boy-lovers, but of the boys themselves, be heard. Although this puts NAMBLA closer to the mainstream of the modern gay movement, it and PIE have been the object of much the same criticism.

Paedophilia addresses issues that are as foreign to most gay men (and lesbians) as to heterosexuals. In this sense it is not a gay book. Its overall view, however, is one of sexual liberation, and its arguments should be welcome to a wide audience. But the topic is controversial, and it is not the least merit of the book that it opens up for rational discussion areas hardly touched on until now. Puberty, for example, has often been seen as a natural boundary, so that for many people sexual acts with a prepubescent child are literally unthinkable. O’Carroll sees the ‘barrier’ as a sacred cow, and he presents a strong case for his view. He is at his best discussing the notion of consent. Here he meets the various objections head-on, beginning with the simplistic argument that unequal power excludes the possibility of consent. He makes a convincing case that the powerful side in a paedophilic relation is not automatically, or generally, the adult.

Nor does O'Carroll see his goal of a saner world for paedophiles and the children they love as Utopian. For example, in answer to those who say that abolition of an age of consent would leave the children unprotected, PIE has proposed legal safeguards that have as their aim the strengthening of the child's right to say yes or no. PIE's proposals (discussed in Chapter 6) seem unduly complicated, but are clearly better than the current no-win situation in Britain and North America (where a boy is often forced to testify against the only man who ever showed him real love, while the man may be confined for life as 'sexually dangerous') and could well serve as a basis for further discussion.

The reforms recommended by PIE, and endorsed by O'Carroll, are not very radical after all, for they are placed within a context of the value of family life. One reviewer (Michael Bronski in *NAMBLA News*) thinks that O'Carroll 'grossly underestimates the effects and damages that heterosexuality and the family have had on people's lives.' But in our excessively sex-negative society O'Carroll's idea that families should not 'deny children their sexual life, including the possibility of sexual contact with adults' will seem radical to many.

Following a biographical opening chapter, O'Carroll systematically explores the philosophical, legal, and practical questions of paedophilia. Not every related topic could be included, of course. For example, he does not deal very specifically with what the Dutch magazine *PAN* called the 'painful problem of a loved one's ageing out of attractiveness to his adult lover'. Nor, as O'Carroll notes, did he have space to deal adequately with the questions of why sex particularly in 'advanced' societies generates such powerful feelings of disgust and revulsion, or with paedophilic incest. He does cover a large amount of ground, however, and covers it well, for he writes not only from personal experience, but from a thorough acquaintance with the literature on the subject. His book is well documented and the concluding bibliography of works consulted by O'Carroll is in itself a valuable reference list.

Part three of *Paedophilia* traces the history of the paedophile movement in Britain, culminating in the vicious attacks on PIE and O'Carroll personally. The book closes on an optimistic note, however, with the appearance in public of boy-lovers in the United States, the acquittal of *The Body Politic* in Toronto on charges of obscenity, and the at least partial acceptance of paedophiles in Holland. Yet, less than three years after com-

pleting the book, O'Carroll is in prison and other members of PIE have faced trial as well; three members of The Body Politic collective were retried on the same charges of obscenity for which they were acquitted earlier (and although they were again acquitted, the entire collective faces yet another charge); and in the United States the FBI and local police persecution of NAMBLA has led to the imprisonment of at least one of its Steering Committee members. Only in Holland does the picture appear to have remained the same.

Holland is the country that has gone the furthest in the acceptance of paedophilia. This is due in part, O'Carroll explains, to 'the spirit of tolerance in the Dutch system,' which has a tradition of individualism. As the German writer John Henry Mackay wrote in the preface to the 1924 edition of his boy-love writings (published in Holland): 'At bottom, each person only understands his own love, and every other is foreign and unintelligible to him, if not repugnant. Here, too, only an understanding of the right to equal freedom, the tolerance of different life-styles as the last and highest result of civilization, can have a beneficial effect.'

I believe, with Mackay, that 'an understanding of the right to equal freedom' will bring an advance in all of our lives. This applies to children too, for the denial of the sexual nature of children and the suppression of their human rights by making nearly all forms of sexual expression legally criminal is true exploitation. For them and for the adults who love them the effect of O'Carroll's book is sure to be beneficial. It is both passionate and calmly reasoned, the best on its topic. Alyson Publications is to be congratulated on making it available to the American public in this moderately priced edition.

Hubert Kennedy

June 1982

Providence, Rhode Island

“Ecco! The new gay literature in Italy” by Francesco Gnerre. *The Advocate*, no. 367 (12 May 1983): 33, 36–37. Translator’s preface (p. 33).

Born in the Italian province of Avellino in 1944, Francesco Gnerre completed his university studies in literature and sociology in Rome, where he now teaches Italian and Latin literature in a classical secondary school. He also participates in a research group of the sociology of literature department of the University of Rome. He has contributed articles on the theme of gay liberation to *Lambda*, *Il Manifesto*, *Rinascita* and *Libertaria*, and is an active collaborator on the journal *Babilonia*, mentioned in his article.

Gnerre’s article is complete in itself but may also be seen as an updating of his *L’eroe negato: Il personaggio omosessuale nella narrativa italiana contemporanea* (The Denied Hero: The Homosexual Character in Contemporary Italian Fiction; Milan: Gammalibri, 1981). An excellent survey of the treatment of gays in Italian fiction, it provides essential background for a study of this topic.

From my own acquaintance, limited to be sure, of the novels discussed by Gnerre, I can only agree with all his conclusions. In particular, I share his excitement in looking forward to reading the novel of the charming Mario Mieli, whom I would like to thank here for directing my attention to the recent Italian novels of gay interest.

For those who may wish to sample some of the novels discussed by Gnerre, a word about their linguistic difficulty may be in order. Pasolini’s *Amado mio* (and *Atti impuri*, in the same volume) are beautifully poetic, and therefore somewhat difficult, but at least the words can be found in a standard dictionary. The same cannot be said of the language of Tondelli. *Altri libertini* and *Pao pao* are told in the language of their protagonists: In the first this is an ungrammatical mixture of dime novel, street language and slang; in the second it is the authentic language of a sometimes queenly army recruit. Both will be difficult with only two years of school Italian (some words they use are not in your dictionary!), but the context may help in learning the common Italian expressions for cock, fuck, blowjob, faggot, queen, etc. *Estate* is written in more ordinary Italian and, indeed, is grammatically simple in that the sentences tend to be short and crisp. The sentences do not always hang together, however, so that word meanings may not be recognized from their context. A large vocabulary is required.

The novel *Il mirto e la rosa* by Gamila Ghali (Palermo: Sellerio, 1982) may also be mentioned, although it was not discussed by Gnerre, perhaps because it is in the old tradition of “distancing” the subject (it is set in a remote Arabian country in a remote time) and, indeed, hiding behind a pseudonym. It is not “liberated” but is a gem of a story: the boy-lover’s dream of an ever faithful boy, whose beauty is lovingly described. The language is very simple, but beautiful Italian—a must for beginners.

Hubert Kennedy

Introduction to *Better Angel* by Richard Meeker (i.e., Forman Brown) (pp. v–ix). Boston: Alyson Publications. Revised introduction in third Alyson edition (pp. 5–8), 1995. [The following is the revised introduction.]

INTRODUCTION

When Sasha Alyson asked me in 1986 to recommend older gay novels that deserved new editions, I immediately lent him my copy of *Better Angel*. After reading it, he agreed with my recommendation and kindly asked me to write an introduction for it. Little did I suspect that seven years later the very copy I lent Sasha would be autographed “Forman Brown aka Richard Meeker” and I would meet its gracious, charming, and witty author. For, to everyone’s delight, after the publication of the novel by Alyson, Forman Brown identified himself as the author, writing under the name Richard Meeker. The success of that new edition has prompted Alyson to publish the present edition, identifying Forman Brown more closely with the novel — and giving me a welcome opportunity to update my earlier introduction.

Better Angel is probably the first novel published in America to show male homosexuality in a positive light — it even provides its gay hero with an apparently happy ending. In this it also contrasts with many later novels, but it must have especially surprised early readers, who just a couple of years before its appearance in 1933 had only the tortured experiences of *Twilight Men* and the tortuous search for explanations of this “sickness” in *Strange Brother* — novels whose titles tell all. Here, instead, is “love’s coming of age” in a story that no doubt shocked some and delighted others, and perhaps did both at the same time.

The 1933 edition is a rarity today, as is the paperback reprint that appeared in the 1950s with the title *Torment*. This later edition was reviewed in 1957 in the early gay journal *Mattachine Review* by Richard Meyer, who noted that its hero, Kurt Gray, was “perhaps the healthiest homosexual in print.” James Levin, in his more recent sociological study of gay literature, *The Gay Novel: The Male Homosexual Image in America* (1983), comments: “Perhaps it is this very wholesomeness which caused it to be seen as less than realistic in a period when few gays thought well of themselves.” And indeed,

after noting the novel's happy ending, Meyer had added in 1957 that "I wouldn't bet that they lived happily ever after." His review concludes: "Perhaps Richard Meeker, who wrote this pioneer and still highly readable novel 24 years ago, could tell us what became of Kurt — and of himself. For the promise of this obviously youthful work ought to be fulfilled in a sequel." But there was no sequel, for the author was busy with other projects and — Meyer would have lost his bet — was busily living "happily ever after."

Much in the novel is obviously autobiographical. The picture of childhood in small-town Barton, Michigan, in the early decades of this century is especially convincing. Roger Austen, in his *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* (1977), even found "a touch of Dreiser realism in the town revival service where they sing 'Just As I Am' and where Kurt goes forward to be 'saved.'" Readers who have shared this agonizing experience will find this episode utterly authentic — and poignant. Equally authentic for the period is Kurt's very real fear of the physical dangers of masturbation. Also in Michigan, it may be noted, is the town of Battle Creek, from which the baleful influence of Dr. Kellogg ("The physician rarely meets more forlorn objects than the victims of prolonged self-abuse") lasted well into the twentieth century.

By the time Kurt leaves Barton for Ann Arbor to enroll in the University of Michigan, he has overcome these fears. By the time he graduates, his religious scruples, too, have faded as his faith turns to the power of love to justify his sexual activity — no longer a solitary vice. Kurt in the meantime has read much on homosexuality, including Edward Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age*, with its high-minded, Whitmanesque ideal of same-sex love. In literature, he rejects the "decadence" of Oscar Wilde, while giving Frank Wedekind special mention. (Brown probably had in mind here not the question of Lulu's "father": "Do you still practice French?" but rather the happy homosexual scene, with its pledges of love, in *Spring's Awakening*.)

Kurt's musical studies at the university lead in an untroubled fashion to a successful career as teacher and composer. James Levin complains, gently, that "Emphasis on artistic, sensitive, gay male personalities perpetuates an invalid stereotype." But not all the relatively small cast of characters in this story fit the type, and in Kurt's case Brown's obvious knowledge of contemporary trends in musical composition allows an added touch of realism.

Since the major part of the novel is set around 1930 (two characters are seen at a silent movie, while a year later another plans to make a “talkie”), it is certainly realistic that no call is made to “come out” publicly. Yet Brown allows his indignation at the treatment of gay people to show in Kurt’s outburst over Frank Harris’s autobiography:

What I objected to all through the book was Harris’s opacity, his inability to see how little difference there really is between his sort of dallying — and ours...

The only difference — the only damned difference is that for us there’s no way of getting social sanction —so we go around the world like a lot of sorry ghosts, being forever ashamed of a thing we’ve no reason to be ashamed of.

Brown’s outrage also shows in the brief episode describing police entrapment. For the most part, however, the conflicts in the novel are the interior ones of coming to terms with one’s own sexuality, personality, and temperament — of reconciling our animal and spiritual nature, sex and love, for in his own way Kurt comes close to Plato’s idea of love as “the desire and pursuit of the whole.”

That love is the theme of this charming novel is indicated already in the three-line epigraph (the beginning of Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 144”), from which the novel’s title is taken. But Brown apparently felt that his was a pioneering treatment of this perennial theme, and he must have felt the need for it. He has one of his characters planning to write a book “about us,” one that is “to be a sort of vindication of our kind of loving,” adding: “Nobody’s ever done it, really.” And his hero, Kurt Gray, reflects earlier in the novel: “Someone will be brave enough to write such a thing someday, to be believed, and to escape unscathed. Not now.” Fortunately for us, Forman Brown was brave enough to write it. Happily, he also escaped unscathed and has enjoyed the satisfaction of knowing that he helped many others growing up gay to accept their kind of love as genuine and good.

HUBERT KENNEDY

Nachwort zu: *Der Puppenjunge* (Verlag rosa Winkel, 1999), S. 341–352. Zusammen-
gestellt und übersetzt von Wolfram Setz.

Hubert Kennedy

Der Dichter der namenlosen Liebe

Ich bin der Pfeil, der von der Sehne springt,
Und durch die Nacht der Zeiten schwirrend singt –
Muth hier, dort Trost, und Allen Heilung bringt:
Heil, wenn ihm Heilung ohne Tod gelingt!
Sagitta bin ich!
– Wisse: bin der Pfeil,
Der tötet oder heilt . . .
Steh! – – oder – enteil'!

Sagitta, der Dichter der »namenlosen« Liebe, ist John Henry Mackay (1864–1933), der deutsche Dichter mit dem schottischen Namen. 1864 wurde er in Greenock in der Nähe von Glasgow geboren, doch schon zwei Jahre später, nach dem Tode des Vaters, kehrte die Mutter mit ihm in ihre deutsche Heimat zurück. 1883 verließ er die Schule, war ein Jahr lang Lehrling bei einem Verlagsbuchhändler, studierte dann in Kiel, Leipzig und Berlin. Es folgten Jahre des Reisens, längere Zeit lebte er in London, Paris, Rom und Zürich. 1892 ging er nach Berlin, wo er sich bald dauerhaft für den Rest seines Lebens niederließ. Dort war er 1897 schon so bekannt, daß ihn Arno Holz in seinem Stück *Sozialaristokraten* erkennbar als Vorbild für Frederick S. Bellermann nehmen konnte: ein »deutsch dichtender Amerikaner, Anfang Dreißig« mit »beginnendem Fettansatz«, »ganz kleine Koteletts, Glatze. Das übrige blond. In jeder Beziehung durchaus korrekt! Beim

Sprechen sich überstürzend. Stößt ein klein wenig mit der T-zunge an. Kleidung letzte englische Mode, aber nicht übertrieben« – bis auf den »Amerikaner« ein zutreffendes Bild (Zitate nach der Ausgabe von Theo Meyer, 1980, S. 3 und 10).

Bellermann-Mackay wird vorgestellt als Verfasser der *Anarchisten* und als Entdecker von Max Stirner. Mackays Monographie *Max Stirner. Sein Leben und sein Werk* erschien zwar erst 1898, doch seine Beschäftigung mit dem Verfechter des philosophischen Egoismus und dessen Hauptwerk *Der Eigene und sein Eigentum* war 1897 schon bekannt genug, nicht zuletzt dadurch, daß er – was ebenfalls in den *Sozialaristokraten* erwähnt wird – 1892 an Stirners Haus eine Gedenktafel hatte anbringen lassen.

Seinen ersten großen Erfolg als Dichter hatte Mackay mit der Gedichtsammlung *Sturm* (1888), von der zu seinen Lebzeiten nicht weniger als 20.000 Exemplare erschienen sind. Erfolgreich war auch sein Buch *Die Anarchisten. Kulturgemälde aus dem Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (1891), das innerhalb weniger Jahre in zahlreiche Sprachen übersetzt wurde. So war er um die Jahrhundertwende ein bekannter Schriftsteller, hatte insgesamt drei Bände Gedichte veröffentlicht, außerdem Novellen, Kurzgeschichten und vieles andere – eine erstaunliche Vielfalt von literarischen Genres, darunter erste Beispiele des Naturalismus.

Seine literarische Produktion kulminierte 1901 in dem Roman *Der Schwimmer*, einem der ersten Sport-Romane, der noch heute für die Geschichte des Sport-Schwimmens von Bedeutung ist.

*

1905 betrat Sagitta die literarische Bühne mit Gedichten in der Zeitschrift *Der Eigene*, die, 1896 von Adolf Brand begründet, ihren Namen ebenfalls von Stirners Hauptwerk ableitete und 1898 zur »ersten Homosexuellenzeitschrift der Welt« wurde. Mit diesem Schritt in eine neue literarische Öffentlichkeit hatte Mackay eine seiner größten Lebenskrisen überwunden, die durch den Tod der geliebten Mutter 1902 ausgelöst worden war. In seinen Memoiren (*Abrechnung. Randbemerkung zu Leben und Arbeit*, 1932) heißt es dazu (S. 41): »In der Mitte meines Lebens erhob sich, wie eine Rettung zu einem neuen Ziel, die Aufgabe, von der zu sprechen mir immer noch zu früh erscheint (so spät es auch

schon ist)«.

