

BEYOND DISINTEGRATION. APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE IN HERMANN
BROCH'S *DIE SCHLAFWANDLER*

by

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Dedication

To my family

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Abstract

Beyond Disintegration: Apocalyptic Discourse in Hermann Broch's

Die Schlafwandler

by

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My dissertation argues that the Biblical apocalyptic text of *The Book of Revelation* serves as the central subtext for the structure and content of Hermann Broch's *Die Schlafwandler* (1931/32). The apocalyptic catastrophe of the novel lies in the resignation and apathy of the characters, particularly in regard to each other, which leads to the idea of the "value vacuum." Broch's text is apocalyptic in the sense that it is a warning and revelation of the things that could go wrong, yet it reminds readers that disintegration is not inevitable. By using apocalyptic rhetoric, Broch actually problematizes a one-sided interpretation of his contemporary period as a catastrophic age. In mapping apocalyptic rhetoric on to the trilogy, I do not intend to say that the work is a religious text, but rather that it is a modernist secular novel that uses religious rhetoric to criticize the phenomena of modernity, including the effects of secularization in the early 20th century. The

treatment of the trilogy as a text of worldly revelation, rather than an eschatological text about the end of the Wilhelmine era as the end of humanity, helps improve our understanding of Broch's novels as a kind of *Erkenntnisweg*, a path of comprehension, during a specific critical period in German history. This line of inquiry contributes to a nuanced view of the trilogy's unresolved tensions, while allowing readers to detect the importance of (the idea of) hope in *Die Schlafwandler*, which is an understudied aspect in the body of literature on the trilogy.