Jakob von Gunten: Group 3- Narrative style and time

* Attracted considerable attention owing to the simplicity of its form and the unprepossessing nature of the protagonist. – novel is anything but naïve.
* Jakob stages his innocence as part of a masquerade for the reader that calls the fictive character into question
* Novel is structured as a double fiction- a diary within a diary. Allows Jakob to escape the constraints of the first-person pronoun that normally confines the speaker to one time and place.
* Events unfold for the most part in chronological sequence.
* the eponymous hero of this diary novel occupies more than one here-and-now, which is generally a constraint of the diary. The rules of ordinary language dictate that the first person can refer only to the speaker invoking it at any point in time; in other words, the first person is "an instance of discourse" and nothing else, as Benveniste has demonstrated.
* That Jakob would exist in two places at once is thus a logical contradiction and a violation of grammar. This article will nonetheless claim that he can do so precisely because in fiction a narrator is not constrained by the rules of ordinary language or, more specifically, the form of first-person utterances. von Gunten is a novel which plays with narrative conventions to undermine them in the end? ultimately to subordinate form to content.
* The double fiction
* Jakob would have us believe that he retreats from the very pages of the book we hold in our hands to emerge on the other side of writing, that is, in life as someone we fail to acknowledge. The two instruments he uses in this undertaking are his pen and us. We, the readers, are the necessary witnesses to his passing into eternal life.
* That is to say, in the fiction of the existence of someone named Jakob von Gunten lies another fiction, namely that Jakob attends a servant school that he records in his diary. The text is arguably structured as a series of concentric rings, in which the diary of a student is enclosed within the diary of another person bearing the same name as him.
* Jakob draws on the tradition of the Bildungsromanto generate and from himself as a work of art. (170-9). Jakob, the student, in his opinion is a figure modeled after the hero of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Insofar as the narrator of the diary is modeled after another figure and as such sketched by another hand, the text has to be conceived as a double fiction with two narrators.
* A hidden writer named Jakob represents himself as a student who writes a diary in which he also represents himself.
* To bolster this speculative claim, G??ling points to the num ber of passages in which Jakob's knowledge exceeds that of an ordinary diarist. For instance, early in the text Jakob writes, "Von Kraus werde ich sehr viel reden mussen" (25), as if he already knows what direction his diary will take. A few pages later he comments, "Ich mu? noch einmal ganz zum Anfang zuruckkehren" (29), as if it were necessary to inform others that he is retracing his steps. And throughout the text, Jakob wonders how readers will respond to what he writes. For example, he begins one entry with the statement, "Ich mu? jetzt etwas berichten, was vielleicht einigen Zweifel erregt" (53). And later he jokes: "Ich schwatze wieder ein wenig, nicht wahr? Geb' es gern zu, da? ich schwatze, denn mit etwas mussen doch Zeilen ausgefallt werden" (105). All of these remarks lend credence to Gossling's claim that the diary is marked as fictitious within the very space of the text.

WEEK 3: LECTURE/ SEMINAR

* Deviant aristocratic protagonist
* Exotic-
* Departure proceeded by dream- turn back on Euro culture, go to Africa and start revolutions
* Stark contrast to ‘Tod
* Revitalized identity
* Modernity’s multiple dislocations- travel facilitated by technology, globalization, crumbling of divine through power of the church. Urban to rural. Thinning out of social bonds,
* 1905, Walser moves to Berlin, enrolls in training school for servants and works briefly as a butler.
* Micrograms- drafts of prose texts, theme of smallness, reduction
* Striking manifestation of smallness- inferior social role of protagonist eg. Servants, impoverished poets, marks bottom of social ladder and powerlessness.
* Kleinsein: der arme Mann- inverse, to be less and take up less space.
* ‘Jakob von Gunten’- from a particular class, starts from the bottom and wants to work himself down? Forming the unmaking of the individual, re-making of something that is obedient.
* Servants no longer in fashion
* Setting forwards the notion that a servant is not needed- p35. Institute is rundown, people no longer wants servants. Out of step untimeliness.
* Sight of deferral- a place of wasting time, not to use it productively
* Teachers are asleep or either dead
* Juxtaposed with the city
* Time slows down in the institute, in contrast to description of buzzing metropolis p.37 idea of hustle and bustle created through language and sentence structure.
* Plot: reflective, about himself, the environment, obsession with the ‘future’, self- contradictory- arrogant at times but then puts himself down, role play? An insecure identity?
* Power- roles, trying to control how you are perceived. Power hierarchy changes through role play.
* Masters need recognition of slave.
* Glorifies his friend Kraus, talks about him with enthusiasm but damns him as well.
* Benjamenta- desperate for love, maternal function, strangely sexual, reliant but also not really. Secret.
* ‘Ein Tagebuch’
* Time- arrival

-later time of enlightened reflection

* end blends with the beginning- conflict between ‘schein’ and ‘sein’
* abrupt interruptions stop narrative development and at the same time force narrative development
* bildung/ entwicklung/ erziehung- upbringing eg. Morality, manners, society/ habitus, social structures, old money vs. new money
* playing with idea of ‘Bildungsroman’ but degeneration is a chosen option.
* Different understanding of education?
* Being a good servant means being ‘invisible’, to not think, thinking only for the master.
* Jakob as ‘eine reizende Kugelrunde Null‘– basis of all counting based from ‘0’.
* Reduction of personality and thought is becoming ‘something’?
* Jakob as a puzzle- p.81 Kraus as a puzzle. No one interested in resolving. in becoming a puzzle, he is happy, so disinteresting that no one wants to solve him and this is the ‘achievement’.
* Practical sessions- gymnastics, dance
* Repeat class ‘wie hat sich der Knabe zu benehmen?‘
* Education is meaningful because it changes behavior and expectations, it cultivates ignorance
* P.50- CV- eg. Qualifications, achievements, anything noteworthy// generally not regarding personality, positive characteristics, worries/ concerns, weaknesses, family lineage, religious beliefs
* Jakobs CV: p.50/51- third person, wants to be dealt with in a particular way, ‘instructions for use’. Elevated by his family lineage- then rupture. Forwards how he’s not willing to do things he’s not comfortable with. He wants the experience of having to react in a particular way to his environment- form of education by life. Employer should be flattered that he wants to be a servant. Inflated ego/subservience. He’s a liar and a ‘trotzkopf’- not generally what you want
* CV is a perversion of a document to mark achievement.
* Group 3: read and summaries Simmel’s text on the metropolis and the individual. (is the city an educator? If so, what kind?) MOODLE