Diese Aufgabe war das Sagitta-Projekt. Er plante eine Reihe von Schriften in unterschiedlichen literarischen Formen, die den gemeinsamen Titel *Die Bücher der namenlosen Liebe* tragen sollten. Alle medizinischen, juristischen und moralistischen Begriffe seiner Zeit lehnte Mackay ab und sprach immer nur von der »namenlosen Liebe«, beeinflusst wohl von Oscar Wildes Plädoyer im Prozeß von 1895, der das Gedicht *Two Loves* seines Freundes Alfred Douglas zitierte, das mit der Zeile endet »I am the Love that dare not speak its name«.

Mackay, der sich bereits 1886, als er Krafft-Ebings *Psychopathia sexualis* las, bewußt geworden war, daß er mit seiner sexuellen Orientierung nicht allein war, stellte sich eine doppelte Aufgabe: Er wollte die Unterstützung von Männern erreichen, die empfanden wie er, und dann die Öffentlichkeit mit seiner Liebe konfrontieren. Er dachte, das Erstere wäre das Einfachere, glaubte, daß es viele geben müßte, die so gelitten hätten wie er und nur auf einen Sprecher warteten. Er beschloß, unter Pseudonym zu schreiben, weil er wußte, wie leicht eine einzelne, öffentlich erhobene Stimme mundtot gemacht werden konnte. Pro Jahr sollten zwei Bücher in einer Auflage von je 1.000 Stück herauskommen und ausschließlich im Abonnement verkauft werden. Im August 1905 wurden die Bestellscheine für die ersten beiden Bücher verschickt, die dann 1906 erschienen: *Die namenlose Liebe – Ein Bekenntniss* und *Wer sind wir? Eine Dichtung der namenlosen Liebe*.

Die Reaktion war enttäuschend. Obwohl seine Adressenliste immer länger wurde, war die Anzahl der Abonnenten so gering, daß ihm weitere Publikationen als unmöglich erscheinen mußten. Die sog. Eulenburg-Affäre, durch die das Thema Homosexualität Gerichte und Medien beschäftigte, veranlaßte ihn jedoch, den Kampf weiterzuführen. Er entschied sich für eine billige Broschüre, die er Ende 1907 an die fast 1.000 Adressen verschickte, die er gesammelt hatte. Ihr Titel: *Gehör! Nur einen Augenblick!* Darin versuchte er, die Bedenken gegen die Liebe zwischen Männern und Knaben zu entkräften.

Ein schwerer Schlag traf ihn im März 1908, als die Polizei nicht nur die Broschüre, sondern auch die beiden ersten Sagitta-Bücher konfiszierte.

Im Oktober 1909 erklärte ein Gericht Bücher und Flugschrift zu »unzüchtigen Schriften«, womit zugleich ihre Vernichtung angeordnet und eine Verbreitung in

Deutschland unter Strafe gestellt war.

Der Kampf um die Gleichberechtigung der Liebe zwischen Männern und Knaben schien verloren, kaum daß er begonnen. In seiner Erinnerung war jener Tag für Mackay der deprimierendste seines Lebens. Nachdem er das Urteil gehört hatte, wanderte er allein durch einen Wald am Rande der Stadt, gewann dabei allmählich sein Selbstbewußtsein zurück, weil er erkannte, daß er getan hatte, was er tun mußte.

Und in der Tat: Mackay fand die Kraft, sein Projekt weiterzuführen. Das dritte der *Bücher der namenlosen Liebe* ist der Roman *Fenny Skaller. Ein Leben der namenlosen Liebe*, den wir nach Friedrich Dobe, dem Freund und Biographen Mackays, als dessen »Lebens- und Liebesbeichte« lesen dürfen (*John Henry Mackay als Mensch*, S. 60). Ferdinand (Fenny) Skaller, kehrt eines Abends, nachdem er vergeblich auf einen neuen Bekannten gewartet hat, nach Hause zurück, wo er die Nacht damit verbringt, die Fotos von zehn Knaben zu betrachten und den Erinnerungen an sie nachzuhängen. So wird die Geschichte eines Mannes erzählt, der sich langsam und schmerzlich seiner Liebe zu Knaben bewußt wird und sie schließlich zu akzeptieren lernt.

Das vierte Buch ist ein kurzer Einakter *Über die Stufen von Marmor. Eine Szene der namenlosen Liebe*, in dem ein deutscher Bildhauer und ein 16jähriger Tourist in Venedig ihre Liebe zueinander entdecken.

Das dritte und vierte Buch wurden erst in der Gesamtausgabe von 1913 veröffentlicht. Anders die später als fünftes Buch bezeichneten *Gedichte der namenlosen Liebe* unter dem Titel *Am Rand des Lebens*, die bereits 1909 in einer Einzelausgabe vorlagen. Unter den Gedichten finden sich viele Verse über unerwiderte Liebe, aber auch solche, die an Richter oder an frühere Freunde adressiert sind. Ihr Inhalt reicht von Sentimentalitäten über die Schilderung flüchtiger sexueller Kontakte bis zu Ratschlägen an andere Knabenliebhaber. Und das erste Gedicht trägt den programmatischen Titel:

Die namenlose Liebe

Weil noch auf ihren jugendlichen Schwingen
Der Duft der unberührten Schönheit liegt,
Der leicht zu Staub in fremder Hand zerfliegt –

So muß ich zart von dieser Liebe singen.

Doch weil, gepaart mit Euren schmutzigen Dingen
In Schlamm und Schmach Ihr sie so tief gezerzt;
Und weil Ihr sie in Nacht und Kerker sperrt –
So will ich frei von dieser Liebe singen.

Und weil mein Lied zu den Verfolgten dringen
Und den Enterbten soll zu dieser Frist,
Weil sie mein eigenes Glück und Unglück ist –
So darf ich hoch von dieser Liebe singen.

Die 1913 erschienene erste Gesamtausgabe der *Bücher der namenlosen Liebe* war besonders unter den »Wandervögeln« verbreitet. Zahlreiche Zuschriften aus ihrem Kreis haben Mackay später bewogen, für die zweite Gesamtausgabe, die 1924 erscheinen konnte, ein handlicheres Format zu wählen. Deren Erscheinen konnte – der Umbruch nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg machte sich bemerkbar – in Zeitungsanzeigen öffentlich angekündigt werden. So war das Jahr 1924 in gewisser Weise ein Höhepunkt, denn 10 Jahre zuvor war das ebenso unmöglich wie 10 Jahre später für mehr als »Tausend Jahre«.

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Es ist nicht überraschend, daß John Henry Mackay schon früh die vom *Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitee* (WhK) und damit vor allem von Magnus Hirschfeld betriebene »Petition an die gesetzgebenden Körperschaften des deutschen Reiches« für eine Revision des § 175 unterzeichnet hat: Sein Name steht auf der ersten, 1898 veröffentlichten Unterschriftenliste (als seine Adresse ist Zürich angegeben, obwohl er damals schon in Berlin lebte). Weniger bekannt ist, daß Mackay auch an Sitzungen des WhK teilgenommen hat. Dies wurde erst in den Memoiren seines langjährigen Freundes Friedrich Dobe enthüllt, die, 1944 geschrieben, erst 1987 publiziert wurden. Von Dobe wissen wir auch, daß Mackay an der von Benedict Friedlaender geprägten und durch dessen frühen Tod

nur kurzlebigen »Secession des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees« beteiligt war.

Seine Kritik an der homosexuellen Befreiungsbewegung in Deutschland (am WhK wie an der *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*) hat Mackay in der Einleitung zur ersten Ausgabe der *Bücher der namenlosen Liebe* formuliert. Seiner Meinung nach waren zwei große Fehler gemacht worden: Man hatte versucht, diese Liebe als »edler und besser« als die heterosexuelle Liebe darzustellen, wo doch »jede Liebe gleich wesensberechtigt« sei, und man hatte versucht, die Freiheit in der Liebe für die Männer auf Kosten der Frauen zu erstreiten. Er sah darin ein »völliges Mißverstehen des großen Gesetzes der Zukunft. Dieses Gesetz heißt Freiheit. Freiheit aber schließt Alle ein und Keinen aus« (S. 62).

Zusätzlich zu diesen grundsätzlichen Einwänden machte er dem WhK noch einen besonderen Vorwurf:

«Diese Liebe, verfolgt von den Richtern und verflucht von den Priestern hat sich zu den Aerzten geflüchtet, als sei sie eine Krankheit, die von ihnen geheilt werden könne. Aber sie ist keine Krankheit. Aerzte haben hier so wenig zu suchen und zu untersuchen, wie Richter, und die sich ihrer angenommen haben wie einer Kranken, irren sich, wenn sie glauben, sie könnten sie aus den Fängen der Gewalt befreien, indem sie mit dieser Gewalt paktieren. Das aber – paktieren – thun sie, und indem sie es thun, suchen sie die Einen auf Kosten der Anderen zu retten. Wohl wissend, wie sehr die ›öffentliche Meinung‹ (deren Beeinflussung ihnen so über Alles wichtig erscheint) grade der Liebe des Aelteren zu dem Jüngerem seines Geschlechts widerstrebt, weil die gedankenlose hier immer nur ›Verführung‹ zu sehen vermag, während sie sich mehr und mehr dem Gedanken einer ›Freigabe der Liebe zwischen Erwachsenen‹ hinneigt, billigen, ja befürworten jene gefährlichen Helfer ein Gesetz, das die Einen freispricht, während es die Anderen verurtheilt. Und das thun sie, die keinerlei Entschuldigung der Unkenntniß und der Voreingenommenheit für sich in Anspruch nehmen können, sondern die wissen, genau wissen, daß hier nicht die Altersstufe, sondern allein die Reife entscheidend sein kann, und die Eingeborenheit, die Unabwendbarkeit und die Unabänderlichkeit dieser Liebe zum gleichen Geschlecht als eine wissenschaftlich begründete Thatsache kennen und lehren!« (S. 62 f.).

Im dem Vorwort, das er in Ergänzung der *Geschichte eines Kampfes um die namenlose Liebe* der zweiten Ausgabe der *Bücher der namenlosen Liebe* (1924) voranstellte, formuliert Mackay einmal mehr klar das individualanarchische Element in seiner Forderung nach Freiheit für alle:

»Mir selbst haben diese zwölf Jahre zwei Erkenntnisse nur bestätigen und vertiefen können. Die eine: daß dieser Liebe allein die Zeit ihre Rettung bringen kann. Auch sie ist, wie alle Fragen unserer Tage, eine soziale Frage – eine Frage der persönlichen Freiheit, der Freiheit des Individuums, und sie kann nur gelöst werden mit ihr und durch sie. Wann? – das weiß Keiner von uns Lebenden. Die andere: daß der Kreis, von dem heute Verständniß für diese Liebe erwartet werden darf, ein noch weit kleinerer ist, als ich einst dachte. Denn im Grunde versteht doch Jeder nur seine eigene Liebe und jede andere ist ihm fremd und unverständlich, wenn nicht unheimlich. Auch hier kann nur das Begreifen des Rechts auf gleiche Freiheit, die Duldung fremder Wesensart als letztes und höchstes Kulturergebniß, heilend wirken.«

Und auch hier folgt eine harte Kritik am *Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitee*:

»Denn wieder hat es sich in diesen Jahren gezeigt, daß diese Liebe ihre schlimmsten Feinde gerade unter ihnen – nicht draußen, sondern, im eigenen Lager zu suchen hat. Wieder haben Die, die sich ›Führer‹ nennen in diesem Kampfe und als solche verantwortlich zeichnen, in einer ihrer lächerlichen und entwürdigenden Petitionen an die grade herrschenden Gewalten, also öffentlich, ein ›Schutzalter‹ – nicht etwa für das Kind, sondern für den reifen Knaben und Jüngling! – und damit die Verfolgung und Bestrafung Derer befürwortet, von denen sie, wie keine Anderen, wissen, daß sie genau so unschuldig sind, wie sie selbst, und wieder einmal haben die das höhere Alter Liebenden sich so auf Kosten der Schicksalsgenossen ihrer Zeit zu retten versucht – ein Verrath an der Sache, wie er schmähhlicher in seinen Absichten und furchtbarer in seinen Folgen

nicht gedacht werden kann« (S. 67–69).

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Der zweiten Gesamtausgabe der *Bücher der namenlosen Liebe* von 1924 folgte zwei Jahre später im gleichen handlichen Format der Roman *Der Puppenjunge. Die Geschichte einer namenlosen Liebe aus der Friedrichstraße*. Die Schreibweise des Titels beschönigt ein wenig, denn der ›Pu(p)penjunge‹ soll keineswegs an die ›Puppe‹ erinnern, sondern verweist auf den ›Pup‹, den Furz. Lebensecht ist der Roman nicht nur in der Zeichnung der Personen, sondern auch in der Beschreibung des Strichjungenmilieus Berlins. Christopher Isherwood ist dafür ein Zeuge. Zur amerikanischen Übersetzung, die 1985 unter dem Titel *The Hustler* erschien (übersetzt vom Verfasser dieses Nachworts), schrieb er dem Verleger: »I have always loved this book dearly – despite and even because of its occasional sentimental absurdities. It gives a picture of the Berlin sexual underworld early in this century which I know, from my own experience, to be authentic.« (»Ich habe das Buch immer sehr geliebt – trotz und sogar wegen seines ab und zu sentimentalischen Widersinns. Es zeichnet ein Bild der Berliner sexuellen Unterwelt zu einem früheren Zeitpunkt dieses Jahrhunderts, das, wie ich aus eigener Erfahrung weiß, authentisch ist.«)

Die Authentizität des Buches kommt nicht von ungefähr. Während des Jahres 1924 hat Mackay planmäßig ziemlich alle ›schwulen‹ Kneipen Berlins besucht, und im Sommer und Herbst saß er abends im *Marienkasino* im Hinterzimmer am Kopfende eines langen schmalen Tisches, mit dem Rücken gegen die Wand, und um ihn zwei, drei, vier und mehr Jungen, ließ für sie Wurststullen, Zigaretten und Bier kommen und ließ sie erzählen, erzählen und immer wieder erzählen.

Im Roman heißt die Kneipe *Adonis-Diele*, was etwas verwirrend ist, da es auch eine echte *Adonis-Diele* gab, über die Curt Moreck in seinem *Führer durch das lasterhafte Berlin* (1930) schrieb: »Vielversprechend der Name eines Lokals an der Alexandrinenstraße in der Nähe des Halleschen Tors ... Vom weißen Gift bis zur Liebe jeder Art wird hier alles gehandelt, was sich in Geldeswert umsetzen läßt. *Adonis-Diele* heißt der Ort, in dem aber nichts an den schönen Jüngling der Sage erinnert« (zitiert in: *Berlin von hinten*

1981, S. 42). Auch das *Marienkasino*, die *Adonis-Diele* des Romans, ist später geschlossen worden, weil sich dort Kokain-Handel eingeschlichen hatte.

Der Puppenjunge schildert ein Jahr im Leben Günthers, der mit fünfzehn Jahren aus einem kleinen Dorf ausreißt und in Berlin das Leben eines Strichjungen beginnt. Zu gleicher Zeit ist auch Hermann Graff nach Berlin gekommen, um dort zu arbeiten; er verliebt sich in Günther und wird sich im Verlaufe der daraus folgenden Schwierigkeiten über seine eigenen sexuellen Neigungen immer klarer. Graffs seelische Entwicklung ist zwar manchmal etwas melodramatisch überzeichnet, aber doch realistisch und faszinierend dargestellt, ebenso die verschiedenen homosexuellen »Szenen« im Berlin der 20er Jahre. Mackay kannte sein Berlin, und er kannte den Schmerz unerwidelter Liebe. Die Personen der Geschichte erweckt er in klar umrissenen Szenen zum Leben. Das kurze Kapitel, in dem die Zusammenkunft von zwölf Knaben am »Pupentisch« der Kneipe beschrieben wird, ist ein schriftstellerisches Meisterstück.

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Angesichts der zitierten Kritik an der Emanzipationspolitik besonders des WhK verdient die Besprechung besondere Beachtung, die Magnus Hirschfeld über den *Puppenjungen* verfaßt hat. Schon in der Ausgabe vom Oktober/November 1926 der *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees*, als der Roman noch gar nicht erschienen war, wurden die WhK-Mitglieder mit Nachdruck auf ihn aufmerksam gemacht: »Mit diesem siebenten in der Reihe seiner ›Bücher der namenlosen Liebe‹ betritt Sagitta ein für die schöne Literatur aller Länder bisher völlig neues Gebiet – das der männlichen Prostitution. Einmal gewählt, mußte mit unerschrockener Hand von ihm Besitz ergriffen werden, sollten die Schilderungen seiner abseitigen und nächtlichen Tiefen wahr und überzeugend wirken. So, schon seines Stoffgebietes wegen, vielleicht das fesselndste unter seinen Büchern, wird es verblüffen, empören, entzücken – je nach Einstellung des Lesers.«

In den *Mitteilungen* vom Januar/Februar 1927 erschien dann die Besprechung aus der Feder von Magnus Hirschfeld:

«Dieses siebente Buch in der Reihe von Sagitta's Werken über die ›namenlose

Liebe< schließt sich in seiner formvollendeten Sprache und in dem tiefen psychologischen Gehalt würdig seinen Vorgängern an. Weniger vielleicht in seiner Titelwahl, aber dieses Bedenken gegen ein bisher unliterarisches Wort schwindet, sobald man liest, mit welcher Meisterschaft es Sagitta auch hier wieder versteht, uns Menschen und Verhältnisse menschlich näher zu bringen, deren Werden und Wesen noch immer die meisten so verständnislos gegenüberstehen.

Im Mittelpunkt der Erzählung steht die seelische Beziehung zwischen dem in der Mischung von herber Zurückhaltung und Leidenschaftlichkeit (namentlich der Potsdamer Ausflug verdient hier hervorgehoben zu werden) äußerst fein gezeichneten jungen Buchhändler Hermann Graff und dem halbwüchsigen Ausreißer ›Günther‹, der in seinen Kreisen den bezeichnenden Namen ›Hühnchen‹ trägt. Es ist der, nach dem das Buch seinen Titel erhielt. Ihre Erlebnisse spielen sich auf dem bekannten Berliner Hintergrund: Passage – Friedrichstraße – Tiergarten – Tauentzien – Adonisdiele – dem Stammlokal am Stettiner Bahnhof – Moabit etc. ab; alles von dem Griffel eines echten Künstlers so lebenswahr gezeichnet, daß viele Einzelheiten in einer Belichtung zutage treten, die dem oberflächlichen Beobachter – und leider sind ja auch die meisten Beobachter vom Fach nur oberflächliche Beschauer – gewöhnlich entgehen. So große Bewunderung jedoch diese ›Milieuschilderungen‹ verdienen, ich glaube, wir würden dem Verfasser und seinem Werke nicht gerecht werden, wenn wir nicht in den Vordergrund die verkannte und verfolgte Liebe des Aelteren zu dem Jüngeren stellen würden in ihrer unendlichen Tragik, tragisch nicht nur für den Liebenden, sondern auch für den Geliebten, der ihre Größe nicht begreift, auch aus der ihm gewordenen Erziehung heraus nicht begreifen kann (– hier ist der Anspruch [Ausspruch?] seines Entdeckers und Gönners Arthur Klemke, genannt ›der feine Atze‹, besonders bemerkenswert: ›Wenn sich einmal einer in mich verlieben würde, den würde ich aber ordentlich hochnehmen!< –), tragisch aber auch für die Menschheit, welcher die Werte verloren gehen, die sich für sie auch aus dieser Liebe gewinnen ließen, wenn ihr menschenfreundlicher und menschenfördernder, pädagogischer und produktiver Charakter unvoreingenommen gewürdigt würde.

Hermann Graf bleibt nichts vom Schicksal eines Homosexuellen erspart:

›Entweder bin ich ein Verbrecher, oder die andern sind es, die diese Gesetze gemacht haben und sie ausführen‹, ruft er einmal mit wohl verständlicher Bitterkeit aus. Aber auch Hühnchen kommt von seinem Flug aus dem heimischen Nest mit geknickten Flügeln zurück – nicht durch seines Freundes Schuld. Es ist ein Armutzeugnis unserer Zeit, welche die Wahrheit nicht hören mag, daß dieses mit so schöner Menschlichkeit geschriebene Buch vom Verfasser nur ›als Privatdruck‹ herausgegeben werden kann.«

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Die Zeiten haben sich geändert. Erschien schon die Neuausgabe von 1979 (zusammen mit den *Büchern der namenlosen Liebe*) in einer Zeit, da der § 175 zwar immer noch galt, aber doch durch die Strafrechtsreformen von 1969 und 1973 zumindest Homosexualität unter Erwachsenen straffrei ließ, so ist inzwischen (im Juni 1994) der Paragraph aus dem Strafgesetzbuch gestrichen worden. Aber es war keine ›ersatzlose‹ Streichung, wie sie von der Schwulenbewegung gefordert worden war. Mit der Streichung einher ging eine Verschärfung an anderer Stelle, in dem neu gefaßten und jetzt wortreichen § 182 »Sexueller Mißbrauch von Jugendlichen«. Sie führt dazu, daß Hermann Graff wohl auch heute mit dem Staatsanwalt in Konflikt geraten würde.

Homosexualität ist längst keine ›namenlose‹ Liebe mehr, sondern zu einem Lieblingsthema der Medien geworden. Sexuelle Befreiung ist für die Schwulenbewegung aber heute kaum noch ein Thema, die Leidtragenden sind auch heute wieder die, die sich zur ›namenlosen‹ Liebe im Sinne Mackays bekennen. War der § 175 in seiner Endphase in weiten Teilen der Gesellschaft längst überwunden, geht heute dem neuen Paragraphen eine teilweise schon zu Hysterie gesteigerte Furcht vor sexuellem Mißbrauch zur Hand. Das alte Vorurteil von der allgegenwärtigen ›Verführung‹ ist übermächtig neu erstanden. Die von den Medien beherrschte Gesellschaft – ob in den USA oder in Deutschland – ist heute weniger denn je bereit, sich überhaupt mit der Frage zu befassen, ob und unter welchen Bedingungen eine Beziehung zwischen Knabe und Mann möglich, erlaubt und lebbar sein sollte, ist nicht bereit den »menschenfreundlichen und menschenfördernden, pädagogischen und produktiven Charakter« einer solchen Beziehung, von dem Hirschfeld

sprach, auch nur in Erwägung zu ziehen.

Gesellschaftsverändernde Impulse, die jede Form von Liebe lebbar machen, sind heute so notwendig wie zu Hirschfelds und Sagittas Zeiten. Nicht seine Resignation darf das letzte Wort sein («... im Grunde versteht doch Jeder nur seine eigene Liebe und jede andere ist ihm fremd und unverständlich, wenn nicht unheimlich»), sondern es geht nach wie vor um »das Begreifen des Rechts auf gleiche Freiheit, die Duldung fremder Wesensart als letztes und höchstes Kulturergebnis«.

Zu John Henry Mackay vgl. K. H. Z. Solnemann (d. i. Kurt Helmut Zube), *Der Bahnbrecher John Henry Mackay. Sein Leben und sein Werk* (1979) – Hubert Kennedy, *Anarchist of Love. The Secret Life of John Henry Mackay* (zuerst 1983, revidierte Auflage 1996), dt.: *Anarchist der Liebe. John Henry Mackay als Sagitta* (1988). – Zitate aus den *Büchern der namenlosen Liebe* nach der zweiten Ausgabe von 1924 (Reprint 1979). – Walter Fähnders, *Anarchism and Homosexuality in Wilhelmine Germany: Senna Hoy, Erich Mühsam, John Henry Mackay*, in: *Journal of Homosexuality* 29 (1995) (= *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left*, hg. von Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis und James Steakley) S. 117–153. – Andrew Hewitt, *Political Inversions. Homosexuality, Fascism, and the Modernist Imaginary* (1996), darin Kap. 4: *Paederasty and the Dialectic of Emancipation: Mackay's Books of Nameless Love* (S. 1310–170).

John Henry Mackay
The Swimmer: The Story of a Passion
Translated by Hubert Kennedy
2001

“Dedicated to my beloved art—of swimming”

Preface

John Henry Mackay’s *The Swimmer* was originally published in German in 1901; it has been reprinted several times, most recently in 1982. This “Centenary Edition” is the first translation into English. Mackay himself was a “passionate” swimmer, but swimming for him was always an “art”—as expressed in his dedication—and never a sport. Nevertheless, he came into contact with sport swimming in Berlin, where he had been living from 1892, and was able to describe it with some exactness. Thus the novel, in addition to its own real artistic merits, is also a valuable historical document, for it carefully describes competitive swimming and diving at that time and place. The reader may be surprised to see how much that scene has changed in the past century, although much will be familiar, of course.

The Swimmer is not merely a “sports novel,” however. It is the story of the rise and fall of an individual who prides himself on his individuality, but who finally comes to see that individuality, by itself, is not enough to sustain him. As Edward Mornin remarked, our swimmer “has the will, but not the strength to be a free individual.” Mackay, who in his own life had that strength, shows great psychological insight in his delineation of the strengths—and weaknesses—of his protagonist.

Since Mackay is best known as an anarchist propagandist—and in some circles, as a man-boy love propagandist—it should be noted here that *The Swimmer* is not a work of propaganda, neither for the one nor the other. It was meant purely as a work of art—and it succeeds on its own merits. It tells a genuinely human story with understanding and compassion. But whether read as such, or as an exciting sports tale, it appeals to today’s

reader just as it did to readers a century ago—perhaps more so, since today’s reader will probably be more familiar with the sport—if not the art—of swimming.

Afterword

When John Henry Mackay published *Der Schwimmer* in 1901 he was at the height of his fame as a writer. He had proven himself in a variety of genres, most notably lyric poetry (his poem “Morgen” had already been set to music by Richard Strauss and continues to be one of Strauss’s most popular songs), had become famous with his book *The Anarchists* (German and English editions in 1891, later translated into eight other languages), and had written fiction in a variety of lengths, as well as a biography of the egoist philosopher Max Stirner. *The Swimmer* was his first full-length novel—and it remained his only one under his real name. (He used the pseudonym Sagitta in 1926 for his only other long novel, *Der Puppenjunge*—translated into English as *The Hustler*.)

Mackay was born on 6 February 1864 in Greenock, Scotland, the son of a Scottish father and a German mother. His father died when Mackay was only nineteen months old, and his mother returned with him to Germany, where Mackay grew up with German as his mother tongue. He later learned English and even translated a collection of English and American poems into German, but he never wrote it well—as may be seen in his letters to his American anarchist friend Benjamin R. Tucker. (The letters are in *John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writings*, Xlibris, 2001.) Following an unsuccessful year as an apprentice in the book trade, he was a student at three universities, but only as an auditor. He early considered himself a writer, and although never very successful commercially, he did gain a certain esteem. Already in 1885, following a visit to relatives in Scotland, he published an epic poem, *Kinder des Hochlands* (Children of the Highlands), which is inspired in part by Walter Scott’s poetry (as discussed by the Germanist Edward Mornin in “A Late German Imitation of Walter Scott” in *Germanic Notes* 17.4 [1986]: 49–51). In 1887 he went to London for a year, a London filled with German refugees from Bismarck’s anti-Socialist law, and there he moved to the extreme left with his interest in the “social question.” His collection of anarchist poems, *Sturm* (1888), was ac-

claimed as revolutionary. Then he read Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (*The Ego and His Own*, as the title was given in the English translation published by Benjamin R. Tucker in 1907). This strengthened Mackay in his own individualistic views, which were then seen in his book *The Anarchists* (1891; Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1999). Mackay also determined to write the biography of this forgotten philosopher of egoism; his biography of Stirner appeared in 1898, the same year as the 636-page volume of his collected poems.

Mackay's mother died in 1902. He was devoted to her, and her death brought on a depression from which he only recovered by dedicating himself to a new cause. As "Sagitta" he began a literary campaign in 1905 for the acceptance of man-boy love—Mackay himself was attracted to boys 14–17 years old. There are hints of Mackay's interest in boys in his short stories, but none of this is in *The Swimmer*. Mackay later said of his first man-boy love propaganda books: "I was Sagitta. I wrote those books in the years in which my artistic strength was believed to have died out." In fact, he never regained the literary esteem that he had earlier enjoyed. The edition of his collected works in eight volumes in 1911 contained little that was new—two short stories and a few poems—and drew little attention from the literary establishment, especially since he published it himself. Following World War 1 *Der Freiheitsucher* (*The Freedomseeker*) appeared in 1920, but in contrast to the attention given his earlier anarchist work, it was largely ignored. Mackay's mother, who was of a well-to-do family, had generously supported him and left him enough to live on the rest of his life, so that he was not dependant on the sale of his books. But the runaway inflation of 1923 wiped out the value of the lifetime annuity he had purchased. After that he wrote for money, but never regained the attention of the reading public, so that he died in relative poverty on 16 May 1933, shortly after the Nazis came to power.

Anarchist writing was, of course, taboo in the Nazi era, and Mackay's writings as Sagitta were put on the Nazi list of forbidden books. Following World War 2, the Adenauer regime in West Germany was nearly as anti-homosexual as the Nazis had been, and anarchism—at least in the individualistic variety of Mackay—never regained its earlier interest. But with the founding of a Mackay-Gesellschaft in 1974 and the reprinting of most of Mackay's writings (*Der Schwimmer* in 1982), there has been a revival of recog-

nition of this extraordinary individual—and many of his writings are now also available in English. (My own translation of the “Sagitta” novels *The Hustler* and *Fenny Skaller* appeared in 1985 and 1988 respectively; the collection *John Henry Mackay: Shorter Fiction* was published by Xlibris in 2000.)

Reviews of *Der Schwimmer* on its original publication in 1901 were generally favorable. Kurt Martens, for example, wrote in *Das literarische Echo* (4: 64–65):

“Not without mistrust will the friends of Mackay’s poetry leaf through this book at first. One knows the ardor of his ideas, the warmth and content of deep feeling of his short stories, and one fears that he has become shallow by increasing the current fashion for sports novels—milieu studies of the world of the cyclist, the mountain climber, the jockey—with one of the world of swimming. In fact, this smooth, objective work has little of the dark, almost fanatical violence of Mackay’s short stories; hastily read it could even easily have the effect of a mass-produced work of realism. But whoever thoughtfully pauses before the dash in the dedication ‘To my beloved art—of swimming’ will, full of joyous surprise, discover under the wrapper of a sports novel that the real kernel is an eternal problem, a tragedy of the passion for glory. The struggle of the swimmer for the world championship acquires a meaning that reaches far beyond sports and club comrades. The poor mechanic, who, not satisfied with the championship in swimming, would also like to become the champion in diving, feels his strength sink, plucks up his courage anew and now as a solitary victor suffers the envy of the clique—he becomes unawares the type of someone who ‘wants to exceed himself.’ His daring upward striving, his triumph in the circle of comrades, his insight that even the most mature art remains still piecemeal, the enervating attraction of the passion of love, its victorious overcoming, and finally the fear of the transitoriness of fame, which is always coupled with the feeling of abandonment—that is at the same time the destiny of all those ambitious people who set pure ability higher than fruitful creativity. Franz Felder, the swimmer, swims at first only from naïve joy in water, then for the fame of his club, finally for the sake of his own fame. In every period, however, he is mindful of his ‘style’; with untiring energy he strives not only to swim the fastest, but also the best. However coolly the novel presents itself, it is surely hotly lived, less indeed by Mackay, the swimmer, than by Mackay, the writer. The eternal conflict between the joy in one’s own fulfillment and the demands of

organizations, which would like to make the individual serve their needs and goals—this was really material after Mackay's own heart. With simple, distinguished means, the narrator has created from it a moving work of art."

On the other hand, an anonymous English reviewer for *Literature* (9: 320) dismissed Mackay's novel in three sentences:

"*Der Schwimmer*, by John Henry Mackay, an author well known as a strenuous champion of the proletariat, is a somewhat distasteful story of a boy of the people who becomes a champion swimmer. At first a love for the water is mingled with the love of the sport, but it degenerates into the pure lust of prizes and of fame, and his youth and strength are destroyed by an evil woman. The obsession of one idea often leads to madness and self-destruction, but to use the art of swimming for the *idée fixe* is sufficiently original."

Other reviews stood somewhere in between. So as not to repeat the plot descriptions, I give here only the conclusions of two more reviews. The first, by Edmund Lange in *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* (Beilage Nr. 23: 369–370), also suggests what the English reviewer may have found "somewhat distasteful":

"The psychological execution of the whole, which perhaps has also a symbolic meaning, is mainly very fine, Mackay seldom goes off track in this direction; only the role played by the wondrously beautiful woman, a member of the highest rank of the international demi-monde, occasionally disagreeably recalls pulp novels; but on the other hand, even in those parts, as unpleasant as they are, there is much that is well observed. A serious weakness of the novel, however, lies in the too great and for the simple lay understanding often unbearable diffuseness with which the technical side of the swimming sport is treated; at times one can believe that he has before him a professional work on the subject."

In contrast to this, Max Lorenz, in *Preußische Jahrbücher* (105: 343–344), found precisely the descriptions of sport swimming of interest:

"The novel is of interest above all for the material. We get a glimpse into a world that is completely closed to most people. We learn with great exactness the life and motives, striving and feeling, in the swim clubs. One should by no means underestimate the 'material' of a novel. It plays a great role in its external success, even if the specific artis-

tic value is not at all bound to the material. In Mackay's book, however, we have not only to do with new and therefore interesting material, but also, above all, with a work of art. With great psychological skill the development of a human destiny is rolled out... Even if this novel of a swimmer is not intended at first as symbolic, but is to be viewed in the factuality of its events, the novel is still in the final analysis, however, the work of a poet. But a poet has the gift and characteristic of seeing in every single event of daily life a universal case that touches mankind. For the poet, everything is an allegory and behind everything solitary there stands, felt and sensed, a universal truth and a binding law. Thus Mackay too, through the tone that he strikes and constantly lets sound through, understands how to treat the swimmer's destiny of the young Felder as a case that gives an example of the tragedy of human striving and human passion altogether."

The above reviews all appeared in 1901, the year *Der Schwimmer* was published. The first critical study of the novel did not appear until over a half century later, in *Theorie und Praxis der Körperkultur* (1962, 11: 200–216), published in the German Democratic Republic. The author, Günther Fuchs, was a graduate of the Johannes R. Becker Literary Institute in Leipzig. Taking as his starting point the statement of Becker in 1960, "John Henry Mackay's novel *Der Schwimmer* has remained until today the only document about that sport that is to a certain extent important," Fuchs titled his article, "A Novel as Literary Document: Significance and Limits of Realism in the Book *Der Schwimmer* by John Henry Mackay." It is a Marxist analysis, amply sprinkled—as befit the time and place—with quotations from Marx, Engels, and Lenin, as well as Walter Ulbricht and even Nikita Khrushchev.

"Mackay," Fuchs writes, "can claim to be the first author in the German language who was concerned to connect sports events with the social environment." But Fuchs faults Mackay for being historically inaccurate. He points out that four years before the novel appeared, three Berlin swim clubs combined to form the "Workers' Swimming Club," contrary to Mackay's depiction of only bourgeois clubs in Berlin: "John Henry Mackay ignored this development. And—an expression of the understandable reciprocal effect—the bourgeois swimming clubs (to the greatest disappointment of Mackay) took no cognizance of his book, they left it unnoticed." In fact, Mackay complained in his memoirs (*Abrechnung*, 1932; in English in *John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writ-*

ings, Xlibris, 2001): “The sport of swimming itself should have been genuinely happy to call such a book its own. So far as I know, it was not happy.” Whether this was a result of his ignoring the Workers’ Swimming Club is not at all clear. At any rate, his efforts in 1913 to have a film made of the novel were unsuccessful. Alas, for, as Mackay himself said, “What an artistically beautiful film could be made of it!”

Although Fuchs finds the ending of the novel melodramatic, that “still cannot wipe out the strong impression that the excitingly written ‘story of a passion’ left with the reader, especially not when it is known that precisely at the turn of the century the sport of swimming had to succeed against many prejudices and to fight against conservative reservations.” He gives a charming example from 1902, when a swimming club in Düsseldorf asked for support from the city council, which replied: “The board cannot see that the swimming club is displaying a blessed activity in relation to morals. It just does not serve to raise morality, when boys with naked bodies and only wearing thin bathing trunks romp around in the water and can measure one another with their glances.” Fuchs displays his own prejudices, however, when, after stating that freedom in love “means for Mackay the unlimited relationship to the same-sex partner, which he propagated in his little books *Der Puppenjunge* (1926) and *Hans, mein Freund* (1929) and also glorified in his anonymous writings that were distributed under the title ‘Sagitta’ by Bernhard-Zack-Verlag,” he adds: “Knowing this, the portrait of the physical merits of Franz Felder, written in vulgar naturalism, has a downright painful effect.” One wonders how much of Mackay’s “Sagitta” writings Fuchs actually read; while *Der Puppenjunge* is a full-length novel, “Hans, mein Freund” (in *John Henry Mackay: Shorter Fiction*, Xlibris, 2000) is a short story about a boy who is beaten to death by his pious grandmother and there is nothing sexual in the boy’s relationship with the narrator of his story.

Of course Fuchs has no sympathy with Mackay’s anarchism, which he also misunderstands. After noting Mackay’s claim that he was “the first in the German language to represent the weltanschauung of individualistic anarchism,” Fuchs adds: “With this declaration Mackay presents himself as one of the apostles who promote ‘absolute freedom.’” He then quotes a passage from Mackay’s book *Abrechnung* in which he speaks of freedom, ending: “in a word, because I want to be free.” Fuchs states: “This freedom promoted by him is self-evidently supposed to be ‘absolute,’ free in every connection,

absolutely free in marriage, absolutely free in love.” But Mackay is clear in his writings—even in the passage quoted by Fuchs!—that freedom can never be absolute; it is always relative.

Above all, Fuchs faults the “politically muddleheaded” Mackay for not including in his novel “the totality of his time, the many-layered reciprocal relations of people with one another”: “He consciously closes himself off—and this holds true for the whole book—from the working class with its aspiring swimming clubs and the resulting disputes with the bourgeois swimming clubs.” And he asks rhetorically what would have happened if Mackay had written the novel he should have written: “What would have become of Franz Felder if he had spoken with social-democratic workers and had to defend his estranged-worker position before them? How indeed would the development of this gifted swimmer have progressed, if he had been able to develop all around in company with workers aspiring to education?”

While recognizing that this book of Mackay has “unjustly fallen into oblivion” (Fuchs cannot resist adding in parentheses “and only this one”—presumably meaning that the others have justly been forgotten), in the end Fuchs sees its value as a challenge: “Viewed thus, the book of John Henry Mackay, *Der Schwimmer*, is an unspoken provocation for today’s writers to write the life story of a sports figure of our time and our social organization, which allows him all the possibilities of personal development and in which he grows up into a socialist personality.”

Thomas A. Riley, Mackay’s American biographer (*Germany’s Poet-Anarchist John Henry Mackay: A Contribution to the History of German Literature at the Turn of the Century, 1880–1920*, New York: The Revisionist Press, 1972), has high praise for Mackay’s *Der Schwimmer*: “Nothing in the man’s work is so intimately connected with Max Stirner as this book; nothing he wrote is so difficult to understand correctly without a knowledge of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, nothing he wrote is so well constructed and developed. *Der Schwimmer* is the greatest novel of anarchism in existence; it is indeed perhaps the only outspoken and absolutely anarchistic novel.” Now, this last sentence is out and out exaggeration; it is significant that, despite this statement, Riley nowhere points out any anarchistic elements in the novel, though a knowledge of Stirner

does help us to understand it. Riley, however, is much too pedantic in explaining everything in Mackay's book by reference to Stirner's work.

In 1976 Edward Mornin included a more balanced view of *Der Schwimmer* in his "Taking Games Seriously: Observations on the German Sports-Novel (*The Germanic Review* 51: 278–295). Oddly, Mornin too suggests that Mackay promoted "absolute freedom" in his anarchistic propaganda. Perhaps he took the phrase from Fuchs; at any rate, he mentions it only once, and it does not come up in his later, extensive study of Mackay's writings, *Kunst und Anarchismus: "innere Zusammenhänge" in den Schriften John Henry Mackays* (Freiburg/Br., Verlag der Mackay-Gesellschaft, 1983). According to Mornin, Mackay's *Der Schwimmer* "represents his most successful synthesis of social message with aesthetic appeal." And, in contrast to Fuchs, Mornin points out that in the novel "the harmony of Franz's relationship to nature as a child is further underscored by his being frequently compared to some water creature.... By these means, Mackay suggests that the way to blissful and euphoric self-fulfillment lies in surrender to the benevolent and life-giving forces in nature—so lending a metaphysical dimension to this novel, a dimension which should not be overlooked, but which is consistently neglected by critics in favour of the work's social significance."

After noting that in the end "Franz had for so long lived only for his club that he cannot now survive without its approval," Mornin perceptively concludes:

"Unfortunately, Franz does not have sufficient strength of character to defy his club and thrive alone. His is the tragedy of a man with the will, but not the strength to be a free individual as Mackay understood that word....

"It is important to bear in mind that from an early period sport in Germany had been perceived as a means of integrating the individual into the community and of achieving political and social goals.... It is a mark of the originality of *Der Schwimmer*, this earliest of German sports-novels, that, while it exalts swimming as an activity, it already exposes the sinister social aspects of organized (though amateur) sport. Through his use of sport and sports clubs as universally comprehensible symbols, Mackay is able effectively to convey the joy and elation deriving from surrender to nature, and the dangers of abandoning one's will to the control of any social organization.

“*Der Schwimmer* is one of Mackay’s best works and certainly deserves to be better known, though it is admittedly not without its artistic shortcomings. Races and crowd scenes are described vividly and dramatically, but the psychology of the novel is crude, and its technique (the point of view is uniformly that of the omniscient author) is not sufficiently varied to prevent monotony.”

One more discussion of this novel must be mentioned. It is in the biography of Mackay by K. H. Z. Solneman—pseudonym of Kurt Helmut Zube (1905–1991)—*Der Bahnbrecher John Henry Mackay: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (Freiburg/Br.: Verlag der Mackay-Gesellschaft, 1979). Zube knew Mackay personally and was the founder in 1974 of the new Mackay Gesellschaft. He had originally intended to publish a translation of Riley’s biography, but due to problems with Riley’s publisher, that project had to be abandoned. Zube then wrote his own biography of Mackay—which, reflecting the background of his project, often reads like a polemic against Riley’s book. Unlike Riley, Zube shared Mackay’s anarchist weltanschauung, and so shows an insight into Mackay’s writings that even Riley, for all his academic research (the biography was essentially his Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard University in 1946), was unable to attain. The following extended quotation may serve to illustrate this:

“*Der Schwimmer* is the story of a passion—Mackay was himself, and even into the last years of his life, a passionate swimmer—not, however, a mere sports novel, but rather on the whole the representation of the often tragic conflict of an individual with his society, which often, in addition to the state, in various institutions or morals, as, e.g., the church—here, however it is a sports club—raises claims to rule, against which the individual can with difficulty defend himself....

“The novel is already not anarchist because the club—in contrast to the state and many other institutions—did not take Franz Felder in forcibly, but rather—in the language of Stirner—is a union, which Felder voluntarily entered and just as voluntarily left—while its interests at first agreed with those of Felder. The union promoted Felder in such a way that he would have had every reason to be grateful, although he returned the favor as much as he could with the honors that he brought to his club. Felder’s tragedy is his enormous one-sidedness—highlighted by Mackay— which left him completely uninterested in everything that was not swimming. Riley’s reproach of ‘his tender ego,

spoiled by the very society that nurtured him,' does not hold true, because it was neither the union's task to develop him to a balanced personality, nor could such efforts, precisely because of his one-sidedness and lack of interests, have been successful. The club in no way demanded too much from him. It was not the club which so completely arrested him, but rather he had so completely identified himself with the union that he could not do without it, i.e., the friends, as long as they were such. It was not the club which provoked the conflict, but rather Felder's arrogance and conceit, as Mackay expressly remarks. His particular tragedy lay in the fact that his first love was shattered on family group-egoism, while the love of the girl could perhaps have been a substitute for the comradeship of the club friends, who had, indeed, warned him soon enough that fame, and with it his importance in the union, was a passing thing. The novel is, therefore, in no way a commentary or exemplification of Stirner's teaching. Felder's egoism with regard to the union was even greater, but at the same time more short-sighted, than, on the contrary, the egoism of the union regarding him. Since the latter, however, was in a stronger position and did not need Felder as much as he did it, it was Felder's mistake that he did not bring their mutual interests into agreement, which he could have succeeded in doing without difficulty.

"The real theme of the novel is not the oppression of the individual by society, but rather the loneliness of the (if only very one-sided) highly gifted individual and the limitation and transitoriness of fame. Regarding both Mackay spoke from his own experience; after having enjoyed the success of his *Sturm* and the fame of his *Die Anarchisten* and his discovery of Stirner, he had to remark how little recognizable and enduring the result of it was. He, who until the end of the 1890s had moved in a large circle of acquaintances and even friends, with many constant contacts, saw himself, quite apart from the isolation that was conditioned by the singularity of his love, now also more and more misunderstood and isolated from his old friends and fellow-travelers in social relations, for whom the passionate drive of Mackay for truth and insight, as well as his determination and strong personality, were missing.

"'Only a few,' it says in *Der Schwimmer*, 'had the strength and desire after their return to take up again the goals of their youth and dare new contests in new circumstances. Many indeed retained their interest in the cause, but life had its demands, and like the

student into the ranks of the academics, so they went into their profession, and were soon absorbed in it and in their newly founded family.’ Mackay, of course, was no Franz Felder, because he possessed within himself the strength also to make his—absolutely unwanted—solitude enjoyable as well as useful. Thus he became—and unfortunately also remained—a sort of world champion in his largely compartmentalized field of interest, as an outsider. With this, however, was bound a great ability to empathize with quite different natures and therefore *Der Schwimmer* reflects only with a grain of salt one side of Mackay’s world of experience and knowledge, and thus, just as the work was dedicated to ‘my beloved art—of swimming,’ it surely had as model one of those completely un-intellectual sports athletes, whom Mackay met in abundance in his own swimmer’s life.

“On the other hand, Riley quite correctly sees in Franz Felder ‘an enchanted beast of the fairy tale books, under whose rough exterior is hidden a prince. He never found the charm that would have brought out his true character; nor did he even become aware of what other possibilities there are in any human being. It is for the reader to realize that Felder is an unfortunate who never found the real key to life. That key, according to Mackay, is a truly egoistic, independent, self-respecting attitude towards oneself, which brings out the best in any personality, rounds out the man in all ways and makes of him an outstanding individual.’”

Zube makes no comment on the artistic merits of Mackay’s novel, and his interpretation may indeed not be the last word, but I am inclined to agree entirely with his view—with it and Mornin’s judgment on the artistic merits—and limitations—of *Der Schwimmer*.

A word more may be said about the novel as a historical document. Competitive swimming and diving have changed much since it was written. Some competitions that were once official Olympic events have long been forgotten—or nearly. There is now a “Retroympics” in Germany whose purpose is to renew events that have been omitted from the official list, for example, swimming with obstacles, which is mentioned a couple of times in Mackay’s novel. This competition was in only one Olympics, that in Paris in 1900, where the competitors, in addition to swimming, were required to climb over a boat and a log in the river and to go under another boat. Long distance swimming under water, too, has mostly been abandoned in competitions, primarily because it is too dangerous,

though records continue to set: Herbert Nitsch of Austria set a World Record of 131 meters “without fins” in Geneva on 28 January 2001 (and a World Record of 170 meters “with fins” in Berlin on 24 February 2001). Diving for plates was probably never held in great esteem, as suggested by one of the characters in Mackay’s novel; it too is dangerous, as a scene in Mackay’s novel illustrates, and has largely been abandoned. *Der Schwimmer* contains one of the rare mentions of this sport. All together, this novel is a valuable historical document of organized swimming and diving—despite Mackay’s omission of the Workers’ Swimming Club mentioned by Günther Fuchs.

It is also notable for mentioning some landmarks that, rather surprisingly, are still with us. The “Ronacher” variety theatre in Vienna was established in 1886. It enjoyed a tremendous success for many years, but what the moral apostles were unable to do—Josephine Baker appeared there in 1932—was accomplished shortly after by threats and interruption of performances by racists who objected to the Jewish performers who had been forced to leave Berlin; they were then barred from performing here too. After World War 2, the theatre served as a substitute for the Burgtheater for ten years, was a variety theatre again for five, and closed in 1960. There were occasional productions of opera and musicals (“Cats”) in 1986–1990. Following a renovation, the theatre opened again in 1993 as a variety theatre, now with productions of rock musicals and “cyber shows.”

The “Eierhäuschen” restaurant (Little Egg House—it originally featured specialties made of eggs) in Berlin had already been mentioned in a novel two years before Mackay mentioned it in *Der Schwimmer*. One section of Theodor Fontane’s 1899 novel *Der Stechlin* is titled “To the Eierhäuschen” and describes an excursion to that well-known restaurant. It is in the news as I write this (in February 2001): Despite its landmark status, it has been closed for ten years because of the poor condition of the building, but there is again talk of reopening it.

But this is all secondary. Mackay himself, making a distinction that was important to him, insisted that his novel was not a work of propaganda (nor of history). “*Der Schwimmer* is a work of art; was appreciated as such; and is intended as nothing else.” I, for one, am grateful for it. A century after its original publication it is still a good read.

John Henry Mackay

Three Novels

Hubert Kennedy, Editor and Translator

2001

Introduction

The Scotch-German author John Henry Mackay wrote on a variety of subjects. This is well illustrated in the three short novels presented here. The first, *The People of Marriage* (1892), appeared only one year after his instantly successful book *The Anarchists* (1891). Although in a fictionalized form, *The Anarchists* was a work of propaganda. But from the beginning critics have called it a novel; Mackay himself always insisted that it was not. Thus *The People of Marriage* is Mackay's first novel (though "long novella" might be a better description). Nevertheless, it too had a pronounced propagandistic tendency, namely in the cause of free love. This subject is no longer as topical as it was in 1892—today's interest will probably be more in the denunciation of small-town life that Mackay presents in his scathing picture of Saarbrücken, where he lived for a while in the home of his stepfather.

The second novel in this volume is Mackay's only thriller—*District Attorney Sierlin: The Story of a Revenge* (1928). All propaganda is lacking here—this novel was written for money. *District Attorney Sierlin*, which is set in Berlin where Mackay had been living for many years, was one of his few commercial successes. Before publication as a book, it had been serialized in the well-known Berlin paper *Vossische Zeitung*. The sustained tension in the story is well suited to serialization and Mackay's characters are psychologically interesting. The novel reflects his lifelong fascination with the "perfect crime."

The third novel, *The Imagined World*, was written shortly after *Sierlin*, but was never published in Mackay's lifetime. If it had been, he would probably have given it a subtitle to describe its content as he did for all his other stories. I have taken the liberty of adding the subtitle given here. Although lacking the excitement of the earlier novel, it has elements that reflect Mackay's own *weltanschauung*—and, indeed, sexual interests—that make it fascinating for anyone interested in Mackay's biography. These aspects will be further discussed in the afterword.

John Henry Mackay was born on 6 February 1864 in Greenock, Scotland, the son of a Scottish father (John Farquhar Mackay, a marine insurance broker) and a German mother (née Luise Auguste Ehlers). His mother returned with him to Hamburg, Germany, on the death of his father when Mackay was only nineteen months old. Thus he grew up with German as his mother tongue. He later learned English—and translated a volume of American and English poems into German—but did not write it well. His mother married a second time to a Prussian civil servant who already had a son. Mackay did not get along with his stepbrother and spent his later school years away from home as a boarding pupil. After one year as an apprentice in a publishing house, he was a student at three universities (in Kiel, Leipzig, and Berlin), but only as an auditor. With a generous allowance from his mother, he traveled much and began his long career as a writer.

Overnight fame came to Mackay in 1891 with his propagandistic *The Anarchists*, which was translated that same year into English and later into eight other languages. But he was already known as a lyric poet. The composer Richard Strauss, whom Mackay met in 1892, later set four of Mackay's poems to music—his "Morgen" has remained one of Strauss's most performed lieder. Mackay was also known as an anarchist poet, but he wrote in a variety of literary forms, including novels, plays, and shorter fiction of all lengths. His first full-length novel, *The Swimmer* (1901), was one of the very first literary sports novels. It has all the excitement one expects from a sports novel and is also notable for its psychological insights. In addition it is historically important for the picture it gives of competitive swimming and diving in the first period of the organization of those sports. (An English translation of *The Swimmer* was published by Xlibris in 2001.)

The death of Mackay's mother in 1902 brought on a depression from which he only recovered with his dedication in 1905, under the pseudonym Sagitta, to the new cause of

homosexual liberation, especially the right of men and boys to love one another. Mackay himself was attracted to boys in the ages 14–17. His literary efforts in this direction were ruthlessly crushed by the state—though Mackay continued to write and publish underground.

Mackay was also the rediscoverer of the philosopher of egoism Max Stirner, whose biographer he became. During the years of World War I, he was unable to publish but did complete his second large work of anarchist propaganda, *The Freedomseeker*. By the time it appeared, however, interest in Mackay's brand of individualist anarchism had nearly died out. Nor was he able to reclaim the attention that his earlier works had brought him. The runaway inflation in 1923 wiped out the value of the lifetime annuity Mackay had bought with his inheritance from his mother, so that he spent his last years in relative poverty. He died in Berlin on 16 May 1933.

Afterword

John Henry Mackay's novel *Die Menschen der Ehe* (*The People of Marriage*, 1892) is, as he himself noted, "decidedly propagandistic." He said twenty years later that writing it was for him a "kind of liberation." Its theme of free love was very much "in the air" at the time, a theme that was also—in a somewhat different context—close to Mackay the boy-lover. Some anarchists were much more vehement than Mackay in their condemnation of the institution of marriage. Emma Goldman, for example, wrote strongly about it shortly afterwards in her "Marriage and Love" (in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 1910) and concluded: "Thus Dante's motto over Inferno applies with equal force to marriage: 'Ye who enter here leave all hope behind.'" And in a review of Mackay's novel, Emma Heller Schumm (wife of George Schumm, who translated Mackay's *The Anarchists* into English) faulted Mackay for not being sweeping enough in his condemnation of marriage:

"It is only because literature is still so poor in novels that have stamped marriage with the label 'failure' that I feel at all grateful to him for the little he has given us. Per-

haps I would be less disappointed if the title of the book had not misled me to expect more, and if I did not know Mr. Mackay's condemnation of marriage to be absolute, and not confined to merely 'bad marriages.' ...

"Mr. Mackay has not, as his American friends, who knew of the forthcoming book, had fondly hoped he would, dealt a death-blow to marriage. Where is the great artist and psychologist who will, by giving to the world *the* novel of free love?" (*Liberty*, 21 January 1893, Whole No. 255, p. 3).

Mackay did not publicly comment on the review, but near the end of his life he recalled the novel in his *Abrechnung* (1932):

"It was a disappointment. One had—I know not why—expected a voluminous discussion of the problem of marriage.

"I am sorry. I feel myself quite incompetent here, although, many years later, in 1930, I once more dared that dangerous field with a small one-acter, the 'Scene': *Ehe* [Marriage].

"All that I wanted, there and here, was to show in an example how very much more beautiful and pure the—even then!—so much slandered 'free love' was than the—even today!—so vehemently defended institution of marriage, and how much more correct it is to separate than to remain together if one no longer loves" (*John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writings*, Xlibris, 2001, p. 48).

Like the central character of *The Anarchists*, the protagonist of *The People of Marriage*, Franz Grach, is the spokesman for Mackay's own views and so may be identified with him. His opposite number, the strong woman Dora Syk, is, I believe, patterned after Mackay's good friend Gabriele Reuter (1859–1941). Certainly Reuter believed in free love. As Jeannine Blackwell wrote in her Ph.D. dissertation "Bildungsroman mit Dame: The Heroine in the German Bildungsroman from 1770 to 1900" (1982): "Reuter herself willingly had a child out of wedlock, and lived for a short period with German anarchist poet John Henry Mackay." The two were part of the group of writers that spent summers in the mountain village of Schreiberhau (today, Szklarska Poreba, Poland). Reuter may

have stayed with Mackay there. Margarete Hauptmann wrote to Hedwig Fischer (wives of the well-known writer and publisher, respectively) on 25 September 1904:

“Yesterday evening John Henry Mackay had a party in his Schreiberhau cabin, to which we also went. It was very successful and entertaining. Frau Bölsche had prepared the cold buffet and Frau Gabriele Reuter did the honors. In the low, narrow room moved an elegant, wittily conversing crowd, drinking champagne—all gave a fantastic effect, as if from another world and time” (quoted in Peter de Mendelssohn, *S. Fischer und sein Verlag*, Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1970, p. 311).

In Mackay’s correspondence with Benjamin R. Tucker, however, there is no mention of Reuter. Instead, from the first remaining letter of 28 February 1905, Mackay several times mentions only one woman visitor in Schreiberhau, the Dresden actress Luise Firle (1865–1942). (See *John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writings*, Xlibris, 2001.)

Although Reuter had begun publishing early, she was still not well known when Mackay’s book appeared. That changed only a few years later, however, when she published *Aus guter Familie* (*From a Good Family*, 1895), the novel that made her famous—and financially independent. At first she had difficulty finding a publisher for it. Then she sent the manuscript to Mackay to examine. She related the result in her autobiography:

“He recommended it to his own publisher S. Fischer so warmly that Fischer decided to print it. And it was Mackay too who suggested the title ‘Aus guter Familie.’ I had titled it only ‘Agathe Heidling.’ The changed title contributed not immaterially to its success” (Gabriele Reuter, *Vom Kinde zum Menschen: Die Geschichte meiner Jugend*, Berlin: S. Fisher Verlag, 1921, p. 471).

If, as I believe, the character Dora Syk in *The People of Marriage* is modeled after Reuter, she repaid him in kind in *Aus guter Familie*. For the character Martin Greffinger in that novel is clearly intended to be Mackay. Mackay’s American biographer, Thomas A. Riley, suggested much too mildly that Greffinger “seems to be a portrait of Mackay” (*Germany’s Poet-Anarchist John Henry Mackay: A Contribution to the History of Ger-*

man Literature at the Turn of the Century, 1880–1920, New York: The Revisionist Press, 1972, p. 102). Lynne Tatlock stated that Mackay served “as prototype for the final development of Martin” (introduction to *From a Good Family*, by Gabriele Reuter, translated by Lynne Tatlock, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1999, p. xii). There is even an echo of *The People of Marriage* in Reuter’s novel when Agathe, the central character, thinks her friend Eugenie wants to marry Martin. Eugenie replies reproachfully: “A Social Democratic student? But Agathe—one doesn’t marry such! And besides, he really hates marriage!”

Contemporary readers of *The People of Marriage* would have had no difficulty in identifying an unnamed personage in the novel, the owner of the iron works, whom Mackay described thus: “From one of these dark knolls the narrow turrets of a modern castle towered into the sun-hot sky. There dwelt the king of the region. He knew that’s what he was: he talked down to his workers (using the familiar pronoun ‘Ihr’) and cared for them like ‘a father for his children.’ Things went well for him doing it; less so for his ‘children.’ Never mind!”

This was Carl Ferdinand Freiherr von Stumm-Halberg (1858–1906), who owned the leading iron works in Saarland. Here is an excerpt from his speeches to his workers in the years 1889–1895, i.e., around the time of Mackay’s novel. In it the “you” addressed to the workers is in fact the familiar pronoun “Ihr” as Mackay pointed out (“Ihr” is the plural of “Du”, the pronoun used to address intimates, children, and inferiors):

“I for my part would stay not a moment longer as your head, if in place of my personal relationship to each of you I had to place coming to terms with a workers’ organization under independent leadership.... Such a relationship to an independent power is forbidden me already by my sense of moral duty and my Christian conviction.... If this should ever change and I would in fact be hindered from supervising and rectifying the worker also in his relations outside the mill, then I would not remain a day longer at the head of the business, for I would then no longer be in a position to fulfill the moral duty that my conscience prescribes for me before God and my fellow men. An employer for whom it is indifferent how his workers conduct themselves outside the mill violates, in my opinion, his most important duty.... I could name a whole series of workers’ activities

outside the mill where I hold it to be the absolute duty of an employer, who is permeated by his moral duty, to interfere and not withdraw to the comfortable standpoint and say: what the worker does outside the mill is indifferent to me, I am interested only in the work done in the mill.... I state all this not to claim a merit for myself, for I do it only as my duty as a human being, a Christian, and as head of the great Neunkirchen family of workers.... I believe I may say with a good conscience that I am in no way inferior to my professional comrades in the direction of social welfare, at least not in the effort to care for your material and spiritual welfare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, and to manifest practical Christianity, for which I feel myself responsible to God. In this way I hope to take care that, far beyond the days of my own life, you will remain unreceptive to the enticements of the Social Democrats and other false prophets. That is the best direction of social welfare that I can grant and leave to you. Remain firm for all time in the old, unshakable loyalty to our exalted monarch, remain firm in Christian neighborly love and the genuine fear of God, whichever confession you belong to. Then it will continue to go well for you according to human judgment.” (This excerpt is from the Internet – Datenbank zur Unterrichtsvorbereitung im Fach Geschichte, Bremerhaven, 10.06.2001.)

Mackay was not a Social Democrat, but as an anarchist he surely qualified as one of the false prophets castigated by “King Stumm”—and at any rate the distinction between anarchist and Social Democrat was not as clear then as it is now. Indeed, Lynne Tatlock informs us in a footnote to her translation of Reuter’s *Aus guter Familie*: “In the Germany of the 1880s at least two anarchist movements grew out of and subsequently separated themselves from the Social Democratic party” (Gabriele Reuter, *From a Good Family*, translated by Lynne Tatlock, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1999, p. 220, n. 87).

In his memoirs Mackay commented: “I quite certainly have no weakness for the military. On the contrary! But—unmusical as I am—for military music.” But he did note the popular music of his day and mentioned several songs in his writings. Already in *The Anarchists* (1891) he recalled the song “Two Lovely Black Eyes” that the cockney comedian Charlie Coburn had introduced in London in 1886. Later, in the poem “Pfungsten” in his boy-love poetry collection *Am Rande des Lebens* (1909), he recalled an outing with a

boy to Grunewald (Berlin), where everyone sang “Im Grunewald ist Holzauktion” and “Donna Theresa.” The first of these was the hit dance song of Berlin in 1892 and continues to be popular; the second is also still on the nostalgia repertoire.

Another German evergreen is the song “Nur einmal blüht im Jahr der Mai” (May blooms only once in the year), which Franz Grach and Dora Syk in *The People of Marriage* hear and then join in singing. The music is by Wilhelm Heiser, the text by Johann Gabriel Seidl. It begins:

Es streuet Blüten jedes Jahr der Lenz auf allen Wegen,
bringt Rosen dir zur Gabe dar und liebereichen Segen.
Da laßt die Sorgen all’ vorbei und schütze die zarten Triebe!
Nur einmal blüht im Jahr der Mai, nur einmal im Leben die Liebe,
nur einmal blüht im Jahr der Mai, nur einmal im Leben die Liebe.

Every year spring strews blossoms on every path
Brings roses to you for a gift and loving blessing.
Then all cares are left behind and tender inclinations protected!
May blooms only once in the year, love only once in life,
May blooms only once in the year, love only once in life.

Another reference that would have resonated with contemporary readers of Mackay’s novel is in the passage in which Grach recalls an event from his youth. The scene is in the back room of a tavern where the students had taken the waitress. One of them played the piano, another “in a dim memory of ‘Nana,’ emptied his beer into the piano.” Emile Zola’s novel *Nana* had been published in 1880. The scene the student recalls occurs near the beginning of the novel at a drunken all-night party where the characters are trying to think how to liven things up:

“Then the little fair-haired fellow, the man who bore one of the greatest names in France and had reached his wit’s end and was desperate at the thought that he could not hit upon something really funny, conceived a brilliant notion: he snatched up his bottle of

champagne and poured its contents into the piano. His allies were convulsed with laughter.

“‘Hey! Why’s he putting champagne into the piano?’ asked Tatan Nene in great astonishment as she caught sight of him.

“‘What, my lass, you don’t know why he’s doing that?’ replied Labordette solemnly. ‘There’s nothing so good as champagne for pianos. It gives ’em tone.’

“‘Ah,’ murmured Tatan Nene sounding convinced.”

In *Die Menschen der Ehe*, the student’s memory—or at least his wit—was dim indeed!

All together *Die Menschen der Ehe* is a scathing portrait of Saarbrücken, where Mackay lived briefly in the home of his stepfather, building inspector Dumreicher, at Pestelstrasse 4. His character Franz Grach even refers to the town as Abdera: “Dora Syk—and teacher of the second class in the girls’ school of Abdera! Now if that is not a joke one may laugh at, then I don’t know what is!” The real Abdera is a maritime city in northeast Greece. The air of the region was thought in ancient times to cause people to become dull, and from this came a folk belief among the ancient Greeks that all Abderites were stupid.

A century later the population of Saarbrücken—at least some of them—had come to terms with Mackay’s novel. On 16 November 1995 the Saarländischer Rundfunk broadcast a one-hour discussion of it in their series “Literatur im Gespräch” and gave a nice overview of various aspects of Mackay’s life. It may be doubted, however, if many there had actually read the novel. This is illustrated by the poem “SAGITTA oder: ‘Salü Saarbrücken’” that Hans Arnfried Astel wrote about the same time for his series “Sand am Meer—poetische Geheimkorrespondenz”:

Narrowly and secretly
Saarbrücken honors
its great son
John Henry Mackay.
Scotch on his father’s side,

but German
was his mother tongue.
From Hamburg
his mother
followed her second husband
to the dull town of businessmen,
officials, and military.
This town,
and what's worse,
its citizens, by Mackay,
who wanted his name pronounced
Mak-kai in good German,
this town was pictured by
the fugitive in the "Pictures
of a Small Town"
with the title
"The People of Marriage."
No one here
knows the book,
and that hardly surprises me,
for here, where every native wind
is caught in a butterfly net,
the old Maoist will remain a leftist
before the anarchist J.H.M.
will be sold as a "gift book."
Narrowly and secretly
they honor him
by the wind arrow
over the globe
at the main railway station
on the Saar.

Mackay as “Sagitta,”
which is Latin for arrow,
published the first hustler novel
of the Weimar Republic.

The covering of dust
on the window pane here:
a curtain.

I see the woman next door,
but she cannot see me.

(Reprinted in *Espero*, nos. 6/7, March 1996. From 1967 to 1998 Hans Arnfried Amstel was director of the literature department of the Saarländischer Rundfunk.)

(As an aside I note that the mention of Mackay’s insistence on the “German” pronunciation of his name is based on a misunderstanding of Erich Mühsam—expressed in his *Namen und Menschen: Unpolitische Erinnerungen*. Mühsam apparently did not realize that the pronunciation insisted on by Mackay was in fact the ordinary Scottish pronunciation.)

In 1911 Mackay invested most of the money he had inherited from his mother in a lifetime annuity, which he expected to give him an income sufficient to live on the rest of his life without having to be concerned about the sale of his books. But the runaway inflation of 1923 wiped out the value of the annuity, so that Mackay was dependent on those sales—which were never very large. He looked for a topic that would suit the popular taste—and pay immediately. Crime is always popular and serialization in a newspaper brought immediate reward. Mackay wrote his American friend Benjamin R. Tucker on 15 August 1926: “Could you give me the names of some American weeklies, which contain ‘fascinating stories’ and *pay well*? I have written one. Who could translate it?—Schumm?” (See *John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writings*, Xlibris, 2001.) This story must be his thriller *Staatsanwalt Sierlin: Die Geschichte einer Rache* (*District Attorney Sierlin: The Story of a Revenge*), which was serialized the following year in the *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin).

When things seemed bleakest, a millionaire patron appeared on the scene in 1927, enabling Mackay to found the Stirner Verlag. It was the Stirner Verlag that first published Mackay's thriller in book form in 1928. Mackay dedicated the book edition to his patron, the Russian émigré Michel Davidowsky. Alas, following the publication by the Stirner Verlag of Mackay's *Werke in einem Band* (1928), Davidowsky withdrew his support and Mackay's plans for a "Great Stirner Edition" had to be abandoned. Nor did Mackay receive the lifetime pension he had been promised.

District Attorney Sierlin reflects Mackay's lifetime interest in crime. Not that Mackay himself was a criminal—far from it. But he enjoyed fantasizing about it. His friend Friedrich Dobe later recalled:

"Mackay loved to let his fantasy play and invent situations and events in which the seemingly impossible is to be made possible. Thus I remember an evening in one of the Pilsner Urquell bars mentioned earlier, I believe it was Stallman's. On the wall opposite on a plaster base stood a life-sized bust of one of the Caesars that often drew our glances. Suddenly Mackay asked me, 'How would you go about it if you had to steal this bust?' 'Why should I steal it?' 'That doesn't matter. Assume that you are in love with it or know that it hides a secret treasure—enough that it is a life and death matter that you have this bust. How would you go about it?' And we made suggestions to one another, each more fantastic than the other, how we would manage to steal the bust from the pub without being noticed. Some of Mackay's stories—and not the worst—arose from such playful games of fantasy" (Friedrich Dobe, *John Henry Mackay als Mensch*, Koblenz: Edition Plato, 1987, p. 26).

Dobe mentions the short stories "Herkulische Tändeleien," "Der Stärkere," and "Der große Coup" as products of Mackay's "playful games of fantasy." (These and other short stories and novellas mentioned here are in English in the volume *John Henry Mackay: Shorter Fiction*, Xlibris, 2000.) But surely *District Attorney Sierlin* is the most successful and original result of these plays of fantasy. This "Story of a Revenge" (the subtitle) builds and sustains a tension that is gripping indeed. And although here as elsewhere Mackay uses the technique of the "omniscient author," by concentrating on the different

actors in repeating the scenes of the story he is able to display a fine psychological insight into individual actions.

A reviewer for the *Vossische Zeitung* (in which the novel had first been serialized, nota bene) used the phrases: “a book so surely resting on its own foundation, such convincing, humanly gripping treatment ... such cool consistency ... what artistic sureness ... what absolute psychological force.” Other reviewers were not quite as kind. Wilhelm von Scholz (1874–1969), a prolific author of poems, plays, novels, and memoirs, wrote in *Das literarische Echo* (1930, 33: 9–10): “This tale begins excitingly and also holds the tension until about the middle of the book. Then the interest of the reader slackens, for the tale develops all too consequentially and programmatically—one can also certainly say: the tension heightens all too programmatically. But the heightening in a straight, unbroken line, without new diversions from the already anticipated, almost foreseen path, loses its essence and quickly awakens the impression of constant uniformity.”

This description reminds one immediately of Maurice Ravel’s famous orchestral work “Boléro”—which was composed the same year as the publication of Mackay’s book. Scholz continued: “To be sure, the book is lacking in any kind of aftereffect beyond its conclusion.” (And did Ravel not say something similar about his own “Boléro”?) “But on the other hand it is undoubtedly a serious literary accomplishment and the work of a clever, significant person, in which life is reflected above all in its shadows, and it deserves attention.”

The reviewer (von Hentig) for the *Monatsschrift für Kriminalpsychologie und Strafrechtsreform* (Monthly for Criminal Psychology and Penal Reform; 1928, 19: 768) took a more “professional” view: “At times a certain paranoid undertone of the book awakens a strong interest. Many features of this district attorney, who ambitiously envisions a place for himself in the Supreme Court of Justice in Leipzig, are seen in a sharp, caricatured way and are dazzlingly presented. But since one does not see why a talented and healthy person chooses as his only goal in life this crude and unproductive kind of revenge and loses himself in a private vendetta, we experience the book as a technical solution, as a deluded system that has by chance a rational starting point, not as a work of art that also has something to suggest to science.”

Mackay thought the book did not have the fate it deserved. He added: “This, too,

among my books cries out for filming; its effect, as I have been told, with correct treatment, would have to be just as uncanny as that of the book itself” (in *Abrechnung*; in English in *John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writings*, Xlibris, 2001, p. 60). (He had earlier written of his sports novel *Der Schwimmer*, “What an artistically beautiful film could be made of it!”)

Kurt Zube, Mackay’s German biographer (under the pseudonym K. H. Z. Solneman), agreed that *District Attorney Sierlin* was “downright material for a film.” I agree with his description of the novel:

“The revenge of an innocently sentenced man on the responsible district attorney is described with constantly increasing tension in a masterly composed construction. The protagonist proceeds so methodically and cleverly in doing it that none of the actions with which he pursues and encircles the attorney, who becomes ever more nervous, offer any means against himself. He applies a tactic of wearing him down, the model example of passive resistance, which puts the bad conscience of the attorney under ever harder pressure. It becomes so unbearable for him that it finally leads him to an actual attack on his pursuer, who averts it with pleasure so as also to have the means to allow the so-called ‘state of laws’ to act against him. Sierlin finally lands in a mental hospital for the rest of his life. This is a truly anarchist story” (K. H. Z. Solneman, *Der Bahnbrecher John Henry Mackay: Sein Leben und sein Werk*, Freiburg/Br.: Verlag der Mackay-Gesellschaft, 1979, p. 256).

Zube finds only the ending of the story “somewhat unsatisfying,” for “someone who summons up such energy to demand an accounting for the time in his life that was spoiled by another, should also find his life still worth living for other goals and not end it in suicide.” Perhaps. But it is part of Mackay’s honest insight into the human condition that he also shows how difficult it is to live an anarchist life. Once again (as the poet Browning suggested) a man’s reach exceeded his grasp.

An amusing note in *District Attorney Sierlin* is presented by Assistant Judge Kreidewien, who coined the term “somewhat too human” and applied it to D.A. Sierlin. It is, of course, a parody of Nietzsche’s “Human, All Too Human” and may be a tip of the hat

to the contemporary cult of Nietzsche. What Mackay really thought of Nietzsche was forcefully expressed in his comparison of Nietzsche and Stirner: “No one admires more than I the defiant courage of this thinker [Nietzsche], his proud disdain of all traditional authority, and the power at times of his language; but wanting to compare this eternally vacillating spirit, who is always anew self-contradictory, almost helplessly tumbling from truth to error, with the deep, clear, calm, and superior genius of Stirner is an absurdity, not worth serious refutation” (from the introduction to Mackay’s biography *Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk*, 3rd ed., 1914—more on Stirner below).

Die gedachte Welt (The Imagined World) was not published in Mackay’s lifetime. Edited by Edward Mornin, it first appeared in 1989 along with a few other unpublished works of Mackay. If *District Attorney Sierlin* is a “true anarchist story,” as Zube remarked, then *The Imagined World* is a true egoist story. As Mornin commented: “In *Die gedachte Welt* Mackay carries his liberation ideas to their ultimate conclusion. Through the love and example of a simple, devoted girl, Ludwig Behrendt is rescued from self-destruction and led to the conviction that everyone can form his own life and create his own world through his readiness to be happy or unhappy” (Edward Mornin, editor, *Die gedachte Welt* by John Henry Mackay, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989, p. 24). Mornin then quotes the lines near the end of the novel:

“He thought of her words again. Was it not so?

“My thoughts create the world. My thoughts let it sink back again into its nothingness.

“I live and the world is there—it exists. I am dead and it is gone—it exists no more.

“I think and I am. I cease to think and I am no more.

“My thoughts are everything—they are my happiness; they are my unhappiness.

“If I am their master, then I am master over my life and my death. If I am their slave, then I am the plaything of my fate.

“He wanted to become master of his thoughts and remain so from then on.

“He wanted to be happy by ruling in his thoughts.”

“These ideas,” Mornin concludes, “were taken by Mackay from the writings of Stir-

ner. *Die gedachte Welt*, his last large work, leads to a point beyond which there can be no more real development. This point, at which the human being creates his own world ('the imagined world') through his will, presents an existential conclusion and negates in the final analysis the importance of the outside world" (p. 25).

Mornin references several very apt pages from the egoist philosopher Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1844). (All quotations from Stirner here are in the brilliant English translation of Steven T. Byington. This was published in 1907 by Benjamin R. Tucker, who gave the book the title *The Ego and His Own*.) These include, for example, the passages in which Stirner compares "freedom" and "ownness":

"What a difference between freedom and ownness! One can get *rid* of a great many things, one yet does not get rid of all; one becomes free from much, not from everything.... Ownness, on the contrary, is my whole being and existence, it is I myself. I am free from what I am *rid* of, owner of what I have in my *power* or what I *control*. My *own* I am at all times and under all circumstances, if I know how to have myself and do not throw myself away on others. To be free is something that I cannot truly *will*, because I cannot make it, cannot create it: I can only wish it and—aspire toward it, for it remains an ideal, a spook....

"Freedom teaches only: Get yourselves rid, relieve yourselves of everything burdensome; it does not teach you who you yourselves are. Rid, rid! so rings its rallying-cry, and you, eagerly following its call, get rid even of yourselves, 'deny yourselves.' But ownness calls you back to yourselves, it says 'Come to yourself!' Under the aegis of freedom you get rid of many kinds of things, but something new pinches you again: 'you are rid of the Evil One; evil is left.' As *own* you are *really rid of everything*, and what clings to you you *have accepted*; it is your choice and your pleasure. The *own* man [der *Eigene*] is the *free-born*, the man free to begin with; the free man, on the contrary, is only the *eleutheromaniac*, the dreamer and enthusiast."

We see these ideas well illustrated by Ludwig Behrendt in *The Imagined World*. With the arrival of the blackmailer he is awakened to a sense of how very much he has lost his freedom. He tries to regain it by getting rid of the blackmailer. But even though

he achieves this, he realizes that he is still not free. Nor does his achievement of ridding himself of his concern for the opinions of his fellow citizens satisfy him. He is consequently led to consider suicide as the path to final freedom. Then, as Mornin has pointed out, the young girl (whom Behrendt has fallen in love with without realizing it) suggests to him something else altogether: that he can will to own himself—and in so doing create his own world. This he does, and it is the very choice proposed by Stirner.

(As an aside here, I note that I have put the original German of what Byington translated as “the *own* man” in square brackets above, namely, “*der Eigene*.” This term was taken from Stirner’s book to be the title of the first “gay” journal in the world, *Der Eigene*, which began as an anarchist journal in the direction of Stirner in 1896, but was openly homosexual from 1898. With interruptions—mostly due to interference by the police—it continued until 1932. To try to be explicit and non-sexist, I have elsewhere translated the journal’s title “The Self-Owner.”)

Stirner’s ideas appear in many of Mackay’s writings, of course. He prided himself on being the rediscoverer of Stirner and was (and remains) *the* biographer of Stirner. There is surely a reference to Stirner’s book in *The Imagined World* when Behrendt’s acquaintance Dr. Radewald is described as “the only one here with whom one could talk about something other than the local interests and the questions of the day. About a book, not even known here by title.” (Two other topics are also mentioned: “about a matter of which the newspapers only wrote in order to suppress it and which only those readers found out about who were able to think independently; and now and again also about a question that was better not discussed here at all.” Mornin has suggested that the second is “probably an allusion to pederasty.” The first is perhaps homosexuality in general; I am assuming that “pederasty” is a synonym for “boy-love” here.)

Some further passages from Stirner (also referenced by Mornin) help illuminate the ending of Mackay’s novel:

“Exertions to ‘form’ all men into moral, rational, pious, human, ‘beings’ (training) were in vogue from of yore. They are wrecked against the indomitable quality of I, against own nature, against egoism. Those who are trained never attain their ideal, and only profess with their *mouth* the sublime principles, or make a *profession*, a profession

of faith. In fact of this profession they must in *life* ‘acknowledge themselves sinners altogether,’ and they fall short of their ideal, are ‘weak men,’ and bear with them the consciousness of ‘human weakness.’

“It is different if you do not chase after an *ideal* as your ‘destiny,’ but dissolve yourself as time dissolves everything. The dissolution is not your ‘destiny,’ because it is present time.

“Yet the *culture*, the religiousness, of men has assuredly made them free, but only free from one lord, to lead them to another. I have learned by religion to tame my appetite, I break the world’s resistance by the cunning that is put in my hand by *science*; I even serve no man; ‘I am no man’s lackey.’ But then it comes. You must obey God more than man. Just so I am indeed free from irrational determination by my impulses, but obedient to the master *Reason*....

“Without doubt culture has made me *powerful*. It has given me power over all *motives*, over the impulses of my nature as well as over the exactions and violences of the world.... From religion (culture) I do learn the means for the ‘vanquishing of the world,’ but not how I am to subdue *God* too and become master of him; for God ‘is the spirit.’ And this same spirit, of which I am unable to become master, may have the most manifold shapes; he may be called God or National Spirit, State, Family, Reason, also—Liberty, Humanity, Man.

“I receive with thanks what the centuries of culture have acquired for me; I am not willing to throw away and give up anything of it: I have not lived in vain. The experience that I have *power* over my nature, and need not be the slave of my appetites, shall not be lost to me; the experience that I can subdue the world by culture’s means is too dear-bought for me to be able to forget it. But I want still more.”

Although Behrendt has been “rescued from self-destruction” by the girl’s “love and example” (Mornin), Mackay makes it quite clear in *The Imagined World*, with his description of the “Death Park,” that suicide is part of everyone’s right to self-determination. In fact, this is one of the recurring themes in Mackay’s writings, and already in one of his earliest publications, the narrative poem *Helene* (1888), it is central to the title character’s motivation (as I pointed out in “No Good Deed Goes Unpunished:

John Henry Mackay's *Helene*," *Germanic Notes*, 1986, 17: 6–8).

On a lighter note may be mentioned Behrendt's dislike of the greeting "Mealtime!" (in German, "Mahlzeit!"). Mackay had already satirized this greeting in his short story "Nausea":

"'Me-e-a-l-time ... Me-e-a-l-time ...' Oh how I hate that word! Whether stated or not, from dawn to dusk, the whole people bellow out that greasy, slimy, self-satisfied word, in which there is no sense and no reason. I hear it always. I cannot avoid it.

"Even when I lie dying, I will have to hear it: 'Me-e-a-l-time! Me-e-a-l-time'—yes, for the worms!" (*John Henry Mackay: Shorter Fiction*, Xlibris, 2000, p. 65).

I experienced this ridiculous greeting firsthand during the academic year 1974–75, which I spent as guest of the Institute for the History of Science (University of Munich), where I shared lunch with colleagues in the canteen of the German Museum.

In *The Imagined World* the young girl Marie deserves a closer look. Her "child's face" reminded Behrendt of "the face of that young Englishman who had worked beside him in London." Edward Mornin noted: "That the girl who attracts Behrendt reminds him of a young man is perhaps to be ascribed to Mackay's homosexuality." I believe that much more is going on here with this girl who "was never afraid of anything." There are several indications that Mackay is really describing an affair with a boy and has only used the well-known device of changing the pronoun to disguise the fact and make the novel acceptable to the public. The first indication is indeed that noted by Mornin, but the whole one-night stand has all the elements of a typical man-boy encounter down to the showing of the photo of the lad's real girlfriend. Despite the prevalent anti-boylove, anti-homosexual, anti-sex propaganda, many (heterosexual) boys welcome the interest of an older man, even as they are basically interested in girls. This was as true in Mackay's time as it is today. Of course they show their photos. And then as now boy-lovers are pleased to see them, among other reasons, to reassure themselves that they are not "seducing" the boy into becoming a homosexual as the denouncers of pederasty all say now—and said in Mackay's Berlin.

In his "Books of the Nameless Love," written under the pseudonym Sagitta, Mackay

was more explicit. But homosexuality was never explicitly part of any story written under his real name—or almost never: it appears in an unexpectedly matter-of-fact way in the novella *Der Unschuldige* (The Innocent, 1931), his last published fiction. But there are hints of boy-love in several short stories and poems, where it is mostly hidden by the lack of any pronouns, thus allowing the reader to assume the gender at will—and, of course, the heterosexual assumption has prevailed. Already in *Helene* (1888) the title character appears to be patterned after a boy who appears in the “Sagitta” novel *Fenny Skaller*, which is largely autobiographical. The short short story “Ein Abschied: Ein später Brief” (A Farewell: A Late Letter, 1903) is an unusual example in which the gender of the older lover of a young man is unstated. All prior critics have assumed that person is a woman, but I read the character as a man.

Whatever the sources for Mackay’s literary figures—whether Gabriele Reuter for Dora Syk in *The People of Marriage* or a boy for Marie in *The Imagined World*—the two can be read on several levels with enjoyment. The third novel here, *District Attorney Sierlin*, is more superficial in this regard. Yet it too has depths in its psychological insights and unrelenting anarchistic treatment even as it remains on the surface a gripping thriller. All together, the three novels presented here reveal many sides of the Scotch-German writer—anarchist, boy-lover, his own man—the unique John Henry Mackay.

Hubert Kennedy

John Henry Mackay

The Hustler

The Story of a Nameless Love from Friedrichstrasse

Translated by Hubert Kennedy

2002

Introduction

The first edition of my translation of John Henry Mackay's *The Hustler* appeared in 1985 (Alyson Publications, Boston; Sasha Alyson was still the owner-publisher). It has been out-of-print for several years, so that a new edition now seems called for—along with a revision of the translation, for in an attempt to make the novel “flow more smoothly” the editor had trimmed my rather literal translation. I had forgotten how much until once more, after many years, I compared that version with the original German. And—I should add—my acquaintance in the meantime with Mackay's writings showed me a number of errors in translation. For example, in my attempt to make the story clear I often put the names of the characters in place of the pronouns “he” and “him.” I discovered that I sometimes got them wrong, so I have now left Mackay's pronouns in and trust the reader to straighten them out. Nor did I earlier trust the reader to know the distinction between the German personal pronouns: the familiar “Du” (used between close friends) and the more formal “Sie.” Each must be translated as “you,” but when the characters in the novel refer to the distinction, I have now given the German words.

The result is a return to a more literal translation—not a word-for-word translation, but a closer adherence to the original text as well as to Mackay's own writing style: short paragraphs, repetitions designed to pace the reader through the story and heighten the suspense—so that the present edition is nearly four percent longer than the first. In short, having immersed myself in Mackay's writings over the years—and having followed *The Hustler* with five other volumes of Mackay translations—I have come to appreciate the

force of his personal style, which is superficially simple, but carefully constructed—and very effective.

Beginning in 1905, the Scotch-German writer John Henry Mackay (1864–1933), using the pseudonym Sagitta, began a literary campaign for the recognition of man-boy love with several works in various genres; the first were suppressed by the government, but all were published underground in 1913. The relative freedom of the Weimar Republic allowed him to reprint those works in a one-volume edition in 1924. Two years later he followed this with his last work as Sagitta, the long novel *Der Puppenjunge* (which I have translated as *The Hustler*; the title will be explained in my afterword). All the Sagitta writings were reprinted in a two-volume edition in 1979 (simultaneously published by the Verlag der Mackay-Gesellschaft, Freiburg/Breisgau, and the Verlag rosa Winkel, Berlin). I first became acquainted with the novel in this edition and, encouraged by Kurt Zube, secretary of the Mackay-Gesellschaft, spent several months translating it while on a sabbatical leave in Munich in 1982–1983. I followed that translation with a number of articles on Mackay’s writings as well as other translations, and Mackay has continued to be a special interest.

When a new edition of *Der Puppenjunge* was planned for 1999, I was asked to write an afterword for it. It was this that prompted me to return to the novel, and I was once again reminded of its timely theme—and Mackay’s passionate, yet objective treatment of it. I wanted to make it available again in an English edition worthy of the original.

Thus I hope that the numerous readers who enjoyed the first edition of *The Hustler* will also want to revisit the story in its new appearance. I believe they will discover further depths to the story and appreciate more its historical context. And of course I hope that this edition will introduce Mackay’s unique novel to a new generation of readers. In our time, which has demonized intergenerational love, Mackay’s novel of “a nameless love from Friedrichstrasse” is the classic document of the agonies, triumphs, and defeats of this love “like any other love.”

Afterword

The Hustler, Mackay's second long novel, appeared in 1926, a quarter century after his first, *The Swimmer* (1901). The two novels have great historical value: both are set in Berlin and describe scenes that have nowhere else been documented in such exemplary fashion. *The Swimmer* describes competitive swimming and diving in the formative years of those sports in Germany. *The Hustler* (the original German title, *Der Puppenjunge*, will be explained below) gives us a view of homosexual life in Berlin in the 1920s; the accuracy of its description is vouched for by Christopher Isherwood, who wrote: "I have always loved this book dearly—despite and even because of its occasional sentimental absurdities. It gives a picture of the Berlin sexual underworld early in this century which I know, from my own experience, to be authentic" (letter of November 1983 to Sasha Alyson, publisher of the first English translation of *The Hustler*). But both novels are of far more value than their witness to history. *The Swimmer*, the story of the rise and fall of a world-champion swimmer, while on the surface an exciting sports novel, also gives a penetrating insight into the nature of a gifted individual who is consumed by a single-minded ambition; it was written without propagandistic intent at a time when Mackay was best known as an anarchist propagandist. *The Hustler*, on the other hand, is clearly propaganda—written from an anarchist viewpoint, it pleads for the acceptance of man-boy love. It gives a view of human sexual nature that has been brutally suppressed—not least in our own day. Not surprisingly the novel was first published under a pseudonym. Who was Mackay/"Sagitta"?

John Henry Mackay was born in Greenock, Scotland, on 6 February 1864. His father, John Farquhar Mackay, was a marine insurance broker, who died when his son was only nineteen months old. John Henry's mother, née Luise Auguste Ehlers of a well-to-do Hamburg family, returned to Germany with her young son, who thus grew up with German as his mother tongue. He later learned to speak English—and even published a volume of translations of British and American poetry—but he never wrote it very well. Following an unsuccessful year as an apprentice in a publishing house, he was a student at three universities (Kiel, Leipzig, Berlin), but only as an auditor. He early considered himself a writer, and although never very successful commercially, did gain a certain es-

teem. Already in 1885, following a visit to relatives in Scotland, he published an epic poem, *Kinder des Hochlands* (Children of the Highlands), which is inspired in part by Walter Scott's poetry (as discussed by the Germanist Edward Mornin in "A Late German Imitation of Walter Scott" in *Germanic Notes* 17.4 [1986]: 49–51). In 1887 he went to London for a year, a London filled with German refugees from Bismarck's anti-Socialist law, and there he moved to the extreme left with his interest in the "social question." His collection of anarchist poems, *Sturm* (1888), was acclaimed as revolutionary. Then he read Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (*The Ego and His Own*, as the title was given by the publisher, Benjamin R. Tucker, to the English translation in 1907). This strengthened Mackay in his own individualistic views, which were then seen in his book *The Anarchists* (1891; Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1999; also available on the Internet: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/macan/macan.html). Mackay also determined to write the biography of this forgotten philosopher of egoism; his biography of Stirner appeared in 1898, the same year as the 636-page volume of his collected poems.

Mackay's sports novel *Der Schwimmer* (The Swimmer) appeared in 1901. (A "Centenary Edition" English translation was published by Xlibris in 2001.) He was at the height of his literary power. But the death of his beloved mother the following year brought on a depression from which he only recovered by dedicating himself to a new cause. Using the pseudonym "Sagitta" (Latin for "arrow"), he began a literary campaign in 1905 for the acceptance of man-boy love—Mackay himself was attracted to boys 14–17 years old. He later said of his works under that name: "I was Sagitta. I wrote those books in the years in which my artistic strength was believed to have died out." In fact, he never regained the literary esteem that he had earlier enjoyed under his real name. The edition of his collected works in eight volumes in 1911 contained little that was new—two short stories and a few poems—and drew little attention from the literary establishment, especially since he published it himself. Following World War I *Der Freiheitsucher* (the Freedomseeker) appeared in 1920, but in contrast to the attention given his earlier anarchist work, it was largely ignored. Mackay's mother had generously supported him and left him enough to live on the rest of his life, so that he was not dependant on the sale of his books, but the runaway inflation of 1923 wiped out the value of the life-time annuity he had purchased. After that he wrote for money, but never regained the at-

tention of the reading public, so that he died in Berlin in relative poverty on 16 May 1933, shortly after the Nazis came to power.

Mackay, who had been living in Berlin since 1892, first appeared as Sagitta with five poems in the journal *Der Eigene* in 1905. In his effort to keep his identity secret, he even had the poems sent to the editor in the handwriting of his friend the Dresden actress Luise Firlre (1865–1942; Mackay may have met her when she was appearing on the Berlin stage before she moved to the Dresden State Theatre in 1896). Rejecting as derogatory all the names previously used for his love, he called it the “nameless love.”

Six “Books of the Nameless Love” were planned, to be sold by subscription, two each year. But after the first two were published in 1906, objections were raised that led to a long court battle that ended only in 1909. It is fortunate that Mackay was able to keep his identity as Sagitta secret, for otherwise he would probably have gone to prison. But the result was bad enough: The offending “obscene writings” were ordered destroyed and the publisher was fined and sentenced to pay court costs—all paid by Mackay, of course. He reported the result to his American friend Benjamin R. Tucker on 12 October 1909: “That means, that *everything*, I did as Sagitta, is absolutely destroyed and stamped out. The work of years is lost and, besides, it costs me about 6300 Marks loss” (in *John Henry Mackay: Autobiographical Writings*, Xlibris 2001).

In fact, Mackay persevered and was able to publish a complete edition of the *Books of the Nameless Love* in 1913, in which he also included a history of his fight as Sagitta. The title page gives the place of publication as Paris, but it was prepared by him in Berlin and sold by him underground. In a further irony, the first two books were not destroyed, but were kept in the publisher’s warehouse as “confiscated”—and were forgotten. Following the revolution of 1919, Mackay was able to retrieve and sell them. Five years later he published a new edition—in a handier format, as requested by friends in the Wandervogel movement—and, in the freer atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, sold it openly. But the “window of opportunity” in 1924 was brief: What was impossible ten years earlier was just as impossible ten years later, for all the writings of Sagitta were put on the Nazi list of forbidden books.

Although Mackay’s name was on the first published list of signatories of the petition for revision of the German anti-homosexual law § 175 (in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle*

Zwischenstufen 1 [1899]; Mackay's name is on page 256), the petition circulated by the Scientific Humanitarian Committee directed by Magnus Hirschfeld, Mackay soon came to see the limitation of that effort, especially with regard to his own fight for the right of men and boys to love one another. In "The History of a Fight for the Nameless Love" in the 1913 edition of the *Books of the Nameless Love* (in English in *Fenny Skaller and Other Prose Writings from the Books of the Nameless Love*, Southernwood Press, Amsterdam, 1988) he wrote: "My fight is ended. But I cannot take my leave from a cause to which I have given the best years of my life without having a word yet for its fate in the near future. Mistakes and errors have been made that must absolutely be avoided. *Two above all.*" The first mistake was that of the Gemeinschaft der Eigenen (Community of Self-Owners), the group organized around the journal *Der Eigene*. Despite his closeness personally to several members of this group, Mackay had sharp criticism of them:

"In a reaction to a persecution that had increased until it was unbearable, it has been sought to represent this love as special, as 'nobler and better.' It is not. This love is a love like any other love, not better, but also not worse, and, if it is truly love, results in blessings as rich as any love. The fight *for* it should never degenerate into a fight *against* another, for every love is entitled to its nature and the same source of life nourishes all. And from similar, often only too understandable feelings, it was sought to promote the freedom of man's love at woman's expense. This, too, is an error. However false the position of the other sex (in all classes) still is today—to prevent and to deny that sex its possibility of developing does not mean making friends out of enemies, but rather making the enemies of today into the implacable enemies of tomorrow and forever, and it is above all a complete misunderstanding of the great law of the future. This law is called freedom. Freedom includes all and excludes none."

But Mackay's strongest words were directed to the Scientific Humanitarian Committee:

"Finally, however, a mistake has been made that, in my eyes, is more disastrous than all the others. This love, persecuted by judges and cursed by priests, has fled to the medical doctors as if it were a sickness that could be cured by them. But it is not a sickness. Doctors have as little to look for and examine here as judges, and those who have accepted it as a sickness are mistaken if they believe they can free it from the clutches of

power by making a pact with this power. This—making a pact—they are doing, and by doing it they seek to save some at the expense of others. Knowing well how very much ‘public opinion’ (whose influence above all appears to them so important) opposes precisely the love of the older man for the younger of his sex, since the thoughtless always are able to see here only ‘seduction’ while they are more and more inclined to the thought of a ‘legalization of love between adults,’ these dangerous helpers consent to, yes, advocate, a law that legalizes the one while it condemns the other. And this they do, who can claim for themselves no excuse of ignorance and bias, but rather know, and know precisely, that here not the age but rather the maturity alone can be decisive, and who know and teach the inborn nature, the inevitability, and the immutability of this love for the same sex as a scientifically grounded fact!

“Is this their science? Then I shudder at it and them, and the quicker and more explicitly a clean-cut separation takes place here, the better—for them and for us!”

In a foreword to the 1924 edition of the *Books of the Nameless Love* Mackay once again complained of the latter group:

“For it has been shown again in these years [since the first edition] that this love has to look for its worst enemies precisely among those not outside, but within its own camp. Again those who call themselves ‘leaders’ in this fight, and as such label themselves as responsible, have publicly advocated, in one of their ridiculous and degrading petitions to the currently ruling powers, an ‘age of consent’—not in the case of a child, but rather for the mature boy and youth!—and with it the prosecution and punishment of those who they, like no others, know are exactly as innocent as themselves. Once again those who love a higher age have thus sought to save themselves at the expense of the comrades-in-destiny of their time; a betrayal of the cause more harmful in its intentions and more terrible in its results cannot be imagined. Once again here, as the only opportunity offered to me, just as before in the history of my fight, I would never be able to forgive myself for not having branded it as such.”

I have quoted the above statements of Mackay at some length, not only to make his position quite clear, but also to point up how remarkable was the reception of his novel *Der Puppenjunge* only two years later—and precisely from those he criticized most severely. Already before publication of the novel the *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-*

humanitären Komitees (Communications of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee) of October/November 1926 called attention to it: “With this seventh in the series of his ‘Books of the Nameless Love’ Sagitta is entering into a completely new area of international belles lettres—that of male prostitution. Once selected, possession must be taken of it with a fearless hand if the description of its marginal and nocturnal depths is to have a genuine and convincing effect. Thus, already because of its subject matter perhaps the most fascinating of his books, it will amaze, revolt, enthuse—depending on the attitude of the reader.”

Following publication of the novel, Hirschfeld himself reviewed the book in the *Mitteilungen* (in no. 5, January/February 1927, p. 34, where there is also an indication that the book was sold by the Scientific Humanitarian Committee.):

“This seventh book in the series of Sagitta’s works on the ‘nameless love,’ in its perfectly formed language and in its deep psychological content, is a worthy addition to its predecessors. Less so perhaps in its choice of title, but this scruple against a hitherto unliterary word disappears as soon as one reads with what mastery Sagitta even here again understands how to bring humanly closer people and their circumstances, whose existence and essence the majority stand opposite with such lack of understanding.

“In the middle point of the narrative stands the emotional connection between the young bookseller Hermann Graff, extremely finely sketched in his mixture of bitter holding back and passion (here the excursion to Potsdam deserves to be given special mention), and the teenage runaway ‘Gunther,’ who is called in his circle by the significant name ‘Chick.’ It is he from whom the book takes its title. Their experiences are played out in the well-known Berlin background: Passage—Friedrichstrasse—Tiergarten—Tauentzien—Adonis Lounge—their regular bar by the Stettiner Bahnhof—Moabit etc.; all are drawn by the brush of a genuine artist so true to life that many details come to light that ordinarily escape the superficial observer—and unfortunately even most professional observers are only superficial onlookers. But however great the admiration this ‘milieu description’ deserves, I believe we would not be doing the author and his work justice if we did not place in the foreground the misunderstood and persecuted love of the older man for the younger in its infinite tragedy, tragic not only for the lover, but also for the beloved, who does not understand its magnitude—from his upbringing, too, is unable to

understand it (here the claim of his discoverer and patron Arthur Klemke, called ‘the refined Atze,’ is especially worth noting: ‘If one of them would once fall in love with me, I would really take advantage of him!’), but also tragic for humanity, which loses the value that it too could gain from this love, if its humanitarian and fostering, pedagogical and productive character would be evaluated in an unprejudiced way.

“Hermann Graff is spared nothing from the fate of a homosexual: ‘Either I am a criminal or the others are, who have made these laws and enforce them,’ he once cries out with very understandable bitterness. But Chick, too, comes back from his flight out of the home nest with clipped wings—not through his friend’s fault. It is a sign of the poverty of our time, which prefers not to hear the truth, that this book written with such beautiful humanity can only be ‘privately published’ by its author.”

Hirschfeld’s generosity is evident in this review, but especially noteworthy is his rare statement of the value of man-boy love in its “humanitarian and fostering, pedagogical and productive character.”

Here, perhaps, is the place to explain the “hitherto unliterary word” of the title of Mackay’s novel *Der Puppenjunge*. Not that it ever became a “literary” word: “Puppenjunge”—or, in its primary spelling, “Pupenjunge”—was a slang word for a male prostitute and its use was almost entirely confined to the early years of the twentieth century. (The more common slang word was “Strichjunge,” which is found already in Magnus Hirschfeld’s *Berlins drittes Geschlecht* of 1904 and is still used.) It is so defined, for example, in the standard dictionary *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (edited by Lutz Mackensen, 10th edition, 1982), where only the spelling “Pupenjunge” is given. That this was its primary spelling is seen in Mackay’s novel, for every occurrence of the word in the text of the novel is spelled with a single-p. Only in the title is the word spelled with a double-p. The reason is this: Whereas the title suggests a derivation from “Puppe” (doll) and “Junge” (boy), the actual derivation is from “Pup” (fart). Clearly Mackay did not want to display this in the title and so chose to put the euphemized spelling there. (“Pupe”—a short form of “Pupenjunge”—was also used. It occurs once in Mackay’s novel.)

Since my English translation of the novel was meant primarily for American readers, I chose the corresponding American slang term “hustler” for the title. This term is ambiguous, but the subtitle of the book immediately told which meaning was intended—just as it immediately told the reader of Mackay’s original book that it was not about a

as it immediately told the reader of Mackay's original book that it was not about a "boy doll." (A search of the Internet for "Puppenjunge" in November 2001 found references to this novel and a number of sites selling dolls, distinguished as *Puppenjunge* = boy doll or *Puppenmädchen* = girl doll.) Other English-speaking countries have other slang words for a male prostitute. For example, Wayne Dynes has noted in his *Homolexis: A Historical and Cultural Lexicon of Homosexuality* (New York: Gay Academic Union, 1985), under the heading "Hustler": "In nineteenth-century England, male prostitutes were called **rent** or **renters**. In London today the term **dilly boy** occurs, since Picadilly Circus is a major pickup center." Although the slang word "hustler" is currently (in the United States) giving way to the more "politically correct" term "sex worker," I have kept the title *The Hustler*. (An extensive list of gay slang can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.hurricane.net/~wizard/19.html>.)

We may also note the word "Pupentisch," used by Mackay for the regular table of the hustlers at Uncle Paul's pub. He says in the novel that the proprietor "tolerated the name." I have given it as "Hustler Table," but the name also suggested, of course, "farting table."

As noted (above) by Christopher Isherwood, Mackay's description of Berlin's sexual underworld in the 1920s is "authentic." How was this authenticity achieved? Mackay's good friend Friedrich Dobe (in a memoir written in 1944, when Dobe was sixty years old, but only published in 1987) relates at length how Mackay prepared to write the book:

"This book, in construction, in thickening and unraveling the plot, probably the most mature artistic achievement of Mackay, is at the same time one of the truest books ever written. I accompanied the author, at times also with Dr. Hartwig, in all his study trips through Berlin for it. I saw what he described and observed himself. In the course of the year 1924 we systematically visited what in the Berlin vernacular were called 'queer' [schwul] bars by following the advertisements in the magazine *Die Freundschaft*—and indeed with such thoroughness that not a single one was left out, however difficult they often were to find. The scene with the policeman is literally true. It happened under the 'Bülow curve' (the elevated in Bülowstrasse), where we were looking in vain for the Dédé Restaurant; Mackay asked the policeman in his amiable fashion, and I still see today the indignant motion of his hand with which he showed us the way!

“The Adonis Lounge, which plays the principal role in this book, actually existed under another name exactly as Mackay described it. To be sure, there was also a real Adonis Lounge—if I’m not mistaken, in Berlin South in Alexandrinenstrasse. The bar described by Mackay was actually named Marienkasino and was found in Marienstrasse, not far from the eastern end of the north side and not too far from the Friedrichstrasse Train Station. Mackay described the life there very exactly: the rooms, the old proprietor whom they called ‘Father’ (Mackay too!), the boys—they all existed and I myself saw and recognized them repeatedly. Even the refined Atze lived and sat at a table with me. Only the principal persons of the story, Hermann Graff and his beloved, the boy Gunther, are free creations of Mackay.

“In the summer and fall of 1924 the author made no appointments: ‘You can find me as often as you wish, always from six o’clock on in the Marienkasino!’ And I followed his word as often as I could, as did Dr. Hartwig. There Mackay sat then in the back room at the head of a long, narrow table with his back against the wall and around him two, three, four, and even more boys. He ordered sausage sandwiches, cigarettes, and beer for them and let them talk, talk, talk. There was only one thing that he did not tolerate: that erotic things should be dragged in the dirt. Since the boys soon noticed that he wanted nothing further from them, they were glad to have his friendship, and the author was truly able to plumb the depths of that part of the population that frequented there. He never took notes, but only sat there among the flock of ‘lost sheep,’ pleasantly laughing along with them, at times also consoling and helping. They, of course, had no concept of why he came, but accepted him as a welcome diversion and as a contributor of many welcome gifts. Dr. Hartwig, differently organized than Mackay, got close to individual boys that he liked and could therefore relate to the author many additions to what was heard at the open table.

“Unfortunately the Marienkasino was later closed by the police, not for reasons of morality, but because the destructive traffic in cocaine had crept in there, which of course completely ruined many of the boys. Today there is a so-called ‘respectable’ bar there” (Friedrich Dobe, *John Henry Mackay als Mensch: Auf Grund langjährigen, freundschaftlichen Verkehres*, Koblenz: Edition Plato, 1987, pp. 78–80).

In his realism, Mackay even put himself into his description of the Adonis Lounge: “Guests were seldom here at this time. Only a singular-looking man, who was said to be an author and to write for the newspapers, was often already here, sitting among the boys and chatting with them—nice, intelligent, and interested in them. One saw from his clever and serious face that he must have gone through a lot.”

Another bit of realism that would have resonated with contemporary readers of the novel is Mackay’s mention of films. As Friedrich Dobe reported: “After his midday meal he took a walk, either through the streets of Berlin or outside the gates of the city, mostly in the direction of Potsdam. With this he united his daily swim. If he became tired on the street, then he sat down to rest in a cinema. In this way he saw nearly all the films ever presented, without really being interested in them. He only looked for them in order to relax and rest. Yet he knew well how to value good films and constantly notified me of them, since I did not have so much time” (*John Henry Mackay als Mensch*, p. 21). An example of such a good film is the one that Hermann and Gunther saw on Gunther’s birthday, which moved Hermann so much, but caused Gunther to say, “But none of that is really true.” This was surely the 1913 documentary by Herbert G. Ponting, *Scott’s Antarctic Expedition*, which the French film critic Georges Sadoul called “the first great documentary film” (in his *Histoire de l’Art du Cinema des origines à nos jours* [1915]; that documentary was later eclipsed by Ponting’s 1933 film *90 Degrees South: With Scott to the Antarctic*). Ponting was on the tragic expedition of Robert Falcon Scott to the South Pole in 1911–1912. According to his journal, Scott and a couple of his companions reached the South pole in January, only to discover that the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had been there a month earlier. Scott’s party did not survive the return trip.

Mackay must also have been well acquainted with the films of Harry Piel, which appealed so much to Gunther. Harry Piel (1892–1963) was the German film actor, director, and producer who introduced the “sensational” film to Germany. He produced or acted in over one hundred of them and was said officially never to have had a stunt double. Piel (who was married to the actress Dary Holm and appeared with her in all of her films) directed Marlene Dietrich in the 1927 comedy *Sein grösster Bluff* (His Greatest Bluff), in which he played the leading man—and his twin.

Apropos film: One of the more striking images in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* of 1926 (the year of Mackay's novel) is the picture of the underground factory as a Moloch that devours the workers. A similar image is in Mackay's description of the Passage at the beginning of Part Three: "a Moloch sucking in and spitting out, spitting out and sucking in—crowds, crowds of people, always new crowds." Mackay had already used this image in 1902 in his short story "13bis rue Charbonnel" in his description of the entrance to a state-run brothel in Paris: "And as Grillon stared and stared across the way, he saw everything that this door sucked in and spit out: elegant ladies and gentlemen of all ages; very young lads, mere street-boys, and little girls; women in feather hats and simple citizens who appeared to be honest shopkeepers and civil servants—they all went in and out there, coming by foot and by carriage, and disappeared inside" (in *John Henry Mackay: Shorter Fiction*, Xlibris, 2000, pp. 131–132).

As an aside: Mackay, who tried unsuccessfully to have *The Swimmer* made into a film—and also thought that his thriller *Staatsanwalt Sierlin: Die Geschichte einer Rache* (1928; District Attorney Sierlin: The Story of a Revenge) would make a good film—would probably have been pleased to know that a film script has been written for *Der Puppenjunge*. Unfortunately, its author, the filmmaker Wieland Speck (whose *Westler: East of the Wall* was named Best Feature Film, San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, 1986), was unable to find a producer for it (see *Magnus* [Berlin], October 1993).

Magnus Hirschfeld has already called attention to several of the familiar Berlin landmarks in the novel. Alas, the most important to the story—the Passage—is no longer there. The building that contained it was destroyed by bombs during the Second World War; that area has twice been rebuilt since. Built in 1869–1873, the Passage—officially Kaisergalerie—was an arcade 400 feet long, 24 feet wide, and 40 feet high. One entrance was on Unter den Linden; halfway through it there was an angle and the other entrance was at the intersection of Friedrichstrasse and Behrenstrasse. But Hirschfeld did not mention another landmark, In den Zelten (literally, in the tents), where Hermann and Gunther ate in an outdoor restaurant. Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science was in that area (at In den Zelten No. 10) and he also lived there. That building too was destroyed in the war. After the rubble was cleared away, the grounds became part of the Tiergarten park.

In the novel Pipel makes an appointment to meet Hermann at the “the bear sign” (the Berolina, the emblem of the city of Berlin)—at the “left calf” (linke Wade). Mackay says Pipel loved little jokes that like. It was probably a popular joke: there is today a music and dance group called “Berolina linke Wade” that presents, mostly for seniors, dances from Berlin in the 1920s.

Although Mackay’s novel, as a “milieu description” (Hirschfeld), concentrates on the hustler scene, it is notable that several other homosexual “scenes” are also included—or at least mentioned (for example, those who “spank”). The “Count” is an example of voyeurs—or, as the refined Atze remarked, those who “get it off merely from looking!” Many couples visited the lounges—“always an older man and a younger.” (This is not propaganda; it reflects the taste of the time. Today couples of the same age are more in fashion, not to say “politically correct.”) Effeminate homosexuals, “aunties,” are also in the novel. In view of Mackay’s dislike of the effeminate, clearly seen in Hermann’s refusal to call his relative “aunt,” it is notable that the only one of Hermann’s coworkers who offers to help him is effeminate. The “closed circles of gentlemen who did not cruise the street”—briefly enjoyed by Gunther—probably describes that of Mackay’s friend Benedict Friedlaender (1866–1908), a well-to-do private scholar, married, and author of *Renaissance des Eros Uranios* (1904), which urged a return to the ideal of Greek love. His suicide in 1908 cut off much of the financial support of Mackay’s fight to gain public recognition of man-boy love.

Perhaps the most surprising event in the story for American readers today is the length of Hermann’s prison sentence: two months. For Hermann’s “offence” Americans are regularly given an “indefinite” sentence, in practice a sentence to prison for life. Even in cases where the official sentence is for a limited time, upon its completion the man may be held indefinitely under a form of “preventive detention” as “likely” to commit the crime again. The idea of “preventive detention” is the same as that used by the Nazis (in Nazi terminology “Vorbeugungshaft”) to send to concentration camps those homosexuals who had served their court sentence. The situation is not as bad in Germany today, though Hermann would still find himself in conflict with the law. Although § 175 was abolished in 1994 (nearly a century after the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Berlin circulated its first petition for its repeal—and 127 years after the brave pioneer Karl

Heinrich Ulrichs first spoke out publicly against that law at a Congress of German Jurists in Munich), the law against sex with those under the “protected” age (of sixteen) has been strengthened.

Mackay’s view of that law and the courts that enforced it—expressed in the novel by the wise old woman, Hermann’s aunt—is permeated by his individualist-anarchist viewpoint: “There are few human beings who have not become criminals against their fellow humans—not directly, but rather indirectly, in that they tolerate and advocate laws such as this one for example.” And she added, her eyes flashing in anger: “And what are all the crimes in the world compared with the ones committed by those in gowns and vestments, robes and uniforms!” This and her other opinions on man-boy love are, of course, Mackay’s own.

This novel is of undeniable literary merit. Because of its subject matter, it has been ignored by the literary critics—or dismissed as “trivial literature.” As Hermann said, describing his unrequited love: “If it had been a woman he was suffering over—how they all would have understood him! Then his passion would have been great and sacred, and his despair noble.... But since it was only a boy—madness, if not a crime, the only cure to be locked up. Locked up in a cold-water treatment institution for the insane.” It is, in fact, a beautifully crafted story of the eternal joys and sufferings of love. For anyone willing to see this love as *love*, Mackay’s masterful treatment of it is universally compelling. At the same time, the action of the story takes place in a determined time and location that are described with historical exactness, making it a valuable document of a Berlin that will never be again.

The personalities of the story come alive for us in the sure sketches of Mackay. The brief chapter describing the gathering of a dozen boys around the Hustler Table at Uncle Paul’s is a masterpiece of characterization. But Mackay does not romanticize these boys. He sees them as limited by the hypocritical, bourgeois morality of the society on whose margin they must lead their empty, often sordid lives.

On its publication Walter Hauer (in Adolf Brand’s *Eros* 1/3, pp. 39–42; Brand was also publisher of *Der Eigene*) wrote that it was “the only novel on a grand scale that homosexual literature has to show” and he concluded: “We are richer by a great work of art, a work that has captured in its bright mirror all the nuances of our love and our life, that

has dared to say once and for all the unsaid, the not-to-be-said, and to present things that no one has had the courage to touch; and from the very same poet who wrote the splendid words ‘This love must I tenderly sing,’ these things have been raised to such a height that every objection must remain silent” (quoted in Marita Keilson-Lauritz, *Die Geschichte der eigenen Geschichte*, Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1997, p. 208). In a late review of the book, Kyrill (Christian von Kleist) also concluded that it “belongs to the few books in the literature on ‘our subject’ that may raise a claim to art” (*Der Eigene* 13/2, 1931, p. 61). In the years since then gay literature has seen many works of true art. *The Hustler* remains one of them: an enduring work of art from the hand of the Scotch-German writer— anarchist, boy-lover, his own man—the unique John Henry Mackay.

Hubert Kennedy